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**An Investigation of the New Independent
Christian Schools:
What kind of citizens are they producing?**

by

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degree of
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. A paper based on material from Chapter 7 has been accepted for publication by *Research in Education*.

Abbreviations

ACT	Association of Christian Teachers
ACE	Accelerated Christian Education
AMSUK	Association of Muslim Schools, UK
BHA	British Humanist Association
CEE	Christian Education Europe
CARE	Christian Action Research and Education
CSA	Christian Schools Australia
CPCS	Christian Parent-Controlled Schools
CST	Christian Schools Trust
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector (Education)
ID	Intelligent Design
ICS	Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto)
NSS	National Secular Society
NIV	New International Version (Holy Bible)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PACE	Pack of Accelerated Education
RE	Religious Education
TE	Theistic Evolution
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YEC	Young Earth Creationism

Summary

This thesis investigates a network of new independent Christian schools in England, with special reference to their teenage pupils. The place of faith-based schools in British society currently constitutes a contentious issue; the nature of this controversy is explored before a description and evaluation of the schools and their educational aims is given. A wide-ranging survey is then described. This survey investigated the views, values and beliefs of 695 teenage pupils who were receiving their education in the schools in 2006. Its purpose was to discover to what extent the aims of the schools were being realised amongst their older pupils. At the same time, the survey was designed to address the criticisms aimed at faith-based schools, particularly the charge that such schools might be inadequately preparing young people for life as citizens of modern Britain. The results reveal an unusual cohort of young people. The majority of the pupils claim to hold religious beliefs and values which differ from the current norms of British society but which would not necessarily jeopardise acceptable British citizenship. The data indicate that the schools are achieving their aims of enabling pupils to develop and retain the belief system and moral position taken by their parent bodies and founding churches. The results show that male pupils hold the same beliefs as female pupils and that the older pupils are as likely to be religious as are the younger. These findings differ from those found by similar surveys conducted in other British contexts. Finally, the data reveal the existence of a small subset of pupils who claim not to hold religious beliefs and whose views and values differ substantially from those of the majority of their fellow pupils. The data also suggest that the anomalous position of these pupils is not necessarily detrimental to their well-being.

Introduction

Twelve years after Tony Blair first came to power in the UK, with the election mantra “education, education, education”, concerns about British schooling are as great as ever but the voices are telling conflicting stories. It is suggested that underinvestment is the problem; no, is the response, investment on a massive scale has not resolved the issues. Testing is the answer, some say; no, testing is the problem, say others. “Faith schools” are the answer – they get better results; no, faith schools are the problem – they manipulate their intake and lead to division in society. This thesis is concerned with the third controversy, one which has intensified over the past decade, concerning the role of schools with a religious basis in the liberal, multicultural democracy that is modern Britain. However, the theme of the thesis has the power to inform the other two issues described above, and many more besides, for it concerns a group of schools which are strongly religious and strongly ideological. These schools claim that they do not simply serve middle class families, have more than their fair share of “problem” children, and operate on a very low budget. They therefore, if the claims can be verified, constitute a research population which can genuinely inform the debate.

The small independent schools known as “the new Christian schools” have now been in existence for up to 40 years. They form a loose network and are easy to identify. However one might define a “faith school” (and that in itself is an issue), these schools are at the extreme end of the spectrum. Amid the strident voices calling for either the banning or the expansion of schools like these, something is conspicuous by its absence, namely empirical evidence that properly establishes what these schools are actually achieving. Are they producing indoctrinated, poorly

educated, divisive elements in society, as their various critics would claim? If these charges have any truth in them, the situation is serious. It is therefore of great importance that these schools, and others like them, should be investigated in a manner which contributes hard empirical evidence to the controversy which surrounds them.

In order to investigate the impact and influence of the new Christian school movement, or any other movement of the same nature, it will be necessary to discover the educational philosophy which underlies their practice and to evaluate their curricula and teaching methods. However, far more important, more illuminating, than all of these would be an assessment of the effects of the education offered by the schools in the lives of the pupils, both while they are receiving their education and subsequently. Those participating in the debate need to know what the pupils are actually learning, not just what the teachers claim to be teaching. They need to know what kind of people are emerging from the schools; only then can the controversy be resolved. By the time they reach their teenage years, many of the pupils will have been receiving their education in the new Christian schools for about nine years. What do these young people believe and think? How do they behave? What kind of people are they? What kind of citizens will they become? This is what the Government needs to know; it is what the churches need to know. Supremely, it is what the parents and teachers involved in the schools need to know. This thesis aims to provide evidence which will help to answer these questions.

Chapter 1 describes the “faith schools” controversy as it now stands as revealed by the published literature, together with a description of the parallel debate within the

Christian community. It provides the rationale for an in-depth examination of the new Christian schools and for a survey of their current pupils.

Chapter 2 contributes an in-depth description of the schools. It describes their roots, their history and their nature, focusing on those aspects which make them uniquely “Christian” and highlighting differences between them. Chapter 3 focuses on the reasons why the schools were founded. It emphasises those aspects, particularly in terms of ethos and curriculum, which might be expected to produce measurable outcomes in the lives of their pupils, outcomes which might conceivably be different from those produced by mainstream secular education. Chapter 4 describes the political engagement, some of it unexpected, which the schools have experienced over the past 30 years, and records changes in the law which have directly affected them. The historical and descriptive narrative provided by Chapters 2, 3 and 4 is important. It highlights the unusual nature of the schools and emphasises their reasons for existing. In addition, it reveals some ways in which the gap between them and the current norms of secular education has widened over the years.

Chapter 5 introduces the major survey which is the subject of the rest of the thesis. It describes the context and methodology for an extensive survey of the teenage population of the new Christian schools. It describes how the survey will investigate a wide spectrum of the beliefs, views, values, opinions and concerns of these pupils. It also provides an initial introduction to the young people themselves.

Chapters 6 to 12 present the results of the survey. Effectively, the material recorded here constitutes a database which will have a much wider application than is possible in one thesis. Chapter 6 describes the religious beliefs of the pupils; where possible, these responses are compared with those of the wider teenage population. Chapter 7 is a specialist chapter. It investigates the beliefs of the pupils in connection with one important aspect of their religious position, that of their beliefs about the creation/evolution debate and the relationship between science and religion. Chapter 8 reports on the worries and concerns of the pupils while Chapter 9 describes their views and values connected with a range of moral issues, some of them controversial.

Chapters 10 to 12 present the results obtained when some key internal comparisons were made. These data make an important contribution to the debate by making visible differences which might be hidden within the overall data. Thus, Chapter 10 compares the views of the girl pupils with those of the boys, Chapter 11 compares those of the older pupils with those of the younger and Chapter 12 contrasts the outlook on life held by the pupils who describe themselves as Christians when compared with those who say they have no religion. In each case, these categories might be expected to reveal significant differences, differences which parents, teachers, school governors and church leaders need to be aware of when seeking to assess whether or not the schools are achieving their aims.

Chapter 13 discusses the wider implications of the research findings for four groups of people, parents, teachers, church leaders and the Government, before final conclusions are reached. In addition to summarising the overall findings of the

thesis, the conclusion has many suggestions for future research, for that which is recorded here is just the beginning of what could become a major research project.

On a personal level, I have been involved with the new Christian schools since 1978. In that year Trinity School, Stalybridge, Greater Manchester opened. I was a founder of the school, a member of the parent body for 15 years and a teacher within the school for 26 years. For 15 of those teaching years my position was co-headteacher. From 2002 until the present, I have been part of the Core Team which co-ordinates the activities of the Christian Schools Trust, a body which links and serves some of the schools. This direct involvement with the new Christian schools movement places me high on the list of those who keenly desire to know what the overall outcome of the past 40 years of education provided by the schools has been and whether or not they have earned the right for a continued existence.

The key research questions addressed by this thesis, therefore, are these: are the new independent Christian schools achieving the aims which constitute the reasons for their existence? Are they also fulfilling the fears, concerns and predictions of those who would criticise and oppose them?

Chapter 1

“Faith Schools”: the Controversy

The new independent Christian schools are regarded as controversial at two different levels and in two different contexts. First is the wider context; a nation-wide debate has been in progress for decades as to whether “faith schools” (schools of a “religious nature”), despite their central place in the history of the British education system, should even be allowed to exist. For example, Roger Marples (2005, p134) considers that all schools with a religious foundation should be abolished, arguing that this is the most appropriate course of action for a liberal democracy to take. Second is the church context. A quite separate debate, employing largely different arguments but also questioning the validity of the existence of such schools, is on-going in the Christian community. Brian Hill (1990a) is one who has taken this approach. This chapter will investigate each of these debates and in so doing will provide the background to and rationale for an investigation of one very specific group of faith-based independent schools and of the views, beliefs and concerns of their pupils.

It is difficult to find an accurate term with which to describe the schools often referred to as “faith schools”. Until 1999, the Government had no way of formally identifying the “faith” basis of any particular school. In that year, the “Designation of Schools having a Religious Character (England) order 1999” came into force, applying to schools in the state-maintained sector and was followed in 2004 by the “Designation of Schools having a Religious Character (Independent Schools)(England) Order 2004”. All independent schools in England had been contacted by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003 to ask if they

wished to apply for designation as a religious school; the definition thus depends on a school's view of itself. Those involved in the new Christian schools would argue that *all* schools are in a sense religious, that there is no such thing as religious neutrality (Clouser, 2005). Having acknowledged this caveat at the beginning, this thesis will, for convenience, refer to all schools which are consciously religious as "faith-based schools".

1.1 Faith-based schools: the wider controversy

Writing originally in 1971, Paul Hirst claimed that:

There has already emerged in our society a view of education, a concept of education, which makes the whole idea of Christian education a kind of nonsense, and the search for a Christian approach to, or philosophy of education a huge mistake. From this point of view, the idea that there is a characteristically or distinctively Christian form of education seems just as much a mistake as the idea that there is a distinctively Christian form of mathematics, engineering or of farming. (Hirst, 1994, p305)

Others argue the exact opposite, maintaining that there *is* a distinctively Christian form of mathematics and engineering together with every other subject and basing this position on the concept of a Christian worldview (Walsh and Middleton, 1984; Pearcey, 2004; Sire, 2004a,b, 2006). Elmer Thiessen has responded specifically to Hirst arguing that there is a need and rationale for separate Christian schools and colleges:

There must be a unique content to Christian education in all areas of study. Christian presuppositions do provide an interpretative framework for all the forms of knowledge. Christian education, if it is truly Christian, will be radically different from secular education even in subjects like mathematics and physics. (Thiessen, 1990a, p91)

Debate about the place of Christian schools in a pluralistic society has frequently emanated from cultural settings other than the UK, notably the Netherlands, Canada, Australia and the United States (Hill, 1993; Peshkin, 1993; Reese, 1993; Shapiro, 1993; Snik and de Jong, 1995; Long, 1996; de Ruyter, 1999a,b; Friesen, 1999; Guzie, 1999). These publications reveal the complexities and nuances of the controversy. Thus, de Ruyter, writing in the Dutch context, argues that separate Christian schools are defensible in a liberal democracy but only if the schools endorse the values of the liberal democracy, while Guzie (1999, p241) describes two distinct school systems in the United States and Canada which arose primarily from Catholic perceptions that public education was not religiously neutral but essentially Protestant. The debate is indeed complex and wide-ranging.

Writing at the beginning of the new millennium, Helen Johnson considered one of the more telling arguments against British faith-based schools to be that “faith schools of all kinds are socially and racially divisive and undermine the possibility of truly comprehensive education in which all share basic values of tolerance” (Johnson, 2000, p128). At the same time (p116) she was able to ask, “Why does their existence and public funding seemingly remain unchallenged?” Just one year later, that situation was to change dramatically. In the year 2001, two independent factors came together to escalate the controversy regarding faith-based schools (Short, 2002, p559; McKinney, 2006, p105). Early that year, the Church of England announced its intention to expand the number of church schools and the Government issued a Green Paper in which it expressed support for such an expansion (Cush, 2005, p435). In September of the same year came the terrorist attacks in New York which ushered in a new era, one in which “religion” has

increasingly come to be seen as posing a threat to multi-cultural liberal democracy. As part of this reaction, education has become a focus for some of the fears aroused both by the “9/11” event and the subsequent terrorist atrocities in London. Since 2001, an extensive literature has emerged, informing and debating the controversy (Judge, 2001; Short, 2002, 2003a,b; Burtonwood, 2002, 2003; de Jong and Snik, 2002; Grace, 2003; Hand, 2003, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Mason, 2003; Dagovitz, 2004; Groothuis, 2004; Siegel, 2004; Copley, 2005; Cush, 2005; Gardner, Cairns and Lawton, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Marples, 2005; Parker-Jenkins, Hartas, and Irving, 2005; Gokulsing, 2006; McKinney, 2006; Walford, 2008). The arguments put forward on each side of the debate have been summarised by Robert Jackson in the context of state funding, but they have a wider application to the desirability, or otherwise, of the existence of faith-based schools:

Supporters of state funded faith based schools advance a variety of arguments in their favour, including the view that they: provide a positive response to racism; promote justice and fairness for children, parents and religious communities; offer education of a high quality; and promote social cohesion and the integration of minority communities into the democratic life of the state. Opponents of such schools argue that they: limit the personal autonomy of pupils; erode social cohesion through separating young people of different religious and non-religious backgrounds; impose on pupils a restricted view of their religion; use state finance to fund proselytisation or mission; and disadvantage other schools through selection procedures that cream off the most able students. (Jackson, 2003, p89)

Geoffrey Walford has also summarised the controversy:

Blair’s policies to increase the number of faith schools and to open the opportunity for state-funding to schools for a wider range of minority faiths has been highly controversial for three main reasons. First it is argued that segregation of minority faith students (and thus often students of minority ethnicities) into separate schools is highly undesirable and could lead to greater ethnic tensions in the future. Second, it is claimed that many Roman Catholic schools and some Church of England schools indirectly select students according to social class, and that the Christian ethos and demands of these schools act to exclude

students from some ethnic minorities. Third, the curriculum of some faith schools may inculcate intolerant and bigoted views. (Walford, 2008, p689)

It seems from these sources that two arguments, in particular, are regarded as being central to the debate: the first maintains that faith based schools are divisive, that they undermine social cohesion; the second concerns the charge of indoctrination (Hand, 2003, pp89-90). Within the charge of indoctrination lies a particular concern about the teaching of creationism. Emma John, writing within a Christian context, has summarised that concern as follows:

Secularists and humanists are among those who have argued loudly against single faith schools. They have two main objections: that faith schools are divisive, discouraging social cohesion; and that publicly-funded schools should not be allowed to influence children's religious beliefs. Meanwhile, the controversial teaching of creationism at some American faith schools has worried educationalists that the teaching of science and other subjects will be compromised by religious views. The danger at present is that the arguments against faith schools are so loud, and so often repeated, that instead of analysing them, it's easy to accept them as fact. (John, 2007, p17)

These specific objections to faith-based schools will now be considered in turn.

1.1.1 Are faith-based schools divisive?

Halstead and McLaughlin (2005, p61) refer to "a wide range of expressions of concern about the divisiveness of faith schools from many quarters". They consider that the charge of divisiveness is particularly damaging to faith schools because "it represents a tangible evil which affects society as a whole". They argue (pp60-71) that the claim that faith schools are divisive is less clear and well-grounded than is often supposed. Short (2002, 2003a) defends faith-based schools against the charge that they necessarily undermine social cohesion and claims to show how they can in fact be seen as a force for unity. He also challenges the assumption that non-

denominational schools are inherently better positioned than their faith-based counterparts to promote a tolerant society, advancing two reasons:

The first is that the prerequisites of successful contact cannot be guaranteed and, even if they could be, the benefits, seemingly, are of limited value, for changes in attitude tend not to generalise outside of the contact situation. Second it has been argued that, in any case, the relevant consideration is not contact, even under ideal conditions, but anti-racist education which can in principle, be undertaken as effectively in a faith school as in a non-denominational one. (Short, 2002, p570)

Burtonwood (2003, p423) argues that “in choosing to support faith schools for the qualities of community that they bring to their pupils, liberals must acknowledge the price that is paid by individuals in terms of some loss of autonomy and by society in terms of some loss of cohesion” while McKinney (2006, p109) suggests that:

More research is required to establish the nature of the links between a range of minorities and faith-based schooling and the impact this has on society and democracy...One strand of this research may be to critically question the facile stereotypes: faith-based schools prevent social cohesion, community schools aid social cohesion and examine the extent to which all schools foster, or impede, social cohesion.

Short (2003a) has already made a small contribution to such a research agenda through an ethnographic study of the way Jewish schools approach cultural diversity. He concluded (p140) that Jewish schools are not inherently antithetical to social cohesion. Halstead and McLaughlin (2005, p67) claim that there is no evidence to link Muslim or other faith schools to political extremism or civil unrest and they too call for “careful and sensitive empirical investigation about these matters”. Despite the lack of empirical evidence to inform the debate, the British Humanist Association has “long opposed religious schools as discriminatory, unnecessary and potentially very divisive” (Mason, 2005, p74).

1.1.2 Are faith-based schools indoctrinatory?

Michael Hand (2003, pp89-90) considers that there is nothing contradictory about the idea of a faith school trying to promote social harmony and religious tolerance but that there is another objection which, if valid, could prove fatal to them: namely, that they are indoctrinatory. Elmer Thiessen has commented:

Today the term ‘indoctrination’ is used largely in a derogatory sense, to refer to teaching that is somehow incompatible with true education...[This meaning] is rooted in the acceptance of a very specific ideal of liberal education, which in turn is rooted in the overwhelming acceptance of some important liberal values, such as individuality, freedom, autonomy, rationality, and tolerance. (Thiessen, 1992, p67)

Thiessen goes on (pp68-9) to define the term “indoctrination” in terms of four criteria: content, method, intention and consequences; eventually he decides (p76) that the core idea should be thought of in terms of the curtailment of a person’s growth towards rational autonomy. Jeff Astley (1994, p44) considers that “the distinction between ‘indoctrination’ and ‘rational education’ is less clear-cut than is often supposed” and goes on (pp46-50) to provide a critique of the four criteria proposed by Thiessen. More recently, Richard Pring has observed that:

Indoctrination lies in closing the mind, to blocking out, often through strong sentiments or feeling, the possibility of contemplating an alternative point of view. It lies in the removal of the system of belief from the critical tradition through which those very beliefs have evolved. But such a closing of the mind can come in many different ways – the sneering at alternatives, the assumption of self-evidence of what is current, the constant portrayal without insight of what people within a particular tradition believe in. Indoctrination arises as much from the secular assumptions of the media and the cold indifference to religion of the humanist as it does from the closed institutions of religion which create an emotional grip over the maintenance of certain beliefs. (Pring, 2005, p59)

Following a lengthy description of differing usages of the term “indoctrination”, Terence Copley provides an alternative view:

None of these commentators, interestingly, raises the question of whether indoctrination by omission is also possible. A child from a home in which religion and God are never mentioned and encountering a curriculum in which they do not occur, except perhaps, *en passant* in history lessons, may not only have no belief in God, but may view the entire question of God as unnecessary and irrelevant, even incomprehensible. How much ‘choice’ has such a child had in forming this view? ...Surely this too is indoctrination, as it has very effectively fixed habits and dispositions without engaging the child’s active powers. (Copley, 2005, p5)

Elmer Thiessen applies the charge of indoctrination to the teaching of science, arguing that:

It is difficult, if not impossible, to define indoctrination in such a way that the teaching of science is able to escape the charge while religion falls prey to it. It seems that there can be as much or as little indoctrination in the teaching of religion as there is in the teaching of science. (Thiessen, 1990b, p227)

The “creationism” element to the charge of indoctrination in the debate over faith-based schools is of concern to Richard Pring. He comments (2005, p54) that “such schools are seen to support doctrinal teaching (for example, on evolution) which is regarded as unacceptable within the science community”, referring later to “doctrinal absurdities”. The debate as it is currently being conducted in the media is a heated one, with strong opinions being expressed on both sides. However, what appears to be missing is any kind of verifiable, objective data which could help to answer the question of what the effect would be if the teaching of creationism alongside evolution became widespread in British schools. Also missing is any evaluation of pupils who have been taught that way; are they “indoctrinated” as their critics claim, or are they rather the ones, as their teachers would claim, who are *not* indoctrinated because it is they who have been taught to evaluate the evidence critically?

1.1.3 Citizenship and the liberal agenda

The controversy over the existence of “religious” schools, as it has been described so far, can perhaps be summed up by the question: can faith-based schools produce future citizens who are suitably prepared for playing a role in a multi-cultural, liberal democracy? This question can only be answered by future research, of which the current project is seeking to be a part. It is the pupils themselves, both current and former, who can successfully provide the necessary answers. Do the current pupils of faith-based schools hold views which are likely to cause them to play a divisive role in society? Do they, actually and in practice, give evidence of having been indoctrinated, so that they are unable to think for themselves? Are former pupils proving to be divisive elements in society? Have they been unable to function in a liberal democracy? What kind of citizens have they become? Grace (2003, p165) states:

Critics of faith-based schools often imply that the pedagogical climate of such organisations is inimical to the realisation of a liberal education or the formation of democratic citizenship. This view is premised on the assumption that the particular faith in question is absolutist, closed to liberal intellectual discourse and in its own internal power relations, incompatible with modern democratic culture and citizenship...To try to establish a more reliable evidence base in this sector, in depth studies of particular faith school cultures are needed with a focus on liberal education practice and on citizenship formation.

The “particular faith school culture” that the present project will examine is that of the new Christian schools. Pike (2005, p35) has indicated what he believes children in the new Christian schools should learn about “the liberal, plural and secularised society in which they live” but in so doing makes no assessment of what is actually being taught in the schools. The present project will attempt to do this, along with an in-depth investigation of the pupils who are being educated in this way.

1.2 Faith-based schools: the church-linked controversy

Within a Christian context, criticisms of the movement have come from the academy as well as directly from the churches. Brian Hill (1985; 1990a; 1993) has written extensively on the subject and his concerns reflect several of the issues listed above. In addition, he asks the schools to consider whether or not their aims and procedures are both ethical and Christian (1993, pp250-255), arguing that it is unethical to evangelise in the formal classroom setting or to regard every student as a consenting Christian person. Hill has described his objections to the establishment of further independent Christian schools, maintaining that their stance:

seeks to avoid compromise with the world's disregard of God by maintaining agencies parallel to those of secular society, but operating within a distinctively Christian rationale. [This stance] achieves clarity of purpose but at the cost of some social division and possible loss of identification and communication with the world. (Hill, 1985, p26)

Hill also expresses concern (p27), within the Australian context, that the establishing of such schools reflects a desire to repudiate pluralism. He questions the schools' principles of curriculum selection, advocating what he calls "transcultural studies":

By these are meant studies which develop in students a critical awareness of culture as such and a capacity to choose consciously what values and belief they themselves will embrace. One component of such studies would be the study of Christian apologetics. This implies not just a knowledge of what Christians believe but how these truth claims stand up to challenge from other faiths and how the biblical Gospel stands over against all cultures including the Christianised sub-culture to which one belongs. (Hill, 1985, p29)

Some of the new Christian schools in the UK, especially those from a reformed background, would claim to be doing just this. One aim of the present project is to determine to what extent they may be succeeding. Hill acknowledges that "the

apologia for reformed schools invites us to help children increase in understanding and sensitivity, and to acquire and accept good reasons for the faith that is in them” (1990, p129). He goes on to say that this is not so with the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system, imported from America. This system will be described in Chapter 3, but in Hill’s view:

The ACE student lives in a universe of authorities and right answers. The available ideological options are boiled down to two. One is the Christian way of life as laid down in God’s word and the other is the secular way of life which promotes humanistic ideas. The Bible supplies the answer, by direct inference, to every question of social interpretation and pedagogic method. (Hill, 1990a, p130)

Noel Weeks (1990, pp134-141) has sought to respond to Hill with a defence of Christian schools. As part of that response, he states (p138):

Professor Hill, and those who take a similar position, are very concerned by the restrictive nature of the Christian school. They are concerned that the presentation of just the one viewpoint will not produce a critical mind. Yet one finds a strange inconsistency. When the state school presents one viewpoint it does not receive similar condemnation. The logic of Professor Hill should lead him to oppose all schools which express a united and consistent world view, whether that world view be Christian or non-Christian.

Those involved in the new Christian schools movement have expressed their surprise at the degree of opposition that their schools have received directly from the churches and especially from church leaders. The reasons usually given have little to do with the wider controversy. Opponents of independent Christian schools from within the Christian community often aver:

1. that the children of Christian parents need to remain within the state sector to act as a Christian influence on their classmates;
2. that Christian teachers should similarly all remain within the state sector to exert a Christian influence and not be diverted to cosy Christian enclaves;

3. that the small, cosy atmosphere of a Christian school will fail to prepare the children adequately for life in the wider world;
4. that the children will fail to develop social skills because of the small numbers in each class or even in the whole school;
5. that the limited resources of the poorly-funded schools will be inadequate to enable the children to achieve academic success;
6. that the churches cannot afford to put money into the schools and do not want to see money diverted by parents into the schools and away from church programmes.

Now that the new Christian schools have existed for up to forty years with thousands of former pupils having moved on into society, it should be possible to make an assessment of the validity, or otherwise, of these criticisms.

1.3 Existing empirical evidence

A majority of the new Christian schools have now been in operation for at least 20 years. A significant number started more than 25 years ago and a few were founded 30 to 40 years ago. Do the schools succeed in producing good citizens or have they proved to be a divisive element in society? Have the schools fulfilled the aims of the parents and church leaders who established them or have the fears listed above been realised? As yet there is very little empirical evidence to provide answers to these questions; hence the importance of the current survey. Elizabeth Green and Trevor Cooling have reviewed the current research evidence on the impact of schools with a Christian ethos (Green and Cooling, 2009). Writing in the foreword, Professor Geoffrey Walford concludes that:

The currently available research is limited, and does not allow any definitive conclusions to be drawn about the spiritual impact on students of a school's Christian ethos. One of the most important conclusions to this report is that there is a distinct and pressing need for further research on the impact of a Christian school's ethos on students' beliefs, attitudes, behaviour and spiritual development. (Green and Cooling, 2009, p9)

The available evidence relating directly to the new Christian schools in the context of the current research questions will now be reviewed.

1.3.1 Citizenship

To date very little empirical evidence exists which could attempt to answer the question of the kind of citizens that are produced by the schools. In one of the very few available studies, Francis and Robbins (2005) have examined the relationship between spiritual health and attending an independent Christian school, particularly in relation to urban living, using the model of spiritual health developed by the Australian researcher John Fisher (Fisher, Francis and Johnson, 2000). They consider that there are significant ways in which young people in the new Christian schools enjoy a higher level of spiritual health compared with young people in non-denominational schools and that this will predispose them to become good citizens.

Francis and Robbins conclude that:

The positive interpretation of these findings is that Christian schools bring to the urban environment communities committed to shaping purposive young lives capable of contributing to the common good on both local and global levels. Such communities are constructive rather than divisive of urban hope for the future. Urban planners may need to recognise and to value the distinctive contribution made to urban living by the relatively recent movement to develop independent Christian schools (Francis and Robbins, 2005, pp131-132).

1.3.2 Parental expectations

As will be described in detail in the following chapter, parents send their children to Christian schools usually for clearly defined reasons. They wish their children to be brought up as Christians and for the school to encourage and support this aim rather

than work against it. Inherent in the desire for a Christian training in life for the children is a hope that the young adults who emerge from the schools will retain Christian beliefs and want to live according to Christian moral values.

O’Keeffe (1992, p105) investigated the attitude towards Christianity of 439 pupils between the ages of 8 and 16 attending six of the new Christian schools and concluded that:

The main conclusion to emerge from this study is that schools are exercising a positive influence on their pupils’ attitudes towards Christianity. The responses of the pupils demonstrate that the majority of pupils hold positive attitudes towards God, Jesus, the Bible and personal prayer. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of pupils have a high regard for personal religion.

Francis (2005a) surveyed nineteen of the new Christian schools as part of a wider investigation into teenage religion and values. The values of 136 13-to-15- year-old boys were compared with those of 12,823 boys attending non-denominational state-maintained schools. Some very strong differences between the two groups emerged from this study. Within the new Christian schools, 89% of boys believed that Jesus really rose from the dead compared with 28% in the state-maintained sector; 67% of the boys believed that Christianity was the only true religion, compared with 13% in the state-maintained sector. The views of the boys from the Christian schools concerning a number of moral issues were also much more likely to accord with traditional Christian beliefs than were those of boys from the state-maintained sector.

Francis concludes:

Parents who elect to send their children to independent Christian schools generally do so because they wish for an environment which they purport to model in their home and in their church congregation to be replicated within the environment of the school...The data

provided by the present study can assure parents that the values environment modelled by 13-15 year old boys attending Christian schools is significantly different from that modelled by boys in the same age range attending non-denominational state-maintained schools. While it would be unreasonable for parents to expect every boy attending the Christian school to sign up to Bible-based standards, the data could assure them that the values environment being modelled by boys in the Christian school is indeed 'more Christian' than can be found in the non-denominational state-maintained schools...Many 'Christian' parents may feel satisfied that this is precisely what they are purchasing for their 13-15 year old boys when they elect to send them to a Christian school. In many ways the distinctiveness of the 'Christian' community is being reproduced within the Christian school. (Francis, 2005a, p139)

Do these Christian beliefs and values persist as the pupils reach school-leaving age and move out into the wider world? Three small studies suggest that they do. Baker and Freeman (2005 p17) report the results of a survey into the current beliefs of former pupils from eleven of the new Christian schools. Of the 240 young adults aged 17-32 who responded, 80% described themselves as practising Christians and 73% were members of churches. Further, a study of 135 women who had attended new Christian schools reported that "A high proportion of respondents had remained committed to the Christian faith, with 79% regarding themselves as practising Christians and 76% regarding themselves as members of churches" (ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2009, p225). A parallel study of 106 male former pupils found that, again, 79% regarded themselves as Christians while 70% were members of churches (ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2007, p7). One purpose of the present study is to provide a base-line with which future such surveys can be compared. What percentage of the current population of teenage pupils identify themselves as Christians and will that percentage remain the same when they are adults? In an age of declining church attendance, what percentage of the teenagers attends church? Will they continue to do so?

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the criticisms that are levelled at faith-based schools, both by wider society and, alternatively, by the Christian community. It has identified the need for empirical research to be carried out to inform each of these controversies and has introduced the new independent Christian schools as a suitable setting for such an investigation. First, the schools themselves will need to be described and assessed as a prelude to an investigation of their pupils and this will be the purpose of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. A note on the methodology employed in the development of these chapters can be found in Appendix 1.

Chapter 2

The new Christian schools: their origins and history

As described in the previous chapter, questions are often raised as to whether faith-based schools can adequately prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural, liberal democracy. This project will add to the debate through an investigation of the specific group of faith-based independent schools which are often referred to as “the new Christian schools”. This chapter will describe the origins and nature of the new Christian schools sector. It will define the movement and describe its roots, highlighting both the similarities and the differences that exist between the schools. In setting the scene in this way, it will provide the background against which both current and former pupils of the schools can be investigated and assessed.

2.1 What are the new Christian schools?

The beginning of the movement has been traced to the opening of The Cedars, Rochester, Kent, in 1969 (Deakin, 1989a p4; Baker and Freeman, 2005 p19). *The Love of God in the Classroom: the story of the new Christian schools* (Baker and Freeman, 2005) describes the histories of seventeen of the schools. In her foreword, Baroness Cox refers to “the remarkable development of a new generation of Christian schools in the United Kingdom” and to:

their amazing growth as they have mushroomed during the last twenty or so years on the initiative of local Christian communities. Dismayed by what they perceive as poor academic and behavioural standards in their local state schools, many parents, teachers and churches have made great personal and financial sacrifices to establish these, their own independent schools. (Baker and Freeman, 2005, p7)

The schools are usually small, with numbers of pupils ranging from a handful to more than 200. Some cater only for primary-aged children while others cover the

age range from 3 to 16. A few take pupils through to the age of 18. The schools have been established by churches, groups of churches or parent bodies and occasionally by individual proprietors. They are part of what Geoffrey Walford (1991, 2001a, p470,) has described as “the reluctant private sector” in that the parent bodies involved in the schools do not have an ideological commitment to private education per se. Deakin (1989a, p5) claims that they “represent a genuine grass-roots movement which is not co-ordinated or controlled by any outside interest group”.

During the early 1990s, O’Keeffe (1992), Poyntz and Walford (1994) and Watson and MacKenzie (1996) conducted surveys of the new Christian schools. Having looked at six schools (O’Keeffe), 53 schools (Poyntz and Walford) and 34 schools (Watson and Mackenzie), they reached a consensus about the nature of the schools and their reasons for existing. These researchers all argued that the schools were established to promote a positively Christian philosophy and practice of education in response to what they discerned as the growing secularisation of education:

These schools share an ideology of biblically-based evangelical Christianity which seeks to relate the message of the Bible to all aspects of present-day life, whether personal, spiritual or educational. (Poyntz and Walford, 1994, p128)

In contrast to a denominational constituency, [the schools] were founded in response to the ‘secular drift’ in state schools by Christians who wish their children to have an education which is in accord with ‘their deepest religious and philosophical convictions’. (O’Keeffe, 1992, p92)

These schools have arisen because of the growing pluralisation of societies, the growing secularization of education and indifference to, or rejection of, religious beliefs on the part of the education authorities. (Watson and Mackenzie, 1996, p179)

The reasons underlying the establishment of the new Christian schools will be investigated more fully in Chapter 3.

Jones (1997, p13) has referred to the schools as “evangelical Christian schools” and in February 2005, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) described 100 of the independent schools on their lists as “Evangelical”. However, it is interesting that the schools very rarely, if ever, define themselves this way. Not one of the 46 schools listed on the current (2008-9) address list of schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust carries the word “evangelical” in its name. The same is true of a further 43 schools on a list of new Christian schools known to the Trust but not members of it. Walford (1995a, pp30-32) has discussed how neither the term “fundamentalist” nor the alternative “evangelical” is appropriate to describe the schools while Jones (1997, p6) has explained that:

Evangelicalism is a major Christian *tradition*; it is not to be confused with *evangelism* (as is commonly done by reporters and journalists). It is not easy to define in one sentence, but broadly unites those who believe the Bible is the word of God, that Jesus is the son of God, who hold to the traditional creedal statements of the Church, and seek to live out the implications of these commitments.

By this definition, the new Christian schools could rightly be described as having arisen from the “evangelical” constituency. However, many of the schools would not be happy with this description. Buckeridge (2006) detailed some possible reasons for this. He described a survey in which 87% of a church-going sample identified themselves as “evangelical” but only 59% would describe themselves as such to others. Buckeridge attributed the difference to negative connotations that have begun to be associated with the word. Within the movement itself, the preferred description is “new Christian”.

It is difficult to state precisely at any one moment how many new Christian schools exist in the UK. There is no one body that oversees the movement, or to which all

the schools are affiliated. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) does not at present have a special category for these particular schools. According to statistics of the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES), in February 2005 there were 1006 independent faith-based schools in England, categorised as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Independent faith-based schools in England, 2005 (DfES)

Buddhist	1	Church of England	280
Hindu	2	Church of England/Christian	4
Sikh	1	Congregational	1
Jewish	37	URC	2
Muslim	111	Roman Catholic	122
Multifaith	4	7 th Day Adventist	5
Interfaith	76	Unitarian	1
Christian	338	Methodist	14
Quaker	7		

Source: DfES, 2005

Ofsted (the inspectorate for children and learners in England) at the same time were operating according to different categories as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Independent faith-based schools in England, 2005 (Ofsted)

Evangelical	100	Brethren	38
Muslim	115	Other	10
Jewish	50		

Source: Ofsted, 2005

Another factor making it difficult to compute the exact number of new Christian schools is that in any one year one or two may close and new ones may open. A reasonable estimate of the number of schools in existence at the present time would

be something in excess of 100 in the UK as a whole, with the great majority of these, about 100, being situated in England.

2.1.1 Focus Learning Trust

The Ofsted data refers to 38 “Brethren” schools which it categorises separately from the “Evangelical” schools. In September 2003, new legislation came into effect making it much more difficult to open a new independent school. Shortly before this date, a number of applications were received by the DfES whereby centres that had previously supported “home-schoolers” within the “Exclusive Brethren” denomination applied to be registered as schools. Eventually, 38 new schools were registered, linked to and overseen by the “Focus Learning Trust”, a body that stands in relation to the schools in a manner that is comparable to a Local Education Authority. In 2006, the number in England stood at 32, after some of the smaller schools combined to produce more viable units (Long, 2006, p15). The schools at that point catered for approximately 1,400 pupils of secondary age. They are now adding Key Stage 2 departments to many of their schools and taking some pupils on to age 18. The Focus Learning Trust runs its own government-approved inspection service, the School Inspection Service and their inspection reports can be viewed on its website (www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk).

Until the late 1980s the Exclusive Brethren were content for their children to be educated within the mainstream state-maintained or independent sectors. It was at this point that Brethren parents became concerned about secular influences in the schools, particularly in the areas of information technology and sex education. Long (2006 p18) states that from the beginning of the 1990s it became increasingly common for Brethren children of secondary age to be withdrawn from mainstream

schools and to be educated partly at home and partly through tuition provided in study centres established by local Brethren communities. At present, all Exclusive Brethren schools are for those aged over seven years or in some cases over eleven years. Primary-aged children below the age of seven are currently educated in mainstream schools. Exclusive Brethren schools largely follow the National Curriculum and function within a tightly-controlled denomination. In these respects they differ fundamentally from the new Christian schools and rightly constitute a separate category. The Focus Learning Trust was approached with an invitation for their schools to take part in the current survey, but they declined to accept.

2.1.2 Free Presbyterian Schools

A further group of exclusive independent Christian schools exists in Northern Ireland. This movement seems to have begun in a similar way to and at the same time as that of the new Christian schools in the rest of the UK. For example, according to its website (www.hebronfpc.org/school), Ballymoney Independent Christian School began in 1983, having been inspired by the opening of Kilskeery Independent Christian School in 1979. Ivan Foster (2001) states that in 2001 the Free Presbyterian Church had seven independent schools with some fifty teachers, twenty of whom were full-time, and that it also trained its own teachers. Again, the group functions within a tightly controlled denomination, this time the Free Presbyterians, and again it is not included in the current survey.

2.2 The roots of the new Christian schools movement

Previous studies have high-lighted the role of the “charismatic” or “house church” movement in the establishing of the new Christian schools (O’Keeffe, 1992, p92;

Walford, 1995a, p8) and most studies to date have focussed on schools of this nature. However, an equally strong influence in the initial founding of the schools was the re-emergence of the “reformed” tradition in British Christianity.

The terms “reformed” and “charismatic” represent theological positions that transcend denominational differences. The emergence of these emphases in the 1960s was exemplified by The Banner of Truth Trust on the one hand, and the Fountain Trust on the other. The Banner of Truth Trust originated in London in 1957. The founders believed that much of the best literature of historic Christianity was no longer easy to obtain and began to republish literature dating from the Reformation and Puritan eras. This literature, and the “reformed” or “Calvinistic” theological position that it advocated, strongly influenced some of those who subsequently founded new Christian schools. “Reformed thinking” is widely discernible within the current movement, especially the version of it that is sometimes described as “neo-Calvinist”. Neo-Calvinism comes from the Dutch Reformed tradition and is particularly associated with Abraham Kuyper who founded the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880 and was Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905. Kuyper was also instrumental in establishing Christian schools (McGoldrick, 2000 p49, pp52-56) and many in the current movement see him as an inspirational mentor.

The Fountain Trust, on the other hand, was promoting a very different theological perspective. Through the holding of meetings and large conferences, particularly in the 1970s, it sought to spread the theology and practice connected with the “baptism

in the Holy Spirit” and the use of supernatural spiritual gifts. The legacy of this movement can also be clearly seen in many of the new Christian schools today.

Although there has always been some overlap between those who have held to these two theological positions, in the 1960 and 1970s they could accurately be viewed as constituting two separate wings of the evangelical Protestant church. The reformed sector rediscovered Puritan writings and adhered to the principles of Calvinism. The charismatic sector developed a strong theology and practice connected with belief in the immediate power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Both sectors expressed belief in and adherence to the reliability and authority of the Bible. In the 1960s and 1970s the two wings had little overlap and this was reflected in the constitution of the early schools. Today, as this history will demonstrate, there is much more overlap both within the schools and between them, although a few schools remain isolated on the extremes of each position.

2.2.1 The “reformed” influence

In the 1960s, neo-Calvinism emerged as a powerful force amongst Christian university students. The Christian Union at Aberystwyth University was particularly affected, earning it the reputation of being “more reformed than Calvin.” In 2006, an extensive personal interview was conducted with Ross Evans, who was a student at Aberystwyth from 1963 until 1967. He explained that the Christian Union at the University drew many of its speakers from ministers associated with the Evangelical Movement of Wales who spoke from a Calvinist perspective. Another influence on the students was the minister of a church which many of them attended, the Reverend Geoffrey Thomas, minister of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth. In 1967, Geoffrey Thomas held a series of special

meetings for those Christian students who were currently taking the postgraduate certificate in education. In these he introduced them to the reformed concept of the “Christian mind” and the view that the whole of life for a Christian, including education, should be subject to the demands and teaching of the Bible. Geoffrey Thomas subsequently spoke at meetings in England on “The Biblical Basis of Education” or related themes. One such meeting was held at Hayes Town Chapel in April 1972. Another, held in February 1988, led directly to the founding of Emmanuel Christian School, Oxford.

From the Christian Union at Aberystwyth in the mid 1960s emerged several people who were to play key roles in what became the new Christian schools movement. One of these was Richard Russell who founded and ran the Christian Studies Unit, a source of reformed literature that is still in operation today. During the 1970s he organised several conferences in different parts of the UK, including one held at Derby in 1975. Through meetings such as these a desire for Christian schooling began to spread amongst young parents who had come under reformed influences in the 1960s and now had young children of their own. John Harding had also been influenced by Geoffrey Thomas at Aberystwyth. In 1971 he was the speaker at a meeting held in Bradford-on-Avon. Some who were present at that meeting were directly linked to Emmaus School which eventually opened in Trowbridge in 1996 (Baker and Freeman, 2005, pp123-126). John Harding also started the Christian Parent-Teacher League which began publishing newsletters in the late 1970s promoting the need for Christian schooling. Other members of the Aberystwyth Christian Union in the mid 1960s were Elaine Storkey who subsequently became a nationally known speaker and writer and is supportive of the new Christian schools

and Ross Evans who has played a significant role in establishing two schools in Greater Manchester.

A major influence on many of those who founded new Christian schools from a reformed perspective was the writer and apologist Francis Schaeffer (Parkhurst, 1986; Morris, 1987). The groundwork laid by his three seminal works, *The God who is There*, *Escape from Reason*, and *He is there and He is not Silent* (Schaeffer, 1990), undergirds much of the educational thinking that has been developed since in this sector of the schools. Schools which were founded on a reformed basis include Trinity School, Stalybridge, Greater Manchester; Covenant School, Stockport; Bethany School, Sheffield; Emmanuel Christian School, Oxford; Emmaus School, Trowbridge; Ely Presbyterian Church School, Cardiff; and Wyclif Independent Christian School, Machen, Caerphilly.

2.2.2 The “charismatic” influence

Some of the new Christian schools began completely independently of any other group or influence. For example, the oldest of the schools, The Cedars, Rochester, founded in 1969, had no direct connections with any other churches or groups interested in Christian schools. The founders of this school believed that they heard directly from God that they must start a school (Baker and Freeman, 2005, pp19-30). An increased awareness of this kind of phenomenon was a characteristic of the charismatic renewal movement which affected many churches and individual Christians throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that several of the schools began independently, in different parts of the country, with no prior connections has led some to describe the development of the schools as “a movement of the Holy Spirit” (Watson and MacKenzie, 1996, p.185).

By the 1970s, the controversies within the traditional Protestant denominations caused by the charismatic movement had led to the establishment of what were then known as “House Churches”. An important influence in the establishment of several of the schools was the “Salt and Light” group of such churches. Schools linked to Salt and Light churches include The King’s Schools at Basingstoke and Witney, Emmanuel School, Derby and Christ the King School, Sale. Hollow (2006, p5) describes how Basingstoke Baptist Church, under the influence of the charismatic renewal movement, had, by the end of the 1970s, left the Baptist denomination and renamed itself Basingstoke Community Church. This church was one of the original group of churches which formed the Salt and Light network in 1979 and it went on to open The King’s School, Basingstoke in 1981. Other churches were inspired by the example of this school and of The King’s School, Witney, which opened in 1984, to open schools of their own. Schools founded by other churches directly affected by the charismatic renewal movement include Immanuel School, Romford, The King’s School, Southampton, and Kingsfold Christian School, Preston.

2.2.3 Influences from overseas

The reformed influence on the early history of the new Christian schools movement can also be attributed to several overseas institutions. Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, USA, is “committed to the systematic exposition of biblical truth known as the Reformed faith” (Lillback, 2009). It was while studying at this institution that Geoffrey Thomas, who was later to become an advocate of Christian schooling and to influence students at Aberystwyth, first became aware of the issues surrounding Christian education and saw Christian schools of this type in operation.

He returned to Wales convinced of the need for such schools in the UK. Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987) was a highly-regarded Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. His publications on reformed themes also influenced some of the early founders.

Richard Russell, Elaine Storkey and Mark Roque, who were later to provide support for the new Christian schools movement, all studied at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada, which describes itself as “a Christian graduate school in the reformed tradition” (ICS 2009). The Institute was founded in 1967. In 1980 it developed a doctoral programme in co-operation with the Free University of Amsterdam, indicating a Dutch-Reformed or neo-Calvinist connection.

Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) was originally a student and later a professor at the Free University of Amsterdam. He developed a philosophical position, grounded in Calvinist thought, and detailed in his three-volume work, *The Philosophy of the Cosmogenic Idea*, first published in 1936. Elmer Thiessen describes the relevance of Dooyeweerd’s thinking to education:

A central thesis of Dooyeweerd is that science, philosophy and the other disciplines are not autonomous and neutral, a thesis that is more commonly recognised in philosophy today. Dooyeweerd argues that thinking in any area is fundamentally dependent on the religious (or ‘irreligious’) point of departure of the thinker. (Thiessen, 1990a, p88)

The ideas of both Van Til and Dooyeweerd provoked controversy and discussion amongst some of those who later founded the schools on the reformed wing of the new Christian schools movement. The idea that there was a “Christian mind”, that there was “Christian thinking” as distinct from “secular thinking”, provided a

strong stimulus towards the opening of schools which would be staffed by Christians committed to rethinking their whole view of the world from a Biblical perspective.

Two Australian institutions also stimulated interest in a Christian schools movement for the UK. The Australian Christian schools movement pre-dates the British one and has provided a source of encouragement to it. Brian Hill (1993, p248) has summarised the movement in terms which reveal its similarity to the situation prevailing in the UK. Referring to the “newer wave of small alternative Christian schools” in Australia, he says that they may be subdivided into:

- a) individual schools each controlled by a local church;
- b) a few instances of individual schools controlled by a local inter-denominational consortium of churches;
- c) a number of parent-controlled schools.

Christian Schools Australia (CSA) is an association linking some of these schools. Its membership includes 150 schools, involving 60,000 students and 3000 teaching staff (CSA 2009). Christian Parent Controlled Schools (CPCS) is a further association of schools, this time established by reformed churches. Currently the association numbers 85 schools, involving 22,500 students with 2,300 full-time teachers. The first school of this type opened in 1962 and schools have subsequently opened in every state and territory in Australia (Vanden Berg, 2005). The new Christian schools in Australia have also been described and assessed by Robert Long (1996).

2.3 How do the schools differ in practice?

The new Christian schools that were founded in the late 1970s and early 1980s tended to fall clearly into either the “reformed” category or the “charismatic” category, and the theological roots of a particular school were reflected in many aspects of how the school was constituted and operated.

Reformed schools tended to be parent-controlled; charismatic schools were usually church-controlled. Reformed schools were founded on a clearly thought-out philosophy of education; charismatic schools were founded on an intuitive sense that God needed to be at the centre of a school’s life. Charismatic schools gave a high profile to acts of worship, usually involving singing and perhaps the operation of spiritual gifts; reformed schools, on the surface at least, were more cerebral. Reformed schools often provided an integrated curriculum approached as a whole from a worldview perspective, one that tended to focus on citizenship and parental nurturing. Charismatic schools were more likely to take a varied approach to the curriculum, one that focussed more on discipleship and general character training.

In essence, the reformed schools were aiming to produce good Christian citizens, spouses and parents while the charismatic schools were aiming to produce good disciples in a more general sense. This situation was to alter over the following 20 years as the schools became aware of each other and began to interact. The two approaches had never been mutually exclusive and they have tended to blend together through the influence of mutual conferences and training programmes. Nevertheless, differences do remain and current schools can be distinguished by:

1. ideological differences regarding the curriculum and approaches to learning;
2. the nature of the governance of the school, whether parent-controlled, church-controlled, or founder-controlled;
3. whether the schools are structured as 'family schools' or as traditional schools;
4. the school's means of funding, whether fee-paying, acting as a parent-co-operative or involving church support;
5. the degree to which the school restricts its intake to children from Christian homes.

Each of these differences will now be examined in detail.

2.3.1 Curriculum and approaches to learning

From the earliest days of the movement, different approaches to curriculum have been evident amongst the new Christian schools. In particular, a major difference exists between those schools which operate the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system and those which do not. Curriculum constitutes a major means by which the schools hope to achieve their aims and the subject will therefore be considered in detail in Chapter 3, where these differences will be examined.

2.3.2 School governance

A further difference amongst the schools stems from a theological difference and is reflected in the nature of their governing bodies. Some schools, usually those from a reformed background, believe strongly that the parents have prime responsibility for their children's education. Their governing bodies are made up exclusively of parents. Examples of such schools are Trinity School, Stalybridge and Covenant School, Stockport. Other schools are directly linked to one church, or to a group of

churches that is effectively functioning as one church. In this situation, church leaders play a major role in the governing body. This is the case with The King's School, Witney, and the King's School, Basingstoke. These schools are seen as ministries of Oxford Community Churches and Basingstoke Community Churches, respectively. In some cases, a large number of local churches of varying types have cooperated to found a school, and the governing body of the school includes representatives of several of the churches. Bradford Christian School operates in this way. Occasionally, a school is effectively governed by its founder, as in the case of the oldest school, The Cedars.

2.3.3 School structure

Some of the new Christian schools have been founded as 'family schools'. In these schools, numbers are deliberately kept low, to a maximum of about 60 or 70, and parents are required to play an active part in the day to day life of the school. Pupils do not wear uniforms. The idea is to make school life as similar to family life as possible. Examples of family schools are Covenant School, Stockport and Bethany School, Sheffield. At the other end of the spectrum are schools that look more traditional in their style, with a strict uniform and traditional classroom structure.

2.3.4 Funding

The funding of the new Christian schools has always constituted a major issue for them and a variety of means for raising funds exists among them. Geoffrey Walford has described the financial situation that prevails among them:

All private schools are subject to market pressures, but the nature of those pressures is somewhat different in the case of most of the new Christian schools. In the main, these schools are not well funded and do not serve traditional high social-class users of the private sector...The vast majority of these schools would not be able to operate if it were not for many teachers who give their time free. Most have low indicative fees or rely on

donations from parents that are related to their ability to pay...The financial situation of many of the schools is precarious. (Walford, 2001a, p469)

Chapter 4 will allude to a significant campaign to obtain public funding which began in the late 1980s. This campaign did not succeed so far as the schools were concerned and, as Walford suggests, they have arrived at a variety of different solutions to the need for funding. Some are fee paying, although the required fees are usually very low compared to the average for the private sector. Other schools ask parents to contribute what they can afford. The “family schools” may sometimes charge no fees and function as parent co-operatives. All teaching, administration, cleaning and maintenance of the buildings is carried out by parents in such schools. If a school is linked to a church, the church will usually make some financial contribution to the school, often by paying the salary of the headteacher.

2.3.5 The pupil population

Where schools are linked to churches, the children of church members will have first call on school places. In some instances, the demand from this source will be such that the school will have no room to accept applications from Christians from other churches, or from non-Christians. This situation has applied to The King’s School, Basingstoke, throughout its history. However, the great majority of the schools admit children from a variety of church backgrounds and some have specifically been set up in this way. Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool, Trinity School, Stalybridge, and Bradford Christian School are examples of larger schools whose parent bodies represent many different kinds of churches, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, Methodist, Free Evangelical, Congregational, URC, Salvation Army and several different varieties of “New Church”. These schools, in which the teachers and governors, as well as the pupils, typically are

drawn from a variety of different Christian denominations are “providing a breeding ground for a degree of ecumenism” as Wagner (1997, p13) has observed in connection with similar Christian schools in the United States. In addition, it is not uncommon for the schools which operate a more open admissions policy to number Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim children amongst their pupils. Also, it would be typical of the new Christian schools for them to admit children with special needs so far as they were able to cope with doing so; some of the schools have a high percentage of such children.

2.3.6 Further possible differences

The question might be asked as to whether differences between the schools can also be attributed to social class or to the educational background of the founders. This is an area, not covered by the present study, which might repay further investigation.

2.4 Connecting bodies

The two main bodies linking the schools, the Christian Schools Trust and Christian Education Europe, will now be considered in more detail. The oldest of the new Christian schools, The Cedars School, Rochester, was established in 1969. According to Deakin (1989a, p5 and Figure 2, p20), between 1978 and 1989 each year saw the founding of between three and eight schools. Deakin represents the growth rate of the new Christian schools as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3
The early growth of the new Christian schools

Year	Number of schools in existence
1969	1
1975	2
1980	8
1985	26
1988	44

Source: Deakin, 1989a

In 1982, four or five headteachers from different schools began to meet informally for mutual encouragement (CST, 1987a,b, 1997a,b). In 1988 the meetings were extended to include more headteachers and this led eventually to the formation in 1989 of the Christian Schools Trust (CST). In the same year, Christian Education, Europe (CEE), the body which connects schools using the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), system was established. The majority of the current schools (2009) are affiliated with one or other of these groups, with a few affiliated to both. The precise number is difficult to assess as the situation changes regularly, with schools moving away from using the ACE system towards developing their own curriculum and others joining CST who are using the ACE system.

2.4.1 The Christian Schools Trust (CST)

At the time of the Christian Schools Trust's formation, its National Team were aware of the existence of about 50 new Christian schools in the UK. Two separate lists have been kept over the succeeding years, one representing those schools that are full members of the Trust and the other representing all the new Christian schools that the Trust is aware of, whether members or not (See Table 2.4). The Trust sees itself as supportive of new Christian schools whether they are committed members or not, and schools that have not committed themselves to membership are often represented at conferences or make use of the Trust's facilities. Although

figures are only available for certain years, these lists provide data illustrating the changes in the number of schools in the period from 1993 to the present.

Table 2.4
New Christian schools in the UK 1993-2009

Year	Number of schools affiliated to CST	Total number of schools known to CST
1993	35	60
1994	25	65
1995	-	66
1996	25	-
1997	-	71
1998	24	69
1999	39	-
2000	41	-
2001	43	-
2002	43	-
2003	46	-
2004	47	-
2005	46	89
2007	45	-
2008	47	-
2009	46	100 (approx)

Source: Archives of the Christian Schools Trust

Geoffrey Walford has commented inaccurately on the schools affiliated to the CST:

Although there is variety within the schools involved with the CST the image the Trust presents tends to be that of charismatic Christianity, where considerable emphasis is given to the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy. New Christian schools without such an emphasis are thus generally not to be included. (Walford, 2001a, pp466-467)

Walford's final statement as quoted is not correct. Schools from both the reformed and charismatic wings of the Christian church have played a significant part in the Christian Schools Trust from its earliest days, as have schools that have a more mixed heritage. For example, Dr Roger Slack was one of the early Trustees of the Trust, a position he still holds today. The school founded and run by Dr Slack, Covenant School, Stockport, emerged from the reformed sector. Philip Williamson,

the founder of Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool, was also centrally involved as a Trustee from the formative days of the Trust. Christian Fellowship School draws from a wide variety of churches, presents a reformed rather than a charismatic image and has been an influential school within the Trust. Barbara Lord eventually replaced Philip Williamson both as headteacher of Christian Fellowship School and as a Trustee of the Trust. When the Christian Schools Trust was founded in the late 1980s, the reformed/charismatic distinction was clearly visible but this situation soon began to change as the schools came to influence each other. The impression given by Walford, that non-charismatic schools were not welcome as part of the Trust and have not played an active role, is incorrect.

Since its formal inception in 1989, The Christian Schools Trust has provided major three day residential conferences for its teachers approximately every two years. Day conferences for headteachers take place three times a year. The Trust has coordinated work on the development of a Christian curriculum and has produced a number of publications. *Science in Faith: a Christian Perspective on Teaching Science* was published in 1998 (Jones, 1998). It was produced by the Science Curriculum Team, which consisted of working science teachers from several CST schools. *Starters: Christian Curriculum Perspectives* was produced in 2002 and updated in 2009 (CST, 2009a). This publication provides an introduction to a Christian worldview for sixteen different subject areas. An annual residential teacher training course, “Appointed and Anointed”, a summer school lasting a full five days, was first held in August 1995 and a similar course for headteachers was introduced in April 2000.

2.4.2 Christian Education Europe (CEE)

Christian Education Europe is a branch of The School of Tomorrow, the organisation which produces the Accelerated Christian Education materials. It was constituted in its present form in 1989, with a view to catering specifically for the European market. At one level it can be viewed simply as the company that markets the ACE materials. However, by providing training courses for teachers and supervisors and other support services, it fulfils some of the same functions as the Christian Schools Trust and largely serves a different group of schools. In 2006 only six schools in membership with the Christian Schools Trust used ACE materials and hence could be regarded as belonging to both bodies.

Walford (1995a, p23) describes how the ACE system entered Britain through two separate routes. The first was through a group of Americans linked to the Brentwaters American Air Force Base in Suffolk who opened Faith Christian Academy in 1980. This school seems to have served only American children. The second was through Fleetwood Full Gospel Church which opened Emmanuel Christian School in 1979. The principal of this school, Dr. Michael Smith, actively encouraged other church groups to establish their own schools using ACE.

The individualised learning system provided through the use of ACE materials is popular with small schools which otherwise would find it difficult to provide for a range of children of different ages needing to be taught in one class. Most schools affiliated to CEE use ACE packages for approximately 50% of the time for English, Maths, Science and Social Studies. The other 50% of the curriculum is used creatively to compensate for any imbalance that might be present (Lord, 1990).

Walford (1995a, p21) described how in 1985 four schools using ACE materials were served with notices of complaint following poor reports submitted by HM Inspectors. The use of the ACE programme was then considered cause for concern; twenty years later, problems seem to have been resolved. In 2004, Emmanuel School, Exeter, a school which uses ACE materials, received a good Ofsted report. The “summary of main findings” states:

Emmanuel School is a small friendly school with a strong Christian basis. Pupils are well cared for and parents are welcomed as partners in their child’s education. The teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good. The combination of ACE and non-ACE curriculum is suitable and taught effectively. Pupils make sound progress and are prepared sufficiently to move on to local further education or the world of work (Ofsted report, 2004).

Christian Education Europe provides a schools list on its website but say that it is not definitive. The list shows that in October 2008 there were thirty CEE schools in England, three in Wales and two in Scotland. Christian Education Europe also provides ACE materials for a large number of “homeschoolers”.

2.4.3 Unaffiliated schools

The DCSF currently (2009) recognises the existence of approximately one hundred new Christian schools. Of these, approximately seventy, allowing for overlap, belong to either CST or CEE or to both. A significant number of new Christian schools therefore are not affiliated to either CST or CEE. These include Peniel Academy, Brentwood, and Wyclif Independent Christian School, Machen, Caerphilly.

2.5 Growth or Decline?

In 2001, Geoffrey Walford predicted “a further slow decline in the strength of the new evangelical Christian schools” (Walford, 2001a, p476). As can be seen from the figures in Table 2.4, it could be argued that there has actually never been a decline in the number of schools although there may possibly have been a decline in the total number of pupils attending the schools at any one time. While new schools are continually opening, it is true that others are closing, including some that had been in existence for many years. For example, Emmanuel School, Rochdale and Christ the King School, Sale, both closed in 2008 having been in existence for 15 to 20 years. Walford presents the following argument for the failure of the new Christian schools’ movement to continue to expand:

While some evangelical Christians started their own private schools in response to the perceived problems with the state sector, they and others also campaigned for changes in state-maintained schools. These campaigns have been surprisingly effective. Moreover, there have been significant linked changes at the national level. The Church of England, for example, has recently rethought its role in education... In such a situation, it becomes more likely that parents will be able to find a school to their liking within the state sector. (Walford, 2001a, p476)

It is difficult to know how true in practice this argument is. The parents and churches who founded the new Christian schools were radical in their thinking. Minor and peripheral changes to the state-maintained system would have been unlikely to satisfy them; they were seeking a much more fundamentally different kind of education for their children than that suggested by Walford. An alternative explanation for the failure of the movement to expand concerns the absence from the churches of young families of the age of those who originally started the schools. The average age of the twelve parents who founded Trinity School, Stalybridge, in 1978 was 31 years. Church surveys show that it is this age group

that has moved out of the churches in large numbers over the past twenty years (Brierley, 2006a, p121). Brierley's figures show that between 1985 and 2005 church attendance in England declined by 40%. Over the same period, the percentage of those attending church who were aged between 20 years and 39 years fell from 21% in 1985 to 18% in 2005. Church-attendees of the age to be the parents of young children thus now constitute a smaller percentage of a much smaller population.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide an overview of the origins of the new Christian schools, describing the influences on them as they emerged from two separate wings of the evangelical Protestant church. Differences existing between the schools have been highlighted, especially in the areas of approach to curriculum, school governance, school structure, means of funding and the nature of the schools' intake. The two major groupings within the movement, the Christian Schools Trust and Christian Education Europe, have also been described. The following chapter will investigate in detail the reasons why parents and churches were moved to take such a radical step as to found their own net-work of schools.

Chapter 3

The new Christian schools: why were they founded?

Despite the differences between them, the new Christian schools share very much in common. In particular, they were founded in response to common concerns. These concerns are part of the focus of the current survey; it is attempting to establish whether or not the schools are fulfilling their *raison d'être*, and whether in so doing they are also fulfilling the dire predictions of their opponents. In essence, the schools were founded because of a perception that by the 1970s schooling in the United Kingdom was likely to turn pupils away from the Christianity espoused by their parents or by the churches with which they had contact. Kay and Francis (1996, p144) have described data in support of this view and explain the decline in terms of socialisation theory:

Data from the present research reveal consistent and persistent linear decline in attitude toward Christianity throughout the years of compulsory schooling, from the age of eight to the age of sixteen. As young people leave the world of childhood, they are absorbed incrementally into the world of adulthood. Today the world of adulthood is characterised by the secular rather than by the religious...The socialisation process is persistently and inevitably drawing young people into the ethos of [the] post-Christian world. In this sense to be irreligious is to be normal.

The new Christian schools were thus founded in response to the belief that most other schools, be they state or independent, denominational or non-denominational, were educating pupils into becoming unbelievers. As Walford (2001a, p476) has expressed it:

Most of [the new Christian] schools were started almost in desperation. The churches, teachers and parents involved had little ideological commitment to the private sector as such, and felt forced into starting their own schools because they felt that state-maintained schools were increasingly anti-Christian in their teaching and ethos.

Parents, teachers and church leaders from the two different sectors of the evangelical church constituency came to these conclusions independently, as will now be described.

3.1 A response to the secularisation of society and of education

Both reformed and charismatic influences led to renewed zeal amongst the generation of Christians who were young parents in the 1970s and early 1980s. Those influenced by the reformed outlook, with its focus on a more “Christian” past, its Calvinistic view of the sovereignty of God over all of life and its immersion in 16th and 17th century Christian literature, came to believe that the UK had become “post-Christian” and that this trend in society must not be allowed to influence their children. Many of the young parents involved in the founding of the schools were also teachers and had witnessed first-hand the culture that prevailed in the average classroom, one that was no longer based on Christian norms and which did not support Christian moral values. Charismatic churches, on the other hand, had already taken radical steps in breaking away from the older denominations. They were led by radical pastors and attracted church members who wanted their Christianity to affect every part of their lives, including the up-bringing of children. They, too, discerned the difficulty of fulfilling this Biblical mandate in the current educational climate. Church leaders and parents from both backgrounds were acting from the conviction that the education of children is primarily the responsibility of the parents and perhaps also the church. They could see no Biblical justification for the state to control that education (Davies, 1978, pp18-25).

Table 2.3 has shown how the growth of the new Christian schools movement took off rapidly during the 1980s; sources quoted earlier (O’Keeffe, 1992; Watson and McKenzie 1996; Kay and Francis, 1996) have indicated that one of the main reasons for this was a perceived secularisation of education during this decade and the preceding one. Kay and Francis 1996, p43) describe a twenty-year survey which set out to monitor changes in attitudes towards Christianity among secondary-school pupils in England between 1974 and 1994. The major conclusion of the study was that there was a significant and progressive deterioration in pupil attitude toward Christianity between 1974 and 1986. The period 1974 to 1988 corresponds to the major pioneering phase of the new Christian schools movement.

Walford (1995a, pp6-48) describes interviews he conducted with the headteachers of a number of the new Christian schools in the early 1990s. In response to the question ‘Why start a Christian school?’ many of them quoted the same few Bible passages as a theological justification for taking such a radical step. Walford noted that the same verses can also often be seen in school prospectuses. They include the following two passages, quoted here from the New International Version of the Bible:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, NIV 1996)

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4, NIV 1996)

Walford (1995a, p41), having considered six such passages from the Bible, concluded that they contain nothing to justify the idea of separate Christian schools. In reaching this conclusion, Walford has misunderstood the way in which the Biblical verses are being used. The schools and their headteachers are not seeking to use the verses as proof texts; they do not regard them as direct commands to open Christian schools. Their argument is that the secular or even anti-Christian ethos, learning environment and teaching content of the alternative local schools, be they state schools or independent schools, would be incompatible with being able to obey the injunctions contained in these verses. The passages are being used to convey the belief that there is a Christian framework, worldview and body of truth that Christian parents are obliged to work within in the bringing up of their children.

Mark Pike describes the dilemma facing Christian parents who desire a positively Christian education for their children in a secular society and thereby sums up the reasons for the founding of the new Christian schools:

We hardly need more evidence of a profoundly secular world view than the widespread belief that life can be neatly divided into separate spheres of spiritual and secular, sacred and mundane. In contrast, for many committed Christians, every aspect of life, including a child's time at school, is spiritually significant. The tyranny of a secular, liberal mindset is apparent when it is taken for granted that faith should have nothing to do with the curriculum and that Christian beliefs have nothing to do with learning. The artificial separation of faith and learning is utterly incomprehensible to those Christians who regard their commitment to Christ as an all-embracing lifestyle and wish their children to be educated in a way that is congruent with the values of the Christian home. (Pike, 2004, pp150-151)

3.2 The creation/evolution debate

A specific factor leading to the desire on the part of church leaders and Christian parents for an education founded on biblical Christianity was the emergence in the

1960s of a renewed interest in the creation/evolution debate. The publication of *The Genesis Flood* (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961) in the USA in 1961 marks a turning point in this controversy and the birth of the modern creationist movement. The first British edition was published in 1969. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many well-attended church meetings and conferences were held on this issue. Christian parents became aware that their children were being taught a different view of origins at school, in a manner that they considered to be uncritical and even indoctrinatory. However, it would be a mistake to view the origins issue as directly leading to the formation of the schools. Rather, by focussing on this subject and thinking it through in depth, some church leaders and parents came to believe that there is a Christian worldview, of which the creation account is just one aspect. It was this worldview, with all its wider ramifications and applications and not simply its view of origins, which the new Christian schools were founded to promote.

3.3 Further specific issues

A variety of further issues, arising from the application of a Biblical worldview to all aspects of education, influenced those who founded the early new Christian schools and they continue to inspire the setting up of new schools. Churches and parent-groups establish new schools because they desire some or all of the following:

1. that the atmosphere and ethos of the school should be the same as that in a Christian home;
2. that there should be no conflict for the child between the norms and teachings of home, church and school;

3. that assemblies and tutor times should be fully Christian, involving Christian worship and Biblically-based teaching;
4. that the content of all lessons should reflect a Christian perspective on the subject under consideration;
5. that the disciplining of the children should be according to Christian teaching and Biblical principles, proceeding from a belief in right and wrong as defined by the Bible and involving the foundational Christian principles of repentance and forgiveness;
6. that the children should be protected from certain teaching material that they would encounter in secular schools, particularly in the area of sex education;
7. that a Christian view of the family should be taught and promoted;
8. that the children should be protected as far as possible from unsuitable peer pressure;
9. that the children should be protected from the life-styles of teachers who do not conform to Christian moral values;
10. that spontaneous prayer should be a natural part of school life, not just confined to assembly times;
11. that their children should be educated within a framework which sees God as Creator;
12. that their children should be protected from the “null curriculum”, common in schools, whereby God is very rarely mentioned and therefore, in practice, viewed as irrelevant.

3.4 The need for a Christian curriculum

As part of their concern that the education of their children should accord with their Christian beliefs, the founders of the schools desired the freedom to use a Christian curriculum. The concept of a Christian curriculum is controversial in itself and intolerant and bigoted views” (Walford, 2008, p689). Elmer Thiessen has reviewed some of the ways in which major objections to the idea of a Christian curriculum have been expressed (Thiessen, 1990a, pp83-87). Thiessen argues (p84) that such objections basically stem from the idea that a religiously neutral curriculum is a possibility, a position that the new Christian schools would deny, together with concerns about exactly how religion can be integrated with other forms of knowledge. Jeff Astley (1990, p265) has discussed criteria used for curriculum selection within the context of religious education. His arguments that such criteria can never be coming from a neutral base could also be applied to the wider curriculum.

Geoffrey Walford has addressed the issue of curriculum in the new Christian schools:

[The new Christian schools] were started because parents and others believed that the nature of schooling available within the existing state-maintained sector was inadequate for their children. While some concern centred on the quality of schooling that was available, a further main feature was that they wished their children to experience a greater continuity of teaching between the school and the home and church. Not only did they believe that existing state funded schools were largely secular and that there should be more teaching about their particular religious faith, they also thought that some of what was taught in existing schools was contrary to the teaching of their religious faith. Thus, there were both positive and negative elements to their concerns that centred on curriculum. (Walford, 2002, p404)

Walford goes on to discuss (p405) the implications of the belief that to “make a school Christian” it might be necessary to rethink the nature of the whole curriculum. Would simple modifications aimed at excluding secular elements suffice, or would it be necessary to re-examine wholesale the assumptions on which subjects and their contents were based? He concludes:

Some of the evangelical Christian schools have really taken to heart the idea that there are no “secular” subjects in the Christian worldview. While the practical attempts to design a curriculum that rejects humanism and secularism and, instead, reflects Christianity have met with various degrees of success, some of the evangelical Christians have devoted considerable energy to the task. (Walford, 2002, p409)

W. E. Anderson (1995, p8) has also addressed the issue of what might be expected from a Christian curriculum:

If Christ be at the centre of education, what could we expect to be included as topics within teaching and learning? First, because Christ is the agent of creation we would expect some coverage of major aspects of the world as it now functions, along with the skills needed to continue discovering further aspects. To spell this out, there would need first to be a reasonable attempt to understand:

- a. the realm of non-human nature and the ways we have devised of observing, investigating and dealing with it;
- b. the realm of personal and social structures and functions such as personality, society, culture, communications, economics and politics; and
- c. The sphere of person-to-person relationships, self-understanding, and individual and group activity.

Second, because Christ is the revelation of God we would expect the curriculum to include teaching about Christ, the Father and the Spirit. By extension, this teaching would include the scriptures generally for their encouragement and hope and for their multiple contribution to individual maturity and ministry.

Third, God has a master-plan according to which He purposes to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ. Therefore we could expect a Christ-centred education to include an attempt to relate all areas of study to each other within available frameworks of interpretation.

The “Appointed and Anointed” teacher-training summer school run by the Christian Schools Trust contains a module entitled “Christ-centred Curriculum” which defines a Christian curriculum in the following terms:

[A Christian curriculum] communicates a Christian worldview. It is ultimately based on Biblical principles. It conveys the character of God. It has breadth and acknowledges the richness of diversity in creation. It gives opportunity for growth in knowledge, understanding and wisdom. It prepares the student for eternity as well as for life in society. It is an unfolding revelation. (Freeman and Morgan, 2007, p1)

3.5 Curriculum practice within the new Christian schools

How, in practice, have the new Christian schools responded to their perceived need for a Christian curriculum? Many of the schools were founded at a time when all schools, be they state or independent, had the right to set their own curriculum and independent schools largely retain that right today. Having declared that they wished their schools to be following a Christian curriculum, how did the schools set about providing one? A number of them chose to follow the curriculum provided by the scheme known as Accelerated Christian Education. For the schools that chose not to follow this path, diverse approaches to the curriculum were adopted.

3.5.1 Accelerated Christian Education (ACE)

Walford (1995a, pp21-26) has described in detail the teaching programme known as Accelerated Christian Education, also known as the School of Tomorrow. Developed in 1970 in the United States, by Baptist Minister Donald Howard and his wife Esther, this is a packaged programme which makes it easy to start a Christian School. All the necessary materials are provided. The children sit in separate cubicles known as “offices” and work at their own pace through a series of workbooks known as PACES (Packs of Accelerated Christian Education). They are

provided with small flags which they display to get the attention of the supervisor or monitor. Each workbook contains one or more intermediate “check-up tests” and a concluding “PACE test”. The pupils mark the exercises and tests themselves from answer books kept at the central “scoring station”. The adults in charge under the ACE system do not need to be qualified teachers and function more as supervisors. The advantages of such a system within the context of the new Christian schools movement have been summarised by Walford:

ACE teaching materials and methods were an important part of the growth of some of these new Christian schools, for the existence of ACE enabled small groups of Christian parents to contemplate providing all age Christian schooling for their children at low cost and with little or no teaching experience required by those adults in charge. In particular, ACE allows schools to teach the entire age range of children without the need for specialist teachers in each subject area at secondary level. (Walford, 2002, p410)

The ACE package was first promoted in the UK in the late 1970s and met with some success. Emmanuel Christian School, Fleetwood, opened in 1979 using the system. At that time, there were two different parent groups looking to start schools in Greater Manchester. The possible use of ACE materials was considered by these groups and it was recognised that they would greatly facilitate the process of setting up the schools. However, the two parent groups, influenced by the teaching contained in such publications as *Back to the Blackboard: design for a Biblical Christian school* (Adams, 1982) decided, on principle, that the education of children requires not just face to face contact, but a relationship with the teacher. As a result, when Trinity School, Stalybridge opened in 1978 and Covenant School, Stockport opened in 1981, they developed their own curricula. As more schools opened in the 1980s, some of them used the ACE system to get themselves started

but then moved on to developing their own curricula. The King's School, Witney, which opened in 1984, was one which took this approach.

3.5.2 Further curriculum models within the new Christian schools

In addition to the ACE curriculum, followed by about one third of the schools, several different curriculum models are in use in the new Christian schools, including:

1. the Trinity model, also known as the way, truth, life model;
2. the creation/fall/redemption model;
3. the 'three (or four) domain' model;

These models are not necessarily mutually exclusive and they will now be described in more detail.

3.5.2.1 The Trinity Model is a three-stage progressive structure for planning lessons, themes or projects on a Biblical basis. Originally developed by David Freeman at The King's School, Witney, it is now widely used in CST schools. Although it is commonly referred to within the schools as a curriculum model, it could more accurately be described as an approach to a Christian use of an existing curriculum. To use this model in planning lessons, the teacher needs to take the topic concerned and ask three questions about it:

- i. what truth about God does this topic convey?
- ii. by what means shall I demonstrate this?
- iii. what application of it do I want the pupil to learn?

An early version of this model has been described by Walford (2002, pp411-412).

3.5.2.2 The creation/fall/redemption model is favoured more by schools from a reformed background and is often used in the development of science curriculum. It sets the framework for the study of any particular topic by asking the questions:

- i. What was the purpose for which this was created?
- ii. How has it been affected by the “fall”?
- iii. How can it be redeemed by the application of Christian truth?

This scheme has a wider application than the Trinity model, since the concepts creation, fall and redemption together essentially summarise the Christian meta-narrative within which the schools are claiming to operate.

3.5.2.3 The “three domain” model asks a different set of questions to help make the decision as to whether or not a certain topic should be included in the curriculum. It asks how the topic under consideration would help the child to relate healthily:

- i. to God;
- ii. to other people;
- iii. to the environment.

Another version of this model includes a fourth domain, that of the self. It asks how the child can be helped, in Christian terms, to relate healthily to himself or herself. The whole curriculum is then balanced to ensure that the three, or four, domains are evenly covered.

3.5.3 Science in the curriculum

The science curricula provided by the new Christian schools are often considered to be of particular interest because of a perceived conflict of interest between science and religion. Lesslie Newbigin has highlighted how this issue brings into focus some of the fundamental concerns that the schools are seeking to address:

Nietzsche was the first to realise with terrible clarity that the operation of the modern critical scientific method must make it strictly impossible to assert of any proposition 'This is true' or of any course of conduct 'That is right'. The critical principle must necessarily destroy all such pretensions...We do not talk of right and wrong; we speak of values, lifestyles, orientations. We do not ask of a world-view 'Is it true?' but 'Are you sincere?' (Newbiggin, 1990, p96)

Newbiggin concludes that:

The work of historians and philosophers of science has surely shown conclusively that the attempt to draw an absolute boundary between science as what we all know, and religion as what some of us believe, is futile. Both science and religion claim to give a true account of what is the case, and both involve faith commitments. (Newbiggin, 1990, p95)

The Christian Schools Trust has paid particular attention to the issue of science in the curriculum. In 1990 they established the Christian Schools Trust Science Curriculum Team, a group of seventeen science teachers from their own schools, who met regularly for seven years to produce science curriculum materials. Their work culminated in the publication of an extensive monograph, *Science in Faith: a Christian perspective on teaching science* (Jones, 1998). Writing in the foreword, Elmer Thiessen expressed how, in his view, the monograph:

shows how science is shaped by worldviews and how science can and should be taught from a Christian perspective. It is refreshing to see the language of cause and effect combined with talk of purpose – a recovery of ancient and medieval approaches to science. It is delightful to see the grand Reformed (and biblical) themes of creation, fall and redemption integrated into discussions of scientific concepts and theories. And the reader will sometimes be surprised to see a detailed scientific analysis include talk of God and His will for His creation. And this is not done in a superficial way, as is sometimes the case with attempts at developing a Christian curriculum. Here, theology, philosophy and science are integrated into a meaningful whole. (Jones, 1998 p vi)

The authors of the monograph go on to describe how the creation/fall/redemption model underlies their whole approach to science. The section is included here because of the contentious nature of the teaching of science within the Christian

context of the schools but also because it illustrates how this model could potentially have a much wider application in the schools:

[The Science Curriculum Team] has sought to work with a distinctively Christian worldview. Our curriculum resources seek to show that the meaning of the sciences lies with the God who faithfully creates and upholds His world. This involves an understanding of:

- God's loving provision – reflected in the purposefulness, design and order of His creation – which evokes awe and wonder and draws us into worship;
- the diversity in unity of creation, with its rich pattern of relationships;
- the radical effects of human sin, through which relationships have been spoilt, and the creation distorted and abused;
- how those alienated from God, from each other, and from the creation, may be reconciled, so that healing of every marred relationship within the creation may begin;
- how the worldview commitments of all scientists shape and influence every aspect of their work;
- the need to combat the faith in secular reason and the deification of science, technology and economics. (Jones, 1998, pvii)

3.5.4 Creation and evolution in the curriculum

The teaching of origins within faith schools is currently a matter of intense media and political interest. The controversy dates back to March 2002, when the media discovered that Emmanuel College, Gateshead, a city academy partly funded by an evangelical Christian foundation, was teaching creationism as part of its curriculum. Concerns were originally raised by Richard Dawkins, Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, in a letter to the press, and newspaper articles, TV interviews and questions asked in Parliament followed. The subject made the headlines again in September 2008, when the Revd Professor Michael Reiss was forced to step down from his position as Director of Education for the Royal Society for advocating that creationist pupils should be treated with more respect in science classes (Baker, 2009b). In November 2008, a poll carried

out by Teachers TV, a satellite television channel, found that there was strong support for the views of Professor Reiss amongst teachers, with 31% of respondents agreeing that creation or intelligent design should be given the same status in the classroom as evolution. Andrew Bethell, chief executive of Teachers TV, was quoted as saying:

Nearly half of teachers agreed with Professor Reiss' sentiment that excluding alternative explanations to evolution is counter-productive and alienates pupils from science. Perhaps most telling is the fact that almost nine out of ten (88%) of teachers take the pragmatic view that they should be allowed to discuss creationism or intelligent design in science, if pupils raise the question. This poll data confirms that the debate on whether there is a place for the teaching of creationism is still fierce. (Beckford, 2008)

The findings of the Teachers TV poll were supported by the results of an Ipsos MORI poll carried out in November and December 2008 for which 923 primary and secondary teachers were interviewed. This poll found that 37% of the teachers agreed that creationism should be taught alongside evolution in science classes. The figure for those who cited science as their subject specialism was 29%. When asked if creationism should be discussed in science classes, 65% of the teachers agreed and the figure for science specialists rose to 73%. A poll carried out by Ipsos MORI in January 2006, relevant to this issue, had also produced a surprising result. According to this survey, a large minority of British adults, 39%, believe in a form of creationism and 44% believe that creationism should be taught in schools.

The new Christian schools approach the teaching of this controversy within the curriculum in a variety of ways. However, all would start from the basis that the universe and everything in it was created by God and designed for a purpose, a purpose in which human beings play a supreme role. The Christian Schools Trust

has produced a statement on the teaching of creation and evolution (CST, 2009b) which can be seen in Appendix 3.

In a survey conducted in the early 1990s, Geoffrey Walford (1995a, p20) discovered that all but one of the 53 schools treated Biblical creation as fact. Two thirds of the schools taught evolution as well as creation, but all of them treated it as a theory. In nearly all cases it was taken for granted that the Bible's account of six day creation was literally true and the evolutionary view was false. In May, 2006, similar questions were put to the headteachers of new Christian schools attending a Christian Schools Trust conference (CST, 2009c). The results showed that the twelve schools represented all taught the theory of evolution alongside creationism. Eleven taught that the view of origins conveyed by the theory of evolution was false, with the twelfth headteacher stating that he or she did not know whether that was the position taken in the school or whether a neutral position was taken. The schools took a more diverse approach to the matter of the age of the Earth. Eight taught unequivocally that the Earth is only thousands of years old. Of the remaining four schools, three taught that the Earth is ancient while one did not take a specific position on timescales. Of the twelve schools, one was a primary school, with the other eleven having secondary departments and entering their pupils for GCSE science. All eleven schools reported that their GCSE science results were above average with five stating that their results were well above average. Data already exist which corroborate the claim that those who are taught in the new Christian schools achieve very well at science at GCSE level (CST, 2009c, p4).

This survey will aim to investigate the views of those who are currently receiving this kind of education, where science is taught from a design perspective and where the pupils are exposed to the creation/evolution debate. It is to be hoped that further surveys will follow up former pupils who have been educated in this way as they progress through life, to establish whether or not such an education has been in any way detrimental to them. Such research is urgently needed, as there is a strong lobby pushing for the teaching of creationism to be banned from science classes, as described in detail in the following chapter.

3.5.5 The National Curriculum

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 produced a range of responses from the new Christian schools. In 1993, Geoffrey Walford investigated the extent to which they were following it (Walford, 1995a, p18). He found that of 53 schools, 11% taught the National Curriculum in full, 30% taught most of it, 23% said that they did not teach much of it and 36% did not teach it. Similarly, in 2009 a number of the schools openly use the National Curriculum, but many see freedom from it as one of their reasons for existing and as one of the chief barriers to their being able to accept state funding. Some schools follow it, selecting and reinterpreting the material to be consistent with a Christian worldview. Most of the schools do not follow it, although they would normally retain a professional awareness of its existence and content. The majority of the new Christian schools with secondary departments follow GCSE courses and therefore necessarily interact with the National Curriculum at this stage. Some CEE schools use a different accreditation system and therefore do not interact with the National Curriculum at all.

The schools see the National Curriculum as driven by materialistic and economic considerations. As part of an evaluation of the National Curriculum when it was first introduced, Lord (1990) wrote:

Many schools have been convinced that a wide perspective of the created world and its history is needed as a context for details on man's achievements ...It is thought that the curriculum should make sense of life, convey basic meaning and answer questions common to most human beings such as 'Who am I?' or 'Why am I here?' and 'Is there a God?'. It is expected that the curriculum should convey historical continuity of God's purposes for individuals and communities showing the relevance of Biblical narratives, themes and principles.

Lord, writing on behalf of the Christian Schools Trust, did not feel that the National Curriculum then met these criteria. In 2009, it has proved to be quite difficult to uncover what the aims and values underlying the current version of the National Curriculum are intended to be. The Government website, *teachernet* (www.teachernet.gov.uk) accessed 18 May 09 states:

The core aims of the National Curriculum are to produce pupils who are:

- **Responsible citizens**
— which includes understanding identity, valuing diversity, working cooperatively to promote positive change
- **Confident individuals**
— which includes developing independence, self awareness and moral judgements
- **Successful learners**
— which includes developing enquiring minds, and engaging with the big issues of our world

It is not clear, for example, what is meant by 'identity' or on what basis moral judgements are to be made. In addition, the absence of any reference to spiritual considerations in the formulation of the curriculum would probably seem to the new Christian schools to be de facto atheism.

An unprecedented situation with respect to the National Curriculum was created in September 2008 by the introduction of new regulations concerning "Early Years"

education. The Government publication *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* states that:

From September 2008 [the framework] will be mandatory for all schools and early years providers in Ofsted registered settings attended by young children, that is children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday.
(DCSF, 2008, p7)

While the document is referred to as a “framework”, it is clearly in effect a curriculum. The document goes on to spell out what is meant by “schools”, stressing (p8) that independent schools are covered by the legislation and that therefore they now have a legal responsibility to “ensure that their provision meets the learning and development requirements” which follow. What follows is a very detailed description of required learning outcomes. For the first time ever, independent schools with no access to Government funding have had a curriculum imposed on them by law, and that curriculum is highly prescriptive. It remains to be seen how the new Christian schools will respond to this legislation, but its introduction serves to highlight the steady reduction in freedom, that they, along with all other independent schools, have experienced over the past twenty years. This matter of increasing political control in the field of education is so important to the new Christian schools that it is considered in more detail in Chapter 4.

In summary, it appears that the desire for a radically different curriculum, one which begins and ends with a Christian worldview, is one of the major factors driving the establishment and continued development of the new Christian schools.

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter has considered the reasons for which the new Christian schools were founded. While there may be some differences in practical detail, the picture that emerges of the new Christian schools movement is one of radical commitment to Christianity. The parents, teachers and churches involved in the founding and running of the schools commonly express an open rejection of the secular basis of much of modern education and have aimed instead at an explicitly religious and specifically Christian education for their children, one that might be expected to have produced measurable outcomes in the values, beliefs and life-styles of both current and former pupils.

Table 3.1, taken from training material produced in connection with the Appointed and Anointed summer school for Christian teachers run by the Christian Schools Trust, contrasts the two education systems (secular and Christian), as they see them.

Table 3.1
Aims of Christian Education: Contrast of Two Systems

Secular School	Christian School
Faith: Humanism	Faith: Christianity
Source belief: Evolution	Source belief: Creation
Child: Innately good	Child: Innately sinful
Will: Sacrosanct	Will: to be submitted to God and proper authority
Teacher: Manager/Facilitator	Teacher: Discipler/trainer/nurturer
Education process: Child-centred; aimed at self-development	Education process: Christ-centred; aimed at servanthood
The goal: Self-realisation	The goal: God's glory
The fruit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-centredness • Self-assertion • Career-oriented focus • Materialism • Hopelessness • Disillusionment 	The fruit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God-centredness • Self-denial • 'Destiny'-oriented focus • Contentment • Hope • Peace

CST A&A(2006) Module: Aims of Christian Education p9 © David Freeman

Table 3.1 is included here because it summarises both the reasons why the schools were established – to provide a “Christian” education system, defined in a very specific way – and also the expected outcomes, the “fruit”, that the schools expect this system to produce. One aim of the current study is to investigate to what extent the schools are achieving those aims.

The parents, teachers and church leaders involved in the setting up of the new Christian schools often reiterate their desire for schools that will complement and endorse the Christian influence that they are seeking to exert on their children through the home and through the church. Kay and Francis (1996, pp44-58) have provided empirical evidence which indicates that this is a valid aspiration:

As common sense would suggest, schools *do* make a difference to the pupils who pass through them. They make a difference to pupils’ attitude toward Christianity, a matter of great importance to the likely future religious behaviour of school leavers. This difference is quantifiable and statistically significant. It is a difference which exists even after all those other factors which are known to influence attitude toward Christianity are taken into account. The most important conclusion from this study is that church schools *can* influence young people positively toward adopting a more positive attitude toward Christianity, in addition to any influence exerted by home and church. (Kay and Francis, 1996, p57)

The overall purpose of the previous two chapters has been to establish that the unusual nature of the new Christian schools causes them to constitute an important research population and to provide the background against which such research can be evaluated. The next chapter will illustrate these points more emphatically by high-lighting some crucial areas in which the schools have, over the past twenty years, interacted with political and legal processes to an unexpected extent while at the same time they have watched a steady erosion of the freedoms that were theirs when the schools were first founded.

Chapter 4

The new Christian schools and the impact of political changes

This chapter will continue to set the unusual scene within which thousands of children and young people are currently receiving their education, as a prelude to an investigation of the views of the young people themselves. Forty years have now passed since the founding of the first of the new Christian schools. That period of time has seen profound political changes in the United Kingdom, leading to changes in the law, some of which have strongly impacted the schools. Less predictable, indeed somewhat unexpected, has been the political influence that the schools themselves have had and the role that they have played in testing the legality of some of the changes. This chapter will detail some changes to the law that have directly affected the schools and their responses to those changes. It will pay particular attention to a major legal case in which the schools were contesting what they saw as an infringement of their civil liberties. A significant recent development in which the schools are co-operating with their Muslim counterparts in the area of school inspection will also be highlighted, as will an influential political campaign that was instigated by some of those directly involved in the schools.

Many of the new Christian schools were founded during a time when only two legal requirements were demanded of them, first that they register with the appropriate Government agency and second that they keep an accurate attendance register. Provided that the pupils could be seen to be receiving an adequate education, there were no restrictions at all imposed on the curriculum, no restrictions on the schools' freedom to employ Christian staff and no necessity for their teaching staff to hold

teaching, or indeed any, qualifications. It was in this culture that early decisions were made, involving great sacrifice on the part of teachers and parents, to establish schools which would take full advantage of the liberty available to parents in the United Kingdom to educate their children according to their own beliefs.

The changes to the law that have occurred during the past forty years are regarded by the schools as having curtailed and limited these freedoms. This situation was recognised by Geoffrey Walford in 2001 but the process has continued further since then. Comparing the positions of schools in England and the Netherlands, Walford (2001b, p359) wrote:

Increase in state regulation and control is such that there are now some religious schools in both countries which do not seek state funding but prefer to remain dependent upon fees. The benefits of state funding are seen as being outweighed by the decrease in autonomy that the schools would undergo. A final twist, however, is that private schools not in receipt of state funding have also experienced increased state regulation at both the country and European levels. Furthermore, all schools have also been influenced by the growing public rhetoric of ‘standards’ and ‘league tables’ which has brought with it a growing pressure to conform to a narrow version of schooling.

The changes to the law and to politically-driven educational practice have had both direct and indirect influences on the schools and these will now be described.

4.1 The National Curriculum

As described in the previous chapter, 1988 saw the introduction of the National Curriculum into state schools, a change which began a process of state intervention into the content and practice of schooling, one which continues today. While independent schools were, and still are, exempt from the legal requirement to adhere to the National Curriculum except at the Early Years Foundation Stage, it is

difficult for them not to be influenced by it, especially at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. The introduction of the National Curriculum radically affected the variety and nature of the syllabi offered by the various GCSE examination boards and culminated in a reduction in the number of the boards themselves. Effectively, if their pupils are to take the public examinations at age 16, the schools have to move to the National Curriculum at this point, if not sooner.

The National Curriculum has also had a less direct influence on the schools. Those schools which do not have their own secondary departments may feel a pressure to use the National Curriculum as the children approach the age at which they must transfer to a state school. Most of the schools would say that they want to be aware of the National Curriculum, to benefit from it where appropriate, but not to be driven by it. This position is difficult to maintain in practice for teaching staff who are under pressure to prepare lessons and who have few Christian resources suitable for use in the UK. There is a strong temptation to drift into using National Curriculum materials.

4.2 Changes to inspection and registration law

As will be described later in this chapter, the 1992 Education (Schools) Act, as a result of campaigning by some of those involved in the new Christian schools, extended the basis for inspection of state schools to include the “spiritual, moral, social and cultural” development of pupils. Initially, changes in legislation such as these had only marginal impact on the schools themselves but 1 September 2003 saw the implementation of new legislation making it much harder to open a new independent school and bringing the inspection of the new Christian schools, along

with that of similar independent schools, under the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), a change which has had a major effect on them.

The 1944 Education Act legislated for the appointment of a Registrar for Independent Schools who was required to keep a register of all such schools. Independent schools were to be provisionally registered until they had been inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) on behalf of the Secretary of State. Under the terms of the 1944 Act, the criteria for inspection stated that the school's premises and accommodation must be suitable, it must be providing efficient and suitable instruction and its proprietor and teachers must be "fit and proper persons" (Long, 2006, p5). Following its successful registration, the school would be routinely inspected by registration visits which generally lasted one day and took place every five years, unless a cause for concern was found. If failings were found, there would be follow up procedures to help the school to improve to a point where it met the registration criteria. The system operated in this way until 31 August 2003.

Dr. Roy Long served as a full-time HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector) from 1984 until 2002 and had many years experience of inspecting faith-based schools under the above system. He gives it this assessment:

The system had both strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses stemmed from the fact that the criteria appear to be very general and imprecise...The strength of the system was its flexibility. All independent schools had a registration visit once every five years, but inspectors had the flexibility to visit more frequently if they were concerned about a particular school. Such regular visiting of schools showing weaknesses meant that they were regularly monitored and that they could be encouraged to work towards improvement.

Inspectors were able to build up a relationship with such schools, win their trust, and either provide them with, or direct them to, good advice. (Long, 2006, pp6-7)

The 2002 Education Act laid down stringent new criteria which radically altered this situation. Previously, anyone could open a school, provisionally register it and then wait for the necessary inspection and final registration. It was in this relatively relaxed way that, up to this point, the new Christian schools had opened. From 1 September 2003, all new independent schools had first to gain approval from the Secretary of State and this would involve fulfilling 96 precisely defined regulations. The new regulations still did not require independent schools to adhere to the National Curriculum although they did insist that each school should make provision for children's linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative development. (Long, 2006, p9)

4.2.1 Inspection of spiritual and moral values

One section of the new regulations was of particular interest to the new Christian schools, the section dealing with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. That such a requirement was part of the legislation at all was the direct consequence of political action undertaken by some of those associated with the schools, as described later. The intention of that political action had been to draw attention to the fact that no school is neutral and that all schools are operating according to a worldview which will affect how they approach spiritual and moral issues. Now, ten years later, the schools found themselves directly affected by the legislation that they had brought about and recognised that it could potentially be used, from their perspective, to their detriment. This concern applied particularly to one regulation which states:

Does the school assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes balance and harmony between different cultural traditions? (Long, 2006, p 10)

The schools themselves would wish to do this but are afraid that they might have a different interpretation of how such a thing can be achieved. For example, if the schools teach that the Christian faith is the true way to find God, would that fall foul of the requirement for “balance and harmony”? The Christian Schools Trust has produced a publication which advises its schools in connection with these legal requirements (CST, 2006a). In early 2009, Ofsted conducted a survey of 51 independent faith-based schools in connection with the issue that has just been described. The results of the survey were published in October 2009 (Ofsted, 2009).

4.2.2 Co-operation between “faith groups”

A further consequence of the change in legislation was that from 1 September 2003 the new Christian schools were required to pay for their schools to be inspected. The registration visits by HMIs that had taken place up until this point had been conducted free of charge. The prospect of suddenly having to find thousands of pounds to pay the Government for an inspection seemed very daunting to the poorly-funded new Christian schools. It also seemed to them to be unfair since they viewed their parents as already paying twice for the right to educate their children according to their religious convictions, once through their taxes and then again by giving financial support to their children’s school. These concerns were shared by those running independent Muslim schools and by those running independent Jewish schools. In May 2003, representatives of the three different faith communities met to agree on what action to take about this dilemma, common to all

three of them. The meeting was convened by David Freeman, on behalf of the Christian Schools Trust, and resulted in the composition of a letter, dated 9 May 2003, jointly signed by the three representatives and sent to the DfES. The letter described the concerns felt by all three faith groups about the new legislation and concludes:

As Faith schools, we would emphasise our commitment to developing well-balanced, law-abiding citizens with sound moral values who will make a good contribution to the welfare of society. We hope the Government recognises the contribution of Faith schools in raising the attainment of children in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of education. We trust the Government will look favourably, therefore, on the proposals made in this letter. (CST, 2003a)

Although the letter did not appear to make any difference to Government policy, the act of uniting in composing it was significant. It drew together the three different faith communities on the basis of their common concerns and has led to further co-operation between them as the following section will describe.

4.2.3 Bridge Schools Inspectorate

Although the changes that came into effect in 2003 were aimed at independent schools, they did not in fact affect all of them, but only those not in associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), which served such schools, was already in existence and was recognised for the purposes of inspection under Section 163 of the Education Act. This inspection service is overseen by Ofsted but the inspections are carried out by ISI inspectors and are more extensive than Ofsted inspections. In March 2005, Ofsted announced that it would no longer directly inspect non-association schools, such as the new Christian schools, but would contract their inspections out to a commercial body, with effect from 1 September 2005. This caused further concern

to those involved with independent Christian, Muslim and Jewish schools. Until this point, Ofsted had tended to use inspectors who had been familiar with independent faith-based schools under the old system. There was now the fear that the faith-based schools would be inspected by inspectors who had no knowledge or understanding of their distinctive characteristics. The Christian Schools Trust began to dialogue with The Association of Muslim Schools, UK, and also with representatives of the Jewish independent schools over these common concerns. They had become aware that the 2002 Education Act, under section 163(1)(b), made provision for other bodies to be recognised as inspection agencies. The first body to benefit from this possibility was Focus Learning, an association of Exclusive Brethren schools whose own inspectorate, the School Inspection Service, became active in 2006. In January 2008, the joint Christian Schools Trust/Association of Muslim Schools, UK, application also received Government approval and the Bridge Schools Inspectorate began to inspect schools in October 2008. The name of the inspection body was carefully chosen. It is intended to reflect that one aim of the venture is to demonstrate that the existence of separate faith schools does not inevitably lead to a breakdown in social cohesion but may actually achieve the reverse. The Bridge Schools Inspectorate has produced an information sheet which can be seen in Appendix 4. This states that the objectives of the Inspectorate are:

1. To protect and to promote the religious ethos and philosophy of our school communities.
2. To promote cross-cultural awareness, understanding and co-operation between the faith communities.
3. To ensure quality and objectivity by the involvement of experienced inspectors as Lead Inspectors and in the training and quality assurance processes.
4. To be more cost-effective by regulating our own charges.

The Board of Directors of the Bridge Schools Inspectorate includes members from both the Christian and Muslim communities and the Inspectorate is in on-going discussions with representatives of Jewish independent schools with regard to the possibility of Jewish schools becoming involved in the future. At present, the new Christian schools and the Muslim schools are inspected by teams, led by highly experienced HMIs, which include both Christian and Muslim inspectors. The existence of the Bridge Schools Inspectorate and the warm welcome into their schools that each faith community has given to the other is evidence that neither the new Christian nor the Muslim schools are in danger of promoting social division on religious grounds. The Inspectorate is itself closely inspected by Ofsted and its annual inspection reports can be seen on the Ofsted website.

4.3 The “civil liberties” case

The Education Act, 1996, abolished the use of corporal punishment in State schools. In March 1998, the House of Commons voted in favour of an amendment to the School Standards and Framework Bill that would extend the ban to independent schools. The law came into effect in the summer of 1999 and many of those involved in the new Christian schools felt that this constituted an infringement of parental rights and religious liberty. One school in particular, Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool, decided to take legal action and they were supported in this by about 50 other of the new Christian schools (Baker and Freeman, 2005, p54). They took the view that the legislation infringed their human rights and unjustly limited their freedom of religion (Jones, 2003, p26). In October 1999, Philip Williamson, headteacher of Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool, lodged a petition on behalf of the group of schools (the Petitioners) with the European Court

of Human Rights. They were appealing to Articles 3 and 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Court of Human Rights and Section 13 of the Human Rights Act, 1998 (Jones, 2003, pp26-27).

The case was only superficially about corporal punishment. The fundamental issue at stake was the degree to which a state has the right to interfere with the beliefs and practices of a religious minority. The Petitioners also felt that if no action was taken not only schools but homes would eventually become the target of this kind of legislation, with parents themselves being denied the right to use corporal punishment (Baker and Freeman, 2005, p54). In September 2000, the European Court ruled that the application was inadmissible. No detailed explanation was given, but it appeared that the reason was that teachers, presumably rather than parents, could not claim to be victims of a human rights violation (Jones, 2003, p26). However, during the process, a court official had expressed in writing that it was his view that the new British legislation did not forbid corporal punishment in an independent school if parents had specifically delegated that authority to the school.

In an attempt to clarify whether this situation really was the case, the Petitioners took the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to the High Court for infringement of religious liberty and parental rights. The case was dismissed by Mr. Justice Elias on 15 November 2001. The Petitioners decided to appeal, and the Appeal was considered from 14 May to 12 December 2002. By the summer, it appeared that the arguments put forward by the Petitioners had won the first

hearing, but completely unexpectedly the Court of Appeal requested a second hearing and the case was heard again on 30 September. Judgement was issued on 12 December when the Appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the issue of discipline was not central to religious belief. Various cases that had been heard at the European Court of Human Rights were also cited as precedents. In each of these cases the court had ruled that a state or corporate response was not required if an individual and private avenue was available, however difficult in practice and whatever the implications for the appellants (Jones, 2007, p15). On this basis, the Appeal Court judges ruled that the human and religious rights of the new Christian schools had not been infringed because they do not need to use corporal discipline in school while it is legal for parents to use reasonable chastisement at home.

The Court of Appeal had taken an unusually long time to reach a judgement in this case and this was taken to reflect the seriousness and complexity of the issues involved. When the judgement did come, it astonished and disturbed the Petitioners and their legal advisors. Baker and Freeman (2005, p56) have described the nature of the concern:

For the first time, a British Court had taken upon itself to decide what was central to religious belief and what was not. Effectively, a secular court had decided how the Christian faith should be practised.

Jones (2003, pp28-49), writing on behalf of the Christian Schools Trust, has provided a detailed analysis of the arguments that were made by the Appeal Court judges in reaching their decision. He goes on to summarise the considerations that eventually led the Petitioners to take the case to the House of Lords (p46):

1. We must continue to press the argument that the right to believe must be accompanied by the right to act on that belief, since otherwise the former right would be worthless.

2. We must maintain that the State should not interfere with the free exercise of religion, whether in public or in private, unless it can be *demonstrated* that there is a *compelling* State interest. When there is such a demonstration, the State should interfere through the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling interest.

3. The particular application of the doctrine of material non-interference (impossibility test) seen in this case should be wholly rejected. Without that rejection religious freedom will quickly cease to be a substantive right. We must also point out strongly that since minority religious cultures already face an overwhelmingly dominant and all-pervasive secular host culture, the State is showing a woefully inadequate concern for the religious person whose expression of faith it excludes.

He then concludes (p46):

This is not a matter just for Christian schools. It concerns all Christians, because the trend of the European Court of Human Rights cases is in the direction of the undermining of religious freedom. The decisions are predicated on the assumption that the public realm can be and should be religiously neutral. That assumption emasculates religious belief and religious freedom. It tells the believer that he may not bring his faith into the public realm. The matter is very serious...because such court precedents could – and very likely will – in the future be used to justify the setting aside of even more significant Christian freedoms.

The case was taken forward to the House of Lords where it was heard in February 2005. The very fact that the Law Lords agreed to hear the case confirmed that the issues raised by it were of central importance; it was not just dealing with a very secondary issue. Unexpectedly, when their judgement was given, it completely overturned the judgement of the lower courts and ruled on an entirely different basis (Jones, 2007, p15). The unanimous ruling was that the rights of the schools under the European Convention of Human Rights *were* infringed, but that Parliament has the right to interfere with the rights of parents in order to protect children. The Law Lords therefore went against all the lower courts by ruling that any corporal punishment infringed children's rights and should be banned in all circumstances.

The case concerning corporal punishment had occupied the time and attention of some of those involved in the new Christian schools, particularly Philip Williamson, for some six years. The upshot had been a ruling which they regarded as very unsatisfactory and which seemed to confirm their fears that it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to fulfil the purpose for which the schools had been established, to provide a setting in which children could be educated according to a Christian, rather than a secular, worldview.

4.4 Changes to employment law

Those involved in the new Christian schools watched the approach of December 2003 with mounting unease. A news release from the Christian Institute dated 24 January 2003 articulated their concerns. Headed “New equality laws substantially restrict religious liberty”, it stated:

Today the Government closes its consultation on radical anti-discrimination laws which substantially restrict the freedom of churches and religious bodies to employ staff who are practising believers. David Harte, Barrister and Senior Lecturer in law at Newcastle University said: ‘Unless the Government’s draft regulations are substantially modified, the regulations may be used to restrict religious liberty in quite unprecedented ways. The key problem is that the Directive and the regulations focus on the rights of individuals as employees. They fail to take account of the rights of religious people to structure their work in accordance with their own beliefs.’

The planned new laws were the result of an EU directive which the Government had signed in October 2000 and which involved a package of measures aimed at banning workplace discrimination, including job applications, on the grounds of religion, belief and sexual orientation. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, were intended to implement parts of the Equal Treatment

Directive (2000/78) and were due to come into effect on 2 December 2003. As a result of the consultation which ended on 24 January, various amendments were made to the Regulations. These extended the range of exemptions, to the effect that it would be lawful for independent Christian schools to insist that their teaching staff are practising Christians, although this freedom would not necessarily extend to other staff (CST, 2003b, p1-2). Similarly, exemptions relating to sexual orientation were strengthened to permit employers to impose requirements relating to sexual orientation where “the employment is for the purposes of an organised religion” (CST, 2003b, p2) or the employers have “an ethos based on religion or belief” (CST, 2003c, p1). The exact scope of the exemption was unclear and would need to be determined by the courts on a case by case basis.

Although the exemptions introduced a measure of mitigation, the new Christian schools considered that the Regulations struck at the heart of what they were trying to achieve and were a genuine threat to Christian autonomy and religious freedom (CST, 2003c, p1). How could the schools successfully create the Christian ethos that was their very reason for existence if they had no right to control who was employed within the school? How could a non-Christian school secretary, for example, adequately explain the purpose and ethos of the school to the many enquirers who contacted the school? How could the lifestyle of employees be encouraged fully to reflect Christian values if it was impossible to insist that those employees were Christians? It was possible that the exemptions would cover these eventualities, but that would remain to be seen.

In October 2003, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) announced that it was challenging the lawfulness of the exemptions to the Regulations, under the Human Rights Act 1998, claiming that they violated the human rights of homosexuals. The TUC accepted that the Church and religious employers could discriminate on the grounds of religion, but not sexual orientation. Six unions commenced proceedings in the High Court to challenge the exemption for religious belief. In addition, the TUC wanted the Courts to review the basis of the religious belief in question, raising the real possibility that the Court would determine what the adherents “ought” to believe. The Government agreed to expedite the hearing, as a decision was required before 2 December. Very little time was therefore available to the new Christian schools, or others, to intervene in the proceedings, but in the event a joint submission was made by the Evangelical Alliance, the charity CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) and the Christian Schools Trust. In their submissions, the three Christian organisations agreed that:

Should the Claimants succeed in their challenge, then our clients, and a substantial number of other religiously motivated organisations will be unable to operate in conformity with the core values of those organisations. (CST, 2003d, p3)

The Court found for the Government and therefore the exemptions remain as part of the Regulations.

4.5 The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

In February 2006, the DfES and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) set up a meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss the impact on schools of extending the discrimination provisions in the Equality Bill. This extension would be achieved not through parliamentary procedures but through Regulations issued under the

order-making power included in the Bill (Jones and Jones, 2006, p2). The aim was that the Regulations concerning sexual orientation would have the same coverage as those for religion or belief (Part 2 of the Equality Act) and would cover access to and delivery of education in schools, as well as goods, facilities and services more generally. The Christian Schools Trust was invited to send a representative to the meeting and Graham Coyle attended on their behalf. Arthur Jones and Mark Jones attended on behalf of the Association of Christian Teachers (ACT) and subsequently wrote a report of the meeting (Jones and Jones, 2006). The following account is based on their report and on subsequent discussions with one of them, Dr. Arthur Jones, and with Graham Coyle. It is included in detail as it illustrates how these trends in legislation were perceived by those in the new Christian schools.

Those attending the meeting on 1 February 2006 were concerned about several aspects of its organisation and conduct as well as some aspects of the discussions themselves. No documents were given out at the meeting and there was no clear agenda. Although a DfES representative was there to take notes, he did not appear to take many. The meeting was supposed to last for two hours. In the event it started late and was punctuated by a long break for lunch with the result that there was inadequate time for the views of all those present to be heard. These factors combined to make some of those present feel that the meeting was not being taken very seriously by its organisers.

Although no official list of the participants was available, it was noted that, in addition to those from the Christian Schools Trust and the Association of Christian

Teachers, the meeting included representatives from the Evangelical Alliance, the Christian Institute, the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lawyers Christian Fellowship, the Muslim community, the Jewish community, the Independent Schools Christian Association, the British Humanist Association (BHA) and the National Secular Society (NSS). Jones and Jones (2006, p2) question why the two latter categories were included:

It was never made clear why secular organisations (BHA and NSS) opposed to faith and faith-based schools (and with no responsibility for running schools) were allowed to make representations at a meeting meant to address the impact of the regulations upon those of faith and faith-based schools. The familiarity between the Government officials and the BHA and NSS representatives was also noteworthy.

It is clear from this, together with other parts of the report, that some of those attending the meeting did not feel that it was a genuine consultation but was being conducted merely to fulfil a necessary requirement. They considered that (p1) “It seemed as if we were part of some unpalatable, but obligatory act that in order to tick the relevant box the DfES had to endure”.

During the meeting, several general concerns were expressed by those representing the various religious groups. One of the most strongly felt of these was the fact that such significant legislation was being introduced by what felt like the “back door”, bypassing Parliamentary scrutiny and debate. The sense that several of those present had that hard-hitting legal changes were being “smuggled through” without proper opportunity for public debate was subsequently borne out by the effect of the changes on Roman Catholic adoption agencies. On 21 March 2007, referring to a debate in the House of Lords, BBC News On-line reported:

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, which outlaw discrimination against gay people by businesses and service providers, and have already been approved by MPs, will now come into force on 30 April. But they have proved extremely controversial. The Catholic Church has said it will be forced to shut its adoption agencies, which handle some of the most difficult-to-place children, rather than act against church teachings. Some back-bench Tory MPs have complained that the draft regulations were being ‘rail-roaded’ through Parliament with ‘unseemly haste’. Lady O’Caithain told peers: ‘I believe the regulations are seriously flawed. The Commons has had no opportunity to debate them, other than in a hastily arranged committee off the floor of the House. This surely is not acceptable. The Government is rushing headlong into the incredibly sensitive area of a clash between gay rights and religious freedom and doing so by secondary legislation that does not allow for amendments and permits only very limited debate.’ Her amendment warned that the draft regulations will ‘result in litigation over the content of classroom teaching’.

The fear of litigation was also expressed by those at the meeting with the DfES. It was felt that the DfES did not appear to understand some of the legal concepts that they were discussing (Jones and Jones, 2006, p1) and that they had not foreseen the many real-life examples that were reported at the meeting where it was feared that schools, simply by maintaining the traditional Christian view of issues relating to homosexuality, could fall foul of the Regulations.

The Christian Schools Trust wrote to Ruth Kelly, then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, soon after the meeting, to ask for clarification on some of the contentious issues. The letter (CST, 2006b) summarises some of their chief concerns:

There seem to us to be two potential problem areas, firstly in the area of admissions and secondly within the area of curriculum content. In both cases there are no assurances that faith schools of any religion will be able to maintain the integrity of their community’s beliefs. [For example] if a child with homosexual parents wished to apply to a school, the parents would have to be prepared to assent to any statement of faith that the school adhered to. What would be the case if the parents could agree with all of it except the areas relating to a belief that homosexual behaviour was against the tenets of the school’s faith life? Would this be discrimination? Equally what would be the position regarding a

school's teaching on family life? Will faith schools be able to maintain their position that stable, heterosexual marriages are the most favourable environment for establishing strong and secure families?

Unless our schools are permitted to continue to form their admissions policy in agreement with basic doctrinal beliefs, we will be compromised and criminalised simply for attempting to live peacefully as Christians in modern society. Schools must [also] have the freedom to teach in accordance with their basic convictions without interference from secular authorities. To do otherwise would undermine the very principles of fairness and respect that the legislation seeks to uphold.

It remains to be seen if the fears of litigation expressed by many at the meeting with the DfES become a reality. This particular episode has served to highlight the sense that the new Christian schools have of their freedoms being eroded by legislation that at first sight might appear to have little to do with schools.

4.6 Political interference and the teaching of creationism

The new Christian schools greatly prize their freedom from the National Curriculum or from any curriculum constraint, beyond that necessary to ensure that their pupils are adequately educated for modern life. They consider that their Bible-based approach to the curriculum does exactly that and that their examination results prove it. However, the issue of whether the teaching of creationism should be confined to religious education classes and banned from science classes has become a particularly contentious issue in recent years, as described in Chapter 3. The British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society and Professor Richard Dawkins are among those who have urged the Government to legislate on the teaching of creationism in state schools. In October 2007, the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain published the fifteenth pamphlet in their *Impact* series, entitled *Intelligent Design Theory and other ideological problems*. Its author

is philosopher Mary Midgley and, having discussed the nature of creationism and intelligent design theory, she concludes:

How ought we in Britain now to respond? In particular, what should we do in our schools? Plainly it is not enough to say that teachers should not be presenting Intelligent Design Theory as science. A veto here is indeed probably needed; perhaps it should even be pronounced at government level. But it will do little good on its own. (Midgley, 2007, p41)

Mary Midgley goes on to describe what she considers should be done in the face of the perceived threat to science education from creationism and intelligent design. She argues that teachers, both of science and of religious education, need to become more literate on the whole subject and to understand it better, but only in a certain prescribed manner. She advocates that trainee teachers from the two disciplines should be brought together to be trained to handle the topic in the classroom. From the perspective of the new Christian schools, what she is advocating could be viewed as a form of brainwashing:

Classes of this kind should aim to educate their students in a way that will make it quite impossible for them – whatever views they started with – to come out as either bigoted fundamentalists or bigoted atheistical pseudo-Darwinists. They should aim to cure their students of the naïveté which leads people to grasp at straws such as Intelligent Design Theory. (Midgley, 2007, p43)

The new Christian schools would consider that if such a position were adopted it would amount to a “silencing” of a fully-informed debate on the subject. That such fears are not fanciful is indicated by the language used by the series editor, Michael Smith, in his editorial introduction. He states:

Many of those arguing for [intelligent design] are members of the Discovery Institute, a major organisation for the dissemination of Creationist propaganda...There is a need to counter swiftly the threat from Intelligent Design Theory and from other issues on which fundamentalists may well seek to act in future. (Midgley, 2007, pp viii-ix)

The use of such emotive, ad hominem, phraseology gives credence to fears expressed by some in the schools that an impartial consideration of the issues involved in the creation/evolution debate might eventually be impossible to find in a state school situation, where the Government has the power to intervene. There is certainly evidence of a campaign to ensure that that situation will eventually prevail in British schools. Since 2002, the British Humanist Association has conducted just such a campaign, designed to outlaw the teaching of creationism and intelligent design, the details of which can be seen on their website. They have been supported in their campaign by the web-based Christian think-tank Ekklesia. In July 2007, the two organisations sent a joint letter to Ed Balls on his appointment as the Children, Schools and Families Minister urging him to make progress in “combating creationism in British schools”. Richard Dawkins too is actively campaigning for the teaching of creationism and intelligent design to be banned from schools. On 27 November 2006, EducationGuardian.co.uk reported:

The University of Oxford atheist Richard Dawkins has established a foundation to keep God out of the classroom and prevent ‘pseudo science’ taking over in schools. The new Richard Dawkins Foundation for Science and Reason will subsidise books, pamphlets and DVDs for teachers to fight what the professor describes as the ‘educational scandal’ that has seen the rise of ‘irrational ideas’.

In 2007, Dawkins used the website to promote an on-line petition calling on the Government to “abolish all faith schools and prohibit the teaching of creationism and other religious mythology in all UK schools”.

Also in 2007, the Government responded to such pressure by publishing the DCSF document *Guidance on the place of creationism and intelligent design in science teaching*. Although hailed by the British Humanist Association and Ekklesia as a success for their campaign, it could just as easily be read in a different light, since it

begins by stressing that the National Curriculum provides the framework of what should be taught in a subject but does not state how subjects should be taught or prohibit the use of additional material. However, the document does go on to define what, in the Government's view, a scientific theory is and states:

Creationism and intelligent design are sometimes claimed to be scientific theories. This is not the case as they have no underpinning scientific principles, or explanations, and are not accepted by the scientific community as a whole. Creationism and intelligent design therefore do not form part of the science National Curriculum programmes of study. (DCSF, 2007, p2)

From the point of view of those who wish to be able to teach freely, this paragraph is certainly worrying. The Government has come down on one side of the debate and this would seem to be a dangerous precedent. Where then will the debate be permitted? The document states (p1) that "there is scope for young people to discuss beliefs about the origins of the Earth and living things in Religious Education (RE)". A statement like this raises all kinds of questions in the minds of those who wish to be permitted to teach creationism. Exactly what is going to be permitted in RE? The debate is about the interpretation of scientific evidence. Are RE teachers likely to be equipped to handle all the scientific detail that would be required? Are they rather just permitted to portray creationism as something akin to a fairy tale? Are young people going to be taught one thing in RE and the opposite in science? This situation could very easily lead to the scenario advocated by Mary Midgely, where student teachers are trained, not to conduct a debate on this issue, but to combat one viewpoint while enforcing another.

A powerful lobby campaigning on this issue also exists in Europe. On 17 September 2007, the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published a report entitled *The dangers of creationism in education* (Doc. 11375). The summary states:

Creationism in any of its forms, such as ‘intelligent design’, is not based on facts, does not use any scientific reasoning and its contents are definitely inappropriate for science classes. However, some people call for creationist theories to be taught in European schools alongside or even in place of evolution. From a scientific view point, there is absolutely no doubt that evolution is a central theory for our understanding of life on Earth. The Assembly calls on education authorities in member states to promote scientific knowledge and the teaching of evolution and to oppose firmly any attempts at teaching creationism as a scientific discipline. (Council of Europe, 2007, p1)

The document concludes, without citing any supporting evidence, that “the denial of evolution is particularly harmful to children’s education” (p 12).

Do such campaigns constitute a real threat to schools such as the new Christian schools which have independent status? On 15 October 2007, The Local, an English language Swedish news agency (www.thelocal.se) reported that the Swedish Government has decided to ban biology teachers from teaching creationism in private schools as well as in state schools. Sweden’s education minister Jan Björlund was quoted as saying, “Pupils must be protected from all kinds of fundamentalism”. This is possible because most private schools in Sweden are not fully independent but receive government grants and it provides support for those within the new Christian schools movement who are opposed, on principle, to any receipt of public funding.

The controversy surrounding the teaching of creationism in state schools was brought into sharp public focus in September 2008 by the forced resignation of the Revd Professor Michael Reiss from his prestigious position as Director of Education for the Royal Society over this very issue (Baker, 2009b). Professor

Reiss is an acknowledged expert on the subject of the teaching of creationism and has written extensively on the subject (Jones and Reiss, 2007; Reiss, 2008a,b, 2009). He has discussed the importance of religious worldviews for science education and it was for expressing views such as these that his contract with the Royal Society was terminated:

Science educators and teachers need to take account of religious worldviews if some students are better to understand the compass of scientific thinking and some of science's key conclusions, including the theory of evolution. Little is to be gained and much lost by ridiculing non-scientific worldviews. It is perfectly possible for a science teacher to be respectful of positions that students hold, even if these are scientifically limited, indeed to engage with these positions, while clearly and non-apologetically but sensitively helping students to understand the scientific worldview on a particular issue. (Reiss, 2009, p794)

The issue of creationism and its role in education continues to stimulate both academic research and popular debate. A poll conducted in April 2009 for the British Council found that just over half of adults (54%) in Great Britain thought that evolution should be taught in science lessons alongside other theories, such as intelligent design and creationism (British Council, 2009). Also in 2009, the Journal of Biological Education produced a special issue (Volume 43, Number 3) dedicated to Charles Darwin. This edition of the journal carries, amongst other relevant articles, a paper seeking to address teachers' concerns about teaching evolution (Sanders and Nonyameko, 2009) and another addressing the issue of worldviews and evolution in the biology classroom (Schilders, *et al.* 2009). The current survey will be able to make a contribution to this important discourse.

This chapter has so far considered significant changes to the law and the effect of those changes on the new Christian schools during the past twenty years. It has shown that the trend of those changes has been to deprive the schools of some of

the liberty that was originally theirs to run the schools in accordance with their interpretation of the Christian faith. The picture has been of a group of schools, on the margins of society, striving to retain their distinctive ethos as the state seeks to impose an increasingly secular worldview onto the educative process in the UK.

4.7 Christian Schools Campaign

From the vantage point of 2009, it would seem that independence from state control is a more pressing need than ever for those running the schools, if they are to continue to be able to fulfil their mandate. However, in 1988 the dangers inherent in potential state interference were less apparent. It was then that some of the new Christian schools became involved in a major campaign, the Christian Schools Campaign, in an attempt to gain state funding. Some details and consequences of the Christian Schools Campaign have been extensively documented by Geoffrey Walford (1994a,b, 1995a,b,c,d, 1998, 2000a,b, 2001a; Poyntz and Walford, 1994).

In Walford's opinion:

The 1993 Education Act can be seen as a victory. Various sections of the Act can be seen to have been directly influenced by a particular educational pressure group, and the objectives of that group were to a large extent achieved in that legislation. The pressure group was the Christian Schools Campaign and the particular legislation concerned the right for various sponsor groups to apply to the Secretary of State for Education to establish new forms of grant-maintained school. (Walford, 2000a, p1)

Those involved in the new Christian schools were often very wary of the possibility of obtaining state funding for fear of the restrictions which might come with it. They valued their independence very highly. By the late 1980s, however, many of the schools were struggling under the burden of trying to provide a uniquely Christian education without adequate sources of funding. The changes that the

Government made at this time to the funding of state education began to suggest that funding might be able to be obtained without too much compromise being involved.

In 1989, a booklet was published, *The New Christian Schools: the case for public funding* (Deakin, 1989b), as part of the campaign. It drew on the situation in the Netherlands to illustrate what the campaign was aiming for:

[Dutch] parents, teachers and churches are given the liberty to establish schools which are expressions of their own particular world-view...Today in the Netherlands 79% of Dutch children are educated in schools which are independent of state control but funded with public money. Most of these private schools are run by religious bodies or associations of people adhering to specific ideological principles. They may promote such beliefs or principles and may refuse admission on religious or ideological grounds. (Deakin, 1989, pp 13-14)

However, Walford (1995c) has assessed the Dutch system to establish whether or not it is really providing what the new Christian schools were and are looking for. He concludes that the Dutch position might be seen more as a warning to faith-based schools than an example to be emulated:

Most advocates [of the Dutch system] say little about the stiff criteria that have to be met before state funding is obtained, or the conditions under which private schools operate once funded by the state. (Walford, 1995c, p 251)

Those using the Netherlands as an example to be emulated have frequently been highly selective in their policy borrowing, and have failed to consider aspects which are in contradiction to their views. The lack of influence of parents in the Dutch system is a particular case in point, as is the Dutch belief that the responsibility for education lies with the state rather than with parents. Both of these are in opposition to the view of most of those involved in the new Christian schools. (Walford, 1995c, p255)

The campaign successfully achieved changes to the law, effective from 1993, making it easier for religious schools to obtain public funding. In the light of these

changes, the Christian Schools Trust commissioned a report to assist Christian schools and their related churches in the decision that was now available to them. The report *Grant Maintained Status: a realistic option for Independent Christian Schools?* was published in February 1995 and provided detailed information to aid the schools in their decision whether or not to apply to 'opt in' to the state-funded system. The report (CST, 1995, p5) urged caution:

Is it truly possible to rely on God while remaining dependent on funding from a source which makes requirements on us as a condition to our continued existence? In the light of the assertion that education is not 'neutral' are we prepared to open our children to a required curriculum that does not have at its heart the pursuance of the knowledge of God?

It also listed (p13) the advantages and disadvantages of obtaining funding:

Possible advantages: greater capital funding, funds for new or improved premises, improved cash flow, higher pay for teaching staff, more teaching resources including high worth items such as science and technology equipment, release of parents' funds for other uses, funds for specialist help in key areas such as special needs, direct access to central funding agency.

Possible disadvantages: lowering of faith levels, displacement of God from the centre of the school, sacrifice of ultimate control to central funding agency/Secretary of State, large sums need to be found initially up front, no guarantee of funding levels being maintained, particularly if there is a change of government and therefore philosophy, the need to maintain pupil numbers to receive funding.

In the event, not one of the new Christian schools has to date decided to benefit from the change in legislation that the Campaign brought about and there have been some possible negative consequences for them (Baker, 2009c). Nevertheless, the Campaign, conducted by some of those directly involved in the schools, was highly influential politically. In addition to making it easier for faith-based schools to obtain public funding, it affected the inspection arrangements with respect to spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, as described earlier.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has described political and legal changes which have profoundly affected the new Christian schools. It has shown that their freedom to continue to operate as they have been doing for the past 40 years is now under threat and that there is a real possibility that such schools will soon cease to exist. It therefore becomes more urgent that the current pupil population of the schools should be investigated. Throughout the past twenty years of political interaction, at least 3000 pupils at any one time have been receiving their education in the schools. What effect has an education received in such an environment been having on them? What do the young people themselves believe? What are their values and how do they perceive the education that they are receiving? In short, what kind of people are the schools producing? The succeeding chapters will address these questions.

Chapter 5

The survey of pupils: its context, methodology, target population and respondents

The previous chapters have described the unusual nature of the education that is on offer in the new Christian schools, one that sets them apart from most of British society. They have indicated that in some quarters there is political opposition to such schools and that within the Christian community itself the schools often lack support. This chapter will discuss the context of an extensive survey of the teenagers currently receiving their education in the schools. It will describe both the methodology employed in the survey and the nature of the group of young people who were its target population. Finally, it will include a description of those who actually responded to the survey, as a precursor to the evaluation of their responses.

5.1 The survey: its context

The essential purpose for carrying out a survey of the teenagers currently receiving their education in the new Christian schools was to find out what kind of young people they are. What are their beliefs and values? What are their concerns and fears? What kind of peer groups do they mix with? What are their hopes and aims for the future? How do they view the unusual education that they are receiving? How do their views compare with those of their peers who attend schools of a very different nature? In providing information of this kind, the survey aimed to provide empirical evidence to inform the following questions:

1. Are the expectations of the parents and churches who established or who are currently involved in the schools being fulfilled? In other words, are the schools achieving what they set out to achieve?

2. Is there any evidence to suggest that the fears held in relation to the schools, together with the criticisms directed at them, are justified?

Each of these questions will now be examined in turn.

5.1.1 The expectations of parents and churches

As described in previous chapters, parents send their children to the new Christian schools, often at great personal sacrifice, because, in many cases, they wish them to continue in the Christian faith. There is a perception that, in British society, by the time children from Christian homes reach their mid teens, they are often failing to follow in the spiritual footsteps of their parents and there is evidence to support this view (Kay and Francis, 1996, p27). Is the perception true of the pupils in the new Christian schools? Do they hold Christian beliefs? How do they view the church? Do they hold to Christian values? The parents, both Christian and non-Christian, also wish to protect their children from harmful peer pressure. To what extent is this actually being achieved? Similarly, the churches directly involved with the schools wish their young people to retain their Christian faith and church membership as they move through their teenage years. They hope to see them developing a Christian worldview, holding to Christian values and pursuing a Christian lifestyle. To what extent is this actually the case once the young people reach their early to mid teenage years?

5.1.2 The fears and criticisms associated with the schools.

As previously described, fears and criticisms come from two distinct sources, from fellow Christians and from wider society, and they cover a wide spectrum of issues. This survey has the potential to inform many of those issues. Is there any evidence that the pupils nearing the end of their school years have been indoctrinated? Do

they hold views which would make them a divisive influence in society? Do they consider that the schools have prepared them well for life in modern society? Do they value the education that they are receiving or do they see it as a possible hindrance to them in life? The question of whether or not the schools are producing good citizens for the United Kingdom in the 21st century is, in a sense, a key one that has bearing on all the others. Good citizens are honest. They are law-abiding and hard-working. They have a social conscience and care about the environment. They are concerned for others, without discrimination. These are exactly the qualities that the schools are seeking to instil in their pupils. Are they succeeding? Who, then, are the young people emerging from the new Christian schools?

5.2 The survey: its methodology

5.2.1 The instrument

It was decided that a quantitative survey would be the most appropriate way to investigate the issues detailed above since this would enable a wide range of the views and beliefs of as many as possible of the teenagers to be accessed. While the instrument primarily needed to address the issues described, it would also be useful if it permitted comparison with the results of past surveys of the wider school population, for example those conducted by Francis and Kay (1995) and Francis (2001). For this reason, the version of the Centymca Attitude Inventory employed by Francis in his most recent survey (Francis, 2001, pp19-23) formed the basis of the instrument that was developed. However, the instrument was extensively revised with some of the items omitted and a substantial number added in order that it should meet the particular demands of the current survey. The final version used consisted of a total of 204 items which represented four main categories. The first

category aimed to profile the religious beliefs of the pupils, the second their views regarding the creation/evolution controversy, the third their personal concerns and the fourth their moral values.

The areas included in the first category were defined as: attitude to religion; religious beliefs; life after death; images of God; attitude to Christianity; church and society; non-traditional beliefs; luck/superstition. The second section included areas defined as: creation and evolution; science and the Bible; scientism. The third category targeted the personal concerns of the young people and consisted of areas defined as: personal well-being; personal worries; dependency strategies; counselling; peer groups; parents; school; my area; aims in life; personal responsibility. The fourth section aimed to profile the views and values of the pupils according to the following subject areas: right and wrong; sexual morality; sexism and sexuality; anti-social behaviour; substance use; media influences; work; politics; global fears; environmental issues; education. Each of the subject areas consisted of a set of short statements to which the pupils were invited to respond using a Likert-type scale (Likert,1932). A five point scale was used, allowing the pupils to grade their responses according to the categories: agree strongly; agree; not certain; disagree; disagree strongly. A brief overview of the four categories and their 32 subject areas will now follow, showing how the responses to them will serve to address the research questions described above.

5.2.1.1 Religious beliefs

A thorough investigation of the religious beliefs of the pupils was an essential part of the survey since religion is the primary *raison d'être* of the schools' existence. It is for this reason that this category is included first. Parents send their children to

the new Christian schools, in the main, because they wish them to continue as Christians through their teenage years and into adulthood; they believe that the schools will help to achieve this. Where churches support the schools, they do so for the same reason. The teachers and governing bodies involved in the schools hold the religious life of the pupils to be their most important characteristic. The responses to the items in these subject areas will throw light on all of the issues mentioned above. They will enable the religious beliefs of the pupils to be compared with the more postmodern view of spirituality currently common in UK society and with the corresponding beliefs of their peers in other types of schools. They will provide information about the effects that the schools are having on the religious positions of their pupils and to what extent the expectations of the parents are being met.

1. Attitude to religion

This section was designed to introduce the general topic of religious belief painted with broad brush strokes. It aimed to discover how many of the young people saw themselves as religious people and how many saw themselves as spiritual, a distinction that has become increasingly well-defined in recent decades. The postmodern world tends to be fascinated by non-traditional beliefs but the evangelical community from which the schools largely draw their pupils would tend to look with suspicion on anything regarded as superstitious. What percentage of the young people would say that they are superstitious? Do any of them from this highly religious background have a negative view of religion itself and consider it to be a negative force in the world?

2. Religious beliefs

What do the teenagers actually believe in detail? Are their beliefs consistent with their conservatively Christian background? Do they believe in God, in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit? Do they think that Christianity is the only true religion or do they think that there is truth in all religions? In evangelical churches there is an emphasis on a personal faith in Jesus. How many of the young people would say that they believe in Jesus as their personal Saviour?

3. Images of God

In what kind of God do the teenagers believe? Conservative Christianity has the reputation with some of promoting a view of God as harsh and unyielding, a God who delights to punish. Do the teenage pupils in the new Christian schools hold that view or do they believe that God is loving, kind and merciful? Does he care about them personally? Is he forgiving or does he punish? Is he a “real” God who answers prayer and is in control of history?

4. Attitude to Christianity.

This section, using the Francis Scale of Attitude to Christianity, investigates the personal, more intimate, beliefs of the young people. It is one thing to assent intellectually to religious propositions but quite another to have a personal commitment to and emotional involvement in a religion. Would the pupils say that they know that Jesus is close to them and helping them? Does God mean a lot to them? Does he help them to lead a better life? Do they find prayer helpful? Is going to church a waste of time for them personally and do they find the Bible to be out of date?

5. Life after death

Do the pupils have traditional Christian beliefs when it comes to the issue of life after death? Do they believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Do they believe in heaven and hell? Have they adopted the alternative view that when they die they will come back to life as someone or something else? What about the body after death? Would they want a church funeral?

6. Church and society

This section is designed to find out what the young people believe about certain church-related matters and will provide important information for church leaders as well as for church-going parents. Does the church seem irrelevant to the pupils? Does the Bible have little relevance for them? Would they want to use the services of the church for marriage and baptism? Do they think that church ministers serve society well in such matters? Should church-related matters extend to the nation's schools? Should these hold religious assemblies and should they teach RE?

7. Non-traditional beliefs

This is the first of two sections dealing with beliefs in the areas of superstition, the paranormal and the occult. What do the young people believe about horoscopes, fortune-tellers and tarot cards? Do they believe that it is possible to contact the spirits of the dead? Do they believe that magic can be used for good or for bad? Do they believe in vampires?

8. Luck/superstitions

Do the young people exhibit behaviour which would indicate a superstitious outlook on life? Do they cross their fingers for luck or wear a cross or crucifix for protection? Do they say "touch wood" or use charms to protect

themselves from evil? Do they think it unlucky to open an umbrella indoors or that bad things happen in threes? Do they believe in guardian angels?

5.2.1.2 Science and creation

The three sections in this category will address the extent to which the pupils have been affected by the creationist context of their science education, an important matter in its own right and one that is also relevant to the issue of indoctrination. The sections are designed to access the pupils' beliefs in the area of the creation/evolution debate and the relationship between the Bible and science, a topic that is of acute public interest and one in which the new Christian schools are uniquely placed to provide relevant research material.

1. Creation and evolution

The creation/evolution debate is complex and nuanced. The very terms themselves are difficult to define. This section confines itself to some straight-forward statements to find out if the young people believe the Earth to be very ancient or very young, if they believe that God created in six days or that evolution created over millions of years and if they believe, as many in society do, that science disproves the biblical account of creation.

2. Science and the Bible

This section is a large one because of the importance of the issue to this particular group of schools. It is designed to access a more refined set of beliefs connected to the pupil's view of the reliability of the Bible and the relationship between the Bible and science. Do the pupils believe that God created the world as described in the Bible, out of nothing? Do they believe that he formed Eve from Adam's rib? Was the world created perfect and has it been affected by sin? Are living things designed or have they come about

by a process of evolution involving purely natural forces? Was there once a world-wide flood? Have scientists discovered how the world was made? Is it possible to be a good scientist and believe in the Bible?

3. Scientism

Do the pupils think that it is possible to trust both science and religion? Can scientific theories be proved beyond doubt and are scientific laws unchangeable? Can science give us absolute truth and will it eventually give us control over the world? Do the teenagers hold to the view, common in British society, that nothing should be believed unless it can be proved “scientifically”?

5.2.1.3 Personal concerns

The third category of subject areas is designed to extend the information obtained from the previous sections by providing a more intimate portrait of the personal concerns of the young people and their aspirations for the future. The responses will provide a profile of how the young people are feeling and behaving across a range of situations and categories. Parents are often making considerable sacrifices in order to provide their children with this unusual education. Is it doing them good, as their parents hope it will? Is it protecting them from harmful peer group influences? Are they happy at school and do they feel that the school is doing a good job? Are they emotionally healthy? Such information would be useful, not only to parents but to teachers and governors.

1. Personal well-being

How emotionally and spiritually healthy are the young people? Do they find life worth living and feel that it has a sense of purpose? Do they value

themselves as people or are they often depressed? Have they ever considered deliberately hurting themselves or even taking their own life?

2. Personal worries

What are the issues that cause the teenagers most concern? Do they worry about their attractiveness to the opposite sex or about putting on weight? Are they concerned about their body shape or about how they get on with others? Is the prospect of getting HIV/AIDS a concern? Are they worried about going out alone at night or about being attacked by pupils from other schools?

3. Dependency strategies

How likely are the pupils to try to cope with their worries by becoming over-dependent on food or drink? Do they eat or stop eating to make themselves feel better? Do they eat chocolate or drink caffeine for the same reason? Do they consume alcohol for such a purpose?

4. Counselling

Given that life as a teenager may well involve worry, to whom would the young people feel able to turn for counsel and advice? Would they turn to a teacher, a doctor or a Christian minister? Would they find help via chat rooms or be prepared to contact a helpline? Do they perhaps feel that there is nobody they would feel happy to approach?

5. Peer groups

Concern about peer pressure is a major factor motivating parents to send their children to the new Christian schools. To what extent are the teenagers being influenced by their peer groups and what are those peer groups like? Do their friends think that religion is important? Do those

friends smoke cigarettes, take drugs or drink alcohol? Do the young people find it helpful to discuss their problems with their friends and do those friends pressure them to do things that they would rather not do?

6. Parents

Parents are making sacrifices to provide their children with the unusual education on offer at the new Christian schools. How do the young people view their parents? Do they feel that their parents support them or do they feel pressured by them to do things they would rather not do? Do they find it helpful to discuss problems with their parents? Do they consider that religion is important to their parents?

7. School

The view that the young people have of their school is particularly pertinent to this survey. Are they happy at school or do they find it boring? Do they like the people they go to school with and feel that the teachers are doing a good job? Do they feel that the teachers are interested in them? Do the pupils consider that the way they are being taught is preparing them well for life in a society where the views of the majority are very different from those of their churches and parents? Is their school helping them to know how to live in a right way? Are they worried about exams, about school work or about being bullied at school?

8. My area

Independent schools are often viewed as only serving children from wealthy and privileged backgrounds. How do the young people view the locality they live in? Is crime a growing problem there or vandalism? Is there a growing drugs problem or is violence increasing? Are drunks a

concern or is unemployment growing? Do the teenagers like the area where they live and do they feel that it cares about its young people?

9. Aims in life

The new Christian schools see it as part of their educational responsibility to train their pupils in a certain view of life and its aims and purposes. What aims in life do the teenagers have? Do they want to get married, have children and own their own home? Would they like to study for a degree or make a difference to the world? Do they consider that life is about living for God and for others, as their education will have sought to teach them, or is life about enjoying oneself?

10. Personal responsibility

The young people have been receiving an education based on Christianity, with its strong emphasis on personal responsibility. Are they keen to help others and to avoid hurting them? Are they concerned for the environment and unwilling to prosper at the expense of others? Are they reluctant to cause offence to others by the way they speak? These topics are of particular relevance to an assessment of the way in which the schools are preparing the young people for citizenship.

5.2.1.4 Views and moral values

The final category covered by the survey is designed to investigate the views and moral values of the pupils. Are the schools having the effect of instilling a strict sense of morality into the young people, thereby fulfilling the expectations of the parents? Do their views give credence to those who would see such schools as potentially divisive for society or do they imply that the teenagers are already acting

as good citizens? The responses to the items in this section will be particularly useful in addressing concerns that the schools might be indoctrinating their pupils with a fundamentalist ideology which would cause them to become a divisive influence in society. They will also shed light on the question of whether or not the schools might be capable of preparing the teenagers for life in modern culture and go some way towards assessing the extent to which the schools might be producing good citizens.

1. Right and wrong

Do the young people hold to traditionally Christian moral values? Do they see anything wrong with shop-lifting or with travelling without a ticket? Would they cheat in exams or play truant from school? Do they think it wrong to swear or blaspheme or to experiment on human embryos? How do they view the police?

2. Sexual morality

In this age of sexual liberty, how do the views of the pupils compare with traditional Christian values? How many would consider it wrong to have sex under the age of 16 or before one is married? Do the teenagers agree that homosexuality is wrong, or contraception, abortion, pornography or divorce?

3. Sexism and sexuality

The evangelical community is often portrayed as “sexist” and “homophobic”. Do the young people consider that women and men are equally capable of looking after children? Do they believe that women are better at housework but men better at DIY? Do they agree that gay couples should be allowed to marry and care for children?

4. Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour on the part of teenagers is currently regarded as a major social problem in the UK. How many of the pupils consider that smoking should be banned from public places or that the streets should be alcohol free? How many agree that pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day or that people should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection? Are any of them prepared to say that young people should not be allowed on the streets at night?

5. Substance use

Teenage drunkenness is currently a major problem in British society. Do the pupils agree that it is wrong to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, sniff solvents or get drunk? Are they opposed to the social use of drugs?

6. Media influences

This section explores the moral position held by the pupils in connection with the media. Do they agree that there is too much violence in the media and in computer games? Is there too much sex in computer games, on the internet and on TV?

7. Work

This section addresses issues concerning work and employment. Good citizens work hard and contribute positively to the nation's economy. Do the teenagers want to get to the top in their future job? Do they consider that a job gives you a sense of purpose or would they be quite happy to be unemployed? Do they consider that most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to? Would it be important to them to work hard when they get a job? Would they like to do a job which helps others?

8. Politics

Good citizens need to be politically aware. Do the young people intend to vote when they are old enough or do they consider that politics is irrelevant to their lives? Do they think that politicians do a good job or that it makes no difference which political party is in power? Do they believe that there are too many foreign people living in Britain and that immigration should be restricted?

9. Global fears

Good citizens will have a wider concern for the world. How many of the young people are concerned about nuclear war or about the risk of biological and chemical warfare? Are they worried about the risk of terrorism? Are they concerned about the poverty of the developing world and do they consider that there is anything they can do to help to solve the world's problems?

10. Environmental issues

The evangelical community is sometimes accused of holding beliefs which contribute to environmental problems. Are the teenagers concerned that we use too much of the Earth's resources and about the risk of pollution to the environment? Do they make a special effort to recycle and to help to save energy resources? Are they concerned about plants and animals becoming extinct?

11. Education

This section is designed to assess the views that the young people hold about the unusual education that they are receiving. Do they consider that education is about learning facts and passing exams or is it also about

learning to live in a right way? Is education about understanding how to think about life? Does it include understanding how other people think about life? The teenagers are receiving a specifically Christian education. Do they agree that different religions have different views of life and will educate in different ways? Would the pupils want their own children to go to a Christian school?

Results from the four above sections, taken together, will ensure that an in depth and extensive analysis is possible so that the survey can achieve its aim of making visible the kind of young people who are emerging from the new Christian schools.

5.3 Data collection

The 23 schools with secondary departments belonging to the Christian Schools Trust in 2006 were invited to participate in the survey. All agreed to do so and 22 subsequently returned completed questionnaires. Three further schools, of a similar nature but not members of the Trust, also took part. In each school pupils of the age equivalent to Years 9, 10 and 11 (13 to 16 years-old) were invited to complete the questionnaire and the great majority did so. The administration of the questionnaire followed a standard procedure and was conducted under examination conditions. The pupils were told not to write their name on the booklet, so that they could be assured of complete anonymity, and it was stressed to them that no-one in their own school would look at the completed questionnaires.

5.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS statistical package using the crosstabs and frequencies routines. In addition to providing an overview of the whole sample, this enabled internal comparisons to be made between the responses of the pupils according to their sex, their age and their religious commitment. Previous surveys of a similar nature (Francis, 2001, pp56-81) have compared the responses of Year 9 with those of Year 10 so these were the year groups selected for the comparison by sex. However, the decision was made to compare the responses of Year 9 with those of Year 11, rather than with Year 10, as the wider age gap would be predicted to show greater age-related differences. For the comparisons in terms of religious commitment, it was decided to compare the views of those who identified themselves as Christians with those who claimed to hold to no religion. The numbers of pupils who held to other religions was found to be too small to provide meaningful comparisons.

The data, where possible, were compared with published data, collected and analysed by Francis (2001) during the 1990s, a major project known as the Teenage Religion and Values survey and which will be referred to in this study, for convenience, as the Values Survey. The Values Survey covered the responses of nearly 34,000 pupils from a wide range of denominational and non-denominational schools. It included 128 items compared with 204 in the current survey; 78 items were the same in each survey. Ideally, the responses of the pupils from the new Christian schools, obtained by the current survey, need to be compared directly with those of their peers currently in other schools, since it is now 10 to 15 years since the Values Survey was carried out. Such information is not yet available. However,

the research team which conducted the major survey in the 1990s is committed to repeating the exercise carried out then so that a comparable database relating to the current decade can be established (Francis and Robbins, 2005, p24).

5.5 The target population

The current survey aimed to cover as many as possible of the teenagers to be found in Years 9, 10 and 11 of the new Christian schools, particularly from those schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust (CST). Earlier surveys of this nature (Francis and Kay, 1995; Francis, 2001) have concentrated on Years 9 and 10 and have not included Year 11. It was decided to include Year 11 for two reasons. First, the age range covered by Years 9, 10 and 11 normally runs from 13 to 16 years of age. With the exception of those in Year 8 who will have reached the age of 13 and of those very few who might be receiving their education out of their age group, the project will therefore aim to survey the great majority of the teenagers receiving their education in the new Christian schools. Second, by including those in Year 11, the survey has provided a base-line against which this particular group can be compared in future years since a key question which can be addressed by future surveys is the extent to which the views of the former pupils change once they have left the environment of a new Christian school.

5.6 The respondents

In the event, 25 schools returned completed questionnaires, of which 22 were schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust. A total of 695 thoroughly completed questionnaires were returned, of which 673 were from CST schools,

leaving just 22 from the three schools unconnected to the Trust. The schools had been asked to indicate how many pupils they currently had registered in Years 9, 10 and 11 at the time that the questionnaire was administered. The Christian Schools Trust schools indicated that they had a total of 782 pupils of this age. The three other schools did not provide this information but given that they only returned 22 questionnaires between them, they were clearly very small schools. The figures indicate that the 673 pupils who completed questionnaires from schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust amounted to 86% of their total. The responses should therefore provide a reliable picture of the beliefs, views, values and concerns of the young people who are emerging from this sector of the educational scene.

Of the 695 young respondents, 364 (52%) were male and 331 (48%) were female. They were evenly divided between the year groups, with 234 (34%) in year 9, 232 (33%) in Year10 and 224 (32%) in Year 11. (Five respondents failed to indicate their year group). The majority (55%) were from suburban neighbourhoods, with 28% from urban and 15% from rural localities. The overwhelming majority (83%) were white with 6% mixed race, 6% black African, 2% black Caribbean, and 2% Asian. Seventy-five percent lived with both natural parents. Of the 25% whose parents had been separated or divorced, 12% lived with one natural parent and 8% with one natural parent and her or his partner. The remaining 5% lived with adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents or guardians.

Eighty-seven percent of the teenagers in the new Christian schools identified themselves as Christians, with 11% claiming to have no religion. The remaining 2% included very small numbers of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The

Christian respondents were given the opportunity to indicate the Christian denomination or grouping with which they identified. Fifteen per cent indicated that they had no connection with a church or group. Thirteen percent were Baptist, 12% Church of England, 6% Methodist, and 15% Pentecostal. Two per cent indicated that they were Roman Catholic and 1% identified with the Salvation Army. The remaining 37% of the young people chose to use the “other” option which enabled them to specify their church grouping if it did not fit into one of the given categories. Twenty-eight different church groups were indicated, all of which would come under the broad heading of Evangelical. The majority of these were either independent churches or churches from the new, charismatic groupings.

The data reflecting the religious observance of the respondents can be seen in Table 5.1. It indicates that the great majority of the teenagers attend church regularly, pray regularly and read the Bible regularly.

Table 5.1
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their religious observance

Read Bible every week	49%
Read Bible at least once per month	67%
Pray every week	73%
Pray at least once per month	81%
Attend church at least once per week	69%
Attend church at least once per month	77%

The profile of churches with which the teenagers from the new Christian schools are associated reinforces the picture of those schools as representing an unusual subsection of British society, one that is strongly religious and ideological. The remaining chapters will present and analyse the beliefs, views, values and personal

concerns of the teenage pupils receiving their education within these unusual schools.

Chapter 6

The pupils: their religious beliefs and attitudes to religion

The beliefs of the pupils concerning Christianity are of particular interest and importance to any consideration of the new Christian schools. The schools exist to protect the children of Christian parents from anti-Christian influences within modern society and to build on the Christian upbringing that the children are receiving in the home. Parents make considerable sacrifices to achieve this kind of education for their child. Have these sacrifices been worthwhile? When they reach their teenage years are the young people in the schools continuing to follow the faith of their parents? Does their attitude to religion and do their beliefs in general accord with the teachings of Christianity? A wide-ranging selection of categories of statements was included in the survey in an attempt to answer these questions.

Research of this type has an extensive pedigree. Francis and Kay (1995) surveyed over 13 000 teenagers from Years 9 and 10. A subsequent survey covered 34 000 young people of this age (Francis, 2001). The items included in those surveys overlap extensively with those of the current survey and where appropriate comparisons will be made between the responses.

6.1 Attitude to Religion

This section analyses the responses to four items designed to assess the overall attitude of the young people in the new Christian schools to religion, defined in its widest sense and placed in both a personal and a global context. It is designed to set the scene for the more detailed sections which follow by indicating, with broad brush strokes, to what extent the teenagers see themselves as religious, to what

extent they value the “spiritual” side of life and to what extent they see spirituality as possibly having a “dark” side. Finally, widening the horizons, how do they see the role of religion in the wider world?

Table 6.1
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitude to religion

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I am a religious person	21	21	59
I am a spiritual person	14	28	58
I am a superstitious person	70	21	9
Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today	51	43	15

Although a total of 89% of the teenagers identified themselves as belonging to a major religion, only 59% were prepared to describe themselves as religious people. A further 21% were not sure if they were religious or not, while 21% were sure that they were not religious, a much higher figure than the 11% who identified themselves as belonging to no religion. There are two possible explanations for these discrepancies. For some of the pupils, their adherence to a major religion might be purely a cultural phenomenon. A much more likely explanation in this particular context is related to the type of church background from which those young people who identified themselves as Christian come. Of the total number of pupils, 12% come from Church of England churches and a further 2% from Roman Catholic churches. The remaining church-going 71% all belong to church groupings which could broadly be described as non-conformist, evangelical and/or charismatic. These churches frequently teach that to be a Christian and to be “religious” are two different concepts. For them, “religion” refers to outward observance of ceremonies and rituals while Christianity is seen as essentially a

personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is quite possible for those who come from this kind of background to be devout Christians but at the same time not to consider themselves to be religious.

Similar considerations apply to the responses to the item “I am a spiritual person” with 14% of the pupils clear that they are not spiritual and 58% sure that they are. A substantial minority, 28%, were not sure how to respond to this item, perhaps because the word “spiritual” has come to have a range of different meanings in recent years. Many of the young people, coming as they do from evangelical backgrounds, may have understood the word in its “classical” sense:

Classical definitions of spirituality tended to concentrate on the religious, ecclesiastical, or matters concerned with the soul. Current studies in spirituality adopt much wider definitions, integrating all aspects of human life and experiences. (Fisher, Francis and Johnson, 2000, p133)

Brian Hill (1990b, p7) has commented on the change in meaning of the word “spiritual”:

What seems in the current climate to be giving new life to the use of the word ‘spiritual’ is its very vagueness. It suggests a level of educational purpose which has to do with self-development, creativity and the arts, avoiding any of the stigma associated with institutional religion, or intellectual philosophy, or moral imperative.

Many of the teenagers in the new Christian schools would not be used to the word “spiritual” being used to convey something “vague”. These pupils, when asked if they are “spiritual” people, would take the question to be asking whether or not they have “spiritual life”, in the sense of being alive to God. Others might be more familiar with the word in its more recent usage.

For those who consider themselves to be religious and/or spiritual people, what kind of religion and/or spirituality are they espousing? The majority of the teenagers in the Christian schools, 70%, are clear that they do not hold superstitious beliefs. Only 9% were prepared to describe themselves as superstitious and 21% were not sure whether they were superstitious or not. It would be interesting to compare this result with the views of the wider population of their peers. Is the current population of English teenagers in general superstitious or not? The evangelical background of many of the pupils would have included teaching specifically against superstitious attitudes or practices and the schools might be expected to have upheld and supported these views. Francis (2005a, pp134-135) as part of the Values Survey analysed the superstitious beliefs of 136 boys attending new Christian schools in the 1990s and compared them with 12,823 boys attending non-denominational state-maintained schools. He found that the boys attending Christian schools were less likely to hold superstitious beliefs. The question of the degree to which the current pupils in the Christian schools are or are not superstitious is investigated further in two later sections.

The statement “Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today” provoked a varied response. While 51% clearly disagreed with the statement, 34% were uncertain and 15% fully agreed with it. A different range of responses might have resulted if the item had been phrased “Christianity is mainly a force for bad in the world today”.

To summarise, the majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools consider themselves to be both religious and spiritual although a large minority would not

choose to describe themselves this way. For the great majority, this spirituality does not take a superstitious form. Most of the young people have a positive view of religion in that they would not be prepared to agree that religion mainly causes harm in today's world. The next section will examine the religious beliefs of the pupils in more detail.

6.2 Religious beliefs

A set of six statements was used in the survey to assess the attitudes of the young people towards specific Christian doctrines.

Table 6.2
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their religious beliefs

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I believe in God	5	10	85
I believe in the Holy Spirit	6	13	82
I believe in Jesus Christ	5	10	85
I think Christianity is the only true religion	12	15	73
I believe in Jesus as my personal Saviour	8	16	76
I believe that there is truth in all religions	48	34	18

To the first statement "I believe in God" only 5% returned an emphatically negative response, despite the fact that 11% had declared themselves to be of no religion. A further 10% were undecided about belief in God. A very large majority, 85%, declared unequivocally that they did believe in God. Francis (2001, p36) included this same item in the Values Survey conducted in the 1990s. At that time, he found that 41% of 13 to 15 year-olds believed in God. That 85% of the teenagers in the new Christian schools believe in God suggests that their Christian schooling has enabled them to retain their childhood faith. The figures were precisely the same in

response to the question about belief in Jesus Christ. Again, 85% said that they did believe in him and 5% said that they definitely did not. The statement “I believe in the Holy Spirit” received a slightly different response. This time, 82% said that they did believe in the Holy Spirit, 6% disagreed and 13% were not sure.

Evangelical Christians tend to define Christianity in terms of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The statement “I believe in Jesus as my personal Saviour” received a positive response from 76% of the young people, indicating that for 9% of the pupils their belief in Jesus Christ did not take this particular form. Eight percent of the pupils were sure that they did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and 16% were not sure about the matter either way.

Bible-based Christianity is often regarded as intolerant of other faiths. Two further questions were included to explore this matter with the pupils in the new Christian schools. Seventy three percent declared that they believed Christianity to be the only true religion, 12% disagreed with this view and 15% would not commit themselves one way or the other. Francis (2001, p36) found that only 16% of the general population of teenagers of a similar age in the 1990s took this position.

The statement “I believe there is truth in all religions” received a much more diverse response. Only 18% agreed with this view and nearly half of the young people, 48%, declared that they did not accept it. A further third, 34%, were still considering the matter. Taken together, the responses to the two questions do not suggest a mindless intolerance amongst the teenagers. Christianity makes exclusive

claims, which the majority of the young people accept. However, 52% of them are not prepared to say that there is no truth in any other religion.

The responses in this section, whereby the great majority of the young people declare themselves to hold traditional Christian beliefs, suggest the schools are succeeding in their aim of providing a Christian culture in which the children of Christian families can more easily retain the family faith. The next section will explore a further subset of religious beliefs concerning life after death, before more general conclusions are drawn.

6.3 Life after Death

Six statements were included in the survey concerning life after death.

Table 6.3
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their beliefs about life after death

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I believe in life after death	9	18	73
I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead	5	11	84
I believe that when I die I will come back to life as someone or something else	76	16	8
I believe in heaven	4	10	87
I believe in hell	7	13	80
I want a church funeral	7	28	65

Francis (2001, p36) found that 45% of teenagers in the 1990s believed in life after death. This compares with 73% of the teenagers in the new Christian schools in 2006. Nine percent did not agree and 18% were not sure about it. There was a greater certainty about whether or not Jesus himself rose from the dead; 84% agreed

that he did and only 5% were sure that he did not with 11% being uncertain on the matter. The comparable figure from the Values Survey was 30% (Francis, 2001, p36). The young people in the new Christian schools were more likely to believe in heaven than in hell. Eighty-seven percent believed in heaven compared with 80% who believed in hell. Only 4% were sure that they did not believe in heaven compared with 7% who did not believe in hell. Only 7% emphatically did not want a church funeral. Therefore at least 4% of those who say that they are not believers of any kind do want one. On the other hand, only 65% are sure that they do want one, a considerably smaller percentage than those who say they are Christian believers. This is a somewhat unexpected result. It is possible that some took the item to refer to a church funeral as opposed to one at a crematorium, or took the term “church wedding” to refer to the Anglican church, whereas their own background was non-conformist or “new church”.

A final question was included to see if the “new age” tendencies and influences from eastern religions that are now common in modern society have affected the beliefs of the young people in the new Christian schools. When asked to respond to the statement “I believe that when I die I will come back to life as someone or something else”, 76% definitely disagreed with it. However, this left 24% who could not say that they did not believe in some form of reincarnation, of whom 8% declared that they positively did believe in it.

To summarise the last two sections, the new Christian schools, for the most part, are producing teenagers who take an orthodox, conservative position on the central beliefs of Christianity. As few as one in twenty were prepared to state

unequivocally that they do not believe in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The figure for those who do not believe in the existence of heaven was even lower. As few as one in 25 were prepared to state that they definitely do not believe in it and the figure for those who would deny the existence of hell, although a little higher, was still very low. These figures suggest that about half of the 11% who say that have no religion do in fact retain a high view of Christianity, to the extent that they are not prepared to deny its central doctrines. The young people in the new Christian schools thus largely constitute a believing community. Are these beliefs theoretical and intellectual, or do they affect the lives of the pupils? The following section will examine this question.

6.4 Attitude to Christianity

The scale of attitude to Christianity used for a deeper assessment of the more personal beliefs of the pupils in the new Christian schools was developed by Francis (1988) and has been widely used within the social scientific study of religion, in the United Kingdom, in other English-speaking cultures and in a wide range of cultures where translation of the scale was necessary (Francis, 2009). The scale is concerned with affective response to religion, be that response positively in favour of it or negatively against it. The short form of the scale was included in the present study. The scale was employed by O’Keeffe (1992) in an earlier study conducted within the new Christian schools. From her investigation of 439 pupils aged between eight and sixteen who were attending six of the schools in the early nineties, O’Keeffe concluded (p105) that the schools were having a positive influence on their pupils’ attitude to Christianity and the current data support this conclusion.

Table 6.4
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitude to Christianity

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I know that Jesus helps me	8	15	77
I think going to church is a waste of time	75	14	11
God helps me to lead a better life	8	19	74
God means a lot to me	8	15	78
Prayer helps me a lot	13	19	68
I know that Jesus is very close to me	9	18	73
I think the Bible is out of date	79	13	7

In an age when very few teenagers look positively on church attendance, 75% of the teenagers in the new Christian schools denied that attending church was a waste of time. Eleven percent took the opposite view and 14% could not make a decision on the matter. At a time when the Bible is widely held to be out of date, 79% of the pupils disagreed with that position. A minority of 7% agreed with it and 13% were not sure.

In terms of spiritual and emotional experiences, a similarly large majority responded positively to the relevant statement. Thus, 77% agreed that they experienced Jesus helping them, 74% agreed that God helps them to lead a better life, 78% could testify that God means a lot to them and 73% were able to say that they know that Jesus is very close to them. In each of these cases, a fairly consistent minority figure of 7 to 9% disagreed with the statements. A smaller, although still large, majority, 68%, could confidently say that prayer helps them a lot while a correspondingly larger minority of 13% denied this.

Francis (2009, pp136-37) describes how a number of studies over the past 25 years have mapped the relationship between attitude to Christianity, as assessed by the Francis scale, and mental health, as assessed by Eysenckian personality measures. He reports that repeated analyses demonstrate a significant negative relationship between psychoticism scores and a positive attitude toward Christianity, implying that a positive attitude to Christianity is associated with higher levels of mental health. The great majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools demonstrate a positive attitude to Christianity and therefore might be expected to score highly on indicators of mental health. Similarly, the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity has now been employed in a series of studies alongside the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Francis, 2009, pp140-141). Of the seven studies, six demonstrated a significant positive correlation between happiness and attitude towards Christianity with the seventh showing no significant correlation. On balance, therefore, it seems that the young people in the new Christian school might be expected to score highly on indicators for happiness.

In summary, Christianity is not merely an intellectual belief system for the majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools, who confidently assert that they have a personal faith that affects their daily lives. However, a minority of around 8 or 9% take the opposite position and a further 14 to 19% are not sure what Christianity means to them. Research indicates that the positive attitude towards Christianity displayed by the majority is likely to result in benefits related to mental health and personal happiness and subsequent sections will explore this possibility.

6.5 Images of God

The image that a person has of God is increasingly regarded as having relevance to widely differing aspects of their mental health and world and life views (Bradshaw, Ellison and Flanelly, 2008; Froese and Bader, 2008; Venter, 2008). Francis (2005b) investigated a sample of 755 pupils aged between 11 and 18 attending two schools, one Roman Catholic and one non-denominational. He found a significant correlation between positive God images and positive self-esteem and concluded:

What the present data are not consistent with is a theoretical model which posits that theological views about the nature of God are irrelevant to understanding the self. Ideas about the nature of God are important for understanding what individuals think about themselves. (Francis, 2005b, p117)

What kind of God do the pupils in the new Christian schools believe in and how do these beliefs relate to their views of themselves and others? Eight statements dealing with these issues were included in the survey

Table 6.5
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their view of God

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I believe that God is loving	5	12	84
I believe that God is kind	4	12	84
I believe that God is merciful	4	14	82
I believe that God cares about me personally	5	14	81
I believe that God is forgiving	5	13	83
I believe that God answers prayer	5	15	80
I believe that God punishes people who do wrong if they do not repent	13	30	58
I believe that God is in control of history	7	24	69

The responses indicate that the majority of the pupils have positive images of God.

Eighty-four percent of them believe that God is loving with the same percentage

believing that he is kind. Eighty-three percent believe that he is forgiving and 82% that he is merciful. Eighty-one percent believe that God cares about them personally and 79% believe he answers prayer. In each case, the percentage disagreeing with these beliefs varied very little, registering between 4 and 5%, with between 12 and 15% indicating that they were not sure how to respond to the statements.

Two items received responses differing from the general consensus. The teenagers in the new Christian schools were much less sure how to respond to the statement “I believe that God punishes people who do wrong if they do not repent”. Fifty-eight percent agreed that this is the case but 30% did not know whether they agreed with the statement or not and 13% definitely did not agree with it. Francis (2001, p36) included a similar item in his major survey. The statement then was phrased “I believe God punishes people who do wrong” and did not include a reference to repentance. Francis found that just 20% of his large sample agreed with the statement. The reference to repentance was added for the pupils in the new Christian schools to take account of the strong emphasis within evangelical Christianity that repentance leads to forgiveness from God, obviating the need for punishment. The statement “I believe God is in control of history” to a lesser degree also received a more varied response. Sixty-nine percent of the young people have this view of God, 7% disagree with it and 24% were unsure what they believed.

To summarise, the teenagers in the new Christian schools for the most part display a consistent profile of belief in positive images of God. This might therefore be expected to be reflected in correspondingly high levels of self esteem.

6.6 Church and society

Francis (2001, p 39) included in the Values Survey eight statements concerning attitude to the church and its role in society. Six of those statements were included in the current study.

Table 6.6
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their views concerning church and society

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
The Church seems irrelevant to life today	67	24	9
The Bible seems irrelevant to life today	71	16	14
I want my children to be baptised/christened/dedicated in church	7	23	70
I want to get married in church	3	18	80
Religious Education should be taught in school	5	14	81
Schools should hold a religious assembly every day	33	37	30
Christian ministers/vicars/priests do a good job	5	28	68

The responses indicate that the majority of the young people in the new Christian schools have a positive view of both the church and the Bible. Sixty-seven percent do not agree that the church is irrelevant in current society and only 9% are sure that it is. About one quarter, 24%, could not decide either way. Seventy-one percent disagree with the view that the Bible is irrelevant in today's world, 14% believe that it is and 16% are unsure. The confidence of the young people in the relevance of the church for today is reflected in their views about how it should figure in respect of marriage and the bringing up of children. Eighty percent declared that they would like to get married in church and a mere 3% disagreed with this view. Seventy percent would want their children to be baptised or dedicated in church, with just 7% disagreeing and 23% undecided on the matter. In the light of these findings it is

not surprising that 68% of the teenagers claim to believe that Christian ministers do a good job, a view that is rejected by only 5%, with 28% yet to make up their minds.

Two further statements dealt with the role of religion in school, an issue of particular interest within the context of the new Christian schools. Eighty-one percent of the pupils agreed that religious education should be taught in school with a very small minority, 5%, disagreeing with this view and 14% undecided. These figures indicate that the young people are not rebelling against the strongly religious nature of the education that they themselves are receiving. The figures contrast noticeably with the 38% of pupils that Francis (2001, p38) found to be positive about religious education in his survey in the 1990s.

The question of whether or not schools should hold a religious assembly every day met with a response that was at variance with all the other responses in this section. The views of the young people were fairly evenly divided, with 30% agreeing that this should happen, 33% disagreeing and 37% unsure on the matter. Thus, the majority, 66%, did not confidently agree that for schools to hold a religious assembly was a good thing. The reason for this may be that the young people do not enjoy the assemblies provided by their schools and this possibility would merit further investigation. However, there are at least two further possible explanations for the equivocal response to this particular issue. The new Christian schools do not distinguish between one part of their school day and another. Their assemblies are not considered to be any more or less “religious” than any other part of the school day, since the whole day is supposed to be conducted in a Christian context.

Some of the young people may therefore have been unsure how to respond to the term “religious assembly”. On the other hand, some of the young people may have felt that it made a considerable difference what kind of school the statement was referring to. They may have believed that it was appropriate for a school with a religious foundation to hold a religious assembly but not for one with a secular foundation and that they therefore could not give a positive answer to the general way in which the item was phrased.

To summarise, the young people in the new Christian schools, who might be expected to have a much closer first-hand knowledge of church life than the general population, retain a very positive view of the church, of church ministers and of the Christian teachings and practices that the church upholds. They do not appear to be reacting negatively to the religious nature of the education that they are receiving, believing that religious education would benefit all schools. However, they are unsure about the desirability of religious assemblies in a school context.

6.7 Non-traditional beliefs

There is a general perception that the decline of the influence of Christianity in British culture over the past fifty years has seen a concomitant rise in what would once have been regarded as superstitious and occultist beliefs. Traditional Christianity has always discouraged these views and the new Christian schools might be expected to have encouraged their pupils to have resisted the influence of popular culture in this regard. Francis (2005a, pp134-135) found this to be the case in his survey of 136 teenage boys attending the schools. That survey had included four items concerned with ghosts, horoscopes, fortune-tellers and contacting the

spirits of the dead. He concluded from the results that boys attending new Christian schools are much less likely to hold superstitious beliefs than those attending non-denominational schools. Francis and Robbins (2005, p31) came to very similar conclusions in their survey of pupils from the schools who live in urban areas. Further statements were added to the current survey to take the investigation further. These statements covered the areas of belief in tarot cards, vampires and the use of magic.

Table 6.7
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their non-traditional beliefs

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I believe in my horoscope	80	14	6
I believe fortune-tellers can tell the future	78	14	9
I believe that tarot cards can tell the future	83	12	5
I believe it is possible to contact spirits of the dead	58	21	22
I believe in ghosts	54	24	23
I believe magic can be used for good	56	28	15
I believe magic can be used for bad	11	21	68
I believe in vampires	87	8	5

The results in this section indicate that majority of the pupils educated in the new Christian schools reject non-traditional beliefs. With regard to being able to predict the future, 80% reject the use of horoscopes, 78% deny that fortune-tellers can tell the future and 83% similarly reject the use of tarot cards. In each of these cases, 12 - 14% were not sure how to respond and a small minority, ranging from 5-9% agreed with the statements. These figures contrast markedly with those obtained by Francis in the nineties for the general school population (Francis, 2001, p40) Then, 36% of pupils in general of this age believed in their horoscope compared with just 6% of the current pupils in the new Christian schools.

There was less agreement among the young people about whether it is possible to contact the spirits of the dead. While 58% denied that this was possible, about one fifth, 22%, felt that it was possible and 21% were not sure either way. Similarly, 54% denied the existence of ghosts, while 23% agree that they exist and 24% are not sure whether they do or not. A very large majority, 88%, gave no credence to the view that vampires exist, 5% believe that they do and 8% have no view on the matter. When it came to the question of the use of magic, 68% agreed that bad purposes could be achieved by the use of magic, while 11% disagreed with this view and 21% were not sure about it. The converse, that magic could be used for good purposes received a different response. Only 15% agreed that magic can be used for good purposes, 56% disagreed with this view and 28% did not know how to respond to the idea.

In summary, while the great majority of the young people in the new Christian schools consider themselves to be both religious and spiritual, their spirituality needs to be carefully defined. The belief systems of the teenagers in this regard appear to follow lines that would be expected from those who hold traditional Christian views. Given the increasing prevalence of other forms of spirituality in current British society, it was decided to investigate further the degree to which the young people might hold to superstitious views and practices.

6.8 Luck and Superstition

Seven statements were included in the survey to investigate in more detail the extent to which the pupils in the new Christian schools hold superstitious views and

engage in superstitious practices. The results did in fact reveal a more varied range of responses.

Table 6.8
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their attitude to luck and superstition

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I have crossed my fingers for luck	48	13	39
I wear a cross or crucifix for protection	85	11	3
I think it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors	84	9	6
I believe everyone has a guardian angel/spirit	1	34	48
I believe bad things happen in threes	74	23	4
I say 'touch wood' when talking about bad things not happening	75	14	11
I have used charms to protect me from evil	93	5	2

In the light of the data reported in the previous section, it is somewhat surprising that 39% of the young people have crossed their fingers for luck and only a minority, 48%, claim never to have done so. The origin of the practice of crossing one's fingers is believed to be Christian, as essentially a shortened version of the sign of the cross. However, most of the pupils in the new Christian schools come from Protestant backgrounds where such practices have historically been regarded as superstitious and strongly discouraged. The result found for this item contrasts with the finding that a mere 2% have used charms to protect themselves from evil, a practice that is more clearly non-Christian and which 93% of the young people repudiate. However, 85% do not wear, and presumably would not wear, a cross or crucifix for protection; only 3% do so. In this case the expected 'Protestant' view seems to prevail. A very similar percentage, 84%, do not think it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors while 6% agree that it is. The teenagers are less clear about the

practice of saying “touch wood”. Seventy-five percent do not do so, 11% do engage in this practice and 14% are not sure whether they do or not. Do they really mean that they do not know what their behaviour is? One possibility, as with other items in this section concerned with practice rather than belief, is that when they say they neither agree or disagree with it they are intending to convey that they may engage in the behaviour but do not necessarily intend anything superstitious by it.

Two further statements concerned with superstitious beliefs rather than practices produced a more varied range of responses. In particular, the pupils were much less agreed on the issue of the existence of guardian angels or spirits. Nearly half, 48%, agreed that everyone has a guardian angel or spirit and a large minority, 34%, were not sure what they thought about it while 18% definitely did not agree. The existence of angels is strongly affirmed throughout the Bible and the existence of guardian angels for children is hinted at in at least one text (Matthew 18:10). It would seem that the young people are aware of this and that many of them are not sure how this teaching should be applied in the modern age. A belief that bad things happen in threes, however, seems to them to be more clearly superstitious. In this case, 75% of them reject the belief and only 4% agree with. However, 23%, a fairly large minority, did not know how to respond to this item, possibly because it was the first time that they had ever come across such a suggestion.

To summarise and add comment to the last two sections, the Protestant, Bible-based background that the majority of the young people in the new Christian schools are experiencing in both the home and the school seems to have resulted in a rejection of the non-traditional beliefs held by others in current British society. The young

people maintain that they are not superstitious in either belief or practice. This is an important finding. The rise of a strident secularism in the early part of the twenty-first century has had as one of its mantras the view that religious ideas and practices are to be equated with superstition. The young people in the new Christian schools are very religious but not superstitious in the generally accepted use of the term. There is a case to be made for more attention to be paid to the correlation between superstitious beliefs and practices and carefully defined religious positions.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reported on the religious beliefs of the young teenagers who are receiving their education within the evangelical context of the new Christian schools. Christian parents place their children in these schools in the hope that by the time they reach their teenage years those children will not be rebelling against the faith in which they have been brought up. The data presented here indicate that the parents should not be disappointed. The great majority of the young people maintain a traditional Christian belief system, express a personal Christian faith and reject the alternative world views that are increasingly common in the society around them.

One important area of religious belief has not been dealt with in this chapter. Beliefs concerning origins, especially the origin of human life, currently constitute a contentious issue in British society, especially where education is concerned. The topic of creation and evolution therefore has particular relevance to the new Christian schools. The schools may well constitute the only setting within the

United Kingdom where science education is approached within a creationist framework. For this reason the next chapter will focus exclusively on this issue.

Chapter 7

The pupils: their beliefs concerning science and creation

What do the teenagers in the new Christian schools believe about the controversial questions of creation versus evolution and of the relationship between religion and science? As Lesslie Newbigin has commented, the parameters for this debate are wide-ranging and essentially philosophical:

The work of historians and philosophers of science has surely shown conclusively that the attempt to draw an absolute boundary between science as what we all know, and religion as what some of us believe, is futile. Both science and religion claim to give a true account of what is the case, and both involve faith commitments. (Newbigin, 1990, p95)

As described in Chapter 3, the great majority of the schools teach their science from a creationist viewpoint. This survey therefore has the opportunity to make a distinct contribution to the controversial issue of whether or not schools should allow creationism and intelligent design to be taught alongside evolution in science lessons. The importance of the matter was brought into sharp focus by the forced resignation of the Revd Professor Michael Reiss (Baker, 2009b) and it remains a major potential source of criticism for the new Christian schools. The categories considered in this chapter therefore carry a special significance. However, the designing of a questionnaire that can clearly elucidate views on creation and evolution is associated with particular difficulties, as the results of a recent survey, described below, indicate. These difficulties stem from the complex nature of the debate, and in particular from the need to define its key concepts very carefully. For example, John Lennox has cautioned against using the term “evolution” as though it has a single, agreed meaning:

This is manifestly not the case. Discussion of evolution is frequently confused by failure to recognise that the term is used in several different ways, some of which are so completely

non-controversial that rejection of them might indeed evidence some kind of ignorance or stupidity. (Lennox, 2007, p98)

A similar problem arises in connection with the term “creationism” since it also can be used in different ways. For example, it is often used pejoratively to mean an anti-science position, founded on ignorance and imported in recent years from the United States. However, various forms of creationism have a long history in the UK. The Creation Science Movement (formerly the Evolution Protest Movement) was founded in Britain in 1932 and claims to be the oldest creationist society in the world (www.csm.org.uk) while the Biblical Creation Society, again a British organisation, was founded by academic theologians and scientists in 1976 (www.biblicalcreation.org.uk). The recent publication *The New Creationism* (Garner, 2009) provides an overview of the current position taken by British creationism.

Problems also exist concerning the definition of the position taken by the Intelligent Design movement. It is frequently referred to as a version of creationism, although it consistently denies this. Its origins, history and nature have been documented (Woodward, 2003, 2006; Dembski and McDowell, 2008) and can be accessed via its public face, the Discovery Institute, based in Seattle (www.discovery.org). These sources indicate that the basic premise of the movement is that living things show evidence of having been designed, that they demonstrate “specified complexity” (Dembski and McDowell, 2008, pp104-109) and that the nature of the designer is quite deliberately excluded from discussion so that the debate can be solely about the nature of the scientific evidence. William Dembski explains the concept:

Intelligent design is the science that studies signs of intelligence. Note that a sign is not the thing signified. Intelligent design does not try to get into the mind of a designer and figure out what the designer is thinking. Its focus is not a designer's mind (the thing signified) but the artefact due to a designer's mind (the sign). (Dembski, 2004, p19)

The Darwin bicentennial year, 2009, witnessed a flood of both media and academic attention to the status of evolutionary theory in the twenty-first century. A survey of the general public conducted in 2008 suggested that more than half of the British population are unconvinced by Darwinism. That survey, conducted by the polling company ComRes on behalf of the theological think-tank Theos, reported its full findings in March 2009 (Lawes, 2009). The initial report, included in the publication *Rescuing Darwin*, had described those findings as “complex and confused” (Spencer and Alexander, 2009, p31). The full report subsequently revealed the extent of the complexity and confusion. No fewer than 45% of the responses (932 from a total of 2060) were considered to be too confused or contradictory to be classified (Lawes, 2009, p12). That confusion may have been partly engendered by the way in which the questions themselves were constructed. The survey suffered from some fundamental flaws in that regard, particularly in its choice and definition of four categories of belief about origins. In the research report, Lawes states:

Below we look at the percentages of the population who hold to four particular views relating to the origin and development of life. Following on from this, clusters of opinion are identified and grouped together. These four positions are: Young Earth Creationism (YEC), Intelligent Design (ID), Atheistic Evolution (AE) and Theistic Evolution (TE), and can be defined as follows:

- Young Earth Creationism is the idea that God created the world sometime in the past 10,000 years.
- Theistic Evolution is the idea that evolution is the means that God used for the creation of all living things on earth.

- Atheistic Evolution is the idea that evolution makes belief in God unnecessary and absurd.
- Intelligent Design is the idea that evolution alone is not enough to explain the complex structures of some living things, so the intervention of a designer is needed at key stages. (Lawes, 2009, p27)

In each case, the respondent was asked to say whether they thought the statement was definitely true, probably true, probably untrue or definitely untrue. As Lawes makes clear, these definitions, together with another set about the origins of human life, constituted the base-line against which responses to other items in the survey were measured. It can be argued that the definitions themselves set the scene for the confusion which followed, for the following reasons.

First, each of the first three definitions uses a different type of parameter as its essential feature, building in the potential for confusion from the start. For example, the definition of position 1 (Young Earth Creationism) focuses exclusively on the age of the Earth. As Professor Steve Fuller has pointed out in a critique of the survey, position 1 actually says nothing significant about evolution since it is compatible with God working through evolution over a short time frame (Fuller, 2009). It therefore overlaps with position 2 (Theistic Evolution) and position 4 (Intelligent Design). Position 2 (Theistic Evolution), on the other hand, is defined in terms of the means that God might have used in creating living things, a parameter that is not included in position 1. Position 3 (Atheistic Evolution) is defined in a fundamentally different way from the other three positions. It says nothing about *when* or *how* evolution might have occurred, the characterising features of positions 1 and 2 respectively, but rather this time is about the *consequences* of belief in evolution. Further, it uses two different adjectives to describe belief in God,

“unnecessary” and the emotive “absurd”, thus creating a problem for a respondent who might wish to say that evolution makes belief in God unnecessary but not necessarily absurd.

Second, to add to the potential confusion, the definition of position 4 (Intelligent Design) is not one that most people in the Intelligent Design movement would recognise as theirs. In his book *Understanding Intelligent Design*, leading intelligent design theorist William Dembski describes how he is often asked how intelligent design fits into the creation/evolution debate:

So how *does* ID [intelligent design] fit into the creation-evolution debate? The intelligent design community is a broad tent. We have only begun to glimpse how design gets implemented and expressed in the fabric of nature. Some argue that God continually intervenes in nature to create new species. Others accept common descent, arguing that God front-loaded the universe with information for it to evolve. Many other ID theorists, on the other hand, reject common descent. ID theorists may disagree over common descent, but they agree that organisms show clear scientific evidence of design. The primary question for intelligent design is not *how* organisms came to be (although they regard that as an important question also). Rather, it is whether organisms demonstrate clear, observable marks of being intelligently caused. (Dembski and McDowell, 2008, pp41-44)

Position 4 is essentially another “*how*” based definition and therefore will have failed to identify many of the advocates of intelligent design since a range of views on this is held amongst them. In fact, some (possibly most) of the leaders of the movement would not have known how to respond to it, had they been asked to participate in this survey. For example, Michael Behe, author of one of the most significant ID publications, *Darwin’s Black Box* (Behe, 1996) makes it clear in his publication *The Edge of Evolution: the search for the limits of Darwinism* (Behe, 2007) that he accepts the Darwinian idea of common descent but argues that it requires intelligent guidance. His position therefore overlaps with position 2.

Jonathan Wells, on the other hand, author of the influential ID publication *Icons of Evolution* (Wells, 2000), rejects common descent and would overlap with position 1. The evidence suggests that intelligent design is not a position that will stand on its own as a separate category for belief about origins (Nagel, 2008; Ross, 2005). The definition used in the Theos survey will have identified only a small subset of those who advocate intelligent design and the remainder will probably have identified themselves under other categories. It could be argued that *anyone* who believes in a Creator God is very likely to believe in at least some element of real, as opposed to apparent, design in nature.

Third, the limited definition of young earth creationism, whereby it is defined solely in terms of time, hides the fact that most creationists, be they young or old earth, accept some elements of what would normally be regarded as evolution. This view is elaborated in the publication *The Natural Limits to Biological Change* (Lester and Bohlin, 1989) where the authors state:

That populations of living organisms may change in their anatomy, physiology, genetic structure, etc., over a period of time is beyond question. What remains elusive is the answer to the question, How much change is possible, and by what genetic mechanism will these changes take place? (Lester and Bohlin, 1989, p13)

Paul Garner summarises how the creationist view of biological change differs from that taken by Darwinian evolutionists:

1. According to evolutionary theory, all living things can be traced back to a single ancestor, but in creation theory each baramin [created kind] had a *separate* ancestry.
2. According to evolutionary theory, the changes in organisms were brought about by unguided natural processes, but in creation theory living organisms were *designed* to change.

3. According to evolutionary theory, diversity is generated by random genetic accidents (mutations) acted upon by natural selection, but in creation theory the potential for variety was *already present, though latent*, within organisms. (Garner, 2009, p143)

An apparent failure to understand this aspect of the creationist position again built in a potential for confusion for the Theos/ComRes survey.

Creationists accept a considerable portion of the view that has come to be regarded as exclusively the property of Darwinian evolutionists, but they regard the process that gives rise to change as designed and ordained by God and as capable of happening rapidly (Garner, 2009, pp134-143). This, together with the difficulties involved with the given definition of intelligent design, explains something that the author of the ComRes report considered to be very unexpected and contradictory, namely the finding that young earth creationists are the most likely group to believe that there is truth in the other positions:

YECs are more likely than any other group to be open to the idea that other positions may be true. 68% say that TE is probably or definitely true, and 67% that ID is probably or definitely true. (Lawes, 2009, p15)

The confusion engendered by the use of the category definitions is compounded by other problems throughout the questionnaire. For example, the definition of the term “evolution” itself is a critical aspect of this debate. A failure to clarify what was meant by the term in each item of the survey may well have been a further contributing factor to the confusion that arose. The author of the report does not take into account that the respondents may have been interpreting the word differently at different times. The student textbook *Explore Evolution* describes the problem like this:

Some people use ‘evolution’ to refer to something as simple as small changes in bird beaks. Others use the same word to mean something much more far-reaching. Used one way, the word ‘evolution’ isn’t controversial at all; used another way, it’s hotly debated. Used equivocally, ‘evolution’ is too imprecise to be useful in a scientific discussion. (Meyer, *et al.* 2009, p8)

The authors then go on (pp8-9) to describe three major uses of the term “evolution”, maintaining that people sometimes get the definitions confused, even switching from one definition to another in mid-argument. First, “evolution” can simply mean change over time. Second, it can mean universal common descent, the idea that all living things are descended from a common ancestor. Third, it can mean the creative power of natural selection, the idea that the natural selection/mutation mechanism is capable of creating new living forms and has thus produced major change. Lennox (2007, pp99-101) goes further and describes five different ideas represented by the single term “evolution”, three of which he considers to be uncontroversial.

An analysis of the use of the word “evolution” throughout the Theos/ComRes questionnaire reveals how a failure to take into account how imprecise a word it is set up a situation where confusion was inevitable, resulting in data that were almost impossible to interpret. Space will only permit the following example. Question seven asked for a response to the following statements. Only one was permitted to be chosen:

1. Evolution and Christianity are totally incompatible; you can’t believe in both.
2. Evolution presents some challenges to Christianity but it is possible to believe in both.
3. Evolution and Christianity are wholly compatible and there is no tension at all between the two.
4. Evolution and Christianity are totally disconnected subjects and have nothing to do with each other.

Applying the three possible definitions of the term “evolution” quoted above to these items is an illuminating exercise. For example, if the first definition is used, that biological change can occur over time, then some young earth creationists could say that they disagree with the first statement. However, other young earth creationists might have the second definition in mind, the idea that all living things are descended from a common ancestor, in which case they will say that they agree with it.

The Theos/ComRes survey has been critically examined in some detail as a prelude to a description of the survey findings on these very issues conducted amongst the teenagers in the new Christian schools, most of whom have been exposed to a measure of direct creationist teaching. An extensive range of items was included in the questionnaire, grouped under three main headings, Creation and Evolution, Science and the Bible and Scientism. It was understood from the beginning that this is indeed a complex issue and that some of the items might prove to be inadequate to cope with the complexities and nuances of the debate.

7.1 Creation and Evolution

The teaching of creationism as an alternative to the theory of evolution constitutes one of the most controversial issues involving the new Christian schools. Walford (1995a, p20) investigated 53 of the schools in 1993 and found that the teaching of creation and evolution was one of their distinguishing features. This has been confirmed by a recent investigation involving the schools which took part in this survey, as described in Chapter 3. The Christian Schools Trust statement on the teaching of creationism and intelligent design (see Appendix 3) clarifies the

approach that the majority of the schools are taking. While a number of studies have investigated creationist attitudes amongst young people in different educational settings (Fulljames and Francis, 1987, 1988; Francis, Gibson and Fulljames, 1990; Fulljames, Gibson and Francis, 1991; Francis, Fulljames and Gibson, 1992; Kay and Francis, 1996, pp97-111; Francis and Greer, 1999, 2001; Astley, 2005), these have not included a specific investigation of the views of young people who have received their education in schools which have made this topic part of their *raison d'être*.

Three relevant empirical studies exist which inform the subject further. In one of these, Jeff Astley (2005, pp 39-51) found that belief in creationism was predictive of higher levels of personal dissatisfaction, with teenage creationist pupils tending to feel more worried, worthless, lonely and even desperate than do their evolutionist peers. He found this result surprising because:

Creationists and fundamentalists might be expected to argue that a firm belief in the word of God, plainly understood, should tend to an easing of the human spirit. But it does not appear to work like that. A non-creationist might explain this lack of psychological solace in terms of the cognitive dissonance between creationist belief and the adolescent's wider understanding of scientific, particularly biological, matters as well as her recognition that creationism is a minority option within society. (Astley, 2005, p49)

Astley concludes (p51) that these results demonstrate that creationism, as well as being bad for the brain because, in his view, it is scientifically mistaken, is "not even good for the heart and soul". However, that conclusion is open to debate. Perhaps it is not the creationism itself that is to blame but rather the experience of being educated as a creationist in a hostile evolutionist setting, in which one's heartfelt beliefs are despised and mocked and the religious foundations of one's

home and religious community are called in to question by something (science) which is claiming to have nothing to do with religion. Would a different kind of situation be found to prevail in the new Christian schools, most of which educate within a creationist setting? The data used by Astley in his study was obtained from a very large sample of nearly 34 000 teenagers (Astley, 2005, p45) drawn from 163 schools throughout England and Wales. The participating schools covered a wide range of independent and state-maintained schools. It would be fair to assume that very few of these schools would be providing a creationist setting for the science education of their pupils.

It is within the creationist setting of the new Christian schools that the two further empirical studies were conducted. Francis (2005a) investigated the views of 136 boys aged between 13 and 15 drawn from 19 of the schools. Francis (2005a, p133) found that 82% of them believed that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, compared with 19% of boys in non-denominational schools. However, contrary to Astley's findings, Francis goes on to describe how his data demonstrates that:

The boys attending Christian schools overall enjoy a significantly higher level of personal wellbeing in comparison with boys attending non-denominational schools. They are much more likely to feel that their life has a sense of purpose. They are much less likely to be depressed and to entertain suicidal thoughts. (Francis, 2005a, p138)

The second study investigated the spiritual health of students attending new Christian schools who live in urban areas (Francis and Robbins, 2005, pp 123-132). As the previous study demonstrated, pupils attending new Christian schools are also very likely to hold creationist beliefs. Francis and Robbins found that there are significant ways in which young people in the new Christian schools enjoy a higher

level of spiritual health compared with young people in non-denominational schools. Again, they were much more likely to feel that their life has a sense of purpose and much less likely to be depressed and to entertain suicidal thoughts (Francis and Robbins, 2005, p 236).

The three studies, taken together, suggest that creationist beliefs amongst pupils lead to “an easing of the human spirit”, exactly as Astley first predicted (2005, p 49), when the educational setting is coherent with the religious basis of the pupil’s life but that the opposite is true when the setting is hostile and debate is not permitted. In both settings, the pupils had been made aware that a theory of origins exists which eliminates the need for a Creator and which is held by the majority of modern scientists. It seems to be the educational setting, not the creationist beliefs themselves, which is leading to an anguished mental state for thousands of young people. Astley concludes his discussion by noting that further research is needed to provide a more nuanced account of the nature of adolescent creationism. The current survey is seeking to achieve just that.

This section therefore includes six statements of special interest to the current study. Has the creationist teaching provided by the schools resulted in a corresponding acceptance of creationism and rejection of evolutionary theory on the part of their pupils?

Table 7.1
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their beliefs about creation and evolution

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
The earth is billions of years old	45	42	27
I believe God made the world in six days of 24 hours	13	30	57
The earth is only a few thousand years old	24	37	39
I believe in evolution creating everything over millions of years	76	16	7
Scientists have discovered how the world was made	67	25	8
Everything in the world was made by natural forces – it was not designed	71	23	5

As shown in Table 7.1, the idea that evolution is responsible for creating everything over millions of years is clearly rejected by the teenagers in the new Christian schools. Seventy-six percent of them reject this view outright and a further 16% do not want to commit themselves on the issue. Only 7% agree that evolution has creative powers. The item itself could be open to the criticism that the term “evolution” is not adequately defined. However, the reference to evolution as the active agent in creating everything seems to have enabled the respondents to identify the term unambiguously as meaning naturalistic, materialistic or atheistic evolution whereby God is excluded from the process.

The statement “I believe God made the world in six days of 24 hours” would be regarded by many as summing up the essence of creationism. Fifty-seven percent of the pupils fully agree with this and a further 30% are not sure that they disagree with it. The fact that responses to this item are less emphatic than the rejection of evolution described for the previous item is a further indication of the nuanced

positions possible amongst creationists. This item insists on a response requiring the “days” to be of 24 hours, a fairly extreme position. It could be this that has led to equivocation on the part of 30% of the pupils. However, only a small minority, 13%, reject the concept completely. The young people are even less sure about the age of the Earth, with 37% of them expressing uncertainty on this issue. Thirty-nine percent of the pupils could clearly say that they believe the Earth to be young, while about one quarter, 24%, reject the idea that it is. Conversely, 27% agree that the Earth is billions of years old, while 45% are sure that it is not but nearly half, 45%, of the young people do not want to commit themselves on the matter.

That modern science has its limits was asserted by the 67% of the young people who disagreed with the statement that scientists have discovered how the world was made. A further quarter, 25%, is undecided on the matter, while only 8% take the view that modern science has achieved this.

One item was included specifically to assess the pupil’s response to the idea of “intelligent design”. The viewpoint that there is scientific evidence for the existence of a designer is regarded by many as a form of creationism, although intelligent design theorists would deny this (Behe,1996, p5; Dembski, 2004, pp33-44; Dembski and McDowell, 2008). Seventy-one percent of the teenagers denied that everything in the world was made by natural forces in a manner which precluded a designer. Only 5% took the opposite view, with 23% expressing uncertainty on the matter.

The schools themselves claim that, in addition to placing all of their educational practice within a Biblical creationist framework, when it comes to science education they teach creationism alongside evolution as a debate. The responses of the young people in this section go some way towards supporting this claim. A substantial majority of the young people reject the concept that living things owe their origins to a process of evolution. A smaller majority endorse the Bible's account of creation. However, over the question of the age of the Earth their responses are more varied and a sizeable minority indicate that they have yet to make up their minds. This indicates that questions dealing with the age of the Earth may need to be investigated more precisely and again suggests that the definitions of creationism used in this kind of research need to become yet more nuanced.

A subsequent section will investigate the personal well-being of the pupils. This will throw further light on the issue described earlier: do creationist beliefs lead to an anguished mental state when the educational setting is more sympathetic to those views, or is such anguish rather a feature of those who hold creationist beliefs in a setting which they regard as hostile?

7.2 Science and the Bible

The teaching of creationism in science classes is an issue of more than theoretical importance. For example, the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Science and Reason was established with the aim of achieving a ban on such teaching in state schools. In the light of the importance of the issue, and also because of the acknowledged difficulty in achieving a sufficiently nuanced questionnaire on the topic, it was decided to investigate further the views of the young people who have been

educated in a creationist setting by including a further selection of items in the survey. This time the items focus specifically on the relationship between science and the Bible.

Table 7.2
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their beliefs about science and the Bible

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
God created the world as described in the Bible	6	16	78
God created the Universe including living creatures out of nothing	6	20	74
God formed man out of the dust of the Earth	7	22	71
God made woman out of man's rib	8	20	72
There was once a world-wide flood as described in the Bible	4	16	81
The world was once perfect but has been affected by sin	5	15	81
I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of evolution	67	24	10
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	47	34	19
You can't be a good scientist and believe in the Bible	68	24	8

Six of the items in Table 7.2 were designed to assess the beliefs of the young people that are contingent on a face-value acceptance of the early chapters of the book of Genesis. The response to the question “God created the world as described in the Bible” established that 78% of the young people agreed with this general statement, which differed from a similar statement in the previous section in that it did not include a mention of a time scale. Put this way, only 6% of the teenagers disagreed with the statement and 16% were not sure about it. Similarly, the general statement “God created the Universe including living creatures out of nothing” was fully

accepted by 74%, with 6% again taking the opposite view, while this time 20% could not reach a conclusion on the matter.

According to the evangelical viewpoint held by those who are running the schools, the manner of the creation of the first man and woman is of essential importance to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Cameron, 1983, pp84-91), who is described in the New Testament as the “second” or “last” Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). Seventy-one percent of the young people in the schools claim that they believe that God formed man out of the dust of the Earth and only 7% do not believe it. Similarly, 72% believe that God made woman from Adam’s rib, with 8% taking the opposite view. 81% of the teenagers believe that there was once a world-wide flood as described in the Bible with a tiny minority of 4% denying this, leaving 16% who are not sure about it.

Theodicy is of central and critical importance to the creation/evolution debate and one item was included in this connection. Theodicy concerns the issue of God’s goodness and justice in the face of the existence of suffering and evil. To the modern mind, this conundrum might appear to have nothing to do with the theory of evolution, but Cornelius Hunter has demonstrated that it is actually one of its defining concepts (Hunter, 2001). Hunter believes that Darwin was motivated towards evolution, not by direct evidence in favour of the theory but by problems with the notion of divine creation, because of how imperfect, even cruel, nature can be. “A good God would not have done it like this” is a common refrain when the subject is being debated. Creationists would argue that both suffering and death amongst animals and humans were not part of the original creation but instead are a

result of “Adam’s sin and the Edenic curse” (Tyler, 2003, p85). The great majority of the pupils, 81%, believe that the world was once perfect but has been affected by sin. Just 5% do not agree with this view and 15% have not yet decided one way or the other.

A further item revisited the theory of evolution itself. “I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of evolution” was phrased differently from a similar question in the last section in that a reference to “millions of years” was this time omitted. Again, when the issue of a timescale was not involved, the young people responded somewhat differently. This time, 67% unequivocally rejected the idea of evolution while 10% accepted it, with nearly a quarter, 24% not knowing how to respond. These figures compare with 76%, 7% and 16% respectively when the idea of millions of years was included.

There is a level of uncertainty amongst the young people as to whether or not science disproves the Biblical account of creation. Forty-one percent are sure that it does not but more than one third, 34%, are not sure whether it does or not. Again, nearly one quarter of the teenagers, 24%, agree that the science does disprove the Bible’s account of creation. The range of responses on this issue could be partly generated by an ambiguity in the item itself, since “science” is not defined in any way and is another term that is capable of carrying different meanings. The respondents might well have been wondering what kind of science is being referred to. Is the reference to laboratory science, the science of repeatable, verifiable experiments? If not, to what does it refer? The same criticism could possibly apply to a further statement which was included to assess the views of the young people

with respect to science itself. Does belief in creationism lead to a lower view of science? This question requires a much more thorough investigation than is possible within the scope of this survey, but a small contribution to the debate is made here. Sixty-eight percent of the young people educated within a creationist framework believe that you can be a good scientist and believe in the Bible. Only 8% deny the possibility of this, while nearly a quarter, 24%, have yet to make up their minds.

To summarise, the great majority of the young people in the new Christian schools accept a face-value reading of the early chapters of the Bible. They reject the theory of evolution and accept the existence of a supernatural designer. They hold traditional Christian views of Noah's flood and of the "fallen" nature of the created order. How they regard science itself needs to be further investigated using items which define the term "science" more precisely. However, the majority of the young people maintain that belief in the Bible does not prevent one from becoming a good scientist, suggesting that in general they do not reject the importance of the scientific process.

7.3 Scientism

Scientism has been defined as the view that scientific methods and scientific theories can attain to absolute truth (Fulljames and Francis, 1988, p78) or, similarly, that absolute truth is obtainable through science and science alone (Kay and Francis, 1996, p99). However, Sire (2004) defines scientism as "the notion that materialistic (naturalistic) science can answer all the questions that can be answered and that these are the only questions that need to be answered" (Sire, 2004, p 92).

This second definition is important to the analysis which will follow, since it distinguishes between one kind of science and another, between naturalistic science, which assumes that the supernatural can have nothing to do with science, and the (by implication) “super-naturalist” position taken by many of the founders of modern science (Fuller, 2008, p233). The new Christian schools would often be operating within the ‘super-naturalist’ paradigm whereas previous studies have used a scale to investigate scientism which is based on the first definition. A number of studies have investigated the interplay between attitudes to scientism (defined naturalistically), creationism, science and religion amongst school children (Fulljames and Francis, 1988; Francis, Gibson and Fulljames, 1990; Fulljames, Gibson and Francis, 1991; Kay and Francis, 1996, pp 97-111; Francis and Greer, 2001; Astley, 2005). The new Christian schools provide an ideal setting in which to investigate this matter further and six statements were included in the current survey with this end in view. To what extent do the young people in the schools accept or reject the claims of scientism, as defined by previous surveys?

Table 7.3
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their beliefs about scientism

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
Theories in science can be proved to be definitely true	29	44	27
Science will eventually give us complete control over the world	67	25	7
The laws of science will never be changed	25	61	15
I cannot trust both science and religion	36	47	17
Nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically	70	24	6
Science can give us absolute truths	52	34	14

In the context of the new Christian schools, “science” does not necessarily mean one thing and needs further definition. There is “science” connected with origins, much of which is historical in nature and therefore not open to what is normally regarded as the scientific method, and there is what might be summarised as “laboratory science”, where repeatable, verifiable outcomes are possible. The problem with the “scientism” scale used in this section is that to the pupils in the new Christian schools it might not be clear exactly what the term “science” is being employed to mean. Thus, the 61% of the pupils who did not know how to respond to the item “the laws of science will never be changed” possibly did not know exactly what was being meant by the term “laws of science”. Does the term, they might ask, refer to specific measurable laws, such as Boyle’s Law, or does it include much more diffuse and metaphysical ideas such as “evolution by natural selection” where the phrase can mean different things to different people?

That the young people were experiencing some confusion in responding to this scale is shown by the more assured response given to two of the items. The item “nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically” is more clearly referring to a naturalistic definition of “science” and a large majority, 70%, of the teenagers could confidently say that they disagreed with it, although about a quarter (24%) were still not sure. Similarly, “science will eventually give us complete control over the world” is a concept less dependent on an exact definition of the word “science” since it amounts to saying “human activity will eventually give us complete control over the world”, a view rejected by a clear majority, 67%, of the young people. Again, a quarter (25%) did not know how to respond. The data

looked at in this section suggest that a case can be made for a repeat of studies into “scientism” using a scale based on Sire’s definition, given above.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the beliefs of the young people as regards creation and evolution in some detail. While many of them were found to subscribe to what might be regarded as typical creationism, this was not true of all. The young people did not appear to be anti-science, with most of them claiming that belief in the Bible does not prevent one from becoming a good scientist. However, they maintained that there were limits to what science has yet discovered and they did not agree with the claims of scientism, so far as they understood them.

The results reveal that further research on this topic is needed. A more nuanced survey would be able to discern with greater clarity how the young people regard the scientific process itself and its relationship to the creation/evolution debate. The responses also raise four specific questions that would repay further investigation. First, what exactly is being taught in the schools on this issue? Second, how does the creationism taught in the schools and accepted by many of the pupils affect the performance of those pupils in science examinations and in their future career paths? Third, how does the pattern of responses given by the teenagers in the new Christian schools compare with that of the current generation of teenagers who are receiving their education in secular schools? While it might be expected that there would be a clear difference, the extent of that difference needs to be established by empirical evidence. Fourth, do those pupils who hold creationist views as teenagers retain them as adults, once they have had experience of the wider world?

Now that the religious beliefs of the teenage pupils in the new Christian schools have been examined in detail, it is time to turn to their views on other matters. The pupils constitute a highly religious subculture in modern day secular society. Their beliefs set them apart from the great majority of their peers. Is this also true of their personal concerns and of their views and opinions on other matters? The following two chapters will investigate these themes.

Chapter 8

The pupils: their personal concerns

What kind of young people are emerging from the new Christian schools? The previous two chapters have demonstrated that, in the main, they hold to traditional Christian beliefs, beliefs that set them apart from the mainstream of current British society. How emotionally healthy are these young people? What are their worries and concerns? Do they feel isolated or do they have effective support networks and healthy relationships with their peers and with others? This chapter will seek answers to these questions.

8.1 Personal well-being

In June, 2009, a special edition (issue 3) of the *Oxford Review of Education* was published with the title *Well-being in Schools*. John Coleman began the introductory article by saying:

The place of well-being in education has come to be a hotly debated topic in Britain over the last decade. Recent years have been marked by a notable increase, among researchers and policy-makers alike, of interest in the themes of well-being in schools, the relationship between cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning, the importance of a ‘good childhood’, the balancing of instrumental with less readily definable purposes of education, concerns with resilience and with happiness...The changes that are being introduced into schools have created tensions between those who take differing views over the wisdom of a new focus on the emotional health of the child. (Coleman, 2009, p281-2)

Coleman goes on to describe the possible reasons for the increased awareness of well-being in educational circles. Included in these are concerns about the level of mental health problems currently seen in children and young people and the UNICEF report of 2007 which looked at well-being among children in developed countries and showed British children as doing poorly in comparison with those in

other European countries (UNICEF, 2007). He acknowledges that there are different approaches to the concept of well-being but sees this not as an admission of failure but rather a recognition that the concept fulfils a number of functions in the educational context. Coleman also acknowledges (p286) that research provides no clear answer to the question as to whether programmes in schools are able to enhance the well-being of pupils.

The new Christian schools would argue that special programmes would not be needed if a school has a coherent ethos which will promote the well-being of the child consistently throughout the school day. They would claim that this is exactly what their schools are designed to do, through their specialised educational framework linked to a system of strong religious belief. How has this background affected the view that the young people have of themselves and of life in general? Five items were included in the survey to investigate this area of personal well-being, all of which were originally used by Francis (2001, p 27).

The faith-based education provided by the new Christian schools has both as an aim and as a natural correlate the instilling of a strong sense of purpose in life. The system of education operates within a view of the Cosmos, and especially of human beings, as having been designed for a purpose. It was therefore considered important to include a question of this nature in the current survey. The concept of purpose and meaning in life is of ongoing interest to researchers. John White agrees that education ought to prepare young people to live a meaningful life and has attempted to provide a secular approach in this regard, recognising that meaningfulness is a necessary condition of a life of well-being (White, 2009, p1).

Table 8.1
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their personal well-being

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	4	14	83
I find life really worth living	7	19	75
I feel I am not worth much as a person	68	18	14
I often feel depressed	54	21	26
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	71	10	19

As shown in Table 8.1, when asked to assess their response to the statement “I feel my life has a sense of purpose”, 83% of the pupils responded positively. Just 4% felt strongly enough to say that they disagreed with the statement and 14% were not sure. These figures indicate that the great majority of the young people in the new Christian schools are indeed approaching adulthood believing that life has meaning and purpose for them.

The statistic of 83% provides for an interesting comparison with other published data. Francis (2001, p27) found that just 56% of his large sample were able to report that their lives had a sense of purpose. Internal analyses of these figures were even more revealing. The sample included 16,581 females aged 13 to 15 years whose responses to the item concerning sense of purpose in life were analysed to reveal denominational differences (Francis, 2008, pp192-193). Just 50% of those with no religious affiliation reported a sense of purpose in life. This compared with 75% of Pentecostals, 73% of Jehovah’s Witnesses, 65% of Baptists, 64% of Methodists, 63% of Roman Catholics, 59% of Presbyterians and 58% of Anglicans. These figures show that Christian affiliation in general is associated with a greater sense of purpose in life but that there are clear denominational differences. The pupils in the

new Christian schools come from many different denominational backgrounds and their figure of 83% covers the whole sample, including the 11% who say they have no religious affiliation. It therefore indicates that the pupils in the new Christian schools have a greater sense of purpose in life, regardless of their denominational background.

Again, the sample obtained by Francis in the 1990s included 136 boys who attended new Christian schools. Francis shows (2005a, p139) that 75% of these boys reported a sense of purpose in life compared with 54% of the 12,823 boys who attended non-denominational schools, a statistically significant difference ($P < .001$).

Further relevant published data are shown in Table 8.2. This time the sample includes both boys and girls and is restricted to teenagers aged between 13 and 15 who live in urban areas (Francis and Robbins, 2005, pp 234-236). Again, the survey concerned took place in the 1990s and is especially relevant in that it includes data obtained from the new Christian schools at that time. The Urban Hope data indicate that in the decade of the nineties, pupils in the new Christian schools in urban areas were much more likely to have a sense of purpose in life than those in non-denominational schools, Roman Catholic schools or Anglican schools. The current survey, a decade or more later, shows the percentage reporting a sense of purpose as 83%. What are needed now are equivalent current statistics for the other types of schools.

Table 8.2
Urban Hope Survey Results: comparison by schools
Source: Francis and Robbins, 2005 pp234-236

	New Christian Schools %	Anglican Schools %	Roman Catholic Schools %	Non- Denom. Schools %
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	75	51	64	54
I find life really worth living	74	64	69	69
I often feel depressed	38	58	52	52
I feel I am not worth much as a person	12	17	13	14
I have considered taking my own life	15	30	26	28

The differences shown in the table were statistically significant for the new Christian schools compared with non-denominational schools for three of the items: I feel my life has a sense of purpose (P<.001), I often feel depressed P<.001, I have sometimes considered taking my own life (P<.001). Significance levels for comparisons with the denominational schools are not available.

The statement “I feel I am not worth much as a person” addresses the issue of self-esteem. The decision to include it in the current survey stemmed from the consideration that an education rooted in belief in a created order, with a special prominence given to the value of human beings as “created in the image of God” might be expected to have affected the view that the pupils have of themselves. As shown in Table 8.1, 68% of pupils disagreed with the statement but a significant minority, 14%, agreed with it. These figures are very similar to those obtained in the 1990s for the more general school population (Francis, 2001) and also to the Urban Hope results shown in Table 8.2.

Similar considerations apply to the two further statements in this section which deal with the value of life, “I find life really worth living” and its corollary, “I have sometimes considered taking my own life”, since the schools taking part in the survey place a strong emphasis on the value of human life. Self-harm and suicidal ideation in adolescents is an increasingly recognised problem in modern society. In response to the statements, 75% of the teenagers in the new Christian schools agreed that they did find life really worth living, with just 7% clearly disagreeing. Almost one fifth, 19%, were not sure whether life was really worth living or not. It is worth noting that whereas 14% of the pupils felt that they were not worth much as a person, only 7% could clearly say that they thought life was not worth living and only 3% could see no purpose in life. It seems that for 7% their low self-esteem does not necessarily seriously interfere with their enjoyment of life and for 8% the purpose that they see in life does not make that life really worth living. Again, these figures were not dissimilar to Francis’ general findings (2001, p27) nor to the findings of the Urban Hope survey.

The two final statements, “I have sometimes considered taking my own life” and “I often feel depressed”, touch on issues that are of increasing concern in modern society and particularly as regards modern youth culture. Kay and Francis (2006) investigated suicidal ideation amongst young people aged 13-15 in the UK and found that church attendance offered significant protection against suicidal tendencies. Following from this, it might be expected that attendance at a Christian school would have the same effect. That anyone should respond positively to the statement, “I have sometimes considered taking my own life” is a matter for concern. In the event, 19% of the teenagers in the new Christian schools agreed

with this statement and 10% were not sure whether they agreed with it or not. Again, the figure of 19% seems somewhat at odds with the finding that only 7% were sure that they did not find life really worth living. Adolescents are notorious for the instability of their emotions and there would be a large difference between the mental state of a young person who had had a single suicidal thought during an atypical low moment compared with that of a young person who was continually plagued by such thoughts. Suicidal ideation and behaviour is such an important issue that it would be worth investigating this matter further. However, 71% of the pupils were able to say unequivocally that they had never considered taking their own life. The Urban Hope data shown in Table 8.2 indicates that, in the 1990s, pupils from the new Christian schools who lived in urban areas were much less likely to have considered taking their own life than those from any of the other kinds of schools included in the analysis. Similarly, at that time, boys attending the new Christian schools were found to be much less likely to have such thoughts than boys attending non-denominational schools, a difference that was statistically significant ($P < .01$) (Francis, 2005, p139).

To the final statement, 54% of the young people responded negatively; it is not true of them that they often feel depressed. A further 21% were not sure how to respond and 26%, more than a quarter, agreed that they do often feel depressed. Figure 8.2 shows how these statistics compare with data obtained in the 1990s for young people living in urban areas. At that time, 38% of the pupils from Years 9 and 10 in the new Christian schools said that they often felt depressed. This percentage compared positively with the figures obtained for other kinds of schools with pupils from the new Christian schools approximately half as likely to often feel depressed

as those from the other kinds of schools. Francis (2005a, p139) found that the boys from the new Christian schools were less likely to be often depressed than boys from non-denominational schools, a statistically significant finding ($P < .01$) The current figure of 26% is noticeably lower but it is difficult to assess the significance of the difference in the absence of more up-to-date data from the other schools. Are young people in general less likely to be depressed than they were a decade or two ago or has the gap widened further between the new Christian schools and other schools in this regard? Either result would raise the question of what has caused the change.

To summarise, the data reveal a cohort of young people the great majority of whom have a strong sense of purpose in life. A clear majority find life really worth living, have a sense of self-worth, are not prone to depression and have never considered suicide. However, a significant minority, about one quarter, often do feel depressed while a small but not insignificant minority do not find life worth living and suffer from low self esteem. Even from within a setting which generally sees life in very positive terms, nearly one in five of the young people have sometimes entertained suicidal thoughts.

8.2 Personal worries

The Values Survey, (Francis, 2001, p 29), included five items dealing with worries in the areas of relationships and personal safety. They have been included in this survey and to them have been added two further items, "I am worried about putting

on weight” and “I am worried about my body shape”, which deal with issues regarded as of particular concern to today’s young people.

Table 8.3
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their personal worries

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I am worried about my attractiveness to the opposite sex	30	23	47
I am worried about getting AIDS/HIV	61	20	19
I am worried about how I get on with other people	37	18	45
I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools	64	16	20
I am worried about going out alone at night in my area	47	20	33
I am worried about putting on weight	41	17	43
I am worried about my body shape	37	17	46

The Values Survey found that 62% of young people were worried about getting AIDS with just 21% disagreeing with the statement (Francis, 2001, p29). These findings contrast strongly with those of the current survey with the two sets of figures almost constituting mirror images of each other. Table 8.3 indicates that 61% of the young people in the new Christian schools in the year 2006 disagree with the statement “I am worried about getting AIDS/HIV” and just 19% agree with it. The question arises as to whether the difference is as a result of the passage of time or if it is a result of the strong moral framework urged upon the pupils in the new Christian schools. Are young people in general now less concerned about the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS because of medical advances in the treatment of this condition? Or are these particular young people committed to a lifestyle which they believe would minimise their chances of contracting HIV/AIDS?

Francis (2008) investigated the question of anxiety about AIDS amongst female young people belonging to a variety of denominations. He found:

Anxiety about AIDS is lower [than for those with no religion] amongst Methodists, Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses but not among Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Baptists or Presbyterians. These differences suggest that teaching on sexuality may vary significantly from one Christian group to another. (Francis, 2008, p196)

The lowest figure that Francis found in this study was for teenage Jehovah's Witnesses, 33% of whom were worried about getting AIDS. Jehovah's Witnesses would be regarded by most people as belonging to a sect; there may be factors operating with them that set them apart from the other denominations, for example strong central control mechanisms. The next lowest figure, for Pentecostal teenagers, was 41%. The comparable figure for the new Christian schools was 19%, despite the fact that the pupils from these schools are linked to a variety of different denominations. Perhaps the theological stance of a teenager is of more importance than denominational affiliation as a predictor of concern about AIDS. Most Pentecostals are also evangelicals, as are most of the families connected with the schools.

In terms of the topics included in the survey, the possibility of contracting AIDS is the subject that worries the pupils in the new Christian schools least. Their response to the statement "I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools" indicated a similar lack of anxiety. Although 20% agreed with this statement, 64% did not agree with it. For each of the other categories of potential anxiety, a significant minority, though never a majority, expressed agreement that this was an area of concern for them. Thus, 48% were worried about their attractiveness to the opposite sex, 45% worry about how they get on with other people and 33% worry

about going out alone at night in the area where they live. The responses to the latter question yielded very similar results to those Francis (2001, p29) found for the general school population in the 1990s. This may indicate that the population found in the new Christian schools exhibits a microcosm of the general population in terms of the areas the pupils live in. Current data for the wider population would be needed to confirm this. The responses to the questions concerning gaining weight and body shape especially indicate an area for concern. Forty-three percent of the teenagers stated that they worry about gaining weight and 46% worry about their body shape. Given that these worries would generally be considered as more likely to affect girls than boys, the findings could possibly indicate a very significant problem amongst the girls of an unhealthy obsession with weight and appearance.

In summary, teenage pupils receiving their education in the new Christian schools do not in general worry about contracting AIDS or about the possibility of being attacked by pupils from other schools. It is possible that the school environment helps to shield them from these worries. However, the majority could not confidently say that they never worried about their appearance, their attractiveness to the opposite sex, their relationships with other people or about going out alone at night. These are no doubt concerns that they share with their peers in other schools and it would be interesting to be able to compare this profile with the levels of anxiety experienced by the teenage population in England at large.

8.3 Dependency Strategies

Anxiety about weight and appearance can often lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with food such that both over-eating and under-eating can constitute problems during the teenage years. To what extent do the young people in the new Christian schools use food or lack of food for emotional support? Does the consumption of caffeine play a significant role in maintaining a sense of wellbeing for them as it does for many adults? What about the use of alcohol in this way? The current generation of British teenagers is reputed to have a culture which includes regular binge drinking. The items in Table 8.4 were included to try to gain a picture of to what extent the pupils in the new Christian schools might conform to teenage stereotypes in these matters.

Table 8.4
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their dependency strategies

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I eat to make myself feel better	50	21	30
I stop eating to make myself feel better	82	9	9
I eat chocolate to make myself feel better	50	16	34
I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better	64	13	23
I drink alcohol to make myself feel better	76	10	14

Exactly 50% of the teenage pupils denied that they eat in general to make themselves feel better or that they eat chocolate in particular for this purpose. Around 30% admitted to doing both. While 82% denied any anorexic tendencies, a worrying 9% agreed that they did stop eating to make themselves feel better. Around a quarter (23%) of the pupils admitted to some kind of dependency on caffeine while 14% of these 13 to 16 year-old young people admitted to depending on alcohol for feelings of well-being.

It would be informative to perform a further analysis of the responses in this section to see whether boys show different responses from girls, particularly as regards food consumption. Similarly, it would be interesting to know whether the 14% who have a measure of dependence on alcohol consist largely of the older pupils. These issues are addressed in later chapters.

8.4 Counselling

It is clear from this and other surveys that the teenage years can be plagued by worries and anxieties. It naturally follows from this to consider the extent to which teenagers feel able to turn to others for help with their worries. Francis (2001, p30) began to investigate this issue by using a statement designed to establish whether or not teenagers feel the need for advice. He followed this with statements designed to establish the extent to which, if at all, the young people would be prepared to turn to professionals for guidance, be they teachers, doctors or religious leaders. These questions have been included in the current survey. A further question has been added to investigate the influence of the internet. In 2006, is it to their peers and others that the young people turn for help, via internet chat rooms? Recent years have also seen a proliferation of helplines aimed at children and young people. A final question has been added to investigate the extent to which the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools would be willing to make use of these.

Table 8.5
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views on counselling

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I often long for someone to turn to for advice	38	22	40
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a school teacher	25	23	53
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a doctor	42	30	27
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a Christian minister/vicar/priest	42	29	28
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people in chat rooms	21	13	66
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people on helplines	21	21	58

By their response to the first question, the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools indicate that many of them often do long to be able to turn to someone for advice. Forty percent fully agreed with this statement and a further 22% were not sure that they disagreed with it. Only 38% could say unequivocally that the statement was not true for them. In terms of who they would be willing to turn to, a very similar minority percentage would be prepared to discuss their problems with a doctor (42%) or with a Christian minister (43%), while 27% (doctor) and 28% (minister) definitely would be reluctant to do so. The teenagers indicated that they were much less willing to discuss their problems with a school teacher. Fifty-three percent said that they would be reluctant to do this and only 25% unequivocally disagreed with the statement. This result may raise concerns with the schools themselves since they regard the relationships between their teachers and their pupils as one of their highest priorities. It is possible that the result is an unfortunate side-effect of the fact that the schools have such close

contact with parents. In a number of the schools it would be quite likely that one of the child's parents would actually be on the premises most of the time as a teacher or a helper. If a child has a problem they are reluctant to share with their parents, that reluctance might extend to their teachers, whom they view as closely linked to their parents. A majority of the young people (66%) declared that they would be reluctant to talk about their problems with people in chat rooms, although 21% indicated that they would not be reluctant to do so. Similarly, a majority (58%) would not be prepared to use helplines while 21% would be prepared to do so.

The data thus indicate a cohort of young people who will often admit that they need advice but who, for the majority, are reluctant to seek that advice from professional bodies, from outside agencies or even from their teachers. Teenagers might be expected to turn first for advice to their parents or friends and these possibilities are investigated in the following two sections.

8.5 Peer Groups

Francis (2001, p31) found that in the 1990s young teenagers were more likely to turn for advice to their peers than to either professionals or to their parents. This result raises the wider issue of the general influence upon young people of their peer group. One of the main reasons that parents are likely to want to choose independent education for their children concerns the influence of the peer group. For example, those parents who have high academic aspirations for their children will often choose a private school rather than the local comprehensive. The matter becomes of even greater importance for many of those parents who choose to place their children in a new Christian school since they are seeking to place their

children within a community which will reflect their Christian values. The desire to protect their children from the values and behaviour of the wider teenage population would be one of the chief factors motivating them to make the sacrifices attendant upon providing them with alternative fee-paying education. This consideration applies generally to the whole survey; the parents of the children in the schools will be interested in the overall values profile of those who are being educated alongside their children. However, pupils in the new Christian schools no doubt associate at times with those from other schools. For this reason a selection of statements has been included in the current survey with the aim of investigating the influence of the wider peer group on those who attend the new Christian schools.

Table 8.6
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitudes to their peer group

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
Sometimes I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do	47	15	38
Most of my friends think religion is important	19	29	52
Most of my friends smoke cigarettes	66	18	17
Most of my friends drink alcohol	39	21	41
Most of my friends take drugs	78	15	7
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with close friends	18	13	69

The responses in Table 8.6 clearly show that the teenagers in the new Christian schools prefer to turn to their peers for advice than either to their parents or to professional advisors. Sixty-nine percent indicated that they found it helpful to talk about their problems with their close friends, compared with 52% who would consult their mothers (see Table 8.7), 42% who would consult their fathers (Table 8.7), 43% who would be willing to consult a church leader (Table 8.5), 42% a

doctor (Table 8.5) and just 25% a school teacher (Table 8.5). The remaining questions in this section tell us more about the close friends themselves. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents indicate that they sometimes feel pressured by their friends to do things that they do not want to do, while 47% clearly do not feel that pressure and 15% are not sure. Just over half, 52%, have a circle of friends most of whom think that religion is important, while 29% are not sure what their friends think about religion and 19% are sure that religion is not important to most of their friends. These figures indicate that around half of the pupils from the schools have a social life that is not spent mainly with Christians. Unwelcome peer pressure exists for a large minority of the teenagers. It would be interesting to know if this pressure emanates from their fellow pupils or from their wider social circle.

Substance abuse is of particular concern to parents. The misuse of alcohol and drugs are ever present fears and most parents would be very reluctant to see their young teenagers become smokers of cigarettes. Parents who place their children in new Christian schools are hoping for an environment that will minimise these influences on their children. Just 7% of the teenagers in the schools agreed that most of their friends take drugs while 78% were sure that most of their friends do not. 17% of the teenagers in the schools in 2006 agreed that most of their friends smoke cigarettes, while 67% were sure that most of them do not. For alcohol consumption the picture is somewhat different. Forty-one percent of the 13–16-year-olds in the schools agreed that most of their friends drink alcohol. Thirty-nine percent disagreed with this and 21% were not sure. This level of alcohol consumption amongst the friendship groups of the young people, most of whom are below the age of 16, gives cause for concern.

To summarise, the data suggest that the young people attending the new Christian schools are relatively, but not entirely, shielded from some of the peer group influences of wider society. While the great majority do not mix with those who take drugs, a significant minority do. A smaller majority do not significantly associate with those who smoke cigarettes but a minority do. A large minority of these young teenagers, who might be regarded by many as being overprotected, are in fact associating with friends who have a culture involving the consumption of alcohol, confirming fears that this is indeed a growing social problem.

8.6 Parents

The Values Survey (2001, p31) included two statements designed to discover whether or not the teenagers found it helpful to discuss their problems with their parents. In the current survey, three further statements have been added to create a separate section dealing with different aspects of the teenagers' relationships with their parents. This issue is of special interest to an investigation of the new Christian schools for two reasons. First, the schools themselves attribute a particular importance to the role of parents in the education of their children. Second, many, although not all, of the parents will be Christians themselves. Both of these factors might be expected to affect the responses of the young people to an investigation of their values.

Table 8.7
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitudes to their parents

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
My parents are supportive of me	4	7	90
Sometimes I feel pressured by my parents to do things I don't want to do	40	17	44
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my mum	31	17	52
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my dad	39	19	42
My parents think religion is important	10	13	76

The responses indicate that teenagers receiving their education in the new Christian schools very largely feel supported by their parents. The great majority, 90%, fully agreed with a statement to this effect and only 4% disagreed with it. Three further statements provoked a rather different response from the young people. Forty-four percent indicated that they sometimes feel pressured by their parents to do things that they do not want to do while a similar number (40%) disagreed with the statement. Given the notorious tendency of teenagers to want to rebel against their parents, this result indicates a relative lack of tension in the homes of those attending the schools. Fifty-two percent find it helpful to talk about their problems with their mother, but 31% do not. A smaller number (42%) find it helpful to talk about their problems with their father while 39% do not find it helpful. A final question asked whether the young people considered that religion is important to their parents. Seventy-six percent agreed that this was so while 10% disagreed and 13% were not sure. It would be interesting to establish whether or not the 10% from non-religious homes responded differently from the majority who describe their home background as religious.

To summarise, the young people aged 13-16 attending new Christian schools very largely come from religious homes in which they feel supported by their parents. A minority of them experience some tensions with their parents and they would be more likely to turn to their mother than to their father for advice.

8.7 School

Francis (2001, p32) included in his survey eight statements concerning the overall attitudes of young people to their schools. The new Christian schools have been established specifically to offer a different atmosphere, ethos and approach to education from that provided by mainstream schooling. What do the pupils themselves think of their experiences in the unorthodox setting in which their parents have placed them?

Table 8.8
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their concerns about school life

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
School is boring	33	24	42
I am happy in my school	10	14	76
I like the people I go to school with	4	8	88
I often worry about my school work	22	13	65
I am worried about my exams at school	16	15	70
I am worried about being bullied at school	80	10	11
Teachers do a good job	7	22	71
My school is preparing me for life	9	16	75
My schooling has helped me to know how to live in a right way	10	21	68
I feel that my teachers are interested in me	14	30	56

The responses shown in Table 8.8 indicate that while 42% of the pupils say that they find school boring, 76% indicate that they are happy in their schools. The great majority, 88%, like the people that they go to school with, 71% feel that their

teachers are doing a good job and 75% consider that their school is preparing them for life. A similar 68% believe that their schooling has helped them to know how to live in a right way, a response that will be of particular interest to the schools. Ten percent did not agree that it has. The problem of bullying, while it does exist, does not seem to be major in the new Christian schools. When asked if they were worried about being bullied at school 79% disagreed. However, fear of bullying was a problem for 11% of the respondents. Sixty-five percent indicate that they often worry about their school work and 70% often worry exams.

An extra statement was added to the survey to investigate the view that the pupils have of their relationships with their teachers. In a recent study, ap Sion, Francis and Baker (2009) traced 135 women who had graduated from 11 of the new Christian schools between 1986 and 2003 and asked for their reflections on the education that they had received. The authors report that:

Responses in the relationships between pupils and teachers subcategory contain mainly positive general comments describing the qualities and characteristics of teachers and the relationship between pupils and teachers. Words used to describe teachers in relation to pupils include 'approachable', 'encouraging', 'not critical', 'supportive', 'kind' and 'caring', 'friendly', and 'committed'. (ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2009, p235)

These reflections come from young adults looking back on their school days with the benefit of greater maturity. The statement "I feel that my teachers are interested in me" was included to assess the views of those currently receiving the input of the teachers. A small majority, 56%, say that they do feel that their teachers are interested in them with only 14% clearly disagreeing. Thirty percent are not sure whether their teachers are interested in them or not. It would be interesting to know if the responses to this item would be different in ten or twenty years' time when

the teenagers are adults and able to reflect on their school days from a more mature perspective.

To summarise, the data reveal that the teenagers in the new Christian schools, while some of them may claim to find school boring, are in general happy and satisfied with their school, where they enjoy a relatively “bully free” existence.

8.8 My home locality

The young people in the new Christian schools are experiencing independent schooling. This places them in what most people would regard as a privileged position, normally associated with families from wealthy backgrounds. Pupils in independent schools would generally be regarded as living in pleasant areas. The new Christian schools are unusual in many respects and would claim that their clientele were often not from privileged backgrounds. How do the young people in the schools view the areas where they live? Francis (2001, p54) used eight statements designed to investigate how young people feel about their local area. Do they like living there? What are the problems associated with the area? Do they matter in their area? The same eight statements have been used in the current survey as shown in Table 8.9.

Table 8.9
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their concerns about their locality

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
Crime is a growing problem in my area	31	38	32
Vandalism is a growing problem in my area	29	31	41
Drugs taking is a growing problem in my area	27	37	37
Violence is a growing problem in my area	28	38	34
Drunks are a growing problem in my area	38	37	26
Unemployment is a growing problem in my area	25	64	12
I like the area I live in	15	11	74
My area cares about its young people	27	46	26

The data indicate that the great majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools, 74%, like the area that they live in. Fifteen percent do not like it and 11% are not sure what they think. However, there is less agreement about the extent to which those in their area care about them. Nearly half of the young people, 46%, did not know what to make of the statement. Twenty-six percent agreed that they were cared about in their area and 27% took the opposite view. One quarter of the young people, 25%, saw unemployment as a growing problem in their area. The majority of the teenagers, 64%, did not know whether it was a growing problem or not and 12% were sure that it was not a problem.

The young people were evenly divided as to whether they did or did not think that crime was a growing problem in their area. Nearly one third, 32% agreed that it was while 31% were sure it was not. Thirty-eight percent were unsure one way or the other. A greater minority, 41% agreed that vandalism was a growing problem for them in their area. Vandalism was not a growing problem for 29%, with 31% not sure either way. Thirty-seven percent agreed that the misuse of drugs was an

increasing problem for their area with only 27% able to say confidently that it was not. For 34%, violence was regarded as a growing problem in their area with 28% able to indicate that it was not. The presence of drunks represented a growing problem to 26% but not to 38%, leaving a further 37% who were not sure.

In summary, the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools are happy with the area where they live although they are not sure that the area as a whole really cares about them. Crime, vandalism, drugs taking, violence and excessive drinking are seen as increasing local problems for about one third of them and only about one quarter to one third can say confidently that these problems are not significantly growing in their locality. In these respects, it seems that not all of the young people in the schools, and perhaps not even a majority, live in privileged, relatively problem-free localities.

8.9 Aims in life

The new Christian schools have been set up for closely defined reasons, to provide an education which they claim differs radically from that provided by other institutions. Do the young people who are nearing the end of their time at the schools share similar aims in life with their contemporaries in other institutions? This survey can make available a profile which will enable future such comparisons to be made. For this reason, seven statements were included, dealing with the themes of aims and aspirations in life.

Table 8.10
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their aims in life

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I would like to get married	1	6	93
I would like to have children	3	10	87
I would like to own my own home	1	4	95
I would like to make a difference to the world	3	13	85
I would like to study for a degree	9	21	70
Life is about living for God and for others	9	20	71
Life is about enjoying myself	18	20	63

In an age when many young people are choosing to live together rather than to get married, the overwhelming majority, 93%, of the young people in the new Christian schools expressed a desire for marriage and only 1% took the opposite view. The UK currently experiences a high abortion rate together with a tendency of couples to delay having children or in some cases to opt not to have children at all. Despite this cultural setting, 87% of the pupils state that they would like to have children, just 3% would not like to and 10% at this stage of their lives are not sure whether they would like children or not. A very large majority, 95%, of the young people aspire to own their own homes, with only 1% disagreeing with this and 4% not sure about it. The new Christian schools aim to inspire a sense of vocation and calling in their pupils and 85% of their pupils agree that they would like to make a difference to the world, while 3% would not and 13% are undecided on the matter. Seventy percent of the young people in the schools have high academic aspirations, indicating that they would like to study for a degree. Only 9% are sure that they would not like to.

The young people in the new Christian schools are receiving their education in a Christian context which stresses the denial of self and the serving of both God and others. The five statements that have already been described in this section were phrased in a way which would probably be unfamiliar to them, focusing as the statements did on materialist human desires. Two further statements were added which were deliberately phrased differently and which explored the more fundamental question of what life is really all about. Seventy-one percent of the young people hold that life is about living for God and for others and while 20% are not sure about this only 9% would deny it. At the same time, 63% saw no conflict between that view and one that regarded life as there to be enjoyed. Eighteen percent did not see enjoying oneself as a major aim in life and 20% reserved judgement on the issue.

In summary, the teenagers in the new Christian schools aspire to traditional Christian values with respect to marriage and children. They put a high value on owning their own homes and on achieving at a higher level of education. Their sense of purpose in life leads them to want their lives to count in some way and while they wish life to be enjoyable, the majority agree that that life must not be lived only for themselves.

8.10 Personal Responsibility

This section is designed to investigate the effect that the specifically Christian approach to education prevailing in the new Christian schools is having on their teenage pupils in the area of personal responsibility. Questions are often asked

about the ability of faith-based schools to produce graduates who would, as adults, prove to be desirable citizens for the UK in the 21st century. Advocates for the new Christian schools would argue that the teachings of Christianity are exactly those that would promote good citizenship, with their emphasis on concern for others, especially the poor, the need for law-abiding, moderate, self-controlled behaviour and honesty and integrity in all kinds of relationships. In these terms, what kind of young people are the new Christian schools producing?

Table 8.11
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their attitude to personal responsibility

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
It is important to me to help others wherever I can	4	14	83
It is important to me to avoid hurting others as much as possible	5	12	84
I want to try to care for the environment	8	26	67
I do not want to prosper at the expense of others	10	34	56
I want to be careful how I speak, I don't want to offend	8	14	79

A large majority, 83%, of the young teenagers in the new Christian schools indicated that it was important to them to help others while 4% denied this. Eighty-four percent claimed that it was important to them to avoid hurting others, although this was denied by 5%. Sixty-seven percent expressed a concern to try to care for the environment, 8% had no such concern and 26% were not sure whether they had such a concern or not. A majority of the pupils, 56%, indicated that they did not want to prosper at the expense of others. Around a third, 34% did not know how to respond to this item, possibly because they did not understand exactly what it was asking. Ten percent admitted that they would have no qualms about prospering at

the expense of others. Nearly four fifths, 79%, of the young people indicated that they appreciated how important the use of language is in personal or professional relationships by expressing their desire to be careful with their speech. A small minority, 8%, had no such desire to be moderate in their language and 14% were not sure on the matter.

To summarise, current society in the UK is considered by many to be characterised by unacceptable levels of antisocial or inconsiderate behaviour, foul or aggressive speech, cut-throat business practices and insufficient concern for the environment. The responses of the young people nearing the end of their education in the new Christian schools indicate that the great majority of them wish to behave very differently from that. They aspire to be inoffensive and honest, and caring both of other people and of the environment. It appears that they have at least the potential to become good citizens. Further research is needed to compare their responses with those of the wider population of their peers to assess to what extent their Christian schooling has contributed to their views.

8.11 Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the personal concerns, worries and attitudes to others of the teenagers who are receiving formal education from the new Christian schools. The young people exhibit evidence of considerable well-being. They have a strong sense of purpose in life and are generally not prone to depression. While their school setting may appear to be very protective, about half of them associate socially mainly with those who are not religious. The pupils on the whole have a positive view of their school life and enjoy good relationships with their parents.

They generally aspire to high Christian principles of concern for others together with a desire for moderate and self-controlled behaviour. A minority of the pupils, however, in each instance take an alternative position, revealing the possible existence of a small subculture of pupils with different concerns and with a wholly different approach to life from the majority of their school peers.

So far, the area of personal morality has not been investigated. Do the pupils in the new Christian schools hold moral positions which are likely to differ from their peers in the wider school population, as the specifically evangelical Christian nature of the schools would predict? Could they even be accused of holding views which modern society would deem unacceptable? The next chapter addresses this topic.

Chapter 9

The pupils: their views and values

The survey has so far revealed the majority of the pupils in the new Christian schools to be religiously inclined young people who enjoy a sense of well-being and who on the whole are happy with their school life. What opinions do they hold on moral issues? What are their “values”? Nadi Hofmann-Towfigh has discussed the problem of the need for the assessment of “values” in the present-day context:

When studying values, one can easily be overwhelmed by the vast amount of literature and studies, as well as the eclectic nature of the topic. It is a concern of many different disciplines to understand the concept and dimensions of values and explore the history and the change of values in society. Philosophers, theologians, educators, sociologists, psychologists and many more have written and discussed the issue from different angles and viewpoints. However, there is almost no empirical research that demonstrates how and why values change in individuals, especially during adolescence. At this point in history, when many basic values have lost their relevance, especially among adolescents, there is a strong public demand for values education at school [but] there exists no clear consensus as to which values are moral values. (Hofmann-Towfigh, 2007, p 453)

The desire for an educational setting in which children can be trained in Christian “values” constitutes one of the main incentives leading parents to choose the new Christian schools. The current generation of adolescents is held to be characterised by the post-modern rejection of the meta-narrative with its attendant rejection of previously-held moral absolutes. Do the moral principles held by the teenagers in the schools concur with the traditional Christian worldview within which they are being educated or has the influence of the media, of the internet and of their wider circle of peers had a greater impact? Are their views those that would be acceptable to modern society? A wide-ranging selection of topics was covered by the survey in an attempt to answer these questions.

9.1 Right and wrong

This section considers the views of the young people as to what constitutes right and wrong. In 2008, the banking system of the western world was judged to have been beset by moral failures on the part of leading bankers, with disastrous results for the global economy. In 2009, the parliamentary system in the UK faced unprecedented problems as a result of questionable behaviour on the part of many MPs with respect to expense claims. At a time when the moral basis of society is deemed to be lacking in key areas such as these, what are the views of the young people who have been receiving their education in a strongly moralistic setting? Do those views imply that they will emerge from the schools as law-abiding citizens who will contribute positively to society?

Several different categories concerning moral issues were included in the questionnaire, covering such issues as honesty, trustworthiness, the use of language and consideration for human life. Francis (2001, p50) used the first four of the indicators listed in Table 9.1 in the Values Survey. Three new statements have been added to reflect moral issues that have particular relevance to current youth society (cheating and swearing) and to the Christian community (blasphemy and respect for human life).

Table 9.1
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views of right and wrong

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
There is nothing wrong in shop-lifting	89	7	5
There is nothing wrong in travelling without a ticket	63	21	16
There is nothing wrong in playing truant (skiving) from school	74	15	11
The police do a good job	17	24	59
It is wrong to cheat in exams	7	6	87
It is wrong to swear or blaspheme	17	17	67
It is wrong to experiment on human embryos	10	35	55

The great majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools (89%) agree that shop-lifting is wrong. Sixty-three percent agree that it is wrong to travel without a ticket but 21% are not sure about this and 16% can see nothing wrong in it. Seventy-four percent believe that it is wrong to play truant from school, 15% are not sure and 11% do not think that it is wrong. These figures are very similar to those obtained by the Values Survey for the wider school population (Francis 2001, p50). Francis also found that boys in the new Christian schools were no more likely to project a uniformly law-abiding profile than boys attending non-denominational schools (Francis, 2005, p136). The young people very largely agree that it is wrong to cheat in exams (87%) while 6% are not sure whether it is wrong or not and 7% feel that it is perfectly acceptable to do so.

The issue of swearing and blasphemy is one on which the new Christian schools take a very different position in practice from that of much of modern society. It would be rare to hear swearing or blasphemy during the school day in a new Christian school. Two thirds (67%) of the pupils believe that it is wrong to swear or blaspheme while

equal proportions, 17%, either are not sure about this or believe that swearing or blasphemy constitute acceptable behaviour.

The statement “It is wrong to experiment on human embryos” touches on a further area where the new Christian schools may be at odds with modern society. The high view of human life that they hold might be expected to have influenced the opinions of the pupils in this area. More than half, 55%, of the teenagers agreed that it is wrong to experiment on human embryos and just 10% thought that to experiment on human embryos presents no moral problem. This item differed from others in this section in that it did not concern behaviour that was directly relevant to teenage life and a much higher proportion (35%) indicated that they did not know how to respond to it. It would be interesting to know how this result would compare with that for their peers in the wider school population.

A final statement concerned the attitude of the young people to the police. The police are considered to be doing a good job by 59% of the young people while 24 % are not sure about this and 17% do not agree. Again, this is a similar result to that obtained in the 1990s for the general school population of a similar age (Francis, 2001, p51).

To summarise, by their responses to the values profiled in this section, the teenagers in the new Christian schools reveal themselves to be largely law-abiding and principled young people. However, a small minority reject the traditional Christian morality conveyed by the items and a further minority do not hold clear views on these matters.

9.2 Sexual morality

Francis (2001) included six statements concerning sexual morality in The Values Survey and they were included in the current survey. The new Christian schools aim at instilling strictly conservative moral values into their pupils who might therefore be predicted to show a values profile in this area that would differ from that of most of their peers in other schools. One further statement was added concerning pornography.

Table 9.2
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitudes to sexual morality

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
It is wrong to have sex under the legal age (16 years)	18	14	68
Homosexuality is wrong	16	15	68
Contraception is wrong	56	33	11
Abortion is wrong	15	16	69
Divorce is wrong	22	31	47
Pornography is wrong	11	12	77
It is wrong to have sex before you are married	20	16	63

Sixty-eight percent of the teenagers in the new Christian schools believe that it is wrong to have sex under the legal age of 16 and 63% believe that it is wrong to have sex before you are married. These figures are very different from those obtained by Francis (2001, p46), where the picture is the reverse. Francis found that just 24% of his sample of teenagers thought that it was wrong to have sex below the legal age and only 14% considered sex outside of marriage to be wrong.

Beliefs concerning the nature and morality of homosexual behaviour constitute contentious issues in current British society, and are matters that sometimes divide

Christian communities. Crockett and Voas (2003) analysed empirical evidence concerning attitude change towards homosexuality, covering two decades, from the British Social Attitudes and British Household Panel surveys. They concluded:

It is apparent that no real consensus yet exists on basic issues of sexual morality. Society as a whole is highly polarised over the question of whether same-sex unions are wrong, with significant and increasing divisions between young and old, women and men, and religious and non-religious. Far from being better placed than others to avoid disputes, Christian churches suffer from compounded problems. The attitudes of lay Christians are starkly and increasingly polarised along the dimensions of ideology and religious practice. (Crockett and Voas, 2003, p1)

The new Christian schools tend to take a conservative line on the Christian view of marriage as it has traditionally been defined and regard the Bible's teaching as precluding homosexual behaviour. Sixty-eight percent of their teenage pupils believe that homosexuality is wrong. The equivalent figure from the Values Survey was 37% (Francis, 2001, p46), a figure that was close to that of the general British population at that time (Crockett and Voas, 2003, paragraph 6.1). The figure of 68% is almost identical to that found by Francis for teenage boys attending the new Christian schools (Francis, 2005a, p46) when the equivalent figure for non-denominational schools was 21%.

The issue of abortion is similarly contentious, with religious groups differing in their beliefs from much of secular society. Sixty-nine percent of the pupils believe that abortion is wrong. Francis (2001, p46) found that 36% of the general school population of 13 to 15 year-olds in the 1990s believed that abortion was wrong. On the other hand, just 11% of the pupils in the new Christian schools clearly believe that contraception is wrong while a further 33% are not sure whether it is wrong or not. This leaves 56% who do not think contraception is wrong. The equivalent figure

found by the Values Survey (Francis, 2001, p46) was 73%. Nearly half of the respondents, 47%, agree that divorce is wrong with a further 31% not sure of their view on the matter. Again, while the contrast is not as stark as for some previous items, this figure is still very different from the 19% who responded in the same way for Francis (2001, p46). For teenage boys, Francis (2005, p135) found that 41% of his sample who were from new Christian schools thought divorce to be wrong, compared with just 15% of boys from non-denominational schools, a statistically significant difference. These figures suggest that for the new Christian schools the position has not changed substantially in the past ten to fifteen years. The fact that approximately one third of the pupils from the new Christian schools were not sure of their views on either contraception or divorce is one that should interest the schools themselves, since it contrasts with the greater certainties that the young people feel on other moral issues. In the case of divorce, it is possible that the item itself was not sufficiently nuanced; the young people perhaps consider that divorce is permissible in some circumstances but not in others.

A further statement was included in the survey concerning pornography. The use of the internet has greatly increased the availability and use of pornography and some reports have claimed that 50% of all Christian men use internet pornography (Saunders, 2009). Seventy-seven percent of the teenagers in the new Christian schools agree that pornography is wrong, with just 11% taking the opposite view.

To summarise, the teenage pupils in the new Christian schools appear to have been influenced by the view of sexual morality promoted within their schools in nearly all of the indicators contained in this section. Nevertheless, in each case a minority of

pupils was not prepared to state categorically that they believed that the matter under consideration was wrong and some were happy to state clearly that they did not consider it to be wrong. The picture is one of considered opinions, at least to some degree, rather than of a blanket acceptance of a certain programme of moral values.

9.3 Sexism and sexuality

The evangelical Christian community is sometimes regarded as fulfilling and promoting “sexist” and “homophobic” stereotypes, hence the decision to include a section in the survey dealing with these issues.

Table 9.3
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their attitudes to sexism and sexuality

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
Women and men are equally good at looking after children	8	14	79
Women are better at housework than men	27	25	48
Men are better at DIY than women	25	26	50
Gay couples should be allowed to care for children	62	18	20
Gay couples should be allowed to marry	70	16	15

Three statements were used to investigate the views that the pupils hold on the roles of men and women in the family and the home. The accusation that the schools are likely to be promoting sexism is not borne out by the finding that 79% of the pupils agree that women and men are equally good at looking after children. When it comes to male/female roles in the home, the picture is less clear cut. Nearly half, 48% of the pupils agree that women are better at housework than men, with 27% disagreeing with that statement and 25% saying that they are not sure. Similarly, 50% of the

pupils agree that men are better at DIY than women, with the remaining 50% being equally divided between those who disagree with the statement and those who are not sure. Further research is needed to be able to compare these figures with those of the wider population of young teenagers.

A further two statements in this section were designed to examine the views of the pupils on homosexual relationships. These are of particular importance because conservative Christians are often accused of promoting bigotry in general and homophobia in particular. The schools would deny the accusation of homophobia and would claim that in their teaching they stress love for one's neighbour and the importance of non-judgemental attitudes. However, historically, the teaching of Christianity on the subject of homosexuality, based on various passages from the Bible, is that homosexual practice and lifestyle is a sin. Coming as they do from an evangelical background, the new Christian schools might be expected to uphold these teachings, together with the traditionally Christian high view of marriage as a life-long partnership between one man and one woman. Sixty-two percent of the teenage pupils in the schools do not agree that homosexual couples should be allowed to care for children. However, 20% of the pupils do agree that they should be allowed to and 18% are not sure on the matter. Similarly, 70% of the pupils do not believe that homosexual couples should be allowed to marry although 15% take the opposite view and 16% are not sure. While these data certainly support the view that the schools are upholding traditional Christian teaching on the issue of homosexuality, it also indicates that 30 to 40% of the pupils feel able to either reject or question that teaching.

In summary, the responses suggest a thoughtful group of young people who should not necessarily be regarded as fulfilling the stereotypes of sexism and homophobia that are often ascribed to the evangelical community.

9.4 Antisocial behaviour

Four items were included in the survey to assess the views of the young people concerning anti-social behaviour. Their generation is often accused of such behaviour. What position do the pupils themselves take on matters concerning smoking, alcohol and violence?

Table 9.4
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their attitudes to antisocial behaviour

	Disagree %	Not Sure %	Agree %
Smoking should be banned in public places	11	13	75
Streets should be alcohol free	29	26	46
Pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day	52	27	21
People should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection	61	20	20

A clear majority, 75%, of the teenagers in the new Christian schools consider that smoking should be banned from public places, but only a minority, 46%, agree that streets should be alcohol free. Although a small majority, 52%, do not approve of the idea that pubs should be allowed to stay open around the clock, 21% agree that they should. Similarly, 20% of the pupils believe that people should be able to carry weapons for their own protection and a further 20% would consider this possibility. These figures are somewhat surprising, given the Christian context in which most of the pupils spend their lives and in which they all receive their education.

To summarise, while the pupils share clear opinions regarding smoking, there is a diversity of opinion among them on the other three items in this section. Since both alcohol-related problems and violence are perceived as affecting the current generation of teenagers to an unacceptable extent, these are topics that the schools might need to address further.

9.5 Substance use

This section explores the attitude of the young people in the Christian schools to substance abuse. Five of the statements were used by Francis (2001, p48) in the Values Survey. These dealt with cigarette smoking, sniffing solvents, getting drunk, and the use of cannabis and heroin. Four further statements have been added to refine the survey further, concerned with the use of alcohol, ecstasy, cocaine and speed.

Table 9.5
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views on substance use

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
It is wrong to smoke cigarettes	19	19	63
It is wrong to drink alcohol	65	16	19
It is wrong to sniff solvents (glue/aerosols)	9	9	81
It is wrong to get drunk	28	21	51
It is wrong to use cannabis (hash/pot)	14	11	75
It is wrong to use heroin	9	7	84
It is wrong to use ecstasy	7	12	81
It is wrong to use cocaine	9	7	84
It is wrong to use speed	10	16	75

Sixty-three percent of the young people in the Christian schools believe that it is wrong to smoke cigarettes. The remainder are evenly divided between those who think that cigarette smoking is acceptable and those who are not sure on the matter. When Francis (2005a, p136) investigated the views of teenage boys in the new

Christian schools, he found that 50% thought it was wrong to smoke cigarettes, a figure that was significantly different from the 38% of boys in non-denominational schools who thought the same. The current figure of 63% would appear to be significantly higher, indicating that cigarette smoking has become less acceptable for the pupils in the new Christian schools over the past decade.

Eighty-one percent of the pupils agree that it is wrong to sniff solvents. Again, the remainder are evenly divided in their views with 9% unsure and 9% prepared to say that there is nothing wrong with such behaviour. For the social use of drugs, the young people present a fairly consistent picture, with the great majority, ranging from 75% to 84%, depending on the substance in question, agreeing that it is wrong to use them in this way. However, this leaves a sizeable minority of up to 25% who do not categorically reject their use. These figures are similar to those found by Francis for the general school population in the 1990s (Francis, 2001, p48).

When it comes to the use of alcohol, the picture is more complex. The majority of the pupils, 65%, do not think that it is wrong to drink alcohol. Nineteen percent do think it is wrong to do so and 16% are not sure about it. However, only a very small majority, 51%, agree that it is wrong to get drunk and 28% claim that it is not wrong to do so. A further 21% cannot decide whether it is wrong or not. This means that almost half of the pupils in the new Christian schools do not consider drunken behaviour to be wrong. This is an unexpected finding and one that the schools will probably find disturbing.

To summarise, when it comes to substance abuse, a subject of great concern to the parents of teenagers, the young people in the Christian schools on the whole reveal themselves to have strong moral views which should help them to avoid the level of abuse that appears to be so common amongst their wider group of peers. However, in every category a minority claimed to see no harm in the use of cigarettes or drugs. In the case of the use of alcohol, while the young people largely agreed with its moderate use, it is of concern that only just over half of them could clearly say that they believed it is wrong to get drunk.

9.6 Media influences

The new Christian schools are often accused of educating their pupils in an unrealistically naïve way which is out of touch with modern society. How do the pupils themselves view the “real world” when they encounter it via the internet, computer games, television and other media sources such as films and magazines? Five items were included in the survey in an attempt to answer that question.

Table 9.6
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views concerning the media

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
There is too much violence in the media	30	29	41
There is too much violence in computer games	40	27	33
There is too much sex in computer games	37	37	25
There is too much sex on the internet	20	27	53
There is too much sex on TV	24	30	46

The responses in this section indicate that between one quarter and one third of the young people surveyed did not know how to respond to the items concerning the influence of the media. This is unusual for a group of teenagers who have normally

expressed clear opinions one way or the other, whatever the matter under consideration. It may indicate that, in these cases, the schools and the parents are successfully shielding the young people from what they consider to be harmful influences. The numbers who disagreed with the items also suggest that a percentage of the pupils are not encountering the kinds of material through the media with which many of their peers in other settings may be familiar. For example, 30% do not consider that there is too much violence in the media. Nevertheless, a large minority (41%) did agree that there is too much violence in the media and a similar proportion (46%) agreed that there is too much sex on TV. Even more, (53%), agreed that there is too much sex on the internet. This is a section where comparisons with the wider school population are essential for a proper analysis of the significance of the data.

9.7 Work

One of the main purposes of schooling is to prepare young people for the world of work. The new Christian schools see it as part of their duty to train the young people in terms of character as well as academic skills. How has the distinctive approach of the schools affected the attitudes of the young people towards work and unemployment? Francis (2001, p34) included five statements dealing with these issues which have been reproduced in the current survey. To them has been added one other of particular relevance to Christian schooling. The statement ‘I would like to do a job which helps other people’ is included to assess the effect on the young people of the Christian framework within which they have been educated with its strong emphasis on caring for others.

Table 9.7
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their attitudes to work

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I want to get to the top in my work when I get a job	4	15	82
A job gives you a sense of purpose	7	19	74
I think it is important to work hard when I get a job	1	4	94
I would not like to be unemployed	9	6	86
Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to	10	22	68
I would like to do a job which helps other people	4	29	67

The responses to the items demonstrate that the young people in the new Christian schools regard the world of work in a positive light. Seventy-four percent believe that a job gives you a sense of purpose with only 7% disagreeing with this position and 19% indicating that they are not sure on the matter. These figures are very similar to those found by Francis (2001, p34) for the wider teenage population. At that time Francis found that there was a small but significant difference between the boys in the new Christian schools and those in non-denominational schools, with the pupils from the new Christian schools less likely to believe that a job gives one a sense of purpose (Francis, 2005, p137). The current figures suggest that this difference, together with others that were found in this section, may no longer exist. Eighty-six percent of the pupils would not like to be unemployed although 9% would not have a problem with unemployment. A very high percentage, 94%, thinks it is important to work hard at their job and 82% would like to rise to the top in their job. Only 5% indicate that they would not be ambitious in this way, with 15% expressing uncertainty on the matter. All of these findings are very similar to those previously found by Francis (2001, p340) for young people in general.

The statement “Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to” was answered in the affirmative by 68% of the young people. Ten percent disagreed with the statement and 22% were not sure. This is the one response in this section which seems to be different from that found by Francis (2001, p34) who found the wider teenage population then to be evenly divided in their response to this item. The high proportion of young people in the new Christian schools who do not see unemployment as a potential problem for themselves, and therefore for others, may correlate with the proportion who do not encounter much unemployment in the area where they live. In response to an earlier item, only 12% indicated that unemployment was a problem visible to them. It may also be a reflection of the “Protestant work ethic” still associated with the evangelical community, whereby almost any job would be considered better than none. The difference may also reflect differences in the economic climate. The current survey was conducted in 2006 when employment opportunities were readily available.

In the event, 67% of the pupils agreed that helping other people is the kind of work that they would like to take up. Just 4% clearly took the opposite view, and 29% were not sure on the matter. Two thirds of the teenagers in the new Christian schools thus claim that they aspire to pursue a career involving the service of others. It would be interesting and informative to be able to compare this figure with a future assessment of the profile of careers which this cohort does eventually enter. It would also be valuable to be able to compare both their aspirations now and their careers in the future with those of their peers in wider society.

In summary, the teenagers who will soon emerge from the new Christian schools in the main have a strong work ethic and many of them aspire to use their future employment in the service of others. However, many of them retain little sympathy for those who are unemployed.

9.8 Politics

The question of the kind of citizens faith-based schools, of which the new Christian schools are an extreme example, are producing is especially relevant to the consideration of political interest and involvement. Six statements were included in the survey to assess the views of the young people both on matters of general political interest and on more specific issues of current concern.

Table 9.8
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views concerning politics

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
It makes no difference which political party is in power	53	29	18
I think that immigration into Britain should be restricted	23	32	45
When old enough I will vote at election time	7	26	67
There are too many foreign people living in this country	37	23	40
Politics is irrelevant to my life	46	29	25
I think politicians do a good job	29	48	24

The majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools are not cynical about party politics, in that 53% of them do not agree that it makes no difference which political party is in power. However, nearly one fifth, 18%, do take that rather sceptical position and 29% are undecided about it. These figures are broadly similar

to those that the Values Survey found for the general teenage population in the 1990s (Francis, 2001, p42) with some indication that the new Christian school pupils might be less cynical. Of the general teenage population then, 44% disagreed with the statement compared with 53% of the pupils in the current survey. Only 24% of the young people believe that politicians do a good job. Nearly half of the teenagers, 48%, were not sure how to respond to this item, with just 29% having confidence in politicians. The large percentage who did not know how to respond may have wished for a more nuanced statement; they possibly thought that some but not all politicians were doing a good job. Less than half of the teenagers, 46%, thought that politics was relevant to their lives, 29% were not sure whether it was or not, and one quarter, 25%, were sure that it was irrelevant to them. Nevertheless, 67% declared that they intended to vote in elections when they were old enough, with only 7% saying that they did not intend to. About one quarter, 26%, were not able to say at this juncture whether they would vote or not.

The matter of immigration is currently a controversial issue. When the young people completed the questionnaires, in the spring of 2006, the London bombings and attempted bombings that had taken place in July 2005 were still a very recent memory. This influence may be reflected in the responses that the young people gave to two statements concerning immigration into Britain. Forty-five percent of them agreed that immigration into Britain should be restricted, 23% disagreed with this view and 32% were not sure about it. Francis (2001, p42) found that just 31% of the general teenage population in the 1990s thought that immigration should be restricted. As to whether there are too many foreign people living in Britain at present, their opinions were evenly divided. Forty percent agreed with this view,

38% disagreed with it and 23% did not at present have a definite opinion on the matter. Further research would be needed to establish whether these responses were in reaction to the recent terrorist atrocities in London and New York or whether they represent views at a more fundamental level that could be defined as racist.

To summarise, the young people in the new Christian schools for the most part are not cynical about party politics although they do not have much confidence in current politicians. Nevertheless, the majority of them intend to fulfil their civic duty by voting in elections. Immigration is a matter of concern to a large minority of the pupils.

9.9 Global Fears

This section extends the consideration of political issues to the global scene. What kind of potential global citizens are being produced by the new Christian schools? How do the pupils in these schools view some of the tensions and needs currently affecting the wider world? Three of the statements in Table 9.9 were included in the Values Survey. One further statement was added, asking whether the pupils were concerned about the risk of terrorism. In addition to covering an important issue in its own right, it was felt that the responses to this item might throw light on some of the responses described in the previous section.

Table 9.9
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their global fears and concerns

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I am concerned about the risk of nuclear war	25	33	42
I am concerned about the risk of terrorism	17	23	61
There is nothing I can do to help solve the world's problems	63	24	13
I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world (e.g. Africa)	5	12	83

The responses to the four statements included in this category indicate that the pupils in the new Christian schools are not indifferent to global issues. Sixty-three percent of the young people do not agree that there is nothing they can do to help to solve the world's problems, with a small minority, 13% taking the opposite view. The equivalent figure for the wider teenage population in the previous decade was 45% (Francis, 2001, p44). It seems that the teenagers in the new Christian schools are potentially more likely than their peers to want actively to assist with aid programmes and other means of helping those in other nations. A very large majority, 83%, indicated that they are concerned about the poverty of the developing world with a mere 5% having no concern for the poor of other nations. The equivalent figures for the wider population in the previous decade were 61% concerned and 13% unconcerned (Francis, 2001, p44).

When asked to consider the issue of nuclear war, the teenagers displayed a range of responses. Forty-two percent agreed that they are concerned about nuclear war, but 25% are not concerned. Exactly one third, 33%, did not know what they think about the issue. The risk of terrorism was viewed very differently, reflecting, as expected,

current concern with this issue in the UK. Sixty-one percent expressed that they were concerned about this risk and a further 23% could not confidently say that there was nothing for them to be concerned about. Just 17% of the teenagers could say that they had no concern about the risk of terrorism.

To summarise, the majority of the teenagers in the new Christian schools are concerned about the needs of the wider world and believe that it is possible for them to help in some way. They thus indicate that this is an area that they cannot ignore and that they take seriously. On the whole, they are not fearful of the theoretical risks of modern warfare but they are concerned about the reality of the risk of terrorism.

9.10 Environmental issues

How concerned are the young people in the new Christian schools about environmental issues? In an earlier section concerned with personal responsibility (see Table 8.11), 67% of them indicated that they want to try to care for the environment and only 8% disagreed with this. In this section, the items were designed to investigate the matter in more practical detail. Bible-believing Christians are sometimes regarded as having insufficient concern for the environment. However, Francis (1997, p15) in a study of concern about environmental pollution amongst 13 to 15 year-olds found that the young people who displayed the highest level of environmental concern were those who believed in God, attended church and engaged in personal prayer. This profile would describe the majority of the pupils in the new Christian schools. Helton and Helton (2007, p141) consider that very little research has been done into the question of how Christian theology influences people's environmental attitudes. Their own research (p 139) found that Christian

students were no more or less likely to believe in the intrinsic value of nature than non-religious students.

Table 9.10
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools:
their concerns regarding the environment

	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %
I am concerned about the risk of pollution to the environment	20	26	55
I am concerned that we use too much of the Earth's resources	13	36	52
I make a special effort to recycle	46	28	25
I make a special effort to help to save the world's energy resources	44	37	19
I am concerned about animals and plants becoming extinct	24	29	47

A small majority of the teenagers, 55%, maintain that they are concerned about the risk of pollution to the environment. However, one fifth of them, 20%, assert that this is not their view and a further 26% are not sure that it is. The equivalent figures for the Values Survey were that 66% of the teenagers said then that they were concerned about the risk of pollution. An even smaller majority of the teenagers from the new Christian schools, 52%, express concern about the depletion of the Earth's resources, although only 13% can confidently say that this is not true of them and 36% do not know what to think about the issue. Forty-six percent of the young people admit that they do not make a special effort to recycle, 25% assert that they do and 28% are uncertain of their response. A similar percentage, 44% acknowledge that they do not make a special effort to help to save the world's energy resources with just 19% agreeing that they do make such efforts. A large minority of the young people, 37%, cannot decide whether they make such efforts or not. Forty-seven percent of the pupils express concern about the extinction of animals and plants, with 24% denying

that they feel like this and 29% unsure about the extent of their concern. The views expressed in this section were less clear-cut than for most previous sections and may indicate that the schools need to pay more attention to environmental issues in their teaching programmes.

To summarise, when it comes to practical detail, many of the teenagers in the new Christian schools admit that they do not live up to the desire to care for the environment that most of them have expressed. This is an area that the schools need to investigate. A comparison between the views expressed in this survey and those of the wider current population of UK teenagers might well prove to be informative.

9.11 Education

This section is concerned with the view that the young people have of the nature of the education that they are currently receiving in the new Christian schools. Previous sections have been designed with a wider constituency in mind in order that comparisons might eventually be made between the views of those receiving their education in the new Christian schools and those being educated in other schools. The statements in this section, however, have been added to the survey specifically for the purpose of gaining an understanding of how the young people are responding to the alternative kind of educational process that they themselves are receiving.

The rationale for the founding and continued existence of the new Christian schools includes the argument that the great majority of schools in the UK, even many of those with a religious foundation, are in practice educating within a secular worldview. As described by ap Siôn, Francis and Baker (2007, pp2-3):

Theologically, pioneers of the new Christian schools conceptualise a strong division between the Kingdom of God and the secular world. They argue that in comparison with the secular school, the Christian faith posits a radically different curriculum and a radically different view of the child. According to this view, Christianity affects the whole of life and there is a Christian perspective on all that is taught.

The schools, then, are aiming at what they claim is a radically different Christian curriculum presented within a cultural setting operating according to a consciously Christian worldview.

Two recent studies have investigated the views that former pupils of the new Christian schools have of the unusual education that they received as school children. First, ap Siôn, Francis and Baker (2007) report on their findings from a survey of male graduates from the new Christian schools. The young men were asked to state their view of the quality of the education that they had received in the schools. After he had commented positively on high academic standards, one male is quoted as saying:

Grades though of course are not everything and academic achievement I don't think has ever driven the school's ethos – this sets it apart nicely from other schools. (p8)

Another is quoted as commenting:

It [the school's training] provided a biblical foundation upon which to question and analyse academic and personal opinions/theories and beliefs. I was taught not just to accept what science dictates. (p10)

In a second study, ap Siôn, Francis and Baker (2009) quote young female adults, whose views on the subject they have collected, as follows:

My Christian faith has been strengthened by the ability to think 'Christianly' and the school equipped me to approach life this way. (p 230) The school allowed me to develop a greater political awareness and social conscience which would not have been encouraged or honed within an ordinary state school environment. (p231)

These quotations represent relatively mature reflections on the part of young adults who have now had a wider experience of the world. What are the views of the young teenagers who are currently in the schools? Do they have an understanding of what the school is trying to achieve? Are they aware that there are different worldviews for education and that they are being educated according to just one among many? Do they fulfil the stereotype of a young person being educated in a faith-based school as someone who is unaware of the views of the wider world? Do they agree with the viewpoint, so foundational to schooling in the new Christian schools, that education is as much about character training as it is about learning facts and skills? Do they agree that the schools are being successful in achieving this? Would they wish their own children to be educated in the same way as themselves? An extensive collection of eight items was included in the survey to attempt to answer these questions.

Table 9.11
Teenage pupils from new Christian schools: their views on education

	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
	%	%	%
Education is about learning facts	12	18	70
Education is about passing exams	23	22	55
Education is about learning how to live in a right way	8	22	69
Education is about understanding how to think about life	12	26	62
Education is about understanding how other people think about life	13	34	53
Education is about being prepared for life	5	13	83
Different religions have different views of life and will educate in different ways	4	20	76
I want my children to go to a Christian school	11	27	62

The young people in the new Christian schools were very largely agreed that education is about being prepared for life. Eighty-three percent responded positively to this statement with only 5% disagreeing and 13% declaring that they were unsure on the matter. Seventy percent of the pupils agreed that education is about learning facts, although 12% disagreed with this and 17% were not sure. The young people were less sure that education is about passing exams. Fifty-five percent agreed that it is, 23% said it was not and 22% did not know what they thought on the matter. Seventy percent agreed that education is about learning how to live in a right way with just 8% taking the opposite view. Sixty-two percent agreed that education is about understanding how to think about life while 12% did not agree that education has this role to play and 26% were unsure. A smaller majority, 53%, agreed that education is also about understanding how other people think about life and only 13% did not think so. About one third, 34%, was unsure how to respond to this statement. Three quarters, 76%, of the teenagers in the new Christian schools agree with the view that different religions have different views of life and will therefore educate in different ways. Just 4% disagreed with this view and 20% were not sure about it. The majority of the young people, 62%, indicated that they would like their own children to go to a Christian school. Just over a quarter, 27%, were not sure about this but only 11% were confident that a Christian school was not something that they would choose for their children.

To summarise this important section, the data present a picture of a cohort of young people who very largely understand what the new Christian schools are trying to achieve, feeling that it is benefiting them and that it is of sufficient value to pass on to the next generation. Approximately one fifth to one quarter of the pupils have yet

to make up their mind on the issues raised and approximately one in ten could perhaps be described as disaffected. This last figure correlates closely with the figure of 11% of respondents to the survey who identified themselves as having no religion.

The young people responding to the survey are aged between 13 and 16 years. A 16-year-old would be expected to be able to reflect with considerably more maturity than a 13-year-old on what are essentially abstract and philosophical statements. Further statistical procedures are needed to provide such an age-related comparison of the responses.

9.12 Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the views and values of the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools across a wide spectrum of potential concerns. The data indicate that the majority of the teenagers are espousing the conservative Christian morality promoted by the schools, although a significant minority think otherwise. In terms of consonance with the views of current society, existing wider data suggest that there is agreement in some areas, for example honesty and integrity, but a divergence over certain key areas of sexual morality, for example homosexuality. The schools appear to be successfully promoting concern for others, including those in less fortunate nations, but may be less successful at inspiring a concern for the environment both locally and globally. A comparison of the data reported in this chapter with those obtained from a directly equivalent wider generation would have the potential to either confirm or refute some of these observations.

This chapter and the two preceding it have provided an extensive overview of the beliefs, concerns, views and values of the 695 13-to-16-year-olds who completed the questionnaires. Concealed within this overview are many potential differences. To what extent do the girls hold the same views as the boys? Are the opinions of the oldest pupils significantly different from those of the youngest? What about the 11% of the pupils who identify themselves as unbelievers? How do their beliefs compare with those of the vast majority who say they are Christians? Succeeding chapters will investigate these questions.

Chapter 10

The pupils: compared by sex

Now that the overall profile of the young people in the new Christian schools has been described, attention is turned to key examples of the various ways in which the data can be analysed. This chapter will consider the beliefs and values of the male pupils compared with those of the female pupils. Traditionally, significant differences in religious belief and practice are found within this dimension and the data that have thus far been reported could be masking these differences. This thesis is concerned with the question of to what extent the schools are succeeding in achieving their aims. It is possible that they are succeeding with the girls but not with the boys; hence the importance of an internal analysis to investigate this possibility.

There is a wide literature reporting on further educational differences between boys and girls in the UK, especially the generally recognised tendency for girls to outperform boys in attainment levels. Teresa Tinklin used data from the Scottish School Leavers survey to investigate the link between gender differences and high attainment in the Scottish educational setting. She concluded:

The only factor which seemed to offer any ‘explanation’ for gender differences in high attainment was the evidence that females took school more seriously than males. This is in accordance with other research evidence which showed that girls tend to be better prepared, more conscientious, cooperative, organised and respectful at school, while boys are seen as ill prepared, competitive, disruptive, overconfident and less attentive. It also lends weight to research on the influence of different peer cultures experienced by girls and boys. While academic success was valued by girls, doing too well at school could disadvantage some boys among their peers. This suggests that boys who did do well at school had to transcend their peer culture somehow, either by forgoing popularity among other boys, or by doing well while not being seen to take school too seriously, perhaps by appearing not to put too much effort in. While attitudes

towards school and peer group pressures are clearly important in understanding gender differences in performance, it should not be forgotten that a range of other factors have also been shown to influence gender differences. These include teaching and learning processes, curricular content and assessment methods, teacher–pupil interactions, parental attitudes and post-school opportunities and any explanation of gender differences in performance needs to take account of these factors as well. (Tinklin, 2003, p 322)

The current study is not aiming to assess educational attainment. Nevertheless, an assessment of the different views and attitudes of the boys compared with those of the girls in the new Christian schools should enable a prediction, based on the parameters listed by Tinklin, as to whether they might be expected to follow the general trend in this respect. Do the boys in the new Christian schools take school less seriously than the girls? Do they fulfil the stereotype of being overconfident and less conscientious compared with their female counterparts? Does the peer culture in the schools disadvantage those boys who wish to do well or are the schools managing to be “counter-cultural” in this regard? The schools claim that their teaching and learning processes, their curricular content, their teacher-pupil interactions, their parental attitudes and in some cases even their assessment methods are directly influenced by their Christian viewpoint and are factors that differentiate them from main-stream British education. These are the very factors listed by Tinklin as known to influence gender differences in education.

As regards the influence of schools themselves on the gender gap in attainment,

Tinklin comments:

Interestingly, there was no evidence of variation between schools in the gender gap in attainment, when other factors were held constant. This indicates that the factors affecting gender differences in attainment are found equally in all schools. This suggests that wider cultural changes are affecting young women’s expectations of education and

aspirations for the future and that this is having an effect on their performance in schools, over and above what individual schools are actually doing. (Tinklin, 2003, p 322)

The new Christian schools provide a setting within which such a finding could be further tested.

Other specific differences between the educational responses of boys compared with those of girls are currently causing concern in the UK. William Stewart, writing in the Times Educational Supplement (20 May 2009), reports on research showing that boys in the UK significantly out-performed their female classmates in science, with a bigger gap in favour of males than any other developed country. The new Christian schools provide an unusual context for their science teaching. Would this distinction hold true for them?

A recent study investigated 505 male and female adolescents aged between 13 and 16 years looking for psychological variables (Mestre, *et al.* 2009). The researchers found that females demonstrated a greater empathic response than males of the same age, with the differences growing with age. Palmer (2009) has written extensively about a perceived general problem with 21st century boys, whereby the British educational system is regarded as having failed many of them. Is the cultural and educational setting provided by the new Christian schools enabling them to avoid this dichotomy between the sexes?

In the following analysis of the data, the religious beliefs of the boys and girls will be compared first, followed by their views on other matters. This particular analysis has been confined to Years 9 and 10, in order to enable a more direct comparison

with the results of the Teenage Religion and Values survey, together with any future results obtained from the proposed update of that survey. In Years 9 and 10 of the current survey, 250 boys and 216 girls completed questionnaires. Thus, 54% of the sample used for this comparison was male and 46% female. These figures compare with 52% male and 48% female for the sample as a whole when Year 11 is included.

10.1 Pupils compared by sex: their religious beliefs and attitude to religion

There is a common perception that women are more likely to engage in religious practices than are men, a perception that is borne out by research:

A large body of research demonstrates that women attend church more often than men and in greater numbers. Women are more likely than men to claim for themselves denominational membership, to pray, to read their Bibles, to report religious and mystical experiences, to watch religious television programmes and to express belief in God. They are also more likely to hold traditional religious beliefs, to report feeling close to God, to believe in spirits and to report deriving comfort from religion. These sex differences are well-established and found in, among other places, England, Ireland, Wales, Japan, Canada, the United States, Australia, Scotland and western Europe generally. (Kay and Francis, 1996, p10)

Further, the British Social Attitudes survey has published data on sex differences in attitudes to religion which have shown significant differences in the proportion of men and women who expressed religious belief, experience, practice and affiliation (Francis, 2001, p89) and in every case women were more religious than men. The differences quoted are large, with 76% of women claiming to believe in God compared with 60% of men. Observations such as these have led some to speak of the feminisation of the Christian church in Britain (Brown, 2001).

Francis (2001, pp82-110) investigated several of the parameters covered by the present study in the extensive Teenage Religion and Values survey conducted in the 1990s. He found that there were significant differences between the responses of the boys compared with those of the girls in most instances. Significantly more girls believed in God than did boys. The girls were also more likely to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead. In fact, in 11 out of the 15 items linked directly to religion investigated by Francis, girls were more likely than boys to hold traditional Christian views. Conversely, significantly more boys believed Christianity to be the only true religion than did girls and they were also less inclined to believe that one could be a Christian without going to church. The only items on which the boys and the girls were agreed were concerned with the extent to which Christian ministers were doing a good job and with the belief that God punishes people who do wrong. Would these differences prove to hold true for the pupils in the new Christian schools?

An earlier study (Francis, 1992, pp340-368) had investigated the attitude towards God of 4000 pupils from England aged between 12 and 16. Francis found that:

As is consistent with much research into the psychology of religion, female [pupils] are much more inclined to demonstrate belief in God than males. The statistics also demonstrate that females are more likely to be aware of God's presence, and to feel that their life is being guided by God. They are more likely than males to feel that God is very real to them and to experience God's help in their lives. (Francis, 1992, pp 343-4)

Francis (2009, pp141-147) has commented on the different explanations advanced to account for the gender differences in religiosity and to explain why it is that females record a more favourable attitude towards Christianity than do males. Kay and Francis (1996, pp19-21) argue that Christianity appeals to those who are

psychologically more feminine (women and more “feminine” men) because Christianity is perceived as more feminine than masculine in its fundamental nature. They cite (p21) the use of such words as “gentle”, “sympathetic”, and “compassionate” to assess femininity and conclude that these are words which describe Christ himself, as he is depicted in the New Testament. That Christianity commends qualities traditionally viewed by society as essentially feminine is corroborated by other Biblical teaching. For example, Galatians 5:22-23 describes the way Christians should behave if they are being guided by the Holy Spirit in terms of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In any other context, these might be seen as feminine characteristics, rather than as those defining Christian behaviour. The new Christian schools are seeking to be counter-cultural. They use the Bible extensively, both in planning their curriculum and directly with the children throughout the school day. In such a context, will the differences between the boys and girls prove to be reduced or even eliminated?

Table 10.1
Pupils compared by sex: their attitude to religion

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I am a religious person	62	63	0.0	NS
I am a spiritual person	59	59	0.0	NS
I am a superstitious person	10	10	0.0	NS
Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today	14	9	2.8	NS

The data indicate (Table 10.1) that the male teenage pupils receiving their education in the new Christian schools display an identical attitude to religion as do their female counterparts. The boys and girls are equally able to describe themselves as

religious, as spiritual and as superstitious. They are no more or less likely to regard religion as a force for bad in the world.

Similarly, males and females display an almost identical profile in terms of their religious beliefs as shown by the data in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2
Pupils compared by sex: their religious beliefs

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I believe in God	84	88	1.6	NS
I believe in the Holy Spirit	81	84	0.8	NS
I believe in Jesus Christ	85	87	0.3	NS
I think Christianity is the only true religion	75	73	0.2	NS
I believe in Jesus as my personal Saviour	75	79	1.0	NS
I believe that there is truth in all religions	16	21	2.2	NS

Boys and girls in the new Christian schools are equally likely to believe in God, in the Holy Spirit and in Jesus Christ. Both sexes are equally likely to profess belief in Jesus as their personal Saviour, to regard Christianity as the only true religion or to believe that there is truth in all religions. These results are at variance with those obtained by the Values Survey for the two items for which direct comparisons can be made. There it was found that young women of this age were more likely to believe in God while the young men were more likely to believe that Christianity is the only true religion (Francis, 2001, pp100-101).

Table 10.3
Pupils compared by sex: their beliefs about life after death

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I believe in life after death	74	75	0.1	NS
I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead	84	87	0.6	NS
I believe that when I die I will come back to life as someone or something else	9	10	0.1	NS
I believe in heaven	86	90	1.9	NS
I believe in hell	80	78	0.3	NS
I want a church funeral	56	73	4.0	.001

Table 10.3 introduces the first item where a difference is shown between the sexes. Girls in the new Christian schools are significantly more likely to want a church funeral than are the boys. On all other parameters in this section, the males again hold identical views to the females. They are just as likely to believe in life after death, to agree that Jesus really rose from the dead and to believe in heaven or hell. They are just as unlikely to believe in any form of reincarnation. Again, where comparison is possible, these results differ markedly from those found by the Values Survey for the wider population of equivalent age (Francis, 2001, pp100-101). There it was found that girls were significantly more likely than boys to believe in life after death and to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead.

Tables 10.4 and 10.5 indicate that, in their attitude to Christianity and in their view of God, there are once again no significant differences between the positions of the boys and girls in the new Christian schools.

Table 10.4
Pupils compared by sex: their attitude to Christianity

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I know that Jesus helps me	77	82	1.8	NS
I think going to church is a waste of time	10	9	0.1	NS
God helps me to lead a better life	74	81	3.1	NS
God means a lot to me	79	81	0.4	NS
Prayer helps me a lot	68	73	1.4	NS
I know that Jesus is very close to me	72	80	4.5	NS
I think the Bible is out of date	8	8	0.0	NS

Table 10.5
Pupils compared by sex: their view of God

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I believe that God is loving	82	87	2.1	NS
I believe that God is kind	83	87	1.6	NS
I believe that God is merciful	80	85	2.1	NS
I believe that God cares about me personally	80	84	1.4	NS
I believe that God is forgiving	81	86	2.2	NS
I believe that God answers prayer	78	83	2.0	NS
I believe that God punishes people who do wrong if they do not repent	59	58	0.0	NS
I believe that God is in control of history	68	69	0.1	NS

Table 10.6
Pupils compared by sex: their views concerning church and society

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
The church seems irrelevant to life today	9	9	0.0	NS
The Bible seems irrelevant to life today	15	11	1.4	NS
I want my children to be baptised/christened/dedicated in church	70	76	2.3	NS
I want to get married in church	75	86	7.9	.01
Religious Education should be taught in school	78	84	2.6	NS
Schools should hold a religious assembly every day	32	32	0.0	NS
Christian ministers/vicars/priests do a good job	70	70	0.0	NS

Table 10.6 does reveal a difference between the male and female pupils in that the girls are more likely to desire a church wedding than are the boys. In every other respect, there is no difference between the sexes in their views of the relationship between church and society. The Values Survey found that the wider population of young women at that time held a more positive view than the young men concerning the role of the church in society (Francis, 2001, p101). A direct comparison is possible for all the items in this section and a result that differs from the general survey is obtained for five out of the seven. Only in two items do the results agree; in both sets of data, girls are more likely to desire a church wedding than are boys and both sexes are equally likely to believe that Christian ministers do a good job. In every other respect the Values Survey found that the views of the boys differed from those of the girls, whereas the pupils in the new Christian schools display no such difference.

Table 10.7
Pupils compared by sex: their beliefs concerning creation and evolution

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
The earth is billions of years old	28	27	0.1	NS
I believe God made the world in six days of 24 hours	62	56	1.7	NS
The earth is only a few thousand years old	41	37	0.8	NS
I believe in evolution creating everything over millions of years	10	6	3.1	NS
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	24	24	0.0	NS

Table 10.8
Pupils compared by sex: their beliefs about science and the Bible

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
God created the world as described in the Bible	73	82	5.6	NS
God created the Universe including living creatures out of nothing	73	71	0.2	NS
God formed man out of the dust of the Earth	68	74	1.5	NS
God made woman out of man's rib	70	76	2.7	NS
There was once a world-wide flood as described in the Bible	79	81	0.1	NS
The world was once perfect but has been affected by sin	78	82	1.3	NS
I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of evolution	10	9	0.1	NS
Everything in the world was made by natural forces – it was not designed	6	5	0.1	NS
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	16	21	1.8	NS
Scientists have discovered how the world was made	6	7	0.4	NS
You can't be a good scientist and believe in the Bible	9	8	0.1	NS

Table 10.9
Pupils compared by sex: their views about scientism

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Theories in science can be proved to be definitely true	30	24	2.1	NS
Science will eventually give us complete control over the world	8	6	1.4	NS
The laws of science will never be changed	15	10	2.7	NS
I cannot trust both science and religion	17	14	0.8	NS
Nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically	6	7	0.2	NS
Science can give us absolute truths	16	13	1.2	NS

When it comes to the creation/evolution debate and the relationship between science and religion, the data shown in Tables 10.7, 10.8 and 10.9 indicate that there is no significant difference between the beliefs of male and female pupils with respect to any of the 22 items included in the survey. Once again, the results are different from those obtained in the Values Survey where it was reported that the young women were more likely to hold creationist views than were the young men (Francis, 2001, p101).

To summarise, the results encountered in this section on religious belief and church-related matters, whereby on almost every criterion provided by the survey no difference was displayed between the boys and the girls, constitutes an important finding. Of the 49 items listed, the males differed from the females in only two instances. Both of these were concerned with social behaviour as well as with religious belief, in that the girls were more likely than the boys to want to marry and to have their funeral in a church building. These results go against all reported trends in British society in terms of the relative religious beliefs of men and women.

10.2 Pupils compared by sex: their personal concerns

Francis (2001, p96) found that on many criteria young women reported a lower sense of personal well-being in comparison with young men. The young women of the same age in the new Christian schools on the whole have no such problem, as shown by the data in Table 10.10.

Table 10.10
Pupils compared by sex: their personal well-being

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	80	83	0.5	NS
I find life really worth living	74	76	0.1	NS
I feel I am not worth much as a person	12	17	2.1	NS
I often feel depressed	22	29	2.8	NS
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	15	21	3.3	NS
I have sometimes considered deliberately hurting myself	16	33	19.1	.001

The first four items in Table 10.10 were also used by Francis (2001, p97). He found that the general population of young women of this age was more likely to often feel depressed and to feel that they were not worth much as people compared with their male counterparts. They were also more likely to have considered taking their own lives and less likely to find life really worth living. None of these differences applied to the pupils in the new Christian schools. However, on one criterion, one not included by Francis, there was a strongly significant difference. While the girls were no more likely than the boys to have considered taking their own life, they were twice as likely to have considered deliberately hurting themselves. Just 16% of the boys agreed with this statement but the figure for the girls was 33%. That one third of the girls has considered acting like this should give the schools cause for concern. In order fully to understand the significance of this finding, it will be necessary to ascertain the comparable figure for the wider population of girls of this age.

Table 10.11
Pupils compared by sex: their personal worries

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I am worried about my attractiveness to the opposite sex	40	53	7.6	.01
I am worried about getting AIDS/HIV	21	19	0.2	NS
I am worried about how I get on with other people	41	50	3.6	NS
I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools	22	20	0.3	NS
I am worried about going out alone at night in my area	25	44	18.2	.001
I am worried about putting on weight	28	58	43.7	.001
I am worried about my body shape	32	57	31.4	.001

Table 10.11 shows the girls in the new Christian schools to be more beset by worries than are the boys, worries that are mainly concerned with their physical appearance. The girls tend to worry about their attractiveness to the opposite sex, about their body shape and about the possibility of putting on weight to a greater extent than do the boys. The differences are marked, with nearly 60% of the girls concerned about their body shape and about putting on weight, compared with about 30% of the boys. The young people are at an age when the danger of developing an eating disorder can become a real concern and this is another area that the schools may wish to address. Francis (2001, p97) also found that girls were more inclined than boys to worry about their attractiveness to the opposite sex. However, his figures were lower, with 30% of boys and 41% of girls admitting to worries of this kind whereas for the new Christian schools, 40% of boys and 53% of girls admitted to such concerns. This is the one area where the pupils in the new Christian schools appear to worry to a greater extent than do their peers in general. Again, the schools might wish to take note of this, especially as it concerns more than half of the female

teenagers in their care. The girls are also more concerned about going out alone at night in their home locality, a result similar to that found by Francis (2001, p97).

Table 10.12
Pupils compared by sex: their dependency strategies

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I eat to make myself feel better	22	32	5.9	NS
I stop eating to make myself feel better	4	11	9.0	.01
I eat chocolate to make myself feel better	24	46	25.6	.001
I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better	26	24	0.4	NS
I drink alcohol to make myself feel better	9	13	2.1	NS

Despite their greater tendency to worry, the teenage girls in the new Christian schools are no more likely than the boys to turn to comfort eating or to caffeine or alcohol to improve their mood, as shown by the data in Table 10.12. However, they admit to being much more likely than the boys to use chocolate in this way. A more worrying finding concerns the admission by twice as many girls as boys that they sometimes stop eating to make themselves feel better. The numbers involved are small but the difference is significant.

To whom are the girls and boys likely to turn for help with their anxieties? Table 10.13 shows that one half of the girls and one third of the boys often long for someone to turn to for advice, again a significant difference. The Values Survey found a similar result for the wider population of boys and again found a significant difference in the response of the girls (Francis, 2001, p98). The figure for the girls then was lower, with just 41% feeling this need compared with 50% of the girls in the current survey. However, there was no significant difference between the male and female pupils in the new Christian schools in the likelihood that they would turn

to a doctor, teacher or church minister for advice. They would also be equally reluctant to share their problems via chat rooms but the girls would be significantly less likely than the boys to be willing to make use of a helpline. On the other hand, as shown in Tables 10.14 and 10.15, the girls are much more likely than the boys to talk about their problems with close friends but much less likely than the boys to discuss their problems with their fathers.

Table 10.13
Pupils compared by sex: their views concerning counselling

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I often long for someone to turn to for advice	35	50	10.4	.01
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a school teacher	52	49	0.7	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a doctor	26	33	3.0	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a Christian minister/vicar/priest	25	27	0.2	NS
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people in chat rooms	66	69	0.6	NS
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people on helplines	33	23	8.4	.01

Table 10.14
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to their peer groups

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Sometimes I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do	40	43	0.4	NS
Most of my friends think religion is important	56	55	0.1	NS
Most of my friends smoke cigarettes	10	17	4.5	NS
Most of my friends drink alcohol	26	36	5.6	NS
Most of my friends take drugs	6	5	0.2	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with close friends	60	82	27.5	.001

Table 10.15
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to their parents

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
My parents are supportive of me	92	89	1.0	NS
Sometimes I feel pressured by my parents to do things I don't want to do	44	42	0.2	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my mum	49	60	5.6	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my dad	50	36	9.1	.01
My parents think religion is important	81	76	1.6	NS

Table 10.16 indicates that once again it is the tendency to worry that distinguishes the young men from the young women in their view of their Christian school. Male and female pupils are equally likely to be happy at school, to like those they go to school with, and to consider that their teachers are doing a good job. Both sexes are equally likely or unlikely to find school boring and to feel that they are of interest to their teachers. Similarly, both boys and girls feel to an equal extent that their school is preparing them well for life and that it is a place where they do not need to worry about bullying. However, the girls are more likely to worry about their school work and much more likely to worry about their exams than are the boys. The first eight of the items in Table 9.16 are identical with those used in the Values Survey, where, in most cases, very different responses can be found (Francis, 2001, p99). Francis found that, in the wider teenage population, girls were more likely than boys to worry about school work and exams, the same as for the new Christian schools. However, they were also more likely to worry about being bullied and were less likely to feel that their school was preparing them for life. On the other hand, the girls in the general school population were more likely than the boys to be happy at

school and to like the people they go to school with. They were also less likely to find school boring. These differences were not apparent in the responses from the pupils in the new Christian schools. In both settings, males and females were equally likely to regard their teachers in a positive light.

Table 10.16
Pupils compared by sex: their concerns about school life

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
School is boring	46	38	3.4	NS
I am happy in my school	78	76	0.4	NS
I like the people I go to school with	89	89	0.0	NS
I often worry about my school work	56	69	7.2	.01
I am worried about my exams at school	61	76	12.9	.001
I am worried about being bullied at school	12	14	0.5	NS
Teachers do a good job	70	70	0.0	NS
My school is preparing me for life	75	74	0.0	NS
I feel that my teachers are interested in me	52	55	0.4	NS

Table 10.17
Pupils compared by sex: their aims in life

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I would like to get married	92	95	2.0	NS
I would like to have children	87	91	1.9	NS
I would like to own my own home	94	93	0.4	NS
I would like to make a difference to the world	82	85	0.6	NS
I would like to study for a degree	70	71	0.0	NS
Life is about living for God and for others	73	70	0.3	NS
Life is about enjoying myself	53	65	6.9	.01

The data in Table 10.17 reveal that male and female teenagers in the new Christian schools have very similar aims in life. High percentages of each sex indicate that they would like to marry, to have children, to own their own home, to study for a degree and to one day make a difference to the world. Both sexes are agreed that life is about living for God and for others. The one item showing a difference is

concerned with enjoyment in life. The girls are significantly more likely than the boys to believe that life is also about enjoying oneself.

Finally, in this section, Table 10.18 compares the responses of the male and female pupils in the area of personal responsibility. Just one difference was found, with boys just as likely as girls to claim to want to be considerate, helpful and careful towards others and to care for the environment. However, the girls were more concerned than were the boys about the need to use inoffensive speech

Table 10.18
Pupils compared by sex: their attitude to personal responsibility

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
It is important to me to help others wherever I can	75	84	6.3	NS
It is important to me to avoid hurting others as much as possible	82	85	0.8	NS
I want to try to care for the environment	62	70	2.9	NS
I do not want to prosper at the expense of others	53	58	1.4	NS
I want to be careful how I speak, I don't want to offend	72	84	9.2	.01

To summarise the findings of this section, male and female pupils in the new Christian schools have very similar concerns and aims in life, displaying very few differences, except in one important area. The teenage girls in the schools are significantly more inclined to worry, especially about their appearance and their school work. These anxieties seem to be related to a worrying level of potential self-harm amongst the girls, and, for a small minority, a tendency towards eating disorders.

10.3 Pupils compared by sex: their views and moral values

As Table 10.19 indicates, there are no differences between the male and female pupils in the new Christian schools with respect to their view of what constitutes right and wrong. Again, this finding contrasts with that of the Values Survey. Francis (2001, p106) found young women of this age, in general, to be more law-abiding than young men and to be more likely to regard the police in a positive light. These differences do not hold for the pupils from the new Christian schools.

Table 10.19
Pupils compared by sex: their views of right and wrong

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
There is nothing wrong in shop-lifting	4	6	1.0	NS
There is nothing wrong in travelling without a ticket	12	13	0.4	NS
There is nothing wrong in playing truant (skiving) from school	11	12	0.2	NS
The police do a good job	61	67	2.0	NS
It is wrong to cheat in exams	87	86	0.1	NS
It is wrong to swear or blaspheme	71	68	0.4	NS
It is wrong to experiment on human embryos	52	57	1.2	NS

Table 10.20 reveals a similar agreement between the sexes as to what constitutes sexual morality, with two significant differences. The male and female pupils hold very similar opinions on abortion, contraception, divorce, under-age sex and sex before marriage. However, they differ on the issue of homosexuality which the boys are considerably more likely to regard as morally wrong than are the girls. Conversely, the girls are more likely than the boys to agree that the use of pornography is wrong. Francis (2001, p105) also found that girls were less likely to judge homosexuality to be wrong. The difference in this case was very large with

53% of males considering homosexuality to be wrong compared with 21% of females. For the new Christian schools the difference was not so large, although still significant. However, in most other categories in which comparisons can be made, the results from the new Christian schools differ from those of the Values Survey, where significant differences were found between the sexes on attitudes to underage sex, contraception, abortion and divorce (Francis, 2001, p105).

The finding that males are more likely to be opposed to homosexuality than are females seems to be one that is general in society. Crockett and Voas (2003, paragraph 4.6) found, through an analysis of results from the British Social Attitudes survey covering two decades, that men were substantially more likely than women to be opposed to homosexuality, with the gender gap largest amongst the young. To this extent at least, the young people in the new Christian schools are following the trends of wider society. As Table 10.21 indicates, the female pupils are also significantly more likely than the males to believe that gay couples should be allowed to care for children. Both sexes agree on whether gay couples should be allowed to marry.

The data in Table 10.21 indicate that the male and female pupils agree on whether men and women are equally good at looking after children and doing housework. However, the boys are significantly more likely than the girls to hold the view that men are better than women at DIY.

Table 10.20
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to sexual morality

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
It is wrong to have sex under the legal age (16 years)	67	73	2.2	NS
Homosexuality is wrong	76	60	12.8	.001
Contraception is wrong	16	9	5.4	NS
Abortion is wrong	69	70	0.1	NS
Divorce is wrong	47	45	0.2	NS
Pornography is wrong	70	87	19.1	.001
It is wrong to have sex before you are married	65	65	0.0	NS

Table 10.21
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to sexism and sexuality

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Women and men are equally good at looking after children	76	82	2.4	NS
Women are better at housework than men	50	47	0.5	NS
Men are better at DIY than women	63	37	32.9	.001
Gay couples should be allowed to care for children	11	24	13.6	.001
Gay couples should be allowed to marry	10	18	6.4	NS

When it comes to antisocial behaviour, the male pupils in the new Christian schools hold very similar views to their female counterparts, as shown in Table 10.22. The boys and girls are agreed about the permissibility of the use of alcohol and smoking in public places and on whether pubs should stay open for 24 hours. However, the girls are significantly less likely than the boys to agree that people should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection.

Table 10.22
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to antisocial behaviour

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Smoking should be banned in public places	76	77	0.0	NS
Streets should be alcohol free	46	52	2.1	NS
Pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day	22	15	3.4	NS
People should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection	22	12	7.4	.01

The prevalence of violence and sex in the media are two areas of concern where there is considerable disagreement between the boys and the girls, as Table 10.23 indicates. The girls are more likely than the boys to believe that there is too much violence in the media in general and specifically in computer games. Francis (2001, p104) found a similar result; teenage girls in his survey were more likely than boys to believe that there is too much violence on television. The female pupils in the current survey are also more likely than the males to consider that there is too much sex in computer games. However, both sexes agree on the extent to which there is too much sex on the internet or on TV.

Table 10.23
Pupils compared by sex: their views concerning the media

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
There is too much violence in the media	32	46	9.4	.01
There is too much violence in computer games	23	42	19.1	.001
There is too much sex in computer games	19	32	10.0	.01
There is too much sex on the internet	50	56	1.2	NS
There is too much sex on TV	42	53	5.0	NS

Table 10.24 compares the responses of the males and females to work-related matters. The boys and girls agree on the extent to which a job gives one a sense of

purpose and on issues concerning unemployment. Both sexes agree that it is important to work hard at one's employment. However, the girls are less ambitious than the boys; they are significantly less likely to want to get to the top in their future employment. The girls in the current survey were also much more likely than the boys to want to find future employment that will help other people. The sex difference in the response to this item is very marked, with 82% of the girls expressing a desire to help others compared with 55% of the boys. Francis (2001, p100) had found in his wider survey that there were sex differences across all six work-related areas that he investigated. Once again, this is far less true for the pupils in the new Christian schools.

Table 10.24
Pupils compared by sex: their attitudes to work

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I want to get to the top in my work when I get a job	86	76	7.8	.01
A job gives you a sense of purpose	74	68	2.0	NS
I think it is important to work hard when I get a job	96	94	1.0	NS
I would not like to be unemployed	83	82	0.1	NS
Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to	72	62	4.8	NS
I would like to do a job which helps other people	55	82	37.8	.001

When it comes to politics, Table 10.25 shows that once again the young man and women in the new Christian schools hold very similar opinions, much more so than was found in the Values Survey (Francis, 2001, p104). There were two areas of disagreement; boys were much more likely than girls to think that immigration into

Britain should be restricted and that too many foreigners have already been admitted.

Table 10.25
Pupils compared by sex: their views concerning politics

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
It makes no difference which political party is in power	18	19	0.2	NS
I think that immigration into Britain should be restricted	53	31	24.3	.001
When old enough I will vote at election time	70	68	0.1	NS
There are too many foreign people living in this country	47	27	9.5	.001
Politics is irrelevant to my life	26	26	0.0	NS
I think politicians do a good job	25	23	0.2	NS

Table 10.26 shows that the male and female pupils take a similar position on global concerns, with one important exception. The girls were more likely than the boys to be concerned about the poverty of the developing world. In all other respects, their views were the same. The young men and women were equally concerned about the risk of nuclear war and equally likely to agree, or disagree, that there is nothing they could do to solve the world's problems. In both these responses they differed from those found in the Values Survey (Francis, 2001, p104). There, girls were more concerned than boys about the risk of nuclear war and less likely to agree that they could not help with the world's problems.

Table 10.26
Pupils compared by sex: their global fears and concerns

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I am concerned about the risk of nuclear war	39	42	0.5	NS
I am concerned about the risk of biological and chemical war	36	31	1.5	NS
I am concerned about the risk of terrorism	54	63	4.0	NS
There is nothing I can do to help solve the world's problems	15	11	1.6	NS
I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world (e.g. Africa)	76	88	10.7	.01

To summarise this section, the young men and women who have been, and are being, educated in the new Christian schools hold very similar views and share very similar values on a wide range of issues, much more so than would have been predicted by the findings of the Values Survey. Where there are different responses, they indicate: first, that the girls have a greater tendency towards worry, particularly over personal issues such as their appearance; second, that the boys tend to be more ambitious; third, that the boys tend to be less tolerant on issues such as homosexuality and immigration; fourth, that the girls tend to be more concerned about the needs of other people.

10.4 Conclusion

Francis (2001, p108) was able to say that the Values Survey had identified significant differences in male and female responses across all the areas that had been investigated. He therefore concluded:

Young women and young men not only inhabit different bodies, they also inhabit and shape quite different world-views. Sex is an important predictor of individual values among young people. (Francis, 2001, p109)

The current research has not replicated these findings in the case of the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools. While some differences do exist, it cannot be said of them that they inhabit different worldviews or hold predictably different values.

For the teenagers receiving this kind of education, there is no tendency for the boys to be more religious than the girls. Both sexes hold the same religious beliefs, have the same view of God and the same beliefs regarding creation and evolution. The conclusion that women are more religious than men is regarded as one of the best attested findings in the psychology of religion (Francis, 2009, p 142). Attempts to account for these differences have included gender-role socialisation theories, structural location theories, gender-orientation theories and biologically-based personality theories (Francis, 2009, pp141-147). The new Christian schools occupy a place in British society where different gender roles for the sexes might possibly still be emphasised. They draw from churches some of which might still promote the view that a woman's place is in the home and that leadership is not a woman's prerogative, at least within the church setting. Nevertheless, male/female differences with regard to religion, so well-attested elsewhere, seem to be effectively eliminated within their educational setting. Important questions are raised by this finding which merit further investigation. What light does it throw on current theories? Will it prove to be a repeatable finding? Does it result from the education process itself or from other factors connected with the schools, such as parental or church background? Will their commonality with respect to religious belief still prevail for this particular group of young people as they reach adulthood and experience life in a secular society?

Similarly, the young males and females in the new Christian schools testify to the same degree of personal well-being, profess similar aims in life and are largely agreed on moral issues. The one consistent difference found, that the girls are more prone to worry than are the boys, is one that the schools perhaps need to address.

The data give little indication that sex differences in attainment along the lines predicted by Tinklin (2003) are likely to be found among the young men and women attending the new Christian schools. There is some evidence that the girls are more conscientious than the boys in that they are more likely to worry about their school work and about their exams. However, overall, the young people exhibit such a similar “beliefs and values” profile that it would be fair to predict that the gender gap in attainment, if it exists at all, would be smaller than in other schools, once all other relevant factors had been taken into account. Tinklin claimed (2003, p322) that the gender gap in attainment exists in every kind of school. Further research could easily demonstrate whether or not this claim holds true for the new Christian schools.

This chapter has established that very few differences exist between the teenagers in the new Christian schools when they are compared by sex. To the extent that the schools are succeeding to fulfil their aims, they are doing so equally with boys as with girls. The next chapter will report the results that are obtained when the pupils are compared by age.

Chapter 11

The Pupils: compared by age

Leslie Francis has reviewed evidence which indicates age to be a significant factor in mapping individual differences in the values of young people (Francis, 2001, pp56-67). Once again, the data previously reported could be masking such differences. For example, are the schools “succeeding” with the younger children but not with the older? Such a finding would significantly undermine the value of what the schools are achieving, in terms of their original aims. The data obtained from the new Christian schools were analysed for age-related differences between the 13-14 year-olds in Year 9 and the 15-16-year-olds in Year 11. The extensive Teenage Religion and Values survey, carried out in the 1990s, performed a similar analysis (Francis, 2001, pp 56-81) but that survey covered Years 9 and 10 only. The current survey also included Year 11 for three reasons. First, by doing so it was possible to survey almost the entire teenage population attending the schools. Second, including Year 11 meant that a base-line could be established for a possible future longitudinal study whereby the three year groups could be followed and surveyed at stages on their journey through life. Third, the inclusion of Year 11 made possible an age-related analysis that might be expected to show clearer differences than would be found by a comparison of Year 9 with the closely age-related Year 10. Despite that very narrow age-range, however, Francis (2001, p81) did discover significant detectable differences between the values of pupils in Year 9 when compared with those in Year 10. Those differences would therefore be expected to be greater in the present study.

For the present study, 234 Year 9 pupils and 224 Year 11 pupils completed questionnaires. Thus 51% of the sample used for the following comparison was aged 13-14 years and 49% was aged 15 -16 years.

11.1 Pupils compared by age: their religious beliefs and attitude to religion.

Kay and Francis have summarised substantial research findings concerning the way in which attitude to Christianity changes during childhood and adolescence:

[The findings] indicate that there is a general deterioration in attitude toward Christianity during the years of childhood and adolescence. This decline occurs in schools of different types and in different geographical locations. The decline is well established and documented extensively. In essence children start with positive attitudes and end with less positive ones. Girls hold a more positive attitude toward Christianity than boys throughout the years of compulsory schooling, but the attitudes of the two sexes decline in step , at approximately the same rate...There was a sharper drop in attitudes in the fifth or final year of compulsory secondary education. In other words, the main trend is not reversed but accentuated just before the majority of pupils leave school. (Kay and Francis, 1996, p27)

Kay and Francis go on to describe how the decline in attitude toward Christianity during childhood and adolescence is to be found in denominational as well as non-denominational schools. In their view, whatever is causing attitudes to decline affects boys and girls attending denominational and non-denominational schools equally (Kay and Francis, 1996, p27).

Francis (1992, pp340-368) reported the results of a survey which covered nearly 4,000 teenage pupils from England, aged between 12 and 16 and as part of its remit assessed the attitude of the teenagers towards God. The findings when the responses of the 13 year olds were compared with those of the 15 year-olds were reported as follows (p344):

As is consistent with much research in the psychology of religious development, the older subjects are significantly less likely to express belief in God, to experience God's presence and guidance in their daily lives or to be aware of the reality of God.

Do the young people in the new Christian schools show the same age-related trend towards rejecting Christianity; do they show the same tendency to abandon belief in God? The following five tables contain data relevant to these questions

Table 11.1
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to religion

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I am a religious person	61	50	5.28	NS
I am a spiritual person	54	55	0.02	NS
I am a superstitious person	12	9	1.18	NS
Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today	12	20	5.64	NS

Table 11.2
Pupils compared by age: their religious beliefs

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I believe in God	84	82	0.21	NS
I believe in the Holy Spirit	80	79	0.12	NS
I believe in Jesus Christ	83	83	0.01	NS
I think Christianity is the only true religion	71	68	0.38	NS
I believe in Jesus as my personal Saviour	75	71	1.04	NS
I believe that there is truth in all religions	18	16	0.43	NS

Table 11.3
Pupils compared by age: their beliefs about life after death

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I believe in life after death	73	69	1.03	NS
I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead	84	80	1.72	NS
I believe that when I die I will come back to life as someone or something else	11	6	3.40	NS
I believe in heaven	87	83	1.53	NS
I believe in hell	77	79	0.19	NS
I want a church funeral	65	67	0.21	NS

Table 11.4
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to Christianity

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I know that Jesus helps me	80	72	3.61	NS
I think going to church is a waste of time	8	14	3.84	NS
God helps me to lead a better life	76	66	5.55	NS
God means a lot to me	80	71	4.02	NS
Prayer helps me a lot	71	62	4.90	NS
I know that Jesus is very close to me	76	66	5.58	NS
I think the Bible is out of date	8	5	1.38	NS

Table 11.5
Pupils compared by age: their view of God

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I believe that God is loving	83	80	0.68	NS
I believe that God is kind	83	80	1.14	NS
I believe that God is merciful	81	78	0.67	NS
I believe that God cares about me personally	79	78	0.13	NS
I believe that God is forgiving	82	79	0.67	NS
I believe that God answers prayer	80	75	1.59	NS
I believe that God punishes people who do wrong if they do not repent	56	55	0.11	NS
I believe that God is in control of history	69	67	0.27	NS

Tables 11.1 to 11.5 indicate that between the ages of 13 and 16 there is no significant decline in the religious beliefs of the pupils in the new Christian schools. The high percentage of the pupils who believe in God, in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit when they are in Year 9 still do so when they are in Year 11. There is no decline in belief in life after death, or in heaven and hell. The older pupils have the same attitude to Christianity and the same view of God as do the younger. Francis (2001, p73) found that for the wider school population there was a general decline in religious belief even between Years 9 and 10. This finding is not replicated in the case of the new Christian schools.

Age trends among secondary pupils' attitudes towards science and religion and the creation/evolution debate have been monitored by several studies. (Gibson, 1989; Francis, Gibson and Fulljames, 1990; Francis and Greer, 1999). These surveys found that pupils moved away from creationist beliefs as they grew older. Francis (2001, p73) found that, compared with Year 9, fewer pupils in Year 10 believed that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Would these trends prove to be true for the pupils in the new Christian schools, where a creationist approach to science is an active part of the teaching agenda? The following three tables contain data relevant to these questions.

Table 11.6
Pupils compared by age: their beliefs about scientism

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X²	P<
Theories in science can be proved to be definitely true	22	25	0.49	NS
Science will eventually give us complete control over the world	7	9	0.66	NS
The laws of science will never be changed	13	19	2.59	NS
I cannot trust both science and religion	16	20	1.15	NS
Nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically	7	6	0.40	NS
Science can give us absolute truths	13	12	0.06	NS

Table 11.7
Pupils compared by age: their beliefs about creation and evolution

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X²	P<
The earth is billions of years old	31	26	1.34	NS
I believe God made the world in six days of 24 hours	62	53	3.66	NS
The earth is only a few thousand years old	37	38	0.13	NS
I believe in evolution creating everything over millions of years	7	6	0.40	NS
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	14	12	1.23	NS

Table 11.8
Pupils compared by age: their beliefs about science and the Bible

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
God created the world as described in the Bible	77	75	0.23	NS
God created the Universe including living creatures out of nothing	68	75	2.14	NS
God formed man out of the dust of the Earth	71	68	0.26	NS
God made woman out of man's rib	71	68	0.51	NS
There was once a world-wide flood as described in the Bible	80	78	0.22	NS
The world was once perfect but has been affected by sin	79	79	0.00	NS
I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of evolution	8	10	0.41	NS
Everything in the world was made by natural forces – it was not designed	6	6	0.13	NS
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	21	20	0.12	NS
Scientists have discovered how the world was made	7	9	0.99	NS
You can't be a good scientist and believe in the Bible	10	7	1.48	NS

Tables 11.6 to 11.8 indicate that there is no significant change in the pupils' beliefs regarding scientism, creation and evolution or the relationship between science and the Bible as they age from 13 to 16. Pupils in Year 11 are just as unlikely as those in Year 9 to believe that evolution created everything over millions of years. The older pupils are just as likely as the younger to believe that God created the world as described in the Bible. The movement away from creationist beliefs with age, described in other situations, does not occur for the teenagers in the new Christian schools.

Francis (2001, p73) found a significant deterioration in attitudes toward the place of the church in society between Year 9 and Year 10. Seven of the items used by Francis, all of which indicated this deterioration, were included in the current survey.

Table 11.9
Pupils compared by age: their views concerning church and society

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
The church seems irrelevant to life today	9	9	0.10	NS
The Bible seems irrelevant to life today	15	16	0.21	NS
I want my children to be baptised/christened/dedicated in church	72	62	5.84	NS
I want to get married in church	82	76	2.25	NS
Religious Education should be taught in school	81	80	0.22	NS
Schools should hold a religious assembly every day	38	24	9.75	.01
Christian ministers/vicars/priests do a good job	73	60	7.89	.01

The results shown in Table 11.9 reveal that in five of the seven indicators no deterioration in attitude was found for the pupils in the new Christian schools, even over the larger age gap found between Year 9 and Year 11. The vast majority of the older pupils did not consider the church or the Bible to be irrelevant any more than did the younger. The two age groups were agreed on the extent to which they wanted to use the church for weddings or to dedicate or christen their children. The great majority of both ages agreed that religious education should be taught in schools. However, there had been a significant deterioration in attitude with respect to the remaining two items. Pupils from Year 11 were much less likely than those from Year 9 to agree that schools should hold a religious assembly every day. They also were less likely to regard church ministers as doing a good job.

Francis (2001, p75) found that for the wider teenage population there was not usually a decline between the beliefs of those in Year 10 compared with Year 9 with respect to non-traditional beliefs. Table 10.10 shows that such is also usually the case for the teenagers in the new Christian schools, with one rather surprising exception. The unexpected finding, given the context of the new Christian schools, was that 55% of the pupils in Year 9 professed a belief in ghosts. This figure had fallen to 43% for the pupils in Year 11, a significant difference. The figure of 55% is much higher than that of 41% for Year 9 found by the Values Survey.

Table 11.10
Pupils compared by age: non-traditional beliefs

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I believe in my horoscope	5	7	0.81	NS
I believe fortune-tellers can tell the future	9	11	0.62	NS
I believe that tarot cards can tell the future	5	6	0.27	NS
I believe it is possible to contact spirits of the dead	18	27	5.11	NS
I believe in ghosts	55	43	6.90	.001
I believe magic can be used for good	15	19	1.47	NS
I believe magic can be used for bad	62	72	5.10	NS
I believe in vampires	5	4	0.37	NS

Table 11.11 indicates that the pupils in the new Christian schools are no more or less likely to be superstitious in Year 9 than they are in Year 11 with one interesting exception. Although the numbers involved are small, those in Year 11 are twice as likely as those in Year 9 to say “touch wood” when referring to possible bad events.

Table 11.11
Pupils compared by age: their attitude to luck/superstition

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I have crossed my fingers for luck	37	41	0.72	NS
I wear a cross or crucifix for protection	4	3	0.18	NS
I think it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors	7	9	0.99	NS
I believe everyone has a guardian angel/spirit	49	50	0.03	NS
I believe bad things happen in threes	5	4	0.13	NS
I say 'touch wood' when talking about bad things not happening	8	17	8.44	.01
I have used charms to protect me from evil	3	3	0.21	NS

To summarise this section, the young people receiving their education in the new Christian schools retain their Christian beliefs in a remarkably consistent manner throughout their early teenage years. In contrast with the findings from wider surveys, there is effectively no deterioration in their religious beliefs with age. This is indicated by the fact that of the 75 items in this section, 71 showed no significant difference between views of the younger pupils when compared with those who are older.

11.2 Pupils compared by age: their personal concerns and attitudes

The Values Survey found that levels of personal well-being remained stable across Year 9 and Year 10 (Francis, 2001, p68). Table 11.12 shows that the same is true across Years 9 to 11 for the pupils in the new Christian schools. Similarly, Year 9 pupils are not more inclined to worry than are those in Year 11, as shown by Table 11.13.

Table 11.12
Pupils compared by age: their personal well-being

	Year 9	Year 11	X²	P<
	%	%		
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	82	84	0.27	NS
I find life really worth living	75	73	0.24	NS
I feel I am not worth much as a person	43	43	0.76	NS
I often feel depressed	24	25	0.23	NS
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	18	21	0.68	NS
I have sometimes considered deliberately hurting myself	23	28	1.28	NS

Table 11.13
Pupils compared by age: their personal worries

	Year 9	Year 11	X²	P<
	%	%		
I am worried about my attractiveness to the opposite sex	42	50	3.37	NS
I am worried about getting AIDS/HIV	18	17	0.07	NS
I am worried about how I get on with other people	43	43	0.02	NS
I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools	21	15	3.40	NS
I am worried about going out alone at night in my area	32	31	0.08	NS
I am worried about putting on weight	39	45	1.33	NS
I am worried about my body shape	42	51	3.39	NS

Table 11.14 introduces the first significant difference between the two age groups and it is one which gives cause for concern. While there is no difference between the younger and older pupils with respect to using food in general, or chocolate or caffeine in particular in order to improve their mood, the same cannot be said for the consumption of alcohol. Year 11 pupils are more than twice as likely as those in

Year 9 to drink alcohol to make themselves feel better with the result that nearly one fifth of the older teenagers claims to be doing this.

Table 11.14
Pupils compared by age: their dependency strategies

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I eat to make myself feel better	24	35	6.56	NS
I stop eating to make myself feel better	9	13	1.91	NS
I eat chocolate to make myself feel better	31	35	0.31	NS
I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better	26	19	3.14	NS
I drink alcohol to make myself feel better	9	19	10.94	.001

In contrast to the findings of the Values Survey, young people in the new Christian schools do not change in their view of who would constitute a good counsellor as they age from Year 9 to Year 11, as shown by the data in Table 11.15. Francis (2001, p 70) found that the same proportion of teenagers in his wider survey often longed for someone to turn to for advice in Year 10 as in Year 9 and this finding was the same for the wider age gap in the new Christian schools. However, for the wider survey, there was evidence that a significant shift had taken place between the two year groups in that the older pupils were less likely to find it helpful to discuss their problems with a teacher or church minister. No such change had taken place for the pupils in the new Christian schools, despite the wider age gap between the two groups.

Table 11.15
Pupils compared by age: their views concerning counselling

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I often long for someone to turn to for advice	38	35	0.38	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a school teacher	50	55	0.74	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a doctor	28	23	1.25	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a Christian minister/vicar/priest	26	34	3.38	NS
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people in chat rooms	62	63	0.01	NS
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people on helplines	53	61	2.78	NS

As indicated by Table 11.16, whether it concerns other people or the environment, older pupils in the new Christian schools have the same sense of personal responsibility as do those who are younger.

Table 11.16
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to personal responsibility

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
It is important to me to help others wherever I can	80	84	1.24	NS
It is important to me to avoid hurting others as much as possible	82	81	0.01	NS
I want to try to care for the environment	66	66	0.00	NS
I do not want to prosper at the expense of others	50	55	0.74	NS
I want to be careful how I speak, I don't want to offend	77	78	0.09	NS

Table 11.17
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to their peer groups

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
Sometimes I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do	45	30	12.24	.001
Most of my friends think religion is important	54	46	2.83	NS
Most of my friends smoke cigarettes	11	24	13.64	.001
Most of my friends drink alcohol	20	60	77.16	.001
Most of my friends take drugs	3	12	15.41	.001
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with close friends	70	66	0.85	NS

Table 11.17 reveals substantial age-related differences for the young people in the new Christian schools in connection with the influence of their peer groups. The older pupils are significantly less likely than the younger to feel pressured by their friends to do things that they do not want to do. This could possibly be the effect of greater maturity whereby by the age of 15 to 16 they feel more confident about withstanding such pressures. Another possibility is that by this age they have either submitted to the pressures or convinced their friends of their own point of view. However, it could also indicate that, by the time they reach their mid-teens, some of the young people have begun to move in a different social circle. In favour of this interpretation is the finding that by the time they reach Year 11, the pupils are more than twice as likely to be able to say that most of their friends smoke cigarettes. While just 11% of Year 9 pupils make such a claim, the figure for Year 11 pupils is 24%. Similarly, a mere 3% of the pupils in Year 9 agreed that most of their friends take drugs but by Year 11 this figure had risen to 12%, a four-fold increase. For the consumption of alcohol, 20% of Year 9 pupils can say that most of their friends drink alcohol, a statistic concerning in itself since the young people in this year group are aged just 13 to 14. However, by Year 11, and the age of 15 to 16, the

figure rises to 60%. It would be informative to be able to compare this figure with that of the wider population of 15 to 16 year-olds. There was no significant difference between the two groups with respect to the remaining two items under this heading. Younger pupils are as likely as older to have friends who think that religion is important and each group finds it equally helpful to talk about their problems with close friends.

Table 11.18
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to their parents

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
My parents are supportive of me	92	86	3.23	NS
Sometimes I feel pressured by my parents to do things I don't want to do	41	44	0.47	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my mum	56	48	3.08	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my dad	47	38	3.87	NS
My parents think religion is important	76	71	1.27	NS

Table 11.18 indicates that the relationships between the young people in the new Christian schools and their parents remain stable throughout their early teenage years. This is a time of life when problems in the home often emerge, as teenagers begin to assert themselves as individuals. A very high percentage of Year 9 pupils are able to say that they feel supported by their parents and the number of those in Year 11 who feel the same is not significantly different. The other factors measured in this connection reinforce the picture of relative stability in the home during these years. Thus the two age groups find it equally helpful to discuss their problems with their parents and any sense of unwanted pressure from their parents does not increase or decrease over the time period.

Table 11.19
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to their school

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
School is boring	37	43	1.54	NS
I am happy in my school	77	74	0.65	NS
I like the people I go to school with	92	85	4.27	NS
I often worry about my school work	58	70	7.61	.01
I am worried about my exams at school	65	73	3.25	NS
I am worried about being bullied at school	14	7	6.69	.01
Teachers do a good job	71	71	0.00	NS
My school is preparing me for life	75	73	0.36	NS
I feel that my teachers are interested in me	51	60	4.13	NS

The Values Survey found significant changes taking place in the young person's attitude to toward school between Year 9 and Year 10 (Francis, 2001, p71). The items listed in Table 11.19 are largely the same as those used in that survey, thus making a comparison with the current survey possible. Both surveys found that attitudes towards fellow pupils and towards teachers remain stable over the two year groups. Both surveys found that the older pupils were less likely than the younger to worry about being bullied but more inclined to worry about their school work. However, whereas the wider survey had found a growing alienation from school over the shorter gap between Year 9 and Year 10, for the new Christian schools there was no evidence of that alienation over the larger gap between Year 9 and Year 11. Thus, pupils in Year 11 were no more likely than those in Year 9 to find school boring and no less likely to be happy at school or to feel that their school is preparing them for life.

Table 11.20 reveals that the aims in life aspired to by Year 9 pupils in the new Christian schools have largely not changed by the time they reach Year 11.

Table 11.20
Pupils compared by age: their aims in life

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I would like to get married	94	90	2.82	NS
I would like to have children	90	83	4.94	NS
I would like to own my own home	93	94	0.06	NS
I would like to make a difference to the world	80	86	2.70	NS
I would like to study for a degree	37	45	2.95	NS
Life is about living for God and for others	69	67	0.18	NS
Life is about enjoying myself	57	69	7.00	.01

To summarise this section, the results reveal a remarkable level of stability for the pupils in the new Christian schools as they progress through their teenage years. During this period, there is no change in their sense of well-being, no indication of an increasing alienation from their parents or teachers and no sense of interruption to their aims in life. However, in one area there are significant changes. As they approach the end of their time at the relatively secluded new Christian schools, it appears that the pupils are becoming more likely to be part of a peer group that experiments with tobacco and alcohol and even with drugs. It seems that by the time they reach Year 11, a significant minority of the pupils have become well acquainted with alcohol, an aspect of current youth culture from which their parents may well be wishing them to be protected.

11.3 Pupils compared by age: their views and moral values

The Values Survey found a slight growth in disregard for the law between year 9 and year 10 (Francis, 2001, p78). For the new Christian schools, for the greater age gap under consideration, this was true in just one area. As shown in Table 11.21, pupils in Year 11 were more likely than those in Year 9 to see nothing wrong in

travelling without a ticket. As with the wider survey, the older teenagers were also less likely than the younger to believe that the police were doing a good job. With these two exceptions, there was no significant difference between the two age groups as to what constitutes right and wrong.

Table 11.21
Pupils compared by age: their beliefs about right and wrong

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
There is nothing wrong in shop-lifting	6	5	0.53	NS
There is nothing wrong in travelling without a ticket	13	24	9.06	.01
There is nothing wrong in playing truant (skiving) from school	11	11	0.03	NS
The police do a good job	67	47	19.11	.001
It is wrong to cheat in exams	85	87	0.37	NS
It is wrong to swear or blaspheme	68	59	3.64	NS
It is wrong to experiment on human embryos	52	54	0.16	NS

Tables 11.22 and 11.23 indicate that when it comes to sexual morality and issues relating to sexism and sexuality there has been no change with age in the views of the pupils in the new Christian schools with just one exception. Year 11 pupils are less likely than those in Year 9 to believe that contraception is wrong. The overall finding contrasts with that of the Values Survey. There Francis (2001, p77) had found a progressive liberalisation of attitudes towards sexual practices and family life between Year 9 and Year 10 with every item he investigated except that dealing with homosexuality.

Table 11.22
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to sexual morality

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
It is wrong to have sex under the legal age (16 years)	70	62	3.30	NS
Homosexuality is wrong	65	65	0.00	NS
Contraception is wrong	16	8	7.44	0.01
Abortion is wrong	72	65	2.32	NS
Divorce is wrong	45	46	0.11	NS
Pornography is wrong	76	73	0.66	NS
It is wrong to have sex before you are married	63	58	1.31	NS

Table 11.23
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to sexism and sexuality

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
Women and men are equally good at looking after children	80	78	0.49	NS
Women are better at housework than men	49	46	0.34	NS
Men are better at DIY than women	50	48	0.15	NS
Gay couples should be allowed to care for children	18	26	4.73	NS
Gay couples should be allowed to marry	13	17	1.24	NS

Table 11.24
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to antisocial behaviour

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
Smoking should be banned in public places	80	71	5.46	NS
Streets should be alcohol free	52	39	7.12	.01
Pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day	15	25	7.95	.01
People should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection	17	25	3.87	NS

Table 11.24, dealing with the attitudes of the young people with respect to anti-social behaviour, provides further evidence that attitudes towards the use of alcohol

are changing as they get older. Pupils in Year 11 are more likely than those in Year 9 to believe that pubs should stay open 24 hours per day and less likely to agree that streets should be alcohol free.

The liberalisation of the pupils' attitude to alcohol as they reach Year 11 can be seen further in Table 11.25. The data displayed there show that pupils in Year 11 are much less likely to think it is wrong to drink alcohol and even to get drunk than are those in Year 9. There has been a liberalising of attitude toward tobacco too with young people in Year 11 much less likely than those in Year 9 to think it wrong to smoke cigarettes. However, there has been no shift in attitude towards the use of solvents or drugs and in this the results differ from those found by the Values Survey (Francis, 2001, p78).

Table 11.25
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to substance use

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
It is wrong to smoke cigarettes	69	53	12.52	.001
It is wrong to drink alcohol	24	11	12.10	.001
It is wrong to sniff solvents (glue/aerosols)	83	79	1.40	NS
It is wrong to get drunk	55	43	6.90	.01
It is wrong to use cannabis (hash/pot)	80	70	5.86	NS
It is wrong to use heroin	84	84	0.01	NS
It is wrong to use ecstasy	77	80	0.45	NS
It is wrong to use cocaine	83	83	0.00	NS
It is wrong to use speed	70	77	2.63	NS

Table 11.26 indicates that there has been no change in the attitudes of the teenagers with respect to either work or unemployment between Year 9 and Year 10. Francis (2001, p72) had found the same in his wider survey with respect to work but had found differences with respect to unemployment, with Year 10 more concerned

about unemployment than Year 9. These concerns may reflect the different conditions nationally with respect to unemployment that prevailed at the different times that the two surveys were conducted. The older pupils in the new Christian schools were no less likely than the younger to believe that unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to, although the wider survey had found such a shift.

Table 11.26
Pupils compared by age: their attitudes to work

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I want to get to the top in my work when I get a job	82	75	2.60	NS
A job gives you a sense of purpose	70	76	1.95	NS
I think it is important to work hard when I get a job	94	93	0.25	NS
I would not like to be unemployed	80	89	6.88	NS
Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to	66	70	0.77	NS
I would like to do a job which helps other people	69	64	1.10	NS

Table 11.27
Pupils compared by age: their views about politics

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
It makes no difference which political party is in power	19	18	0.14	NS
I think that immigration into Britain should be restricted	36	50	9.30	.01
When old enough I will vote at election time	69	63	1.75	NS
There are too many foreign people living in this country	34	43	4.40	NS
Politics is irrelevant to my life	15	25	7.95	.01
I think politicians do a good job	25	21	0.92	NS

Table 11.27 reveals that by the time the pupils in the new Christian schools reach Year 11 some of them have become more cynical about politics; they are more likely to regard politics as irrelevant to their life. By this age they are also significantly more likely to believe that immigration into Britain should be restricted, a finding that matches one found by the Values Survey (Francis, 2001, p76). In every other respect, there has been no shift in attitude.

Table 11.28
Pupils compared by age: their global fears and concerns

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
I am concerned about the risk of nuclear war	45	43	0.28	NS
I am concerned about the risk of biological and chemical war	35	39	0.88	NS
I am concerned about the risk of terrorism	58	63	1.33	NS
There is nothing I can do to help solve the world's problems	15	12	1.11	NS
I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world (e.g. Africa)	81	85	1.06	NS

The data in Table 11.28 indicate that pupils in Year 11 of the new Christian schools are no more or less prone to fears about global issues such as nuclear war or terrorism than are those in Year 9. The Values Survey found that for the wider teenage population there was slightly less concern about nuclear war in Year 10 than in Year 9 (Francis, 2001, p76). It also found that Year 10 pupils were slightly less likely than those in Year 9 to believe that there is nothing they could do to help to solve the world's problems. The views of the pupils in the new Christian schools remained stable on this point as did their concern about the poverty of the developing world.

Table 11.29 indicates that once again there has been very little shift with age for the teenagers in the new Christian schools, this time with respect to their views on education, where differences are shown with just two of the nine items. Year 11 pupils are more likely than those in Year 9 to agree that education involves understanding how other people think about life. They are also significantly less likely to want their own children to go to a Christian school. It is possible that this result might be reversed once the pupils have reached adulthood and become parents themselves.

Table 11.29
Pupils compared by age: their views on education

	Year 9 %	Year 11 %	X ²	P<
Education is about learning facts	71	69	0.17	NS
Education is about passing exams	53	59	1.19	NS
Education is about learning how to live in a right way	68	70	0.09	NS
My schooling has helped me to know how to live in a right way	66	67	0.03	NS
Education is about understanding how to think about life	58	69	6.01	NS
Education is about understanding how other people think about life	44	61	14.16	.001
Education is about being prepared for life	80	84	0.97	NS
I want my children to go to a Christian school	70	52	15.35	.001

To summarise this section, by the time that year 9 pupils in the new Christian schools have reached year 11, there have been few significant changes to their moral views and values, a finding that is sometimes at variance with those of the Values Survey. However, in one respect there has been a substantial change. Year 11 pupils, much more so than those in Year 9, appear to be taking on the views of their

wider peer culture with respect to the consumption of alcohol, even to the extent of drunkenness.

11.4 Conclusion

As described in earlier chapters, the new Christian schools have been established by parents and churches who perceive the education system to be a battleground for the minds and souls of their children. A particular desire on their part would be that there should be no fall-off in religious belief as their children progress through their teenage years, something that is commonly observed in modern society. The data presented in this chapter reveal that, for the duration of their time at the school, the pupils do indeed retain their religious beliefs. This finding suggests that it is the young person's educational and cultural setting, rather than something inherent in the adolescent condition, that is responsible for the decline in religious belief that has been observed elsewhere. The finding inevitably raises the question of whether those beliefs are retained as the pupils leave the sheltered environment of the schools and encounter the wider world.

The data in other respects as well indicate a more stable teenage world than appears to be the case for the wider population. The pupils retain good relationships with their parents and teachers. They hold on, largely, to their moral values. They retain clear aims in life. However, in one respect they seem to be moving towards becoming involved in an aspect of youth culture which their parents and teachers may well find disturbing. The drunken teenager has almost become a defining figure of the British social scene for their generation and some of the teenagers in the new Christian schools appear to be in danger of gravitating in that direction.

This chapter, together with the previous, one has revealed that there are very few internal differences when the data is analysed to compare the pupils by either their sex or their age. The next chapter will describe a further comparison. What will be the results when the beliefs, views and values of the pupils who claim to be Christians are compared with those of pupils who say they have no religion?

Chapter 12

The pupils: compared by religion

Given the religious nature of the new Christian schools, an internal comparison of the pupils with respect to their religious position could prove to be of particular importance. The schools exist in order to educate children within a Christian view of life and previous data indicate that the majority of the pupils do hold such views. However, what of those pupils who do not hold Christian beliefs? To what extent can the schools be considered to be “succeeding” with them? The question then arises of the best way to achieve a comparison between the views of “believing” and “unbelieving” pupils.

A considerable literature exists which debates the relative merits of different markers for religiosity (Davie, 1994, Francis, 1994, Francis 2001, pp156-157). Three in particular have been identified, self-identified religious affiliation, belief in God and church attendance. Francis (2001, pp156-180) chose to use church attendance rather than religious affiliation in his analysis of religiosity as part of the Teenage Religion and Values project. This study has chosen instead to use self-identified religious affiliation, for the following two reasons. First, those parents who send their children to the new Christian schools are very likely to attend church themselves and to insist that their children also do so. This factor would be expected to skew the results for church attendance in comparison with wider surveys of the population. Second, in the ten to fifteen years since the Teenage Religion and Values Survey was conducted, church attendance has continued to decline in the United Kingdom. For example, the English Church Census, carried out in May 2005, found that since 1998 there had been an overall decline in regular church

attendance of 15% (Brierley, 2006a,b). At the same time, the 2001 national census reported that 71.7% of the population in England identified themselves as Christians (www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001). The relationship between personal Christian belief and church attendance thus seems to be changing.

Francis and Robbins (2005, pp152-162) have argued the case for using self-identified religious affiliation to predict individual differences in spiritual health amongst teenagers and have then tested that prediction. They conclude that there is an overall clear relationship between self-assigned Christian affiliation and spiritual health, as defined by the model proposed by John Fisher (Francis and Robbins, pp 31 and 161). When asked to identify their religion, 602 of the 695 respondents to the present survey described themselves as “Christian” and 78 responded “none”. Thus 87% of the sample claimed to be Christians while 11% claimed to have no religion. The remaining 2% consisted of those who identified themselves as Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims.

What might be the effect on a pupil who has no religious belief of receiving their education in a strongly religious environment such as that of the new Christian schools? Is it a source of unhappiness to them to be in such a minority? Do they resent their parents for requiring them to be educated in a setting that does not accord with their own beliefs? Do they resent the school itself? Do they perceive the context to be hostile to them? A further question concerns the extent to which the views and values of the “unbelieving” pupils will differ from those of the great majority of their fellow pupils who profess Christian belief and what the implications of those differences might be. This chapter will attempt to answer these

questions by an analysis of the data comparing the beliefs, concerns, views and values of the two groups of pupils. Similar questions could be asked about those of other religions who attend the new Christian schools. However, their very low numbers in any particular year group would necessitate a different approach and they are therefore not included in the present study. This chapter therefore will confine itself to comparing the responses that were obtained from those pupils who claimed to have no religion (the non-affiliates) with those obtained from pupils who claimed to be Christian (the Christian affiliates).

12.1 Pupils compared by religion: their religious beliefs and attitude to religion.

Table 12.1
Pupils compared by religion: their attitude to religion

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I am a religious person	1	66	119.7	.001
I am a spiritual person	9	65	8.5	.001
I am a superstitious person	19	8	11.4	.001
Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today	23	13	5.6	NS

The data recorded in Table 12.1 deal with the attitude of the young people to religion in general and, as might be expected, the results show significant differences between the responses of the two groups. One pupil of no religion did claim to be a religious person, while 34% of the Christian pupils do not regard themselves as religious. "Religion" to them may well have had a specific meaning involving ritual and ceremony rather than a personal faith. Despite these anomalies, the responses of the two groups were significantly different. Nine percent of the pupils with no religion agreed that they could be described as spiritual people but the

word “spiritual” does not necessarily any longer have specifically religious connotations (Francis and Robbins, 2005, pp30-31). Meanwhile, 35% of the Christian young people do not consider themselves to be spiritual people. Again, the problem with interpreting this response lies with the word “spiritual” which no longer has directly Christian connections. The pupils with no religion are more than twice as likely to regard themselves as superstitious as are the Christian pupils. This reinforces the view that Protestant Christianity militates against superstitious views and practices. The more precise nature of the superstitious beliefs held by both groups will be explored in a later section.

Although 11% of the pupils have no religion, and most of these deny that they are religious or spiritual in any sense, it is interesting that the great majority of them do not have a negative view of religion itself. A minority, 23%, agreed that religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today but this figure is not significantly different from the figure of 13% of Christian pupils who hold the same view. The statement to which they were responding did not distinguish between one religion and another and the attitude of the non-affiliates to Christianity specifically will be explored in subsequent sections.

Table 12.2
Pupils compared by religion: their religious beliefs

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I believe in God	24	93	264.3	.001
I believe in the Holy Spirit	19	90	238.9	.001
I believe in Jesus Christ	27	93	242.5	.001
I think Christianity is the only true religion	15	81	150.2	.001
I believe in Jesus as my personal Saviour	6	85	232.4	.001
I believe that there is truth in all religions	23	16	1.9	NS

Table 12.2 compares the religious beliefs of the two groups of pupils in more detail and focuses more specifically on Christian beliefs. As might be expected, large significant differences were found between the two groups, for five out of the six items under consideration. Around one quarter of the pupils who say that they have no religion, and who have thereby declared that they do not wish to be identified as Christians, nevertheless claim that they believe in God, in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Fifteen percent of the non-affiliates regard Christianity as the only true religion and 6% even go so far as to say that they believe in Jesus as their personal Saviour. Within the 11% of those with no religion there are therefore different concepts of what this expression actually means and belief itself does not seem to be a reliable indicator of religious affiliation.

For the young people who identified themselves as Christians, 90% to 93% believe in God, in the Holy Spirit and in Jesus Christ. This leaves 7% to 10% who wish to be regarded as Christians without those beliefs. Since the findings of the 2001 census, when 72% of the British population identified themselves as “Christian”, the concept of “cultural Christianity” has been increasingly recognised. The two groups of young people are equally likely to believe or not to believe that there is truth in all religions.

Table 12.3 reveals the comparative beliefs of the two groups about matters concerning life after death. Once again significant differences were found for five out of the six items. The two groups are equally unlikely to believe in reincarnation, but differ on belief about life after death, the resurrection of Jesus, heaven and hell

and on how desirable it is to have a church funeral. Again, around a quarter of the non-affiliates also hold Christian beliefs concerning the existence of life after death and the doctrine that Jesus really rose from the dead. When it comes to belief in heaven and hell, the percentage is even higher with around a third of the non-affiliates claiming such beliefs and no fewer than 50% of them wanting a church funeral. Conversely, only 67% of those self-identified as Christians would want a church funeral.

Table 12.3
Pupils compared by religion: their beliefs about life after death

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I believe in life after death	24	80	108.4	.001
I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead	27	92	218.5	.001
I believe that when I die I will come back to life as someone or something else	14	8	4.0	NS
I believe in heaven	32	94	229.7	.001
I believe in hell	35	86	114.8	.001
I want a church funeral	50	67	9.1	.01

Table 12.4
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to Christianity

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I know that Jesus helps me	14	86	206.9	.001
I think going to church is a waste of time	51	5	154.1	.001
God helps me to lead a better life	8	83	201.0	.001
God means a lot to me	10	87	234.8	.001
Prayer helps me a lot	14	75	120.1	.001
I know that Jesus is very close to me	8	82	194.6	.001
I think the Bible is out of date	30	4	69.8	.001

In Table 12.4, the items are dealing with deeper, more personal beliefs concerning Christianity. Whereas one can give intellectual assent to such a statement as “I

believe in God”, this section is investigating personal religious practice and experience. When this is the case, the beliefs and attitudes of the two groups are significantly different for all seven items and the differences are more pronounced than in previous sections. Whereas 25% to 30% of those claiming to have no religion had given assent to statements about belief in God and Jesus Christ, items dealing with personal religious experience were assented to by between 8% and 14% of this group. Fourteen percent of those with no religion were able to say they know that Jesus is helping them and that he is very close to them. Ten percent could say that God means a lot to them. Eight percent of the non-affiliates believe that God helps them to lead a better life and that Jesus is very close to them. Conversely, between 12% and 17% of those identified as Christians were not able to assent to any of these statements.

Very few of the Christian affiliates agreed that going to church is a waste of time or that the Bible is out of date. Interestingly, nearly half of the non-affiliates, 49%, agreed with the majority of the Christians about the value of church attendance and a large majority, 70%, of the non-affiliates did not agree that the Bible is out of date.

Nearly one quarter, 24%, of those who claim to have no religion also claim to believe in God. The data in Table 12.5 reveal that the God in whom they believe is very much the biblical Christian God. Between 22% and 26% of the non-affiliates believe that God is loving, kind, forgiving and merciful, that he answers prayer and that he cares about them personally. A very high percentage of the Christian affiliates, around 90%, take the same view. The Christians are not so sure that God will punish those who do not repent, with 63% assenting to this view. Similarly,

fewer of the non-affiliates, 18%, agree with that position. Just 15% of the non-affiliates believe that God is in control of history compared with 76% of the Christians.

Table 12.5
Pupils compared by religion: their views of God

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I believe that God is loving	24	91	218.9	.001
I believe that God is kind	26	92	222.7	.001
I believe that God is merciful	22	89	210.2	.001
I believe that God cares about me personally	22	89	201.1	.001
I believe that God is forgiving	24	90	206.3	.001
I believe that God answers prayer	23	87	171.0	.001
I believe that God punishes people who do wrong if they do not repent	18	63	57.3	.001
I believe that God is in control of history	15	76	118.2	.001

Table 12.6
Pupils compared by religion: their views of church and society

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
The church seems irrelevant to life today	30	6	48.2	.001
The Bible seems irrelevant to life today	33	11	29.5	.001
I want my children to be baptised/christened/dedicated in church	22	76	97.5	.001
I want to get married in church	56	83	29.0	.001
Religious Education should be taught in school	41	86	91.7	.001
Schools should hold a religious assembly every day	8	33	20.9	.001
Christian ministers/vicars/priests do a good job	26	73	70.4	.001

As shown in Table 12.6, issues concerning the role of the church and church-related matters in British society met with varied responses from both those of no religion and from the Christians, yet in every case there was a significant difference between

the two. Once again, a sizeable minority of the non-affiliates displayed a positive attitude towards the church, the Bible and religion in general. A majority of them, 56%, would want to get married in church and 41% agreed that religious education should be taught in schools. Conversely, a small minority of the Christian affiliates agreed that both the church and the Bible seem irrelevant to life today and a larger minority would not want to get married in church, would not wish to have their children dedicated or christened and do not consider that Christian ministers do a good job.

Tables 12.7 and 12.8 indicate that pupils with no religion are significantly more likely than Christian pupils to hold to non-traditional or superstitious beliefs. The two groups are equally likely to agree or disagree that fortune-tellers can tell the future or that it is possible to contact the spirits of the dead. They are equally unlikely to wear crucifixes for religious purposes or to use charms for protection. However, for each of the other eleven items described in the two tables, the pupils with no religion took a different position from that of the Christians. They were more likely to believe in their horoscope, to have confidence in tarot cards and to believe in ghosts and vampires. They were more likely to believe that magic can be used for good but less likely to believe that it can be used for bad. They were much more likely to engage in superstitious practices such as crossing their fingers, and “touching wood” or to have superstitious beliefs such as “bad things happen in threes” or that it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors. They were much less likely than the Christians to believe that everyone has a guardian spirit or angel.

Table 12.7
Pupils compared by religion: their non-traditional beliefs

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I believe in my horoscope	22	4	37.1	.001
I believe fortune-tellers can tell the future	15	8	5.6	NS
I believe that tarot cards can tell the future	10	4	7.1	.01
I believe it is possible to contact spirits of the dead	21	21	0.0	NS
I believe in ghosts	37	20	11.7	.001
I believe magic can be used for good	31	13	16.7	.001
I believe magic can be used for bad	50	70	12.8	.001
I believe in vampires	12	4	8.5	.01

Table 12.8
Pupils compared by religion: their views on luck and superstition

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I have crossed my fingers for luck	63	35	22.2	.001
I wear a cross or crucifix for protection	4	3	0.1	NS
I think it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors	24	5	24.4	.001
I believe everyone has a guardian angel/spirit	21	52	27.7	.001
I believe bad things happen in threes	10	3	11.7	.001
I say 'touch wood' when talking about bad things not happening	33	8	44.7	.001
I have used charms to protect me from evil	4	2	1.1	NS

Tables 12.9, 12.10, and 12.11 compare the pupils' views on scientism, creation and evolution and the relationship between the Bible and science. What is it like to be an unbelieving pupil in a setting where God is promoted as Creator and where the Bible is permitted to be the final authority on the question of origins?

Table 12.9
Pupils compared by religion: their beliefs about scientism

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Theories in science can be proved to be definitely true	37	25	5.7	NS
Science will eventually give us complete control over the world	14	7	5.5	NS
The laws of science will never be changed	13	15	0.2	NS
I cannot trust both science and religion	23	16	2.5	NS
Nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically	19	4	28.4	.001
Science can give us absolute truths	13	14	0.0	NS

Table 12.9 reveals that the Christian pupils and those with no religion hold similar views on matters related to scientism. The only significant difference between them is that the non-affiliates are more likely to believe that nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically. Although that difference does exist, only 19% of those with no religion took this view, so even here the majority of them agreed with the majority of the Christians. Both groups of pupils were equally likely to believe, or not to believe, that theories in science can be definitely proved, that science will eventually give us complete control over the world, and that the laws of science will never be changed. They are equally likely to be able to trust both science and religion or to reject the idea that science can give us absolute truths.

Table 12.10
Pupils compared by religion: their beliefs about creation and evolution

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
The earth is billions of years old	45	25	14.2	.001
I believe God made the world in six days of 24 hours	21	62	49.3	.001
The earth is only a few thousand years old	9	43	34.2	.001
I believe in evolution creating everything over millions of years	24	5	38.8	.001
Science disproves the Biblical account of creation	15	19	0.7	NS

As shown in Table 12.10, the pupils with no religion and the Christian pupils were equally doubtful about the suggestion that science disproves the Biblical account of creation but on every other parameter concerning creation and evolution there were significant differences between the two groups. The non-affiliates were much more likely than the Christian affiliates to believe that the Earth was billions of years old or that evolution has created everything over millions of years. They were correspondingly much less likely to believe that God made the world in six days of 24 hours or that the earth is only a few thousand years old. That said, the majority of the non-affiliates, 55%, doubt that the earth is billions of years old while 25% of the Christians agree that it is. Similar disparities were found with the other items.

When it comes to the relationship between science and the Bible, the two groups of pupils were agreed that you can be a good scientist while believing in the Bible but differed significantly on the other nine items listed in Table 12.11. For the first six items, differences were consistently marked. In each case, the great majority of the Christian affiliates, between 80% and 90%, took the traditionally Biblical view

while the great majority of the non-affiliates, around 75% to 85%, rejected that view. These items dealt with the account of creation, followed by the “fall” and the world-wide flood, as described in the book of Genesis. The Christians were also significantly more likely to take the “intelligent design” position and significantly less likely to believe that scientists have discovered how the world was made.

Table 12.11
Pupils compared by religion: their beliefs about science and the Bible

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
God created the world as described in the Bible	26	84	137.3	.001
God created the Universe including living creatures out of nothing	26	80	104.8	.001
God formed man out of the dust of the Earth	14	79	141.0	.001
God made woman out of man’s rib	14	80	150.7	.001
There was once a world-wide flood as described in the Bible	24	87	172.3	.001
The world was once perfect but has been affected by sin	24	87	170.5	.001
I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of evolution	26	7	27.2	.001
Everything in the world was made by natural forces – it was not designed	19	4	32.6	.001
Scientists have discovered how the world was made	16	6	11.2	.001
You can’t be a good scientist and believe in the Bible	10	7	0.8	NS

To summarise, this section has compared the religious views of the self-identified Christian pupils receiving their education in the new Christian schools with those of the pupils who say that they have no religion. It has revealed that an important subset of pupils exists, consisting of teenagers who hold very different beliefs from those that form the basis of the education system within which they are receiving

their schooling. This subset believes very differently from their peers in the school on nearly all matters relating to religion, including those inherent in the creation/evolution debate.

About one quarter of those who claimed to have no religion does not in fact belong to the subset that has been described. This group tends to give intellectual assent to many of the same beliefs as the Christians. However, they are less likely to admit to personal religious experience and tend to be less likely to respect Biblical authority. Conversely, a small subsection of those who identified themselves as Christians seem not to hold many of the beliefs associated with that religion and should perhaps be described as cultural Christians. To the believing Christian pupils, the new Christian schools must seem to be an ideal setting. Cultural Christians and those who can readily assent to Christian principles and beliefs would no doubt find the setting congenial too. It is the small minority who truly do reject the fundamental tenets of their educational setting who may be unhappy. Subsequent sections will investigate the views of these pupils on other issues, including their opinion of the education that they are receiving.

12.2 Pupils compared by religion: their personal concerns

Table 12.12 reveals that the pupils who say they have no religion experience a poorer sense of personal well-being than those who say they are Christians as assessed by every indicator except one. The two groups of pupils are equally unlikely to have considered hurting themselves. However, the non-affiliates are less likely to feel their life has a sense of purpose and less likely to find life really worth

living. They are more likely to feel unworthy or depressed and to have considered taking their own life.

Table 12.12
Pupils compared by religion: their personal well-being

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	63	86	25.8	.001
I find life really worth living	51	78	25.6	.001
I feel I am not worth much as a person	26	13	9.6	.01
I often feel depressed	42	23	13.5	.001
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	30	17	7.0	.01
I have sometimes considered deliberately hurting myself	36	23	6.0	NS

The question immediately arises as to whether the lower sense of well-being experienced by the pupils with no religion when compared with their Christian peers is a direct consequence of their lack of religious faith or whether it results from their educational setting. One way to inform this question would be to compare the responses in Table 12.12 with those of the wider school population. Data do not yet exist which would enable a direct comparison. However, the Urban Hope project has provided data which allow a measure of comparison and these data are shown in Table 12.13, where they are compared with the current data.

The Urban Hope project (Francis and Robbins, 2005) investigated the beliefs and values of 23, 418 young people from Years 9 and 10 who lived in urban areas in England and Wales. That project therefore did not cover exactly the same age range as the current project, whose participants, in addition, were only from England and were not from exclusively urban areas. At least ten years separated the two projects. With these provisos, it is possible to interpret the data shown in Table 12.13 as

indicating that the pupils with no religion may be no worse off, in terms of their well-being, than their counterparts in the wider population and in some respects may be better off. Those counterparts, for the most part, were in secular, non-denominational schools and only 50% of them could say that for them life has a sense of purpose compared with 63% of those with no religion who were in Christian schools. Similarly, 51% of pupils with no religion in the wider population could say that they often feel depressed, compared with 42% of those in the new Christian schools. However, the situation was reversed with respect to finding life really worth living, with 68% of those in the wider population able to assent to this view compared with 51% of those in the new Christian schools. Also, 26% of the non-affiliates in the new Christian schools could say that they feel they are not worth much as a person compared with 14% of those in the wider school population. This statistic, if it is confirmed by future research, will be of particular concern to the new Christian schools because of the value that they place on all human life. It is possible that their unbelieving pupils are receiving a more negative message in this regard than are the Christian pupils.

Table 12.13
Data comparison: new Christian schools with Urban Hope project

	New Christian Schools		Urban Hope Data	
	None %	Christian %	None %	Christian %
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	63	86	50	60
I find life really worth living	51	78	68	71
I feel I am not worth much as a person	26	13	14	13
I often feel depressed	42	23	51	54
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	30	17	28	26

Source: Francis and Robbins, 2005, pp 242-243

So far as general worries are concerned, there are no significant differences between the two groups of pupils, as indicated by the data in Table 12.14.

Table 12.14
Pupils compared by religion: their personal worries

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I am worried about my attractiveness to the opposite sex	53	46	1.1	NS
I am worried about getting AIDS/HIV	30	18	6.3	NS
I am worried about how I get on with other people	46	44	0.1	NS
I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools	15	20	0.9	NS
I am worried about going out alone at night in my area	27	33	1.3	NS
I am worried about putting on weight	49	42	1.3	NS
I am worried about my body shape	56	44	4.2	NS

Table 12.15
Pupils compared by religion: their views concerning counselling

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I often long for someone to turn to for advice	41	39	0.1	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a school teacher	64	51	5.0	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a doctor	31	27	0.5	NS
I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a Christian minister/vicar/priest	41	26	7.5	.01
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people in chat rooms	45	69	8.4	.001
I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people on helplines	45	60	6.0	NS

Table 12.15 reveals that the two groups of pupils are equally likely to be wanting someone they could turn to for advice, equally likely to turn to a teacher for advice

and equally unlikely to discuss their problems with a doctor. The non-affiliates would be significantly more reluctant than the Christian affiliates to discuss their problems with a Christian minister, although a majority would still be willing to do so. The pupils with no religion would be significantly more likely than the Christians to talk about their problems in chat rooms and the two groups would be equally reluctant to use help-lines for advice.

Table 12.16
Pupils compared by religion: their dependency strategies

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I eat to make myself feel better	30	29	0.0	NS
I stop eating to make myself feel better	19	8	11.9	.001
I eat chocolate to make myself feel better	31	35	0.5	NS
I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better	31	22	3.3	NS
I drink alcohol to make myself feel better	36	10	40.3	.001

Table 12.16 reveals that the two groups of pupils are equally likely to eat in general, to eat chocolate in particular or to drink caffeine to make themselves feel better. However, the non-affiliates are significantly more likely than the Christian affiliates to stop eating or to drink alcohol to improve their mood.

Table 12.17 reveals that the two groups of young people differ radically when it comes to matters pertaining to their peer group. While each group is equally likely or unlikely to feel pressured by their friends to do things that they do not want to do, on every other parameter investigated there are major and significant differences between them. The Christian affiliates are twice as likely as the non-affiliates to mix mainly with friends who think religion is important. The non-affiliates are much

more likely than the Christians to have a circle of friends most of whom smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or take drugs. The Christians are much more likely than those with no religion to find it helpful to talk about their problems with close friends.

Table 12.17
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to their peer group

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Sometimes I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do	44	37	1.2	NS
Most of my friends think religion is important	28	56	20.6	.001
Most of my friends smoke cigarettes	44	13	47.1	.001
Most of my friends drink alcohol	71	36	33.8	.001
Most of my friends take drugs	23	5	34.5	.001
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with close friends	56	70	6.2	.001

Table 12.18
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to their parents

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
My parents are supportive of me	77	91	14.5	.001
Sometimes I feel pressured by my parents to do things I don't want to do	50	43	1.4	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my mum	46	53	1.4	NS
I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my dad	31	43	4.3	NS
My parents think religion is important	32	83	98.8	.001

When it comes to their attitude to their parents, the two groups are equally likely to feel unwanted pressure from their parents or to find it helpful to talk with them, as shown in Table 12.18. However, the Christian pupils are more likely than the non-affiliates to feel supported by their parents. Another difference between the two

groups is indicated by their response to the item concerning their own parents' attitudes to religion. It seems that the great majority, 83%, of the Christians are from Christian homes whereas this is true of just 32% of the non-affiliates.

Table 12.19
Pupils compared by religion: their concerns about school life

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
School is boring	64	39	17.3	.001
I am happy in my school	62	78	10.7	.01
I like the people I go to school with	86	89	0.5	NS
I often worry about my school work	70	65	0.7	NS
I am worried about my exams at school	73	69	0.6	NS
I am worried about being bullied at school	10	11	0.0	NS
Teachers do a good job	47	74	24.6	.001
My school is preparing me for life	47	78	34.1	.001
My schooling has helped me to know how to live in a right way	41	72	29.7	.001
I feel that my teachers are interested in me	36	58	14.3	.001

The data in Table 12.19 are of particular interest. They relate to the view that the two groups of pupils have of their school and of their schooling. Once again significant differences are found between the two groups, this time for six of the ten items included in the survey. Both groups are equally likely to like the people they go to school with and to worry about their school work, about their exams or about the possibility of being bullied. However, the non-affiliates are much more likely than the Christian affiliates to find school boring and less likely to be happy at school. Those with no religion are significantly less likely than the Christians to regard their teachers as doing a good job or to feel that their teachers are interested in them. They are less likely to agree that the school is preparing them for life or that the school is helping them to know how to live in a right way. Compared with the

Christians, the non-affiliates thus seem to be disaffected with a number of aspects of school life. While this was not true of all of them, with the majority, 62%, able to say that they are happy in their school, a small majority of the non-affiliates do not regard the teachers as doing a good job and do not feel that the school is preparing them for life. A larger majority, 64%, find school boring and do not feel that their teachers are interested in them.

Table 12.20
Pupils compared by religion: their concerns about their locality

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Crime is a growing problem in my area	28	32	0.4	NS
Vandalism is a growing problem in my area	36	41	0.6	NS
Drugs taking is a growing problem in my area	36	37	0.0	NS
Violence is a growing problem in my area	39	33	0.9	NS
Drunks are a growing problem in my area	22	25	0.4	NS
Unemployment is a growing problem in my area	15	11	1.3	NS
I like the area I live in	64	75	4.5	NS
My area cares about its young people	12	28	9.8	.01

As shown by Table 12.20, the two groups of teenagers have very similar concerns about their home locality except in one important respect. The non-affiliates are less likely than the Christian affiliates to believe that the area where they live cares about its young people with only 12% of them able to agree that such care exists.

Table 12.21 indicates that the two groups of teenagers under consideration have different aims in life for four of the seven items included in the survey. Both are equally likely to want to get married, to have children, and to own their own home.

However, the non-affiliates are less likely than the Christian affiliates to want to make a difference to the world or study for a degree. Unsurprisingly, the great majority do not hold the view that life is about living for God and for others while the great majority of the Christians do take that view. The non-affiliates are more likely than the Christian affiliates to believe that life is about personal enjoyment. Finally in this section, the pupils with no religion display a very different values profile from that of the self-identified Christians when it comes to their attitude to personal responsibility.

Table 12.21
Pupils compared by religion: their aims in life

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I would like to get married	90	93	1.1	NS
I would like to have children	87	87	0.0	NS
I would like to own my own home	99	93	3.8	NS
I would like to make a difference to the world	72	86	11.3	.001
I would like to study for a degree	56	72	7.9	.01
Life is about living for God and for others	8	80	173.0	.001
Life is about enjoying myself	78	60	10.3	.01

Table 12.22
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to personal responsibility

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
It is important to me to help others wherever I can	68	83	10.1	.01
It is important to me to avoid hurting others as much as possible	64	85	20.2	.001
I want to try to care for the environment	53	68	7.7	.01
I do not want to prosper at the expense of others	35	59	15.9	.001
I want to be careful how I speak, I don't want to offend	53	82	34.1	.001

Table 12.22 shows the non-affiliates to be less likely to want to help others or to try to care for the environment. The non-affiliates are very much less likely than the Christian affiliates to want to avoid hurting others or to avoid offending them by their speech. The pupils with no religion are significantly more likely than the Christians to be prepared to prosper at the expense of others.

To summarise this section, those pupils from the new Christian schools who identify themselves as having no religion have a very different personal and inner life from that of those who say they are Christians. These young people are less likely than their Christian peers to have a sense of well-being. They are more prone to eating disorders and more likely to turn to alcohol to help their mood. The non-affiliates mix with a different peer group from that of the Christian affiliates, one that is less interested in religion and more likely to indulge in smoking, drinking and taking drugs. They do not however necessarily find these friends helpful when it comes to discussing problems. Those who say they have no religion are somewhat disaffected with their schooling. They have different aims in life from those of the professing Christian pupils and a very different sense of personal responsibility.

12.3 Pupils compared by religion: their views and moral values

This section will explore the differences between the two groups in how they view a wide range of moral and ethical issues. Such views might be expected to be strongly influenced by a person's religious position.

As expected, Table 12.23 reveals that those pupils who describe themselves as Christians hold very different opinions about what constitutes right or wrong when

compared with those who say they have no religion. Whether the moral issue under consideration concerns theft, dishonesty, unreliability, cheating or profane speech, those with no religion are less likely than the Christians to subscribe to traditional Christian morality. The non-affiliates are also significantly less likely to regard the police as doing a good job. However, there was no difference between the two groups regarding the morality of experimenting on human embryos.

Table 12.23
Pupils compared by religion: their views of right and wrong

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
There is nothing wrong in shop-lifting	10	3	9.9	.01
There is nothing wrong in travelling without a ticket	30	14	12.9	.001
There is nothing wrong in playing truant (skiving) from school	24	9	17.1	.001
The police do a good job	36	62	18.9	.001
It is wrong to cheat in exams	77	88	8.0	.01
It is wrong to swear or blaspheme	22	72	79.6	.001
It is wrong to experiment on human embryos	46	56	2.6	NS

Table 12.24
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to sexual morality

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
It is wrong to have sex under the legal age (16 years)	33	72	48.4	.001
Homosexuality is wrong	36	72	40.1	.001
Contraception is wrong	3	12	6.3	NS
Abortion is wrong	45	72	23.2	.001
Divorce is wrong	17	51	32.1	.001
Pornography is wrong	44	81	54.4	.001
It is wrong to have sex before you are married	17	70	84.2	.001

The difference in moral standards displayed by the two groups extends to issues relating to sexual morality, as shown in Table 12.24. Again, whether the issue is under-age sex, sex before marriage, homosexuality, abortion, divorce or pornography, the Christian affiliates are more likely than the non-affiliates to take a traditionally Christian position. Only with respect to contraception do the two groups hold similar views.

Table 12.25 shows that there is a measure of agreement between the two groups of teenagers on matters related to sexism but not on sexuality. While there is no difference between them with respect to the roles of men and women, the Christian pupils are less likely than the non-affiliates to believe that gay couples should be allowed to marry or to care for children.

Table 12.25
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to sexism and sexuality

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Women and men are equally good at looking after children	76	78	0.3	NS
Women are better at housework than men	49	48	0.0	NS
Men are better at DIY than women	50	50	0.0	NS
Gay couples should be allowed to care for children	40	17	23.3	.001
Gay couples should be allowed to marry	42	11	57.7	.001

The two groups of pupils hold very different views of what constitutes anti-social behaviour, as shown by the data in Table 12.26. The Christian young people take a negative view of smoking in public places, of the widespread availability of alcohol and on the use of weapons for protection. In each case, the non-affiliates take a

significantly different position. The two groups are agreed, however, that young people should not be banned from the streets at night.

Table 12.26
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to antisocial behaviour

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Smoking should be banned in public places	41	80	54.9	.001
Streets should be alcohol free	22	49	20.6	.001
Pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day	46	17	34.6	.001
Young people should not be allowed on the streets at night	13	16	0.6	NS
People should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection	40	16	24.2	.001

Table 12.27
Pupils compared by religion: their attitudes to substance use

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
It is wrong to smoke cigarettes	32	67	36.0	.001
It is wrong to drink alcohol	9	19	5.1	NS
It is wrong to sniff solvents (glue/aerosols)	70	83	6.8	.01
It is wrong to get drunk	18	56	39.6	.001
It is wrong to use cannabis (hash/pot)	50	77	27.1	.001
It is wrong to use heroin	71	85	11.2	.001
It is wrong to use ecstasy	56	83	30.1	.001
It is wrong to use cocaine	68	85	15.1	.001
It is wrong to use speed	50	77	26.7	.001

Again, major differences exist between the two groups of pupils in their approach to substance use. Table 12.27 shows that both agree that it is not wrong to drink alcohol, but differ, sometimes radically, in their view of every other criterion employed in this section. Thus while a large majority of the Christians, around 80%, think that any kind of social drug use is wrong, for the non-affiliates this figure is as

low as 50% for cannabis or speed and around 70% for heroin or cocaine. Only 18% of the non-affiliates consider it is wrong to get drunk, compared with 56% of the Christian affiliates. The non-affiliates are less likely to differ from the Christians over the use of solvents but even here the difference between them is significant.

Once again, as shown by the data in Table 12.28, major differences exist between the two groups in their view of the violence and sex presented by the media. The non-affiliates are much less likely than the Christian affiliates to object to these being portrayed in computer games, on the internet or on TV.

Table 12.28
Pupils compared by religion: their views concerning the media

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
There is too much violence in the media	21	44	15.5	.001
There is too much violence in computer games	16	35	12.3	.001
There is too much sex in computer games	12	27	8.7	.01
There is too much sex on the internet	27	56	23.9	.001
There is too much sex on TV	15	50	33.9	.001

Table 12.29
Pupils compared by religion: their views concerning work

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I want to get to the top in my work when I get a job	76	80	0.8	NS
A job gives you a sense of purpose	76	72	0.4	NS
I think it is important to work hard when I get a job	86	96	12.1	.001
I would not like to be unemployed	77	86	4.5	NS
Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to	76	66	2.8	NS
I would like to do a job which helps other people	47	69	14.6	.001

Table 12.29 indicates a measure of agreement between the two groups of young people in their attitude to work. Both Christian affiliates and non-affiliates feel that a job gives you a sense of purpose and would like to get to the top in their future employment. Neither group would like to be unemployed and both take the view that most unemployed people could have job if they really wanted to. However, in two respects the views of the two groups differ. Although a large majority of the non-affiliates, 86%, think that it is important to work hard when they get a job, for the Christian affiliates, the figure is significantly higher, at 96%. For the final criterion in this section, the difference between the two groups is very marked. 69% of the Christian pupils would like to do a job which helps other people whereas this is true of only 47% of the non-affiliates. Investigations in later years could establish whether this difference in aspiration is translated into reality once the young people reach permanent employment.

Table 12.30
Pupils compared by religion: their views concerning politics

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
It makes no difference which political party is in power	27	17	4.3	NS
I think that immigration into Britain should be restricted	60	42	9.0	.01
When old enough I will vote at election time	50	70	12.1	.001
There are too many foreign people living in this country	56	37	11.5	.001
Politics is irrelevant to my life	28	24	0.7	NS
I think politicians do a good job	17	24	2.2	NS

On political matters, there is again a measure of agreement between the two groups, together with some significant differences. As shown in Table 12.30, both non-

affiliates and Christian affiliates on the whole do not regard politics as irrelevant and are equally unlikely to regard politicians as doing a good job. The two groups agree that it makes a difference which political party is in power. However, the non-affiliates are significantly less likely than the Christian affiliates to be planning to vote when they are old enough. They are more likely than the Christians to think that immigration into Britain should be restricted and that there are already too many foreign people living in the country.

Table 12.31
Pupils compared by religion: their global fears and concerns

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
I am concerned about the risk of nuclear war	37	42	0.7	NS
I am concerned about the risk of biological and chemical war	31	36	0.8	NS
I am concerned about the risk of terrorism	53	61	1.9	NS
There is nothing I can do to help solve the world's problems	39	10	50.9	.001
I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world (e.g. Africa)	65	85	19.2	.001

Table 12.31 once again reveals a mixed response, this time to global concerns. Christian affiliates and non-affiliates are equally concerned about the risk of terrorism or of nuclear, biological or chemical war. However, the Christians are much more likely than the non-affiliates to believe that they can help to solve the world's problem. They are also much more likely to be concerned about the poverty of the developing world.

Table 12.32
Pupils compared by religion: their views on education

	None %	Christian %	X ²	P<
Education is about learning facts	65	70	0.8	NS
Education is about passing exams	31	47	7.5	.01
Education is about learning how to live in a right way	42	72	28.1	.001
Education is about understanding how to think about life	46	64	9.1	.01
Education is about understanding how other people think about life	40	54	5.6	NS
Education is about being prepared for life	63	84	21.7	.001
Different religions have different views of life and will educate in different ways	62	77	9.0	.01
I want my children to go to a Christian school	21	67	60.1	.001

Table 12.32 introduces the final data to be considered in this chapter. It concerns the views of the two groups of pupils regarding the education process itself. Once again, many differences between them are found. Both groups agree that education is about learning facts, but the non-affiliates are less likely than the Christians to think that education is about passing exams. Both agree that education is about understanding how other people think about life but they are less likely to agree that it is about understanding how to think about life themselves. The non-affiliates are much less likely than the Christian affiliates to regard education as being about learning how to live in a right way or that it is about being prepared for life. They are also less likely than the Christians to take the view that different religions have different views of life and will educate in different ways, although the majority of them do agree with this position. Finally, as might be expected, while 67% of the Christian pupils would like their own children to be educated at a Christian school, the figure for the non-affiliates is very much lower, at 21%. The fact that as many as a fifth of those who

say that they have no religion would like their children to receive the same kind of radically Christian education that they themselves are receiving is further proof that a number of the non-affiliates are in intellectual agreement with many aspects of Christian belief.

To summarise this section, many differences exist between the moral values held by those pupils who say that have no religion and those who claim to be Christians. The Christians are much more likely than the non-affiliates to hold traditionally Christian views on sexual morality and other moral issues. They are more generally law abiding, more concerned to fulfil public duties such as voting in elections and more concerned about the needs of the poor. The Christian affiliates are also less racist in their attitudes than the non-affiliates and more inclined to want to help others.

12.4 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a cohort of young people who in a very real sense represent a counterculture within their Christian school. These pupils are swimming against the tide in their schools in terms of religious belief and moral values. Their experience of school and their relationship with their teachers is different from that of their Christian peers and tends to be less satisfying for them. The non-affiliate subset has a different social context outside school from that of the Christian pupils. It has different aspirations in life and a different profile in terms of future citizenship.

Despite these major differences, there is no evidence to date that the non-affiliate pupils receiving their education in the new Christian schools would be happier or more likely to prosper in a secular setting; however, that possibility is something that would benefit from further investigation. The position of the non-affiliate pupils raises an interesting question with regard to religious pupils in secular schools. Believing Christian or Muslim pupils (as distinct from those whose religion is more cultural than personal) might well constitute a separate subset in secular schools in just the same way as has been identified here for non-affiliate pupils in new Christian schools. How does the experience of school life for these religious pupils compare not only with their secular counterparts in secular schools but also with the different experiences of the two groups identified within the new Christian schools?

The previous seven chapters have presented and analysed extensive data concerning the teenage pupils in the new Christian schools. The next chapter will assess the wider implications of the reported findings.

Chapter 13

The survey findings: their wider implications

Earlier chapters have described the responses to the survey returned by teenagers in the new Christian schools; those responses have been analysed in some detail. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the findings as they affect specific groups of people and to discuss their wider implications for each of those groups. In each case, those concerned need answers to the questions that are the focus of this thesis. Some of the results are of particular significance for parents and teachers directly involved in the schools and these will be considered first. Next will be considered implications of the survey findings for the churches and finally for the Government.

13.1 The survey: its implications for parents

The parents who send their children to the new Christian schools would themselves make interesting subjects for a survey. The schools are an unusual subsection of society and this observation must in some ways apply to the parents too. The great majority of the parents, perhaps three quarters of them, are Christians themselves and have chosen the new Christian school for their child because of its Christian ethos. That choice will very often have involved them in sacrifice; it is not a decision that they will have made lightly. The Christian parents will be keen to see that their choice leads to positive results in the spiritual lives of their children. They will hope to see those children continuing in the Christian faith in which they have been raised. They will want to see them associate with other religious, law-abiding, morally-principled young people rather than with those who will lead them along a different path. The parents will want to know that their children are aiming to live

by Christian moral standards and that they aspire to Christian ways of living involving the service of others. The remaining quarter of the parents, it seems, are not Christians. Presumably they are sympathetic to the Christian faith and hope that the Christian ethos and moral standards upheld by the schools will benefit their children too.

Those parents whose main motivation in sending their child to a new Christian school is to see them continue in the Christian faith should be very encouraged by the findings of the survey. Not only do the great majority of the young people profess to believe in God and in Jesus Christ, in the main they go further and speak of a personal faith that affects their lives. Furthermore, those beliefs do not decline as they move through the early part of their teens but are retained to the age of 16. Similarly, the parents can be encouraged that it has not been the case that their daughters have continued in the family faith while their sons have begun to abandon it, even though that situation is so common in the Christian church. Both sons and daughters profess the same kind of faith and the same level of faith.

The moral standards and aims in life aspired to by the majority of the young people are also just what their parents would have hoped for. However, the parents should note that there are signs that as the teenagers grow older, their attitude to some moral issues is beginning to change to become more in line with wider teenage culture. In particular, the parents need to be aware that alcohol is beginning to play a significant part in the lives of some of their children and in the social circle with which they are mixing.

The parent body should feel encouraged that the very great majority of the teenagers feel that their parents are supportive of them. However, they also need to take note that their children do not necessarily find them approachable. Less than half of the young people find it helpful to talk with their fathers about their problems and only just over half find it helpful to discuss their problems with their mothers. The parents often have close involvement with the schools as teachers, helpers or governors; this may be beneficial in many ways but the parents need to consider whether or not it might make their children reluctant to discuss school problems with them. Nevertheless, the parents will be reassured to know that the majority of their children are happy at school and like the people they go to school with.

A number of specific issues have emerged from the survey, which need to be brought to the attention of the parents. One concerns a tendency among the girls to worry and to admit to feelings and behaviour which might lead them to develop eating disorders. Another issue concerns the fact that even with supportive parents and a congenial school life, about one quarter of their children admit to often feeling depressed and a worrying fifth of them have considered taking their own life. A major consideration concerns the 11% of pupils who claim to have no religion, particularly the subsection of that group whose personal beliefs are fully at variance with the religious aims of the schools. Who are these young people? Are their parents aware that their children feel like this? What should they do about this situation? These are questions too important for the parent body to ignore.

Francis (2005a p139) investigated some of the boys attending the new Christian schools and concluded that the data provided by his study:

can assure ['Christian'] parents that the values environment modelled by 13-15-year-old boys attending Christian schools is significantly different from that modelled by boys in the same age range attending non-denominational state maintained schools...Pupils attending the Christian schools are more likely to be surrounded by boys who are themselves committed to belief in God, have a positive view of the church and who reject superstitious beliefs. Pupils attending the Christian schools are more likely to be protected from boys who hold liberal attitudes to alcohol, tobacco and sex. Pupils attending Christian schools are less likely to be troubled by bullying and more likely to respect their teachers. [They] are much more likely to feel good about life and about themselves.

Francis concluded from these findings that the values environment being modelled by the boys in the new Christian schools is precisely what the “Christian” parents want. In his view, it is indeed “more Christian” than can be found in non-denominational church schools and the distinctiveness of the “Christian” community is being reproduced within the Christian school. The present study has confirmed the general picture that Francis found and hence, with the provisos articulated above, can be of further reassurance to the parents that their desire for the ethos of their homes to be replicated in the schools is being fulfilled.

13.2 The survey: its implications for teachers

The teachers who work in the new Christian schools often do so at great cost to themselves. While they may benefit from smaller classes and an atmosphere congenial to their own Christian faith, they will often need both to survive on low salaries and to work with barely adequate resources. They too need to know that they are accomplishing in the lives of the pupils the spiritual aims that form the basis of the schools' *raison d'être*. The teachers, too, can be encouraged; the data demonstrate that they are succeeding in reproducing a Christian community within the Christian school.

The survey findings are directly relevant to teachers in many respects. Table 8.8 detailed the responses to items concerning school life, while the responses shown in Table 9.11 were directly concerned with the education process. The teachers can be encouraged; the great majority of their pupils are happy in school, although a small minority are not. The great majority of their pupils think that the teachers are doing a good job and, while some are not sure about it, very few do not. The teachers will be relieved to hear that only a small minority of those for whom they have responsibility do not consider that they are being well-prepared for life or worry about being bullied. However, the teachers need to be concerned about these small minorities for whom school does not seem to be such a happy and safe place. They also need to take special notice of the responses to two particular items. First, when asked to indicate whether or not the pupils felt that their teachers are interested in them, not all could confidently agree and some disagreed emphatically. In some ways, the 30% of pupils who could not decide whether their teachers are interested in them or not represent a particular challenge for those teachers. The second item of particular note established that only a third of the pupils could deny that school is boring for them while 42% stated unequivocally that they are bored at school.

The views held by the pupils on the education process itself largely correlate with those that, given the nature of the schools, can be presumed to be held by their teachers. However, a large minority of the pupils did not know how to respond to the item “Education is about understanding how other people think about life” and this will probably be of concern to their teachers, since this is an important aspect of education within a new Christian school, especially for those from a more reformed background. The teachers may also be concerned to learn that although most of their

pupils claim to want to care for the environment this concern does not, for many of them, seem to translate into suitable environmentally aware behaviour. A major concern for the teachers will be the finding that so many of their pupils do not consider drunkenness to be wrong behaviour.

The teachers in the new Christian schools need to take particular note of those of their pupils who say they have no religion. These young people may not necessarily be visible to them but, if not, the teachers need to discover who they are. This group holds hold very different views and beliefs from those of their teachers, their fellow pupils and in a minority of cases their parents. Teachers need to be aware of this and to pay special attention to their needs. For example, do these particular pupils feel able to take part in class discussions or are they afraid to do so because they would feel too much like stepping out of line? Are these unbelieving young people required to behave in school assemblies and other worship times as though they are believers? Is their different position respected? The teachers need to be aware that their unbelieving pupils are more likely than the others to feel unworthy or depressed and are more likely to have considered taking their own lives. The teachers also need to know that compared with their Christian pupils, those with no religion are disaffected with a number of aspects of school life. In particular, while most of the Christian pupils could say that they considered their teachers to be interested in them, this was true of only just over a third of the non-affiliates. Also, whereas the great majority of the Christian pupils believe that their teachers are doing a good job, this is true of less than half of the non-affiliates. How can these results be explained? What is their real import? Are the teachers in reality just as interested in these unbelieving pupils as in the others or possibly even *more*

interested in them, in that they might be especially “concerned for their souls”? In this case, the perception that the unbelieving pupils have is in fact a misconception, an assumption that Christian teachers would inevitably be more interested in Christian pupils. If this is the case, it is possible that the real problem lies with the unbelieving pupils who might themselves find it difficult to be interested in a Christian teacher. However, the possibility remains that the teachers, or some of them, actually are less interested in their unbelieving pupils, possibly because they find them less responsive and more difficult to handle. There is some encouragement for the teachers, however, in that about one fifth of the unbelieving pupils want their children to go to a Christian school. There is also potential encouragement for them from the Urban Hope data, which implies that the unbelieving pupils would not necessarily find a different kind of school more congenial.

The teachers in the new Christian schools should be particularly interested in the findings of the comparisons by sex and by age reported in Chapters 10 and 11. It seems that they are succeeding, where all other contexts have failed, to eliminate whatever the factors are which normally cause boys to be less religious than girls and older teenagers to be less religious than those who are younger. For this reason, amongst others, the teachers in the new Christian schools would themselves make interesting subjects for a survey, in the same way as would the parents.

13.3 The survey: its implications for the churches

Writing in the foreword to the report of the 2005 English Church Census, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, said:

The last English Church Census, carried out in 1998, showed an alarming decline in the number of children and young people in church. These latest results suggest that we have yet to reverse this, but at least the rate of change has slowed. It has often been said that children are not just the future of the church, they are the church. Based on the findings of this Census, we still have some way to go to give effect to this maxim. (Brierley, 2006a, xiv)

The English Church Census referred to was carried out on 8 May 2005. Almost exactly one year later, 695 teenagers from the new Christian schools aged between 13 and 16 completed the present survey. The author of the report, Dr. Peter Brierley, comments:

There has been a decreasing decline in the annual numbers of those aged 15 to 19 leaving the church. Perhaps those who ‘make it’ through the crisis years of 11 to 14 are more inclined to stay. (Brierley, 2006a, p115)

For those who established the new Christian schools, concern for the “crisis years” constituted one of their most powerful incentives. The desire to see children who had been raised in the church remain within the church as teenagers and as young adults was one of their strongest motivations. Their reasoning was that one of the most powerful forces leading young people to leave the church was the nature of the secular education that they were receiving in most of the nation’s state schools. In the event, the current survey has shown that 77% of the teenage respondents at the time of the completion of the questionnaire were attending church at least once per month (see Table 5.1) and 69% were attending at least once per week. That their attendance was not merely nominal but was part of a wider spiritual life is indicated by the findings that the majority of them were also praying and reading the Bible

regularly, that 87% of them profess to believe in God and that 77% of them believe in Jesus as their personal Saviour. Moreover, as the data in Chapter 11 indicate, there has been no decline in religious belief as the teenagers age from 13 to 16. It seems that not only have they so far survived the “crisis years” but they do not actually appear to have been having a crisis.

Peter Brierley has commented:

Those in ‘Generation Y’, defined by some as those born in the 1980s, have been found to have little spiritual interest, being rather focussed on ‘happiness’. The central goal of their life is to be happy...The lack of relevance of the Christian faith to young people is not because they are hostile to it or reject it but because they know hardly anything about it. (Brierley 2006a, p118)

Those churches which have been directly involved in founding new Christian schools have done so because they have observed this trend, in some cases when it was just beginning. They have been rewarded in that, so far, they have retained their young people and have not become part of another set of statistics revealed by the 2005 Church Census:

Not every church has young people in its congregation.

- 39% of churches had no-one attending under the age of 11.
- 49% of churches had no-one attending between 11 and 14 and
- 59% of churches had no-one attending between 15 and 19 years of age.

These are horrific figures and indicate the huge amount of work that churches need to do to reclaim the lost ground among young people today. (Brierley, 2006a, p118)

The 2005 English Church Census also revealed the extent of a further problem facing the churches, one that has already been articulated in Chapter 10. This concerns the feminisation of the church, the fact that a far higher percentage of women than men attend church in England. For 2005, the overall percentages were

57% women and 43% men (Brierley, 2006a, p130). However, the Census revealed another phenomenon, the fact that many young women, more so than young men, left the church during the 1990s and continued to do so in the years to 2005 (pp 132-133). The data in Chapter 10 reveal that there is no difference between the religiosity of the teenage boys and girls in the new Christian schools. Whatever the factors causing the gender imbalance in the churches, they do not seem to be operating in new Christian schools. One factor that might be of significance to the results described in Chapter 10 concerns the denominational background of the pupils. As indicated in Chapter 5, 14 % of the pupils are connected with Pentecostal churches. A further 37% chose the “other” option to describe their church affiliation; a fair estimate suggests that of these at least 20% overall were charismatic “New Churches”. At least 34% of the pupils in the new Christian schools are therefore connected with either the Pentecostal churches or the “New Churches”. The significance of this statistic is that these are the churches that are most evenly balanced in terms of gender. The New Churches by gender are 50% male and the Pentecostals are 49% male (Brierley, 2006a, p135). While the influence of their home churches might partly explain the absence of a “gender effect” within the new Christian schools, the fact remains that more than 60% of the pupils do not attend such churches and some are connected with those where the “gender effect” is strong.

13.4 The survey: its implications for the Government

As the first decade of the 21st century draws to its close, the British Government is facing at least three crises in connection with young people. First is the fact that the state education system, despite massive financial investment and many

governmental initiatives, does not seem to be able to raise educational standards or to produce a “level playing field”. While some state schools are excellent and produce good results, many are not and do not. Second is a public perception that many young people are out of control, with very high rates of teenage pregnancies, a general reputation for drunken and rowdy behaviour amongst teenagers and, in some localities, teenage gang warfare and extreme levels of violence. Third is the concern, high-lighted by the UNICEF (2007) report, that the very state of childhood in Britain is giving cause for concern and does not seem, for many, to be the happy time that it should be. It is against this backdrop that the culture to be found in the new Christian schools needs to be considered. Would an increase in the number of such faith-based schools help to solve these problems or would such a policy rather lead to a lack of social cohesion and to the production of an indoctrinated, extremist element to society?

Geoffrey Walford has assessed the long-term effects of the Blair government’s support for faith-based schools (Walford, 2008). In his opinion (p696):

The Blair government’s encouragement of faith-based schools was officially linked to a belief that faith schools have a particular ethos that supports the development of morality and of high academic achievement. This belief was supplemented by the additional one – that faith schools could be inclusive and teach social cohesion. It is difficult to test this type of faith against evidence, but, where it is possible, the evidence is at best mixed.

In his following critique, Walford cites no evidence for or against the notion that the ethos of a faith-based school may support the development of morality in its pupils. The current survey has provided some such evidence in that the teenage pupils in the new Christian schools profess high moral standards.

The question of faith-based schools and academic achievement is controversial. Walford claims that the higher educational results obtained by faith-based schools are due to selection of more able pupils from higher social classes. The evidence he cites to support this view seems to have focused on Roman Catholic, Church of England and Jewish schools (Walford, 2008, p696). A survey comparing the educational standards of independent schools similar to the new Christian schools with their more secular counterparts should settle the argument. Muslim, Jewish and secular schools exist which are similar to the new Christian schools in that they are small independent schools which cater for pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds. A comparison of the educational achievements of schools like these would establish whether a faith-based ethos adds value in this regard. Such a survey would have an additional advantage; it would permit a comparison between the faiths. "Faith-based" is a term often used to imply that whichever faith is under consideration, the faith itself should make no difference to educational outcomes. While this may prove to be true, it has not been demonstrated to be the case. Rather, it seems to have been assumed that the content of a religion is not relevant to this debate. There are in fact profound differences between the faiths and it is possible that these will work through into different educational outcomes.

The third issue raised by Walford, that of social cohesion, has been investigated by Geoffrey Short (2002, 2003). Short argues that faith-based education may actually lead to greater social cohesion (2002, pp565-567). One reason he puts forward concerns the relationship between tolerance and self-esteem. Writing in 2002, Short said:

Whether faith schools do, in fact, benefit their pupils' self-esteem is an empirical question for which there is currently no relevant data. Should it prove to be the case, however, that the schools have this effect, the link with tolerance ought to be taken seriously, for the clear implication of such a link is that faith schools serve the interests of social cohesion. The possibility of a causal connection between self-esteem and tolerance has long been recognised by both philosophers and psychologists. (Short, 2002, p567)

In the years since 2002, empirical data that has a bearing on this question has been forthcoming (Francis, 2005a; Francis and Robbins, 2005 pp123-132) and is supplemented by the present study. Data presented in Chapter 8 indicate that the majority of the young people in the new Christian schools have a strong sense of self-worth and an overall sense of well-being.

This final point is worth emphasising. As the special edition of the *Oxford Review of Education* entitled *Well-being in Schools* (2009) indicates, the Government is very concerned about the importance of well-being within education. The results presented in this thesis support the contention of the new Christian schools that it is the lack of a coherent basis to education, the absence of a consistent world-view making sense of life, which is a prime cause of so much unhappiness within secular schools. The evidence which has been presented suggests that the new Christian schools are able to produce an environment where children feel loved, safe and protected, indicators which, some consider, represent the hall-marks of a civilised society (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, p371).

Conclusion

Thirty to forty years ago, concerned parents and churches began to instigate the founding of a network of independent Christian schools. In recent years, the fears and concerns which motivated them have come more clearly into public focus. Richard Dawkins (2006), Sam Harris (2006) and Christopher Hitchens (2007), amongst others, have been promoting an aggressive atheism and have been linking their cause to education. Dinesh D'Souza (2007, pp 33-39), despite writing in a different context, has clearly articulated the concerns which led to the founding of the new Christian schools. He maintains that:

The secularisation of the minds of our young people is not, as many think, the inevitable consequence of learning and maturing. Rather, it is to a large degree orchestrated by teachers and professors to promote anti-religious agendas...The strategy is not to argue with religious views or to prove them wrong. Rather, it is to subject them to such scorn that they are pushed outside the bounds of acceptable debate. The story of how young people move from a childhood of innocence and piety to a questioning, sexually liberated and finally cynical adolescence is now a familiar one in Western culture. While this is often represented as a form of enlightenment or liberation, it also represents an ideologically motivated attack on religion and traditional morality. Religion and morality are either excluded from consideration or treated with presumptive disdain. (D'Souza, 2007, pp 33 and 38)

The research data that have been presented in this thesis gives credence to D'Souza's view. They have shown that when children are educated within a Christian framework they do not, on the whole, become cynical and reject Christianity as they reach adolescence. This finding will encourage those who founded the schools but will fuel the concerns of those who take a different position within the debate.

This study, in investigating the new independent Christian schools, has found them to be operating at the radical edge of conservative, evangelical Christianity. To those

opposed to faith-based schooling, the schools would appear to be providing a setting designed to fulfil predictions of indoctrination and of social divisiveness. The investigation of the views and values of the pupils has produced results which mitigate some of these fears while confirming others. For example, most of the teenagers attending the schools believe that homosexuality is wrong and do not accept the theory of evolution, as it is commonly understood; these are not views which will endear them to modern society. However, alongside these opinions, the young people express a concern for others which is greater than that of their secular peers and their views on evolution do not lead them to reject science in general.

The teenagers in the new Christian schools exhibit a strong sense of self-worth and take a clear stand on matters of personal morality. They anticipate that in later life they will work hard and play their part in the political process. They express a desire to serve others and not to benefit at the expense of others. All of these factors have the potential to lead the teenage pupils eventually to become exemplary citizens, making positive contributions to British society. The all-important question remains, however, as to whether these aspirations will actually be fulfilled in future years.

The parents, teachers and churches directly associated with the new Christian schools can all be encouraged by the extent to which the young people nearing the end of their schooling are claiming to be active Christian believers. Again, the question of what will happen in the future is a crucial one; has the “crisis of faith” merely been delayed? Will the respondents to the survey still be Christian believers and active church attendees in later years? Will they wish their own children to be brought up in the Christian faith once those children have actually appeared?

Further research is necessary in order better to understand the full implications of the current data. Where possible the research findings have been compared with those of the Teenage Religions and Values Survey, but at least a decade separates the two surveys. The proposed repeat of the wider survey would provide the opportunity to make more direct comparisons; it could even lead to a change in some of the inferences that have so far been drawn from the current survey. For example, 85% of the teenagers in the schools believe in God compared with 41% of teenagers who took part in the Values Survey in the 1990s. What is the equivalent figure today? Has the gap between the religious beliefs of the pupils in the new Christian schools and their wider peer group grown larger or narrowed in the past decade? New data concerning teenagers in the general population who profess to belong to no religion would be of particular interest. It would throw light on the important question of how the new Christian schools may be succeeding with, or alternatively failing, the 11% of their pupils who take a similar position. New data could potentially help to decide the question of whether a secular educational setting would be more suitable for pupils like these.

Further research is also needed to answer fully the central question of whether the new Christian schools are producing citizens who are an asset to British society and if they are not what kind of citizens they have actually produced. Such a research agenda would need to locate and survey former pupils who are now adults. The pupils who were surveyed in 2006, whose views have been extensively elaborated as the main thrust of this thesis, are already entering adulthood themselves. Repeat surveys of this cohort at regular intervals as they mature and move on in life would also help to settle the question of what kind of citizens the schools are producing.

Surveys like these could also be designed to shed light on some of the other criticisms commonly directed at the schools. For example, have the former pupils adjusted well to life after leaving school? Have many of them moved into careers involving the service of others or involving science? If the latter, has their creationist background hindered them in this regard? Have they retained their creationist views? Are they still members of churches? Are they raising their own children as Christians? How do they view their unusual education with the benefit of hindsight?

A further area for new research would be to assess the pupils in the new Christian schools in terms of their spiritual health. This concept, developed in practice by John Fisher (Fisher, Francis and Johnson, 2000) and applied to the British educational scene by Francis and Robbins (2005), assumes that the mental and emotional health of a person actually depends on four domains of relationship, his or her relationship with others, with the environment, with the transcendent and with the self. This concept, as explained in Chapter 3, is an extension of one that has influenced many of the new Christian schools in their choice of curriculum; the schools would therefore constitute a suitable forum for its further application.

The new Christian schools are not alone in constituting a network of faith-based independent schools of recent origin. The Association of Muslim Schools, UK, links a similar grouping of independent Islamic schools. These schools are of special interest for several reasons, not least that in the wake of “9/11” and “7/7”, it is the Muslim schools, rather than faith-based schools in general, which arouse special fears amongst the general population of possible links with extremism. Several of the schools have joined the state sector in recent years (Baker, 2009c) but at present

the great majority remain independent and bear many similarities to the new Christian schools. A research project to investigate these schools and possibly also to compare them with the new Christian schools would play an important role in resolving whether or not there is any justification in the fears which they arouse. Jewish independent schools have a longer history in Britain but would also constitute an interesting research population with which to compare the new Christian schools.

Geoffrey Walford (2001, p465) has referred to the new Christian schools as one of the most interesting groups of schools to be found in the private sector. He has also commented (2008, pp697-698) that the Christian churches have only partially exploited the possibilities offered to them by Tony Blair's policies to increase the number of faith-based schools, policies that may already be going into reverse. At the same time, deep concerns are being expressed about unhappiness and emotional ill-health amongst growing numbers of children and young people. These concerns are coming from all sides and are depicting children as over-stressed, over-tested, unhealthy, materialistic and under-nurtured emotionally (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, p373). In the face of such a crisis amongst the nation's young people, a crisis which is perceived to be linked to education, the new Christian schools appear to be producing very different outcomes. While much research remains to be done to inform the situation further, the schools deserve to be brought to the attention of the Government, the churches and the educational establishment while they are still able to exist since the initial empirical evidence provided by this study suggests that they are fulfilling their educational aims while at the same time producing well-adjusted young people with the potential to become good citizens.

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Appendix 1

A note on the methodology used in developing Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

In preparing the material for these chapters, I have consulted the published literature, where it is available. Such literature is sparse, and where it does exist, it cannot always be relied upon. Geoffrey Walford's publications constitute the great majority of the existing literature regarding the history and nature of the new Christian schools. However, I have identified inaccuracies in a number of these publications. For example, Oak Hill School, Bristol, did not close in 1995 as Walford asserts (Walford, 2000, p45); it closed in two stages, with the primary section closing in 1994 and the secondary department in 1996 (Baker, 2009a). Walford's published account of the reasons for the end of the Christian Schools Campaign has been strongly challenged by many who were involved at the time (Baker, 2009d) and a further serious misrepresentation regarding the constitution of the Christian Schools Trust is dealt with in Chapter 2. Where Walford's accounts are accurate they are necessarily limited, since his main interest in the schools has been in the political arena. Therefore, some of the information provided in the Chapters 2, 3 and 4 has of necessity been gained from my direct personal experience. During the 26 years I spent working within one of the oldest of the new Christian schools, Trinity School, Stalybridge, Greater Manchester, I also interacted closely with those schools situated in the north of England, through joint teacher-training initiatives, sports days, musical festivals and other similar events. At a national level, I have interacted with the schools affiliated to the Christian Schools Trust, together with some not so affiliated, through national conferences, three days in length, which take place every two years. These are attended by approximately

200 headteachers, teachers, teaching assistants and governors representing many of the schools. I attended such conferences in 1990, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009. In addition, the Christian Schools Trust holds regular conferences for headteachers. These began in 1988 when the Trust itself was first being set up and I was present at those early meetings. In 1989, early in the Trust's history, a significant residential conference for headteachers was held in Bristol, at which I was present. Subsequently, once the Trust was fully in place, meetings for the headteachers of its affiliated schools began to be held three times a year, a process which still continues. To date, I have attended approximately 30 such meetings. Initially, I was present in my capacity of headteacher but since 2003 as a member of the Core Team for the Trust. Further exposure to the headteachers and teachers involved with the new Christian schools has come about through my attendance at and participation in the annual teacher-training week provided by the Trust. Approximately 30 to 40 teachers attend these courses each year and to date, I have been involved in six such weeks. Three publications have emerged as a result of this level of general exposure to the new Christian schools movement. *The Love of God in the Classroom: the story of the new Christian Schools*, a narrative account of the histories of 17 of the schools, co-authored with David Freeman, was published in 2005. Subsequently have appeared two publications describing the views of former pupils of the schools (ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2007, 2009).

As preparation for the current research project, more formal visits were made to eleven of the new Christian schools; these schools are listed in Appendix 2. They were selected to cover a wide range of the different kinds of schools affiliated to the Christian Schools Trust and included one that was not so affiliated. The list

included urban schools, suburban schools and one rural school; some schools were large and some small; some had developed their own curriculum and some used the ACE system. Most covered the age range from 4 or 5 years to 16 years but one was mainly a nursery school with a few primary-aged children. The schools were situated in both the north and the south of England. They included parent-controlled schools and church-linked schools; some of the schools had their roots in the “reformed” theological tradition and some in the “charismatic” tradition.

Each school visit normally lasted most of one full school day. During each visit, an interview was conducted with the headteacher and a tour of the school was undertaken, giving opportunity for the pupils and teachers to be observed ‘in action’. Where possible, and it usually was, informal interaction with the teachers also took place during break and lunch-times. The interview with the headteacher in each case was relatively unstructured, using the following prompt questions:

- When was the school established?
- Why was it set up and by whom?
- Does the school have a church connection? If so, what is its nature?
- What is the nature of the school’s governing body?
- How is the school funded?
- If the school is fee-paying, what is the schools’ policy with respect to accepting those who are not in a position to pay fees?
- How does the school determine its curriculum? Does it use the National Curriculum? Does it use the ACE system?
- Does the school admit non-Christian families? If so, is there a limit on how many?

- Does the school cater for children with special needs?
- Are the teachers salaried? If so, at what salary level?

Any available relevant literature was obtained from the schools, including in each case, the current prospectus.

A separate visit was made to a further school, Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool, in connection with the “Civil Liberties Case” described in Chapter 4. That important legal action had been spear-headed by Philip Williamson, the headteacher of the Liverpool school. By the time of my visit in April, 2008, Philip Williamson was gravely ill and has subsequently died. Two of his colleagues, Barbara Lord and Polly Bolton, had been closely involved in the case with him and they provided me with valuable information from their extensive archive of material related to the case. I also spoke at some length with Jane Lawrence, a school parent, to obtain a parent’s view on the case and its outcome.

In order that my account should be as accurate as possible, the Christian Schools Trust made available to me its full archive of historical documents, including minutes of meetings, correspondence, address lists and newsletters. I have consulted these extensively both in establishing the history of the schools and in providing the analysis of them.

Appendix 2

New Christian Schools visited for research purposes

Barnsley Christian School

Bethany School, Sheffield

Bradford Christian School

Christian Fellowship School, Liverpool

Christ the King School, Sale, Cheshire

Covenant School, Stockport

Emmanuel School, Rochdale

Folly's End Christian School, Croydon

Immanuel School, Romford

King of Kings School, Central Manchester

Potter's House School, Bury

The King's School, Witney, near Oxford

The River School, Worcester

Appendix 3

The following statement was commissioned by the Core Team of the Christian Schools Trust. The initial draft was circulated to all CST schools for comment and the document amended accordingly. The agreed version was approved in May 2009.

Statement concerning:

The place of the teaching of the Creation/Evolution debate and Intelligent Design in schools affiliated to the Christian Schools Trust

The Christian Schools Trust is a network of independent schools, each of which is able to subscribe to an evangelical basis of faith. The Trust is not in a position to impose stipulations on to its member schools with regard to secondary matters, nor would it wish to do so. The creation/evolution debate, although held to be very important, is regarded by the Trust as a secondary matter, which recognises that there is a diversity of views on this issue amongst Christians who hold a high view of the authority of Scripture.

The Christian Schools Trust affirms a high view of God as the Creator and sustainer of the Universe and of all living things. It categorically rejects the notion that living things have come into being by a random and purposeless process in which God has played no part. It rejects the idea that living things came about by a process involving the death and destruction of mutated creatures and affirms the belief, held by many scientists both past and present, that nature provides abundant evidence of the hand of a Designer.

The following description of how the creation/evolution issue is being approached represents the position held by many of the schools although not necessarily by all.

Teaching at Primary Level

About 50% of CST schools consist only of primary departments. The majority of the rest cover both primary and secondary levels. Young children within the schools would learn from the start of their schooling that they are created beings, that they are very valuable to God and that they are made in His image. They would be taught

that He is the Creator of all things, including all living things, and that He has designed this Earth to be their home. They would also learn that creation was originally good but that it is now flawed as a consequence of sin introduced into the human race by Adam and Eve. The picture presented would be one of decline from an original state that was perfect and highly ordered. The children would be introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God who came to save both them and all of creation from the devastating effects of rebellion against God.

This traditional, orthodox, Christian viewpoint, based on teaching that resonates throughout the Bible and has been preserved for millennia in creeds and catechisms, would form the framework within which all subjects, not just those related to science, would be taught. It would not be confined to RE lessons, giving the impression that it would not matter if the opposite were taught in other subjects. The schools would aim to teach consistently within this view of reality. The theory of evolution would rarely be taught directly at primary level, except to answer children's questions should they arise or to deal with it in immediately relevant subjects such as when fossils or dinosaurs are under consideration. The creation/evolution debate might possibly be handled in more detail with older primary children if individual schools and teachers consider it to be appropriate.

Teaching at Secondary Level

The general framework of Christian theism described above applies as much to the teaching of the older children as it does to the younger. In addition, ideally, by the time students reach Years 10 and 11 they will have been fully exposed to the creation/evolution debate. Evidence for and against the theory of evolution will have been evaluated and discussed and they will have been made aware that many, probably most, of today's scientists support the theory. However, it will also have been pointed out that many well-qualified scientists oppose it or dissent from it in some way. The role taken in the development of modern science by Christians such as Kepler, Boyle, Newton, Linnaeus, Faraday and Mendel will have been emphasised and it will have been noted that some of these, including Isaac Newton and Carl Linnaeus, held essentially the same position as today's 'Young-Earth' creationists.

Students will also have been made aware of the differing positions held by Christians on this issue and may have been given an overview of both ‘Young-Earth’ and ‘Old-Earth’ creationist viewpoints and the theistic evolution position.

By this stage, it should have been made clear to the students that creationist scientists have no quarrel with Darwin’s theory that limited change in populations might possibly occur by a process of natural selection. They should have had the opportunity to see that this is not what the debate is about, except that most of the supposed ‘overwhelming evidence’ for evolution falls into this uncontentious and undisputed category. The students will have been told that the debate is about the much more contentious issue, for which creationists maintain there is no convincing evidence, that there is no limit to this process and that by it all living things have come into being in a random, purposeless, fashion involving the deaths of countless billions of mutated creatures

The creation/evolution controversy provides a stimulating, up-to-date and interesting context within which many important philosophical and scientific principles can be evaluated. Young people educated in this way do well at science both at GCSE level and beyond. Former pupils of CST schools who proceed to University are often surprised at the ignorance, on this topic, of their peers who have been educated in a secular setting which denies that the debate even exists.

Intelligent Design

The Christian Schools Trust is watching the increasing impact of the Intelligent Design Movement with interest. The fundamental premise of the movement, that biological systems show evidence of having been designed, is one that is to be predicted by those who believe in a Creator.

Appendix 4

Statement produced by: Bridge Schools Inspectorate October 2008

The Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has approval from the Secretary of State for Education and began its work in September 2008 to inspect schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust (CST) and the Association of Muslim Schools (AMSUK) throughout England. BSI provides an opportunity to establish a specialist faith schools inspectorate. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of reports. At the end of its first year in operation an evaluation report on the inspectorate will be available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection teams are led by highly experienced retired HMIs who understand the distinctive characteristics of faith-based education. The aim is to raise standards in schools and to foster school improvement through inspection.

Objectives

1. To protect and promote the religious ethos and philosophy of our school communities
2. To promote cross-cultural awareness, understanding and co-operation between the faith communities involved
3. To ensure quality and objectivity by the involvement of experienced inspectors as Lead Inspectors and in the training and quality assurance processes.
4. To be more cost-effective by regulating our own charges

Registered Office: 72C Woodstock Road, Witney, Oxon OX28 1DY
Tel: 01993 866060, www.bridgeschoolsinspectorate.co.uk

Appendix 5

The text of the questionnaire used in the survey

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VALUES

This survey looks at what young people aged between 13 and 15 most value, and think is most important. This survey has been designed to let the voice of young people be clearly heard. Please help by answering the questions.

Please say what you really think and try to be as honest and accurate as possible.

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to these questions. We are very interested in your views. Please do not discuss your answers with anyone else, and do not pause for too long over any one question.

Everything you tell us is completely private and confidential. No one in your school will read your answers.

Thanks for all your help.

Sylvia Baker

University of Wales, Bangor

PART ONE asks for some information about yourself. Please tick the appropriate boxes

Which sex are you?

Male

Female

Which school year are you in?

Year nine

Year ten.....

What kind of area do you live in?

Rural.....

Suburban.....

Urban.....

Do you have a part-time job during term-time?

No.....

Yes, just weekends.....

Yes, just weekdays.....

Yes, weekends and weekdays.....

If you have a part-time job how many hours do you work during term-time?

0 - 5 hours.....

6 - 10 hours.....

11 + hours.....

Do you have a mobile phone?

Yes.....

No.....

How much time did you spend on the internet last Thursday?

None.....

Less than 1 hour.....

1 or 2 hours.....
 3 to 4 hours.....
 More than 4 hours.....
 How much time did you spend watching TV / videos / DVDs last Thursday?
 None.....
 Less than 1 hour.....
 1 or 2 hours.....
 3 to 4 hours.....
 More than 4 hours.....
 How much time did you spend playing computer games last Thursday?
 None.....
 Less than 1 hour.....
 1 or 2 hours.....
 3 to 4 hours.....
 More than 4 hours.....
 What is your ethnic group?
 Asian - Bangladeshi.....
 Asian - Indian.....
 Asian - Pakistani.....
 Any other Asian.....
 Black - African.....
 Black - Caribbean.....
 Chinese.....
 Mixed.....
 White.....
 Who do you live with?
 Both natural parents.....
 One natural parent.....
 One natural parent and her / his partner..
 Grandparents.....
 Adoptive parents.....
 Foster parents.....
 Do you have any sisters or brothers that live with you?
 Yes.....
 No.....
 Have your parents been separated or divorced?
 Yes.....
 No.....
 Don't know.....
 Does your dad have a job?
 Yes, full-time.....
 Yes, part-time.....
 Yes, homemaker.....
 Retired.....
 No.....
 Don't know.....
 If so, what does he do?
 Does your mum have a job?
 Yes, full-time.....

Yes, part-time.....
 Yes, homemaker.....
 Retired.....
 No.....
 Don't know.....
 If so, what does she do?
 Do you read the scriptures by yourself? (e.g. Bible, Qur'an, Vedas)
 Nearly every day.....
 At least once a week.....
 At least once a month.....
 Occasionally.....
 Never.....
 What is your religion?
 none.....
 Christian.....
 Buddhist.....
 Hindu.....
 Jewish.....
 Muslim.....
 Sikh.....
 other (please specify).....
 If you ticked Christian, with which group do you identify?
 none.....
 Baptist.....
 Church of England / Church in Wales.....
 Jehovah's Witnesses.....
 Methodist.....
 Pentecostal (Assemblies of God, Elim).....
 Roman Catholic.....
 Salvation Army.....
 URC / Presbyterian.....
 other (please specify).....
 Do you pray by yourself?
 Nearly every day.....
 At least once a week.....
 At least once a month.....
 Occasionally.....
 Never.....
 Do you feel that your life is being guided by God?
 No.....
 Perhaps, but I am not really sure.....
 Probably, but I am not certain.....
 Yes, definitely.....
 Have you ever had something you would describe as a 'religious experience'?
 No.....
 Perhaps, but I am not really sure.....
 Probably, but I am not certain.....
 Yes, definitely.....

How often do you attend a place of religious worship? (e.g. church, mosque, temple etc)

Nearly every week.....

At least once a month.....

At least 6 times a year.....

At least once or twice a year.....

Never.....

Are both your parents still alive?

Yes.....

No.....

Don't know.....

Please give your date of birth

Date..... Month.....

PART TWO Please read each sentence carefully and see if you agree or disagree with it.

If you Agree Strongly put a ring round AS

If you Agree, put a ring round A

If you are Not Certain, put a ring round NC

If you Disagree, put a ring round D

If you disagree strongly, put a ring round DS

I feel my life has a sense of purpose.....

I know that Jesus is very close to me.....

The earth is billions of years old.....

I am worried about getting AIDS / HIV.....

I stop eating to make myself feel better.....

Sometimes I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do.....

The Bible seems irrelevant to life today.....

Teachers do a good job.....

I make a special effort to help to save the world's energy resources.....

It is wrong to use heroin.....

Streets should be alcohol free.....

I believe tarot cards can tell the future.....

I am concerned about animals and plants becoming extinct.....

I eat to make myself feel better.....

I find it helpful to talk about my problems with close friends.....

It is wrong to sniff solvents (glue / aerosols).....

Most unemployed people could have a job if they really wanted to.....

I find life really worth living.....

I believe that God made the world in six days of 24 hours.....

Drug taking is a growing problem in my area.....

People should be allowed to carry weapons for their own protection.....

I am worried about putting on weight.....

Theories in science can be proved to be definitely true.....

I am a religious person.....

Contraception is wrong.....

The earth is only a few thousand years old.....

I drink caffeine (tea / coffee / cola) to make myself feel better.....
 I would like to have children.....
 I feel I am not worth much as a person.....
 I am worried about how I get on with other people.....
 Most of my friends think religion is important.....
 I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a school teacher.....
 I think going to church is a waste of time.....
 Gay couples should be allowed to marry.....
 I think Christianity is the only true religion.....
 I think the Bible is out of date.....
 I would like to make a difference to the world.....
 School is boring.....
 There are too many foreign people living in this country.....
 I believe magic can be used for bad.....
 There is too much violence on the television.....
 I would like to study for a degree.....
 Abortion is wrong.....
 I believe in evolution creating everything over millions of years.....
 Politics is irrelevant to my life.....
 Pubs should be allowed to stay open 24 hours a day.....
 I feel that my teachers are interested in me.....
 I want a church funeral after my death.....
 When I die I will come back to life as someone or something else.....
 It is wrong to use cocaine.....
 I often feel depressed.....
 I have sometimes considered taking my own life.....
 I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a Christian
 minister/vicar/priest.....
 It is wrong to smoke cigarettes.....
 I am worried about being attacked by pupils from other schools.....
 I want to be cremated after my death.....
 I eat chocolate to make myself feel better.....
 I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my mum.....
 Most of my friends drink alcohol.....
 Science will eventually give us complete control over the world.....
 I have sometimes considered deliberately hurting myself.....
 I often worry about my school work.....
 Women are better at housework than men.....
 Sometimes I feel pressured by my parents to do things I don't want to
 do.....
 I know that Jesus helps me.....
 I believe in Jesus Christ.....
 I am worried about my exams at school.....
 I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people on
 helplines.....
 Most of my friends take drugs.....
 It is wrong to cheat in exams.....
 I believe bad things happen in threes.....
 I am worried about going out alone at night in my area.....

I am worried about being bullied at school.....
 I think it is important to work hard when I get a job.....
 My parents are supportive of me.....
 I would be reluctant to talk about my problems with people in chat
 rooms.....
 I have crossed my fingers for luck.....
 I find it helpful to talk about my problems with my dad.....
 I believe everyone has a guardian angel / spirit.....
 I am worried about my body shape.....
 I believe magic can be used for good.....
 Gay couples should be allowed to care for children.....
 I would be reluctant to discuss my problems with a doctor.....
 I drink alcohol to make myself feel better.....
 Men are better at DIY than women.....
 I want a green burial after my death.....
 I believe in my horoscope.....
 Religious Education should be taught in school.....
 I am a spiritual person.....
 I am worried about my attractiveness to the opposite sex.....
 God means a lot to me.....
 I am concerned about the risk of pollution to the environment.....
 Divorce is wrong.....
 I have used charms to protect me from evil.....
 It makes no difference which political party is in power.....
 I often long for someone to turn to for advice.....
 I believe in the Holy Spirit.....
 I want to get to the top in my work when I get a job.....
 My parents think religion is important.....
 I believe Jesus really rose from the dead.....
 I am happy in my school.....
 It is wrong to get drunk.....
 I would not like to be unemployed.....
 Most of my friends smoke cigarettes.....
 I make a special effort to recycle.....
 Young people should not be allowed on the streets at night.....
 There is too much violence in computer games.....
 I think politicians do a good job.....
 The death penalty should be brought back for murder.....
 Christian ministers/vicars/priests do a good job.....
 It is wrong to use ecstasy.....
 Smoking should be banned in public places.....
 I believe in hell.....
 I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world (eg Africa).....
 My area cares about its young people.....
 Vandalism is a growing problem in my area.....
 My parents allow me to do what I like in my leisure time.....
 Religion is mainly a force for bad in the world today.....
 I like the people I go to school with.....
 Unemployment is a growing problem in my area.....

Men and women are equally good at looking after children.....
 I believe there is truth in all religions.....
 I believe it is possible to contact spirits of the dead.....
 I would like to get married.....
 ASBOs should not be used on people under the age of 16.....
 My school is preparing me for life.....
 When old enough I will vote at election time.....
 I believe in ghosts.....
 I am concerned that we use too much of the earth's resources.....
 I believe in God.....
 The laws of science will never be changed.....
 I would like to do a job which helps other people.....
 It is wrong to swear or blaspheme.....
 I am concerned about the risk of nuclear war.....
 I want my children to be baptised / christened / dedicated in church.....
 It is wrong to use speed.....
 I wish I had more things to do with my leisure time.....
 There is nothing wrong with playing truant (skiving) from school.....
 I believe in heaven.....
 I am concerned about the risk of biological and chemical war.....
 There is nothing wrong in travelling without a ticket.....
 God helps me to lead a better life.....
 Violence is a growing problem in my area.....
 Schools should hold a religious assembly every day.....
 It is wrong to drink alcohol.....
 I would like to own my own home.....
 There is too much sex on the television.....
 The church seems irrelevant to life today.....
 I believe in life after death.....
 I cannot trust both science and religion.....
 A job gives you a sense of purpose.....
 My parents prefer me to stay in as much as possible.....
 I believe in Jesus as my personal saviour.....
 I am a superstitious person.....
 There is nothing I can do to help solve the world's problems.....
 There is too much violence on the Internet.....
 It is wrong to have sex under the legal age (16 years).....
 Prayer helps me a lot.....
 There is too much sex in computer games.....
 I want to get married in church.....
 I believe fortune-tellers can tell the future.....
 I wear a cross or crucifix for protection.....
 Drunks are a growing problem in my area.....
 I think immigration into Britain should be restricted.....
 Science disproves the biblical account of creation.....
 I believe in vampires.....
 There is nothing wrong in shop-lifting.....
 I say 'touch wood' when talking about bad things not happening.....
 It is wrong to use cannabis (hash / pot).....

I think it is unlucky to open an umbrella indoors.....
 I am concerned about the risk of terrorism.....
 Homosexuality is wrong.....
 There is too much sex on the Internet.....
 The police do a good job.....
 Pornography is wrong.....
 Nothing should be believed unless it can be proved scientifically.....
 I often hang about with my friends doing nothing in particular.....
 It is wrong to have sex before you are married.....
 Crime is a growing problem in my area.....
 I like the area I live in.....
 Science can give us absolute truths.....
 Life is about living for God and for others.....
 Life is about enjoying myself.....
 It is wrong to experiment on human embryos.....
 Education is about learning facts.....
 Education is about passing exams.....
 Education is about learning how to live in a right way.....
 My schooling has helped me to know how to live in a right way.....
 Education is about understanding how to think about life.....
 Education is about understanding how other people think about life.....
 Education is about being prepared for life.....
 My schooling has helped to prepare me well for
 life.....
 Different religions have different views of life and will educate in different
 ways.....
 I want my children to go to a Christian
 school.....
 God created the world as described in the
 Bible.....
 God created the Universe including living creatures out of
 nothing.....
 God formed man out of the dust of the
 earth.....
 God made woman out of man's
 rib.....
 There was once a world-wide flood as described in the
 Bible.....
 The world was once perfect but has been affected by
 sin.....
 I accept the idea that living things were made by a process of
 evolution.....
 Everything in the world was made by natural forces, it was not
 designed.....
 Science disproves the Biblical account of
 creation.....
 Scientists have discovered how the world was
 made.....

You can't be a good scientist and believe in the Bible.....
I want to try and care for the environment.....
I do not want to prosper at the expense of others.....
I want to be careful how I speak, I don't want to offend.....
I believe that God is loving.....
.....
I believe that God is kind.....
I believe that God is merciful.....
I believe that God cares about me personally.....
I believe that God is forgiving.....
I believe that God answers prayer.....
I believe that God punished people who do wrong.....
I believe that God is in control of history.....

HAVE YOU ANY HELPFUL COMMENTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE?

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

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