Some Implications of New Creation Theology for Christian School Curriculum

Submitted by

Lindsay G. Graieg
DipTeach (MLTC), BEd (ECU), MEd (CCHE)

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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South Street campus
90 South Street
Murdoch
Western Australia 6150

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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(Lindsay Graieg)
ABSTRACT

The study notes that much curriculum theory in the public domain is constrained by a materialist understanding of the person, prompting a focus on economic objectives and treating persons as human capital in a consumer culture. Examples are identified in current public curriculum in Australia. It is also noted that many purportedly Christian schools, in complying with state-prescribed minima, seem to fall short of offering an effective counter to this reductionist perspective.

An alternative perspective is hypothesised, drawing on the New Creation Theology exemplified by N. T. Wright, particularly in its approach to human personhood and human destiny, as implied in the narrative of human history moving towards the ultimate renewal of heaven and earth.
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INTRODUCTION - Asking Questions of Curriculum Purpose

Introduction

For two hundred years, Western Culture has come to aggressively promote the idea of economic ‘progress’ as a key epistemological indicator. The myth of economic progress holds such teleological power, as a vision of the future that schooling appears to have become the mechanism to shape the person whose first right, and chief end appears framed by unmitigated consumption. Consumerism seems to have become the story of this time and a reflection of all that is ‘good’ about life.

Susan White (1998) observes

If there is any overarching meta-narrative that purports to explain reality in the late twentieth century, it is surely the narrative of the free market economy. In the beginning of this narrative is the self-made, self-sufficient human being. At the end of this narrative is the big house, the big car, and the expensive clothes (p. 4)

This study will argue that contemporary educational purpose has been incrementally enlisted as a mechanism for projecting the endorsed understanding of a person, living a materialist dream of the economic ‘good’ life. It will be proposed that, through schooling, such a worldview has come to be systematically transferred to the next generation and that this has come to drive curriculum purpose. The focus of this study is about the impact of a story about the world and an idea about the person as reflected through curriculum.

From the standpoint of schooling, curriculum is understood as being based upon statements of belief or ideological positions that teachers enact in the form of learning activities on
behalf of others. The implication is for educators, that in telling of the curriculum story if the process includes an understanding that relates to identity, some degree of responsibility will be assumed.

The plan is to demonstrate that curriculum derived from a worldview stance presumably will address the fundamental questions of identity, place, purpose, solution and time. It will be argued curriculum addresses the key questions of worldview - Who are we? Where are we? What is the problem? What is the solution? And, What time is it? (Wright, 1992). Curriculum frameworks will be shown to represent an amalgamated distillation of assumptions regarding the nature of being or ontology, about a type of knowing or epistemology and relate to purpose as in teleology. It will be developed that a curriculum, as a delivery mechanism for ideas, implicitly considers first things or origins and asks what does it mean to know and how knowing is framed toward a particular end.

The purpose of this study

Some Christian schools in Australia tend to submit to the goals and objectives of the Australian Curriculum with concern but lack adequate means for critique and adjustment. This study postulates that such practice could be made more consistent with a faith stance that takes into consideration some implications of a theological perspective under the heading of New Creation as chiefly espoused by N. T. Wright.

The question framing this study is; how might the New Creation Theology of N. T. Wright enhance the goals and objectives of a Christian school curriculum?
The limits to this study

This study attempts to provide for Christians at work in Australian schooling a set of insights regarding personhood consistent with both the Australian Curriculum requirements and a rounded Christian understanding of human nature and destiny.

Chapter One begins this discussion and revisits the intent of current curriculum theory, particularly at the level of framing goals and objectives, and how relevant to their determination are philosophical assumptions concerning the nature and destiny of persons. The opening chapter investigates the effect that differing philosophical views regarding what constitutes a human person have on the subsequent iteration of a theory.

The significance of this idea is elaborated in Chapter Two through a critique of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, (MCEETYA, 2008) [hereafter referred to as The Melbourne Declaration] as denoting the person to be facilitated through the Australian Curriculum. Chapter Two asks how adequate a view of human personhood is presented by The Melbourne Declaration and presumably thereby the Australian Curriculum. As preamble to this analysis, the chapter looks first at some ideological trends in Western culture, often traced back to the 17th century Enlightenment, which have contributed to the forces that sustain tension between ideologies.

The next step is to provide a contrast to this suggested iteration through a theological understanding of the person as biblically framed under the heading of New Creation. This is the purpose in Chapter Three, which investigates a theology of New Creation as chiefly propounded by N. T. Wright and what contribution might be made through such ideas for Australian Curriculum practice in Christian schooling.
Chapter Four outlines the possible impact that existing curriculum intent has upon the practice of Christian schooling in Australia. This chapter asks if curriculum practice in some Australian Christian schools meets the promise of New Creation Theology?

The work of Chapter Five is to identify guidelines that a New Creation Theology might offer towards a more rounded implementation of curriculum goals and objectives appropriate for some Australian Christian schools.

This analysis will be a focus upon assumptions within a single document in the form of The Melbourne Declaration. This document is understood to represent the aspirations of Australian culture and forms the basis of the Australian Curriculum. As such, The Melbourne Declaration is likened to the tip of an iceberg in that it represents a focused projection of a larger worldview upon which the Australian Curriculum is based. The brief fourteen pages of The Melbourne Declaration will be read as an endorsed framework or worldview for Australian schooling. The concentrated focus upon a condensed target intends to highlight how the Australian Curriculum might frame particular values and attitudes and orient the person toward a future based in a material present.

Educators are assumed as those who are trained to effectively transfer the curriculum entrusted to them. Christian educators in Australian schools are generally perceived as trustworthy practitioners who have faith in established political and economic orders. The assumption is that compliance to legitimated authorities will flow from those who are well trained to faithfully implement a set of endorsed ideas. This thesis seeks to establish if there exists a degree of divergence and therefore possible conflict between an understanding of personhood framed in contemporary curriculum and the idea of New Creation. It is assumed that if contemporary Australian culture endorses consumerism as a way of life then this too might be reflected among curriculum goals. A theology of New Creation
might offer a way of understanding the intent of the Australian Curriculum and act as a means of supplementing any deficit with regard to identity at work in Christian schooling in Australia.

**The nature of this study**

This study takes the form of a critical cultural exegesis. According to Ezzy, (2002) such an interpretation contributes to cultural analysis by highlighting “what is missing from the text” (p. 102). Critical cultural analysis maintains that what is absent or assumed is as “important as its manifest content” (p. 102). The assumption about the world prioritised through a curriculum discourse is that it represents a selective and largely implicit framework outlining a privileged culturally formed understanding of the person. This study seeks to highlight the implications of an educational goal statement that forms the basis of a national curriculum in privileging one set of understandings of the person at the expense of others. An anticipated outcome through a theology of New Creation is to identify what might be omitted about such a person by curriculum assumptions and the impact this might have on Christian schooling in Australia.

One assumption regarding curriculum is that it reflects an implicit understanding about the human condition in relation to their culture. Vanhoozer (1998) endorses as much about the nature of written texts in that he claims they “not only display a world but communicate a way of viewing” concluding that they are mostly about “training in the ways of being human” (p. 227). Under scrutiny through this study is the crucial presupposition that *The Melbourne Declaration*, along with framing a worldview facilitates and legitimates a particular rendering of the person. Vanhoozer (2007) therefore suggests that cultural works and worlds need to be approached as if they were “text-like” because “the cultural texts we love best come to serve as the lens through which we view everything else and as the
compass that orients us toward the good life” (p. 36). The challenge, Vanhoozer, Anderson and Sleasman (2007) maintain, is for Christians in education to be actively engaged as culturally literate; as those whose abilities include “to read or interpret the world we live in through the lens of the Bible and Christian faith” (p. 11). This study takes up a particular theological insider position to provide a place from which to critically appraise the Australian Curriculum as a legitimated cultural ‘text’ that through The Melbourne Declaration facilitates a particular person.

Couldry (2000) asserts that such cultural studies are “essentially inter-disciplinary” (p. 7) hence, this study occurs at an intersection between theological insight and curriculum theory. The intent of Curriculum theory will be contrasted with a theological position to determine some implications of the Australian Curriculum for Christian schooling in Australia.

**The significance of this study**

This study takes seriously the task of education and the importance of curriculum impact in the contemporary process. The contention is that what educators do has shaping impact and therefore what they contribute about the person needs to be carefully considered. The aim of this analysis is through a theology of New Creation to provide a set of guidelines for Australian educators at work in Christian schools seeking to engage with the Australian Curriculum and what it means to be human.
CHAPTER 1 - Sourcing Curriculum Assumptions

Introduction

School curriculum is a multi-faceted process. This chapter investigates its beginnings in cultural analysis with particular focus on the effect that differing philosophical views of what constitutes a human person have on the subsequent iteration of a theory.

What is curriculum?

Within education, the traditional perception of curriculum is that it simply concerns itself with what is to be learnt. Print (1993) initially defines curriculum as “the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institutions and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented” (p. 9). This idea of a curriculum implies the existence of a body of relevant information to be transferred from those who know to those who need to know. Print (1993) maintains that this idea of curriculum as ‘subject matter’ (p. 5) is the most traditional and culturally ingrained understanding of the term. Delivery of curriculum content is often the level where teachers spend most time in planning. Consequently, educators implicitly trust the theoretical framework upon which curriculum rests as being in the best interests of the learner.

In a postmodern culture, the idea of curriculum has come to be understood as ‘currere’ or the running of a course. Each generation of learners run a planned path of instruction relevant to their stage of learning involving a prescribed body of knowledge. Print (1993) describes this idea as “a process of providing continuous personal meaning to individuals” (p. 6). At a deeper level curriculum therefore represents a meaning-making activity that delivers a framework for a particular set of understandings about the world. The track upon which learners run presupposes meaning will be made about the world and the self by the
running of a designated course. This assumes that through curriculum a particular set of meaningful worldview practices will be repetitively reinforced. This implies that the task of the faithful teacher includes the transmission of ideas about identity, the seminal question addressed by a worldview (Wright, 1992). Therefore, the most important aspect of worldview is to understand what is being reinforced regarding identity.

With regard to establishing identity, Dewey (2004) argued overall for the idea of curriculum as an *experience*. This process is referred to as Experimentalism and sometimes as Pragmatism or Instrumentalism and each understands curriculum as experiences encapsulated in the idea of ‘learning by doing’. The character of a curriculum oriented around ‘experiences’ amplifies not just growth for the learner; with the teacher acting as a facilitator, but that implicit in the process is a shaping of the person. Hill (1973) claims that curriculum as *experience*, as the ideal for education promoted by Dewey, shapes education “in and for a secular, scientific democracy” (p. 132). Such an idea presupposes curriculum to be a selective body of knowledge acting as the vehicle for specific ideologies centred on promoting a particular human identity. For Dewey curriculum becomes the experience advocating the autonomous, scientific, constructivist person. Explicit curriculum content from within such a worldview amplifies human autonomy and science as elements in the construction experience of a secular understanding of the person. The ideological impetus of such a curriculum perspective establishes in the human an authority to deliver a specifically shaped understanding of human experience.

This fundamental insight that curriculum represents a framework endorsing a particular identity can be overlooked by the complex influences that have come to act on curriculum. Hill (1994) underscores the importance of ‘boundary conditions’ both normative and empirical that drive the curriculum process. The ‘*what*’ of objectives, content, learning
environments, methods and resources, lessons, assessment and evaluation are determined by the ‘ought’ of normative ideas and the ‘is’ of empirical boundary conditions. These represent the ‘why’ of curriculum theory and include normative influences such as ethics, educational aims and particular discipline guidelines. Social expectations and psychological understandings that relate to ways of learning and developmental characteristics and institutional constraints constitute the empirical influences. Hill reminds curriculum developers of the logical necessary balance between the why and what, the is and the ought as essential to an effective curriculum process. The process of curriculum identifies the presence of a framework of meaning to be internalised, derived from a complex interplay of normative and empirical variables upon which learning is based. An understanding of the intricate ‘hidden’ influences upon the curriculum process is essential for educators as the result is usually something more than the sum of its obvious parts. Such a complicated interplay of conditions tends to obscure the primary function of curriculum in encapsulating a worldview that can be shaped to transmit a particular understanding of the person.

Kliebard (2013) in his review of the basic tenets of a scientific curriculum popular in the 1920s underscores this idea. Education, it was proposed through a scientific curriculum, “…consists in preparing to become an adult. There is probably no more crucial notion in the entire theory” (p. 70). A scientific conceptualisation of curriculum assumes that an adult results when a balance is struck between the informational what and an intentional formational why. Curriculum if presented as a science indicates premeditated shaping of information for an ideological purpose to create what is understood to be the adult. The idea of a scientific curriculum assumes the state of the world can and will be meliorated through human effort. Social Meliorism as a modernist, secular, scientific, democratic imperative enlists curriculum as the means of forming what it understands to be the adult person. Curriculum itself will always be derived from and privilege a particular worldview, which
inevitably frames an equally endorsed understanding of the person. A curriculum grounded in a scientific worldview therefore facilitates an understanding of the person that validates their identity and action in the material world.

In reflecting on the nature of curriculum, Pinar (2012) concluded it to be a ‘highly symbolic concept’ that has come to represent a ‘complicated conversation’. He states

The educational point of the public school curriculum is understanding, understanding the relations among academic knowledge, the state of society, the processes of self formation, and the character of the historical moment in which we live, in which others have lived, and in which our descendants will someday live. It is understanding that informs the ethical obligation to care for ourselves and our fellow human beings, that enables us to think and act with intelligence, sensitivity and courage in both the public sphere – as citizens aspiring to establish a democratic society - and in the private sphere, as individuals committed to other individuals.

(p. 187)

Such a conclusion is arrived at through the observation that “curriculum becomes the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world” (p. 186). This implies that the anthropological imperative has come to underpin the idea of curriculum. The key assumption in contemporary curriculum is to understand the complicated conversation about the person being currently projected. A complex technological society necessitates close attention to curriculum, as an increasingly specific person is required to be shaped by such a society. It might be concluded that there may be serious implications for Christian schooling if at the core of contemporary curriculum theory is a scientific
worldview at work rationalising, justifying and endorsing a human-centred understanding of the person. It could be concluded, for the sake of this study, that one way to understand the person is to analyse the rationale upon which the curriculum is based.

**A Review of the Australian Curriculum**

The recent review of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2014) highlights the impact of curriculum as a vehicle for such shaping purpose. The review acknowledges influences upon the development of the Australian Curriculum including utilitarianism (p. 33), contemporary issues (p.33), constructivist child centeredness (p. 118), critical theory (p. 26) and values education (p.27). The interplay of practical skills and productivity along with a vision for the future embracing personalised learning emphasising equity and social justice and enculturation are presented as positive contributing factors. However, the review concedes such an emphasis on many complex interlocking variables has resulted in an Australian Curriculum that is a compromised mechanism (p. 37). The review also acknowledges these endorsed elements impede the curriculum through concept overload but claim there is little choice in contemporary culture but to privilege the cramming of content. The Australian Curriculum represents by the writers admission to be “a utilitarian, a 21st century, a personalised learning and an equity and social justice view of the curriculum” (p. 31). It is acknowledged that for the sake of utility such an emphasis is at the expense of the moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and general well being of young Australians. Despite discussion regarding the importance of religion, belief systems and values in the Australian Curriculum, the conclusion is that the draft Civics and Citizenship document will cover such omissions fairly and justly. The concern regarding such deflection is the presupposition that within the larger claims of the document privileging a particular curriculum model comes a privileged but limited iteration of the person. The
Critical admission is that the facilitation of an adequate understanding of the person will nonetheless be validated through the utilitarian worldview of the Australian Curriculum. The idea that character can become an addendum to this process deflects attention from the thought that curriculum implicitly represents a vehicle for a privileged value-laden iteration of a person.

**Conclusion**

It is therefore concluded that curriculum theory might act as a template from which emerges a particular outline of personhood. A curriculum framework potentially acts as a shaping mechanism that prepares the person from within a specific context for a particular purpose. The assumption is this person will reflect the worldview from which the justified curriculum is derived and will by their actions endorse such a context.

Three key presuppositions appear embedded within contemporary curriculum theory. Firstly, curriculum represents an ideological vehicle for an image of a particular cultural context. Secondly, curriculum represents a worldview orientation imbued with a set of values and attitudes that reinforce a particular understanding of personhood. Finally, the person formed through a particular curriculum context will be predisposed to adopt the worldview, which is privileged and legitimated in that culture and will act accordingly.

In the next chapter an example of a curriculum framework as worldview and the possible person proposed will be examined through the educational goals and objectives for Australian schooling.
CHAPTER 2 – Critique of the Australian Curriculum

Introduction

This chapter asks how adequate a view of human personhood is presented by *The Melbourne Declaration* and thereby the Australian Curriculum. As preamble to this analysis, the chapter looks first at some ideological trends in Western culture, often traced back to the 17th century Enlightenment, which have contributed to the forces that sustain tension between ideologies.

The Enlightenment and the shape of curriculum

In order to appreciate the assumptions made about personhood within contemporary curriculum, some understanding of the history of ideas and their impact upon education theory and curriculum is necessary. Wright (1999) proposes that Enlightenment thinking is based on Epicurean Materialism and effectively represents a “rival eschatology to a Christian one” (p. 21). This understanding of Epicurean Materialism implies hedonist materiality represents a worldview orientation privileging the senses in opposition to faith. Wright (1999) maintains that through materialism comes a ‘notorious insistence’ in sustaining a dualistic worldview. The result is an institutional division between basic categories such as history and faith, facts and values, religion and politics, nature and the supernatural. This Wright (1999) claims has created a state of mind that has “great difficulty of even conceiving of a world in which they belong to one another as part of a single indivisible whole” (p.21). Wright (2013b) further contends that Epicurean philosophy amounts to a metaphysical dualism and that some form of Epicureanism is the “default mode of most modern westerners” (p. 213). Later, in a more popular example of his writing, Wright (2014) equates Epicureanism in contemporary culture to a recent slogan
used by the British Humanist Association. The billboard appearing on English buses in 2008 reassured the public with the phrase, “There’s probably no god. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life” (p. 8). Such a proposition encapsulates the postmodern worldview of the common person that reality is a one-dimensional space bounded by the senses. The legacy of the Enlightenment includes the reinforcement of the idea that all information is derived and every understanding formed exclusively from the material ontological space.

In his analysis of what he describes as the resulting ‘postmodern divide’, Borgmann (1993) also maintains that in contemporary culture the enlightened dualist vision of reality is “deeply internalized” (p. 25). He maintains the Enlightenment project has come to tell the story of the world through human “domination of nature, the primacy of method, and the sovereignty of the individual” (p.27). The pervasive way of thinking about the world has an entrenched bias towards a material understanding of reality. As such, materiality privileges human autonomy as authoritative and posits the person at the centre of discourse through method and control.

By extension, the present understanding of schooling has been shaped by a worldview whose focus is upon the person based in the concrete reality of a material world. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) confirm as much by acknowledging, “contemporary public education has been largely formed by an Enlightenment worldview” (p. 166). Through the lens of Enlightenment presuppositions, the irrational prescientific world ruled by religious superstition is positioned as historically outdated, restrictive and therefore oppressive. The connotation through labeling of historical ages includes the idea that a former prescientific age was ‘dark’ and a product of religious misconception and repression. As a reaction, Enlightenment thinking made viable an alternative worldview that might have enhanced an understanding of the world that included the possibility of God. Instead, such ideas have
been put to work as a separating wedge used to frame the world without the need for an omniscient being or an immaterial world.

The idea of free will is critical to the human condition. Without the ability to choose, humans appear no more than the robotic under the control of a greater force. The possibly well-intentioned attempt by Descartes, to prove his hope of the certainty of the self in a mechanistic universe, resulted in the self-referential maxim ‘I think therefore I am’. This appropriated and condensed aphorism has come to represent a mantra for contemporary self-realisation and a cornerstone of contemporary educational philosophy. Cress (1993) in his translation of Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy highlights the critical shift in focus such thinking had about the understanding of persons. Descartes declares

*I am; I exist-this is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking; for perhaps it could also come to pass that if I were to cease all thinking I would then utterly cease to exist. At this time I admit nothing that is not necessarily true. I am therefore precisely nothing but a thinking thing; that is, a mind, or intellect, or understanding, or reason – words of whose meanings I was previously ignorant. Yet I am a true thing and am truly existing; but what kind of thing? I have said it already: a thinking thing. (p. 28)*

Descartes, in such thought, initiated what has generally come to be understood as Substance Dualism. In essence, he sought to understand if the mind might exist ‘substantively’ apart from the body as a way of reflecting on the existence of God. Instead, over time, Substance or Cartesian Dualism has become a feature of the way persons are understood as distinct from consideration of either a supernatural being or an immaterial reality. Pearcey and Thaxton (1994) observe that *Cogito, ergo, sum* was initially a “religious affirmation” (p.
intended to endorse the existence of the human spirit in relation to God. Whereas Cartesian Dualism has become a mechanism whereby materialism is validated through ‘systematic doubt’ (Pearcey and Thaxton, 1994, p. 133) as the dominant discourse justifying the centrality of autonomous human thought and action apart from God.

Dooyeweerd (2012) charts the resulting course of classic humanism as a ‘humanisation’ of God’s sphere sovereignty through Thomas Hobbes and his system of thought now understood as Materialism. The line of mechanistic thought runs through Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu to Rousseau to make concrete in the contemporary mind the separation of science from faith. The result Dooyeweerd (2012) contends is that the “science ideal influenced political theory to create a society after science’s own image” (p. 173). Such a way of thinking becomes a ‘binding’ of the person in ‘subjection’ to the ‘absolute sovereign authority’ of the modern state constructed along the lines of a mechanistic scientific worldview.

The next logical step if the person is an autonomous construction is to understand that all meaning then comes focused not just ‘on’ but also ‘through’ the human. Nietzsche & Wayne (2004) amplified the Enlightenment search for the autonomous self in *Ecco Homo* through the character of Zarathustra. They contend further that, “all of history is indeed the experimental refutation of the proposal of a so-called ‘moral order’” (p. 92). The conclusion is that from the process of self-mastery will result the superman or ‘over-man’. Readers of *Ecco Homo* are invited to behold the results of the self-made man; the much better ‘antichrist’ who is presented as complete through having killed off any need for a good God. Willard (1998) notes that what Nietzsche made intellectually acceptable was the moving of the modern world “off its foundations in the Christian traditions of moral goodness” (p. 147). This Willard (2009) notes elsewhere eventually made acceptable that a
Christian ethic is “pushed out of the category of teachable knowledge” (p. 85). Newbigin (1986) and MacIntyre (1985) observe that such enlightened elimination of teleology as a category forecloses on discussions relating to virtue other than through a scientific worldview.

Kantian moral theory as distilled by Herman (2010) then, claims to “contain an objective end that occupies a central place: rational nature as an end in itself” and “that the end’s most important role is practical, as the anchor of the formula of humanity” (p. 96). An understanding of personhood and ethical behaviour in an Enlightenment worldview became a reflection of what could be understood through human thought or scientific rationalism. Such a thought world is now generally accepted at the level of a cultural bias, as a contextual self-justifying circularity (Wielenberg, 2005). Materialist thinking reductively locks itself into a narrow framework for understanding reality by rejecting the possibility of an ultimate being and an unseen world. The closed framework of Enlightenment ideas has come to reflect a progressivism narrative that positions, relativises and justifies the self-made moral or ‘good’ human and their thought world at the centre of discourse.

Noddings (1993) notes that education theorists generally act as if the outcome of the Enlightenment in marginalising religious thought is therefore successfully completed. The resulting Western schooling model could be understood as having developed from an increasing set of metaphysical dualist ideals about the person and their place in the world. The assumption is that the Enlightenment focus upon human reason has become a historically entrenched educational goal that now dominates contemporary curriculum.

Despite scientific certainty, doubt remains that the materialist worldview can deliver on its promise to form the fully human. Slattery (2006) argues in detail for the need to reconsider
the effect of Enlightenment thinking on contemporary curriculum and observes that since
the eighteenth century

The Enlightenment created a new educational paradigm which understood curriculum as a technological text. This paradigm was as much a proposal to advance society into enlightened thinking as it was a reaction against the authoritarian theology of the Middle Ages. Science replaced religion as the voice of authority on the mysteries of the universe. (p. 100)

The potentially valuable ideas of Descartes highlighted the importance of understanding the human as an autonomous being. Where such thinking might falter is in the claim that science and technology has the capacity to account fully for what it means to be human. The issue is that education, as a science, continues to claim the capacity to provide the means and methods of forming the fully human. Slattery (2006) recognises the inability of a scientific curriculum to deliver and argues for a re-conceptualisation of curriculum concluding

The commitment of modernity to Cartesian dualism is pervasive. However, a postmodern vision will thrive only once there is a clear understanding of the negative impact of the modern milieu on the human spirit that has been rent asunder. (p. 286)

The Enlightenment embrace of an ontology formed through evidence as neglecting the essential spiritual dimension of the person suggests the issue has not been resolved. The basic assumption underpinning what constitutes reality remains an issue in contemporary curriculum. The result, from an ontological framework privileging science and technology appears to produce the person divided. The foundational Enlightenment assumption of the
autonomous person in a purely material world as a key element within a scientific worldview may not be able to deliver on the promise.

The material context appears to have become the privileged rational source for the content of curriculum. What ‘is’ rather than what ‘could’ or ‘might’ be therefore determines the learning process. Curriculum content is therefore logically assumed to be a pragmatic process determined because of the needs of a culture grounded in a dualistic ontology. A materialistic framework appears to have become the normative justified framework from which understanding and action within that world is almost exclusively derived.

Through Enlightenment thinking, contemporary curriculum has come to reflect the world in which humans live from within a materialistic worldview. The present condition has given rise to the general understanding that the most certain learning is to be shaped by and is to reflect the material context. At the core of secular education, it might be assumed, is a curriculum derived from the material world that will reinforce an enlightened Epicurean understanding of the person. The question remains however as to how adequate a view of the human this is.

**Consumer culture as a curriculum pressure**

The current Western schooling model developed alongside the rise of industrialised society. Educational historian Hurt (1972) notes, that industrialisation "still affects the structure and practice of our educational system today" (p. 13). In his analysis of the evolution of education Hurt (1972) also observes this reactive process had developed early into what he describes as the "great struggle" (p. 224) between the established church of the day and the non-conformists. Dissenters and the church as a reflection of the established order were wrestling with the impetus of a material world seeking to dominate the spiritual. It is also noted that by 1870 societal factors such as "social stratification, job opportunities, religion,
theories of social control, demographic and family patterns, economic organisation and resources and political theory and institutions” (p. 13) came to dominate educational purpose. Since the inception of formal Western education, tangible considerations based on practical needs have come to privilege the material context as determining the curriculum process. The needs of industrial society for human capital signaled to education a set of pragmatic expectations. The validation of a curriculum through an Education Act reflecting the material needs of a society successfully marginalised other discourse by establishing the space for redefinition of the person along economic lines. Education as a reflection of societal needs centred on economic progressivism is thereby understood as having contributed to the rise of a secular system. The value of the person came early in schooling process to reflect the quality of an individual economic contribution to industrialised culture.

Hurt (1972) maintains a critical moment was the introduction of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 as driven by the need to ensure “industrial prosperity” (p. 223). The consequent complex ‘machinery’ of modern society was seen as needing rational, organised, trained human beings to extend the reach of the ideological imperative of economic prosperity. The education of the young becomes the obvious and easiest ‘resource’ to be mined to fulfill such an ideology. Economic progress then became the means of attaining a type of civilising 'salvation' through education. Hence, ideas such as ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ are invested in education as a means of making a better world and a stronger person through a commitment to economic progress. The efficacy of economic progress has come to represent a complex and integrated aspect of modern society. Therefore schooling in the relatively short time since the 1870 Education Act has been developed into a complex framework through which humans are expected to participate and be shaped for the service of the consumer society.
The current thinking continues to reflect such curriculum pressure magnified through the idea of globalisation. An economic framework on a global scale might take up a totalising view of schooling as a shaping mechanism in service to consumerism. Curtis and Lambert (2002) have consequently labeled this global age of the consumer as the ‘Century of the Self’, an age they claim, was first ‘engineered’ by Edward Bernays the propagandist and Sigmund Freud the psychoanalyst to promote the positive idea of the human as consumer to postwar America. Their construction and amplification of the consumer identity now has a global reach and predisposes the self as the entitled centre of a global consumer discourse. The particular why of this age, the zeitgeist of consumption, is now energised by billions of dollars spent annually on advertising to create a world of insatiable ‘wants’. This creates a paradox that sets the individual and their material fulfillment against the basic needs of a global population of 7.2 billion in a world of impending limits. A lifetime of training the self to consume trivialises the idea of discipline and reflection as an outmoded practice for the person. Goudzwaard (1984) contends that consumerism has become an idol of our time and such overwhelming global emphasis through advertising and education disempowers and diminishes the person. Kunstler (1996) in his trenchant critique of consumerism concludes that to understand the human as a consumer is among the most “degrading” (p. 38) ways of understanding the person.

Van Brummelen (2009) in his observation regarding the impact of globalisation on education also notes

Technological progress has enabled globalisation to occur. But it is repeatedly forcing education into a technological straitjacket. The faith commitment behind this is that the world needs efficient educational strategies. Such methods will lead to competencies for
the workplace that, in turn, will enable the world’s gross economic product to continue to grow. The economy must continue to be profitable for large corporations. Therefore education must teach the competencies needed to contribute to a prosperous and sustainable economy. This is accompanied by the mass media shaping children and adolescents into individualistic and self-centred consumers. All this has led to narrowing the meaning of education as well as how human beings are viewed. (p. 350)

This exposes an issue with curriculum in that if it is grounded in materiality is likely to instantiate a limited understanding of reality for the person centred on consumerism.

Educational curriculum then comes under pressure to privilege and reflect a compromised worldview that leans toward consumerism as a way of understanding the purpose of the person in the world. In this context, curriculum is in danger of being a flawed mechanism if used as a justification for creating more consumers.

The end of Enlightenment discourse could be said to privilege the right to self-definition, self-justification and self-rule. Such human centred thinking Paterson (2007) argues, acts as the “‘core’ of capitalist development” (p. 21). Advertisers and their annual billion dollar budgets repetitively vie with minimal ethical restraint to shape the human through branding and commodification to whatever end or story about the self ‘sells’ more product. This Taylor (1975) maintains is, at the very least, unhelpful and produces only the person as “*homo affluens*” (p. 28) or someone who perceives affluence as their normative condition. Human definition and purpose is reduced through consumerism to unreflective emotional gratification as a way of being in the world. The insistent emphasis of advertisers upon emotion posits the human as constantly malleable and therefore vulnerable at the level
of the senses. The advertising industry is generally engaged in encouraging the person to accept definition in terms of their feeling about objects. Postman (1986) observed this manipulation as a calculated shift from the quality of the product to “the character of the consumer of products” (p. 128). This acknowledges that advertising has also a focus in forming the person and as such reinforces an Epicurean worldview by reinforcing objects as the source of value. The consumer process may discourage reflective behaviour by reinforcing the importance of the external and visual over the internal and virtuous.

In short, there is a case among cultural analysts that schooling and the curriculum in contemporary society through an emphasis on a materialistic worldview have become bound to science, technology and economics. These powerful determinants represent a framework from which is derived an understanding of the world and a way of acting in it. The method and certainty of a scientific worldview it is suggested create for the western mind a safe and certain place. A scientific worldview is positioned as a dominant and privileged lens through which the world is seen and the person formed. As such, the term ‘Scientism’ fits such a view that promotes itself as the solution with material resources and human research and innovation as the hope for humanity. The curriculum process appears to follow such thinking.

Through their critique Giroux, Penna and Pinar (1981) challenge the modernist certainty that, humanity will through the education process find a way to learning enlightenment through “administrative convenience” and “scientific management” (p. 2). This suggests that the development of curriculum formalised and thereby legitimated as a reflection of material conditions projected though schooling remains incomplete. Such a view is predicated upon acceptance that a scientific and technical paradigm has become normalised. Kuhn (1967) suggested in a world dominated by the scientific paradigm comes
privileged but restricted way of knowing and being in the world. There are risks when
science as a controlling idea in a rational world is elevated to the level of religious
significance in which is invested unshakeable faith and hope. Walsh and Middleton (1984)
define this as Scientism described as the “elevation of human scientific prowess to a place
of salvific or redemptive significance” (p. 122). Scientism according to Newbigin (1986)
effectively marginalises other epistemic frameworks becoming in Western culture the “true
account of how things are” (p. 38). Information, facts and data have become the raison
d’être, the why of an age dominated by Scientism, Technicism and Economism, these
having become what Walsh & Middleton (1984) describe as the “Gods of our age” (p. 131).
By logical extension, science, technology and economics become the categories that form
the metaphysical, ontological and epistemological frameworks of the common person.
Scientific research, technological innovation and economic growth are presented as the sure
ground for the development of a society and it is assumed curriculum will reflect these
categories.

Economics in global terms emerges from, runs alongside and reinforces a scientific
worldview. Schooling then exists to create persons who contribute productively to the
machinery of producing more wealth as well as solving the problems of the world through
scientific means. What could be described as a social Darwinian hierarchy emerges where
the smartest become the most able, who achieve the best results and are rewarded with the
spoils of economic success. To be educated becomes having greater capacity to climb the
economic ladder to accumulate more products of a consumer culture. Materialism therefore
by itself has the propensity of reducing educational understandings to economic rationalist
terms; the concrete, factual and measurable determine the value of what is to be learnt in
monetary terms.
The media and politics assume the role of describing and reinforcing positively to citizens how economic growth has to be sustained through education. Consumerism has developed into a global enterprise that has absorbed education as the means of supplying human capital for the process. To take a place in a global world may by the cynical, be concluded to be reduced to being a well-trained consumer. One issue is that curriculum has come to reflect the needs and interests of a consumer culture. If the pressure from advertisers invades every aspect of a culture in reducing the person to impulsive and unreflective consumerism then schools would presumably be influenced by such values. It could be concluded that the impact upon the curriculum process if bound to a consumer culture would contribute to nurturing persons who are rewarded through reflecting a materialistic worldview.

**Curriculum as a reflection of the ‘good’ life**

At the level of the physical senses such as sight, sound, touch, taste and hearing it is generally concluded that the natural world is a place of complexity, variety and beauty. An understanding of what it means to be human includes a distinctive ability to reshape the physical world with apparent ease through countless creative acts including art, music, literature, sport and science. The use of language, actions and artefacts represent elements through which the human experience can be interpreted. Additionally, Taylor (1989) maintains that any discussion of personhood is “inextricably intertwined” (p. 3) around concepts of good and morality. This suggests that human thought, word and deed in a material world also relate to the reinforcement of a view held regarding the moral self. Any view of the self is therefore value laden. Consequently, any discussion about humanity or personhood represents a complex contested continuum about what it means to be ‘good’
and what actions flows from this. Ethics and morality, it is assumed, are implicitly reflected through a curriculum framework as a part of an understanding about the person.

Plato (1993) attributes to Socrates the essential human attribute of critical self-analysis in the idea that "the life which is unexamined is not worth living" (Apology, 36a). This presupposes that effort toward a differentiated quality of life is made worthwhile when humans can clearly make judgments, good from bad, and better from worse. Aristotle extends this insight as a virtue ethic based upon the concept of human flourishing known as 'the good life'. Character for Aristotle developed by choosing the good through habitual practice to become a person from whom all benefit. Hence the idea of a common good or an understanding of being a person of value determined by an understanding of the self for the benefit of a community. The Greek word eudaimonia as used by Aristotle, may be translated as human flourishing, derives from eu (good) and daimon (spirit) based upon the quality of the person.

Understood through a consumerist lens, the ‘good life’ considers the human as successful according to their access to commodity. However, Bauman (2008) argues that ethics cannot survive consumerism and any attempt to tie the idea of ‘good’ to commodity is therefore flawed. De Botton (2005) suggests within contemporary consumer culture anxiety is the outcome when confusion over concepts such as ‘good’ are reinforced through a world of objects. When material ‘goods’ are presented as a substitute for virtue, character or human flourishing, it is suggested that identity problems emerge. Niebuhr (1987) proposed that an emphasis upon economic success as an understanding of self-worth contributed to the decline of revolutionary Christianity. The concept of commodification in emphasising the material might create a set of conditions that weakens an ethical framework and limits the development of a ‘good’ person.
Some definitions of *good* from Old English, German or Dutch appear to be derived from the word God. Such attempted correlation between the idea of good and the character of God might reflect a historical connection to a biblical assumption (Matthew 17:19). The larger idea of omnibenevolence argued by Oord (2010) as God’s primary attribute implies perfect goodness or moral perfection might be situated outside human definition.

Contemporary secular thinking grounded in materiality works to disassociate such connections through aphorisms that emphasise being ‘good without God’ or being ‘good for goodness sake’. Hence, Grayling (2013) contends, “goodness is a matter that has to be discussed independently of theology” (p. 158). Harris (2012) also argues that science has so reshaped the moral landscape that values and attitudes should be determined in contemporary culture by scientific principles alone. Materialism in remaining faithful to scientific worldview categories has to insist on relativising any definition of good along with values and attitudes relative to context to be applied personally. What it means to be good, as a universal external ideal is therefore within materialism vigorously disconnected from an understanding of God’s character. Contemporary curriculum as a symbolic concept and as the site where humans struggle to define themselves will presumably also speak about morality and ethics as contextually derived from the material world.

Green (2008) observes contemporary disciplines such as science, sociology, anthropology, psychology and neurobiology as materially derived also maintain that what it means to be human “remains open to the possibility of reformulation” (p. 24). Hence, Carrell (1998) maintains, one key descriptor of postmodern life includes ‘fragmentation’ resulting from a smorgasbord like narrative constructed from unlimited options as the way of understanding the self made possible by a scientific worldview. Taylor (1992) contends humans are thereby “atomistic” and “a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out” (p. 112). Carrell (1998) then concludes the contemporary person is
rendered as superficial due to the shaping focus on the self in a materialistic moment or perpetual present. The suggestion is that once category descriptors connecting good with God are removed, an ethical vacuum opens and a pervasive cultural narcissism characterised by disorientation, immaturity and dissatisfaction is made possible.

It might be possible that the human at the centre of all discourse could be considered a destabilising idea with negative consequences. Wright (2008) terms the post enlightenment impetus as the “human project” (p. 82); a belief system he argues that amplifies the self even at the expense of the natural world – the only context for materialists that sustains existence. It is generally agreed that human impact upon the earth has become increasingly detrimental and humanity may be entering a time that Spratt and Sutton (2009) describe as an anthropocentric climate change impact ‘red zone’. A time that will inevitably, result in what Gilding (2011) terms an economic ‘great disruption’ resulting from human action. The end will be as Hamilton (2010) has coined, an unavoidable yet necessary ‘requiem’ for the human species. Kunstler (2006) maintains anthropocentrism is at the heart of the problems facing planet Earth. He proposes that, who we think we are has led to an insurmountable set of ‘converging catastrophes’ that includes overpopulation, environmental damage and pollution. Weisman (2007) concludes that the natural world would be better without humans based upon the destructiveness that characterises humanity and their collective treatment of the earth. The demise of the current form of human he argues would actually benefit the earth. It is the present understanding of the self and the collective action thereof that has resulted in a range of complex problems for the planet. It could be concluded a materialistic understanding of the ‘good’ consumer may have become antithetical to the sustaining life on earth.
Weisman (2007) proposes that, “the good are those who strive to restore harmony and speed nature’s regeneration” (p. 271). Hamilton (2010) also concludes that solutions can only be found by collectively “acting ethically” (p. 266). Gilding (2011) also concludes “there can be no technology fix for flawed human values; we have to change the values” (p. 254). The prospect of impending ecological crisis may call into question the framing of the ‘good’ by philosopher, advertiser or educator in the modern age. This also presupposes a change of worldview elements might be necessary if the material context acts as the only template for identity and understanding what is ‘good’.

(Wright, 2006a) observed that Steiner after a lifetime of thought concluded that humanity might need to be prepared to settle for a “gloomy humanism at the end of an inhuman century” and that “there is such a thing as evil and that human beings must take their fair share of responsibility for it” (p. 15). Borgmann (1993) likewise argues that the state of the world and the failure of modernity cry out for an ethical human who needs an understanding of stewardship subject to sustainable constraints. The contemporary curriculum assumption of character based upon a definition of good derived through materiality, if it ends in destruction of the Earth, may need a larger framework of accountability than human autonomy for understanding what is ‘good’.

The historical development of ideas from the Enlightenment endorsement of autonomy through the rise of science and technology as defining proof of reality have come to be considered as normative. Such a framework has to be self-referential when focus is on understanding the person within the bounds of the natural world. The idea of an ontology where the self is central to discourse may feed into the formation of a consumer culture with an emphasis upon amplifying the individual as a consumer. The understanding of the
person derived through substance dualism dominated by consumption may only result in a diminished understanding of the self unfit for life on a spoilt planet with limited resources.

Science and technology have attempted to reduce the uncertainty of the world through scientific management without restraint from a greater moral or ethical authority. Personhood if grounded in materiality may be easily lost between the complex interplay of scientific certainty and brand insecurity. The global condition of consumption may be a fatal trajectory upon which the Western world is set unless a different person is framed. The key in identifying the type of person promoted might begin at the level of a rationale that guides the content of learning that contributes to the formation of a particular worldview that the person is encouraged to indwell. The implication might include the idea that whoever controls the narrative owns the shape of the person. Whoever ‘owns’ the person assumes the authority to continue to control the narrative. The critical point is identifying the curriculum narrative about the world in order to disclose the particular understanding of the person facilitated. The issue for contemporary schooling might be that such a person, defined exclusively through materiality as a consumer, is then facilitated through the curriculum process.

**Contemporary Curriculum as framing the autonomous person**

Curriculum theory has become a reflection of what the dominant culture considers valuable to learn. The key to understanding the person proposed is to identify the value laden worldview assumptions within contemporary curriculum. This is also based upon the assumption that a particular context will privilege a specific way of thought and action. Contemporary curriculum is therefore a dynamic reflection of the values of attitudes promoted in the person by the culture and is embedded within the substance of learning.
Curriculum is therefore the complex interdependent interplay between the informational ‘what’ and an ideological ‘why’. It will be assumed that what a culture considers important will be transmitted through curriculum as an expression of the ideal person. The idea that the person becomes like the reality with which they are presented implies that the template from which they are taken needs to be carefully considered.

These thoughts presume a particular worldview endorsed by Australian culture will be reflected in the curriculum rationale as the foundation for the Australian Curriculum. It has been argued that a contemporary secular worldview is grounded historically in materialism. As such, it will be assumed that the worldview reflected might be grounded in dualist thinking, consumerism and secular authority established through scientific method. The outcome of this chapter is to identify the values and attitudes facilitated by the Australian curriculum presuming it legitimates a materialistic worldview based in consumerism. Therefore, an investigation into The Melbourne Declaration might reveal an understanding of the person to be valued and promoted through Australian schooling.

The Preamble to The Melbourne Declaration

The Preamble to The Melbourne Declaration lays a foundation from which it derives the two major goals for the education of young Australians. The two-page summary represents a reading of key markers as to the state of the world from a modern Australian perspective.

It is prefaced with the following overarching statement:

As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society—a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future. (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4)

The function of education within the worldview of this document primarily reflects enlightened human activity to be the central responsibility for building society. Three foundational elements defining this society include the ideas of democracy, equity and justice that in turn require the three conditions of prosperity, cohesiveness and cultural diversity. Democracy here implies a political condition, and assumes that the voice of the individual matters and that collective action has meaning. This contributes to the idea that the means and methods of human discourse are sufficient to a vision of society. One key outcome of Enlightenment thinking established is the assumption of human autonomy. The value of human thought appears to be a foundational prerogative privileged in the formation of the Australian Curriculum through The Melbourne Declaration.

A favourable emphasis upon democracy implies ongoing reassurance of economic and social stability in which humans participate consensually. Concepts such as democracy, equity, and justice represent the mythic potential of Australian culture. This egalitarian ideal is upheld politically as a generalised stereotypical reassurance for public consumption.
The uses of such terms are of an idealised condition, which are expected will be sustained through an educational process. Such values promote a worldview that attempts to project a satisfying image of a society made possible through a proposed curriculum.

Equally mythological are the conditions of prosperity, cohesion, and cultural diversity as idealised states to which citizens are encouraged to aspire. The epistemological function might serve as a rhetorical cliché that condescends and pacifies a populace. Readers of this document are positioned to accept as sufficient constituent elements, like a packet mix for an instant cake, a limited set of descriptors for the well-being of a nation. These represent the ‘endorsed’ ingredients of a realised present and a romanticised future within Australian culture. A democratic, equitable and just society therefore becomes the hopeful projection onto the purpose of schooling that will be enacted through curriculum. Prosperity, cohesion and cultural diversity are thereby identified and sanctioned as evidence worth the educational effort. Education in Australia’s future as conceived within *The Melbourne Declaration*, is endorsed as having the ability of “building” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) a person who is reassured materially, comfortable in, and satisfied by the way things are, the ‘status quo’. It is suggested that such an overarching educational goal is limited by a restricted set of characteristics that endorse human autonomy. As a reductive narrative, *The Melbourne Declaration* begins by projecting a curriculum vision of future material prosperity as sufficient to human cohesion, meaning and significance and diversity.

In a seemingly politically correct gesture, Australian Aboriginal culture is included in a final phrase, “…and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The idea that Aboriginal history and cultural stories are to be of value to all Australians, implied through inclusion in this first key statement, infuses cultural identity with a religious force that may inadvertently create
exclusion rather than contribute to a racially cohesive nation. Continued emphasis upon cultural factors as determining identity may contribute to facilitating a sense of competing groups seeking entitlement and self-worth in terms of race. Emphasising culture and race as aspects of personhood while valuable might lapse into reinforcing surface differences that run counter to democracy, cohesion and prosperity. Human centred discourse operating within a materialistic framework would appear limited to the amplification of descriptors such as race and culture. Volf (1996) maintains the solution to countering conflicting claims that create such exclusion is in “cultivating the proper relation between distance from the culture and belonging in it” (p. 37). The emphasis of external qualities such as skin colour and culture may potentially exacerbate rather than ameliorate a satisfying account of human identity. Agreement with such as an introduction to the purpose of education also presupposes a worldview grounded in human thought and action and reinforces identity through a materialist lens.

The idea of ‘indigenous culture’ may unhelpfully amplify the importance of prior claims such as ownership of a physical context, in this case ‘the land’. This establishes a powerful filter through which people understand the person in relation to the earth and ownership that can be difficult to address. The presumption is that the plot of earth belongs to those who are the original occupiers. This could also reflect enlightenment thought of the human as central to discourse in control of particular pieces of earth. Such sanctifying concepts may seek to strengthen the legitimacy of the document but may restrict dialogue beyond human centred discourse. To be both indigenous and have a particular culture are valuable elements to identity. The Melbourne Declaration begins with an idea of the person emerging from contextual forces such as culture, and by implication race. These are presented as necessary elements to establishing identity for the person. An assumption about human diversity should be welcomed but may place considerable conceptual load
upon defining the self through a layer of epidermis and a prior claim to place. A material construct may have little option but to elevate physical elements associated with identity although if amplified through curriculum may create complex barriers to implementation and resolution.

Such initial descriptors appear to endorse an anthropocentric construal of reality as the grounds for constructing a narrative pointing to the importance of education in terms of an economic future. Articulating education as central to society and placing within that an expectation upon the young to be the “centre” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7) paints a picture of a future vested in individuals realising ‘fulfilling’ lives through education. The document presupposes a central element to the realisation of personhood is through a set of limited characteristics, including ‘youth’, as sufficient to constituting a satisfying life. At the core of The Melbourne Declaration through the Preamble is the concentrated idea of the centrality of human identity and process. The justification of such a person will presumably be reflected in the Australian curriculum.

**The shape of the Australian Curriculum**

The shaping of the Australian curriculum is outlined through a set of key indicators. These are described as “major changes in the world that are placing new demands on Australian education” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The ‘new demands’ listed by The Melbourne Declaration are echoed in The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2009) in the section titled, “Building Australia’s future”. The “major changes” of The Melbourne Declaration are rebadged as the “[C]hanged context” of The Shape of the Australian Curriculum. The “new demands” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) and the “changed context” (ACARA, 2009, p. 5) remain through all versions to presumably reinforce the formational motivation of the Australian Curriculum.
Examples of these new demands for shaping curriculum include the ideas of global integration, mobility, internationalism, technology, environmentalism, and the importance of science and economics. The five cluster features of the contemporary world constitute the new demands acting as markers for the development of The Australian Curriculum. These demands, it is claimed, have “increased rapidly” and present “new and exciting” “opportunities” that are “emerging” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) to frame the future. These ideas may positively incline the person towards a set of pre-determined values and attitudes for the next generation of young Australians. The Melbourne Declaration in reflecting current global goals for education in terms of future prosperity could be an example of what Slattery (2008) considers an example of the “global standardization in curriculum” (p. 286). On offer is a hopeful scenario, described by Wright (2008) as an example of “liberal modernist optimism” (p. 83). Essential to the proposal is a prosperous vision for Australia through effective exploitation of economic resources and established systems, especially as facilitated by science and technology. Great emphasis is invested in the younger generation as the hope of the future and the means to link the vision to schooling. In his critique of overarching cultural stories, Bauckham (2003) observes that androcentric tendencies in such narratives are assumed as normative and represent the modern metanarrative “primarily about human achievement” (p. 48). The idea of human mastery is pervasive and presented as sufficient to the ‘new demands’ within the narrative of The Melbourne Declaration.

The introductory section of the Preamble concludes by emphasising that the ‘future’ and ‘new’ represent key justification of the forthcoming Australian Curriculum. The presupposition is that the person proposed by The Melbourne Declaration will be sufficient to the task of meeting the demands of the future.
The educational goals for young Australians

The new demands within the Preamble create the premise for the two major goals for Australian Education. These are: “Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence and, Goal 2: All young Australians become: – successful learners – confident and creative individuals – active and informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7). These goals are expanded upon as affirming and promoting “equity and excellence” along with the outcome that learners will be “successful”, “confident and creative individuals” and who are restated as “active and informed citizens” (pp. 8, 9). These goals, the Declaration maintains, “must” (p.7) be achieved through the “provision”, “ensuring”, “promoting”, and “encouraging” (pp. 7 -14) of a range of conditions. These conditions are to reflect the best of humanitarian goals within schools that are to be, free of discrimination, where cultural identity is valued, socio-economic factors are eliminated or diminished, diversity is respected and education is seen as valuable and excellence within it honoured.

This first conditional goal within The Melbourne Declaration creates an idealised space for the more practical second goal. The assumption includes that from a favourable material context will emerge successful learners, confident and creative individuals who are active and informed citizens. They will be, it is proposed, those who take responsibility for learning and who are able to “think deeply and logically” and “evaluate evidence in a disciplined way” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8). They will also be “creative, innovative, resourceful” (p. 8) and motivated problem solvers who can plan independently and collaboratively in making sense of “their world” (p. 8). As “confident and creative individuals” they will have a sense of “self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity” they will be “optimistic, enterprising, honest, resilient” and show “empathy” and maintaining “healthy and satisfying lives” (p. 8). As active and informed citizens they will
“act with moral and ethical integrity” and be “committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice” and working for the utilitarian “common good” as “responsible” (p. 9) global and local citizens.

The assumption is that context and conditions predicate a state of excellence and equity results in a person demonstrating qualities of the highest character. The assumption is reinforced that a fully flourishing human is possible through humanitarian idealism and will emerge from a material context provided a set of favourable conditions are established.

The Preamble (MCEETYA, 2008) includes specific qualities of such a person, the young Australian, to result Australian schooling. It states that:

As well as knowledge and skills, a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others. (p. 5)

The provision of a “high quality of life” and “ongoing economic prosperity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) are predicated towards specific but limited values and attitudes from the education offered through the National Curriculum. The Preamble concludes, “[I]mproving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives” (p. 7).

A material high quality of life denotes fulfillment in Australian culture yet the conditional caution is that this promise is dependent, in 21st Century Australia, upon “the ability to compete in the global economy” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The qualifying dependence on competitive ability generates the uncertainty and urgency of contest, a key implicit element
of the educational worldview of *The Melbourne Declaration*. A high quality of material life appears to be the impetus offered by such a view of education. The curriculum proposes the promise of prosperity as the vehicle for the delivery of the democratic, resilient, honest and respectful person.

In *The Melbourne Declaration*, a high quality of life or ‘the good life’ is presented, as being successful in the high stakes game of competitive economic progress. In his discussion of the moral significance of material culture, Borgmann (2003) describes such a reinforcement of the ‘good life’ though materialism as a “bland and insubstantial notion of self realization” (p. 27). The implication is that the goals of the Australian Curriculum in endorsing economic ascendancy, as the privileged and pervasive way of being in the world may not have the capacity to produce the person demonstrating the qualities suggested.

The phrases ‘economic prosperity’ and consequent ‘social cohesion’ appear connected within this document. The Australian Curriculum appears to infer that the development and cohesion of the person is chained to consumerism. There appears a token inclusion of another source through the clause, “Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). However, materialistic hope may well produce irreconcilable tension with the goal of creating a person who is democratic, equitable and just and who lives a life that reflects honesty, respect and resilience. The yoking of socially acceptable behaviour and a perceived right to a high standard of living may inadvertently create a sense of unjustified entitlement. The person facilitated by an emphasis on individual fulfillment through economic prosperity may inevitably produce the self-centred. A binding of social cohesion to economic progress may also reinforce a fragile toxic dependency on maintaining a particularly hedonistic way of life. In proposing
that, through education, ‘success’ is to be tied predominantly to a materialistic worldview, the risk may be of producing people who are fragile in their self and superficial in their understanding. They may lack any resilience to live apart from a material life of high quality and superficial in that their horizon is fixed inside a consumer culture.

The goals described emerge from a material context pronounced as in a state of constant flux. Overall, an emphasis upon economic progress appears to be the justification and impetus for an Australian Curriculum. Essentially The Melbourne Declaration promotes the idea that the ‘educated’ person understands fulfillment through the lens of the economic cycle that perpetuates and justifies itself through exploitation of the material world.

**The human assumed by The Melbourne Declaration**

The perspective promoted for the person in The Melbourne Declaration is optimistic and technocratic. Educational goals in the form of policy or as official state documents, it has been suggested, are weighty condensed narratives of the world. Their focus is on elements that position the person as comfortable with the idea that consensus as an element of a democratic process represents what is correct. In this context, The Melbourne Declaration lends itself to analysis as a worldview statement addressing questions about fundamental identity derived from the immediate material context. It defines the person through reference to the physical environment and geographical context, and the economic, social, cultural and surrounding historical variables. Such emphasis, and the choice of the elements considered key to it, cannot be value-neutral. These represent what Prunty (1985) identifies as a “legitimated” and authoritative “image of society” (p. 136) accepted as a normative projection of reality. These assumptions mean that education acts, as what Perelman (1980) describes as the “social glue” (p. 396). These elements are presented as those that bind together a culture and create a shared vision. Hill (1997) concludes the
danger in such a condition has the capacity to become a form of “social control” (p. 200) that reduces the person to a commodity. Hill (1997) also recognised early that economic rationalism could easily become a prostitution of educational purposes. He confirms the idea that consumerism places pressure upon curriculum by diminishing schooling to a process that manufactures consumers.

Quiggin (1999) maintains this diminishes learners to being understood as simply human capital “instrumentality” (p. 2). The Melbourne Declaration reflects such thoughts through a restrictive set of external expectations. These expectations essentially represent a definition of the endorsed person for a ‘human capital’ framework. Such powerful materialistic assumptions shaping curriculum, despite consensus, may risk delivering a truncated understanding of human potential and of the person.

**The new demands defining the person**

Presenting a series of descriptors as ‘new’ legitimates further the proposed educational change and possibly positions an Australian populace for uncritical adoption of the ensuing curriculum. The elements of global integration, mobility, internationalism, technology, environmentalism, and science and economics are a dense summation of the global conditions from 2008 just before the Global Financial Crisis or GFC. An assumption is that the state of rapid change is an imperative requiring bold innovation and about which critical reflection appears unnecessary. The ‘new demands’ urgently validate the Declaration, implying endorsement of the proposed curriculum, and facilitate acceptance of the subject specific syllabus documents being introduced into Australian schools. Most importantly for the sake of this study, is the idea of personhood proposed by these new demands within such a contemporary educational framework. These elements are positioned to be of such importance that education and the individual are subject to and shaped by them. The
assumption of the ‘new demands’ is that the material context acts as primary determinant of personhood. The selective narrative elements that comprise the new demands validate the Australia Curriculum as a legitimate discourse may endorse an abbreviated understanding of the person. For a more defined understanding of the person framed through this set of new demands, each warrants further examination.

**Global integration and mobility**

Global integration and by extension the idea of being a global citizen are assumed to be positives, as are the ideas of mobility and internationalism. *The Melbourne Declaration* in sanctioning the considerations of global integration and mobility as aspects shaping the Australian Curriculum may altruistically produce a sense of global proportion in young Australians. One constructive aspect of the idea of global citizenry might be that individuals develop a better sense of their relative finitude or proportional significance on the small planet that is Earth. However, the implication appears to be that within an integrated global economy due to international mobility the possibility of “exciting opportunities” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) will be within the reach of the educated.

To be globally mobile is an assumption of our age and one tied in Australian culture as an outcome of education reflected in the curriculum. In his search to understand the human propensity to be on the move Urry (2007) contends that one fundamental assumption is that to be human is to be ‘mobile’ and that this is a “mobile world” (p. 12). Dennis and Urry (2009) in their study on the impact of rapid global mobility in terms of the automobile have described this age as the, “century of the car” (p. 27). According to Paterson, (2007) the rights and privileges of a mobile life have become “a ruling principle of contemporary life” (p. 5). *The Melbourne Declaration* appears to validate an assumption that for young
Australians one reward of education will be future employment along with unlimited mobility on an international scale.

This suggests that long-term commitment to place and connection to community may be sacrificed by the educational endorsement of global integration and mobility. Bouma-Prediger and Walsh (2008) claim that in the global lifestyle, “economic profit is the paramount goal” (p. 180). They caution however that the cost of such is that “we can expect the sacrifice of place”. They maintain such a view produces a person whom they negatively describe as “homo autonomous” or the “mobile self” (p. 256).

The Melbourne Declaration also enlists the possibility of global citizenry as a means to promote the “need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The idea of the global village, attributed to Marshall McLuhan and James Joyce (McLuhan, 1996) is generally considered a positive image in regular use as describing the impact of the Internet. However even global citizenry as mediated solely by the Internet has also been challenged as being ‘fragmentary’ and ‘divisive’ (Van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson, 2005). In fulfilling the ‘new demand’ of global mobility the effect may actually absorb and diffuse remaining distinctions between social, cultural and religious groups. Urry and Larson (2011) factor into this issue the idea that even the ‘tourist gaze’ amounts to a destructive ‘consuming’ of places.

Through such liberal emphasis upon unlimited mobility, the Melbourne Declaration may inadvertently privilege a consumerist attitude towards continued unreflective exploitation of natural resources. Alvord (2000), Paterson (2007) and Urry (2013) highlight the destructive connection between fossil fuel mobility and loss of global habitat biodiversity. Such concerns suggest the ongoing proliferation and diversity of animal life may be secondary to a person subject to the ‘new’ demands. The question of global ethical
accountability may be better framed through a renewed emphasis on the person establishing their identity in the *local and communal*. The emphasis on *plurality and movement* may actually negatively affect cultural identity and environmental health. Personhood may require a measure of place within the whole and perhaps this is not possible if the assumption is that being human means to stand *above and outside* rather than *within and connected* to the simple, small and local. There may be a lack of global responsibility in promoting through curriculum the idea of global integration and international mobility.

Within the assumption of being a global citizen, integrated and mobile, may also be suggested a marginalisation of ethics. The larger pragmatic good of creating a mobile and integrated global culture relegates the history of human cultural and spiritual expression to a secondary position. The observed need is for, “an appreciation of and respect for cultural and religious diversity” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5), yet the very act of creating a global economy made up of highly ‘mobile consumers’ (Urry, 2013) may hasten the demise of local cultural manifestations and diversity. Just as there is a struggle to save the languages of the world (Crystal, 2006) that are impacted by English as a totalising language, so (Michaels, 2011) claims it is a monoculture centred on consumerism that results from the spread of globalisation. The propensity to view both culture and religion as personal and subjective, reinforced by such relativistic relegation, contributes to subjecting all else to the idea of a global mobile consuming citizenry. The costs to the environment in terms of noise, air, and water pollution result from a human obsession with consumption including mobility are well documented (Leonard & Conrad, 2010). Statistics such as 3500 human deaths per day that result of global car accidents and up to a million animal deaths per day (Alvord, 2000) are discreetly overlooked as having any association with human mobility. The result of global integration and mobility might be a hastening of the loss of
biodiversity, along with cultural distinctiveness and the human cost in 1.2 million lives per year due to car accidents alone.

Globalisation represents an idea made possible in an age of technological innovation in terms of transportation and communication, none of which is possible were it not for an age of cheap fossil fuels. Without a cheap energy source, the promise of global integration and mobility that generates externalised incentives, such as the possibility of a high quality of life, would remain a hollow promise. Gilding (2011) maintains that planet earth is approaching unviability yet the expectation of the uncritical mobile consumerist is facilitated as a curriculum outcome for young Australians. Urry (2007) contends that as such the nature of our mobile expectations have become ‘omnivorous’, something which might suggest caution rather than endorsement. The expectation of global mobility as a curriculum outcome could be a misguided promise that contributes more to a narcissistic privileging of the material mobile consumer than a cohesive culture.

**Asian literacy**

The Declaration’s second new demand is that of becoming Asian literate. This demand is to be met “by building strong relationships with Asia” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). Urry (2013) has described China as “the workshop of the world” consuming “20 per cent of global energy” (p. 119). The assumption from the word ‘influence’ used in conjunction with Asia is that Australia will be the supplier of natural resources to the world’s workshop. The idea that Asian “nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) predicates ‘growth’ or economic influence as a primary determinant of another nation’s value in an Australian educational future. The process possibly denotes support of a global economic system outsourcing production through cheap labour offshore.
Australia’s heritage, historically brief, has stemmed largely from a Eurocentric worldview. *The Melbourne Declaration* encourages an enlargement of cultural understanding to embrace nearer and increasingly more economically influential Asian neighbours. Asian Literacy is one of the three Cross Curriculum Priorities elaborated in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011, p. 14). The Australian Curriculum permits the use of a range of texts past and present but the stress is upon the perceived ‘influence’ of economic partnerships among the selection criterion that implies the economic imperative is to be positively facilitated through cultural expressions including literature.

Asia, until after the end of the Second World War, was for the post war Australian generation the alien ‘other’. The threat from ‘Asian hordes’ had been the political motif used to bolster Western Alliances. The historically diminished view of Asia, reinforced through aggression and earlier political decisions such as the White Australia policy, was in need of change. With the rise of the free market came globalism and mobility. These have both been made possible through a range of cheap energy sources. A surge in scientific and technological development has also resulted from the confluence of a global economic environment with undervalued fossil fuel and low paid workers. Asia has become the centre of cheap labour – a condition Klein (2001) contends is dehumanising and unjust, yet means for Australians cheaper manufactured goods (further reinforcing the commodification of all things). For the people of Mainland China globalisation has lead to the rapid development of a consumer class yet has resulted in significant pollution. Asian literacy has many positive effects in ‘refashioning’ a definition of Asia for Australians (Salter, 2009) but to do so for economic reasons, as an assumption for curriculum may replace one set of prejudices and problems with another.
The argument that Australians should be Asian literate has merit as culture has value as an expression of creativity, diversity and identity. Berg (2010) in his critique of the Australian Curriculum challenges postcolonial influences as undermining the benefits of Western Civilisation. To emphasise Asian literacy, might assume a de-emphasis of Europe heritage, a shift in economic or regional focus implying identity is relative to economic relationships and that learning is prescribed by context. An economic focus upon Asia potentially highlights the relativised nature of values through the materialist construct of the Australian Curriculum. In any culture whose definition privileges consumersim, it is difficult to avoid presenting cultural relationships, as other than conditional, temporary and fragile when based on economic advantage.

**Technological change**

As an echo of the earlier demand of global integration and mobility the third major change “placing greater demands” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) on curriculum is the idea of globalisation paired with technological change. The solution for such pressure is in skilled jobs, university and vocational education and training. For early school leavers who fall outside these categories the warning is that they will fare worse and minimise opportunities for healthy, productive, and rewarding futures. Technology as a change agent is paired with science in contemporary culture to become the twin pillars of assurance and motivation towards a brighter economically satisfied future. Technological development results from scientific investigation and innovation, an association that is taken for granted. Science and technology rest unobtrusively upon the exploitation of energy sources without which the concept of globalisation or the modern condition would be inconceivable. The assumption is that the concrete rewards of successful participation in the curriculum process will be the reward of faraway places and shiny technological byproducts. The idea
of a ‘greater demand’ tends to act as a justification and encouragement for the educated person to perceive being temporary and migratory as a positive goal. The appeal becomes the exciting “nature of jobs” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) and the maximising of “opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures” (p. 4) that link education to a wide world of employment possibilities on a global scale made possible by technology. Here is possible encouragement to readily abandon the primitive ‘local’ for the exciting ‘elsewhere’. This, Bouma-Prediger and Walsh (2008) also argue, creates a culture of “displacement economics” (p. 176) that potentially disconnects people and fractures communities. The promise of a globetrotting lifestyle facilitated by technological gadgetry is presented as a positive educational outcome to be reflected as of value through curriculum. However, the technologically equipped person always on the move may be reduced to virtual connections, a potentially nowhere, never ‘present’ person, yet one which the Melbourne Declaration and, by extension, the Australian Curriculum, suggests has the essential components to a narrative of meaning and significance.

**Environmentalism and Scientific progress**

The fourth of the new demands may present a serious challenge to the realisation of the previous three. Here The Melbourne Declaration acknowledges that globalisation, mobility, and technological advancement also produce negative consequences. The Declaration on one hand generates the hopeful scenario of prosperity while cautiously implying that the environment is at risk through such activities. Anthropocentric impact is presented as having created complex environmental pressures including global warming, resource depletion and pollution. True to the worldview of The Melbourne Declaration, such problems will be solved by the application of “scientific concepts and principles” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). Such is the established faith commitment to the salvific potential
of science and technology that through such assurances human responsibility may be minimised and a sense of accountability marginalised. The remaining difficulty resides in resolving the apparently mutually exclusive ideological positions promoting economic prosperity alongside sustainability. Shearman and Smith (2007) observe:

Secularism arose as a product of industrial capitalism and the rise of Enlightenment scientific rationality . . . Just as the state separated itself from religion, so must the modern state separate itself from the new religion of corporatism, for the functioning of corporatism is an anathema to truly sustainable development. (p. 157)

Despite such a warning, the goals of growth and a promise that the environment will be saved by science become the paradoxical message of The Melbourne Declaration to young Australians. According to Perelman, (1980) environmental sustainability almost requires the elimination of the idea of economic growth (p. 398). While Bartlett (2010) maintains the promotion of the idea ‘sustainable growth’ is an “oxymoron” (p. 2) with neither action effectively possible in relation to the other. Their proximate use suggests unavoidable lip service to both sustainability and political mollification through continued economic growth as a smoke screen to effective action. The ‘business as usual’ model presented by The Melbourne Declaration with regard to the “complex environmental pressures” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5) could be accused of being an example of political “green-marketing”. Such an idea is derided by Spratt and Sutton (2008) as a “double edge fraud” where the person is encouraged to “consume even more and save the planet” (p. 179). The emphasis upon averting the consequences of the impact upon the environment through more scientific and technological development may inevitably be self-defeating. The problem in the equation that promotes consumerism resulting in earth as a critically
damaged environment is the person. To claim that the scientific means as precipitating environmental problems will provide technological solutions may represent the means to bypass challenging the person and their worldview.

*The Melbourne Declaration* may facilitate a suspension of reality by deflecting that the human condition represents the cause of the environmental problems of the world. A doctrine of economic growth emerging from Post Enlightenment certainty in human achievement appears to produce willing participants in legitimated self-destruction of the natural environment. Shearman and Smith (2007), in discussing the energy required to drive modern society underlines what appears to be human incapacity by observing “If we are honest we must conclude that the inertia of liberal democracies will ensure that the problem of oil depletion is not solved before it is too late” (p. 123). The assumption of economic growth as an educational aspiration might facilitate a form of denial similar to ‘cognitive dissonance’ (Festinger, 1962). Promoting the idea of economic growth alongside an understanding of the person as someone who lives within particular material boundaries remains a challenge for the Australian Curriculum.

In his critique of current economic practice that he claims is addicted to growth, Heinberg (2011) describes the promotion of the idea of ‘sustainable growth’ as both paradox and “absurdity” (p. 40). Achbar, Abbot and Bakan (2004) have argued in their documentary *The Corporation* that the recognition of a business as a legal but unaccountable 'person' eventually results in a pathological irresponsibility that is taken up by individuals in the wider community. The dehumanising concept of economic ‘externality’ whereby the negative consequences by corporations, such as pollution, are abrogated Achbar, Abbot and Bakan (2004) claim will eventually be reflected in human activity. The idea that a corporation can be considered a legal human opens the possibility of psychopathic
tendencies and a refusal to take responsibility for its actions are normalised. Such corporate externality inculcates unethical stewardship practices to the point where Wright (2013) claims the earth is treated as either a “goldmine” to be pillaged, or as a “rubbish dump” for the mountains of resulting waste (p. 9). The material benefits that result from the clinical certainty of a technical and economic worldview appear to persist even though they cost the earth in terms of resource depletion and pollution. Heinberg (2010) also maintains that the growth fetish has resulted in a “homo economicus” (p. 41). He maintains this economically oriented person is entering a time when the idea of economic growth as the measure of purpose is ending. He contends that ideas including ‘community’ and ‘resilience’ (p. 270) need to be among the defining categories of the next generation, denoting that a different way of being human other than as a consumer is required. The Melbourne Declaration appears to persist in endorsing the paradox of growth alongside sustainability from which it might be that the externalising consuming human is encouraged to emerge. This internal contradiction may actually require living in a future with less rather than more. Austerity is a word absent from The Melbourne Declaration as is any direct call for the human to change the view of the self in relation to the idea of economic growth. Despite this highlighted paradox, the central theme of The Melbourne Declaration persists with the assumption that fulfillment for the individual is to come predominantly through economic progress.

The promise of economic enrichment through education is a powerful motivation for students. Down (1994), suggests kindly that the promotion of consumerism through Human Capital Theory will turn out to be “ill-informed” (p. 57). The pressure created by framing curriculum through unmitigated consumption of natural resources will eventually come up against natural limits. These limits imply that externalising responsibility and persisting with scientific concepts as the solution to the state of the environment are misplaced. The
curriculum assumption in amplifying ongoing faith in science and technology as a solution has the potential to downplay accountability and the need for the human to review their behaviour.

**Information and Communication technologies**

The final new demand or ‘changed context’ dot point relates to the rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT). This change is one that schools have embraced with varying degrees of success and the stated challenge is to “increase their effectiveness significantly” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). This element is also dependent on, and interconnected with, ideas such as global reach and mobilities facilitated by the technologies that flow from scientific innovation. There is little doubt that like all tools the Internet and the information therein have merit. The personal computer and the Internet have made possible access to information on a scale that makes it unlikely that any person would be able to assimilate all but a portion in a lifetime.

One appeal of information technologies such as the Internet and the related devices used is the learner’s fascination of both the device and the content. Such informational motivations are seen as worth harnessing by educators and are framed by The Melbourne Declaration as essential skills that young people “need” in a “digital age” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5).

However, Schultze (2002) argues that such a person is, “succumbing to informationism: a non-discerning, vacuous faith in the collection and dissemination of information as a route to social progress and personal happiness”. He continues his critique of information by observing that it, “preaches the, is over the ought, observation over intimacy, and measurement over meaning” (p. 26). Carr (2010) also develops the idea that the Internet as a medium “promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking and superficial
learning” (p. 116) and that the price humanity will pay is “alienation” (p. 211) as these tools reshape minds.

Such warnings imply that unless otherwise prepared the person may be diminished by such technologies. There remains a need to cautiously consider uncritical promotion of information and communication technologies as essential to curriculum. For Borgmann (2003) the challenge, apart from the information, is the device itself that he believes is “at the heart of the crisis of contemporary culture” (p. 123). His call is to understand and renew the human apart from the ‘device paradigm’ of technology. Borgmann also notes, “as Thomas Kuhn observed, people will not let go of a ruling paradigm unless or until a viable counter paradigm is on the horizon” (p. 123). Given the ‘addictive’ power of the device it is possible that only energy scarcity will resolve such fixation. These critical voices suggest that current issues associated with information and communication technologies are not being effectively met. The impetus of The Melbourne Declaration assumes a faith in these technologies presuming any contribution by them is a positive contribution to the formation of the person through material means.

With little dissent outside academic circles, the ideological dominance of the Information Society (Lyon, 1988) has become a normative assumption. Rozak (1994) predicted early that information within a rationalist framework would develop cultic proportions. The tsunami of information as a marker to knowing, has in this age, re-defined learning around the gathering of facts. Too much information may leave few intellectual spaces for reflection or synthesis of ideas. The reality of information overload may preclude the ability to make any meta-cognitive sense of the world. Information and communication technologies competency is the part with which student have little difficulty whereas time and space to reflect and process appear to be the scarce commodity.
In what seems like another age, Harold Benjamin (1971) presumed the learner to be a thinking being within a changing context who adapts slowly and perhaps unwillingly. The adopting of new ideas is often presented as inhibited by the forces of tradition such as an ill-fitting industrial revolution model for education in an information age. Information within contemporary education has been privileged to take precedence over the less glamorous and time-consuming formation of the person. In broad educational terms an emphasis upon formation of the person other than through ‘information’ according to Laird, et al. (1998) has come to represent fundamental narrative “contestation” (p. 147). An Information Society presumed the informed person represents the enlightenment ideal. *The Melbourne Declaration* promotes information as an essential educational process and product. The material *what* of information transcends questions that ask a meaningful *why*. The contested ground becomes the implementation of an informational ideological agenda that drives what is considered worth learning. The privileged core of human achievement through information reinforces an epistemology of facts. A curriculum framework grounded in informationism again privileges a material view of the world and presumes as somehow complete the person as a container when filled with facts and data.

A curriculum assumption promoted by *The Melbourne Declaration* includes that information represents a privileged knowing outplaying the validity of the person formed by other ways.

**The overall insufficiency of new demands in framing the person**

The core values implicit in the preamble of *The Melbourne Declaration* imply an endorsement of the world to be ‘read’ through the lens of a Post Enlightenment worldview. The state of world becomes the starting point for the document that attempts to deal in a
reasonable but idealised way with limited evidence from within a materialistic construct to frame an Australian identity.

A key assumption is that from a democratic state flows a natural expression of law that will be equitable and just within such a framework. The story or narrative encapsulated in this section of *The Melbourne Declaration* delivers some key change ideas present in culture that, due to space, are treated briefly and are understandably superficial and rhetorical. As such, *The Melbourne Declaration* does not have the capacity to deal in anything but a cursory manner with many unresolved complex issues. Populist ideas, difficult to address, such as Globalisation, Mobility, Technology and Science are presented as the privileged categories through which an Australian Curriculum is to be framed. These Urry (2013) claims represent the types of mainstream clichés that constrain education within an epistemology framing the future in terms of neoliberal market exchanges. Urry also highlights in a materialist construct, such a way of knowing inevitably comes to represent the “source of value and virtue” (p. 24). True to a scientific worldview, the defining factors of an Australian Curriculum are sourced from the material world to establish identity, worldview and the values and virtues of community.

*The Melbourne Declaration*, shaped by a scientific worldview, might be said to project the idea of education as a future-proofing utopian solution. Young Australians are encouraged to accept, as an epistemic framework, a set of forces defined almost exclusively by current political, social, economic, scientific, and technological parameters as the means to establish their identity and worldview. Hart (2009) describes such epistemological reliance on materialism as “metaphysical prejudice”. He likens the person holding a materialist vision of the world as a “kind ofchildishly complacent fundamentalist” (p. 103). In essence, *The Melbourne Declaration* as a curriculum framework endorses an almost
confident faith in a largely material worldview that privileges a glowing rendering of the person through a limited set of ephemeral ideas.

The assumptions that form the basis of the Australian Curriculum more importantly frame material context as sufficient for the development of a flourishing person. There is an assumption that human nature is altruistically responsive and will collectively adopt such a representation of the self. The Melbourne Declaration demonstrates considerable faith in humanity and their ability to solve the problems of the world through the curriculum process grounded in a scientific worldview.

**Excursus – Energy and Population: two elephants in the room**

Ryerson (2010) describes population growth as the “multiplier of everything else” (p. 153). Globally the human population has doubled since 1960 to over 7 billion. Tainter (1988), Kunstler (2006), Heinberg (2007), Diamond (2005) and Homer-Dixon (2006) draw a direct correlation between the current spike in human population and cheap energy of this century. Their voices represent a collective warning of the dangers in failing to understand the connection between energy expenditure and population explosion. Their concerns draw attention to the problems emerging from an economy based on abundant cheap fossil fuel and an earth full of humans. Essentially, fueled by cheap energy, abundant food production facilitates an explosion of population that in turn has made modern society possible, which then permits ideas about human mastery and control to also flourish.

Hubbert (1979) predicted that the supply of fossil fuel would eventually ‘peak’ and oil based energy dependency would inevitably diminish. Urry (2013) has described oil as “preserved sun” (p. 5) and “a unique gift but finite and irreplaceable” that is “central to
Western civilization” (p. 6). He maintains that at current rates of use modern society will shortly be left with only the oil drags, bringing to an end what he describes as the “good high carbon life” (p. 13). Heinberg (2003) estimates that at current rates of consumption industrial society will consume the other half of all remaining oil reserves in less than thirty years. Therefore, modern civilisation may be entering a period of decline after having consumed in less than one hundred years half the known oil reserves. If the correlation between energy and population is correct then the utopian idealism of The Melbourne Declaration may be evanescent and therefore unintentionally misleading. The assumption of a glowing future as the outcome of an educational narrative may soon need to be re-appraised in the light of diminishing fossil fuels in relation to overpopulation.

Klare (2012) maintains that one outcome might be an undignified global ‘race’ for the remaining natural resources. Orlov (2008, 2013) predicates this struggle will unfold in a series of painful stages of collapse. He describes these steps as an inevitable decline beginning with the ‘collapse’ of systems. He maintains this will begin with the financial sector, proceed to the commercial, then political, social and eventually cultural. He suggests a demise of global civilisation in its present form may be unavoidable due to the failure of the complex interdependencies between overpopulation, resource depletion and environmental devastation. One key observation is that cheap energy as fuel and as fertiliser has made possible what has often been referred to as the Green Revolution. The resulting increase in available food leads directly to an explosion in human numbers.

Cheap energy may therefore be the assumed ‘fuel’ of modern civilisation and sophisticated scientific and technological development. Kunstler (2006) claims that the unquestioned assumption of entitlement to an energy rich context has allowed the fermentation of grandiose ideas about human identity. He proposes that it is through the abundance of oil
“that whole ideologies have been constructed to account for being modern” (p. 22). He adds “everything characteristic about the condition we call modern life has been a direct result of our access to abundant supplies of cheap fossil fuels” (p. 23). If correct, the optimism of economic progress and a future full of the cornucopian wonders promised by science and technology may turn out to be short lived and no more than intellectual fantasy.

It appears that within contemporary culture, under the mollifying influence of mass media, few make any critical connection between the “assumed doctrine of progress” (Wright, 2006, p. 7) and the technology made possible by the 86 million barrels of oil consumed globally per day. The connection between the dazzling defining devices of this time, and the energy used to sustain them, are positioned so far apart by media, politics and presumably schooling that it is difficult to appreciate the impending limitation to resources (Heinberg, 2011). Possible limitations on energy and resources are understandably glossed over within the political rhetoric of The Melbourne Declaration as it might be assumed little of a hopeful scenario would remain.

Bartlett (2000) claims that population growth and advances in technology will become the robbers of “democratic freedoms” (p. 70), yet the potential for such restrictions are also overlooked within The Melbourne Declaration. Shearman and Smith (2007) conclude that, in terms of governance the only recourse for an overpopulated and an energy-starved world is a form of authoritarianism they describe as “illiberal democracy” (p. 125). The Melbourne Declaration does not appear to have the load bearing capacity for such potentially negative pressures on democracy and freedom as demands facing the ‘human project’ in the next generation. A consideration of the impact of energy upon the assumptions embedded in The Melbourne Declaration would suggest a reappraisal of the worldview from which these ideas emerge and the identity it presumes.
The worldview elements of *The Melbourne Declaration*

The analysis in this chapter of the elements *The Melbourne Declaration* considered essential for inclusion in the Australian Curriculum tends to legitimate a narrative from within a form of utopian materialism. To summarise, personhood is presented as derived from the economic and cultural context of the material world. Ongoing prosperity and wellbeing are to be derived from technological innovation, scientific development and strong trading partnerships. Identity for young Australians is established through opportunities presented by globalisation, mobility, technology, information, and communication.

Negatives in the form of a compromised environmental and social and economic pressures are to find resolution through engagement with “scientific concepts and principles” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). *The Melbourne Declaration* subscribes to and endorses an implicit faith in the inevitable benefits of ongoing scientific discovery and technological innovation. As such, *The Melbourne Declaration* represents a type of ‘sacred’ text that Blomberg (2007) describes as a, “pervasive moral structure” (p. 154) that facilitates a particular identity. Scientism and Technicism appear presented as the twin powers that underpin a worldview whose hallmarks are human achievement through a system of mechanised values and attitudes.

These feed what Wright (2006a) describes as the aforementioned “assumed doctrine of progress” (p. 7), reinforcing the material efficacy of science and technology. As the dominant reading of secular history, this is encouraged politically and reinforced daily through positive media coverage. The myth of progress is observed by Newbigin (2003) as, “what is in line with the development of society” causing the citizen to conclude such a condition as “the direction of the good” (p. 14). Schooling becomes the mechanism for
reinforcing the assumption that what is good for the culture will be enacted through curriculum making. Kliebard (2013) describes such an approach to curriculum as “a form of utopian thinking” (p. 71). The Melbourne Declaration might therefore represent a condensed, powerful, self-fulfilling, self-reinforcing and self-legitimating evangelical tract of a secular age. Therein is the promise of a curriculum that will tell the ‘good news’ of secular utopianism that is claimed will produce fulfilled, productive and responsible persons.

The Melbourne Declaration presents an idealised view of the world as democratic, equitable and just that will be realised through the practice of the Australian Curriculum. It aspires through positivist materiality to produce persons who are honest, resilient and respectful assuming such persons are capable of being formed by a set of transitory socio-cultural and economic conditions. The view that curriculum becomes a process whereby an image of the person is projected onto and reflected back in affirmation from the canvas of the culture. Willard (2002) observes that such thinking is about a human propensity to represent “ideas as reality” (p. 69) and it is indeed ideas about the self that govern our lives. These ideas are then given form through words and acted out as a worldview orientation within the culture. The claim is that the Melbourne Declaration presents a narrow view of the world based upon a restricted set of descriptors, the type of which Smith (2010) describes as an example of weak social constructivism. Technological efficacy, faith in science and the centrality of economics presented as favourable conditions may not guarantee prosperity, cohesion and cultural diversity. O’Donovan (1994) maintains that secular documents that emphasise the benefits of a material world represent an authoritative endorsement of “the divinization of mankind as the creator of his own history” (p. 161). The Melbourne Declaration fits into this category as it presupposes a future where glowing material conditions to define the person and presumes the person will be willingly formed
to fit that future. The present condition of economic abundance becomes a reflection of an
even better future in order to give meaning to the proposed curriculum. The anthropocentric
perspective within the educational proposal of The Melbourne Declaration represents a
fragmentary picture pared down to short-term political rhetoric. Within such relativised,
neo-modern discourse is the marginalisation of what Hill (2004) claims is “any objectively
true descriptions of what the world is really like” (p. 21). The quintessential observation is
that if the definition of the person frames all discussion and ends with the human as the
centre, outlined by a set of uncertain material conditions, then the person who emerges
from such an ‘education’ will be incomplete. Despite the obvious benefits of science and
technology Green (2008) concludes, “it is problematic to imagine that human identity is
constructed solely in material terms” (p. 178). The globally mobile connected consumer is
encouraged to form the impossible expectation of a high quality of life through economic
development facilitated through science and technology. It might be that the person
visualised through The Melbourne Declaration may actually turn out to be incompatible
with a sustainable life on Earth.

**Conclusion**

Postman (1996) maintained in his observations about the ‘end’ of education that it needs to
include the idea that “students must esteem something other than self” (p. 76). At the core
of consumerism is the amplification of the self with any reduction in the capacity of self as
a consumer implicitly discouraged. The placing of the person at the centre of all thought
and actions since the Enlightenment and the development of systems to reinforce such
humanist ends, especially education, possibly creates an identity problem for the future of
Australian society. To foster a view of the person as primarily an unbridled ‘consuming’
entity appears to eventually result in overpopulation, pollution and resource depletion. The
dream of Western consumerism of which this is a small part promises temporary material fulfillment to the relative few while potentially rendering the majority of humanity and the natural world bankrupt. The contemporary manifestation of the human through economic ‘progress’ may be antithetical to human flourishing and the sustaining of planet Earth.

Such a person if facilitated through contemporary curriculum is larger than the capacity of the Earth to contain. However, a consumerist imperative persists with such a vision despite impending limitations in world resources. *The Melbourne Declaration* acting as such a stimulus for the Australian Curriculum may ultimately endorse personhood summed up by William Catton (2009) as “*homo colossus*” (p. 201). A person more demanding than the capacity of the material resources of the earth can support.

In this chapter, a cultural critique of *The Melbourne Declaration* might conclude it represents a defining narrative or ‘sacred text’ for The Australian Curriculum that has been shown to short-change the person through a materialistic world-view. The next chapter will take up the third research sub-question, exploring the possibility of an alternative worldview that does more justice to human personhood.
CHAPTER 3 – The Perspective of New Creation Theology

Introduction

This chapter investigates a theology of New Creation as chiefly expounded by N. T. Wright and seeks to identify what contribution might be made through it for Australian Curriculum practice in Christian schooling.

To recap, the key issue with The Melbourne Declaration and by extension, the Australian Curriculum is the presentation for uncritical adoption of a particular understanding of personhood to be facilitated through Australian schooling. The reviewers of the Australian Curriculum in their final report acknowledge a privileging of a materialist construct with understandings of the person delivered primarily through a scientific worldview (ACARA, 2014). An overall observation suggests such impetus reinforces dualist thought through the Australian curriculum. This chapter outlines an alternative understanding of personhood derived from the biblical narrative under the heading of New Creation. The person as a New Creation will be contrasted with the identity promoted through The Melbourne Declaration and that suggested by a dispensational framing in Protestant Christianity.

Buchanan and Chapman (2011) have posed the valid question whether the Australian Curriculum facilitates a utopian or dystopian endorsement of the future and the person. The analysis through the previous chapter suggests The Melbourne Declaration leans towards a utopian future but is unrealistically framed to form a diminished person. In this chapter, a stronger curriculum purpose for Christian schooling in Australia will be explored through a theology of New Creation.
The impact of Enlightenment thinking on Theology

An epistemology that includes the idea of faith as understood biblically implies that there is more to knowing than exclusive reference to a material world. The Bible presupposes that to ‘know’ includes the idea that there is evidence that cannot be seen that requires consideration (Hebrews 11:1). Such an epistemology assumes about God that “since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (Romans 1:20). A foundational premise to reality grounded biblically is that the existence of things material is derived from the invisible or immaterial. This presumes the possibility of a powerful creator God whose character will be at least partially evident through the created order. The physical world might be analogous to a lens through which God is glimpsed, or a smudged mirror that subtly reflects the values and attitudes of an invisible God. The material world if seen as a created context then might act as a means to derive some understanding of a Creator. This also denotes the possibility that through an invisible God meaning and purpose undergird materiality.

Despite the assertions of some ideologists that scientific method is the proof that God does not exist, to persist with the question appears a part of the human condition. As Karl Barth was the theologian to a liberal modernist world framed by Nazism and other totalitarian thought, so too is N. T. Wright regarded today as among the world’s leading theologians helping addressing the ongoing question of God’s sovereignty and the implications of this to human purpose. Wright’s oeuvre includes the scholarly presentation in six volumes under the broad heading of ‘Christian Origins and the Question of God’. Of the four volumes published to date, his overall focus has attempted to restore the work of God to the centre of creation. Wright (1992) affirms the historical Jesus denoting through the
incarnation that God seeks to justly rule the world through humans. Wright (1996) strengthens this idea in Jesus Christ as God’s victory and the person through whom the fully human can be most clearly understood. Wright (2003) established the significance of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ as the type of trans-physicality that unites spirit and body as what God intends for his human creation. The claim is that with a renewed life, made possible through Jesus Christ, comes the potential re-definition of humanity as the "resurrection people” (p. 581). It is therefore the faithfulness of God, Wright (2013) argues, that will complete his plan and bring renewal to the whole creation. Wright has worked to deliver an alternative perspective regarding the place of the person derived from the biblical narrative and this has not been without critics. In particular, Piper (2007) challenges the implication that Wright diminishes a reformational reading regarding the assurance of faith by questioning who is justified through such a redemptive process. The essential point for this discussion appears to be that for Wright (2002) the death of Jesus demonstrates God’s righteousness. This he states is a clear “display of God’s righteousness in the death of Jesus is the basis for God’s justifying declaration of this category of people” (p. 473). Wright (2009) argues that it has to be God who is justified otherwise the epistemological framework derived might potentially feed into a type of anthropological duality the Wright (1992) argues amplifies human definition over the cosmic plan of God. The value of such academic dialogue highlights the centrality of human identity renewed as a physical embodiment in relation to the plan of an invisible God.

From within Roman Catholicism Moser (2008) argues that God actually chooses to hide himself and that in doing so challenges human use of capacities subtler than scientific verification. To dismiss the idea of God, he claims, amounts to a cognitive idolatry. The implication includes the idea that scientific materialism centres the self at the expense of other authorities, particularly the idea of God. Walton (2009) also maintains that scientific
enquiry, while of great benefit “is not capable of exploring a designer or his purposes” (p. 127). Science he reiterates “is incapable of affirming or identifying the role of God” (p. 135). This he bases on the presupposition that “relative to God, as humans we are by definition simplistic” (p. 134). To be physically embodied is a finite experience implying the possibility of limitations and fallibility. The tools of scientific enquiry, acting as human validation in an exclusively material realm are potentially limited in their ability to provide detailed answers about God. This should not circumscribe creative enquiry but implies that there might remain, apart from scientific methodology, questions to which the tools of faith provide conditional answers of a more unified understanding of reality. Gibbs (2003) investigating reports of near death experiences, using scientific methodology, has sought unsuccessfully to establish “the relation of moral development and behaviour to a deeper reality” (p. 225). One implication is that through exclusive reference to scientific means it might remain unlikely that a complete understanding of the moral self or God is possible. Such thought might imply that a full curriculum might benefit from tools that develop faith alongside the limited capacities of scientific investigation.

Similarly, the work of Wright foregrounds that without reference to God a complete understanding of personhood is not possible. The implication is that a different set of intellectual and emotional attributes, or epistemological tools are required for an understanding of an immaterial reality.

Such a proposition is afforded little space in the Australian Curriculum since within a scientific worldview the immaterial technically does not exist. As such, The Melbourne Declaration in taking up such a position that emphasises material conditions may signal foreclosure on the biblical narrative to deal with ideas relating to anything other than faith. Wright’s position in this debate finds support through Plantinga (2011) who maintains that
a modern culture based in materialism serves “one of the main functions of a religion. It offers a master narrative, it answers deep and important human questions” (p. 311). Hence, as a convinced materialist, Wielenberg (2005) can sustain the idea “that no supernatural entities exist, nor have such entities existed in the past, nor will they in the future” (p. 2). The confidence of the materialist comes through the certainty of a scientific worldview in understanding the person. The ‘text’ for understanding reality becomes the natural world for which evidence is taken as almost final authority. The pervasive insistence is upon evidence as the proof essential to define the human apart from any immaterial reality including any understanding of God.

As noted in the previous chapter, the worldview promoted through The Melbourne Declaration for elaboration in the Australian Curriculum privileges a form of scientific materialism. The idea that the material or natural world is the only measure of reality privileges and reinforces the premise on which it is based. Science as the primary tool in a pervasive narrative defining humanity has also profoundly influenced Christianity in the modern age. Sommerville (2006) notes that the development of theological systems, commonly known as Systematic Theology, echoed the rise of modern science as an authoritative discourse in the early twentieth century. Scientific influences on theology, while historically beneficial in highlighting biblical themes and doctrines may tend to compartmentalise and thereby contain the biblical narrative. Williams (2005) maintains that such stratifying of the Bible as a “topical and synthesizing discipline” is prone to becoming “abstract and distanced” (p. 200). The valuable systemising of the Bible may possibly tend through the fragmentation of ideas into categories diminish the capacity and appreciation of an overarching coherent and cohesive purpose within the narrative.
Neill and Wright (1988) argue the strength gained in applying methods used by physical scientists to theological interpretation can result in the ability to self criticise and reject failed hypotheses. However, they claim eventually that a secular scientific mindset leads to a paradoxical “suspension of disbelief” (p. 446). One product of the Enlightenment is to eliminate doubt and so upholds a divide between science and faith. Neill and Wright (1988) claim the attempted removal of theological uncertainty and therefore doubt through scientific systems results in the reduction of scripture to a set of splintered ideas. They conclude this replaces the possibility of understanding scripture as “the new covenant document, the charter for the people who belong to Jesus” with a “handbook of dogma, a source-book for models of religious life” and “a repository of timeless truth” (p. 446). An application of scientific process to theology may contribute to a loss of insight into a larger plan by God and relegate faith as a personal hermeneutic. This suggests the possibility that theology influenced too heavily by scientific process may tend to feed dualist tendencies.

The reinforcement of such an artificial split between the supposedly personal nature of religion and the corporate reality of science Wright (2006) proposes has been “fashionable for the past 200 years” (p. 44). An understanding of the person through evidence, method and system has been positioned powerfully as positive and necessary in the educational system of the Western world. Christianity framed through a scientific approach to understanding the world has tended, as science does about the natural world, to reduce the biblical narrative to a manageable human scale. A scientific worldview through systematic and detailed analysis, unless held up against some larger purpose, may tend to be colonised by an emphasis upon the examination of particulars under human scrutiny and control. Christianity, under such reductionist pressure from a scientific worldview, tends to relegate faith as a private relativist position of one ‘religious’ choice between the pluralist many. Wright (2006) claims that Christianity constrained within relativised pluralism is reduced to
simply a therapeutic “discovering who I am” (p. 67). A worldview whose focus is upon pieces of reality tends to replicate a focus upon the self in isolation. This has contributed to what Stendahl (1977) described as the ‘introspective conscience of the West’. Such reductionist pressure has squeezed the biblical narrative into a set of stories whose application is generally regarded as personal and therefore private. The biblical narrative under such circumstances may come to be understood as the source of affirming the individual and a personal faith experience. The impact of scientific methodology places dualist pressure upon a theology of the person by emphasising isolation, insignificance and vulnerability. Science dominating Christian interpretation has the capacity to produce a modern gnostic dualism characterised by a personalised spirituality as the primary expression of faith. The result might privilege a selective appropriation of the biblical text as principally about personal salvation and rescue from a doomed earth for disembodied spiritual life elsewhere. Systematic theology under the influence of a scientific worldview may inadvertently contribute to reducing the biblical narrative to a gnostic dualist text about how the important soul is saved and rescued from a dangerous physical world.

Wright (2003b, 2008, 2013c) gives examples of how dualistic thought contributes to the fragmentation of the biblical narrative and an understanding of the person through the idea of Dispensationalism. Similarly, Rossing (2004) concludes such an understanding is characterised by delineation of the Bible into ages and stages representing a systematic and ethical failure that disproportionally amplifies the self. Marsden (2006) describes Dispensationalism as “militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism” (p. 4). Dispensational thinking is said to have emerged from the millenarian movement of the late nineteenth century in North America through a particular reading of a selection and recombination of specific scriptures. The Dispensationalist reading according to Williams (2003) is also a ‘worldview’ that Marsden (2006) observes falsely divides “all history into
distinct eras” (p. 4). The Dispensationalist schema is generally attributed to J. N. Darby that was promoted by C. I. Schofield through his Study Bible. The term Darbyism is understood as a selective appropriation of decontextualised scripture verses to construct an understanding of the person and the future. The culmination of such a worldview narrative is the extraction of Christians as ‘souls saved’ from an earth that is to be destroyed. A dispensationalist worldview through a pseudo-scientific grid implies that human physicality is an inferior condition and the physical context an impermanent state.

Hal Lindsey (1970) popularised the dispensationalist hermeneutic to collectively focus on an event traditionally called, The Rapture. The *Left Behind* series of fictional texts by Tim La Haye amplified dispensational distortions through creative license. These authors foster a fear orientated militaristic Christianity where the urgency of immediate personal commitment is foregrounded at the expense of the understanding greater of the self as incarnational. The focus became salvation of the soul perceived as being extracted from the earth, escaping the limitations and flaws of embodiment for a better spiritual state. Hays (1997) describes such thinking as a “turning inward” (p. 281) and essentially a theological distortion facilitating disconnection from a permanent place on earth in order to live in a disembodied form in a spiritual realm.

Additionally, Wright (2008) claims such thinking as residual Platonic dualism that “has infected great swathes of Christian thinking” (p. 18) and reduces Christianity to a hyper-individualism where the earth is devalued to the point where destruction and depletion are interpreted positively as signs of the end times. Such hyper-individualism Wright (2008) describes as a “private dualistic spirituality” (p. 113) characterised by a misplaced heavenly-minded disinterest in the state of the world and the care of the planet. Similarly, Hays (2006) concludes that such thinking inevitably results in an “abandonment of social
responsibility” (p. 21). Such attitudes tend to validate a perception that Christianity is self-serving and lacking relevance to contemporary life in the wider community through disengagement with environmental and cultural issues.

The benefits of theology in asking why questions and science offering explanations to how may offer the possibility of a relationship in better understanding and caring for the world. However, Enlightenment thinking has possibly developed into contemporary justification for separating out and privileging a scientific worldview. The safety of science is trusted, since it claims materiality is verifiable, whereas the possibility of understanding the person through nonscientific means is positioned as unreliable. The assumption is that faith and science are irreconcilable and that an accurate understanding of personhood can only be accounted for through scientific means.

Edlin (2006) suggests that Reformed Critical Realism offers an epistemology of middle ground through which such a breach might be healed. Critical Realism is a claim that involves fostering an intellectual attitude described as “certain uncertainty” (p. 104). This view suggests that to know everything is impossible and therefore to accept that all knowledge is conditional is presented as an attribute worth cultivating. Critical realism suggests that to be human includes awareness of what it means to be finite, fallible, and humble. This state requires the person to live in the necessary uncertain space that includes an understanding that biblical faith can teach trust of the immaterial to the scientific self. Critical realism makes possible the reviewing of humanity in the light of a hidden, subtle and complex God that includes the capacity to be inconclusive. It might be that exclusive dependence upon a scientific worldview may foster a sense of dogmatic insecurity. The need for scientific conclusiveness and certainty, and dispensational disconnection and departure, both suggest an incomplete, less subtle understanding of the person.
Wright (1992) agrees defining Critical Realism as:

a way of describing the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the reality of the things known as something other than the knower (hence realism), while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence ‘critical’). This path leads to critical reflection on the products of our inquiry into ‘reality’, so that our assertions about ‘reality’ acknowledge their own provisionality. Knowledge, in other words, although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower. (p. 35)

An understanding of the human may therefore paradoxically be called to understand maturity in terms of learning to live with provisionality and uncertainty. The work of faith might ask the human to live confidently embodied in the light of the unknown. Wright (1992) adds that “knowledge of particulars as taking place within the larger framework of the story or worldview which forms the basis of the observer’s way of being in relation to the world” (p. 37). The observation for curriculum includes the idea that Enlightenment certainty may have created a gulf between faith and trust and science and certainty.

In support of Critical Realism as defined by Wright, Blamires (1963) contends that Christian faith has to testify to a “reality beyond our finite order” (p. 106). This other reality is to shape the Christian mind and the conception of Truth as:

supernaturally grounded, not developed within nature; that it is objective and not subjective; that it is a revelation and not a construction; that it is discovered by inquiry and not elected by a
majority vote; that it is authoritative and not a matter of personal choice. (p. 107)

Such an understanding about reality suggests that a supernatural revelation can be known that authoritatively governs the created order. A critical realist epistemology promotes what Hays (2005) has coined as a hermeneutic of trust encouraging a living with an inconclusive universe as the means through which to view and understand reality.

To understand what it means to be human includes experiencing reality through a range of means, including religion. Sommerville (2009) claims, “our very definition of the human or humane were born in religious discourse” (p. 27). Likewise, Smith (2012) identifies the inescapable aspects of human existence as “located – situated in tradition, as part of a culture, and having a history” (p. 61). Christianity as a lived faith maintains there is a trusted set of conditional insights into humanity available from outside the material world. The claim is that to fully understand the human condition requires reality to be supplemented by a revelation of God that clarifies the material world.

**The importance of God in understanding what it means to be human**

Wright’s emphasis on understanding the future through the concept of a New Creation is not idiosyncratic, for others have equally viewed it as crucial to biblical revelation. Thus, Goldsworthy (1991) maintains the idea of New Creation represents the “unifying element” (p. 77) that pervades and brings to completion the purpose of God. Dumbrell (2001b) speaks of the plan of God as a ‘search for order’ proposing that New Creation is the culmination of this process. He states that:

The Bible is a book about the future in the light of the human failures of the past and present. In this sense the entire Bible is
eschatological, since it focuses upon the ushering in of the kingdom of God, the fulfilling of the divine intention for humanity and society. In very broad terms the biblical sweep is from creation to new creation by way of redemption, which is, in effect, the renewing of creation. (p. 9)

Goldsworthy (2012) adds that such a ‘creation to new creation’ theme is repeated and intensified biblically and the “consummation of Christ’s work is the new heavens and the new earth as the dwelling of God with his people” (p. 169).

The first specific use of the phrase ‘new creation’ is within the letter of Paul to the Galatians where his argument concludes, “a new creation is everything” (Galatians 6:15, New Revised Standard Version). Such an emphatic conclusion is by way of challenging perceived divisions between legalism and grace, flesh and spirit. The culmination of God’s broad encompassing purpose becomes the elimination of such categories by making new the whole of creation.

The idea of New Creation includes the understanding of God’s purpose of renewal focuses on the shaping of the person. This idea is amplified in the second direct use by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17, where it is stated, “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (NRSV). These two direct uses of the term ‘new creation’ echo the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. The text is structured so it appears that God speaks, “I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating” (Isaiah 65:17, NRSV). A similar thought concludes the biblical narrative in Revelation with a vision of a new heaven and a new earth again through the declaration by God that “I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5, NRSV). The
implication is that New Creation is God’s plan and purpose first for the human and ultimately the whole earth.

Therefore, Wright (2011) in his translation of Paul’s letter to the Galatians renders verse 15 of chapter 6 as emphatically, “what matters is new creation” (p. 425). In his commentary on Paul’s letter to the Romans Wright (2002) amplified the importance of New Creation:

This new creation began with Jesus himself at his resurrection, continues with the spirit-given new life which wells up in all those who belong to the Messiah, and will go on until, as Paul says in Romans 8, the whole creation will be set free from its own slavery and will share the freedom of the glory of God’s children. (p. 82)

Wright (2003a) notes the emphasis of the original Greek: “‘If anyone in Messiah, new creation!’ The ‘new creation’ in question refers both to the person concerned and to the world which they enter, the world which has now been reconciled to the creator” (p. 65). In the first letter to the Corinthian church Wright (2008) observes regarding chapter 15, that “the entire chapter, one of Paul’s longest sustained discussions and the vital climax of the whole letter, is about new creation, about the creator God remaking the creation” (p. 44).

Elsewhere Wright (2005a) positions Paul the Apostle as the “interpreter of Israel’s Scripture” who unpacks New Creation as the key insight into God’s ultimate plan that provides a “hermeneutical model, an exemplar of how we might learn anew to read scripture” (p. x).

Wright (2005a) also notes that Paul:

Locates himself on the larger map of the purposes of God, which always stretched out *through* Israel to the restoration of the whole
creation: ‘what matters is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but new creation’. From here there is a straight line both to 2 Corinthians 5 and, more especially, to Romans 8: Paul is not just speaking of the individual Christian as a new creation, though of course that is true as well, but of the entire renewal of the cosmos in which the Christian is invited to be a participant, in the sense both of beneficiary and of agent. (p. 114)

Consequently, New Creation encapsulates the unifying idea of a biblical understanding of God’s “universal” (Acts 3:21) plan of renewal for the whole earth. The idea of New Creation includes an understanding of the person who is made ‘new’ through and for the purpose of God. Such an understanding specifically proposes that the fully human results through the exercise of a plan of renewal by God. Within the idea of New Creation, to be human includes definition by, and hence accountability to, someone greater than the human. The biblical implication is clearly that the development of the fully human will only be realised through the actions of God. To be fully human, is therefore understood, as being formed by a greater God within the larger plan that moves toward the renewal of all things.

Hence, Marsden (1997) maintains that with the idea of God and his purpose factored back into any discussion “the set of epistemological questions changes dramatically” (p. 88). The idea of New Creation denotes that there is a created context and a way of understanding humanity planned by God to which the human by attending to becomes more fully human. This presumes that if as claimed, curriculum represents a shaping process of the person then Christian schooling might have in terms of New Creation a stronger vision of God’s plan and purpose.
Wright (2005a) therefore takes time to recalibrate the idea that Christians are ‘saved’ for an enhanced permanence within the created order rather than a removal from it. He stresses that humans become those who do not await an “ahistorical rescue from the world but as the transhistorical redemption of the world” (p. 12) with God being the focus of the entire process. Walton (2009) endorses such an observation with the thought that, “[T]he biblical way of thinking counters materialism when it insists that the most important part of the equation is God's purposes” (p. 144). This presupposes an understanding of the person that is derived from the purpose of God. This also reinforces the idea that to be fully human is to be framed by the plan of God.

Hubbard (2002) states, “The biblical story, from beginning to end, can rightly be described as an epic of new creation” (p. 1). Dumbrell (2001a) adds that New Creation is “the axis around which all biblical theology turns” (p. 196) and which through all “redemptive images (the New Jerusalem, the New Covenant, the New Temple, The New Israel) must climax and finds its fulfillment” (p. 196). Goldsworthy (2012) argues that a ‘biblical theology’ is “an understanding of what this biblical text reveals about God and his ways with his creation” (p. 39).

A biblical theology is understood as a post-liberal response to textual deconstruction common to critical theory in that it attempts to reinstate a metacognitive framework. Lindbeck (1984) concludes expansively that biblical theology will result in “absorbing the universe into the biblical world” (p. 135). The presence and possibilities held out by a metanarrative act as a larger framework within which the person is understood. One summary of the biblical narrative from Hays (1996) reflects the essence of the story:

The God of Israel, the creator of the world, has acted (astoundingly) to rescue a lost and broken world through the death and resurrection
of Jesus: the full scope of the rescue is not yet apparent, but God has created a community of witnesses to this good news, the church. While awaiting the grand conclusion of the story, the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is called to re-enact the loving obedience of Jesus Christ and thus to serve as a sign of God’s redemptive purposes for the world. (p. 193)

Christians have even been identified by the Muslim world as “followers of The Book” (Quran 29:46) for they have sought in every age to become what Newbigin (1995) has called, “the community shaped by the story that the book tells” (p. 53). Borgmann (2003) maintains, “holy texts are a bond that unites the generations of believers into the people of God” (p. 127). Hence, the biblical narrative represents the primary source in understanding enactment of the larger purposes of God in the world. Newbigin (1995) suggests, life without a big story is “incomprehensible” (p. 52) and hence the propensity for the human to seek out metanarratives to live by as a way of establishing meaning. The idea of a biblical theology seeks to reinstate a comprehensive ‘narrative’ (Frei, 1974) into which can be integrated the detailed insights of systematic theology.

The purpose of the biblical narrative, according to Wright (2005a), runs “from creation to new creation and from covenant to new covenant” (p. 33). Bauckham (2003) also maintains the Bible is presented as a text that “accounts for history not in terms of immanent reason or human mastery but in terms of the freedom and purpose of God and of human freedom to obey or to resist God” (p. 48). Within this schema, the church is the embodied community of believers (Frost & Hirsch, 2003) whose form is willingly derived from the whole text. The God of the Bible appears to be relational and seeks to establish the person in community.
In understanding what sort of entity this ‘person’ is, Volf (1996) asserts that Jesus existed in and for the establishment of the relationship between God and humans. He observes within this discussion however that this role does not turn Jesus into a marionette but involves reciprocity. He concludes, “[P]ersons are not relations; persons stand in relations that shape their identity” (p.180). This thought connects to the idea of God’s purpose for the whole history of salvation is the shaping of a particular person. Volf (1996) concludes, “God came into the world so as to make human beings, created in the image of God, live with one another and with God in the kind of communion in which divine persons live with one another,” (p. 181). From this stems the insight that to understand human identity formation involves a greater ‘other’ namely God and that through this relationship is also formed a community. It is therefore axiomatic that being human finds clearest iteration in relationship with God. This implies that human identity framed outside a relational construct centred on God results in a diminished understanding of the person, as has been argued in the case of *The Melbourne Declaration*. Wright would probably agree.

A fundamental presupposition is that humans live by stories. Borgmann (1993) observes:

> People feel a deep desire for comprehensive and comprehending orientation. To be human is to have a capacity for the beginning and end of all things and for assuming a position among them. (p. 144)

Humans indwell narrative frameworks and it is presumed that a person acts in accordance to the narrative to which they subscribe. The narratives inhabited reflect understanding about personhood including identity, problems, solutions, purpose and context. The search for a place within a narrative is a fundamental dimension in understanding human action and highlights the intuitive importance of identity. It is suggested that human-centred narratives, when evaluated biblically, appear insufficient to human needs and the health of
creation. Thus, Wright’s emphasis on New Creation, as the idea of a renewed humanity, emerges from a comprehensive biblical reading in that it reveals God’s plan for His world. The idea of New Creation is posited as an understanding of the embodied person in the light of the God of the Bible.

The curriculum for Christians in education therefore would benefit from factoring back into learning the idea of God as understood biblically. A first proposition derived from the foregoing, which has implications for Christian school curriculum, is that human identity can only adequately be established in relationship with God.

**Proposition 1. Human identity is fully established in relationship with God.**

A biblical worldview as the context for human flourishing as a New Creation

A theology of New Creation presents the complete person as someone transformed by God who reflects His character back into his world. Hays (1996) suggests this person consciously factors through a view of the world that is “trained to see the world from the perspective of God’s future” (p. 98). New Creation grounds the idea that to become fully human is made possible by framing thought and action to reflect the character and purpose of God.

The tendency with presenting a biblical worldview has been to do so through the three major categories of Creation, Fall and Redemption. Wolters (2005) however argues that a robust worldview emerges biblically when it is dynamically framed about the interlocking elements or compass points of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consumation. Wright (2008) claims being ‘saved’ for most Christians has come to represent the end of God’s plan, which might see life then as a holding pattern waiting for release through death. The tendency might be to think that the idea of salvation is the termination point of a three-part
process overlooking the fourth compass point. Such a view tends to reductively frame the salvific work of God in Jesus Christ as an ‘escape clause’ that obviates any need for a lifetime of transformational critical engagement with the world. To his credit, Thompson also (2003) argues for a stronger understanding of the category of ‘Redemption’ to include the detailed historical work of God through “Israel and Jesus Christ” (p. 311). To their credit, both frameworks by Wolters and Thompson present the resolution of a biblical worldview through ideas such as, consummation, restoration or renewal. Vanhoozer (2005) in his particular discussion regarding the importance of theological maps as “the way to wisdom and human flourishing” (p. 305) elaborates on these worldview elements. He enriches the framework within his ‘Theo-dramatic perspective’ with Creation being “Right Cognitive Functioning”, Fall as “Distorted Cognitive Functioning” (p. 302), Redemption as “Restored Cognitive Functioning” (p. 303) and Consummation as “Perfected Cognitive Functioning” (p. 304). The particular strength of his contribution is the identification of intellectual and practical engagement as an integral dimension within faith. The essential component is what results from a worldview, as it prescribes how the person understands the self and acts within the world. Initially Dooyeweerd (2012) framed creation, fall and redemption as the “ground-motive that shaped the development of western culture” (p.28). He argued these represent an indivisible unity that “cannot be separated” (p. 60). This assumes the elements of Creation, Fall and Redemption as inextricable to a biblical worldview and point to intelligent purpose in renewal. The idea of the New Creation as the intentional goal of God is firmly set within this set of specific worldview elements that when derived biblically orients and shapes the human intellectually, emotionally as an embodied spiritual being. These are to be understood as indivisible and have a clear goal in a consummation; a renewal that it is suggested finds their clearest iteration when focussed through the term New Creation.
Walsh (2000), Ebertz (2006) and Dickens (2014) express misgivings regarding the potential distortions or repressive dimension to the application of worldview categories. Concerns include loss of dynamic engagement with scripture along with a diminishment of relationship at the expense of intellectualism. These concerns are well founded and call for constant vigilance to maintain worldview as the crucible for a dynamic lived relationship with God. A biblical worldview denotes a lived environment energised through human identity as the New Creation derived from ongoing attention to the plan and purpose of God.

Naugle (2009) maintains “the most practical and important thing about being human is his or her view of the universe and theory of the cosmos — that is, the content and implications of one’s worldview” (p. 5). The key observation is that “[L]ife proceeds “kardioptically” out of “a vision of the heart” (p. 16). Reppmann (2009) adds, “Christian worldview can unite us by offering us a shared vision of what identifies us as a community . . . a place to stand and survey the cultural work to be done” (p. 51). A biblical worldview remains a key tool to help orient and form the person when maintained as a dynamic framework particularly if it tells the story of the world with honesty from a perspective outside the person.

Such considerations underscore the usefulness of Wright’s way of constructing the paradigm. He (1992) boldly claims that such an epistemology, an understanding of human knowing, derived from within the elements of a biblical worldview, represents the “true history of the world” (p. 471). The claim is that the adoption of a set of filters beginning with Creation through Fall, then Redemption culminating in New Creation encapsulates the intent of the biblical narrative. From within a biblical worldview, New Creation fits as the culmination of the narrative and within it is framed an understanding of the meta-purpose
of God for the earth and the person. A biblical worldview provides a dynamic narrative framework that creates a particular understanding of the person. The three biblical worldview elements of *creation, fall and redemption* claim to provide the platform for perceiving God’s ultimate purpose as the formation of a person and a community for relationship with him. With New Creation understood as the purpose of God for the whole of creation, there is on offer a specific future hope and a clear understanding of what it means to be fully human.

New Creation ties the biblical story together and potentially offers a framework for critical discernment regarding competing views of the self and the world. It is through a biblical worldview crowned by New Creation that the claims of a diminished person for the purposes of this study are made about *The Melbourne Declaration*.

In his presentation of the work of a biblical worldview Wolters (2005) observes

> Loyal allegiance to our Kingdom mission will mean a clash of comprehensive stories. The gospel makes an absolute claim on the whole of our lives. The story that shapes our Western culture is likewise a comprehensive story which makes totalitarian claims. There is an incompatibility between the gospel and the story of our culture. (p. 134)

For Wright (2005a) worldview is foundational and represents the struggle for a hold on the imaginations of people. He equates worldview as a struggle of who rules, the power of empires for control and mastery of human hearts and minds. The re-establishment of a worldview centred on God consummated by New Creation Wright (2013b) claims is a ‘cosmic battle’ and represents the strongest possible way to reject “dualism that wants to pretend that the world must be ultimately divided” (p. 372).
Contemporary narratives surrounding human origins, beginnings or genesis are generally presented in secular culture through Darwinian evolution. Harris (2012) claims, human progress through evolution has become the normative and “obligatory” (p. 224) way of understanding reality. The end of such narratives centre on human progress through evolutionary development includes the necessary construction of values through a scientific worldview. Wright (1992) highlights such as an example among the ten types of ‘duality’ against forces that seek to “posit a radical split in the whole of reality” (p. 256).

The biblical assumption is that characteristics of a purposeful God include generosity, creativity and purpose. The profuse, complex, beautiful and infinitely diverse ‘creation’ within which humans exist is also taken to be originally “very good” (Genesis 1:31). This condition is understood to result from processes that cannot be conclusively determined but which are governed by a ‘good’ God. The interplay of concepts involving God, goodness and creativity also denotes a potential relationship, or covenant of trust, between the human within creation and the Creator. This might imply that the created order is a place of meaning that extends into a purposeful future. When God is understood as a creator of immeasurable variety human diversity is potentially affirmed along with subtle and complex creativity. A biblical worldview explains the human as an intricate creation, denoting potential for an unlimited variety of good, creative, intelligent, acts within a created order. Therefore, the act of being creative is taken as evidence of spiritual inheritance that directly reflects the character of God. Christian theology maintains that fundamental to understanding the character of God is the implication that his creativity is of a particular value in his creation and acts as a reflection of character. God is good and therefore the creation and the human within might be expected to have the capacity to be and do the same. Hence, renewal as the New Creation is the critical outcome.
Wolters (2005) comments that because of such an origin “men and women become coworkers with God; as creatures made in God’s image they too have a kind of lordship over the earth, are God’s viceroy in creation” (p. 16). To be human is enhanced by a special embodiment as Green (2008) observes, “our personhood, is inextricably bound up in our physicality, and so is inextricably tied to the cosmos God has created, and in the sum of our life experiences and relationships” (p. 178). God creates and one reason for such includes a covenant of cooperation implying a desire to cultivate a reciprocal relationship expressed through intelligent creativity. Humans, Middleton (2005) concludes, are invited by a generous creator to “participate in the creative (and historical) process” (p. 296) taking the lead from God as Creator in order to become more like him.

O’Donovan (1994) therefore concludes, “the relation of the creation to the Creator is teleological” (p. 40). God is essentially creative, good and relational for a future orientated purpose that denotes a formational project in that direction is underway. This highlights a central truth to the creation account, according to Walton (2009) “that this world is a place for God’s presence” with “God’s presence serving as the defining element of existence” (p. 85). Such an insight presupposes God has a particular end in mind, presumably with himself at the centre, and a particular form of human in relationship with him.

Lawrence (1995), in attempting to translate these ideas for educators, concludes practically that the human appears to fit remarkably well for the created context claiming profoundly they “belonged together” (p. 19). The created order might be understood as the precisely prepared place where God seeks to meet his creation on his terms. Lawrence (1995) states that for the New Creation this planet is “to be our home for ever and ever” (p. 20). It appears that part of the purpose of the unseen God is to be present with humans in a physical state on earth. The idea of New Creation implies the importance and value of
embodiment and a particular character in relation attuned to the plan and purpose of God and to life on the earth.

This teleological imperative within the fabric of reality then becomes about establishing a relationship with God that is of a particular quality. God as a good creator is contrasted with the privileged Darwinian metanarrative of savagery, power and struggle through chance and time. Peterson (2006) observes that in his ‘heart’ God is “inherently and inclusively personal” (p. 27) seeking always to establish relationship with his embodied human through patient love and care. Gilkey (1965) also maintains creation “sets man’s life within an ultimate context of coherence and significance” and in an “essential structure of concrete creaturely life” (p. 196). Collectively the idea that creation itself is good is reinforced, with the human placed as the custodian of the good creation whose function, declares Wright (2008), is to “reflect God, both to reflect God back to God in worship and to reflect God into the rest of creation in stewardship” (p. 94). This infers that the quality of the person defined biblically is the one able to be present with God. Within this framework, is implied that the ‘good’ creation has order, an ethic, an expected way of being, a “conscience” described by Wolters (2005) as “intuitive attunement to creational normativity” (p. 29). So to be considered ‘wise’ from a biblical perspective is to be in ethical conformity to a good, creative covenantal God. Within a created order, Wolters (2005) continues, “people are defined by their servanthood, and servanthood is defined by heteronomy, obeying the law of the Creator” (p. 50). The character of God is to be understood as reflected in his purposeful creation. The created order as a ‘good’ place becomes the context where humans learn to enact their creative stewardship in ways that reflect the character of the creator as the New Creation.
The letter to the Ephesians establishes the idea of God as worker with human formation being understood as the result of his “workmanship”. A contemporary rendition of the place of God in relation to the humans is the idea that we are “what he has made us” (Ephesians 2:10 NRSV). This conclusion is that to be fully human is to be “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10 NRSV). This implies negative results of human activity, whether by global warming through climate change, species loss, over population, pollution or fundamental inhumanity inflicted as injustice, pain, suffering and death, imply humanity is not following God’s script. Hays (1996) underscores the importance of this idea by stating that “refusal to acknowledge God as Creator ends in blind distortion of the creation” (p. 385). This negative appraisal of the distorted human condition is described in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans:

They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Romans 1:29-31, NRSV).

The human within a biblical worldview is assumed as flawed by what Wolters (2005) described as “an event of catastrophic significance for creation as a whole” (p. 53). The biblical explanation is that “sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). The pervasive state of humanity by such reckoning is rendered as collectively dysfunctional and disobedient resulting in a distorted reality shift collectively labeled as sin. Such a disconnection of the person from the purposes of God denotes fracture and distortion. The original intention of reflecting any good into the world planned by the Creator is displaced
by the ‘self’ reflecting an inflated and misplaced image of itself. Dawn (2001) contends the collective result of sin is the pervasive state that humanity is understood as actually “dehumanized” (p. 4). The condition of the person is one of being less than fully human presupposes a formerly better state from which history since has been a downward descent. This contrasts starkly with the dominant discourse of an inexorable humanist ascent towards self-perfectibility. Many such narratives pervade our culture including technological repackaged Platonism expressed as the trans-human ‘singularity’ proposed by Kurzweil (2005). Untethered from the idea of God the human has no greater reference point than the self whose inevitable result is a tendency to overinflate the person. An understanding of the human in relation to God might be said to bring balance and produce perspective.

In contemporary narratives, the human as an autonomous authority outside the ‘demands’ of a relational God have come to be presented as normative, representing Grayling (2013) claims progress from a previously ‘primitive’ and ‘immature’ religious state. Within a biblical framework such a categorical reversal, one that privileges human aims and activities as central to all discourse, is taken to represent a form of institutionalised disobedience. Many secular narratives at multiple levels speak positively about the humanist way of being in the world. Any ‘good’ done is appropriated as relative to context that facilitates constant affirmation of the autonomous self as righteous and just. The human as the final reference persists despite the evidence of the denigrated state of the Earth and centuries of mistreatment of one another. The secular human claim of the self, as the measure of sufficiency and success, from within a biblical worldview becomes evidence of noetic activity characterised by delusion and denial.
The current state of the world resulting from the action of the human may be characterised by an inability to take responsibility for the consequences of errant ideology. This correlates to what Festinger (1962) understood as cognitive dissonance, holding thought and practice apart as protection of but perhaps to the detriment of the self. Wright (2008) observes, “Humankind cannot, alas, bear very much reality, and the massive denial of reality by the cheap and cheerful universalism of Western liberalism has a lot to answer for” (p. 180). He adds when human beings give their heartfelt allegiance to and worship that which is not God. One of the primary laws of human life is that you become like what you worship: what’s more you reflect what you worship not only back to the object itself but also outward to the world around. (p. 182)

The self-promotional narrative of human autonomy replaces God with a rendering of the human as sufficient to any time and finite place. Such a self-fulfilling humanist narrative strives to stay faithful to the assumption by Wielenberg (2005) “that naturalism is true” (p. 98). However, from within a biblical worldview the problems of the world stem from human perception, with solutions usually sought outside the need for the human to change behaviour. Materialist solutions to human failures are generally deflected to science, technology and politics that externalise the need for personal responsibility or changes in collective or individual behaviour. From the perspective of New Creation, this amounts to a learned behaviour like an addiction, a constant return to the view of the human as self-sufficient and competent to rescue the autonomous self. Pascal (1966) observes “Christianity is strange: It bids man to recognise he is vile, and even abominable, and bids him to want to be like God. Without such a counterweight his exaltation would make him
horribly vain or his abasement horribly abject” (p. 133). The humanist ‘project’ grounded in materiality may have little option but to elevate a positive perception of the human and deflect toxic results to be remedied through future progress in science or technology. Most indicative of a possibly flawed humanity in a broken world, that has resulted from human behaviour, is the collective untruth that, human endeavour remains the solution to the problem. To be human, framed by a New Creation reading, is to be understood as being a wonderful, yet fatally flawed, finite and fallible creation yet capable of becoming the New Creation through the good God.

If humanity had the ability, given the historical collective effort to date, then ethical ‘progress’ might have reached at least some state of completion with human life and the world being relatively problem free. Willard (2002) suggests the condition of the planet and the state of the human within it demonstrate humankind’s “very limited success” (p. 20) in ‘redeeming’ the self from its condition and predicament. Willard maintains that “societies the world around are currently in desperate straits trying to produce people who are merely capable of coping with their life on Earth in a non-destructive manner” (p. 20). Hence, he maintains humanity needs to “give up the project of being in control” (p. 51). This implies that the lessons of trust in God that the idea of faith promotes about human identity may be among the most important lesson for humanity and for the future of the planet.

At the core of New Creation is the idea that God has instigated the possibility of the fully human through the resurrection of the dead. For Christianity, Easter or the ‘gospel event’, climaxing in the resurrection from death of the incarnate God as the fully human named Jesus, is regarded as an event of cosmic significance. After a detailed examination of the significance of the Easter event Wright (2003b) claims that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead represents, “the start of the new creation” (p. 667). Hays (2003) concurs and
adds that the “resurrection is the climactic event – indeed the linchpin – of the biblical story of God’s redemption of the world” (p. 220). Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) describe the consequent ‘salvation’ narrative as the comprehensive, progressive and restorative biblical goal whose specific culmination is the “renewed creation” (p. 65). The intended results for those who choose this way of defining the self will include a “new bodily life” (Wright, 2008, p. 36). The implication is an understanding of salvation is enlarged to include the idea of a “transformed physicality” or “trans-physicality” (p. 44) or an “incorruptible physicality” (p. 136). The resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes the point of ultimate hope and affirmation of the future embodiment of the human with a body like that of the resurrected Jesus. It is within this critical idea of what it means to be a human in which the idea of New Creation is grounded and can proceed (Wright, 2003).

O’Donovan (1994) notes:

In proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, the apostles proclaimed also the resurrection of mankind in Christ; and in proclaiming the resurrection of mankind, they proclaimed the renewal of all mankind with him. (p. 31)

The dead rising to new life is an anomalous event, according to a scientific worldview, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ runs counter to the natural order. The beginning of the New Creation is couched in the irony of a single anomalous event from which is claimed results a universal necessity for human flourishing. Hays (1997) concurs by stating “the whole web of Christian discourse is airy nonsense if it is not anchored in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus” (p. 260). Additionally Polkinghorne (2002) concludes, “The resurrection of Jesus is the seminal event from which the whole of God’s new creation has already begun to grow” (p. 113). Hays (1997) observes that Paul in his detailed account
concerning the correct understanding of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:32-48 highlights that such beliefs have “definite behavioral consequences” (p. 252). An essential aspect is that the resurrection was a physical event with significant practical implications and a challenge to the gnostic sophistication of first century Roman culture and the Western scientific worldview. Hays (1997) elaborates:

Paul insists that the fundamental logic of Christian proclamation demands belief in the resurrection of the dead: therefore, Christian hope necessarily affirms rather than rejects the body. To proclaim the resurrection of Christ is to declare God’s triumph over death and therefore the meaningfulness of embodied life. That is why, according to Paul, our future hope must be for a transformed body in the resurrection, not an escape from the embodied state. (p. 253)

By extension Hays (1997) maintains that the resurrection implies the human is “accountable for what we do with our bodies” and that “our bodily labour is significant” (p. 254). The renewed body is “the necessary outcome of God’s intent to redeem his people” (p. 276) and “the necessary foundation for faithful action in the world” (p. 277). Wright (2008) adds that because of the resurrection “what you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it” (p. 193). The implication is that the fully human is to be a participant in the impact of the cosmic significance associated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A theology of New Creation presents the radical idea that to become fully human is to be “transformed” (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18) by God in a renewed body on Earth with him. A theology of New Creation suggest God’s aim for the human is a resurrected trans-physicality of which Jesus Christ was the first example.
Hays (1997) concludes that through the resurrection all creation is validated and that embodied humanity is shown to be within God’s care and purpose by stating “God the creator of the world has not abandoned his creation” (p. 278). The resurrection holds creation and redemption together and “affirms the moral significance of life in the body” (p. 279). He concludes:

When we live within the story told by Paul, however, a story whose climactic conclusion is the triumphant fulfilment/transformation of our mortal bodies, we will use these bodies in ways appropriate to their telos (goal/end), which is to be conformed to Christ. (p. 280)

These observations imply that the moral action to which the resurrection calls the person conflicts with human-centred narratives. At stake through the fully human that results from the resurrection of Jesus Christ is ontological redefinition that has implications for curriculum within Christian schooling. Understandings of good, truth, justice and excellence all take on new meaning in relation to a plan and person greater than the way humans understand themselves. This confirms, as Paul in the conclusion to his letter to the Galatians categorically states, “a new creation is everything!” (6:15, NRSV) The new creation tied inextricably to the resurrection and trans-physicality is the way God produces the fully human for life on earth.

From such insights regarding Creation, Fall and Redemption herein briefly described emerges God’s crowning goal described as a New Creation. Within this comprehensive framework is a way of understanding human flourishing. Human creativity is a reflection of a created origin, with human nature referenced against a righteous and just God providing the means for a redefined and restored relationship. A human of virtue formed from within this set of understandings makes it possible to be present with God in a transformed body
on a restored earth. As Wright (2003) concludes it is through the destruction of death by the resurrection and the potential New Creation that “the creator’s new world can proceed” (p. 476).

It is suggested that through reading the biblical narrative as a cohesive story humanity can be fully understood as a New Creation. This is framed, Wright (2008) states, around “God’s purpose of rescue and recreation of the whole world, the entire cosmos” (p. 184). Following this, Vanhoozer (1998) maintains, is the idea that “Biblical interpretation is undoubtedly one of the chief means of character formation in the church. Character – and community – are formed by hearing and doing the Word” (p. 406). It is from within a comprehensive biblical narrative, Wright (2008) which is essentially “an epistemology of faith, hope and love” (p. 72) that to be the ‘transformed’ New Creation is to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom, 8:29).

Perhaps the most powerful implication to emerge from an understanding of the person as the New Creation, when framed within a biblical worldview, is the idea of judgement. The resurrection of Jesus Christ affirms the person and work of a particular type of human as ‘acceptable’ to God. Jesus Christ is not just the saviour; he also becomes the template that God holds up as the model from which the human is formed. New Creation implies that through incarnation and resurrection comes the possibility of being the type of person God wants to have on earth. This denotes that implicit in the idea of New Creation is that ethics and morality are to be derived from relation to God’s rendering of the person of the New Creation.

A biblical worldview effectively begins with a rich and diverse creation and, through the judgment in the resurrection, arrives at the New Creation. Human flourishing is reignited within the authority of a biblical worldview.
In terms of curriculum, a biblical worldview framed by the elements of Creation, Fall and Redemption suggests that Christian schooling seeking to imbue learning with the idea of an adequate view of human nature and destiny would be enriched by the idea of New Creation..

Proposition 2: Human nature and destiny finds resolution in New Creation.

The New Creation denotes a person of particular character

The idea of New Creation as chiefly explored through the thought of N. T. Wright presents a future centred on the idea that the God of the Bible desires to be present with a particular type of person on a rejuvenated Earth. These theological insights suggest a God of love seeks relationship of a particular quality within and for his creation. A theology of New Creation implies that understanding the character of God, as good, creative and covenantal are core elements to the definition of the human. The definition of the person through the categories of God’s goodness, creativity and relational nature are provided for the enrichment of the material context. As such, the idea of the person as New Creation could be described as God’s meta-ethical ‘values’ orientated way of being in the world. Wright crystalises New Creation as an epistemology and ontology that redefines the quality of human action in the world.

A comprehensive biblical understanding of the human as a product of God at work becomes the key to revising the purpose of all things, including schooling. To be fully human is to see the self as essentially a New Creation - a person attentive to the possibility that they are formed in relation to the values held important by God. O’Donovan (1986) claims these to be ‘[T]eleological ethics’ that emerge “from the ontological conception of God as the sumnum bonum, in which it was the task of moral reasoning to recognise and
respond to the ordered structures of being and good” (p. 138). An ontology and epistemology represented by the ‘greatest good’ of a loving God presupposes an ethic outside human construction. As such, the consequences of thought and actions are best referenced against and clarified by reference to God rather than consensus or other values systems. Hays states "God has chosen to be present in the world in and through a specific community of human beings" (p. 58) suggesting communal thought and action are also to resonate through reference to God. This implies that what is good, or of any virtue as defined by God is to become a central consideration for humanity and the starting point of decision-making processes enacted by humans and the character of a community.

This theological emphasis posits that the climax of history, described in the concluding chapters of the Christian scriptures, is that God “is making all things new” (Rev 21:5). God does so because he chooses to be present on a renewed Earth and therefore a renewed people is also implied. Put succinctly Wright (2005b) states, “in scripture itself God's purpose is not just to save human beings, but to renew the whole world” (p. 21). Wolters (2005) cautions it is important to understand that New Creation is not seen as a ‘gradual process’ in ‘social progress’ towards ‘repristination’. Newbigin (2003) notes that there is a need to carefully avoid understanding the future “as meaning the progressive realisation of the good in the life of the world, [which] is simply a Christianised version of the secular idea of progress” (p. 21). To be a New Creation remains a choice to voluntarily take up a particular form to fit being present with God. Wright (2010) adds:

The basic point is this: Christian life in the present, with its responsibilities and particular callings, is to be understood and shaped in relation to the final goal for which we have been made
and redeemed. The better we understand that goal, the better we shall understand the path toward it. (ix)

The New Creation is the person oriented to, and willingly shaped by, a potential future that submits to the intricate care of a God who desires his ‘good’ for the individual within and for creation. O’Donovan (1994) states such “participation in the created order” (p. 76) becomes moral understanding which “is the grasp of the whole shape of things” (p. 91) He continues:

But at the ontological level we must say something stronger; Jesus is not only a witness to the restored moral order, however indispensable; he is the one in whom the order has come to be. God has willed that the restored creation should take form in, and in relation to, one man. He exists not merely as an example of it, not even as a prototype of it, but as the one in whom it is summed up. (p. 150)

Therefore, New Creation as key to the biblical metanarrative positions itself amid other paradigms seeking to provide a framework for signposting provisional answers to the basic questions surrounding the shape of the human purpose and meaning. This worldview framework appears to be at odds with the paradigm from which Marsh and Stafford (1988) claim the dominant educational rationale and privileged curriculum “factory-production metaphor” (p. 50) currently arises. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) conclude for a full life, what is worth being framed by is a place in the biblical story and that to be fully human is to “embody the good news that God is restoring the creation” (p. 66).

Wright (2010) therefore maintains that to be “ethical” is an aspect of a “God-reflecting vocation” (p. 71) and suggests this is summed up in “the fundamental character of the
person who is anticipating in the present, by patient and careful moral discipline, the goal of genuine humanity which is set before us.” (p. 137). Wright (2013c) labels such thinking as ‘eschatological ethics’ whose “purpose has to do with the present development of character” (p. 1048). The integrating idea of New Creation considers the future expectation to be the determinant for present action, making possible a reconsideration of the aims and purpose of schooling. This suggests that human identity, being and doing, has the potential to take on renewed learning significance when seen in the light of God’s plan for the New Creation.

Therefore, in New Creation, Christians in schooling also have an alternative vision of human flourishing made possible through an eschatological ethic. A New Creation reading has the capacity to frame with purpose from beginning to end a story about God and human renewal on a restored earth. A different educational hope is made plausible when God is understood as being at work with a particular character as key to his plan. An understanding of the person is revalued by the interest that the work of God invests. New creation is a way of understanding ‘good’, as becoming the person one was meant to be in relation to God. Wright (2010) states, the offer is presented:

- to be encouraged and excited by the pursuit of virtue in its specifically Christian form, and to have their character shaped, together and individually, to become the human beings God meant us to be, which means being concerned primarily with worship and mission and with the formation of our own character as a vital means to that double end. (x)

Biblically it is understood that ‘all things’, (Colossians 1:17-20) are to be renewed by God’s ethic. All categories, for the human are potentially put under review in the light of a
theology of New Creation. Wright (2010) contends that the New Testament in particular “invites its readers to learn how to be human in a particular way” (p. 18). The steady development of the New Creation character through deciding to act virtuously with courage, restraint, judgment and determination represents what is worth learning. A theology of New Creation is then imbued with the development of character with the person as ‘conformed’ to the virtuous shape that God has described. Wright (2008) maintains that “The risen Jesus is both the model for the Christian’s future body and the means by which it comes about” (p. 149). Hays (1997) adds “an unimpeachable truth about the development of character: People learn from role models” (p. 74). In new creation, the Christ-like character is presented as foundational to an understanding of the person. The model given is Jesus. This is whom humanity is given to emulate as the fully human. In highlighting the imitative power of modeling Herdt (2008) concludes:

virtue is imitative rather than original, while nevertheless being reflective of the distinctiveness of each individual character and each particular social and historical context – at the same time mimetic and authentic. This approach appreciates how human persons transform their character through their actions, becoming the personae they enact, but enabled so to act by the power exercised over them by attractive exemplars. (p. 344)

Wright (2010) also maintains that this represents a teleologically orientated ethic and that “The habits of heart we need to learn in the present are those which will take hold of Jesus’ accomplishment and make it their own” (2010, p. 131).

Such a way of being ethical sits counter to dominant educational discourse that reflects contextualisation as a rationale for determining values from surrounding circumstances.
Here, based upon a narrative ‘outside ourselves’, is a new way of being human compared with contextually circumscribed versions of secular humanist and possibly dispensationalist thought. This is a call to live, as Wright (2010) maintains Paul might say is, “to develop in the present, the character which will truly anticipate the life of the coming age” (p. 142). A theology of New Creation presupposes that the present context is to be renewed by anticipated reference to God’s greater good purpose.

The idea of good then is seen to be relative to the character God proposes and all virtue is to reflect the character of God. The range of virtues is infinite, inextricably interrelated and are to permeate the character of New Creation. The development of character within the biblical narrative “invites its readers to learn how to be human in a particular way” (Wright, 2010, p. 18). It is suggested that the biblical narrative therefore foregrounds virtue as essential to the New Creation. The foundational biblical goal becomes "the renewed humanity which at last truly reflects God’s image". Elsewhere Wright (2010) describes this as an "eschatologically driven virtue ethic" a, "fresh vision of the habits of life by which humans can live in the present as a people shaped by the future" (p. 172). Therefore, a third implication for Christian school curriculum emerges as New Creation Theology anchors human virtue and character in the good God.

**Proposition 3: New Creation sources human virtue through the good God**

**The implications of the New Creation for the Australian Curriculum**

A theology of New Creation centred upon the plan of God demonstrates a divergent teleology from current human centred goals for schooling. The educational vision of The Melbourne Declaration, as foundational to an Australian Curriculum, leads in essence to the continued promotion of consumerism. The core assumption is that schooling will then
adopt the role of fitting the person to that goal. Christian schooling in Australia, attempting to shape the person according to a perception that centres on God and his purpose, will therefore enter into competition with the authorised dominant discourse centred on the human as a consumer. Christian schooling in Australia, if it claims a better calling, has to challenge foundationally the ‘force feeding’ of economic growth and material progress as representing a fulfilled way of existence. Such a legitimated message may become strident and prescriptive if changes in climate, pollution and resource depletion along with overpopulation impose on these foundational materialist hopes.

Assadourian (2010) in his observations regarding the inevitable fall of consumer cultures confirms the dangers of continuing to promote the consumerist way of life. He maintains:

Preventing the collapse of human civilization requires nothing less than a wholesale transformation of dominant cultural patterns. This transformation would reject consumerism—the cultural orientation that leads people to find meaning, contentment, and acceptance through what they consume—as taboo and establish in its place a new cultural framework centered on sustainability. (p. 3)

While recognising and detailing the deleterious effects of consumerism, such a conclusion remains centred on human efforts to “redirect the momentum of consumerism and provide a vision of a sustainable future that appeals to everyone” (Assadourian, 2010, p. 20). As suggested in the previous chapter the inertia of the Western cultural narrative shaping education may only be revised by an unappealing austerity imposed through a radical reduction in available resources. The world of the near future already appears unlike the Australian educational mantra of economic prosperity where the needs of billions outweigh the means to provide a materialistic nirvana for the relative few.
The Melbourne Declaration, as an attempt to resuscitate the modernist utopian myth of secular progress appears to offer little more than an ideology of unmitigated consumption. New Creation proposes that any story excising the possibility of God and deifying the human eventually ends problematically. The resulting divided and weakened person expected to maintain the irreconcilable positions of growth and sustainability may lack capacity, resilience and depth. Therefore, a theology of New Creation highlights that the person of contemporary Australian culture as encapsulated in The Melbourne Declaration may have little effective future.

New Creation also challenges a Dispensationalist reading of scripture that results in sudden rescue from a sick and dying earth through an idea known as ‘the rapture’. A Christian thought-world that facilitates departure may unwittingly feed a Christianised version of consumerist affirmation that results in a detachment from responsibility and care for the earth. The idea that God’s plan involves removal of the ‘saved’ individual from the destruction of the remaining debris for an ethereal space in a distant heaven appears incompatible with a theology as comprehensive as New Creation. As such, the rapture ideology may represent a dualist disconnection from an incarnational life characterised by neo-gnostic readiness to depart both body and earth that cultivates what could be described as an epistemology of the elsewhere.

New Creation functions from within a set of values and attitudes derived from the transcendent that are manifested in a ‘present’ community. It appears that through the idea of the New Creation as the fully human that God intends to transform the person and restore the world. Therefore, New Creation stresses the importance of transformation of the person by God for the good of the earth. As the present dream of Western consumer
civilisation inevitably fades, the possibility of the New Creation may present a better hope to fill an emerging epistemological vacuum.

**Conclusion**

The idea of the New Creation as a person forged in relationship with God, through a biblical worldview provides a contrast to an understanding of the person framed through *The Melbourne Declaration*. New Creation shifts focus from the human to the narrative of a wise and intentional God and their purpose understood biblically. New Creation in commencing with God as understoodbiblically claims to present a powerful vision of the nature and destiny of the person.

Such a human is invited into envisioning God, the world and history from within a biblical worldview summarised by three foundational propositions framed to address what might be absent about the person in an Australian Curriculum grounded in a scientific worldview.

1. If *Human identity is fully established in a relationship with God* then curriculum for Christian schools is to include assisting students to understand and develop an identity in relation to God’s intentions.

2. If *Human nature and destiny finds resolution in New Creation* then central to curriculum for Christian schools is opportunity for the development of a biblical worldview whose focus culminates in New Creation.

3. If *New Creation sources human virtue through the good God* then curriculum for Christian schools is encouraged to cultivate a community of practice reflecting such origins.
A theology of New Creation foregrounds God’s good, creational, covenental and holy character among the infinite categories defining a person. Human flourishing is then a reflection of the person referenced against the immeasurability of God and his plan to renew all things. New Creation theology seeks to reframe the quality of the person in the present in terms of a future ethical state. The radical suggestion that emerges from a theology of New Creation is that God has a particular person, worldview and community in mind that he intends to produce. This challenges a materialist understanding of reality, what it means to be human and, for the sake of this study, the purpose of the Australian Curriculum.

Given that Christian schools in Australia face the daunting task of fulfilling the requirements of the Australian Curriculum, how well are they at the same time to reflect the perspectives of Christian faith such as in Wright’s New Creation Theology? A discussion of this question forms the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4 – Critique of Some Christian School Practice

Introduction

This chapter asks if curriculum practice in some Australian Christian schools meets the promise of New Creation theology?

Australian Christian schooling practice in the light of New Creation

New Creation claims to encapsulate a God shaped understanding of personhood. The possibility of the New Creation implies that to be fully human is to practice an incarnational life as a qualitative reflection of immaterial reality as integral to the material world. The claim includes the finite, fallible and flawed person refined through a biblical worldview might develop a capacity to critically appraise other ideas about the human condition at work in the world with resources contributed by revelation from outside human rendering. Hays (1999) maintains that such an overarching moral vision of the person called to be God’s New Creation makes possible a “future hope essential to the critique of the present order” (p. 179). A contribution New Creation makes to The Melbourne Declaration includes calling into question aspects of the legitimated discourse regarding human formation through a limited range of economic and social descriptors. Through legislation, The Melbourne Declaration establishes in the Australian Curriculum materialist expectations to be reflected through the schooling process. The endorsed outline of the person is understood as authorised through government legislation, the process of registration and government funding for delivery in Australian schools through the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum could then be said to make concrete and normative the formation of the person as a human capital instrument to underwrite progress as an essential economic purpose justified by scientific and technological means. The idea of New Creation suggests that a person grounded exclusively by thought and practice in a
world that equates growth with ‘economic progress’ as a measure of fulfillment will by omission be seriously deficient. The Melbourne Declaration and by extension the Australian Curriculum therefore might represent the reduction of the potential for the person to live the more rounded ‘good’ life of the New Creation.

The sanctioned understanding of the person expected by implementation through the Australian Curriculum is potentially called into question by a biblical worldview when culminating in New Creation. Christian schools that implement the Australian Curriculum without critique that includes the nature of the person being facilitated may thereby inadvertently endorse and nurture what could be considered the less than fully human. The core intent of The Melbourne Declaration in facilitating a particular understanding of the person also predisposes that the character of the institution established reflects the person intended. Naugle (2004) confirms such a possibility by observing, "naturalism and Christian theism as alternative worldview frameworks are going to make a great difference in the character of an educational institution" (p. 20). Such is the power of the ideas about the person embedded in the curriculum that it too could be said to pervade the fabric, form and function of the schooling process. If within curriculum is presented an iteration of the person who reflects and reinforces the schooling process serious implications arise about the effectiveness in re-forming the person if no change is made to the system.

Consequently, the way in which schools enact curriculum through syllabus, policies and programs can contribute to the deep purpose of schooling as part of the formation of the person. The ideology of The Melbourne Declaration as a direct endorsement of consumer culture might therefore with subtle force facilitate a particular person through the established practices of Australian schools. Smith (2013) confirms such influence by observing that “imagination is contested ground, pulled and wooed and shaped by
competing stories about “the good life,” tempted and attracted by affective pictures of what counts as “flourishing” (p. 162). This chapter seeks to identify possible impact of such legitimated frameworks upon practices for Christian education and the implication this might have on establishing a different person. The propositions previously distilled from the contrasting idea of New Creation that relate to human identity, flourishing and character might be expected to be placed under considerable pressure from the legitimated curriculum.

In his discussion of the challenge which is presented to the historical world by Jesus as the fully human, Wright (1999) reminds Christians that three basic positions can be taken regarding adopting a stance towards empires or in this case a legitimated ‘system’ of schooling. He observed that even in first century Palestine contrasting positions were taken up in the culture against the established order that was the Roman Empire. He cautions

> The way of Christian witness is neither the way of quietist withdrawal, nor the way of Herodian compromise, nor the way of angry militant zeal. It is the way of being in Christ, in the Spirit, at the place where the world is in pain, so that the healing love of God may be brought to bear at that point. (p. 189)

From this observation, three broad categories of withdrawal, compromise and emotional pain as possible anger and frustration emerge that might assist in this study. The relative power of Australian educational forces presumably shapes the relatively small Christian schooling sector with pressures embedded within curriculum intent. For the sake of this argument, if the Australian Curriculum is uncritically implemented, the impact upon some Australian Christian schools, it is proposed, will result in isolation of a distinct identity, collusion with the surrounding culture and hence nullification of a stronger vision.
Christians in education by implication are encouraged to identify contested cultural ground and act restoratively wherever human flourishing is under pressure. Van Brummelen (1986) maintains that for a form of schooling to be considered Christian implies critical engagement with the surrounding culture whose purpose includes transformation. This is to take place at the point of greatest cultural pain and challenges where being human departs from an understanding of the person as perceived by God. To withdraw quietly, or comply with the status quo without critique or react in anger or emotional frustration are actions that might indicate the vision of the person, worldview and sense of community are diffuse and therefore prone to weakening by pressure from more powerful forces.

For the purposes of this discussion and the impact of curriculum, these categories are taken as pressure points about the person within some Australian Christian schools. The pressure to withdraw into educational isolation, to compromise with curriculum may tend to frustrate and nullify attempts to counter curriculum assumptions. It is through the ideas of isolation, collusion and nullification that an understanding of how Australian Christian Schools fall short in terms of the New Creation will be discussed.

**The Melbourne Declaration as isolating the Christian in Schooling**

This study has proposed that through *The Melbourne Declaration* the Australian Curriculum represents a vehicle that implicitly frames and therefore endorses an understanding of the person. If there is merit in this idea then from within the secular scientific worldview of the Australian Curriculum the person privileged as an autonomous entity in a material world is disclosed with assurance. The person of *The Melbourne Declaration* is presented as positive, complete and connected whereas, the New Creation suggests such a person has limited hope and without an identity framed by God may result in the less than fully human. If the proposition formed in the previous chapter that if *human*
identity is only adequately established in relationship with God has any merit then serious deficiencies are exposed in the narrative of The Melbourne Declaration. The person facilitated by The Melbourne Declaration could be understand as potentially isolated through the schooling process from the possibility of developing an understanding of reality apart from within a scientific worldview. For Christian schooling in Australia, the problem in such marginalisation creates barriers to framing an alternative vision of the person.

The claim is that cumulative pressure of an authorised identity as encapsulated in The Melbourne Declaration creates a particular reified place and time that isolates a Christian vision of the person. Marsden (1994) demonstrated through his study of Harvard and Yale, the process of isolation, collusion and nullification at an institutional level can take place within three generations. What has been described as movement from protestant establishment to established nonbelief results he concludes from the privileging of “purely naturalistic and materialistic worldviews” (p. 430). By extension, it could be understood that the worldview promoted by The Melbourne Declaration creates the conditions where such an isolating process might be amplified. Christian schooling in Australia if the person of The Melbourne Declaration is uncritically adopted might result in the isolation of an alternative understanding of personhood. For those in Christian schooling implementing the person of the Australian Curriculum could be by omission contributing to the weakening of the person as understood biblically. Australian educators in Christian schooling such as (Hanscamp, 2010) identify this challenge to the core business presented by curriculum as like a bakery pretending to make bread. For Christian educators to deliver the loaf of bread that is intent of The Melbourne Declaration may circumscribe the delivery of the bread that includes a biblical understanding of what it means to be human. Christian schooling in
Australia through *The Melbourne Declaration* may be required to use the wrong recipe for the preparation of the person.

In an investigation into the challenges of maintaining distinctively Christian institutional cultures, Iselin (2009) concludes that it is only the “cultivation of a generational embodiment of core cultural vision and values, will ensure that a lasting and living legacy remains within our Christian schools” (p. 22). Through the work of Burtchaell (1998) and Marsden (1994) the warning of the short journey of institutions from founding vision to secularisation is elaborated. Iselin (2009) counsels, “the price of sustaining distinctly Christian educational cultures must be ‘eternal vigilance’ to core cultural vision, values and identity.” (p. 20). The issue within Christian schooling and *The Melbourne Declaration* becomes about who sustains the stronger vision in the life of the person and the mind of the institution. For the sustaining of Christian schooling in Australia it may be that there is required a clear understanding of the person being delivered. Once the vision of and for the person is weakened, so presumably is the need for a biblical definition until the character of the institution reflects fully the prescription of the material culture. Once the defining ‘text’ is marginalised, a particular understanding of the person is isolated then the replacement of a more privileged vision would appear inevitable. It could be concluded that the effect of *The Melbourne Declaration* on Christian schooling is that it isolates any understanding of the person other than that facilitated by materialism. Through the dualist breach reinforced by *The Melbourne Declaration*, the only space remaining for understanding the person for Christian schooling appears to be a personal faith formed outside the schooling process.

Thompson (2003) confirms from his research that within schools seeking to be Bible-based there is a distinct inability to teach effectively from biblical foundations. He argues that
curriculum pressure results in the Bible being reduced to “a source book of decontextualised statements” (p. 301). He comments that:

In attempting to practice education that is Bible-based, and in establishing schools that intend to be bible-based, Christian educators are not only proceeding in a fashion diametrically opposed to mainstream Australian culture; they are also behaving in a way that is counter to the Christian sub-culture, in which, as respondents frequently recognised, the use of the Bible as the basis for belief and action is largely devotional by nature, and frequently untrue to the Bible itself. (p. 303)

Thompson (2003) concludes unless educators move beyond largely tokenistic biblical application then “Bible-based Christian schooling faces a bleak future” (p. 320) and he recommends that, along with honesty, the greatest need for these schools is to “receive effective training in how to read, study and reflect on the Bible as the basis for life and the practice of education” (p. 304). Therefore, Christians in education are called to recognise that the source of understanding about the nature and destiny of the person are being pushed to the margins by the power of the authorised curriculum. This suggests that unless the biblical narrative can be restored as the text that contributes authentically to an understanding of the fully human then the future of Christian schooling in Australia, as a distinctive schooling model may be short term.

Jones (2003) claims the fault to be within the wider community stating “we have lost a sense of the Bible as a (or the) central text in the formation of Christian character and identity” (p. 144). He further contends that people have lost a “rich familiarity with ruled patterns for reading and embodying scripture” (p. 145) and that this failure is compounded
by less reading of the text, further reducing the capacity to draw out understanding of any plan larger than personal application.

In effect, the Australian Curriculum if it draws exclusively on the worldview of *The Melbourne Declaration* enacts a script that may isolate the person from hearing anything except the materialist narrative. Brueggemann (2004) in his critique of Western ideology through ‘19 Theses’ maintains that the “technological, therapeutic, consumer militarism” (p. 1) is a misleading script that has to be renounced. If *The Melbourne Declaration* represents a script for the Australian Curriculum to socialise the next generation into consumerist practice, so it appears for its survival Christian Education needs to subvert the rendering of the person through *The Melbourne Declaration* with an alternative script that activates a transformational vision such as on offer in the idea of New Creation.

These ideas suggest that a viable Christian schooling is to be ‘scripted’ and thereby sustained only through living out a biblical worldview that equips for comparative critical engagement. Naugle (2009) makes the observation that, “God’s existence changes everything hermeneutically” and suggests that “the Logos of God is the foundation and reference point by which to interpret the world truthfully” (p. 25). This implies for curriculum in Christian schooling that keeping God at the centre of the educational narrative requires constant vigilance. Smith (2013) acknowledges this need includes a “re-story-ing” of the person through the biblical narrative. *The Melbourne Declaration* could be said to act as a mechanism that acts to lock out of the Australian Curriculum the possibility of a controlling narrative apart from the one it privileges. This suggests that Christian schooling in Australia would benefit from a stronger sense of identity based in a better narrative otherwise the person promoted by *The Melbourne Declaration* may eventually prove overwhelming.
This study proposes that the idea of New Creation offers Christian schooling in Australia the means to establish a stronger vision of the person as the means to counter the isolating power of *The Melbourne Declaration*.

**The pressure on Christian Schooling to collude with *The Melbourne Declaration***

The excluding effect of the possible expression of an alternative to the person facilitated by *The Melbourne Declaration* implies compromise is expected on the part of Christian schooling. Students who attend a form of Christian school in Australia generally operate within a structural and administrative framework common to schooling. In using similar authorised curriculum frameworks, certain common practices emerge. Anecdotally there is a comparable use of timetables, groupings by age and stage, expected outcomes and achievement standards. The processes are grounded in a defined space with architectural expectations and common rules of governance. The functional expectations about schools are part of the mental fabric of contemporary Australian culture. Schools take up a particular physical form that denotes their function and are an expected part of the Australian landscape and psyche. Schooling as a process has become an expected rite of passage through which students pass on their way to a life that contributes to the culture and from which the schooling model emerges. In an earlier chapter, education was likened to a ladder climbed by the motivation of the reward promised. The higher up the ladder of educational achievement a student climbs the more assured they are of the possibility of being rewarded economically. The greater their economic potential the higher their value to a consumer culture as a cog to keep the consumer ‘machinery’ turning. Outwardly, Christian schooling does not depart markedly from the means and methods, the ladders and economic incentives of public schools yet desires to encourage the person to adopt a life
that at the very least includes God. Walsh and Keesmaat (2004) do not think it possible to effectively combine both goals. They ask:

If it is true that schooling is an institution of the modernist progress myth and is preoccupied with quantification, testing, standardization, passivity, docility and consumption resulting in dazed, numbed-out stupefied, disinterested, disempowered and unmotivated population of unthinking consumers, then why are Christians playing this educational game at all? (p. 216)

Such compromising pressure insinuates itself upon the identity and practice of educational institutions, as they struggle with the challenge of turning the heads of the young who are all too willing future ‘customers’ immersed in the powerful narrative of the consuming self at the centre. Those who learn well within such a framework are suitably rewarded in status and material terms, but become, as Smith, Christoffersen, Davidson & Herzog, (2011) conclude, simply “captives to consumerism” (p. 70). Walsh and Keesmaat (2004) support such an insight by claiming Christian schooling overseas has come to ‘play’ a nicer form of the same educational game producing what they describe as little more that “law abiding consumers who always crave more” p. 176). If the task of Christian schooling is to maintain the status quo and be faithful in the implementation of the authorised curriculum then the task appears straightforward. To replicate the person within an Australian form of Christian schooling that satisfies The Melbourne Declaration is according to Faull (2009) not particularly difficult to fulfill providing the question of what sort of person this produces is overlooked. If the unquestioned implementation of the person of The Melbourne Declaration produces compliant, law-abiding citizens then the anecdotal evidence would suggest that at this Christian schooling in Australia appears to excel.
Justins (2002), in his research into the relationships between foundational values and prevailing practices in Christian Parent Controlled (CPC) schools, surmises that "the whole venture of Christian schooling in a culture that has different values, is inherently problematic" (p. 249). The conclusion to his study recognises:

The fundamental task of implementing the foundational values in a CPC school classroom is conceptually difficult for a start. Preparing students for matriculation exams in Physics or Art while at the same time using the Bible as guide and having Christ as central is a complex and demanding task. It would be easy to underestimate the pressure on teachers to ensure not only that students are ready for an external exam, but that students understand and adopt a faith perspective to the particular issue(s) under consideration. Throughout the school, teachers have the responsibility of assisting students to critically consider all aspects of their culture, including for example, the infatuation of many Australians with sport, their attitudes to commemorations such as Anzac day, and their approaches to festivals such as Christmas. This task of critiquing widely accepted icons requires a great deal of insight and cultural sensitivity. (p. 249)

The implication is that for Christian schooling an ability to make more than a superficial difference in the life of a culture let alone that of an individual is limited by the means and methods employed. The potential of Christian schooling appears to be short-circuited by established processes, cultural expectations and the meaning of schooling in the wider culture. Australian schools, as educators understand them and as parents in some cases
expect them, are shaping environments designed to prepare students for the ‘real’ work world in which they will take their productive turn. The formation of the environment reflects the core ideology and unless that idea changes the practice is established, the course is set and the outcome assumed. Such ingrained structural practice suggests that Christian schooling is an environment potentially compromised by systemic demands that take precedence over the possibility of providing a validated biblical understanding of the person in the world.

The explosion of information is taken as one justification of disciplines such as English, Mathematics and Science. The necessary compartmentalisation of knowledge into specialist subject areas tends to constrain learning into the form of artificial isolations. Schools are under increasing pressure to offer a range of ‘subject’ oriented environments that funnel students into work place environment or tertiary education specialisation. Avoiding the perception that education then imposes a judgmental framework that sorts students by ability is difficult to avoid. The factory metaphor of an industrial age and implied machine-like nature of schooling confirm the idea that students risk being seen as a resource shaped for a consumer culture. Clarke (2010) maintains the implementation of the Australian Curriculum will continue to create “huge pressure on the timetable” (p. 28) within Christian Schools leaving little space for developing or practicing an alternative worldview. The current schooling model as endorsed through the scientific worldview of The Melbourne Declaration may exacerbate a pressurised, sometimes stressful, time poor learning environment. The Australian Curriculum may be no more that a technocratic certainty that squeezes the person into a mechanised understanding of the self that privileges their material contribution to an economic system.
The recommendations of Justins (2002) and Clarke (2010) to counter such fragmenting educational pressures include the continued development of relationships, particularly those of parent and teacher. They also call for a clear emphasis upon Christian values and induction into the educational culture through a biblical worldview. One key recommendation is that the Bible be used as a guide to be taught as a separate but integrating subject, with Jesus as central. However, even the review of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2014) recognises that little space remains for articulating and practicing alternative values after the demands of the legitimated curriculum are met. A crowded curriculum creates pressure on educational practice and forecloses on variation from a materialist theme. Hull (1993) maintains the task for Christian teachers in schooling increases in complexity with the attempt to fulfill the legitimated requirement of curriculum when placed alongside an alternative narrative. The difference creates a tension as the task involves a wrestle with a set of alternative values and expectations to that of the dominant culture. This resonates with the task of Christians in schooling and the Australian Curriculum having become a challenge of representing two large stories about the world in competition.

Consequently Hull (1993) in his critique of the deep structure of schooling, concludes that what results is educational environments and practice that are “Christian in atmosphere, and confused in vision” (p. 182). If the idea of New Creation has any substance, such divergent practice implies that to produce consumers is to collude with a system that defines fulfillment as being satisfied with being less than fully human. If as proposed an adequate view of human nature and destiny requires a New Creation perspective then Christian schools are structurally compromised in the ability to deliver on such a promise. The system itself powerfully underpinned through the curriculum commands the time, space
and energy and tends to foreclose on the effective delivery and practice of an effective alternative.

The concept of reification shows the power of ideas as taking up concrete form. Wenger (1999) has highlighted the impact of reification upon the learning environment process. He proposes that education is a transformative process that “concerns the opening of identities” of “exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state” (p. 263). The places in which humans engage and the materials and experience provided are the physical result of ideas that lead to a particular ‘practice’. Smith and Smith (2011) maintain that “an account such as Wenger’s has value for discussion of Christian practices and learning because it provides a systematic framework for exploring how vision becomes embodied in particular educational behaviours” (p. 14), leading to the insight that “practices, then, are not just “things we do”; they do something to us” (p. 15). The essential form of educational institutions carries forward the idea of process and method orienting the person in the direction reflecting the dominant narrative. Bound up in the means and methods, the structure and practices of education are a worldview that orients and contributes to the shape of the person. Hull (1993) in recognition of this problem in the Canadian context argues that the traditional structure of schooling is in his case “inherently problematic as a vehicle for actualising a Reformed Christian Education” (p. 3). He identifies deep structures of Canadian Christian schooling as rooted in the “ideological triad of progressivism, liberalism and democratism” (p. 142). Progressivism is highlighted by Hull as the process in postwar North America that centred education on the child and removed “the Judaeo-Christian tradition as the basic organiser of society and substituted a ‘natural religion’ in its place” (p. 145). Hull argues that Liberalism also reinforces a dualist mentality of personal values and autonomy and that school has become a place that reinforces inequality in the name of democracy. This triad, according to Hull, remains a “formative and formidable” (p.
150) source of deep structural values within education. They form a “matrix of myths that is the Enlightenment tradition” (p. 157), holding a conceptualisation of schooling in its ‘distorting’ grip. He recommends reform will only come from within by increments from a clear vision to which all are committed. Such thinking underlines the impact of ideas on the structure of educational systems and confirms that the models and means of education as the reified objects represent the framing of reality that orient the person. Such thinking contributes to confirming the idea that The Melbourne Declaration reinforces to Christians involved in schooling existing patterns and models, whose physical structures and routines represent deeper ‘structures’, continue to powerfully orient a person to conform to such a way of understanding the world. As such, Christian schooling in Australia comes under similar pressure to collude with the person of The Melbourne Declaration through the schooling model and its particular practices. Unquestioned compliance expected with the worldview of The Melbourne Declaration gives precedence to the status quo to which Christian schooling is forced to collude. The existing patterns and practices demanding the time and energy of the Christian educator in schooling appears to leave little time except to implement the curriculum as delivered.

**The nullification of Christian Schooling by The Melbourne Declaration**

It could be said that what has resulted from the progressive disparagement of a reality outside the material world since the enlightenment is the nullification of any ideas outside a scientific worldview being taken seriously. The isolating effect of The Melbourne Declaration occurs through the constriction of an understanding of the person down to a scientific worldview. In this discussion the chief block set up by a materialist construct is the capacity for the character of the person to be identified with the God of the Bible except as an expression of personal faith. The cumulative power of the materialist worldview as
represented through the schooling model has come to privilege a particular industrial model of schooling that shapes students for a way of life based in materiality. If Christian schooling is forced to compromise with the models of schooling through legislation and registration, so too it might be left with little option but to collude in the process of privileging the person of *The Melbourne Declaration*. This might lead progressively to the nullification of even the possibility of being able to deliver an alternative rendering of the person. The complex machinery of the Australian schooling model has come to represent a seemingly impervious mechanism of which Christian schooling is but a small cog obediently at work facilitating the person of *The Melbourne Declaration*. This might mean that efforts towards changing the system may prove to be a futile exercise leading to frustration.

If as previously argued *New Creation theology anchors human virtue and character in the good God* then with *The Melbourne Declaration* comes the possible nullification of defining the person except through a material context. The possibility of a measure of the person outside a secular materialist context is therefore deflected by and diluted through *The Melbourne Declaration*. To comply appears natural, as what has been rendered unnecessary is the possibility of offering an understanding of person other than through the legitimated discourse of *The Melbourne Declaration*.

**The cumulative impact of the person facilitated by *The Melbourne Declaration***

*The Melbourne Declaration*, as a foundation for the Australian Curriculum, and the biblical idea of New Creation seek to facilitate a particular understanding of the person. *The Melbourne Declaration* has central the development of the person from a material context whereas the idea of New Creation contends that the formation of the fully human has to do with a reflection into the material of an understanding about God as critical to human
identity. A theology of New Creation is posited as offering a better understanding of the sort of person needed for an uncertain future.

The systems developed by the human including language to bring order to time and space are among the means of defining and managing reality. Such processes and procedures take concrete form that reflect and reinforce the thought and practice in shaping and orientating the person. The outcome of a legitimised conceptualisation of the person results from, and reinforces, the framework established. Australian schooling through the power of the ideas about the person embedded in *The Melbourne Declaration* may quarantine and annul any alternative defining text. Acting as a template for an understanding of the person, these shaping forces work to present produce the ‘good life’ framed materially to the exclusion of the fully human framed by God.

The legitimating curriculum establishes an authorised framework that facilitates a reductionist view of the person who is rewarded as the informed consumer. Schooling if framed by New Creation would wrestle with the combined metanarrative influences of informationism, consumerism, and industrial modes of schooling as derived from an Enlightenment worldview that actively sustains the established separation between science and faith. Such pervasive fundamental influences now institutionalised make the task of schooling that is Christian to be a contest for the heart and mind of the person weighted in the favour of the established order. The claim is that the cumulative effect of *The Melbourne Declaration* in legitimating for curriculum of a particular understanding of the person creates barriers to the realisation of an alternative rendering of the person. Consequently, the current models of education may reinforce a divided person with a split vision that restricts the development of the fully human New Creation character.
Conclusion

The idea of New Creation suggests the cumulative effect of *The Melbourne Declaration* on Christian schooling through collusion with the surrounding culture effectively neutralises the formation of the fully human. Therefore, through the core intent of *The Melbourne Declaration*, the vision and practice of Christian schooling in Australia might be potentially weakened.

The next chapter proposes by way of practical steps based upon the idea of New Creation how Christians in education may offer up a reframing of the human through a redemptive enactment of the Australian Curriculum.
CHAPTER 5 – Some Guidelines for Christian Schools

Introduction

This chapter highlights implications emerging from the idea of New Creation theology that might guide the curriculum goals and objectives in some Australian Christian schools.

This study has argued that based upon *The Melbourne Declaration* the Australian Curriculum represents a utilitarian mechanism framing identity through the idea of economic growth as the main outcome of schooling. For Christian schooling in Australia, a theology of New Creation highlights the need for the facilitation of identity that might surpass such a materialist vision as part of a secular humanist curriculum framework.

Roston (2008) has classified this century as the ‘carbon age’ and claims human behaviour through the economic imperative has been over stimulated to unreflectively feast on the resources of the earth at the expense of the generations to come. This study suggests that an overemphasis upon Economism, in that it amplifies the consumerist self, contributes to planetary problems such as overpopulation, habitat destruction, resource depletion and climate change. Consequently, such a perspective may subvert the intention to produce an accountable and responsible person.

This study has suggested that through the idea of New Creation, Christian schooling in Australia may have the potential to enact a stronger understanding of personhood. The premise of the New Creation essentially rests on the idea that God provides, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, an iteration of the means and the model of the fully human. The biblical idea of New Creation includes that to be fully human represents a spiritual affirmation of human embodiment derived from a good God as the means to reflect his character into the world. Based upon the implications of a theology of New Creation this
chapter offers some guidelines to Christian schooling in Australia with regard to identity, worldview and community as projected through the Australian Curriculum.

**Curriculum purpose for Australian Christian Schooling in the light of New Creation**

The idea of overarching purpose within the biblical narrative could be encapsulated in the understanding that God has a plan for the restoration of all things. It is the key idea that all creation, the earth and the humans within, have the capacity to be made ‘new’ that might motivate an alternative perspective for Christian schooling with regard to the Australian Curriculum. A theology of New Creation highlights that the plan and purpose of God includes solving the ‘problem’ of the human. The biblical narrative concludes with such a confident hope

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:3-5).

Such a climax presents an image of the presence of God as the authoritative solution to the human condition that includes the elimination of death, grief, tears and suffering. The impetus of the biblical narrative therefore identifies the presence of God as critical to the fulfillment of human nature and destiny. Cole (2013) in his analysis of incarnation confirms as much with the thought that “in a nutshell God from the start has created with the end in view of living with the creature in his image” (p. 37). The idea of New Creation as God’s imperative highlights the divergent nature of the worldview underpinning the Australian Curriculum whose goal is to establish the person through materiality. A theology of New
Creation therefore contrasts markedly with the observation by White (1998) that preaced this study regarding the purpose of the metanarrative of modern times whose outcome is the self-made, self-sufficient human being. The implication is that such disparate goals denote and enact a different person.

The presupposition of *The Melbourne Declaration* is that the material context and a limited range of economically beneficial descriptors or ‘new demands’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) represent the primary source for the establishment of an adequate identity. With such a limited framework, it has been argued, comes a propensity to amplify expectations for and about the person out of proportion to the capacity of the material context to deliver. Beale (2008) in his study highlighting the importance of identity and how it is established concludes “what we revere is what we resemble, either for ruin or restoration’ (p. 16, p.311). Wright (2006c) maintains for the Christian in worshipping God two important principles are at work. First, “you become like what you worship” and that given it is God whom is worshipped then such “worship makes you more truly human” (p. 127). Such highlighting of an end proposed by God’s presence compared to the self-made, self-sufficient human being points to a need for enlargement of Christian schooling expectations beyond materialist ‘means and methods’ of the Australian Curriculum.

As concluded in Chapter 3 a theology of New Creation might assist in the process of enhancing the person at the core of curriculum for Australian Christian schooling. A theology of New Creation highlights three interlocking practices that might facilitate establishment of a person re-aligned within the purposes of God.

Firstly, if *Human identity is fully established in relationship with God* then curriculum for Christian schools is to include the means to assist students to have modelled and practice emulating an identity in relation to God’s character and intentions.
Secondly, as *Human nature and destiny finds resolution in New Creation* then central to curriculum for Christian schools is the need for opportunities to be oriented within a biblical worldview whose goal includes the idea of New Creation.

Thirdly, as *New Creation sources human virtue through the good God* then curriculum for Christian schools is to cultivate a community whose practice reflects the character of God implicit in such a plan and purpose.

Practices whose focus is renewal of the person through orientation within a theology of New Creation are outlined as signposts to those in Christian schooling whose responsibilities include the delivery of the Australian Curriculum.

**Work to establish human identity in a relationship with God**

If from a comparative analysis of *The Melbourne Declaration* a divergent understanding of the person emerges then for Christians in Australian schooling there is a restorative work in which to participate. A theology of New Creation suggests human identity has the capacity for a more mature expression when the primary guiding principle is participation in a relationship with God in the light of his nature and purpose.

Such a claim is implausible from within reality shaped through Enlightenment dualism, as a secular scientific worldview promotes the establishment of the person almost exclusively from within a materialist framework. The claim is *The Melbourne Declaration* privileges such an identity that is authorised for modelling through Australian schooling. The world of the material in being endorsed as the trusted realm positions the immaterial world as relatively inconsequential to the learning process. This presupposes that the idea of establishing identity in relation to an invisible God becomes marginalised as a personal preference. The work of Christian schooling in enacting the limited identity prescribed
within *The Melbourne Declaration* suggests a necessary inclusion in the curriculum process of developing an identity through a relationship with God, which in this case reflects the character and purpose of the New Creation.

For Christians in some sectors of Australian schooling a tension might therefore be highlighted as a biblical orientation of the person diverges from an authorised understanding facilitated through curriculum. Christian schooling in Australia implementing the Australian Curriculum suggests a first essential requirement is a robust iteration of the person through a spiritual source. For this an authoritative narrative alternative for Christian educators is required for the establishment of a stronger identity.

Christian Education in Australia in enacting the Australian curriculum might benefit from a reading of the biblical narrative through the idea of New Creation. When included as an overarching story foregrounding New Creation the material world has the potential to be enhanced and revalued through the reality of the immaterial as defined biblically. Griffiths (1999) frames this process of transformation through religious reading as being textualized. His observation is that the habit of attending ‘religiously’ to a text includes a lifetime of attentive, patient and humble immersion that is repeated and ongoing in order to become a person in relationship with the intent of the text. This process of identity renewal through the Bible might equip Christians to identify and challenge iterations of the person as framed by, in this case, *The Melbourne Declaration*. The critical ingredient in a curriculum process becomes a focus on transforming Christian adults, either parents or teachers reshaped through the biblical text.

Part of the work to establish identity within a biblical framework is to equip the person with the capacity to disrupt and reframe a curriculum rationale grounded in a materialist ontology. This re-establishment of identity that involves biblical re-textualising might
gradually reorient the self-made person toward that of an understanding of the person as being a work of God. Such counter scripting strategies are also considered important by Brueggemann (2005) who claims such are needed to provide “a critical alternative to enmeshments” (p. 22) to what he describes as the destructive script of militant consumerism. Marsden (1997) suggests that even the lessons of graduate training take “ten years of teaching to unlearn” (p. 14). This implies that human identity is the critical element needing renewal in the curriculum process and the place to commence this is in the life of the educator. A strong vision of the self for the Christian educator is considered essential to challenge the person privileged through *The Melbourne Declaration*. Christian schooling might therefore find in a theology of New Creation the most potent model of the fully human through which to be transformed.

Smith (2009) affirms such thought by suggesting schooling is better perceived as a "formative rather than an informative project" (p.18). His proposal includes the emergence of the person as one who learns to worship rightly, a person he describes as "homo liturgicus" (p. 40). His argument highlights the propensity for human worship to veer into distortion. This study suggests *The Melbourne Declaration* contributes to such by inculcating an almost liturgical focus upon materiality. The formative work of being what we worship proposed by Smith (2013) suggests that learners are to shift focus to what he describes as a ‘desire of the Kingdom’. His claim includes that such a person is then prepared for what he describes as a life of “action” (p. 5). The challenge for Christian schooling includes the formation of a different person who lives and acts within the larger goal of God’s renewing purpose. At issue is the training of teachers who enact with uncritical compliance the intent of documents such as *The Melbourne Declaration* who perhaps facilitate a lower materialist horizon and a potentially impoverished person. A theology of New Creation suggests a lived experience with identity shaped by the plan and
purposes of God in renewal might then act as a clarifying filter for Christian schooling with regard to documents such as the Australian Curriculum. The identity of the Christian teacher in relation to the person of The Melbourne Declaration is therefore suggested as a critical factor in the process of reframing curriculum intent.

Such work in re-establishing identity suggested by Wolterstorff in (Wolterstorff, Stronks & Joldersma, 2002) is that for educators the goal becomes "to lead the student into a Christian way of being in the world" (p. 106). This identity he elaborates as being characterised by "responsible, worshipful, and appreciative gratitude" (p. 101). For Wolterstorff schooling for the Christian is an environment to be focused through the idea of ‘shalom’ the complex Hebrew concept that approximates to the peace that comes from a all pervading trusting relationship with God. In a similar vein, Palmer (1993) advocates such an idea by suggesting that Christian schooling becomes a "space in which obedience to truth is practiced" (p. 105). These and other educational thinkers associated with Christian schooling highlight the importance of the quality of the person within the learning process as critical and also imply such a person is best established through identification with God. This resonates with others including Edlin (2014), Spears and Loomis (2009), Stronks and Blomberg (1993) and Van Brummelen (1986, 2002) who also suggest the aim of Christian schooling is best understood as a process to shape the person in the image of God. Their case is made through such concepts as the person being those ‘with a vision’, those who are ‘disciplined’ or the ‘flourishing’ human and that such formation results from direct reference to, and influence by, the purposes of a ‘worthy’ God. There is support for teacher identity to be understood as being a ‘disciple’ of God rather than to the self or materiality as a key outcome of the schooling process. In Christian schooling the teacher is considered an essential representation of the character and purpose of God at work to which role the idea New Creation may bring renewed clarity and authority.
The Melbourne Declaration might not use the concept of making disciples but, as has been argued, such an idea fits the intent of the endorsed shaped person based upon contextual markers within contemporary culture. It has been argued that the way to counteract the narrative of a consumer culture and form of schooling is to develop an alternative approach to the discipline of learning which builds on the assumption that a mature person is shaped by a relationship with God. Such a framework, it has been argued, delivered through the worldview of the curriculum and endorsed by the wider culture represents a formational context that for Christian schooling to challenge requires a strong embodiment of the mature person shaped by a relationship with God. The enacting of an alternative shaping process within such a powerful orientation and established constraints will however require time and space. The Christian teacher re-shaped by the biblical narrative within the idea of a New Creation might in time come to act as the most effective disruptive lens through which curriculum narratives such as The Melbourne Declaration can be reframed. This underlines the importance of the quality of the Christian teacher to the idea of Christian schooling as an environment for modeling as more significant than an arena for the transfer of information.

Hull (2009) confirms the orienting power of curriculum, arguing despite the validity of the concept that no existing Christian curriculum framework has yet to make a significant difference. His reflection confirms this through the observation that, “a learning community needs to live its life to the beat of a different drummer” (p. 167). His reflections acknowledge the essential nature of curriculum as a suggested way of being by also looking beyond the program to the living person. This thought also confirms that flaws in identity will arise if the cultural context is the sole framework to determine curriculum as a means to facilitate the person. Identity formation is highlighted as a key ingredient in the development and delivery of the curriculum. The effectiveness of curriculum in facilitating
the person whose professional development and style can be enriched by immersion in a New Creation perspective.

The power of *The Melbourne Declaration* as an endorsed scripting of the person is difficult to counter, as the forces of cultural endorsement and government legislation present considerable authorising pressure. On one hand, the offer is a life of material well-being and security while the other appears a less glamorous self-denial and restraint, denoting a disciplined life as a negative. The choice to learners within the present schooling model seems obvious unless there is a better model of life that breaks the circuit. How Christian schools navigate between dualist disembodiment as the good life and the economic good life is a challenge to which New Creation may act as a strong alternative when enacted through Christian educators. Christian schooling has to offer through educators a vision of life that resists retreat into gnostic otherworldliness as better than an embodied life. The first step is to establish an identity strong and clear enough that works to reunite the material world with the New Creation intent of the biblical narrative. The first line of guidance offered for Christian schooling in Australia in response to the person facilitated is the value of reframing identity for the Christian educator in terms of what it might mean to live as the New Creation.

**Build human nature and destiny as understood from a New Creation perspective**

Christian Educators in Australia through a theology of New Creation with identity established through God may also have renewed capacity to enhance a biblical worldview. Such an understanding of the self also moves beyond a truncated biblical worldview that represents ‘redemption’ or ‘being saved’ as the conclusion of the biblical process. A reductive end to the narrative of God in terms of personal salvation may reflect dualist influences upon the biblical narrative that foreclose on a more rounded biblical worldview.
of New Creation theology. The idea of imminent departure as the conclusion of God’s plan may also possibly cultivate disengagement from practical involvement in the future of the earth as an embodied representative of God. New Creation as the capstone of a biblical worldview could re-establish human purpose to include being permanently present in restorative relationship with the earth. The continuation of the work of renewal with God through being intentionally present might bring clarity and intensity to the purpose of service within Christian schooling.

This idea of ubiety finds some confirmation through Walsh (1994) who contends that worldview formation “only occurs within the context of community” (p. 11) and that the role of Christianity in Western culture is to be subversive in creating a vision of restorative hope for the world. He elsewhere states, “Christian Education, if it is to be worthy of its name must be transformational in character” (2000, p. 101). Walsh maintains that such an “interpretive community” is to be formed through a “dynamic engagement with scripture” (p. 107) or it too risks falling back into becoming another repressive ideology. This he maintains will be avoided only by “indwelling the biblical narrative of suffering love that we not only allow, but expect, our transformational worldview itself to be continually transformed” (p. 113). Wolters (2009) also endorses such thought with the idea that “worldview thus functions as a hermeneutical key for cultural engagement” (p. 110). This suggests that a learning vision, based upon the biblical narrative to frame a living worldview, might become communal and dynamic if given a clear focus in New Creation. The worldview encapsulated in The Melbourne Declaration, that chains the human to the ‘controlling story’ of consumerism has the potential to be challenged and disrupted by a worldview that defines the human in God and directs the person to understand the self in line with that purpose. Therefore, an identity grounded in an understanding of the person as the New Creation has the potential to be enhanced by establishing the idea of New Creation
as the capstone of a biblical worldview. Through the goal of New Creation, Christian schooling in Australia might be energised to courageously subvert the place and space given to the worldview goals of *The Melbourne Declaration*. The conscious and intentional lived experience, within a biblical worldview crowned by New Creation, is recommended to be developed within Christian schooling curriculum to facilitate presence and permanence.

New Creation implies that the work God has commenced in the renewed person, for the renewal of the earth, is ongoing and elevates human identity by invitation into an honouring partnership. The person of the New Creation is offered capacity to understand the self, as called to live in the present consciously and constructively, at the unresolved and difficult overlap between the material and immaterial realities. Such a person, as a part of being the fully human New Creation, might therefore also be understood as God’s intentional means to re-unify the physical and the spiritual. The Christian Educator whose worldview is crowned and impelled by the idea of New Creation has potential to frame curriculum within the understanding that heaven and earth are to be rejoined. Christian schooling might then be understood as a community where a biblical worldview, crowned by New Creation, can be promoted to facilitate the practice of being a person as present, permanent and potentially a wholly spiritual and physical embodiment.

**Practice reflecting human virtue and character anchored in the good God**

As a theology of New Creation suggests, the essential nature and destiny of the person is most fully defined in relation to God, so too are the behavioural characteristics of such relationship regards imbuing such a community.

The observation by Walsh and Middleton (1984) that Economism has become the “chief idol” (p.138) of the consumer age presupposes that the ethics of such a community will also
be framed in materialist terms. Berry (1993) argues that, in terms of community, what results behaviourally from economic emphasis within a secular scientific worldview is “a culture of displacement” (p. 151). The ethical propensity of the person framed within a consumer culture, without accountability to anybody other than the constructed self, tends to “destroy any place” (p. 22). This suggests that a consumerist culture in relativising and externalising an ethical framework may be insufficient to build lasting community. From within the sealed worldview of The Melbourne Declaration understandings of virtue and character have little option but to be derived from the material realm. The moral self results from a reflection of a communal ethic, partially presented as optional addendum, where it confirms consumerism. As such, community as a self-reinforcing feedback loop may have been established that tends to relativise values and attitudes for individual appropriation within the material framework facilitated by the economic good life. Despite global promotion, a socially constructed reality reflected in the worldview of The Melbourne Declaration may not be able to provide a lasting basis for an ethical person.

A biblical worldview would contend that within an identity established by the character of God comes an ethic that defines and sustains community. Therefore, an understanding and expectation regarding the quality or character of the person in a material world requires reference to the infinitely good character of God. Christian schooling then needs to reflect a community derived from an ethic whose characteristics and qualities are sourced from an understanding of God’s nature as essential to the material world.

Some educational theorists including Theobald and Curtiss (2000) indeed ask “scholars from a range of disciplines . . . what their subject of study might look like if community were substituted for economic gain as the primary human motive” (p. 106). Their vision is for schools to become “a source of community renewal rather than a cause of community
disintegration” (p. 107) and their appeal is to policymakers to “see the sense and urgency of promoting the value of community” (p. 110). This idea generally understood as ‘Communitarianism’ is derived through a concept of ‘situationality’ that understands the immediate material context and conditions as a frame for interpreting reality. Consequently, Gruenewald (2003a) endorses schooling as the arena needed to develop a critical pedagogy of place through which community is to be refined through the ideas of “decolonization and reinhabitation” (p. 4). Gruenewald also “insists” (p. 9) that a communal source outside the school is essential for “unlearning much of what dominant culture and schooling teaches” (p. 9). In place of the colonising forces, the Freirean concept of conscientização is endorsed which essentially means, “becoming more fully human through transforming the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 5). Schooling from this perspective becomes a vehicle for renewing culture and presupposes the capacity to reflect into the culture an image of the person more potent than that offered by the community. New Creation theology implies such that a transformation of the culture and the formation of community will occur most effectively the other way, when identity is framed to reflect the love of a good God into the world for the transformation of community.

For Freire (2000) what was to be challenged about schooling was what he referred to as the “banking concept of education” where “knowledge is a gift bestowed”. He maintained that such schooling simply contributed to a narrative of “sickness” (p. 71). His argument about schooling and community, like the claim of New Creation, is that it tends to diminish the “ontological vocation to be more fully human” (p. 74). Freire saw community as the means whereby what he described as a cycle of oppression would be broken. The Freirean concept of liberation for human authenticity he termed ‘humanization’ ideally resolved through what he termed “dialogic relations” (p. 79). A relational understanding of the person would make possible a critical engagement and transformation of a culture perceived as
oppressive and authoritarian when a respectful or democratic conversation was made. Fundamentally, Shor & Freire (1987) maintained such “critical consciousness begins with an encounter between students and their human capacity to transform the world” (p. 126). Such a view acknowledges the potential distortions that arise within particular ideologies reflected through schooling, as has been argued is the case with The Melbourne Declaration. The merit in such thinking is in identifying the person as an agent of change who, through adopting a countercultural ethic made possible through schooling, might bring transformational change to a community. A theology of New Creation highlights that communitarianism suggests but does not identify a source outside the cultural milieu needed for effective communal change. A theology of New Creation offers the potential for such a community ethos to be established through a relationship with God. Such an ethic flows through a biblical worldview, in order to reflect an infinite range of positive qualities that create difference with regard to the character of God as the means to transform both person and community.

At work in communitarianism is the idea that the power of the group is an adequate change agent with schooling harnessed to serve as the means of such transformation. Such a view presupposes schooling has the capacity to be empowered by a vision of the person other than that reflected by the culture. This study has highlighted that in Australian schooling, cultural conditions determine the shape of the community of which the learning environment becomes a subset. Within a global economic framework, the person framed by the material context may have available a diminished set of ethical options through which cultural change may not be possible.

By contrast, a theology of New Creation implies that the source of community renewal occurs most effectively through the transformation of the person in relationship with God.
Goldsworthy (2012) makes the observation that “God as a communal being is also seen to be a communicating being” (p. 42). This leads to the conclusion that “the communal relationship he creates with human beings reflects his very being” (p. 43). This interdependent idea of community or koinônia is described by Banks (1994) as “participation alongside one another” (p. 57), which “means that each member has a unique role to play yet is also dependent upon everyone else” (p. 60). The idea of New Creation invests the source of virtue in God through which is formed the fully human as a unique and diverse character to reshape community. Volf (1996) describes this flow from a moral God as embracing the “selves we need to be in order to live in harmony with others” (p. 21). The difference for Christian schooling will be through framing an understanding of the person as a virtuous ‘work’ of God who contributes to transformation of community and culture. New Creation suggests human virtue and character are to flow from God through the person as the means to shape community.

Despite this Arendt (1961) maintained that it is not so much the person but the intent of service work through education that becomes “the task of renewing a common world” (p. 196). Claus and Ogden (2004) also maintain that service learning is for “transforming the world into a better place” (p. 70). They also “believe that service learning has an extraordinary potential to engage young people in experiences involving explorations of community and self, critical thinking, democratic activism, and the pursuit of a more just and humane world” (p. 70). Here the idea of service is recognised as contributing to being more fully human, which presumably becomes the catalyst for further improvement in the person. The benefit of service to others has merit for those who serve and for those who receive. To serve, as explained by Arendt (1961) and Claus and Ogden (2004), contributes to breaking down the negative impacts of a self-centered culture and transform the person.
Such thinking, when framed by the idea of New Creation, takes on added significance for Christian schooling and curriculum as reflected by Wright (2008):

The world of new creation is precisely the world of new *creation*; as such, is open to, and indeed eager for, the work of human beings – not to manipulate it with magic tricks nor to be subservient to it as though the world of creation were itself divine but to be its stewards. And stewards need to pay close, minute attention to that of which they are stewards, in order the better to serve it and to enable it to attain its intended fruitfulness. (p. 71)

Schooling from within a biblical perspective ideally represents a counter-cultural vision about service. Service acts as an aspect of worshipping God that ‘transforms’ the person in that they reflect God’s character and purpose into the world. This challenges the flow of ideological forces that emerge from culture in such authorised documents as *The Melbourne Declaration* which amplify disproportionally human effort as the means and method of adequate community renewal. Walsh and Keesmaat (2004) argue the need is to "raise up children who are subversive to the empire" (p. 219). The possibility of this, they maintain, can only occur with an ethic of secession, community and liberation that emerges from the love of God. A theology of New Creation suggests that effective community renewal emerges through practice of virtue and character that is enacted through a relationship with God in line with his purpose.

**Conclusion**

It is claimed *The Melbourne Declaration* forms an ontological framework through which is reflected a socially constructed understanding of community, worldview and the person. The Australian Curriculum might then also represent a vehicle for the endorsement of a
materialistic rendering of the person. The flow of this representation emerges from culturally determined markers to form a humanised worldview in order to establish an autonomous identity. For Christian schooling, unless challenged, this oppositional flow through an authorised curriculum framework has the capacity to dilute efforts to establish human identity through relationship with the God of the Bible.

Therefore, for Christian schools in Australia there exists a wrestling centred on repositioning authority over the establishment of identity. It might be claimed that at work through *The Melbourne Declaration*, is a subtle pervasive framing of identity that orients the person away from the necessity of establishing the self in relation to God.

The idea of New Creation highlights the importance of what the biblical narrative contends is the end that God has in mind. In bringing to the fore the larger goal of the renewal of all things by God to Christian schooling, it is suggested the priority is to nurture lived examples of such an idea. This presumes that the work of Christian schooling in Australia might find, in the renewed person, the strongest antidote to the materialist vision of the Australian Curriculum. The nurture of the Christian teacher in establishing their identity in relation to God is therefore of critical importance, as their lived experience might challenge and invigorate the privileged discourse of *The Melbourne Declaration*.

This, along with the dynamic refinement of worldview resolved in New Creation, will take time and effort to cultivate as a vision that recombines the benefits of the material world with the spiritual. Among the most important tasks for Christian educators in the light of New Creation is the development of a biblical worldview that lives out the idea that heaven and earth will be rejoined. An understanding that the material world will be restored through God denotes that at the object of this process includes an iteration of the human. New Creation offers the potential for what might be understood as a moral universe to
imbue the human condition to produce a community established by God. Christian schooling in the idea of New Creation has a transformational model of the fully human attuned to and aligned with the nature and purpose of God.
CHAPTER 6 – Conclusion

Introduction

This study has been undertaken in order to clarify the goals of curriculum as proposed for Australian schooling through *The Melbourne Declaration* in the light of a theology of New Creation as chiefly elaborated by N T Wright.

The importance of curriculum purpose for Australian Christian schooling

This investigation began in cultural analysis with particular focus on the effect that differing philosophical views of what constitutes a human person have on the subsequent restatement within curriculum theory. The conclusion is that any curriculum rationale will be value-laden and endorse a set of worldview assumptions whose implicit core is an amalgamated distillation of ideas regarding the nature and purpose of the person.

This assumption has been applied to question the adequacy of human personhood presented in *The Melbourne Declaration* for application through the Australian Curriculum. The preamble to this analysis, highlighted ideological trends in Western culture traced back to the 17th century Enlightenment, that still contribute to the forces sustaining dualist tension between categories including science and faith. A specific focus upon *The Melbourne Declaration* as a Curriculum framework essentially disclosed it as a materialist grid privileging Economism to frame the person as human capital fulfilled through a consumerist ‘good’ life. Through omission, due to space and possibly political intent, looming global, environmental and social issues are glossed over for the rendering of a person fulfilled materially through a limited set of economic, technological and scientific descriptors. The result, it has been argued, when human fulfillment and flourishing are tied inexorably to materiality tends to a diminished understanding of the person lacking
essential capacities. Such a conclusion arises from an insider position within an Australian Christian schooling environment where facilitating such a person becomes part of an authorised imposition which effectively constricts the practice of a biblical understanding of the person. As such, the person framed by the mandated Australian Curriculum as an outcome of curriculum purpose represents a serious challenge to the formational aspirations of Christian schooling.

**New Creation as curriculum purpose for Christian schooling in Australia**

An investigation into a theology of New Creation as chiefly expounded by N. T. Wright highlights such challenges by offering a clear alternative for Australian Curriculum practice in Christian schooling. A theology of New Creation, it has been argued, represents a stronger yardstick for a measure of the nature and destiny of the person. New Creation has been proposed as God’s restorative plan for the person and the world. As such, this plan implies that to be fully human begins with identity established in a relationship with God. Identity as the New Creation then acts as the spearhead of a biblical worldview through which a renewed community is to reflect God’s good character into the world. This identity template is offered as the means and method made possible through the person and work of Jesus Christ whose resurrection to a new type of physical life acts as the primary model of the New Creation.

Given the curriculum pressures experienced by some Australian Christian schools, there might be in a theology of New Creation a better hope for their continued viability. Unless challenged the view of the person endorsed by the national curriculum may eventually isolate and nullify their capacity to offer an alternative. The implications of this study include that for Christian schooling in Australia the critical issue is the development of the Christian teacher as an exemplar reflecting the character of the New Creation. The
refinement and strengthening of a biblical worldview whose focus is upon the idea of New Creation as a means to understanding and enacting God’s plan for humans and the earth is an essential development. It is proposed that the person reframed within the lived experience of New Creation will offer the best hope for implementation of the Australian Curriculum within Christian schooling.

Such a robust iteration of the human formed by God as designed and destined for the New Creation might indeed be critical for the future of Christian schooling in Australia. It has been argued this perspective provides a stronger framework for developing such a person when re-oriented towards God’s future. A theology of New Creation also denotes the character and virtue of God who acts through the idea of New Creation in order to bring transformation into community and culture. The implication is that viewing the person in the light of New Creation theology will make the difference when it comes to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum for Christian schooling.

**The idea of New Creation as a future for the human now**

The idea of New Creation brings into view the plan and purpose of God to specifically include an iteration of the person as one who lives in the present at the intersection of heaven and earth. It has been argued that insofar as the Australian Curriculum frames a materialist utilitarianism it then tends to reinforce a dualistic worldview. A theology of New Creation offers Christian schooling the means to heal such an artificial breach by framing the fully human from God’s perspective as derived from a biblical worldview. Christian schooling in Australia through a theology of New Creation with the person formed by God has an opportunity to address the materialist and dualist tendencies of *The Melbourne Declaration*. Under this aspect, Christian schooling has the potential to both reframe and enrich the person suggested through the Australian Curriculum.
Future directions to explore

Further lines of research suggested by this study might include,

1. Given the diminished view of the person reflected in *The Melbourne Declaration*, the challenge for Christian schooling in Australia is to develop in parallel a statement which subsumes its requirements under the larger perspective of New Creation theology as teased out in the present study, while enriching them with goals and values which represent a New Creation.

2. Highlighting how at the core of the curriculum process is an understanding of the nature and destiny of the person also has implications for the professional development of Christian educators. Further work is needed at this level, to develop professional development materials at a tertiary level preparing teachers to instantiate this perspective.

3. In the light of the conceptual groundwork supplied by the present study, work is now needed on the standard learning areas of the Christian school curriculum to examine the presuppositions and practices underlying them; for example, what are the implications of New Creation theology for the teaching of economics?
REFERENCE LIST


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