VALUES IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY AND ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

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1. On Prophesying

Speaking about the future is a very risky business. After all as a theologian I reflect on our biblical heritage which, of course, includes the fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy. Speaking about the future recalls the sober words in Deuteronomy about the prophet who speaks a word in the name of the Lord. If that prophecy does not take place or prove true, then it is a false prophecy and the prophet is to be put to death.[2]

Yet the business of looking into the future and trying to make predictions is one with which we are very familiar in our culture. Science constantly tries to predict in order to test hypotheses. Economists are constantly asked to predict in order that we might take decisions that will maximise our wealth. Prediction is a means to take advantage at the next step.

It was in this tradition that Richard Kew and Roger White published a book five years ago, called *New Millennium New Church. Trends Shaping the Episcopal Church for the Twenty-first Century*. Kew and White go through a series of current trends in the Episcopal Church and seek to identify what those trends will do when projected into the future. Each chapter concludes with a section called, "Trends to Watch". In the Episcopal Church they say the liberal consensus will begin to erode and there will be a ground swell towards credal orthodoxy. The spirituality and formation movement will mushroom. The liturgical movement will come to an end and women will have an increasing profile in the church. Clergy will be very different kinds of people from the current generation and outsiders will flock to the Episcopal Church. There will be a new confidence in evangelism. The continued priority of stewardship and single issue organisations will become more dominant. Networks will arise, hierarchy will decline. We will look forward to a bright bright future. The last sentence in the book about the future declares "these could be vintage years for our grand old church!"[3]

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[1] This paper began life as an address to the annual conference in 1997 of the National Anglican Schools Consultative Committee. I am grateful for the responses of those present to the idea expressed here.

[2] Deut 18.22

[3] R Kew and R White, *New Millennium, New Church. Trends Shaping the Episcopal Church for the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge Mass, 1992, p.170

In the spirit of Deuteronomy I would certainly not like to be Mr Kew or Mr White. They have given too many hostages to fortune. I am more attracted to a different image.

If you walk down Fifth Avenue in Lower New York going past Forty Third Street, almost unawares you come across a huge building which occupies an entire block at Forty Second. Steps lead up to columns, which provide a grand portico entrance to the New York Public Library. It sits there in the middle of the vast bustling city, a testimony to the idea that it is worth reading, thinking and taking time to reflect.

It was in that secure and reflective environment that the wonderfully eloquent and enormously well read Robert Heilbroner, gave a series of lectures sponsored by the New York Public Library entitled *Visions of the Future, the Distant Past, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.* The lectures were given in 1994 and they built in many ways on his Massey Lectures entitled *Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, which were broadcast in November 1992 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The Massey Lectures in 1994 were given by Connor Cruise O'Brien and published under the title, *On the Eve of the Millennium, the Future of Democracy through an Age of Unreason.*[4] Heilbroner and O'Brien, offer different but much more sober estimates of the next century and beyond, than do Richard Kew and Roger White, and they do so on a different basis and according to a different approach.

Robert Heilbroner finished his 1992 Massey Lectures on capitalism by underlining the tensions and failures which are more likely to characterise the future. In that context of restrained pessimism, he said "it will help to have another social destination in our imaginations".[5] That is a theme to which he returned in his New York Public Library Lectures, which explored the way in which conceptions of the future have arisen in human experience. He contrasts the distant past, the two hundred and fifty years since the middle of the eighteenth century and our present circumstances. The last two hundred and fifty years have thought about the future optimistically. In the present he thinks of the future pessimistically. "Today", he says "stands in contrast to yesterday."

> First the future has regained some of the inscrutability it possessed during the distant past. Second the marriage of science and technology has revealed dangerous and de-humanising consequences that were only intuitively glimpsed, not yet experienced by our forebears of yesterday. Third the new socio-economic order proved to be less trustworthy than when it appeared during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

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[4] R Heilbronner, *Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, St Leonards, 1992, C O' Brien, *On The Eve of the Millennium*, New York, 1994, R Heilbronner, *Visions of the Future. The Distant Past, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, New York, 1995.
[5] *Twenty-First Century Capitalism,* p.118

> century. And last, the political spirit of liberation and self determination has gradually lost its inspirational innocence. Hence, the anxiety that is so palpable an aspect of today, is in sharp contrast with both the resignation of the distant past and the optimism of yesterday."[6]

Robert Heilbroner speaks as an agnostic. He sets aside any kind of religious hope, but he does register for his readers, three hopes for the very long term prospects of human kind. The first he says, is indisputable, that humankind must achieve a secure terrestrial base for life.

> We cannot go on, destroying the planet. But the attainment of such civilisational advance, which would enable the planet to be nurtured, is simply not available to us. The necessity of ceaseless accumulation for the capitalist pattern of economic life is destructive of the environment and a new order is necessary. [7]

Secondly he says that "we have to find ways of preserving the human community as a whole against its warlike proclivities." Thirdly, he says "that the distant future must be a time in which the respect for 'human nature' is given the cultural and educational centrality it demands"[8].

Heilbroner is here referring to the need for us to be aware of the complex inner characteristics of our condition,

> of the hidden attractions of both power and submissiveness of the fine line between rationality and paranoia of the Janus-faced character of so many events and the dialectical and psychological unity of so many opposites.

It is important to notice what Heilbroner is doing in these lectures. He is not prophesying in the sense of declaring what will be the future. Rather, he uses a discussion of our thoughts about the future to reflect upon the condition of humanity. In this respect he reminds us of the great utopian tradition in literature. When in 1516 Thomas More wrote *Utopia*, he deposited in our literary tradition a very ambiguous image. Recent More study has shown that *Utopia* is not a statement of the aspirations Thomas More entertained about the future, but rather a very careful, subtle, highly nuanced comment on the political and social circumstances of his day. There are many indirect allusions to the details of his own age, indeed to the politics of his own age scattered throughout *Utopia*. In *Utopia* More was using

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[6] Visions p.118
[7] p.118

the image of a projected different ideal place to comment upon the circumstances of his own day.

This is very different from the kind of prophecy which is prediction to which we have become accustomed in the last two hundred and fifty years from scientists and economists. It is different also from the prophecy which Winston Churchill used to engage in the 1930's. In 1936 he deplored the failure of the allies to resist Hitler's occupation of the demilitarised Rhineland. On 12 November, 1936 in the House of Commons, Churchill deployed all of his careful documentation to show that if he had said two years ago what had been happening in Germany in the last two years would happen, no one would have believed him. Yet here in the public arena it was displayed for all to see. On the basis of his previously proven predictions, he berated the government

> so they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent.[9]

That kind of prediction, in the short term, was the basis for planning and action. That is what Churchill called for and that is what eventually had to happen.

Anyone who is responsible for an organisation or an institution knows very well that that kind of prediction is necessary in order to make sensible plans for the immediate future, to prosecute the purposes for which the organisation exists. That is no less true for schools.

But it is not that kind of prediction with which we are engaged today. Rather, I invite you to consider where we are now in order to ask something about what might motivate and direct us for the future. I undertake that task in the spirit of Robert Heilbroner and Thomas More, and therefore ask that if you invite me back to a conference of this kind in one hundred years time you will not seek to execute me for false prophecy!

2. The Present Watershed - The industrialised West

In western culture generally, and in Anglicanism in Australia in particular, we are at a great watershed in our history.

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[8] p.118

[9] Quoted from *The Speeches of Winston Churchill,* Ed D Cannadine, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1990, p.121

Many in our generation regard the fall of the Berlin wall as the sign of the collapse of the great East European Communist experiment. Yet the difficulties that the eastern empires encountered with their command economies and command social structures have echoes elsewhere in western culture. For two hundred years western culture has been dramatically influenced by the intellectual impulse of the enlightenment, particularly through its children the cultures of science and technology and economic and social rationalism. That modern outlook captured a sense of optimism and progress, a commitment to the future, a sense in which the mind set of science through the instrumentalities of technology, would improve the human condition dramatically.

That scientific mind set however excluded from the public arena much that was important in the human condition. The perceptual aspects of the human experience such as art, religion, and personal values, were relegated to the private arena. Almost certainly because this public private division of the enlightenment did not satisfy the needs of the human condition, the distinction never totally established itself in western culture, and in the last fifty years has encountered significant difficulty.

Liberal Democratic confidence

In 1988 Francis Fukuyama gave a lecture at Chicago University entitled the End of history. It was later published in the Journal, *The National Interest*. It created huge interest, for it argued that the emergence of liberal democracy as the dominant political system in the modern world marked the end of history in the sense of the end of the development of political relationships between human beings. In the book of the same title which was published in 1992, Fukuyama drew attention to the inadequacy of an economic and natural science interpretation of the human condition. The logic of modern science, he said, can explain a great deal about our world, but it is incomplete and unsatisfying "because man is not simply an economic animal. In particular, such interpretations cannot really explain why we are democrats."[10]

Fukuyama turned to the German philosopher, George Hegel, and what he called the struggle for recognition. Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy provides the answer to the question of our desire for recognition and dignity from others. It means the abolition of master and slave as a social and political pattern of relating. It means that each recognises the dignity of the other and the state is the entity which embodies the authority for that recognition.[11]

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[10] F Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, 1992, p. xvi

[11] Compare the treatment of these issues in C Taylor, Sources of the Self, Cambridge, Mass, 1989, A MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?, Notre Dame, 1988 and the recent

Fukuyama interprets the great shift which has taken place in the last fifty years in western culture in terms of a great long term change in the nature of our historical existence. Fukuyama's optimism is reflected in this book and in his more recent book entitled, *Trust*. Broad optimism however ought not to be confused with the recognition that there are continuing challenges and irregularities.

Disquieting Difference

On the other hand, John Lukacs[12] and Eric Hobsbawn, interpret the twentieth century and our present circumstances quite differently. Lukacs draws attention to the presence of tyrannies in the twentieth century, as does Hobsbawn. He looks to the future not in terms of the triumph of mutual recognition under the patronage of liberal democracy, but to a future in which differences are accentuated and tyranny and uncertainty prevail. Lukacs gives a deeply pessimistic interpretation of the present situation in western culture. The same is true of Eric Hobsbawn. He finishes his extraordinary account of the Age of Extremes, that is to say the twentieth century, by saying,

> if humanity is to have a recognisable future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millennium on that basis, we shall fail. And the price of failure, that is to say the alternative to a change of society, is darkness.[13]

Lukacs and Hobsbawn share the sense of unease, even foreboding, which we noticed in O'Brien and Hielbroner.

Similar indications that we are at a watershed can be seen in the literature which is gathered together under the general heading of post modernism. Postmodernism is a term which captures a number of impulses present in our culture. The assertion of the perceptual and the non rational as having a place in the public domain and an individualism which is set against the corporate tyranny of the mentality of natural science. The incorporation of art and creativity into the public curriculum of the universities is a signal expression of the changed position of the old rigorous scientific mentality. That old rigorous scientific mentality has

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critique of Fukuyama J Walter, Tunnel Vision. The Failure of Political Imagination, Sydney, 1996, chapter 3.

[12] J Lukacs, *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age*, New York, 1993,

[13] E Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century*, London, 1995, p. 585

itself been subjected to significant adaptation in of all places, the faculty of physics and in particular, theoretical physics.[14]

3. The Present Watershed - Australia

In the Australian environment, these forces are at work, though not as obviously or in as thorough going a way as in the United States of America. In part that is because Australian civilisation is less obviously a creature of the enlightenment. Within this broader framework of western culture Australia is at its own particular turning point.

Two of Australia's most acute social commentators have recently written at length on our present circumstances. In 1992 Paul Kelly published *The End of Certainty*, and in 1993 Hugh Mackay published *Reinventing Australia*, the first chapter of which was entitled "The Big Angst". Both writers confessed to optimism but both portrayed Australia in the 1990s in terms of anxiety and uncertainty. Mackay's book is the result of extensive social research and Paul Kelly writes form the standpoint of a close observer of day to day politics. In their different ways both writers provide a valuable insight into Australian society and suggest a background to such disturbing Australian statistics as the highest youth suicide rate in the western world.

Paul Kelly[15] suggests that after the establishment of the Commonwealth at the beginning of this century there fell into place what he calls the Australian settlement. There were five elements in this Australian settlement as it came to be the way in which Australia existed up to the 1980s. Those five elements were the White Australia Policy, Protection, Centralised Arbitration of the Labour Market, State Paternalism, and Imperial Benevolence, at first from Britain and subsequently from the United States of America. His book is taken up with a description of the way in which each of these five elements have been undermined and eroded. It is the removal of the foundations of the Australian settlement which provides him with the title of his book *The End of Certainty*. The marks of the future according to Kelly's analysis will be determined by the power of the market and the globalisation of the economy.

Hugh Mackay reaches similar conclusions but by a different route and in regard to different sorts of questions. He analyses a series of topics to show that in the past twenty years the

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[14] Such a re-thinking is most obvious in quantum physics and astro-physics, and can be seen in the writings of Stephen Hawking. For a Christian reflection on these issues the various writings of John Polkinghorne are both accessible and well informed from the point of view of physics and theology. The impact of scientists in the public intellectual arena is a slightly different, but nonetheless related, matter in terms of the shape of our society, for which see the recent overview, J Brockman, *The Third Culture*, New York, 1996.

[15] P Kelly, *The End of Certainty. The Story of the 1980s*, St Leonards, 1992.

social fabric in Australia has been through a process of redefinition. He focuses on gender roles, marriage, the value of work, the use of invisible money, the disappearance of economic egalitarianism, multiculturalism, and the nature of the political system. These changes bring anxiety. The big angst is a symptom of the age of redefinition.

> Since the early 1970s there is hardly an institution or a convention of Australian life which has not been subject to serious challenge or to radical change. The social, cultural,. political and economic landmarks which we have traditionally used as reference points for defining the Australian way of life have either vanished, been eroded or shifted.[16]

These words echo those of Sir Zelman Cowen in 1976 he said "I believe there has come upon us, quite suddenly, an awareness that there is a crisis which in various ways threatens and puts at peril the stability of our society, our institutions, and the liberal values which are cherished by many of us."[17] At the end of his lecture Sir Zelman said "I bring the matter to an end by saying that the fragility of the consensus poses awful dangers and great challenges."[18]

Sir Zelman's reference to institutions and his anxiety was in no small measure influenced by the events of November 1975 and immediately following, but it is noteworthy that both Kelly and Mackay as well as Cowen draw attention to the role of institutions in our society.

4. Institutions and the Culture of the Market

Institutions are important in social life they embody and foster the values which are important in society. Education takes place within the institution of the school. Any change in education must reckon with the institutional context. Institutions presume important values in social relationships. Business enterprises cannot function without a reasonable level of trust and honesty. An institutions which does not rely on these and similar values will eventually operate on the basis of coercion, and that means radical imbalances of power, and ultimately tyrannies of one kind or another. The 1960s and 70s showed how fragile universities were when the values and purposes consensus about the institution collapsed. They could not function.

Institutions are social constructs to sustain continuity through time of agreed values and purposes. When therefore Peter Drucker contemplates the demise of value based institutions and the rise of mere organisations, then, I believe, he is looking down the barrel of a new dark

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[16] H Mackay, *Re-Inventing Australia*, Pymble, 1993, p. 17
[17] Z Cowen, *The Fragile Consensus*, Sydney, 1977, p.2
[18] Cowen, p.20

age, in some ways the same dark age pointed to by Heilbronner, O'Brien, Lukacs and Hobsbawn.[19]

Peter Drucker was concerned with the business corporation and its changing character. I want to draw attention here to the broader social significance of a mentality of economic rationalism and the power of the imagery of the market place. In many respects the business excesses of the 1980s have been put behind us. Many, though not all by any means, have learned that those excesses were unacceptable in a civil society. However, it remains the case that the influence of the imagery of the corporation and of the market place has grown in power and extent in our society. This can be seen in the way in which all sorts of social institutions which exist for intentional purposes now feel compelled to describe their activity in terms of the market, of measurable external transaction costs or benefits.[20]

We are in this respect, I believe, at the high point of a pattern of social life which began a thousand years ago. The transition from feudalism to capitalism took place only gradually and was facilitated by the development of the state as a entity different from the landed and personal relationships that existed in the feudal aristocracy.[21]

The political disruptions at the time of the Reformation not only aided the religious renewal of western Christianity, but gave some parts of the reformation, especially in England, it political and institutional clothing. Weber and others have noted that the individualism of the reformed tradition aided the rise of capitalism in Europe. What is not so often observed is that the transition from feudalism to capitalism begun in the centuries preceding the reformation shaped the social climate and specifically its individualism and thus also that of the reformation. It is not surprising that it was malleable in the hands of the new and rising culture of capitalism.

At first the science of economics was deeply connected to social sciences. Only in the 18th century, marked tentatively and nervously by Adam Smith, did economics become detached from its social roots and constraints.[22] Even in the 19th century the full flourishing of the corporation only became possible when the state accorded to it the concession of limited liability in return for the social benefits arising from the deployment in enterprises of large amounts of capital. The rise of the business corporation, its globalisation, and its multiple

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[19] P Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society*, New York, 1993.
[20] It can also be seen in the way in which corporations have taken over such an influential role in culture and public expression. This has been described and analysed for the United States by H Schiller, *Culture, Inc. The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*, New York, 1989.
[21] R Holton, *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London, 1985.
[22] See BN Kaye, The Real Issue in Business Ethics? Institutional Ethics and the Market Place, *Australian Journal of Management,* 19.1, 1994. 121-133

transmogrifications during the course of the 20th century have made it into one of the most creative and powerful of the institutions of humanity.

However, during the twentieth century the social significance of the business enterprise has been internalised. Limited liability was a social compact to enable the business corporation to deliver goods and services to the community, and internal corporate profits were the motivation and stimulus for the effective promotion of that external purpose. Now we are subjected to a flood of powerful imagery which reverses this situation. In one of the most revolutionary and significant cultural subversions, Milton Friedman declared that the purpose of business is to make profits. What once was the means and stimulus has become the purpose, and the purpose of providing goods and services for the community has become merely the means to this end.

Such a revolution in social thinking was possible only because of the dramatic growth in power of the imagery of the market of measurable outcomes and transactions. Today we see the influence of this imagery in every quarter. What is at stake is not simply a matter of linguistic fashion. The language and imagery we use in time comes to affect the way we understand who we are as individuals and as a society. The reality is that this powerful imagery has the capacity to change the way we think about ourselves and our relationships. It may not lead to the overthrow of long established social institutions, but it will almost certainly erode the way those institutions work, so that they collapse or re-make themselves in the image of a business corporation.[23]

One of the great triumphs of this materialistic imagery is that it colonises the way we think about efficiency and effectiveness. Actually these are quite distinct issues and are found in all sorts of areas of social life besides the corporatised market players. I am not concerned here with the growing power of the business corporation, though that is something to ponder. Rather I am concerned here with the cultural influence of the market place thought of in such rationalised materialistic terms. So powerful has this imagery become that the market seems to operate in our perceptions as living entity, an orgasm that can be the subject of ever more powerful verbs. The impulse to interpret the whole of our public life, let alone the more private aspects of the human condition, in terms of the imagery of the market is a, however, profound threat to our humanity.

Think how hard it is in an independent school to maintain a vision statement which is not in some sense captured by the market forces within which the school is operating. Do not

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[23] See J Saul, *The Unconscious Civilization*, Ringwood, Victoria, 1997 and P Self, *Government by the Market*, London, 1993.

school councils and principals struggle almost daily with the challenge of responding to the accepted power of what are now sometimes called "customers" to have what they want on the one hand, while still in many cases conscious of the fundamental religious and philosophical purposes for which the school was initially founded. In such an environment it has become astonishingly difficult to sustain an intentional institution, such as a school with a religious based and value expressed purpose.

5. Educational Change

In Australia education is going through an extraordinary revolution. In the current period we are experiencing a return to the pattern of the nineteenth century of state sponsored independent education on a large scale. The changes in the recent government budget in regard to grants for the creation of independent schools and their funding via the federal government have capped a process begun twenty-five years ago. This has opened up vast opportunities for grants to be made to all sorts of groups and organisations to establish independent schools. The growth in the independent sector in the last twenty-five years since the Menzies government introduced state aid to private schools has been simply phenomenal. That growth has been focused most particularly in the last eight years.

This very growth brings to the surface the ambiguity of the term "independent". It used to mean those which were not part of the State system and funded from non-state sources, endowments or fees or the labour of religious orders. Now, however, there are in practical terms no schools of this kind left. All receive government funds in some degree. Furthermore, the relationship between the school and the sponsoring body or community is extremely varied and ranges from total control of the running of the details of school life to very wide freedom for the principal and staff. what is really happening in this situation is that schools are often less "independent" than they once were in relation to the state and the real allegiances and obligations of the school are not at all easy to see.

Taken in a broader perspective, two important interactions now appear in the educational arena. Where there is increasing centrifugal activity and bifurcation in the system through the growth of independent schools, there will in time inevitably be a reaction towards some kind of coherence at some level or in some way. We have had hints of that already, with the federal government's interest in a national curriculum. I believe there will be a revival in that interest, as there will be an increase in questions of accountability for government funds given to independent schools. Multiplying independent entities will produce a reaction in a cohering or even controlling direction.

That same principle applies in the general social domain. One of the arguments deployed in the second half of the nineteenth century in favour of increased state involvement in the education system, was that a multiplying of church schools would lead to sectarianism and social division. If the pluralisation of society and its institutions continues then I suspect that there will be a move towards some social assertion of national identity and national sovereignty. Depending on how far and in what way that pluralisation occurs the re-asserted national sovereignty may be more or less attractive to those whose principles move them to be different from their neighbours.

As it becomes increasingly manifest that the church is one player among others in a pluralised society, and where the interface between that society's various institutional expressions of its life becomes more ambiguous, radical lateral thinking will be needed. All Christians are part of Australian society in some sense. Furthermore there are many church related institutions which sit acutely on the interface of Christian values and the changing value environment of the rest of society. Those institutions thus become strategically important not only in terms of their Christian vocation but also in terms of the inevitable re-invention of the church which we face. In some places church communities in new suburbs are being established by starting a school rather than a parish structure, and basing the community with an ordained ministry within the school framework. The school not only creates its own community in relation to which the Christian community can grow, but it also gives that Christian community a necessary point of connection with the wider community and the values conversation which takes place around education. It is an interesting step in the re-invention of the church.

6. Australian Anglicanism

So far what I have tried to argue, is that generally in western culture we are at a watershed. Furthermore, in the Australian environment there are particular colours to the watershed which we are experiencing and they have affected issues to do with Anglicanism in this country which are vitally important for anyone concerned with the Anglican community in its various institutional expressions.

This situation is also complicated by the fact that in Australian Anglicanism we are at an interesting turning point. For the past twenty years the public organisational structure of the church has been the scene of dispute and conflict. The General Synod and our diocesan synods have been marked by debate and dispute on issues to do with the Constitution, the ordination of women as priests and the recent new prayer book. These public debates have

displayed the operation of centrifugal currents. There has been a flight to the edges in regard to the community life of Anglicans as that is expressed in the synodical structure.

However, at the same time here have been less publicised and less observable centripetal currents towards the centre around the core beliefs of being an Australian Anglican. These currents are to some extent represented in this conference. Both Anglican schools and Anglican welfare agencies have been driven towards national liaisons and networks in large measure because of increasing centralisation of government policy upon the federal government. Welfare agencies for the purposes of lobbying for funding and in relation to policy formation have formed themselves into the National Anglican Caring Organisation Network. This conference is organised by the National Anglican Schools Consultative Committee. It is an analogous movement. While these liaisons have been prompted in the main by external policy and fiscal considerations, one of the side effects in both cases has been a growing appreciation of the commonalities of being Australian Anglican institutions. One may also note here the danger that the impulses from Federal Government policy and funding which have contributed to this process in welfare and education, may also influence the culture and dynamics of those schools and agencies. It may be that the economic and organisational, and thus, one must also say, power, considerations will become more marked in ostensibly intentional institutions.

Across our church congregations and communities of people are being transformed by programmes such as Education for Ministry, Cursillo, Catechumenate, Alpha Groups, Christianity Explained. These movements provide points of connection and networks that cross diocesan boundaries, indeed, often do not have any reference to diocesan categories.

The recent National Anglican Conference gave dramatic and visible expression to these centripetal currents in Australian Anglicanism. The Conference made it much more obvious that the visible organisational structures related to the synods, both general and diocesan, do not define adequately what it means to be an Anglican in Australia.

Being an Anglican in Australia is belonging to a community of people who believe certain kinds of things and see themselves in Benedict Anderson's terms an *Imagined Community*.[24] These changes, this reshaping of the national church in terms of a community of people, offers great hope for the future but it complicates significantly the interpretation of our circumstances as Anglicans in a changing Australia and cultural environment. Nonetheless the interpretation of these changes and the developments of a more effective and more

[24] B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1991.

faithful ecclesiology remains one of the urgent and exciting tasks before Australian Anglicans.

7. Challenges for Anglican Schools

Given this lengthy characterisation of our situation I want to highlight three elements which I believe an Anglican school will need to confront in the medium term future. These are matters which confront any school, but are particularly germane for Anglican schools. These challenges have to do with what I will call confidence, what in educational philosophical terms belongs in the arena of epistemology, with community or the way in which diverse individuals and groups sustain an effective connection with each other and thirdly the way in which we interact publicly in a plural society.

Confidence

Hugh Mackay speaks about truth by assertion, that is to say, I have the right to hold this opinion, this is true for me, it is right therefore because I hold it. The film version of Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* is a chilling reminder of how this kind of approach to knowledge and truth is subject to the terrifying effects of group hysteria. The crudities of the Mcarthy era in which Miller wrote his play may not be present today but the subtle and pervasive power of political and economic correctness is most certainly present.

Similarly, truth as information seems to be the assumption of the electronic revolution through which we are passing. As a consequence an education curriculum can be made up of a whole variety of leggo pieces fitted together in the most convenient form from the point of view of the students' consumer appetites, but without reference to any overarching sense of wisdom or understanding or the enduring truths embedded in the culture of which educational institutions are the custodians.

Such a plural society, marked by uncertainty and endless opportunities, provides ready soil for an authoritarian singular notion of authority to take root.

All of these conceptions of authority and of our confidence in our knowledge and wisdom in life present critical challenges to any Christian appreciation of knowledge and truth. How to sustain a notion which is based upon persuasive resonance which assumes some notion of connection, community, commonality and diversity is a challenge which any school avoids at its peril.

Community

The kind of society in which we are living offers the temptation for community to be abandoned. Hugh Mackay's book is almost desperate on this point. Withdrawal into the private, whether it be private individual or private group, will, in the end, lead to different kinds of tyrannies in the public arena. A recent book on Australian spirituality and the churches concluded, correctly I believe, that "the major challenge is finding new ways of developing community in a society which is not at all sure what community is. The major challenge is identifying and naming the presence of God in our fragmented life-worlds, that the dynamic quest for faith may be sustained."[25]

What is true of church communities is most certainly true of the school community. The challenge is to establish a school community which has some mark of interdependence of diversity, some mark of creativity and openness. The culture is against such communities and the challenge of creating them lies in front of church schools as much as it lies in front of church communities.

Rampant rationalism and economic and material values and the so called measurability of every aspect of social life will seep their way in from the external culture in which we are located so that schools will hardly know that they have been infiltrated. Yet the maintenance of institutions which sustain and express clear values and purposes and are maintained and inhabited by an effective community culture are essential to the health of any society and fundamental to a school.

Interaction

If education is in any sense a preparation for life then the degree to which future citizens in our society are able to interact with each other in a pluralising society is an important part of that preparation. Eva Cox has recently given currency to the notion of social capital, what she calls the glue which holds the community together. Whether we like the idea or not the truth is that the sort of civil society towards which she is pointing is one with which Christians ought to have some sympathy. It has always been a challenge in human communities to sustain a balance of connectedness and diversity, of freedom and responsibility. That challenge in our social and cultural environment is increasingly difficult. It is not surprising in such a pluralised and rationalised social culture that we find it so difficult to listen to others. We want to express our point of view, we do not want to be intruded upon. Yet any significant interaction requires an openness to listen. To attend to others. To have the capacity imaginatively to enter into other peoples worlds of understanding and to know that at the same time they too are human beings created in the image of God.

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[25] P Hughes, C Thompson, C Pryor and G Bouma, *Believe it or Not. Australian Spirituality and the Churches in the 90s*, Kew, Victoria, 1995, p.113

To shape an institution so that it even half way adequately meets the challenges of appropriate confidence, creative community and respectful interaction, in what is already a subversive cultural environment, and will be an increasingly hostile one, is a vocation of the highest significance for the identity and mission of Anglican Christian faith in Australia.