



F.A.C.S. REPORT

FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES
P.O. Box 547, Ferny Hills QLD 4055

Vol. 14, No. 4.

©Copyright, 1995

April, 1995

Looking into the future can be an interesting exercise. Some would say it is an exercise in futility. Others spend enormous amounts of time hoping for a magic crystal ball that will give them infallible insights into the future.

Economically speaking, it has been the role of the entrepreneur to assess the future. The entrepreneur is the one who has the special gifts and abilities to peer into the future in order to make "best guesses" at what will happen. It is good to remember, however, that although the entrepreneur may have special gifts and abilities in this area of forecasting the future, this does not make him infallible. Entrepreneurs make mistakes. They lose a lot of money on those mistakes, too.

The ability to predict the future with some accuracy is vital for the ongoing success of a business. There is a time lag in the production cycle of most goods. However, businessmen cannot be sure that by the time they get their goods to market people will still want to buy the goods. People do change their mind. Only those businesses that can correctly forecast that by the time they get their goods to market people will still want to buy them will be certain of success. This is why successful businesses will spend large amounts of money in helping them predict the future with greater certainty. They will pay specialist researchers whose task it is to identify future directions (i.e. trends) in the marketplace. This is the work of specialists, because people themselves don't always know what it is they want in the future. For example, did you know 20 years ago that you would want to buy a personal computer in the 1990s? Probably not. People don't necessarily know what they want

THE CHURCH IN THE FUTURE SOCIETY

by Ian Hodge

to buy in a month or a year's time. Researchers, however, develop the special skills that are necessary to help interpret and translate what people say today into expectations for the future. Businessmen use this information to develop goods and marketing strategies for existing goods and services.

Two books are available today that provide this specialist kind of information to people in all walks of life. One of them is Australian in origin, the other American.¹ The authors of these books have developed specialist research techniques to determine trends in society. This research data is sold to companies who then base their activities on one or more aspects of the information they receive. For example, in America a fast food chain changed its slogan from Good Fast Food to Good Food Fast. Notice the distinction? Subtle, but important. The change emphasises quality of the food. Why this change? Because Faith Popcorn's company, BrainReserve, had identified that consumers were becoming increasingly health conscious. The identified trend in health consciousness could directly translate into business activity, in this case a marketing program.

The Psychology of Value

This points to an interesting psychology. Why do consumers buy the things they do? There are probably many answers. But one answer is this: people buy things in order to achieve some kind of psychological satisfaction. Even the purchase of food, while it has a physical necessity behind it, is not just for the purpose of satisfying hunger pains. People don't buy just any old food, not if they have a choice. They buy specific food, often specific brands of food. Why? Because there is a belief that this particular food, or this particular brand will satisfy hunger *better* than the alternatives that are available. Now this term "better" is a value judgement, but no one can quantify how much better one type of food is over another. All the consumer knows is that he prefers this over that. He might even be prepared to pay premium prices and go to extraordinary lengths to obtain what he wants rather than take substitutes. His value judgement, however, tells us about preferences that cannot be measured in an objective manner.

This concept of the psychology of value is why the phenomenon of profit is also psychological. Profit to many is the amount of money indicated in a profit and loss statement at the end of an accounting period. However, this is

1. The Australian book is by Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s* (Sydney, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1993); the other by Faith Popcorn, *The Popcorn Report* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). Both titles are readily available in Australian book stores.

F.A.C.S. REPORT is published monthly by the FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES, a non-denominational educational organization. A free six month subscription is available upon request. Donations are invited, and those who send a donation of \$25 or more will receive a full year's subscription. A donation of \$45 or more entitles a subscriber to purchase books and tapes at 15% of our regular prices. Foreign subscriptions: a minimum donation of \$30, payable in Australian currency, is required for a year's subscription. Cheques should be made payable to F.A.C.S.

FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT
of CHRISTIAN STUDIES
P.O. Box 547
Ferny Hills QLD 4055

©Copyright, 1995. All material published in F.A.C.S. REPORT remains the property of its author.

Permission to reproduce material from F.A.C.S. REPORT in any format, apart from short quotations for review purposes, must be obtained in writing from the copyright owner.

a financial definition of profit. Economists, on the other hand, recognise that profit is psychological. Since people act in order to increase their satisfaction in some form, there are no objective criteria that can be used to measure this increase in satisfaction. In the words of von Mises,

Profit and loss in this original sense are psychic phenomena and as such not open to measurement and a mode of expression which could convey to other people precise information concerning their intensity. A man can tell a fellow man that *a* suits him better than *b*; but he cannot communicate to another man, except in vague and indistinct terms, how much the satisfaction derived from *a* exceeds that derived from *b*.²

If people act for psychological reasons, then a businessman has every reason to try to identify those psychological issues that motivate people to buy, then position his product or service as being able to satisfy that latent psychological need. For people such as Faith Popcorn or Hugh Mackay, this psychological need can be identified and described as emerging trends in the marketplace.

In order to appreciate the work of Popcorn and Mackay, let's look briefly at the trends they have identified. First, the American list. Faith Popcorn has identified 10 trends for the future. Some of these will be recognised in

Australia society as well. The identified trends are:

1. Cocooning.

People want to stay home more. Sales of VCRs and take-away food are on the increase, as are mail-order sales. Not surprisingly, then, restaurant sales are down. Correspondingly, with the increased desire to stay at home, births in 1990 in America were 4.2 million, the highest since 1960. The reasons for this cocooning are many, but the large increase in gun ownership among women indicates one reason people want to stay at home more: they are afraid to leave their homes after dark.

2. Fantasy Adventure.

The stress of the 90s is causing people to seek escape. Thus fantasy adventure of various kinds is sought as a relief from the stress and strain of every day life. The economic climate is forcing people to work longer hours for less pay. It is harder for couples to buy their own house. Unemployment is far too common for many. Job security has gone. This trend could better be called escape from the real world, and ultimately escape from God, but the trend is recognised.

3. Small Indulgences.

While people have always been willing to indulge themselves in many ways, Popcorn has identified a new "militancy" (emphasis in original) about self-indulgence. Small, designer boutique stores are evidence of this. So, too, is the growing number of ice-cream parlours.

4. Egonomics.

According to Popcorn, "egonomics can be looked at as the sister of Small Indulgences — the other half of the 'I Deserve It' syndrome. Where in Small Indulgences the emphasis is on 'Deserve,'" in Egonomics the 'I' takes center stage."³ The proliferation of magazines for increasingly specialist markets, is one result, since readers tend to identify themselves with particular magazines.⁴ Made-to-measure furniture, clothes, and even designer bicycles are evidences of this trend.

5. Cashing Out.

A number of circumstances are driving this trend. People are getting out of the rat-race in order to build themselves a better life-style. Executives will suddenly quit and move to a quiet, rural location. Electronics — the computer, fax, photocopier, and mobile phone — are making it increasingly easier for people to set up business in remote locations. The latent desire to get out of the city is seen in the passion for four-wheel drives and clothing fashions that have the appearance of country living. In Australia, Country Road has been a success story with its range of clothing, and four-wheel drive vehicles are sold in large volumes, despite the fact that many of them rarely leave the city streets. The desire is there, and when the opportunity arrives people will make the most of it.

6. Down-Aging.

The older generation is refusing to show its age. Americans spend \$2 billion a year on products that will help them to hide their age. The increase in demand for plastic surgery, skin-care products and hair colouring are evidences of this trend.

7. Staying Alive.

Health is now important. The demand for healthy food has resulted in changes in the food offered by the fast food chains. Alternative health care is an expanding market, and products aimed at prolonging life, that will control or prevent disease, are in big demand. Some of this demand is no doubt driven by the growing costs of medical care. People cannot afford to get sick. Again, reasons behind trends such as this one can be many and varied.

8. The Vigilante Consumer.

With growing resentment over what many considered to be shabby marketing and poor quality goods, consumers have expressed new demands from suppliers. Many goods (e.g. the motor car, refrigerator, etc.) now come with extended warranties. In other instances, return policies have been upgraded to allow easier return of goods by dissatisfied customers. In Australia,

2. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (3rd rev. ed. Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 289.

3. Popcorn, *The Popcorn Report*, p. 44.

4. The Packer publication machine publishes more than 60 magazine titles in the Australian market.

television shows such as the ABC's *The Investigators* have wide appeal. Consumer boycotts, often driven by environmental issues, have increased. The move by McDonalds to replace its polystyrene packaging with recycled paper is an outcome of this trend.

9. 99 Lives.

The lifestyle of many is such that they seem to have too many things to do and not enough time to do it in.⁵ Popcorn describes this trend in these words: "To stay young, get fit, live healthy. Achieve self-fulfilment and conquer self-doubt. Win friends and influence people. Get rich, get smart, get ahead of the crowd. Accumulate toys and trophies, the badges of having lived. Save the planet, save ourselves. Test out the theory that nothing is impossible. So many goals, so little time!"⁶

10. S.O.S. (*Save Our Society*).

People are increasingly recognising that there is something wrong with society: a breakdown in education standards, increasing illiteracy amongst students at school; higher crime rates and juvenile delinquency; growing alcohol and drug abuse; more divorce and single-parent families. All these are contributing to the recognition that something is wrong with society. It must be saved.

In terms of Christian ethics and psychology, much could be made of these trends. A departure from biblical faith is certainly the reason for some of these trends. However, that is not the purpose of this essay. In this essay I want to explore what implications these trends might have for the church and its activities. Before doing that, however, it will be more relevant to see what similarities or disparities might exist in the trends Hugh Mackay has identified in Australia.

Epidemic

Hugh Mackay begins his book by drawing attention to what he calls an "epidemic." The epidemic — one of "anxiety, stress and insecurity" — has been noted by social commentators around the world, he claims.

All around the Western world, social commentators have been struck by the rising level of anxiety over the past 20 years, by the extent to which people report stress as a central feature of their lives, and by the feelings of insecurity which sap the energy of so many people — especially young people. Some commentators, following the path of Jung, talk about a generalised angst which has gripped Western society's collective unconsciousness; New Age philosophers interpret signs of stress as evidence of the increasing disharmony between urban life and the natural order; theologians smile knowingly; medical authorities simply speak of a virtual epidemic of anxiety and of a widespread need to be tranquilised.⁷

The "big angst", as Mackay calls it, is a phenomenon of the decline of Christian faith and character. Sin has introduced into the world the constant struggle in the life of men and women to be obedient to their Creator. This leads to tension within the individual, and strained relationships with others. But those whose faith is in the living God know that these tensions serve a greater purpose, are ordained by God, and therefore need not be feared. Stress is now considered a major health and sociological problem, often blamed for the increase in domestic and child violence, drug abuse, broken marriages, and a belief in the meaninglessness of life. Whereas Mackay says that "the so-called Age of Anxiety is in reality nothing more than a *symptom* of the fact that we are really living in the Age of Redefinition,"⁸ he could have better described it as a symptom of the fact that people are abandoning one religion for another.⁹ Christianity has been replaced by Humanism — man-centred

religion — and the price that society is paying for this shift is horrendous. Mackay identifies seven key points in this redefinition that society is undergoing.

1. *New Men & Old Women*.

The roles of men and women are undergoing change. Women's Lib and feminism have combined with materialism to cause women to undertake a new role. But the strain is telling. In order to meet expectations, the contemporary working wife is wearing herself out. Men are maintaining their traditional roles in the home, but the working wife has to return from a day in the office and factory and continue to provide the domestic help expected of her mate. Some are over-compensating in the devotion to their children, determined that no one can accuse them of letting the children suffer by their absence from the home. This, says Mackay, cannot continue. There is, he identifies, a growing demand for services to the working wife: cleaning and cooking are just some examples. There are also pressures for the husband to take on more domestic duties in order to share the burden with the working wife. It is no wonder that divorce rates are on the increase.

2. *In-Laws & Out-Laws*.

The age of redefinition is certainly redefining the family. When divorced parents remarry, is it okay to call two people "mum"? High divorce rates are redefining the family in remarkable ways, and people are trying hard to cope with the changes. Hard as they try, however, it does not appear to be successful. Hence the stress and anxiety of contemporary society.

Within the context of this section, Mackay makes a remarkable claim. "The idea of childhood as a free, innocent and self-contained stage of life is pretty much a twentieth-century invention. Before then, children tended to be regarded as junior adults who were waiting in the wings to assume the

5. The complaint of not enough time is really a complaint against God for not giving the complainer enough time. Yet God has given each one of us the same 24 hours in every day. The question that needs to be asked is why do some people seem to achieve so much while others achieve less? The amount of achievement, therefore, does not appear to be a function of time, but is attributable to other characteristics that will be found in the individuals themselves.

6. Popcorn, *ibid.*, p. 79.

7. Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, p. 7.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 17, emphasis in original.

9. On the theological implications of anxiety, Rushdoony is even more to the point when he says, "All fretfulness and anxiety is either a denial of God's providence or a distrust thereof." *Systematic Theology*, (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), Vol. 1, p. 161.

mantle of adulthood. Certainly, the idea that 'teenagers' might still be indulged like children is a very modern concept."¹⁰ The effort to extend childhood into teenage years and beyond is creating its very own problems, with frustrated youngsters at many levels seeking revenge in increased crime, sex, and drug abuse.

3. Whither the Work Ethic?

The work ethic as it is known to us is the fruit of religious faith. Not just any old religion, but Christianity, and in its modern manifestation has been attributed to Protestantism in general and Calvinism in particular.¹¹ In the "lucky country," however, the work ethic has taken a beating. Whereas many people find much of their meaning to life in their work, rising unemployment has meant a loss of identity for many. This will lead many to seek new ways to give their life meaning, and such activity is further sign of the redefinition that Mackay observes

4. Managing Invisible Money.

Easy credit has changed the way people manage their wealth. Spiralling debt, once thought to be the antithesis to prudent money management, is now seen as the pinnacle of successful wealth strategies. Urged on by government example and some tax concessions, perpetual debt is the way of life for many. "Get rich on OPM (Other People's Money)" is a slogan of many investment advisers. "Debt is better than renting" is a catchcry of some real estate salespeople. "We owe it to ourselves" is a slogan preferred over an alternative, "living beyond our means." Easy spending has led to a change in retail shopping to cope with the demand. Ease of shopping and impersonal service have helped in the alienation many feel. This is why there are many businesses attempting to reverse this trend, and in so doing are reaping extraordinary results.

5. Divided By the Dollar.

There is a widening gap between rich and poor. The middle class is

shrinking. While Mackay could have done us a greater service by identifying the causes of the widening economic classes, people are recognising the problem. Unfortunately, envy is often the result. Mackay's research has caused him to conclude that "there is little evidence to support the proposition that Australians resent success or wish to slash tall poppies: the truth is that Australians are only irritated by those tall poppies who *act* tall and who respond to their own success by displays of arrogance."¹² Resentment and envy drive the demand for government handouts, and wealth redistribution through social welfare.

6. Multiculturalism.

Rising immigration from our Asian neighbours is putting pressure on Australian society. People whose cultural background is not Christian, white Europeans are bringing new challenges. Muslims are now seeking seats in parliament. Minority ethnic groups are putting pressure on the political system to allow more of their kind to enter the country. Australians feel the immigrants are taking jobs from Australians. So the tensions mount.

7. Politics.

Australians have become cynical towards politicians and the political system. Politicians rank very low on a scale of respectable occupations. "The parliamentary behaviour of Australia's politicians is no longer regarded as a joke — even though some incidents may be seen as amusing; rather, it is rapidly approaching the point where parliamentary behaviour is regarded as a national disgrace."¹³ Voters are leaving the major parties in droves. Swing voters, as a group, have increased from 10 to 30 percent. This is causing all the major political parties to put their efforts into attracting the swinging voter. In many instances this is to be found in the fringe groups espousing environmental, alternative life-styles, and a larger number who seek to put their hands into the government's purse for

handouts of various kinds, such as the grey-power vote.

Values

There is, however, an even more significant point in Hugh Mackay's observations. Consider this:

Coming out of stable home and family backgrounds in the 1950s, the Me Generation have found themselves unable to provide the same kind of stability and security for their own children, and they are beginning to have second thoughts about the wisdom of "doing your own thing" as an adequate principle for regulating life.

The Me Generation are beginning to acknowledge that the process of value-shedding through the Sixties and Seventies has left them with a vague sense of emptiness — a feeling that life lacks some of the meaning and some of the sense of purpose (and even some of the simple pleasure) which they observed in their own much-maligned parents and grandparents. Facing their mid-life crisis, the Me Generation are beginning to have some regrets about their marital instability, their failure to devote sufficient time to the nurturing of children, and their lack of a coherent framework for dealing with the uncertainties of life in the last decade of this century.

Put simply, the Me Generation thought that, 20 or 30 years on, they would feel better than they do. They thought that the sense of freedom and excitement which they experienced in early adulthood would become characteristic of their lives, but it doesn't seem to have turned out that way.¹⁴

This is one of the most significant points in Mackay's study. It identifies that people are interested in values. Now there is a theological sense in which we understand that without regeneration people will not be interested in the values contained in the Bible. But on the other hand, unless we present those biblical values, and put them in the context of the Gospel,

10. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

11. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin University Books, 1930).

12. *Ibid.*, p. 135, emphasis in original.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

14. Mackay, *ibid.*, p. 245.

people will not be challenged with the message of Christ.

The Church's Reponse

What do these findings mean for the Christian community as a whole, and the Christian church (the institution) in particular? First, it is very obvious that the trends being observed here are a religious phenomenon. They are the result of a society that has lost its direction, as Mackay observes so astutely. Second, it is evident from the work of these researchers that people are looking for answers. Now, we must admit that in this search for answers they will not turn to the God who created them — unless they are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Third, the church can clearly use these identified attitudes in the community to reach out and touch the lives of those who are seeking for answers. What is the great Australian complaint about the church? It's irrelevant! These researchers have provided us with information that could be used by any church to portray itself as relevant. And it can do this without compromising its faith, its ethics, or its theological creed.

For example, people are searching for values. How could the church respond to this latent need? Perhaps by advertising itself as a church that holds to values that are true and right. Perhaps by establishing a Christian school that will put God's values into the educational curriculum. Perhaps by offering physical help to the poor and needy, the unemployed, the divorced, the drug abusers, etc. In short, by attending to people's needs as they perceive them, the church might find an open door into people's lives in order to reach them with the real message of hope: the Good News of Jesus' substitutionary life and his death on the cross for sinners.

There are, unfortunately, a couple of trends in the church which cause us to ponder deeply the current state of the institutional church. On the one hand, many churches that have attempted some kind of social relevance

have changed the historic Gospel somewhere along the way. Those churches that have retained the Gospel have somehow managed to lose the ability to provide real help to those in need. These are general statements and there are exceptions. But there are too many churches that are evidence of these points and we cannot afford to ignore them just because there are some churches that have managed to avoid the mistakes.

The research of Hugh Mackay in particular has relevance, since he is dealing with Australian society. He can help us understand our fellow Australians, their hurt and their suffering. Yes, it is self-inflicted hurt caused by an abandonment of God. Yet, unless we are willing to reach out to the hurting Australians with real answers to real questions, we cannot expect them to take us seriously or the faith we espouse. Francis Schaeffer had some telling words to say on this score:

People are looking at us to see, when we say we have truth, whether it is possible for this truth not only to take men's souls to heaven, but to give meaning to all of life in the present time, moment by moment. They are looking to us to produce something that will bring the world to a standstill — human beings treating human beings like human beings. The church should be able to do this, because we know who we are and we know who they are — first, man made in the image of God. . . .

There is no use saying you have community or love for each other if it does not get down into the tough stuff of life. It must, or else we are producing ugliness in the name of truth. I am convinced that, in the twentieth century, people all over the world will simply not listen if, though we have the right doctrine and the right polity, we are failing to exhibit community.¹⁵

While Schaeffer has primarily in mind the ability of the church to show true community amongst itself, he also means that the church must exhibit relevance into the community in order for it to gain credibility in the eyes of the unbelievers.

At this point someone will say that this credibility cannot be gained unless God works in the lives of unbelievers. That is true. But the fact that it is God who changes people and not man does not exonerate man from doing that which is commanded in the Bible. Just because it is God who ultimately causes the crops to grow does not mean we should not till the soil, plant the seed, water and tend to the crop in its formation, then reap the harvest of God's blessing. Consequently, a history of Western civilization reveals that the spiritual progress of the church was linked to efforts in helping people physically in so many ways.

The historian W.E.H. Lecky pointed out that the Christian response to mankind's physical needs — charity — was one of the great accomplishments of the church throughout history. In the words of Lecky, "surely no achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity."¹⁶ Even during the Crusades Christian charity was working to break down barriers and reach ordinary people with the Christian message. "No period of history exhibits a larger amount of cruelty, licentiousness, and fanaticism than the Crusades; but side by side with the military enthusiasm, and with the almost universal corruption, there expanded a vast movement of charity, which covered Christendom with hospitals for the relief of leprosy, and which grappled nobly, though ineffectually, with the many forms of suffering that were generated."¹⁷

Finally, Lecky concluded, "the high conception that has been formed of the sanctity of human life, the protection of infancy, the elevation and final emancipation of the slave classes, the suppression of barbarous games, the creation of a vast and multifarious organisation of charity, and the education of the imagination by the Christian type, constitute together a movement of philanthropy which has never been paralleled or approached in the Pagan world."¹⁸ That's some achievement, especially when there are those who are keen to deny that any good could come out of

15. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church At the End of the Twentieth Century* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), pp. 89,90.

16. W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals* (New York: George Braziller, [1869] 1955), Vol. II, p. 85.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

the medieval church. To be sure, as Lecky recognises, the church had many faults. But we do not give extra weight to our arguments by denying the good things that the church achieved in the midst of its questionable practices.

The Christian influence was not confined to charity. Political and legal systems were greatly influenced by Christian ethical standards.¹⁹ This influence was to subsequently decline, as Buckle noted. There was, he said, two important symptoms of the decline of the influence of the church:

These were, the separation of theology, first from morals, and then from politics. The separation from morals was effected late in the seventeenth century; the separation from politics before the middle of the eighteenth century. And it is a striking instance of the decline of the old ecclesiastical spirit, that both of these great changes were begun by the clergy themselves. . . .

Thus it was that, in England, theology was finally severed from the two great departments of ethics and of government. As, however, this important change was at first not a practical, but solely of an intellectual character, its operation was, for many years, confined to a small class, and has not yet produced the whole of those results which we have every reason to anticipate. . . .²⁰

The task of the Christian church is to restore the connection between theology, ethics and politics. Without it, civilization will continue to flounder. The fact that many Christians don't recognise or appreciate the severance that Buckle describes indicates that the first place for evangelisation is within the church itself. Unless the church can rediscover the faith that was able to transform cultures out of barbarism, it is unlikely to have any significant impact among the modern barbarians.

The trends which businessmen are identifying can possibly be used by the church in its efforts to evangelise. In *Reinventing Australia*, Hugh Mackay has identified a trend which, for Christianity in general, has interesting but

serious implications. First, if people are seeking values, who is to provide them? One thing is to be certain, some human agency will provide those values. But the values that are provided will be transcendent (i.e. spiritual in origin) or they will originate in the physical world and be man's creation.

Second, if there is a genuine breakdown in community which people recognise, and they are seeking genuine answers to this problem, then the Christian church can show true community and make these people welcome. Not just welcome in a particular denomination or church group, but welcome into the faith. This is far broader than any denomination, but does not exclude denominations.

Third, not only can the church present itself in its theological terms as an upholder of the faith, but it can offer itself in terms that people will understand in the present generation. Therefore, a church that upholds "traditional family values" is more likely to get a hearing than one that upholds "biblical values" — even though those "traditional family values" will equate with the church that offers "biblical values." I am not saying that the church needs to change its message at all; I am simply saying that in order to get a hearing, the church may need to approach people at the level at which they are prepared to listen.

A similar situation exists for Christian schools: those that offer "value based" education will probably have wider appeal than those that offer "Christian values," even though at the end of the day they are offering exactly the same product. The Christian school does not need to water down its content at all, but if "values based education" is less offensive to people than "Christian based education" the Christian school can have a wider appeal that will eventually permit it to educate larger numbers in terms of the Christian faith.

There is evidence that such things are already influencing churches and

their activities. Australians have a great negativity to the word "church." The word "church" conjures up a picture in the mind of many Australians that is repulsive. Those churches which eliminate the word "church" from their name and call themselves New Life Centre, or Community Centre, or some such name, appear to have wider appeal. This is a generalisation, I know. But it is valid in many areas, as a very successful church planter in Sydney once told me.

It needs to be emphasised that I am not saying we must change our message. The message stays the same. But the name we give it can alter. I can think of another example: The law of God is often referred to as God's law or biblical law. Is one name more correct than the other? Are they identical in meaning? While the answer to this is 'yes,' we can still ask do the words 'God's law' and 'biblical law' conjure up identical images in the minds of men? Probably not, since one sees the law originating in a Person while the other designates its origin as a book. Yes, the book does have its origin in God, but I hope you can see the point I am trying to make here. The words we choose can make subtle differences in presentation, even though the message itself remains the same.

Conclusion

In biblical and theological terms, the future of the church is guaranteed. In practical terms, however, the church's place in history appears to parallel the faithfulness of its adherents. When Christians are faithful to the word of God, the church flourishes. In an age such as ours, where the connection between Christian theology and the rest of life is little understood or appreciated, the church cannot be expected to evangelise the lost unless it offers a comprehensive gospel to challenge the comprehensive humanism which opposes it. This is the task — and the challenge — before us.

19. See Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

20. Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1869), Vol. I, pp. 424, 425, 427. Buckle was not lamenting this shift, unfortunately.