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The New Renaissance and Postmodern Reformation

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If there is one lesson from history it is that history has no lessons. The past is no help in trying to predict the future. Nevertheless, an understanding of the past can help us to understand the present and by so doing help us face up to our future. It is through such understanding that our hopes can be achieved. We should look forward, not with misty eyes to a golden dawn, but clear eyed from where we are. At first glance, there may not seem to be much cause for hope. We live in extraordinary times. The world around us seems chaotic and contradictory: secularisation and religious fundamentalism, technological fantasies and poverty-stricken realities, globalisation and fragmentation into conflicting tribal loyalties. However, in looking into the past we can find similar periods of incoherence and instability, and one period in particular is noted not only for its sense of disruption and dislocation but also for its excitement and creativity. If we can look at our own times in the same way that we look back to The Renaissance, perhaps then we might feel more hopeful about our future. What I propose is to draw out the parallels between then and now, to see if we are justified in seeing ourselves as part of a "New Renaissance". If the account that follows at times seems unsettling, then we must accept that radical change whether it be 'old' or 'new' is indeed an uncomfortable process to experience. However, such realism should not make us any the less hopeful. We do indeed live in extraordinary times, but if we see ourselves as part of a cultural transformation equal to one of the greatest flourishings of endeavour and creativity in the history of civilisation, then perhaps that should be as much cause for hope as concern.

Renaissance and Reformation

There is no period in history which is autonomous and self-contained. We will always be able to search for origins and assess outcomes, pick out precursors and trace influences. Nevertheless, it is part of the historian's craft to arrange what might otherwise be an incomprehensible flow of complex interactions into suitably sized chunks. One such chunk which finds favour with most historians is "The Renaissance",

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Abstract: Renaissance, perhaps then we might feel more hopeful about our future. What I propose is to draw out the parallels between then and now, to see if we are justified in seeing ourselves as part of a "New Renaissance". If the account that follows at times seems unsettling, then we must accept that radical change whether it be 'old' or 'new' is indeed an uncomfortable process to experience. However, such realism should not make us any the less hopeful. We do indeed live in extraordinary times, but if we see ourselves as part of a cultural transformation equal to one of the greatest flourishings of endeavour and creativity in the history of civilisation, then perhaps that should be as much cause for hope as concern.

though that might well be the limit of historiographical consensus. The nature and timing of the Renaissance are much disputed, as indeed is its singularity, that is, whether we can talk of "the" Renaissance since there are other periods which witnessed a similar flourishing of ideas and activities. However, I believe the term as commonly understood does have some merit in helping to mark a major transformation in European (and ultimately world) history.

There are, as I said, no self-contained periods in history and so one should not expect clear cut start and finish points. However, there are two convenient moments which suggest themselves: the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in 1454 and the publication of Copernicus's De Revolutionibus in 1543. This may be a little late for some tastes (missing out as it does the work of men such as Brunelleschi and Alberti) or a little too early for others (leaving out the most important work of the scientific revolution), but I believe that what it might lack in detail is made up for in convenience, and if we accept the permeability of historical periods we should feel no qualms about making reference to earlier or later events and people. Dates and periods should be our guides not our gaolers.

The importance of the period seems quite clear. The disintegration of mediaeval society brought a major dislocation and readjustment in the European worldview in social relations, international relations, politics, religion, economics, demography, intellectual life, the arts. According to T.K. Rabb "...the ubiquity and simultaneity of these radical departures stamp the decades around 1500 as a fundamental dividing point in European history" (Rabb 1975: 36). The sixteenth century, says Rabb, was a time of anguish, disarray and bewilderment with a sense of disorder and incoherence, mixed with doubt, misgivings and insecurity such that "no succession of events so disruptive of safe and comfortable suppositions had occurred for hundreds of years"(Rabb 1975: 37). The effects of such radical change dominated Europe for the next century and a half, that is, until the crisis and resolution of the middle third of the seventeenth century.

What distinguished this from earlier periods was the extent and rapidity of these radical changes. In large part this may be ascribed to the advent of printing. There were a number of obvious advantages with the new technology. It reduced the time and cost of reproduction, it increased the number of copies and removed the possibility of copying errors though, of course, reproducing any errors in the 'original' text. Indeed, it was often efforts to establish what was the "correct" text that gave rise to so many theological and political discussions, and because of the new technology such discussions could now take on more than mere local significance. For example, previous challenges to church authority such as those of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus had to rely on oral or handwritten dissemination and their influence was largely confined to their own regions. Luther, however, had the power of the printed word, and the impact of his challenge shook the whole continent. More of this later.

It is a much overused term, but it would not be too much say that the coming of print really did bring about a cultural revolution. It could even be argued, says Peter Rietbergen, that "it was the beginning of the most important cultural revolution which western man had experienced in many thousands of years" (Rietbergen 1998: 200). Religious publications dominated the new trade, but hardly any aspect of life was left untouched with manuals and guides being published covering almost everything from dress conventions and etiquette to architecture and horsemanship. The result was increasing uniformity in tastes if not in culture. Similarly, in the hands of the state, print was instrumental in bringing greater centralisation and standardisation. For example, helping to establish a single national language in France. In the hands of the Church, printing became an effective medium for spreading dogma and doctrine, though which doctrine would naturally depend on which church. The Catholic Church seized on the power of the press in its campaign against the spread of Turkish power into the Balkans, while on the other side of the confessional divide, Luther declared that "print is the best of God's inventions". Within three years of nailing his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg 300,000 copies of his works were on the market.

Like a genie from a bottle the power of print was not something that could be contained or controlled (at least not easily) and it showed no favouritism or loyalty in just who should wield that power. True, it gave more power to those who already had the power to control it - the Church and State - but it also gave voice to those who would otherwise be unheard. For all the attempts at censorship, and there were many, subversive and clandestine presses would still operate. For every broadsheet in support of the Pope there would be a scatalogical print attacking him. The new technology was more than a technology of information, communication and reproduction, it brought a new democratisation of word and image. Indeed, among some circles it generated a new fear, a new spectre - the educated commoner. Undermining the monopoly of knowledge by spawning its own new and diverse authority, might not the printed word undermine other bases for authority? Might not the common people, says Rietbergen voicing the concerns of contemporary intellectuals and politicians, "given the chance to acquire new ideas and test them against their own opinions of their present position, come to voice their criticism?" (Rietbergen 1998: 224).

Such democracy was not a renaissance ideal. It was not until the nineteenth century that "democracy" would be seen as anything other than rule by the "mob". Nevertheless, the cultivation of individuality was something that the educated elite did strive for. As Burckhardt pointed out long ago, to be a "singular man" or a "unique man" were both the highest levels of individual development and the highest levels of praise (1860). We see this humanist concern for the individual equally in the autobiographical efforts of Cellini as well as the naked self-interest in Machiavelli's Prince. The ideal was "l'uomo universale", what we nowadays would simply call a "renaissance

man" and, more generally, the studium humanitatis generated a deepening interest in what it was that made man more civilised. Braudel has written:

> The intellectual ferment of the Renaissance, and that of the reformation in so far as it raised the principle of individual interpretation of revealed truth, laid the bases for freedom of conscience. Renaissance humanism preached respect for the greatness of the human being as an individual: it stressed personal intelligence and ability (1993: 325).

Indeed, our modern conception of what it means to be an individual can be seen as stemming from this period in the complex interrelationship of renaissance, reformation and the birth of capitalism. The mediaeval idea of an individual was simply as a particular member of a group, a particular instance of a generality. The modern idea, as Raymond Williams has written, brought a change in emphasis which "enabled us to think of 'the individual' as a kind of absolute without immediate reference.....to the group of which he is a member"(Williams 1961: 90-1).

Renaissance humanism may have fostered individualism, but it also reconciled, or at least attempted to reconcile, this new individualism with an older, largely mediaeval, sense of order. Thus, the great challenge of the Reformation was not a secular individualism but rather the challenge of individual faith. Reviving the Pauline metaphor of the Christian soldier armed with Bible and prayer, it was the wish of Erasmus that "the humblest woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles of St Paul...that the countryman might sing some parts of them at the plough, the weaver chant them at his loom, the traveller lighten with them the weariness of his journey"(Erasmus quoted in Mandrou 1978:76). For Erasmus (as in Thomas à Kempis's "Imitation of Christ") true veneration of saints was best achieved through imitation, through inner spiritual development, not outward ritualistic show. This emphasis on the subjective religious experience was a common feature of the Devotio Moderna and highlights the personal quality of the new religious ideas. As Williams has pointed out: "A change in the conception of relationships - crudely from man-church-God to man-God - is recorded by the new sense of what it is to be 'an individual'."(Williams 1961: 91-2). Truth, and in particular spiritual truth, was to be found in one's own reading of the Bible, not in papal proclamations. Likewise, the priesthood of all believers meant that the individual now had direct access to God unmediated by pope or priest.

For Luther, who abhorred the economic individualism of the age, the "Church" should be recognised as consisting of Clergy and Laity. "It is pure invention", Luther wrote, "that pope, bishop, priests and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans and farmers are called the temporal estate.....all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office." In this "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation" of 1520 he makes it quite clear that "baptism, gospel and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people". The pope or bishop may anoint, ordain, con-

secrate "but he can never make a man into a Christian or into a spiritual man by so doing"(Luther reproduced as document 11 in Johnston, Andrew 1991). Luther's justification by faith was more than an attack on the power of the Catholic Church, it was a rejection of its spiritual authority.

> I wish to be free. I do not wish to become the slave of any authority, whether that of a council or of any other power, or of the University or the Pope. For I shall proclaim with confidence what I believe to be true, whether it is advanced by a Catholic or a heretic, whether it is authorised or not by I care not what authority"(Luther quoted in Bronowski and Mazlish, 1960: 110).

Luther's early anarchic individualism. however, did not generate the freedom and tolerance that one might hope for and expect. "In breaking down papal authority," says Chadwick, "the Reformation seemed to have left the authority of the Christian ministry vague and uncertain"(Chadwick 1972: 83). The answer for Luther (and more particularly for Calvin) was the organisation of a new and equally authoritarian church - or in Calvin's case an organised church even stricter than the one it replaced(Bronowski and Mazlish 1960: 114-5).

The burning of Michael Servetus in Geneva is a useful corrective to any simplistic elision of Protestantism with freedom, tolerance and progress - the "new" and therefore (to modern sensibilities) the "good". The same can be said if we examine any supposed parallel between new ideas in religion and new ideas in science. The relationship between Protestantism and the rise of modern science has long been debated, but John Brooke rightly suggests caution in any attempt to link the two. In his insightful historical analysis of science and religion he draws out the complexities of the relationship and avoids neat conclusions. "It must not be supposed," he writes, "that the desire of Protestants to dissociate themselves from Catholic Christianity automatically created a disposition in favour of free thought"(Brooke 1991: 97). The complexities are nowhere more evident than in the reception of the Copernican cosmology. Doctrinal differences did not readily translate into philosophical differences about whether or not to accept the new astronomy. Catholics like Diego de Zuniga readily adopted the Copernican system as did Protestants like Kepler. The Catholic Church may have decreed that the new system was "erroneous in faith", but equally many Protestants objected that it was an absurd rejection of common sense.

However, even without the historical convenience of being able to set the new against the old for both science and religion, we can nevertheless see in the Copernican system such a fundamental revisioning of the world that it has understandably come to stand as the archetypal case of a revolution in thought. Not only was it a landmark in the bifurcation of science from common sense, but it also marked a major shift in our understanding of ourselves and our place in nature. In Margaret Wertheim's opinion, it quite literally offered a new perspective on the world. The western mind, she says, had been trained by the development of perspective painting to

think of space in Euclidean terms. The application of geometry had enabled artisists to create the illusion of seeing in three dimensions, portraying characters in physical rather than metaphysical spaces. The task facing Copernicus, like that facing his artistic contemporaries, was to find the best place from which to view the harmony and symmetry of the cosmos. In viewing the cosmos from the sun we have, says Wertheim, "the ultimate perspective picture of the world" (Wertheim 1997: 61).

The sense of intellectual vertigo experienced by many of those coming to terms with the Copernican system was not just a result of considering the Earth's three-fold motion. I suspect it may have been more because of this displacement in point of view. It was in every respect a dislocation, a disturbing shift of locus. The pre-Copernican universe, says Koestler, was "reassuringly orderly". It was contained and centralised with a natural 'up' and 'down'. In contrast, the Copernican system opened up the possibility of infinite space and a plurality of worlds, "decentralised, perplexing, anarchic". In the Copernican cosmos, "there are no longer any absolute directions in space. The universe has lost its core. It no longer has a heart, but a thousand hearts"(Koestler 1968: 221).

It was an unsettling new world that Copernicus had opened up. In mapping the heavens it gave us a new way of understanding ourselves. It demanded that we reconsider, in a very literal sense, our place in the scheme of things. That place, however, was in a world without absolutes, without fixed points of reference, forever in motion. It was, as we have seen, a world that his contemporaries would view with bewilderment. The pluralism and relativism invited by the Copernican system would have done little to have increased feelings of security amidst the widespread sense of disorder, incoherence and instability that was concommitant with the disintegration of a mediaeval social order and the emergence of a more 'modern' one. However, the experience of disruption and dislocation, the challenges to authority, the pluralism, relativism and the loss of absolutes, I would argue, are not unlike what we might find in our own 'post-modern' times .

The New Renaissance and the Postmodern Reformation

In turning to our own times what parallels can we find with the radical transformations of 1450-1550? Are we in the midst of similar transformations? What are the modern (or rather post-modern) counterparts to the development of print technology, the Copernican revolution, Renaissance individualism, and, perhaps most importantly, the Reformation? Indeed, what are our own times and when did they begin?

The nailing of a document to a Wittenberg church door provides us with a powerful, even poetic, historical punctum. The sound of hammer on nail marked a precise moment in time and space for the start of a new era - even if it may not have been recognised at the time, and even if, as many historians believe, the story is apocryphal. Our own times have no such convenient starting point, neither poetic nor prosaic,

yet the final years of the last century do seem to constitute the start of a new period in history. In his history of the 'short twentieth century' Eric Hobsbawm says that the end of the century was qualitatively different to the start of the century in three respects. Firstly, it was no longer Eurocentric, although the rise of the USA would still mean the dominance of 'western civilisation'. Secondly, globalisation had transformed economic and social life. Thirdly, traditional patterns of social relationships were disintegrating, principally through the pressures of a-social individualism. (Each of these poses a challenge for us to have 'hope' in the future and which I will touch on towards the end of this paper). Hobsbawm divides the years since 1914 into three periods: an Age of Catastrophe from 1914 to the aftermath of the Second World War; a Golden Age of extraordinary economic growth through to the early 1970s; and finally "The Crisis Decades". For Hobsbawm, then, it is the fin de siecle gloom of the 1980s and 1990s that is the mark of our own times (See 1994).

For many, including Hobsbawm, our current period of insecurity dates from the oil crisis that followed the Yom Kippur war of 1973. The world economy was already changing before that (as early as 1967 J.K. Galbraith was writing of The New Industrial State), but it does give us a convenient marker post. In the twenty years that followed, the world "lost its bearings and slid into instability and crisis"(Hobsbawm 1994: 403). It was not simply that much of the world's economy was in recession (which was true), nor that the inequalities between rich and poor had grown (which was also true), but that the operations of the capitalist economy had become uncontrollable. (Hobsbawm 1994: 404-8) Traditional interventions into national economies seemed impotent when faced by the overwhelming power of a global market, and some ideological positions deemed that interference with market forces was in any case undesirable. Commentators began to talk of "post-industrial society", of "post-Fordism," and of "post-modernism".

Which brings us to the first of our contemporary counterparts to the Renaissance world - the internet. Now a key feature of both the global economy and of postmodernism, the internet began as a project funded by the U.S. Department of Defence. Faced with the problem of protecting communication structures in the event of nuclear war, planners at the Rand Corporation came up with the solution of a decentralised network. In the mid 1980s protocols were established that enabled communication between different networks (ie truly an inter-net) and different "domains" were created to help bring order into what was becoming a sprawling anarchic system. Non-military possibilities proliferated ("military" was only one of seven domains) and the net rapidly developed as an instrument of social communication and not just as a medium for research and business messages. The real explosion in growth, however, came with the widespread use of personal computers at the same time as the creation of the World Wide Web in 1990. What began as a military problem involving a handful of scientists had now become a brave

new world of cyberspace open to anyone.with a PC and a telephone link (see Watson 2000).

Of course, not everyone has such access (probably less than 1% of the world's population) but the new technology does herald a cultural revolution in much the same way as the advent of print technology did in the fifteenth century (which also had limited access). As with print, it has accelerated the pace of change. The interconnection of financial markets now means that vast sums of money (often more than the wealth of a small nation) can be shifted anywhere in the world instantaneously at the touch of a button. At the same time, disparate protest groups can organise and co-ordinate themselves with much greater ease and speed than before, and through e-mail what once might have been a single letter of complaint to a large corporation can now be copied and forwarded to millions of activists across the globe. The result is both greater empowerment and greater instability. From the start the internet had built within it the principle of decentralisation, and power would now be devolved to anyone who possessed the technology. As with print, it helps democratise the production and reading of texts and the issue of control becomes paramount as do struggles to resist that control. For some, cyberspace might seem to be a wild, lawless world, a hotbed for anarchy and crime, for perversion and subversion, but this same quality of wildness can be embraced with a frontier spirit. In this way, the net can be seen as a liberatory technology, giving voice to those who would otherwise be silenced under oppressive regimes in a place that is untamed and free.

One freedom that the net is said to give us is the freedom to be whoever we want to be. In cyberspace we can choose how the world sees us. We can cast aside our fleshly selves ("meat" to use the language of cyberpunk) to construct a virtual persona made entirely from the non-physical realm of information. In cyberspace our identities are determined by our desires, not by our biology. However, the plasticity of identities was only one part of a more general assault on the "self" at the end of the twentieth century, the most fundamental attack coming from the development of genetics. There had long been a debate about the relative importance of nature versus nurture, but genetics seemed to open the prospect of finding the root cause of nature's control over our lives. The rise of neo-Darwinism in the last quarter of the century ensured that genetic determinism would increasingly be the orthodox position (at least, in terms of the public face of biology). From the 1970s onwards with books such as E.O. Wilson's Sociobiology (1975) and Richard Dawkins's The Selfish Gene (1976), our bodies and behaviours were explained in terms of our genes. At first our understanding was assembled piece by piece with individual genes being identified as responsible for particular characteristics or conditions, but in June 2000 it was announced that scientists had produced the first draft of the entire human genetic code. This mapping of the human genome is the second of our Renaissance parallels. As Copernicus's new map of the heavens reconfigured our place in

the world, so too does the map of the human genome. In both cases our natural tendency to anthropocentrism is shaken to the core. The heliocentric dislocation of ourselves from the stable centre to one of many spinning orbits has its counterpart in the genocentric dislocation from coherent selves to multitudinous "selfish" genes. Each forces us to reconsider who (and consequently, what) we are. Looking outward to the heavens, Copernicus had rearranged our place in nature. Looking inward to our biology, the map of the human genome transforms our understanding not so much of our place in nature but of nature's place in us.

In some respects, however, the idea of self was very much still alive. The 1970s were, to use the title of Tom Wolfe's book, The Me Decade. For Wolfe, the counter-culture concerns for individual personal and spiritual development had become an unwholesome obsession with self. Relationships with others were now simply opportunities for expressing one's self. The appeal of fashionable therapies was simple. Says Wolfe, "It is summed up in the notion: 'Let's talk about Me '." (Watson 2000: 599). The late-twentieth century counterpart to Renaissance individualism, therefore, was a new "culture of narcissism" which, according to Christopher Lasch, had come to dominate the whole development of American (and by implication, Western) society (Watson 2000: 598). In the free-market ideologies of Thatcherism and Reaganomics such rampant (and degenerate) individualism would also find expression in economic policies and attitudes. Cocooned in their own private spaces, self-interested and selfish, the Me generation lived in a world where, if we were to believe Margaret Thatcher, 'there is no such thing as society'.

Thus, we can draw parallels between the radical transformation of the decades around 1500 and a similar transformation in our own times. We can see how print, heliocentricism, and individualism have their latterday counterparts in the internet, genocentricism and a narcissistic culture. Such comparisons may be of interest, and could possibly even be significant, but there is one final parallel that I believe truly is important - the challenges posed by the Reformation and those posed by postmodernity. It has become a commonplace to see science as a new form of religion with its own rites and rituals, its own initiation practices, its own esoteric language, its own priesthood and martyrs. However, its authority now faces the same challenges as those faced by the Catholic church at the time of the Reformation. The fragmentation of belief in the sixteenth century is now being replayed as a fragmentation of knowledge in the twenty-first.

Postmodernity is as unsettling as the struggle for reform must have been 450 years ago. Both undermine the certainties which people rely on. Both dissolve boundaries which had hitherto seemed natural. Both seek solutions that are local, not universal. If there is one major difference it is that postmodernity is intentionally unsettling. It actively searches for and celebrates that which is ambivalent and unstable. Indeed, the very definition of postmodernity is undecided and contested, an example of

the very fluidity which it is trying to describe. Like a mythical beast it may not be easy to depict, but we will recognise it when we see it. For Lyotard, its defining feature is an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). The postmodern condition means it is no longer possible to legitimate knowledge through an appeal to a grand narrative or metadiscourse such as the dialectics of spirit, the emancipation of the working class, or the Enlightenment belief in Progress. Its anti-universalism is a war on all totalising discourses (eg. Marxism or Imperialism) and its anti-foundationalism a constant challenge to institutional authority. Indeed, there are no authorities. There is no final court of appeal to which we can refer (or defer). Instead, according to Lyotard, we are to play "games" of move and counter move trying to increase the space for our own "little narratives". The sense of semantic weightlessness is even more evident in the work of Derrida. All words, says Derrida, should be placed sous erature, "under erasure", as inadequate but necessary. Signs have different meanings in different contexts and no text or sign is deemed to be final, each and all only ever refer to others. There is no privileged sign, no transcendent signifier, no ultimate logos from which we can take our bearings. No truth is unmediated. Nothing is stable, everything is dispersed and broken up. Even Derrida's writing style seems to demonstrate that there are no fixed positions, no ground beneath our feet (see for example Derrida 1974).

Popular reaction against science predates Lyotard's "Report on Knowledge". Hiroshima and Nagasaki had already marked a loss of innocence, Rachel Carson's Silent Spring had already stirred environmental consciences, and attacks on the one-dimensional thinking of reductionist science were already part of a youth counter-culture. The challenge from postmodernism, however, is more fundamental because it challenges not only what science does, but what science is. The cultural position of science is undermined not just because of any abuse of science, but because it can no longer claim to have privileged access to nature. What it tells us is no longer a single, unmediated, transcendental truth, but a historically contingent collection of stories in an anthology of little narratives. Its epistemological authority is shattered into a thousand pieces, a thousand local knowledges. As the Reformation dissolved boundaries between sacred and secular sites, between clergy and laity, so too the "Postmodern Reformation" dissolves the boundaries between lay and expert thinking. Luther's priesthood of all believers has become a priesthood of all knowers. We are all experts now, all experts in our own experiences of the world.

Not surprisingly, the reaction from some scientists has been fierce (one might even say Jesuitical), finally breaking out into the 'science wars' of the late 1990s (Sardar 2000). However, not all scientists have been so hostile and 'postmodern science' has developed alongside postmodern critiques of science. We can see postmodernism in science as "a break from the mechanistic, objectivistic and deterministic worldview of modern science ... giving way in the twentieth century to a new

paradigm based on the principles of indeterminacy, chaos and evolution" (Best, *Science as Culture*, 189). In its rejection of foundationalism we can see it take a more holistic approach, an approach concerned with networks, webs and interconnections. It marks a shift in thinking - from parts to wholes, from objects to relationships (Capra 1997). It accepts that all we can have is "approximate knowledge", and in Lyotard's formulation ("paralogy") it searches for instabilities and paradoxes, for dissent not consensus.

Dissent, instability, no foundations beneath us, no transcendental truth above - are there any reasons for hope in anything of what I have presented here so far? The historical record does not look good. The earlier of our two periods was followed by a hundred years of religious wars. In drawing out the similarities between then and now, are we to expect our current unsettling period to be followed by similar conflicts, an epistemological divide as savage and cruel as the earlier confessional divide? Moreover, what kind of hope can we expect to have? A fatalistic hope that surrenders itself to the power of Progress (Wells 1933 & 1967: 43). Optimistic hope that is little more than wishful thinking? Or simply the hope that is born of despair since it is all we have? "The miserable have no other medicine," Shakespeare said, "but only hope" (Shakespeare *Measure for Measure* act 3, scene 1). Our earlier period is marked by a dualism of hope and despair, of weakness and courage. Catholcs might be optimistic about our capabilities and our exercise of free will, but Protestants would be more likely to see ouselves as innately depraved and helpless. Erasmus might write Concerning the Freedom of the Will, but Luther could counter with The Bondage of the Will. A personal relationship with God and justification through good works might raise one's hopes, but the doctrine of predestination would as surely knock them down.

We should, perhaps, expect no more from our own troubled times, but I believe that the Postmodern Reformation gives us real reasons for hope (in a positive sense). If we can see in the Renaissance the origins of modernity, perhaps we should look to our own "New Renaissance" to see a world of postmodernity. In this way postmodernity should be understood not by a referencing back to what it opposes or replaces, but a referencing forward to what it brings forth. It may be that our own Reformation is best seen not as a reaction to what has been, but rather as early symptoms of what is to come, not post- but pre- , not post-modern but pre-future. At first sight that future might seem unsettling, but if we accept its challenge it could equally be liberating and empowering. The focus on local knowledges, for example, would emphasise the importance of local farming knowledges as against the technological fixes proposed by corporate agribusinesses, finding sustainability in biodiversity not in genetically engineered monocultures (Shiva 2000). Likewise, a postfoundational model of rationality offers the possibility of moving beyond stereotyped ways of relating theology and science, a postfoundationalist Christian theology allowing us "to explore freely and criti-

cally the experiential and interpretative roots of all our beliefs"(van Huyssteen and Wentzel 1998: 46).

Accepting the postmodern challenge means accepting diversity, pluralism, uncertainty, the absence of foundations, the loss of absolutes and the undermining of authority. The postmodern world is a world of fluidity and motion, and our best hope lies in our ability to swim. The spontaneous experiential qualities required for postmodern swimming are, to my mind, not unlike those to be found in Taoism. Indeed, as Sinologist Angus Graham has noted, there are striking similarities between Derrida's attempts to undermine binary oppositions and the attempts of Lao-tzu to break the habits of thinking in dichotomies. There is a holistic interconnectedness in the semantic world of postmodernity - "none of the elements is absolutely definable, everything is caught up and traced through by everything else"(Sarup 1988: 36) - so perhaps it is not surprising that "We see from Derrida as from Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu that language which deconstructs oppositions has to take the direction of poetry"(Graham 1992: 113). For Derrida, thinking and writing are bound up with traditional concepts of linear time, and linerality suppresses "pluri-dimensional symbolic thought". The history of Western philosophy, he says, is a history of linear thought, and in calling for non-linear ways of thinking and writing, not only does he present a challenge to Western philosophy but in doing so what he produces (perhaps unwittingly) has resonances with certain aspects of Eastern philosophy. It may be no coincidence that Heidegger's similar attempt to deconstruct (even destroy) Western metaphysics is likely to have benefitted from unacknowledged appropriations of the Taoist and Buddhist classics (May 1996).

In his History of Civilisations Fernand Braudel writes that, "America lives in advance of modernity. It is still the country of the future - and that, at least, is a sign of hope and a proof of vitality" (1993: 505). What then is the future and does it have to be American? The threat of globalisation is often perceived as a cultural threat, the threat of creeping Americanisation at the expense of local and indigenous cultures, the Disneyfication of experience, and the tyranny of the logo whether it is MacDonald's, Coca-cola, or Nike. The promise of postmodernity, however, is to fragment the global stasis of corporate capitalism into the dynamic diversity of local possibilities. Potentially the greatest cultural export from America is its confidence, and in a postmodern world that should mean the confidence not to be American (at least for most people on the planet). The irony is that the success of science, capitalism and Western culture is an indication of our own failure - our own failure of nerve (even of those living in the west). In its rejection of grand narratives and ultimate authorities, postmodernity reaffirms that science, capitalism and culture are all things that we do, and not things that should be appealed to. We are the world that we make, and having the confidence to accept the postmodern challenge we might indeed hope to enjoy the fruits of a "new renaissance" in a global celebration of our differences.

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Review Article

The Markan Jesus

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The Identity of Jesus in Mark: An Essay on Narrative Christology (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 49) by Jacob Chacko Naluparayil, Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2000 (pp. xviii + 636).

This is a revised version of the doctoral dissertation defended by Dr. Jacob Chacko Naluparayil in 1999 at Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem. The book, written in clear, articulate and almost flawless English, engages the reader to follow the progression of thought with ease, to understand the logic of the argumentation with clarity and to evaluate various views on different points and subtle nuances mentioned therein with proper discretion and critical acumen. The concluding summaries provided at the end of each section and of every chapter will enable the reader to recapitulate the often intricate and at times extensive argumentation in proper perspective.

A perusal of the brief introduction (pp. xvii-xviii), conclusion of part one (pp. 285-87) as well as of part two (pp. 550-52) and the general conclusion (pp. 553-5 will 6) undoubtedly ably equip one to comprehend the main content of the work and its primary thrust.

This scholarly study, neatly divided into two almost equal parts (pp. 1-287 and 289-552) and each part containing three chapters, is the end-product of a systematically planned and meticulously executed research containing overabundant (sometimes too lengthy) footnotes and an extensive bibliography (pp. 557-623) with a well-documented index of authors (pp. 625-36).

The study is an earnenst attempt to answer a very pertinent and extremely significant question in Mk: Who is Jesus according to the Marcan Gospel? Naluparayil (= N.) commences his response in the first chapter by offering a historical survey of the key opinions on this question spanning over a period of one century: (1) the Messianic Secret as the clue to understand the Christological orientation of Mk proposed by W. Wrede in 1901 and its sequel in the following decades; (2) the Divine Man Christology of divergent strands in the middle of the 20th century; (3) The Son of God Christology and the Son of Man Christology beginning from the 70s; and (4) 'the Polar Christology' and 'the Integrative Christology' attempting to negotiate a balance between the Son of God Christology and the Son of Man Christology in the subsequent years. Of these four modes and shades of views, N. opines, the Son of God Christology and the Son of Man Christology are most prominent among the Marcan scholars at present.

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