

# Loyola and the 'Trained Will'

## by: Douglas Lockhart

The revival of learning, the Church's grand delusion that it is engaged in a cosmic war, and the challenge of theology to the Western intellectual tradition

In *The First Jesuit*, Mary Purcell tells us that the genius of Ignatius Loyola displayed itself more fully in education than in any other sphere. Devising an educational plan from his experiences in the universities of Europe, he chose "...the golden mean between the old and the new, being always on the alert for what was good and useful in contemporary educational developments".<sup>1</sup> Appraising the strengths and weaknesses of the older medieval and the newer Renaissance education, he learned how to "...adapt himself to the needs and interests of his times". So said a certain Father Ganss, relied upon by Purcell to paint her picture of Ignatius Loyola's intellectual formation in a period of great change. Summarising Ganss, she describes Ignatius as devoted to the "...harmonious development of the whole man with all his faculties, natural and supernatural."<sup>2</sup>

Reading such words leaves one with the impression of a thoroughly balanced mind seeking the best for all. However, Malachi Martin's description of the same idealistic vision sounds slightly different: "Programmatically," says Martin, choosing a rather strange word for starters, "he [Ignatius] best achieved that goal . . . by training his companions so that they could achieve the desired unification of many wills, each and all locked into a super-human spiritual ideal."<sup>3</sup> Super-human spiritual ideal? From the difference of focus detectable in those two descriptions, I could only presume that I'd confused two processes: (1) those who were to be trained, and (2) those who were going to do the training. Loyola himself seems to agree with this division. In his *Spiritual Exercises* Purcell's "harmonious development of the whole man" turns into: "To arrive at the truth in all things, we ought always to be ready to believe that what seems to us white is black, if the hierarchical church so defines." So much for the harmonious,

balanced development of others; Ignatius is obviously talking of his super-obedient “soldiers”, and these soldiers - referred to by Malachi Martin as a papal Rapid Deployment Force - no doubt purveyed their likes and dislikes to all and sundry with conviction and certainty.

And the reason for this training of the will among Loyola’s followers? Because public interest in the “here and now”, in the more “exciting temporal life” of the early sixteenth century had swamped the age old belief in the subtle war against God waged by Lucifer through his subverting of the human will. The Renaissance may have seemed light-struck to those who gloried in its humanist values, in its cult of the individual, in its profane pronouncements against God and Church, but it was actually a dark renaissance, a returning to pagan values under the guise of freedom through thought and knowledge. So thinks Malachi Martin; and I dare say there are many who agree with him. For in spite of the great advances made during the Renaissance period, it can also be argued that brilliance of social culture hid savage appetites and passions, and that courtly refinement and spectacular literary and artistic achievements of the age cloaked many hideous deeds. Christian virtues were scorned. Diplomacy in the hands of humanists created a network of intrigue and string-pulling at the highest levels. The society surrounding Ignatius Loyola became mundane, pagan and irreligious. The good of the past was sacrificed, its evil retained, in moral terms the future ignored.<sup>4</sup>

But surely that was more or less the state of affairs long before the Renaissance occurred? What was so different? When the Renaissance finally came the Church was in a state of moral and spiritual collapse; centuries of debauchery, scandal and power-mongering had enfeebled it. And this, I think, is why Ignatius’ elite team of teachers were finally directed not to the poor and needy, to the uneducated and deprived as first intended, but to the task (directed by the pope himself) of creating a dedicated phalanx of totally obedient leaders of men. The rampant modernism of the time could not be stopped, that was fully realised, but through a highly skilled teaching Order like the Jesuits the people could be reconvinced of their spiritual plight

and brought back to the fold. For although many had discovered that there was more to life than religious dogma, that there was in fact mental air to be breathed untainted by fear, superstition and corruption, at the back of this new-fangled freedom lay the machinations of Lucifer - a fact which only those enthralled by Lucifer could not detect. The Renaissance was therefore no more than a new phase of the war between God and his evil counterpart; it was not, as many believed, an indication that the Church had got things terribly wrong right from the very beginning.

### The Revival of Learning

The transition from the middle ages to that of the “modern” is a fascinating historical journey which, alas, we can only touch upon here. Suffice it to say that this transition contained many important ingredients, some of which are vital to our appreciation of the medieval mind and its enthusiastic search for truth on multiple levels. A fresh and invigorating stage of the human journey had been reached, and with it came a fuller consciousness than had previously been witnessed.

As the word “Renaissance” means re-birth, this has led some writers to interpret the Renaissance as a harking back to antique times; but according to the experts, the revival of learning which took place signifies a much broader canvas, a canvas of research and discovery based on the release of vital energies which heralded a mental revolution. Yes, the pagan past would contribute greatly to the Renaissance thirst for art and literature, but at base it was a visionary movement with its eye on the future, not the past. Brilliant the past had certainly been, but the future to Renaissance thinkers spelt release from the gods, or from God, not a doubling back into an older, more primitive perception of reality. The recovery of the classics was certainly important, but in comparison with the more immediate factors of Church decay, the breakdown of empire, the weakening of the feudal system throughout Europe, the invention of paper, printing, gunpowder and the mariner’s compass, what the classics revealed of ancient Greek and Roman culture took second place.

Thus the Renaissance was a time of transition, fusion, preparation and tentative endeavour, the last stage of that escape from ecclesiastical and feudal despotism which characterised the middle ages. As men and women read the classics and realised that humanity had a great and glorious past, their confidence soared; for had not these men and women found a new, freer way to live, relate and express themselves? Such freedoms had been eroded at the whims of emperors, kings and popes, but what had to be remembered was that in spite of having no Christian tradition, no Christ, no Church, no pope, these so-called "pagans" had created great civilisations replete with works of literature, philosophy and art, and encouraged both inquiry and criticism within their societies. In fact, from remotest times, they had created civilisations which, according to Malachi Martin, could not have continued if Christianity hadn't merged with the Roman Empire; civilisation would have come to an abrupt halt. Here then was a mirror-image for the future, a goal to be reached and refined with the energy of a people at last set free. And the start of this great mental revolution? Ironically, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks - Constantine's Eastern empire was no more, his Western empire in the throws of revolution. The will and intellect of the people, harnessed now towards self-emancipation, towards the natural rights of reason and the senses, would open a gap between Church, state and populace which would never again close.

Malachi Martin does not agree with this; to him "self-emancipation" is a dirty word. And so too reason and the senses divorced from a theology which demanded total subjugation of intellect and feeling - subjugation to theological policies often blatantly at odds with everything sensible and humane. Without at any point seeming to consider that self-emancipation - termed "self-centeredness" by this ex Jesuit - was utterly natural by way of reaction due to past subjugation of the human spirit, he tells us that the Jesuits rejected the Renaissance preoccupation with the "grandeur of the self", their attention being directed always to just two things: ".....the warfare between God and Lucifer for each individual, and the Pope's need of devoted servants." (5)

On reading such a sentence, one cannot help but wonder which of these propositions came first, and whether the latter “need” was somehow linked to the former problem. But Martin’s point is basically straightforward; he is saying that individuals should know what kind of “spirit” a situation or event contains. But by this he does not mean “natural bias” or “fashion of thought” or “paradigm” but, quite literally, either “the spirit of God” or “the spirit of Lucifer”. We should not allow perception or analysis to function divorced from this polarising theological view, for to do so is to fall foul of Lucifer’s means of communications through the natural world. Sense data on its own is not innocent, it is by its very nature Lucifer’s means to an end, that end being the creation of “...images and motives he (Lucifer) would like to see as the individual’s interior intimates, the regulators of his decisions and actions.”<sup>6</sup> This is no metaphor; it is a challenge to the very fabric of the Western intellectual tradition.

And yet in spite of what he has said about self-centeredness and self-grandeur, he then tells us that the “. . . power of the individual in all this is crucial.” We have the power to choose, the power to willfully reject spiritually inadequate views of the world or self. For as Ignatius had discovered, whatever you deliberately allowed to develop in your “inner theatre of consciousness” would eventually regulate your decisions and general mode of behaviour. Herein lay the power of the Jesuits, the secret of their extraordinary success: it was their willingness to sublimate the whims of the self on behalf of a greater vision. Here was the purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and that purpose was “...to control what entered his consciousness....so that he could remain Romanist and activist.”<sup>7</sup> Romanist and activist? Apparently so. The Jesuit’s ascetic training was based on rules, and more rules, and then more rules. Every move, every thought just about, was governed by a rule. Order and discipline was the secret of Jesuitical success. As can be imagined, and as is admitted, cool, rational detachment resulted, a trait sustained by rigorous self-analysis, and either admired or feared by friend and foe alike.

Of course the whole exercise was for the “greater glory of God” through the recognition that God and Lucifer were at war, and because the Pope needed devoted servants. These were the

factors that differentiated it from, say, the attempts of Reichsfuher Heinrich Himmler to create the Waffen SS. Martin is himself interested in this curious copy-cat organisation. He tells us that Himmler put together a huge library about the Jesuit Order, and that he even dreamed of training his elite troops along Jesuit lines. Dreamed? I could have sworn he did exactly that. And when he goes on to say that Himmler's plan failed to produce that " . . . inner subjugation of the will and intellect that Inago had produced in his Jesuits", one can only wonder at such a statement. For if there were ever soldiers brought to a state of "cool, rational detachment", it was certainly Hitler's Waffen SS. One could of course question the word "rational" in this context, but was it really rational to believe that some kind of cosmic war was going on between God and Lucifer, and to think that believing such a thing glorified God? Or was it more accurate to say that the *raison d'etre* of both organisations had simply been a willingness to sublimate the whims of the self on behalf of what was believed to be a greater vision? SS combat troops may have taken part in foolish esoteric rituals based on Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* at Wewelsburg Castle in Westphalia, and the vision adopted no more than a curious blend of "...the new Nordic cult of Wotan, Siegfried, the Holy Grail, and the Teutonic Knights of old" as Martin records, but when all was said and done was there really any difference between such an esoteric line up and the Church's utterly intolerant notion of itself as divinely appointed by God to control what happened not only on earth but also in God's good heaven? Hitler, it is agreed, was either mad or crazed to think of himself as a latter day Messiah sent to liberate the German people from the sin of weakness, but popes believed something uncomfortably similar, and expected to be treated not only as sane, but as sensible and spiritually responsible - the "weakness of sin" was after all nothing more than the "sin of weakness" by another name.

And so in 1936 Hitler could speak confidently to Bishop Berning of Osnabruch of having done no more than the Church itself had done for over fifteen hundred years; for had not both organisations the same basic vision, the vision of all humanity brought to a state of perfect subjugation? To believe such a thing

was of course to massively misrepresent the Church in many, many ways; but could Hitler ultimately be blamed for such a view (whether cynically held or not) given that the Catholic Church had itself blithely killed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in the name of Christ? No, there was a terrible darkness on both sides, and Hitler's darkness was only reckoned to be the more terrible because it had been perpetrated after rather than before the Renaissance. Like it or not, the Renaissance, in spite of its intellectual impiety and arrogant sense of self-importance heralded a basically healthy change in human consciousness, and to read it otherwise was perhaps to be in the grip of a disabling fear, a fear of things that go bump in the night.

### The Un-dark Middle Ages.

Basically, the Renaissance symbolised the recovery of the human spirit. However, it's many marvels of thought and perception did not materialise without previous endeavour. After what is generally described as a long period of bondage to oppressive ecclesiastical and political orthodoxy during the middle ages, European consciousness again became liberal, practical and enthusiastic. Finding again some of the qualities exhibited by the nations of antiquity, but working from an even more astute perception of self and world, human consciousness began to evolve the rudiments of a vision quite at odds with Church and state. From being dominated by an intolerant theology, and deprived of positive knowledge, the medieval mind had indeed struggled to make philosophical and mathematical sense of the world, but had fallen back in disarray as Churchmen, backed by the awesome power of the Church, and wielding the same type of logic (shades of the Jesuits to come), argued from the standpoint that "heaven" and "hell" and "salvation" were the only realities ultimately worth considering. Everything had to be measured against those realities; to speculate on anything for its own sake was to invite the world to loom larger than the creator of that world. Persecuted for trying to free philosophy from theological orthodoxy, Scotus Erigena and Abalard gained little support and were defeated. So too was Roger Bacon, condemned by the

Franciscans because he presumed to know more than was allowable in terms of humility. The Fraticelli spiritualists, inspired by the mystic prophesies of Joachim of Flora, attempted to grasp something purer than rigid Latin theology could afford and were treated abominably as a result. The influential order of the Templars suffered wholesale persecution because they, too, sought to evade the rigidity of the Roman Church.

In 1232 the Inquisition was born. Anyone opposed to what the pope said was condemned as a heretic and given into the hands of the secular authorities to be interrogated, tortured and burned. Repentance - the very heart of Christian teaching - earned one imprisonment for life. De Rosa records that in July 1233 Gregory IX appointed two full-time inquisitors, the first of " . . . a long line of serene untroubled persecutors of the human race."<sup>8</sup> In a telling cameo we learn from De Rosa that in 1239 a bishop by the name of Moranis was accused of allowing heretics to live and multiply in his diocese. As a result, a certain Dominican by the name of Robert le Bougre was sent to Champagne to investigate. One week later the whole town was on trial, and on 29 May bishop Moranis and 180 people went to the stake. Such fanaticism, it seems, was not uncommon, it having taken root after Gregory VII's reign. And no wonder, for between 1200 and 1500 all shades of difference in discipline and belief had been carefully removed by a series of papal laws - creative disagreement was officially taboo.

Yet as early as 384 torture had been denounced by a Roman synod; and in the 600's judges had been ordered by Nicholas I to ignore testimony procured by such means. Being beyond civil law, inquisitors could do whatever they liked, for as long as they liked, to whomever they liked. And by direct papal command they were to have "no mercy" on their victims; pity for heretics was defined as "unchristian".

De Rosa is ferociously truthful in the face of such evidence. He says: "Like the Nazi SS in the twentieth century, they were able to torture and destroy with a quiet mind because their superior officer - in this case, the pope - assured them that heretics were a dirty, diseased and contagious foe that must be purged at all costs and by all means."<sup>9</sup> I can only presume that it is



observations like this that made Philip Caraman SJ call Peter de Rosa's book " . . . a binful of garbage." But one can only wonder why, for there are reams of damning evidence against the Church and the papacy for anyone with the patience and the stomach to seek it out. And the excuse of "human frailty", of "these were ages of barbarity" does not wash here, not one little bit. For behind these vicious, arrogant and pathologically driven men of the cloth hung the Christ of Golgotha, the God-man who through the auspices of the Holy Spirit was supposed to be in charge of the whole sad affair.

Such deeds were certainly inspired from within, of that there can be little doubt; but not as a result of some whispering Christ as anyone with an ounce of commonsense realises. More by an ever growing hydra-headed theology which ensnared and destroyed innocent human beings by its insidious presence. Even the acclaimed Dominican Thomas Aquinas would succumb to theological madness, for in his *Summa Theologia* he would write

Though heretics must not be tolerated because they deserve it, we must bear with them, till, by a second admonition, they may be brought back to the faith of the church. But those who, after a second admonition, remain obstinate in their errors, must not only be excommunicated, but they must be delivered to the secular power to be exterminated.<sup>10</sup>

More terrifying, more chilling, however, is a statement of Dr Marianus de Luca, SJ, Professor of Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome who, in his *Institutions of Public Ecclesiastical Law* in 1901, was able to write that the Catholic Church had the right and duty to kill heretics. For if they were imprisoned or exiled they would only corrupt others. There was therefore no option but to put them to death. 1901? And this statement was backed by a personal commendation from Pope Leo XIII!<sup>11</sup> What can one say? Malachi Martin may dream Church had power and respect and authority, but for his sake as well as my own and Peter de Rosa's I sincerely pray that it never comes about.

During October 1302, Pope Boniface VIII made the ever-growing claims of the papacy "arrestingly specific," as Will Durant so charmingly puts it. Issuing the Bull *Unam sanctum*, Boniface stated that there was but one true Church outside of which there was no salvation; that there was but one body of Christ, with one head, not two; and that Christ's representative on earth was the Roman pope. But he didn't stop there; the Bull went on to say that there were two swords, or powers - the spiritual and the temporal - that the first was borne by the Church, the second borne for the Church by the king. But only under sufferance. Spiritual power was above temporal power, and in light of this, *all men should be subject to the Roman pontiff*.

Without going into the complicated circumstances surrounding this outburst of spiritual bravado, suffice it to say that Boniface VIII, governed in his nature by a brutal cynicism, died one year later as a result of stretching the patience of his subjects too far. One incident will be sufficient to show the ruthless nature of this pope, a ruthlessness which caused Dante to bury Boniface head down in a fissure of rock in his Eighth Circle of Hell. At the storming of Palestrina where some of his enemies were holed up after questioning his legitimacy, he avenged himself by killing around six thousand of its inhabitants and utterly flattening the fortress - only the cathedral was spared. Nicknamed the "Black Beast" for his deeds of tyranny, murder, adultery and much else, he was posthumously tried for practicing ritual magic in or around 1310. Peter de Rosa adds a curious footnote to the volumes of information available on this infamous pope; he tells us that when the new St Peters was completed in 1605, Boniface's tomb had to be moved. To everyone's horror it cracked open and revealed an incorrupt body in spite of a lapse of three centuries.

### The Progress of Roman Christianity

And so Roman Christianity "progressed", having started humbly in the catacombs with care for the needy and a real humility due to much suffering on behalf of a high moral ideal. But, thrust suddenly into the limelight and given unlimited prestige and

resources before it had time to mature, before it could properly digest its future role in the world, it immediately succumbed to the temptation of seeing itself as the only legitimate arbiter of the spiritual condition, and fell into the grotesque state of rationalising its most brutal and devious actions as "sanctioned" from above - for surely God had ordained such a miraculous elevation? Constantine may even have sensed the direction about to be taken by the Church he had so rapidly elevated, for it is said that he cried out on his death bed: "Not the sword! Not the sword! Knowledge!" Did he perhaps see the carnage to come, the intolerance, the greed, the brutality?

In relation to the same tradition, Malachi Martin says "Was Constantine regretting it all? The wealth he had conferred on the church, the power he had put at the Roman pontiff's disposal?"<sup>12</sup> But on further reflection he thinks not; it's more likely that in an unrefined way Constantine was attempting to say what a dying Augustine would say one hundred years later: "Too late have I known thee, O beauty ever ancient, ever new!" Yet Martin asks the question, and in asking it shows that he is conscious of the possibility that something had gone wrong, or was about to go wrong, with the Church's method of functioning; a functioning related to Martin's previous speculation that Pope Sylvester's churlish rejection of the blood relatives of Jesus having paid him a visit could have been better handled. Better handled? In what other way could it have been better handled? If Sylvester had not sent these Jewish-Nazarean Christians packing what then? A friendship? A relationship? A Partnership? What then? A sharing of power? A whole new set of influences on the early Church? A completely different basic theology of Jesus' spiritual status? This thought is quite obviously at the back of Malachi Martin's mind, but it is never articulated. As he says, "The Jewish Christians had no place in such a church system."<sup>13</sup> No place indeed. The juggernaut of Roman Christianity was already on the move.

Later, in a different context, Martin will recognise that things could have been other than they eventually turned out; however I cannot help but feel that I've been distracted from the main event when he explains that the Church's basic problem was Constantine, and that through supplying both the Eastern and

Western branches of the Church with hypocritical religious reasons to split from one another (religious reasons backed by political and economic considerations), this Emperor effectively derailed the Church through the introduction of election methods which produced bitter, and sometimes violent clashes between prospective popes. As one pope lay dying, factional disputes filled the air, bishops, priests, deacons and subdeacons facing up to nobles and the Roman Senate while friends, kinsmen and families of ambitious candidates tried to sway the decision in their favour. As a result, blood was shed and people died in the name of the Church.

So we learn that at the election of Pope Damasus I in 366 CE, no less than thirty-seven corpses littered the Liberian Basilica. Only occasionally would popes be elected by their predecessor, force sometimes being used to ensure the result. And at the end of the day the nominee had to be ratified by the Emperor who, more often than not produced his own candidate and expected him to be accepted without question. So yes, Constantine was a primary influence on how things shaped up within the Church, but the question of those kinsmen of Jesus just won't go away - their omission from the process of formation is, to my way of thinking, fundamental.

Throughout the centuries the Church promoted feeling and emotional attachment over intellectual development; yet at the same time evolved a highly complex backcloth of theology linked to divine revelation. Through claims of divine revelation she cancelled out the strict requirements of intellect, and in organising such revelations into dogmas backed by theology, held the common mind in thrall both by way of emotional projection and intellectual bemusement. And so "doubt" became a sin, and the conflict with natural intellect arose, and a closure on philosophy took place. It did not matter what the question was, divine revelation had produced the answer, and if not, then the answer was obviously hidden somewhere in Scripture. In 307 CE Lactantius would write: ". . . we who are instructed in the knowledge of the truth by the Holy Scriptures know the beginning of the world and its end."<sup>14</sup> And so the axis of concern was shifted from this world to the next, and the supernatural replaced history.

By such means was investigation of natural causes discouraged, and as Durant states " . . . the advances made by Greek science through seven centuries....sacrificed to the cosmology and biology of Genesis."<sup>15</sup>

However it cannot and should not be denied that it was the Roman Church which helped hold things together during the Dark Ages of barbarian invasion and cultural decline; the destruction would certainly have been worse but for the Church with its unwavering policy of faith over reason. But the constant provision of supernatural sanctions to support social order, of a creed created out of myth, miracle, fear, hope and love to tame the barbarian heart and quieten the brute mind eventually backfired, for it was a policy which resulted, inadvertently, in a hostility towards real learning. Seven centuries of Greek science all but vanish as the Roman Church evolved; literature in the free, explorative pagan sense went into decline - in spite of the aspiration of some Church Fathers to keep Virgil and Cicero alive. The historic function of Roman Christianity may have been to re-establish the moral basis of society, but as it tangled with the world of politics and power and wealth this promising premise gave way to a stultifying egocentricity - the Christ of Faith, unleavened by Nazarean realism, was running out of epistemological control.

Writing of the Renaissance and the middle ages in 1965, Professor P Smith of Cornell University reminds us that in spite of being dominated by an intolerant theology and deprived of positive knowledge, the " . . . native human instincts, [and] the natural human appetites, remained unaltered and alive beneath the crust of orthodoxy."<sup>16</sup> All was not lost. But the dangers inherent in hallucinations of fancy, allegory and visions were real enough. Smith captures the situation in these words:

"Man and the actual universe kept on reasserting their rights and claims, in one way or another; but they were always being thrust back again into Cimmerian regions of abstractions, fictions, visions, spectral hopes and fears, in the midst of which the intellect somnambulistically moved upon an unknown way."<sup>17</sup>

That exactly describes the dilemma faced by intelligent minds during that long dark night of the intellect. Numerous attempts were made to lighten and enlighten, but each attempt was successfully suppressed by a logic of heaven and hell and salvation which haunted the conscience like a nightmare, and still does. Smith adds to this apt description the observation that the medieval problem was that the age had lost “ . . . the right touch on life”. This was what was missing. And how beautifully put. No dwelling on rebellion or lawlessness here; just a wistful noticing that the delicate touch required to live a successful life or build a successful civilisation had all but vanished. This was the problem; and the losing of this delicate human sensibility had resulted in the over-shadowing sphinx of theology sustaining superstition and stupidity to the detriment of real questions.

An attempt at intellectual and aesthetic escape was made in southern France during the 13th century; Emperor Frederick II was deeply influenced by the blooming of a gentle culture perfumed by poetry in Provence. The ecclesiastical and feudal fetters were momentarily broken. A richness and dexterity language developed which reflecting the latest and most modern phase of medieval literature in Europe. Naturalism was released in what Professor Smith describes as “ . . . the fabliaux of jongleurs, lyrics of minnesingers, tales of trouveres, romances of Arthur and his knights”. Passion and enjoyment of life came bursting to the surface. And, curiously visible in Goliardic poetry the influence of pagan inspiration. In poem and song the ancient gods of Greece and Rome were evoked in taverns, on the open road, in the forests. These naughty gods of the ancients were no longer in exile, but back in the hearts and minds of men and women.

I've closely paraphrased Professor Smith's prose at this point to capture something of what he so movingly conveys in his excellent article on the Renaissance and medieval preparation for that rebirth, and I can almost see Malachi Martin shudder at what I think he would consider the beginnings of the spiritual debauch to come. Along with Smith and de Rosa and many another Martin is of course fully aware of the state the Church had got herself into, and is honest to a fault in writing of that debacle; but he

believes something inherently sinister to have resided in that resuscitation of the pagan vision. And that in spite of the fact that the revival of learning was not the root of the Renaissance at all, rather, it was the surfacing of the pent-up energies of natural human intelligence using whatever lay around. Once again Martin would wince; for the word “natural” would to his ear suggest an unbalanced condition of soul and mind, mind having displaced soul and left it vulnerable to demonic attack.

But for the people of southern France this opportunity to continue the experiment in freedom and gentleness was short lived. In a re-thinking of age-old dogma, the Church “ . . . preaching Simon de Montfort’s crusade” and “ . . . organising Dominic’s Inquisition” bore down to exact vengeance for deviation by sword, fire, famine and pestilence. The people were driven back into the darkness of superstition to experiment not with reality, but with sorcery and magic; for these were the only means left through which power over nature or insight into the mysteries surrounding human life could be attained. It did not matter that life had seemed sweet and ordinary, sensible and free of fear during those heady days of poetry, inquiry and love, what mattered was the realisation that all of it was in the hands of Satan, and that the idea of innocent action at any level was a dark trick perpetrated by that great and terrible being. This attempt to throw off the shackles of a religious vision which had sufficed for so long was premature; the historical conditions were not yet unbalanced enough for the idea of universal monarchy, of an indivisible Christendom incorporating the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Church to come apart. Reassessment and experiment and exploration were not yet fully possible; and that in spite of Frederick II extraordinary attempt to initiate a Renaissance all of his own and single-handedly to topple the pope from his lofty perch in 1250. An abortive Renaissance; but an inkling of what was to come.

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