

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".¹ 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 Father Ganss, the priest 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."²

This leaves one with the impression of a thoroughly balanced mind seeking the best educational results for all, but as Jesuit Father Malachi Martin's evaluation of the same figure reveals, this is not actually the case. "Programmatically," says Martin, choosing an interesting word with which to launch his observations, "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."³ A super-human spiritual ideal? The difference of focus is stark; Loyola's description of the educative process in his *Spiritual Exercises* fails to reflect Purcell's innocent evaluation of the same process. "To arrive at the truth in all things," according to Loyola, "we ought always to be ready to believe that what seems to us white is black, if the

hierarchical church so defines." Malachi Martin explains this statement by telling us that Ignatius is referring to his "super-obedient soldiers", to a "Rapid Deployment Force" created for the specific purpose of enforcing papal authority.

The reason for this training of the will is because public interest in the more "exciting temporal life" of the early sixteenth century had swamped belief in the subtle war against God waged by Lucifer. The Renaissance may have gloried in its light-filled humanistic values, in its cult of the individual and 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 of thought and knowledge. In spite of the advances made, the Renaissance period had been rife with savage appetites and passions, its courtly refinement, literary and artistic achievements used to cloak many hideous deeds. Diplomacy in the hands of humanists had created a network of intrigue and string-pulling that rendered society mundane, pagan and irreligious. The good of the past was sacrificed, its evil retained, in moral terms the future ignored.⁴ The Renaissance was in fact a new phase of the war between God and Satan; it was not, as many believed, an indication that the Church had got things terribly wrong right from the start.

The Revival of Learning

The transition from the middle ages to that of the modern is a journey we can only touch upon. Suffice it to say that this transition contained many important ingredients, some of which are vital to an appreciation of the medieval mind and its search for truth. 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 period as a harking back to antique times, but it actually signifies a broader canvas of research and discovery based on the release of vital energies heralding a mental revolution. The pagan past would contribute to the Renaissance

thirst for art and literature, but at base it was a visionary movement with its eye on the future. The past had certainly been brilliant, but to Renaissance thinkers the "future" 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 had been 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 had revealed of ancient Greek and Roman culture took second place.

The Renaissance was a time of transition, fusion, preparation and tentative endeavour, the last stage of an escape from ecclesiastical and feudal despotism that 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? In spite of having no Christian tradition, no Christ, no Church, no pope, these pagans had created civilisations replete with works of literature, philosophy and art, and encouraged both inquiry and criticism within their societies. 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. 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 that would never again close.

Malachi Martin does not agree with this summation; to him "self-emancipation" is a dirty word. So too "reason" and the "senses" divorced from a theology that demanded total subjugation of intellect and feeling. Without at any point appearing to consider that self-emancipation - termed "self-centeredness" by this Jesuit - was natural 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 ... the warfare between God and Lucifer for each individual, and the Pope's need of devoted

servants."⁵ Martin's point is that we should sense the kind of "spirit" a situation or event reflects, and react accordingly. By "spirit" he does not mean "natural bias", "fashion of thought" or "paradigm", he means either "the spirit of God" or "the spirit of Lucifer" detectable in each and every moment. To not do so is to be influenced by Lucifer's means of communications through the natural world: sense data is *not* innocent. Sense data is that through which Lucifer creates "images and motives he would like to see as the individual's interior intimates, the regulators of his decisions and actions."⁶ The "power of the individual ... is [however] crucial", for we each have the capacity to *willfully* reject spiritually inadequate views of world or self.

Ignatius Loyola believed that whatever one deliberately allowed to develop in one's "inner theatre of consciousness" eventually regulated one's decisions and general mode of behaviour. This belief lay at the centre of Jesuit teaching and constituted their power: they were willing to sublimate the whims of the self on behalf of a greater vision. The purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* was not to harmoniously develop the whole man; it was "to control what entered his consciousness ... so that he could remain Romanist and activist."⁷ Jesuit training was based on rules, and then more rules; every move or thought was governed by a rule. Order and discipline was the bottom line, cool, rational detachment and rigorous self-analysis an outcome either admired or feared by friend and foe alike.

The whole exercise was of course for the "greater glory of God" through the recognition that God and Lucifer were at war, and that the Pope, due to this dire state of affairs, needed devoted servants. These were the factors that differentiated it from the attempts of Reichsfuhrer Heinrich Himmler to create the Waffen SS. Malachi Martin is interested in this 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 of doing so? I could have sworn he managed to do just that. And when told 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 Hitler's Waffen SS. The term "rational" can of course be questioned; there again, is it rational to believe that a cosmic war has been going on between God and Lucifer since before the beginning of time?

The *raison d'être* of both organisations had 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 esoteric rituals based on Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* at Wewelsburg Castle in Westphalia, the vision adopted 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 the two esoteric line ups? The Catholic Church's notion of itself as a divinely appointed authority with the right to control every thought and movement of its followers is on record. Hitler 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 have believed exactly the same thing for centuries. The "sin of weakness" was after all just the "weakness of sin" reversed!

In 1936 Hitler spoke confidently to Bishop Berning of Osnabruch of having done no more than the Church itself had done for over fifteen hundred years; had not the vision of both organisations been perfect subjugation? Had not the Church killed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in the name of Christ? There was little anyone could have said in response to that; a terrible darkness had existed on both sides, Hitler's darkness the more terrible because it had been perpetrated *after* rather than before the Renaissance. In spite of intellectual impiety and an arrogant sense of self-importance, the Renaissance had heralded a healthy change in human consciousness, not a disastrous breaking away from some great eternal truth.

The Un-dark Middle Ages.

The Renaissance symbolised the recovery of the human spirit, but it's marvels had not materialised without previous endeavour. After a long period of bondage to oppressive ecclesiastical and political orthodoxy during the middle ages, European consciousness again became liberal, practical and enthusiastic. Some of the qualities exhibited by the nations of antiquity were recovered, but it was a more astute perception of self and world that allowed human consciousness to evolve. From being dominated by an intolerant theology, and deprived of positive knowledge, the medieval mind had struggled to make philosophical and mathematical sense of the world, only to fall back in disarray as Churchmen, backed by the awesome power of the Church, argued their case from the standpoint "heaven", "hell" and "salvation". Everything had to be measured against those realities; to speculate otherwise was to invite the world to loom larger than the creator of that world. Attempting to free philosophy from theological orthodoxy, Scotus Erigena and Abalard gained little support and were defeated. So too Roger Bacon who was condemned by the Franciscans because he presumed to know more than was allowable in terms of humility. The Fraticelli spiritualists, inspired by the mystic prophecies of Joachim of Flora, would attempt to purvey something greater than Latin theology and be treated abominably, the influential Templars likewise.

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 when necessary, burned. Repentance - the very heart of Christian teaching - earned one imprisonment for life. The ex-Jesuit historian Peter 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."⁸ In a telling cameo we learn 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 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.

As early as 384 torture had been denounced by a Roman synod, whereas in the 600's judges had been ordered by Nicholas I to ignore testimony procured by such means. This kind of tolerance ceased with the Inquisition: inquisitors could do whatever they liked, for as long as they liked, to whomever they liked. By direct papal command they were to have "no mercy" on their victims; pity for heretics was defined as *unchristian*.

Peter De Rosa tells us that: "Like the Nazi SS in the twentieth century, they [they inquisitors] 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."⁹ The excuse that these were barbaric times does not hold up here, for behind these vicious, arrogant and pathologically driven men 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* inspired from within, of that there can be little doubt; but not in the sense of some whispering Christ. More as the result of a hydra-headed theology that ensnared and destroyed 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.¹⁰

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 no option but to put them to death. This statement was backed by a personal commendation from Pope Leo XIII!¹¹

During October 1302, Pope Boniface VIII made the claims of the papacy "arrestingly specific" according to the historian Will Durant. 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. And he did not 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.

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 is sufficient to show the ruthless nature of this pope, a ruthlessness that 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 Boniface's enemies were holed up for questioning his legitimacy, he avenged himself by killing around six thousand of its inhabitants and flattening the fortress - only the cathedral was spared. Nicknamed the "Black Beast" for his deeds of tyranny, murder, adultery and much else, Boniface was posthumously tried for practicing ritual magic in or around 1310.

The Progress of Roman Christianity

And so Roman Christianity "progressed", having started humbly in the catacombs with care for the needy and much humility due to having suffered for a high moral ideal. Thrust into the limelight and given unlimited prestige and resources before it had time to

mature, however, it succumbed to the temptation of seeing itself as the only arbiter of spiritual values. Rationalising its most brutal and devious actions as "sanctioned" from above, it took to avenging itself not on the Roman Empire, of which it was now a recognised part, but on the pagan world whose religious beliefs it abhorred. The Emperor Constantine may have sensed the direction about to be taken, for it is said that he cried out on his death bed: "Not the sword! Not the sword! Knowledge!" Perhaps he saw the carnage to come, the intolerance, the greed, the unfettered brutality.

In relation to this tradition, Malachi Martin asks: "Was Constantine regretting it all? The wealth he had conferred on the church, the power he had put at the Roman pontiff's disposal?"¹² On further reflection he thinks not; it is 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!" In asking this question, however, Martin shows that he is aware of something having gone wrong with the Church's method of functioning, and in conjunction with a later acknowledgement that blood relatives of Jesus (the *Desposni*) had attended the court of Pope Sylvester 1 in the 3rd century, he goes on to ponder what the repercussions of that meeting could have been for the Church. A friendship, perhaps? A relationship? A Partnership? A sharing of power? A new set of influences on the Church? A completely different theology of Jesus' spiritual status? This is at the back of Martin's mind, but it is not articulated. He says instead: "The Jewish Christians had no place in such a church system."¹³ No place indeed. The juggernaut of Roman Christianity was already on the move.

Malachi Martin will later recognise that things could have been other than they turned out, but not for either of the above reasons - it *is* Constantine's fault, but only because he supplied 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 had effectively derailed the Church through the introduction of election methods

that produced bitter, and sometimes violent, clashes between prospective popes. As one pope lay dying, factional disputes had 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 had been shed and people had died in the name of the Church.

At the election of Pope Damascus I in 366, thirty-seven corpses littered the Liberian Basilica. Only occasionally would popes be elected by their predecessor, force sometimes being used to ensure the result. Nominees had to be ratified by the Emperor who, more often than not produced his own candidate and expected him to be accepted without question. Throughout the centuries the Church promoted emotional attachment to doctrine over intellect and developed a 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, she 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 hidden somewhere in Scripture. In 307 Lactantius would write: "[W]e who are instructed in the knowledge of the truth by the Holy Scriptures know the beginning of the world and its end."¹⁴ The axis of concern had been shifted from this world to the next, the supernatural made to replace history. By such means was investigation of natural causes discouraged, "the advances made by Greek science through seven centuries ... sacrificed to the cosmology and biology of Genesis."¹⁵

The Roman Church did however hold things together during the Dark Ages of barbarian invasion and cultural decline; the destruction would certainly have been worse but for its policy of faith over reason. But the constant provision of supernatural sanctions to support social order, and a creed created out of myth,

miracle, fear, hope and love to tame the barbarian heart and quieten the brute mind did eventually backfire: the result was a hostility towards real learning. Seven centuries of Greek science would all but vanish as the Church evolved, literature in the explorative pagan sense go into decline, the aspiration of some Church Fathers to keep Virgil and Cicero alive, uneventful. The historic function of Roman Christianity had been to provide a moral base for society, but as it tangled with the world of politics and power and wealth this premise gave way to a stultifying egocentricity - the Christ of Faith, unleavened by Nazarean realism, had run 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."¹⁶ All was not lost, but the dangers inherent in hallucinations of fancy, allegory and visions triumphing over sound reasoning took their toll. Smith captures the situation thus:

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.¹⁷

Numerous attempts were made to lighten, and enlighten, but each attempt was suppressed by a logic of heaven, hell and salvation that haunted the conscience like a nightmare. The medieval problem was that the age had lost "the right touch on life", an observation of Smith's that perfectly captures the nature of the problem. The delicate touch required to live a successful life or build a successful civilisation had all but vanished, commonsense and sensibility had been over-shadowed by superstition.

An attempt at intellectual and aesthetic escape was made in southern France during the 13th century, Emperor Frederick II being influenced by the blooming of a gentle culture perfumed by the poetry of Provence. Ecclesiastical and feudal fetters were momentarily broken, a dexterity of language developed that marked the 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 burst again to the surface, the influence of pagan thought made visible in poetry, the ancient gods of Greece and Rome evoked in song.

I have closely paraphrased Professor Smith's prose in an attempt to capture what he so movingly conveys about this period, and I can sense Malachi Martin's shudder at what I think he would perceive as the beginnings of Europe's spiritual decline. Along with Smith and de Rosa Martin is fully aware of the state the Church had got herself into, and he is honest to a fault in writing of that debacle; but he believes something inherently sinister to have resided in this resuscitation of pagan values in spite of it not being the root of Renaissance thinking. The root of Renaissance thinking lay in the energies of human intelligence using whatever came to hand, and that, to Martin's ear, suggested an unbalanced condition of soul and mind vulnerable to demonic attack.

For the people of southern France this opportunity to experiment in freedom and gentleness was short lived. Preaching "Simon de Montfort's crusade", and "organising Dominic's Inquisition", the Church bore down to exact vengeance for deviation by sword, fire, famine and pestilence. Driven back into the darkness of superstition, those left alive resorted to sorcery and magic, these being the only means left to them 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 trick perpetrated by Satan.

These were the Church's ground rules, the historical conditions not yet unbalanced enough for a reassessment. And that in spite of Frederick II's extraordinary attempt to single-handedly topple the pope from his lofty perch in 1250. An abortive Renaissance; but an inkling of what was to come.

References and Notes:

- 1 Purcell, Mary, *The First Jesuit, St. Ignatius Loyola*, The Newnan Press, Westminster Maryland 1957, p. 316.
- 2 Ibid., p. 317.
- 3 Martin, Malachi, *The Jesuits* Touchstone Books, New York 1987, p. 185.
- 4 Britannica, Encyclopaedia (1965) vol. 19, p. 128.
- 5 Martin, Malachi, *The Jesuits*, (as above) p. 181.
- 6 Ibid., p. 179.
- 7 Ibid., p. 180.
- 8 Rosa, Peter de, *Vicars of Christ*, Corgie Books, 1989, p. 226.
- 9 Ibid., p. 228.
- 10 Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologia*, vol. iv, p. 90.
- 11 Boettner, Loraine, *Roman Catholicism*, The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia 1964, p. 426.
- 12 Martin, Malachi, *The Decline & Fall of the Roman Church*, J. P. Putnam & Sons, New York 1981, p. 51.
- 13 Ibid, p. 44.
- 14 Durrant, Will, *The Age of Faith*, vol. iv, *The Story of Civilisation*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1950, p. 78.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Britannica, Encyclopaedia (1965), vol. 19, p. 124.
- 17 Ibid, p. 125.

