CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

WHAT DID THE TWELFTH-CENTURY RENAISSANCE *MEAN*?

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The idea of renaissance, which Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) implanted so securely in European historiography, appeared to have condemned the medieval period to languish forever in the dungeon of 'the Dark Ages' to which Petrarch, the sixteenth-century humanists and, most inexorably of all, the scholars of the Enlightenment, from Leibnitz to Voltaire, had consigned it. Against Voltaire's judgment, issued in his *Essay on Manners* (1756), no appeal seemed possible: 'The whole of Europe lay sunk in this debased state until the sixteenth century, and even then only emerged through frightful convulsions.'

Nor, despite appearances, did Romanticism succeed in rediscovering the light of the Middle Ages. In fact, all it did was to pierce these traditional shadows with a few bright shafts. Lessing put it well: 'The night of the Middle Ages, yes indeed! But it was a night shining with stars.' Michelet himself, after imagining the Middle Ages as 'beautiful', plunged them back into darkest gloom. In the first edition of his *History of France*, written between 1833 and 1844, Michelet saw three great flashes of light in the Middle Ages: the Barbarians, Gothic art, and national consciousness. 'I like this word "barbarians" – I welcome it. Yes, it means "bursting with new sap, full of life and cheerfulness".' Secondly, Michelet contrasted classical art, 'old art, which adored the physical', with 'modern art', that is, medieval art, Gothic art (barbarism had become a positive value), 'the child of soul and spirit'. And thirdly, the Middle Ages saw the realisation of 'that great progressive interior movement of the national soul' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, from Jacques Bonhomme to Joan of Arc, from the peasant 'goodman', to the peasant-woman, rebels both (Le Goff 1977: 19–45).

What glimmer of light is there in the twelfth century, though? None, none at all. For in Michelet's vision, 'the beautiful Middle Ages' did not belong to the culture of the powerful but to the soul of the people: 'we other barbarians have a natural advantage – the upper classes may have culture but we have so much more of the warmth of life!' If the medieval period was one of greatness, that derived from the union of religion with the people. 'The Church at that time was the people's home . . . Religious cult was a tender dialogue between God, the Church and the people, expressing one and the same thinking.' But Michelet's 'beautiful Middle Ages' waned bit by bit. In 1855, he abandoned them, rejecting 'the bizarre and monstrous and

amazingly artificial medieval condition'. His deliverance came not through the Renaissance but through the Reformation, and especially through Luther: 'it was entirely salutary for me to live with that great heart who said No to the Middle Ages'.

Yet Burckhardt's enthronement of the Renaissance did not take long to evoke doubts in the minds of some historians. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a reaction in favour of the Middle Ages. Its chief manifestation was paradoxical, however. These new Middle Ages stole from the Renaissance its title, its sign, its proud banner. These new Middle Ages did not invent the Renaissance as it appeared in the fifteenth and especially the sixteenth centuries, defined, as it had been then, in opposition to the whole preceding medieval period: they invented a string of earlier renaissances, including one great Renaissance of their own. It was Charles Homer Haskins who fixed its date firmly in the book he published in 1927, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*. Haskins explained in his Preface: 'To the most important of the earlier revivals the present volume is devoted, the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, which is often called the Medieval Renaissance' (Haskins 1927: viii).

This idea flourishes more strongly than ever today, and I want to devote this chapter to a discussion of four problems it raises: (1) Were twelfth-century people, or anyway the most distinguished twelfth-century scholars, conscious of living in an age of renewal? (2) What was the nature of this renaissance? Was it a rediscovery of classical Antiquity, a return to Antiquity, or was it a creative movement, a birth rather than a re-birth? Was it, to repeat the question asked by Peter von Moos, a Renaissance or a century of Enlightenment (von Moos 1989)? (3) Was it limited to the realm of intellectual high culture, that is, to philosophy, theology, science and art? Or was it associated with more general creative impulses that were also economic, social and political? If so, was it an aspect or a consequence of those wider impulses? (4) Accepting the idea and the label, when did this Renaissance begin and end?

First, then, were twelfth-century scholars aware of their own intellectual superiority over the great thinkers of Antiquity? Modern historians have found support for the idea that they were, in a famous but difficult passage in John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*, written *c.*1159. Here John purported to quote a famous teacher, Bernard of Chartres, who had been chancellor of the cathedral school from 1119 to 1126: 'We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. Our gaze can thus extend more widely and reach further than theirs. It is not that we see better than they did, of course, nor that our own height gives us any advantage. It is rather that we are carried and raised up by the giants' lofty stature' (Webb 1929: 136). The dwarfs were the *moderni*, the giants the *antiqui*. We have got used to thinking of 'the ancients' as referring particularly to the writers of pagan Antiquity, hence of the twelfth-century renaissance as consisting first and foremost of a return to Greek and Latin philosophers, poets and grammarians, and Roman historians. True, the chapter of the *Metalogicon* (iii. 4) in which John's comment on Bernard's metaphor appears, is devoted to Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*. True, M.-D. Chenu thought of the twelfth century as an age when a variety of platonisms bloomed (Chenu 1957: 108–41). True, Ovid's *Art of Love* so seduced twelfth-century poets and writers of romances that the period has been termed an Ovidian age: Chrétien of Troyes plagiarised *The*

Art of Love, while the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx, and Peter of Blois, who was John of Salisbury's student and a member of the scholarly circle at the archiepiscopal court of Thomas Becket (the 'eruditus Sanctus Thomas'), ransacked Cicero's treatise *On Friendship* (Paré, Brunet, Tremblay 1933: 48).

Yet the term 'moderns' was applied, still more significantly, to theologians and Christian 'authorities'. The *Liber pancrisis*, an 'all-gold' anthology of citations treasured as authorities, added to the sayings of the Fathers – Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory, Isidore and Bede – those of writers here termed 'modern masters' (*magistri moderni*), such as William of Champeaux (who taught at St-Victor near Paris from 1108 to 1113, then became bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne), Ivo of Chartres (died *c.*1116), Anselm of Laon (died 1117) and his brother Ralf. What is important here is not so much the adding on to authorities of ancient vintage other authorities of recent times, but the nature of these 'modern' ones. These recent authorities were masters (*magistri*) in the urban schools, which, at the beginning of the twelfth century, were often still episcopal schools. At the close of that century, these men were thought to be re-embodied, so to speak, above all in the masters of the budding universities. M-D. Chenu has shown very clearly how these new authorities, known as *magistralia*, gained importance during the twelfth century not in opposition to but alongside the ancient ones, the *authentica* (Chenu 1957: 351–65). The challenge posed by the moderns lay not in rejecting the ancients, or trying to prove them inferior, but in denying them a monopoly on doctrinal authority. In the ninth century, Walhfrid Strabo, one of the great men of the so-called 'Carolingian Renaissance' (the first of the medieval renaissances) spoke of his own age as 'modern times' (*saeculum modernum*). Yet where that earlier 'renaissance' had really failed, the twelfth-century philosophers and theologians succeeded in imposing a new periodisation of knowledge and of what counted as authorities. The age of the Fathers was over, no question about it: the age of the masters had arrived. Scholasticism began to hold sway.

John of Salisbury's story about Bernard of Chartres, with the metaphor of the dwarfs mounted on the shoulders of giants, was to become a commonplace among writers of the second half of the twelfth century and the early thirteenth. It has been interpreted in different ways, even in ways that are diametrically opposed: on the one hand, it has been said to convey the overwhelming superiority of the Ancients, on the other hand, to assert the superiority of the Moderns, even to imply an idea of progress. We should note at the outset that this second interpretation simply develops a view expressed in the sixth century by the great grammarian Priscian whose work was well-known to twelfth-century scholars: 'quanto juniores, tanto perspicaciores' ('the younger they are, the more perspicacious') (Ladner 1982: 8). Twelfth-century writers themselves seem to have veered between the two positions. John of Salisbury, the most eminent of them, asserted at one point elsewhere in the *Metalogicon*, 'I have not thought it worthwhile to quote the Moderns, whom I have no hesitation in preferring most of the time to the Ancients.' At another point, he asks, 'Who today is satisified with what Aristotle teaches in the *Peri hermeneias*?' Yet John also says, 'Though as far as meaning goes, the Moderns and the Ancients are as good as each other, what is old is more worthy of veneration' ('venerabilior est vetustas') (Webb 1929: 3–4, 135–6). Among those twelfth-century writers who, implicitly or explicitly, cite the saying of Bernard of Chartres, most tend to affirm

the superiority of the Ancients. This is the case, as Edouard Jeauneau rightly observed, with two of the most innovative and combative thinkers of the twelfth century: Peter Abelard and William of Conches. Abelard, whom John of Salisbury also quotes, says that it would be easy to be 'a man of his time', to write a book about logic which would not be inferior in form or content to those of the Ancients. Nevertheless he adds: 'but it would be impossible, or at least very difficult, for such a [modern] philosopher to raise himself . . . to the rank of an authority'. He goes on: 'Our age benefits from what it gains from the ages that went before it. It often knows more – yet that superiority comes not from its own talents (*ingenium*) but from the fact that it depends on another's strength and on the vast wealth of its ancestors.' According to William of Conches, one of the great masters of the School of Chartres: 'Priscian rightly said that the Moderns are more perspicacious than the Ancients, not that they are wiser. The Ancients only had their own writings at their disposal. We, however, possess all their writings and, in addition, all that has been written from the beginning right up until our own times. Furthermore, we have more perspicacity than they had, but no more wisdom. Much greater wisdom is indeed required to discover something new. That is why we are like a dwarf perched on the shoulders of a giant. . . . We see more things than the Ancients because our modest writings are added to their great ones.' The conclusion is clear: 'The Ancients were better than the Moderns' (Jeauneau 1967: 84; Jeauneau 1968: 23–6).

One last example, which brings in a further dimension. It occurs in a letter of Peter of Blois: 'How the dogs bark! How the pigs grunt! For my own part, I am always full of enthusiasm for the writings of the Ancients. . . . We are all of us like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants. Thanks to them, we see further than they could see when, attaching ourselves to the works of the Ancients, we give new life to their finest phrases' (Le Goff 1993: 14). This is not merely a claim for the superiority of the Ancients, it is, above all, a demand that they should be studied, because this is how the Moderns can surpass them.

We are now in a position to pin down just what the superiority of the Moderns over the Ancients meant, and also to see its limits. It is a quantitative superiority. It stems from a cumulative conception of learning and of thought. It shows itself in the field of accumulated knowledge that is more plentiful and more penetrating, but not in the field of wisdom. What does that mean? On the one hand, the Moderns suffer by not having the advantage of the prestige of antiquity already affirmed in the Old Testament: 'With the ancient is wisdom' (Job XII, 12). Yet is this not at the same time an incitement to the Moderns to acquire wisdom as well, on the model of biblical and pagan wisdom? Is it not an invitation to the Moderns to crown their learning, the fruit of the liberal arts and theology, with the making of a wisdom whose twin sources are biblical exegesis, that is, the perfecting of an understanding (*lectura*) of Holy Writ (the *sacra pagina*), and philosophical thought which is more or less independent of theology?

Was not the twelfth century a great age of the renewal of biblical exegesis, starting with the work of the thinkers of St-Victor, Paris, as Beryl Smalley demonstrated so well (Smalley 1968; Smalley 1983: 83–195)? Was it not also a great age of affirmation of a specifically Christian philosophy rooted in a Christian Socratism constructed in different but equally profound ways by the two great adversaries,

Abelard and St Bernard? The driving idea which inspired the use of the metaphor of the dwarfs borne on the shoulders of giants was fundamentally the discovery and powerful assertion of a sense of history. This sense was ambivalent: what comes after is, from one point of view, superior, richer and weightier, and yet what comes before also embodies a kind of superiority: it is more venerable, quite literally, more worthy of respect. This connection between authority and age in a sense bound both to the past. But twelfth-century scholars, in harmony with the increased valuation conferred by development through history, were in the process of inventing a way of transcending the contradiction between Modernity and Antiquity, Modernity and Authority. This way was embodied in a new kind of man, defined by his historical context, a new kind of intellectual: the *magister*. By means of new biblical exegesis, more authentic and more accurate as far as literal meaning went, yet at the same time new, created by Christian philosophy, the *magistri* put in place a new balance between the study of texts, scholarly research and the production of knowledge in the double form of what was spoken and what was written. Above all, the *magistri* created the authority that the Moderns lacked when they confronted the Ancients. The confusion, the contradictory attitudes, of twelfth-century thinkers confronted by a double Antiquity, pagan and Christian, were expressions of pride in a creative *renovatio* and restlessness (rather than humility) in the face of intellectual weaknesses that would not allow them to dispense with the authority of the Ancients. Medieval society, in every field, was always a brittle form of human nature.

What needs to be examined more closely is the historical context of this discussion between the relative values of Ancients and Moderns. For the context in which that discussion developed throws into relief the ambiguity of the Moderns' appeal to the Ancients. Against whom were they trying to assert themselves? They were fighting on two fronts. First they confronted the traditionalists, who were especially powerfully entrenched in the monastic world, at Cluny. More than a monastic order among other orders, Cluny was a veritable monastic *ecclesia* carrying enormous weight in the Church as a whole. Dominique Iogna Prat has recently highlighted Cluny's passionate engagement in 'ordering' Christian society on the basis of patristic doctrine and of the 'ancestral custom' worked out in Late Antiquity (Iogna Prat 1998).

The pagan Ancients were always suspect in the minds of the guarantors of the Christian order and the ancient Christian traditions to which the Modern writers and thinkers explicitly or implicitly attached themselves. Were the Moderns not closer to evangelical currents, to the evangelical renewal which the new religious movements of monks and canons, who were sometimes denounced as heretics, wanted to promote? These reformers' goal was not a literary and philosophical renaissance, but an evangelical one. From another angle, the Moderns worried about those among their own contemporaries who, far from searching for wisdom, wanted to exploit new intellectual techniques to extract worldly profit of a quite material and monetary kind. These technicians sought to establish new intellectual fashions. These were the men John of Salisbury labelled the Cornificians: they bid fair to divert modernity from the quest for wisdom (Webb 1929: 23). For modern dwarfs, ancient giants constituted a weapon that was both offensive and defensive. It was to translate this ambiguity and this embarrassment that twentieth-century historians invented the term the Twelfth-century Renaissance.

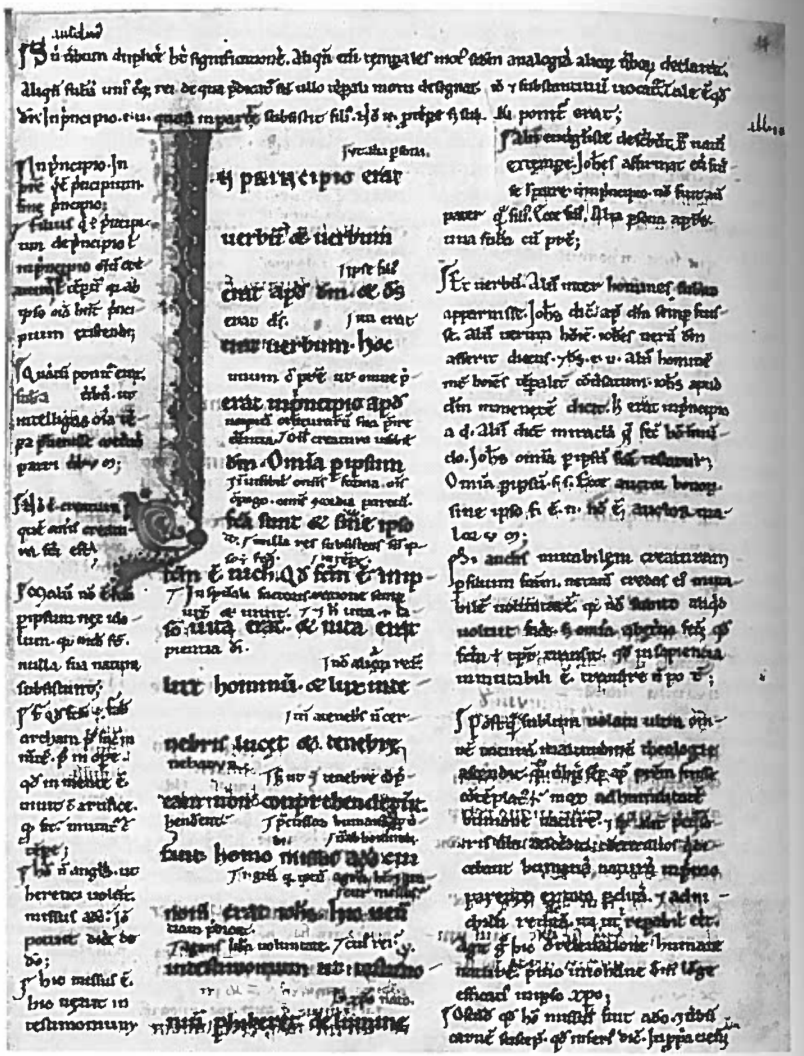

Figure 36.1 Ancient and modern. A copy of the Gloss on St John's Gospel with particular glosses attributed to 'Anselmus' (Anselm of Laon), taken from the ninth-century commentary by John the Scot. © Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Lyell 1, fo. 4r.

There is more to this story. The difficult discovery, or re-discovery, of History (the term *historia* itself is ambiguous) in which M.-D. Chenu discerned the heart of the twelfth century's dynamism – he saw it in Hugh of St-Victor's *Didascalion* (1130–40) 'where the term *historia* is used as often as the term *logica* and more often than *dialectica*' – was fundamentally the most important statement of those who used the metaphor of the dwarfs and the giants (Chenu 1974).We ought not to forget that in the twelfth century the dominant vision of historical evolution was that of the Ages of Man. This vision obeyed a law of decline which ended by representing the present time as that of old age: *mundus senescit* ('the world grows old'). Behind the resort to the image of the Moderns as dwarfs, in a reversal of perspective that gave the metaphor exceptional, even revolutionary, force, was a more or less veiled reference to the idea of the most extreme partisans of decline, who claimed that men were getting smaller and smaller, and that this shrinkage in size was a tangible illustration of humanity's general decadence.

What remained to the Moderns was to fight decisively against the idea of decline, by offering a new inversion of meaning in an area of fierce debate, the area of novelty. In preference to dealing with the dwarfs and giants as a pair, the Moderns threw themselves into battle against another pair of terms: *nova et vetera*, new and old. 'New' was clearer than 'modern', old age was less to be venerated than antiquity.

At the beginning of the twelfth century, one family of words was especially hateful to the Church, the monks and the clergy: these words clustered around *novus*, *novitas* ('new', 'novelty'). The terms evoked the *novissima*, the Last Things, the Apocalypse, the end of the world. They denoted the worst errors of mind and conduct. When in 1116, the inhabitants of the town of Laon rebelled against their bishop, who was also their lord, with shouts of '*Commune! commune!*' ('the common interest'), the Benedictine abbot Guibert of Nogent shouted back: '*Commune*: a new and detestable word!' In the field of doctrine, 'novelty', lack of respect for tradition and stability, was firmly to be condemned. There was a strong risk that it might lead to heresy. This is just what happened in the case of Abelard. At the Council of Sens (1140), Abelard was condemned as a heretic. His chief accuser was William of St-Thierry, the tool of St Bernard. William declared that Abelard had started 'to teach and write novelties' (Leclercq 1969: 377). In the course of the twelfth century mentalities changed, however. From being a negative term, the new became, first, neutral (almost the equivalent of our 'modern', or 'contemporary'), and then, positive. Alan of Lille, a distinguished university master who died *c.*1203, clothed in the Cistercian habit, balanced new things and old things, as Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny has clearly shown (d'Alverny 1968: 117–35). Walter Map, chancellor of Lincoln (1186–9) and archdeacon of Oxford (1196–1209/10), contrasted the 'novelties' of modern masters to 'the older masters', and made the twelfth century, which he defined as a period of one hundred years, a century of modernity in a positive sense. 'By our times I mean this modern period, the course of these last hundred years, at the end of which we now are, and of all of whose notable events the memory is fresh and clear enough. . . . The century which has passed I call modern times' (James 1983: 123–5). Beryl Smalley made a study of hostility to the new monastic orders during the twelfth century. She drew attention to the fact that this polemic gives us 'an overview of a change of attitudes in regard to novelty'. The Premonstratensian canon Anselm,

Bishop of Havelberg, for instance, in the first book of his *Dialogue* (*c.*1149), set out a theory of salvation-history whose object was to integrate novelties into this new perspective. St Bernard himself, in his *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, hailed the novelty of the new military orders (Leclercq and Rochais 1963: 214–15). M.-D. Chenu credited twelfth-century theology with having put the march of history on its onward path (Chenu 1957: 386–98). For Beryl Smalley, this rehabilitation of novelty relied on St Paul's appeal to 'put off the old man, and put on the new man, who has been created according to God in the justice and holiness of the truth' (Ephesians iv, 22–4); and its triumphant outcome was the foundation of the mendicant orders by St Dominic and St Francis at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Smalley shared my impression that the intellectuals of the twelfth century had 'a lively awareness of doing something new, of being new men'. M. H. Vicaire stressed that the *Life of St Dominic* in its opening pages used the terms 'new' and 'novelty' to describe the saint and his preachers; in so doing, the author of the *Life* conveyed their programme, and expressed his own admiration (Vicaire 1977: 103–5, 280–1). The first 'official' biographer of St Francis, Thomas of Celano, intended to arouse praise for the saint and his order when he exclaimed:

Novus ordo, nova vita
Mundo surgit inaudita!

('A new order, a new kind of religious life, has risen up, which was unknown to the world before.') And Smalley concluded (before shading the conclusion somewhat): 'An emotional change has come about in some hundred and fifty years. New has ceased to be a dirty word. It may carry the sense of "improvement", in that case it is praiseworthy. God has changed sides, he is no longer safely conservative' (Smalley 1975: 115).

This judgement of a great historian of medieval intellectual life indicates the direction in which we ought to look for a sense of the duration of the twelfth-century renaissance. It was a long twelfth century, a long renaissance. I would happily follow those modern scholars who extend Haskins's rather narrow and confined chronology, causing the century's distinctive leap forward to begin a bit earlier and reach its apogee a bit later.

As far as the beginnings go, I find it clarifies matters to see the renaissance as emerging from that great affirmative movement of Christian western Europe that we call the Gregorian Reform. Already in 1901, in volume 3 of Lavisse's *Histoire de France*, Achille Luchaire defined a change whose scope should be extended to cover the whole of the Christian Latin West:

> the period of our history that includes the last quarter of the eleventh century and the first third of the following century, saw profound changes in French society. The Church's violent effort to regenerate itself and to throw off its feudal traits; the definitive establishment of papal monarchy, whose reform and crusades ushered in its universal power; the first attempts of the great feudal powers to found states and governments; the recovery of the national monarchy in the person of Louis VI; the first attempts of the people in the towns and in

> the villages to free themselves; the awakening of independent reason which gives a new character to theological studies and allowed heresy to renew its strength; the decisive progress of art manifested by the first masterpieces of vernacular literature, by the prodigious spread of Romanesque architecture and by the creation of Gothic.
>
> (Luchaire 1901: 203–4)

Allowing for some simplifications and exaggerations, and a slightly dated vocabulary, we may say that here indeed are the essentials of a movement that involved all the structures of a society which, around the year 1100, adopted the term 'Christendom' as the sign of its cohesion and its strength.

What has not been sufficiently noticed is that, unlike modern historians such as Luchaire in the passage just quoted, not one of the intellectuals of the twelfth century, from Abelard to John of Salisbury, with the exception of Bernard of Clairvaux, made the least reference in his writings to the First Crusade and the conquest of Jerusalem. Was this military enterprise (the expedition is termed *bellum* in all the sources, even if was a war that gradually became a holy war) part of another face of Christendom, a face quite distinct from that of scholarship (*studium*)? If so, we would have to reflect on the meaning of this split, this double aspect, in the vital force of the Christian twelfth century.

I think we are now in a position to show that the twelfth century really was the century of a great take-off rather than of a renaissance: a take-off of medieval thought and knowledge, between the eleventh century's first cautious stumblings forward, and thirteenth-century scholasticism's great setting of things in order. This take-off involved every aspect of the Christian world. Christian society moved forward at the same time, if not at the same rate, in every field. And this take-off was that of a 'long twelfth century', clearly marked out in a world and at a time when the essential guidelines were bound to be religious – the Gregorian Reform and the appearance of the mendicant orders.

What were the fields and forms of thought in which this take-off was manifested most decisively and most distinctively? Haskins has already identified and described the essentials here, even though some of the nuances have been shifted to some extent by those historians who came after him. As far as intellectual centres are concerned, three emerged, one after the other, as places where the main theological innovations were made or developed: Laon, Chartres, Paris. An increase in the number of books and libraries, perhaps as a result of destruction and of inadequate stock-taking, did not emerge in the twelfth-century foreground: it was, rather, a thirteenth-century development. A significant feature, nevertheless, was the growing interest of lay aristocrats in books, their building-up of libraries, their commissioning of translations from Latin, and their enthusiasm for genealogical literature such as Lambert of Ardres' *History of the Counts of Guines* (1194), on which Georges Duby threw so much light (Duby 1977: 143–6). It was only at the turn of the twelfth/thirteenth century that there was an acceleration in the trend towards having things written down: the preservation of royal and seigneurial archives produced a great change in administrative practice 'from memory to written record' (to borrow Michael Clanchy's expressive phrase) (Clanchy 1996).

Even more than Latin poetry, what now strikes us as the great twelfth-century genre is the vernacular romance in verse, then in prose – a genre which Antiquity had barely sketched out. With the true birth of the historical romance was linked a growing sensitivity to the enduring quality and strong affirmation of the individual. History was the other genre to emerge strongly in the period. Haskins's scarce notes on this subject have crystallised in Bernard Guenée's study demonstrating the twelfth century's affirmation of a historical culture and the appearance, in terms of both method and thinking, of several works of true historians, especially in the Anglo-Norman realm with Orderic Vitalis, William of Malmesbury and, above all, Geoffrey of Monmouth (Guenée 1990).

Since Haskins, the accent has been placed, above all, on the flowering of law, on the progress of the sciences and of philosophy. These subjects had been stimulated and nurtured by translations from Greek and from Arabic, and by the activity of translators in lands bordering the Mediterranean, in Illyria, Sicily, southern Italy and above all in Spain, where Toledo was reconquered from the Moors by Alfonso VI of Castile in 1085 and became a great centre of encounters promoting the acculturation of Christian learning with the traditions, methods and achievements of Greek, Jewish and Arab science. The twelfth-century renaissance was a summons: the response was a process of reception that meant much more than the simple rediscovery of the ancient classics.

The practice of law and the forming of legal collections were responses to the demands of ecclesiastical, royal and urban institutions. Lawyers proliferated wherever officials were needed: in cathedral chapters, and in royal chanceries. The lawyers elaborated and diffused an urban legal culture. The renaissance of Roman Law has traditionally been accorded huge importance: but perhaps it was not the most important aspect of this legal explosion. Charles Radding has made a study of the changes in cognition which modified conceptions of order, law, and society (Radding 1985). A new mentality developed around the idea of community rather than that of hierarchy. Skills in discussion and debate tended to replace the mechanical rehearsal of authorities; and this opened the way to the scholastic methods of the *quaestio* and the *disputatio*. The great crucible of the transformations of law was Bologna, where a key event was the composition of the *Decretum* of the Bolognese monk Gratian, traditionally dated to *c.*1140. This gave a tremendous boost to the development of canon law, and that development in turn would reinvigorate the whole field of law and legal thinking far beyond ecclesiastical boundaries. Gratian's clearly set-out collection of authorities, with his own careful resolutions of their contradictions, not only furnished a formidable armoury of texts, but also presented a vast body of basic problems. It set going an innovative movement of critical thinking, debate and research into the theoretical and practical solutions to the problems of the new Christian society of the twelfth century. In the realm of theology where the new *magistri* ensured the development of scriptural commentary towards more 'scientific' speculation, 'theological science', likewise inspired, developed from the sacred page into sacred doctrine (*sacra doctrina*).

The School of Chartres, in particular, expanded the use of reasons, if not of reason, alongside authorities. The masters' modes of proof appealed to logic and reason. A further essential change arose from the development of a new Christian conception

of nature. Tullio Gregory has defined it in the following precise and profound terms: 'One of the chief experiences of the twelfth century – in the new framework of society and culture that took shape at that period – was the gradual progressive setting-out of an idea of the natural as an ordered complex of phenomena which could be the object of rational enquiry, beyond the symbolic references that had characterised the contemplation of nature in the early Middle Ages' (Gregory 1994). The domain of the miraculous grew more limited, while that of the marvellous, the extraordinary but not the supernatural, expanded. Courtly literature did much to spread this new sense of the marvellous.

A further great change in the twelfth-century's sensibility and system of values related to work. Traditionally considered as a penance, and despised as manual activity, the concept of work preached by monastic reformers in the twelfth century and set in a place of honour in urban crafts (by contrast with the work of peasants and 'vile people') was the object of ideological promotion. Though inferior to the system of liberal arts, the system of mechanical arts brought a certain dignity to the world of the artisans. The list of unlawful or suspect *métiers*, which included the professions of merchant and lay scholar-master, grew shorter. The work these offered freed the faithful from the charge of selling either time or knowledge 'which belonged only to God'. Martha was partly rehabilitated *vis-à-vis* Mary (Constable 1995: 90–2). In Gothic art, the representation of active forms of conduct balanced that of contemplative forms. People observed that, according to Genesis (ii, 15), God had placed man in paradise 'ut operaretur et custodiret illum': 'to dress it and to keep it' (Le Goff 1977: 173). Thus, before the Fall and the imposition of work as punishment, there had been a divine calling of man to work.

The intellectual development of the twelfth century contained something hugely original in social terms: it emerged from the monastic milieu and realised itself on urban workshop floors. The new *masters* were professional men, who sought to follow the model set by others and to group themselves in corporations. Here was the birth of the universities, Bologna leading the way. By the end of the twelfth century, Paris and Oxford had begun to organise themselves. Finally, crowning this descent of values from heaven to earth, man was no longer constantly symbolised by the figure of Job, overwhelmed by God's omnipotence and the terrible trials He imposed. Men could also read in Genesis – and underline this passage too – that God had made man 'in His own image'. Romanesque art, and still more Gothic art, bore witness to this. The crowning achievement of the twelfth century was the shaping, from this material, of Christian humanism, of the Christian Socratism mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is to be seen, for instance, in those two great adversaries Abelard and Bernard.

Yet this take-off of the twelfth century also had a negative aspect: one that appeared very clearly in the century that followed. Strong in their new rights, their new dignities, increasingly enclosed in the structures of the Church and of lay powers anxious to channel and tame the often uncontrolled effervescence that had typified the twelfth century, Christian establishments were determined to defend what they had gained – and to defend their purity. As R. I. Moore (1987) and Dominique Iogna Prat (1998) have so tellingly pointed out, Christendom became an institution of persecution, marginalisation and exclusion. Behind the heretics, who were the most

stubborn and most dangerous, the Jews who resisted new efforts to convert them, the homosexuals who had been relatively tolerated until then, the lepers who symbolised sinners in the impurity of their status, and right down to the poor in their ambiguous condition: all these became objects of control, of rejection, of enclosure, and, at the worst, victims of pogroms, of expulsions, of the Inquisition. This was the dark side of the 'lovely' twelfth century.

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