

"Death and the Devil" 研讀心得

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書 摘

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Content Introduction	<p>In the year 1260, a great cathedral, the most ambitious ecclesiastical building in all of Christendom, is rising high above the bustling city of Cologne under the supervision of the architect Gerhard Morart. Far below the soaring spires and flying buttresses, a bitter war rages between the archbishop and the city's ruling merchant families—a deadly conflict that claims Morart as the first of its many victims. But there is a witness to the murder of the unfortunate architect, pushed to his death from the cathedral's scaffolding. A cunning, street-smart, politically naïve petty thief called "Jacob the fox" has seen it all—and seeing has made him the target of a relentless and ruthlessly efficient assassin who's been stripped of his humanity by dark, hidden secrets. Ensnared in the strangling vines of a terrifying conspiracy, the Fox must now run for his life. But who—and what—is he running from?</p>

Abstract

The original title of this novel is: "Tod und Teufel" , in the 911 Cologne for the translation of the title, which reminds me of the German painter Albrecht Dürer (Albrecht Duerer) who once wrote: "Knight, Death and the Devil (Ritter, Tod und Teufel). Earl Marquart, the killer in this story, was originally a knight. He could be described as a strong, handsome, intelligent and another extraordinary highly skilled extraordinary blue-blooded prince, but since the bursting of war trauma and loss of faith as knight upon himself, the degradation of Death and the Devil begins.

Reading experience

This book' s story is mainly developed in a German city - Cologne, it sketches out the medieval European lifestyle. Within this book, we can analyze the Western world during the Middle Ages four characteristics:

I. The Middle Age—The struggle of the pope and the nobles:

With the rise of the commercial activities and the urban circumstances in the Middle Ages, the trade between towns was more prevalent than ever, causing the nobility and the merchants to have a greater benefits from the strike and also having them signed an alliance or so called the contract in order to expand one' s own forces. As the wealth and power only rests in the hands of a few, the differences between the gap of rich and poor gap are abysmal, making both the rich and the poor live in a town together making the difference between life styles as if it were like heaven and hell in the same place. As we can take a reference from the book which says,

“In the pass years, a bizarre hierarchy had developed among the poorest of the poor, who didn' t even have a place in one of the hospices or convents, and the status muri, “privilege of the Wall,” was part of it.” For that time living in Colon was referred as to live in the walls of the shadows with poor people and vagrants, who has no position, wealth and with only one side of the wall being as a sheltering corner with no one caring about their fate. This situation of a lack of material needs lead the people into the focus of spiritual needs, so churches and monasteries where built everywhere including the augmentation of: prayers, ceremonies and songs. People dedicated practically most of their time singing hymns in order to become a part of the church which means to become: missionaries and monks

so they could gain some status over the people that they lived among. However, the religious interference became a very big influence over the country, so its objectives were no longer missionaries and preaching, so eventually they started to participate in politics, traffic volume and other measures (Yom Kippur). So this leads them to even allow believers and participants to receive economic privileges, such as "the right of items for sale - trade goods must be in the city to stay more than three days" or "first purchase of power - have priority in the selection of goods." A passage from the book mentions, "They tax rich and poor more than ever and share their ill-gotten gain with the bishop. When they must pronounce judgment, they first ask the bishop what judgment would be acceptable to him, so they do not lose his favor. They are always guided by the wishes expressed by the bishop and nothing happens against his will." This led to a so called a race war, where corruption started within the cleric then expanding it to the political economic and nobility. "Now it is in the nature of things that the powerful are constantly at each others' throats. The pope wanted to turn the empire into an ecclesiastical state under the authority of the Church. The emperor, for his part, also claimed to be God' s representative - naturally, since God is the authority - and denied the pope any jurisdiction in political and territorial matters. Each tried to clip the other' s powers and increase his own." From the book, we can see a lot about the conflict between the Pope and the noble as for example, the Red Beard Andre slander and Pope Alexander III, the king and the Pope, between a story the aristocracy - Matthias et al and Colon Archbishop - a rift between Conrad and so on.

II. The Middle Age—The crusades

Around the medieval Europe, fanatics or also called religious pilgrims started to compete for the Holy Land - Jerusalem so they launched the largest-scale war in history, known as the Crusades. Crusade refers to the action of the Catholic Church that launched a series of military operations in the east, with the symbol of a cross in their accessories such as the sword, shields, tabards, etc. The initial aim was to recover the holy city Jerusalem, which has fallen in the hands of the Muslim, and also with the excuse to ensure the safety of pilgrims. Earl Marquart, the killer in the story, was the noble knight in this battle. 「Urquhart was duke of Monadhliath in Scotland. ...Hieronymus described him as a man both noble and bold. Quick to take up his sword, but just as quick with words. A man who loved duels,

but not slaughter.」 However, we all know, this brutal campaign brought to the European people into a big mess. "These people in the Seljuk jail has a surprisingly weight loss, or in the Pecce Niece dungeons, where they used to be tortured, and after all of that their head was spearced and then arranged in the entrance which led to the infidel camp." This book authors also described the story in expressing his views on '「The Crusades, for example, were not holy wars, but a conflict between the secular and spiritual authorities. They agreed on a common enemy, and had a common army, but one or the other of them always came out on top, depending on circumstances... some of the crusaders, however much I condemn their deeds, were motivated by a vision. But most of them were unscrupulous adventurers and they had no idea of what actually awaited them.」 The war led to the darkest side of human nature, where people no longer fought for faith, instead for revenge in its the sole purpose by murdering many innocents in name of God, 「The infidel were tortured and butchered, so that many of the men, even the toughest and cruelest among them, turned away in horror.」 And at the end the noble knight ended up crazy for this madness.

However, this war is not in all cases to be considered a big loss, there were for instance a little gain. It did not only indirectly promote the exchange of East and West sides of the world in a culture way but also a faith trade that has driven the economy, regionalism and the rise of nationalism. With it, many mutual exchanges of knowledge has happened such as: mathematical algebra, medical books, philosophy books and some may even epoch-making inventions in science and technology that began to spread to a different world.

As conclusion, we can describe the following points in the history of the Crusades:

1. Hundreds of thousands of the Crusaders, which may be one fourth of that time died in the road, a quarter die in the battlefield.
2. To bring a lot of the Western Church, the Oriental romance and passion, experience, legends, and legends.
3. To deepen the hatred between the Muslim and Christian and mistrust.
4. East-West Church and further division and mutual distrust.
5. Increase the East-West trade.
6. West, Greek philosophy and the Church to increase their understanding of Islamic science and technology.
7. Fueling nationalism and the rise of localism.
8. Indulge corruption redemption system was established

9. Reminds Christians by force cannot conquer the hearts of people.
10. Beliefs must be rational.

1. Historic building—the walls of the cathedral of Cologne :

This book fully describes the medieval German town - Cologne, the people's living environment. Cologne is Germany's oldest city, built in Roman times. Its name is derived from a Roman Empress Agrippina, born in the Rhine River. The city is easily accessible from the Rhine River, which made Cologne in the Middle Ages the city where the church has become an important center of art knowledge. In the novel, the walls and the cathedral of Cologne was impressed by the description of. 「Five miles long, with twelve massive gate towers and fifty-two towers, it literally dwarfed all other town walls. As well as the city proper, it also enclosed farms and monasteries, productive orchards and vineyards, which until then had lain unprotected outside the city gates, making Cologne an almost self-sufficient world...the men who designed the wall had included an architectural feature of which he and others like him had made good use. At regular intervals along the inside there were arches that were deep and high enough to provide shelter from the worst of the weather and the seasons. 」 This by the Cologne citizens set up their own walls, on behalf of their determination to defend their homeland, but also to demonstrate the power of the military city of Cologne. 「For the citizens the great wall was a symbol of their independence and bolstered their self-confidence...」; As mentioned in the book, there were several times that the city of Cologne was the center of churches, as for example: St. Martin's Church, St. Mary Church, Ursula Women's Monastery, Saint church or monastery, and so Santa, Simon. And one of the most interesting facts for me is the architect which is mentioned in - a new church built by Islamic Jihad, which is now in Cologne Cathedral. Cologne Cathedral is the largest Gothic church in northern Europe, but also the world's third-largest Gothic cathedral. That it is proclaimed to be preserved as the remains of the Magi, making it a sign of Cologne. A description of the novel is particularly dedicated and detailed for the cathedral that made me feel like being really in it. 「Seen from street level, they appeared to rise to a slender, delicate beauty; from close up they looked broad and massive, the buttresses almost fortress-like. In the dim light the glass, although colored, was a black skin with veins of lead running through...Just above, the pointed arches at the tops of the windows

began, filled with magnificent tracery that seemed to render the heavy stone weightless. ...Each of the piers supporting the structure and separating the chapels seemed to be composed of many smaller columns of varying diameter, crowned by capitals of petrified foliage below the sweep of the vaults and arcades. Jacob was looking down into a ravine, as frightening as it was wonderful, an abyss containing nothing broad or bulky, only endless vertical lines.」

2. Western Culture—the Christian faith and the Bible story :

The author of the book uses a lot of biblical allusions and Western fairy tales used in dialogue between characters, also supported with a strong literary background leading us to the the Bible. There is a deeper understanding of the story, such as: "Fiat lux." that is, "The Creation" in the first chapter III said: "God said, Let there be light and there was light."; "in the post will be the first" from "St. Matthew" 20th chapter 16 The last will be the first, and the first last. Which the meaning is: in the post will be the first, in the former will be in the post. ; Leviathan is a myth in the sea, strange; Cana dian from "John" the second section of chapter to the 11th festival, the line of Jesus first miracle; The Good Samaritan word out "Luke," the idea was courageous and kind-hearted people, while the Antichrist is in the "Bible" to represent the embodiment of evil. We can also describe the characters through the story, understand the medieval Christian factions, like the Waldenses, Cathars, and Saint Benedict and so on. There are medieval celebrities, such as St. Augustine (the West well-known theologian and philosopher), Caesarius von Heisterbach (Cologne, the famous chronicler), Roscelin of Compiègne (French philosopher and theologian), Roger Bacon (English philosopher and alchemist), and the sponsor of the Crusades—Urban I I and Tristan (the medieval masters of the romantic opera) and so on, which I am Saint Francis of Assisi as the most profound poems of praise, he wrote:

Praise be to Thee, my Lord, through our sister, the death of the body,
For no living man can escape her:

Woe unto those who die in mortal sin;

Blessed are those she finds in Thy most holy will.

For the second death cannot harm them.

Personal thoughts

Apart from the four characteristics above, I' d like to bring in the

author's personal point of view, which is that he put forward these ideas which I consider to be very interesting. One section discusses the debate on skills that goes like this: 「There are two men who have never done each other any harm. One night the archangel appears to one of them and announces that the other will hit him over the head with a rock and kill him. Terrified, the man picks up a rock and hurls it at the other so as to beat him to it. But his aim is poor and the other, seeing himself attacked, picks up the stone and strikes the first man dead in self-defense, of course, thus fulfilling the archangel's prophecy. Did the archangel speak the truth?

Jacob thought for a while. "Who would doubt the words of an archangel?" he said.

"The truth. The archangel told the man the other would kill him. He didn't say the other intended to kill him. But the first man took what he thought was the truth as the truth. Looked at in this light, it was his misinterpretation of the archangel's prophecy, that is something that was not the truth, that led to it being fulfilled, that is the truth. If, on the other hand, he had ignored the warning, then nothing would have happened. But in that case the archangel would have lied, which, as you quite rightly point out, is *defecto* impossible. Leaving us with a dilemma."」; which with such paragraphs let me very impressed: 「I don't need anyone to tell me my life is worth less than that of others. Send me away, if you want. But leave me my pride.」; 「Everything was made by God, but perhaps not everything is willed by God. Perhaps God's will is that we should use our own willpower, that we should develop His ideas because we are His ideas. If God is in everything and we are therefore God...」; 「When people stop forming their own opinions, when they take bits for a whole and don't look for connections, then the world becomes a church with no mortar between the stones. One day it'll collapse spectacularly and people will talk of the coming of the Antichrist...」 As conclusion, I think this is one of the deepest religious thoughts, history, economic and political masterpieces, which makes this novel a worth reading one.

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