

The Jesuits

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"It is not necessary to go over the well-known story of Ignatius of Loyola, and the first foundation of the Jesuits. Suffice it to say, he had a singularly clear eye for the needs of the time. Authority had been contested and at length denied; it must be indicated and set on such a basis as should leave no room for cavil. The Feudal System was gone, and Absolutism was to be set up in its place. When this could be accomplished, the danger as he saw it would be ended. Towards this he bent all his energies. The Society he founded to bring about the Absolutism of Authority was to have obedience for its vital principle. Himself a soldier, he viewed everything from a military point of view. Obedience became the one thing necessary, and any infraction of this close and particular discipline was to be impossible in his Society. No room was left for self-will. A General, who alone was the Living Rule, directed all things, and his soldiers, mere functionaries, had only to do or die."

Father Ethelred L. Taunton, "The History of the Jesuits in England" p. 7.

II—THEIR FOUNDATION

NOT only had the Feudal system gone in the days of Ignatius Loyola but the whole system of the Roman Church was "nigh unto vanishing." The religious orders, whether Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Minorites or whatever else they might be called, through which Rome had hitherto swayed the hearts of men, had now largely lost their influence. Griesinger remarks (History of the Jesuits, p.24) that the clergy "owing to their ignorance, dissoluteness and shamelessness, were even more thoroughly despised than the barefooted monks, and it was no longer possible to awaken from the grave any faith in them." Gradually Loyola formed the project of a spiritual knighthood for the conversion of men to the obedience of the Faith and he modelled his order on the example of the Lord Jesus by calling out from the world those who would be his disciples. He seems to have taken infinite pains over details and also to have possessed a natural capacity for knowing "what was in man." One of Loyola's earliest biographers, Ribadeneyra, dwells on the eagerness with which Ignatius welcomed the slightest details of the life of some of his later disciples in the Indies, and how he one day said: "I would assuredly like to know, if it were possible, how many fleas bit them each night." He deliberately set himself to win the confidence of certain young men. He played billiards with some, paid the college expenses of others, fasted and prayed with others and shared with them the discipline of his own *Spiritual Exercises*.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

He finally chose a band of nine disciples. Peter Faber, a Savoyard, the son of a poor peasant, was a youth of unbending will, glowing

imagination and fine intellect. The next, Francis Xavier, belonged like Loyola himself, to an ancient Basque family. He was at that time professor in the college of Beauvais. All the authorities stress Loyola's difficulty in winning this proud young Spaniard. These two were well known and esteemed in the University of Paris and their allegiance to Loyola led to Diego Laynez and Alonzo Salmeron being attracted. The former, a youth of twenty-one, has been described as "a young man with the brain of an ancient sage." Cool and logical in outlook and temper he was extremely hard to arouse to enthusiasm, but once aroused, he flamed with ardour. Salmeron, a youth of only eighteen was impetuous and fiery from the outset. He became the eloquent preacher of the company. Nicholas Boabdilla, another Spaniard, was a man who was as powerful with his pen as with his tongue. Rodriguez, a Portuguese, and Jay, from Geneva, were "young men of insinuating manners and were the destined diplomatists of the little company" (Lindsay). Another, Jean Codure, died early. The last of the original nine, a phlegmatic Netherlander, named Paul Broet, "endeared himself to all of them by his sweet purity of soul."

On the feast of the Assumption (August 15th, 1534), in the subterranean chapel of St. Mary on Montmartre, near Paris, seven of these men met Ignatius. Faber, the only priest in the number, said Mass and administered the Sacrament to them. They took oaths of celibacy and of poverty, though Lindsay remarks that "Loyola himself had long abandoned the vow of poverty; his faithful disciples, the circle of Barcelona ladies, sent him supplies of money, and he received sums from Spanish merchants in France and the Low countries" (See note p. 537, History of the Reformation, Vol. 2., T. M. Lindsay). Loyola was especially concerned about the Holy Land. During his travels he had witnessed the difficult position of the Christians living there and the power and fanatical zeal of the Turks. He knew that the Crusades had failed to recover the Holy Places and he bound his band of disciples to assist him in the great missionary task of bringing their Gospel to the unbelievers in Palestine. If, however, this hope of establishing the Sovereignty of Jesus failed to materialise by a certain time he and they bound themselves to journey to Rome and there throw themselves at the feet of the Pope to offer him their services. They took as their motto: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*—"To the greater glory of God." To say of anything that it is A.M.G.D. is to set on it the mark of their approval no matter what it may be. Ignatius never again saw the Holy Land, because when he and his band were ready to start, the Turkish war broke out, rendering impossible for a long while all journeys to Moslem countries.

THEY GO TO ROME

Four years later the "Company of Jesus" set out for Rome. Ignatius himself gave them, besides their main idea, their name: "like a cohort or century gathered to fight spiritual enemies, as men devoted body and soul to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Vicar on earth." In every town through which they passed on their way to the Eternal City they left behind them a reputation for sanctity by their labours in the hospitals and their earnest addresses to the populace in the streets. They experienced considerable opposition, however, before

getting the stamp of Papal authority on the Society they now proposed to form. Paul III. referred the matter to three cardinals who unanimously condemned the establishment of the Order as unnecessary and dangerous. Loyola, however, was a man of the world and soon discovered a plan to overcome these difficulties. He changed the articles of his professed constitution. Two peculiarities in their revised constitution specially recommended it in the Pope's eyes. The first was its vow of unconditional obedience. The Society swore to obey the Pope as an army obeys its General. It was not *canonical* but *military* obedience which its members offered him. They were not to be a monastic order. They were to be a political rather than a sacerdotal body. The second peculiarity was that their services were to be wholly gratuitous; never would they ask so much as a penny from the Roman See.

At a time when half Europe was in revolt and the monastic orders were incapable of doing anything to stem the tide of the Protestant Reformation, such new and unexpected help seemed to the Pope to be sent from Heaven! He saw the advantage of such a fraternity and gave it formal recognition in a Papal Bull issued on September 27th, 1540. It is true that it restricted the number of Jesuits to sixty but it also stated that they were "to bear the standard of the Cross, to wield the arms of God, to serve the only Lord, and the Roman Pontiff, His Vicar on earth."

On the 20th of March, 1543, a second Bull was promulgated. This permitted the worldwide extension of the new order. This Bull seemed to Loyola to be the fulfilment of his dreams. He had founded an Order which, in the words of his speech quoted by the Jesuit Bonhours would win to God: "Not only a single nation, a single country, but all nations, all the Kingdoms of the world." (Book 1. p. 248).

THE GENERAL

It now became necessary to choose a General. He was to have unlimited power, and to hold office for life. "He was to be venerated as if Christ were present in him." (*The History of the Reformation* by J. P. Whitney, 1940 Edition, pp. 286-287). Needless to say, Ignatius Loyola, was chosen to be the first General. He pretended to be very reluctant to take the exalted position at first but, when his followers offered it to him a second time, after he had spent four days in prayer, he declared it to be a Divine interposition which he could not resist. John Lorin, a Jesuit writer, gives the following curious reason why Loyola was thus chosen. He says: "Since Peter had more zeal than the rest of the Apostles . . . when he struck the servant of the High Priest, it is for this reason amongst others, we may conceive that the sovereign priesthood was committed to him by Christ. And, if the conclusion be admissible, we may affirm that Ignatius was chosen to be General of our Order because he would kill a Moor who had blasphemed."

After the General's election the Society of Jesus increased with most remarkable rapidity. It did so in spite of many difficulties and much criticism. Many devout Roman Catholics disliked the name by which the Order was known. In his *Memoirs of Pope Sixtus the Fifth* vol. ii. p.53, Baron Hübner informs us that that Pope strongly objected to

the name. He "insisted that the Order should cease to be styled the Society of Jesus. The name, he urged, was prejudicial to other institutions, and to the Faithful in general. It was not proper . . . nor convenient, because each time the name of the Society was brought into conversation the respectful and the pious would have to leave their occupation, make the sign of the cross and uncover."

THE ORDER ORGANIZED

Gradually, as time went on, the membership of the Jesuit order, was divided into four degrees. The Professed or Perfect Jesuits are of two classes. The first of these consists of those who have taken the four vows of Chastity, Poverty, Obedience and Unreserved Obedience to the Pope in the service of Missions. These were the élite of the Society and alone had a share in its government. At the time of Loyola's death (1556), "the Professed of the Four Vows," who were the Society in the strictest sense, numbered only thirty-five. They were only admitted by the General of the Order and must be of superior education and in Priest's order. They should be learned in Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law and possess some special talent. They pass through severe prostration in begging, serving in hospitals and prolonged "spiritual exercises." The less honourable class have not hazarded the perils and self-sacrifice which are inseparable from some Missions. The next degree, the Coadjutors, were not destined for such high or select service as the Professed. They are of two classes, Spiritual and Temporal. The Spiritual assist the Professed. Heads of Colleges and Residences are usually taken from this class. They are said to confer as much grace in the help of souls as if they were Professed! The Temporal Coadjutors may be persons of humble attainments; they must be apt for domestic services in the houses of the Professed; content with Martha's lot; of healthy constitution and capable of hard work. They need not know Latin and at one time it was not necessary for them to be able to read. The next lowest degree is sometimes known as the Scholastics. These passed through a noviciate of two years and then spent five years in study and five years as teachers of junior classes. The Novices were men who had been carefully selected either for priesthood or for secular work. Novices whose vocation was as yet undetermined, were known as the Indifferents. It is said that the Novices have everything necessary to try their humility and patience!

Under the Jesuit system the world was divided into six great divisions. The heads of these six divisions were to act as the staff or Cabinet of the General. The six divisions were sub-divided into thirty-seven Provinces, ruled over by a Provincial. Every Provincial was obliged to send a monthly report to the General on the state of his province. Every Jesuit house, college or mission had to send a quarterly report. Thus to the General of the Jesuits the world lies naked and open. The words of Dr. Wylie, the judicious Scottish historian are worthy of quotation in this connection. He wrote in *The History of Protestantism* Vol. ii. p. 389: "All ranks, from the nobleman to the day labourer; all trades, from the opulent banker to the shoemaker and porter; all professions, from the stolid dignitary and the learned professor to the cowled mendicant; all grades of

literary men, from the philosopher, the mathematician and the historian, to the schoolmaster and the reporter on the provincial newspaper, are enrolled in the Society. Marshalled, and in continual attendance before their chief, stands this host, so large in number and so various in gifts. At his word they go, and at his word they come, speeding over seas and mountains, across frozen steppes, or burning plains on his errands. Pestilence or battle or death may lie in his path, the Jesuits' obedience is not less prompt. Selecting one, the General sends him to the royal cabinet. Making choice of another, he opens to him the door of Parliament. A third he enrolls in a political club; a fourth he places in the pulpit of a church whose creed he professes that he may betray it; a fifth he commands to mingle in the salons of the literati; a sixth he sends to act his part in the Evangelical Conference; a seventh he seats beside the domestic hearth; and an eighth he sends afar off to barbarous tribes, where, speaking a strange tongue and wearing a rough garment he executes, amidst hardships and perils, the will of his superior. There is no disguise which the Jesuit will not wear, no art he will not employ, no motive he will not feign, no creed he will not profess, providing only he can acquit himself as a true soldier in the Jesuit army, and accomplish the work on which he has been sent forth." "We have men," exclaimed a General exultingly, as he glanced over the long roll of philosophers, orators, statesmen and scholars who stood before him, ready to serve him in State or in the Church, in the camp or in the school, at home or abroad—"We have men for martyrdom if they be required." Such is the marvellous organization which the Bulls of Pope Paul III. brought into being in 1540.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Council of Trent was the final answer to the Papacy to the demand of Europe for a reformation. The Council met in 1545 and continued its sessions during eighteen years. In his book *Our Attitude towards English Roman Catholics and the Papal Court*, the late Arthur Galton declared: "The definitions of Trent were moulded and carried through by the Jesuits, solely in the interests of the Papacy, by the votes of illiterate, venal, dependent Italian bishops, the tools and creatures of the Pope." Some of the extreme men in our Church have regarded Trent as a mouthpiece of Catholic opinion and doctrine! It is well for us in these days, when the real attitude of the Pope is by no means clear, to recall that during the final sessions there were present one hundred and eighty-nine Italians, who, for the most part, were dependent on the Roman Court, and were not conspicuous for learning. There were two bishops from Germany; thirty-one Spaniards; six Portuguese; twenty-six Frenchmen; two from Flanders and one Englishman! That is to say, the Teutonic nations, who were most anxious about reform had five representatives!

On the 18th of October, 1549, Paul III. gave the General unlimited power in a Bull which the Jesuits called: "The Great Sea of their Privileges." The first paragraph gave the General: "complete power as to the government of the Society. His power . . . so unlimited that, should he deem it necessary for the honour of God, he shall even send back, or in other directions, those who have come

direct from the Pope." In the third paragraph the Bull states : " That in order that obedience may be quite strictly maintained, there shall be no appeal against the Ruler of the Order to any judge or other official whatsoever, much less can any member be released from his vows by any other person." Even the Keys of Peter, it would appear, can have no power over a Jesuit !

The following extract from the *London Times* for September 7th, 1906, illustrates how this power over the members of the Jesuit Order operates. " Father Tyrrell was the most distinguished English member of the Society of Jesus, the only English Jesuit ; perhaps, who had any influence outside the Roman Catholic body and his works have been widely read in England and other countries. *His relations with the central authority of the Society had long been strained* and last year he tried in vain to obtain a dispensation from his vows—a matter which was made all the more difficult owing to the fact that he was " Professed of the Four Vows," that is, had attained the final stage of Jesuit profession." The article goes on to state that Father Tyrrell withdrew his application, but was suspended by the late General, Father Martin, from his functions as a priest, and excluded from the Sacraments. " Recently a French Bishop, without Fr. Tyrrell's knowledge, applied to the *Vatican* for leave to give the latter work in his diocese. His generous action was met with a refusal to reinstate Fr. Tyrrell as a priest except on the condition that he undertook to publish nothing and to submit even his private correspondence dealing with religious matters to a censor appointed by the Bishop." The reason for this treatment of the Rev. Jesuit was that in order to succeed in inducing the many enquiring Protestants who wrote to him, to join his church, he thought it necessary to abandon many of the more superstitious observances and antiquated arguments which usually comprise the stock of a Romish controversialist, and by following a line of thought more in harmony with the spirit of modern criticism and scientific research it was feared that he was approximating too near to the Evangelical position. Father Tyrrell ultimately passed away and was denied the last office of the Church to which he still belonged !

THE JESUITS AND LIBERTY

In view of the stand our country and its allies are taking for freedom to-day and especially for that freedom of conscience in religious matters which we know is not mentioned in the Pope's Five Points, it may be well for us to recall that the Black Pope—the General of the Jesuits—is still the power behind the White Pope. Father Taunton, from whom I quote at the head of this article in his " *History of the Jesuits*," published in 1901, states that : " Liberty to Latins means license. It never enters their mind that the best remedy for the abuse of liberty is more liberty which brings with it more responsibility." " But the idea of the Society," he continues, " was to reduce by obedience, the individual to nothing. Thus liberty is especially antagonistic to Jesuit ideas." Has it ever been more truly or better stated than by Froude in his *History of England* vol. viii. chapter xxvii. He is writing of Spain, the country to which the founder of the Jesuits belonged. . . . " Before the sixteenth century had measured half its

course the shadow of Spain already stretched beyond the Andes; from the mines of Peru and the customs-houses of Antwerp, the golden rivers streamed into her Imperial treasury; the crowns of Aragon and Castile, of Burgundy, Milan, Naples and Sicily, clustered on the brow of her sovereigns; and the Spaniards themselves, before their national liberties were broken, were beyond comparison the noblest, grandest, and most enlightened people in the world.

The Spiritual earthquake (of the Reformation) shook Europe: the choice of the ways was offered to the nations; on the one side liberty with untried possibilities of anarchy and social dissolution; on the other the reinvigoration of the creed and customs of ten centuries in which Christendom had grown to its present stature. Fools and dreamers might follow their ignis fatuus till it led them to perdition. The wise Spaniard took his stand on the old ways. He too would have his reformation with an inspired Santa Teresa for a prophetess, an army of ascetics to combat with prayer the legions of the evil one, a most holy Inquisition to put away the enemies of God with sword and dungeon, stake and fire. That was the Spaniard's choice, and his intellect shrivelled in his brain and the sinews shrank in his self-bandaged limbs."
