

Extract from E H Broadbent's *The Pilgrim Church*

Ignatius Loyola, of noble Spanish ancestry, was born in 1491, became a page at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and then a soldier, distinguished from the first by his intrepid courage, but a wound which he received when he was thirty years of age, and which made him permanently lame, changed the whole course of his life. During the long illness following his wound he read some of the books of the Mystics and became passionately desirous of being delivered from the lusts of his former life and of doing great things, not now for military glory in the service of an earthly king, but for God and as a soldier of Jesus Christ. "Show me O Lord" he prayed, "where I can find Thee: I will follow like a dog, if I can only learn the way of salvation." After long conflict he yielded himself to God, found peace in the assurance that his sins were forgiven, and was delivered from the power of carnal desire. At the famous monastery of Montserrat, among the mountain peaks which look as though leaping flames had suddenly been turned to stone, after a night's watch and confession, Loyola hung up his weapons before the ancient wooden image of the Virgin and dedicated himself to her service and that of Christ, gave away his very clothes, and, taking the rough garb of a pilgrim, limped to the neighbouring Dominican monastery of Manresa. There he not only followed the methods of self-examination common to the Mystics, but set himself to note with minute exactness all that he observed in himself, meditations, visions, and also outward postures and positions, to find out which were most favourable to the development of spiritual ecstasies. There he wrote a great part of his book, "Spiritual Exercises" which was afterwards to have so powerful an influence.



The quest of the Mystics for immediate communion with God, without priestly or other intervention, constantly brought them into conflict with the priests. Suspected of being of this mind, Loyola was more than once imprisoned by the Inquisition and by the Dominicans, but was always able to show them that he was not what they thought and to obtain release. Indeed, although at first so strongly affected by the writings of the Mystics, Loyola evolved a system which was the very contrary of their teaching. Instead of seeking experiences of direct communion with Christ, he placed each member of his Society under the guidance of a man, his confessor, to whom he was pledged to make known the most intimate secrets of his life and to yield implicit obedience. The plan was that of a soldier, each one was subject to the will of one above him, and even the highest was controlled by those appointed to observe every act and judge every motive. In the course of years of study and travel, of teaching and charitable activities, during which there were unavailing efforts to get to Jerusalem, and also interviews with the Pope, that company gradually gathered round Loyola, which was organized by him as the "Company of Jesus" in Paris in 1534. He and six others, including Francis Xavier, took vows of poverty and chastity and of missionary activity, and in 1540 the Pope recognized the "Society of Jesus", to which the name of "Jesuit" was first given by Calvin and others, its opponents. The careful choice and the long and special training of its members, during which they were taught entire submission of their own will to that of their superiors, made of them a weapon by which not only was the Reformation checked, but a "Counter Reformation" was organized which regained for Rome much that she had lost.

The Society worked consistently and skilfully for reaction. Its rapid growth in power and its unscrupulous methods raised many enemies against it even in the Church of Rome, as well as in

various countries where its interference not only in religious, but also in civil matters, was resented. Its history was a stormy one. At times it rose to the point of entirely dominating the policy of a nation; then it would be driven out and forbidden altogether—only to return when circumstances once more became favourable. The attempt of Hermaun von Wied, Archbishop Elector of Cologne, to bring about a Catholic Reformation and a reconciliation with the Reformers, was frustrated by Canisius, the able representative whom the Society had won in Germany, while in countless instances movements of reform were repressed or rendered nugatory and the dominion of Rome strengthened, by its activities. Diligent and devoted members went out as missionaries and brought the form of religion which they represented, to the heathen peoples of India, China, and America.