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ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA AND THE JEWS

THE religious problem of Spain in the sixteenth century was far more complicated than that confronting any other European nation of the time. In England, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries, the struggle for unity of belief, then considered essential as a safeguard for political unity, was being waged at least between various Christian communities, whereas in Spain the Christian majority had to face powerful and unassimilable minorities of Jews and Moslems. The political unification of Spain had come about through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon with Isabella of Castile, whom Spaniards like to designate "the Catholic Kings."

In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella brought to a victorious conclusion the centuries-long crusade against the Moors by the conquest of their last enclave in the country, the Kingdom of Granada. At first, the Moslems were given very generous terms of surrender in the hope that they would be won over to the Christian faith, but the results were meager while the severe measures of Cardinal Cisneros provoked rebellion. Many of the Moors sold their holdings in Spain and went to North Africa; the majority, however, remained and constituted the mass of the rural population in eastern Andalusia, Valencia, and Aragon where, on account of their skill as farmers and artisans, they enjoyed the protection of aristocratic landowners. They also formed tightly organized communities in nearly all Spanish cities, and their mosques were everywhere. Spain at that time was populated by about ten million people; of these, at least half a million were Moslems.

Through long association, Catholics had become accustomed to these Arab-Berber aliens, but their tolerance was not without a certain amount of contempt. For another group of non-Christians, even longer on Spanish soil than the Moors, Catholics, especially of the lower classes, felt only fear and hatred. Those so feared were the Jews, who

had flourished on the Iberian Peninsula as they had nowhere else on earth since the time of King Solomon.

I

IN THE course of the centuries, quite a few Jewish families accepted the Christian faith with deep sincerity and became part of the Spanish people. Many of these converts married into the proudest aristocratic "old Catholic" circles, which for the most part descended from the ancient Aryan Visigoths. When, in the sixth century, these Romanized barbarians became Catholics under King Reccared, they signalized, alas, their conversion by persecuting the Jews, whom the pagan power of Rome in Spain had left unmolested. It was natural enough that "the first gleam of a Moorish scimitar" on the Spanish coast turned the Spanish Jews into allies of the invading Moslems, under whose long rule they prospered in the development of science and trade and commerce.

As the *Reconquista* pursued its slow, heroic course through the centuries, the Spanish kings, like their Moorish foes, learned to respect the Jews. They cultivated property, held public office, and many had become wealthy. Their prosperity, however, aroused jealousy; they were obliged to pay large subsidies to the kings, and this forced them into the practice of usury and positions as financial administrators. There was so much intermarriage between wealthy Jewish families and aristocratic but impoverished Catholic families that, according to a book generally considered to have been written by Cardinal Francisco de Mendoza y Bobadilla, there was scarcely a noble family in Spain without a trace of Jewish blood. If the Cardinal was really the author, his book might have been an *apologia pro domo sua*, for he himself bore a Jewish and also a Moorish name.¹

The privileged position of the Jews in Spain suffered disastrous reverses as the Middle Ages moved toward their close. The estates of many spendthrift Catholic nobles had become mortgaged to Jewish moneylenders, a situation that bred bitterness among the upper classes and led them to look favorably at the antagonism of the common

1. I have not had access to *El Tizón de la española*, which was published anonymously, and take what I have written from Feliciano Cereceda, S.J., *Diego Lainez en la Europa religiosa de su Tiempo* (Madrid, 1945), I, 18.

people, even to stimulate their easily aroused passions. During the years 1391 and 1392, there were fierce outbursts of anti-Semitism in nearly all parts of Spain except Castile. Thousands of Jews were massacred and their properties looted by the mob, while even greater numbers—reaching, it has been estimated, the appalling figure of 200,000—were given the choice of baptism or death. Those who submitted to baptism can hardly be blamed for saving their lives at the cost of what was not in a true sense apostasy but only compliance with an act that meant nothing to them in their hearts. They were known as the *conversos*, the New Christians, in contrast to the proud Old Christians, whose savagery had betrayed that the ancient pagan Goth still slumbered in their souls.

The external conformity of the New Christians did not bring them great relief, nor did it contribute much to the unity of belief and practice that had become the main purpose of statesmanship under Ferdinand and Isabella. Of the unhappy *conversos* who went to Mass, often hearing sermons directed against themselves, some became genuine Christians but the majority continued to perform the rites of the Synagogue so dear to them. They were spied upon and often denounced; at times they even suffered death at the stake as apostates from the faith. Attendance at Synagogue services, still permitted to the upper-class and wealthy Jews, meant for the small man, when discovered, a speedy end to all his earthly troubles. Yet, the cobbler, the tailor, the peasant farmer, remained loyal to the Law and practiced it behind barred doors. They are also said to have carried on a certain amount of proselytizing among Catholics of their own class, whose grasp of the faith was often not much more solidly based than that of the New Christians themselves. Many old Catholics, however, developed a real hatred for the New Christians because of their secret practices—for which these same Catholics were responsible—and fastened upon their wretched victims the opprobrious name of *marraños*, swine. As often in history, and never more so than in our own terrible times, the Jews, simply because of their existence and refusal to deny their age-old traditions, were made the scapegoats of a nationalism that had gone sour and unchristian.

According to Pastor, historian of the popes, whose sympathy for Spain is not very conspicuous in his erudite volumes, the problem of the New Christians had reached such a state at the end of the fifteenth

century that the very survival of Catholic life was at stake.² He is supported in this view by the Austrian scholar, Baumgarten, who wrote that "if matters had been allowed to proceed in the religious sphere [of Spain] as they had shaped themselves since the fourteenth century, a kind of Islamism, by an indirect route through some sort of syncretism, would have been the inevitable result."³ True, the powerful Dominican preacher St. Vincent Ferrer had converted many Jewish people, notably Rabbi Paul of Burgos who died Bishop of Carthagen in 1435. It is also said that St. Vincent went to Granada at the invitation of its Moslem ruler, Mohammed Aben Balva, and there converted 8,000 Moors. But such efforts were merely marginal, hardly touching the immovability of the Jewish and Moorish population. The forced converts, on the other hand, formed a separate problem because of their number and clandestine practices.

On their account, the old, medieval Inquisition Pope Gregory IX had set up to combat the anarchical Albigenian heresy was revived in the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella. Actually, the tribunal established in 1478 was quite different from the medieval institution. "The Catholic Kings" had sought and obtained the sanction of Pope Sixtus IV, but that Renaissance Pontiff of humble birth was soon at odds with the powerful and determined Spanish monarchs who sought to dominate the operation, themselves naming the inquisitors, paying them and dismissing them as they thought fit—in fact, making the Inquisition a branch of their own judiciary. The Pope tried to keep a semblance of control over the new institution but eventually succumbed to the threats and hectoring of Ferdinand. He did protest, however, against the illegality and cruelty of the inquisitors of Seville in 1481 and insisted on appointing a man of his own choice, to whose judgment the incriminated New Christians might appeal.⁴

2. See Ludwig von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, ed. Frederick I. Antrobus (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1910), IV, 398.

3. Paul M. Baumgarten, *Henry Charles Lea's Historical Writings: A Critical Inquiry into their Method and Merit* (New York: Wagner, 1909), p. 89.

4. Bernardino Llorca's *La Inquisición en España* (Madrid, 1954), is a good and balanced account of the tribunal, though the author seems to accept as truth the story of a ritual murder supposed to have been committed by Jews at Sepúlveda in 1468. No such story has ever yet been proved, be it in Spain, England, or anywhere else, to the satisfaction of an unbiased historian. It is, of course, quite possible that Christian children have been murdered by Jewish maniacs, just as children have been murdered by Gentile maniacs, but no tittle of real evidence has ever been produced to show that the use of Christian blood formed any part of Jewish

On March 31, 1492, shortly after the conquest of Granada, the Spanish monarchs issued a decree expelling all public, or confessional, Jews from Spanish soil where they had lived for nearly a thousand years. Andrés Bernáldez, a chronicler of the time, put the total between 35,000 and 36,000 families, a formidable number and a woeful blot on the name of "the Catholic Kings." Those expelled, known as the Sephardic Jews, settled after much tribulation in North Africa, Italy, Turkey, the Levant, and Holland, where they restored their lives and fortunes. Only the baptized Jews, the *marranos*, remained. Partly through the ruthless measures of the Inquisition and, perhaps even more, through the irenic efforts of many priests and lay people, their faith had become, three generations later, as deep as that of anyone in Spain. Nevertheless, the old prejudice of the Visigothic majority not only remained but grew in intensity. Even if one's great-great-grandfather had been a convert from Judaism, one was still a *converso*. It was no longer a question of pure faith but of pure blood.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the insistence upon *limpia*

ritual. Unfortunately, medieval Christians believed that it did, with terrible consequences for innocent Jews. The late eminent scholar, Father Herbert Thurston, S.J., trenchantly dealt with the whole question in *The Month* of June 1898 and November 1913.

(The lack of historic evidence mentioned by the author has its complement in the theological improbability of what has euphemistically been called "the Jewish blood ritual." The Old Testament clearly forbids the consumption of animal blood and meat from which blood is not fully drawn. "Flesh with its life—that is, its blood—you shall not eat." [Gen 9:4. See also Lev 3:17; 7:26; 19:26; Deut 12:16, 23; 15:23; 17:10, and others.] God chose blood as a means of atonement; it must, therefore, serve no other purpose. Though drinking of human blood is not explicitly proscribed, it is so implicitly. If the partaking of animal blood is not permitted because of the animal sacrifices ordained in the Ancient Dispensation, the use of human blood can hardly be part of a worship, for which the sacrifice of a child is a profanation of God's name deserving the death penalty [see Lev 18:21; 20:2-3], an "abomination that the Lord detests" [Deut 12:31].

In many ways, later rabbinical legislation is stricter or, rather, more specific than Scripture. For instance, while blood in one's mouth may be swallowed, blood found on a loaf of bread must first be scraped away before the loaf may be eaten. [See Ker. 21b; cf. *B. Talmud, Kerithoth*, p. 163.] There is also the frequently pronounced principle that a dead body and whatever pertains to it may not be used to anyone's benefit. [See 'A.Z. 29b, 'Ar. 7a-b, San. 47b, Nid. 55a; cf. *B. Talmud, 'Abodah Zarab*, p. 147, 'Arakin, pp. 36-39, *Sanhedrin*, p. 317, *Niddah*, pp. 382-384.] Hence, an act of ritual murder—the use of the blood of a Christian child for the baking of unleavened bread or the drinking of such blood—would violate not only the natural law but also specific precepts of the Jewish tradition. It would repudiate the Jewish way of life, indeed, pervert Jewish worship into the service of Moloch. The popes have repeatedly denounced the injustice of the charge. [Editor.]

sangre had developed to such a degree that a Jewish or Moorish ancestor, no matter how far back in one's family tree, precluded a man from public office or required his resignation if he already held one, as New Christians often did. In 1525, the Franciscan Observants requested and obtained permission from Pope Clement VII to refuse applicants of Jewish descent or those who had been examined by the Inquisition. Other orders were quick to follow suit until "the question of the *limpieza* . . . became a veritable plague to the country, affecting destructively all Civil and State conditions."⁵ In 1540, however, there appeared on the Spanish scene the unique phenomenon of the Society of Jesus.

II

WHEN Ignatius of Loyola arrived at the University of Alcalá in the spring of 1526, hoping to improve his sadly neglected education, he soon fell under the suspicious eye of the local ecclesiastical authorities. They were wary of his unconventional dress—a long robe of sack-cloth—and of his practice of gathering about him small groups of simple folk—tradesmen, working women, and young girls—so that he might teach them simple methods of prayer. The questions put to him by the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Toledo were decidedly tendentious: Did he keep the Sabbath? Was he not, in fact, one of those pestilent New Christians proselytizing for the Law of Moses? Ignatius answered with a certain pride: "I employ Saturdays in devotion to our Lady, and I know of no other observances. Moreover, in my country there are no Jews."⁶ The country to which he referred was Guipúzcoa, the smallest of the Basque provinces in the far north of Spain. Its mountainous and unproductive land had not attracted Jews; not even the traces of a synagogue have been found within its confines. As far as can be ascertained, Ignatius was of pure Basque descent and therefore without a drop of Jewish or Moorish blood. In view of this, Baumgarten expressed amazement at discovering that the founder of the Jesuits was "an almost fanatical Jew-lover."⁷

5. Baumgarten, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

6. *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (subsequently shortened to *MHSJ*), *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola* (Rome, 1951), I, 174.

7. Baumgarten, *Neue Kunde von alten Bibeln* (Krumbach, 1922), p. 391.

At Alcalá, Ignatius may have been somewhat supercilious about the *conversos*; they had just been forbidden by a new law of Guipúzcoa's junta to enter the province. He had been born less than a year before the expulsion of the confessional Jews in 1492, and he had spent the best part of his youth at Arévalo in old Castile, where feeling against the New Christians was strong. Quite naturally, he at first shared the prejudice of the majority of Spaniards, but he shed it completely as he grew in spiritual stature.

Pedro Ribadeneyra, his intimate disciple and later his biographer, tells a story testifying to the firmness of Ignatius's conviction. In 1547, when the question of *limpieza* had developed into a feverish heat, Juan Martínez Siliceo, the Archbishop of Toledo, published a statute requiring the members of his chapter, and all other priests subject to the Primatial See, to provide proof for the "purity" of their blood.

One day, many of us were dining together. A statement was made that caused Ignatius to say he would count it a special favor of our Lord were he of Jewish lineage. He gave this reason: "What wonder! That a man can be related by blood to Christ our Lord and to our Lady, the glorious Virgin Mary!" He spoke these words with such an expression and an emotion so deep that tears sprang to his eyes. This impressed everyone profoundly.

In connection with this incident I shall relate what Pedro de Zárata, a Basque from the town of Bermeo and a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, very friendly to the Society and an intimate of our Father, told me. On hearing our Father make the same statement Pedro crossed himself; exclaiming "Judío!" he spat on the ground contemptuously. Our Father took him up. "Very well, Señor Pedro de Zárata, let us be reasonable. Hear what I have to say." And then he gave the Knight so many good arguments for his view that he persuaded Pedro to wish, too, that he had been of Jewish blood.⁸

Two actions taken by St. Ignatius show that his feelings for the Jewish people were not pious sentimentality but a strong practical conviction. First, his attitude toward the many statutes regarding *limpieza*, especially those of Archbishop Siliceo, was one of complete and serene detachment. Other religious orders had accepted them and had ruled against the admission of candidates, no matter how suitable, if they were unable to prove that there was no "taint" of Jewish

8. MHSJ, *Monumenta Ignatiana* (series quarta; Madrid, 1904), I, 398-399.

blood in their ancestry. When writing the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus at the very apogee of the movement for *limpieza*, Ignatius ignored the question, except in one brief reference that had no bearing on the acceptance or rejection of a candidate by the Society. In the *Examen* prefixed to the *Constitutions*, various impediments are listed, such as apostasy, the commission of murder, a note of public infamy for criminal activities, that would preclude applicants from admission to the new community; however, no mention is made of New Christians, though that appellation automatically branded a man in Spain and Portugal with a note of infamy. Only in the third chapter of the *Examen* is it ruled that a candidate be asked if he comes from Old or New Christian stock; but the question was to obtain information, not to imply an impediment. The candidate was also asked whether or not he was of legitimate birth and whether or not his parents were dependent on him for sustenance. Alfonso Salmeron, youngest of the ten Jesuits then in the world, objected even to the one mild reference to *limpieza* when Ignatius submitted his draft.⁹

The Saint revised the *Constitutions* until the end of his life but held out serenely against attempts even by the King of Spain and Ruy Gomez, his all-powerful minister and a friend of the Jesuits, to persuade him to ban New Christians from the Society. Among the most notable *conversos* received by Ignatius himself was a man who fully merited the title of New Christian, for "he went to the baptismal font on his own feet." As a Jesuit, he bore the name of John Baptist Romano; his holiness and zeal, as well as the mission he undertook for the Holy See in the East, earned him the esteem of many.

The second way by which St. Ignatius showed his affection for the Jewish people was his Pauline eagerness to bring them to the knowledge of Christ. From the beginning of his work in Rome, when he and his infant Society were yet hardly known, the apostolate to the Jews was one of the projects dearest to his heart. For his own use and that of his companions, he had been given a tiny church, Santa

9. See MHSJ, *Constitutiones Societatis Jesu* (Rome, 1934), I, 391. Salmeron like Ribadeneyra was a native of Toledo and certainly of Old Christian stock. But he had been an intimate friend of Laynez since their university days at Alcalá and Paris, and it may have been on Laynez's account that he wished the single reference to *limpieza* to be omitted. But Ignatius let it stand, purely with a view to the better guidance and help of the many so-called *conversos* whom he freely admitted into the Society's ranks.

Maria della Strada, on the site of which the mighty Gesù now stands. There, in the summer of 1541, a most unusual ceremony took place. Ignatius himself tells the story in a joyful letter to his first disciple, Pierre Favre.

Moved by the grace of God, a young Roman Jew, handsome and well-off, decided to become a Christian. But, only a few days later, he fell in with a *publicana meretriz* and succumbed to her wiles. After some weeks during which he learned to love the woman in spite of her degradation, she was arrested, for liaisons of this kind between Christians and Jews were against the law. The young man went into hiding, but "by the goodness of God who governs all things," Ignatius discovered his whereabouts and brought him to Santa Maria. He also obtained the release of the woman and placed her in the house of a friend, where he could see her frequently in order to help her make a good confession and reform her life.

To the delight of St. Ignatius, the Jewish catechumen expressed the desire to marry the lady, and she to have him for her husband. Ignatius arranged that Doña Margarita of Austria, daughter of Emperor Charles V, and other members of the nobility as well as several bishops be present at the baptism of his protégé and at the marriage which took place immediately afterwards. He appointed his great and well-loved disciple, Diego Laynez—the New Christian who soon afterwards won fame at the Council of Trent—as preacher at the unique ceremony and Alfonso Salmeron to officiate at the baptism and the marriage. Ignatius himself said the nuptial Mass, and certainly, there was no happier man in Rome that Sunday.¹⁰

This incident was a mere feather in the wind that blew the sails of St. Ignatius. Pope Paul III, reigning at the time, showed great interest in the Jews of Rome and of the papal states so that a man as little inclined to anti-Semitism as Cardinal Sadoletto protested that "no Christian in any pontificate was ever showered with so many privileges, favors, and prerogatives as have been the Jews by Paul III in the last few years."¹¹ It was this Pope that St. Ignatius petitioned

10. See MHSJ, *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Epistolae et Instructiones* (Madrid, 1903-10), I, 181-184. That the welfare of his catechumens occupied St. Ignatius's mind time and again is evident by the brief letter immediately following the one referred to. In it, he asks a friend for eight *scudi* to buy a suit of clothes for a poor Jewish catechumen who lived in the house.

11. As cited by Tacchi Venturi, *Storia della Campagna di Gesù in Italia* (Rome, 1951), II, 2, p. 151. The excerpt is from a letter of Sadoletto dated June 29, 1539.

to issue a brief, again condemning a custom that had persisted since the Middle Ages, whereby converts from Judaism were constrained to surrender all their property to public treasuries, in token of a complete break with their past. This unchristian requirement had been condemned as a detestable abuse by Pope Nicholas III in 1278, and again by John XXII in 1320 as absurd and contrary to justice and reason. Yet it persisted until the sixteenth century, even in the papal states. Paul III's brief, *Cupientes Judaeos*, issued on March 21, 1542, at last put an end to the practice. He ruled that Jews who desired to become Christians despite the opposition of their parents must be allowed to have and keep the inheritance that would have fallen to them in the ordinary course of events.¹²

The number of Jews wishing to become Christians increased so greatly that Ignatius was no longer able to accommodate them in the small, uncomfortable house adjoining Santa Maria della Strada. With the help of Doña Margarita and the Duchess of Castro, mother of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, he obtained two other houses for his catechumens, one for men and another for women. Writing to St. Francis Xavier in 1543, he described the progress of the new work: The Pope had issued a bull commending it, alms had poured in for its support, and a little church, San Giovanni del Mercato, was assigned to the new foundation.

There, on Low Sunday of 1544, before a packed congregation, the Bishop of Brescia administered baptism to two women and three men—one of whom was a learned rabbi. Between April and July of the same year, seven adults were prepared for the sacrament; five were Jews and two were Moslems. At the end of that year, the number of men and women baptized from the Casa dei Catechumeni approached two score.¹³

12. Pedro Ribadeneyra states expressly in his famous *Vida* that it was St. Ignatius who procured *Cupientes Judaeos* from the Pope. (See *Historias de la Contrarreforma*, ed. Eusebio Rey, S.J., Madrid, 1945, p. 179.) The editor of this volume, which contains the "Life of St. Ignatius" and several other works by Ribadeneyra, has himself written an article on "San Ignacio de Loyola y el problema de los 'cristianos nuevos,'" *Razón y Fe* (Jan.-Feb. 1956), pp. 173-204, to which the present modest essay is much indebted.

13. See Venturi, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157. By the time of St. Ignatius's death in 1556 there were 208 men and women under instruction at the Casa dei Catechumeni. A jarring note in the history of the Casa was the order of Pope Julius III that the synagogues in the papal states should help support it, a measure we cannot but call unfair. Neither can we concur with the ukase of Pope Gregory XIII in 1584, requiring a third of the Jews of Rome to attend sermons preached for their

III

TO FILL out this simple sketch, it seems appropriate to examine in greater detail the difficulties St. Ignatius encountered because of his attitude toward the New Christians. The chief gainsayer among his own sons was Antonio Araoz, nephew of his sister-in-law and a fine preacher whom he had appointed provincial of the Jesuits in Spain. Father Araoz, also a Guipúzcoan, was proud of his "untainted" blood and though not liked by his brethren they bore with him because of his relationship with their beloved father. His polished manners and gift for oratory won him entrance to court circles where he enjoyed the friendship of Ruy Gomez de Silva, Count of Eboli, a favorite of King Philip and an ardent believer in *limpieza*. A long letter that Araoz addressed to Ignatius from Valencia on December 1, 1545, gives reasons for a prolonged stay at the court of Philip II, but ends with these significant lines:

Padre, until the Society is somewhat better known and established in Castile, it would seem highly important to think over the matter of accepting New Christians, as that alone is now, in the opinion of many, poison. The inquisitors here are my very good friends, not just spiritually, as one of them hails from Guipúzcoa and the other is acquainted with my father. They are losing the suspicions they entertained through lack of information.¹⁴

The following year, he referred again to the matter of *limpieza*, and he continued to press it, not only during the remaining years of St. Ignatius's life but with Laynez, St. Ignatius's successor as general, whose election had displeased the Spanish court because of his Jewish blood. Ribadeneyra went so far as to say that Araoz raised *grandes turbulencias* and even contemplated abandoning the Society of Jesus for a religious order not "contaminated" by New Christians if he could not get the ruling of St. Ignatius changed.

To be fair to Antonio Araoz, who shared the common prejudice of most Spaniards, one must remember that he was under continuous

benefit each Saturday at specified churches, even though Protestant princes exercised the same "right" and even though Catholics in England and Ireland, for instance, were compelled to attend Anglican services and support the established church for an even longer period.

14. MHSJ, *Epistolae Mixtae* (Madrid, 1898-99), I, 241.

heavy pressure from his friends at court to bombard St. Ignatius. Perhaps Ribadeneyra, so fierce on the other side, exaggerated these interventions, for when Araoz wrote in November 1549 to say that there was a schism among devoted friends of the Society over the question of accepting men of Jewish extraction into its ranks, he was stating the simple truth.¹⁵ On the one hand, St. Francis Borgia, who was an outstanding Spanish grandee and intimate friend of Charles V, stoutly opposed discrimination between New Christians and Old, while Archbishop Siliceo of Toledo, a man of humble origins, was adamant in maintaining the distinction. He hated the Jesuits because they would not abide by it. Having set up a modest mission in Alcalá under the Archbishop's jurisdiction, they were persecuted unmercifully; the mission was deprived of its faculties, the priests forbidden to preach and threatened with excommunication.

The rector, Father Villanueva, explained the situation to St. Ignatius in a letter written on November 15, 1551. He and another Jesuit, Miguel Torres, a man of great distinction, had called upon the Archbishop, who suspected Villanueva of being a New Christian and therefore would speak only to Torres. The Archbishop told Torres he was not an enemy of the Society, except on this one point, and if it accepted his statute on *limpieza*, it would have no greater friend than himself. Villanueva's letter continued:

If we compromise with the Archbishop, I believe we shall lose more in other places than we shall gain in his Archdiocese. Moreover, we shall put a big obstacle in the way of people who wish to obtain our help in the confessional and by the *Spiritual Exercises*. If we make distinctions, the people will stay away, and this at the present time when there are mighty few grandees in Castile who can boast of *limpia sangre*. It is a great pity that the authorities should want to exclude from these parts the *pobrecitos*, these poor little ones whom they call New Christians. I wish I had the strength and health to be able to constitute myself their attorney, especially as they are generally more virtuous than the Old Christians or the hidalgos.¹⁶

St. Ignatius answered this letter, and one from Araoz advocating a compromise, in no uncertain terms, through his secretary Juan Polanco:

15. See *ibid.*, II, 314.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 625-626.

Our Father has been to see the Pope and has told him and some of the principal cardinals, usually favorable to the Archbishop, about his procedures. They are now all on our side. It is extraordinary the fame which that Prelate enjoys here in Rome on account of his pre-eminence in Spain, and so the more disturbing to hear of his actions. May God give him the grace to reform himself first, in order that, as he ambitions, he may be able to reform the Church, or help with its reform. . . . The first thing you must try to secure is your right to preach and to hear confessions, so that the service of God may not be suspended. As for coming to terms with the Archbishop and accepting his statute of *limpieza*, thus adapting our constitutions to his, it is not to be thought of. Let him look to his own charge and that will give him quite enough to do.¹⁷

The Papal Nuncio to Spain at that time was Cardinal Giovanni Poggio. At first, he was inclined to temporize with the headstrong Archbishop of Toledo; he even persuaded Father Villanueva—against the latter's better judgment—to reject some "virtuous and well-born candidates because they had a few drops of Jewish blood." St. Ignatius would not hear of such an accommodation and, after a careful inquiry into the state of affairs at Alcalá, the Nuncio came around to his view. Cardinal Poggio went to the Archbishop and told him with great earnestness that it would please the Pope if he desisted from his campaign against the Jesuits. The Archbishop replied angrily that he wished to be left alone to govern his sheep as he thought best. The Cardinal retorted hotly: "You are to leave the Jesuits, who are not your sheep, alone if you do not want to be sent a prisoner to Rome."

This was no idle threat. The Nuncio had not only the Pope behind him but the Spanish King as well, and the Archbishop gave way before such a powerful combination. He withdrew his edicts against the Alcalá mission and for the rest of his life carried on no more than a "cold war" against the Jesuits. St. Ignatius was so relieved by the restoration of peace that he wrote a letter of deep thanks to the Archbishop for canceling his edicts. In the same letter he promised that his sons in the Archdiocese of Toledo would not use the faculties, which like all religious communities they held, under the canon law of the time, directly from the Holy See, "except in so far as it shall seem

17. *Cartas de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid, 1877), III, 13-21.

good to your Highness, for the relief of even the smallest particle of the heavy load God our Lord has imposed upon you."

The Saint went even further and, for the first and only time, relaxed his opposition to the myth of *limpieza*, though only in so far as it concerned Spain. "I am writing to our men in Spain," he continued, "instructing them that neither in Alcalá nor in any other part of the Kingdom are they to accept any person for our Society who is unacceptable to your Most Reverend Highness." On the same day, June 1, 1552, he wrote to Father Villanueva, giving strict orders that his men were not to preach, administer the sacraments, or engage in any other pastoral activity, "except in conformity with the mind of his Highness the Archbishop." Finally, no one was to be received into the Society throughout Spain against the Archbishop's wishes.¹⁸

The olive branch, however, did not greatly move the flinty-minded prelate—as flinty by nature as by name¹⁹—for though he maintained an icy, surface politeness, he continued to thwart the Alcalá Jesuits to the end of his life. He had not obtained what he wanted most of all: that Ignatius write into his *Constitutions* a clause that barred from the Society of Jesus all candidates with the slightest trace of Jewish blood, even if they had been Catholic for a thousand years.

Two letters written to Spain slightly more than a year before Ignatius's death indicate that the founder of the Jesuits had not actually wavered in his attitude toward *limpieza*, but had merely made a temporary concession to what he called the *humor español*. The first, dated May 29, 1555, was addressed to St. Francis Borgia, then a Jesuit priest and *comisario*, general agent for the Society in Spain, who had asked for instructions. Polanco wrote on behalf of the ailing founder:

As for that youth of good parts whose father is a convert Moslem, he can be accepted, as can all other similar cases, no matter from what religion their ancestors turned to Christianity, or even if they are themselves immediate converts. This is the general practice of the Society and its *Constitutions*. As our aim and endeavor is edification and the service of God our Lord, a discreet charity will be able to judge what is best in particular cases. If it would be unwise to receive such candidates in Seville or Cordoba or similar places, they might well be sent to other parts of

18. See *ibid.*, pp. 68–75.

19. The Latin *silex*, *silicis*, means flint stone.

the country where nothing would be known against them to cause disedification. However, if, as you say, it would be no good to direct them to other places in Spain, let them come to Italy if they are good subjects, since here their origins will be unknown and people, in any case, do not trouble their heads about such things.

The second letter, dated June 13, 1555, went to Father Antonio de Cordoba, also a Spanish nobleman; it is even more emphatic:

As for our Father abolishing the distinction between New and Old Christians in the Society, he has already done so. Here in Rome, all are received without discrimination if they are good and suitable subjects for our Institute. As the affairs of our Society are still in an early and precarious state in Spain, it is necessary to be cautious in order to avoid such opposition as would hinder foundations and the free practice of the service of God. For this reason, our conviction ought not to be declared as openly as we hold it in our hearts, namely, that there is no partiality to persons among us nor any consideration of their racial origins. The intention of our Father is that you should not desist from receiving any suitable candidate because he happens to be of Moorish or Jewish descent. If you have reason to fear that the acceptance of such a person in any particular place might cause disedification, then move him somewhere else, or should nowhere in Spain be safe from wagging heads, send him to us in Italy where there are no such discriminatory obstacles, which are surely unworthy of such fine and sensible Christians as are the Spaniards.²⁰

Polanco wrote a final letter on the matter to Pedro de Zárata on October 29 of the same year, nine months before the Saint died. Zárata had written to Ignatius that the powerful Count of Eboli had expressed his displeasure with the Society of Jesus because it accepted, or took back into its ranks, many New Christians who had been rejected to placate Archbishop Siliceo. The Count, he felt, should be given full and accurate information about the Society's attitude, which was as follows:

Our Society neither can nor ought to exclude all applicants of that kind. . . . As it would not befit our Society to accept candidates indiscriminately, even less would it become it to exclude one or the other group of men well-suited to the service of God in its ranks. Hence the merits of each candidate are carefully considered, circumstances of place are also

20. *MHSJ, Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Epistolae et Instructiones*, IX, 87, 149-150.

taken into account. Indeed, no one is received whose entrance might result in disedification. But tell the Prince [Gomez] that there are men of Jewish and Moorish extraction in the Society who yield in no respect to Old Christians, to the hidalgos or caballeros, as good religious and as promoters of the general welfare. If he knew this as well as we do, he would, I have not the slightest doubt, be entirely of our opinion.²¹

These were the last words of St. Ignatius on this burning question. In his unruly youth, he had dreamed of martial glory and had proved himself more than ready to die on the last redoubt in the service of his king. But when the King of heaven took over, He put His raw recruit through a period of training so severe as few, even of the great saints, were called upon to endure. The relentless pressure of God, working on his natural temperament and powerful will, made Ignatius of Loyola into a new type of Spaniard, one above the narrowness and prejudices of nationalism, one who saw in every human face the clouded features of Jesus, his Lord, who even yearned, as was said of him, to draw every heart into his own. On so high an altitude, lit by the effulgence of the Holy Trinity, where Ignatius habitually lived, there could be no longer Jew or Greek, but all were one in Christ Jesus (see Gal 3:28). His *Constitutions* are the perfect reflection of his mind and heart, timeless in their wisdom and open to the future.

Sadly enough, years after St. Ignatius's death, Araoz and those who thought like him won a victory over the good judgment and the magnanimity of their founder. Ribandeneyra was still alive, though an old man, to fight a gallant rear guard battle for the true spirit of the Society. He lost, but in the long run, the very long run, the Ignatian spirit prevailed.

21. *Ibid.*, X, 61.