



Chapter 1

The Influence of Ignatius' Surroundings Upon His Spiritual Formation

AS HAPPENS in the case of every manifestation of true life in the Church, the flame of a newly conceived ideal of Christian perfection is kindled in the souls of those who are called to it, amidst human conditions arranged by Providence guiding the Church. It never rises in the rarefied and chilly atmosphere of the purely intellectual, but in such conditions of race and ancestry, of environment and education, that they become the starting point which determines the character of the new ideal. They exert a positive influence and often also a negative one. But they always leave behind them permanent traces in the total picture of this ideal of perfection. This picture will always betray the peculiar form that a man of this particular kind of origin has given it. Just as it is impossible, for example, to get a total picture of Augustine's theology and spirituality without at the same time including the story of his sinful youth with all its experiences of concupiscence and Manichaeian contempt of the

body; so also, the fine, late-Greek family culture of a great Cappadocian house in which St. Basil was reared, the bearing of Roman provincial nobility peculiar to St. Benedict, the hot Umbrian blood coursing through the veins of St. Francis of Assisi, the charm and elegance of French humanism that distinguished St. Francis de Sales—can never be wholly eradicated from the ideals of perfection formed by these men.

This holds true also for the ideal of perfection of the man who in the world bore the proud title Don Inigo Lopez de Loyola and later founded a company for the Church of his King.

I. Ignatius' Ancestry

Inigo Lopez de Loyola was descended from a noble Basque family which documents trace back to 1180, showing a record of unbroken loyalty in the service of the kings of Castile, the *Rey Catolico*, since the year 1200 (the year of the final separation of Guipuscoa from Navarre and of its union with Castile). The Loyolas were among the ten great families called *Parientes mayores*; they had the vested right of invitation to the king's court on certain occasions. Hence they felt that they really belonged to the court and the highest nobility, and therefore believed they were entitled from time to time to rebel against their king. It was owing to such self-willed rebellion that Inigo's grandfather was compelled to raze the tower that rose defiantly over Loyola castle and replace it by a less formidable structure. But such occasional acts of defiance were no argument against their

constitutional loyalty. Inigo's father fought side by side with his king in the battle against the Moors before Granada. The sources speak of him as "a noble knight and great soldier."¹ Inigo's oldest brother fell in the expedition against Naples (1496); a second brother, named Hernandez, in the conquest of Mexico; a third, whose name is unknown, in the battle against the Turks in Hungary.² Father Nadal was right when he later stated that "Inigo could trace his descent from the best nobility in the province of Guipuscoa."³ This blood Inigo found impossible to deny even to the day of his death. It was because of this aristocratic family-sense that Inigo, despite all the detachment of his Christian asceticism, could write in later years such submissive letters to the temporal heads of his house, to his brother and to his nephew. This family-sense is, as it were, the prototype of his matured feeling for form, subordination, and obedience.

In addition, a second trait may be pointed out. The Loyolas were provincial nobility, in the best sense of the word. They never lost touch with the peasant world around them. They belonged to the Basque people in the same way the hoary stone blocks of their castle-tower formed part of the mountainous country of Azpeitia. Hence, the little Inigo, the thirteenth and last child, was entrusted soon after his birth to a peasant wet nurse, who was to suckle him with the milk of her breasts during his infancy. We know even her name and the name of her unpretentious farm from the processes for the canonization of Inigo: Maria Garin, from a tiny hamlet called Eguibar, close to the castle of Loyola.⁴

If, as we have said, the Loyola paternal manorial estate partook of a peasant-patriarchal character, then the time of Inigo's early youth was spent partly in the "comparative elegance of the family seat and partly at the modest farm house at Eguibar."⁵ Because of this upbringing, Inigo, for the rest of his life, remained a Basque closely linked with the common people. The shrewd peasant proverbs of his keen-sighted fellow countrymen remained embedded in his laconic thinking; and the maxims of the Saint, collected in later years from his writings, give evidence, as a Roman cardinal once testified concerning the aging Saint, of an uncanny knack "for striking the nail on the head."⁶

From the days of his youth utterly discordant elements flowed harmoniously together in the personality of Inigo, as though into a single river bed. In it we find mirrored the dovecotes and white flour dust of the mills and farms of his father's estate, together with the pleasant odor of roasted chestnuts wafted from peasant cottages of Eguibar, the memory of which persisted up to the last years of his life, as he ate his four chestnuts as a special titbit on a feast day. We find mingled together in a curious blend, moreover, the soldier Spanish he picked up from his father and elder soldier brothers and the fine Basque which he learned from his foster mother and in the peasant homes, so much so that this strange mixture cannot be thought of as separate from the crude Spanish which we note in the letters of St. Ignatius during the whole course of his life. We see, too, in the parish church the pew reserved for the nobility that the son of a lord can claim whenever he comes down from the castle to attend mass and vespers; but at the same time we also see the robust, through-and-through Catholic piety of the lord's rural pilgrimages to the hermitages of Olaz and

Elosiaga situated near the castle of Loyola. The courtly manners of his relative, Juan Anchieta, the archpriest of the royal chapel at Azpeitia, is closely linked with the ineffaceable impression made upon the youthful Inigo by the pious folk songs and merry dances of the Basque peasantry, which Inigo, many years after while a student at Paris, could re-enact in order to cheer up a fellow companion suffering from a spiritual affliction. There also we meet with the mischievous pranks played by Inigo in his effervescent youth—the thefts of apples, and such deeds—misdemeanors of which he was later (1535) to accuse himself in the pulpit before all the assembled people. But at the same time, too, we witness his first trial services in choir and at the altar—charges which had been entrusted to his care as a cleric. Finally there is the rod of the pedagogue, some unhappy cleric of Azpeitia appointed to drive into the head of the young rascal from the noble castle the rudiments of writing and arithmetic, which his father with a grim sense of humor willed to him as his only inheritance.⁷

There is still a third factor to be considered. Inigo was the last-born child of the family. In the house of Loyola it was customary for the eldest son to inherit the whole of the vast and wealthy estate, whereas the other sons had to shift for themselves and determine how they could obtain the means of livelihood commensurate with the standards of their noble rank. Inigo's father, in his usual patriarchal and arbitrary manner, first considered securing the future of his youngest son by enrolling him in the clerical militia. Accordingly his son received the tonsure while still a mere stripling; his father then engaged a tutor for him at no small expense. But as Inigo grew to maturity, there also grew in him a stubborn op-

position to this plan of his father's. Nadal, in an as yet inedited manuscript, remarks very aptly concerning the youth of Inigo: "Though he received the education usually given to noblemen's sons, he did not profit any from his studies; soon a sort of noble fire began to burn in his breast, and his thoughts were wholly intent upon the idea of distinguishing himself 'in military glory.'" ⁸ Inigo was "of Loyola," and that meant a good deal; but he was also "of and at Loyola." The future lay before him, the insecurity of his life had to be removed first; all things were possible for a descendant of Loyola, but first it had to be won! His hands were empty, but in the hopes burgeoning within his youthful breast lay hidden a whole new world. In that consisted the original foundation of his "more."

2. His Education

It was during this carefree period of his youth that Inigo was called upon to make the first decision involving a serious change in his life. When Inigo was fifteen or sixteen (probably in the year 1507), his father, or, in the event of his death, his elder brother, sent him as a page to the princely court of their relative, Don Juan Velasquez de Cuellar, at that time the High Lord Steward, *Contador Major*, of the Catholic Majesties who were residing at Arevalo, from which central point Velasquez followed the royal court in its round of progress. From this time on Inigo forsook the clerical course thrust upon him by his father, though he still clung to the tonsure (thus ready for any possible future contingency).

We should hardly be wrong in maintaining that this step was due to Inigo's own vehement insistence; for he felt that he was fit for something better than the career of country pastor on his father's demesne, where his elder priestly brother had already given a very unsavory example (he left behind him four natural children, to the disgrace of the princely line of Loyola). The pressure of the "more" in Inigo, as yet merely natural and aristocratic, drove him therefore from the service of the Church to the service of an earthly king, since, as a page in the house of Don Juan, he came as a matter of course into contact with the royal court.

It was at this time, too, that he was smitten with an infatuation for a certain lady (and this was, so to speak, the second courtly "more" of the young Loyola). This lady, he tells us many decades later, "was of a higher rank than a mere duchess or countess." ⁹ She must then have been of the royal lineage—no less, perhaps, than Dona Catarina, the young daughter of Philip the Fair and of the mad Joanna, in whose eerie castle at Tordesillas he was compelled to live for a while as a page of Don Juan de Cuellar. ¹⁰

What Inigo acquired from his contact with these highly aristocratic surroundings was, above all, in addition to the strengthening of his sense of fidelity toward the *Reyes Catolicos*, a sense for what pertained to courtly ritual, a sense for "etiquette" in the best sense of the word. The results of his training at Arevalo are summed up by Fr. Nadal in two words: "He was educated piously and 'nobly.'" ¹¹ The best fruit, however, that he carried away with him from his sojourn at Arevalo was

that chivalrous attitude which never left him the rest of his life: to be at last in the service of a king revered from afar, to form a part in the mysterious mechanism of "the royal household," even though merely an insignificant page. There was the silent fitting of himself into the royal service, the all-penetrating consciousness of being "at court," the feeling, at first still very unpurified, of being set apart from the common people and of being called to perform deeds that would give him a chance to distinguish himself. In short, there began that attitude which he later transposed to the spiritual realm when he spoke in the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ about "the man who was willing to signalize himself in every kind of service for his King and supreme Lord."

In a different sense, however, Arevalo proved for Inigo a step in his formation for his coming vocation. This period during which Inigo ripened to manhood was a sinful period. The laconic allusions of the *Autobiography* of the Saint were filled out by Polanco in the following way: "Though he always remained faithfully attached to his religion, still he did not always live according to its prescriptions and was not always on guard against sin; he especially indulged in gambling, duelling, and romances with women."¹² He persevered in this line of conduct even after his return home to Loyola, where, in 1515—hence in his twenty-fourth year—he was even cited before court for some mysterious affair. Exclude this experience of his sinful youth and it will be impossible to comprehend his knack for the discernment of spirits, manifesting itself so powerfully on his sickbed at Loyola; indeed this discernment of spirits is nothing

more than an intensified continuance of the inner turmoil that had been going on for years, of the civil war raging between his knightly sense of honor and the shameful yielding to "dark" inclinations. He who characterized himself a man "who experienced within himself a powerful but vain longing for fame"¹³ was at the same time a man "who succumbed to the vices of the flesh."¹⁴ This is a typical experience which we find described for all times in the pages of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. In the case of St. Ignatius, it is rendered acute by his chivalrous sense of violated decency, the typically Ignatian "shame," upon which he later laid so much stress in his Spiritual Exercises and which he symbolized (First Week, Second Annotation) by the image "of the recreant knight, standing full of shame and confusion before his king and the whole royal court." (This image of the knight serves at the same time as the introduction to the Second Week and its chivalrous attitude in the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ.) On the other hand, it is to be noted that Ignatius never at any time, neither here nor elsewhere, permitted himself the luxury of a too frank confession of his past sinful life or of painful self-recriminations. Such things, he held, were things to be settled in private between God and the soul and were to be got rid of in almost scrupulously exact general confessions. Even during the mystic peace of his latter years (for example, before his election to the generalate in 1541), such matters were to be humbly hidden in the bosom of "the hierarchical Church" in sacramental general reviews. Before men, the chivalrous attitude demanded that a deep veil of silence be spread over the sins

he had committed in the past, no less than over the mystic graces which he had received. Reserve and shame go together. The most sublime and the most abysmal things of his life are matters to be dealt with before His Royal Majesty alone. This chivalrous attitude, the fruit of his training and education, was the real seed of his "discreet love."

3. Conclusions

From the formation outlined so far springing from his descent and education, a few further deductions can be drawn which relate the ideal of perfection presented in the book of the Spiritual Exercises to the ideal exemplified in the Company of Jesus. Let us first touch on the ideal of perfection held out by the Exercises. A mere glance at the contents makes it evident that in a man such as Inigo the illuminating grace of Manresa had to be connected with his earthly ideals of a king. Behind these ideals which had hitherto swayed Inigo—behind his inborn loyalty to the *Reyes Catolicos* and their religio-political ideals world-wide in extent; behind the roving phantasies of gallant knights galloping far and wide in search of daring feats to perform (feats that would bring them distinction in the eyes of their royal master, feats that his imagination painted so vividly and of which he was so fond of reading in his precious romances of love); behind his romantic love for a lady of high degree; behind the ideal of iron discipline in the military service which he chose as his calling (a discipline casually submitted to, yet which demanded standing in alert readi-

ness at an assigned post, a military service assuming, after the merry days of Arevalo and the tragic fall of his first master in 1517, the character of frighteningly serious war duties under the leadership of the Duke of Najera)—behind all these ideals, I say, there rose up a new ideal beckoning him, an ideal so sharp and vivid in outline as to be able almost to be grasped with the hands, an ideal just as noble but wholly different in nature: the ideal of service under an eternal king. We can see an instance of this transposition in the working out of the exercise on the Kingdom of Christ. God is called "His Divine Majesty," up to and including the contemplation for gaining Divine Love (*Spiritual Exercises*, nn. 98, 146, 147, 233).^{14a} The Blessed Trinity is "seated on the royal dais or throne of His Divine Majesty" (no. 106) even at the moment of the marvelous condescension in the Incarnation; and around His Majesty is His "heavenly court" (the *corte* or *corte celestial*); God is "His Majesty" not merely when the sinful knight stands in deepest shame before the king and his court, but even at that supreme moment, when at the highest pitch of enthusiasm, the knight makes a fresh oblation of himself to the Divine Majesty—nay, even at the time when in the highest flight of love he unites himself with God in the most intimate communion (no. 232). The only reply worthy of a man animated by the sentiments of a true nobleman to the appeal of the Divine King is the "more" of the offering of himself to perform deeds of distinction: a *senalarse mas en servicio*, that is, a signaling of himself in service, an offering of *oblaciones de mayor stima*, that is, offerings of greater value; or, as the first Latin

version has it, an *oblatio praeiosior*, "an ever more sharply defined offering." * In his estimation, anything of less value or more in conformity with hard common sense, would be unworthy of His Divine Majesty. But since such a tawdry offering is out of the question in the mind of a true knight, and since he does not make a great ado of his clear, calm surrender, it follows that his "more" immediately becomes an offering of "homage and obedience" (no. 92), a "service of the Eternal Father" (no. 135), just as it was in the case of Christ Himself. The Ignatian ideal of the Spiritual Exercises, therefore, is contained in the four words: *senalarse mas en servicio*, "to distinguish oneself more in His service."

What we have just said about the ideal of perfection of the Spiritual Exercises holds true equally for the ideal of perfection of the Society which grew out of them. By his very lineage Ignatius was fitted to found a "Company," to plan and bring into existence an Order that would be the embodiment of the words *senalarse mas en servicio*, "to distinguish oneself more in the service of God." The foundation for two of the more characteristic qualities of his Society, obedience and discipline, seems to have been laid in the natural preparation of Ignatius for the lifework marked out for him by God.

First, obedience. Considered from the viewpoint described above, it is already plain just why this disposition of obedience had to play such an essential role in the Order he founded. Like Inigo at Arevalo, every Jesuit is

* Actually the Latin version has *oblatio praeiosior*, "a more precious offering," which Father Rahner seems to have misread.—Translator's note.

a member of a royal household, is ever ready for service in the household of his king, who is constantly changing his place of residence; and is ever alert at his assigned post and has no leisure to become attached through monastic contemplation and exclusive spiritual self-sanctification to a fixed dress, set manner of fighting, or permanent habitat. For him obedience means alertness, kept ever bright and shining by fresh exercise, to the divine call—a call conveyed to him by a gradation of human means; a Jesuit's obedience is characterized by a readiness to accept the wholly unexpected, never to build for himself a "comfortable nest," and never to be a soldier unarmed. Obedience is nothing else than the "more" of service carried out in the activity of daily life.¹⁵

Secondly, in regard to discipline. This is simply the religious form of that "attitude" in the ideal of Ignatius which resulted from his training as a nobleman. It is the opposite of what is impulsive, the sworn enemy of sensuality in every form, even the most refined. Discipline connotes shame, reserve, aristocratic reticence, instinctive shrinking from too great familiarity with any particular person, love of plan even to regimentation, flight from all that refuses to submit to control and regulation. It is fond of the conventional and conservative, even the "old-fashioned." Discipline shuns all forms of ostentation, posing, putting on airs, especially and precisely in that which is the highest of all things—in the service of God. In a word, discipline is bodily and spiritual purity.

This characteristic St. Ignatius impressed most deeply on the ideal of his Order. Hence life in the Society of

Jesus is not a "cozy" life, nor have its houses that celestial-terrestrial atmosphere of deep-rooted stability found in the monasteries of St. Benedict, or that romantic *poverello* air displayed by Capuchin convents. This trait accounts for that feeling of aloofness which prevails among fellow Jesuits, leading them to address one another in a more polite and formal manner, and inducing them to govern their dealings with the outside world by "the rules of modesty" worked out by the "Senor of Loyola." It may be that by adopting this way of acting the Jesuit loses contact with the outside ordinary world, a contact so often and so unnecessarily praised. Such a line of conduct may even be an advantage to him, provided he does not turn this feeling of reserve into a systematic habit, but cultivates the attitude solely because it is a "representation" of the fact that the Kingdom of God "suffereth violence," that His Divine Majesty is to be approached only with awed reverence, and that the mysteries of our holy Faith do not admit of any and every sort of familiarity. The Jesuit ideal stands for "disciplined service," which is, however, "the boundless love of the 'more' confined within the limits of the discretion of obedience." The distinctive mark of this attitude's authenticity is the "noble" discipline, that cleanness of the interior life and its outward relations, which is in accord with one of the wisest maxims bequeathed to us by Ignatius: "Do not mingle indiscriminately with the multitude; shun particular friendships. Take counsel with your spirit and see whither it is leading and driving you. Note carefully in what direction the motions of the spirit are seeking to lead you."¹⁶ This procedure was observed

by Ignatius even down to the most minute external details of everyday life. Basically his almost fastidious feeling for physical cleanliness¹⁷ sprang from the same disposition as his instinctive distrust of the extravagant manifestations in mystics.¹⁸ The form his love of poverty took always remained "noble." Father Benedetto Palmio, the minister of the professed house at Rome, has given us a description of what was customary in the refectory during the regime of Ignatius: "The appointments at table, to be sure, always breathed a love of simplicity and poverty, but over all there hung an indefinable air of court etiquette (*nescio quid aulicum tamen redolebat*). As a rule, two or three were appointed to serve at table, especially when distinguished visitors had been invited. At such a time the wine-glasses were 'credenced' with a decorum and elegance, such as could not have been surpassed in any princely court."¹⁹ For the Jesuit, discipline is the discretion of the "more" carried into daily life.

Thus the noble stock from which he sprang and the training and education which he received already lay bare before our eyes the skeleton outlines of his future ideal. The Spiritual Exercises and the Society of Jesus reveal themselves "as it were, from below," as the work of a nobleman and of a soldier. Their ideal is the "more" of a chivalrous disposition, but one which developed into the discretion of service.