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CORNELIA'S CONSTITUTIONS
Part I INTRODUCTION

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The constitutions¹ with which this article is concerned were not given pontifical approval in the lifetime of Cornelia Connelly, though she had worked on them for over thirty years, committed in obedience to legislate for the Society which she founded, a task which at that period would normally have fallen to a bishop or a priest. The failure to obtain such approval, in spite of her perseverance in the continual labor of revision and a courageous struggle against every kind of obstacle, was for her a deep disappointment, for she knew ever more surely as the years passed that her Society was God's work. It was therefore her duty to safeguard its future as far as she could by obtaining for it an official status within the Church and the stability and protection which this would bring.

Though Cornelia had left Rome in 1846 with a mandate from Propaganda, a mandate which had at least the "verbal sanction"² of the Holy

¹ Mother Connelly used the word Rule more frequently though she knew that this applied technically only to the few basic rules acknowledged as such by the Church, those of St. Augustine, Benedict, et al. In English the word Rule was and is still used popularly with variations of meaning. The compromise term Rules was also used for an entire document or draft thereof. The popular usage of the terms Rule and Rules has been retained in this article where the context requires it.

² "The Religious of this Holy Child J. having had the verbal sanction of His Holiness, Gregory

Father himself, she was embarking on something new in the ecclesiastical history of the country to which she had been sent. She would find there old English monastic institutions which had returned home after the period of persecution, autonomous houses like those of the Benedictines, Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, etc. There too were convents belonging to new foreign apostolic congregations--Sacré Coeur, Notre Dame, etc.--with generalates abroad, slowly adapting their way of life to the English situation. Finally there were a few contemporary native foundations under the authority of particular diocesan bishops, e.g., Mother Margaret Hallahan and the English Dominicans under Bishop Ullathorne.

The congregation which Cornelia was called to found fitted into none of these existing patterns and its particular characteristics, reflected in the constitutions as they developed, aroused opposition.

i. It was not an institute which had taken root spontaneously in a local English diocesan situation. It had been planned with the encouragement and under the auspices of Propaganda Fide in Rome itself. Albeit diverted in its first foundation from America to England, through the wish and under the protection of the vicar apostolic of the central district, Nicholas Wiseman, it retained a special link with the Holy See.

ii. Unlike many of the older orders which also looked to Rome, the Society was in no way 'exempt' from episcopal control. But the foundress, residing not at a distance but in an

XVI, and the Protection of Cardinal Fransoni." CC Notebook, Dates of the SHCJ from 1846, Orig HCJ/Rome.

English diocese, was a superior general with a centralized system of government quite different from that of a diocesan congregation.

iii. Though Cornelia was not a native of England, her father had been, and she herself came from the English-speaking world. Her specific object as foundress was to provide both a religious life and an educational apostolate deliberately geared to the needs of that world, where most of the population did not belong to the Church and Catholics were a struggling, often oppressed, minority.

iv. Wiseman recognized in Cornelia not only a woman with the ability to provide a more outward looking education for the old Catholic families of England, but a convert whose remarkable gifts could be used, like those of Newman, to forward the Oxford Movement and to carry the Church in England into a new era of missionary expansion and consolidation.

v. Many of the insights of Cornelia's foundation charism were shaped by her experience of marriage and motherhood.

All these factors would contribute to the depth and richness of the constitutions she would formulate, but their novelty would also bring to Cornelia the quite extraordinary degree of suffering she had to endure.

Even had her institute been diocesan she would have found her position with regard to the ordinaries extremely difficult at a time when their relationship with the new apostolic congregations of women was still to be worked out in canon law. How much more difficult then was Cornelia's position as foundress of a Society whose origins bound it in a special way to Rome and whose mission required a general government. Neither she nor the bishop had any clear idea of the right boundaries between episcopal jurisdiction and the domestic

power of a superioress general. In the practical working out of these boundaries and their expression in written constitutions, staving off every attempt to make her Society a diocesan congregation, she became one of the pioneers of a new way of religious life for women, a way of life formulated by women and governed by them.

In addition, as a convert and an American, Cornelia found her role as a religious and educational pioneer particularly difficult in 19th century England. Among the old Catholic families and the bishops and clergy who shared their outlook, converts were regarded as necessarily lacking in true Catholic instincts, while in Victorian society to be an American was at once to be labeled brash and superficial. Moreover a religious, (traditionally) a consecrated virgin, who was in law still a married woman, seemed to many not only an anomaly but rather a scandalous one, especially in view of the puritanical attitude of the Victorians towards sexuality. This prejudice was reinforced by the case of Connelly v. Connelly for the restoration of conjugal rights.

Almost from the beginning therefore Cornelia and her enterprise met with suspicion and hostility, attitudes which were soon adopted by the very man who had been the driving force in her actual establishment in England and who had given her Society and its constitutions the first episcopal approbation. When after four years Cornelia's concern for the mission entrusted to her clashed with the personal and unfounded expectations of Cardinal Wiseman in the St. Leonards affair, she not only lost his support in England, but his powerful influence in Rome was turned against the Society from 1854 onwards. Apart from the behavior of Pierce, this did more perhaps than any other single factor to prevent the approval of the

SHCJ constitutions during Cornelia's lifetime.

The absence of such an approval by the Church had its effect on the internal affairs of the Society. Without it Cornelia's efforts to set up official machinery of government were continually frustrated and, as the Society expanded, its unity was therefore threatened. In 1870 discontented elements among the sisters, frustrated by the deficiencies in a rapidly expanding congregation of a system of personal government more suitable for its beginnings, and encouraged by the sympathetic attitude of the bishops, challenged Mother Connelly's authority within the Society. Their subsequent activities brought not only the approbation of the constitutions, but the very existence of the congregation into jeopardy.

Through it all Cornelia's faith endured and she was confident that the "Old Rule" which had developed under her hand within the Society and which had been replaced by the Bishop of Southwark in 1874, would eventually be restored. But it was only after her death in 1879 and that of Pierce three years later that the question of pontifical approval was seriously taken up in Rome and a defender (Cardinal Mazella, SJ) such as the Society had lacked in Cornelia's lifetime came forward to carry the matter to a successful conclusion.

MAJOR SOURCES

In approaching the task of writing constitutions for her congregation, Cornelia had to keep two factors in mind:

- i. She had primarily to give some expression to her ideal of religious life in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus with all the new insights this contained.
- ii. In doing this, she had as far as possible

to meet the expectations of the Church at that time with regard to religious women in general. These expectations included elements essential to ensure that any new commitment to the evangelical counsels in community would be a true participation in the religious life sanctioned by the tradition of the Church as a valid Christian endeavor, as a part of its own total mission.

But they also included customs that were ephemeral, which had their roots in social convention and in the domination of women by men. Cornelia accepted these insofar as they did not interfere with her own vocation and mission and that of her Society. To have done otherwise would have been to delay unnecessarily the recognition vital to its stability. It would also have diminished the influence of the members of the Society by making them appear to their contemporaries as "playing at being nuns," "half-nuns," accusations which were, in fact, made even by a Roman consultor³ in spite of Cornelia's attempts to guard against them.

In seeking to fulfil her difficult task Cornelia preferred to express herself where possible through the adaptation of constitutional texts drawn up by others, especially the saints⁴

³ 1854 report, Propaganda Archives, D 50:152.

⁴ "I need only make use of the saints and apply their words to you, being far above any I could give you as my own" (Epiphany letter, 1851). "We must venerate the rules and words of the Saints for by these they become saints and pleasing to God" (Letter of CC to Preston, March 6, 1870; copy, Propaganda; D 52:44).
/The Preston protest against Cornelia was sent to Propaganda Fide in June 1870./

whose words she revered as vehicles of their sanctity. Diffident though she was in this undertaking, she was quick to recognize which of the passages available to her could be combined and focused within her own original vision. Her constitutions would be drawn from a variety of sources, but their overall thrust and design would be an expression of her own special charism.

Sources from the Society of Jesus

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

Cornelia was fortunate to meet Ignatian spirituality at a time when the Exercises were being restored to their central place within the mission of the Society of Jesus. It was the grace flowing from a moment of vision, a moment of conversion, granted to her during her first entry into this Christ-experience at Christmas 1839 which perhaps above all she sought to capture, to communicate and to penetrate by means of her constitutions. Since the Exercises had been the means which God had used to bring her this grace, she desired that the search for and obedience to the will of God in the Society should be guided by the same principles. In this way the Exercises under-pinned her constitutional work, formed as she said a "sort of bulwark to the Rules and Constitutions. They are the great means we have to bring us to the true spirit of the Constitutions" (CC 27:3). She therefore laid down in the Rule specific occasions when the sisters would renew the 'discreet love' central to the life of the Society by following the Ignatian Exercises. The text of the Exercises is echoed here and there in the constitutions, but the principles of this famous work are present in numerous excerpts from Ignatian sources.

The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus

Cornelia took the text of these constitutions as her prime source for conveying a true understanding of the life of a "contemplative in action." When working with Father Grassi, SJ, in Rome she seems to have had access to a full edition of the Jesuit constitutions. At Derby she probably had the 1843 French translation⁵ of the Examen and Constitutions; there too Newman lent Emily Bowles an English translation⁶ of Parts I-X to forward the constitutional work on which she was engaged with the foundress. In 1855 Father Gallwey, SJ, gave the latter a full version of the Examen and Constitutions in the 1827 Latin edition (Avignon).⁷

⁵ The first translation of Ignatius's constitutions into a vernacular language was one into French, 1762, made from the Latin text in great haste. A revised French translation appeared in Paris in 1843 and Cornelia obtained a manuscript copy of this, though at what date is not known. It could have been when she stayed in Paris in 1846.

⁶ This Latin/English edition (London, 1838) of Parts I-IX of the Jesuit Constitutions was part of a hostile polemical work calculated to reveal "The Whole Dark Crime" of a Jesuit infiltration which threatened the English nation. Cornelia ignored the context and used it for her own purposes. Newman lent it to Emily Bowles after his return from Italy, November 1847, and before the sisters left Derby, December 1848; he asked for its return two years later.

⁷ "He [Gallwey] made her a present of the latin /sic/"

This was translated by M. M. Joseph Buckle⁸ and written out four times, so that the different houses might make their own copies for future guidance. Cornelia's knowledge of the SJ constitutions was thus quite remarkable, so that in using the Summary and other supplementary material she was able to do so with an awareness of their value and their limitations when separated from their full context.

The Summary⁹ was indeed given a central place in the SHCJ constitutions. In itself it may not have been an accurate reflection of the total thought of the constitutions, but it represented the best description available to Cornelia of the spiritual dispositions and basic ideals proposed by St. Ignatius, and as such offered a useful vehicle for the spirit of the Exercises. The Society lived these texts at depth during her lifetime; only later, when the

text of the rules, of the ratio of studies, of the Decrees of the General Chapters [sic] of the Jesuits, and of that admirable book of Father Aquaviva on the 'methods for governing subjects of the Society.'" Buckle, Original HCJ/R, D 65:161.

⁸ This was probably the first English translation of the whole of the Jesuit Examen and Constitutions ever to have been made. One copy and part of another still exist in the USA.

⁹ In 1553 while Ignatius was still alive Nadal promulgated a collection of excerpts from the Examen and Part III, but it was in 1560 that the first official collection was put forward. This lasted, with some early revisions, until 1968, when it was replaced with a new summary drawing on all ten sections of the constitutions.

superiors lacked Cornelia's wider knowledge, did their interpretation become more limited.

The SJ Common Rules and Rules of Religious Modesty¹⁰ were closely linked in the SHCJ constitutions with the Summary. Placed side by side with paragraphs fostering vital spiritual attitudes, they came to have an unwarranted importance. All Cornelia's constitutional writing reveals however that she valued discipline as a means of channeling energies towards the

¹⁰ The Common Rules dealt with precise norms and practices which have been described as the behavior of the "Roman Society of Jesus" at a time close to the foundation of the order (1560-80). The Rules of Religious Modesty were penned by St. Ignatius himself in 1555. Whatever their deficiencies by the time of Cornelia, these texts did provide a set of simple rules intended "to express and effect union among Ours" and had been drawn up not for the regulation of a monastery but with a missionary perspective in mind. Taken together they were an expression of the desire to be by the quality of personal and community life an apt instrument for Christ's saving work. This was, no doubt, the context of religious discipline which Cornelia desired to express by using them.

In her revision of 1861 Cornelia included twenty-one "general admonitions" and fourteen decrees from Jesuit sources, as well as "Certain Rules of Blessed Father Ignatius," an adapted list of Jesuit suffrages, and several prayers. Presumably these texts, like the copies of the SJ constitutions, were for general guidance or to cover areas where legislation was still lacking.

fulfillment of God's will, instead of frittering them away by pursuing "imagination, passions, whims, inclinations and aversions" (SHCJ Rule, 1854). The same thought may lie behind the Rules for the Minor Offices, most of which were adapted Jesuit texts. But it was also customary for such directives to be included in the actual constitutions of women's orders, and there seemed no reason for her to depart from this.¹¹ []

¹¹ Source #4 reproduces Cornelia's earliest versions or adaptations of these materials: the Summary, pp. 26-32; Common Rules, pp. 32-35; Rules of Modesty, pp. 35-36; Rules for the Minor Offices, pp. 38-48.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

An answer to the question: OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES BY WHICH THE SOCIETY HAS LIVED, WHICH DO YOU CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT?

For the individual, her relationship with God.

For the Society, therefore, the most important is that relationship and how it the Society can by means of it help in the building up of God's kingdom on earth.

All the rest are ways of doing this.

(Constitutions Commission interviews)

WHAT IS CHARISMA? Part II
CHARISMA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The word occurs in the New Testament as follows: 1 Corinthians 1: 7, 7:7, 12:4,9,28,30,31; 2 Cor 1:11; Romans 1:11, 5:15,16, 6:23, 11:29, 12:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Pet 4:10.

1 Corinthians

St. Paul's exposition of 'charisma' in the Christian context was first drawn from him in response to some very concrete questions arising among the earliest Christian converts. His first letter to the Corinthians contains phrases such as "concerning the things about which you wrote to me" (7:1), and "it has been reported to me of you" (1:11). It is in the setting out of his guidance on these various controversial matters that we begin to find gradually revealed to us what he understands by charisma as the endowment of every follower of Christ.

As we know, the first Christians looked for their Lord's second coming at an early date, and it is in keeping with this expectation that St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians assures them that they are "not lacking in any charisma" while they wait for "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7). If we today have a more long-term notion of this waiting it does not affect our understanding of our charismatic endowment: it is bestowed upon us in relation to our end, which is union with our Saviour in the glory of his whole Mystical Body.

"Each has his own charism from God, one of one kind, one of another" (7:7). After placing the concept of charisma from the start in the setting of the parousia, St. Paul opens up the