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Source

Historical Perspectives — II

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES — II

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EDITORIAL

THIS issue of **SOURCE** contains a further collection of articles which can broadly be described as 'Historical Perspectives'. The theme, which has occupied two issues of **SOURCE,** obviously grows out of and overlaps with other initiatives in exploring and retrieving our shared story - Radegunde Flaxman's recent biography of Cornelia, the History and Spirit workshops which have been held in all the provinces, the *SHCJ Stories,* and the projected history of the Society. The **SOURCE** editorial board hopes that the articles we have published will be a stimulus to further interest and research. It should be noted, in particular, that Claire Murphy's article is an edited and shortened version of a longer paper which is more properly a contribution to the history of the Society.

The articles on Cornelia and Pierce present the story we know so well from an unfamiliar, even unexpected, angle. Anne Stewart's article on the founding mothers in America and Claire Murphy's on Angelica Croft present material which will be completely new to many of us. They may perhaps serve as pointers to the wealth of material about our heritage which remains to be uncovered.

The editorial board continues to hope for more subscribers to **SOURCE.** A subscription in any currency is acceptable; we ask for least £6 or $12 or 50 naire or 2000 cedis per annum. If you know of anyone who would like to subscribe, please contact one of the editors.

Once again, we invite contributions, suggestions and responses to published articles. The next issue will be devoted to Risk, and after that an issue is planned on The Reality of the Incarnation. Copy for the first issue of each year should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous September; for the second issue by the beginning of February.

JUDITH LANCASTER SHCJ

NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISHWOMEN: CORNELIA'S CONTEXT

Judith Lancaster SHCJ

THE "duties" of the Victorian woman of the leisured classes consisted in "faddling, twaddling and the endless tweedling of nosegays in jugs". Such was the graphic language used by Mary Clarke, a friend of Florence Nightingale, to bemoan the manner in which she was obliged to fritter away her life. And Florence would have known how she felt. In a letter to Dean Stanley she herself had written:

> I would have given the Church my head, my hand, my heart. She would not have them. She did not know what to do with them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother's drawing-room, or if I were tired of that, to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table. You may go to Sunday School if you like it, she said. But she gave me neither work to do for her, nor education for it.

The stifling narrowness which hemmed in Victorian women is hard for us to grasp in spite of our familiarity with the lamentable state of girls' schools in England at the time Cornelia arrived to found the Society. (As late as 1868 the Taunton Commission wrote, "the general deficiency of girls' education can be stated with absolute confidence," and gave by way of illustration the case of "a young lady of twenty years of age ... [who] could not with any degree of fluency count by twos, such as 1,3,5 etc — 2,4,6 she did better. And yet the same young lady was an expert on the piano.")

But what was a young woman to do once she had left her often woefully inadequate school? Emily Davies — who, after a tremendous struggle, was to establish Girton as the first women's college in Cambridge in 1873 — commented in 1866 that "there is no point on which schoolmistresses are more unanimous and emphatic than on the difficulty of knowing what to do with girls after they leave school." No English university admitted women students; teacher training colleges were not yet fully developed; nursing was not considered respectable; and other employment opportunities were extremely limited (jobs as hairdressers, shop assistants and office workers, for example, were not open to women). So girls were kept at home after school doing nothing — which was considered "feminine and refined" — until they were married, often to a man of their parents' choice, and, as married women, ceased to have any separate identity in law at all, and once more occupied their days with little more than "faddling and twaddling". "You had better make up your mind to be uninteresting as long as you live," wrote Sarah Ellis to prospective brides in 1843.

Victorian England was truly a man's world where double standards prevailed in law, in education, in employment, in sexual morality, in personal freedom, in every sphere of life. The success of Cornelia's contemporaries in

breaking out of their straitjacket is an achievement by which twentieth century feminism pales in comparison, especially when one considers that women could not vote, let alone become members of parliament, so that men and men alone determined the laws and regulations which controlled their lives. (The movement for women's suffrage did not begin in England until 1867 — when Cornelia was 58 — and the twentieth century was well established before women gained the vote in Britain or in the United States.)

Throughout the nineteenth century the struggle to widen opportunities for women was countered at every turn by prejudice. It was commonly and regularly asserted that women were intellectually inferior to men "by nature", and that not only their brains but their bodies made it unsuitable for women to pursue intellectual activity. There was much talk of "girl's organisation" (ie menstruation) which was supposed to make it impossible for girls to study seriously for weeks at a time. So Wiseman's reference to the community at St Leonards as "the fragile daughters of Eve" for whom access to Mr Jones' library was a "danger" would have caused no ripple of surprise.

Medical knowledge of women's bodies was skimpy and there were, of course, no women doctors before the 1850s. Interrogation and examination by male doctors was hampered by a Victorian sense of modesty, and treatment of gynaecological problems and illnesses verged on the barbaric. Women were ignorant and rightly afraid of their own bodies. (In passing I wonder how members of the early Society coped and how many of them died of what would now seem relatively minor ailments..)

The young women who left St Leonards and the other schools the Society was establishing in the 1850s and 1860s had few career opportunities open to them. They might become low paid governesses or schoolmistresses, but very little else. Yet at the other end of the social scale people were desperate for the help and support these women could have provided. In the slums of big cities like London and Liverpool, where Cornelia was already establishing communities, poverty and degradation reigned, sweat-shop conditions and starvation wages. Cholera, typhoid, dysentery, diphtheria were endemic. The Select Committee on the Health of Towns had reported in 1840 that 7,800 Liverpool cellars housed 39,000 families and that in Bethnal Green in the east end of London people lived "perfectly in the conditions of the wigwams of the wildest savages". It was in this context that so many former pupils entered the Society. How much preferable the possibility of working in the Society's poor schools must have been to "faddling and twaddling" - and, the church notwithstanding, religious life must have afforded some measure of self-determination.

We are accustomed to think of Cornelia's story as extraordinary, quite outside the common run of experience - and indeed it is. Yet, in looking at the lives of other women in Victorian England, example after example presents itself of people coping with circumstances similar to hers - legal disputes with husbands, death of children and separation from them, desire to improve educational opportunities and to be of greater service in the church, and endless struggle and determination in this world controlled by men. ("Men cannot stand indignation," Emily Davies wrote in one letter, and in another, "I think there must be truth ... as to the peculiar fitness of women for fighting - I cannot help enjoying it.")

Unlike Emily Davies, Cornelia was extremely reticent, leaving little written evidence of her personal reactions to the death of John Henry, the loss of Pierce and of her children, her family, her home, her country, or of her struggle with education authorities and church leaders. There are hints only of how she coped with specific issues such as travel in nineteenth century Europe, or illness in the heat of Italian summers; the merest suggestions of how she faced the loss of her reputation, the spreading of lies and gross untruths about her. In all of this, as Archbishop Goodier remarked, her silence was her greatest strength. But reading the experiences and comments of other nineteenth century women at least provides a background, some insight into the circumstances she found herself in, and makes possible some imaginative speculation about what she may have felt and how she may have coped.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for instance, describes the discomfort and slowness of coach travel in the Europe of the 1840s, and speaks of her longing to escape from Florence and Rome during the summer months - to go anywhere rather than continue to endure the stifling and oppressive heat of rented apartments. Mary Elizabeth Lucy, a member of the English landed gentry and a friend of the Shrewburys and of the Prince and Princess Doria, was also travelling in Europe with her growing family in 1840 and makes a note of some of their luggage, "three beds for the little ones, three tin baths, sheets, towels, pillows...lessons books, tea, arrowroot and every possible thing we thought we might need". One of Mary Elizabeth's children died on that journey and she held his dead body on her knee in the coach for eleven hours until they reached Turin at three in the morning. ("Why, oh why should I mourn when I know [he has] been saved all sin and sorrow, reclaimed as a bright jewel in the Saviour's crown?") And she gave birth to another child at Nancy, in rooms which had only been booked for one night.

It is hardly possible to read the life of any nineteenth century woman without coming upon her grief at the loss of a child - and Cornelia lost two. Mary Shelley, wife of the poet, an author of the novel *Frankenstein,* wrote after the death of her son, William, "the thought never leaves me for a single moment" - words reminiscent of Cornelia's own. And Mary Elizabeth Lucy, "I strove hard to say, 'God's will be done,' but it was agony to feel that the object of my care for the four short years of his life was past all help or need of it; that dear little dependent being who I had been accustomed to think of almost every moment of the day, was no longer there to ... listen to the oft-repeated Bible stories or to kneel beside my knee and repeat his childish prayers ... A cold weight presses on my heart."

Jenny, Karl Marx's wife, lost four of her seven children, the death of one child, she wrote, "calling to mind anew the old pain and longing for the dear departed." Looking back across her life, at the age of sixty-three, she used language which finds echoes in Cornelia:

> It is life that comes to our rescue with its little joys and its great troubles.. and the great grief is softened by the little troubles of the moment, and almost without knowing the violent grief grows less. Not that the wound ever heals, above all in a mother's heart, but little by little there awakes in the heart a new awareness, even a new sensibility, to a new trouble and a new joy. And thus it is that one goes

on living still with a wounded heart but always hoping that at last all will be calm and that it will be eternal peace.

Josephine Butler is the person whose experience seems to me to parallel Cornelia's most closely. Josephine was a deeply committed Christian whose sense of ministry - to and for prostitutes - grew out of a personal tragedy. The Butlers were happily married with three sons and a daughter, Eva, whom they especially treasured. One evening they returned home late and Eva rushed onto the landing to greet them; the banisters gave way and she fell onto the tiled floor in front of them in the hall beneath. They nursed her for hours until she died in terrible convulsions. Eva's death changed Josephine's life and led directly to her work with prostitutes: "I became possessed of an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own."

As an old woman, in a letter to one of her sons, Josephine spoke at last of Eva's death. She wrote that for the next twenty-five years she never woke from sleep without a vision of Eva's falling figure or without the sound of her head hitting the ground ringing in her ears. She dreamed about Eva constantly, she said. "I dreamed I had my darling in my arms, dying; that she struggled to live for my sake, lived again a moment and died." Josephine's life was not as busy as her husband's and she found she had "many hours everyday, alone, emptyhanded and sorrowful." Her husband was understanding, and prayer helped ("I sometimes gave whole nights to prayer") but until she began her work with prostitutes the pain of Eva's death was hardly bearable. "Most people who have gone through such an experience," she wrote, "will understand me when I speak of the ebb and flow of sorrow." We can only guess the heartache John Henry's death caused Cornelia, but Cornelia Connelly (1809-1879) and Josephine Butler (1828-1906) might well have supported one another.

Another woman for whom Cornelia must surely have had understanding and sympathy - and whom she must have known of from the press - was Lady Caroline Norton. George Norton, Caroline's husband, abducted their three children and used money Caroline had earned for herself by writing to pay his own debts. Along with her children and her income Caroline lost her reputation, just as Cornelia was to do, and found herself ostracised in polite society. And she discovered through grim personal experience her powerlessness in English law: a married woman had no separate existence in law and no rights with regard to her children or her own money. The Nortons' two court cases in June 1836 and August 1853 were well publicised. At the first Caroline was not present - she had no legal existence and so no right even to be represented. But at the second she was in court, and called out to George, "I do not ask for my rights. I have no rights - only wrongs." Like Cornelia, Caroline seems to have loved her difficult husband. Although one of her sons died whilst in his custody, she nevertheless eventually took George back under her own roof.

Other contemporary women who would surely have kindled a spark in Cornelia must include Mary Livingstone, wife of the explorer. The Livingstones were feted in London in the late 1850s and perhaps Cornelia was stirred by talk of their missionary journeys into central Africa (an uncharted map for the Victorians). Mary returned to Africa with her husband in 1858 leaving behind four of her children to whom she wrote sad, moralising letters

reminiscent of Cornelia's to Merty.

On the face of it Victorian England was no place to be a woman: the legal, social and economic position of women was patently unjust and in need of reform. In every stratum of society women were oppressed. Working class women were caught in the worst excesses of the industrial revolution, supporting large families on minimal wages, and often the victims of domestic violence. The single middle-class woman found herself in an economic trap too; it was often difficult for her to earn a living because employment opportunities were severely restricted and wages poor, and she was generally expected to remain dependent upon her father or her brother. (Women greatly outnumbered men in both England and France during the nineteenth century so large numbers of women remained unmarried.) For those who did marry there was the loss of any separate legal identity and with that any right to their own property. "Organ blowers to the musicians," Mary Livingstone's sister called wives.

On the face of it no place to be a woman. And yet nineteenth century England was teeming with creative, energetic, gifted women: Florence Nightingale who almost single-handedly - and from deep religious conviction - established the nursing profession; Emily Davies and a whole host of other educators who sought to widen women's opportunities for employment as well as higher education; Elizabeth Garrett (and her American forerunner, Elizabeth Blackwell, who lived for a time in Hastings) who campaigned not just for women in medicine but for a general improvement in women's social conditions; Josephine Butler and Frances Power Cobbe whose concern was for the poorest women; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, the Brontes... Such a range of creative ideas and energy and achievement. And perhaps these women achieved so much precisely because they had experienced in their own lives the restrictions that were cramping all women, and had determined not to be crushed.

In this too Cornelia was a woman of her time. Her experiences were many and varied - wife, mother, foundress; life in cultured Natchez and in isolated Grand Coteau, in Rome and in England; the joy of giving birth and the pain of death and loss and separation; wealth and poverty, success and abject failure. There were times when Cornelia must have felt as oppressed as any woman of her generation - and, as with her more famous contemporaries, that very oppression seems to have led her to be more creative, energetic and clear-sighted in responding to 'the wants of the age'. The circumstances of her life, which might have extinguished a less spirited and God-centred woman, made her into a woman who launched out and took risks, a woman who could say, "Let us never think we have done enough."

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PIERCE CONNELLY: NOT A BAD MAN

Joseph Boland

AS so often happens in a parish, my first contact with the Connelly family was through Mrs Connelly, and even now I feel I know her much better than I do her husband. And yet it is about Pierce Connelly that I wish to write because, as a secular priest working in a parish, I think I see common elements in his experience and that of many priests in parishes today, and because I think I detect parallels between his relationship with his wife and the often strained relationship between the clergy and religious sisters in today's church. And if I have a purpose in writing as I do then it is the hope of furthering just a little the cause of tolerance and understanding between the secular clergy and the modern daughters of Cornelia.

The first thing I want to say about Pierce Connelly is that he was not a bad man. In the end the evidence for this lies in the fact that Cornelia Peacock fell deeply in love with him and he with her, and that this love lasted in some ways all their lives. They 'caused' each other a great deal of pain, but this is not at all uncommon between husbands and wives, and results from a whole series of complex factors, the least of which is usually deliberate badness. It is precisely this fact that makes the pain so sad and often tragic, and there can be few stories so sad or so tragic as that of the Connellys.

The whole sad story begins, it seems to me, with a fundamental lack of discernment. Not to beat about the bush, I don't believe that Pierce should ever have been ordained a priest in the catholic church. The 'blame' for this I think is fairly evenly shared between Pierce and the church itself. There seems little doubt that from early in his life a large part of the attraction of Pierce to the ministry was the position and status that went with it. And I can well understand this because, looking back now, I can see that this was a large but not always obvious part of my own original attraction to the priesthood. Over the years I think I have been able to see this more clearly and am struggling to break free from it, but I don't think that Pierce ever even saw it. And how could he? He lived in the nineteenth not the twentieth century, and the insights and ways of thinking that are so familiar to us were no more than twinkles in the eyes of even the most prophetic figures of the time. Even for those of us who have lived through 'the changes' of recent years position, power and status are still major issues, and clericalism is still the biggest obstacle to what the Spirit is trying to say to the church, causing great pain to many, especially to the clergy themselves and to women. But while we can see this and address it, even if only slowly and painfully, only very extraordinary individuals could have seen it in Pierce's day. And Pierce was certainly not such an individual. He was very much a weak and flawed man of his time.

Had Pierce lived today of course, it would all have been very different. In therapy he would have explored the many things which seem to have driven

him. He would have explored too his relationship with his mother and the effect that this had on him. He would no doubt have done the enneagram and come to see his basic compulsion. But none of this happened. Pierce was a man driven by all kinds of forces within himself and lacked the basic freedom required for the discernment that was needed in his life. He might reasonably have expected something better from the church in all of this, but it was as caught up in unfreedoms as he was himself. The signs of the corruption which follows in the wake of power were all around, and on top of this there was the all-pervading influence of bigotry, prejudice and narrowness of thinking. The church was locked in a struggle with the reformed churches for influence and control as they vied with each other to score points and win over influential and important converts, and Pierce was caught up in all of this. The speed with which he was accepted for minor orders and then for ordination were beyond belief and the final symbol of the whole unsavoury mess was the 'big fish' sent to Pierce by the pope on the day he took minor orders.

In Ignatian terminology, the Standard of Satan fluttered over the whole proceedings and given the circumstances the end result was always going to be an awful mess. But from Pierce's point of view, the real tragedy was what was to follow. His lack of discernment and the 'mistake' which resulted from it were the things which triggered off in his wife movements and events which might otherwise never have happened. Pierce set in motion a process which led to her far outstripping him in almost every area of their lives, and for an ordinary nineteenth century man this was just beyond his comprehension or capacity to cope.

If the Connellys had lived all their lives as a married couple then it is quite possible that Cornelia would have been content to live the life of a nineteenth century wife. She would have accepted her role and place in the world and been - up to a point - happy with it. But Pierce changed all that. Through his lack of discernment in his own life he set in motion a chain of events which, from his point of view, quickly got out of control. His 'mistake' was the thing which began to set Cornelia free from the trap in which women of her time lived. She began to develop as a person in a way which might not otherwise have happened. She began to stand on her own two feet, to make her own decisions and to explore her own personal experience as a woman. Even more importantly she began to trust her own experience. This was something Pierce had never envisaged, and he could neither accept nor understand it.

Their roles were changing before his very eyes and he was both bewildered and frightened. He was like a man who had set fire to his own house and was now furiously trying to put out the flames when they were in fact out of control. Or like a man who had started to push his car down a slope only to find the slope was steeper than he had thought, and he was now fighting a losing battle against the force of gravity. Pierce Connelly shot himself in the foot and his behaviour after Cornelia had settled in Derby was the behaviour of a man hopping up and down in self-inflicted pain. Those must have been truly terrible years for him, and my own hope is that later in life he came to see it for what it was and somehow came to know some kind of peace in himself. For Cornelia of course the pain was also very great but it was a

different pain. From the beginning she had been more free than Pierce to allow things to unfold and happen. She was not driven the way he was and so, although she suffered greatly in all that happened, she was able to make it 'accepted suffering' and being accepted it bore fruit in a way that Pierce's never could.

Being driven, it seems to me, Pierce constantly confused his own urges and needs with the will of God, and so life must have been so baffling and so painful for him. Had he just been able to wait, to wait for confirmation of the decisions he made, how different things might have been. But Pierce never could wait. Even during the eight days retreat he made at Grand Coteau in 1840, he could not wait to tell Cornelia his decision about the priesthood, and met her with the news on the fifth day. A truly discerning person would have waited to see if God had anything else to say in the remaining days of the retreat. This inability to wait for confirmation of his decisions was to cause himself and Cornelia much suffering.

But what has all this to do with the parish clergy in 1992? Well, I believe we can say of them what we said of Pierce just a moment ago, 'They are not bad men.' You may wonder why I feel the need to say this at all, but in recent years I have listened to women religious who would seem to cast doubt on it. They talk as if being a man is bad enough, but to be an ordained man...that is the lowest form of life. They seem to feel that the parish clergy are the cause of all the ills in the church; that if they were not there then the fullness of the Kingdon would immediately be visible on earth. And so I say it again. We are not - on the whole - bad men. What we are of course is very weak and flawed human beings -like Pierce - and there is no doubt that we are the cause of much trouble and pain in the church. Many of us became priests because of the same power, status and position which attracted Pierce, and we are riddled still with the evil of clericalism. Large numbers of us are immature and manipulative, like Pierce, and lack at times even the basics of spirituality and discernment. Many of us are greatly in need of on-going formation and personal development though, like Pierce, we cannot even see it. We often fail to understand what is going on around us in the world and in the church; and it is true that some of us have not read a book since we were ordained. In one parish after another we block progress and development and we celebrate bad liturgies which lead to spiritual mal-nourishment and even starvation in many, while others are driven to frustration, anger and despair. Women suffer from our faults in a special way. Many of us are afraid of women and don't know how to relate to them. Our respective roles are changing before our very eyes and, like Pierce, we are confused and bewildered by it. We experience women religious as a special threat very often, especially when you are more gifted and better trained and qualified then we are. The truth is that, like Pierce, we prefer women who know their place and stick to it.... And much more!

And yet that is not the complete picture. The parish clergy are not just the cause of problems in the church. They are the consequence of them too. As they struggle, many of them, to come down from the pedestals where they have been isolated and quite lonely, they need the help and support of the people who first put them there, and amongst these 'the good sisters' have

played a big part. And so surely you have a big part to play now too even though you have suffered a lot from us in the past. If any group of sisters has this ministry as part of the charism of their founder then surely it is the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. Despite everything that Pierce did to her, Cornelia prayed for him each day and wished him well at all times, even paying his costs for the case he brought against her. The secular clergy were a constant source of suffering to her and yet she never became bitter against them.

Am I just being a typical man when I suggest that her daughters today may be called to imitate her in their dealings with the secular clergy?

PIERCE CONNELLY: HIS CALL FROM GOD

Carolyn Mitchell SHCJ

AN imaginary picture of Pierce that comes easily to my mind is of him sitting alone, late at night, exhausting himself in writing scurrilous pamphlets against the catholic church in his anger and bitterness over losing Cornelia. The shadow of the case Connelly versus Connelly stretches across his life. It is hard to think about him without remembering these events.

Maybe we feel angry with him for the suffering he caused Cornelia and his children. How far was he to blame for what happened? Was he also a victim, like Cornelia, caught up in the tragedy that cut like a sword through the intertwining love of their two lives? Was Cornelia a bad judge of character in choosing to marry Pierce? What was this marital relationship like for both of them? I wanted to think about questions like these as they are central in coming to know who Cornelia was as a person; for at the heart of her life was her relationship with Pierce which gave her so much happiness and so much suffering.

Four years into the Connelly's marriage, when Pierce was resigning from his parish at Natchez, Cornelia showed herself to be deeply in love and committed to him. On 1st September 1835 she wrote to her sister, Adeline, to tell her about Pierce's resignation about which she knew Adeline would disapprove. "Do not be unhappy about us, dear Addie, and do not be too anxious. I have perfect confidence in the piety, integrity and learning of my dear husband, and if you mistrust my judgement recollect that he has the increased confidence and esteem of the best and first men of this parish." It was these qualities of piety, integrity and learning in Pierce which had attracted her to him. She had fallen in love with his goodness. She wanted to see the best in him and was glad when others shared her opinion and appreciated him. It would be unfair to both Cornelia and to Pierce himself to think that these positive qualities of his were little more than a veneer. By then Cornelia had lived with him for four years. She knew him to be intelligent, gifted and a good man. The tragedy was that there were other

pressures at work in his life which would stifle or distort his generous desires and high ideals.

Cornelia saw her role as Pierce's wife in terms of her contemporary culture as one of following her husband in love and submission. She conformed to what was expected of the good wife, who as the weaker sex, yielded to her husband. The circumstances of her early married life encouraged her to look up to Pierce and to want to follow his lead. "I am proud to say that against my prejudices and in spite of the horrors which I have always nurtured for the catholic faith, I am ready at once to submit to whatever my loved husband believes to be the path of duty," she wrote to her sister, Adeline. Cornelia admired Pierce for his ability to assert himself on a matter of principle and stand against the tide, which she felt he was doing over his resignation from Natchez and conversion to catholicism.

The paths of the Connellys first diverged when Cornelia chose to become a catholic in New Orleans, rather than waiting to be received into the church with Pierce in Rome. It is difficult to know how much to read into this difference but I think it shows that right from the outset the spiritual journeys of Pierce and Cornelia were far apart, in spite of their desire to walk together. There does not seem to have been any disagreement between Pierce and Cornelia over her reception, yet such an important piece of news was not included in Pierce's two letters to Nicollet written from New Orleans. (Joseph Nicollet's friendship and conversations about his catholic faith had been the initial impetus in setting the Connellys on their way towards the church.) As Nicollet would have rejoiced in hearing about Cornelia's reception such an omission seems very ungenerous and self-centred on Pierce's part. Maybe he felt uneasy or jealous about the simple whole-hearted way that Cornelia entered the church in contrast to his own more complex progress.

Cornelia's independent decision and Pierce's omission were significant pointers for the future. Nevertheless their married life was very happy and harmonious. Their expectations of each other dove-tailed. In particular Pierce had exactly the kind of wife he wanted; he had chosen extremely well. He wanted a help-mate at his side, beautiful, intelligent, well educated, cultured, capable and charming: and Cornelia was all this.

When Adeline was born, Pierce, instead of supporting Cornelia, was away at an ecclesiastical meeting where there was a possibility that he might have been chosen as the next bishop. So we might speculate: what if Pierce had stayed in the episcopal church? Would he have become a bishop and would Cornelia and he have led happy and fruitful lives as a bishop and his wife? Pierce would almost certainly have been happier within the episcopal church because the problems and tensions raised by his entry into the catholic church and into the priesthood exacerbated a deep-seated problem in his personality. Cornelia's presence was like a balm for Pierce and his insecurity was kept in check by her constant love and appreciation. His behaviour only deteriorated disastrously after his separation from Cornelia. She brought out the best in Pierce so it is not surprising that it took Cornelia time to realise the depth of his weakness.

At the root of Pierce's psychological problems was his relationship with his

mother. When Pierce reflected on the sins of his past life in preparation for his reception into the church, what caused him most sorrow was the failure of his relationship with his mother. He wrote and asked for forgiveness, "few [sins] lay heavier than those I have committed as a son, and mother, how much have I bitterly to remember."

Georges Cruchon SJ, psychologist at the Gregorian University in Rome, thinks Pierce's mother saw that her son was over-ambitious. His ambition may have been fanned by a feeling that he was being supplanted in his mother's love by his younger brothers, Henry, John and George. They all did well in later life but none of them was so well educated or so gifted as Pierce. When his father died in 1826 his mother must have looked to Pierce, the eldest, for financial support. George, the youngest, was only thirteen. Pierce was unable to help because although he had read law and been admitted to the bar in 1824 he was now studying for the episcopalian ministry; he was ordained in 1828.

This must have caused conflict and ill-feeling in the family. In a letter to his brother George in 1844 Pierce complained of his lack of influence and his feeling of being rejected by his family. John, the only member of his family to become a catholic, made it clear that his conversion was not due to Pierce, and that his wife came into the church through contact with Cornelia.

Pierce's disappointment at not being able to retain his mother's special love and the consequent anger, jealousy and bitterness may have been aroused again whenever he was criticised. So he tried to suppress such feelings by constantly hearing and feeling that he was a great success. He could only do this by striving to be outstanding and worthy of praise. Cornelia gave him the affirmation he needed and inspired his real goodness and generosity. Yet underneath there was a hidden agenda, the need to cover up his sense of failure and inadequacy. Cornelia knew that Pierce was upset by criticism and liked to feel important. "Dearest," she wrote in September 1835, "do not distress yourself about the alienation of any of your family. If you should rise they will bow down to you. If you do not, you have that within which they can neither give nor take." This, I think, was the challenge for Pierce: to be able to break through the psychological bonds of childhood to find his own inner strength. Otherwise mixed in with all that was good in him would be his need for praise. Praise came to him most satisfyingly when he was feeling important - doing important things in the eyes of important people. He was not aware of how crucial Cornelia was to him in this respect. Like many of his contemporaries he had a great admiration for status and title. He was a snob and his brothers criticised him for it.

Pierce's desire for notice and importance was not helped by the religious attitudes of the period. The rival christian denominations were delighted to attract converts from each other's ranks. The catholic church was very clerical and hierarchical and so a clerical convert brought special prestige. Pierce's conversion was particularly appreciated by catholics because it came at a time when the catholic church in North America was on the defensive against mounting anti-catholic propaganda. It was probably very difficult for Pierce to disentangle the still small voice of God from the natural feelings of pleasure at the attention and praise he received on his journey into the

church and later towards the catholic priesthood. An American missionary bishop wrote about Pierce at the time of his conversion, "No one has ever before exposed with such clarity and conciseness, the falsity of Protestantism and the necessity of an infallible church to direct us in our faith, than that great man. "

Pierce enjoyed the interest that important people in Rome, including Pope Gregory XVI, took in his reception into the church and possible vocation to the priesthood. When he received minor orders the pope sent a huge fish; Pierce must have felt overwhelmed and excited at how much his vocation was appreciated. He may have dreamed of vistas opening up, of the great things he would do for God in the church with Cornelia in the front row on the admiring side lines.

Pierce's time in Rome confirmed his attraction to the institution of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, which was at the heart of his conversion. Though he had come to the church searching for the truth, the danger was that Pierce would be caught by the glitter of the church and that his outward response would not be matched by an inner conversion of heart and deeper turning to God. Bishop Oti, Pierce's superior at Natchez, included Pierce's susceptibility to the splendour of the catholic church as a contributory factor in his decision to become a catholic, along with his loneliness at Natchez and his poor health.

In spite of Bishop Oti's comments, Pierce was probably at his happiest as an episcopalian minister in Natchez, for there he was able to combine a successful priestly ministry with a happy marriage. Was it with great courage that he let go of this, knowing that the catholic church did not permit such a combination, or was he not mature enough to understand the consequence of his actions? The struggle of his conversion harmed his health at Natchez.

The realisation of what he had lost by becoming a catholic was deferred until he returned to Natchez after his first visit to Rome. Now he was debarred from the priestly work to which he had felt especially called by God. He was not attracted to any other kind of work and had not relinquished his priestly vocation on leaving the episcopalian church. " The intention of my vows I never, never can forget. By my own desire, by my own consent I was forever separated from all pursuits and occupations inconsistent with the sacred character of an ecclesiastic: and the sincere purpose of my heart and of my act I have no wish, no thought to change," he declared in his farewell sermon at Natchez. There was an inherent ambiguity in Pierce's conversion to catholicism: how could he reconcile it with his dual call to the priestly ministry and to married life?

At first the problem was solved by Pierce giving up his priestly ministry. Cardinal Odescalchi advised him to remain a layman. And maybe this was what God wanted from Pierce - the sacrifice of his priestly vocation. Yet Pierce was not helped by the church to make such a sacrifice. In the nineteenth century the church was so clerical that there was no concept of a lay ministry and no way of being "important" in the church without at least being a priest. The Roman clerics did not recognise Pierce's episcopalian ministry as priesthood - it was merely working in a heretical church - but they knew he had lost his livelihood on becoming a catholic. Yet there was no

offer of a job for him in Rome to give him financial security or apostolic satisfaction. Instead he returned to Natchez to work as a bank clerk.

Then in the spring of 1838 came the offer of a job for Pierce teaching English in the Jesuit college at Grand Coteau. Both Connellys responded with great generosity, seeing in this offer the will of God for them. They readily accepted a lower standard of living, cramped housing conditions, isolation from family and friends and an uncomfortably hot and humid climate - all in striking contrast to the high society and excitement of Rome and the comfort of Natchez.

Family and friends testified to the joy and peace of Gracemere, the Connellys home at Grand Coteau, where husband and wife put into practice the ideal of the christian family with their children, playing and praying together. As Pierce wrote, " We and our small children have found in this solitude, sanctity and great happiness." And gradually daily contact with the Jesuits and the Sacred Heart community opened to both Connellys the ideals of religious life.

Here at Grand Coteau one of the most significant events of Cornelia's life occurred - the death of her son, John Henry. Pierce seems strangely absent from the suffering. Did he sit beside Cornelia as she held their dying child? I do not think there is any evidence to show how the event affected him. He would not have been as closely involved in bringing up and caring for his young children as his wife was, and he looked beyond the family home to find work and interest in life.

Teaching English to young boys was uncongenial to him, and he missed, probably acutely, his priestly ministry at Natchez and the excitement of Rome. His talents and ambitions were frustrated by the narrowness of life at Grand Coteau. Cornelia's spiritual journey enabled her to let go of family happiness if necessary. Was Pierce called to let go of his priestly vocation and of his desire for success and importance? Pierce's companions at the college were men who had given up everything to follow a priestly calling, which was then considered a much higher and more generous way of following Christ than the married state. In sacrificing Cornelia he could give this most precious gift to God, and by becoming a priest he could escape his present frustrations. He lamented that his domestic happiness was not the Royal Road of the Cross. Maybe Cornelia thought of Pierce when, years later, she wrote, " Take the cross He sends, as it is and not as you imagine it ought to be."

During his eight days retreat in October 1840 Pierce discerned that his true vocation was to become a catholic priest. This was only possible if Cornelia accepted the separation. With characteristic generosity she was ready to let Pierce go if that was truly God's will. Out of this death to self grew the Society of the Holy Child Jesus which Cornelia said was founded on a breaking heart as she sacrificed her natural happiness in permitting Pierce to break up their family and home.

But was this really God's will? Was Pierce able to discern properly or was he too caught up in his own desire to be able to have the indifference he needed to listen freely and follow God's will? He was once again caught up in the pattern of behaviour which at the time of his conversion to catholicism

had enabled him to blind himself to the costly sacrifice of his priestly ministry. This time he was sacrificing Cornelia in her special role as his wife. Once again he was compensated for any future loss by a present sense of well-being as he expressed his noble ideals and received notice and admiration. Maybe his desire for the priesthood had a certain dreamlike quality of something very much in the future, because at this time Cornelia once again became pregnant. Their unborn child was present and disregarded by Pierce as he asked for his freedom from Cornelia on October 13 1840.

There was much in his cultural and religious formation which encouraged Pierce to disregard the needs of his wife and his young children in the pursuit of what he perceived as a higher good. Legally in the nineteenth century women and children were a man's property. Pierce, a man of his time, had seen Cornelia's role as one of being ready to help him and follow his lead at whatever cost to herself. She had happily followed him to Natchez, to the catholic church and to Rome. Together they had come to Grand Coteau; now he was calling her to make another move for no less a motive than the glory of God.

After October 1840 Pierce's plans for the priesthood affected Cornelia deeply; they agreed to have no further sexual intercourse. From what Cornelia said later to Pierce in Derby she must have found this sacrifice much harder than he did. "No! you have not the violent temptations that I have in thinking of the little Bethlehem room [their bedroom at Gracemere], nor have you perhaps gone through the struggles of a woman's heart. No! you never have." She gave up the natural emotional satisfaction of being with him and watched him move away as he focussed his attention on his plans for the future.

On May 5 1842 Pierce left Cornelia at Grand Coteau and went to Rome to obtain ecclesiastical consent for his petition to be a priest. Mercer, aged nine, went with him, the first of the children to be taken from Cornelia by Pierce. Their family life at Gracemere was at an end.

Cornelia and Pierce were not only far apart geographically but also spiritually and emotionally. While Cornelia waited in silent prayerful attentiveness on God in preparation for the next stage of her life, Pierce arrived in England full of plans and excitement. He was in a hurry to have Cornelia in a convent so that he could get on with his priestly training. Yet he wanted Cornelia's convent near him, as he said in a letter, "on the same side of the Atlantic," so that they could make their parallel journeys through life in close contact with each other. Father Lythgoe, the English Jesuit provincial, advised Pierce to delay his entry into the Society of Jesus for three or four years. This would give him some time to provide for his children; also some further theological studies were "necessary in order to acquire the habit and feeling of a Catholic Priest". Pierce ignored this wise advice.

Instead he went to Rome to present his petition for marital separation to Pope Gregory XVI in April 1843. Cornelia had to be uprooted again so that she could come to Rome to give her consent. On March 15 1844 Pierce submitted a formal petition for the separation to the pope. It was granted the very next day along with permission for Pierce to receive minor orders. Papal approval swept away delaying obstacles. The speed with which the separation came about was unnerving for both Connellys. Pierce wrote to his brother John on March 17 that there had "seemed little chance of matters being brought to a

speedy conclusion and I had agreed to pass some years with Lord Shrewsbury, and Nelie with the Princess Borghese, but now within the last month the Father General and the Pope himself have approved of the thing and everything is determined."

On April 1 1844 Cornelia and Pierce signed the deed of separation. On April 9 Cornelia entered the Trinita. On April 10 Pierce received the tonsure and on May 1 minor orders. A year later, July 6 1845, Pierce was ordained a priest. Impeded by their generosity, neither Pierce nor Cornelia could check the speed of their separation. Pierce, after all his requests, could hardly back down; yet a sentence from his letter to John on March 17 seems to express an inner anxiety: "Indeed it is all a little uncertain, for who can tell how long he will be faithful and nothing but God's great grace will save one's courage from failing even at the last moment." The impulsive action of Gregory XVI apparently over-riding the process of careful discernment and preparation in Pierce's case can be seen as a contributory factor in Pierce's failure to persevere. The pope made a wonderful gesture in Rome but Pierce was left to grapple with the consequences in England.

Pierce needed the benefit of a careful formation and probably the security of religious life, neither of which he received. It is not clear when or why he decided not to join the Jesuits. Possibly he wanted to retain his freedom and continue seeing Cornelia (the Jesuit general, Father Roothaan, had criticised him for seeing her too frequently). Free access to Cornelia was more important to Pierce than trying his Jesuit vocation. If this is true it was a disturbing forewarning of the final disaster. Cornelia had misgivings about Pierce's ability to live out the sacrifice entailed in the priesthood; before his ordination she offered to return to him as his wife.

On April 271846 Cornelia wrote to Pierce's brother, John, that "Pierce is well and deeply engaged in the duties of ministry, instructing, preaching, hearing confessions etc etc. So you see it is not for nothing that I have given him to God. You may be sure this thought gives me much consolation." It was a short lived consolation, because in England inspite of a great need for priests there was no satisfying pastoral ministry for Pierce. If there had been, Pierce might have found happiness. He came to England as an assistant chaplain to Lord Shrewsbury and was based at Alton Towers. There he remained a foreigner, unaccepted and unwanted by the English bishops and clergy. It was not for this that he had sacrificed Cornelia, nor was this the priestly ministry that he had longed for. At his conversion the church in Rome had made a great fuss of him, but once he was ordained he had been dropped as someone no longer of much consequence. He was left to cope as best he could with the pain and emptiness of his loss. He was under-employed and frustrated, his energies and talents unused.

He found two ventures into which to channel his gifts, ventures which might bring him status and importance. Lord Shrewsbury was the hereditary Lord High Steward of Ireland and so was involved in Irish politics. Pierce, whilst knowing nothing about Ireland, set himself up as an authority on Irish Affairs; his interference was resented and unsuccessful. This was also the case with his other venture: to take on the role of co-founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. He would once more have his ex-wife close to him and

under his control, while he supervised her way of life. Such a solution would have been ideal from Pierce's point of view, but was firmly rejected by Cornelia.

Since their separation the opportunity to visit Cornelia was very important to Pierce. He had visited Cornelia at the Trinita once a week, and Frank and Adeline were there with her. All this was changed at Derby. Wiseman decided that Adeline and Frank should be sent away to school for the duration of Cornelia's noviceship, so the needs of their children could not be an excuse for Cornelia and Pierce to meet. Pierce was seen by the people who supported Cornelia at Derby as an embarrassment and an encumberance. The vestiges of her former marriage should be swept under the carpet, so she could be free, with an unsullied reputation, for her work as a foundress.

After the more liberal attitude in Rome both Connellys must have found it hard to adjust to the restrictive atmosphere in England. The catholic church in England was very much on the defensive against any protestant criticism. The scandal which might be derived from even a hint of impropriety in a convent was too much to risk. Robert Peel's grant of public money to the Irish Seminary at Maynooth in 1845 caused a public outcry of anger. So fear of scandal took precedence over the welfare of the Connelly family. Wiseman, as Cornelia's ecclesiastical superior, did not want Pierce to visit her. Both Cornelia and Pierce were strangers in a foreign country with all the stresses of starting again in a new place. They needed the support and friendship of each other.

The last time that Pierce and Cornelia met was strained and disappointing for both of them. On March 4 1847, Pierce arrived unannounced at Derby and Cornelia was ill at ease and reserved knowing that such a meeting was against Wiseman's wishes. Two days later Cornelia received a letter from Pierce, which is no longer extant, but which probably expressed his anger and hurt: in her reply Cornelia revealed that the passion of her feelings and sexual attraction for Pierce was still strong. For all his selfishness it had been a costly sacrifice for her.

Pierce saw Bishop Wiseman as his rival. In effect it was Wiseman's protection and help that enabled Cornelia to found the Society in Derby. He had the role Pierce wanted. It angered Pierce to have to ask Wiseman for permission to see his wife. He viewed Cornelia not as an independent person but as a member of the weaker sex, no longer controlled by him but by Wiseman and the English bishops. Pierce had a very possessive love for Cornelia. Wiseman, even if he had taken the trouble to treat Pierce well, which he did not, would have been a potential enemy. Pierce was probably unaware that his strong emotional attachment to Cornelia and his desire to continue to control and dominate her was incompatible with his role as a catholic priest. The bond of sexual relationship between a husband and wife had been cut since October 1840 but Pierce had not let go of his emotional need for Cornelia.

Bereft of the moderate, calming and sustaining influence of Cornelia, who had kept at bay his feelings of inadequacy and insecurity for so many years, he became more and more unbalanced and self-centred. With the habits of a life time he managed to justify all that he did, seeing God's will and high

motives in all that he wanted and planned to do. Above all he wanted to free Cornelia from Wiseman's clutches. When she made her vows on December 21 1847, Pierce feared that Cornelia had put herself irrevocably into Wiseman's power. The way to rescue her was to snatch away the children, so that their mother would come to look for them. Then freed from Wiseman's control, she could continue founding her Society elsewhere, rightfully under her husband's control. So on January 11-12 1848 Pierce 'kidnapped' Mercer, Adeline and Frank from their schools and took the two older children to the continent...

His plan failed. On 21 January Cornelia made a private vow "to have no further intercourse with my children or their father beyond what is for the greater glory of God and his manifest will known through my director." This was a drastic solution, maybe to stop her from following the impulse of her heart to rush off after her children and to get into controversy with Pierce. In the darkness of faith she gave her all to God, probably feeling bitterly betrayed by Pierce. His action may have rooted out of her heart the desire for any further intimate close relationship with him. She would however continue to care about him and to love him with a compassionate, forgiving love, remembering who he had been and grieving over the loss of that love which could have enriched both their lives which together they had consecrated to God.

Pierce was not going to let go of Cornelia; he had another way of interfering in her life. In Rome on February 10 1848 he presented his own constitutions for the Society. In the preface he poses as co-founder "de cette petite congregation que j'ai enfantée." Cornelia knew nothing about this until May when Pierce returned to England with a medal for her from Pius IX. The presentation of a papal gift provided an excellent excuse to visit Cornelia. Without waiting for Wiseman's permission Pierce travelled to Derby. Supported by Asperti Cornelia, in obedience to Wiseman, refused to see him, while he waited in hurt and anger for six hours in the parlour.

Pierce believed that this rejection was not Cornelia's free choice; he saw her as totally in the power of her ecclesiastical superiors. In a way Pierce was right. Cornelia's natural loving response would have been to go to him in spite of any personal hurt, but her obedience to Wiseman and her fidelity to her private vow prevented her. This is borne out in her letter of explanation to Lord Shrewsbury on June 16: "I should have preferred going on the same way with Mr Connelly, letting time clear up all things — But now circumstances have made it my duty to take a decisive step with him which will be more useful in the end tho' at the moment he will be wounded... You may imagine, my dear Lord Shrewsbury, how much all this costs my feelings." Though this is a very generous letter it nevertheless shows Cornelia becoming emotionally more detached from Pierce.

There is conflicting evidence about what actually happened during Pierce's last visit to Derby. His memories of that day were distorted by a fog of pain and anger, and he seems to have conveniently forgotten that he had taken away Cornelia's children and posed as co-founder of her Society. That visit to Derby became a turning point in Pierce's determination to get Cornelia back at any cost even if he had to go to the length of a court case. His resolve was

strengthened in December 1848 by her move from Derby to St Leonards where she was once more under Wiseman's jurisdiction.

On December 21 Pierce made his position quite clear to Lord Shrewsbury: "For my part *I am determined to go on* cost what it may. They may drive me into lay communion, they may drive me out of all visible communion - but Dieu et le droit and I will give up the one when I give up the other and not before. I do not even know if Cornelia is satisfied that I do not consider her a free agent and never will do so, nor hold communications with her until she is out of all control whatever - delivered from W[iseman], A[sperti], E[mily] B[owles] and the whole tribe of what I consider worse than infidels." According to the English lawyers who advised Pierce the only way to get Cornelia back was to sue for restitution of conjugal rights. Pierce was not interested in sexual domination. There is no evidence that he was ever interested sexually in any one apart from Cornelia. He would have been content to control her life in the convent but Cornelia herself as well as her ecclesiastical superiors refused this. Power was the problem for Pierce. At their conversion to catholicism the spotlight had been on Pierce, the clergyman. It had been the same when Pierce became a catholic priest, and Cornelia his wife, a mere appendage, had conveniently entered a convent. Now the focus had moved to Cornelia, the foundress, and Pierce was the one marginalised with no special role. He could not cope with the consequent feelings of powerlessness, loss and inadequacy. The same kind of experience which God had used to shape Cornelia into a saint provoked paranoiac behaviour in Pierce.

Lord Shrewsbury had a unique position vis à vis the Connellys. He spanned the gulf between their married life in Rome and their present situation in England. As their special friend he had appreciated their loving relationship as husband and wife and also their sacrifices in becoming catholics and following their vocations to the priestly and religious life. Now he cared about their broken relationship and the deterioration of Pierce's behaviour not just because of the scandal for the church but because of his compassion for the two of them caught up in this tragedy. Pierce was widely condemned by people who did not know him well or see any mitigating circumstances, but Lord Shrewsbury considered that Wiseman's attitude was a serious factor in the escalation of events towards the disaster of a court case. On Christmas day he wrote to Bishop Ullathorne, 'I must regret extremely that Bishop Wiseman has not acted more courteously as well as more considerately towards him [Pierce] - - I could not say less than that I consider Mrs C to have been very ill managed, and Mr C treated with a neglect and inattention at variance with the usages of polite life — It is indeed a sad business and though there can be no defence for Mr C's present conduct, I must say I do think he has very much to complain of, and that by a proper conciliatory course having been pursued towards him from the beginning by Dr W all this would have been averted.' Shrewsbury's solution was to suggest that Cornelia should be removed from Wiseman's jurisdiction, and Pierce given free access to her as he had had in Rome, which was more or less what Pierce had suggested to Ullathorne on December 6. However, Cornelia had told Pierce that he could see her only when he returned Adeline and he had not done so. Years later, Sister Aloysia,

who had been with Cornelia in Derby, said that Cornelia had told her that if she (Cornelia) had "acted upon her own judgement the evils that followed from what she was told to do would never have happened with regards to her family."

Even if satisfying pastoral work and free access to Cornelia could have averted or at least delayed the tragedy of Pierce leaving the catholic priesthood, there would have been inevitable friction. Pierce had failed to give up his dominion over Cornelia; her ecclesiastical superiors were his rivals; he needed her emotionally. Cornelia would have had to check his attempts to interfere in her life and in that of the Society. She expressed her awareness of this in a letter to Wiseman in January 1849, "Do you not see that Mr C has determined to break up our Order and ruin and upset the whole? He declared he would do this and he probably hopes that I may go to another convent to begin afresh *under him!*" She had hoped that "some other crochet ... would have caught his inclinations, and thus his thoughts of authority over us would have gradually died away."

Yet though there was never any outward reconciliation, Cornelia cared about Pierce and prayed for him all her life. In 1852 she asked Bishop Blanc to use his influence on Pierce and Mercer: "I know you may better understand the delusions Mr Connelly has fallen under than others, who never understood his character or comprehended the innocent affections, which he seems not to have had the strength and grace to overcome." Pierce fell through weakness rather than ill will. Cornelia showed a very compassionate, nonjudgmental attitude towards him. With great generosity she "offered to go on the missions to Japan (if Our Lord will let me) and perhaps our dear Lord may convert Pierce and bless the children."

For Pierce, probably Natchez was the time when he was happiest and closest to doing God's will. He recaptured something of that experience by once more becoming an episcopalian clergyman in Florence in the 1880s with Adeline replacing Cornelia at his side. Pierce is like the second class of men in the Ignatian Exercises who want to do the will of God in the way that suits them. At the heart of the Christian faith is the way of Christ through poverty and humility. Cornelia recognised that and went that way. Pierce did not, and came to disaster because of his excessive desire for success and power. Pierce's life illustrates the difficulties of discernment: where was God's will for him in his decision first to become a catholic and then a priest? Both decisions took Pierce out of his depth and started a chain of events which highlighted his fundamental weakness. Pierce's experiences raise questions about the nature of conversion, respect for other christian denominations and problems of clericalism.

AMONG VALIANT WOMEN
ANNE STEWART SHCJ

A few years ago, preparing for the History and Spirit Workshops, I became interested in the beginnings of the Society in America. In particular, the journey to America in 1862, on the *Scotia,* of those first six missionaries has become a symbol of hope for me, a symbol of what our future can hold. It was, I think, the ordinariness of those six women and yet their extraordinary openness to God's action in their lives that fascinated me. At the same time, as I began to get to know each one better, I realised that their lives ultimately took very different routes. Two died prematurely and in a way tragically and one left the Society. Yet for a few short years their bondedness as a group and their willingness to work together, became the foundation of the life of the Society in America. In very simply highlighting their individual lives I am also trying to highlight the transforming power within a group. I wanted to write about them as a tribute to their memory, but also as an encouragement to all "Nova Scotians" everywhere, who feel the Spirit blowing through our Society and our world, calling us to take the risk of breaking new ground, crossing new frontiers. I am reminded constantly of the words of St. Paul: "We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us."

Six SHCJ went to America in 1862. In this article I shall simply give short profiles of three of them and hope I can write about the other three at another time.

MARION MCKAY 1840-1910

Convent of the Holy Child Jesus
St Leonards on Sea

I wish to go to America with the SHCJ. My parents are dead and I have no guardian. My uncle lives in America and I have a sister there. Another aunt lives in England but she has no communication with me - and I wish to enter the Order there rather than to remain here.

Marion McKay July 28 1860

As much of what I could find about Marion McKay is factual information, it was hard to piece together much of a portrait of her as a person. Perhaps the simple facts of her life can speak eloquently enough for themselves.

Marion, according to a letter from Cornelia to Bishop Grant on July 4 1862, was twenty two and an orphan who had been several years in the Middle School at St Leonards. She appears to have taught music there and is referred to as a choir postulant when she joined the group going to the States in 1862. There seems to have been quite some discussion about her between Cornelia and Bishop Grant. In a letter to Cornelia, Bishop Grant wrote: "What you say of Miss McKay, makes me think it is inexpedient to receive her unless I have letters from parents who know her and proof that her fortune is adequate."

Cornelia apparently agreed to talk to Mr Searle about her. However we still find Cornelia in July 1862 begging Bishop Grant for leave to send Marion to the States. She did join the group, but there is little evidence about her on the voyage, except to her being "very ill". References to her are scant, but Mother Xavier Noble asked Bishop Wood to clothe Marion on September 29 1862 and she appears to have been professed on December 21 1865 at Sharon.

Mary Cornelia McKay is recorded as giving music lessons at St Leonards, Philadelphia in 1873, but we next find her in Neuilly in 1876. By July 9 1880, Marion is back in England, moving from St Leonards to London. Two years later, on August 20 1882, the Annals of Nottingham Place in London give the following information: "Priest from the Cardinal to see Marion McKay." This information is underlined and in a Register of Names it is stated that in August 1882 Marion McKay was dispensed from her vows. Whatever the reason for Marion's leaving, and I have not been able to discover it, she retained very close connections with the Society.

According to the Mayfield Diary, Marion was present at the death of Mrs Doyle, her aunt, who was a lady boarder at Mayfield, on February 23 1895. Marion herself then appears to have lived at Mayfield, because two entries in the diary for the same year tell us that Marion was ill and that on another occasion she took a trip to London. Finally the Annals recount her death and burial at Mayfield on April 16 1910. " On April 9 Miss McKay was anointed, but could not receive Holy Communion because she was unconscious. Our Lord took her to himself on April 16 RIP. The Requiem Mass and funeral took place on the 20th and she was laid in our cemetery, the same grave as Miss Granville. Dear Miss McKay had lived here at Mayfield since 1895 and had always been affectionately devoted and loyal to the nuns. Indeed we owe her a debt of gratitude as it was due to her in great measure, that her aunt, Mrs Doyle, was so generous to the Society. Both are to be considered as our benefactresses and so have a right to our prayers and suffrages."

ALOYSIA WALKER 1826-1892

I am very desirous to go to America and I am quite ready to remain there or to be sent where my Superior shall think proper at future times to send me. I am 36 years of age, my father is dead and my mother consents to my wishes.

July 28 1862 Sister Aloysia
M A Walker

I am quite willing that my daughter M A Aloysia Walker should go with the community to America.

M Walker Banford

Mary Anne Walker was the daughter of William Walker and Elizabeth Newman. She was born in Birmingham, and was received into the catholic church in December 1844. She was one of three postulants to accompany Cornelia to Derby and was clothed by Bishop Wiseman on Easter Monday 1847, only the second clothing in the Society. Aloysia was in Preston when Cornelia asked her to come to St Leonards to join the first group going to the States in 1862.

In Towanda Aloysia is mentioned as helping in the parochial school with needlework. She appears to have moved to Spring Garden Street in July 1863 and then to Sharon in 1864. There is a reference to her in the community in St Leonards, Philadelphia in 1873 and the note describes her as invalided. It gives as her responsibilities "Bazaar, Clothing Room, attends to Miss Reed." I found reference to her in Sharon in 1886, where in fact she died and was buried in 1892.

Some insights into Aloysia Walker are to be found in Recollections of her by Mother St Martin Cutmore. She recalls Aloysia's experiences in Derby and her deep loyalty to and love for Cornelia. Mother St Martin recounts that when Cornelia sent for Aloysia to go to America, she said to her, "I am sending you to my country while I remain in yours," giving her to understand that she fully appreciated the pain which such separation was bound to give. Mother St Martin gives some space to Aloysia's early life in the Society, no doubt because what she brought to the group going to the States was not only her close companionship with Cornelia, but also the experience of those first, difficult days in Derby. Mother St Martin wrote, "They [people like Aloysia] were the foundation stones of the Society... Sister was of that number and remained staunch and true whilst many around her were either scandalised or fell away." In another set of recollections Sr Marion Daly said that Aloysia enjoyed telling stories of the early days and her ties with that history must have contributed much to the little group, perhaps particularly during the hardships of Towanda. In a rather poignant note Marion Daly made another interesting observation about Aloysia: "Changes are always painful; she not only left her home and country but the many alterations in the Rule, added to the uncertainty, must have pressed heavily on one who was singularly faithful and true."

Apparently Aloysia had very poor health all through her life. Mother St Martin says she was unable to take any other food than that given to babies and invalids. She seems to have coped well despite the lack of variety in diet. Aloysia herself often spoke to others about her confidence in Cornelia and of how Cornelia kept them going when she wondered how they would get along. Aloysia appears to have been someone who probably helped the group to keep going when things must have seemed impossible.

There is one part of Mother St Martin's Recollections that I think bears quoting because at the heart of it is something of the struggle that I feel Aloysia must have had in her life and which in some measure must be part of the birth of something new. Mother St Martin is speaking about the Rule. "She (Aloysia) had to listen to adverse criticism of that Mother whom she loved and trusted so wholeheartedly. She saw those who should have stood by her, falling off and taking the side of her opponents and in the confusion and doubt which followed she knew not where to turn for light and direction. Pure oblations, hidden lives of prayer and abnegation, silent, unwavering heroism build up God's works on earth. Among this group of valiant women who have run their course and gone to their rewards stands Sr Aloysia."

LUCY IGNATIA NEWSHAM 1838-1869

I desire to go to America and I am quite ready to remain there, or to be sent where my Superiors shall think proper at future times to send me. I am 24 years of age and quite beyond the control of guardians though my parents have willingly consented to my wishes.

There is a letter of consent from Richard and Alice Newsham dated July 27 1862 and also a very touching letter from her parents to Ellen written on the same day: "Your mother and I must and do feel your leaving England to go to America but as we have given you to Almighty God we can with pleasure make that sacrifice for so good a purpose. We feel greatly obliged to dear Reverend Mother for sending us your photograph for she could not have sent anything that we should have prized more. Your mother went to Mass at St Walburge's at 11.00 and she met M. Lucy who came home with her to look at your photograph which she took with her to the convent to let the sisters look at it."

Ellen Newsham was born in Preston and through her contact with the Society became a student at the Training College at St Leonards. She entered the Society and was clothed in 1857. Ellen made her vows in 1859 and became second prefect in the Holy Child School in St Leonards. She joined the group going to America in 1862 as Assistant to Mother Xavier Noble. Lucy Ignatia accompanied Xavier Noble to Towanda after the arrival of the group in America. In July 1863 she moved to Spring Garden Street. In 1867 Lucy Ignatia and Xavier Noble went to England to see Cornelia, a difficult visit because of some misunderstandings between Cornelia and Xavier Noble. Lucy Ignatia died in 1869 at St Leonards, Philadelphia and is buried in Sharon. It has to be said that the deprivations and stressful conditions of those early years took their toll on members of that first group. Lucy Ignatia was only 31 when she died of consumption on January 17 1869.

There are many references to Lucy Ignatia which give some idea of her lively and courageous personality. Her letters from the *Scotia* are amusing and frank and display an openness and simplicity that seems to have been a source of strength in the group. She seems to have had the ability to keep a sense of humour and she certainly found a bottle of wine helped to keep her going on the *Scotia.* In fact when Xavier Noble was so sick on the ship she brought her a bottle of sherry to "strengthen her" and she noted that she really was the better for it! At the same time she wrote from the *Scotia:* "The strangest thing is to find ourselves so happy without the least fear of death or of anything of the kind."

Lucy Ignatia's comments about Bishop Wood whilst on board the *Scotia* suggest quite a shrewd person. She thought him "awfully sharp," if most interesting and amusing. "He tries to catch us in every way," she wrote and "Every time there is an opportunity he tries to give us a knock." Relations with Bishop Wood were strained and indeed led ultimately to some difficulties between Cornelia and Xavier Noble. It seems evident though that Lucy Ignatia was a great support to Xavier Noble and I wonder if she did not sometimes have the gift of lightening a situation.

In general Lucy Ignatia seems to have had a warm personality. In Towanda

she and Agatha Deacy were the two who literally went out looking for pupils for the School For Young Ladies they hoped to start and she certainly went begging for money for the Sharon foundation. Her enthusiasm and energy were obviously important. The Annals of those first years say: "She...helped so energetically to draw closer the bond of union between us."

I found a comment on her life by Mother Francis Bellasis. It does not quite fit my own impression of her, except in some respects, but it bears quoting: "Mother Lucy Ignatia was of a gentle disposition. Her ornament was that of a meek and quiet spirit and she won all hearts by her untiring kindness and thoughtfulness for others. She spoke little and was rarely heard to raise her voice. Her peculiar virtue was peace and her life was modelled on the Hidden Life of Nazareth." Lucy Ignatia does not seem to me to have been afraid to speak her mind, but I think her care for others and willingness to stand back and reflect must have helped to hold the group together during some quite critical times.

Even with such brief sketches it is possible to see how different each of these three women was. The other three women in the group only add to the picture. Agatha Deacy was 27 when she joined the group and ultimately went on to found the first Holy Child community in the west, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Her writings from those early days give a lovely insight into the spirit that animated the group. Xavier Noble, who was the leader, is a fascinating woman whose story needs to be told at some length. She was recalled to England in 1876, on Bishop Wood's orders, in what proved to be a condition of terminal brain cancer. Josephine Kearn, the sixth member of the group, was a Londoner who appears to have been a capable and resilient person. Somehow it is the combination of their different personalities and skills and above all their shared vision and commitment to the founding of the Society in America that cast the first spark. In fact they did not have long together; the group soon had to split up, as need arose. I believe though that the journey on the *Scotia* and those early painful months in Towanda cemented their unity and their hope. Four of the group were in their twenties and the eldest was 35, a fact that I feel highlights Cornelia's great trust in their ability to learn from their experience and believe in the dream she must have conveyed to them with deep passion.

In concluding this part of the story of those first SHCJ who went to the States, I remembered a quotation from Cornelia: "I wish with all my heart I had five hundred to take over to America this year... if only you knew the wants of a vast and new country your heart would warm with zeal." My thought was that she never did have five hundred, but six was quite enough! I feel there is a message for us there.

ANGELICA CROFT SHCJ 1839-1902

(Drawn from the Memoirs of Clare Hadfield, Teresa Walton, Theophila Laprimaudaye and M St Peter Ennis in the Mayfield Archives)

Claire Murphy SHCJ

ANNE Croft, the third of six children, was born in Liverpool on 22 March 1839 and baptised at Great Crosby. Her father, Henry, died when she was seven and the following year brought the death of her mother, Anne Sudlow, a convert. Not surprisingly Annie retained all her life a great fear of death, and showed a constant concern for motherless children.

The six young Crofts went to live with their father's brother at Heysham Hall on Morecombe Bay and Annie often spoke with affection of their early life there. When she was eleven Annie was sent to a convent school at Courtray in Belgium with her younger sister, Agnes. But early in 1854 Emily Bowles SHCJ acquired Rupert House in Liverpool and Mr Croft brought his two young nieces back to school there. Some weeks later Cornelia Connelly arrived on visitation and was struck by the delicate appearance of the two girls. She got permission to take them with her to the clearer air at St Leonards. On the journey south Annie was greatly impressed by Cornelia's kindness and spirit of prayer.

The sisters at St Leonards described Annie, then sixteen years of age, as bright, high-spirited, full of common sense, self-reliant, with very strong affections and devoted to her sister. She spent two years as a pupil at the school and towards the end of her second year Cornelia asked her if she wished to be a nun. 'Certainly not,' came the reply. 'You will pray, will you not?' persisted Cornelia. Annie prayed and struggled but when she was hooded in the autumn of 1856 she said peace returned to her. That same day Cornelia remarked, 'That child has come to take my place.' In her memoirs Mother Mary Theophila Laprimaudaye wrote "Mother Foundress took the deepest interest in her young life, and contrary to her usual course of action encouraged her entrance into religion without passing through the ordeal of the world and its temptations."

On December 6 Annie was clothed by Bishop Grant and given the name Angelica. As a novice Sister Angelica was noted for her spirit of self-sacrifice and her kindness to all. Her gift for exercising authority was used on several occasions when she was sent for to restore order in the school. There were only thirty children in the school at this time and one of them was her sister, Agnes. On January 13 1859 at the age of twenty Angelica made her first profession and was appointed to the St Leonards school.

Cornelia continued to have great confidence in Angelica and soon appointed her Prefect of the school, a post she held for seven years. She proved remarkably competent, had talent for administration and obeyed Cornelia to the letter. She is reported to have been demanding yet encouraging with the mistresses, and firm, kind and just with the children.

It was Angelica, together with Cornelia, who took the children on the famous picnic to Mayfield on Whit Tuesday May 26 1863. Two years later on the feast of the Assumption Angelica played the harmonium at the first mass celebrated in the restored Synod Hall. A community of five sisters had come to live at Mayfield where a group of orphans were already established in the Villa. While still at St Leonards Angelica received on the same day news of her sister Agnes' death and that of her brother Richard. Her grief we are told was 'indescribable'. She herself was threatened with consumption and all her life struggled on with zeal and energy despite constant ill health. She was small, a little over five feet in height and of slight build. One sister recalled her at this time, "It was in the autumn of 1866 that I first saw Sister Angelica, who was the Prefect of the school at St Leonards. My parents were looking for a school in England, and having heard much about St Leonards, they came over from Ireland to see the Convent. They were simply fascinated by Sister Angelica; they thought her very young for so great responsibility, but at the same time they could not help seeing the power hidden under the fragile exterior. She was the first religious they had ever seen, and they always spoke of her in after years as 'one too good to be shut up within the four walls of a Convent.' With her personality they thought she would have been able to save many souls in the world!"

In 1867, when she was twenty eight, Angelica became superior at Mayfield. There is no record of the following year, but it would seem that she was ill as we find her recuperating at St Leonards. In August Cornelia transferred the novitiate to Mayfield and on the 12 November Angelica returned there to take up her duties as superior and novice mistress. Renewed in health Angelica proceeded to have the grounds of the Old Palace laid out and she also managed the 120 acre farm.

Reports show that Angelica was always interested in her pupils, treated them with calm and affection, and remained a friend for life. The same is recorded of her relationship with the convent workers for whom she always showed consideration. With the sisters in residence the Mayfield convent became a regular place of call for the poor and again we are told Angelica received them with sincere respect and was concerned for their needs. However, accounts go on to say that she knew also how to deal with church authorities. She is described as having great moral strength, determination and courage. She was well read and seems to have been a good conversationalist. Her novices stressed the moral strength Angelica had, her fine intellectual powers, and say she was extremely good at giving encouragement and help, even protection when needed.

There appears another gap in information relating to Angelica for the year 1873. It has been suggested that she had a serious break-down in her thirties and that the effects lasted throughout her life. We constantly hear of her struggle with bronchitis and another unnamed illness. It is probably at this time that one of only three letters from Cornelia to her which have survived was written. Half the letter is missing, including the date, but in tone it is personal; Angelica is ill and Cornelia fears the very reading of the letter may tire her. Cornelia ends by saying she is 'half envious of the perfect freedom from thought which you are forced to submit to'.

The following year Cornelia recalled Angelica to St Leonards to be her Assistant. Angelica found it hard to leave Mayfield just when the school was established and the buildings finished. Of her seven years at Mayfield, two are left unrecorded.

In August of this same year, 1874, the First General Chapter of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus was held at St Leonards. Cornelia was elected Superior General; she was sixty-five. Angelica, now thirty-five, was elected an Assistant General and Vicaress. A month later she was appointed novice mistress to the second year novices at St Leonards. To these responsibilities were added the offices of secretary general and treasurer. We are told she was of especial help to Cornelia in business matters. Within a short time, Angelica was relieved of the office of novice mistress and appointed superior at St Leonards instead.

When the three convents in Preston were amalgamated in 1875, Cornelia sent Angelica to stay with the sisters and comfort them in this 'most trying transition period'. Then in November 1876, together with Agnes Orr, Angelica was sent by Cornelia to Rome to continue the negotiations on the Rule, and there she became ill with fever. They returned to England in the January without any positive results. That spring Angelica's health broke down once more and she is reported as 'suffering in mind as well as body'.

Marie Therese Bisgood when writing of Cornelia refers to this period, pointing out that Cornelia was herself ill and therefore all the more concerned about Angelica, who was not well enough to attend the Chapter of 1877. Cornelia had prayers offered for Angelica in all the convents for "I cannot spare Mother Angelica," she said. "She must take my place when I am gone." This Chapter was the very painful one at which the sisters expressed their disapproval of Bishop Danell's Rule. Cornelia was re-elected Superior General and Angelica her Assistant.

Mother Teresa Walton in her Memoirs records that in early 1878 Cornelia, anxious to save the work in Neuilly, sent her 'right hand', Angelica, to be superior. Angelica was fluent in French and with the help of some French priests she succeeded in reopening the school with an enrollment of thirty pupils. Maria Josefa Carter described Angelica as a good organiser, hardworking and a devoted teacher. She taught French grammar, gave weekly conferences to the Children of Mary, and arranged excursions to places of historical interest. She also exhausted herself with housework. One sister recalled Angelica coming to her and saying, "I . cannot use both my head and my body. I find it will not do. I *must* use my *head* - so I will get you a girl to help you."

The year 1879 was to prove another difficult one for Angelica. In March a French boarder, Laura Marquess, became very ill with typhoid. By April Cornelia was dying, and Angelica had to make a choice between answering the summons to St Leonards or remaining with her very sick charge. In the event she arrived too late to be with Cornelia at her death and this led to rumours in the Society that she was not caring of Cornelia. Angelica was now Vicar General; Theophila Laprimaudaye recalled that the whole Society felt Angelica would be the next Superior General and so gave her loyal allegiance as Vicar. In May word came of little Laura's death.

The ever growing strength of anti-religious feeling in France obliged Angelica to return to Neuilly. The government again wanted to close the school; however, an old St Leonards girl, the Duchess Caracciola, persuaded the French authorities to accept the English Teacher's Certificate. The situation continued to remain uncertain until Mlle Geraldy who had the Brevet' became Directrice of the school.

Meanwhile it was time for the Society to prepare for its Third General Chapter. On August 6 1880 Angelica was unanimously elected second Superior General of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus; she was 41. Though obviously concerned with the overall direction of the Society, Angelica was still interested in the individual sister. Towards the end of the year, she wrote to a sister in Paris asking her to write regularly in French so that Angelica could mark her progress in the language.

In May 1881 the General Council voted to open a house on the Hagley Road in Birmingham. Bishop Ullathorne welcomed the sisters and Cardinal Newman celebrated the opening mass. The sisters struggled for four years but the number of pupils remained too few and it was decided to close this Angelica's first foundation. The bishop who had been a good friend to the community expressed much regret when they withdrew.

Angelica made her only visit to the States in September 1885, accompanied by Rita Bethell and St Raphael Thompson. On arriving in New York they were met by Walburga White and taken to Sharon. Angelica was very impressed by the spirit of the American communities and the sisters' faithfulness to their spiritual duties. In the States the SHCJ had always lived by Cornelia's Rule as Mother Walburga, the provincial, had never introduced Bishop Danell's Rule. The sisters in America were therefore unaware of the tension and strains in the European houses. Another bout of bad health prevented Angelica from visiting Cheyenne so Rita and Walburga went there without her. Ill health would continue to prevent Angelica from visiting the States again, and in future she had to send others. Returning to England, the travellers were warmly welcomed back to Mayfield where during the previous three years Angelica had made great improvements. Pugin had designed the cloister, added utility rooms and restored the gate house.

Accounts of Angelica at this time state that she literally spent herself for the welfare of the Society. She placed absolute trust in the nuns and gave them full liberty in the discharge of their offices. She once said, "I never give a sister an office and then clip her wings. I leave her free to do her duty, but expect her to give me an account of it." The writer added that Angelica had taught the spirit of Cornelia; and someone else recalled how, "She often said that few women can delegate their power to another - they want to do everything themselves".

Angelica used to tell of a Jesuit who when in office made a serious mistake. Speaking to his superior he said, 'You can never trust me again.' 'On the contrary,' came the response, 'you have learnt what will render you cautious and careful in the future, and are therefore the more to be trusted.' When a sister ordered tons instead of hundred-weights of soap and then left unread the query into such a large order, Angelica said, 'Well I sympathise with you. I made a similar mistake when I began to manage affairs, but it has made me

very careful. Now, see what can be done to remedy the matter.'

We are told that Angelica was strict about poverty for herself and encouraged the sisters to live out their poverty through hard work. She used to say, 'Diligence is an off-shoot of poverty of Spirit, for if we really consider ourselves to be *poor-women,* we shall *work hard* like poor women.' She wore patched and darned clothing and, like Cornelia, often sewed as she talked. She would say to the clothing sister, 'Give me something easy,' and then would stitch away on a duster while listening to a sister. Often she took a long stick and unblocked the gutters to prevent the water causing unnecessary damage.

Though thrifty she was liberal. In winter she had extra soup made in the kitchen and asked for it to be given out with bread to the poor. A sister whose duties kept her working outdoors never forgot Angelica's kindness in getting her snow boots and checking they were strong enough. Other accounts tell of Angelica noticing the needs of the young professed and doing something about them. Sisters remembered how as young professed they looked forward to the midday recreation when they drew Angelica in her wicker chair down to the brook. For Wednesday afternoon reading she provided Dickens, Thackeray, *The Month* etc. Like Cornelia she preached 'Fidelity, fidelity' plus a spirit of dependence on superiors, but added, "Do not trouble superiors in matters in which we should use our common sense."

The Fourth General Chapter of the Society opened at Mayfield in July 1886 and Angelica was re-elected Superior General. There was a unanimous vote to send sisters to Rome to continue negotiations on the Rule, and the General Council was empowered to accept or NOT the results of the Roman visit. When the telegram informing of Approbation of the Rule eventually arrived at Mayfield during dinner, the portress took it straight to Angelica. The meal continued in silence, but once in the cloister Angelica broke the good news.

On Epiphany morning 1888 all the sisters renewed their vows using the new formula and for the first time the crosses were given to the finally professed. After the ceremony at Mayfield Angelica sat on a window ledge in the cloister and when one sister remarked, 'Now we are grafted on to Peter's barque,' Angelica replied, 'Yes – indeed we are – thanks be to God.' She gave each sister a card on which were the words, 'I will sing the mercies of God throughout Eternity'. There was a delay in issuing the official document because of the death of Father Gualdi SJ who had been working for the sisters in Rome. All the necessary documentation was in his room and had to be sorted. Finally on May 13 the legal approval arrived, back-dated to 7 August.

On August 23 1889 Angelica wrote to each house of the Society (in her own hand) informing the sisters of a new regulation. To those at Mark Goss she wrote:

> My Dear Mothers and Sisters, … To keep up the spirit of Detachment taught by our Holy Rule, it has been settled that the sisters are not to go out of the convent to visit their relatives. I hope you will all be comforted and strengthened by the retreat. Asking your prayers …

In another letter written on the same day she added, "We religious are worse than seculars if we do not strive constantly to keep our hearts and minds 'on high'. This life of faith is fed by prayer and fidelity to grace." And

to an individual sister she wrote, "You say you are willing to make the sacrifice of seeing your cousin, and I am glad, for I could not have given you the permission to go to the north to see her. It is true some of the sisters have been allowed lately to visit their Mothers and other relations but, for good reasons, such permissions will not be given any more. Make your act generously, and God will bless you and your cousin." In the light of documents written after the death of Angelica it may be queried whether these restrictions came from Angelica's interpretation of the Rule or if they were insisted on by her Council.

The Fifth General Chapter of the Society held in August 1892 saw Angelica again re-elected Superior General. Out of this Chapter came a decision that for the next six years on the anniversary of Cornelia's death mass was to be offered for her in each house of the Society.

That October Angelica went on visitation to St Leonards. On the way there she caught a cold which developed into bad bronchitis and she had to remain at St Leonards till the following March. During her stay she worked on the rule preparing it for the Final Approbation which was given by Pope Leo XIII on May 20. When the news reached Mayfield on June 10 Angelica felt the greater part of her life's work had been accomplished. In the years that remained to her, pressure seems to have been building up for her to correct 'abuses'. In reply to complaints from an old friend in the north she wrote, "Of course I do not understand certain allusions you make in your letter. If there is anything I ought to know, you must tell me. I have visited the Convents for thirteen years so I know pretty well the interior of each. If it is the matter of difference of age, character and consideration due for one another, that must and will always go on, for wherever we are some people will try us."

Cardinal Vaughan now asked Angelica to train teachers for secondary education, and she planned to send sisters to the Training College in Cambridge. Miss Hughes was willing to receive religious but her committee would not permit the habit in the lecture halls, so Sisters Raphael Paley and Mary of Assisi Bethell went to Bedford College, London instead.

Meanwhile Mayfield had always been the junior school for St Leonards, an arrangement the parents were no longer happy with as they wanted their children to remain together. Angelica therefore decided that the juniors should continue on at Mayfield and St Leonards should start its own junior school. In 1895 Mrs Doyle, an invalid and boarder at the Villa, died leaving most of her fortune to Angelica. With the money Angelica had Pugin demolish the Villa and build the present school.

This was the Golden Jubilee Year of the Society so all the superiors and sisters who had entered during the first ten years of the Society were invited to Mayfield for the feast of the Assumption. Mother Maria J Buckle was the oldest jubilee guest and with Mother Martha was one of the only two who had been with Cornelia in Derby. Towards the end of dinner Mother Gonzaga Snow read an address to Angelica saying that achieving the Approbation of the Rule was the greatest blessing of her term of office. Angelica responded by recalling the work done by Cornelia. After the celebrations that same month Teresa Walton and Aloysius Radcliffe left Mayfield for Harrogate to find a suitable house. They were given £200 and told to buy good bedding for

the sisters. While searching they stayed in lodgings and Angelica wrote to them daily except on September 6 when she had an operation in a nursing home in London.

In May 1897 the new school building at Mayfield was opened. It was connected to the old buildings by an arched bridge which Angelica named the Bridge of Praise in order to instill a sense of reverence and silence in the children as they crossed over it on their way to chapel. Carved on stone were the words 'Laudate Pueri Dominum'.

This was the time of the boer war and we are told it aroused strong national feelings in Angelica. Despite her usual calmness she had a highly-strung temperament quickly inclined to anger when roused. Perhaps with age this tendency became more pronounced. Still the SHCJ accounts of Angelica at this time continue to speak of her great sympathy for and interest in the young religious and their parents. To the young professed she would say, "I'm old now and I want *your views* on the subject." On Wednesday mornings the young sisters went to her room for spiritual instruction and each month they received from her their 'permissions' and were examined on the Rule. By all accounts these visits were much appreciated.

Angelica's prayer seems to have become more and more simple; she said she never prayed for anything save God's Will. It was her custom to pray the rosary aloud with another sister and like Cornelia she had had a firm faith in the dolour rosary and the strong novena. Once when found by a young sister praying alone in church and asked for guidance on how to pray Angelica said, "I have been saying over and over again, 'Lord help me, Lord help me'."

On August 1 1898 Francis Bourne, Bishop of Southwark, opened the Sixth General Chapter of the Society. Angelica was once again re-elected Superior General, with Agnese Ingram, Rita Bethell, Gonzaga Snow and Clare Hadfield as General Assistants. When the voting was over the bishop immediately closed the Chapter, apparently giving no explanation for its abrupt ending.

Towards the end of 1900 she wrote to a sister, "You say you are in your 75th year, and I am in my 61st - we are neither of us young; and truly life seems to have flown, and to be flying. You cannot expect to be so ready for work as in days gone by - no one is - but you worked when you were able and it is all treasured up!" With advancing years Angelica was less able to accept criticism. She could be abrupt and forthright in speech, yet anxious to make amends if she heard she had hurt another. "I learned better as I advanced in age, for I found it was not always wise to say out the whole truth, and often did more harm than good," she once confessed.

By March 1901 Angelica was 62 and into the last year of her life. When a sister said one day that if she were soon to die she would like some time to put herself in readiness, Angelica remarked, 'I have done all that long ago'. Another sister reports that "For about a year, she had often spoken of her death, and her great desire to resign her office of Superior General, saying she did not feel equal to the work, adding that if she could not do her duty properly and go the round of the convents, she ought not to remain in office." Another account tells that Angelica said one day, "I think I shall not live long now, for what I set myself to do when they put the Office of Superior General on me, is done. There is no more for me to do. If those who come after, will

govern *by the Rule* all will be well."

During this year Mary Agnese Ingram died; she had entered the Society in 1857, a year after Angelica. She was among the second band of sisters sent to the USA where she was superior and novice mistress. She was recalled to England in 1881 to be a General Assistant and was appointed novice mistress at Mayfield, an office she held for twenty years right up to her death. A month before her death, when she could no longer move her legs she was taken from the novitiate to the infirmary at the request of Angelica. The doctor said she was worn out and it would take time for her to pull through. There was no mention of her imminent death, and a week later she was able to sit out in an easy chair. Then Agnese suddenly became worse and the Last Sacraments were administered. In a letter dated May 23 Angelica wrote, "I hope that Mother Mary Agnese may pull through this sad illness. It has been an anxious time here but we must look forward to better things." The next day Agnese died. She was the same age as Angelica and had spent 44 years in the Society. She had usually accompanied Angelica on visitation or was sent in her stead. We are told Angelica loved her especially for her loyalty. A month later Angelica wrote, "If we had looked round we should have thought that Mother Mary Agnese was almost the last of our Mothers we could do without, and yet God has seen fit to take her to her eternal reward! You all know how diligently she worked, and may have had special proofs of her devotedness and zeal. She died as she had lived, a model of piety and resignation and full of joy and fervour!" After Agnese's death Angelica's health declined rapidly.

During Angelica's time as General the Society expanded from 190 to 405 professed and from ten to sixteen convents. But there were also signs of stagnation and her constant efforts to improve the qualifications of the sisters seems to have produced small results.

On the doctor's advice, Angelica with her infirmarian spent two weeks in September resting in Eastbourne. But in January an epidemic of influenza broke out in Mayfield and Angelica became very ill. With devoted nursing she rallied for a few weeks but on February 12 after a long day of suffering she died at 7pm. She was buried at Mayfield facing the entrance to the cemetery and directly in front of Cornelia. The phrase most associated with her, 'I will sing the mercies of the Lord throughout Eternity', was carved on her stone. Six days later Rita Bethell sent out the following announcement, "You will be pleased to hear that a Dole of 63 loaves and 63 shillings will be given to the poor tomorrow for the repose of the soul of our late much loved Mother General."

Such is the life of Angelica Croft as I have gleaned the facts and impressions from the biography written by Clare Hadfield in 1913, and from the Memoirs of Theophila Laprimaudaye, Teresa Walton and De Chantal Ross. All four were obviously devoted to Angelica. In recent years it has been asked whether Angelica needed people to be dependent on her in order to bring out her great qualities of caring, encouragement and support for others. Perhaps sisters who were not as dependent, who questioned decisions, who carried out their offices efficiently without the need of her support may have proved a threat to Angelica.

There is another document written by Mother Mary St Peter Ennis in 1955

which discusses Angelica's relationship with Francis Bellasis to whom M St Peter was devoted. In their early years in the Society Angelica and Francis had worked happily together as first and second prefect and first and second novice mistress, but they were never 'friends'. Francis was whole-heartedly devoted to Cornelia. Angelica 'loved' the Society, and was influenced by those who believed that the Society would never prosper so long as Cornelia with her strange history was at its head. Angelica felt relief when Cornelia died.

In 1886 Angelica as Superior General sent her councillors, Rita Bethell and Francis Bellasis, to Rome to negotiate the approbation of the Rule. Rita fell ill so that most of the work with the consultors was done through Francis and this continued even when Rita recovered. After returning to England Francis felt a marked change in Angelica's attitude towards her and put it down to something Rita must have reported. While both were on visitation at St Leonards Francis knelt by Angelica in choir and begged to be told what she had done to offend. The answer she got on this and other occasions was, 'Nothing! It's all your imagination.'

The Chapter of 1892 appointed Francis as Monitress General. Angelica's health had deteriorated seriously and she could no longer cope with the work of the Society; disorders accumulated, representations were ignored and so the sisters turned to the monitress. When Francis tried to present their cases her interference was resented.

As the Chapter of 1898 approached Francis consulted two Jesuits who both advised that if Angelica were re-elected Francis should refuse to accept office as councillor or monitress. She asked the sisters not to vote for her, but when Angelica was re-instated as superior general, the delegates went on to vote for Francis as first councillor and monitress. Francis rose, entered the sanctuary, knelt before the bishop and asked to speak to him privately. They withdrew, and the bishop was sympathetic. On returning he asked the sisters to vote again as Mother Mary Francis could not accept the office.

Mother St Peter wrote that after the Chapter the delegates realised they had made a mistake in re-electing Angelica, that she was quite unequal to the work and would not delegate her authority. Her health deteriorated and sisters were unable to get past her devoted infirmarians. Clare Hadfield was in charge and her team were determined Angelica should not be distressed. It was well meant, but after Canon Croft had visited his sister he said to the infirmarians, "You have spoiled what would have been a fine woman but for you."

The Chapter of 1898 had elected Agnese Ingram as monitress, and the nuns now appealed to her to get the disorders remedied. Like her predecessor she tried to make representations tactfully to Angelica, but this caused a serious breach between them .

Angelica's necrology (re-written in the 1960's) sums up the life of Cornelia's 'right hand':

Throughout her life of service to the Holy Child, Reverend Mother fully justified the confidence placed in her by Reverend Mother Foundress and the Society. She had the natural endowment of a remarkably integrated character - firm, just and wise, with an excellent judgment and a gift of broad interpretations of motives and events. On the other hand, she was great-

ıearted and understanding, and until her failing health largely removed her rom contact with the community, she showed the kindest and most practical nterest in the details of the welfare of those under her care. In the matter of he Rule, which she guided to a happy conclusion, Bishop Ullathorne was mmensely impressed by her outstanding prudence.

It was also due to her initiative that immediately after Reverend Mother oundress's death, steps were taken to collect information about her life with ı view to a biography when the time should be propitious.

Reverend Mother Angelica's natural gifts were sanctified by a deep and olid spirituality which gave her a great influence over others. She had an ntense love of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament which showed itself in a pirit of prayer and her care for the beauty of God's house. As Superior eneral, she was made a pattern to the flock from the heart, and often leclared that she would give her whole life and being for the welfare of the ociety.

ONTRIBUTORS

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