

The legislative work of Fr. Arnold Janssen as the Founder of the Missionary Congregations

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Introduction

This study intends to present the efforts of Fr. Arnold Janssen, the Founder of the Divine Word Missionaries (1875) to provide his foundation with a good Rule and its final Church approval. Fr. Arnold Janssen worked for more than 35 years to give his missionary congregations a sound and solid foundation. In his legislative work, he managed to produce six different “Rules” for the Society: Statutes of 1876; February Rule of 1885; September Rule of 1885; Rule of 1891, Rule of 1898 and Rule of 1905. In addition, he laboured to create the Rule for the Mission Sisters (1891).

In what follows, the Founder’s legislative work will be traced descriptively throughout the six different ‘rules’ in order to show his efforts to implement the charisma and to meet the growing demands of the missionary calling.

The First draft of Statutes on 5 August 1875

The legislative activity of Fr. Arnold can be traced back to a time even before the founding of the Mission House at Steyl on 8 September 1875. The 1876 "Statutes" of the Mission House had their antecedent in his first attempt at drawing up Statutes on 5 August 1875¹. On that day, Fr. Arnold proposed a draft of possible future statutes to his two co-workers, Fr. Bill from Luxembourg and theology student Reichart from Austria. During their first meeting, two additional points were discussed: the petition to be submitted to the German and Austrian bishops for the approval of the Mission House to be opened on 8 September 1875² and the election of its provisional Superior, Fr. Arnold, the next day. The draft of the Statutes in Latin³ defined the general purpose and two objectives of the Mission House. The general purpose strongly emphasized the Love and knowledge of the Blessed Trinity, the special veneration of the Divine Word and the total surrender to the Divine Heart of the Saviour longing to save souls. Furthermore, in his petition letter to bishops, Fr. Arnold alluded to the "Great Commission" found in Mathew 28:19⁴. The general purpose provided the basis and motivation for the principal and secondary objective of the House respectively to the two groups of members: "Missionaries working in foreign countries and teachers who will educate them". The first – special objective was the Propagation of Faith in pagan lands whereas the secondary objective focused on the "cultivation of true scholarship in theology, the humanities and natural sciences in the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas"⁵. As for the latter, the two co-workers accepted it provisionally but vigorously opposed the suggested introduction of the Rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic. Eventually, though, all were able to agree to try out the Third Order Rule in order to determine whether "the experience of our mission seminary would prove it to be suitable and useful" (19 August 1875). On 24 August 1875, Fr. Arnold

¹ J. Ommerborn, *The Arnoldus Family Story*, "Bulletin SAJ", nr 6, June 2011, pp. 1-3.

² The *Archivio del Fondatore* (AdF) of the Society of the Divine Word in Rome: AdF: 2411-13: Arnold Janssen to the German and Austrian Bishops on the imminent Foundation of the Mission House, Steyl, 5 August 1875.

³ AdF: 3639-3644: Arnold Janssen, *The Statutes of the Mission House*, 5 August 1875.

⁴ "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", [in:] *The New Jerusalem Bible* (NJB) is an English-language translation of the Bible published in 1985 by Darton, Longman and Todd and Les Editions du Cerf.

⁵ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith. The Missionary Life of Arnold Janssen*, "Analecta SVD", nr 85, Romae 2002, p. 75.

could put down: "On opening day we will begin to live according to the established rule".

The First Statutes of the Mission House of 1876

After the inauguration of the Mission House, and mainly from January 1876, set in a difficult period with a series of clashes over the final formulation of the statutes. Now, with one more associate, the seminarian John Baptist Anzer, Fr. Arnold had to face even greater opposition to his project of the Mission House Statutes. He proceeded slowly, studying the statutes and guidelines of similar institutes. In his opinion, the time was not ripe for the formulation of final statutes, whereas his associates wanted to have them finalized at once. The growing tensions at the Mission House led eventually to the dismissal of Fr. Bill and student Reichart in April 1876 so that only the cleric Anzer remained. Despite differences over the internal structure of the Mission House, Arnold and Anzer managed to work out a compromise and completed the final Statutes within several weeks from 8 May to 5 June 1876.

The new Statutes spoke only of the twofold task of the Society: the pastoral and the pedagogical/educational. They also agreed:

"The purpose of our society is the spreading of the Word of God on earth, especially by evangelizing activity among those non-Catholic peoples where this activity would prove most fruitful. In the first place we mean the pagan peoples, especially those in the Far East" (No. 2).

The Mission House was dedicated to St. Michael, but the Society itself was called "the Society of the Divine Word at the Service of the King and Queen of Angels" or briefly, "the Society of the Divine Word" (No. 1). The Founder and the clerical student Anzer signed the Statutes on 15 June 1876⁶ and on the following day pronounced privately their

⁶ The quotations [in:] *Statutes of the Mission House Steyl dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel (1876)*, Steyl, 15 June 1876. The English translation was published [in:] "Nova et Vetera", vol. XXIV, 1982, pp. 81-90. The text was intended only as "a temporary formulation pending a later more exact one in Latin" (Fr. Jansen). But of the Latin text we have only a fragment. The German text is found [in:] F. Bornemann (ed.), *Curia Generalitia, Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini*, vol. 1, *Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1875-1891*, Roma 1964, pp. 21-34. The Polish translation [in:] „Zeszyty Werbistowskie”, nr 3, *Śluby zakonne w Konstytucjach SVD*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 11-27.

perpetual profession of obedience for life, modelled after the "Oblatio"⁷ of the Mill Hill Missionaries.

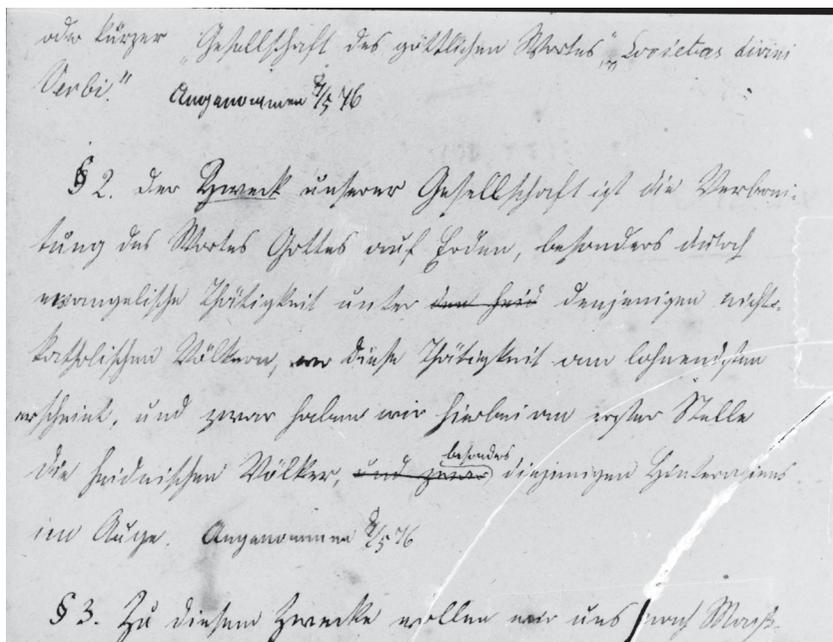


Photo 1. The handwriting of the SVD Statutes of 1876 by Fr. Arnold Janssen (Archives SVD, Rome.)

The first Statutes of the Mission House contained concise principles of life for the new Society of the Divine Word. The printed Rule ran to ten pages of text, of which six dealt with ascetical and spiritual matters. Attached to the main text there was a two-page appendix on the Spirit of the Society, that may have been inspired by the rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic, since it emphasized "the spirit of faith, the spirit of penance and mortification, the spirit of peace, love of neighbours and compassion". The Bishop of Roermond approved the statutes orally and they thus constituted the first consolidation of the Foundation.

The Rule called for complete dedication to God built on the cornerstone of personal sanctification: "This should be a spirit of

⁷ Oblation, meaning an offering (Late Latin *oblatio*, from *offerre*, *oblatus*, to offer), is a term used in the Catholic Church for an offering or presentation to God without taking full religious vows.

dedication, a spirit of faith and trust, a spirit of humility and self-denial”⁸. The first Statutes of the Mission House developed around the two pillars of the Society: the Founder as the main architect of the Statutes and John Baptist Anzer, the future first bishop of the Society in China. Despite differences, the Statues were born out of compromise, as they complemented each other in joy and suffering for the sake of the kingdom of God. For a period of 9 years, from 1875 to 1884, 22 members of the House: including 20 clerics and 2 brothers made their vow of obedience based on this rule for periods of three, five or seven years.

Two Rules of 1885: German Rule of February and Latin Rule of September

The Statutes of June 1876 turned out to be totally insufficient for the rapid internal and external development of the Society, which was still cantered on the single Mission House in Europe and on the first mission in China. Writing on the introduction of religious vows, the Founder noted: “we have to create something new and better”⁹. The two years before the first General Chapter kept the Founder fairly busy. Influenced by Fr. Ferdinand Medits, and Magdalene Leitner, he gave much thought to starting a congregation of missionary sisters¹⁰. Already in 1882, or at the latest during the first weeks of 1883, Fr. Arnold wrote the first draft of the Sisters’ Rule based on the rule of St. Augustine. Initially, he toyed with the idea of forming one single congregation which would be composed of three sections: one for priests, brothers and sisters, with the sisters’ branch consisting of both choir and lay sisters.

Ultimately, two distinct SVD Rules were born at the First General Chapter (1884-1886), the early provisional Rule of February in German (1885 F) and the permanent Latin Rule known as “the Rule of September” (1885 S). In the Chapter participated four capitulars: the Founder, his brother John, ProVicar John Baptist Anzer from China and Hermann Wegener. At the following Chapter of 1890-1891, to them will join one new capitular, Fr. Eikenbrock as the delegate of the European Province. Both rules introduced the religious vows as being compatible

⁸ *Statutes of the Mission House*, nr 12.

⁹ *Arnold Janssen to the China Missionaries*, Steyl, 28 May 1886, [in:] J. Alt, *Arnold Janssen. Letters to China*, vol. I, 1879-1897, “Analecta SVD”, nr 83/I, Romae 2002, p. 180.

¹⁰ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 216.

with the Society's missionary activity. On the second day of the Chapter (11 December 1884), the capitulars replaced the Third Order Rule of St. Dominic for the priests and introduced instead the three traditionally understood vows of poverty, chastity and obedience – at first only for the priests¹¹. Still the Rule of February made provision for brothers to join the Third Order that included obligation to recite the Divine Office.

Both Rules produced at the 1st General Chapter were based on the Lazarist (Vincentian) Rule. He consulted also Miss Leitner and the *Instructio Societatis Jesu*. Fr. Arnold copied out all the drafts of the Rule. Finally, the clean copy was examined by the capitulars and formally approved.

The Rule of four parts with 184 constitutions on 93 pages included the most important canonical regulations. The first chapter of Part I: "on the Foundation of the Society" (Const. 1-44) was signed on 27 February 1885. Some days before, on 24 February 1885 the Statutes of 1876 ceased to be in force and the Rule of February 1885 took their place. The German Rule of February was completed on 28 March and included the other three parts: Part II: on the general obligations of Confreres (Const. 45-128); Part III: on the particular obligations of the priests (129-156) and Part IV: on particular obligations of the lay brothers (157-184). The Rule covered everything essential. Moreover, according to this Rule, on 12 March 1885, Fr. Arnold was elected Superior General for life.

The capitulars also defined the main purpose of the Society, that is the adoration of the Divine Word and the spread of the devotion to the Holy Spirit; in the second place: the work for sanctification of priests and in the third place: the work for the conversion of heretics and unbelievers¹². The first two purposes were marked by an influence of Miss Leitner, who was declared Mother Gregoria, that is a spiritual Mother of the Society.

Shortly afterwards Fr. Arnold started to work on the Latin version of the September Rule, which was twice as long as the German Rule of February 1885, a total of 426 constitutions on 227 pages. Apart from the Vincentian Rule, the Founder used also other sources in drafting the new Rule: The Life of Vincent de Paul; the Rules of the Picpus Missionaries; the Resurrectionists; the Mill Hill missionaries: the Paris Foreign Missionaries as well as the *Summa Theologica* of

¹¹ AdF: 7767: Leo Haberstroh, *Zusammenfassender Bericht, Das erste Generalkapitel* (10 Dez. 1884-12 Mai 1886), *Conventus* (11 Dez.).

¹² *Rule of the Society of the Divine Word, September 1885* (3/a-c). English translation by Stanley Plutz, Tagaytay (n.d.).

St. Thomas Aquinas (II-II ae). The September Rule contained four Parts: Part I: Constitutions of the Society (Const. 1-140). Part II: Obligations common to all the Confreres (Const. 141-261). Part III: Further obligations common to all the Confreres (Const. 262-314). The second part dealt with the obligations of the lay Brothers in particular. Part IV: Further obligations specific to the Clerics (Const. 315-426).

Fr. Arnold hoped that everyone at Steyl would accept the new rule and that their work would be blessed from above. The Rule was to meet both the ascetical and legal requirements of the Society's life. Some of its characteristics were: the introduction of the short name for the Society: VERBISTAS; the term of the SVD Superior General, limited to seven years (without affecting Fr. Arnold's election as Superior General for life); the 2-year novitiate and the obligation of daily half an hour of meditation and 15 minutes of spiritual reading for all members. In that rule, Arnold's understanding of "mission" was expressed in terms of a "Vow of perseverance in the service of the mission" according to the *Titulus Missionis* (1885/S 85). Furthermore, the Rule promoted the intrinsic relation between the furthering of family and vocations to the Society:

"Every year, seven Holy Masses are to be said for the sanctification of those marriages among the faithful, from the fruits of which the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to summon priests for the Church and especially for our Society" (Const. 8b).

Despite criticism that the Rule was too long and insufficiently legal in tone, the Founder insisted on preserving the unity of law and spirituality. The General Chapter promulgated the September Rule at its final session on 12 May 1886, and declared "obligatory" for all members of the Society. But it was not until the following summer 1887 that the September Rule was solemnly introduced:

"We have had two beautiful feasts, the feast of the Holy Trinity (15 June) and the feast of the Sacred Heart (17 June), both highly meaningful for us with the introduction of the new Latin Rule"¹³.

The first Rule of 1885 was carefully examined for many years and finally approved by Bishop Franciscus Boermanns of Roermond (1886-1900) on 23 January 1889.

¹³ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 222.

The Sisters Rule (1891-1893)¹⁴

The Founder decided to convoke a General Chapter in 1890 with the aim of drawing up a rule for the Mission Sisters. Fr. Arnold started to work on the Sisters rule in May and August of 1890. But when the General Chapter was drawing near, he took time out to work seriously on the rule. Then he discontinued his work. Overall, Fr. Arnold drafted alone the Sisters' Rule in the course of two years, including in the span of the 2nd General Chapter (1890-1891). The sisters were asked to pray for the intention of the rule but did not have any part in the drawing up of the Rule. Sr. Helena Stollenwerk wrote "that the Founder bore all the effort, worry and pain alone"¹⁵.

While working on the draft of the Sisters Rule Fr. Arnold found ideas and models in the constitutions of other female congregations. He especially liked the newly issued Constitutions and Statutes of the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus from Simpelveld due to their many detailed regulations.

Finally, the Founder began to write out a draft of the rule based on material he had collected in October 1890. He brought the draft to be debated by the capitulars with Fr. Medits present as an adviser. The capitulars decided on the name Servants of the Holy Spirit for the Sisters (SSpS). The distinctly subordinate role of the Missionary Sisters was now eliminated¹⁶. In addition to working on the Sisters' rule, they also resolved:

"that our [SVD] Rule should be revised once again in such a way that all rules, including those concerning the lay brothers, be compiled as *Regulae or Constitutiones communes* [common rules or constitutions] and separated from the *Regulae speciales* [special rules] which concern the government of the Society and the priests"¹⁷.

The SSpS Constitutions defined the structure of the Sisters' Congregation. It would be composed of two branches: the Mission Sisters with a blue habit and the Adoration Sisters with a rose coloured habit. Both would profess the same religious vows. The Mission Sisters

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 345-352.

¹⁵ O. Stegmaier, *Mutter Maria Anna Stollenwerk und ihre Familie - Briefe* (Quellen 4), Rome 1988, p. 24.

¹⁶ F. Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen - Founder of Three Missionary Congregations, "Analecta SVD"*, vol. 35, Manila 1975, pp. 231-232.

¹⁷ J. Ommerborn, *The Arnoldus Family Story, "Bulletin SAJ"*, vol. 12, nr 8-9, 2018, p. 1.

were to work mainly in those missions where SVD Missionaries were engaged. Both the cloistered and the mission sisters were to be daughters of the same spiritual mother, and have the same Father, that is God the Holy Spirit. Although the Sisters were ultimately subject to the Superior General SVD or his delegate, they did have their own Superior General for the two branches. The Mother General was always to be elected from among the cloistered Sisters. She was to have two Vicars General, one each for the cloistered and for the missionary branches. Until the General Chapter of 1909-1910, the Diocesan Bishop was effectively the Sisters' highest Superior.

On 20 and 22 April 1891, the Chapter approved the resolutions on the Sisters' rule and completed the protocol. Two days later Fr. Janssen called on the bishop, submitted the basic outline of the Sisters' Rule and was given oral approval. The Chapter then authorized him to rewrite the Sisters' Rule and to model it on the SVD rule but with appropriate adjustments required by the Sisters' life. The Sisters Rule was approved for five years by Bishop Boermans of Roermond on 16 October 1891 for the German text of Part I; on 26 December 1892 for the Latin text of Part II; and on 14 January 1893 for the Latin text of Part III.

The bilingual Rule of 1891

During the first half of November 1890, the capitulars worked almost exclusively on the Sisters' Rule. They also intended to revise the SVD Constitutions. So, Fr. Arnold forwarded from Steyl all the material he had gathered on the Constitutions. "During the weeks previous to his trip to Berlin in mid-December, and again from January until his journey to Rome, he worked feverishly on the revision of the Rule"¹⁸. His revision was discussed, in particular, the debate revolved around a new Rule written by John Janssen, between 19 March and 1 April 1891. In reality, John Janssen's text was only a draft and lay-out but most of the essential regulations came from the old September Rule of 1885, and the definition of the special goal of the Society was taken literally from that Rule¹⁹.

Thus, the September Rule was revised in order to standardize it as a common rule for both clerics and brothers on 27 April 1891. Although, it had been customary since 1886 for the two groups to make their religious vows according to the Latin Rule of September 1885, still

¹⁸ F. Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen – Founder...*, art. cit., p. 236.

¹⁹ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 230.

the brothers were introduced to the religious life on the basis of the abridged German Rule of February 1885. Consequently, there were still two rules, the Latin for the clerics and the shorter German for the brothers. The Rule of September included two parts, one for the brothers with regulations no less applicable to the clerics, and one for the priests. The new Rule of 1891 has three parts. It was decided to put together all the constitutions for the priests and the brothers into Part I: Common Rule (Const. 1-82), which was translated into German and printed as the first printed Rule of the Society²⁰. After the episcopal approval of the German Rule on 16 October 1891, the vows were taken only on this part. Fr. Arnold wrote to St. Gabriel's:

“much work had to be done by typesetters, printers and binders. But they succeeded! On Saturday evening at 7:30, I was able to distribute the first ten copies and today more of them. It seems everything is going well... The lovely little book is generally welcomed. May the Rule itself be kept and loyally followed”²¹.

On 25 October 1891, Bishop Frans Boermans of Roermond presided a solemn profession of vows taken on the new Rule with the transfer of the vows made in 1885 to the new rule of 1891. While handing the little book of Rules to the priests and brothers, bishop said:

“Most beloved sons, receive the Rule of the Society of the Divine Word. It is your duty to live according to it in future. When you learn this with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and with pious sentiment and observe it in what you do, you will see the Triune God in the glory of his saints”²².

The second part of the Rule for Priests (Const. 83-123) and third part of the Rule on the Government of the Society (Const. 124-149) in Latin were never translated into German. They were printed and approved by the bishop two years later²³. The revised Rule made

²⁰ The first part of the Rule 1891 (Const. 1-82) in German was published as *Allgemeine Constitutionem und Statuten der Gesellschaft des Göttlichen Wortes vom Jahre 1891*, Steyl Missionsdruckerei, 1891, 233 pp. Also [in:] *Fontes Historici SVD*, vol. 1, pp. 191-254. The Latin original appeared only in a limited number of hectographed copies.

²¹ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 234.

²² “Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote”, December 1891.

²³ The complete edition of the Rule in Latin (the part I and part II of the Latin version was approved on Dec. 26, 1892: *Regula Societas Verbi Divini 1891* with imprimatur of bishop Boermans on 14 January 1893 [in:] *Fontes Historici SVD*, vol. 1, pp. 257-348. The Latin version of the Rule contained 149 Constitutions.

a distinction between constitutions and statutes. The latter were what later was called directories, elucidating the content of the Constitutions, but both were equally binding. The Founder concluded the 2nd General Chapter saying that everything may serve to renew in all of us the spirit of the Society, and lead us to a better and more perfect observance of our rule.

The Spiritual and Ascetical Rule of 1898

The rapid growth of the Society both in Europe and overseas required an adequate government to tackle both administrative problems and spiritual cohesiveness. The third General Chapter of 12 capitulars served to make the definitive formulation of the Rule before seeking approbation in Rome. The Founder wanted to revise Part II for Priests and Part III on the Government. But the primary objective was to define the Purpose of the Society put before Part II and III. The Constitutions of 1891 and 1898 distinguish between general and special aims of the Society. The Rule of 1898 named three general aims of the Society: love of God, love of neighbour and sanctification of self. The special aims are also three: a devotional one – the adoration of the Divine Word and the spreading of devotion to the Holy Spirit; a spiritual one – the worthy administration of the sacraments and the sanctification of the priesthood; an external one – the work undertaken by the Society (Rule of 1898, Const. 134-149)²⁴.

The revised Rule on the Government was based much on the Jesuit Rule on the Government and Administration but also, it made use of texts from the Vincentian Rule. The new Rule of 1898 gave our Society a strongly centralized structure so that the Superior General (now elected for 12 years) would appoint provincials and their councillors and all newly ordained priests were under his complete jurisdiction. All personnel and property of the Society were to be controlled by the Generalate with the Superior General competent to transfer property and confreres from one province to another. Each house and province had to present an annual financial report and a budget for the next year.

Overall, the Constitutions of 1898 represented the expanded Constitutions of 1891²⁵: Part I: *Regulae Communes* grew by a third from

²⁴ J. Musinsky, *The Specific Purpose of Our Society in the Mind of Our Blessed Founder Arnold Janssen*, "Verbum SVD", nr 3-4, 1981, pp. 227-242.

²⁵ *Constitutiones et Statuta Societatis Verbi Divini* (anni 1898), [in:] Curia Generalitia, *Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini*, vol. II, *Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1898-1948*, Romae 1967, 1-162. The Constitutions are translated

48 pages (82 Constitutions) to 68 pages (92 Constitutions); Part II: *Pro Sacerdotibus* remained unchanged (41 Constitutions) on 16 pages, simply taking the text printed in 1892, which, in turn, had been almost wholly composed at the first General Chapter; Part III: *De regimine Societatis* was practically rewritten from 14 pages (26 Constitutions) to 71 pages (99 Constitutions) and contained the actual work of this Chapter. This part was enlarged by about one-fourth and very little was accepted in its original form in the process. In total the size of the Rule of 1898 was doubled from 149 Constitutions on 78 pages in 1891 to 232 on 155 pages in 1898. Fr. Arnold did not exaggerate when he characterized the deliberations as gigantic and strenuous task that required 160 sessions. 100 Constitutions of the year 1891 received renewed approval, some were entirely recast.

Fr. Josef Alt pointed out three basic characteristics of the Rule of 1898: a deep religious character; closeness to reality; and positive approach which finds in Love of God the strength, able to change the shape of reality. The ascetical character of the Rule was due to the Founder's tendency to see missionaries as spiritual men, who love and honour the Holy Spirit above all as the Father of the Society²⁶.

The revisions of the Rules from 1891 and 1898 received their episcopal approbation in *Vigilia Nativitatis Domini*, on 24 December 1898. The Founder won the battle with confreres at the Chapter but did lose it in Rome, that ordered to remove the extensive quotations. Though the Rule of 1898 was unpublished, it was put into practice throughout the Society. More than six years were to elapse before Rome approved the Constitutions.

Rule of 1905 with papal approval

Thus, in the last decade of life, nothing occupied the Founder so long and as intensively as his efforts to obtain the approbation for the Rule of 1898 from Rome. In this struggle, he encountered collaborators and opposition. He was dependent on the Congregation *Propaganda Fide* and didn't like to go for business to Rome. "He had to deal with a strange language of the country. I have perhaps some anxiety with regard to my superiors"²⁷. Rome was making demands and he was

partially into English by Stanley Plutz, SVD, *Constitutions and Statutes of the Society of the Divine Word (1898)*, 106 pp.

²⁶ J. Alt, *The Constitutions of 1898*, "Verbum SVD", nr 1, 1963, pp. 31-46.

²⁷ Arnold Janssen to Card. Steinhuber, 1902, [in:] F. Bornemann, *The Papal Approbation of the Constitutions of 1905*, "Analecta SVD", vol. 3, Romae 1967, p. 11.

bound both by the General Chapter of 1898 and his conscience. The Rule became an oppressive burden. Arnold Janssen submitted his constitutions to the Propaganda for papal approval in 1899. Domenico Serafini, the Abbot General of Subiaco, was a scholarly consultor commissioned to study our Rule. He expressed his opinion on 14 December 1899 and appraised our Rule as pious handbook but not a legal document:

“Even though the substance of the Constitutions is probably very good, the form, in my humble judgment, does not conform to a legal codex. It is too complicated and much too detailed. In many parts it appears rather to be an ascetical manual for religious. Thus, it comes that there is no clear distinction between what should be considered as a law, and what is admonition and advice. Moreover, such a method causes the same things to be treated several times in different paragraphs and leads only to confusion. Finally, I also point out that according to the basic guidelines of the commission the long texts from ecclesiastical writers and fathers of the church are to be eliminated completely and the passages from Holy Scripture at least to be decreased. To be eliminated as well are certain sections which are dogmatic and ascetical expositions rather than religious rules”²⁸.

This act of mutilation broke the heart of Fr. Arnold. He strove to breathe a religious spirit into the letters of the Law, but now all that was not purely legal and normative was to be excluded:

“all dogmatic teaching, all spiritual motivation, all Scripture texts, quotations from the Fathers of the Church and theologians, all inspirational texts and overly detailed regulations for daily life”²⁹.

It wasn't until Vatican II that he was vindicated and was proven to be both right and ahead of his time³⁰. At that time, the abundance of scriptural texts, as well as its division into constitutions and statutes was contrary to Roman legal requirements. At the end of 1899, the Founder was in Rome and employed his adviser Mgr. Johannes de Montel, the consultor at the Holy Office as intermediary between

²⁸ F. Bornemann, *The Papal Approbation...*, art. cit., p. 23.

²⁹ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 758.

³⁰ The Pope, Paul VI, recommended to all orders in 1966 to revise their Constitutions in such a way that they contain not only rules but also spiritual inspiration. F. Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen - Founder...*, art. cit., p. 457.

himself and Abbot General Serafini. Montel praised highly our Rule because of its form and content, but Rome categorically denied the permission for publication of the Rule (25 April 1901) as approved by the 3th General Chapter. In 1901, Fr. Arnold was told to shorten the ascetical and dogmatic statements. The negotiations with Rome in regard to the Constitutions became more complicated as the text did not restrict itself to the normal legal prescriptions but included lengthy spiritual passages that the Superior General particularly valued. After Fr. Blum managed to do the first revision of the Rule according to the *Normae* and Mgr. Melata and the Secretary of the examining Commission sent it back in July 1902, the Founder reported accurately to Fr. Freinademetz in China: "Unfortunately, so much has been deleted (...) that even in essential matters hardly more than dry bones are left over"³¹. In 1903, the Founder sent the shortened version of the Rule to Rome and again he was told to shorten it still more, whereupon he rewrote the first chapter. There were four different revisions, each of which he gave to the general councillors for comments and suggestions which he then incorporated into the text. In January 1904 he had it printed. It was the Founder's mature work on the spirit and the task of our Society. "I did it from a sense of duty in that I kept in mind the importance that this chapter would have for the Society now and in the future"³².

After the Commission had accepted the drastically revised Rule in the final meeting on 24 April 1905, Pius X approved it in an audience of 2 May 1905 on an experimental basis for five years. The copy of the Rule printed by the Congregation reached the Superior General in Sankt Gabriel on 11 May. He was deeply disappointed "That was like plunging sword in the Founder's heart"³³. He found it painful that all his ascetical and spiritual principles had been deleted from the Rule. He saw that the structures and the form of the Society had been changed, it was a different Society. After consultation with the General Council he decided to go to Rome and personally requested a revision of the parts of the Rule in question.

The situation in the Society became critical as the Founder was confronted with an opposition among his confreres (e.g. Fr. Joseph

³¹ Arnold Janssen to Joseph Freinademetz, St. Gabriel, 14 August 1902, AdF: 110.258-260.

³² A. Janssen, *The Spirit and Task of Our Society*, [in:] P. McHugh (ed.), *Arnold Janssen - Yesterday and Today*, "Analecta SVD", vol. 63/III, Romae 1998, p. 300.

³³ F. Bornemann (ed.), *Remembering Arnold Janssen. A Book of Reminiscences*, "Analecta SVD", vol. 42, Romae 1978, pp. 290-291.

Koesters) who wanted the Rule to be published immediately. Fr. Arnold hoped to explain all the difficulties to Card. Girolamo Gotti, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide (1902-1916). How it is possible that:

“Originally the Rule had followed the model of the Vincentians and the Jesuits in the matter of government and appointments but now everything has to be done according to the democratic regime of the Franciscans. In that way the one European province had authority over the mission provinces, and also over the general chapter, and that would certainly not promote the internal peace and healthy development of the Society. In St. Gabriel the opinion was voiced that «the new Rule is the sharpest condemnation of the entire system up to now». (...) Fr. Arnold asked his confreres: «Please let us stand firmly and faithful together»³⁴.

In May, our Founder was already in Rome and had to wait some days to be received by Card. Gotti on 25 May 1905. During the meeting, the cold and frosty manner of Card. Gotti hurt Him deeply. As it turned out, Cardinal’s attitude was influenced by nuncio Belmonte in Austria-Hungary who in turn was in touch with Fr. Koesters who provided Him with a list of complaints of internal opposition acting against the Rule.

Now, he understood that if changes had to be made in the Rule, the best solution was to appeal directly to the Pope. And so, he did draw up a petition in which he asked the Holy Father for a stronger recommendation of the Holy Spirit devotion, the retention of the no-smoking rule, the easing of regulations regarding the dismissal of those not yet in vows, the appointment of superiors and officials by the Superior General, the participation of missionaries in the General Chapter, the restriction of the competence of the Local Chapter. Fr. Arnold wrote on 23 May 1905: “May I be granted the grace to finish my life’s work - the establishment of the Society on a solid foundation”. On 5 June 1905, Fr. Arnold had a successful audience with Pius X:

“These two men immediately understood one another. After this audience the Commission on the Rule back-tracked step by step until the Founder was satisfied and could leave for home at peace with himself”³⁵.

Thus, Fr. Arnold won a decisive victory. The nuncio commented the Pope’s decision: “The Holy Father, Pius X, has said that he would

³⁴ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 760.

³⁵ F. Bornemann (ed.), *Remembering Arnold Janssen...*, art. cit., p. 289.

not oppose a saint and Father Arnold Janssen is a saint"³⁶. The final draft of the constitutions of 1905 was drawn up in Rome, however the input of the almost 68-year-old Founder's was very high. By himself, he had put together over 1,500 pages of the texts of the Constitutions of 1905, let alone his note books and lists of the priests, brothers, sisters and students.

Among circa twenty of Arnold's requests for correction, two were of utmost importance: the devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, with special stress on the veneration of the Divine Word, "(...) to have the Solemnities of Trinity and Pentecost declared as main feasts"³⁷. The second important request was the selection of candidates to the Society as important are not the numbers but their spiritual, moral and religious quality. Rome approved the total prohibition of tobacco, the abrogation of the Supreme power of the provincial chapter and the change from private to public vows so that the Society became a religious order in the proper sense. The requested by the Founder changes were accepted by the Rule Commission of Propaganda on 30 June 1905, then on 12 August 1905, Propaganda drew up a decree concerning the changes and sent it to Superior General with the modified Rule book. The new Rule promulgated by a circular letter on 13 October 1905³⁸ comprised 226 constitutions on 136 pages³⁹. The General Council agreed that no special General Chapter needed to be held to introduce the Rule. On 14 October 1905 a solemn thanksgiving was held with Nuncio Belmonte in Sankt Gabriel.

As the Constitutions of 1905 were given only for 5 years, so in time after the Founder's death the 4th Extraordinary General Chapter from 3 Nov. 1909 to 15 Jan. 1910 dealt with the definitive text of Constitutions for final papal approbation. Fr. Nicholas Blum, Assistant General presented the draft of a complete text of 630 Constitutions to the capitulars for discussion and then sent it with few minor changes to Rome. Only three months later, the Constitutions were approved without limit on 5 April 1910⁴⁰. The Latin and German text of the new constitutions was published on the Founder's feast day on 18 July 1910.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 340.

³⁷ J. Alt, *Journey in Faith...*, art. cit., p. 765.

³⁸ The text of the new Constitutions of 1905 was published [in:] *Fontes Historici SVD*, vol. II, *Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1898-1948*, Roma 1967, pp. 168-225. The text of the Constitutions was originally published in Steyl, in October 1905.

³⁹ "Nuntius SVD", vol. I, p. 292.

⁴⁰ The text of the Constitutions of 1910 was published [in:] *Fontes Historici SVD*, vol. II, pp. 229-304.

Conclusion

The legislative work of Fr. Arnold Janssen over 35 years of his life-time was decisive for the Missionaries of the Divine Word to work out a sound and solid foundation to carry out its missionary charisma. This period was marked by many changes, improvements and adaptations. It was also a time of learning to avoid extremes, e.g. by moderating the strongly ascetical spirit of sacrifice. In the methodological approach, Fr. Arnold applied a broadminded inductive outlook in crafting the good Rule which expanded his view of religious and mission reality. He also used scientific formation and teaching experiences for his legislative activities. Despite great distress, especially during six-year period of painful efforts to achieve the papal approval, Fr. Arnold preserved trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, the source of all graces. The Founder had a highly spiritual concept of the Rule to express the spiritual core of the Society and secure its unity. The Rule provided important criteria for the admissions to the Society. The Founder's main concern was not so much the letter of the law but the preservation and cultivation of the spirit that gives life. He gave a precedence to Divine Grace over human foresightedness, e.g. by introducing Religious Vows. As Rule-maker he endeavoured to create a Rule which should serve to learn to know Christ, love Him and follow His example. He himself acted as a walking embodiment of the living Rule and stressed the faithful observance of the Rule.

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ANDRZEJ MIOTK SVD

The legislative work of Fr. Arnold Janssen as the Founder of the Missionary Congregations

Abstract

This historical study presents the untiring legislative activity of Fr. Arnold Janssen, the Founder of the Society of the Word of God in Steyl (1875), who during 35 years of his life, had developed six different sets of internal law (Statutes and Constitutions) to regulate the life and organization of his Institute: Statutes of the Mission House (1876); February Rule of 1885; September Rule of 1885; Rule of 1891, Rule of 1898 and Rule of 1905. In addition, he laboured to create the Rule for the Mission Sisters SSps (1891). The Founder's legislative work mirrors

faithfully his thoughts, intentions and spiritual profile. It also discloses the charisma, character and spirituality of his Foundations. The elaboration of the Constitution aimed at providing the Congregation with a specific organizational framework and with means to reach the missionary goals. The key move in this endeavour was the introduction of religious vows and the centralization of the structure of the Society to consolidate the activities of its missionaries through internal unity and spiritual rooting. The Founder not only strived to develop the specific legal norms, but wanted the law to be animated by the right spirit. Therefore, he was extremely determined to provide his spiritual sons and daughters with healthy spiritual food for their personal growth. Hoping to obtain approval from the competent ecclesiastical authorities, Fr. Arnold spent a good deal of time trying to work out for each of his three congregations a solid, unified, "one-size-fits-all" design of the nature, purpose and spirit of the missionary task.

Keywords: Founder, The canon law, Statutes of the Mission House (1876), Constitutions of the Society, charisma, religious vows.

ANDRZEJ MIOTK SVD

Działalność legislacyjna o. Arnolda Janssena, jako Założyciela Zgromadzeń misyjnych

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono działalność legislacyjną o. Arnolda Janssena, założyciela Zgromadzenia Słowa Bożego SVD (1875). W ciągu 35 lat wypracował on sześć zbiorów prawa wewnętrznego (Statuty i Konstytucje), aby uregulować życie i organizację swojego Instytutu: Statuty Domu Misyjnego (1876); Konstytucje Lutowe (1885); Konstytucje Wrześniowe (1886); Konstytucje z 1891, Konstytucje z 1898 i Konstytucje z 1905 roku. Opracował również Konstytucje dla Sióstr Misyjnych SSpS (1891). Prace legislacyjne Założyciela oddają wiernie jego duchowość i charakter jego fundacji. Konstytucje miały zapewnić Zgromadzeniu ramy organizacyjne i środki do realizacji celu misyjnego. Kluczowym posunięciem było wprowadzenie ślubów zakonnych oraz scentralizowanie struktury Zgromadzenia. Założyciel chciał, aby prawo było ożywiane duchem.

Słowa kluczowe: Założyciel, prawo kanoniczne, Statuty Domu Misyjnego (1876), Konstytucje Zgromadzenia, charyzmat, śluby zakonne.