

THE BOSCO-GASTALDI CONFLICT (1872-1882) [PART I]

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General Introduction

(1) Nature and Serious Character of the Conflict

The conflict between Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi and Don Bosco may at first sight appear to have been, to put a facile contemporary label on it, a typical confrontation between institution and charism. It was indeed a clash between episcopal authority as claimed by an ordinary and the freedom sought by the founder of a new (and different) religious congregation. But the confrontation should be seen as an event within a particular moment in history and as deriving its specific character from it. It was a time when the Church, pitted against the encroachments of the liberal state, after the First Vatican Council and the triumph of Ultramontanism, was struggling to “redefine” the nature and extent of those competencies, and to institute reforms within the ranks of both the secular and the regular clergy. Furthermore, the engagement was between two men risen to preeminence from vastly different cultural and educational backgrounds, and working in the same city with different conceptions in theology and pastoral practice.

The conflict acquired unusual asperity from the strong personalities of the protagonists, and their belief in the rightness of their cause, as well as from the actions of subalterns. The archbishop regarded Don Bosco’s opposition as a rejection of his episcopal authority. At first, Don Bosco looked upon the archbishop’s opposition as a failure to understand; later, he experienced it as outright persecution. Don Bosco’s perception that he himself personally, his Salesians and the Congregation, were the object of an unjust and systematic persecution by his own archbishop, from whom he had hoped to have not only understanding, but also encouragement and support, and this in the very diocese and very city of the Congregation’s origin and best work, made it all the harder to bear.

Inevitably members of the diocesan clergy and of the nascent Salesian Congregation were drawn into the quarrel together with the principals, and the affair did not fail to engage also the press and public opinion.

The serious character of the clash is evidenced, on the one hand by the fact that the clergy of the diocese of Turin has retained a memory of the conflict as distinctive of Gastaldi's episcopacy; and on the other hand by the fact that the Salesian biographical tradition has given much attention to it, with an obviously partisan slant. The resentful, sometimes angry feelings surfacing in the tradition reflect the painful experiences of those difficult years. And such feelings are understandable in the light of the fact that from the start the conflict took the form of opposition to the official and definitive approval of the Salesian Society and its constitutions, and that, at a later stage, it resulted in obstructions to the process of Don Bosco's beatification.

(2) Length and Complexity of the Conflict

The confrontation was a long drawn-out affair that, beginning with the archbishop's appointment in 1871, lasted more than a decade. And it was really the archbishop's death in 1883, which preceded Don Bosco's by some five years, rather than the reconciliation (*Concordia*) enforced in 1882, that brought it to an end. It was also a complex affair. The complex character of the conflict is evidenced by the fact that it went beyond the phase of the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (1874). At this stage, the archbishop's brief was chiefly with the alleged lack of religious spirit among Salesians and with inadequate provisions for study and formation in the constitutions themselves. But the conflict continued unabated over matters pertaining to episcopal authority and pastoral practices, and it finally degenerated into a legal battle before the Church's highest tribunal for alleged personal attacks on the archbishop by the Salesians through anonymous defamatory pamphlets.

As the issues multiplied and as the exchanges dragged on over a long period of time, the conflict acquired complexity in yet another sense. The terms of the confrontation themselves appear fairly straightforward. But a number of incidental elements, less definable and more elusive, came between to befog the dialogue and to give rise to a tangled skein of misunderstandings and suspicions: the personality of the protagonists (already mentioned) and the difficulty of ascertaining their real behavioral motivations; the role of the lesser figures revolving and acting within the orbits of the principals; the network of intersecting interests and relationships; the tangled jumble of ecclesiastical gossip; the provocation of the anticlerical press.

These and other interfering factors affected the quality of the abundant archival material both published and unpublished.¹ In addition, the polemical climate in which the material originated affected its shape then, and renders its reliability problematic now. It is always difficult, and often impossible, to get to what really happened; namely, to disengage the words actually spoken from the maze of hearsay reports, or from words attributed to various persons whether in good or bad faith. A further problem peculiar to the literature originating with the Salesian part lies in the psychological conditioning consequent upon Don Bosco's canonization and the celebration of his holiness. Hence, one must rely on the scholarly literature available on the subject for guidance in the matter.

3) Method Employed in the Present Study

In view of its length and complexity, the story of the conflict will be told in two parts. In the present installment I will describe the phase connected with the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (1872-1874). The further developments of the confrontation will be surveyed in the concluding installment.

However, I think it helpful, for a better understanding of the affair, to preface the whole treatment with a somewhat detailed biographical sketch of Lawrence Gastaldi. Who was Lawrence Gastaldi? Our readers may be familiar with the life story of one of the protagonists, Don Bosco, but they may not be quite as familiar with the *cursus vitae et honorum* of the other. A knowledge of the man and of his work will enable us to gain a better perspective on the conflict, its phases and episodes.

SECTION ONE: LAWRENCE GASTALDI—A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Introduction

Of Lawrence Gastaldi we now possess a valuable critical biography by Giuseppe Tuninetti,² and the sketch which follows is based almost entirely on it.

¹ The Vatican archives, Turin diocesan archives, and Salesian archives. Much material is held in the *Archivio Salesiano Centrale [ASC] (Fondo Don Bosco Microfiches [FDBM])*: in ASC 123: Persone: [i] Franchetti, FDBM 591 B7-603 D7; [ii] Gastaldi, FDBM 614 A5-619 A2; Gastaldi e i Salesiani, FDBM 619 A3-676 B2; Gastaldi-Bertagna, FDBM 676 B3-679 C9; [iii] in ASC 133: Pubblicazioni, Esposizione, FDBM 317 D7-324 A1.1

² Giuseppe Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883* (Casale Monferrato: PIEMME, 2 Vols., 1983 & 1988). Vol. I: *Teologo, publicista, rosminiano, vescovo di Saluzzo (1815-1871)*; Vol. II: *Arcivescovo di Torino (1871-1883)*. [Hereafter, Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I & II*]

Lawrence Gastaldi, in many ways a controversial figure, stands out as one of the most distinguished bishops of nineteenth century Italy, and one whose influence extended beyond the archdiocese of Turin. His was a multifaceted personality, rich in natural and acquired endowments. He was a man of many interests and diversified involvement—a scholar, a patriot, a theologian, a man devoted to prayer and asceticism, a priest fired with zeal, a bishop driven by deep commitment to the Church. The flaws under which he labored, and which were the cause of much suffering to himself and to others, should not blind us to the reality of his outstanding achievements. The protracted struggle with Don Bosco over a variety of issues (which forms the object of the present inquiry) is certainly not the only thing for which he should be remembered.

I. Lawrence Gastaldi's Early Life to His Appointment as Bishop of Saluzzo (1815-1867)

1. Family, Education, and Priesthood

Lawrence Gastaldi was born in Turin on March 18, 1815 (some five months before Don Bosco), as the monarchies were being “restored” by the Congress of Vienna, following upon the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the eldest of the thirteen children born to Bartolomeo Gastaldi and Margherita Volpato. His parents, both originally from the Chieri area, were people of good family and considerable fortune.³

Lawrence received his first education, and his first moral and religious guidance outside his family, from the Jesuits at the *Collegio del Carmine*, also called *Collegio dei Nobili*, which he attended as a day student.

His father, a successful attorney, would have liked his oldest son to study law and follow him in that profession. Lawrence, however, chose the priestly vocation. In 1829, at the age of 14, he received the clerical habit and started his studies at the University of Turin as a non-resident seminarian.⁴ He

³ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 12-16.

⁴ The non-resident seminary (*chiericato esterno*) was an institution for the training of candidates to the priesthood which did not require residence at a seminary. It was popular in the first half of the nineteenth century in the dioceses of the Kingdom of Sardinia and throughout Italy. Many candidates availed themselves of it, especially in the city of Turin. The non-resident seminarians would live at home or in lodgings and attend lectures either at the seminary or at the university. They would belong to one of three “clerical communities” established at designated parishes in Turin, where they met as scheduled for prayer and where they would receive formation and direction. It is believed that this practice was responsible for the poor education and spiritual formation of the clergy in Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This was obviously not universally true, and certainly not in Gastaldi's case.

was awarded the diploma in philosophy and liberal arts in 1831, and the doctorate in theology in 1836. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Luigi Fransoni in 1837, and the following year he was admitted to the university's theological faculty. While still in theological studies, he had been voted to membership in the *Accademia Solariana*, one of several learned societies in the city, where scholars met to discuss the relevant religious, social, and political questions of the day.⁵

The teaching of dogmatic theology at the university was Thomistic at the time; that of moral theology was rigorist-probabiliorist (based principally on the works of Antonio Alasia); and that of canon law and ecclesiology, jurisdictionalist in orientation. Such was laureate Gastaldi's position in these fields, a stance which explains his enduring opposition to the Probabilism of Alphonsus de' Liguori, the Jesuits, the *Amicizie*, and the *Convitto Ecclesiastico*. It would also explain the fact that in his doctoral dissertation he defended the infallibility of the Church without reference to papal infallibility.⁶

But it was not long before Father Gastaldi came under the influence of the philosopher-theologian Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, whose doctrines had a following also among some of the university professors. In the conflict between the Probabilism of St. Alphonsus de' Liguori and the prevalent Probabiliorism, Rosmini indicated a third ("conciliating") way. First, with respect to original sin, he distinguished between the sin (*peccatum*) and the fault (*culpa*). Secondly, with respect to the moral law, he made a distinction between the natural law and the positive law; he allowed a probabilist solution in cases of doubt within the field of the latter, not within the field of the former. In 1841 Father Gastaldi (by this time a canon of the church of the Holy Trinity) took an active part in the Rosminian controversy, in defense of the philosopher when the latter was attacked for his *Treatise on Moral Conscience*. In 1842 he began to correspond with Rosmini, whose philosophy was exerting an ever greater influence on him. He spoke of the light obtained from Rosmini's writings, and expressed the hope that the master's work would bring about a renewal in Catholic philosophy and theology—the desired effect being a deeper and more professional education of the clergy. This would always remain Gastaldi's overriding concern. By 1844

Most of the Piedmontese bishops at the time had studied for the priesthood by attending the university as non-resident seminarians.

⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 16-23.

⁶ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 23-36. For these terms and positions, cf. Arthur Lenti, "The Convitto Ecclesiastico—"Where One Learnt to be a Priest," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 3:1 (1992) 39-77, esp., 40-54, and notes 6, 7, and 10. [Hereafter, *Lenti, Convitto*]

Father Gastaldi was discussing religious life with Rosmini, an option which the founder of the Institute of Charity encouraged.⁷

Then came the liberal revolution of 1848, and with it a plethora of liberal newspapers, increasingly anticlerical, and (in counterpart) a number of Catholic newspapers, at first generally conciliatory in orientation. Father Gastaldi, even while considering following a religious vocation, caught the patriotic spirit and espoused the neo-Guelf doctrine of the day, of which Rosmini (with Vincenzo Gioberti) was an ardent proponent.⁸ He was thus drawn into the political arena. From July 1848 to September 1849, aided by collaborators chiefly of Rosminian persuasion, he published a paper called *Il Conciliatore Torinese*, first as a biweekly, then as a triweekly. As principal contributor, Father Gastaldi wrote in defense of Rosmini's philosophical-theological system, and of his work, *Of the Five Wounds of the Church*.⁹ In this connection, he argued for a new approach to the education and formation of the clergy. On a strictly political line, while defending the Pope's temporal power, he supported the monarchy, the new political institutions, and Italian independence. He expressed critical but balanced views on the laws establishing an a-confessional state and liberalizing education. But events in Rome in 1848-49 (the Mazzinian Republic) swung Catholic sympathies away from the liberal cause, and therefore toward more conservative positions. Conservative Catholic dailies, such as *L'Armonia*, began to dominate Catholic public opinion, thus forcing Father Gastaldi's paper out of business.¹⁰

Gastaldi never quite left behind the political ideas of the period of the *Conciliatore*, even when at his most ultramontane (or so represented). But his venture into journalism and its subsequent failure signaled the onset of a period of reflection and study, in fact of retreat. During this time he continued his work on a new edition of Antonio Alasia's *Compendium of Moral Theology*, tempering this author's probabiliorist positions with "Rosminian corrections." It was also a period of intense personal questioning, vocational discernment, and "conversion." In 1850 he resigned from the chapter of canons; and after having considered and decided against the Jesuits, he joined Rosmini's Institute of

⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 37-52.

⁸ "Guelf" and "Ghibelline" are medieval terms designating respectively partisans of the Pope and of the Holy Roman Emperor in their long struggle. In the earliest period of the liberal revolution and of the unification of Italy, the term "neo-Guelf" was applied to a Catholic patriot who conceived of the unity of Italy as of a federation under the presidency of the pope.

⁹ Cf. note 40 and related text, below.

¹⁰ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 53-88.

Charity in 1851—in spite of the fact that “it enjoyed neither the pope’s nor the bishops’ wholehearted sympathy.”¹¹

2. Rosmini’s Institute of Charity and Missionary Activity in England

After completing his novitiate in the Institute of Charity at Stresa, where he was in close contact with Father Rosmini, its founder, Father Gastaldi was assigned to England in 1853. Since 1835, the Rosminians had been actively engaged in parish ministry and preaching in that country. English society at the time was undergoing profound transformations, after the publication of Karl Marx’ Communist Manifesto (1848), and with the onset of a new phase of the industrial revolution. Equally remarkable was the religious transformation in progress. Roman Catholics were making a good recovery thanks to the decree of “Emancipation” of 1829. The Oxford Movement was reaching its zenith, and a second great wave of conversions to Roman Catholicism was in effect. But even more telling from the social and religious points of view was the migratory movement from Ireland to large English cities in consequence of the great famine (1845-1852). This was the context in which Father Gastaldi began his work as teacher, preacher, and pastor. He taught moral theology and other disciplines at St. Mary’s Rosminian Seminary, Rugby, till 1856, while studying English intensively. Fluency in the language soon enabled him to engage in the ministry of preaching, in which he excelled, and which took him as far afield as Ireland and Scotland. In 1858 he was appointed rector of St. David’s mission at Cardiff, for a large Irish immigrant community. Here he built what still remains the largest Catholic church in the area, St. Peter’s. All the while, Father Gastaldi kept in touch with political developments in Italy, and had occasion to express in print his disappointment with the policies of the liberal state.¹²

But there were problems. Educated to a life of personal freedom and self-sufficiency, unaccustomed to community life, authoritarian in manner, seeing his ambition to get ahead in the ranks of the Institute frustrated, and hence finding religious life a struggle, Father Gastaldi suffered periods of deep personal crisis. In 1855, after Father Rosmini’s death, he had asked to be released from his vows, but later changed his mind and decided to continue in the Institute. In 1856 and 1857 he was allowed to return to Turin for fairly extended periods, to attend to family affairs as the first born.¹³ In 1862, after a dispute with his

¹¹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 89-96. Gastaldi remained a lifelong admirer of the Jesuits for their learning and religious discipline, but was frankly critical of their support of Alphonsian Probabilism and of their opposition to Rosmini.

¹² Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 97-110.

¹³ The Gastaldi family’s property was valued at well over half-a-million pre-revolutionary lire. At the father’s death in 1843, the administration of the property

superior over the organization of the Cardiff mission and several failed attempts by a third party to effect a reconciliation, and for an accumulation of other reasons, including ill health, he returned to Turin permanently. There he was released from his vows "for reasons of health"; severing his ties with the Institute (but not with Rosminianism), he returned to the archdiocese.¹⁴

The biographer points out that the conflict between Father Gastaldi and his superior relating to the administration of the Cardiff mission and its strategy was only the final episode of a deep on-going crisis in the subject himself. The root cause of the "final solution" lay chiefly in Gastaldi's inability to fully espouse, perhaps even to understand, the type of religious consecration demanded by Rosmini.¹⁵ Tuninetti writes:

The converging causes may be summarized as follows: the uncertain quality of his religious commitment with regard to obedience and poverty; his basic inability to accept community life due to an individualistic and authoritarian character. Added to these reasons were Gastaldi's pride and underlying contradictions and ambiguities in his personality; Finally, the asperity of the Cardiff conflict and lack of tact on the superior's part brought things to a head.¹⁶

3. Pre-Episcopal Period in the Turin Archdiocese

(1) Five Years of Activity as Preacher and Writer

Having regained his post as canon, this time of the collegiate church of St. Lawrence, during the next five years (before his appointment as bishop), Father Gastaldi devoted most of his time to his family and to family matters, as well as to preaching. For this ministry, chiefly in the form of missions and spiritual retreats, he was sought far and wide. His preaching was now characterized, to a greater degree than before, by simplicity and by a pervasive concern for depth and relevance.¹⁷

He also devoted time to writing. During and after the English period, Father Gastaldi made significant contributions to Don Bosco's *Catholic Readings*. While writing in the popular vein as required by editorial policy, he nonetheless exercised considerable restraint and critical judgment. The following

was passed on to the first born, Lawrence, until its division in 1864 [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 15].

¹⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 110-122.

¹⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 121.

¹⁶ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 122.

¹⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 123f. 135-138.

works are worthy of note: *Catechetical Instruction on Marriage* (1855); *The Life of St. Jean Marie Vianney* (1863); *On the Authority of the Roman Pontiff* (1864); *The Life of Father Giovanni Ignazio Vola* (1865); the *History of the Holy Martyrs of Turin* (1866).

In the biographies of the Cure d'Ars and of Father Vola, Rosmini's influence is evident in his depiction of the priest primarily as the man of God, pursuing holiness through ascetic practice and the spiritual life. In this regard, at this time, one may note on Gastaldi's part an almost total disengagement from the social and political issues (in which he had earlier taken such great interest) and an increasing interest in the problems of the clergy.¹⁸

Again, under Rosminian influence, a development took place also in Gastaldi's ecclesiology, in an ultramontane direction. From the late fifties on, in letters and other writings, such as the just mentioned *On the Authority of the Roman Pontiff*, he expressly upheld the centrality of the papal magisterium and papal infallibility.¹⁹

(2) *Father Gastaldi and Don Bosco*²⁰

Besides contributing to the *Catholic Readings*, Father Gastaldi, now reestablished in Turin, was keen on resuming his good relations with Don Bosco and assisting him with his work. For he had earlier joined the group of priests who helped Don Bosco with the work of the oratory at Vadocco. He had made himself available for confessions, the teaching of catechism, and preaching, especially on Sunday afternoons.²¹ In 1848, Canon Gastaldi had headed a committee that sought to unite, regulate, and give permanence to the oratory movement. Don Bosco insisted on his own independence, however, but the effort showed the canon's concern.²² In spite of such failure, Canon Gastaldi continued to assist Don Bosco, even financially.

When the canon entered the Institute of Charity in 1853, he asked his mother to look after Don Bosco's boys as she would her own children. Margherita Gastaldi, as one of the "mothers," had been helping Mamma

¹⁸ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 124-129.

¹⁹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 129-132.

²⁰ It appears that Father Gastaldi and Don Bosco had first met in Chieri on February 17, 1841, across the examination table. On that occasion subdeacon John Bosco sought to bluff his way through a certain question posed by Father Gastaldi by creating a canon of the Council of Trent. The ruse did not succeed [G. B. Lemoyne, A. Amadei, E. Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco* (An American Edition, Diego Borgatello, Editor-in-chief. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Salesiana Publishers, Volumes 1-15, 1965-1988) I, 38a]. [Hereafter, *EBM*.]

²¹ *EBM* III, 80.

²² *EBM* III, 320f.

Margaret at Valdocco since 1848. When Mamma Margaret died in 1856, she took over the leadership of the “mothers” and continued her charitable work till 1867, at which time she followed her son on his appointment as bishop of Saluzzo. Her place was taken by a daughter and a niece of hers, who helped till 1877.²³

Father Gastaldi had been generous with financial help on a number of occasions. When leaving for England in 1853, he made a secret will, leaving to the superior of the Oratory, in the event of his own death, the not inconspicuous sum of 70,000 lire. Throughout the Rosminian period, as correspondence shows, Don Bosco was close to Father Gastaldi’s family.

During Father Gastaldi’s furloughs of 1856 and 1857 (Dominic Savio had visions of the conversion of England at this time!), and after his definitive return from that mission in 1862, he intensified his activity on behalf of the Oratory to an even greater degree, especially through preaching. He preached the first spiritual retreat for Salesians at Trofarello in 1864. While the church of Mary Help of Christians was under construction, he made financial contributions. He spoke at the laying of the first stone in 1862; and in 1868 (as bishop of Saluzzo) he was the principal guest speaker during the solemn dedication octave.²⁴

II. Lawrence Gastaldi, Bishop of Saluzzo (1867-1871)

The confrontation between the Italian government and the Holy See resulted in many diocesan vacancies. Turin had been vacant since the death of exiled Archbishop Luigi Fransoni in 1862; Saluzzo, since the death of Bishop Giovanni A. Gianotti in 1863. Vacancies began to be filled in 1867, and Don Bosco’s contribution in this regard is to be noted. At Pius IX’s request, so Lemoyne tells us (and a document in the Vatican archives confirms it), Don Bosco submitted a list of names of Piedmontese priests for appointment as bishops, and Gastaldi’s topped the list.²⁵

²³ *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855*. The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco ([...] New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1989), 297. [Hereafter, *MO-En*] Cf. *EBM* II, 414; III, 178f. (*his*, not *her*, sister!); IV, 99.

²⁴ *EBM* VII, 372, 394; VIII, 318; IX, 125-238. For all the above, cf. also Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 132-135.

²⁵ *EBM* VIII, 279. Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 145, note 2; and more recently and critically, Francesco Motto, “L’azione mediatrice di Don Bosco nella questione delle sedi vescovili vacanti dal 1858 alla morte di Pio IX (1878),” in *Don Bosco nella Chiesa a servizio dell’umanità. Studi e testimonianze* (ed. by Pietro Braido. Istituto Storico Salesiano, Roma, Studi 5. Roma: LAS, 1987 [p. 251-328]), p. 283-299, esp. p. 291-294. [Hereafter, *Motto*, *L’azione*]

1. The Man and the Priest

Father Gastaldi appeared well qualified for an episcopal career. His had been a life lived to the full amid the most varied experiences: scholarly endeavors, priestly ministry, religious controversy, political involvement, writing and publishing, the challenge of a major philosopher and theologian (Rosmini), religious life, the English mission—a series of successes, failures and crises. Moreover, as already noted, after his doctoral studies he had progressed to a personal synthesis, uniting Piedmontese theology and Rosminian thought. It was the latter which was responsible for Gastaldi's modified Probabiliorism and for his progress toward Ultramontanism. Rosmini's ascetic and spiritual program as expounded in his *Maxims of Christian Perfection*, even if assimilated only in part, was responsible for shaping Gastaldi's spirituality. And Rosmini's *Of the Five Wounds of the Holy Church* helped him formulate a doctrine of the Church's present need, and a conception of the role of the bishop in the modern Church.²⁶

This is the background that conferred episcopal stature on Father Gastaldi. During the years of reflection, following his withdrawal from the Institute of Charity, his character and personality seemed to settle, solidify and come to maturity in preparation, as it were, for the episcopal ministry. He was indeed a worthy candidate. But reasons of personal friendship also were a strong motivation behind Don Bosco's decision to place Gastaldi's name on his list of nominees, with a special recommendation for Saluzzo.

On March 27, 1867 Canon Gastaldi was in fact named bishop of Saluzzo. He was ordained on June 2 in the church of St. Lawrence by the recently appointed archbishop of Turin, Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi dei Conti di Netro. On June 9 he entered his see.²⁷

2. Gastaldi's Ministry as Bishop of Saluzzo

(1) The Setting

Saluzzo, situated some thirty-five miles south of Turin, in the province of Cuneo, was at the time a city of some 16,000 inhabitants. The diocesan territory surrounding it, lying in the alpine foothills and valleys, sustained a population of some 140,000 people. They were largely engaged in agriculture, partly in sheep herding, and very little in industry. The area was poor, and the economy generally depressed, a depression made worse by the unstable conditions in Italy at the time. The priests directly in care of souls in the 91 parishes numbered

²⁶ Cf. note 40 and related text, below.

²⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 145f.

138, and the people's religious practice was generally satisfactory, though much was needed to be done with regard to religious instruction.²⁸

Bishop Gastaldi's greatest concern was the education and formation of the clergy. He wanted priests who were outstanding in holiness and learning, as well as attuned and equal to the challenges of the times. As bishop he could at last try to implement some of the ideas he had been fighting for through the spoken and written word for many years.

Since the government had denied him use of the episcopal palace, due to difficulties with the granting of the *Exequatur*, he had chosen to reside at the seminary. This enabled him to supervise personally the seminary program and the forty-five seminarians.²⁹

(2) *The Pastoral Visitation*

Undoubtedly, in his episcopal ministry Gastaldi aimed at exemplifying the ideal of the reformer-pastor bishop, as he understood the role. Tireless in his priestly work, and in the spoken and written word, he sought to bring about a genuine reform among the clergy and a renewal in the Christian life of the faithful throughout the diocese.

The two most important acts of his episcopal ministry during his brief tenure at Saluzzo were the pastoral visitation of each parish in the diocese, carried out during the years 1868 and 1869, and his participation at the First Vatican Council during 1869-70.

The pastoral visitation in its content shows that genuine reform and renewal were the bishop's immediate priority, as well as the goals that would characterize his future administration. But, in its pastoral style, the visitation also revealed his limitations. Though inspired by a spirit of priestly service, his efforts to achieve full unity and control and to strengthen ecclesiastical discipline bore the stamp of a centralizing tendency aggravated by an unyielding character. His very pastoral charity and spirituality seemed far removed for the realities of life in that backwater that was the diocese of Saluzzo. Likewise, his austere asceticism tended to alienate his clergy's sympathy.³⁰

²⁸ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 147-172.

²⁹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 178-182.

The *Exequatur* was a decree issued by the government permitting the bishop to enter into possession of the diocesan institutional premises and to receive the bishop's revenues. (The *Placet*, on the other hand, was a similar document issued to a pastor with respect to the parish to which he was appointed.)

³⁰ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 185-188.

(3) *The First Vatican Council*

The forthcoming Council, first announced by Pius IX on June 29, 1867 to bishops gathered in Rome for the celebration of the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul (among them the newly ordained Bishop Gastaldi), and publicly proclaimed on June 29, 1868, dominated Gastaldi's whole Saluzzo period. From its inception, the bishop engaged in intense personal reflection on the Council and on the roles of pope and bishops. He gave frequent expression to these concerns in his preaching and writing. This was followed by preparatory meetings of the clergy and by surveys among the people. Bishop Gastaldi departed for Rome on November 16, and was an active participant in the work of the Council from its first session on December 8, 1869.

The Piedmontese bishops were deeply divided, especially over the question of infallibility. Such division gave rise to blocks of opinion which solidified through dialogue during the Council itself. More generally, these opposing stances reflected different conceptions of Church order and canon law—the ultramontane and the Gallican in their various shades and degrees. It appears that Bishop Gastaldi at first suffered through a period of uncertainty, and then for some time maintained an “independent” posture in the matter. But on January 23 (1870), in a letter to Cardinal Filippo De Angelis he declared his support for papal infallibility and its definition. But he also expressed his reservations as to the manner in which it was presented in the schema. He explained (as mentioned above) that he found it difficult to conceive of an infallible papal magisterium in isolation, apart from the bishops. It seems, as Lemoyne relates, that it was through Don Bosco's efforts that Bishop Gastaldi set aside these reservations; therefore when the question was debated in general congregation, he was the first of the Piedmontese bishops to speak in favor of infallibility (May 30, 1870).³¹

(4) *New Pastoral Goals and Illness*

Throughout that spring Bishop Gastaldi had not been well. Consequently, after a spiritual retreat with the Jesuits and an audience with Pius IX, in which he received assurances that his services to the Church would not go unrewarded, he

³¹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I*, 189-211; *EBM IX*, 382-384.

As mentioned above, Gastaldi had been a supporter of papal infallibility as such as early as 1858. He was also a supporter of its definition. His uncertainty (if he indeed suffered a period of uncertainty) concerned not whether the pope was or was not infallible, nor whether the definition was or was not opportune or timely, but rather the manner in which it was expressed (without meaningful reference to the bishops' magisterium). Tuninetti [*ibid.*, 198] believes that Lemoyne's statements should be interpreted in this light.

quit Rome at the end of July. A number of bishops did the same, since by this time the work of the Council seemed to be winding down. Then came the Italian occupation of Rome (September 20, 1870) and the Council's hasty adjournment *sine die* (October 20, 1870).

This development had the effect of widening the rift dividing the Piedmontese bishops, as they met in congress in November, a division now aggravated also by disagreements over the question of participation in political elections.

In spite of such controversies and poor health, through the first half of 1871, Bishop Gastaldi turned his renewed, vigorous attention to the pastoral care of his diocese and to the reform and renewal program initiated with his pastoral visitation. For this purpose he announced a diocesan synod to be held in early July. The synod, however, never took place. He fell gravely ill (of an unspecified illness), and had to take a leave of absence on that account. After convalescing through the summer, in September he returned to his diocese only to learn that he had been nominated archbishop of Turin, the appointment being officially confirmed on October 27 (1871).³²

III. Lawrence Gastaldi, Archbishop of Turin (1871-1883)

1. Appointment

Archbishop Riccardi di Netro of Turin died on October 16, 1870. There followed a vacancy of nearly a year, due to the "state of war" existing between the Holy See and the Italian government after the occupation of Rome. Many other dioceses were vacant at the time, for the conflictual situation interfered with the free appointment of bishops. Nevertheless, in late summer of 1871, Pius IX began to set in motion the process of nominations and appointments. At this point (in September) Don Bosco was called in by Minister Giovanni Lanza to act as intermediary in the matter in a private capacity. Don Bosco meanwhile had submitted to the pope a list of eighteen nominees to fill vacant sees in Piedmont and Liguria. He had specifically recommended the transfer of Bishop Gastaldi to Turin; he had also suggested the nomination of Salvatore Magnasco for Genoa and of Giuseppe M. Sciandra for Acqui. Don Bosco had his wish, and he immediately notified Bishop Gastaldi. The official bull of nomination was delivered on September 23.³³

³² Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 212-215.

³³ *EBM* X, 198-200. For various phases of the mediation, cf. *ibid.*, 183., 186-191, 197-208; and critically, Motto, *L'azione*, 308-315. At this point, Don Bosco's mediation was concerned only with bishops' nominations. Later, between 1872 and 1874, Don Bosco was to be actively engaged in the matter of the *Exequaturs* [cf. note 39 and related text, below].

Archbishop Gastaldi entered the See of Turin on November 26, 1871. For political reasons his entrance was in a less solemn and public form than had been originally planned. It was also marred by hostile manifestations and the fear of personal abuse by the populace. The new archbishop was the object of hostile attacks from the secular press, and was received ambivalently, even if civilly, by the local authorities. The Catholic press, the clergy, and the Catholic laity, generally speaking, were loud in his praises; but dissenting voices were heard even in these quarters.³⁴ After all, he was a well known and, in many ways, controversial figure. He had been no passive spectator in the religious and political events of the past quarter century.

2. Facing a Difficult Situation

Other factors combined to make the new archbishop's position more difficult. In the first place, the economic situation was none too promising. The Turin archdiocese lay partly in the Po valley, and took in the surrounding foothill and mountain country. Poverty reigned in the mountains, which accounts for the sustained migratory movement to the cities. In the valley and in the foothills, agriculture (the prevailing occupation, with a large number of small proprietors) provided a better living; but it was already experiencing serious depression due to the inflow of cheaper imports. Piedmontese cities, Turin in particular, had been growing along the two related tracks of urban expansion and industrial development. But, according to the 1862 census for Turin, of 204,715 inhabitants, only some 78,000 were engaged in industries or crafts, related to the military, railroad construction, wood products, and food processing. Unlike cities like Milan, perhaps also because of the transfer of the capital after the unification of Italy, Turin would have to wait for decades for its industrial promise to be fulfilled. But, although one may not yet speak of the existence of an "industrial proletariat", the 1870s were characterized by a society in the process of transformation.³⁵

Secondly, the Church in the diocese of Turin was facing a critical situation. The archdiocesan structures, such as the archbishop's household and chancery, the chapters, the seminaries, the theological faculty, were left without resources by the secularization laws. The operation of the parishes was largely guaranteed. But only pastors and teachers had sure incomes; most of the remaining clergy, including associate parish priests, lived from hand to mouth.³⁶

³⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 15-25.

For Don Bosco's participation in this event and his subsequent illness at Varazze, cf. *EBM* X, 122-130.

³⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 31-34.

³⁶ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 34-41.

As for the religious situation, the Church of Turin was suffering from the general regression caused by the revolutionary movement, even if circumstantial religious practice, together with private devotion, was still the norm. Regarding pastoral care, the Church's religious life throughout the diocese was in a state of neglect, with harmful results for both clergy and people. In this regard, one should bear in mind that Bishop Gastaldi was taking over an archdiocese which for twenty years had been deprived of its pastor. Archbishop Fransoni's period of exile (1850-1862) had been followed by five years of vacancy (1862-1867). Archbishop Riccardi di Netro's short term (1867-1870) had been taken up in part with the Vatican Council, and for the most part was marred by ill health.³⁷

3. The Struggle for the *Exequatur*

Archbishop Gastaldi's initial activity in Turin was rendered even more difficult by an additional problem, which he would have liked to see resolved immediately, but with which, by force of circumstances, he had to contend for some years. As was the case with all the bishops nominated in 1871, Gastaldi was neither permitted to take possession of the archiepiscopal palace nor allowed to receive the bishop's revenues. He was thus forced to establish a temporary residence at the seminary, where he acted as rector, and where he lived until May 1874 with the help of an allowance from the Holy See. This state of affairs both hampered his ministry and deprived him of needed resources.

The Law of Guarantees passed by the Italian parliament on May 13, 1871, after the taking of Rome and the expropriation of papal territory, did indeed concede to the pope the right to appoint bishops; but, in line with the government's jurisdictionalist policy, the Law continued to reserve to the state the granting of the *Exequatur* and of the *Placet*. These permits, the *Exequatur* in particular, were to be issued to the bishop only upon submission of the bull of nomination. Such provision of "guarantees" was flatly rejected by the Holy See. By injunction from the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Giovanni Antonelli, bishops were forbidden to request the *Exequatur* or to make any act of submission to the State authority. They were to enter their see and immediately challenge the State by some official act. Not only did such a *modus operandi* give rise to situations of conflict; it also deprived the bishop of a rightful financial base.

As already indicated, it was on the occasion of the pope's first appointments after the Law of Guarantees, that Minister Lanza sought Don Bosco's private mediation. Lanza's purpose would have been that of obtaining favorable nominations. But Don Bosco was then "retained" by the Holy See as a

³⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 41-49.

private mediator in the matter of the *Exequatur*. The idea was to negotiate a formula that would make it possible for a bishop to enter into possession of diocesan assets without the humiliating procedure of submitting the nomination bull to the government. He was active in the matter between 1872 and 1874. The outcome of these negotiations was important to every bishop, including Archbishop Gastaldi. Don Bosco's effort, however, ended in failure in spite of the government's willingness to reach a compromise, chiefly (so it seems) because of Cardinal Antonelli's intransigence, but also (so Don Bosco believed, according to the biographer) because of Chancellor Bismarck's opposition to any concession to the Church.³⁸

Eventually, however, a practical, unofficial *modus operandi* was developed by which individual bishops requested the *Exequatur* indirectly—to which procedure the Holy See acquiesced. It consisted in exhibiting the nomination bull for the inspection of “clergy and people” in the sacristy of the cathedral, and allowing a notary public to make a copy for the authorities(!). This is how Gastaldi (with the added support of the local authority), finally, in May 1874, obtained the *Exequatur*.³⁹

4. Gastaldi the Reformer-Pastor Bishop

Archbishop Gastaldi did not wait for the *Exequatur* to fall in place. No sooner was he established, than he inaugurated his pastoral program, guided by the understanding he had gained of what the role and task of a bishop should be.

³⁸ Cf., e.g. *EBM* X, 241.

³⁹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 51-58. For a detailed description of Don Bosco's mediating activity, cf. *EBM* X, 208-245, and more critically, Francesco Motto, “La Mediazione di don Bosco fra la Santa Sede e Governo per la concessione degli Exequatur ai vescovi d'Italia (1872-1874),” *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 6:1 (1987) 3-79. [Hereafter, **Motto, Mediazione**]

Throughout this whole period (1872-1874), when Don Bosco was trying to bring about a rapprochement between the government and the Holy See in the matter of the *Exequatur*, Archbishop Gastaldi, while no doubt interested, and perhaps even appreciative of his efforts, maintained nonetheless a certain independence both from Don Bosco and from Rome. The *Exequatur* was ultimately granted on a different basis than that sought by Rome through Don Bosco's mediation.

During those very years, the two protagonists were locked in a serious and personal struggle over the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (a struggle which Gastaldi carried beyond the approval of 1874 into the years during which Don Bosco was seeking exemption privileges). This, the first significant stage of confrontation, will be described below.

(1) Rosminian Influence

Earlier we discussed Rosminian influence on Gastaldi, and the fact that Rosmini's work, *Of the Five Wounds of the Holy Church*, published in 1846, was decisive in shaping that understanding.

These wounds, Rosmini argues, are a legacy of medieval feudalism, and the Church needs to reform itself so it can regain its earlier purity. The first wound, the "Wound in the Left Hand," stands for the lack of unity between clergy and people in public worship. This condition has been created not only by the use of a dead language in its liturgical services, but also by inadequate and incompetent preaching and teaching on the part of the clergy. The latter failure is a consequence of the second wound, the "Wound in the Right Hand," which is the insufficient education and formation of the clergy. This deplorable state in the Church is perpetuated by the third wound, the great "Wound in the Side." It is the wound of division among the bishops, and of their separation from one another and from their priests and people. The principal contributing cause of division has been the nomination of bishops by the civil power. This is the fourth wound, the "Wound in the Right Foot." Because of such interference, all too often bishops proved to be nothing but schemers and politicians, engrossed in secular affairs, and generally more devoted to the pursuit of their own interests than to the care of their flock. Historically the claim by the civil power to appoint bishops is traceable to the feudal period. It was the time when land grants held by the Church were fiefs of an overlord. In that system the bishops on whom the fiefs were bestowed were regarded as vassals. And this is the fifth wound, the "Wound in the Left Foot." Rosmini then brought his reflections to a close in an additional chapter, bearing the significant title, "On the Election of Bishops by Clergy and People."⁴⁰

Archbishop Gastaldi then believed in the necessity of structural, as well as spiritual reforms in the church, especially with regard to the formation of the clergy. This went along necessarily with a new conception of the centrality of the role and function of the local bishop, for this is the emphasis of Rosmini's book. The latter point was decisive for Gastaldi's conception and exercise of

⁴⁰ Antonio Rosmini, *Of the Five Wounds of the Holy Church* (tr. & ed. with an introduction by H.P. Liddon. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1883), *passim*.

Rosmini had first published the work anonymously in 1832. But with the accession of Pope Pius IX, who had the reputation of being a "liberal," he thought that reforms could take place in the Church, and thus published the book in his own name. However, such a critical assessment of the situation (at once social, political, and religious in character) inevitably incurred the Church's censure. The book, together with another work of Rosmini, *The Constitution According to Social Justice*, published in 1848, was condemned.

episcopal authority. Such an idea received support from Gastaldi's university education, as well as (from a different perspective) from Roman policy, which, in view of the attacks mounted by the liberal state, sought to strengthen the bishops' authority.

(2) *Gastaldi's Conception of Episcopal Office*

Gastaldi brought to his new and difficult task a high concept of the episcopal dignity. In his first pastoral letter as bishop of Saluzzo, he had described the bishop as "a new Moses," as "holding the perfection of the priesthood," and called to a "holiness more perfect than that of religious with vows." Bishops were "the successors of the Apostles, to whom Christ had said, 'He who hears you hears me'."⁴¹ In his first (rather restrained) pastoral letter as archbishop, he asked for prayers that he might be worthy of "this office of father, teacher, judge, and leader."

His statements at Vatican I were even more explicit. When speaking in support of papal infallibility, Gastaldi expressed his reservations with respect to the doctrine's formulation, precisely because of a failure to relate it to the bishops' magisterium. In his comments on the *schemata*, *De Ecclesia* and *De Romano Pontifice*, he spoke of the bishops as collaborators of the pope in matters of faith (what we now call, "collegiality"); as seated at the ecumenical council, not just as advisers, but as judges *jure divino* in decrees and definitions; and as having teaching authority in their own dioceses.

In speaking on the *schemata*, *De Episcopis* and *De vita et honestate Clericorum*, he stressed the necessity of the pastoral visitation, and of diocesan and national synods. A bishop's pastoral activity, he emphasized, should be modeled on that of the great bishops of antiquity, with *salus animarum* as the top priority. St. Charles Borromeo could well serve as the model of the post-Tridentine pastor bishop.⁴²

(3) *Gastaldi's Personality and Character*

In all this, Rosminian influence (stemming especially from *The Five Wounds*) is evident. These understandings, however, were processed in a very personal way. Without a doubt, Gastaldi was a person of deep faith, spirituality, and piety; he was austere in personal habits and demeanor. Gifted with a keen intelligence and a strong will, he was dynamic, aggressive, and zealous in the ministry to the point of self-sacrifice. But, though generally self-reliant, he was not free of self-doubt, uncertainty, and restlessness; there was in him a tendency

⁴¹ Lk 10:16.

⁴² Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 26-29.

to seek compensation in feverish activity. He was conscious of his own gifts and merits to the point of haughtiness; and he often reacted strongly when slighted. Most damaging of all, just as Gastaldi never really appropriated Rosmini's ideas of religious consecration and spirituality, so also in his conception of the Church, unlike Rosmini, he never quite transcended the rigidly clerical-hierarchical-institutional model. All such traits of character and formation could not but be reflected in his pastoral style, the chiefly quality of which was a relentless and unyielding pursuit of stated reform goals.

To sum up: a person of outstanding qualities and tragic flaws—this was the man whom Don Bosco had recommended for the archiepiscopal see of St. Maximus.

5. Gastaldi's Collaborators

As indicated above, the new archbishop's pastoral program would have to face serious problems, especially as it related to the Church and the clergy. The better to achieve his goals, Gastaldi put together a team of able collaborators. He brought with him from Saluzzo a dynamic, if controversial, private secretary in the person of Canon Tommaso Chiuso, who was to figure prominently and adversely in the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict.⁴³ The experienced Canon Giuseppe Zappata was named vicar general.⁴⁴ Once granted the *Exequatur* and established in his own residence in 1874, the archbishop appointed Giuseppe Soldati as rector of the seminary, a young priest whom he had learned to appreciate when in residence there.⁴⁵ Later Archbishop Gastaldi installed as a key figure in his

⁴³ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 59-62.

Tommaso Chiuso (1846-1904), as personal secretary, was very close to the archbishop, who successively named him to the metropolitan chapter of canons and then appointed him archdiocesan chancellor. In these capacities, he was deeply involved in the Bosco-Gastaldi controversy, and was accused of having been its evil genius. Archbishop Gastaldi made him his universal heir. Later, to offset debts incurred by speculation in the stock market, the canon became embroiled in mismanagement of church property he had in trust and in embezzlement of funds. He would later be brought to trial, suspended and defrocked by Gastaldi's second successor, Archbishop Davide Riccardi.

⁴⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 62f.

Giuseppe Zappata (1796-1883) had already served as vicar in the previous administration, and had practically governed the diocese since Archbishop Fransoni's death in 1862. Both loyal and independent, he was one of Gastaldi's most trusted advisers.

⁴⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 64-68.

Giuseppe Maria Soldati (or Soldà, 1839-1886), doctor in theology and, like his archbishop, an austere and demanding pedagogue, was the chief agent of Gastaldi's seminary reforms. He had been appointed vice-rector of the seminary by Canon Zappata in 1863. He then served as rector until 1884, when he was removed by

administration a bright young canon lawyer and theologian, Emanuele Colomiatti, to serve as diocesan fiscal attorney. Colomiatti was to be deeply involved in the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict at its most critical stages; and later, by his adverse testimony and action, he was to prove a redoubtable opponent in Don Bosco's process of beatification.⁴⁶ Archbishop Gastaldi often had recourse to advisers outside his official team, usually men of high qualifications. Two of these were particularly influential as counselors in spiritual matters: Father Felice Carpignano, the archbishop's confessor, and Father Marcantonio Durando, Vincentian provincial, his most trusted adviser.⁴⁷

It should be emphasized that Gastaldi put together a team of collaborators endowed with both experience and competence, and all (perhaps with one exception) of high repute. He did not simply look for yes-men who would do his bidding. The same may be said of the canonical body of advisers that formed the cathedral chapter of canons. Its diversity and its independence virtually guaranteed unbiased advice.⁴⁸

6. Reform of the Clergy and Church Life: Synods

As mentioned earlier, up to this point Gastaldi had not been in a position to put his ideas into execution. As archbishop of Turin at the age of 56, even though not in the best of health, he dared to hope for the span of time necessary to turn those understandings into the reality of needed reforms.

Gastaldi's successor, Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda. Soldati's perception of the inferior quality of Salesian priestly formation made him, like his archbishop, a very hostile participant in the struggle over the approval of the Salesian Constitutions.

⁴⁶ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 64.

Emanuele Colomiatti (1846-1928), a doctor in theology from Turin and a doctor in canon law from Rome, a professor of canon and international law in Turin, joined the Gastaldi chancery in 1875, and was formally named fiscal attorney in 1882, on the death of the incumbent. The fiscal attorney or lawyer was a bishop's counsel and procurator in all legal questions arising within the territory. In 1881-82, Colomiatti conducted the legal defense of the archbishop against Don Bosco and Father John Bonetti in their trial by the Holy Office in Rome.

⁴⁷ Felice Carpignano (1810-1888) was a priest of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. Marcantonio Durando (1801-1880), the austere visitor (provincial) of the Priests of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul, was for nearly forty years a major influence in the church of Turin. At the request, first of Archbishop Fransoni in 1860, and later of Archbishop Riccardi di Netro in 1867, Father Durando examined the Salesian Constitution, recording his critical observations regarding their provisions and spirit.

⁴⁸ For all the above, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 59-77.

(1) Assessment of Church Life

In his first Report to the Holy See on the state of the diocese, presented in 1874 but reflecting the experiences of the first three years in office, Archbishop Gastaldi described a real situation and expressed real concerns. Speaking of pastors, he found that, while most of them were good and zealous priests, a number of otherwise good priests lacked any kind of pastoral concern. Then there were those who led worldly lives and “seemed to have lost even their faith.” He had suspended one of them, but regretted that bishops lacked the canonical tools to remove pastors as needed.

With respect to the diocesan clergy at large—he had silenced some otherwise gifted priests who were spreading doctrines at variance with papal teachings; he had ordered others to wear the ecclesiastical garb under pain of suspension; he had reprimanded some for not celebrating Mass correctly; he had tried in various ways to correct priests addicted to drinking or guilty of sexual misconduct. Some were found to be incorrigible, claiming that they never had a vocation. Gastaldi stated that his efforts had evoked accusations of undue severity from the clergy and personal attacks in the press. But he was determined to move forward, after the example of St. Charles Borromeo.

Religious (especially if priests) driven from religious houses by the laws of suppression were a serious social and religious problem. The root cause of their malaise was the poor quality of their early formation, particularly in their novitiate. He expressed the hope that the Holy See would require all candidates to the priesthood, including exempt religious, to be examined by their bishop before ordination, as the Council of Trent prescribed.⁴⁹

In assessing the religious life of six classes of people, he found that the nobility, and the peasantry remained in different ways the most attached to their religion. Merchants and tradesmen had turned anticlerical, but still largely attended church. The educated intellectuals and the moneyed middle class engaged in business and finance had lapsed almost entirely. Likewise, applying different criteria—people educated before the liberal revolution of 1848 generally still practiced their faith. Those educated between 1848 and the unification of Italy (1861) had to a considerable extent abandoned its practice. But those educated in the sixties and seventies had generally lost their faith. This was especially true of university students.

⁴⁹ At this point, Gastaldi makes a critical reference to the Salesian novitiate and to Don Bosco's way of forming his Salesians. Throughout the process of approval of the Salesian Constitutions (1872-1874) Gastaldi stated his opposition on these and other grounds in the most forceful terms [cf. Part II of this installment, below].

Archbishop Gastaldi reached the conclusion that reform of the clergy and restoration of ecclesiastical discipline had to have priority. Only then could Christian life be made to flourish among the people, and programs for education and renewal undertaken. Moreover, his pastoral strategy included the development of a new type of parish priest. True, the archdiocese had in the recent past produced such saintly priests as Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo, Giuseppe Cafasso, Don Bosco, Leonardo Murialdo, Carlo Faà di Bruno, Federico Albert, and others. But these were charismatic persons who transcended the current seminary model. Now, by a kind of shock treatment, he meant to put into effect reform programs that would produce holy, learned, totally dedicated priests. This goal dictated his point of attack.⁵⁰

At Saluzzo Bishop Gastaldi had begun his term of office with an extended pastoral visitation, and only after the Vatican Council (at which he had upheld the necessity of episcopal councils and diocesan synods) did he turn his attention to a synod. Now, by contrast, he felt that diocesan synods would be the most effective instruments of reform and of government. The archbishop then convoked the first diocesan synod for June 25-27, 1873. Although such synods had been prescribed by the Council of Trent, no synod had been held in the archdiocese since 1788, and none in Piedmont since 1848.

He convoked further synods in 1874 and 1875; and again (at three-year intervals) in 1878, and 1881. Other bishops in Piedmont followed Gastaldi's example. Gastaldi was convinced that after Church life and clergy discipline were put on a firm basis, a proper canonical visitation of the parishes could be undertaken with success. As it turned out, time ran out on Archbishop Gastaldi before he could complete such a visitation.

(2) *Synod of 1873*

Among the Gastaldi synods, those of 1874 and 1878 were important; but that of 1873 was fundamental and pace-setting. For this first synod, which was to serve also as a basis for future synods, the archbishop drafted elaborate new statutes for the ordering and reform of all areas of Church life and discipline, to be discussed at the synod. He submitted them to a representative theological committee of fifteen, and to the cathedral chapter of canons for their comments and proposals. These two bodies generally sought to reduce the severity of the archbishop's formulations—for example on such titles as: internal assent to the papal magisterium, with special reference to Pius IX's Encyclicals and the *Syllabus*; ecclesiastical censorship of publications by priests in the diocese; necessity of baptism and responsibility for children dying without it; absolution of sins

⁵⁰ For all the above, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 79-85.

reserved to the bishop; obligation on the part of the faithful to support seminary and clergy; the promise of obedience to the bishop made at ordination; etc. Only in some instances did Gastaldi accept their modifications. But one area of reform, and one in which he was determined from the start to effect a major change, dealt with the lifestyle, discipline and responsibilities of the clergy. On these issues he was adamant. After all, that was to be the real purpose of the synod.

Inevitably, the text of the statutes was leaked, and there followed a series of protests from various quarters of the clergy as well as vicious attacks on the archbishop by anticlerical newspapers in defense of the clergy(!). During the synod itself the reading of the statutes met with numerous vocal protests. After the synod, appeals were made to the Holy See by members of the clergy; and on July 11, 1873, an anonymous brief was presented to the Congregation of the Council. The anonymous author not only decried the severity of the norms, calling for greater humanity and charity in regard both to the diocesan clergy and to religious; he also attacked the archbishop's basic pastoral policy at several points. A secret investigation by the Secretary of State through the Apostolic Delegate in Turin confirmed the substantial truth of the allegations. The Holy See then contacted Archbishop Gastaldi, and issued a decree disqualifying some of the judges and examiners for being (as had been alleged, and were in reality) politically "fellow travelers". The Archbishop in reply expressed his keen disappointment, rejected the decree as undermining his authority, and even spoke of resigning. But he acquiesced when the Rome yielded on the statutes themselves, which were already being printed.

This was Gastaldi's first clash with the Holy See. If, on the one hand, he was allowed to publish the synodical statutes, on the other, he suffered defeat in the matter of the judges and examiners, and more so in the fact that Rome's action implied disapproval of some of his pastoral policies.

The synod, and the dialogue that preceded and accompanied it, also revealed that positions for or against the archbishop's pastoral policy had been forming among the clergy.⁵¹

(3) Synod of 1874

Opposition from among the clergy again reared its head in 1874. Relying on the Tridentine decrees and the example of St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop Gastaldi convoked a second synod for May 4, 1874. The purpose of this one-day meeting was to ascertain if the statutes of 1873 were being implemented.

Immediately the cathedral chapter of canons, to whom Gastaldi had sent the agenda and some additional articles, protested that the statutes had not been reviewed by them before publication. The canons then proceeded to examine each

⁵¹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 85-107.

article, making substantial alterations, noting that the first synod had not been well received, and that the many penalties attached or threatened had been strongly resented.

The Archbishop, surprised and disappointed, countered by reaffirming the deliberations of the synod, and by publishing a revised list of judges and examiners (including some names vetoed by Rome!).

(4) Synod of 1878

The fourth synod (convoked for November 5, 1878) was noteworthy for the archbishop's addresses and the important pastoral concerns expressed therein: the primacy of preaching; the necessity of festive oratories; the importance of unity between clergy and bishop.

This synod also added articles to the statutes that dealt chiefly with theological conferences and preaching (all priests, except pastors, had to submit to the archbishop a sample sermon!). Gastaldi also presented revised lists of judges and examiners. Again, among the former he had named four who had been proscribed by Rome earlier; among the latter he had named Don Bosco.⁵²

(5) Liturgical Calendars

Every year, from 1872 to 1883 Archbishop Gastaldi published a liturgical calendar, which included a "Letter to the Clergy," as well as directives and decrees. It was the vehicle by which he instructed his priests, gave them directions for their pastoral activity, sought to control abuses and lack of discipline, and specified how the synodical statutes should be observed.

In conclusion, it can be said that through the synods and the liturgical calendars Archbishop Gastaldi asserted his concept of the bishop's role, and his right to act accordingly. He expressed his idea of what a priest should be like, and demonstrated compelling concern for priestly holiness and asceticism, and for a pastoral dedication expressing the essentially religious nature of the priestly vocation. A clerical, hierarchic ecclesiology (that of Trent and of Vatican I) supported Gastaldi's actions and pronouncements, as well as his frequent recourse to canon law, to Tridentine disciplinary norms, and to ecclesiastical sanctions.

⁵² In his address, Archbishop Gastaldi referred to factions among the clergy, and particularly to Don Bosco's "insubordination." By the end of 1878, a definitive breach between the two seemed inevitable. How then is one to explain the honor conferred on Don Bosco by the archbishop? Was it a concession, an attempt at a rapprochement? Or was it simply a recognition of merit, nobly overlooking personal disagreements?

And remarkably, no attempt was ever made to address the transformations occurring in society and the need to develop appropriate pastoral strategies.⁵³

7. Reform of Structures for the Education and Formation of the Clergy

(1) The School of Theology and the Theological Faculty

It is a matter of record that during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century Catholic culture, religious and ecclesiastical studies, and in particular the theological formation of the clergy, had been in steady decline in Italy, Piedmont included. This situation was now aggravated by the secular laws passed after the liberal revolution and the unification of Italy. School reforms, beginning with the Boncompagni Law of 1848, had removed the theological faculty at the University of Turin from the bishops' control. This action marked "the beginning of the end." The school of theology and its faculty were caught in a stranglehold, so to speak, and it became increasingly difficult to maintain enrollment and standards, whether academic or "Catholic." By decree of January 26, 1873, the government closed the school of theology altogether. The seminaries, on the other hand, did not offer graduate degrees in any branch of ecclesiastical studies; Archbishop Gastaldi regarded such lack as one of the chief causes for the insufficient education of the clergy. After all, most priests attended one of the diocesan seminaries.

The archbishop was quick to take action and ask the Holy See for permission to transfer the school of theology to the seminary, with the power to grant the doctoral degree. By decree of February 24, 1874, the transfer was granted. The new statutes allowed the archbishop to assemble a new faculty, and to place theological studies on a new and firmer basis.

The archbishop had requested also the establishment of a faculty of canon law, but did not obtain it. However, the negotiations continued and came to a favorable conclusion in 1883, a month before the archbishop's death.

To foster the study of Church history, in 1872 Archbishop Gastaldi had developed a plan for the establishment of an Academy. It became a reality on January 28, 1874 under the title of the Sub-Alpine Academy of Church History. In the list of the founding members we find also Don Bosco's name.⁵⁴

⁵³ For all the above cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 79-114.

⁵⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 115-143.

Archbishop Gastaldi asked Don Bosco to become a member of the Academy in December, 1872. In the founding document of January 28, 1874, Don Bosco is listed third among the 10 founding members. According to the biographer, Don Bosco's diploma of appointment was signed on the same date, but "for some reason"

(2) Reform of Diocesan Seminaries

Archbishop Gastaldi, like many of his brother bishops, had never attended a seminary, but had studied for the priesthood as a non-resident seminarian, living at home and attending the university. A number of factors converged in shaping his new understanding of the seminary and its role: his ultramontane conversion; his espousal of Rosmini's doctrine of the Five Wounds with regard to education and formation of the clergy; his experience at the First Vatican Council; and, finally, his recourse to the Council of Trent and to the example of St. Charles Borromeo for inspiration in his episcopal ministry. The experience of the first two synods conferred a sense of urgency on Gastaldi's plan for seminary reform.

At the time of Gastaldi's appointment, the archdiocese operated four seminaries. The Turin seminary alone offered the five-year theological course (as well as the doctoral program from 1874 on). The Chieri seminary alone offered the two-year course in philosophy, together with a five-year non-graduate theological program. Bra and Giaveno conducted junior seminaries. The first and the last of these four were most in need of reform both as to studies and discipline. Obviously the Turin theological seminary had to have priority.

For the first three years Archbishop Gastaldi had resided at the seminary, and had taken personal direction of it. Out of this experience, with the collaboration of Father Soldati, first vice-rector then rector, he drafted new statutes, which were published in September 1874. They were quickly adapted to the other seminaries, and they remained the *magna charta* of clergy formation in the Turin archdiocese until the Second Vatican Council. By these statutes the seminary, conceived as a religious house ("*ad instar domus religiosae*"), acquired a monastic character; it was a place of retreat in which the seminarian could pursue his intellectual and spiritual formation in-depth, away from "the world." Priestly holiness and priestly learning were emphasized in the statutes as the all-important goals of the seminary. The virtues inculcated were: faith, hope, charity, humility, obedience, chastity, modesty, devotion, temperance and mortification. The program of studies was expanded and made more demanding.

was not delivered till after the archbishop's death in 1883 [*Ceria-Ep* II, 243f.; *EBM* X, 376; Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 143].

It will be recalled that from 1872 to 1874 Don Bosco and the archbishop were already at loggerheads over the approval of the Salesian Constitutions and related matters. Hence, one may wonder about the significance of the archbishop's action. Was this a conciliatory gesture, or a recognition of merit? Church history was a predilection of Don Bosco; he had authored a survey of Church history (1845) and had written a series of lives of the popes. But he could not be regarded as a scholar in the field.

The seminary syllabus also acquired a Rosminian orientation in both philosophy and theology, which fact drew a reprimand from the Roman congregation. To encourage good priestly vocations, scholarships and grants-in-aid were given to many poor students. Summer residences in the hill country with hermitages were provided for each seminary.⁵⁵

(3) *Reform of the Convitto Ecclesiastico and of the Teaching of Moral Theology*

As has been explained elsewhere,⁵⁶ the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* (Institute of Moral and Pastoral Theology for Priests) was founded by Father Luigi Guala (with Father Pio Brunone Lanteri) and flourished under the founder and even more so under Father Joseph Cafasso. The orientation of the teaching of moral theology and pastoral practice at the *Convitto* was thoroughly Alphonsian, that is to say, [equi-]probabilist. This alone, as already mentioned above, would set it at variance with the teaching of the school of theology at the university and at the diocesan seminaries. It would also set it at variance with Lawrence Gastaldi, even after the latter's Rosminian and ultramontane conversion.⁵⁷

But Archbishop Gastaldi decided to look into the affairs of the *Convitto* for a further reason. Back in the early fifties, Father Cafasso had named Father Giovanni Battista Bertagna as his assistant lecturer in moral theology. After Father Cafasso's death in 1860, Father Bertagna had become the *Convitto's* principal lecturer, though not its rector.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 145-163.

The archbishop's concern for a deeper intellectual and spiritual priestly formation explains his objections to the way in which Don Bosco formed his priests. It also explains his demands: that Salesian candidates attend the seminary; that they be examined by the bishop before ordination; and that the Salesian Constitutions provide specifically for a regular novitiate and a regular course of studies. The severity of the Gastaldi-Soldati seminary also explains why a seminarian would wish to "defect" to Don Bosco and do "his studies" at the Oratory, a situation which angered and frightened the archbishop [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 270, note 50].

⁵⁶ Lenti, *Convitto*, cit.

⁵⁷ Cf. note 6, 7, and 11 and related text, above.

⁵⁸ Giovanni Battista Bertagna (1828-1905), a native of Castelnuovo, attended the seminary in Turin, earned his doctorate in theology at the university in 1850, and was ordained in 1851. He then enrolled in the *Convitto*, where he eventually succeeded Father Cafasso in the chair of moral theology, though not in the rectorate. With a reputation of taking Probabilism to extremes, he was dismissed by Archbishop Gastaldi. He subsequently accepted the appointment of professor of moral theology and vicar general in the diocese of Asti. In 1884, after Archbishop Gastaldi's death, he was named auxiliary bishop of Turin under Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda. Dismissed by Cardinal Alimonda's successor, Archbishop Davide Riccardi, he was later named to the post of Vicar General by Cardinal Agostino

In 1871, the *Convitto* was transferred to the church of Our Lady Consoler of the Afflicted (*Consolata*) by Archbishop Riccardi di Netro, under the rectorate of Father Felice Golzio. When the latter died in 1873, Archbishop Gastaldi appointed Father Bartolomeo Roetti as rector. It was at this point that the *Convitto* and Father Bertagna came under Archbishop Gastaldi's critical scrutiny. For it seems that his quarrel was both with the kind of moral theology that was being taught and with Father Bertagna's in particular.

The accusation leveled at Father Bertagna was that his course of moral theology had deteriorated into dry casuistry. Whether this was true or not is debatable. The archbishop may or may not have given credence to the rumors; but in any case, the accusations of laxity that circulated and had come to his attention had to be investigated. The investigation dragged on for over two years, and left behind a considerable amount of documentation, chiefly in the form of letters from the Archbishop. In these statements, Gastaldi emphasized the bishop's magisterium—his right to exercise it in the fields of moral theology and pastoral practice, and to choose, from among those opinions that are free of censure, that which he deems most conducive to the spiritual good of his flock.

In September 1876 Father Bertagna was relieved of all duties at the *Convitto*; he obeyed without a protest and retired quietly to his hometown of Castelnuovo. The event was given little publicity in the press, but it had the effect of widening the rift already dividing the clergy.

A period of crisis followed which led to the closing of the *Convitto* for the year 1878-79, amid protests and recriminations.

But the *Convitto*, and what it stood for, had become a fact of life in the Archdiocese, especially among the younger clergy, most of whom had attended the *Convitto*. The person that made the resurgence of the *Convitto* possible, and in such a way that the archbishop's fears were allayed while the Cafasso tradition was carried forward, was Father Giuseppe Allamano.⁵⁹

Richelmy. An early helper of Don Bosco at the Oratory, he remained his lifelong friend and presided at his funeral [Lenti, *Convitto*, 68, note 60].

⁵⁹ [Blessed] Giuseppe Allamano (1851-1926), was Father Cafasso's nephew, and like him and Father Bertagna a native of Castelnuovo. He attended Don Bosco's Oratory, entered the seminary in Turin, and was ordained in 1873. After studying moral theology under Father Bertagna at the *Convitto* (1873-1875), he was hand-picked by Archbishop Gastaldi to serve as spiritual director and vice-rector of the seminary (1876-1880). Known for his spirituality, his learning and his loyalty, he remained ever thereafter a trusted collaborator of the archbishop, without ever sacrificing his freedom and his personal convictions. He was successively named associate professor in the School of Theology (which the archbishop had transferred from the university to the seminary), rector of the church of the *Consolata*, and rector of the 'new' *Convitto* in 1882. He went on to found the Institute of the *Consolata* for Foreign Missions (1901) and the Missionary Sisters of the *Consolata* (1910), and

Father Allamano enjoyed the archbishop's trust; and as rector of the church of the *Consolata*, in 1882, he negotiated with the archbishop for the re-establishment of the *Convitto*, which had always stood at the center of his concern. Tuninetti writes:

[Archbishop Gastaldi] had been displeased with Dr. Bertagna's teaching [...], but perhaps he was also unhappy with the whole Guala-Cafasso orientation [of the *Convitto*]. In other words, he had reservations about the *Convitto*'s very tradition, and his preferred option would have been for a continuance of the Piedmontese theology of the kind that had found expression in his own edition of the Alasia-Stuardi compendium.[...] He may therefore have believed that his man Allamano would be the agent of the reform—perhaps not the reform he himself yearned for, but (as the six-year crisis had brought home to him) of the only reform that was concretely possible under the circumstances.⁶⁰

8. Archbishop Gastaldi's Pastoral Activity among the People

The emphasis on clergy reform, with priority given to synods, and the fact that the archbishop did not immediately undertake a pastoral visitation, may have conveyed the impression that the people themselves were not at the center of his concern. This was not the case. While pressing forward with clergy reform, which he considered basic and essential, he was also engaged in energetic pastoral action.

As mentioned earlier, for what concerned religious life and Catholic practice, the situation in the diocese was ambivalent. The real problems, however, arose from blatant anticlericalism in the press and in the literature. It was a pervasive, underground anti-religious movement, the danger of which was certainly felt, but against which there seemed to be no defense. The resulting sense of powerlessness explains the pessimism and the apocalyptic tone of Roman documents and of pastoral letters, Archbishop Gastaldi's included.⁶¹ Nonetheless, the archbishop acted on several fronts.

was without a doubt one of the most influential personalities in the Church of Turin, especially under Card. Richelmy (1897-1923) [Lenti, *Convitto*, 73f., note 77].

⁶⁰ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 183. For all the above, cf. *Ibid.*, 68-70, 165-184; and Lenti, *Convitto*, 67-76.

⁶¹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 185-192.

(1) New Parishes

Urban development to the north and to the south of the city of Turin made new parishes necessary. Even though the steadily dwindling offerings of the faithful were now the only resource for such projects, during his tenure Archbishop Gastaldi built three new parish churches, and initiated a fourth: they were the parishes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Secundus in the southern district;⁶² and St. Joachim (in honor of Pope Leo XIII) in the northern district of *Borgo Dora*, near Valdocco. He had a fourth parish church on the drawing boards, the Holy Guardian Angels on the southwest side; but he died before actual construction could begin. The archbishop made a sizable financial contribution toward these projects out of his own share of the family estate.⁶³

(2) Preaching and Religious Instruction

Archbishop Gastaldi was personally and tirelessly engaged in the ministry of preaching—at the seminary, at various churches, in spiritual retreats and missions. The synod of 1873 emphasized the central role of preaching in priestly ministry and the duty incumbent upon all in care of souls. He placed preaching under strict disciplinary rules, and organized liturgical and occasional preaching in the churches throughout the city.

Catechetical instruction was another important matter treated and legislated in the Synods and implemented in new and better ways in the parishes. For this purpose, Archbishop Gastaldi published an expanded and updated edition of the catechism then in use. In this edition, theological updating is seen in such areas as the nature and order of the church, and frequent Communion. Other initiatives of a catechetical nature were the promotion of festive oratories in parishes and catechetical instruction of children in schools as allowed under the law.⁶⁴

⁶² In 1871 Don Bosco undertook to build the church of St. Secundus, first planned in 1867, at the request of Canon Zappata. He withdrew in 1872 because of restrictions imposed by the city authorities [*EBM* X, 89. 171].

⁶³ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 192-194.

⁶⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 194-203.

Since the ordinance issued in 1870 by Minister Cesare Correnti, religious instruction was available in State schools only if parents requested it for their child.

Don Bosco, in his own *Memoirs*, when speaking of the infrequent reception of Communion in his day lauds the archbishop: "This defect of piety was corrected when, through an order of Archbishop Gastaldi, things were arranged so as to permit daily Communion, provided one is prepared" [*MO-En*, 132].

(3) Doctrinal Teaching

During his eleven-and-a-half-year tenure, Archbishop Gastaldi addressed 47 pastoral letters to his people. Although they do not exhibit a systematic pastoral approach yet together with the letters to the clergy published in the yearly Liturgical Calendar, they constitute a remarkable body of teaching. Topics most frequently addressed are: the Church and the papacy (to counter the mounting anticlerical offensive); the clergy and the seminary; Christian education; prayer and the sacraments, especially Holy Communion, and devotion to Our Lady. Of great interest are his controversial letters on the death of King Victor Emanuel II (1878) and on the failed assassination attempt on King Humbert I (1878). Of doctrinal importance, and no less controversial, is his pastoral letter on the papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879).⁶⁵

(4) Pastoral Visitation

Catholic pastoral tradition, and canon law itself after Trent, saw the pastoral visitation as a privileged moment of pastoral activity in the diocese. Through it the bishop met, addressed, and took the pulse of the people in the parishes, and from it then could stem synods and pastoral policies. Therefore, as at Saluzzo, so in Turin, it should have had priority. The archbishop, however, as we saw, followed a different course of action. He began by addressing the clergy, rather than the people. He chose to institute his reforms and to govern through synods and statutes. He had come to Turin with a pre-programmed pastoral policy. After

⁶⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 207-209.

The two letters of 1878 expressed greater sympathy for the house of Savoy and for the political order it represented, than the Vatican authorities could countenance.

Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* called for a renewal of philosophical thought on the basis of Thomism, and for sound, traditional doctrinal teaching in the seminaries—this, to counter liberalism and secularism. The encyclical was followed by a series of actions in the same direction which included the condemnation (in 1887) of propositions extracted from the works of Rosmini [*New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) VIII, 648f.]. In his comments on the encyclical, as earlier in his *Monitum* (published in the Liturgical Calendar of 1876), Archbishop Gastaldi defended Rosmini's orthodoxy. He was thus drawn into the fierce polemic surrounding Rosmini which had flared up again in the context of the Thomistic philosophical renewal. Repeatedly the Roman authorities expressed their disapproval of his Rosminian persuasion. For an extended treatment, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 307-329.

The Bosco-Gastaldi conflict reached its climax at the time of Rosmini's condemnation and ensuing debate (1879-1881), with the publication in late seventies of the anonymous pamphlets against the archbishop, two of which attacked him for his Rosminian leanings. He and his chancery held Don Bosco responsible for them.

all, except for the period of the Rosminian years, he had been active in Turin all his life! But there was a deeper reason for this inversion. At the Vatican Council he had been vocal in defending the necessity of regional councils and synods; and probably his clerical-hierarchic view of the Church had a lot to do with such an approach. Hence, once established in Turin, unable to hold a regional council (because the ecumenical council was still “in session”), he began by holding a synod. But both the convening and the style of the synod were resented by many in the diocese.

In his visits *ad limina*, Archbishop Gastaldi defended his *modus operandi*. But he finally decided to undertake a pastoral visitation in 1880. Although he was thorough and conscientious, the sense of urgency had gone out of it. He died before he could complete it.

9. The Social Question and the Catholic Lay Movement

At the time of Lawrence Gastaldi's appointment as archbishop of Turin, Catholics were becoming increasingly more aware of the labor question. The Archbishop too showed both awareness of, and sensitivity to, labor problems. His pastoral letter of 1873 appears to have been the first official instance of an Italian bishop's addressing the problem. This was to be expected, since Turinese Catholics were ahead of most other groups in Italy in that respect. But his perception of the problem and the solutions envisaged were quite restricted. Not only was his attitude basically negative and defensive, but he vastly underestimated the nature, the newness and the magnitude of the problem. Thus, the solutions which he proposed, namely, the reviving of medieval guilds and social welfare through charitable works, would have been totally inadequate. These inadequacies, which were also those of the Catholic workers unions at the time, appear serious indeed when one looks at what was being said and done at the time by bishops and Catholic laity in France, Belgium, England, Austria, Switzerland, and especially in Germany.

Limitations notwithstanding, Archbishop Gastaldi has the merit of not having overlooked the problem. Although he showed little sympathy for the incipient Catholic lay movement typified in the *Opera dei Congressi*;⁶⁶ his

⁶⁶ With the taking of Rome, the “intransigent” Catholic element, the avowed defenders of the right of the papacy against the “usurping” Italian state, and the advocates of political abstentionism, prevailed over Catholic moderates, who favored an accommodation with the state. The “intransigents” acquired an effective organizational instrument in the *Opera dei Congressi* (Associated Workers Unions), founded in 1875. It stood as a counterpart to the growing labor movement and in opposition to incipient organized socialism in Italy. Especially from 1885 on, it promoted a range of economic and social welfare activities, mainly in the north and central rural areas [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Macropedia, 1987) XXII, 233].

interest and support greatly encouraged other initiatives on behalf of workers, such as the Catholic Workers Union founded by Father Leonardo Murialdo in association with some Catholic laymen.⁶⁷

10. Archbishop Gastaldi's Relationships with Religious

The Napoleonic law of 1802; the Rattazzi Law of 1855 (preceded by the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1848); and the general laws of 1866 and 1867 practically wiped out religious orders and congregations in Piedmont first, then in the rest of Italy. In the seventies there was a gradual return, and Archbishop Gastaldi himself was instrumental in re-establishing religious in their former houses and churches. Meanwhile, surprisingly, numerous new congregations were founded in spite of the suppression laws.⁶⁸ Of the new congregations the one that was experiencing the greatest expansion and vitality was the Salesian Society of Don Bosco, founded in 1859, and approved in 1869 and 1874. Religious were not widely engaged in the care of souls, in parishes and the like. They were instead deeply involved in the education of the young; and this is particularly true of the Salesian Society and of the Society of St. Joseph.⁶⁹

Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, Archbishop Gastaldi did not downgrade religious life. As the synodical statutes of 1873 show, he exalted the way of the evangelical counsels, especially consecrated virginity. He called for unity between diocesan and regular clergy, but also required the latter not to interfere in parish life. It may be said that, on the one hand, he had a deeper theological appreciation of religious life than most bishops of his day; and on the other, that he was more rigorous in his demands and more severe in applying disciplinary sanctions. This attitude toward religious is to be explained less from

⁶⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 215-243.

Father Leonardo Murialdo (1828-1900), a collaborator of Don Bosco in the work of the oratory, took over the direction of the *Collegio degli artigianelli* in 1865, and founded the Society of Saint Joseph in 1873. Unlike Don Bosco, Father Murialdo (among others) was active in the Catholic labor movement, and was a pioneer in this apostolate.

⁶⁸ In Piedmont, seven congregations of men, and forty of women were founded; in Turin alone five and nineteen, respectively. During the Gastaldi years, the following congregations were founded: the Society of St. Joseph (1873, by Father Leonard Murialdo); the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows (1875, by Father Roberto Murialdo); the Little Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1875, by Anna Michelotti); the Daughters of St. Joseph (1875, by Father Clemente Marchisio); the Sisters Minims of Our Lady of Suffrage (1881, by Father Francesco Faà di Bruno) [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 247].

⁶⁹ In his Report *ad limina* of 1879, Gastaldi speaks of 2,000 young people educated by the Christian Brothers, and of 800 and 200 in the care of the Salesians and Josephites respectively [ASC 123: Franchetti, *FDBM* 697 A4].

his personal authoritarian character than from his concept of episcopal function and authority, that is, his ecclesiology. The paragraph on religious included in his Report *ad limina* of 1874 provides a handy reference. In this document, he first gave a critical assessment of the Salesian formation program. Then he expressed the hope that the Vatican Council, once reconvened, would reform the present formation practice of religious congregations as to novitiate, and as to humanistic, philosophical, and theological studies, to be completed *before* ordination. He further saw the role of the bishop as a participant in the discernment process regarding the vocation and worthiness of candidates for perpetual vows; and again as one who investigates and examines candidates before conferring ordination.

Such a doctrine of the bishop's function with regard to religious obviously reflects on his concept of religious exemption. Again for an understanding of his position with regard to "exemption privileges," one must keep this ecclesiology in mind.⁷⁰

Archbishop Gastaldi's encounters with the Jesuits were largely of a doctrinal nature, arising from the fact that Italian (especially Roman) Jesuits were Rosmini's principal opponents. Otherwise, as noted above, he admired their spirituality and discipline.

On the other hand, the various clashes between the archbishop and religious founders and their institutes in the archdiocese are to be seen in the light of the archbishop's ecclesiology. Three instances are particularly significant, as well as emblematic: his clashes with Sister Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac, with Father Francesco Faà di Bruno, and (the most serious of the three) with Don Bosco.

(1) *Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac*⁷¹

⁷⁰ For all the above, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 245-249, 254-257.

⁷¹ Marie Louise-Angélique Clarac (1817-1887) joined the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in France. She volunteered for the mission in Algiers, was recalled because of grave illness, and was reassigned to Turin in 1853. Appointed Servant (superior) of a community, she immediately began to broaden its work of charity, acquiring with Don Bosco's advice, a new base of operation (with a public chapel, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart). Thus the "institute" gradually set itself apart from the Daughters of Charity, and enjoyed the protection of Archbishop Riccardi di Netro and the service of the Salesians, who served as chaplains. Following an order to return to France, Sister Clarac conferred with Don Bosco about leaving the Daughters of Charity in order pursue her work of charity in Turin, and at his suggestion she applied to Bishop Moreno of Ivrea, the dean of the Piedmontese bishops (the see of Turin was still vacant after the death of Archbishop Riccardi di Netro). Bishop Moreno advised her to leave her community and join (temporarily) the Sisters of

By the time of Archbishop Gastaldi's appointment, Sister Clarac had already left the community of the Daughters of Charity to engage in a more diversified apostolate. Pressed by her former community, the archbishop ordered Sister Clarac and companions to lay aside the habit of the Daughters of Charity, or have the public chapel placed under interdict. Rather than remove the habit, she had the chaplain remove the Blessed Sacrament and closed down the chapel. On April 13, 1872 Archbishop Gastaldi notified her that she was no longer a religious of any sort. A little later she was excommunicated by the archbishop and given a public reprimand in the church of SS. Peter and Paul.

Not permitted to speak to the archbishop in person, Sister Clarac, between 1872 and 1875, pleaded her case with him in numerous letters. She made the point that the Daughters' habit was not a religious habit blessed by the Church, but that she was ready to modify it; that she was not guilty of disobedience, and had done nothing to deserve being deprived of the sacraments; that the interdict placed her girls in spiritual danger from the Waldensian activities in the area; that she was willing even to rejoin the community of the Daughters of Charity. Repeatedly she begged the archbishop to allow her to

Mary Immaculate at Ivrea under his patronage. In May 1871 she and four sisters resigned from the Daughters of Charity. Her woes began with the appointment of Archbishop Gastaldi in October 1871, when she was excommunicated and the chapel placed under interdict. But the institute grew in number and foundations. Archbishop Gastaldi's successor, Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda, restored her and her institute, thenceforth known as the Daughters of Charity of St. Mary. The cause for her beatification was introduced in Rome in 1941.

Through the sixties Don Bosco maintained a close relationship with Sister Clarac and supported her work. It is believed that he had given some thought to establishing his congregation of women in association with her. By the late sixties, however, he had opted for the Mornese group. After her reinstatement, the Salesian Father Angelo Savio (about to leave for the mission of Ecuador) re-dedicated the public chapel of the mother house with a spiritual retreat, and Don Bosco awarded Sister Clarac the certificate of Salesian Cooperator.

Sister Clarac has been vindicated as a true and legitimate representative of the work of St. Vincent de Paul for the poor. She was also deeply imbued with the spirit of charity and devotion stemming from St. Francis de Sales. There was close spiritual and educational affinity between Don Bosco and Sister Clarac. This above all is what brought Don Bosco and Sister Clarac into close association, rather than the fact that both were under Archbishop Gastaldi's censures. The Salesian Father Luigi Fiora, postulator of the cause for her beatification, states that Sister Clarac and Don Bosco were kindred spirits. The spiritual daughter of St. Vincent de Paul, acknowledged "the St. Vincent de Paul of the nineteenth century," as being "by right the founder of her oratory," [Commemorative centenary brochure, *Maria Luigia Clarac. Il coraggio dell'amore, Nel centenario della morte. Moncalieri 1887, Torino 1987*].

receive the sacraments, and to reopen the chapel. Following Archbishop Gastaldi's recourse to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, between 1873 and 1875, Sister Clarac pleaded her case with the Congregation and with individual cardinals; and on April 10, 1874 with Pius IX himself.

The Roman Congregation allowed Clarac's argument that the habit of the Daughters of Charity was not a religious habit; but it also recognized the archbishop's right to forbid anyone to wear it who was not a Daughter of Charity. As to the archbishop's right to inflict canonical penalties on the sister for her disobedience, the Congregation in its session (according to a biographer cited by Tuninetti) sided with the archbishop, but in its official response to him merely advised prudence. Archbishop Gastaldi did not relent, and Sister Clarac was not restored to communion during his lifetime.⁷²

In conclusion, Tuninetti writes: "True, the archbishop was excessively severe in inflicting the interdict at once; but neither can one excuse the stubbornness with which the sister refused to lay aside the bonnet which she regarded as a sign of fidelity to the Vincentian spirit."⁷³

(2) *Francesco Faà di Bruno*⁷⁴

By the time of Gastaldi's appointment, this highly educated Catholic layman and university professor had initiated a number of charitable works on behalf of working women in Turin. A regular contributor to the Catholic press, and a leader in the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul and other associations—he was regarded as one of the most distinguished Catholic laymen in the city. At the beginning of 1876, with encouragement from Don Bosco and Bishop Moreno, he decided to become a priest. He wished his ordination to coincide with the dedication of the church of Our Lady of Suffrage (an event planned for November 1); for he desired to offer his first Mass in suffrage. On such short notice, he submitted a petition to the Pope directly; he was then advised to apply to his archbishop.

⁷² Tuninetti [*Gastaldi* II, 250] states that, in spite of the prohibition, sympathetic priests administered the sacraments to her.

⁷³ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 251.

⁷⁴ [Blessed] Francesco Faà di Bruno (1825-1888) was a man of noble birth. A graduate of the military academy, he served as a captain in the Second War for Italian Independence. With a degree in mathematics from the Sorbonne University in Paris, he was professor of analytic calculus at the University of Turin. In 1876 he decided to become a priest, and his ordination was engineered to take place without Archbishop Gastaldi's consent. He was subsequently "pardoned" by the archbishop and incardinated into the archdiocese. After Gastaldi's death, he founded the Sisters Minims of Our Lady of Suffrage at the church of that name [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 206, 239-241, 243, 251].

As Tuninetti (relying on a biographer favorable to Gastaldi) relates the episode, the archbishop agreed, though on condition that Faà take the clerical habit immediately and enter the seminary. This would allow the candidate ten months of intense preparation in a seminary environment, a reasonable request in Gastaldi's view. Because of his commitment to the university, Faà di Bruno could not immediately enter the seminary; hence, when five months had gone by, the archbishop set a later ordination date, some time in the spring of 1877. At this point, still aiming at the earlier date, Faà di Bruno was invited to go to Rome for his preparation. The archbishop did not object, but reserved to himself the right to issue the dimissorial letters as circumstances demanded. Since Faà was legally domiciled at Alessandria, at the urging of "friends," he applied to Bishop Giocondo Solvay (of Alessandria) for the dimissorials, which were granted. At the same time, testimonials of all kinds in support of an early date for his ordination and first Mass, to coincide with the dedication of the church of Our Lady of Suffrage, were received in Rome. He himself (with encouragement from Pius IX himself) did everything he could to help his own cause in Rome. The archbishop, however, stood firm on the later spring date. Faà di Bruno was disposed to return to Turin and abide by the archbishop's decision. But his supporters thwarted Gastaldi's plan and engineered Faà di Bruno's ordination in Rome on the desired date, November 1, 1876, for the diocese of Alessandria. Thus (so Tuninetti writes),

the archbishop's reasonable demands were rebuffed as unjustified by a coalition which included the Piedmontese Bishops Moreno and Solvay, who acted without due regard; Don Bosco, whose habit it was to ask of the Pope what he could not obtain from his archbishop; the prelates of the Roman and Vatican chanceries, who regarded Gastaldi's demands as unduly severe; and Pius IX himself, who in matters that concerned the diocese of Turin was more inclined to listen to Don Bosco than to its archbishop.⁷⁵

Archbishop Gastaldi had suffered a humiliating defeat. But, aware perhaps of Faà di Bruno's guilelessness, he followed a moderate course of action in his regard. Toward the end of 1877, he allowed the good priest to be incardinated into the Turin diocese and to continue his work of charity from the church of Our Lady of Suffrage.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 253f.

⁷⁶ For all the above, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 251-254.

The confrontation between Archbishop Gastaldi and Don Bosco, which spanned the decade 1872-1882, and which was much more serious both as to its intensity and as to its effects, will be dealt with separately.

11. Archbishop Gastaldi's Death

Lawrence Gastaldi had never spared himself in anything he did or undertook. His was a life of sustained study and feverish activity. It was also a life of strife and travail. Contrary to what one may be led to believe, he was never a very strong man physically. He was small in stature, and subject to frequent ailments. He had taken ill before the close of the First Vatican Council, after which he was forced to take a long leave of absence from the diocese of Saluzzo. He had not been a well man since his accession to Turin in 1871. Moreover, the frequent situations of conflict in which he was involved, within the Archdiocese and with Rome, were not only morally and psychically damaging, but also physically debilitating. His ten-year-long conflict with Don Bosco, which exposed him to relentless battering by the press, divided his priests, and compromised him with Rome, was especially detrimental. The last and most bitter episode of the conflict, the clash over the anonymous defamatory pamphlets of 1878-1879, dealt him the final blow. His health deteriorated rapidly during the summer of 1882 after the settlement enforced by Pope Leo XIII, a period in which he suffered frequent hemorrhages.

During Holy Week of 1883, he insisted on presiding at all the solemn liturgical services. Early on Easter Sunday morning, March 25, 1883, at 7:30, he was found unconscious in his apartment by his secretary, Canon Chiuso. He had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and an apoplectic stroke. He died shortly thereafter, at 9:55, at the age of 68. He had been archbishop of Turin for eleven years and five months.⁷⁷

At the head of this essay, the conflict between Archbishop Gastaldi and Don Bosco was introduced in its most general terms, and we spoke of its length and complexity. We then proceeded to give a fairly extended biographical sketch of one of the protagonists, Lawrence Gastaldi. We also stressed those features that might illuminate his thought and action in relation to Don Bosco. We now move on to a description of the first phase of the "hostilities", from the first signs of trouble in early 1872 through to the contested approval of the Salesian Constitutions in 1874.

⁷⁷ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 341f.

SECTION TWO: FIRST PHASE OF THE CONFRONTATION:
 ARCHBISHOP GASTALDI'S CLASH WITH DON BOSCO
 OVER THE SPIRIT OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY AND THE
 APPROVAL OF ITS CONSTITUTIONS

[Bibliographical Note]

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Documenti XIII-XXIV, passim, ASC 110: Documenti, *FDBM* 1018 C9-1081 E12; and XLV (Bonetti-Gastaldi), *FDBM* 1194 B12-1201 A9. [*Documenti*].

Giovanni Battista Lemoyne-Angelo Amadei, *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*, Volume X, 1871-1874. Torino: SEI, 1939. [*IBM*] *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. An American Edition. Translated from the Original Italian, Rev. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B. Editor-in-Chief, Volume X, 1871-1874. New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1977. [*EBM*]

The *Biographical Memoirs* tell the story of this first phase of the Conflict in Vol. X—the Italian edition fully and with ample documentation; the English edition in more condensed fashion, omitting much of the documentation.

Francis Desramaut, "Chronologie critique du différend entre don Bosco et l'archevêque de Turin Lorenzo Gastaldi," in *Cahiers salésiens. Recherches et documents pour servir à l'histoire des salésiens de don Bosco dans les pays de langue française*, Numéro spécial 6-7, avril-octobre 1982. Lyon: SDB, 1982.

This work of Father Desramaut lists all the relevant documentation in critical chronological order, giving for each piece a summary of the contents and references. It is an indispensable work. No reference will be given to it, but it will be followed scrupulously.

Id., "Études préalables à une biographie de saint Jean Bosco V: La pleine maturité (1867-1874)," in *Cahiers salésiens [...]*, Numéro 24-25 (Avril-Octobre 1991). [*Desramaut, Études V*].

This carefully documented and annotated study of the period, deals with this phase of the conflict in a brief but scholarly manner: p. 187-196 (Origin of the conflict; Gastaldi's negative report); p. 200-202 (Troubles in Turin); p. 202-205 (Constitutions 1873); p. 221-231 (Definitive approval).

Giuseppe Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883*. Casale Monferrato: PIEMME [Vol. II: *Arcivescovo di Torino (1871-1883)*], 1988. [*Tuninetti, Gastaldi II*]

Chapter 12 (p. 259-290) of this critical, carefully documented biography, surveys the events of the entire conflict. Pages 259-270 deal

with the phase under consideration. Like Desramaut's works listed above, it is a basic resource.

Pietro Braido, "L'idea della Società Salesiana nel <Cenno storico> di Don Bosco del 1873/74," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 6 (1987) 245-331. [Braido, *L'idea*]

In this critical edition of the *Cenno storico* (a capital document on the Salesian Society authored by Don Bosco at a crucial point of the approval process) Father Braido provides an illuminating introduction and notes on the present phase of the conflict. This document is also published, together with others, in Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco per i giovani: L'Oratorio. Una Congregazione degli Oratori*. Documenti (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano, 9). Roma: LAS, 1988, p. 81-146.

For a reference to relevant material held in the Salesian Archives, cf. note 1, above.

1. Antecedents

The events of the confrontation between Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi over the approval of the Salesian Constitutions spanned the years 1872-1874. However, the issues of the conflict had been forming over the years. A brief account of this pre-history will be helpful.

The founding, early development and approval of the Salesian Society went hand in hand with the development and approval of its constitutions. Although the process was in effect since the early fifties, the formative phases of both Society and constitutions span the years 1858-1874.

(1) *Initial Phases in the Development of the Salesian Constitutions and the Decretum Laudis*

[Constitutional Texts of 1858 and 1860]

The earliest known extant text of the Salesian Constitutions, a manuscript in the hand of Father Rua in Italian, dates from 1858, and was the result of an "incubation" period, and of Don Bosco's meetings with Minister Urbano Rattazzi (1857) and Pope Pius IX (earlier in 1858). The first two of its ten chapters were a preamble and an historical introduction, which preceded the chapter, "Purpose of the Society."

The Salesian Society was founded officially on December 18, 1859, when Don Bosco and eighteen other "Salesians" (a designation adopted in 1854) met to pronounce their "vows" and to elect officers.

Don Bosco meanwhile had been revising and expanding the constitutions. In 1860 a text (in Italian) signed by twenty-six Salesians (including young Paul Albera, still in his secondary studies) was sent to the exiled Archbishop Luigi Fransoni for comments and approval. The text had four

new chapters, including one (the last) on “External Members.”⁷⁸ The archbishop gave his encouragement, but sent the text to Father Marcantonio Durando, Provincial of the Vincentians in Turin. We do not know what the latter’s comments were on this occasion, but it is assumed that they may have been similar to the critical remarks he later made in 1867, when, as will be explained below, he examined a revised text at the request of Archbishop Alessandro Riccardi.

[Text of 1864, *Decretum Laudis*, and Thirteen *Animadversiones* (*Critical Observations*)]

There followed a period of laborious revision of the constitutions by Don Bosco, the outcome of which was the Italian text of 1864, which was submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for the hoped-for approval of the Salesian Society. It contained new articles (on politics, on the pope), and three new chapters for a total of seventeen. Don Bosco had collected testimonial letters of support from several bishops for the purpose, but he had had only a half-hearted letter of commendation from the vicar of the (vacant) Archdiocese of Turin, Canon Giuseppe Zappata. These constitutions specifically gave the rector (superior general) the power to issue dimissorial letters for his priestly candidates. All he obtained, however, was the *Decretum Laudis* (Decree of commendation), which is not even an official approval, though it is an important preliminary step toward it. He was also given thirteen *Critical Observations* by Consultor Angelo Savini, O.C.D. and Secretary Stanislao Svegliati, with the charge that he modify the text of the constitutions accordingly. One of these *critical observations* denied him the power to issue dimissorial letters; and the last one required that the text of the constitutions be submitted in Latin, in accordance with canonical procedure.

In a detailed response, Don Bosco readily accepted some of the *critical observations*, but on others he demurred. In particular, he tried to salvage the

⁷⁸ Don Bosco had conceived the work of the oratories, hence all Salesian apostolate, as a work of collaboration from the start, that is, a work of diverse forces united on behalf of the young. He wished to give permanency and official status to this idea in a special chapter of the constitutions, a chapter first introduced in 1860. These extern members were to be Salesians who neither took vows nor lived in community. They were nonetheless to be committed to the Salesian apostolate and to the practice of the constitutions to the extent that it was compatible with their state in life. This novel idea met with objections when the constitutions were submitted in 1864. Don Bosco, however, at first did not remove the chapter, but merely transferred it to the end as an appendix. He was finally forced to remove it when the constitutions were submitted for definitive approval in 1873-74 [cf. p. 78 below]. The idea was continued and perpetuated with the institution of the Salesian Cooperators.

power to issue dimissorial letters by presenting an elaborate argument in eight points.⁷⁹

(2) *New Move for Approval and Archbishop Riccardi's Opposition*

By 1867 he had ready a printed Latin text modified in accordance with some, but not all, of the thirteen *critical observations*. He started the process for approval again, a process which entailed, among other things, collecting more testimonial letters from the bishops.

Lawrence Gastaldi's response (he was by now Bishop of Saluzzo) was completely favorable. For, as noted above, between Don Bosco and Lawrence Gastaldi there had existed over a long period of time, in fact from the beginnings of Don Bosco's oratory, a mutual esteem, friendship, and factual collaboration. Moreover, Don Bosco had played a key role in Gastaldi's appointment to Saluzzo as bishop.

Such show of support came precisely at a time when influential Piedmontese bishops opposed the approval on grounds, among others, of lack of proper intellectual formation, of religious discipline, and of ecclesiastical spirit.

[Archbishop Riccardi's Objections and Demands]

The most trenchant critique came from Archbishop Riccardi, appointed to Turin from Savona in 1867.⁸⁰ He was apparently unknown to Don Bosco, and Don Bosco in his mediating role had not mentioned his name for any see.

As noted above, the diocese had been vacant since the death of Archbishop Fransoni in 1862, and since 1850 had been governed by its exiled archbishop only "from afar." The Turin seminary had been closed at the time of the liberal revolution and remained closed until 1863. During this time Don Bosco's Oratory functioned as a seminary, and while making a significant contribution to the diocese Don Bosco had enjoyed considerable freedom of action. Many diocesan seminarians lived at Valdocco together with Don Bosco's own clerical students, and there was no clear distinction between the two categories.⁸¹ When the seminary was reestablished, all these young candidates to

⁷⁹ For all these constitutional developments, cf. Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 16ff., 58ff., and 228-234.

⁸⁰ Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi dei Conti di Netro (1808-1870), born at Biella (Piedmont) and ordained in 1832, was appointed bishop of Savona (Liguria) in 1842. Appointed archbishop of Turin in 1867, his tenure, partly taken up by the First Vatican Council and marred by illness, was brief. He died in 1870, before he could get his program of ecclesiastical reform under way.

⁸¹ Generally, throughout this paper I refer to young men studying for the priesthood and not yet ordained as "seminarians" (the Italian term being "*chierici*").

the priesthood apparently attended only some seminary lectures, or none at all, receiving supplementary instruction at the Oratory. All of them, moreover, were occupied full-time in youth work both in the school and in the oratories.⁸² In 1866 the capitular vicar and the rector of the seminary had insisted that all of them, Don Bosco's clerical students included, attend regular seminary lectures. Don Bosco had countered by submitting a plan for the establishment of a regular seminary program at Valdocco, but it was rejected.⁸³ (Don Bosco had already anticipated such pressures when, in applying for approval in 1864, as related above, he had also applied for the faculty to grant dimissorial letters for the ordination of his clerical students, a petition which was denied.) This had been the situation at the time of Archbishop Riccardi's appointment.

A priority on the new archbishop's agenda was the strengthening of the seminary program and the formation of the clergy, and in that context he did not like what was going on at Valdocco. At this time the archbishop received a copy of the new Salesian constitutions, and could not help but notice some glaring deficiencies in them, notably the absence of provisions for a regular course of studies for Salesian priestly candidates and for a regular novitiate. In addition, the constitutions still accorded to the superior general the power to issue dimissorials. The Vincentian Father Marcantonio Durando was asked to examine the constitutions, and his observations are recorded. Among many deficiencies, he noted the provision for the establishment of junior seminaries without specification of the ordinary's role; the mixture of clerical students and boys without separate guidance and formation; the lack of a proper novitiate and of a program of studies.⁸⁴

In September 1867, the archbishop notified Don Bosco that he would "no longer let diocesan seminarians teach or supervise boys in any boarding

However, in this account of the debate between Don Bosco and the diocesan authorities over priestly studies and formation, I refer to Don Bosco's candidates as "clerical students" to distinguish them from the diocesan seminarians. There was no proper theological seminary established at Valdocco.

⁸² Don Bosco wrote somewhat unadvisedly to Canon Alessandro Vogliotti, rector of the seminary: "The seminarians living here and at Lanzo are about fifty in number. They are fully occupied [*impiegano tutta la loro vita*] in the assistance and religious instruction of poor children, of those in particular who attend the boys' oratories in this city" [Letter of June 26, 1866, in *Ceria-Ep I*, 405].

⁸³ For the plan (listing Canon Gastaldi as prospective professor of theology), cf. letter of Don Bosco to Canon Giuseppe Zappata (Capitular Vicar), August 26, 1966, [*Ceria-Ep I*, 424-426]. For the "flat refusal," cf. letter of Don Bosco to Canon Alessandro Vogliotti (rector of the seminary), September 6, 1866 [*Ceria-Ep I*, 427]. *Ceria* notes that a second petition to establish a philosophical course at the Oratory was granted.

⁸⁴ Motto, *Cost SDB*, 235.

school;” and that he would henceforth “confer sacred orders only on candidates residing at the seminary.” He added soothingly: “this directive may prove somewhat burdensome to you, but it will benefit the Church and your community as well.”⁸⁵ Don Bosco suggested that the matter be submitted for arbitration to Rome (where Don Bosco had the patronage of Pope Pius IX and of the Secretary of State, Cardinal Giovanni Antonelli), a suggestion which the archbishop rejected.

Don Bosco (and the biographers) clearly viewed the archbishop’s demands as unwarranted harassment. The reasons he gave for his objections are revealing. He wrote to Cardinal Filippo De Angelis:

If I allow my clerical students to reside in the seminary, what will become of the spirit and discipline of our Society? Where will I find the one hundred and more instructors to take their place in as many catechism classes? Then, after spending five years in the seminary, will any of them ever wish to come back and shut himself in at the Oratory? [...] Can I, then, in good conscience send my clerical students to the diocesan seminary? I think not.”

He added a revealing comment: “Fortunately, I have for some time anticipated this move; and [fortunately] all my clerical students who wish to join the Society, except a few, are from other dioceses.”⁸⁶

Thus it was that when Don Bosco began to solicit testimonial letters from bishops in support of his petition for the official approval of the Society, Archbishop Riccardi followed his short letter of commendation with a longer one addressed to Cardinal Angelo Quaglia, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, in which he set forth his objections. Archbishop Riccardi stated that his testimonial letter was written in support of the Society’s original work, not of the Congregation as described in the present constitutions, which would surely be drastically emended by Rome. He made the following points, among others: the Society should not be involved in the formation of seminarians; the constitutions make no mention of a course of studies whether for priestly candidates or laymen; seminarians not belonging to the Society should be under the bishop’s authority; the constitutions contain no provision for a novitiate. And he added:

⁸⁵ Letter of September 11, 1867 [*EBM* VIII, 406].

⁸⁶ Letter of September 9, 1868 [*Ceria-Ep.* I, 373].

What can a congregation achieve when it is composed of such disparate elements lacking unity of purpose? The Salesian school in Turin [the Oratory] is already a chaotic mixture of apprentices, students, laymen, seminarians, and priests. The chaos will only increase as the Congregation extends its sphere of action.⁸⁷

Bishop Lawrence Renaldi of Pinerolo likewise gave a contrary opinion and withheld his letter of commendation. He had reservations about the formation of priestly candidates outside of the bishop's control. The eloquent silence from, among others, Bishop Louis Moreno of Ivrea expressed a similar opposition. (Later, the subalpine episcopal conference, meeting in November 1868 under the presidency of Archbishop Riccardi, summarily dismissed Don Bosco's request for a joint letter of commendation.)⁸⁸

[Vatican Representative Tortone's Negative Report]

Impressed and concerned, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars asked the representative of the Holy See in Turin, Mgr. Gaetano Tortone, to conduct an independent investigation. His report to Secretary Svegliati was negative indeed. He wrote: "The primary aim of Don Bosco's institution [the education of young people] has had admirable and encouraging success. It appears, however, that the same cannot be said of the intellectual and ecclesiastical formation of the young clerical students who belong to his institute." After commenting on their poor performance in studies, he continued: "Such mediocre intellectual achievement is not surprising when one bears in mind that Don Bosco entrusts these same clerical students with responsibilities, such as teaching and supervising the boys, that take up the time which they should be devoting to their studies." As for their priestly formation, he saw nothing but "obstacles in the way of their acquiring that ecclesiastical spirit and that good breeding which are so important a prerequisite for the priestly life." He commented on the odd mixture of people living together at the Oratory without any order or discipline, and with reference

⁸⁷ Letter of March 14, 1868 [IBM IX, 96-100 (abridged in EBM IX, 53-55); Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 236f.].

⁸⁸ EBM IX, 121-124; IBM IX, 419-424 (briefly in EBM IX, 192f.); *Ceria-Ep* I, 561f., 590-593.

In his petition to the conference, Don Bosco stated that, contrary to what "someone" had reported to the Roman Congregation, clerical students belonging to the Salesian Society had been successful in their studies, but that he meant to correct any deficiency.

Bishop Moreno's opposition to Don Bosco, and after him to the Salesians, stemmed also from the struggle (1862-1867) over the ownership of the Catholic Readings. The two remained permanently estranged [cf. Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale* (Roma: LAS, 1980), 347-368, esp. 366-368].

to Salesian seminarians he concluded: “Our good Don Bosco [...] has little interest in forming them to a genuine ecclesiastical spirit and to a consciousness of the dignity of the life they wish to embrace.”⁸⁹

[Petition Denied]

The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars met in formal session to consider Don Bosco’s petition, (1) “for the approval of the Institute and its constitutions”; (2) “for the faculty to issue dimissorials for the ordination of candidates, also by reason of community life [*titulo mensae communis*] in the case of candidates for major orders; (3) and finally for the faculty to dispense from triennial vows[...].” The seven-point report by Consultor Savini, dated September 22, 1868, found the constitutions defective and recommended a longer waiting period.⁹⁰ Don Bosco’s petition was turned down. In a sensitive personal letter notifying Don Bosco of the decision, Secretary Svegliati pointed out “two principal articles” needing attention: the one pertaining to the issuing of dimissorial letters (to be removed); the other pertaining to a regular course of studies in the seminary (to be added), as demanded by the ordinary.⁹¹

(3) *Approval of the Society Not of the Constitutions*

After a short period of doubt, Don Bosco decided to make another attempt and left for Rome in early January 1869. In the meantime letters of commendation had been received in Rome, which did much to offset the bad reports. Bishop Gastaldi of Saluzzo, clearly and without any reservation expressed his support of the Salesian Congregation. He wrote to Cardinal Quaglia:

[...] From the very start Don Bosco began to train his own clerical students and priests, imbuing them with his own spirit. With their help he successfully ran his institutions. Now these same students and priests are giving shape to a Society which will perpetuate a work already so well established. The undersigned [Gastaldi] has witnessed the birth and growth of this Society, has known and knows each individual member, and cannot but praise it and express his desire that it be established on a permanent basis. To this end the official approval of the Holy See, without which it could never attain stability, is urgently needed. Father John Bosco has already submitted the rules of his nascent Society to the Holy See, together with a petition for the favors and

⁸⁹ Letter of August 6, 1868 [*EBM IX*, 170-173].

⁹⁰ Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 237f.; *EBM IX*, 170, 174.

⁹¹ Letter of October 2, 1868 [Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 239].

exemptions that are necessary to all religious societies. [...] As in the past, this Society will without a doubt continue to promote the Christian education of youth, a most urgent need in our times.⁹²

This time, perhaps even to Don Bosco's surprise, the Society was approved by decree of March 1, 1869.

But the decree, after referring to the founder's "insistent petitions" (*enixe postulavit*), stated that the Holy Father had approved the Society, but not its constitutions. "These must first be emended in such a way that all of the [thirteen Savini-Svegliati] *critical observations* given earlier [in 1864] are complied with—with the exception of the fourth," which dealt with the faculty to issue dimissorial letters. With regard to this matter, "His Holiness, graciously responding (*benigne annuens*) to Father John Bosco's entreaties (*supplicationibus*), gives him as Superior General of the said Salesian Congregation, the faculty of issuing dimissorials for the tonsure and for the ordination of [Salesian] candidates." But the decree clearly stated, "this faculty is valid for ten years only, and concerns only those candidates who prior to their fourteenth year of age were admitted, or will be admitted, to any house of the aforementioned Congregation, and who have joined, or will in due time join, the same[...]"⁹³

The language and style of the decree lead one to suspect that the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars wished to distance itself from such a concession which was contrary to Roman practice and which was attributable only to Pius IX's wish to accede to Don Bosco's persistent requests. By this concession, Don Bosco, as far as his own seminarians were concerned, was evading the discipline established by the archbishop. By recourse to privilege Don Bosco foiled Archbishop Riccardi's policy (as he would later foil Archbishop Gastaldi's) in a matter to which both had given high priority—the training and ordination of priests. They had to put a good face on a disagreeable situation, but neither of them ever accepted the idea of special privileges. Gastaldi in particular would do all in his power to obstruct their exercise or to limit their application. Don Bosco then would counter by seeking more favors in Rome, a characteristic *modus operandi*. He was so thoroughly convinced of the goodness and rightness of his objectives that, when faced with opposition from his ordinary, he tried to circumvent it by appealing directly to Rome (to Pope Pius IX particularly), or to some other bishop.⁹⁴

⁹² Letter of January 8, 1869 [*EBM IX*, 220].

⁹³ Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 239f.; *EBM IX*, 257.

⁹⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 261f.

Shortly after the decree of approval of 1869, Don Bosco sought and obtained directly from Pius IX the additional privilege of issuing dimissorials for eleven Salesians that had entered *after* the age of fourteen.⁹⁵ Archbishop Riccardi's reaction, as far as is known, has not been recorded; but in relating the "Albera episode" from this period, Lemoyne reports the Archbishop's bitter words: "Don Bosco is a proud man. He refuses obedience to his bishop."⁹⁶

More serious, and potentially disastrous, was the incident of Joseph Cagliero's "illicit" ordination. Certainly, it greatly aggravated an already strained relationship. In early November 1869, Deacon Cagliero applied for, but was denied, ordination by the archbishop when he refused, according to the *Biographical Memoirs*, "to sign a promise to leave the Oratory." The point is also made that he had not yet taken vows, though he apparently intended to do so. Rebuffed, he quickly made his religious profession, got assigned to the house of Mirabello in the diocese of Casale and, on November 14, was ordained by Bishop Pietro Maria Ferrè. By letter of November 26, the archbishop notified Don Bosco of his displeasure, as well as of the canonical penalties incurred by all who had a part in that "totally illicit ordination." Don Bosco's reply can only be described as a feeble groping for a semblance of justification; but it was a humble and apologetic letter, which must have mollified the archbishop somewhat. In a second letter, dated December 8, the latter rejected all of Don Bosco's explanations, but did not take any action against him. By that time he was already in Rome for the opening of the First Vatican Council, and was involved in other concerns.⁹⁷

2. Lawrence Gastaldi Archbishop—Initial Estrangement

At this point momentous events followed one hard upon the other: the First Vatican Council and the debates on its controversial schemata; the definition of papal infallibility; the occupation of Rome by the Italian army in September 1870; the Council's indefinite adjournment.

Archbishop Riccardi had been forced to leave Rome and the Council in April because of illness, and died not much later on October 16 of the same year. Now again, as in 1867, at Pope Pius IX's request, Don Bosco drew up his list of candidates for vacant episcopal sees. Thus he found himself in a position to further the nomination to the See of Turin (which obviously he had most at heart) of a longtime friend, benefactor and supporter, Bishop Gastaldi of

⁹⁵ *Ceria-Ep* II, 25f.

⁹⁶ *Documenti* XI, 302 in *ASC* 110: Cronachette, Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBM* 1,014 D7, edited in *EBM* IX, 297f. Cf. Desramaut, *Études* V, 46. 59.

⁹⁷ *EBM* IX, 356-364; *Ceria-Ep* II, 62f. Cf. Desramaut, *Études* V, 46-48.

Saluzzo.⁹⁸ The nomination came through in September. On November 26, the archbishop made his disputed and difficult official entrance into his diocese, and Don Bosco shared the anxiety and excitement of that moment.⁹⁹

Don Bosco must have looked on the entrance of Archbishop Gastaldi as the sure guarantee of patronage where he needed it most; he must have confidently entertained the hope that ecclesiastical policy in Turin would permanently change in his favor. He was to be bitterly disappointed, and he would live to regret the not quite high-minded proposal he had made to Pius IX.

How explain such a sudden change of heart in Lawrence Gastaldi? Initially, we should rather speak of “distancing” rather than a change of heart as from friend to foe. The reasons are complex.

To begin with, the incessant battering and vicious abetting by the anticlerical press had something to do with it.¹⁰⁰ These newspapers habitually presented Don Bosco and Gastaldi in tandem, speaking of the latter as a creature of the former. Shortly after Gastaldi’s entrance, the most popular “serious” daily in Turin, *La Gazzetta del Popolo* [The People’s Gazette], had this to say:

It matters little whether the name of the archbishop of Turin be Don Bosco or Don Margotti, and that their lackey’s name be Gastaldi. What do we care? [...] Gastaldi indeed relies on Don Bosco for his supply of wood, out of which priestly puppets are manufactured. Don Bosco’s seminarians and tonsured boys may troop up and down Turin’s streets looking like Lenten ghosts and smelling like rotten truffles, but educated people are amused [...].¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *EBM* X, 200f. For details and documentation, cf. Motto, *L’azione*, p. 307-315.

⁹⁹ *EBM* X, 123-125. Cf. note 34 and related text, above.

¹⁰⁰ Archbishop Riccardi had largely been spared by the anticlerical press because of his position at the Vatican Council and for his conciliating policy; but, as new appointments were in the offing, a vicious campaign was mounted against all likely candidates, especially against rumored nominees for the see of Turin. When Gastaldi’s appointment became known he became the target of the most personal and vile attacks, and the populace was suborned to interfere with his entrance [cf. Motto, *L’azione*, 313, n. 173].

¹⁰¹ *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, November 2, 1872, n. 306, p. 2, cited by Giuseppe Tuninetti, “L’immagine di don Bosco nella stampa torinese (e italiana) del suo tempo,” in *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare* (ed. Francesco Traniello. Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1987, [209-251]), 219. [Hereafter, Tuninetti, *L’immagine*]

Father Giacomo Margotti was the powerful editor of the arch-conservative Catholic newspaper, *L’Unità Cattolica*.

And the weekly satirical sheet, *Il Fischietto* [The Whistle], under the heading, "Bishop Gastaldi's Biography," wrote:

Don Bosco, the famous holy bigot, knew that Gastaldi was merchandise for sale, that he could use him to further his own schemes. He submitted his name to God's Vicar, the then-non-yet-infallible Pius IX, for nomination as bishop of Saluzzo, and it was done. [...] But in the recent reshuffling of bishops, Don Bosco transferred him from the Church of Saluzzo, where no tears were shed at his departure, to the Church of Turin.¹⁰²

One, then, can readily understand Gastaldi's need to distance himself from Don Bosco. Perhaps, Don Bosco's very familiarity made such distancing advisable. Gastaldi was conscious enough of his own merit, for he had "served the Church well," not only by upholding papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, but because of his record as an outstanding bishop. In his inaugural discourse he emphasized the fact that he was now archbishop of Turin not by the will of men, but by the action of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ He obviously must have recognized the debt he owed Don Bosco; but he probably resented being reminded of it. Don Bosco, however, had immediately put himself forward. With the Pope's permission he was the first to notify the archbishop-elect of his promotion by telegram.¹⁰⁴ He did not hesitate to offer him advice; and in an informally written note he even made the suggestion that Father Giovanni Battista Bertagna, "a pious, learned, practical, and well-to-do person" be appointed pro-vicar general of the archdiocese.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the new circumstances in which Archbishop Gastaldi found himself, his new role, demanded that their relationship be placed on a different footing. Furthermore, advancing from the relatively unimportant post of suffragan bishop in a provincial town to the archdiocesan see of St. Maximus, he was taking on responsibilities so demanding as to make everything else, even friendship, appear secondary. True, even under such circumstances the

"Relies on Don Bosco for his supply of wood." This play on words (Bosco-wood) refers to the fact that throughout the period when the diocesan seminary was closed (1848-1863), and even thereafter, the Oratory functioned as a seminary which "manufactured priestly puppets."

¹⁰² *Il Fischietto*, September 14, 1872, n. 111, in Tuninetti, *L'immagine*, 225.

¹⁰³ *EBM X*, 124f.

¹⁰⁴ *EBM X*, 200f.

¹⁰⁵ Letter of October 1871. [*EBM X*, 123; cf. *Ceria-Ep* II, 185].

expression of friendship is always possible, but only insofar as it is compatible with the new relationships that have come into being.

Finally, there was (I believe) a more cogent reason. It appears that in his new role Gastaldi found his identity as the reformer-pastor bishop he had always felt called to be. And, most importantly, he was inheriting an ecclesiastical policy relating to the training and formation of clergy, secular and regular, which, though not of his own making, responded to his deepest conviction and was consonant with canonical tradition.

[Year 1872]

Don Bosco and the Salesians became aware of a change in attitude on the part of the archbishop, of the way he seemed to be distancing himself from them, as early as the beginning of 1872. On February 17, the archbishop attended the service held at the Oratory in thanksgiving for Don Bosco's recovery from the Varazze illness; but he ignored the invitation to stay for the reception that followed. This drew from Don Bosco a remark that expressed not only his disappointment but his perception of the change: "What can we do? The archbishop wants to be the head of our Congregation. That is too much. However, we shall see."¹⁰⁶

In March or April (1872), the troublesome question of ordinations came up again and it dragged on through the following months, as will be seen below.¹⁰⁷ And yet, right at this time (by letter of April 23), Archbishop Gastaldi asked Don Bosco to take the school at Valsalice which was running the risk of closure. After considerable hesitation, Don Bosco accepted. The offer would tend to show that Gastaldi's regard for Don Bosco and his work had not changed, even though, by accepting, Don Bosco would be doing the archbishop a favor. Moreover, one is struck by the fact that the correspondence betrays no animus on either side; and even shows a willingness on the archbishop's part to accept Don Bosco's terms.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *EBM* X, 155. For this episode the biographer quotes a report by Canon Giovanni Battista Anfossi, who was present. It should be noted that Anfossi, a diocesan priest and an alumnus of the Oratory, a few years later would be playing a role in the conflict against the archbishop.

¹⁰⁷ *IBM* XVI, 82f. This information is contained in comments on the conflict made by Ceria after recording Gastaldi's death [*Ibid.*, 82-102].

¹⁰⁸ For the story, cf. *EBM* X, 168-170. and two letters in *Ceria-Ep* II, 214. In June 1872 Don Bosco accepted to operate the school officially. He leased the premises from the Christian Brothers for five years, up to 1877. In 1879 he bought the property. In 1887 he decided to turn Valsalice into a *Seminary for the Foreign Missions*, in reality a minor seminary for the Salesian Society. For a full account, cf. E. Pederzani and R. Rocca, *Don Bosco a Valsalice. Un contributo per il centenario*. Torino, 1987.

3. Hardening of Gastaldi's Position

(1) *Process for the Definitive Approval of the Constitutions Begun*

In August (1872) Cardinal Giuseppe Berardi, undersecretary of state, speaking for the Holy Father, advised Don Bosco to pursue the matter of the definitive approval of the Society and its constitutions.¹⁰⁹ Don Bosco again began to solicit letters of commendation from bishops, and again turned his attention to the text of the constitutions. This effort resulted in the revised Latin text of 1873, to be discussed below, and the assembling of the documents for the new *Positio* or docket to be presented in Rome.¹¹⁰

(2) *Gastaldi's "Declaration of Intent"*

But, while the process of approval of the Salesian Constitutions was moving forward, Archbishop Gastaldi's position was hardening, and his letter of October 24, 1872 to Don Bosco amounted to a "declaration of intent." The letter began with an elaborate reference to his past benefactions and support for Don Bosco and the Salesian Society. Then, (1) referring to the privilege authorizing Don Bosco "to issue dimissorial letters to those youths (only) who had entered the Oratory prior to their fourteenth year," he demanded that documentary proof of the fact be submitted in each case; (2) he directed that all Salesians who sought ordination should present themselves to him at least forty days in advance with affidavits as to personal data, formation, studies, and religious profession status; (3) he likewise directed that Salesian candidates seeking ordination should take examinations each time in two appropriate theological treatises at the chancery; (4) he added that he might also have demanded that Salesian clerical students attend classes in the diocesan seminary (as an instruction of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of March 3, 1869, prescribed), but he hoped that the outcome of such examinations would render this further measure unnecessary. For these demands he appealed both to the Council of Trent and to the

¹⁰⁹ Letter of August 27, 1972, [IBM X, 673 (omitted in EBM X, 303)].

¹¹⁰ By the Latin term *Positio* was meant the docket or file containing the official documents that together made up the proposal for approval. This was presented to the cardinals who constituted the Special Congregation charged with deciding on the approval. On the basis of these official documents, a lawyer of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars drafted a summary statement, designated as "Consultation for a Special Congregation," which gave the pros and cons, and framed a motion on which the members of the Special Congregation cast their votes.

Pontificale Romanum, which prescribed that “religious should not be ordained without the bishop’s diligent scrutiny.”¹¹¹

The immediate effect of the letter of October 24 was to aggravate the conflictual situation which the matter of dimissorials for ordination had already created. Gastaldi, as we have seen, was not the first to object to this privilege. But this was not all. His demands must have been perceived as unwarranted, in fact, as overt harassment. Later the letter would be branded by Don Bosco as the first in a long series of abusive acts of power by the archbishop against the Salesian Society.¹¹²

Don Bosco’s reply is not on file. But from Gastaldi’s next letter of November 9, we learn that Don Bosco was “so grieved as to be unable to find rest or relief.” After admonishing him to seek to do the will of God and not be perturbed, the archbishop restated his position, stressing what he considered his right and his duty:

While acknowledging that religious orders should rightly be exempt from episcopal authority to the extent required for their preservation and successful growth, I am nevertheless averse to unnecessary exemptions, particularly when they are harmful. Such in my opinion is the exemption that would prevent bishops from carefully examining candidates for ordination, while the Council of Trent and the *Pontificale Romanum* expressly order bishops to do so. Unfortunately little by little abuses gained a foothold in this matter, which now claim the status of privileges. [...] It is high time that we adhere scrupulously to the prescriptions of the wise fathers of the Council of Trent.

He likewise pointed out what he regarded as yet another failure, namely, the defective religious formation among Salesians due to the lack of a proper novitiate; he made this requirement a prerequisite for his support.

¹¹¹ *EBM* X, 304ff.

Some time earlier, beginning with the issue of June 24 (1872), the scandal sheet, *Il Ficcanaso* (The Meddler), had begun to run installments of a scurrilous “novel” entitled “Don Broschi.” It described a seminary wherein disorder and ribaldry reigned supreme, and wherein pupils and teachers, their leader (Don Broschi) in particular, were crooked-minded hypocrites one and all [*IBM* X, 460 (omitted in *EBM* X, 211)]. The archbishop’s letter would not have been prompted by such a trashy publication, but even such grossly false allegations would increase his concern.

¹¹² Cf. *Esposizione del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco agli eminentissimi cardinali della Sacra Congregazione del Concilio*. Sampierdarena, 1881, p. 8, *OE* XXXII (Roma: LAS, 1977), p. 56. [Hereafter, **Bosco, *Esposizione* 1881**]

If there is no such novitiate, or if it does not resemble, at least to a great extent, that of the Society of Jesus, your Congregation will lack stability. [...] All too often complaints are made that [Salesians] lack virtue, especially humility. [...] This could be remedied by a good novitiate, which I do not think the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales has as yet. *I shall therefore be unable to support the Holy See's approval of this Congregation, except on the basis of a clear, prior, and mutual understanding that such a novitiate will be established.*

With assurances of genuine interest, and with exhortations to patience and humility, the archbishop signed off, "Affectionately in Jesus Christ."¹¹³

Clearly, in the light of the foregoing discussion, Archbishop Gastaldi's demands should be understood as expressing a genuine concern for the proper preparation of candidates for ordination, as well as his strongly felt responsibility in the matter. His statement with regard to exemption of religious should be noted: he was not against limited necessary exemption of religious; but he was against unnecessary and harmful privileges, among them (in his view) the privilege of issuing dimissorials.¹¹⁴

Don Bosco, on his part, believed he was in the right. He set forth his reasons to the archbishop by letter dated November 23 (1872). He wrote that, prior to the Society's approval in 1869, he had explained Salesian formation practices to Pius IX's complete satisfaction. True, the Salesian Society's official documents (because of the suppression laws!) did not provide for a formal novitiate, but there had always been a novitiate in actual practice. He also disputed the archbishop's claim that Salesians did not possess the necessary religious virtues. If that was so, how should one explain the fact that the archbishop had until recently spoken of the Oratory as a house of piety and virtue?¹¹⁵

(3) Positions and Understandings of the Parties

By these letters, the position of the parties, and the substantive issues in the confrontation over the Society's definitive approval, were laid bare: religious formation and novitiate; priestly formation and ordinations.

¹¹³ *EBM X*, p. 305f. Italics mine.

¹¹⁴ Tuninetti [*Gastaldi II*, p. 261f.] notes that Archbishop Gastaldi seems to have been opposed not only to the granting of specific special privileges to religious, but also to the established practice of total exemption. On the other hand, as has been pointed out above, he was strongly in favor of religious life as such, and was very appreciative of the work of religious congregations.

¹¹⁵ *EBM X*, 307f.; cf. *Ceria-Ep II*, 239f.

With respect to the first point, the disagreement rested on different conceptions of the Salesian Congregation, and therefore of its novitiate. In the seventies Gastaldi could not regard the Society as anything but a traditional Tridentine religious congregation (and essentially such it was), the novitiate of which (in his view) should reduplicate that of the Jesuits. Don Bosco, on the other hand, had only gradually accepted that model, and in the seventies he was still struggling to salvage some ideas he had come by with a different model in mind. At first (so it seems) he had wanted not a traditional congregation, but one that would be more pliable and suitable to youth apostolate. Its novitiate would naturally have to be compatible with this model. As Pietro Stella remarks:

The Salesian Society had initially been conceived as a generic association partaking both of the nature of a religious congregation with simple vows and the nature of a pious union. It was envisioned as a moral person with civil rights. Instead, under pressure from diocesan authorities in Turin and from the canonical system then in force in Rome, it was pushed in the direction of the classical Tridentine congregations, with the three simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and the obligation to lead the common life. It then gradually found its place within the ecclesiastical organization as a clerical, exempt congregation.¹¹⁶

Seeking now definitive approval of the constitutions of a basically Tridentine Society, Don Bosco was still fighting to salvage earlier forms, such as civil rights, power over the vows, a less formal system of formation. Such clinging to elements of the earlier model would place Don Bosco in a serious dilemma. On the one hand the novel character of the institute would tend to make him more dependent on the local bishops, and consequently independence would have to be secured through obtaining privileges from Rome; but, on the other hand, privileges would be available only to a traditional religious congregation.

With respect to the second, related point (priestly formation and ordination of candidates), the opposition was between the standards adopted by a reformer-pastor bishop on the strength of the canonical tradition and the freedom of action needed by a group of youth workers in the field. From a different point of view, the disagreement was accentuated by the claims of episcopal authority on the one hand, over against recourse to Rome for exemption privileges on the other. There were different ecclesiologies at work here also. Recourse to Rome (and to the Pope personally) for privileges and concessions appeared not only necessary, but “natural” to Don Bosco. It went hand in hand with a thoroughly

¹¹⁶ Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco: Life and Work* (2nd rev. ed., tr. by John Drury. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1985), 170f.; cf. also 154f.

utramontanist ecclesiology, in which the centrality of the Pope loomed so large that the local ordinary's role paled by comparison.

As Christmas 1972 drew near, another cause of conflict arose on the very point of a papal concession. In his Christmas pastoral letter, the archbishop had forbidden the celebration of three consecutive Masses on Christmas night, a practice obtaining in a number of religious communities.¹¹⁷ Don Bosco, however, had obtained the privilege of three midnight Masses for his houses in perpetuity from Pius IX, and so notified the archbishop.¹¹⁸ The latter replied ("courteously but curtly") that he meant to correct an abuse and to emphasize the established liturgical celebrations at midnight, at dawn and during day. Obviously Gastaldi looked upon such concessions with disfavor; but, after an exchange of letters, he allowed Don Bosco the private celebration (*januis clausis*) of three midnight Masses. Don Bosco immediately notified "confreres benefactors and friends."¹¹⁹ Later, reviewing the archbishop's hostile behavior over the years, Don Bosco would speak of this action as vexatious; and the comment he makes is revealing: "The archbishop thinks he is more Catholic than the pope."¹²⁰

4. Clash over the Approval of the Constitutions (1873-1874)¹²¹

[Year 1873]

(1) *Gastaldi's Conditions for His Support*

As the year 1872 came to an end, Don Bosco was in the process of gathering the documents to submit to Rome with his petition for the approval of the constitutions. He therefore took steps to obtain the necessary letter of commendation from Archbishop Gastaldi. With a cover letter of December 23, 1872, Don Bosco submitted to the archbishop the galley proofs of a pamphlet

¹¹⁷ Letter in ASC 123: Gastaldi, Lettere pastorali, 30-11-72, *FDBM* 616 A7-B3.

¹¹⁸ *EBM* X, 309f.

¹¹⁹ *EBM* X, 310.

¹²⁰ "Sembra all'Arcivescovo che egli conosca meglio lo spirito della Chiesa che non il Papa" [Bosco, *Esposizione* 1881, 9, in *OE* XXXII, 37].

¹²¹ For a survey of this complicated history, cf. *IBM* X, 661-1006, with abundant documentation, and *EBM* X, 298-417, with much of the documentation omitted. The documentation is reliably transcribed from Lemoyne's *Documenti*, and ultimately from archival sources. It is obvious that the Salesian biographical tradition is totally partisan and makes nary an attempt to understand Gastaldi's point of view.

entitled, *Brief Historical Notice on the Salesian Society with Some Decrees Pertaining Thereto*.¹²² This historical sketch was intended for distribution and presentation in Rome. In the letter, Don Bosco referred to the new draft of the constitutions (which the archbishop was supposed to have seen), and then went on to ask blithely if it were not opportune also to present in print, as part of the *Brief Historical Notice*, the archbishop's letter of commendation, so that each member of the Roman Congregation would have access to it(!).¹²³ The *Brief Historical Notice* itself consisted of the usual historical survey, presenting the Society as existing well before its approval in 1859 and as endowed, at certain points of its historical journey, with various ecclesiastical "decrees." But its closing paragraph must have taken the archbishop by surprise. For, after mentioning commendations and support from twenty-four bishops and three cardinals, Don Bosco added:

Lastly, our most gracious archbishop, eager to add yet another token of his favor to the many and ample ones heretofore granted, has commended the Salesian Society in the most lavish terms [...]. And now our archbishop, the bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Turin, and other bishops as well, jointly appeal for the definitive approval of the Salesian Society.¹²⁴

¹²² *De Societate S. Francisci Salesii Brevis notitia et nonnulla decreta ad eandem spectantia*, in *OE* XXV, p. 103-121, and partially in *IBM* X, 890-893 (omitted in *EBM*, except for a short quote, X, 311).

This is the last but one of a long list of historical summaries of the origins and development of his work which Don Bosco produced over the years, chiefly for the purpose of obtaining commendations or approval from Church authorities. Here is the list: Presentation to Canon Zappata of 1863; *Brief Notice (Breve notizia)* of 1864; Society of St. Francis de Sales for Archbishop Riccardi, 1867; *Historical Summary (Cenno storico)* for Bishop Ferrè of Casale, 1868; *Brief Notice and Decrees (Notizia brevis [...] et nonnulla decreta)* of 1868; *My Purpose (Nella persuasione [...])* to the bishops of the ecclesiastical Province of Turin, 1869; *State of the Society (Stato religioso-materiale [...])* of 1870; *Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales of 1873*; the present *Brief Historical Notice of 1873*; *Historical Summary (Cenno storico)* of 1874; *Summary (Riassunto [...])* of 1874—the last three specifically prepared for the definitive approval. For details and references, cf. Braido, *L'idea*, p. 255f. In these remarkable documents, Don Bosco gives varying descriptions of the beginnings of his work (the usual point of reference being 1841) and its development, and then presents the current state of the Society with an "effective" mixture of truth and fiction.

¹²³ *Ce-Ep* II, 244f. If Gastaldi had seen a draft of the constitutions at this time, it was not the text of 1873 to be presented in Rome for approval.

¹²⁴ *EBM* X, 311; cf. *OE* XXV, p. 121.

One wonders what Don Bosco, aware as he was of Gastaldi's views, hoped to accomplish by confronting the archbishop with a *fait accompli*. As Desramaut remarks, unless Don Bosco (inappropriately and in bad taste, to be sure) just meant to humor the archbishop, he had deliberately styled both the letter and the *Brief Historical Notice* so as to force Gastaldi's and his suffragan bishops' hand. Gastaldi, however, was not to be trifled with. He had already set his course, a course which he would consistently follow to the end.¹²⁵ He would indeed write the required letter of commendation, but only on *certain definite conditions*.

He immediately set about enlisting the support of other bishops through a circular letter dated January 1, 1873, in which he clearly stated his conditions. It was from Bishop Pietro Giuseppe De Gaudenzi of Vigevano, a good friend, that Don Bosco learned of the archbishop's letter and of his demands.¹²⁶ Subsequently, when on February 17 he visited the archbishop before leaving for Rome, the latter personally notified him of his commendation and attached conditions. In summary, Archbishop Gastaldi demanded (1) that Salesian candidates be perpetually professed before being admitted to ordination; (2) that a more serious novitiate be established on the Jesuit model; (3) that Salesian candidates for ordination submit to an examination by the bishop in accordance with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent and the *Pontificale*; (4) that the bishop have the right of inspecting Salesian churches and oratories, to ascertain compliance with church laws.

Archbishop Salvatore Magnasco of Genoa, who was otherwise supportive, had similar reservations.¹²⁷ On the other hand, Don Bosco had the full support of Bishops Pietro Maria Ferrè of Casale, Giovanni Battista Cerruti of Savona, Pietro Giuseppe De Gaudenzi of Vigevano, Pietro Anacleto Siboni of Albenga, and (most emphatically) Emiliano Manacorda of Fossano. The latter's recommendation countered Gastaldi's objections at every point.

(2) *Gastaldi's Brief Presented in Rome: Objections and Demands*

This first volley was followed by a veritable barrage of letters and memorandums in which the Archbishop made his objections to the Salesian Constitutions known in Rome. The documents may be listed as follows:

[i] Memorandum *Quum admodum* addressed to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (February 10, 1873). After lavish encomiums, Gastaldi made the following demands: (1) That the Salesian Constitutions be submitted

¹²⁵ Desramaut, *Études* V, p. 191-193.

¹²⁶ *EBM* X, 312f. This is the letter (dated January 11, 1873) which Gastaldi wrote to De Gaudenzi. Presumably similar letters were written to the other bishops.

¹²⁷ Cf. *EBM* X, 318, and *OE* XXV, 362f.; *IBM* X, 933f., Appendix V, No. 12 (omitted in *EBM*).

to the ordinary; (2) that the Salesian Congregation institute a novitiate modeled on that of the Jesuits; (3) that perpetual profession be made a requirement for ordination for all Salesian candidates; (4) that Salesian candidates submit to an examination by the bishop before ordination; (5) that the ordinary have the right to inspect the churches and oratories of the Salesian Congregation; (6) that exemption from the ordinary's jurisdiction be kept at a minimum.¹²⁸

[ii] Letter to Cardinal Prospero Caterini, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council (February 19, 1873). Here Gastaldi stressed the following points: (1) necessity of a proper novitiate; (2) necessity of a regular course of studies; (3) necessity of perpetual vows before ordination.¹²⁹

[iii] First letter to Cardinal Giuseppe Andrea Bizzarri, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (April 20, 1873). Gastaldi's criticism of Don Bosco was extensive, more explicit, and certainly more damaging. He contended that the lack of a novitiate affected adversely the formation of Salesian seminarians; that the failure to take perpetual vows before ordination made it easier for those who had joined for financial reasons to leave the Society; that Don Bosco accepted seminarians dismissed from the diocesan seminary and sent them to teach in schools located in other dioceses; that Salesian clerical students lacked a philosophical formation because they were engaged full time in teaching and assistance; that Don Bosco had obtained dispensation for his clerical students from attending classes at the diocesan seminary, an obligation which the Holy See itself had imposed—and more. Hence in order to guarantee the permanence of the Salesian Congregation even after Don Bosco's death, the Archbishop made the following suggestions: (1) that the constitutions be submitted for approval to the archbishop of Turin and to the bishops in whose territory Salesian houses had been established; (2) that Don Bosco not be permitted to present for ordination candidates who had joined after their sixteenth year of age; (3) that perpetual profession be required of Salesian candidates before ordination to the subdiaconate; (4) that Salesian clerical students be required to attend classes in the seminary of their diocese for at least four years; (5) that Salesian candidates before ordination submit to a "careful examination" by the bishop, after submitting proof of compliance with the above requirements.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *IBM X*, 927f.; cf. *EBM X*, 314f.

¹²⁹ *EBM X*, 315f.

¹³⁰ *EBM X*, 323-328.

Some of Gastaldi's demands were clearly reasonable, even though Don Bosco probably thought that none at all were. Others, however, were not. They were an attempt by the archbishop to bring the Salesian Society under his control, though one cannot conclude from this that he wanted to make it a diocesan congregation. After all the Salesian Society had been approved by Rome in 1869; and he knew his canon law. But, on the one hand, at this time the Society had neither achieved the status of a *clerical* congregation nor that of an *exempt* congregation; and on the

Don Bosco learned of this, the most damaging of Archbishop Gastaldi's briefs, on his return to Rome the following year, in March 1874. It was then that in a memorandum addressed to the four cardinals of the Special Congregation (March 29 and 30), he tried to refute Gastaldi's allegations and objections. For instance, he rejected Gastaldi's demand for a formal novitiate for three reasons:

This was possible in other days, but not in our country at this time, because it would destroy the Salesian Congregation. Were the civil authorities to know of the existence of a novitiate, they would abolish it immediately and disperse the novices. Secondly, this kind of a novitiate would not be consonant to the Salesian Constitutions; for these are crafted to suit the active life of the members and prescribe only those practices which are essential for forming and maintaining the spirit of a good priest. Moreover, such a novitiate would not be suitable for us because the novices would not be able to practice the constitutions in a manner consistent with the purpose of our Congregation.¹³¹

(4) Second letter to Cardinal Bizzarri (July 27, 1873). Gastaldi wanted to know whether the Salesian Society was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. He repeated the question for emphasis: "*Is it, or is it not?*" Then he went on to explain his objections to privileges, or special concessions.¹³²

The reply of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars came on August 8 (after Don Bosco's first petition for definitive approval had been rejected) in these terms: A congregation with simple vows is not exempt from the ordinary's jurisdiction, except to the extent defined in approved constitutions and by privileges specifically granted. The Salesian Constitutions are just now under consideration. Then the cardinal added: "Nevertheless one cannot conceal the fact that the Rev. Bosco has obtained from His Holiness more than one personal privilege regarding dimissorial letters [...]"¹³³ Such special privileges obtained by Don Bosco from Pius IX personally were precisely what Archbishop

other, Gastaldi was speaking and acting out of a very special concept of an ordinary's authority and responsibility.

¹³¹ *EBM X*, 364-366, cf. *Ceria-Ep II*, 373-376. For the "second trial" (he generally avoided the term "novitiate") Don Bosco regarded one year spent in a Salesian house, with involvement in the works of the Society, as appropriate and sufficient for the Salesian's formation [cf. Motto, *Cost. SDB*, p. 196, 192f.; also p. 72 f. below].

¹³² *IBM X*, 729 (briefly in *EBM X*, 336).

¹³³ *IBM X*, 730; cf. *EBM X*, 336 (inaccurate translation).

Gastaldi found unacceptable. And it is likely that the Roman Congregation, having competence in matters which concerned diocesan ordinaries and religious, and their interrelationships, found such a situation embarrassing.

(5) Third letter to Cardinal Bizzarri (January 9, 1874). Knowing that the Salesian Constitutions were being examined in Rome, Gastaldi, "out of a sense of responsibility," wished again to express his concern about the poor quality of religious and intellectual formation among Salesians. He complained about a number of deplorable cases of poorly formed Salesian seminarians, and cited the lack of a proper novitiate as the cause. He wrote:

I deem it my solemn duty to acquaint [the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars] with the need that a novitiate of two years' duration be made mandatory in the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. Young [Salesian] seminarians should be trained not to *command* (as it is all too frequently the case through their being appointed teachers in the schools of the Congregation), but to *obey*, as in the traditional novitiates of other religious congregations, especially of the Society of Jesus. The Rev. Don Bosco has a special gift for training young lay people, but he does not seem to possess the same talent in training young seminarians.¹³⁴

Archbishop Salvatore Nobili Vitelleschi, secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, showed this letter to Don Bosco in Rome in February 1874, after the latter's second petition for definitive approval. For a rebuttal of the allegations, Don Bosco had recourse to a stratagem. He composed a letter and arranged for it to be sent to him in Rome anonymously (in the handwriting of Father Giovanni Anfossi!). He showed it to his friend and patron, Cardinal Berardi, who was only too glad to make use of it.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ EBM X, 348-350.

¹³⁵ EBM X, 759f. For Anfossi, cf. note 106, above.

Knowing as we do that it was written by Don Bosco himself, we find this document somewhat disconcerting. The "anonymous writer" accused Gastaldi of "seeking to destroy the Society's good name with infamous allegations" ("*studia coprirla tutta di nera infamia*"), and of "treating the members of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars as so many ignorant children" ("*supponendo che [...] siano altrettanti bambini e che sappiano nemmeno un po' di latino*"). He added: "It was Don Bosco who raised him [Gastaldi] from the dust, gave him a job and a name, printed his books, and worked hard to get him the position he now holds. [...] He fears that Don Bosco's priests might outdo those of his diocese, all the more so since his own seminarians want to leave and join Don Bosco [at the Oratory], where they are better treated (*dove si sta meglio*)."¹³⁶ For diocesan seminarians wishing to "transfer" to the Oratory, cf. note 55 and related text, above.

5. Trials and Tribulations of the Approval: The First Unsuccessful Presentation

Don Bosco went to Rome to present his petition for the definitive approval of the constitutions twice, in early 1873 and early 1874—the first time without success.

Accompanied by his new scrupulous and humorless secretary, the twenty-four-year old Father Gioacchino Berto, he arrived in Rome on February 19, 1873. Of all the letters received in Rome from various bishops to be included in the *Positio*, a number of which expressed reservations, Gastaldi's represented the chief obstacle, and Gastaldi, therefore, appeared as the principal adversary. It seems that Archbishop Magnasco's reservations, and those of other bishops, real as they were,¹³⁶ represented less of a menace. In any case, Don Bosco quickly found that his ordinary's complaints had already been registered in Rome, and had in fact already made their mark.

(1) *Petition for Definitive Approval*

Undaunted, however, he pressed forward, and the *Positio* or docket was assembled. Besides the *Brief Historical Notice* and the letters of commendation, this file contained two important documents: the new text of the constitutions and the *Declaratio*. In this last document Don Bosco attempted to explain his acceptance or non-acceptance of the Savini-Svegliati *Critical Observations* of 1864 and other specific features of the Salesian Constitutions.¹³⁷ The new text (the printed Latin text of 1873) had been painstakingly revised; but, in defiance of the warning given with the approval of the Society in 1869, not been brought into complete accordance with the *Critical Observations* of 1864.¹³⁸ In spite of this, on March 1, he petitioned the Holy Father for approval and presented the *Positio*. In the cover letter Don Bosco wrote: "Two things above all are now needed to complete the work: the definitive approval of the constitutions and the full authorization to issue dimissorial letters."¹³⁹

Don Bosco was detained in Rome for over a month, involved in feverish activity relating not only to the approval but also to the urgent matter of the *Exequaturs*, or bishops' revenues. On the subject of these complicated and

¹³⁶ Cf. Cardinal Giuseppe Berardi's letter to Don Bosco, August 8, 1873, in *EBM X*, 336.

¹³⁷ *De Regulis Societatis Salesianae aliqua declaratio*, *IBM X*, 894f. (omitted in *EBM*), critically edited in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 248.

¹³⁸ For the critical text of these constitutions cf. Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 18f. and 59ff. The work of revision is described in *IBM X*, 674-682 (omitted in *EBM X*, 303). For the 1864 observations, cf. note 79 and related text, above.

¹³⁹ *EBM X*, 317.

delicate negotiations, he had several exchanges with Archbishop Gastaldi, who, like many others was still deprived of the benefices, but who was meanwhile acting in a more private capacity in the matter.¹⁴⁰ Don Bosco could finally leave the city on March 22, and on March 30, he was back in Turin awaiting the verdict, so to speak.

(2) *Further Incidents in a Deteriorating Situation*

Meanwhile, even while the Salesian Constitutions were being examined in Rome, the archbishop expected Don Bosco to meet his demands in practice for all that regarded an ordinary's power over priestly candidates and ordinations. Don Bosco's failure to take any steps in that direction was an on-going cause of friction. Incidents occurred to sharpen the very issues that were already in contention.

The first group of incidents related to the ordination of Salesian candidates. As reported, on one occasion when Father (later Bishop) John Cagliero, who was in charge of Salesian ordinands, presented a list of candidates, the archbishop angrily threw it on the floor.¹⁴¹ This occurred some time in March. The *Biographical Memoirs* give no reason for such an outburst, but one suspects that they were the very same that prompted the archbishop to press his demands a little later. Deacons Luigi Lasagna and Giovanni Baccino (future missionaries) were to be urgently ordained (outside the diocese), and the archbishop, as he had made abundantly clear before, demanded statements regarding the time of their entrance into the Society, their religious profession, and their examinations taken at the chancery. The two Salesians did take their examinations for orders at the chancery, and the archbishop's secretary notified Don Bosco of their promotion.¹⁴² A similar incident occurred on August 22, 1873, when the archbishop demanded proof of subdeacon (and future missionary) Domenico Milanese's perpetual profession before ordaining him *titulo mensae communis*.¹⁴³

A second situation of conflict was created by Don Bosco's acceptance of "ostracized" diocesan clerics into Salesian houses. Some time in March the archbishop had suspended *a divinis* a canon of the *Duomo* of Chieri. Don Bosco

¹⁴⁰ Cf. note 39 and related text, above.

¹⁴¹ *EBM* X, 320.

¹⁴² *EBM* X, 321-323. The archbishop had set these conditions for ordination earlier [cf. Note 111 and related text, above]. At this point the *Biographical Memoirs* comment on the archbishop's vexatious demands.

¹⁴³ *EBM* X, 340. Perpetual profession would also be set as a requirement by Rome for ordination *titulo mensae communis* when the Salesian Constitutions came up for the definitive approval.

defended him and then received him into the Salesian house of Alassio.¹⁴⁴ Much more serious was the Borelli-Rocca affair in early May. These two seminarians, Borelli (or Borel) and Angelo Rocca, had been received by Don Bosco into Salesian houses (Varazze and Lanzo, respectively) after their leaving, or being dismissed from, the seminary. The archbishop, through his secretary, Canon Tommaso Chiuso, asked for an explanation. Whatever the reply, it did not satisfy him, for he immediately notified Don Bosco that he would not ordain any Salesian candidate so long as those two remained in a Salesian house.¹⁴⁵

Don Bosco's reply to the archbishop, dated May 14, from Borgo San Martino, after "a three-day spiritual retreat," was such as to strain further his relationship with the archbishop. Believing himself in the right, he apparently did not realize that he was dealing with a prelate who ruled by synod and decree, a reformer bishop who did not hesitate to use the *a divinis* suspension as a disciplinary measure, and who, above all, regarded all matters pertaining to clerical formation and ordination as non-negotiable. In this rather disconcerting document, certainly not free of resentment, Don Bosco defended his admittance of the two ex-seminarians on humanitarian grounds, adding that permission repeatedly asked in similar cases had been rejected. He also disputed the archbishop's right to refuse ordination to Salesian candidates if they were not unworthy. He stressed the Salesian Society's meritorious service to the archdiocese (to which "since 1848 it has supplied no less than two-thirds of its clergy"!). Finally, he recalled his meritorious service to the archbishop personally—recently, by preventing the publication of derogatory articles against him; earlier, by submitting, and supporting against not a few objections, his nomination as bishop and then as archbishop. The manner in which he introduced this last and very sensitive point is quite remarkable:

Certain documents pilfered from government files, who knows by whom, are circulating in Turin. From these papers one may learn that Canon Gastaldi owes his appointment as bishop of Saluzzo to Don Bosco's mediation; and likewise that it was through Don Bosco's mediation that he was made archbishop of Turin. These papers also recall the difficulties that had to be overcome in the matter, and give the reasons why I championed your cause [...].¹⁴⁶

Archbishop Gastaldi regarded such a "lecture" from one of "his priests" as inexcusable insolence, as he himself had occasion to tell the Pope some two years later. Writing to Pius IX on April 12, 1875 he complained:

¹⁴⁴ EBM X, 320f.

¹⁴⁵ EBM X, 328.

¹⁴⁶ EBM X, 329-331; Cf. *Ceria-Ep* II, 277-279.

Recently [...] the same Don Bosco on returning from Rome wrote me a long letter in which he claims to have been reprimanded for submitting my name for nomination as bishop of Saluzzo, and later as archbishop of Turin; and that I am pursuing a ruinous course. He adds that he is writing this letter *on orders from higher authority*. I cannot regard such a letter from one of my own priests, as anything but an *insolent affront*. Therefore, I sent one of my seminary professors to plead with him [...]. His reply was in the form of another letter in which he expressed the same sentiments.”¹⁴⁷

Gastaldi, however, relented—on condition that in the future diocesan seminarians would not be accepted in Salesian houses, except by written consent from the chancery. Don Bosco did indeed write a declaration promising to do what was demanded, but attached a proviso that rendered it unacceptable: “[...] This statement is made with the reservations and within the limits prescribed by the sacred canons to safeguard the freedom of religious vocations.”¹⁴⁸

A gauche attempt to mediate a reconciliation with the archbishop was made in Don Bosco’s name by Bishop Giuseppe De Gaudenzi of Vigevano in early August. He was notoriously partial to the Salesians and of ambiguous sentiments toward the archbishop. The latter’s harsh reply to De Gaudenzi’s letter was a dour put-down of the good-hearted bishop, and a bitter denunciation of Don Bosco’s actions; it even called into question Don Bosco’s reputed saintliness: “Saints never ran their superiors down, and never stirred up scandals to compromise them.” When Don Bosco was shown the letter, he took the ill-advised step of replying. His opening remark shows, as Desramaut points out, a failure to appreciate how much the archbishop’s position had changed since their Saluzzo days: “If the letter had not been written to a bishop, I would have said that it had been written in jest.” And after reviewing the archbishop’s grievances of recent months and declaring that he had always done his best to comply with the archbishop’s wishes, he added: “For the past sixteen months I have pleaded

¹⁴⁷ *Vatican Archives*, quoted in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 267, note 37. Still later, in a letter to the archbishop, October 28, 1875, Don Bosco wrote: “With all respect [...], I can assure you, and you know perfectly well, that if you were named bishop of Saluzzo, and then archbishop of Turin [...], it was all due to poor Don Bosco’s proposals and efforts” [*Ceria-Ep* II, 514]. Thus it appears that the letter of May 14, 1873 was not the only instance of Don Bosco vaunting his good offices on the archbishop’s behalf. It was not his one and only “fatal mistake” from which sprang all of Gastaldi’s ire, as some biographers seem to think [cf. e.g., Teresio Bosco, *Don Bosco. Una biografia nuova* (Leumann, Torino: Editrice Elle Di Ci, 1979), p. 391f.].

¹⁴⁸ *EBM* X, 331.

with you to tell me what you hold against poor Don Bosco, and so far I have heard nothing but a few vague inferences.”[!] Again Desramaut remarks: “Apparently Don Bosco could not see into his ordinary’s mind so easily as he could peer into his boys’ consciences.”¹⁴⁹ Needless to say, by this time the relationship had become a dialogue of the deaf, both parties being utterly convinced, rightly or wrongly, of the justness of their cause. The long series of clashes over ordinations and faculties to hear confessions that were to follow was the inevitable result of the confrontation between two people that regarded themselves as armored with just cause.¹⁵⁰

Gastaldi’s vexation found an echo even in the constitutions of the Diocesan Synod of June 25-27, 1873, in Titles XIV (Holy Orders) and XXIV (Religious). Such undisguised allusions to Don Bosco and the Salesian Society must have had a telling repercussion among the clergy.¹⁵¹ Understandably, too, Don Bosco’s dissatisfaction spread to the Salesians around him, for he was heard to complain about the archbishop’s way of acting and to blame himself for the archbishop’s appointment, for which he received nothing but ingratitude. After receiving Gastaldi’s letters of October 24 and November 9, 1872,¹⁵² he remarked to his secretary, Father Berto: “Just think! It was I who had him appointed bishop of Saluzzo and then archbishop of Turin. I did all I could with the Holy See, and especially with the Italian government which in no way wanted to accept him. And now see how he treats me!” Don Bosco then went on to quote Psalm 55:12f.[!]. On June 9, 1873, Father Berto recorded similar words of Don Bosco, who, perhaps in connection with the Borelli-Rocca controversy, complained about Archbishop Gastaldi’s actions, and quoted God’s lament in Isaiah 1:2f.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Desramaut, *Études* V, p. 202. For the exchange, cf. *EBM* X, 337-339 and more fully *IBM* X, 730-733.

¹⁵⁰ *EBM* X, 298-417, and cf. Bosco, *Esposizione* 1881, in *OE* XXXII, 49-124, where Don Bosco later listed in detail instances of harassment through the years, touching all areas of Salesian activity.

¹⁵¹ For the synod’s of 1873 and its constitutions, cf. note 51 and related text, above; also: Desramaut, *Études* V, p. 205-208; Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 268.

¹⁵² Cf. note 112 and 113 and related text, above.

¹⁵³ *EBM* X, 309 and 332f. Father Gioacchino Berto, Don Bosco’s secretary since 1872, kept a kind of journal (especially as Don Bosco’s traveling companion) in which he recorded these and other utterances [cf. *ASC 110*: Cronachette, Berto, Appunti [...] 1873 and 1873-74, *FDBM* 907 D8-911 A8].

3) *The Bianchi-Vitelleschi Thirty-Eight / Twenty-Eight Animadversiones (Critical Observations) on the Text of 1873*

While Don Bosco and the archbishop were drifting farther and farther apart in Turin, in Rome the new text of the constitutions was being subjected to meticulous scrutiny by Father Raimondo Bianchi, O.P., designated consultor of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. On May 9 he submitted his evaluation to the Secretary of the Congregation, Archbishop Vitelleschi. It was an awesome thorough-going thirty-eight-point critique, going far beyond the thirteen *Critical Observations* of 1864. Shortly thereafter (in a kindly worded letter dated May 19) Secretary Vitelleschi notified Don Bosco that the constitutions had not passed the test. He advised him not to come to Rome, but to wait patiently for further instructions.¹⁵⁴ These later came from the secretary in the Holy Father's name, on July 26, in the form of a twenty-eight-point summary of Father Bianchi's report. A sensitive cover letter accompanied the twenty-eight *Critical Observations* and gave Don Bosco friendly advice as to how to proceed, for Archbishop Vitelleschi held Don Bosco in high esteem and was aware of the Holy Father's desire to see the Salesian Constitutions approved. However, he emphasized the necessity of compliance.¹⁵⁵ Specifically, what were Rome's demands?

[Consultor Bianchi's Action]

As noted above, Consultor Bianchi listed thirty-eight *critical observations*.¹⁵⁶ He prefaced them with a reference to objections and proposals received in Rome: those advanced "for example, by the archbishop of Genoa and especially by the archbishop of Turin, ordinary of the mother house." He then expressed "his surprise [...] that most of the thirteen *critical observations* officially handed down by the Holy See [in 1864] [...] had not been complied with, or had been evaded under more or less specious pretexts, as may be seen from the superior general's [Don Bosco's] *Declaration on the Rules* submitted together with his petition for approval."

The consultor first listed eight points (from 1864) not complied with, of which the following are perhaps the most significant: (1) the 3rd, denying the power to dispense from vows; (2) the 4th, denying the faculty to issue

¹⁵⁴ Letter in *IBM X*, 726 (omitted in *EBM X*, 335). The events are related in context in *IBM X*, 726-728 (briefly referred to in *EBM X*, 335f.).

¹⁵⁵ Letter in *IBM X*, 728 (omitted in *EBM X*, 335).

¹⁵⁶ The thirty-eight Bianchi observations are given in *IBM X*, 934-940, Appendix. V, No. 13 (omitted in *EBM*), critically edited in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 241-244.

dimissorials; (3) the 9th, demanding the removal of the chapter on extern Salesians.¹⁵⁷

He then proceeded to add thirty more *critical observations*. In the thirty-eighth and last he suggested

that before being submitted for approval by the Holy See, these constitutions be diligently emended in accordance with the former *critical observations*, and in accordance with any of the present ones that His Holiness may see fit to hand down; that it would also seem desirable that before approval the constitutions be submitted to a trial period, especially for what regards the novitiate and the program of studies.

[Secretary Vitelleschi's Action]

In the above mentioned letter (July 26), the Secretary urged Don Bosco to accept the *critical observations* and revise the constitutions accordingly. He added:

In the main, these *critical observations* reflect the guidelines established by Rome for the approval of new religious institutes. I notice that you would wish to modify or eliminate what is established with regard to novitiate, studies and ordinations. But these are precisely the matters which have always been of greatest concern to ordinaries and which the Holy See has always held as firm and unassailable. [...] Men come and go [...] The Holy See must guarantee the existence and the continuance of your institute. [...]

The new *critical observations*¹⁵⁸ were prefaced with the statement: "It is our *absolute* will that [the earlier *critical observations*] should be *taken into account*. The fear of reprisal from the [civil] authorities [...] cannot be regarded as sufficient justification." It then went on to specify the following important points, among others:

1. Since it is contrary to the Holy See's practice to approve a preamble and a historical summary commending the Institute, these two opening chapters should be removed from the constitutions.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. note 78 and related text, above.

¹⁵⁸ The twenty-eight Vitelleschi observations are given in *IBM X*, 941-943, Appendix V, No. 14 (omitted in *EBM*), critically edited in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 244f.

3. The repeated mention in the constitutions of lay civil rights and of the duty to abide by civil laws should be deleted.

7. Obligatory manifestation of conscience as laid down in the constitutions *is not admissible*. Voluntary manifestation might be acceptable, but it should in any case be limited to external observance of the constitutions and progress in virtue.

16. The constitutions lack any provision with regard to the novitiate. The novitiate should be set up in accordance with Clement VIII's Constitution *Regularis disciplinae* and with the other prescriptions of canon law. Of special importance are the prescriptions regarding gathering of novices together in a house of novitiate, their total separation from the professed, and their being engaged solely in spiritual exercises and not in any of the works of the institute.

17. Likewise the constitutions lack any provision with regard to studies. All candidates for the priesthood should spend four years in the study of theology, whether in a special studentate of the institute or in a seminary; and should not be engaged during that period in the works of the institute.

28. What is said in the constitutions with reference to ordinations, "that is, in accordance with the privileges granted to those congregations that are regarded as regular orders" (*videlicet ex privilegiis Congregationum quae tamquam Ordines regulares habentur*) would imply that the superior general has the power of issuing dimissorials—which has already been denied. Such concession would be objected to by ordinaries, and would in any case be an exception to the general law. Occasional exceptions granted by the Holy See may not be invoked as a precedent, especially if objected to by ordinaries. Furthermore, the lack of a regular novitiate and of a regular course of studies would discourage the granting of such concessions.

The last three points show that Archbishop Gastaldi's brief had been heard.

[Year 1874]

4) *Don Bosco's Response to the Animadversiones (Critical Observations)*

With Secretary Vitelleschi's *critical observations* before him, Don Bosco undertook a revision of the constitutions and compiled a Response to accompany the presentation of the new text. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had demanded "absolute compliance." Don Bosco (so he stated in the Response) had "accepted most of the twenty-eight *critical observations* handed down to him.

However, "in the case of a number of them" he had "made some accommodations;" and on "some articles" he had stood firm "solely to safeguard his institute from shipwreck in the fierce storm of civil law," and had done so relying on "advice recently received."

Here the salient points of Don Bosco's Response may be noted.

(1) *Observation 1* called for the removal of the first two chapters of the constitutions, the Preamble (*Prooemium*) and the Historical Summary (*De ejusdem Societatis primordiis*).

Don Bosco removed these chapters from the text itself, but kept them in italics as a kind of double preface. He considered both texts important, for they constituted the basis on which the sparing article 1 of the chapter on Purpose could be understood.

(2) *Observation 3* called for the removal of clauses mentioning the member's civil rights as citizens and their abiding by the civil law.

Don Bosco accepted this observation only in part. He softened, but did not eliminate, the clauses on civil rights and civil law. For example, in article 2 of the chapter, "Form of the Society," he devised a simpler formula: "No one on entering the society, even after making vows, forfeits his civil rights. Hence he can validly and licitly acquire and sell property, as well as make out his last will and testament and receive an inheritance. However, as long as he remains in the Society [...]" On the one hand, he felt that the formula satisfied the Church's demand regarding the canonical vow of poverty, even though it expressed the essence of religious poverty in terms of renunciation of the administration of goods, rather than in terms of radical dominion. On the other hand, the mention of civil rights and their exercise constituted a sufficient safeguard before the civil law.

(3) *Observation 4* called for clearer constitutional provisions regarding the observance of the vow of poverty, in accordance with the directives of *Collectanea S.C. Episcoporum et regularium*, N. 859.¹⁵⁹

Instead of transcribing the article referred to, Don Bosco maintained what he had written in the chapters on the 'Form of the Society' and on the 'Vow of Poverty' (in effect that the members retained private ownership and the Society owned nothing), in the

¹⁵⁹ Article N. 859 of the *Collection of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars* read: "Professed religious with simple vows may retain the radical dominion (as it is called) of their goods; but they may neither administer them, nor use or dispose of the income therefrom. Hence, before their profession they must give over both administration of goods, and the income and use thereof, for the whole period of their vows, to whomever they choose—even to their Congregation, if that is what they wish to do" [IBM X, 748, note 1 (omitted in *EBM*)].

conviction that this solution offered the best guarantee against reprisals by the government. He merely added a footnote stating that the two chapters in question had been taken almost literally from the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Schools of Charity (Cavanis of Venice) approved by Pope Gregory XVI.

(4) *Observation 16* noted the total absence of a constitution regarding the novitiate and called for such a constitution in accordance with Pope Clement VIII's Constitution, *Regularis disciplinae* (Of the Discipline of Religious Orders), and with other canonical rules—especially, that the novices should reside in a special house of novitiate, be separated from the professed, be totally engaged in their spiritual exercises, and not be engaged in the work of the Society.

Don Bosco greatly expanded the chapter, "The Master of Novices and Their Direction," in twelve articles. But these articles revealed an idea of the Salesian novitiate which did not comply with the observation. Here are the salient points:

[1] Every candidate, before being definitively admitted to the Society, must undergo three trials. The first trial precedes the novitiate and is called the "aspirantate"; the second is the novitiate itself; and the third is the period of triennial vows.

[3] As a rule for the first trial it is sufficient for the candidate to have spent a few years in a house of the Society, or to have attended one of the schools of the Congregation, and to have given proof of virtue and intelligence.

[6] Once the first trial is over and the candidate has been received into the Congregation, the master of novices shall at once take him under his care, and shall leave nothing undone that may help him in the observance of the constitutions and regulations.

[7] Hence the master of novices shall make every effort (a) to show himself amiable, mild and full of gentle goodness, so that the novices will open their hearts to him regarding anything that may help them in their striving for perfection; (b) to provide his charges with guidance and instruction in all the rules generally, but especially in those that pertain to the practice of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience; (c) to get everyone to observe with exemplary regularity all that is prescribed regarding the practices of piety of our institute; (d) to regularly hold a weekly conference on a moral topic; (e) to invite each novice with great gentleness to make his spiritual manifestation at least once a month.

[8] It is the purpose of our congregation to give young people, especially poorer ones, a secular and religious education [...]. Hence during the second trial each novice shall be seriously engaged in study, as well as in teaching day and evening school, in teaching catechism to children, and even in assisting the ones that are in grave need [*nei casi più gravi*]. If the candidate shall have shown in all these exercises that he can work for the greater glory of God and the good of the Congregation, and if he has been exemplary in the observance of the practices of piety and in the practical exercise of charity, then the second trial shall be regarded as completed. If not, the trial may be prolonged for an additional few months or even for one additional year.

[11] Through these trials, the novice master shall recommend and gently inculcate the practice of mortification of the external senses, in a particular manner the virtue of sobriety. But much prudence should be exercised in the matter of mortification, and care should be taken that physical health is not impaired to the point that the member is unable to perform the work proper of our institute.

(5) *Observation 17* likewise noted the absence of a constitution regarding a regular program of study, and called for such a constitution. This was to include the explicit provision that all candidates for the priesthood should spend four years in the study of theology in a house of the Society set aside for that purpose, or in a diocesan seminary, and not be engaged for that period of time in the works of the institute.

Don Bosco pointed out that for the moment he could not establish a special separate house for this purpose, and that in any case it would have to be submitted for approval to the Ministry of Public Education in accordance with the laws of the state. He also noted that teaching catechism and assisting pupils need not be incompatible with a proper course of studies, and that by doing so his seminarians would show their ability and willingness to take on the work of the institute. Don Bosco, however, declared himself in agreement with a four year program of theological studies, and drafted and inserted a short chapter on “Studies” as follows:

[1] Priests and all candidates to the priesthood in the Society shall seriously apply themselves to ecclesiastical studies.

[2] They shall apply themselves with serious attention first and principally to the study of the Bible, of

Church history, and of dogmatic, systematic and moral theology. In addition they shall apply themselves to the study of those authors and treatises that deal specifically with the education of young people in the faith.

[3] Our masters shall be St. Thomas and those authors who have achieved recognition for their work in catechetics and in Catholic religious education.

[4] Each member, besides attending daily lectures, shall prepare a course of meditations and instructions, suitable in the first place for young people, and then adaptable also for the faithful at large.

(6) *Observation 28* was the most serious of all. It concerned the coveted power to issue dimissorial letters for ordination.

Article 4 of the chapter, "Religious Government of the Society," in speaking of the ordination of Salesian candidates to the priesthood by the local ordinary, provided that this be done "*in accordance with the custom approved for congregations that have a communion of houses and in accordance with privileges granted to congregations that are regarded as regular orders.*" (In a note appended to this article Don Bosco stated that it had been taken almost literally from the Constitutions of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary [Lanteri], Part 2, paragraph 1.)¹⁶⁰

Observation 28 rejected this claim as unavailing, and cited the fact that the superior general [Don Bosco] had already asked for, and had already been denied the power of granting dimissorial letters.

Don Bosco later countered by claiming that the denial had been due to the fact that in 1869 only the Society, not its constitutions, was being considered for approval. He added that he had nevertheless obtained that faculty for ten years, applicable to those candidates who had entered a Salesian house at an age of fourteen or younger. He had also obtained that faculty by special privilege for others who had entered after their fourteenth year. In any case, by the constitution in question he was not asking a blanket privilege, but was only requesting the

¹⁶⁰ "Communion of houses" meant houses in various dioceses, but centrally united under one rule and one superior, as would be the case with a religious congregation that had extended beyond the diocese of origin. "privileges granted to congregations that are regarded as regular orders," might have meant "privileges granted to exempt clerical congregations in accordance with established custom." What Don Bosco was asking for with regard to ordinations was the authorization to issue dimissorial letters, which is one of the privileges which comes with "exemption."

restricted power to issue dimissorials to a local ordinary, since the article spoke of ordination by the bishop of the diocese, in accordance with Clement VIII's Decree of March 3, 1596.

Don Bosco's plea was unavailing, and article 4 was eventually removed.

(7) No new observation had been made with regard to the chapter, "Extern Salesians."¹⁶¹ Don Bosco kept it as an appendix, after the "Formula for Profession."

By this response Don Bosco fairly indicated the kind of Society he had in mind. This is even more evident in a letter to Archbishop Vitelleschi, dated August 5, apparently written after he had already sketched out the Response and the Historical Summary of 1874.

Your Excellency: At first sight the *critical observations* relating to our rules did not appear to be impossible to implement. But when I set myself to the task, I experienced all kinds of difficulties. If these *critical observations* were accepted, I should have to remove [from the constitutions] a number of provisions which have generally been approved in the case of other religious orders or congregations. For in the matter of principles I have faithfully been guided by constitutions already approved, such as those of the Jesuits, Redemptorists, Oblates, and Rosminians. I would, moreover, have to deviate from the foundations set for me by the Holy Father, to which all Salesian rules are conformed.¹⁶² [...] Bearing this in mind, I have complied with the demands to the extent that it was possible without reducing our Society to a diocesan congregation. For otherwise our Society would cease to exist as intended. Having houses in various dioceses, our Society should be subject to the ordinaries only in matters that pertain to the external exercise of religion. Furthermore, my concern has been not to change or destroy what has already been established by the decrees of 1864 and 1869. And in order that these matters be understood in their proper context, I have written an Historical Summary (*Cenno storico*).

I would ask your Excellency to read the Historical Summary and my response to the *critical observations*; then, I pray you, be so good as to tell me if, after the modifications I made, I might again

¹⁶¹ Cf. note 78 and related text, above.

¹⁶² The twin foundations, of which Don Bosco so often speaks, are that the Society should be on the one hand a fully recognized religious congregation with vows before the Church, and on the other a union of private citizens before the state [Cf. Don Bosco's first audience with Pope Pius IX in *EBM* V, 561].

present the constitutions to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars with any chance of success. If all the *critical observations* must needs be complied with, then I would rather desist from submitting another petition, for an approval won on that condition would place the Salesian Society in a much worse situation than it is in now. I am also writing to Cardinal Berardi [...]. How is one to explain the fact that, whereas the consultors of 1869 made no objection, now everything must be done all over again?¹⁶³

(5) *Don Bosco's Second Petition, Further Revisions, and Definitive Approval*

With the two above-mentioned documents completed or near completion (the revised text of the constitutions, and the Response), and likewise, according to the letter, with a draft of the Historical Summary (*Cenno istorico*), Don Bosco left for Rome on December 29, 1873, with his faithful secretary, Father Berto, in tow. He was to remain in the city until the decree of approval was obtained on March 13, 1874. Throughout those two-and-a-half months he would be engaged in ceaseless rounds of consultations and interviews, and in feverish activity relating to the approval of the constitutions (as well as to the matter of the *Exequaturs*, in which he ultimately failed). The Response and the new text (First Text of 1874) were finalized and printed some time in January at the *Propaganda Fide* Press.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Not found in *Ceria-Ep*, this letter is published in part in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, p. 19, note 41, and in its entirety in Braido, *L'idea*, p. 252f. Motto speculates that it may have been addressed to Cardinal Bizzarri, not to Secretary Vitelleschi, as Braido believes.

It should be noted that the "consultors of 1869" had clearly indicated that the observation of 1864 had to be complied with "absolutely." No further observations were made at that time, because the constitutions were not up for definitive approval, as was the case in 1873, with Gastaldi clamoring for a hearing, to boot.

¹⁶⁴ Don Bosco's Response is described in *IBM X*, 746-755 (omitted in *EBM X*, 346), critically edited in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 245-247. The First Text of 1874 is given as *Regulae Societatis S. Francisci Salesii* (Romae: Typis S. C. de Propaganda Fide, MDCCLIV) in *OE XXV*, p.235-292; transcribed in *IBM X*, 896-915, Appendix IV (omitted in *EBM*). The Historical Summary, *Cenno istorico sulla Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales e relativi schiarimenti* is critically edited in Braido, *L'idea*, 276-331; also in *OE XXV*, p. 231-250 and in *IBM X*, 949-954, Appendix VI (omitted in *EBM*).

[First, Second and Third Printed Latin Texts of 1874]

The First Constitutional Text of 1874 reflected the position of the Response, and was far from the total compliance demanded by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. For instance, it retained the Preamble and the Historical Summary as prefaces; it merely rephrased the concepts of civil rights, especially in the chapter on Form of the Society, where it had appeared most objectionable; it merely retouched the constitutions on Poverty; it introduced chapters on novitiates and on studies, but not according to the form demanded; it stood firm on the power to issue dimissorial letters; it retained the constitutions on Extern Salesians as an appendix.

No sooner did he arrive in Rome, than Don Bosco began to pay visits and to seek support in the matter of the approval. In January, he visited (among others) Archbishop Vitelleschi and Cardinal Berardi (both of whom, after Pius IX, were to be the principal champions of his cause in the days ahead); Cardinal Vicar Costantino Patrizi (a prospective member of the Special Congregation); Father Sallua, O.P. (a member of the Holy Office and a confrere of Consolator Bianchi); Cardinal Bizzarri (Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars). He had audiences with Pope Pius IX, as well.¹⁶⁵

At the beginning of February, Secretary Vitelleschi notified Don Bosco that the Special Congregation had been designated. It consisted of the Cardinals Patrizi, Antonino De Luca, Bizzarri, and Tommaso Martinelli. On February 17, Vitelleschi introduced Don Bosco to Attorney Father Carlo Menghini, a lawyer of the Congregation. He would represent the Salesian part in the process of approval. Don Bosco submitted to him the galley proofs of a revised *Historical Summary* with separate comments on the novitiate, studies, and dimissorials. Menghini was impressed with the Historical Summary, but he thought that it was too extensive for the purpose. Don Bosco then set to work and produced a shorter version (*Riassunto*, Summary).¹⁶⁶

On March 4, Don Bosco had a new text of the constitutions (modified, but not significantly in terms of the demands) printed at *Propaganda Fide*. This was the Second Constitutional Text of 1874. And on March 7, the *Positio* or docket, containing all relevant protocols, was re-assembled and printed.¹⁶⁷ The text of

¹⁶⁵ *EBM* X, 341-347.

¹⁶⁶ *Riassunto della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales nel Febbraio 1874*, in *OE* XXV, 377-384.

¹⁶⁷ The *Positio* is given in *IBM* X, 916-948, Appendix V (omitted in *EBM*), and as the *Summarium* for the Special Congregation in *OE* XXV, p. 335-385. It contained: [1] Don Bosco's petition; [2] the *Decretum Laudis* of 1864; [3] the thirteen Savini-Svegliati Observations of 1864; [4] the decree of approval of the

the constitutions was to be presented as a separate document. Don Bosco was still in the process of retouching it; and a little later in March he had it reprinted (the Third Constitutional Text of 1874). The Appendix on Extern Salesians, to which Consultor Bianchi objected, was removed; but Don Bosco stood firm on the other capital points. This is the text which he submitted together with the *Positio* to the four cardinals of the Special Congregation.

Now Don Bosco went into action, to the point of importunity, to win a hearing with the Roman authorities. In February he had circulated the "anonymous" letter created to offset Gastaldi's own of January 9 to Cardinal Bizzarri.¹⁶⁸ Now, that the *Positio* was being presented, he wrote and circulated a leaflet entitled, *Considerations That Prompt Father John Bosco [...]*.¹⁶⁹ He paid *ad hoc* visits to the cardinals of the Special Congregation and to others interested in the matter.

[Action of the Special Congregation]

The Special Congregation held two sessions, in which the discussion bore on Gastaldi's objections and proposals, on Don Bosco's failure to comply with what was demanded, and consequently on the peculiar provisions embodied in the constitutional text at hand.

Congregation of 1869; [5] Gastaldi's *Quum admodum* memorandum of February 10, 1873; [6] Gastaldi's letter of April 20, 1873 [cf. notes 128 and 130 and related text, above]. [7-12] letters of commendation from the bishops of Casale, Savona, Vigevano, Albenga, Fossano, and from the archbishop of Genoa. [13] Consultor Bianchi's thirty-eight *Critical Observations* of 1873; [14] Secretary Vitelleschi's twenty-eight *Critical Observations* handed down to Don Bosco; [15] Don Bosco's report on the moral and material state of the Society, which is the shorter version (*Riassunto*) of the *Historical Summary* made at Attorney Menghini's suggestion [cf. note 166 and related text, above; and *EBM X*, 352f., where a short excerpt is quoted].

Some of Don Bosco's statements in the report are noteworthy: "This Pious Society has been in existence for 33 years," referring to the year 1841[!]; "It has a membership of three hundred and thirty priests, seminarians, and laymen;" "Forty-four bishops were asked and wrote letters of commendation expressing their highest approval. The one exception is the present archbishop of Turin [...];" "Some three-fourth of the priests presently active in Turin and of the professors in the seminaries of the archdiocese were our pupils; and the same may be said of other dioceses;" etc.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. note 135 and related text, above.

¹⁶⁹ *Alcuni pensieri che muovono il Sac. Giov. Bosco a supplicare umilmente per la Definitiva Approvazione delle Costituzioni della Società Salesiana*, in *EBM X*, 359f., cf. *Ceria-Ep II*, 371f. In this nine-point presentation, Don Bosco repeated some of the publicity statements of the report already mentioned [cf. note 167, above]. For example, he spoke of the constitutions as having been tested for the past thirty-three years, the point of reference again being 1841[!]; of the imminent establishment of the Salesian work in America, Africa, and China.

The first session was held on March 24, 1874, and the discussion was inconclusive.

It was at this point in time, that is, shortly after the first session, that Secretary Vitelleschi showed Gastaldi's letter of April 20, 1873 (addressed to Cardinal Bizzarri) to Don Bosco. Don Bosco's memorandum in reply was dated March 29 (1874).¹⁷⁰ In it he rebutted Gastaldi's objections point by point: the lack of approval of the Society by the ordinary; a two-year novitiate on the Jesuit model; insufficient formation of Salesian seminarians; the Society's troubles with ordinaries; troubles caused by Salesian seminarians leaving after triennial vows. Don Bosco immediately forwarded his defense to the cardinals.

Meanwhile, the same cardinals were at work emending the text of the constitutions. They were determined, if these were to be approved, to correct their (much lamented!) deficiencies and to bring them into compliance with the pre-established Tridentine canonical mold in every other respect. The Preamble and the Historical Introduction were removed, so that the sixteen chapters appeared as follows: Purpose, Form, Obedience, Poverty, Chastity, Religious Government, Internal Government, Rector Major, Other Superiors, Particular Houses, Admission, Studies, Practices of Piety, Novitiate, Habit, Profession Form. The text itself suffered drastic revisions, especially with regard to the following subjects: in the matter of the civil rights clauses (Form of the Society) and of the practice of poverty (Vow of Poverty); the chapters on Studies and Novitiate were practically re-written; the chapter on Practices of Piety was considerably enlarged. The power to issue dimissorial letters (provided for in the chapter on Religious Government, article 5, note 1) was denied, and the text suppressed. It was instead suggested, if the Holy Father should wish to grant it, that the power to issue dimissorial be given for ten years (for a candidate to be ordained in the diocese of residence) by way of privilege.¹⁷¹

The second session of the Special Congregation was held on March 31, and the drastically revised text was finally approved, though not without "a fight."

Father Berto diligently made a calligraphic copy of the new revised text of the constitutions. Don Bosco presented the manuscript to Pope Pius IX for approval and for filing with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. A second calligraphic copy was made by Father Berto for the Salesian archives. The approval was given on April 3, 1874, and the Decree, handed down on April 13.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Cf. note 130 and related text, above.

¹⁷¹ For a description of the changes and emendations introduced, cf. *IBM X*, 809-819; and for what regards the novitiate only, *EBM X*, 377-380.

¹⁷² The approved text is in *ASC 022* (18), *FDBM* 1,912 E2ff., critically edited as text Q in *Motto, Cost. SDB*, 73ff. This is not a printed text, for protocol

Thus it was that despite his diplomatic efforts for the *Exequaturs* and the prestige he had thereby acquired in Roman circles; despite the steady outpouring of memorandums in his own defense and his frenzied activity to further his cause; despite his friendship with Pius IX, with Cardinal Antonelli, with Cardinal Berardi, and with Secretary Vitelleschi, Don Bosco did not prevail. The cardinals of the Special Congregation had worked within the fixed traditional juridical principles, which were axiomatic in the matter of the approval of a religious congregation: ecclesiastical centralization, total binding force of vows, even though simple, independence from the State's juridical order, experimental gradualism, freedom of conscience for the members, etc. Proximately, their work was guided by the *Critical Observations* of 1864 (1869) and those of 1873, and they were certainly put on the alert by Gastaldi's double-barreled salvos. Consequently Don Bosco's novel concepts, which made the Society new and special (flexibility in structures, freedom of action, relating to new political realities, etc.) were either erased or greatly reduced in force. Likewise all references to times and places, representing historical experiences that he considered charismatic and normative were expunged, with the removal of the first two chapters and of references in the rest of the text. The constitutions on extern Salesians, an unheard of idea, had had to be previously removed.

He did receive the power to issue dimissorial letters, but separately by rescript, limited to ten years, and applicable only to members with *perpetual* vows.¹⁷³

Even in defeat, however, Don Bosco claimed victory. The short letter with which, on the very day of the Decree, April 13, 1874, he notified Archbishop Gastaldi had a ring of triumph and a touch of mischievous glee about it: "I have just received the decree of the definitive approval of our constitutions. It bears today's date. Since your Grace has at all times spoken in our favor [*raccomandati*], I wish that you be the first to know."¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

With respect to the Roman authorities, the issue was between what, in Don Bosco's view, the times required (a different kind of congregation for a new historical situation) and the established canonical tradition. Whereas the

required that the text submitted and filed be in manuscript form. For the decree cf. *EBM X*, 372f. and Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 253.

¹⁷³ Cf. separate Rescript in *EBM X*, 373.

¹⁷⁴ *EBM X*. 376; cf. *Ceria-Ep II*, 378. Note Amadei's comments in this connection with the notification of the approval [p, 376f.].

established tradition required ecclesiastical control and centralization, Don Bosco wanted a free hand, that is, independence from local ordinaries and in many ways also from Rome. Whereas the established tradition regarded vows, even simple vows, as totally binding, and subject only to papal control, Don Bosco had a more flexible idea of the vows, and wanted power to dispense from vows when necessary.¹⁷⁵ Whereas in established tradition religious congregations were subject to the Church's juridical order, and independent from the state's, Don Bosco wanted his congregation to be recognized as such by the Church and yet to be in line with the juridical principles of the liberal state—that is, an association of free citizens retaining their civil rights, and not a religious corporation. Whereas established tradition was for granting recognition and privilege only by degrees (experimental gradualism), Don Bosco wanted everything at once. Whereas established tradition safeguarded the member's freedom of conscience, Don Bosco wanted manifestation of conscience from the members, in view not only of spiritual direction, but of the apostolate.

As indicated, the cardinals of the Special Commission did not accept any of his proposals on these points. And yet Don Bosco was substantially pleased with the outcome; and in some respects it surpassed his expectations. The Society and its constitutions had indeed lost much of the suppleness and versatility he had endowed them with; but they nonetheless remained, in his view, a sufficiently apt and viable tool for the Salesian apostolate.

Thus on March 4, the day following the approval by the Special Congregation he wrote exultantly to Father Rua:

Our constitutions have been definitively approved, with the power to issue dimissorial letters without restrictions. When you learn the details, you'll know that it all came about because of your prayers. The concession was granted by the Holy Father yesterday at seven in the evening. But keep it "under wraps".¹⁷⁶

Clearly the concession referred to here is that of issuing dimissorials given by rescript of April 3. It was obviously not without restrictions, though it no longer set an entrance age requirement for a candidate (fourteen years). But Don Bosco, in a private audience with Pius IX on April 8, obtained what was perhaps an even more significant concession. For in their definitive form, the constitutions did indeed embody the substance of Gastaldi's demands regarding novitiate and studies. But Pope Pius IX made concessions by way of privilege in

¹⁷⁵ This is how Don Bosco interpreted Pius IX's statement, which he cited: "This Society must have vows [...], but these vows should be simple and such as to be easily dissolved" [*Breve notizia*, 1864, in *IBM* VII, 892, (omitted in *EBM*)].

¹⁷⁶ *Ceria-Ep* II, 376.

matters that the cardinals had refused to grant in the constitutional text itself. Not only, as mentioned, was Don Bosco given the restricted faculty of issuing dimissorials, but in the audience of April 8 he also obtained from Pius IX *vivae vocis oraculo* (by an unwritten papal pronouncement) a concession to implement a type of novitiate *different* from that demanded by Gastaldi and approved in the constitutions.¹⁷⁷

And these are the constitutions he gave to his Salesians in the “official” Latin and Italian editions of 1874 and 1875—not the text approved by the Roman Congregation and filed in the Vatican and Salesian Archives, but a text modified at strategic spots in accordance with the concessions he had obtained directly from Pius IX *vivae vocis oraculo*, and emended in other ways throughout.¹⁷⁸

In practice, therefore, the concessions amounted to a resounding defeat of the archbishop. The variance existing between the prescriptions of the text of the constitutions and the concessions made to Don Bosco reflected a rift between the position taken by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, attentive to Gastaldi’s objections, and that taken by Pius IX, favoring Don Bosco and allowing him to prevail in practice through privileges granted. Gastaldi was fully aware of the Pope’s favor, and the ambiguity of the solution made his defeat even more humiliating. But he fought on. The clashes that followed for some time thereafter were the result of this tension. Thus with the approval of the constitutions the climate between the two worsened, and the attitude of the archbishop and of his chancery toward the Salesians became significantly more hostile. In other words, recourse to privilege by Don Bosco set off an increasingly more severe inquisitorial reaction on Gastaldi’s part.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps because he had received neither an official notification from Rome nor an authentic copy of the constitutions and of the Decree, Gastaldi persisted in demanding of the Roman Congregation a clear statement regarding the approval of the Salesian Society.¹⁸⁰ His thinking in the months that

¹⁷⁷ *EBM* X, 368, 370.

¹⁷⁸ Texts T and V in Motto, *Cost. SDB*, p. 73ff. For a comparison between the approved Latin text and the first Latin edition, side by side, cf. *IBM* X, 956-993. (omitted in *EBM*) and the study by Germano Proverbio, “La prima edizione latina ufficiale delle costituzioni salesiane dopo l’approvazione pontificia,” *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 3 (1984) 93-109.

¹⁷⁹ Details are given in *EBM* X, 380-417.

¹⁸⁰ Letter of September 3, 1874 in *EBM* X, 393f.

In his Report *ad limina* of December 31, 1874, cited in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 270, note 49, Gastaldi complained: “[The Salesian Congregation] now claims to have the *definitive* approval of the Holy See. But the Pontifical Decree granting this kind of approval is still to be shown to me” [from the Archives of the Turin Archdiocese] According to Tuninetti [*Ibid.*], he made the same point in his letter to

followed upon the approval of the Salesian Constitutions is most clearly expressed in his letter to Pius IX of October 4, 1874,¹⁸¹ as well as in the cited Report *ad limina*. In both documents he assembled all his standard complaints about Don Bosco and the Salesians. But in the second he dared express the hope that when the Vatican Council should be reconvened, and the matter of novitiate and of formation of religious should be taken up, the competence of the ordinary to judge the suitability of candidates for the religious life be recognized, and the ordinary's right *diligently to examine* religious previous to their being admitted to sacred orders be likewise maintained.¹⁸²

He apparently intended to fight on. The manner in which he annotated Don Bosco's letter bearing the news of the approval was an omen of more strife to come. As reported by the biographer, he wrote and underscored the words: "April 13, 1874 — Don Bosco — Notification of the definitive approval of his institute, *which, however, is not definitive.*"¹⁸³

Coming in the next issue of the *Journal of Salesian Studies*:
The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict (1872-1882), Part Two, on the conflict after the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (1874).

the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of January 24, 1875 [from the Archives of the Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes].

¹⁸¹ *EBM X*, 396-402.

¹⁸² Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 270, note 49 [from the Archives of the Turin Archdiocese].

¹⁸³ *EBM X*, 376.