

HISTORY AND THE CONGREGATION. An invitation to reflection

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Introduction: Relevance of the theme

1. The Rector Major, Fr J. E. Vecchi, had already in 1997 emphasized the importance of the study of salesian history (cf. Letter *For you I study*, AGC 361), and in 1998 he came back once more to the same argument. After a series of journeys during which he had taken part in many jubilee celebrations, while expressing his satisfaction at the many publications produced on such occasions for recalling the past history of the various institutions, mainly for the benefit of the local people and those close to us, he also pointed out some further and precise objectives: “At the same time the need is felt of greater historical completeness and a better arrangement of studies which would render more adequately the picture of our insertion in a particular context” (Letter: *Church and Family Events*, AGC 364 [1998] 26). He could not have spoken more clearly. It was a precise invitation to undertake studies and research which in *method, content and style* would extend beyond *contingency* and *salesian settings*.

2. Last July the General Council gave some time to a reflection on the Salesian Historical Institute and to the study of salesian history in general and endorsed the need for the “care of salesian *archives* and *libraries* and the preparation of *trained personnel*” (AGC 369 [1999] 61).

3. The Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church published on 2 February 1997 a circular letter with the title *The pastoral function of ecclesiastical archives*. Among other things, it recommended not only the careful preservation of archives, but especially their use at the level of research and culture. It concluded with the significant words of Pope Paul VI: “profound respect for these papers and documents in archives reflects respect for Christ; it implies a sense of the Church, the desire to have ourselves and to give to those who come after us the story of the different phases of the *transitus Domini* in the world”.

4. The document *A pastoral approach to culture*, published by the Cultural Commission on 23 May 1999, recalled the importance of “encouraging the formation and multiplication of specialized libraries in the field of the Christian and profane cultural patrimony of every region, which provide the broadest possibility of contact with such patrimony to as many persons as possible” (n. 37).

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1. At the salesian origins

The implications of the well-known saying *historia magister vitae* were undoubtedly very much present in Don Bosco's mind, and not only theoretically – Don Bosco had written a great deal of historical matter himself – but also with a view to the foundation and development of the Salesian Society and the associations which took their origin from it.

The starting up of such foundations imposes an obligation in the first place of the careful preservation and intelligent assessment of every kind of documentation and recollection that can bear witness in the future to the characteristic features of the salesian institutions, and can foster a dynamic continuity while safeguarding fidelity to the origins.

In particular the educative and charismatic dimension prompted a safeguarding of the legacy to be passed on to those continuing the work, so as to avoid the serious risk, *through forgetfulness and lack of proper sensitivity*, of improvisation or of innovations without the necessary roots.

In this connection it is enough to read what Don Bosco wrote in the introduction to the *Memoirs of the Oratory*:

“Now, what purpose can this chronicle serve? It will be a record to help people overcome problems that may arise in the future by learning from the past. It will serve to make known how God himself has always been our guide. It will give my sons some entertainment to be able to read about their father's adventures”.

What he had said was taken up again later at some of the most important moments of the Salesian Society, such as General Chapters. In the minutes of the 1st such Chapter, which took place only three years after the definitive approval of the Constitutions, we find the following:

“We have now become aware that, with the definitive approval of the Congregation, we must lay down some norms for those who will come after us. When they see that we did things in one way rather than in another and with successful results, it will be an indication for them as to how they themselves should proceed. At this moment”, went on Don Bosco, “I think that this is more important than anything else: and so I believe it to be necessary that each director should think about and study the best way in which this can be done, and that they should all write an *account of their own school or house*, and that this be continued each year by whoever is the director at the time [...] When these individual accounts reach us in Turin we shall be able to study them and draw up a brief description of the state of the Society as a whole, and thus produce little by little *a true history of the Congregation* [...] The Jesuits have someone appointed for this purpose in every house and he is listed in the printed list of the confreres (*Historicus domus* – the house historian)”.

And in the following year's deliberations we read:

“1. There shall be an analyst for each house of the Congregation. He will keep a written account of the year of the house's foundation, [...] biographies of those

members called by God to a better life, and any particular facts useful for a history of the Congregation.

2. There shall also be a *historian of the Congregation*, who will take care [...].

2. The function of history

2.1. Some basic principles

A. That a religious institute is ecclesial implies not only that it belongs to the Church, but also that it *has a history behind it*. “Religious life is a reality which is both historical and theological”, we read in *Essential elements of the teaching of the Church on the Religious Life* (Rome, 1983). It could hardly be otherwise, since religious life “is at the very heart of the Church” (VC 3), for the understanding of whose mystery history and theology constitute the fundamental criteria. These cannot be separated or replaced by anything else: history without theology would reduce religious life to a purely social phenomenon, but theology without history would reduce it to an ideology tending to justify factual situations or gratuitous options.

B. At turning points in history a religious institute can survive only on condition that the charism be reinterpreted and not remain a precious relic of the past. The founders had an experience of the Holy Spirit in a precise historical context, and because of this the problem arises with respect to contingency, because the response to a contingent situation remains valid only as long as the particular circumstances persist. In other words the demands of the ecclesial community and those of the prevailing social and cultural context cannot be considered as something extraneous to a religious institute.

C. At this point it becomes clear that it is not a question of studying Don Bosco alone, but also his “sons”. Continued research into our particular identity and the formation of future SDB necessarily requires the study of the “principle” but also of what follows from it, i.e. *tradition*. One may even say that it is tradition that helps to identify and express in modern language a “substance”, an “essence”, a “nucleus” of unchanging value within “historical” concepts, which are always contingent, as has been said, for the relative aspects of the social and cultural setting which has created them.

D. Founder, tradition and culture are known to us at the present day through two main instruments:

1. *the sources*: these do not change with respect to time and place of reference, which remain the same and so permit the avoidance of rhetoric, ideology, abstractions etc. The greatest effort has to go into their sound editing (in a critical sense), but one must also go more deeply into them so as not to be content with what appears on a first reading but delve further and get below the surface.

2. *studies*: i.e. the reflections of specialists in history, theology, hermeneutics, pedagogy, etc. These are obviously always provisional and subject to change with time.

Summing up: The criteria to be applied for the attainment of a correct understanding and development of the particular charism and spirituality cannot be of an exclusively psychological, sociological or cultural nature, but neither can they be of a solely theological order. There must be a complementary relationship between the human and theological sciences, between science and faith, between history and theology.

2.2. *The growth of historical sensitivity within the Institute is a “sign and instrument” of fidelity to the charism*

A. It is now more than 30 years since Vatican II urged us to return to the *sources* so as to remain faithful to our charism (*Perfectae Caritatis, Ecclesiae Sanctae*).

B. “Finally, all these elements are united *in the dimension of the charism* proper to each Institute, as it were in a synthesis which calls for a constant deepening of one’s own special consecration in all its aspects [...]. This means that each member should *study diligently* the spirit, *history* and mission of the Institute to which he or she belongs” (VC 71).

C. The culture of memory or remembrance is simply the culture and duty of its organization and possibility of fruition, and these have given a notable importance:

1. to how we recall the inter-family collective memory which prompts us to re-think problems of the present day with a more mature awareness of the past;
2. to how we ensure that the tone of salesian life, even though it will continue to see more changes from many standpoints – our present is the tradition of the future – will be the sure bearer of the charism of the origins and the vigilant guardian of a tradition. Clearly, awareness of the roots need not necessarily either enslave or condition us, but we must be able to distinguish critically between positive requirements and the essential historical meaning, so freeing it from gratuitous excesses and from arbitrary and unfounded subjective interpretations, and so avoid giving a historical and charismatic endorsement to statements and reconstructions which have little to do with real history and much more with the circumstance of the moment and personal foibles.
3. to avoid getting carried away by lofty ideals, or becoming hypnotized by *extreme idealistic exaggerations*, which can have a disorientating effect when they meet with hard daily reality. Historical ignorance, in fact, could give rise to the risk of reading the life of the Congregation in a fundamentally mistaken perspective which sees today as being worse than yesterday and tomorrow will be worse than today. This kind of use of history is adopted all too often for sidestepping any serious problem in the historical framework.

D. In the reconstruction and interpretation of SDB history, *prudent discernment* is necessary. The past is certainly not to be seen as gloom and darkness; there is nothing, indeed, to be exorcised as a dangerous antithesis for the most genuine aspirations, but the passion for truth is always present, and truth is reached through the daily toil of work and study.

For us too the advice of Pope Leo XIII will always remain valid: “Veritas non indiget mendaciis nostris”, and also: “Primam esse historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat, deinde ne quid veri non audeat”.

E. The care of historical instruments (archives, museums, libraries) moreover – a point already so obvious to those assigned to them and to the studious – is one of the most significant expressions of the ability to become inculturated, to dialogue with contemporary events, and for the evangelization of culture (VC 80, 81).

F. Among the tangible expressions of affection for those who have preceded us therefore, there are not only holy pictures and bigger paintings, statues, popular biographies, collections of thoughts and sayings, touching incidents of particular interest, but also *scientific study*, laborious efforts to discover the genuine meaning of the existence of those who have gone before us and of their offering of themselves to Christ in the Salesian Congregation.

2.3. *A charism viewed in a historical perspective to be offered to those outside the Institute to promote cultural dialogue on an equal footing*

A. “Our” history is not really ours at all; it is the *history of the Church and the history of humanity*, and so it must form part of ecclesiastical history and of the civil history of the individual countries, and this with all the more reason since salesian history is a reality stemming from dynamic interactivity, relationships of dependence, of collaboration (and also clashes) with the social, political, economic, religious, educative and cultural fields. Now we cannot expect “the others” (non-Salesians and laity) to give any attention to “our” history if we do not provide them with modern and adequate means for getting to know it. Dialogue with others can take place only if we speak the same kind of language, using the same concepts, the same professional approach and skills; otherwise we shall be left on the fringe of society, remote from the historical and cultural discussions that are taking place; we shall be absent from those places where not only are facts documented and interpreted, but also where a lead is given in solving current problems.

Exclusion from the cultural debate and discussion going on in every country would also lead to:

- the lack of any historical significance of the Salesians,
- marginalization on a social level and on that of the salesian image,
- the complete absence of “our” proposals from the ideas-market.

B. *History is always contemporary* (B. Croce), in the sense that no period in history can be reconstructed without the study and help of the historian. This dictum of Croce is very relevant at the present day and contains much deep truth. It means among other things that

1. Subjectivity (choice of arguments, ability to identify the problem, skill and patience in seeking documents useful for the search for a solution, without arbitrary choices and manipulations, and also without prejudice and ideological judgements, political passions, sympathies and antipathies, etc.) is fundamental and a *sine qua non*.

2. What distinguishes contemporary history (*our history*) from other kinds (ancient, medieval, modern) is its lack of stability, in the sense that it is more subject to the laws of events and to the luxury of an unlimited documentation. Contemporary history is continually assailed by new and insistent realities which can modify, correct, or integrate the perspective and formulation of research now in hand and of past studies.

3. The writing of history is a continual critical revision of judgements made in the past; a *critical revision* of this kind is necessary when we realize that the past cannot be left embalmed in a kind of monument only to be looked at, because fundamentally linked (as we have just said) to the personality of the person wanting to know it.

4. If it is true that *history is made by historians*, the kind of approach is being continually diversified:

- * because of the personal *sensitivities* of the historians themselves,
- * because of the incessant *pressure* of the new sciences which have become wedded, so to speak, with history. Not everything is to be explained, for instance, by the intervention of the supernatural, or better the supernatural cannot fail to take into account *natural elements and factors*; often such “facts” are not given adequate consideration in the writing of salesian history;
- * because of the *new and innumerable objects of historical attention*: to the study of events, institutions and great personalities, it is now possible to move on to questions of mentality, values, sentiments, educative methods, forms of marginalization, socialization, basic cultural advancement, etc. One could take up, for example:
 - The *history of salesian institutions with their social, political, religious and cultural consequences*.
 - The *history of the forms of aggregation and socialization of young people; the history of the impact of salesian formation on young persons in specific periods of history*.
 - The *history of religious facts and events of the Congregation in the different countries*, from a broader standpoint than a simply apologetic one.
 - The *history of fidelity* to Don Bosco, seen through the various hermeneutics of his language and the different realizations of his charisma, in the practical examples of our countries in the last hundred years?

- The further study of *quantitative history*, of *social history*, of the *history of instruction*, the *history of ideas and pedagogical doctrine in the Congregation*, of *the practice of spirituality as concretely lived in our houses*.
- And then there is *oral history*, through conversation with so many confreres who have lived through important periods of history in a country or under a regime etc., but are no longer able to leave an account in writing.
- All this, obviously, without forgetting the *history of a house or province*, the *biography of a confrere*, accounts of particular *experiences*, etc. and all the consolidated forms of minor historical writings which fall under headings like, *memoirs, chronicles, and annals*.

C. And so *history is a serious branch of study*, and it follows that:

- the personal good will of a person, or the improvisation of others is not enough. An *adequate preparation* is indispensable.
- there is no place for amateurs: slapdash and haphazard methods will not do. There are *rules and methods* to be followed; intellectual honesty is needed, together with scientific exactness.

D. Among the reasons for interest in salesian history is also the role which has come to be assigned in recent times to *local history*, in which the presence of a salesian house in a specified area is now a motive of interest, as witness the continual requests for information which reach the Salesian Central Archives in Rome.

3. The present situation

3.1. *In terms of historiographical production*

A. A history of *the Salesian Congregation as such* (and of the Institute of the FMA and of the Salesian Family) conceived in scientific terms, simply *does not exist*. The four volumes of the *Annali* edited by Fr E. Ceria (1941-1951) cannot be considered as belonging to this category, and not only for chronological reasons. On the other hand there do exist attempts at the deeper study of specific cross-sections of the history of the Congregation (pedagogy, missions, formation, various activities etc.) which are frequently founded, as well as on the wealth of unpublished documentation in the Salesian Central Archives, on *the Acts of the Superior Council*, the *Acts of the General Council*, *Circular Letters of Rector Majors*, documents of various Departments, etc.

B. The bibliography on the single salesian works, however, tends to be more plentiful as a consequence of the celebration of anniversaries: of regional and local work, with some valuable monographs, informative articles and notes published in bulletins, local reviews, newsletters of provinces or houses, nearly always in extra-commercial editions.

But there do not seem to be many publications which can properly be described as “histories of houses”. Often the title or sub-title is an acknowledgement that the work is incomplete – *Memoirs, outlines, special edition for the centenary or golden jubilee*; often they consist of a mass of dates and facts hinged around a series of provincials or rectors with perfunctory notes about the foundation, followed by a plentiful collection of photographs of illustrious persons and witnesses, the whole lot gathered from manuscript sources, generally scarce and unpublished and not subjected to any critical evaluation. The only thing present in abundance is the iconographic apparatus which adds notably to the printing costs. Though the production of these publications has become a *model* for the celebration of continuing salesian anniversaries, the fact remains that they do not and cannot enter the cultural circle and history of a country. And there are even those who have written about salesian history and even presented doctorate theses in this field without ever being aware of the existence of the Salesian Central Archives. For its part the Salesian Historical Institute has published various methodological indications, in several languages, which do not seem to have caught the attention of salesian historiographers.

C. Even though some works which have recently appeared, based on more abundant sources and better methodological criteria, might suggest the opposite, there does not exist at the present day a complete *history of individual provinces*.

The history of a province, like its written presentation, passes through the houses. Naturally one cannot demand the previous compilation of 10, 30 or more monographs, one for each house. But it remains a difficult if not an impossible task to write the true history of a province (and consequently of the Congregation) until we have a consistent and competent number of monographs, at least of the houses more representative of the life and activities of a province.

Here we are not living in a cloud-cuckoo land invented by outstanding persons; it is a matter of the practical geographic territory of the houses, in which the salesian life is lived and comes to fruition. A house is essentially a point of reference and of educative, spiritual, apostolic and cultural radiation. The SDBs are called by the local people to be a public utility for them. And it is precisely this life and activity which must be documented and borne witness to in monographs, which can also serve as a recognition and homage to the local civil and ecclesiastical community.

D. A certain consistency attaches, on the other hand, to the bibliography on *outstanding persons* (major superiors, bishops, provincials, others), all gleaned from written sources, published or unpublished, but even in these cases frequently not critically evaluated. And so the works vary a great deal in value. We have thus been compelled to overhaul the *Dizionario biografico dei Salesiani* (Turin 1969), which is becoming ever less reliable.

Here I take the opportunity to emphasize that in general in the mind of the Congregation there have been no great advances made in the traditional interpretation of the Founder. Even though recent innovations and discoveries put forward by historical writings are not ignored, there is almost always a preference for the literature on Don Bosco which was in vogue in the first half of the past century. The study of confreres in matters of salesianity is defective and modelled more on the texts and memories of their own formation than on any serious updating. Sometimes translations are being made into the vernacular of studies that were published 20, 30 or even 40 years ago, and which in the nature of things are now outmoded or at least not updated. It is quite natural that the first acquisition of a new house should be the classical *Biographical Memoirs*, but they cannot remain the one and only source. The bibliography on Don Bosco has made great strides in recent decades. In the period following Vatican II scores of volumes and scientific articles have appeared. Cf the volume of the ISS on the *Bibliografia di Don Bosco in lingua italiana* (S. Gianotti, 1995).

3.2. *Terms of structures*

Although our Constitutions, Regulations and provincial Chapters lay down rules in this connection, and although general criteria concerning archives were offered by the Secretary General, Fr F. Maraccani, in AGC 351 (1995) 34-45, we find for the most part a *widespread abandonment of archives, libraries and museums*, not only locally but at a provincial level; quite recently were sent for pulping the whole or parts of libraries containing valuable archival documentation of a great historical value for the study of a house or province. Obvious risks are run at the present day to such documentary patrimony with the closure of salesian works, or rapid changes in their kind of work.

3.3. *In respect of persons*

The *shortage of serious students of salesianity* (full-time or almost so), or at least of salesian personnel keen on research in salesian history, is clear to the eyes of all. Our active salesian life, the continual demands and even emergencies which crop up, the lack of vocations, all seem unfavourable to study in general and to the study of history in particular, but in this matter things were little better in the past. It is not something new that there are few confreres specialized in civil and church history, or being trained in it, though this is a basic foundation for studies in "salesian history". Trained lay people, of the Salesian Family or not, who are concerned with salesian history are numerically insignificant. Efforts to involve non-salesian experts in salesian historiography are being made for the houses of Villa Sora of Frascati (Rome) and for Fr Carlo Maria Baratta at Parma.

4. For a renewed historiography, non-contingent and of high profile

From what has been said so far it is not clear what policy the Congregation is following in the writing of history. It is therefore necessary and urgent that the Congregation as such develop such a policy and programme it seriously. To the internal motives of the SDBs other external reasons may be added: requests from the social and ecclesial community, from developments in the sciences, from the dialogue needed with cultural institutions, from the adoption of new research techniques, etc.

My personal opinion is that in the Congregation (and in the Salesian Family):

1. The conviction needs to be spread in a better and more detailed manner that the preservation, promotion and exploitation of cultural values constitutes an *investment for the future*, one of the best means for keeping faithful to the foundational charism and for preserving the spiritual patrimony we have inherited.
2. Incentives should be provided for increasing *attention and sensitivity to the history of the Congregation itself and to our particular local history*, which seems at present to be limited in many provinces to the repetition of stereotyped phrases (“without the past there is no future” etc.), or to the conviction – evidently false as has already been said – that what has been written (even a long time ago) must automatically be always valid and relevant to the present day.
3. An effective plan must be set up for the *preparation of local experts* (at provincial level) in salesian history and a better coordination of research centres (far too few in number at present), enjoying proper freedom and autonomy in their options and study perspectives. The critical texts, the “sources”, the resulting studies, must not remain only in the hands of the authors and local custodians, but must be widely diffused and used throughout the Congregation for the purpose of deeper study and ever more valid and richer interpretation. Is it necessary to remind ourselves that a history built on the shifting sands of partial, unreliable and uncertain sources has no value from the outset?
4. Serious consideration must be given to the “salesian” *preparation of the formative personnel*, who do not always have the practical possibility of adequate updating, and often do not know or do not have available suitable instruments for the purpose (for themselves and those they are training). In the Congregation it is not difficult to note unequal levels of “updating” in this regard, especially where Italian presents a serious problem. Suitable conditions are not always present for the realization *sic et simpliciter* of what is wisely prescribed (or can be prescribed in future) by the *Ratio*.
5. *Languages* certainly cause a *problem*. But it is also true that nowadays informational technology has reached a stage where it is sufficiently easy and cheap to transmit and print *in proprio* facts, sources, texts and studies from other countries. But it would seem useful to have a stable *coordination and organization* of

the efforts made in countries of the same language and available for local productions and for the translation of contributions coming from others.

6. It is desirable moreover that *updating in the facts of salesian historiography* be made available for rectors, retreat preachers, editors of salesian newsletters, bulletins and reviews, and those spreading information through the mass media. The production and large-scale diffusion of popular publications does not mean that their content be superficial, contain inaccurate and unscientific information about salesian history, and repeat past 'facts' now known to be unreliable. Those who have the gift, duty or opportunity of speaking or writing, of forming and educating others, have *a duty to be always up-to-date* on the subject they are talking or writing about. Their working instruments (the library) of even those who write for children and ordinary people should not be of an infantile or popular level, but of high scientific quality and worthy of the greatest possible reliability.
7. Salesian *libraries, retreat houses, bookshops*, and selling points for books and religious objects attached to houses, churches and salesian sanctuaries should not confine themselves to selling the usual popular items like holy pictures, leaflets and medals, but should also have a section of greater cultural depth. Those who buy such items of salesianity are not always and only persons of little culture, and in any case it is a question of making it understood that the story of Don Bosco and the Salesians has a cultural depth and prominence which is often problematic and sometimes downright traumatic; it is not always a matter of amusing comic-strips or delightful little embellishments.
8. In the field of salesian historiography, as indeed in every sector of the salesian mission, all the various groups of the Salesian Family should work together, and in particular the *Cooperators and Past-pupils*, many of whom are already professionally prepared for carrying out research in the field of salesian history. The problem necessarily arises as to *who* can competently follow them up in their studies, and *how* the financial costs are to be met. Can special funds be set up for the purpose? Can formal collaborative relationship[s] be established with cultural centres and non-Catholic Universities (in Catholic areas or not) traditionally close to salesian work? These are questions which await a reply.
9. History needs documents: without documents there is no history. And the documents, for the most part, are to be found in the *archives (documentary, photographic, audiovisual and computers) and in libraries*. We can therefore rightly ask:
 - What is being documented in our archives concerning the opening, closing and transformation of works, changes in activities, the movement of lay and salesian personnel, the suppression of long-standing traditions? Are the reasons idealistic or contingent? Are they conditioned by legislative, educative or territorial considerations?

- With what precision are registers of Salesians, collaborators and pupils kept? With complete and exhaustive details? How are financial and scholastic registers kept, the minutes of community assemblies, and those of meetings of the house council?
- How and where is being documented the contribution made by SDBs to civil and ecclesiastical organisms outside the community, their participation in activities managed by others, their publications, radio and television interviews, collaboration with other religious institutes? Reasons, duration, content, names etc.
- What attention is given to the adequate preservation, maintenance, cataloguing and enrichment of the archived material itself (type of paper, magnetic, electronic and digital material, etc.)? Is a copy of the inventory of the archives deposited with the Salesian Central Archives in Rome? Does the Rector feel responsible for it, and has he had from the provincial secretary all the indications sent out by the Secretary General for the ordering and organization of archives?
- On the death of a confrere, what steps are taken to collect and put in order his manuscripts or the books preserved in his office or room?
- Is not perhaps the preparation of *obituary letters* sadly lacking from the aspect of historical documentation, given that they frequently constitute the only (or almost the only) source of information about the confrere. (It should be kept in mind that anything not preserved by document or testimony, published or unpublished, historically runs the risk of having never existed).
- To draw up the *chronicle of the house* is a truly intelligent thing to do. Maybe for some chronicles still applies what Fr C. Gusmano with Don Albera (who was making the Extraordinary Visitation in America) on 13 January 1902, wrote to Fr Barberis: “Few houses have a chronicle, and for those that do it is almost as if they had none at all, because they make note of trifles of no importance and leave out necessary items: so that after plugging my way through 60 or 70 pages, I have picked up perhaps 4 or 5 lines of interest; it seems that the writer can think only of the times of church services and an occasional change in the house”.
- The house library should contain in indexed fashion at least the fundamental books which constitute the historical documentation (scholastic teaching, pastoral, formative and educative) of the work. And in the case of the closure of the house, how is all that patrimony preserved?

These are reflections which arise from the purpose of the Salesian Historical Institute. It is true that the one putting them forward is one committed to this kind of work; but there are many who like him are convinced that loving Don Bosco means not only the writing of a salesian history worthy of the name, but also setting the conditions so that such a history may worthily redound.

Rome, 1/1/2000.