

DON BOSCO
LIFE AND WORK

PIETRO STELLA

DON BOSCO
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SECOND REVISED EDITION

Translated by John Drury

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- Volume II Don Bosco: Religious Outlook and Spirituality
- Volume III Don Bosco: Later Influence and Continuing Significance
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ABBREVIATIONS

- A Archives
- AS Central Salesian Archives (Rome)
- BM *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. An American edition translated from the original Italian (see MB below). Rev. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B., Editor-in-Chief. New Rochelle, NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-.
- DB Don Bosco
- DHGE *Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastiques*
- Documenti *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco*. . . (AS 110)
- DSp *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*
- DTC *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*
- EC *Enciclopedia cattolica*
- Epistolario *Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco* (ed., E. Ceria), Turin, 1955-1959, 4 volumes.
- Indice MB E. Foglio, *Indice analitico delle Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco nei 19 volumi*, Turin, 1948.
- LC *Lecture cattoliche*
- MB G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco* . . . , then, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco* . . . , S. Benigno Canavese-Turin, 1898-1917, Volumes 1-9.
- G.B. Lemoyne and A. Amadei, *Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco*, Volume 10, Turin, 1938.
- E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco* . . . , Volumes 11-15, Turin, 1930-1934.
- E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*, Volumes 16-19, Turin, 1935-1939.
- (See BM above)

- MO San Giovanni Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, edited by Eugenio Ceria, Turin, 1946. English translation, *The Memoirs of the Oratory 1815–1855*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, in progress.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Background of This Work

If one peruses the literature that has grown up around the figure of St. John Bosco, one will quickly notice that it rose to a peak, both in enthusiasm and number of publications, around the years of his beatification and canonization.

There were commemorative and promotional pamphlets of a laudatory sort fairly early. Between 1878 and 1881, works from the hands of Jules Rostand, Father Mendre, Count Conestabile, and a lawyer named Leonori appeared in Marseilles, Padua, and Rome.¹ They were restrained in tone. Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin kept a close eye on this biographical work. Anxious to reorganize and supervise the ecclesiastical forces of his diocese, he was instinctively anxious and at times disgusted by the volcanic fervor of the Salesian Society. Don Bosco always managed to keep that fervor well in

¹ L. Mendre, *Don Bosco prêtre, fondateur de la Congrégation des Salésiens . . .*, Marseille, 1879. J. Rostand, *Société anonyme de la maison Beaujour. Rapports du Conseil . . .*, Marseille, 1881. E. Conestabile, *Opere religiose e sociali in Italia . . .*, Padua, 1878. C. Leonori, *Cenni sulla Società di S. Francesco di Sales, istituita dal sacerdote Giovanni Bosco . . .*, Rome, 1881. Besides earlier references in Catholic periodicals, he also gets honorable mention in G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale degli Stati di S.M. il Re di Sardegna*, Turin, 1851, 21:714–718. D. Giovanni Bosco, *cenni biografici*, Turin, 1872. He is called a St. Vincent de Paul by N. Pettinati, "Torino benefica," in *Torino*, Turin, 1880², pp. 855–858.

The following come from Salesian sources, aside from what Don Bosco himself published on his work and the Oratory. G. B. Lemoyne, *Biografia del giovane Mazzarello Giuseppe*, Turin, 1870 (LC) and 1872²; Chapter 14 deals with the "Oratory of St. Francis de Sales." More widely received was C. Chiala, *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina. Lettere di Missionari Salesiani*, Turin, 1876, LC; it was a source for Leonori and the MB. The fullest bibliographical overview up to now, though still incomplete, is in P. Ricaldone, *Don Bosco educatore*, Colle Don Bosco, 1952, 2:631–705.

hand, but outsiders may have seen it as a noisy, chaotic medley of disorganized forces which would require the painful intervention of legitimate authorities some day in the near future.

Charles D'Espiney might well be considered the pioneer of the more enthusiastic brand of biography concerning Don Bosco. A medical doctor in Nice and a devout Catholic, D'Espiney looked at the many activities sponsored and promoted by the priest from Piedmont and saw the hand of God clearly at work. Through the intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians, God had visibly worked wonders on behalf of his servant, Don Bosco. This inner conviction of D'Espiney shone through every page of the anecdotal biography which was published in 1881.² His biography helped to ensure the triumph of Don Bosco in Paris in 1883, and its widespread influence was almost incalculable. Within a period of about five years it was translated into Italian, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. It also served as the basis for other publications in Hungarian, Polish, and Ukrainian; and it was a source of inspiration for Catholic journals and religious newspapers of all sorts in Europe and Latin America.

Less widely circulated but of greater importance was the *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, published between 1883 and 1887 in the *Bollettino salesiano* by Father John Bonetti. It made much use of Don Bosco's own *Memorie dell'Oratorio*, which was not published until 1946.³

In publishing the *Storia dell'Oratorio*, Salesian official circles may have been trying to get around certain problems raised by inaccuracies in the biography by D'Espiney.⁴ But its tone was substantially the same and completely in line with the conviction of the Salesians and Don Bosco himself. His words expressed what was in his heart, and they were designed to direct veneration away

² C. D'Espiney, *Don Bosco*, Nice, 1881. We are told that D'Espiney "sought mainly to highlight the wondrous intervention of the all-powerful goodness of Our Lady Help of Christians" (*Bulletin salésien*, 6, 1884, p. 64).

³ MO. We have an autograph by DB and an apograph by Father Berto which was corrected and annotated by DB himself (AS 132 Oratorio).

⁴ In particular, there were complaints from Count di Viancino. In a letter to Don Bosco (6 December 1881) he asked that an episode about a certain Count di V. be expunged or corrected in some way, since he denied its veracity if it in fact was supposed to be about him. The episode itself was in D'Espiney, *Don Bosco*, pp. 132-135.

from himself and towards God and Mary Help of Christians, whose humble instrument he was.

The *Storia* also had the obvious purpose of inspiring fresh zeal in Don Bosco's immediate co-workers and all those involved in spreading the Salesian movement.

The same intention underlay another official biography done by a French author, Albert Du Boys: *Don Bosco and the Salesian Society*.⁵ It was commissioned by the Salesians and written in accordance with Don Bosco's own directives. Translated into Italian, it went through four editions in the course of two years. It was less anecdotal and incisive than D'Espiney's work, but it too sang the praises of Don Bosco as the genial poet of charity. Don Bosco was pictured as a poet no less than Dante or Milton, the Homer of the Catholic apostolate. His 150 houses in 1884 were the "150 cantos of his immense epic," the 150 cantos of his poem "composed of human beings instead of verses and strophes." His intuitions, noted Du Boys, "which were long regarded as the hallucinations of a sick mind, were all creations in germ."⁶

Next came the monumental *Memorie Biografiche*, tirelessly compiled by Father Lemoyne over the course of almost thirty years. The project was envisioned as forty or more volumes, but Lemoyne was able to author only nine volumes for publication before he died.⁷ Father Lemoyne's view of Don Bosco is clearly stated in his

⁵ A. Du Boys, *Don Bosco et la pieuse Société des Salésiens . . .*, Paris, 1884; Italian trans. by G. Novelli, *Don Bosco . . .*, S. Benigno Canavese, 1884 (1884⁴ stereotyped). The French edition published the Constitutions of the Salesian Society in an Appendix. Some relevant materials are to be found in AS 123 Du Boys.

⁶ Du Boys, *Don Bosco*, p. 229.

⁷ The original idea had been to collect documentation. Out of this came the monumental collection of *Documenti* (see list of Abbreviations), begun in 1883. It contains 45 volumes in all. Volumes 41 and 42 are Appendixes, and Volumes 43 and 44 contain additional material gathered after the original compilation. Volume 45 contains documents relating to matters arising between Father Bonetti, Don Bosco, and Archbishop Gastaldi. On their origin and publication see F. Desramaut, *Les Memorie I de Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. Etude d'un ouvrage fondamental sur la jeunesse de saint Jean Bosco*, Lyon, 1962, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 57–93. An intermediate stage to examine, between the *Documenti* and the MB, is made up of the letters of Father Lemoyne preserved in AS 110 Lemoyne.

preface to the first volume: "The story of his life truly constitutes a wondrous complex of events in which the hand of God is clearly discernible. A source of infinite comfort to us in the present, it rekindles our firm trust in the future."⁸

In the meantime Lemoyne had also written a two-volume biography of Don Bosco. For a time it remained the most widely known and consulted biography of the saint.

Alongside this biographical work came the bits and pieces of information published in the various vernacular editions of the *Salesian Bulletin* and other periodicals. These articles and notices were always enthusiastic, evoking admiration for the gigantic stature of the holy man, who was remembered at each recurring anniversary.

In Don Bosco people saw the power of one who had initiated a movement that was continuing to spread irresistibly in every sort of context and climate. While focusing on the education of young people, it also offered its enthusiastic service to all sorts of initiatives in the area of popular religious or civil education. Everywhere the Salesians were seen as spirited, congenial, active, and able. Everywhere they themselves carried the conviction that they were the instruments for carrying out a vast program envisioned by Don Bosco. They were meant to go to Buenos Aires, Santiago (Chile), Calcutta, Peking, Australia—everywhere doing some great good and transforming even rude or savage peoples into good Christians and upright citizens.

Leaving for India, China, or Australia, Salesians read again the dreams of Don Bosco and saw their own itinerary outlined in some prophetic vision of their father.⁹ Everywhere they proclaimed and celebrated him, instilling love for him in the circle of people whom they managed to get close to. To all such people the Salesians came across as dynamic and versatile achievers, well suited and trained to shoulder the most lowly and self-sacrificing tasks.¹⁰

⁸ BM XI, vii.

⁹ Dreams of DB were recalled in 1921, for example, when the Salesians set out for Kimberley (Australia) and Assam (India). The *Salesian Bulletin* and commemorative Salesian publications have not infrequently stressed connections between Don Bosco's prophetic visions and the discovery of oil in Patagonia, as well as the building of Brasilia in the highland wilderness of central Brazil.

¹⁰ Most Rev. Marcelo Spínola, later a cardinal, described the Salesian as one of the most unpretentious laborers among the faithful servants of the

Somewhat hesitantly at first and then far more closely, attention was focused on Don Bosco by students and scholars concerned with social phenomena, pedagogy, and the historical sciences. There was growing admiration for the great educator of the nineteenth century. The prodigy of the century was seen as one of those rare people whom divine providence now and then grants the Church in the course of centuries.¹¹ Authoritative historians such as Salvemini and Chabod viewed Don Bosco admiringly as the apostle of Christian charity. He typified the Italian lower clergy of the nineteenth century, which numbered "more than a few unknown heroes, living lives of poverty and self-sacrifice and, in many areas, exposed to the hostility of an irreligious milieu." Don Bosco embodied that "mystical Italy" which is sometimes overlooked by those who have contact only with the political world, or who do not stop to give sufficient consideration to the role of religious piety and practice in the making of history.¹²

Today, no less than in the past, the desire to know Don Bosco is keenly alive. People have felt the widening distance from him, the loss of that concrete personal contact which enabled one to sense and touch his moral grandeur every day. So there is a keen desire to bring his profile back into proper focus, to evaluate the

Church. The Salesian "goes where he is sent, takes things as they are and accepts them, and builds his nest equally well in the flourishing branches of a leafy tree or on the outermost crag of some desolate rock The Salesian has something of the energy, activity, farsightedness, high-mindedness, and bedrock firmness of the Jesuit; something of the popularity of the Capuchin; something of the recollectedness and work habits of the monk. In short, the Salesian has something of all the well known religious congregations, but is still a new type" (M. Spínola, *Don Bosco y su obra por el Obispo de Milo* . . . , Barcelona, 1884, p. 99).

¹¹ According to a remark attributed to Urban Rattazzi, Don Bosco was "perhaps the greatest wonder" of the nineteenth century (MB 8:797). "God in his mercy gave him to us so that his strong arm might push back the avalanche of iniquity and scatter the seed of goodness everywhere" (M. Spínola, *Don Bosco y su obra*, p. 99). Other statements can be found in the section entitled "Così dicono di Don Bosco i grandi," in *Don Bosco nel mondo*, Turin, 1965, p. 47 f.

¹² F. Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896*, Bari, 1962², p. 390. The quotations come from Gaetano Salvemini's remarks in his Harvard Lectures on Italy from 1919 to 1929, which are cited by O. Barié, *L'Italia nell'Ottocento*, Turin, 1964, p. 801.

import of the enthusiasm which he aroused and the halo of veneration which surrounded him.

The literature of Don Bosco is predominantly laudatory in tone. Despite that—or rather, precisely because of that—it stands as important historical documentation. It is important insofar as it was fed by direct knowledge of Don Bosco, and indeed even insofar as it was imbued with the optimism widespread among Catholics who felt renewed energy and effectiveness returning to themselves and their efforts in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

It may well be true that admiration for the grandeur and providential role of Don Bosco went off in wrong directions. People may have failed to focus properly on the fact that he had a great ability to seize opportunities, organize things well, and further the expansion of his works. People may have failed to notice enough that his persistence was rooted in a very deep faith, a faith not easily attained or plumbed. Instead some may have proclaimed him the first to start Oratories in Turin,¹³ or the first to publicize the metric system in Piedmont,¹⁴ or the first to propose the idea of apprenticeship contracts.¹⁵ These were little optical illusions. The impressive figure of Don Bosco may have caused admirers to blur the context of the time. Yet it was that context of vital contemporary forces which often explained, nurtured, and reinforced the ever-widening scope of his activities.

¹³ See Chapter 4 in this book.

¹⁴ On the metric system see C. Verri (Brother Giovannino), "Il sistema metrico decimale in Piemonte e l'opera dei Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane," *Rivista lasalliana*, 8, 1938, pp. 90–101; also found in *I fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane e la storia della scuola in Piemonte*, Como, 1959, pp. 97–112.

¹⁵ Contract terms for young apprentices were already operative in Piedmont, terms being stipulated by the civil (in this case, royal) agency for vocational trainees among the poor (*la mendicizia istruita*). "The co-director acting as supervisor of the pupils, or some other co-director taking his place, has the task of finding a suitable employer for new students . . . and spelling out the proper terms of apprenticeship to him for a period no longer than four years . . ." (G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico*, 21:707). The whole project won the approval of the episcopate in 1774, of the king in 1776. A contract for hiring an apprentice composer and another for hiring an apprentice presser (1791), both by the Fontana printing firm in Turin, can be found in Emilio Soave, *L'industria tipografica in Piemonte. Dall'inizio del XVIII secolo allo Statuto Albertino*, Turin, 1726, pp. 233–236.

My Working Premise

But we are not looking at a sea of sand that was turned into a mirage of cool, clear water by thirst-crazed wanderers in some desert. Instead we find ourselves before a grain field that ripened in season, at a time when it may have seemed rash to rush in and farm such a plentiful crop. Today it is not difficult to take stock, thanks to the abundance of inherited documents and our greater historical perspective. We can undertake a review of the documents and their worth calmly, fully aware of the confidence such an operation may confer on the activity of those who look to Don Bosco for their inspiration.

Today the fresh tone of the old enthusiasm seems somewhat muted. It is not due to any diminution in the faith or conviction that Don Bosco was one of the most singular personalities in nineteenth-century Catholicism. Rather, the older emotional type of enthusiasm and acclaim is giving way to attentive reflection. The foaming and bubbling of water near its source is giving way to the calm, majestic flow of a river in its already formed bed. Historians can no longer ignore its ongoing course amid the complex rush of human events.

What we need today is an historical presentation of Don Bosco that is grounded in a scientifically valid methodology. Indeed nothing would have been more congenial to him than a presentation of his work in terms of its historical development. He himself was fond of presenting his life as the *History of the Oratory*. He always liked telling personal anecdotes, feeling they were indicative of the lowly beginning and early development of projects which later came to seem colossal to him.

A developmental study of Don Bosco's life and work is all the more suitable insofar as his was an eminently practical spirit.¹⁶ In particular, his thinking, his way of perceiving and evaluating facts and events, and his way of giving direction to individuals seem closely bound up with surrounding conditions and circumstances.

What has been said of Newman,¹⁷ author of genial and illu-

¹⁶ This point is made by M. Spínola, *Don Bosco y su obra*, p. 61.

¹⁷ H. F. Davis, "Le rôle et l'apostolat de la hiérarchie et du laïc dans la théologie de l'Eglise chez Newman," in *L'Eclésiologie au XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1960, p. 330.

minating writings, might also be said of Don Bosco: by temperament he was incapable of writing a systematic treatise on any topic, or even a completely systematic monograph on the Church. The situation of Don Bosco proved to be like that of Fénelon.¹⁸ He found himself in difficulty when he sought to systematize his thoughts and intuitions about interior realities; he could only keep going back and making revisions here and there. All of Don Bosco's writings—like all of his constructions in brick and mortar, his institutions for young people, and his organizations for lay people and religious—bear witness to the same style and approach. He moves forward in stages, never settling permanently into a position reached at a given moment. There is ongoing change in every matter, every idea, and every practice, under the impetus of various factors which we cannot always pinpoint easily today. Don Bosco had his absolute values and his constants; but, working in the concrete, he never turned into an absolutizer. He made decisions and passed judgments, but he never stopped to formulate a whole theoretical system. What he said, and did, and got done, was always inspired by surrounding circumstances. Even when he starts to generalize and theorize, the immediate experience on which it is based surfaces. So nothing would seem to suit him better than to follow his ideas, his inner life, and his works as they move along.

Moreover, nothing better suits the personality of Don Bosco than situating him in the context of religious history. And by 'religious history' here I mean the kind of history that has been legitimately constructed by such respectable scholars as Bremond, Dansette, and Goyau; they have offered us the religious history of a particular region in a particular period, or recreated the religious thought and feeling of a given epoch in history.¹⁹

One further point should be noted. Such terms as 'religion' or

¹⁸ J.L. Goré, *L'itinéraire de Fénelon: humanisme et spiritualité*, Paris, 1957, p. 25.

¹⁹ H. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France . . .*, Paris, 1916–1933, 10 vols; Eng. trans., *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France*, 3 vols, 1928–1936, reprinted New York, Octagon Books, 1973. A. Dansette, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine. De la Révolution à la IIIème République*, Paris, 1964³. G. Goyau, *L'Allemagne religieuse . . .*, Paris, 1910–1911, 4 vols.

the 'religious' life of a certain individual or milieu have now been picked up by sociology and psychology as well as by historians. But they do not always have the same meaning, sometimes being understood as no more than a vague sense of the sacred held by the subject under study.²⁰

When I write about the 'religious' life of Don Bosco here, I am referring to the way in which he perceived and lived his own relationship with God, and how it led him to involve himself actively in history. Don Bosco's religious outlook and practice were obviously Catholic, yet they were not unrelated to that of other groups: e.g., the Jews and various Protestant groups who were organizing in Piedmont and other places. They were clearly singular and fashioned out of his own personal experience, but at the same time obviously belonged to a certain epoch and milieu. They were part of a collective way of thinking and living. We must keep the latter in mind, insofar as it helped to shape and alter Don Bosco's own life.

This volume is not, properly speaking, a biography. It seeks only to shed light on the religious motivations of Don Bosco as priest, educator, and founder of movements and institutions. It focuses particularly on various critical moments when those motivations took solid shape, moments which can be ascertained by a panoramic sweep over the whole life of the saint. I readily acknowledge the difficulties involved in trying to spell out the scope and interconnection of those motivations in all their particulars.

I will not deal with Don Bosco's devotion to Mary or his charismatic feats here. In those fields, doctrine and life are so tightly interwoven that it seemed best to treat them together in a later work.

²⁰ See, for example, M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, I Band, Tübingen, 1947⁴; A. Cu villier, *Manuel de Sociologie*, Paris, 1950; D. Goldschmidt and J. Matthes (eds.), *Probleme der Religionssoziologie*, Cologne, 1966.

Translator's Note. Here our author (Stella) is writing about the terms *religione* and *religiosità*. The latter term is available for use in many European languages, but the English term 'religiosity' has pejorative connotations and does not convey the range and concreteness of the Italian term. Hence *religiosità* is translated in different ways throughout this work in an attempt to convey its connotations in a given context.

The Method of Study

So we find ourselves mainly in the realm of psychological history, and we can hardly nurture any illusions about the difficulty of achieving an objective reconstruction or about the precarious nature of certain conclusions.

If we want to describe the way in which the sense of God arose and grew in a particular person, we must get inside that person and identify with him or her. We must live that person's life in its time, get inside his or her soul, become one in spirit with that person. That is not easy to do in the case of Don Bosco. His autobiographical pages and personal recollections are not like those of Teresa of Avila, nor even like those of Thérèse of Lisieux. For the most part they come slowly and belatedly. Only very rarely and fleetingly do we manage to surprise Don Bosco in the act of expressing his own inner religious sentiments and the motives behind his actions. Almost always his talk is about facts and deeds: e.g., what his life was like before or after his priestly ordination, how the Oratory came into being, or how the various works "entrusted to him by divine providence" grew and prospered.

Nevertheless, in all that we can detect a certain way of perceiving and presenting his own life. There is nothing left for us to do but to listen and read carefully, to look through the little peep-holes he has left us in the massive external edifice of his labors. We must try to get a better look, taking advantage of certain tools which he did not have but which are ours today, thanks to advances in many disciplines.

I should also note that few things are more congenial to our own time than the examination of human events in their flux and evolution. I daresay that a developmental view of Don Bosco's whole life is the most welcome approach today. The Salesians have gone through, and perhaps not yet wholly gotten beyond, a fairly acute phase of a phenomenon that is inherent in any organized movement: i.e., the anxious desire for fidelity to the original aims of the institution vis-à-vis the desire to adapt to new exigencies of time and place. Like the Franciscans, the Salesians adopted the motto of the 'rule without glosses' (*regula sine glossa*) because they saw fidelity to their original institution as fidelity to their very reason for being within the Church, as a matter of life and death. The summons to remain faithful to Don Bosco has been reiterated

by his priestly successors: Michael Rua, Paul Albera, Philip Rinaldi, Peter Ricaldone, Renato Ziggiotti, Louis Ricceri, and Egidio Viganò. It has found expression in a variety of simple formulas and dicta: Let us abide by the rule; let us avoid the itch for reform; let us abide by his spirit; fidelity to St. John Bosco.²¹

Such an attitude inevitably nurtured a certain tendency towards fixedness, towards the exact reproduction of principles and attitudes held by Don Bosco, or attributed to him, at different times and in different circumstances. As a crystallization of principles and practices, it had the undoubted advantage of solidifying and stabilizing an entity which still had all the heat and force of lava just erupting from a volcano. In the early decades of this century such an attitude was fostered and encouraged by the surrounding religious context. This was particularly true in Italy, where anti-modernism was antipathetic to any mention at all of the evolution of dogma; and where some intransigent Catholics, while engaging in aggressive and enterprising social action, clung tightly to the principles and traditions of their religious faith as if every item were equally essential.

Today Vatican II's call for renewal has echoed beneficially within Don Bosco's own institutions. The old motto, "With Don Bosco and with the times,"²² is taking on new connotations. Salesians are noticing not only that times change but that Don Bosco went through changes of his own. The latter changes were not just in his quest for something better in the abstract; they also, and indeed mainly, were meant to help him achieve something more in line

²¹ "Fidelity to St. John Bosco" was the title or motto of the *strenna* given to the Salesians for 1935 by their Rector Major, Rev. Peter Ricaldone. The *strenna* is a brief saying, in the form of a motto, which proposes a spiritual program for the coming new year. It is called the Annual Practice in English.

In his proposed *strenna* for 1935, Father Ricaldone reiterated statements of his predecessors. The aim to seek renewal by going back "to [our] authentic origins . . . to the very charism of Don Bosco" was reasserted by the members of the nineteenth General Chapter in their message to their Salesian confreres (Rome, 17 May 1965). See *Atti del Cap. Generale XIX*, 9 April-10 June 1965, Rome (Atti del Consiglio Superiore della Società Salesiana, 47, January 1966, N. 244), Turin, 1966, p. 346.

²² Auffray adopts a motto of Father Paul Albera for his work entitled *Con Don Bosco e coi tempi*, Turin, 1955.

with the needs of the day. Nor were his changes confined to obviously accidental and transitory elements. They also had to do with elements which have instinctively been considered substantive, or even absolutized as constants in his life and integral components of his mind and spirit and teaching. The mistaken view of such elements was due to the fact that people did not pay close enough attention to their evolution, or did not advert to all the reasons for their persistence in Don Bosco. In his own day certain changes in various factors may not yet have taken place, or may not have been noticed by Don Bosco himself. If such change did take place and if he had noticed it, he would have been quick to change himself and even to anticipate new developments.

Evolution is the rule for humanity and history. Careful study of it is one of the most important and beneficial of all studies because it brings home to us what is constant on the one hand, and what is inevitably destined for decay and disappearance on the other hand.

Since the First Edition

More than ten years have gone by since the first edition of this work was published in January 1968. Indeed more than fifteen years have passed since I participated in work seminars with young students in Turin and served as the archivist of the Salesian Congregation (1961–1965). It was during that period that I had occasion and opportunity to reflect on the documents, lectures, and questions posed to me concerning the figure of Don Bosco and the history of his Congregation.

Many saw my study as a profound revision. Others judged it to be demythologization or even desecration. Today I have no desire to draw up a final balance sheet on that reception. It may have reflected moments of particular tension. After all, we had gone through the years of renewal between the end of Vatican II and the protests of 1968, which inevitably had repercussions on the Salesian world as well.

I think it proper that this study remain anchored to that precise moment in history. Hence this new edition, requested insistently from many different quarters, is being published without any substantive changes in theme or methodology. I have made a few minor

revisions and corrections, and I have added a few bibliographical entries in the footnotes and references.

The original edition of this work contains an appendix with a study of the documents pertaining to the "resurrection of Charles"—one of the many miracles attributed to Don Bosco. Coverage of that episode is merely meant to exemplify clearly and in some detail the kind of philological research which undergirds this whole work. My point is not to arrive at a particular conclusion, but to demonstrate the necessity of going to non-Salesian sources as well if one is seeking a more accurate reconstruction of the figure and work of Don Bosco. The saint can be known and appreciated in his real-life dimensions only when the sources dealing with him are studied in their entirety, and when the chronology and facts recorded in them are carefully collated.

The second volume in this series contains a similar appendix dedicated to a study of Don Bosco's dreams. These appendices have been dropped from the present edition and will be published in English as separate monographs.

Before January 31, 1988 (the centenary of Don Bosco's death) I hope to complete the promised third volume of this work. It will deal with the reaction of the surrounding world to the life and work of Don Bosco: the significance attributed to him, and the role assigned to his educational endeavors by institutional bodies of church and state in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

I would like to thank the editors of Don Bosco Publications for bringing forth this English version of the second Italian edition and to congratulate Mr. John Drury for the accuracy of his translation.

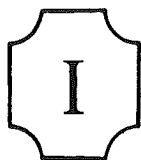
Finally, I express my fondest wish that this work, drawn from firsthand sources and an abundance of edited materials, will encourage others to undertake the serious study of Don Bosco. A knowledge of such an attractive person and his experience are not irrelevant to understanding the relationship between Europe and other parts of the world in the nineteenth century and today.

Rome

January 31, 1985

PIETRO STELLA

DON BOSCO
LIFE AND WORK



FROM BECCHI TO CHIERI (1815–1835)

1. God in the religious outlook of the local area

When John Melchior Bosco was born on August 16, 1815, the world had already witnessed the rise and fall of Napoleon's star. Like many other pastors, Canon Emmanuel Gonetti, vicar capitular of Turin, had urged his people to ponder the tumultuous events in which they had been involved as spectators or actors. Many were persuaded that the whole scene was one of definitive decline. Achievements that seemed destined to perdure for centuries had succeeded one another at a hectic pace. To Canon Gonetti they bore unmistakable witness to a "higher hand that sovereignly arranges and directs everything, toppling and resurrecting thrones at its will, demolishing them in one instant and restoring their old grandeur in the next, scourging the nations and then suddenly giving them back their former prosperity."¹

Everything that had happened resembled a theophany: "Let the fool, who said in his heart that there is no God or that God in the heights of his glory has no concern for what happens on this lowly earth, find a sufficient reason, if he can, for such extraordinary events."

The new era was opening with a vivid awareness of God's presence in human events. People knew in their hearts that human reason, in which the preceding century had placed so much confidence, had been

¹ Pastoral letter, *Le strepitose vicende*, Turin, 10 May 1814. Successive citations are from the same letter. In pointing up religious factors in the childhood of DB, I have not tried to draw a general picture of Piedmont and Europe. Instead I have focused on factors that would have had a more direct impact on Don Bosco and his immediate neighborhood.

unable to construe matters in a reasonable manner. Nor could it explain how matters had been resolved in such an unpredictable way.²

What had happened in Piedmont itself? "Who," asked Canon Gonnelli, "could explain the joyous transports of mothers as they gazed lovingly on their little ones and murmured, more with heartbeats than with words, 'Ah, you are safe, safe at last'?"

The Lord was with us, noted the canon. The Lord did not permit the clash of armies to reach Piedmont: "Our soul, like a sparrow, has been saved from the hunter's nets. The net was torn, and we have been set free! Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

It was a grace granted by God. Piedmont could boast of no merit of its own. "Along with foreign ways, did we not also adopt some of those strange vices that grew and spread, if they did not originate, from the most terrible of revolutions? Even here among ourselves did we not see in many a desolating coldness and indifference toward religion, and in others an arrogant craze to mock the august rites of the Church, to curse everything they did not comprehend? . . . Alas, perhaps even among us iniquity abounded. And if grace did even more abound, we owe our thanks solely to the unspeakably gracious mercy of God. In so many varied and wondrous ways God gave us the clearest proof of his infinite goodness, of what I might go so far as to call his predilection for us."

The view of the vicar capitular was a conviction shared by many in the religious milieu of Piedmont. It was echoed by preachers and parish priests from both urban and rural pulpits. The restoration of the throne, the "regeneration of Europe," was the work "of God's hand alone."³

² See the remark of Gaetano Donaudi (d. 1829), who was the superior general of the Theatines: "What human mind, however keen, could have foreseen that new order of things, from which followed such dark and stormy days that turned fair Europe into a theater of bloody, murderous warfare?" (*Cantandosi un solenne Te Deum nella chiesa reale di San Lorenzo pel trionfo accordato da Dio alla Chiesa, e pel sospirato ritorno ne' suoi Stati di S.S.R.M. Vittorio Emanuele . . .*, Turin, stamp. Reale, p. 4).

³ "The very people . . . who were trying to cast doubt on divine providence are now forced to acknowledge it and confess it openly!" (*Per l'imminente ritorno in Piemonte di S.S.R.M. Vittorio Emanuele re di Sardegna ec. ec. orazione di Gian Bartolomeo detta in Torino nella chiesa di S. Teresa addì 15 Maggio 1814*, Turin: C. Fontana, 1814, p. 21). "What were our merits that we should have been favored and set apart by the great and good God?" (Donaudi, *Cantandosi un solenne Te Deum*, p. 11).

After the first bouts of enthusiasm, however, hard times fell upon Piedmont. There were years of economic failure and famine. Discontent reigned among many classes of people. The recent past, far from being wiped out, had cut deeply. Its cumulative force erupted again in the constitutional stirrings of March 1821. When they were suppressed, it helped to nurture secret societies and yearnings for reforms of a constitutional or outright republican cast.

Those events were also probably interpreted in simple terms (on the hills south of Castelnuovo d'Asti)—according to the Sunday sermons of priests, afternoon catechism lessons, and the admonitions given to penitents in the confessional. Alphonsus de Liguori's discourses on the scourges had been reprinted in Turin by the Marietti publishing house. From them one learned that cholera, famine, and rebellions against legitimate authority were divine punishments justly deserved by the sins of the people.⁴ Prayer, penance, attendance at church, respect for church life, attentiveness to God's word, greater care in approaching the sacraments, obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and civil authorities: all these were powerful ways to turn God's face toward mercifulness.⁵

2. God in the early childhood of Don Bosco

From Don Bosco's recollections in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* we learn how and to what extent God was present in his life from earliest childhood. We see clearly how his sense of God was deeply rooted in the simple religious life of his rural environment.

Little John's first memory was the death of his father in 1817. His view of it as a "grave calamity" visited on the family by the "merciful

⁴ Citing Jeremiah, St. Alphonsus said: "Your sins have ruled out good for you" (*Nove discorsi da farsi in occasione dei flagelli*, disc. 2; *Opere ascetiche*, Turin: Marietti, 1847, 3, p. 623). The Jesuit Muzzarelli recalled God's words to Catherine of Siena: "Let this people commit the horrible and atrocious sin it is contemplating, so that I may punish them as their iniquity deserves and wipe them away from the land of the living" (*Delle cause dei mali presenti e del timore de'mali futuri e suoi rimedi*, Chap. 2 [Pittura del secolo XVIII. Suà peggiorità], Turin: Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, 1874, p. 48; first edition, Foligno, 1792).

⁵ See Colombano Chiaveroti, *Lettera pastorale "O ammirabile sapienza . . ."*, 15 May 1821, Turin: Botta Sons, 1821. The themes of chastisement and penitence recur periodically in pastoral letters for the start of Lent and Jubilee celebrations (1826, 1829, etc.).

God” probably derived from Mamma Margaret and the family circle. From them he probably also heard his dying father’s exhortation to trust in God.⁶

Another early recollection was the famine endured that same year, and the prayer which his mother had the children recite as they wasted away from fasting and looked forward to a satisfying meal.⁷

To little John, God was the One for whom his mother had the utmost respect: “God is not mocked.”⁸ Her confidence in God was unlimited and unquestioned because he was the good and provident father who gave people their daily bread and everything they needed.

From his mother he learned to kneel and say his morning and evening prayers with other members of the family; to recite the prayer forms used in the diocese of Turin; and to say five decades of the Rosary.⁹ Dominating everything was the idea of a personal God: the most high

⁶ MO: 18 f.

⁷ MO: 20. See A. Fossati, *Origine e sviluppi della carestia del 1816–17 negli Stati Sardi di Terraferma*, Turin, 1929.

⁸ G.B. Lemoyne, *Scene morali di famiglia esposte nella vita di Margherita Bosco . . .*, second edition, Turin, 1889. The second edition takes into account remarks made about the first (1886, LC) by Don Bosco as well. “One does not make mock of God” is the key sentence in the story of a blasphemer who is punished: [Bosco], *Episodi ameni e contemporanei ricavati da pubblici documenti*, Turin 1864 (LC), pp. 5–9.

⁹ We can accept this on the word of Don Bosco: “She herself taught me the prayers . . . we were on our knees every morning and evening, and together we recited our prayers in common, along with five decades of the Rosary” (MO: 21 f.). This dovetails with what was being taught in the *Dottrina cristiana* and various prayer manuals. See, for example, the *Compendio della dottrina cristiana ad uso della diocesi di Torino*, *Catech. ad uso degli ammessi alla Comunione e degli Adulti*, pt. 4 (Instructions on the Principal Virtues), lesson 7 (Practices for the Christian to perform every day), Turin: Binelli, various 1820 editions, pp. 164–168: “Q. What should a good Christian do upon waking up in the morning? A. Make the sign of the Cross Q. What should a good Christian do after getting up and dressing? A. If possible, kneel down before a holy image, renew one’s act of faith in God’s presence, and say devoutly: My God, I adore you Q. What should one do before going to work? A. Offer up one’s work to God Q. What should you do when you are outside church and hear the bell for the elevation of the host at Mass?”

Daily recitation of the Rosary was recommended in many devotional booklets. See, for example, Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, *La via del paradiso . . .*, Turin 1792, p. 176: “Every evening, if you are the head of the house, gather the family together, say a little prayer in common, and recite the Rosary with your household.”

Lord but also a Father of infinite goodness. The natural and supernatural orders were tacitly impressed on John's mind as he learned of the ties that united the frail human person to God as creature or adopted child.

3. First confessions

From the practice of prayer John was led to the sacrament of Penance and the confessional. This took place around the age of six or seven, according to the practice of the time, when a child showed the necessary ability to reason and had the good fortune to take the first steps in elementary schooling. It was between the ages of eight and ten that John had this good fortune,¹⁰ studying in the nearby village of Capriglio under Father Joseph Lacqua.¹¹

Don Bosco recalled that it was his mother who prepared him for the confessional. She accompanied him there, went in herself first, and then entrusted him to the confessor. It was she who helped him with his penance and thanksgiving, and who chaperoned his future trips to the confessional until she felt he could do it properly by himself.¹² It was obvious that she had great respect for the holiness and dignity of the sacrament as a sign and instrument of God in action. John learned that it was something not to be profaned—under pain of spiritual death.

During those years (1820–1825) fatherlessness did not seriously affect the upbringing of the Bosco brothers. The former presence of their dead father was recalled to good effect, and his absence was counterbalanced by the presence and support of others: their paternal grandmother, their guardians, and their uncles.

4. John's dream at the age of nine (1825)

Around this time John had an important experience. It may have occurred when he finished his portion of schooling under Father Lacqua in 1824—

¹⁰ We have nothing definite about the childhood of DB from 1817 to 1826. Did he go through the whole cycle of lower elementary school, which entailed two years? Did he begin it when he was eight or nine? November being the start of the school year, did he start in November 1823 or 1824? Was he preceded by Anthony, who signed the baptismal records of his children with his own hand? Or did Anthony simply learn as an adult, as did the father of Dominic Savio?

¹¹ MO: 20. Father Lacqua may already have had Marianne Occhiena, sister of Mamma Margaret, for a housekeeper. See his letter to Don Bosco, Ponzano, 5 May 1840, AS 126.2, BM 1:358–59.

¹² MO: 22.

1825. It may have been around the feast of St. Peter, when he heard the gospel injunction: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." John himself, in any case, was then using Sundays to put on feats of magic and acrobatics interspersed with prayers and religious exhortations. His dream experience was to leave a deep impression on him for the rest of his life:¹³

In my sleep I seemed to be near my home, in a fairly large yard where a crowd of children were playing. Some were laughing, some were playing games, and more than a few were cursing. When I heard the cursing, I jumped into their midst and tried to stop it with words and fists. At that moment a distinguished-looking man appeared, a nobly-attired adult. A white cloak covered him. His face was so radiant that I could not look straight at him for long. He called me by name and made me take charge of the boys, adding these words: "You will have to win these friends of yours not with blows but with gentleness and love. So start right now to teach them about the ugliness of sin and the preciousness of virtue."

Confused and afraid, I replied that I was a poor, ignorant kid, unable to talk to those youngsters about religion. At that point the boys stopped their laughing, shouting and cursing, and gathered around the one who was speaking.

Hardly realizing what I was saying, I asked: "Who are you, asking me to do the impossible?"

"Precisely because they seem impossible to you, you must make them possible through obedience and the acquisition of knowledge."

"Where, how, can I gain knowledge?"

"I will give you a lady teacher. Under her guidance you can become learned. Without her all learning becomes foolishness."

"But who are you that speaks so?"

"I am the son of the woman whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day."

"My mother tells me not to associate with people I don't know without her permission. So tell me your name."

"Ask my mother for my name."

At that moment I saw beside him a lady of majestic bearing, dressed in a mantle that sparkled all over as if every point on it were a dazzling star. Noticing me getting more and more confused with my questions and answers, she beckoned me to come closer to her

¹³ MO: 22-25.

and took me kindly by the hand. "Look," she said. Looking around, I noticed that all those kids had vanished. In their place I saw a whole bunch of goats, dogs, cats, bears, and other kinds of animals. "This is your field. This is where you must work. Make yourself humble, sturdy, and strong. And what you see happen with these animals right now, you will have to do for my children."

I looked around again. Instead of wild animals there appeared as many gentle lambs. All of them were frisking about and bleating, as if to welcome that man and woman.

Still in sleep, I began to cry and begged the lady to please speak plainly so that I could understand her, since I did not know what it all meant. She then placed her hand on my head and said: "In due time you will understand everything."

When she said that, a noise awoke me and everything disappeared.

This dream at the age of nine was certainly not just another one of the many dreams that John undoubtedly had during childhood. There are unanswered questions, of course: How well did he remember it? What about the texts that report it to us? When exactly did it take place? What immediate circumstances provoked or stimulated it? One thing is clear and certain, however: little John was deeply affected by it. To him it seemed to be some sort of divine communication. It had all the outer dressing (the signs and guarantees) of the supernatural. It was as if some new divine character had been indelibly stamped on his life.¹⁴

His mother now voiced a sentiment that she may well have felt earlier and aroused in her favorite son's mind: "Who knows if some day he may not be a priest?" His grandmother preferred to keep the matter open and unsettled, taking her cue from common sense: "Don't attach any importance to a dream."

When Don Bosco had his first audience with Pius IX in 1858, he was asked to give a minute account "of everything that had the slightest appearance of the supernatural." He narrated the dream he had had "between 9 and 10." Pius IX "ordered me to write it down word for word,

¹⁴ MO: 25. The wording published by Father Ceria in the MO is the definitive copy of Father Berto, revised by Don Bosco himself, between 1873 and 1876. We have other accounts of this incident, which are in substantial agreement. Some of them are independent of the MO. See Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, p. 251.

in complete detail, and to leave it behind for the edification of the members of the Congregation."¹⁵

Looking ahead, we can say that this particular dream affected Don Bosco's whole way of thinking and acting. It especially affected his way of sensing the presence of God in the life of an individual and in the history of the world.

Isn't it also likely that John's dream affected his mother's behavior in the months and years to come? Was it not for her, too, a manifestation of a higher will and a clear sign of her son's priestly vocation? If so, that would help to explain her tenacity in trying to assist John to take the steps that would eventually lead him to the altar.

5. *First Communion*

With greater determination John would now return to his schooling under Father Lacqua in November 1825. Perhaps his dream helped to persuade the Bosco family that their youngest member should go to school. In any case Anthony, now eighteen,¹⁶ seldom needed the help of his younger brothers for fieldwork during the winter break, particularly the help of the youngest.

During the winter the health of their paternal grandmother went downhill fast. Death took her on February 11, 1826, at the height of winter's rigors. This created a new situation in the family. With Grandma Bosco gone, Margaret instinctively turned to the Occhiena side of the family for support. Her stepson Anthony, now practically an adult, would have begun to make the weight of his own personality felt. Hard times could be foreseen for John's enthusiasms and Margaret's aspirations for him.

It was now time for John to make his First Communion. If Don

¹⁵ MO: 25 f. The circumstances of the colloquy fit in well with Pius IX, who was particularly interested in any church event that savored of extraordinary divine intervention. See R. Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., n. 372, p. 703.

¹⁶ Not 23, as assumed in BM 1:21, which has Anthony being born in 1803 instead of 1808. The date in the BM comes from Father Lemoyne's life of Mamma Margaret published in 1886. The unfortunate error may derive from a letter of Francis Bosco, Joseph's son, to Father Viglietti dated 7 June 1885 (AS 122). Francis wrongly wrote: 3 February 1803. This mistake may well be one of the worst affecting the biographical reconstruction of Father Lemoyne and those who have followed him.

Bosco's own calculations are correct, he made it on Easter Sunday of the very same year in which his grandmother died. That would have been March 26, 1826.

John's emotional state and that of his mother may have had some influence on the decision of Father Sismondo, their parish priest. He gave John Communion just around the age of eleven, the age at which authoritative writers felt that children should start their preparation for the reception of that sacrament.¹⁷

Don Bosco recalled his mother's many efforts to prepare him for First Communion, and he even recorded some of her admonitions and advice. The crowd of people that filled the church of Castelnovo made it impossible to avoid 'dissipation'.¹⁸ Yet John remembered it as a great day, and how his mother used to remind him that it was the moment when he solemnly renewed his sentiments of penitence, self-sacrifice, and loyalty to God.

6. *The little acrobat and showman*

John's dream at age nine certainly helped to inject new meaningfulness into his Sunday shows. Up to that time the shows had borne witness to his early training in religious values and his ability to win interest, sympathy, and collaboration from his peers. Organizing their games, he became leader, umpire, and center of attention through all sorts of little stratagems. At a much later age Don Bosco would still describe those feats of childhood industry with manifest sympathy. He did not proffer abstract reflections on his own temperament or the problems bothering him at the time. Instead he concentrated on how he went about the whole business: looking for ways to win greater interest and attention from people, spying on acrobats and magicians, trapping and selling birds, collecting and selling herbs and spices, and gladly accepting contributions

¹⁷ Charles-François Lhomond, *Méthode pour confesser les enfants*, pt. 2, art. 1, translated by Dominic Moro, *Il sacerdote cattolico tenuto ad ascoltare le confessioni . . . è traduzione di un opuscolo francese*, Ivrea 1832, p. 141: "One should admit children to First Communion as soon as possible after the age of eleven, say, between eleven and thirteen, particularly in the schools. Since children of that age have the essential dispositions, it is not wise to put off their First Communion."

¹⁸ MO: 32.

from his audience so that he might acquire what he needed to entertain them:¹⁹

When everything was ready and everyone was waiting expectantly for the novelty acts, I would invite them all to recite five decades of the Rosary. After that we sang a hymn. Then I stood on a chair and preached a sermon. To be more exact, I repeated everything I could remember of the gospel homily given that morning at Mass, or else I mentioned incidents or examples I had heard or read in a book. When the sermon was finished, we said a short prayer. Then the entertainment began. At that point, as I have told you, you would see the orator turn into a professional clown: doing cartwheels and somersaults, and walking on his hands. Then, with my knapsack around me, I would swallow coins and pick them off the tip of some spectator's nose. I would multiply balls and eggs; change water into wine; kill a chicken, tear it to pieces, and then restore it to life clucking more heartily than before. . . . After a few hours of this, when I was completely worn out, the entertainment stopped. We said a brief prayer, and all of us went our separate ways.²⁰

Don Bosco noted how hard it was for people to hear a sermon or attend catechism class. Some would have to make a round-trip journey of ten kilometers to Castelnuovo or the neighboring village of Buttigliera. That was why they were so willing to hear the sermons of the little acrobat.²¹ The new industry made such a journey seem much more arduous to the villagers of Morialdo. It gave them a sense of less urgency regarding the obligations imposed on their conscience by local practice: e.g., catechism lessons, vespers, religious instruction, and Eucharistic Benediction. It also made less attractive the diversions they might find in local public gatherings or visits to their neighbors.²²

¹⁹ MO: 31.

²⁰ MO: 29 f.

²¹ MO: 33.

²² Ordinary liturgical services in the country church of St. Peter, in Morialdo, were held only on Sunday morning. Around 1820 a priest had to be fetched from Castelnuovo for the celebration of Mass. From 1825 to 1829, before Father Calosso established himself there, a priest came from Buttigliera. See J. Klein and E. Valentini, "Una rettificazione cronologica delle Memorie di san Giovanni Bosco," *Salesianum* 17 (1955), pp. 581–610.

In his hours of providing entertainment young John also satisfied many of his own overt or covert desires. He compensated for the anxiety he may have felt over the real or alleged needs of Anthony, and he found a way to express his manifold talents. The depths of his own religious feeling, nurtured by maternal solicitude and personal conviction, could be put wholly in the service of a local need. Thus personal conviction and inclination dovetailed with the atmosphere of piety that surrounded Sunday in his local area.

7. At the Moglia farm (February 1827—November 1829)

During the summer and fall of 1826, Anthony's outlook probably underwent a change. The psychological climate of the family had changed with the death of his grandmother, and his own round of labors must have intensified his sense of value to the family and his desire to see his own viewpoints prevail. Another year of schooling for John would have seemed quite impossible to him. According to the school setup then prevailing in Piedmont, John should by now have finished one specific cycle: his lower elementary schooling. This he would have done in Castelnuovo, the main town, or through substitute training under Father Lacqua. Once that cycle was finished, Anthony assumed that his brother had enough education to qualify as a literate member of the family. He may well have regarded as impractical and utopian all hints of an ecclesiastical career for his poor brother. In all likelihood Anthony appealed to John himself for support, put obstacles in the way of school attendance, and sparked tension and quarreling at home. Life must have seemed impossible for the widow Bosco. She undoubtedly was growing more afraid of her stepson. Though still subject to her, he was almost an adult; and on the subject of John and his education Anthony was neither docile nor yielding.

Twelve-year-old John was now in danger of rough treatment from his brother of nineteen. To prevent the family situation from worsening still further, the Occhiena brothers intervened. Michael Occhiena was a skillful mediator, and Francis was a man of decision. The Bosco clan may well have been in agreement with them—particularly John Zucca, a relative of the paternal grandmother.

On October 3, 1826, the parish priest of Castelnuovo died. No longer could Father Sismondo play a role as mediator or peacemaker in the matter.

That winter there was to be no schooling for John nor work for Anthony. John was sent away from home. First he was sent to his maternal grandparents and uncles in the hamlet of Serra, near Buttigliera d'Asti, and then to the Moglia family. Friends of the Occhiena family, the Moglias had a large farmstead a few kilometers from Moncucco. The youngster headed there alone, perhaps preceded by a few words from his uncle Michael. He arrived with a broken heart and was received with compassion.

Going to a farm was not the solution that John himself would have chosen. His heart was probably elsewhere, thinking of Castelnuevo or more distant Chieri, and of himself as a boarder somewhere while he attended public school and continued his preparations for entry into the seminary. But we can imagine how often he had been told that the family's situation did not permit the luxury of maintaining him in Castelnuevo, much less in Chieri.

Direct information about John's stay at the Moglias comes largely from the two Moglia children, George and Anna, who were very young at the time. Their parents were Louis Nicholas (1799–1882) and Dorothy (1802–1890). Their daughter, Anna Frances Catherine, had been born on April 22, 1822. Their son, George Lawrence Maria, had been born on October 2, 1825. George gave testimony at the diocese of Turin's proceedings for the beatification of Don Bosco in 1893. His personal recollections were obviously minimal and remote, but he made clear that he had heard of various incidents from his parents and other family members.²³

From our sources we gather that young John Bosco came to feel much better at the Moglias. There was an atmosphere that supported his inner yearnings and healed the wounds he had carried inside himself from Becchi. He found himself in a well-to-do peasant family that was living in harmony. The household was large because other relatives lived there

²³ Birth and death dates come from the parish records of Moncucco. The documentation used by Father Lemoyne for the period John spent at the Moglia farm is described by Father Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, pp. 435–39.

The other children of Louis and Dorothy Moglia were: Joseph Lawrence (b. March 3, 1829); Lawrence Hyacinth (b. 1831, d. 1833); Francis Mary (b. 1834); Anna Maria (b. 1837); Louis John Baptist (b. August 1, 1840, d. May 3, 1906). The last mentioned had John Bosco as his only godparent. In the baptismal record John is described as a "student . . . domiciled in Castelnuevo." At the time he was a seminarian in Chieri.

too. The *Biographical Memoirs* mention an uncle, John Moglia, and two aunts, Teresa and Anna.²⁴

The family took care of their meadows and vineyards, tended their cattle and livestock, and prayed together. John gained a reputation as a boy of fine religious sentiments who was also gentle, industrious, and obedient.

The rector of Moncucco was Father Francis Cottino, an honorary canon of the cathedral of Ivrea. A native of Buttigliera, he was one of the most influential clerics in the region.²⁵ It was under his guidance that Father Joseph Cafasso made his spiritual exercises in preparation for ordination.²⁶

With the people around him John made no secret of his own aspirations to the priesthood. This created a very different situation than if he had been just another youngster. It helps to explain why Canon Cottino approved and encouraged his weekly attendance at the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Support also came from the Moglia family, who knew why the boy from Becchi was so anxious to attend the first Mass in Mocucco on Sundays.²⁷ Dorothy Moglia let him lead the family Rosary, which they recited before a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, and she taught him the invocations of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.²⁸ The family provided him with much leeway so that he could read books and indulge in the life of prayer while he tended flocks or took a break from his labors in the vineyards.

John's prayer was probably that of an adolescent who dreamed of his ideal, longed for it passionately, and sought some divine confirmation of it. At highly suggestive moments he may have even sensed the comforting presence and voice of his heavenly Father:

One day . . . Dorothy Moglia and her brother-in-law, John Moglia,

²⁴ BM 1: 145, 147, 150.

²⁵ He died at the age of 72 on March 9, 1840. See T. Chiuso, *Buttigliera astigiana. Cenni*, Turin 1875, p. 158 f.

²⁶ L. Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del Venerabile Giuseppe Cafasso*, Turin 1912, I, 28.

²⁷ BM 1: 146. On the sources for this see Desramaut, *Les Memorie* I, p. 436.

²⁸ Ibid. On the image of Our Lady of Sorrows see A. Amadei, "Storia del Santuario," in *Maria Ausiliatrice*, monthly periodical of the Marian basilica in Turin, 1 (1928) p. 9. This presupposes, of course, that the statue or picture of Our Lady of Sorrows was already in the Moglia home in 1826, and that it was the only holy image.

happened to see him lying motionless in the middle of the meadow. Because of the terrain he seemed to be lying flat on the ground. Thinking he had fallen asleep, they called out to him by name. The boy did not stir, so John Moglia walked toward him, repeatedly shouting his name as he got closer. John did not reply. When Moglia was only a few steps away, he realized that the boy was kneeling, a book dangling from his hands; his eyes were closed, his face turned toward the sky and so inexpressibly devout as to cause amazement. Moglia tapped him gently on the shoulder and asked: "Why are you sleeping in the sun?"

John stirred and answered: "I wasn't sleeping." So saying, he stood up, obviously greatly embarrassed at having been discovered in meditation.²⁹

It was not long before other activities were added to John's schedule on Sundays, and perhaps other days of the week now and then. In the environs of Father Cottino's church or rectory John gathered boys for his games and spiritual exercises. He also got advice, instruction, and books from Father Cottino himself.³⁰

This period of time, then, was not a useless hiatus for John. His sense of God and prayerful contemplation took deeper root as he conversed with God amid the solitude of his labors in the field. It was a period of expectant waiting, focused on God and human beings and filled

²⁹ BM 1: 147.

³⁰ BM 1: 150. The source is not at all reassuring. It is a document of Father Lemoyne himself unsupported by older testimony. See Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, p. 438.

The fact that DB omitted the period spent at the Moglia farm from his MO has given rise to various suppositions. According to Lemoyne, DB regarded it as the most colorful and adventurous period of his life because then he had to face the world alone (BM 1: 145), but he refused to go into further details when asked. Did DB think it cast aspersions on his mother and his own family members? The possibility is discussed in detail by Klein and Valentini, "Una rettificazione." Desramaut (p. 123) stresses the note of refusal to talk further about the period, which was indicated by Lemoyne. But might that not be Lemoyne's emphasis? And if DB chose to omit the episode, was it really or mainly because he regarded it as unedifying? Why did he omit to describe the day of his Confirmation? Why did he not record in the MO the resurrection of young Charles or the arrival of Dominic Savio at the Oratory? It seems to me that there is little sure ground for maintaining the hypothesis that DB omitted his stay at the Moglia farm from the MO because he felt it cast aspersions on his mother.

with meditation and supplication. It may well have been the most contemplative period of his youthful life, opening wide his spirit to the gifts of the mystical life that flowed from an attitude of hope and prayerfulness.

8. *With Father John Calosso*
(November 1829—November 21 1830)

Staying with the Moglias could only be a temporary solution for John and all concerned. The Moglias certainly would not have tried to put obstacles in the way of John's own desires. The Bosco family could hardly have envisioned his stay as permanent, though that did not resolve the question of his future. Was he to be a farmer or a priest? The dilemma still weighed on his mind when he spoke with Father Calosso for the first time.

A change in the situation did occur when Father John Melchior Calosso came to Morialdo to serve as a chaplain around September 1829. A priest from Chieri and now seventy-four, he had given up the pastorate of Bruino. Thus he came to Morialdo with years of rich pastoral experience behind him.³¹ It is not unlikely that Mamma Margaret unburdened herself to the new chaplain, who may also have become her new confessor.

In November, the usual time for contracts to lapse in the rural area of Monferrato, John was taken back to Becchi by his uncle Michael. His encounter with Father Calosso on the road back to Becchi could not have been more felicitous. The old priest had an opportunity to study the boy, admire his memory of a sermon heard shortly before, and offer his help for the project which John did not hesitate long to reveal to him. John's return to Becchi, then, not only reintegrated him into Bosco family life but also brought Father Calosso into the picture as a new balancing factor.

³¹ At least there are good grounds for probability here. The arguments for precisely ascertaining the time of Father Calosso's arrival in Morialdo are not compelling. (1) In 1825 there was no permanent chaplain in Morialdo, and the parish priest of Castelnuovo did not expect to be able to get one even in 1826. (2) There is a request from Father Calosso himself to reserve the Eucharist at Christmas (1829). There are similar requests for subsequent years, but not for the preceding years. (3) We run into incongruities if we accept the idea that John Bosco met Father Calosso in April 1826, yet had to remain at the Moglia farm for almost two years according to the recollection of witnesses. See Klein and Valentini, "Una rettificazione cronologica," p. 594; Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, p. 128 f.

The solution reached had an air of compromise about it. John would study at the chaplain's house, not far from the family farm, but be ready to help out at home whenever he was needed. This decision, reached over any opposition offered by Anthony or others, set John firmly and definitively on a career of further studies leading towards the priesthood. Under the circumstances, he was as close to satisfying his desires as he could be. He also found things which, at the age of fourteen, he particularly needed: a father's confidence and trust, a sense of security, and a chance to contemplate his own ideal in the life of a worthy priest. The old priest, in turn, found in John an unexpected bond of complementary affection and a chance to do something worthwhile. He could work with a young man who gave every hope of reviving the flame of his own priestly faith in the Church.

Don Bosco described the incalculable personal benefits he derived from his acquaintance with Father Calosso:

I told him all about myself. Every word, every thought, every act was promptly revealed to him. That pleased him a lot because in that way he could soundly guide me in both spiritual and temporal matters.³²

From that point in time I began to savor what the spiritual life really was. Before then I had acted somewhat materially, like a machine that does something without knowing the reason behind it.³³

Don Bosco's words suggest a sharp contrast in his own mind between his earlier practice and that inculcated in him by Father Calosso. It seems clear, however, that his new stage of delight in spiritual matters marked the maturation of an earlier stage in his life, and particularly of the hours spent in prayer and contemplation on the Moglia farm. Father Calosso also gave greater balance to John's exercises in piety and asceticism:

Among other things he promptly ruled out a penance that I had been accustomed to doing, one not suited to my age and condition. He encouraged me to frequent Confession and Communion. He taught me how to make a brief meditation every day, or better, to do a

³² MO: 36.

³³ Ibid.

little spiritual reading. Whenever I could, I spent days off with him. On weekdays I went to serve his Mass whenever I could.

So I came to know what it meant to have a stable guide, a faithful soul-friend—something I had lacked up until then.³⁴

Around September 1830, John began to spend the night at Father Calosso's as well. This may have been to avoid discussions and debates with Anthony, but it may also have been due to new designs projected by the family members. In any case his future now seemed to be taking definite shape. Then, on November 21, Father Calosso died at the age of seventy-five.

To appreciate the full extent of this 'disaster', coming after a period of 'indescribable good fortune',³⁵ we must remember the delicate stage of life through which John was passing. He was an adolescent, and his dreams of future goals were shrouded in all the vaporous contours of deep emotion. With Father Calosso he had immersed himself in a life of prayer and study, served Mass daily, frequented the sacraments, and shared intimately in the priest's life. His adolescent idealism might well have regarded all that as a sure sign of his own approach to the altar. The loss of Father Calosso must have seemed like a death blow to everything he had been hoping for. We can conjecture that the adolescent John could hardly ever imagine being subjected to the distress of earlier years once again. Might it not have seemed like brutality? Yet everything seemed to be leading him back inescapably to a farmer's life.

We don't know what Anthony was thinking, or what went on between the two brothers. We only know what Don Bosco himself chose to record. He shut himself up in his dream and thought only of Father Calosso. It was as if some part of himself had suddenly been amputated:

I wept inconsolably over my dead benefactor. I thought of him when I was awake, I dreamed about him when I was asleep. Things went so far that my mother, fearing for my health, sent me away for a while to my grandfather in Capriglio.³⁶

The dream world of his stay in Capriglio and its healing influence

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ MO: 40, 43.

³⁶ MO: 43; BM 1: 163.

somehow gave expression to everything that was simmering inside him: the will to make a fresh start, to find a way out of his dilemma, to pursue once again what he felt to be a divine mission. "At this time I had another dream, in which I was sorely reproached for having put my hope in men and not in our good heavenly Father."³⁷ God now took over first place in John's awareness and his future projects. The adolescent realized that previously he had planned his life without taking into account the God who preordained all things.

Not only did John's ideal remain ever present in his mind, it sometimes became a cause of great anxiety and torment. The idea of progressing with his studies was constantly on his mind,³⁸ since that was the road that would lead him to the priesthood. But the sudden collapse of his ideal situation evoked feelings of isolation, helplessness, and futility. He yearned for some friendly person in whom he could confide. His thoughts instinctively turned to priests, but even he was not immune to adolescent timidity. He wanted to open his heart, but he could not bring himself to make the first move. He hoped that others would read his thoughts and his sufferings on his face:

I would see good priests working at their sacred ministry, but I could not strike up a close relationship with them. Often I would meet my pastor [Father Bartholomew Dassano] out walking with his assistant [Father Emmanuel Virano]. I would greet them at a distance and bow when they got closer. But they would return my greeting gravely and courteously, and then continue on their way.³⁹

³⁷ BM 1: 163; MO: 43.

³⁸ It seems that the concern for study evident in John and his mother must be linked up with what he said in his first talk with Father Calosso: "Why are you interested in studying?" "To embrace the clerical state." "And why would you like to embrace that state? . . ." (MO: 35). I think the same background applies to the remarks that Father Ruffino reported from the lips of Don Bosco: "I was without a teacher [after the death of Father Calosso]. She decided to send me to Castelnovo, to a certain theologian [missing], but he taught me a few months and died also. I then went to the public school of a certain [missing]. He, too, left me because he went off to be a pastor after a few months, and Castelnovo was without a Latin teacher. I felt a craving to study and my mother wanted to back me up" (*Cronaca 1861 1862 1863*, p. 127, AS 110 Ruffino).

³⁹ MO: 44.

Ideal and reality were now at loggerheads, and John did not take note of his own share of blame for the situation. He did not realize that it was up to him to go out to others when they failed to take notice of his inner yearnings. The adolescent was wholly centered on himself, and an inner voice whispered that he was completely helpless. John felt isolated and sad, unable to deal with the grave reserve of the typical cleric. More than once he said to himself and others:

If I were a priest, I would act differently. I would look for boys and get them around me. I would want them to know that I care for them and desire their friendship. I would speak kindly to them, give them good advice, and dedicate myself entirely to their spiritual welfare. How I would love to have a chance to talk with my pastor, just as I did with Father Calosso. Why shouldn't it be so?⁴⁰

9. *At school in Castelnuovo (December 1830—June 1831?)*

Father Calosso's death also shook up the Bosco family and hastened the resolution of several important matters.

Anthony was now an adult preparing for marriage.⁴¹ With his coming of age, the Bosco family had settled on the division of the patrimonial heritage. It may have been arranged over a period of time with the help of Father Calosso. Guidance and support probably came from John Zucca, the guardian, and the Occhienas. Margaret's sister, Marianne, was ready to share her own patrimony with her widowed sister.

The Becchi house was divided. Anthony became proprietor of one part. For a few months Margaret shared the other part of the house with John's other brother, Joseph. Anthony married a woman from Castelnuovo named Anna Rosso (1807–1875) on March 22, 1831. A few months

⁴⁰ BM 1: 170; MO: 44.

⁴¹ Precise data on the Bosco marriages were not provided by DB himself in the MO, nor in the BM. There are only indirect references to the families of Anthony and Joseph, and to Don Bosco's nephews and nieces. But the marriages and such things as Anthony's adulthood provide a less dramatic explanation for certain events recorded in biographies of the saint. The latter suggest, for example, that the division of the family property and the split-up of its members were due to intolerable tension between the mother and Anthony (alleged to be 27); or that she was waiting for his coming of age in order to separate from her stepson.

later, probably in October, Joseph moved a short distance away to Sussambrino, a farm where he was now a sharecropper. Henceforth Margaret Bosco would divide her time between the old Becchi house and the Sussambrino one.⁴²

Absorbed in his own affairs, Anthony relaxed his pressure on the rest of the family and John went ahead with his studies. First he tried to attend school by walking the four or more kilometers from Becchi to Castelnuovo. Then, with the help of his mother and his uncle Michael, he found board and lodging in Castelnuovo at the home of a tailor, John Roberto.

In school the boy of fifteen found himself with classmates of ten and eleven. His interior life necessarily felt the weight of the situation, and discomfort was certainly a part of it. He was now separated from the family circle and from the company of his peers. The former farmboy was now cast in the role of student. To these discomforts were added others of which he had taken no notice before. His threadbare coat and ill-fitting clothes bore witness to his poverty, probably reinforcing his petitions that the Lord might help him to realize his vocation and overcome the dangers in which he found himself. There were jokes about his age and his clothes, and invitations to do a little thieving in the countryside. On the other hand, his condition helped to win a certain degree of favoritism from Father Emmanuel Virano, his teacher for upper elementary subjects and his first course in Latin.

When Father Virano left to serve as parish priest in nearby Mondonio, the students were put in the hands of Father Nicholas Moglia. In 1830 Father Moglia was seventy-five, unable to maintain discipline and totally preoccupied with keeping the student body under control. It would also seem that he had some prejudice about the abilities or inclinations of John Bosco, whose studies were a waste of time in his opinion.⁴³

⁴² Persistent attention has been paid to the household at Becchi, Mamma Margaret's lodgings, and those of Anthony and Joseph Bosco by Father M. Molineris in his writings on *Il tempio di Don Bosco sul colle presso la sua casa nativa*: 16 (1962) pp. 149–52 (Joseph Bosco); 17 (1963) pp. 21–23 (Anthony Bosco); 3 (1963) pp. 107–09 (nephews and nieces of DB), p. 117 (Mamma Margaret), p. 120 f. (division of goods in 1830); 18 (1964) pp. 150–53 (court findings after the death of Francis Bosco, 11 May 1817); 19 (1965) pp. 134–38 (forebears of DB, division of goods in 1830), pp. 115–18 (nephews, nieces, the little household).

⁴³ MO: 47.

Thus the year in Castelnuovo closed on a note of dissatisfaction and disappointment.

John now took refuge in the world of dreams once again. Prophetic dreams flourished within him as if he were secretly immersing himself in the realm of the divine, the realm where his aspirations to the priesthood could be assured and guaranteed.⁴⁴ These dreams absorbed his attention during his summer and autumn days at Becchi and Sussambrino. He would forget about the cows under his care, lost in thought as the animals strayed into nearby cultivated fields.⁴⁵ And always there would be a book in his hand, a symbol of the ideal he longed for so much.⁴⁶

10. Student in Chieri (November 1831—August 1835)

In Moncucco and Castelnuovo the major test had been John's capacity to adapt quickly to new situations. Now, in Chieri, the full richness of John Bosco's adolescent but maturing personality would break into the open. From the age of fifteen to twenty (1831–1835) he would spend his life in Chieri without suffering frustrations. In that town he would live a euphoric existence amid scholastic triumphs and the prestige of the companions who gravitated towards him.

In a few short months John moved through the junior high school course and into high school. Within a year he had also completed the second and third years of high school. His marks were brilliant, at least by comparison with those of his fellow students; but his surviving notebooks reveal clearly how incomplete his training in the humanities was at that point.⁴⁷ In 1833–34 he got through the humanities course brilliantly. The next year he went through the rhetoric course in the same way, even though as early as the previous year he had been found qualified to tackle courses in philosophy.⁴⁸ It was during this period that John won

⁴⁴ On a dream very much like the one when DB was nine, see the discussions of Father Ceria (MO: 43 note) and Desramaut (*Les Memorie I*, pp. 253–56), in connection with BM 1: 316–17. But here is another instance where the sources do not provide sufficient certainty.

⁴⁵ BM 1: 178.

⁴⁶ BM 1: 181.

⁴⁷ AS 132 Quaderni 1.

⁴⁸ MO: 58.

amazed attention with some of his feats. He recited by heart an excerpt from one textbook he had forgotten to bring to class (Cornelius Nepos's life of Agesilaus) while pretending to read from another (Donatus's Latin grammar).⁴⁹ When some bullies were threatening his friend, Louis Comollo, John grabbed one of the ringleaders and swung him around, knocking several of his cohorts to the floor just as the rhetoric teacher entered the classroom.

As Don Bosco recalled those days, everyone had some opinion of him. Some liked him, some feared him. His teachers thought highly of him. He was a particular favorite of two teachers: Father Giusiana, a

⁴⁹ MO: 50; BM 1: 188–189. The books to which Don Bosco refers are almost certainly those in use in the royal schools of Piedmont: *Donato accresciuto di nuove aggiunte e diviso in due parti approvato dall'eccellentissimo Magistrato della Riforma* (pt. 2 for the use of students in the fourth Latin class), Turin: stamperia Reale, 1824; *Cornelii Nepotis excellentium imperatorum vitae, quibus accedunt ejusdem Auctoris, neonon Corneliae Gracchorum matris fragmenta, et Andreae Schotti imperatorum Graeciae chronologia. Vita insuper Cornelii additur ex Gerardo Johanne Vossio ad usum Regiarum Scholarum*, Taurini: typ. Regia, 1754. Dominic Savio had an 1801 edition of the *Cornelio* (Turin: Soffietti), which is now in the AS 9132 Savio.

Criticisms of the *Donato* mentioned that such terms as 'declension', 'case', and 'conjugation' were words "that meant nothing to the ears of students." Such critiques are collected in F. Aymar, *La scuola normale di Pinerole . . .*, Pinerole, 1898, pp. 7–9.

In studying the education of DB, one should not overlook (besides his own notebooks) the school textbooks. In the *Elementi di geografia moderna ad uso della gioventù studiosa* (Turin: G. Marietti, 1836, p. 249 f.), we learn that the Patagonians are 6 ½ feet, independent, and adjacent to the Republic of La Plata. The *Compendio del nuovo metodo per apprendere agevolmente la lingua latina . . . ad uso delle Regie Scuole*, was used for classes in rhetoric and the humanities. It was a summary version of the famous grammar of Port Royal (*Nuovo metodo per apprendere agevolmente la lingua latina*) by Claude Lancelot (1616–1695), adopted in Piedmont and elsewhere for classes in the humanities, rhetoric, and philosophy. Besides didactic prayers, the Christian thrust of these manuals is typical. In the introduction to the fourth general rule of syntax, for example, we find this sentence: "Ecclesiae duo sidera Augustinus et Hieronymus, haereses debellarunt" (*Compendio*, Turin: stamp. Reale, 1815, p. 239); "two luminaries of the Church, Augustine and Jerome, fought heresies to the finish."

For the study of Greek there was the *Compendiaria graecae grammatices institutio . . . in usum Regiarum Scholarum*. Many examples were drawn from the writings of Sts. Basil and John Chrysostom, and many constructs were based on the Greek word for God: *theos*.

Dominican who taught grammar; and Father Peter Banaudi, his teacher for rhetoric and the humanities.⁵⁰ John always got the highest marks for exams and conduct, and every year he was exempted from the school fee of 12 francs.⁵¹

11. *Anxieties about choosing a specific state in life*

John's versatility and ability to win sympathetic attention now flowered triumphantly. He was ready to help in any way he could. He would assist schoolmates, including Jewish youngsters who were worried about not being able to do their school work on Saturdays. John served as clerk, tailor, and bookbinder.

Once again in Chieri he put his talents to use, particularly when religious concerns prompted him to act. Thus he performed amazing acrobatic feats to outdo the professional acrobat who was interfering with church services on Sunday. Aided by his sharp intelligence and

⁵⁰ For all of them DB had words of praise in the MO. For his teacher in the sixth form, the theologian Valeriano Pugnetti: "He showed me great kindness . . . inviting me to his home" (MO: 48). For Father Placido Valimberti of the fifth form: "a dear person" (MO: 48 f.). For the cleric Vincent Cima of the fourth form (whom DB erroneously named Joseph): "strict in discipline, he was unusually affable" (MO: 49). For Dominican Hyacinth Giusiana, his professor of grammar: "with paternal affection . . ." (MO: 116). For his professor of humanities and rhetoric, Father Peter Banaudi from Briga Marittima, who died at the age of 83 in Turin on March 29, 1885: "a model teacher. Without ever punishing them, he managed to win respect and love from all his pupils. He loved all of them as his children, and they loved him as a tender father" (MO: 63).

On Giusiana, from Cuneo (1774–1844), and the prefect of schools in Chieri, Dominican Father Pius Eusebius Sibilla, from Gressio, see Stefano Vallaro, *Del ristabilimento della Provincia Dominicana di S. Pietro Martire nel Piemonte e Liguria dopo la soppressione francese . . .*, Chieri, 1929, pp. 20 f., 49 f.

Some publications of Vincent Cima and the former friar observant Vincent Raviola from Govone are indicated in Manno, *Bibliografia*, nn. 17733, 17736, 17739, 17742, 17795, 17795¹, 17965. They are occasional verses and discourses. Among the closest to the time of John Bosco are: Raviola, *Ad Mariam Matrem Gratiae: Carmen saeculare*, Taurini: typ. Chirio et Mina, 1830; Cima, *Inno a M. SS. Madre delle Grazie per l'annua festa votiva celebrata dai Chieresi il dì 1° di settembre per l'anno 1838*, Turin: tip. Favale, 1838.

⁵¹ MO: 57.

superb memory, John used large portions of his free time for reading. He, too, was enticed by the volumes newly published in the Popular Library series, which came from the publishing house of Joseph Pomba in Turin.⁵² Reading became a passion. John's relish for literary works deprived him of sleep, but it also encouraged reflection and introspection.

After he had donned the clerical habit, John offered a retrospective evaluation of his earlier years as a student. In all likelihood it was not a sudden judgment: "The life I had led so far had to change radically. In the past years I had not done anything bad, but I had been careless, vain, all-absorbed in games, tricks, stunts and similar pastimes that gave momentary pleasure but did not really satisfy the heart."⁵³ He must have gradually grown dissatisfied with the things he mentioned. His adolescent years were fading, along with the interests that had held his attention and made him the center of his little world. Now he was beginning to look around him and consider what role he was to play in the future. The problem of choosing a state in life took on greater urgency and importance.

Don Bosco recalled this phase of his life with a certain sense of anguish. He would have liked more concrete advice from his confessor. As Don Bosco remembered him, he was "a good confessor who sought to make me a good Christian, but who never chose to get involved in the question of my vocation."⁵⁴ In another context, however, Don Bosco described the choice of Canon Maloria as confessor in different terms. It had been one of his luckiest strokes of fortune, he said. He rejoiced over the kindness of the priest and his urgings to more frequent confession and Communion.⁵⁵

At that point in time (1833–34) Father Joseph Maloria had just turned thirty. He had been the confessor of Joseph Cafasso, and he may have had something to do with cementing the bonds of friendship between the two young clerics from Castelnuovo. Maloria continued to be John's confessor while the latter was in the seminary. He had received his

⁵² MO: 77–79; also see page 70. The series *Biblioteca Popolare* was one of the big publishing events in Turin at the time. Its 100 volumes, published 1829–1840, had a circulation of 10,000 copies each for a grand total of one million (Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino*, Turin: G. Pomba, 1840, p. 354).

⁵³ BM 1: 278; MO: 87.

⁵⁴ MO: 80.

⁵⁵ MO: 55.

doctorate in theology from the University of Turin, and he was considered one of the most learned priests in Chieri.⁵⁶

Having reached this point in his life, however, John would have liked a bit more personal involvement from Father Maloria. Perhaps the priest was uncertain about the exact qualifications and needs of his penitent. The young man's piety was clear, but he was an acrobat and showman as well. Or perhaps the priest wished to go slowly with John, who was still taking courses in grammar and the humanities. He may not have wanted John to decide too hastily on a vocation in life. In particular, he may have been less than enthusiastic about John's entering the Franciscans as early as 1834, when the Order was facing a terrible crisis in vocations.⁵⁷

The dream which dissuaded John from taking that step is recorded

⁵⁶ Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del ven. Gius. Cafasso*, Turin 1912, I, 24; BM 1: 283. Here I would stress the pedagogic intent of DB in compiling the MO. He may have wanted to underline how ticklish a matter was the choice of a state in life and how "necessary" is the direction of a good confessor in such an important issue. He may also have wanted to suggest that they should not go to just anyone for advice, but to someone they admired and liked. Perhaps to Don Bosco himself? But that does not rule out the notion that John himself would have liked to have had a more encouraging confessor at that point in his life. On the career of Maloria as a canon see Valimberti, *Spunti storico-religiosi*, p. 370.

Joseph Mary Maloria was born in Chieri in 1802; got his doctorate in theology at the University of Turin on March 14, 1825; and died on February 2, 1857. See his obituary in *L'Istitutore*, 5 (1857), pp. 124-126.

⁵⁷ John Bosco's approach to the Franciscans of Turin is certain from the records of the time. He presented himself at the monastery of St. Mary of the Angels on April 18, 1834 during his humanities course and was accepted on the 28th of that month (MO: 80 note). He may have been guided there by Father Vincent Raviola, who succeeded Father Sibilla as the prefect of studies at the Chieri school. The *Life* of Comollo and the MB erroneously give his name as Robiola, perhaps mixing Raviola up with a noted theologian who authored an Italian dictionary. Father Raviola died in Chieri at the age of 70 on November 6, 1837.

The Franciscan Observants of Piedmont were noted for some distinguished figures at that time. They served as missionaries to America, the Holy Land, and China. They were vicars apostolic in Kienshu and Kiangsi. See Francis Maccono, *La Parrocchia e il Convento francescano di S. Tommaso in Torino*, Casale Monferrato, 1931. In the eighteenth century their number had exceeded 70,000. They suffered a terrible collapse during the French Revolution, and went into decline: 23,000 in 1862, 15,000 in 1882. Then came a revitalization of the institute and the Third Order. See Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., n. 366, footnote 23, p. 690.

very succinctly, but it is enough to suggest a deeper underlying outlook of major importance:

I was accepted in the middle of April and was all ready to enter the monastery at Chieri . . . when, a few days before, I had a very strange dream. I seemed to see a multitude of these friars, clad in threadbare habits, all dashing about helter-skelter. One of them came up to me and said: 'You are looking for peace, but you will not find it here. See what goes on! God is preparing another place, another harvest for you.'⁵⁸

This was a confirmation of the religious principle on which his first dream had been grounded, and which had been drummed into him by his mother and the religious milieu of his day. John was really seeking out what God in his divine wisdom had preordained and prepared for him. The dream suggested no more than what John himself might have figured out about choosing a state in life from reading a book and doing some personal meditation.

The conviction that God prearranges one's proper state in life was commonplace.⁵⁹ It could be found in any number of books that John might have read: Alphonsus Liguori's writings on the religious life, which John used for the Introduction to his own Salesian rules; Jesuit Father Antonio Foresti's book on the road to the sanctuary, which John certainly looked at in the seminary; the *Angelic Guide*, which John used as a source for his own work, *The Companion of Youth*; Joseph Zama-Mellini's *Gesù al cuore del giovane*, which is listed as a preferred work of spiritual reading in Don Bosco's *Companion of Youth*; and the *Saggia elezione* written by the Piedmontese Jesuit, Father Charles Gregory Rosignoli.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ BM 1: 226; MO: 80.

⁵⁹ The choice of a state in life is "the principal means of predestination and the primary cause of eternal salvation . . . the Divine Wisdom, having resolved *from eternity* to give you existence and life, likewise designed to sow in your heart that Holy Inspiration from your earliest years." If you choose well, "you are enrolled in the catalog of the elect. You have guessed the first thread, or we might well say, the first link in the highly intricate chain of predestination." Refusal of sound choice, on the other hand, is "cause for reprobation" (Rosignoli, *La saggia elezione*, cp. 1, nn. 2 and 3, Rome, 1828, pp. 14 and 17.

⁶⁰ "It is clear that our eternal salvation depends chiefly on the choice of a state in life. Father Granata described that choice as the main wheel of one's whole life. When it is broken in a watch, then the whole watch is destroyed; and so it is with our salvation. When one makes a mistake in choosing one's state, one's whole life will go awry, as Gregory Nazianzen says" (Alphonsus Liguori, *Opus-*

The conviction itself had its roots in ancient Christian thinking. In the Middle Ages it was framed in objectivist terms, which held that every human choice entailed conforming the individual or group to the divine plan. In more modern times the issue became somewhat fraught with anxiety because one's state in life had to be freely chosen as proof of one's fidelity to God. It became a question of merit and salvation on the one hand, or guilt and eternal damnation on the other.

In such a context divine grace was obviously needed to prepare people for the right choice and to accompany them in making it. Grace was to be implored through prayer, an upright life, reception of the sacraments, and the intercession of Jesus, Mary, one's guardian angel and patron saints.⁶¹

coli relativi allo stato religioso, cp. 1, n. 1, in *Opere ascetiche*, 4, Turin: Marietti, 1847, p. 396; citation traced from the Introduction to the *Regole o Costituzioni della Soc. di S. Franc. di Sales* . . . , Turin, 1877, p. 6).

"Viewed aright, the most important business of youth is that of choosing one's state in life, on which will depend joyfulness of heart, tranquillity of conscience, spiritual progress, and ultimately eternal salvation" (*Guida Angelica, ossia pratiche istruzioni per la gioventù* . . . , Turin: stamp. Reale, 1767, p. 107. See P. Stella, *Valori spirituali nel "Giovane provveduto" di San Giovanni Bosco*, Rome, 1960, p. 77).

"If one embraces the ecclesiastical life, the decision should come from a call from God and from right intention" (Foresti, *La strada al Santuario mostrata ai chierici*, pt. 1, cp. 1, S. Benigno Canavese 1884, p. 23; Modena 1649').

⁶¹ "If you choose a state in life different from the one that God wanted for you, will you have the graces and special helps designed to help you live rightly in that chosen state? . . . Good theologians generally say that it is very difficult, calling for extraordinary and unwonted mercifulness" (*Raccolta di vari esercizi di pietà ed istruzioni*, Turin: Avondo Sons, 1798, p. 440).

Zama-Mellini pictures the following exhortation of Jesus to a young person: "Consider your imprudence. You do little thinking or preparation concerning your state in life, your profession, and the way you should serve me in order to be saved. With almost no advice or prayer you head down the first easy road you encounter, as if you already knew sufficiently that it was the one I had destined for you; as if you already had in hand all the graces you needed for that end; as if it were not a major matter regarding your temporal and eternal happiness" (*Gesù al cuore del giovane*, cp. 30, Rome 1833, p. 131). The colloquy concludes: "Recall the age-old advice. If you are not to mistake your vocation, you need time, prayer, and advice. So pray for help every day to God, Mary, and your guardian angel . . . Reflect often on your inclinations and talents. Make everything known early to your director, whom you must keep informed about your inner life so that you may get timely direction" (*ibid.*, p. 134). That is precisely what John Bosco did. Similar advice can be found in all the works cited above.

John Bosco, too, had his moments of keen anxiety, intense fervor, and suppliant prayer. He chose to take his time so that he might see things more clearly. When he finished his courses in the humanities, he chose to take the course in rhetoric even though he was already nineteen. That decision had much to do with his ultimate choice, however, because it was in that year that Louis Comollo joined Professor Banaudi's class after having studied grammar in Caselle. John decided to confide in his new-found friend:

He advised me to make a novena to the Blessed Virgin so that she would guide me in so important a matter. Meanwhile he would write to Father Comollo, his uncle. On the last day of my novena, I went to confession and Communion with my devoted friend. I attended one Mass and then served another at the altar of Our Lady of Grace in the cathedral. Then we went home and found a letter from Father Comollo which read: "Having given careful consideration to what you wrote me, I advise your friend not to enter a monastery at this time. Let him don the clerical habit. As he goes on with his studies he will better understand what God wants him to do. He must not fear to lose his vocation because aloofness from the world and earnest piety will help him to overcome every obstacle."⁶²

Father Comollo had gotten part of the picture at least. John Bosco certainly did have a vocation to the clerical state. But the priest missed the point about John's concern over the religious life. John was worried about losing God's special grace by entering a life that was not properly his. Father Comollo's response might be viewed as an application of the guidelines offered by such writers as Charles Gobinet: "One must take one's time in examining calls to the religious life,"⁶³ opting for a career in the secular clergy in the meantime.

12. Friendships

Youth is the time for deep friendships and the close-knit circle of intimate friends. Of decisive influence on John Bosco were the religious elements,

⁶² BM 1: 272; MO: 81.

⁶³ Carlo Gobinet (1613–1690), *Istruzione della Gioventù nella pietà cristiana* . . . , pt. 5, cp. 10, art. 3: "That one must take time to examine vocations to the religious state" (Scelta bibl. economica d'opere di Relig., 23) Turin: Maspero e Serra, 1831, pp. 361–363.

which were further inculcated in him by his teachers and by various spiritual treatises then in circulation.

Don Bosco recalled only two names from the first two years: William Garigliano and Paul Braja, respectively two and three years younger than John. Both were members of the *Società dell'Allegria* (The Jovial Society). If Braja was indeed a member, then the group had to have been organized in the school year 1831–1832 because Braja died on July 10, 1832.⁶⁴ It was a 'secret' society, like the many patriotic societies then flourishing in Italy. But its aims were very different: "To avoid dirty conversation and actions unbecoming a good Christian; to carry out one's scholastic and religious duties exactly; to be good-humored and cheerful."⁶⁵ The members were also to advise and counsel one another, using books, conversation, and games to that end.

In 1833–34 two other friends of great importance entered the picture. One was John's friendship with a Jewish boy named Jonah. The other was his friendship with Louis Comollo.

Jonah was the same age as John, and he too was highly talented: "Remarkably handsome, he had an exceptionally fine singing voice" and was a good billiards player.⁶⁶ The two shared another common ground: Jonah, too, had lost his father. Don Bosco recalled their friendship in terms that were unusual for him: "He was madly anxious to be friends with me. He would spend every free moment in my room. We spent hours singing, playing the piano, and reading; and he would listen to the countless little stories I had to tell."⁶⁷ These words hint at the passionate response that could be evoked in John Bosco when he came in contact with youthful charm. A vaguely described "disturbance and fight" threw the young Jewish boy into a crisis. John Bosco promptly suggested the sacrament of Penance as the only effective way to wipe out his friend's

⁶⁴ On Paul Victor Braja see MO: 57 footnote. William Garigliano was a companion of Don Bosco in the seminary and the postgraduate institute in Turin for ordained priests known as the *Convitto ecclesiastico*. Garigliano remained at the latter from November 1842 to June 1846. See the *Taurinen. Positio super Introd. Causae* of Father Cafasso, Rome 1906, p. 94. He was a native of Poirino, where he served as chaplain of the Holy Cross Confraternity and died on May 2, 1902. One of his grandnephews, John Baptist Garigliano, was bishop of Biella. See Basilio Buscaglia, *San Giovanni Bosco e i biellesi*, Biella 1934, p. 60.

⁶⁵ MO: 52.

⁶⁶ MO: 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

sense of guilt. Jonah became a Christian and was solemnly baptized in the cathedral of Chieri.⁶⁸

The origin and cast of John's friendship with Comollo were very different. In this case it was John who discovered great spiritual richness in the boy who looked so physically frail. John instinctively became his protector against the insults and attacks of bullies and other superficial boys. Now athirst for the interior life, John was really defending the source and wellspring that he was seeking for his own soul's sake. He was defending the incarnation of the very ideal that seemed to be his own. John had already been moving toward it on his own, but his encounter with the virtuous Comollo tripped the tension wire in his heart. Seeing in him a *hero*, John wanted to be his friend.⁶⁹ As he put it: "From that time on he was always my close friend; and I can truly say that, thanks to him, I began to learn how to live as a Christian."⁷⁰

As he moved beyond adolescence, John was beginning to overcome the tension between his ideal and real life. Now pointed determinedly towards the seminary and buoyed up by congenial friendships, he increased the tempo of his own religious life. An increased tempo was indispensable, he felt, for someone who was planning to approach the altar of God.

⁶⁸ From the parish registers of the cathedral and of St. George in Chieri we learn for sure that only one Hebrew youth was baptized during the years John Bosco spent there as a student. Here is a translation of the official baptismal record: "Bolmida. On 10 August I, Sebastian Schioppo, theologian and canon curate, by permission of the Archbishop of Turin, solemnly baptized a certain Jewish young man of Chieri ['of Chieri' added above the line] named Jacob Levi, aged 18. I gave him the name Aloysius, Hyacinth, Lawrence, Octavio, Maria Bolmida. The godparents were Hyacinth Bolmida and Octavia Maria Bertinetti."

There is no reference to the name Jonah. That does not rule out the possibility that it was a second name, or the name which his peers called him. It is also clear that DB did not recall correctly the name of the godfather. It was not Charles Bertinetti but Hyacinth Bolmida (see MO: 69). Finally, there is no need to insist on the name Louis, as suggested by John Bosco. In Chieri there were many reminders of St. Louis, and many bore his name. On Canon Schioppo (d. 25 April 1871) see Valimberti, *Spunti storico-religiosi*, I, 337.

⁶⁹ MO: 60.

⁷⁰ MO: 60. Here we might note Don Bosco's tendency to hyperbole, clearly evident in the documents after 1870 (numbers of youths, of printed works . . .). It is obvious earlier in the MO (p. 70): "Then the wonders of the magician's tricks grew. You would see him take thousands of balls bigger than himself out of a little box, thousands of eggs out of a little pocket . . ."

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(a). Early childhood and school in Castelnuevo

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(b). Adolescence and early adulthood in Chieri

The most important documents for the religious life of the town and neighborhoods inhabited by John Bosco are those of the cathedral and the churches of St. Philip, St. Anthony, and St. Dominic. Of related interest are those of the churches of the Annunciation, St. George, etc., copies of which are in the archdiocesan archives of Turin.

On DB's school activities: AS 132 Quaderni 1. The files contain: notebooks of all sorts and Latin or Italian compositions which reveal the religious and moral aims of the teachers. They also contain remarks on his schoolmates, some verses, some pious invocations, and the draft of a letter to his friend, Hannibal Strambio.

2. *Published*

MO

DB's *Cenni* on Comollo: 1844, 1854², 1867³, 1884⁴.

The life of Mamma Margaret written by Father Lemoyne: 1886, 1889².

BM 1

II. Secondary Sources and Related Reading

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IN THE SEMINARY OF CHIERI (1835–1841)

1. Founding of the seminary amid conflicting views and new hopes: 1829

In John Bosco's day the Chieri seminary was of recent establishment. It opened in 1829, in what had once been the home of the Filippini Fathers. Father Cafasso had been one of its first students.

The seminary was designed to house 100 seminarians,¹ a fairly large number. There were several reasons behind this. First of all, the alliance between throne and altar created a climate in which religious practice came to new life and the number of those interested in the clerical state increased.² Moreover, the Camaldolese archbishop of Turin, Colombano Chiaveroti, wanted to provide his seminarians with a more cloistered and peaceful environment set apart from worldly dangers. It had been

¹ Casalis, *Dizionario*, 4, Turin 1837, 715.

² The phenomenon seems to have been widespread. Indicative are the comments on the diocese of Troyes by J. Roserot de Melin, *Le diocèse de Troyes des origines à nos jours*, Troyes 1957, p. 272 f.: priestly ordinations reached their high (176) in the decade 1830–1839, their low (66) in the period 1851–1860. In 1834 the number of seminarians in the diocese of Turin was 180, including those in Bra and Chieri. 70 were attending the archdiocesan seminary in the capital. See Chiuso, III, 140. In 1840 the number of boarding seminarians in Turin, Chieri, Bra and Giaveno was 358; of day students, 207: D. Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino*, p. 53.

On the concern for a more active and zealous clergy during the era of Pius IX see Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, n. 361, Italian trans., pp. 680–683; and above all, C. C. Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans au milieu du XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1964. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there were polemical and critical attacks on the career cleric of the immediately preceding period.

for that very reason that the Tridentine reformers, fearful of humanistic secularization or Protestant heresy, had instituted seminaries in the first place. The archbishop was particularly anxious to separate clerics from the general environment of Turin, which to many seemed ill-suited for the training of priestly candidates indiscriminately. But there was cultural exchange and sharing between the university and the seminary. The latter sent its teachers to the university as teaching coaches, and sometimes sent clerics there to the departments of theology, law, and the arts.³

The year 1829 marked the height of tension between two differing pastoral viewpoints: the benignist and the rigorist. The former was espoused by such groups as the Jesuits, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, the Catholic Friendship association (*Amicizia Cattolica*), and the Convitto for priests under the direction of the theologian, Father Louis Guala. The rigorist outlook was centered in the university and the seminary.⁴ The disagreement had reached the point of public demonstrations and protests, which hardly exerted good influence on the clergy. In March, amid student agitation, Father John Dettori was dismissed from his post as professor of moral theology at the university; and the Catholic Friendship association was disbanded by royal decree.

The hagiographic tradition associated with the Jesuits, the Oblates, and the Convitto depicts Dettori in somber colors. He is presented as a

³ The episcopate of Chiaverotti in Ivrea and Turin is covered in Chiuso, III, 54–121. Of particular interest are the sections on the education of the clergy, theological disputes, and the spread of Alphonsian and infallibilist doctrines (sections 20–23). The same topics are brought up in biographies of Lanteri, Cottolengo, and Cafasso. From the Alphonsian standpoint (by way of apologetics) see G. Cacciatore, *S. Alfonso de' Liguori e il Giansenismo*. . . , Florence 1944. He incorporates earlier documentation, particularly that of E. Rosa and P. Savio, *Devozione di Mgr. Adeodato Turchi alla Santa Sede. Testo e DCLXXVII documenti sul Giansenismo italiano ed estero*, Rome 1938.

⁴ The religious climate from the standpoint of the Catholic Friendship organization is set forth by A. Gambaro, *Sulle orme del Lamennais in Italia. I. Il Lamennismo a Torino*, Turin 1958; and more recently by C. Bona, *Le "Amicizie" società segrete e rinascita religiosa (1770–1830)*, Turin 1962. The following are useful for the Piedmont milieu and the Convitto circle in Turin: P. Pirri, *P. Giovanni Roothan XXI Generale della Compagnia di Gesù (1785–1853)*, Isola del Liri, 1930 (for a time he was in Turin); I. Rinieri, *Il Padre Francesco Pellico e i suoi tempi. I. La Restaurazione e l'opera della Compagnia di Gesù*, Pavia, 1934.

rabid rigorist fomenting Jansenism.⁵ In reality he was a zealous proponent of the probabiliorism and Thomism espoused at the university of Turin. He expressed himself in terms that had been heard at the university for well over a century; and they were no harsher than those one might find in the works of Hyacinth Serry, Daniello Concina, or any other opponent of probabilism or Molinism. There is no reason to trace his thought back to Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, or to assume that he was steeped in Jansenist literature and was trying to spread its ideas. Dettori's mistake was failing to realize that the times had changed. His terminology could not have the vitality and bite of Concina's because the latter's content belonged to a different context.⁶

The Catholic Friendship association sought basically to distribute good books to the public at large. Most of the books, however, were benignist in moral outlook; and some of their major advocates, associated with the Jesuits, occupied important posts in Piedmont politics and administration. The suppression of the association was due to the tangled interaction of various factors: political motives, personal jealousies, and religious concerns. Some feared that a new benignist, probabilist offensive would result in another period of slack behavior and irreligion, which

⁵ Echoes of those writers can be heard in the fervidly anti-Jansenist tone of E. Rosa, "Il Giansenismo in Piemonte e la Regia Università di Torino," *La Civ. Catt.*, 78 (1927) 1, pp. 428-442. He is countered with equal fervor by an alumnus of the university of Turin, who rejects the imputation of Jansenism: Canon G. Piovano, "La Facoltà teologica, il Clero di Torino e il Giansenismo," *Atti della R. Accad. delle Scienze di Torino*, 64 (1929), pp. 123-140. He is also countered in other writings which are reviewed by G. Usseglio, *Il teologo Guala e il Convitto ecclesiastico di Torino*, Turin 1948 (= *Salesianum* 10, 1948, pp. 487-490). For a synthesis on the Jansenist movement in Piedmont see P. Stella, *Il Giansenismo in Italia. Collezione di documenti*. . . I/1 Piemonte, Zurich 1966, pp. 15-30. On the behavior of the clergy when John Dettori was dismissed, see Savio, *Devozione di Mgr. A. Turchi*, pp. 655, 658, 660.

⁶ James Hyacinth Serry (1659-1738), a Dominican theologian and polemicist, was professor of theology at the University of Padua. A Dominican nephew of his, Hyacinth Drouin (1682-1741), left France because he was opposed to the bull *Unigenitus* that condemned 101 propositions of Quesnel; he took refuge in Piedmont and died in Ivrea. Daniello Concina was an anti-benignist polemicist. On their role in the polemics and religious tensions of that era see A. Jemolo, *Il Giansenismo in Italia prima della Rivoluzione*, Bari, 1928; A. Vecchi, *Correnti religiose nel Sei-Settecento veneto*, Venice and Rome, 1962.

was cited as the chief cause of the French Revolution and its resultant upheavals. Not the least or last of the latter were the revolutionary uprisings of 1821.⁷ For its part, the other side felt that recent cataclysms were due to the links between Jansenists and Jacobins: the former being rebels against ecclesiastical authority, the latter being rebels against the throne.⁸

There were fears that the evils of the past would recur in the future. Little thought was given to the way that many others viewed the general climate of restlessness. To them it fed their sense of dignity, nurtured hopes of freedom for their homeland and national unity among Italians, and encouraged the Romantic view that the history and geography of their country had been marked out by God.⁹

In 1829 it was not easy to diagnose the facts underlying various phenomena: unrest among the citizens, tension on all social levels, dis-

⁷ This was the outlook of those attached to the Old Regime. Archbishop Chiaverotti, for example, called for greater strictness in press censorship, since the press all too often was undermining both religion and civil society. He appealed to the sovereign to ward off insidious traps being set for religion and the throne (pastoral letter, *O ammirabile sapienza*, Turin, 15 May 1821).

⁸ This is the well-known thesis of the Piedmont Jesuit, Rocco Bonola, in the anonymous work entitled *La lega della teologia moderna colla filosofia*, 1789; it was reissued in Novara in 1823 with the permission of Father Taparelli d'Azeglio. On the first anti-Jansenist formulations of the alleged link between Jacobins and Jansenists see M. Aquarone, "Giansenismo italiano e Rivoluzione francese prima del triennio giacobino," in *Rassegna storica del Risorg.*, 49 (1962) pp. 559-624. Right near the end of 1821, Pius Bruno Lanteri wrote to Bishop Francis Bigex of Pinerolo about the urgent need "to use every possible means to try to block. . . the adoption of any kind of constitution by the sovereign." In the uprisings of March 1821, he noted, sensible people noticed that the only people who had taken part were lazy, restless spirits imbued with principles opposing the government and the Church: i.e., people without religion. Lanteri argued that no constitution could be adopted without implicitly or explicitly adopting the principle of popular sovereignty. That principle was favored by Protestants, philosophes, and Jansenists, who would extend it to the Church as well (Bona, *Le "Amicizie" società*, p. 337). In a few short lines Lanteri here brings out the reasons for the dissension between liberal tendencies and conservative Catholic religious views.

⁹ The liberal and Romantic outlook in Piedmont is brought out by A. Anzilotti, *Gioberti*, Florence, 1922; E. Passerin D'Entreves, *La giovinezza di Cesare Balbo*, Florence, 1940; A. Colombo, *La vita di Santorre di Santarosa*, Rome, 1938 (stressing the constitutional ideal in almost mystical terms); A. Omodeo, *La cultura francese nell'età della Restaurazione*, Milan, 1946.

putes between various factions of the clergy, student demonstrations, and worries about clerical training. Perhaps one of the main worries was professionalism for its own sake among the clergy: i.e., entering a clerical 'career' for merely human reasons rather than from any deeper religious motive. It was one way to secure a decent future for oneself. The attitude of some clerics seemed to point in that direction. They seemed more interested in composing verses about profane love, in the manner of Metastasio or Leopardi, than in directing their attention to God and the salvation of souls as Alphonsus Liguori had done. There was a feeling that a superficial religious sense and an empty interior life boded ill for the priesthood.

Thus the transfer of many seminarians to some other locale, far from the big city and its distractions, dovetailed with the innermost feelings of higher ecclesiastical authorities. Quite logically diocesan pastors would turn their attention to Chieri and begin to show a preference for it. Later the feared calamity at the Turin seminary would be patriotism. In many it may have been the pure flame of love of country, but it could also serve to fill the interior emptiness of some clergymen.¹⁰

The hopes now invested in the Chieri seminary may well have played a role in the closing of the Turin seminary by Archbishop Fransoni in February 1848. This came after clerics, wearing the tricolor cockade, had taken part in public demonstrations of a political, patriotic nature.¹¹ But we must also assume that the influence of the big city had made itself felt in Chieri, and that the liberal stirrings of 1831 had repercussions there as well. There were day students at the Chieri seminary besides live-in students, just as there were in Turin. The day students attended the seminary for scholastic lessons and ordinarily joined the boarders for liturgical functions and other practices of collective piety. They were

¹⁰ On the bright and dark aspects of the Italian clergy in the middle of the nineteenth century see G. Martina's coverage in the Appendix to Aubert's *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., pp. 760–765. Besides pastoral letters and episcopal interventions in their seminaries, one should not overlook various instructions for the clergy, such as those of Father Cafasso or Stanislaus Donaudi, the Vicar General of Saluzzo: Cafasso, *Istruzioni per esercizi spirituali al Clero*, Turin, 1893 (flight from the world, pp. 68–87); Donaudi, *Raccolta d'istruzioni ed esortazioni divote agli ecclesiastici e specialmente ai chierici*, Saluzzo, 1848 (on scandal, pp. 272–291; on vacations, pp. 292–320).

¹¹ Chiuso, III, 223 f. and, in particular, Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21, 466–468.

easily viewed with intolerance by their superiors, who saw them as a fatal source of worldliness.¹²

In that general context we can make more sense out of John Bosco's choice. He preferred to shut himself away in the seminary rather than remain a boarder in the city where he had so many friends. Insofar as it was possible for him, he wanted to break with his old routines and give himself wholly to God. The words he actually recited in donning the cassock may or may not be exactly those recorded in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, but the latter almost certainly do reflect the feelings he had at that time: "To take off all the old stuff and don the new man so that he will no longer delight in games, sports, amusements, and diversions but rather in righteousness and holiness for the sake of his soul's salvation, with the help of Mary most holy as well."¹³

2. Entrance into the seminary

To discover the state of mind of John Bosco as a new seminarian we do well to consider the talk he had early on with one of his teachers. During the initial triduum of spiritual exercises, he spoke with Father Francis Ternavasio, a theologian, who was to be his professor of philosophy: "I asked him for some rule of life by which I might fulfill my duties and win the goodwill of my superiors."¹⁴

The bare words might well seem to come from an older Don Bosco, the experienced educator. More than once he raised the same sort of question to his own students: "You might ask me what you should do to please Don Bosco. My answer is: help him to save your soul."¹⁵ But

¹² The tendency to get rid of non-boarding seminarians grew stronger. But the reorganization of the Turin seminaries along the lines that would hold for more than fifty years was due to Archbishop Gastaldi. Nevertheless there were still dayhops around in 1882: of 136 theology students in the Turin seminary, 32 were dayhops; of 86 philosophy students in Chieri, 12 were dayhops. See *Calendarium liturgicum archidioecesis taurinensis. . . servandum anno 1882*, Turin: Marietti, 1881, p. 92. Lists of the Chieri seminarians for the years when Don Bosco was a student there, which once belonged to the theologian G. B. Appendini, are now in AS 123.

¹³ MO: 86 f. On the need to withdraw from the world as a cleric see his comment on the hunt. MO: 101.

¹⁴ MO: 90.

¹⁵ MB 15: 683. Also see the heading 'Anima', *Indice* MB, p. 14 f.

we can see that the basic concern fits in well with Don Bosco's own temperament. He wanted to win the goodwill of others, to establish an atmosphere of mutual sympathy, harmony, and satisfaction. As he spoke to Father Ternavasio, he may well have had in mind his previous dealings with Father Calosso and Father Banaudi. He may now have hoped to create the same climate of familiarity with his superiors in the seminary. But he could not help but notice that his new milieu was different, calling for discipline and the fulfillment of certain 'duties'.¹⁶

Father Ternavasio told him that there was just one thing that would fill the bill: "strict fulfillment" of his duties. His reply is very much like the one that Don Bosco would later give to Dominic Savio.¹⁷ As a new seminarian, however, John Bosco probably did not associate the fulfillment of daily duties with 'holiness' in the compelling way that would be true later in the case of Savio. He probably just assumed that one had to carry out one's duties as a seminarian properly in order to become a good priest. His later experience as an educator would prompt him to deduce certain pedagogical and spiritual principles and link them together more closely.

3. *Seminarians and their superiors*

John Bosco was not just looking for the approval of his superiors, however. He was not asking simply for their acknowledgment of his performance of duties and his sincerity of commitment. He was also looking for their *benevolence*, hoping they would return the affection he had for them. In early childhood he had missed some of that love, then found it again when he was a student in Chieri. In choosing to leave his old surroundings in Chieri, he had voluntarily renounced it. Consciously or not, John Bosco was projecting his own innate capacity for sympathy

¹⁶ The terms are Don Bosco's. Solely on that basis, however, I would not care to specify exactly how much DB, perhaps to "combat" his native temperament, put stress on a morality of duties, with overtones that might well have been suggested by others: e.g., Father Anthony Riccardi of Lombardy (1788-1844), *Dei doveri e dello spirito degli ecclesiastici*, Brescia, 1825; Archbishop Michael Basil Clary of Bari (d. 1858), *Lo spirito e i principali doveri del sacerdozio cristiano esposti agli ecclesiastici in dieci omelie*, Turin: G. Marietti, 1833.

¹⁷ Bosco, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, chap. 10, Turin, Paravia, 1858 (LC), p. 51; Eng. trans., *St. Dominic Savio*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1979, second edition.

into his picture of the ideal priest: i.e., a priest who would be friendly and affectionate.

"I loved my superiors very much and they were always very good to me," he noted later, "but my heart was not satisfied."¹⁸ His love for them was real, rooted in his respect for them as priests and superiors. But the reality of life in the Chieri seminary was far from his ideal:

We paid visits to the rector and other superiors only when leaving for or returning from vacations. No one went to talk to them, except to get a reprimand. One of them took his turn supervising us on walks and in the refectory each week, but that was it. Often I would have liked to talk to them to seek advice or clear up some doubt, but that was not possible. Indeed if one of our superiors happened to pass by, we for some reason would scatter right and left to avoid him as if he were a wild beast. This fact intensified my longing to be a priest soon so that I could spend my time with young people, help them, and satisfy their needs.¹⁹

These comments are striking when we realize that all his superiors were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five, and that some of them remained in their posts for a long time.²⁰ On the other hand it must be noted that Don Bosco's evaluation is made in very general terms. He

¹⁸ MO: 91; BM 1: 281.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Like the teachers in the Chieri high school, the seminary superiors are systematically left untreated in biographies of DB. There is no research on them. All we can add to their names are the few remarks contained in the obituary list appended to the annual *Calendarium liturgicum* of the Turin Archdiocese.

The rector, theologian Sebastian Mottura, was born in Villafranca in 1795. He was a canon of the collegiate church of Giaveno, where he died on November 30, 1876. The spiritual director, Joseph Mottura, was born in Villafranca in 1798; he, too, was a canon of the Giaveno collegiate church and died there on March 21, 1876. The seminary procurator was the theologian Alexander Pogolotti. He was born in Giaveno, was a canon of the Chieri collegiate church, and became rector of the seminary. He died at the age of 64 in Chieri, on March 8, 1878. The theologian Ternavasio, professor of philosophy, was born in Bra and had a doctorate in philosophy. He was a knight of the Order of Sts. Maurice and Lazarus. He died at the age of 80 in Bra, on November 14, 1886. Laurence Prialis, theologian and professor of theology, was born in Virle. He served as an assistant curate in Vigone, where he died at the age of 65 on February 5, 1868. The theologian Innocent Arduino was canon rector of the Giaveno collegiate church,

may have had the image of one or more of his superiors in mind, but he certainly did not include all of them. The theologian Appendini, for example, was his professor during his final years of theology. John remained deeply attached to him, and the latter continued to offer him many tokens of friendship and assistance.²¹

Of the community of seminarians Don Bosco also offered a basically negative judgment. He found it to be very different from the community ideal he had been envisioning:

Here, for the guidance of young aspirants to the priesthood, I must note that although many seminarians are exemplary, some are not. Not a few young men, with little regard to their vocation, enter the seminary with hardly the proper motivation or goodwill. I recall having by chance come upon some very improper conversations. On one occasion, some seminarian was found in possession of irreligious and obscene books.²²

These judgments find confirmation in the advice offered to him by the dying Louis Comollo. It is clear that at the Chieri seminary, as elsewhere, there were to be found seminarians without any serious vocation to the priesthood.²³

It seems clear that there was an element of sufferance and at times diffidence in John Bosco's attitude towards his fellow seminarians and his superiors during his seminary years. He certainly felt respect and love as well; but at times he missed an element of affection, though it may

rural dean, and commander of the Order of Sts. Maurice and Lazarus; he died at the age of 74 in Giaveno, on January 15, 1880. The theologian John Baptist Appendini was beneficed in Villastellone, where he died at the age of 85 on July 3, 1892. On the career of Mottura and Pogolotti as canons in Chieri see Valimberti, *Spunti storico-religiosi*, 1, 326 f.

²¹ His letters on the Chieri seminary are preserved in AS 123; letters written to him by Don Bosco in AS 131.01. In his papers, turned over to the Salesians, we find circulars of DB prior to 1853 that are not to be found elsewhere; they are now in AS 131.04. On him see also the *Indice* MB: 505.

²² BM 1:282; MO:91.

²³ Statements already to be found in AS 133 Comollo: *Infermità*. They are reiterated without substantial alterations in the *Cenni storici*, chapter 6, p. 63 f: "Finally, take heed of whom you are dealing with. . . I am talking specifically of your fellow clerics and seminarians. Some of them are bad, some neither bad nor very good, and others really good. . ."

not have shown up in any dramatic way. There was no complete or satisfying response to some prompting of his spirit, such as his need for real friendship or complete and total confidence. And this turn of events may have been felt all the more keenly in his move from the open student environment of the immediate past to the closed, regimented, and less than ideal environment of the seminary.

Though we cannot pinpoint it exactly, we can say that John's time in the seminary was to some extent a period marked by emotional inhibition that reflected his physical circumstances and drove him towards greater self-control. Intensified asceticism helped to secure and protect him against the dangers of frivolity that he sensed in his surroundings. He would prune or strip away everything that smacked of yielding to the world, a world which ascetic spirituality told priests of that day to shun and condemn interiorly.²⁴ On the road John took, we might hardly notice that one requisite was missing: the efforts of a spiritual director to help him guide himself aright. In the external forum the seminary had a spiritual director, but he was little more than a master of ceremonies. In the internal forum John was still in the hands of Canon Maloria. Since it is likely that he was not kept up to date on matters, he could hardly carry out the role of a balancing or healing influence.

John forbade himself active games and stunts, confined himself to sedate walks, and gave up table games. Only rarely did he go to the parlor on permitted days to see old friends from his student days; but

²⁴ We find a sharp contrast between DB's comments on his student life and the testimony of Msgr. Theodore Dalfi, Vincentian, who was his fellow seminarian: "How many times I tried to pull John from his tiny corner and drag him into the game. . . . No one ever saw him run about, nor do I remember ever seeing him play cards or read novels or poetry" (BM 1:304). There are two possibilities: (1) DB put stress on the elements of his 'conversion' in the seminary; or (2) Dalfi idealized the exemplary character of DB as a seminarian. There is no sense pushing such conjectures too far. They point up the difficulty of any attempted reconstruction in a psychological vein.

Here we might also recall what Father Giacomelli had to say at the beatification process (ad II^m) about DB as a seminarian: "The first time that I sat in philosophy class I saw a seminarian in front of me who seemed much older than the rest. . . . He was very handsome, had curly hair, but was pale and thin and looked unwell. In my opinion, he would hardly last till the end of the school year" (BM 1:300).

almost all of them entered the seminary.²⁵ In the seminary John kept to himself even though chances for contact with his milieu were offered by public academic gatherings and, in the final years, by the office of prefect. He served as sacristan and cherished a very small circle of intimate friends. There was William Garigliano from Poirino, who entered the seminary with John. Two others joined them the next year. One was Louis Colmollo. The other was John Giacomelli from Avigliana,²⁶ who would become his confessor in Turin after the death of Father Golzio. We can readily appreciate why John Bosco, thirsting for friendship and incentives to lead an intense spiritual life, should regard those three friends as a real "treasure".²⁷

4. *Seminary subjects and their religious implications*

Insofar as seminary courses were concerned, Don Bosco's overall evaluation was again one of dissatisfaction. In the seminary he was taught dogmatic, speculative theology—something purely theoretical and abstract. Moral theology was taken up with debated issues and controversies. It was in the postordination training of the Convitto that he and

²⁵ According to DB's account, 21 of his 25 fellow students of rhetoric embraced the ecclesiastical state. See MO:82.

The counsels he claims to have received from the theologian Borel dovetail with the reserved conduct he adopted: "One's vocation is preserved and perfected by withdrawal and frequent Communion" (MO:114); "One preserves and perfects one's vocation, and becomes a real ecclesiastic, by withdrawal and frequent Communion" (MO: 109). A year before he wrote the MO, Don Bosco offered similar counsels to a lady: "She gives much thought to the choice of her state in life and does good. . . . Prayer, frequent Communion, withdrawal are the bases" (A N.N., Turin, March 24, 1872; original in the Salesian house of Chiari-Brescia).

²⁶ *Indice* MB: 553. Father Giacomelli, born in Avigliana, was chaplain of the little infirmary of St. Philomena and DB's confessor after the death of the theologian Felix Golzio (at the age of 65, on March 27, 1873); he himself died on July 28, 1901. He is commemorated in the *Bollettino salesiano*, 25 (1901), p. 295 f. He is sometimes mentioned as a member of the Convitto in the *Positio* and in the biography of Father Cafasso. According to the recollection of old-timers, there was nothing remarkable about him; the same was true of William Garigliano.

²⁷ MO:92

his fellows were taught to be real priests.²⁸ The courses there really dealt with pastoral life and pastoral work.

While residing in Chieri, Don Bosco may not have entertained the sharp contrast between the seminary and the Convitto that he brings out in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*. It is more likely that he felt vague feelings of discontent. Later, after actually attending the Convitto and hearing criticisms of the seminary setup, he would find the explanation for his own discontent in the contrast between the two schools and their approach.

Complaints about the abstruseness of scholasticism and seminary teaching were not new or rare in Turin by the time of Don Bosco. They went back to Montaigne, Descartes, and representatives of the Enlightenment. Even Catholic philosophers and theologians complained that scholastic philosophy and theology had fallen into decadence. Students, they said, were taught to syllogize for the sake of syllogizing; to joust with each other in academic tournaments, wielding subtle, pungent syllogisms against each other. Instead of mastering syllogisms, critics said, students should be learning how to joust with shrewd adversaries, heretics, and unbelievers in real life.²⁹

Theology came in for criticism from more than one writer who was neither completely unknown nor rabid about Church reform. It was accused of having translated Christianity, a reality that called for commitment, into abstract formulas that did not accord with the idiom or the sentiment of the day. The life of grace, the life of the Church, the mystery of God, the mystery of salvation: all these things had been translated into scholastic language. In the seminary and the university young theologians got training which amounted to distorting their way of thinking. If they were men of zeal and were to speak to the faithful, they would have to unlearn that whole scholastic way of expressing themselves which no one understood. Otherwise they would render

²⁸ MO:121. "Only dogmatic theology is studied in our seminaries. . . Here (at the Convitto) we learned how to be priests." The Chieri seminary is brought in only by implication. For the sake of delicacy with regard to his own seminary, DB calls into question the educational system prevailing generally in seminaries.

²⁹ The image of jousting syllogizers is to be found in an unpublished critique of the theologian Joseph Ponte, librarian of the Asti seminary, around 1740. See Asti, uncatalogued miscellany of the seminary library.

fruitless the blood of Christ, the salvific mission of the Church, and the work of the sacred ministry.

The Turin clergy could read such views in the *Theologus Christianus* of John Opstraet,³⁰ and in the *Storia ecclesiastica* of Fleury. They were more or less repeated in the writings of Rosmini, who claimed that the first wound afflicting the Church was the fact that church ministers and the faithful did not understand each other, not even in their liturgical worship. Without special training and the grace of God, few lay people

³⁰ John Opstraet (1651–1720), *Theologus Christianus, sive ratio studii, et vitae instituenda a theologo, qui se ad ordines sacros, atque ad directionem animarum disponit*, Turin: typ. Regia, 1769 (especially pt. 2, chap. 3 f., dealing with scholasticism and casuistry).

I will cite only one text from this work, in which the author points out that many pastors of souls regretted all the time they had wasted in scholastic and philosophic debates in the seminary. They wished they had learned the science of the saints so that they might be able to teach others: “Testantur Pastores, qui aliquando cum laude in academia disputarunt, parum sibi in regimine animarum prodesse tot quaestiones, et terminos scholasticos, non tam theologicos, quam philosophicos, quibus olim incalescebant, dolentque vehementer se tempora tam multa, tamque pretiosa dedisse uni scholasticae, quam postea debuerunt dediscere, cut aut nihil, aut parum dederint scientiae Sanctorum, quam unam discere debuerant, ut alios possent docere” (ibid., p. 160).

We find similar comments in Rosmini (*Delle cinque piaga della santa Chiesa*), who frequently cites a work with which DB was familiar: Fleury’s *Storia ecclesiastica*; in Gioberti, *Il gesuita moderno*; in Manzoni (*Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica*, chap. 4), who bases himself on Fleury, *Les mœurs des israelites et des chrétiens*, pt. 2, n. 65, *Multitude des docteurs*.

Among DB’s circle of acquaintances there is the pastoral instruction of Archbishop Chiaverotti (December 9, 1820), reprinted in 1835. He deplores the break between the rigorist schools and the benignist schools, urging them to take their cue from the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church, “among whom there is to be found a greater consensus than in later authors” (see Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte*, 3, Turin 1889, pp. 101–103).

Thus, besides being accused of abstractness, exaggerated ratiocination, and criticism, scholasticism was blamed for the decadence of habits and the crisis in unity among pastors of souls. From the time of Pascal’s *Provincial Letters*, the terms ‘scholasticism’ and ‘casuistry’, having entered the public domain in both sacred and secular culture, tended to evoke uneasiness, if not downright disapproval.

I don’t think it is unreasonable to assume that such sentiments also had repercussions in the kind of seminary that the Chieri one was in the days of DB.

could manage to understand Latin and the symbolic language of the liturgy.³¹

At the same time, however, dogmatic theology of that day presented everything in terms of predestination or free correspondence with grace. Stress was placed on rendering an account to God, the final judge, before going to eternal life or death. Thus everything was ultimately viewed in terms of its value for eternity, whether it would bring reward or condemnation. For its part, moral theology focused on the relationship between the divine law and human freedom in its debates about probabilism and probabiliorism. Thus it taught people to see their actions in terms of responsible conformation to the divine law. In their own different ways, moral theology and dogmatic theology brought home to people the sense of God's presence and one's relationship to him.

Today we have almost nothing that would help us to reconstruct the specifics of Don Bosco's philosophical and theological training in the Chieri seminary. We have only a few pages he wrote about his introductory course in philosophy, and they are replete with uncertain words and Piedmont idioms. In them we read that God is "alone . . . truly wise," and that human beings are "students of wisdom rather than wise." We read of the human being who "seeks truth and loves integrity." Human wisdom is "a sincere affection [*affessione*] of the mind whereby our faculties, enlightened by reason, are spurred to seek truth and cultivate virtue so that we can be happy." The accent is on Platonic elements, but room is left for affective elements. Note is taken of the moral and eudaemonistic strands in eighteenth-century philosophy, and philosophy itself is defined as follows: "Science of the true and the good, derived from right reason [and] acquired for the sake of true human happiness." Insofar as philosophy is "derived from right reason," it can be differentiated from revealed theology, since the latter makes use of divine revelation as well as reason. "Acquired for the sake of true human happiness" means that philosophy "teaches the human being to judge things correctly, use them well, and enjoy them according to the prescriptions of the laws, both of the supreme legislator and of others who share his rights by his authority. True happiness begins in this life, reaches fulfillment in the next." Even in these rough introductory notes it is obvious that God

³¹ This is the wound of the "left hand of the holy Church, i.e., the separation of the people from the clergy in public worship." He also alludes to pastoral repercussions in discussing the wound of the right hand, "the inadequate education of the clergy."

and theology play a preeminent role. It is also evident that the theologian Ternavasio was close to the shorter diocesan catechism, which taught readers that God created us “to know him, love him, and serve him in this life so that we might go and enjoy him forever in our heavenly homeland.”³²

From other sources we indirectly learn something about John Bosco's theology courses. When he was exempted from the fourth year, the assigned exam texts were Gazzaniga's *De Eucharistia* and Alasia's *De Poenitentia*.³³

The uncertain state of our sources should not bother us too much. They seem to be sufficiently indicative and sound. Gazzaniga's work

³² *Compendio della dottrina cristiana ad uso della diocesi di Torino*. Breve catechismo, lesson 1. On the oneness of God. Turin: Giov. Batt. Binelli [182. . .], p. 11.

³³ That the examination was based on the *De Eucharistia* of Peter Gazzaniga (1722–1799) and the *De Poenitentia* of Joseph Anthony Alasia (1731–1812) is not a recollection of DB, as it might seem from BM 1:363. It is the testimony of Father Stephen Febbraro, then assistant pastor in Castelnuevo (see *Documenti* 43, p. 8), Father Lemoyne inserted it into the quoted text of DB without saying anything. DB's text now in MO:112 f.

The Tracts of Gazzaniga (Vienna 1765; Bologna 1789; Venice 1792 and 1819) were published in a period of harsh polemics and were fiercely against Molinism. They were repeatedly censured for Jansenism (see Savio, *Devozione*, p. 222). But John Jerome Caffè, Dominican and Savoyard Jansenist, saw them as tending towards the Pelagianism associated with Molinism; in the library of the monastery of Chambéry he had them placed with the *libri venefici* ('poisonous books'). See M. Perroud, *Jansénisme en Savoie*, Chambéry 1945, pp. 72–76.

Rosmini considered them deficient on certain critical points of theology (*Delle cinque piaghe*, chap. 2, N. 38, Rovereto 1863, p. 59); but he also considered them one of the works that should be kept constantly “under one's eyes” (G. Radice, *Antonio Rosmini e il clero ambrosiano*, Epistolario, 3, Milan 1964, p. 83 f.).

Alasia was denounced as a laxist by John Peter Enrietti (1754–1843), a canon of the Ivrea cathedral, who in turn was accused of Jansenism (see Stella, *Crisi religiose nel primo Ottocento piemontese*, Turin 1959, pp. 55–63, and *Giansenisti piemontesi nell'Ottocento*. . . , Turin 1964, p. 69 f.). However, he was highly praised by the archbishop of Turin, Victor Gaetano Costa di Arignano (1737–1796), and moderately praised by the moral theologian, G. B. Bertagna (1828–1905). See G. Usseglio, *Il teologo Guala*, pp. 37–40; also on Alasia see the *Dizionario biogr. degli Italiani*, 1, Rome 1964, p. 584.

Comparing the first draft of the MO with the final published version, we find more than a slight change of tone. Talking about the agitated debate over probabilism and probabiliorism, DB alludes to “Alasia, Antoine, and other rigid authors, whose practice leads to Jansenism” (MO:84). The term ‘leads’ is changed to ‘can lead’ (MO:132).

fitted in well with the Thomistic standpoint of the University of Turin. It is not surprising that it would have been chosen by the teachers in the archdiocesan seminary as the uniform text for diocesan clerics. Alasia's work was a classic text in Piedmont, and its authoritativeness was almost unquestionable. It was recommended by Cardinal Costa, Archbishop of Turin, and adopted even by Guala and Cafasso for use in the Convitto.³⁴

The choice of texts is not without value. Peter Gazzaniga was an avid Thomist, Joseph Anthony Alasia a probabiliorist tending to resolve practical cases along the lines of strictness. In all likelihood, therefore, theological courses at the Chieri seminary were along those lines, though both the philosophy and theology courses were based on lectures and further explanations by the professors. Don Bosco probably was taught theses favoring Thomistic premotionism and Alasia's probabiliorism. It explains the later presence and emphasis of certain elements in his thought and life, elements which survived the anti-probabiliorist attacks he heard in the Convitto. Premotion and predestination probably were fitted into a reasoned context during his seminary years. He had already picked them up in popular spiritual works, including those of St. Alphonsus, particularly with regard to the choice of one's state in life. And in his moral theology courses he was offered a reasoned explanation for the things he had learned in the diocesan catechism and parish lessons. The necessity of confessing doubtful sins, for example, was laid down as an absolute by both probabiliorists and tutorists.³⁵

Another recollection of Don Bosco's seminary years comes down

We learn something else from Father Francesia, *Memorie biografiche di Salesiani defunti*, S. Benigno 1904, p. 213: "Don Bosco had had among his authors on hand the theology course of Father Charmes; and he used to recommend it to us for its clear method and its correct, Catholic doctrine. For the more expert, he limited himself to recommending the *Compendio*. . ." We do not know at what point in time DB first came across the *Theologia universa* of the Capuchin Thomas de Charmes (1703-1763). Identifying the text used is even more of a problem. The Nancy edition of 1750 is along Molinist lines, and it grants inerrancy to the pope. Later editions, such as the 1797 Siena edition and the 1828 Florence edition, are edited along Augustinian lines. New modifications were introduced in the 1858 Paris edition by the Piedmontese Jesuit, John Perrone. See Hurter, *Nomenclator literarius theologiae cath.*, 5, Oeniponte 1911, cl. 16.

³⁴ L. Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del Ven. Giuseppe Cafasso*, Turin, 1912, I, 56-59.

³⁵ *Compendio della dottrina cristiana*, pt. 4, les. 6, n. 6. "Della Confessione," Turin: Binelli, p. 139 f.: "Q. What does sincere mean? A. That you must state your sins as they are, without excusing, diminishing, or exaggerating them; confessing definite sins as definite, doubtful sins as doubtful."

to us through the testimony of Father Francesia at the information-gathering diocesan inquiry.³⁶ If it is reliable, it sheds light on other documentation. Reports Father Francesia: "When he was studying the tract on predestination, he felt real fear for his own salvation. He spoke of it in school and he spoke with his professors privately about it. He also had private talks with the rector, but nothing could calm him."³⁷

The assertions of Father Francesia find confirmation in another piece of testimony that has solid documentary grounding. It is an entry in Father Ruffino's Chronicle (January 16, 1861): "Don Bosco was asked his opinion about various systems dealing with the efficacy of grace and replied: 'I studied those questions a great deal, but my system is that which redounds to the greater glory of God. What do I care about having a strict system and then sending a soul to hell, or having an easy system, provided that I send souls to paradise?'"³⁸ According to Ruffino's verbal report, Don Bosco would not have descended to the particulars mentioned by Francesia; nor did he reveal the inner crises caused by this subject in the seminary or elsewhere. It seems legitimate, nevertheless, to find a shorthand summary of Don Bosco's concern about the matter in Ruffino's report. Even back in the seminary Don Bosco's study was probably much more than an academic exercise, a search for some valid theoretical solution to the problem of freedom and grace. It was probably an inner struggle over the question of eternal salvation, which he felt deeply as a very personal question. Francesia's report continues:

After he had suffered a long time over this matter and fallen ill, he was visited by his confessor, who said to him: "Bosco, what is written in the Gospels?" "There are many things to be read in the Gospels." "I mean, what does the Lord demand for eternal life? Doesn't it say: 'If you will to enter . . . life'? Get it, *if you will*? His grace will not fail you, so long as you correspond to it." These

³⁶ Father Francesia is remembered by older Salesians as "the poet," who kept the spirit of youth into ripe old age. I would agree with the view that in his recollections it is sometimes difficult to differentiate how much is objective reality, how much idealization, and how much fanciful reconstruction. Desramaut (*op. cit.*, p. 197 and footnote) stresses this episode as a singular one in the testimony of Father Francesia. Obviously we do well to re-examine carefully the always interesting recollections offered by Francesia, especially in the *Memorie di Salesiani defunti*, published in S. Benigno and Turin at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one.

³⁷ *Positio super introduct. causae*, interrog. ad 12m; see AS 161.1 Francesia.

³⁸ AS 110 Ruffino 9, p. 43; See BM 6: 469.

words restored peace to him. Putting his whole trust in the Lord, he went on with his studies. Don Bosco himself told me about those fears of his.³⁹

In this inner torment caused by scholastic teaching we can see another reason for Don Bosco's critical evaluation of his courses. The teaching was 'speculative'. Not enough attention was paid to the fact that a debated and debatable doctrine, presented as the true or truest one, was sometimes the cause of serious inner wounds.

We might also add that the spiritual reading of the day for seminarians and priests helped to nurture the sort of anxiety that could take root in extremely sensitive religious souls, such as St. Francis de Sales or Luther.⁴⁰

It would have been easy enough for John Bosco to be convinced that the call to the clerical state was his vocation, that following the call was already a guarantee of salvation, that his dreams were an extraordinary indication of the good he was supposed to do. Soon enough, however, he would have been able to detect the element of illusion in any such conviction, if it led him to think that he was thereby firmly planted on the road to salvation.

In reality he could only say that he had set his foot on the road that God wished him to take. It would not take him long to find out that it was no triumphal arch but rather a garden of thorny roses.

"Very few priests will be saved": this was the title of a meditation offered to priests by Giambattista Compaing in a book published in Bergamo in 1824.⁴¹ In another meditation offered to priests, Father Cafasso had this to say: "It is certain, however, that some priests will go to perdition. (2) Every one of us faces this danger if we do not keep on our guard."⁴²

Whether or not they stressed the small number of the elect and the doctrine of the narrow way, both rigorists and benignists addressed themselves to priests in terms of their eternal salvation. They spoke about the dignity and holiness required of the priesthood; about the great and

³⁹ Interrog. ad 12m. AS 161.1 Francia.

⁴⁰ See, for example, E. M. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales*, Paris 1966; J. Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, Freiburg 1941.

⁴¹ J. B. Compaing (1652-1718), *Della santità e dei doveri de' sacerdoti*. . . , pt. 1, chap. 18, Bergamo 1824, pp. 154-61.

⁴² G. Cafasso, *Meditazioni per esercizi spirituali al Clero*, Med. 7, "Il Sacerdote all'Inferno," Turin 1923, p. 162.

difficult obligations imposed on priests as opposed to those imposed on the ordinary faithful; about their duties towards God, themselves, and their fellow human beings; about the serious dangers posed to the priest by the world, women, and dissoluteness of all sorts; about frequent dealings with sacred things, which took the edge off their initial priestly fervor and led them—as St. Alphonsus decried—to deal heedlessly with the awesome sacrifice of the Mass and the Divine Office.⁴³ Much comment was made about the severe and frequent temptations that the devil posed to priests, preferring them as a target over lay people⁴⁴; about the strict accounting that God would demand from his ministers,⁴⁵ who might turn out to be sterile figs, useless servants, or arid rainclouds.⁴⁶ The ultimate image was the sorry, astonishing sight of a priest—the favorite food of the demons, according to St. Jerome⁴⁷—being cast down from the altar into the abyss.⁴⁸ A priest forever, “but a wretched child of perdition; a priest, but without God . . . or altar . . . or sacrifice to save him; a priest with nothing but the name, marked out for eternal disgrace and torment.”⁴⁹

The cleric who seriously pondered such things would end up con-

⁴³ “La Messa e l’Officio strapazzati” is the title of a well known little work by St. Alphonsus, published also in Piedmont. See M. de Meulemeester, *Bibliogr. générale des écrivains Rédemptoristes*, 1, The Hague-Louvain 1933, p. 113; 187 f. St. Alphonsus, *Opere ascetiche*, 3, Turin: Marietti, 1847, pp. 832–64.

⁴⁴ St. Alphonsus, *Selva di materie predicabili*, pt. 1, chap. 4, n. 15: “Be on guard, my priests, because the demons tempt one priest more than 100 lay people; because a priest who goes to damnation takes many of them with him to hell” (*Opere ascetiche*, *ibid.*, p. 16).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pt. 1, chap. 2, n. 8, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Nicole Belon (1690–1762), Jesuit, *Trattato della perfezione dello stato ecclesiastico*, pt. 2, chap. 1, Venice 1768, p. 293.

⁴⁷ Cafasso, *Meditazioni*, p. 159.

⁴⁸ Stanislaus Donaudi, *Nove conferenze agli ecclesiastici*, Saluzzo 1847, p. 148.

⁴⁹ Cafasso, *Meditazioni*, p. 152. Similar ideas can be found in other writings that Piedmont then offered to priests. Claude Arvisenet, *Memoriale vitae sacerdotalis*, Turin: Franc. Prato, 1795. Charles Andrew Basso, *Vita sacerdotis et curatoris animarum*. . . , Turin: Jos. Rameletti, 1773. Charles Emmanuel Pallavicini (1719–1785), *Lettera al Sacerdote novello sul grande mezzo di santificarsi nel suo stato*. . . , Pinerolo, 1781, of which there were several editions; see C. Sommervogel, *Biblioth. de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Brussels-Paris, 6, 1895, cl. 112–114. Joseph Righetti, *Il mese di Maria ossia il mese di maggio consacrato a Maria Santissima proposto agli ecclesiastici*, Turin: Marietti, 1838. Simon Salamo and Melchior Gelabert, *Regula Cleri ex sacris liberis*. . . , Turin: typ. Regia, 1762.

vinced that the priesthood was something grand and terrible, cause for greater reward or greater punishment; that the clerical state aggravated rather than solved the problem of personal salvation. He might find consolation in the fact that he had noticed the Lord's call and responded to it; but the problem of final perseverance remained unanswered, fraught with dread questioning and uncertainty.

5. *Seminary reading*

In the *Memoirs of the Oratory* Don Bosco tells us that another cause of inner crisis for him in the seminary was the choice of readings. He may well have pointed up the issue in terms of contrasts in order to provide instruction to his own boys. He writes: "Accustomed to reading the classics throughout high school and addicted to the inflated figures of mythology and pagan tales, I had no taste for ascetic matters."⁵⁰

As a lay student in earlier years, John Bosco almost certainly approached Latin, Greek, and Italian classics with open-mindedness and enthusiasm. He tackled the popular editions published by Pomba⁵¹ as the humanists of the fifteenth century might have. But his religious sentiments caused him pain. He was convinced that "fine language and eloquence cannot be reconciled with religion." As he put it: "Even the works of the holy Fathers seemed to me to be the fruit of fairly limited ability, except for their religious principles which they expressed with force and clarity."⁵²

This contrast between art and religious matters would take solid root in his mind once again during his seminary years. It was one of the many conflicts breaking out into the open in the modern age: faith versus science, natural religion versus positive religions; the human versus the divine. If I may be forgiven the comparison, John Bosco was convinced that art and religion could not mix even as Diderot had fled from religious processions with feelings of boredom and revulsion.

Now that John Bosco was in the seminary, he felt obliged to choose

⁵⁰ MO:109.

⁵¹ See footnote 52 of Chapter I (p. 26).

⁵² MO: 109 f. Perhaps we can accept the reasons offered by DB, but caution is advisable. I would repeat that his own attitude was perhaps a more or less consciously noticed feeling or taste. The proffered reasons might well have been his own adaptation of those brought out in a famous debate on the Latin classics between Msgr. Gaume and Dupanloup, a debate which took place a few years before DB wrote his MO.

between two values that he somehow felt to be in opposition. In this process his thinking was closer to the outlook of the Enlightenment than to that of Romanticism. As a cleric, he could not help but opt for religious literature, forcing himself to see its beauties and its superiority over profane literature.

He himself tells us that his final choice was decided by the *Imitation of Christ*, which he read at the start of his second year of philosophy (November 1836). Giving up what he had once appreciated, he would now pay heed to ethical values rather than esthetic ones. His earlier predilections now appeared to be 'worldly' and practically worthless in religious terms. Reading the *Imitation of Christ*, he tells us, "I soon realized that a single verse of it contained more doctrine and morality than I had found in the large volumes of the ancient classics. It was due to that book that I gave up profane reading."⁵³ His decision to make that shift does not seem to have entailed any great drama or crisis. Perhaps it simply marked the overcoming of a certain uneasiness he had felt with the type of reading that had been offered him in the seminary so far. In any case, he himself gives us a fair idea of the succession of books that he then read:

So I devoted myself to reading Calmet's *History of the Old and New Testament*; then Flavius Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War*; then Marchetti's *Discussion of Religion*; then the works of Frayssinous, Balmes, Zucconi, and many other religious writers. I also enjoyed reading Fleury's *Church History*, unaware that it was a book to be avoided. Even more beneficial was my reading of the works of Cavalca, Passavanti, and Segneri, and Henrion's entire *History of the Church*.⁵⁴

⁵³ MO: 110.

⁵⁴ MO: 10 f. Father Ceria tells us that "Don Bosco read Balmes's *Protestantism compared to Catholicism*" (MO:110 footnote). But the original edition of that book appeared around 1842–1844, i.e., when DB was already a priest.

The only work of the Spanish philosopher to appear while DB was a seminarian was his work on matrimony (1839). We know of no Italian translations of it in that period, and it is unlikely that DB read the original Spanish edition. There is a possibility that DB made a slip here. Perhaps he was thinking of a little work for young people that he might have read in a Turin edition: Balmes, *La religione dimostrata alla intelligenza della gioventù* (Collez. di buoni libri, 1), Turin: Botta, 1849, reissued Sampierdarena: Libr. Salesiana, 1878. But it is also possible that he is referring to the work cited by Father Ceria, published in two volumes in Carmagnola in 1852 (Biblioteca ecclesiastica, vols. 5 and 6).

His list enables us to pinpoint some of the editions he might have had in hand. Elsewhere Don Bosco tells us that Frayssinous, Cavalca, and Bercastel's *Church History* were readings during meals, and we know they were then being published in Turin in the series: Select Economical Library of Religious Works.⁵⁵

The Select Library had a history behind it. Books of a benignant slant were being promoted by Pius Bruno Lanteri, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, the Jesuits, and the Catholic Friendship associations. This viewpoint was challenged during the Restoration by the revived Thomistic school at the university and by the probabiliorist viewpoint, which put out high-class works and a few rare books on the popular level. The Select Library was meant to give solid organization to this effort. Its publications began to appear in 1829, the very same year that the Catholic Friendship association was suppressed, and it had the express approval of Archbishop Chiaverotti. Naturally it dovetailed with his own views, and its volumes were introduced into his seminaries. The publishing effort was under the direction of a priest from Saluzzo, Godfrey Casalis, one of whose co-workers had this to say upon his death: "He was able to become a deep theologian . . . by meditating assiduously on the authors of the famous society of Port-Royal in Paris. He always advocated their strict morality without, however, succumbing to their excessive rigidity."⁵⁶ Around 1829 Casalis was one of the backers of Dettori, one of the group of Neo-Guelphs. Among the followers of Gioberti he was one of those who remained convinced that a fight had to be waged to free the Church from probabilism, Molinism, and the Jesuits.

This may help to explain the inclusion of Passavanti's *Mirror of True*

⁵⁵ On Bercastel being read during meals in the seminary see MO:92. The *Scelta Biblioteca* had the huge printing of 360,000 volumes. See the "Elenco delle opere stampate a maggior numero di copie in Torino dal 1830 al 1840," in D. Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino*, Turin, 1840, p. 354. Other works to appear in the collection included: Nieremberg, *Bilancia del tempo*, Turin, 1832; C. Gobinet, *Istruzione della gioventù*. These works were recommended to the Salesians while DB was alive; see *Deliberazioni del secondo capitolo generale*. . . , Turin: Tip. Salesiana, 1882, p. 68f. (Gobinet is mentioned only by name). Also accepted were the *Ragionamenti sulla vita di Cristo e sui Fatti degli Apostoli* by A. Cesari, which DB read in the seminary in the free time available to him right after getting up in the morning; see BM 1:283-284).

⁵⁶ Paul Camosso, *Vita di Goffredo Casalis*, Turin, 1857, p. 11. On Casalis's relationship to Jansenism see also Stella, *Giansenisti piemontesi nell'Ottocento*, p. 73 f.

Penance in the selection of works published. Passavanti's austere work insisted, for example, that one had to confess one's sins over again if one discovered that they had been confessed to a priest who was not sufficiently capable of distinguishing between mortal and venial sins or of imposing a suitable penance.⁵⁷ If we examine other works in the series, we notice that they tend to be very reticent about the whole issue of Gallicanism (considered a disputed question), openly opposed to dogmatic Jansenism, reticent about the ethics of Port-Royal, and inclined to advocate an austere Christianity.

Frayssinous's work, the *Defense of Christianity*, also has its significance. It was a fortunate series of apologetic conferences seeking to drive out the doctrinal apostasy and religious indifference of the eighteenth century. Many people were reacting in a similar vein amid the new climate of Romanticism. Frayssinous's work was also based on the societal view of the Old Regime, with its alliance between throne and altar, and on an ecclesiology stressing hierarchical structures as well as diocesan and national autonomy.⁵⁸

John Bosco read these works but left us no critique of them. He focused his resentment on Fleury's *Church History*, and indirectly on those who did not prevent him from reading it (thus filling out his critique of his seminary environment).⁵⁹ But Fleury's theological and historiographical tendencies are akin to those of other works that Don Bosco read and assimilated to some extent: the works of Bercastel and Henrion.

It is worth examining the *History of Christianity* by the ex-Jesuit, Bercastel, to which Don Bosco had recourse later for his own *Church*

⁵⁷ *Specchio di vera penitenza*, distinz. 5, chap. 6, Turin 1831, p. 129.

⁵⁸ The Paris conferences of Frayssinous around 1807 attracted thousands of young listeners. Their importance is brought out by A. Garnier, *Frayssinous et la jeunesse*, Paris, 1932. Attendance was also prompted by the reaction against Napoleon. When Frayssinous later became an advocate of legitimist conservatism, the new young generation turned to such people as Lamennais and Lacordaire. The theme of paternalism, played in a religious key, urged people to regard the Church as their mother, whom they were obliged to obey. It was a theme dear to writers and preachers of the Restoration, as we are informed by Y. M. Congar, "L'ecclésiologie de la Révolution française au Concile du Vatican," in *Ecclésiologie catholique dans le XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1962, p. 101, footnote.

⁵⁹ DB probably read the Italian translation of Fleury's work done by Gaspare Gozzi, Venice 1767-1771, or Genoa 1769-1773, 27 vols. There also appeared a *Giustificazione dei discorsi e della storia ecclesiastica dell'abbate Fleury contro le accuse e le calunnie di alcuni religiosi fiamminghi, tradotta dal francese*. . . , Venice, 1772.

History. Bercastel's design is ambitious and majestic, like that of Bossuet's *Discourse on Universal History*.⁶⁰

Here is my plan: to make plain throughout this work the unfailing protection of the Lord over his people, the holiness and infallibility of the Church, its beauty and splendor even in the darkest times and despite the flaws that have frequently disfigured a portion of its members.⁶¹

Bercastel, in other words, proposes to present history as the work of God and the work of human beings, a work of both holiness and sinfulness. The history of the Church is to be presented as the story of a living organism because

nothing could be more suited to nurturing and reviving the faith, and giving it the required vivacity and robustness. By its own nature faith produces fruits of blessing and salvation; or, through our failings, it produces the fruits of death and damnation. But without vivacity and robustness it would serve only as an argument for an even more rigorous condemnation!⁶²

Bercastel's history is often theology or hagiography, with an admixture of legendary accounts. It is not for scholars, as the author himself points out, but it is aimed primarily at clerics. Less attentive than the works of Fleury and Tillemont, it takes no critical notice of the works of the Maurists or Bollandists, of Petavius or Muratori, or of Catholic and Protestant critical historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is rarely tedious to read, however, and it is easy to see why it might be adopted for reading during meals at the Chieri seminary.

As a history of Christianity, it is a history of salvation, of humanity's sinfulness and redemption. That history is "as old as the human race" because "the religion of Jesus Christ, considered in all its breadth, begins with the fall of the first human being, or with God's promise to him of

⁶⁰ The *Discorso sopra la storia universale* came out in an Italian translation in Venice, 1812; there were various editions in Venice and Naples. It is one of the key points in the historiography and subsequent historical diffusion, with which DB was also associated.

⁶¹ Bercastel, *Storia del Cristianesimo*, 1, Turin 1831, p. 30 (Preface).

⁶² *Ibid.*

a liberator."⁶³ But after dealing with the first few centuries of the Christian era, Bercastel's history becomes a history of Western Christianity. And after the Protestant revolt it becomes a history of Roman Catholicism, focusing mainly on the deeds and misdeeds of Christian France.

Neither Bercastel nor Fleury could envision history as the story of church triumphs. They were inwardly certain that sin and the devil had sinister power over all Christians, whether the latter were simple church members or Roman pontiffs. All were subject to error and sin, but the Church did not cease to be a holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Sharing the outlook of the eighteenth century, Fleury and Bercastel were inclined to view the Middle Ages as the dark ages for Christianity, a time when the tree of life, the Church, was afflicted with a terrible frost on all its branches.⁶⁴

Neither could these two authors see history as a story of papal triumphs, as Rohrbacher and Salzano were inclined to do. The latter sought to point up to the moments leading to the assertion of papal primacy, of the Roman see's superiority over all others, of pope over

⁶³ Ibid., lib. 1, p. 35. That Christianity was as old as creation was the well known thesis of the English deist, Matthew Tyndal (d. 1733), whose work was considered the 'Bible' of deism: *Christianity as Old as the Creation: or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature*, London, 1730; see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London 1960, 22:237. Catholic apologists of the eighteenth century aimed their arrows against it. Tyndal and Bercastel differ, however, in their suppositions. Tyndal assumes that human nature is good, never wounded by an original fall due to the sin of our first parents. Bercastel assumes their fall and a redeemer. On Tyndal and apologetics see the translated works of Paul Hazard: *The European Mind; 1680-1715* and *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century, from Montesquieu to Lessing*; several editions.

⁶⁴ The literature dealing with the 'triumphs' of the Church goes way back and ties in with themes to be found in various books of the Bible (e.g., Psalms, Maccabees). Victories over Protestantism were added in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; victories over deists and atheists were added in the eighteenth century. Numerous works had 'triumph' or 'victory' in their title. See, for example, the anonymous works listed by A. Barbier, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes et pseudonymes*, 4, Paris 1879, pp. 829-839. Ultramontane literature tends to praise the triumphs of the papacy: M. Cappellari, *Il trionfo della S. Sede e della Chiesa contro gli assalti dei Novatori*, Turin 1857 (= Rome 1799); G. Margotti, *Le vittorie della Chiesa nel primo decennio del pontificato di Pio Nono*, Turin, 1857; L. Guanella, *Da Adamo a Pio IX, o quadro delle lotte e dei trionfi della Chiesa universale*, Milan, 1885.

councils, of his position as supreme hierarch and infallible teacher of the universal Church independently of the episcopal college.⁶⁵ As far as Bercastel was concerned, it was not worthwhile to go into questions that seemed secondary. The infallibility of the pope and his superiority to ecumenical councils were not doctrines of faith, and they could not be presented as such. To do that would be "to arrogate the authority to formulate articles of faith not recognized by the Church."⁶⁶ Indeed there

⁶⁵ We have an alleged remark by DB on Salzano's church history: "He also read Salzano's work, regarding which he once stated that if that work had been in print when he was still a seminarian, he would have kissed every page of it, so pleased was he with the respect shown toward the papacy by this great Italian historian" (BM 1:331).

How did DB see church history? There are indications that DB wittingly or unwittingly distanced himself from the approach of Fleury and Bercastel, adopting instead the outlook of M. Cappellari, Rohrbacher, Salzano, and Margotti. Instead of viewing the Church as holy despite the scourges and faults that afflicted it, DB focused on the Church emerging triumphant from the purifying waters of persecutions. His attention focused especially on the pope. During his seminary years, popular religious reflection centered on the martyr pope, Pius VII. Unlike temporal rulers and sovereigns, he was bold enough to stand up to the tyrant (Napoleon). That very theme can be found in DB's sonnet on the *Constancy of Pius VII*, a copy written and signed by him being in the aforementioned codex. The first two stanzas below describe the submissive conduct of rulers; the latter two describe the stubborn resistance and ultimate victory of Pius VII:

Sconvolti i troni e le città dismunte
e i grandi imperi lacerati, e cinti
tosto piegar al Gallo umil la fronte
i Duci, i Regi sbiggotiti (*sic*) e vinti.

Altri la pace addurre, leggi e pronte
segnar sul campo fra i guerrieri estinti
altri fuggir fra mille scorni ed onte
costretti furo di pallor dipinti.

Ma Pio, che giusto il Ciel governa e regge
dall'armi opresso e da crudel arresto
forte rigetta al vincitor la legge,

E innanti a Cristo genuflesso e mesto
priea e vince. . . tal che decanta il gregge
fra' bei trionfi e il gran trionfo è questo.

⁶⁶ Bercastel, *Storia del Cristianesimo*, lib. 80, N. 189; Turin 1833, 22:140.

was no point or purpose to debates over those issues because doctrinal infallibility "was not assigned with certainty either to the head of the Church in particular or to its members apart from their head, but to the entire Church, i.e., to the combined votes of head and members."⁶⁷

The things which John Bosco could read in Bercastel's work around this time (1835–1840) reflected to some extent the doctrinal stance of the University of Turin. It did not wish to get involved in such issues. Indeed in 1825 it had refused an academic degree to a theologian who had dared to uphold the infallibility of the pope in a public examination.⁶⁸

The French Benedictine, Augustine Calmet (1672–1757), had written numerous works. His *History of the Old and New Testament and of the Hebrews* appeared in an Italian edition from Pomba publishing house in Turin. It was part of the series entitled Popular Library of Moral and Religious Works, divided into seventeen pocket-size books which appeared in 1830–1831. Some fifteen years later Don Bosco would adopt Calmet's *Bible Chronology* for his own use.⁶⁹ That fact might cause some consternation. Even in the middle of the nineteenth century people were daring to maintain that the chronology of the Bible was true and scientific; that the world had been created from nothing in a week a mere four thousand years before the coming of Christ. And this was being maintained despite growing difficulties and objections. Others noted that Egyptian and Chinese chronologies listed pharaohs and emperors when they could not yet have possibly existed, according to the biblical account. Their children were around when the only survivors of the flood, according to the Bible, were Noah and his offspring. And now there were fossil finds that seemed to date back six or seven thousand years before Christ.⁷⁰

None of this data managed to shake the confidence of ecclesiastical works and pious literature. The new critics were viewed as unbelievers,

⁶⁷ Ibid., N. 188.

⁶⁸ On the case of the theologian Giambattista Ferrero (or Ferreri) see E. Rosa, "Il Giansenismo in Piemonte e la R. Univ. di Torino," in *La Civ. Catt.* 78 (1927) 1, p. 437 f.; P. Savio, *Devozione di mgr. A. Turchi*, pp. 679–681.

⁶⁹ Bosco, *Storia Sacra*. . . , Turin: Speirani, 1847, p. 7: "Insofar as chronology is concerned, I stick to that of Calmet, except in a few instances where some modern critics call for corrections."

⁷⁰ On these matters see Hazard's discussion of Richard Simon, Peter Bayle, and other foreshadowings of the coming Enlightenment, in the two works cited above in footnote 63.

or as people favoring Protestantism. The naturalist Buffon did not want to repeat the Galileo affair, so he retracted his hypotheses on fossils at the insistence of the Sorbonne. A growing number of scholarly works sought to prove the validity of the biblical chronology and the falsity of Egyptian and Chinese dating. They maintained that Moses, who had written about the origins of the world, was the most ancient historian of them all. His narrative was true because his sources were fresh and recent. Only a few generations separated him from Noah, and Noah from Methuselah. Methuselah himself had reached the age of reason by the time Adam was in his seventies.

Catholic biblical hermeneutics in the mid-nineteenth century was still reluctant to enter the path beaten by Richard Simon: to study more closely the literary genre of the sacred texts, the process of their composition and transmission, and the modalities of divine inspiration. Instead it insisted on attributing to the Bible values that it did not have, fearing that denial of those values would jeopardize its true and basic structures.

Frayssinous's *Defense of Christianity* devoted much space to defending the true and false values attributed to the Bible. Marchetti's *Discussion of Religion* also made every effort to defend the true and alleged foundations of the Christian religion, formulating a well-knit structure of dates, lines of reasoning, subtle ironies and sophisms.

Marchetti's work, however, differed somewhat in theme and inspiration from the works of Frayssinous, Bercastel, and Calmet. The Turin edition of his book had been published by the Catholic Friendship association in 1823. Marchetti was a supporter of papal prerogatives, and he also authored polemical works against Scipio de' Ricci, Italian Jansenism, and Fleury's *Church History*.⁷¹

⁷¹ G. Marchetti (1753–1829), *Trattenimenti di famiglia su la storia della religione con le sue prove letti a' miei figliuoli e consegnati a' medesimi per loro preservativo*. . . , Turin: tip. Bianco, 1823, 2 vols. It is noted as a publication of the Catholic Friendship association by C. Bona, *Le "Amicizie"*, pp. 367, 388. DB adopted the subtitle; "Trattenimenti. . ." and cited the work in his own *Cattolico instruito*, tratt. 14, Turin 1853, p. 59. The most well known work of Marchetti against Scipio de' Ricci is *Annotazioni pacifiche di un parroco cattolico a mons. vescovo di Pistoia e Prato sopra la sua lettera pastorale de' 5 ottobre 1787*. . . , In Italia 1788; against Fleury, *Critica della storia ecclesiastica e de' discorsi dell'abate Claudio Fleury*. . . , Milan 1836. It should be noted that Fleury was not a sectarian. He was a scholar rather than a polemicist; see A. Didon's article on Fleury in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 5, Cols. 412–19.

The works of the Jesuits Segneri and Zucconi, also mentioned by Don Bosco, come from the same circle approved by the Catholic Friendship association. To them we must add Father Antonio Foresti's *La Strada al santuario mostrata ai chierici* ("The Road to the Altar Pointed Out to Clerics"). Around 1860 Don Bosco cited a maxim from that book which he said he had read in the seminary, and the book itself was published by the Salesian Press (Libreria Salesiana) in 1884.⁷²

Foresti wrote his work near the end of the seventeenth century, at a time when seminaries were far from being well organized. Despite the example of Charles Borromeo and Gregory Barbarigo, not to mention reform efforts after the Council of Trent, the vices of the day were still to be found deeply rooted in the clergy. Worldliness, crudeness, and ignorance still appeared in the sanctuary. The tone of the Jesuit is understandable in that context, as he angrily criticized attitudes and people embodying the disreputable customs of the baroque period. Clerical dress, he warned, does not make a man invulnerable. The cleric must shun the evils summarized in the ancient Latin maxim:

Otia, segnitie, somnus, caro, faemina, vinum
Prosperitas, ludus, carmina, forma, puer.⁷³

*Easy leisure, slothfulness, sleep, the flesh, females, wine
Prosperity, sports, songs, beautiful shapes, boys.*

Clerics should shun "not only dealings with women but the very sight of them because looking at them is tantamount to burning with desire for them." (Don Bosco would later cite Louis Comollo's behavior by way of example. Comollo never dared to look directly at his female cousins when they visited him at the seminary. Instead he made out who they were by their speech and the length of their shadows on the wall.⁷⁴) Father Foresti also urged clerics to avoid indolence and gloominess. If they do not take delight in virtuous exercises, they will succumb to

⁷² *Abstrahe ligna foco, si vis extinguere flammam*. See BM 7:55; A. Foresti (1625–1692), *La strada al santuario*. . . , pt. 1, chap. 8, Turin: Libr. Sales., 1884, p. 95.

⁷³ Foresti, *ibid.*, p. 92.

⁷⁴ Bosco, *Cenni storici*, Turin 1844, p. 34 f. DB was asked to be the godfather of the newest born Moglia son, born August 1, 1840. He made sure that the only godmother alongside him was Mary and the Church, although the parents had asked their firstborn Anna, age 18, to fill that role (AS 161 Moglia ad 12m; BM 1:359)

“sensual pleasures.” (That is why John Bosco and Louis Comollo tried as much as possible to carry out the motto of the *Società dell’Allegria* during their seminary years: *Servite Domino in laetitia*, “serve the Lord joyfully.”)

Clerics should also avoid excessive eating and drinking. The true abode of wisdom, said Heraclitus, was the dry soul that had been purged of crass humors: *anima sicca sapientissima*. One should take no delight in the taste of food, regarding it as a consequence of sin for all. The necessity of eating should be a source of distress to us. We should feel that God “has condemned us to eating so that we might live and endure in his service.”⁷⁵

Foresti also recounts what Blessed Jacopo did in order to escape all the snares of improper self-love: “He sprinkled wormwood grounds, instead of salt, on his food . . . so that in taking food he found no savor and gave pleasure only to God.”⁷⁶ In like manner, seminarian John Bosco sprinkled dirt and ashes on his food and diluted it with water, claiming that this made it more tasty.⁷⁷

Father Segneri maintained his lofty reputation as a preacher. His *Quaresimale* (“Lenten sermons”) were still admired, praised, imitated and plundered by Catholic preachers of the nineteenth century. They had not abandoned their predilection for moralizing sermons, despite the new directions evident in the sermons and conferences of Frayssinous and Lacordaire.⁷⁸ The *Quaresimale* came out in various editions in Turin, and an edition of his complete works was published in Turin while John Bosco was a seminarian.⁷⁹ The second General Chapter of the Salesians (1880) recommended Segneri’s *Cristiano istruito*, a very popular work of catechetical instruction.⁸⁰ Don Bosco borrowed the title for his own

⁷⁵ Foresti, *La strada al santuario*, chap. 9, p. 107.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷⁷ On the temperance of DB as a seminarian: BM 1:284; Lemoyne, *Vita*, pt. 5, chap. 2, 2, Turin 1943, p. 198. On Comollo see Bosco, *Cenni storici*, p. 36: “Sometimes he disregarded the main platter and wine, content to eat bread dipped in water, on the specious pretext that it was better for bodily health.”

⁷⁸ E. Santini, *L’eloquenza italiana dal Concilio tridentino ai nostri giorni. Gli oratori sacri*, Milan, 1923.

⁷⁹ *Delle opere del padre Paolo Segneri (1624–1694)*. . . , Turin: Soc. tipografico-libreria (Pomba), 1832–33, 12 vols.

⁸⁰ *Deliberazioni del secondo capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo torinese nel settembre 1880*, Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1882, p. 68.

catechetical and anti-Protestant conversations between the father of a family and his children, which was published in 1853 (*Trattenimenti di un padre di famiglia co' suoi figliuoli*) as the first of his *Catholic Readings* (*Letture Cattoliche*).

Ferdinand Zucconi (1647–1732) was the author of *Lezioni sacre sopra la divina scrittura*, which came out in Rome for the first time in 1729. They were pious and instructional more than exegetical. He moved quickly from the biblical text to moral or apologetic applications. Thus his work was akin to Anthony Cesari's *Ragionamenti* on the life of Christ and the acts of the Apostles, from which Don Bosco borrowed for his own *Life of St. Peter*.⁸¹ In Zucconi's work we again find elements that dovetail with the general religious outlook of Don Bosco. In their various ways the world, human life, and Scripture are a theophany. The human being is supposed to return to God through the external pathways established by him; but even here the human being, while on pilgrimage, should live in union with God and in God's presence since the kingdom of God is within (*regnum Dei intra vos est*).⁸² Noteworthy is Zucconi's analysis of Christ's words to Peter, *Tu es Petrus*, which is very close to what we find in Don Bosco's *Cattolico istruito*.⁸³

6. *The spirituality of John Bosco as a seminarian: overview*

From all that has been said above, we can now delineate the inner itinerary of John Bosco as a seminarian, though only in broad terms and with regard to certain aspects. We can also, it seems, offer some evaluation of the documentation offered above.

From what Don Bosco himself tells us, it seems that his shift from 'profane' tastes to a rigorously religious outlook took place during his philosophy years. It reached its climax around the beginning of 1837 when he read the *Imitation of Christ*.

⁸¹ See footnote 55 above. For the *Vita di S. Pietro*, however, DB must have used the edition put out in the *Collezione di Buoni libri*, 3 (Turin, 15 October and 1 November 1851).

⁸² F. Zucconi, *Lezioni sacre*, corso 2, lez. 2, t.4, Venice 1762, pp. 5–9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, corso 1, t.3 of the New Testament, lez. 13, p. 67; and Bosco, *Cattolico istruito*, pt. 2, tratten. 3, Turin 1853, pp. 88–90. There are no persuasive arguments for affirming direct dependence, however. There are more obvious coincidences between this section in DB's work and the exegetical notes in the Bible translated by Anthony Martini.

Some of the main aspects of his inner life are also discernable. Awareness of being called by God to the priesthood took deeper and deeper root inside him. Conscious of the holiness that was specifically demanded of one approaching the altar, John Bosco was driven to detach himself from habits and attitudes that seemed to him to be incompatible with the priestly state. All of this took place in a general atmosphere of ascetic tension, of ongoing control and inhibition. His was an ongoing ascetic effort that drove him to fasts and abstinences, and to fits of anger with himself when he found himself indulging in his old worldly abilities such as feats of agility or violin-playing. This ascetic tension helped to drive his friend Comollo to his death, and John Bosco himself to the very limits of his strength. We find some striking maxims and comments written by him in his old notebooks as a theology student:

The wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God.

God arranges for sins in such a way that those things which were pleasures for the human being as sinner may be the instruments of God in punishing.

There are three kinds of goods given by God. Goods without which it is impossible to live well: the virtues. Goods without which it is possible to live well: riches. Goods without which we would not know how to live well: the faculties of the soul, of which free will is the mistress (St. Aug. *De lib. arb.*).

O human being, you who wish to be forgiven always, forgive always.

The Antichrist is to be born of a wicked Jewish Woman of the tribe of Dan [. . .]. The world will come to an end in flames. The sun will be darkened by the expansion of the 40 great spots perceivable in it. The moon will be darkened [. . .] Then the earth will split open and from its depths will issue huge whirls of fire. The heat found in the ethereal regions and in the molecules of bodies will condense, and in such wise will take shape the conflagration at the end of the world.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ All these expressions are taken from *De Censuris* (AS 132 Quaderni). They remind one of the work, *La fine del mondo. Ragionamento teologico filosofico del prop. Antonio Riccardi, aggiuntavi in ultimo la profezia detta di Orval*, Turin: Pompeo Magnaghi, 1840.

Despite appearances, then, it seems that John Bosco was not always at peace in the seminary, not always content. There were times of crisis and uncertainty. An additional reason, perhaps, was the fact that his longing for the religious life had not yet been extinguished. There is no way of knowing what his aspirations were more specifically: flight from the world, consecration to God in the monastic life, or the specific apostolate of some religious institute.

During his philosophy years he had a dream in which he saw himself in a tailor shop mending worn socks. He was already a priest and dressed as one. He did not reveal the dream to anyone until after he was ordained, and then to Father Cafasso who had become his spiritual confessor.⁸⁵

In the seminary John Bosco's cheerfulness and affectionate qualities were channeled within the banks of Salesian gentleness. Father John Giacomelli, who was in the seminary with him, offers us a valuable insight into his developing style:

John was called *Bosco of Castelnuevo*. . . to distinguish him from another seminarian by the same surname. . . . In this connection I remember a little incident which, though unimportant, impressed me. The two Boscos were joking about their names and wondering whether they should use some nickname for clarity's sake.

The other Bosco said: "Bosco means wood. I like *nespolo* wood [the hard and knotty medlar wood], so call me *Nespolo*."

"I, instead, like *sales* [willow] wood which is soft and flexible, so call me *Sales*."

Was he perhaps already thinking about the future Society of St. Francis de Sales while he tried to imitate the benignity of this saint? Sensitive as he was even in minor things, he would easily have been carried away by anger if he had been less virtuous. No other seminarian (and there were many) was so prone to flare up. It was evident. . . that John fought earnestly and steadily to keep his temper under control. He was a model student.⁸⁶

Many problems remained unsolved for him. But the thread of divine providence was forming close-knit ties between John Bosco and three others in the priesthood: Joseph Cafasso (his compatriot from Castelnuevo), John Baptist Giacomelli, and William Garigliano. John and the

⁸⁵ AS 110 Ruffino (Apr. 1861) p. 48 f., from which borrows BM 1:285.

⁸⁶ BM 1:302; see Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, p. 452.

latter two men were inseparable companions in the seminary, and they would find themselves together again at the Convitto for post-ordination training in the priestly ministry.

Considering his native temperament, we are not surprised that John Bosco should feel deep affection for the seminary. He expressed his feelings in a passage that might seem to contradict everything we have heard so far, and to offer a wholly different overall judgment of his seminary years. It is worth quoting at length:

The day on which I had to leave the seminary for good was one of real consternation for me. My superiors loved me, constantly showing me signs of their goodwill. My companions liked me very much. You could say that I lived for them and they lived for me. If someone needed to get shaved or tonsured, he came to Bosco. If someone needed a biretta or a cassock mended, he headed for Bosco. Hence the separation was most painful for me. I was leaving a place where I had lived for six years, where I had received education, knowledge, the clerical spirit, and every indication of goodwill and affection that I could ask for.⁸⁷

Some might say that Don Bosco was trying to correct or even reverse the negative judgments he had expressed earlier about his seminary companions and the educational approach of his superiors. Or it might be suggested that he had written down his thoughts at different times and in different moods. In 1873–1874 he was thinking about his own clerics who were moving from the Oratory to the Turin seminary because the authorities wanted them to be definitely a part of the diocesan clergy. Temperament or conscious deliberation prompted him to indicate some of the negative aspects of his own stay in the Chieri seminary. It was an opportunity for him to offer his own clerics some general advice and judgments. Looking at his text today, we find differing judgments juxtaposed in the space of a few pages. Other sources do little to solve the seeming discrepancies for us, whether or not they are based on the actual spoken or written words of Don Bosco: e.g., the diaries of Fathers Ruffino, Bonetti, and Barberis, or other sources of testimony which may or may not have been included in the beatification and canonization processes.

One gets the definite impression that the documents deriving from Don Bosco bear the clear impact of his successive experiences. Thus his

⁸⁷ MO:114, to be linked up with BM 1:383.

recollections of the seminary were selected and presented in the light of convictions which he formed later at the Convitto, or of his later concerns as an educator of young people and the founder of a religious Congregation.

Having stated these precautions, I think we can say that there is no substantial opposition between the various assertions of Don Bosco. The fact that his superiors showed him all the goodwill and affection he could want does not mean that John Bosco did not feel uncomfortable about their educational system. In the seminary he could well regard himself as a privileged person. He could not have asked for more, seeing that the system of the day tended to isolate seminarians from their superiors. And the fact that he felt well liked by his companions does not mean that he did not feel uneasy about the presence of seemingly unworthy seminarians in the student body.

Thus we can say that Don Bosco's various statements complement one another. It may be legitimate to make use of the last cited text to clarify his other statements and to place his seminary years in a better light. But it is not legitimate to minimize the content of his other remarks and criticisms. They have their own valid historical sense and import based on what actually happened in Chieri. The ideas or impressions expressed above find solid support in the convergence of various sources and data: Don Bosco's comments on his seminary reading; his passing remarks about the seminary curriculum; his general remarks about his superiors and fellow students; his insights into himself and Comollo; and the backup testimony of Giacomelli, Dalfi, and other texts cited above.

Thus John Bosco's comments about taking leave of the seminary bring out clearly and plausibly his great capacity for affection and sympathy. In him we encounter the same phenomenon so often noticed in people's lives: profound consternation over separating oneself from an environment where, despite everything, mutual affection had taken root and prospered.

The memory of his dream at the age of nine had not faded at all. Recounting his first days as a priest, Don Bosco wrote: "When I was close to home and saw the site of my dream around the age of nine, I could not hold back the tears and exclaimed: 'How wondrous are the designs of divine providence! Truly God has taken a poor boy from the land and set him among the leaders of his people'."⁸⁸ His words were perhaps an impulsive expression of faith in the extraordinary value of

⁸⁸ MO:116.

that early dream. Indeed the Lord had given him early notice of his ascent to the priesthood, and in time it was corroborated.

7. *Comollo the seminarian and John Bosco*

Along with the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Don Bosco's *Cenni* on Comollo constitutes the most important document relating to his years in the seminary. The *Cenni* appeared anonymously in 1844. The first two chapters contain excerpts from letters sent by acquaintances, two of whom stand out: Father Francis Calosso, spiritual director of the high school in Chieri; and the theologian John Bosco of Chieri, professor of rhetoric (1835–1836) and then of sacred eloquence in the University of Turin.⁸⁹ The remaining five chapters deal almost completely with the testimony of an anonymous friend: i.e., Don Bosco.

The little book is transparently designed to edify its readers, and it is addressed as such to the Chieri seminarians. Unlike other works of the same genre, it offers a chronological account of events from Comollo's birth to his death rather than devoting separate chapters to examples of a specific virtue in action. Nevertheless the biographical content is slim, the method is anecdotal, the aim of edification is all too evident, and the influence of hagiographical works read by Don Bosco is clear.

It is evident that the writer is seeking to point up any possible similarities between Louis Comollo and Aloysius Gonzaga. Like Gonzaga, Comollo wept during his first confession, as if acknowledging that he was a terrible sinner. Like Gonzaga, he was filled with sweetness whenever he approached the Eucharist.⁹⁰ Don Bosco goes so far as to use almost the same words to be found in biographies of Aloysius Gonzaga:

When they saw Aloysius coming, they changed the conversation right away and became serious, discussing something that they knew was more likely to please him.⁹¹

Right away one would warn the other: "Watch it, Louis is listening." When he joined them, all less worthy talk was interrupted.⁹²

⁸⁹ The names of Calosso and Bosco, not mentioned in the 1844 edition, were added in the 1854 edition, pp. 20 and 24.

⁹⁰ Bosco, *Cenni storici*, Turin 1844, p. 9: "Flood of tears" at his first confession; p. 10: sacramental and spiritual communion; favorite reading, St. Alphonsus, *Visite al SS. Sacramento ed a Maria SS.*

The absence of literary devices and the hagiographic influence should not cause readers to overlook the solidity of the few episodes recounted. They are described without rhetorical embellishment and without the minuteness of detail that might suggest an effort at reconstruction. The sayings attributed to Comollo are brief, few in number, and easily remembered. They crop up again in the writings and spoken words of Don Bosco himself, but that is no reason to assume that he attributed his own way of thinking to Comollo. Indeed, we get a very different impression from reading this book. Due to the communion of life between the two friends, ideas and expressions were taken in by osmosis. Thus they took deep root in the mind and language of Don Bosco himself.

Don Bosco asserts, for example, that one of Comollo's habitual maxims was: *Servite Domino in laetitia* ("serve the Lord joyfully").⁹³ Comollo could have picked it up in the meetings of the *Società dell'Allegria*, but other expressions seem to fit his outlook more closely, even though we later find them being used habitually by Don Bosco.

Comollo's death-bed counsels, for example, can be found back in Don Bosco's notes taken around 1839 and thus have every guarantee of genuineness. Among them we find the comment already noted about seminary companions: some are bad, some neither good nor bad, and others are good.⁹⁴ We find the same differentiation offered to young people by Don Bosco in his *Giovane provveduto*. It recurs in his biography of Dominic Savio and in his *Sistema preventivo*.⁹⁵

⁹¹ A. Cesari (1760–1828), *Vita breve di San Luigi*. . . , pt. 1, chap. 7, Piacenza 1829, p. 53. *Translator's Note*: Gonzaga's first name was Louis (Luigi), and it is so given in various European languages such as French and Spanish, although in the English-speaking world he is better known as Aloysius. Stella draws attention to the name *Luigi* to point up the parallels with Louis Comollo.

⁹² Bosco, *Cenni storici*, p. 6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21 f.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁹⁵ *Il giovane provveduto (the Companion of Youth)*. Things to be especially avoided by young people, art. 2, Shunning evil companions, Turin, Paravia, 1847, p. 21 f.: "There are three sorts of companions. . ." *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, Chap. 5, Turin 1859, p. 20 f.; Eng. trans., *Saint Dominic Savio*, second edition, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1979. *Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù*, n. 5. Other recommendations, art. 4 (this n. 5 is not found in the first redactions published in *Inaugurazione del Patronato di S. Pietro in Nizza a Mare*, Turin: tip. Sales. 1877; and in *Regolam. per le Case della Società di San Francesco di Sales*, Turin: Tip. Sales., 1877). It is an addition to the manuscript by DB himself.

In the life of Comollo, however, the comment has a context of its own and a rather ominous air, since it applies to those living in the seminary with him. Moreover, Comollo seems to be disillusioned with clerics in general. Somewhat bitterly he voices a common thread of reflection to his friend: "Sometimes we find that an ordinary man or lowly woman has holier dispositions [in church], whereas the minister of the sanctuary goes about distractedly, not reflecting on the fact that he is in the house of the living God."⁹⁶

The most striking thing is the overall set of value judgments that Comollo expresses about his milieu. His discomfort and a tendency to escape his surroundings are fairly obvious. He was a timid student in Chieri, and probably elsewhere as well. He was often subjected to abuses and dirty tricks, which he chose not to avoid or perhaps did not know how to avoid. For him the earth was a "vale of tears," his body was the "wretched body," and he himself "a miserable tender of cattle."⁹⁷ Hence he was unworthy of the priesthood, and he left to others the responsibility for the steps he took. Their decisions would be manifestations of God's will for him.

Distressed with the world and himself, Comollo found refuge and consolation in religious practices that did not entail social involvement. He engaged in prolonged, emotional prayer, filled with gestures and sighs of which John Bosco could not wholly approve. While others were at recreation he, joined only by his friend Bosco, would recite the penitential psalms, the Office of the Dead, or the Office of the Blessed Virgin, for the sake of the souls in purgatory. His devotion to the Eucharist was nurtured by St. Alphonsus's *Visite al SS. Sacramento e a Maria SS.* The saint had become popular in Piedmont and many other places by this time. Comollo read his life and vowed to imitate him in not wasting any of his time.⁹⁸

Comollo's life in the seminary seemed to be one long examination of conscience. Every thought, word, and deed was scrutinized under the gaze of the divine judge. As Don Bosco recalls, Comollo spent the last year of his life meditating on the work of the Jesuit Pinamonti entitled *L'inferno aperto al cristiano perché non v'entri* ("Hell Opened to the Christian so That S/He Might Not Enter It").⁹⁹ These continual reflections, it

⁹⁶ Bosco, *Cenni storici*, p. 62.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹⁹ John Peter Pinamonti (1632–1703), *Opere*, Venice 1742, pp. 372–392.

seems, account for the turn that his religious outlook took in his last days: an almost obsessive focus on Christ as judge, final judgment, and the irrevocable judicial sentence. Don Bosco recounts an incident which occurred on the night of March 30, during his final illness: "Coming back to himself a bit and staring fixedly at those around him, he burst out with the exclamation: alas, Judgment! Then he began to struggle so violently that five or six of us could scarcely hold him down on the bed."¹⁰⁰

In a dream Comollo saw himself being thrust into the depths of hell by terrible monsters. Saved at the right moment by the Virgin Mary, who guided him up a snake-ridden ladder, he managed to reach a garden filled with delights.¹⁰¹

Elements in this dream clearly echo images and concepts in the book by Father Pinamonti. He suggests that we ask Mary to intercede that we might be freed from the abyss of sinfulness, from justly deserved damnation, from hellfire and eternal death. We should seek the intercession of Mary, our mother and advocate, so that we might escape the sentence of damnation through the merits of Jesus, his wounds and bloodshed, and enjoy him forever with all the saints in heaven.¹⁰²

Comollo might be considered to be somewhere between Aloysius Gonzaga, Alphonsus de Liguori, and Don Bosco. He was angelic like Gonzaga, sick and mistrustful of the world like Gonzaga and Alphonsus, and a simple farmboy who had become a student and aspirant to the priesthood like John Bosco. Unlike the latter, however, he would never have become a teacher of young people by the score. The motto, "Serve the Lord joyfully," was for him a summons to inner peace, which was to be attained and preserved through the realization that one was living in God's grace. It was not a motto for meetings of boisterous young people.

What John Bosco would admire in Comollo the seminarian was his rich interior colloquy with God, Mary, and the saints, not his tormented search for outward discipline and regularity. The same had been true during their high-school days together. John Bosco regarded him as near and dear because he felt that Comollo balanced his own tendency to move out into the exterior world. To say that Don Bosco owed the solidity of his own inner life to Comollo would be an exaggeration. But

¹⁰⁰ Bosco, *Cenni storici*, p. 53.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.

¹⁰² Pinamonti, *Opere*, p. 392.

the communion of life shared by the two certainly helped to safeguard and enrich John Bosco.

John Bosco admired the “unexceptional but accomplished virtue”¹⁰³ of his friend. In such virtue he would come to see the essence of holiness for young people. Louis Comollo was one of Don Bosco’s favorite examples, and the *Cenni* dealing with his life was one of the texts used for spiritual reading at the Oratory.¹⁰⁴ But the influence of Comollo may also have had something to do with Don Bosco’s somewhat excessive turn to asceticism, rigidity, and diffidence in the seminary. Such measures were suggested in contemporary books, and John Bosco saw them practiced by his admired friend and model, Comollo, the very reincarnation of Aloysius Gonzaga.

¹⁰³ Bosco, *Cenni storici*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ The number of editions bears witness to this. Also note this remark in the *Vita* of Dominic Savio (chap. 16, Turin 1859, p. 83): “Before anyone was accepted into the sodality of Mary Immaculate, he was made to read the life of Louis Comollo.”

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(a). AS 132 Quaderni 2: "Bosco Gioanni—manuscripts containing sonnets and various other poems, 17 May 1835," 1 f., 61 p., 1 p. b. On p. 61 f. it contains philosophy notes: "Introduction. The human being seeks truth and loves uprightness. . ." Presumably they were dictated by Prof. Ternavasio. There are too few details to determine the cast of the lessons (slight sensist tendencies?) or their derivation. Were they in the tradition of Joseph Pavesio (*Elementa logices ad Subalpinos*, Turin 1793; *Elementa methaphisices ad Subalpinos*, 1794; *Elementa philosophiae moralis ad Subalpinos*, 1795), with a sensist and Augustinian slant? Or did they follow more recent treatments influenced by Gioberti, Rosmini, and their adepts? The file also contains the hymn to St. Julius of Metastasio: "Giulio splendor de' martiri. . . speme e sostegno, amor—de' tuoi divoti" (p. 44). In the *Sei domeniche in onore di S. Luigi*, published by DB in 1846, we find that hymn reworked into: "Luigi onor de' vergini. . . dolce speranza, amor—de' tuoi divoti."

132 Quaderni 4: theology notebooks. Case in moral theology: "Titius filius. . ." 2 f.—Notes on "De locis theologicis," die 11 Junii 1839, 1 f.; "De Censuris," 2 f. stamp. with handwritten notations by DB, 15 f.—"Analysis quaestionum, quae juxta Alasiae ordinem in 1°, 2°, 3° et 4° Decalogi praecepto continentur, a D. Cafasso contracta 1840.—Codex primus 1842–43," manuscript perhaps partially handwritten by DB, 18 f.

(b). AS 113 Comollo 1: "Infermità e morte del giovane chierico Luigi Comollo scritta dal suo collega C. Giò Bosco. Nozione sulla nostra amicizia, e sulla sua vita" 1839, autograph copy of DB, 12 f. 2: "Cenni storici sul ch. Luigi Comollo seminarista di Chieri Dedicati al giovane Larissé conte ereditario," autograph of DB, 184. . . , 34 f. The dossier also contains the 1867 interfol. edition prepared by DB for the next edition "1883 quinta".

(c). Various chronicles (AS 110) and brief bits of testimony (AS 123), largely noted by Desramaut, *Les Mémoires I*, pp. 20–23. Certificates of sacred ordinations (AS 112 Documenti personali).

(d). Beatification and canonization process of Don Bosco and Father Cafasso. The documentation is partly in Turin, in the archives of the chancery and the Convitto; and partly in Rome, archives of the Congregation for Religious. For the history and interpretation of the MB it is well to remember that in compiling it Father Lemoyne made use of a copy of the diocesan information-gathering inquiry regarding the possible beatification of DB, and that the copy is preserved in AS 161.

(e). Verona-Saval, Bibl. Salesiani: *De Matrimonio*, autograph of DB, 1 notebook.

(f). Turin, archives of the curia. Besides the documents mentioned in (d) above, there are: pastoral letters dealing with various aspects of religious life in the diocese; correspondence, some of it dealing with the life of the clergy and, in particular, the seminary; various provisions dealing with persons, churches, confraternities, etc.

(g). Rivoli (Turin), seminary archives. It contains records of Chieri. One of the things noted is the frequenting of the sacraments. DB's practice is that of the normal seminarian in good favor. This seminary has also incorporated the old library of the Chieri seminary.

According to the records, DB did not go to Communion every Sunday in his first year at the seminary. He went to Confession every two weeks but changed confessors eight or nine times. In his second year he chose Canon Maloria as his confessor. See *Il prof. don Giovanni Maria Rolando. Ricordo della vita*. . . , Chieri 1968, p. 160 f.

(h). Chieri, Church of St. Phillip. Has records of various confraternities established there. They included the Association of St. Francis de Sales and the Sodality of St. Louis Gonzaga, both for adults.

2. Published

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III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

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THE TURIN CONVITTO AND FIRST CATECHETICAL EXPERIENCES (1841–1844)

1. Pastoral tendencies in post-Restoration Piedmont

The Turin Convitto for priests, wrote Don Bosco, was “that marvelous seedbed which produced so much good for the Church, especially by clearing out the roots of Jansenism that still remained intact among us.”¹ His was a conviction shared by many who had a high regard for the combined school and boarding house where some fifty young priests were given practical training in the pastoral ministry.² Nor was Don Bosco the only one to claim that the Convitto deserved credit for uprooting Jansenism. At the proceedings for Father Cafasso’s beatification more than one former student of the Convitto claimed it had freed Piedmont “from the tabes of Jansenism.”³

Not all were convinced, however, that Jansenism existed in Piedmont, or that the heresy of the five condemned propositions had ever gained a foothold there. Many of them reacted sharply to such an insinuation or accusation, which was still used and abused in polemics.⁴ By this time the meaning and sense of the term had evolved quite a bit.

¹ MO: 121

² In 1839–1840 the Convitto had 45 students. See Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino*, p. 54.

³ Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del Ven. Gius. Cafasso*, I, XIV.

⁴ See the polemics between Jerome Vincent Spanzotti (1741–1812) and Gaetano Donaudi (d. 1829) discussed by F. Ruffini, *I giansenisti piemontesi e la conversione*

When people used it now, they rarely meant the advocates of the oft condemned doctrine of Jansenism, or those who upheld the orthodoxy of Jansen, or those promoters of ecclesiastical reform who found inspiration in the ideals attributed to the Port-Royal authors. Now the label 'Jansenist' was sometimes applied to priests who did not readily grant absolution or allow frequent Communion, and this was usually done in good-natured terms. It was a far cry from the doctrinal tension of an earlier day.⁵

Yet it must be pointed out that there was no lack of fierce anti-Jansenists: e.g., Pius Bruno Lanteri, who in his younger days had known Jansenist sympathizers both in and outside the University of Turin before the French Revolution.⁶ The polemics may well have been confined almost exclusively to academic circles, where people looked over the general scene from their lofty perch and denounced the underground connections they detected between the pastoral rigorism of the early nineteenth century and Jansenism. Even outside the scholastic strongholds of the benignists fears might be expressed about certain present and immediate dangers that actually belonged to a bygone day. Thinking about pastors who counseled infrequent Communion, fervid benignists might well be tempted to assume that they had wittingly or unwittingly absorbed the unsound principles proposed in Antoine Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion*. The latter's work, it was claimed, was cunningly and maliciously contrived "to separate souls from the food of life."⁷

della madre di Cavour . . . , Florence, 1942; or those between John Peter Enrietti (1754–1843) and Joseph Anthony Alasia (1731–1812) in P. Stella, *Crisi religiose nel primo Ottocento piemontese*, Turin, 1959, pp. 55–63.

⁵ At least that is the opinion of G. Piovano, "Il Convitto ecclesiastico di Torino," in *Il Corriere*, Turin, 17 June 1926. Discontent with the Convitto must be taken into account, among other reasons because Guala was a leader of the fight against Jansenism. It is worth noting the comment of Gioberti cited by Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21, p. 477: "It is difficult to assess the harm that this group [in the Convitto] has done to religion, not only in Turin but throughout Piedmont. I have heard that statement made many times by old and experienced parish priests."

⁶ Bona, *Le 'Amicizie'*, p. 46, 77 f.

⁷ Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del . . . Cafasso*, I, XIX. The Jesuit Nicholas de Diessbach (1732–1798), who worked all over Piedmont, reported this view supposedly expressed by St. Vincent de Paul: "Perhaps Mr. Arnauld could offer him clearer proof that his book had not been composed for the purpose of ruining Mass and Communion" (*Il zelo meditativo di un pio solitario cristiano e cattolico . . .*, Turin: G.F. Fontana, 1774, p. 89).

Perhaps those pastors had imbibed the fatal poison of the appellant, Michael Simon Treuvé, who had written *Instructions on Both the General and Particular Obligations of Every Christian Living in This World*. The Italian version had been published in Turin in 1765, with a dedication to Bishop Rorà of Ivrea (later archbishop of Turin). The chief biographer of Father Cafasso tells us that one of the things taught in Treuvé's work was that it is "the height of presumption to expect God's pardon twice."⁸ Or perhaps those pastors had been influenced by Gabriel Gerberon's *Conversations with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament*, which made the point that if the world had prepared four thousand years to receive the Lord, then Christians ought to prepare their whole life by abstaining from Communion.⁹ It is a fact that alarming reminders of the awesome holiness of that sacrament could be found in books that were being published in Piedmont around the turn of the nineteenth century, and also in the pastoral letters of bishops.

In stressing those aspects, however, the benignists ended up creating a partial picture at best. Their view was historically inaccurate and theoretically tendentious. Insofar as their practical principles and actual pastoral work were concerned, they imagined themselves further removed from their adversaries than they actually were.

St. Alphonsus showed no less an appreciation of the holiness of the eucharistic sacrament than did Arnould, and he was more vehement in urging that people not desecrate it sacrilegiously. The benignists did not reproach Alphonsus for that stance. Though he deprecated Jansenist rigorism, Don Bosco himself affirmed that frequent Communion should not be allowed to someone who falls back into the same serious sin several times a week. This was Treuvé's position also.¹⁰ Don Bosco was

⁸ Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del . . . Cafasso*, I, XIX. The work of Michel-Simon Treuvé (1651–1730) was published by the royal press. I have looked unsuccessfully for the statement criticized by Di Robilant. But Treuvé does strongly stress the impossibility of lifting oneself up from sin by one's own efforts (pp. 91–96).

⁹ So interpreted by Di Robilant, *ibid.* Gaspare Nizzia, the acting vicar general for Cardinal Delle Lanze, ordered a copy of the *Entretiens avec Jésus-Christ* from France in 1762 for Joseph Ossorio, the Piedmont minister of foreign affairs. See Stella, *Giansenismo in Italia*, I/1, p. 395. In 1795 the work was published in Turin, in the original French (Turin: Guibert & Sons).

¹⁰ At least that is what he had to say to Salesians in 1879 (MB 14:46). When speaking to young people, especially at the start of the school year, he never ceased to urge as frequent use of the sacraments as possible. See, for example,

not basing himself on Treuvé, however, but on the moral theology of the Convitto and the teachings of St. Alphonsus and St. Francis de Sales. Don Bosco was not a Jansenist. The point is that in practical principles and pastoral work Jansenists and anti-Jansenists often ended up agreeing in their outlook and acting accordingly.

Jansenists were accused of keeping the faithful away from the sacraments. Yet while Don Bosco was at the Convitto, a certain parish priest died who was reputed to be a Jansenist, but who was credited with having increased the frequency of sacramental reception among his parishioners far beyond that in neighboring parishes. Was the label 'Jansenist' unjustified? Or was there no solid ground for the assumption that those who considered themselves disciples of Port-Royal, or were so considered, kept people away from the sacraments?¹¹

At the Convitto, in any case, there was a strong reaction against the wary-eyed sacramental approach to giving Communion that had been particularly common in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was considered a byproduct of the Jansenist scourge.

Insofar as this set of ideas was concerned, the school of Guala and Cafasso was no less polemical than that of the Chieri seminary. Alasia and his textbook were a favorite target. Required reading by virtue of its reputation among the clergy, it was commented on and criticized, the teaching of St. Alphonsus serving as a stimulus to critical-minded observations. Alasia and his teaching, which had been denounced for laxism at the turn of the century, were now criticized for rigidity and rigorism.¹²

We can pinpoint some of the reasons which led to the abandonment of the older sacramental practice, which was rightly or wrongly being accused of excessive strictness.

What had become of the faithful, some asked, after so many years

his comments on All Souls' Day, 1879 (BM 12:415–416). Treuvé's *Instructions* deal with the proper dispositions for frequent communion in chapters 19 and 20.

¹¹ John Peter Enrietti was a canon of the Cathedral of Ivrea and parish priest of his native Quincinetto, where he died on January 8, 1843. Of him it has been written: "Although . . . opinion had it that he gave signs of being a Jansenist, the frequent attendance of the sacraments and the piety which flourished in his parish area might well lead many to think quite the contrary." See Stella, *Giansenisti piemontesi nell'Ottocento*, p. 71.

¹² See footnote 33 of Chapter 2.

of rigorist predominance? Anthony Favre of Savoy, a dedicated follower of St. Alphonsus who would have some of his writings published in Don Bosco's *Catholic Readings*, felt that rigorism had helped to ruin religion "in Savoy and France, by estranging the faithful from the sacraments."¹³

Austerity and rigorism were supposed to lead people to a purer Christian life. But what were the actual results? asked the benignists. It was not just those alienated from the Church who were left without the sacraments, but also those who had wished to remain united with the Church in a living way. One advocate of more frequent use of the sacraments put it this way:

It has been noted that in the century preceding the last one, when corrupt behavior gave rise to many heresies that inundated almost the whole Catholic world, reception of the sacraments of Penance and Communion was almost completely lost; and that when it began to pick up again, thanks to the many saintly people God soon began to stir up, piety began to flower again everywhere. This soon put a stop to error in the very places where it had been doing the most damage! But why look so far away for examples of a truth, of which we have been convinced by our own personal experience? Sometimes we hear it said that it is a mistake to go to Communion once a month, once every two weeks, or once a week; that one will derive more fruit from it if one goes more seldom. Such talk may well be persuasive to those who attend Communion only two or three times a year. But what sort of impression could it make on those people who know very well how advantageous it is for them to receive Communion often?¹⁴

There is no little equivocation in the above statement. It seems to suggest that mere attendance at the sacraments produced a result which, in fact, was produced by a whole complex of factors. It also rebuts an alleged position which is probably taken out of its larger context, where it might well be more justifiable and to the point: e.g., "it is a mistake

¹³ Perroud, *Le Jansénisme en Savoie*, p. 94. Details on refusal of the sacraments, particularly in Maurienne, on p. 100 f.

¹⁴ Dominic Bigiogero, *L'amore degli amori Gesù Cristo nella SS.ma Eucaristia considerazioni pratiche per la frequenza della SS.ma Comunione . . .*, Turin: Stamp. Reale, 1794, p. 141 f.

to go to Communion . . . once a week—without the proper dispositions!” Nevertheless such statements by the benignists did bring out the intrinsic value and efficacy of the sacraments themselves. Catholic theology taught that Penance, by its very nature, was capable of communicating grace. The Eucharist was the very Author of the supernatural life, imbuing the faithful with love for God, nourishing and strengthening them, and cementing their ties to the Church.

Working on the supposition that in the past the faithful had been discouraged from frequent Communion indiscriminately and on principle, the benignists concluded that the result of this approach had been a serious undermining of piety, morality, and the faith. If one did not want to lose the remaining faithful, if one wanted to regain those who had been lost, then one would have to follow the path taken by those who stemmed the tide of Protestantism and corrupt morals in the seventeenth century. The people would have to be given back the things they had been deprived of, the absence of which had caused them so much suffering: i.e., devotion to the Eucharist, Mary, and the saints.

Nineteenth-century piety, in Piedmont as elsewhere, saw the rapid spread of devotions that had been repressed in the preceding century. The latter century's attitude had been one of opposition to devotions, and it found expression in such works as Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Della regolata devozione*.¹⁵ Now efforts were made to promote devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Benediction, and devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The practice of dedicating the month of May to Mary spread, and the Daughters of Mary became a familiar association in many parishes. May devotions drew in many people who were used to attending Lenten sermons, and still more when the Lenten sermon series went into decline. The Stations of the Cross also grew as a practice, particularly on Fridays during Lent.¹⁶

Popular manuals of piety did not omit private devotions and pious exercises. Indeed they tended to be chock-full of prayers to all sorts of saints for all sorts of spiritual and corporal needs.¹⁷

¹⁵ On its impact in the eighteenth century see Jemolo, *Il Giansenismo in Italia prima della Rivoluzione*, pp. 229–236. On the lively reaction to it see J. Stricher, *Le voeu du sang en faveur de l'Immaculée Conception*, 1, Rome 1959.

¹⁶ Stella, *I tempi e gli scritti che prepararono il 'Mese di Maggio' di Don Bosco*, in *Salesianum* 20 (1958) pp. 648–694.

¹⁷ A distinguished anthology of devotions is the *Manuale di Filotea* by the Milan priest, Joseph Riva, Milan 1831, 1865¹⁶ . . .

The devotions of the Marchioness Barolo may serve as an example, since they were probably not untypical. Her major biographer tells us that she had special devotion to the Blessed Trinity, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Sacrament, the Three Hours of the Agony, Our Lady of Consolation and Sorrows, the Guardian Angels, and the souls in Purgatory. The brightest stars on her heavenly map, her favorite saints, were: Joseph, Theresa, Julia, Anne, Mary Magdalen, Cosmas and Damian. She instituted the Sisters of St. Anne and Providence, the little hospital of St. Philomena, and the work of the Sisters of St. Mary Magdalen. She paid tribute to the Trinity by saying the Glory Be to the Father three times whenever she listened to any of her protégées. She practiced special devotions various months of the year; in March to St. Joseph, in May to the Blessed Virgin, in June to the Sacred Heart, and in October to the Guardian Angels. She also had the intention of founding a priestly congregation under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales.¹⁸

There was a widespread fear of losing the common people, a desire to keep them close to the Church. Strange as it may seem, the same concerns affected many of the old heirs to university rigorism: those who around 1820–1830 had been known as Dettorians, Alasians, or simply rigorists (e.g., Canon Peter Riberi, zealous promoter of efforts for the propagation of the faith and close friend of Gioberti), and who in 1840–1850 saw the Italian people clearly aiming for national unity and independence from foreign powers.¹⁹

There were the patriotic priests who, by the middle of the nineteenth century, were rightly or wrongly being called liberal priests by those who wanted to maintain the status quo, who advocated respect for all rulers because it was their religious conviction that all power and authority came from God. The liberal priests were viewed as revolutionary priests, probably tied in with freemasonry, the Carbonari, and other factions condemned by the popes. They were seen as the heirs of the Jansenists, who in the early part of the nineteenth century had given proof of collaborating with the Jacobins to bring ruin to both throne and altar.²⁰

Many patriotic priests, like Lamennais and Montalembert, had in-

¹⁸ G. Lanza, *La marchesa Giulia Falletti di Barolo nata Colbert*, Turin: G. Speirani, 1892, pp. 178 f., 188.

¹⁹ D. Berti, *Di Vincenzo Gioberti riformatore politico e ministro con le sue lettere inedite* . . . , Florence, 1881.

²⁰ Noteworthy in this connection are the reports sent to Rome by Ambrose

deed replaced the old binomial of 'throne and altar' with a new one: 'God and the people', or, 'religion and the people'. It expressed their desire to save the people for religion in a situation where rulers and proponents of conservatism were unwilling to recognize their rights and dignity.²¹

The last years of Gregory XVI's papacy and the early years of Pius IX's reign saw the rise of a tension that cannot readily be evoked in all its facets. Many people had long suppressed any enthusiasm because no one could see how national unity might be achieved without infringing upon papal prerogatives vis-à-vis the papal states. The patriotic priests expected that the people, if not supported in their aspirations for national unity, would achieve their aim anyway, despite all obstacles and even excommunications. And if Italy took shape that way, there would be bitterness and hatred toward the Church. Writing in 1851, after the break came between the cause of Risorgimento and the intransigent clergy, Godfrey Casalis would blame the decline of religious life on the attitude of the clergy, whom the people judged to be opposed to civil liberties:

Herein lies the origin of the denunciations and accusations of which the clergy are the target today. It is a sad fact indeed because the harm to society is great, whatever may be the cause and whoever may be to blame. Fallen from public esteem, the priest exercises his ministry fruitlessly. That ministry does not go beyond simple exhortation and moral influence, and hence lacks its necessary foundation. Having lost their respect for the ministers of the altar, the people no longer pay heed to what they preach, nor are they inspired to seek virtue.²²

Priests, some complained, fled from the people, from whom they were alienated. And the people, in turn, fled from priests as from "scruple-ridden misanthropes who knew neither the world nor the times in which they were living."²³ Meanwhile priests trumpeted their fanatical

Campodonico, who was in charge of the affairs of the Holy See in Turin. He writes with dark overtones. See P. Savio, *Fedeltà di mgr. A. Turchi*, p. 1049 (index).

²¹ On this subject a useful work is A. Gambaro, *Sulle orme del Lamennais in Italia*, Turin, 1958. For the post-1840 period, however, one should consult the letters of Vincent Gioberti, the *Letture di Famiglia* of Valerio, the works of Michael Flavian Bens (Oratorian priest of Turin), or those of Father Orsières from Val d'Aosta.

²² Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21, p. 465 f.

²³ Michael Flavian Bens (d. 1879), *Il gesuitismo alla berlina per cura di madama Filomena Bechinselva*, Turin: Speirani and Ferrero, 1850, p. 106.

complaints about the people, complaining that religion was dangerously declining and "threatened by unbelief."²⁴

Such was the situation, then. Priests with different presuppositions of a religious and political nature, but with the equal social sensitivity, found themselves side by side on the same battlefield in a war without trenches. Separated by principles, they found themselves together in trying to keep their people in the Church. So it was not surprising to find agreement in practice between Father Cafasso, the theologian Guala, and Bishop Losana, of Biella. The latter, nephew of a priest who bore the "scars of Port Royal,"²⁵ was viewed as a liberalizing priest; but he was also deeply concerned about the young people of Biella who were immigrating to Turin and so he was generous in offering help to Don Bosco as well.²⁶ Bishop Moreno of Ivrea, also regarded as a liberalizing priest, joined Bishop Losana in supporting the establishment and circulation of the *Catholic Readings*, even though the latter were reticent with respect to nationalistic ideas.²⁷ This also explains Don Bosco's collaboration with Fathers Carpano, Trivero, and Cocchi up until the point in 1848 when it seemed necessary to choose between unconditional loyalty to Pius IX and adherence to the cause of nationalism.²⁸

²⁴ *Il vero curato dell'abate Orsières tradotto da Nicolò Eustochio Cattaneo . . .*, Turin: tip. Economica, 1852, p. 55.

²⁵ Matthew Losana (1758–1833), parish priest of Lombriasco; see P. Stella, *Gian-senisti piemontesi nell'Ottocento*, pp. 77–81.

²⁶ See N. Menna, *I vescovi italiani anti-infallibilisti al Concilio Vaticano*, Naples, 1958, pp. 20–25. However, his negative view of Bishop Losana is due to insufficient knowledge of the sources. It has been written of him, as was true for DB, that he had "an open mind to grasp the needs and cast of modern times." See B. Buscaglia, *San Giovanni Bosco e i biellesi . . .*, Biella 1934, p. 43.

²⁷ Francis Favero (1827–1905). *Elogio funebre di mons. Luigi Moreno*, Turin: tip. S. Giuseppe, 1878; John Saroglia, *Memorie storiche sulla Chiesa d'Ivrea. Cenni Biografici*, Ivrea 1881; Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte*, 4, p. 4. In the local estimation Bishop Moreno was "one of the greatest bishops of the age," as his successor, Bishop Paul Restagno, put it. See A. Vaudagnotti, *Suor Clarac*, Turin, 1954, p. 301.

²⁸ E. Reffo, *Don Cocchi e i suoi Artigianelli*, Turin 1957 (= 1896¹); Reffo, *Cenni biografici del canonico Berizzi*, Turin: tip. S. Giuseppe, 1874; Reffo, *Vita del Servo di Dio Leonardo Murialdo*, Rome 1956 (1905¹); A. Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio su Leonardo Murialdo educatore*, Rome 1964 (rich in published and unpublished documents). A. Castellani, *Il beato Leonardo Murialdo. Vol I: Tappa della formazione, prima attività apostolica (1828–1866)*, Rome 1966 (the most well doc-

umented biography of Murialdo, very useful for filling out the documentation on the work of the Oratories in Turin).

Father John Cocchi was born in Druent in 1813 and ordained a priest on March 25, 1836. He founded the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia, Annunciation parish, in 1840. In 1849–1850 he was one of the animating spirits of the Charitable Society for Poor and Abandoned Youths. Later he played the same role vis-à-vis the School for Young Artisans, the Oratory of St. Martin, the Farm Settlement of Moncucco, and other initiatives on behalf of young people or the needy classes. He died on December 25, 1895. He is commemorated briefly in the *Bollettino Salesiano* 20 (1896) p. 49.

Canon Hyacinth Carpano was born in Turin on April 9, 1821, into an affluent and esteemed family from Bioglio (Biella). He was ordained in 1844 and died in Turin on January 26, 1894. He took a deep interest in the ill-equipped boys who came out of the prison for minors known as 'the General'. He also won much gratitude for his courageous help to the victims of cholera in 1854, when he was chaplain of the cemetery of St. Peter in Chains. He, too, was remembered in the *Bollettino Salesiano* 18 (1894) p. 84. The funeral eulogy was provided by Father Francesia, *Il canonico Giacinto G. Carpano, Elogio funebre*, Turin: Tip. Salesiana, 1894.

Father Joseph Trivero was born in Pettinengo, an area adjoining Bioglio, and was probably a friend of Father Carpano. His relatives were employed in the royal household in Turin, and so he was able to become a member of the palatine clergy. He was the guardian of the chapel of the Holy Shroud, and he died in Turin at the age of 78 on April 6, 1894. See Buscaglia, *San Giovanni Bosco e i biellesi*, p. 24.

Casalis, who sides with the liberal priests but has respect for all those who collaborated in educating young people and the common people, stresses the merits of Father Cocchi: "He is a true gem of the Piedmont clergy, whom he greatly encouraged to practice active charity by his own example. He thus roused them from the inertia in which their ecclesiastical superiors let them lie. Indeed their superiors did not bother with them at all, except to persecute any manifestations of liberal opinion. . . . With his kindly ways [Cocchi] knew . . . how to find priests after his own heart, who generously carried out those tasks even though neither he nor they ever got the slightest encouragement from their superiors" (*Dizionario*, 21, p. 713). On the other hand this genial ecclesiastical conservatism helps to explain why others came to support and encourage Don Bosco, who came from the Convitto of Father Guala, often considered 'the oracle of Archbishop Fransoni.' In the Archbishop's eyes, the mere attendance of his lectures was a thing of great merit, since he saw it as proof that one adhered to the doctrines taught there" (*Dizionario*, 21, p. 474).

Of Canon Carpano, Father Francesia delicately writes that he was "liberal only with his own possessions. His intention was to think of nothing else but souls. And so he divided, nay gave away, everything he got from his family to benefit that other family he had adopted on the vast fields of Valdocco" (*Elogio funebre*, p. 15).

2. Moving beyond intransigent systems

As we noted in the previous chapter, Don Bosco had found the theology of the seminary to be excessively abstract and polemical, and insufficiently pastoral. At the Turin Convitto, by contrast, young priests were given concrete preparation for their ministry.²⁹ It is not going too far to suggest that it was a desire to breathe new life into pastoral work that had prompted Guala, and later Cafasso, to find some way to get beyond the centuries-old antinomy between probabilism and probabiliorism.

Commenting on Alasia's textbook, Cafasso seemed to relish pointing out different evaluations of opinions. Whereas Alasia would judge certain opinions to be merely probable or even less than probable, those same views would be judged more probable by Billuart (a probabiliorist), Patuzzi (a probabiliorist), or Sporer (a probabilist).³⁰ Without realizing it, in all likelihood Cafasso was using the same tactic that Blaise Pascal had used against the casuists two centuries earlier. He was bringing out the fact that there was nothing absolute in the casebook approach, that there were many variables depending on viewpoint, time, place, and circumstances. Father Cafasso's intentions, however, were quite different from those of Pascal, perhaps even directly opposed to his. Whereas the author of the *Provincial Letters* had used irony to discredit the casuist's

²⁹ Godfrey Casalis, however, became the spokesman for the criticisms that the university circle directed against seminary teaching: "The teaching of this school is reduced to studying the less philosophical part of theology, i.e., dogmatic and moral theology. The speculative aspect, which is most needed to refute the errors of our day with regard to religion, is regarded as a luxury and hardly touched. The result of this narrow-minded training is that when one knows how to resolve the riddles of casuistry, one thinks one is a big deal and takes no interest in other study. Indeed such is the education given to clerics not going on for degrees that one can become a priest, a confessor, and even a pastor by mere attendance, without even knowing what the Holy Bible really is!" (*Dizionario*, 21, p. 467). Similar points are made by Rosmini—often borrowing from Fleury—with regard to the wound of the right hand of the Church: "the inadequate education of the clergy" (*Delle cinque piaghe dell'al Santa Chiesa*, Chap. 2, nn. 22–44). Casalis dares to add that "when the opportunity was offered, Archbishop Fransoni almost always was hostile to the priests with degrees, often noting that he had become archbishop of Turin without earning a degree" (*Dizionario*, 21, p. 466).

³⁰ A. Grazioli, *La pratica dei confessori nello spirito del Beato Cafasso*, Colle Don Bosco, 1944, p. 40 f. On Father Cafasso's view of rigorism see Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita . . . Cafasso*, Book 2, Chap. 3, 1, pp. 15–111.

arsenal, Father Cafasso was seeking to restore confidence in that approach insofar as it offered a well grounded, probable opinion.

That is the conclusion that Father Cafasso wanted to get across. In theory he may have been an advocate of the pure probabilism that was rightly or wrongly attributed to St. Alphonsus. In practice he tried to point up how probabilists and probabiliorists sometimes ended up agreeing on the same conclusions, even though they started off from contrary premises. What was the point, then, of fighting so hard to defend this or that system, creating division and scandal in the process? Priests should focus instead on the value of opinions as applied to practice:

The various opinions of theologians have the same function for us that various work tools have for a laborer. When a laborer needs tools in his work, he takes up now one tool and now another, using the one most suited to the work at hand. That is what we should do in that great workshop for souls . . . the ministry of Confession . . .

We enter it to save souls. Before us is a series of theological opinions, like so many tools to be used in this great task. In choosing between them, we don't consider the author in question or the opinion that pleases us most. We choose instead the opinion which we believe is more likely to save the penitent in the latter's circumstances. We hear confessions to prevent sin, so let us choose the opinion that is most likely to ensure, in a given case, the perseverance of our penitent in his or her resolutions. This is the real way to serve the interests of our master and to exercise the greatest charity possible vis-à-vis the souls of our neighbors.³¹

It is precisely the same outlook we find in Don Bosco when he talked about choosing the system that would send souls to paradise rather

³¹ Ibid., 1, p. 101 f. In Piedmont the minimization of moral systems on the pastoral level had already been advocated by the Jesuit Charles Emmanuel Pallavicini (1719–1785). See his work, *Il sacerdote santificato nella retta amministrazione del sacramento della penitenza . . .*, Turin: G. Marietti, 1826. Whether or not the confessor followed probabilism or probabiliorism, he needed discretion and wisdom in adapting himself properly to the penitent. In practice both the probabiliorist and the probabilist “can be wise and useful teachers of moral theology” (letter 2, n. 19, p. 246 f; n. 43, p. 283). But both Pallavicini and Cafasso felt that probabilism was more useful to the penitent (N. di Robilant, *Vita*, 1, p. 104).

than worrying about whether it was strict or not.³² And his preoccupation with souls ended up stimulating his sense of God rather than any concern for the theoretical system he might adopt in practice. Writing about him around 1860, Father Ruffino noted: "His norm is always where the greater glory of God lies; once that is evident, he spares no labor or expense."³³

3. *Moving beyond rigorism*

In their penitential practice as confessors, neither Father Cafasso nor Don Bosco were minimalists or laxists. Both approached the confessional with a vivid sense of sin and the life of grace. They were not simply judges, but fatherly priests and pastors of souls. Not satisfied solely with the minimum required for valid absolution, they wanted to plant the life of grace solidly in their penitents and help it grow.

Both of them also vividly experienced the presence of God in sudden, unexpected conversions, which they did not attribute to their own capacities but to the power of the grace granted by an infinitely good and merciful God.

To the moral conferences he gave at the Convitto Father Cafasso brought his personal experience as a confessor of priests, ordinary people, nobles, artisans, criminals, and convicts under the death penalty. In his spiritual exercises for clerics he often laid stress on the mercifulness that God had displayed so abundantly in the incarnation, passion, and death of Christ; on the mystery of grace vis-à-vis humanity, adumbrated in such parables as that of the prodigal son and clearly manifested in such acts as Jesus' kindness to the adulteress.³⁴

We can conclude that at the Convitto Don Bosco's stance vis-à-vis rigorism took clear shape. He now became firm in his conviction that

³² AS 110 Ruffino 9, p. 43. Joseph Frassinetti manifests analogous preoccupations. If the goal is the salvation of oneself and others, a good norm for the confessor is to follow the opinions of the canonized saints. What if they disagree on some point? "We will follow those opinions that seem more suitable to us; and if we do not save ourselves, say, with St. Thomas, we will do so with St. Bonaventure" (*Osservazioni sopra gli studi ecclesiastici proposte ai chierici*, Chap. 3, n. 4, Rome 1912, p. 24; 1839¹).

³³ AS 110 Ruffino 9, p. 43.

³⁴ See the chapter on confidence in F. Accornero, *La dottrina spirituale di S. Giuseppe Cafasso*, Turin 1958, pp. 107-130.

kindness, not severity, would be his way of leading souls to God. There may be some significance in the fact that it was two years after he left the Convitto that Don Bosco compiled his devotional exercise to the mercy of God for Marchioness Barolo,³⁵ who was then Father Cafasso's penitent.

4. Catechism lessons

The catechetical instruction that Don Bosco gave to Bartholomew Garelli in December 1841,³⁶ a few weeks after he arrived in Turin, was a decisive factor in the life of the young priest; but it was not the first catechesis to take place at the Turin Convitto. It seems, in fact, that the teaching of Christian doctrine to young people was an integral part of the pastoral training given to priests at the Convitto: "We cannot pinpoint the exact year when this catechetical instruction began, but numerous depositions and the cited testimony of the founder of the Salesians enable us to say with absolute certainty that it had begun well before 1841."³⁷ The documentation offered by Di Robilant comes from testimony offered during the beatification process for Father Cafasso and from his own first-hand experience as a priest familiar with the Turin oratories.³⁸

³⁵ *Esercizio di divozione alla Misericordia di Dio*, Turin: tip. Botta and Sons, 1847. It was written anonymously, but DB admitted authorship (AS 132 Testamenti; MB 10:1333). The manuscript was approved by the theologian Calvi on January 5, 1847 (Turin, archdiocesan archives, register of ecclesiastically approved books).

³⁶ MO:124-127.

³⁷ N. di Robilant, *Vita . . . Cafasso*, 2, p. 8.

³⁸ Louis Nicolis di Robilant was born in Turin on August 11, 1870. He was ordained a priest in 1893, but even earlier as a cleric he helped out at the Oratory of the Sacred Heart in the Nizza area. He died at the age of 33 on February 12, 1904. He was the nephew of Canon Stanislaus Gazelli and had close relations with Canon Allamano and Father Peter Ponte. The latter was a friend of Pellico, chaplain for the Marchioness Barolo and the Sisters of St. Anne, and a co-worker of Don Bosco. A native of Pancalieri, he died in Turin on October 2, 1892. On Di Robilant see E. Dervieux, *I miei trovanti . . .*, Turin 1940, pp. 39-65, and the Preface to Nicolis De Robilant's *Vita . . . Cafasso*, 1, pp. I-XL. Stanislaus Gazelli di Rossana (1817-1899) was a Turin patrician charitable to all, and an admirer of DB; see Nicolis di Robilant, *Un prete di ieri. Il canonico Stanislao Gazelli di Rossana e S. Sabastiano . . .*, Turin, 1901. Father Peter Ponte is frequently mentioned in biographies of Barolo and of the second Superior General of the Sisters of St. Anne, Maria Enrichetta Dominici (1829-1896).

Along with catechism lessons went charitable assistance to needy young people. Di Robilant refers particularly to the chimney-sweeps from Val d'Aosta who were attended by three priests already mentioned: Hyacinth Carpano (1821–1894), Peter Ponte (1821–1892), and Joseph Trivero (1816–1894). Don Bosco worked with them for a while. After catechetical lessons, they would lead them out into the yard of the Convitto and feed them bread, sometimes adding salami slices.³⁹ There must have been predecessors in this work at the Convitto, however, if it is true that the group of chimney-sweeps was among the first to have the religious assistance of the Convitto members. For these three priests, who were younger than Don Bosco, were certainly classmates of his, or of others a few years younger at the Convitto itself.

It is clear that some remarks of Don Bosco on the origins of the Oratory must be taken in a more restricted sense than they suggest at first glance. December 8, 1841, did not mark the start of oratories or catechism lessons for Turin youths. It simply marked the start of the institutions and activities of which he was the founder or, at least, the chief promoter from this point on.⁴⁰

When Don Bosco's three years at the Convitto were up, Father Cafasso proposed that he remain there as a tutor or go to serve as a chaplain at the little hospital of St. Philomena that had been founded by the Marchioness Barolo. Don Bosco may well have wished to stay at the Convitto, continue his catechetical work, and perhaps establish an Oratory. But we learn from Father Berto, who claims to have heard it from Don Bosco himself, that Father Cafasso did not want that at all.⁴¹ Even in the case of Don Bosco, Cafasso may have opposed the tendency to turn the yard and other areas of the Convitto into meeting places for

³⁹ Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita . . . Cafasso*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ One might get an erroneous impression from what DB says, for example, in a dialogue of April 27, 1865: "In origin (1841) the Oratories were nothing else but gatherings of young people . . . The first Oratory is the one where we are now, that of St. Francis de Sales. After this one another was opened in Porta Nuova, later another in Vanchiglia, that of St. Joseph in S. Salvario a few years ago" (G. Bosco, *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice . . .*, Turin, 1868 (LC), p. 163; MB 8:1037). He is correct in what he wrote in the oldest redactions of his *Constitution of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*, under the heading "Origin of This Society": "Starting in 1841, Father John Bosco joined other priests . . ." (AS 022 1, p. 3; see BM 5:636).

⁴¹ Autograph document in AS 123 Cafasso.

noisy youngsters, who would upset the atmosphere of study and recollection. Father Cafasso may well have given Don Bosco one of two choices: become a tutor at the Convitto and give up the Oratory, because it would be too distracting if it were his chief occupation; or else go elsewhere and dedicate himself wholly to young people. Thus Cafasso would have forced Don Bosco to make a choice even before the Marchioness Barolo did, but not in such drastic and peremptory terms and certainly not until his pupil was secure in his plans and arrangements. If Father Berto's testimony is correct, it is worth noting that Don Bosco was inclined to keep quiet about the matter. Perhaps he felt that talking about it would cast a shadow over the bright picture of Father Cafasso that he had presented, so he preferred to stress Cafasso's gifts of prudence and foresight.

Don Bosco chose what was more to his inclination and liking, particularly after his three years of positive experiences with the young people of Turin. In his choice we again glimpse the religious atmosphere that influenced him. Don Bosco was convinced that the will of God was manifested to him in Father Cafasso's advice, though he admitted to some initial misgivings: "At first glance that advice seemed to go against all my inclinations because the direction of a hospital, preaching and hearing confessions in an institute for more than 400 girls, would take away time for any other occupation. But such was the will of heaven, as I soon came to know for sure."⁴² Father Cafasso expressed the same conviction: "Go with Borel . . . do your work . . . God will put in your hands what you are to do for young people."⁴³

One or more dreams that Don Bosco had amid his emotional departure from the Convitto revived the images and messages of his dream at the age of nine; but there were new details. Not only did he see himself amid a crowd of "wolves, nanny goats, kids, sheep, rams, dogs, and birds" that changed into lambs. He also saw "lambs changing into shep-

⁴² MO: 133.

⁴³ Ibid. Along with Canon Charles Anthony Borsarelli di Rifreddo, theologian Borel was the spiritual director of the schools of San Francesco di Paola (*Annuario statistico-amministrativo della Divisione di Torino per l'anno 1836*, Turin: tip. Gius. Fodratti, p. 97). In 1844 he had become the chaplain (or perhaps already the spiritual director) of the convent of St. Mary Magdalen. He died on September 9, 1873 and was affectionately remembered in the *Museo delle Missioni Cattoliche* 16 (1873) p. 620 f: "simple, popular, modest, happy humble . . . affectionately called . . . the *little padre* (padre piccolo)."

herd boys" and a "huge, tall church." It may well have been what he now felt a need for: co-workers and some sacred place all to himself and his youths.⁴⁴

5. *Don Bosco's sermons*

In the Convitto Don Bosco's priestly activity took a turn towards vigorous pastoral work and young people. This orientation was reflected in his preaching activity as well.

One might think that the sermon material of a priest would be among his less important and less personal papers. The press of urgent tasks, the awareness that the material is not bound for publication, and confidence in one's own abilities may often lead to more modest compositions or the rather mechanical transcription of material already at hand. But it should also be noted that a priest deeply committed to his ministry is not too easily pleased with his sermon work in most instances. He will find it hard to rest content with texts that do not echo the deeper feelings of his own inner life, and he will tend to give a personal accent to his words. It may well be that he borrows words, sentences, or even whole pages; but that does not mean we can accuse him of laziness or superficiality without further ado. The accusation would certainly not hold for the Curé of Ars (John Vianney). His sermon material was almost entirely secondhand, but his words touched hearts and moved them to conversion.⁴⁵ Neither can Don Bosco be accused of laziness or superficiality, though his preaching was often modest in form and content. His words drew young people and adults to him, and to a more intense religious practice.

The sermons of Don Bosco that we have were largely compiled in his early years as a priest, the years he spent at the Convitto.⁴⁶ The topics

⁴⁴ MO:134-136.

⁴⁵ J. Genêt, *L'énigme des sermons du Curé d'Ars*, Paris 1960.

⁴⁶ AS 132 Prediche-Conferenze-Discorsi (sermons, conferences, discourses). By way of example, here are a few from his first two years as a priest:

AS 132 Prediche A/1: The End of the Human Being (12/3/1841)

A/3: Introduction (4/2/1842)

A/4: Mortal Sin (4/17/42)

D/11: The Visitation of Mary: "Mary's devotion is a sign of predestination . . .," f. 2 v:

Visitation of Mary (6/13/42). Retreat for orphan girls.

are ones which were common sermon topics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are patterned after the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and the written works of Segneri and St. Alphonsus. Don Bosco borrows from them directly, or from their followers: e.g., the Piedmont Jesuit, Rosignoli (early eighteenth century), and the Ligurian priest, Anthony Francis Biamonti (early nineteenth century).⁴⁷

Worthy of special note among these early documents is the panegyric in honor of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, which Don Bosco put together in 1844 or even earlier.⁴⁸ Its sole source seems to have been Anthony Cesari's biography of the saint, *Vita breve di san Luigi Gonzaga*, which was later cited by Don Bosco in his comments on the saint that were appended to his *Six Sundays and Novena* in Gonzaga's honor.⁴⁹ Don Bosco borrows almost word for word, as a brief comparison makes clear:

DON BOSCO:

He set up for himself a fast
that covered at least three
days a week;

Friday in bread and water;
[. . .]

Those who provided him
with dinner were all amaze-
ment,

CESARI:

He set up for himself a fast,
at least three days a week,

and Friday in bread and
water [. . .]

The very people who pro-
vided him with dinner
[. . .] were astonished,

A/5: Death of the Sinner (7/1/42)

A/6: With death time ends and eternity begins
(7/17/42)

A/9: Institution of the Eucharist (8/12/42)

A/11: Happiness of Paradise (6/30/43)

See BM 4:123 f., and MB 16:594–613.

⁴⁷ Charles Gregory Rosignoli, *Verità eterne esposte in lettioni*, Milan, 1688; A.F. Biamonti, *Serie di meditazioni prediche ed istruzioni ad uso delle sacre missioni e de' santi spirituali esercizi*, Milan 1840², 6 vols (= Genoa 1840¹).

⁴⁸ AS 132 Prediche . . . F/7. Begins: "Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis . . .," autograph draft of DB and allograph copy (published in MB 16:605–613). Alongside the date of birth, 9 March 1568, DB wrote in the margin: "276 years ago."

⁴⁹ [G. Bosco], *Le sei domeniche e la novena di san Luigi Gonzaga con un cenno sulla vita del Santo*, Turin: tip. Speirani & Gerrero, 1846 (one copy, along with a partly handwritten ms. of DB, is in AS 133 Sei domeniche; 1854 (LC) . . .

that with so little he could
sustain life.

and regarded it as a great
miracle thanks to which God
wished

to prove how much the hu-
man being was capable of.

that with so little he could
sustain life;

and regarded it as that sort
of miracle by which God
wished

to prove, how much the hu-
man being was capable of.⁵⁰

The motto of the panegyric, *Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis* ("You made him a little lower than the angels"), clearly expresses Don Bosco's theme and personal conviction. In Aloysius everything radiates the wholly gratuitous work of God; but the youth collaborated with complete dedication, so that God granted him eternal life and, before that, the happy death of the righteous person. Aloysius was a model given to young people by the goodness of God.

The panegyric, taken by itself, is a fairly modest piece of work, but it has value for us when seen in the context of Don Bosco's life and writings. It is rich in themes that will be characteristic ones for Don Bosco. The vocation of young people to holiness, merely touched upon in the panegyric, will become one of the dominant themes in the biography of Dominic Savio. The death of the righteous person will almost always be presented by Don Bosco in exciting terms, and in contrast with that of the sinner. This idealizing strain can almost be said to be influenced more by the literature on St. Aloysius (nourished by Old Testament considerations and popular preaching) than by the drama of the crucified Christ.

More detailed analysis of these early sermons would uncover other themes that were to become typical of Don Bosco's way of thinking and expressing himself. It is already evident, for example, that Don Bosco is not preparing to give conferences and lectures in the manner of Frays-

⁵⁰ A. Cesari, *Vita breve di san Luigi Gonzaga scritta novellamente*, Part 1, Chapter 5, Piacenza 1829, p. 39; MB 16: 607 f. DB's text does not come from Cepári, who seems to take directly from Cesari: "Ordinarily he fasted at least three days a week . . . But ordinarily he ate so little that some astonished people at court, wondering how he could stay alive, decided one day, without his knowledge, to weigh the food he was wont to take in a meal. They solemnly swore, after the weighing, that the bread and what went with it did not amount to an ounce at a time . . ." (Cepári, *Vita dell'angelico giovane S. Luigi Gonzaga . . .*, Part 1, Chap. 7, Turin: Gius. Rameletti, 1787, p. 65 f.).

sinous, to become a classic Lenten preacher like Segneri, or to be a new preacher and apologist for the Church in the age of Romanticism. He is not setting out to preach the beauties of the faith, like G. Ventura, or the genius of Christian civilization, like Chateaubriand or Balmes. Don Bosco will be a catechist by choice, spelling out the principles of the catechism in simple, popular terms whether he is addressing kids, country people, or the members of the Roman Academy of Arcadia. By virtue of this basic pedagogical bent, the fruit of his experience as a catechist, Don Bosco's preaching bears a resemblance to that of Anthony Rosmini.⁵¹

6. *The years at the Convitto: a time of inner healing and religious maturation*

From Don Bosco's recollections we get the definite impression that he found compensation for the things he had missed at the seminary during his years at the Convitto. He had longed for affection and familiarity with his superiors at the seminary; he found all that at the Convitto. There was Guala, of whom he spoke with the greatest respect, and Cafasso, his compatriot and benefactor. He found affection and friendship in his colleagues as well. One was Felix Golzio, his 'gold mine'. From 1867 to 1873 Golzio was the Rector of the Convitto; and when Cafasso died (1860), Don Bosco chose him for his personal confessor.⁵² To Father Cafasso he opened his heart completely as he had once done with Father Calosso:

Father Cafasso, my guide for six years, was also my spiritual director. If I have done anything worthwhile, I owe it to that worthy cleric into whose hands I entrusted all my deliberations, all my studies, and all my activities in life.⁵³

This is the first time that Don Bosco talks about a spiritual director in recalling his life, and the context makes clear what he means. His spiritual director was the person to whom he revealed his conscience in order to get direction for his religious life, the one who heard his confes-

⁵¹ E. Santini, *L'eloquenza italiana dal Concilio tridentino ai nostri giorni. Gli oratori sacri*, Milan 1923, p. 327 f.

⁵² MO:122.

⁵³ MO:123.

sions, and the one who gave him authoritative counsel in every matter and decision of importance.

Don Bosco also benefited from the opportunity to read and study. He stressed the point, though perhaps because he was aware of the fact that he was writing to Salesians. He certainly did read books at the Convitto, but he does not mention any specific book titles as he did for his seminary years.

He also found the moral conferences and lessons in sacred eloquence congenial. Posing practical cases, they did not teach a theological system or a theory of the apostolate but the art of caring for souls. Situations from everyday life were presented, and then put to the test in such priestly activities as preaching, giving catechism lessons, and so forth.

Most beneficial of all must have been his work with young people as friend, helpmate, teacher and confessor.

If we have any right to conjecture about the motivating forces behind his pastoral work as a young priest, then I think we can be enlightened by the motto he chose for his priestly life: *Da mihi animas caetera tolle* ("give me souls, take away everything else"). In the context of Catholic literature of the day, particularly that of the St. Alphonsus tradition, this motto takes on a particular cast when associated with another one that was widely used and personally assimilated by Don Bosco: *Animam salvasti, animam tuam praedestinasti* ("you have saved [a] soul, you have predestined your soul").⁵⁴ In the general context of one's vocation and choice of a state in life, pastoral work fitted in as a response to a God-given vocation and as a guarantee of salvation.

The place of God in the life of Don Bosco as a priest is made even more clear by his remarks on the catechism lessons he gave to Bartholomew Garelli. Don Bosco began with a Sign of the Cross, then sought to introduce the youth "to God the Creator and the end for which God created us."⁵⁵ But first he knelt before the tabernacle and devoutly recited a Hail Mary.⁵⁶ Thus Don Bosco began as various catechisms recommended, moving from a solid basis in Christian practice.⁵⁷ The initial recognition of Jesus and Mary was part of general Catholic religious

⁵⁴ See the headings 'Anime', 'Apostolato', 'Zelo', in *Indice MB*, pp. 14 f., 18, 497 f.

⁵⁵ MO: 127; also see MB 17:150

⁵⁶ MB 17:510

⁵⁷ That is the way that Bellarmine's *Doctrina* began, for example.

practice, and so was the initial focus on God as our creator and end. Both bore witness to the fabric of Don Bosco's own life and his way of viewing reality, in which God was the logical and ontological ground of reality.

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FROM THE ORATORY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES TO THE HOSPICE ADDITION

(1845–1863)

1. Problems posed by Turin's population growth

The catechetical efforts and pastoral concerns of the Convitto make more sense in the light of their surrounding context. Much concern and worry was rooted in the population growth taking place in Turin, due to industrial expansion. Whole families were being lured from the provinces and from Lombardy, and much housing construction was in progress.

According to the 1838 census, Turin had 117,072 inhabitants; by 1848 the figure was 136,849. Municipal housing had risen from 2,615 to 3,289. In 1838 there were 26,351 families (10.08 per house); in 1848 there were 33,040 (10.05 per house). In 1838 the family had an average of 4.44 members; the figure was 4.14 in 1848. The overall jump in population over the ten years was 19,777 (16.89%).¹

Illiterates under the age of twenty numbered 29,364: 14,006 males, 15,358 females. All together they constituted 40.32% of the inhabitants: males, 31.46%; females, 49.32%.²

Besides the stable population, a transient population not covered in the above statistics gravitated to Turin: military men (1,521), students (4,787), occasional laborers, and convicts.³

¹ G. Melano, *La popolazione di Torino e del Piemonte nel secolo XIX*. . . , Turin 1961, p. 73.

² *Ibid.*, p. 75f.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

The flow of immigrants reached even higher levels in the following decades.

These statistics lend concreteness to traditional references to the boys and young men who filled the streets, squares, and meadows. Children of needy families, of parents who were often unemployed, they had no trade or hope of acquiring one. Or else they struggled to find some job that would keep them alive and perhaps help them improve their living standard. Writes Father Lemoyne:

This area, adjacent to Porta Palazzo, swarmed with hawkers, peddlers, bootblacks, chimney sweeps, stable boys, lads passing out fliers, and messenger boys, all poor youngsters scraping together a meager livelihood from these odd jobs.⁴

Apart from the possible exaggeration as to how many chimney sweeps and stable boys might be 'swarming' around what was already a marketplace, his comment does give us a decent idea of the various categories of boys, occupied or at loose ends, who might be found hanging around the general area. Don Bosco himself reports that around 1843–1844 the Oratory was made up of "stonecutters, bricklayers, plasterers, pavers, squarers, and others from distant areas."⁵

2. *Municipal efforts to train students and workers*

This multitude of youths, differing in age and social status, posed their own peculiar set of problems within a larger context. A vast effort at popular education was envisioned by many people, liberals or no, who were sensitive to the values of the person and the dignity of the people.

⁴ BM 3:33. Lacking data for 1844–1848, we can take as a basis of comparison the figures for 1861, when the population of Turin was about 200,000. At that time the number of chimney sweeps in the whole city was 77; male students and schoolboys, 10,098; poor males without a profession, 885, non-poor males without a profession, 13,603; day laborers without a specific trade, 1,222. See Melano, *La popolazione di Torino*, pp. 155–160. There is no mention of bootblacks, and no specific data on the other categories mentioned by Father Lemoyne. On the verb 'swarm' see footnote 28 below and the corresponding chapter text.

⁵ MO: 129. In 1861 there were: 61 pavers of various sorts; 1,481 bricklayers; 81 plasterers and whitewashers; 38 brick and tile roofers; 23 building painters. See Melano, *La popolazione di Torino*, p. 156 f.

Their efforts fitted into more modest regional schemes, or into more ambitious plans for an Italian nation.⁶

By this time the rush of people from provincial areas to the capital as a center of instruction and training was more due to grassroots aspirations among the lower and middle classes than to any carefully planned and coordinated scheme. The structures set up by Victor Amadeus II and Charles Emmanuel III in the preceding century no longer existed or could not meet the need.⁷ New pedagogical methods were filtering in from elsewhere. On the elementary level there were plans to increase the number of schools using the 'monitorial system' of Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838), which would put hundreds and hundreds of pupils under the general direction of one teacher. Schools of vocational training were being organized for those pupils who went beyond the elementary level, and education in the humanities was being offered by a growing number of municipal schools and private tutors.⁸

Even before 1848 the humanist schools were seeing members of the poorer classes taking their seats alongside members of the nobility and the upper middle classes. They were educating a class of youth "which no longer knew whether it was born noble or plebeian, but which wanted a civilized existence and intended to have it."⁹

The problem of artisans (trade students) was serious and keenly felt. In 1845 two schools were opened: a school of mechanics under Charles Ignatius Giullio, and a school of industrial chemistry under Ascanio Sobrero. Laborers were flocking to the Brothers of the Christian Schools

⁶ The hopes and desires for elevating the level of the common people during the era of Charles Albert are effectively brought out by N. Rodolico, *Carlo Alberto negli anni 1843-1849*, Florence 1943, pp. 21-26.

⁷ See T. Vallauri, *Storia delle Università degli studi del Piemonte*, Turin 1856 (deals in particular with Piedmont schools in the eighteenth century); A. Gambaro, "La pedagogia italiana nell'età del Risorgimento," in *Questioni di storia della pedagogia*, Brescia 1963, pp. 451-455 (on Piedmont during the Restoration), and p. 651 f. (relevant bibliography).

⁸ C. Verri, *I Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane e la storia della scuola in Piemonte*. . . , Como 1959; Gambaro, "La pedagogia italiana," pp. 453, 652-654; D. Bertoni Jovine, *Storia della scuola popolare in Italia*, Turin 1954; Idem, *Breve storia della scuola italiana*, Rome 1961.

⁹ Hyacinth Provana di Collegno to Gino Capponi, 5 July 1846, cited by Rodolico, *Carlo Alberto negli anni 1843-1849*, p. 12.

(also known as the Christian Brothers) to take the lessons sponsored by the government agency that provided vocational training for the poor (*Opera di Mendicizia istruita*). In 1847 the number of would-be students surpassed 600, for which all but 70 (qualified workers) were 'amateurs'.¹⁰ The eagerness for training far surpassed anticipations and actual possibilities, as Giullio himself wrote in 1847:

Last year 700 adult workers over the age of twenty-two showed up at the evening schools for untrained boys to attend the classes. There was room for only 150, so the rest were turned away. During the summer, classrooms for 800 were constructed, but even that proved to be inadequate. More than 1500 adult workers showed up to register, and some of them had to be turned away for lack of space, until other schools are provided. I would have liked to find them in 24 hours, if I had been in the place of those whose job it is to provide them.¹¹

In this general context of problems and preoccupations, varied but interconnected, many stepped in to offer help since public facilities were inadequate. Some were inspired by philanthropy, others by promptings of charity exercised in the name of Christ.¹²

3. *The various oratories for abandoned youth*

The new social situation, with its influx of population, of young people in particular, also created problems of religious assistance. The antiquated parochial setup—fourteen parishes in the city, two in the suburbs—could

¹⁰ Letter of Hilary Petitti di Roreto, 3 February 1847, in A Codignola, *Dagli albori della libertà al proclama di Moncalieri. Carteggio Petitti-Erede* (Bibl. di stor. ital., 13), Turin 1931, p. 266.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² R. M. Borsarelli, *La marchesa di Barolo e le opere assistenziali in Piemonte nel Risorgimento*; C. Carrera, *Brevi cenni sulla R. Opera Mendicizia Istruita dalla sua origine all'anno 1878*, Turin-Rome, 1878; A. Cherubini, *Dottrine e metodi assistenziali del 1749-1848. Italia, Francia e Inghilterra*, Milan, 1958; S. Solero, *Storia dell'ospedale maggiore di San Giovanni Battista della città di Torino*, Turin, 1959. Similar suggestions and hints for studying the Turin milieu are offered by G. C. Bascapè, "L'assistenza e la beneficenza fino al termine delle dominazioni straniere," in *Storia di Milano*, Milan 1960, 14:802-834. Rich data can also be found in N. Pettinati, "Torino benefica," in *Torino*, Turin 1880², pp. 837-882; and in L. E. Rossi, *Milano benefica e providente*, Milan, 1906.

not deal adequately with the situation.¹³ How many youths came to Turin from their native country or rural area with a letter of commendation from their original parish priest to his confrere in the big city? How many provincial pastors even considered the problem? And how many city priests felt prompted to change the network of traditional structures and organisms centered around the administration of the sacraments and the celebration of Mass?¹⁴

Besides the assistant curates performing funerals and baptisms, there would have to have been others appointed specifically for a roving apostolate to shops, offices, and markets. Pastors and their assistants would have had to go beyond simply waiting for young people to come to them in church or the sacristy for catechism lessons in the evening, on Sunday, or during Lent. In provincial and rural areas pastors were able to exercise control through the adults whom they influenced. This was becoming impossible in the city because curates were losing contact with recently arrived families.

In Milan this problem did not exist to such a distressing degree when the Turin clergy went to visit its parochial and interparochial oratories between 1840 and 1850.¹⁵ But in Turin it was necessary to start from scratch because the student associations could not really be transformed into mass oratories for young people, for artisans or vagabonds in particular. Yet that was what the moment called for: popular oratories akin to schools of the Lancastrian sort.

This was the problem being considered by many 'freewheeling'

¹³ Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino*, Turin 1840, p. 53.

¹⁴ The question is brought up in MO:152-154 from the viewpoint of Don Bosco. The conclusion was that "The parish priests of Turin, assembled [in 1846] at their customary conferences, dealt with the question of the advisability of oratories. They weighed the fears and hopes associated with the issue. And since each pastor could not provide for an oratory in his own parish, they encouraged Father Bosco to continue with his work until such time as a further decision was made." The same held true for Father Cocchi also. See also BM 3:129 f.

¹⁵ Around 1850 in Milan there were fifteen youth oratories (see *Milano sacro*, the archdiocesan yearbook), some of which had been in existence for more than a century. At the invitation of Father Seraphim Allievi, Don Bosco preached at the Oratory of St. Aloysius (by the church of St. Simplicianus) in 1850 (BM 4:119, 123 f.). Perhaps DB then obtained a copy of the Regulations of St. Francis de Sales (AS 025 Regolamento dell'Oratorio e delle Case; AS 029 Regole e regolamenti di altri Istituti).

priests: e.g., those of the Turin Convitto and others who ended up working with oratories. They fitted in with the new class of youths to whom they turned. They were, in a sense, a new class of priests. Eventually they forgot whether they themselves had come from the nobility or the country folk. They were united as brothers in the common effort to promote popular education in oratories and associated enterprises, and to assist one another in their work among the sick and the imprisoned.¹⁶

If we wish to respect historical fact, we cannot say that Don Bosco was the first to appreciate the problem of poor and abandoned youth in Turin, or that he was the first to establish an oratory for aimless young artisans.

The first known oratory of the type that Don Bosco would open under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales was the Guardian Angel Oratory founded by Father John Cocchi in a wretched ward of Turin with a bad reputation (*il Moschino*, Annunciation parish, neighborhood of Vanchiglia). Like Don Bosco, Cocchi came from a country district, having been born in Druent in 1813. He was already a priest in 1836, when Don Bosco was in his first year of philosophy at the Chieri seminary. Father Cocchi had a knack for starting things, but he lacked organizing ability and the perseverance to see things through. After various vicissitudes the Guardian Angel Oratory came under the direction of Don Bosco. But even up to 1850, it seems, its renown exceeded that of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.¹⁷

The designation given to the young people who frequented the oratories was 'abandoned youth' or 'poor and abandoned youth'. We find this documented in similar works instituted in Brescia and elsewhere by Father Ludovico Pavoni. Even before that, there had been similar initiatives in Marseilles and other French cities under the leadership of John Joseph Allemand.¹⁸ But the term remained vague and could mean

¹⁶ See footnote 28 of Chapter III.

¹⁷ See footnote 29 below. Brief comments on the Turin oratories are offered in the little work, *Della Dottrina Cristiana e dei Catechismi. Lettera pastorale di S.E. Rev. ma monsignor D. Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi dei conti di Netro arcivescovo di Torino seguita da un'appendice sulle oratorii e sulle compagnie delle Figlie di Maria*, Turin: P. Marietti, 1873, pp. 34-37.

¹⁸ Gaduel, *Le directeur de la jeunesse ou la vie et l'esprit du serviteur de Dieu Jean-Joseph Allemand [1772-1836], prêtre du diocèse de Marseille*. . . , Marseille, 1885, 1934². Among those who continued this work and theorized about it, a distinguished contributor was Rev. Joseph Timon-David. See also F. Gibon, "J.J.A.,"

many different things. Many of the youths were indeed economically poor and wretched, coming from a criminal or underworld background. Many, however, lived by their own labor. And there was no lack of students and other participants from the middle classes, not to mention a few youths from the upper middle class and the nobility who helped to conduct catechism lessons. In short, many could be considered abandoned or neglected only insofar as they were so in social and religious terms.

The term might be somewhat debatable and misleading, but in some real way it did indicate the type of young people towards whom the pastoral effort was directed amid the bustling activity of the masses in the Moschino housing area. Activity in that area, as in the Valdocco area, gravitated towards the market of Porta Palazzo.

4. *Don Bosco's Oratory*

In 1844 Don Bosco transferred to the Refuge and the little hospital or infirmary (*Ospedaletto*) of Marchioness Barolo, serving as an assistant to Father Borel. He was followed there by the group of youths who had gathered around him at the Convitto, and he did not send them away. Then and there he started the Oratory, which he named after St. Francis de Sales. If he did that with all due consideration, then it was one of the most carefully calculated and decisive steps he had ever taken in his life so far. At the Ospedaletto he was ensured autonomy. He could rely on the confidence he enjoyed with Father Cafasso, and the confidence that Cafasso and Borel enjoyed with the archbishop and a large part of the city clergy.

The choice of a patron saint was also decisive, though he might seem to have come by it almost by chance. Don Bosco himself tells us that the Marchioness Barolo had had a picture of St. Francis de Sales painted at the entrance to the priests' residence connected with the Refuge, because it was her intention "to found a congregation of priests with that title."¹⁹ Don Bosco's act might have been a shrewd gesture to

in DHGE, 2, Paris 1914, col. 594 f.; M. Viller, s.v., in DSp., 1, Paris 1937, col. 314; R. Hamel, s.v., in *Catholicisme*, 1, Paris 1948, col. 331; H. Arnaud, *La vie étonnante de J. Joseph Allemand (1772-1836) apôtre de la jeunesse*, Marseille 1966. R. Bertoldi, *Lodovico Pavoni educatore [1784-1849]*. . ., Milan 1949 (with bibliography).

¹⁹ MO:141.

win the benevolence of the marchioness. Just happening upon such a picture might well have seemed providential to him, however, since that choice of patron certainly suited his own inner aspirations, which he yearned to make manifest and justify. In the oldest Regulations for the Oratory known to us (to be dated 1851–1852), we read that the Oratory is placed “under the protection of St. Francis de Sales, because those who intend to dedicate themselves to this kind of work should adopt this saint as their model of charity and affability, the latter being the wellsprings of the fruit we expect to derive from the work of the oratories.”²⁰

Later, in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Don Bosco offers several reasons why he chose St. Francis de Sales as his patron:

1. Because the Marchioness Barolo had the intention of founding a congregation of priests under that title, and with that in mind had had the saint's picture painted at the entrance-way, where it can still be found.
2. Because our kind of ministry called for great calm and gentleness; and so we placed ourselves under the protection of this saint so that he might obtain for us from God the grace to imitate his extraordinary gentleness and his winning of souls. Another reason. . . was that he might help us from heaven to imitate him in combatting errors against religion, especially Protestantism, which was beginning to insinuate itself into our localities, and noticeably into the city of Turin.²¹

Autonomous as it was, the new Oratory was influenced by the ideal of oratory work as it already existed. Don Bosco took over the basic features: catechism lessons and possibilities for recreation. These were modified by his own personal traits. Here was an active, appealing priest, a kindly man of the people who was ready to participate in sports and games when the occasion arose. But he was already gaining a reputation as an extraordinary priest as well. He dared to predict deaths, and they would happen. He was already surrounded by a certain halo of veneration because there was something singular about him, something that came from the Lord. He seemed to know the innermost secrets of conscience,

²⁰ AS 025 Regolam. dell'Orat. di S. Franc. di Sales, ms., then published in 1877: *Regolamento dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales per gli esterni*, pt. 1, scope of this work, Turin: tip. Salesiana, p. 4; see also BM 3:68.

²¹ MO:141. See BM 2:196–197.

he could switch from light-hearted jests to stunning private revelations, and he somehow made people appreciate the problems of their soul and their eternal salvation.

The influence of the Milan oratories was indirect but real. Dependence on the oratories of St. Philip Neri may have only been in terms of ideal, due to reading the life of the saint; but Father Cocchi probably did gain a firsthand acquaintance with the work of the Oratorians during his brief sojourn in Rome.²² Other suggestive examples and influences cannot be ruled out. In Brescia (Lombardy), for example, there was the oratory of Ludovico Pavoni. And in France there was the youth work (*Oeuvre de la jeunesse*) initiated or inspired by Father Allemand.

5. *His Oratory comes to the fore*

The wave of patriotic activity that swept through the region in 1848–1849 marked a crucial period in the maturation of Don Bosco's institutions. These were decisive years for the cause of national unity, marked by failures that were the seeds of final success, dreams and high enthusiasms, and inevitable signs of shock and splintering.

Now the patriotic priests felt it was especially necessary to follow the people in their aspirations for unity if religion was to have a future. One can appreciate their agonizing attempts to enlist the whole clergy and all the forces of Catholicism in the cause of Italy, to get all to adopt the slogan: "Expel the foreigner, long live Pius IX!" In 1848 almost all the bishops of the Sardinian states issued patriotic and religious pastoral letters. But there were reluctant voices, too, who might or might not be favorable to Austria.²³

Around 1848 Don Bosco, too, must have shared in the common hopes of Italy. His was the Neo-Guelph version, respectful of the pope and the old governing dynasties.²⁴ That sentiment did not last long, however. Soon he would clash with the patriotic priests, and an irrev-

²² A. Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio su Leonardo Murialdo educatore*, p. 4.

²³ Much data on the attitude of ecclesiastics can be found in Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte*, Turin 1889, 3:201–306.

²⁴ Recall "the great Gioberti" of the *Storia ecclesiastica per uso delle scuole*, as it appeared in 1848² (p. 182) and was later suppressed. See also BM 3:300–302.

ocable gap would open between him on the one hand and Fathers Cocchi, Trivero, and Ponte on the other.

Even before 1848 Don Bosco had fought for the autonomy of his own Oratory. When meetings were held to unify the management of the Turin oratories, he had turned down amalgamation with the other oratories. He supported collaboration between various oratories and the priests connected with them, it seems, and he may even have offered his own services in that cause. But he refused to submit to any sort of formal subordination to others, whose ideas he did not fully share.

Similar initiatives were tried again in 1849. Involved in them was Father Cafasso, who was the friend of many priests and who wielded influence over all the younger priests involved in youth work. But no agreement was reached.²⁵

Meanwhile, in March 1849, Father Cocchi had led a squad of young men from the Oratory of Vanchiglia to take part in the battle of Novara.²⁶ It proved to be a setback for the national idea and for the work of the enterprising priest from Druent. His oratory was closed down, to be opened not long afterwards under the direction of Don Bosco. This step certainly enjoyed the support of Father Cafasso and the confidence of Archbishop Fransoni. By now the latter's position had hardened into an anti-liberal and anti-nationalist stance. So Don Bosco took over, facing an inevitable dose of rancor and reprisals from some of the tough-minded boys and young men.²⁷

In October 1849, a printed notice from Father Cocchi announced the institution of a society of priests and 'young laymen' who would try to provide education for the many "abandoned boys, mainly orphans, swarming around Turin. . .to get them started in some profession or trade." Working with other ecclesiastics, he thus laid the groundwork

²⁵ Writes Father Lemoyne: "The priests and laymen mentioned above demanded that, regardless of cost, Don Bosco enter into partnership with Father Cocchi" (BM 3:319). The data in the BM should be connected up with the announcement published by Father Cocchi on October 15, 1849, for the foundation of a society "principally of priests and young laymen," for aiding and educating abandoned youth (AS 123 Cocchi, original print; Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio su Leonardo Murialdo*, p. 5).

²⁶ DB alludes to this: MO:214 f. More detailed is E. Reffo, *D. Giovanni Cocchi e i suoi Artigianelli*, Turin 1896, p. 11. See BM 3:392 f.

²⁷ An important source, for BM 3:275-401 also, are the recollections of Joseph Brosio, the *bersagliere* (AS 123 Brosio).

for the Institute for Young Artisans (i.e., for artisan trainees or apprentices).²⁸

The next year Don Bosco asked Pius IX for spiritual favors for three 'congregations' legitimately established in Turin, *of which he was the director*, and which had no other purpose than to "instruct abandoned youth in religion and piety."²⁹

In 1851, after the expulsion of Archbishop Fransoni from Piedmont,³⁰ Father Cocchi opened the Oratory of St. Martin in Borgo Dora. It was right around Porta Palazzo, about 500 meters from Don Bosco's Oratory. It looked like a contest or test of strength between the two groups of priests involved in oratory work.³¹

Then came Archbishop Fransoni's decree from Lyons, dated March 31, 1852. It named Don Bosco 'Head Spiritual Director' of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, and Superior of the Oratory of St. Aloysius Gonzaga (opened in Porta Nuova in 1847) and Guardian Angel Oratory in Van-chiglia. The latter two oratories were declared to be formally united with, and dependent on, the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. In short, they became part of the project for "gathering poor boys in the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Valdocco."³²

It is hard to make out the major steps leading up to this important episcopal document. The *Biographical Memoirs* was put together long after the event. Rather than being deliberately reticent, its pages seem to be innocently short on details. We get very little additional information from the archdiocesan archives, and not much more from the documentation preserved by the Pious Society of St. Joseph regarding Father

²⁸ See footnote 25 above and Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio*, pp. 5-7.

²⁹ See AS 13401 Pio IX and BM 4:521 and 64. In the AS we have the two rescripts for the pious unions (or congregations) of Guardian Angel and St. Francis de Sales respectively. The two documents, identical in form and writing, are dated September 28, 1850. One assumes that there also existed a document for the congregation of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

³⁰ The decree of expulsion was issued on September 25, 1850. On September 28, the archbishop was at the border; by October 5, he was in Lyons. See Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte*, 3:386-389.

³¹ Marengo, *Contributi*, p. 355; BM 4:258 f., of which Brosio is the principal source.

³² AS 110 Personal documents of DB, authentic copy of May 12, 1868, after the original of March 31, 1852. This can be found in the Turin archdiocesan archives (*Provisioni semplici*). See BM 4:527-529.

Cocchi, the Murialdo cousins, the School for Young Artisans, and the Oratory of St. Martin.³³

Feeling compelled to bring some cohesion into the work of the various oratories, the archbishop probably had no hesitation about preferring Don Bosco to Father Cocchi when it came to choosing a *leader*. But he need not have intended to put the squeeze on Father Cocchi's initiatives by subordinating them to Don Bosco's own initiatives.

The overall impression one gets, however, is that power plays were not the chief feature of the relationships between the priests who had taken the lead in youth work: Fathers Cocchi and Ponte on the one hand, and Don Bosco on the other. Undoubtedly there were moments of high tension, but their relations were probably marked by great frankness and camaraderie, bursts of frenetic energy, and a keen sense of the crucial moment through which the Church in Turin was living. Some priests and laymen began as helpers of Fathers Cocchi and Ponte, went on to help Don Bosco between 1848 and 1856 (perhaps noticing his neediness), and then returned to Father Cocchi's circle without giving up their friendship and collaboration with Don Bosco.

There was no lack of initiatives to coordinate forces: e.g., the Holy League of young clergy, instituted in 1850; the St. Francis de Sales Society of Priests for the Piedmont clergy; and the Mutual Aid and Assistance Society for Ecclesiastics. Acting as promoters and unifying figures for these efforts, either by their membership or their supporting prestige, were such people as: Father Cafasso; Father Mark Anthony Durando, Superior of the Vincentians; Canon Louis Anglesio, Cottolengo's successor as director of the Little House of Divine Providence; Abbé Amadeus Peyron, an orientalist, and John Anthony Rayneri, education teacher, both of whom were professors at the university; Canon Alexander Vog-

³³ The references of Marengo and Castellani to St. Martin's Oratory are almost all after 1866. Far more useful are the data on the Oratory of St. Aloysius. Initially (December 1847) it was entrusted to Fathers Carpano and Trivero (Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21:21); then, in 1849, it was entrusted to Father Peter Ponte, Barolo's secretary, who was assisted by Father Charles Morozzo, Father Paul Rossi (who became its director under DB and died 1856), the lawyer Gaetano Bellingeri, and others (Casalis, *ibid.*). Among the assistants was Father Robert Murialdo (d. 1883), nobleman. He and his cousin, Leonard, were friends of DB and Father Cocchi (Marengo, *Contributi*, p. 358; Castellani, *Il beato Leonardo Murialdo* I, 399-451).

liotti, seminary rector; and Father Peter Baricco, for long the vice-mayor of the city.

From the facts as we know them, we also learn that the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales became the most important of the three mentioned in the archbishop's decree. But it did not incorporate the Oratory of St. Martin in the Molassi district of Turin. Nor did it incorporate other oratories that had existed for some time, supervised and directed by priests of the Molassi area and those involved with the School for Young Artisans. Indeed the latter undertaking underwent growth and consolidation at the same time that the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales did, though it had its share of unfortunate episodes.

Don Bosco had now won for himself not just autonomy, but a certain measure of independence and respectable preeminence in oratory work. The archbishop's approval gave formal sanction to an overall effort which, in the range of its activities, did not fit into the ordinary parish structure. Don Bosco also found his own position clarified. He was no longer simply the person who had established a youth organization; he was now its 'Head Spiritual Director'. He was no longer simply an associate and subordinate of Father Borel; he was now the superior of an institution in his own right. It becomes increasingly rare to find the name of 'Borel' or 'Cafasso' preceding that of 'Bosco' in contracts for the sale or purchase of land, or in suretyship clauses of contracts for apprentices. With Rosminians (lay and clerical members of the Institute of the Brethren of Charity founded by Anthony Rosmini), and with civil and religious authorities, Don Bosco would now begin to deal as the principal, as the sole responsible head of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and the institutions under its control. He would have less and less need to rely on autonomous priests for the running of his oratories. From 1853 on, an ever increasing number of clerics, priests, and lay people would be under his direct control.

6. The hospice addition to the Oratory (1853-1863)

If you choose to go out and make personal contact with poverty and misery, and if you do not succumb to compromises in trying to do something about it, you will be drawn irresistibly to give your all: your time, your possessions, your whole life. Once Don Bosco committed himself to helping the needy, it was inevitable that he would repeat the

experience of such men as Joseph Calasanctius, Philip Neri, John Baptist de la Salle, and Vincent de Paul. Closer to home were the experiences of Father Joseph Cottolengo, Marchioness Barolo, Father Peter Merla, Father Casper Saccarelli, and Father Bernard Sappelli, O.P. In the immediate environment of Don Bosco himself there were the experiences of Father Cocchi and his collaborators. Fathers Berizzi and Carpano also felt compelled by conviction and circumstances to assume responsibility for youngsters who had no roof over their head, whose only parent was the priest who had held out a helping hand on some occasion.³⁴ Don Bosco himself narrates how, in 1847, he began to offer shelter in the Pinardi shed on the outskirts of the city, amid the vegetable gardens, the nocturnal barking of dogs, and the din coming from the house of ill repute owned by the Bellezza family.³⁵

Once again it was the appeal of needy youths that gave direction to Don Bosco's activities, that prompted him to sow the seed whose fruits he could hardly have imagined at that point. Later, drawing up the Rules for the Salesian Congregation, he would explain the reason behind the hospice addition to the Oratory and other similar initiatives he planned for the new Society: "Since some boys are so neglected that, unless they are sheltered, every care would be expended on them in vain, to this end every effort shall be made to open houses in which, through the assistance of divine providence, they will be provided with lodging, food, and clothing. While receiving religious instruction, they will also be taught some trade or craft, as is presently being done in the hospice attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in this city."³⁶ Much the same thing had been expressed back in 1850 by Father Cocchi and his associates in their set of basic regulations for the Charitable Society for Poor and Abandoned Youths.³⁷

³⁴ On Father Peter Joseph Berizzi (1824–1873), native of Occhieppo Superiore, see Buscaglia, *San Giovanni Bosco e i biellesi*, pp. 24–27; Marengo, *Contributi*, pp. 35–37. On Carpano see Francesia, *Il canonico Giacinto G. C. Elogio funebre*, p. 22 f.

³⁵ MO:199–201.

³⁶ AS 022/1. Cited here from BM 5:637, n. 4.

³⁷ "The aim of this society is to help the many poor youths on the streets. . . vagabonds, orphans, or abandoned. . . We propose to give them suitable lodging and to provide for their most urgent needs while they are there: lodging, meals, clothing, and Christian education. In the meantime we will try to place them with some decent employer as apprentices or office boys. . ." See

With the economic help of Father Cafasso and the charitable donations of benefactors, Don Bosco now went into building: repairing the Pinardi place, tearing down and rebuilding, and adding new buildings to existing ones. Between 1851 and 1853 he oversaw the building of the Church of St. Francis de Sales and a new residential house. With new additions and adaptations in succeeding years, the latter would gradually take on the shape of a boarding-school complex.³⁸ Around 1853 the number of young people under his care—including artisans or trade students (*artisti*), academic students, and clerics—came to about twenty. In 1854 Don Bosco was able to take in about eighty youths, including some who had been orphaned or left without family support because of the cholera epidemic, which had been particularly virulent in the poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of Turin.³⁹

The boarding school for young men and seminarians was gradually transformed into a school for adolescents of high-school age, including both trade and academic students. Their average age dropped from 18–20 to 12–15. Young clerics and seminarians remained associated with the students. Many of them came from the same classical high school (gymnasium) and attended lessons given by teachers duly authorized by the archdiocesan chancery under the direction of Don Bosco. Some of them taught the boys of Valdocco or those in Guardian Angel Oratory and the Oratory of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. In 1859 many of these clerics would join Don Bosco in the Salesian Congregation as it moved towards becoming a religious congregation rather than simply a pious union entrusted with the care of oratories.

Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21:710 f., who transcribes from the *Regolamento della Società di carità a pro dei giovani poveri ed abbandonati in Torino*, Art. 2, Turin: Marietti, 1850, p. 1. This was drawn up by Father Robert Murialdo. DB could have gotten it from Murialdo or from his friend Marietti. It is even possible that he read the passage in Casalis's work.

³⁸ F. Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco*. . . , Turin 1935² (based partly on the MB, and partly on his own direct acquaintance with the places and with archival materials preserved in the Economate General of the Salesians; it should be linked up with other documentation he did not consult, such as the material cited in the following footnote).

³⁹ The exact number of youths, population shifts at the Oratory, and financial receipts come from the important documentation of the Oratory Prefecture: registration of youths, registers of accounts, scholastic grades, Confirmation, etc., now in the AS. Also from AS 110 Fatture; 132 Quaderni (or *taccuini* of DB); 38 Turin St. Francis de Sales (series of documents relating to the Oratory).

At the Valdocco oratory the boarders, who later came to be called the interns, led a simple and rather rustic life as one big family. There was no pretentiousness because all were convinced that they could not ask more of Don Bosco or others.⁴⁰ All did what they could to keep things going as well as possible, even though the food was coarse, barely enough, and prepared by makeshift cooks with little or no special knack. The boarders knew they were living on charity. The boarding fee paid by relatives or benefactors was not enough, and Don Bosco did what he could to stay afloat.⁴¹ The young people knew that he often made the rounds of the city begging for donations. In winter it was freezing cold in the church as well as other areas of the house. Only one or two rooms had a wood stove. Only a few enjoyed the luxury of a wool or horsehair mattress. Most had to do with one of dry leaves or straw, the kind used at the Turin Convitto and many other places. With good reason the oratory house could be regarded as a place where people lived on charity and the meager earnings of the print shop.

At the start Don Bosco entrusted his meager supply of money to Joseph Buzzetti, who was stupefied by the trust placed in him.⁴² Mamma Margaret had joined her priest-son in 1846. She remained in Valdocco until she died, working tirelessly in the kitchen and at other tasks. The boys would leave their torn or dirty clothes at the foot of their beds in the evening. Mamma Margaret, often assisted by Don Bosco, would clean and mend them at night, and the boys would awaken in the morning to find their clothes refurbished. When Don Bosco went off to write in the quieter atmosphere of the Turin Convitto, the home of Joseph Brosio the *bersagliere* (member of a crack infantry squadron), or elsewhere, or when he was out preaching or seeking alms, it was Mamma Margaret who took care of the young people. She was helped by her sister, Mari-
anne, who was called 'Aunt' (*la magna*) by the boys, and who also died at the Oratory in 1857.

Other mothers lived at the Oratory, giving it the homey quality

⁴⁰ The documentation is abundant and concordant. The most suggestive recollections may be those of Brosio the *bersagliere* (AS 123), Peter Enria (AS 110 and AS 161.1), and G. Ballesio, *Vita intima di Don Giovanni Bosco*, Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1888 (funeral eulogy).

⁴¹ Evident from the account registers. See footnote 39.

⁴² G. B. Francesia, *Memorie biografiche di Giuseppe Buzzetti coadiutore salesiano*, S. Benigno Canavese, 1898.

that flowed from their nature and personal experience. When Mamma Margaret died, the mother of Father Michael Rua settled in at the Oratory. She was assisted by other mothers, including those of James Bellia and Canon Gastaldi.

Marianne Magone, the mother of another famous student of Don Bosco's Oratory, also came there to live. She worked diligently and always attended the first Mass celebrated each morning in the house. She "prayed with a ready will and feared sin as if it were a serpent." She died at the Oratory on January 20, 1872, wrote Father Rua in the house obituary notices, "with all the consolations of religion, fully resigned, invoking Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and her dead son Michael, and asking the latter to take her up into Paradise with him."⁴³

Then the tradition of mothers living at the Oratory faded out. The life of the boarding school was well organized by this time, the religious life of the Congregation could no longer allow for the presence of women in the house, and Don Bosco was already thinking about the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

But those little details still deserve to be remembered because they undoubtedly affected many aspects of life at the Oratory, both for Don Bosco and for his young people. They help us to glimpse the 'family' of the Oratory in its concrete cast. We must remember that the elements of that family life were based, not only on pedagogical and theological ideals, but also on the day-to-day constants of peasant life in Piedmont. The atmosphere was one of family solidarity along homespun lines. Father and sons shared a common orientation towards religious values and eternal salvation, towards a better future in society for each and all, and towards a continuing expansion of the educational, charitable, and devotional initiatives that had begun in Valdocco. For all of these reasons Don Bosco can be considered one of the most distinguished renovators of the Catholic boarding school in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴

⁴³ AS 276 Defunti, Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.

⁴⁴ In that sense we can accept the intuition underlying certain paradoxical statements by Olindo del Donno, *Don Bosco. Il demolitore dei Collegi, l'antipedagogista di convinzione, l'educatore di vocazione*, Bologna 1963. The author does not offer the slightest documented comparison between the boarding schools (*collegi*) existing in Turin and elsewhere and those which came out of Don Bosco's experience. See especially his Chapter XV, entitled *Il demolitore dei collegi*, pp. 266-279.

7. *Growth of the Oratory and Don Bosco's own spirituality*

The details cited above are few, but enough, I think, to indicate the channel bed through which the life of the Oratory took its tumultuous course.

Don Bosco no longer found himself in the closed and quiet circle of his native hills of Chieri, in the restricted atmosphere of the seminary, or under the watchful eye of Father Cafasso as a student at the Convitto. From 1854 on, he was plagued by the problems of finding his own domicile and giving systematic organization to the Oratory. He took possession of the Pinardi property before he managed to acquire actual ownership of it. Hence he was always plagued by the worry of trying to survive in Turin on his impoverished resources. His trust lay in God, Father Cafasso, and his circle of friends.

Don Bosco now found himself in conflict with his colleagues in the priestly ministry to a degree he could never have imagined before. He found himself the victim of misunderstandings and sideswipes, the latter dictated more by the passion of the moment than by any calculated malevolence. Other priests also felt, with good reason in many instances, that their cause was a matter of life and death for themselves and oratory work. Parish priests also had their resentments, particularly those who witnessed the magnetic lure of Don Bosco in their own parish boundaries. Under their very noses he was drawing boys and young men off their streets and into his oratories.

At times he was terribly isolated and subjected to severe testing. He suffered in body and spirit—consider his serious illness in 1846—because he did not want to abandon his Oratory to others or deviate from the course that he saw to be the right one at the moment. He stuck fervently, pigheadedly some would say, to his priestly vocation on behalf of Turin's poor and abandoned youths. Dreams told him that the glory of God and of Mary would spread out from Valdocco, thanks to his efforts. There he took his stand and endured the frosts of 1848.

At the Valdocco oratory Don Bosco's character took firmer shape. In many things he now reached his mature development. He was now the scrappy priest of daring initiatives. He was not afraid to separate from co-workers, as Paul had from Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41), when he deemed it necessary. He made it clear how it pained him, but he also tried to show why it had to be done.

Another aspect of this new phase in his life and growth deserves to

be noted, even though it was not peculiar to him. It was a more clearly defined sense of devotion to the Church and the pope as such. The slogan was now, "Long live the pope!" rather than, "Long live Pius IX!"⁴⁵

Worry over Protestant propaganda, Waldensian proselytizing in particular, was added to his pastoral preoccupations after 1848. Protestants now sought to derive as much profit as possible from their newly won religious liberties. The Protestant presence in Porta Nuova and other areas spurred Don Bosco to increase the level of his activities and to move decisively into the field of the popular periodical press.

In the ten years between 1853 and 1863, most of Don Bosco's initiatives took firm root or reached full maturation. Even the first nucleus of the Salesian Congregation was in existence by then. It was during this period that he wrote most of his works of a certain tenor—works in which we can see his own personal involvement as author, compiler, and proofreader. This was also the golden era of his activity as an educator. Don Bosco was never directly involved in the school system as such, either on the elementary or high-school level. But he was constantly in direct contact with young people: in the courtyard, in the confessional, in one-on-one encounters, and in his little evening talks or sermons. Almost always the latter were a sort of dialogue with his listeners.

This was the decade of Dominic Savio, Magone, Besucco, and many important co-workers of Don Bosco: Cagliero, Bonetti, Berto, Cerruti, and so forth. It was also the period of audacious prophetic dreams concerning civil and religious authorities as well as the future destiny of governments and the Church. They became public knowledge, especially after 1858, when they were printed in the yearly almanac of his *Catholic Readings* entitled *The Gentleman (il Galantuomo)*. And during those years Don Bosco had no scruples about publicizing extraordinary graces. We find them in his hagiographical writings, such as his biographies of St. Pancratius and St. Martin. Those attributed to the intercession of Dominic Savio, for example, are mentioned in the Appendix to his biography of Savio as well as elsewhere.⁴⁶

The fact that his Oratory was an object of special divine favors now began to be commented on, accepted, or debated. It was discussed beyond the confines of Piedmont, and even in the polemics of the anticlerical

⁴⁵ BM 3:166 f.

⁴⁶ For example, in the Appendix to *L'uomo propone e Dio dispone. . .*, Turin 1863 (LC), pp. 86–95; *Il cercatore della fortuna*, Turin 1864 (LC), p. 68 f.

press. Don Bosco played a definite role in all this because he himself was thoroughly convinced that it was true.

This whole web of events deeply affected Don Bosco's first collaborators in Valdocco. They firmly resolved not to let the miraculous things they had witnessed firsthand fall into oblivion. They would set down the annals of Don Bosco, for they felt sure that God had chosen to involve them in the opening strains of what would be a great and holy epic:

While Don Bosco worked untiringly, a few of his dedicated sons got together during this year, 1861, to record for posterity the most important words and deeds of their beloved father. In previous years several boys and young clerics, especially [Dominic] Ruffino and [John] Bonetti, had jotted down fairly extensive reports of what they had seen and heard. Now at this meeting they intended to examine and evaluate these reports and see to it that this important, useful project would continue. In a preliminary meeting Ruffino summed up and recorded their intentions as follows:

"Don Bosco's outstanding brilliant gifts, his extraordinary experiences which we admire to this day, his unique guidance of young people along virtue's arduous paths, and his grand plans for the future are indications to us of some supernatural intervention; they portend a glorious career for him and for the Oratory. All this lays a strict duty of gratitude upon us; we are bound to see to it that nothing concerning Don Bosco is allowed to fall into oblivion. We must do all we can to record everything for posterity, so that one day, like a blazing torch, it may illumine the whole world for the salvation of youth. . ."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ BM 6:505–506. For Ruffino's statement see AS 110 Ruffino, 1, p. 1 f.

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(b). AS 026/20-33: Regolamento della Casa annessa all'Oratorio di S. Franc. di Sales, mss. partly DB autographs. AS 026/34 Piano di Regolamento pel Collegio Convitto di San Filippo Neri in Lanzo (dependent on the preceding and a source for later ones).

(c). AS 026/40-46 Regolamento per le Case, ms. of Fathers Barberis, Rua, etc., with glosses added by DB. AS 026/60: various *regolamenti* (covering dormitory heads, school directors, house directors, dormitory, infirmary, workshops, school teachers, the 'little cleric' students (*piccolo clero*) who served at sacred functions, refectory, commercial school, music school, students, theater, printing shop, assistant rector), almost all of which were later used in the published *Regolamento per le Case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1877.

(d). AS 04 Capitoli generali (see capo VI Fonti gruppo D)

(e). AS 110 Cronache (Berto, Barberis, Bonetti, Enria, Ruffino, etc.).

(f). AS 112 Fatture; Prospecti (of non-Salesian secondary schools held in regard by DB).

(g). AS 115 Letters of best wishes, homages to DB for his name day and other celebrations in his honor (most of them from Valdocco alumni).

(h). AS 123 Testimony about DB (Brosio, etc.).

(i). AS 126 and 131: letters to and from DB. Those relating especially to the Oratory are under the headings *Autorità* (Mayor of Turin, etc.) and *Governo* (foreign, war, domestic, etc.).

(j). AS 132 Mainly made up of writings that DB did not intend for publication. Of particular interest are the headings: *Fioretti*, *Oratorio* (records of moral conduct for 1853-1855, DB autographs), *Quaderni*, *Prediche*.

(k). AS 133 *Breve ragguaglio della festa fattasi nel distribuire il regalo di Pio IX ai giovani degli Oratori di Torino*, Turin: tip. Eredi Botta, 1850, printed edition with glosses by DB.

(l). AS 38 Torino S. Franc. di Sales (correspondence, documents dealing with the Festive Oratory and boarding school, feasts, practices, property register, associations, etc.); AS 38 Torino S. Giov. Evangelista (and the Oratory of St. Louis).

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With regard to educational concerns see: P. Baricco, *L'istruzione popolare in Torino. . .*, Turin 1865; L. Pogliani, *Le scuole comunali di Torino. Origine e incremento*, Turin 1925.

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(a) Catholic: *L'Armonia* (1848–1878); *L'Unità cattolica* (1863–1888); *La buona settimana* (1856–); *La Campana*, later called *Il Campanile* and *Il Campanone* (1850–1862); *il Museo delle Missioni cattoliche* (1857–); *Il cuor di Maria* (1866–); *L'Ateneo religioso* (1869–); *L'Apologista* (1877–).

(b) Hostile press: *La Buona Novella* (1851–1880); *La Luce evangelica* (1854–1855); *La Gazzetta del popolo* (1848–); *Il Fischietto* (1848–).

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On DB's relationship with Protestants see: G. Spini, *Risorgimento e Protestanti*, Naples, 1956; V. Vinay, *Facoltà valdese di Teologia 1855-1955*, Torre Pellice, 1955; idem, *Evangelici italiani esuli a Londra durante il Risorgimento*, Turin, 1961; idem, *Luigi Desantis e il movimento evangelico fra gli italiani durante il Risorgimento*, Turin, 1965.

III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

The beginning of great works in the life of a human being are both enormously exciting and hard to trace. From the distances of time and space, we grope in the dark with clues, if we are lucky. Despite much useful material, we still have only clues to what went on in Don Bosco's mind as he began his work. For today's readers, who must explore the terrain now, only suggestions can be offered.

Don Bosco must be approached through his *works*, as Stella repeatedly suggests. For a start, then, readers should consult Don Bosco's whole practical approach as indicated in the general overview by Morand Wirth and now available in English translation: Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982. For this chapter and the following one see Chapters 2-7, which discuss the Oratory from 1841-1862, student societies, Dominic Savio, and recreation: pages 15-83.



THE SALESIAN HIGH SCHOOLS (COLLEGI)

1. *Schools in Italy in the latter half of the nineteenth century*

We cannot adequately explain the way Don Bosco's work developed after 1860 if we do not realize that it was influenced to some degree by the mid-century situation in Italy itself. That situation was bathed in the atmosphere of hopes and efforts for political unity played out in a liberal key.

Consider, for example, the growth of the printing works above and beyond that of other workshops at Valdocco, and the success of such popular publications by Don Bosco as the *Catholic Readings* and his *History of Italy*. Surely one of the most important contributing factors was the desire to raise the cultural level of the people, an effort in which printing and the popular press found their place. Underlying that contemporary effort was a renewed sense of human dignity at every level. Nurtured by the liberal outlook, among Catholics it helped to stimulate efforts to improve the Christian education of the people, to carry on with an effort initiated towards the end of the Middle Ages and intensified to combat Protestantism after Luther and Enlightenment thinking in the eighteenth century.

A similar combination of causes underlay the growth and devel-

Translator's note. The meaning of the word *collegi* is brought out in the course of this chapter. The important point for readers to note here is that it does not mean 'colleges' in the U.S. sense. Analogous terms in various European languages always refer to various types of schools, usually private, that offer education on the *high-school* level.

opment of the boarding schools designed to educate youth. Anxious to act in accordance with the needs of the day, Don Bosco was led to focus mainly on boarding schools.

Everywhere in liberally structured Europe such schools were taking root. They were on the rise again, after suffering their worst decline in the latter half of the eighteenth century amid harsh polemics against the Jesuits and their educational system.¹ Strong arguments had been raised against private high schools of that sort, known in many parts of Europe as 'colleges'. It was said that they did not prepare students for real life. Leaving the secluded atmosphere of the private school, they were thrown on their own resources and left to the mercy of their passions, which had not been properly educated because of intrinsic defects in the whole 'college' system. Thus they were in danger of losing their faith and being useless to society. Drawing arguments from Enlightenment thinking, critics stressed the education of the individual as an effort to conform the student to nature. Such education would enable students to express their own nature and character, and to fit into an environment that might hopefully have no trace of social phoniness.²

After the Restoration in the nineteenth century, there was a reaction against Enlightenment polemics and a new flourishing of educational religious institutes. The result was a more positive judgment on the sort of education provided by private high schools. In Piedmont authoritative educators, such as Lawrence Martini, asserted that their adolescent years spent in *collegi* had done them no harm. Indeed they had done fine and been well trained for life. Nevertheless they did not deny that a sound

¹ See J. Schroeteler, *Die Erziehung in den Jesuiten-Internaten des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1940; S. Delvaille, *La Chalotais éducateur*, Paris 1911. La Chalotais was one of those who had deep reservations about education in the *collegi*. Useful suggestions can be found in *Questioni di storia della pedagogia*, Brescia 1963.

² Noteworthy are the points raised by William Grivel, for example, in his French work entitled *Théorie de l'éducation* (Paris, 1775). Note the headings in t.1, liv. 2, 2 pt., chap. 3: "Des Collèges; Art. 1: The institution of *collèges* always unsatisfactory; Art. 2: The merits of the teachers cannot entirely make up for the defects of *collèges* as an institution; Art. 3: The principal, prefect, and house masters can hardly make up for the institutional defects of *collèges*; Art. 4: *Pensionnats* (private boarding schools) more dangerous than *collèges*; Art. 5: The *collèges* must be reformed if they are to be truly useful" (pp. 242-255).

education in one's home environment had advantages over education in the boarding schools.³

In nineteenth-century Piedmont this new outlook did not have much impact on the growth of private boarding schools before 1849. The school was a state institution. It had been organized as such during the absolutist regime of Victor Amadeus II (1729) and further consolidated by Charles Emmanuel III (1770). Organizational consolidation was also advanced by Napoleonic legislation. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, in fact, the term *collegio* referred primarily to the state public schools. Don Bosco himself had attended the *Real Collegio* of Chieri. It was in the latter half of the nineteenth century that *collegio* would come to be reserved for private boarding schools.⁴

The flourishing growth of such schools occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, as politics and legislation in Piedmont and Italy came to be based on liberal foundations. While efforts were being undertaken to solve the serious organizational problems of state-operated schools, legislatures were also trying to guarantee the existence and rights of independent and private schools.

There was serious discord between 'legal' Italy and real Italy. Legal Italy was made up of the ruling class of liberal politicians. Real Italy was made up of broad strata of opposition Catholics and newly rising forces of opposition such as socialists. One result was the aconfessional and indeed anticlerical orientation of the Italian public schools, and the fierce opposition to the teaching of religion in them. Catholics, who were forbidden to participate in public politics but not administration, reacted by organizing their own associations of all sorts: religious associations, mutual aid societies, people's banks, insurance companies, and private schools for the education of their children. Their support lay mainly in the peasants, the working class, and the lower middle class; thus they were almost a society of their own within the larger civil society.

It was also impossible at that point to ensure any solidly centralized administration, particularly since arrangements were still being worked out between the various regional groups that would constitute united

³ L. Martini, *L'Emilio*, Milan 1828, p. 431. On Martini (1785–1841) see G. B. Gerini, *Gli scrittori pedagogici italiani del sec. XIX*, Turin 1910, pp. 546–548.

⁴ G. Mantellino, *La scuola primaria e secondaria in Piemonte . . .*, Carmagnola, 1909; A. Lizier, *Le scuole di Novara ed il Liceo-Convitto*, Novara, 1898; N. Rodolico, *Carlo Alberto negli anni di regno 1831–1843*, Florence 1936, pp. 395–400; G. Talamo, *La scuola dalla legge Casati all'inchiesta del 1864*, Milan 1960.

Italy after 1860. This encouraged the organization of boarding schools along municipal lines under local control. Such control was often in the hands of Catholics, who were under the influence of, or in league with, the ecclesiastical authorities.⁵

2. *The Salesian schools and their historical role*

The above facts help to explain developments after 1863, the year when the Little Seminary of Mirabello was opened. A growing number of high schools, hospices, schools for artisans, agricultural schools, and seminaries were opened by the Salesians or put under their direction. And the Salesians themselves showed a growing preference for private boarding high schools over every other type of institution (parishes, semi-boarding schools, dayhop schools, etc.), even over oratories.⁶

The importance of this fact cannot be overlooked. It was responsible in no small measure for the consolidation of Don Bosco's institution. His boarding high schools ensured a population of students less transient and more organizable than the population of the oratories. His schools took their place among the educational institutions specializing in private high-school education just as those institutions were being demanded by the milieu. This ensured greater growth, a larger range of action, and more solid support. There were less creative demands on these schools than on the Festive Oratories; but they served as so many seedbeds from which to draw new recruits into the family of his educators. Indeed Salesian involvement among those specializing in private high-school education helped to spur Salesian growth in Europe and around the world at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century. And insofar as its primary aim was concerned, the Salesian secondary boarding schools made a massive contribution of young recruits to bolster the forces of Catholicism in Italy and the world.

3. *The focus on boarding schools and its impact on the Salesians*

The turn to secondary boarding schools is also a factual datum of the utmost importance if we wish to pinpoint and understand the focus of

⁵ G. Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98*, Part I, Chap. 5, Florence 1961⁴, p. 150 f.

⁶ See the headings *Fondazioni* in *Indice MB*, pp. 185–187 and *Collegio* in *Indice MB*, p. 78.

Don Bosco's outlook and that of the Salesians once they had initiated the era of boarding schools.

Various Salesians began to make contacts with other diocesan boarding schools and seminaries, serving as confessors and preachers, bringing the experiences of the Oratory to them, and in turn assimilating everything they thought might be applicable to their own institutions.

For his part Don Bosco, particularly after the hospice addition had been set up, often thought primarily or even exclusively of collegial communities and the Salesians as educators in '*collegi*'. Boarding-school experiences are recounted or alluded to in the biographies of Magone (1861) and Besucco (1864), in the historically based novel entitled *Valentino o la vocazione impedita* (1866), and in the *Ricordi per le vacanze* (1872). Many things said by Don Bosco at that time to young people and the Salesians would not have been said in other circumstances, nor were they wholly applicable to other educational settings. Many religious principles were specifically formulated for boarding students in the institute or on vacation at home. Four-fifths of the Salesian General Chapters inspired or prepared by Don Bosco dealt with the boarding schools and their population of students and educators.

Festive Oratories, the press, boarding house residents, and agricultural schools are not overlooked in the legislative work of the General Chapters. In practice, however, the Festive Oratories in particular seem to have gone through a period of decline and decay in the last decades of the century, although some Oratories, set in the right atmosphere, did serve as models for similar institutions in Italy and elsewhere.

Nomenclature also evolved in line with the new orientation of the Salesians. The name *Collegio* or *Collegio-Convitto* was given to the institutes in Lanzo (1864), Cherasco (1869), Alassio (1869), Valsalice (1872), Vallecrosia (1875), and so forth. Valdocco, Sampierdarena (1872), and Rome (1885) used the term *Ospizio* because they maintained the form of houses for 'poor and abandoned' youth. In France the name 'Oratory' or 'Patronate' was used for the houses in Nice (1875), Marseilles (1878), and Paris (1884); the name 'Orphanage' was used for those in Navarre (1878), Saint-Cyr (1879), and Lille (1884). In Spain the first major institute (after the school for poor children founded at Utrera in 1880) was the *Talleres* ('Workshops') of Sarriá, a trade school for artisans founded in 1884. It was followed by boarding high schools, Oratories, and the agricultural school (or hospice) of Gerona after Don Bosco's death (1891).

In America high schools and parishes were predominant. The house in Niterói (Brazil, 1882) was called a 'hospice'.

Overriding concern for the high schools produced a typical reaction in Don Bosco during the last fifteen years of his life, whenever the question of interference with parish activities came up. In a parish framework it would probably have been possible to get greater involvement and collaboration from the personnel of a Festive Oratory, a day school, or a boarding house. But that was hardly the case when the Salesian establishment was a private *collegio* for students or artisans, with its own schedules or scholastic and religious activities. In La Boca (Buenos Aires, 1877) and La Spezia (1887) the Salesians were embroiled in thorny issues with the diocesan clergy and local confraternities. At Sacred Heart in Rome there were minor conflicts between the director of the hospice, the person in charge of the Festive Oratory, and the parish priest. Each had his own special requirements for the religious practices of the community he represented and led.⁷

In Marseilles Canon Clement Guiol mistakenly strove and almost insisted that the Salesians assist him in all the activities of the parish of St. Joseph. Don Bosco made it very clear that the specific and principal mission of the Salesians was the education of youth, not assistance to parish priests in their liturgical functions.⁸ This sort of response to Canon Guiol was prompted by practical considerations: by avoiding obligations

⁷ At La Boca in Buenos Aires the Salesians took over the parish on the basis of a vague agreement that was bound to give rise to serious inconveniences as time went on. See BM 12:190 f; AS 38 Buenos Aires, S. Giov. Evangelista; Ceria, *Annali*, 1: 247–260. On La Spezia see *Indice* MB, p. 608; AS 38 Spezia.

On the warnings from DB urging that in Rome the autonomy of the hospice be respected, as well as that of its superiors in providing personnel for the sanctuary, see MB 14:587; *Epistolario*, 3, n. 2116.

⁸ Fairly important are the remarks written by DB on September 15, 1879; "To ensure discipline and morality, absolute authority over our pupils and autonomy in education is indispensable. That would become impossible if some or all of them had to leave the Institute for matters outside it. It is equally obvious that our Congregation, having as its aim the education of youth, soon came to notice an unwillingness among some of its members to devote themselves to offices that are properly those of assistant (parish) priests. For that reason some of them have withdrawn from our Institute. Others have refrained from entering it, adducing only the aforementioned reason" (see *Epistolario*, 3, n. 1977). On Guiol see *Bullettin salésien*, 7 (1884), pp. 120–122.

to help with parish liturgical services, Don Bosco was also helping to preclude negative forms of interference with his work for the education of youth.⁹

This helps to explain what happened in 1886, when the 'ordinary' work of the Salesians was the education of youth in boarding schools. The General Chapter approved and had inserted in the rules the following principle: 'under ordinary circumstances' (*in via ordinaria*) parishes are not to be accepted because (it was understood) they are incompatible with our activities.¹⁰

⁹ Also noteworthy are the fears expressed in 1883 when a parish in Genoa was being discussed. "There was talk of erecting our church of Sampierdarena into a parish. Don Bosco enumerated the problems that would arise from having a parish associated with a *collegio*: (1) This creates imbalance . . . (2) Parish functions are not compatible with the presence of young students. (3) A governing church board can, in certain circumstances, force young people to clear out a certain part of the church . . ." (MB 16:419 f; which draws from the minutes of the third General Chapter of the Salesians held in Turin and Valsalice in September 1883). Questions on parish rights did in fact arise (MB 17:388 f.).

¹⁰ The fourth General Chapter of September 1886 dealt with Rules for parishes. The major debates came with reference to "hospices associated with parishes" and pastors appointed by a superior (*ad nutum Superioris*). It was a time when anticlerical public opinion was still fanning debate about election of pastors by the people. The first preliminary article was formulated as follows: "Having considered the aim of the Salesian Congregation in its works, according to our Constitutions (Chap. I), it seems we should not readily or ordinarily assume the direction of parishes that might be offered to us by bishops." See *Deliberazioni del terzo e quarto capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana* . . . , S. Benigno Canavese, 1887, p. 5; MB 18:183 f., 694-696.

The manuscript of the *Regolamento*, drawn up by the Chapter Committee, contains the reasons behind their thinking, which were then crossed out with a sweep of the pen. "The reasons persuading us against taking over parishes are: (1) The autonomous life that should be led by a pastor and his assistant priests in carrying out parish duties, which duties often distract them from communal life and exact observance of the Rules. (2) The serious danger of losing one's religious vocation in the handling of money; exact accounting of it all too easily escapes the eyes of one's superior. Also the danger from contact with all sorts of people, which puts the virtue of the parish priest to a severe test. (3) The bad relations that can develop between the superior of the house and the pastor wherever these two functions may be separate. (4) The difficulty of reconciling the instruction that should be imparted to youth from that which should be given to the people. In such a case there would have to be a separate chapel, or else services would have to be held at different times" (AS 046 Cap. gen. 1886). The article was revised in form, but not in substance, by the tenth General Chapter

Of course the schools, besides guaranteeing greater solidity, entailed all the risks that go with stabilization: e.g., stagnation, narrow confinement within the school precincts, a certain quiescence, and extinction of the concern and drive for creativity.

One might well say that the Salesian organism was prone not so much to the gangrene of disorganized cells, but to the sclerosis of cells lacking adequate circulation. Placing their hopes in the fortunes of their boarding schools, the Salesians also took on the risks associated with the possible outdating of such schools as an educational force. Those institutions enjoyed success for decades. But today they seem to be on the road to inevitable decline, both in Italy and other countries.

of 1904, and by the redactors of the new Rule: "Ordinarily parishes are not to be accepted. But if some special circumstance should warrant such acceptance, it should be insisted that acceptance be conferred canonically on our Pius Society . . ." (see *Regolamento per le parrocchie* . . . , Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1906, p. 3).

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III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

Three works available in English provide valuable insights into the educational practice of Don Bosco. Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, and Kindness*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1977. Giancarlo Isoardi, *Don Bosco the Catechist*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1981. John Morrison, *The Educational Philosophy of Saint John Bosco*, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1979.

With regional variations the problems and processes were going on throughout Europe. For a fine study of contemporary developments in the French countryside see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976, especially Chapter 18: “Civilizing in Earnest: Schools and Schooling.”



THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

1. The political and religious situation in Piedmont between 1848 and 1855

Among the events that swirled around Don Bosco after the establishment of his Oratory, two must be given special attention insofar as they had a real impact on the origin and growth of the Salesian Society both as idea and reality. One event was the temporary closing of the Turin archdiocesan seminary in 1848. The other was the law of May 29, 1855, which suppressed all religious congregations with few exceptions and combined their assets in an ecclesiastical fund that was to provide for the needs of poor parish priests and the Sardinian clergy.¹ Excepted from the law of suppression were the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and those communities dedicated to education, teaching, preaching, or the care of the sick.

Both events were rooted in one and the same basic conditioning factor: the unstoppable drive towards national unity, which now found its chief political and military impetus in Piedmont. The seminarians had been dispersed by the archbishop because they had taken part in national celebrations against his explicit orders. The two differing attitudes symbolized the situation. The clerics were adherents and collaborators in the ongoing course of events. The archbishop moved from mistrust to out-

¹ The principal sources for the vicissitudes of the suppressive laws are the Acts of Parliament, the basis in particular for G. Sardo, *Storia del Parlamento italiano diretta da N. Rodolico*. Vol. III. *Dall'ingresso di Cavour alla Crisi Calabiana*. . . , Palermo, 1965. On the suppression of the religious corporations and the Calabian crisis see pp. 367-394. The directives for implementing the laws are in the *Atti del Governo di S.M. il re di Sardegna*, Vol. 24, pp. 837-871. S. Tessitore, *Il conte di Cavour e le corporazioni religiose*, Turin, 1911.

right opposition to the Risorgimento cause because he sensed a profound break with religion in its historical and theoretical bases.

1848 also laid the groundwork for the laws that would suppress religious communities and confiscate their assets. The war against Austria exhausted government finances, and the presence of exiles only aggravated the problem of the domestic budget. Mindful of the concessions made by the Holy See (1796–1798) during the war against the French Republic, the political representatives of Piedmont asked Rome to alleviate the budget situation insofar as support for the clergy and cultic worship was concerned; but a concordat of that sort between Piedmont and the Holy See proved to be impracticable.² As 1848 drew to a close, talk began about the possible confiscation of ecclesiastical assets. The clergy and their supporters were hit hard by such talk. Militant Catholics such as Clement Solaro della Margarita, Victor Amadeus Sallier de la Tour, Louis Provano di Collegno, and Leon Costa di Beauregard, who had held key posts in the political and administrative life of the region, now spoke out boldly in the Piedmont House and Senate to defend the rights of the Church. Anthony Brignole Sale, the former Sardinian ambassador to Paris who was elected senator in 1848, took his oath of office as measures relating to the confiscation of the church assets were being brought up because he felt he would then have the right to vote against them.³

Due note was taken of all the arguments, subtle and not so subtle, that had ever been elaborated concerning the right of the Church to possess assets or the right of the State to take them away. People were especially familiar with the relevant literature dating from the middle of the eighteenth century on. There had been the suppression of the Jesuits and laws enacted against mortmain in Spain, Parma, Venice, and Naples. There were the works in favor of the Church by Mamachi, and those opposed to the Church by Campomanes, Contini, Portalis, and others through the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rule. More

² Papal motivations are reported in *Allocuzione della Santità di nostro Signore Pio PP. IX al sacro collegio nel concistoro segreto del 22 gennaio 1855 seguita da una esposizione correlata di documenti*. . . edizione economica eseguita sul testo ufficiale di Roma, Turin: tip. scolastica di Sebastiano Franco, 1855.

³ A. C. Jemolo, "Il 'partito cattolico' piemontese nel 1855 e la legge sarda soppressiva delle comunità religiose," in *Il Risorgimento ital.*, 11–12 (1918–1919) pp. 1–52; now in Jemolo, *Scritti vari di storia religiosa e civile*. . . , Milan, 1965, pp. 321–373. On Brignole Sale see page 338.

than anything else, however, it was the impression of public misery that worked on the advocates of confiscation. Finances had to be put right. They thought it could be done if the Church were to renounce privileges and even acknowledged rights, the scope and value of which were no longer recognized by many people. Rome's intransigence was sustained, not without difficulty, by tenacious prelates who were trained more to uphold the consistency of abstract principles and to sniff out impending dangers than to notice emergency situations here and now.

Opposing feelings and views clashed repeatedly, only serving to reinforce the mutual antagonism. Clerical intransigence fed feelings of scorn and hatred for the priest who, like the Levite of old, would not stop to assuage the wounds of the man who had been set upon by bandits. In turn, this scorn and hatred, translated into legal claims to lay hold of ecclesiastical assets, caused scandal and rebelliousness among those who saw such measures as acts of violent sacrilege.⁴

To some it seemed that a new wave of Jacobinism had arisen, or that the Hydra of Jacobinism had never been completely destroyed. Apparently laid to rest after the fall of Napoleon, it had been growing new heads and now seemed more powerful and invincible than ever. Such a view was not entirely without reason because advocates of the populist, national cause did proclaim themselves heirs to the Jacobin tradition. The unfortunate generation that had reared its adult head at the start of the nineteenth century came under the blows of an older generation, and the latter managed to prevail for a time. But the Jacobin heritage had been given a welcome by the younger generation, which had grown up during that period and was in a position of dominance by 1848. Forming new recruits, it would triumph in some future day whose outlines could already be dimly descried.⁵

⁴ The literature is fairly extensive. See, for example, *Difesa di diritti della Chiesa Cattolica intorno ai beni temporali ed alle istituzioni contro il progetto di legge per la soppressione di comunità religiose, ecc. già approvato dalla camera de' deputati nella tornata del 2 marzo 1855. Opuscolo presentato al Senato del Regno*, Turin: Speirani e Tortone, 1855; *Il diritto di proprietà della Chiesa. Terza edizione*, Voghera, 1852 (1849¹).

⁵ Expressions used by John Nepomucene Nuytz, *Relazione letta al Consiglio municipale di Torino nella seduta del 27 dicembre 1855 dal signor cav. Nepomuceno Nuytz vice-sindaco professore della Facoltà legale e rettore dell'Università*, Turin: tip. subalpina di P. Pelazza, 1856. Perhaps it is significant that there was a reissuing of A. Barruel, *Storia del Giacobinismo* (Bibl. ecclesiastica), Carmagnola, 1852, 3 vols.

The suppression of religious communities and the confiscation of their assets seemed inconceivable and absurd to the religious sensibilities of many Catholics. It was a sacrilegious line of action, a violation of natural law, and a prelude to the destruction of the Church itself and everything religious. It was an affront to their ancestors and their deeply religious sovereigns. The latter's faith and devotion to the Church, after all, had been responsible for the erection of such monuments as the Superga basilica, which had been built at the behest of Victor Amadeus II in fulfillment of his vow to the Virgin. There wasn't a church, monastery, or convent in Turin, Piedmont, or Savoy that had not been the object of the religious munificence of sovereigns, nobles, or the common people.

In an 1852 pastoral letter, Bishop Ghilardi of Mondovì gloomily foresaw what was likely to happen: "Ah, what would that deeply religious Charles Albert say if he were to raise his head from the grave, look around at the municipalities of his beloved peoples, and see more than a few of them conspiring to demand the spoliation of the Church that he was so solicitous to protect and enrich in every possible way. That august monarch had been encouraged by Us in a time of trial to courageously continue his protection of the Church and the improvement of the state's welfare. On December 21, 1844, he deigned to write Us the following words, among others: 'There are certain moments when my life is truly filled with grief . . . I become more convinced every day that if God does not come to the aid of our old world with special graces, we will end in social dissolution because human means no longer suffice'. Would he not have to say that his prediction is coming true, that the social dissolution he feared may well be at hand?"⁶

The course of events was sensed by those who felt fear and anxiety. It was also prognosticated by those who scrutinized the guiding ideas behind people's actions. People were proposing to confiscate goods of which the Church was the legitimate proprietor. In short, they were proposing a "principle of communism and anarchy, one that would

⁶ John Thomas Ghilardi, *Lettera pastorale del vescovo di Mondovì intorno all'incameramento de' beni ecclesiastici*, Mondovì, 1852, p. 7. Note that Catholics of the day then sought to distinguish the responsibility of the reigning house from that of the government and the 'sects': The author of the *Difesa di diritti* wrote (p. 14): "The august House of Savoy down to Charles Albert always took pride in protecting this right and possession."

dissolve society itself.”⁷ Once you establish the principle for taking away one property, you have a basis for taking away all property.⁸ Ghilardi cited the Spanish priest and apologist, Jaime Balmes, and recalled what had happened during the French Revolution to establish analogies and forecast the future.⁹

Margotti’s clerical journal (*L’Armonia*), which was read at the Oratory and by Don Bosco, found it easy to prophesy the future. Once the monasteries, hospitals, and churches were despoiled, it would be the turn of the municipalities. Then would come the turn of the nobility, “some of whom, forgetful of their status and their traditions, were not ashamed to hold the bag for the robbers. They will lose not only their titles, a small matter, but also their possessions.”¹⁰

Don Bosco went further. It might seem that a trap was being set only against religion, but in fact the effort was seeking to topple the throne along with religion. “The former will come toppling down, but nothing will prevail against the latter.”¹¹ Dismal events were befalling Piedmont: cholera, famine, loss of life among humans and cattle, and great funerals at court while the law of suppression was being debated. All of these things were foreseen and viewed as signs of God’s wrath over the sacrilege that the nation was committing at the hands of its rulers. The same held true for other events that politicians saw as part of a wise design leading to a united Italy: i.e., the Crimean War and the seemingly inevitable war that would break out with Austria or throughout Europe. The *Galantuomo*, Don Bosco’s Almanac, offered this prophecy: “War is about to end in the Crimea. Its stage will be elsewhere, but ever bloody.” In 1856 his beloved homeland of Piedmont “will be horribly scourged by death. And since people will attribute the scourge to chance, worse evils will follow: hailstorms, drought, earthquakes, famine, and business failures accompanied by sacrilegious thefts, suicides, homicides, blasphemies, and impiety. Thus the fate of your homeland will grow worse and worse . . . If human repentance does not bring

⁷ Ghilardi, *Lettera pastorale*, p. 6 f.

⁸ *Il diritto di proprietà*, p. 59.

⁹ Ghilardi, *Lettera pastorale*, p. 6.

¹⁰ *L’Armonia*, N. 65, March 22, 1855.

¹¹ *Il Galantuomo almanacco nazionale pel 1856 coll’aggiunta di varie utili curiosità*, Turin: tip. De-Agostini, 1855, p. 59.

about a change in God's decrees, people will see things unheard of in times past."¹²

What caused the greatest pain and exasperation to Catholics was the fact that they were being knocked off their feet and swept away by a minority. They were never able to reverse a situation that they could appraise only in numerical terms. When the law was being debated in the Senate, these Catholics, now known as the 'clerical party', presented 97,000 signatures against the law. Those in favor of the law presented only 36,000 signatures.¹³ When the bishops intervened in a conciliatory effort and it was thought that the draft of the law might be shelved, there was such a popular outcry, according to the liberal and anticlerical press, that there were fears for the throne itself. This outcry was caused by a small minority. According to the clerical party, it was made by a meager group of students and rabble-rousers and orchestrated by a few hotheads. Yet this minority represented the political force of the country at the time. Its ups and downs were influenced by many other factors, of course, especially by the stimulus of a widespread and no less active 'clerical' reaction.

Intransigent Catholics were convinced that there could be no compromise between religion and revolution. As their fears turned into realities, they felt justified in their growing disdain for those who called themselves moderates, for those who wanted to be both Catholics and patriots. Such moderates were really "the discreet fomentors of revolution, letting it gradually engulf rulers and their people in carefully measured doses. When they do not want to submit to the Church, they ask for separation of Church and State; but when they want to despoil and enchain the Church, they immediately put it back under the feet of the State."¹⁴

The turn of events after the 1848 armistice had been a disastrous blizzard, destroying the seeds of moderation that might otherwise have borne fruit. The suppression of religious communities was a fatal blow to the survival of Neo-Guelph literature, which had also used monas-

¹² Ibid., p. 59 f.

¹³ D. Massé, *Il caso di coscienza del Risorgimento italiano dalle origini alla Conciliazione*, Alba 1946 (p. 267). Writing about them, Massé becomes a spokesman for the feelings expressed at the time by intransigent Catholics.

¹⁴ William Audisio, *Questioni politiche*, Napoli, 1854, p. 14; cited by Jemolo, *Scritti vari di storia religiosa*, p. 336 footnote.

ticism to exalt Christianity and the Middle Ages in the face of scornful attacks on them by the advocates of the Enlightenment. Chateaubriand in France and Dandolo in Italy had admirably brought out the civilizing work of Western monasticism. That monasticism, wrote Gioberti, "essentially labored and aimed to promote the cultural improvement of humanity." And it was exquisitely Italian, "insofar as it arose in Italy through the work of Benedict."¹⁵ Jaime Balmes used the work of monks and religious missionaries among uncivilized peoples to stress the leavening power of Catholicism as opposed to the sterility of present-day Protestant proselytism. The difference in results, he argued, was due to the fact that Catholicism was the true religion. Protestantism was the sterile branch cut off from the living trunk.¹⁶

Now that contribution was to be disregarded entirely, as the words of Rattazzi indicated: "I don't see what use or advantage society can derive from the conservation of religious corporations."¹⁷ This comment from someone who was willing to admit their past usefulness:

I fully realize that in ancient times, in the Middle Ages, a place was made for religious bodies having no other function than to lead an ascetic and contemplative life (for the projected law concerns them alone); and that civil law protected them by granting them a privilege and civil personality . . . It is also undeniable that they rendered signal service to civilization by preserving monuments, by cultivating the arts and sciences, and especially by engaging in and promoting agriculture.¹⁸

Now that historical function was gone, however. The care of monuments and agriculture was better provided for by other groups of people who were more diligent and expert. Gone also was the age when younger

¹⁵ Gioberti, *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, Brussels, 1844³, p. 194. See also Chateaubriand, *Genio del Cristianesimo*, Italian trans., pt. 3, 1. 3, cp. 3-6, Turin: Fontana, 1843, pp. 472-485; T. Dandolo, *Monachismo e leggende, saggi storici*, Milan, 1856.

¹⁶ Balmes, *Il Protestantismo paragonato col Cattolicismo*, Chap. 45, Italian trans., Carmagnola, 1852, II, 78-91.

¹⁷ *Discorsi pronunziati alla Camera dei Deputati nelle tornate delli 11 gennaio, 15 e 17 febbraio 1855 dai ministri commendatore Urbano Rattazzi e conte Camillo Cavour sul progetto di legge per la soppressione di comunità religiose e per altri provvedimenti intesi a sollevare i parroci bisognosi*, Turin: tip. Botta, 1855, p. 42.

¹⁸ Rattazzi, *Discorsi*, p. 41.

children were sent off to convents and monasteries. The preservation of mortmain in a modern state was a mark of inexperience rather than of competency.¹⁹ Rattazzi and many others like him were moved by considerations akin to those of the apologists for religious Romanticism; but they reached the opposite conclusions. They expressed appreciation for the work done by monks in past ages, but they saw no usefulness in it for the present. In them we see the old utilitarian outlook of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment getting the better of Romantic reactions. In this new form it would serve as the driving force behind the upcoming generations.

More acutely than others, Bishop Rendu of Annecy saw all this as the manifestation of an outlook profoundly at variance with the religious and spiritually oriented outlook of Catholicism. In practice the suppression of monasteries and convents denied citizenship rights to a religious fact over which the State could not have any power. Why? Because the attraction to a consecrated life was undeniably "a divine attraction" to a state of life, a personal obligation that was now to be suppressed by those who dared to call themselves "the protectors of freedom of conscience."²⁰ The most delicate point attacked by the law of suppression was the social justification and the right to civil existence of the life of prayer and asceticism, of associations "formed for the attainment of heaven."²¹

It was said that such institutes were not essential for the Church or the State, so they could be suppressed. On the same grounds, replied Bishop Rendu, one could amputate an arm or a leg. It is a failure to realize that one is dealing a death blow to an organism in which contemplative, active, and mendicant orders have their justifiable place. In reality "there is only one single religious corporation, that of all the faithful." In it "all the organisms derive from the same principle and tend towards the same end. They are kept united by the thought of God in such a way that you must destroy them all if you want to cease being Christians, or else preserve them all if you want to go on following the Gospel."²² To suppress the contemplative orders on the grounds that

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁰ L. Rendu, *Associazioni religiose. Lettera pastorale di mons. Luigi Rendù vescovo di Annecy. Versione dal francese di un giovane studente* (Collez. di buoni libri, a.7, dispensa 22, July 15, 1856), Turin: De-Agostini, 1856, p. 12.

²¹ Ibid., p. 33 f.

²² Ibid., p. 56 f.

they were not useful was to lay down the premises for the destruction of Christianity as a whole and the annihilation of any transcendent conception. It would rule out any recognition of different kinds of ties with God or of extraterrestrial survival.

At this point in time Catholics overlooked many ticklish situations that had been faced by the Church because it had religious orders and congregations who operated with varying degrees of autonomy in dioceses and parishes. Monks and friars were not viewed now as the people whose activity in other times had seemed to be an unwarranted and improper intrusion into the sphere of bishops and parish priests. At times the latter had had to endure this intrusion in silence, knowing that the monks and friars could get a favorable hearing in Rome.

In moments of exasperation this latent annoyance had found expression in Piedmont too. Bishops had denounced the situation in terms that sounded like, and often were, expressions of episcopal Gallicanism regarding the conflict between diocesan and religious clergy. There had been complaints in Piedmont, too, that Rome tolerated moral and civil disorders from the friars in order to assert its own supremacy, its own absolute, universal monarchy. Some of these books, dating from the eighteenth century, were to be reissued in Turin after 1850. A few years later Döllinger's book, *The Pope and the Council* (1869), written under the pseudonym Janus, would also be published in Turin. In it Döllinger complained that monks, the mendicant orders, and the congregations had upset the whole administration of the Church through the use and abuse of their privileges, their teachings, and their ministry in competition with, or direct opposition to, that of parish priests and bishops. They had reduced the Church practically to 'a monster', and helped to establish the universal dominion of the popes.²³

2. Urban Rattazzi's view of the law of suppression

The law of May 29, 1855, as formulated and explained by Rattazzi, was not meant to be anticlerical or Gallican. The revenge of the secular clergy

²³ [Von Döllinger], *Il papa ed il Concilio di Janus*, Chap. 3, Turin-Florence: E. Loescher, 1869, p. 237; Jerome Spanzotti, *Disordini morali e politici della Corte di Roma esposti a nome de' zelanti della ecclesiastica libertà alla Santità di Pio VI dal giureconsulto Spanzotti membro del Collegio di legge nell'Università nazionale*, Turin: tip. Canfari, 1852; Charles Anthony Pilati, *Riflessioni di un italiano sopra la Chiesa*. . . , Turin: tip. Canfari, 1852; P.C. Boggio, *La Chiesa e lo Stato in Piemonte, esposizione storico-critica dei rapporti fra la S. Sede e la Corte di Sardegna*. . . , Turin: tip. Sebastian Franco, 1854, 2 vols.

on the regular clergy did not serve as its inspiration, nor was it hostile to the Church. It was not contrary to justice and equity, not favorable to communism, not sacrilegious, and not in violation of the property rights of others.

His juridical and jurisprudential arguments began from a jurisdictional presupposition: in the external order civil authority, as embodied historically by State units, was primary and prevailing. As an external reality, the Church suddenly appeared in the State, was accepted and welcomed by it, and became a moral entity in the State through civil law: "The Church was introduced into the State only through the assent of civil authority."²⁴ Hence religious corporations, too, were secondary and dependent entities vis-à-vis the State and its authority. Their moral personality was twofold: one deriving from the spiritual authority that recognized them as moral entities with religious aims issuing from it, and the other deriving from State authority. The law of suppression did not in any way impugn the personality that religious corporations claim from the Church. It simply rescinded and annulled their civil personality.²⁵

Second, the law did not violate individual freedom or freedom of association; nor was it favorable to communism. It did not entail the expulsion of individuals. They had full and free rein "to assemble and to devote themselves to whatever sort of life might please them."²⁶ Indeed Rattazzi viewed the individual personality as a primary subject of rights vis-à-vis the State, as a juridical entity stronger than that of the civil authority in its roots and solidity. It was prior in the order of nature and also more sacred because closer to God, by whom all other good things—including social nature—were created "to provide for the needs of individuals."²⁷ Thus the State was not a monster swallowing up the in-

²⁴ Rattazzi, *Discorsi*, p. 29. There is an obvious similarity to Cavour's formula, "a free Church in a free State," on which there is already an abundant literature. See Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, section 54, p. 128 f. But I don't think I can subscribe fully to Aubert's evaluation (p. 127): "This legislation [the suppression of religious corporations] found its inspiration not so much in the liberal principle of the separation of Church and State as in the Jacobin and royalist tradition concerned with affirming the sovereign rights of the State. . ." Also present was the liberal concern to guarantee the liberty of the individual and of moral entities.

²⁵ Rattazzi, *Discorsi*, p. 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

dividual or violating its rights. By nature it was set up to guard and regulate the rights of the individual members of a community. This viewpoint, exalting individual values and giving them priority over societal ones, had its historical roots in the contractual theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

According to Rattazzi, then, one could not argue against the law by claiming that in suppressing the right of ownership of religious corporations one was establishing a principle that would destroy every other kind of ownership.

Moreover, one could not say that the law was injurious to the rights of the Church and individuals. It did not infringe on the rights of the Church because the assets of the corporations were not properly the Church's and use of the term 'ecclesiastical' could give rise to ambiguity. Everything possessed by the corporations was in the State, was made fruitful or squandered in the State, and was regulated by State laws. The law did not infringe on the rights of the individuals involved either. Through their vow of poverty they had voluntarily abdicated title to ownership. Hence they were recognized, by the State also, as individual nullities incapable of use or usufruct rights as individuals.

Once the religious corporations were suppressed, therefore, their assets became anonymous. No private individual could reclaim them, nor could the Church put in a claim for them. They became part of the public domain.²⁸ In the redistribution of those assets the civil authorities would make every effort to be scrupulously fair. Piedmont was legally

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 22-27. "We are accused of wanting, with this project, to destroy society, to totally uproot the right of ownership on which social order rests, to open the way for socialism and communism, to ignore the will of the founders. . .to commit an actual theft (p. 22). . .But insofar as religious corporations or ecclesiastical establishments are concerned, the fact is that ownership turns out to be fictional, to be created by law; and just as it is the law that created them and keeps them alive, so the law obviously can destroy what it has created. . .This is a right undoubtedly belonging to the State over all the goods it finds located in its territory. Whenever there is no one who can claim a right of private ownership over certain goods, the State steps into the ownership of the abandoned assets (p. 24). . .Moreover, there is manifestly an intrinsic difference between individual ownership and the ownership associated with a moral entity, an individuality created by law. In the case of private property, the individual proprietor recognizes his right by nature (p. 25). . .The members of religious communities have made an absolute vow of poverty. Hence, by virtue of their vow, they cannot make reasonable claims of ownership, dominion, usufruct, or use over the assets of the establishment to which they belong (p. 24)."

a confessional state and Rattazzi, at least, recognized the social reality of Piedmont in which Catholicism was professed by the majority. Ecclesiastical assets would be used for ecclesiastical needs, which were urgent. The State had vainly sought understanding from the ecclesiastical authorities. Unable to provide for the needs of poor parish priests and the clergy of Sardinia, it had acted unilaterally and suppressed the civil personality of less 'useful' religious corporations. Thus its *modus operandi* was necessary, just, and fair.

In this connection Rattazzi recalled some of the highlights of the familiar jurisdictional conflicts between Piedmont and Pope Clement XI in the eighteenth century. At the time Victor Amadeus II had made a point of telling his officials that any vindictive interventions by Rome would not be just. Excommunications, suspensions, and interdicts were to be viewed as ineffective. Rattazzi recalled his words in 1707: "We are prepared to face any extreme of injustice to which His Holiness might be tempted . . . Before putting such measures into effect, let him ponder the matter seriously so as not to cause such great scandal to the world and such damage to his pontificate. On this end he should expect to find ever greater firmness in the upholding of justice and reason, which is so palpably on our side." The pope should have no doubt "that we will not fail to counter with the remedies available to us by virtue of the authority that sovereigns possess from God alone."²⁹

These subtle lines of reasoning, unilaterally stressing the powers of the public authority in a given territory, expressed a determination to go ahead with the suppression of religious corporations deemed useless.

3. Questions confronting Don Bosco

Such were the events and attitudes in 1855, when Don Bosco began to feel keenly the need for collaborators and people who would carry on his work. Everyone was caught up in the situation because of its many, complicated repercussions of both a political and a religious nature. Don Bosco himself had not stayed out of the fray. His involvement was indirect when he sent Victor Emmanuel II copies of the message he took to be a portent from heaven: warnings of divine punishments, for the sacred person of the sovereign too, if he did not oppose the designs of those who, in clerical terms, were considered indiscriminately sectarian.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., p. 46 f.

³⁰ BM 5:116-122.

Don Bosco's messages were sinister but respectful. They mirrored the outlook of all those who were convinced of the sacred character of the sovereign, who liked to think and say that Victor Emmanuel II had been the victim of deception. He had ended up in the toils of the sectarians. He would have acted differently if he had been more farsighted, if he had felt freer to act in such a delicate situation.

Moreover, wittingly or unwittingly Don Bosco had involved himself in the fray by publishing a booklet attributed to a 'Baron Nilinse' in a combined issue of his *Catholic Readings*. The booklet dealt with the stealing of church property and its consequences, and an appendix focused on developments in Piedmont specifically.³¹ More than once since 1850 he himself had been attacked by the anticlerical and Protestant press for the publication of his *Avvisi ai Cattolici* ("Warnings to Catholics"). His *History of Italy*, published in 1856 and reissued in 1859, prompted the *Gazzetta del Popolo* to accuse him of being an anti-government, pro-Austrian reactionary.³² Thus all his deliberations would be conditioned by the potential effect of his actions on the anticlericals.

In the quiet of his own inner world Don Bosco saw his desires and projections in a sacred context. As far back as a dream of 1844, so he tells us, he had seen lambs being transformed into shepherds. This was the elaboration of a motif already evident in his dream around the age of nine. We are reminded of the way contemporary Catholic circles more devoted to the pope interpreted Christ's metaphorical command to Peter: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." The pope was to guide and direct all the faithful and their pastors in the Church. The symbolic language of his dream told Don Bosco that he was to have many young people in his care, and that some of them would become little pastors and help him in his educational work. What was true in the Church would be true in his Oratory too. Shepherds would come from the transformation of some members of the flock.³³

By 1855 Don Bosco could see that his dream was coming true. His Oratories and the boarding school of Valdocco had given clerics to the

³¹ *I Beni della Chiesa come si rubino e quali ne siano le conseguenze pel barone di Nilinse con breve appendice sulle vicende particolari del Piemonte*, LC, a. 3, fasc. 3-4, 10 and 25 April 1855, Turin: Libr. Sales. 1883². Nilinse is the pseudonym of Collin de Plancy. See BM 5:149 f.

³² *Gazzetta del popolo*, October 18, 1859. See BM 6:156, 657-658. On DB's book see also BM 5:322-331.

³³ It is the dream that DB places in 1844, just before he went to the little hospital of St. Philomena. See MO:134 f.

diocese. Some were living with him and already assisting him. But how was he to keep these more loyal clerics united with him? In general, once young men finished their studies, they went back home. Once clerics entered the priesthood, they would be called by legitimate authorities to a specific ministry; or, if free, they would turn to work as teachers or chaplains.

The Congregation for the Oratories, to which Archbishop Fransoni had alluded in 1852, was not yet an operative reality. There were priests who had worked at the Oratory of St. Aloysius and Guardian Angel Oratory who might have been members of such a congregation: e.g., Rossi, Robert Murialdo, Canon Nasi, and Chiatellino. But sooner or later they dedicated themselves to other activities.

Don Bosco would now have to build on new bases, using new personnel in a new way; and he would have to take care that the laws against religious corporations would not strike down his work. At that point he might have felt as safe as the Brothers of the Christian Schools in establishing a society whose aim was to educate youths and the common people. But would he have felt as safe later on?

Suppose he wanted to bind his new collaborators to him with religious ties. Would it be better to have private vows or a simple promise? What kind of vow should be taken? Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but made in secret, obliging in conscience, and without public effects that might compromise his work in the eyes of the civil authorities?

How was he to regularize the life of his group vis-à-vis Church authorities? How could he get the latter to recognize their need for autonomy from the diocesan clergy and their dependence as clerics and priests on the director of the Oratories, so that the latter might have a stable personnel and some guarantee of continuity?

How was he to regularize their life vis-à-vis the State? Right now the Oratories were registered to Don Bosco and others associated with him in official documents, purely for legal effects. If he erected a religious congregation that was recognized by diocesan authorities and the pope, would he not run the risk of some day having its buildings confiscated and its other assets taken over insofar as they belonged to an ecclesiastical corporation?

These and similar questions might well have arisen in Don Bosco's mind around this time.³⁴ We know for a fact, however, that he continued

³⁴ Some support for this assumption is provided by data to be placed around 1854–1855. First is the commitment to practice charity, transmitted to us by a

to use his own name in registering new buildings and filing public deeds regarding the oratories, boarding schools, and other properties. The first gathering of Salesians in 1854 was private and secret. Adherence was freely given with a simple promise or a vow. But what sort of vow or vows were made? The situation of seminarians in Turin at the time allowed them to live elsewhere as individuals or in groups. They were

contemporary document of Father Rua: "On the evening of January 26, 1854, we gathered in Don Bosco's room. Present were Don Bosco, Rocchietti, Artiglia, Cagliero and Rua. It was suggested that, with the help of the Lord and St. Francis de Sales, we should first test ourselves by performing deeds of charity toward our neighbor, then bind ourselves by a promise, and later, if possible and desirable, make a formal vow to God. From that evening on, those who agreed—or would later agree—to this were called Salesians" (AS 9132 Rua; see BM 5:8). Note that there is no word about the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but rather about a vow to perform works of charity toward one's neighbor. Perhaps this was the only vow taken by the first Salesians: Rua (1855), Alasonatti (1855), Francesia (1856). . .

Fr. Bonetti was a student at Valdocco from 1855 on and joined the Salesian Society in 1859. Recalling the beginnings, he writes that DB began by gathering around him about a dozen clerics and young men, each of whom "simply promised to obey Don Bosco and to carry out those duties feasible for him. . . Some of the members stayed at their home. Their activity was limited to helping out at the Oratory on holidays, or attending evening school, or visiting youngsters in the workshops during the week, or seeking a decent employer for those who were unemployed or in a dangerous place. Others, however, stayed at the Oratory itself, sharing a common life with Don Bosco and ever ready to obey his commands." See "Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales," pt. 2, chap. 11, in *Bollettino Salesiano*, 7 (1883), p. 97 f. It seems, therefore, that the aims and activities of the Salesians were similar to those of the Charitable Society for Poor and Abandoned Youth, instituted by Father Cocchi. Its Rule dates from 1850 (described by Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21, Turin 1851, pp. 710–712).

That DB might have been thinking of a secret society is suggested by BM 4:120–122, containing the *Statement of Purpose* of the "pious union under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales." It is a secret society "run by laymen to forestall certain prejudiced persons from calling it, in their modish jargon, 'a priestly front' " (p. 121). It is not clear from the MB, however, why Father Lemoigne involves DB, or why he places the gathering at the end of 1850 (p. 120).

The Company of Mary Immaculate, also known as the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, was in existence at Valdocco already in 1856, however, but even some Salesians (e.g., Father Francesia) were unaware of its existence.

It is also worth noting a remark in the oldest manuscript of the Rules, 022 (1), p. 5: "The number of individuals presently professing these rules are 15: i.e., 5 priests, 8 clerics, 2 laymen."

to be found at Cottolengo's group (the *Tommasini*) and at the Oratory of St. Philip Neri.³⁵

4. *Political and religious developments from 1855 to 1875*

The course of events amply justified Don Bosco's line of conduct and any questions that might have arisen in his mind.

On July 6, 1866, a new law indiscriminately suppressed all religious corporations in Italy (now a united kingdom). As had happened in 1855, there was fierce tension between supporters and opponents as the law was being drawn up. Once again the clerical party was defeated, even though it had concrete proof that it represented the majority in the nation. They had gotten 191,000 signatures from Italians opposed to the law, whereas the backers of the law had gotten only 16,000 signatures. The figures documented the profound gap between the legal country and the real country. In 1857 Father Margotti had coined the slogan: "Neither elected, nor electors." In exasperation Catholics withdrew from political life. The few who persisted and kept up their hopes felt that they were facing an unfair fight. A member of parliament in 1866, Cesare Cantù recalled the struggle:

A small minority in parliament but the majority in the country, we defended them [the religious] as staunchly as we could. Thousands upon thousands of petitions were sent from all parts of the kingdom asking for the preservation of all of them, or of the vast majority concerned with teaching and works of charity . . . They paid no attention to the appeal, shaken by the louder outcries of our adversaries, who held meetings in city after city, though they only numbered in the hundreds . . . Then the war against Austria came, full powers were granted to the Minister, arrests and deportations threw fear into the faithful and reduced to silence those who might have dared to defend the religious orders. So the suppression of religious corporations was voted through without discussion.³⁶

³⁵ See *La famiglia dei Tommasini nella luce del suo 1° Centenario*, Pinerolo, 1949. They were instituted in the Little House of Divine Providence in 1841. From that date to 1936 they were 1,988 in number, of which 735 were ordained priests (see 273–343, list of Tommasini). See DB's letter to Canon Vogliotti, Turin, November 12, 1859 (BM 6:188; chapter bibliography, item (e), n. 206).

³⁶ C. Cantù, *Cronistoria della Indipendenza italiana*, 3, Turin 1876, p. 73 f.; cited by Massè, *Il caso di coscienza*, p. 280 f.

In Turin, Don Bosco was able to witness the fate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who taught in the municipal grammar schools of St. Pelagia and St. Primitivo (which Michael Rua had attended). These schools were administered by the Royal Office for the Instruction of the Poor. Its director informed the Brothers that they could no longer live in community at St. Pelagia and should go to live elsewhere. They could continue to teach with the approval of the Royal Office, provided they did not wear the habit of their congregation or of any other suppressed congregation. In a new contract the Royal Office entrusted the school to 'certain individuals' represented by Messrs. John Baptist Andorno (Brother Genuino) and Leonard Antoniotti (Brother Casimir).

Only in 1875 were the Brothers able to come back and live at St. Pelagia. Although anticlericalism and Catholic intransigence had grown more acute, after 1870 the religious congregations were able to re-establish a bridgehead in Italy by presenting their members as free citizens. The Italian State accepted the *de facto* situation without touching the *de jure* situation based on the laws of suppression.³⁷

During this period we find a somewhat similar process going on in Italy, France, Spain, and other countries based on liberal and anticlerical principles. The situation was somewhat akin to that which in earlier ages had produced the mendicant orders, clerics regular, and religious congregation. Revolutionary changes in mentality produced more or less peaceable social changes, and they called for new forms of associated religious life.³⁸

The stormy atmosphere of the nineteenth century might seem in the abstract to have been hardly favorable to the growth of religious congregations, but hundreds of new male and female congregations were instituted. Working in isolation or with some knowledge of each other, they often started out from similar experiences and ended up with similar conclusions. They brought their plans to diocesan bishops or to Rome,

³⁷ *Primo Centenario dei Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane in Torino*, Turin, 1929, p. 72. And in the general historical picture of the Institute see G. Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes*, 6, Paris 1947, pp. 64-69.

³⁸ Though it does not take account of Don Bosco and the Salesians, an important historical treatment is that of The Benedictine, R. Lemoine, *Le droit des religieux du concile de Trente aux Instituts séculiers*, Bruges, 1956. See also J. Beyer, *Les Instituts séculiers*, Bruges, 1956; E. Jombart, "Associations pieuses," in *DSp*, 1, cols. 1027-1037; idem, in *Catholicisme* 1, col. 942-947; J. M. Perrin, "Instituts séculiers," in *Catholicisme* 5, cols. 1777-1792.

suggesting new ideas about the structure of the religious life and their own relationships with bishops, the faithful, and the State. They thus helped to modify church law governing religious and to create a new religious society.³⁹

5. *The Salesians and the State*

Conversations held with Urban Rattazzi in 1857 and Pius IX in 1858 were enlightening and historically important for the eventual structure of the Salesian congregation.

Rattazzi himself brought up the matter of ensuring continuity to Don Bosco's work. He advised the latter against setting up a religious congregation, even though there was no present threat of suppressing those congregations engaged in educational work. Rattazzi suggested a society "in which each member retains his civil rights, submits to the laws of the land, pays taxes, and so on."⁴⁰ In the eyes of the government Don Bosco's society would then "be nothing more than an association of free citizens living together and sharing the same charitable goals." Rattazzi assured Don Bosco: "No lawful constitutional government can oppose the establishment and development of such a society, just as it does not oppose but rather favors commercial, industrial, stock, mutual, and other such societies. Any association of free citizens is permitted as long as its purpose and activities do not conflict with the laws and institutions of the State."⁴¹

Rattazzi was merely reiterating in private the ideas he had already expounded in parliament. But to Don Bosco his words were a revelation, a 'ray of light' from the least expected source. The Salesians would not be touched if they kept their civil rights, professed obedience to their rulers (however unmanageable), avoided mortmain, and dutifully paid their taxes.

Perhaps this was the idea that Don Bosco carried to Rome, though we cannot say for sure on the basis of contemporary documents that he had even drawn up an organic set of rules. Perhaps he told the pope it was possible to ensure the continuation of his work through the insti-

³⁹ The list of institutes (more than 130) that addressed themselves to Rome between 1821 and 1861 is provided by P. Bizzarri, *Collectanea in usum Secretariae S. Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium*, Rome, 1885², pp. 808–814.

⁴⁰ Reported from the source which Father Lemoyne used for the MB and other biographies: Bonetti, "Storia dell'Oratorio," in *Bollettino Salesiano*, 7 (1883), p. 97. See also BM 5:461.

⁴¹ Ibid., BM 5:461.

tution of a pious union. It would be some sort of moral body in which the members would be bound by promises, or perhaps by private vows if it was so desired.⁴² In short, the bonds would set them off from religious

⁴² The oldest redaction we have, from Father Rua's hand, cannot be prior to November 1857, a time when Father Angelo Savio had had to go to Alexandria at the start of the school year and was in correspondence with Father Alasonatti, *maestro* of the Salesian Society (AS 272 Alasonatti; see also BM 5:47 f.). But in itself it could be posterior to Don Bosco's trip to Rome (March 1858).

On the Roman sojourn of DB and Father Rua, the most important document is a diary written largely by Rua, but in DB's name and partly completed by the latter. This diary was consulted by Father Bonetti for his *Storia dell' Oratorio*, and by Father Lemoyne for the MB (see BM 5:534 f.).

This document by DB and Rua stops on March 29, the thirty-eighth day of their stay in Rome. Now there is something a bit astonishing here. It gives a detailed description of a papal audience held on March 9, Tuesday after the third Sunday of Lent; but it says nothing about a private audience held, according to Father Lemoyne, on Sunday, March 21. Yet Rua provides a succinct itinerary of that day's events:

Day 32. March 21. Sunday. St. Maria in Via Lata. Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. Forum and Trajan's Column. Tomb of Publius Bulbus. Via Argentaria. Campo Vaccino. Arch of Septimius. Forum. Sts. Cosmas and Damian.

This is followed by Monday's entries: "Day 33. March 22. Monday. Visit to the Cardinal Vicar. St. Paul Outside the Walls. St. Paul of the Three Fountains. St. Zeno the tribune . . ."

It seems odd that Father Rua would record a visit to the cardinal vicar and completely overlook an audience granted by the pope. Also odd would be a private papal audience granted on Sunday at an unspecified time. One suspects that Father Lemoyne, having assumed that DB gave his manuscript of the Rules to the pope, felt obliged to stipulate another audience in which Pius IX gave back the document after he had examined and commented on it. It is also odd that this document would be neglected and then lost at Valdocco. If you look carefully at what DB says in his memoranda and letters, you notice that he never says that Pius IX corrected the first Rule in his own hand (note, for example, his petition to the pope dated February 12, 1864; MB 7:621).

This would not be the only instance of a forced reconstruction based on a doubtful or erroneous assumption. In the first volume of the MB, Father Lemoyne writes: "Wherever he went, he took along a bundle of religious books and the grammar which Father Calosso had given him" (BM 1:150). Which assumes they met for the first time in 1826. In MB 8 he states that DB blessed the school built in Mornese, when it is certain that he only attended the rite celebrated by Father Pestarino (see BM 8:429 and F. Maccono, *L'apostolo di Mornese sac. Domenico Pestarino . . .*, Turin, 1929, p. 116 f.). Father Lemoyne probably assumed that Pestarino would have ceded the honor of blessing the place to DB, and he never imagined that DB might have reasons for declining the invitation.

congregations in the strict and proper sense, who now faced sad and difficult times. In germ it was the whole idea of secular institutes, which were to be approved as religious associations with private vows but public effects.

From what Don Bosco tells us, Pius IX did not reject the notion of a corporation whose members would keep their civil rights. In those days he himself and the Roman Congregations were encouraging new religious organizations that would respond to new exigencies.⁴³ But he wanted something more than a simple promise. The members were to be united by public vows, recognized as such by the Church, "linked by a bond of conscience with their superior, the latter considering himself and his subjects linked to the head of the Church and hence to God himself."⁴⁴

It is not easy to determine to what extent Don Bosco modified Rattazzi's idea and acceded to that of Pius IX. From the oldest drafts of the Rules of the Salesian Society we learn that he did not propose the obligation of perpetual vows, although he certainly was counting heavily on perpetually professed members to ensure the continuation of his work. Instead he initially stipulated that the vows were valid and binding in conscience so long as people remained in the congregation. They could be dissolved by voluntary withdrawal, legitimate dismissal by one's superior, or a dispensation from the local ordinary.⁴⁵

Don Bosco abandoned that formula and adopted another one, still

⁴³ Lemoine, *Le droit des religieux*, p. 431.

⁴⁴ *Regole e Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales . . . Introduzione, I voti*, Turin 1875, p. 17. DB recalls his 'first' colloquy with Pius IX.

⁴⁵ AS 022 (1), p. 8. *Form of the Congregation* 9: "The vows obligate the individual so long as he remains in the congregation. Those who leave the congregation, for a good reason or on the prudent advice of their superiors, can be released from their vows either by the local ordinary of the motherhouse or by the superior general."

"For a good reason . . . superior general" corrected from "leave on their own or on the prudent judgment of their superiors are discharged from the congregation, by that very fact are understood to be released from their vows, except for those who have taken perpetual vows."

The formula derives in part from the *Constitutiones Congregationis Sacerdotum saecularium Scholarum Charitatis*, cp. 1, *De Instituto et forma congregationis*, 4, Venice, 1837, p. 17: "Haec autem vota, paupertatis nimirum, obedientiae, et castitatis eousque obligare censentur, quousque alumni sive Clerici sive Laici in Congregatione permanserint. Qui enim aut sponte discedunt, aut prudenti Superiorum

trying to keep the vows fluid and transitory in some way. Members were to take temporary vows every three years, and perpetual vows if they so chose, dispensable in every case by the superior or the local ordinary.⁴⁶

Between 1860 and 1864 a new possibility was added. One could be affiliated as an extern, remaining a Salesian 'in the world', with a simple promise to dedicate oneself to Salesian works insofar as one could.⁴⁷

judicio a Congregatione dimittuntur, eo ipso et sine nulla dispensatione praedictis votis exsolvuntur."

It is not easy to ascertain when or how DB came to know the *Scholae Charitatis* of the Cavanis brothers. Their social status was very different, Don Bosco being a peasant, the Cavanis a family of counts. But their educational experiences were surprisingly similar: catechism lessons, sodality of St. Aloysius, oratories, schools, congregation of educators, and so forth. The Cavanis included among their most distinguished members Victor Frigiolini of Piedmont, whose biography was published in Don Bosco's LC in 1872. They also had good relations with another apostle of youth, Ludovico Pavoni, whose work in Brescia was noted by DB.

⁴⁶ This is the corrected formula of ms. 022 (1) reported in the preceding footnote, to be compared with what is said about Acceptance (p. 15), art. 4: "The vows will be twice, every three years. After six years any member is free to continue for periods of three years, or to make perpetual vows, i.e., to pledge to keep the vows for life."

⁴⁷ The addition is made on the copy AS 022 (4), which contains the request that Archbishop Fransoni look them over and approve them (see BM 6:360-361). The document is undated. There are no certain grounds for saying that it was a copy of the 'Rule' sent to Lyons. On the basis of Father Ruffino's diary, however, it seems it should be placed in 1860, before June 11. The addition of 'externs' seems to be later than that date. Fransoni's response letter of July 7, 1860 (BM 6:362-363) is in AS 126.2 Fransoni.

The latest possible date cannot be later than the early months of 1864, since the externs are mentioned in the Observations On the Rules presented to Rome.

The figure of 'the religious in the world' is associated with a time when the classic forms of religious orders and congregations were being suppressed. We find it in France and Italy in institutions that were akin to the spirit of Don Bosco and his own experiences: e.g., the *Oeuvre de la Jeunesse* in Marseilles. DB was to find direct inspiration in the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, whose Rules he consulted. One of their distinguished oblates was Father John Baptist Rubino of Morra, founder of the St. Aloysius Sodality for young men at the end of the eighteenth century and the corresponding congregation of nuns. Rubino was accepted orally as an external oblate in 1831, and officially on January 15, 1837. See G. R. Claretta, *D. Giovanni Rubino perla del Clero albese. Fondatore delle Suore Oblate di San Luigi Gonzaga*, Alba, 1961.

Don Bosco's group, then, was not strictly a congregation. Indeed he abandoned that word for 'Society'. The Salesian Society was a moral entity sharing in the nature of several different types of organizations: the classical religious congregation, the simple pious union (e.g., the Daughters of Mary and various Oblates), and the simple association. One such association was that of Turin priests known as the Society of Turin Priests for the Education of Youth. They had founded it on July 25, 1863, in the vicinity of the Institute for Young Artisans, and had gone to the vicar capitular of Turin for approval and encouragement.⁴⁸

Don Bosco had been negotiating with the archbishop, who was in exile in Lyons and died in 1862. In September 1863, he too went to the vicar capitular of Turin, not to get approval but to get a letter of recommendation to present to Rome for an examination of his constitutions and definitive approval at some point. To Zappata, the vicar capitular, he wrote: "My aim is to establish a Society which preserves all civil rights in its members in the eyes of government authorities, but which constitutes a real moral body in the eyes of the Church."⁴⁹

Notice that the terms are carefully measured. Don Bosco does not say that he wants to have his Society recognized by the civil and religious authorities. He does not even say that he wants to present it to the Church as a congregation, but rather as a moral body. Strictly speaking, his group was not merely a congregation, although much of its structure smacked of a religious congregation with simple vows.

One should not overlook possible suggestions from the Ursulines, who were then undergoing reorganization. See P. Guerrini, "La rinascita e la diffusione della Compagnia nei tempi moderni," in *S. Angela Merici e la Compagnia di S. Orsola nel IV Centenario della fondazione*, Brescia, 1936, p. 391 f; M. V. Boschet, *Les origines de l'Union Romaine des Ursulines jusqu'à sa fondation 1900*, Rome, 1951, p. 172.

⁴⁸ See *Regolamento fondamentale della Società di sacerdoti torinesi per l'educazione della Gioventù approvato nell'adunanza del 24 agosto 1863*, Turin: G. Speirani, 1863, p. 7; *Regolamento fondamentale del Collegio-Convitto Val-Salici presso Torino diretto dalla Società di Sacerdoti torinesi per l'educazione della Gioventù discusso ed approvato nell'adunanza delli 19 ottobre 1863*, Turin: G. Speirani, 1863. Some of these priests were from Father Cocchi's circle, already involved somehow in 1850 in the Charitable Society for Poor and Abandoned Youth. See Casalis, *Dizionario*, 21, p. 713; A. Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio su Leonardo Murialdo educatore*, Rome, 1964, pp. 3-48.

⁴⁹ AS 131.01 Zappata; MB 7:563.

With good reason Father Durando, the Vincentian, asserted: "Though the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales can—and one day may—be approved by the Church, its civil approbation is hardly likely at present, since the laws of the land and public opinion are against anything resembling a religious congregation."⁵⁰ And, in fact, when the Salesian Society was definitively approved by the Holy See in 1869, Don Bosco did not get the royal *exequatur*.⁵¹

However, Father Durando probably did not consider the fact that Don Bosco did not need civil approval of his institute as an ecclesiastical entity, and that he may not even have wanted it. When he was obliged in 1869 to hand in the papal decree of approval, he had an easy time of it for several reasons. First and most importantly, the members of the Salesian Society had retained their civil rights and thus could present themselves as free citizens. Second, like the members of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, they could retire to some corner of the city or Piedmont, then head for the buildings of the oratories and boarding schools registered to a priest named Don Bosco in order to carry out their activity of free association. As Don Bosco put it in a letter to the attorney general: "If they wish, the members can stay at home and do what they can to collect poor boys off the streets and squares, in order to introduce them to morality or some art or craft."⁵²

If the situation had required it, Don Bosco could have resorted to other approaches without deviating from the Roman guidelines of the

⁵⁰ Observations on the Rules of the Society of St. Francis de Sales (n.d.), dated 1860 by Father Lemoyne (BM 6:421–422). But they are certainly later than 1864 because they refer to a copy that has the subdivisions of the text presented to Rome and further alterations added by DB on the basis of observations made by Father Angelo Savini, Consultor for the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. For example, the rector major no longer rules for life because the Carmelite had objected. Instead he rules for twelve years, and this seems ridiculous to Father Durando.

The cause for the beatification of Marcantonio Durando has been introduced, and the *Positio* of the process is important. Durando is one of the key figures in Piedmontese religious life and ecclesiastical politics. Vague but useful is the old biography by F. Martinengo, *Il P. Marcantonio Durando*, Turin: Libr. Salesiana, 1888; G. Martina, "Clero italiano e sua azione pastorale . . ." in R. Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, section 413, p. 780 f.

⁵¹ MB 9:656–663; see BM 9:311. Various documents on the matter are to be found in AS 023.

⁵² To the Attorney General of the King, June 1869, MB 9:658 f.

time. He could have resorted to the full-bodied formula, 'Salesians in the world'; people linked by the bond of the three classic vows and by a common purpose, but not by a life in common. Such were the members of the *Oeuvre de Jeunesse*, which was approved by Pius IX in 1871. Despite the opposition of the bishop of Marseilles, the pope chose to substitute the term 'Congregation' for Pious Union in their decree of canonical erection.⁵³ Don Bosco's members could even be without any distinctive habit, like the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, who in 1878 were described by the archbishop of Paris as true religious in secular dress: "in saeculi habitu degentes, se vere religiosas exhibentes secundum formam vitae a S. Sede approbatam in his difficillimis temporibus."⁵⁴

One expression adopted by Don Bosco was: "Upon entering the congregation (the Society), no member will lose civil rights." This phrase was inserted into an article taken literally from the Rules of the *Scholae Charitatis*, which had been established in Venice by the Cavanis Brothers and approved by Gregory XVI in 1836.⁵⁵ In the context of Don Bosco's own time and thinking, however, even the words of the Cavanis Brothers took on new meaning. They not only sought to safeguard the future of individuals in the event they left the Society. Even more importantly, they sought to provide the basis for the existence of the Society itself in terms of civil law: the members, by virtue of their legal rights, had the authority to associate legally in philanthropic works.

For similar reasons Don Bosco's formulas also differed in substance from those of the *Institutum Caritatis* founded by Rosmini, which had been approved in 1838 and noted by Don Bosco in his compilation of the Salesian Rules. In Rosmini's rule, individuals retain *legal dominion*

⁵³ Lemoine, *Le droit des religieux*, p. 431.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ AS 022 (1), p. 7: "Form of This society [original term: Congregation] 2: Upon entering the congregation no member will lose civil rights, even after taking vows. He retains the ownership of his goods, and the right to accept inheritances, legacies, and donations. However, as long as he remains a member, he may not administer his goods except in the manner and within the limitations imposed by the major superior" (see MB 5:934; BM 5:638).

Const. Schol. Char., De Instituto et forma congregationis, 2: "Praeterea quisquis ecclesiasticus vel laicus ex nostra Congregatione, etiam post nuncupationem votorum, non amittit proprietatem rerum suarum, neque facultatem succedendi atque acceptandi haereditates, legata et donationes. Fructus vero eorumdem bonorum, vel favore Congregationis, vel suorum parentum, vel alterius cujuscumque personae cedere tenetur; durante ejus permanentia in Congregatione."

over their goods (it speaks of dominion, not rights); but they can use them for charitable works only as stipulated by their superior out of obedience.⁵⁶ Rosmini's aims are ascetic, but he also tends to guarantee the right of ownership and the power of acquisition to members and his institute. He does not reflect a clash between Church and State, nor does he presuppose suppressive legislation that must be confronted.

Viewed in the abstract, the expressions adopted by Don Bosco might seem to have been the most natural and obvious: "retain their civil rights, obey the civil laws regarding inheritance or any possible judicial suits." But they did not seem so to Rome, which was still smarting from the wounds being inflicted by anticlerical legislation in Italy and other countries. Sanctioning obedience to civil laws in the Constitutions of Don Bosco could be interpreted as implicit approval of unjust laws.⁵⁷ Thus

⁵⁶ *Regula Instituti Caritatis*, XXIV (in *Acta Gregorii papae XVI* . . . v.2, p.1, Rome 1901, p. 365): "Qui autem per simplex paupertatis votum ita abdicant a se rerum temporalium dominium, ut not ex voluntate propria (qua prorsus omnia reliquerunt), sed ex obedientia tantum, ad tempus, non animo sed externo dominio substantiam huius mundi retineant optime paupertatem evangelicam profitentur . . . et usquedum retineant aliquorum bonorum legale dominium, abiecto penitus ab eis usu et dispensatione . . . in pios usus . . . ex ipsius praepositi obedientia distribuunt."

Similar formulas can be found for other Orders. The Redemptorists, Rule, 2, section 1, art. 8: "Since the member of the congregation always retains ownership of his goods . . ." The Oblates of the Virgin Mary, Rule, p. 2, section 1: "Since the Congregation of the Oblates . . . essentially is only a pious union of secular ecclesiastics living under rules suited to their institute and its spirit, they always retain ownership of their goods and all the capacities accorded to secular ecclesiastics by government laws." But in 1835 this article was replaced by the following: "Since the member of the Congregation always retains ownership of his goods . . . (following as in the Redemptorist Rule)." Note also the comment of A. Rosmini to Cardinal Mauro Cappellari, Milan, March 25, 1827: "But radical dominion would be kept so that in the eyes of civil law the member of the Congregation would appear to be an owner like any other citizen" (*Epistolario completo*, II, Casale Monferrato, 1887, p. 219).

Constitutiones et regulae congr. Missionariorum oblatorum SS. Immaculae Virginis Mariae . . . , p. 2, c.1, section 1, art. 14, Marseilles 1853: "Quisque nostrum bonorum suorum jus retinebit."

⁵⁷ *Mese di Marzo. Anno 1874* . . . *Torinese sopra l'approvazione delle Cost. della Soc. Sal., Num. I. Riassunto delle precedenti osservazioni trasmesse al Sac. D. Giovanni Bosco sopra le Costituzione esibite nell'anno 1874*, p.3: "3. Take out the repeated mention of the civil rights of lay people, and of obedience to civil laws . . ." See MB 10:747.

all reference to civil laws was challenged and eventually eliminated in 1874. Not even something akin to Rosmini's formula—'legal dominion' over their personal possessions—was retained. Advised by the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, Don Bosco adopted a formula already approved for the Marists, and it found its way literally into the Salesian Constitutions: "professi in hoc Instituto [Don Bosco: in hac Societate] *dominium radicale*, ut aiunt, suorum bonorum retinere poterunt."⁵⁸

Don Bosco's innovative contribution disappeared in its material formulation, but it perdured in its value as a formula, one that could serve as the basis for the legal existence of religious corporations in systems of legislation that recognized and respected the rights of individuals who did not abdicate radical dominion over their patrimonial goods.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ AS 022 (18) *Constitutiones Soc. S. Franc. Salesii, c. IV De Voto Paupertatis* (edited Latin ms. of Father Berto, authentic copy with seal of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars), p. 5 f:

1. Votum paupertatis apud nos respicit cujuscumque rei administrationem, non possessionem; ideoque Professi in hac societate *dominium radicale*, ut ajunt, suorum bonorum retinere poterunt; sed his omnino interdicta est eorum administratio . . .

2. Poterunt vero de dominio sive per testamentum, sive de licentia tamen Rectoris Majoris, per actus inter vivos libere disponere . . .

3. Professis autem vetitum non sit ea proprietatis acta peragere de licentia Rectoris Majoris, quae a legibus praescribuntur.

4. Quidquid Professi sua industria vel intuitu Societatis acquisierunt, non sibi adscribere aut reservare poterunt . . .

Constitutiones Presbyterorum Soc. Mariae . . . confirmatae die 28 februarii 1873, Fines et quasi fundamenta Societatis, art. 3, De voto paupertatis, Lyons, 1874, p. 56 f:

131. Professi in hoc Instituto *dominium radicale*, ut aiunt, suorum bonorum retinere poterunt; sed his omnino interdicta est eorum administratio . . .

133. Poterunt vero de dominio, sive per testamentum, sive, de licentia tamen Superioris Generalis, per actus inter vivos libere disponere . . .

134. Professis autem vetitum non sit ea proprietatis acta peragere, de licentia Superioris, quae a legibus praescribuntur.

135. Quidquid Professi sua industria vel intuitu Societatis acquisierint, non sibi adscribere aut reservare poterunt . . .

⁵⁹ Nevertheless DB managed to retain 'civil rights' close to the Constitutions, inserting them into the Introduction to the section on Poverty, ed. 1875, p. XXIII: "It is true that our constitutions permit the possession and use of all civil rights; but upon entering the congregation one can neither administer nor dispose of . . ."

Is this not a proof of his tenacity and his immensely resourceful flexibility in practice?

Interpreting events in a religious key, Don Bosco could rightly tell his Salesians in a conference: "The Lord availed himself of us to propose a new concept of the vow of poverty in keeping with the requirements of the times. All this redounds to the glory of God, because it was he who did it all."⁶⁰

6. *The Salesians and the Church*

The closing of the Turin archdiocesan seminary had given legitimacy to the presence of diocesan clerics at Valdocco. Indeed this turn of events won sympathy and honor for the Oratory. It seemed to be the providential citadel that in difficult circumstances had offered refuge to the youthful aspirants to the Turin clergy.⁶¹ But in 1859 Don Bosco came to feel sure about the possibility of public life for a congregation. On December 18, he officially instituted the Society of St. Francis de Sales with a few of his clerics and one priest, Father Alasonatti.⁶²

Suddenly the situation of diocesan seminarians at Valdocco no longer seemed so privileged. Valdocco was viewed as a chaotic environment, a home where young aspirants to the priesthood could not find quiet, an ecclesiastical spirit, or the possibility of devoting themselves to prayer and the sacred sciences, since they were "merged with a crowd of poor, uneducated lads."⁶³ The climate of serene familiarity that was Don Bosco's joy seemed to be a negative thing, hardly conducive to forming a good seminarian. This is what Monsignor Cajetan Tortone, representative of the Holy See, wrote to Rome in 1868: "I happened to visit this institute several times during recreation time, and I must confess that I was very painfully shocked to see young clerics playing with apprentice tailors, carpenters, and cobblers, and even exchanging playful slaps with little clerical decorum. Our good Don Bosco is satisfied with his clerics'

⁶⁰ BM 9:231. It is possible, in any case, that Dominicans, Carmelites or others, with whom DB was in contact with regard to the Constitutions, may have learned of the existence of new types of religious poverty for the first time from Don Bosco.

⁶¹ A good idea of the change (whose psychological aspect is brought out here by me) is given by Father Lemoyne (BM 6:184-192). Interesting in this light is all the correspondence between DB, Canons Vogliotti, Zappata, and Fissore, and Archbishops Riccardi and Gastaldi. Almost all of it is recorded in the MB and preserved in AS 131.01 and 126.

⁶² BM 6:181 f. The original is in AS 055, written by Father Julius Barberis.

⁶³ Observations of Father Durando, BM 6:422.

devout demeanor in church and has little interest in forming them to a genuine ecclesiastical spirit and to a consciousness of the dignity of the life they wish to enter."⁶⁴

People reproached Don Bosco for proceeding to establish the Salesian Society, saying that he had set foot on a difficult, if not mistaken, road. He had asked and gotten permission to have clerics with him, but things had hobbled along 'on crutches' for some years. The situation had certainly not improved, nor did it offer any assurance. Don Bosco claimed that the ecclesiastics of the Society were of the diocese and could leave the Oratory when they chose. But in reality they tended "to form a clergy . . . distinct from that of the diocese . . . a makeshift seminary."⁶⁵

The situation was problematic for another reason. Diocesan authorities allowed other seminarians to attend the classes of the seminary professors for externs, so they could not insist too much. If they put pressure on Don Bosco's people, they would have to put pressure on Cottolengo's people and others.⁶⁶

Suddenly the course grades of the Oratory's clerics seemed lower than they actually were. It seemed inconceivable that they could get solid grounding in ecclesiastical subjects while acting as prefects, assistants, and teachers and getting involved in the many pressing and distracting affairs of the institute.⁶⁷

Relations between the internal authorities of the Salesian Society and those of the diocese were also a ticklish matter. Wrote Father Durando: "The main aim—or at least one of the aims—of the Congregation is the intellectual and moral formation of aspirants to the priesthood, and yet the extent of the ordinary's authority in their regard is insufficiently explained. Nothing is said of the relations which must necessarily exist between rector and ordinary in matters of admission or dismissal of pupils and reports on their progress, conduct, etc."⁶⁸

On another front there were well-disposed bishops who were aware

⁶⁴ Report to the S.C. for Bishops and Regulars, Turin, August 6, 1868 (AS 023, Father G. Berto's copy); BM 9:170 f. Monsignor Tortone reflects the same ideas and feelings as Father Durando. Similar are the Observations sent to Rome by Archbishop Ricardi, dated Turin, March 14, 1868 (BM 9:53–55).

⁶⁵ Tortone, BM 9:171–172.

⁶⁶ See footnote 35, p. 148.

⁶⁷ Durando, BM 6:422; Tortone, BM 9:171–172.

⁶⁸ BM 6:421.

that the existence of Don Bosco's Congregation had received approval (*decretum laudis*) from the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars in Rome on June 23, 1864. Now they were asking whether his members should be ordained *titulo mensae communis* (on the basis of a common life) or on the basis of a personal ecclesiastical patrimony.⁶⁹

Don Bosco himself seemed to be going much too far. He was asking for authority to get clerics ordained on the basis of his own dimissorial letters. Clerics now belonging to Don Bosco might later become diocesan priests and prove to be a cross for their bishops. Episcopal powers, if granted to Don Bosco, could lead to many serious abuses among the clergy.⁷⁰ Every little cause of friction provoked irritation in Turin. This was particularly true when some cleric from the seminary moved to the Oratory, when the Valdocco clerics did not arrive punctually for lectures, when they skipped them and still dared to show up for exams, or when their exams were not brilliant on occasion.

The transitory nature of the vows bothered people. Father Durando noted: "Since the members of this Congregation are bound only by triennial vows, and perpetual vows are at their option, they cannot be ordained unless they have the required patrimony, inasmuch as ordination *titulo paupertatis* or *mensae communis* is reserved for congregations having perpetual vows. It can therefore happen that many youngsters will enter the Congregation only to receive a free education, be ordained, and leave to become a problem for bishops and perhaps a scandal to the people."⁷¹ Similar observations were made by Monsignor Tortone.⁷²

Acting on the presupposition that Don Bosco's group was a Congregation with simple vows, Father Durando also regretted the absence of an embryonic novitiate. There was no hint of it in the Rules, and with some good reason he predicted: "If the Congregation has no distinct novitiate, house of studies, and specific norms and rules by which to form its aspirants in the spirit of the institute, we cannot hope that it will either succeed or last."⁷³

Don Bosco reacted to these complaints about himself and the Or-

⁶⁹ BM 8:251.

⁷⁰ Tortone, BM 9:172-173.

⁷¹ Durando, BM 6:422.

⁷² Tortone, BM 9:172.

⁷³ BM 6:422.

atory.⁷⁴ He quickly realized the problem of diocesan ties that were too tight, uncertain, or tangled. He had used very unclear terms to describe his own competence and that of the local ordinary over the Congregation and its members. Now he found himself in a painful situation. If his Society was to enjoy expansion and success, it would have to be guaranteed autonomy from diocesan rule. Otherwise, as he wrote as early as 1864, "this Society, uniting houses in different dioceses, would be unable to make use of its members in accordance with various needs; for they could readily be sent elsewhere by the ordinary as he pleased."⁷⁵

A heavy blow fell in 1866. Ten clerics had been obliged to go to the archdiocesan seminary of Turin. "Not one of them returned to the Society after the year was up."⁷⁶ Other clerical associates of the Society (with or without vows?), who were unable to attend the seminary regularly, were not permitted to take the examinations. What alternatives were open to them? It seemed they could leave the Society or become disaffected from it by staying at the seminary; or else they could remain Salesians, without being able to receive Holy Orders or license from their bishop.⁷⁷

In his own little way Don Bosco was experiencing the difficulties faced in previous centuries by the whole juridical institution of religious orders and congregations, which had been woven into, or superimposed on, the older institutions of diocese and parish, sometimes replacing the latter. And this was a period when fear of diocesan disorders and the seeming appearance of disciplinary abuses in Turin and Italy were not unfounded; when bishops of an aggressive, take-charge nature (e.g.,

⁷⁴ Besides the already noted letters to diocesan authorities, there are the various statements issued in response to difficulties raised in Rome, Turin, and elsewhere (AS 023). The difficulties of Father Durando are noted in the statement drawn up for the bishops of the Turin ecclesiastical province, November 1868 (MB 9:420–423).

⁷⁵ *Cose da notarsi intorno alle Costituzioni della Società di San Francesco di Sales*, n.d., that Father Lemoyne places in February 1864: MB 7:622.

⁷⁶ *Animadversiones pro facultate literarum dimissorialium obtinenda*, autograph copy of DB (AS 023 and MB 8:572).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, MB 8:573. In this memorandum DB goes to the crux of the issue: "4° Generatim quomodo conciliari potest oboedientia proprio Episcopo cum oboedientia Superiori debita, cui vi votorum S. Sede reservatorum devincitur?" How reconcile obedience to one's bishop with obedience to one's superior when one is obligated by vows reserved to the Holy See to obey the latter?" See MB 8:573 and 7:712.

Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi of Turin) were reacting against anything that seemed opposed to their active work of reorganization.⁷⁸

Thus there were delicate and dramatic moments in the whole process of incorporating the Salesian Society into church structures. And it was accomplished with norms that did not produce a uniform fabric but rather ensured a practical connection between various organs of one and the same body.

Definitive approval of the Society as a congregation with simple vows came on March 1, 1869; of the Constitutions, on April 3, 1874. The Congregation was approved with a year of novitiate, followed by one or two periods of triennial vows ending in the obligation of perpetual profession. To avoid diocesan touchiness, Don Bosco realized that he would have to lead his new recruits to perpetual profession as quickly as possible.⁷⁹ But he was also pushed in that direction by inner reasons. What Father Durando had feared was still happening around 1874–1878. Young men were embracing the religious state only to get ahead with their studies under the tutelage of Don Bosco and his benefactors. At least that is how Don Bosco depicted certain defections. He decided that perpetual profession would be made after the novitiate. Temporary profession would be tolerated for individuals who gave solid hope of being useful to the Society in the period of their vows.⁸⁰

The novitiate took clearer shape in 1873 when the directors of the houses formally asked Don Bosco that it be separated from the rest of the Valdocco community.⁸¹

⁷⁸ For a clear-cut, delicate judgment of Gastaldi, note that of Bishop Duc of Aosta: "He was born for the episcopate. The ascendancy of his character, the vigor of his conceptions and will, the range of his knowledge, the facility of his speech, the fervor of his piety, his attachment to the teaching of Rome, and his passionate love for souls and the Church: all this made one foresee him as the spiritual leader of a people." See Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte* . . . 5, Turin 1904, p. 272.

⁷⁹ We read a report of a talk between DB and Archbishop Gastaldi in a confidential letter to Cardinal Berardi dated February 7, 1875 (AS 131.21 Berardi; BM 11:87 f; (e) 1282).

⁸⁰ MB 14:46 f., 361. There was no noticeable gain. From the catalogue of the Salesian Society we gather that the percentage of perseverance remained constant during the lifetime of DB. One difference is that after 1875–76 the exodus of perpetually professed members vis-à-vis temporary professed becomes more noticeable.

⁸¹ MB 10:1061. Father Rua was the master of novices. From November 7, 1874, it was Father Barberis. MB 10:1266; see BM 10:542.

From the first of March 1869, Don Bosco was able to enjoy the privilege of dimissorials on behalf of youths who had entered Salesian houses before the age of fourteen.⁸² For other cases he obtained special favors now and again. Only on June 28, 1884, did he finally obtain the privilege he desired for the Congregation. Henceforth the Salesian Society was classified among the congregations of exempt clerics.⁸³

The diocesan clergy was protected against possible abuses by the Salesians, as it was in the case of other religious orders and congregations, because members could not be admitted to Holy Orders *titulo congregationis* until after their perpetual vows; and, as clerics, members could not leave the Society to join the diocesan clergy until they had found a consenting bishop. By inviting candidates to perpetual profession right after the novitiate, however, Don Bosco was in a position to move some people rapidly toward the priesthood through intensive training (known as the *scuola di fuoco*). These were people whom Don Bosco sensed to be worthwhile and quickly usable, particularly in mission lands.

More than once Don Bosco tried to defend the existence of external members in the Congregation and the Rules, depicting them as a Third Order sharing in the spiritual favors of a pious society and committed to helping out in whatever way was possible for them. His rationale was

⁸² MB 10:804. See also BM 9:257 f.

⁸³ MB 17:124-143. See the *Indice* MB under the headings *Dimissorie* and *Privilegi* (p. 135). The relevant documentation is in AS 03 (*Privilegi*, now being reorganized).

In a decree from the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars dated June 28, 1884, DB and the members of the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales were granted the privileges and other favors that had been granted by the Holy See to the Redemptorists: "Omnia et singula Indulta, Privilegia, Indulgentias, Exemptiones et Facultates Congregationi SS. Redemptoris concessa, iisdem Sociis eorumque Ecclesiis, Cappellis et Domibus . . . in perpetuum."

It would have been desirable to get a more pointed formula that explicitly mentioned the *Privilegium exemptionis*. In any case the Salesian Society, on the basis of the decree, was classified among the clerically exempt Congregations; and the term *Exemptiones* came to be interpreted as equivalent to *Privilegium exemptionis*. See *Elenchus privilegiorum seu facultatum et gratiarum spiritualium quibus potitur Societas S. Francisci Salesii ex S. Sedis Apostolicae concessionibus directe et Congregationis SS. Redemptoris communicatione . . .*, pt. 2, cp. 3: De exemptionibus seu de Privilegio Exemptionis.

I. Qualis sit Exemptio Nostra et quid comprehendat.

II. Quid non comprehendat Exemptio Nostra (S. Benigni in Salassis, ex Officina Salesiana, 1888, pp. 35-52).

of no avail. More urgently concerned about the definitive approval of the Constitutions dealing with true and proper members, he dropped the figure of the external affiliate in 1874.⁸⁴

But the external member had a particular significance in the Salesian context, insofar as Don Bosco could find inspiration for it in the Oblates of the Virgin Mary.⁸⁵ The Salesian externs also reflected the highly personal experience of Don Bosco himself. Affiliation was readily granted to benefactors and friends, such as Count Charles Cays. In all likelihood it was also a sensitive way to maintain a certain kind of vocation that had proved to be a *de facto* possibility: that of the many people who desired or tried to stay with Don Bosco as religious in the strict sense but had not been able to do so.⁸⁶ For these people, too, Don Bosco reserved his own sort of blessing: the name of Salesian, his affection, and the satisfaction of participating in some sort of desired activity. It was a way of not totally frustrating those who withdrew from the Congregation even after taking vows, of not extinguishing the smoking wick. A mark of Don Bosco's paternal sensitivity, it was an opening up to the broadest possible collaboration between religious bound by vows and a common life and the Catholic laity. It was a way of fleshing out 'the religious in the world', a concept that was then being promoted by the rector of St. Sabina in Genoa and a friend of Don Bosco, Joseph Fras-

⁸⁴ See *Supra Animadversiones in Constitutiones Sociorum sub titulo S. Francisci Salesii in Dioecesi Taurinensi* (reply to observations of Father Savini, various autograph drafts of DB and copies with his comments, not dated, in AS 023; MB 7:710-715). Regarding the tertiaries: *Animadversio nona.*—*Approbandum non est ut personae extraneae Pio Instituto adscribantur per ita dictam affiliationem.*—*Adnotatur.* Cum fere omnes Congregationes et Ordines religiosi habeant tertiarios quos amicos vel benefactores vocamus, quique specialiter bonum Societatis promoventes sanctiorem vitam appetunt, atque constitutiones religiosas in saeculo, quoad fieri poterit, observare satagunt, ideo humiliter postulatur ut hoc caput si non in textu saltem in finem constitutionum tanquam appendix approbetur."

⁸⁵ See footnote 47, p. 153.

⁸⁶ Count Cays later became a Salesian. Others took a different road even though they regarded themselves as 'confreres': e.g., Canon Anfossi (his letters to confrere Father Francesia in AS 123), the laymen Charles Gastini and Jerome Suttill, many former students whose letters of best wishes and homages to DB are preserved in AS 115. External Salesians whose registration is recorded include the parish priest of Marengo d'Asti, Father John Ciattino (BM 6:571), and Father Joseph Pestarino of Mornese.

sinetti.⁸⁷ (Such terminology could not help but be challenged by rigid canonists.)

Although the concept of external Salesians was dropped, something of it endured for quite a while in the Salesian Society. Don Bosco had no plan to set up rigid structures for the aspirants, novices (known as *ascritti*), and coadjutors (lay confreres). Certainly, he did not conceal his disappointment when people on whom he was counting left him, nor did he hide his personal feeling about the obligatory nature of a vocation that was recognized as certain. But he kept other things in mind. If people had a vocation, one should not regret that they went elsewhere after spending time with Don Bosco. A vocation was always a gift from God to the Church.

Even after the approval of the Constitutions in 1874, the novitiate retained its own peculiar cast: flexible and many-faceted. Writing to Canon Guiol on July 31, 1878, Don Bosco stressed the usefulness of a 'novitiate' in Marseilles: "It is a gigantic but enormously useful undertaking, because more than half of our students become clerics in their respective dioceses. There will be missionaries and also good lay people." What, then, was the novitiate in Don Bosco's eyes? A house of study? A seedbed of vocations for the Salesians and other church institutes? A way to induce contact with the work of the Salesians, the ecclesiastical state, and the religious state?

On the basis of a privilege obtained *vivae vocis oraculo* from Pius IX on April 8, 1874, Don Bosco saw to it that duties were readily assigned to novices as assistants and teachers in the Oratory and elsewhere. One, two, or more novices could be found in every house, the major nucleus being in Valdocco, San Benigno, Foglizzo, and Valsalice. This was still true at the start of the twentieth century.

What did they do? Those headed for the ecclesiastical state sometimes did the same work as the professed members. Coadjutors helped out with a more disparate array of duties. Novices, "besides acquiring inner virtues," learned and perhaps even practiced "works of charity" on behalf of young people. This was done in accordance with the superior's judgment and under the tutelage of their master, who was the director of a

⁸⁷ Frassinetti, *Il Religioso al secolo*, Genoa 1864; C. Olivari, *Della vita e delle opere del servo di Dio Sac. Giuseppe Frassinetti . . .*, Rome 1928, pp. 178-189; G. Vaccari, *San Giovanni Bosco e il priore Giuseppe Frassinetti*, Porto Romano, 1954, pp. 27-32 (DB and the Sons of Mary). Joseph Mazzarello was a Son of Mary in Mornese, who became a Salesian cleric. His biographer was Father Lemoyne.

given house for many of them. Reading Salesian obituaries, we can only wonder whether some of them knew exactly what status they had in Don Bosco's house.

While attending the University of Turin, Bartholomew Fascie helped out with the teaching at Valsalice. In 1877–1879 he was placed among the novices, but he himself never remembered that period as a real time for testing a vocation to which he had never given any serious thought. From 1883–1888, he was one of the pillars of the high school at Alassio, doing much to promote cultural activities. His smile and fine sensitivity drew young people to him. He was at table with the Salesians as if he were one of them. In 1888 he decided to enter the novitiate. He later became a priest and a member of the Superior Chapter of the Salesians.

Similar was the condition of many coadjutors living in Salesian houses with or without vows. In 1883 the distinction was made between 'Salesian Coadjutors' and 'famigli' ('domestics': i.e., people who are not formally Salesians but live in their houses and share their community life, as relatives might in an extended-family household). This helps to explain the drop in novice coadjutors in the listing of Salesians for 1884. But before and after that date we find coadjutors enrolled as novices for five or more consecutive years. Wasn't the novitiate supposed to last one year? Did those coadjutors know they were enrolled as novices? What impact might knowing it or not knowing it have had on their lives?

Anthony Francis Forcina, John Vota, and Francis Veggi were among the novices from 1881 on. They professed respectively in 1888, 1890, and 1899. Philip Charles Gavarino was at Valdocco from 1885 on, but he was never officially enrolled as a novice. He professed in 1890 and died as a Salesian coadjutor on June 18, 1966. Like the men just cited, he found himself at home in Don Bosco's house. He worked and prayed with the Salesians. One day he joined them.

The care of young clerics remained among the aims of the Salesian Society. Roman practice was not opposed to this. The year before the Salesian Constitutions were approved, the same aim found specific expression (care of minor and major seminaries) and approval in the Constitutions of the Marists. But there was a clear-cut clause, noted by Don Bosco, that the approval of the Holy See was necessary besides that of the local ordinary.⁸⁸

The tension between Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi was to

⁸⁸ Pointed out by DB himself: MB 10:996.

influence the maturation of another idea related to clergy formation: the seeking out and nurturing of adult vocations. This meant people who had done their military service or at least were already adults, and who aspired to the priesthood or the religious life.⁸⁹ The idea took concrete shape in the work of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians, which is as early as 1873–1874. It was made public as such, first in Turin and Fossano,⁹⁰ then in Genoa.⁹¹ In 1876 part of it was transferred to Sampierdarena,⁹² then brought together in Mathi Torinese (1883). From there it came back to Turin, not to Valdocco but to St. John the Evangelist (1884).⁹³

Many other elements came into the Salesian Society and its Constitutions because they were required by its gradual growth in Europe

⁸⁹ Another influencing factor was legislation regarding the military draft, which did not exempt clerics despite Catholic protests, from bishops in particular. See *L'episcopato e la Rivoluzione in Italia ossia atti collettivi dei vescovi italiani prededuti da quelli del Sommo Pontefice Pio IX contro le leggi e i fatti della Rivoluzione offerti a San Pietro in occasione del diciottesimo centenario del glorioso suo martirio*, Mondovì, 1867. This kind of effort on behalf of adult vocations, which tended to avoid the difficulties inherent in military service, won the support of various bishops. See *Indice MB*, pp. 180 and 286: *Figli di Maria* and *Opera di Maria Ausiliatrice*. The appellation 'Sons of Mary Help of Christians' reflects the Marian mentality of the time (akin to the Sons of Mary Immaculate instituted by Frassinetti) and links up directly with the experience of DB, who promoted devotion to Mary Help of Christians and then founded the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

⁹⁰ *Opera di Maria Ausiliatrice per le vocazioni allo stato ecclesiastico*. Messis multa, operarii autem pauci; rogate ergo Dominum messis . . . ('the harvest is great but the laborers are few . . .'), Turin: Tip. dell' Orat. di S. Franc. di Sales, 1875. Notes of DB and other relative documents in AS 133 Sons of Mary. Among them are a letter of Archbishop Gastaldi to Cardinal Bizzarri, Prefect of the S.C. for Bishops and Regulars, Turin, July 25, 1875 and another letter from Bishop Moreno to the same cardinal, Ivrea, August 7, 1875, against the work of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians. Various relevant documents in Rome, AS. C. Relig., posiz. T. 91.

⁹¹ *Opera dei Figli di Maria Ausiliatrice, per le vocazioni allo stato ecclesiastico . . .*, San Pier d'Arena: tip. e libr. of St. Vinc. de Paul, 1877.

⁹² BM 11:51 f.

⁹³ MB 17:345. There were already adults with DB as aspirants and novices. From an examination of statistical and registration data, it does not seem that the *Opera dei Figli di Maria* noticeably changed the percentage of adults that had already helped to increase the size of the Salesian Society.

and other parts of the world, or because they were pressed upon it by the common law governing religious bodies at the time.

Expansion in Italy, Europe, and America created the need for an intermediate structure between the houses and the rector major. This gave rise to the provinces in 1879, which were called Inspectorates. The terminology initially bothered Rome. The new term seemed, and was, influenced by civil language. Don Bosco was able to keep it by stressing the need for protective camouflage, so that the Congregation would not attract the undue attention of hostile civil authorities. He was not trying to bring ecclesiastical language closer to contemporary language for the sake of better understanding, nor was he seeking better relations with the world. On the contrary, he was afraid that the maintenance of ecclesiastical terminology might jeopardize the survival of his Society.⁹⁴

Don Bosco's natural tendency was to dominate and deal flexibly with everything he created. He desired to use everyone for the carrying out of his plans. He tended to regard himself as a father enjoying the complete trust and confidence of his sons, who were fully associated with his work; or as a superior who knew the slightest thoughts and inner twinges of his subjects. This was not prompted by any fierce, rigid, watchdog mentality, but rather by a desire to achieve the best possible results and the greatest mutual satisfaction. All these traits, however, are quite noticeable in the earliest redactions of the Rules, which seem to be extremely autocratic and centralized.⁹⁵ The prudence of Rome, which had experience in dealing with contemporary constitutional projects of the same sort, led Don Bosco to introduce many mitigations, both with regard to the structure of the Society and with regard to the reciprocal rights and duties of superiors and their subjects.

The General Chapter came to have precise functions. It was to meet

⁹⁴ Don Bosco, *Schiarimenti sull'esposizione alla S. Sede del 1879*, August 3, 1879 and January 12, 1880 (MB 14:220-228): "The terms *Province* and *Provincial* in these calamitous times would drive us into the jaws of wolves, who would scatter or devour us" (p. 226). Allusion to the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal?

⁹⁵ In this connection note the observations of the Carmelite Savini and the Dominican Bianchi, members of Orders in which the autonomy of houses and individuals (in a certain sense) was sacrosanct, the result of an age-old social situation. The tendency towards maximum centralization is evident in the Constitutions of various institutes presented to Rome around this time. The Roman practice is documented in the *Collectanea* of Bizzarri (see footnote 39).

for the election of major superiors and as a legislative assembly. The rector major was deprived of the authority to elect any of his own advisers; all of them were to be designated by the General Chapter. He was also deprived of the authority to secretly choose his own vicar or substitute (an idea Don Bosco found in the Constitutions of the Redemptorists and the Oblates of the Virgin Mary⁹⁶), who would exercise full authority as provisional rector in the event of the death of the rector major. Limitations were also placed on his powers of accepting or dismissing members, or of releasing them from perpetual or temporary vows.

It was made clear that as a rule the superior did not have a right to know the secrets of conscience of his subjects,⁹⁷ and that the Constitutions did not bind under pain of sin.⁹⁸

The elected rector major had to be approved by the Holy See. His term was for twelve years rather than for life (only Don Bosco was to rule for life, by permission of Pius IX). And there was now an obligation to send the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars a triennial report on the religious, moral, and administrative state of the Society.

The Salesian Society had initially been conceived as a generic association partaking of the nature of a religious congregation with simple vows and the nature of a pious union. It was envisioned as a moral entity with civil rights. But that is not how it turned out. Under the pressure of Turin's diocesan authorities and of the canonical system then prevailing in Rome, it was pushed in the direction of the classical congregations of the Tridentine era: with the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and

⁹⁶ *Costituzioni e Regole* (of the Redemptorists and Oblates of the Virgin Mary), p. 2, chap. 1, art. 8.

⁹⁷ P. Brocardo, *Direzione spirituale e rendiconto*, Rome, 1965, pp. 147-169.

⁹⁸ In its material shape the formula is borrowed from the Marist Constitutions, art. 446: "Ne praesentes Constitutiones evadant quasi in laqueum . . . declarat Societas eas non obligare *per se* sub peccato nec mortali nec veniali; ideoque . . ." See the *Conclusio* of the Constitution of the Salesian Society, MB 10:992, AS 022 (18) p. 30: "Praesentes Constitutiones declarat Societas pro animarum quiete non obligare *per se* sub peccato nec mortali nec veniali; ideoque si quis illas . . ." But DB defended the obligatoriness of the rules *under pain of fault*, in response to the *Animadversiones* of Father Savini (animadv. 13), appealing to St. Alphonsus, *La vera sposa di Gesù Cristo*, chap. 7, par. 7: "Others are excused by saying that the rule does not oblige in sin . . .", ed. Marietti, 1847, p. 87 (see AS 022 (6e) p. 21; written by Father Rua). In practice, however, requests for pardon were granted. (MB 7:715).

obedience, and the obligation to lead a common life. It thus entered the framework of ecclesiastical organisms as a clerically exempt congregation.

In this whole process it is worth pointing out several choices made by Don Bosco that were of major importance for the existence and success of the Salesian Society, and hence for certain features of its spirit.

If Don Bosco had clung stubbornly to the figure of the extern Salesian, he probably would not have obtained the approval of the Society as a religious congregation at that time. It probably would have had to wait until 1947 to get papal approval as a secular institute. In the meantime it would not have enjoyed the growth and progress that characterized it in fact.

If he had persisted in defending the formula asserting the preservation of the civil rights of the members, he might not have gotten ecclesiastical approval. It would have remained a pious society on very shaky foundations, remembered today only as the center of a certain impulse to renewal in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

If he had decided to release all the clerics of the Turin seminary even before 1870, if at the same time he had insisted that to be with him one always had to make a perpetual commitment right after the novitiate, then he probably would not have had sufficient personnel to establish numerous schools in Piedmont and other areas, as he in fact did. The forces he relied on were unstable, but they enabled him to plant the seedbeds that nurtured his congregation on a regular basis. The moment of clear-cut separation from the secular clergy came at an opportune time for both his congregation and the Turin diocese. The former did not suffer from small amputations; the latter now had well organized seminaries, thanks to the efforts of Archbishop Gastaldi.⁹⁹

Between 1874 and 1884 Don Bosco used all his energy and resources to ensure the stable and definitive exemption of his pious society. If he had not done so, he might have found himself greatly affected and constrained by the efforts of contemporary bishops to bring matters under their control and centralize their authority. He might not have been able to give his congregation the features that he did give it: security, drive, exuberance, optimism, and a unified but flexible shape.

⁹⁹ Important as historical information are two pastorals by Archbishop Gastaldi (January 1, 1873 and January 12, 1878) in L. Gastaldi, *Lettere pastorali, commemorazioni funebri e panegirici*, Turin: tip. Canonica, 1883, pp. 233-247, 403-416.

7. *A divine and human work: the view of Don Bosco and others*

Examining the documents—be they letters, memorials, circulars to Salesians or publications for benefactors and friends—one is in a position to gauge how thoroughly the inner religious world of Don Bosco was wrapped up in the establishment and growth of his congregation.

For this work, too, he consulted his own heavenly map. He looked to divine providence, which he saw manifested in the needs of human beings and the times, and in many other facts that struck him as extraordinary favors: dreams, miraculous cures, the overcoming of all sorts of obstacles, triumph over persecution, the ongoing expansion of his congregation, the continual discovery of new spheres of labor and new circles of sympathy.

Along with God he sensed the presence and involvement of Mary as well. She was the source and inspiration for new hopes, directing new recruits to the Oratory or other Salesian houses. She stood behind his work as its mother and powerful patron.

There was a sense of the devil at work as well. The *Biographical Memoirs* record an episode that probably goes back to Don Bosco's own account. When he had finished the drafting of the first set of Rules after long and patient labor, a sudden wind knocked the inkwell over on his papers. The ink blots were so bad that the papers were illegible.¹⁰⁰ In 1884 Don Bosco was in Rome, seeking and finally getting its concession of privileges. At that point there were strong gusts of wind and flashes of lightning back at the Oratory. People there sensed that the concession had been granted and that the devil was displaying his wrath.¹⁰¹

There was a deep sense of respect for the new sacredness of the Salesian Constitutions once they had received papal approval. Don Bosco was sure that they were now set on solid foundations because they were grounded on the rock of Peter. Indeed, noted Don Bosco, "we could say they are infallible, since the judgment of the supreme head of the Church who approved them is infallible."¹⁰² Five years had passed since the proclamation of papal infallibility as a truth of divine and Catholic

¹⁰⁰ BM 5:458–459.

¹⁰¹ MB 17:140–142.

¹⁰² *Regole o costituzioni della Soc. di S. Franc. di Sales . . .*, For Salesian members, Turin, 1875, p. 3.

faith. The Congregation could thus be regarded as a divine work, because it had been sought and realized in accordance with God's most wise plans.

But Don Bosco also saw it as a human work, especially when he compared his earliest plans and projects with the way they had turned out after slow and laborious efforts. On October 18, 1878, he explained: "I made the vows triennial because at the start my idea was to organize a congregation that would come to the aid of bishops. But since that was not possible and I had to do otherwise, the triennial vows became more of an obstacle than an advantage."¹⁰³ Talking to the house directors assembled at Alassio, he expressed the same opinion on February 7, 1879: "The triennial vows were introduced when I had a different idea of the congregation. My idea was to set up something quite different from what it now is. But I was compelled to do this, and there you have it."¹⁰⁴

Notice that it is not easy to pinpoint Don Bosco's outlook between reality on the one hand and the dreams he takes to be prophetic on the other. One gets the impression that his actions are based on the conviction that he has a mandate from heaven, a goal to reach, something to accomplish, even though his dreams do not make evident what exactly that thing is going to be.

Don Bosco indicates that the course of events gave the congregation a configuration that was not exactly what he had wanted or thought it should be. This does not mean he did not like the way it turned out, or that he was unsatisfied. Don Bosco's attitude seems to be that of a person explaining how things happened, not that of a person indulging in re-creations and clinging fondly to a fanciful ideal in preference to reality. Between the idea of helping bishops, with the education of youth in particular, and the idea of dedicating himself somehow to the service of youth in the Church, it was the stronger idea, the more congenial vocation, that prevailed. Don Bosco turned it into a reality in accordance with the possibilities of his time.

Here again his temperament is revealed: practical and aggressive rather than passive; extrovert rather than introvert. His ideas were modified and defined more precisely by the course of actual events. He always paid close attention to the latter, not to accept them in a passive way but to adapt to them in a constructive and creative way.

¹⁰³ MB 14:46 f.

¹⁰⁴ MB 14:47.

He himself talked about the way he dealt with obstacles. If they held him up too long, or if there was no way to remove them, he would go around them.¹⁰⁵ It is an image that best describes his way of thinking and acting. He had set a goal for himself. But instead of sticking to the same road, he is more concerned to achieve his purpose without useless delay, disproportionate effort, or succumbing to defeatism. The image of battle also suits him. The important thing is not that one carry out a prearranged plan to perfection but that the battle be won. The plan itself is a living, changing thing, as it were, altered as circumstances require until the army achieves victory.

This is not pragmatism because the whole project is governed by a well established goal and a series of religious and moral principles. It is the ability to seek and find the right moment, a radical optimism based on the conviction that the course of events will always provide suitable ground in which to plant one's own seeds. It is a feeling of confidence that those seeds, however much affected by 'sorry weather', will somehow find a way to survive disasters and bear fruit.

It is in the framework of the Salesian Society that we see Don Bosco displaying his full spiritual forces: the sometimes bold fighter, the careful calculator, the consummate diplomat, the leader who instills a sense of security and evokes loyalty and enthusiasm.

Yet he, too, could feel anxiety and almost fear, when he placed himself before God rather than human beings and considered the complex work he had in hand. As he said to Father Julius Barberis: "When I think of my responsibility for the position in which I find myself, I tremble all over. The things I see happening are such that they place an enormous responsibility on me. What a tremendous account I shall have to render to God for all the graces that have ensured the successful course of our pious society! One could say that Don Bosco sees everything and is led forward by the hand of the Madonna . . . at every step, in every circumstance, there is the Blessed Virgin!"¹⁰⁶

Going back to Don Bosco's early years, we find something similar to all this: the agony of Comollo. Louis Comollo was assaulted by fear when he considered the tremendous account he would have to render to God; but he also hoped to be helped on that 'day of wrath' by the maternal solicitude of Mary and her all-powerful supplications. In all likelihood Comollo had in mind his own virtues and vices (real or assumed). Don

¹⁰⁵ *Indice MB*, heading *Difficoltà*, p. 133 f.

¹⁰⁶ Ceria, *Don Bosco con Dio*, Turin, 1929, p. 192 f.

Bosco, on the other hand, was thinking of the massive burden of his works. Contemplating all that, he was not the only one to be struck by feelings of admiration or fright.

When he needed episcopal letters of recommendation to present to Rome for the approval of his pious society, scores of prelates vied with each other in praising Don Bosco and his society. They called it a providential work blessed by God. It was tangible proof that in such difficult times, when Catholic schools and seminaries were being closed, God had raised up men like Don Bosco to find new ways for good to prosper and to pave the way for new triumphs for the Church against all odds.

Don Bosco and his members ended up embodying the expectations of Italian Catholics: their desire to recoup their losses, their inner conviction that the bad weather was over, their feeling that Christ was intervening miraculously to calm the storm just when it seemed that the bark of Peter was about to sink.¹⁰⁷

When he was bishop of Saluzzo, Gastaldi bore witness to what he had heard from Archbishop Fransoni of Turin regarding the providential work of the Salesians when the diocesan seminary was closed. On July 11, 1867, Bishop Gastaldi wrote: "Testor etiam me audivisse sanctae memoriae Archiep. Taurin. Aloysium Franzoni, dum Lugduni in exilio dolore premebatur, affirmantem se tanquam Divinae Providentiae speciale auxilium in hac Societate agnoscere, cujus ope dum Seminaria dioecessana erant clausa, aliqui tamen pueri ad hoc pro ecclesiastica militia praeparabantur."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ The attitude of Catholics in Italy in the closing years of the nineteenth century is one of the themes that has been picked up by recent historiography. See G. Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98*, Florence, 1964⁴, especially the Bibliographical Note to the fourth edition, pp. 755-758. This should be linked up with other works: E. Passerin D'Entreves, "Recenti studi sull'azione cattolica in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento," in *Studium* 60 (1964); D. Veneruso, "La recente storiografia del movimento cattolico in Italia e le sue relazioni con le ricerche sulla natura della politica e dello Stato," in *Stidium* 61 (1965), pp. 218-222; U. Marcelli, "Interpretazioni del Risorgimento," in *Convivium* 27 (1959), pp. 385-407, 513-532; R. Romeo, "La storiografia sul Risorgimento e l'Italia unitaria (1815-1915) nel secondo dopoguerra," in *Clio* 1 (1965), pp. 407-433, reviewed in *Archivio storico ital.* 123 (1965), p. 416; G. de Rosa, *Storia del movimento cattolico in Italia*, Bari, 1966, 2 vols; G. Martina, "La questione di Roma nell'opinione degli storici cattolici negli ultimi cento anni," in *Atti del XLVIII congresso di storia del risorgim. ital. Mantova, 26-29 sett. 1976*, Rome, 1978, pp. 111-181.

¹⁰⁸ Ms. copy by Father Berto in AS 023.

On May 25, 1868, Gastaldi wrote about the wondrous fruits that all could see: "They prove clearly that there the merciful God is pouring out his blessings in superabundant measure, that there we find a special mission on behalf of young people . . . The undersigned sees a colossal Church [Mary Help of Christians] rising almost miraculously in its midst. It is the wonder of all who look at it. The expense of more than half a million lire is borne by poor priests who have nothing, and this may be taken as a proof that God is blessing this society."¹⁰⁹

In such disastrous times the appearance of Don Bosco could only be attributed to the mercy of God. Religion and the Church seemed to have suffered shipwreck, and one could only hope that God would raise up people like him to pick up the pieces. So wrote Bishop James Philip Gentile of Novara on April 14, 1868: "In tanta rerum calamitate quae ubique locorum disperdit lapides Sanctuarii, sana ephebea clauduntur, omnibus demum datur pessum, quae ad Religionem faciunt, nihil potius, nihil optatius esse debet, quam ut illud continget, quod nonnumquam summa Dei misericordia tum vidimus, nempe ut aliquis exurgat, qui veluti naufragii colligat lapides disiectas."¹¹⁰

Outside Italy, too, the atmosphere of conflict and oppression was creating a desire for new forces, indeed as many as possible. Forgotten or overlooked were the frictions between secular and regular clergy, who felt attacked on every side. Elsewhere, too, scores of congregations going to Rome for approval found bishops ready and anxious to offer praise and encouragement.¹¹¹ It was the right moment in history, and Don Bosco was fortunate enough to be able to respond to a religious need of the time.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. See MB 9:143.

¹¹¹ Lemoine, *Le droit des religieux*, p. 430 f.

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(f). AS 131.02 Circulars of DB to the Salesians (arranged in chronological order). The notes initially are DB's. Then the compilers are Fathers Bonetti, Lemoyne, and Rua. Corrected and signed by DB.

(g). AS 132 Sermons, Conferences, Discourses (G) (to the Salesians). Eight written documents, all by DB.

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(q). AS 133 Brief Notice. "Notitia brevis Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii et nonnulla Decreta ad eandem spectantia." Written copy by DB and printed (Turin 1868; three copies with comments by DB).

(r). Official publications of the Salesian Society: Catalogue (from 1872). Obituaries (the first ones in the appendix to catalogues; from 1874 on they were generally compiled by Count Cays but checked by DB).

(s). Documents relating to the Salesian Congrégation in Turin (archdiocesan archives; Rome AS. C. Relig.: posiz. T. 91. Contains among other things two undated ms. redactions of the *Regole* (1864?; 1867?) and six printed copies, with Italian and Latin ms. drafts.

Turin archives of the Vincentians (Church of the Visitation). I was not able to see the letters of Marcantonio Durando, which would probably have contained statements about the Salesians.

II. Secondary Sources and Related Reading

For the general political and religious context one may consult all works dealing with the *Risorgimento*, the pontificates of Pius IX and Leo XIII (Aubert, Fernesole, Serafini, etc.); monographs and studies of Cavour, Rattazzi, Antonelli,

Gioberti, D'Azeglio, Victor Emmanuel II, Crispi, etc. Of basic importance are studies on the Neo-Guelph Italian Catholic movement at the start of the century: Passerin d'Entrèves, P. Scoppola, Spadolini, De Rosa, Candeloro, and so forth.

More specifically relating to DB and his viewpoints, there are also biographies and hagiographic writings of lesser pretense dealing with the Cavanis, Vincent Pallotti, Gaspare del Bufalo, Frassinetti, Cottolengo, Cafasso, Pavoni, Cocchi, Murialdo, Bertagna, Gazelli, Albert, Allemand, Dupanloup, Ségur, Gay, etc. For them see also the respective headings in the *Encicl. Cattolica, Catholicisme*, and the bibliography in Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*.

Insofar as the writings of DB are used as an historical source, I would only point out here that the figures given for young people, Salesians, or houses, tend towards hyperbole. That is due to the atmosphere of enthusiasm, gaiety, jocularity, and slyness that prevailed at Valdocco and other places where DB was at work. By themselves, then, those figures do not suffice to date documents or bring out the progress of various activities.

In his report to the Holy See in 1879 DB wrote that there were 250 Salesians in 1874, more than 700 in 1879. In his *Summary* of February 23, 1874, he had written that there were 330 Salesians. In fact, on the basis of the (printed!) general list of the Society, it turns out that there were 254 (including novices) in 1874, and 481 in 1879 (including novices, excluding 148 aspirants).

III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

For another treatment of the formation of the Salesian Society and its Constitutions, several chapters may be consulted in the book by Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982. Chapter 8: "Birth of the Salesian Society: 1850-1864," pp. 84-94. Chapter 10: "The Salesian Constitutions up to 1874," pp. 106-117. Chapter 13: "Salesian Regulations up to 1888," pp. 139-149. Chapter 18: "Consolidation of the Congregation: 1874-1888," pp. 200-212.

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The religious and civil experience of the United States was divergent and highly informative, but unfortunately often misunderstood or ignored by contemporary Europeans. Three books deserve mention here: Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972; John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921*, 2 vols., Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952; John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.



SOUTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

1. The missionary atmosphere after 1870

The extraordinary facts surrounding Don Bosco, "his grand plans for the future,"¹ the great success of his many undertakings, the extraordinary cures effected by his intercession, his fidelity to the pope, and his zeal for religion: all these things, in the eyes of Salesians and his other admirers, were so many reasons for regarding him as a man raised up by God to give hope and consolation to good people. To Don Bosco himself the growing number of co-workers and the successfully sought approval of his Society and its Rules were a constant spur to undertakings of greater intensity and even wider scope, hence of greater impact and influence as well.

The movement of Salesians beyond Piedmont and Europe was only logical, as was the reaction at Valdocco in 1874 when it was announced that the sons of Don Bosco would be going across the ocean to Argentina. The announcement did not evoke fear of the risks involved, nor consternation over what might appear to be a rash undertaking. It evoked boundless enthusiasm in young people and the Salesians, spurring the enrollment of novices who wished to become missionaries and of Salesians who yearned to be picked for this historical undertaking.

Considering all that had happened in 1876, Father Cesare Chiala saw it as the natural consequence of a mystical fact marked by the juridical incorporation of the Salesians into the Church through the definitive approval of their Rules:

Our lowly vine had hardly been joined to the Church's mystical trunk when tangible effects began to be felt. Vocations to the ec-

¹ See end of Chapter IV, p. 189.

clesiastical state multiplied among young men. Requests to join our Congregation also increased. And some, to whom the youth apostolate seemed a bit difficult because it went on day and night, nevertheless dedicated all their love to it. From many sections of Italy and from various parts of Africa, Asia, and America, requests began to pour in, asking for Salesians to come and open houses for their endangered young people.²

The reality was much more complicated. Among many other factors Vatican I may well have done most to foster Catholic missions in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Prelates from North America, Africa, and Asia, in particular, had profited from the opportunity to enroll priests and nuns for their dioceses, whether they were missionary or not.³

In 1869–1870, Dominic Barbero of Piedmont, who was consecrated the first bishop of Milan's Institute of Foreign Missions during the very year of the Council, asked Don Bosco to give him nuns for his diocese of Hyderabad in India. Not having any at that time, Don Bosco referred the bishop to the Sisters of St. Anne and Providence.⁴

In 1870, Dominican Bishop Alemany of San Francisco (California) was visiting his confreres in Turin. While there, he entered into negotiations with Don Bosco for a hospice-school of arts and trades.⁵ Other proposals were to be made between 1870 and 1874. Don Bosco alludes to appeals for establishments in Asia, Africa, and America. Father Chiala talks about proposals for India and Australia.⁶

Don Bosco's missionary aspirations went way back. During his

² C. Chiala, *Da Torino alla repubblica Argentina. Lettere dei Missionari salesiani*, Turin 1876 (LC), p. 18 f.

³ G.B. Tragella, *Le missioni estere di Milano sul quadro degli avvenimenti contemporanei*, Milan 1959, 2 vols.; C. Bona, *Il Servo di Dio Giuseppe Allamano e un secolo di movimento missionario in Piemonte*, Turin, 1960; S. Beltrami, *L'Opera della Propagazione della fede in Italia*, Rome, 1961; idem, *La rinascita missionaria in Italia*, Turin, 1964; Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., Chapter 13, pp. 645–678.

⁴ MB 10:626,658. P.P. Gastaldi, *Umiltà e grandezza. Suor Maria Enrichetta Dominici [1829–1894] superiora generale delle Suore di sant'Anna e della Provvidenza*, Turin, 1926², pp. 278–292. On Bishop Dominic Barbero (1820–1881), native of Foglizzo, see S. Malvisi, *Figure di Sacerdoti*, Ivrea, 1921.

⁵ AS 126.2 Alemany. AS 132 Contracts, San Francisco (autograph ms. of DB).

⁶ [Bosco], *Riassunto della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales nel 23 Febbraio 1874*, "Rapporti coi vescovi," p. 43; Chiala, *Da Torino alla rep. Argentina*, pp. 21, 46 f.

years at the Convitto they had prompted him to learn a little Spanish and to pack his bags in anticipation of joining the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. He admitted that those aspirations had never died out.⁷ He had kept up a lively interest in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, published in Italian, which were first brought to him in 1848 by young James Bellia, then his first cleric.⁸ From the *Annals* he borrowed episodes for his *Cattolico istruito* (1853) and his *Mese di Maggio* (1858).⁹ He was very friendly with Canon Ortalda of Turin, an active and generous sponsor of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the apostolic schools.¹⁰ He also had good relations with Fathers Eugene Reffo and Alexander Lana (who had been a catechist at Guardian Angel Oratory in his youth). They were editors of the *Museo delle Missioni cattoliche*, which Don Bosco advertised in his *Lettture Cattoliche*.¹¹

Thus Don Bosco nurtured an ongoing attitude of sympathy, inquiry, and expectation, and a store of projects, plans, and hopes. Out of all that came his first missionary dream in 1870–1871: of cruel savages killing missionaries; quartering them and cutting them into pieces, then carrying chunks of their flesh on the tips of their spears. Suddenly Salesian missionaries arrived on the scene. Led by a number of young boys, they advanced cheerfully towards the savages with rosaries in their hands. The savages welcomed them warmly and listened to them docilely.¹²

Don Bosco's behavior suggests that he regarded this as a real portent;

⁷ MB 10:55.

⁸ Father James Bellia, retired pastor of Soprana, died at the age of 74 in Pettinengo (Biella) on June 22, 1908. On him see: *Bollettino Salesiano* 32 (1908), p. 255; Buscaglia, *San Giov. Bosco e i biellesi*, pp. 14–19; *Indice MB*, p. 509.

⁹ Bosco, *Il Cattolico istruito*, Part 2, tratten. 41, Turin 1853 (LC), p. 313; idem, *Il mese di maggio*, g. 7, Turin 1858 (LC), pp. 53–55.

¹⁰ Canon Ortalda was director of the Turin diocesan council for the Society of the Propagation of the Faith from 1851 to 1880 and died on September 26, 1880, at the age of 66. See Beltrami, *L'Opera della Prop. della Fede*, p. 44 f.

¹¹ Father Alexander Lana was born in Turin on July 6, 1841; attended Guardian Angel Oratory and was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; served as a catechist for Swiss chimney sweeps; was ordained a priest in 1866; served as director of the Oratory of St. Martin; died on December 30, 1869. See *Museo delle Missioni cattoliche* 13 (1870) pp. 65–84. A bibliography on Father Reffo (1843–1925) is recorded by Marengo, *Contributi per uno studio su Leon. Murialdo educatore*, pp. v–x. See also *Bollettino Salesiano* 49 (1925), p. 167. The advertising material on the *Museo* is in a separate appendix insert (pp. 1–16) to Bosco, *Valentino o la vocazione impedita . . .*, Turin, 1866.

¹² BM:46 f.

but as in the case of other portents, he had not grasped all the concrete circumstances. He thought it had to do with people in Ethiopia, where the Capuchin William Massaia was at work. Later made a cardinal, Massaia came from Montferrat and was a distant relation of the cleric, John Massaglia, a former student of the Oratory who had died.¹³ Then Don Bosco believed that the people were Australians or tribes in India. Indeed he even imagined that the savages of his dream, covered only with hides and armed with spears, might inhabit the environs of Hong Kong.

The basic orientation of Don Bosco in looking for a way to expand his work beyond Europe is clear in any case. His thoughts and dreams are of missions in the strictest sense (*in partibus infidelium*), and in the most Romantic sense of the day: i.e., among cruel and savage peoples that almost call up the desire for martyrdom. The gospel mandate to go into the whole world and teach all the nations is not just an object of one's knowledge of the faith. It is also a mandate that has come down to them, a motive for transplanting Salesians to America.¹⁴

From simple believers and spectators of the work of others, so to speak, the Salesians felt they were now to become more active participants. They would join those whose duty was to give ever increasing confirmation to the Church's attribute of 'Catholic': i.e., "universal and perpetual, because it extends to all times and places and should endure until the end of time unchanged, believing and professing all the truths taught by Jesus Christ."¹⁵ The involvement of the Congregation in missionary work gave new substance to its contemplation of the Church. By comparison with the latter, all else paled into insignificance: "Its growth thrives on everything: peace, war, persecutions, and political vicissitudes. Like an ark on the waves, it rides them out."¹⁶ It is the solid pillar to be seen by everyone in all times and places, even though it may

¹³ John Massaglia was a friend of Dominic Savio. He was born in the hamlet of Romagnolo, the village of Marmorito (Asti), on May 1, 1838, and died there on May 20, 1856. Cardinal Massaia was born in Piovà on June 8, 1809, and died at St. Giorgio Cremano (Naples) on August 6, 1889. See S. Cultrera, *Gli scrittori italiani e il card. Massaja*, Rome 1948; C. da Sessano, M., in EC 8, Rome 1952, cols. 284-287.

¹⁴ These views of DB are clear in his departure address to missionaries: see Chiala, *Da Torino alla rep. Argentina*, pp. 44-46.

¹⁵ Bosco, *Il Cattolico istruito*, tratten. 6, pp. 103-106.

¹⁶ G. Perrone, *Il protestantismo e la regola di fede*, Part 3, Chap. 8, sect. 2, Turin: Speirani and Tortone, 1853, p. 596. Feelings and convictions expressed there can be found in DB also, it seems.

be defaced by many bad Catholics or attacked by heretics.¹⁷ With its power of penetration, the Church proves itself to be the fruitful tree planted by Christ, winning out in the confrontation with heretical societies. The latter boast of being Christian, but they "are confined to a few kingdoms, or even a few provinces."¹⁸ They are sterile as well because "in changing the age-old rule of faith for a new one, they have exchanged a principle of conservation for a principle of destruction."¹⁹

An apostolic spirit and anti-Protestant preoccupations combined to nurture missionary aspirations in Don Bosco and his Salesians. It was a struggle to abandon abstract polemical arguments that did not accord with the facts, particularly now that Protestantism was vigorously proselytizing in Catholic Europe and Latin America.²⁰

The underlying principles of mission work were much the same for Catholics and non-Catholics. They saw themselves as a transforming leaven in a struggle for conquest that entailed confrontations between various Christian 'societies'.

In Don Bosco's eyes the mission to the whole world was also framed within a canonical mission, a mandate sought and received from the pope. It was from the pope, the father of the whole family of believers, that Don Bosco received approval and divine blessing for his new enterprise. His act of sending the first group of missionaries to Rome in 1875 for the pope's blessing was certainly designed to give the project more resonance and public authoritativeness; but it was also prompted by sincere religious exigencies.²¹

2. *The savages of Patagonia*

If Don Bosco decided to send Salesians to Argentina, it was probably because various factors nurtured his hopes in such a course. For example,

¹⁷ Bosco, *Il Cattolico istruito*, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁹ Perrone, *Il protestantismo*, p. 596.

²⁰ See R. Sylvain, *Clerc, garibaldien, prêchant des deux mondes*, Alessandro Gavazzi, Quebec, 1962, 2 vols; Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Chap. 13, pp. 645-678; P.F. Douglas, "Methodism in America," in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1962, 18:723 f; H.T. Kerr, "Protestantism in America," *Encyclopedia Americana*, 22:685b-686; H.G. Hageman, "Reformed Church in America," *ibid.*, 23:305-307 (with bibliography).

²¹ So one may conclude from DB's repeated assertions. See also such works as Chiala, *Da Torino all rep. Argentina*, p. 52 f.

his Salesians would not find themselves isolated and alone in that region. They would be among friends and fellow countrymen from Italy. They could re-create an atmosphere akin to that of the homeland they had left behind, when circumstances called for it: i.e., when they felt worn out by overwork or nostalgia.²² Moreover, in Argentina Don Bosco had savages. Indeed they were *his* savages because they seemed to him to be the ones he had met in his dream of 1870–1871.

‘Savages’ was a magical word, arousing the interest and curiosity of all those who were anxious to get close to the origins of human nature: either as it had been preserved outside civilization or as it had been degraded and brutalized by vices and unbridled passions as a result of original sin.

An atmosphere of legend surrounded the savages of Patagonia. The early explorers had described them as giants, and that is how they were depicted in eighteenth-century travel books. Even with their three-cornered hats on, Europeans barely came up to their waist or matched the height of newborn savages.

Even in 1864, an encyclopedia published in Turin described them with the following features: “broad shoulders, huge head, coarse black hair, very little beard, and about six feet tall, so perhaps the tallest people in the world.”²³ Their ferocity was amply suited to the wild, inhospitable terrain devoid of trees and swept by fierce winds. They roamed around on swift horses, brandishing lasso, bolo, and spear—the weapons they used so skillfully.

As soon as they arrived in Buenos Aires, the Salesians followed the wise suggestion of Don Bosco and started writing letters back to Italy. Packed with information, these letters could be useful in Turin for advertising the work of the Salesians and other purposes. The first scraps of information on the Patagonian savages were well suited to evoke strong emotions. The Patagonians had been and still were cannibals, for example:

Yes, all the tribes inhabiting these and other areas of South America . . . were cannibals . . . i.e., eaters of human flesh. Even today, in

²² Almost as soon as they arrived in Buenos Aires, the first Salesian missionaries were welcomed by former students of the Oratory as well. See Chiala, *ibid.*, p. 226.

²³ *Enciclopedia elementare. Dizionario di cognizioni utili specialmente alla studiosa gioventù Italiana* . . . , Turin: Unione tip. editrice, 1864, 8:55. It echoes the *Nuova enciclopedia popolare*, Turin: Gius. Pomba, 1848, 10:515.

areas such as Patagonia where Christian civilization has been unable to penetrate, they continue to eat prisoners of war. They take special delight in the flesh of whites, i.e., Europeans . . . They are still called Native Americans . . . or more commonly, Indians, a generic name for all the native inhabitants of America.²⁴

The eating of human flesh was described in detail. Chiefs ate the corpses of their equals, "while the other men gorged themselves on the bodies of ordinary warriors and the mothers consumed the flesh of their dead children." Not even the bones were spared. Crushed and mixed with meal, the bones "furnished a kind of bread."²⁵

As days went by, the missionaries did not show any loss of interest in the savages of Patagonia. In their lines one can sense their anticipation of the effect their words would have on young people at Valdocco, or on the wider public that read *Unità Cattolica*, which boldly published such reports. One can also sense the great allure that the pampa mission had for them. There they stood amid the spears of the savages, with crucifix held up high, surrounded by simple, happy children and the adult savages—the latter amazed and diffident at first, then softening until finally their heads were bowed under the waters of Baptism.

Since there was a real concern to gather as much accurate information as possible about the Indians, the letters too gradually began to report more reliable news. By February their accounts would merit attention from the man in Turin, who was anxious to assist them and suggest suitable tactics.

In a report of January 10, 1876, we read:

Patagonia comprises the whole most southerly portion of South America . . . With an inhospitable climate, it has not yet been explored by any European, except for its coastal areas . . . The larger section faces the Atlantic and is occupied by vast deserts covered mainly with salt, sand, and wild grasslands. There are no trees and few bushes there. Around the Andes, on the other hand, there are magnificent forests filled with tall plants . . . In climate Patagonia

²⁴ G. Barberis, *La repubblica Argentina e la Patagonia. Lettere dei Missionari salesiani*, Turin 1877 (LC), p. 14: letter from Buenos Aires of January 5, 1876. The accuracy of this and all the letters cited here require sifting in terms of value and accuracy. My aim here is to bring out the state of mind they would have evoked at Valdocco. See also the conference of DB on February 6, 1876; MB 12:78.

²⁵ Barberis, *ibid.*, p. 15 f.

could be called the Scandinavia of America or the Siberia . . . The summer temperature hardly rises above 5 degrees Réaumur.²⁶

The inhabitants are completely savage:

They have no city, no village, no fixed abode. They are believed to be divided into nine principal tribes, which change their habitation according to circumstances. They will travel many hundreds of miles, taking all their worldly possessions with them: i.e., a few pelts to cover themselves and to make tents when they come to a halt. Unfamiliar with agriculture, they live only on hunting, and especially on the meat of an animal they call the *guanaco* [a type of llama].²⁷

As for the Tehuelches:

Since they are nomads, one cannot pinpoint where they live; but ordinarily they are in the southeast.²⁸

Their basic disposition:

Abandoning themselves to ferocious glee when they see their enemies suffering, they emit savage whoops and surround them on all sides, brandishing their spears, slings, and lassos. Men, women, and little children contemplate the suffering victim with barbaric curiosity . . . They are thoroughly treacherous and superlative liars. Duplicity is universal and inveterate in all of them.²⁹

Their attitude towards the civilized population:

The policy of extermination now being directed against them by the Argentine republic has taught them to hate as much as any uncivilized people could be so taught . . . The cruel tortures meted out repeatedly to missionaries who came to evangelize them have so terrified every religious congregation that for more than a century, as far as we can tell, none has taken on the task of evangelizing these savages.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid., p. 64 f.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 66.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 66 f. The Tehuelches lived south of the Rio Colorado.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 68 f.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 69. The real facts were less tragic than the letters would suggest. The Argentinians were not pursuing extermination on principle, for example. The Tehuelches tended to defend themselves and hold their own. They were more manageable than other groups; less ferocious than the pampa tribes, for example.

In March the news becomes even more precise:

The material and spiritual condition of the Indians, the tribes of the pampas and Patagonia, fills one's soul with sadness. The *caciques* [leaders] of those savage tribes are in a conflict with the government. They complain of harassment and oppression, evade the troops quartered to repress them, and wander about the countryside robbing. Armed with Remington rifles, they make prisoners of men, women, children, horses, and sheep that get too close to them. The government soldiers, for their part, are waging a war to the death. Instead of coming closer together, therefore, the minds and hearts of both sides are becoming increasingly embittered and emotionally aroused. Things might be very different if they were to send out a band of Capuchins or other missionaries instead of soldiers. Many souls would be saved. Prosperity and social well-being would take room among these savages, as it once did among the savages of Paraguay. There are some missionaries already, of course, but they are few in number when compared with the great need and the vast area of land inhabited by the savages. Moreover, missionaries can do little or nothing in the present state of exasperation and conflict that exists between the Indians and the government.

Don't think that the savages are that far away from us. One need travel only about 60 leagues southwest to come into contact with them. A few days ago one savage was allowed to attend Mass with Christians in a church. Throughout the divine sacrifice he never took his eyes off the celebrant. The savages from the northern province tend to be black. Those near Bolivia are even blacker, with very small hands and feet.³¹

No longer are the reports about cannibalism. Now there are truthful descriptions of the psychological, social, and military situation on both sides. The Salesians apparently have also noticed that they were not the only ones to face up to the problem of evangelization. Towards the end of 1872, Archbishop Aneyros of Buenos Aires had established a commission to study the issue; and in 1873 he asked Pius IX for a special blessing. The fact was also brought out in Turin by the *Museo delle missioni cattoliche*.³²

³¹ Ibid., p. 175 f. Letter from Buenos Aires of March 10, 1876.

³² *Museo delle Missioni catt.*, 16 (1873), p. 63.

But what could one possibly do with nomadic, hostile peoples from whom one could expect incomprehension, ferocity, and sudden abandonment even before one had had a chance to say one's piece and be understood?

3. Salesian missionary strategy

Don Bosco had to ponder all this. He put no pressure on his Salesians to take risky actions for the sole purpose of nurturing and sustaining the missionary ardor of youths in Europe, propaganda efforts, or charitable contributions. But he did not hesitate to make use of the savages in publishing propaganda circulars and structuring his missionary tactics. The plan was to open high schools in cities bordering Indian lands, take in savage boys, and thus approach the adults through their children. It was similar to the approach that educators and directors of educational projects had long found to be effective in civilized countries. In a circular of October 1876, Don Bosco wrote:

Once these houses are opened and these shelters are in operation, morality and religion among the natives will be assured. We can give a scientific and Christian education to boys of every class, and cultivate any ecclesiastical vocations that might manifest themselves among the students. In this way we hope to prepare missionaries for the pampas and the Patagonians. Savages would become the evangelizers of the savages, and there would be no danger of seeing a revival of the massacres of an earlier day.³³

The projected tactic was ingenious enough, but rather evanescent and out of touch with the facts. There was the matter of getting Indian students, much less Indian vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. And many other favorable circumstances would have to converge to preclude the dreaded massacres. But Don Bosco liked to dance his project before the eyes of his sons, making it look as if it were already a reality. He would describe the phases that were transforming a tactical approach into a full-fledged strategy, now that the Salesians had established a bridgehead in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás:

Now we are trying to establish a new institute in the city of Dolores, and another in Carmen, the vast region of the Argentine republic

³³ Chiala, *Da Torino alla rep. Argentina*, p. 251.

between the Atlantic and Patagonia. Letters just received from our missionaries console us with the great news that in three areas the savages are asking for missionaries to come and proclaim the kingdom of heaven to them. Other houses and shelters of the same sort are planned in the Republic of Chile. It has been proposed that we open a shelter in Santiago, the capital, for the multitude of abandoned children living without instruction or any means of knowing God the creator; a high school in Valparaiso, the second city of that republic; and a minor seminary in the city of Concepción, the most southerly diocese adjacent to the savages of Patagonia.³⁴

It would seem that the encirclement of the Patagonian savages was imminent, that those peaceful *conquistadores*, the Salesians, were about to achieve their goal.

As the letters of the missionaries indicate, there had been sporadic efforts to penetrate the central pampa and Patagonia; but for about fifty years, no large-scale organized activity had in fact been possible. In the south, at the mouth of the Rio Negro, military outposts had given rise to small centers of gauchos in Carmen de Patagones (or simply Patagones, or Carmen) and Viedma. Their religious needs were taken care of by the Vincentians, who also went out to nearby Indian groups when that was possible. One such place was Carhué, north of Bahía Blanca.³⁵

In 1872 the Franciscans had undertaken courageous efforts at evangelization and pacification among the Ranqueles tribe. The Franciscans had been entrusted with the pampa missions by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Their headquarters was the monastery of Rio Cuarto, which was still viewed as a frontier outpost in 1876.³⁶ But the tense situation existing between the Argentinians and the Indians at the time increasingly impeded and jeopardized any effort designed to reproduce the old Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay as described by Cha-teaubriand or Muratori.

For some time the Argentinians had been constructing a series of outposts, moving inland gradually as colonists dared to settle in the pampa and expose themselves to sudden raids from the Indians. (Such

³⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

³⁵ R. Tavella, *Las Misiones Salesianas de la Pampa . . .*, Buenos Aires, 1924 (an informed, scholarly treatment based on archival documents); A. Palmieri, "Argentine," in DHGE, i, Paris 1930, cols. 41-61 (with extensive bibliography).

³⁶ Tavella, *Las Misiones Salesianas*, Chap. 14, pp. 178-188.

raids were known as *malónes* in Spanish.) The protection of the outposts was precarious at best. The Indians sometimes got around it, gaining strength and security from intertribal pacts and from military and political struggles for power within Argentina. Opposing groups of Argentinians might enlist the help of friendly Indian tribes for their own faction.³⁷ Even after repeated defeats, Indian tribes would put up stout resistance against the troops sent to quell them. One great organizer of the Indians was the Araucanian chief, Calfucura, who died on June 4, 1873. For more than thirty years he had organized Indian resistance and led them on raids. New coalitions formed after his death, and these Indians were always ready to defend themselves or engage in predatory activities.

In 1875 the minister of war, Adolfo Alsina, offered a proposal to safeguard farmers and breeders from Indian attacks. He wanted to construct a huge moat that would serve as a boundary between the civilized population and the native Indians. This idea gave way to another, however. Repeated pillaging and fear of penetration by the English, who had gained a foothold on the Falkland Islands and adjoining areas of Chile, led to the idea of a massive military action against the Indians. Headed by then Colonel Julius Roca, a huge force started out for the 'desert' from Buenos Aires on April 7, 1879. The nomadic tribes of the central pampa and northern Patagonia were attacked by various military columns. The Indians were dispersed and pursued, decimated by armed force and by smallpox. Driven towards the Andes, they were definitively subjugated by later military actions under General Villegas in 1882–1883, when Roca was president of Argentina.

After that the Indians ceased to be a military power threatening colonization efforts. The surviving groups were forced into a relationship based on fear and subjection, if not total peacefulness. They found themselves in a state of indigence because their sources of wild game were reduced and they could no longer undertake raids with impunity. Now they felt the need for help and support.

The uneasy and uncertain period of 1876–1879 were years of expectant waiting for the Salesian missionaries. The first to offer their services among the Indians were Father James Costamagna and the cleric Louis Botta. With Mariano Espinosa, then vicar general of Buenos Aires

³⁷ C. María J. Vicuña, *Estudio histórico sobre el descubrimiento y conquista de la Patagonia*, Buenos Aires, 1911; Tavella, *Las Misiones Salesianas*, Chap. 10, pp. 124–133.

and later its bishop, they accompanied General Roca's troops as chaplains. On several occasions they had the opportunity to meet Indians, preach, and even administer Baptisms. These Indians, of course, were already friendly and well disposed.³⁸

An important event took place in August 1879. The Vincentians withdrew from Viedma and Patagones, which were turned over to the Salesians.³⁹ Don Bosco's plan now began to turn into a reality. The two towns became centers for evangelical efforts and missionary journeys by Fathers Costamagna, Milanesio, and Beauvoir. Sometimes risky and sometimes uneventful, the journeys were always exhausting for the priests, who sought to reach various groups of Indians: nomads, semi-nomads, and those who had settled in one place for good.

In 1883 Father Milanesio had the good fortune to be called upon by some Indians. They asked him to serve as a peace mediator between the Argentinian government and the big chief of the Vorogas, Manuel Namuncura, who had succeeded his father, Calfucura, as the leader of the resistance.⁴⁰ Even after 1879, work among the Indians was upset by mutual mistrust. It also faced problems common to other areas: how to instill solid Catholic convictions about ethics and religion, and how to deal with the interference of outside factors. In a letter dated February 20, 1885, Father Milanesio wrote:

When a missionary is about to leave a group of Indians for some other group, he usually distributes medals, crosses, and other religious objects to the new Christians. Indeed he often gives clothing and footwear as well to the most needy and diligent [= indigent?]. In such circumstances it is hard to avoid the discontent of some

³⁸ R. Tavella, *Vita del missionario salesiano mons. Giac. Costamagna . . .*, Turin, 1929. R. Carbia, *Monseñor Leon Federico Aneiros. Ensayo biográfico*, Buenos Aires, 1905; his death (October 1894) noted in the *Bollettino Salesiano*, 18 (1894), p. 225. G.L. Copello, *Gestiones del arzobispo Aneiros en favor de los Indios hasta la conquista del Desierto*, Buenos Aires; the book takes issue with the Salesian literature on Argentina, but it is useful in trying to incorporate the work of DB's missionaries into the pastoral framework of Buenos Aires and it also makes use of unpublished sources.

³⁹ Tavella, *Las Misiones Salesianas*, Chap. 13, pp. 166-177. In 1876 the Vincentians had only Carmen de Patagones open. See Barberis, *La rep. Argentina*, p. 62 f; letter from Buenos Aires dated January 26, 1876.

⁴⁰ *Datos biográficos y excursiones apostólicas del rdo D. Domingo Milanesio . . .*, S. Benigno Canavese, 1928.

impertinent ones. Sometimes you hear: "Become Christians just for this . . . ? It wasn't worth the trouble and inconvenience to learn Christian things." And there are those who say: "I will not come any more." Far from taking offense, the priest must treat them with great charity and patience, offering some word of comfort as he departs.⁴¹

The inevitable presence of "very corrupt soldiers and even more corrupt pupils" (but how many were honest and of goodwill?) seemed to be no small obstacle to the solid planting of religion in areas where the military were present and officially in charge of distributing aid to the Indians.⁴²

Another obstacle to Catholic proselytism was competing Protestant proselytism. In Chubut there were solid colonies of Welsh, and Protestants were also established in Ushuaia (Tierra del Fuego) and the Falkland Islands.⁴³ Don Bosco described Protestant activity with the eyes of the traditional polemicist:

As soon as the danger of being massacred seemed to have disappeared, and prompted by big stipends, they set out to pitch their tents in the Catholic colonies. There, under the guise of practicing medicine, surgery, and pharmaceuticals, they make lavish use of every resource and manage to cause serious problems for Catholic missionaries.⁴⁴

Such a view might or might not have had some real foundation, but it disregards sincere religious motives among Protestants as well. Their efforts meant encounter and competition between differing beliefs, missionary systems, techniques, structures, and financial possibilities.

One of the ideals dearest to Don Bosco's heart was the hope that some day he could point to Indians who had become missionaries. As early as 1876 he was writing as if the process were already operative:

The plan to train native missionaries seems to have God's blessing. There already are native young men who have asked to join the

⁴¹ *Bollettino salesiano* 9 (1885) p. 69.

⁴² Sentiments expressed by Father Fagnano in a letter to DB, March 1883: MB 16:71.

⁴³ Barberis, *La rep. Argentina*, p. 63; MB 14:368.

⁴⁴ Ceria, *Epistolario* 2297.

missionaries and been accepted. Their burning desire is to become priests and go out to preach the gospel to the savages.⁴⁵

Given the existing circumstances, it was a dream that could not be concretely realized at all. Reality stood in the way of Don Bosco and his missionaries despite their persistence. It was impossible to have Indians in the novitiate, and it was extremely difficult to see native vocations follow through to successful completion. Father Tomatis was a tireless missionary who had modest success among the Indians. But in a letter dated November 5, 1885, he wrote bluntly that the effort to nurture vocations was meeting with minimal success:

Rarely will a father allow his son to become a priest. So despite the flourishing schools of the Jesuits, Franciscans, Baionesi (priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus founded by Michael Garicoïts), Vincentians and others, almost all the priests laboring in these regions are foreigners. . . . Every year twenty youths enter the seminary, and eighteen or nineteen leave.⁴⁶

The ten natives whom Don Bosco depicted on their way to the priesthood in 1876 as future missionaries to their own people were but an overly optimistic hope on his part. In all likelihood ten native Argentinians, or sons of immigrants, were turned into native savages by Don Bosco's pen as he wrote to benefactors.⁴⁷

As for vocations, Father Tomatis wrote that they were worse off than in infidel lands: "So far, four or five Salesians have come from San Nicolás, and in Buenos Aires there are novices or people who have taken three-year vows. But we have many hopes at present."⁴⁸

In fact, the old Spanish stock and fresh waves of European immigrants did subsequently respond to the prayer, sweat, and enthusiasm of the Salesians. They were able to build a novitiate in Bernal, transferring there what had been only embryonic hopes in Buenos Aires.

The dream of counting Indians among his sons remained no more than that during Don Bosco's lifetime. The only glimmer of hope had been Zepherino Namuncurá, a son of the fierce *cacique*, Manuel Na-

⁴⁵ Circular published in Chiala, *Da Torino all rep. Argentina*, p. 251.

⁴⁶ MB 17:631.

⁴⁷ From the general roster of the Salesian Society for the years 1876 and 1877 we see that no Indian is enrolled as a novice; that the first novices were not natives is a well known fact in Argentinian Salesian circles.

⁴⁸ MB 17:631

muncura; but he died in Rome at the age of eighteen. His beatification process is now in progress.

Other difficulties were due to the tense political situation, once Julius Roca became president of Argentina in 1880. There were acute tensions between the government, public opinion as embodied in the ruling class, and Catholics.⁴⁹ In Roca and his policies we find conflicting elements that have been the subject of attention and debate ever since, even among Argentinian historians. Forceful and even brutal acts, inspired by the age-old royal jurisdictionalism of Spain, alternated with liberal gestures of forbearance toward Catholics. Such gestures were often motivated by friendship, or by a keen regard for what might best serve the interests of the nation.

In 1880 a pastoral letter by Archbishop Aneyros drew violent reactions from the anticlerical press. No less violent was the tension created in 1884 when the teaching of religion was banned in the public schools (as was happening in European countries run by liberal governments), with the proviso that it was permitted where parents requested it for their children. Catholic protests brought new repressive measures and the expulsion within twenty-four hours of the apostolic delegate, Bishop Louis Matera, a man of rather difficult temperament.⁵⁰

Closer to our own day, criticism has been directed against the Salesians for not taking their cue from the methods that had once been used by the Jesuits in Paraguay. But political difficulties only compounded other difficulties of an ethnic, climatic, and social nature. The military phase in Patagonia was to be followed by "pacification through the conversion of the savages to Christianity."⁵¹ But there were reservations and limits. According to Du Boys, President Roca "stated that he would have given open support to the Salesians, but that he did not want to see Reductions created in Patagonia such as those that had been created by the Jesuits in Paraguay: i.e., colonies or settlements completely under the control of a society of priests or religious."⁵²

Fear that the Salesians might create a state within the state may have

⁴⁹ B. Galindez, *La revolución del 80. Historia política argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1945; L.B. Kress, "Argentine Liberalism and the Church under Julio Roca," in *Américas*, 30 (1973-74), pp. 319-340.

⁵⁰ M.J. Sanguinetti, *Representación diplomática del Vaticano en los países del Plata*, Buenos Aires, 1954; A. Palmieri, "Argentine," *DHGE*, 1, Paris 1930, col. 54.

⁵¹ Du Boys, *Don Bosco e la Pia Soc. Salesiana*, p. 201.

⁵² *Ibid.*, translation of a letter of December 20, 1880.

turned the president against any projected Reductions, and also against the proposal to turn Patagonia into a vicariate. In 1880, when a precarious amity still existed between the Argentinian government and the Holy See, Leo XIII earnestly desired General Roca's consent to such a step. Without it, noted Don Bosco, "Propagation of the Faith gives us nothing; our missions and even the governing authority in the Patagonian province continue to be very insecure."⁵³

Once diplomatic relations between the Argentinian government and the Holy See broke down, Propaganda Fide decided on a unilateral course of action based solely on suggestions from the Salesians and the diocesan chancery in Buenos Aires. On November 16, 1883, several territories were detached from the diocese to form the vicariate apostolic of northern and central Patagonia, and the prefecture apostolic of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Bishop Cagliero became the first vicar apostolic, and Father Fagnano became the first prefect apostolic. On October 31, 1883, Don Bosco had sent a letter to General Roca to inform him of the imminent decisions and win his consent, but he received no reply.⁵⁴

Cagliero was appointed titular bishop of Magyus on November 13 and consecrated bishop in the Church of Mary Help of Christians (Turin) on December 17, 1884. He disembarked in Montevideo on March 12, 1885, and made the risky passage to Buenos Aires on March 23. Relying on Father Costamagna's personal friendship with Roca and the latter's professed sympathy for Don Bosco's charity and ability, he managed to get approval for the *de facto* situation. On July 8 he entered Patagónes and succeeded in getting back at his side Father Milanese, who had been expelled by the governor in 1883. Cagliero started to reorganize missionary centers, stimulated the efforts of his co-workers, and exercised real influence on both the Indians and Argentinian citizens.⁵⁵

⁵³ DB to Father James Costamagna, Turin, November 12, 1880, *Epistolario*, 3, n. 2108.

⁵⁴ MB 16:379 f; *Epistolario*, 4, n. 2439.

⁵⁵ J. and F. Avellà, *Mons. Dr. Mariano A. Espinosa*, Buenos Aires, 1945; L. Carbajal, *Le missioni salesiane nella Patagonia e regioni magellaniche studio storico-statistico*, S. Benigno Canavese, 1900, p. 16 f; L. Massa, *Monografia de Magallanes. Sesenta años de acción salesiana en el Sur. 1886-1946*, Punta Arenas, 1945 (the work of Franciscan missionaries and then of the Salesians—Bishop Fagnano in particular); R. Entraigas, *Monseñor Fagnano . . .*, Buenos Aires, 1945; R. Entraigas, *El apostol de la Patagonia*, Rosario, 1955 (documented biography of Cardinal John Cagliero).

Only then could it be said that the work of civilizing and evangelizing was on a sound and promising footing.

With regard to the Patagonian missions Don Bosco's trajectory was akin to that he followed in creating the Salesian Society. Argentina had a complicated web of civil and religious needs. On that basis Don Bosco introduced his Salesians into the country with the approval and support of both ecclesiastical and political authorities, the sympathy of the people and other religious congregations, and charitable support from around the world. Then he made every effort to win juridical autonomy for his Salesians as religious and missionaries, without undermining their civil status. The latter would be economically assured by contributions and a fair return for their educational and civilizing work in schools, parishes, and missionary enterprises.

4. Schools, parishes, and care of immigrants

According to Father Chiala's remarks back in 1876, Don Bosco was thinking of choosing the Patagonian missions even before John Baptist Gazzolo approached him from Varazze and opened up negotiations for the establishment of a Salesian boarding school at San Nicolás de los Arroyos.⁵⁶ This proposal, then, was a timely opportunity to give concrete form to Don Bosco's tactical plan of missionary penetration.

Father Chiala's remarks leave us perplexed today, especially since we have little else to help us ascertain whether his version is merely a propaganda ploy or a real conviction held at Valdocco. Regarding the Patagonians, he writes:

Since earlier missionaries trying to reach those tribes had ended up as food for those cannibals, a new plan was devised: set up schools and hospices in areas close to the savages; take in their boys in order to learn their language, customs, and habits; and in this way initiate social and religious contacts. For a start, however, a hospice would have to be opened in Buenos Aires, to serve as a communications center. So the offer of the school of San Nicolás came at the right time.⁵⁷

Ideally, then, Buenos Aires and San Nicolás were to have been no more than strategic bases; but concrete circumstances quickly forced the

⁵⁶ Chiala, *Da Torino alla rep. Argentina*, p. 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21 f.

course of missionary activity to take new directions, just as it had done with the course adopted for civilized centers. There was no rest for the Salesians newly arrived in Buenos Aires, who were shocked by what they saw. Here were people of good character and background, respectful and generous to priests, who were terribly ignorant and in desperate need of religious care. Salesian letters reported that about 30,000 Italians in Buenos Aires and 300,000 in the whole republic were left almost entirely to their own devices, due to the scarcity of native priests.⁵⁸ Cagliero and his confreres felt like drops of rain being eagerly drunk in by parched earth.⁵⁹

The care of young people, their favorite line of work, was especially deficient. To their bewilderment, Cagliero and his co-workers found themselves surrounded by friendly youths, "mostly Italian." When asked to make the Sign of the Cross, some of them, ranging in age from 16 to 18, looked astonished and had no idea what was being asked of them. Asked if they went to Mass on Sundays, they said they never thought about it because they did not know when it was Sunday and when it was not.⁶⁰

The lack of schools was evident everywhere to some extent, and within a few weeks Cagliero was besieged with requests. From Dolores and Córdoba came pleas and promises of help from priests and lay people.⁶¹ The secretary of the apostolic delegate in Montevideo came to speak to the Salesians on behalf of the papal representative. He outlined the urgent needs of the capital city to the missionaries, who wrote: "In a capital of 100,000 souls there is not one Catholic school! In the whole republic there is not one seminary, minor or major, and not one seminarian! And that republic is half as big as Italy!"⁶²

In Argentina people brought home to them the potential importance and impact of a house of *arts and trades*. They were told that the city of Buenos Aires was ready to offer them land and whatever else was needed. The opening of a house for artisans, similar to those which the Salesians already had in Italy and France, would be a landmark event in the history

⁵⁸ Barberis, *La rep. Argentina*, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Chiala, *Da Torino alla rep. Argentina*, p. 231.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Barberis, *La rep. Argentina*, p. 8; letter of January 3, 1876.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 114; letter of February 5, 1876.

of the country, winning admiration from the whole republic and doing an immense amount of good.⁶³ The president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society said he was ready to help with the establishment of a Festive Oratory and a hospice. Others pointed out that there was no press for the Italian immigrants and offered their services.⁶⁴

The fame of the Salesians was spreading everywhere, according to the letters of their missionaries. They were seen as hard but jovial workers, free and easy in their care of young people and their cultivation of music. In a short time Cagliero's sacred and secular compositions were to be heard everywhere in the city. His tunes were sung in churches and on the streets, hummed by adults and children.

It was clear that the climate was now favorable to their work. It was a period when governments and the ruling classes in Latin America were favorably disposed toward foreign congregations who came to promote the education of youngsters and the people. Also clear was the urgent need for many works. Jorge C. Poulson, a professor at the local university in Córdoba, admitted that the general populace was good and religious. But there was only one private boarding school, and one minor seminary which he thought was insignificant, poorly organized, and sparsely attended. Hence he feared that the populace would go into decline and decay within a few years.⁶⁵ In Buenos Aires there were "many bad newspapers, many immoral books, and many incentives to evil."⁶⁶

Reading the letters from Argentina, Don Bosco could appreciate one difference between their reports on the savages and their comments on the civilized population. The concrete situation of the latter was similar to that he had encountered in Turin as a young priest when he began the Oratory, with young immigrants in particular. It was a similar situation that had geared his Congregation towards high schools and hospices in order to meet the pressing needs of Catholics. Moreover, the

⁶³ Ibid., p. 115: letter of February 5, 1876.

⁶⁴ *Museo delle Missioni cattoliche*, 19 (1876), p. 291 f.

⁶⁵ Barberis, *La rep. Argentina*, p. 145: letter of February 20, 1876.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 174: letter of March 10, 1876. I cite these only to indicate the impression they might evoke back in Turin. See also: J. Tonelli, *Garibaldi y la masoneria argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1954; J. Belza, *En la Boca del Riachuelo. Síntesis biográfica del sacerdote salesiano don Esteban Bourlot*, Buenos Aires, 1957 (draws on civil and ecclesiastical archives).

problem of caring for Italian immigrants was a critical one in America because their numbers reached new highs during these years.⁶⁷

In the course of a few years all the foundations for subsequent Salesian work on American soil were laid. From 1876 to 1888, ten missionary expeditions were launched to provide manpower for work among the Indians. But most of it went into founding and running seven missionary centers in Patagonia and nineteen establishments in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador: parishes, oratories, schools for students and artisans, hospices, printing works, and bookshops. Salesians who had started out hoping to engage in the romance of mission work found themselves assigned to work among the civilized population. It did not take them long to realize how awesome, urgent, and necessary was the task that Don Bosco had given them.

5. *The missionary epic: impact on Salesians in Europe*

In Europe, particularly at Valdocco, the needs of civilized America were not forgotten by the Salesians; but it is clear that their favorite objects of thought and concern were the missions and the savages, even some

⁶⁷ See M. Jefferson and C.E. Pray, "Argentina," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London 1960, 2:324-327; J. Arce, "Argentina," *The Encyclopedia Americana*, New York 1962, 2:196-221. Between 1880 and 1886 the average number of immigrants per year was 40,000. In 1876 a law on immigrants was passed; many immigrants were Italian. For the pastoral care of immigrants see monographs and books on Bishop Scalabrini, Bonomelli, and Mother Cabrini. On the situation of Italian Catholic immigrants in the United States, one may also consult Juvenal Marchsia, "The Italian Catholic Immigrant," in Thomas T. McAvoy (ed.), *Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960.

Some indications of the view of America held at Valdocco may be gleaned from the little work by Father Louis Guanella, *Saggio di ammonimenti famigliari per tutti ma più particolarmente per il popolo di campagna*, Turin: tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1872. In America immigrants will find "crowds of confused people" (p. 180). It is a country of violence (p. 181), where strangers are hated. "Someone hoping to rob you of a few bucks will not hesitate for a moment to dump your corpse in the street in broad daylight, because it is easy to escape the arms of the law" (p. 182). "There are so many women of ill repute, scandals, obscene spectacles, theaters, amusements, and taverns that our rural areas would seem to be choice gardens of devotion by comparison" (p. 181). America is a land where people lose their faith because of the lack of religious care and the great abundance of "bad companions, who use scorn and outright violence to keep you from attending church" (p. 181). For this work Father

years after the initial mission undertakings. They loved to picture the metamorphosis of fierce, bloodthirsty savages into meek Christians: bowed before a missionary, softened by the gospel message, led to civilized ways, and turned into a field of fertile hopes for the Church and the Salesians.

Before the eyes of his dream-filled youths Don Bosco projected prophetic visions of the Church's future triumphs in America and around the world. South America would inherit the mantle of Christianity and European civilization, since Europeans were now conspiring to plunder the churches.⁶⁸ Scores of new believers would sit down with Salesians at the heavenly banquet: men, women, and children of every age, race, and condition. Everywhere there would be hymns of praise for the savages, who had imbibed God's word and become proclaimers of the good news in turn. Multitudes would make the journey from earth to heaven, joyously chanting the triumphs of God and his glory for all eternity.⁶⁹

The atmosphere created at Valdocco and other Salesian houses in Europe finds expression in Father Lemoyne's books on Christopher Columbus and Francisco Pizzaro, on the Incas and the conquest of America to civilization and the faith.⁷⁰ His five-act drama of 1884 (*Una speranza, ossia il passato e l'avvenire della Patagonia*) dealt with Patagonia's past as well as Salesian hopes for its future. It depicts traitorous white men captured by ferocious Indians armed with spears. Preparing to slaughter the whites, the Indians spend the night doing their war dance. Missionaries, the good guys, win over the Indians and save the day. They foil the carefully laid schemes of the traitorous whites and manage to convert the whole tribe. Heaven favors them, granting a vision of Mary, the Mother of God, to the big Indian chief.⁷¹ Father Ceria offers his own

Guanella found himself in no little trouble; see A. Tamborini, *Don Luigi Guanella*, Bari, 1958², pp. 90–95.

⁶⁸ MB 17:301.

⁶⁹ MB 17:305. It was a moment of high enthusiasm, connected with the consecration of Cagliero as bishop. This dream of January 31, 1885, was reported by Father Lemoyne, as told to him by Don Bosco. Perhaps that is why it is one of the most emphatic and redundant written accounts.

⁷⁰ The works of Father Lemoyne are reviewed in F. Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, pp. 17–19.

⁷¹ There are also allusions to such things as the cannibalistic habits of the Patagonians in the not too distant past: "Thirty years ago we would have roasted him on a slow fire . . .": Act 5, Scene 1 (S. Benigno Canavese, 1884, p. 75).

firsthand account of the prevailing atmosphere: "In the years of the first expeditions, Patagonia was a word that set young imaginations on fire. Father Lemoyne's successful drama embodied and fed this general state of mind. How many dreamt of adventures among the Indians, of roaming through those open spaces!"⁷²

Propaganda materials and spontaneous manifestations of religious enthusiasm reveal both the secrets and the limits of the early missionary activities undertaken by Don Bosco and the Salesian Society. Their missionary work came out of a simple, popular milieu that may at times have been naïve and a bit out of date; but as it launched into great enterprises, it managed to develop surprising gifts of perceptiveness and adaptability. The milieu of their destination proved to be quite similar. It was a simple, popular milieu; its inhabitants were living on various levels of indigence and cultural refinement. The factors affecting Salesian missionary work proved to be favorable as well. The people were well disposed, indeed eager to accept what Don Bosco and his Salesians had to offer them.

One of Don Bosco's characteristic traits seems to surface here again. By intuition or careful reflection he somehow had the knack of choosing, not only the right forces for his purpose, but also the right place and time to act with assurance of success.

The propitious start of his American experiment prompted Don Bosco to mine new forecasts from the depths of his inner religious life.

⁷² Ceria, *Annali*, 1, p. 265. Father Francesia recalls the delirium of the Salesians at Varazze when the ship bearing their first missionary confreres away appeared in the waters off Varazze on November 12, 1875: "About 2:00 P.M. there you were in the waters off Varazze. I followed you with my eyes and my heart. Our students tried to get a look at you from the windows of the school and the trees in the courtyard. Even the townspeople were scattered along the shore, trying to get a look through their binoculars. What hours of anguish! It seemed to me that the ship had drawn near as if at your request, and I thanked you for that. Everyone was so excited that we could not get to chapel on time and had to suspend services. Although I myself hate to give up my evening sermon to them, I was so moved that I had to drop it. For two hours I stood there, leaning on the windowsill and gazing out at you. When your ship finally disappeared from my view, I realized that I had been shedding profuse tears. Addio, dear friends! I cried. May the good God be your escort on your hazardous voyage!" (Dedication: "Ai nostri cari missionari dell'America del Sud," in *A Monsignor Daniele Comboni vic. ap. dell'Africa Centrale. Accademia letteraria della solenne distribuzione dei premi per l'anno scolastico 1881-1882 nel collegio Valsalice*, Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1882, p. 4).

Divine providence promised a bright future and enduring glory to the Salesians, so long as they faithfully observed their Constitutions. In time, he noted, "our missions will be carried to China, to Peking specifically. But never forget that we go for the poor and abandoned boys. There, among unfamiliar peoples ignorant of the true God, we will see almighty God openly working wonders that no one would have believed possible before."⁷³

His religious spirit immersed in contemplation between heaven and earth, Don Bosco prophesied new prospects and projects that might well have seemed rash or naïve. Or else he voiced the intuitions of a man who had learned to scrutinize the hearts and inclinations of human beings, and who had formed an overall positive judgment. He told his Salesians: "The world will always welcome us so long as our solicitude goes out to savages, to the poorest and most endangered boys in society. That is our true prosperity, and no one will try to steal it from us."⁷⁴

⁷³ *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel Sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli Salesiani*, 1 quaderno (AS 132 Quaderni-Taccuini; Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, p. 21) published in MB 17:257-73. The passage cited here is on page 273.

⁷⁴ MB 17:272.

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THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

It is easy enough to construct a coherent account of the stages that transformed the Daughters of Mary Immaculate in Mornese into the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. We can see the pious union (or sodality) organized by a few devout young women under the guidance of their spiritual director, Father Pestarino, becoming a religious congregation of nuns under Don Bosco. We can watch the provincial group, once under the spiritual influence of Father Joseph Frassinetti of Genoa, shifting into the spiritual orbit of Turin and Don Bosco.¹

It is not so easy to pinpoint the motives of Don Bosco: how they grew and what impact they had on his own thinking or the course of events. Nor do we have definite answers to certain basic questions: When and why did Don Bosco begin to think about a female religious congregation? Why did he turn to the Mornese group instead of creating one in Turin or some other area more familiar with his presence and activity? Was it the presence of Father Pestarino in his own circle that suggested the idea of a female congregation to him, or was it the idea of founding such a congregation that prompted him to draw Father Pestarino into the Salesians? Was he initially thinking of a religious con-

¹ See F. Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello prima superiora generale delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Turin, 1934²; idem, *La beata Maria Domenica Mazzarello confondatrice delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Alba, 1940³, an abridged version of the first title. The most accurate and documented exposition is in MB 10:575-660; Father Amadei was assisted by Mother Clelia Genghini, secretary of the general council of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; abridged English version in BM 10:246-297. E. Ceria, *Santa Maria Domenica Mazzarello confondatrice dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria A.*, Turin, 1952² (an appealing account based on the MB and Maccono's work); idem, *Annali della Soc. salesiana*, 1, Turin, 1941, pp. 196-206.

gregation, or was he thinking of a 'moral body' like the Salesians, with flexible vows and external members without vows?

We know for certain from our sources that Don Bosco committed himself officially before the Salesians to found a female congregation only on April 24, 1871. On that date he told the Salesian chapter meeting:

Many people have repeatedly begged me to do for girls the little good which, by God's grace, we are now doing for boys. Were I to follow my own inclinations, I would not go into this type of apostolate, but since the requests have been insistent and come from very worthy persons, I fear to thwart God's plans by not giving this matter serious consideration. Hence I put it to you and urge you to ponder it before the Lord, weighing the pros and cons, so as to reach a decision that will redound to God's greater glory and the good of souls. All this month, therefore, let our community and private prayers be directed to obtain God's needed enlightenment in this important matter.²

That same day Don Bosco sent a copy of the Salesian Constitutions (an Italian manuscript?)³ to Sister Maria Enrichetta Dominici, superior

² BM 10:261.

³ Unpublished autograph from DB to Mother M.E. Dominici (1829–1894), in the general archives of the Sisters of St. Anne and Providence, Turin, Via della Consolata:

"4-24-71/ Dear Reverend Mother/ I am entrusting to your hands the Rule of our congregation, asking that you might be good enough to read it and see if it can be adapted to an institute of nuns, as I have already explained to you in person. / You should begin with No. 3—Scopo ('purpose') of this institute *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*—Then delete or add as you deem best in your wisdom to establish an institute whose daughters would be true religious in the eyes of the Church, but so many free citizens in the eyes of civil society. / I would be happy to use any sections or articles of the Rules of St. Anne that might be adopted. / When you think it advisable for us to get together for a talk, you can let me know through one of our clerics or messengers who often go there. Annoying news, this, but I think it will turn out for the greater glory of God. If we manage to win some souls, it will be mostly your doing. / God bless you and your religious family. I recommend myself and these students of mine to the charity of your holy prayers. With thanks/I am your humble servant/ Fr. Jo. Bosco."

The reference to No. 3 *Scopo* (not *finis*) seems to indicate section 3 of the Rules of the Society of St. Francis de Sales: *Scopo di questa Società*.

of the Sisters of St. Anne. He probably included the rule of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Mornese as well. He asked Sister Dominici to adapt them for an 'institute of nuns' called the 'Daughters of Mary Immaculate', as he had already had occasion to explain to her orally. So by that time Don Bosco had already focused his attention on Mornese.

But when did he begin to do that? When did he overcome the resistance posed by his own 'inclinations'? What exactly was the nature of his resistance to the idea of establishing a female institute? The fact that it would be female? Or his firsthand knowledge of the effort involved in founding a religious institute in that time and place?

The decision reached on April 24, 1871, is clearly a crucial point in trying to learn more about Don Bosco's own motives and course. Another series of events centered in Turin is also suggestive and relevant. Considering them, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was only around 1870-1871 that Don Bosco decided to make use of the Mornese group, though he may have decided earlier to keep track of them.

1. Don Bosco and Sister Clarac

There were several projects of charitable assistance to girls in Turin. Marchioness Barolo had taken an interest in them after the Restoration, and so had various female religious congregations that gradually established themselves in the capital of Piedmont. Here and there various projects were started or revived: hospices, boarding establishments, schools, boarding schools, and even a festive oratory.⁴ In 1860 another oratory

⁴ They are described and praised in the monographs and guidebooks of Turin that I have mentioned frequently, by Bertolotti, Baricco, Pettinati, and Casalis. The festive oratory for females was opened in 1850 by Father Casper Saccarelli, a contemporary of DB (1817-1864), not far from Valdocco in Via S. Donato. The course of the project was similar to that of DB: "The good priest, who did not have great means but an ardent and compassionate soul, began by opening a small festive oratory in a house on this street. To the oratory he then added a nursery school. Then he opened a larger house as a shelter for poor abandoned orphan girls and daughters of the poor, whose parents' work was not enough to maintain and educate them . . . The charity of private individuals was not lacking to support the project": see G. Torricella, *Torino e le sue vie illustrate con cenni storici*, Turin: tip. Giov. Borgarelli, 1868, p. 220. Also see F.S. Reggio, *Elogio del teol. cav. don Gaspare Saccarelli cappellano di S.M., fondatore dell'Istituto della Sacra Famiglia* . . . , Turin: Falletti e comp., 1868; A. Bonnet, *Elogio funebre del teol. cav. avv. Paolo Bergher [1812-1888] canonico onorario della SS. Trinità* . . . direttore dell'Istituto della Sacra Famiglia . . . , Turin: Vinc. Bona, 1889.

for poor and abandoned girls was started under the direction of a Jesuit, Father Sapetti. The inspiration seems to have come partly from Brescia and the work of St. Angela Merici's Ursulines, and partly from Don Bosco and his work in Turin.⁵

In 1862 Marie Louise Angelica Clarac, a Sister of Charity, returned to Turin. She had originally come from France to Turin in 1854. Now she was returning from Sardinia, where she had been serving as director of a charitable work sponsored by a charitable organization of women in the parishes of St. Maximus and Our Lady of the Angels.⁶ In 1865 all the welfare works headquartered on Via Borgo Novo (Via Roma) were transferred to a building on the corner of Via S. Pio V and Viale del Re (Corso Vittorio Emmanuele). This was not far from the Waldensian church and the Oratory of St. Aloysius in Porta Nuova (run by Don Bosco). There were five projects in the complex: a nursery for newborn infants, a shelter for children aged 3 to 6, a dressmaking workshop for women, an orphanage for girls, a dispensary for the poor, and home care for the poor. Don Bosco suggested to Sister Clarac that she organize a big oratory "to assemble girls of the lower classes on Sundays," and he promised to send a priest for Mass. For that reason, said Sister Clarac, Don Bosco rightly deserved to be called the founder of the oratory.⁷

Sister Clarac was an exceptional person. Archbishop Gastaldi said that she had 'a head of iron' and 'the heart of a volcano'.⁸ In a few years she was the guiding force behind an enterprise of respectable size and scope. New projects were added to the already existing ones: a day school (a maternal institute for girls akin to a paternal one already existing in Turin); a weekly religion course for young ladies (along the lines of the 'catechism of perseverance' proposed by Father Gaume); and a women's workshop making clothes for the poor.⁹

Among women's projects in Turin, therefore, the work of Sister

⁵ P. Guerrini, "La rinascita e la diffusione della Compagnia nei tempi moderni," in *S. Angela Merici e la Compagnia di S. Orsola nel IV centenario della fondazione*, Brescia, 1936, p. 442.

⁶ A. Vaudagnotti, *Suor Clarac. La serva di Dio madre Maria Luigia Angelica Clarac [1817-1887] fondatrice delle Suore di Carità di S. Maria*, Turin, 1954. The *Positio* for her beatification and canonization sheds light on factors and circumstances in ecclesiastical circles, both in Turin and Rome, that affected Don Bosco also.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91 f.

Clarac was closest to that of Don Bosco. He kept his word and did not fail to send priests: e.g., Fathers John Cagliero, Paul Albera, and Francis Dalmazzo.¹⁰ So the Salesians were familiar and involved with an oratory for poor and abandoned young women. It seems only natural that a question would arise about the possible institution of a parallel Salesian congregation of nuns dedicated to serving girls. And Father Lemoyne reports such a conversation with Don Bosco on June 24, 1866:

“Tell me, Don Bosco . . . don’t you think something is wanting to complete your work?”

“What do you mean?”

“Won’t you do anything for girls? . . . Don’t you think that a congregation of nuns founded by you and affiliated to our Society would crown your work? . . .”

I had hesitated to speak my mind because I feared that Don Bosco might oppose me. He remained pensive for a few moments and then surprised me by his answer. “Yes, this too will be done! We shall have nuns, but not yet. A little later.”¹¹

Disregarding the work of Sister Clarac, Don Bosco’s biographers see this comment as an indication that he had already formed plans around the Mornese group. But if we pursue the story of Sister Clarac further, we find reasons to be less than sure about any such conclusion.

In 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, correspondence and communication diminished between the Sisters of Charity and their superiors in Paris. The immediate superiors in Turin (including Father Durando, a Visitor or inspector) asked Sister Clarac to make a will bequeathing her possessions and assets. The nun had made a will bequeathing everything to the projects on Via S. Pio V set up as a moral entity. The nun serving as Visitor offered two drafts of an alternative will, dated April 20, 1870, which would have bequeathed the goods registered to Clarac to four Daughters of Charity in perpetuity. Sister Clarac feared that this would compromise the existence of her projects, and so she delayed her decision. She was then ordered to relinquish the post of superior. Clarac expressed her willingness to do that, but not to execute her will in the form desired by her superiors. She still feared that the projects on Via S. Pio V might simply be abandoned. In her difficulties she could have

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 104.

¹¹ BM 8:187. Ceria, *Santa Maria D. Mazzarello*, p. 47.

looked to Archbishop Riccardi for support, since he had shown himself well disposed to her on several occasions, but he died on October 16, 1870. Clarac then turned to Don Bosco for advice. She had gone to him before, if for no other reason than to thank him for his help.¹²

We cannot really know whether Don Bosco was waiting or hoping for this moment. We do not know if he or his Salesians influenced Sister Clarac in forming the conviction that the projects on Via S. Pio V were of the utmost importance as a bulwark against the nearby Waldensians; that they would have to be kept going, even if it meant confrontation and conflict. Still less can we know whether they may have nurtured the hope that some day Sister Clarac would turn over everything to them, so that direction of women's projects would fall into their hands in much the same way that direction of the Guardian Angel Oratory had fallen into Don Bosco's hands between 1847 and 1852.

As Sister Clarac tells it, the behavior of Don Bosco was decisive in her own case. He took great delight in the good done by her in a district "infested with Protestants," who were then very active and enterprising. He did not want those projects "to disappear after her death." Unwilling to "assume responsibility as her direct adviser," however, Don Bosco directed her to Bishop Moreno of Ivrea, the senior bishop in Piedmont. "Since the post of archbishop of Turin was empty, he could be considered the most authoritative prelate to make clear God's will to her."¹³

It is worth noticing that Don Bosco sent her to Bishop Moreno, who had two female institutes in his diocese that had once been part of the Sisters of Charity and then broken away.¹⁴ Remember that relations between Don Bosco and Bishop Moreno had not been very cordial since 1864. At that time Don Bosco took back complete control of his *Catholic Readings*, which had been published jointly with the bishop of Ivrea.¹⁵ Nevertheless Don Bosco sent Sister Clarac to Bishop Moreno. Did she perhaps indicate that she was planning to withdraw from her religious

¹² Vaudagnotti, *Suor Clarac*, p. 115 f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁴ The Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea (formerly of Rivarolo), and the Daughters of Charity of Montanaro. See A. Pierotti, *La vita e l'opera della serva di Dio madre Antonia Verna, fondatrice delle Suore di Carità dell'Immacolata Concezione d'Ivrea*, Florence, 1938; Vaudagnotti, *Suor Clarac*, p. 121 f.

¹⁵ BM 7: 96, 379 f; BM 8:177-178.

congregation? Did Don Bosco foresee the way things would go? Did he have reason to hope or expect that the bishop would advise Clarac to place herself under Don Bosco's direction? We have no evidence to shed light on Don Bosco's behavior or to assume that he entertained such prospects. The only striking thing is the coincidence of the decisions made at the time by Bishop Moreno, Sister Clarac, and Don Bosco.¹⁶

On May 3, 1871, Sister Clarac informed the Visitor of her congregation in Turin that she was leaving it and the Vincentians to put herself under obedience to the bishop of Ivrea.¹⁷ That decision might well have been anticipated even before that date. It may have been foreseen by Don Bosco in April, when he wrote to Sister Dominici about drafting a constitution for a congregation called the *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*.

2. *Father Pestarino and the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate*

The Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate must be seen in the context of the history of nineteenth-century Italian Catholicism. It was part of a religious revival taking place in many areas, thanks to the efforts of generous-hearted and enterprising people. It flourished in the climate of Marian devotion that was strong around the middle of the century, and that culminated in the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception and Marian apparitions at La Salette and Lourdes.¹⁸

New associations dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and affiliated with the main one in Paris (at Our Lady of Victory Church), were appearing all over Italy: e.g., in Turin, Novara, Vercelli, and Pinerolo.¹⁹ Old congregations of the Daughters of Mary were reviving, and new ones were tending to combine devotional exercises with a predilection for charitable works, in line with the contemporary activities of St. Vincent de Paul Conferences.²⁰

¹⁶ Many mysteries surround the person of Bishop Moreno. Many documents relating to his long episcopate are missing from the diocesan archives of Ivrea. His corpse disappeared, and it was replaced in his tomb by that of a simple priest who died seventeen years after him. See Vaudagnotti, *Suor Clarac*, p. 301 f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125 f.

¹⁸ Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., Chap. 14, section 3, pp. 694–707.

¹⁹ P. Stella, "I tempi e gli scritti che prepararono il 'Mese di Maggio' di Don Bosco," in *Salesianum*, 20 (1958), pp. 614–667.

²⁰ Growth took place, for example, with the Daughters of Mary that had been instituted in Oropa in the first half of the seventeenth century (*Fiori e canti a*

The Daughters of Mary Immaculate, which flourished in Mornese, had been organized and propagated by Father Joseph Frassinetti.²¹ From Genoa and lower Piedmont the organization spread quickly to upper Italy and sparked the rise of similar groups. It was particularly effective in accelerating the revitalization of the Ursulines, who had been in Brescia and other areas for several centuries and who were already in a process of renewal.²²

Insofar as the religious life of Mornese was concerned, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate had their own little history and a specific impact. In the rural town, located in a tranquil section of Montferrat, religious practice tended towards austerity. People were sensitive to the honor and respect due to God, the Creator and Father of all things, whose presence was enthroned on the altar. Eucharistic Communion was rare, but not because of religious indifference or any hostility to a life of piety that put more value on the use of the sacraments. With no polemics or contending views at stake, one's relationship with God was satisfied in the sense of God's presence as provident overseer, judge, and distributor of reward and punishment. This God was honored by frequent prayer and by respectful participation in the sacrifice of the Mass.²³

Father Pestarino came from the school of Frassinetti. To Mornese he seems to have brought the outlook and concerns of the Alphonsians and benignists. This included the fear that infrequent use of the sacraments was the result of Jansenism and an outer manifestation of spiritual

Maria. Oropa 1910, Biella, n.d., p. 181. There was a revival of the one in Carignano in the middle of the nineteenth century (*Regolamento per la Compagnia delle Figlie di Maria eretta nell'unica insigne chiesa parrocchiale . . . di Carignano*, Carmagnola, 1840). Other sodalities or associations were instituted through the efforts of the Daughters of Charity (see *Manuale per le Figlie di Maria ad uso degli opifici e delle scuole delle Figlie della Carità*, new edition, Prato, 1875).

²¹ He discussed the subject in various larger and smaller works of his: e.g., *La monaca in casa*, Genoa, 1859; *Industrie spirituali nel celibato cristiano*, Turin, 1860 (LC); *Il religioso al secolo*, Genoa, 1864; *Compendio della teologia morale di S. Alfonso M. de' Liguori*, Genoa, 1867³.

²² J. Frassinetti, *Vita ed Istituto di S. Angela Merici*, Turin, 1863 (LC), p. 118; P. Guerrini, *La rinascita e la diffusione*, pp. 390–477.

²³ On some of the real forms of pious Jansenism in the diocese of Acqui see P. Stella, *Giansenisti piemontesi nell'Ottocento . . .*, Turin, 1964, pp. 7–17. For an episodic reconstruction of the milieu and an interpretation of the data in terms of Father Pestarino see F. Maccono, *L'apostolo di Mornese sac. Domenico Pestarino . . .*, [1817–1874], Turin, 1927.

torpidity; and that such a state of affairs might open the gates to impiety and indifference, even in Mornese. From the very start of his ministry, Pestarino sought to break down old habits. He stressed the value and necessity of frequenting Confession and Communion in order to better resist temptation and please the Lord more. From the recollections of Mary Mazzarello we gather that the first woman who dared to go to Communion every week, at Father Pestarino's urging, evoked much comment and came to be called 'the nun'.²⁴

We can assume that Father Pestarino, seeing how difficult it was to get through to adults and change their ways, turned instinctively to the younger generation. They could be educated to his way of thinking more easily, and so he may well have considered gathering a group of well disposed girls around him.²⁵

Thus there came into being a group of adolescents and young women known as the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. They had grown up in a family atmosphere with long-standing and deeply rooted religious traditions, and then come under the influence of Father Pestarino and his solid personality. This led them to a religious life centered around devotion to the Eucharist and backed up by systematic spiritual direction. Adolescent girls would brave foul weather and cold winter mornings to go to Mass and receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

The Daughters of Mary Immaculate found unity and mutual inspiration in spiritual reading and resolutions to pursue holiness and show love for God and neighbor. Out of their shared life, thinking, and affection came a real, deep-rooted spiritual friendship. They devoted themselves to works of charity suggested by a rural way of life where everyone knew each other and obeyed the local parish priest: e.g., teaching catechism to children, organizing games, ministering to the sick, holding workshops in dressmaking, and doing little things for those in need. All this was done in a general atmosphere of closeness to God and inner peace. The members made resolutions of virginity and promises to Mary

²⁴ Maccono, *L'apostolo di Mornese*, p. 42 f.

²⁵ According to one witness: "The time came when there were more than 100 Communions every weekday morning, especially in winter. The whole population went to Father Pestarino for Confession; only about twelve people went to someone else, or didn't go at all": F. Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello*, Turin, 1934, p. 23. In 1854-1855 Mornese had 1,182 inhabitants: see *Calendario generale del Regno pel 1855 . . .*, Turin, n.d., p. 575.

Immaculate. They held intimate conversations with Jesus in the Eucharist, seeing themselves as little flowers on his altar.

Such feelings and attitudes cannot be attributed mainly to the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori or Father Frassinetti, with their masculine and moralistic accents, although the young women read those authors. Rather, they can be found in the various works of Elizabeth Girelli that served as their spiritual reading and meditation—in particular, her guide to holiness for young females (*Indirizzo e pascolo della giovane alla pietà*).²⁶ They can also be found in the little cards of congratulation sent to Don Bosco on his birthday or patron saint's day,²⁷ or in biographies of the first nuns of theirs to die. Many of those nuns died at a very early age, due to the hard circumstances in which they found themselves or which they voluntarily chose. Driven by religious zeal, they might go too long without sufficient nourishment, or consistently fail to get a good night's rest after their exhausting labors of the day. Even though they might find contrary advice in Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat* or the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales, they shared the conviction of many simple people that the harsh austerity described in lives of the saints was a necessary component of sanctity.

3. *Their transformation into a religious congregation of nuns*

Father Pestarino's move from the circle of Frassinetti to that of Don Bosco probably had its remote beginnings when he and Don Bosco met at Frassinetti's house. Another key point was obviously the conversation between the two priests when they were traveling together from Acqui to Alessandria, at which time Don Bosco invited Pestarino to spend a day at the Oratory as a guest. In the meantime, other things would help

²⁶ M. Moretti and C. Genghini, *Cronistoria dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* . . . , Nizza Monferrato-Turin, 1922–1942, typed copy in the general archives of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and AS 4, vol. 1, p. 227 (which relates specifically to the year 1871 but deals with readings in general terms: "Besides the already cited books and writings of Liguori, Frassinetti, and Don Bosco, another book making the rounds among the 'Daughters' and New Ursulines for some time was Girelli's *Indirizzo e pascolo delle giovani alla pietà* . . ."). On E. Girelli (1839–1919) see A. Bianchini, *Elisabetta Girelli. Monografia*, Brescia, 1926.

²⁷ See AS Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

to focus Pestarino's attention on the priest of Turin. From 1860 on, the works of Frassinetti were published in Don Bosco's *Catholic Readings* and probably reached Mornese. Those same pages carried comments and promotional statements about the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate which had quickly spread from Mornese to other regions. The publicity undoubtedly tickled the people of Mornese and their clergy. Then, in October 1864, Don Bosco and his youths made an epic trip as far as Acqui. Don Bosco stayed as a guest for a few days in Mornese, in an atmosphere of indescribable enthusiasm. Shortly afterwards, Father Pestarino undertook to form a little community with some of the Daughters, despite gossip and opposition from some families and inhabitants of the area.

After the *decretum laudis* (1864) expressed approval of the Salesian Society, Don Bosco would accept Father Pestarino as a Salesian. From that time on, we can be sure that Pestarino's relationship with Don Bosco was one of real dependence and cooperation. Henceforth he attended meetings of the Salesian directors.

As far as we can tell, Father Pestarino's obedience to Don Bosco had an explicit and crucial impact on the Daughters of Mary Immaculate from the beginning of 1871 on (perhaps even around the end of 1870). The transformation of the pious union into a religious congregation of women was decided upon and carried out. Important stages in that process were the first investiture and profession (August 1872), and episcopal approval of the Constitutions in a decree of January 23, 1876.²⁸

The transformation entailed painful adjustments and real anguish. The old nucleus of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate was split. Families and relatives in Mornese were not always understanding. They had let the young women go their own way, allowed them to endure fasting, outright hunger, and freezing winters in the naïve belief that this would drive them back home in the end. Finally, there were problems in putting the intramural life of the new congregation on an even keel. Some malcontents disturbed the peace, and Mary Mazzarello was at first unsure of herself in her role as superior. She saw herself as incapable, even though her sister nuns had elected her because they recognized her fine qualities: wisdom, insight into people and situations, and the rare ability to keep them in harmony.

²⁸ The original, in the Acqui chancery, is published in MB 12:663 f.

Their new situation obviously entailed profound spiritual transformations. The young women would now find themselves consecrated to God and the Church in a new way. No longer would their ties be with the rhythms of rural parish life. Their souls would have to open to the worldwide scope of Don Bosco's projects. This entailed substantive changes in their charitable activities, which had been carried out in the homes of country folk as well as their own centers. Now their work would be centered in their own religious institute and its convent atmosphere, and this could not help but affect their way of thinking and acting wherever they might be.

Care of the sick had probably been one of their activities most gratefully welcomed by the people of Mornese. For that they were pardoned many things that seemed a bit strange: e.g., living by themselves in a house and acting like nuns. But by the middle of the nineteenth century care of the sick had taken on a new meaning. It was no longer simply a matter of fraternal assistance that members of religious associations offered each other, or a spiritual and corporal work of mercy practiced in the Christian community. It was now seen as a new form of the apostolate in a world of disintegrating faith. In assisting the sick or those in need, one could take advantage of their situation to revive their interest in God's help and their Christian conscience.

In Turin as elsewhere, this form of apostolate had spurred the religious zeal of priests and lay people. Care of the sick was provided by members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which did outstanding work during the cholera epidemic of 1854. In 1865 Father Marcantonio Durando, with the help of the widow Borgiotti, instituted the Nazarene Sisters. Oratorian Father Carpignano, Archbishop Gastaldi's confessor, helped Joan Michelotti to found the Little Servants of the Sacred Heart, who provided free home-care for poor sick people.²⁹

Home-care for the sick was in the Rules of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and it remained a stated purpose in the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians during Don Bosco's lifetime. But

²⁹ [G. Torre], *Breve ragguaglio della vita e virtù della serva di Dio Luigia Borgiotti* [1803-1873], no date or place indicated, approved for publication 1877. A. Vaudagnotti, *Vita di suor Giovanna Francesca Michelotti* [1843-1888] *fondatrice delle piccole Serve del S. Cuore per l'assistenza gratuita dei malati poveri. La serva di Dio Suor G.F.M.* . . . , Turin, 1939. A Berteu, *Elogio funebre del P. Felice Carpignano* [1810-1888] . . . , Turin, 1889².

it was a dead-letter issue, it seems, except in mission territories such as Patagonia.³⁰

In accordance with Don Bosco's own instincts and inclinations, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians soon became cloistered nuns dedicated to instructing and educating those who came to them: in kindergartens, elementary and high schools, and Festive Oratories for women. Their activities, in short, paralleled those that Don Bosco was devising for his male Salesians. Such activities meant that Don Bosco could feel more secure about his nuns insofar as the Holy See was concerned. There was less likelihood of suspicious comments from people who were worried about the relationship between the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

In 1872 the Daughters had adopted a uniform dress, but they themselves wanted to exchange it for something that would clearly mark them as nuns and they told Don Bosco. In 1877 he granted them permission to make this change.³¹

Their Rules were drawn up, it seems, either personally by Mother Maria Enrichetta Dominici or by one of her co-workers. Based on the Rules of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, they borrowed structures, terminology, and practices from the Rules of the Sisters of St. Anne.³² This included the borrowing of certain ascetic practices, such as the discipline of self-mortification by scourging on certain days, at the discretion of the superior. Such practices aroused instant astonishment in the Mornese women, who unanimously declared that they were out of the question insofar as they were concerned.³³

³⁰ *Regole o costituzioni dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice*, tit. 1: Scopo dell'Istituto, art. 2, Turin 1878, p. 7: "... Where needed, they will also dedicate themselves to caring for sick poor people and to similar works of charity." 1894 edition, p. 50, art. 3: "... Where needed, they will also accept the running of hospitals, and similar works of charity." This sort of clause disappears in the 1906 edition.

³¹ MB 11:360 f; Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello*, p. 163 f.

³² *Costituzioni e regole dell'Istituto delle Suore di S. Anna della Provvidenza*, Turin: Eredi Botta, 1846. They, in turn, are largely dependent on the *Constitutions pour la petite Congrégation des Soeurs de saint Joseph*. Nouvelle édition publiée par ordre de Mgr. Jean-Paul Gaston de Pins, archevêque d'Amasie, administrateur apostolique du diocèse de Lyon, Lyon: Rusand, 1827. The Sisters of St. Joseph were asked by Marchioness Barolo to run the little hospital (*ospedaletto*) of St. Philomena.

³³ *Costituzioni Figlie M.A.*, tit. 9. Distribuzione delle ore del giorno, art. 10 [1871]: "... The discipline can also be performed (by the whole community every

Insofar as the legal order was concerned, Don Bosco never lost sight of his cherished formula. His new religious institutes were to be satisfactorily incorporated in the Church and in civil society. In his brief note to Mother Dominici, he did not fail to point out that the members of his group were to "be true religious in the eyes of the Church, but so many free citizens in the eyes of civil society."³⁴ As a result, the Rules of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, drawn up on the basis of the Salesian Constitutions before the latter were modified in the light of criticisms from Rome, preserve literally the article on civil rights that had been upheld and approved by Bishop Sciandra of Acqui: "Upon entering the institute, the sisters retain their civil rights even after taking vows; but they cannot administer their goods except in the ways and limits set by their major superior."³⁵

Within the structure of the Church the Daughters became true and proper religious, taking simple vows that were recognized by the diocesan authorities. As was true of male Salesians, obligatory perpetual vows were to be taken after one or two periods of three-year temporary vows. But there were cases when this rule was not followed. With the connivance of Don Bosco's representative, perpetual vows might be made right after the novitiate "in a state of emotion and by mistake."³⁶

At the time common law invested many powers in the bishop. He ceded many of these powers to the major superior of the Salesians, who

Friday). *In this exercise let the Sisters strive to meditate well on the severity of Jesus Christ's scourging, whose whole body was bruised and wounded by bloody cuts*" (see MB 10:605).

Costituzioni e Regole Suore di S. Anna, pt. 1, tit. 12, p. 104 f: "... can fast, always with the permission of the superior, on Friday . . . The same can be said for performing the discipline, for which permission of the superior is again needed. *In this exercise let the Sisters strive to be meditating well on the severity of Jesus Christ's scourging, whose whole most sacred body was bruised and wounded by bloody cuts.*"

Constitutions Soeurs de saint Joseph, Directoire, pt. 2, IV, p. 335: "When you do the discipline, unite it with the whiplashes that Jesus endured, and call to memory *the severity of those lashes that flayed his whole body, so that by his example you will not spare yourself.*"

³⁴ See footnote 3 above.

³⁵ *Regole o costituzioni Figlie di M.A.*, tit. 2, art. 5, Turin, 1878, p. 9.

³⁶ My statement is based on the testimony of Mother Clelia Genghini. This was in line with the approach adopted by the Salesians.

acted through his priestly delegate or representative. In each house this delegate was known as the director of the sisters. He exercised his authority over the whole congregation through a member of the general chapter of the Salesians, his delegate, who was known as the director general of the sisters.³⁷ The latter was to "oversee and take care of everything relating to the proper material and spiritual running of the Institute."³⁸ The reference, it seems, was to economic administration and religious formation.

In every house the director was also the ordinary confessor of the nuns, proposed by the rector major and approved by the local ordinary.³⁹ The latter reserved to himself matters regarding the administration of the sacraments, leaving to parish priests all the common or specific laws of the diocese that constituted the 'parish laws or rights' relating to nuns.⁴⁰

The women superiors were thus left with "the government and discipline of the House and the Congregation."⁴¹ But further limitations could be imposed on them by the rector major, who could assign 'specific tasks' to his representatives.⁴²

By formal statute, then, Don Bosco clearly imposed on his nuns a state of almost total dependence on himself and his representatives. In houses where the community of nuns was right next to that of the Salesian men, Don Bosco's immediate representative was ordinarily the director of the Salesian House. In economic matters the subjection of the institute and the individual nuns was almost total as well.

This situation did in fact bring incalculable advantages to both sides, as I shall discuss further on, and it was continued longer after the death of Don Bosco. But Don Bosco himself was a practical man, and we can assume that he would not have hesitated a moment to adopt other formulas in different circumstances, if they seemed more suitable.

³⁷ *Regole o costituzioni Figlie di M.A.*, tit. 2, art. 1, p. 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, tit. 2, art. 2, p. 9. On the extraordinary confessor to be seen every six months, see tit. 11, art. 3, p. 27 (delegated by the major superior and approved to hear Confessions in the diocese).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, tit. 2, art. 4, p. 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, tit. 2, art. 3, p. 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

4. Don Bosco's use of intermediaries in running the congregation

Observing the growth of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from its beginnings to the death of Don Bosco, one is struck by the predominant role he played. He adopted a singular style of leadership and followed it consistently, of set purpose it would seem, to the very end of his days.

Rarely did he take direct action or personally take center stage. His tactics here were akin to those he had adopted in dealing with Sister Clarac and her situation. It was Father Pestarino, not Don Bosco, who dealt directly with the young women. At first Father Pestarino acted in his own name, even when he was carrying out Don Bosco's plans. As Don Bosco made his commitment public, and as his prestige grew among the young women and others, Father Pestarino moved further into the background. But he always remained Don Bosco's mediator, faithfully transmitting his wishes and making sure they were carried out. When Pestarino died, his role was taken over by Father Joseph Cagliero. When the latter died in 1874, Don Bosco sent Father James Costamagna to Mornese, who was later succeeded by Father John Baptist Lemoyne. Trusted and devoted sons, they nurtured in the nuns a real devotion to their father and founder, on whom heaven had showered extraordinary charisms and through whom Mary Help of Christians was working wonders all over the world.

Bringing the full weight of his moral authority into play, Don Bosco stepped into Mornese with the idea of starting a high school for boys. The plan did not work out, and Father Pestarino was left with the odious task of turning the boys' school into a girls' school under the direction of the poor, simple young women whom everyone in the area knew. The reasons for doing this (whether they were well established or slightly exaggerated) came not from Don Bosco but, at least in part, from the local council, which was somewhat obliging and influenced by Father Pestarino as one of its members. In part, it also came from the vicar capitular of Acqui, who had objected to a boys' school so close to the minor seminary of the diocese. Since the episcopal office was vacant at the time, he claimed that he could not assume responsibility for such a serious step!

Mother Maria Dominici's help did not end with the compilation of the Rules. She loaned two of her nuns, including one of her general assistants, to Don Bosco for several months so that the new institute and

its life under the rules might get off to a good start in Mornese. Perhaps it was also a way of repaying Don Bosco for his part in promoting the spread of her congregation to India.⁴³

The growth of the institute was entrusted to publicity pieces in the press, to circulars, and to prospectuses about the educational work of the group for girls of modest circumstances. The latter were sent to parish priests, distributed by the Salesians, and passed around by women teachers who had responded to the appeal of spiritual exercises in Don Bosco's house.⁴⁴ To be sure, other religious congregations of women were geared to the same potential audience and followed the same approach to recruitment. But Don Bosco was soon able to assume a leading position because of the high esteem he enjoyed in Piedmont. He had proven capable of initiating many successful projects, and his achievements seemed all the more astonishing in the 'difficult times' through which the Church was living.

This helps to explain the quick growth of the institute within a few short years. In 1876 the single house in Mornese could send out thirty-six nuns to found six communities. In 1879 it had enough nuns to develop and run a total of twenty-one independent communities.

Don Bosco did not play a direct role in the recruitment of postulants either. When he was informed of some upstanding young woman who wanted to become a nun, he directed her to Mornese. When he was introduced to such a woman, his conversation was very brief: a smile, a joke, a word of encouragement. From what he heard, he would judge whether the postulant was right for him or not and make a quick decision.

He put in brief appearances in Mornese and Nizza Monferrato. He was at the latter place in 1881, after the death of Mother Mary Mazzarello, and he presided over the election of the new superior general. But he did not attend other general chapters held in Nizza Monferrato during his lifetime.

The transformation of the Mornese young women into nuns was handled directly by Father Pestarino. Enthusiasm for the missions was nurtured in them by Father John Cagliero. He often served as Don Bosco's go-between with the nuns, and he did not fail to write letters from South America to his religious sisters in Mornese. They read the

⁴³ See footnote 4 of Chapter VII.

⁴⁴ MB 10:625 f.

letters avidly, and their missionary zeal was sparked by the comments of their director, Father James Costamagna.

In 1877 Father Costamagna was chosen by Don Bosco to head the third missionary expedition. This evoked a high state of emotion in Mornese, and an instinctive desire among many to be able to do the same thing: to go to those remote lands and bring souls to Christ. A good judge of the right time and circumstances, Don Bosco soon was sending another order to Mornese. They were to prepare a company of missionary sisters. Ten nuns left for South America and established themselves in Villa Colón (Uruguay). This opened the way for their expansion in America.

5. Regulating relations between male Salesians and the nuns

Great care and prudence also went into establishing relations between male Salesians and Don Bosco's nuns. The assistance that the nuns would later give to the male institutes of Don Bosco, taking care of the kitchen and laundry, would not be their first work; indeed it is not even codified in their rules.

Mornese, their first establishment, was an educational institute for girls and a house of spiritual exercises for schoolmistresses and unmarried women. Their second establishment, initiated in Vallecrosia in February 1876, was a Festive Oratory for females, an elementary school and place for teaching catechism, associated with a Salesian effort to counteract similar projects of the Waldensians.

When the nuns did cooking and housekeeping work for the first time in a male establishment, on the basis of a regular agreement, it was not in a Salesian house but rather in the episcopal seminary of Biella (September 1876).⁴⁵ Only after that did Don Bosco ask them to provide the same services at the Salesian school in Alassio. He could then structure their presence among Salesians on the basis of actual experience and the agreement he had reached with Bishop Basil Leto of Biella. When the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars reproached him for using the nuns to provide such services in Salesian houses, Don Bosco made

⁴⁵ But from Turin Don Bosco was already sending "bags of clothes for mending": testimony of Mother Petronilla Mazzarello. See Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello*, p. 179.

much of the fact that they were doing the same things in seminaries under the authority of bishops.⁴⁶

His talks to his men about the sisters (almost all of whom were quite young) were cautionary for the most part. He continually reminded them of the disciplinary norms promulgated by General Chapter II of the Salesians in 1880, which were partially echoed in the corresponding General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in 1886.⁴⁷ These norms were minute and concrete. The only connection between the Sisters' house and the Salesians' quarters was a carousel device called a *ruota* which allowed food, laundry, and other items to pass from one room to another without communication of persons on either side. Only the Directress had permission to communicate with strangers or with the Salesian Director, and this was to be done in the parlor.

To confessors Don Bosco recommended brevity.⁴⁸ All his men were urged not to try to "win the favor of any member of the opposite sex" by jokes, kidding, or any other means. In dealing with material matters, men and women religious were not to be alone on a one-to-one basis. They were to see to it that they were attended or at least seen by other people: "Numquam solus cum sola loquatur."⁴⁹

One gets the impression that Don Bosco was deeply influenced here by what he had read in Foresti and other spiritual books of the Tridentine era during his seminary years. Still with him were the admonitions of St. Charles Borromeo, the figure of Louis Comollo, and the sense of human frailty common to the outlook of such people. But we must not forget that Don Bosco was also influenced by the anticlerical press of his own day, which had inherited the mantle of the Enlightenment press, its tone, and its tendency to make malevolent insinuations about churchmen.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ To Cardinal Ferrieri, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, August 3, 1879: MB 14:223.

⁴⁷ *Deliberazioni del secondo cap. gen. della Pia Soc. Salesiana*, Distinzione I. Regolamenti speciali, VI Direz. generale delle Suore, Turin, 1882, p. 26 f. *Deliberazioni del secondo capitolo gen. delle Figlie di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice*, Distinzione 3. Moralità e pietà, Turin, 1887, pp. 62-76.

⁴⁸ *Deliberazioni del secondo cap. gen. della Pia Soc. Salesiana*, art. 11, p. 27. G. Costamagna, *Conferenze alle Figlie di Don Bosco*, Valparaiso, 1900, p. 39.

⁴⁹ MB 17:269.

⁵⁰ See footnote 2 of Chapter IX. In Turin the flames of anticlericalism were fed

6. Don Bosco and the religious formation of the nuns

Don Bosco did not hesitate to voice his own positive evaluation of the nuns, their work, their attitudes, and the bright future he saw for them. He knew of their docility, which had been put to the test by Father Pestarino in the transformation of the Mornese group. He certainly relied heavily on their nature as women, whose security was largely rooted in the guidance of Don Bosco. In the eyes of these religious women, he was a man invested with a halo of sanctity and special divine assistance. But Don Bosco did not count heavily on such sentiments to win their obedience. He preferred to rely on their simplicity and industriousness, traits of the peasant stock in Piedmont from which most of them came. In Mornese, as in other rural areas, the domestic round of activity was pretty much that of one big family. To his nuns, who came from that sort of milieu, he spoke with complete openness and frankness. They would approach him gaily to kiss his hand, as they had seen the boys do at Valdocco. Don Bosco let them do it, but then he used the occasion to say: "Now they kiss Don Bosco's hand. Later, if the practice becomes general, as is likely, there could be serious repercussions."⁵¹

Don Bosco's attitude and approach, which he inculcated in his Salesians, had an impact on the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as well. Their native adolescent candor was modulated by his tactful behavior toward them. There was always a smile, sometimes even a slight hint of embarrassment. The Mornese women were used to the ingenuous and boisterous gaiety of the countryside, where social forms were not much heeded. On the eve of their investiture Don Bosco would urge them to tone down their gleeful serenity, in line with their new obligations as nuns.⁵² The Mornese women were also used to encountering argument and opposition as they strove to carry out Father Pestarino's directives. So Don Bosco was not afraid to underline the sacrifices and misunderstandings they would have to endure in their chosen way of life. Obedience, docility, and observance of the Rule were the means that would lead them to eternal salvation and foster the growth of their Congregation.⁵³

by the epithet 'black sack' used in the *Gazzetta del popolo*, and by the insinuations and interpretations in *Il Fischietto*.

⁵¹ Costamagna, *Conferenze*, p. 52.

⁵² MB 10:616; BM 10:275.

⁵³ MB 10:617; BM 10:276.

In the atmosphere of enthusiasm evoked by the growing number of postulants and novices, Don Bosco warned them about being too easygoing or indulgent. What individual dispositions suggested a vocation to their institute? Don Bosco stressed a liking for pious practices and prompt, joyous obedience.⁵⁴

A significant document is his dream-allegory of December 31, 1881, which he recounted to the sisters of Nizza Monferrato. Their superiors, he said, must show discernment in selecting postulants, novices, and professed nuns. They must get rid of the unsound people lest they spoil the good ones. Like chestnuts, the spoiled ones could be detected in various ways. When the water starts to boil, the *empty* ones will float to the top. After boiling, the *spoiled* ones will reveal their contents if squeezed. Others still look good after cleaning, but if you look closely, you will see that they have a second layer of skin underneath the first layer. They are *double-faced*, and bitter inside.⁵⁵ Empty, spoiled, two-faced spirits were not made for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Put to the test, they should be pinpointed and eliminated.

Don Bosco readily used allegories, examples, and maxims in talking to his nuns. They reveal his uncommon ability to adapt to the psychology of the people he was addressing:

“Complain of neither cold nor heat. It’s not wrong to say occasionally ‘How hot it is!’ or ‘How cold it is!’ as long as it is not in a tone of complaint . . .”

“Let me teach you holy pride. Yes, holy pride! Each of you is to say, ‘I want to be the best of all’, but don’t believe that you are so. With all goodwill, say, ‘I will never lower myself by committing sin. I want to die working!’ Do you understand? Let each of you strive to be the best of all by avoiding every deliberate fault and by being happy to die while working for God’s glory!”

“Take care of little things! Look at a sack of rice! As long as the sack is in good condition, it will stand upright, but if it has a small hole, it will lose its grains little by little, and the hole will increase until the sack at last falls over . . . So with us. If we are not careful in small things, we fall into bigger sins little by little.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello*, p. 146. See MB 10:611 f; BM 10:271.

⁵⁵ MB 15:364–366.

⁵⁶ MB 10:648; BM 10:293–94.

7. Don Bosco's nuns vis-à-vis the Holy See

One seeming anomaly in Don Bosco's life is the fact that he never asked, or even resolved to ask, Rome's approval of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. This is all the more disconcerting when we consider his general attitude and outlook. Here was a man who placed great emphasis on the person of the pope and the papal prerogatives then being asserted by Catholics. In his introduction to the Constitutions of the Salesian Society, Don Bosco urged his sons to delight in the fact that they now enjoy a guarantee of quasi-infallibility. They could be sure they were working for the Church in accordance with God's salvific designs. And as we saw earlier, Father Chiala regarded their missionary expansion as a beneficial result of papal approval.

Such was not the case when Don Bosco turned his attention to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He was satisfied with episcopal approval from Bishop Sciandra of Acqui and sought no further decision from Rome, even though he was urged to do so by friends and the guardians of ecclesiastical discipline. In order to safeguard the shape and structure of the Salesian Society as he had envisioned it, Don Bosco did everything he could to free it from episcopal pressures in Turin. Yet at the same time, and for very similar reasons or feelings, he avoided submitting himself to Rome insofar as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was concerned. For his Salesians he would appeal to Rome for privileges and exemptions from episcopal authority; but in the case of his nuns he would ask the Holy See to trust the bishops.

He presented the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to Rome for the first time in an 1874 report on the Salesian Society. The Society, he noted, had an "appendix in Mornese." It was a house of Mary Help of Christians with religious women approved by the bishop of Acqui. Its aim was "to do for poor girls what the Salesians were doing for boys."⁵⁷

As Don Bosco later recounted, the cardinals examining the Salesian Constitutions noted the fact, questioned the founder, got verbal explanations, and then decided that "the matter would be examined more carefully when their Constitutions were presented for appropriate approval by the Holy See."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Riassunto della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales nel 23 febbraio 1874 in . . . Torinese sopra l'approvazione delle Costituzioni della Società Salesiana . . .*, Rome, 1874, p. 48; MB 14:227.

⁵⁸ To Cardinal Ferrieri, Turin, January 12, 1880; MB 14:227.

He next wrote of the sisters in his 1879 *Exposition to the Holy See*, indicating facts about the twenty-one communities they now had in Europe and America. "Thanks to the goodness of God," the lowly institute had seen great growth in a short period of time.⁵⁹ He added that "the houses inhabited by the sisters all belonged to the Congregation, but were directed by a Salesian."⁶⁰

This state of affairs surprised the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. They asked for a clearer explanation of the exact juridical structure of the institute. Were the sisters subject to a superior general? Or was the institute "wholly independent of the Salesian Institute, as it should be"?⁶¹ Don Bosco must have realized that he would never be able to win from Rome the concessions that he had gotten from Bishop Sciandra and other bishops. Offering further explanations to Rome, he tried to evade certain questions by pointing out that everything had been arranged in accordance with the already approved Constitutions, subject to episcopal control and consent. Several points seemed particularly crucial to Rome. The nuns were juridically dependent on, and obedient to, the superior of a male institute. There was the matter of his moral influence on them, their economic dependence, and the use of the nuns in male institutions for cooking and housekeeping work.

Don Bosco pointed out that "a good number of bishops had already approved this female institute. Now was the time of practical experimentation, to see what modifications should be introduced before submitting to the Holy See for appropriate approbation." To show his own goodwill, Don Bosco included a copy of the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, so that Rome could see that adequate norms covered all the issues about which Rome was worried.⁶²

In 1881 Leonori, his defending attorney before the Roman Congregations, asked Don Bosco to proceed with the process of approval. Don Bosco hedged, indicating that he did not yet want to approach Rome on the matter. Certainly his basic attitude toward the Holy See had not

⁵⁹ *Esposizione all S. Sede dello stato morale e materiale della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales nel marzo del 1879*, S. Pier d'Arena, tip. Salesiana, 1879, p. 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16. Don Bosco does not indicate whether the congregation mentioned here is the Salesian Society, or the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

⁶¹ MB 14:222.

⁶² MB 14:222, 227 f.

changed.⁶³ But we cannot say for sure what motives were operative because he does not indicate them specifically in his writings. He simply asks for indulgence or understanding, since he is working in a calamitous time; or else he appeals to the authority of those bishops who have already given their approval to the institute and thus guarantee its validity.

Perhaps he was thinking of the wholly docile and modest members of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, convinced that their precious work would be fruitful only if guided and channeled by real-life possibilities. Mere support was not enough. They would have to be nurtured and trained in a common spirit and thus prepared for the educational work that was new to most of them. Perhaps he was thinking of Sister Clarac, still caught between the hammer and the anvil. Her own determination was to create an autonomous religious family, but pressure was being put on her by Archbishop Gastaldi, the Vincentians, and the Sisters of Charity. Sister Clarac had been able to take that attitude because the works on Via S. Pio V were largely in her name. Did Don Bosco fear that something similar might happen to his docile, humble Daughters of Mary Help of Christians?

These are questions for which there are no answers. Perhaps they never even arose in Don Bosco's mind, and fade into insignificance before the more obvious facts.

Worth noting are his remarks about the pressure being put on him from Rome: "I cannot hide my bitter distress at not being able to make myself understood. I labor, and I want all Salesians to labor, for the Church to the very last breath. I don't ask for material aid. I only ask for that measure of indulgence and charity that is compatible with church authority."⁶⁴ In other words, Don Bosco seemed to be saying: let me go about my work, look at the results, see how everything is progressing nicely to the benefit of the Church. Here again he is the practical man who has difficulty in spelling out the motives behind his way of acting, or who does not like to do so because he fears some sort of damage. He expects that others, like himself, will be persuaded by the facts.

This explains why Don Bosco kept stressing works and concrete results: the growing number of nuns in his institute and their houses. In 1874 he wrote that there were forty nuns in one house. In 1879 he wrote that there were twenty-one houses and more than three hundred nuns.

⁶³ MB 15:352.

⁶⁴ MB 14:229.

Then, forgetting what he wrote in 1874, he adds to the hyperbole by noting that in 1874 the number of nuns was "between ten and fifteen."⁶⁵ His optimistic handling of numbers is not meant for publicity purposes alone. It is as if he were telling Rome: the Lord is blessing us, let us carry on. Don Bosco's attitude is that of a man working for the Church: "Whenever obstacles are put in our way, I react by opening a new house."⁶⁶

Don Bosco did not like to go into systematic discussions. He stated his own insights, preferring to confirm them with facts and deeds. When he complained about not being understood, he did not seem to notice, or care to point out, that he himself was partially responsible; that part of the problem was due to his own inclination not to disclose too much about his plans and projects when they were in the making.

The difference between him and Rome seems to have been mainly a difference in the way of looking at things. Don Bosco was concerned with facts; Rome was concerned with legalities. Don Bosco was a person who tended to adapt to the concrete situation; Rome was inclined to channel the specific situation into the larger framework of the existing juridical order. In the last analysis Don Bosco's attitude was not that of someone criticizing his superior and appealing from a badly informed Roman Congregation to a better informed one. His was not the spirit of a rebel who rightly or wrongly regards a certain value as universal and inalterable. His was the concern of a person fearing that his superior might issue an ill-timed order. In his efforts to win considerate attention and appreciation from Rome, Don Bosco manifested a sincere and profound ecclesial sensibility. It is obvious in his assertion that he wanted to work "for the Church to the last breath."⁶⁷

At the time there was a strong centralizing tendency in Rome, intensified by the definitions of Vatican I and by the concern to put the Catholic forces in better order.⁶⁸ Yet it did not come down on him with a heavy hand. When Mother Daghero, the second superior general of

⁶⁵ *Esposizione all S. Sede*, p. 16.

⁶⁶ MB 14:229.

⁶⁷ Expressions that can be found in the so-called 'spiritual testament' (MB 17:272) and in every petition to the pope.

⁶⁸ See, for example, G. Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98*, Part 1, Chapter 6 (Centralism and Autonomy in the Catholic Movement), Florence, 1961⁴, pp. 152-161.

the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, had an audience with Leo XIII, he expressed interest in the institute and asked her how many houses had been opened. Whether by deliberate intention or out of mere curiosity, his behavior indicated a desire to enter into the mentality of Don Bosco.⁶⁹ He then asked Don Bosco personally to undertake construction of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome. Don Bosco undoubtedly weighed the heavy responsibilities of the undertaking, but he agreed to do it. His love for the pope was surely a factor. But it would also be credited to his account in the balance sheet at Rome, offsetting his own debits and requests: e.g., the privileges granted to the Salesian Society and an indulgent attitude toward the *de facto* situation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

This may also explain why Don Bosco, in his talks to the nuns about their Rule, never offered the kind of argument that abounds in his talks to the Salesian men about their Rule. Fidelity to the Rules, he told the Salesians, was also fidelity to the Vicar of Christ, and hence to Christ himself. His talks to the nuns concentrate on the Rules themselves and stop there. Their rules must be observed to preclude abuses that would undermine the fragile equilibrium of the institute as he had deliberately constructed it. Observance of the Rules would mollify those who looked with a worried eye at what was going on in the houses of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In the spirituality of the individual nun and the group, observance of the rule meant, at bottom, fidelity to Jesus Christ. Each must strive to be his True Bride, in the sense that St. Alphonsus had used the term in his noted work that was familiar reading for them.

⁶⁹ MB 15:363.

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(d). *Positio* for the beatification and canonization of Mother Mary Mazzarello (Turin, Acqui, Rome: diocesan chanceries, archives of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; Sacred Congregation for Religious; Sacred Congregation for Rites).

II. Secondary Sources and Related Reading

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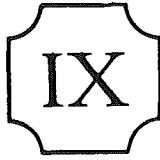
Also useful are Lemoine, *Le droit des religieux*, and other works on the Salesian Society cited in Chapter VI.

III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

Ferdinand Maccono's biography of Mary Mazzarello is now available in English: F. Maccono, *Saint Mary D. Mazzarello*, 2 vols., Haledon, NJ: Salesian Sisters, 1980. So is the *Cronistoria* cited in section I above: Sister Giselda Capetti (ed.), *Cronistoria*, 5 vols., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1981.

For the beginnings of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians there is much informative material in the English *Biographical Memoirs*. See BM 9:289–294, BM 10:246–297, BM 11:335–347, BM 12:202–214.

For a broader treatment of the Salesian Sisters and their work, readers may again consult chapters in the work by Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982. Chapter 14: "Mary Mazzarello: 1837–1881," pp. 150–161. Chapter 15: "The Salesian Sisters Until the Death of Don Bosco," pp. 162–174. Chapter 28: "The Salesian Sisters after 1888," pp. 332–344.



THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS

1. United action: the main objective of Italian Catholics after 1870

The first Italian Catholic Congress was held in Venice in 1874 (June 12–16). The event was widely heralded by the press, both hostile and favorable, which sensed its great importance. Catholics were now beginning to move beyond localism and regionalism, just as the ruling liberal class sought to do in the legislature, the bureaucracy, the school system, and political life after national unity had been achieved.¹

Catholics were standing up and taking cognizance of their strength. They were the 'real state' as opposed to the 'legal state'. They were the ninety-nine percent of the population who had withdrawn from political life in order to organize under the aegis of liberty, a liberty that the government had promised to respect. Stephen Iacini, the Catholic delegate from Terni who had resigned in 1870, saw something revolutionary in this attitude of 'real Italy'. To him it augured the early demise of the Italian state, which would suffer a fatal blow and give way to a reviving Christian society. For the liberal government it could only be a destructive force.²

¹ See footnote 107 of Chapter VI.

² The distinction between real Italy and legal Italy was made by S. Iacini in his work, *Sulle condizioni della cosa pubblica in Italia dopo il 1866. Lettera agli elettori di Terni del loro deputato dimissionario*, Florence, 1870. Extracts are quoted in *l'Unità Cattolica*, Friday, July 3, 1874, n. 153: "One can conclude that in Italy, in fact, no more than 250,000 people actually participate in the system of government—i.e., less than one percent of the population." In 1893 *L'Italia reale* became the name of the Catholic newspaper in Turin that succeeded *Unità Cattolica*. Thus it

Many things were expected from the Congress. Joseph Sacchetti of Padua, editor of the *Veneto cattolico*, had this to say at one of the sessions: "For me, gentlemen, the main salutary effect is that we are finally bringing to an end the era of illusions and opening the era of Catholic activism fused with the Christian faith."³

It was time to unmask and abandon those who "call themselves liberal Catholics, in general and largely improper terms, because they want to remain Catholics while favoring liberalism within limits that are hard to define." They were the people, added Father Henry Massara, editor of Milan's *Osservatore cattolico*, "who saw the luxuriant crop growing in the field, came in, and sowed the chaff that either destroyed the harvest or stunted its growth."⁴

Now it was no longer possible to indulge in illusions or evade the issue. "The seventy propositions of the Syllabus condemn any reconciliation between Catholicism and the revolution. Doesn't that also imply condemnation of these liberal Catholics?" Catholic liberalism was to be considered "the real heresy of our day."⁵

It was necessary to disenchant those who had espoused that liberalism in various ways and hence favored the revolution: rich gentlemen flitting between the Church and the Masonic Lodge; timid men "locking themselves up in their little office" to read the Catholic newspaper with

was the paper received and read at Valdocco, and various yearly issues are stored there. "It upheld the thesis of clericalism in its harshest and most aggressive form, while at the same time there were allusions to the existence of large masses of people who were politically undifferentiated and unspecified who had not joined the institutional setup or voted in the elections" (Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98*, Part 1, Chapter 5, Florence, 1961⁴, p. 130).

³ *Primo congresso cattolico italiano tenutosi in Venezia dal 12 al 16 giugno*, vol. 1. Atti, Bologna, 1874, p. 55. On Sacchetti (1843–1906) see G. de Rosa, *Giuseppe S. e l'Opera dei Congressi*, Rome, 1957.

⁴ *Primo congresso*, p. 78. We must not overlook the uncertainty and need for caution when we hear Massari using the term 'liberal Catholic'. It is a term still indispensable today for orienting ourselves. As Passerin points out, we are "forced to use it for nineteenth-century Italy, after having applied it with some uneasiness to French culture" (review of Jemolo's *Scritti vari di storia religiosa e civile* in the *Riv. di st. d. Chiesa in Italia*, 20 [1966], p. 500 f.). It is not always easy to define what was meant by the designation 'liberal Catholic', either by those who claimed to be such or by those who opposed them. It is even harder to define currents or circles of thought.

⁵ *Primo congresso*, p. 79 f.

"great complacency," but discreetly associated with it under the name of porter or waiter because they were afraid to be fingered as die-hard reactionaries or Jesuits; naïve men, "who did not want to stand alone and isolated with Catholics and so joined perfectly revolutionary groups and organizations." These naïve people were giving contributions to mutual-aid societies and philanthropic works "manifestly established to persuade the masses that priests were not the ones practicing charity," and thus they were backing the "work of the revolution" with the potent support of money.⁶

It was also necessary for Catholics to rouse themselves from quietism, said Joseph Sacchetti:

Up to now we Catholics have believed, fervently believed, prayed, and hoped, blindly. But what have we done? What have we done in all these years of revolution? Has our action matched our faith? Have our deeds kept pace with our prayers? . . .

The triumph of the revolution hit us so unexpectedly and forcefully that we were caught at a serious disadvantage: disunited, divided, unprepared for battle, defenseless. The awareness of our weakness, coupled with the sorry spectacle of implacably vicious impiety, succeeded in throwing us into a state of consternation . . . We had put all our hope in God, trusted in Him so completely, that we thought action of our own was superfluous, useless, inopportune . . . We deceived ourselves to the point of foreseeing the year, the day, and the hour when a rousing miracle would effect the victory of Catholicism over the forces of its enemy. An extraordinary function, a solemn and happy anniversary, an unexpected event, sometimes even an alleged prophecy or an enormous crime unexpectedly perpetrated by the revolution: these things were often enough to make us set the date of its ultimate downfall with feelings of incredible certainty.⁷

For a good fifteen years Catholics had been living on abstractions and illusions. Even around 1867, the anniversary of St. Peter's martyr-

⁶ Ibid., p. 80. Catholic messianism was matched by the anticlerical messianism of societies of free-thinkers. Their ambitious and optimistic programs were based on the conviction that "the transformation of humanity's moral life was imminent and inevitable, and they dedicated themselves to the cult of science and progress on the ruins of religious belief" (Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana*, Bari, 1962², p. 234 f.

⁷ *Primo congresso*, pp. 55-57.

dom, Catholics had been content to do little more than make allusions to the new Nero who had cast Peter's successor into prison. The new Peter might succumb, they had said, but not his faith, not the Church, because God was on the watch and his promises were certainties: *non prevalebunt* ('they will not prevail')!⁸ But now was the time for Catholics to join action to their hopes, and to coordinate the disparate efforts they had undertaken so far.

Looking back, Catholics could see what had been done. They had invigorated cultic worship, giving new impetus to religious rites and participation at the Eucharistic banquet. They had organized Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Everywhere they had made efforts to stem the penetration of revolutionary ideas into various strata of society. They had provided care for children through catechism lessons, festive oratories, and charitable institutions. They had organized workshops and mutual-aid societies for the working classes. They had opened savings banks. They had looked out for families, promoting their consecration to the Holy Family of Nazareth. They had provided assistance to the poor, the sick, the dying, and female domestic servants.

Everywhere in Italy—as in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany—there had been a fresh flood of efforts to revitalize the Christian community. The problem of organizing the popular press and its distribution on the local level was being faced. In Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Venice, Rome, and Naples, Catholic periodicals and pamphlets existed alongside aggressive dailies. Peter's Pence had been created to support the pope, who had been despoiled by the Italian government. Efforts were being made to redeem poor clerics from military conscription. Generous-hearted priests and lay people were helping out with catechetical instruction on the parish level. Efforts were being made to keep Sundays and holydays holy. Tabernacle societies were looking out for church decorum. And there were organized efforts to care for the deaf, the mute, and the congenitally blind.

⁸ This is the thrust of the volume entitled *L'episcopato e la Rivoluzione in Italia ossia Atti collettivi dei vescovi italiani preceduti da quelli del Sommo Pontefice Pio IX contro le leggi e i fatti della Rivoluzione offerti a San Pietro in occasione del diciottesimo Centenario del glorioso suo martirio*, Mondovì, 1867, published under the auspices of Bishop Ghilardi. For his part, DB reissued his *Life of St. Peter* (1856, LC) under the title, *Il centenario di S. Pietro apostolo . . .* (1867, LC), without any allusions to contemporary events. There are a few allusions to the sufferings of the pope and the victories of the faith in his almanac for 1868, *Il Galantuomo*, pp. 6,8.

Now there was a need to coordinate those generous and promising efforts. In unity there was greater strength: *vis unita fortior!* Only if they were united could Catholics hope to regain their ground and win victory over the revolution.

2. *From the proposal for a Christian Union and Salesian externs to the Union of Salesian Cooperators*

These sentiments merely echoed what many people felt in their hearts, and they certainly were on Don Bosco's mind when he returned to Turin in 1874 with his Constitutions approved. His first appeal for a coalition of laymen, in fact, was entitled 'Christian Union':

Feeble forces, when united, become stronger. *Vis unita fortior* . . . A single strand may be easily broken, but several such strands twined together form a strong cord which is very difficult to break. *Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur* [A triple-plaited cord is hard to break]. That is what people of the world do in order to succeed in business enterprises. We Christians must act likewise. Like the first Christians, we must stand united as a single heart and soul in order to succeed in the important venture of achieving eternal salvation. This is the objective of the Salesian Association. (BM 10:565)

This was not a general appeal to anyone and everyone, however. Don Bosco had returned from Rome with Salesian externs ruled out of the religious congregation that had won Rome's approval. According to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the external affiliates were absolutely not to appear in the Constitutions of a congregation living simple vows and a common life. By invoking the third orders, Don Bosco had furnished a weapon to those who rejected the right of religious-in-the-world to exist in the Salesian Congregation. For, in fact, third orders were not mentioned in the Rules of the first orders; they had their own separate Rules. Still less could Rome be pleased to hear from Don Bosco that he granted affiliation to lay benefactors or collaborators for meritorious service.⁹

Thus Don Bosco returned to Turin with the idea of the Salesian extern in his mind, perhaps not realizing that he was grouping together three different categories of people: benefactors, collaborators, and ter-

⁹ See Chapter VI, footnotes 84–87.

tiaries. The latter idea was somewhat akin to Frassinetti's notion of the religious in the world: a person bound by vows, given novitiate training, publicly and formally committed to the practice of Christian perfection, and also to apostolic works when the times and new necessities required them.¹⁰ There is certainly a hint of nostalgia for the cloister and its appeal when he writes the following about the purpose of his Salesian Association (or Christian Union)¹¹:

The purpose of this association is to offer to people living in the world a way of life somewhat similar to the religious life, so that they may at least partially enjoy the peace which is vainly sought in the world. Many would willingly withdraw into a monastery but cannot do so because of age, health, or state of life; very many others lack the opportunity or call and have no chance at all. Still, even in the midst of their usual occupations, within their own family circle, they can lead a life which is helpful to their fellowmen and to themselves, almost as though they lived in a religious community.¹²

When he refers to "the peace which is vainly sought in the world," we hear echoes of the advantages of the religious state he was promoting in conferences to his Salesians and in the introduction to their rules.¹³ We can see his idea of a third order, too: "For this reason the Salesian Association may be regarded as one of the ancient third orders, with this difference: those third orders aimed at Christian perfection through pious exercises, whereas this association has as its main purpose the active

¹⁰ For the reasons offered here, I feel obliged to diverge from the general view that the organization of the Cooperators grew out of a single, unitary idea. It seems to me that this thesis is due to the fact that DB himself was fond of likening his Union of Cooperators to third orders. Furthermore, DB's biographers have shown little interest in considering the milieu outside of that documented by the Salesian Archive at Valdocco.

¹¹ Earlier designations were: Union of St. Francis de Sales, Associates of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. See AS 133 Cooperatori, reproduced in MB 10:1309 f. See BM 10:565 f.

¹² [Bosco], *Unione Cristiana*, Turin: Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, 1874, p. 1 f; reproduced in MB 10:1315, derived from the manuscript published in MB 10:1310; see BM 10:565.

¹³ *Unione Cristiana*, p. 2. Obviously some formulas from the Rules of the Salesian Society (concern for abandoned youth and vocations . . .) were used by DB in his Rules for the Associates of the congregation.

life."¹⁴ He is thinking of benefactors when he writes that "voluntary contributions to sustain the association's activities are gratefully accepted,"¹⁵ and of collaborators when he recalls that he has never lacked the help of priests and lay people since 1841.¹⁶

Other ideas were lying in wait to fuse with the above ones and thus find their way into Don Bosco's plan for his Salesian Cooperators. First was the Association of Devout People Dedicated to Mary Help of Christians (*Associazione dei devoti di Maria Ausiliatrice*), which he founded in 1869. It was partially inspired by a similar Turin confraternity that had been established in the previous century: *Veneranda confraternita sotto il titolo della V.B. Ausiliatrice canonicamente eretta nella chiesa parrocchiale di S. Francesco da Paola*.¹⁷ Its aim was to enhance and promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians, a devotion that centered around the church Don Bosco had managed to erect.¹⁸ Five years later, in 1874, Don Bosco raided the statutes of the *Associazione dei devoti*, incorporating as much of their material as he could into his new association. Even its name may have influenced him in titling his new organization, 'Associate Members of the Congregation of St. Francis De Sales'.¹⁹

The Devout Associates of Mary Help of Christians were supposed to help "spread good books, pictures, medals, leaflets," and "to promote decorum and devotion in novenas, feasts, and solemn rites."²⁰ In like manner, Salesian associates were to "promote catechetical instructions, novenas, triduum, spiritual retreats and . . . spread good books, leaflets,

¹⁴ *Unione Cristiana*, p. 2. See BM 10:565.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5 (Special obligations). See BM 10:566.

¹⁶ "Storia dei Cooperatori salesiani," in *Bibliofilo cattolico o Bollettino salesiano mensile*, 3 (September 1877), p. 1. This seems to have been composed by the editor, Father Bonetti, but it was clearly inspired by DB and contained many of his recollections.

¹⁷ It was established in 1798. The *Statuti e pratiche devote della Veneranda Confraternita* were reprinted more than once by various people, including Don Bosco's friend, Hyacinth Marietti (1856).

¹⁸ P. Brocardo, "San Giovanni Bosco apostolo del titolo Auxilium Christianorum," in *Salesianum*, 12 (1950), pp. 519-574.

¹⁹ See Bosco, *Associazione de' Divoti di Maria Ausiliatrice canonicamente eretta nella chiesa a Lei dedicata in Torino*, Turin, 1868 (LC), and *Associati alla Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales* (AS 133 Cooperators, autograph manuscript of DB, published in MB 10:1310-1314; see BM 10:560 f.).

²⁰ *Associazione de' Divoti*, p. 48 f.

and similar publications where they are most needed.”²¹ Enrollment of the devout associates of Mary Help of Christians was to be reported to the Turin Church: “to the director of the Church, who is also the director of the pious association” [i.e., Don Bosco].²² In like manner, every Salesian associate was to “give his full name and address, place of birth, and state of life to the director of the association, who is also the rector of the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.”²³

There were other stimuli as well. In Genoa, Bologna, Venice, and elsewhere—mainly in France and Belgium—there was the Association of St. Francis de Sales for the defense and preservation of the faith. It operated from diocesan centers that coordinated and promoted the work of mutually autonomous organizations in parishes or religious institutes: societies, catechism lessons, assistance to the poor, and so forth. In France the great organizer and promoter was Bishop Gaston de Ségur, who was well known to Don Bosco for his writings on apologetics and frequent Communion.²⁴ In 1865 it was established in Genoa by Archbishop Andrew Charvaz, who was originally from Savoy.²⁵ The Italian Catholic Congress of 1874 expressed the hope that the association would be introduced into every diocese.²⁶

²¹ MB 10:1312; see BM 10:562.

²² *Associazione de' Divoti*, p. 54.

²³ MB 10:1313; see BM 10:563.

²⁴ Louis de Ségur, *Memorie e narrazione d'un fratello . . .*, Turin, 1914, pp. 184–191. In 1861, DB's *Catholic Readings* hosted G. de Ségur's *La Chiesa*; in 1872, his *La santissima Comunione*; and in 1878, his *Ogni otto giorni*, which went through several editions.

²⁵ Archbishop Charvaz merged it with another group, the *Pia Associazione genovese di N.S. Immacolata per l'incremento e la conservazione della Cattolica Fede*, which had begun in 1853 under the vigorous sponsorship of Marquis Brignole Sale. According to Monsignor Vincent Persoglio, it was the Marquis who inspired Bishop Gaston de Ségur and his friends in France: see *Associazione cattolica di S. Francesco di Sales . . . , relazione letta dal direttore diocesano mons. Vincenzo Persoglio . . .*, Genoa, 1884, pp. 11–13. The Genoa initiative, in turn, was inspired by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which had met with much approval and response in Italy. De Ségur writes Pius IX also had the idea of organizing “in Catholic lands a great association of faith, prayer, and charity that serve . . . to propagate one's inner faith” (*Memorie e narrazione*, p. 185). On the Venice Association see De Rosa, *Storia di movimento cattolico in Italia*, I, 89–91.

²⁶ *Primo congresso*, pp. 84, 89, 296.

There are many surprising resemblances between the statutes of the Genoa Association and those drawn up by Don Bosco. The associates are made up of groups of ten headed by a decurion. Ten decurions have a leader called a centurion (a prefect, by Don Bosco). The spiritual benefits were largely derived from the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis (whereas Don Bosco would see to it that the benefits of third orders were granted).²⁷ The activities directed by the diocesan council were practically everything Don Bosco would have wished:

1. Oratories for Christian doctrine.
2. Concern for girls whose faith or morals are endangered, the task being entrusted to a commission of pious women [by Don Bosco, to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and female Cooperators].
3. The *Religious Week* is the organ of the association [matched by Don Bosco's *Salesian Bulletin*].
4. The distribution of good books, mostly for free, to various classes of people. [Don Bosco's *Libreria Salesiana* was also designed to provide reading series for various categories of people: library of edifying reading, library for working-class people, etc.]
5. Circulating libraries.
6. Novena and Feast of St. Francis de Sales.
7. Spiritual exercises for men in religious houses in preparation for

²⁷ *Associazione Cattolica di S. Francesco di Sales per la difesa e conservazione della fede nell'archidiocesi di Genova*, Genoa, 1882 (statutes already drawn up in 1865), p. 14 f: "In each parish the association should have a number of male and female collectors charged with the task of enrolling the faithful. These /collectors/ will be called decurions when they have enrolled ten people, centurions when they have one hundred people enrolled . . . At the end of each year (and in Genoa it is usually the evening of the feast of St. Francis de Sales, which for good reasons has been shifted to the first Sunday after January 29), in a general, public meeting, the diocesan director will read a report of the work of the association during the previous year, and the secretary and treasurer will report how many joined that year and how money was spent."

At the point where DB had shifted from the title of Associates to Christian Union, he set up something very similar: "In villages or towns with no Salesian house but with at least ten associate members, a leader will be appointed with the title of decurion. Then decurions may also have a leader whose title will be prefect of the association. . . . At the end of each year, the superior shall advise members on priorities for the coming year . . ." (BM 10:566).

the fulfillment of their Easter duty. [Don Bosco would promote spiritual exercises for female teachers and young women.]

8. Daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament . . .²⁸

In every way possible, writes Don Bosco, his Cooperators were to undertake works on behalf of endangered youth: i.e., oratories, catechism lessons, prayers, promotion of priestly vocations, printed works. In short, they were to be active collaborators in the cause of good.²⁹

In the end, however, everything was to be under the direction of the rector major of the Salesians: "The superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of this association . . . Decurions and prefects shall maintain contact with their respective teams, but members may always consult their superior directly . . . At the end of each year, the superior shall advise members on priorities for the coming year."³⁰

In his first draft of the proposed Christian Union, Don Bosco did not mention bishops. He was indeed picturing a Salesian Association that would coordinate Catholic initiatives for youth on a parish basis, and the bylaws state that the decurion is to be the local pastor or a priest chosen by him. In so doing, however, Don Bosco does not seem to have noticed the juridical and pastoral difficulties inherent in an organization that would create an authority distinct from that of the local ordinary but exercised over persons and activities falling within the latter's jurisdiction.

On the one hand Don Bosco thought it worthwhile to put forth the Salesian Society as a 'bond of union' for worthwhile efforts along their own specific lines.³¹ But at the same time he realized that work among young people would be impossible if it were not incorporated into the territorial structures of the Church—unless it were handled by the female

²⁸ *Associazione Cattolica di S. Francesco di Sales*, p. 16 f.

²⁹ See the manuscripts of the Associates and of the Christian Union in AS 133 Cooperators; the printed copy of *Unione Cristiana*, Oratory of St. Francis de Sales Press, 1874; and BM 10:558–568.

³⁰ *Unione Cristiana*, "Costituzione e governo," p. 3 f; see BM 10:566.

³¹ Thesis enunciated at the point where DB finally accepted the term 'Salesian Cooperator'. *Cooperatori Salesiani ossia un modo pratico per giovare al buon costume ed alla civile società*, Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1876, p. 4: "Having received the definitive approval of the Church, this Congregation can serve as a secure and stable bond for the Salesian Cooperators" (relevant manuscript in AS 133 Cooperators).

Salesians, whose institute was set up with the approval of diocesan ordinaries.

We can readily detect Don Bosco's discomfort: a practical man of action trying to theorize about his project and forced to express his aims in ponderous juridical laws. On the one hand, he asserted, the Cooperators were to be collaborators of the Salesians (who, for all their goodly number, could not meet the day-to-day demands made on them); but on the other hand they were to consider themselves collaborators of the bishops and parish priests under whose direction they were to work³²:

The association is humbly entrusted to the benevolence and protection of the pope, bishops, and parish priests, on whom it will be *absolutely* dependent in all matters relating to religion.³³

We can see how his early project has shifted course, moving from the exclusive realm of the Salesian Society to that of the diocesan clergy. And the wrench is not completely healed by Don Bosco's humble appeal for their benevolence.

Other stimuli were at work to modify his original plan. The efforts of Italian Catholics to 'close ranks' seem to have inspired Don Bosco's first designation, 'Christian Union', and his use of a motto expressed the preceding year by Archbishop Gastaldi in a pastoral letter on worker societies: *vis unita fortior*.³⁴ This fighting slogan must have led Don Bosco, by association of ideas, to recall an expression that was already very much his own: "to combat the irreligious press with good press."³⁵

When he was thinking seriously about the Cooperators, however, this combative aspect does not seem to have been dominant or persistent. Don Bosco tended to avoid such entanglements, to appeal for sympathy,

³² DB says this himself: *Cooperatori Salesiani*, pp. 5-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁴ L. Gastaldi, *Lettere pastorali, commemorazioni funebri e panegirici*, pastoral letter of October 5, 1873, Turin, p. 267 f: "It is Christian charity that proves most completely the truth of the old adage, *Vis unita fortior* (united forces increase the strength of each). . . . This spirit of association has given solemn proof of its vitality from the very beginnings of the holy Catholic Church, which soon saw the rise of various groups dedicated to their own works of Christian charity." Compare this with the first paragraph of DB's *Unione Cristiana* (p. 1) and *Cooperatori Salesiani* (p. 3).

³⁵ See the heading 'Letture Cattoliche' (Catholic Readings) in *Indice MB*, p. 234.

and to lay a basis for joint efforts. In drawing up plans for the Cooperators, he stressed that the association had no political aims, that it was to be neutral. Rather than being exclusivist, it was designed to offer "one practical way of abetting good behavior and civil society." Pursuing this train of thought, Don Bosco eliminated the term 'religion' and used two sets of ideas: 'moral and civil education'; 'good behavior and civil society'.³⁶

Ultimately his own personal promptings, based on decades of experience as an educator and organizer and modified by new suggestions from his milieu after 1870, fused six formally distinct projects:

1. religious Salesians in the world
2. collaborators of the Salesians in their houses, helping out with catechism instruction and other activities
3. people in the world supporting Salesian works through prayer and contributions
4. associates for youth work and the promotion of the faith, working under bishops and parish priests
5. a confederation to combat anticlericals and Protestants, mainly through the press
6. a union to promote the moral and civil uplifting of youth.

These projects are clearly distinct, almost like planets looking for a sun around which to orbit. Circumstance and Don Bosco's own inclination brought them together in two areas whose interests were not always mutually compatible or even easily harmonized.

For planned, united action among the churches of Italy, what was needed was not the superior of a religious congregation but a national episcopal commission, or a general assembly of the clergy, as had been the case in France for many years. Or it might have been entrusted to the Catholic Congresses, whose efforts were aimed at eliminating competing projects and promoting parish and diocesan committees under the direction of a standing central committee. The work of the Cooperators had been partially inspired by the same motives. Adoption of structures

³⁶ *Cooperatori Salesiani*, La Congregazione Salesiana vincolo di unione, Turin, 1876, p. 5. For a more explicit exegesis see *Bibliofilo Cattolico*, 3 (August 1877), p. 1 f.

and aims similar to those of the Congresses and their committees laid the basis for a conflict that would somehow have to be resolved.³⁷

For philanthropic action on a pluralistic, worldwide scale, the desirable course would have been to study such organizations as the Rotary Club or the Lions Club; or perhaps even to set up a real 'Catholic Freemasonry', as Pius IX is supposed to have said to Don Bosco.³⁸

In short, there was a need to sit down at one's desk and think things out, to clarify and sift ideas, to envision the possibility of separate yet coordinated organizations. Don Bosco really needed the assistance of a theoretician, who might have helped him to see the intrinsic difficulties of a many-faceted organization that combined the features of a movement, a society, a third order, and a collection of well-wishers and benefactors who had made no deeper commitment.

That did not happen. There was no carefully organized elaboration of the project on the theoretical level. The further clarification of ideas and the hierarchical arrangement of activities would be left to the dialectics of concrete action and real-life events.³⁹

³⁷ This conflict surfaced rather clearly in Italy between 1940 and 1950 when the problem of coordinating lay forces in Italy around Catholic Action as a nucleus came to the fore. It was reflected within the Salesian Society insofar as the latter took up the problem of the relationship between Catholic Action and religious organizations that were part of the tradition of Don Bosco.

³⁸ MB 13:624. DB reportedly said this to Father Angelo Rigoli, parish priest of Somma Lombardo, in 1876: *Ceria, Annali*, 1, 224.

³⁹ DB actually paid a great deal of attention to this matter because he considered the Cooperators "a very important matter." His co-workers helped him as subordinates. For this reason, the organization of the Cooperators is one of the best examples of Don Bosco as a practical man working mainly on the basis of intuition and his extraordinary talents as organizer and adapter. In 1876 DB said: "I have been working at this for about two years. Now I shall write up the regulations and publish them before the end of the year. It will take about two years to consolidate this association. In the meantime I have been working on another project and shall perfect it during the next two years. Then once the Salesian Cooperators have been put on a firm basis we shall announce this plan also. It has to do with what I would call a Third Order of women, associated not with us but with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians" (BM 11:62).

As it turned out, women were admitted to the Cooperators and nothing more came of the Third Order of women.

3. *The ideas in action*

In the first ten years (1875–1885) Don Bosco operated differently with the Cooperators than he was doing with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He personally took on the task of spreading the idea of Salesian Cooperators and enrolling members. In Turin he encountered opposition from Archbishop Gastaldi, who was doing his best to organize Catholic initiatives under the direction of his own diocesan see and person. Don Bosco turned to well disposed bishops elsewhere, first in Albenga and then in Genoa.⁴⁰ Then he turned to Rome, as he had done in the case of the Salesian Society. He wanted the authoritative approval of the primal see, which would open the doors of every diocese to his Salesian Cooperators. Once the Salesian press in Sampierdarena was set up, he had the first Rule of his new association printed there. It was called the Salesian Cooperators. One reason for the name may have been his desire to distinguish it from the local Catholic Association of St. Francis de Sales.

Wherever he went to spread the good news of cooperation, he found sympathy, solidarity, and signs of approval. He personally gave seventy-nine conferences (twenty-eight of them in France). Everywhere he publicized the many initiatives of the Salesians and got contributions. He sent the *Salesian Bulletin* to people whether they asked for it or not. When there was some hope for a deeper commitment, he included the membership certificate of the Salesian Cooperator. The *Bulletin*, sent for free, made its way into the homes of the rich and the poor. It reached the Roncalli farmhouse in Sotto il Monte and the table of Henry, Count de Chambord (1820–1883), claimant to the French throne. Pius IX, Leo XIII, illustrious cardinals and bishops, distinguished writers and publicists such as Cesare Cantù, Anthony Stoppardi, the Hungarian Anthony

⁴⁰ *Cooperatori Salesiani ossia un modo pratico per giovare al buon costume e alla civile società*, Albenga: tip. vescovile, 1876, 34 pp; *Cooperatori Salesiani . . .*, S. Pier d'Arena-Turin-Nice-Buenos Aires, 1876 (approved by the diocesan chancery of Genoa but with the type fonts of Valdocco, something which irritated Archbishop Gastaldi), 1877²; *Coopérateurs Salésiens ou moyen pratique de se rendre utile à la société en favorisant les bonnes moeurs*, Turin: impr. et libr. Salésienne, 1876 (and on the cover: imprimerie et libr. Salésienne, S. Pierre d'Arène-Turin-Nice-Buenos Ayres). On the difficult relationship between DB and Archbishop Gastaldi see BM 11:66–72.

Lonkay, and the German John Mehler agreed to be counted as Cooperators. Rich people sent substantial contributions enabling Don Bosco to send the *Bulletin* to the poor and to increase its circulation to respectable figures. While Don Bosco was still alive, French and Spanish editions were added to the Italian one.⁴¹

It could be said that the *Bulletin*, the many mail circulars, and the biographies written by D'Espiney and Du Boys were crucial to the world's discovery of Don Bosco. Here was an extraordinary human being endowed with supernatural charisms, the Vincent de Paul of the nineteenth century. Up to 1874 the Salesians had been a regional congregation, operating primarily in Piedmont, Liguria, and a few other spots. They were not noticed by the first Italian Catholic Congress, whose speakers and patrons pointed to initiatives in Venice and Lombardy. But after 1874, and even more after 1880, the Salesians could justifiably compare themselves to the respectable religious orders of older vintage that were spread throughout the world and composed of male religious, female religious, and third orders.⁴² With ever increasing frequency young people were being recommended to Don Bosco by priests and lay people, pleas for Salesian houses in cities and countries were being made, and requests for enrollment in one of the three Salesian families were being received.⁴³

Don Bosco took note of what was going on. He was not afraid to undertake demanding and exhausting journeys of all sorts. In the last five years of his life especially, he dragged his exhausted body through the cities of Italy, where his sons filled in for him as lecturers. It was as if he no longer belonged to himself or this world. He was a living relic for Catholics, who could admire and venerate him as a man who effectively put his faith into action in a very difficult age. Don Bosco dragged himself before the eyes of people who wanted to glean the secret of success from him, to experience the contact with the divine they sensed in him, to

⁴¹ See the letters of Mehler and Cantù in *Bollettino Salesiano*, 9 (1885), p. 166; 12 (1888), p. 63. Note from Stoppani to DB in AS 126.2. Correspondence between DB and Lonkay in AS 123 (typed copy). Names of distinguished Cooperators can be found in Ceria, *I Cooperatori Salesiani. Un po' di storia*, Turin, 1952, pp. 54–56. Add: Marianna, Empress of Austria, mentioned in an unmailed letter of DB to Emperor Francis Joseph (AS 131.01), whose name is found in a list of deceased Cooperators in *Bulletin salésien*, 8 (1885), p. 36.

⁴² These comparisons and descriptions can be found even in the early books about DB cited in the General Introduction of this volume.

⁴³ Many such requests and proposals are collected in AS 381.

give their own little contribution so that they might feel themselves numbered among the glorious confessors of the faith. Wherever he went, the scene was the same: packed churches, thunderous applause, high enthusiasm. Everywhere he promoted the idea of Salesian cooperation, and people joined by the dozen and by the thousand.⁴⁴

When a push was made to organize oratories or catechism classes in parishes and dioceses, however, perplexity and touchiness surfaced. The organization seemed to be heavily dependent on Don Bosco and his directors of Salesian houses, hence a centrifugal force vis-à-vis diocesan organisms.

In this connection Don Bosco stoutly reaffirmed the notion of a bivalent association responding to two different centers of operation and interest. On February 16, 1884, he said to Father Lemoyne:

I put much thought into the matter of the Salesian Cooperators and how they were to be organized. Their real, direct purpose is not to assist the Salesians but to offer help to the Church, to bishops and parish priests, under the top management of the Salesians, for such charitable works as catechism instruction, the education of poor children, and so forth. Helping the Salesians is nothing but helping one of the many efforts to be found in the Catholic Church. It is true that we will appeal to them in our urgent needs, but they are instruments in the hands of the bishop . . . The Salesian Cooperators should not arouse envy because they belong to the diocese . . . All parish priests and their parishioners ought to be Cooperators.⁴⁵

But Don Bosco was still expressing the purpose of the Cooperators in general terms. He did not adequately clarify what was meant by 'the top management of the Salesians', or how exactly Salesians were to participate in parochial efforts. In what sense and for what kinds of work were the lay members of a religious association to be considered instruments of the bishop, to meet the 'urgent needs' of the Salesians and dioceses, when the Cooperators were neither Catholic nor even Christian?

In this latter area, in particular, it seems evident that Don Bosco did

⁴⁴ Here I need only refer readers to the reports of his trips to Nice, Milan, Rome, Marseilles, Paris, Barcelona, etc., which were drawn from newspaper notices and letters and published in the *Bollettino salesiano*.

⁴⁵ MB 17:25.

not face up to the problem of clarifying in theory how joint action between Catholics and non-Catholics might be possible. Even more to the point, he did not ponder how it might be possible to have an association with Protestants and Jews while he himself, on another front, was promoting Catholic resistance to Protestant proselytism.⁴⁶

In 1881 he sent a certificate of membership to the Milanese Jew, August Calabria. Earlier a registration form had been sent to another Jew named Lattes in Nice. They read the rules and took note of the papal approval, the indulgences that could be obtained, and the linkage with third orders. But they were not Catholics, so what were they to do? The problem was put politely to Don Bosco by August Calabria: "I am grateful for the trust you show me in doing me the honor of enrolling me among the Salesian Cooperators . . . But I must point out that I belong to the Mosaic religion, and that pretty much says it all."⁴⁷

In his reply Don Bosco stressed the peculiarity of "a Catholic priest proposing a charitable association to an Israelite!" He had no intention, however, of going into religious beliefs or juridically separate religious societies. He did not speak of Christ either. Instead he talked about charity and about God, putting himself on the same level as his addressee, who believed in an omnipotent God the Father: "God's charity has no limits. It does not exclude anyone, whatever their age, condition, or beliefs may be. Among our young people, who number about eighty thousand, we have had Jews and still do. Moreover, you tell me you belong to the Mosaic religion. We Catholics strictly follow the teaching of Moses and all the books that great prophet left us. We differ only in our interpretation of those writings."⁴⁸

With great candor Don Bosco, too, says it all, stressing a convergence of faith up to a certain point that is a sufficient and solid basis for universal charity and the possibility of mutual esteem and cooperation. Instead of overlooking points of disagreement, he notes them tactfully while emphasizing their subjective, existential aspects: i.e., differences of interpretation and religious conscience. His observations, he feels, are enough to justify the offer of charitable association. Such an offer had been found valid by Lattes, whom Don Bosco describes as "a Jew, but

⁴⁶ E.g., in Vallecrosia and in South America.

⁴⁷ Milan, November 29, 1881: AS 126.2; *Epistolario* 2247.

⁴⁸ DB to A. Calabria, Turin, December 4, 1881: AS 131.01; *Epistolario* 2247.

one of our most fervent Cooperators." His offer of cooperation is grounded on assurances of mutual respect and individual good conscience:

In any case, I will continue to send you our *Bulletin*. I don't think you will find anything offensive to your beliefs in it. But if that should ever happen, or if you should like the mailing to stop, just let me know. God bless you and keep you in good health. Be assured of my respect and esteem . . .⁴⁹

Clearly the Cooperators were not just in the service of bishops and parish priests for strictly Christian works, like a third order. The organization was also built on a pluralistic base and had joint social action as one of its aims.

We see a different side when Don Bosco addressed himself to Salesians as high-school educators. When students have finished their courses, they should be invited to enroll as Salesian Cooperators. Artisans (trade students) might be directed to one of the Catholic Worker Societies.⁵⁰ Here the core idea seems to be that of a third order or of the religious in the world; or it might simply be the pedagogic value of maintaining personal and solid ties between teachers and their former students.

Faced with a horde of friends and well-wishers, Don Bosco instinctively stretched out his hand to them. He detailed Salesian expansion in the world as the result of contributions by so many good people. He described the neediness of missionaries, the pope's desire to have a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus built in Rome, and the importance of combatting bad reading material with good reading material. Far from being demagogic, Don Bosco expressed himself in spare and measured terms. But his cadenced repetition of arguments gained added force from the occasional insertion of new figures: more Salesians, more houses, more projects. Thus many people who read the *Bulletin* or listened to Don Bosco's lectures came to feel almost instinctively that cooperation

⁴⁹ Ibid. Leonori echoes the same view: "In short, any upright person who seeks and desires the true welfare of human society can be said to be a Cooperator of the Salesian Society" (*Cenni sulla Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, p. 41).

⁵⁰ *Deliberazioni del terzo e quarto capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuti in Valsalice nel settembre 1883-1886*, III, §2, "Indirizzo religioso-morale," N. 12, S. Benigno Canavese, 1887, p. 20 and MB 18:701.

basically meant giving financial support to the initiatives of Don Bosco and his Salesians in the world.⁵¹

Participation on a vast scale was achieved, on the basis of various kinds of membership. This was not due solely to the personal efforts of Don Bosco. To a great extent it had to do with the current state of mind among Catholics in Europe and America. They were ready to join together and to restore to the Church its age-old prestige.

It is possible, and efforts have been proposed, to offer a history of religious fervor in the period from 1820 to 1860 that would stress data other than the kind to be found in a history of religious practice.⁵² Much the same is true of the Salesian Cooperators in the last thirty years of the century. The movement could provide data for a history of Catholic involvement in social and religious projects. This involvement itself was symptomatic of the decline in the fiery anticlericalism of old. Even in the era of intransigence the foundations were being laid for a Catholicism of social action. In the mind of its proponents the aim was to create a new basis of sympathy for the Church, and hence for the re-evangelization of Europe and South America.

4. Later spiritual outlook and approach of Don Bosco

In the last decade of his life, and particularly after the death of Archbishop Gastaldi in 1883, Don Bosco appears before us with certain clear-cut traits. His native ability and prudence had been tested in the school of experience. He had learned much from a long life of action in which mutual goodwill and the sympathy of many people had played an essential part. No longer did he face the conflicts that he had confronted in earlier days: as a young adolescent, with his half-brother; with his first co-workers in the early days of the Oratory; with Bishop Moreno over the *Catholic Readings*; and later, with Archbishop Gastaldi. Increasingly he withdrew from polemics and disliked disputes. In the face of hostility and harassment he preferred not to raise his voice or counter-attack. He would not follow the example of the intransigent Catholic journals with their harsh, corrosive polemics. Caught in a rainstorm, he

⁵¹ See DB's programmatic articles to the Cooperators in the January issue of the *Bollettino salesiano* each year, and various reports of conferences.

⁵² Claude Savart, "Pour une sociologie de la ferveur religieuse: l'Archiconfrérie de Notre-Dame-Des-Victoires," in *Rev. d'hist. ecclés.*, 59 (1964), pp. 823-44.

preferred to walk between the drops and not get wet.⁵³ Increasingly he seems to have been imbued with the ideal of gentleness and kindness embodied in St. Francis de Sales, as he had come to know him from biography, sermons, and his own idealization of the saint.⁵⁴

There was a difference, however, in his last years. It was a time of great conflicts and little official support. There was often fiscal harassment from bureaucrats and political authorities. Don Bosco's kindness and benevolence operated on a social foundation quite different from that which had affected the bishop of Geneva in his lifetime. Don Bosco looked for sympathy and cooperation beyond the boundaries of religious confessions, which Francis de Sales could not have done. Hence the educator of Turin somehow foreshadows the outlook and idiom of ecumenism, even though he shows no real concern to create a sound theory of pluralistic action. In him it is a general, concrete state of mind guided by instinct and native ability.

For this reason even the Salesian Cooperators, as a working project, did not wholly dovetail with Don Bosco's own sentiments. Remember that the majority of its adherents came from the ranks of Catholics who took their cue from the literature and general approach of intransigent Catholicism. With his pluralistic bent Don Bosco should be placed among those who were trying to tone down the polemics and create a more peaceful atmosphere. At the same time it should be noted that the idea of pluralistic charitable action was not uppermost in Don Bosco's mind or scale of values, and that the idea of actively combatting Protestants and anticlericals was never wholly absent from his mind.

Initially the dominant idea in his mind seems to have been that of the Salesian religious in the world, combined with the idea of benefactors and activist supporters of Salesian or diocesan educational projects. As things turned out, however, this idea did not really prevail. Spurred by

⁵³ AS 110 Chronicle of Father Barberis, May 18, 1878, cited by Ceria, *Annali*, 1, 238 f.

⁵⁴ St. Francis de Sales is presented by DB mainly as the saint of gentleness. "Strive to practice the virtues of charity, patience, and the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales" (to Father Fenoglio, Turin, July 13, 1882; MB 15:669). "Work always with the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales and the patience of Job" (to Father Dalmazzio, Turin, November 26, 1882; MB 15:680). "With the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales, the Salesians will draw the peoples of America to Jesus Christ" (to the Salesians, missionary dream of 1883; MB 16:394).

pressing Salesian 'needs', Don Bosco readily turned to his Cooperators to ask mainly for contributions, sympathy, and promotional support.

Throughout the development of the Salesian Cooperators, the centralizing thrust of Don Bosco is very evident, all the more insofar as he himself compares the organization of his Cooperators with that of the Franciscan Third Order. In General Chapter I of the Salesians (1877), Don Bosco noted that if he had wanted to avoid the massive labor involved, he could have imitated the Franciscans and opted for as much decentralization as possible. "Each Franciscan house can enroll all who want to be affiliates, hence the number always remains very large." Don Bosco could have entrusted the enrollment and direction of Cooperators to the individual Salesian houses, but in that case there could have been "no center or unity of action." His main concern and effort over the years had been "to find a way to keep all united with the head, so that the latter might be able to get across his thoughts to all."⁵⁵

Thus Don Bosco did not seriously consider the advantages of decentralization and localism. In the Middle Ages they had ensured liberty

⁵⁵ MB 13:263 f. On that occasion Don Bosco wrote of the Cooperators in compelling terms. Glossing his work on the proposals he had formulated, of which we possess the rough draft (*Capitolo generale della Congregazione Salesiana da convocarsi in Lanzo nel prossimo settembre 1877*, p. 8 f.), he went so far as to say that the Cooperators were an association of the utmost importance for the Salesians, "the soul of our congregation and a link for doing good in conjunction with good members of the faithful who live in the world." He continued: "We have the Salesian Society . . . for those who want to live apart and consecrated to God by religious profession. We have . . . the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for . . . members of the opposite sex who want to follow the Salesians. Now we need friends and benefactors in the world, people who will practice the full Salesian spirit while living within their own families, which is precisely what the Salesian Cooperators do. They are our help in need, our support in difficulty, our collaborators in work which should be done for the greater glory of God, but for which we lack the personal resources . . . These Cooperators should increase as much as possible. What conditions in the Cooperators? By what means do we increase their number?" (AS 04 General Chapter I: copy with annotations; and AS 133 General Chapter, autograph rough draft).

The expression, 'soul of our congregation', may have been meant to suggest the idea of plasma or humus, the organic medium in which the congregation was to be immersed as a living organism. In any case, in the *Deliberations* it became "strong arm of our congregation." Don Bosco's subsequent remarks were also toned down considerably: see *Deliberazioni del Capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo-Torinese nel settembre 1877*, Turin: tip. and libr. Salesiana, 1878, p. 91 f.).

and strength as components of a united Christendom, holy empire, or Christian community. But Don Bosco was living in a time of great efforts to achieve political and religious unity, so he did not advert to the possible strengths of such features in an idea that met a universal need. The idea of unity dominated his thinking: *vis unita fortior*. In it was reflected another solid idea from his own religious heritage: that of a single family in the image and likeness of the human family whose Father is God, and the ecclesial family whose father is the pope. As early as 1850 he had told Catholics in the Foreword to his *Warnings to Catholics*: "Our pastors, especially our bishops, unite us to the pope, and he unites us with God." The union of the Cooperators with the Salesian Society and their dependence on its major superior ensured success. As an article in the *Salesian Bulletin* put it: "We move forward fearlessly because . . . if God is on our side, who can beat us, who can prevent our work from being crowned with success?"⁵⁶

This centralism was certainly one of the reasons for the vitality of the Union of Cooperators, which was solidly bound to the Salesians and dependent on the same center. It was also one of the reasons behind the respectable growth of the Salesian Cooperators. But that growth did not keep pace with the growth of such movements as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic Action. The latter were not bound to a religious congregation, hence they could easily fit into the parochial and diocesan framework. Their unity of spirit and action was not based on juridical subordination but on coordination through the press and other media as well as on unified planning that involved the bishops or had their approval, and that was under their direction.

In his very first project for Christian Union Don Bosco appealed for the unification of the Catholic forces, and this appeal was maintained in successive editions of the Rules for Cooperators. As early as 1876 it was spelled out in fairly clear-cut terms. It is no longer a general appeal for union, nor is room left for objections that Don Bosco might be trying to draw off energies devoted to other initiatives.

The Cooperators is presented as *one* practical way of helping to improve societal behavior and morals, not as *the* way. Don Bosco's organization came into being around the same time as various worker societies of different structure and purpose, all of them sharing the same

⁵⁶ *Bollettino salesiano*, 2 (1878), p. 3. For the Foreword to DB's *Warnings to Catholics*, see BM 4:158.

desire for greater cohesiveness. But the Cooperators ended up solidly within the orbit of Don Bosco and his creations, whereas the worker societies linked up with the work of the Catholic Congresses. Both shared the same motto (*vis unita fortior*), but it came to mean different things to each. For the worker societies it was a reminder of the thrust towards unity within the Italian Catholic movement. For the Salesian Cooperators it was a reminder of the value of coordinating all their good works under the direction of the rector major of the Salesians, who in turn was working in harmony with church authorities to meet the needs of the universal Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources

(a). AS 131.04 Circular letters and ones sent to non-Salesians. After 1876, they deal with the work of the Cooperators. There are printed letters and, in some cases, the rough drafts written or revised by DB, and drafts of revisions for new circulars that make use of earlier printed circulars.

(b). AS 133 General Chapter: DB autograph for his booklet, *Capitolo gen. della Congr. Sal. da convocarsi in Lanzo nel prossimo sett. 1877*.

(c). AS 133 Cooperators. Many autograph writings of DB dealing with his working up of the rules or other writings for the Cooperators, their canonical approval, and their promotion.

(d). AS 04 General Chapters of the Salesian Society. Relevant are the papers of the first four: 1877, 1880, 1883, and 1886 (convocation, topics proposed and discussed, minutes, deliberations).

(e). AS 126: the store of letters to DB. Various ones are from friends and Cooperators, especially in the group 126.4 (letters to DB, but dealing with the *Bollettino salesiano* and the Union of Cooperators).

(f). AS 5: the store of documents dedicated to the Cooperators, former students, etc. Letters relating to its institution, organization, congresses, individual Cooperators, etc.

(g). Important published sources are the booklets or short writings compiled by DB. Here I cite: *Unione cristiana* (Turin, 1874), *Cooperatori Salesiani* (Turin, 1876;

Albenga, 1876; S. Pier d'Arena, 1876 . . .); *Bollettino salesiano* (from 1877; begun with the title *Bibliofilo Cattolico*).

Precedents worth noting include: the *Associazione Cattolica di S. Francesco di Sales* (see footnotes 25–28 of this chapter); and the *Associazione di S. Francesco di Sales* for 56 brothers and 56 sisters, in honor of the years spent in the land by the bishop of Geneva. The latter association was set up in Turin in 1720 (Visitation Church, where DB as a deacon made his spiritual exercises), and in Chieri in 1723 (Church of St. Philip). Both were still active at the end of the nineteenth century, and their statutes were in print.

For more direct outside influences on DB, the following should be noted: the *Conferenza di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli*, whose rules and manuals propose many of the works promoted by DB and planned for his Cooperators; G. Frassinetti, *Il religioso al secolo*, Genoa, 1864, which presents a typical rule that was adopted by the Pious Union of the Sons of Mary Immaculate (established in Mornese and other places); the *Regola del Terz'Ordine di S. Francesco d'Assisi*, Rome, 1875, from which DB took the indulgences and other "spiritual benefits" that he sought and won from the Holy See (see *Cooperatori Salesiani* . . . , S. Pier d'Arena, 1876, p. 15).

I would also note the *Opera delle feste* (Turin: Marietti, 1858, 8 pp.) of which Don Bosco was vice president; and the *Pia Associazione di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice*, which was founded in Ivrea in 1854 for the defense of the faith in the diocese but which did not function specifically as a diocesan coordinating organism of Catholic efforts. Archbishop Franson had a project analogous to that of Bishop Moreno of Ivrea: see G. Griseri, "L'allontanamento e la mancata rinuncia di mons. Luigi Franson arcivescovo di Torino," in *Boll. stor. bibliogr. subalpino*, 64 (1966), p. 482 f., letter of Bishop Ghilardi to Archbishop Franson, Mondovì, December 28, 1852.

(h). Among the documents in the Salesian tradition published immediately after DB's death, the following deserve mention: *Manuale teorico-pratico ad uso dei decurioni e direttori della Pia Associazione dei Cooperatori Salesiani* . . . , Turin: tip. Salesiana, 1894; *Atti del primo congresso internazionale dei Cooperatori Salesiani tenutosi in Bologna ai 23, 24 e 25 aprile 1895* (Father Stephen Trione stated then that there were about 200,000 Cooperators in the world: p. 18).

(i). The richest presentation and elaboration of the sources can be found in the MB from Volume 10 on.

II. Secondary Sources and Related Reading

For popular summary accounts see: E. Ceria, *I Cooperatori Salesiani. Un po' di storia*, Turin, 1952; G. Favini, *Il cammino di una grande idea, I Cooperatori Salesiani*, Turin, 1861. Useful for framing DB's activity in a broader context is the work of Gabriele de Rosa, *Storia del movimento cattolico in Italia* . . . , Bari, 1966. But he focuses on the work of Leonard Murialdo (I, 208 f.) and overlooks Don Bosco.

III. Supplementary List for English-language Readers

For a presentation of source material on the Salesian Cooperators see BM 10:560 f; BM 11:60 f.

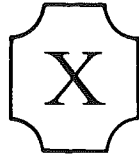
For a broader treatment of the Cooperators see Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982. Chapter 16: "The Salesian Cooperators," pp. 175-186. Chapter 29: "The Cooperators After 1888," pp. 345-357.

Also consult Enzo Bianco's excellent historical summary in *Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way of Life*, translated by Peter Swain, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1984. For a more thorough treatment of the Salesian Cooperator, see Joseph Aubry's *The Salesian Cooperator: A Real Vocation in the Church*, Madras: SIGA, 1982.

A general overview of the church-state issue in Italy is provided by S.W. Halperin, *The Separation of Church and State in Italian Thought, from Cavour to Mussolini*, Chicago, 1937; reprinted New York: Octagon Books, 1970. Of great relevance and interest for the period immediately following Don Bosco is the thought and work of the great political activist and organizer, Father Luigi Sturzo. See, for example, Luigi Sturzo, *Church and State*, 2 volumes, Eng. trans., Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962. Many useful references can be found in the bibliographical survey pamphlet by Charles F. Delzell, *Italy in the Twentieth Century*, Washington, DC: American Historical Association/AHA Pamphlet 428, 1980.

The works of the Italian scholar, Gabriele de Rosa, are very relevant here, but they have not been translated into English. Moreover, he is not the only one to overlook the work of Don Bosco. Most church histories fail to give Don Bosco due consideration as a major Catholic figure in nineteenth-century Europe.

For Catholic movements in the modern period see Joseph N. Moody (ed.), *Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movements, 1789-1950*, New York: Arts, 1953. On the ecumenical movement see Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill (eds.), *History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517-1948*, Second edition, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967. For a provocative and much discussed reinterpretation of the European scene from 1870 to 1914, see Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.



DON BOSCO AS AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

The reaction to Don Bosco's writings were not untypical of those that occur when people sense the greatness of individuals and events.¹ Readers picked up his works with feelings of affection and reverence. They were astounded and captivated by the mounds of paper behind them, by the number of short pieces and editions, by the quantity of letters, memorials, and autobiographical pages. They spoke of them as people do of things small and great. By common agreement, for example, his *History of Italy* was his 'masterpiece'.²

Sometimes this led to inflated remarks and overgeneralizations. Referring to his *History of Italy*, the *Biographical Memoirs* tells us that "nearly all the chapters ended with a quotation from the Book of Proverbs."³ Presumably the history was worthy of great esteem for that reason alone. Sometimes his works were given an overly exalted place by failing to take note of their place in the surrounding context and their dependence on other works. Lamenting the absence of "a good, popular history of Italy that would induce readers to love history and Italy," one writer

¹ See M. Delehay, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, Brussels, 1905, especially the first two chapters.

² A. Caviglia, "Introduction" to *Opere e scritti editi e inediti di 'Don Bosco' . . . III. La Storia d'Italia*, Turin, 1935, p. ix.

Translator's Note. In this chapter Don Bosco's works are given in English for the most part, even though few of them are translated into English. Works cited as such are listed alphabetically in section III of the chapter bibliography with correct original titles and publishing information; see p. 284 f.

³ BM 5:323. "But there is no direct quote from the Book of Proverbs, except remotely insofar as there is an almost natural affinity. And there are not that many direct quotes either" (Caviglia, "Introduction," p. xxxiv).

thought that this gap had been filled by Don Bosco.⁴ Others thought that the pedagogical wisdom in *The Preventive System* of Don Bosco had never been matched before.⁵ In other instances his works were elevated to loftier categories. Thus some people tended to classify his three histories—*Bible History*, *Church History*, *History of Italy*—as historical works⁶ rather than as school textbooks or popular treatments for young and old. They focused on the fact that Don Bosco was dealing with historical material rather than on his educational approach and purpose.

1. School books

It is obvious that Don Bosco's *Church History* (1845) should not be compared with Fleury's work, or with the similar histories of Bercastel, Rohrbacher, Döllinger, and Salzano.⁷ While compiling his church his-

⁴ Statement by Caviglia, *ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁵ Note the reaction of Father Bartholomew Fascie to that typical phenomenon: "When people talk about the preventive system, they do so as if it were a wholly new idea that sprang from Don Bosco's brain as Athena did from Zeus . . . To disabuse ourselves of any such notion, we need only read Don Bosco's first words about his educational system: 'There have always been two systems used in the education of young people, the preventive and the repressive' " (Fascie, *Del metodo educativo di Don Bosco*, Turin, 1935, p. 24 f.).

⁶ This is the classification followed by Father Caviglia for the *Opere e scritti editi e inediti* . . . , Turin, 1929 on; but it is already present during Don Bosco's lifetime in the catalogue appended to the *Catholic in the World* (LC), Turin, 1883, p. 461 f.

⁷ See "Bibliografia delle opere riconosciute o citate come fonte o modello per la 'Storia d'Italia' di Don Bosco," in Caviglia, "Introduction," pp. C–CVI. But there are gaps, imprecisions, and puzzles. Caviglia labels certain works as anonymous ones published by Marietti, lumping in this group works by the Jesuit Loricet and others, based on Rollin, that were put together by Jesuits Acacio Saracinelli and Paul Beorchia (according to C. Sommervogel, *Biblioth. de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Brussels-Paris, I, col. 1317). There is no mention of the *Serie di biografie contemporanee per L.C.*, Turin: De-Agostini, 1853, 2 vols., which was the source for the profiles of Pellico and Manzoni, a source for which Caviglia searched in vain (*Opere e scritti*, p. 579). The edition of the *Giannetto* used by DB certainly was not the Turin edition of 1838 (Caviglia, p. CII), most likely it was the much reprinted Livorno edition. As for Lamé-Fleury, DB's phrasing is closer to the Piucco translation than to those of Mellini and Galeffi. With regard to Bérault-Bercastel, DB did not use the Venice edition of 1793–1805 or the Florence edition of 1842–1846, but the Turin edition of 1831–1835. For DB's *Church History* no apparatus of sources was provided by Father Caviglia.

tory, Don Bosco was not thinking of priests or well educated laypeople. He was thinking of young people in public schools, high schools, and seminaries; of young men learning a trade, who pursued their education at night school. Close at hand for reference were the little handbooks of John Nicholas Loriquet (1767–1845), which had been translated into Italian and published by Marietti. Those handbooks, too, bore the subtitle, ‘for young people’. When he replaced or elaborated material, Don Bosco’s approach was that of Bercastel. He did not write about clashes between emperors and popes, or between heretics and orthodox Catholics. Instead he added edifying episodes, hagiographical portraits, miracles, and acts of virtue that dot the history of the Church. As he himself put it, his aim was to show the “progress” of the Church, “how it was spread and preserved amid so many conflicts.” More than Loriquet (and Lhomond, on which his work was based), Don Bosco concentrates on the various kinds of saints that have flourished in the Church and on the variety of charitable works that have been undertaken. It is this predilection, it seems to me, that distinguishes Don Bosco among the many lowly writers of handbooks and school texts.

The models for his *Bible History* (1847) were not the commentaries of Tirino, Calmet, or Martini (whose version he did have before him). They were the little works of Loriquet, Francis Soave’s *History of the Hebrew People*, and the *Bible History* of Cyprian Rattazzi. The last mentioned work imitated the popular *History of the Old and New Testament* by Le Maître de Sacy (or Royaumont), which had been published by another printer-friend of Don Bosco, John Baptist Paravia.⁸

⁸ Of the work of Francis Soave, well known as a popularizer of Condillac’s sensationism, DB seems to have used a Vigevano edition of 1814. We have found a copy among the books of Father Joachim Berto bearing the inscription: “To Mr. John Baptist Vola, First in the Class of Rhetoric, January 18, 1819 . . .” Vola was the priest who met DB on his arrival at Valdocco and gave him his watch (BM 2:409). He died on November 24, 1872 at the age of 67. Soave’s work was entitled *Storia del popolo ebreo compendiata dal prof. Francesco Soave C.R.S. ad uso delle scuole d’Italia*.

The *Storia sacra dell’Antico Testamento con opportune riflessioni atte al vantaggio d’ogni persona* by Father Cyprian Rattazzi was published by Paravia in 1843. DB used it for the second edition of his own *Bible History*. Rattazzi (1774–1856) came from the diocese of Acqui and was one of the last Piedmont priests devoted to Port-Royal. See P. Stella, *Giansenisti piemontesi nell’Ottocento*, p. 104. There were several editions of the Royaumont in Piedmont. Paravia published one in 1837: *Storia del Vecchio e Nuovo Testamento ossia della Bibbia Sacra con riflessioni morali*.

Don Bosco's *History of Italy* (1855) picked up the title and some material from a manual published by Hyacinth Marietti (1834): *Storia d'Italia dai suoi primi abitatori dopo il diluvio fino ai nostri giorni*. That manual seems to have been a revision by the Jesuit, Paul Beorchia (1795–1859). But Don Bosco's little work does not draw on Denina, Botta, Cesare Balbo, or even Muratori. It is closer to the sentiments and ideas of the Neo-Guelphs and Neo-Ghibellines of the mid-nineteenth century. It is not that it looks to the great historians who represent those currents of thought. Rather, it breathes the same general atmosphere as they do, even though it is a more modest and popular work for the common people and youngsters. Its place is with similar abridgments by Sforzosi, Ricotti, and Zini, and even more with the moral tales of the *Giannetto*⁹ and the history book for young people by Lamé-Fleury.¹⁰

In Don Bosco's histories, as in those of his chief models, we do not find a systematic treatment of historical events. Instead we find episodes and personalities recounted in the clear and simple style that Don Bosco had worked out over the course of a decade and that was truly suited to the level of the readers for which the books were intended.¹¹ His pages are those of an educator talking. There is a concern for truthfulness and solid grounding, but his main concern is to teach, to present the facts and events that would be "more beneficial for morality and more useful to know." Like Parravicini, he wants the moral lesson to flow naturally from his presentation of facts, to avoid the 'political debates' that permeate other manuals (especially Ghibelline treatments), and to underline the religious import of history as he had already learned to do in his Bible history and his Church history.¹² He seeks to teach that God governs human events, that good and evil are recompensed even in this life, and that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. It is Jesus, the head and judge, who will reward the good.

Don Bosco's work on *The Metric System* (1849²) may be linked up

⁹ On Parravicini (1799–1880), see *Pedagogisti ed educatori*, Milan, 1939, p. 325.

¹⁰ Jules Raymond Lamé-Fleury (1797–1878), *Corso di storia raccontata a' fanciulli*. See footnote 7 above.

¹¹ DB reiterated these intentions in almost all the prefaces of his books addressed to children and average people.

¹² Bosco, *La storia d'Italia*, Turin, 1855, pp. 3–5. These principles are pointedly summarized in a letter to Father Lemoyne dated November 3, 1869: see BM 9:350–351.

with his three histories.¹³ In it we find the same effort to treat the subject "as simply as possible, so that even a partially educated person might be able to read and understand it without the help of a teacher."¹⁴ Moralistic intentions could not help but be present, even as they were to be found in the models he used. Arithmetic operations provide an opportunity to present concrete examples: decent young men who save and use their money wisely, giving some to the poor as well; grownups who leave money in their will for the restoration of churches and the education of young people; lazy workers who are penalized; and young men who let their money go up in smoke. Thus Don Bosco continues the Christian tradition of education. Like the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he could look to such outstanding models as the manuals for schools put out by Port-Royal.¹⁵

2. *Droll tales and dramatic scenarios*

Don Bosco also devoted his pen to various writings he liked to characterize as 'droll' (*amene*), such as his *Droll Tale of an Old Soldier of Napoleon I* (1862) and his *Droll Facts in the Life of Pius IX* (1871). He wrote scenes and dialogues: *The Metric System* (1849), *A Debate Between a Lawyer and*

¹³ We do not possess any copy of the first edition. Don Bosco cites Borghino (*Compendio d'istruzione della nuova sistemazione metrico-decimale*, Turin, 1846) and Giulio (*Quattro lezioni sul sistema metrico-decimale, dette nella scuola di meccanica applicata alle arti, le sere del li 20, 23, 27 e 30 giugno 1846*, Turin: Pomba, 1846). If he did use those authors, then his work must date from the latter half of 1846. According to the archdiocesan archives of Turin, the *Quattro lezioni sul sistema metrico-decimale* (no author indicated) were approved 'for reprinting' on October 25, 1846. On March 8, 1847, approval was given for a *Sistema decimale portato alla intelligenza di tutti senza bisogno di studio, né di Maestro* by the Carmelite P. Clodoveo, who at the same time was giving approval to the *Bible History*, Don Bosco's work in galleys from the publisher, Speirani. The phrase "senza bisogno . . . di Maestro" reminds one of the phrase in Don Bosco's *The Metric System*: "Senza aiuto del maestro." See the following footnote and the corresponding text on p. 396.

¹⁴ Bosco, *Il sistema metrico decimale*, Turin, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁵ As I noted in Chapter I (see footnote 49), the Piedmont schools used the *Nuovo metodo per apprendere agevolmente la lingua latina* and the *Compendio del nuovo metodo*. On the relationship between the educational system of La Salle and that of Port-Royal see, for example, Brother Emile, "Alle sorgenti della dottrina spirituale di S. Giov. Batt. de la Salle," in *Rivista lasalliana*, 5 (1938), p. 252 f.

a *Protestant Minister* (1853), and the little drama entitled *The House of Fortune* (1865). The strengths and weaknesses of these writings stem from the fact that they express some sentiment shared by the milieu that produced them, whether it be sympathy or antipathy. In one work we encounter a blustering old soldier who is sincere and appealing nevertheless. Once his religious prejudices have been stripped away, he ends up attending the sacraments once again. In another work Don Bosco lauds the merits of Pope Pius IX, who liked him and favored him so much. Another tale dramatizes the fortunes of two fine orphans, who manage to find their generous and benevolent grandfather once again. Still another dialogue presents and then refutes the views of some unscrupulous Protestants.

In Don Bosco's dialogues and dramas there are no vehement feelings in the prose itself. Such feelings would have to come from the delivery of the actors, the staging of the scenes, the sympathy aroused in the spectators for the author or characters, and their general agreement with the ethical and religious sentiments evoked.

3. *Hagiographical writings*

Don Bosco's *Life of St. Peter* (1856), *Life of St. Paul* (1857), and his series of biographies of the popes of the first three centuries were conceived and issued as part of his *Catholic Readings* (LC) between 1856 and 1864. They should not be compared with Hurter's *Innocent III* or Klee's *History of Dogma*, both published in Turin.¹⁶ They belong with other biographies by him: *Life of St. Martin* (1855), *Life of St. Pancratius* (1856), *Life of Blessed Catherine de Mattei da Racconigi* (1862), *Life of Blessed Mary of the Angels* (1865), and *Life of St. Joseph* (1867). All of these works should be classed with the hagiographical works then being published by Annoni of Monza and other printing houses, or with the accounts of saints from which Don Bosco himself borrowed: e.g., those by Charles Massini (1702–1791),¹⁷ the Jesuit John Croiset (1656–1738),¹⁸ and a group of Milanese priests.¹⁹

¹⁶ F. Murter, *St. di Innocenzo III e contemporanei*, Turin: Bibl. ecclesiastica editrice, 1857, 4 vols. E. Klee, *St. dei dogmi*, *ibid.*, 1858, 2 vols. In the same series there had already appeared Moehler's *La Simbolica* (1852) and Döllinger's *Introduzione allo studio della storia ecclesiastica* (3 volumes, 1856).

¹⁷ C. Massini, *Vite de' Santi per ciascun giorno dell'anno*. DB must have used the Turin edition of 1830–1831, published by Maspero and Serra in twelve volumes.

In their ideas all these biographies were linked up with Don Bosco's *Church History*, and they expanded its hagiographical tendencies. But they postdate 1848, and Don Bosco is aware of Protestant proselytism in Turin and the Piedmont countryside. So these later works also tend to present the Catholic Church as the one and only ark of salvation and font of holiness.

There is no need to look for much more in Don Bosco as hagiographer. He showed no systematic concern to restudy the sources personally, the sort of concern to be found in the work of the Maurists and other critical editions. Don Bosco had Martini's translation of the Bible and he sometimes incorporated passages from it; but he preferred to use hagiographical material that had already been put together. For his *Life of St. Peter* he almost always followed the works of Louis Cuccagni and Anthony Cesari.²⁰ For his *Life of St. Paul* he did not rely mainly on the Acts of the Apostles or Paul's epistles; instead he had recourse to Gervaise's *Life of St. Paul*, which had been published anonymously in Naples.²¹ The epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul interested him only insofar as they provided biographical material. By way of exception, he did

¹⁸ Also published in Turin by Francesco Prato, 1794, 12 vols; but DB's text is closer to a Venice edition published by Baglione in twelve volumes in 1745. Croiset's title: *Esercizi di pietà per tutti i giorni dell'anno*.

¹⁹ *I fasti della Chiesa nelle vite de' santi in ciascun giorno dell'anno. Opera compilata da una pia società e corredata di tavole in rame*, Milan, 1824–1833, 13 vols.

²⁰ These sources are implicitly noted by DB when he writes: "The life of St. Peter has been considered extensively by Anthony Cesari in his work on the Acts of the Apostles and a separate volume, and by Louis Cuccagni in three large volumes and many others" (*Vita di S. Pietro*, Turin, 1856, p. 11). The three-volume edition of Cuccagni was the one published in Rome by John Zempel, 1777–1781, of which there was a set in the Valdocco library. With regard to the works of A. Cesari, Don Bosco might seem to be alluding to *La vita di Gesù Cristo e la sua religione con i Fatti degli Apostoli* (in the series *Opere morali e sacre del P. Antonio Cesari*, volumes 2 and 3, Turin: Marietti, 1852). But the *Life of St. Peter* mentioned by him is in the *Fiore di storia ecclesiastica. Ragionamenti* (ed. cit., Vol. 4, Turin: Marietti, 1853); and the separate volume mentioned, which is very close to his own dictation, is *San Pietro capo della Chiesa. Ragionamenti dell'Abate Cesari*, Turin: De-Agostini, 1851 (Collezione di buoni libri, a.3, October 15 and November 1).

²¹ François-Armand Gervaise (1660–1751), *Vita di S. Paolo apostolo delle genti e dottor della Chiesa*, DB did not cite it, but he seems to have used the three-volume Naples edition published by Gabriel Elia in 1786, a slightly revised version of the 1754 Naples edition published by Joseph Anthony Elia.

incorporate the whole Epistle to Philemon because "it is the easiest and the shortest . . . and the beauty of its sentiments enable it to serve as a model for any Christian."²² Of Gervaise's work he disregarded the fifth book dealing with "the spirit, virtues, and gifts of grace that God planted in Paul's soul," and also the sixth book dealing with "the doctrine and maxims of this saint."

In all his hagiographical writings the dominant concern seems to have been to find or compose a page that would be pleasing and comprehensible to the popular mind, a page that would depict the hero in action, engaged in undertakings that would evoke amazement or emulation. Don Bosco did not care to incorporate pages of doctrinal teaching or psychological introspection. He preferred dramatic scenes, fabulous incidents, and heroic dialogues: e.g., between Pancratius and the emperor, or Martin and his disciples. He borrowed them from his models when he could, and made them up when he had to. Don Bosco liked direct conflicts and simplifications. Hence he did not care for such characters in Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* as Father Abbondio and Geltrude, Abbondio's mediocrity did not make him a sympathetic hero of goodness on the one hand, or a repellent monster of evil on the other. Geltrude could make evil look attractive and seductive.²³ Don Bosco also avoided complicated scenes and background material that were not strictly needed for popular narratives.

4. *Biographical writings and historically based narratives*

The biographies and historical accounts (*Cenni*) of Louis Comollo, Dominic Savio, Michael Magone, Joseph Cafasso, and Francis Besucco are typical specimens of edifying biography as it was practiced in school and church circles from the time of Trent on. In them we see the same tendencies evident in Don Bosco's *Church History* and *History of Italy*. A thin tissue of biographical and chronological facts is filled out by episodes of virtue in action, the virtues themselves being based upon scholastic, moral, or hagiographical categories: the spirit of prayer, innocence, or repentance; practice of the sacraments; devotion to the Blessed Mother;

²² Bosco, *Vita di S. Paolo apostolo*, Turin, 1857, p. 136.

²³ Bosco, *La storia d'Italia*, Turin, 1874, p. 486; *Opere e scritti*, 3, p. 471; "The regard we have for this work [*I promessi sposi*] does not stop us from severely censuring his portrayal of Father Abbondio and the unfortunate Geltrude . . ." See the comment of Father Caviglia in *Opere e scritti*, 3, p. 585 f.

death as the crowning event of a life that responded to God's graces and favors.²⁴

The structure and phrasing of these works are akin to those found in his little works of instruction or devotion: e.g., the *Six Sundays and a Novena in Honor of St. Louis [or Aloysius] Gonzaga* (1846) and the *Month of May* (1858). The same features can be found in his historically based narratives and tales such as the *Power of a Good Upbringing* (1855), *Valentine or the Impeded Vocation* (1866), and *Angelina or the Orphan Girl of the Apennines* (1869). In *Angelina*, as in his *Life of Francis Besuccio*, we find passages on frequent communion from the *Month of May* that will crop up again in *Nine Days Consecrated to the August Mother of the Savior* (1870).

5. Works of religious instruction and prayer

It should be obvious that we cannot make any clear-cut distinctions between the various writings of Don Bosco. The same subject matter and purpose crop up in different works, and Don Bosco himself never seems to have felt obliged to give each work its own distinctive shape. For example, one might be inclined to regard the *Companion of Youth* (1847) as simply a manual of prayers and practical devotions, but Don Bosco intended it to serve as a method and way of life. This aim applies to its various parts: the devotional part; the earlier part explaining the religious way to understand one's own existence, creation, growth from adolescence on, and the daily manifestations of life; and the *Fundamentals of the Catholic Religion*, a piece of apologetics published as *Warnings to Catholics* in 1850 and inserted into the *Companion of Youth* the following year.²⁵

The same tendencies are found in other works of varying size: e.g., the *Key to Heaven for the Practicing Catholic* (1856), the *Catholic Equipped for Pious Practices* (1858), the already mentioned *Month of May* (1858), the *Christian Vademecum* (1858), and the *Companion of the Christian Girl* (1878).

Primarily devotional are: *Devotion to Your Guardian Angel* (1845), *Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary* (1845?, 1871³), and *Devotion to the Mercy of God* (1847). Similar to them are: the *Anthology of Hymns*, based

²⁴ On the various hagiographic tendencies evident through the centuries see R. Aigrain, *L'hagiographie, ses sources, sa méthode, son histoire*, Paris, 1953.

²⁵ See P. Stella, *Valori spirituali nel 'Giovane Provveduto' di San Giovanni Bosco*, Rome, 1960.

on Don Bosco's scheme and with a Preface signed by him; the *Catholic Harp* (1879); and various extracts of the *Companion of Youth* in Italian or French, such as the *Italian Morning and Evening Prayers* (1876) and the *French Counsels for a Young Man* (1880).

Various works of devotion to Mary Help of Christians are instructional, devotional, informational, or connected with pious groups and their practices at her sanctuary in Turin: *Cornerstone Ceremony* (1865), *Wonders of the Mother of God* (1868), *Celebration in Honor of Mary Help of Christians* (1868), *Pious Association of Mary Help of Christians* (1869), *Nine Days Consecrated to the August Mother of God* (1870), *Mary Help of Christians* (1875), and *Devotion to Mary Help of Christians* (1877).

The *Apparition of the Blessed Virgin at La Salette* (1871) reissues an account already published in a *Collection of Curious Contemporary Events* (1854). It adds new amazing facts and warnings from heaven, reflecting Catholic tensions and fears after the capture of Rome.

Works published on the occasion of Vatican I tended to be works of religious instruction: the *Catholic Church and Its Hierarchy* (1869) and the *General Councils and the Catholic Church* (1869). Apologetics is a main concern, and Don Bosco is also seeking to safeguard youngsters and the average person against anticlerical propaganda and Protestant proselytism. This aim is particularly evident in *The Religiously Instructed Catholic* (1853), which was revised and republished as *The Catholic in the World* (1883). Other works fall under this same general heading even though they narrate stories and purport to be based on historical events: *Conversion of a Waldensian Lady* (1854), *Conversations Between a Lawyer and a Rural Pastor About the Sacrament of Penance* (1855), *Two Debates on Purgatory* (1857), *Severino* (1868), and *Massimino* (1874).

The reading public addressed by Don Bosco was not made up of Waldensians or anticlericals, although Don Bosco might sometimes analyze statements by Amadeo Bert, Charles Louis Trivier, Louis Desanctis, or Father Joseph Ambrogio. His works were not primarily polemical, attempting to refute, confound, and decimate some adversary.²⁶ His intended readers were the young people, artisans, peasants, and commoners of Piedmont. For them he depicted the insecurity and hence unhappiness

²⁶ Echoing the Waldensian periodical *La Buona Novella*, V. Vinay describes DB as a 'controversialist' whose polemics were really of 'a very primitive sort': *Luigi Desanctis [1808-1869] e il movimento evangelico fra gli Italiani durante il Risorgimento*, Turin, 1965, p. 235. On Father Ambrogio see BM 7:320.

of those who were not Catholics, and the security of Catholics, who could easily win eternal salvation for themselves by practicing their religion.

6. *Writings about the Oratory and Salesian activities*

In this last category can be placed the majority of Don Bosco's letters as well as the following items: Rules of the Oratory and Houses, Rules of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, Rules for the Salesian Society and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; pamphlet and circulars to benefactors and Cooperators, to political and religious authorities; articles in the *Salesian Bulletin*; school and festival programs; memorials defending the schools of the Oratory or the Congregation, seeking favors, or spelling out the progress of the Salesian Society or of its missions in Patagonia; memoranda (*promemoria*) for papal audiences; notes of all sorts; notices to boys or Salesians; plans for General Chapters of the Salesians; redactions of sermons, conferences, and 'dreams'.

7. *Choice of sources*

Faced with this mass of writings, we gradually come to the conclusion that on the whole they relate to some practical need, big or small, associated with the people or circumstances to which Don Bosco's work was directed. He likes to write, but he has no desire to explicate the results of prolonged reflection or theorizing. His is the mentality of the cultural popularizer of the early Risorgimento era. Don Bosco writes to make himself heard and understood, to inculcate and invigorate Catholic culture in children and average people. Or he picks up his pen when it might be necessary or useful for his work, which was growing increasingly complicated. In either case he approaches an urgent situation on the basis of his own personal experience and what it has taught him; or he resorts to whatever may help him in the quick completion of some publication adapted "to everyone's understanding." These concerns obviously had a real influence on his selection of material from his literary arsenal.

Don Bosco's tendency to perceive religion as a living fact, and religious practice as holiness, helps to explain his predilection for works that recount the fortunes of the Church and the vicissitudes of saints in the martyrology, tradition, and common opinion. Having had a chance

to procure the works of the Bollandists, he naturally used them with a real sense of security, knowing they were 'accredited authors'. He approached other authors with the same feelings: St. Alphonsus, Perrone, Cuccagni, Gervaise, Berchialla, Gerdil, and Frassinetti. The critical component in Don Bosco's effort is to be found in his choice of authors, though he sometimes stops to add a relatively critical and erudite note of his own to his narrative. He demands that authors be accredited ones. He seeks out those authors who are regarded as authoritative by scholars, who are favorable to the Church and the papacy, who are zealous or, better yet, saints.

Today Cuccagni has no critical reputation at all.²⁷ But to Don Bosco his three-volume work on St. Peter could not help but seem authoritative, with its many footnotes and its dedication to Pius VI.²⁸ In his judgment Don Bosco would not go much further than that. He does not notice, for example, that Cuccagni was an Augustinian; that his interpretation of the fall of St. Peter or the nature of the Church reflected a theological view of grace and ecclesiology that was outmoded by the middle of the nineteenth century. Cuccagni's view was too respectful of Gallicanism, and its Augustinianism sounded too much like Jansenism to many ears.

Gervaise's *Life of St. Paul*, in the Naples edition of 1786 that seems to have been used by Don Bosco, had been dedicated to Cardinal Banditi, the archbishop of Benevento. The *Life of St. Joseph* brings together many pious legends on the wedding of the Virgin and Jesus' infancy in Egypt and Palestine. But Don Bosco writes, or signs as his own, the following statement: "It is our hope that the veracity of the narrative, the simplicity of the style, and the authenticity of the reports will win a favorable welcome for this slight work." His compilation is done with Martini's translation of the Bible in hand, but is based above all on readings and meditations on the life of St. Joseph by the Oblate of the Virgin Mary, Vincent Gregory Berchialla (1825-1892; later Archbishop of Cagliari), works by the Marist, Mark Andrew Huguet, and other little works that

²⁷ A. C. Jemolo, "L'abate Luigi Cuccagni [1740-1798] e due polemiche ecclesiastiche nel primo decennio del pontificato di Pio VI," in *Scritti vari di storia religiosa e civile*, Milan, 1965, p. 206. The youthful pro-Jansenist sympathies of Cuccagni are brought out by E. Codignola, *Carteggi di giansenisti liguri*, 1, Florence, 1941.

²⁸ Again we do well to recall the 'taste for the miraculous' noted by Aubert as a characteristic feature of nineteenth-century religion, a reaction against the skepticism of the previous century: R. Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian edition, §372, p. 703 f.

liberally indulge in the visions of Maria d'Agreda and Catherine Emmerich.²⁹

As an inveterate popularizer, Don Bosco was bound to prefer other popular treatments to the primary sources when he was looking for his raw material. For this reason it is hard to find in his work deeper probings of Scripture, even if based only on Martini's version. When Scripture is incorporated as a highly reliable maxim rather than as a page of narrative, it is generally taken in a moral sense. Often it is taken in an extended sense ("Give me souls, take away everything else") or a highly accommodative sense: "My delight is to be with the children of men," means that young people are God's delight; "Lads, you haven't caught anything to eat, have you?" means "Lads, do you perchance have any fish for lunch?"³⁰

In his Marian writings the allegorical and figurative sense is triumphant. It was preferred by the Mariology of his day, which enthusiastically carried on the exegetical approach of those in the previous two centuries who deliberately opposed Protestant interpreters and their concern for the literal sense of the biblical text.³¹

In his apologetic works Don Bosco cites patristic texts with some frequency, especially those favoring papal primacy, those supporting jurisdictional and magisterial authority in the Church, and those pointing up errors that Catholic polemicists would see resurfacing in Protestantism. But it is all secondhand erudition, it seems, borrowed from Bergier,

²⁹ V.G. Berchiolla, *S. Giuseppe. Manuale di letture e contemplazioni sulla vita del S. Patriarca sposo di M.V.*, Turin: Marietti, 1867. M.A. Huguet, *L'intimore di San Giuseppe . . .*, Translated by Josephine Pellico, Turin: Marietti, 1862. *Vita di San Giuseppe . . .*, Monza, 1866.

³⁰ *Give me souls . . .* is the well known motto of DB that he often urged upon his Salesians. *My delight . . .* is in the *Giovane provveduto*, parte previa, art. 2: "I giovanetti sono grandemente amati da Dio," Turin, 1847, p. 11. *Lads . . .* is in the *Vita di S. Pietro*, Chapter 9, Turin, 1856, p. 55. According to DB, Martini's analysis was "one of the most beautiful possible studies of the Bible" (MB 9:709).

³¹ Figurative exegesis in mariology was given great impetus by the works of the Theatine, Gioachino Ventura, who picked up the tendency from the Jansenist, Jacques-Joseph Duguet: see P. Stella, *Jacques-Joseph Duguet (1649-1733) e le sue fortune in Italia*, Turin, 1966 (= *Salesianum*, 27, 1964, pp. 629-665). But DB seems to have been more directly influenced by the two following figures: Agostino Ferrari, *Simboli mariani ossia il mese di maggio santificato ad onore di Maria . . .*, Turin: Marietti, 1853; José de S. Miguel y Barco, *Biblia mariana ex pluribus divinarum Scripturarum commentariis excerpta . . .*, Genoa, 1749.

Moore, Archbishop Charvaz, Bellarmine, St. Alphonsus, and lesser writers of Piedmont. The latter would include such priests as: Joseph Casaccia, parish priest of Verrone, who argued against Louis Desanctis; and Dominic Cerri of Marcello (near Pinerolo), who wrote in defense of purgatory.³²

Don Bosco does not seem to have had a special attachment to any of the Church Fathers, even though he could have read various patristic works in the *Scelta biblioteca economica d'opere di Religione* in the seminary of Chieri or Turin: e.g., homilies on the Gospels by St. Gregory the Great (1831), St. John Chrysostom on the priesthood (1832), orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen, sermons of Theodoret (1831) or of St. Augustine (1832).

Don Bosco's scholarly library was filled with works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it also contained works of the seventeenth century. Taking first place were the ascetical writings of St. Alphonsus and the dogmatic works in the Marietti edition. Then came Bergier's *Dictionnaire de théologie* with Gousset's notes, Martini's translation of the Bible, and a Turin edition of Bercastel's *History of Christianity*. Later Don Bosco would prefer Rohrbacher to Bercastel, using the sixteen-volume edition published by Marietti in 1864–1865. Other books included: Dominic Bernino, *History of All the Heresies* (Italian, Rome, 1705, 4 vols.); John Croiset, *Exercises of Piety* (Italian); Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*; the life of Francis de Sales (Venice, 1743) written by the Piedmont Canon, Peter Hyacinth Gallizia (1662–1737); and the 1656 life of St. Phillip Neri written by Bacci.

³² N. Bergier, *Dictionnaire de théologie* . . . édition enrichie . . . par Mgr. Gousset . . . augmentée . . . par Mgr. Doney . . . , Besançon-Paris, 1844, 6 vols. seems to be the edition used for such works as the *Religiously Instructed Catholic* and *Two Debates on Purgatory*. Idem, *Dizionario di teologia* . . . tradotto e arricchito . . . , Milan: C. Turati, 1853–1854, 4 vols. seems to be the edition used for the *Catholic Church and Its Hierarchy* and the *General Councils and the Catholic Church*. T. Moore, *Viaggi d'un gentiluomo irlandese in cerca di una Religione* . . . , Milan, 1834. A Charvaz, *Le guide du catéchumène vaudois* . . . , Paris-Lyon-Turin, 1840–1843, 5 vols; *Guida del catecumeno valdese* . . . (Bibl. ecclesiastica editrice), Turin: Speirani e Tortone, 1857, 5 vols. G. Casaccia, *Il trionfo della confessione sacramentale sul saggio dommatico storico di L. Desanctis* . . . , Turin: G.A. Reviglio, 1854. D. Cerri, *L'esistenza del Purgatorio è la bottega del prete* . . . , Turin: Marietti, 1850. For his *Religiously Instructed Catholic* DB made use of St. Alphonsus's *Storia delle eresie*. He used Bellarmine's *De Controversiis* (*De Conciliis et Ecclesia*, lib. 4, cap. 9).

On his desk were hundreds of French works in the original or in Italian translation, indicative of the ongoing cultural interaction between Piedmont and France amid political and emotional fluctuations. Besides works by Fleury, Lamé-Fleury, Gobinet, Gervaise, Calmet, Rollin, Ansart, Loriquet, and Huguet, Don Bosco had such works as: Aimé, *Catéchisme raisonné sur les fondements de la foi* (Lyon, 1821); Guillaume de Burry, *Romanorum Pontificum brevis notitia*; Alphonse Chaucon, *Vitae et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum*; Alphonse Balleydier, *Roma e Pio IX* (Turin: Fontana, 1848²); *Storia della rivoluzione di Roma* (Florence, 1851); Claude Arvisenet, *La guida della gioventù* (Turin, 1858); Auguste Nicolas, *La Vergine Maria vivente nella Chiesa* (Turin: Ferrando, 1863); and Gaston de Ségur, *La SS. Comunione*.

Among writers of Piedmont, Liguria, and Savoy, Don Bosco used Casaccia, Cerri, and the following: Charvaz, *Guida del Catecumeno valdese* (in the French original and in translation); Gerdil, *Breve esposizione dei Caratteri della vera religione*; works of the Jesuits, John Perrone and Secondo Franco; short writings by Blessed Sebastian Valfré; and hagiographical works on Catherine de Mattei, Mary of the Angels, and St. Pancratius. When he needed them, he consulted the encyclopedia-dictionaries of Casalis and Moroni, the *Prompta bibliotheca* of Ferraris, and Beyerlinck's *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae*. When he got involved in the formation of the Salesians, another work was added to his list of favorites: Rodriguez, *Esercizio di perfezione e di virtù cristiane* (Turin: Martietti, 1828?).³³

³³ Aimé is one of the sources for the *Religiously Instructed Catholic* alongside Gerdil, Perrone, Bellarmine, Charvaz, St. Alphonsus, Moore, etc. Burry and Chaucon were used for the lives of the popes, Balleydier for *Droll Facts and History of Italy*. Arvisenet, who depends on Gobinet, influenced DB in a general way for some remarks on purity. In the LC edition cited, there is a chapter inserted on the Pastors of the Church that comes from DB's *Month of May*. Nicolas was used in *Wonders of the Mother of God*, Ségur in *Nine Days*. Father Franco (*L'infallibilità pontificia proposta ai fedeli*, Turin, 1871) was used for the *Companion of Youth*. Franco's articles on the Councils, which appeared in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, were used for DB's *General Councils and the Catholic Church*. Casalis was used in the *Life of Dominic Savio*, the lives of the popes, and wherever data on local history were needed. Moroni, Beyerlinck, and Ferraris are cited in various works: e.g., *Jubilee Year*, *Religiously Instructed Catholic*, and *Catholic Church and Its Hierarchy*. Rodriguez was used in the introduction to the rules and in conferences, particularly conferences dealing with obedience and the *rendiconto*, or interview with the religious superior.

8. Use of sources

Don Bosco's elaboration of his sources was minimal. At times it seems that he merely selected statements expressing his own sentiments, statements that could easily be inserted into his own writings. Here again we find his tendency to be a popularizer. His is a mind that assimilates a point, simplifies ideas, and then expresses them in his own way. His mental makeup does not seem to have been geared to making universal statements, theorizing, or exploring crucial points of concrete or abstract issues. He is concerned with what should be done in the concrete, how to persuade people and get them to act. His own work proceeded on the basis of intuitions, convictions, maxims, and hopes.

Sometimes we can discern the publication used, or most likely used, by Don Bosco in composing certain pages. His reading and use of sources reveal other features of his mental processes. A typical example is his *Introduction to the Rules of the Salesian Society*. Don Bosco had his eye on *The True Bride of Christ* by St. Alphonsus, but his rough draft is very tortured. He had a hard time trying to summarize the sentences of the saint. Don Bosco begins sentences, does not know how to go on with them, crosses them out. His composition becomes an illegible tangle, and he is forced to rewrite most of it in the margins. In this particular case one might suggest that he was more tired than usual, but the fact is that many other pages written by Don Bosco are in the same state. Perhaps he found it much easier to quote words and phrases from memory than to turn ideas over in his mind and rephrase them.

But even his prodigious memory, wreathed in a halo of legend by his devoted and astonished sons, had its Achilles heel. At times it is uncertain in recalling well worn texts, uncustomary personages, and distant dates. But hadn't Don Bosco read Martini's Bible? Didn't he have a stainless memory? Couldn't he recall pages, volumes, and episodes of Bercastel? At times he certainly gave proof of all that.³⁴ In his pages, nevertheless, we find scriptural citations from memory (quoted by Don Bosco, or by someone else with his approval) that could have been revised in order to reproduce the exact text of the Vulgate. And remember that his *Companion of Youth* and others works might well end up in the hands

³⁴ Various instances from the MB are brought together by Ricaldone, *Don Bosco educatore*, 2, Colle Don Bosco, 1952, pp. 99-104.

of people who would not take kindly to inaccurate citations of the biblical text.³⁵

In fact, various phrases were methodically corrected. In the third edition of his *Catholic in the World*, Eusebius of Caesarea lost the title of saint.³⁶ In his *Companion of Youth* we find the following corrections: *tamquam a facie colubri* becomes *quasi a facie colubri*; *corrumpunt bonos mores colloquia prava* becomes *corrumpunt mores bonos . . .*; *ite, maledicti, in ignem aeternum* becomes *discedite a me, maledicti . . .*; *quae seminaverit homo haec et metet* becomes *quae enim seminaverit homo, haec et metet*.³⁷

Some pages that Don Bosco takes over literally from others seem to be clearer. There almost seems to be more fluency in the pages that he had others (e.g., Father Bonetti) write for him than in those he attempted himself. And generally they are congenial. They dovetail with his convictions and his way of expressing himself, particularly when he is not troubled with the thought of having to write for publication.³⁸

For this reason a discussion of Don Bosco as writer and author cannot wholly resemble discussions of such authors as Manzoni, Leopardi, or even St. Alphonsus. Some writings say on the title page that they were compiled, summarized, or simply done by Father John Bosco. Others have a Preface signed by him (the first edition of the *Companion of Youth*, the *Key to Heaven for the Practicing Catholic*, the *Life of St. Joseph*, etc.). Still others bear someone else's name (e.g., *La città di Rifugio*) or are

³⁵ This was a concern of Don Bosco himself: "Our enemies will have nothing of material importance to criticize us with in regard to this matter, even though they like to harp on little nothings. For them an erroneous citation is a *casus belli*": Letter to Paul Sforzani (member of the Congregation of Pious Schools) of Florence, Turin, March 11, 1860 (*Epistolario* 214). One attack on the *Companion of Youth* from Waldensian circles was entitled *Le Boccie di Don Bosco ossia il giovane provveduto di confusione* (Torre Pellice: tip. Alpina, 1884); the Preface was signed: "Reggio Eugenio contadino."

³⁶ Bosco, *Il cattolico nel secolo*, pt. 1, tratt. 24, Turin, 1883³, p. 160. The designation 'Saint' ('S.') was removed from the plate of the second edition of 1883, of which the third is a stereotype.

³⁷ *Il giovane provveduto*, Turin, 1847, pp. 22, 23, 43, 71; Turin, 1885¹⁰⁵, pp. 21, 22, 46, 69.

³⁸ Backup proof for my assertion here might be found in the use made of DB's pages by authoritative interpreters of his spirit: e.g., Father Peter Ricaldone. For a brief overview of his work see Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982, pp. 272-277.

anonymous. All such works may derive wholly or partially from Don Bosco, expressing his own convictions more or less felicitously insofar as we know them from his actual behavior, his own words, and reports in the various diaries (*Cronachette*).

Insofar as material content is concerned, almost all the published writings contain the work of others as well as that of Don Bosco. The *Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary* is simply an extract from a book published in Saluzzo.³⁹ The *Christian Guide to Virtue and Civility* is a borrowing from a book by Joseph Ansart that was translated into Italian and published in Genoa.⁴⁰ His *Droll Tale of an Old Soldier of Napoleon I* is a consistently felicitous translation of *Papa Civil ou petites réponses à un vieux de la vieille* (Caen, 1853). With respect to the *Droll Facts in the Life of Pius IX*, the main work of Don Bosco was to mark, with red and blue pencil, the incidents to be taken from a book by Huguet: *Lo spirito e il cuore di Pio IX . . .*, Modena, 1867, 2 volumes.⁴¹ The *Election of Leo XIII* (1878) presents a slightly revised version of materials drawn from *Unità cattolica*, *Osservatore romano*, and other journals (still preserved in Rome at the Central Salesian Archives).⁴²

One cannot even hazard the opinion that Don Bosco acted thus because he lacked time, or because the works of one particular period were more personal than those of another period. Even when he was mainly preoccupied with Sunday or Festive Oratories, or with the boarding school at the Pinardi house, he could find plenty of intervals of spare time to retreat to the library of the Turin Convitto or to the home of Joseph Brosio. He could leave household chores and the care of the boys in the hands of Mamma Margaret or Father Alasonatti.⁴³ Nevertheless his biographical treatments of Louis Comollo, Dominic Savio, Michael

³⁹ *Esercizi divoti a Maria Vergine Addolorata e ad alcuni Santi e Beati dell'Ordine de' suoi Servi*, Saluzzo; Lobetti-Bodoni, 1844.

⁴⁰ Ansart, *Lo spirito di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli ossia modello di condotta proposto a tutti gli ecclesiastici, religiosi e fedeli nelle sue virtù nelle sue azioni e nelle sue parole*, Genoa: Antonio Beuf, 1840, 2 vols.

⁴¹ The copy used by DB is in AS 133 Fatti ameni (Droll Facts).

⁴² Many of these newspaper clippings or complete issues are to be found in AS 133 Più (II) bel fiore.

⁴³ These 'disappearances' of DB are certified by Brosio (AS 123), who helped at the Oratory from early 1849, and by Peter Enria (AS 110; 161.1) who was with DB from 1854.

Magone, and Francis Besucco rely heavily on the writings of others, whether cited as such or not. They are largely compilations just as are the *Month of May* and *Devotion to the Mercy of God*; the latter work had borrowed freely from the *Apparecchio alla morte* of St. Alphonsus and the *Tableau de la miséricorde divine* by Nicholas Sylvester Bergier (Besançon, (1821)). Father Michael Rua had a hand in Don Bosco's *History of Italy* (1859) and in the *Rules* of the Salesian Society. The 1870 *Church History* was entrusted to the industry of Father Bonetti, who was also responsible for the complete elaboration of the *Catholic Equipped for Pious Practices*, the dialogues in the *General Councils and the Catholic Church*, and various circulars for the Cooperators. *Wonders of the Mother of God* was compiled by several people, including Father Joseph Bongiovanni who died soon afterwards. The collection of the documents published in the *Oratory of St. Francis de Sales* (1879) and the *Charitable Schools of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales* (1879) was done largely by Father Joachim Berto, who was also responsible for *Favors and Spiritual Graces Granted By the Holy See to the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales* (1881).⁴⁴

La città di refugio (1880) and *La Madre delle grazie ovvero Maria Ausiliatrice* were both 'edited' by Father Lemoyne. But they come from Don Bosco just as surely as does *Devotion to Mary Help of Christians*. Indeed we possess the accounts, often handwritten, by the recipients of favors. On them are Don Bosco's revisions. They were then published under his name or that of Father Lemoyne, whose name had to be used when Archbishop Gastaldi showed annoyance over the publication of such facts as miraculous or wondrous.⁴⁵

The pages of the *Upcoming General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation* are not signed by anyone, but they dovetail with a handwritten draft by Don Bosco.⁴⁶

In short, the presence or absence of Don Bosco's name on the title page of a book may be informative, and then again it may not. The fact and extent of his authorship must be determined on the basis of many different factors, some of which I have briefly treated here.

⁴⁴ See the surviving manuscripts and drafts of the works cited here in AS 133.

⁴⁵ The pertinent writings are in AS 133 *Maria Ausiliatrice*. The graces and favors are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the recipients.

⁴⁶ AS 133 *Capitole generale*. All that is missing is the last sheet regarding the Rule of the General Chapter itself; but it, too, was probably devised by DB.

9. *More personal writings by Don Bosco*

It is in his personal correspondence that Don Bosco is more informal and freer with his pen. This is particularly true of his letters to Salesians, young people of the Oratory and other houses, and benefactors whom he knew personally such as Fassati, Callori, and Cardinal Berardi. In such cases we find the manuscripts free of blotches, his writing free of inhibitions.

Here we have the sober thinking of a hardworking man. He does not indulge in long disquisitions, tackle knotty theoretical problems, or dally over matters more easily considered in face-to-face talk.

A feeling for God and souls is ever present. Religious concern surfaces whenever he is dealing with crucial issues of educating youths or the common people, or with the needs of the Church in general. We find explicit calls to prayer or to trust in the Lord. In the last fifteen years of his life he was particularly inclined to call down God's grace on all: "May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us . . . be always with you . . ."

His pen also flows swiftly when he is describing matters that he has often narrated orally: his childhood years, his early experiences as an educator, his travels. That is why many pages of his *Memoirs of the Oratory* flow freely and evenly, even on his first draft. The same is true of some of his 'dreams'. The redaction is so crystal-clear we are inclined to believe it was preceded by some fact or by some oral or written exposition.⁴⁷

Highly significant for Don Bosco's thought are the documents in which he condenses his principles, experiences, and methods: e.g., his confidential letter to directors (composed as early as 1863 for Father Michael Rua); the draft proposals (1877) and official acts (1878) of General Chapter I; and his so-called "Spiritual Testament," probably drawn up between 1884 and 1886.⁴⁸

10. *Borrowed passages or expressions that he made his own*

A word must be added about phrases and expressions, borrowed from other people's works, that Don Bosco carried from one book of his to

⁴⁷ In AS 132 Oratorio and AS 132 Sogni respectively.

⁴⁸ AS 131.01 Rua 131.02 (Lettera confidenziale ai Direttori); AS 04/1877; AS 132 Quaderni-taccuini. For the "Spiritual Testament" and a good sampling of DB's letters and writings, readers may now consult: Joseph Aubry (ed.), *The Spiritual*

the next. In many instances they are far from being insignificant or impersonal. Like expressions learned at mother's knee, they often express his most basic, deep-rooted, and operative feelings.

We read, for example, that a person should be dedicated to God from youth onward. That was the point of the biblical phrase, *adolescens jura viam suam etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea*, which can be found right at the beginning of Don Bosco's *Companion of Youth*, and which he got from Charles Gobinet's *Instruction de la jeunesse*. Gobinet had been Fénelon's teacher, and he had influenced many pedagogical books of Don Bosco's sort.

Along with the expression went a theological conviction: that the first acts of a human being mark the start of a chain leading to eternal salvation or damnation, depending on whether one does or does not adhere to God's plan of grace. It was this conviction that prompted him to compose a prayer to be recited by children who had barely reached the age of reason.

In Don Bosco's case the phrase had deep personal relevance. He was driven to deal with young people as a matter of urgency because he believed that their eternal salvation depended on their youthful years. He would often back up his conviction with concrete examples. As writer and educator, he kept stressing the importance of dedicating oneself to God in one's early years. We find that stress in his comments on St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Martin, St. Pancratius, Blessed Catherine de Mattei da Racconigi, and Blessed Mary of the Angels. The same conviction was shared by many others besides Gobinet, and Don Bosco could have picked it up from Cepari, Croiset, Pasquale De Mattei (source for the *Six Sundays*), and many other spiritual writers and hagiographers. Michael Magone was the extraordinary type in the divine plan, more like Mary Magdalen or St. Augustine. He was the kind of person who faithfully adheres to God's grace once he has come to know and experience it.

The educational literature with which Don Bosco had ties stressed service to young people. One had to love young people, treat them gently and kindly, help them to avoid evil or correct them, and ensure that their feet would be solidly planted on the right road. It is the message of Rollin, Fénelon, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Lancelot, Pierre

Writings of Saint John Bosco, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1984.

Nicole, Fleury, Pierre Coûtél, and Robbio di S. Raffaele. It can also be found in the works of authors closer to Don Bosco: Aporti, Lambruschini, Timon-David, Dupanloup, and the Barnabite Alexander Teppa. In their works we often find allusions to the Pauline passage about charity being patient and kind, and this is the principle that should motivate the educator of youth.⁴⁹

Thus the writings of Don Bosco are of no little importance, whether they were compiled by himself or other people, whether they contain his own phrases or ones borrowed from others. Indeed I would say that they are essential for any exploration of his personality and his fortunes, which were not unrelated to his use of language. He sought and managed to use language that would put him in tune with the people and contexts which he was working on.

11. *His labors as publisher and publicist*

The success of many of his works was often bound up with his publishing approach and publicity. As time went on, he managed to organize and develop all that on an increasingly vast scale.

The story of his publication of the *Christian Guide to Virtue* is typical. Don Bosco composed the work without too much trouble, then approached Canon Anglesio, rector of the Cottolengo Hospital. He suggested that the canon take three thousand copies for his charges. "But who will pay for them?" asked the canon. Don Bosco said that he would take care of that, so the canon agreed to take the copies. Don Bosco then went to Countess Del Piazzo and suggested that she pay for three thousand copies to be distributed to patients in the Cottolengo Hospital. She promptly agreed.⁵⁰

It is one instance among many. It is difficult, if not impossible, to uncover the infinite pains that Don Bosco took to stir the waters of charitable activity and to win a good reception for his work and its products. Judging by his success, we must admit that he showed great ability as a publisher too.

His *Catholic Readings* was a pocket compilation of moral tales, lives of the saints, works of instruction and apologetics. In itself the format was not a new idea. It was his adaptation of an idea carried out in 1835 in Savoy by the *Bibliothèque des familles chrétiennes*, by similar projects in

⁴⁹ I shall deal with DB's religious outlook in detail in Volume II of this work.

⁵⁰ BM 3:274.

Lille and other French areas, and as early as 1849 in Florence and Turin by periodic pocket editions of 'good books'. Don Bosco's genius was not to create a new format but to take over a good idea and to organize its implementation in an effective, enterprising way.

Although his *Catholic Readings* were typographically and literarily inferior, they outlasted the *Collezione di buoni libri* published in Turin.⁵¹ The *Catholic Readings* were more popular in tone, and Don Bosco made every personal effort to get them into the parishes of Piedmont. He succeeded in getting them to be regarded as a most useful and almost indispensable resource by bishops, priests, wealthy and generous Catholics, teachers, and the humble populace. They helped with money and efforts at wider distribution, so that circulation rose from three thousand to ten thousand while Don Bosco was still alive.⁵² Success was also due to the fact that the simple prose was adapted to the understanding of all, and that it was addressed to people well disposed to religion and hungry for reading material.

When Don Bosco launched the *Salesian Bulletin*, the Catholic publishing market was pretty well saturated with political newspapers and intransigent periodicals for families, professionals, devotees of the missions, and enthusiasts of Marian devotion.⁵³ Don Bosco may have found inspiration in the *Franciscan Annals* published by the Franciscans of Milan from 1870 on, or the *Franciscan Readings* published by the Franciscans of Cuneo from 1871 on. In any case he made the *Salesian Bulletin* an organ for contacting and informing all those who had become interested and involved in his activities, giving much space to missionary news.

⁵¹ The *Collezione di buoni libri* did not get to 1870. There was no real competition between the two, however, since they were on fairly different levels. They did share one author, Jesuit Giovanni Perrone: *Catechismo intorno alla Chiesa Cattolica ad uso del popolo* (LC, a.2, fasc. 8, 9, 10, June 25, July 10 and 25), Turin: tip. dir. da P. De-Agostini, 1854; *Collezione di buoni libri*, a.5, dispensa 19, June 1, 1854. DB also seems to have been familiar with the *Bibliothèque* of Annecy, with whom he shared: Jean-Antoine Le Vachet, *L'artisan chrétien ou vie du bon Henri cordonnier*, Annecy, 1836 (livraison 7e, Italian translation in LC 10 and 25, November 1853); *Théodule, ou l'enfant de bénédiction, modèle pour la jeunesse*, by Father Michel-Ange Marin, Annecy, 1836; *Teodulo . . .*, LC, a. 14, fasc. 6, 1866).

⁵² Solid documentation for the increases in circulation of the LC is offered by the invoices of De-Agostini and Paravia (AS 112 Fatture), which provide documentation up to 1864 at least.

⁵³ See A. Ferrandina, *Censimento della stampa periodica cattolica in Italia*, Asti, 1893, p. 14.

By the time of his death the *Salesian Bulletin* was being published in Italian, French, and Spanish; and its circulation had surpassed one hundred thousand copies.⁵⁴

12. *Motives and incentives behind his writing and publishing*

Don Bosco was a tireless writer, publisher, and propagandist because he was personally convinced that preaching the good news through the press was a service he had to perform for religion. It was a necessary part of his vocation as an educator of youth and the common people. He shared this belief with many of his contemporaries, but his belief was mixed with feelings of apprehension. He knew he was not a polished writer, yet he felt that his language had to be correct if his writing was to be worthwhile and effective and 'beneficial to religion'. This was his aim as a priest, which is what he liked to call himself on the title page of his publications.

It pained him when he did not feel up to a task he had taken on. Humbly and simply he sought and accepted revisions from both the learned and the unlearned; but he also was careful to look over changes proposed to him by others.⁵⁵ For this reason he was very sensitive about anything that was to be printed with his name. Perhaps nowhere are his sentiments expressed better than in the following passage from his Spiritual Testament:

In my sermons, talks, and published books I have always done my best to support, defend, and promote Catholic principles. Nevertheless, if a sentence or a word were to arouse a single doubt or not state the truth properly I would want to take it back in order to correct erroneous thoughts or opinions. Speaking in general, I submit every sentence of every publication to the decision or correction of Holy Mother Church.

Concerning printed matter and future editions, some of my works have been published without any assistance and others against my will. Therefore, I have the following recommendations:

1. I commission my successor to catalogue the last editions of all my published works.
2. Whenever reprints are made, I ask that errors of orthogra-

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Several instances, drawn from the MB, are provided by Ricaldone, *Don Bosco educatore*, II, 172-175.

phy, chronology, language, or meaning be corrected for the good of knowledge and religion.

3. If some of my letters written in Italian should be printed, special attention is to be paid to meaning and doctrine, since, by and large, these letters were written in haste, with considerable likelihood of inaccuracies. The French letters could well be burned, but if someone wanted to publish them, please have people who know French correct them, to make sure they convey the right meaning and do not disparage religion, for the sake of which they were written.

Finally, if someone were to remember facts or events or if there were stenographic records, the entire material must be scrupulously examined and corrected in order to forestall publication of anything which is not in complete agreement with the principles of our holy Catholic religion.⁵⁶

For good reasons Don Bosco had certain fears about his writings, and he judged them with severity. They, like himself, were in humble service to the Church, and they were to be treated accordingly. But ours is a different context today, and so we can be grateful to those Salesians who 'disobeyed' the injunctions of their Father.

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⁵⁶ AS 132 Quaderni-taccuini; published in MB 17:265. Cited here from Aubry (ed.), *The Spiritual Writings of Saint John Bosco*, pp. 355-356.

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CONCLUSION

1. *Don Bosco's death*

The hour of death struck for Don Bosco on January 31, 1888, as he approached his seventy-third birthday. It is not beside the point to note how this last phase of his life was marked by the convictions and activities he had lived so intensely during his years on earth.

It was not a sudden, unexpected death but the slow, inevitable quenching of a flame that had exhausted its fuel. It was not a death accompanied by revelations of heavenly visions or extraordinary signs, such as those that Don Bosco had described in biographies of various figures (Cafasso, Magone, Besucco, and Dominic Savio in particular) or that could be found in biographies of Aloysius Gonzaga and Philip Neri. It was not even like the death described in biographies of St. Alphonsus Liguori: his spirit anxiously yearning and hoping for salvation as he urged bystanders to ponder the salvation of their own souls. Nor was it the spiritually tranquil death, in an atmosphere of serene and loving expectation, that characterized the final earthly days of his patron, St. Francis de Sales. Don Bosco was far more afflicted by his failing strength and the little torments devised by his doctors to keep him alert.

We have two complementary and interrelated accounts of Don Bosco's last days: what he said and did, and what went on around him. One quite detailed report comes from Fathers Viglietti and Lemoyne. The other, briefer and more incomplete, comes from Father Berto, who could not follow everything closely or in a continuous way.¹ Through these

¹ AS 110 Lemoyne, 2 (2 notebooks. The second, written by Father Bonetti, continues events from January 31 to February 6, 1888). Used extensively in MB 18. For some of Don Bosco's last words see Joseph Aubry (ed.), *The Spiritual Writings of Saint John Bosco*, Eng. trans., New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1984, pp. 365-376.

documents we can contemplate what happened in the small chamber of the dying saint without any screen of idealizations.

First of all, the bystanders were in differing states of mind. Father Berto, his trusted secretary for more than a decade (replaced by Father Viglietti in 1883), did not want to see Don Bosco die. He wanted to intervene somehow. He prayed and entreated, offering his own life in exchange for that of the dying man. The same self-offering was made by several young men, including the future Father Orione.

Fathers Viglietti, Lemoyne, and Rua were thoroughly convinced that they were about to lose Don Bosco. Along with their sorrow went a concern to gather the last relics of their common father with the greatest care, to transmit to posterity his last words and acts. Coming at the culminating moment of his life, they would represent his testament. Father Rua, Don Bosco's vicar on whose shoulders would fall the heavy weight of succession, asked him to give his last words, his last blessings and messages for the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Cooperators.

Don Bosco was aware of the parting. These last hours and moments were a bit like those he had so often pondered and described in his prayer for a holy death, he himself lying immobile in bed with his sons around him: "When my feet, immobile, tell me that my course in this world is almost over, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When my hands, numb and trembling, can no longer hold you, my Love on the crucifix, and I cannot help dropping you on my bed of pain: merciful Jesus, have mercy on me . . ." But the immobility of his last days lost the tinge of abstractness that might be sensed in the prayer, for all its hypnotic allure. Note his remark to Father Sala: "You know how exacting I have been about cleanliness, and now I cannot have it. I find myself in filth all the time."² Amid the miseries of his body's decay Don Bosco tried to joke as much as possible, demonstrating not stoicism but the solid roots of his moral strength.

With his mind less watchful, his subconscious stole to the surface. It was a subconscious that had ripened over his many years of intense activity as priest and educator. On the verge of falling asleep, he suddenly jerked awake, clapped his hands, and cried out: "Hurry, hurry quickly to save those young people! . . . Mary Most Holy, help them . . . Mother, Mother!"³

² MB 18:528.

³ MB 18:530.

What a bundle of sentiments! Fear that the youths needed help because they were about to fall into sin. Fear, notice, not confidence at that moment. A feeling of urgency, an appeal to others, knowing he himself could not rush in to help. Fear that his Salesians would not get there in time. His appeal drew on the resources of faith, manifesting his filial trust and confidence in Mary.

"He was often heard to say: 'They're in real trouble!' Then: 'Courage! Keep moving forward . . . always forward!' [Was he thinking of the Salesians or the youths?] Sometimes he called out a particular name. That morning [January 27] he repeated some twenty times: 'Mother! Mother!' In the evening, his hands joined, he called out: 'O Mary! O Mary! O Mary! . . .'"

To those who came to his bedside he bade farewell for the last time. Usually he said something like this: "We will meet again in Paradise . . . Pray for me . . . Have the boys go to Communion for me."

To Father Bonetti he said: "Tell the boys I am waiting for them all in Paradise . . . When you talk or preach, stress frequent Communion and devotion to Mary Most Holy . . . Listen! Tell the Sisters their salvation is certain if they observe the Rules."⁴

No anxious concern for his own fate. His last words for himself were words of prayer and hope addressed to Jesus, Mary, God: "Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul . . . Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit . . . O Mother . . . Mother . . . open the gates of Paradise to me."⁵

For others there were words of fear, counsel, and encouragement, as if to suggest he had more confidence in his own resources than theirs. In the early part of the night (January 28–29), he cried out: "O Paul, my dear Paul, where are you? Why don't you come?" All those in the room were sure that he was calling for Father Paul Albera, then Provincial of the French houses.

A little later he again said: "They're in real trouble!" Bishop Cagliero spoke to him in a loud voice: "Be calm, Don Bosco. We will do everything, everything you want." At that he was seen to make a great effort. He raised his head a moment and said in a steady voice: "Yes, they want to do something but they don't." Then he fell back on his cushion.

At one point he asked: "Who is that there? Who is that boy?" Enria replied: "There's no boy there. It's the coat-stand." But Don Bosco made

⁴ MB 18:533.

⁵ MB 18:537

signs as if someone were near him, then suddenly clapped his hands as he often did when frightening things appeared in his dreams. "Is there anyone there? Is there anyone there?" he cried. "We're here," replied Father Sala, going to his side. Don Bosco's teeth were chattering, as if he were assailed by fever chills.⁶

On the night of January 30, "slowly, very slowly he recited the Act of Contrition. Several times he exclaimed: 'Have mercy on us, O Lord.' From time to time in the middle of the night he raised his arms toward heaven, folded his hands, and said: 'Thy holy will be done.'"⁷

At 12:45 A.M. his secretary and Joseph Buzzetti happened to be alone at his bedside for a moment. He opened his eyes wide, stared twice at Father Viglietti, raised his free left hand and placed it on his head. At this, Buzzetti burst into tears and sobbed out: "The final farewells!" Don Bosco became immobile as before.⁸

It was the last conscious act the bystanders noticed.

2. *Don Bosco: a first appraisal*

Don Bosco's death left his sons and admirers in grief. Mute respect and reflection characterized others who had deeply admired and revered him, even though they were not believers or partisans (in their own eyes at least).

Francis Crispi, as head of government, made an exception and granted permission for Don Bosco to be buried at Valsalice. Crispi was "a not untypical example of certain Italians of the Risorgimento period: areligious in fact, but convinced they had a lofty religiosity of their own and inclined to exalt the idea of a God whose only function was to prop up a stoic ethic."⁹ Crispi was considered, and was in fact, a friend of Don Bosco, though from a distance. Perhaps his state of mind was that of Rattazzi, Nicotera, and Zanardelli. In the quiet atmosphere of familiar conversaton they contemplated the charismatic priest. He was both humble and capable, a man of the people and a man of nobility. His secular education was modest, but his heart was large and his charity peerless.

⁶ MB 18:534 f.

⁷ MB 18:538.

⁸ MB 18:540.

⁹ A.C. Jemolo, *Crispi*, Florence, 1922, p. 137.

He was tireless in his efforts for the neediest classes, towards whom these men felt no less tied by obligation. Nicotera, Rattazzi, and Zanardelli readily let themselves be scrutinized by him, amused to find out whether they were judged great sinners or excommunicated from the Church; but their protective padding was a morality that no longer acknowledged sin or religious confessionalism. They had learned the art of not letting themselves be unnerved or wounded, even by saints whom they might admire and revere.¹⁰

Crispi's doorkeeper, Ciccio Lupo, remembered a visit by Don Bosco. He announced that there was a priest in the parlor: very thin, the same height as the minister, with piercing eyes. "A flash of recognition hit Crispi. Indeed he ran to the parlor. The priest got up. The two embraced. 'We have an illustrious guest with us, Lupo,' said Crispi upon coming back into the room. 'Here he is. Perhaps you will hear people speak of him when I am dead. Kiss his hand. Do you know who this is? His name is Don Bosco'."¹¹

Besides Don Bosco, the man himself and his legacy, we must not forget another factor that helped to account for his success. It was the climate of religious feeling (with or without God) that surrounded him. It brought him love and help, and it won respect for him in Italy and other countries. We see Don Bosco approaching certain people, sometimes attentively and cautiously, sometimes open and ready to accept their affection and give his own in return (with the intention, too, of deriving useful benefits for himself and the Church). Crispi and others may have been convinced that no internal renewal of the Church was possible,¹² approaching Don Bosco for the sake of sympathy or the social usefulness they saw in him. But Don Bosco approached them with the conviction that the Lord was also at work in them to further the welfare of poor and abandoned youths, the salvation of souls, the success of the Salesian Society, and the triumph of the Church. This tendency to make use of people clearly had healthy roots. It was not prompted by self-serving calculation, a quest for personal prestige, or a desire to derive

¹⁰ See BM 12:301–309 for DB's talks with Nicotera, Zanardelli, Depretis and others at Lanzo. The question supposedly asked by Urban Rattazzi was: "Well, am I excommunicated?" (BM 5:283).

¹¹ V. Mar Nicolosi, "Il 'custode' di Crispi," in *Il Giornale d'Italia*, March 13, 1937.

¹² Jemolo, *Crispi*, p. 80.

personal religious profit and save his soul. It was rooted in his sense of God and his concern for others. His own personal salvation was certainly at stake, but Don Bosco sensed that the solution to that problem lay outside himself.

His life, he felt, was first and foremost a dutiful yet perfectly natural response to a divine call. In some respects the ties to medieval religious attitudes and terms were clear: the quest for the ideal, the divine plan to which one was to conform and consecrate oneself. But in other respects his quest was typical of the nineteenth century: not in a hermitage but out in the streets, where he could work for the social and religious rehabilitation of the common people, of poor and abandoned young people in particular.

The problem of his own personal salvation, which may have caused him moments of anxiety in his seminary years, was put in proper balance by the presence of others and by concrete action. He saw himself as part of a group, a family: not its center but a hard-working member and servant sharing responsibility with others.

His attentiveness to others (not only individuals but also the religious and civil situation) helped him to perceive the evolving course of everything and the ever new demands of the times. It also helped him to appreciate the necessity of adapting to the understanding of each individual, to evaluate his own capabilities and those of others, to determine how much he could demand or give, to know when to hold fast and when to let go: with politicians and churchmen, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, benefactors and young people.

The result for him was an education in detachment, an expenditure of energy and money that would scandalize anyone who did not realize that Don Bosco knew how to replenish his resources. It prompted him to make bold use of the press, publicity, young people, his own Salesians, friends, and himself in order to serve the divine plan he was carrying out. Taking off from his dreams, he saw that plan was much vaster than any prudent or modest calculation might imagine. His own personal activity was only an initial phase of it.

Like Catholics of the Romantic age, he had an exalted sense of divine providence at work in human events. Like liberal Catholics, he had a lively sense of God and the people as the justifications for his life. This found expression in his motto, *Da mihi animas caetera tolle*, where 'souls' referred especially to the children of the common people.

Like conservative and intransigent Catholics, he could not see any

political collusion between religion and revolution. As one reared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the religious outlook behind his actions was framed in familial and paternal terms. He viewed things in terms of the Father-son relationship, in terms of command, obedience (or consecration to God), and execution. Another reason for the familial cast was his own experience as a boy who had lost his father. This made him very sensitive to boys in a similar plight, and he ended up becoming their Father.

By natural bent and education, he was alert to the voices of the day. He could not evade the anguish of the Risorgimento, the conflict between national consciousness and religious conscience. Like many intransigent Catholics, he frankly disapproved of many things that led to the unification of Italy. Like many others, he too predicted calamities and divine punishments. Like many liberal Catholics and clerical moderates, he saw the possibility for a common effort in the area of popular education. Like all Catholics, he suffered through the humiliations of the Church and had a keen sense of its transcendent mission.

Unlike many liberals and intransigents, Don Bosco deliberately rejected the political arena. Before many others, he resolutely withdrew after the financial disaster of the *Amico della gioventù: giornale politico-religioso*, which he published in 1849 up to May. But he did not express criticism of those (e.g., Father James Margotti) who stayed in the political arena.

All in all, he saw his life as a commitment to the problem of education almost exclusively. Therein, he felt, lay the overall solution to the problems of religion and society. Out of that basic commitment came the many initiatives that carry on his ideals and *modus operandi* even to this day.

In his achievements we find a vital connection and ongoing interaction between various factors: the milieu, the age, his own temperament and inclinations, and the entreaties of others. The Salesian Society, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Cooperators might not have existed at all, or been what they were, if Don Bosco had not felt the need for them while he was engaged in oratory work and the education of young people in boarding schools; and if he had not also felt committed to his *Catholic Readings* and devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

By the same token, his work with oratories and his earlier work in catechetics might not have taken the same course if Don Bosco had not

seen them as his vocation, as inextricably bound up with his own eternal salvation. He saw them in terms of convictions and viewpoints that had taken root in early childhood and youth. Even though the circumstances were not highly favorable, they had grown into a vital synthesis, combining his own natural sociability and the religious values of his milieu. Thus his childhood and seminary years left their imprint on everything later, rooting his life in a lively sense of God.

We can assume that Don Bosco experienced highly personalized moments, mystical moments if you will, that related directly to his own temperament and experience of the divine rather than to any particular era. But it is risky to say the same thing about the outward manifestations of his inner life and his achievements. All of them seem to be conditioned by, and connected with, the age and place in which he lived. The very terms used by him bear witness to the influence of his milieu and the ongoing development of his own work: the Oratory as a project dedicated to young people, combining local elements and personal touches of Don Bosco himself; the Salesian *Society* (not Congregation); *Mary Help of Christians* (not Mediatrix or Intercessor); Salesian *Cooperators* (not confraternity members or associates).

The strength and vitality of his works are still visible and growing today. His own person can still serve as a model for those who would plumb his secrets, follow his methods, and carry on his mission. In various respects he was indeed a pioneer and forerunner of later developments. Despite all that, Don Bosco's place as educator and saint is firmly rooted and fixed in Risorgimento Italy of the nineteenth century. It is from there that he would come to exercise his distinctive influence on Europe and the world.

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DON BOSCO
AND THE DEATH OF CHARLES

PIETRO STELLA

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AND THE DEATH
OF CHARLES

APPENDIX TO DON BOSCO: LIFE AND WORK

Translated by John Drury

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Don Bosco in the History of Catholic Religious Thought and Practice

- Volume I Don Bosco: Life and Work
- Volume II Don Bosco: Religious Outlook and Spirituality
- Volume III Don Bosco: Later Influence and Continuing Significance
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ABBREVIATIONS

- AS Archivio Salesiano: The Salesian central archive in Rome
- BM *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. An American edition translated from the original Italian (see MB below). Rev. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B., Editor-in-Chief. New Rochelle, NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-.
- DA Documentary Accounts at the end of this monograph.
- Documenti* *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco . . .* (AS 110).
- Indice* MB E. Foglio, *Indice analitico delle Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco nei 19 volumi*, Turin, 1948.
- MB G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco . . .*, then, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco . . .*, S. Benigno Canavese-Turin, 1898-1917, Volumes 1-9.
 G.B. Lemoyne and A. Amadei, *Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco*, Volume 10, Turin, 1938.
 E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco . . .*, Volumes 11-15, Turin, 1930-1934.
 E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*, Volumes 16-19, Turin, 1935-1939.
 (See BM above)

Introduction

Some time ago the *Memorie biografiche* of Saint John Bosco, a monumental work in nineteen volumes, began to attract the attention of scholars dealing with the nineteenth century. In the annotated bibliography added to the Italian translation of Roger Aubert's *Le pontificat de Pie IX*, Father James Martina describes the *Memorie biografiche* as a "first-rate historical document based on the direct narration of Don Bosco and only a short remove from the events narrated." And he adds: "Although dealing mainly with facts having to do with the growth of the Salesians, the *Memorie* contains noteworthy particulars about many contemporary events."¹

Even earlier the *Memorie* had been used by Massè.² Now an English translation is being undertaken by the Salesians of the United States. Unlike the Italian edition, the American edition is available for sale to the reading public.³

In his important doctoral thesis on the first volume of the *Memorie*, a volume which covers the life of the saint up to his ordination as a priest in 1841, Salesian Father Francis Desramaut brings out the method of the volume's author, John Baptist Lemoyne. A Salesian from 1864 on, Father Lemoyne was entrusted in 1883 with the task of gathering documentation on Don Bosco and his works, under the supervision of Don Bosco himself.⁴

With great conscientiousness Lemoyne did the work of a fine compiler. He brought together, sometimes in their actual literary form, doc-

¹ R. Aubert, *Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans., p. 17.

² D. Massè, *Il caso di coscienze del Risorgimento*, Alba: 1961².

³ See BM in the list of Abbreviations.

⁴ F. Desramaut, *Les Memorie I de Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. Etude d'un ouvrage fondamental sur la jeunesse de saint Jean Bosco* (Lyon: 1962).

uments and oral sources of information stemming partly from Don Bosco and partly from other witnesses who may or may not have given depositions at the diocesan information-gathering process in connection with Don Bosco's beatification.

As I see it, Father Desramaut's work was mainly that of literary criticism. He was concerned to pinpoint the sources employed by Father Lemoyne and to see how he used them as a compiler right up through the final published text. Only rarely does Desramaut check the objective value of the sources by comparing the data used by Lemoyne with other outside data. The literary critic may well be satisfied with the minute and careful analysis done by Desramaut, but the historian cannot help but feel a little apprehensive. It turns out that many of Lemoyne's sources are much later than the events described; hence their real value, beyond what they had for Lemoyne as a writer, must be more carefully weighed and judged.

By way of justifying this assertion, in this monograph I would like to analyze one of the most fascinating episodes in the life of Don Bosco: the temporary resurrection of a youth named Charles. Lemoyne writes that Charles died one morning in 1849, reawakened to life in the afternoon at Don Bosco's call, made his Confession, and after a while fell asleep in the Lord once more. Lemoyne devotes almost eight pages to the episode (MB 3:495-503; see BM 3:349-355), of which the last five pages provide testimony to the authenticity of the event.

1. *The Charles of tradition*

The oldest account for the general public dates from 1881 and comes from Charles d'Espiney, a doctor in Nice. He had close relations with the Salesians, who had established themselves in Nice in 1875. He was also a devoted admirer of Don Bosco, readily offering him his services as a physician on more than one occasion.⁵

The *Dom Bosco* of D'Espiney is an anecdotal profile, a fluid presentation of brief episodes.⁶ From annotations by Father Michael Rua to

⁵ Charles d'Espiney died in Nice on April 13, 1891. His obituary is in the *Bulletin salésien*, 13 (1891), pp. 92-94.

D'Espiney is also cited with regard to *Grigio* ('Grey'), the dog who helped Don Bosco in critical situations on several occasions: *Bollettino sal.*, 6 (1882), p. 13; *Bulletin sal.*, 4 (1882), p. 55.

⁶ D'Espiney, *Dom Bosco* (Nice: typographie et lithographie Malvano-Mignon, 1881).

a letter of D'Espiney we learn that in Turin, where the doctor had sent his manuscript, people wanted more historical accuracy and indeed hoped that the whole work would be recast.⁷ D'Espiney asked to have the manuscript back, perhaps revised it here and there, and sent it to press a year later.

The episode of the resurrected youth concludes the biography. D'Espiney entitled it, "Arise!" We are reminded of the words that Jesus spoke to the son of the widow of Naim. The episode is placed in Rome. Don Bosco supposedly rushed there from Florence. As we shall see, the whole event is narrated in such a way as to focus attention on its miraculous nature.⁸

Don Bosco was displeased by this undesired publicity. From a letter of Salesian Father Louis Cartier, who was director in Nice from 1886 to 1902, we learn that the saint did not fail to complain to D'Espiney about the matter, while not denying that the event had happened and dodging D'Espiney's pressing questions designed to make him admit that he had in fact resurrected a dead person.⁹

Don Bosco's reaction certainly would explain why D'Espiney's biography did not at first meet with a very cordial reception in official Salesian circles. The *Salesian Bulletin* presented explicit notices of the *Don Bosco* by Albert du Boys, published in Paris in 1883, while barely mentioning the work by the doctor in Nice.¹⁰ Yet D'Espiney's biography had its own little share of success. The second and third reprintings came

⁷ "Okay, but changes are required [in the manuscript] in several places: (1) some mistakes in chronology; (2) eliminate something not suitable in these times." Annotation to letter from D'Espiney, Nice: July 15, 1880. AS 123 D'Espiney.

Elsewhere D'Espiney himself expressed uncertainty about the period in which he placed the Charles episode: "The facts have been told to me with so many variations that I fear many inaccuracies." To D. [Rua], Nice: June 21, 1880.

⁸ See DA 1. The account of Charles with D'Espiney's circumstances passed to M. Spinola, *Don Bosco y su obra por el obispo de Mila* (Barcelona: 1884) p. 47 f. Spinola commented: "Such miracles and others, too many to recount, prove that D. Bosco is a true miracle worker."

⁹ See DA 12.

¹⁰ A. du Boys, *Don Bosco et la Pieuse Société des Salésiens* (Paris: Jules Gervais, 1883). The Italian translation appeared the next year and went through several printings (S. Benigno Canavese: tip. e libr. Salesiana).

The respective notices are in: *Bulletin salésien*, 6 (1884), pp. 64, 83 f.; *Bollettino salesiano*, 8 (1884), p. 119 f.

The *Bulletin* alludes to D'Espiney also, whose intention had been "to spotlight the wondrous intervention of the omnipotent goodness of Mary Help of Christians" (p. 64).

in 1882, with no changes in the episode of Charles.¹¹ His work may have inspired the extemporaneous verses by a seminarian of Saint-Sulpice in Paris:

Don Bosco a fait de grands miracles,
Ressuscité des morts, et rendu des oracles. . .¹²

His work certainly helped to foster the atmosphere of sympathy and veneration that surrounded Don Bosco in France, particularly in 1883. That same year a new edition appeared in Nice. It was a revised and enlarged edition, now without the episode of Charles.¹³

Its official entry into the Salesian world came in 1888 with the tenth edition. It was completely revised and considerably enlarged, and the subtitle expressly indicated that the work was “approved by the Salesians.”¹⁴ In the *Salesian Bulletin* Father Cartier vouched for the author’s credentials: “The close and constant relationship that M. d’Espiney has always enjoyed with Don Bosco himself, with Father Rua, Don Bosco’s vicar and now his successor, with Father Durando and the entire Superior Chapter of Turin, and with the *Patronage Saint Pierre* in Nice, gives his account an air of authority on which the reader can rely.”¹⁵ In the new edition facts and events were arranged chronologically. The resurrection of Charles no longer figures in the book.

★ ★ ★

The handing down of the episode was to be entrusted to a much more authoritative document, on which later tradition would be based: the *Memorie biografiche* of Don Bosco written by Salesian Father John Baptist Lemoyne (1839–1916).

The resurrection of Charles is narrated with many details in Volume III, which appeared in 1903.¹⁶ The redaction of the MB may seem to be

¹¹ Nice: Malvano–Mignon, 1882.

¹² “Don Bosco worked great miracles/ raised the dead and delivered oracles” (*Bulletin salésien*, 53 (1931), p. 167 f.; MB 16:172, footnote).

¹³ C. d’Espiney, *Dom Bosco*. . . *Louée soit Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice*, New Edition (Nice: Impr. et Libr. du Patronage St.-Pierre, 1883).

¹⁴ C. d’Espiney, *Dom Bosco*. . . *dixième édition entièrement refondue et enrichie d’un grand nombre de faits inédits. Ouvrage approuvé par les Salésiens et orné du portrait*. . . (Nice: Impr. ed Libr. du Patronage St.-Pierre, 1888). The first notice in the *Bollettino* is in the book notices of November (p. 4). The first Italian version of the eleventh French edition was published in Genoa: S. Pier d’Arena, 1890. Numerous reprintings, editions, and translations into other languages followed.

¹⁵ *Bulletin salésien*, 10 (1888), p. 97.

¹⁶ *Memorie biografiche di don Giovanni Bosco* raccolte dal sac. salesiano Giovanni

quite unitary. In actual fact it involved continual retouches and, above all, additions, most of which can be reconstructed and evaluated today.

Lemoyne states that he heard Don Bosco himself narrate the episode at the Salesian school of Borgo San Martino in 1882.¹⁷ That account—and another earlier one mentioned by Father Julius Barberis in a diary (*Cronichetta*) of 1876—may well have served as the main inspiration for the version that Lemoyne put together, while Don Bosco was still alive, for the third volume of the *Documenti per scrivere la storia di Don Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione salesiana*.¹⁸

Examining the entire volume, I could not find any item that might enable us to determine exactly when Lemoyne drew up the episode about Charles. Inadequate for our purpose here, for example, is the biographical note on Canon Ortalda, founder of the Apostolic Schools in Turin, who died in 1881.¹⁹ But from a letter to Bishop John Cagliero dated December 7 (1885 or 1886), we learn that Lemoyne already had prepared more than two hundred chapters on the life of Don Bosco up to 1859, and that he had arranged and written material up to 1865.²⁰ So we have good reason to assume that Lemoyne had already composed the account of the resurrected youth before December 1886.

Batt, Lemoyne, ediz. extra-commerciale (S. Benigno Canavese: Scuola tipografica e libreria salesiana, 1903), III, 495–500. See heading MB in the list of Abbreviations. Citations of this particular volume are given as follows in this monograph: (e.g.) MB 3:500/14–23 refers to Volume 3, page 500, lines 14–23.

¹⁷ MB 3:500/14–23. Lemoyne was already a priest when he entered the Oratory on October 18, 1864. His statement is reproduced by Father Eugenio Ceria in the volume covering the events of 1882. The episode is placed in July, when Don Bosco went to Borgo for the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga (BM 15:476–477).

¹⁸ See DA 2 and DA 14. The *Documenti* are oversize volumes with black cloth covers. On the spine the number of the volume is printed in gold at the top, in Roman numerals. In the center is a picture of Mary Help of Christians. At the bottom the years covered in a given volume are noted. The volumes are made up of thick, blank sheets. Pasted on them are long lists of paper on which are printed the account elaborated by Lemoyne and documents properly so called, reproduced from original and printed manuscripts or from copies of various sorts. Often clippings from newspapers or other printed matter have also been pasted or inserted into the volumes.

Thus every page has a column of printed matter and a blank column on which Lemoyne made additions or corrections. The binding was done after the work of pasting and inserting various printed items. The numbering of the pages was done last.

¹⁹ *Documenti* III, 287 f.

²⁰ Reported by Desramaut, *Les Memorie* I, p. 59, n. 11.

Examination of the *Documenti* will enable us to better appreciate the editing work that went into the text in the MB. The episode is placed in 1847 in the *Documenti*. The youth in question is described in sufficiently informative terms. In the MB the more obvious particulars would be eliminated:

***Documenti* III, 169**

"A boy of fifteen who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of D. Bosco fell seriously ill in 1847 and soon found himself at death's door. He lived in the *Gelso Bianco* restaurant [*trattoria*] at the corner of Carmine and Quartieri Streets and was the son of the innkeeper [*albergatore*]."

MB 3:495/22-26

"A boy of fifteen, named Charles, who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, fell seriously ill in 1849, and soon found himself at death's door. He lived in a restaurant [*trattoria*] and was the son of the innkeeper [*albergatore*]."

The section in the *Documenti* for marginal additions bears only three notes in Lemoyne's hand. With slight revision they went into the MB. These additions are given in *italics* below:

***Documenti* III, 169**

"A day and a half later he died, *manifesting the desire* to speak with D. Bosco."

MB 3:496/2-3

"A day and a half later he died, often asking to speak with Don Bosco."

MB 3:496/9-10

"... he met a waiter, and immediately asked him for news of the youth, but this man replied [...]"

"... he first met a waiter, of whom he immediately asked news of the sick person: —
You have come too late, he replied [...]"

MB 3:497/7-9

"... if you only knew [...] I have had a dream that scared me greatly [...]"

"... if you only knew [...] I have had a dream that scared me greatly [...]"

Contrary to what some have stated²¹, not only did Lemoyne not destroy or disperse the original documents he used to compose the bi-

²¹ Ceria, MB 15:11; Desramaut, *Les Memorie* I, p. 62.

ography of Don Bosco, he did not even destroy the copy he often made of them and the rough draft of the elaborated text he drew from the *Documenti* for the final draft of the MB.²²

Some of this rough draft has been preserved for us, making sufficiently clear the annalistic approach of the biographer. He arranged the items chronologically, almost always wrote them on separate sheets of foolscap size, and noted the year at the top in blue pencil. If he was unsure of the precise year, he noted the range of years within which certain episodes were to be placed.

As his work progressed and the mass of transcriptions mounted, however, for facts relating to Don Bosco's last years he sometimes used the back of sheets on which he had written episodes that were put in the early volumes of the MB. This happened with the sheet containing the resurrection of Charles. We now possess only half of that sheet. Originally of foolscap size, the lower half has been torn off. The halfsheet contains only the opening sentences. Comparing it with the *Documenti* and the MB, we find that the sequence of the three redactions is clear and fixed: i.e., the rough draft depends on the *Documenti* and precedes the MB. Note the additions and variants that clearly place the rough draft before the MB: *named Charles; 1849; in a restaurant (trattoria); seeing him in danger; he died, often asking to speak with Don Bosco. . .*

***Documenti* III, 169**

"A boy of fifteen who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of D. Bosco fell seriously ill in 1847 and soon found himself at death's door. He lived in the *Gelso Bianco* restaurant [*trattoria*] at the corner of Carmine and Quartieri streets and was the son of the innkeeper [*albergatore*].

110 (3) Lemoyne, 1849

"A boy of fifteen, *named Charles*, who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, fell seriously ill in *1849* and soon found himself at death's door. He lived *in a restaurant* [*trattoria*] not far from the church on Carmine Street and was the son of the Innkeeper [*Albergatore*].

MB 3:495/22-32;

496/1-5

A boy of fifteen, *named Charles*, who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, fell seriously ill *in 1849*, and soon found himself at death's door. He lived *in a restaurant* [*trattoria*] and was the son of the innkeeper [*albergatore*].

²² AS 110 (3) Lemoyne. This escaped Desramaut, but few sheets refer to Volume I of the MB.

Documenti III, 169

Seeing the danger, the doctor advised his parents to ask him to go to Confession, and they, grief-stricken, asked their son what priest he wanted to be called for him. He showed a great desire that they call in his ordinary confessor, who was D. Bosco. They sent for him immediately, but with *great* [*gran*] *regret* the response was that he was out of Turin. The youth displayed a *profound* grief and asked for the assistant parish priest who soon came. A day and a half later he died, *manifesting the desire to speak* with D. Bosco.

Arriving home after two days, D. Bosco was immediately told that they had been there seeking him for that youth."

110 (3) Lemoyne, 1849

Seeing him in danger, the doctor advised his parents to ask him to go to Confession, and they, grief-stricken, asked their son what priest he wanted to be called for him. He showed a great desire that they call in his ordinary confessor, who was D. Bosco. They sent for him immediately, but with *great* [*grande*] *regret* the response was that he was out of Turin. The youth displayed a *great* grief and asked for the assistant parish priest who soon came. A day and a half later he died, *often asking to speak* with D. Bosco.

Barely returned home, Don Bosco was immediately told that they had been there *several times* seeking him for that youth."

MB 3:495/22-32;

496/1-5

Seeing him in danger, the doctor advised his parents to ask him to go to Confession, and they, grief-stricken, asked their son what priest he would like to be called for him. He showed a great desire that they call in his ordinary confessor, who was D. Bosco. They sent for him immediately, but with *great* [*grande*] *regret* the response was that he was out of Turin. The youth displayed a *great* grief and asked for the assistant parish priest who soon came. A day and a half later he died, *often asking to speak* with D. Bosco.

Barely returned home, Don Bosco was immediately told that they had been there several times seeking him for that youth."

Lemoyne returned to the Charles episode (very probably before composing his draft for the MB) in Volume XLIII of the *Documenti*. On the spine of that volume we read: *Additions from 1815 to 1842*. In fact, it contains records and documentation for later years as well, up to 1882; and it seems to have been compiled in 1891-92 with the help of records of Father John Bonetti.²³

²³ Desramaut would place the first lines of Volume XLIII in 1892 (*Les Mémoires*

Insofar as Charles is concerned, the first thing we note is that the dialogue between Don Bosco and the waiter who reported the youth's death to him at the door of the *Gelso Bianco* is rephrased in Piedmont dialect.²⁴ That dialogue had already found a place in *Documenti* III, and the MB drew its dialogue directly from there.²⁵

We also find some notes regarding what took place between Don Bosco and Charles:

“Scarcely had Don Bosco blessed him, he stirred, turned around and immediately began to say: ‘It was a bad companion!’ ”

In the MB, reference to the blessing is included in the various acts that Don Bosco performed to awaken the youth.²⁶ The phrase, “It was a bad companion,” completed with an instrumental complement (“with his discourses”) was placed after a series of exclamations, part of which Lemoyne had noted in *Documenti* III and part of which he had drawn from the sources I shall soon present.²⁷

Another series of additions deals with the handing down of the event and the guarantees for its truthfulness: the first echoes among the young people of the Oratory, the attestation of a Christian Brother, exposition of the event deriving from Don Bosco himself (specifically at Borgo San Martino in 1882, where Lemoyne himself was a witness who heard it).

All these particulars went into the MB.²⁸ They indicate that Lemoyne saw more clearly the need to document his statements as well as possible by supporting himself with the authority of various witnesses. He could now avail himself of this sort of documentation, thanks to a new event: the diocesan information-gathering process for the beatification of Don Bosco, which opened in 1891.

The resurrection of Charles was recalled by two laymen: Peter Enria, a Salesian Coadjutor; and John Bisio, a former student of the Oratory.

I, p. 59). Lemoyne's manuscript composition would have gone on during the preceding year. As the pages proceed, we find citations of documents of successive dates: February 18 (p. 91); March 14 (p. 146); March 18 and October 9 (p. 356); December 2 (p. 371); February 22, 1891 (p. 432). But even if the final compilation is carried to 1892, it has no significant impact on what I have to say here.

²⁴ See DA 3 and DA 15.

²⁵ MB 3:496/9–16.

²⁶ MB 3:496/30.

²⁷ MB 3:497/15.

²⁸ MB 3:499 f.

Their way of expressing themselves indicates clearly that their texts, unlike other texts, are independent of Lemoyne's *Documenti*.²⁹ While agreeing on the substance of the event, both have their own terminology and circumstances that Lemoyne would readily find to contradict what he had known and written.

Enria seems to have placed the event in the Oratory, as if the youth were a boarder lying in the infirmary: "Don Bosco went to the infirmary to see him."³⁰ The mistake is not inexplicable. As Lemoyne notes in the MB, Enria was one of the youths whose family was devastated by cholera in 1854, and it was only in that year that he entered the Oratory.³¹ He became an expert infirmarian at Valdocco, and he served Don Bosco elsewhere in that capacity as well.³²

According to John Bisio, the youth was named Louis and would have died without the sacraments in the absence of Don Bosco.³³ But as Lemoyne tells us once again in the MB, Bisio entered the Oratory in 1864.³⁴

Both Enria and Bisio heard the story from others. Enria alludes to two oldtime youths of the Oratory: Joseph Buzzetti, already dead in 1891, and Charles Tomatis, still alive at the time.³⁵ Bisio claims he heard the story from 'some' of the first pupils of the Oratory and from Teresa Martano, by then deceased.³⁶

²⁹ That was not the case with some of the witnesses (Barberis, Berto, Lemoyne. . .). See Desramaut, *Les Memorie I*, pp. 192–202.

³⁰ See DA 5.

³¹ MB 3:499/8.

³² Enria was born in S. Benigno Canavese on June 20, 1841. He entered the Oratory on September 6, 1854. He died on June 21, 1898 (Secretariat General of the Salesian Superior Council, registered list of deceased confrères).

³³ See DA 6.

³⁴ MB 3:499/9. John Bisio was born in Capriata d'Orba on April 23, 1837. He entered the Oratory on August 2, 1864, after completing military service. He was fifty-seven when he gave a deposition at the diocesan process on March 26–27, 1895. He said he was a businessman, proprietor, and father of a family. See *Processo diocesano per la beatificazione di D. Bosco*, manuscript copy in AS 161.1/25 (the text that Lemoyne had in hand). File data on Bisio in the so-called *Anagrafe dei giovani* (Register of youths), AS 38, Turin–S. Franc. di Sales, covering enrollment from 1847 to 1869. Bisio died in Piossasco (Turin) on August 12, 1905.

³⁵ On Buzzetti and Tomatis see footnotes 42 and 50 and their related texts in this monograph.

³⁶ Teresa Martano, a native of Chieri, was a maid for the family of Count Rademaker in Turin. See BM 2:135, 245 f.

The contradictions have to do with secondary matters, not substantive ones. Lemoyne must have noted them, but he did make use of both reports. Let me present each in turn with the corresponding text of the MB, first that of Bisio, then that of Enria:

Bisio

"Drawing near his bed, he uncovered his face [. . .] The youth opened his eyes and exclaimed: 'Oh you, D. Bosco! I longed so much to see you. You did well to come to see me and wake me because I have had such a terrible dream that scared me awfully. I seemed to be on the edge of a furnace, and I saw many ugly monsters who wanted to throw me in. But there was a lady there who opposed it, saying—Wait, he has not yet been judged. This struggle had gone on for a long time when you, D. Bosco, woke me up.'"

MB 3:497/3–23

"[. . .] he uncovered his face. He [. . .] opened his eyes [. . .] and said: '[. . .] Oh! D. Bosco! Oh! If you only knew! I longed so much to see you [. . .] You did so well to come and wake me! [. . .]

I have had a dream that scared me greatly. I dreamed of being on the edge of a huge furnace and fleeing from many devils who were pursuing me and trying to catch me. They were just about to push me over and hurl me into that fire when a lady stepped in between me and those ugly monsters, saying—Wait, he has not yet been judged. After some time of anguish, I heard your voice calling me and I woke up [. . .]."

In this passage we can very clearly see Lemoyne's concern not to lose any *new* detail. In *Documenti* III, he had simply written: "I dreamed of fleeing from many devils who wanted to catch me, and who were just about to push me over and hurl me in the inferno, when I heard you call me."³⁷ In the MB, Lemoyne not only introduces the 'lady' but is also anxious not to lose the detail of the 'ugly monsters', while still retaining the 'devils' already explicit in the *Documenti*.

Enria's account is brief and it offers only one new thing: one phrase.

Enria

"He heard his Confession and then said to him: 'Goodbye, until we meet in heaven', and the youth expired."

MB 3:498/11

"Goodbye, then, until we meet in heaven."

³⁷ See DA 2.

The words put in Don Bosco's mouth tell us that Lemoyne is basing himself on Enria's testimony at the diocesan proceedings, not on the account that Enria drew up privately for his deposition. In the latter account we find slight variations. For example, he puts the words of farewell cited above in the mouth of the dying youth.³⁸

One redaction that we would not expect to serve as a source for the MB is that of D'Espiney. We do not know whether Lemoyne was aware of Don Bosco's reservations about D'Espiney's account of the Charles episode. We do not know how Lemoyne finally interpreted Don Bosco's desire that the resurrection of Charles not be spoken of. Did Lemoyne share D'Espiney's view that Don Bosco had said that out of humility? Finally, we do not even know when or how Lemoyne came to know of the French text, of which there is no trace in his redaction of the *Documenti*.

From D'Espiney he borrowed the most sensational passage, the one that might well have displeased Don Bosco the most since it clearly highlighted the miraculous interpretation of the event. And it did so with circumstantial details that Don Bosco may well have known to be as fanciful as others: e.g., placing the episode in Rome and attributing an attitude of intractable impenitence to the dying youth.

D'Espiney

"When Don Bosco entered his room, he found him lifeless on his funeral bed.

'Leave me alone', he said; and when everyone had left, he began to pray. Then, in a loud voice and a commanding tone, he called the dead person three times: 'Charles, arise! Charles, arise! Charles arise!' Lo and behold, Charles sat up."

MB 3:496/20-21; 28-32

"Don Bosco [. . .] was immediately ushered into the death room [. . .] Turning to the one who had brought him in, he said: 'Withdraw. Leave me alone'. After reciting a brief but fervent prayer, he blessed [him] and called the youth twice in an imperative tone: 'Charles, Charles, get up!' At that voice the dead [one] began to stir."

First, let us notice a point where Lemoyne varies from D'Espiney. The latter wrote that Don Bosco called the dead youth three times whereas Lemoyne says only twice. The change is due to Lemoyne's desire to harmonize the various accounts. John Bisio was the one to claim that Don Bosco called the dead youth twice, and that the youth's name was Louis.

³⁸ See DA 5.

The concluding dialogue between Don Bosco and Charles also derives from D'Espiney:

D'Espiney

"Don Bosco [. . .] embraced him and said to him: 'My son, you are now in the state of grace; heaven is open to you. Do you want to go there or remain with us?'

'I want to go to heaven', replied the young man; and he immediately fell back lifeless."

MB 3:498/7-13

"At last, Don Bosco said to him: 'Now you are in God's grace; heaven is open to you. Do you want to go up there or remain here with us?'

'I want to go to heaven', replied the youth [. . .]

And the boy let his head fall back on the pillow, closed his eyes, did not sitr, and fell asleep in the Lord again."

Comparing the MB redaction with the original text of the *Documenti* III, we can see that the inclusion from D'Espiney simply damages the overall account. Further on in the MB, Lemoyne notes that "Don Bosco had acted with the greatest simplicity *in stating* that the youth was not dead."³⁹ But it seems that he acted with the same simplicity in all his behavior during this episode. According to the account of the *Documenti*, unaffected by other reports except for that of D'Espiney, there was nothing staged or ritualistic in Don Bosco's behavior, nothing to suggest that Don Bosco was preparing or asking for anything extraordinary. According to the *Documenti*: "Don Bosco drew near him and thought: Who knows if he made a good Confession! Who knows what fate awaited his soul?" These phrases, particularly the first, might well indicate what Don Bosco was really thinking at that moment; for he, of course, was always concerned with the problem of the soul's salvation.

The simplicity and naturalness of the events are not affected at all by what is added in the *Documenti* regarding Don Bosco: "After reciting a brief prayer, he called the dead [one] by name." This phrase survives in the MB, but the influence of D'Espiney's account has wrought changes in it: " 'Leave me alone'. After reciting a brief but fervent prayer. . . " At Don Bosco's call, the youth stirred and his mother (according to the *Documenti*), "frightened by this spectacle and outside herself, went out and started calling people."

The command borrowed from D'Espiney ("Leave me alone.") should

³⁹ See MB 3:498/15-16.

have caused some alteration of the text of the *Documenti*, but Lemoyne likes to harmonize his accounts. The order is addressed to the one who escorted Don Bosco to the room. The youth's mother remains in the room so that she can witness to the two calls issued in an imperative tone: "Charles, Charles, get up!"

On the basis of the account in the *Documenti* III, we can picture Don Bosco approaching the corpse, surrounded by weeping relatives. Don Bosco is concerned about the state of the youth's soul. He senses that there is still time and affectionately whispers the youth's name. It is the very human gesture of calling him and trying to rouse him, if that is still possible.

D'Espiney's text transforms everything. Don Bosco's attitude is already that of a miracle worker, like Elijah before the son of the widow of Sarephath or Jesus before the daughter of Jairus. He is certain of the death, yet full of the strength that gets him a miracle.

Thanks to D'Espiney's account, the second and last death agony of the youth is also raised to the level of the completely miraculous in the MB. In the *Documenti* we read only: "He stayed that way about two hours [. . .] Then he expired again." The MB and D'Espiney report him dying in a flash, right after he expresses his desire to go to paradise. It is as if the miracle worker, who had obtained his resurrection in the first place, had stepped in here again.

In support of his own account Peter Enria appealed to the testimony of Charles Tomatis. Whether at the suggestion of Lemoyne or someone else, Tomatis was interviewed by Salesian Father John Garino, a native of Busca, which was not far from Tomatis's native area and residence: Fossano. The interview took place on two dates: March 28 and July 5, 1901. We have Garino's handwritten report of the two meetings.⁴⁰ In the interview of March 28, Tomatis spoke of his first encounter with Don Bosco in terms that made their way literally into the MB. This assures us that Garino's pages got into Lemoyne's hands in time enough for him to use them for the resurrection of Charles as well.⁴¹ Asked specifically about that incident, Tomatis replied that he didn't recall that at all. His statement was a serious matter. Born in 1833, Tomatis began to attend

⁴⁰ AS 123, Tomatis. See the testimony of July 5, 1901, in DA 8.

⁴¹ MB 3:175/1-10 is transcribed literally from his first account (see BM 3:118). The testimony and wording of Tomatis appears elsewhere in the MB: on DB's multiplication of chestnuts in 1849 (MB 3:576/15-16; 578/1-2; see BM 3:404-405) and on a malignant pustule (MB 3:595/19-24; BM 3:419).

Don Bosco's place in 1847. He began to live at the Oratory on November 5, 1849; and he stayed there for more than a decade, up to February 1861.⁴²

In the MB Lemoyne did not mention the name, Tomatis, nor did he eliminate the phrase he had already put in the *Documenti* XLIII: "the report went undisputed at the Oratory for many years."⁴³ But Tomatis may also have influenced Lemoyne in introducing reasons why the event did not create a 'big stir' in the city.

Father Garino does appear among the witnesses, however.⁴⁴ He had entered the Oratory in 1857, at the age of twelve. His testimony does not go back directly to Don Bosco, but to others at the Oratory who spoke about the incident: "I recall that being told. . ."⁴⁵

After the testimony of Garino, Lemoyne must not have had any other concrete documents that could have enriched the MB text. Lemoyne's exposition was elaborated in three parts: a detailed account of the resurrection of Charles; the reasons why the fact made just a stir at the Oratory and went undisputed, even though there was no talk of it elsewhere; and mention of the persons who guaranteed the veracity of the events narrated.

Besides such witnesses as Garino, Enria, Bisio, Martano, Father Anthony Sala, and the Christian Brother, three others should be mentioned: Father Bonetti, Cardinal John Cagliero, and Father Michael Rua. John Bonetti had died on May 21, 1895. His testimony indicated that the tradition was alive more than five years after the event, since he had entered the Oratory on July 10, 1855.⁴⁶ Salesian John Cagliero (1838–1926), who later became a Cardinal, arrived at the Oratory of Castelnovo d'Asti on November 3, 1851.⁴⁷

The testimony of Michael Rua is of particular importance. Born in Turin on June 9, 1837, he came to know Don Bosco as early as

⁴² *Anagrafe dei giovani*, which is confirmed by an older register handwritten by DB, *Repertorio domestico*, f. 10r: "The Tomatis youth came with D. Bosco on November 5, 1849. Sig. D. Barberis gave me the alms-donation for said youth, November 10, 1849." See AS 132 Quaderni (Notebooks).

⁴³ See DA 3; MB 3:498/24.

⁴⁴ John Baptist Garino was born in Busca on April 19, 1845; entered the Oratory on October 13, 1857; died there, a Salesian priest, on April 25, 1908 (Secretariat General of the Salesian Superior Council, registered list of deceased confrères).

⁴⁵ See DA 8.

⁴⁶ *Anagrafe dei giovani*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

September 1845 and began to attend the Oratory regularly in 1849.⁴⁸ His penchant for exactness and his close familiarity with Don Bosco for more than forty years lend great weight to his assertions. Those assertions are cited by Lemoyne in the MB, and we also possess a manuscript report of them: "When I was attending the elementary grades in the school of the Christian Brothers in Turin in 1849. . . Don Bosco often came to hear our Confession. And I recall hearing him tell us in a sermon of a youth named Charles. . ."⁴⁹

The other witness given special emphasis by Lemoyne is Joseph Buzzetti, a Salesian Coadjutor, who died in Lanzo Torinese on July 13, 1891.⁵⁰ Writes Lemoyne: "Although he did not see the event, he unquestionably did hear of it immediately afterward from one who had been present, for, years later, he never doubted the authenticity of the facts, as he himself told us several times."⁵¹ On the basis of this statement it seems likely that Joseph Buzzetti was one of Lemoyne's privileged informants, alongside Don Bosco himself and Father Rua. Joseph Buzzetti and his brothers were among the first to attend the catechism lessons given by Don Bosco as regulars, starting near the end of 1841 or soon afterwards. Joseph Buzzetti remained one of his most faithful and valued co-workers, someone on whom Don Bosco was able to depend for the rest of his life.

Don Bosco's testimony remains very much in the forefront. In *Documenti* XLIII, Lemoyne wrote that Don Bosco had narrated "this incident to his youths a hundred times, never alluding to himself but always giving the same details without alterations or additions." In the MB he was a bit more specific: "Don Bosco told the story to the Oratory youths more than fifty times, and hundreds of times to those of his other houses."⁵² The numbers can only puzzle us when we notice that the testimonies of Tomatis, Garino, and Bisio, which cover a good twenty years, either

⁴⁸ *Processo diocesano per la beatificazione di D. Bosco*, deposition of April 29, 1895; see DA 7. These data were used by A. Amadei, *Il Servo di Dio Michele Rua, successore del Beato D. Bosco* (Turin: 1931-34), 3 vols.

⁴⁹ MB 3:499/20-24; AS 161.1/26. See DA 7.

⁵⁰ G.B. Francesia, *Memorie biografiche di Giuseppe Buzzetti coadiutore salesiano* (S. Benigno Canavese: 1898). E. Pilla, *Giuseppe Buzzetti coadiutore salesiano* (Turin: 1960).

⁵¹ MB 3:499/3-6; BM 3:351-352.

⁵² MB 3:500/6-8.

are negative or appeal to indirect reports. Lemoyne's figures are a bit inflated, I would suggest, but they do indicate that Don Bosco told the account often, at least after 1860.

One item that made its way from the *Documenti* to the MB was the statement that Don Bosco recounted the incident repeatedly, "although he never once alluded to himself."⁵³

A precise and gracious statement was sent to Lemoyne by Father Joseph Bologna on June 13, 1904. Bologna indicated that in his presence Don Bosco had told "the matter as described" in the MB. But in the grip of emotion, notes Bologna, Don Bosco slipped and revealed himself to be the priest who was Charles's friend.⁵⁴

* * *

The text of the MB was incorporated by Lemoyne himself into his biography of Don Bosco, which was published in two volumes (1911–1913).⁵⁵ Some slight revisions for the sake of clarity did not change the overall account. The most noticeable differences have to do with the enumeration of the witnesses supporting the veracity of the fact. The testimony of Father Rua that went back to the time when he was a student of the Christian Brothers is replaced by testimony deriving from him that goes back to 1858 and 1862 and that is corroborated by a contemporary document. The latter is called the 'Chronicle of the Oratory' in Lemoyne's biography. In fact, it is one of the notebooks which Father John Bonetti compiled under the title *Annali* ('Annals'). If we put

⁵³ MB 3:500/8.

⁵⁴ DA 9. Father Bologna places the event at the triduum in preparation for Easter of 1864 or 1865. Lemoyne prefers the latter date (BM 8:93), but it may be more correct to place Don Bosco's sermon in the spring of 1864. Otherwise it is hard to explain why John Bisio, who arrived at the Oratory in August 1864, expressly cited Teresa Martano as his source of information instead of appealing directly to Don Bosco's own words. Unusable was a brief allusion to it by Father John Baptist Anfossi at the diocesan information-gathering process: "When I came to the Oratory in 1853 [December 23], everyone there was convinced that Don Bosco had performed miracles. . . had raised the dead and multiplied hosts and chestnuts" (BM 4:467–468).

Joseph Bologna was born in Garessio on May 15, 1847. He entered the Oratory on September 1, 1863, and he died there on January 4, 1907.

⁵⁵ Lemoyne, *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio Giovanni Bosco fondatore della Pia Società Salesiana* (Turin: 1911) I, 438–441. There were several reprintings, up to 1920, of the 2-volume second edition of 1914; the Charles episode is in I, 430–433.

the two texts side by side, it seems certain that Bonetti's text was Lemoyne's new source:

Bonetti, *Annali*, II, 41 f.⁵⁶
"One day at table Father Rua (who at that time did not have any orders) recounted that *the Romans*, when he was in that city with D. Bosco, told him of the miracle worked by Don Bosco in Turin some years before, thus demonstrating they were very well informed. Don Bosco heard *this account, even though a little distance away*, and we noticed him get very red in the face. Then, *turning to the narrator*, 'Be quiet', he said in a serious tone. 'I have never said it was me, and no one is to know it'."

Lemoyne, *Vita*, 1911, I, 433, footnote 1, lines 1-11

"The report of this went even beyond Piedmont. In 1858, the Servant of God took his first trip to Rome, accompanied by Michael Rua, then a subdeacon. Well, on that occasion Rua learned how widely known to many *Romans* was all I have presented above. One day in 1862, while Father Rua was sitting at table and mentioning this to those near him, 'Don Bosco,' reports the Chronicle of the Oratory, '*even though he was sitting a little distance away*, nevertheless was paying attention to *this whole account* and we noticed him get very red in the face. Suddenly, *turning to the narrator*, he interrupted him and said to him in a serious tone: 'Be quiet'. I have never said it was me, and no one is to know it!'"

Note that Bonetti does not specify the miracle in question. Nor can that be figured out from the context of his *Annali*. Both before and after the above statement the *Annali* report other episodes that are wholly independent of each other. In any case, Don Bosco's reply as given by Bonetti is already in the MB, and the context is readily reconcilable with the *Annali*. According to the MB, Rua tried to evoke a reply from Don Bosco by direct questioning.⁵⁷ I don't think we can rule out the possibility that we are dealing with the same episode, and hence that Bonetti's record of what took place might well be a better account than that of Lemoyne (or Rua).

⁵⁶ AS 110 Bonetti.

⁵⁷ "He [D. Bosco] answered me: 'I have never said I was the author of that deed' " (MB 3:500/1-2). This text is dependent on AS 161.1/26, copy A, p. 345: see DA 7.

Insofar as Michael Rua's ecclesiastical status in 1858 is concerned, we find an obvious difference in the two above reports. Lemoyne writes that he was a subdeacon; Bonetti records that he had no sacred orders. In fact, Rua received tonsure and the minor orders in Turin on December 11, 1859, and he was made a subdeacon on the seventeenth of the same month.⁵⁸

The accounts in the MB and Lemoyne's *Vita* became the *received texts*, as it were, and were drawn upon by biographers and popularizers of every sort. In 1920, the *Vita* was revised and somewhat touched up by Father Angelo Amadei. But he left wholly unchanged the episode of Charles, right down to the typographical plates of the second edition (1914).⁵⁹ In a new edition Amadei limited himself to adding the name of the Marchioness Fassati to the list of those vouching for the fact.⁶⁰

Among those writing popular accounts of Don Bosco, one who deserves to be noted here is Father Eugene Ceria. He was the first to make use of indications about the identity of Charles in a work written for the public: "The fifteen-year-old son of the proprietor of the *Gelso Bianco* at 11 Carmine Street."⁶¹ Ceria, who carried on the MB from Volume XI to Volume XIX (1930–1939), made extensive use of the *Documenti*. The address information ('11 Carmine Street') does not come from the *Documenti*, however. Apparently it comes from Lemoyne's deposition at the Vatican process for the beatification of Don Bosco. At that time he summed up all he had written and gave, as a new datum, the address as the scene of the events.⁶²

* * *

The documentary situation underwent an unexpected change on May 7, 1922, when Marquis Philip Crispolti handed over some memoirs of Marchioness Fassati to the third successor of Don Bosco, Father Philip Rinaldi. The memoirs of the marchioness had been transcribed by her daughter, Azelia, who turned them over to Crispolti shortly before her

⁵⁸ Secretariat General of the Salesian Superior Council, registered list of deceased confrères.

⁵⁹ Lemoyne, *Vita*, New edition (Turin: 1920) I, 430–433.

⁶⁰ Lemoyne, *Vita*, New edition edited by Father Angelo Amadei (Turin: 1943) I, 407.

⁶¹ Ceria, *San Giovanni Bosco nella vita e nelle opere*. . . (Turin: 1938) p. 93.

⁶² See DA 10.

own death.⁶³ Written in French, the documents were published in an Italian translation for the first time in the *Salesian Bulletin* for September 1922.⁶⁴ As far as I know, they were first incorporated into a biography of Don Bosco by Father Angelo Amadei in 1929.⁶⁵

The valuable qualities of the Fassati account are evident from a simple reading of it. She concludes: "I have this account from the mouth of Don Bosco himself, and I have tried to write it down as faithfully as possible."⁶⁶ Her account is quite detailed; and it reflects the traits of simplicity and naturalness in Don Bosco's behavior that best explain, according to Father Lemoyne, why the incident passed without any immediate clamor or public reaction.

Fassati reports that Don Bosco went to Charles's house with the feeling that the youth was not yet dead. He approached his bed and called him by name. . . . The awakening of Charles threw panic into several of the people present. The major difference between the MB and Fassati's account lies in the nature of this central point.

A minor but interesting difference has to do with the youth's dream. In *Documenti* III, Lemoyne had described struggles with devils. Then, borrowing from Bisio he added the appearance of a heavenly lady and a blazing furnace into which the 'ugly monsters' wanted to throw him. The Fassati account talks about a long, narrow, airless cavern in which the youth found himself; here the images and sensations suitably express the exhaustion and nightmare oppressing the dying youth.

2. *The historical Charles*

What is the real identity of the youth, Charles? What is his last name? Where and when did he die?

We get only partial answers to these questions from the documents

⁶³ On Maria Fassati Roero San Severino, née De Maistre (1823–1905), see F. Guasco di Bisio, *Tavole genealogiche di famiglie alessandrine e monferrine*, Volume XII, tav. IV of the Fassati; A. De Foras, *Armoirial et nobiliaire de l'ancien duché de Savoie* (Grenoble: 1893), table De Maistre; her obituary in the *Bollettino salesiano*, 29 (1905), p. 94.

On Azelia Ricci des Ferres, née Fassati (1846–1921), besides Guasco and De Foras see *Bollettino salesiano*, 45 (1921), p. 279.

⁶⁴ *Bollettino salesiano*, 46 (1922), pp. 229–232.

⁶⁵ Amadei, *Don Bosco e il suo apostolato. Dalle sue memorie personali e da testimonianze di contemporanei* (Turin: 1929) I, 223–225.

⁶⁶ See DA 11.

we have examined. I felt that an exhaustive answer was possible on the basis of their suggestions, despite uncertainties and contradictions.

First of all, I undertook to examine what the documents offered for research into the historical Charles.

In the accounts that give a proper name, the youth is consistently named Charles (*Carlo*). The only exception is Bisio, whose testimony we know to be late and indirect.

The youth's age is indicated only by Lemoyne: he was fifteen. Fassati writes simply that he was a 'young man'.

All agree that he was known by Don Bosco. The majority add that he used to attend the Oratory. Lemoyne asserts that Don Bosco was his ordinary confessor.

Not all of the documents expressly mention the youth's family. Fassati reports that his father and mother were on the scene. From his very first redaction Lemoyne wrote that the parents, at the suggestion of the doctor, took a personal interest in having their son make his Confession. Lemoyne tells us that the youth's mother and an aunt were attending the corpse when Don Bosco approached it. It is also Lemoyne who informs us that Charles had a brother (a young man, it seems) who participated in the war of independence or at least its closing phase. This brother was wounded at Novara and came back home, where he died soon after.

The specific profession of his parents is again mentioned only by Lemoyne: they were owners of an inn (*albergo*) or restaurant (*trattoria*).

Both Lemoyne and Fassati inform us that Don Bosco was escorted into the mortuary chamber by a waiter or household servant.

Both tell us that many people witnessed the events. According to Fassati, those present fled in terror when the youth revived. According to Lemoyne, they came running in response to the emotional outcry of the mother, who witnessed the reawakening.

Only Lemoyne writes that the assistant pastor of the parish was called since Don Bosco was not around. In his deposition at the Vatican process Lemoyne changed that to the pastor.

The year is uncertain. We must reject out of hand the dates offered by D'Espiney (Rome, hence 1858) and Bisio (shortly before August 1864). The testimony of the Christian Brother, in conjunction with that of Father Rua, does not allow for any date beyond 1849. Undecided between 1847 and 1849, Lemoyne finally placed the resurrection of Charles in 1849. His account assumes that the incident took place before the death

of the brother who was wounded at the battle of Novara (March 22–23); hence it would have to be placed somewhere in the first three months of the year. No one tells us the month or day, however, and we get no help from the fact that Don Bosco was away from Turin temporarily.

Many inform us of the time that went by between the first attempt to get hold of Don Bosco and his return to Turin (two days later). We also get information on the time that elapsed between his arrival back in Turin and his visit to the youth's house. He went right away, says Lemoyne. It was in the afternoon of the following day, says Fassati. Almost all allude to the time that elapsed between the youth's death and Don Bosco's visit: six hours (Bisio), half a day (Lemoyne), a whole day (Fassati). Fassati specifically indicates that Don Bosco arrived to see the corpse around 4:00 P.M.

As far as the locale of the event is concerned, we must rule out Enria's testimony that the youth died in the infirmary (of the Oratory?). Aside from everything else, the Oratory did not have one in 1847–1849. The few rooms that Don Bosco could have had at his disposal were occupied by the dozen or so youths he was housing. According to Lemoyne and Fassati, the youth died at home in the presence of his relatives.

Lemoyne is the only one to tell us that the house was the *Gelso Bianco*, at 11 Carmine Street and the corner of Quartieri Street, which was owned by the parents of Charles. We are struck by Lemoyne's discrepancies on the exact nature of the *Gelso Bianco*. He tells us it was an inn (*albergo*), tavern (*osteria*), restaurant (*trattoria*), wine shop (*bottiglieria*).⁶⁷ This uncertainty is reflected by Father Ceria, who makes Charles "the fifteen-year-old son of the *trattore* of the *Gelso Bianco*."⁶⁸

In all likelihood, Father Lemoyne did not verify this item. From Marzorati's *Guide to Turin* we learn that the *Gelso Bianco* was always an *albergo* ('inn'), but does not rule out the possibility that it had a public

⁶⁷ "He lived in the *Gelso Bianco trattoria*. . . and was the son of the *albergatore*" (*Documenti* III). "On the corner of Carmine Street. . . there is still the *Gelso bianco bottiglieria*, scene of this event"; "The youth. . . was the son of the *oste* of the *Moré Bianch*" (*Documenti* XLIII). "Charles. . . lived in a *trattoria* and was the son of the *albergatore*" (MB 3:495/25–26). "Charles, son of the *albergatore* of the *Gelso Bianco*. . ." (see DA 10).

⁶⁸ Ceria, *San Giovanni Bosco nella vita e nelle opere*, p. 93. A curious distortion is that of D. Fierro, *Vida de San Juan Bosco*. . . (Madrid: 1957). The resurrection is supposed to have taken place in an "inn called the *Muletto*" (p. 263).

table or *trattoria* ('restaurant').⁶⁹ For the year 1838 the indicated proprietress is Mary Anthony (*sic*) Giuliani, and the name of the inn is the *More Bianco*.⁷⁰ Mary Giuliani is still listed as the owner in the *Guide* for 1848⁷¹ and 1858.⁷² The *Guide* for 1876 tells us that Victor Detomatis had become the owner.⁷³ The *Guide* for 1890 indicates that the *Gelso Bianco* was no longer in existence.⁷⁴ Thus Lemoyne's statements in the *Documenti* XLIII about the continued operation of the *Gelso Bianco* after 1891 were incorrect. The reason for his mistake may be surmised from his letter to Bishop Cagliero in 1885 or 1886: "I am working day and night [on the *Documenti* for the biography of Don Bosco]. I don't take time out for recreation, I never go out, I turn down any other assignment, I am almost always alone. . ."⁷⁵ It seems that Father Lemoyne had fallen prey to the common temptation of people who find themselves with a huge quantity of documents at their immediate disposal. They may fail to consider, or reject, the necessity of adequately evaluating the sources they intend to use by having recourse to other documentation of a solid, trustworthy nature.

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Despite uncertainties about accidental details, it seemed to me that it would not be difficult to find out exactly when Charles, son of the *Gelso Bianco* innkeeper, died. I had the data indicated by the various pieces of testimony and the last name provided by Marzorati's *Guide*.

No. 11 Carmine Street is and has always been part of the Carmine Street parish about thirty meters away. I consulted the parish registers of the deceased. Since the year of the incident was uncertain, I started with the year 1841, when Don Bosco was ordained a priest. That date seemed improbable, of course, because Don Bosco did not yet have faculties for Confession and could not have been the ordinary confessor of

⁶⁹ Actually the widow Giuliani, owner of the *Gelso Bianco*, is also described with other words in the parish records: *obergista* in the death record of her daughter Josephine, *ostessa* in the death record of her son Peter. In Piedmont usage the term *obergista* includes the notions of landlady and innkeeper. See Vittorio di Sant'Albino, *Gran dizionario piemontese-italiano* (Turin: 1859), p. 812.

⁷⁰ [G. Marzorati], *Guida di Torino per il 1838* (Turin: n.d.), p. 272.

⁷¹ [Marzorati], *Guida. . . pel 1848* (Turin, n.d.), p. 79.

⁷² [Marzorati], *Guida. . . pubblicata il 26 aprile 1858* (Turin, n.d.), p. 109.

⁷³ [Marzorati], *Guida. . . pubblicata il 7 marzo 1876* (Turin, n.d.), p. 158.

⁷⁴ [Marzorati], *Guida di Torino pubblicata il 1° marzo 1890* (Turin: 1890). As I already indicated, the *Documenti* XLIII are to be dated in 1891-1892.

⁷⁵ Letter of December 7, 1885 (or 1886). See footnote 20 above.

Charles Giuliani (or Giuliano). I chose December 1860 as the terminal date.

From the parish records I learned that during those years no Giuliani had died in the Carmine Street parish. Indeed there was no death of a youth between ten and twenty years of age who was described as the son of innkeepers or the like. The only Charles to die around that period, in the ten to twenty age group, was one Charles Conti: ten, native of Cùnico, died on August 20, 1850, son of Felix, a peasant.

Perhaps the Giuliani lived elsewhere. To get data on Charles, I would have to trace down their domicile. Thus the field of inquiry was unexpectedly enlarged to include other parishes. Far from easy inquiries in Turin and elsewhere were required before I had a sufficiently solid basis of documentation. A search was made of the following archives:

- (1) Archives of the archdiocesan chancery of Turin, which have copies of the Baptism, Matrimony, and death records of all the parishes, at least for the years in question, and also of some of the municipal hospitals.
- (2) Archives of the municipal parishes of St. Augustine, St. Barbara, St. Eusebius (St. Philip), St. Francis of Paola, St. Teresa, Carmine (records of Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, and deaths).
- (3) Archives of Bruino parish (diocese of Turin).
- (4) Municipal Archives of Turin, register section.
- (5) State Archives of Turin, *sezioni riunite*: military draft registrations.

I got the following picture of the Giuliani family. George Hermenegild Giuliani, son of Victor, native of Aquila in Valle di Blenio (Switzerland, but diocese of Turin), married Mary Frè (*sic* in the parish register of St. Augustine, but it is Piedmontese dialect; in other registers one reads *Ferrè* or *Ferrero*), daughter of John Battista, of Turin, on September 21, 1820. The two of them had been domiciled in the parish of St. Augustine, where they remained until at least August 1831. There they had six children:

- (1) Mary Frances, born February 19, 1823.
- (2) Giacinta (female, Hyacinth) Mary Geltrude, b. November 15, 1824.
- (3) Victor Mary Joseph, b. June 3, 1827.
- (4) Joan Mary Pia, b. May 5, 1828.
- (5) John Joseph George, b. May 2, 1830.

- (6) Giacinto (male, Hyacinth) Rocco Anthony Victor Mary,
b. August 16, 1831.

They changed their domicile to the parish of St. Thomas. There their seventh child was born:

- (7) Josephine Clotilde, b. December 16, 1832.

The eighth and ninth children of the Giuliani were born in the parish of Bruino:

- (8) Joseph Flavian Martin, b. December 22, 1833.

- (9) Peter Mary, b. April 10, 1835.

Their tenth child was born in Turin, in the parish of St. Francis of Paola:

- (10) Dominic Hermenegild, b. January 1, 1837.

An important datum was provided by the Bruino registers. On the death certificate for Giacinto (1838), the sixth child, we learn that his father George had also died and that he was a man of means. Thus the series of births was closed by the death of the father, but I could not find his death certificate in the civil and church registers I was able to consult in Bruino or Turin. A search for further children in the city and diocese of Turin also proved to be negative.

Thus no child of George Hermenegild Giuliani bore the name Charles as a first, second, or even third name. But I could not rule out the possibility that Don Bosco used an assumed name, given the delicacy of the episode. I had to check whether any of the Giuliani had died in the time period in question: before 1850, in Turin. Lemoyne also noted the death of a brother. So I also wanted to check whether any of them had died in 1849 at the battle of Novara, or shortly afterwards, as the result of wounds.

By 1839, two boys and two girls had died. The third child, Victor, died in the parish of St. Augustine on August 8, 1829. The sixth child, Giacinto, died in Bruino on October 15, 1838. The first child, Mary Frances, died in the parish of St. Augustine on February 24, 1828. The seventh child, Josephine Clotilde, died on June 18, 1839, in the Carmine Street parish, at the Dogliotti house (which turns out to be the place of the *Gelso Bianco*).⁷⁶

Further inquiries produced the following information on the surviving six children.

⁷⁶ *Topodexia della città di Torino per rintracciarne facilmente le vie, le piazze, le case ecc.* (Turin: 1825), pp. 33, 63.

The second child, Giacinta, married Joseph Victor Detomatis (who later became the proprietor of the *Gelso Bianco*) in the Carmine Street church on February 27, 1849. The fourth child, Joan, married Anthony Ros in the same parish on January 2, 1853. The marriage took place where the spouses were domiciled. The mother, Mary Ferrero, was still living and described as an innkeeper (*albergatrice*).

The fifth child, John, married Margaret Dro[v]jetti and had children in the parish of St. Eusebius: John George, b. August 17, 1862; Victor Joseph Delfino, b. November 25, 1868. He died in the parish of St. Barbara, Boucheron Street, on November 11, 1907. His wife had died earlier in the same parish on December 14, 1904.

The ninth child, Peter, died at his mother's domicile on November 18, 1855. The tenth child, Dominic Hermenegild, was selected by lot for military service in 1855; but he was declared exempt in 1858 by reason of Swiss nationality.⁷⁷

The only child on whom I could not get useful data was the eighth, Joseph Flavian Martin. All I found was that he was confirmed in Carmine Church on April 1, 1844. Did he emigrate from Turin?

I had enough data to be convinced that any other results would be based on sheer suppositions. If the Charles of tradition was indeed one of the Giuliani, it could only be Joseph Flavian Martin. He was fifteen around 1848–1849. But in that case many of the details of the Charles of tradition fall apart, some of them deriving from testimony of no little value. Joseph Giuliani certainly did not die at the *Gelso Bianco*. He had not died in Turin up to 1855. He did not die in the presence of his father and mother, as Don Bosco told Fassati, because the father was already dead. Charles had to be a fictitious name. None of his brothers died after the battle of Novara, nor at the *Gelso Bianco* or elsewhere in or outside of Turin in the immediately following years.

But what if all the information of Father Lemoyne pointing to the *Gelso Bianco* was mistaken? Then the search would have to be based on whole layers of suppositions, one more untrustworthy than the next. We could look for Charles among the relatives of the Giuliani of the *Gelso Bianco*: the Ferreros, the Blanchins, and other Giuliani.⁷⁸ We could

⁷⁷ Turin, State Archives, sez. riun., provincial draft of youths born in 1837. Alphabetical list completed by the *Sindaco* on January 12, 1855: "Dominic Giuliano. . .draft selection. . .cancelled by reason of Swiss citizenship following the decision of the war minister contained in a dispatch of March 27, 1858."

⁷⁸ Ferrero is an extremely common last name in Turin. Joseph Blanchin was a

assume that somehow the relations were brought closer so as to equate the two families.

One could also assume that the 'Charles' of Don Bosco was some other boy who died between 1848 and 1849. If he did not belong to the *Gelso Bianco* (a young waiter?), perhaps he was part of the Carmine Street parish. That could be Dominic Odasio, son of John Baptist, who died at the age of fourteen on June 27, 1848. It could be a girl, Anna Gilli, daughter of Joseph (*cantiniere*) and Cecilia Giacchero, who died at the age of sixteen on September 29, 1848.

We can go still further along these lines. Suppose we assume that, no matter what, it was a Charles, his parents were alive, and he was somehow connected with an inn (*albergo*). In fact, there was such a Charles. He died not far from Valdocco, at what was then Piazza Italia 1 (now Piazza della Repubblica), in the parish of St. Augustine. His name was Charles Vinzia, and he died on January 20, 1848.⁷⁹ He was a native of Boleto, on Lake Orta, in the province of Novara.⁸⁰ A brother of his

declarant for the death of Peter Giuliani (1855); in 1876 he was proprietor of the Zecca inn at 36 Rome Street (*Guida di Torino*. . . 1876, p. 159). Teresa Blanchin, née Giuliani, was godmother at the Baptism of George Augustine Detomatis (Carmine Parish, July 7, 1862); and we find her to be proprietress of the *Cavallo rosso* inn at 34 Rome Street (*Guida di Torino*. . . 1876, p. 157).

Among the Giuliani of Swiss origin there was also a Charles Victor, son of Louis Victor and Mary Giuliana (*sic*), born in Aquila. At the age of forty-four he married Agata Asinari from Tigliole d'Asti, in Turin, at the archdiocesan parish, on May 2, 1849. Toward the end of the century he was still the owner of a chocolate factory on Academy of Sciences Street. See *Guida di Torino*. . . 1858, p. 49; *Guida di Torino*. . . 1893, p. 171).

⁷⁹ One item that could dovetail with the Charles of Don Bosco: Charles Vinzia died at 8:00 A.M. A very interesting item: in writing, it clearly says that Charles Vinzia died on the *twentieth*; his death was certified on the *twenty-fourth*; his burial took place on the *twenty-fifth*. The official document is signed by the assistant parish priest, Dominic Massa (another little coincidence with the Charles of tradition).

The item 'twentieth' must have struck whoever made the transcription for the chancery. The chancery record has *twenty-fourth* for the day of death as well. The latter date places the death unusually close to the day of burial, which usually took place two days after death. In any case, neither date in itself has any direct bearing on the possible coincidences with the Charles of Don Bosco.

⁸⁰ Charles Vinzia was born on July 7, 1809, the son of John Baptist and Mary Parodi. When he was selected for military service, he was employed as a waiter. In 1829, he was assigned to the artillery corps (Turin: State Archives, *sezioni riunite*, Province of Novara, youths born in 1809, Selection List for the Orta district, n. 28).

could have fought at Novara and died at home or somewhere in his native region.⁸¹ Charles Vinzia was the owner of the *Rosa Bianca* inn: not much difference between *Rosa Bianca* and *Gelso Bianco*. He died at eight in the morning. But he was thirty-eight and married at the time! Even that does not rule him out as a youth (*giovane*), the way Don Bosco used the term. We have a handwritten document by Don Bosco listing *giovani* ('youths') of three Oratories: *Nota dei giovani degli Oratori di S. Francesco di Sales, di S. Luigi Gonzaga, del Santo Angelo Custode*.⁸² Its date, September 21, 1850, is after the resurrection of Charles. Among the *giovani* are some over forty, some over thirty, and twenty-four over twenty. Charles Vinzia would not be out of place in such a listing of *giovani*.

Suppositions. In the final analysis the historical Charles evades identification based on compelling proofs.

3. *The resurrected youth of Don Bosco and similar ones in the tradition of Catholic hagiography*

By way of hypothesis, one may assume that the Charles episode is entirely fictitious; that Don Bosco told his youths an incident that had occurred with St. Philip Neri and that is reported in Bacci's biography of the saint; then that the atmosphere of veneration around Don Bosco wrought some transpositions: from Rome to Turin, from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, and from St. Philip to Don Bosco. Like the Charles of Don Bosco, the boy Paul de'Massimi was dear to Philip Neri and died without the saint being in attendance:

His father closed his eyes and the parish curate, who had given him the holy oil and recommended his soul to God, departed. The members of the household prepared the water to wash him and readied the clothes to put on him. A half hour had passed when the holy priest arrived. He was met by a weeping Fabrizio who said: "Paul is dead . . ."

Philip entered the room where the dead boy was and threw himself on the side of the bed. He spent a good quarter of an hour in prayer, displaying the usual bodily tremors and heart palpitations.

⁸¹ For this brother of a Charles, too, the information remains uncertain and the field is wide open for suppositions.

⁸² AS 132, Oratorio, 5: see BM 4:523–524.

Then he took holy water and sprinkled it on the boy's face, letting a little go into his mouth. Then, breathing on his face with his hand on his forehead, he called the boy twice in a loud, resounding voice: "Paul, Paul." At which the boy suddenly opened his eyes, as if awakened from a dream, and said: "Father, I had forgotten a sin and so I would like to go to Confession." Then the holy priest sent away those around the bed . . .

Then the holy priest asked the boy if he wanted to die and the boy said yes. The holy priest gave him a blessing, saying: "Go and may you be blessed, pray to God for me."

With a calm expression and no stir, the boy immediately died again in the arms of the holy priest.⁸³

The similarities between this episode and the Charles episode of Don Bosco are truly noteworthy: calling the boy's name twice, hearing his Confession, and then asking him if he is content to die. Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence that Don Bosco knew the life of St. Philip Neri and recounted it to his youths.⁸⁴

One detail missing in the Neri episode is the nightmare. But that detail is to be found in a similar episode recounted in the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great, which was cited by Beyerlinck in a work that Don Bosco used to quote: *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae*. It concerns a priest named Severus who arrives too late to hear a dying person's Confession. Returned to life, the person tells Severus he was being dragged off to a terrible place until saved by an angel and restored to his body, thanks to the tears of Severus. He goes to Confession, does seven days of penance, and then dies again:

Severus sacerdos, vocatus ad cujusdam aegrotantis confessionem audiendam, cum paulum tardius venisset, vita defunctum offendit. Eaque de re vehementer anxius, et afflictus, lamentis cadaveri incumbens, cum acerrime fleret, revixit qui jacebat mortuus, dixitque: se, dum ab impiis spiritibus ad horrenda tenebrarum loca raptim

⁸³ Pietro Giovanni Bacci, *Vita di S. Filippo Neri* (Monza: 1851), Book III, Chapter XI, II, 219. Quite a few copies of that edition were to be found in Valdocco. The similarities between the episode of St. Philip Neri and that of Don Bosco were noted by Jesuit Father John Franco in a letter to Father Lemoyne from Rome dated February 24, 1891; see BM 3:353-354.

⁸⁴ Don Bosco offered panegyrics of him and assimilated his views. See *Indice MB*, 601.

traheretur ab angelo protinus dimitti, atque corpori restitui jussum, quod diceret, Deum id Severi lachrymis indulsisse. Igitur ubi confessus est, peracta septem dierum poenitentia, iterum obiit.⁸⁵

Faced with these and similar texts, one might be inclined to say that the revival of a dead person in need of sacramental absolution is a motif of Catholic hagiography, akin to the eucharistic miracles that prove the real presence. Hence, by way of hypothesis one might conclude that there is no objective basis at all for the Charles episode as an actual fact. But such a conclusion means stripping away testimony of great weight: e.g., that of Father Bologna, Marchioness Fassati, and Father Lemoyne, who go back directly to Don Bosco and describe his behavior as that of a person involved in a real-life happening.

Before coming to any conclusions, I think the wisest course is to take a closer look at the ways the episode has been transmitted, and to weigh the various forms of testimony more carefully.

One channel of transmission was the catechesis and preaching of Don Bosco. It must be said right away that he did not have much recourse to it. In the beginning he must have told the incident outside the Oratory. If he spoke of it at Valdocco too, he must have told it in such a way that his listeners did not suspect he himself was involved. Otherwise we cannot explain why Charles Tomatis was unaware of the fact that Don Bosco had been credited with the temporary resurrection of a youth.

The Oratory tradition or transmission must have been twofold: (1) among Don Bosco's intimates; (2) among the youths and those less intimate with Don Bosco. The first group (Rua, Cagliero, Bonetti, Buzzezzetti, etc.) were probably convinced that Don Bosco was the priest who heard the Confession of Charles, and that a real resurrection had taken place. The second group seems to have heard indirectly (e.g., Bisio). If they heard directly (e.g., Bologna), it seems to have come from something Don Bosco said in a sermon.

We cannot check the eventual transmission of the fact by other channels, though it cannot be doubted that there were some. There was

⁸⁵ L. Beyerlinck, *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae*, under the heading 'Resurrectio' (6, Venice, 1707, 1198/C), which also reports an incident involving St. Francis of Assisi as reported by St. Bonaventure. A similar case is given under the heading 'Mors' (5, Venice 1707, 268/E). Beyerlinck picks up the original text of St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* I, Chap. XII in Migne: PL 77, 212 f. (Rome: ed. Moricca, 1924, p. 68 f.).

Joseph Buzzetti who, according to Lemoyne, "unquestionably did hear it from someone else who had been present." And there was the Christian Brother, whose testimony may go back to the preaching of Don Bosco.⁸⁶

Neither can we check out the ways in which news of the 'miracle' might have circulated in Rome, as noted by Bonetti in his *Annali*.

Among the various redactions that have come down to us, that of the MB is the best known. Yet, as I think I have documented here, it does not seem to be the most faithful to the narration of Don Bosco. It is overlaid with elements which, if stripped away, might give us a better chance of hearing the event as told by Don Bosco. Some additions simply do not bring us closer to a likely reconstruction of the episode.

To get back to Don Bosco's account and the objective event, it seems advisable to adopt the accounts of Fassati and the *Documenti* III, even though we do not know the precise precedents of the latter. For example, its statement that the *Gelso Bianco* was the scene of the event must be ruled out.

⁸⁶ Lemoyne describes in great detail the conversation between Sala and the Christian Brother: "Father Anthony Sala, while traveling by train to Parma, met an elderly Christian Brother who was stationed there. When the conversation got around to Don Bosco, the Brother told Father Sala that he had been an elementary school teacher in Turin in 1849, and that the event in question, the temporary resurrection of Charles, was an undisputed fact" (MB 3:499/13-19; BM 3:352). On the basis of inquiries graciously made at my request by Father Francis Gherzi of the headquarters of the Christian Brothers, we learn that none of their members residing in Parma in 1889 could have been a teacher in Turin before 1867. From 1867 to 1878 Brother Maximus (Paul Mazzi) was there. He was born in Reggio Emilia in 1848.

In all likelihood Father Sala found himself on the train with the Turin provincial of the Christian Brothers, who also had their Parma house under his jurisdiction. His name was Brother Genuine (John Baptist Andorno). Brother Genuine was almost an exact contemporary of Don Bosco, born in San Paolo (Asti) on June 7, 1826. He entered the novitiate on February 10, 1843. By January 1844 he was in Pinerolo, then went to Saluzzo and Racconigi before returning to Saluzzo again. In 1847 he was sent to Turin and the community of Santa Pelagia, where he taught at the upper elementary level and showed rare gifts as an educator. From 1863 on, he was Visitor (or Provincial) of the Turin area. He died in Turin on November 8, 1901.

If Brother Genuine is the one in question for us here, it is easy enough to understand how Sala and Lemoyne might have misunderstood his connection with the Parma house. It is even possible that Brother Genuine did not want to make known his title as provincial superior. He might have simply said that he was going to 'his' house in Parma—'his' because he was its superior.

It is primarily the Fassati account that sheds light on Don Bosco's way of dealing with his young people and with Doctor D'Espiney. For the former, Don Bosco used the episode to get across an educational and religious point: the need for sincerity with one's confessor and the necessity of overcoming considerations of human respect in dealing with him. This theme was stressed repeatedly in Don Bosco's catechesis, and the incident certainly would get across the point Don Bosco wanted to make. But those who knew the man teaching them, who had in mind the multiplication of the chestnuts and hosts or the extraordinary graces effected through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, were instinctively inclined to assume that the reawakening of Charles had been a miracle worked by the protagonist, Don Bosco. This interpretation became the heart and soul of the account in D'Espiney's *Dom Bosco*.

Don Bosco protested against that account. In all likelihood he was aware of many inconsistencies in the details given by D'Espiney. But he himself may also have been unsure of the exact nature of all that had happened. Any reconstruction of the event must certainly consider what Don Bosco's state of mind might have been. But it should describe his behavior in terms of naturalness and matter-of-fact conduct, the very qualities that are compromised by the MB borrowings from D'Espiney.

4. Conclusion: Lemoyne's use of sources for the MB account

I think we can now say something about the way Father Lemoyne went about composing the text of the MB.

Insofar as his sources, or sections of them, were not mutually contradictory, Lemoyne used them as if they were complementary documents. But the authors of the documents had no such intention, and some of the documents themselves can hardly be called complementary. Peter Enria's *infirmary* and John Bisio's *lady*, for example, seem to be the results of confusing the resurrection episode with other incidents involved in their own testimony or in the life of Don Bosco. Enria was an *infirmarian*, and there are frequent references to "a Lady" in the dreams of Don Bosco.

Nevertheless the various testimonies about Charles do have real value. They indicate how the account was perceived and passed on in various circumstances by people of diverse mentality and training: e.g., Enria, D'Espiney, Rua, Lemoyne, and others drawn to the personality of Don Bosco. But insofar as the fact itself and Don Bosco's presentation

of it are concerned, their value is diverse and secondary because they are often late and indirect sources.

I think the same holds true for the MB. The redaction is faulty for two reasons: (1) it is a conglomeration of fragments of unequal historical value; (2) it reveals an obvious failure to check out sources not contained in the Salesian archives, which could have helped to prevent inaccuracies. Some of those inaccuracies could easily have been avoided, even if they had to do with only secondary matters. If certain mistakes had been avoided back then, we today might have been able to place the Charles of tradition in a satisfactory historical context.

Examination of the various redactions suggests several final considerations regarding any critical work on them.

It is obviously worthwhile, eminently worthwhile, to consider how Father Lemoyne operated in composing the MB. Those volumes will always retain an eminent place for anyone who wants to know Don Bosco or to study how he was seen by a whole epoch: i.e., the generation that accompanied the saint during his lifetime and continued his work immediately after his death. They are also valuable because up to now they have served almost exclusively as the inspiration for devoted followers, hagiographers, and scholars.

DOCUMENTARY ACCOUNTS

DA 1. From *Dom Bosco* by Charles d'Espiney: "Arise!" (1881).⁸⁷

A young man, educated at the Oratory, was dying in Rome. The unfortunate fellow had lost the faith and obstinately refused to go to Confession.

The broken-hearted family then turned to Don Bosco in the hope that he could triumph over the fatal blindness of his former child.

Unfortunately Don Bosco was in Florence at the time. At the first news he set out in all haste, but he arrived too late. The patient had just

⁸⁷ D'Espiney, *Dom Bosco* (Nice: 1881), p. 177 f.

expired; when Don Bosco entered his room, he found him lifeless on his funeral bed. "Leave me alone," he said; and when everyone had left, he began to pray. Then, in a loud voice and a commanding tone, he called the dead person three times: "Charles, arise! Charles, arise! Charles, arise!" Lo and behold, Charles sat up.

Don Bosco heard his Confession immediately, then gave him Communion in the presence of his relatives and neighbors.

That done, he embraced him and said to him: "My son, you are now in the state of grace; heaven is open to you. Do you want to go there or remain with us?"

"I want to go to heaven," replied the young man; and he immediately fell back lifeless.

DA 2. Lemoyne, *Documenti*, "A Dead Person Resurrected" (1885-1886).⁸⁸

The enthusiasm of young people for D. Bosco was not aroused solely by his charity, his words, and his ways but also by certain extraordinary deeds which, seen by some and believed by all, caused him to be regarded as a person who was a friend of God.

A boy of fifteen who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of D. Bosco fell seriously ill in 1847 and soon found himself at death's door. He lived in the *Gelso Bianco* restaurant at the corner of Carmine and Quartieri streets and was the son of the innkeeper.

Seeing the danger, the doctor advised his parents to ask him to go to Confession, and they, grief-stricken, asked their son what priest he wanted to be called in for him. He showed a great desire that they call in his ordinary confessor, who was D. Bosco. They sent for him immediately, but with great regret the response was that he was out of Turin. The youth displayed a profound grief and asked for the assistant parish priest who soon came. A day and a half later he died, *manifesting the desire to speak with Don Bosco*.

Arriving home after two days, D. Bosco was immediately told that they had been there seeking him for that youth, who was in danger of death and had insistently asked for him. He went out and headed right away for the dying or dead boy's house, just in case, he said, he might

⁸⁸ *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione salesiana*, III, 169 f: AS 110, Lemoyne, *Documenti*.

still be in time. Arriving there, he met a waiter and immediately asked him for news of the youth, but this man replied that he had been dead for half a day. Then, chuckling, Don Bosco replied: "Oh! he's asleep and you think he's dead." At these words the other people in the house broke into tears, saying he was, alas, no more. Almost jokingly, D. Bosco replied: "I'll bet a pint he's not dead. Let me go see him." He was ushered into the mortuary room where the mother and aunt were praying by the deceased. The corpse, with a change of clothes for burial, was covered with a veil, wrapped and stitched, as usual, in a tattered sheet. Near the bed was a lighted lamp. Don Bosco drew near him and thought: Who knows if he made a good Confession! Who knows what fate awaited his soul? After reciting a brief prayer, he called the dead [one] by name. At that voice the dead [one] began to stir. D. Bosco quickly hid the lamp and, with a strong pull of his two hands, tore apart the sheet to free the youth. The latter, as if waking from a deep sleep, opened his eyes and looked around, rose up a little, and said: "Oh! How did I get like this?" Then he fixed his gaze on Don Bosco. As soon as he recognized him, he exclaimed: "Oh, D. Bosco! Oh, if you only knew! I was looking for you specifically. . . I need you very much!" His mother, frightened by the spectacle and beside herself, went out and started calling people. Meanwhile, D. Bosco replied: "Tell me everything you want. I am here for you." The youth proceeded: "Oh, D. Bosco, I was bound for the place of damnation. In my last Confession I did not dare to reveal a sin committed a few weeks ago. I have had a dream that scared me greatly. I dreamed of fleeing from many devils who wanted to catch me, and who were just about to push me over and hurl me in the inferno, when I heard your voice. Now I want to go to Confession." The poor kid immediately began his Confession with signs of real repentance. And as D. Bosco was raising his hand to give him absolution, his mother reentered the room with about twenty people who were able to be witnesses to the fact.

Turning to her, her son said: "This priest is saving me from hell."

He stayed that way about two hours, during which he was in possession of his mind. Among other things, he told D. Bosco to urge sincerity in Confession on young people insistently and always. Then he expired again. One remarkable thing was noticed in this resur[r]ection. All the time the youth moved about, looked around, and talked, his body remained the cold corpse it had been before the resuscitation.

DA 3. Lemoyne, Additions to the *Documenti* (1891–92).⁸⁹

The youth said to have been resurrected was the son of the innkeeper [oste] of the *Morè bianch*. When D. Bosco entered the house and said that the boy was not dead, the manservant replied: “*A le nen mort?*” Replied Don Bosco: “I bet a pint *ca le nen mort!*”

Scarcely had Don Bosco blessed him, he stirred, turned around and immediately began to say: “It was a bad companion!”

The report went as undisputed fact at the Oratory for many years. Traveling to Parma in 1889, Father Sala met an elderly Christian Brother on the train who was from their Parma house. The Christian Brother, who had been in Turin around 1848–1849, considered it an undisputed fact.

As for its veracity, we have these indirect proofs. (1) Don Bosco narrated this incident to his youths a hundred times, never alluding to himself but always giving the same details without alterations or additions, so that it was apparent that he was present at the event which had impressed itself on his memory.

(2) Telling the incident to the youths one evening after night prayers at Borgo S. Martino, midway he switched from the third person to the first person without realizing it. He said: “I said to him, he replied to me. . .” Then he went back to the third person. That was in the latter years of his life and Father Lemoyne was present.

On the corner of Carmine Street and Quartieri there is still the *Gelso bianco* wineshop, scene of this event.

DA 4. Father Barberis, On the proprietors of the *Gelso Bianco* (1885–93).⁹⁰

The present owner of the *Gelso Bianco* in Turin is Mr. Vittorio Detomatis, who has three sons: Joseph, Henry, and Anthony. Anthony is a telegraph operator at the Porta Susa station.

But forty years ago the owner (*padrone*)⁹¹ of said inn was Mr. [*il signore*]⁹² George Giuliano, residing at 8 Bucheron Street, third floor, Turin.

⁸⁹ Lemoyne, *Documenti*, XLIII, 11: AS 110, Lemoyne, *Documenti*.

⁹⁰ Autograph ms. of Father Julius Barberis, AS 123 Carlo.

⁹¹ *Padrone* corrected from *padrona*.

⁹² *Il signore* corrected from *la signora*.

Son of this gentleman is Mr. Dominic Giuliano, residing in Bruino, Milano Farm.

This Giuliano family is Swiss. The mother was a Ferrero. One of the daughters was married to the aforementioned Detomatis.

This is all we could learn, after many inquiries by our confrère Eula of Valsalice, about the owners of the *Gelso Bianco*.⁹³

Rev. Julius Barberis

DA 5. Peter Enria, Deposition at the diocesan information-gathering process for the beatification of Don Bosco: Personal Notes (1891–93).⁹⁴

On one occasion D. Bosco was out of Turin for a couple of days. When he returned, he was informed of the death of a youth who had had a great desire to go to Confession to D. Bosco. He was sorely grieved for the youth, asked about him, and sadly wanted to know [*sempre*⁹⁵] when he had died. They told him some hours earlier. Then Don Bosco went to the infirmary, where the dead youth was, went up to the bed, called him by name, and the youth opened his eyes and exclaimed: “Ho!”⁹⁶ D. Bosco, I was looking for you. I need to go to Confession.” He went to Confession. After his confession, he talked a bit with D. Bosco and then said with a smile: “Goodbye, until we meet in heaven.” Then he expired. This incident I heard [*lo*⁹⁷ *sentito*] from Joseph Buzzetti and Tomatis the painter. I also heard it was confirmed by Don Bosco himself.

⁹³ From the register list of the Secretariat General of the Salesians and the annual roster of the Salesians we learn that there was only one Salesian named Eula while Barberis was alive (1847–1947). He was Vincent Eula from Villanova (Cuneo), who made his religious profession on September 26, 1893, was in the Valsalice high school in Turin (1893–1894), and then left the Salesians. The remark of Barberis assumes that the *Gelso Bianco* was still operating, suggesting that the Eula’s checking might have been done even earlier: i.e., while he was simply living in the Salesian institute of St. John the Evangelist in Turin (1885–1891) or in the novitiate at Valsalice (1891).

⁹⁴ Autograph, AS 110 Enria, 1–2, p. 74 f. The orthography of the original is pretty bad, and I have taken the liberty of revising the punctuation.

⁹⁵ *sempre* = *seppe*.

⁹⁶ *ho!* = *oh!*

⁹⁷ *lo* = *l’ho*.

Peter Enria. Deposition at the diocesan information-gathering process (January 30, 1893).⁹⁸

On one occasion D. Bosco, returning to Turin after an absence of a couple of days, found out that a few hours earlier there had died a boy who had expressed a desire to go to Confession to him. Hearing that, D. Bosco went to the infirmary to see him, approached him and called him by name. The boy opened his eyes and said: "Ah! D. Bosco, I was looking for you. . ." He heard his Confession and then said to him: "Goodbye, until we meet in heaven." And the youth expired. I heard this told by Buzzetti and Tomatis. The latter is still alive.

DA 6. John Bisio, Deposition at the diocesan information-gathering process for the beatification of Don Bosco (March 27, 1895).⁹⁹

I was told by Teresa Martano, an outstanding benefactress of the Oratory now deceased, that in my early years at the Oratory a youth living in Turin fell seriously ill and wanted to go to Confession to Don Bosco right away; but he was away and so the youth died without receiving the sacraments. When D. Bosco got back to Turin, he was told that this youth Louis, whose last name I don't remember, had called for him to hear his Confession and then had died a few hours ago. Hearing this, D. Bosco rushed to see him. Entering the house, he met the mother, who told him tearfully that her Louis had longed greatly to go to Confession but had died six hours ago without receiving the sacraments. Don Bosco asked to see him. Drawing near his bed, he uncovered his face and called him twice by name. The second time, the youth opened his eyes and exclaimed: "Oh you, D. Bosco! I longed so much to see you. You did well to come to see me and wake me because I have had such a terrible dream that scared me awfully. I seemed to be on the edge of a furnace, and I saw many ugly monsters who wanted to throw me in. But there was a lady there who opposed it, saying, 'Wait, he has not yet been judged.' This struggle had gone on for a long time when you, D. Bosco, woke me up." D. Bosco then told him to pull himself together and make his Confession, and he did. When his Confession was finished, D. Bosco told him that he should not be afraid any longer, that those monsters would no longer cause him harm, and that he was no longer

⁹⁸ AS 161.1/14, copy A, p. 45.

⁹⁹ AS 161.1/25, copy A, p. 43 f.

meant for this earth. The youth closed his eyes and died. This incident I also heard from some of the first students of the Oratory.

DA 7. Father Rua, Deposition at the diocesan information-gathering process (1895).¹⁰⁰

When I was attending the elementary grades in the school of the Christian Brothers in Turin, Don Bosco often came to hear our Confession. And I recall hearing him tell us in a sermon of a youth named Charles who had fallen gravely ill and was in danger of death. So his confessor was sought but could not be found. The youth died in the meantime. When the confessor arrived, he found the parents in tears because their son had died without being able to speak to his confessor.

The latter asked to be brought to the bedside of the deceased. After calling him by name, he saw him open his eyes and heard him say: "Oh! You're here! I'm really glad to see you. You have come in time to save me. I found myself being pursued by horrible monsters who wanted to throw me into a furnace."

Then his confessor had the parents withdraw, heard his Confession, and gave him absolution. Then the boy fell asleep in the Lord.

Later I heard this incident told by several people who attributed it to Don Bosco himself. Taking advantage of my close and confidential relationship with him, I once asked him (when I was already a priest or shortly before ordination) if he indeed was the author of the deed that had been attributed to him. He replied: "I have never said I was the author of that deed." I did not pursue the matter further, satisfied that he did not deny he was, but simply denied he had ever said he was. Anyway, I didn't want to abuse his confidence. I don't know any other particulars about the matter.

DA 8. Father Garino, "Deposition of Mr. Charles Tomatis" (1901).¹⁰¹

Tomatis of Fossano does not recall either the multiplication of hosts or the resurrection of a dead person. He does say that D. Bosco used to visit the hospitals, even those with patients who had the most contagious diseases. Once he was attacked by the malignancy. A pustule formed on his arm, but he recovered without taking anything (in 1847-1848).

He says that during the cholera epidemic 40 died on the periphery

¹⁰⁰ AS 161.1/26, copy A, p. 345 f.

¹⁰¹ Autograph of Father Garino; AS 123 Tomatis.

of the city or in the area around the Oratory (known as *Cor d'oro*).

In the first chapel, where there had been a shed or the like, many outsiders also came to Mass and there were many Communions.

When the house fell, the first section to fall was between the central staircase and D. Bosco's room. The house had been built with last-resort material, sand, stone of poor quality or small quantity, lime. The contractor was a man named Bocca. There was someone there to supervise for Don Bosco, but he may have been more on the contractor's side. The other part fell after dinner one day, collapsing about ten minutes after people had left. No injuries. One boy had been in danger of going blind from the sand, but he came out okay.

D. Bosco multiplied the chestnuts at the door of the Church of St. Francis de Sales. Mamma Margaret put a small quantity there and D. Bosco ladled them out in large quantity.

★ ★ ★

July 5, 1901

I recall in particular that Don Bosco said to me one day, as we were in the courtyard of Mary Help of Christians and looking at the church: "Here I would like to build a monument depicting Moses striking the rock in which there was a spring of water." Likewise that it was his intention, in the meadow area where the carpenters had wood stockpiles and where there were stone masons, i.e., right across from the sisters, to build a big house that might serve as lodging for Salesian Cooperators, priests, etc.

Rev. Garino

P.S. About Don Bosco resurrecting a dead person, I recall that being told: how he went to visit a sick boy, got there after he was dead, revived him, heard his Confession, and then the boy died again.

DA 9. Father Joseph Bologna to Father John Baptist Lemoyne.¹⁰²

Paris

June 13, 1904

Dear Father Lemoyne:

I read for the first time, in your third volume of the *Memoirs* of Don Bosco, the account of the incident involving young Charles, resurrected, etc. . . I remember having heard D.B. himself recount the incident in

¹⁰² Autograph original, AS 123 Bologna.

1865 (perhaps it was 1864), when he was preaching a triduum in the Church of St. Francis de Sales in preparation for Easter Communion. He recounted the matter as described, speaking of the priest in the third person. But after having mentioned the priest, he added: "And that priest was Don Bosco." He could not add a single word. The tears and emotion forced him to leave the pulpit. We all were beside ourselves, and he remained like that for a long time before he could intone the litanies. I remember it as if it were yesterday.

J. Bologne (*sic*)

DA 10. Father Lemoyne at the Vatican process for the beatification of Don Bosco (July 17, 1912).¹⁰³

In 1848 a boy from the Festive Oratory fell ill. His name was Charles, son of the innkeeper of the *Gelso Bianco* at 11 Carmine Street, still in existence ten years ago. He called insistently for Don Bosco, but he had to go to Confession to his parish priest since the Servant of God was away. Returning to Turin, the Venerable hastened to his house as soon as he learned of the request. There he found the boy's mother and aunt praying by Charles's dead body. Don Bosco blessed him and called him by name twice. Charles opened his eyes and sat up, saying: "Oh! Don Bosco! You did well to wake me!". . . And he told him how he had kept silent about a sin out of shame, and then found himself on the edge of an horrendous furnace into which horrible monsters wanted to throw him. But a lady had protected him, saying: "Wait! He has not yet been judged!" Don Bosco heard his Confession. Then the boy turned to his mother and said: "Don Bosco has saved me from hell!" The whole family that had rushed into the room witnessed the miracle. Then the boy fell back again on his pillow and remained immobile once and for all. Report of this incident remained undisputed for many years at the Oratory. Joseph Buzzetti, who certainly heard it from someone who had been present, told it even in his later years and had no doubts about it. In 1864, Father Charles Ghivarello spoke to me of it for the first time. There was knowledge of the deceased's first and last name, native place, and residence near the Carmine Street church. The incident was known to, and told by, Miss Teresa Martano, who knew D. Bosco even before

¹⁰³ *Sacra Rituum Congregatione. . . Taurinen. Beatificationis et canonizationis ven. Servi Dei sac. Ioannis Bosco. . . Positio super virtutibus. Pars I. Summarium* (Rome: 1923), p. 1005 f.

1849. Father Rua and Father John Cagliero assured me that they were informed of it by schoolmates soon after they entered the Oratory; so also Father John Garino, Father Bonetti, and others. In Parma, in 1889, Father Anthony Sala met an elderly Christian Brother who had taught a class in elementary school in Turin in 1848-49, and who told him that the temporary resurrection of a youth by Don Bosco was a sure and proven fact. The Venerable himself recounted this incident many times; but he never said he had been the protagonist, and he did not reply on being asked.

DA 11. Report of the Marchioness Maria Fassati née De Maistre.¹⁰⁴
A.M.D.G.

One day they came seeking Don Bosco for a young man who usually attended the Oratory and who was said to be gravely ill. Don Bosco was away and did not return to Turin until two days later. He was not able to visit the sick youth's home until about 4:00 P.M. of the following day. Arriving at his home, he saw the black crepe on the door with the name of the youth he had come to see. He went in nevertheless to see the poor parents and console them. He found them in tears. They told him that their son had died in the morning. D.B. asked if he could go to the room where the body of the deceased was so that he might see him one more time. A household servant escorted him there.

"On entering the room," said Don Bosco, "the thought came to me that he was not dead. I approached the bed and called him by his name. Charles! Then he opened his eyes and greeted me with an astonished air. 'Oh! Don Bosco, he exclaimed, you wakened me from a frightful dream!' At that point several people who had been in the room fled in terror, screaming and knocking over the lamps." Don Bosco hastened to undo the shroud in which the youth had been sewn. The youth went on to say: "I seemed to be being pushed into a long, dark cavern, so narrow I could hardly breathe. At the end I saw a larger and brighter area where many souls were undergoing judgment. My anxiety and terror kept growing because I saw a great many of them condemned. Then my turn came, and I was going to share their terrible fate for having made my last Confession badly, when you woke me up!"

Then Charles's father and mother rushed in, having learned that their son was alive. The young man greeted them cordially but told them not to hope for his cure. Having embraced them, he asked to be left alone with Don Bosco. He told Don Bosco that he had the misfortune

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript of Azelia Ricci des Ferres née Fassati: AS 123 Fassati.

of falling into a sin he believed to be mortal; that when he found himself very ill he sent people for Don Bosco with the firm intention of confessing it, but when Don Bosco could not be found they brought another priest whom he did not know and to whom he would never dare reveal that sin. God had just shown him that he merited hell for that sacrilegious Confession. He then made his Confession with great sorrow. After he received the grace of absolution, he closed his eyes and calmly expired.

I have this account from the mouth of Don Bosco himself, and I have tried to write it down as faithfully as possible.

DA 12. Father Louis Cartier to Father Eugene Ceria.¹⁰⁵

Marseille

April 23, 1940

Note for Father Ceria, historiographer of St. John Bosco

I have heard some confrères maintain that the fact of the resurrection of young *Charles*, recounted by Father Lemoyne in the *Biograph-*

¹⁰⁵ Original signed autograph of Cartier: AS 123 Cartier. Louis Cartier was born in Colomban (Savoy) on February 7, 1860; entered Valdocco on October 27, 1877; made perpetual profession in Marseille on January 13, 1879; was ordained a priest on June 29, 1883; was director of the Nice Salesian house from 1886 to 1902, 1914 to 1918, and 1921–1923; died in Nice on December 29, 1945. Information from Secretariat General of the Superior Council of the Salesians, register of deceased confrères.

A protest against D'Espiney's first-edition *Dom Bosco* was made by Count Francis di Viancino, who saw himself described as Count V. in the episode entitled: "Providence is a good treasurer" (pp. 132–135). In a letter dated December 6, 1881, the Count asked Don Bosco to get the episode deleted, or at least for some guarantee that he was not the person described, since he did not acknowledge the truth of the circumstances if the person was supposed to be he. The original of this letter with a copy of D'Espiney annotated by Father Berto, is in AS 123 *Viancino*.

In his letter of reply to the Count, Don Bosco expresses himself in terms that seem pretty tough with regard to D'Espiney: "Doctor D'Espiney is a fine Catholic; but in his book his aim is to tell whoppers at the expense of Don Bosco. So don't be surprised to find flaws and even mistakes in his exposition. But I will see him in Nice next January, and I will not fail to make him take out or, at least, correct some of the tall tales in his account" (*Epistolario*, 2250). The original of this letter is in AS 131.01 *Viancino*.

Contrary to what Father Ceria writes in MB 15:71, the Count Viancino episode remained unchanged in the second edition.

From Don Bosco's letter we can surmise that his talk with D'Espiney, as recorded by Cartier, must have taken place in March 1882 when Don Bosco was in Nice (MB 15:512–515).

ical Memoirs of Don Bosco, was debatable. Now here is what I can state on the basis of a conversation I had with Dr. Charles d'Espiney, who was the first to publish an anecdotal life of Don Bosco in 1880 or 1881. We have a copy of the third edition printed in Nice by Malvano-Mignon in 1882. That edition reports the resurrection of Charles as having taken place in Rome. The locale. . . is wrong since it took place in Turin rather than Rome, but the fact itself is indisputable. You see, Don Bosco complained to Dr. D'Espiney about his having reported the incident. The doctor replied to him: "If the fact is a mistake, I will suppress it. But I beg you, Father, to tell me outright that the resurrection did not take place." Don Bosco replied that there should be no talk of it. The doctor answered: "Tell me it is not true." Asked a third time by D'Espiney to say that the miracle had not taken place, Don Bosco merely kept his silence. Now if the miracle had not taken place, Don Bosco would certainly have said so to Doctor D'Espiney. His silence is an admission.

Doctor D'Espiney himself told me of a conversation he had had with Don Bosco. He told me that Don Bosco was greatly pained by this publicity indeed, because of his humility, but he could not say that the resurrection of Charles had not taken place.

Doctor D'Espiney edited his account in accordance with all the conversations he had with Don Bosco. I myself will never forget the conversation in which Doctor D'Espiney told me all that I have just recounted.

So as not to annoy Don Bosco and cause him pain, Doctor D'Espiney eliminated the account of Charles's resurrection from subsequent editions of his book.

Vale in Domino,
L. Cartier

DA 13. Father Dominic Ruffino, 'Happenings that are reported'.¹⁰⁶

It is said that D. Bosco resurrected a dead person, a youth who fell ill and went from bad to worse. He sent for D. Bosco, who arrived after the youth had died. The parents were sorely grieved. Don Bosco tried to console them, then went to see the deceased and offered a brief prayer. At that moment the cold corpse came back to life and cried out: "Oh, Don Bosco, if I had not been freed soon, the devils would have carried me off to hell." Then he confessed all his sins and expired again.

¹⁰⁶ D. Ruffino, *Cronaca*, quaderno I (1859-1860), p. 34; AS 110 Ruffino.

DA 14. Father Julius Barberis, *Cronichetta* [Little Diary].¹⁰⁷

Saturday

January 5, [1876]

Today I heard this from Father Tamietti about Don Bosco. It is magnificent. In these past days, when at Borgo, speaking publicly to the youths and urging them to be sincere in Confession, Don Bosco recounted this incident:

It is not so many years ago that the following incident took place in Turin. A youth of fifteen fell gravely ill. Seeing the danger, the doctor advised his parents to ask him to go to Confession. The parents asked the youth what priest he wanted to be called. He showed a great desire that they call in his ordinary confessor, a zealous priest who worked hard in the church ministry in Turin. They sent for him immediately, but with regret the response was that he was out of Turin. The youth displayed keen regret and asked for the assistant parish priest. A day and a half later he died. His ordinary confessor got back to Turin after two days and was informed that the youth had sent for him. He wanted to go see him, in case he might still be in time; but he found that he had been dead for more than half a day. Indicating a desire to see him, he was led to the mortuary room where the mother and the [*here there is a gap in the original*] were praying by the deceased, who had been changed for burial and covered with a veil [*outside his bed? already in the coffin?*]. Approaching him and looking at him, the priest thought to himself: "Who knows if he made a good Confession? Who knows how things have fared for him?" Having said a brief prayer, he simply called him by name. The youth awoke as if from sleep, looked around, rose up a little, and said: "Oh, how did I get like this?" Then, seeing the priest: "Oh! I was looking for you specifically. I need you very much."

Frightened by this spectacle and beside herself, his mother went out to call people. About 20 people came in to witness the event. Meanwhile the youth called me and said: "Oh, I was bound for the place of damnation. In my last Confession I did not dare to reveal

¹⁰⁷ AS 110 Barberis, 1, Quaderno 3, pp. 60–62. Handwritten document of Father Julius Barberis. Alongside the first line, ms. of D. Berto (?): "Il risuscitato da D. Bosco." Alongside each line are quotation marks indicating that Father Lemoyne knew and transcribed the text. Ms. copy in AS 110 Barberis, 1 bis, ff. III–60 and III–61.

a sin." And he went to Confession to the priest. Turning to his mother, he said: "This priest is saving me from hell." He stayed that way about two hours, during which he was in possession of his mind. Among other things, he told his confessor to urge sincerity in Confession on young people insistently and always. Then he expired again. One remarkable thing was noticed in this resurrection. All the time the youth moved about, looked around, and talked, his body remained the cold corpse it had been before the resuscitation.

Then Don Bosco went on to urge sincerity in Confession. After the youths had gone to bed, said Tamietti, when I was alone with the director and Don Bosco, I asked: "Were you by any chance that priest, Don Bosco?" He replied: "Oh, why?" I said: "I thought you said, 'the youth called me'." Don Bosco: "I didn't mean to say that. If I did, it was inadvertently." The conversation ended there.

"I [Tamietti] was not aware of this incident with these details. But, eleven or twelve years ago, I heard vaguely that Don Bosco had resurrected a youth, who was able to go to Confession and then died again. I then asked someone if he knew anything, but I could not get any solid information. But the person who told me said he heard it from Father Ruffino (of happy memory) and that would confirm it wonderfully."

DA 15. Father John Bonetti, 'The boy awakened from the dead'.¹⁰⁸

A boy who had been in the habit of attending the Oratory of Don Bosco fell seriously ill and soon found himself at death's door. Seeing the danger, his folks sent for Don Bosco. Since the latter was not at home, he could not go right away and the youth died without being able to go to Confession.

Arriving home, Don Bosco was immediately told that people had come looking for him for the youth, who was in danger of death. He went out and headed right away for the dying or dead boy's house. Arriving there, he met a waiter and immediately asked him for news of the youth, but this man replied sadly that he was dead. Then, chuckling, Don Bosco said: "Oh! he's asleep and you think he's dead." At these words the other people in the house broke into tears, saying he was, alas, no more. Almost jokingly, Don Bosco replied: "I'll bet a pint he's

¹⁰⁸ Ms. notebook of Father Joacim Berto, who wrote on the cover: "Ms. of Father Bonetti." The episode is at f. 6r-v; AS 110 Bonetti 9.

not dead (he was the son of an innkeeper). Let me go see him." He entered the youth's room alone, approached and called him. He was already wrapped and sewn, as usual, in a long sheet, and there was a lamp nearby. After calling him, Don Bosco noticed him beginning to stir. He hid the lamp quickly and, with a strong pull of his two hands, tore the sheet to free him. The youth, as if waking from a sound sleep, opened his eyes and saw Don Bosco. As soon as he recognized him, he exclaimed: "Oh, Don Bosco! If you only knew! I need you very much." "Tell me what you want," said Don Bosco, "I am here for you." The youth proceeded: "I have had a dream that scared me awfully. I dreamed of fleeing from many devils who were trying to catch me and were about to grab me and throw me into hell, when I heard you call me. Now I want to go to Confession because some weeks ago I committed a sin that I have not yet confessed." Don Bosco heard his Confession right away. He showed real repentance, received absolution, and expired again.

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