

DON BOSCO AND THE WORLD OF WORK

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1. A complex context

Gian Mario Bravo, in an informative book of his on *Torino operaia. Mondo del lavoro e idee sociali nell'età di Carlo Alberto*,¹ dwells at great length on the ideas and actions of conservatives and moderate socialists, of radicals and social reformers, on the first workers' movement and on the mutual aid societies, yet skims through the work of Giuseppe Cottolengo and John Bosco in a page. Speaking of them, he writes: «Christian charity and Piedmontese paternalism combined to produce outstanding enterprises which, in both conception and execution, were confined to restricted groups of individuals rather than enlarged to embrace the whole society». He continues: «[their] activities were vitiated by the basic concept that inspired them both, according to which everything was left in the hands of a kindly divine providence, which, at its own discretion, could alleviate or aggravate men's ills». Consequently «the only possibility of relief for the poor depended upon the good-hearted concern of the rich and the noble, who might provide them with a bed, a bowl of soup, a place to meet». He concludes: «They [Cottolengo and Bosco] thus remained extraneous to the real movements and needs of the masses. Relying upon the ruling classes, they could do no more than offer assistance to a sub-proletariat which was even more wretched and oppressed than the ordinary workers and which had fewer problems than the latter, since their sole preoccupation was how to find something to eat».²

«One does not want to deny the good accomplished by these two priests and by the institutions they founded; one notes, however, that as their ideas were formulated into a theory, by their followers rather than by the men themselves, they became an obstacle to the social and intellectual development of the masses and of Piedmontese society, in so far as the latter was

¹ Cf. G.M. BRAVO, *Torino operaia. Mondo del lavoro e idee sociali nell'età di Carlo Alberto*, Torino 1968.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

seen as something unchangeable, as sick or evil through constitutional necessity and capable of only marginal improvement. That was what encouraged their concern for the people and their misfortunes».³

The writer, of course, ought to have made a distinction between the work of Cottolengo, which was directed towards the relief and protection of the most socially deprived, and that of Don Bosco, who began by gathering together and helping the country lads who came to the city seeking work, only to find themselves completely alone. He then moved on from instructing boys to finding them employment and giving them further assistance. As Guasco and many other historians have noted, he probably never even considered the problem of changes in class structure;⁴ still less the question of class warfare, which even many laymen of the period ignored. It is worth pointing out, with Scoppola, that though Don Bosco may be placed in the line of socially minded saints, which began with Cafasso and Cottolengo and passed through Don Bosco to Murialdo, forming a special characteristic of Piedmontese society, his own field of action was wider than that of the others; it included not only assistential work but also the facing of the many problems associated with the gradual modernization that followed upon the unification of the country.⁵ It therefore seems clear that it cannot be said that «his institutions belong to the pathetic prehistory of early capitalism»,⁶ nor that they only had a very limited influence on subsequent history.

Quite the opposite view is taken by one lay historian, Bairati, who sees Don Bosco's institution as a stopping-off ground and place of inculturation for the youngsters who «were moving into the city from the country-side, from a society on the verge of industrialization and moving towards the modern world; they were leaving a style of life and culture based on the rhythms and practices of farmers or simple tradesmen for a life and culture whose patterns were more structured and orderly».⁷ The Salesian cultural milieu, therefore, «although it had certain features that contrasted with those of the period in which it originated and developed, remained at many levels

³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁴ Cf. M. GUASCO, *Don Bosco nella storia religiosa del suo tempo*, in: *Don Bosco e le sfide della modernità*, Centro studi «C. Trabucco», number 11, Torino 1988, p. 4. This view is echoed by L. PAZZAGLIA, *Apprendistato e istruzione degli artigiani a Valdocco (1846-1886)*, in: F. TRANIELLO (edit.), *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, Torino, SEI 1987, p. 20.

⁵ Cf. P. SCOPPOLA, *Don Bosco nella storia civile*, in: *Don Bosco e le sfide* 20. Recall what Scoppola says at the end of his conference touching this matter: «Don Bosco is entitled to a place in the civil history of our country and of our troubled contemporary world. He certainly belongs to Turin in every way: to Turin the Christian, Catholic city, to the Turin of the liberals, Cavour and Gobetti, to the workingclass Turin of Gramsci, and to the Turin of industry, enterprise and culture».

⁶ Cf. S. QUINZIO, *Domande sulla santità. Don Bosco, Cafasso, Cottolengo*, Torino, Gruppo Abele 1986, p. 88.

⁷ Cf. P. BAIRATI, *Cultura salesiana e società industriale*, in: TRANIELLO, *Don Bosco nella storia* 338.

in close touch with the changing conditions of society».⁸ It thus became «modern» not so much in doctrine as in its organization, which was characterised by a sturdy economic autonomy, by a remarkable capacity for expansion and by an outstanding ability to encourage and mature individuals in preparation for work and for playing their part in society. Bairati accordingly defined Don Bosco's work as «an extraordinary Taylorian organization of Christian love».⁹

This is seen by many as the complex context within which we must locate the personality of Don Bosco,¹⁰ his concept of work and his activities relating to work.

2. Don Bosco's concept of work

His fundamental concept of work could not be other than that found in the Bible and taken in its most immediate interpretation: *in the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread*.¹¹ Work is the means of earning one's living, and the labour of work is a consequence of sin. This was the theme of a long dream on the night between 1 and 2 May of 1861, when a mysterious person pointed out a crowd of abandoned children and indicated by three words the means of salvation for his boys: *labor, sudor, fervor* (going on to explain: *Labor in assiduis operibus, sudor in poenitentibus continuis, fervor in orationibus ferventibus et perseverantibus*, in other words, «toil in daily work, sweat in continual penance and fervour in constant prayer».¹² This reminds us of how he promised three things to those entering his congregation: «bread, work and heaven».¹³

This also reflected his own experience, beginning from his childhood, when he worked for his living at home, and then later in the service of

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹⁰ On the complexity of Don Bosco's personality cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco*, Torino, SEI 1988.

¹¹ *Gen.* 3,19, to which one could add verse 17: *in laboribus comedes ex ea cunctis diebus vitae tuae*. Cf. also what Don Bosco wrote in his *Storia Sacra* (revised edition, Turin 1955), pp. 9-10. In the *Primo piano di regolamento per la casa annessa all'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* in chapter II (*Del lavoro*) one reads:

«1) Man, my dear boys, is born to work. Adam was placed in the earthly paradise to cultivate it. St. Paul says that the man who does not work does not deserve to eat.

2) Work means the fulfilment of the duties of one's particular state of life, whether as a student or as a tradesman.

3) Remember that through work you make yourself worthy of society and of religion and do good to your own soul, especially if you offer what you are doing to God [...].

7) Anyone who has a duty to work and does not do so is a thief» (MB IV 748 ss.).

¹² Cf. MB VI 904.

¹³ Cf. MB XII 598.

neighbouring peasants. He had to interrupt his studies, at his step-brother's insistence, to return to labouring in the fields. As a youth at the Moglia farm he rose at dawn and laboured until night. Even after returning to his studies at Castelnuovo and Chieri he earned his board and his fees by working as a servant, as a private tutor, as a barman, a tailor and a stable-boy. He also worked during the holidays, as he wrote later: «I made spinning-wheels, wall-brackets, spinning-tops, turned bowls on a lathe, stitched shoes, did ironwork and woodwork. At my home in Murialdo there is still a writing desk, a dining table and some chairs, which were the height of my achievement during the holidays. I also worked scything grass and in the wheat fields during the harvest; I pruned vines, harvested the grapes, helped to make the wine and tapped the barrels, and so on».¹⁴

If we make due allowance for the saint's exuberant prose and for his central role in this account, we have still to admit that he worked incessantly, not only in his early life but also afterwards. Work for him could be tramping round Turin looking for boys in need, searching for benefactors, educating his spiritual sons. Nor was he ever ashamed of manual work, such as patching a garment, mending a door, rebinding a book, helping the bricklayers at work on the Church of Mary, Help of Christians.

He saw manual work (and tried to ensure that his boys shared his view) as a means of earning his living, as well as of spiritual formation, preparing one for future responsibility and ensuring good behaviour.¹⁵ It would, perhaps, be an exaggeration to say that Don Bosco had a secular concept of work;¹⁶ it would be nearer the truth to emphasize, as Veneruso has done, the positive value which he set upon it.¹⁷ That value was independent of the value of different kinds of work; it sprang from his associating work with prayer as a means of saving souls,¹⁸ as well as from his conviction that work was a better form of personal asceticism than penitential practices. «I don't recommend to you penances and fasts but work, work, work», was something he was always saying to his boys.¹⁹

If by «secular concept» one means (as did the Rector Major in his Milan

¹⁴ MO 95 et ss.

¹⁵ M. PERRINI, *Politica e imprenditorialità di Don Bosco*, in «*Studium*» (1988) 269-274, where he speaks of the Salesian doctrine of work as summed up in the words of Don Bosco: «Anyone who does not work is no Salesian», and where he observes in Don Bosco «a most lively response when faced with what was modern in such things as industrial production, scientific and technological innovations, the research for better living and working conditions for the working classes».

¹⁶ Cf. P. SCOPPOLA, *Don Bosco nella storia civile* 11, where he affirms that Don Bosco in practice often anticipated the vision of the laity that was proclaimed by Vatican II.

¹⁷ Cf. D. VENERUSO, *Il metodo educativo di San Giovanni Bosco alla prova. Dai laboratori agli istituti professionali*, in: P. BRAIDO (edit.), *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 134, note 1.

¹⁸ Cf. MB XII 598.

¹⁹ Cf. MB IV 216.

talk) respect for the importance of the temporal order, openness to scientific progress, competence in organizing things, then yes, one can agree in speaking of Don Bosco's «secular concept» of work. But not, it seems to me, when Don Viganò himself affirmed: «Don Bosco in his way of doing things always showed himself especially sensitive to the positive values of that "secularity" which is peculiar to the world of work. This implied the recognition of the goodness and the order in creation, a witnessing to the sovereignty which man by his activity exercises over creation».²⁰

Here Don Bosco almost seems to anticipate the theology of earthly reality, as Scoppola also seems to suggest, when he writes: «If a layman is someone for whom reality exists and has its own special value, as the theologian Congar has neatly defined it, then we can say that Don Bosco anticipated in his work and practice many of the elements in the vision of the secular which Vatican II made its own».²¹ Nor are we inclined to accept the judgement of Pietro Prini that Don Bosco's method anticipated the personalistic humanism of our own century.²²

To have a clearer evaluation of Don Bosco's concept of work, it is useful to compare it with a discourse given on 11 May, 1862, by a priest-poet of liberal tendency, Giacomo Zanella, on the occasion of the handing over of a church to a workers' mutual aid society. «Man's natural condition», he affirms, «is to earn his bread through labour». But he at once added that this labour has been ennobled by the work of Jesus as a craftsman, and he sees work as the continuation of creation. «Our mission on earth is to work. When God created the world and fitted it out to meet our needs, reserving the main part of the work to himself, he entrusted to man the remainder of that work, just as a master-artist executes a design with his own hand, then leaves most of the colouring to his students [...]. Just as the world would not exist without God, so life would not go on without man: God and man need to work together every day in order to maintain life, God providing the material and the strength, man contributing his labour and adapting things to meet his different needs. God begins, man continues [...]. The craftsman is the true conqueror of the world; he harnesses to his own benefit the savage forces of nature».²³

²⁰ The talk by Don E. Viganò was published in the special number, dedicated to the person of Don Bosco, in «Rassegna CNOS» 4 (May, 1988) 5-13, in a form that differed slightly from that which appeared in a cyclostyled edition. I am quoting from the latter.

²¹ P. SCOPPOLA, *Don Bosco nella storia civile* 11. He continues: «The so-called preventive system – an expression which could today sound ambiguous – actually tends to place very positive value upon all the secular expressions of youthful existence». That does not seem enough to justify talking about «secularity» in Don Bosco.

²² Cf. P. PRINI in the introduction of the essay by S. PALUMBIERI, *Don Bosco e l'uomo*, Torino, Gribaudo 1987.

²³ Cf. G. ZANELLA, *Religione e lavoro*, in: *Le auspicateissime nozze Scola-Patella*, Vicenza 1863, pp. 32-33. Cf. also the recent essay by P. MARANGON, *Cristianesimo sociale e questione*

If one wishes to vindicate Don Bosco's greatness there is no need to claim that he anticipated developments in philosophy or theology; it is enough that he was a realist in his thinking, if we judge him by the standards of his contemporaries; a pragmatic man who could adapt himself to the present and yet be ready to face the future when it came. It is enough to point out how he valued work as an expression of personal dedication, as an activity that was alive with the spirit of sacrifice and yet inventive. This fact has been commented upon by the psychologist Giacomo Dacquino. He has noted the way Don Bosco encouraged his collaborators to be versatile in their work: «One must be ready to go into the pulpit or to attend a service in church; ready to teach or to sweep a floor; ready to teach catechism or pray in chapel or be with the boys in recreation; ready to study in the peace of one's cell or to go for a walk with the pupils; ready to command or to obey».²⁴ He said that on the evening of 20 January, 1862, and it was something he had practised from the beginning. He had been a conjurer, an acrobat, a tailor, a carpenter, a musician, writer, book-binder, and a priest. And that was the way the laybrothers, clerics and priests of Valdocco all led their lives.

This kind of work was conceived not merely as an inescapable condition of existence but as a positive value through which one could build and express one's own personality. There is a difference between work that is done as a means of production and that done for love; between consumer-oriented work (which makes it an end in itself) and work as a form of service of others, and therefore an expression of charity.²⁵ (Don Cusmano, the Sicilian «Don Bosco» would have called it «the prime charity»).

Another aspect of Don Bosco's view of work that needs underlining is his esteem for both manual and intellectual work, which led him to provide in his house for both students and artisans, side by side. There was no essential difference in the value of the two forms of work; rather complementarity. In fact he was convinced that manual and intellectual work were mutually beneficial in the formation of a rounded personality. He accordingly ensured

operaia nel pensiero di Giacomo Zanella e Antonio Fogazzaro, in «Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia» (1988) 111-230. Note also what Zanella says on page 58: «Man has a right to work, because without work he would have no daily life. Consequently any obstacle placed in the way of his exercising this right is a grave injury striking, more or less directly, against his very life». It seems to me that this and the preceding quotations go far beyond the mere concept of «social paternalism» attributed to Zanella by Marangon.

²⁴ MB VII 47.

²⁵ Cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 155. Blessed Giacomo Cusmano, the Sicilian Don Bosco, used to say that «work is the first charity», and I fancy Don Bosco would have shared that idea, even if he never used those words, in view of what he did and wrote. Regarding Cusmano and his social work cf. M.T. FALZONE, *Giacomo Cusmano. Poveri, Chiesa e società nella Sicilia dell'Ottocento (1834-1871)*, Palermo 1986. For similar initiatives in Palermo, cf. ID., *Carità e assistenza nella Chiesa palermitana dell'Ottocento*, in «Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia» (1988) 70-110.

that the artisans received cultural instruction, however rudimentary, while the students were made familiar with manual work. In this he seems to me to have been truly forward-looking.

3. The kinds of work

Initially the students outnumbered the artisans. In 1855, out of one hundred pupils 49.40% were students and 37.34% were artisans. By 1891, three years after Don Bosco's death, between the three schools of Valdocco, Porta Nuova and Val Salice there were 800 artisans (200 of them working in the printing and book-binding shops) and 400 students.²⁶ The needs of the time had caused him to devote more attention to manual skills and to send diocesan clerics back to their respective seminaries.

I am convinced that we ought to study Don Bosco's developing view of work right from the beginnings of the Oratory. This seems of fundamental importance, though it is not always taken into account. The Oratory was his point of departure and would remain the meeting place for new activities and for their coordination. It was Don Bosco himself who pointed this out.

In a leaflet published in 1862, *Invito ad una lotteria d'oggetti in Torino a favore degli Oratori*, he commented: «For some years there have been three oratories for boys in the three main sectors of the city of Turin,²⁷ where there are gathered together as many as possible of those boys who find themselves in sad circumstances. They are provided with honest and pleasant recreation after they have attended Sunday mass; they are attracted with prizes, with a bit of gymnastics and with classes. A considerable number of pious gentlemen have been persuaded to lend their services by teaching catechism, by supervising the boys as they carry out their duties in the various workshops, and by finding work with a decent employer for those who are unemployed.

«In the Oratory of St. Aloysius and of St. Francis de Sales there are day-schools for those youngsters who, on account of their shabby clothes or their indiscipline, would not be accepted in the state schools. In addition to religious instruction, they are taught reading, writing, basic arithmetic, the metric system, Italian grammar and the like.

«But amongst these boys there are several who are so poor and abandoned that they could never learn any trade unless they were first given lodging, food and clothing. The house adjoining the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales provides for these needs.

²⁶ These facts are taken from P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*, Roma, LAS 1980, pp. 180 and 612 respectively.

²⁷ The Oratories in question were St. Aloysius at Porta Nuova, St. Francis de Sales at Valdocco and The Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia.

«Evening classes also take place there; there are workshops and elementary scientific instruction for the artisans and they are taught singing and choral and instrumental music. These schools serve both boarders and day pupils.

«Moreover, as Providence had endowed many youngsters with exceptional talent, and yet the material means for progressing in their studies was lacking, entrance to the house was opened up to them. Some could pay fully for their board, some only in part, and others nothing at all; all that was required was that they should have ability and be well-behaved. Most became school teachers; others engaged in commerce, and those who felt they had the vocation were directed towards the priesthood».²⁸

When Don Bosco sent out this appeal in 1862, his organization was almost complete, the printing-house was already set up, and there were only a few more stages left. But we can see how the three Oratories were always his central interest.

4. Enterprises for the world of work

It was at the Oratory that the saint began his work. Three Oratories were opened by Don Bosco between 1840 and 1850: one in Vanchiglia, abandoned by Don Cocchi in 1849; the one in Valdocco, opened on a permanent basis in 1846, and that of Porta Nuova, opened in 1847. All three were largely traditional Oratories, except for the fact that about ten boys boarded in the Pinardi house. The remaining six to seven hundred boys attended in the evenings, when there were classes in the elements of reading, writing, mathematics, simple drawing, singing and music, and on Sundays, when there was Sunday school, church services and healthy recreation.

4.1. *The early phase*

During that period Don Bosco's main concern was to find his boys a job with a decent employer, to ensure that their terms of employment were fair and to visit them in the shops or workshops where they were employed, even when this involved mounting the scaffolding of houses that were being built. This caused a certain amount of consternation amongst some of the clergy, who did not think that this kind of involvement by Don Bosco in the world of work was a suitable apostolate. Placing the boys with good Chris-

²⁸ *Elenco degli oggetti graziosamente donati a beneficio degli oratori di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco, di S. Luigi a Porta Nuova e dell'Angelo Custode in Vanchiglia*, Torino 1862, pp. 1-3, quoted by P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 29.

tian employers in an environment that would not lead them into immorality or even to prison (his prison visiting had warned him how boys could end up), stipulating the terms of their contracts so as to prevent the exploitation that was then so common, especially in the case of apprentices – such was his prime objective.

In the Salesian archives there exist two contracts of apprenticeship, one dated November, 1851, the other February, 1852, signed by the employer, by the young apprentice, his father and Don Bosco. In the contract the employer undertakes to teach the boy his trade, to instruct him as required and to impose only fair rules, to correct him kindly and not with blows, should he fail in some way, and not to demand services that lie outside his trade; the boy must be free on all Sundays and days of obligation, and must be given a suitable weekly wage, with half-yearly increments. The employer is to behave towards him not like a master but a father. For his part the young apprentice promises to be attentive, willing and diligent, docile, respectful and obedient, and to repair any damage he causes. The contract was to run for two or three years.²⁹

Don Bosco, as Dacquino points out, fought for what we now call *fair terms* but without any union card and without being backed by the threat of a strike. He was not the inventor of work contracts – these had already been demanded by the «Organization for the Instruction of the Poor»³⁰ – but it can be affirmed, with Dacquino, that Don Bosco was the first true Italian trade unionist in his stand for the rights of workers.³¹ There is always the danger of exaggerating, as we sing Don Bosco's praises during his centenary, but it was certainly a triumph for him to obtain the guarantee of a fair contract for his boys in that era, when young apprentices were defenceless and at the mercy of employers who threatened them with unemployment and exploited them in a world of open competition.

As early as July 1849 he founded a *Mutual Aid Society* for the young workers who used to frequent the Oratory. Each member paid five cents each Sunday and, after having been a member for six months, was entitled to 50 cents a day if he was ill or unemployed. The cash reserve was aug-

²⁹ The contract drawn up on 8 February, 1852, between the employer Giuseppe Bertolino, the young apprentice Giuseppe Odasso, his father Vincenzo and Don Bosco for an apprenticeship as a joiner, was reproduced in the appendix to Don Vigano's talk (not in the printed but in the cyclostyled edition).

³⁰ Concerning the *Opera della mendicizia istruita* cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 61-66. Don Guala and Don Cafasso made the young people at the Ecclesiastical College work in the above *Opera*, which had been begun about 1770 as a result of Jesuit inspiration, partly through the *Catholic Friendship*. Don Bosco drew inspiration from it for his initial activities, such as helping the abandoned, teaching catechism, giving evening and day classes, providing lodging, etc.

³¹ Cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 194. Despite criticism of its general approach and of certain details, this appears to me a book worth referring to.

mented by voluntary contributions of benefactors, as was fairly common with Mutual Aid Societies at that time, but the contributions made by the members taught them to save and educated them in a spirit of solidarity.³² In this respect, too, Don Bosco was a social innovator. With his clear intuition of the way things were moving did he anticipate health insurance, indemnity against accidents and even the «community chest» (*cassa integrazione*);³³ or was he simply a man who noted new institutions arising around him³⁴ and promptly made use of them for the benefit of his boys? All this relates to an early phase when he was still only involved in the world of labour from the outside, so to speak, but after 1850 a new phase began. From helping and placing boys in work he moved on to opening his own workshops.

4.2. *A new phase*

This is the simple description given by Pietro Enria, who later became one of the first Salesian brothers: «Don Bosco saw how his boys in the workshops of Turin were in continual danger, so he gradually got the idea of setting up workshops in his own house and he began with workshops for tailoring and shoe-making, then woodwork, and then later all the workshops that still exist today; and he did all this to avoid danger to his dear boys that he loved more than himself».³⁵

In 1853 he opened workshops for shoe-making and tailoring; in 1854 book-binding; in 1855 the woodwork shop; in 1861 the printing shop, and in 1862 the metalwork shop. As is clear from the above testimony, the main purpose of the first workshops was to remove the youngsters from factories where they were listening to dirty talk, the ridiculing of religion and bad language. The structure of the workshops was preindustrial, with the craftsmasters, workers and apprentices all working together. They were considered not really as true *trade schools*, where the investment was made for purely

³² Cf. *Società di mutuo soccorso di alcuni individui della congregazione di San Luigi eretta nell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales*, Torino 1850. «On the first of June the Society of Mutual Aid was started and its statutes may be consulted in the printed book». These words are found for the year 1850 in the *Principio dell'attuale oratorio di Valdocco e suo ingrandimento fino al presente* (BRAIDO, *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 57: Don Braido points out that it had actually begun a month or two earlier).

³³ These assertion are made by DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 192.

³⁴ On the birth and development of the Mutual Aid Society cf. V. FRANCHINI, *Le prime lotte operaie nell'Italia unita*, in: *L'economia italiana dal 1861 al 1961. Studi nel 1° centenario dell'Unità d'Italia*, Milano 1961; E.R. PAPA, *Origini delle società operaie*, Milano 1967; A. CHERUBINI, *Dottrine e metodi assistenziali dal 1789 al 1848: Italia - Francia - Inghilterra*, Milano 1958; A. CHERUBINI, *Storia della previdenza sociale in Italia (1860-1960)*, Roma 1977, pp. 36-70; *Stato e Chiesa di fronte al problema dell'assistenza*, Roma 1982.

³⁵ The story is given in P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 505. He reproduces all 24 pages of the *Promemoria* of Enria.

social reasons, but rather as *craft businesses* which could turn out finished, marketable products which corresponded to the needs of the workers but were also able to be sold.

There was a great difference, however: whereas craft businesses were normally run for the profit of the owner, those in the Oratory were operated for the benefit of the artisans, so that they would not have to be subsidised so heavily out of the boarding fees of the students.³⁶

Don Bosco's project, therefore, did not as yet have the real character of a professional school but continued to be based on the idea of apprenticeship. Even so, this involved a gradual transformation of the traditional concept of the Oratory. It became something quite new and, in its own way, found a place in the world of labour and production, without the concomitant dangers of depersonalization and exploitation. The Oratories were not just a convenient pool of workers, or craft factories or a new industry; they were a genuine union of workers, even if this fact increased the constant difficulty in marketing their products and in finding outlets for them at competitive prices.

The second phase of participation in the world of labour forced Don Bosco to work out new forms of organization. He could not always rely on the craftmasters; sometimes they would leave their job without any previous warning. In such a situation it was preferable for the most advanced among the apprentices to instruct the others, even if the end product was less perfect. Out of this grew his idea of having «coadjutors» (or lay-brothers). As Stella has pointed out,³⁷ this name of «coadjutor» was initially given (starting in 1854, when one out of thirty nine entrants was thus designated) to young or slightly older lay people who helped to perform domestic duties in the house or in the workshops. They were odd-job men, sweepers, waiters-on table, or, if they were more capable, assistants to the craftmasters in charge of the workshops. Eventually, these evolved into the Salesian «coadjutors», with or without vows, who became themselves real craftmasters, thus ensuring continuity of instruction as well as a higher degree of care for the pupils. This prepared the way for the setting up of professional schools properly so-called.³⁸ Moreover, they were a great help, even the way they had initially, and in a certain sense of necessity, been conceived. They saved the boys from being exposed to danger from an apprenticeship with employers who were of doubtful morality; they provided both moral and material help; they

³⁶ Cf. F. RIZZINI, *Don Bosco e la formazione professionale. Dall'esperienza alla codificazione*, in the special issue in May 1988 of the CNOS, *Don Bosco e la formazione professionale*, pp. 15-56.

³⁷ Cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, p. 180, and the essay by F. RIZZINI, *Il salesiano coadiutore e la formazione professionale*, in the issue quoted of the CNOS, pp. 87-97.

³⁸ Cf. P. STELLA, *Cattolicesimo in Italia e laicato nelle Congregazioni religiose. Il caso dei coadiutori salesiani (1854-1974)*, in «Salesianum» 36 (1975) 411-445.

created friendships and collaboration, and they set some of them on the road to religious life as coadjutors.³⁹

4.3. *Towards the professional schools*

It was only at a later date that the craft workshops began to approximate to a real professional school. (Veneruso claims that this last change occurred about 1876 in the institute of Sampierdarena,⁴⁰ but this view is probably born of local loyalty, since similar changes were occurring in the same period at Valdocco). The old style of workshops that had endured for so long no longer met the needs of the time, which called for more specialization and a more complete formation. The demand had always been for the same kind of clothes, shoes and books: the products were all the same and did not demand any great skill, or time, or updating on the part of the artisan. Suddenly the demand was not for a changeless product but for variety.

As the method of production changed, a corresponding change was called for in the way the apprentices were trained. Years of assiduous training were needed, combining study and practical work, so that planning and openness to new ideas progressed *pari passu* with the acquisition and perfecting of manual skills. More workshops, therefore, had to be turned into professional institutes of arts and trades. Don Bosco was well aware of this, and the deliberation of the third and fourth General Chapter⁴¹ and the document *The orientation to be given to the craft sections in Salesian houses*⁴² established the basic norms for the future professional schools, which were developed and multiplied by Don Bosco's successors.

It is, accordingly, necessary to correct the view of Quinzio that «the professional and trade schools belong to the pathetic prehistory of early capitalism».⁴³ If that was true of the first stage, when the craft schools were just

³⁹ On the development of the first workshops cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 123-199. On the analogy with the beneficent societies of Venice, which never got beyond this first stage, cf. S. TRAMONTIN, *Gli Oratori di Don Bosco e i Patronati veneziani*, in: P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 117-132.

⁴⁰ Cf. D. VENERUSO, *Il metodo educativo* 138-140.

⁴¹ Cf. *Deliberazioni del terzo e quarto Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana*, S. Benigno Canavese, 1887, pp. 18-22.

⁴² *L'indirizzo da darsi* is mentioned in: D. VENERUSO, *Il metodo educativo* 141. Cf. also the MB XVIII 700-702. It is significant, as Pazzaglia has commented, that it was probably only in a letter of 1880 that Don Bosco spoke of «professional schools». Cf. L. PAZZAGLIA, *Apprendistato* 43. On 7 October, 1879, the minister of agriculture, industry and commerce, Benedetto Cairoli, requested the suburban authorities to encourage the setting up of schools of arts and trades, concentrating upon Sunday and evening classes, which were at a more convenient time, rather than upon day schools, which served to prepare more skilled workers and master craftsmen.

⁴³ S. QUINZIO, *Domande sulla santità* 88.

getting started, it was certainly no longer true after 1880, when genuine professional schools were established, destined to provide, amongst other things, hundreds of workers for Lane Rossi in Schio and for FIAT in Turin.

It was Alessandro Rossi himself who helped the Salesians to start their work in Schio (1901). He had met Don Bosco in Turin on several occasions and had also exchanged ideas with senator Giovanni Agnelli.⁴⁴ When the latter welcomed religious and civic dignitaries to FIAT in 1929, during the Turin celebrations to mark the beatification of Don Bosco, he said: «The disciples and followers of Blessed Don Bosco, this great Piedmontese that Turin particularly venerates and celebrates today, will feel pulsing in this place a rhythm of life that would not have displeased the "Beatus" who was a noble hero of charity as well as a most enthusiastic apostle of human labour, a man who released exceptional energies and discovered untapped forces, a tireless founder of workshops and factories».⁴⁵

One should also note that the creation of fresh workshops and professional schools kept pace with the development of the Salesian Cooperators to meet the increased need for economic, moral and personal assistance.⁴⁶

Don Bosco, however, did not only bring together abandoned boys in order to prepare them for a job by founding workshops and, later, professional schools; he forged even closer links with labour by his entrepreneurial enterprise in setting up and developing printing houses.

4.4. Initiatives in publishing

Like some of his wiser contemporaries during the period of the Restoration, the Piedmontese saint appreciated the importance of the printed word. One recalls that one of the chief aims of the *Catholic Friendship* founded in 1811 by Don Brunone Lanteri, taking over from the *Christian Friendship* of Fr. Diessbach, had been the free distribution of good books.⁴⁷

Don Bosco's first book published by Speirani and Ferrero in 1844 was his *Cenni storici sulla vita del Chierico Luigi Comollo*. Three thousand copies were printed (a considerable number in those days) and sold at the modest price of 30 cents to encourage its dissemination. This marked the beginning of a long series of reprints, of devotional books (like the *Giovane Provveduto*, a classic of its kind that had an initial run of 10,000 copies [1847] and was frequently reprinted), of school texts (amongst them the *Storia Ecclesia-*

⁴⁴ «It gives me great pleasure to welcome you», said senator Agnelli, «since I knew Don Bosco personally and his luminous figure still speaks to me».

⁴⁵ This discourse is quoted by BAIKATI, *Cultura salesiana* 347.

⁴⁶ On the Salesian Cooperators, cf. *Cooperatori salesiani, ossia un modo pratico per giovare al buon costume ed alla civile società*, Sampierdarena, 1877; *Don Bosco e le sue opere. La casa di Sampierdarena*, Sampierdarena, 1923, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁷ Cf. C. BONA, *Le Amicizie. Società segrete e rinascita religiosa (1770-1830)*, Torino 1962.

stica and the *Storia Sacra*, one of his best known works, and later the *Storia d'Italia*). There were also periodicals like «L'Amico della gioventù», which began in 1848, printed by Marietti, but lasted only a few months, and the «Letture Cattoliche», begun in 1853 and appearing monthly, dealing with religious and lighter topics. The first issues were so popular that they had to be reprinted.

For these numerous publishing initiatives Don Bosco used various Turinese printers, including Paravia, Marietti and De Agostini, but between 1853 and 1855 he had already, together with Rosmini, conceived the idea of founding his own printing works; this would ensure greater freedom as well as improved profits. On 26 October, 1861, he applied to the governor of the province of Turin, Count Giuseppe Pasolini, for permission to open a printing shop in the Oratory complex. This was successfully opened in 1862, and work was guaranteed by the established success of the «Letture Cattoliche». Legally speaking, once he had terminated his contract with Paravia,⁴⁸ Don Bosco was effectively the proprietor of a printing house; socially speaking, he was an entrepreneur who was investing his capital in the cause of philanthropy.

The printing house soon became the dynamic centre of the Valdocco workshops, and also the best known. Don Bosco invested considerable sums of money in improving machinery, starting a book-binding shop, buying a paper works and opening a bookshop (by 1891 there would be no less than 200 people working in these departments). He wanted to be in the vanguard of progress, as he often declared, and this aroused the envy and jealousy of other printers in the city. He weathered some difficult crises and displayed a real flair for management.⁴⁹

At this point I want to confirm an observation made by Don Pietro Stella. «There had been the old-fashioned relationship between craftmasters and apprentices in the workshops, and then this was replaced by the style of technical school envisaged by the new law on public teaching; between these two extremes Don Bosco found a third way which better suited him, that of owning his own large workshops. The process of producing popular and scholastic material provided useful training for young apprentices».⁵⁰ As we have seen, this did not prevent him also opening real technical schools.

The motive force behind all this was his love for his boys, and it was this Christian charity that drove him on to become such an extraordinary organizer of so many varied enterprises.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 366-368.

⁴⁹ Concerning the running of the printing shop cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 351-369, and the essay by F. RIZZINI, *Don Bosco tipografo e editore*, in the special number of CNOS, pp. 57-85.

⁵⁰ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 248.

⁵¹ The expression is that of BAIRATI, *Cultura salesiana* 355. This author's assessment seems

There are two other significant aspects that we need to touch on when talking about Don Bosco and the world of work, because they show how the Oratory remained at the centre of Salesian life: one is the need for rest or recreation; the other is the combination of work and prayer.

5. Work and rest

There were, of course, the Sunday and Holyday days of rest, which were not only observed but also written into the terms of employment that he demanded for his boys,⁵² as many witnesses have testified. In addition, however, Don Bosco wanted to provide healthy relaxation. In the Turin process for the beatification Don Felix Reviglio affirmed: «On Sundays and feastdays about five hundred boys used to gather in the huge playground that surrounded the little chapel. Don Bosco had provided various games and gymnastic equipment to keep them happily occupied, *bocce* (bowls), *piastrelle* (a game like marbles), stilts, parallel bars and a vaulting horse. On the feasts of St. Aloysius and St. Francis de Sales there were sack-races, target shies, "breakneck" (so called because it involved climbing a steep plank covered with grease), which did not, however, expose them to any danger and for which the winner received a prize».⁵³

During recreation periods Don Bosco used to encourage the boys to play because he understood that games play an important part in developing mental balance and in establishing relationships.⁵⁴ He also used games to make contact with his boys, not only because he realised that «the playground is more attractive than the church», but because games sublimated aggression by producing the acceptance of and respect for rules, by demand-

to me to be important. He writes: «The Salesian cultural model is particularly interesting from the point of view of the relationship between religion and society, culture and economy. In the case of the Salesians these relationships are not the expression of a temporary ideological compromise, of daring but sterile doctrinal accommodation or of unprejudiced but short-lived political pacts. Salesian intransigence was total. The social awareness of Don Bosco and his Salesians is not the result of any watering down of Catholic teaching with progressive populist theories [and one needs to recall that at that time no real Catholic social doctrine had emerged]. Its modernity did not come from some borrowed ideology or from the pious reshuffling of secular values. The Salesian cultural model manages to be *social* and *modern* not in any doctrinaire sense, as Burzio has rightly pointed out, but because it coincides with an organization that is traditional in a new kind of way, characterised by strong economic control, by an extraordinary capacity for expansion and by an outstanding ability to encourage and mature individual people in preparation for work and for taking their place in society» (*ibid.*, p. 354.).

⁵² The saint devoted the July 1861 edition of the «Letture Cattoliche» to the question of rest on Sundays and feasts.

⁵³ Cf. *Taurinensis. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Ioannis Bosco sacerdotis fundatoris Piae Societatis Salesianae. Positio super introductione causae*, Roma 1907, p. 147.

⁵⁴ Cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 151.

ing interdependence with others and by discouraging selfishness. «Instead of punishment we must make use of games and mingle with the boys», was the answer that Don Bosco gave to a journalist who had commented upon the orderly atmosphere in the Oratory.⁵⁵ He did not favour sedentary games «because they don't correspond with a boy's need for movement and letting off steam. For this reason he never wanted seats or benches in the playgrounds of his institutes, because he wanted to discourage sedentary games».⁵⁶ He liked to accompany his boys on long walks through the hills of Monferrato, as he told his boys in 1876: «Exercise is the best thing for our health. I am convinced that one reason why people are not so healthy these days is because they don't get as much exercise as they used to. The convenience of the "omnibus", the coaches and railway means that people no longer have occasion for even a short walk, whereas fifty years ago one thought nothing of walking from Turin to Lanzo. It seems to me that the rocking of a train or a carriage is not enough movement to keep a man healthy».⁵⁷

These walks also helped to create in his boys a sense of wonder at the beauty of nature. The aesthetic sense was further developed by singing and music (he used to say that an Oratory without music was like a body without a soul),⁵⁸ by puppet plays and, later, by the proper staging of sketches and farces (music and theatre are still a very significant characteristic of the Salesians).

He also wanted gymnastics as an aid to the physical development of his boys, and as something likely to improve both their manual work and their studies. He used to advise the students, in particular, to make good use of their free time; he was fond of repeating to them that idleness is the father of all the vices: «I advise you to keep yourselves enjoyably occupied. Play bowls, ball, football. Everyone will have special games at home and can play at cards, at draughts, at "tarocchi" and chess, or at any other game that you find entertaining. Above all I'd recommend you to go for some good long walks».⁵⁹

This was what he proposed to his students; the boys in the Salesian workshops had to make do with shorter breaks or with the evening and Sunday recreation in the Oratory. It may seem strange that, with all these outings, none seems to have presented Don Bosco as forerunner of ecology!⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Cf. MB XVI 168.

⁵⁶ P. RICALDONE, *Don Bosco educatore*, II, Colle Don Bosco (Asti), LDC 1952, p. 49.

⁵⁷ MB XII 343.

⁵⁸ MB V 347. As regards music, there was tuition in the piano, accordion, harmonium, organ and in all the brass, woodwind and string instruments (*Riassunto della Pia Società di San Francesco di Sales nel 23 febbraio 1874* in the OE XXV 381).

⁵⁹ MB XIII 431 et ss.

⁶⁰ There is reference to this in C. SEMERARO, *Don Bosco, il santo dell'aria aperta*, in «Rivista del CAI del Piemonte» (September 1988). For the sake of comparison an article by I.

6. Work and piety

Don Bosco's pedagogical programme involved three things: cheerfulness (*allegria*) and work, but also piety.⁶¹ Work was linked to recreation but also to piety, which was based on religious instruction. As early as 1850, when Don Bosco was asking for support from the Pious Organization for the Instruction of the Poor, he gave a very brief historical outline, in which he said: «By means of pleasant recreation enlivened by various forms of entertainment, by means of catechism, lessons and singing, many [of the young apprentices] became better-behaved, fond of their work and of religion».⁶²

A little further on he added: «A fair number of pious gentlemen are most helpful in undertaking to teach them catechism».⁶³ And in 1862 he repeated: «A significant number of pious gentlemen readily devote themselves to teaching the boys catechism, to ensuring that they carry out their duties in the workshops and to finding an honest employer for those without work».⁶⁴

In his *Cenno storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, recently republished by Don Braido, the saint shows how his work began with the teaching of catechism: «This Oratory, which is a gathering of youngsters on Sundays and feasts, began in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. Don Cafasso had for a long time given catechism lessons each Sunday during the summer to young brick-layers, who met in a little room adjoining the sacristy. Pressure of work forced him to suspend this work which was so dear to him. I took it over at the end of 1841 and began by meeting in the same room two young adults who were greatly in need of religious instruction. Others began to join them and in the course of 1842 the number increased to twenty, and then twenty five. From these beginnings I learned two most important truths: that young people are not usually inherently wicked but only become so through contact with evil companions; and that even those evil companions, when treated individually, are capable of great moral improvement (these two truths later gave rise to the preventive system). During 1843 the catechism lessons continued on the same footing and the numbers rose to fifty, which was as many as could be accommodated in the place assigned to me».⁶⁵

This need for religious formation spurred him on in 1847 to publish, in

PIEPER of Munich University on the *reevaluation of feastsdays*, is of interest. The importance of feasts is weighed up against the over-valuing of action, of force, of suffering and the active aspects of society. There is a reevaluation of «sloth» in the Aristotelian sense, and the author concludes: «Celebrate a feast, in other words, give praise to God, because the world is enjoyable». The article appeared in «Settimana», 18 December, 1988.

⁶¹ Cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 158.

⁶² The memoir was read on 20 February to the administrators of the «Pia Opera della Mendicizia istruita». Quoted in E I 29 et s.

⁶³ *Catalogo degli oggetti* 1. The booklet appeared in 1857.

⁶⁴ *Invito ad una lotteria* 1.

⁶⁵ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 38 et s.

addition to the usual short catechisms,⁶⁶ his *Storia Sacra* (printed and published by Speirani and Ferrero), because amongst those then in circulation he could find none suitable for his boys, given that they were almost completely ignorant regarding religion. In his *Memorie* Don Bosco complained that «most of the books available were not written in a popular style, the material was often unsuitable and discussion of questions was too lengthy. Many facts were dealt with in a way calculated to do moral harm to the young, and none of them concentrated sufficiently on the points that have to provide a basis for the truths of the faith. The same could be said of the way they dealt with public worship, purgatory, confession, the eucharist and similar matters».⁶⁷

Don Bosco is here attempting a qualitative leap, but although his *Storia Sacra* may have avoided many of the defects that he condemned in others, it did not really succeed in providing that «basis for the truths of the faith» that he had aimed at, even if it took a step in that direction. The end which he had in view was certainly the right one, which would eventually lead to a significant change of approach.

Don Bosco brought his boys together for prayer: triduum, novenas and the preparation for the great feasts provided constant themes. The list of his publications provides significant clues regarding practices of piety: *The six Sundays and the novenas in honour of St. Aloysius Gonzaga* (1846), *Devotion to the Guardian Angel* (1845), *The Christian's Day* (1852), *The Key of Heaven in the hands of a Catholic who practises the duties of a good Christian* (1856), together with the sundry titles of his «Letture Cattoliche». His finest production, however, in this field, was the publication, through Paravia, of the *Giovane provveduto* in 1847. This book of devotions had 352 pages and 10,000 copies were initially printed. It contained morning and evening prayers, based on the catechism of Mons. Casati,⁶⁸ the Little Office of Our Lady, Sunday Vespers, the Via Crucis, and many common and successful hymns.

⁶⁶ A book which he acquired, reprinted and made great use of was the *Breve catechismo pe' fanciulli alle preghiere della mattina e della sera ad uso delle scuole cristiane della città e diocesi di Torino*. It had been printed several times by Marietti.

⁶⁷ MO 184 et s. P. STELLA, however, in his *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 333, judges them to have been exaggerated and in no way based on biblical catechesis of the kind found in Aperti or Rayneri.

⁶⁸ The so-called Casati catechism was actually written by canon Giuseppe Maria Giaccone in 1765, at the request of the bishop of Mondovì, mons. Michele Casati. It was clearly in the Oratorian tradition, using, as one of its sources, the *Piccolo compendio della dottrina cristiana* printed in Turin in 1710, with St. Philip Neri on the frontispiece. The author took into account the Roman Catechism and that of Robert Bellarmine, as is made clear in a pastoral letter of Casati recommending it to all his priests. It also owes something to the catechism of Bossuet, from which the whole final section on liturgical feasts was transcribed. In 1896 it was adopted by the bishops of Piedmont and Lombardy as the official catechism, a fact which confirms Don Bosco's good judgement in using it. Cf. S. TRAMONTIN, *Dal catechista di Tombolo al papa catechista*, in: *Le radici venete di San Pio X. Saggi e ricerche*, edited by S. Tra-

At the heart of the piety in which Don Bosco schooled his boys, however, was attendance at Mass, which was celebrated in the Oratory, and the frequenting of the sacraments of confession and holy communion. Enria tells of the Masses celebrated by the saint and attended by his boys in the icy church,⁶⁹ as well as of the hours the saint spent in the confessional and, even longer, hearing confessions in one of the rooms of the Oratory. One of the loveliest photographs is, indeed, the one that shows him hearing the confession of a boy who is whispering almost into his ear, while clustered around are other boys, awaiting their turn. He attached great importance to chats in the confessional: he felt that as well as a spiritual guide he was also a friend and a father. Dacquino has pointed out that, in the homely atmosphere of the Oratory, confession was a moment of filial trust and thus provided reassurance at the affective level, as well as spiritual guidance.⁷⁰

As for communion, although a relic of the Jansenistic mentality restrained him from urging all his boys to communicate frequently, he nevertheless encouraged the best of them to nourish themselves frequently with this eucharistic food, in order to keep in close touch with Our Lord.⁷¹

Prayer, the sacraments, together with religious instruction, were thus meant to feed the spiritual life of his young boarders and day-pupils, both students and artisans. For these latter piety also provided strength in enduring the fatigue of their physical toil, helping them to a spiritual vision of their work as the fulfilment of God's will and as something precious in his sight.

He wanted his boys to pray even while they were working, in addition to offering their work to God. In number 8 of his *Primo piano* he exhorts: «Always begin your work with a "Hail Mary"»; and in number 9: «In the morning, at midday and in the evening recite the *Angelus*, and in the evening add the *De Profundis*».⁷² Zanella, in the talk referred to, affirmed: «Religion and work once again joined forces [in the formation of Christian-inspired mutual aid societies], and the combination of the two produced great benefit for both religion and work. Was it not, in fact, religion that imparted dignity

montin, Brescia 1987, pp. 72-104; also L. NORDERA, *Il catechismo di Pio X. Per una storia della catechesi in Italia (1896-1916)*, Roma, LAS 1988.

⁶⁹ Cf. the *promemoria* (memorandum) of Pietro Enria, reproduced by P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica* 494-506. He also speaks of the confessions and communions of the boys of the Oratory.

⁷⁰ Cf. G. DACQUINO, *Psicologia di Don Bosco* 259.

⁷¹ There is an interesting description of a Sunday at the Oratory in a document quoted by Don Braido: «Religious services on feastsdays are as follows: in the morning, a chance for anyone who wants to, to go to confession; Mass, followed by a story from sacred or Church history or by an explanation of the day's Gospel; then recreation. In the afternoon, catechism classes, Vespers, a short sermon, benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by the usual recreation. After the religious services everyone is free either to stay and play games or to go home. As soon as it goes dark everyone is sent home and the Oratory is locked up» (P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco nella Chiesa* 68).

⁷² Cf. *Primo piano*, quoted in note 11.

to work? And does not work, on the other hand, correspond with the lofty ideals of religion?». He promoted religious festivals, as they used to be celebrated by the ancient guilds, in order to «raise the spirits trapped amid the machinery of labour, stimulating and cheering them with the lofty spectacle of the mysteries of the faith». He compared these celebrations to «those shrines that one meets on roads in the Alps, which arouse a pious thought in the heart of the traveller and, at the same time, provide him with a bench, where he can rest awhile».⁷³ A feast was meant to provide for rest and prayer: that was Zanella's view and it was Don Bosco's too.

7. As a conclusion

This was Don Bosco's attitude to the world of work, his thinking and undertakings. His main preoccupation always remained the same, the saving of souls, but if we want to sum up his "doctrine of work", we cannot do better than quote the discourse of Don Viganò in Milan, namely:

- the primacy of man over work;
- the primacy of the personal value of work over its objective value;
- the primacy of work over capital;
- the primacy of conscience over technical progress;
- the primacy of solidarity over individual or group interests.⁷⁴

These are ideas that are confirmed by John Paul II in his *Laborem Exercens*⁷⁵ and repeated in his numerous talks on his recent visit to Turin and to the places dear to Don Bosco.⁷⁶ His discourse on man, on his work, on his dignity, was the dominant theme of those days, as some commentators noted.⁷⁷ And he invited us not just to view Don Bosco as a precursor but «to feel his presence in our today and in our tomorrow».⁷⁸

⁷³ Cf. ZANELLA, *Religione e lavoro* 40. He sees the foresight and saving recommended by Don Bosco as useful in helping to foster religious sentiments. He also suggests that, in addition to religious practices, one should read good books. Once again the two men are seen to be in agreement in seeing this as a form of «education which makes you aware of your dignity».

⁷⁴ Cf. the cyclostyled text of the discourse by Don E. Viganò, already quoted.

⁷⁵ For *Laborem Exercens*, cf. *Le encicliche sociali dalla Rerum Novarum alla Laborem Exercens*, Roma, 1984, pp. 471-564.

⁷⁶ See «L'Osservatore Romano», numbers 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, where the talks are quoted in full or in summary, with some comments. See also BS (October, 1988), where there is a commentary on the Pope's stay in Turin.

⁷⁷ Cf. P. AMICI, *Seguire la via indicata da Don Bosco per restituire a Torino la sua vera anima*, in «L'Osservatore Romano» of 5-6 September, 1988, p. 7.

⁷⁸ From the homily given in the Piazza of Mary, Help of Christians.