

Don Bosco Studies N. 18

**The
MAGNA CARTA
of the
SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

Volume 2

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INTRODUCTION

The original Dutch study of “The Magna Carta of the Salesian Education” consists of two volumes. The first volume contains comments on the first part of manuscript D (Ms. D) with the text for the teachers and assistants at Valdocco. It was translated into English and placed on the list of the Salesian Digital Library (SDL).

Some years later Fr. Gaston Deneve, SDB finished the second volume, commenting on the second part of Ms. D with almost the complete letter sent From Rome on 10 May 1884 to the boys at the Oratory in Valdocco, and offering further considerations concerning both parts. Julian Fox and Emmanuel Camilleri kindly reviewed and corrected this translation.

To make the comparison with the original Italian texts easier we have prepared an Auxiliary or Supplementary Booklet consisting of six columns. This was realized by Jos Biesmans, SDB and Eugene Vanhoof, a committed cooperator. In the second volume of the Study we have indicated the pages concerned between brackets.

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5. Comment on the second large part of Manuscript D, that is of the second part of the so-called final ‘long version’

The continuation of the text destined for the Salesians, consists of an almost literal copy of the text of the letter to the boys (10 May 1884), attached to a sort of circular addressed to the Salesians at Valdocco.

1. The transition to taking over the instructions to the boys from the letter that had been sent them.

Buzzetti’s reply “at a dinner the best dish is a hearty welcome” might have given the author the opportunity of having Don Bosco react in the following way: “I’ll let my Salesians know what you have told me, but what should I say to the boys of the Oratory?” Thus Fr. Lemoyne might have elaborated a pretty natural unity between a text for the Salesians and the text sent to the boys. At the same time he would have preserved the connection that was more or less present at the end of the very first notes in manuscript A (Ms. A), but there in the reversed order, because in those notes Don Bosco’s suggestions for a letter to the boys precede two embryonic phrases that may be interpreted as inspiration for a possible circular to the Salesians.¹ Yet, Fr. Lemoyne opted for a different approach. He preferred to close the detailed but very stimulating first part with the conclusion he had already used in the letter to the boys and that also rounds off Manuscript C (Ms. C).

If he then wished to add a large part of the letter which was meant for the boys to a text for the adults, he might have been faced with a serious problem. For he would be obliged to think out a new introduction to the sequence of the text. Thanks to his experience with noting and writing up different ‘dreams’, this must have been only a very small problem for Fr. Lemoyne. Certainly so when without the slightest reticence he had decided to write that the long composition to the confreres was due to one of Don Bosco’s dreams. Thus he could make use of a technique that he had applied for working out the dream of 1868 that I have already mentioned several times in the first volume of this study. To be able to tell the long allegory of the grapes in two parts, the dream narrative itself was in 1868 divided into two phases. The sound of the bell, signifying that it was time to go the refectory for lunch, woke up Don Bosco for the first time. After this interruption he nodded off again and the dream continued with almost the same co-workers around him, who were called by name (Fathers. Rua, Cagliero, Francesia and Savio) and with an as yet not known guide, a serious-looking man, who strode up to Don Bosco with determination. (7-8)²

- Clear attribution of the letter to the boys to a dream.

The decision to attribute the origin of both parts to a dream already appears from the first words of the transition passage: “I wish I did not have these dreams, because they tire me so much.” (26) No longer any prudent or veiled suggestions, but open and free words: “these dreams”. This introductory sentence preparing the attachment of the remaining part of the letter to the boys may have been inspired by Don Bosco’s real physical condition in those days, namely: illnesses and exhaustion.³ But also because of what often happened to him in similar circumstances. Don Bosco had had many sleepless nights in his life and others during which he woke up several times in fright. He was considerably disturbed especially at times of illness and stress, times in which a great number of dreams are dated.⁴ They were nights when he must have felt “exhausted” and must have intensively longed for a calm, undisturbed sleep. In 1868, after being awoken by the bell, he could have rejoiced since he was able to fall asleep again though the joy was short-lived, for the dream continued.

Because of the generalization, that is the allusion to other dreams (“such”, “these”), this transition sentence looks very much like the end of the dream narrative on 31 December 1867. On that evening he concluded the dream proper in the same way: “Some (hailstones) struck me on the head with such force that I woke up only to find that I was more tired than when I had fallen asleep.”⁵ How very tiring it must sometimes have been for Don Bosco is also apparent from the introduction of some brief information from 1875. At that time he began the narrative with the following avowal: “I had a very restless night. I had a dream that upset me very much.”⁶ More than a dream, it sounds like a nightmare.

No less happened to him in April 1868. At that moment too his health was very poor. That is the reason why he went for a rest at Lanzo. “I began to have these dreams on [Sunday] April 5, at the very beginning of Holy Week and this went on for several miserable nights”, he told his listeners in May. And he went on: “These dreams so exhausted me that in the morning I felt more done in than if I had been working all night. They also alarmed and upset me very much.”⁷ This quotation confirms once more that the narrative of 1868 contains numerous aspects that agree with the wording in 1884.

According to the introduction of a story on 3 May 1868 things got still worse in those days. For he started with the following words: “I spent the whole next day worrying about the miserable night in store for me, and when evening came, loath to go to bed, I sat at my desk browsing through books until midnight. The mere thought of having more nightmares thoroughly scared me. However, with a great effort, I finally went to bed.” He was scarcely lying down when a dream surprised him all the same. This was a completely new dream. The guide invited him to follow him on a trip. Thus it may easily be understood that he defended

himself at the time and shouted: “For heaven’s sake, leave me alone. I am exhausted! I have been tormented by a toothache for several days now and need rest. Besides, nightmares have completely worn me out.” Yet he finally went with the guide. After a long trip with this guide he thought to himself: “... what with my toothache and swollen legs.”⁸

Again some similarities are striking, but there is also a difference. In 1868 two nights are involved with two different dreams, the first of them about the grapes during one night but in two phases and the second which had been previously announced. Contrary to what happened in 1868 the editor in 1884 does not let the sequence of the second dream happen that same night. The consequence is that Don Bosco, just like in 1868 between two different dreams, after an exhausting night, also had an endlessly long and tiring day. But because in 1884 he no longer expected anything terrible: “I could hardly wait for the hour to come to go to bed that evening.” (26) In 1884 he could intensely look forward to a salutary rest, without fear of being troubled again.

The similarity with the elaboration in 1868 might have been more striking still in 1884, if Fr. Lemoyne had made use of the notification of a possible pause in the first notes. In the synoptic charts to be found in the Auxiliary (Supplementary) Booklet it is suggested in the column of Ms. A with the words: “I felt tired.” (26) It is a caesura between a first and a second handful of suggestions. Both series of thoughts precede a couple of scanty data for a possible letter to the Salesians.⁹ That makes us suppose that the inspiration for the letter to the boys was proposed and noted before the considerations in Ms. B. The second small group of ideas in Ms. A begins with the question: “Haven’t you anything else to tell me?” (31) Through this splitting the letter to the boys might also have consisted of two parts. Even with a “dropping off again.” Whatever may be the case, the construction of the allegory in 1868 shows a few characteristics that make it look like a blueprint of the working out in 1884. Thanks to the writing down of notes of what Don Bosco had told him in earlier circumstances Fr. Lemoyne had mastered several stylistic stratagems. and clichés that came in very useful in 1884.¹⁰

Furthermore, Don Bosco, according to Fr. Lemoyne, started only in the evening of that too long a day to dream again. And it even proved to be the continuation of the dream of the night before. The editor does not leave any doubt about it in the transition passage. He repeats that it is about a dream and even about the same dream: “I was hardly in bed when the dream started again.” And so the situation is the same, yet not completely the same. There is the same playground and the same guide: “the same past pupil,” namely Buzzetti. His companion Valfré had already disappeared stealthily from the field of vision. Furthermore, there are also “the boys who live now in the Oratory.” Nevertheless there is a

remarkable difference. In the second part of the second playground-happening Don Bosco and his companion especially observed the behavior of the Salesians. At the beginning of the continuation of the letter towards the boys only their presence is now mentioned. The attention is now turned exclusively to the boys as they were seen in the first part of the second scene. The change in the angle of vision concerning all the doings of the Salesians and the extended explanation of what they should change, are so much veiled that one might even not notice it.

Don Bosco himself is allowed to state this change explicitly and justify it with a question that forms the real transition between the two parts of the text. “I’ll let my Salesians know what you have told me, but what should I say to the boys of the Oratory?” (27; see column 1868) Or was the division rather influenced by the dream narrative of 1868? At a first glance this may look like a very natural question. It even seems to be an echo of the very concise and rather impatient and curt question in the letter to the boys: “and for the boys...?” (27) But properly speaking it looks rather surprising in the combined version. Maybe not so much because he still wants to speak after Buzzetti had made clear with his saying about the best dish that he had nothing more to say. It is rather surprising because Don Bosco had already got an answer at the end of what I have discussed in the third section of volume 1 under the title “Unexpected intermediate piece or intermezzo that interrupts the normal train of thought”. The insert that mainly went back to the first notes (Ms. A), indeed concluded with the instruction to the boys: “So obedience will guide the pupil as a mother guides her baby.” (18) We even may translate: “Obedience must guide the pupil as a mother guides her little child”, for at the same time is indicated how important obedience is in his pedagogic-pastoral ideas.¹¹ This fitted in well as a conclusion at the beginning of the insert where about the boys of the early times it was said that they have excelled in love and obedience: “The boys loved them [the superiors] and gave them prompt obedience.” (18)

It did not stop at this in the letter addressed to the boys. Shortly after, a series of five appeals followed. They also follow now in the combined version as Buzzetti’s direct answer to Don Bosco’s introductory question. (27)

In the meantime the editor has not yet said anything in this transition passage concerning reasons for attaching the large remaining text of the letter to the boys to a possible circular destined for the Salesians.

2. Five tasks for the boys

Anyone who reads these five appeals or tasks for the first time will probably not be struck by the remarkable similarities between these exhortations and what

preceded them in the actual letter addressed to the boys which was sent to them from Rome. Among other things, this is because the direct connection is lost in the combined version. In the actual letter, the series of admonitions follows almost immediately the passage that treats the cause of the big difference between the ‘now’, the present situation at the Oratory, and the ‘previously;’ that is “the old days.” In the text for the adults this passage has become the “intermezzo” or unexpected intermediate piece. (18) In the letter to the boys, the contrast between “confidence” and “no confidence” or even “mistrust” stood central. There Buzzetti indicated the boys’ obedience as a means to “break down the barrier”, to “revive confidence and reinstate peace and joy.” Whoever reads the five appeals to the boys here in the combined text will probably see no link between these appeals and the five or six harmful consequences of “the weary boredom” in the playground which are mentioned in Mss. B and C. (11) The gap between the two passages is too large indeed. The distance between them is larger still in the combined version. (Ms. D) Yet one might expect that at some time measures would be proposed to combat those consequences even through help of the boys themselves. That is why I think it necessary to study the five appeals thoroughly to obtain a better insight into the real connection.

- The boys should realize and recognize what the superiors, teachers and assistants are doing for them

First in the series of appeals comes the exhortation that the boys must “acknowledge how much the Superiors, the teachers, the assistants put in and study” and that they do so “for love of hem”. (27) The latter is well-founded. What they are doing for the young demands so much of the adults that one may speak of them as those who “put up with such sacrifices.” (27) Nobody would want to do this unless he had only the boys’ well-being at heart. If we interpret the appeal in this way, we notice that some very important aspects and even certain words are already present in the counter-balancing words of the first elements in the circular for the Salesians in Ms. B in which Don Bosco defends his co-workers. There we read: “Don’t you see that they are martyrs to work, studying day and night, supervising them, burning themselves out?” (13 and 27) The next manuscript (Ms. C) brings in a few changes: “Don’t you see that they are martyrs to study and work, and how they burn out their young lives for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them?” It changes the sequence in the activities of the Salesians: “study”, meaning carefully preparing the lessons, comes first. It leaves out the element “supervising them”, specifies and strengthens “burn out their young lives” and adds a religious motivation: “for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them.”

Thus the passage with the defense of his co-workers may have influenced here the first instruction to the boys. Especially through Ms. B. Hence it is probable

that the heavy emphasis on active, effective love we find there is the basis of both efforts at defense: taking great pains, studying and being ready for lots of sacrifices. (13; 27) Yet there is also an important difference and a remarkable independence in the version of the letter to the boys. As far as the effort of the Salesians is concerned, there is, in the proper letter, absolutely no mention of a religious motivation as there is in the following adaptations in Ms. C and Ms. D. According to the formulation of this instruction in Ms. K, the superiors, teachers, and assistants make great efforts because they love the pupils. They completely sacrifice themselves because they feel very strongly about the boys' well-being. The text reads indeed: "Per loro amore" (out of love for them; but "amore" rather in the meaning of *caritas*) and "per loro bene" (for their benefit; for their well-being). These are very humane motivations that could appeal to the boys and persuade them to "recognize", to realize, "to acknowledge."

Of course 'recognize' also refers to recognition (appreciation) meaning gratitude.¹² And that element is present in the data of Ms. B, namely in the fifth shortfall in Buzzetti's accusation. There may have been an influence from this on the choice and the wording of this first exhortation in the combined text.

Here the question may arise whether the first exhortation could really appeal to everyone. If Fr. Rua had read this, it could have been the case for many boys. To others however this exhortation may have appeared as a hackneyed, oft-repeated phrase that no longer made much of an impression. For some of them it could even have been empty words because in daily life perhaps they had experienced very little or none of this kind of love. Maybe they suffered from what Don Bosco had firmly denounced during the second General Chapter in 1880, namely that "teachers did not love some pupils and did not treat them correctly" and that they were ignored, not questioned for a long time and their homework was not corrected, and so forth.¹³

And what was the negative impression some pupils had of teachers and assistants who were exhorted in the "general assembly" of 16 November 1882 "not to spend the playtime with each other but with the pupils"?¹⁴ Did not many pupils have sufficient reasons for fearing their teachers and educators more than to love them, as was observed on 9 March 1883?¹⁵

- They should be humble (obedient)

The second appeal states: "Let them remember that humility is the source of all peace of mind." (27) However, this does not seem to fit in with any of the other versions. Yet Don Bosco must have wanted to speak about the peace of soul, for the first notes (Ms. A) already contain the suggestion: "so also peace of heart." This idea got its place in the letter to the boys. This happened in the passage

speaking about “the cause of the big difference” and later on in the text that was adopted as an “intermediate piece” for the Salesians. (18) In this latter insertion into the combined text, Buzzetti clearly indicates that obedience is the source of “peace and joy.” Thus there is this interchanging between obedience and humility. An equal sign should almost be put between the two.

According to Don Bosco’s opinion there is indeed a very close link between obedience and humility. We have already noticed this during the preparation of the Christmas festivity in December 1865. During nine preparatory days before Christmas he proposed a kind of slogan (“a little flower” or spiritual bouquet) for each day. For the second day he chose: “Simplicity in dressing and grooming, in conversing and obeying, in accepting lowly tasks.”¹⁶ Years later, at the end of a retreat in 1876, he told “a symbolic dream about a raging bull.” To avoid being toppled down by the furiously approaching bull the people present, obeying the order of a guide, had to lie down. This attitude was a sign of humility. All those who obeyed by lying down could “see the power of humility.” Because they were humble, they obeyed. In a second part of the story Don Bosco generalized saying: “Mainly by humility, the bedrock of virtue.” In a sequel to the dream narrative he added: “The other recommendation I make is humility, which we must strive to acquire and impress upon our boys and others. It is a virtue which is usually called the basis of Christian life and perfection.”¹⁷ Thus, he considered humility as the basis of the other virtues. Concerning obedience, a youth who thinks knowing or doing things better, who thinks his insights are the best, who does not recognize that the educators have got more experience and know better what is good for him, will have problems with obeying and letting himself be led. In other words “letting oneself be led by humility like a child by its mother.” This is an idea that also appeared in the letter to the boys. (18) This link between ideas may have led to taking up precisely this appeal, namely to practice humility.

Of course it is also possible that the exhortation was inspired by the article in the *Regulations for the Houses*, which must have been well-known, because they had to regularly read from the Regulations. In the chapter about piety, it stated: “the virtues that are the nicest ornament for a young Christian are: morality (modesty), humility, obedience and charity.” And concerning the pupils and their attitude in class and study “the virtue that is especially impressed on the pupils is humility. A haughty pupil is a foolish ignorant.”¹⁸

We may readily accept that some boys, hearing the letter read, will have felt or even ascertained the link. Some other pupils however certainly not. For them it will have been one of the numerous not unknown but not directly applicable admonitions. An admonition that Fr. Vespignani also had to do on Don Bosco’s

demand in 1880 in Argentina was “Tell the students and our novices that I expect great things from them. Morality, humility, diligence in study.”¹⁹

- Putting up with the shortcomings of the others.

The third appeal “Let them be able to put up with other’s shortcomings since we do not find perfection in this world, but only in heaven,” (27) is still less prepared in the letter to the boys at Valdocco. Yet it is an admonition that had to be repeated more than once amongst youngsters and adults, if one desires to live in a constructive and happy climate. Even with Don Bosco. One example from the already quoted preparation of Christmas in 1865 is the spiritual bouquet for the third day which read “Charity in bearing other people’s faults and avoiding offense to others.”²⁰ Whether with “others” is meant only the co-disciples or also the superiors, teachers, and assistants cannot be easily determined. But in any case we may presume that this was the case both in 1865 as well as 1884.

That too is a rule which, through the *Regulations of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales for the Pupils*, Don Bosco tried to impress on the youngsters regarding their behavior amongst each other. He prescribed that we “are all God’s children; we must love each other with the same charity as brothers among each other.” Next to this, we also read in the *Regulations for the Houses* that “Real charity prescribes to patiently bear the faults of the other and readily forgive when somebody insults us” and “practice charity, put up with the other’s faults.”²¹

- Tell them not to grumble, because it freezes the heart.

The following appeal to the boys seems to be inspired by Mss. B and C. In fact it is Ms. B that begins with the question concerning the cause of “weary boredom, surliness” during recreation and immediately sums up the evil consequences of such a cause. One of them is “secretiveness, grumbling.” (11) So there may have been some influencing on the formulation of this admonition. Though it must not necessarily be so.

Criticism is, in fact, an evil that Don Bosco could not bear. He frequently did fly at it. He fought against it both among his boys and his co-workers. Thus in the ‘goodnight’ of 10 June 1867. He related a dispute between two former pupils. For the boys and the educators present he drew the lesson to “not speak evil of others: either speak well or remain silent.” And he concluded by exhorting them to learn “from Dominic Savio, Michael Magone and Francis Besucco never to find fault with people. If your neighbor has faults be understanding. Let us bear one another’s faults because nobody is perfect.”²² In the letter of 1884 it is an almost literal repetition.

As it often happened, in January 1876 he also worded his ideas in a dream narrative. He said: “Murmuring is all the nastier because it is generally done on the sly; it grows and thrives where we would least expect it. (...) So it is with sermons, exhortations and good resolutions; if they are followed by distractions or temptations their good effect will be lessened but not destroyed, but if there is murmuring or backbiting or some similar thing, all is wiped out.” Very interesting is the definition he gave a little further on: “I want it to be known and borne well in mind that when I say murmuring I do not mean merely backbiting, but every word and expression that may destroy the wholesome effect of God’s word with a companion.”²³

At the end of October 1877, Don Bosco had announced that from then onwards, the beginning of each scholastic year will be preceded by a triduum of reflection and prayer. This decision had been previously taken at the General Chapter at Lanzo. Don Bosco spoke about the possible less good influence of the summer holidays. He said: “However, if you realize that you also brought something back with you, some bad habit, an attitude of grumbling, or disobedience, then correct it.”²⁴

Some weeks later, in December 1877, while in Rome, he asked Fr. Rua on the home front to communicate some ideas for the following year. The first task was: “Break up the habit of smoking and grumbling.”²⁵ We can suppose that this was meant primarily for the Salesians. But the topic of ‘criticism’ was certainly directed to all. Just like the other two slogans, this one - to use Don Bosco’s words - was applicable “from father Rua to Julius.”²⁶

Don Bosco must have had more than one reason to speak of criticism so often. And for the boys living at Valdocco in 1884 it will not have been a complete surprise to hear this admonition once more in a letter that was addressed to them. For this was also impressed on them during the reading, and possibly the explaining of the *Regulations for the House* in this way: “Avoid the company of those who criticize the decisions of the superiors, though the latter take great pains to work for you. That would be a sign of very great ingratitude.”²⁷

- They must make efforts to live in God’s grace and peace.

The final task expected to be taken upon by the young, is: “But especially, tell them to live in the holy grace of God.” This eventually is the most important, for at the beginning of that particular admonition we find the word “especially”. Fr. Lemoyne at once takes up a suggestion by Don Bosco: “So also peace of heart.” (27; Ms. A) This assignment to the boys may also have been inspired as a reaction against the evil consequence of ‘the boredom’, that in the enumeration

stands in front of namely “the coldness in approaching the sacraments” (Ms. B), and respectively “the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments.” (11) In the first place one finds thought about the sacrament of Confession because this sacrament restores damaged or lost grace. That was a predominating anxiety of Don Bosco in his pastoral activity among the boys. Did Valfré in fact in his commentary not give attention to “the frankness both in the confessional and out of it.”? And wasn’t it also one of Don Bosco’s main ideas in Ms. A? (7)

For him “the eternal salvation” was a priority. But how would the eternal salvation be possible without living at peace with God and dying “in the holy grace of God”? In the biography of Michael Magone he laid down the profound connection of both living at peace with God and living in God’s grace. This connection was included in the biography when Don Bosco was highlighting a crisis in the boy’s life. Don Bosco concluded that chapter with the idea: “We must follow the confessor’s advice and live with peace and joy in our hearts. In short, obeying the confessor is the most efficient means to free us from scruples and to live in God’s grace.”²⁸ To foster that living in peace and grace, Don Bosco was very inventive. He would not leave a single means unused. On the occasion of the opening of the new school year 1877-1878 he spoke to the boys in the evening and stimulated them by saying that if “unfortunately, we have lost the treasure of God’s grace, let us endeavor to regain it so that we may always be on the safe side.”²⁹ In his experience such a misfortune was very real during the holidays.

He had addressed the previous generations in the same way. In 1868 addressing the students on their return from summer holidays, he exhorted them and told them “let him who lives in the state of grace be glad but careful too not to fall. If anyone has fallen, let him arise immediately and regain God’s grace through confession.”³⁰ Sometimes he even had boys called “so that they may soon make their peace with God.”³¹ In his and also in his contemporaries’ view the sacrament of Confession had the utmost importance. At the end of May 1875, he said at the beginning of the retreat of the artisans, that a “tranquil conscience is one of the greatest consolations in life. If our conscience is at peace, we have everything. If not, what happiness can we hope to find on earth?”³²

After coming home from a visit to the houses in Liguria, Don Bosco gave a “good night” in the middle of March 1876. He was still deeply impressed by the sight of a stormy Liguria Sea, and said: “But as I gazed upon the sea, another thought flew through my mind: how alike are the angry waves and a boy’s state of conscience tormented by sin. He can never have a peaceful or calm moment. A good boy is serene and happy because his conscience has no fears, whereas a youngster with serious sins on his conscience is forever restless and stormy like the sea.”³³ What is striking in this passage are the extremes “serene and happy”

and “he can never have a peaceful or calm moment.” In a letter to the boys of the house in S. Nicolás in Argentina who had written to him on the occasion of his name day in June 1876, he thanked and encouraged them to continue “on the path of virtue, and you will always enjoy the peace of mind, the good will of your fellow men and the blessings of the Lord.”³⁴ Here too he used the adverb “always.”

These are encouragements and reflections that confirm the proverb “what the heart thinks the mouth speaks.” From the last admonition arises quite naturally the statement Buzzetti is allowed to pronounce: “If you are not at peace with God, you cannot be at peace with yourself, nor with others.” (27-28) It sounds like a faraway echo of an idea in an address Don Bosco gave to the sisters at the conclusion of the retreat and the investiture ceremony in August 1875. In that address “he spoke of the great gift of peace, saying that one must first be at peace with oneself before one can live in peace with God and neighbor.”³⁵

So it is as if Buzzetti wants to say that criticism and intolerance for one’s neighbors’ defects, haughtiness and ingratitude with regard to the superiors, teachers and assistants result from the boys’ discontentment with themselves.

- Eventually, the five appeals form a series consisting of general, often to be repeated, and in fact also repeated admonitions, and others resulting from concrete circumstances of the written versions as well. In this sense they may well be a variant of the enumeration in the 1868 dream narrative. In that narrative there is a long list of propositions and how they should be followed: “They have all they need to go through life unscathed. They have house rules; let them observe them. They have superiors; let them obey them. They have the sacraments; let them receive them. They have Penance; let them not profane it by concealing different sins. They have the Holy Eucharist; let them not partake of it in the state of mortal sin. Let them check their eyes, avoid bad companions, bad books, foul conversations, and so on. (...) Let them promptly obey the bell; let them stop trying to fool their teachers so as to idle away their time. Let them willingly obey their superiors instead of looking upon them as boring watchdogs, self-interested counselors, or even enemies. Let them not consider it as a great victory when they succeed in concealing their wrongdoings and escaping punishment. Let them be reverent in church and pray willingly and devoutly without disturbing others and chattering. Let them study when it’s time to study, work when it’s time to work, and behave at all times. Study, work and prayer are the things that will keep them good.”³⁶

This series of appeals did not strictly go with the preceding list of “ills” or defects. They rather go with the program of educating young men to be “good Christians and upright citizens.” In other words with the pedagogical purpose that Don Bosco often formulated and also clearly presented to the boys in the *Regulations*: “When a boy comes to the Oratory, he must understand well that it is a religious place, where one wants to form good Christians and honest citizens.”³⁷

The series of admonitions in both dream narratives makes us understand that there is always a good deal of work to do in education to instill good attitudes, create order and help the boys live at peace and in God’s grace. The limited number of tasks in 1884 makes us suppose that Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne have learned that it is better not to let the boys bite off more than they can chew, certainly not if one is addressing the whole group.

3. Dwelling on the regrettable consequences of the lack of peace at heart.

Don Bosco places such value on peace at heart that Fr. Lemoyne and he pursue the matter further. In the conversation Don Bosco has, of course, understood Buzzetti’s suggestion very well. Quite rightly he concludes: “Are you telling me then that among my boys there are some who are not at peace with God?” (28) But he expresses that insight in question form and limits the feasible application to “some”. By doing so he tones down the conclusion to: ‘You say this, but I cannot or I can hardly believe it’; and also to: ‘This certainly does not count for all the boys.’ Thus the words sound less a personal hard conclusion than what Buzzetti himself meant. That’s why, when they were listening to Fr. Rua reading the letter, it may have seemed to the boys as if Don Bosco did not agree with what Buzzetti wished him to believe.

The statement - concealed behind a general way of expressing himself - that not all the boys were living at peace with God must now be made clear by Buzzetti. And he does so with nerve and great familiarity.

He does so in a familiar way. In the first notes (Ms. A) not only did Don Bosco use the familiar form “tu” with G. Buzzetti (“did the present-day boys seem to you” = ‘ti sembravano’) but also Buzzetti with Don Bosco (“your advice” = ‘i consigli tuoi’) (10; 16) In the Mss. B and C this was maintained pretty consequently (12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 22, 24). More so consequently in B than in C. That may have had an impact on the wording of the letter to the boys. (19, 28-29) In the circular version for the Salesians, Buzzetti mostly employs the courteous or formal form (...) or he bypassed the pronoun in one way or another. (17, 18, 22, 24). In this way a significant contrast is drawn between the

first large part of the combined version and the second attached part taken from the letter to the boys.

Buzzetti made his point also with nerve, for he was not afraid of stigmatizing the lack of peace at heart of several boys as “the principal cause of bad spirit” at Valdocco. Therewith he does not erase with a single movement what he had earlier indicated in the letter to the boys as “the cause of the big difference.” In that letter the direct cause described was “that many of the boys no longer have confidence in their superiors.” (18) [This happened at the beginning of the passage that, in my view, was inserted in the long version as the “unexpected intermediate piece.”] In the prolonged commentary here, he will unite both. In the letter to the boys, later on, the part addressed to the Salesians was also hinted at in passing, namely “amidst the boys, few priests and clerics could be seen” and “the superiors were no longer heart and soul of the recreation.” (15) So Don Bosco must be aware of “a lot of causes.” Buzzetti need not list them again. However - and this is of great importance in the whole context - because Don Bosco knows them, he must also intervene: “There is no need for me (Buzzetti) to tell you (Don Bosco) that you must do something about it.” (28) It is, so to speak, implied between the lines, but here in fact, Don Bosco is given the mandate to intervene. He has a great responsibility. He has no other choice: “He has the duty of speaking to them with the freedom of a father,” as was written in the introduction to the letter to the boys. It is not a personal bad mood or an arbitrary decision that urges him on.

Next, Buzzetti shows with self-assurance that the lack of peace with God lies at the basis of “having no confidence” or - expressed more directly - of the distrust shown by several boys. The expression “the one without trust” is indeed connected to another, namely “some boys do not have confidence” a couple of paragraphs before in the combined version.³⁸ (28 and 18)

According to Buzzetti “only” those who have something to hide are distrustful; only those who believe their bad record will become public, that what they are up to might do harm to their good reputation or their interests. For those who grasp things quickly at the time he means that there are boys who avoid contact with the superiors in the playground but also that there are some who conceal sins or shortcomings in confession. The consequences or accompanying symptoms of that distrust are visible. They are a prey to restless anxiety. They are the ones who form cliques “casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction.” (9) They have problems with submissiveness and obedience and they “get upset over nothing.” In the previously quoted words, they “are not able to put up with other’s shortcomings. Everything seems to go wrong for them.” (28) That’s why they criticize. They do not know what true love means and “think the superiors do not love them.” They are the ones who consider “the superiors

as superiors”, as “boring watchdogs self-interested counselors, or even enemies.” (18 and EMB IX, 80) In brief, they are the ones who poison the environment.

The symptoms coincide with the shortcomings he has described before and which the boys have to remedy through positive attitudes. This applies to all but in particular to some of them. However, improvement is only possible if they try to live at peace with God. As we know, according to Don Bosco the sacraments are the most effective means “to live in the holy grace of God” or “at peace with God”.

4. The boys’ confession practice

The conversation does not admit any doubt that Don Bosco has clearly understood that Buzzetti is speaking about boys who conceal things and as a consequence do not go to confession or conceal things in confession. Yet he takes his boys’ part. He broadly opens up the discussion. He refers to the general practice at the Oratory which is laudable: “But see here, my friend; don’t you see how many go to confession and communion here at the Oratory.” (28-29)

- The absolute necessity of earnest resolutions

But Buzzetti does not let himself be diverted. He continues about the practice of confession. He does not contradict Don Bosco where the frequency of confession is concerned. He confirms that indeed there is frequent confession and states that it “is true that many go to confession.” Thus the practice may be general and frequent, but it is very defective, even in “so many youngsters.” Confession suffers from a *radical* defect, namely unstable resolutions. The word radical indeed is in italics and was already present in Don Bosco’s first and important suggestions. (29 Ms. A) Of course, the boys would not have seen the italics, but Fr. Rua would certainly have emphasized ‘radically’ when reading this word. Buzzetti finds proof of his statement in the facts. The boys do go to confession, but come back each time with “the same sins, the same occasions, the same bad habits, the acts of disobedience, the same neglect of duty. This goes on, month in, month out, even for years.” In the text for the Salesians, Fr. Lemoyne adds some elements to this tirade and it becomes: “Nearest occasions, “bad” habits and “even for years.” (29)

Very striking here is that the pupils of the fifth year of secondary school, are singled out: “and some even continue in this way in the 5th year.” (In the English translation: “till they leave school.”) This may have had to do with the difficulties they experienced with those boys at the time, difficulties Fr. Febraro

did not dare to mention when writing to Don Bosco in the spring of 1884, because he wished to spare him on account of his weak health and his activities in Rome. Still he considered “sending Father Lemoyne more specific details about how the boys behave themselves.” Whether he has done so or not, we do not know. Maybe this problem resurfaced clearly after Fr. Lemoyne had come back from Rome so that he inserted this part on the 5th year only later into the combined text.³⁹

Don Bosco must often have hammered at the necessity of firm resolutions. Maybe it was not the main subject for the new year that he proposed in January 1883. However, in the middle of that month, to his nearest collaborators, he narrated a dream narrative that he considered so important that it deserved to be told on more than one occasion, first for himself, then for his Salesians, and finally also for the boys. For them the admonition read: “Let them feed on the food of the strong and make firm resolutions in confession.”⁴⁰ It seems practically impossible to suppose that he would not have communicated this motto to the boys one way or another.

In February 1871 he wrote to the boys at the Lanzo college. He told them that he had fallen out with the devil in a dream story. As happened more than once, Don Bosco was one up to him (Satan) and succeeded in filching some precious information from him. So, for instance, Satan had to admit: “Even here many serve my interests by making promises and breaking them. They keep confessing the same sins, and that just delights me!” After a grotesque and clownish spectacle the devil gave away the following confession: “What hurts most and what we fear most, is carrying out the resolutions made in confession!”⁴¹ That was religious instruction in a playful and at the same time, frightening way.

What he wrote to the boys at Lanzo is a concise variant of an intrinsically earnest story that he had narrated there in April 1869 with no less amusing details. Then too, Don Bosco remained the boss and the devil was the dupe who had to give away the meaning of three nooses. “The third noose,” the monster said, “is when I keep them from making a firm resolution and carrying out their confessor’s advice.” After narrating the story he summarized the meaning of the three satanic nooses once more and repeated that the third noose meant “lack of a firm resolution”.⁴² He wanted to drum this into his boys heads thanks to the impact of an imaginative language.

He also wanted to accomplish this with his goodnight given on 31 May 1873. He talked about “what, most of all, drags souls into hell.” And he said “that almost every night he dreamed that this is due to the lack of firm resolutions in

confessions (...) That's why so many go frequently to confession but never mend their ways and keep confessing the same sins over and over again."⁴³

Before the pupils of the fifth year in 1875 left for their holidays, speaking to them, he impressed about those who seek a life of pleasure, the following on them: "Yet when they recover they continue to live as they did before, oblivious of their resolutions. Wretched people! At the hour of our death, what matters is *what you have done (avere operato)*, not what you plan to do (*volere operare*)."⁴⁴

All this seems to be a continuation of what Don Bosco had already said to the boys on New Year's Eve 1858. For the new year he told them that he expected them to "always make good confessions. Tell all your sins, but be truly sorry and determined to sin no more; otherwise, your confession will be useless and, worse yet, harmful. Rather than blessings, it would draw curses."⁴⁵

It is practically self-evident that he inserted this concern into an article of the *Regulations of the Oratory* which reads: "Act in a way that from one confession to the other you remember the confessor's advice and that you take care to put it into practice."⁴⁶

The insistence on firmness in resolution is a constant element in Don Bosco's pastoral activity. That is why Buzzetti may start his charge with this terrific 'opener': "What is *radically* missing." He may even end with the severe conclusion: "These confessions are worth little or nothing, and so they do not restore peace." (29) He just avoids saying that they have no value at all, but he does say that such superficial confessions - in general - do not bring peace. Which was to be proved. He may even go further and add this frightening thought that "if a youngster in that state were to be called before God's judgment seat, it would be a serious matter indeed." With this he suggests still more or something other than only a lack of firmness in the resolutions.

Whether all this is in keeping with the true doctrine about the sacrament of confession remains to be seen. This does not come up for discussion here for Fr. Lemoyne and Don Bosco. For them and the objective in view, that is in exhorting the boys in question to conversion, it is now more important to obtain some explanation concerning the disparity between "so many youngsters" and "a few". This appears from Don Bosco's following question.

- Don Bosco's question about the number of youngsters whose confession practice remains fruitless.

Continuing the conversation Don Bosco asks whether there are many such boys at the Oratory. This question may sound surprising. The word “many” in fact seems to betray some pessimism. Isn’t it striking that in the English translation published in the *Constitutions and Regulations* this question has been left out? Yet, there is one way of understanding that wording. Indeed, it may have been suggested to the writer by Buzzetti’s former statement: “a firm resolution is *radically* lacking in the confessions of so many youngsters.” Besides it may have had the effect of a stylish echo for a trained writer like Fr. Lemoyne. Not only about the beginning of Buzzetti’s charge, but also concerning the reminiscence of the passage “the reason for the present change at the Oratory is that many boys no longer have confidence in their Superiors.” (18) Further, the fact that the word “many” was a sure ingredient in Don Bosco’s stories may have played a part.

When the unknown personage in the story of 1868 about the vine and the grapes withdrew the veil a second time, the countless number of boys Don Bosco had seen the first time did not reappear but still there were “very, very many.” Furthermore, now they “appeared ugly, sullen, and covered with hideous sores.”⁴⁷ The moral and religious situation of many boys [at the Oratory] was not good at the time. To be frequently confronted with a lack of sincerity in confession might discourage the priest confessor. This may have happened to Don Bosco in 1868. He must have greatly needed the days of rest at Lanzo for several reasons. The fact that his sleep was disturbed through nightmares proves it. But the care concerning their spiritual well-being was certainly a factor. During one of those disturbed nights, he saw how many boys got lost forever. While narrating, he said: “Seeing so many going to perdition, I cried out disconsolately, “if so many boys end up this way, we are working in vain in our colleges.”⁴⁸ And here too we encounter, yet again, “so many.”

About a year later also at Valdocco he said that he “would never have thought that so many of them had nooses around their necks and the big cat behind their backs.” In the same ‘goodnight’ he repeated at the end: “Those of you who had these monsters behind their backs were far more numerous than I would have believed.”⁴⁹ The way he expressed himself does not belie his concern.

In what was perhaps the last dream-story he narrated to the boys, he couched his message as an allegory with little lambs. “Still, many [lambs] stayed outside, the most battered of them all, but I could not get near them.”⁵⁰ Then too, for him they were ‘many’, and again he did not disguise his impotence.

- Buzzetti’s severe outburst concerns a limited number of boys

From Buzzetti's answer, however, it appears that the number of 'serious cases' was all the same not as bad as his outburst "so many youngsters" seemed to imply. According to Buzzetti "they are only a few in comparison with the whole group in the house." (29-30) In this way the author now observes the data in the first of Don Bosco's suggestions in Ms. A. There Don Bosco himself limited them to "some boys" (*qualche giovane*)." (29-30) It is a way of relativizing or bringing in nuances as was often done when he narrated a dream-narrative or talked to his boys.

In 1868 Don Bosco stayed for a short time at Lanzo. When Fr. Lemoyne brought him back to Turin he learned how terrifying dreams had tormented Don Bosco over those nights. One of them, a very short dream, concerned the boys at Lanzo. That is why Fr. Lemoyne hastily wrote a letter to his boys in Lanzo. Just like Don Bosco he addressed himself particularly to "these unhappy scoundrels (a few, mind you) who are in league with the devil and try to ruin their companions."⁵¹ The similarity in the texts is obvious.

The goodnight on 4 June 1875 was in the form of a dialogue. As a complementary explanation Don Bosco said to Fr. Barberis: "Well, there were indeed some boys, though not very many, whom I could not see very clearly. ... Those are the boys, my dear boys, who are tight-lipped with their Superiors; they do not open their hearts to them, they are not sincere."⁵²

In his address in September of 1876 concerning the members of the Congregation, he said that "just about everyone lay flat on his face to protect himself against a furious bull. Nonetheless, a few remained standing in order to have a good look at the bull." They refused to lie down.⁵³ Again there were only "a few."

However, each time only "a few" are concerned and they are grossly mistaken. So for instance, about those who refuse to lie down, he says: "Now you will see what happens to them. You will see what they get for refusing to lie down," which means that they do not accept humbling themselves.⁵⁴

If we place the two groups side by side, it looks as if the choice between "many" and "a few" was not unambiguous and probably depended on concrete circumstances. Probably the boys in cliques "strolling about, talking in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances" were intended to be "the few" in the letter to the boys dated 10 May 1884. Hence rather "a few".

- The text makes clear that Buzzetti knows who those boys are

Buzzetti takes one more step. He does not only say that these boys “are only a few,” he allows Don Bosco to see who they are. Just as he indicated the various groups in the playground (8), so with his finger he pointed them out “one by one.” (30)

Learning to know the “dangerous elements” among the boys employing a known or even unknown personage is a firm ingredient as well in Don Bosco’s dream-narratives.

According to the conclusion of the narrative about the Salesian garden (1876) Domenico Savio brought three sheets of names with him. The third one “labeled: *Lassati in via iniquitatis (exhausted on the path of iniquity) [Wis. 5, 7]* bore the names of all those who at that moment were in the state of sin.” Don Bosco stretched out his hand for it, but did not get it at once. After some time Savio did give it to him. When Don Bosco opened the paper, “he saw no names, but”, so we read, “in an instant there flashed before my eyes all the lads mentioned, just as real as if they were standing in front of me.” He saw them all “with great grief,” and “most he knew personally. They belonged to the Oratory and to other schools.”⁵⁵ Whether the use of the words “all those boys”, “all the lads” really means that they were many, cannot easily be decided; but it is clear that he says he saw them standing in front of him. On the other hand, through the emotional reaction “I saw them with great grief” the presumption arises that the number was not so small. But here it is the fact that Savio gave him the list that really matters to us. Thus he learned which boys were concerned and he could “recognize the greater number of them.” After listening to such a story the boys could not but accept that Don Bosco had learned the names in a very special, wonderful way.

At the end of April 1868 he related at Valdocco what had happened to him during his rest at Lanzo. He talked about the boys he had been able to see after the guide had withdrawn the veil a second time and shouted to him to “Look!” – As soon as he did so he could see that “their face was ugly, sullen, and covered with hideous sores.” As he wanted “to warn and correct them, he took his notebook and pencil to jot down the names of the boys he knew and their sins, or at least their predominant sin. The unknown guide held his arm and did not allow him to do it.” When Don Bosco insisted, “the guide snatched his notebook away and threw it on the ground” and he added: “For the last time, I say there is no need to write down their names. God’s grace and the voice of conscience will tell your boys what to do and what not to do.” Finally, Don Bosco “was allowed to tell the boys whatever he would remember.” In a further part of the story that he narrated the following evening, the guide invited him to look at the grapes. “They bore the name of each pupil and his predominant sin.” That is why Don Bosco tried again and in the same way to write down the names of a few boys he

knew or recognized. He wanted to do so “to warn them privately and correct them.” Again the guide did not allow it, although Don Bosco continuously insisted.⁵⁶

It is important to notice that the guide invited him to have a good look at the grapes. Thus - through careful attention - he could read the names and their faults. It is also important to underline that they were ‘a few boys’ that he knew or recognized and that he indicated what he intended to do with the information later. It is also significant that he wanted to talk privately to each of the boys concerned.

In December 1871 Don Bosco went to Varrazze, where he fell gravely ill. In the days of his illness his sleep was disturbed by dreams or nightmares. Later he related that in a corner of the playground he saw somebody who had a copybook in his hand with the names of all the boys. The man looked at Don Bosco and immediately started writing. Of course, Don Bosco wanted to know what the unknown man was writing. When he came nearer he saw that the person in question each time wrote something next to the name of a boy and then another. Very soon Don Bosco realized that that person appeared to be the devil himself. While this individual gazed off here and there, Don Bosco got still nearer and turned over some pages of the book and saw that on one side stood the names of the boys and on the other side sometimes figures of beasts were drawn. While he was turning the pages quickly, he noticed that “some names had not been written in ink and so were hardly legible”. He concluded with this comment: “Many of you might like to know whether I saw something about you in that copybook and whether your names were clearly legible. I can’t talk about that now, but I will privately tell those who are interested.”⁵⁷ Remarkable in this story is the copybook with names in which something was added next to them, and furthermore, there is the open invitation to anyone concerned, to freely contact Don Bosco.

Although each time Don Bosco very much wished to learn the names of the boys who had grievously been at fault, this knowledge did not give him any joy. Fr. Lemoyne, who was at that time Rector at Lanzo, told the boys in his letter to them what Don Bosco had confided in him after some days of rest there: “Last night I had dreams which truly grieved me.”⁵⁸ Such an emotional reaction was not uncommon in Don Bosco. At the end of a story in 1878 he said: “All this happened during the vacation, one of my friends told me, as I bewailed the destruction, beside myself with grief.”⁵⁹ That is almost a repetition of his reaction in the course of what happened with the vine and the grapes in 1868. Then Don Bosco said he was grieved, even heart-stricken “as a consequence of that spectacle.” And the spectacle was that with the help of the guide he

discovered that a throng of boys “bore on their foreheads and hands the name of each boy’s sin.”⁶⁰

There are quite a few similarities between the stories from earlier years and this part of the letter. But there are also some differences. A noticeable difference, for instance, is that here a well-known person, still living and united with the Oratory, namely Buzzetti, indicates the boys concerned. This is seldom the case with other stories which for the rest are clearly announced as the outcome of dreams or visions. There, either an unknown guide or a deceased acquaintance of Don Bosco, like Dominic Savio or Fr. Provera or a saint like Francis de Sales or Our Lady appears.⁶¹ Here it is Buzzetti, recently arrived in Rome, who had been able to talk with and open his heart to Don Bosco who always liked to be informed. It is in fact remarkable how in this passage the notes of Ms. A have been faithfully followed.

- The way Don Bosco wants to “handle” the boys

The points of similarity are found in Don Bosco’s reaction to Buzzetti’s statements and indications. Don Bosco sees those ‘few boys one by one.’ He does not hide his sadness at what he had seen: “things that brought profound bitterness to my heart.” (30)⁶² And he also wants to discuss these things with each one concerned, when he is back at Valdocco. The latter words “when I come back” is a slight, almost superfluous addition compared with Ms. A. (30) On the other hand here again this difference can be seen: contrary to what Don Bosco more often tried to do, he does not try here to write down names. So, no list, no notes and no quotations in Latin either like in 1868.⁶³ Now, he “did not want to put such things in writing.” (30)

How clichéd certain elements had become in the course of the years may here once more be brought into full light. The issue here is the quotation from a goodnight at the beginning of 1865. At that time he already spoke as follows: “My children, should death strike now, would you be ready? Most of you are, I hope; unfortunately, a few are not because they are in mortal sin. ... For some time I wanted to warn them, but I have waited, hoping they would reform themselves. I will wait a few more days only, and then I will tell them. I could single them out now, but I will not do so. I shall warn them privately. Poor boys!”⁶⁴

- Appeal to all the boys

Following simply the text of Ms. A, Don Bosco may now address all the boys directly with the conclusion: “For the moment I limit myself to saying it is time to pray and make firm resolutions,” meaning “with facts not just words.” (30)

With this expression he goes back to the essential part of confession which according to Buzzetti's opinion is radically missing at Valdocco. In this regard they must follow the example of Comollo (+1839), Don Bosco's youthful friend, and of boys from the glorious time of the Oratory. These boys are quoted with their names: Domenic Savio (+ 1857), Besucco (+ 1864) and Saccardi (+1866). (30) Comollo, Savio and Besucco especially were not unknown names for the youngsters at Valdocco in 1884. The sixth edition of Comollo's biography came out in 1884 and a fifth and sixth edition of Domenic Savio's biography was published in 1878 and 1880 respectively. A second edition of the biography of Francesco Besucco appeared in 1878.

It was not only through these books that Don Bosco presented these boys as examples for the new generation of youngsters, but possibly also through all kinds of verbal opportunities. During the novena in preparation for the solemnity of All Saints in 1878, he talked about them during a goodnight he gave. He said: "I recall how several boys, like Domenic Savio, Michael Magone, Francis Besucco and others, made this novena with extraordinary devotion and fervor. One could not ask more of them. I do not mean that you are making them poorly; there are good boys among you, but the enthusiasm of former times is lacking."⁶⁵

He must have spoken more often about them and have recommended the biographies to his boys. In 1883 he had said to Fr. Lemoyne that he wished to give him some work. Later he recalled his promise. He briefly traced the theme for a circular. According to Fr. Ceria, Fr. Lemoyne wrote a circular, edited by Don Bosco, concerning private reading material in Salesian houses. It was being revised and distributed in November 1884. For the reading in the dormitories, this was prescribed: "I would begin with the biographies of our own boys *Comollo, Savio, Besucco*, etc."⁶⁶ Even Comollo was listed as "a pupil."⁶⁷

In September 1884 he handed seven recommendations to the rectors. The sixth recommendation read: "Preferably read aloud, or have the boys read, the lives of our pupils."⁶⁸ Some months later Don Bosco saw that the circular about "*the spreading of good books*" was written and published. Here too he devoted special attention to these young people: "Attract the boys to the virtues, especially through the biographies of Savio, Besucco and youngsters like them."⁶⁹

By asking the youngsters "to show that the Comollos, the Dominic Savios, the Besuccos and the Saccardis are still among them" the topic of firmness in the resolutions is rounded off. But we already know, that, when Don Bosco wishes to say something more or something important at the end of a conversation, he puts it in question form: "And nothing else?" Thus at the end of the draft

destined for the Salesians, it was concise (Ms. C and Ms. D, 24). Now it is: “Haven’t you anything else to tell me?” Faithful again to the suggestions in Ms. A. (31).

5. Special tasks Don Bosco has to accomplish on the occasion of the forthcoming feast of Mary Help of Christians on 24 May.

In the letter to the boys, Fr. Lemoyne uses two elements from the suggestions in Ms. A in order to furnish Buzzetti’s answer to Don Bosco’s question. To these he already added a couple of ideas in Ms. K. Now, in the united version he further develops the second element and inserts a new aspect.

- First of all the two recommendations, intended for everyone (in Ms. A, 31), become a double task for Don Bosco, just like in the original letter to the boys. It is not an exception that Don Bosco himself is taught a lesson or is receiving a task from a guide. On 23 January 1876, he gave a goodnight about the subject of criticizing others. A kindly old man then told him in plain terms: “You are a priest. Insist on this point. Preach, exhort, speak out, and never be afraid of saying too much.”⁷⁰ In another dream narrative, he was severely rapped over the knuckles by voices that let him hear clearly that, although he was a priest, he was not well-versed in “moral theology”. In all this, he appeared like “a babe in arms.” Brother Michael of the De la Salle Brothers, who was also working with the ‘Guides’, told him clearly that he was “a novice” in such things. Eventually, he got this laid out to him: “You who are these boys’ rector must safeguard them from these two sins [gluttony and idleness] by striving to strengthen their faith.”⁷¹ It looks as if Don Bosco saw a double benefit in this way of speaking. It let him speak more substantially than if he - simply as a rector – would have spoken in his name. Besides, through certain suggestions and conveyed indications while telling a dream, a climate of supernatural inspiration and accompaniment was created.

Meanwhile on behalf of Buzzetti, he must tell “young and old alike” what follows here: at first “that they must remember they are children of Mary Help of Christians” and secondly that it is thanks to her that they are at Valdocco, for “she has gathered them here.” (31) The “and old” reference in the original notes and letter to the boys probably referred to the pupils in the 4th and 5th secondary grade. This appears from the rest of the letter. He also must tell them that Mary has brought them there together to obtain a threefold objective. Firstly “to take them away from the dangers of the world. Secondly, that “they may love one another as brothers; and thirdly to “give glory to God and to her by their good behavior.” The second and third idea appeared in the letter to the boys. (Ms. K, 31) The first idea is an insertion in Ms. D. (31). The expressions “love one another as brothers” and “give glory to God and her by their good behavior” are

written especially for the pupils and are adapted to their life circumstances and Don Bosco's relational and religious sphere of education. "That they may love one another as brothers" in fact links up with the quotations I mentioned when discussing the third of the five admonitions. They are the admonitions at the beginning of the insertion of the large second part of the letter addressed to the boys.⁷² (27)

With the assignment that Don Bosco should recall the role of Mary Help of Christians in their lives, Buzzetti does not charge his superior with anything new. Already in the fifties, Don Bosco repeatedly spoke to his boys in this sense. In his goodnight given on 31 December 1858, he pointed out to them: "A great advantage of ours that we do not sufficiently appreciate is the Virgin Mary's protection and the effectiveness of praying to Her."⁷³ Before and after 1854, the year when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was proclaimed, that aspect of the devotion to Mary was also in the forefront with Don Bosco. This is shown in his biography of Dominic Savio (1859). In 1856, the boy wanted to start the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception. The young Savio drafted the rules for this sodality, undoubtedly with the collaboration of Don Bosco. The articles 9 and 10 of these rules provide a real insight into the Marian devotion Don Bosco promoted among the boys. The ninth stipulated especially "during the Rosary we will daily recommend our sodality to her and beg from Her the grace of perseverance." And the tenth read that every "Saturday we shall try to do a devotional practice or something special in honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception."⁷⁴

During the preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1859, he spoke in the same manner as he did in 1858. How he managed it exactly we learn from the goodnight on 29 November: "Our heavenly mother loves us immeasurably more than all earthly mothers put together. She loves all Christians tenderly but she has always shown a very special affection for the Oratory boys. Thousands of instances, even extraordinary ones, can be told to prove this." During the novena they had to prepare a bouquet of flowers for Her feast day. "They were to do so "by picking a flower each day. But from where when no flowers are blooming in this cold winter? From the garden of your hearts. What sort of flowers? Some little act of virtue to be practiced every day in honor of Mary Immaculate."⁷⁵

Years later he began honoring and invoking Our Lady under the title of Mary Help of Christians. Both titles were mixed up as it happened, among others, during a goodnight on 30 May 1862. On that occasion, Don Bosco spoke about two solid columns in the turbulent sea, on which stood respectively a consecrated wafer (host) and a statue of the Immaculate Conception. And under the statue of the Virgin the title "Help of Christians."⁷⁶ That feast became "the

Oratory's greatest feast" and was held on or around 24 May and was carefully prepared and gloriously celebrated. During the preparation he gave a goodnight on 13 May 1877. The change of the title did not prevent him from developing almost the same ideas as before for the new generations. For instance, at one point he said that's "the way earthly mothers are. Is our good heavenly mother different? No, trust me, she is far better, infinitely more loving and powerful than our earthly mothers. She can give us anything and she loves to do it! If we pray to her from the heart, she will promptly aid us, because we are Her special children."⁷⁷

All his life Don Bosco put an ardent and unlimited confidence in Mary, the mother of the Lord. And this highly evolved confidence he wished to pass on to his listeners, the younger and older ones.

As has been indicated above, there are important reasons to believe that "young and old alike" in the original letter did in fact concern the "bigger" and "smaller" boys. It may be the case that Fr. Lemoyne meant the Salesians by "the older ones" and the boys by "the younger". This, on the other hand, seems to have been his intention in letters he sent to Fr. Rua during his stay in Rome. On 16 April 1884, he wrote: "Don Bosco says 'good day' to you and to all the others, 'bigger and smaller ones alike.'⁷⁸ There his intention is quite clear I think. The same also seems to apply to another letter from that period in which he talked about what Don Bosco had suffered over forty long years, concluding: "That ought to be the subject to preach about to all people, to the big ones and to the smaller ones as well."⁷⁹ And couldn't it be the case when here - not so much further on - with "Tell them [grandi e piccoli] that it is our Lady who provides," he completes the letter to the boys with the condition to make the barrier of mistrust disappear successfully? The condition is that "young and old are ready to put up with some small mortifications." (32) That is without doubt a condition that concerns the respective groups on either side of the barrier, one might think. However, the insertion goes back to a suggestion from Ms. A that probably concerns the younger ones in the first place. But this is not certain. Not even, if we listen to Don Bosco's words during the session of the Superior Chapter on 28 February 1884, a few days before his departure for France. He asked the councilors to encourage the boys to pray for him fervently while he was away. "For two reasons: So that my health can stand up to the discomforts of the journey, and because I need a lot of money. Let the older boys and the younger ones know about it."⁸⁰ Here it is clear from the translation that he meant the two groups of boys.

- Don Bosco's mission also includes of telling "that our Lady provides them [the boys] with bread and the means to study, by endless graces and wonders." (31) This is the third point. It is an aspect that Fr. Lemoyne adds to

the other two. This idea is new and it was not present in any of the preparatory writings. Maybe it was inspired by the passage in the circular for the Salesians where Buzzetti summarizes the consequences of the “listless recreation.” One of these consequences was “their reluctance to be in a place where Divine Providence heaps every possible blessing on their bodies, their souls and their minds.” (11)

For Don Bosco it is indeed God, Divine Providence, who controls and guides everything. This, among other things, is confirmed by statements in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*. Looking back on his life, he wrote about the Oratory as being the “work which Divine Providence has entrusted to the Society of Saint Francis de sales.” When Marchioness Barolo placed two large rooms at the Refuge for girls under construction at the disposal of the incipient Oratory work, he experienced this in the same retrospect as the choice of Divine Providence: “That was the site Divine Providence chose for the first Oratory church.”⁸¹

It had become clear to him that he should also attribute the events and the inspiration to the merciful and motherly protection of Our Lady. Thus he wrote in the same *Memoirs* that on the Monday after his ordination which took place on Saturday, the vigil of the feast of Trinity, he went to celebrate mass in the Consolata Church so as to thank the great Virgin Mary for the innumerable graces she had obtained for me from her divine Son Jesus.”⁸² Without the slightest doubt all he had written in the flash-back on his life between 1873 and 1875 also played a part in his use of the word “innumerable” (in Italian “infiniti”), very early after his ordination.

That the Blessed Mother was given this interceding role in his life by her Son and so, in fact, by Divine Providence, Don Bosco illustrated in the later elaborated symbolic dream he had at the age of nine. The core of his mission, as he described it at that moment, and thus the kernel of his vocation, he received from Jesus himself: “He called me by name and told me to take charge of these children.” Moreover, Divine Providence, in and through Jesus, indicated to him the method that was to be followed: “Not by blows but by gentleness and Christian love you will have to win these friends of yours.” To assist him in the fulfilling of this vocation Jesus passed the task of assistance on to his Mother: “I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance you can become wise. Without her, all wisdom is foolishness.”⁸³ This too is influenced by the experience of his life until the seventies (1872-1875).

As far as those innumerable graces are concerned, what happened in 1878 is very illustrative. Don Bosco fell seriously ill at that moment while in Sampierdarena. Brother (coadjutor) Enria attended to him and noted that one evening Don Bosco confided in him: “How much the Madonna loves us!” He

said this regarding the visit of many benefactors who had not come “empty-handed.”⁸⁴ Financial aid was urgently needed at that moment. That evening at Sampierdarena was not a unique or accidental event. This and so many other events were part of “the endless graces and wonders.” And this expression means as much as saying that Mary Help of Christians assisted him with supernatural graces or interventions in favor of his works.⁸⁵

This conviction had not only grown in Don Bosco himself, but also in his close co-workers and many benefactors. For all of them, it became clearer as years went by that Mary Help of Christians achieved healings, conversions and wonders through Don Bosco’s intervention.

In this climate it is not surprising that Fr. Lemoyne inserts a paragraph in which the expression “by endless graces and wonders” is found. And once more it is difficult to believe that he would have left the topic out in the letter to the boys. At any rate, “bread and study” have in the first place to do with their life at Valdocco, especially with the life as pupils.

- In the fourth point Fr. Lemoyne now introduces a small modification. The task is no longer presented as belonging to Don Bosco’s duties, but as a task for all the boys, to whom this part of the letter proper was directed. And now - maybe meant only indirectly earlier in the letter - for the adults too. Through this modification of the subject in the sentence, there is a rupture again in the construction. “They [the boys] should be aware that they are at the vigil of the feast of their holy Mother.” They must understand that, “with her help,” they, as the first suggestions already indicated (Ms. A, 31), have to destroy that barrier of mistrust. One might remark that this sentence should be understood in this way: it is his task to remind them of it. At any rate, it is no longer stated in the same clear words.

The boys’ efforts which had been appealed to above, are necessary, but not sufficient. In the *intermezzo* part these efforts – as far as the boys are concerned – were as follows: obedience (18) and afterwards the five points at the beginning of the second main part (27). The existing barrier, however, is not a consequence of human weaknesses but is also the devil’s work. He succeeds in using that barrier “to ruin certain souls.” “Certain,” of course, goes with “some” and “a few”. The focus is still on them. But they may have been a little over-exposed. For him and his co-workers the devil is a real enemy, and let us say, the personalized force of evil. That is why also more powerful opposing forces are needed to master them.

How Don Bosco was sometimes too clever for the devil has been dealt with earlier.⁸⁶ Sometimes, however, he pointed to the Virgin Mary’s help in fighting

him. In the sixties, for instance, during a goodnight he delivered on 2 January 1865, he said: “The devil, my dear children, goes about among you – and I see him – seeking to devour you. He follows you and tries to trip you, but at your side stands a beautiful Lady stretching forth a hand to steady you. You will not fall if you take hold of it. ... My dear children, that horrible fiend is the devil, the beautiful Lady is the Blessed Virgin Mary.”⁸⁷

It is hard to explain why the writer draws their attention to the fact that it is “the vigil of the feast of their holy Mother,” for the letter to the boys had already been sent on 10 May. Maybe he only wanted to say that the feast was very near. That would be in agreement with the accompanying task for everyone during the preparation for the great feast of Mary Help of Christians, a supplementary task that will follow soon after.

6. Specific, added tasks applicable to everyone, the big and the small among them, to clear away the barrier at Valdocco as preparation for the feast of Mary.

The allusion to the necessity of clearing away the fatal or disastrous barrier that the devil had been able to erect, allows Fr. Lemoyne to insert now some ideas from Ms. A, which he had not taken up in the letter to the boys. Through this, the text in Ms. D differs again from the letter in Ms. K. It remains difficult to find a reason why he would have left out the idea from an earlier written text for adults because it would, so to say, not have been becoming in a letter for the boys.

In Ms. A first came Don Bosco’s question about the possible success of the operation: “And will we succeed?” followed by the task given for all, that is that they must do something special in honor of Mary Help of Christians. In this insertion, Buzzetti gives a positive answer to Don Bosco’s question. Instead of only “yes” now he answers “yes certainly.” (32) He consequently offers a hopeful and gratifying perspective. Yet, he links that splendid prospect to a condition, even a twofold condition.

- For the first condition Fr. Lemoyne changes Don Bosco’s original wording “a little flower” or “a small bouquet” into “some small mortifications.” Giving a small spiritual flower during the days of preparation to a liturgical feast still rendered a well-known practice in Don Bosco’s moral and religious education. Whether it regarded preparation for Christmas, the 8th of December (Mary Immaculate), the 24th of May (Mary Help of Christians) or the whole month of May or the remembrance of Saint Francis de Sales and St Aloysius,

Don Bosco intensified his education through concrete ideas and proposals to which he gave the name “fioretti” (little flowers or spiritual bouquet).

On one occasion Fr. Lemoyne uttered his appreciation for this custom as follows: “Then for each Sunday and for each day of the novena, Don Bosco described one of the saint’s principal virtues, followed by a short prayer and some act of virtue.” These acts of virtues included practices of piety or spiritual nosegays which were the essence of the suggestions, sermons, and private exhortations.” He then gave a series of examples.⁸⁸

Apparently, In conformity with this tradition, Don Bosco wished to do this again in May 1884. Yet Fr. Lemoyne does not take over the word “fioretto” from Ms. A. He replaces it by “small mortifications.” Whether Don Bosco agreed with this or not, we do not know. For there are no traces to be found of Don Bosco reading, correcting, editing the text of the longer version.

Yet it is practically self-evident that Don Bosco, like most of the faithful in his time, practiced mortification and sometimes also advised it. Even to the youngsters. Thus, for example, in a goodnight he delivered during the novena in preparation to the feast of St. Francis de Sales in January 1876 Don Bosco said: “Lastly, I have to give you a spiritual bouquet for tomorrow. This winter it is exceptionally cold: as a “fioretto” I suggest that during this novena you endure cold, dampness and other discomforts without complaint in honor of St. Francis [de Sales]. When you have to suffer illness, insults or other hurts, just say: ‘I’ll offer it up for the love of God.’ The Lord will be very pleased and through our patron saint’s intercession will bless you.”⁸⁹

That bouquet was in line with what he had praised in Dominic Savio in a supplementary chapter of the biography and what the boys were given as advised reading matter. “During the cold season he suffered seriously with chilblained hands. But although he suffered a lot, one never heard him speak or complain about it.”⁹⁰

And yet, on the other hand, when it came to physical mortifications Don Bosco was prudent and had reservations. When he went to visit Dominic Savio because the boy had stayed in bed on a winter morning, he found that he was numb with cold and lying in bed with his legs pulled up. Don Bosco looked attentively and remarked that the boy was covered only with a thin summer blanket. “From then onward,” Don Bosco concluded, that young Savio “was forbidden to practice any mortification without asking permission first.” Still allowed were “patiently enduring insults that sometimes occurred and benignly supporting heat, cold, wind, rain, fatigue and all kinds of disagreements in the field of health.”⁹¹

The bouquet Don Bosco had in mind probably went in the line of “supporting”. For in Ms. A there was not only the proposition to offer “the heavenly Mother a “fioretto”, but also “to be ready to suffer a little (something) for her.” Fr. Lemoyne makes a whole of it, but leaves out a word, a name [“fioretto”] that was specific, traditional and familiar for Don Bosco.

- It looks as if for Fr. Lemoyne something else is equally important, or perhaps even more important, namely that young and old “do what I have told you”, that is what Buzzetti has said to Don Bosco. [In the text itself we now find the direct speech: “what I have told you” with the polite form [“le ho detto”] once more.

Fr. Lemoyne of course knows that true Christian life is only possible when grace and human effort work together. After all that has been asked in the commentaries as efforts from the adults and the youngsters, it is normal that, once more, attention is drawn to the necessity of fulfilling the respective tasks or assignments. Thus the combination “young and old” certainly has a wider meaning here. Yet the ultimate responsible person is Don Bosco himself. Buzzetti has addressed him for the last time.⁹²

“What I have told you” indeed closes the conversation between Don Bosco and Buzzetti in the continued dream narrative. At the same time, this sentence rounds off all conversations in the longer version which means that the expression may concern the entire content and engage everybody.

7. Don Bosco’s again waking up according to the ‘long’ or unified version.

To wake Don Bosco up from the “dream” or distraction or a momentary dozing off in a standing position Fr. Lemoyne could no longer use the proper conclusion of the letter to the boys. He had already copied this at the end of the first long part of the draft. He has to think out a new closure. And so he used a sentence from the end of that first part. (25) At the same time, he found inspiration in other dream narratives.

- He softens Don Bosco’s reaction “with great displeasure” or “such heavy grief looking at that recreation” at the end of the first extensive part in the new conclusion with the neutral “meanwhile I continued to watch my youngsters.” (32) This objectivity does not look quite natural, because it sharply contrasts with what follows immediately.

- Don Bosco is mesmerized by the youngsters “heading for eternal damnation.” This so strongly frightens him that he wakes up.

The sudden awaking from a dream was often related to some noise from outside: uproar in the next room, the sound of bells, lightning and thunderclaps, sometimes also physical pain such as hailstones falling on his head.⁹³ Yet a few times, like in 1884, it was a violent emotion that woke him. At the sight of the furious bull which “reappeared” in the story of the four nails (1876), he “was struck with such terror that he woke up.”⁹⁴ During his illness in February 1884 in a fever-fit dream he heard Saint Paul pray and “this prayer made an impression so profound that he began to weep and woke up.”⁹⁵ It looks like the narrative in 1868. Then he “became so frightened that he broke into a run and woke up.”⁹⁶ And this horror was then also caused by the discovery of grievous sins, namely immodesty and pride, two main faults that threatened his house.

So, after Buzzetti’s answer to the question whether it will or not succeed, there is no more talking about regaining consciousness little by little or about trouble with swollen legs or the declaration that he is still standing in front of his bed, which in fact had become impossible after an attentive reading, because when passing on to the added text from the letter to the youngsters Fr. Lemoyne had let Don Bosco go to bed. (26) Thus there is no longer the ending of the letter to the boys which had combined so harmoniously the distraction or the dozing off with the beginning of that letter. Besides, it is a closure exclusively meant for the Salesians and that does not fit in with the whole of the answer concerning the phase of transition to the letter for the boys: “What should I say to the boys of the Oratory?” (27) The boys indeed never heard Fr. Rua read that ending of the letter, no more in fact than they could hear a couple of the already mentioned later additions, because they were not found in the letter that was meant for them. It is rather a stereotype question that also occurred in other narratives. (See MB XVI, 16; EMB XVI, 4).

After this rounding up, Fr. Lemoyne goes on copying the last part of the letter to the boys. This part consists of a short transition followed by a few considerations. Except for a few unimportant alterations it completely coincides with the original text.

8. Transition to minor considerations from the letter to the boys.

In the transition sentence Don Bosco is allowed to speak directly to his readers, or rather listeners, once more: “I still have to tell you many important things that I saw.” But he thinks “he has neither time nor opportunity at present.”⁹⁷ It is far from clear what Fr. Lemoyne (or Don Bosco) is hinting at here. Maybe there was not enough time, because the letter had to be sent off to arrive on time in Turin.

Maybe both had recourse to that excuse because Don Bosco used it more often in the past. Especially in ‘goodnights’ where he related dream stories, he had warned the listening boys that these were not the suitable place or circumstances to say more. And Fr. Lemoyne knew that practice very well. In connection with a narrative about a dreamt conversation with a bishop, Don Bosco said straightaway: “Since the things he told me are not for you, my dear boys, I will leave them out.”⁹⁸ In 1871, when the problem was to know whether the names of the boys were written in ink or not, he decided that the goodnight of that evening was not a suitable opportunity to talk about it: “It would take too long” and the boys “would become swell-headed.” That time too “he had to tell them many things about the past and the present, about which he wished to talk later bit by bit. But after it, he did not mention the names. He wished “to leave that among God’s inscrutable secrets.” Besides, he only hesitantly and reluctantly went into the marrow of the matter.”⁹⁹ On 14 July 1875, the follow-up to a dream narrative consisted in a dialogue between him and Fr. Barberis. In it he bypassed a direct answer to one of Fr. Barberis’ questions. Yet, he firmly declared: “No, it would not be wise to tell each one which path he will follow or how he will end up.”¹⁰⁰ In a short concluding speculation on the long-drawn-out narrative about the Salesian garden in December 1876, he spoke in the same manner about the situation of each boy: “of this, however, I shall say nothing in public. There are also several points which need clearing up, but I will put this off to some other evening.”¹⁰¹ As far as we can see from the documents, nothing came true of “some other evening.”

9. Reflections in which Don Bosco talks to his boys directly in the first person.

That Don Bosco used to let a dream narrative proper be followed by some sort of commentary, has already been mentioned before. They were often moralizing reflections or admonitions. Mostly they remained very short. In this letter however, it is a pretty long passage, in which he, by exception, repeatedly appeals to the sentiment of the readers or listeners. The author lets Don Bosco introduce this reflection with an extraordinary and powerful “and now I must finish” (“Concludo”). It looks as if Don Bosco must swallow a moment to master a suddenly arising emotion.

+ A general heartfelt formulation of his great expectation for the near future

- This impulse is audibly caused by the feeling that the present Oratory boys no longer respond to, no longer appreciate his total dedication as was the case before. He indeed becomes very personal, contrary to the first of the admonitions at the beginning of the added larger part of the letter to the

boys. (27) There the point was the appreciation by the boys of the enormous efforts and offers of the superiors, teachers and assistants. But now he confronts them only with his unselfish lifelong efforts. And here he applies to himself the very expressive and strong wording “has spent (“consumato”) his whole life”, or “sacrificed” from the notes in Ms. B. (13) Through this life-long dedication he has become “this poor old man.” (33) And so he presents himself as somebody who must be treated respectfully. Somebody who must be spared. As somebody who deserves, who must be obliged. The sentimental argument is predominant. For the Salesians who may happen to read the text, the expression “spent his life” or in the combined text also “his whole life” may doubtless recall Don Bosco’s retort in defense of his co-workers against Buzzetti in the first part of the long version.

- The sensitive nuance is also noticeable in his worded expectation for the near future. It is his inmost and explicit expectation: “we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old.” (33). It is an allusion to the joyful remembrances wherewith Buzzetti had characterized the atmosphere of the former Oratory in Ms. B and the letter to the boys. When Don Bosco formerly went among his boys, this contact caused joy and noisy exuberance (“tripudio”). That’s why life in the Oratory was “a foretaste of heaven” (“un tripudio di paradiso”). (16) That is the expression that was inserted and even further explained in the draft circular for the adults.¹⁰² It is the part of Buzzetti’s commentary, after which in the Mss. C and D Don Bosco became very personal saying: “Then all was joy for me.” (16) In the longer version, this personal note from Ms. C is now probably also resounding here. They were unforgettable “beautiful years”, happy years. For everybody. Probably at the same time this was an allusion to the beginning of the letter, where he stressed that his only wish was “to see you happy both in this world and in the next.” (3)

- But with this expectation, rich and nostalgic outlook on the future, namely living anew the golden age of the Oratory, he links an unexpected matter-of-fact sense of relativizing, which is shown in the remarkable words: “due allowances being made” (fatte le debite proporzioni: ‘taking into account the changed circumstances’). The problems around the translation and the meaning of these words have been treated in one of the preceding editions of the Dutch series “Don Bosco Studies.”¹⁰³ The explanation essentially lies in the fact that in the course of the years the youth-work at Valdocco had taken on quite another look, both concerning Don Bosco himself, his co-workers, the boys, and even what concerns the influence from outside.

For Don Bosco the situation has changed completely. He has expressed this honestly in his defense against Buzzetti. He can no longer talk to the boys in the same way, with the same frequency and force. His health, his numerous

appointments and the intensified businesslike duties prevent him from doing this. (16-17) Moreover, there are long absences due to necessary journeys. Even the possibility of continual contact with his co-workers suffered from this. His captivating, hearts-winning and educating presence could define the atmosphere at Valdocco less and less.¹⁰⁴ He had to rely more and more on his co-workers. That is certainly a change that must be taken into account.

This is a changed situation that gives more responsibility to co-workers. But these do not act responsibly in several aspects. The definitive text of the larger version does not leave any doubt about it. At first, Fr. Lemoyne dropped in a desirable mitigating circumstance in the manuscripts B and C to finish in the longer version with a very severe accusation: “Not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as you used to do.”[The English Constitutions give a rather ‘soft’ translation of the D-version with “molti” translated by “not everyone”. (17)] In this way his Salesians neglect opportunities for personal contact and a stimulating, animating, preventive presence in the playground. They even revert to the repressive system with some of their punishments and approaches to discipline. (21-23) We also heard about more than a few Salesians who do not respect the direction and unity of management.¹⁰⁵ Their mental outlook has changed in some respects. Yet they are not changes that must be taken into account. On the contrary. His co-workers and substitutes should go back to the original system, the preventive system, “the system that lovingly and watchfully prevents disorderliness.” (22)

Furthermore, there are the boys themselves. According to the description of what happens in the playground, many boys no longer find the activities offered during recreation to their taste. Some even leave the bigger group. Some others form cliques where criticism or bad talk takes place. (9-10) Disobedience and mistrust occur too often. (18) The sacramental practice seems to be characterized by superficiality and formalism. (29) Such negative “changes,” no more than the shortcomings of the Salesians, can be considered, according to the meaning of the whole text, for being accounted with.

A change that is not mentioned in the text, but has still to be considered, is the number of the boys which has increased enormously. Thanks to a study by P. Stella we have reliable information about the years 1851-1869 concerning the increasing number, the percentage of academic and technical or trade students and their geographical and social origins.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, we do not have data available for the period 1871-1884. The modified situation concerning the number of boys must have thwarted order and discipline and doubtless necessitated adaptations concerning assistance and personal contacts. One of the measures that had already been taken was the separation of academic and

technical students for the recreation time and other activities.¹⁰⁷ Which other activities are thought of here is not immediately clear.

Maybe external factors such as political, social, cultural and ecclesiastical developments should also be considered. Already in the past, Don Bosco had been confronted with such factors. Thus around 1876 the percentage of trade students in Valdocco had increased because of a general economic crisis. At that time Turin lost significance because Rome had become the capital of the new Italy. Employment diminished and the cost of living increased. Employers were under the pressure of wage increases.¹⁰⁸ I have not found anything thus far concerning the influence of this social situation on the boys and life at the Oratory. Maybe this study does not have to find traces of the rapidly spreading unity of the proletariat in many countries (1848) and of the impact of the “Internationale”, founded by Karl Marx in 1848, on workers and their families in Northern Italy. Yet, such writings and movements could only but disturb a lot of people in Italy too.

So it is not superfluous to know that Don Bosco was not unworldly in this respect. We may gather this from a speech in 1883. Then in Lyons, he said to the audience in “halting French” that the “salvation of society, my dear friends, is in your pockets. (...) If you back down now and leave these youngsters to fall victims to anarchist ideals (“teorie comunistiche”), the benefits you withhold from them today will one day return as they demand them from you, no longer begging with hat in hand, but putting a knife to your throats, and then with your goods they may also take your lives.”¹⁰⁹ This happened only eight years before the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was promulgated. Together with him, his earliest co-workers would have taken into account that the boys in the 1880s were no longer like the boys they had known in their youth (the 1840s and 50s) at the Oratory.

The first conclusion of the 3rd General Chapter in September 1883, in fact, shows that Don Bosco and his earliest co-workers were aware of changes in society and the Church. Don Bosco cleverly formulated it as follows: “We must make an effort to discern and adapt ourselves to our times.”¹¹⁰ However, which changes he had in mind is not clear from the context. What is remarkable is that he considered adaptation as a serious and urgent task.

This awareness of and that sensitivity for diverse kinds of changes make Don Bosco’s reaction after listening to a letter from Fr. Dupuy a couple of years later very acceptable. At least as it was passed on in the tradition. This cleric was the director of the Major Seminary at Montpellier and questioned Don Bosco on his approach in the field of the religious education and accompaniment of youngsters. According to an addition inserted by Fr. Lemoyne, Don Bosco

would have reacted to this by saying: “They want me to state what my method is! Really... I would not know what it is myself. *I have always gone along as our Lord inspired me and as the circumstances demanded*”¹¹¹ P. Braido has indicated that Don Bosco probably did not utter the italicized words. Yet it remains possible he did utter them as they do agree with Don Bosco’s way of thinking and speaking. In any case it is striking that Fr. Lemoyne, if it is his addition, not only drew attention to possibly divine inspirations but to “circumstances” as well so as to characterize Don Bosco’s life and work

That saying will continue its influence. For example in G. Barberis’ instructions to the novices. In the lithographic edition of his *Appunti* [notes for a sacred or Christian pedagogy] he firmly defended it. The literal, uncommented insertion of Don Bosco’s short treatise on the preventive system in his course was introduced by Fr. Barberis: “Our unforgettable father John Bosco also devoted his life to providing us with a method. If we [in our turn] followed this method we would be able - in the actual circumstances and following our constitutions - to realize such an education that would with certitude succeed in its intentions.”¹¹² This means that faithfulness to Don Bosco’s way of living and acting were assured, but also - and even preceding “our rules” - that Fr. Barberis shows openness to the changed times and the “actual circumstances.” Still, the concrete explanation of the meaning of “the changed times” and “the actual circumstances” is also missing in his teaching.

When in his letter to the boys Don Bosco expresses the globally formulated desire that they should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old, the boys should not fear that he is thinking obstinately of going back to the past. They really should not be afraid that the present should be a servile copy of the past. He is thinking of essential things. Things that make them happy. What he really wants to keep, he will summarize once more.

*The concrete formulation of his expectations in a series which shows four times two aspects linked together

The summary contains essential aspects mentioned previously and given fair coverage in the letter to the boys. They are now taken up again expressly, beginning with the introductory words “the days of” on each of four occasions when he deals with the four linked aspects. The repetition serves to imprint these ideas in memory.

- Affection and Christian confidence

First mentioned we find relational aspects which should characterize the boys’ attitude towards the superiors: “The days of affection (amore) and Christian confidence between boys and superiors.”¹¹³ (33) That Don Bosco was referring

to deeply felt affection was something the boys would have already gathered, when Fr. Rua was reading the letter, from the description of playtime during the former times at the Oratory. “You could see”, they were told, “that (at that time) the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors.” And Valfré added: “You see, closeness (famigliarità) leads to affection, and affection brings confidence.” (7) Buzzetti in his turn had formally said that a heart that “is not at peace with God will be a prey to restless anxiety. (...) Everything seems to go wrong for him, and because he has no love himself he thinks the superiors do not love him.” (28) In other words a boy who does not live in peace with God, thinks that the superiors do not love him. Without affection from youngsters and without mutual affective love true education is impossible.

True education is also impossible without the youngsters having confidence in their educators. That is why Buzzetti was allowed to say in his comment that “the reason for a notable difference” between the present and the past must be ascribed to the fact that “many (a certain number) of the boys no longer have confidence in their superiors.” (11; 18) That is why all the boys had to hear - when the letter was read - that “the fatal barrier of distrust must be broken down and be replaced by cordial (hearty) confidence.” (18-19) Even though ‘only’ “a certain number of boys” was meant, especially those who were bent on keeping their distance and who tried “ardently to escape from the teachers and Superiors.” (16) For the climate of trust and familiarity all are responsible. Their attention to this first desire is drawn in a very emotional way.

It is a desire that he had already often expressed in the past, including the period before 1870. At the end of August or the beginning of September 1862, during the preparation of the feast of Mary’s birth, he gave some explanation about one of the spiritual bouquets. Fr. Bonetti wrote this note: “Don Bosco urged us [the boys] *“to have the greatest confidence in our superiors in both spiritual and material matters.”*”¹¹⁴ And in the course of a good night that has already often been quoted here, he said: “Don’t be afraid of me. Far from it! Trust me fully. It’s all I want, all I expect of you, my friends.”¹¹⁵ In the first part of the combined text the editor had wanted the Salesians to notice that confidence on their part can “create an electric current between youngsters and superiors.” (20) That was their part.

- Indulgence and mutual tolerance

Then follows the second wish to be fulfilled: “the days of the spirit of indulgence and mutual tolerance for the love of Jesus Christ.” (33) The third task in the preceding series of five admonished the boys first “to put up with each other’s shortcomings.” (27) In this summary now the Spirit of indulgence

is added.¹¹⁶ To make tolerance possible and foster it indulgence is needed. You should not ask too much of the others. In case of a conflict they should not want to get everything. The religious foundation “for the love of Jesus (Christ)” is necessary. That may mean “to please Jesus”, but also to imitate Jesus who was pleased to forgive and advised Peter to forgive “seventy times seven times”.

Tolerance was an attitude toward the neighbors that Don Bosco already presented to the boys in the first edition of his *The Companion of Youth* (a book with reflections, prayers and religious songs) in 1847, amongst others through the example of Saint Aloysius. Don Bosco wrote about the young saint: “He succeeded wonderfully in putting up with his neighbors’ faults.” Probably rather applicable to the youngsters who at that time came to the activities of the Oratory, he gave insight into possible defects that might undermine the spirit of tolerance: “He was very patient when faced with insults, injury and mockery...” And to conclude he wrote once more: “We too, my dear boys can imitate saint Aloysius (...) by tolerating the faults of our companions and by pardoning when we have been insulted.” That aspect in the presentation of the saint has been kept by Don Bosco even in the 1885 edition.¹¹⁷ This is certainly not without reason in spite of changed circumstances.

- Open-heartedness and ingenuousness

The third wish links attitudes that are likewise connected with each other: “The days when hearts were open” sounds like an echo of the passage with the question: “Do you remember those wonderful years?” years that Buzzetti characterized with the statement: “And we held no secrets from you.” (18, with suggestions also in Ms. A). Valfré had already highlighted: “It is this that opens hearts.” So unprejudiced and open-hearted were the boys at that time or so unprejudiced and open-hearted are they presented by Buzzetti and Valfré.

How important open-heartedness was for Don Bosco may be deduced from the fact that he had already mentioned them twice in his first suggestions for the elaboration of the letter to the boys: “Formerly their hearts stood completely open” (16 and 18, Ms. A) which then, in the letter has become: “And we had no secrets from you.” (16, Ms. K) And also: “Let the hearts be open.” (33, Ms. A) Properly speaking the same theme stands in the forefront here as in the *Regulations for the Houses*: “Open your hearts freely for them, because you consider them as fathers who ardently desire your happiness.”¹¹⁸

And now we find added: “with simple candor”. As so many educators, Don Bosco is courteous. However, he does not want formality and still less formalistic manners. On the contrary, for him the contact with the superiors,

teachers, assistants, may, or better still, must excel in unaffectedness. Personal contact must be informal, simple, confidential, familiar, that is unaffected. This amounts to “must be inspired by the spirit of familiarity”, the word so highly recommended by Valfré in his comment, intended for the pupils, as a synonym of “the greatest cordiality,” he was allowed to highlight. (7)

How Don Bosco conceived and ornately presented this simplicity and unaffectedness we can deduct from an article in the *Regulations for the Houses*. In the chapter about the attitude toward the superiors he wrote: “Those you can’t see, the ones who hide or run away from the superiors when they appear are acting badly. Recall the image of the chickens. The ones nearest to the mother hen always get the special morsels.”¹¹⁹

- Charity and real joy

The fourth desire too links two aspects together: “days of charity (carità) and a real joy for everyone.” (33) Indeed joy rightly gets a place in the summary of ardent wishes. Joy or gladness plays a prominent part from the very beginning in the letter to the boys. It pre-eminently characterizes the climate in the playground during the former period of the Oratory: “It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of joy.” And: “The boys were yelling and shouting cheerfully all around them.” (6) This is a joyfulness that is caused by activities. It is due to the lively recreation itself.

This joyfulness is very important for Don Bosco. However, creating such favorable but at the same time, rather superficial circumstances, to his mind was not enough. Indispensable for creating a truly joyful, animated climate are hearty relations, jovial and unforced contacts or familiarity “between youngsters and Superiors.” (6) To that end, distrust must disappear. It should be replaced with “cordial confidence.” That is confirmed in the combined version through the answer given to the question after describing the playground around 1884. In that passage the question was: “How can we bring these youngsters to life again so that we can get back to the liveliness, the cheerfulness, and the enthusiasm of the old days?” (12) For this purpose, according to Buzzetti, there is more needed than just playing or “looking for new games.”¹²⁰ Before everything else confidence, affective love is required, literally: “Coll’ amore”, “with love!” (12) And this love is shown through the intimate, constantly interested presence among the youngsters. (16). Only when the intimate, familiar contact of the educators with the boys and of the boys with the educators and through them the “cordial confidence”, “familiarity” is revived, especially during recreation time, could the old peace and joy reign once again in the Oratory. (19)

Peace and joy combined would have been evident then. It might have appeared as a repetition of the link between the two ideas in the letter to the boys where Buzzetti inserted his opinion about “the cause of the big difference between formerly and today.” In the text for the Salesians, this combination also appeared at the end of the so-called ‘intermezzo’. (19) In the letter to the boys, the combination of the two aspects of the former Oratory was almost immediately followed by the passage with the five tasks for the boys. (27) The combination of “peace and joy” by Buzzetti announced the fifth task that stressed - so to speak - the peace idea: peace with God, with others and with oneself. (27-28) That peace was for Don Bosco the basis of the inner joy, the true joyfulness that is consequently called “the real joy” in the fourth desire. Moreover “the real joy for everyone.” (33) Thus not only “for those who do not live in peace with God because they do not live in God’s holy Grace.” (28)

Linking charity with joy however is not evident. Effective or active charity had not been mentioned before in the letter to the boys. So the use of the idea *carità* (love of neighbors, Christian love) is fairly unexpected. The more so because Don Bosco himself when giving his first suggestions with “so the love for each other (*quindi l’amore per vicendevole*)” must rather have thought of mutual affective love. (39) That intention had shortly before been respected by Fr. Lemoyne while wording the first paired desire. And what Buzzetti attributed to Mary Help of Christians toward the end of the dream-narrative leads us in the direction of affectivity also: “She has gathered the boys so that they may love one another as brothers.” (31) So loving each other just like brothers. Yet it must be said that in the letter directed to them he does not give deep considerations about “amore” as ‘affective’ love. That much is clear.

Perhaps Fr. Lemoyne, influenced by the second desire with the keywords ‘indulgence’ and ‘tolerance’, may have wanted to draw attention to effective love, the Christian love (charity), that is the readiness to support and pardon each other like brothers, but likewise a willingness to stand up for each other and do each other a good turn. This is the charity of Dominic Savio and Michael Magone which Don Bosco had so concretely described - and thus encouraged - in the biographies of both boys. Together with the aspect of loving each other this daily standing up for each other makes living together agreeable, joyful and happy.

It seems to me unlikely that the insertion of “*carità*” into the wording of the fourth desire should have happened accidentally or simply to interchange the words “amore” and “*carità*” as synonyms in the short paragraph. Especially because in some sentences further on in the letter to the boys he again prefers “*carità*”. Isn’t it rather possible that at the moment of writing the fourth desire, he already had some ideas flashing through his mind where ‘*carità*’ would take

central place? Shortly after, he would utter this in an invitation to conclude a summarizing “agreement”.

Just as Fr. Lemoyne allows Don Bosco to touch on the sensitive issue at the beginning of his added reflections, so he allows him to do so again as he sums up the ardent desires. Don Bosco does not conceal that he is sad and needs to be comforted: “I want this consolation”. He communicates authentically and again he directly addresses the boys: “that you give me the hope”, “that you will promise.” They can comfort him by giving him hope and promising “to do everything he desires.” This can also be done by educators. With the words “I want” the author nicely concludes the summary. At the same time, he once more makes clear what Don Bosco eventually wishes, namely “the good of your souls.” In other words, the purpose is “their eternal happiness,” to say it with his own words from the beginning of the letter. This aspect stood manifestly in the foreground in the talk with the other past pupil. So manifestly that the second element, namely happiness now, the temporal one, disappears from view.

With this Fr. Lemoyne could have concluded the elaboration of Don Bosco’s ideas and also of the letter to the boys. But he still noticed a few ideas that he truly wanted to add.

*Diverse ideas that are partly rehearsals and partly insertions inspired by a suggestion in Ms. A, the oncoming feast and Don Bosco’s health.

- Our Lady, the “Virgin Mary’s” part

It looks as if Fr. Lemoyne has noticed that he has not yet mentioned one of Don Bosco’s initial suggestions, as if he has started thinking that no sufficient attention had been given to the task “to tell them that Mary Help of Christians has gathered them here.” (31) At any rate, he lets Don Bosco enter into this idea: “You do not realize how lucky you are in having come to the Oratory.” (33) Their being pupils at the Oratory occurred indeed thanks to the Madonna. Mary Help of Christians has a special link with the Oratory. This is a very profound conviction of Don Bosco’s. It is the fruit of lifelong experiences. Experiences in his beloved Valdocco but also his other houses. That is why he can declare before God that Mary Help of Christians - here called by Fr. Lemoyne “la Vergine SS” - takes a boy who enters a Salesian house “under her special care.” (34; cf. 31) Indeed it is a conviction about which Fr. Lemoyne wrote to Fr. Rua in April 1884 and that Don Bosco had ordered him to communicate to the boys. And so the conviction became: “Thus they should continue to pray for him and often think of the great happiness of being children of the Madonna in such a special way.”¹²¹ By the look of the quotation this was a constant familiar idea during these days of preparing the feast of Mary Help of Christians. It certainly

fits in well in the letter, but is not well-placed in terms of the overall development of the letter.

It seems opportune to me to interrupt the explanation here to draw attention to a rather delicate question. That mentioning of the preparation of the feast of Mary Help of Christians could be understood as proof that the so-called long version was already complete on 10 May 1884. However, attention to that feast coincides with Don Bosco's suggestions for a letter to the youngsters at Valdocco (31-32; 33-34; Ms. A). This letter was indeed sent to Turin in good time, since the preparations for the splendid feast on May 24 were underway. Through the insertion of that letter in the elaboration of a circular to the Salesians which Fr. Lemoyne was already preparing but which was not worked out yet in Rome, the impression might be created that the combined version was also ready on 10 May. Thus the denomination "letters of 10 May" could arise. In the elaboration-texts Ms. B and Ms. C, however, there is no mention of this passage.

- Living in the spirit of mutual charity ('carità')

Insistence on the oncoming feast day is not well-placed here for, without the slightest transition, the author once again returns to the emphasis on charity (carità), Don Bosco's fourth desire. With the introduction "Let us all agree on this then" he tries to make a transition, but it can hardly be considered successful. Before the paragraph about Our Lady, this admonishment might have been significant. But not here.

Thanks to the synoptic survey we can notice that the wording of the text in column D, Ms. D) differs from the one in the letter to the boys (Ms. K). The singular of the indefinite form "who commands" and "who obeys" has been altered into "those who command" and "those who must obey." In this way Fr. Lemoyne in his final redaction has respected a little topic that Fr. Rua had inserted in the manuscript that he was going to read out or had read already.¹²² Whatever Fr. Rua's reason may have been, the insertion of his alterations by Fr. Lemoyne is at the same time a proof that the final touches of the so-called long version were not put in Rome nor do they fit with the tenor of the ideas presented earlier.

Yet we can admit that in the letter to the boys the docile and immediate response of obedience of the boys in the early days of the Oratory was provided as an example to the academic and technical student body around 1884. This passage concerning the former and once again desired attitude of the boys has also been inserted in the so-called "intermezzo" in the long version. (18) But the docility, as it was described there, was not at all aroused by the active love of the

commanding superiors, teachers and assistants or by a consciously practiced charity of the boys through obedience. On the contrary, in the former Oratory, the prompt obedience was the effect of affective love (*amore*) and the familiar, confidential contact, the familiarity of the Salesians on the one hand and of the spontaneous, open-hearted, confidential readiness of response of the boys on the other hand. In the text intended for the Salesians, affective love (*amore*) and familiarity played a prominent part. Consequently the mechanical taking over of the word “*carità*” from the letter to the boys at the end of the long version becomes even more surprising.

- The spirit of St Francis de Sales

Still less prepared or justified is the reference to St. Francis de Sales that is connected with the preceding passage in the letter to the boys and the text for the Salesians as well: “May the charity (...) cause the spirit of St. Francis de Sales to reign among us.” (34) Whether the spirit of the saint would be promoted or helped by the proposed practice of charity or Christian ‘*Caritas*’ by the boys (“those who must obey”) is more than doubtful. Indeed, the distinction between affective and effective love and the accentuation of “*douceur*” or meekness (*amiability*, *affability*, *friendliness*) are too important for Francis de Sales himself.

During a goodnight given in January 1876 Don Bosco spoke about an adapted way in which the boys could and must imitate St. Francis de Sales. Then he asked the question: “Now what shall I suggest to honor our patron saint?” And he answered: “As you know, St. Francis de Sales is the saint of meekness and patience. During this novena, I would like all of you to strive to imitate these virtues.” The little sentence “as you know” allows us to believe that he proposed Francis de Sales in this way more often than not. And in the Italian version, “this virtue” in the singular anticipates what he really intended, for he continued thus: “Store up a great amount of meekness in your heart so that you may always be inclined to love your companions without getting angry at them and without using an insulting or sarcastic tone of voice. Always do good whenever you can. Never do harm to anyone in any way. On this score, I would really like you to resolve to show your love (*amore*) for your companions by giving each other good advice and never – as it unfortunately happens in the world – leading each other into wrongdoing. At your age especially, nothing is more harmful than evil advice.” It looks as if Don Bosco meant that meekness - in imitation of the saint - would enable them to cordially love their companions and thanks to this lived and sharing love to be active in seeking their wellbeing. And he repeated: “On the contrary, and this is true, a companion can do a lot of good with timely, friendly, lovingly (*amorevolmente*) wholesome advice.”¹²³ There was no explicit mentioning of the “*carità*” of the saint. The recommendations of Don Bosco,

however, clearly show traces of the practical intertwining of affective and effective love. And with Don Bosco too there lies an audible accent on the friendly contact with each other. That is the true spirit of St. Francis de Sales, especially in the area of relationships that can touch youngsters and must affect their educators.

Yet I have to express some reservations concerning the interpretation of the whole paragraph. Isn't it based on a too restricted conception of the meaning of "carità"? The same question may be asked concerning the discussion on Don Bosco's fourth desire. Couldn't the word 'carità' in both cases rather be a variant of "amore"? Indeed, sometimes it is said or maintained that Don Bosco himself, as his co-workers, did not use some concepts in a consistent, logical way. In May 1879 he related a dream-narrative wherein St. Francis de Sales handed him a booklet and made him read what was important for the novices, the confreres with vows, the rectors and superiors of his congregation. And the patron saint also gave verbal advice. He was allowed to say about promotion of vocations: "The Salesians will reap many vocations through good example by constant kindness ("con somma carità") toward their pupils."¹²⁴

Obviously, this is a repetition of an oft-expressed idea that betrays a never diminishing concern. Some three years earlier he had already presented the same subject, but worded differently. In 1876 he expressed his experience and his method as follows: "With great friendliness (amorevolezza) we ought to mix with the youngsters, to treat them really well. Let this loving kindness be a trait of all superiors without exception."¹²⁵ In the course of that conversation he did not use "somma carità" but the word "amorevolezza." Even several times. Yet in both cases, he seems to mean the same thing, to urge his co-workers to follow the same method namely the familiar, confidential, winning contact, a token of sincere, perceptible affection. His terms do not always cover a precisely described content. They are interchangeable.

Though such an ascertainment prompts to prudence, other declarations of Don Bosco's and the story of the long version direct us really toward a strictly delineated meaning and a conscious choice of words like "amore" and "carità".

An example can be found in a word of thanks by Don Bosco at the end of the celebration of his name-day in June 1877 as is mentioned in the *Biographical Memoirs*. On that evening he said: "My heart has been truly touched to see so many boys around me, so joyously expressing love ("amore") and gratitude." He undoubtedly meant the hearty, affective love of the boys. He put it next to the Christian love (carità) which he wanted to specially highlight that evening in the presence of many invited people and the Salesians. "How beautiful it is to see love ("l'amore") linked with charity ("alla carità")." It is their active charity that

made his pastoral and pedagogical work possible among the boys. He illustrated this as follows: “Why do people contribute funds to gather and rear so many youngsters for heaven? And why do so many pious persons sacrifice a portion of their livelihood and invest it in this holy undertaking?” This he asked rhetorically with a view to the charitable activity of the benefactors present. He further asked: “And why do others abandon the world to bind themselves to God in virtue and brotherly love (“amore fraterno”) so as to spend their whole life in caring for heaven’s tender plants?” And he answered: “For charity!” (“per la carità”) And this was meant for his closest co-workers, the Salesians. “Yes, this virtue (genuine Christian love) links us so closely to our Lord and prompts us help each other kindly (“amorevolmente”).”¹²⁶ In this way he also characterized their manner of contacting youngsters and the persons they had to work for. We may ask ourselves if there is a text that reflects in a more differentiated way Don Bosco’s central ideas about charity, affection and jovial, genuine kindness.

The oldest manuscripts of the combined or long version conform to the use of words in that spontaneous address. In the third part of this study (vol. 1) I have shown how; according to Ms. D, Fr. Lemoyne tried via Buzzetti’s comment and the key-passage as well to provide an insight into the difference between effective and affective love, between “carità” and “amore”. In other words between charity or unselfish and unlimited engagement and hearty affection through which superiors, teachers, and assistants let the boys experience, let them feel that they do love them. And how the boys respond to that affection and that friendly, familiar contact with heartfelt affection and confidential and unconstrained attitudes. But it is precisely in this essential explanation that further on, what I have slightly mentioned in parts III and IV of the first volume occurs somewhat enigmatically.¹²⁷ In the framework of the considerations about Don Bosco’s conclusive proposal to everyone and his fourth desire (34), I would like to explore this a bit further.

In Ms. D, the translation of which is our line of action in this study, this difference is consistently maintained except in the paragraphs that begin with “I conclude” and that have been adopted from the letter to the boys. According to P. Braido, Ms. D is the eldest of the known manuscripts with the long or combined version. It was written by Fr. Lemoyne himself but on larger pieces of paper than the manuscripts A, B, C and K, which makes us suppose that it was written at another moment than the four just mentioned. Fr. G. Berto, Don Bosco’s secretary for many years, has faithfully copied that manuscript on an unknown date. That copy is called Ms. E.¹²⁸ This was the copy recovered by Fr. Fascie (we do not as yet know how) and used for the edition in 1920. Fr. Fascie remained faithful to that text-tradition for the edition and the re-edition of a collection of inspiring writings and stories of Don Bosco and of some testimonies.¹²⁹

We can say “we do not as yet know how”, because Fr. Fascie, in the normal course of events, must have known of another manuscript (F) that differs from Mss. D and E in important places, among other things because of the fairly frequent substitution of “amore” by “affetto” or “carità”, which, according to P. Braido, are both “stricter, more solemn” and consequently more at a distance, less sensitive.¹³⁰ P. Braido concludes that Ms. F was written by a young writer with elegant handwriting. But he does not mention a date. Neither does he cite an instructor nor a cause. At any rate it must have happened during the years when G.B Lemoyne, who died in 1916, was diligently busy collecting and arranging documents and notes for the *Biographical Memoirs* and a biography of Don Bosco. In that collection which he called *Documenti*, he inserted these changes. The proofs show this, again without any date. P. Braido called it Ms. G. Does this insertion by Fr. Lemoyne mean that he has given the copyist the task of inserting the changes? Hard to say. Somebody may have proposed them to Fr. Lemoyne or expressly asked him to insert them. In the biography that Fr. Lemoyne devoted to Don Bosco and especially in the second part of which was published in 1913, he indeed respected these changes even when quoting a couple of extracts from the long version. By way of illustration: “What a pity it would be if Christian charity (“carità”) was replaced by cold Regulations. (Here still the “Regulations” and not “a regulation” like in Ms. D.) Further: “Without familiarity one does not show one’s love (“affetto”) and when this is not shown, there cannot be confidence.” In a quotation that followed he again kept “amore”: “And this affection (“amore”) means that superiors put up with fatigues, nerves, ingratitude, disturbances and the shortcomings and negligence of the boys.” But in this case the attachment of the boys themselves is considered, not the attitude of the educators toward the boys. That could perhaps be the deeper reason for the other alterations. His last quotation is a sentence that had found its place at the end of the letter to the boys: “So I want to leave you my dear priests, clerics and dear boys, on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow.” Probably as a link to this, he rounded up that series of two pages of quotations with the following conclusion: “Don Bosco wanted the educators and the boys to follow the same way, the path of charity (‘della carità’)! That is the reason why he said that his system *was the preventive system, Christian love!*”¹³¹

It is in that concluding idea in this chapter of the biography that he may have given us the key to understanding why “amore” was replaced by “carità” at a certain moment, and at the same time why he preferred “carità” in the passage: “may the charity of those who command and the charity of those who must obey.” And this both for the educators and for the boys. According to Don Bosco Christian charity is indeed the basis of the Preventive System. He indicated this in his short treatise on the Preventive System: “The practice of this

system is wholly based on the words of St. Paul who says: Charity is patient and kind, bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”¹³²

Maybe it is the key, for it is not impossible that Fr. Lemoyne’s concluding idea after the quotations in the biography is due to a post factum insight and interpretation. The real impulse for the fairly general replacement of “amore” by “carità” might have come from outside. In July 1887 the conclusions of the third and fourth General Chapter (1883 and 1886) were published together. In articles 3 and 10 about the moral and religious education of the chapter called “concerning the trade students” the term “carità” was preferred. Yet it is about how the superiors have to treat the boys to let them experience that they love them. Just as was the case for advice to awaken vocations treated here above. The third article runs: “Everything has to be done so that they understand the superiors love and esteem them. This aim is reached by treating them with that spirit of true charity that the holy gospel recommends.” The tenth then reads: “As there is a great need for technical teachers every confrere must, through his example and Christian charity, take care to arouse in the pupils the desire to become a member of our pious association.”¹³³ The expression now is “true charity” (“vera carità”). No longer “vero amore” (true love) as it was in the draft of a circular for confreres in 1884. (Ms. D, 22) The formulation “vera carità” in the third article is almost certainly from the hand of Fr. Rua. In the accounts of Chapter “proposals” and discussions relating to technical students in 1886 J.M. Prelezzzo still discovered a significant intervention of Fr. Rua. “Before leaving the members of the Chapter, Don Bosco made a sad [emotional] appeal. They should avoid “severe methods” and insist that the Preventive System be practiced.” In the document, Fr. Rua added a note in 1886 that has later become the quoted third article: “We must apply all care possible that they (the boys) understand that they are loved and respected by the superiors. We achieve this by treating them with that spirit of true charity that alone can make them good.”¹³⁴

Fr. Rua’s preference for the use of “carità” is also perceptible in a letter to the confreres in December 1889. There he explicitly referred to the *Regulations for the Houses* of 1877. Not to Fr. Lemoyne’s text or to Fr. Francesia’s ‘circular’, but especially, though not literally, to articles 5 and 6 of Chapter VI. He stated: “The teachers should exert themselves to follow the norms of the preventive system.” This means, among other things, that, according to the *Regulations*, “they must take care of all the pupils; that they must hear the lessons of all of them, not only of a few,” that is “few” meaning only the best or good ones. There was no mention though that the teachers “should show great respect and affection for all their pupils.” On the other hand a little further he added: “I will limit myself to recommending you make charity reign among us in acts, words and feelings. Let us abstain from caressing our pupils and from affectation

[sentimentality] with our pupils.”¹³⁵ It looks as if the fear for misplaced sentimentality has pushed him to stress Christian charity, to use rather the word “carità” himself and to have it used by others thanks to his example. Devotion and unselfish engagement must come first. This is an interpretation of Fr. Rua’s words which must be more profoundly examined. At any rate, according to the data at our disposal, there can be no question on his part of directly intervening in the text of the long version.¹³⁶

There was no such intervention for the choice of “carità” in the last treated passage regarding the orders of the superiors and the obedience of the boys in the combined version. This has been a rather unexpected decision of Fr. Lemoyne in the letter to the boys. In spite of this choice I am convinced that we may or should hear echoes of “amore”. The broader context guarantees this, meaning G. Buzzetti’s commentary. When indeed did the boys – in his opinion – obey “promptly”? In the period when “all hearts were open to their superiors and the boys loved them.” (18) And when do openness and affection appear? When there is familiarity. For, according to Valfré, “closeness (familiarity) leads to affection, and affection brings confidence.”(7) Still more important is the direct, closer context. Just a little before, the two elements of the first of a fourfold summing up were named “The days of affection and Christian confidence.” So obviously, it was a reference to “amore”. (33)

Here, once again, Fr. Lemoyne shows his preference for the ‘inclusion’ figure of speech. He began the part of the text dealing with Don Bosco’s intimate desires by evoking the image of “this poor old man.” He now concludes it with the idea that for this poor old man the hour of final departure is nigh: “He will leave for eternity.” In this letter to the boys, Don Bosco again addresses his young listeners as “figliuoli”, in English “my dear boys.” This can now be kept in the combined text for his dear sons or Salesians, just like at the beginning of the combined version which appeared from the discussion of the initial address in volume 1. But in the letter of 10 May, he said: “very dear boys”.

- Don Bosco and his approaching death

The idea of the death and the approaching end was not at all strange to Don Bosco. In a dream-narrative he related on 9 May 1879, Francis de Sales was his guide. At the time he was about 64 years old and had suffered serious health problems in spring.¹³⁷ This had left a serious trace, even in the dream-story, for during Don Bosco’s conversation with his companion in that narrative, four men suddenly approached carrying a coffin. Don Bosco asked for whom it was intended and he received the answer: “For you”. After which he wanted to know if it was to be “soon.” When the guide left him in uncertainty he insisted: “Is the end of my mortal life at hand?” But his informant said in reply no more than:

“Don’t be concerned. (...) Be vigilant”.¹³⁸ The anecdote shows clearly that in this period he experienced the illness as something life-threatening.

About four years later, in January 1883, again he was not well. His stomach, once more, was causing pain and discomfort, to such an extent that he could hardly breathe. In this situation, a dream surprised him. He thought he saw a deceased Salesian, Fr. Provera. His first question, and this speaks volumes, was: “Tell me something about myself.” Fr. Provera answered that he should continue, that so much was still awaiting him. Don Bosco, however, was not easy about it. He did not feel so optimistic. He then asked Fr. Provera the question: “Will it be for a long time?” And Fr. Provera answered: “Not very long. But work with all your might as though you were to live forever (...) But always be well prepared.”¹³⁹ The expression “not very long” needs no other comment. Yet, Don Bosco wanted to leave for France on 31 January and therefore he wished to pay a visit beforehand to archbishop Gastaldi in Turin. When the latter did not like receiving him, Don Bosco said: “His Excellency has refused to speak to me now when I have looked for him. Very soon he will look for me and will not find me, because I will not be here (any more).”¹⁴⁰

So after the January events it is easy to understand the impressions of the French in Paris and Lille in the spring of 1883. In Paris *L’Univers* of 5 May wrote: “In a dense crowd his voice can hardly be heard. His step is faltering and his vision weak.” The paper *Pas-de-Calais-Arras* a few days later: “An elderly priest strains to mount the pulpit, with the help of others. He modestly greets his audience and standing – since kneeling is far too painful – he recollects himself for a few moments with eyes closed; his lean features, which recall the Curé of Ars, are transfigured while he prays.”¹⁴¹ So he looked like someone who had not long to live.

In the winter months of 1884, the situation had worsened. Fr. Desramaut wrote about that period: “The severe winter in Turin had nearly killed him as had happened to many people around him. The illness in February would put him in a semi-isolated state out of which he will no longer return. (...) Don Bosco was tired, his organism weakened, and he could move only with difficulty. His eyes caused great trouble. He suffered bleedings of the retina. He believed his death was very near. On 8 February he finished his “spiritual testament”, a series of farewell letters to his main benefactors.” And on 11 February the doctor gave the Salesians the advice not to minimize the illness. But toward the end of that month, Don Bosco again expressed his intention to go to France begging one more time. When doctor Albertotti heard this, he told his patient: “If you reach Nice without dying, it will be a miracle.” But courageously, even recklessly he dragged his poor body in short stages of a few kilometers along the Mediterranean coast. And so he reached Nice on 4 March. There, the diagnosis

of Dr Charles d'Espiney was liver-trouble. But his patient showed little enthusiasm for following the prescribed cure. Desramaut is convinced that Don Bosco "fought against the illness with a minimum of prudence and a maximum of determination."¹⁴²

It was in this situation of alternate days and nights of better or worse health that he returned to Italy at the beginning of April, not passing through Salesian houses but directly to Turin to rest there. However, rest was not yet accorded him, for he found himself urged to go further to Rome to solve some problems that oppressed him. He arrived there on Easter Monday 14 April, but it would take him to the middle of May before he could go back to Valdocco with partial results. They were very stressful weeks for Don Bosco. The constant tension following his packed days in France prevented both bodily and spiritual recovery. He often felt "too tired," "could not busy himself with anything" and also the fever-attacks came back.¹⁴³ He needed no more misery to force him to ask himself how long he would be able to bear this and how soon might be the final farewell and departure for eternity. That is the reason why Don Bosco would probably have had no objection to Fr. Lemoyne expressing the preoccupying thought of his in the way he did in the letter to the boys. With earlier and still more direct statements by Don Bosco in mind we even may agree that he suggested them to his secretary when writing the letter to the boys.

In the text, reflection on Don Bosco's approaching death leads to an intimate wish that entails and includes the nucleus of all the other desires: "and so I want to leave you my dear priests, clerics and dearest boys on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow." The phrase "and so" should make us aware that this desire is the direct continuation of the idea that ends with "for eternity." The intimate cohesion, however, has been lost because Fr. Lemoyne inserted between brackets a sentence that divided the original train of thought into two parts that are far away from each other. An insertion where Fr. Rua - for the sake of clearness - added "secretary's note."

Fr. Lemoyne does not let Don Bosco hesitate for a moment to express his ultimate desire clearly and decisively, just as previously he did not fear to express certain wishes clearly and asking the boys plainly to promise "to do everything he desired." It is the certainty whereby he made sure of their goodwill and collaboration in the introduction to the letter: "You will pay attention to what I am going to say you, and put it into practice" (4) which means: 'of this I am confident.'

- "The secretary's note"

By contrast to the letter sent to the boys, the “Secretary’s note” in the combined version” is a clear indication that it is an insertion. This clarification comes from Fr. Rua. He added it into the manuscript which is the preserved letter to the boys.¹⁴⁴ This explains the neutral formulation which is less indicative of it coming from Fr. Lemoyne. Later Fr. Lemoyne adopted it in the united version. That shows that he only accepted this insertion or could only accept it after he had come back from Rome. The whole note contains the information that Don Bosco broke off the “dictation,” that “his eyes filled with tears” and that he only went on “after a few moments.” The point at issue is the reflection of Don Bosco’s emotional reaction at the spontaneous thought of death and eternity.

In the edition of this version in the seventeenth volume of the *Biographical Memoirs* (1936) Fr. Ceria kept the insertion as he had found it in Fr. Berto’s manuscript. Besides, after the conclusive bracket, he began with “and so,” a new sentence which only further clouded the sense of coherence or consistency.¹⁴⁵ In 1959, in the following edition of the longer version, namely in the fourth part of Don Bosco’s correspondence, he changed tack. He relegated the whole insertion to the footnotes.¹⁴⁶ This decision solved the broken coherence and allowed Don Bosco’s final phrase “I want”, following the four earlier coupled wishes to unmistakably take on the value of a climax. Moreover, it became clearer how the passage beginning with the verb “wants” in the question “what this poor old man wants from you,” is nicely rounded off with “and so I want to leave you.”

Eugenio Ceria has given no reasons for his decision in the 1959 edition of the *Biographical Memoirs*. Maybe he thought that this insertion did not fit the text because it interrupted the train of thought. Instead of “Secretary’s note” he indeed wrote in the footnote of that edition: “Note by Fr. Lemoyne” through which he seems to further distance himself from it. We might also suppose that he could not agree with the content of the note. For it must have become clear to him that Don Bosco in his ill state in Rome could neither dictate the whole letter to the boys nor the long or combined version. Besides, when preparing the 1959 edition Ceria was well informed of the way Don Bosco and his secretary collaborated. A proof of this we find in his significant communication of an incident in July 1884, shortly after their return from Rome. He announces: “Don Bosco outlined to father John Baptist Lemoyne what he had seen.” It was, yet again, about a dream-narrative. “But he only told him (in July) what he had heard in general; namely the praise of purity, how to guard it, and the rewards given to it in this world and the next. He then told him to use this as a clue for a topic to be developed freely.” In contradiction with Ms. A with meager suggestions for the letter to the boys of 10 May 1884, in this case we do not even dispose of such an “outline”. Even Fr. Ceria seems not to have had it. That is why he made a firm decision. He finished his concise communication concerning the incident in July as follows: “The secretary obeyed, but he never

had the chance to read the long composition to Don Bosco. That is why we shall quote it at full at the end of this volume.”¹⁴⁷

This is a strange decision. For, if Fr. Ceria were to be consistent, he should never have published the so called long version (1884) in volume XVII of the *Biographical Memoirs* (1936). Indeed, he does not speak about a document with suggestions by Don Bosco for the letter to the boys. Besides, he does not have real proof that Fr. Lemoyne would have read out for Don Bosco in May 1884 his draft of the sparing data in Ms. A, or that Don Bosco himself would have added corrections. And again this does not prevent Fr. Ceria from writing for the publication of volume IV of Don Bosco’s correspondence (1959) this short introduction: “Don Bosco dictated the narrative of a dream for Fr. Lemoyne in the form of a letter with the highest meaning and asked him to send it to the Oratory.”¹⁴⁸ Of course this note can hardly be reconciled with the dropping of the very “note” in the text itself in 1959. His statement (on this point) sounds even more positive than the formulation in the *Biographical Memoirs*. There he was more cautious: “Don Bosco had a dream while in Rome which he almost (pressoché) dictated to Father John Baptist Lemoyne.”¹⁴⁹

This fidelity to the traditional notion of dictating is in that introduction harder to catch because in two other cases Fr. Ceria shows a good knowledge of Don Bosco’s working-method, especially in that period of his life. One of them is allied to the ‘readings’ in Don Bosco’s houses. On this Fr. Ceria reports: “In 1883 he (Don Bosco) had already said to Father John Baptist Lemoyne: “I will give you some work to do in due course.” When he met him a year later, he asked: “Do you recall that I said something to you about some work that was to be done? Well, now (1884) the time has come. ” He drafted the outline for him of a circular letter about ‘readings’ to be sent to all the houses at the beginning of the school year. Father Lemoyne wrote it, Don Bosco edited it [literally: reviewed it], and the long letter was addressed to every school at the beginning of November.”¹⁵⁰ But the question remains whether Don Bosco reviewed the letter or not. G.B. Lemoyne worked it out in the period about which Fr. Ceria himself wrote concerning Don Bosco’s physical condition: “He (the cleric Viglietti) was called upon more and more to lend the support of his strong young arm to the faltering old man.” And: “He yielded to the insistence of the doctors and his own spiritual sons. He slowed down the rhythm of his work, permitting himself the relaxation of an hour-long evening stroll. Father John Baptist Lemoyne and the cleric Viglietti walked on either side of him. He walked very, very slowly along Viale di Rivoli, along Viale Regina Margherita, Corso Valdocco or Via Cottolengo.”¹⁵¹ Still more important in this question lies in this information by the same Fr. Ceria: “From 1884 onward, the decreased ability to see, the increased nephritis and spinal weakness became more and more accentuated. (...) His eyesight had decreased to such an extent that on October

14th he applied to the holy Penitentiary and obtained the permission to celebrate the votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin [on] Sundays and feast days, and the requiem Mass for the dead on other days.”¹⁵²

Fr. Ceria could have even found that some of the details in the quoted ‘note’ were inaccurate. Could it in fact not have been that Don Bosco’s feelings ran high because he was thinking of his approaching death and not because an uncontrollable “inexpressible affection” was overwhelming him? (40) Emotion and tears did not seem to be the exception for Don Bosco in those days. A similar scene, described in practically the same wording, took place in February 1884, when he was overcome by emotion and weeping. Then Don Bosco related that he had dreamt about Peter and Paul. They recalled that he was still in debt with them. He had forgotten that he had decided to publish a new edition of the biography of both of them. And they said: “If you do not do it soon, you’ll have no more time.” In that month of serious illness such a saying was very clear. After this, both saints each in turn said a prayer that Don Bosco certainly would have liked to make his own in his conscious moments at death’s door. About St. Peter’s prayer he said that the repetition of Mary’s name “with such profound affection and deep emotion was indescribable and could only bring about tears of tenderness.” And about St. Paul’s: “By the way the words were uttered, this prayer made an impression so profound on me that I began to weep and woke up.”¹⁵³

Next to Ceria’s jottings on Don Bosco’s way of working, a little note written by Don Bosco to Fr. Lemoyne on 15 October 1883 throws a vivid light on their collaboration. He asked: “Please do me the favor of finishing the dream of [South] America and sending it to me at once. Count Colle is anxious to see it, but he wants it translated into French; I shall take care of that immediately.”¹⁵⁴ It was about a dream-narrative that he had related to the members of the third General Chapter on 4 September. Only on 12 November Don Bosco could send word to Fr. Costamagna in Marseille before his leaving for South America: “The dream [copied by] Fr. Lemoyne needs several corrections, and you will notice this.”¹⁵⁵ Don Bosco certainly meant the dream that Fr. Lemoyne had to correct. Judging from the passing of weeks, or even months, the whole work of redaction cannot have been an easy job. Of course, it gave the ‘editor’ time to search for informative elements that were not found in the original data and to insert them.¹⁵⁶ Such knowledge should have been sufficient to feel uneasy when reading “Don Bosco broke off the dictation” and “he went on” in the “Secretary’s note” in question. [34] That should have been sufficient for Fr. Ceria to relegate it even to the footnotes.

- Another intimate wish

The Christian hope which lies at the basis of the second part of the line of thought that is pulled apart through the “Secretary’s note”, is that they all may reach eternal salvation and happiness together with him. This will happen if they continue to follow the way “the Lord himself wants them to follow.” (34). I cannot positively demonstrate that Don Bosco frequently used this manner of expression. But it was not unusual. In April 1875, when the time for the retreat was approaching, he reflected on what he would tell them to make this time fruitful. He went to bed with those questions. In a goodnight on 4 May, he related what he had ‘dreamt’ about it. A month later he came back to it; this evening in the form of a dialogue between Fr. Barberis and himself. Fr. Barberis asked questions that were meant to be further explained and which they probably had agreed to before. Each time Don Bosco gave elucidations. One of them was: “Each boy had several paths stretching out ahead of him. Some were narrow and thorny; many others were strewn with sharp nails, but God’s blessings had also been strewn on these paths.” When he had said this, Fr. Barberis concluded: “Then this means that you can tell which path each one should take, that is, that you know the vocation of each one of us, how we shall end up and which path we shall follow.” Don Bosco replied: “No. It would not be wise to tell each one which path he will follow and how he will end up. (...) What I can say is this: if one follows a certain path he may be sure that he is on the road to Heaven, namely, to which he has been called; and if one does not follow that road, he will not be on the right path.”¹⁵⁷ Which does not prevent that, if we consider the whole of his speech, it is also, or can also be, a path strewn with graces.

A statement during a speech to the professed, the novices and aspirants in October 1876 goes in the same direction: “Does the mere fact that God has led us here and that we have come here not prove perhaps that He Himself opened to us this path of salvation?”¹⁵⁸ There as well, he used the image of the path to salvation. It can hardly be a rhetorical question. The word “perhaps” offers the possibility of some ‘restriction’ and personal liberty. This openness toward a possible diversity in vocation agrees well with an address he gave on 14 March 1876. At the end of the first part of that extensive goodnight he said: “These and a thousand other ways are open to all workers in the Lord’s vineyard, be they priests, clerics or laymen, regardless of age and position. Everyone, you see, can help gather in many and diverse ways in the Gospel harvest as long as he is motivated by zeal for God’s honor and the salvation of souls.”¹⁵⁹

In the paragraph of the *Constitutions of 1877* where Don Bosco treats “The importance of following one’s vocation”, the religious vocation in the Congregation is underlined. Yet even then he wrote with nuances: “The merciful God who is ‘infinitely rich in grace[s]’, at the moment of creating decides for everyone a path on which - by following it - he can quite easily obtain his

eternal salvation.”¹⁶⁰ The nuances are found in the phrases “infinitely rich in grace[s]” and “by following it” and “quite easily.” Thus he even changed the sentence of the ‘writer’ who preceded him and who had unconditionally and inexorably written “the necessary graces” and “which he has to follow.”

Also in a letter to the students of the 4th and 5th year secondary at Borgo S. Martino he previously stated that “people in this world must go the way to heaven in one of two states: the ecclesiastical or the secular.” What may help the choice of life, he briefly but clearly explained. For the ecclesiastical state, he made a distinction between the diocesan clergy, the priesthood in a religious order or congregation and the missionary priest. Again to be appreciated is his viewpoint: “You are all free to choose which you prefer or that which is more in keeping with your physical and moral capabilities, after seeking the counsel of a prayerful, learned and prudent person.”¹⁶¹

Seeing that in the letter to the boys and the combined version Fr. Lemoyne lets Don Bosco address everyone, priests, clerics and youngsters, he undoubtedly has the vocation to the religious life in view there first of all. Indeed his great concern played its part conspicuously when Buzzetti in the long version summed up the consequences of the listless recreation. One of the consequences was that “so many do not follow their vocation.” (11) The concern for vocations in the letter to the boys may also have inspired the passage about the way which the Lord himself wants them to go, especially through the after-effect of the letter that was sent to him at the end of April by the form-master Fr. Febraro and which Fr. Lemoyne probably had to read and answer. On the one hand Don Bosco might rejoice at the willingness of the pupils in the 4th and the 5th year secondary to have informed him of their choice of life. This he had asked them before through Fr. Febraro. On the other hand, he should have become anxious because of the following little sentences in Febraro’s letter: “I shall send Father John Baptist Lemoyne more specific details about how the boys behave themselves. (...) You will have your troubles with us, but you can be sure that we love you.”¹⁶² In this context a note of Fr. Ceria’s is very relevant. According to him Don Bosco “wanted every boy to write to him in confidence individually and tell him what kind of life they felt themselves to be called to; namely, whether it was to the clerical life or to the life of the world. (...) Everyone had to start from the principle of choosing whatever way of life seemed to him the most likely to ensure his salvation.”¹⁶³ So he let them free. But at the same time, one perceives that he hoped “many” would experience and see “that the way the Lord himself wants them to follow” (34) would be the way of the clerical status.¹⁶⁴

When the priests and the clerics are addressed together with the boys in the letter from Rome to the boys, this can only mean that he wishes they should take the

correct way or continue to follow the road they have taken, in other words that they should persevere in their vocation.

- A few communications

To the passage just discussed, Fr. Lemoyne attaches two more communications and a request. He does so in a handy way by introducing the first communication with the transitional phrase ‘For this purpose’, namely to help them in following the way of the Lord.

° Audience with the pope

After waiting for weeks Don Bosco had indeed finally obtained an audience with the Pope, Leo XIII, on “Friday 9 May.” (34) On this occasion the pope gave him the usual apostolic blessing. This is here now connected with the choice of and the perseverance in ‘the way wanted by the Lord’. Thus the Pope has given his blessing, according to Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne, with a view of strengthening this choice for all, providing the necessary force.

For Don Bosco, this apostolic blessing was no mere formality. He liked to talk about every audience with joy and great respect to let everybody see and respect its value. When he stayed in Rome in January 1874 he sent a New-Year’s letter to all the houses. In it he wrote - in a way adapted to the addressees - about an audience the Pope had given him on 5 January.

The director, Fr. Lemoyne, and the boys at Lanzo had their turn on the same day: “At eleven this morning I had an audience with the Holy Father. I found him amiable, generous and gracious in his concern for our needs. He talked at length about our Congregation, our priests, clerics and boys, and particularly about Lanzo, which I had mentioned to him on a previous occasion. Then, wishing to give you a token of his particular regard, he asked me to tell you that he was sending you his holy apostolic blessing with plenary indulgence on the day when you go to confession and Communion.”¹⁶⁵ That letter too was mainly destined for the boys. However, Don Bosco allowed the Pope to ‘speak’ to the priests, clerics and the boys, in that order.

Still, the order should not be overstressed, since the letter on the same day for the Oratory at Valdocco was addressed to “everyone who is staying there.” For them the information about the papal audience was more objective: “At 11 o’clock this morning Father Berto and I had an audience with the Holy Father, who most willingly took time to discuss our Congregation – its priests, clerics, students, and artisans. (...) He was also glad to give us other favors, among

them his papal blessing with a plenary indulgence on the day when you will go to confession and Holy Communion.”¹⁶⁶ There he summed up almost all the categories of inhabitants at Valdocco.

The letters to the communities of Borgo San Martino and Valsalice were written a day later. They witness the freedom with which Don Bosco worked out the communication according to the concrete circumstances. But the apostolic blessing was given each time.¹⁶⁷

In 1877, Pius IX, who was old and sick, had accorded him no further private audience, but as editor of the *Letture Cattoliche* Don Bosco could take part in a public audience for Catholic journalists and their representatives. During the personal greeting of the Pope he must have been able to speak a few words with him. It is interesting to notice that he used this short encounter a month later in a letter to the boys from the college at Villa Colón (Uruguay). “I talked about Villa Colón, a place he clearly remembered having seen. I asked him for a special apostolic blessing for you and for all your relatives up to the third degree with a plenary indulgence at the point of death. With great pleasure, the affable Pope answered. May God bless the students of Villa Colón and their parents and make ardent Catholics of all of them. May the fathers and their sons become rich, very rich, but in the true richness consisting in virtue, the holy fear of the Lord.”¹⁶⁸

The references to the audience and the blessing formula in 1884 are extremely scanty compared with the communications from 1874 and 1877. Yet, such references are present.

° The return journey

Then Don Bosco announces his return to Valdocco. He assures the boys that he “will be with them on the feast of Mary Help of Christians (May 24) before the statue of their loving Mother.” (35)

° A wish on the occasion of the oncoming feast, a wish that typifies Don Bosco

To this communication Fr. Lemoyne links a corresponding desire. Each year again in the past Don Bosco had worked strenuously to see that it was a splendid feast. No wonder that this time he likewise wishes “this feast to be celebrated with full solemnity.” (35)

For Don Bosco the celebration of Mary Help of Christians is a great and important feast. What motivates him every year is a sincere and deep feeling of

gratitude toward Our Lady Help of Christians; a sentiment that he tried to awaken and strengthen in the hearts of his co-workers and youngsters. On 23 April he had written in his own handwriting from Rome to Fr. Lazzero: “When I get home, I want us to have a splendid feast in church to thank the Madonna for the innumerable blessings she has bestowed on us.”¹⁶⁹ Buzzetti had already recalled some ‘blessings’ earlier in the letter to the boys: “Mary Help of Christians has gathered them here.” (31) And a little further in this letter Don Bosco himself witnessed “for God”: “It is enough for a young person to enter a Salesian house for our Lady to take him under her special care.” (33-34) The youngsters thus can understand why he [D.B.] sticks to the idea that this feast must be celebrated “before the statue of our loving Mother with full solemnity.” In an addition for the Salesians in the long version Buzzetti repeats the idea just quoted from the letter to Fr. Lazzero. (See endnote 169 of this section) Indeed, Don Bosco has to preach “to all, young and old, that it is Our Lady who, by endless graces and wonders, provides them with bread and the means to study.” (Ms. D, 31)

Splendid aspects of the liturgical solemnity which Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne could be thinking of are found in the *Biographical Memoirs*, volume XVII. Fr. Ceria quotes a few lines from an account in the *Unità Cattolica* of 27 May 1884. In the context of the recently opened exhibition in Turin that paper rather bombastically described the celebration “as the Catholic exhibition”. The reporter justified his bold comparison as follows: “because of the crowd of people attending it, the singular piety that was shown, the magnificence of the liturgy and the ornaments, and the excellent quality of the music performed.”¹⁷⁰ Anyone who knows Don Bosco a little, will think especially of the number of acolytes and the polyphonic songs of the boys’ choir.

Though Don Bosco does not breathe a word of it, this time he has an extra personal reason for insisting on a “splendid feast in the church” and “one with full solemnity.” For he knows - and it gives him an unspeakable joy - that the new Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Alimonda will preside at the solemn Eucharist. Cardinal Alimonda had been appointed only a year before in July 1883 and it was the first time that he would come to Valdocco as archbishop. Unlike the former archbishop he was a real friend of Don Bosco’s. For him too it must be a glorious festivity, and at the same time a unique experience. No doubt Don Bosco wants to make a favorable impression.

When speaking about a “splendid feast”, of course, he is in the first instance thinking of the religious aspect of the festivity. This appears from the dual construction of the sentence and the fact of placing this aspect first. Yet for him and the boys, it would not be a real feast-day if it stopped at this. That is why Fr. Lazzero, the director of the Oratory, and Fr. Marchisio, the Prefect responsible

for general discipline and domestic arrangements, must “see to it that we can be happy in the dining room as well.” (Ms. K, 35) In the united text the editor has changed it into “to act in such a way that we can be cheerful in the dining room as well.” (35)

Don Bosco must soon have understood, in his contact with the boys, that a feast for the soul must be matched with a feast for the body. In this way he had already expressed this in a letter to Fr. Rua, the Salesians, and the boys at Mirabello. He had founded there the first presence outside Valdocco in 1863 and appointed the 25-year-old Fr. Rua as director. In June 1864 he informed the whole community that he intended to celebrate mass on 21 June, the commemoration of St. Aloysius, at their college. One of the three things they should ask this Saint was: “That Fr. Rua should make you happy at my expense. First in the church, then at dinner and at last with a good walk.” As Don Bosco had not been able to work out his plan, he wrote to them again at the beginning of June. In that letter he repeated his idea: “All this concerns the soul. What about the body? We certainly cannot ignore it. So now I ask Father Prefect that he should give the appropriate orders to have a nice day and, weather permitting, have a walk all together.”¹⁷¹

To continue on the theme of festivities, on 25 May or in June 1872, the council at Valdocco decided “to celebrate a little that day. The distribution of prizes was organized. (...) Fireworks too were let off.”¹⁷² Meals are not concerned directly here, but such recreational possibilities must have contributed to a joyful, festive climate in the house.

In an address to the students of the higher grade at Alassio in February 1879, he “recommended cheerfulness, stressing that it came from peace with God.” But again he did not find it enough. “He wanted them to rejoice not only in heart but also in body. Hence, he asked Father Director to make sure they were given something special at dinner.”¹⁷³

In the middle of the seventies, Fr. Lazzero succeeded in fixing some rules for the organization of the diverse feast-days. In an appendix or attachment, we find both regulations concerning breakfast and lunch, and directives for the services in church, the academic sessions, recreation and theatrical performances.¹⁷⁴ This does not mean that breakfast and lunch were so copious every time on festive days. That was simply impossible at that time. But the superiors had to see that there was something extra on the yearly recurring festivities.

For Don Bosco it was so essential that he already thought of it in the letter of 23 April 1884 to Fr. Lazzero. His wish was: “When I get home, I want us to rejoice in church and also in the dining room.”¹⁷⁵ Still in the letter to the boys, Fr.

Lazzero together with Fr. Marchisio is once more reminded of it. Was it a little wink to the boys? Was it meant playfully and with certain humor? Or did he rather want to exert pressure on both responsible men? Difficult to make out. It could have been a confirmation of Fr. Lazzero's habitual manner of behaving, even a kind of public rehabilitation after what he had suffered in December 1881. According to Fr. Lazzero's own note, after receiving the complaint of "a petty-minded person," whom Don Bosco had trusted fully, "Don Bosco had given him (Fr. Lazzero) a strict order in future not to provide salami, cookies or pastry at table during any solemnity, and no drinks or cookies to the singers and musicians and not even a single sweet biscuit to the actors. He [Don Bosco] considered the things that happened yesterday as true disorderliness whereas they are things which the writer (of these lines) has always seen at least during the 25 years that he spent at the Oratory."¹⁷⁶

Only this way would "the feast of Mary Help of Christians be a prelude to the eternal feast that we will all celebrate one day together in heaven." (35) It sounds like a conventional conclusion, one that at that time would rather fit into a sermon. Yet even such a conclusion is typical for Don Bosco. His 'goodnight' at Alassio, in which he had spoken about spiritual and corporeal joyfulness, he concluded with similar words: "By being good and joyful now, you will be storing for yourselves eternal happiness such as I wish you with all my heart and that God will grant to you."¹⁷⁷

In fact, on the compositional level, these concluding words perfectly link up with the ideas expressed at the beginning of his letter to the boys: "I have only one wish, to see you happy both in this world and in the next. It was this idea, this wish of mine that made me write this letter." (3) The end is a confirmation of the beginning. Besides, both fit well in the mouth of a "poor old man", who feels the moment coming near that he will have to say good bye and "leave for eternity." (33 and 34)

10. The signatures of the letter sent to the boys and the combined version

Fr. Lemoyne ended the letter to the boys at Valdocco with a usual, but not a stereotyped phrase of Don Bosco: "Your most affectionate friend in J.C." Don Bosco himself signed it: "Rev. Gio Bosco." According to the previously inserted remark G.B. Lemoyne was only the man who wrote down what Don Bosco 'dictated'. However, we know that Don Bosco did not dictate or suggest each sentence, though he was the introducer of initial and central ideas. (Ms. A) He was also the one who signed the letter. All this is the reason why he may in some sense be called the author of the letter sent to the boys.

Don Bosco did not always use the possessive pronoun ‘your’. Nor the abbreviation “J.C.” either. Thus he already closed the letter of 23 July 1861 to the boys with “Most affectionate friend in J.C. Rev. Bosco Gio.” A year later on 21 July, it was “yours most affectionate in the Lord Rev. Bosco Gio”, so without the word ‘friend’. Also to the boys at Mirabello on 30 December 1863: “Yours most affectionately in J.C. Rev. Bosco Gio.” To the boys at Valdocco on 6 August 1863 again: “(Yours) Affectionately in Jesus C. Rev. Bosco Gio.” At the end of the letter to Fr. Lazzero and the technical students we read in 1874 literally: “Vostro aff.mo amico in G.C.” (Your most affectionate friend Rev. G. Bosco.) Exactly like in the original so-called short version, the letter to the boys in 1884.¹⁷⁸

In the combined version it is no longer ‘Your most affectionate friend’, but ‘vostro aff. amico’ (the English translation of the Constitutions 1997: “your Friend in Christ Jesus”). That is somewhat surprising, because in former circular letters to the boys and the Salesians together it could be ‘(Your) most affectionate (friend)’.¹⁷⁹ Fr. Ceria treated it with still greater liberty in his publications of the combined letter, both in the *Biographical Memoirs* and in *Epistolario di Giovanni Bosco*, collection of Don Bosco’s letters. And once again, we have the problem of saying “Vostro aff.mo” (‘most affectionate’), without “amico” (‘friend’) in each case. Moreover in the *Memoirs*, behind the word ‘paradise’ (or heaven) he added place and date: Rome, 10 May 1884 and in the *Epistolario* he did this after ‘J.C.’ Putting the place and date underneath, however, seems to have been quite normal in Don Bosco’s time.¹⁸⁰

Then follows the reproduction of the signature: “Sac. Gio. Bosco.” For P. Stella it was in 1969 still clear that Don Bosco signed the long version, which appears from the following affirmation: “Of this letter no exemplar written by Don Bosco himself is known, but only the original version (in two elaborations) which Fr. Lemoyne has written and which were signed by Don Bosco.” In later years P. Braido was very clear about the short letter to the boys [the only letter from Rome of 10 May 1884]: “At the end there is the signature written by Don Bosco himself.” And about the checking of the control that Don Bosco might have made, he wrote: “This is absolutely clear concerning the short version, that bears his personal signature.”¹⁸¹ On the contrary, he did have reservations concerning the combined version. About that version he did not write or say anything directly, but the respective highlighting of the presence of the signature in the version of the letter to the boys and the silence about it in the publications of the longer version are meaningful.¹⁸²

Certainly, Don Bosco has not made any corrections or supplements, neither in the letter to the boys, nor in the long version.¹⁸³ It is equally certain, according to P. Braido, that the elaboration of both writings is Fr. G.B. Lemoyne’s work. He

concludes: “Several arguments assure us that their redaction must completely be attributed to Fr. Giovanni Baptist Lemoyne, an excellent writer and a very good educator (...) Whatever the case, not to mention the problem of the people directly concerned in the making up of the document, and who were the unique witnesses of it, it is obvious that the two texts are a successful synthesis of a collective experience that had matured for decades with Don Bosco and his co-workers and which he had well considered and formulated on diverse occasions. (...) The letters are the fruit of a vivid and consolidated tradition. They are wording them and reformulating them in terms that were original and sharply defined at the time. On the theoretical level they enrich and perfect them. Consequently they have to be read and interpreted in the context of the complete historical experience which in turn is better explained by them. They constitute the ideal undivided patrimony of a pedagogical community that recognizes itself in Don Bosco and in his “style” of life and action.”¹⁸⁴

Thus the long or combined version is not simply “his (Don Bosco’s) memorable letter from Rome of 10 May 1884”; neither is it “the most authentic comment on his Preventive System” as Fr. Albera enthusiastically formulated in 1921.¹⁸⁵

Authentic in the sense that Don Bosco himself would be the author or the dictating author. Still the document with the combined version is and remains a fully clear description and a well-considered representation of his system. A document that rightly may be conserved and propagated as the Magna Charta of the Salesian pedagogical system or as a compendium of Don Bosco pedagogical and pastoral ideas and convictions.

¹ The sequence in BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 33-34; BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco the Educator, Texts and Testimonies*, translated by Julian Fox, 217-218.

² MB IX, 160-161; EMB IX, 80-81.

³ Later on Fr. Lemoyne wrote: “In those nights when he [Don Bosco] was ill...” in BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 8-9 and 57/200-201; ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 206; 236. See EMB XVII, 91. We can read what Don Bosco himself told the cooperators in May 1884 after his return from Rome in MB XVII, 148; EMB XVII, 125: “You may have heard that for some time, I have had very poor health. I was almost (quasi) incapable of doing any work.”

⁴ Look for the periods 1846-1871 and 1884: BIESMANS J., *Ziekte, lijden en leed...*, 51-59, respectively 221-245. Also footnotes 3 and 6 in this section (5.) of the study.

⁵ MB IX, 17; EMB IX, 11.

⁶ MB XI, 34; EMB XI, 22.

⁷ MB IX, 156; EMB IX, 77.

⁸ MB IX, 167-168; EMB IX, 85-86.

⁹ Compare with footnote 1 in this section. The same pattern (a subdivision in two parts with the sudden awakening and falling asleep again and completing the dream) characterizes the story in September 1876 during a retreat in Lanzo. (MB XII, 469; EMB XII, 341.) Meanwhile it may be useful to remember that G. Buzzetti arrived in Rome, before the interview with the journalist of *Le Monde* took place. See footnote 22 in section III in volume 1.

¹⁰ See also MB XV, 364; EMB XV, 305 with this message: “On the last of December Don Bosco had a dream about them [the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians] which he narrated to Father Lemoyne, who, as he always did with anything relating to Don Bosco, immediately took notes of all he said.”

- ¹¹ See the footnotes 92-96 in section III and footnote 9 in section IV of volume 1 with paragraph 1.3 on "The obedience of the young as a *conditio sine qua non* in education."
- ¹² In Italian "riconoscere" and "riconoscenza."
- ¹³ See footnote 22 in section I of vol. 1 of the entire study. *I verballi del CG 2*. Copia pulita di Fr. Barberis, FdB 1857 C9-10.
- ¹⁴ See footnote 64 in section I of vol. 1. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 254/590-602.
- ¹⁵ See footnote 79 in section I. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 258/685-690.
- ¹⁶ MB VIII, 257; EMB VIII, 133.
- ¹⁷ MB XII, 464-465, 471; EMB XII, 334-336, 342.
- ¹⁸ For both quotations OE XXIX, [160/7];[169/22]. See BIESMANS, R., *Doelstellingen van opvoeding en opleiding...*, 143-144.
- ¹⁹ MB XIV, 644; EMB XIV, 521. E III, 620.
- ²⁰ MB VIII, 257; EMB VIII, 133.
- ²¹ OE XXIX, [62/7]; [173/1 and 174/5] on the behavior towards companions, and [179/10].
- ²² MB VIII, 830-831; EMB VIII, 357. Compare to the anecdote in MB X, 129-130; EMB X, 92-93.
- ²³ MB XII, 44 and 49; EMB XII, 31 and 36. See also footnote 117 in section III, vol. 1.
- ²⁴ MB XIII, 439; EMB XIII, 346.
- ²⁵ E III, 254. MB XIII, 392; EMB XIII, 304.
- ²⁶ Ibidem.
- ²⁷ OE XXIX, [172/9].
- ²⁸ OE XIII [177-178]. This happened in the first edition of the story in 1861, but also later in 1866 and 1880, the editions 2 and 3.
- ²⁹ MB XIII, 439; EMB XIII, 346.
- ³⁰ This happened on 19 October 1868. (MB IX, 394; EMB IX, 182.)
- ³¹ MB X, 76; EMB X, 65.
- ³² MB XI, 248; EMB XI, 230.
- ³³ MB XII, 132; EMB XII, 105.
- ³⁴ E III, 69. MB XII, 278; EMB XII, 199.
- ³⁵ MB XI, 363; EMB XI, 339.
- ³⁶ MB IX, 160; EMB IX, 78-80. Compare to footnote 155 in section III, vol. 1. In the next section of the narrative of the dream series at Lanzo, Don Bosco repeated: "They have superiors; let them obey them. They have rules; let them observe them. They have the sacraments; let them receive them." (MB IX, 173; EMB IX, 81). The antithesis friends-enemies will return in the Third General Chapter in September 1883: "On leaving they will be our friends; otherwise, they will be our enemies." (MB XVI, 417; EMB XVI, 331.) Compare with section I of vol. 1 footnote 89. See also BRAIDO, P., *Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù*, Rome, LAS 1985, 84/III. and IV. *Constitutions...*, 248.
- ³⁷ OE XXIX [60/6].
- ³⁸ In Italian the verbal form "affida" with the expression "non ha confidenza."
- ³⁹ On the correspondence see BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome voor de jongens...*, 36. Especially the letter in MB XVII, 703-704; EMB XVII, 649-650. Furthermore, in section 7. of vol. 2 the course of the meetings after Don Bosco's homecoming from Rome. At any rate, the clause "and some even continue till the 5th class" didn't appear yet in the letter sent to the boys from Rome.
- ⁴⁰ MB XVI, 16; EMB XVI, 4. In 1863 he praised the pupils in Mirabello, the first foundation outside Turin: "I have noticed with real satisfaction that you frequently receive the sacraments of confession and Holy Communion." (E (m), vol. primo, 629/15-16.)
- ⁴¹ E (m) vol. terzo, 308-309. MB X, 43; EMB X, 35-36.
- ⁴² MB IX, 595; EMB IX, 280-281.
- ⁴³ MB X, 56; EMB X, 48.
- ⁴⁴ MB XI, 256; EMB XI, 238.
- ⁴⁵ MB VI, 115; EMB VI, 58.
- ⁴⁶ OE XXIX [69/11]
- ⁴⁷ MB IX, 159; EMB IX, 79. In Italian "molti e molti."
- ⁴⁸ MB IX, 173; EMB IX, 90.

⁴⁹ MB IX, 595-596; EMB IX, 280-281.

⁵⁰ MB XIII, 763; EMB XIII, 586.

⁵¹ MB IX, 134; EMB IX, 68. On the use of "not many" see also footnote 102 in section III of vol. 1.

⁵² MB XI, 262; EMB XI, 245.

⁵³ MB XII, 464; EMB XII, 336. He insisted that it concerned only few pupils, also in a letter to the pupils of Mirabello in 1863: "There were some boys, very few ones who, should I mention it?, received the sacraments in an unworthy manner." (See E (m), vol. primo, 629/31-32.)

⁵⁴ MB XII, 464; EMB XII, 336.

⁵⁵ MB XII, 594-595; EMB XII, 441.

⁵⁶ MB IX, 159-160; EMB IX, 79-80 and 82. Apparently, nobody was interested in the way Don Bosco was able to retrieve the following evening his notebook the unknown guide had thrown on the ground previously.

⁵⁷ MB X, 46-47; EMB X, 39-40.

⁵⁸ MB IX, 133; EMB IX, 68. See also the preceding footnote 45 in this section 5.

⁵⁹ MB XIII, 763; EMB XIII, 586.

⁶⁰ MB IX, 159; EMB IX, 79. Also in the letter to the pupils in Mirabello he did not conceal his deep sadness: "I have to inform you about many things, that have saddened me deeply." And: "What hurt me most..." (E (m), vol. primo, 629/20,29.)

⁶¹ Examples are MB IX, 158; EMB IX, 78; MB XII, 42; EMB XII, 29; MB XII, 463; EMB XII, 335; MB XIII, 302; EMB XIII, 225; MB XII, 587; EMB XII, 433-434; MB XIV, 123; EMB XIV, 88; MB XII, 351; EMB XII, 250; MB XIII, 535; EMB XIII 414; MB XIV, 609; EMB XIV, 488.

⁶² Beside other factors goodnights and narratives in which he hinted or overtly said that he knew of certain names convinced former generations of youngsters and co-workers that he could read their consciences. Fr. Berto was undoubtedly convinced and testified: "On the evening of December 7, 1873, I accompanied the servant of God to his room and then asked him to tell me confidentially how he was able to read the boys' consciences, especially their sins. "Well," he replied with his usual kindness, "*nearly every night I dream* that boys come to me for their general Confession and tell me all their sins. The next morning, when they do really come for confession, all I need do is tell them their sins." (MB X, 71; EMB X, 61.) Nevertheless, we have to be careful in this respect. This is already required at the beginning of Fr. Berto's tale: "As I was going with him to his room, he told me that the lamp used during his visit to the dormitories was the one he had in his room." (MB X, 70; EMB X, 60). Carefulness appears also from Fr. Ceria's statement in volume XIV of the *Biographical Memoirs* in which he treated the year 1879. He wrote: "The prevailing belief that he could read consciences served greatly to draw boys to his confessional. Though this did not always happen, and did not usually and not frequently occur, the mere realization that it was possible was enough to swell the number of his young penitents." (MB XIV, 121; EMB XIV, 86-87.) The progressive relativization with Ceria is meaningful. Moreover, it is striking that he limits its effect to "piccoli clienti" (young penitents). Without any doubt a suggestive nuance. Furthermore, a statement of Don Bosco's remains valid. In a goodnight in April 1879 he frankly said: "Along with these good boys a few who were on the verge of being expelled before the retreat. Their names were given to me a few days ago. I have the list up in my room. I studied the reasons for expulsion and found them reasonable." (MB XIII, 420; EMB XIII, 329.) Undoubtedly he owed this list to his Salesians. See also BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens in Valdocco*, Don Bosco Studies n° 16, 2007 and BIESMANS, R., *Redelijkheid in de omgang met jongeren (1876-1884)*, Don Bosco Studies, n° 14, 2000, 118. ID., *Ragionevolezza nei contatti (nelle relazioni) coi giovani nel Sistema Preventivo di Don Bosco nel periodo 1876-1884*, 52. Of course, the whole matter deserves an individual treatment.

⁶³ MB IX, 159 and 162; EMB IX, 79 and 82, where the Latin names are translated.

⁶⁴ MB VIII, 7; EMB VIII, 4.

⁶⁵ MB XII, 557; EMB XII, 407.

⁶⁶ MB XVII, 199; EMB XVII, 176. Consequently, also in the compilation of texts by FISCHER, K.G., *Giovanni Bosco, Pädagogik der Vorsorge*, 77-81. However, in part IV of the *Epistolario* this circular was not included.

⁶⁷ As regards the influence of the biography of Comollo on Dominic Savio, see OE XI [227/footnote].

⁶⁸ MB XVII, 376; EMB XVII, 347.

⁶⁹ E IV, 320. The date is 19 March 1885. That circular letter has not been included in volume XVII of the *Biographical Memoirs*. This is why it is not to be found in FISCHER, K.G., Giovanni Bosco, *Pädagogik der Vorsorge*. But it was published by P. Braido in BOSCO, G., “*Scritti sul sistema preventivo...*”, 599-604.

⁷⁰ MB XII, 44; EMB XII, 32.

⁷¹ MB XII, 354-355; EMB XII, 253-254.

⁷² See footnote 21 in this section (5). This emphasis does not exclude that Don Bosco wished his pupils should consider their superiors, teachers and educators as their elder brothers.

⁷³ MB VI, 115; EMB VI, 58.

⁷⁴ OE XI [129].

⁷⁵ MB VI, 318-319; EMB VI, 169-170.

⁷⁶ MB VII, 170; EMB VII, 107. In the letter of 1863 to the boys in Mirabello: "Show devotion for her and take often recourse to Holy Mary. Never and nowhere in this world has been noticed that somebody who had confidential recourse to this heavenly Mother was not promptly heard." (E (m) vol. primo, 629/46-48.)

⁷⁷ MB XIII, 406 and 408; EMB XIII, 317 and 319.

⁷⁸ BRAIDO, P.-ARENAL LLATO Rogélio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne...*, 140/34-35.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, 147/36-38.

⁸⁰ MB XVII, 34; EMB XVII, 18.

⁸¹ BOSCO, G., *Memorie dell'Oratorio...*, 29/11-12; 132/1072-1080; Saint John BOSCO, *Memoirs...*, 30 and 113.

⁸² BOSCO, G., *Memorie dell'Oratorio...*, 110-111; Saint John BOSCO, *Memoirs...*, 96.

⁸³ BOSCO, G., *Memorie dell'Oratorio...*, 35/133-136; 36/145-147; Saint John BOSCO, *Memoirs...*, 34. In this text Don Bosco himself has corrected "a mistress" into "the mistress". It is significant that he placed “gentleness, kindness” first. Compare with BIESMANS, R., *Amorevolezza...*, 217-221.

⁸⁴ MB XIII, 547; EMB XIII, 424.

⁸⁵ See therefore notes in MB XVII, 53-54; EMB XVII, 35. After a recovery about which a message was sent to him in 1885, he would have reacted as follows: “It is really obvious that our Lady is always our good mother. We see this with our own eyes every day, and even several times a day.” (MB XVII, 680; EMB XVII, 627.)

How he was to realize this task was summarized in a document which is considered to be his "spiritual testament". There we read: “The Holy Virgin Mary will continue most certainly to protect our Congregation and our Salesian houses if we maintain our trust in her and promote devotion to her. Let us always stress, both in public and in private, the importance of her feast days, the solemn commemorations in her honor, her novenas and triduum. And the month consecrated to her; let us do this by means of leaflets, books, medals, holy pictures, publication or simply by telling people of the graces and blessings obtained constantly at every moment for suffering humanity by our heavenly benefactress.” (MB XVII, 261; EMB XVII, 235.) Also see BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 415/324-331; ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 255. *Constitutions...*, 268.

⁸⁶ See footnote 37 in this section (5.) of vol. 2.

⁸⁷ MB VIII, 7; EMB VIII, 4.

⁸⁸ MB II, 361-362; EMB II, 283. Compare with footnotes 14 and 69 in this section (5.) of the study. A striking series in MB XV, 469-470; EMB XV, 392 and in MB VIII, 351-354; EMB VIII, 435-438.

⁸⁹ MB XII, 33; EMB XII, 20-21. See MB VIII, 352/9; EMB VIII, 436.

⁹⁰ BOSCO, G., *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, Turin, 1880, 69. The title of the new chapter in this edition reads: "Mortification of the senses."

⁹¹ OE XI [224-225].

⁹² In the editions of MB XVII and in *Epistolario IV* the personal pronoun has been omitted, and so that nuance disappeared too. Cf. *Constitutions...*, 263.

⁹³ A bell ringing for dinner (footnote 2 in this section); raging bull (footnote 17); sound or noise (MB XIII, 764; EMB XIII, 587; MB XV, 365; EMB XV, 306); chiming of bells (MB XVI, 394; EMB XVI, 312); physical pain (MB XIII, 44; EMB XIII, 27); huge hailstones (footnote 5 in this section).

⁹⁴ MB XII, 469; EMB XII, 341. By using the verb “spaventare” this quotation refers to the previous one with the noun “spavento”.

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- ⁹⁵ MB XVII, 29; EMB XVII, 14.
- ⁹⁶ MB IX, 164; EMB IX, 84.
- ⁹⁷ In the combined version the word "other" is omitted and "inconvenient circumstances" (plural) is used. Nevertheless, it remains just as vague.
- ⁹⁸ MB VIII, 858; EMB VIII, 372.
- ⁹⁹ MB X, 47-48; EMB X, 40-41.
- ¹⁰⁰ MB XI, 263; EMB XI, 245. A direct indication that delicate matters should be dealt with in a personal conversation.
- ¹⁰¹ MB XII, 595; EMB XII, 441.
- ¹⁰² The word "tripudio" was not included in Ms. C.
- ¹⁰³ BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 2007, 61-64.
- ¹⁰⁴ The extracts in the various versions of the combined elaboration (18-19) suggest that Don Bosco realized that the situation had changed radically. Emotionally it was difficult for him to accept and handle that. See BIESMANS, J., *Ziekte, lijden en leed...*, for example 252-256.
- ¹⁰⁵ How this was displayed was dealt with in the first volume. See also the passage of the Second General Chapter in 1880 and the subdivision: "Practical instruction of the personnel as to the reconciliation of tradition and adjustment to altered circumstances." Also footnote 36 and footnotes 50-53 in the same section I of vol. 1.
- ¹⁰⁶ STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*, Rome, LAS, 1980, 178-181.
- ¹⁰⁷ See the first section in volume 1. For instance, the footnotes 32-33 and 62. Also footnotes 41-46 in the same section. Furthermore, on the possible appointment of two managing directors in Valdocco in MB XVII, 200-203; EMB XVII, 177-180.
- ¹⁰⁸ STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, 181.
- ¹⁰⁹ MB XVI, 66; EMB XVI, 46-47.
- ¹¹⁰ See footnote 89 in the first section of vol. 1. MB XVI, 417; EMB XVI, 330.
- ¹¹¹ MB XVIII, 126-127; EMB XVIII, 96. Cf. LEMOYNE, G.B., *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio Giovanni Bosco*, vol. II, Turin, 1913, 270. It is worthwhile reading the explanation given by Fr. Ceria. He interpreted Don Bosco's answer on the general level of the Preventive System, though the question of the Rector in Montpellier especially concerned the religious-spiritual aspect.
- ¹¹² BARBERIS, G., *Appunti...*, 276-277.
- ¹¹³ See the 'key passage' in section III of vol.1, and the considerations on "affective love" in section IV of vol.1. I won't consider the fact that Fr. Lemoyne uses the term "Christian confidence". Already in Ms. L of the letter to the boys which was effected round 1886 under his guiding, he canceled the word "Christian". See BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 23 and 46/line 135; ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 213 and 224.
- ¹¹⁴ MB VII, 245; EMB VII, 149.
- ¹¹⁵ MB VII, 503; EMB VII, 302.
- ¹¹⁶ Let it be noted in passing that the letter to the boys mentions the common expression "spirit of tolerance". In the long or combined version (Ms. D) "Spirit" gets a capital letter. In that same second wish, we can read respectively, Jesus and Jesus Christ.
- ¹¹⁷ OE II [243-244] en OE XXXV [191-193].
- ¹¹⁸ OE XXIX [172/7]
- ¹¹⁹ OE XXIX [172/4]
- ¹²⁰ See footnote 63 in section I of vol. 1. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 253-254.
- ¹²¹ BRAIDO, P.-ARENAL LLATO Rogelio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne...*, 140/24-26.
- ¹²² BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 16 and 46/explanations to the lines 144-145. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 211 and 227.
- ¹²³ MB XII, 32; EMB XII, 20. On the use and possible meaning of 'mansuetudine' see BIESMANS, R., *Amorevolezza...*, 209-236.
- ¹²⁴ MB XIV, 124; EMB XIV, 88-89, in a striking English translation: "endlessly kind". See OE XXXVI, [170-171] with the expression "true spirit of Christian charity". See also MB XII, 88 and 90; EMB XII, 68 and 71.
- ¹²⁵ See BIESMANS, R., *Amorevolezza...*, 34. BRAIDO, P., *I molti volti...*, 28/3.

- ¹²⁶ MB XIII, 149; EMB XIII, 112-113. Cf. BIESMANS, R., *Fatti amare...*, 72; ID., *Studia di fatti amare*, Quaderni di Spiritualità Salesiana, 8, UPS, Rome, 1996, 45. ID., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 47.
- ¹²⁷ In footnote 146 of section III in vol. 1 and in the text that can be consulted through footnote 286 also in section III, vol. 1. Further in section IV of vol. 1 as indicated in footnote 33.
- ¹²⁸ BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 16-17. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 211-212.
- ¹²⁹ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 6-7. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 205.
- ¹³⁰ BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 19. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 212-213. See section III of vol. 1/ footnote 146.
- ¹³¹ LEMOYNE, G.B., *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio...*, II, 311-312. Compare with Ms. D in the Supplementary Booklet (22), (19), (20).
- ¹³² BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 84. *Constitutions...*, 248-249. It came to the front again in a dream narrative during a retreat in September 1881 where the word 'caritas' prevails. Not only the diamond of caritas was shown on the heart of the splendidly dressed main character, but Don Bosco also made Fr. Costamagna, one of the spectators, dictate: "Charity understands all things, bears all things, overcomes all things. Let us preach this in word and deed." (MB XV, 184; EMB XV, 148-149.)
- ¹³³ OE XXXVI, [270-271].
- ¹³⁴ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Don Bosco e le scuole professionali (1870-1887)* in: *Don Bosco nella storia* (a cura di M. Midali), Rome, LAS, 1990, 323-324. See also OE XXXVI [270-270] and MB XVI, 417; EMB XVI, 331.
- ¹³⁵ *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua...*, 41-44. OE XXIX, [129-130].
- ¹³⁶ See BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 47/Sigle D and D2. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 228. Which was the case in Ms. K, the letter to the boys. (Ibid., 41/Sigle S and consequently, 224/Sigle S.)
- ¹³⁷ BIESMANS J., *Ziekte, lijden en leed...*, 151-155. See MB XVI, 17; EMB XVI, 5.
- ¹³⁸ MB XIV, 124-125; EMB XIV, 90.
- ¹³⁹ MB XVI, 16; EMB XVI, 3. Cf. MB XVI, 17; EMB XVI, 3. See also BIESMANS, J., *Ziekte, lijden en leed...*, 201-202.
- ¹⁴⁰ MB XVI, 31; EMB XVI, 16.
- ¹⁴¹ MB XVI, 122 and 262; EMB XVI, 85 and 205. A completely different view was given by *Il Berico* of Vicenza. It seems to be idealized. (See DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1227.)
- ¹⁴² DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1233-1249, especially 1233, 1237-1238, 1243 and 1247.
- ¹⁴³ See footnotes 31 and 33 in section III of vol. 1. (MB XVII, 80-81; EMB XVII, 60-61.)
- ¹⁴⁴ BRAIDO, P., *La Lettera...*, 16 and 46/note to line 147. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 211 and 228/footnote 739.
- ¹⁴⁵ MB XVII, 114; EMB XVII, 94.
- ¹⁴⁶ E IV, 269. [This fourth volume was edited posthumously.] This way of dealing with the "secretary's note" was adopted by Fr. Desramaut in his edition: *Saint Jean Bosco...*, 170. Though something went wrong with the reference to the MB. That option, that is without the publication of "Secretary's note", continued in the French version of the Constitutions. (*Constitutions et Règlements*, 1986, 252.)
- ¹⁴⁷ MB XVII, 194 and 722-730; EMB XVII, 170 and 662-671.
- ¹⁴⁸ E IV, 261. The "irregularity" or the contrast between the previous note and the transfer of the "Secretary's Note" should perhaps be attributed to a certain tiredness at the end of Fr. Ceria's life. See Fr. E. Valentini in the introduction of the fourth volume of the *Epistolario* (p. V) which was edited posthumously.
- ¹⁴⁹ MB XVII, 181; EMB XVII, 156 (where pressochè is left out). This information concerned the letter to the boys that was read aloud by Fr. Rua. This message can be compared to: "He (Don Bosco) told Father John Baptist Lemoyne about it (the dream) in several stages, ordering him to write it down. When this work was done, he (Don Bosco) made him read it and dictated corrections." (MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85 (which I had to complete). All this should refer to the so-called long version. Moreover, "made him read" can't be proved and "dictating corrections" even less. See BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 75.

¹⁵⁰ MB XVII, 197; EMB XVII, 172-173. It is worthwhile reading what P. Braido has written in *Don Bosco Educatore...*, 350-352. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 206-208. Also other confreres wrote in Don Bosco's name whereupon he signed. See Fr. Bonetti at the beginning of 1884 according to MB XVII, 22; EMB XVII, 8.

¹⁵¹ MB XVII, 144 and 158; EMB XVII, 121 and 136.

¹⁵² MB XVII, 207; EMB XVII, 183-184.

¹⁵³ MB XVII, 28-29; EMB XVII, 13-14.

¹⁵⁴ E IV, 237. MB XVI, 430; EMB XVI, 344.

¹⁵⁵ E IV, 241. MB XVI, 383; EMB XVI, 302. Would the translation "and you will see it" presume that the narrative had already been sent, although some details needed improvement? With reference to that "dream" Fr. Ceria reports in a nutshell on the assignment of tasks between Fr. Lemoyne and Don Bosco.

That is why I provide the translation of this report: "Father Lemoyne immediately put it into writing, which Don Bosco critically read from beginning to end, making some additions and modifications. We will record in italics those words which are in Don Bosco's hand in the original; we shall enclose in brackets some passages introduced later by Father Lemoyne as reflections based upon further explanations given him by Don Bosco." (MB XVI, 385; EMB XVI, 303) The very thought makes it an interesting and relevant unit. Compare with the edition of the manuscript by ROMERO, C., *I sogni di Don Bosco*, Turin, ELLE DI CI, 1978, 79-93. See especially LENTI John A., *Don Bosco's missionary dreams...*, in *Journal of Salesian Studies*, III, no. 2, 1992, 55-80.

¹⁵⁶ A few pages in BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete dei giovani... II*, 499-506 provide insight.

¹⁵⁷ MB XI, 263; EMB XI, 245.

¹⁵⁸ MB XII, 560-561; EMB XII, 410.

¹⁵⁹ MB XII, 628-629; EMB XII, 461. The entire text in MB XII, 625-631; EMB XII, 459-464.

¹⁶⁰ OE XXIX [203-204]. Cf. STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia...II*, 398/footnote 134.

¹⁶¹ E III, 476. MB XIV, 125-126; EMB XIV, 90-91.

¹⁶² MB XVII, 704; EMB XVII, 649-650. See also footnote 21 in section I and footnotes 6 and 60 in section II of vol.1 and BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 36.

¹⁶³ MB XVII, 77; EMB XVII, 57.

¹⁶⁴ How many of them joined that year the Congregation, we apparently don't know. On the years until 1875, Don Bosco wrote that 15 % of the pupils chose priesthood. As far as Valdocco is concerned, in 1878 for example the 5th year of the secondary school counted 38 boys. Only three of them entered the noviciate. See STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia ... II*, 394/footnote 122.

¹⁶⁵ E (m), vol. quarto, 193/9-15. MB X, 740; EMB X, 342. Relevant is also Don Bosco's conduct after his visit to the pope in January 1867. See E (m), vol. secondo, 337-338 and 345. MB VIII, 715 and 729; EMB VIII, no translation.

¹⁶⁶ E (m), vol. quarto, 194-195. MB X, 741; EMB X, 343-344.

¹⁶⁷ E (m), vol. quarto, 196-197. MB X, 742-743; EMB X, no translation.

¹⁶⁸ E III, 200. In 1823 the future pope Pius IX had visited South-America as a member of an apostolic delegation. (MB XII, 519; EMB XII, 376-377.) Details on the circumstances of that audience in MB XIII, 136-137 and 139; EMB XIII, 104-105 and 106 without translation of the letter. Compare E III, 184, letter to Fr. Rua. Also see BIESMANS, R., *Debrief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 35.

¹⁶⁹ E IV, 256. MB XVII, 115; EMB XVII, 95.

¹⁷⁰ MB XVII, 151; EMB XVII, 129.

¹⁷¹ Two letters in E (m), vol. secondo, 57/17-19 and 59. Fr. Motto demonstrates a connection between the two. E. Ceria dates the first one from 1864 and the second one from 1867. See E I, 310 and E I, 483. G.B. Lemoyne only mentions the second one. See MB VIII, 875; EMB VIII, 382. Cf. BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 31.

¹⁷² PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 169/117-121.

¹⁷³ MB XIV, 52; EMB XIV, 33-34. See also BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 50.

¹⁷⁴ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 104-122. In December 1881, Fr. Lazzerio called it an "added manual". See PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 85/1252-1253.

¹⁷⁵ E IV, 256. MB XVII, 114; EMB XVII, 95.

¹⁷⁶ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 85/1243-1248: “petty-minded” or literally “a person with little brains”.

¹⁷⁷ MB XIV, 52; EMB XIV, 35.

¹⁷⁸ E (m), vol. primo, 453, 511, 630, 685. See other letters in E (m), vol. secondo, 57,59; vol. terzo, 309, 501, where Don Bosco’s Christian name was placed before the family name; vol. quarto, 194,197, 198, 208 with the letter from 1874.

¹⁷⁹ E (m), vol. quarto, 382, 386, 409. E III, 405; E IV, 250, 349.

¹⁸⁰ See BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 62 and 46. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 238 and 228. Also in *Epistolario IV* the word “amico” (friend) is lacking. On the mentioning of date and place see E (m), vol. quarto, 28 at the end of the series with “abbreviations” in the explanation at the asterisk.

¹⁸¹ STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia... II*, 469. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 23 and 41 at “Sigle”, especially at the abbreviation S. The same opinion also in 1992 in: ID., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 359. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 213 and 224. ID., *Luce intellettuale...*, 1068.

¹⁸² BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 17. The same also in 1992 in: ID., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 357. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 211-212. ID., *Luce intellettuale...*, 1068.

¹⁸³ See the “Sigle” in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 41 and 47. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 224 and 228.

¹⁸⁴ BRAIDO, P., *Luce intellettuale...*, 1068.

¹⁸⁵ ALBERA, P., *Lettere circolari di D. Paolo Albera ai Salesiani*, Turin, SEI, 1922, 458-459. Also in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore della pia società salesiana*, II,15 May 1921, 4, p. 202. Compare with footnote 31 in section IV of vol. 1.

6. The reverse side of the medal or the boys' collaboration in the educational process

The second part of the 'long' or combined version of what in Salesian circles is called 'the letter from Rome', consists in practical terms of the almost literal transcription of the remaining and larger part of the letter to the boys at Valdocco in May 1884. The preceding pages, it is hoped, probably sufficiently prove this. For reasons similar to those mentioned in section IV in vol. 1 of this study it seems useful to me to give a short survey of the most important elements in that inserted or added part. This chapter then becomes a kind of counterpart of that section IV. If there the tasks of the educators and teachers especially were concerned, this part is about the role played by the youngsters in the education process. Because in the first large part of the connected version some extracts from the letter to the boys are also inserted, I will consider these here as well. Yet I will follow another sequence of key factors.

The reason for this decision is that, after the description of the first scene in the playground in the letter to the boys, Valfré is allowed to posit the following statement: "You see, familiarity leads to affection and affection brings confidence." (7)

1. Familiarity

Essentially, the interpretation of the first scene is given in Ms. C (7), because Valfré's statement immediately follows the description of the scene. On the contrary, in the letter to the boys a first interpretation of the scene was inserted with the following explanation: "You could see that the greatest cordiality reigned between youngsters and Superiors." (7) In the 'circular' drafted for the Salesians this was extended by the expression "and (the greatest) confidence." (7)

In the first version, Ms. C, the editor had not needed the explanation. The conclusion from the scene in the playground was self-evident. Indeed familiarity meant the spontaneous, confidential, informal contact between educators and youngsters, as could be observed during the recreation time that Valfré pictured. At the same time, with his statement he put familiarity (that is the familiar, spontaneous, friendly and hearty contact with each other) in the first place. This familiarity is so important because it generates love and confidence.

The boys should understand and know that this way of contact with the teachers and educators was not only permitted but normal, and even desired. They might hear that it was this contact that precisely constituted the kernel of "those wonderful years when Don Bosco was able to be with us and deal with us all the

time.” (16 Ms. K) They should also understand that this style of contact which their predecessors in the Oratory witnessed, was called familiarity.

Another indirect way of providing insight into what was meant by ‘the unexpected familiarity’ is found in what I called “intermezzo” or the unexpected intermediate part. In that intermezzo, Buzzetti complained that around 1884 “the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers and friends.” (18) Put positively this means that when the boys consider the superiors - the Salesian teachers, and educators - as fathers, brothers and friends and consequently are on familiar terms with them, when they are confident, kind-hearted, natural (unconstrained), and friendly, so only when familiarity reigns, are they good boys as Don Bosco desires them to be. Only then do they play their role to provide the basis of an education that can succeed.

In this sense ‘familiarity’ is synonymous with ‘loving kindness’. Don Bosco often used the terms “dolcezza or amorevolezza” to express this notion. They too mean friendliness, affability, confidentiality, kind-heartedness, amiability in social intercourse.¹ In his little treatise about the Preventive System “amorevolezza” (loving kindness) is for Don Bosco one of the three supporting pillars, though in the context of this treatise it is one-sidedly presented as the quality of the educators alone.²

But if mutual familiarity is lacking, neither mutual affection (affective love) nor mutual confidence are generated and flourish. Then, according to the text, the Salesian educators are “more feared than loved.” Consequently, the boys can no longer “have confidence in their superiors.” (18)

2. Affective love

So it is easily understandable that in the series of Don Bosco’s staccato list of desires at the end of the letter to the boys, this topic was put first: “The days of affection (i giorni dell’ amore). (33) It is equally comprehensible that they refer to the past as the time “when the boys loved them (the superiors).” (18) For a good education, the boys’ affective love is as indispensable as that of the educators. For all of them Buzzetti’s conviction “coll’amore,” (with love) holds good. (12)

Buzzetti insisted once more on affective love when he gave Don Bosco the task: “Preach to all, young and old alike, that they must remember they are the children of Mary Help of Christians.” “She has gathered them (...) to love one another as brothers.” (31) This implies, among other things, that the young amongst themselves but also the youngsters with their educators must try to satisfy Don Bosco’s second desire, namely to live in a spirit of leniency

and mutual tolerance. (33) This love (affection) must indeed be mutual and even characterize the manner of obeying on the side of the boys and the way of commanding on the side of the educators.³ (34)

3. *Confidence*

Along with love, Valfré had already mentioned confidence, specifically “confidence in the confessional and outside of it.” (7) According to Buzzetti’s reminder of the former period of the Oratory this confidence in Don Bosco, their superior, showed itself in the fact that “they had no secrets from him,” that there was a time when “all hearts were wide open to their superiors.” (18 and 20) The importance of both love and confidence is once more highlighted in Don Bosco’s first couple of desires for the future. First of all he desired the return “of the days of affection and Christian confidence between boys and superiors.” Furthermore, Buzzetti presented the third desire in this way: “The days when hearts were open with simple candor.” (33) According to Don Bosco’s previous suggestions it must indeed be “a cordial (hearty) confidence.”⁴ (18)

This is completely in the spirit of his goodnight of 2 December 1859. Already at that time, he put it quite clearly. After the introduction, entitled “Tonight’s spiritual bouquet is very important,” he gave the following as a personal motto for everyone: “I will try to put great trust in my superiors.” He carefully confirmed the proposal: “We superiors do not want to be feared; we wish to be loved and trusted. What better thing could a house like ours have than confidence in superiors? This alone could transform the Oratory into an earthly paradise and make everybody happy.”⁵

That is why Don Bosco declared that “suspicion on the side of the boys pained his heart.” (9) That is why he denounced suspicious glances and keeping away from the teachers and superiors. (9-10; 24; 16) Therefore grumbling must stop. (27) Criticism is like a spreading poison. To be able to educate properly it was necessary to “break down this fatal barrier of mistrust, and replace it with hearty confidence.” (18)

4. *Obedience*

That a youngster trusts his educators means, among other things, that he believes, even counts on the teachers and assistants having the best intentions with him and above all loving him. That belief and this certitude together with affection generate the feeling of being loved, which for Don Bosco was the basis of obedience. Not fear or coercion, not the fact of not being capable of anything else. In his eyes, the boys’ obedience was a very important quality, one of the

cardinal virtues. In the letter addressed to them this is easily perceptible. Indirectly through referring to the manner of obeying in the years before 1870 (1860): “The boys loved them and gave them prompt obedience.” (18) But it was also perceptible through the task that Don Bosco had to give them relying on Buzzetti’s word: “Let them never forget that humility is the source of all peace of mind.” (27) Humility or unpretentiousness is the admission of a lack of experience. The stressing of an attitude of acceptance like in a family was also audible in the appeal “obedience may guide the pupil as a mother guides her baby.” (18) Thus the emphasizing of ‘obedience and the particular way of obeying’ is present almost everywhere.

5. Joyfulness, gladness

From the discussion, it appears that a joyful, cheerful spirit in the educational context is extremely important. In the outline of how the recreation went on in the playground before 1870, it “was a scene full of joy; yelling and shouting cheerfully” topped the description. (6-7) Essentially, it means contentedness, buoyancy generated by games loved by the youngsters. Boys also become cheerful and buoyant on well-organized feast-days when there is something extra to be relished at the table. So Don Bosco had hit the mark when he asked the director and the economer “to see to it that they have a good time in the dining room as well.”(35)

Yet cheerfulness is not only generated through external activities, through “life, movement, and joy.” There are also deeper roots. In the evocation of the first recreation scene, spontaneous, interested participation and jovial, confidential, familiar contact contribute to the joyful climate. (6-7) The part about the breaking down of the fatal barrier confirms this: the realization of the vision of the future, “the former peace and cheerfulness (happiness) will reign once again at the Oratory” depends on the spirit of “confidence and prompt obedience.” (18)

The roots of “real joy” (33), or of true pleasure, in the fourth of Don Bosco’s wishes find the source of their life-giving water deeper still. (39) They draw from the religious source of peace with God especially through the sacrament of confession and the comprised good resolutions. (27 and 29) They also lie in earnestly living as children of Mary Help of Christians. (31)

6. *Ongoing attention to the boys’ religious, faithful practice as something indispensable for a good education*

Don Bosco's concern for the sacrament of confession and the devotion to Our Lady bear witness to the earnestness with which he promoted Christian faith practice and brought it to the attention of the boys. He was constantly busy carrying out the first element of the concise summary of the objectives of his education. Indeed his motto was "forming good Christians and honorable, competent citizens."⁶ He wanted to discover the germs of the person's capacities and to contribute to their development and to the realization of the good itself, also in function of the larger community.

Neither he in the first suggestions nor Fr. Lemoyne in the elaboration of the letter to the boys, linked most of the aspects concerning education mentioned above directly with the Christian religion. Yet there were a few indications. First of all when there was the insistence on "being one of heart and soul." They undoubtedly had to pursue this oneness for a neutrally formulated motive, namely the model of "the former days", but also, and very explicitly, "for the love of Jesus" or the sake of Jesus (18) and, furthermore, when practicing mutual love. He wanted to appeal to them, because "they are the children of Mary Help of Christians who gathered them in the Oratory" and "took them under her special care."⁷ (31; 33-34) Finally, where, in Don Bosco's version, it was about "not much confidence in the confessional" and especially in matters of conscience, Valfré re-formulated it in a positive sense and bracketed them together as "frankness (and confidence) in the confessional and outside of it." (7) But "in the confessional," confidence remained in the first place.

In the second part of the combined version, taken from the letter to the boys, "to live in the holy grace of God" and consequently "be at peace with God" were placed first. That is the condition for being "at peace with oneself and with others," (27-28) both with companions and with the superiors. Only then could the boys be indulgent, forgiving, fraternal, affectionate in their contact with each other and also confident, obedient, spontaneous, jovial with the superiors. For a wise person, this means that peace with God has an extremely favorable influence on educating someone to be a good Christian and an upright, valuable citizen. Besides, this peace is the source of "real joy," true happiness of life. (33) If this deep joy is lacking, a bad spirit arises which makes education impossible. Buzzetti can even say that the lack of inner, religious peace is "the principal cause of the bad spirit." (28)

The sacrament of penance is the exquisite means for preserving, promoting and repairing a life in grace and peace. The positive influence of the sacrament of penance, in particular, is carefully developed in the letter to the boys. Once more Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne want to emphasize its significance. In the first instance, at least according to Buzzetti's commentary, because when it is received correctly, it gives peace with God. Which means, among other things, a

quiet conscience and thus joy and a lifestyle open to values and norms. Secondly, because the correctly received sacrament results in firm resolutions. From his own experience with Comollo, Savio, Besucco and Saccardi and with many other youngsters - also with those who lived at the Oratory around 1884 - Don Bosco knew that it was precisely firmness in carrying out one's resolutions that fostered the build-up of a virtuous and morally firm personality. He had drummed this into the minds of several generations of boys in the biography of Dominic Savio. The fourteenth chapter started with the following convincing sentence: "Experience has shown that the strongest means of supporting the youngsters are the sacraments of confession and communion."⁸

That is why it must have pained him so much that his colleges gradually fell into the habits of other colleges and "that the élan for good causes and religion and religious persons was no longer perceptible."⁹

Yet the influence of the sacrament alone did not seem sufficient. The boys also needed the support of Mary Help of Christians. This was drummed into the boys' minds. Buzzetti underlined Don Bosco's lived conviction: "With her help that barrier of mistrust must" and can "fall." (31) This probably was equally true for the Salesians according to a possible interpretation of the sentence: "Preach to all, young and old alike, that they are children of Mary Help of Christians." (31) For both groups in the Oratory, youngsters and adults, it was true that the spirit of Saint Francis de Sales should characterize their mutual contacts. (34) The spirit of the saint who excelled in meekness (kindness) and sincere affection in his contacts with fellow-men. Don Bosco proposed the patron-saint's words and deeds as an example.

It is very important that Don Bosco wanted to openly communicate with the boys in all aspects of their education. Also again in this letter to the boys.

Conclusion

The inserted pieces and the adjoined part of the letter to the boys strikingly illustrate that religion and loving kindness ("amorevolezza") are supporting pillars of Don Bosco's educational system. They are two of the three pillars that he indicated in his little treatise about the Preventive System and where he put religion in the first place.¹⁰ He mentions only two here as he did in 1864, when he spoke of religion and reason in a talk with F. Bodrato, an elementary school teacher from Mornese. With more vigorous stress still on "true religion, sincere religion."¹¹

On the other hand, it is also a fact that the long version in both parts pays much attention to effective and especially to affective love, to the familiarity and mutual confidence in the educational process, and more explicitly and more strikingly than in Don Bosco's former texts about his pedagogical method. In this sense, we may say that the letter to the boys and the 'circular', intended for the Salesians, are complementary to those other texts. At the same time, they are in themselves so rich in pedagogical-pastoral elements and indications that the highly appreciating qualifications "Magna Charta of the Salesian educational system" and "pedagogical Manifest" and also "Poetry of educative love" mentioned at the end of section IV (vol. 1) of the entire study remain justified for the whole "minuscule document."

¹ BIESMANS, R., *Amorevolezza...*, 189-207.

² BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 83/395-396. How much some assistants were only thinking of the adults, can be deduced from G. Vespignani's variant: "L'apoteosi del suo sistema educativo: religione, ragione, paternità". (VESPIGNANI, G., *Un anno alla scuola...*, 70). In translation: "The apotheosis of his educative system: Religion, reason or reasonableness, fatherliness."

³ Actually it seems to be difficult to keep on giving affectionate love its autonomy. A.J. Lenti writes: "Love should be expressed with a certain style, much like Jesus, or like loving parents, would express it – with loving concern, with caring friendliness, with tender loving care". (LENTI, A.J., *Don Bosco History and spirit, 3. Don Bosco educator, spiritual master, writer and founder of the salesian society*, Rome, LAS, 2008, 153.) The last phrases connect aspects of affectionate love too strong to that of effective love.

⁴ More on the term "cordiality" in BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome voor de jongens...*, 53-59.

⁵ MB VI, 320-321; EMB VI, 171-172. See also footnote 160 in section III of vol. 1.

⁶ Exhaustive explanation in BIESMANS, R., *Doelstellingn van opvoeding en opleiding...*, 77-96.

⁷ See also BRAIDO, P., *La lettera di don Bosco...*, 33-34. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 217-218.

⁸ OE XI [217]. This was in the first edition of 1859. Similarly in the sixth edition of 1880. It is obvious that he wrote in his booklet on the Preventive System: "Frequent confession and communion and daily Mass are the pillars which support the edifice of education, from which we propose to banish the use of threats and the cane." (BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 85/452-454 and *Constitutions...*, 249/4). This was still his conviction in an interview with a journalist of *Le Pèlerin* on 12 May 1883. When he was asked: "But what makes up the formation of these lads?" he said: "Two things: kindness under all conditions and an open chapel with full facilities for confession and Communion." (MB XVI, 168; EMB XVI, 131). See footnote 86 in section III of vol. 1. Nevertheless, he was aware that "frequent reception of the Sacraments is not of itself an indication of virtue." (MB XI, 278; EMB XI, 258.)

⁹ See footnote 27 in section III of vol. 1. BRAIDO, P.-ARENAL LLATA Rogelio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne*, 157/10-15.

¹⁰ BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 83/395-396; 84-85; 85-86; *Constitutions*, 247, 248-249; 249-250.

¹¹ BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 179/7-8; 180/26; 181/58-59. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 134-135. See also *Salesianiteit uit Mornese*, 88-192.

7. The ‘extended text for the Salesians’ and ‘the letter to the boys’ as attempts to eliminate and overcome major shortcomings in the practice of the Preventive System and aspects of a malaise at the Valdocco Oratory as described in the first section (vol. 1) of the study.

During the discussions of the explanation in dream-form for the Salesians and also of the letter sent to the boys it became clear at intervals that Fr. Lemoyne treated some topics under the influence of pedagogical and pastoral shortcomings and aspects of a malaise, collected in section I of this study (vol. 1). Because it happened incidentally and sporadically I want to show in a condensed survey that the ‘extended treatise’ for the Salesians and the letter to the boys are in themselves endeavors to thoroughly sanitize the situation at Valdocco.

1. Shortcomings in the field of assistance in the playground and indications to correct them.

It is worth noticing that both for the letter and the detailed explanation at a certain point the playground was chosen. This was not yet the case for the first ideas that Don Bosco had told Fr. Lemoyne in Rome (Ms. A) and, not explicitly either, in Ms. B, where nevertheless the expressions “look at the youngsters” and “What is special about it” are found, however without giving a clarifying context. This is also true for the hint: “like on the other sheet.” (15) Something more may have been written on that sheet, which has probably been lost. Finally, Fr. Lemoyne must have given special attention to describing what happened in the playground. Especially in draft C (Ms. C) and in the ultimate explanation for the Salesians. Many elements in the diverse descriptions have determined each time the direction and the contents of the comments.

We have no indications about the inspiring moment of that choice and its elaboration. But we can guess. In the entirety of the education according to Don Bosco’s concept the playground has indeed a central place. Playtime shows in the most perceptible way what is lacking or - on the contrary - what is going on well. What happens in the playground is the thermometer of the climate at the Oratory, especially in the sector of the boarders, the secondary school and the technical section. It is also possible that an earlier dream-narrative from 1868 has been the spark. Fr. Lemoyne had been involved in it because, at that time, Don Bosco stayed at the college of Lanzo where Lemoyne was the director. Yet it is still more obvious that especially the remembrance of meetings of the House Council and meetings of the staff at Valdocco may have played a prominent part. Thus in November 1882, it was noticed that “there was no

assistance during the playtime” and an appeal was heard “not to stay among themselves.”¹

- Similarity in summing up shortcomings

It is obvious in this respect, that the analysis of the situation in the first part of the text for the Salesians and the other one during the meeting in 1882 are similar. The neglect of assistance in the long version is indeed described as follows: “I looked, and I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. The superiors were no longer the heart and soul of the recreation. Most of them were walking up and down, chatting amongst themselves without taking any notice of what the pupils were doing. Others looked on at the recreation but paid little heed to the boys. Others supervised from afar, not noticing whether anyone was doing something wrong.” (15) Sometimes the texts show almost the same wording as the reports of the meetings in November 1882.²

- Remedial activities

Thereupon the writer, just like the confreres in the previous meetings, tries to remedy. And then rather important differences appear. In the past for example (1882), we learn from Fr. Lazzero’s report that “the following day was chosen to give them a few norms” or “the *Regulations* were read and a few [not mentioned] remarks were made.” Besides, the little treatise about Don Bosco’s Preventive System and a work of P.A. Monfat were taken in hand or the well-known booklet of A.M. Teppa was distributed.³ All of this came over as rather normative and theoretical. In 1884 Fr. Lemoyne does not appeal to obligatory prescriptions, but acts concretely. He proposes the kernel of Don Bosco’s way of acting as an example: “Were you not always among the boys, especially during recreation?” But he does not stop at this beautifully worded prudent hint. He enforces it by evoking at once the attractive result of this way of behaving: “Those wonderful years were a foretaste of heaven” and “then love was the rule.” (16) But the heart of the matter was, and is, demonstrating how it ought to be, either through written normalization or through illustrative examples.

Still in the spirit of wishing to convince (them) to an adequate behavior he stresses that ‘imitating Don Bosco’ they can make themselves happier. He does so indirectly at first through Don Bosco’s words: “Everything was a joy for me then.” And afterwards by describing what properly gives joy and so makes people happy, namely: “The boys used to rush to get near to

me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my advice and put it into practice.” (16) Further by assuring through Buzzetti’s commentary that they will be able to enjoy the satisfaction that “the youngsters will come to like what pleases the superiors and in this way, their work will be made easy and light.” (17)

It is a completely different way of inviting people to changes than the one mentioned in the meetings. In these passages, it is not the rational, moralizing and theoretic way that is followed but the emotional and visual one. Not the way of appealing to accomplish prescriptions and tasks, but the way with the perspective of realizing personal satisfaction and true happiness. Whether this approach has obtained good results will be tested later on.

2. About the specific way of contacts between the educators and the youngsters

In Don Bosco’s testimony there already appears what is lacking in the actual contact with the boys and how his collaborators can change this.

- Even in this respect interfaces can be found between a directive of Don Bosco’s in the earlier eighties and Fr. Lemoyne’s text.

The manner of his presence amidst the youngsters and the way they behaved with him do not obtain yet a specific qualification in Don Bosco’s reaction and Buzzetti’s advice. In the report of the meeting on 16 November 1882, however, Don Bosco did give it. At the same time he made a clear distinction: “When a teacher or assistant is accomplishing his task, he is acting as the superior. When this service is finished, he must be a friend and a father for the boys”.⁴ However, what this requires in the ordinary daily contacts is not expressed.

Yet this is what happens in the greater part for the Salesians. Fr. Lemoyne makes these requirements concrete via the proposal of the way of acting of a teacher, a preacher or teacher of religion. Even in such a way that makes us think of Don Bosco’s words in 1882. After the lesson, that is “when his service is finished,” the teacher quits his desk and “joins in the pupils’ recreation.” He behaves as their brother and is respected and treated as such. The preacher, too, leaves his pulpit after his sermon or instruction. He comes down to the boys’ level and remains amongst them during recreation time. He talks to them and makes use of the word-in-the-ear to give good advice. (19-20) Thus, he shows himself, after his

service, as a friend and father. The similarity in the context cannot be denied.

- Closer description of the teacher's and the "preacher's" behavior

If we pay attention to the context, we discover that Fr. Lemoyne has prepared the 'concrete-making' and goes one step further. Indeed, just before Buzzetti was allowed to say that "without familiarity (a friendly informal relationship) one cannot show affection (amore)." (19) Here Buzzetti repeats the word "familiarity", the rather less used word by Don Bosco, already spoken by Valfré. To make clear what he means, he recalls the acts and words of Jesus-Christ: "He made himself little with the little ones." (19) The expression "made himself little with the little ones" and in this way 'showing that they love the boys' now illustrates the behavior of both educators because they are living in a friendly manner with the boys. Both typify a familiar, confidential, intimate, identifying and participating behavior. Both show what such pedagogical, fertile familiarity precisely means.

- Answering the still pending question of 9 March 1883

Though in March 1883 the confreres could not find the cause why the youngsters feared them more than they loved them, now they are offered the answer, as it were, on a little piece of paper.⁵ The cause lies with the confreres themselves: "I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. (...) Most of them were walking up and down, chatting among themselves without taking any notice of what the pupils were doing." (15) Thus a fatal barrier was created. That is why they should follow the example of Don Bosco, of other colleagues (teacher and preacher) and even of Jesus Christ himself. They are "models", "masters" of true familiarity, models of the efficient pedagogical approach of the educators with the boys. Their behavior is fertile indeed. For they create affection rather than inspiring fear or fearful respect and "they obtain anything, especially from the young who love them" (20) and - so we may interpret - think of them precisely "as fathers, brothers and friends." (18) This is completely according to and not "against their spirit or at any rate Don Bosco's spirit."⁶ If everybody at Valdocco imitates them "the happy days of the Oratory of old" will come back. (33) Then they will become successful educators and teachers and happier people. For, "the boys will love them and give them prompt obedience". (18)

- The less usual term "familiarity" and the directives of the past

The introduction of the word 'familiarity' should not be hastily understood and interpreted as a break with the past. Indeed, Don Bosco's speech to the members of the second General Chapter (1880) contains already, next to points of

difference, many corresponding elements. He had then expressed his displeasure about shortcomings against the Preventive System, especially about the school and the situation in the classroom. Furthermore, in that rather emotional explanation he did not use the word familiarity. Though, as usual he did use “dolcezza”. But the course of his remarks and indications with “dolcezza” agrees very well with the meaning of “familiarity.”

In 1880 he seriously reprimanded the teachers because he had noticed that “some” boys were not loved and not treated well. He regretted that in some cases “the superior was forced to follow unfriendly proceedings”. That is why he summoned them “to treat each other with charity and affability (*dolcezza*). When then this affability (or kindness), shown to the confreres flows further out to the pupils themselves, they undergo an electric shock so to say. And we certainly would win their affection and have an influence on their vocation”.⁷

Of course, there is a nuance between “*familiarity*” in the meaning of affable, confidential, spontaneous, informal treatment and *dolcezza* considered as affability, meekness, kindness when one comes in contact with others. Not only on the level of concreteness or abstraction, since, if we refer to the wording of his ideas to the conclusions of the second General Chapter published in 1880, his objectives and the similarity are illustrated. For the conclusion says: “Their mutual Christian love (that is of the Salesians), their pleasing manners and friendly, meek contact with the pupils are efficient means to promote vocations to the ecclesiastic state.”⁸ So they are synonyms which indicate what should, in Don Bosco’s spirit, be characteristic of the contact with the boys.

If at first there seemed to be a real split in the wordings, this is, when looking better into it, certainly not the case for the contents. The reason why Fr. Lemoyne, via Valfré for the boys, and especially via Buzzetti, changes *dolcezza* into *familiarità* and puts the latter so much at the center, remains unexplained up till now.

Yet, I must admit that the word familiarity occurs twice in Ms. B. This manuscript may contain indications and suggestions from Don Bosco, but certainly not in the same manner as in document A (Ms. A). Therefore the manuscript creates too much the impression that it is a first attempt to elaboration. Besides, we should not forget that Don Bosco himself did not use the word so manifestly as it happens here. With him it surely had not the function of a key-word, as attributed in Fr. Lemoyne’s composition. This appeared sufficiently from the elucidations given for the concept “familiarity” in the third section of this study in volume 1.

3. *The affection or the affective love in the educative relation*

Something similar has taken place for the use of the word “amore” (affection, love). In the statement from the second General Chapter quoted above, Don Bosco was optimistic concerning the influence of winning and affable contacts. “We would win their affection,” he concludes. Their affection is in Italian “loro affetto.” It is a conclusion that corresponds well with Valfré’s comment: “You see, closeness (familiarity) leads to affection (amore)” (7) and with Buzzetti’s recommendation: “Familiarity. You cannot have affection without this familiarity”; and also: “Without familiarity we cannot show that we love them.” (19) Both “amore” and “affetto” seem to be synonyms.

It may be noted in passing that the interchangeability of terms at Valdocco may have been remarkable. When Fr. Francesia at the end of 1882 elaborated his treatise about practicing punishments, he wrote: “Nothing, says St. Gregory can compel a heart, which is like an impregnable city, and which it is necessary to conquer with affection (affetto) and gentleness (dolcezza).”⁹ It sounds as if Fr. Francesia wanted to detach the word “carità” from the binomial “carità-dolcezza” which was repeated seven times in Don Bosco’s address in that General Chapter, and to lay open its real meaning. And wouldn’t he have hit the mark? Indeed, on the sixth time Don Bosco said: “So I say and I repeat: The affable friendliness [and] and the ‘charitas’ among each other and towards the boys are the strongest means to educate them and to promote vocations.”¹⁰ It is most obvious that Don Bosco too properly meant affection, the affective mutual love. He had introduced this passage in his address with the statement that “some boys were not loved”. It was a heavy burden for him that some teachers neglected a few boys, did not treat them justly and did not engage with them for their development. But it was not less painful for him to see that they did not love them and had no friendly affable contact with them. When Fr. Francesia in his treatise and Fr. Lemoyne in his explanation respectively preferred “affetto” and “amore” instead of “carità” they remained faithful to Don Bosco. Fr. Lemoyne the more so, because Don Bosco himself had wanted in his suggestions (Ms. A) to exhort to “mutual affection” with the expression “amore” and “per vicendevole” (mutual love). (33)

If they interacted with the boys with Don Bosco’s spirit, both in class and out of it, they undoubtedly would have less to punish, yes, practically never to have recourse to punishments. Moreover, they would have less to talk thereabout in their meetings.¹¹

4. *About punishing*

Though the pedagogical situation at Valdocco was not so bright in the early eighties, the topic on ‘punishments’ occurred only once explicitly, namely during the important meeting of 7 March 1883, that is a few months after Fr. Francesia had finished his extended essay about punishing. The discussion must have taken much time then, but the report is very vague. It was decided “to prefer these men [Don Bosco and A.M. Teppa] experienced examples in educating the youngsters.”¹²

Yet, the topic on punishments must have engaged the confreres’ attention more often. Even in the third General Chapter it appeared on the agenda. The most important conclusion at that moment was, in any case, while punishing, the Preventive System must be followed. Consequently, no repressive behavior and no corporal punishments were permitted.¹³

In the text for the Salesians Fr. Lemoyne does not avoid treating the theme. He does not mince his words. On the contrary, he confirms the points of view of the last General Chapter. Among other things, by opposing repression: “Why do people want to replace love with cold rules? Why do the superiors move away from the observance of the rules Don Bosco has given them? Why the replacement little by little of loving and watchful prevention of disorders by a system that consists of framing laws? Such laws either have to be sustained through punishment and so create hatred and cause unhappiness (...).” (22-23) It is clear that he places the Preventive System in face of the repressive one, more than was done in the third General Chapter. However, his indignant questions in 1884 and the conclusion in 1883 are very much akin.

On the other hand, Fr. Lemoyne contributes to the debate in a specific way. He ventures to write that “some did take notice but only rarely, and then in a threatening manner”. (15) And he emphasizes an exceptionally blameworthy cause of punishment-treatment. For he lectures them all by putting the finger on a delicate wound: “Punishing only out of wounded self-love.”¹⁴ (21)

5. Incentive to remain loyal to their own pedagogical system

Fr. Lemoyne not only places the subject on punishing within the framework of the two contrasting pedagogical systems, but also draws attention to the positive characteristics of Don Bosco’s Preventive System. He points out that it is part of the essence of his method to watchfully and lovingly (*amorosamente*) prevent disorderliness. On the one hand that means preventing or averting faults in a resolute but friendly way and on the other, providing fatherly and loving accompaniment, kind advice and affable assistance, and being present among the boys in a constructive, empathetic way.¹⁵ For the superiors, the system also

means being “always ready to listen to any boy’s complaints or doubts” and being “always alert to keep a paternal eye on their conduct.” (23)

Fr. Lemoyne’s treatise in dialogue form is a plea for the interested, loving, positive and constructive contact of the educators with the youngsters. Don Bosco’s behavior, especially in the earlier years, and the manner of acting of two exemplary teachers-educators are an actualization of what Fr. Lazzero and the confreres more than once had to read and discuss in their assemblies around the eighties.¹⁶

Reading matter and refreshment of directives, however, are “*words that awaken*” to quote Don Bosco’s words from the first section of volume 1. Reminding them of two exemplary models of confreres means “examples that draw” (“actions speak louder than words”).¹⁷

Thus the author of the “long version” gives an answer - that cannot be misunderstood - on the unanswered question in the second meeting of March 1883 as to how it was that the boys feared rather than loved the Salesians. At the same time and in a concrete manner he showed how they could remedy this.

6. Concern for vocations for the Church

Don Bosco recalled the saying “words that awaken, examples that draw” on the occasion of jointly publishing the conclusions of the Second and Third General Chapters, precisely in the context of promoting vocations to the clerical state. For years, this had been one of his constant concerns. That is why he tried to convince his collaborators to share his concern in that respect and to demonstrate the same ardor.¹⁸

In the concise notes following the meetings during the period 1880-1884, this concern and this ardor are not directly perceivable. And Fr. Lemoyne, too, leaves it to an expression of Buzzetti’s in the margin: “This is why so many do not follow their vocation.” (11)

Conclusion

Seeing all these themes together we may conclude that Fr. Lemoyne and maybe Don Bosco too had the intention of stopping the pedagogical and pastoral decline at Valdocco and giving the Oratory a new élan. With these intentions, they brought a clear analysis of the malaise and personal but clear insight into its causes. Therefore they indicated inspiring models and gave concrete, useful directives. In all this, they took into account the conclusions and worries of the superiors, teachers, and assistants at Valdocco as these were fixed in reports of

meetings of the period around 1880. Here I say: ‘Fr. Lemoyne and Don Bosco’ as well as ‘they’ because it is difficult for me, even impossible to indicate the part each contributed to Ms. B. Yet I am quite sure that not only the elaboration, but also important elements about the contents, must be attributed to Fr. Lemoyne. In doing this I cannot repeat enough that he has written with immense respect for and a laudable knowledge of Don Bosco’s experience and opinions.

And thus the ‘combined’ text has become a compendium of Don Bosco’s pedagogical method and the “Magna Charta” of it.¹⁹ Despite of these most appreciative words I believe a few considerations must be added.

Some secondary considerations

Those who reread the first section of volume 1 of this study will find that there is at least one aspect of education in Don Bosco’s spirit which is carefully treated by Fr. Lemoyne but which remained underexposed around 1880. On the other hand, we will discover that one subject of discussion - though very important for the superiors, teachers, and assistants at Valdocco - is completely absent in don Lemoyne’s exposé.

A. The religious component

An aspect that draws great attention in the letter of 10 May to the boys is the diminishing religious practice among the youngsters. During the Second General Chapter (1880) Don Bosco had already indicated this decline, not only at Valdocco. Quite clearly he had said: “[In the colleges] one no longer sees the élan that was seen there before, the ardor for good things and for religion, and religious persons”.²⁰

Whether the superiors, teachers, and assistants took Don Bosco’s concern seriously and how they tried to remedy it, we do not learn from the notes taken during their assemblies in the years after that Chapter. In his comments for the Salesians, Buzzetti limits himself to a kind of paraphrase of Don Bosco’s words in the Chapter: “This is what gives rise to the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments, the neglect of the prayers in Church and elsewhere.” (11) Thus, he puts a link between the boys’ listlessness in the playground and their lack of enthusiasm or ardor in their religious practice. But he gives no further explanation of that link nor does he go further into the matter in the explanation for the Salesians.

In the letter to the boys, Buzzetti does not at all mention this link. Yet he has to tell and insistently advise the youngsters concerning religious practices, for example through the fifth and final task: “But especially let them make the effort

to live in God's holy grace." (27) Further, using Don Bosco's suggestion in Ms. A, he severely criticizes their practice of Confession: "What is *radically* lacking in the confessions of so many youngsters is firmness in their resolution." (29) That is why it is high time "to make firm resolutions." (30) Finally, he impresses upon Don Bosco to make the boys aware "that they are children of Mary Help of Christians" and that they have to behave as such. (31)

So we may ask ourselves why precisely in this letter Fr. Lemoyne puts so much energy into treating the practice of Confession and devotion to Mary Help of Christians and its importance in education. The answer is probably very simple: because Don Bosco himself wanted it. In his suggestions to his secretary (Ms. A, these aspects indeed occupy several lines. Thus successively: "The difference between these boys and those former is that "these of today do not have much confidence in the confessional." (7, Ms. A) "A firm resolution is *radically* lacking." (29, Ms. A) "They must remember they are children of Mary Help of Christians; she has gathered them here." At the same time, the question arises which effect would Fr. Lemoyne have expected from the Salesians themselves through these considerations, when joining the two texts?

He really might have brought all this together because it agreed with Don Bosco's fundamental conviction: "On occasions of retreats, tridua, novenas, sermons and catechism classes let the beauty, the grandeur and the holiness of the catholic religion be dwelt on, for in the sacraments it offers to all of us a very easy and useful means to attain our salvation and peace of heart. In this way children take readily to these practices of piety and will adopt them willingly with joy and benefit."²¹ To this series of occasions, the goodnights and letters might surely be added. Maybe Fr. Lemoyne had more reasons than we could imagine to hope that indicating shortcomings and admonitions in a letter like the one on 10 May to the boys might impress them and have good results.

I do not believe it is easy to decide whether the educators too could agree with the explained interpretation of cause and consequence and whether they felt encouraged to be in some way or other present, especially in the playground.

Besides, the question may be asked whether the admonitions and reprimands in a letter to all the boys in the given situation of the Oratory could "spontaneously and truly" motivate them. As previously stated, so much in fact depended on the familiarity of the educators in their contacts with the boys and on their pedagogical and pastoral approach in the spirit of the Preventive System.

B. *The problem of unity in administration*

The second observation concerns a theme that is not found at all in Fr. Lemoyne's version, that is the theme that occurs again and again in the meetings after Don Bosco's return to the Oratory, namely the lack of unity - or expressed more precisely - the fact that the Salesians do not constitute a unity around or with the director, or that the director cannot be the unique true Director. Already in 1879 there were complaints about this lacking. Fr. Lazzero noted "the necessity that the Oratory must be a house like all other houses in the Congregation. It must have one Director who is the only one to guide."²² Judging from this recurring point, it has been a truly painful problem for several years.²³

Yet Fr. Lemoyne did not pay any attention to it. Still we heard him argue for the demolition of the fatal barrier of mistrust and the restoration of the happy spirit of confidence to be again "one heart and soul for the love of Jesus." (18) But with this he meant the reunification, the spiritual unity of the boys with the educators and the adults with the youngsters, not the unity meant by the Salesians of Valdocco, namely the unity among them of and in governing.

It is an intentional or unintentional oversight of Fr. Lemoyne, an oblivion he had to suffer for as will appear from the unexpected vicissitudes after Don Bosco's return from Rome.

¹ See footnotes 62 and 64 in section I of vol. 1. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 251/81; 253/565-567; 254/590-602.

² See especially footnotes 62 and 63 in section I of vol. 1.

³ See section I of vol. 1 footnotes 62, 64, 65, 76 and 77.

⁴ See section I of vol. 1 footnote 64. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 253/563-567.

⁵ Ibidem. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 258/685-690.

⁶ See section I of vol. 1 footnote 79.

⁷ See section I of vol. 1 footnotes 22 and 27. We can translate also: "Thus we would win their affection and have great influence on their vocation." We can hear a testimony of this influence in a boy's letter on 24 June 1879. He wrote: "My heart is flooded with love. (...) How can I express it? My tongue cannot speak the language of my heart, cannot find the words to express so much sincere affection." He concluded his letter: "I beg you to accept the most loving regards (d'affetto) of your ever obedient son in J.C." (MB XVI, 589; EMB XVI, 396-397)

⁸ See section I of vol. 1 footnote 31. Especially "le belle maniere" is patently obvious. But also "dolcezza cogli alunni", translated here as "friendly-kind contact with pupils."

⁹ E IV 202. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco Educatore...*, 328/59-61; *Don Bosco the Educator*, 1997, 187.

¹⁰ FDB 1.857 C 12.

¹¹ Compare with footnotes, especially 37, 72, 74, 77 and 79-80, 89, 90 in section I of vol. 1. See MB XVI, 449; EMB XVI, 369.

¹² See section I of vol. 1, footnote 77. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 257/677-680.

¹³ See section I of vol. 1, footnote 89. ASC 1.864B2. See MB XVI, 416-418; EMB XVI, 311.

¹⁴ Maybe influenced by A.M. Teppa who warned for "each impulse of self-love." (TEPPA, A.M., *Avvertimenti...*, 49).

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- ¹⁵ On the impeditive (hindering) and the constructive aspect of prevention see BIESMANS, R., *Assistance the Essence of Don Bosco's Preventive System*, 2014, 33-74. ID., *Assistentie, de essentie...*, 71-146.
- ¹⁶ See footnotes 36, 39, 61-63 and 89 in section I of vol. 1. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 246/358-364; 248/400-404; 253/555-558.
- ¹⁷ See section I of vol. 1 footnote 31. OE XXXIII, [65].
- ¹⁸ See footnotes 31, 88 and 89 in section I of vol. 1. MB XVI, 411, 415-418; EMB XVI, 326, 330-331.
- ¹⁹ See the conclusion of section IV in vol. 1.
- ²⁰ Section I of vol. 1 footnote 27. *I verballi del CG 2...*; FDB 1857 C 10-11.
- ²¹ BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 86/456-461. *Constitutions...*, 249-250.
- ²² See section I of vol. 1, footnote 14. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 78/1028-1031. See MIDALI, M., (a cura di), *Don Bosco nella storia*, Atti del 1° Congresso Internazionale di studi su Don Bosco, Studi storici 10, Rome, LAS, 1990, 341.
- ²³ See the various notes in the footnotes 50-51, 53, 60, 65-66, 71, 77, and 101 in section I of vol. 1.

8. The long or combined version in the light of meetings and events that took place especially after Don Bosco's return from Rome.

On 17 May 1884, Don Bosco arrived at Valdocco in the evening.¹ Fr. Ceria reports enthusiastically and expressively on the effects of the letter to the boys during the first weeks after Don Bosco's return. We find it in MB XVII. In a previous study with the title "*De brief uit Rome aan de jongens in Valdocco (10 mei 1884)*" (*The letter from Rome to the boys at Valdocco, May 10, 1884*) a few – though critical – pages were devoted to the reception of it by the boys.² On the contrary, Fr. Ceria keeps notably silent about possible effects of Fr. Lemoyne's long composition for the teachers, assistants, and superiors. However, Fr. Ceria offered several Superior Council reports, at the time still called Superior Chapter. He made these available in several chapters of MB XVII but at no time referred to the reaction of confreres at Valdocco to the first extensive part of the combined version or the complete combined text.

To find out more about it, I want to estimate and analyze, from that point of view, the documents he consulted and published. With the same intention I want to consider as well the texts of a few Salesians at Valdocco. They have answered, in writing, an inquiry which Fr. Bonetti had been ordered to launch. I will be looking also at Fr. Bonetti's summary of these answers. A synthesis by Fr. Lemoyne in consequence of the inquiry is also very interesting in this regard.³

1. Reports of the Superior Chapter's meetings on 19 May and 5 June 1884.

1.1 Session on 19 May 1884

Two days after his return home, Don Bosco already presided over a meeting of the Superior Chapter. The main theme was "the account of his journey to Rome and of the extraordinarily nice reception by the pope" and further a word on "the privileges and his requests for honors and recognition for particular lay benefactors that he was truly promised." But at the end of the account there is a significant note, namely that "Fr. Bonetti proposes to establish a further meeting with a view to the situation at the Oratory." This account closes with a concise "approved".⁴

At first sight, Fr. Bonetti's proposal seems to be connected with the texts that have been treated in the preceding sections of this study. To make sure that this is the case we must attentively read the notes of the meetings that followed.

That the Superior Chapter met only in the beginning of June – on 2 June it must have been a limited assembly – is probably a consequence of the preparation and

the celebrations for the feast of Mary Help of Christians. While in Rome, Don Bosco had already conceived the plan to eventually offer two conferences, one on 20 May for male Cooperators and a second on 23 May for female Cooperators. Finally, the same date was kept for the two groups together to meet in the Basilica. The confreres wanted to spare Don Bosco from fatigue. Yet on that day, they had to ascertain that “he delivered this address with a vigor no longer habitual with him.” Indeed, “When he descended the pulpit, he must have said that he felt he could have gone on preaching.” We can question whether he could have done this or not. Or would he have said merely for form’s sake: “You may have heard that I have been in poor health for some time and have been almost incapable of doing any work,” and also “I am now near the end of my life” in the address, reduced to one conference?⁵

His health see-sawed. But he did what he could. He heard the boys’ confessions in the sacristy. He did not overlook the Rome lottery, and drafted a little circular for the male and female Cooperators. Nevertheless, “yielding to the insistence of the doctors and his spiritual sons he slowed down the rhythm of his work, permitting himself the relaxation of an hour-long evening stroll. Father John Baptist Lemoyne and the cleric Viglietti walked on either side of him. He walked very, very slowly along Viale di Rivoli, Viale Regina Margherita, Corso Valdocco or Via Cottolengo.”⁶

1.2 The assembly on 5 June 1884.

- Proposal for the discussion of two agenda items.

Don Bosco presided at the meeting that took place in his room, on 5 June. He introduced the third item on the agenda in this way: “We need to look at and examine what needs to be avoided to ensure good moral conduct among the boys and how vocations can be fostered. Various rules have already been established for this by the General Chapter and have been printed.”⁷ Thus he presented two topics and precisely two of his main concerns regarding the boys. The first concern was about the improvement of morality among the boys, and the second regarding vocations.

Both points of concern are found in Fr. Lemoyne’s combined text but only in passing. It is striking, however, that Don Bosco, in his introduction, does not at all refer to the letter to the boys sent from Rome or to a text destined especially for the Salesians. He reminds those present solely of “the rules of the General Chapter.” Moreover, he emphasizes that all the confreres had them at their disposal or could consult them because they had been printed.

Because the Congregation had already held three General Chapters, namely in 1877, 1880, and 1883, his reference is not very clear. But if we take into account the three themes he wanted to treat, we must admit that he had in mind the *Resolutions of the Second General Chapter* (1880). They were published only in 1882. For the question of the “*Morality among the pupils*” the third chapter of Part III of the resolutions summed up almost literally the articles of the First General Chapter. Only two new items had been inserted. In these resolutions, however, an entirely new chapter was devoted to the “Means to care for vocations to the clerical state.” This chapter contains an important introduction and thirteen articles.⁸

As far as morality is concerned, in a short introduction, the Chapter prescribed the following to the Salesians: “The pupils’ morality progresses to the extent that it is resplendent among the Salesians. The boys get what is offered them. And the Salesians cannot give to the others what they do not possess themselves.” The following article reminds them that “punctuality in fulfilling their own office and regular assistance are the seeds of good morality for the pupils.” Another article reminds them that “forbidding them to enter hiding-places serves as a powerful aid to morality.”⁹

The first article of the chapter about cultivating vocations agreed with this command: “The exemplary, pious, punctual life of the Salesians, mutual charity, fine, courteous manners, kindness and gentleness towards the pupils are efficient means to care for vocations to the clerical state, because *words awaken, examples attract*.”¹⁰

So the quotations contain points of similarity with clear or less clear emphases in Fr. Lemoyne’s elaboration in 1884. In particular, they are the need for assistance and the beneficial action of courteous, benevolent, friendly, and familiar contact with the youngsters. Yet I feel obliged to repeat that on opening the assembly Don Bosco told those present that for the discussion on the two proposed items they had better remember what the resolutions of the second General Chapter had prescribed in this regard. This spontaneously raises the question: “Why did he not use his secretary’s ‘long’ version at that moment? Why did he not start with it explicitly? Only two sensible explanations seem to be possible, namely that the combined text was not available yet or that he was thinking of launching into a topic that was not sufficiently treated in Father Lemoyne’s explanation for the Salesians. My conviction is that the first supposition is the more probable one.

- *The 'vocations' theme*

After that short introduction he entered further into the second theme. Don Bosco spoke frankly of what he had experienced lately concerning the problem of vocations: "It is distressing to see, he said, how so many boys who began so well, change completely by the time they reach the fourth and the fifth years high school. We have already observed how many pupils of the fourth and the fifth years decided to go on to the university or seek employment instead of entering the clerical state. Some of them did enter the clergy, but went to the seminary to please their parents. (...) This means we are giving charitable funds received from others (cooperators and benefactors) to boys who want to become lawyers, doctors or journalists (...). I therefore propose that we investigate where our duty in conscience lies, and what needs to be done. In past years, there were so many boys who came to talk to me about their vocation. But things are different this year. Only a few, reluctantly, came to me and they told me quite frankly that they wanted to go either to a seminary or remain living in the world."¹¹ This personal description of the situation agrees with one of his objections during the Second General Chapter. It is even an illustration of his words at that time: "One no longer sees among the boys the enthusiasm we saw before, that impulse for good causes, religion and religious people."¹²

It is certainly possible that he wished to tell the Superior Chapter members that only a few boys had come to him reluctantly during the first weeks after his return from Rome to speak to him about their plans after the fifth year. This contrasts strongly with a note of Fr. Lemoyne's on 13 June in *Documenti*, vol. XXVII, 274. There he reported: "In recent days Don Bosco often gave the boys towards evening the opportunity to come and speak to him about their vocation. But yesterday on Corpus Christi many boys went to his room to speak with him about their vocation".¹³ Don Bosco's sorrowful comment on 5 June may also have meant that his question to Fr. Febraro, in a letter from Rome, had received very few replies. Around 23 April he had asked him to tell the pupils of the fourth and the fifth years that he wanted "every boy to write to him, individually and in confidence, to tell him what kind of life they felt themselves called to, namely whether it was to the clerical life or to the life of the world. (...) Everyone had to start from the principle of choosing whatever way of life seemed to him the most likely to ensure his salvation."¹⁴

These rare and disappointing encounters with fifth year students must have inspired the idea to tackle the problems differently. After the outline of the situation he did not ask the Chapter members for their experience or a reaction

to his report. He immediately put a surprise proposal on the table to correct that trend: "It is my opinion that we should take measures concerning our study program's organization. We should reduce it to one used by the French apostolic schools. It will be difficult. Yet, it is necessary that we succeed. When this is done, we shall see how the boys can be taught and how they can be protected. True enough, this means we will not have such a big number of them anymore. Even if we only had one hundred, fifty, forty, no matter. But there would be no moral gangrene. I do not believe that the decisions taken in our General Chapters are good enough to reach our goal."¹⁵

On hearing this we suppose Don Bosco must have been thinking of drastic intervention. He wanted to change the secondary school at Valdocco into a "juniorate", a training-school for Salesian vocations. In this way, he hoped to realize two improvements: finding more vocations and forming them for his congregation which required more and more man-power and, at the same time, heal the morality that, in his eyes, was weakened. There is no mention at all of the main emphases in the letter to the boys or the combined circular.

The first to react to Don Bosco's main theme was Fr. Lazzero, Director of the Oratory at Valdocco and a member of the Superior Chapter. He proposed to start by abolishing the fifth year. Maybe he had thought this up because he was aware of a conversation that had been taken place between Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne. In the report of what had happened in May-June 1884 Fr. Ceria mentions that conversation. "On 27 January he [Don Bosco] presented a project of his own to this same end to Father John Baptist Lemoyne: I would like to transfer the fourth and fifth years to San Benigno, just for those who intend to remain in the Congregation, he had said, but first I would have their parents sign a statement, guaranteeing their sons' absolute freedom of choice. This should leave only the first, second and third years at the Oratory."¹⁶

Yet, now in June it looks as if Don Bosco could not appreciate Fr. Lazzero's contribution. At any rate, he preferred to continue on the same track. The reporter mentioned Don Bosco's words: "I plan to appoint a task force to examine the proposal of the apostolic schools. I cannot go into it because it gives me headaches (*la mia testa ne soffre*). It is necessary that the task force realize how essential this is and explore seriously the ways in which it may be accomplished." In passing Don Bosco remarked that he was not too well. He suffered from headaches. However, that did not prevent him from being present and taking an active part in the conversation.

Neither did it prevent Fr. Rua from communicating his experience and carefully seeing how certain things were related. “He had noticed again and again that the success or failure of the fifth year high school always depended on its teacher. Ever since Father Herman Borio taught at Lanzo, the Congregation always had novices coming from that school.” It was a delicate manner to justify why he had other ideas than Fr. Lazzero and Don Bosco himself. Maybe there was also an indirect allusion, prudently put, that the fifth year teacher (of the present-day) at the Oratory, namely Fr. Febraro, was less effective. That sounds different from what Buzzetti had been made to say in the combined text.

Whatever the case, Don Bosco completely ignored Fr. Rua’s remark. It looks as if he wanted to spare Fr. Febraro. According to him the causes of the diminishing number of vocations had to be sought elsewhere. He underlined two causes for this diminishing: “For some time now the number of novices coming from the Oratory has gone down, partly because parish priests have been sending us “roclò” (rejects) - highly recommended for their good behavior - but also partly because once we have admitted them we have not been forceful enough to send them back home. We have therefore to look into the rules for enrolling pupils and how to purge the house of some elements. Meanwhile we have to consider whether (1) it will be advisable to organize our schools along the lines of the apostolic schools; and (2) which ones are to be apostolic schools. From the outcome of these investigations, we shall know whether or not we are to retain the fifth year high school.”

Thus Don Bosco remained firm in intent and language, certainly when referring to the parish clergy, but also concerning the superiors at Valdocco. True enough this discussion took place in a restricted circle, yet the language was very emotional. It must have been vitally important for Don Bosco. Besides, he expanded his intention by using the plural “our schools”, certainly meaning the Salesian secondary schools as such.

This broadening must have led Fr. Scappini, the Rector of Lanzo, who was present together with Fr. Bertello, the Rector of Borgo San Martino, to react. Fr. Scappini must certainly have felt that the fifth-year class in his college was under threat. To save it, he outlined an ingenious compromise. He proposed “to eliminate Greek and mathematics from our school curriculum or teach only the rudiments of these two subjects, as is the custom in seminaries. Then the boys who reached the higher third year and had no intention of entering the clerical state should make other arrangements for themselves. Boys who are to remain with us can study for their high school diploma, taking Greek and mathematics at San Benigno.”

At that point of the conversation Fr. Bonetti seems to have been fed up with it. The secretary Fr. Lemoyne jotted down: “Father John Bonetti approved what had been said, but maintained that this should be the outcome and not the beginning of reform. This would be like taking care of the leaves of a tree when its roots are failing.” Fr. Bonetti’s language was flowery, so what he meant may not have been clear to his listeners.

He was no more successful than his predecessors with Don Bosco, who continued imperturbably: “Now we have to attend to the matter of accepting students and removing the rotten apples [literally: *mettere le ossa rotte alla porta*]. Meanwhile the matter we should meditate upon is the apostolic schools and the way they are followed in the seminaries.”

After having formulated his standpoint once more, Don Bosco addressed Fr. Bertello. The Director of San Martino started speaking very frankly though he spoke against Don Bosco’s plans saying “that he did not think an apostolic school could be set up within the Oratory.” His argument was that they “would set parish clergy, bishops, parents and the Government against them. Therefore, he was not in favor of abolishing the fifth year at the secondary school.” In this way, he went undauntedly against Fr. Lazzero’s proposal. Yet, “he was firmly convinced” that three points of attention should be taken into account “to cure these evils”. These were: “1) discipline, 2) severity in expelling bad boys, and 3) vigilant supervision of stairways, terraces, and playgrounds not in use for recreational purposes.”

Fr. Bertello had heard Don Bosco use the plural “apostolic schools.” He just adopted the idea and applied it only to the Oratory. Still, like Fr. Scappini, he probably feared that like Valdocco, the other schools might follow. Judging by the measures he proposed, the evils he was thinking of probably were the same as the two Don Bosco had indicated at the beginning of the meeting: shortcomings in the field of morality and decrease in the number of vocations. The choice of the word ‘severity’ reflects Don Bosco’s tough words: “to purge the house” and “to send them back home.” The drastic handling he required by expelling some boys, recalls the words “the superiors should be unbending” and “it is better to run the risk of expelling someone innocent” that Fr. Lemoyne advocated in his text for the Salesians. But this does not mean that Fr. Bertello was influenced by him. On the contrary, when we compare this with Mss. B and C we see that Fr. Lemoyne’s passage is a later insertion. (24) It is a later addition, later than his stay in Rome. We may also assume that Fr. Bertello knew the prescriptions of the First and Second General Chapters. During the General Chapter discussions on the morality of the pupils they had decided: “As

soon as it is known that somebody scandalizes in the field of public morality, he should immediately be separated from the others and then be sent back to his parents.” Besides, since the Second General Chapter a new article prescribed: “One should inexorably expel from our houses those boys and persons one knows - in one way or another - to be a danger in the field of morality and religion.”¹⁷ When in the former prescription it read “immediately”, it is now “inexorably” and, this is not unimportant, in the frame of a new chapter in the recently published Resolutions about caring for vocations to the clerical state.

The admonition “to be vigilant on the stairs and places not destined for recreation purposes” is linked with the article of the First General Chapter regarding the concern for morals: “It would contribute a lot to morality that no access is given to hiding-places.”¹⁸ It is possible, of course, that Fr. Bertello was still more convinced of it through listening to the letter to the boys or reading that letter himself.

Fr. Cagliero entered the discussion at this stage, at the point where they were discussing the admission of boys at the school. He considered the question from a different standpoint. He suggested that “enrolments should be under the supervision of only one person; otherwise it might happen that one enrolled the ‘lambs’, while another would enroll the ‘wolves’.” By wolves he meant “older persons accepted out of charity and assigned to various tasks in the house.”

With this contribution he touched on a very delicate subject which Fr. Bertello had broached more than once in the past, as has been indicated in the first section of this extensive study (vol. 1). However, Fr. Lemoyne did not mention a single word about it in his text for the Salesians. Being the secretary, he now had to experience that the devil is incapable of organizing things his way.

Don Bosco wanted to avoid this discussion. He started speaking about something different: “He explained his project of a catechism class on Sundays where the boys should be instructed according to our principles.”

- *Significant endeavor to steer the conversation in another direction*

However, this diversion failed because Fr. Bonetti again took up the thread of his first intervention and returned to his hobby-horse, that is the “necessity of taking care of the roots.” Then he said that “Fr. Lazzero, practically Director of the Oratory, ought to know this better than any other member of the Chapter. He invited him to take the floor.”

Fr. Bonetti spoke about Fr. Lazzero as “practically Director” because, when Fr. Rua had started the service as Director, he had wanted Don Bosco to remain the actual Director of the Oratory, which was in fact how he was considered. After Fr. Rua, Fr. Lazzero did become officially “the Director” of the Oratory.

Fr. Lazzero was not distracted and said: “We should apply the house rules as done in the other houses.” An appeal to the regulations was not strange to Fr. Lazzero. On the contrary. This was proved by his recalling of some Chapters or aspects of these regulations during the meetings that have been analyzed in the first section of the entire study (vol. 1).¹⁹ He immediately referred again to what bothered him most: “This means unity of command, because otherwise the office of director is reduced to the humble one of servant.” He also said that “boys who have been expelled have procured recommendations of good conduct from some Chapter members before they leave the house, playing on their goodness of heart. When the other boys discover this, discipline and authority are damaged. The directors’ hands are bound, etc...”

It is a pity that Fr. Lemoyne’s report did not reproduce Fr. Lazzero’s entire presentation and has left the reader wondering with this “etc.” On the other hand at the very least, thanks to the comment on the meetings treated in the first section of this study (vol. 1), we are sufficiently aware of what Fr. Lazzero took to heart and also how already in 1879 he was upset by the intervention of superiors of the Superior Chapter in the matters of the Oratory, of which he was the Director.²⁰

So he seized the opportunity to propose a topic that in his opinion was linked to the decrease in the field of morality and vocations. At the same time, we have to stress that his remark concerns an aspect that remained untouched in Fr. Lemoyne’s text for the Salesians. Whether Fr. Lazzero was aware of this or not is not important.

Once again, Don Bosco did not press further on that delicate issue though it did lead him to change the task of the committee. If previously the committee members had been obliged to discuss the question of the apostolic schools, now he decided “that a committee was to be appointed to look into the measures that needed to be taken to improve morality at the Oratory.” That had been the first of the two themes he had put on the agenda at the opening of the assembly. “Fathers Michael Rua, John Bonetti, Joseph Lazzero, Celestine Durando and John Cagliero were appointed to this committee, which will meet next Monday afternoon [June 9] at half past three to share their views after reflecting on the matter.” Besides, “Father John Bonetti was instructed to ask the individual

members of the local Chapter about their opinions, as well as to ask the opinions of the individual teachers and to report to the committee. On Monday he had to report to the committee.”

This decision might have meant the end of the assembly. But Fr. Bertello, who would not be a member of the committee, and did not belong to the teaching staff either, wanted to quickly bring in his “reflected opinions” as he called his thoughts. He proposed two means to enhance the morals: “(1) Strictly segregating the boarders of the house and subdividing them into three major categories: academic students, artisans and persons not belonging to the Congregation; and (2) vigilant supervision of stairways, corridors, etc.” In the first instance he followed Fr. Cagliero. The second he had previously recommended. On both occasions he did so clearly without referring to the wordings of the letter to the boys.

Fr. Lazzero too wanted to put in a word. He pointed out that “in the past when the boys went out for a walk, the groups consisted of no more than 25 boys. Now the whole class goes out in a group instead. If there is no strict supervision, outings can be a great danger. He also deplored vacations, etc.” Again, we can regret the use of “etc.”

According to the report Don Bosco reacted to this: “He insisted on the urgent need to safeguard morality. To do this, neither personnel, nor labor, nor effort, nor expenses should be spared.”

Fr. Lazzero pursued the matter regardless: “He, yet again, deplored the lack of unity in government, saying that he is not given cooperation.”

- *Rounding off the assembly.*

At that moment Don Bosco must have felt enough was enough. “He concluded the meeting repeating the points that the assembly must bring to a practical result: (1) rules about the acceptance of students; (2) purging the house; (3) division, distribution and regularizing of assignments, the boys, the playgrounds, etc.”²¹

Here too we regret that an incomplete summary of Don Bosco’s comments has been included. At the forefront are Don Bosco’s two personal concerns: admissions and expulsions. In itself, they demonstrate his firm hand, yet balance at the same time. His concerns, along with Fr. Bertello’s proposals and Fr.

Lazzeri's comment about "regularizing the assignments" may have also influenced the third point, but we are none the wiser because of the "etc." It would be surprising if Don Bosco had not again referred to the possibility of an apostolic school and the task of the committee concerning morality at the Oratorio. This would have further strengthened the impact of his projects and insight.

Still it remains relevant that several members of the Chapter had quite freely, or rather prudently defended their opinions, opinions deviating from Don Bosco's proposals or wishes on different levels. It is also interesting to notice how Don Bosco treated their contributions. Undoubtedly, it is also important that he launched the idea of a committee and sought a broader consultation among the confreres.

More remarkable than this is the fact that at no time references to Fr. Lemoyne's so-called combined circular were heard during the meeting. Not a single member of the Superior Chapter mentioned it and Fr. Lemoyne himself remained conspicuously silent. Hence Braido's opinion regarding the entirety of the sessions over these months: "The reports of the General (Superior) Chapter of the Salesian Society don't mention it at all."²²

2. A first series of written contributions to the enquiry that Don Bosco had entrusted to Fr. Bonetti

2.1 One of the noted written reactions to Fr. Bonetti's questions came from Fr. Stefano Febraro, Prefect of Studies at Valdocco.²³

° His greatest worry

By way of introduction Fr. Febraro wrote that he had not had enough time to reflect thoroughly because he was busy with the exams. Nevertheless, it was a lengthy contribution. His first conviction was: "I deem it necessary for there to be one *absolute head*, one who keeps united the minds and the forces which are now taking diverse directions. *He should interpret and make everybody observe the rules with the same spirit and the same method.* He should be capable of being answerable to God and the Major Superiors concerning his subjects' behavior, and completely fulfill, along with them, the tasks assigned by the "Rule for Directors." If that person isn't there, I think every other measure is in vain. Where there are many Superiors to receive the reports and nobody to control everything personally and directly, smart ones hoodwink us while others are losing courage, suspicion enters the scene along with neglect and wrongdoing. It is the story of the clerics and the boys at the Oratory for many years already. I constantly saw this plague, hidden beneath the best of appearances. It

meant that for many the benefit of being at the Oratory with Don Bosco turned into a disaster. Just think about what has happened to so many clerics of goodwill and is happening to so many young students; of the two hundred we have here currently more than a third have been expelled or turned bad before finishing their studies. You can see, then, how wise is Don Bosco's idea of removing the reasons for this evil."²⁴

Fr. Febraro had a pessimistic view of the matter and presented a gloomy picture. According to him, the main cause was the lack of unity of governance. In that regard his complaint and his desire still coincided to a large extent with Fr. Lazzero's opinion. Yet, at the same time, he seemed to be saying that Fr. Lazzero did not take firm control, that he made insufficient use of the possibilities the Rules provided.

However negative this may sound, especially as far as expulsion from school was concerned, Fr. Febraro did present in a more concrete manner Don Bosco's words at the beginning of the assembly on 5 June. Don Bosco said at the time: "It is distressing to see how so many boys, who began so well, change completely by the time they reach the 4th and 5th year of high school." (Cf. column 6, p.7 and p. 9)

Writing about "Don Bosco's idea of removing the causes" Fr. Febraro was expressing his appreciation of Don Bosco's plan. Maybe he also approved of the method, namely to do so after consulting the confreres concerned. Hence he wanted to collaborate.

- Transition to a series of seven complaints

Initially, Fr. Febraro's contribution reflects his strong feelings on the matter. He was aware of it, adding: "Pardon my outburst and bear with me. I may react quickly but I still write about what I think at considerable length."

As he moves to his more extended presentation we hear how important the appointment of a single Director was for him: "Once a Director has been appointed who is in complete control and is alone the ordinary judge and interpreter of the rules and duties, this will remove the principal causes of discontent. In other matters, we can come to an agreement with him." He will repeat this idea towards the end of his considerations. Yet he did not want things to be hurried: "Nevertheless, before settling matters, I would like the Superiors to take the following things into consideration regarding the students."

- These "matters" he described in five items

- “1. This director has to be there for the students only, as there should also be a specific Prefect of Studies for the students.” Otherwise, even those who possessed Fr. Rua’s common sense, activity and perfect tact, would be unable to fulfill their role due to the large number of boys and the complexity of relationships. “We would still find ourselves in the same miserable predicament.”

What he wanted was two distinct roles, a separate Director and a Prefect for the secondary school, in other words a distinct separation of the two sections: the students and the artisans. It is striking that he mentioned “the great number of boys” as one of the two reasons why a director exclusively for the secondary school was necessary. Maybe it was one of the “due allowances being made”, which Fr. Lemoyne and Don Bosco alluded to in the letter to the boys. (33) Yet Fr. Febraro did not avail himself of this opportunity to substantiate his argument in this way. Of course, it is possible that he was not present when the letter was read or that the remarkable expression “due allowances being made” had not struck him so forcibly at the time.

- 2. The considerations in the second item show that he was realistic enough to suppose one would not want to establish two separate administrations, namely one for the students and one for the artisans, this means that one would not be willing to carry through a complete separation. In this case he proposed “that there should be at least somebody for the students who, though dependent on the overall Director in everything, would maintain a complete overview of the boys and those most immediately concerned with them.” That might be someone “like we have today in the Catechist for the artisans and formerly the Prefect of Studies.” He thought of this solution as one which conformed with the Rules, which in fact stipulated that “the Prefect of Studies had to see to the discipline in the school, while the Prefect saw to the punishments of the boys and the Catechist to supervision or assistance among the clerics.”²⁵ He could agree with this division of labor “if the Director is present everywhere and does not learn about things through accounts or reports.” For now the situation was such that “if someone is the Director of the Oratory overall, he must rely entirely on what they tell him and upset one or the other according to what viewpoint he accepts or not for the sake of harmony. Information needs to be obtained from the assistants, the teachers, and the Catechist to learn whether this is not one of the principle reasons for the discontentment.”

- 3. The indication of a third reason is the result of a very personal view of the state of affairs: “The Director should sit around the table with the other superiors, or at conferences, and seriously discuss what to do, reaching an

agreement through mutual frankness and sincerity. They need to chastise or encourage depending on the character and need, and yet not openly spare admonishing anyone who deserves to be corrected. This is something never done at the Oratory.”

When we juxtapose minutes of the House Chapter meetings and these remarks, we see that this Chapter really met and that Fr. Lazzero was regularly present and wrote the reports. However, this was not so for the “monthly meetings” with the confreres. Between 8 January 1878 and 17 October 1884, not a single report was drawn.²⁶ Time and time again, decisions were also taken. However, as was noticed in the first section of the study (vol. 1) sometimes such decisions were taken hesitatingly and not always resolutely executed.²⁷ We do not know the extent to which he admonished confreres during personal direction regarding their duties, but we do know that Don Bosco was opposed to personal admonition given in public.

- 4. The fourth cause for the disorder, tensions, and malaise existed in the unjust interference of people who had nothing to do with the secondary school. “Confreres who have nothing to do with the house should be forbidden all contact with the boys and the clerics except the Superior Chapter members and a few others the Director will judge convenient. They were always the ones sowing discord and murmuring among the boys and among the superiors from whom they sought favorable treatment to the detriment and discomfort of those who were working and following orders.” Thus, he partly justified the standpoint that Fr. Lazzero had already defended in 1879, though only partly because Fr. Febraro made an exception for “the Superiors of the Superior Chapter and for a few others the Director had judged convenient.”²⁸

Once again this concerns a practical, everyday aspect of life which Fr. Lemoyne paid no attention to in the extended version. That does not alter the fact that Fr. Febraro may have been wrong about the exceptions he wanted to permit. Fr. Lemoyne would write at about the same time: “The admission and enrolment of boys for the house in Turin depend on too many people: Fr. Cagliero, Fr. Rua, Prefect, Director.”²⁹ Frs. Rua and Cagliero were members of the Superior Chapter.

- 5. In the fifth cause, Fr. Febraro specified some matters that the Director or the House Chapter were to arrange. He decided: “The Director or the House Chapter must see to sharing out the tasks according to everyone’s strengths. They should not allow anyone refusing work or rejecting less palatable jobs, to be rewarded for their industry or praised by someone who only sees the results of an exam or a few months’ work.” It did not mean he sought perfect equality,

but “it goes against the grain when I see straightforward injustice. This clashes with natural feelings and divine law.”

- 6. It was not just physical strength he was referring to in sharing out tasks and labor: “One should consider the character, the capabilities and the merits of people, at least of those who have to accomplish the most important functions. That is necessary in order not to discourage the others.” He thus demonstrated again how well he understood the chapter about the Director in the Rule. According to article 13 such concern is part of the Director’s function.³⁰ At the same time, he was able to adjust according to context.

- 7. The seventh concern points at what, in his opinion, was a weakness that was damaging the organization of the Oratory. It was about decision making: “When a decision has been taken and the tasks and roles have been assigned, one should not change them arbitrarily every year, as I have seen happening the last five or six years. At least, if we want to modify something, let it be announced publicly. You will understand what I’m saying if you just think of what happened the last few years to the functions of the Prefect, Catechist, Prefect of Studies, and the other Superiors in charge of the students. If necessary, I will give you explanations.”

There were still more things he wanted to add to these seven items, but he did not do so: “I had decided not to speak of the past since these would be pointless complaints. I might have caused the superiors much grief, but I suffered even more because I was not understood.”

° He insists on his main proposal

He returned once more to his main concern: “Supposing we have a *Director who is a good director*, who has the necessary *authority and time*, we will solve the less important matters with him. They concern the staff, discipline, books, reward and punishment. We will deal with things in such a way that we do not work against each other nor impact on the boys’ desire to be virtuous.”

Fr. Febraro expected an exceptionally positive influence from the appointment of a Director who in his opinion would take up the task of being a true Director. That was a priority for him. All the rest was of secondary concern. Nevertheless, it is striking that none or very little of what Fr. Lemoyne thought to be among the most serious shortcomings on the part of the educators (15-16; 21-22; 23) was reflected in Fr. Febraro’s list. And it seems no less important that in his final version, Fr. Lemoyne agreed with Fr. Febraro among others. Indeed in Ms. C he altered the plural: “being all things to all people, fathers to the boys...” into

Ms. D's singular: "Let the Superior be all things to all people". (23) There is not the slightest doubt he meant the Director whose position was so much under fire in the meetings after Don Bosco's return from Rome. He may have altered the text under the influence of the discussions during these meetings.

° Some strictly personal reactions and some further opinions

Fr. Febraro added some more considerations, one of them being that the "boys who come to us are generally good and with a positive mindset. The reasons for them turning bad could be fewer now than in former times if the malaise afflicting us were not undermining our forces and saddling the boys with something that makes them hesitant to be good, and open to suspicion."

This view appears to run counter to Don Bosco's position in the letter to the boys. Indeed, the past-pupil Valfrè might extol "the old days" with his description of the recreation scene. It is perfectly possible, however, that around 1884 things were running equally smoothly for Fr. Febraro, or even better, so long as people took the necessary measures. Fr. Febraro employs the term "suspicion". This word may recall a passage in the letter to the boys. When Don Bosco spoke of a small clique he saw wandering around, he described this as: "Others were strolling about in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction." (9, Ms. K) It is possible that this passage struck Fr. Febraro during the public reading by Fr. Rua.

Of course, we may doubt that Fr. Febraro had written this consciously. The similarity, especially ("suspicion/suspicious"), may be accidental. On the other hand, he put forward reasons for the malaise that are quite different from Fr. Lemoyne's. There is no question concerning the fact that the combined text had no decisive influence on Fr. Febraro.

2.2 Fr. Canepa's contribution

Fr. Canepa wrote his contribution on the same day, 8 June. He had been the Catechist for the students for two years (1882-1884).³¹ He was the second member of the House Chapter to make a contribution. He too preferred to list items by way of summary, nine of them to be precise. Given his opinion that the constant search for causes had been somewhat sterile, something he immediately made clear to Fr. Bonetti, it is a little surprising that he continued to cooperate. Here are his nine contributions to the discussion.

- 1. "Already last year someone suggested finding out why confidence was lacking in the upper classes and is still lacking now." Here he seemed to be

referring to the assembly of 9 March 1883. That was when someone raised the question “Why the boys fear us rather than love us? But (at that moment) the question remained substantially unanswered.”³² Fr. Canepa must have taken part in that discussion, since he continued: “What I answered then, I am repeating now.” As a reason for this repetition, he went on: “I do so because I saw it confirmed in the letter that Don Bosco sent from Rome.” It is clear then, that he had listened diligently to Fr. Rua’s public reading as had Fr. Febraro.³³ In fact, confidence is something Valfré spoke of after the first and very positive recreation scene. (7) Lack of confidence, even distrust, is what Buzzetti considers as a cause of the malaise in his commentary on the second part of the negative scene in the letter to the boys. (18) The aspects ‘trust’ and ‘mistrust’ were also explicitly present in this letter. (28 and 31) Fr. Canepa’s argument, based on Don Bosco’s authority, seems to confirm he believed this letter to be Don Bosco’s.

It is very significant that he picked the theme of confidence or lack of confidence from it. What he then considered as the cause of the lack of confidence makes us wonder after all. The boys from these classes “have no confidence because they outdo the pupils of other classes in doing wrong.” Furthermore, the fact that he laid the blame squarely with the youngsters, though he meant “some particular boys”. Their wrong-doing was “obscene language, bad reading-matter, etc., etc. etc.” Yet, he did not stop at a simple accusation. His interpretation and the threefold etc., etc., etc. he explained through a comparison between the boys of the different classes: “May I make a comparison between the third and the fourth years secondary school?”

From his answer to this question, I quote some sentences. “There are more boys in the third year. (...) They are sincere. In the fourth - very few boys excepted, but really very, very few - they always look suspiciously at the superiors and avoid all contact unless someone is doing what they want. And how does this happen? From the second year onward, they already found pleasure in accusing somebody, even a superior, of immorality. Such comment continued last year [their third year] all the time and now [in the fourth year] the superiors have to handle them with kid gloves to avoid being attacked. It is enough to be in their classroom for a few minutes to discover their ill-inspired spirit, their jealousy and name-calling. If a good boy makes a mistake you will hear: ‘You are a chicken, a spy and you don’t know that?’ etc. so that the few good youngsters are faced down by a large number of scoundrels.”

He elaborated this point: “I believe I am not exaggerating if I say that the oncoming fifth year will be worse still than the one of this year if the mentality of the current fourth year continues. [This year] a few boys have caused damage

to the fifth year. Many boys of the current fourth year will cause still more damage. The longer we wait, the more painful the intervention will be and the more damaging for us. We must also intervene similarly in the third year to prepare for the fourth year. There are only a few of them but these few suspicious types will rear their ugly head and cause great damage to us.”

Just like Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne in the letter to the boys, Fr. Canepa shoved the blame of the distrust and the bad atmosphere in the secondary school on to the boys, especially those of the fourth year. He meant difficult behavior, namely their spirit of contradiction and jealousy but also their immorality that expressed itself in “filthy language” and pernicious reading matter and their almost morbid accusation of immorality in the others. He desired to purify the classes, not to do away with one or more classes. Maybe Fr. Canepa was one of the superiors who had convinced Don Bosco of the pernicious change in the boys when they had reached the fourth and fifth year. It was a change Don Bosco regretted at the opening of the assembly on 5 June.

On the other hand, Fr. Canepa, following Don Bosco’s traces in the third General Chapter, gave to understand - although in indirect allusions - that some educators were not without blame in the area of moral behavior.³⁴ His words approximated those of Ms. D about “people who let their hearts be stolen by one individual and neglect all the other boys to cultivate that particular one.” (21) Yet, he did not seem to have known of this passage, but he did know what he had written concerning the perceptible distrust since he connected it with “Don Bosco’s letter”, that is the letter Fr. Rua had read in public.

Yet the delicateness of the matter did not prevent him - following Don Bosco’s thinking - from pleading for “intervention” or sending the boys away even in the case of boys in the third year.

- His next four or five points were complaints regarding interpretation of the role of the Director at the Oratory.

Along with Fr. Febraro he stated in his second remark: “2. There must be only one Director and this Director must have the Christian love and the active energy of a father. But one and the other would be useless if he was not among the boys, if he did not receive the reports about the boys directly from his subordinates and could not react immediately.” All this is possible since the “Rules are as plain as a pikestaff. It would be sufficient to arrange things in a way that one can observe them.”

The conviction that the Director must be present everywhere and should receive the information first hand, Fr. Canepa shares with Fr. Febraro.

“3. The Director is practically superfluous if he cannot have direct contact with others. As long as the Prefect, Prefect of Studies, teachers, and assistants are so removed from the Director, due to his many activities and a large number of boys, much time will be lost signaling transgressions or needs of the boys, who will not be reprimanded or assisted and will consequently get worse. It is no less the case for the assistants. They need a direct relationship with the Director. At the moment they do not even know who it is they depend on. The Director, or someone he has appointed must have the power and capacity to motivate the staff and especially the assistants. As soon as a problem has been noticed, someone must promptly fix it. In regular meetings, allowing freedom of speech for subordinates too, along with the superiors’ goodwill and active involvement, many wrongs can be righted.”

Fr. Canepa further elaborated on the need to intervene directly. “4. Should friction arise between individuals, why let it continue and cause harm when it can be solved? People keep passing the ball: Should I do this then or should he? Though we are many, nothing is gained except destroying what the other does. This would not happen if the Director were to immediately examine where the problem lies and act as he believes he should.”

His fifth remark also tried to implicate other superiors. “5. It would be best for the Director to make use of every means of rewarding, while the Prefect deals with punishment. There are complaints that there is no discipline. The Rules say that this is the job of the Prefect. At the Oratory, it has always been the task of the Prefect of Studies. Whom should it be given to then? Once we are clear about this then we will know who must see to discipline.”

He was right regarding the Prefect’s competence. Already in 1877, *The Rules of the Houses* had given responsibility for discipline, neatness, and maintenance of the house to him.³⁵ Whether or not the deviant practice at the Oratory ever achieved official status cannot be verified.³⁶ In the meantime, there was an article in the *Rules* that could cause misunderstanding and friction. It prescribed: “In case someone has to punish outside the classroom or make important decisions, he should communicate it to the Prefect of Studies or the Director of the house and leave it in his hands.”³⁷

Fr. Canepa began the sixth point with a serious complaint: “The Oratory is the place where a confrere feels most isolated.” Here the superiors are to blame, including the Director. “In spite of the large number of superiors there is no direct superior who can say a decisive word or encourage at the right moment. For instance, somebody is oversevere. Has he been warned? No. In the meantime, the boys and the confreres are gossiping among each other about that

person and the superiors disapprove of him. Yet he knows nothing about it. Another falls into the other extreme and they let things take their course. Or he is warned, but only after some time and when the inconveniences can be set right only with difficulty.”

- Concerning expulsion

Then he dealt with expulsion: “It is cruel to wait until a boy has provided full proof of his evil before expelling him. Each year the suspect boys in each class should be noted so we can avoid the difficulty for the fourth and fifth year classes.”

His opinion and suggestions seem quite radical, yet to me, they seem to be in line with Don Bosco’s and Fr. Bertello’s radical approach. Did not Don Bosco, during the 5 June meeting determine that “We have not been forceful enough in sending them back home again?” And did he not also give the order “to see how best to purge the house of certain elements?” And did not Fr. Bertello demand, in the same context, for “severity” when expelling? Severity, here, probably meant being inexorable. Perhaps this kind of language was not so strange when seen in the light of an article (already cited previously) which was made legal by a decision of the Second General Chapter. Fr. Lemoyne who was present when the matter was discussed on June 5, has included it afterwards in the combined text. (24) Expulsion from the Oratory was the predominant view when immorality was involved.

It is a standpoint which lies somewhat distant from the very brief chapter on punishments in Don Bosco’s short treatise on the *Preventive System* (1877). There it read: “First of all never have recourse to punishment if possible.” Though, of course, we read “if possible”. He did not choose to further specify this “if possible.” At least not within the framework of this essential text.³⁸ Yet, in practice, a consensus among educators was necessary. Guidelines for such are found in the *Rules for the Houses* (1877) and in the *Conclusions of the First General Chapter* (1877). Among others, we find: “When it becomes known that somebody gives offense in the area of moral behavior, he must at once be separated from the others and then be sent back to his family.”³⁹ Maybe this unyielding stance was also influenced by the line in Matthew’s Gospel: “If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose his faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone round his neck and be thrown into the deep sea. (Mt.18,6) Though this severe condemnation referred in the first instance to adults, and did not take into account the following verses concerning fraternal correction. (Mt. 18, 15-17)

When, during the meeting held on 5 June, Don Bosco complained that people were not acting forcefully enough, the assumption is that not everybody agreed with the predominant opinion, that is to intervene decisively, and drastically. Whatever ‘drastically’ may have meant, not everybody would have agreed with certain forms of punishment. Could this not be the reason for Fr. Francesia’s position in his treatise about *Punishments to be inflicted*. (1883)? According to him “if anyone should remain deaf to all these wise means of amendment, and should prove to be a bad example, or scandalous, then he should be sent away without hope of returning.” However, the key points are that the boy ignores warnings and continues to give scandal. “He is then to be expelled with the provision that as far as it is possible his good name should be respected.”⁴⁰ It is a paragraph he copied almost literally from P.A. Monfat, but it indicates he was thinking among the same lines. The tactic described is, in fact, the manner in which to act that corresponds with what the Preventive System proposes.

- The last two remarks concern the function of the Catechist

Fr. Canepa made further suggestions as part of his eighth and ninth considerations. “Both for the superiors and the boys, it would be convenient to organize the Exercise for a Happy Death more strictly and more solemnly.” That meant, among other things, that the day of reflection must be organized with great care every month. And as far as especially the boys were concerned, he decried the fact “that they did not receive a sermon suitable to their level.” He expanded on this latter point: “In the church, the preacher needs to address seven or eight different audiences simultaneously. He cannot freely develop subjects that are important for them and would be of great help, and which they would also like to hear. The public church is of good value for material aid, but of lesser value due to its spiritual drawbacks.” He concluded his ninth point with this sally and thus came very close to Don Bosco’s notion concerning “the teaching of catechism on Sundays to instruct the boys by following our own pastoral and pedagogical principles.”

2.3 Fr. Secondo Marchisio’s contribution

The third reaction to the investigation came from Fr. Marchisio who was Prefect at the Oratory in 1883 and 1884. During this period he was also one of the important superiors of the house and member of the House Chapter. At the end of the letter to the boys he was asked to see to it that there was a cheerful time in the refectory in May 1884. (35) On 9 June, he handed in his seven insights which were briefly formulated. This formulation came just in time since Fr. Bonetti was going to write up his summary on the same day.⁴¹

His first, and as a consequence his very intense wish, was not different from that one of his colleagues, namely: “We need a *Director* who is truly a Director.” That means “someone we can always go to and who is expected to give a *yes* or a *no*. ”

He found it necessary in his second admonition that the House Chapter meets weekly or at least every fortnight. “That would, I believe, create the strongest bond among the superiors and be the surest means of maintaining correct discipline among the boys.” That proposal would have necessitated a modification or an addition to the *Conclusions of the Second General Chapter*, for article 10 prescribed: “The Director should convene the Chapter every month and each time an important matter is to be dealt with.”⁴²

In a third item, Fr. Marchisio added: “One only person should deliver the goodnight. In this respect I would say he should be scrupulous, and never absent himself. The conclusions of the General Chapter state that the Director must speak, whatever the subject in question may be.” These requirements strictly interpreted an article in the conclusions of the Second General Chapter which had prescribed: “The Directors should particularly remember that the short talk in the evening before going to bed is a mighty means to make the boys think of their salvation.”⁴³

Fourthly, regarding the Catechist’s function, he proposed an insight that he had acquired through experience: “The Catechist should always be an older person, so that the boys might have more confidence in him. If so little has been achieved with the boys this year, it was because they did not know whom to confide in and whom to go to for advice.”

Here he appears to be giving exceptional significance to the Catechist in his role of spiritual accompaniment. That significance could damage the position of the Director and lessen the responsibility of the priests in the house.⁴⁴

The fifth subject concerned the clerics. The latter, Fr. Marchisio thought, could do freely as they wished and did not always work in a dignified manner.

His sixth point was that “many matters, best left unknown, easily leak out among the boys. The source of such information remains unknown.”

And then finally, a bothersome conclusion: “The local superiors do not always agree among each other. The result is that matters are left unattended.”

This was an old sore. Someone had already complained of it in November 1882. Fr. Lazzero then cautiously attacked the problem by quoting Monfat who

insisted on the need “to be unanimous and to agree.” Did the Prefect at the time not leave the meeting in July 1882? Was it not a fact that the Catechist of the students refused to attend on 16 November 1883? It was precisely the period when Fr. Canepa was the Catechist.⁴⁵ His contribution, discussed previously, was far less than gentle in its reference to the Director, Fr. Lazzero.

2.4 A fourth document

J.M. Prellezo’s documents regarding the inquiry in June 1884 include a letter from a Tommaso Pentore, a 24-year-old confrere assistant, though the letter was directly addressed to Don Bosco. It is not clear when Pentore wrote the letter but confessed in a frank manner the reason why he turned to Don Bosco. He chose the written form though he feared eventual consequences if other superiors were informed about the content of his letter. He even feared, as he writes at the end of his letter, a certain form of retaliation, namely “expulsion from the Oratory at the end of the year.” I will now present this letter since it contains elements that can be considered as a contribution to the inquiry.⁴⁶

During his military service (1882-1883) Pentore stayed at the Oratory and during the following school year; he was an assistant there. Thus it is understandable that he began with the subject on assistance. He reacted strongly: “There is a lack of assistance and considerable carelessness regarding the behavior of the young students. That is not because there are not enough assistants, but because each assistant says he is not sufficiently supported by the superior who has no ear for his complaints. On the contrary, it appears the superior shows displeasure when he sees someone taking an interest in assistance. It’s high time these *misunderstandings* are discarded.”

The complaint about “the lack of support by the superior” reveals the same sentiment as Fr. Canepa’s “feeling isolated, left in the lurch.”

Pentore wanted to convince Don Bosco that he was not simply talking through his hat. That is why he gave an example: “For more than a fortnight the fifth year pupils have been spending their learning and study time, especially after lunch, in the dormitory. They were lying on their beds with the excuse that they were rehearsing their lessons together. Yet, no measures have ever been taken, despite all four of the Oratory superiors being informed and even seeing this with their own eyes. Fr. Febraro gives up since he stands fully alone. The others complain that they are not supported by the person most qualified to respond. The Director appears to be doing nothing about it. In the meantime the boys are corrupted. Today they are still left to their own devices in class and the playground nearly all day long so that one sees them in every hiding-place of the house. Already more than two months have gone by, and every day after lunch

there are more and more boys filling the staircase leading to Fr. Durando's room, and higher up to the small chapel, with the excuse they are studying there. Yet, nobody has ever publicly forbidden it."

These are weighty accusations against the main authorities at the Oratory, except for Fr. Febraro, the Prefect of studies. They are aimed particularly at the Director, Fr. Lazzero, who according to the first part of this study (Vol. 1) attempted several times to improve assistance, among others, by addressing the abuse of the use of the staircase. But he was not always successful.⁴⁷

Given that the letter is undated it is possible that Tommaso Pentore had delivered it to Don Bosco much earlier and in different circumstances. It is also possible he did so later, during his second year of assistance (1884-1885) since the letter was referring to the fifth year. This was the class about which Fr. Canepa wrote in 1883-1884: "A few pupils caused moral damage to that class", whereas "many more from the fourth year would do so the following year." Whatever the case, "boys not taking part in recreation" was occurring largely with fifth year students, the focus of Pentore's complaints, and that was not happening for good reasons.

A second issue he would have liked to see improved, one both Fr. Canepa and Fr. Marchisio had complained of, was the frequency of the meetings. But as an assistant he had other concerns: "A meeting should be held monthly with us, the assistants, and the teachers, along with another superior to establish measures. And also to get a better insight into the places where assistance is needed and to prevent things being ignored because nobody takes them in hand, not wanting to attract attention to himself."

We may presume that the expression "along with another superior" is a reference to the Prefect of Studies Fr. Febraro. The *Regulations for the Houses* prescribed that the Prefect of Studies "had to listen to the remarks of the teachers and assistants regarding discipline and morality of the pupils to provide them with the standards and advice he deemed necessary." That task was more clearly defined by the First and Second General Chapter: "The Prefect of Studies has to meet monthly with the teachers and those who give extra lessons or who participate in conducting studies or assistance of the pupils."⁴⁸

Once again it becomes clear that what is lacking in the Oratory is not so much a case of regulations; what was needed were energetic, friendly, persuasive co-workers and key personnel who were themselves exemplary and disciplined.

3. Summary of the oral and written answers to Fr. Bonetti's inquiry

Fr. Bonetti was to bring his report with the results of his contacts with members of the House Chapter and individual confreres to the commission appointed on 5 June. It met with him on 9 June in the afternoon. He wrote this report on 9 June 1884.⁴⁹

- The introduction

The summarized introduction was a single sentence: “From the inquiry I carried out and from matters raised by key personnel involved in instructing and assisting the boys, we see the following essential requirements.” This introduction, then, indicates that he has relied on oral as well as written contributions. Yet, we can be certain that seven of the eight points in the report refer to the main issue raised in the written contributions, namely the Director of the Oratory. Several reflections correspond with the contributions treated above.

- The body of the report

- Six points concerning the Director

Already in the first item, we can hear the wishes and suggestions of Fathers Febraro, Canepa and Marchisio, but equally so, Fr. Bonetti’s appropriate wording: “The Director of the house must be able to be the director and be that in an effective manner. This means that he must manifest his authority in such a way that the boys know he is their superior and that all other individuals at the school responsible for discipline and assistance are like the fingers of his hand, or the arms of his body.”

His second item indicates what the confrere or confreres he had spoken with thought of this “must manifest his authority.” Citing what he has read or heard he begins listing the well-known obligations of the Director at the Oratory: “He must often be present during the recreation time, he has to visit the classes, in short, he must go to all the spots where his fingers, his arms, that is his helpers ought to be.”

These first requirements agree with the following task in the “*Confidential Reminders for Directors*: “Let the pupils come to know you. On your part, get to know them by spending as much time as possible with them.” In the summary, “all the time possible” was interpreted clearly as “often”.⁵⁰ Furthermore, they are in keeping with a conclusion of the Second General Chapter which had prescribed that the “Director must often walk through the house. He must check everything, enter the rooms, the kitchen, the refectories, and the cellar and he

should not neglect to visit the workshops [if they exist in the house] to keep himself informed of everything.”⁵¹

The strict observance of these prescriptions might produce some advantages. Concerning the students, the Director’s “presence among the boys of the house would always better convince them that he is their head and would offer him the opportunity to open confidential contact with them.” And regarding the Salesians he “would provide his subordinates with the impetus to be in their place themselves. Doing this would ensure that the former system prospers once more, meaning the system Don Bosco and the first superiors applied in those happy times. They spent their recreation together with the boys either talking, playing or singing and thus transformed the Oratory as it were into a true family.” Fr. Bonetti thus offers a personal interpretation of the first vibrant recreation scene described in the letter to the boys. It is an interpretation that could well accompany Valfré’s words “the greatest cordiality between youngsters and superiors” in that passage of the letter. (7)

The notion that the Director’s presence among the boys may contribute to the creation of a bond of confidence comes near to the meaning of Valfré’s aphorism in the letter to the boys: “Closeness (familiarità) leads to affection (amore) and affection brings confidence.” (7) Furthermore, “in those happy times” in the summary certainly recalls “the happy days of the Oratory of old” and also “these wonderful years,” which Don Bosco so wished to return, both expressions which appeared in the letter to the boys. (33 and 16) On the other hand, the description of the favorable influence of the former system on the Salesian personnel in Fr. Bonetti’s report contains a term found only in the first part of the combined version, namely “the former system” or perhaps literally “the old system.” However, it is not accompanied here by the expression “bring back” (23), but by “would ensure that it prospers once more.”

Such resemblances may be partly due to a conversation between Fr. Bonetti and one or more confreres who had listened attentively when the letter to the boys was read, but also partly to an interview Fr. Bonetti had had with Fr. Lemoyne, the secretary of the Superior Chapter, when performing his task for the committee. Yet, it is not necessary to believe there was a conversation with Fr. Lemoyne. The term “the old system” indeed was not unusual in Valdocco. It even might have become a cliché. After a meeting in October 1883, Fr. Lazzero - though in another context and another application - noted: “Today they would like to resume the old system.”⁵²

The conclusion to the second point of his report is somewhat striking: “They transformed the Oratory as it were into a family, a household so to speak.” In the *Biographical Memoirs* Fr. Lemoyne enthusiastically recorded how the Oratory

in its earliest years “was truly a family” followed by: “Until 1858 Don Bosco ran the Oratory as a father would run his own family.”⁵³ No wonder then that the Salesians of the first era, now twenty-five years older in 1884, liked to recall those “happy days” and that they sometimes felt a nostalgia for the early familial, household-like atmosphere.

Fr. Bonetti’s third part of his summary is again based more on the contribution of the three earlier named superiors. “Since the Director must arrange many things through the Prefect, the Prefect of Studies, the Catechist, and teachers, it is necessary for him to bring them together often around himself to learn from each of them what the boys’ discipline and behavior are like.” Again he explains the advantages of this approach: “This way, not only is he informed, but he can also inform all the others; this way unity of management is fostered and we avoid situations where one superior ends up praising and favoring a boy whom another is accusing of serious misdemeanors.”

This is a suggestion which includes what Don Bosco wished after the 5 June meeting, where he wanted them to think of how to “share, distribute and regularize assignments.”

Fr. Bonetti then adopted Fr. Marchisio’s strong advice on regular goodnights. He did so delicately and constructively. Again he provided reasons, this time emphasizing the pedagogical value of that custom. “The Director himself will assume the task of giving the evening talk aiming to educate the boys to virtue, accompany them in piety, and lay his finger on the sore spot, and thus make the boys aware that it is their souls the Director loves. He should have at heart the well-considered purpose of these talks, that is accompanying his house on the way to moral behavior and devotion. This also means letting the better boys realize they belong to a family and this is their home, so to speak their realm; it also lets the bad ones know that this is no home for them and that they should either prove their worthiness to stay or go elsewhere. This helps encourage the virtuous, bolster the shy, and humble the regrettable cases.” This account maintains that moral education can be fostered in a positive and preventive manner. We probably also learn how characteristic the aspect of “forming a family,” feeling at home at the Oratory was for Fr. Bonetti.

The sixth point of Fr. Bonetti’s summary dealt with the lax approach vis-a-vis expulsion. One of the main causes of this situation was the Director’s attitude to the matter since the other confreres did not feel they could gain an immediate hearing from him, or he did not believe he was sufficiently free to make such a decision. The consequence was that “boys were tolerated in the house who led

others astray.” Along with similar lines to those of Fr. Canepa he proposed that “next year we should expel the boys who could present a risk. At least we can do that much if we don’t want the contamination to spread.”

The seventh issue concerned a matter which was not found in the written contributions, namely the *rendiconto* or monthly contact with the clerics. He proposed that clerics with a role at the Oratory would have their *rendiconto*, relating directly with their role, with the Director of the house. The fundamental reason for this was that: “In this manner, the Director could learn the abilities and the special needs of each cleric. He could also use the *rendiconto* to assign the various tasks in the house.”

This proposal linked up with an article in the *Conclusions of the (First) General Chapter*: “The directors should see that all members of the Congregation come to them monthly for a calm and conscientious report.”⁵⁴

° Regarding the Catechist

In a further item which stood apart from matters concerning the Director, Fr. Bonetti paid special attention to remarks made by Fathers Marchisio and Febraro and other confreres regarding the Catechist’s role: “A solid catechist is needed. Somebody who can instruct with the prudence needed and particularly someone capable of gaining respect and sympathy from the boys.”

° Regarding the sacrament of Penance and spiritual accompaniment

His final point was also not one found in the written contributions he was using. He certainly had heard Don Bosco speaking about this item during the meeting of the Superior Chapter concerning the necessity of limiting the number of priests confessing. The motivation he gave is the following: “To avoid entrusting spiritual accompaniment into the hands of many, especially into the hands of priests with insufficient experience.”

° Conclusion

To conclude his summary Fr. Bonetti adopts another idea of Fr. Febraro’s. He appreciates his opinion that “secondary matters” can be adjusted “if the Oratory’s Director gains the same powers as those given to most of the other directors.” This was already Fr. Lazzero’s keen desire in 1879.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, in Fr. Bonetti’s report we read that “The Director [at the Oratory] does not yet feel sufficiently free in his management.” During the meeting of the Superior

Chapter Fr. Bonetti had succeeded in eliciting the same complaint from Fr. Lazzero.

Review following Fr. Bonetti's summary

It is but normal that Fr. Bonetti's report strongly highlights Fr. Febraro's main theme, a very important part of Fr. Canepa's complaints and Fr. Marchisio's first point. It concerned the Director's situation, attitude and shortcomings which they had thrown into relief. That painful point dominates everything. Other items which include expulsion of some boys and the furtherance of morality, are connected with it. However, on 5 June the latter was the priority task Don Bosco gave to the commission. The word morality only occurs en passant in Fr. Bonetti's fourth point. Other elements are hardly mentioned, while Don Bosco's massive proposal to transform the secondary school into an apostolic school was not even mentioned at all. Nevertheless, this can be understood because it was not included directly as part of the commission's task and was as yet unknown to the confreres working at Valdocco.

Once more this summary shows how, in drawing up his combined version for the confreres, Fr. Lemoyne had been bypassing and continued to bypass an important reason for discontent and malaise among the confreres. What he asked all the confreres concerned in a first version (Ms. C), he would only in a later stage apply specifically to the Director. (23)

There is something else in the summary and written contributions that deserves our attention. Along with the topic of the director, at the beginning of June, the matter of expulsions is still conspicuously present. I say 'still' because according to Fr. Ceria the reading (aloud) of the letter to the boys and Don Bosco's contacts with the boarders separately had "two principal effects," namely "the beginning of the reform of the life in the Oratory and the expulsion of some boys who only seemed to be excellent in their conduct."⁵⁶ But the expulsions must have been more or less overlooked, otherwise Fr. Canepa would no longer have made such proposals and Fr. Bonetti would not have considered the subject from such future perspective. Even Don Bosco, on 5 June, would not have had to regret the lack of "energetically taking action."

Yet, if there had been the beginning of a revival apparent, it may not have been so perceptible. Fr. Marchisio began his down to earth summing up with the sentence: "When house matters are not running properly." That seems to be a figure of speech to suggest that things were not so good. However, this does not mean that everything was going poorly.

On the contrary! Fr. Ceria writes: “8 June [1884], the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, brought something new to the Oratory. That Sunday was the anniversary of Don Bosco’s first Mass, and it was the first time that any special commemoration was given to this auspicious anniversary. There was music in the church, a special treat at the table, and a concert by the band in the playground. The boys read compositions and poetry in the dining-room. Father John Baptist Lemoyne also added to the happiness of this family celebration by contributing a brilliant little sonnet of his own.” (MB XVII, 159-160; EMB XVII, 137.)

But we do not learn how Don Bosco was engaged in it, how he felt and whether or not he was able to address the people present.

4. The committee meeting

In the survey that P. Braidò conducted about the meetings of the Superior Chapter in the months after Don Bosco’s return from Rome, he does not mention anything about what happened on 9 June. No wonder! In 1936 E. Ceria had to be satisfied with the note: “We do not have any information at all about what was the outcome of the findings of the committee that Don Bosco had appointed to examine ways to strengthen and improve the discipline at the Oratory.”⁵⁷

It is rather surprising that E. Ceria, in this context, prefers mentioning discipline where Don Bosco had spoken about morality, though it must be said, of course, that both aspects are intertwined.

5. Supplementary contributions to Fr. Bonetti’s inquiry

Whether there had been a meeting of the commission or not, we do not know, yet it is without doubt a fact that, afterwards, Fr. Canepa still wanted to provide some experiences and considerations. Other confreres, Fathers Fumagalli and Ruffino did not put a date on their written considerations, but several ideas of their contributions had not had any influence on Fr. Bonetti’s summary. That is the reason why I wish to treat them in the second group of contributions.

5.1 Fr. Canepa’s second sign of co-operation

Fr. Canepa who had written his first contribution in a hurry, must have heard that he could still send in more additions. He even gives the impression that he knew of Fr. Bonetti’s short report. He introduced his addition on 13 June as

follows: “I write a short addition to the report.”⁵⁸ ‘Report’ is exactly the word Fr. Bonetti had used in the title of his summary.

On close examination, we see that he had only to add one aspect, namely the “decisive cause of the worst disorders is that no one, or nearly no one, takes up the nasty tasks.” And the reason was “because subordinates are ultimately put in the wrong each time they report anything. The boys, who can rely on the approval they get from the superiors, do not care a rap for anyone who could, and should, have the right to give orders and be obeyed.” To give more weight to his complaint, he gave Fr. Bonetti the following advice: “You can consult with the clerics and you will learn that it is a general complaint.” He probably did so, because in general; the clerics were very young, had no, or very little experience and consequently were confronted with disagreeable situations and thus needed help. To top it all, certain superiors tackled the problems in the wrong way. This we can understand from the questions he posited: “Even if the cleric were wrong, is it right to tell him so and to explain it in front of the boys? Wouldn’t it be better to pull each aside and deal with him, but always to support the cleric in the presence of the boys?”

Fr. Canepa didn’t mince matters and - to avoid a misunderstanding - laid the blame clearly at the feet of the Salesians, especially of the Superiors. They do not agree amongst themselves. They do not pull together. And the boys benefit from it. However, it is not obvious what is meant by “superiors”. Probably the Director, the Prefect and the Prefect of studies, whom he had mentioned in his first contribution. They did not work together at their optimum. That was also Fr. Marchisio’s complaint about the “local superiors.” Moreover their competencies were not always clearly defined or agreed upon so that they were overstepping their boundaries.

What follows, then, was his personal experience. He stated that if “another superior takes up the matter and thoroughly examines things, he only attracts dislike and the criticism of the boys upon himself. Then you find another superior who takes the side of the boys. And when there is a favor to be given, it is given to such individuals.” We may assume that he was the superior who took up things correctly. Later on he will let this be heard more clearly. His displeasure with putting a spoke in a person’s wheel inspired the following remark: “Believe me, at the Oratory, we are too numerous and because of this, nothing is done.” In this way, he strengthened his opinion expressed in his previous contribution: “As we are numerous, nothing is achieved.” This was a conviction he shared with Fr. Febraro.

That is why, in his view, the separate functions had to be correctly defined and why everyone should be allowed to operate within his own set of competencies,

always, of course, in collaboration with the Director and those who had the right to do so. Fractured functions ruined the overall running of the house.

However, acting drastically is no easy task for anybody. Some teachers do not like it, and if possible, they would much prefer others to do such dirty work. This awareness brought him back to what he wrote at the beginning. If possible, the boys should dislike a particular individual and not all the superiors, otherwise, “we are worse off than the state prison [in Turin].” Fr. Canepa was not afraid of using strong expressions. “That individual must have at his disposal the means and the freedom to act. In reality, nobody is the focus of any dislike, at least not any individual. It is just that anyone who wants to do his duty must eventually despair of achieving anything because overall management has been thrown into disarray. For my part, I confess that in conscience I cannot tolerate certain frequently occurring disorders. Yet I have to deal with them because the one who is meant to be solving such disturbances, either does not want to find a solution or is not....”

Whom he is pointing to as ‘that individual’ is not clear. In the fifth point of his contribution on 8 June, he recalled that according to the *Rules* the Prefect is responsible for discipline and punishments. On the other hand, he adds that at the Oratory the discipline was practically always in the hands of the Prefect of Studies who, at the time, was Fr. Febraro.

His challenge sounds rather bitter and sarcastic: “Suppose it’s me who wants the boys to love him, but someone else wants the same. What do we do then? Do we avoid noticing the boys’ disorders, not mention them, or do we back them up? These are the waters we are swimming in now at the Oratory. I believe you can summarize in this way all I wanted to say in my former intervention.”

In other words, teachers, assistants, and superiors seem to be chummy with the boys, befriend them, and be sympathetic to them. That is the reason why they shrink from the nasty tasks of strong actions, admonishments and punishments. All this they leave to others and so nothing is done and the youngsters do what they want.

In his challenge, we might hear a statement of G. Buzzetti’s in the letter to the boys. Making use of one of Don Bosco’s suggestions in Ms. A, Fr. Lemoyne let Buzzetti say in fact: “As a consequence they are more feared than loved.” (18) Yet it is also possible that Fr. Canepa, being a very earnest man, was still seriously impressed by the question asked on 9 March 1883: “Why do the boys fear us more than they love us? And they received no reply.”⁵⁹ But still more obvious is that he was fluent in the content of the treatise on the *Preventive System in the Education of the Young*. In the fourth chapter, Don Bosco had

written that “the educator must see that the pupils love him if he wants them to have respect for him.”⁶⁰ Don Bosco used the expression “farsi amare”, just what Fr. Canepa used on 13 June.

No less sharp is his supposition in the nota bene of his second contribution: “If one wants to punish a boy, it is not good to wait till long considerations, investigations, etc. have taken place. One can believe the reports one has received from the confreres. Some examinations and considerations last till the end of the year which is disastrous. And one harvests...”

Fr. Canepa is very concrete in this addition. At the same time, he touches on a very delicate point. Maybe Fr. Lemoyne made an allusion to this course of action through the painful considerations Don Bosco was allowed to formulate while looking at the second scene of the recreation happenings in 1884. One of the negative points that were added to Ms. C, in fact, reads: “A rare superior gave admonitions, but in a menacing tone and he did so rarely.” (15) If Fr. Canepa had been able to read this, he would have got on his high horse. He certainly did not see it like that, though he did not always act appropriately. Fr. Marchisio deemed him obviously too young at the age of twenty-five for the role of Catechist. Wasn’t he who wrote that the “Catechist should always be somewhat older?” Fr. Bonetti took this up in his summary report: “A solid Catechist is needed, who can instruct of course, but with much needed prudence.”

It becomes more and more clear that precisely some elements that Don Bosco had not dealt with in the suggestions for the letter to the boys nor Fr. Lemoyne had inserted in the combined text caused the malaise in Valdocco. They were of the organizational kind and weighed heavily on the confreres. The choice of the main individuals responsible was not always a happy one: they were too young, insufficiently formed Salesians, or found, by nature, contact with others difficult. There were too many confreres in the educating community, they trod each other underfoot. They had too little to do and - according to Fr. Febraro - “spread conflicts and were tell-tales among the boys and the superiors.”

Besides, the Director had not enough authority. He was not firm enough. And he was not sufficiently in touch with his subordinates. Hence, many felt unsupported or understood and certain things did not happen at all, or if they did, went awry.

All this can also be found in the reports of two other confreres, that is Fr. Fumagalli’s and Fr. Ruffino’s.

5.2 Fr. Fumagalli's views

Fr. Fumagalli was Vice-prefect at Valdocco during the school year 1883-1884. His introduction was short and sharp: "Some causes of several disorders in the house." His expression "Some causes" differs clearly from Buzzetti's "The reason for such a difference is that many of the boys no longer have confidence in their superiors." (18) Fr. Fumagalli gets down to business at once.

His first point is to the boys' advantage and the disadvantage of the superiors and the Director. So once more: "The boys would be ready to do what is right if only they had a center to direct themselves to." He meant: a central person. "But they see themselves in *a large sea, in an ocean of superiors* and do not know whom they have to go to, to get good advice, admonition or correction. That's why they decide to speak to nobody." The image of the ocean gives better insight still into the situation than Fr. Canepa's concise "too many" and Fr. Febraro's "numerous superiors." There are too many points of reference, too many reference people. For him, that is the main source of disorder, resentment, and tensions.

On the other hand, the image of the ocean may have been overdoing it somewhat, though in the report of the "great meeting" on 16 November 1882 Fr. Lazzero noted the presence of "some thirty-five" members of the staff. They probably included Salesians working with the artisans. In August 1882 an Irish pupil spoke about only thirteen to fourteen superiors in the secondary school.⁶¹ This may be a personal perception of the situation rather than the reality of the entire Oratory.

How this central figure was to function Fr. Fumagalli could not better explain than by referring to the past. Although at the beginning of the seventies he attended school at Borgo San Martino and took his first vows only in 1876, he seems to be able to judge Don Bosco's role in Valdocco quite correctly. Or did he idealize the past influenced by what he had heard? He had certainly not known Don Bosco as Director who was always present. From 1876 till 1879, Fr. Lazzero had succeeded Fr. Rua as Vice-director, but he actually was the Director. From 1880 till 1886, he already held the official title of Director. Whatever this meant, Fr. Fumagalli wrote that "it would be good if everyone could go to our dear father Don Bosco." Yet the young priest must have been a realist, a man open to necessary changes. At any rate he wanted to give Fr. Lazzero a little urging, at least this is what we sense from his comment that "this, however, is impossible for Don Bosco. Therefore, someone must represent him not only in name but in fact as the one whom the boys can easily contact for

every problem and from whom they can get fatherly reprimands, advice, and admonitions useful for their temporal and spiritual needs.”

Fr. Fumagalli did not dwell on the reasons why they could no longer go to Don Bosco. One of the reasons must certainly have been his worsening health, but also his absences from the Oratory and his other numerous occupations. These last facts had already, for some time, impeded frequent contacts between Don Bosco and the boys and the confreres. If we may suppose that Don Bosco himself had also made suggestions for the annotations in Ms. B, we may also conclude that he too was aware of the changed situation. (16-17) Therefore, Fr. Fumagalli’s statement must draw frowns when we read Fr. Ceria’s news about what occurred after Don Bosco’s return when he enthusiastically noticed: “After he (D.B.) returned home, there was a steady coming and going of boys in his room.” And: “Once he had taken care of the more pressing business, the Saint began to interview the boys every day for a few hours in the late afternoon.”⁶²

Fr. Fumagalli saw where the shoe pinched, namely in the contrast between “in name” and “in fact” in the just mentioned quotation. He cleverly illustrated how necessary a director is: “I say this because someone who asked a boy in one of the senior classes was already told, ‘Who is the Director?’ He immediately gave a sound proposal to solve the problem: “Such a question (given as an answer) shows that the teachers and assistants in class or the playground never or seldom spoke about the Director. They do not make him known and they do not see that the boys love him, visit him. They do not see that his virtues are appreciated as they ought to be, though this is their strict duty. If all the boys loved the Director he would be in a better position to refer them to Don Bosco and the other Superiors of the Superior Chapter and so promote a true and sacred unity.”

Clearly, for Fr. Fumagalli the cause is less the Rector’s fault and more the teachers’ and the assistants’ approach.

A second cause has to do with “the lack of assistance during recreation”. Here, he was presenting something similar to assistant T. Pentore’s first subject. Fr. Fumagalli formulated it as follows: “Instead of being among the boys during recreation time, the confreres prefer walking and talking with each other. When from time to time they are made aware that this is not in accordance with the Rules, they offer the excuse that they do not dare to remain among the boys. They fear they will either be seen as intruders and ignored, or they do not know what to talk about.”

This passage is sometimes quoted to indicate that the writer knew Fr. Lemoyne’s long version. But this view loses sight of two things. First, that it was often the case that the Salesians had to be told it was their duty to assist at

recreation instead of standing apart. For instance, it was the complaint and the reaction heard during the meeting of the personnel on 16 November 1882: “Not to spend recreation with each other but among the boys.”⁶³ Secondly, in Ms. C Fr. Lemoyne only mentioned walking. Talking is added to the final elaboration. This passage is a later addition just like some others in the list of eight shortcomings indicated in the text aimed at the Salesians. Furthermore, there was no case of reported excuses. But there were some Salesians of good will and also a clique of boys who intentionally avoided all contact. (16; and 9-10) And so Fr. Lemoyne placed a good part of the blame on the boys.

Another form of neglect was just as bad or even worse for Fr. Fumagalli: “It often happens, especially in the higher classes, that someone lets the boys in, then leaves them unassisted for half an hour or longer. Left on their own they commit serious disorders. The better boys complain that, if they want to study a little, they are obliged to leave the classroom and retire under some portico to find some rest and not to lose time. And when they are asked why they are not in the classroom, they immediately answer: who can put up with such noise and disorder? There is no teacher, no assistant and there is such noise ...” In this illustration too, there is some resemblance with the examples of T. Pentore. The teachers and assistants are very much at fault regarding an article of the Rules: “The teacher must see that he arrives in class on time to prevent disorders before or after the lesson.”⁶⁴

The neglect of assistance had almost no limits. “During the singing lesson in the evening you often see boys freely climbing or coming down the stairs and up to now nobody has thought of tackling this improper situation.”

The forbidden presence of boys on the stairs [Fr. Fumagalli] or in hiding-places [T. Pentore] was a frequently occurring transgression. It had to be dealt with in previous years too.⁶⁵ T. Pentore had been upset by the improper use of some stairs and the fact that there was no official reaction to it.

Nothing is found in Fr. Bonetti’s summary concerning the serious shortcomings in assistance, that essential element in education according to the spirit of Don Bosco. And equally, nothing was found there about the third and fourth of Fr. Fumagalli’s complaints. That seems to prove that this additional intervention was not ready yet before 9 June.

In a third point, he complained about the lesson in politeness that was to be given weekly but was not given. In the fourth he attacked the practice of the admonitions: “Admonitions are given, but no one insists that they must also be put into practice and followed up. As a consequence, the boys attach little or no value to whatever admonition the superiors give.”

The fifth remark focused on disagreement over the refusal or giving permissions. This was an annoying factor which Fr. Canepa also criticized in his addition on 13 June, when writing that the boys did not feel concerned at all about it. It still sticks in Fr. Fumagalli's throat: "It does a lot of harm to the boys when they see that the superiors do not react in the same manner (I regret I have to say this, but I put it between brackets, I mean the spirit of contradiction). A superior refuses a certain favor, permission, because he finds it is convenient to do so, and a couple of minutes later the same permission is granted by another superior. The result is that the boys secretly sneer at the superiors and their warnings (...) Once more this proves the necessity that each order, each refusal or permission must come from one and the same point." Thus he availed himself of this opportunity to enforce his considerations of the first item.

What he did not do was give his opinion about the possible motives for this way of acting by superiors. Was it because of jealousy? Was it, to quote Fr. Lemoyne's words, "because people let their hearts be stolen by one individual?" (21). Fr. Fumagalli does not seem to have heard about this.

His sharp remark about sneering at some superiors Fr. Lemoyne picked up in a summary which I will treat later. Fr. Fumagalli's wording - so it seems - has brought Fr. Lemoyne to broaden the data of Ms. B with the negative consequences: "such laws (...) cause the superiors to be despised and bring about serious disorders." (23).

In a sixth remark Fr. Fumagalli moved from a description of abuses as a consequence of disagreements to a word on "the lack of charity." "Seeing that things went wrong, some confreres filled with goodwill and holy zeal for the good of souls, would like to get involved with the boys and do them a bit of good. But now, they do not risk it anymore because after a few attempts they have suffered humiliation at the hands of others (I regret to have to say this of superiors)." The three points of consideration may mean: "And so they continue to make a mess and let things go awry." Once more, the text between brackets shows how heavily this matter weighed on him. This was the case not only for him, but also for the young assistant Pentore, who saw how matters were ignored, and also for Fr. Marchisio as he expressed in his seventh remark.

The interpretation that things go awry contains an expression that looks like a sentence that Fr. Francesia used in his treatise on punishments to be imposed.⁶⁶ It is an expression he borrowed from Monfat's book which many confreres at Valdocco were sufficiently aware of.

With the expression “to get involved” Fr. Fumagalli used almost the same term Don Bosco was going to use vis-à-vis Fr. Lazzero in a meeting on 4 July. That indicates something about Don Bosco’s approach. Here too, Fr. Fumagalli’s text shows some resemblance to parts of Fr. Lemoyne’s explanation, namely his seventh positive consequence of the “electric current between youngsters and their superiors” in the text for the Salesians. (20) Still, with Fr. Fumagalli there is no connection with “human respect”, but rather with painful experiences. On the contrary, Fr. Fumagalli’s influence on Fr. Lemoyne’s text may be real because Fr. Lemoyne made use precisely of his and Fr. Ruffino’s interventions. (15-16, also in column 6) This will be treated under the heading 5.4.

He had just signed that series of six with “D.F.S [Don Fumagalli Serafino] when two other reasons for disorder came to his mind.

The first concerned the other thorn in his flesh: the expulsion of boys. Just like Fr. Canepa, he thought there was too much patience or laxity in the question of sending some boys away: “We tolerate bad boys for much too long. And this happens either because they were recommended by rich people [literally “magnati”], or because they are either protected from outside or even *from the inside*. We ought to expel them *immediately* and thus remove the parasites from among the other boys. Then we would not have to complain about the corruption of so many boys.” And then again an insert: “The fault lies with the superiors” which was a severe criticism. “We would not end up, then, with what has happened previously so often, where we have had to send away five or six boys at the end [of the school year] simply because we refused to send one boy away at the beginning of the year. The good boys themselves are complaining about this. They cannot understand why we tolerate rapacious wolves that not even a State school run by lay people would keep. Yet they are kept on here and treated in a friendly manner as if they deserved every respect. They often are granted favors that better boys are refused.” Even in this issue Fr. Fumagalli did not mince his words.

Though he reacted strongly to such a delicate matter, he avoided exaggeration. Where Fr. Febraro talked about one third of the two hundred pupils, he mentioned “five, six” cases at the end of the school year. Fr. Fumagalli’s calm and relaxing voice contrasted with the heated debate and emotional outbursts of other written and oral contributions.⁶⁷

A second point attacks the behavior of a certain superior where the boys are concerned. Some pupils certainly did not appreciate this, and boys in their Rhetoric year had said that “you would be foolish to believe that admonitions given by this superior are put into practice; far from it – the boys do the

opposite. Others have said that the main reason so few boys remain and go on to the novitiate at San Benigno is because of that superior's way of acting..."

This last comment sounds like a confirmation of Don Bosco's statement during a conference for the directors in 1876. Speaking from experience he said: "It may take combined efforts of everyone to win over one candidate, but a single one of you can turn them all away."⁶⁸ It was an experience that he frequently impressed on his co-workers.

5.3 Remarks and proposals by Giacomo Ruffino

Following his ordination in 1883, Fr. Ruffino was a member of the House Chapter at Valdocco for two years (1884-1885). His contribution to Fr. Bonetti's inquiry contains twelve very short parts.

- Concrete proposals regarding the boys

The first proposal concerns how pupils progress through the secondary classes. Their promotion, or their need to repeat a year in the Oratory school, should not be made based on moral purge at the end of the school year. Rather, the decision must be based on positive criteria. His standpoint on the issue was that progress to the third, fourth and fifth year "must be a reward, not only for academic progress, but also for blameless behavior." To strengthen this argument, he pointed to the fact that "the pupils of the lower classes look up to those of the fifth."

Furthermore, according to him the exclusion of some pupils was not a measure to be refused. On the contrary, it was a serious question. However, he considered it from another point of view. He preferred to act preventively. This preference is suggested by his twelfth and final proposal which reads: "At the beginning of the school year we must most attentively screen for youngsters who could be of harm to their companions. If such a boy is found, he must be immediately removed to prevent others from being morally corrupted."

His second proposal echoed one of the decisions of the second General Chapter and may be recognized as one Don Bosco strongly defended: "It would be a useful matter at the beginning of the school year to carefully control the books the boys introduce into the Oratory and, like in other colleges not to allow so many reading books to be brought in. Such control could be repeated during the course of the year. Indeed, experience has taught us that we should not trust the list (of books) the boys fill in. For, many of them do not do it consciously."⁶⁹ "However", Fr. Ruffino asked himself, "but who will take up this task?"

These proposals are meant to assure and foster morality among the boys. The nine following points describe the tasks of the leading superiors in the house and also those of the assistants and teachers.

- Review of important assignments of individual superiors

His summary starts with recommendations to the Director so that “the boys might form a better unity with the superiors, it would be better that the Director of the house is busily engaged with their [the boys’] affairs, both in the field of morals and their studies.” Prompted by Fr. Canepa, Fr. Ruffino suggests that “the Director should have more contact with the pupils. He should not only approach them during recreation but also now and again in class or personally pass on to them their monthly results, etc. In short it would be useful to act in a way that the boys know they have a direct superior, around whom everything turns.”

“While providing these marks for behavior,” he adds in his sixth suggestion, “everybody who is in any way concerned should show the greatest interest. And it would be a good thing if the Director of the house could always be part of it, because that is precisely the best moment to take measures should they prove necessary.”

A fourth point criticized the accumulation of tasks by the Prefect. “Nowadays the activities of the Prefect at the Oratory do not measure up to what the Rules prescribe. Various tasks that are part of that function, are not accomplished at all and as a result, some disorders are not prevented. And when they do occur, no measures are taken to prevent them from occurring again.”

Then the Catechist gets his turn. According to Ruffino, “the task of the Catechist is most important, but also very delicate. That is why he must be a person with a steady character. He must be a combination of earnestness and fatherly affability. When admonishing and reprimanding he must banish every act betraying irritation and - worse still - sarcasm or contempt.”

- Concerning collaboration among the principal superiors: ninth and tenth points

On the one hand, along with Fr. Marchisio, he had noticed that the superiors did not always hit it off amongst them. That is why “there must be the strongest unity between the Prefect of Studies, Catechist, and Prefect in carrying out their respective roles to avoid giving rise to delays, misunderstandings, and discontent.” On the other hand, he must have experienced, together with Fr. Fumagalli, that such disunity has a bad effect on the boys’ behavior. That is why he notices that when “a rule is promulgated for the pupils, all the superiors must make efforts to see it is followed, otherwise it results in general disrespect for the rules.”

- The assistants

His seventh point was made in support to the assistants. While they were certainly not doing so well, they could hardly be blamed for it. “The assistants are in a good mood generally, but they are inexperienced. They need instruction at special meetings on how to supervise, mix with the students, and how to win their respect and sympathy, etc.” It looks like a variant of what T. Pentore hoped for. At the same time ‘respect’ and ‘sympathy’ were also terms Fr. Bonetti used in his report, though this does not mean Fr. Bonetti borrowed them from Fr. Ruffino. If so, he would have treated rather inaccurately the “remarks and proposals” as a whole.

In spite of his gentler attitude with the assistants Fr. Ruffino did not want to shut his eyes to the serious lack of assistance among the students. This concern appears in the eleventh remark: “The boys should not be left unsupervised, neither in the dormitories nor in the classrooms or any other place.” Thus, he shared this concern with T. Pentore and Fr. Fumagalli.

- The teachers

Finally, he concluded that “every teacher’s commitment in the classrooms must be to imprint on the pupils not only love for the studies but also respect and esteem. They should be very prudent during recreation with their comments regarding each other, especially when the boys are near.” This was a softer, more calculated criticism than Fr. Canepa’s who in his contribution made a more direct and serious accusation. Fr. Ruffino’s contribution was well formulated overall and his arguments were well-founded.

Concluding reflections

Somehow neither Fr. Ruffino nor Fr. Fumagalli would have let it be seen that their opinions and proposals were directed to Fr. Bonetti. By contrast to Fathers Febraro, Canepa and Marchisio, both began their responses without the usual

formula of address. Nor did they provide a date. If Fr. Bonetti did receive them, he has not acknowledged them. This may be because, in his view, their items for attention “were part of the numerous other suggestions that could best be put into practice as soon as the Director...” And it may be no less the case that he focused on the situation of the Director at the Oratory. The latter case is obvious in his summary report, but is also visible and at the forefront in the report of the meeting on 5 June 1884.

5.4 An unexpected document

The one who under the heading of “*Disposizioni generali*” (*General Arrangements*) did make use of the Fathers Fumagalli’s and Ruffino’s notes, was Fr. Lemoyne. It was not a recapitulation in the style of Fr. Bonetti’s preparatory work, but rather a compilation of the proposals and considerations of both men.⁷⁰ It is not clear, however, what the criteria were for ordering their subjects in a threefold articulation of this summary. In some places, he has added a personal insight or aspect. But strange enough, he has not attempted in these occasional brief personal additions to insert elements from the letter to the boys or from Ms. C as preparation of his extended presentation. Even the wording of the inserted remark, “The superiors are never amidst the boys” differs from the imputation in the letter to the boys and the text for the confreres: “The superiors were no longer the soul of the recreation time.” (10 and 15).

It is not at all clear what were his intentions in bringing these two contributions together. Nor is it clear if this document played a role in the eventual discussions of the committee and in the Superior Chapter meetings. In any case, in the existing reports, nothing can be found that is convincing. Yet, it is incontestable that he has used certain elements from both confreres to fill up Ms. C. This I have previously hinted at. In an **Appendix** to this section, I will show this more explicitly under the heading “*Indications found in the text itself*”.

6. The meetings of the Superior Chapter end of June-beginning of July 1884

6.1 The assemblies on 27 and 30 June

We do not know why there was no meeting of the Superior Chapter between 5 and 27 June. It may have been because of Don Bosco’s health. On the one hand, one could “see Don Bosco several times a day and it was possible to speak to him either in the confessional, the playground, the dining room, or in his room.” Moreover, he “found relief from the friendly talks with some of his sons, to whom he related recent occurrences, but he preferred more often than not to relate episodes from bygone days in such a way that all “created the illusion that

he had regained his former health.”⁷¹ On the other hand, we are well aware of the constant and clearly stated concern for Don Bosco’s health.

Other causes that prohibited the Superior Chapter to hold meetings, may have been the feast of St-Aloysius, patron saint of the young, held that year on 22 June, and the glorious feast on the occasion of Don Bosco’s Name day on 24 June. A recital was organized on the eve of the event, after which Don Bosco expressed his gratitude. In that talk we find two remarkable ideas. The first one is striking for its sense of humor: “He did not possess the virtues that his sons attributed to him in their affection, and he would try to acquire them in the future, so that on another occasion they would not be telling poetic lies.” To talk in such high spirits about the future, he must have felt pretty well. But the second thought betrays the deeper sense of impending death. He said that “the one thing he did admit was the great love he always had for his boys, to whose welfare he wished to dedicate whatever little lifetime remained for him.” The day became an apotheosis. Bishop Bertagna officiated at the Eucharist and confirmed several boys. At noon “dinner turned out to be a family feast.” The crowning sensation came in the evening when Cardinal Alimonda, the Archbishop of Turin, came to congratulate Don Bosco, remained for the recital, and spoke a few hearty words. On 26 June, Don Bosco let himself be fêted again at the house of Lanzo.⁷² But we do not know who accompanied him there. Because of all this, there was, so to speak, almost no time for problems, but the days must have been tiring.

It is a fact that the Superior Chapter did not meet before 27 June. The report of the meeting which Don Bosco once more presided at, does not mention anything about the urgent problems at the Oratory. That evening, they had enough to do with material and contractual problems in the house at Varazze. In the fourth point of the notes on 30 June, however, we find a couple of data.⁷³ This time Fr. Lazzero had to propose several matters. Among other things, he suggested to give importance to the feast of the Sacred Heart. He wanted to do this “in line with Don Bosco’s intention of obtaining particular graces for the house.” The expression “particular graces” was vague. It might have referred to Don Bosco’s health, but also the situation being dealt with at the Oratory, the meaning which Fr. Bonetti seized upon directly. “He began to talk about the assistance offered to the boys and about the dormitories being open during the day”. Now, the matter of the assistance to the boys undoubtedly had been a theme in the written contributions of the confreres. The question of the dormitories, however, only occurred in T. Pentore’s contribution.

At this point Fr. Lazzero intervened. He gave the reasons why the dormitories must be open during the day. It is a pity that the secretary has not noted these

motives. (FdB1.880 D4-5). Nor do we learn whether or not Fr. Lazzero also mentioned measures to prevent any possible abuses. At a certain moment Don Bosco must have asked these questions: “Who is responsible for discipline? To whom can the teachers and assistants turn to gain support? Who - according to the regulations - is the arbiter in matters of dispute? When a teacher is absent, who has to arrange for another to take his place? I have said we should not worry about expenses, provided that we have everything necessary for maintaining order. The Director is not to see to it himself, but to assure that others do.”

“So I propose”, Don Bosco said, “that we meet again next Friday.” And that was already on 4 July. “The same subject would be resumed.”

The question referring to the responsibility for discipline was the question which Fathers Canepa, Marchisio, and Ruffino had strongly forwarded. And Fr. Bonetti repeated in his report that the Director together with the Prefect, Catechist, and Prefect of Studies had to see to it. The complaint about the support did not come from T. Pentore alone but also from Fr. Fumagalli, who saw how some confreres retreated, and from Fr. Canepa, who experienced how lonely one could be when left to fend for oneself. T. Pendore and Fr. Fumagalli did complain about the absence of teachers or assistants from their assigned tasks. Don Bosco certainly asked questions that went round among the confreres, but concrete answers or measures were not forthcoming on that day.

With the words “we should not worry about expenses,” he only repeated the strong recommendation towards the end of the assembly on 5 June. His view that the Director must not do everything himself was at least a suitable directive for the Director. At the same time, he confirmed an insight he had obtained a long time ago. Indeed, in 1877 he wrote to Fr. Ronchail, the Director at Nice: “From all the above you will realize that *to be a Director means essentially to portion out what needs to be done and then see to it that it is done.*”⁷⁴ So the point for him was not only the fact of delegating itself, but also the delicate question of controlling the delegated task.

In passing, during this intervention, he repeated his query of 5 June regarding catechism instruction: “E il catechismo?” (What about catechism?) There was no further explanation or maybe the Secretary did not annotate any.

6.2 Don Bosco’s intervention

Don Bosco did not even wait till Friday. At least according to a note by Fr. Ceria: “However, the saint was distressed over the frequent disorderliness that caused discontent among the boys.”⁷⁵ This note allows us to see that the earlier

information concerning the letter to the boys, namely that it was meant to initiate a reform of life at the Oratory, had had a slow start. It seems to be a reform that owed less to the letter itself than it did to the assemblies and resolutions made there. However, even this remains to be seen.

Because Don Bosco judged there was no time to be lost, “by his hand he wrote down seven items that he considered essential if the school year was to come to a peaceful end.” He did so under the heading “Temporary measures.” They are the following: “(1) a novena to the holy Virgin Mary for Don Bosco’s intention; (2) kind by attitude toward the boys, making them realize that everything was for their good and the success of their studies; (3) an occasional talk in the evening given to them by the members of the Superior Chapter; (4) assistance: the members of the (House) Chapter should make an effort to be present during the boys’ recreation; (5) the Director or someone acting in his stead should talk to those in charge of the boys and exhort them to make sure that all griping is stopped; (6) encouragement to receive the Sacraments, and to state quite frankly in public that some boys had not gone to confession, neither during the retreat nor for the feast of Mary Help of Christians; (7) Don Bosco (...) had to talk to the boys now and then.”⁷⁶

We can recognize elements in these seven points that are found in the letter to the boys and others that are rather inspired by the contribution of several confreres, or rather through Fr. Bonetti’s summary.

° Elements that were emphasized in the letter to the boys

The influence of the letter is present - though somewhat obscurely - in the second recommendation. The Salesians must mix with the boys in a simple, not severe, “kind way” and, at the same time, make it clear that they are doing everything possible “for the boys’ good”. Valfré had been able to show the efficiency of an informal, kind-hearted contact in the first recreation scene and also to illustrate it with a short commentary. (6-7) In turn, G. Buzzetti had been allowed to recall the blissful time when Don Bosco had been able to be constantly with them. (16)

Essentially Don Bosco recalled these ideas but without using the characteristic expression “the greatest cordiality” or the very important word “familiarity” (19). According to Fr. Ceria’s text he preferred “alle buone”, that is to say a simple approach, one that is friendly, good-natured, informal and at the same time well-mannered.⁷⁷ And that, of course, very much in the spirit of Don Bosco.

On the other hand, as the first of a list of tasks for the boys, Buzzetti had insisted to realize “how much the superiors, teachers, and assistants, study and wear themselves out for love of them.” (27) This implies that the Salesians must show love. How, without this, would the boys be able to experience and acknowledge it? The Salesians can, and must, show their tireless zeal by spending their free time with them and being in time for class and elsewhere. These were the things that left much to be desired according to T. Pentore, Fathers Fumagalli and Ruffino. And so, the second measure went further into the complaints and tactfully called on everyone to renew themselves immediately.

So Don Bosco suggests, in his, perhaps subconscious way, the need for both the affective and effective love.

The emphasis on devotion to Mary Help of Christians and the insistence on the sacraments of Confession and Communion in the first and the sixth of the admonitions show similarity with the letter to the boys. In these admonitions, G. Buzzetti pointed out the faulty confession practice and he gave Don Bosco the instruction to warn everybody that they are children of Mary Help of Christians and should be ready during the novena “to offer a bouquet and to put up with some small mortifications for love of Mary”. (Mss. A and D, 31-32)

◦ Highlights from the responses to Fr. Bonetti’s questions

The ‘written contributions’ discussed above certainly do not bear witness to a strong attention to promoting a living faith. Maybe this aspect was treated orally in the contacts with Fr. Bonetti. In the fourth point of his report, we learn the following: “With a view to educating the boys to virtue and directing them to devotion; with the aim of putting a finger on sore spots and making the boys understand that the Director really cares about their souls, he will take up the task of saying a few words every evening. He will see to it that his words have a well-prepared objective in view, namely of leading his house to exemplary moral conduct and piety.”

This consideration and indirect reprimand puts the heaviest responsibility for morality and religious education on the shoulders of the Director. This, at least in general terms, correctly followed the *Regulations for the Houses*: “The Director has to see to the general progress of things on the spiritual, scholastic, and material level.” On the other hand, these same Regulations determined that “the Catechist [of the secondary school] had to watch over and look after the spiritual needs of the boys in the house, and to ensure that the pupils receive the holy sacraments.” The article referring to the Catechist for the artisans was still more precise: “Besides what was described in the preceding chapter the Catechist for the artisans has to ensure that his boys receive the sacraments of

Confession and Communion at least once a fortnight or monthly and that nobody misses the practices of piety (or plays truant) on Sundays or work-days.”⁷⁸

In connection with his fifth item Don Bosco’s sixth point seems to expect that the Director would be the one to foster sacramental practice. But maybe the conciseness of his wording is deceiving and he meant it for all the educators in general at Valdocco. That would have been reasonable. To maintain a religious practice and help it to flourish; it needed everyone’s involvement. Yet the question persists whether all of them agreed with this outspoken and strong insistence on Don Bosco’s side.

Besides, it seems that Don Bosco wanted to more or less spare, or relieve, the Director. In the fifth point, he asked “the Director or someone else to hold a conference.” Fr. Ruffino had asked for “special conferences” for the young assistants without adding that the director had to do this. T. Pentore, for his part, pleaded for such assemblies in the presence of a superior. Fr. Canepa was vaguer: “Many meetings with even the subordinates having freedom to speak.”

Don Bosco’s special intention was that the assembly or conference, which he ardently wanted to take place, would prevent criticism. According to Fr. Canepa in the brief addition of his report “criticism by the boys and even their hatred” were what the correctly intentioned superior would obtain. On the other hand, Buzzetti’s fourth point regarding the boys hit the same difficulty: “Let them stop grumbling.” (27)

As far as the goodnight was concerned, Fr. Marchisio proposed that only one person should speak in the evening, namely the Director. But Don Bosco was not so confident in his third point. He asked the Superior Chapter members explicitly to give, from time to time, a goodnight talk.

Moreover, under the catchword “assistance, Don Bosco’s fourth point included the Superior Chapter members. He wanted them to make efforts to be with the boys during recreation time. Like Fr. Febraro, he wanted to exclude agitators from contact with the boys and the clerics. However, unlike Fr. Fumagalli, he wished the Superior Chapter members to be directly in contact with the boys rather than leaving it to the Director to bring the boys to them.

Don Bosco desired such contact to materialize. He imposed it in his seventh point. In the future, he would speak to the boys personally “now and again.”

Perhaps he wanted to respond to those who, like Fr. Fumagalli, felt that direct contact with the boys was no longer possible for him now. Yet, Fr. Fumagalli was right. E. Ceria wrote about the situation at the beginning of January 1884: “Don Bosco no longer talked to the boys of the Oratory after evening prayers.”⁷⁹ However, it seems that Don Bosco intended to change this, at least with a prudent “now and again”. But it is rather unlikely that he succeeded.

Fr. Desramaut sums up the year as follows: “A (different) rhythm of life at the Oratory was started in 1884. The years 1885, 1886 and 1887 were for Don Bosco similar to 1884. (...) At Valdocco he now lived a retired life with his secretaries who worried about his health and his comfort.” Following the assemblies at Valdocco in July 1884, he was no longer always there. For the first time he went to Pinerolo for a holiday from 19 July till 22 August. But he was not yet fully recovered at his return home. Shortly after returning to Turin for the retreat at Valsalice, he had to ask for a substitute, Fr. Rua, to hear confessions because it was beyond his strength. “To tell the truth,” Fr. Desramaut concludes, “from the first weeks of July onward he was semi-retired.”⁸⁰ Moreover, he continued to suffer from his left eye. From Rome, on 19 April, he asked Fr. Lemoyne to write to Fr. Rua to tell him that the eye was inflamed. And on 1 June Viglietti noted that he had to read the spiritual reading and the meditation to Don Bosco.”⁸¹

Even if we suppose that E. Ceria had this handwritten document (dated before July 4) at his disposal, it remains difficult to understand why Don Bosco wanted to make these decisions in great haste. Apart from three measures, namely the novena, the familiar contact and the intense engagement for the well-being of the students, in addition to the organization of a conference, there were measures here that could not be realized in a couple of days, that is between June 30 and July 4. And we need to add that, regarding the three measures just mentioned “in the accounts of the house or in Fr. Lazzero’s diary nothing can be found about a special conference during those days”.⁸²

6.3 The July 4 Assembly

On July 4, Don Bosco presided over the following meeting of the Superior Chapter. The situation at Valdocco was only discussed as item number. seven.⁸³

Don Bosco started speaking about the reform of the Oratory and referred to Fr. Lazzero’s words of June 4. At the time, Fr. Lazzero had responded to what he meant by “*applying the house rules as it is done in the other houses*” and safeguarding the unity among the management. This implied that there should

be only one Director at Valdocco. Don Bosco himself had said: “I have looked over the rules that were in force in former times, and I am convinced that they should be observed at the present since they provide for and anticipate all possible needs.” It is difficult to put the central place of the *Regulations* in a clearer light. It may be that for Fr. Lemoyne, the secretary at that time, this was the occasion to change the wording ‘the rules that you have given’ in Ms. C into the unambiguous “the exact observance of the rules of the house.” (24)

° The Director’s role

The first conclusion Don Bosco drew from it, concerned the Director’s role. He took Fr. Lazzero’s side and linked up with the opinions of Fathers Febraro, Canepa, Marchisio and Fumagalli. This is perceivable in what follows: “I have looked over the rules that were in force in former times. (...) But the Director must be in command; he should know his regulations well and also the regulations concerning others and all they have to do so that it should stem from one sole principle. Now, there seems to be relaxation in this area. One says: ‘It is not my responsibility.’ Someone else denies it. They all give orders and so hitches arise. One gives an order, and another does not execute it. Even the assistants want to wield authority, and woe to anyone who interferes with it. So let there be, as before, this principle of authority: that one person alone is responsible. This one person responsible shall not perform any [fixed] work himself; he may stick his thumbs in his belt, but he is to go around and always ask questions, like “did you do that?” and “did you not do it?” He can put someone in charge of reading and answering the mail. Thus, he will not have more than three or four letters in which he needs to check the marginal notes before passing them on to his secretary to answer.”⁸⁴

In the last part of this talk about the Director’s role, Don Bosco reaffirmed what he had said on June 30, that the Director does not have to do the work himself. Rather he should delegate others to do the various tasks.

Once this point of view was determined, Fr. Lazzero reacted and said: “that was not all, although it did represent much trouble.” Again his answer did not affirm much but suggested all kinds of things without adjusting anything concretely. It was sufficient though, to challenge Fr. Bonetti to confront Fr. Lazzero. He asked him “to specify what his difficulties were since, practically speaking, he was the Director.”

Again, Fr. Bonetti succeeded in his intent. Yet, Fr. Lazzero went no further than to repeat his complaint of 16 May and 5 June 1879. He said: “There is no unity because subordinates appeal to different members of the Superior Chapter,

seeking direction and abiding by whatever they were advised.” To elucidate this, Fr. Ceria added in the *Biographical Memoirs*: “which at times was in contradiction with what the director would have told them.” Thus, Fr. Lazzero still looked for the causes elsewhere than in himself, although Don Bosco indicated that it was a must to take the responsibility practically and not to get lost in a multitude of activities.

Once more Don Bosco explained his standpoint. He did not address Fr. Lazzero directly but simply used the third person singular to avoid an insult. “If the Director were to get involved, he would soon find out what needed to be done. Very soon he would become master of all and everything. Let there be one Director of the house to stipulate contracts. One person alone should accept those who must belong to the house; one person alone must be in charge of expelling students; one person alone to stipulate the work that needs to be done at the Oratory. This person is the Director. He alone may invite guests to dine, or should at least be informed in advance before invitations are sent out so that he will not find himself at the table with unknown or unexpected guests. The only authority the Superior Chapter has at the Oratory is the same authority it exercises toward any particular house. The Oratory Director must have that same freedom of action that all the other directors exercise in their houses. It is for him to decide if any work is to be undertaken, and the Superior Chapter only has to approve or reject his plan, while always taking the director’s opinion into due consideration. The Superior Chapter is not the master of this house. The one who commands is the local Director. I repeat that during the last few days I read over the *Rules of the houses* very carefully and did not come across anything that needs to be changed. So let there be unity in direction. The staff in this house is at the service of the Director and of no one else.”

This intervention by Don Bosco may be an excellent occasion to ask a question concerning a change in the versions of Mss. C and D of the combined text. In Ms. C Fr. Lemoyne had written that for a return to the former system to materialize it was necessary that the Salesians would be “all things to all, fathers to the boys...” In Ms. D he altered the plural into a singular: “let the superior be all things to all.” (23) Could this not have happened after the meeting on 4 July 1884?

Don Bosco spoke for all those present. It must have been a support for Fr. Lazzero and a rap on the knuckles for the members of the Superior Chapter. Thus, Don Bosco considered the matter to be closed. Rightly so, or was he too

optimistic? Did he reckon sufficiently with Fr. Lazzero's character? Was he the man to throw himself courageously into the matter? Were the other members ready to discuss possible complaints or personal findings with him as head of the institution? The future was to reveal it.⁸⁵

° Morality among the boys

Don Bosco's next issue was moral behavior among the boys, the issue which the Committee had been given to study. He began with the question: "What measures might be taken in the coming year to ensure the sound moral conduct of the fourth and fifth years of high school?" This was practically the question he had given to the Committee on June 5 to study. But it does not seem that he let the reporter Fr. Bonetti speak to explain his findings. According to the account, Don Bosco himself continued with his view on the question: "I have decided, he added, to warn the boys that they will not be promoted to the upper classes next year unless they plan to enter the clerical state." And also "that the Oratory cannot guarantee pupils their admittance to the examinations for the high school diploma." This last point was a bridge too far for Fr. Durando who had been responsible for all the schools since 1876. He maintained "that such a measure would drive away any brilliant pupils, while the mediocre intellects would remain. Some pupils one would like to expel, will not fail to come." Fr. Durando meant that they should look at things in a different way: "It was only studies and assistance toward their success in them that induced the boys to be good." In fact, he was simply confirming the second of the seven ideas that Don Bosco had noted previously, namely "that care had to be taken for their studies."

Yet, at that moment, Don Bosco could not let the objection stand. He retorted passionately: "I do not wish to be contradicted, but rather I want to be supported in this plan which I believe is the best way to reach my objective." Fr. Lemoyne noted that "Fr. Durando withdrew his objection."

° Conclusion of the assembly

Thereupon Don Bosco concluded the meeting and fixed a new date, Monday 7 July to reconvene. Maybe he was feeling too tired or was suffering headaches again.⁸⁶ Or he felt that the others were stricken by his strong reaction and rather authoritarian behavior. Concluding the meeting he added: "Everyone is to help the Director. Father Michael Rua will give a talk to the whole house staff in this connection. But first, he must wait until we agree. Here, we need to think hard. The short goodnight talk is the master-key to the house. Much, if not everything hinges on it."

His addition once more stressed the assembly's first point: that one head is needed and that all must contribute their part so that he can also be Director. Then came two emphases (out of the seven) that he had noted after the meeting of 30 June, but probably not yet communicated to the others. It concerned the fifth point about the conference that was to be held. Now he decided who must do it, namely Fr. Rua and what was to be the theme. His third point was the aphorism so frequently quoted subsequently: "The goodnight is the master-key to the house." This idea that is a repetition of his intimate conviction that he had written in his little work on the Preventive System: "This [the address after night prayers] is the key to good behavior, to the smooth running of the school and to success in education."⁸⁷

6.4 The assembly on 7 July.⁸⁸

The few days between the two meetings were used by Don Bosco or his secretary to make a summary of the discussion and possibly also of the contributions to the overshadowing problem of the director's concrete role. The summary contains decisions in the form of four pieces of advice. So he began that day with the third point on the agenda: "about the running of matters at the Oratory".

- The first part of the assembly was dedicated to try and solve the problem of the directorate
 - Summary of the Director's tasks

In the main, Don Bosco's standpoint regarding the Director's tasks is as follows. The first four tasks are necessary:

"1° Unity of government." This was essential, meaning there should be only one Director. "The Director must be well aware of the tasks assigned to each of his subordinates."

"2° He shall entrust the sorting of the mail to someone else. He shall read over the annotations."

"3° He will admit or dismiss the domestic staff of the house and enroll or expel pupils on whatever grounds he thinks fit in each specific case."

"4° As far as possible, the Director will limit his action to checking to see whether or not his subordinates are doing their jobs, but he should not take up any specific job."

Then four points follow, two of which specify the third recommendation and two others remind the Director of very concrete points of attention.

1) “Only boys wishing to enter the clerical state, preferably the boys who show some sign that they wish to become Salesians, will be admitted as students.” This directive let them understand that he had given thought to the question on 5 June to examine the problem of enrolling boys.

2) “Anyone who said, hinted at, or did anything contrary to morality should be expelled with the utmost severity. One should not be afraid to use excessive rigor in such instances.” This supported Fr. Bertello’s severe approach. The emphasis of this norm seems to mean that they had not taken or did not take sufficient action either before or after his return from Rome.

3) “Let any boy who does not go frequently to Holy Communion and who is neglectful in his devotions, learn a trade; he should never be admitted to studies.”⁸⁹

4) “The Director should talk affably with the students outside the confessional; he should often call them individually to enquire after their needs, their health, their studies, their problems, their vocation, etc.”

Don Bosco’s summary testified to the fact that he wanted to pay sufficient attention to solving the tricky but urgent problem concerning the Director in the Valdocco community although this item did not belong to the two he had put on the table at the opening of the assembly of 5 June.

° New discussion on the problem

Yet his proposals and recommendations did not satisfy everybody. Fathers Cagliero and Lazzeri rejected immediately the idea that “the Director and the members of the Oratory Chapter were expected to do too many things in that particular house.” They were overwhelmed by their tasks. It seems that their objection opened a new discussion about what was considered as a difficult problem.

During the continued exchange of ideas, Don Bosco made some important, and even surprising announcements about the distribution of tasks and especially about lightening the number of tasks of some confreres.

Don Bosco linked in with remarks by both Chapter members, saying: “Everyone is to do only what he was assigned to do.” He made this concrete for the Catechist and the Director: “Let the Catechist teach catechism. (...) The Catechist is the key to the Oratory and its smooth running.” This statement was a particularly high regard of that office. As for the Director he highlighted: “his sole, true task is to always be vigilant and to supervise everything and

everyone.” So it remained a repetition of a well-known standpoint and a tacit reference to the Regulations.

This answer was still insufficient for Fr. Lazzero and he objected: “In this case, the Director is no longer able to have direct contact with the boys.” This can only mean that Fr. Lazzero felt less than happy looking after administrative and organizational matters, exercising general control and accompanying staff, as stimulating as that might be. Direct contact with the youngsters, and hence the pastoral and pedagogical dimensions were more desirable for him.

Rather unexpectedly, Don Bosco did not answer that for a Director it was not a question of one or the other but a judicious one with the other.⁹⁰ He chose a surprising element to express his viewpoint: “If the Director is unable to call in the boys, then he should have the Catechist do it.” This comes down to ‘delegating’, a term Don Bosco probably did not know, but practiced. He had already done so in a previous meeting, also regarding the handling of the mail and the time-consuming answering of letters.

This vision of the directorship was supported by Fr. Barberis who added that “the main duty of the Director was to control his staff which at the Oratory consisted of about 60 or 70 Salesians.” From him, too, we learn that there were more than the 13 or 14 mentioned by an Irish boy or the 35 or so found in the report of a meeting in November 1882. His contribution may be interpreted as before all else, the formation and accompaniment of Salesians are necessary. This should be understood to mean that a Director has enough reason to be content with doing just this important duty.

Don Bosco did not confirm this standpoint as such. He repeated the principle: “I say once more, let everyone do his job.” And he applied this in passing to the Superior Chapter members. “The Superior Chapter members are only to attend to their respective offices, eliminating all other tasks. (...) The [general] Catechist should abandon all occupations extraneous to his office, and should instead endeavor to know all the members of the Congregation; then, to lighten his burden and comply with the rule at the same time, he shall get them to consult with the Provincial in their respective provinces. The Oratory Chapter members must work together if they want things to run smoothly.”⁹¹

Fr. Lazzero then cleverly turned the conversation to Valdocco and more precisely to the House Chapter members. “They had a good spirit but needed formation.” Don Bosco probably availed himself of this contribution to give Fr. Lazzero some useful pieces of advice. For, though he again formulated them in the third person, they seem to be intended for Fr. Lazzero. They sound like if the cap fits, wear it: “The director should always listen to them kindly, encourage

them to talk, dispel misunderstandings and their bad humor. He should put up with the liveliness [of the young, far too young assistants] or their human faults. He should be tolerant, not harsh. Let him be the ring encircling everyone with his charity.” It is possible, I presume once more, that this answer inspired Fr. Lemoyne to alter the plural (Ms. C) into the singular in the combined version (Ms. D). (23)

- Concerning Don Bosco’s inevitable need for a successor

Don Bosco redirected the conversation into another way. He began speaking of his situation. It looks as if he understood that he was to give an example of ‘delegating’: “In my present state of physical and mental exhaustion, I cannot continue any longer. I need to have Father Michael Rua at my side, to take my place in many things and help me in others that I am hardly able to carry out by myself.”

This ‘delegating’ of competences and burdening with new duties would have consequences for Fr. Rua in terms of his already onerous role. “Therefore, Fr. Michael Rua should no longer hold a specific office here in the house. Let others take over his duties concerning the Salesian Society, such duties being strictly speaking those of an administrator. Someone, a procurator, should be appointed to take charge of legacies, credits, debits, litigations, contracts, testaments. Let a priest be in charge, or a layman, or a lawyer or a procurator to deal with these matters. Let him look after claims and administrative matters. If Father John Savio were to take on these duties, he would be ideally suited for handling them.”

It is remarkable that for several things he thought of a layman and a professional, even if he should, in the first instance, have had a lay-brother in view and thus a member of the Congregation. Eventually, however, it could be a priest in the person of Fr. Savio.

We may admit however, that the Superior Chapter members were listening to his proposals with increasing astonishment. They barely had time to recover, for he had two more things to say.

- Aspects that can promote the smooth running of the Oratory.

According to the account, Don Bosco announced that he still wanted to communicate two more aspects concerning the Oratory.

- At first, he spoke very briefly about a matter that the spiritual director or Catechist should have at heart.

- Then he addressed the admission of boys. When admitting or enrolling boys, we need to intuit “an inclination to enter the ecclesiastical state.” That was a repetition of his standpoint at the beginning of the session. He did not repeat the term “apostolic school” from the meeting on 5 June, but it is obvious that he wanted to increase vocation numbers through careful prior examination, even if this meant decreasing the number of students attending secondary classes.

However, this selection at the time of enrollment was not sufficient. Furthermore, he asked them “to be careful that the poison of immorality does not find its way among the boys. Should it be unfortunately that this poison finds it way, unobserved, it would remain invisible and in the end would cause general irreparable damage.” He explained in greater detail what he wanted to be done with regard to the moral standards among the boys. “If you do not wish to warn the boys that next year they will be readmitted to the Oratory only if they aspire to the ecclesiastical state, then think of some other way to achieve the same end.”

Don Bosco maintained the strategy of purifying the house that he had sketched toward the end of the meeting on 4 July. During that meeting Fr. Durando had openly reacted against it. Maybe during the following couple of days Don Bosco had had to understand that his own standpoint was not shared. Hence the conditional “even if this meant”. If they did not agree to organize expulsion in the way he proposed, they should try to find another way to prevent some boys from returning after the holidays. His objective was to be maintained and realized.

Fr. Cagliero had understood this immediately. Concerning the boys of the fourth and the fifth years he had - in any case - a rather diplomatic proposal in store: “As soon as the boys have gone home on vacation, we can write to all those we no longer want to have with us, telling them that they will not be readmitted this coming year unless they renew their application for enrollment to which we can answer yes or no, as the case may be.” (EMB XVII, 169)

The secretary noted that the “Superior Chapter approved.” But it would not have gone ahead unscathed. Don Bosco had thought here of the “four most essential cases.” They must have discussed the precise formulation of the letter. Finally, he gave the instruction to write a letter in the following tenor: “Unless you (the boy addressee) receive confirmation of enrollment by a certain date, make other arrangements for continuing your studies elsewhere.” And he added: “Fr. Cerruti should be asked how he had formulated his letter.” These were only a couple of sentences taken from a larger whole, but they made the procedure simpler than Fr. Cagliero’s proposal was, as letters would no longer need to be replied to.

This procedure would also prevent arguing on the part of parents, guardians, or parish priests, but it was more abrupt and less humane. It would still need a closer examination to see if this proposal would, in practice, prevent a kind-hearted superior from providing a favorable report and if it would overcome Fr. Lazzero's resentment. For those present, Don Bosco's manner of intervening once more was a good motive "for certain boys to no longer be kept in the house. Whenever they reveal certain indications that they have not been called to the priesthood, and whenever their conduct is suspicious, they should be removed from the group of students and sent away."

This decision probably implied that they respected Fr. Cagliero's opinion that they should wait until the holidays began. Since the end of the school year was getting closer Don Bosco probably wanted to send away only few or none at all. Moreover, number four is significant. Were this decision to be announced to the confreres at the time, this approach may have left Fathers Canepa and Fumagalli somewhat disappointed. And possibly Fr. Bertello too, who had opted for 'severity'. But it would have especially disappointed Fr. Lemoyne who would ultimately insert the wording "should be unbending" in the definitive version of Ms. D. (24)

In the meantime, the discussion and ultimate decision on July 7, seem to sideline Fr. Lemoyne's information and Fr. Ceria's note regarding their proposed timeline for expulsions.⁹² It would not have happened that quickly.

6.5 Meeting of the Superior Chapter on 19 July

Concerning the report on the subsequent Superior Chapter on July 19, P. Braido restricts himself to the introduction: "Don Bosco recalls what had been said in the last sessions about the Oratory. They should read and put into practice what has been deliberated by the Chapter." One senses certain impatience here, although in the previous sessions they did not always come to formal decisions. For the most part, they ended with declarations of intent and recommendations. However, the report we find in the archives begins promisingly: "Don Bosco recalls what had been said about the Oratory in the last session [singular]." And that promise is fulfilled. Fr. Ceria provides an extensive report of the meeting in the *Biographical Memoirs*.⁹³ From that report, it becomes clear that Don Bosco has presented his thoughts concerning three of his wishes, though in a less orderly way. They may be summed up rather briefly.

- First, there are two elements regarding the boys

- The boys' behavior

Following the introduction, he said: "We are always deceived as to the conduct of the boys because they always receive good monthly marks from the *decurions*. When we know that a boy is bad, we must not deceive ourselves with hopes that he will reform." That is a rather pessimistic statement which one does not expect so directly from Don Bosco. It shows that he and his co-workers sometimes encountered limited possibilities of education. At least according to the norms, they established in certain circumstances.

- Admitting boys for the next school year

Then he addressed the question of admissions. Concerning this problem, he maintained his conviction: "I foresee that whether we want it or not, our schools will have to follow the directives of the so-called apostolic schools. Insofar as possible, we must only take in the boys who wish to become Salesians or go to the missions. Any boy who is enrolled under these conditions and who does later not want to become a Salesian will pay full tuition if he wishes to stay on." To protect themselves: "upon the termination of the holidays, no boy will be readmitted if he does not submit a report of good conduct signed by his parish-priest. (...) And even if some of them show such certificate, we should question the pastor confidentially, promising to keep his information secret." Furthermore: "whenever there is a boy who promises to become a good Salesian we must not give any heed to expenses, whether he can pay the fees or not. Let the house provide."

It looks as if he has forgotten his outburst on 5 June against the pastors. Of course, he needed them to find vocations in the parishes. Besides, it will not be surprising for him to carry through with a selection and adjust the fees.

- Strengthening the administration of the houses

In between Don Bosco spoke about his intention to select capable Salesians for the most important roles in the houses and so strengthen the leadership team. He aimed at "reforming the Chapters in each house, and checking to see in particular, if the Catechists are equal to their office. The Prefect of Studies should be informed of what is being done in individual classes and should visit them often." As far as the Oratory was concerned, during "these holidays the required staff must be provided for the house [the Oratory]. In particular the Catechist." As for the rest, "each one should perform the duty particular to his office before God."

Don Bosco carried out his plan for the Oratory in September 1884. In spite of Fr. Rua's advice to try it with Fr. Canepa one more year, Don Bosco transferred him to the house in Nice, France.⁹⁴ Also in September, after an intense discussion, came the decision to appoint two directors in the Oratory, Fr. Francesia for the academic students and Fr. Lazzero for the trade students.⁹⁵

Regarding the assemblies held between 19 July and 4 September, we learn from Fr. Ceria that "the Superior Chapter no longer concerned itself with any discipline matters until September." This probably was due to Don Bosco's absence. He must have left for Pinerolo on 20 July, probably the day after he had presided at the assembly of the Superior Chapter meeting, which lasted till late in the evening. He would return to Turin only on 22 August.⁹⁶

Fr. Ceria's diary over that period, relates an occurrence which throws particular light on Fr. Lemoyne's working out both the letter to the boys and the longer 'circular' for the confreres at Valdocco.

7. The effect of a dream-narrative

After reporting on the minutes of the Superior Chapter meeting on 7 July Fr. Ceria inserted an episode from Don Bosco's life.⁹⁷ His introduction to this was a brief single line: "Absorbed by such considerations, the saint had a dream in July." Fr. Ceria seems to accentuate here the connection between psychic pressure and the dream. By describing Don Bosco as "dominato da tutti questi pensieri," it is much more than 'absorbed by.' And by what? All the endless concerns regarding the director's role, admissions, expulsions, morality among the boys and how to agree on a re-enrollment process. But above all there was his constant awareness of his "physical and mental exhaustion to the point where he could no longer continue." All this once more was fertile ground for insomnia and the domination of ideas and images which would leave him exhausted.

E. Ceria's insertion of that dream in this part of the *Biographical Memoirs* does not ensure that the incident took place directly after these discussions. It may have happened later, for instance, after the meeting of 19 July or even during the stay at Pinerolo, where Fr. Lemoyne and the cleric Viglietti were present to help Don Bosco. Moreover, E. Ceria was rather free in adjusting reports of the meetings during this period.

Following his brief introduction, he provided a concise summary of the dream-narrative: "During the next few days, Don Bosco summarized for Father John Baptist Lemoyne what he had seen, but he only told him what he had heard in general, namely the praise of purity, how to guard it, and the rewards given to it

in this world and the next. Then he told him to use this as a clue for a topic to be developed freely. The secretary obeyed but he never had the chance to read the long composition to Don Bosco.”⁹⁸

There is no talk of a specific time in which Fr. Lemoyne started the task entrusted to him or of a date when he concluded the work of writing things up. Very significant in Fr. Ceria’s comment is Don Bosco’s working method, which is to give Fr. Lemoyne only a few suggestions and for the rest let him completely free. Maybe in the background, the intention was to exercise control over time through correction, completion, removing errors and ensuring authenticity this way. Especially striking in this ‘method’ is the similarity with how the two texts must have been written, namely the one to the boys and, also the explanation or, to use Fr. Ceria’s words, the composition for the confreres, regarding the way of tackling the pastoral and pedagogical problems at Valdocco.

It even evokes the notion that during the calm days at Pinerolo it was possible that Fr. Lemoyne was not yet working on this recently assigned task, but on finishing off the so-called long version for the confreres at Valdocco, amongst other things, inserting the alterations and additions I occasionally indicated while commenting on the content. This hypothesis helps us understand why no trace of the unfinished; and as yet unknown “long” or combined composition for the confreres at Valdocco, appears in the exchange of views and discussions during the first months after Don Bosco’s return from Rome.

Of course, this is an assumption. The real date of the final version of the longer ‘letter’ must perhaps be placed later, much later. In any case, that is P. Braido’s opinion. In 1999 he writes: “The texts [the quotations] borrowed from the final version, at quite some distance (in time and place) from the month of May in Rome, are identical with those of the preparatory manuscripts (Mss. B and C). These two documents were written in the capital between the end of April and the end of May 1884.”⁹⁹ However, he does not justify this statement. Whatever the case, in his footnote he goes a step further than in 1984. At that time he wrote that it is “difficult, however, to be sure if and when that long version was sent and how it was communicated to the people concerned and what reactions it provoked.” And further on in his comment: “Also in the possible hypothesis that it [the long version] was written much later.”¹⁰⁰ But it is remarkable that at that time he already doubted the traditionally proposed and highlighted date of 10 May 1884.

Fr. Ceria’s note about Don Bosco’s manner of working also mentioned that Fr. Lemoyne “could not read the long composition (on purity) to Don Bosco” or, and this is worth noting, perhaps could not let him read it.¹⁰¹ The longer it took

before Fr. Lemoyne could work on the dream (on purity), or bring it to a conclusion (which might include the period when Don Bosco was no longer able to do the reading or had died), the more probable Fr. Ceria's note applies to the dream-story in July 1884. But his annotations go also so for the final elaboration of the long version of the so-called 'extended letter from Rome.' In this perspective Fr. Ceria's annotations about that dream-narrative are significant.

8. Superior Chapter meetings at the end of August 1884

Fr. Ceria rightly wrote that during Don Bosco's absence the Superior Chapter no longer looked after "the discipline at the Oratory." Not even by the end of August. At any rate not directly. This did not prevent any of the members, not even Don Bosco, from commenting revealing what, in his eyes, was important if things at the Oratory were to improve.

8.1 Meeting on 26 August 1884

Although Don Bosco had returned from Pinerolo, Fr. Rua was presiding at the meeting of the Superior Chapter on 26 August.¹⁰² It was entirely devoted to material things. In the fifth and last item on the agenda they discussed renovation work in "the underground spaces of the Mary Help of Christians Church." Fr. Sala, the general Prefect, observed that the opportunity could be seized to "make a convenient passage for the artisans," a passage from their actual playground to the one near the printing-office and the little church. "Thus we could start with the project and the separation between the academic students and the artisans." The plan and the separation he had in mind fitted in with structural measures which, in his opinion, could contribute to maintaining order and discipline and also to fostering morality.

8.2 Assemblies on 29 and 30 August

On 29 August, they assembled three times. Twice under the chairmanship of Don Bosco and once under Fr. Rua's. They met mainly to discuss the admission to the novitiate. On 30 August, they continued this discussion in the presence of Fr. Febbraro, the Prefect of Studies of the secondary school at Valdocco and Fr. Chiesa, the Director of the college at Varazze.¹⁰³ During the discussion on the request of a candidate from the Ivrea diocese, Fr. Febbraro put forward that "he had made the retreat badly and that in the church he was often talking to a certain Bertero."

Then Don Bosco took the floor. This was his standpoint: "As a rule one should not compromise with morality. It is better to refuse admission if there are doubts regarding morality than to accept someone who perhaps is immoral. Concerning

lack of earnestness, weak education, and poor results one may compromise. But morality is fundamental. Experience shows that trying to avoid meeting the superiors is a sign of immorality.” His intervention manifests his strongest conviction and confirms what was indicated in Ms. C and in the letter to the boys in the description of pupils who withdrew from the games in the playground. Especially those who formed cliques and stood out for their suspicious behavior and avoiding contact with the educators. (9-10 and 28)

When discussing another candidate for the novitiate, he gave the following advice: “Treat him attentively and admit him in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales.” When at the end of the letter to the boys the spirit of St. Francis de Sales is called on once more, it is perhaps not so unexpected or less out of place than I may first have thought. (34)

9. The situation in September 1884

Though during his stay in Rome Don Bosco could barely write a letter himself, after his return to Valdocco, around the middle of May, and also at Pinerolo, he succeeded in writing a little. On 30 July, he humbly requested a female contributor at Genoa to “Please excuse my bad handwriting. It’s the handwriting of a poor old and ‘half-blind’ man.”¹⁰⁴ So it is obvious that in such a situation he could no longer review extended texts written by his secretary.

In general terms we could say that he could no longer recover. Yet he felt better again at Pinerolo. But on 8 August he had to admit to Fr. Cagliari: “Although my health is much better I cannot go to Nizza [Monferrato] which I had so much wanted to do.”¹⁰⁵ Having returned to Turin only by 22 August, he had to cease hearing confessions on 3 September, as we already mentioned, because his physical strength had left him.

9.1 Superior Chapter assembly on 4 September

Nevertheless the next day he was on his feet again for the meeting of the Superior Chapter. It resumed its activities and met at Valsalice during the retreat in that college. Fr. Ceria is convinced that “Don Bosco was steadfast in his determination to give a satisfactory reorganization to the Oratory.” The item was once again on the agenda for the September meeting “to appoint new personnel for the various houses; he always went back to the issue.”¹⁰⁶ Maybe Don Bosco was steadfast in this respect. However, it was Fr. Rua who on 4 September proposed it without the slightest hesitation. Maybe already before, he had ensured that Fathers Lazzero and Francesia were not present. So he and others could speak without being hampered. He suggested appointing Fr. Lazzero, till then Director of the Oratory in its entirety, as Prefect General for Vocational

Training Schools. This would respond to “a decision of the Third General Chapter” (1883), namely to create an office for the Artisans’ Schools. “He (Fr. Lazzero) would be for the workshops and the artisans what the Councilor for schools (Fr. Durando) was for all the colleges, schools, teachers and pupils of the Congregation. He would appoint Fr. Francesia Director of the Oratory.”¹⁰⁷

But Fr. Rua immediately felt resistance. Fr. Sala, the Economer General, feared interference with his job. Fr. Cagliari squarely backed the idea of the appointment of two separate directors, one for the academic students and another for the artisans. One of his arguments was that a single Director for both groups “would be swamped” (“in an immeasurable sea”). He used the same metaphor that Fr. Fumagalli had used in a previous contribution. Some people agreed with Fr. Rua and others supported Fr. Cagliari. The discussions were vehemently animated. The insights remained diametrically opposed. According to Fr. Barberis “Fr. Lazzero did not have the character to be a resolute referee in the problems that only existed at the Oratory.” However, according to other members the new Director [Fr. Francesia] did not have all the attributes required for maintaining the proper order at the Oratory.” One of the members advanced the idea of a super-director above the other two.

After a long discussion Fr. Rua moved to sum up the discussion. Don Bosco, who had let everyone have their say, thought the moment had come for him to speak. He said: “It is hard to find someone agreeable and acceptable to all: one will find him too gentle; another, less acquiescent; a third, too careless; and a fourth too strict. We are but human beings and we have to act accordingly. Let us make our feasible resolutions. In my opinion, the only objection there might be in the case of Fr. John Baptist Francesia is that he is too kindhearted. But he has such learning and piety that he is unmatched. He has worked for a long time at the Oratory. That’s why I know him well. He does whatever needs to be done and he is very well versed in the *Rules*.” He thus demonstrated his support for Fr. Rua’s proposal. Fr. Francesia was his candidate too, as the single overall Director.

Thereupon someone, who was not impressed by Don Bosco’s arguments, objected that all the good that could be said of Fr. Francesia could also be said of Fr. Bertello. As if he had heard nothing at all, Fr. Rua immediately tackled the problem of appointing a Catechist. The contributions to the matter of the Commission’s discussion, handled before, have shown that Fr. Canepa was not the most suitable candidate. Appointing a new teacher for the Rhetoric year was also proposed. Finally, Don Bosco cut the knot of the Director’s appointment: “Fr. Francesia [present Director of the college of Valsalice] would come to the Oratory and Fr. Cesare Cagliari would be in charge of Valsalice.” And thus the matter was decided.

During the assemblies of 6 and 11 September, indeed, no new comment was made. Other points of the agenda, such as the admission of novices, the permission to make the vows and the discussion of all sorts of demands for material amendments in some houses were urgent. According to what he had said, he had trouble keeping his Chapter united enough to be able to deal thoroughly with matters regarding the Congregation.¹⁰⁸

9.2 Meeting of the members of the Superior Chapter on 12 September

But it was not long before it became evident that despite a decision being already taken, the question of the directorship was not yet settled. We learn this through the account of the assembly on 12 September. Although Don Bosco's left leg was sore again and had been swelling more and more during the night, he presided at the assembly.¹⁰⁹ It would be a long, tiring day. They gathered from eleven till almost half past twelve and a second session from a quarter to four till six o'clock. I limit myself to the afternoon assembly.

- A decision with a far-reaching consequence

The first point of that afternoon has had a permanent influence on the Congregation. The Economist General placed the design of a coat of arms on the table. At the bottom of the design the following text from the Gospel had been inscribed as a motto: "Let the little children come to me." It was a significant phrase because it strikingly defined the scope of Don Bosco's life and work. He offered opportunities for growth and development to young people who were abandoned, neglected, and otherwise discriminated against, doing so in a way that was accessible and welcoming to them, exposed as they were to so many risks. He promoted opportunities at the bodily, intellectual, moral and religious levels. Nevertheless, Don Bosco did not approve of the suggested idea. He preferred the motto that was already hanging on the wall in his room in the fifties and which he had explained to Dominic Savio: "Da mihi animas, coetera tolle" which broadly translated, means: "Give me souls, all the rest does not interest me." Saving souls, the eternal happiness of the youngsters, this was his ultimate concern. That was also demonstrated in the letter to the boys at Valdocco. His choice of the motto was readily approved by the members.¹¹⁰ It would permanently characterize the Congregation and occasionally remind members of fidelity to its core-task.

- Furthering morality among the boys

How preoccupied he was with the moral and spiritual well-being of his boys appeared once more in point eight of the session. He impressed the following

idea on the members of the Chapter: “We must try to keep away every forbidden book from our pupils, even if prescribed for the schools [by the civil authority]. Even less, should we offer such books for sale. (...) We should read and have the boys preferably read the lives of our pupils.” He sought a preventive education where reading was concerned in two ways: by hindering on the one hand, and by being constructive and stimulating on the other.¹¹¹ No argument is needed to prove that this item of the meeting in September 1884 was not influenced by his suggestions at the beginning of May in Rome, nor by Fr. Lemoyne’s elaboration.

No less resolute was his reproach to the Salesians: “We do not sufficiently esteem our publications. Some of us find it humiliating to give religious books to the pupils of the fourth or fifth years.” And so his marked concern for these classes came once more into prominence. He shared this concern with several Salesians answering the Commission’s inquiry in June, but he probably believed more strongly than they did in the moral effect of good reading matter.

- Maintaining the educative system

Point ten of the account expressed a no less important concern. His advice was: “You should make every effort to introduce and practice the preventive system in our houses. The Directors must give conferences about this very important topic and about its countless benefits for saving souls and for God’s glory.” It sounds more or less like an echo of a few lines of the text that Fr. Lemoyne prepared out for the confreres. (22-23). But Lemoyne used neither the official name “Preventive System” nor did he use the term “benefits of the system.” But Don Bosco had made use of it at the end of the Third General Chapter.¹¹² And he did so again during the session in the afternoon. What he failed to do was to provide concrete directives concerning the content of the conferences or a personal survey of the eventual benefits. Nor did he in any way draw on valuable or illustrative passages from the so-called long version.

- Decision on the double directorship

Don Bosco went on to the question of the directorship at the Oratory: “Father John Baptist Francesia must join us here at the Oratory and administer this house together with Father Joseph Lazzero.” After his decision on 4 September this must have appeared as ‘backing down’. That is the reason why he must have felt obliged to justify the new decision this way: “One Director alone is out of the question given the number of people there are in the house here at Valdocco. Father Joseph Lazzero asked me several times to exempt him from such responsibility. So we must divide the burden between Father John Baptist

Francesia and Father Joseph Lazzero. Father John Baptist will mind the students and all matters regarding them and Father Joseph Lazzero will look after the artisans and carry out the office of Catechist in all matters concerning the artisans in other houses of the Congregation. He will concern himself with all matters relating to the moral conduct and discipline of the artisans both here at the Oratory and in the entire Congregation. (...) We will have to work out a *modus vivendi* between Father John Baptist Francesca and Father Joseph Lazzero that will function when we are here and when we are no longer here, so it may continue after us. If we wanted to concentrate all the authority of the whole Oratory in one single person, we would have to establish a new system of rules, and I do not intend to modify our system.” What he meant by this is not clear without further comment. He probably wished to say that he wanted to maintain the Preventive System. And he continued: “Insofar as it is possible, the artisans are to form an autonomous section. The students must also be an autonomous section independent from the artisans. If we do not fittingly organize the staff we will find ourselves in a monstrous confusion and chaos. Father Joseph Lazzero has informed me several times of this in writing.”¹¹³

In practice, Don Bosco offered three arguments for the appointment of two directors. The first to be mentioned was the huge number of individuals at the Oratory. This had been pointed out by Fathers Febraro, Canepa and Fumagalli, at least about the number of Salesians involved. But perhaps Don Bosco also included the number of boys in his calculations. So he could have taken “changed circumstances” into account while also considering ideas coming from the confreres. A second argument was backed by Fr. Lazzero’s vision and desire. Don Bosco must have known this also in June and July, for “Fr. Lazzero had informed him several times in writing.” By appealing to Fr. Lazzero Don Bosco protected himself from that side. Thus they could expect an agreement from Fr. Lazzero. No resentment nor opposition were to be feared. After this, Don Bosco added a third motive, namely the conviction that this organization was needed to guarantee the system, that is to say, the Preventive System with all it contained.

It should not be excluded that Don Bosco had still another argument in reserve for the unexpected change. In the meantime, they may have been able to convince him that Fr. Francesca was truly not the man to administer both sections together.¹¹⁴

- Managing the introduction of the double directorship

Nevertheless, the strength of his arguments did not prevent Don Bosco from remaining realistic and calculating the effects of human sensitivities and

failures. Concretely, among other things, at the level of organization this meant the introduction of a “modus vivendi” between Fathers Lazzero and Francesia. But no less necessary was the mentality, the correct attitude of both men concerned. Thus shortly after he claimed: “With our experience, good will and agreement between the two Directors and by modifying and changing things we will be able to solve all our problems”. He had enough experience to advise them: “We do not have to establish hard and fast principles immediately, but we should carefully investigate how to put my plan into practice, so that we can build on it further. Some traditional maxims, that were valuable norms up till now, must be maintained. However, some things must be handled with greater calm.”

This gradualness and cautiousness did not remove Fr. Rua’s fear. He remarked that it was essential that the duties of both Directors be specified, to eliminate eventual mistrust, friction, etc.”

That was the signal to re-open the discussion. Fr. Cagliero stood out for his sober attention to daily affairs, and his flexibility. Maybe also for a bit of humor. He replied that “friction sets the ship in motion” and then: “As for possible friction, it can be dealt with as it arises.” Fr. Barberis asked some not superfluous questions. So for instance: “Would it not be better for the Provincial to be Director of the Oratory, leaving the two in charge of the artisans and students as vice-directors?” But Don Bosco seemed to be unflinching: “Let us start by appointing two directors to safeguard discipline.”

This admonition reminded once more of the real purpose he had had in mind all the time, and which he still insisted on in the guise of the double directorship: the solution to this question was to be found under the banner of the revival of order and discipline and hence of morality among the boys.

9.3 Superior Chapter assemblies under Fr. Rua’s presidency

The transition to a new model of leadership must have been difficult. After the meeting on 12 September, the Superior Chapter met several times between 18 and 22 September. Fr. Rua had to preside because Dr. Fissore had wanted Don Bosco to remain in bed to give a good rest to the leg that was swollen again. Moreover, his patient was feverish all the time.

◦ On 18 September they met mainly to establish the personnel for the Oratory. Fr. Rua began with the laconic announcement: “Fr. John Bosco Rector, Fr. Rua Vice rector, Fr. Francesia Director of the students, and Fr. Lazzero Director of the artisans.” He had hardly finished speaking when Fr. Francesia presented opposing arguments: “Two directors independent of one other and both

responsible for the same Oratory? It would be a fatal kind of dualism.” Fr. Durando took his side since he “considered it as a solution that would lead things from bad to worse at the Oratory.” Fr. Rua must have had some inner appreciation of the protest and the rejection since he had himself resisted objecting earlier when Don Bosco had been present. Later, of course, he acknowledged Don Bosco’s authority. He maintained this latter position, difficult as it must have been for him. He said that “he was prepared to obey Don Bosco, but he foresaw difficulties and disorders. He felt that Don Bosco had been pushed by others to take such a step because he had always been for a centralized government.”¹¹⁵

° By the commencement of the morning session, it became apparent how alarming was Don Bosco’s health situation. Fr. Rua advised immediately that “we have to face the prospect of a tragic event and take precautionary measures for its immediate aftermath. What was to be done about his funeral and how were they to provide a burial place?” They would also need to think of Don Bosco’s last will to prevent squabbling amongst heirs.¹¹⁶

° In the afternoon Fr. Francesia raised the matter of the two directors saying “that he accepted the task in the manner Don Bosco would propose it.”¹¹⁷ Strangely enough Fr. Rua did not react positively. Maybe he foresaw hidden tensions and feared very harmful frictions and clashes. At any rate, he again took up the idea of a [head-]director and two vice-directors. But this was not well received. During the discussion he thought of another solution. Fr. Lazzero would be the one with overall responsibility for artisans in all the houses of the Congregation and at the same time Director at Lanzo. Fr. Lazzero agreed with this, saying that he would be “more at peace” with this solution. This modification was approved by the Chapter, except by Fr. Cagliero.

° The next day, 20 September, Fr. Rua asked Fr. Lazzero if he agreed [with the position] of going to Lanzo. “But this was not the case. He had the feeling that they had sought a means to remove him from the Oratory.” He declared that, “after having been Director at the Oratory for so many years, he could not accept being sidelined, because this would end with some loss of honor.” The result was that the affair was postponed once more.¹¹⁸

° Nothing more was said about it for three Chapter sessions. The discussion concerning two directors at the Oratory was only re-opened on 29 September. “There was a lively discussion for a lengthy period, but they decided to obey Don Bosco.”¹¹⁹ That meant the definitive introduction of the double directorship at the Valdocco Oratory.

It did not take long for the appointment of two directors to prove to be unsuccessful. When telling the history of the years 1886-1888 Fr. Ceria leaves no room for doubts: “The experiment of the two directors had failed, not so much because the system was wrong in itself, but because Father Jon Baptist Francesia had shown himself unsuitable for the task. That is why there was urgent need to organize the matters of the Oratory on another basis. (In 1888) they went back to the one director system. Father Belmonte was appointed as the director.”¹²⁰

With this, I wish to close the investigation of the eventual effects of the long or combined version on the confreres and the “revival” at Valdocco. For the main part it took place as an investigation at the level of the Superior Chapter between the end of May and October 1884 and also thanks to a couple of contributions of confreres to a kind of inquiry in June 1884. Before adding some points of review to this conclusion, I prefer dwelling for a moment on the way in which Fr. Lazzero handled the new situation.

10. The beginning of Fr. Lazzero’s time as Director of the artisans section

The information about the beginning of the new school year we get mainly from the accounts of two meetings. The first meeting was held on 17 October for the assistants of that section and the second on 18 October for the members of the House Chapter.

- The first meeting with assistants to the artisans

Beforehand Fr. Lazzero very explicitly announced that “the assistants for the artisans were present” and that “he, the Director, was the chairman.” Following this, the first words of the account proper immediately prove that the artisans were dear to Fr. Lazzero’s heart and that he tried to win his young co-workers over to his positive disposition.¹²¹

The first two points of his notes were: “The young artisans are like all the other boys. If you treat them correctly, they can give stronger evidence of a good heart than the students.” And “sometimes they are insolent, rough and in that respect, we must do something about it. Like people who are permanently busy with material things, they cannot acquire that polite attitude that is more easily drummed into young students.”

Then he gave them this golden rule: “One of the best approaches for an assistant to the artisans is to get to know them and be able to call all the boys he assists by their name. The boys are already half-won over when they become aware that you know them.” It was a rule of thumb that Fr. Lazzero had already given to

the priests and clerics for the artisans years before, namely in November 1873: “Knowing the boys. They have greater respect for an assistant when they become aware that he knows them all by their names. And to let them see that you know them it is good to call someone you want to admonish by his name.”¹²² His personal experience guaranteed this.

His fourth piece of advice concerned “unity”. He explained it as follows: “In the presence of the boys, an assistant should never criticize what another assistant does or says. Woe to us if the boys see disagreement among us. Nothing can be done.” This agrees almost literally with Fathers Fumagalli’s and Febraro’s contributions. But it agrees also with the admonition already given to the assistants in 1871. After the meeting at which Fr. Rua presided, the following words were written: “They were advised to all remain united by endeavoring to pursue the one goal, namely to love and advise one another how best to win the boys’ obedience, affection and respect.”¹²³ At that time, of course, there was little or no danger that one would have spoken of “a large sea or ocean” of superiors or assistants.

Skipping to the sixth and final item of advice - I just modify the sequence a little - he demanded they lessen the burden a little by limiting themselves to “reporting or providing an account to the superiors.” This was a kind of diplomacy on his part to prevent them from taking the dangerous path of giving punishments themselves. This is proved by the following statement “For a boy it is already a punishment when he hears that one speaks to the superior about him.”

The fifth item is very particular, especially given the background of all that has been said before in this study. In the first instance, it sounds normal: “The account of the previous meeting was read.” This opening is misleading since “previous” refers to a meeting that had taken place years before, in “February 1872”, but “it was judged very useful for the beginning of the school year.” It was about a meeting at which Fr. Rua had presided. I summarize three of the four directives.

“1. The task of organizing recreation time in such a way that it would be of benefit to the boys and assistants. To achieve this, it is necessary to speak to them, to join their groups, games and talks. But as much as possible, always in a friendly, tactful and loving way.

3. See that the boys love you and at the same time, respect you.

4. Never lose courage if we have to put up with displeasing and even bad things from the boys (...) The superiors should not make any decision on the spur of

the moment because that might be enough to put off the most generous benefactors from the house, and then not only the expelled boys would suffer from it, but many other boys too. This does not mean we do not think about remedying the situation. Instead, we bear with them a little in the hope that all will be well.”¹²⁴

It had to be an account with which Fr. Lazzero was fully familiar, an account he respected and had become conversant with. This is not so surprising. A considerable time before he had written down the account in a copy-book where he had especially kept notes from meetings he had with the priests and clerics of the artisans between 1871 and 1878.¹²⁵ At any rate, the account in question is a text that contains in a nutshell very important but also, in part, detailed aspects of the method of educating in the spirit of Don Bosco. He wished to reserve them for the new team that he was going to work with in the new situation.

There are undeniably some elements in that account that more or less fit with passages from Fr. Lemoyne’s long version. However, Fr. Lazzero does not appeal to that text; he has not distributed copies. So it goes without saying that they were not available and that the text itself was not yet known.

- Second meeting: “18 October 1884 (artisans)”

The assembly that followed gathered the next day. It was quite another kind of assembly for only the superiors, that is the two Prefects, the Catechist for the artisans, Fr. Oddone the Economist, and Fr. Lazzero, the Director, met.

Of significant importance within the framework of the structural renewal that was carried through were the arrangements regarding assignments of duties: “The External Prefect and the Catechist are in charge of the external disciplinary order. The External Prefect should read out and explain the rules of the house to the artisans.” He also had to see that they were given lessons in courtesy. It was indeed Fr. Fumagalli, the Vice prefect at the Oratory, who, in his reflections, had regretted the absence of a weekly lesson in good manners. The Catechist was especially responsible for supervision in the dormitories, church, and infirmary. The dormitories are now the first concern. It is remarkable that his task consists of “supervision” and not “assistance”, for “supervision” rather evokes control and a kind of aloofness.

- Some detached prescriptions [Assembly]

The two accounts are followed by some rules where it is unclear whether the reactions concerned the prior assemblies, or whether he was listing for assemblies yet to take place for the groups he enumerated, namely

- the following applied to superiors: "They should seek agreement with the confreres. In the morning they should assist at the entrance to the workshops." Here again the word assist is used.

- the clerics should: "1. See to the cleaning, and 2. should not appear to be overly severe, but neither should they be lax. They should always report to the nearest superiors. For extraordinary cases, Fr. Bonetti should be contacted. Ongoing supervision."

- then for the workshops teachers: "1. Our boys are no longer of the kind they were before. 2. We need another approach to education, a different tenor. 3. It is bewildering to believe that the boys are already acquainted with wrongdoing. 4. So there is nothing exaggerated in ongoing vigilance and - without always presuming wrongdoing - in feeling uneasy if we cannot see them before our eyes. The greatest possible agreement with the assistants in the strict application of the Rules."

We have at hand the evidence that Don Bosco's instruction to see to morality has defined such regulations. The stress placed on being watchful, everywhere and always, is predominant. This heads in the direction of an objective, preventive supervision. The screws are tightened as we can see in this statement: "A strict application of the Rules." Yet there is reasonableness visible in the parenthetical clause 'without always presuming wrongdoing' and in the demand as to the clerics who 'should not appear overly severe'.

Less accessible is the expression "another approach to education, a different tenor". Might he have meant something like "the kind of modification of the system that Don Bosco was afraid of, and which he rejected on 12 September? Would this other way of educating only or principally consist of watchfulness and strictness? The latter seems less probable, for it would clash with the standpoints of the assembly in February 1872, which G. Lazzero had refreshed on 14 October 1884, when starting the new school year. Or could the suggested modification to the system have been hiding as yet unuttered insights into efficiently and successfully solving the problem of the boys who were no longer as they were before?¹²⁶ No doubt he seems to be at one with Don Bosco's declaration in his talk with Buzzetti in the letter to the boys. There, Don Bosco could formulate this question: "But why such a notable difference between the boys then and the boys now?" (10-11; Mss. K and A) Fr. Lazzero had indeed seen a striking difference, but was he therefore also convinced that the cause Buzzetti had indicated in a fragment of the letter to the boys was the real cause?

(18) How did he judge the recommendations for reviving the ways things were previously, in terms of the short piece of advice and the different tasks given to the boys? (18-19 and 27). But perhaps he thought of none of this. After all it was long ago that Fr. Rua had read the letter to the boys, a letter that would have months ago been archived.

During the following months Fr. Lazzero wrote no reports of meetings where ideas on the topic could have been exchanged. The consequence is that we grope in the dark. Furthermore, some sentences, like those of the undated rules, remain rather cryptic definitions. His post-Christmas note in 1884 is also enigmatic: “Nothing has been noted in 1885 because the person taking down notes, was upset. He was discouraged because he had been thwarted in so many ways that he no longer knew what to note down.”¹²⁷ Perhaps we might suppose that one of “the so many ways” was linked to the introduction of the dual directorship. Had he not had to swallow many negative remarks about his management during the discussions in their meetings? Had the introduction of two directors not been a hard blow to him? Did he not himself speak of a “loss of honor?” Yet the most stressing and discouraging aspect seems to have been a difficult, even conflicting, collaboration with Fr. Francesia. Hadn’t Fr. Rua declared in no uncertain terms that he was not in favor of that experiment because he foresaw weighty difficulties as a consequence of the innovation? It also seems possible to me that they had not been able to find an effective “modus vivendi.” Of course, this is an element that should be further examined. It seems to me that the hypothesis that Fr. Lazzero would have learned of the long version D or its adaptation Ms. E is less acceptable.

11. Looking back

When reading the accounts of the meetings of the Superior Chapter between Don Bosco’s return from Rome and the decisions on 12 and 29 September, some emphases appear to be foregrounded almost of themselves. They are emphases which are related to or could be related to the letter to the boys.

- On 5 June, Don Bosco neatly and clearly defined the objective the members present should consider during the discussions which had started the day before at the request of Fr. Bonetti. “We have to see,” he had said, “and to examine what needs to be done and what to be avoided to ensure a good moral conduct among the boys and how vocations can be fostered.” These two objectives were in line with the content of the letter to the boys, though at no moment did Don Bosco refer to this content. He had maintained these objectives over weeks and months even though the question of the directorship and the

discussion around the management of the Oratory overshadowed his originally formulated concern and absorbed an enormous amount of his time and energy.

- It is also clear that Don Bosco not only confidently stuck to his ideas and standpoints, but could also appear to come down with the force of his authority, and this on more than one occasion. Even while giving freedom for discussion, he sometimes did not allow the slightest contradiction. They had to support him in his planning without contradicting him.

- Equally clearly, or perhaps still more distinctly, it appeared that Fr. Lemoyne's treatise or composition, or, formulated more accurately, his first part of the long version D had no demonstrable influence on the discussions. In part, this is normal since the questions of management and unity of direction as such had not been part of his presentation. But it was unusual, even inconceivable, that other matters in the letter did not impact on the discussion, such as morality, order and discipline among the boys, the practice of the Preventive System and concern for vocations. This would be still more astonishing if one presumes that he might have completed the work already in Rome and that this would have been made public around half May in Valdocco.

- The next conclusion is that some elements in the discussions and the contributions of a couple of confreres raise significant questions about the description of the direct and quite positive effects of the letter to the boys, as they were described by Fathers Lemoyne and Ceria.

- Expulsions

A first element of these described effects regards expulsions. G.B. Lemoyne and in his footsteps E. Ceria mention "the expulsion of some boys who seemed to be excellent in their conduct..." as one of the "principal effects" of the letter from Rome.¹²⁸ Although none of them gives a precise date, their communications do suggest that those measures followed shortly after Don Bosco's return from Rome. However, that does not seem to have been the case at all, for, during the Superior Chapter session on 5 June, Don Bosco was still insisting on "looking into the rules for admitting pupils and how to purge the house of some elements." The problem at that moment was still literally how "to expel the bad apples [le ossa rotte]." Convinced that "they must act with severity by expelling bad boys," Fr. Bertello then took his side with an understandable emphasis on 'bad'. A month later, on 4 July, Don Bosco felt obliged to insist that one "person must be in charge of expelling students." And on 7 July, he again found it

necessary to give directives concerning the procedure they were to follow. It was essential that the Director “enrolled or expelled pupils and hired and fired domestic staff of the house on whatever grounds he would think fit in each specific case.” During the same meeting, Fr. Cagliero came out with his proposal. “At the beginning of the approaching holiday season, he would like to send a letter to the students in the fourth and fifth year. After their answer is received, a decision would be made on their return to the college or their expulsion. All this meant, of course, a stay of execution on the ‘purge.’”

The contributions of Fathers Canepa and Fumagalli as well as Fr. Bonetti’s opinion also show that few or almost no expulsion had been carried out. In his report on 8 June, Fr. Canepa regretted that such an urgent measure had been postponed. He wrote that the “longer one waits, the more painful the measure will be and the more harmful for us.”

The least that can be said is that, in the last months of the current school year, any real “reform” through the expulsion of morally suspect boys, can hardly be spoken of.

- Discipline and order

Something similar is found on the level of discipline and order. According to E. Ceria “obedience increased.”¹²⁹ On the other hand he inserted a summary of seven decisions from Don Bosco in his report. That’s why I have called them “Don Bosco’s intervention” in my previous comment. It happened on 30 June and 4 July. In the 30 June meeting, Fr. Bonetti had started to speak about “the assistance of the boys, the dormitories having to remain open.” So something serious was still lacking on the level of order and discipline. That is why they put this matter on the agenda of the following meeting. But Don Bosco did not wait for the session of 7 July. The reason for a quick intervention was his solicitude concerning “the frequent mishaps that caused discontent among the boys.” The latter, of course, can hardly go together with increasing obedience.

- Religious practice

According to Fr. Ceria “there were more Communions and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament.”¹³⁰ Yet Don Bosco found it necessary at the beginning of the meeting on 7 July to declare, “Let any boy who does not go frequently to Holy Communion and who is neglectful in his devotions learn a trade.”¹³¹ This may perhaps show why E. Ceria could write that the succession of celebrations [Mary Help, St. Aloysius and Don Bosco’s name-day] topped this period and yet on the other hand noted that “the beneficial effects of such timely shocks were not long in becoming evident.” So they feared it might only be a flash in the pan.

This fear is also hidden in his remark: “But lasting measures had to be taken.”¹³² In other words, measures that would be effective over a long time.

- Boys visiting Don Bosco

In a couple of reports from the Superior Chapter, and especially on the margins of the preceding discussions, other elements still appear that throw a new light on some of Fr. Ceria’s data. Thus, during the first weeks since Don Bosco’s return from Rome “there would have been a steady coming and going of boys to his room.” And this would have happened fairly soon, for in the following chapter he added that “the series of feast days topped it all.”¹³³ But can these items be harmonized with the real situation at the Oratory? We must wonder whether Don Bosco had the necessary time and the physical strength to receive and listen to so many boys in this short or even longer period.

After the over-exertion during the return journey to Turin a good rest must have been necessary for him. Moreover before 24 May he must have been especially taken up by the preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians. From Rome, he had left it to Fr. Rua to decide whether or not he would speak twice to the pilgrims during the novena. Probably to spare him from being overburdened, only one assembly of cooperators was held, so that he would need to speak only the once. Furthermore, it would have been appropriate for him to have gone to visit the archbishop of Turin. However, before he took this initiative, Archbishop Alimonda came to see Don Bosco and remained about an hour with him.¹³⁴

During the days following the magnificent celebration of Mary Help of Christians he hardly succeeded in writing a couple of short letters and a long appeal to the cooperators to help him with the lottery for the church in Rome.¹³⁵ More informative still is the chronicle of the young secretary Viglietti: “1 June, Turin. - By order of the doctor, Don Bosco has to go for a short walk every evening. Fr. Lemoyne and I will accompany him. (...) I do the spiritual reading and the meditation with Don Bosco.”¹³⁶ So we must admit that in the evening Don Bosco could not often receive people, even though Fr. Ceria writes: “Once he had taken care of the more pressing business, upon his return, the Saint began to interview the boys every day for a few hours in the late afternoon.”¹³⁷ And what could be the meaning of “in the late afternoon” in these circumstances?

How significant it is in this context that we have Fr. Fumagalli’s remark at the beginning of his written contribution to the discussion in June 1884. That is why I repeat what he wrote: “It would be good if everybody could address themselves to our dear father Don Bosco. But this is impossible now. As a

consequence somebody must represent him.” According to him, direct contact was not possible for the confreres. How much less then for the boys.

Equally significant are some statements given by Don Bosco himself. For instance, his remark during the assembly on 5 June about the headache preventing him from reflecting correctly. And in his speech on the occasion of his name-day celebration on 24 June the allusion to “that little bit of life that remained in him.” Also, the complaint at the session of the Superior Chapter on 7 July about his physical fatigue. And we must not forget his disappointment because so few boys had come to talk to him about their vocation.

- These observations concerning the ultimate elaboration of the combined version can only lead to the following questions: When could Fr. Lemoyne have completed it? When could the Salesians at Valdocco have had it at their disposal? Surely, the answers to these questions are not essential for the intrinsic value of the letter to the boys and the contents of the long or combined version. Still, the answers are not only significant in the whole of the history of the Congregation, but they are also necessary for the study of the real impact of these texts that were mainly meant to exercise a direct and true influence on those who heard or read them at Valdocco. That is the reason why I want to bring together and complete in an appendix some indications that were mentioned here and there in this study with regard to establishing a final date for the completion of the combined version.

Appendix

Several of the presented elements may be classified under the headings “external” and “internal indications.” The first group has, among other things, to do with observations just before or during the writing out of texts, or with events, after Don Bosco’s return to the Oratory. The second category, especially regards the final editing of Ms. D.

1. External indications with data before or during the elaboration of the text intended for the Salesians.

- 1.1 One of the external indications that makes us surmise that the final long version was not finished in Rome is the different use of paper on which the texts were written. For Mss. A, B, C and K (the letter sent to the boys) Fr. Lemoyne used sheets of the same size (209 X 380) with light, blue lines. The long version (Ms. D) he wrote on paper of size 270 x 380 with plain blue lines without margin.¹³⁸

1.2 A second indication is the fact that the letter to the boys was almost certainly signed by Don Bosco himself, which is not the case with Ms. D which contains in the first extended part the text for the Salesians.¹³⁹ Besides, there are no signs that Don Bosco might have read or corrected this part. Moreover, he had not, nor could he have “dictated” the entire text in the precise sense of this word.

1.3 Another external indication is the fifth point in Fr. Lemoyne’s letter to Fr. Rua on 6 May 1884. There he mentioned that Don Bosco was preparing a letter he wished to send to the boys. In it, he wanted to relate so many pleasant things to his dearly beloved boys.¹⁴⁰ ‘Preparing’ probably means that Don Bosco had given Fr. Lemoyne the suggestions of Ms. A to start arranging them immediately into a letter. With the words “to the boys”, indeed “ai giovani” in Italian, Fr. Lemoyne expressed fairly clearly that Don Bosco, at that moment, was thinking only of writing a letter to his boys. There is no mentioning of the adults nor the Salesians in the communication to Fr. Rua.

2. Indications in the text itself

When elaborating on the reasons why the current Oratory differs from the former one, Fr. Lemoyne has inserted a couple of modifications in the final version, compared with the elaboration C. (22-23). This also applies to the description of the ‘former system’ (22) and the description of the positive consequences of re-introducing that system. (23-24) These modifications and additions are found at the end of the draft of a possible circular intended for the Salesians. In this draft the influence of the discussions in the Superior Chapter after the return to Valdocco where Fr. Lemoyne was the secretary, is most perceptible.

2.1 In the passage in which G. Buzzetti is allowed to sum up the causes of the change in comparison with the past, Fr. Lemoyne changes the objective succession of a threefold causal “because” into a threefold resounding question with “why?” That is undoubtedly a later elaboration on the literary level. (22)

More remarkable regarding the contents is the change of the quoted “because your Salesians move away,” where all the Salesians are intended, into a more specific “Why do the superiors move away.” At the same time he altered the more immediate and specific “the education rules you have prescribed” into the more remote and general “the education rules Don Bosco has prescribed” as if Don Bosco were no longer present. (22)

The straightforward reproach to the superiors, and them alone, no longer fits well in Buzzetti’s mouth. It rather seems to have been inspired by the knowledge

of Fathers Fumagalli's and Ruffino's texts. Fr. Fumagalli thought that the superiors were the cause of the corruption of so many other boys while Fr. Ruffino mentioned in succession the Director, Prefect and Catechist and also the lack of unanimity between the Prefect of Studies, Catechist and the Prefect. Indeed Fr. Lemoyne had inserted all this into his so-called "General Arrangements", this means his own summary of Fathers Fumagalli's and Ruffino's contributions to the inquiry on 8 June 1884.

Furthermore, Fr. Fumagalli held that the discord amongst the superiors - once more the superiors - had as a consequence the boys secretly making fun of them and their advice. For his part, Fr. Ruffino said that all the superiors were to exert themselves to assure the maintenance of a rule that had been promulgated, if not, the rules would be ignored. Again something not found in Ms. B or in Ms. C but that Fr. Lemoyne almost literally took down later in his definitive wording. (22-23)

2.2 In the description of what is essential in the former [Preventive] System something quite different has happened. Fr. Lemoyne almost completely rewrote the passage and changed the plural into a singular: the superior. (23) This completely agrees with the importance that - following Fathers Ruffino and Fumagalli when collecting their contributions in his summary - he had given to the role of the Director. Indeed he had given the first place to that item of their remarks. Fr. Fumagalli had pointed out that "a person representing Don Bosco was necessary." The boys must be able to easily entrust everything to him and receive fatherly reprimands, advice, and warnings from him for the good of their temporal and spiritual needs. According to Fr. Ruffino, the Director must have more contact with the pupils. Maybe Fr. Lemoyne was also aware that Fr. Canepa wanted the Director to have a father's 'charity' and energy. All of them are elements that have influenced his rewriting the passage of Ms. C.

Moreover, one should not forget that Fr. Lemoyne, being the secretary of the Superior Chapter, had heard the words Don Bosco had said on 4 July to Fr. Lazzero about 'being a Director'. Precisely in the 'third-person reference'. And on 7 July, Don Bosco said that "the Director should talk affably with the students outside the confessional; he should often call them individually to enquire after their needs, their health, their studies, their problems, their vocation, etc., etc." Don Bosco then also spoke about the Director in the singular as the most important superior.

2.3 The text at the end of the positive results obtained from the return to the previous system, compared with Mss. B and C, is a completion. (24) It inserts the question of expulsions that had been treated several times in the sessions of the Superior Chapter. Here, Fr. Lemoyne took the side of Don Bosco's and Fr.

Bertello's severity, but also of Fathers Ruffino's and Fumagalli's as has been shown in this part of the study. Nonetheless, what followed was a refresher of what Fr. Ruffino had proposed to be on the lookout at the beginning of the school year. If someone were detected who could be of risk to his companions, he must be expelled at once. For his part, Fr. Fumagalli had complained that too much patience was being shown to bad boys. This must have emboldened Fr. Lemoyne to insert the word "unbending" when referring to a decision of the second General Chapter. He consolidated this thinking with the words "it is better to run the risk of expelling someone innocent." (24)

2.4 There are some more completions and digressions. Some of them are already mentioned in the description of the first scene of the playground interaction. In the long version for instance Fr. Lemoyne was interested in the boys "up the terraces near the garden." (9) The reason why this was so important now in his explanation to the Salesians - in contrast to Ms. C and the letter to the boys - is no longer obvious, though he may have heard Fr. Bertello's contribution on the 5 June meeting. (Footnotes 8, 18, 47, 65) Nor is it obvious if he was trying to say that the Salesians ought to be more concerned about this.

Immediately after this, he writes in the combined version that some boys withdrew from the "common recreation." (9) Common is added. It seems to be a trivial detail, but it might be a way of stressing the need of the community in the sense of togetherness of boys and Salesians. When Fr. Lemoyne collected Fr. Fumagalli's contribution, he might have seen how much this confrere hit out against the Salesians who preferred to walk together talking instead of taking part in the games together with the boys. Fr. Fumagalli had experienced that talking together diminished and impeded their awareness of what the boys were doing. The expansion of the comment concerning the boys who lounged about in cliques, makes clear that they were small groups where bad talk reigned. Fr. Lemoyne does this by quoting the reaction of St. Aloysius. (10) The inspiration for the inserted note about this saint may probably be due to the solemn celebration on 22 June and an idea from the sermon of Bishop Chiesa, the Bishop of Pinerolo, who presided.¹⁴¹ It is very difficult to find a reason why he should have discarded this passage in the letter to the boys, if he had written the entire extended part already in Rome.

2.5 Another addition of Fr. Lemoyne's, but a very important one, was in connection with Buzzetti's nostalgia for earlier times, asking: "Do you remember those wonderful years?" (16) It was in the letter to the boys and he was speaking in the name of many past pupils. It was a period about which he is allowed to say in Ms. D: "of which we have fond memories". The reason he gave, moreover, was "because then love was the rule." In Italian he twice used the word "amore". Love meaning affection. Thus it is a strengthened affirmation

of his statement “With love”, with affection, or with affectionate love. (12) Those were the years when the boys could experience and feel that Don Bosco loved them and that they loved him. The phrase “a period of which we have fond memories, because the love was the rule” is an addition that is missing in the letter to the boys but it would correctly have had its place in it.

2.6 There is another remarkable insertion at the end of the seven reproaches against the confreres at Valdocco. (22) The seventh already appeared in Ms. B, namely, “human respect.” What the consequence of this was is described there as follows: “And people don’t do things because they might stand out if they do.” (Ms. B). This sentence is much like Pentore’s complaint, which he announced to Don Bosco and that has been discussed before, namely: “Nobody wants to take up the burden of being obtrusive.” However, Fr. Lemoyne dropped the explanation in Ms. B. He replaced it by a concrete example of neglect of duty: “no one will fail through human respect to reprimand those who need reprimanding.” Then he added a consideration that seems being inspired by a decision of the Third or Fourth General Chapter published in 1887.¹⁴² He still added a personal reflection. These additions, however, give the impression they do not fit well into the whole text. They rather give the impression that the final elaboration of Ms. D was not completed in Rome.

2.7 Additions and modifications also appear in the adjoined part of the letter to the boys.

Sometimes, the insertion contains but a few words such as “the same ‘nearest’ (‘prossime’) occasions” and “the same bad habits” instead of both “the same occasions” and “the same habits.” (29) Sometimes the influence of talks and texts after 30 May is traceable. Thus in the addition “even for years and some even continue in this way till the fifth year secondary.” (29) The problem with the pupils of the fourth and fifth classes, again and again dominated the discussions in the Superior Chapter. Even the drastic proposal to abolish these classes turned up. Fr. Canepa anxiously spoke about these years and, in his “General Arrangements,” Fr. Lemoyne had inserted Fr. Ruffino’s proposal to arrange the admission to the higher classes.

Next comes the passage about the role of Mary Help of Christians. An inserted purpose of the blessed Virgin’s role to attract boys to the Oratory, is: “to take them away from the dangers of the world.” She is also the one “who provides them with bread and the means to study, through endless graces and wonders.” (31)

Other elements owe their content to the insertion of the still unused data from Don Bosco’s original suggestions. (Ms. A) Such is the question: “And will we

succeed in breaking down this barrier?” This is also applicable to the adapted answer concerning the condition for succeeding. Moreover, the editor explains what “the spiritual bouquet” in honor of Mary Help of Christians (Ms. A) can and must consist of, namely, “mortification”. In passing, we should note that Don Bosco has not ‘dictated’ such extensions and that Fr. Rua has not been able to read them to the boys and the Salesians who were present.

What Fr. Rua really could read was his personal addition under the heading “Secretary’s note.” It is precisely this addition that Fr. Lemoyne has included, literally, in the combined version. Of course, he could do this only after returning to Turin, which I have treated in the 5th section (in this second volume) under the intermediate title “The secretary’s note.”

Particularly striking is, of course, the phrase “many important things that I saw” and the part that begins with: “And now I must finish.” They are not found in Ms. C, but they are in the letter to the boys that was really sent from Rome. They were written especially for them, even though Fr. Lemoyne let Don Bosco also directly address the Salesians (priests and clerics), especially at the end of the letter.

All these statements in the text confirm that the definitive redaction of Ms. D was written after the return of Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne from Rome. Even a considerable time after it. They support the conjecture that P. Braido uttered in 1992: “The composition of the extended redaction (Ms. D) may have been realized in Valdocco. Perhaps the editor may have stopped (in Rome) after writing Ms. C.” At the same time, however, P. Braido admitted that it is difficult to fix the time and the place.¹⁴³ That is the reason why I wish to continue checking some external data that were not sufficiently taken into account before.

3 Some more external indications.

3.1 After leaving Rome, Fr. Lemoyne sent a letter to Fr. Rua from Florence on 15 May, in which he expressed the following desire: “I hope that by this time you have received, and have read the letter Don Bosco has sent to the boys.”¹⁴⁴ In this communication, just like in the correspondence of 6 May, quoted above, he mentioned only the letter to the boys. Again, from Florence there was no mention of a version for the Salesians alone or a complete letter (circular) out of which only some selected parts should be read. Nor was there any word of a shorter, adapted version that he would have composed at Fr. Rua’s request.¹⁴⁵

To these communications from Rome and Florence I now want to add data from a note that Fr. Lemoyne wrote only years later when he was busy collecting annotations in preparation for writing the *Biographical Memoirs*. Exactly when

he did so could not be established until now. It was most probably after Don Bosco died. In an introductory note, he gave some details concerning the elaboration of the letter of 10 May 1884 to the boys and about the extended version for the Salesians: “He [Don Bosco] told it [a dream] to Fr. Lemoyne over several stages. Then he asked him to write it down and to read it aloud while he corrected the text. Next, the text was to be worked out anew and rewritten. As the members of the Salesian Congregation were particularly concerned, a new elaboration was needed that could be read aloud in the presence of all the boys at the Oratory. Whereas the whole second part could be kept, what was said extensively in the first part was to be left out except for the descriptions of the two recreation times. That letter was sent on 10 May.”¹⁴⁶

That is a personal reconstruction of the different versions, but a reconstruction that does not seem to fit with the facts in the light of his letters of 6 and 15 May to Fr. Rua. Surely, something can be said in favor of “several stages” or moments when Don Bosco made certain suggestions. So, for instance, there is already a world of difference between the first forty lines and the last six of Ms. A. Yet, all these lines are found on the same sheet. However, the bracket before the last six lines, and more so the contents make us strongly surmise these six lines are not part of the inspiration of the first forty lines. None of the two ideas in the last lines is dealt with in the letter to the boys. One of them appears in Ms. B. (21) If Don Bosco really brought in the suggestions or certain ideas present in Ms. B, he may have done so shortly after the letter of 6 May was sent to Fr. Rua. Those limited lines and some specific suggestions, together with their partial elaboration in Ms. B, clearly show that the author meant that here only “the members of the Salesian Congregation” were being addressed, maybe especially the Clerics (Ms. A: “I Chierici”).

As far as the last part of Fr. Lemoyne’s annotations is concerned, quoted above (with footnote 146), things are presented differently. Indeed that second part is not found in Ms. C and on the other hand, the so-called second part of Ms. D does not contain the letter to the boys sent from Rome in its entirety. This was shown sufficiently in the preceding paragraphs by drawing attention to several additions found in Ms. D. Moreover, the first part of the combined version, intended for the members of the Congregation, contains also the important passage that I have named “intermezzo” in volume 1 of the edition “The Magna Carta”. So, the two opposing recreation scenes are not the only elements that appear both in the definitive “extended part” and in the letter to the boys. However, Fr. Lemoyne does not mention that intermediate part or “intermezzo” in the later annotations indicated above. For Fr. Lemoyne only the descriptions of the two recreation times were concerned. The question then may be posed whether the fact of not mentioning the “intermezzo” is not precisely the proof that this intermediate part found its way from the letter to the boys into Ms. D

later. To me this appears to be the logical course of things because, among other reasons, the intermediate part does not question the attitude or behavior of the Salesians, but the behavior of “a certain number of boys”. That is why it does not fit into the entirety of the explanation for the confreres. Next, the “intermezzo,” almost literally, makes use of suggestions from Ms. A (18), which never happens in the rest of the first extended part for the Salesians.

Very significant, of course, is also that Fr. Lemoyne announces in the same annotations that the letter was sent on 10 May. That cannot be a letter separate from the so-called “shortened” letter for the boys mentioned in his note. It was really only the letter for the boys that was sent and that Fr. Rua could read aloud with a few small “corrections” and some accompanying and still traceable reading aids. (BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 41-46) These reading aids consisted especially of indications that should make it easier for the listening boys to make out who was speaking in the dialogue parts of the text. The combined text could not be sent to Fr. Rua and could not be sent back to Rome to be shortened, as Ms. C was not finished yet. Moreover, in his letter to Fr. Rua on May 6, Fr. Lemoyne wrote very clearly that “Don Bosco was working on a letter he wished to be sent to the boys, and in it, he means to tell his dearly beloved children many wonderful things.” (MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85.) He did not introduce at all a letter or a circular for the Salesians.

Significant too is what follows in Fr. Lemoyne’s indications: “When Father Michael read it to them publicly, it [*the letter*] had a considerable effect.”¹⁴⁷ Fr. Lemoyne did not mention the possible effects of a long version. In 1992 P. Braido correctly added an introduction to Fr. Lemoyne’s informative note. Previously, in 1984 P. Braido had written: “It is convenient to reproduce the important information in its entirety.” However, in 1992, he wrote: “It is convenient to reproduce the important information, which, however, must be radically broadened by a more attentive inquiry into the available documents.”¹⁴⁸ This addition is certainly correct.

3.2 We know with certainty that Fr. Rua has received manuscript K and has read it aloud. To distinguish correctly the people talking, each time Don Bosco was speaking Fr. Rua has written “io” (“I”) in the margin of the text and “V” for Valfré. For Buzzetti it is “a”, with which he probably meant “l’altro mio antico allievo” (‘my other past-pupil who had a white beard’).¹⁴⁹ So Buzzetti was never mentioned by name in the letter to the boys. Such are Fr. Rua’s reading notes I have not previously provided. Only one indication of items he wanted to omit is given there, that is the names of Fathers Lazzero and Marchisio at the end of the letter.¹⁵⁰ This was how delicate and diplomatic Fr. Rua was.

3.3 It is with some difficulty that we can discover the allusions to the letter read out to the boys in the accounts of Superior Chapter meetings from 19 May to 18 September 1884. The combined version does not feature at all. Nor do we find it in Fr. Lazzero's notes at the beginning of the 1884-85 school year. That is unimaginable for a brilliantly written compendium and for a surprising and, in certain aspects, daring reformulation of very important aspects of the educative system placed on the table for discussion. Such an enduring silence can only mean that this otherwise conspicuous treatise was not at their disposal.

3.4 Two further issues are the date of publication of the long version and the hard-to-trace history of the origins of certain manuscripts. Yet this history sufficiently demonstrates that the long version certainly was not ready in Rome in May 1884.

° Around 1886, Fr. Lemoyne was given young Giuseppe Berardo as a copyist. Under Lemoyne's supervision this helper copied an anthology in a notebook called "Dreams of Don Bosco," which included a verifiable copy of Ms. K, that is of the letter to the boys at Valdocco. Consequently Fr. Lemoyne must have entrusted it to him as an independent whole. Berardo seized the opportunity to make a copy of the notebook for himself.¹⁵¹ However, the aim Fr. Lemoyne had with having this collection copied in which the real letter to the boys was taken up separately is not evident. Maybe with this anthology he wished to render a service to the Salesians who had to care for the formation of the novices. At any rate, it is a fact that a number of smaller written works from the 1890s, along with the letter, have been handed down from novices and a novice master at the time.¹⁵² For these young candidates the content of the letter was undoubtedly more accessible and more useful than some other texts possibly containing the longer or unified version. This has not prevented "the short version, certainly the only 'original', from falling entirely into oblivion."¹⁵³

° There are also a few manuscripts of the combined version. The most important, Ms. D, was written by Fr. Lemoyne himself. It contains about twenty pages of a bundle of folios. The cover folio contains indications showing that Fr. Lemoyne wanted to insert the whole (of it) in a collection of documents that he wished to gather as part of his project to write the *Biographical Memoirs*. This preparation was done in a later phase of his life. But P. Braido does not exclude Ms. D having been written at another, earlier time than some introductory data in connection with the combined version in that bundle. However he does not establish a date for it at any time in 1884.¹⁵⁴ This should urge us to be prudent.

Fr. Desramaut openly rejects P. Braido's hypothesis and by implication, the construction, following Fr. Lemoyne's note, described above. He concludes that the "long version is nowadays by far the best known. Unfortunately, it is

impossible to guarantee that Don Bosco has read it and so granted authenticity to it. It is also impossible to date it in 1884. It seems rather probable that we can only say for certain that it must have been fully completed around 1889 when the proofs of the *Documenti XXVII* were prepared.” Fr. Desramaut argues that “Ms. D does appear in *Documenti XXVII*, 221-228,” adding that from “there it formed part of MB XVII,107/28-114/34.” In this way he differs from what P. Braido had found and nor does he take certain facts into account.¹⁵⁵ For instance, the fact that the text which E. Ceria published in volume XVII of the *Biographical Memoirs* does not go back to Ms. D but to Ms. F about which more further on.

° Another important manuscript of the combined version (Ms. E) is by Fr. Berto. He was Don Bosco’s secretary for about twenty years. Because of health problems and psychical pains, he was replaced in May 1884 by the young Salesian Viglietti.¹⁵⁶ P. Braido says nothing of the date, nor of the circumstances, wherein Fr. Lemoyne had Fr. Berto copy the text. Yet, he does mention that the secretary correctly copied Ms. D and that Fathers Fascie and Albera used this copy in 1920 for the publication of the long version in the *Acts of the Superior Chapter*.¹⁵⁷

° Ms. F too is dependent on Ms. D, but it shows a remarkable difference. The word “amore” was replaced by “carità” or “affetto” at several places. This must have been realized with Fr. Lemoyne’s consent for he wrote on top in the margin of the first page: “Chapter XXXI Dream: The former and the actual Oratory - Charity (Carità) and familiarity (in the contact) with the boys - Confessions and behavior of the boys.” It is impossible not to see the word “carità”. Moreover, and even more conclusively, he inserted these modifications in the galley proofs that make up the XXXIst chapter of the XXII volume of the *Documenti*.¹⁵⁸

As a supplement I want to repeat that it is precisely the text of these *Documenti* that E. Ceria has published in later editions, namely in the *Memorie biografiche XVII* (1936) and Don Bosco’s correspondence *Epistolario IV* (1959).¹⁵⁹

° It is also worth looking at something written by Fr. E. Bianchi. He was a diocesan priest in Rimini. At the age of twenty-six (in 1880) he went to visit Don Bosco in Turin and decided to join the Salesians. In 1881 he pronounced the vows and almost immediately got the task of helping Fr. Barberis, the novice-master, with the formation of the young novices at San Benigno Canavese.¹⁶⁰ When in 1886 the novitiate was moved from San Benigno to Foglizzo Fr. Bianchi became novice-master. In a copybook he has taken down the long version. This version is known as Ms. T. It is interesting that he mentioned his source: “From Fr. Lemoyne’s Annals”. Yet it is not immediately

clear what he meant by “from Fr. Lemoyne’s Annals.” It may have meant that the *Documenti* were available to him which could mean he copied the text only at the end of the 1880s. If that is the case, then nothing can be deduced from his copy regarding the date of the original Ms. D.

However, P. Braido leaves room for the supposition that Fr. Bianchi may have had a manuscript at his disposal dating from before the inserted galley proof and even from before Ms. F.¹⁶¹ In itself this does not prove that he must have copied it at an earlier time. Whatever may be the case, the question remains: ‘When and how did Fr. Bianchi know that there was a long version?’ Had Fr. Barberis, with whom he collaborated for some time in the novitiate at San Benigno, given him a tip? That might have happened on the occasion of Fr. Bianchi’s appointment as the novice master at Foglizzo in 1886. With this appointment, they had, of course, wished to show that he merited their entire confidence. Nonetheless, “Father Barberis used to go to Foglizzo as often as possible, to preserve the integrity of the spirit wanted by the founder.”¹⁶² To know that spirit better, to conserve and pass it on, Lemoyne’s text would, of course, have been a useful means for the new novice master.

° That clue, however, may be dismissed. Fr. Barberis does not seem to have passed on the text. Yet there is a Ms. U preserved with the long version in his handwriting. That, too, is not dated. He seems to have used Fr. Bianchi’s manuscript to write it, correcting it here and there and bracketing parts which Fr. Barberis thought belonged to the letter to the boys. Fr. Bianchi had not done this. When trying to identify what belonged to the so-called short version Fr. Barberis had the wrong end of the stick. Perhaps because he had no copy of the letter to the boys and only knew about it by listening to the accounts. For from 1879 he stayed with the novices at San Benigno Canavese and so was not present when Fr. Rua read the letter aloud at Valdocco. Moreover, he placed a ‘nota bene’ beside the text that “was inaccurate and arbitrary,” even utterly unfounded.¹⁶³

Fr. Barberis had not been able to do much with the text, for in his lessons in pedagogy that were published lithographically in 1897 he remained silent about the long version, for whatever reason.¹⁶⁴ However, this does not mean that he would never have spoken of it during his lessons. He must have done so at a given moment in some way. Two manuscripts, V and W, are evidence of this. They go back to his Ms. U.¹⁶⁵ Fr. Barberis and the two novices, (Mss. V and W), have not dated their documents, nor did Fr. Bianchi. And so we do not know when they knew about the existence of the so-called long or combined version. At this stage of the research, their manuscripts cannot contribute positively to the knowledge of the elaboration of the long version; neither do they contribute

anything regarding the time when they learned about the existence of the text nor about the intensity with which the contents were treated and spread.¹⁶⁶

° If we consider the existing manuscripts as a whole, we must conclude that neither those of the letter to the boys nor those of the long or combined version are numerous. It is understandable for the former case, less so for the latter. We must also recognize that the manuscripts can only be dated with great difficulty if at all. Yet it does not seem to me to be too audacious to add that the contents were not known at first and certainly did not cause a furore. Had this been the case, many more manuscripts would have been preserved and the text would have been printed much earlier.

3.5 A circular from Fr. Rua

All things considered, there is enough evidence to suggest that the definitive elaboration of the letter or circular for the Salesians at Valdocco did not come about in May 1884. Is 1889 a possibility as Fr. Desramaut concluded? Probably not. Because especially Ms. D, but also Fr. Berto's copy E are more original than Ms. F and the proofs (based on them) and the insertion in the *Documenti* (document G). Ms. D is indeed the only one that Fr. Lemoyne has written himself. There, he had preferred the word "amore". When Fr. Lemoyne replaced "amore" (or had it replaced) by "carità" and "affetto," P. Braido has been unable to establish. It may have happened after Lemoyne had handed his redaction to Fr. Rua to read it. In section 5 of this study (vol. 2), I have emphasized that Fr. Rua preferred the word "carità". So, this is possible, but uncertain. What is certain is that Fr. Rua, just like Don Bosco at the beginning of the assembly on 4 July 1884, only appealed to the *Regulations for the houses*. En passant, I wish to repeat that on that occasion Fr. Rua omitted part of an article in these Regulations where the language referred to "affezione" or affection.¹⁶⁷ So it should not be excluded either that Fr. Rua even after the replacement of "amore" preferred that the long version should not be made known nor be published. On the other hand, it remains possible that in 1889 he did not yet know of the text Lemoyne had prepared for the *Documenti*, though this would rather be surprising. Even were his silence to mean that Fr. Lemoyne had not yet turned up with the text, this does not necessarily mean that he had not finished the job.

3.6 A printed summary in 1913

While Fr. Lemoyne continued collecting and editing nine volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs*, eight of which appeared between 1896 and 1912, he also wrote a biography of the Blessed G. Bosco in two volumes. The second volume was published in 1913, a year after his death, just several years after the deaths of Fathers Lazzero and Rua, both of whom died in 1910. In chapter eight of

volume two of this biography Fr. Lemoyne treated with thorough knowledge some essential characteristics of Don Bosco's pedagogical system.

° To top off the summary of these clearly explained characteristics, he announced the following: "To justify what we have said we add a few quotations taken from a long letter that he (Don Bosco) dictated and sent in 1884 from Rome to the Salesians at the Oratory."¹⁶⁸

This concise introduction is remarkable for more than one reason. First, there is the wording "to justify." He thinks they are valuable ideas. It even sounds as if it were the first time he could speak of them in public and have them published. The mention of the source, however, "from a long or extended letter" is vague. We should infer, he could not refer to a well-known or already published text.

Next he emphasizes that Don Bosco "dictated" the valuable ideas. Yet, Fr. Lemoyne had not done so in the annotations he had added to the little bundle with Ms. D. There he communicated that "Don Bosco related him a dream in different phases and afterwards made him write it down." I have tried to demonstrate with Ms. A and ideas from Ms. B before us how, in this context, "dictated" is to be understood very broadly.

His last communication in the biography, "sent from Rome in 1884 to the Salesians at the Oratory," is interesting. On the one hand, he simply writes "in 1884", not on 10 May 1884. This creates a certain openness regarding the period of elaboration, an openness, however, that is only apparent because at the same time he confidently assures us that the long version was sent from Rome. Yet, we know that this is contradicted by the findings of well-considered and serious studies.¹⁶⁹ His introducing a few extracts seems to be rather a concern to remove any doubt as to the authenticity of the contents and of the place and the time of the redaction or to nip such doubts in the bud. By authenticity of the contents, we mean that it comes from Don Bosco himself.

° Nevertheless, it is worth giving more attention to several quotations from chapter 8 of volume 2 of the biography. As well as to have a chance of discovering the source he quotes from, and to put our finger on slight modifications he has inserted in this part of the biography.¹⁷⁰

The source could be Ms. F, but more probable he has used the galley proofs for the *Documenti*. Thus he retained the use of "affetto" and "carità", inserted later to replace "amore", the term he preferred in the original Ms. D. This means, once more, that the word "dictated" in the annotations should not be taken literally.

Yet, we need not mention all the modifications. A few examples will prove that Fr. Lemoyne has used the word “dictate” in a rather broad sense. When he speaks about things “that boys naturally dislike,” we read “discipline, efforts to self-denial” instead of “discipline, studying and self-denial.” (14) However, it is possible that this modification is due to a mistake caused by absent-mindedness. Then he continues: “And learn to do these things with zest and love.” This is an addition taken from manuscript F or from the galley proof, instead of simply “with love,” in his proper source. (14).

He lets four quotations be preceded by the cry “woe” followed by a subordinate clause, which creates a totally new climate, gives a different color to the text. The first “woe” introduces the passage where he enumerates the results of apathy during recreation time. One of them runs now as “not responding to their vocation” when in the original version Ms. D, in Ms. F and also in the galley proof it read: “many do not follow their vocation.” (11) Where the original version, and also the *Documenti*, said that the teacher who stays among the boys after the lesson “becomes like a brother” (20), we now read the more direct “becomes their brother.”

All these quotations come from the longer explanation, that is from the possible ‘circular’ intended for the Salesians. Most of them are important ideas. However, the rewritten statement “By neglecting the smaller things, they lose the *more important ones* and these consist of the efforts [burdens, fatigues],” lacks the original context. (17) And so the idea has become more enigmatic. Indeed, I translated with a comparative because a clear confronting of two aspects is missing. Also the idea of “familiarity” is insufficiently treated.¹⁷¹ The reader must guess at the precise meaning of the concept.

In the final paragraphs, he has respected a small correction by Fr. Rua in the letter that was to be read to the boys, but again he discarded the addition “Secretary’s note.” (34) That too betrays that these are no abstracts from a dictated text which was sent off afterwards.

° The closing of this chapter is also important: “Don Bosco wanted educators and youngsters to follow the same route, the way of Christian charity [carità]! Hence, his saying that his system, the Preventive System, was charity.” It is as clear as day that this conclusive idea was inspired by Don Bosco’s words in the little treatise “*The Preventive System in the Education of Youth*.” In that text he wrote: “The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St Paul who says: Caritas patiens est, benigna est (Love is patient and kind)...”¹⁷² With the quotation from Don Bosco’s little treatise Fr. Lemoyne has perhaps unconsciously given the key for changing “amore” into “carità” in later

manuscripts and galley proofs.¹⁷³ This does not prevent the supposition of a possible influence of Fr. Rua, as proposed above, remaining valuable.

All in all, this publication can no longer remove the veil of the mystery that hangs around the definitive elaboration of the long or combined version.

3.7 The publication of the combined version in 1920

In the *Acts of the Superior Chapter* in June 1920, Fr. Fascie announced what follows: “Hoping to be able very soon to let everybody know the entire letter of Don Bosco, I limit myself now to respecting the Rector Major’s recommendations.” It was certainly not an idle announcement of a promise, for the following issue of the *Acts* contained the text.¹⁷⁴ Fr. Fascie’s announcement came out only seven years after Fr. Lemoyne’s publication of his *Biography of Don Bosco*. Still, Fr. Fascie’s words sound as if they regarded the publication of something new, as something of which the Salesians did not know at all.

This impression is strengthened further by what the Rector Major himself wrote not even one year later. Namely: “My dear (confreres), you can read it [the letter] and reread it in the *Acts of the Superior Chapter* (pp. 40-48). And my earnest wish is that the students in the novitiates and the houses for philosophy, study it with true affection together with (the little brochure about) the Preventive System, to deeply impress it on heart and mind. And still better, to make the study easier, I shall have it [the letter] printed shortly in a separate booklet.”¹⁷⁵ From his words it also seems that the combined version was not previously printed, was not known nor to be found in the curriculum of the young Salesians. And surely that it did not belong to the active patrimony of the Congregation, how strange this may be when we take into account the publication of the quotations in the biography Fr. Lemoyne had published in 1913, only some years before.

Conclusion

Although this investigation cannot fully remove the veil concerning the origin of Ms. D, it is not without benefit. It contributes to indicating and clearing away some inaccurate views on the origin and the possible influence of the long or combined text. Thus attention can focus, without other distractions, on the unvarnished reality and essentials, namely, that the first part of the long version, in particular, is the Magna Carta and a very successful compendium of the Preventive System. P. Braido has worded this conclusion in his fashion: “At any rate, the possible and diverging hypotheses concerning the chronological succession of the redaction of the different texts do not lessen their historical significance nor their value concerning the content. This, beginning with the

initial, limited redaction that was intended for a rather small group of addressees (which, however, already carried in itself the possibility of fulfilling the function of being an example) applies up to the successive, legitimate extension of the concepts.”¹⁷⁶ To this, we may add the fact that the intrinsic value of a text is eventually independent of the time it came into existence or of the time it began exerting an influence.

P. Stella, in his turn, shows insight when he states that the long version “must be considered to be one of the most effective and fertile pedagogical documents of Don Bosco’s.” That was his conclusion in spite of doubts and uncertainty regarding its authenticity at a time when so many people were convinced that the signature under the long version was authentic. Hesitation appears in the questions: “But what did Don Bosco dictate? The letter or an outline? A series of recommendations or the entire document with the bombastic, long sentences with a lot of adjectives that can be found even in the secretary’s note?”¹⁷⁷

The story of a few assemblies and events during the months after Don Bosco’s return from Rome also clearly shows that we should not entertain illusions about the immediate impact of the text on daily pedagogical practice at Valdocco. We can be certain that the first part of the long version did not pervade discussions about measures to “bring these youngsters to life again.” (12) Neither has it affected the contributions of collaborators involved in the inquiry carried out by the specially appointed commission. This conclusion evidently also applies to the independent, but unfinished elaboration C. However incomprehensible it may seem, such an inspiring text did not get a chance to contribute to the immediate revival of the Oratory thanks to the renewed and radical fidelity of the Salesians to “the pedagogical rules Don Bosco has prescribed.” (22) Furthermore, it also remains difficult to determine the time the complete text has made its influence felt in the Congregation.

One of the problems that result is the uncertain dating, dissemination and application of Fr. Bianchi’s and Fr. Barberis’ manuscripts among the young Salesians during their formation. It is also connected with the very limited choice of Fr. Lemoyne’s quotes in the 1913 publication. The choice contains striking experiences and general valuable directives but lacks the supporting cohesion and consequently, the clarity and the convincing force of the whole context. And so there is also still some uncovered ground for further research concerning the influence of the Magna Carta in and outside Italy.

¹ MB XVII, 121; EMB XVII, 100. *Bollettino salesiano*, VIII, n° 6, June 1884, 85.

² BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 68-78.

³ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 64-80. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco ...*, 287-307.

⁴ For both quotations see BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 64. The names of the persons for whom he had asked a medal are mentioned in a petition. See MB XVII, 104; EMB XVII, 82-83.

⁵ On this ceremony and Don Bosco's words see MB XVII, 147-151; EMB XVII, 121-128. See also BRAIDO P.- ARENAL LLATA Rogélio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne ...*, 143-144. His words here are more direct and more simple than Don Lemoyne's at the end of his letter to the pupils. For a better understanding in the changing state of Don Bosco's health in those days, see BIESMANS, J., *Ziekte, lijden en leed...*, 223-224 and 245-247.

⁶ E IV, 270-271 and MB XVII, 154-155 and 158; EMB XVII, 131-133 and 136. See DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1267.

⁷ FdB 1.880 D 1- 3. (ASC 0592) MB XVII, 182; EMB XVII, 157. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 274. Partly also in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 64. The meeting on 2 June was according to the extreme short record (FdB 1.880 E 12) only spent on a set of five practical issues, but had lasted nevertheless for almost two hours.

⁸ OE XXXIII [61-64] and [64-67]. The entirety of the *Conclusions* was published in 1882. Compare to OE XXVIII [320-321] and OE XXIX [426-429].

⁹ OE XXXIII [61-62]. This is a repetition of what was decided by the first General Chapter. See OE XXIX [426] and [427/8]. The ideas of the introduction Don Bosco had already written in a circular letter on 4 February 1874. Even more rich in imagery: "It is an axiom that invariably pupils' good morals depend on those who teach, supervise and guide them. As the saying goes, no one can give what he himself has not. An empty sack yields no wheat, nor a flask of dregs good wine." (E (m), vol. quarto, 215/13-16. MB X, 1104; EMB, X, 495.) At the end of the third General Chapter he confronted them with: "Hence let directors remember they are responsible for their own moral life and that of the confreres and the boys." See MB XVI, 417; EMB XVI, 331.

¹⁰ OE XXXIII [65.]

¹¹ MB XVII, 183; EMB XVII, 157-158. Partly in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 274.

¹² See footnote 27 in part I of vol. 1 and footnote 20 in section 7 of vol. 2. I Verballi del CG 2..., FdB 1857 C 10-11.

¹³ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 29-30. See E. Ceria in MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85. FdB 1880 D 1-3.

¹⁴ MB XVII, 77; EMB XVII, 57. See BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 36 en 71.

¹⁵ MB XVII, 183-184; EMB XVII, 158. The series of quotations from the report of 5 June can also be found there. I'll follow the same method for the other meetings to reduce the number of footnotes.

¹⁶ MB XVII, 186; EMB XVII, 161.

¹⁷ OE XXXIII [62/10] and [67/12]. Cf. OE XXIX [427/10].

¹⁸ OE XXIX [427/8]; OE XXXIII [62/8].

¹⁹ See among others footnotes 37, 39, 40, 54, 56, 77, 95, 102, 104, and 107 in section I of vol.1. See especially PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 242/271 and 252/527-528.

²⁰ See for instance footnotes 53, 56, 60, 65, 66, and 93 in that same part. And about 'irritation' see footnote 14 in section I of vol. 1.

²¹ As a conclusion of the series of reports in MB XVII, 185; EMB XVII, 161. See the excerpts in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 64-65.

²² BRAIDO, P., *Luce intellettuale...*, 1067.

²³ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 288-292. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 68-80. Feb(b)raro had been teaching Italian and Greek in the fifth year during the schoolyear 1881-1882. From 1882 till 1885 he was Prefect of Studies. In 1901 he left the congregation. (PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 244/303-304 and 278). See footnotes 105 and 106 in section I of vol. 1.

²⁴ "He who has full authority" is the translation of his expression "*un capo assoluto*". To understand him well, it may help to quote from the *Regulations of the Houses* the following words: "The director is the head of the institution. He is the only one who can enroll or expel pupils of the House. He is responsible for all the tasks of the employees, for the morality and education of the pupils. (...) It is his task to take care of the spiritual, scholastic and material issues". OE XXIX [115/art. 1 and 3]; See OE XXXIII [30, 32-33].

²⁵ These decisions can be found in OE XXIX [127/1 and 116/1, 118/10; 121/1, 123/12]. Formerly the term "Prefect of Studies" was used instead of "Director of the pupils," for instance in the document

containing the regulations of the college at Mirabello (MB VII 866) and in a circular letter of 27 September 1874 in MB X, 1108; EMB X, 497/footnote 3 and E (m), vol. 4, 323/15. See *Indice analitico delle Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco*, Turin, SEI, 1948 under "Consigliere scolastico".

²⁶ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 245-260 and 268.

²⁷ See for instance the text in footnotes 45, 57, 59, and 61 in section I of vol. 1.

²⁸ Footnote 14 in section I of vol. 1.

²⁹ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 307/120.

³⁰ OE XXXIII [32].

³¹ See among others, PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 255/633. His contribution in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 292-294.

³² See footnotes 79 and 86 in section I of vol. 1.

³³ P. Braido was likewise convinced: BRAIDO, P., *Luce intellettuale* ..., 1067.

³⁴ In that respect, he was more reserved than Don Bosco himself at the end of the third General Chapter (September 1883). See footnote 89 in section I of vol. 1, and MB XVI, 416-417; EMB XVI, 330-331.

³⁵ OE XXIX [118/10].

³⁶ Maybe there was an allusion to this in the meeting on 24 October 1882. The report mentions: "We discussed the educational system that was introduced at the Oratory a few years ago. It prescribed that the Prefect of Studies was entirely responsible for education. Now they would like to return to the old system. This means that almost all responsibility should go to the teacher." (PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 259/711-714).

³⁷ OE XXIX [130/7].

³⁸ BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 91/529-531; 137/annotations to the rules 180-183, and 186. *Constitutions* ..., 252.

³⁹ Concrete measures concerning punishments in the *Regulations of the Houses*, OE XXIX [130/6 and 7]. Further OE XXIX [427/10]. See also footnote 14 in this section.

⁴⁰ BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 339/332-336. Don Francesia's drafting shows that he wanted the punishment to be executed in a humanly way. Expulsion from a school or institution was often the case. For example a communication on an investigation in the archives of the institution *Mendicizia Istruita* in Turin in the period 1835-1855. "Not all of them who had been admitted, ended the trade schooling in a regular way. Indeed, 1/5 of the accepted boys left the Institution untimely. The most important reasons were twofold: voluntary dismissals (78 cases or 10,4 %) that were attributed to reasons almost never accounted for in official documents, and expulsions due to indignity or lack of discipline (64 cases or 8,6 %)". The source is CHIOSSO, G., *Carità educatrice e istruzione in Piemonte*, Turin, SEI, 2007, 84.

⁴¹ His ideas in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 296-297.

⁴² OE XXXIII [31/10].

⁴³ OE XXXIII [64/22].

⁴⁴ Cf. OE XXIX [121-126].

⁴⁵ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, successively 254-255; 252/521; 259/733. See also footnotes 65-66, 53, and 107 in section I of vol. 1. Nevertheless, we have to be cautious because J.M. Prellezo also mentions Fr. Domenico Vota as catechist. (PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, p. 256/footnote).

⁴⁶ His letter in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, p. 287-288.

⁴⁷ "At the meeting on 16 November 1882 about 35 people were present, clerics, teachers, and priests (PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 254/590-591). See also footnote 106 in section I of vol. 1. Regarding the issue of the stairs see PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 254/581-584, and footnote 63 in section I of vol. 1.

⁴⁸ See the *Regulations* in OE XXIX [128/10]; the decisions of the First and Second General Chapter in OE XXIX [392/6] and OE XXXIII [80/7].

⁴⁹ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 301-303. Working with a commission was yet no novelty. When Fr. Leveratto, prefect of the Oratory, in the springtime of 1877 submitted a plan to organize the duties and interdependences in a better way, Don Bosco ordered to compose a commission to study this plan. See MB XIV, 115; EMB XIV, 81-82.

- ⁵⁰ BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 163/105-106. In 1863 it sounded more radically: "Make all efforts to spend the entire recreation time amidst the boys." (Ibid., 163/explanation to lines 105-106.)
- ⁵¹ OE XXXIII [33/19].
- ⁵² PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 259/713-714.
- ⁵³ MB III, 353; EMB III, 250 and MB IV, 679; EMB IV, 474.
- ⁵⁴ OE XXIX [423/16].
- ⁵⁵ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 27-28. BIESMANS, R., *Doelstellingen...*, 19. See also footnote 14 in section I of vol.1.
- ⁵⁶ MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85. Don Lemoyne was more careful in his assessment. See BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 72.
- Nevertheless, it may not be excluded that some pupils had been expelled. Don Bosco's way of acting after his return from Rome in 1879, may support this assumption. Although we also read in that story that "ordinarily, he had strong hopes for younger lads doing better" and that "at times such generosity of heart caused others to wonder." See MB XIV, 111-113; EMB XIV, 79-80.
- ⁵⁷ As to the preceding quotation: MB XVII, 159-160; EMB XVII, 137. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 65. MB XVII, 188; EMB XVII, 163. M. Ribotta maintains that the minutes of the meeting on 9 June contain little information on what was discussed. Nevertheless, he doesn't mention his source to prove his allegation. (RIBOTTA, M., *The Roman Letter of 1884 and its Aftermath*, 15.)
- ⁵⁸ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 295-296. In Fr. Canepa's report we can find resemblances with Fr. Francesca's thoughts in 1883. Cf. footnote 80 in section I of vol. 1.
- ⁵⁹ See footnote 79 in section I of vol.1. PRELLEZO J.M., *Valdocco...*, 258/685-690.
- ⁶⁰ See footnote 82 in section I. OE XXIX, [108] and [111].
- ⁶¹ See footnotes 64 and 49 in section I. With regard to the secondary school see PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 244-245.
- ⁶² MB XVII, 107 and 181; EMB XVII, 85 and 156. BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 71 and 76.
- ⁶³ See footnotes 62 and 64 in section I of vol.1. The shortcomings against Don Bosco's spirit seemed an epidemic. Already in 1871 they had to establish that "Salesians had to spend the recreation time amidst the boys who needed that assistance most." (PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 262/46-47; 254/594.)
- ⁶⁴ OE XXIX [81/1, 129/1, 131/2].
- ⁶⁵ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 213/385 and 254/586-587. See article in the *Regulations of the Houses* OE XXIX [427/8]; OE XXXIII [62/8]. See footnote 15 in this section. See also a decision in 1875 in MB XI, 216; EMB XI, 198.
- ⁶⁶ See footnote 80 in section I of vol. 1. It concerns the Italian terminology. On the one hand "lasciano andar tutto a male" (Fr. Francesca in BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 328/67-69; *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 187) and on the other hand, "le cose andare d'a rompicollo" (Fr. Fumagalli in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 299/46).
- ⁶⁷ Compare with Fr. Francesca's guidelines in footnote 40 in this section. In this way we can better understand the writings of J. B. Mehler after visiting the Oratory in 1886: "The most drastic punishment for him [Don Bosco] is expulsion. If implemented, it should be done in a humanly way not to make the boy desperate and to leave some hope to return." See MEHLER, J.B., *Don Bosco und seine sozialen Schöpfungen in Arbeiterwohl*, vol. 6 Jan.-Feb.-March 1886,13. Which does not prevent that theory and practice could differ enormously.
- ⁶⁸ BRAIDO, P., *I molti volti...*, 28/3. BARBERIS, G., *Cronaca*, quad. 19, 22. See BIESMANS, R., *Amorevolezza...*, 34. Cf. MB XII, 88; EMB XII, 68-69.
- ⁶⁹ OE XXXIII [64/21].
- ⁷⁰ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 79. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 304-307.
- ⁷¹ MB XVII, 164 and 161; EMB XVII, 140 and 138 and 141. Cf. DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1268.
- ⁷² For the quotations : MB XVII, 170 and 164-168; EMB XVII, 146 and 141-142.
- ⁷³ FdB 1.880 D4-5. (ASC 0592) BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 65. See also MB XVII, 188; EMB XVII, 163-164.

⁷⁴ E III, 158. MB XIII, 118; EMB XIII, 90. Much earlier to be seen in a circular of 16 November 1873. "It is not necessary that he (the director) does a lot of work. But he should see that everybody fulfils his duties responsibly." (E (m), vol. 4, 178/37-38.)

⁷⁵ MB XVII, 188; EMB XVII, 164.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ The expression "prendere i giovani alle buone" could be translated intuitively as "taking the boys the way they are." But that wouldn't do justice to the expression "alla buona" (here: alle buone). "Alla buona" means "in a simple manner, straight out, without any ado." There is also "con le buone" with the description or transcription "in a well-mannered, polite way", "without severity", "gracious, amiable", "affable" or friendly. We find many translations of the term "prendere con le buone". From "knowing how to deal with somebody" till "to address somebody properly (lovingly, warm-heartedly)" and "prendre quelqu'un par la douceur" (to deal with somebody gently, graciously, friendly.) See the dictionaries *Lo Zingarelli* 1996, 258; VAN DALE, *Handwoordenboek Italiaans/Nederlands*, 2001, 116 and 648; *Langenscheidts Großwörterbuch Italienisch/Deutsch*, 1975, 87; *Il nuovo dizionario Garzanti di Francese, Francese-italiano/italiano-Francese*, 1992, 1142.

⁷⁸ Successively OE XXIX [115/3 121/1 and 122/5 and 125/1].

⁷⁹ MB XVII, 17; EMB XVII, 4.

⁸⁰ Data from: DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1280, 1269-1271, 1274. See also MB XVII, 374; EMB XVII, 181. On the stay in Pinerolo see BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, 553. On the substitution by Don Rua see BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete...II*, 554.

⁸¹ BRAIDO, P. e ARENAL LLATO Rogélio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne...*, 142/4 and DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1267.

⁸² See PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 268 and 89-90.

⁸³ FdB 1.880 D 9-10. (ASC 0592) BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, p. 65. The same, stylistically modified text and additions in MB XVII, 189-190; EMB XVII, 164. Small excerpts from those meetings in BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, 552-553.

⁸⁴ "He may stick his thumbs in his belt". A very illustrative image for all people who remember the times priests were wearing a cassock and on the waist a girdle, sometimes with tassels.

⁸⁵ It wasn't the first time that the Director's situation at the Oratory was specified. In 1877 a commission decided: "The Oratory's Director had the authority of the directors of the other houses. (...) The members of the Superior Chapter were not to butt into the Director's responsibilities, since all important matters, particularly the enrolment of pupils, were exclusively his responsibility. (...) The new setup at the Oratory was underscored also by the fact that the Superior Chapter moved to separate quarters." See MB XIV, 119-120; EMB XIV, 85-86. Everything worked perfectly on paper, but less so in practice.

⁸⁶ As he was bothered by this according to Fr. Lemoyne's minutes at the meeting of 5 June.

⁸⁷ BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 87/484-486; *Constitutions ...*, 250. That they knew how to manage these words at times is shown in the publication in 1880 in *Bollettino salesiano* (BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 25 and 134/Ms. M annotations.)

⁸⁸ FdB 1.880 D 11-12. MB XVII, 190-193; EMB XVII, 166-169. Partly also partially in: BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 65-66.

⁸⁹ See these three guidelines in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 276.

⁹⁰ See OE XXIX [460/3] and especially [461/6] and [462/8].

⁹¹ Don Bosco preferred the word inspector to name the person responsible for a group of houses that belonged together geographically. The First General Chapter had specified his authorities in 1877. He became an intermediary between the directors and their houses and the members of the Superior Chapter. It seemed that not only the confreres, but also the Superior Chapter's members still had to get used to that new situation in 1884.

⁹² BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 9. MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85. BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 69-70, 72.

⁹³ FdB 1.880 E 1. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 66. MB XVII, 186-187; EMB XVII, 162-163, but E. Ceria dates this meeting on 18 July.

⁹⁴ According to data in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 278.

⁹⁵ MB XVII, 200-201; EMB XVII, 177. Cf. footnote 101 in section I of vol.1.

⁹⁶ See footnote 80 in this section and MB XVII, 194-196; EMB XVII, 170; 185-202.

⁹⁷ MB XVII, 193-194; EMB XVII, 169-170.

⁹⁸ MB XVII, 194; EMB XVII, 170.

⁹⁹ BRAIDO, P., *Prevenire* ..., 292/footnote 10. Only two of the three quotations in this paragraph are identical.

¹⁰⁰ BRAIDO, P., *Luce intellettuale* ..., 1066 and 1068.

¹⁰¹ That was, according to E. Ceria, the reason why he included Fr. Lemoyne's extensive text only in the annex of the volume XVII of the *Biographical Memoirs* (MB XVII, 722-730; EMB XVII, appendix 22). Another reason may be that he found some parts of the exposition pompous and idealistic. A comparative study of Don Bosco's conferences on chastity and Fr. Lemoyne's "composition" could be useful.

¹⁰² FdB 1.880 E 3.

¹⁰³ FdB 1.880 E 11-12, 1.881 A 1.

¹⁰⁴ E IV, 280.

¹⁰⁵ E IV, 282.

¹⁰⁶ MB XVII, 196; EMB XVII, 171.

¹⁰⁷ With regard to the quotations see FDB 1.881 A2-4. MB XVII, 200-201; EMB XVII, 177-178. As to Fr. Lazzeri's appointment, see footnote 101 in section I of vol. 1. The portrayal Don Bosco had made of Fr. Francesia, matched the image professor G. Allievo of Turin described in the literary school magazine "Il Baretto". On 10 September he wrote about him: "With this director the blind benevolence [indulgence] towards pupils has more influence than the respect due to the teacher's authority." (PRELLEZO, J.M., *"Dei castighi" (1883): puntualizzazioni...*, 293).

¹⁰⁸ FdB 1.881 A 5-7; 1.881 A 8-11.

¹⁰⁹ FdB 1.881 A 12-1.881 B 1 and 1.881 B 2-7. Cf. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, 554-555. An important part of the report on that meeting in MB XVII, 201-203; EMB XVII, 178-180.

¹¹⁰ FdB 1.881 B 6. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, p. 562. MB XVII, 365; EMB XVII, 337.

¹¹¹ FdB 1.881 B 6. Cf. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, 562-563. About the preventive (impeditive or hindering) aspect: BIESMANS, R., *Assistance...*, 33-39; ID., *Assistentie...*, 71-81.

¹¹² See footnote 89 in section I of vol.1 and on its compliance by Fr. Lazzeri in footnote 104 of section I. See also MB XII, 33; EMB XII, 20-21.

¹¹³ MB XVII, 201-202; EMB XVII, 178-179.

¹¹⁴ See footnote 107 in this section 8.

¹¹⁵ FdB 1.881 B 8. Cf. MB XVII, 204 and 206; EMB XVII, 181-182. With the view and conviction that, up to then, Don Bosco had always sustained unity of government, Fr. Rua was not isolated. Years later, Fr. Lemoyne wrote in a generalizing, maybe also extenuating way: "It was his constant advice that the government of the house would be the director's task and each confrere should do his duty." See LEMOYNE, J.B., *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio ... II*, 291.

¹¹⁶ FdB 1.881 B 9. Also MB XVII, 206; EMB XVII, 183. About Don Bosco's illness and death, see DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1272 and BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco prete... II*, 555.

¹¹⁷ FdB 1.881 B 10.

¹¹⁸ FdB 1.881 B 12.

¹¹⁹ FdB 1.881 C 4.

¹²⁰ MB XVIII, 251; EMB XVIII, 209 and MB XVII, 206; EMB XVII, 183. PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 276.

¹²¹ The quotations from the report on 17 October 1884 can be consulted in PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 268-269.

¹²² PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 266/139-140. That was probably before Don Bosco included a similar idea in a new version of the *"Confidential recommendations"*. See footnote 222 in section III of vol.1. See also MOTTO, Fr., *I "Ricordi confidenziali"...*, 155/annotations to the lines 90-91. Cf. BIESMANS, R., *Op weg naar de 'brieven' van 10 mei 1884, 1^{ste} deel...*, 51-52 with using the christian name by Don Bosco on page 52/footnote (1).

¹²³ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 262/43-45.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 263-264. It is a magnificent and important text. To understand the second recommendation it is necessary to compare it with the preceding footnote.

¹²⁵ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 261-268.

¹²⁶ According to Fr. Lemoyne, Don Bosco had assessed "towards the end of his life that the knowledge of evil had steadily increased among boys who had been victims or spectators of immoral deeds as children." That's why he used clear language. See MB VII, 81; EMB VII, 54 and STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia...II*, 250. It was an adaptation to changing circumstances, but no denial of his system.

¹²⁷ PRELLEZO, J.M., *Valdocco...*, 90/1402- 1404.

¹²⁸ See BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 69-70 and 72. Cf. MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85.

¹²⁹ MB XVII, 182; EMB XVII, 157. Cf. BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 77, where the correct reference is omitted in the footnote.

¹³⁰ MB XVII, 182; EMB XVII, 157.

¹³¹ MB XVII, 191; EMB XVII, 167.

¹³² MB XVII, 182; EMB XVII, 157.

¹³³ MB XVII, 107 and 182; EMB XVII, 85 and 157.

¹³⁴ Concerning the entire paragraph, see MB XVII, 147; EMB XVII, 123. See also footnote 5 in this section.

¹³⁵ E IV, 269-271.

¹³⁶ DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1267. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco Prete... II*, 552. See footnote 6 in this section. See also MB XVII, 158; EMB XVII, 136.

¹³⁷ MB XVII, 181; EMB XVII, 156.

¹³⁸ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera ...*, 14—16 and 22-23. See also footnote 128 in section 5 of vol. 2. Don Braido emphasizes that assessment in *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze* (a cura di BRAIDO, P.), Rome, LAS, 1992, 361/footnote 36. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 214/footnote 699.

¹³⁹ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 23 and 28. Advanced with certainty on page 23: "The end [of the letter to the boys] shows Don Bosco's autographic signature." With some restraint though on page 28: "it's his", and then between brackets: "(if not imitated), only the signature ending the short version." In an article, also published in 1884, P. Braido phrases it as follows: "The checking of the final editing is especially sure as far as the short letter is concerned which also shows his signature." Cf. BRAIDO, P., *Luce intellettuale...*, 1068. See also footnote 3 in section IV of vol. 1 of the entire study "The Magna Carta...". See also DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1276/footnote 57.

¹⁴⁰ BRAIDO, P. e ARENAL LLATA, Rogélio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne ...*, 154/13-15.

¹⁴¹ MB XVII, 170; EMB XVII, 146. Cf. footnote 72 in this section. On the other hand, it is a fact that Fr. Lemoyne had great appreciation of a small text of Don Bosco about that saint. See MB II, 359-363; EMB II, 222-224. Don Bosco included the text in his meditation-, prayers- and songbook for the youngsters (1847). He wrote: "That virtue [purity] cannot be preserved without flying from indecent conversations and bad companions." In OE II [241].

¹⁴² See the text in footnote 254 in section III of vol. 1.

¹⁴³ BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 361. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 214. Cf. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 27, where he only mentioned "a certain interval."

¹⁴⁴ BRAIDO, P. e ARENAL LLATA, Rogélio, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne...*, 159/37-38.

¹⁴⁵ That's E. Ceria's conviction: "This letter was mailed on 10 May, but Father Michael Rua did not think that it should be read in its entirety in public, and so he requested that a copy be sent to him that was suitable for the pupils." See MB XVII, 107; EMB XVII, 85. How could such a correspondence to Rome and back have been technically possible at that time? See footnote 140 in this section for the letter of 6 May to Fr. Rua.

¹⁴⁶ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 9 and 17. The annotation is to be found in collection LXV. The opinion of DESRAMAUT, Fr., in footnote 155 of this section.

¹⁴⁷ DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1276-1277. Then it concerned already a so-called "reduced!" text. Fr. Rua didn't have to insist to Fr. Lemoyne, as E. Ceria wrote.

¹⁴⁸ Respectively BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 8 and BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 350. This part of the text was altered by P. Braido in 1992. An older version cannot be found in BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 206.

¹⁴⁹ See the versions in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 41-45. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 224-228.

- ¹⁵⁰ At the end of the text Fr. Rua had made some changes. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 46. From one of them we may deduce that Fr. Rua had omitted the names of Fathers Lazzero and Marchisio. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 228/note 739.
- ¹⁵¹ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 23 and 41-46. The copy was marked with the letter L. Even Fr. Rua's indications "Io" V and "a., A. " to read the letter aloud and clearly, were copied by G. Berardo.
- ¹⁵² BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 23-26. Cf. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 362. BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 215-216.
- ¹⁵³ BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore ...*, 349. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 205.
- ¹⁵⁴ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 16-17 and *Don Bosco Educatore...*, 357. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 211-212.
- ¹⁵⁵ DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1276-1277. BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 18-19. ID., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 358-359. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 212-213.
- ¹⁵⁶ About Fr. Berto see DESRAMAUT, Fr., *Don Bosco en son temps...*, 1267 and 1342.
- ¹⁵⁷ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 17-18. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 212.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 18-19. MB XVII, 194; EMB XVII, 170. About this paragraph see footnote 146 in this section 8. About dictation, see footnotes 144-149 in section 5 of this volume.
- ¹⁵⁹ See footnote 255 in section III of vol. 1.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Dizionario biografico dei salesiani* (editors VALENTINI, E., - RODINÒ, A.), Turin, 1969, 41.
- ¹⁶¹ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 20. See also the genealogy of the manuscripts, galley proofs and editions on page 31. Partially in BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco Educatore...*, 1997, 361; ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 217.
- ¹⁶² MB XVIII, 249-250; EMB XVIII, 208.
- ¹⁶³ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 20-21.
- ¹⁶⁴ BARBERIS, G., *Appunti...*, 1897.
- ¹⁶⁵ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 21-22 and 31.
- ¹⁶⁶ More about this issue in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 14.
- ¹⁶⁷ Footnotes 134 and 135 in section 5 of vol. 2. It concerns the *Lettere circolari di D. Bosco e di D. Rua*, 39 and 41 and the omission in art. 5 of the *Regulations* in OE XXIX [129-130].
- ¹⁶⁸ LEMOYNE, G.B., *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio... II*, 310.
- ¹⁶⁹ About this paragraph see footnote 146 in this section 8. About dictation, see footnotes 144-149 in section 5 of this volume.
- ¹⁷⁰ The quotes are taken from LEMOYNE, J.B., *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio... II*, 311-312.
- ¹⁷¹ With his choice of quotes Fr. Lemoyne has influenced authors at the beginning of the 20th century who were interested in Don Bosco's educational methods. Among others, in Germany. Even in 1921, a year after the long version was published by the Acts of the Superior Chapter, J. Lechermann stuck to the pages of the second volume of Fr. Lemoyne's *Vita del venerabile Giovanni Bosco II*. This confirms the lack of reputation and circulation of "the letter from Rome to the Oratory" and even of the General Superior's letters. Some excerpts from the "Vita del venerabile..." were even reduced by J. Lechermann. The almost incomprehensible idea about "the lesser part" versus "the greater" was simply omitted. In the sentence on vocations he preferred: "that many didn't follow their vocation." That refers rather to common sense and relativism than to knowledge of another source. Obviously, he didn't understand the idea of "Jesus being the teacher of familiarity" and so he omitted it. He clearly had difficulty with the term familiarità. Next to "Familiensinn" he used "Familiengeist" as a translation which is only possible if one doesn't have the entire context. He translated "Carità" by "Güte" (kind-heartedness, friendliness) and "affetto" by "hingebende Liebe" (giving love) which is only possible if you don't know the entire context. See LECHERMANN, J., *Charakterbild Don Boscos nach Johann Lemoyne*, Ens Dorf, 1921, 56-57. The preference for Familiengeist may be attributed to the use of "spirito di famiglia" by Don Albera in a circular of 15 May 1921. See ALBERA, P., *Atti del capitolo superior della pia società salesiana*, II, 15 May 1921, 4, 202. Also professor L. Habrich had in 1924 only the text of J. Lechermann at his disposal. See HABRICH, L., *Aus dem Leben und der Wirksamkeit Don Boscos*, Kaldenkirchen, 1924, 141.
- ¹⁷² BOSCO, G., *Il sistema preventivo...*, 84. *Constitutions...*, 248. See footnote 131 in section 5 of vol. 2.

¹⁷³ See the explanation of the difference between amore and carità in section III of vol.1. See footnote 132 in section 5 of this volume.

¹⁷⁴ *Atti del Capitolo Superiore della pia società salesiana*, I, 24 June 1920, 1, 14. The text was first published in the *Atti del Capitolo Superiore...*, I, 24 August 1920, 2, 40-48.

¹⁷⁵ *Atti del Capitolo Superiore...*, II, 15 May 1921, 4, 202. Cf. the circular in: *Lettere circolari di D. Paolo Albera ai Salesiani*, Turin, SEI, 1922, 458-459.

¹⁷⁶ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 27. He kept on defending that position. See BRAIDO, P., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 360. In explanation of this: 1. "As regards content" or literally "ideally" means with regard to the ideas. 2. "The possibility to accomplish an example" is literally "potentially paradigmatic". Omitted by P. Braido in the 1997 edition and ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 213.

¹⁷⁷ STELLA, P., *Don Bosco nella storia... II*, 469.

9. As a general conclusion

1. While reading and re-reading the descriptions of the two recreation times both in the letter to the boys and in the extensive arrangement for their superiors, teachers, and assistants, two reports of assemblies at the Oratory suddenly came to mind. They were taken down by Fr. Lazzero at the beginning of the 1880s.

In the first report he very briefly wrote: “Inquiring into the reason why the boys fear us more than they love us. That stands at right angles to our spirit or, at any rate, to Don Bosco’s spirit.”¹ The spontaneous emphasizing of this aspect of his pedagogical method, even of Don Bosco’s spirit tout court, is, of course, a given. It indicates how essential it was for Fr. Lazzero. The movie shots in the texts, in turn make the contrast strikingly clear between the situation around 1884 and the situation before 1870 (even around 1860) with the ideal pattern that must be pursued according to Don Bosco’s spirit. Indeed, the appreciation of the scene in the playground that Valfré and Don Bosco could look at together was the following: “You could see that the greatest cordiality (and confidence) reigned between youngsters and superiors.” (7) In other words, in that early period at the Oratory, they lived Don Bosco’s spirit. Then mutual confidence, openness, even affection and a desire for jovial contact reigned. Not a shadow of fear could be seen. The apathy, aversion and lack of contact during recreation time that the other past pupil on the contrary evoked in the second scene, perceptibly showed distrust, suspicion, unwillingness, and shutting oneself off. The behavior of many boys in 1884 painfully revealed that they “feared and but little loved,” as the text further confirms. (18)

In a second report Fr. Lazzero noted down that Don Bosco arrived later for the same meeting and first wanted to be informed. Then he insisted that his co-workers - after the professional hours, that is during recreation time - should mix like friends and fathers with the boys.² That the Salesians did not make enough effort in that respect is an indirect accusation both in the letter and in the first part of the long version. The consequence is “that the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers, and friends.” (18). How they may still change the situation is shown to them and indicated in the contact of Don Bosco himself with his boys and in the way of mixing with them of the exemplary teacher and his colleague preacher. (19; 20)

While establishing these striking similarities between Fr. Lazzero’s report and the texts from 1884, the question arose whether the letter to the boys and especially the long version of Ms. D were not texts inspired by very concrete

circumstances. To be able to give a reliable answer a closer examination of the pastoral and pedagogical circumstances at Valdocco around 1884 seemed necessary to me. That is why I sketched the situation at Valdocco in the first volume of this study. After the detailed analysis of the possible circular for the Salesians and the content of the letter sent to the boys in May 1884 I have placed a recapitulating test each time (sections 4 and 6). Those surveys led into section 7 which indicated that Don Bosco, and especially Fr. Lemoyne, in the main, actually reacted against formerly discussed and treated shortcomings of the boys and serious negligence and defaults of the Salesians.

2. Another important moment during my long years of study was when I became aware that Fr. Lemoyne had written the texts. He had done so based on a few suggestions from Don Bosco. In the case of the letter to the boys this was very clear and could be checked thanks to the preserved Ms. A which is produced in little parts spread in the first column of the added Auxiliary or Supplementary Booklet with synoptic tables (4, 5, 7-10, 11, 16-18, 19-20, 25-26; 27-34). This was less clear for the preceding longer part of the combined text. Ms. B created the strong impression that it was partly an initial elaboration resulting from “another no longer identifiable page (‘sheet’).”³ Whether or not this is true, an accurate comparison of texts irrefutably shows that in both versions Fr. Lemoyne has consistently freely completed and elaborated inspirational material coming from Don Bosco, directly or indirectly.

This discovery has given rise to the question: “May we still judge that we find the thoughts of Don Bosco himself in both writings? Parts or sections III and IV of the first volume offer the progress of a multi-faceted inquiry to find a well-founded answer. As previously mentioned, the most important findings I have arranged as conveniently as I could and included them in sections IV (volume 1) and 6 (volume 2). The results testify to the fact that Lemoyne not only repeatedly inserted suggestions from Don Bosco and did so with visible respect, but that his thoroughgoing familiarity with Don Bosco’s most important writings and well-known statements guided his assimilation of the material and any additions. However, this fidelity does not remove the fact that he has described, defined and theoretically highlighted some of Don Bosco’s features in his own way. He did this especially in the case of terms like ‘affective love (amore),’ ‘familiarity,’ and ‘greatest cordiality.’ Each is a feature Don Bosco had lived, but had not named in quite that way nor developed a theme from them.

Thanks to this working method Fr. Lemoyne has produced texts that may rightfully be called a compendium of Don Bosco’s experiences, standpoints, and directives. And rightly too, “the Magna Carta of Don Bosco’s pedagogical system.”

3. This is why I began increasingly to regret that we, in the Flemish province, often have been satisfied with a practical handful of quotations (very often unrelated to the context) from the prolific content that was specifically intended for the adult educators. Here, then, are some of the ideas that are often used as slogans:

(a) ‘The educator must show interest in what the youngsters are interested in.’

Yet the original “by being loved in the things they like, through sharing in their youthful interests,” contains much more than simply ‘showing interest in.’

(b) ‘You must make your love tangible, experiential,’ meaning real.

No doubt, this is inspired by the original: “If you wish to be loved, you must make clear that you love,” but it does not offer any idea as to how to make love perceptible, tangible. The nicely formulated saying has lost Don Bosco’s concrete “constantly being present among the boys and talking to them” and also the notion of the ever-present and communicative model teacher and preacher. It is a pity that such slogans have been isolated from the true meaning of familiarity and Don Bosco’s concepts of “dolcezza” and “amorevolezza.”

(c) Additionally, there has been and still is the constant emphasizing of “assistance” during the recreation time.

In practice this comes down especially to active involvement, joining in the game, sympathizing. But in fact, assistance also means kind-hearted, spontaneous, natural contact, stimulating, and educating in every circumstance and at any time. In stressing on the importance of the recreation time, very often insufficient attention is drawn to the more extensive application hidden in the text: “Familiarity with the boys especially in recreation” (19, Mss. C and D). “Especially” is not the same as “exclusively.” It means a privileged opportunity. Not the only one. “Being father, brother and friend” implies much more as appears from the prerequisites for a good superior. (23).

Finding that partial and rather superficial knowledge and application of essential aspects from the combined version has prompted me to continue my attempt to discover the diversity and the impact of the directive pieces of advice and appeals and to unveil the richness of the whole. The directives exceed what is accidental in an answer to local and very concrete shortcomings and difficulties. In the frame of the preventive system according to Don Bosco the ideas, often presented as clear and lasting, are basic and generally valuable.⁴ That is why they deserve a thorough knowledge and a regular comparison with the theory and the daily practice of educators, teachers, and pastorally engaged persons. They merit this along with Don Bosco’s modest treatise about “*The Preventive*

System in the Education of the Young.” I believe it is indeed useful to examine the similarities and differences or, better still, the nuances and developments to show more clearly the value of each of the two texts, namely the letter of 10 May to the boys and the extended composition for the personnel.

4. Reception and impact

In the margin of the separate study of the real letter to the boys, I was agreeably surprised by Fr. Lemoyne’s and Fr. Ceria’s attention to the impact the letter would have had on his listeners when it had been read to them.⁵

I was especially intrigued by a note written by Fr. Ceria. After summing up the positive consequences he noted: “Lasting measures had to be taken.” He meant that in Valdocco there were Salesians who were aware that it was necessary to take measures that could support and continue the consequences which had been awakened perhaps rather emotionally, after Fr. Rua’s reading to the boys and Salesians present. And E. Ceria continued: “The Superior Chapter gave thought to this. During several of their meetings, the conditions existing at the Oratory were carefully discussed. It is instructive to learn at least in part what was discussed at those meetings under the guidance of Don Bosco.”⁶

It seemed obvious to me that Valfré’s and Buzzetti’s ‘analysis’ and the implications thereof would have influenced such a ‘careful examination’ and any measures intended as a lasting remedy. However, the investigation into practical influence as demonstrated in section 8 of volume 2 has shown that the first part of the long version had played no role in Superior Chapter discussions. It even seemed that we cannot decide when this item we have described as a ‘Magna Carta’ started having any impact. Even after 1920. This current study also allows some doubt as to the impact of Fr. Lemoyne’s summary as part of his biography of Don Bosco in 1913.

It looks as if the definitive elaboration of the long version endured the same fate as Fr. Francesia’s text on *Administering Punishments in the Salesian Houses*. That is, set aside and forgotten over a long period.

However, that does not diminish the value of the document (Ms. D). Its gripping style continues bringing the reader into contact with Don Bosco and, in terms of his pedagogical and pastoral convictions, with one of his most like-minded followers and best interpreters.

5. Fr. Lemoyne, the man who “reformulates”

The terms ‘interpreter’ and ‘the man who reformulates’ are inspired by the concepts, once more repeated above, like “amore, familiarity, and greatest cordiality and greatest confidence.” Even if, according to manuscript B, we acknowledge that Don Bosco used these terms in conversations and inspirational suggestions for Fr. Lemoyne, we still cannot deny that the author freely interpreted and developed them.

We may consider this freedom and creativity as an application of the following wise counsel and guideline from both the letter to the boys and the combined version: “I want nothing else than, due allowances being made, we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old.” (33) This rule of life is an ongoing remedy against rigidity and fundamentalism when it comes to describing and determining what are the essential and characteristic elements of the Preventive System itself.

I want to illustrate this conclusion with a couple of examples from a work by P. Braido. They regard aspects that are prominent in the long version.

A first example: the changed circumstances of our time have as a consequence “a radically new way of interpreting and experimenting the notion and role of ‘father’, ‘brother’ and ‘friend.’ The self-confident and confidence-inspiring educator, who is well aware of his task and accepts responsibility, is not authoritarian, but exerts authority. He is able to engage affection, together with profound respect and unconditional confidence. Only this condition can guarantee the authentic dialogue and the constructive contact with a youngster who is respected in his rights, in the personal responsibility for his development, including disagreement and contestation.”

A second example: “It is necessary to find a concrete and decisive ‘familial preventive pedagogy’, which, with special critical concern and changed circumstances, can apply again the key-concepts of the ‘system’, particularly the problematic ‘amorevolezza’ which moves between affective creativity, guaranteeing a sense of belonging, and [on the other hand] fearful possessiveness, violence.”⁷ In this text, in the light of my comments on Lemoyne’s composition, we only have to replace “amorevolezza” with familiarity to agree with Pietro Braido.

In any event, the ultimate purpose of any reinterpreting and actualization should not so much be “a return to the happy days of the past,” but the realization of happiness for everyone concerned today.

¹ See footnote 79 in section I of vol. I and footnote 7 in section 7.

² See footnote 64 in section I of vol. I and footnote 5 in section 7.

³ BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 36/35. ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 219. This other page might perhaps be the elaboration of the letter to the boys. See the text in BRAIDO, P., *La lettera...*, 43/55-57 and in Ms. C, 39/82-85; ID., *Don Bosco educatore...*, 1997, 373/59-62 and 369/92-95; ID., *Don Bosco the Educator...*, 225 ("Rari si... ed i preti" is not translated) and 222.

⁴ According to P. Stella the long version "must be considered to be the most effective exegesis of kind and preventive assistance" and as one of the most effective and fertile of Don Bosco's pedagogical documents." Yet in saying this, he was convinced that Fr. Lemoyne wrote the original text and that Don Bosco signed it." (STELLA, P., *Don Boco nella storia... II*, 467 and 469.) And in 1959 P. BRAIDO called the text "the summary of the best of his pedagogical experiences at the end of his (Don Bosco's) life." (BRAIDO, P. *10 maggio 1884*, 550.) In the next years P. Braido would pass through a remarkable development.

⁵ BIESMANS, R., *De brief uit Rome aan de jongens...*, 68-78.

⁶ MB XVII, 182; EMB XVII, 157.

⁷ Both quotations from BRAIDO, P., *Prevenire...*, 401 and 403. In the twenties of the 20th century Fr. Fascie included the text of manuscript D in an anthology. That is to say he preferred in one way or another the manuscript with a preference to the word "amore". Nevertheless, In his introduction to the publication he wrote that there are two essential elements: REASON AND RELIGION. (...) Reason in the form of common sense and religion in the form of Christian love (carità) *coated with kindness* (mansuetudine) which wins the minds of the pupils and in such a way to make *friends*. (FASCIE, B., *Del metodo educativo*, 33-34.) In this way, the third cornerstone "amorevolezza" in Don Bosco's brief treatise on the preventive system was yet included, but Fr. Fascie substituted the term "amorevolezza" by "mansuetudine" (literally: meekness) accompanied by necessary explanation.

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