

ARTHUR J. LENTI

DON  
BOSCO  
HISTORY AND SPIRIT



6.

EXPANSION OF THE  
SALESIAN WORK  
IN THE NEW WORLD  
& ECCLESIOLOGICAL  
CONFRONTATION  
AT HOME

LAS - ROMA

# Don Bosco: History and Spirit

## 6. Expansion of the Salesian Work in the New World and Ecclesiological Confrontation at Home

The main part of this Volume 6 (Chs. 1-5) of the series, *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*, continues the survey of the Society's Institutional Expansion begun in the preceding chapter in its twofold aspect, external and internal. The external expansion is set in a different scenario and context—no longer in Europe but in South America. Chapters 1-4 describe the implantation of the Salesian work in South America, and specifically (after a brief anthropological and historical introduction by way of establishing a context) they tell the story of the Argentine offer and of Don Bosco's acceptance, out of several options available to him (Ch. 1). It is noted that the original offer was for implanting the Salesian work of behalf on poor children and immigrants in Buenos Aires and La Plata area. Don Bosco, however, out of a new missionary awareness at the same time aimed at committing the Society to missionary apostolate properly so called, among the aboriginal native population, and he eventually obtained Apostolic recognition (Chs. 2-3). Chapter 4 is a collection of appendices relating to the above.

Chapter 5 describes a further internal institutional expansion, the “founding” (organization) of the Salesian Cooperators and connected structures, namely, the Work of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Bulletin.

The last two chapters continue the discussion of further stages in the conflict between Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi that had begun in connection with the approval of the Constitutions (1872-1874). The conflict, for a variety of causes, increases in bitterness through 1874-1877 (Ch. 6), and becomes more acrimonious with the appearance of defamatory pamphlets against the Archbishop (Ch. 7, 1877-1882). It is brought to an end only by Pope Leo XIII's intervention, imposing a document of reconciliation (*Concordia*).

Vol. 1: *Don Bosco's Formative Years in Historical Context*

Vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory*

Vol. 3: *Don Bosco Educator, Spiritual Master, Writer and Founder of the Salesian Society*

Vol. 4: *Beginnings of the Salesian Society and Its Constitutions*

Vol. 5: *Institutional Expansion*

Vol. 6: *Expansion of the Salesian Work in the New World and Ecclesiological Confrontation at Home*

Vol. 7: *Don Bosco's Golden Years* (and General Index of the series)



**Arthur J. Lenti**, who has published many articles on Don Bosco and Salesian topics in the *Journal of Salesian Studies* and in the *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*, has degrees in Scripture, Systematic and Spiritual Theology. After over 20 years of teaching Scripture in various seminaries and in Summer programs, Fr Lenti came to Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley in 1975. Since 1984, he has been the lead instructor at the Institute of Salesian Spirituality in Berkeley (an affiliate of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, member school of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley). His most recent book is *Don Bosco his Pope and his Bishop*.

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DON BOSCO

History and Spirit - 6





ARTHUR J. LENTI

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Vol. 6

EXPANSION OF THE SALESIAN WORK IN THE NEW WORLD  
AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION AT HOME

(Edited by Aldo Giraudo)

LAS - ROME

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## DON BOSCO: HISTORY AND SPIRIT

### **A Survey of the Life and Work of Saint John Bosco (1815-1888)**

#### *A Word to the Reader*

The chapters that make up this series of volumes are a survey of the life and times of St. John Bosco, framed and punctuated by the events that brought both the Western Church and the Western World into modern times.

I call this survey, “Don Bosco, History and Spirit”—“History,” because Don Bosco’s life and work were played out in the context of the fateful events that created a new religious and political world, and thereby also shaped his thinking and action; “Spirit,” because through discernment, interpretation and acceptance he discovered the meaning of this new world and courageously responded to its challenges: his vocation.

These chapters were born, so to speak, in the classroom. The historical materials were the burden of private reading as well as of the instructor’s presentation. But the “Spirit” in them emerged through fairly intensive critical reflection involving the collaboration of both instructor and students.

For the present purpose the material had to undergo considerable revision and re-writing for greater readability, and a number of chapters had to be expanded with Appendices. These contain biographical sketches of figures that were deemed relevant to the matter under treatment. They also contain texts that seemed necessary or useful for a better understanding of the topic under discussion.

#### *Acknowledgments*

The presentation at many point is indebted, sometimes heavily, to the work of scholars, too numerous to mention, who have labored diligently and critically in the field of Salesian Studies, and other related fields. To them goes my grateful acknowledgment.

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Finally, I thank the Director and Staff of Don Bosco Hall for their support over the years.

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Berkeley, California (U.S.A.)

Vol. 6

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## Chapter 1

# SALESIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA I CONTEXT, ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY GROWTH

### Summary

- I. Introductory: Historical, Geographical and Ethnographical Context
    - 1. South American Population: Ethnic Origins and Immigration
    - 2. Independence Movements: End of the Colonial System and of the *Patroado*
    - 3. Brief Historical Surveys: Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay after Independence
    - 4. The Catholic Church in the New South American Liberal States
  - II. Offer Made and Don Bosco's Option to Establish the Salesian Work in the La Plata Area
    - 1. Italian Migrants to Argentina in the Nineteenth Century
    - 2. Don Bosco and the Migrant Problem
    - 3. The Italian Migrant Community of Buenos Aires
    - 4. Archbishop Aneiros' (Fr. Ceccarelli's) Offer and its Character
    - 5. Initial Salesian Pastoral Activity with Italian Immigrants
    - 6. First Salesian Foundations in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile
- Appendix: Don Bosco's Keepsakes to the First Missionaries

## I. Introductory Notices — The Context

### 1. South American Population: Ethnic Origins and Immigration

After "South America," *Enc. Brit., Macro* (1987), vol. 23, 683.

Four main components have contributed to the present-day population of South America: (1) The South American Indians (Amerindian natives) that were the pre-Colombian inhabitants; (2) The Iberians, that is, the Spanish and Portuguese that conquered and dominated the continent from the 16<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; (3) the Africans imported as slaves by the colonizers; (4) Finally, a post-independence wave of immigrants (from ca. 1820) coming from overseas, mostly from Europe.

*South American Indians*

During the epoch of European discovery and conquest in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Amerindian societies existed at three different cultural levels, and this fact to a large extent determined the composition of the population during the colonial period and afterward.

*Andean Society and Culture*

Andean society was a civilization of archaic type, comparable to Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and other Old World pre-Greek civilizations. It existed on the Pacific coast with its focal center in Peru. It is estimated that agriculture (based on corn or maize) had been developed in this area from at least 2500 BC, while the beginnings of the formative period of Andean civilization date to the first millennium BC. At that time the agricultural village was the basic community. Different arts and crafts were also developed, and, toward the end of the period, religious-ceremonial buildings began to appear.

The culture of the Classic Andean period (approximately from the year 1 to 1000 AD) reached a higher refinement in the architectural arts; palaces and elaborate multi-room buildings were constructed. Metallurgy (the smelting of copper and gold alloys) was developed, and agricultural techniques, such as terracing and irrigation, were evolved. Urbanization, that is, the emergence of inhabited cities, as distinct from religious-ceremonial centers, also came into existence during the classic period. With a relatively high level of political and military organization, these civilizations established several kingdoms. Neither the Classic nor the post-Classic Andean civilizations, however, had a written language.

The post-Classic phase (after AD 1000), moreover, was marked by further extension and centralization. The Inca Empire of Peru, for example, expanded from its homeland in Cuzco to the north, to the area occupied by present-day Colombia, with its relatively advanced Chibcha cultures. It also expanded to the south, to present-day Chile, with its primitive Araucanian Indian tribes. The Incas began their conquests around 1200 AD, but the expansion of their empire was greatly accelerated after 1400, until the process was halted by the Spaniards in 1536.

### *Other South American Societies*

Among the remaining South American societies, lower and intermediate levels could at the same time be distinguished that had not evolved beyond the earlier phases of social development.

The *lower level* occurred in the Guanaco area, inhabited by nomadic hunting tribes. It was located on the present-day territory of Argentina and Uruguay and included the extreme south (Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn).

The *intermediate level* occurred in the Manioca area, which covered the Amazon Basin to the Atlantic coast, occupying part of the present-day territory of Brazil. Although hunting was the main occupation of the population of the intermediate level, they also practiced agriculture, using the slash-and-burn technique (that is, cleaning ground for temporary cultivation by cutting and burning the vegetation).

### *Overall Numbers of South American Indians*

The following estimates refer to the whole of South America (with occasional reference to other parts of the Americas). Andean civilization and the peoples dominated or influenced by it included perhaps one-half of South America's indigenous population and also covered the most densely settled areas of the continent. Elsewhere, the population was sparse, and large areas remained deserted.

The number of Indians at the time of the conquest (early to mid sixteenth century) is uncertain. (1) Estimates for North, South, and Central America combined vary from 8,000,000 to 100,000,000. (2) For the Incas alone, the estimate is from 3,000,000 to 32,000,000. (3) Some authorities assign to South America as a whole a population of 6,800,000, of which a little less than half belonged to the Inca Empire or were under Inca influence. (4) Other more recent estimates that put pre-conquest population for the whole of South America at about 14,000,000 seem more realistic.<sup>1</sup>

### *Origin of South American Indians*

Equally controversial is the origin of South America's Indians. Most an-

<sup>1</sup> Statistics for the number of Amerindian natives for the area where the Salesians first established their works and missions (Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego) are given below.

thropologists believe that they arrived in America from Asia, in successive waves, from about 25,000 BC onward. They probably came across the Bering Strait, which separates the extremities of northeastern Asia and northwestern North America.

### *Iberians*

After the conquest and throughout the era of their domination, only the Spanish and Portuguese were admitted to their South American colonies. The rigid exclusion of all other foreigners had but few exceptions, though a small number of other Europeans settled within the colonies as a result of illegal or tolerated immigration. The Iberian ethnic background itself was, however, highly diversified. Apart from the Romans themselves, many pre-Roman peoples, such as Visigoths, Jews, Arabs, Berbers, and Moors, contributed to form both the Spanish and Portuguese population.

Most of the Spaniards came from Castile and the southern regions. Very little is known about the principal regions from which the Portuguese came.

It is estimated that the total number of *licencias* (authorizations to emigrate) granted by Spain was about 150,000 for the whole colonial period, which lasted from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that the number of illegal emigrants out of Spain and Portugal also equaled this number. Of these, no more than two-fifths went to South America.

### *Africans (Slaves)*

A few African servants accompanying their Spanish or Portuguese masters were the first slaves to enter the continent. Larger-scale importation of slaves from Africa developed two or three decades later. The slave trade was authorized by Spain for the first time in 1518, though reliable quantitative information is lacking.

An idea of their demographic contribution as to numbers may be given by some estimates: 4,000,000 for Brazil, and 3,000,000 for all Spanish America, of which only a minority went to the Andean region and an even smaller number to the southern cone (consisting of present-day Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile).

Paradoxically, the slave trade was supported by those claimed to be concerned about the preservation of the Indians. African slaves were considered to be more efficient than American Indians, particularly for working in tropi-



cal plantations. Most of the slaves imported into South America were from West Africa, including Angola. The slave trade (not slavery) ceased in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Post-Independence Immigrants from Overseas—Numbers and Provenance*

With the attainment of independence by most of the South American countries in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (during and following the Napoleonic period), the legal exclusion of foreigners came to an end. Mass immigration to the continent, however, did not begin until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, acquiring momentum in the last three decades of the century and continuing until 1930, when it decreased abruptly.

Some 11,000,000 to 12,000,000 people arrived in South America. The great majority of these went to Argentina (more than 50 percent) and to Brazil (about 37 percent). Although many later left, the demographic and socio-cultural impact of this influx in Argentina and (to a lesser extent) in southern Brazil was tremendous. Immigration to countries other than Argentina and Brazil was numerically less significant (although socio-culturally meaningful). In Uruguay, however, where because the preexisting population was not numerous, the percentage of the foreign born was high—18 percent in 1908, and even higher in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Argentina this proportion reached nearly one-third of the total, and stayed at that level for many years. In both cases the contribution of post-independence immigration was proportionally much higher than in the United States at the peak of mass immigration.

The great majority of the immigrants were Europeans. Italians formed nearly one-half of the immigrants in Argentina, one-third of those in Brazil, and probably the majority of immigrants in Uruguay. The Spaniards formed one-third of those in Argentina, and the Portuguese 30 percent of those in Brazil.

Other small but socially relevant immigrant streams arrived from central and eastern Europe. This source of immigration became more important after the turn of the century and especially during the 1930s and 1940s, when it included more middle class and educated people. Among them were many Jews and other refugees.

After World War II another smaller wave of immigration arrived from Europe, directed mostly to Venezuela and Argentina.

## 2. Independence Movements in Latin America to 1825

After William L. Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History*, a Revised and Modernized Version of Ploetz' Epitome (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949).

### *Brief Description of the Liberation Movement and Its Leaders*

Spain and Portugal between them conquered all of South and Central America, except the Guianas (that is, French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana) and ruled their colonies for nearly 300 years. Isolation from Europe and other factors led many colonists to desire complete independence. Their chance came when Napoleon's temporary conquest of Spain (in the Peninsular War) left them very much to their own devices.

The wars of independence began in the region of the Rio de la Plata in 1806. The outstanding general of this campaign, José de San Martín, liberated Chile in 1818. The region then known as Charcas was freed by Simón Bolívar, and was renamed Bolivia. Bolívar had already helped liberate Venezuela in 1811. Paraguay and Uruguay also proclaimed their independence in 1811, while Colombia and Ecuador were liberated by San Martín and Bolívar in 1822. Mexico began its campaign for independence in 1808, and finally achieved it in 1821.

Brazil provided a haven for the Portuguese royal family during Napoleon's Peninsular War. In 1822, faced with Portuguese demands that Brazil return to a subordinate state of colony, the Brazilians proclaimed their independence and installed Dom Pedro, son of the Portuguese king, as their first emperor (Pedro I). Briefly, we have the following sequence:

- 1810. Argentina made independent (San Martín)
- 1811. Venezuela made independent (Bolívar)
- 1811. Paraguay declares independence
- 1811. Uruguay declares independence
- 1818. Chile liberated (San Martín)
- 1819. Greater Colombia (that is, Ecuador and Colombia) made independent (San Martín and Bolívar)
- 1821. Peru liberated (San Martín)
- 1821. Mexico achieves independence
- 1822. Brazil declares independence
- 1825. Bolivia made independent (Bolívar)

*Situation after Independence—Lack of Unity and Its Causes*

By 1825 South America (and Mexico) had become independent. But the movement for independence in the Spanish colonies produced only ephemeral cooperation between the states of South America and between Mexico and Central America, although there existed an ideal of union, which was one of Bolívar's objectives. The reasons for this are many. The individualism of the Spaniards, separatist traditions inherited from Spain, the influence of administrative division during the colonial period stood in the way of unity, though they created rudimentary nationalism and, in certain instances, a cultural entity within the upper classes. Likewise, geographical and climatic factors, lack of communications, and the personal ambition of individual leaders prevented the achievement of union and cooperation between states.

Orderly progress within nations was rendered difficult by these same factors, by ethnic differences, by class distinctions and by vested interests, which independence from Spain did not eliminate. The Church was determined to maintain its vast influence, interests, and privileged position. Wealth and political power remained the possessions of a small minority.

With regard to ethnic differences, of the peoples of Spanish America some 19% were whites, 31% *mestizos* (persons of mixed European and Amerindian blood), 45% Amerindian natives), and 4% Blacks.

The vast bulk of the population was abjectly ignorant, and large native groups had scarcely been touched by European culture in other than its religious aspects. The educated upper classes had no experience in government other than that afforded by a town's *cabildos* (municipal councils) and by the governmental agencies created during the period of liberation. Military influence, resulting from the long period of wars, was strong.

There existed no community of interest. Consequently political, economic, social, and religious dissension was common. Division into bitterly opposed conservative and liberal reforming groups was inevitable. Conditions after independence demanded firm government and capable administrators. San Martín favored monarchical forms of government. Bolívar, a man of theoretical democratic and republican beliefs but with an understanding of the problems involved, advocated compromise between monarchy and republicanism.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the intellectual leaders of the independence

<sup>2</sup> The terms "Democratic" and "Republican" are to be understood in the sense derived from the French Revolution.

movement were impractical, idealistic and doctrinaire republicans. As a result republican forms, for which the peoples were least prepared, were mostly adopted. Republican leaders were divided among themselves on the question of the unitary as opposed to the federal system. The conflict of forces within the newly formed states made a long period of instability and adjustment inevitable.

We give here brief surveys of historical developments in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay, the countries in which the Salesian work was established in Don Bosco's lifetime. (The Salesian work was established in Ecuador at the very end of Don Bosco's life, 1888.)

### *Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century - Brief Historical Surveys*

The following is a simplified chronology of socio-political developments, roughly for the period 1825-1900.

#### *Argentina*

At the achievement of independence, there existed little feeling of unity in Argentina, and a fundamental issue at once arose concerning the adoption of a unitary or federal republican form of government. Buenos Aires favored a unitary system, while the provinces, controlled by local leaders (*caudillos*) and fearing the preponderance of the capital, favored a federal system. The Argentine provinces wished to include Paraguay and Uruguay within the nation, and this laid the basis for foreign complications.

1825. Hoping to achieve the incorporation of Uruguay, Argentina supported a revolt of Uruguay against Brazil.

1827. Argentine and Uruguayan forces defeated the Brazilians, in the decisive battle of Ituzaingó (Feb. 20).

1828. Through the mediation of Great Britain Uruguay was made an independent buffer state. (Uruguay had won independence of Spain in 1811 but was claimed by Brazil and coveted by Argentina. In 1828 both Argentina and Brazil recognized Paraguay as an independent state.

1829. Almost constant rebellion in the provinces reduced Argentina to anarchy until Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877), a provincial leader and a federalist, became governor of Buenos Aires after defeating the rebels in the provinces (April 1830).

1835. Rosas assumed complete authority in Buenos Aires and twelve provinces recognized him as chief executive. The Argentine Confederacy thus became a reality. Rosas governed with absolute authority. He sought to raise Argentine prestige abroad, and desired to bring Uruguay and Paraguay into the federation.

1831-1841. Controversies arose with the United States and Great Britain (concerning the Falkland Islands, which England claimed), and with France (concerning treatment of French subjects). This led to a blockade of the Argentine coast (1838).

1845-1850. Further disputes arose with France and Great Britain (concerning Argentina's intervention in Uruguay and the closing of the Paraná River to foreign commerce). This resulted in a blockade of the Rio de la Plata by English and French naval forces.

From these controversies Argentina emerged with credit, although the position of Rosas was weakened thereby.

1851. The tyrannical rule of Rosas caused internal opposition, led by Justo José de Urquiza (1800-1870), and Rosas' intervention in Uruguay aroused the enmity of Brazil.

1852. In alliance with Uruguay and Brazil, Urquiza overthrew Rosas in the battle of Caseros (February 3). Despite its drawbacks, the arbitrary regime of Rosas constituted a necessary period of transition between anarchy and constitutional organization. Argentina's designs on Uruguay were henceforth relinquished.

1853. Urquiza became chief executive and a federal constitution, to which Buenos Aires refused to adhere, was promulgated (May 1). It provided for a president with a six-year term, a bicameral congress, and an independent judiciary.

1854. Buenos Aires drew up a separate constitution (April 12). Both Buenos Aires and the provinces of the federation progressed materially, but fundamental antagonism led to war between the federation and Buenos Aires (1859).

1859. Buenos Aires was quickly defeated (October 22) and agreed to union with the federation under constitutional amendments (November 10).

1862. Efforts to adjust differences failed and Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906), governor of Buenos Aires, became head of the national government (August 27) after the indecisive engagement of Pavón (1861, September 17). Urquiza then retired from politics. These events gave Buenos Aires ascendancy over the remainder of the nation, and the city was made the national

capital for a period of five years. Under Mitre administrative reforms were carried out, material progress continued, and education was promoted, while insurrections in several provinces were suppressed.

1865, May 1. Argentina concluded an alliance with Uruguay and Brazil.

1865-1870, war with Paraguay. Dictator Francisco Solano López of Paraguay declared war after Argentina refused to permit passage of Paraguayan troops across national territory. Mitre commanded the allied forces (a majority Brazilian) during the first two years of the war. The war ended in 1870 when López was killed and Paraguay practically annihilated. (Its population was reduced to some 28,000 men and slightly over 200,000 women.)

1868-1880. During the administrations of Domingo Sarmiento (1868-1874) and Nicolás Avellaneda (1874-1880) education, commerce, and immigration were encouraged, and the southern frontiers were advanced through subjugation of Indian groups. The first census (1869) indicated a population of over 1,700,000.

—[1875. The Salesians first came to Buenos Aires and San Nicolás de los Arroyos in the presidency of Avellaneda.]

1880. The ascendancy of Buenos Aires, the province including 30% of the population, created dissatisfaction in the provinces, and they formed the League of Córdoba, supporting Julio Roca for the presidency. Buenos Aires resorted to civil war to maintain its position, but was defeated (July 20-21). The city of Buenos Aires was erected into a federal district and made permanent national capital. The province of Buenos Aires was reduced to the same status as the rest of the provinces. Roca became president (September 21). Thus the problem of the relation of the city and province of Buenos Aires to the rest of the nation was solved.

1880-1886. Under Roca economic progress continued, and the Indian frontiers were pushed further to the south.

—[1880. In the presidency of Roca, the Salesians established their first real mission on the Rio Negro after accompanying Roca's military expedition to the south in 1879.]

—[1883. Likewise under Roca, the Holy See created the Vicariate of Patagonia and the Prefecture of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego entrusting them to the Salesians (Bishop John Cagliero and Fr. Joseph Fagnano.)]

1886-1890. Excessive speculation and corruption, for which President Miguel Juárez Celman was largely responsible, aroused demands for reform. A new party, the *Unión Cívica*, was formed (1890) to secure reforms and a wider franchise.

—[1887. In Celman's presidency, as Don Bosco lay dying, the Salesians first established a mission in Tierra del Fuego (Punta Arenas, Chile), the Prefecture Apostolic having been created in 1883.]

1890. An unsuccessful revolt occurred (July 26-27), but Celman resigned (August 5) and the vice-president, Carlos Pellegrini, assumed office.

1890-1904. Presidents Pellegrini (1890-1892), Lu s S enz Pe a (1892-1895), Jos  Uriburu (1895-1898), and Julio Roca (1898-1904) carried on the task of economic rehabilitation. Boundary disputes with Brazil (1895) and Chile (1899, 1902), the latter leading the two nations to the verge of war, were adjusted by arbitration.

### *Chile*

1818-1823. After Chile achieved independence (1818), Supreme Director Bernardo O'Higgins laid the foundations of the Chilean state and established a highly centralized government.

1823-1827. Opposition developed, and Ram n Freire became chief executive. A federalist form of government was adopted (1826).

1827. In the face of discontent, Freire resigned in favor of Vice-President Francisco Antonio Pinto. A second federal constitution was promulgated (1828). Political parties developed: a Liberal Party, advocating democracy and local autonomy, and a Conservative party, supported by the upper classes and clergy, advocating a centralized system with strong executive authority.

1829-1830. Civil war ensued. The Conservatives, under leadership of Diego Jos  Victor Portales (1793-1837), were victorious (1830), and would remain in power till 1861.

1833. A highly centralized constitution, which accorded great powers to the president, was adopted. Roman Catholicism retained the status of state religion.

1836. Chile opposed the formation of the feared Peruvian-Bolivian Confederacy, and declared war (November 11).

1839. Chilean troops under Manuel Bulnes (1799-1866) overthrew the confederacy through the decisive battle of Yungay (January 20).

1841-1851. During the two administrations of Bulnes great internal development took place and steps were taken to extend Chilean sovereignty over the area of the Straits of Magellan. A new Liberal Party opposed to Conservative oligarchic control and advocating curtailment of presidential powers developed.



1851-1861. Manuel Montt (1809-1880) succeeded Bulnes and served two terms. Material progress continued, education was promoted, and certain liberal reforms, which alienated reactionaries, were adopted. Two liberal revolts were suppressed.

1861-1871. With Montt's support, José Joaquín Pérez, acceptable to the Liberals, was elected. This marked a movement toward greater democracy and a shift of power in favor of the commercial and intellectual elements. Pérez held office for two terms, during which internal development increased and Chilean capital was invested in Peru and Bolivia for the exploitation of guano and nitrate. The lands of the Araucanian Amerindians were made part of the national domain following their final subjugation.

1865. Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador united with Peru in the war against Spain, which had not acknowledged Peruvian independence. A Spanish fleet seized islands from Peru and bombarded Valparaíso (1866). Later an armistice was mediated by the United States (1871).

1871-1876. During the administration of the Liberal Federico Errázuriz education was promoted, anticlerical reforms were adopted, administrative reforms tending toward increased democratization were introduced, and material progress continued.

1876-1881. Financial problems and war with Peru and Bolivia (War of the Pacific) developed during the term of Aníbal Pinto (1876-1881), who was followed by Domingo Santa María (1881-1886).

1879-1883. Chile was completely victorious in the War of the Pacific because of superior governmental efficiency and military and naval supremacy, and emerged unquestionably the dominant power of western South America (Pacific coast).

1883, October 20. By the Treaty of Ancón, Peru ceded the province of Tarapacá, and Chile was to occupy the border regions Tacna and Arica for ten years, after which a plebiscite was to be held.

1884, April 4. By the Treaty of Valparaíso Chile retained possession of the occupied Bolivian coastal area. Chile thus gained rich nitrate territories of vast importance to the national economic structure. After termination of the war, religious and administrative reforms were adopted, but efforts to separate Church and State failed. The reforms of President Santa María aroused much conservative opposition, and the Liberal Party became divided.

1886. José Manuel Balmaceda followed in the presidency. Parliamentary principles had been evolved (although not envisaged in the constitution) by



which a ministry might not remain in office without the support of a majority in Congress. Balmaceda maintained full presidential prerogatives.

—[1887. The Salesian work was first established in Chile (Concepción) in the presidency of Balmaceda. The mission of Tierra del Fuego was also established in 1887 at Punta Arenas, Chile.]

1891. Civil war ensued (January) in which the congressional forces were victorious and the parliamentary principle was established. Balmaceda, driven from office, committed suicide (September 19). Congressional elements were incensed by supposed sympathy of the United States for Balmaceda, and when an attack on members of the crew of the *USS Baltimore* occurred at Valparaíso (October 16) an acrimonious controversy arose. This was adjusted upon agreement by Chile to pay an indemnity.

1891-1896. Jorge Montt, head of the congressional party, was made president, and financial and administrative reforms, including the establishment of a large degree of local autonomy, were adopted.

### *Brazil*

Brazil provided a haven for the Portuguese royal family during Napoleon's Peninsular War (1808-1814). After Napoleon's downfall, Portugal demanded a return of Brazil to its former colonial status. In 1822 the Brazilians proclaimed their independence of Portugal and installed Dom Pedro, son of the Portuguese king, as their ruler (Emperor Pedro I).

1822-1831. The Reign of Pedro I

Even before the declaration of independence dissension and opposition arose in the constituent assembly.

1823. Dom Pedro dissolved the assembly and promulgated a constitution (1824, March 25).

1824, July 2. Discontent with the acts of the emperor caused the formation of the Confederacy of the Equator by certain northern provinces, with republican intent, but this movement was suppressed (September 17).

1825. The Cisplatine Province (also named Banda Oriental and Uruguay) opposed being subject to Brazil, which resulted in a movement of independence from Brazil. Argentina (as mentioned above) had designs to annex the territory.

1825-1828. War broke out between Brazil and Argentina over Uruguay, in which Brazil was decisively defeated in the battle of Ituzaingó (1827, Feb-

ruary 20). Through the mediation of Great Britain, the Banda Oriental, or Uruguay, became independent of Brazil (1828, August 27).

Opposition to Pedro I arose on account of his autocratic tendencies, his preference for Portuguese advisers, and (most important) for his attempts to secure the throne of Portugal for his daughter Maria da Gloria and his consequent interest in the affairs of Portugal. The loss of the Cisplatine Province (Uruguay) increased his unpopularity.

1831, April 7. In the face of this opposition Pedro I was forced to abdicate in favor of his five-year-old son, Pedro de Alcântara (Emperor Pedro II, 1825-1891).

1831-1840. *The regency.* During this period anarchy reigned because of factional quarrels and provincial revolts, the most serious of which was a separatist movement in Rio Grande do Sul (1835-1845). To re-establish direct monarchical government Pedro II was proclaimed of age at 15 years (1840).

#### 1840-1889. The Reign of Pedro II

The provincial revolts were brought to a close and a period of order and progress was initiated, control alternating constitutionally between the Liberal and Conservative parties.

Great material progress took place after 1850. Agriculture, commerce, and industry were expanded; railway construction, encouraged by the government, increased from about 650 miles in 1870 to over 6000 miles in 1889. Sugar and coffee production, and the cattle industry acquired importance in several Brazilian provinces. Rubber production experienced a boom in the Amazon basin after 1880.

In 1850 the estimated population was 8,000,000, including 2,500,000 slaves; in 1872 over 10,000,000, including 1,500,000 slaves; and in 1889 over 14,000,000.

In foreign affairs, Brazil sought to extend its influence to the west and southwest, intervening in the affairs of Uruguay and opposing the expansionist policies of Rosas, dictator in Argentina, whom it helped to overthrow (1851-1852). With Argentina and Uruguay as allies, Brazil conducted a major war against Paraguay (1865-1870). During this period Brazilian prestige increased greatly.

1870-1888. A movement for emancipation of Black slaves developed rapidly after 1850. First, a law was enacted stipulating that children of slaves should be free (the Rio Branco Law, 1871). This was followed by the initiative taken in the provinces of Ceará and Amazonas, which freed the slaves. Then

followed the freeing of all slaves of over sixty years of age (1885). Finally, a Liberal ministry provided for complete emancipation with no recompense to the owners (1888, May 13).

1870. Republicanism, originally a movement of intellectuals, began to spread. A republican party was formed (1870), and the movement grew rapidly. The monarchy was gradually undermined by a number of forces—the dissatisfaction of the army with the peaceful policies of Pedro II after 1870, friction with the clergy, the rapid growth of republican feeling among the people, the alienation of the landed aristocracy because of the emancipation of the slaves, the virtual extinction of provincial autonomy, and the unpopularity of the French husband of Pedro's daughter (Princess Isabella), Gaston d'Orlans, Comte d'Eu.

—[1883. The Salesian work in Brazil was first established at Niterói (Nichteroy), across from Río de Janeiro.]

1889, November 15. The army, headed by General Manoel Deodoro da Fonseca, revolted and deposed Emperor Pedro II. A republic was immediately proclaimed and a provisional government was established.

1889-on: The Republic

1891, February 24. A constitution was framed that provided for a federal republic, the United States of Brazil. The president was to be elected for four years, and a bicameral legislature went into effect. The separation of Church and State became definitive. Deodoro da Fonseca was elected president.

During this period trade, cattle raising, mining, agriculture, and forestry were greatly expanded and there was some development of manufacturing (cotton textiles). Railway mileage increased greatly. The population rose to some 20,000,000 by the end of the century, with the increased immigration, especially of Spaniards and Italians.

The proper functioning of the national government under the republic was, from the very beginning, rendered difficult by the existence of illiteracy (estimated at 80% in 1910!) Political inexperience and intolerance, the absence of real political parties and the prevalent tendency toward military rule compounded the difficulty.

### *Uruguay*

Uruguay is the name of the large river that, originating in Brazil, flows from north to south and joins with the Paraná River to form the Río de la Plata. East of the River Uruguay and south of Brazil there lies a relatively small

territory that was called the *Cisplatine Province* (the “province on this (eastern) side of the Plata”). It was also called *Banda Oriental* (the “eastern shore” with respect to the Uruguay River). This territory (now simply called Uruguay) achieved independence from Spain together with Paraguay and Venezuela 1811, but it continued to be disputed between Argentina and Brazil, until it became a separate state (1828, see above).

1828, August 27. Uruguay became a sovereign state under the treaty that ended the war between Brazil and Argentina over the status of the *Banda Oriental*. A constitution was framed for the *Banda Oriental del Uruguay*, and in accord with the treaty this instrument was approved by Brazil and Argentina (1830, May 26).

1836-1843. Factional strife developed and two parties, *Blancos* and *Colorados* (White and Red), evolved, headed respectively by Manuel Oribe and Fructuoso Rivera. The dictator of Argentina (Rosas) with his expansionist policy supported Oribe, while Rivera had help from French forces.

1843-1851. Upon withdrawal of the French in 1843 following an agreement between the French consul and Rosas, Oribe began an eight years’ siege of Montevideo (the capital). During the period of the blockade of the Rio de la Plata, French and British troops occupied Uruguayan territory as a check to Rosas (1845-1849). Efforts to resolve the situation in the Banda Oriental by negotiation were fruitless.

1851. An alliance between Urquiza (president of Argentina), the *Colorado* government, and Brazil was formed (May 29), and Urquiza forced Oribe to abandon the siege of Montevideo. A treaty was concluded that ended the war and permitted the *Colorado* government to remain in power (October 8). The overthrow of Rosas in Argentina (1852) removed a serious menace to Uruguayan independence.

1851. Seeking to expand its influence, Brazil secured a portion of the Misiones territory from Uruguay (now the farthest northeastern province of Argentina) and intervened to maintain order at the request of the *Colorado* president, Venancio Flores (1854).

1863. Internal disorders continued and evolved into a prolonged civil war between *Blancos*-party president Anastasio Aguirre and Flores’ *Colorados* government. Aguirre’s *Blancos* prevailed. When Brazil pressed claims for injuries to Brazilian nationals and Aguirre proved intransigent, an agreement was reached with Flores whereby Brazilian forces occupied certain Uruguayan frontier towns (1864-1865).

1865. Flores occupied Montevideo and assumed the government (February 22). As Francisco Solano López, dictator of Paraguay, had an understanding with Aguirre, these events did much to bring on the Paraguayan War, in which Uruguay under a *Colorado* government was allied with Brazil and Argentina in crushing Paraguay (1865-1870, see above).

1870-1872. A protracted *civil conflict* between *Blancos* and *Colorados*, in which the latter were victorious, followed the Paraguayan war.

1872-1907. The many changes of executive, for as long as the *Colorados* remained in power, were evidence of political instability. Nonetheless, great material progress took place. Agriculture became highly developed, commerce expanded, and an extensive railway system was built. The foundations of a system of public education were laid. The population, estimated at 70,000 in 1830, increased to 224,000 by 1860, and to almost 1,000,000 by 1900.

—[The Salesian work was first established in Uruguay at Villa Colón (Montevideo) in 1877, and at Las Piedras (near and NW of Montevideo) in 1878.]

### 3. Catholicism in Latin America in the Nineteenth Century

Adapted from Roger Aubert, ed., *The Christian Centuries*, Volume 5 (New York: Paulist Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978), 321-329, 333-335.

#### *Introduction and General Description: Two Contrasting Views of Church and Society*

Late in the eighteenth century, Peruvian clergyman Vicente Amil y Feijoo summoned up theological arguments in defense of political absolutism, thereby emerging as a new spokesman of one traditional aspect of Hispanic America's multi-faceted Catholicism:

Whether the prince uses his power well or badly, this power is always conferred by God ... Even if his government is so tyrannical that he ceases to be a prince and becomes a demon, even so ... we must maintain fidelity, not allowing ourselves any other recourse than calling upon God, the King of Kings, that He may opportunely help us in our tribulations.

A great number of the clergy disagreed with this authoritarian doctrine, convinced that the Church should be used as an instrument to protect citizens against political, social and economic abuses. Churchmen of this persuasion stressed the importance of the natural law and maintained that the

true role of religion was not to bolster political authority but to safeguard the God-given rights of all individuals in society. Such a man was Peruvian-born Father Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza who in the 1790s surreptitiously reformed the curriculum of one of Lima's leading schools (the *Real Convictorio de San Carlos*) so that emphasis in instruction might be placed on popular sovereignty and the natural rights of human person.

Throughout Spanish America by the dawn of the nineteenth century, additional examples of the conflict between the ideas of Fathers Amíl y Peñoo and Rodríguez de Mendoza were clearly in evidence. Indeed, it was difficult to determine what was the true nature of Hispanic American Catholicism.

This was no new situation. In Spanish America, as in the motherland itself, there had always been disputes as to whether Catholicism was to serve as an instrument of repression, stressing narrow interpretations of the divine positive law to the advantage of a privileged elite, or as the means of defending the rights even of the humblest in society in accordance with the teachings of the natural law and the more humanitarian and liberal concepts that had always been associated with the faith.

Thus at the dawn of the independence period (1825), the Church appeared weakened by a serious internal cleavage. It also had to operate within a social and political context that had become decidedly hostile owing to the prevalence of anticlerical sentiments. The essence of anticlericalism was an attitude of suspicion and even animosity towards the administrative organization of the Church and towards clergymen in general.

It has been suggested that an unwitting tendency toward heresy inhered in the Creole mentality. In particular, Creoles (those of Spanish descent born in the New World) have seemed to be attracted by beliefs constituting the heresy of quietism. Thus, they have stressed the importance of the individual's identifying his will with the divine will and have questioned the value of the formal sacramental role of the organized Church and its ministers.

Problems arising from internal divisions and a prevailing spirit of anticlericalism were soon compounded by the appearance of new issues. Even while the independence movement was under way, heated dispute between Church and State officials arose over the issue of patronage (the right of bestowing or recommending an appointment). Churchmen and political leaders also began to argue over taxation. One issue at stake had to do with whether the national governments should continue the colonial tradition of collecting tithes for the Church. At the same time separate Church courts, provided for by the ecclesiastical *fuero* [privilege of judicial exemption] of colonial times, came in

for attack both from intellectuals and government bureaucrats. Moreover, the vast wealth and land holdings of the Church evoked mounting criticism not only from the laity but also from a small number of clergymen.

The issues of patronage, taxation, separate ecclesiastical courts and church property had already been fought out to a large degree in various European nations, beginning as early as the eleventh century, and by 1800 had been substantially resolved. In Spanish America, and also in Brazil, vexatious problems that had concerned Europeans for centuries appeared for the first time only after 1800 and were resolved in the course of a few violence-ridden decades.

With independence achieved, Latin American statesmen tended to look to Europe for ideological inspiration. Delighted in general by the teachings of nineteenth-century liberalism, they were particularly responsive to the anti-clerical aspects of that ideology. Somewhat later particularly in Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and also to a considerable degree in Argentina, Venezuela and Peru, intellectuals and political leaders were infatuated by the works and popularizations of Auguste Comte, and in the name of Positivism they attacked many of the traditional practices and beliefs of Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> Then, as nationalism became more and more important in Latin America, some of its spokesmen who believed in the need to defend royalist traditions of the colonial past denounced the Church as an extra-national institution which, if permitted to survive in the new nation states, must be deprived of temporal power.

At the outset of the independence period, moreover, the Church was involved in the identity problem that plagued the new republics. Many leading intellectuals and politicians were concerned with progress and material development, and they identified with the values that they thought would be conducive to rapid economic advance. To them, it seemed all-important to instill in the citizens materialistic incentives, competitive instincts, and the capitalist drives associated with the individualistic pursuit of wealth. Others wished to conserve the essentially medieval orientation of cultural values that had been a characteristic of the colonial era. They questioned the importance of mate-

<sup>3</sup> Auguste Comte (1798-1857), philosopher-sociologist, originator of Positivism, author of a number of works of the subject (e. g. *Système de politique positive*). Positivism in general may be defined as a theory that theology and metaphysics are earlier imperfect modes of knowledge, and that positive knowledge is based on natural phenomena and their properties and relations as verified by the empirical sciences. At the political-social level positivism is the theory that laws are to be understood as *social rules*, valid if enacted by the "sovereign" or derived logically from existing decisions, and that ideal or moral considerations (e. g. that a rule is unjust) should not limit their scope or operation.



rial development and sought to mute the incentives of individualistic capitalism by maintaining the primacy of non-material, spiritual rewards for the masses and by preserving the collectivism of the guild organization and rural land holding patterns. To a large extent (though not exclusively) churchmen belonged the second ideological school. Furthermore, the clergy, in many instances, asserted that capitalistic individualism was to be rejected because in the final analysis it was the fruit of Protestantism, which exaggerated the importance of the individual conscience in matters of religion.

Throughout most of Latin America, with the striking exception of Colombia and the partial exception of Peru, the Church had by the latter part of the nineteenth century lost most of the battles that it had waged against civilian governments. Its economic and political power as well as its influence in the intellectual and cultural realms had been seriously eroded, and as a temporal institution it was capable of wielding only minimal influence. Dismayed by this situation, the clergy tended to attribute the chronic instability and revolutionary ferment that plagued the new republics to the decline of Church power and prestige.

Even by the middle of the nineteenth century many church authorities and their lay partisans had begun to insist that the only unifying tradition upon which Latin Americans could construct an orderly society was the Catholicism of the colonial era. Like Father Amil y Peijoo, they stressed the authoritarian aspect of traditional Catholicism. Some even claimed that the role of the inferior classes was to serve unquestioningly the superior classes.

Those who held such a position were never able to win a broad consensus in support of their vision of the true Catholic tradition. They were never able even to suppress altogether those within their own Church who, like Father Rodriguez de Mendoza, associated the Catholic tradition with the defense of the rights of all people, and most especially of those least capable of asserting their own rights. Proponents of this tradition were the spiritual heirs of Bartholomé de las Casas (the Spanish-born protector of the Indians, who insisted that all was one, and not divided into inferior and superior classes.

If the churchmen who identified the closed, authoritarian, hierarchical aspect of Catholicism with the true national tradition succeeded for a long time to prevail over their opponents in the Church, it was largely because their views reflected those of the civilians in power. Even if these leaders were anticlerical, even if they refused to associate themselves with the Church as a political ally, Latin America's ruling classes generally acted to defend a political order that stressed the authority and rights of the upper class while



emphasizing the duties and obligations of the lower classes. Given the rigid class structure that had prevailed for centuries, Latin American leaders were almost incapable of envisaging a different type of order.

Only by the late 1850s, that aspect of Catholicism that was associated with the Las Casas tradition and that stressed the responsibilities of the upper classes and the rights of the masses began to gain more and more adherents among Latin American Church authorities. One reason for this was that civilian leaders, faced with new social and economic demands, had by then begun to discard the aristocratic values of a previous century. They were led to acknowledge the need for an open and pluralistic society as they strove for stability, modernization, and political development.

The rivalry between the two Catholic traditions, and the interaction between these two traditions with the prevailing values of temporal society, have largely determined the course of Latin American Catholicism both in its internal development and in its relationship to the body politic. The fact that ecclesiastical leaders had not, by the early 1870s, succeeded in finding a middle way between the two traditions, interfered seriously with the Church's attempt to take advantage of a political climate that had become increasingly benign.

### *The Church and Temporal Society in Latin America to the End of the Nineteenth Century*

#### *Liberal and Conservative Tendencies*

For approximately twenty years following the attainment of independence in the early 1820s, Latin American liberals tended to concern themselves mainly with political considerations. Opposing monarchical schemes, they urged the extension of political participation and the expansion of suffrage. Generally they backed federalism while attacking the evils of centralized authority, and maintained that large standing armies posed serious threats to individual liberties. Liberals also believed parliamentary supremacy could solve all problems.

Among first-generation liberals could be counted a large number (in some countries probably a majority) of the native-born clergy. These priests had absorbed ideas of the Enlightenment during their seminary training, though they had not totally ignored theological issues. But some of them held Jansenist-tinged interpretations of grace or espoused deistic views that left little room for Providence human affairs. Moreover, many liberals believed that

their respective countries should emulate United States models and adopt religious toleration and separation of Church and State. Still, the great majority of early Latin American liberals, whether of the clergy or laity, attached overwhelming importance to political and economic considerations, largely ignoring purely religious issues.

Latin American conservatives at the outset of the independence period were also concerned primarily with political and economic matters. In their understanding conservatism meant essentially authoritarian centralism. This meant rule by a tiny elite backed by a powerful army; it meant executive predominance over the legislature, and preservation of privileged corporate groups. In striving to achieve this type of political-economic structure, conservatives did not necessarily feel that they had any natural affinity with the Church; quite the contrary, they were disturbed by the number of ecclesiastical leaders with liberal political views.

In the early years following independence, Latin American conservatives, except in Central America, generally managed to contain the main onslaughts of the liberals. Only in preventing the establishment of monarchical government in the new countries were the liberals victorious, and in Brazil they failed even in that effort.

### *New Liberals and Conservatives in Conflict and Position of the Clergy*

By the late 1830s, however, a new generation of liberals had appeared and in succeeding years they gradually gathered strength. Heartened by the European events of 1848 (the liberal revolution), they profited from a growing conviction among Latin American intellectuals that liberalism was the inevitable tide of the future. By the middle of the century the liberals had their opponents on the defensive, and in most republics were about to gain the upper hand (except in Central America where conservatives were generally victorious).

But in the ten to twenty years following 1848 the social-political dominance alternated between liberals and conservatives with consequent political instability. Already by the mid-1830s the liberal-conservative issue had begun to take on a new complexion in many parts of Latin America. Clergymen were tending to desert the liberal ranks, disillusioned in part by the continuing political chaos, which they attributed to an alleged breakdown in morality. They hoped to remedy it through the authoritarian rule of political leaders willing to accept Church guidance.

In addition, beginning in the 1840s, Latin America received one of the first waves of clerical immigrants. Arriving on the scene to offset the shortage of priests, the foreign clerics were in general better trained and also, largely because of their European experiences, more conservative in outlook than their native counterparts. Increasingly, foreign priests were able to win to the conservative cause the formerly liberal native clergymen.

The conservative stance assumed by churchmen in Latin America can be viewed as a reaction against the changes that a new generation of intellectuals was introducing into the liberal movement. These young liberals had begun to regard transformation of the traditional organization and practices of the Church as the essential prerequisite for the implementation of their entire program. They appeared to be convinced that democratic usages could never be introduced into the body politic until the powerful and influential Church had undergone the liberalization of its own structure. In the name of equality of all citizens, liberals insisted that ecclesiastical privileges and immunities, the hallmark of the traditional corporate structure, be abolished. In the name of freedom of thought they demanded liberation from the teaching authority customarily claimed by Church in matters both sacred and mundane. The new liberals sought virtually complete State control over the Church. In addition, liberals frequently asserted that the Church's wealth and temporal power were contrary to early Christian ideals, and so they sought to deprive the Church of its wealth so that it could no longer carry out its charitable and social welfare programs. In the liberal view, "charity" encouraged idleness, prevented the spread of competitive, capitalist values among the masses, and thus retarded economic progress. Finally, in the name of federalism and local autonomy, liberals demanded that the Church in Latin America be freed from the centralizing control exercised by the Vatican and the Curia. If they achieved this last objective, liberals could hope to encourage individualism within the realm of religion, thereby matching the individualism they sought to introduce into the temporal order.

Conservative clergymen reacted energetically against the new liberalism that demanded reforms within the internal structure of the Church. Clerical conservatives wanted society to reflect ideally the traditional organization of the ecclesiastical institution, with its stress on order, authority, and hierarchy. They opposed liberals who felt that a new society could not come into being so long as the Catholic Church maintained its rigid position. Conservative clergymen, on the other hand, feared that the Church's life would otherwise be threatened.

Before the end of the 1840s, then, the clergy, by and large, had adopted a position that was acceptable to the conservative ruling class, who had regarded an earlier generation of liberal priests as their enemies. As a result an alliance was forged between conservative civilian political leaders and the conservative Catholic clergy. Both civilian and clerical conservatives feared and opposed the leveling movement toward equality within the body politic, and moreover on that account distrusted the newly emerging and increasingly assertive middle class.

United by mid-nineteenth century in the conservative cause, clergymen and their civilian allies espoused the social philosophy of paternalism. Their fundamental belief was that the natural social order called for the existence of an immobile lower class permanently entrusted with the meaner occupations. Members of the lower class were not expected to rise within the social order, or any endeavor on their part to do so would threaten the providentially established hierarchical order.

On the contrary, the social goal of Latin American liberals of the first and second generation was to give to the lower classes a chance to rise in social status. As the system they envisaged began to function, it would no longer be necessary for the upper classes to take special measures to provide comfort and security for the masses. Rather, the masses were expected to solve their own problems by taking advantage of the avenues for advancement that liberal administrations would provide (educational facilities, employment opportunities, franchise, etc.).

The success that a good number of people of the lower classes enjoyed in bettering their circumstances helped convince liberals that adequate opportunities already existed. Providing the lower classes with additional openings would, they felt, be economically inadvisable and morally unjustified. Liberals, especially as they became converts to one of the schools of Positivism that flourished in Latin America, were enticed by the practical conveniences afforded by a stratified society. Beginning to deny the perfectibility of the lower classes, they grew increasingly indifferent toward supplying its members with opportunities to advance. Political leaders from Mexico to Argentina often regarded the indigenous population as racially inferior and incapable of self-improvement and of contributing to the material development of their countries.

On the other hand, conservatives began to question the feasibility of supplying paternalistic protection to groups that appeared totally to lack economic virtues. By the turn of the century it often appeared that liberals and

conservatives were separated only differing views of how much temporal power the Catholic Church should be allowed to exercise.

As a result of this situation the social problem began to assume dangerous proportions, and early in the twentieth century the ruling classes, whether they considered themselves conservative or liberal, had either to address themselves to its solution or face the inevitability of revolution.

### *Catholic Church and Liberal State in Argentina and Chile*

In the southern cone of Latin America, by the late nineteenth century, the Church had been excluded from the power structure as definitely as in Mexico and Central America. The situation in Argentina and Chile, however, had resulted from a process that was more peaceful and evolutionary than in the far northern republics.

The liberal-conservative issue had appeared in Argentina during the 1820s when Bernardino Rivadavia governor of Buenos Aires province and future president of a united La Plata, sought to abolish separate law courts for clergymen, founded a benevolent society to challenge the Church's customary monopolistic control over charity, and endeavored to found a State-supported public school system.

Rivadavia's efforts were largely unavailing, and in the years between 1829 and 1851 the Church benefited from the consistently favorable attitude of dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. Thus, Rosas is pictured by Argentina's conservative Catholics as continuing a golden age that had existed in the colonial period when society had been structured upon hierarchical models and infused by Catholic principles.

Beginning in the 1860s, approximately ten years after the overthrow of Rosas, liberalism, with decided positivist overtones, gained the ascendancy in Argentina. A public education system that prohibited religious instruction was established. Anticlericalism became one of the few points that united the aristocratic Independent National Party (*Partido Autonomista Nacional*), the dominant political party between 1874 and 1916, and other political groups. All were in general agreement that the Church must be denied the power to impede progress by imposing allegedly archaic, medieval values within the temporal order.

The suppression of the Church's temporal power undoubtedly contributed to an intellectual climate that facilitated Argentina's remarkable material development in the 1880s. The nation's leaders, however, were not concerned

with social reforms, partly because of their racially inspired disdain for the mixed-blood population of the interior provinces.

Just as in Argentina, so also in Chile the Catholic Church, which had been a comparatively weak institution in colonial times, underwent further loss of power in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The confrontation between Church and State, began in 1845 when Rafael Valentin Valdivieso y Zanartu became archbishop of Santiago. Inflexible in his views, Valdivieso was convinced that there could be no compromise with the new, secular, liberal spirit of the times. By his actions the archbishop often suggested that he wanted a theocratic structure and would settle for nothing less than a parallel balance of power between Church and State in temporal affairs. As the political situation developed the archbishop found support in a new political force, the staunchly Catholic, pro-clerical Conservative Party. (Membership in this party, so they claimed, would bring one closer to God!)

In President Manuel Montt (1851-61), the archbishop found an implacable foe, resolutely determined that in temporal matters the State should be supreme, in no way sharing its prerogatives with the Church. By his stand against the archbishop, Montt alienated many Chilean traditionalists; at the same time he gave indirect encouragement to the ideologues of the Liberal Party, who hoped to remove every vestige of the Church's political power and even to alter its internal structure.

By the 1870s Chile's liberals, allied with the still more anticlerical Radical Party, had reduced the Conservative Party to virtual impotence and gained mastery over the political arena. Despite the Church's resorting to massive excommunications, most church privileges had been removed. No longer were there separate ecclesiastical courts, no longer did the State collect tithes for the Church, and no longer did the Church enjoy monopolistic control over, cemeteries, education, and marriage. Churchmen complained bitterly but in vain about the impious and heretical influences that were said to be destroying the only true traditions of the land.

As elsewhere in Latin America, the triumph of secular, anticlerical values in Chile may have contributed to a climate of opinion that was conducive to economic development. In the process, however, social problems were exacerbated. As thousands of peasants crowded into the country's leading cities in the course of a late nineteenth-century demographic shift, they were cut off from the paternalistic practices that had sometimes mitigated the rigors of their lives in a rural setting. In the cities they were subjected to the unre-



strained exploitation of an emergent capitalism that, driven by the values of *laissez-faire* liberalism, abdicated from all social responsibility.



1 – The port of La Boca (Buenos Aires) as it appeared between 1870 and 1880

#### **4. Italian Emigration in the Nineteenth Century**

##### *The Migratory Movement—Statistics*

Emigration of Italians in the nineteenth, and the beginning of the twentieth, century must be reckoned as one of the most significant processes at work in Italian society after the unification. It was not simply a matter of people seeking employment abroad in consequence of the processes of industrialization. It was a veritable large-scale movement of population due to political, economic and social upheavals combined. This movement, which had parallels in other European nations, was chiefly toward South and North America, Oceania, and some parts of Africa.

The movement was massive: 60 million Europeans between 1830 and 1930, of which 14 million Italians between 1876 and 1914.

In 1876, the year when official records began to be kept of the matter in Italy, some 100,000 Italians migrated, chiefly to the Americas. And the yearly quotas increased steadily up to the First World War—1,300,000 for the decade 1876-1885; 2,400,000 for 1886-1895; 4,300,000 for 1896-1905; and 6,000,000 for 1906-1915.

The migrants came chiefly from the mountain regions and from depleted agricultural areas. Piedmont was second only to Veneto in total emigration: some 710,000 for the years 1876-1900.

As far as Argentina was concerned, Liguria (Genoa) and Piedmont were the main contributors, with a total of 321,822 for the years 1876-1914—distributed as follows: 39,000 for the decade 1876-1885; 92,000 for 1886-1895; 81,000 for 1896-1905; and over 108,000 for 1906-1914, the decade of the great migratory wave.

By 1900 the population of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires consisted of some 265,000 people of Italian descent, over 122,000 of Spanish descent, and some 30,000 of French descent. A few thousand people of other nationalities and small numbers of the native population made up the difference.

But even before official records began to be kept (1876), Italian emigration to Argentina had been heavy. From 1857 to 1875, the year when the Salesian work was first established there, Italian immigrants to Argentina were reckoned to exceed 210,000. The census taken of Italians abroad in 1871 reported some half-a-million overall, of which some 50,000 established in Buenos Aires alone.

### *Don Bosco's Acquaintance with the Problem*

Don Bosco had been acquainted with the migratory problem long before official statistics were made available by the Italian government. He was aware of the economic situation of Italians in Argentina (which was fairly good when compared with what it had been in the old country), and of their religious situation (which was bad). In 1865, out of solidarity, he had become a member of the Mutual Benefit Society of Rosario (Argentina), though his membership was terminated in 1870, ostensibly for his failure to pay dues, but more probably for religious-political reasons. He also had occasion frequently to visit places in Piedmont and Liguria from which emigration to Argentina (and to other places) had been steady. He was in touch with past pupils of the Oratory who had migrated to Argentina. And finally in the early seventies, Argentine Consul John Gazzolo, stationed at Savona and acquainted with the Salesian work in that area, had put him in touch with the important Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy in Buenos Aires.

Family members of some of the first Salesian missionaries had migrated to Argentina. Fr. Dominic Tomatis discovered his father who had been reported dead; Fr. Joseph Fagnano had two brothers in the Buenos Aires



area (and later brought his mother over as well); Fr. Francis Bodrato had a brother-in-law there; Fr. John Baptist Baccino had brothers in Montevideo (Uruguay).

From all that has been said above one may gather that the migratory problem was a serious one *already* during Don Bosco's rectorate, and that it assumed even greater proportions during Fr. Rua's rectorate. Hence one understands why both Don Bosco and Fr. Rua, with insistent encouragement from both Pius IX and Leo XIII, readily engaged in the ministry of caring for immigrants.

### *Don Bosco's and the Salesians' Commitment to Emigrants*

Without a doubt, Don Bosco's option for Argentina was ideally motivated by truly apostolic and missionary aims. Don Bosco had heard a true missionary call, and dreamt of missionary activity in the strict sense, *in partibus infidelium*. The charism that had inspired his option for the "poor and abandoned," joined with the missionary ferment that was stirring within the Church in the 1870s, found new purpose in missionary activity. The dream of 1871/72 had clearly imaged the mission among the "savages." Yet of the many requests or offers received, he accepted the Argentine proposal, which was not for missionary activity *in partibus infidelium*. It was rather the type of work that he had been doing in Turin and elsewhere—educational work on behalf of children of the lower working class and other ministry prevalently on behalf of poor people.

The school (and church) of San Nicolás de los Arroyos was the primary destination of the first group of 10 Salesians that left for Argentina in 1875. But Archbishop Aneyros decided to keep 3 of them in Buenos Aires to work among the largest, most neglected, and most difficult immigrant community in Argentina, the community of Italian immigrants.

The difficulties arising from the moral and religious situation prevailing in the communities of Italian immigrants in the River Plate were indeed daunting. But, on the positive side, the Salesians found themselves in a familiar culture; and this afforded breathing space and time to develop a strategy for the missions proper. For, although the apostolate among the immigrants was not just a pragmatic move in view of the mission, but was and remained a *bona fide* program, it served nonetheless as a starting point, or as a beach head, for true missionary engagement. Better stated, it was in fact conceived as part of the total missionary commitment of the Society. Such is the thrust of

Don Bosco's utterances on the subject. At the moving send-off ceremony on December 11, 1875, Don Bosco said:

Several missions were offered to us in China, India, Australia, and elsewhere in America. But for a number of reasons, and especially since our Congregation is just starting, we accepted by preference a mission in South America, in the Argentine Republic ...

I recommend particularly the many Italian families who live scattered throughout the towns, villages, and countryside in sad circumstances. Both parents and children know little of language and local customs and live far away from schools and churches ... You will find a very large number of children and even adults who are illiterate and who know absolutely nothing about religion. Search out these brothers who were driven to a strange land by poverty or misfortune; teach them how great is the mercy of God who is sending you to them for the good of their souls ...

Large tribes of savages live in the areas bordering on the civilized regions ... Christianity is unknown in all these immense areas. Civilization, commerce, and religion are utterly unknown. Let us pray to the Master of the vineyard to send laborers into his harvest ...<sup>4</sup>

Speaking to the boys earlier, he had said:

Priests will be needed to conduct services in the churches entrusted to us; teachers will be needed in schools; singers and musicians will likewise be needed, for the people there love music ... More important still, my dear sons, is the fact that a short distance from San Nicolás one begins to find encampments of savage tribes. The natives are extremely friendly, and many of them have already shown a willingness to embrace the Christian faith.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, work among Italian immigrants, possibly the most needy and abandoned, but also culturally closely related to the missionaries, became part of the missionary commitment. As a matter of fact, Fr. Cagliero, Don Bosco's perceptive strategist in the field, wrote: "The mission among Italian [immigrants] appears to be more urgent than the mission among the natives."<sup>6</sup>

That Don Bosco and the Salesians were committed to ministering to immigrants is clear. A few months before Don Bosco's death, the *Salesian Bulletin* stressed the point. The care of immigrants was a mission undertaken by Don Bosco "not merely as a good work or as an act of charity prompted by

<sup>4</sup> EBM XI, 360-361.

<sup>5</sup> EBM XI, 133f.

<sup>6</sup> Letter Cagliero to Bosco, March 4, 1876, ASC A131.

love, but as a strict duty. It was a mission entrusted to him by the Church's Supreme Shepherd—hence a task which cannot be set aside, and for which he will have to render an account to the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

### *Situation of the Italian Community in Buenos Aires*

Wherever they settled, the immigrants formed communities held together by strong inner cultural bonds. The largest concentration of Italians in Buenos Aires was the “Little Italy” of the *La Boca* district, some 30,000 strong, then located on the outskirts of the city, at the mouth of the Riachuelo River. But there were other Italian groups in the city. One was closer the downtown area and centered on the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy and its “chapel,” the *Mater Misericordiae* Church, known also as the Italian Church.

The Italian community of Buenos Aires was composed at first largely of Genoese and Piedmontese—hence northern Italians. Later, immigrants from southern Italy became increasingly more numerous. The leaders of the community were a group of educated people, mostly republicans of the Mazzini-Garibaldi stamp, or even anarchists of the Bakunin variety. These people had begun to emigrate after the fall of the Roman republic (1849), and the flow continued during and after the unification of Italy under the Savoy monarchy (1861 and 1870). Opposition to traditional religion and to the Church and bitter anticlericalism united all these “leaders” in a common cause. They naturally dominated the mass of the population, which was largely uneducated. The community as a whole, and the “Little Italy” of *La Boca* in particular, was run practically as an independent “republic” of Mazzinian inspiration.<sup>8</sup> In spite of certain superior attitudes of the Mazzinian *élite*, which favored a certain separatism, Mazzinian ideology was very much in tune with Argentine politics, which were republican and anticlerical. A similar situation prevailed in many communities of Italian immigrants in cities of the Americas, Buenos Aires being the prime example.<sup>9</sup>

The Italian Mutual Benefit Society of Buenos Aires remained monolithically Mazzinian, until 1861, when a branch with a monarchical orientation se-

<sup>7</sup> BS 11: 10 (October 1887), 122.

<sup>8</sup> In 1874 some of these “revolutionaries” had set fire to the Jesuit school in the city, and the leaders of the *barrio* had refused admittance to the census takers sent by the Italian consul.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gianfausto Rosoli, “Impegno missionario ...”, in *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare* (Torino: SEI, 1987), 289-329, esp. 301ff. and 317ff.

ceded. But Mazzinian influence persisted. When the Salesians arrived in 1875, the Mazzinians still controlled the most important Italian institutions and the Italian-language newspapers. With respect to the faith and religious practice, Italian communities in the River Plate area were regarded as the most beleaguered, and therefore considered to be most at risk and most “in need.”

It should be borne in mind that immigration took place in such a fashion and at such a rate that religious assistance could not be provided, either locally or through Italian priests accompanying the migratory waves. With notable exceptions, the few Italian priests that had accompanied the migrants were more intent on looking after their own interests than after the spiritual needs of their compatriots. This is the reason why the Archbishop of Buenos Aires for one was so eager to obtain the services of a religious congregation to deal with the situation. The Salesians were the first to be brought onto the scene for this very purpose.

## II. The Salesian Work Established in the La Plata Area

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## 1. Proposal for Establishing the Salesian Work in Argentina

Toward the end of 1874, while invitations for Salesian foundations kept pouring in from everywhere, Don Bosco received a formal request for Salesians in Argentina. He himself stated: "The first letters came during the Christmas novena, and I read them to the Superior Chapter [Council] on the evening of December 22, 1874." Other requests, for example those from United States and Hong Kong, had no following. In the case of the Argentine proposal, on the other hand, negotiations were quickly concluded and the proposal accepted. How did this come about?

*Consul John Baptist Gazzolo's Initiative, Archbishop Aneyros' Initial Response and Don Bosco's Initial Acceptance*

Don Bosco's almost abrupt option for Argentina came about through the initiative of a remarkable layman, John Baptist Gazzolo by name, at the time serving as Argentine Consul, based at Savona.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> John Baptist Gazzolo was born on December 22, 1827 at Camogli (Genoa) and died at Savona on February 23, 1895. He served as a seaman in the navy of the Kingdom of Sardinia and reached the grade of captain. He got married and had four children. In 1858 at the age of 31, he migrated to Argentina (Buenos Aires), which he made his adopted country. For a while he taught Italian in Rojas, a small town SW of Buenos Aires. Then, thanks to the patronage of Mr. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), minister of public education, he obtained the post of caretaker and librarian of the university at Buenos Aires. In this capacity, he developed the library's holdings and established local branches in various parts of the city, with particular attention to the needs of the Italian community. In 1866 Gazzolo probably participated in the purchase of land on which the (Italian) church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*) was to be built. The laying of the foundation stone took place the following year, the event for which Gazzolo produced the commemorative booklet. When in 1868 Domingo Sarmiento became president (1868-1874), Gazzolo was appointed Argentine vice-consul and then consul at Savona, his city of origin. Among the twenty professors from the university who signed the letter of congratulations there figured the name of Father Federico Aneyros, the future archbishop of Buenos Aires. On March 7, 1870 Gazzolo presented his credentials to, and was officially recognized by, the Italian government

John B. Gazzolo had migrated to Argentina as a young man, bettered his condition and risen in the administrative ranks, until appointed consul. He created for himself a network of relationships in his adopted country. Back in Italy as consul he became somewhat of a public figure through his activities on behalf of emigrants, as “*agente di emigrazione*” (emigration broker).

Almost immediately after his appointment as consul in 1870 he had become acquainted with Don Bosco and the Salesian work in Liguria, where Don Bosco was a frequent visitor after the founding of schools at Alassio (1870) and at Varazze, a few miles from Savona (1872).

Don Bosco and the consul had conversations.<sup>11</sup> The consul kept him abreast of developments in the Italian community of Buenos Aires, its religious situation and its problems. They discussed the opportunities for Salesian work and ministry, now that the Our Lady of Mercy church (*Mater Misericordiae*, inaugurated in 1870)<sup>12</sup> was open for worship but in need of priests.

Some time in the summer of 1874, putting the offers for Hong Kong, for Savannah (GA, USA) and others on the back burner, Don Bosco began to look seriously toward Argentina. But, as he indicated to the consul, no decision could be made without an explicit invitation from the archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Consul Gazzolo, probably with help from Don Bosco himself, from Fr. John Francesia and from the text of the Salesian constitutions, put together an account the Salesian Society that enabled him to make a detailed and reliable report to the archbishop of Buenos Aires, León Federico Aneyros.<sup>13</sup> This

as representative of Argentina at Savona. He was immediately actively engaged in fostering emigration to Argentina. He wrote pamphlets and composed posters distributing them through the countryside to advertise the opportunities available in Argentina. So much so that the government issued a warning to him to cease and desist. Whole villages were being depopulated through emigration (F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco e son temps*, 949 and 972, note 56).

<sup>11</sup> In a letter dated December 25, 1874 and addressed to the San Nicolás committee in Argentina Don Bosco writes: “It is now four years since the Honorable Gio. Battista Gazzolo and myself are on familiar terms.” That they were on familiar terms is shown also by a letter dated December 22, 1874, in which Don Bosco addresses Gazzolo as “Dearest friend in the Lord.”

<sup>12</sup> R. Entraigas, *Los Salesianos en Argentina*, I, 40, in F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 971 (note 39).

<sup>13</sup> León Federico Aneyros (1826-1894) was born at Buenos Aires on June 28, 1826. He took a doctorate in theology from Buenos Aires University on February 26, 1846, was ordained in 1848 and obtained the doctorate in canon and civil law from the university on September 16, 1848. Involved in politics as a newspaper editor, he served as secretary to the bishop of Buenos Aires (Mariano José de Escalada) from 1855, and as vicar general from

letter, dated August 30, 1874 in style and content was “perfect: forthright, knowledgeable, discrete, respectful, complimentary without adulation, prudent and clear.”<sup>14</sup> Its importance, however, lay in the fact that it represented Don Bosco’s own concept and earliest statement of what came to be known as the “Salesian missionary project” (though in the early correspondence with the Argentine Church authorities Don Bosco never spoke of his “missionary” aims).<sup>15</sup> A summary of the letter follows.

The consul wrote that in his desire to contribute to the good of the people of Argentina he had conversations with a holy priest, Father John Baptist (*sic*) Bosco, founder of the recently approved Salesian Society, engaged in the education of poor young people. He had visited Salesian schools, and was convinced that “this society would do a great amount of good in the Argentine Republic,” Don Bosco had assured him that both the Pope and the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith were in favor of the salesians’ establishing “some missions in Argentina” (*algunas misiones en Argentina*).

Since many Italian priests who had migrated to Argentina had failed to live up to expectation, the consul took pains to explain in detail what he called “the spirit of the Institute,” for which he summarized the chapter on Purpose of the Salesian constitutions. Then, he assured the archbishop that Don Bosco “kept ready available a number of Salesians imbued with the priestly spirit and of great promise” (*tiene algunos sacerdotes disponibles que por su espíritu eclesiástico prometen muchísimo*).

What would the Salesians do in Argentina? The consul suggested to Archbishop Aneyros that the Salesians be invited to Buenos Aires and be given some place to stay or a church to service. The “Italian” church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*) would do perfectly, all the more so as he, the consul, owned two houses adjacent to the church where they could stay.

After making this adroit and discrete suggestion, Gazzolo returned to the subject of the immense advantage that would accrue to the archdiocese from the work of the Salesians on behalf of young people at risk. These religious “living

1865 when the diocese was elevated to archdiocese. Contemporaneously he was professor of Canon Law at the university (1854-1870). Nominated titular bishop of Aulón on March 21, 1870, he became archbishop of Buenos Aires after the death of Escalada in 1873. He died on September 3, 1894 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 368).

<sup>14</sup> F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 951f.

<sup>15</sup> The original letter was lost in the fire set during the Buenos Aires riots of June 1955. Fortunately the letter had been published in the April 1934 issue of *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires* (R. Entraigas, *Los Salesianos en Argentina*, I, 32-35; Cf. F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 971, note 42).



by the Spirit of God” would provide for these young people the shelter and care that the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul could not provide. They would be “the faithful soldiers working in the vanguard for the realization of the plans that your Grace has put into effect for the good of thousands of souls.” The archbishop could obtain more detailed information from the Holy Father himself, who is well acquainted with Don Bosco and the Oratory.

The consul closed his letter by asking the archbishop’s kind indulgence for the liberty taken, and added: “Your Grace’s words and example, have taught me, when I lived in Argentina, that every Christian is bound to make a contribution to the great work of the salvation of souls.”

Archbishop Aneyros was impressed by the consul’s report and suggestion and replied on October 10, 1874, through his secretary, Msgr. Antonio Espinosa.<sup>16</sup> (To the latter Gazzolo had written a personal letter on the subject dated September 10, 1874). Replying to the consul in the archbishop’s name, Espinosa wrote among other things:

As for your suggestion regarding the Salesians, Archbishop Aneyros will be happy to see them established in this archdiocese. I know Don Bosco well, and I believe him to be a saint though living in this world. His Grace suggested that you write directly to the council of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy, which you and I know well.<sup>17</sup> If the Confraternity accepts the proposal, His Grace will give the church over to the Salesians and will take them under his protection. The Archbishop has not received the two pamphlets that you said to have sent, but he has received the catalogue of books published in Don Bosco’s house ...<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Mariano Antonio Espinosa (1844-1923) was born in Buenos Aires on July 2, 1844. He studied theology at the Picpus Latin American College in Rome (1865-1869), and was ordained there on April 11, 1868 and obtained a doctorate in theology from the Gregorian University in 1869. Back in Buenos Aires, he was appointed archdiocesan secretary general by Archbishop Aneyros, and in 1879 Vicar General. That same year, as chaplain (with two Salesians) he accompanied the Argentine military expedition that opened up the southern frontier beyond the Rio Negro (*Conquista del desierto*)—of which he wrote a diary. On June 15, 1893 he was named titular bishop of Tiberiopolis, on February 8, 1898 first bishop of La Plata, and on August 31, 1900 archbishop of Buenos Aires, successor to Archbishop Aneyros. He built the basilica of Our Lady of Luján, and died on February 8, 1923 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 368; Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 971, note 45).

<sup>17</sup> The church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*) was the base of the Confraternity of the same name and had been built by the Confraternity. Consul Gazzolo had participated in the purchase of the terrain. For the history of the Confraternity, and the Salesians relationship to it, see below.

<sup>18</sup> Excerpt derived from Entraigas, edited in Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 952.



Consul Gazzolo's proposal and Archbishop Aneyros favorable response had just the one Salesian foundation in view, Our Lady of Mercy in Buenos Aires. But at this point a new personality and a new component come into the picture to enlarge the "project"—Father Peter Ceccarelli and the school of San Nicolás de los Arroyos.<sup>19</sup>



2 – Father Peter Ceccarelli (1842-1893)  
parish priest of San Nicolás de los Arroyos

<sup>19</sup> Peter Ceccarelli (1842-1893) was born in Modena (Italy) in 1842. Having been ordained and having obtained doctor's degrees in theology and Canon Law, in 1871 he migrated to Argentina, accompanying the body of Archbishop Mariano de Escalada of Buenos Aires who had died in Rome in 1870 during Vatican I. He was quickly appointed pastor (1873-1893) of San Nicolás de los Arroyos, a small town on the Paraná River, some 250 km. (ca. 160 mi.) NW of Buenos Aires. During his tenure he gave impetus to various works, such as St. Philip Hospital, St. Joseph Kindergarten, and the school that the Salesian were to take over. In 1893 he returned to Rome in pilgrimage, but died in his native city of Modena that very year (1893). Don Bosco had met him in Rome (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 368).

*A Proposal from San Nicolas de los Arroyos—Father Ceccarelli Acting for the Building Committee*

A citizens' committee chaired by the revered octogenarian and staunch Catholic, José Francisco Benítez, had been building a boys' boarding school in the small town situated some 160 miles NW of Buenos Aires on the right (southern) bank of the Paraná River. Father Ceccarelli, the pastor, had presided at the laying of the foundation stone on October 12, 1873, and had blessed the building (such as it was) at its completion in the autumn of 1874. Looking for a religious congregation to staff the school, the committee addressed a request to the Piarist Fathers (Clerics Regular of the Pious Schools of St. Joseph Calasanz), but the Piarists declined due to lack of personnel. Instead of looking for other prospects, Chairman Benítez applied directly to Archbishop Aneyros at Buenos Aires, who had just received Consul Gazzolo's letter recommending the Salesians. The archbishop had Mr. Benítez read the letter, and Benítez immediately notified Father Ceccarelli, who knew Don Bosco and was a close friend of the consul.

Fr. Ceccarelli rushed to Buenos Aires, conferred with the archbishop, and from Buenos Aires, with the date of October 26, 1874 wrote a glowing letter to Consul Gazzolo that complemented Espinosa's and the archbishop's response and added the new component to the "project." A summary of the letter follows.

Father Ceccarelli wrote that he had held a long conversation with the archbishop "about the famous Don Bosco and about the spirit that infused the congregation founded by him." The archbishop "was eager to have such able and saintly laborers" in his vast archdiocese, and had asked him (Ceccarelli) to take charge of the matter and see it to a happy conclusion.

But (Ceccarelli told the consul) "Buenos Aires is a large city bustling with commercial activity, and a port city to boot, toward which sectarian groups converge and religions of all kinds hold sway. Under such circumstances, as I see it, the Salesian Fathers would meet with serious difficulties. San Nicolás de los Arroyos, on the other hand, is a small, eminently Catholic city, situated on the right bank of the Paraná River, with a splendid view and enjoying excellent climate, pure air, good commercial activity, wholesome social life and uncontested exercise of the Catholic religion. These favorable features would facilitate a quick establishment of the Institute and its future expansion." The Salesians could begin by running the school at San Nicolás, then from there

they could go on to found schools in nearby towns and fan out through the whole archdiocese of Buenos Aires.<sup>20</sup>

Ceccarelli lost no time. Back in San Nicolás he quickly set things in motion with the committee for handing the new boarding school over to the Salesians. The committee acted positively, and Father Ceccarelli hastened to inform the Consul of this decision.

San Nicolas, November 11, 1874

Your Excellency:

It is an honor to inform you that the weighty matter entrusted to me by the archbishop of Buenos Aires has been satisfactorily taken care of.

To start with, I was privileged to be chosen by the Lord to acquaint our archbishop with the new Congregation of St. Francis de Sales—a very easy task because between 1867-1869, as I well remember, I had the opportunity to admire the extraordinary zeal of the excellent, incomparable Father John Baptist (*sic*) Bosco in Rome. Now ... I successfully managed to have the Salesian Congregation accepted in this city [San Nicolás], where they will be in charge of a fine boarding school and of a magnificent church in the best part of the town ... I can also assure you that the archbishop and his vicar general are eagerly awaiting this new Congregation ... Furthermore, we have here a true man of God, Francis J. Benítez, who is a very wealthy octogenarian, a father to the poor and a staunch Catholic. He is chairman of the aforesaid committee, president of this chapter of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and chairman of the churchwardens' council. He is very devoted to the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX ... He is happy about the Salesian Fathers and promises to provide for their needs out of his own pocket ...

How my parish will benefit from them! I know that they will bring it new life and that, through their zeal, my parishioners will experience a spiritual renewal.

The school is being given to the Salesian Fathers under most favorable terms; you will get the papers by mail this week, signed by the committee chairman and the secretary. I hope you will find the terms acceptable ...

Then, once our offer has been accepted, Don Bosco should choose gifted young men and have them apply themselves full-time to the study of Spanish. They can stay at my home and I will familiarize them with our customs, assist them during the first weeks of teaching, and help them to gain the people's confidence and affection ...

<sup>20</sup> P. Ceccarelli to G. B. Gazzolo, Buenos Aires, October 26, 1874; *IBM X*, 1294-1296 (omitted in *EBM*).

I close now by asking you to acquaint the Very Reverend Father John Bosco, superior general, with the contents of this letter, and to do your best to have the Salesian priests willingly accept the forthcoming offer of a school in San Nicolás. Please keep me informed.

With regards to you and your family,  
I am devotedly yours,  
Fr. Peter Ceccarelli

[P.S.] As I was about to seal this letter, the committee informed me that the Salesian Fathers have been accepted according to the terms that I proposed, and request me to mail you the formal invitation so that you may present it to the reverend Fathers ... You will soon have all the documents.

P. B. Ceccarelli<sup>21</sup>

### *Don Bosco Contacted by Father Ceccarelli*

Some time later, Fr. Ceccarelli sent all the promised documents to the consul. Along with the documents were two letters for Don Bosco, respectively from Father Ceccarelli and from the chairman of the committee, Mr. Joseph Francis Benítez. Father Ceccarelli's letter could not have been more enthusiastic:

San Nicolás, November 30, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

Though you do not know me, I make bold to address myself to you. I most earnestly beg you to accept the invitation of the committee in charge of the new boarding school of this city to staff this school with the same methods used by your well-deserving Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in its schools for middle-class pupils. The Argentine consul in Savona will tell you about my own humble person and about San Nicolás and the very favorable terms offered to you.

With pleasure I assure you that His Excellency, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, warmly welcomes your Congregation to his archdiocese and earnestly hopes that it may develop and prosper for the welfare of souls and God's greater glory, since from this moment on he intends to be its father and protector.

I say nothing of myself, except that I ardently desire to be useful to your holy

<sup>21</sup> P. Ceccarelli to G. B. Gazzolo, San Nicolás de los Arroyos, November 11, 1874, in *EBM* X, 553-555.

and meritorious Congregation, which in my humble opinion will expand extraordinarily in these endless plains that so badly need the saving waters of eternal life flowing from the side of our most loving Savior.

Let me offer you my humble services in anything you may need. I hope that you will accept them in the same spirit in which they are offered. My home, friends, and indeed all I have are at the disposal of Your Reverence and the Salesian Fathers. From this very moment I love them as my dear brothers and place myself at your command.

Most respectfully and devotedly I kiss your sacred hand.

Yours obedient son in Jesus Christ,

Father Peter B. Ceccarelli<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Francis J. Benítez too, chairman of the committee, thrilled at the thought of having the Salesians there soon, also wrote to Don Bosco on November 30, 1874, promising tickets for the voyage to Buenos Aires of the five priests he hoped to welcome and a check for all other travel expenses.<sup>23</sup>

These documents and letters were in Gazzolo's hands, but Don Bosco needed to have them in his possession, so that he could respond officially to the invitation. As he was traveling in Liguria at the time, he received all materials directly from the Consul's hands whom he met at Varazze between December 15 and 19.<sup>24</sup> Back in Turin on December 19, Don Bosco read letter and documents to the members of the Superior Chapter on the evening of December 22, 1874.

### *Don Bosco's Formal Acceptance of the Argentine Offer*

That same evening (December 22, 1874) Don Bosco composed a careful letter to Msgr. Antonio Espinosa, secretary general of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, accepting the Argentine proposal and specifying the terms of his acceptance.

After referring to the antecedent correspondence and adding complimentary remarks, with thanks, for Archbishop Aneyros, Msgr. Espinosa and Consul Gazzolo, Don Bosco continues:

<sup>22</sup> P. Ceccarelli to G. Bosco, San Nicolás, November 30, 1874, in *EBM* X, 555-556.

<sup>23</sup> J.F. Benítez to G. Bosco, November 30, 1874, in *IBM* X, 1301-1302.

<sup>24</sup> F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 953-954 and 972, note 53.

I am now ready to accept the offer formally and to deal with you as representative of the diocesan Ordinary ...

(1) I am willing to send a few priests to Buenos Aires to establish a home (*ospizio*) to serve as a base. To this end it would be very helpful to have a church for sacred services, and more especially for teaching catechism to the most neglected children in the city. Consul Gazzolo has suggested the Church of Our Lady of Mercy as very suitable for this purpose. However, if no public church is available, we could make do with some hall in which to gather and shelter destitute boys.

(2) In the second place, I would send to San Nicolás enough priests, clerics and lay Salesians as may be necessary for religious services, for choir and, if required, for teaching.

(3) From these two locations Salesians could be sent out to wherever the Ordinary thinks they are needed.

[...]

I would like to add just for your information that our Congregation has won the Holy See's definitive approval; and although its principal purpose is the education of poor young people, yet its activity extends to every branch of the sacred ministry.

Also, since the Holy Father has graciously wanted to be our Protector, he desires to see this agreement before it goes definitively into effect. I know, however, that he is very favorable to our project because he has a special affection [for your country] ...<sup>25</sup>

On Christmas Day 1874, Don Bosco also wrote to Father Ceccarelli. After words of praise for Consul Gazzolo, and of thanks to Father Ceccarelli for the offer, he continues:

All that we [Salesians] desire is to be engaged in the sacred ministry especially on behalf of poor and abandoned young people. Our main field of apostolate is giving religious instruction, teaching in schools, preaching, and running festive oratories, homes and boarding schools.

I wrote to His Grace the Archbishop [to Secretary Espinosa] signifying my acceptance of the basic project, and pointed out to him that it would help having a Home in Buenos Aires to serve as a pied-à-terre for Salesians who are arriving or are waiting to be assigned.

Trusting in your good will, I will send [to San Nicolás] as many priests, clerics, lay Salesians, musicians and craftsmen as you will deem necessary. And please stay on [at San Nicolás] at least until the new arrivals have acquired sufficient knowledge of the language and local customs to be able to promote God's greater glory.

<sup>25</sup> G. Bosco to M. A. Espinosa, December 22, 1874, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 366-369.

Who knows that by your example, zeal and advice you might even become in practice a superior to our Salesians ...<sup>26</sup>

At the same time Don Bosco wrote also to the building committee (and its chairman, J. F. Benítez) at San Nicolás. After referring to his long-standing friendship with the consul, he speaks of the committee's "generous offer of a building, church and land for a boarding school ..." and continues:

The boarding school is to be entrusted to the Salesian Congregation without any limitation in time ... Under these conditions I accept the offer gladly. By next October [1875], I shall take care to have ready the personnel needed for the spiritual and material direction of the school as well as teachers for the instruction and the assistance of the pupils, and personnel for the care of the church and the school building.

I shall follow a program appropriate to a middle-class boarding school (*di civile condizione*). But since the principal purpose of the Salesian Congregation is to care for poor young people at risk (*giovani poveri e pericolanti*), I hope that the Salesians will be free to set up evening classes for these children and gather them on Sundays and holy days in some playground for recreation, while instructing them in the truths of faith ...<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in no time at all it was decided to open the first houses in Argentina. The original "project" was to settle some Salesians in Buenos Aires at some church for ministry (which happened to be the "Italian church"), with the possibility of establishing a home for poor children. The "expanded project" included a school and church at San Nicolás, with possibility of doing oratory work. Both parts of the "project" are typical Salesian work. Throughout these negotiations, including Don Bosco's letters of acceptance, there is nary a mention made either of natives to be evangelized or of immigrants to be ministered to—although (as will be seen) both these ministries were clearly in Don Bosco's intention. (Consul Gazzolo had given him some literature that contained information on the "savages" of Patagonia; and, on the other hand, Don Bosco knew about the Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires.)

<sup>26</sup> G. Bosco to P. Ceccarelli, December 25, 1874, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 372-374.

<sup>27</sup> G. Bosco to the committee of San Nicolás, December 25, 1874, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 374-375.



*Don Bosco's Announcement to the Salesians Directors Gathered for the General Conferences and the Feast of St. Francis de Sales*

A little over one month later, on January 27, 1875, two days before the feast of St. Francis de Sales, replies arrived from Argentina accepting all of Don Bosco's conditions and urging an early departure of the Salesians. The letters were addressed to Consul Gazzolo and were to be officially communicated by him. He came to Turin for that very purpose.

The conferences of St. Francis de Sales, that is, the yearly meeting of Salesian Directors, were in session at the time (January 26-28). In the sixth session of the conferences he made the announcement to the Directors and spoke of *evangelization*, that is, of *missions* among the native populations.

This very day we received letters from America [Argentina] begging us to go to those distant countries to evangelize those populations. We laid down certain conditions, and they have been accepted. We will now engage in negotiations (*pratiche*) to see *quid agendum* [what can be done]. For the moment, two places are waiting for us there: one in the city of Buenos Aires and the other in San Nicolás de los Arroyos, a town a day's journey from the capital. There have been conversations at different times about establishing missions in America, as well as in Asia, in Africa and in Oceania. It seems to me that the one in Buenos Aires is much more congenial to us, both because of its particular circumstances and because of the Spanish language in use there. Spanish is much easier than English, which is the language in use in most other regions.<sup>28</sup>

In making this announcement to his council and to the directors attending the conferences Don Bosco stated that the initiative had come from Argentina, and that he had placed conditions for his acceptance. The historical facts described above seem to put a different cast on the whole affair. It was Don Bosco who (through Consul Gazzolo) had initiated the conversations and that in accepting the Argentine offer had stipulated "no conditions." But more important is the fact that Don Bosco qualifies the whole undertaking as "mission." He does this in addressing both his Salesians and the Roman authorities, whereas in writing to the Argentine Church authorities he speaks simply in terms of the typical Salesian work (oratory, home, school, parish, etc.).

<sup>28</sup> Reported in *Documenti* XV, 54, FDB 1027 D9.



*Announcement Made to Salesians and Boys at the Oratory*

The announcement made to the Salesians attending the conferences, was official but still in the nature of a private communication. Hence Don Bosco decided to make an official public announcement, and to make it with great solemnity and theatrical flair. He gave orders that on the feast of St. Francis de Sales (January 29, 1875) in the evening all the Salesians and boys at the Oratory were to assemble in the large study hall. The members of the Superior Chapter and the Directors that had gathered for the conferences took their seats on an elevated platform around Don Bosco and Consul Gazzolo, who appeared in full-dress uniform, his chest covered with medals.<sup>29</sup> At a sign from Don Bosco, the Consul stood up and amid a deep silence read in a loud voice the letters from Argentina (from Espinosa and Ceccarelli).

Don Bosco then stood and spoke. As Barberis reports in his chronicle, he said that to give a definitive reply to the Argentine request he needed the Holy Father's consent, and he would go to Rome to obtain it. If the Holy Father was against it he would reject the Argentine offer. It appears, however, from the history of the negotiations summarized above that when Archbishop Aneyros, through secretary Espinosa, responded favorably to the proposal Don Bosco accepted outright pressing no conditions.

In any case, Don Bosco knew (so Ceria adds) that the Pope would be quite favorable, but that he did not want to put the matter before the Pope and obtain his blessing on the mission until he had first made sure that the Argentine proposal was firm.<sup>30</sup>

*Announcement of the "Mission" Made to the Whole Society: the Project Presented as a Missionary Undertaking*

The reaction to the impressively staged scene and to the Consul's and Don Bosco's words was enthusiastic and emotional. Salesians and boys at the Oratory were fired with the missionary spirit. Everyone was made to realize that

<sup>29</sup> The scene had been orchestrated and staged by Don Bosco and the consul for effect. R. Entraigas, in his biographical sketch of the consul says that the latter "collected" such decorations (F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 973, note 67). Ceria adds: "A few of the Superiors, at the sight of such elaborate display, had been reluctant to take seats on the dais. They feared that when the time came to carry out the plan it would fail for lack of "personnel or means" (EBM XI, 130).

<sup>30</sup> EBM XI, 130.

new horizons were being opened up for the young Society. Don Bosco therefore acted without delay, even before undertaking a trip to Rome, to acquaint the whole Society with the new reality. Calling for volunteers for the mission among the “savage” populations of South America, he sent instructions to all the Houses by the following circular letter.

Turin, February 5, 1875

To the Salesians:

Among the many proposals received to establish missions in foreign countries, the one from Argentina seems to be the best. Beyond civilized areas there are immense territories in that country that are inhabited by savage tribes. Among them, by the grace of God, the Salesians can exercise their zeal.

We shall begin by opening a hospice in Buenos Aires, the capital of that vast Republic, and a school with a public church at San Nicolás de los Arroyos, not very far from the capital.

Personnel for this new venture must be assembled, but it is my wish that this be done on a volunteer basis and not through obedience. Therefore, those who wish to volunteer for the foreign missions should proceed as follows:

(1) Send in a written application expressing their desire to go to these countries as members of our Congregation.

(2) The Superior Chapter shall then meet, and after invoking the Holy Spirit, will proceed to examine the health, intellectual background, physical endurance and moral strength of all applicants. We shall select only those who, we have good reason to believe, will go to the missions with advantage to their own soul and for the greater glory of God.

(3) Those who have been chosen will then gather together for whatever time they need to study the language and customs of the people to whom they intend to bring words of everlasting life.

(4) The departure is scheduled for next October unless some serious unforeseen reason will force us to modify our plans.

Let us thank God with our whole heart for His goodness in bestowing new favors every day upon our humble Congregation, and let us endeavor to become worthy of them by the exact observance of our constitutions, especially those dealing with the vows, by which we have consecrated ourselves to God.

Let us not cease offering prayers to God so that we may exercise the virtues of patience and meekness. Amen.

Believe me always in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate friend,

Fr. John Bosco

P. S. I ask the Directors kindly to read and explain the contents of this letter to the confreres.<sup>31</sup>

*Don Bosco's Trip to Rome with Secretary Joachim Berto—Pope's Blessing and Propagation of the Faith's Decrees for the Missionary Undertaking*<sup>32</sup>

Don Bosco's stay in Rome lasted nearly one month (February 18 to March 16, 1875), during which he had three audiences with the Holy Father, on February 22 (a long one), on March 2 and on March 12. Don Bosco's activities in Rome, as also his conversations with the Pope, were mostly concerned with the matter of privileges, especially the privilege of issuing dimissorial letters for the ordination of Salesian candidates. He was also seeking to explain his position with regard to Archbishop Gastaldi with whom he was at the time already locked in bitter conflict. But the subject of "his missionary undertaking" was not overlooked—for which he obtained the Pope's blessing and patronage. In two separate petitions for privileges, written in Latin and submitted to the Pope some time before February 26, "the missions" are given as a reason for requesting these privileges. He writes:

[2°] Privileges are a necessity in these times of ours, when priests are scarce in ours regions and much more so in the foreign missions we are undertaking ...

3° The [Salesian] missions that have already been established in far-flung parts of the globe, and the various Houses that are planned there, make frequent recourse to the Roman Pontiff for needed faculties extremely difficult.<sup>33</sup>

During the first few days in Rome (February 19-21), before seeing Pius IX, Don Bosco had conferred with Cardinal Alexander Franchi and Archbishop John Simeoni, respectively Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, on the subject of the "the mission." By the time he left Rome,

<sup>31</sup> G. Bosco to the Salesians, Circular, Turin, February 5, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 408-409; *EBM* XI, 130-131). A few days before, Don Bosco had also written personally to Mr. Joseph Francis Benítez, chairman of the committee of San Nicolás de los Arroyos, whom Father Ceccarelli had so highly commended. In this letter, dated February 2, 1875, Don Bosco praises the old gentleman for his charity and "love for the Holy See," and asks him to take the Salesians under his protection (G. Bosco to J. F. Benítez, Turin February 2, 1875, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 406-407; *EBM* XI, 131-132).

<sup>32</sup> For Father Berto's Memoir of the 1875 trip to Rome see *ASC* A004, Cronachette-Berto, *Memorie del viaggio a Roma nel 18 febbraio 1875*, *FDB* 911 A9-D3.

<sup>33</sup> G. Bosco to Pius IX, Rome, before February 26, 1875 (Motto *Epistolario* IV, 224-226).

Two customary decrees were already being drafted. One was for the Ordinary of the mission territory officially informing him that with the approval of the Holy See the Salesians were coming into his diocese endowed with all the usual privileges and faculties. The other decree was addressed to Don Bosco himself as superior general granting him all the concessions necessary under the circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

Don Bosco therefore (so it emerges from the above) succeeded in presenting the Argentine proposal as a “foreign missions undertaking.” Both the Salesians and the Roman authorities understood it as such, and so did the Pope who gave it his blessing. Don Bosco, however, did not speak of the project in the same terms when addressing the Argentine Church authorities, or to Consul Gazzolo for that matter.

Early in April, in a letter to the Consul Don Bosco inquired whether the riots reported to be taking place in Buenos Aires might delay or prevent the Salesian’s departure.<sup>35</sup> Don Bosco is referring to the situation that developed in Buenos Aires after the term in office of President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874) came to an end. The violence that accompanied the electoral battle for the succession degenerated into a veritable civil war. Nicolás Avellaneda (1874-1880) was elected President, but the unrest lasted into 1875. The Bishop’s palace was sacked, and the Jesuit college of *El Salvador* was torched. By and by things quieted down, though not the anticlerical policies of the Avellaneda government.<sup>36</sup>

### *Lay Salesians Associated with the “Project”*

The Argentine proposal as it related both to Buenos Aires and to San Nicolás de los Arroyos called only for priests to staff church and school. However, in May, as the missionary euphoria fostered by Don Bosco was on the increase among Salesians and boys, Don Bosco decided to associate the “lay component” to his missionary undertaking. He announced this further step in the implementation of his missionary project in the Good Night of May 12, 1875.

<sup>34</sup> EBM XI, 132.

<sup>35</sup> G. Bosco to G. B. Gazzolo, Turin, April 10, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 449).

<sup>36</sup> These are the episodes of civil disturbance referred to in EBM XI, 133.



3 – Don Bosco, Consul John Gazzolo and the first Salesian missionaries

Many people have asked me whether or not our plans for going to [South] America have been cancelled. I can now tell them that the final reply arrived today. Those who want to go must get ready ... [The mayor of San Nicolás] answered my letter immediately, saying that he was completely satisfied with the stated terms and that as of that moment he was placing at our disposal a school and sufficient pasture land for as many as eight thousand sheep with an orchard, playgrounds, etc.

As you see, in that country there will be enough work for all sorts of people. Priests will be needed to preach and conduct services in the public churches; teachers for the schools; singers and musicians, for they are very fond of music; shepherds to take the sheep to pasture, shear them, milk them, and make cheese; and then, people for various domestic chores.

More important still, my dear sons, not far from San Nicolás lies a territory inhabited by savage tribes. Now these natives are friendly and a great many of them have already expressed their willingness to embrace our Faith, if someone will volunteer to instruct them. At present no one has come forward, and so they live in idolatry. Now let us take courage and endeavor in every way to prepare to go to these lands and do some good there. Soon we shall select the personnel, and those chosen will start learning Spanish, the language spoken in Argentina ...<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> G. Barberis, *Cronachetta autografa*, Notebook 1, 11, in *ASC A000, FDB 833 B9; EBM XI*, 133-134.

As these words reveal, Don Bosco aimed not only at establishing the Salesians work of church and school but also at mission work properly so called (the conversion of the “savages”). Moreover, the work force for this double endeavor would be from the start both priestly and lay. Father Ceccarelli wanted just five priests for San Nicolás. Don Bosco included lay Salesians in the group, and almost immediately (1877) he saw the need of including the Salesian Sisters.

Don Bosco became obsessed with the idea of the mission, and the obsession only became stronger with time. On May 20 (1875) in a conversation he had with Father Barberis he spoke at length about the need of converting the masses of infidels that still peopled the world.<sup>38</sup>

*Don Bosco's Missionary Intentions and Idea of a Missionary Strategy*

On July 6, 1875 he spoke to Salesian seminarians and novices about spending their vacation time usefully. As the Argentine proposal had been accepted, the personnel had to be chosen and be ready to leave by October or November. As the situation in Buenos Aires was still somewhat uncertain, Don Bosco spoke of San Nicolás, giving a first description of what might be called his “missionary strategy.”

The school building there is completed, and they would hand it over to us immediately. A public church is also offered to us, and we would have the run of the city schools ... The people are naturally good and devoted to their religion, but they lack priests that would provide instruction for them.

San Nicolás, a city with a population of 50,000 people, all Catholics, has only three priests. How can three priests in a city of that size ... administer the sacraments, officiate at funerals, take communion to the sick, celebrate Mass, hear confessions, preach, give catechetical instruction, etc.?

You should also bear in mind that not far from San Nicolás begin the regions inhabited by the savages, a numerous native population. They are already well disposed toward the Christian religion and are asking for instruction, but no one is available for this ministry, consequently they are left to live and die deprived of the Catholic religion, even of the knowledge of God. These are the pressing needs that persuaded us to accept the school at [San Nicolás] for a start. But I hope that in the near future we shall be able to undertake a ministry to the savages—to instruct them, educated them and make Christians of them.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> G. Barberis, *Cronachetta autografa*, Notebook 1, 16-18, FDB 833 C2-4.

<sup>39</sup> IBM XI, 296-297 (omitted in EBM].



Later Don Bosco would flesh out this missionary strategy by noting that in the past missionaries seeking immediately to penetrate those “savage” tribes had almost invariably met death at their hands. The Salesians would instead first found schools and hospices in the area bordering on these native tribes. These schools would be open to children of the “savages,” a strategy that would facilitate learning their language, habits, and customs. Then gradually, through the education of the children, access could be had to the native tribes themselves, for their social and religious transformation. Buenos Aires would serve as the headquarters, and San Nicolás as an outpost that would facilitate social and religious contact with the “savages.”

As will be seen, Don Bosco was also very much concerned with the welfare of the great and ever increasing number of Italian immigrants scattered throughout Argentina, but especially concentrated in Buenos Aires. They had come pouring into this country in quest of fortune, but partly through their own fault and partly because of the scarcity of priests they were deprived of all religious assistance.

*The First Group of “Missionaries” Assembled by Don Bosco*

Toward the end of July 1875, Don Bosco could write to Father Ceccarelli to acquaint him with the preparations in progress. Speaking of the personnel of priests and lay Salesians (the latter included “according to our constitutions”), he writes among other things:

In keeping with the Constitutions of our Congregation I must to some extent make some changes in the personnel that had been requested. Five will be priests, all qualified teachers holding diplomas of this country. In addition, for the necessary church services and school activities there will also be a music teacher ... I shall send also two Lay Salesian Brothers, one to handle church maintenance, the other to look after the residential quarters at the school. For greater dependability I wish the whole domestic staff to be made up of members of the Salesian Congregation ...

Father John Cagliero, Doctor of Theology, Provincial and Assistant Superior of our Congregation, will lead the Salesians and shall have full authority to negotiate and conclude any business with either civil or ecclesiastical authorities. Then, once the Salesians have assumed their respective duties, Father John Bonetti will take over ... Father Cagliero will then return to Europe to make his report and provide whatever may still be necessary ...<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The plan to involve Father John Bonetti had to be changed, and Father John Cagliero,

Since this is the first long sea voyage ever undertaken by my Salesians, I am most anxious that the Argentine Consul at Savona, the Honorable John Gazzolo, should accompany them ...

The Salesians should leave here about the middle of November. I shall let you know the exact date as soon as it is definitely settled.<sup>41</sup>

In a second letter to Fr. Ceccarelli (dated August 12) Don Bosco discusses minute details about things that might be needed for church and school in San Nicolás. Among other things, he inquires, for example, if a piano and music paper were available. With regard to school regulations, he is sending copies of the regulations in use in Salesian schools, but adds, “the best regulation lies in the quality of the teacher.” In conclusion he writes Father Ceccarelli: “I want you to cut a good figure so that no one may say, ‘It’s a shoddy operation’ (*È una meschinità*). Since the honor of a budding Congregation is at stake, I intend to spare neither personnel nor expense if this will contribute to the success of the undertaking.”<sup>42</sup>

Through the latter months of 1875 out of the many volunteers Don Bosco chose ten “missionaries” who were to be the founders of the Salesian work in South America. The official list prepared by Don Bosco in his own hand for the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith is entitled (in Latin), “Names and qualifications of the Salesians that are leaving for the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires ...” As published for the general public (in Italian) in the Turin Catholic daily, *L’Unità Cattolica*, the title was amended to “Names of the Salesian *missionaries* ...” The list is as follows:

(1) Father John Cagliero, Doctor in Theology, head of conferences in moral theology, author of various musical compositions; (for Archbishop Aneiros Don Bosco adds:) he has all regular faculties to deal with civil and ecclesiastical matters;<sup>43</sup>

though he would have to travel back and forth, remained in charge to whole undertaking.

<sup>41</sup> G. Bosco to P. Ceccarelli, Turin, July 28, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 490-493).

<sup>42</sup> G. Bosco to P. Ceccarelli, Turin, August 12, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 502-504).

<sup>43</sup> Father John Cagliero (1838-1926) at the time of the missionaries’ departure was 37 years old, and spiritual director general of the Salesian Society and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Subsequently he would be inspector-provincial of the Salesians in South America, Vicar Apostolic of Northern and Central Patagonia (1883), for which he was ordained bishop (1884). He was later named titular archbishop of Sebaste, (1904), then apostolic delegate in Central America (1908), and lastly cardinal-bishop of the suffragan diocese of Tuscolo (Frascati) (1915).



(2) Father Joseph Fagnano, professor of literature; (for Archbp. Aneiros Don Bosco adds:) that is, accredited teacher of Greek, Latin, Italian, history, geography and other humanistic subjects;<sup>44</sup>

(3) Father Dominic Tomatis, professor of literature as above [that is, like Fagnano];<sup>45</sup>

(4) Father Valentine Cassini, professor of normal school (for Archbishop Aneiros Don Bosco “translates:”) professor of teaching methodology;<sup>46</sup>

(5) Father John Baptist Baccino, professor of higher-level teaching methodology;<sup>47</sup>

(6) Father James Allavena, schoolteacher (for Archbishop Aneiros Don Bosco corrects the name to:) ... John Baptist...(his real name);<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Father Joseph Fagnano (1844-1916) at the time of departure was 51 years of age and 7-years ordained. The day before departure a priest on the original list (Father Riccardi, see Don Bosco’s letter to Father Ceccarelli, above) had to be substituted, and Don Bosco asked Father Fagnano, who responded generously. He served for 6 years as director of the school of San Nicolás, which (contrary to promise) he had to build from scratch. After recovering from long illness, in 1879 he was appointed pastor of the mission at Carmen de Patagones. In 1883 he was named Prefect Apostolic of the mission of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, which he founded and developed over the years 1887-1916.

<sup>45</sup> Father Dominic Tomatis (1849-1912), 26 year of age, had been a pupil at the Oratory. In 1866 he was considering joining the Jesuits, but he followed instead Don Bosco’s suggestion and professed as a Salesian in 1867. After ordination in 1872 he served as dean of studies at the Salesian school of Varazze until Don Bosco chose him to be part of the mission band. He is the author of the chronicle of the voyage from Genoa to Buenos Aires. At San Nicolás de los Arroyos he served as dean of studies and director. In 1887 he founded the Salesian work in Chile, at Talca and Santiago, where he died after suffering a stroke.

<sup>46</sup> Father Valentine Cassini (1851-1922), after serving for years with the artisans at the Oratory he was chosen for the mission band, a newly ordained priest (October 25, 1875) at 24 years of age. (For the story of his ordination see *EBM* XI, 349-351.) In Argentina he served as teacher at San Nicolás de los Arroyos, at San Carlos de Almagro (Buenos Aires), and as director of the agricultural school of Uribelarrea. Later he was one of the group that started the Salesian work in San Francisco (1897-1901), before returning to Argentina, Carmen de Patagones and Almagro (Buenos Aires), where he died.

<sup>47</sup> Father John Baptist Baccino (1843-1877) had come to the Oratory in 1867 at the age of twenty-four, made his profession in 1869, and was ordained in 1874. During his two brief but laborious years of service at the Italian church of our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*) he was known as “Father of the Immigrants.” He died prematurely in 1877.

<sup>48</sup> Father James Allavena (1855-1887) in 1875 was a 20-year old student in the Salesian school at Alassio. He asked to become a Salesian in order to go the “missions,” but since he was up for military service, he was denied a passport. Don Bosco sent him and Vincent Gioia (see below) to meet the ship at Marseilles, presumably because they could get aboard merely by showing their ticket. The trick worked and he and Gioia sailed with the rest of the group. He was ordained in Buenos Aires in 1878. Thereafter, as the first Salesian in Uruguay

- (7) Bartholomew Scavini, master carpenter;<sup>49</sup>
- (8) Bartholomew Molinari, professor of vocal and instrumental music (for Archbishop Aneyros Don Bosco adds:) schoolteacher;<sup>50</sup>
- (9) Vincent Gioia, master shoemaker;<sup>51</sup>
- (10) Stephen Belmonte, house manager (for Archbishop Aneyros Don Bosco adds:) schoolteacher, accomplished musician and singer.<sup>52</sup>

Don Bosco had expressly asked Consul Gazzolo to accompany the Salesians on their voyage and to see them “established” in Argentina. Don Bosco was always most grateful for all that the consul had done for the realization of the great project, and indeed he regarded the consul as the eleventh missionary of the expedition.

Don Bosco then, having assembled the group, accompanied the missionaries (including the consul) to Rome (October 31 to November 4, 1875), where they received letters of presentation for Archbishop Aneyros from Cardinal Antonelli, the blessing of the Holy Father, and a decree from Cardinal Franchi, Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, declaring the group to be “apostolic” missionaries.<sup>53</sup>

Back in Turin, as preparations for the departure reached their final stage, Don Bosco (as an after thought?) sought to arrange to have Archbishop

he served as pastor in Las Piedras, Asunción and Villa Rica. He had much to suffer from anticlerical people, who torched the church and the residence. He died at Villa Colón (Uruguay) at the age of 32.

<sup>49</sup> Brother Bartholomew Scavini (1839-1918) volunteered for the “missions” the age of 36. For several years he worked as carpenter and cabinetmaker in the Salesian houses of San Nicolás and in Buenos Aires. Recalled to Italy, he continued to ply his trade in Salesian houses as need demanded.

<sup>50</sup> Brother (Novice) Bartholomew Molinari (1854-....), 21 years of age, worked as director of music at San Nicolás de los Arroyos. Always listed as a lay novice he left the Salesians in 1877.

<sup>51</sup> Brother (Novice) Vincent Gioia (1854-1890), 21-year-old master shoemaker. He accompanied Allavena (see above) and together they boarded the ship at Marseilles. He began studying for the priesthood (ca. 1878) and taught in Buenos Aires and in Montevideo (Uruguay), being ordained in 1886. In 1887 he went to Chile with Father Tomatis (see above) for the foundation at La Talca. He died there in 1890.

<sup>52</sup> Brother Stephen Belmonte (1846-1905) served for 30 years as house manager, teacher and musician-singer in residence at Our Lady of Mercy church, at San Nicolás, and Pius IX School in Buenos Aires.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 351-353; for letters, decree and papal brief cf. *IBM* XI, 584-588 (Appendices 23 and 24).

Gastaldi bless the missionaries, but without success.<sup>54</sup>

The emotional departure ceremony, preceded by the Exercise for a Happy Death, took place in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on November 11. Don Bosco spoke at length, and handed to each of the missionaries a 20-point keepsake to serve as guideline for their apostolate. The Biographical Memoirs give a good account.<sup>55</sup>

*The Departure and the Voyage from Genoa to Buenos Aires*<sup>56</sup>

That that very evening (November 11, 1875) the group of eight, accompanied by Don Bosco and Consul Gazzolo, left for Genoa by train, while Allavena and Gioia left for Marseilles.

On the morning of Sunday, November 14, they boarded the ship, the *Savoie*, with Don Bosco and the local Salesians who had wanted to accompany them. Soon the time came for the last moving good-byes, and the ladders were lifted. Among the passengers were 15 Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy of Savona, “our delightful (*amorevoli*) companions for the voyage and for the mission.”<sup>57</sup> Consul Gazzolo had arranged for them to travel with the Salesians.

The *Savoie* was a French steamship, one of four fairly small coal-burning ships of the *Société Générale de Transports Maritimes à Vapeur* plying the south Atlantic route Genoa-Buenos Aires.<sup>58</sup> The first and second-class accommo-

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 353-356.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 356-365. The whole chapter (“The Departure of the Missionaries”, 348-365), in particular Don Bosco’s farewell speech and 20 souvenirs (358-365) is worth pondering for an understanding of Don Bosco’s aims. For the text of the keepsakes given by Don Bosco to the departing missionaries see Appendix below.

<sup>56</sup> Details about the ship and the voyage are taken from Father Tomatis’ Chronicle as critically edited and annotated by Jesus Borrego, “Da Genova a Buenos Ayres: Itinerario de los Primeros Misionarios Salesianos’ por Don Domingo Tomatis,” *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 2:1 (1983) 54-96.

<sup>57</sup> The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy were a congregation founded in 1837 by Saint Mary Josepha Rossello for charitable work among the poor. In Buenos Aires they would work among Italian immigrants.

<sup>58</sup> The *Savoie* was a 2,588-ton ship measuring 102.86 by 11.46 m. (337.5 by 37.6 ft.). It had been launched in 1854, but by 1875 it had been fitted with a new two-cylinder engine delivering 350-horse power to a single screw. “The *Savoie* has only two masts, serving the purpose of steadying the ship rather than that of increasing its speed ... Even with favorable winds, with all the sails unfurled, the ship would gain no more than one or one-and-a-half miles per hour” (Tomatis, *Diary of the Journey*, see above). The ship could accommodate some 700 passengers, most of them in third-class. With the exception of the dining room, first and

dations consisted of small individual rooms ranged around a large, sumptuous lounge featuring velvet-upholstered chairs and crystal chandeliers. The dining rooms and the food served made the five daily meals and teas festive occasions, if only the ocean hadn't been so uncooperative. Weather and ocean permitting, the Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist held in the lounge were attended by most of the passengers.

Steaming out of Genoa at 2 o'clock P.M. on Sunday, November 14 (1875) the *Savoie* made for Marseilles, her first stop, where two "missing" Salesians (Allavena and Gioia mentioned above) were able to come aboard, thus making the group complete. From this point on the Salesians with the consul and the Sisters of Mercy formed a community that prayed together morning, noon and evening, and sat together at meals. Some of the passengers joined the group for daily Mass, and the Salesians organized catechism instruction for the many children on board.

There followed a brief stop at the port of Barcelona, and a longer, refueling stop at Gibraltar, where coal was taken aboard. Then skirting the Canary Islands, the ship headed for Cape Verde and put up at the port of St. Vincent, where the ship was due to refuel for the southwest Atlantic crossing. Here the passengers witnessed the desperate misery of the place and its people, "black slaves and yellow-skinned Portuguese" and "naked black boys 15 or 16-years of age." The chroniclers adds: "We would willingly have stayed here to help so many poor children in their ignorance and misery, were it not that duty and destiny called us elsewhere." [Tomatis, *Ibid.*]

The crossing from Cape Verde to Rio de Janeiro took eleven days (from November 27 to December 6), mostly days marked by stifling heat, rough seas and seasickness. One evening, a young man came to the priest for confession under the delusion that he would be condemned to death for smuggling a sword in his luggage. In the night the deranged man jumped overboard. The ship stopped, two boats were launched, but he was lost at sea.

Merrymaking, dancing, singing and refreshments marked the crossing of the tropics and the equator. Those were happy, carnival-like celebrations organized and catered by the ship's personnel.

second-class passengers shared the facilities. "A vast canopy secured to the railings and supported by arched struts spanning the width of the ship covers the whole deck and screens the passengers from the smoke of the engine and from the sun. The ship's officers and service personnel are polished professionals to the last man. Cleanliness and hygiene are rigorously maintained throughout the ship" (Tomatis, *Ibid.*). Nevertheless the ship carried live animals stabled below the bridge, with an adjoining slaughterhouse.

At last Rio de Janeiro came into view. The port situated in a great natural harbor offered a magnificent spectacle, as did the buildings and villas dotting the hills that surround it. But when the passengers went ashore and into the city, they were made aware of the miserable condition of the poor people and of the many black slaves.

The Salesians paid a visit to the bishop, who was very gracious. The next day, December 8, was the feast of the Immaculate Conception. But it could not be solemnized with a special Mass because all the sailors were busy taking coal aboard and most of the passengers had gone ashore.

At 2 o'clock the *Savoie* was again on its way, and on December 12, in a raging storm the ship steered into the Plata estuary and cast anchor at Montevideo (Uruguay). The next day in the evening the ship continued its course up the Plata and early in the morning of December 14 entered the harbor of Buenos Aires. "We had had traveled 6,225 mi. in thirty days—not bad!" [Tomatis, *Ibid.*].

## **2. The Salesian Work Established in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás de los Arroyos**

Once the ship lay at anchor, a launch pulled to the ship's side, and Father Ceccarelli, who had come to meet the Salesians, quickly climbed aboard. He escorted them to the pier where a group of Italian immigrants, several of them former Oratory pupils, welcomed them. When they reached their temporary residence, they were delightfully surprised to find Archbishop Frederick Aneyros waiting to welcome them. Later in the day, they returned his visit at the episcopal residence to which the vicar general and all the chancery officials had also been invited. Superiors of religious communities and parish priests in the area, and Mr. Joseph Francis Benítez from San Nicolás, came to greet them and offer their support.

Father Cagliero and the Salesians immediately started a flow of letters to Don Bosco that continued regularly for many years. Others, too, wrote congratulatory letters expressing high hopes for the future of the Salesian work: Father Ceccarelli, Msgr. Espinosa, Archbishop Aneyros and Mr. Benítez (in Latin).

The "missionaries" were under the impression that Buenos Aires would be just a stopover on the way to their final destination, San Nicolás. The archbishop, however, decided that some should stay on in the capital to care for the Italian church, and the many Italian immigrants that were without pasto-

ral care. (This had been the original proposal!) So they split into two groups. Fathers Cagliero and Baccino together with Brother Belmonte remained in Buenos Aires, while the rest of the group, led by Father Fagnano, left for San Nicolás. The Archbishop made his case for this decision with Don Bosco by letter of December 18, 1875.

[The Salesians] will certainly do a great deal of good not only at San Nicolás, but also here in the capital. They really should establish a House here not only because they can communicate with Your Reverence more easily from here, but also because they can do far greater good here than at San Nicolás. The Italian community in Buenos Aires numbers thirty thousand, but, regretfully, most of the Italian priests who come here are after money and nothing else. Therefore I think it very fortunate that your sons should take over the church [of Our Lady of Mercy] that this worthy confraternity has offered to them. Theirs will be an invaluable service not only to the Italian community, but to all the people of our diocese as well.<sup>59</sup>

*Our Lady of Mercy (Mater Misericordiae)—Confraternity and Church*

The Archbishop assigned Frs. Cagliero and Baccino and Brother Belmonte to Our Lady of Mercy church, where the confraternity was based, and where they established a residence.<sup>60</sup>

The history of the Salesian apostolate on behalf of the Italian community in Buenos Aires is tied to the confraternity and church of Our Lady of Mercy.

This confraternity had been founded in 1855 around the image of Our Lady of Mercy of Savona that a group of immigrants had brought with them. Originally based at the church of St. Dominic, the confraternity was canonically erected in 1867.

A committee had built the church (a large chapel) in 1870 with funds contributed by Italian immigrants. Known simply as the “Italian Church,” it was dedicated in 1871, upon which the Archbishop made it the headquarters of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy, transferring it from St. Dominic’s. The “Italian Church” was then dedicated to, and named for, Our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*).

<sup>59</sup> EBM XII, 77.

<sup>60</sup> EBM XII, 76f.





4 – The first Salesian residence built at La Boca  
by the church of St. John Evangelist

Dissension arose within the confraternity for political and other reasons almost immediately, calling for action by the Archbishop. Of the two chaplains one was dismissed, and the other one after serving for a while left the area. In 1875 the church still had no resident priest. It was under these circumstances that the Archbishop provisionally appointed Fr. Cagliero chaplain of the church, and Fr. Baccino spiritual director of the confraternity. Fr. Baccino in March 1876 negotiated an agreement with chancery (which Don Bosco reviewed) to make these appointments permanent.<sup>61</sup>

The Salesians lost no time, A couple of days after disembarking Fr. Cagliero began his ministry by preaching the Christmas novena in Our Lady of Mercy Church with a large crowd in attendance. With help from Father Baccino and Brother Belmonte he made that first religious celebration of Christmas one to remember.

Within a few months, in 1876, an oratory for boys was begun, and (with

<sup>61</sup> Legal deficiencies in the contract for these appointments as years went by left the Salesian ownership open to contestation. In 1939 the Salesians' right both to the church and to the confraternity received official confirmation.

the help of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul) a small vocational school capable of housing some fifty orphans and very poor lads was established in premises not far from Our Lady of Mercy.<sup>62</sup>

However, it must not be imagined that the whole Italian colony was won over in one day. The anticlerical group (Freemasons and old Mazzinian republicans) striving for control of the Italian community had infiltrated even the confraternity of our Lady of Mercy. This called for immediate drastic action by Fr. Cagliari. Working hand in hand with Fr. Baccino, Fr. Cagliari took steps to “purge” the confraternity of undesirables (some 500 of them!). But it was Fr. Baccino that in less than two years (he died in June 1877) succeeded to turn things around by his priestly zeal and to restore the confraternity to its intended religious purpose.

### *San Nicolás de los Arroyos: School and Chapel*

The seven Salesians assigned to San Nicolás de los Arroyos, headed by Fr. Fagnano, took leave of their confreres on December 21 (1875) escorted by Father Ceccarelli and Mr. Benítez, and were warmly received at San Nicolás, especially by a group of patriarchal Italian families engaged in farming and herding. These families are gratefully remembered for the help they gave the Salesians and for the priestly and religious vocations that eventually blossomed among them.

But when the Salesians first arrived at San Nicolás, they were unpleasantly surprised to find that the school they had been promised consisted of nothing but three or four unfurnished rooms in a one-story building. The little church, however, build and furnished by Mr. Benítez, was in fairly good condition and well attended by local Italian immigrants both on Sundays and on weekdays. Father Fagnano enlisted the settlers’ help and that of Father Ceccarelli to provide the bare necessities of life for the Salesians, while they got the school ready for its opening.

The school had no boarding facilities, though the people had been promised a boarding school for their children; so they offered to help financially. Father Fagnano, a good administrator with some knowledge of construction, immediately began building a row of porticoes matching the height of the existing structure. Over the whole he erected a large dormitory. Unfortunately, weak foundations and heavy rains caused the new addition to collapse.

<sup>62</sup> EBM XII, 190.



But Father Fagnano did not lose heart, and he had the building ready for the school year 1877-78. Salesian youth activities—games, music, excursions, etc.—contributed to making the school a success. But if it hadn't been for steady help from Mr. Benítez, Father Ceccarelli and the group of cooperators that quickly formed around the Salesians, the undertaking would have failed. There was absolutely no gift of land, buildings, flock of sheep and other provisions that the committee had promised. The thirty thousand square meters of land (about seven and a half acres) belonged to the government, which had only granted its use. Moreover when the committee later broke up, its alleged rights over the school passed to hostile municipal authorities.



5 – Procession celebrating first Communion day (December 18, 1900)  
at St. John Evangelist parish church, La Boca (Buenos Aires)

### *La Boca and the Parish of St. John the Evangelist*

After these difficult, but nonetheless “auspicious,” beginnings it seemed natural to Fr. Cagliero to want to conquer the Italian stronghold of *La Boca*.

The Archbishop had warned him not to venture into a place where priests were not welcome and where up to that time it had not yet been possible to conduct church services. But Fr. Cagliero did go to *La Boca*—the first time scattering medals far and wide, and on subsequent visits stopping to talk to youngsters and promising to set up a playground. The Archbishop then entrusted that “parish” (St. John the Evangelist) to the Salesians, which Fr. Cagliero gratefully accepted in Don Bosco’s name (mid-1877).<sup>63</sup>

The Salesians were thus able to enter the Italian community and make their mark. Don Bosco had committed some of his best people to the project (which he regarded as a test for the Society) to the point of even weakening the leadership at the center. Here was a group of young, zealous, dynamic, and above all courageous priests and brothers (and a little later, sisters), ready for anything. Their education and intellectual preparation, generally speaking, ranked with the highest in the community and could stand up to any move by the opposition. Almost at once they won the sympathy of the community by their activity on behalf of young people. Their all-out engagement signaled the beginning of the end of radicalism and anticlericalism in the Italian community. The engagement between the secular *élite* and the Salesians took place on a variety of fronts: associations (especially for mutual aid), the press, and particularly education.

In spite of daunting challenges that the two small bands of Salesians had to face, Don Bosco kept receiving good news from Argentina—from Msgr. Espinosa regarding the Salesians’ work in Buenos Aires, and from Father Ceccarelli praising the Salesians in San Nicolás to the skies. But Don Bosco realized that additional forces were needed, and in response to Father Cagliero’s urgent requests he was already assembling the personnel for a second expedition.

### *Second “Missionary” Expedition (November 1876)*

Don Bosco, in response to Fr. Cagliero’s reports and urgent requests for additional personnel, set about preparing a second expedition for November (1876). It was composed of twenty-three Salesians: 6 priests, 7 seminarians and 10 lay Salesians. After a moving ceremony in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, on November 7, 1876 they departed for Rome with Don Bosco to receive the Holy Father’s blessing.

<sup>63</sup> EBM XII, 190-192.

Then those bound for Buenos Aires boarded ship at Genoa under Father Francis Bodrato.<sup>64</sup>

Those bound for Uruguay, led by Father Louis Lasagna, left from Bordeaux, France.<sup>65</sup>

Father Cagliero was in the process of preparing a new foundation at Villa Colón, near Montevideo (Uruguay) after receiving an offer from the Apostolic Delegate (the only bishop in Uruguay at the time) of the church of St. Rose of Lima and of a large building with land attached—all through the munificence of a certain Mr. Fynn. The contract called for the Salesians to staff the public church and to establish a school at secondary level. Father Lasagna, appointed director, guided the restoration of the long-neglected church and building and the clearing of the grounds. Just one month after their arrival both church and school were in operation, including primary and secondary school and a college preparatory program, with a boarding facility for some one hundred boys. The people took to the Salesians at once and without any

<sup>64</sup> Francis Bodrato (1823-1880) was born at Mornese and became schoolteacher there. Widowed with two sons, he met Don Bosco in 1864, entered the Oratory and made his perpetual profession in 1865 at the age of 41. He worked as a teacher and administrator, and in 1875 Don Bosco appointed him Prefect General. But in 1876 he was chosen to lead the Buenos Aires contingent of the second missionary expedition. In Buenos Aires he served as pastor in the hostile Boca district that Father Cagliero has just penetrated, and in 1877, when Father Cagliero left Buenos Aires to attend the first General Chapter, Don Bosco appointed Father Bodrato administrator of the Salesian works. He founded a school of arts and trades that was soon transferred to Pius IX School at San Carlos de Almagro (Buenos Aires). In 1878 he was made Provincial of the newly created "American Province," But as a bloody civil war raged in the city, Father Bodrato, unable to get the needed care for a chronic illness, died on August 4, 1880 amid much suffering.

<sup>65</sup> The Uruguay contingent sailed from Bordeaux because the Uruguayan authorities had contracted for the missionaries' passage with a steamship company that was based at Bordeaux. Louis Lasagna (1850-1895), an orphan at 9 years of age, was taken to the Oratory by Don Bosco. There he went through school, became a Salesian in 1866 and was ordained in 1873. In 1876 he was chosen by Don Bosco to lead the Uruguayan contingent of the second missionary expedition. First director of the school of Villa Colon and subsequently provincial, he was deeply involved and influential in education and social action as well as in the care of immigrants. He promoted agriculture, viticulture and the Catholic press. In 1881 he founded the Meteorological Observatory of Villa Colon. He worked toward the founding of the Catholic University in Montevideo and a higher school of agriculture. In 1893 Leo XIII named him bishop for the mission among the natives of the Amazon basin. In this capacity he developed the Mato Grosso mission. As he was planning a mission in Northern Brazil, he died tragically in 1895 in a train collision at Juiz de Fora together with his secretary and two Sisters (FMA).

reservation. But the attacks of the anticlerical forces that controlled the press were vicious and prolonged. They did not prevail, however, and the school, named after Pius IX, flourished.

The Buenos Aires-bound contingent of the second expedition divided into two groups, for San Nicolás and Buenos Aires respectively.

The school in San Nicolás, after overcoming initial difficulties, under Father Fagnano was making steady progress, and with the input of new forces it developed into a great and complex Salesian work.

The Salesian community of Buenos Aires suffered two serious losses in quick succession. Father John Baccino, the mainstay of the apostolate at the church of Our Lady of Mercy, died quite suddenly in June 1877 of an unspecified illness. Father Cagliero, the charismatic guide of the whole undertaking, was recalled to Turin in the fall of 1877 for the first General Chapter, after which he continued to serve as Spiritual Director of the Congregation. (He held this post until his ordination as bishop in December 1884, following his appointment as Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia.) In Father Cagliero's absence Father Bodrato took over the direction of the Salesian work in the La Plata area, and in 1878 Don Bosco appointed him provincial of the newly created Argentine Province.

### *Third Missionary Expedition (November 1877)*

On the basis of Father Cagliero's reports Don Bosco prepared a third "missionary" expedition for November 1877. The group was composed of 18 Salesians: 4 priests, 8 seminarians and 6 brothers. Six Salesian Sisters also joined the expedition, which was led by Father James Costamagna, up to that point in time local director of the Salesian sisters at Mornese.<sup>66</sup> Fr. Cagliero and Mother Mazzarello accompanied the group to Rome. After receiving the Holy Father's blessing the missionaries boarded ship at different ports: some at Lisbon, others at Le Havre, and the largest group, including the Sisters, at Genoa with Father Costamagna. Mother Mazzarello, after an emotional good-bye, saw her daughters off in person.

Don Bosco was criticized for choosing Salesians and Salesians Sisters that were far too young for the mission. Fathers Dominic Milanesio was 34; James Costamagna 31; Joseph Vespignani 27; Bartholomew Panaro 26; Seminarian

<sup>66</sup> James Costamagna (1846-1921) professed as a Salesian in 1867, was ordained a priest in 1868, and a bishop in 1895 as Vicar Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza (Ecuador). He died in Bernal (Argentina) in 1921.

Joseph Gamba 17; Peter Rota 16. Of the six Sisters, Angela Cassulo was 25; Teresa Gedda 24; Angela Vallese 23; Teresa Mazzarello Baroni 18; Angela Negrís 18, Giovanna Borgna 17. All of these (and most of the others) left outstanding records behind them.

The “missionaries” of the third expedition were divided as follows. Five Salesians were assigned to works in Buenos Aires, and four to the work in San Nicolás. The remaining eight, who had debarked at Montevideo, were assigned to the school in Villa Colón. The six Sisters also remained at Villa Colón where they established their first House in the new world.

*Almagro (Buenos Aires): Church of San Carlos and Pius IX Institute*

As mentioned above, Father Cagliero, and Father Baccino with Brother Belmonte had established a small school in rented premises, not far from the church of Our Lady of Mercy, their first foothold in Buenos Aires. By 1878, with the influx of new Salesians, the boarders had increased to about 100 in number, apprentices in 4 workshops. But the place was small and uncomfortable. In 1878 the Salesians with help from the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul and from private charity began construction of a larger facility. This was located in a suburb of Buenos Aires called Almagro, near a beautiful church dedicated to St. Charles (San Carlos de Almagro), which the Archbishop entrusted to the Salesians. As soon as one section of the building became available in August 1878, the old school and workshops were transferred to Almagro. To the tailors', shoemakers', carpenters' and bookbinders' workshops a print shop was added. The institute was named *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* and dedicated to Pius IX (who had died in February 1878).

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Archbishop and by the Minister of Public Instruction and was given good coverage even in the anticlerical press. In October, the school year began with an enrollment of 115 (60 students and 55 apprentices). Under Father Costamagna and Father Vespignani, with the input of new forces of Salesians and Salesian Sisters in the fourth expedition of December 1878, the Institute was well on the way to becoming the “the Valdocco of Argentina.” It was chosen as the provincial's residence and as the Novitiate of the province.

*Fourth Expedition of Salesians and Salesian Sisters (December 8, 1878)*

Don Bosco was now determined to establish the Salesian works in the

Plata Area (Argentina and Uruguay) on a firm basis, and Father Cagliero's reports emphasized this need. Nor had he lost sight of the "mission among the savages." He knew that their time would come, but he also realized that only by strengthening the base in Buenos Aires would that become reality.

The fourth expedition comprised 11 Salesians and 10 Salesian Sisters. Two of Sisters got off at Montevideo for Villa Colón (Uruguay). The other 8 Sisters went on to Buenos Aires and established a residence in Almagro (the suburb of Buenos Aires mentioned above), where the Salesians were in the process of developing an important work. Most of the Salesians of this expedition were also assigned to Almagro. There the Sisters made a start of what was to become a kind of "Mother House" for lower South America.

#### *Further Expansion of the Work for Italian Immigrants*

Fr. Cagliero had been planning a systematic evangelization of all the Italians in the area around Buenos Aires. To this end, with the help of members of the Confraternity, a census was taken of the Italian population, to ascertain conditions and needs. The results were at times disheartening: illiteracy, ignorance, minimal religious practice due to isolation, etc. A series of missions among the people of the countryside was organized and conducted periodically with good results, even when Father Cagliero left the scene in 1877. The added bonus resulting from visiting these outlying areas was the meeting of Pampas natives in various encampments, and the chance to assess possibilities for the mission proper.

Parish missions, religious instruction, and various Catholic life activities took place at the three Salesian churches in Buenos Aires (Our Lady of Mercy, St. John the Evangelist and St. Charles) as well as at six non-Salesian churches with ethnically mixed membership.

In a little more than a dozen years (by the time of Don Bosco's death in 1888) the Italian communities of Buenos Aires, including *La Boca*, were brought back to Catholic practice.

### **3. Closing Comment**

The apostolate on behalf of the Italian immigrants soon bore fruit in several ways. First, the conversions and religious renewal achieved appeared short of miraculous. Secondly, a strong local group of cooperators was



gradually formed that made the continuance of the Salesian work possible. Thirdly, vocations to the Salesian Society and to Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from among the local people held the promise of a bright future.

## Appendix

### **Don Bosco's Keepsakes to the First Missionaries—Six Priests and Four Brothers Departing for Buenos Aires**

DB's autograph: *ASCB32000* (A2270304), *FDBM* 747 C2-5; J. Borrego, "Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco a los primeros misioneros," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 3 (1984) 167-208; Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 547-548; *Salesian Constitutions* (1984), 265-266; *EBM* XI, 364-365; Aubry-Caselli, *Spiritual Writings*, 288-290.

At the close of the departure ceremony held in the Church of Mary Help of Christians on November 11, 1875, each of the departing missionaries received from Don Bosco a small leaflet with twenty keepsakes or souvenirs.

1. Seek souls and not money, honors, or dignities.
2. Be kind and most courteous toward all, but shun conversations and familiarity with persons of the other sex or with persons of questionable conduct.
3. Do not go visiting except for motives of charity or necessity.
4. Never accept invitations to dinner except for very serious reasons. In these cases arrange to go with another confrere.
5. Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged, and the poor, and you will gain the blessing of God and the goodwill of people.
6. Show respect toward all in authority, whether civic, religious, municipal, or state.
7. On meeting a person in authority, take care to greet him with respect.
8. Do the same toward priests and religious.
9. Shun idleness and disputes. Practice great moderation in eating and drinking and sleeping.
10. Love, reverence and respect other religious orders, and always speak well of them. This is the way of winning the esteem of all and of promoting the good of the Congregation.
11. Take care of your health. Work, but only as much as your strength allows.
12. Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food, and dwelling, and you will be rich in the sight of God and will conquer people's hearts.

13. Love one another, advise one another, correct one another, and never be carried away by envy or rancor. Rather, let the good of one be the good of all, and let the pains and sufferings of one be regarded as the pains and sufferings of all, and let each one strive to remove or at least to mitigate them.

14. Observe your rules and never neglect the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death.

15. Every morning commend to God the occupations of the day, especially confessions, classes, catechism, and sermons.

16. Constantly recommend devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

17. Recommend to the boys frequent confession and Communion.

18. In order to foster vocations to the priesthood, you should recommend: (1) Love of chastity; (2) horror of the opposite vice; (3) avoidance of bad companions; (4) frequent Communion; (5) and treat the boys with special charity, affability, and kindness.

19. Hear both sides before judging on reports and matters in dispute.

20. In your labors and sufferings do not forget that a great reward is prepared for us in Heaven. Amen.



## Chapter 2

# SALESIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA II DON BOSCO'S VOCATION, INCREASING AWARENESS AND DECISION FOR THE MISSIONS

### Summary

- I. Don Bosco's missionary vocation and decision to commit the Salesian Society to missionary activity
  1. Missions in the nineteenth century and Don Bosco's missionary vocation and growing missionary awareness in context
  2. Don Bosco's mission dream of 1871/72
- II. Ethnographic remarks on the native populations of Southern Argentina and Missionary activity in Patagonia prior to the Salesian missions
- III. Don Bosco's missionary strategy
  1. Evangelization through native vocations—the role of young people
  2. The originality of Don Bosco's patagonian missionary enterprise (Jesús Borrego)
  3. Women religious and missionary activity; involvement of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

The preceding Chapter told the story of Don Bosco decision for South America and of the establishment of the Salesian work in Argentina and Uruguay (both SDB and FMA), mostly on behalf of Italian immigrants. In Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay), as later in Niterói (Brazil) and Concepción (Chile), the Salesian work was no different than that in Turin or Genoa. It was through parishes and schools on behalf of the poor, mostly immigrants.

The present chapter tells the story of the beginning of the Salesian missions proper, that is, among the native tribes of Amerindians. It describes Don Bosco's growing commitment to the idea of the "missions" and, in the context of the establishment of the Salesians work, the beginning of the Salesian missions (1880).

## I. Don Bosco's Missionary Vocation and Decision for the Missions in the 'Seventies and First Missionary Dream (1871 or 1872)

Agostino Favale, "Le missioni cattoliche nei primordi della Congregazione Salesiana," in *Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975. Studi in occasione del Centenario*, a cura di P. Scotti (Roma: LAS, 1977), 13-48; A. Martín G., *Origen de las misiones salesianas. La Evangelización de las gentes según el pensamiento de San Juan Bosco. Estudios históricos con aportación de documentos inéditos* (Guatemala: Instituto Teológico Salesiano; Barcelona-Sarriá: Escuela Gráfica Salesiana, 1978), esp. 47-81.

### 1. Historical Context in Church and Society

In 1876 Don Bosco related to Pope Pius IX a dream he recalled having had in 1871 or 1872, a dream that imaged a band of Salesian missionaries approaching a group of natives and winning them over. Dreams do not happen in a psychological or in a social vacuum. They are expressions of personal, cultural and social experience, and the actual dream occurrence is often stimulated by the person's concerns in a specific context.

This is true also of Don Bosco's dreams and of his missionary dreams in particular. These dreams, with the needs, wishes and possibilities they express, occurred within a context determined by situations in society and Church. And although Don Bosco's missionary awareness had a long prehistory, it climaxed at a point when developments in Church and society made participation in missionary activity by the Salesian Society "a vocation."

What follows is a description of the context in which Don Bosco's missionary awareness developed and matured. His missionary vocation had its roots in his Christian religious upbringing and it developed steadily and ever more deeply until it came to fruition at a time when the missionary spirit was experiencing a powerful resurgence in the Church.

#### *Don Bosco's Early Missionary Awareness*

As far back as 1844, as he was about to leave the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto ecclesiastico*) upon completing his course in moral and pastoral theology, Don Bosco was considering joining the Oblates of the Virgin Mary and going to the missions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Memoirs of the Oratory* make no mention of this "vocation crisis," but the *Biographical*

It was Father Cafasso, Don Bosco's spiritual director, who decided the issue and set his mind at rest.

The *Biographical Memoirs* in various places document Don Bosco's growing missionary awareness. As a young priest he read the "*Annals*" and the "*Edifying Letters*."<sup>2</sup> He would talk about sending missionaries to evangelize distant regions, singling out Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego for special attention, according to Lemoyne, as early as 1848. One of the Oratory boys, James Bellia, would bring copies of the *Annals* from home and would read to Don Bosco during the noonday meal. Once Don Bosco interjected: "Oh, if only I had many more of priests and seminarians! I would send them to preach the Gospel in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego! Do you know why in those places, my dear Bellia? Guess?" "Perhaps because that's where it's most needed," Bellia would venture. "Right! Those people are the most forsaken!"<sup>3</sup> In 1854 Don Bosco had a premonition of young John Cagliero's missionary vocation, when he saw a dove descend over the lad lying sick in bed, which he saw surrounded by a group of natives.<sup>4</sup>

Don Bosco kept in touch with people involved in missionary initiatives, and with religious congregations of both men and women that were engaged in missionary activity. The canonization of the first Japanese martyrs on June 8, 1862 by Pius IX and the beatification of another group of 205 on June 29, 1867, in connection with the celebration of the eighteenth centenary of St. Peter's martyrdom, served as occasions for promoting the missionary spirit at the Oratory.

*Memoirs* give it considerable space (*EBM* I, 246-247, 379-380; II, 152). The Congregation of the Oblates of Mary was founded by Father Pio Brunone Lanteri (1759-1830) in association with other priests. It received Church approval in 1825 and 1826. In 1834 the Oblates were established at the Church of the *Consolata* in Turin. Among other ministries, they undertook missions in Burma, where a Vicariate Apostolic was established in 1842. Don Bosco was acquainted with the Oblates, whose founder was one of the creators of the Pastoral Institute. It was natural that Don Bosco should have come under Oblate influence during his years at the Pastoral Institute (1841-1844).

<sup>2</sup> The *Annals* and the *Edifying Letters* were publications of the *Society for the Propagation of the Faith* and of the *Pontifical Association of Holy Childhood*, both founded in Lyons—the former by Pauline Jaricot (1799-1862) with Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson (1785-1844) in 1822; the latter by the same Forbin-Janson in 1842 (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* VII, 857-858; V, 1001-1003).

<sup>3</sup> *EBM* III, 257. For similar utterances, cf. *EBM* IV, 294 (for the 1850s) and *EBM* VI, 465 (for 1860).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *EBM* V, 68.

By this time, beyond his personal interest and commitment to the missionary cause, he had been considering committing the Salesian Society to mission work.

*Don Bosco's Missionary Awareness in the Context of the Resurgence of Missionary Activity in the Church of the Nineteenth Century*

Don Bosco's missionary awareness and concern should be understood in the context of a general resurgence of missionary interest and activity in the Church at the time. After the setback of the French revolution and as a reaction to it, Europe experienced a profound and widespread spiritual revival, favored also by Romantic ideals. Even as the liberal, anticlerical spirit was taking root especially among the growing middle class, the Church succeeded in reorganizing structures for the pastoral care of the faithful and reopening seminaries. Preaching and religious instruction, means of spiritual renewal (retreats) and the Catholic press revived the Christian spirit with its powerful missionary inspiration. It expressed itself in the learned as well as in the popular press, and in practical, grass-root support of missionary activity.

In this respect, one must recognize the contribution of religious orders and congregations both of men and of women, and of both active and contemplative life. This contribution took its inspiration from a missionary spirituality that may well be the characteristic spirituality of the nineteenth century, and consequently from a missionary awareness and fervor that bore practical fruit in the growing number of individuals swelling the ranks of the missionaries already in the field.

Such a revival within the Catholic Church would obviously not have been possible without the initiative having been taken at the highest level by the Popes of the post-Napoleonic and following periods. Within the nineteenth century, the most decisive steps were taken in the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). But the missionary movement had already made significant progress under Popes Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and Pius IX (1846-1878).<sup>5</sup>

Among other achievements, Gregory XVI acted firmly to bring about a transition from the old missionary structure of the *patronato* (*patroado*) to a new system of local churches and missions. He denounced slavery and actively promoted its abolition. He gave new mandates to the *Congregation for the*

<sup>5</sup> The following summary description of the Church's official initiatives is based (besides the works already cited) on the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, under entries of the Popes, countries, religious congregations, and founders concerned.

*Propagation of the Faith* for the governance of the missions, for the organization of local churches, for the recruiting of missionaries, and for establishing apposite seminaries.<sup>6</sup>

In a less systematic way, Pius IX continued his predecessor's programs, adding his unwavering support of all missionary initiatives. The official structuring of the Church in missionary countries in his pontificate bore enduring fruit. In non-Christian countries alone, this Pope created 33 Apostolic Vicariates, 15 Prefectures and 3 Delegations.<sup>7</sup>

### *Religious Communities and the Missions*

One of the most amazing manifestations of missionary resurgence in the Church during the nineteenth century was the new missionary orientation taken by religious orders and congregations, old and new. Established religious communities, such as the Priests of the Foreign Missions of Paris, The Priests of the Mission (Vincentians), the Society of Jesus newly reestablished, Mendicant Orders and Clerks Regular—these and others (some 55 in all) returned to, or undertook missionary work with renewed vigor.

However, during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, it was the new religious congregations that made all the difference. The following statistics, though probably incomplete, give some idea of the phenomenon. There appeared some 90 new congregations of men, of which about two-thirds were clerical and one-third lay, with the missionary apostolate either as their principal or secondary special purpose. At least four times as many new religious congregations of women of apostolic life, whether in association with congregations of men or independently, were founded in the same period. Among the congregations that would have most influenced Don Bosco's thinking and decisions concerning the missions, the following may be mentioned:

<sup>6</sup> Pope Gregory XVI's official statements are to be found in such documents as the encyclical *Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* (September 18, 1835), the brief *Commissi nobis* (August 4, 1835), the apostolic letter *In supremo apostolatus fastigio* (December 3, 1839) and the instruction to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith *Neminem profecto* (November 23, 1845).

<sup>7</sup> Pius IX also acted to reorganize the Church in non-Catholic countries (reckoned as missionary jurisdictions at the time). In the United States he erected 38 new dioceses and 11 ecclesiastical provinces. In Australia he established an ecclesiastical province and 9 dioceses. In 1850 he established the Catholic hierarchy in England, with one archbishop and 12 bishops.

The *Priests and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus)*, founded in 1792/1817 and 1797/1817 respectively by Pierre-Marie Joseph Coudrin (1768-1837) with the cooperation of Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie (1767-1837).

The *Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, founded in 1817/1826 by Charles Eugène Mazenod (1772-1861).

The *Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, founded by François Marie Paul Libermann (1802-1852) in 1839/40, joined in 1848 with the *Priests Missionaries of the Holy Spirit*.

The *Institute for the Foreign Missions* of Milan, founded in 1850 and joined in 1871 to the Pontifical Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul for the Foreign Missions, from which then sprang the *Pontifical Institute for the Foreign Missions* (PIME, 1926).

The *Society for the African Missions*, founded in 1856 by [Bp.] Melchior Marie Joseph de Marion-Brésillac (1813-1859).

The *Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scheut)*, founded in 1862 by Théophile Verbist (1823-1868).

The *Missionary Priests* and the *Missionary Sisters of Verona*, founded in 1867 by [Bp.] Daniele Comboni (1831-1881).

The *Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)* and the *Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters)* founded in 1868 and 1869 respectively by [Card.] Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie (1825-1892).

When one considers the formidable array of missionary-oriented congregations, one understands why Don Bosco decided to launch his own Society, which had not been founded for missions, into missionary work. Apart from being germane to Don Bosco's Salesian charism and a natural extension of his specific apostolate, to engage in foreign missions ministry for a nineteenth-century religious congregation was "the thing to do."

### *Determining Influences on Don Bosco*

The last-mentioned two religious groups were perhaps the most innovative of the new forces in the mission field (Africa); and their founders, Bishop Comboni and Cardinal Lavigerie, were indubitably the most eminent missionaries of the century.<sup>8</sup> They were also the ones that most directly inspired

<sup>8</sup> Daniele Comboni (1831-1881) studied languages, medicine and theology with the aim of working for the evangelization of Africa. Once ordained a priest, he became a missionary

Don Bosco's own missionary option, even though this was not to be for Africa.

On December 4, 1864, Father Daniele Comboni visited the Oratory to confer with Don Bosco on the missions. He had just been to Rome, where he had presented to the Pope a plan for the evangelization of Africa embodying the principle that Africa was to be evangelized by Africans. No doubt the conversation during Comboni's visit with Don Bosco must have been concerned with the plan, and the two must have exchanged views on missionary strategy. Don Bosco would later lay down a similar strategy for his missions—a strategy, however, in which young people would figure prominently. Father Comboni was asked to speak to the boys on the missions, and he did so with great success.<sup>9</sup> In letters of September 1869 and July 1870, Father Comboni laid before Don Bosco a bold scheme for establishing the Salesian work in Africa.<sup>10</sup> The second letter indicates that indeed they had discussed strategy. Their thinking agreed on many points, even though on a later occasion Don Bosco was critical of the Combonian missionary style.<sup>11</sup>

Charles Lavigerie was likewise well acquainted with Don Bosco and his work. In the years 1868-1870 he repeatedly asked Don Bosco for Salesian missionaries to help in North Africa and the Sudan where he was Apostolic Delegate—a request that Don Bosco could not at the time comply with. He also asked Don Bosco to accept some Algerian Khabili orphans—which Don Bosco was happy to do.<sup>12</sup> The Cardinal and Don Bosco met again in

on the White Nile (1857), and for this mission he founded the Missionary Fathers and Sisters of Verona (1867). Missions were established in Sudan, and a seminary for the training of native clergy, in Cairo, Egypt (1867). He was named Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa (1872), and later was appointed Vicar (1877). He pioneered new methods of evangelization, and wrote against slavery, actively working for its abolition. As a linguist, geographer and ethnologist, he did scientific work in the field of African languages and cultures. Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892), was named to the chair of Church History at the Sorbonne in 1857, and became auditor at the Roman Rota in 1861. In 1863 he was appointed bishop of Nancy, and in 1867 bishop of Algiers. After being appointed Apostolic Delegate of the Western Sahara and the Sudan in 1868, he founded his two missionary congregations for Africa. In 1882 he was named Cardinal Archbishop of Carthage. From this position he became a powerful force in implementing Pope Leo XIII's missionary directives, especially with respect to fostering the development of native peoples, with particular emphasis on the protection of the black population and the abolition of slavery.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *EBM* VII, 488.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *EBM* IX, 331-332 and 430-431.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *EBM* XII, 199-200.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *EBM* IX, 216, 347-348, 369, 452.



Paris in 1883. On that occasion, in a brief address, he referred to Don Bosco as the “St. Vincent de Paul of Italy.”<sup>13</sup> Card. Lavigerie visited the Oratory again in 1885, with another request for Salesian missionaries for Africa. But even this request could not be met.<sup>14</sup>



6 – Missionary bishop Daniel Comboni (1831-1881)

### *The Missionary Atmosphere Surrounding Vatican I*

In spite of the fact that Pius IX did not take any new bold steps in missionary strategy, but faithfully continued his predecessor's policies, the mis-

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *IBM* XVI, 252-254; *EBM* XVI, 157-159.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *IBM* XVII, 472-473; *EBM* XVII, 434-435.

sionary movement had gained great momentum by the time of the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). The Council therefore was bound to address this important question. During its preparation, the participation by Vicars Apostolic was debated, and finally allowed, if only because otherwise Africa, Asia and Oceania would have been without representation. But beyond such juridical matters, the missionary vocation of the Church and its theological basis called for a re-examination of missionary activity. "Petitions" (proposals) by missionary bishops were submitted. Bishop Comboni, in line with his plan for evangelization, submitted a proposal for the defense and promotion of black peoples in his mission area, which was circulated in June 1870 and was signed by 70 Council fathers. It was after this action, that he wrote the second of the above-mentioned letters to Don Bosco.

True, the *Schema constitutionis super Missionibus Apostolicis* that resulted, failed in many ways to address urgent new theological and strategic questions concerning the missions.<sup>15</sup> But the many "missionary" bishops that attended (some 180 of them), by their very presence, did much to advance the missionary cause. They reinforced missionary awareness in both clergy and laity; they mobilized spiritual and financial support; they recruited personnel (particularly from religious congregations).

During the first phases of the Council and after its adjournment, Don Bosco had occasion to meet a number of missionary bishops and to hear their requests. At the time of his sojourn in Rome between January 24 and February 22, during which he actively campaigned for papal infallibility, Don Bosco spoke to some bishops who had heard the Salesian Society praised on the Council floor. After the Council, a few bishops visited the Oratory (two from China) to ask for Salesian missionaries.<sup>16</sup> Requests began pouring in from various parts of the world.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For a brief yet detailed presentation of how Vatican I addressed the missionary question, and for a discussion of the Schema and its contents, see A. Favale, *Le missioni cattoliche*, 29-44 (cited above). The Schema never came up for discussion because of the Council's untimely adjournment due to the occupation of Rome by the Italian army. Read today, it appears retrograde in regard to both mission theory and strategy, especially in its negative attitude toward the formation of native clergy.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. EBMIX, 432-433. It was at that time that Bishop Joseph Alemany of San Francisco requested Salesians to staff St. Vincent's Orphanage in San Rafael, CA. This he did in a letter from Rome dated July 20, 1870, and a little later on his visiting Turin. Don Bosco accepted, but subsequent negotiations bore no practical results. For details, cf. M. Ribotta, "The Road Not Taken," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 1:2 (1990) 45-67, esp. 54-60.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. P. Stella, *DB: L&W* (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1985), 180-181.

Don Bosco's First Missionary Dream (1871 or 1872) had its context in all these prior experiences. But contacts with missionaries and requests by missionary bishops during and after Vatican I provided the immediate stimulus.

## 2. The (First) Missionary Dream of 1871/72

### *Sources and Reports*

According to Don Bosco's own statement as reported in the sources, this dream (commonly called, "after the fact," *Dream of the Patagonian Missions*) took place in 1871 or 1872. We are also told that he tried to identify the people and the land he had seen in the dream, but was unable to do so. He interpreted the dream to refer to the Patagonian natives only after he had received the offer from Argentina (1874). In February-March 1875 Don Bosco was in Rome and was received by Pius IX. On that occasion he may have discussed the Argentine mission with the Pope (though there is no record that he did so); in any case he did not speak of his dream.<sup>18</sup>

He related the dream for the first time to Pius IX the following year, in March 1876, and subsequently to some Salesians. This was at least four years after it had occurred, and a few months after the first missionaries had left for Argentina.

The dream narrative comes to us primarily from a first-hand report of Fr. Giulio Barberis, who introduces his report as follows.

Here is the dream on account of which Don Bosco was later to decide to give some thought to the missions of Patagonia. He first related it to the Pope on the recent trip he took to Rome (*before July 31, 1876*), and subsequently [he related it] to some of us. On July 30, [he told it] to Father Bodrato.<sup>19</sup> I too heard it from the latter on the evening of the same day at Lanzo, where for some twenty days I had been vacationing with half of the clerical novices' class. Three days later Don Bosco related it to me back in Turin, as we paced up and down in the library. I took care not to mention that I had already heard it, because Don Bosco usually

<sup>18</sup> No mention of missions or dream occurs in *EBM* XI, 98-128.

<sup>19</sup> Francis Bodrato (1823-1880), a school teacher at Mornese, met Don Bosco in 1864 and became a Salesian in 1865. He would lead the second band of 22 missionaries to Buenos Aires in November 1876, and would be appointed head of the Salesian work there in 1877. He died soon after in 1880 (see Ch. 1, Note 64 above).

omits one detail or another [in a first narration]; and also because, heard from his own lips, it would make a stronger impression on me. He told us we were the first to hear it.<sup>20</sup>

Here is a brief description of the reports and of the tradition of the text of the dream narrative: Barberis' and Lemoyne's reports, and their edition in *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs*. (The texts are given in a comparative table below.)

### *Barberis' Report*

The Barberis Report is the primary source and was so regarded by Lemoyne. In *ASC* it is in Lemoyne's collection of dream narratives. The manuscript is neither in Barberis' nor in Lemoyne's hand, but appears to be a calligraphic copy made from Barberis' original draft and placed by Lemoyne in his own file. Lemoyne began to do editorial work on this manuscript. He struck through the original date and the reference to Barberis, but left the original title. He made some corrections in the text (struck through) and introduced some marginal additions, opposite the first and second paragraph only. Thereafter, Lemoyne merely inserted editor's slashes (/ /) at places where he planned to do further editorial work.<sup>21</sup>

### *Lemoyne's Report*

Lemoyne also claims (in *Documenti*) to have drafted a first-hand report from a separate narration made to him by Don Bosco on some unspecified occasion. The *Lemoyne Report* is in Lemoyne's own hand. The only small marginal addition (also in Lemoyne's hand) is near the beginning. Editor's slashes at various points in the text indicate corresponding places in the *Barberis Report* where editorial work would be done to produce the unified text for *Docu-*

<sup>20</sup> Father Barberis was alone with Don Bosco. But Don Bosco's reported statement may refer also to Father Bodrato, (who had been the first to hear the dream) and perhaps Father Lemoyne (who in *Documenti* claims to have heard the dream from Don Bosco).

<sup>21</sup> The *Barberis Report* is in *ASC* A017: Sogni, Lemoyne, "31 Luglio 1876, Sogno," *FDBM* 1314 D1-4. Barberis' autograph could not be traced; it is not where one would expect to find it, namely, in *ASC* A000: Cronachette, Barberis, Quaderno 8, where the pages are missing, though the dream is listed in the Table of Contents of that notebook (cf. *FDBM* 843 E9 and 844 A3 and 5).

*menti*.<sup>22</sup> Unlike Barberis's text, Lemoyne's has no introduction; neither does it claim to be a first-hand report. It is styled in the third person.<sup>23</sup>

### *Text in Documenti and Biographical Memoirs*

Finally, Lemoyne, following his accustomed method, edited the two reports into one narrative, with adjustments, in *Documenti*. And this is the text that Father Angelo Amadei transcribed, with some secondary editing, in the *Biographical Memoirs*.<sup>24</sup>

### *Text of the Dream Narratives*

*Notes:* (1) Marginal notes by Lemoyne are inserted into the text in *italics*. Editor Lemoyne's slashes (/ /) inserted at various points signify places where editorial work would be done. Words that are struck through in the Barberis Report are part of Lemoyne's editorial work.

(2) Where the source reads "*selvaggi*," I translate "savages;" where it reads "*indigeni*," I translate "natives;" where it reads "*barbari*," I translate "barbarians." These terms should be understood in the sense given to them in the Romantic literature, especially in the missionary journals of the day.

<sup>22</sup> The *Lemoyne Report* is in ASC A017: Sogni, Lemoyne, "1874? Le missioni: sogno," FDBM 1314 A8-11.

<sup>23</sup> It is only in *Documenti* that Lemoyne claims to have heard the dream, too, and to have written a first-hand report. Toward the end of Barberis' introduction (which he transcribes in *Documenti*), he inserts the words: "Father Lemoyne was also made privy to this secret; he and Father Barberis drafted separate reports of this dream." He concludes by adapting Barberis' closing words: "Don Bosco said that we were the first to be told of this *sort-of-vision*" (*Documenti* XIV, 140; FDBM 1024 B8).

<sup>24</sup> *Documenti* XIV (c. 28), 140-143 is in ASC A063: Cronachette, Lemoyne, FDBM 1024 B8-11. A. Amadei in IBM X, 54-55 (dream text) and 1267-1270 (Don Bosco's attempts to identify the people and the region seen in the dream), corresponding to EBM X, 46-48 and 543-548.

Barberis Report	Lemoyne Report	Lemoyne's <i>Documenti</i>
<p>July 31, 1876  Don Bosco's Dream of the Missions in Patagonia  Report by Father Julius Barberis  [Barberis' Introduction]  Here is the dream on account of which Don Bosco was later to decide to give some thought to the missions of Patagonia. He first related it to the Pope on the last trip he took to Rome // (<i>before July 31, 1876</i>). Subsequently [he related it] to some of us. On July 30, [he told it] to Father Bodrato. From him I heard it too on the evening of the same day at Lanzo, where for some twenty days I had been vacationing with half of the clerical novices' class. Three days later, Don Bosco related it to me back in Turin, as we paced up and down in the library. I took care not to mention that I had already heard it, because Don Bosco usually omits one detail or another [in a first narration]; and also because, heard from his own lips, it would make a stronger impression on me. He told us we were the first to hear it.</p>	<p>1874? The missions: a dream  Don Bosco dreamt—</p>	<p>Chapter XVIII  Don Bosco's Dream on the Missions of Patagonia  [Reporter's Introduction]  Here is the dream on account of which Don Bosco decided for the Missions of Patagonia. He first related it to the Pope on a trip he made to Rome (in 1876). Subsequently [he related it] to some of his priests. On July 30, 1876, [he told it] to Father Bodrato. From him Father Julius Barberis heard it the evening of the same day at Lanzo, where for some twenty days he had been vacationing with half of the clerical novices' class. Three days later, back in Turin, Father Barberis heard the same dream from Don Bosco's own lips, as they paced up and down in the library. Father Barberis took care not to mention that he had already heard it, because some times Don Bosco adds details omitted in earlier narrations. Father Lemoyne, too, was made privy to this secret; and he and Father Barberis drafted separate reports of this dream. Don Bosco said that we were the first to be told of this "sort-of-vision." We report his words almost to the letter.</p>
<p>[Dream Setting]  I seemed to find myself in a region, wild and completely unknown [to me]. // It was an immense, totally uncultivated plain on which neither</p>	<p>[Dream Setting]  He seemed to be standing in an immense plain on which neither hills nor mountains could be seen. It was uncultivated. Throngs of men</p>	<p>[Dream Setting]  I seemed to find myself in a region, wild and completely unknown [to me]. It was an immense, totally uncultivated plain on which neither hills</p>

hills nor mountains could be seen. At its farthest boundary, beyond the ken of human eye, [the plain] was wholly encircled by jagged mountains that formed a crown on either side of it. On this plain I saw ~~two-bands~~ throngs of men // roaming about. They were nearly naked, of extraordinary height and build, fierce-looking, with shaggy, // long hair, bronzed and dark of complexion, and ~~clothed with~~ their only garments being long cloaks draping down from their shoulders and made of animal hides. For weapons they carried a kind of long spear and a sling. //

[Scene I]

Just then a great number of individuals came into view whose way of acting showed them to be missionaries belonging to various [religious] orders. They approached [the natives] in order to preach the faith of J. C. [to them]. But [the natives] with diabolical fury and with hellish glee slaughtered them all, hacking their flesh to pieces, and impaling it on their long,

wandered about [that plain]. They were nearly naked; their hair was long, and long cloaks made of animal hides hung from their shoulders. They were armed with lances. //

These widely scattered groups of men presented various scenes to the onlooker: *some were hunting wild beasts*; some [others] were walking about with bleeding chunks of meat impaled on the point of their lances; others were fighting among themselves; [still] others were engaged in combat against soldiers who were dressed in the European manner; the ground was littered with corpses.

[Scene I]

Don Bosco shuddered at the sight—when suddenly some missionaries appeared at the far end of the plain. // He looked intently at them, but did not recognize anyone. They walked over to the savages; but no sooner had those barbarians caught sight of them that they pounced on them and killed them by cruelly tearing them to pieces. Then the fighting re-

nor mountains could be seen. At its farthest boundary, however, jagged mountains surrounded it completely, forming a crown on either side. Roaming about on this plain I saw throngs of men. They were nearly naked, of extraordinary height and build, fierce-looking, with shaggy long hair, bronzed and dark of complexion, their only garments being long cloaks made of animal hides and draping down from their shoulders. For weapons they carried a kind of long lance and the sling (bolos). These widely scattered throngs of men presented various scenes to the spectator. Some were running about hunting wild beasts, while others were walking around with bleeding chunks of meat stuck on the point of their lances. Some were fighting among themselves on one side, while on the other side others were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with soldiers who were dressed in the European manner; the ground was littered with corpses.

[Scene I]

I shuddered at the sight—when, at the far end of the plain, numerous persons came into view whose dress and way of acting showed them to be missionaries belonging to various [religious] orders. They were approaching those barbarians in order to preach the religion of Jesus Christ [to them]. I looked intently at them, but did not recognize anyone. They



pointed spears. From time to time bloody fighting would break out among them; and between them and neighboring peoples. //

[Scene II]

After observing these horrible slaughters for some time, I asked myself, "How can one convert such brutal people?" At that moment I saw a small group of missionaries, different from the former, advancing with cheerful mien toward them, with a band of youngsters marching in front. I trembled at the mere thought that they were going to get killed. I walked up // to them; I did not recognize any of them, but I could tell that they were Salesian missionaries, our very own. "How can this be?" [I asked myself.] I did not want them to advance any farther, and was about to stop them and force them back, when I realized that their arrival was causing widespread joy among that throng of barbarians. They lowered their weapons, ceased their savage behavior, and received our missionaries most courteously.

sumed as before. //

[Scene II]

Just then other missionaries appeared in the far distance. Don Bosco looked at them closely and recognized them. They were priests and seminarians of our Congregation. Those in front were known to him; but many others, obviously Salesians, who followed were wholly unknown to Don Bosco. They advanced toward those hordes of savages. Don Bosco was frightened. He wanted to stop them. He feared that at any moment they would meet with the same fate as the former missionaries. // Praying the Rosary of Mary Most Holy in a loud voice, the Salesians advanced through the crowd of savages. The savages, meanwhile, had gathered around from all directions, making room for the missionaries as they passed through. //

walked up to the savages; but no sooner had the barbarians caught sight of them that they pounced on them with diabolical fury and with hellish glee, and killed them all. They slaughtered them ferociously, hacking them to pieces and spearing up chunks of flesh with their long, pointed spears. Then at intervals they would resume fighting among themselves and with neighboring peoples.

[Scene II]

After observing these horrible slaughters for some time, I asked myself, "How can one convert such brutal people?" At that moment in the distance I saw a small group of missionaries, different from the former, advancing with cheerful mien toward the savages, preceded by a band of youngsters. I shuddered, as I thought, "They are going to get killed." I walked up to them. They were seminarians and priests. I looked at them intently and recognized them as our Salesians. I recognized those that walked in front; and although I did not recognize the many who followed, but I realized that they, too, were Salesian missionaries, our very own. "How can this be?" I asked myself. I did not want them to advance any farther, and was about to stop them. I feared that at any moment they would meet with the same fate as the former missionaries. I intended to force them back, when I realized that their arrival was caus-

[Scene III]

In utter amazement I mused: "Let's see how things will turn out." I then saw that [the natives] were being taught by our missionaries, and they were paying willing attention and were learning. [The missionaries] were admonishing them, and they were putting their admonitions into practice. // I watched them for a while, and then I realized that they were reciting the rosary, missionaries and savages, peaceably together. //

[Conclusion of Dream Narrative]

After a while one of the missionaries intoned the [hymn], "*Praise Mary, You Faithful Tongues;*" and all those men with one voice took up the song. They sang it through in such unison and with such power that I woke up with a start.

[Scene III]

The Salesians came and stood in the midst of the surrounding throng, and knelt down. The savages laid their weapons at the feet of the missionaries, and knelt down, too.

[Conclusion of Dream Narrative]

Then savages and missionaries joined in the sacred song, "*Praise Mary, You Faithful Tongues.*"

ing widespread joy among those throngs of barbarians. They lowered their weapons, ceased their savage behavior, and received our missionaries most courteously.

[Scene III]

In utter amazement I mused: "Let's see how things will turn out." I then saw that our missionaries were advancing toward those hordes of savages. [The natives] were being taught [by our missionaries], and they were paying willing attention and were learning diligently. [The missionaries] were admonishing them, and they accepted their admonitions and put them into practice. I watched them, and soon realized that the missionaries were praying the holy rosary. The savages, meanwhile, had gathered around from all directions, making room for the missionaries as they passed through, and were responding nicely together to the prayer.

[Conclusion of Dream Narrative]

After a while the Salesians came and stood in the midst of the surrounding throng, and knelt down. The savages laid their weapons at the feet of the missionaries, and knelt also. Of a sudden, one of the Salesians intoned [the hymn], "*Praise Mary, You Faithful Tongues;*" and all those throngs with one voice took up the song, singing it through in such unison and with such power that I woke up with a start.

[Don Bosco's Conclusion and Comments]

I had this dream four or five years ago, // but I did not make much of it [at the time], especially as I was unable to learn what people might be indicated by the characteristics I had observed in those savages. At first I thought they might be Africans // from the region of Msgr. Comboni's mission. [Note 1 below] Then, as I was at the time negotiating with Msgr. Raimondi for missions in Hong Kong, [Note 2 below] // I thought they might be those islanders; but upon investigation I learnt that neither the area nor its inhabitants matched what I had seen [in the dream]. Some time later we had a visit from Archbishop Quin of Australia [*sic*], [Note 3 below] and I made inquiries about the condition and character of the savages there; but again what he told me did not tally with what I had seen. And yet the impression the dream had made on me and the intimations it had left with me were such that it could not be disregarded; especially since, as past experience had taught me, what I had seen might well come to pass. Meanwhile, we began to talk about the Argentine Republic and [to discuss] the proposals for [foundations in] Buenos Aires and San Nicolás made to us through the Argentine consul [Note 4 below]. I gathered data, made appropriate inquiries and sought infor-

[Conclusion]

This dream made a deep impression on Don Bosco, and he regarded it as a message from heaven. True, its specific meaning eluded him; but he understood that it had something to do with the foreign missions, which indeed had been all along his dearest wish. // He had, however, taken no decision in this regard because, when broaching the subject to Pius IX, the Pope of the Immaculate Conception had replied: "Not yet. See that your work is firmly established in Italy first; When the time is right for you, I'll let you know." In the wake of this dream, Don Bosco felt the old yearning of his heart stirring back to life. The missions are now a priority in his thinking. [Note 5 below]

[Don Bosco's Conclusion and Comments]

I had this dream four or five years ago (he spoke these words in 1876), and it made a deep impression on me, for I regarded it as a message from heaven. True, its specific meaning eluded me, but I understood that it had something to do with the foreign missions, a project which all along had been my fondest wish.

In the wake of this dream, I felt the old yearning of my heart stirring back to life again. But I could not possibly do much with it, especially since I was unable to learn what people were indicated by the characteristics I had observed in those savages. [Note 5 below]

mation. I quickly reached the certain conclusion that the people I had seen were the Patagonian natives dwelling in the southern regions of that republic. From then on I entertained no further doubt as to where my concern and my efforts should be directed.

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### Notes

[Note 1] For [Bishop] Daniele Comboni see note 8, above.

[Note 2] On October 6, 1873, Bishop Timoleonte Raimondi sought Cardinal Barnabò's mediation to obtain Salesian missionaries for Hong Kong. In a letter to Father Rua of January 5, 1874 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 194-195) Don Bosco wrote that he had spoken to Pius IX about the project. On March 12, 1874 he presented a petition to the Pope in which he stated that he was about to open "a home for poor children in the island of Hong Kong, China," and a "hospice and school in Savannah, [GA] in [North] America" (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 251-252). In one of his chronicles, entry for December 1875, Barberis lists China, North America, Africa and Australia as countries that had requested the Salesians (Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 970, note 31).

[Note 3] Archbishop Matthew Quinn of Sydney, Australia.

[Note 4] As noted in the preceding chapter, the Argentine consul was John Baptist Gazzolo (1827-1895), a Genoese navy captain who had migrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was appointed consul for Argentina at Savona, Italy, in 1870. Soon after his appointment he met Don Bosco, in 1871 or 1872, on visits to the Salesian schools of Alassio and Varazze (Jesus Borrego, "Primer proyecto patagónico de Don Bosco," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 5 (1986) 21-72, 48, note 147).

[Note 5] There follows immediately (cf. *FDBM* 1314 A10f.) a lengthy comment in Lemoyne's hand describing Don Bosco's attempts to identify the people and the region of the dream. For this he takes over and expands what the Barberis Report says on the same subject (Conclusion of Don Bosco's narration). This material underwent further editing in *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs* (cf. *Documenti* XIV, 141-143, *FDBM* 1024 B9-11; *EBM* X, 543-545).

### Comments On the Barberis and Lemoyne Reports

Although the two reports are in general agreement, the difference in detail is considerable.

*Barberis* is more ample and offers significant variants: (1) the region was “wholly encircled by jagged mountains;” (2) the natives were people “of extraordinary height and build;” (3) as weapons they carried both spear and sling (*Lemoyne*: only the lance); (4) the Salesian missionaries were “preceded by a band of youngsters” (not so in *Lemoyne*); (5) the evangelizing actions of the missionaries are described (not so in *Lemoyne*).

*Lemoyne*, on the other hand dwells at greater length on the activities of the natives, adding that “some were engaged in combat against soldiers dressed in the Europeans manner.” He states that Don Bosco took the dream to be “a message from heaven,” and that only Pius IX’s advice (on some unspecified occasion) had delayed his decision to act in regard to the missions.

### *Comments on the Documenti Text of the Dream and on Its Final Editing in the Biographical Memoirs*

As may be seen, the *Documenti* text of the dream is a compilation of the reports, a good example of Lemoyne’s method. He scrupulously interlaces, with appropriate minimum editing, all available elements from his two sources, trying, not quite successfully, to achieve a coherent narrative. For instance, there is the anomaly that the missionaries’ work of evangelization is described before they have gained a foothold among the natives. Also he interprets the “sling” (one of the weapons carried by the natives in the *Barberis Report*) as the “*bolos*,” which obviously assumes the decision for Argentina, as well as intervening information. Lemoyne began working on *Documenti* after 1885.

As for the *Biographical Memoirs* (Vol. X), A. Amadei transcribes the text of *Documenti* almost literally, and his editing is limited to punctuation and a few spellings. But he rewrites the description of the distant mountains encircling the plain, perhaps because the original description is obscure, or perhaps because it did not seem to fit the topography of Patagonia, as later ascertained. Also he re-interprets the original “*sling*” (and the “*bolos*” of *Documenti*) as the “*laço*”, again in the light of subsequent information.

Amadei, however, has a fuller description of Don Bosco’s speculations about the identity of the natives and of the land seen in the dream.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> EBM X, 543-545.

*Aftermath of the Dream*

The story of the Argentine proposal and its acceptance by Don Bosco is well known.<sup>26</sup> We may, however, note that Don Bosco did not wait for the Pope to tell him that the time had come.<sup>27</sup> “The missions in South America *that he had already accepted* and others that the Holy See had proposed to him” were a part of the “business of a spiritual nature” that brought Don Bosco to Rome in February 1875.<sup>28</sup> There is no detailed record of what was discussed in the audiences he had with Pius IX on February 22 and on March 12, 1875; but the missions, to which Don Bosco had already committed himself, must have been on the agenda.

Furthermore, it is not clear at what point, after receiving the Argentine proposal and the pertinent data and information, Don Bosco interpreted his dream as referring to Patagonia. Apparently, besides providing verbal descriptions, Consul Gazzolo also showed Don Bosco some sketches of the Patagonian natives. But the natives described in the dream narrative do not really resemble any of the Patagonian types. In any case, the identification was an *ex-post-facto* conclusion.

Juan Belza, an Argentine Salesian scholar, writes that in making this identification Don Bosco

Was working out an instinctive and providential interpretation. We do not know what kind of drawings [of the natives] Gazzolo submitted to Don Bosco. But the savages described by Don Bosco resemble the images derived from encyclopedias a lot more than they resemble any real Patagonian type ... On the other hand, it is psychologically certain that dream images, always blurred, are interpreted only through elements of the dreamer’s inner world. Besides, it can easily be ascertained that the pictures of Patagonian natives circulating at the time were really poor representations ... And furthermore, it can be shown that Don Bosco’s geographical [missionary] dreams, like so many of his dreams, even at their origin, are rooted in daily-life experiences, heightened by the missionary fervor that possessed him.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *EBM* X, 552-558; XI, 129-142 and see Ch.1 above.

<sup>27</sup> See Lemoyne Report, last paragraph, above.

<sup>28</sup> *EBM* XI, 98.

<sup>29</sup> These are J. Belza’s “appropriate comments,” as quoted by J. Borrego, *Proyecto*, 47, Note 157.

## II. The Native Populations of the Southern Part of South America and Early Non-Salesian Missionary Activity

### 1. Ethnographic Remarks

Simón Kuzmanich, SDB, *Cuatro Pueblos ... y un Destino* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Salesiana, 1980); also from *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani); Jesús Borrego, S. Giovanni Bosco, *La Patagonia e le terre australi del continente americano*. Introducción y texto crítico (Roma: LAS, 1988).

#### *Native Populations of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego: Types and Features*

##### *General Classification*

Two facts distinguish the native populations of Argentina-Chile-Uruguay: on the one hand, the great variety of human groups (some times very small), each having characteristic features (polymorphism); and on the other, the absence of extreme differentiation. For example, no group exhibits extreme features such as dark pigmentation of the skin, kinky or frizzy hair, *very* short stature, elongated lower body and limbs, pronounced roughness or smoothness in bodily features.

There is no reason to suppose that the Amerindian is an undifferentiated form, that is, a basic form with potentiality for development, whether in the direction of the European (Australo-Caucasian) type or in that of the Mongolian type. It is probable, on the contrary, that the Amerindian is a mixture of basic types. If this is so, then two conclusions may be drawn: (1) that the mixture occurred at a time when the basic types were still in an early stage of differentiation; (2) that, to allow for the multiplicity of forms, the mixture must have taken place in fairly remote times. These conclusions argue against the theory that the Americas were populated in relatively recent times (e.g. at the end of, or after the Pleistocene (2,000,000 to 10,000 years ago).

The prevalent theory is that the Americas were populated by groups migrating from Asia over the Bering Straits, and the passage must have taken place in fairly remote times.

Because of the lack of extreme differentiation, and for the other reasons mentioned, the systematization of human types for these native populations has never been definitively made.



### *Groups and Types*

In Argentina-Chile, from the 30th to about the 53rd degree of latitude south (that is, from the Pampas to the Straits of Magellan) the following groups predominate:

(1) *Araucans*, chiefly found in the Pampas of Argentina and in south-central Chile);

(2) *Puelches*, chiefly found in northern Patagonia (Argentina);

(3) *Tehuelches*, chiefly found in central and southern Patagonia).

South of the Straits of Magellan, in the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, three smaller groups predominate:

(1) The land-based *Onas*, divided into Shelknam (north) and Haus (south);

(2) The canoe-based *Yamanas* (or Yahgans);

(3) The canoe-based *Alakalufs*.

These groups may be assigned to two basic ethnic types, with one intermediate type.

### *The Fuegin Type (Fuegin, from "Fuego")*

The extreme southern part of the archipelago was inhabited by ethnic groups that come largely under the designation, *Fuegin*. To this type belong primarily the canoe-based tribes of the *Yamanas* (Yahgans) and *Alakalufs*. The face has very little that is "savage" or primitive. True, it has pronounced and arched ridges over the eyes; but this feature, probably developed because of the severe climatic conditions of the region, does not significantly affect eye position nor confer on the face a primitive form as in the Australoid type. On the contrary, the eyes have a slightly Mongolian tilt. Additional features negate the Australoid connection. The face is low; the nose is well shaped; the head is moderately elongated (dolico-meso-cephalic); the hair is black, smooth and stiff in most cases; bodily hair growth is negligible; the pigmentation of the skin is light; the stature is short; the lower body (pelvis, thigh and leg) is also rather short.

### *The Patagonian Type*

This type is best represented by the *Tehuelches* of central and southern Patagonia. The *Puelches* of northern Patagonia and the *Araucans* of the Pam-

pas, with their subgroups, are also within the type. This type was related to the Fuegin in remote times. Hair and skin still bear a close relationship. But it evinces special characteristics. Bodily development and refinement are of such a nature as to make it one of the finest human types in existence. The Patagonians have long been known to be a tall people, though their size was grossly exaggerated (see below). The body is rough-hewn but endowed with great energy and poise. The face is high; the forehead is large and straight; the nose is well formed, long and thin, but not set high; the head is high and round.



7 – A hunter from the Alakaluf tribe with bow and arrows standing by his canoe

*Intermediate Type*

The *Onas* (chiefly based on Isla Grande and the larger Islands of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego) represent an intermediate group. They are taller than the Fuegin type, but they appear to bear greater resemblance to the Fuegians than to the Patagonians.

The native populations west of the Andes (Chile) largely parallel their eastern counterparts.

*Don Bosco's "Savages"—His Idea and Description of the Patagonian Natives*

In the circular letter of February 5, 1875 written to announce to the Salesians having accepted the Argentine proposal, Don Bosco wrote: “[In Argentina] beyond the territory already civilized there are vast regions inhabited by savage peoples. It is among them that by the grace of God the Salesians may exercise their zeal.”<sup>30</sup>

The phrase “savage peoples” was part (and perhaps is still part) of the vocabulary in use to designate people “in a primitive and uncivilized state; wild and fierce; cruel and hostile; brutal and barbarous; members of a savage tribe.”<sup>31</sup>

In the above-quoted letter, Don Bosco contrasts “the territory already civilized” with the “immense regions inhabited by the savages.” In nineteenth-century literature and encyclopedias, Don Bosco’s own cultural context, the latter expression conjured up nomadic, warlike people roaming bush and plain, living without religion, laws or morality. Such people would be dark, hairy, naked or wearing simple animal pelts, and would for the most part be cannibals.

Speaking of the ‘Progress of the Gospel in the New World’ in his *History of the Church* (edition of 1870), Don Bosco stresses the non-evangelized condition of the natives and writes:

The missionaries at their first appearing in that immense hemisphere encountered all kinds of difficulties in their preaching of the holy gospel and in their effort to convert those savages. But once the savages in their ferocity had massacred a number of the missionaries and the blood of martyrs began to be shed,

<sup>30</sup> Don Bosco to the Salesians, Turin, February 5, 1875, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 408; *EBM* XI, 130.

<sup>31</sup> *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1980), s. v., 736.

then, as in the early Church, this shed blood became the fruitful seed of new Christians. Those people that had been for so many centuries addicted to drunkenness, impurity, plundering and, what is even more horrible, to feeding on human flesh, as they came gradually under influence of the light of the gospel they abandoned their savage ways and became chaste, temperate, fervent and ready to shed their blood for Jesus Christ. (From the Gulf of Mexico to the lands of Magellan, etc. ...)<sup>32</sup>

This kind of language appears in Don Bosco first missionary dream (1871/72). Later, the information received from Argentina, especially from Father Cagliero, forced Don Bosco to soften his rhetoric about the “savages,” as he did in the Good Night of May 12, 1875.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless to his dying day Don Bosco retained the term “savages” to designate uncivilized and unevangelized natives, as well as some of the rhetoric connoting that term.

Don Bosco’s anthropological and ethnographic data referring to the native populations (such as their character, culture, etc.) are largely inaccurate and are derived from his general and special cultural matrix. For example, in the First Missionary Dream the “savages” are characterized as “brutal people” who “slaughtered and hacked [the missionaries] to pieces.” In the essay on Patagonia, which Father Barberis researched and wrote for Don Bosco in 1876, the Patagonian natives are similarly characterized:

This large population still lies in darkness and in the shadow of death, and lives in a completely savage state ... Up till now the voice of the missionary could not be heard in that whole immense region, in spite of the many attempts at evangelization over the centuries. This failure is due to the ferocity with which the natives have frustrated every effort on their behalf. For they savagely slaughtered all the missionaries who tried to approach them, and they even ate their flesh.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted that Don Bosco’s ideas and descriptions of the natives seen in his dreams are not true to fact, and reflect the images current in his cultural context. Thus the “savages” seen in the First Missionary Dream (1871/72) are described as “nearly naked, of extraordinary height and build ..., bronzed and dark-complexioned.” This description is more suited to natives of Romantic literature and of nineteenth-century encyclopedias than to any real specimen either of the Fuegin or of the Patagonian type.

<sup>32</sup> G. Bosco, *Storia ecclesiastica* (Turin, new ed. 1870) 309-310.

<sup>33</sup> *EBM* XI, 133-134.

<sup>34</sup> Jesús Borrego, *S. Giovanni Bosco, La Patagonia...*, 24.

The height of the Patagonians is grossly exaggerated in the Romantic literature. The idea that they were “gigantic” originated in Anthony Pigafetta’s report. (Anthony Pigafetta was the chronicler of Hernando de Magallanes’ expedition of 1519-1520). He writes that the Patagonians (*Tebuelches*) were so tall that the Europeans of the expedition barely stood even with their waist. These natives are now extinct, but the consensus is that they were indeed a tall and athletic race. Their average height of males is estimated to have been of 1.75 m. (5’8”). Individuals measuring more than 1.80 m. (5’9”) in height were frequently seen, some reaching the height of 2 m. (6’6”).<sup>35</sup>

### *Numbers of the Native Populations of the Southern Regions of South America*

With regard to the number and distribution of the native populations, Don Bosco both in his dreams and in the above-mentioned essay on Patagonia speaks of very large numbers. The author of the essay on Patagonia (Barberis for Don Bosco), after various calculations, fixes the number of the native population of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego at the time of writing (1876) at no less than four million. This he maintained in spite of information to the contrary received from the Salesians in South America. Don Bosco’s ideas about the number of natives, especially about his fixation that there were large populations yet to be discovered were ridiculed in Rome.

### *Estimates for the 19th Century*

The numbers of the native populations in those regions were (and are) in fact rather small. Jesús Borrego, in his critical edition of the essay on Patagonia, cites various estimates of the number of natives available to Don Bosco in 1876:

(1) Father Cagliero reported the numbers to be 30,000 in the Pampa, and in the whole of Patagonia 40,000.

(2) A. D’Orbigny, whose writings served as a source for the Barberis-Bosco essay on Patagonia, gives the following estimate: *Araucans* (Pampas), 30,000; Fuegians (*Onas*, north and south, *Yahgans* and *Alakalufis*), 4,000; Patagonians (*Tebuelches*, *Puelches*, etc.), 32,500.

(3) F. Lacroix and N. Dally give even smaller numbers: from the Río Negro to Cape Horn (the whole of Patagonia), 8,000-10,000.

<sup>35</sup> Simón Kuzmanich, *Cuatro Pueblos*, 30-31.

(4) G. Moroni: From the Pampas to Cape Horn (southernmost): 319,600, the highest estimate of any source, generally regarded as unlikely.

(5) R. Napp, V. Martin de Moussy: about 30,000 in all.

(6) The Salesian Father Lino Carbajal gives the following estimates of the natives (in the “savage” state, that is, not yet “civilized”): [i] At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from Rio Colorado to Cape Horn: some 50,000; [ii] In 1880 (when the Salesians first began the mission among the natives): in Patagonia, 23,000; in Tierra del Fuego, 8,000; [iii] In 1900 (time of writing): in Patagonia, 5,500; in Tierra del Fuego, 4,200.

In this respect, Ceria quotes rather modest figures.<sup>36</sup>

### *Other Estimates*

Simón Kuzmanich (cited above) with reference to the four groups (*Tehuelches*, *Onas* [Shelknam and Haus], *Yamanas* or *Yahgans*, and *Alakalufs*) discusses this question and gives data which are here summarized.

As is the norm with nomadic populations, their numbers were small, for they needed to roam large territories in order to subsist. The harsh climatic conditions and other physical hardships (such as a deficient diet) kept their numbers low through a high mortality rate, especially in infants.

There have been no accurate assessments of their numbers, for they roamed large territories in small groups, and generally tried to avoid contact with Europeans.

Father Lawrence Massa (SDB) cites various estimates: (1) A. Cañas Pinochet: in 1886, the Onas-Shelknam numbered some 5,000. (2) Thomas Bridge (Anglican apostle of the Yamanas or Yahgans): in 1883, these numbered some 3,000 (in 1882 a French survey counted 2,800). (3) Official Chilean records: in 1887, the Alakalufs numbered about 900, and the Tehuelches barely 2,000.<sup>37</sup>

### *Present Statistics*

The populations described above roamed their territories in small tribal groups, each averaging no more than 100-150 individuals (men, women, and

<sup>36</sup> EBM XVIII, 330-331; *Annali* I, 587f.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence Massa, *Monografía de Magallanes* (Punta Arenas, Chile: Esc. Tip. Salesiana, 1945); Alejandro Cañas Pinochet, “La Geografía de la Tierra del Fuego y Noticias de Antropología y Etnografía de sus habitantes,” in Simón Kuzmanich, *Cuatro Pueblos*, 113 & 120.





8 – A group of Onas women with their children

children), and only in a few recorded instances reaching as high as 500. Beginning with the systematic expansion of the frontiers to the south by Argentina and Chile in the 1870s, the numbers of the natives declined quickly. Four factors in particular contributed to their decline:

(1) Loss of habitat, and consequent loss of game and fish, their means of sustenance;

(2) Armed engagement with the settlers, in which the small groups usually suffered heavy losses, from which they rarely recovered;

(3) Diseases contracted from white settlers;

(4) Gradual absorption through intermarriage.

The last Salesian missionary (in the strict sense of the term), Father Federico Torre, visited the various small groups of natives in 1945, and could not count more than about 400 individuals, all told: *Tehuelches*, 180 in Argentina, none left in Chile; *Alakalufs*, some 130, centered at Puerto Edén (west coast of Wellington Island) and channels to the north; *Onas*, centered at Candelara



mission (Isla Grande, Tierra del Fuego), 25 individuals; *Yamanas* or *Yahgans* living in Navarino Island (Chile) and environs, less than 40. In 1976 this group was reduced to 6-10 individuals. The beautiful *Onas* race had meanwhile ceased to exist, with the death of its last survivor, a woman.

Kuzmanich adds the following statistics from particular years and sources.

Yr. & Source	Tehuelches	Onas	Yamanas	Alakalufs
1839 Alcides D'Orbigny	8,000-10,000	—	—	—
1869 Jorge Musters	1,500	—	—	—
1880 Thomas Bridge	—	3,600	—	3,000
1882 French Survey	—	—	2,800	—
1884 Thomas Bridge	—	—	945	—
1886 Al. Cañas Pinochet	—	5,000	—	—
1887 Off. Chilean Stats	—	—	—	900
1887 Off. Argent. Stats	1,500	—	—	—
1891 Julio Popper	—	2,000	—	—
1896 Otto Nordenskjöld	—	—	300	—
1900 Thomas Bridge	—	—	—	1,000
1931— Argent. Gov. Danieri	358	—	—	—
1934— Chilean J. Tagle P.	—	—	68	—
1945 Federico Torres	180	25	39	130
1976	?	0	¿6-10?	¿25?
now	all	regarded	as	extinct

## 2. Missionary Activity in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego Prior to the Salesians' Commitment in the Area

Cf. A. Martín González, *Origen de las misiones salesianas* (cited above).

In 1848 Don Bosco is reported to have said to young James Bellia: "If I had a lot of seminarians and priests, I would send them to evangelize Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego." Then he asked the boy: "Can you guess why, Bellia?" "Perhaps," he replied, "because these places are in greatest need of missionaries." "You're absolutely right," added Don Bosco, "Those people have been almost totally neglected, as far as religion is concerned."<sup>38</sup>

Actually such was the case only relatively speaking. The *Araucans* of the Pampa, west and south-west of Buenos Aires, had had the advantage of having Franciscan, Dominican, and other missionaries with them right along. The Patagonians (*Tehuelches*) and the Fueguins (*Onas*, *Yamanas* and *Alakulufs*), on the contrary, did not. Don Bosco was probably referring to these native peoples, and it is these that the Salesians were to evangelize.

### *Sporadic Catholic Missionary Activity*

G. Furlong Cardiff, S.J., "Los Jesuitas en la Patagonia," in *Argentina Salesiana*. Miscelánea del 75° aniversario de la llegada de los Salesianos a la Argentina, dirigida por Juan E. Belza (Buenos Aires: Buschi, 1952), 128-134.

In the seventeenth century the Jesuit missionaries had very little success in Patagonia. In the eighteenth century, under the government of the Spanish Viceroy Juan José de Vertiz, a few towns were established in the South along the Atlantic coast. In Tierra del Fuego the most important town was Punta Arenas (Chile). Father T. Falkner did indeed reach Lake Nahuel Haupí, in the Andes, Neuquen province (1778), and subsequently wrote his *Descripción de la Patagonia*; but by Patagonia he meant little more than the southern part of the Buenos Aires province. Likewise, the Jesuit Frs. Cardiel, Quiroga and Strobel explored the parts of Patagonia lying along the coast, traveling by boat. Father Cardiel even ventured five days into the hinterland, starting from San Julián, but he did not make contact with the natives.

The Jesuits returned to the area in the nineteenth century. But since the

<sup>38</sup> EBM III, 257.

murder in 1873 of the Jesuit Father Nicholas Mastardi near Lake Puyrredón (Santa Cruz province, at the Chilean border, 47<sup>th</sup> parallel), no Catholic missionary had even visited the Patagonians, let alone live with them. There were chaplains stationed at Puerto San José (Valdés Peninsula, Chubut). But these, just as those stationed at Carmen de Patagones, at the mouth of the Rio Megro, ministered exclusively to the Argentine troops and settlers.

### *Church of England and Protestant Activity in Tierra del Fuego*

In the nineteenth century, C. Darwin and F. Fitzroy explored the Santa Cruz River (1830-1834). Fitzroy took four young *Fueguins* back to England with him, and returned with three of them (one had died) and with the catechist Richard Mathews of the Church Missionary Society. They settled at Wulaia, but were soon forced to flee.

In 1833, William Arms and Titus Coan, two missionaries from the United States, settled at San Gregorio Bay, on the northern shore of the Straits of Magellan. They remained only two months and were unable to do any missionary work. In 1841 the Church of England missionary Allen Gardiner crossed over from the Falkland Islands and settled at San Gregorio Bay. He went back to the Falklands and founded the Patagonian Missionary Society. Then in 1845 he returned to the Straits of Magellan and settled at Oazi Harbour. But later on learning that a Father Dominic Pasolini, S.J., was doing missionary work out of Punta Arenas, he chose not to interfere and went to Bolivia.

Gardiner's successor, Pastor George Packenham Despard, traveling with the mission schooner, *The Allen Gardiner*, reached Keppel Island, where he established a settlement. But the settlement was attacked, and most of the settlers were killed by the *Yamanas* (Yahgans) of Tierra del Fuego. One of the survivors was a young clergyman named Thomas Bridge. He befriended the *Yamanas*, learned their language, and taught the civilized way of living to groups of them, as Pastor H. Stirling later testified. When the Salesian Father Joseph Fagnano and his successors established Catholic missions in the area, these "Protestant groups" were gradually absorbed, though not entirely.

### *Protestant Missionary Activity in Southern Patagonia (Santa Cruz)*

Protestant missionaries preceded the Salesians also in Patagonia. Theophilus Schmid, who had accompanied Despard to the Falklands as a linguist,

traveled to Patagonia in 1859. There he befriended the *Tehuelche* cacique Casimiro and his tribe. He traveled deeper into the Santa Cruz Province and, by land, as far as Valparaiso (Chile), from where he went back to England. A short time later, he returned to Keppel Island with the catechist John Frederick Hunziger, and together they planned the mission. On July 27, 1861 (in the dead of winter) they sailed out of the village of Punta Arenas and reached Cape Coig, south of Santa Cruz. They went back to Punta Arenas in November, and in June 1862 returned to Santa Cruz to establish a permanent mission at the mouth of the Santa Cruz River. The *Tehuelches* came in numbers. But, as they were denied alcoholic beverages and as the mission was located away from their hunting grounds, they left. While Hunziger remained at the mission, Schmid was crisscrossing the frozen wastes of Southern Patagonia in an attempt to contact natives. When he returned on November 28, 1862, he found Hunziger mentally ill; he had lost his mind perhaps from loneliness or fear. They gave up and left for Carmen de Patagones, where they arrived in October 1863. The area in Santa Cruz where the mission was located still bears the name of *Cañadón de Misioneros* (Missionaries' Hollow).

Welsh missionaries meanwhile established a number of missions in Chubut (Central Patagonia) and were quite successful. This was one of the reasons why, at Don Bosco's suggestion, Rome created mission territories in Northern Patagonia and in Southern Patagonia-Tierra del Fuego, but none *at first* in Central Patagonia.

Carmen de Patagones, situated at the mouth of the Río Negro in Northern Patagonia, was to see the beginnings of Salesian missionary activity, when in 1880 Archbishop Aneyros of Buenos Aires entrusted that enormous "parish" to the Salesians. Under Father Joseph Fagnano it became the staging area for the Salesian mission up the valley of the Río Negro. Following a plan laid down by Father John Cagliero a team of Salesians and Salesian Sisters established mission centers along the Río Negro from Patagones to Neuquén province in the Andes.



9 – Two Tehuelche natives come to the Salesian mission of Rio Gallego for trading purpose

### III. Don Bosco's Missionary Strategy

*EBM* XII, 199-201 (see also preceding chapter); Jesús Borrego, "The Originality of Don Bosco's Patagonian Missionary Enterprise," in *Don Bosco's Place in History*, ed. by P. Egan and M. Midali (Roma: LAS, 1993), 467-484.

#### 1. Evangelization through Native Vocations—the Role of Young People

Don Bosco had his own ideas regarding how the mission among the Patagonian natives should be conducted. Father Ceria quotes Father Barberis'

chronicle, entry of August 12, 1876: “For the last two weeks Don Bosco has talked of nothing but foreign missions and Patagonia.”<sup>39</sup> Ceria continues (in summary):

“Don Bosco was trying to work out a method for the mission. Though still on the mere threshold of his missionary activity, he had set as a high-priority goal the creation of a native clergy, and he believed that he could attain it in seven years. Opening schools along the Patagonian border for the training of native vocations seemed to him a far better way to achieve this goal than just deploy missionaries in the field. He imagined that San Nicolás would serve as a pilot experiment.

Certainly no individual priest could accomplish this, but a religious congregation could. (He cited the example of Father Daniel Comboni who in vain was trying to train single-handedly a native clergy in the heart of Africa.) Don Bosco felt that it was necessary to set up a junior seminary with many boys (providing for all their needs, if necessary) in order to have some priestly vocations.

Don Bosco’s best hopes for the successful future of his missions was linked to his Salesians’ preference for poor youngsters. “One who pursues this road will not fail.”

He then mentioned some religious congregations that had done a lot of good in the missions, but they had to give them up. He was positive, however, that, had they gone a step farther—that is, had they really reached the people by teaching poor young people—they would never have retreated from their apostolate.

As in every other undertaking, so in the missions, Don Bosco joined the use of every possible human means to a most absolute confidence in divine assistance. With reference to the missions, Father Barberis in his chronicle records Don Bosco’s own words:

Let us hope in the Lord. We are conducting this enterprise as we have all others. Let all our trust be placed in God, and let us hope for everything from Him. At the same time, however, let us do our very best. Let no means be neglected, no effort spared, no holy stratagem omitted, no expense barred to guarantee success.

We must have recourse to every human means for personal security and for the protection of our lives from the hands of the savages. True, death by martyrdom is a blessing, for thereby one will fly directly to heaven. However, there

<sup>39</sup> *EBM* XII, 199.

remain thousands of souls who might have been converted had one taken better precautions. It is also true that the blood of martyrs is the seed of new Christians. But this means that in extreme situations we must be ready to give up our lives a thousand times rather than deny our faith. In such a case we should have no fear that with our death the good cause will suffer. The Lord will provide, and we should not hesitate.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. The Originality of Don Bosco's Patagonian Missionary Enterprise (Jesús Borrego)

Edited and adapted from: *Don Bosco's Place in History*. Ed by P. Egan and M. Midali (Roma: LAS, 1993) 467-484. The editing and adaptation consists (1) in the use of pp. 467-478 only; (2) in re-styling and shortening the text; (3) in simplifying the footnote apparatus.

### *Introduction*

Don Bosco, a few months after his Salesians had arrived in Argentina, wrote to the Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide: "Having thus explained my humble project [for the evangelization of Patagonia] ... my one desire is to devote the last days of my life to this mission, which I see as redounding to the greater glory of God and to the good of souls." To Fr. Fagnano he wrote: "The mission of Patagonia is our congregation's greatest undertaking."<sup>41</sup>

The first Salesian missionary priority was laid down in Don Bosco's Spiritual Testament: "As long as we shall concentrate on converting pagans ('savages') and saving the poorest children, the world will always gladly welcome us ... When founding a mission in a foreign land, it must be supported zealously even if sacrifices have to be made. Our efforts should aim at establishing schools and encouraging vocations to the priesthood or the sisterhood ... The day a Salesian loses his life while working for the salvation of soul you may say that our Congregation has won a great triumph."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Quoted by Ceria in *EBM* XII, 200-201.

<sup>41</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Franchi, May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 60-61); Don Bosco to Fr. Fagnano, January 31, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 14).

<sup>42</sup> G. Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel Sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figli salesiani* (Spiritual Testament), critical edition in RSS 4 (1985) 127; J. Aubry, *The Spiritual Writings of Saint John Bosco*, tr. by Joseph Caselli (New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1984) 363-364;



Don Bosco missionary undertaking was conceived and put into effect as an extension of his work of education. As Alberto Caviglia has pointed out, Don Bosco's concept of mission derived its characteristics and its efficacy from being a component part of his multi-faceted apostolate—the saving of souls through the Christian education of youth, particularly the poor. Therefore it adopted the style and the means that Don Bosco had developed for his work of education, and this approach would determine his and his Salesians' missionary strategy.<sup>43</sup>

*Don Bosco missionary plan for Patagonia and its originality*

Don Bosco spoke of his missionary commitment (in Patagonia) as a “new project” and as “a series of projects that would appear to the world as fairy tales or dreams of a madman, but that God blesses as soon as they are undertaken.” He is speaking not of a detailed and structured plan just waiting to be put into execution, but a series of initiatives stemming from developing and expanded experiences—his and of his Salesians in the field.<sup>44</sup>

Don Bosco's “Patagonian project” was conceived and developed between 1876 and 1879 and was based on the knowledge accumulated over the years from various sources, not excluding divine inspiration.<sup>45</sup>

Initially the only thing that was clear was the twin objective: evangelization and the establishing of the Church (*plantatio ecclesiae*) among the natives of the Pampas and Patagonia, and ministry on behalf of Italian immigrants—a productive combined effort on behalf of both the native and immigrant population. This second objective, as well as providing a kind of springboard for the Patagonian mission, would serve to give the Salesians a foothold among the population of Argentina.<sup>46</sup>

EMB XVII, 250.

<sup>43</sup> A. Caviglia, “La concezione missionaria di Don Bosco e le sue attuazioni salesiane,” in *Omnis terra adoret Te* 24 (1932) 5. See also P. Stella, *DB:LeW*, 189-191 and P. Braido, *Il progetto operativo di Don Bosco e l'utopia della società cristiana* (Roma: LAS, 1982) 24-28.

<sup>44</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Cagliero, April 27 and July 3, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 52 and 72; P. Braido, *Il progetto operativo*, 5).

<sup>45</sup> Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 275 (Don Bosco's *Memorandum* to Cardinal Franchi, December 31, 1877); P. Stella, *DB:LeW*, 181-183.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. G. Rosoli, “Impegno missionario e assistenza religiosa agli emigrati nella visione e nell'opera di Don Bosco e dei Salesiani,” in: F. Traniello (edit.), *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare* (Torino: SEI, 1987), 289-329, and P. Stella, *DB:LeW*, 191-193. By 1888 (Don Bosco's death) the Salesians, besides their mission centers in Patagonia, had 19 houses in

Don Bosco had only limited experience of the missions. But the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) expanded his missionary horizons. True, because of the Council's untimely adjournment, the constitution on the missions (*Schema constitutionis super missionibus apostolicis*) and numerous proposals submitted could not be discussed, but he made contact with bishops from various countries and mission lands, some of whom also visited the Oratory and made requests of personnel for their dioceses or missions.

One of these was the bishop of Concepción (Chile) to whom Don Bosco in 1876 addressed a letter asking for permission to attempt evangelizing the "Patagonian [natives] and the barbarians, that is the Pampas (*Patagonos et barbaros sive Pampas*)."<sup>47</sup>

He was in epistolary and personal contact with great missionaries like Massaia, Lavigerie and, in particular, Daniele Comboni, who was a frequent guest at the Turin Oratory, and who shared with Don Bosco his *Plan for the regeneration of Africa*. This aimed at creating (throughout Africa) a chain of educational institutions staffed by European and native missionaries for the formation of black young men and young women, as religious, catechist and teachers. These would be dispatched to the African interior as missionaries to set up centers and form Christian communities.<sup>48</sup> Don Bosco adopted a similar plan stating, as Barberis reports, that his method for the evangelization of Patagonia was patterned after the plan that "Bishop Comboni is seeking to put into effect in the heart of Africa."<sup>49</sup> In this respect, Barberis reports words of Don Bosco:

It seems that the only effective action is to adopt a system of colonization, establishing a series of little villages and stockades on the fringes of civilization, where we can begin to open boarding schools, teaching centers, hostels and hospices and orphanages for the children of the savages, who are largely abandoned; then through these children we shall seek in time to evangelize the Patagonians

Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, including (boarding) schools for students and artisans, printing shops and bookshops.

<sup>47</sup> Don Bosco to Bishop José Hipólito Salas of Concepción, July 29, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 79-80).

<sup>48</sup> For contacts with Cardinal Lavigerie cf. *EBM* IX (orphans recommended by the cardinal) 216, 348-349, 369, 452-453; For Comboni cf. *EBM* IX. 430-431 (letter Fr. Comboni to Don Bosco, July 30, 1870, in which Fr. Comboni writes of having mailed to him the *Postulatum* for the African mission presented to Vatican I); P. Chiocchetta, *Daniele Comboni: carte per l'Evangelizzazione dell'Africa* (Bologna: EMI, 1978), 215-233 (*Piano...*), 235-247 (*Postulatum...*).

<sup>49</sup> *ASC* A000 Cronichetta - Barberis, Notebook 8, 87.

through the Patagonians themselves. If we can attract the young, it should be possible to educate the children and through them spread the Christian religion amongst their parents.<sup>50</sup>

Writing to Leo XIII, Don Bosco expresses the close connection he saw between the work of education in schools and missionary evangelization:

As soon as the Salesians arrived in Patagonia, their first concern “was to erect churches, dwelling places and schools for the boys and girls. While some busied themselves teaching crafts and trades and farming to the small colonies they had established, others pushed on amongst the savages in order to catechize them and, if possible, set up colonies in the more remote regions of the Pampas ...”<sup>51</sup>

In spite of Utopian optimism, the plan overall reflects Don Bosco’s strategy for the mission.

### *Option for Argentina-Patagonia and Don Bosco’s Research*

In the context of Vatican I, Don Bosco received a number of requests for “mission” (from Fr. Comboni in particular), but he chose instead the Argentine offer as more promising and attractive. The fact that his Salesians would be among friends and compatriots, who were in need of evangelization and religious care, provided an added incentive. But, as P. Stella writes,

[Don Bosco’s] thoughts and dreams are of missions in the strictest sense (*in partibus infidelium*) ..., that is (in a Romantic understanding), among cruel and savage peoples [in need of evangelization and civilization]. The gospel mandate [to the Apostles] “to go into the whole world and teach all the nations” ceased to be for the Salesians just an object of [historical] knowledge and of faith; it was also felt as a mandate handed down to them ... Thus, from [simple] believers and spectators of the work of others, the Salesians now felt that they were called to become active participants in the work of extending the “Catholic” faith ... This involvement of the Congregation in missionary work gave new substance the Salesians’ view of the Church; and for Don Bosco the mandate rang also as a juridical mission sought and obtained from the Pope, the father of the family of believers.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Franchi, May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 58-60), and December 31, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 257-261; G. Barberis, *La Repubblica Argentina e la Patagonia* in *Catholic Readings* 291-292 [1877] 93-94).

<sup>51</sup> Don Bosco to Leo XIII, April 13, 1881 Memorandum on the Salesian Missions (*Memoriale intorno alle Missioni Salesiane*) in Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 569, 573-574.

<sup>52</sup> P. Stella, *DB:LCW*, 183-184.

In the discourse to the first group of missionaries departing from Argentina, Don Bosco (as reported) said:

Large bands of savages live in the areas bordering on the civilized regions. Religion, civilization and commerce have not yet penetrated those lands, and no European has as yet set foot among them. I am referring to the regions of the Pampas, Patagonia, and a number of surrounding islands; they form a continent vaster perhaps than all of Europe.<sup>53</sup>

After “diligent research” he had seemed to recognize in these Patagonian “savages” the natives he had seen in the dream of 1871/72.

In May 1876 he submitted to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith his plan for Patagonia, which included “the creation of a Prefecture Apostolic.”<sup>54</sup> In reply that Congregation, which apparently had no knowledge those regions, asked him for a detailed account of that area.<sup>55</sup>

After narrating the dream to Pius IX, and a little later to some Salesians in 1876, Don Bosco made this sober comment to Don Barberis: “I have reached the age of 60 without having ever heard of Patagonia; who would have thought that I should reach a point where I should have to study it in such circumstantial detail.”<sup>56</sup>

It is under these circumstances that Don Bosco, with Fr. Barberis’ help, researched and produced the essay on *Patagonia and the Southern Lands of the [South] American Continent*.<sup>57</sup> This is the lengthiest document in our possession

<sup>53</sup> EMB XI, 360-361.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum of Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 58-60).

<sup>55</sup> ASC A000, Cronichetta-Barberis, May 15, 1876, 49; G. Barberis, *La Repubblica Argentina e la Patagonia* in *Catholic Readings* 291-292 (1877) 93-94.

<sup>56</sup> ASC A000, Cronichetta-Barberis, May 17, 1876, 55-56.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. G. Bosco, *La Patagonia e le Terre Australi del Continente Americano*, Torino 1876. This is a manuscript of 164 pages, dated and signed by Don Bosco himself. It was discovered in 1983 in the library of the Pontifical Urban University of Rome by the Salesian Fr. E. Szanto, who published it in facsimile with a Spanish translation: E. Szanto, *La Patagonia y las Tierras Australes del Continente Americano*, Presentación, traducción y notas del “Proyecto Patagonia Don Bosco,” (Bahia Blanca, Archivo Histórico Salesiano de la Patagonia Norte, 1986). We now have a critical edition by J. Borrego in *RSS* 7 (1988) 255-418. As stated in the essay, the information on Patagonia was derived from “the most weighty authors who have dealt with this subject.” Don Bosco (Barberis) quotes D’Orbigny, Lacroix, Guinnard, Dally, V. Quesada, Ferrario, as well as *Edifying Letters*, the review *Museo delle Missioni Cattoliche* and “letters that our missionaries have already written to us from that region.” The essay gives detailed historical, anthropological and religious information about Patagonia and points out how

(164 pages) in which Don Bosco's concept of missionary work is set forth. As for the information it delivers on Patagonia, the essay without a doubt reflects the state of (imperfect) knowledge that was current in Europe in 1876. Nonetheless some geographers have regarded Don Bosco's research on Patagonia as the first scientific geographical study of a mission.<sup>58</sup>

Don Bosco was quite tireless in his pursuit of information about Patagonia. This is evidenced in the details contained in his letters and reports to the Holy See and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith,<sup>59</sup> as well as in the correspondence to and from the missionaries in the field. Likewise, articles published in the *Salesian Bulletin* between 1881 and 1884 kept the reader abreast of progress made in the missionary "plan" and of recent explorations.

### *Salesian Missions or Salesian Schools and Churches?*

"There are no Salesian missions in the South [of Argentina and Chile], but rather colleges, agricultural schools and churches." The statement was meant as criticism of Don Bosco's missionary strategy, but it actually points to the originality of his approach.<sup>60</sup>

little has been done there from a missionary point of view. In conclusion it offers a description of "its present condition," with reliable details about the appalling social and religious situation. The document then presents the "new plan" that Don Bosco was proposing in order to initiate the work of evangelization.

<sup>58</sup> See e. g. the honors conferred on Don Bosco by the *Geographical Society of Lyons* for a paper presented in 1883, in *EBM* XVIII, 15-16, 569-570 (Appendices 3 and 4). For a discussion of the scientific merits of the essay see: D. Gribaudo, in *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, (Roma, 1961), 312; P. Scotti, "Missioni Salesiane: contributi geografici," in: *Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975*, Studies for the first centenary (Roma: LAS, 1977), 267.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Don Bosco's *Memorandum* to Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 58-60); *Memorandum* of December 31, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 275); *Report* to Leo XIII, April 13, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 569-574).

<sup>60</sup> G. B. Francesia, *Francesco Ramello, chierico Salesiano, Missionario nell'America del Sud* (San Benigno Canavese: Tip. e Libr. Salesiana, 1888), 117: "Some people claim that Don Bosco's missions in America consist only in opening colleges and hostels...". One who made such comments was the Scalabrinian Fr. P. Colbachini, who wrote to a priest friend (on February, 28, 1887): "The Salesians in Rio, S. Paolo, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, together with other Salesians throughout the world are not concerned with missions, apart from a few in Patagonia ... They are only concerned with being teachers and headmasters in schools of arts and trades that they run in this part of the world: it is a fine work, but it is very different from what most people think..." [M. Francesconi, *Inizi della Congregazione Scalabriniana (1886-1888)* (Roma: CSE 1969), 104].



10 – Salesians with native youths and adults in front of Candelara mission on Dawson Island

*Connection of School and Mission—Education and Evangelization*

On the other hand, speaking of the originality of Don Bosco's work, Cardinal Baggio pointed out "that its most significant feature is the class of people he chose to minister to, the twin categories of the young and the poor ... This choice is as clear as day in the Salesian missionary territories."<sup>61</sup>

Don Bosco never deviated from his original option. The fifth of the twenty keepsakes given to the departing missionaries in 1875 reads: "Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged and the poor, and you will gain the blessing of God and the good will of people."<sup>62</sup> Ten years later in his *Spiritual Testament* he wrote:

As long as we shall concentrate on converting pagans and saving the poorest of the poor among young people, the world will always welcome us ... When founding a foreign mission ... all efforts should be made to establish schools and

<sup>61</sup> S. Baggio, "La formula missionaria salesiana," in *Centenario delle Missioni Salesiane. Discorsi*, 43; L. Ricceri, "Il progetto missionario di Don Bosco," *ibid*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> EBM XI, 364 (Twenty keepsakes to the first departing missionaries).



to encourage vocations ... In God's good time our missions will reach China—Peking, to be exact. Then let us keep in mind that we go there to care for poor and abandoned young people.”<sup>63</sup>

Evangelization leading to “implanting of the Church” is the specific aim of all missionary activity, Don Bosco's too! In fact, “genuine evangelization” was a dominant theme in his farewell addresses to departing missionaries and in his letters to them. His Salesians (priests, brothers and nuns) were sent to “announce the word of God,” to “spread the faith” “to carry, ... proclaim [and] spread the light of the Gospel amongst the inhabitants of the Pampas and Patagonia.”<sup>64</sup> In this regard, Fr. A. Caviglia makes the following point:

The fundamental principle of Salesian missionary activity and its method is ... the conversion of unbelievers by ministering to the educational needs of young people ... In every Salesian mission, alongside the [specific] priestly task, there must always be the ministry of the school ... All Salesian foundations, no matter what their field of action, are “*school*”—this is the specific Salesian method of Christian penetration.<sup>65</sup>

With Don Bosco the school was not just a useful means of evangelization; with him education was “an organic constituent of missionary activity.” Hence he wrote in his Spiritual Testament (cited above), “When founding a foreign mission ... all efforts should be made to establish schools and to encourage vocations.”

### *Mission and School—Evangelization and Civilization*

In practical terms, Don Bosco believed that the best and surest means of civilizing and Christianizing Patagonia lay in turning its young people, as those of Turin or Nice or Buenos Aires, into “honest citizen and good Christians.”

This binomial “honest citizens and good Christians” became his missionary formula, as it had been that of his service on behalf of the poor and abandoned. He voices it repeatedly in equivalent terms throughout the 1880's: “Evangelization and civilization;” “the good of society and of religion; “reli-

<sup>63</sup> EBM XVII, 250 (Spiritual Testament); see also Aubry-Caselli, *Spiritual Writings* (“Spiritual Testament,” excerpts), 363-364.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. e. g. Don Bosco's discourse to the first missionary expedition (EMB XI 358-363).

<sup>65</sup> A. Caviglia, *La concezione missionaria*, 8-10, 12, 20, 24-26.



gion and true civilization.” He was, obviously, concerned with Christian civilization, because he was convinced that “there is no true civilization outside Catholicism, the one true religion that sanctifies, unites and civilizes nations.” He therefore adhered to the position, commonly held at the time, that society was civilized in so far as it was Christian (Catholic) and, in the case of Patagonia, it was civilized in so far as it was evangelized.<sup>66</sup> Don Bosco assures a cooperator that the Salesians missionaries “would gladly lay down their lives when it is a matter of saving souls and spreading Christ’s kingdom by bringing religion and civilization among those peoples that still have no knowledge of either.”<sup>67</sup>

### *Collaborative Missionary Undertaking*

In order to support and develop the Patagonian mission Don Bosco drew on all the vital resources available in the Salesian family. The *cooperators*, whom he described as “associate apostles of Patagonia,” were an external army of men and women that, in the new world as in the old, provided moral, spiritual and material support for this great undertaking.<sup>68</sup>

With regard to personnel, he banded together Salesian priests, brothers and sisters as co-participants in the mission. Every missionary expedition included Salesian Brothers, to whom Don Bosco gave the significant title of “catechists.” Beginning with the third expedition (1877) the Salesian Sisters figured among the group. Of the eight pioneers that started the Patagonian mission on the Río Negro (January 1880) four were Salesian Sisters; three were Salesian priests, and there was also one Brother whose job, besides being available as a catechist, was “to teach farming and the more common crafts and trades.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Bodrato, April 15, 1880 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 576-577): “civilization and religion,” “civilization and evangelization”; Don Bosco’s address to the Turin cooperators, January 20, 1881, *BS* 5 (February, 1881) 3; P. Braido, *Il progetto operativo*, 24-26.

<sup>67</sup> Don Bosco to an unnamed cooperator, November 1, 1886 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 363-364).

<sup>68</sup> Don Bosco to the Salesian Cooperators, October 15, 1886 (Circular letter) (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 360-363).

<sup>69</sup> C. Chiala, *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina* 28, 30, 36-37 (Don Bosco gave the Brothers the official title of “catechists.”); *BS* 9 (November, 1885) 165. Don Bosco promised Archbishop Aneyros of Buenos Aires that “in a short time both mission centers on the Río Negro (Carmen de Patagones and Viedma) will have their own priest and teacher. At Carmen de Patagones a hostel will be set up for Indian boys, and one for Indian girls under the

A characteristic feature of Don Bosco's missionary strategy was the participation in mission (almost from the start) of numerous Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians—an unusually bold choice because “nuns had not been seen before in those remote southern climes.” Soon, however, their presence in Patagonia came to be regarded as truly providential, for without their help “it would have been impossible to do so much for the women and girls.”

A Buenos Aires newspaper in an article on the beginning of the Salesian mission in Patagonia in 1880 had this comment:

The Salesian missionaries share mission work with the worthy daughters of Don Bosco, the Sisters of the charitable institute of Mary, Help of Christians ... This is the first time that nuns are to be seen in those remote regions, and their gentleness of manner and their proverbial kindness will undoubtedly contribute a great deal towards the conversion of the Indians to the Catholic faith, the only true religion.<sup>70</sup>

### *Formation of Native Clergy: Patagonians Evangelized by Patagonians*

Don Bosco's concluding words of his narration of the third missionary dream express a fundamental aspect of his strategy for the mission. “To Bishop [Elect] Cagliero and to my beloved missionaries I recommend something that is of the greatest importance to the future of our missions: “Both Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians should concentrate on promoting vocations to the priesthood and the sisterhood’ [in their mission].”<sup>71</sup>

Don Bosco had long since realized that “the Church could not be permanently established in mission lands unless it encouraged the creation of a stable indigenous clergy.” In the closing passage of his Spiritual Testament cited above Don Bosco recommends opening schools for the poor and cultivating native vocations. As a result of his long experience as a Christian educator, Don Bosco was convinced that, even in the missions, young people

care of our Sisters, the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. Later, Salesian Brothers will sail for Patagones to teach agriculture and the more common crafts and trades” (Don Bosco to Archbishop Aneyros, September 13, 1879, in R. Entraigas, *Los Salesianos en la Argentina* III, 85). By Don Bosco's death in 1888, 19 Salesian Brothers were active in the mission of Patagonia (L. Carbajal, *Le Missioni Salesiane* 41, 61, 71-72).

<sup>70</sup> “Los verdaderos héroes del desierto,” *La America del Sur*, (Buenos Aires newspaper), 4 (1880), no. 1152, in C. Bruno, *Los Salesianos y las Hijas de Maria Auxiliadora en la Argentina*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Inst. Salesiano de Artes Graficas, 1981), 201-202.

<sup>71</sup> *EBM* XVII, 280.

who had received “a scientific and Christian education” would be “the most suitable instruments for attracting adults to the faith, thus giving Patagonia a new Christian and civilized aspect” and ensuring that “Patagonians should be evangelized by Patagonians”.<sup>72</sup>

Don Bosco never saw the realization of his dream, but in 1900 in the aspirantate of Bernal (Buenos Aires) there were “twelve novices from the Rio Negro area ... two of whom were the sons of Indian fathers.” At Viedma and Patagones the Salesian Sisters also had a number of professed Indian girls. A number of girls from Patagonia were teachers and missionaries in other places far from where they had been born.<sup>73</sup>

### **3. Women Religious and Missionary Activity. Involvement of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

#### *The Rule of the Cloister for Women Religious*

Communities of religious women were established in South America as early as the sixteenth century. In spite of strict enclosure, they ran convent schools where native and mestizo girls were educated. From them they also recruited vocations for their order, in accordance with a permission granted by Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585). Thus Trinitarian, Poor Clare and Franciscan nuns, among others, worked for the evangelization of South America from their cloisters, in spite of their inability to engage directly in missionary activity.

The Council of Trent established that cloister (enclosure) was to be an essential feature of religious life for women.<sup>74</sup> In accordance with this principle, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith forbade religious women to engage directly in ministry or evangelization, but permitted them to teach

<sup>72</sup> P. Scoppola, *Commemorazione civile di Don Giovanni Bosco nel centenario della sua morte*, Torino, January 30, 1988 (Roma: Tip. Don Bosco, 1988), 22; Don Bosco's circular letter of appeal, August 25, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 90): project for the formation of native missionaries; Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, December 31, 1877 (*Ibid*, 257): “savages” to become evangelizers of the “savages”; Don Bosco's report to the Work for the Propagation of the Faith of Lyons, March 1882 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 124): “to open a way to the natives through their children”.

<sup>73</sup> L. Carbajal, *Le Missioni Salesiane*, 63-64, 104.

<sup>74</sup> Session XXV, November 1563.

Christian doctrine in their convents.<sup>75</sup> In spite of these restrictions, we find the Ursulines engaged in active ministry in Quebec (Canada) since 1639, in Martinique since 1682, and in Pondichery (India) since 1738.

The case of Mary Ward (1586-1646) is instructive. This dynamic Yorkshire Englishwoman entered the Poor Clares in Belgium and went on to found the Institute of Mary with the Jesuit rule. She wanted a community of non-cloistered nuns, without any distinctive habit, engaged in charitable ministry and evangelization. She presented this plan to Pope Paul V (1605-1621) in 1616 and received the Pope's unofficial approval. Later, however, under Pope Urban VIII (1623-1643), the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith suppressed the non-cloistered "Jesuitesses." Mary Ward herself was briefly "imprisoned" in a cloister in Germany, because she worked out of the convent, in contact with the people. However, the Institute was finally approved in 1877, and Mary Ward was officially vindicated.

Thus we understand why in 1633 St. Vincent de Paul, on St. Francis de Sales' advice, wished his Daughters of Charity to appear as lay women without religious habit, rather than as religious, for then they would be subject to the rule of cloister. They were thus free to serve in hospitals and other places in direct contact with the people. It was St. Francis de Sales who pioneered the idea of the religious woman engaged in the apostolate. He had not wanted his Sisters of the Visitation cloistered, but circumstances forced him to accept Rome's decision in the matter.

### *New Role for Women Religious in the Nineteenth Century*

The movement for women's liberation set afoot by the French Revolution and aided by Romanticism also advanced the "liberation" of religious women to the extent that they were allowed to engage, "within limits dictated by prudence," in direct missionary activity. The launching of woman in the 19th century was such a significant social phenomenon that the Popes, as soon as they were free of Napoleon's domination, moved to modify the law of the cloister. Thus in the nineteenth century most religious institutes of men had similar institutes of women associated with them. In the missions, religious men and women worked side by side in the same ministries. By 1880 over 30 religious institutes of women and some 10,000 sisters were engaged in missionary work. By 1924 over 200 religious institutes of women were so engaged.

<sup>75</sup> *Collectanea SCPF* I, 352, Response (1784).

In the nineteenth century, contemplative orders of women also participated in the Church's missionary effort. For instance, the *Carmelites* of Lisieux in their cloister read the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, corresponded with missionaries, and offered special prayers for the missions. In 1861 a group of *Carmelite* nuns from Lisieux established a cloister in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). From this *Carmelite* center no less than forty Carmels were established in China, Japan, the Philippines and other countries of the Far East. Other contemplative orders did the same. True, these communities did not engage directly in external mission work. But their contribution was significant nonetheless.

This missionary fervor was the result not simply of a missionary euphoria, but rather of a missionary spirituality that may well have been the typical spirituality of the nineteenth century. Father Libermann, Card. Lavigerie and, to a lesser degree, Bishop Comboni were important contributors to this missionary spirituality, which influenced not only the apostolic life of missionaries, but also the life of religious communities of both men and women, and of Catholic people generally. Salesian spirituality also acquired a strong missionary orientation.

### *The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians Active in the Missions*

In this context it is understandable why Don Bosco decided to found a religious institute of women to parallel the Society of St. Francis de Sales; and why the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the start were partners in the Salesian missionary effort. On November 6, 1877, only 5 years after the founding of the Institute, six young Salesian sisters left Mornese with the third Salesian missionary expedition. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the group was composed of young women ranging in age from 17 to 25 years.

Two months later, in his report to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Don Bosco wrote: "Not far from Villa Colón [Uruguay] we have established a resident and day school for homeless girls under the direction of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a branch of the Salesian Congregation."<sup>76</sup>

On January 20, 1880 the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians settled at Carmen de Patagones, the first religious women ever to undertake missionary

<sup>76</sup> Report of December 31, 1877, in *EBM* XIII, 593.

work south of Buenos Aires. In 1888 other Sisters joined Father Fagnano in the mission of Tierra del Fuego.

Beyond missionary enthusiasm, these young women lived deeply the missionary spirituality inculcated by Mother Mazzarello and Don Bosco, in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales. With total dedication to Christ and with complete trust in divine Providence, they accepted the challenge of the mission.



11 – Punta Arenas (Chile), 1899: Natives and civil authorities  
in front of the “Colegio de Niñas”  
staffed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

## Chapter 3

# SALESIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA III SALESIAN MISSIONS IN SOUTH AMERICA ESTABLISHED

### Summary

1. Introductory Comments
  2. Beginning of the mission among the natives on the Rio Negro under the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires  
Contact made with natives in the context of a military expedition, and missions begun  
Don Bosco's struggle with and proposals to the Holy See for the creation of mission territories of Apostolic right (1876-1883) entrusted to the Salesians  
Don Bosco's memorandum and petition to the Holy See on the missions (1877)
  3. Creation of mission territories entrusted to the Salesians under the Congregation of Propaganda Fide
  4. Creation of the Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Patagonia (1883)  
Fr. Cagliero's ordination as bishop and taking possession (1884-85)
  5. Creation of the Prefecture Apostolic of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego  
Fr. Fagnano appointed Prefect Apostolic (1883)  
Actual founding and first organization of the southern mission (Punta Arenas, mission center 1887)
- Appendix: Chronology and Organization of the Salesian Work and Missions in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile (1875-1888)

## I. Introductory Comments

### 1. Don Bosco's Missionary Aim in Accepting the Argentine Proposal

The official Argentine proposal was made and accepted without any reference to the evangelization of the native tribes of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Following Consul Gazzolo's initiative, offers were made by Archbishop Federico Aneyros (through his secretary Msgr. Mariano Espinosa) and by Fr. Peter Ceccarelli. But these offers concerned only the Italian church of Our Lady of Mercy in Buenos Aires and, some 160 miles northwest, a school in San Nicolás de los Arroyos. (See preceding Ch. 1.)



Don Bosco, however, was quick to see the specifically missionary possibilities of the proposal, which responded to the missionary plans he had been forming and to the suggestions of his dream of 1871/1872.

Thus, in his exchanges with the Argentine parties he spoke only of the typical Salesian work for youth in parish, school and oratory, etc.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, in addressing the Salesians or the Holy See, he emphasized the missions proper. For instance, in a circular letter inviting Salesians to volunteer he writes:

Among the many proposals received for the establishment of a foreign mission, the one submitted by the Argentine Republic seemed preferable. In Argentina, beyond the regions already civilized, there are immense territories inhabited by savage populations. It is among these that, by the grace of God, the Salesians are called to exercise their zeal.<sup>2</sup>

Don Bosco outlined a plan for the evangelization of the native tribes in a memorandum to Card. Alessandro Franchi, Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. There he speaks of the school of San Nicolás as a “seminary” and staging area for the mission:

The strategy that appeared to be most likely to succeed was to establish shelters, schools, hostels and educational institutes on the borderlands of the savages. Once contact is made with the children, it would be an easy step to contact their families, and so gain a foothold among the tribes of the savages. This city [San Nicolás] is situated a mere 60 miles from where the savages live. From this [vantage point] the Salesians would be able to study the language, the history and the customs of those peoples. It might even be possible to develop native missionary vocations from among the pupils ... It is called San Nicolás School, in order not to offend national sensibilities. But it is actually a seminary, that is, a school where missionary vocations are trained for work among the savages.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So, e. g., in letters to Fr. Ceccarelli of December 25, 1874 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 372-373), and (in Latin) to Archbishop Aneyros, November 15, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 552-553).

<sup>2</sup> Circular letter of February 5, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 407-409).

<sup>3</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, May 10, 1876, FDBM 23 A3-6 (autograph); Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 58-61.

## **2. Immediate Salesian Missionary Activity among the Natives not Possible**

This strategy of evangelizing the natives through native vocations was too idealistic to be put into effect. Nor could the Salesians undertake missions among the natives immediately. This was due to personnel limitation, language and cultural difficulties, ecclesiastical organization and the fact that the Salesians in the eyes of the Buenos Aires Church authorities were there to take care of the poor in city slums. They were not regarded as “missionaries.” Moreover, the armed clashes between the Argentine government and the natives at the southern frontier complicated matters.

Don Bosco, however, did not refrain from speaking and writing in glowing, optimistic terms of the conversion of the natives, and of the strategy that he had contemplated all along—hospices planned for native youngsters, to serve also as junior seminaries for native vocations. This he did when writing to Salesians and to the Roman authorities. This kind of language served to keep alive the missionary spirit among Salesians and boys, and to keep the idea of possible missionary territories before the Roman authorities.

But the prospects for early missionary activity among the natives were not good. True, there had been some missionary activity in the Pampas, the areas south and southwest of Buenos Aires. There the Vincentians established a mission at Los Toldos and a base at the mouth of the Rio Negro, where the military outposts of Carmen de Patagones and Viedma had been established. From this base they ministered to the settlers (*gauchos*), but occasionally also made contact with natives in the vicinity. In 1872 the Franciscan Friars Minor evangelized the *Ranqueles* tribe in the Pampas. But the constant hostilities on the frontier made sustained missionary activity impossible.

But Don Bosco pressed on with ideas and dreams about the missions, for as far as he was concerned the Argentine proposal offered opportunities that went beyond the churches and schools in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás. It was only a matter of time and the hour of the missions would strike.

## **3. Don Bosco's Utopian Solution of the Italian Immigrant Problem**

As Fr. Barberis reports in his chronicle, Don Bosco in February 1876 spoke of bold plan he would present to the Prime Minister of Italy on an upcoming visit to Rome. Barberis writes:

Don Bosco has been seriously developing an idea which may seem preposterous at first, but which he will nonetheless present to [Prime Minister] Minghetti. Don Bosco's proposal is that a colony [of Italian immigrants] be established in South America, specifically in Patagonia. The first step would be that of establishing a fort or stockade, then gradually by successive forays the whole region could be reduced, and at the same time the natives [*selvaggi*] could be civilized. Salesian missionaries would be available to facilitate the process in this latter respect.

Don Bosco first outlined this plan of his late one evening, Saturday [February] 5 [1876]. Letters have meanwhile arrived from Father Cagliero bearing exciting news of the missions [that is, of the Salesian work in Buenos Aires]. So, the following evening Don Bosco spoke again of his plan in greater detail and in a manner that made it look feasible. He added, "The first thing I'll do on arriving in Rome will be to take it to [Prime Minister] Minghetti."<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile in spite of his many commitments and concerns Don Bosco became obsessed with his "Patagonian projects" and devoted much time and energy to articulate them for himself and for the authorities. To Fr. Cagliero he wrote that he was working on "a series of projects that would appear a madman's dreams to the eyes of the world."<sup>5</sup> He was probably referring to the plan he had come up with for a solution of the immigrant problem.

A few days before this letter, in April 1876, he had presented to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs a plan for the establishment of a colony of Italian immigrants. This colony, "completely Italian in language, customs and government," would welcome Italian immigrants from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay, and would be established in the coastal area between the Rio Negro and the Straits of Magellan. Don Bosco erroneously believed this region to be a kind of no-man's-land, with "no hostels, no ports and no established government."<sup>6</sup>

A month later, writing to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Don Bosco suggested that a Prefecture Apostolic should

<sup>4</sup> Barberis' Autograph Chronicle, Notebook IV, 46-47, entry of February 5/6, 1876, FDBM 837 D6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Cagliero, April 27, 1876, Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 52. For a discussion of these "projects" and of Don Bosco's geographical knowledge of the regions of southern Argentina as of 1876, cf. Jesus Borrego, "Primer proyecto patagónico de Don Bosco," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 5 (1986) 21-72.

<sup>6</sup> Don Bosco to Minister Melegari, memorandum of April 16, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 44-45).

be established “to exercise ecclesiastical authority over the inhabitants of the Pampas and Patagonia,” because (so he believed) “no civil or ecclesiastical authority had any influence or power ... over that vast region,” since it lacked “any diocesan or any civil administration.”<sup>7</sup>

Letters from Fr. Fagnano and Fr. Cagliero in Buenos Aires respectfully pointed out to Don Bosco that the project was impracticable. Fr. Cagliero writes:

It is foolhardy even to mention [such a thing] here. We are not among infidels! We cannot even speak of ourselves as apostolic missionaries! Once we have contacted the natives and have worked among them for a few years, we shall see ... As far as Patagonia is concerned, it is an undertaking for which the Salesians are not yet prepared ... It is easy to fantasize about it, but difficult to carry it out in practice ... We have to work toward it with zeal and patience, without making any noise about it. We cannot pretend, we who have just arrived, to conquer a land which is unknown to us, and the language of which we can't speak ... But do you, Reverend Father, overrule, if you think it proper, the reasoning of my all too human prudence, lest God's plans be interfered with!<sup>8</sup>

A reply from Minister Melegari through his secretary (Malvano) came three months later. He wrote politely:

As regards the project for the colonization of Patagonia, the Minister reserves the right to examine its repercussions ... In view of the recent flare up of the old dispute between Chile and Argentina over the division of those regions, it would seem more prudent to defer any action until a more suitable occasion ...<sup>9</sup>

Don Bosco acknowledged his misconception, but continued to maintain that “a system of colonization” was “the most suitable means for turning [Patagonia] into a Christian, civilized people.”


He never gave up his plan for the canonical establishment of one or more vicariates, since he considered them essential in order to consolidate the work of spreading the gospel, culminating in the *plantatio Ecclesiae* and in “the creation of a stable form of civilization amongst these peoples”. A Vicariate Apostolic would form “the center of the colonies that will have been established and of those that the Lord's help, would hopefully come into being.”

<sup>7</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, *Memorandum* of May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 60).

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Cagliero to Don Bosco, March 5-6, 1876, in *ASC* A131.

<sup>9</sup> Secretary Malvano to Don Bosco, August 18, 1876, *FDBM* 1543 A5 (quoted in Borrego, *The Originality*, 479, footnote 41).

18-8-1876



Molto Reverendo Signore,

Ho rassegnato a Sua Eccellenza il  
 Ministro le due Memorie da Vostra  
 mi transmise con la lettera del  
 12 di questo mese -

Rispetto ai progetti di colonniz-  
 zazione in Patagonia, il Ministro  
 si riserva di pensarvi ancora.  
 D'altra parte, giova che Vostra  
 sappia pendere tuttora, anzi  
 essersi esacerbata in questi  
 ultimi tempi, antica controversia

12 – Letter to Don Bosco from James Malvano,  
 secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (August 18, 1876)

## II. Don Bosco Impatient to Begin Missionary Activity

Don Bosco meanwhile did not hesitate to speak about, and to give publicity to, his “plans” for missionary activity among the “savages.” But it would take a few more years before the Salesians could establish a base at Carmen de Patagones in 1880, and begin missionary activity among the natives.<sup>10</sup>

### 1. Sobering Words of Advice from Buenos Aires

Fr. Cagliero wrote to Fr. Rua: “... You live in a fantasy world: ‘Go and preach to the natives, convert and civilize the natives!’ We cannot even find an entry ... Everyone, beginning with the Archbishop, advises us to bide our time.”<sup>11</sup>

These reasons appeared decisive, and Don Bosco simply replied, “What you write about Patagonia is in complete accord with my own feelings about the matter.”<sup>12</sup> Don Bosco’s utopian projects had perforce to come to terms with the harsh reality encountered by his Salesians in the field. His missionary fervor and impatience had to be tempered likewise by the painful process involved in laying foundations and gaining entry. But, as will be noted below, Don Bosco felt that a missionary engagement would earn the Church’s official recognition for the Salesians as “apostolic missionaries,” through the creation of Vicariates or Prefectures.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Aneyros advised the Salesians to establish a strong position in Buenos Aires and the whole Plata area that would serve as a base and a center. The work should be expanded in parishes and schools, and formation structures established. And to prepare for eventual contact with the natives the Salesians should develop a suitable pastoral strategy. Fr. Cagliero was in full agreement.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Borrego, *Proyecto*, 61-67.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Cagliero to Fr. Rua, December 20, 1876.

<sup>12</sup> Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 170.

<sup>13</sup> This initial expansion and consolidation was described in Ch. 1 above.



## 2. Military Activity by the Argentine Government to Extend the Frontier Southward

In the early 1870s, the southern Argentine frontier did not extend beyond the near reaches of the Pampas and the Rio Colorado. The soldiers had built a series of forts or stockades on the frontier to protect the settlements; and from there they were attempting to drive the natives farther south. But the natives kept coming back; and although they usually got the worse of it in skirmishes, in practice it was a stand off. The catalyst of the resistance was the Araucan Chief Calçufurá. He died in June 1873. But the resistance continued under his son, Manuel Namuncurá, and the engagements continued with increasing frequency and violence.

In 1875 the Minister of Defense (General Alsina) proposed the construction of a large canal or moat at the edge of the Pampas, to keep the natives out. The plan was set aside, but 1875 marks the beginning of a sustained and organized effort on the part of the Argentine government to establish permanent Argentine control of Patagonia.

The incentive came not only from the “threat” the natives posed, but also from two other factors. One was the fear that Great Britain (who had control of the Falkland or Malvinas Islands) would try to go into Patagonia. Another and more serious reason was the attempt by the Chilean government to establish control over parts of that territory.

In April 1879 General Julio Roca (successor to Alsina as Minister of Defense) mounted a large military expedition for the purpose of extending the frontier farther south and driving the natives back beyond the Rio Negro and the Rio Neuquén. This would ensure to Argentina undisputed control of Patagonia. Msgr. Antonio Mariano Espinosa (Vicar of Buenos Aires) and the Salesians Fr. James Costamagna and seminarian Louis Botta accompanied the expedition as chaplains.

Carefully kept abreast of events, Don Bosco wrote to the Holy See with a note of triumph:

On this very day, April 20, 1879, three Salesian missionaries, accompanying an expedition led by the Minister of War, are headed for the territory of the Pampas natives. Their purpose is to rescue the greatest possible number of those children who appear doomed to slaughter by the policies of the Argentine government.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Don Bosco to the Holy See (Leo XIII), April 20, 1879 (*Ceria, Epistolario* III, 468-470).



On April 27, 1879 peaceful contact with the natives was made at Carhué and (further southwest) at Choele-Choel on the Rio Negro, the gateway to Patagonia. Holy Mass was celebrated, as the natives looked on. The trip ended at Carmen de Patagones at the mouth of the Rio Negro, where Fr. Costamagna preached a mission to the settlers.

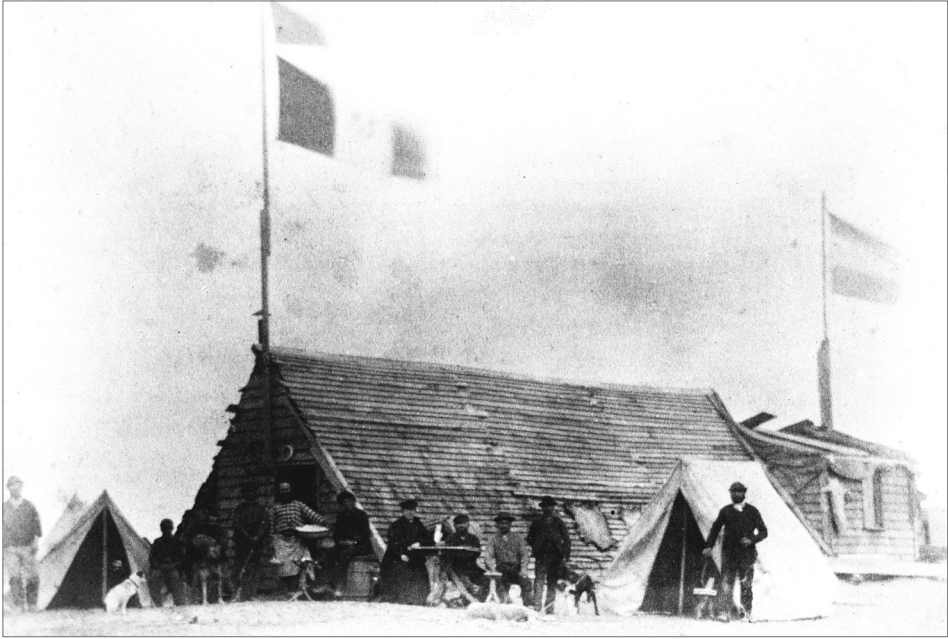
### **3. Salesians Established at Carmen de Patagones and Viedma**

Archbishop Aneyros had planned to entrust to the Salesians the parishes of Carmen de Patagones and Viedma at the mouth of the Rio Negro, from where natives living along the river might be contacted. But he had felt bound to entrust those parishes to the Vincentians, who had been forced to leave Los Toldos (Pampas).

But by letter of August 15, 1879 to Archbishop Aneyros the Vincentians resigned from Patagones due to lack of personnel. The Archbishop then entrusted that parish to the Salesians. On February 2, 1880, Fr. Fagnano was installed as pastor. A few months later, Fr. Emilio Rizzo was assigned as pastor to Our Lady of Mercy in Viedma, the future seat of the Vicariate on the southern bank of the river.<sup>15</sup> It is from this twin base that the Salesian mission work proper in the next few years spread upward along the Rio Negro.

Meanwhile General Roca's campaign for control of the territory (mentioned above) was meeting with fierce resistance on the part of many groups of Araucan natives led by Chief Manuel Namuncurá. The skirmishes continued for some years, usually with undecided outcome, but with considerable loss of life sustained by the natives. Some of the natives fled into Chile, while others surrendered and were detained as prisoners or were drafted into the Argentine army. Toward the end of 1882 and into 1883, General Conrad Villegas, to whom General Roca had handed the command of the Rio Negro frontier, undertook another campaign that forced Namuncurá to surrender. Father Dominic Milanesio acted as go-between in the negotiations that pacified the region under Argentine control. These military operations impeded Salesian missionary activity to a considerable degree, but by 1883, with the cessation of military action, Salesian missionary activity among the remaining

<sup>15</sup> J. Borrego, "Il primo iter missionario nel progetto di Don Bosco e nell'esperienza concreta di Don Cagliero," in *Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975*, ed. by Pietro Scotti (Roma: LAS, 1977), 78-85.



13 – Tierra del Fuego, St. Sebastian mission (1893),  
the first Salesian foundation among the natives

tribal groups gained momentum all along the Rio Negro valley as far up as the Andes. Fr. Fagnano's report of 1883 (mentioned below) describes the Salesians' first missionary success.<sup>16</sup>

The establishment of the Salesians at Carmen de Patagones and the Rio Negro marked the initial phase of Salesian missionary activity. But it should be clearly understood that the Salesians began their mission work among the natives under the patronage of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, not as apostolic missionaries. It was only when the vicariate was created (1883-1885) that the Salesian mission work came under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and that the Salesians became mission-

<sup>16</sup> The story of the pacification of the Rio Negro is told in *EBM* XVI, 291-295. Fr. Dominic Milanese (1843-1922) joined the Salesians in 1869, was ordained in 1873 and was a member of the third missionary expedition in 1877. In 1880 he joined the small group that founded the mission on the Rio Negro and distinguished himself as an active missionary in the field. In 1883 he acted as intermediary in the surrender of Chief Namuncurá (whom he converted) and in 1888 he baptized Namuncurá's son Ceferino (see next Ch. 4). Fr. Milanese died at Bernal, Argentina in 1922.

aries of “apostolic right.” Don Bosco hailed this achievement as the greatest triumph of the congregation and as the augury of the future expansion of the Salesian work throughout South America.

### **III. Don Bosco Seeks the Establishment of Vicariates/Prefectures by the Holy See — and Thereby the Church’s Recognition of Salesian Missionary Activity**

Even before the realization of this first stage of the missionary “project,” in fact even as the Salesians of the first expedition were just beginning the work in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás, Don Bosco had been petitioning the Holy See for the official recognition of the missionary activity of the Salesian Society through the erection of Vicariates or Prefecture. Such recognition by the Holy See would confer “apostolic” status on the Salesian missions in Patagonia.

#### **1. Importance Attached to Recognition by the Holy See**

Don Bosco attached the utmost importance to this official stamp of approval, to the point that this further stage of the “project” became an all-engrossing preoccupation. He practically came to regard its successful completion as a vindication of the Salesian Society and its mission in the Church.

Don Bosco wrote to Fr. Costamagna, who had meanwhile succeeded the deceased Fr. Bodrato (1880) as provincial:

Obtaining the erection of a Prefecture or of a Vicariate Apostolic in Patagonia is of the utmost importance. The Holy Father wants it and is urging it. It is also advantageous to us; for without this [official commissioning] we shall not have the support of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, nor that of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons, nor that of the Holy Childhood. It seems that neither Fr. Bodrato nor you yourself have been aware of the importance of this project.<sup>17</sup>

To Fr. Fagnano he wrote in 1881: “The mission of Patagonia is our Congregation’s greatest undertaking. You will be told everything in due time. But

<sup>17</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Costamagna, January 31, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 7).

I must warn you at once that great responsibilities are being placed on you. God's help, however, will not be wanting."<sup>18</sup>

Don Bosco had been petitioning the Roman Congregation for such recognition ever since 1876.

## 2. Don Bosco's Essay on Patagonia Researched by Fr. Barberis (1876)

Patagonia was no household word in Rome, and Church authorities wanted more detailed information on the land and the native people. Hence it was that at the request of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith Don Bosco was asked to submit a memorandum to that effect. He had Fr. Barberis research "Patagonia and the Southernmost Regions of the American Continent," and the result was a sizable monograph that was signed by Don Bosco with the date of August 20, 1876 and submitted to the Sacred Congregation.<sup>19</sup>

The conclusion of the work described possible new projects for the evangelization of Patagonia based on proposals that were being made to the Salesians and that Fr. Cagliero was evaluating as possible starting points for the mission.

For example, as mentioned above, the parish of Patagones was a possibility, but had instead to be entrusted to the Vincentians. A number of other possibilities were discussed. A chaplaincy was being offered at Carhué where the Argentine army had established a new southern frontier. Fr. Cagliero and two other Salesians had received an invitation to go and stay with two native tribes in Chubut (Central Patagonia). The Argentine government was about to found a settlement in Santa Cruz (Southern Patagonia) where the Salesians might serve as chaplains. But unfortunately for various reasons these plans came to naught. For instance, the chaplaincies of Carhué and of Santa Cruz would be in the service of the military, and Fr. Cagliero thought such a connection inappropriate. The offer in Chubut had to be declined because of the strong presence there of protestant Welsh missionaries.

<sup>18</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Fagnano, January 31, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 13-14).

<sup>19</sup> G. Bosco, *La Patagonia e le Terre Australi del Continente Americano* (Torino, 1876).



14 – Father John Cagliero (1838-1926) in a photograph of 1880

### **3. Petitions and Proposals Submitted by Don Bosco to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith**

No sooner had the first Salesians established themselves in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás than Don Bosco began making his case for “missions” with the Roman authorities. The essay on Patagonia mentioned above (1876) is a case in point. It seems indeed that Don Bosco conceived and spoke of the whole undertaking in terms of “mission.” Between 1876 and 1883 numerous exchanges and negotiations took place to that effect.

In the memorandum to Card. Franchi (quoted above), after laying out his strategy for the evangelization of the native tribes out of San Nicolás, Don Bosco adds:

I humbly ask your Eminence: ... 3° to create a Prefecture Apostolic that might exercise ecclesiastical authority over the natives of the Pampas and of Patagonia, who up to now have not been subject to any diocesan Ordinary nor to any civilized government.<sup>20</sup>

In a subsequent memorandum to the same Prefect, Don Bosco, speaking of the establishment of the Salesian work Argentina and Uruguay as “mission” and of the Government’s military moves to extend the southern frontier, suggested the erection of a Prefecture Apostolic at Carhué and of a Vicariate at Santa Cruz.<sup>21</sup>

A little later in a letter to Cardinal John Simeoni, newly appointed Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Don Bosco proposed the creation of a Vicariate or of a Prefecture at Carmen de Patagones at the mouth of the Rio Negro. Here “two well known [native] chiefs are asking for our missionaries, with assurances of help and protection.”<sup>22</sup>

Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda (Archbishop of Turin) and Msgr. Dominic Jacobini were delegated to study the proposal. Of this phase of the negotiations Don Bosco wrote to Pope Leo XIII in 1880 (when the Salesians, though already established at Patagones, had hardly begun any missionary activity):

In obedience to Your Holiness’ command, I had a long conference with His Eminence Card. Alimonda and with the Most Reverend Msgr. Jacobini ... It was a common point of agreement that a Vicariate Apostolic should be erected for the colonies [missions] established on the Rio Negro, and that a seminary to train evangelical workers should be founded in Europe.

In the detailed “Report on the Salesian Missions” (that is, on the Salesian work in Argentina and Uruguay) attached to this letter, Don Bosco pointed out that the Argentine government had just created the Province of Patagonia. He suggested that the Vicariate might well take the same name and cover

<sup>20</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, May 10, 1876 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 58-61).

<sup>21</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Franchi, December 31, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 256-261, transcribed in *EBM* XIII, 590-596).

Carhué (in the Pampa southwest of Buenos Aires) and Santa Cruz (on the Atlantic coast in southern Patagonia) were military outposts. As mentioned above, Fr. Cagliero declined the offer of military chaplaincies there.

<sup>22</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Simeoni, (March) 1878 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 320-321).

In this letter Don Bosco also declares his willingness to prepare missionaries “for the Vicariate of Mangalor, India, or some other mission.”



the same territory, including all the lands to the east of the mountain range of the Andes “until another Vicariate is erected at Santa Cruz.”<sup>23</sup>

Don Bosco’s “definitive” proposal was made, after further consultations and negotiations, in a laboriously worded memorandum to Cardinal Simeoni, on July 29, 1883. This proposal was for three Vicariates and/or Prefectures. Don Bosco suggested the immediate erection of a Vicariate for Northern Patagonia (Rio Negro) with seat at Carmen de Patagones, and a Prefecture for Southern Patagonia (Santa Cruz). Central Patagonia (Chubut), still undeveloped and “wholly under Protestant control,” would be under the patronage of the northern Vicariate, until a separate Vicariate could be established there. Similarly, the southern Prefecture would remain under the general patronage of the northern Vicariate, unless the Holy Father decided to make it an independent Vicariate.

Requested to nominate candidates for these posts, Don Bosco submitted the names of Fr. Cagliari or Fr. Costamagna for the northern (and central) Vicariate, and Fr. Fagnano, for southern Patagonia. Don Bosco commended the three as “strong, hard-working men, good preachers, inured to toil, and of unimpeachable moral character.” Fr. Fagnano, was further commended as particularly suitable for southern Patagonia, being “a man of powerful physique and defiant of toil and danger.”<sup>24</sup>

At this point (end of July 1883) Don Bosco rested his case and waited for Rome’s decision. A few days before, the Salesian work had been established in Niterói (Brazil).<sup>25</sup>

One month later, the Third General Chapter was convened and held its preparatory spiritual retreat at San Benigno. The “missions” were represented by Fr. Cagliari and Fr. Costamagna.<sup>26</sup> Although the missions were not a topic on the Chapter’s agenda, they must have been a lively topic of conversation.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 567-575; EBM XIV 500-508 (Don Bosco’s Letter and Report of April 13, 1880 to Leo XIII).

<sup>24</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Simeoni, July 29, 1883 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 225-227; EBM XVI. 295-296).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. EBM XVI, 288-291; Ceria, *Annali* I, 457-460.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ASC D579: Capitoli Generali presieduti da D. Bosco, FDBM 1863 E7, where the official list of participants, 35 in number, is given.

<sup>27</sup> Neither Don Bosco’s letter of convocation of June 20, 1883 nor the eight themes published with the same date, nor the minutes of the Chapter, nor its proceedings published together with those of the Fourth General Chapter in 1887 show that the missions were up for discussion (cf. Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 221-222; *Annali*, 468-469; ASC D578: Capitoli Generali; FDB 1863 E7 - 1864 B6; *Opere Edite* XXVI, 249-280).



Father Costamagna had made first contact with the Araucan natives during the expedition of 1879 and had celebrated a memorable Mass in their presence at Choele Choel. The two missionaries must have created a stir by their reports; and Don Bosco himself doubtlessly fanned the flames by expatiating on the great project and on his future plans. They were the very persons whom Don Bosco had nominated for the post of Vicar Apostolic in his proposal to the Holy See. Perhaps this was not yet public knowledge; but Don Bosco must have opened his heart to them, and the three must have shared their successes, disappointments, and future projects.

In this climate, on the last day of the retreat, Don Bosco, as he anxiously and with high hopes was awaiting the impending fateful decision of the Holy See, had a dream—the *Second Missionary Dream*.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. The Church's Official Approval of Salesian Missionary Activity: the Creation of Vicariate and Prefecture and the Ordination of Fr. John Cagliero as Bishop-Vicar Apostolic**

Fr. Costamagna was already on the high seas bound for the missions at the head of a band of 20 Salesians and 10 Salesian Sisters, when the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith came to a decision.<sup>29</sup> But disappointingly, by the briefs of November 16 and 20, 1883, it only erected a pro-Vicariate for Northern Patagonia, and a Prefecture for Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, naming Fr. Cagliero and Fr. Fagnano for those posts respectively. This action of the Holy See establishing missionary territories under the patronage of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith made the Salesians Apostolic missionaries, but this arrangement granted less than what Don Bosco had hoped for, since neither Fr. Fagnano as Prefect nor Fr. Cagliero as pro-Vicar would be appointed bishop.

At a meeting of the General Council held at Alassio on April 5, 1884, and presided over by Don Bosco, the decision of the Holy See was up for discussion. Don Bosco stressed how important it was for the Salesian Society to have a full Vicariate and a bishop. It was pointed out that the Apostolic Delegate in Argentina (Bishop Aloisio Matera) was opposed even to the erec-

<sup>28</sup> For the text of the dream and related questions, see next Chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Don Bosco's letter to Fr. Costamagna of November 12, 1883 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 240-241).

tion of a pro-Vicariate, for political, ecclesiastical as well as personal considerations.<sup>30</sup> Don Bosco remarked that “the nomination of a pro-vicar could not be offensive to Argentina.” He himself had “already written to the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and to the President of the Republic, submitting the plan for their consideration.”<sup>31</sup>

From Alassio Don Bosco, accompanied by Father Lemoyne, went on to Rome primarily for the purpose of petitioning Leo XIII personally for the privileges, and possibly also discussing the Vicariate. His Roman sojourn lasted from April 14 to May 14, 1884 and it was a time of apprehension and pain. When he was finally granted an audience on May 9, the Pope assured the ailing venerable old man that the privileges would be granted, and that he loved him, yes, him and the Salesians. It appears, however, that the question of the Vicariate was not raised in the audience.<sup>32</sup>

In any case, back in Turin, Don Bosco sought Archbishop Cajetan Alimonda's mediation. This great friend of the Salesians also happened to believe that, in view of the great development of the missions on the Rio Negro, it would have been more appropriate to have a full Vicariate established there, with a bishop at the helm. Consequently on September 26, 1884, he submitted a petition to Pope Leo XIII to that effect. Pope Leo was not unaware of the situation in Argentina, and of that of the Salesian missions in particular. In the above-mentioned memorandum of April 13, 1880, and then again in a detailed report directly from the missions presented in early 1883, Don Bosco had kept him informed about what had been achieved and of

<sup>30</sup> The personal reasons for Archbishop Matera's opposition are discussed in *EBM* XVI, 299-300.

<sup>31</sup> These letters of Don Bosco to the Archbishop and to the President bear the date of July 29 and October 31, 1883 respectively and concerned, therefore, the *proposals* for the erection of the missionary jurisdictions. (The pro-Vicariate and Prefecture were created in November.) Why Don Bosco, and not the Roman Congregation, acted to inform the authorities remains unexplained. The Archbishop had all along been gracious and supportive. There is no record of any reply from President Julius Roca. The President is known to have opposed the erection of missionary jurisdictions, and Archbishop Aneyros was aware of that fact. On the other hand, in 1883 and 1884 the Argentine authorities were asking Fr. Costamagna for Salesians to serve as chaplains or missionaries in various settlements in the southern territories, a fact that bespeaks a favorable attitude on the part of some of the authorities.

<sup>32</sup> The month-long stay in Rome is described in detail in *EBM* XVII, 54-102. For a discussion, from primary sources, of the events of this Roman sojourn—Don Bosco's health, privileges, papal audience, *Letter of 1884*, appointment of a successor, etc., cf. F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1256-1262. The privileges were finally granted by decree of June 28, 1884.

what was in progress or being planned.<sup>33</sup> Hence, he granted the request, and by decree of October 30, 1884, he upgraded Patagonia to a Vicariate and made Fr. Cagliero full vicar and bishop. Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, with Fr. Fagnano as prefect, retained the status of Prefecture.

#### IV. Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Patagonia

##### 1. Fr. Cagliero Bishop-Vicar

This action by the Holy See (up-grading of the mission and appointment of Fr. Cagliero as bishop-vicar) was a great victory, as well as a great physical and moral boost, for Don Bosco personally. It was also a sure sign of the Pope's benevolence for Don Bosco and the Salesians. But more significantly it was the Church's seal of approval and validation of the Salesian Society's missionary vocation and of its missionary projects. Rightly Ceria writes:

The raising of this son of Don Bosco to the episcopacy was, for the whole Salesian family, an event of unparalleled significance. Later Salesian generations could not even imagine the triumphant jubilation of the confreres at the time. Who would have dared to entertain such a hope? For the Cooperators too it was a time to rejoice; for in that elevation they recognized the Church's anointing of the Salesian missionary apostolate.<sup>34</sup>

Fr. Cagliero's ordination as titular bishop of Magida by Cardinal Alimonda took place on December 7, 1884. On February 1, 1885 the bishop was ready to leave for his mission at the head of a band of 18 Salesians priests and brothers and 6 Salesian Sisters. Don Bosco had spent the previous days in a painful, almost anguished state of mind. He was, moreover, confined to his room by illness. Cagliero, his beloved son, was leaving him. He might never see him again. It was in this context and in this frame of mind that on the night of January 31, 1885, preceding the departure of the missionaries, he had a dream—the *Third Missionary Dream on South America*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Letter and Memorandum Don Bosco to Leo XIII, April 13, 1880 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 567-575; *EBM* XIV 500-508); Father Fagnano's 1883 report on the Rio Negro mission (summarized in *EBM* XVI, 294-295) was used by Don Bosco to acquaint the Roman authorities of mission's progress.

<sup>34</sup> Ceria, *Annali* I, 504-505.

<sup>35</sup> "Don Bosco accompanies the missionaries to [South] America." This is the title given

## 2. Difficulty of Taking Possession — Missions *de jure* and *de facto*

When Bishop Cagliero and the missionaries arrived in Montevideo (Uruguay), a crisis was brewing in Argentina. In the first place, opposition to the Salesians and their work in the Rio Negro region and elsewhere, already bitter through 1884, had climaxed into a veritable persecution. The abettor was the Governor of the Province of Rio Negro, General Winter, who also commanded the military detachments guarding the frontier. The accusations (chiefly against Fr. Fagnano) had been taken up and re-edited with success by the anticlerical press. Then, to complicate the situation, General Roca's presidential term was coming to an end. This brought on turmoil and unrest, and it was feared that the new political forces vying for control would be even more radical. Under these circumstances, whether bending to the prevailing winds or out of sheer perverseness, the government was refusing to accept the new Vicar on grounds that there had been no prior consultation regarding the establishment of a Vicariate.<sup>36</sup>

Bishop Cagliero, after a brief stay in Uruguay, entered Argentina quietly and took up residence in the Salesian school of Almagro (Buenos Aires), waiting for the right moment to make his official appearance and hopefully be permitted to enter his See.

Since Fr. Fagnano was the chief target of the accusations by the Governor and in the press, so Fr. Fagnano, while trying to pacify the Governor at Patagonas, brought his case before the Archbishop with a detailed exposition of the facts. The Archbishop then took the case to the Minister of the Interior, who apparently accepted the explanation, and refrained from acting on the Governor's brief.

With this development, and taking advantage of a lull in the press. Bishop

to this dream in Lemoyne's reworked draft and in *Documenti*. We have it solely on Lemoyne's authority. *Finding himself in a great plain, Don Bosco sees all the Salesian works connected by a network of fantastic highways. Then (after a "flight" back to Turin, and again to South America) he sees the plain transformed into a splendid hall in which are gathered, glory-bound, the missionaries and all the people saved through them* (Lemoyne's drafts A and B, in ASC A017, Sogni, FDBM 1321 C11-D8 and B7-C10; *Documenti* XXIX, 43-48 in ASC A078, Cronachette, FDBM 1106 D12-E5; EBM XVII, 273-280).

<sup>36</sup> In a letter to Don Bosco, dated January 2, 1885, Archbishop Aneyros had described the pique of the government when presented with a *fait accompli* in the matter of the Vicariate (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 314, note 1; EBM XVII, 287-288; Cf. also 289: comment by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith writing to Don Bosco).

Cagliero asked to be received by President Roca. Accompanied by Fr. Costamagna, who had participated in General Roca's expedition of 1879, he presented his credentials to the President. The audience started badly, but took a turn for the better, when Fr. Costamagna began to recall events from the expedition, and Bishop Cagliero reassured the President that as a Salesian and as Vicar he would work for the development of all the people in the area. Thus reassured, the President gave him a letter of introduction to the Governor. On July 9, 1885, Bishop Cagliero could finally obtain permission to enter his See at Patagones. The Salesian Missions could now be regarded as established *de facto* as well as *de jure*.<sup>37</sup>

At this time Don Bosco's health had taken a turn for the worse. He was loosing his eyesight, a consequence of his rapidly degenerating bodily systems. It was a foreboding of his approaching end. But his moral vigor and spiritual insight seemed rather to be on the increase. He was sure now that the spread of the Salesian work in South America and worldwide could not be stopped. Painfully he wrote to his "generals" in the field. These letters are precious guidelines for Salesian missionary strategy, as well as a kind of spiritual testaments.<sup>38</sup>

And he continued to dream. But now his dreams transcended South America and had a wider scope. They projected the worldwide expansion of the Salesian work.

<sup>37</sup> For the story of the "persecution" of the Salesians by the Governor of Rio Negro (General Winter) and of Bishop Cagliero's entry into his Vicariate see *EBM* XVII, 285-292.

<sup>38</sup> Don Bosco's letters: to Bishop Cagliero (August 6, 1885); to Fr. Costamagna (Provincial) and to Fr. Fagnano (Prefect Apostolic) (August 10); to Fr. Tomatis (Director at San Nicolás) (August 14); to Fr. Lasagna (Director at Villa Colón and Provincial of Uruguay and Brazil) (September 30), in Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 327-329, 332-337. 340-341; Aubry-Caselli, *Spiritual Writings*, 339-346 (Don Bosco's last five letters to heads of missions).



15 – Monsignor Joseph Fagnano (1844-1916) after his appointment as Prefect Apostolic of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego

## **V. Prefecture Apostolic of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego with the Falkland or Malvinas Islands**

*EBM* XVIII, 329-348; E. Ceria, *Annali* II, 61-73.

As we saw above, the Prefecture Apostolic of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego was created in 1883 together with the erection of the Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Patagonia (or Rio Negro). By the same act Fr. Joseph Fagnano was appointed Prefect Apostolic. The mission comprised the province of Santa Cruz (Southern Patagonia, Argentina), Tierra del Fue-

go (Chile and Argentina) and the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas, British since 1833). The mission could not be immediately developed, for a number of reasons—chiefly because of the inhospitable and undeveloped nature of the area, especially of Tierra del Fuego.

Salesian missionary activity in the strict sense began in the Tierra del Fuego in 1888, and its early development and consolidation took place in the early 1890s. Among the many dedicated missionaries (Salesian fathers, brothers and sisters) who labored hard and long in establishing and developing the mission Msgr. Joseph Fagnano and Fr. Joseph Beauvoir stand out above all.<sup>39</sup>

### **1. Southern Patagonia and the Falkland Islands (*Malvinas*)**

In 1885, however, Fr. Fagnano, with the help of Fr. Joseph Beauvoir, established the mission of Santa Cruz (Province of Santa Cruz or Southern Patagonia). Later, in 1888, they established a mission at Rio Gallegos, further south in the same province. These established settlements, could also serve as base for the mission to Tierra del Fuego.

Fr. Beauvoir, Fr. Fagnano's companion and right-hand man, must be regarded as a mainstay of the southern mission (in both Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego). He labored the longest as a missionary in contact with the natives. He produced a dictionary of the Fueguin-Ona language and a study of the Shelknam tribes.

In 1888 Father Fagnano and Father Patrick Diamond (1863-1937) visited Port Stanley (Falkland or *Malvinas* Islands) and established a Catholic center there after having assessed the need. The Church of England pastor was well established in a beautiful church and school. Many Catholics attended

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Beauvoir (1850-1930), born in Turin, joined the Salesians in 1870 and was ordained a priest in 1875. In 1878 Don Bosco asked him if he would volunteers for the South American missions, he accepted and left that very year. After a short stay in Uruguay and at Buenos Aires, he volunteered for the mission of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. He was the missionary who worked the hardest and the longest among the natives. In 1882-1883 he had taken part in General Villegas' expedition to the Andes as military chaplain and was awarded a silver medal for his priestly zeal. With Msgr. Fagnano he established mission bases at Santa Cruz and Rio Gallegos, and then he spent 25 years evangelizing the natives of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. He compiled a little dictionary of the Ona language, later merged with his larger work, *Los Shelknam Indígenos de la Tierra del Fuego*. He died in Buenos Aires in 1930.



that church and sent their children to its school. Father Patrick Diamond, in charge of the center, soon had a small school in operation (1889).

## **2. Tierra del Fuego**

In 1886 Fr. Fagnano and Fr. Beauvoir accompanied an Argentine military expedition south beyond the Straits of Magellan, made contact with natives, and assessed possibilities.

### *Punta Arenas (Chile) chosen as Mission Center in Tierra del Fuego*

In 1887 Punta Arenas was chosen as the See of the Prefecture. Punta Arenas, situated on the northwestern shore of the Straits of Magellan (on the mainland), Dawson Island, lying southeast of Punta Arenas in the elbow of the Straits, and the rest of the archipelago (except the eastern half of Isla Grande) were Chilean territory.

From Punta Arenas, in 1887-1888, Fr. Fagnano and Lay Brother Charles Audisio, with the help of and three laymen, mounted an expedition to Dawson Island by boat, bringing along horses, sheep and necessary gear. They landed at Willis Bay, and made their way inland. On the second day, they made contact with some natives, and invited them to Punta Arenas. (Don Bosco passed away while the missionaries were engaged on this excursion.)

The group continued by boat in a southerly direction towards Admiralty Bay, hoping to catch sight of natives on the shore. A storm forced them ashore on Isla Grande. They traveled some distance inland and met small groups of natives. The missionaries were unable to communicate with them, except to invite them to Punta Arenas. These Isla Grande natives were hostile toward the white people because they had been pushed back by gold diggers and by English sheepherders, who had established themselves in pastures and were killing guanaco, the natives' staple food. The missionaries were lucky to get away without bodily harm.

After returning to Punta Arenas and learning of Don Bosco's death, Fr. Fagnano went to Italy to seek help. Fr. Rua arranged for the sending of 10 Salesians and 5 Salesian Sisters to Tierra del Fuego. The group went directly to Punta Arenas and began a systematic organization of the religious life of the mission there.

*San Rafael Mission Established on Dawson Island*

Fr. Fagnano undertook a second expedition (by boat) to Dawson Island with the essential materials to establish a small village. The mission was established at Willis Bay on Dawson, with Fr. Anthony Ferrero, Brother John Silvestro and 10 laymen (shepherds and builders). By and by natives came and stayed. Thus the San Rafael mission was started. Soon, however, the mission was moved to the more suitable site of Harris Bay (Dawson). Fr. Bartholomew Pistone and additional builders were added to the group, and the mission grew.

In September 1889, while workers, shepherds and Fr. Ferrero were off to Punta Arenas for supplies, the natives attacked Fr. Pistone and Brother Silvestro with knives, wounding them, though not critically. The natives ran away, but the two missionaries lived in fear for next few days. Some Englishmen in a small cutter were driven ashore by a storm and stayed at the mission. Later they brought the news of the attack to Punta Arenas and to Fr. Fagnano. He hired and sent a skiff to take the more seriously wounded brother out, but the boat was shipwrecked, and Brother Silvestro was lost at sea.

Fr. Fagnano with Brother Anthony Bergese went back to Dawson Island, and immediately set about restarting the San Rafael mission. The natives were gradually enticed back; 60 houses and a church were erected. Salesian Fathers, Brothers and Sisters started a school, shops and a hospital.

*Consolidation of San Rafael Mission on Dawson Island (from 1890)*

Fr. Fagnano obtained from the Chilean government the use of Dawson Island for 20 years, under certain conditions, for the stated purpose of evangelizing and settling the natives. On December 8, 1890, 33 natives were baptized.

Although Punta Arenas remained the residence of the Prefecture Apostolic and the supply base, the center of missionary activity after 1890 was Dawson Island. Dawson was centrally located in the Straits and a transit point in the migration of natives from the western part of the archipelago to Isla Grande and vice versa. The San Rafael mission on Harris Bay enjoyed a favorable situation, with good pastures and great forests. Cattle (for which original stock had been supplied in part by the Chilean government) thrived as well as other animals. Some agriculture was possible, but most of the food and supplies had to be shipped in every month from Punta Arenas.

The natives gravitated to the mission as they passed in their boats. Some came attracted by the reports heard from other natives who had visited the mission; but more often it was the missionaries who went looking for them along the many channels and islands.

The native men helped with the heavy work (such as clearing woods, or herding the cattle); the women learned housekeeping; the children (some 50 boys and 40 girls on the average) were taught practical rudiments. Upon coming into the mission everyone was washed and deloused; then they received clothing and housing. But the natives refused to wear shoes. Life would be pretty well regimented, with early rising, prayers, work, meals, class, etc.

In February 1892, Bishop Cagliero, accompanied by the local governor and other authorities, visited the mission on a boat placed at his disposal by the Chilean government. The reception, and what they saw of the working of the mission, made great impression on them. Crossing to Punta Arenas, they witnessed the activities of the mission center there. A new church was blessed on that occasion.

Fr. Fagnano had long wanted a boat for the mission, one that could be relied on to transport supplies and personnel safely and on schedule. He asked Fr. Beauvoir to try to get one, but could give him no money, even for travel. Fr. Beauvoir obtained passage to Santiago (Chile) as chaplain on a military boat, with the intention of seeking help from government authorities. He could not meet the President, but got to speak with the Prime Minister, who listened to the story of the mission and “offered guns and ammunition.” Fr. Beauvoir asked for a boat, and was referred to the minister of defense. Instead of a boat, this gentleman obtained a grant of 6,000 pesos a year for the mission. Fr. Beauvoir boldly asked also for the military survey maps and the navigational charts of the area, and they were granted. After some month’s priestly ministry in the capital, with the help of benefactors, he found and bought a 35-ton steamship, which he named *María Auxiliadora*. He loaded it with provisions, found a makeshift crew and sailed for the straits. After having survived a storm, in sight of Punta Arenas they hit a sand bar. As the sailors threatened to quit, Fr. Beauvoir ordered the boat unloaded, disengaged and then reloaded. Thus the mission acquired a boat.

### *The Candelara Mission on Isla Grande*

The natives living at, or gravitating around the San Rafael mission on Dawson Island were prevalently Yahgans (with a few Onas). The Yahgans

were subject to various diseases contracted through contact with Europeans. Fr. Fagnano realized that it would be best to keep the Onas that lived on Isla Grande separated, and planned to establish a mission for them.

In February 1893, with Fr. Beauvoir, two Brothers, a young worker and two Ona natives (as interpreters), Fr. Fagnano embarked on an exploratory expedition for Isla Grande. Provisions included 9 horses, several dogs, hard-tack, rice, noodle, sugar, coffee and a tent. They also loaded a supply of woolen blankets and religious objects as gifts for the natives they would meet. In a one-week march inland they reached the headwaters of the Rio Grande, which flows from the mountainous spine of the island to the Atlantic. Descending from the ridge toward the Atlantic, they came upon an Ona camp. The Onas were suspicious of Europeans because of the harassment suffered from prospectors and English sheepherders. The interpreters reassured the chief, who came out with some men to meet the missionaries. They each received a blanket and a medal of Mary Help of Christians to put around their necks. Then the missionaries moved into the camp. They gave each person the same gifts. After promising to return, they proceeded another day's march down the slope and met up with an even larger (and more warlike) tribe. The interpreters and the gifts reassured them. Without further ado the missionaries decided on the site of the new mission: it was to be situated near the bank of the Rio Grande, some 3 miles from its mouth. The place was accessible, and had good water and grazing land. Retracing their steps over the hump of the island, they returned to Dawson.

In June 1893, in a hired boat, Fr. Beauvoir, with another priest, three brothers and four hired workers sailed for the Rio Grande. Because of rough waters and dangerous cliffs at the mouth of the river, the captain refused to sail in, unless Fr. Beauvoir "insured" the boat (that is, made good any eventual loss or damage). Obviously, Fr. Beauvoir refused. The captain turned around to return to Punta Arenas. Fr. Beauvoir begged him to put the men and the supplies ashore at St. Sebastian Bay (somewhat further north). In the process a large quantity of the building materials and supplies, and some animals, were lost.

Fr. Beauvoir, the three brothers, and two shepherds landed, while the others returned to Punta Arenas to inform Fr. Fagnano and get help. Impatient with the long delay, Fr. Beauvoir decided to go to Punta Arenas himself. He crossed the Isla Grande on horseback and caught a boat across the straits.

At Punta Arenas the mission boat (*María Auxiliadora*) and a second hired boat were loaded with fresh supplies and sailed to the Rio Grande. Braving

the rocks, they sailed into the river at high tide and found a small natural anchorage. The mission was built at the place designated the preceding February and was called *Candelara* Mission (Candlemass, for the feast of the Purification of Mary, February 2). The mission was located in the Argentine half of Isla Grande, and the Argentine government freely gave the mission rights to extensive grazing lands. For months, while the building was proceeding, no natives were seen. But eventually they came by in small groups. By May 1894 some 350 Ona natives were encamped around the mission.

As supplies had to be brought in continuously from Punta Arenas, and the mission boat was too small for the purpose, Fr. Fagnano purchased a 200-ton vessel, which he named the *Torino*, and hired a reliable crew. In July 1894 he visited the mission for the first time. In successive trips the *Torino* brought new missionaries, and (among other supplies) enough lumber to build some one hundred small houses, schools for boys and girls, shops, hospital and church—a whole village.



16 – Father James Costamagna evangelizes a group of natives during a missionary excursion

**Conclusion**

The courage and perseverance of the missionaries (Salesian fathers, brothers and sisters) made Don Bosco's original dream of missions among the natives a reality. From Turin Father Rua, at great cost in personnel and money and with continuous personal encouragement, backed the missionaries' efforts. And the help and support of the Salesian Cooperators was crucial. By 1900 the whole lower portion of South America, from the Pampas to Tierra del Fuego, was recognized as the mission field entrusted to the Salesians—Don Bosco's Salesian Family.

## Appendices

### 1. Chronology of the Establishment and First Organization of the Salesian Work and Missions in South America (1871-1888)

#### *Preparatory Work*

**1871/72**—Don Bosco's first mission dream, related to Pope Pius IX in 1876, and to Frs. Lemoyne and Barberis.

**1874 Aug**—Consul John Gazzolo (of Savona) writes to Archbishop Aneyros of Buenos Aires proposing that the Salesians establish a work in Argentina and begin by taking over the 'Italian' church, *Mater Misericordiae*, in Buenos Aires.

[1874 Sep 24—Don Bosco receives request to send missionaries to Australia.]

**1874 Oct 10**—Archbishop Aneyros (through Mgr. Antonio Espinosa) writes to Consul Gazzolo and sends Don Bosco a proposal for a Salesian foundation in Argentina.

**1874 Nov 7ff.**—Exchange of letters regarding a school at San Nicolás de los Arroyos (Fr. Ceccarelli, Sñr. Benítez).

**1875 Jan 28**—Don Bosco notifies directors that missions will be established in South America.

**1875 Feb 5**—Don Bosco's circular on the prospective mission.

**1875 May 12**—In good nights Don Bosco speaks of plans to establish Salesian foundations in Argentina as certain. Don Bosco's accepts the Argentine proposal.

**1875 Jul 28**—Don Bosco letter to Fr. Pedro Ceccarelli of San Nicolás de los Arroyos describing the missionaries' preparation for the voyage.

**1875 Nov 1**—Papal audience for the first missionary expedition.

**1875 Nov 11**—Adieu ceremony and departure of the first missionary expedition, the twenty keepsakes.

**1875 Dec 14**—The missionaries arrive in Buenos Aires, via Rio de Janeiro. They are greeted by Archbishop Federico Aneyros and some 200 Italian immigrants (former Oratory boys among them).

#### *Salesian Work Established in the Plata Area (Argentina and Uruguay) and Early Development*

**1875**—Immediately, the Salesians take over the church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Mater Misericordiae*), serving the community of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires (Argentina).

**1875 Dec 21**—Seven of the 10 Salesians continue on to San Nicolás de los Arroyos to take over the school.



[1875—Probable request made to Don Bosco for a foundation in India.]

**1876** Apr 5-May 15—Don Bosco's trip to Rome with Fr. Berto; in an audience Don Bosco discusses the missions with the Pope and relates the dream of 1871/72 to him.

1876 Jul—The bishop of Concepción (Chile) asks for Salesians.

1876 Jul 29—Don Bosco's reply: a foundation in Chile possible only later (not until 1887).

1876 Aug—Don Bosco makes a public appeal to finance the second missionary expedition, and informs the Italian government the missionaries' work on behalf of Italian immigrants.

[1876 Aug—Don Bosco receives request for Salesian work in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and plans to send Fr. Cagliero. (Plans canceled; first foundation in S. L., 1956)].

1876 Oct 29—Pius IX sends Don Bosco 5,000 lire for the second missionary expedition.

1876 Nov 7—Second expedition of 24 Salesian missionaries, preceded by papal audience for Don Bosco and the missionaries: 14 leave for Argentina from Genoa; 10 travel by train to leave from Bordeaux for Uruguay, but are delayed until Dec 2.

**1877**—Salesians take over St. Rose of Lima church and school in Villa Colón, near Montevideo (Uruguay): the buildings had been transferred to Fr. Cagliero on May 24, 1876.

1877 Jun 1-24—Don Bosco in Rome with Archbishop Aneyros of Buenos Aires, on business of the missions, and back to Turin with the Archbishop.

1877 Nov 6—At Mornese, adieu ceremony for the first missionary expedition of six Salesian Sisters.

1877 Nov 7—In Turin, adieu ceremony for the third expedition of 18 Salesian missionaries, Frs. Costamagna and Vespignani among them.

1877—Parish and St. John the Evangelist school established in the district of La Boca, Buenos Aires.

1877 Sep 1—Parish (Mary Help of Christians) accepted, and Pius IX school established in the district of Almagro, Buenos Aires (later to become vocational training center).

From **1876 to 1883**—Don Bosco presses for apostolic recognition of Salesian missions by Rome.

**1878** Sep 18—Leo XIII's brief in support of the Salesian missions.

1878 Dec 7—Fourth missionary expedition with address by Don Bosco.

**1879**—Salesians establish work in Las Piedras (Uruguay).

### *Salesian Missions Proper Established*

**1879** Apr—Argentine military expedition under Minister of Defense Julio Roca. Msgr. A. Espinosa, Fr. J. Costamagna and Sem. Louis Botto join expedition and make contact with natives.



17 – Father Joseph Beauvoir (1850-1930), chaplain to General Villegas military expedition to the Andes mountain 1882-1883

1879 Jun—Parish and mission of Carmen de Patagones (at the mouth of the Rio Negro) are entrusted to the Salesians.

1879 Dec 18—Fr. Rua in a circular announces that the Salesians have entered Patagonia (the previous June).

**1880**—Parish, mission and hospice at Viedma (at the mouth of the Rio Negro) are entrusted to the Salesians.

**1881**—Salesians establish work in Paysandú (Rosario), Uruguay.

**1882**—Salesian work is established in Neuquén (Argentina, in the Andes Cordillera).

**1883**—Salesians establish work in Niterói (Nichteróy), Brazil.

1883 Jul 29—Requested by the Holy See, Don Bosco submits a proposal for the formation of three mission territories of apostolic right (Vicariates, Prefectures), and the name of Cagliero, Costamagna and Fagnano as possible prelates).

1883 Aug 30—Don Bosco's second missionary dream on South America.

*Salesian Missions of Apostolic Right (Vicariate of Patagonia - Prefecture of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego)*

1883 Nov—The Holy See creates two mission territories: the Pro-Vicariate of Northern and Central Patagonia, and the Prefecture of Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.

**1884** Oct 30—On request from Don Bosco, with Archbishop Alimonda's support, the Holy See upgrades missions to a full Vicariate and a Prefecture, and appoints Cagliero and Fagnano as Vicar and Prefect Apostolic respectively.

1884 Dec 7—Vicar Apostolic Cagliero is ordained bishop.

**1885** Jan 31—Don Bosco's third missionary dream on South America (Lemoyne's report).

1885 Jul 9—Bishop Cagliero enters his See at Carmen de Patagones (at the mouth of the Rio Negro).

1885—Santa Catalina school and youth center are established in Buenos Aires.

**1886**—Salesians establish work in São Paulo (Sacred Heart), Brazil.

1887 Jul 21—Fr. Fagnano and three Salesians settle at Punta Arenas, also called San José (Tierra del Fuego, Chile).

1887—Salesian school and parish established in Concepción (Chile).

*Negotiated under Don Bosco, Established under Fr. Rua*

**1888**—Salesians begin a work in Talca (S. Salvador) (Chile).

1888—State's Protectorado: Salesians take over orphanage in Quito (Ecuador). The Vicariate Apostolic of Méndez y Gualquiza (Ecuador) is entrusted to the Salesians.

## 2. Structural Organization of the Salesian Work in South America

[*Note 1:* The additional date (1902) for the provinces is the date of the official *sanatio* granted by the Holy See (upon petition by Fr. Rua) after General Chapter VIII (1898) discovered past canonical irregularities.]

[*Note 2:* Although each Province had its own Provincial, Fr. Cagliero acted as Don Bosco's plenipotentiary Vicar—in practice from the beginning, officially from 1883 (as Bishop-Vicar).]

I. Argentina-Chile	II. Argent-No. Pat.	III. Uruguay	IV. Brazil-Ecuador	V. So. Pat.-TdF-FI
<p>Buenos Aires (ARG) Our Lady of Mercy (1875)</p> <p>San Nicolás (ARG) Holy Angels (1875)</p> <p>ARG. PROV. St. Francis de Sales (1877/1902)</p> <p>B. Aires-Boca (ARG) St. John Evangelist (1877)</p> <p>B. Aires-Almagro (ARG) Pius IX (1877)</p> <p>Buenos Aires (ARG) St. Catherine (1885)</p> <p>La Plata (ARG) Sacred Heart of J. (1886)</p> <p>Concepción (CHI) St. Joseph School (1887)</p> <p>Talca (CHILE) Holy Redeemer Sch. (1888)</p>	<p>C. de Patagones (Mission) O.L. of Carmel Parish, St. Joseph School (1879)</p> <p>Viedma (Mission-Seat of Vicariate OL of Mercy Parish, St. Fr. de Sales school (1880)</p> <p>VIC. APOSTOLIC N. PATAGONIA &amp; St. Fr. Xavier PROV. (1883/1902)</p> <p>Chosmalal (ARG) Mary Immac. Parish (1888)</p>	<p>Villa Colón (Montevideo URU) Pius IX/St. F. de Sales School (1877)</p> <p>Las Piedras (URU) St. Isidore School (1879)</p> <p>La Paz (URU) O. L. of Peace Ch. (1880)</p> <p>URUGUAY PROV St. Joseph (1881/1902)</p> <p>Paysandú (URU) H. Rosary Church &amp; School (1881)</p> <p>Montevideo (URU) S. Heart School (1889)</p>	<p>Niterói (BRA) St. Rose school (1883)</p> <p>BRAZIL PROV. Mary Help of Chr. (1883/1902)</p> <p>São Paulo (BRA) Sacred Heart School (1886)</p> <p>Quito (ECU) Sacred Heart School (1886/87)</p> <p>VICAR. APOSTOL. MÉNDEZ y GUALAQUIZA (ECU) (1888/1889)</p>	<p>PREFECTURE AP. of SO. PATAGONIA-TIERRA d. FUEGO (ARG/CHI) (1883)</p> <p>&amp; ST. MICHAEL PROV (1883/1902)</p> <p>R. Gallegos H. Cross (Santa Cruz, ARG) (1885)</p> <p>Punta Arenas (CHI) St. Joseph school (1887)</p> <p>Port Stanley (EI.) (FALKLAND – MALVINAS Isls) Star of the Sea Parish &amp; School (1888/89)</p>



18 – Tierra del Fuego: Salesians on horseback  
in the area of Arroyo Gama (St. Sebastian Bay)

## Chapter 4

# SALESIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA IV APPENDICES AND COMMENTS

### Summary

1. Don Bosco's Dream on the South American Missions (Second Mission Dream; San Benigno, August 30, 1883)
2. Ceferino Namuncurá (Biographical Sketch)
3. Consolidation and Expansion of The Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Patagonia
4. Establishment of the Vicariate of Méndez y Gualaquiza (Ecuador)
5. Mato Grosso Mission (Brazil)
6. Closing Comment

### I. Don Bosco's Second Mission Dream (San Benigno, August 30, 1883)

#### 1. Sources and Textual Tradition of the Dream

The second Mission Dream (*Dream on the South American Missions*) took place at San Benigno, at the end of the spiritual retreat preparatory to the Third General Chapter, on the night preceding the feast of St. Rose of Lima, hence on the night of August 30, 1883.<sup>1</sup> Don Bosco narrated the dream five days later to the members of the Third General Chapter meeting at Valsalice during the morning session of September 4. In some of the manuscripts, it bears the title, *The American Missions* or *The Great Gathering at the Equator*.

This lengthy dream narrative tells of a gathering at a great hall located in the equatorial region of South America. Here the missions are a topic of conversation and of allegorical scenes. There follows a train journey southward down the length of South America to the Straits of Magellan, along the eastern slope of the Andes. Don Bosco, accompanied by an interpreter, is shown "the harvest entrusted to the Salesians." This is followed, in one tradi-

<sup>1</sup> The feast of St. Rose of Lima fell on August 31. The memorial is now kept on August 23.

tion of the text, by a journey northward, by another route, back to the point of departure.

A number of archival documents, namely, Viglietti's chronicle, the minutes of the Third General Chapter, and Lemoyne's reports (one of them reviewed by Don Bosco) allow us to reconstruct the textual history of this dream. In the present archival situation, Lemoyne remains our principal source.

[Viglietti's Alleged Draft]

In a short biographical introduction to his transcribed chronicle, Charles Viglietti states that on the morning of August 31, in San Benigno, Don Bosco called him to his room and had him take this dream down in writing under dictation. He intended to "read it" to the members of the General Chapter.<sup>2</sup> Viglietti's report is not extant.

[GC 3 Minutes]

The minutes of the Third General Chapter (as preserved in *ASC*) carry a record of Don Bosco's dream for the morning session of September 4. This report is very sketchy, but it does reveal the structure and the shape of the original narration. Don Bosco's dream narrative ended at Punta Arenas and did not have a description of a return journey.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Charles Maria Viglietti (1864-1915) served as Don Bosco's secretary from 1884 up to the Saint's death. He was ordained on December 18, 1886. At Fr. Lemoyne's request, he kept a chronicle beginning with May 20, 1884. He produced a first draft chronicle, which he later transcribed into good copy. In a three-page introduction to his transcribed chronicle, Viglietti recounts how Don Bosco, in August 1882, chose him, still a novice, as an errand boy. He then goes on to describe how, in November 1883, Don Bosco asked him (still a student of philosophy, although already perpetually professed) to be his secretary and serve him as the "*baculus senectutis meae*" (the staff of my old age). On the subject of this dream he writes: "One morning in 1883, the [feast] day of St. Rose of Lima, Don Bosco, no sooner out of bed, called me to his room. He dictated to me a beautiful dream that he had had that night and that concerned our missions in [South] America. That dream was read a few days later at the General Chapter, meeting at Valsalice" (*ASC* A010: Cronachette, Viglietti, "Memorie", *FDBM* 1232 C6).

<sup>3</sup> *GC 3 Minutes* report is in *ASC* D579: Capitoli Generali presieduti da Don Bosco, III Cap. Gen. (1883), *FDBM* 1863 E12-1864 A1. It should be borne in mind that at the time of GC 3 (September 1-7, 1883) Fr. Lemoyne, though present at the Chapter, had not yet been appointed general secretary. The very imperfect minutes were the work of Fr. John Marengo (cf. *EBM* XVI, 326). As a whole the archival copy of the minutes appears to be a transcription of the original notes. But the sparing dream narrative itself (in a different handwriting?) exhibits all the characteristics of an original, unedited draft.



[Lemoyne A]

Fr. Lemoyne, a member of the Third General Chapter,<sup>4</sup> drafted a first-hand report, *Lemoyne A*. It is a long autograph narrative with marginal notes by the same. It tells of the gathering in the great hall at the equator, and relates the journey southward ending at Punta Arenas (with a conclusion of the dream and the awakening). It does not speak of a return journey back to the starting point.<sup>5</sup>

[Lemoyne B]

Subsequently, Lemoyne (on the basis of *Lemoyne A*) drafted a second report that he submitted to Don Bosco for revision (*Lemoyne B*). As in the case of *Lemoyne A*, we have a long autograph narrative describing the meeting at the hall, the train journey southward, ending at Punta Arenas with a conclusion of the dream and the awakening. Again, there is no reference to a return journey.

A number of marginal additions and interlinear corrections in Don Bosco's hand appear through the first part of this draft. One large marginal addition of over 160 words near the beginning reports the conversation heard by Don Bosco in the hall. There are also further marginal notes by Lemoyne (perhaps added later).

[Appendix X]

*Lemoyne B* (with its conclusion) is followed immediately by fairly large appendix in Lemoyne's hand, with his own marginal notes, but none by Don Bosco. It describes an adventurous return journey, by a different route, to the point of departure. This appendix is marked with an X, which corresponds to an earlier X placed *before* the conclusion of the dream in *Lemoyne B*.<sup>6</sup>

*Lemoyne B*, having been authenticated by Don Bosco, should be regarded as the representative text of the dream. The status of *Appendix X* is uncertain. It was not part of the original narration but was added to the narrative after the conclusion of the dream and the awaking, and it bears no sign of having been reviewed by Don Bosco.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Lemoyne's name appears among the 35 members of the Third General Chapter listed in the minutes (cf. *ASC* D579: Capitoli Generali presieduti da Don Bosco, *FDBM* 1863 E7).

<sup>5</sup> *Lemoyne A* is in *ASC* A017: Autografi-Sogni, *FDBM* 1347 B10-C9.

<sup>6</sup> *Lemoyne B* is in *ASC* A017: Autografi-Sogni, *FDBM* 1347 A6-B5; followed immediately by *Appendix X*, *FDBM* 1347 B6-9.

[Lemoyne C]

In a further editorial effort, Lemoyne proceeded to compile a “definitive” text. He edited *Lemoyne B* by inserting *Appendix X* into its logical sequence (before the conclusion and awakening) and by integrating all marginal notes into the text and other details (presumably derived from Don Bosco). Thus a “complete and coherent” narrative was achieved.<sup>7</sup>

[*Documenti* and *Biographical Memoirs*]

*Lemoyne C*, with superficial editing, is the text transcribed by Lemoyne in his *Documenti*. The *Documenti* text then was brought into the *Biographical Memoirs* with some further editing by E. Ceria.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The Dream Narrative — Text of *Lemoyne B*

Note: The marginal additions and corrections in Don Bosco’s hand are inserted in *Italics* into the main body of the text. Lemoyne’s additions are left in the margin at the place where they occur in the manuscript. Titles and other additions in *square brackets* are added for easier reading.

[*Introduction by the Narrator*]

On the night preceding the feast of St. Rose of Lima (August 30) I had a dream. Somehow I was conscious of being asleep. At the same time I seemed to be running hard, which exhausted me to the point that I was unable to speak, write, and work at my usual occupations.

[*Dream Setting: In the Reception Hall*]

As I was considering whether this was dream or reality, I seemed to be entering a reception hall where many people were conversing on various subjects.

A prolonged conversation ensued on the fact that a great number of savages in Australia, in India, in China, in Africa, and particularly in America, are still shrouded in the shadow of death.

<sup>7</sup> *Lemoyne C* is in *ASC* A017: Sogni, *FDBM* 1318 D7-E12+1319 A1-9.

<sup>8</sup> *Documenti* XXVI [c. 37], 525-534, in *ASC* A075: Cronachette, Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBM* 1089 E11 - 1090 A8; *EBM* XVI, 304-312.

One speaker remarked: "Europe, Christian Europe, the great teacher of civilized living and of the Catholic faith, seems to have grown apathetic with regard to the foreign missions. Few have the courage to brave long voyages or unknown [lands] to save the souls of those millions of souls [*sic*] that were nonetheless redeemed by the Son of God, Jesus Christ."<sup>9</sup>

*Another speaker added: "How many idol-worshippers in America alone lead unhappy lives outside the Church, deprived of the knowledge of the Gospel! People think (and geographers make the same mistake) that the American Cordilleras are like a wall that divides that part of the world in two. But it is not so. Those long and high mountain ranges are crossed by valleys that are more than one thousand kilometers long. Within them are forests as yet unexplored; [rare] plants, animals, and [precious] stones [so rare] that [they] are scarce [even] there [sic]. Coal, petroleum, lead, copper, iron, silver and gold lie buried in those mountains, where the Creator's almighty hand placed them for people's benefit. O cordilleras, cordilleras, how rich are your eastern slopes!"*

*At that moment I felt the urge to seek an explanation on a number of subjects, and to find out who those people were, and where I was. But I thought: "Before opening my mouth I ought to see what kind of people these are!" And so I looked around to investigate, but I recognized no one. Meanwhile, as if they had only noticed me at that very moment, they invited me to join them, and they received me kindly. Then I inquired: "Where are we? Are we in Turin, London, Madrid or Paris? And who are you?" But the gentlemen ignored my questions and continued their discourse on the Missions.*

*[Act I: Allegorical Actions in the Reception Hall]*

At that moment a young man of ravishing beauty, radiating light brighter than the sun, who appeared to be about sixteen years of age, came up to me. His clothes were splendidly embroidered; he wore a crown-like adornment on his head that was set with sparkling jewels. He looked at me kindly, and seemed to be interested in me in a special way. His smile expressed ineffable love. He spoke my name, took me by the hand, and began to speak about the Salesian Congregation.

<sup>9</sup> The portion of continuous text in *italics* that follows is Don Bosco's long marginal addition, already mentioned. In dreams "auditions" and conversations are not unusual; but this conversation is very unusual for its length and logical complexity. All other marginal and interlinear corrections or additions by Don Bosco (*also inserted in italics*) deal with small details. The important consideration is that Don Bosco reviewed this text.

At a certain point I interjected: "With whom have I the honor of speaking? Please tell me your name."

The young man replied: "Have no fear! Speak freely, for you are with a friend."

"But what is your name?"

"I would gladly tell you my name, but it isn't necessary. You should know who I am."

Then I looked more intently at that radiant face. How beautiful it was! Immediately I recognized him as the son of Count Colle, the illustrious benefactor of all our houses, and especially of our [South] American missions.<sup>10</sup> "Oh, it's you," I said, speaking his name. "And who are all these gentlemen?"

<sup>10</sup> In a number of dreams Don Bosco is guided by an Interpreter. For example, Dominic Savio fills this role in the Lanzo Dream of 1876. Here the Interpreter is Louis Colle, the son of Count Louis Antoine Fleury Colle of Toulon, France. In March 1882, Don Bosco visited the young man as he lay dying of tuberculosis. He died on April 3 at the age of 17. Don Bosco thought so highly of Louis, (and of his great benefactors, the Count and Countess Colle) that a short time later, with the help of Fr. de Barruel, he wrote and published a biography dedicated "À Monsieur et à Madame Colle": *Biographie du jeune Louis Fleury Antoine Colle*, par Jean Bosco prêtre (Turin: typ. de l'Oratoire, 1882), cf. *EBM* XV, 57-59. Was Louis to be the new Dominic Savio? Be that as it may, the identity of the Interpreter-Guide, as presented in the sources of this dream, is problematic. In the *GC3 Minutes* he is simply a "layperson." In *Lemoyne A* (up to page 4 of the main text), the Interpreter is described as "a gentleman" (*un personaggio*), "a man" (*un uomo*), "that man" (*quell'uomo*). But Lemoyne's later marginal notes from page 2 on, already specify that he was a young man (*un giovane*), subsequently identified as "the son of the Counts Colli" (*sic*). Then from page 4 on, Lemoyne systematically deletes the original designations (such as "that man") replacing them with expressions like, "that young man", "that dear young man." It appears, therefore, that in the original narration Don Bosco had not identified the Interpreter as young Louis Colle. In *Lemoyne B*, which (as mentioned above) is a re-working of the text by Lemoyne reviewed by Don Bosco, the Interpreter is identified as young Louis Colle from the start. In this respect, it is significant that Don Bosco on other occasions spoke of Louis Colle's appearing to him in the missionary dreams and in other contexts (cf. *EBM* XV, 59-70). Specifically, with reference to this second missionary dream, in a letter to Count Colle dated February 11, 1884, he speaks of Louis as his guide: "The trip I took in our dear Louis' company is becoming clearer day by day" (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 501). He does the same with reference to the fourth missionary dream in letters to Count and Countess Colle dated August 10, 1885 and January 15, 1886 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 516 and 521), where he mentions a "stroll" he took with Louis to Central Africa and China. It should be noted, however, that, as our documents stand, in the fourth mission dream Louis Colle merely appears among those who urge Don Bosco on, not as an interpreter-guide. In the third missionary dream, there is an unidentified Interpreter; but Louis Colle appears only toward the end among the blessed.



19 – Father Maggiorino Borgatello (1857-1929) and Salesian confreres with native boys in primary school in front of Candelara mission on Dawson Island

“They are friends of the Salesians; and I, as a friend of yours and of your Salesians, *and in God’s name*, would like to give you a small task to perform.”

[Scene 1: Acted Allegory: The Numbered Rope]

“What kind of task? What’s this all about?”

“Come up to this table, and pull down on this rope.” There was a table in the middle *of the great hall*, and on this table was a rope coiled up into a ball. I observed that this rope was scored with lines like a ruler. Later I realized that the hall was located in South America, right at the equator, and that the numbers on the rope represented the degrees *of the earth’s latitude*. So, I grasped the end of the rope, and as I looked at it I saw the number 0 marked on it. I began to laugh.

“This is no laughing matter,” the angelic youth said to me. “Observe, and tell me what you see written on the rope.”

“The number 0.”

“Pull on the rope a bit.” I pulled, and out came the number 1.

“Pull some more, and coil the rope as you pull.” I pulled, and out came the numbers 2, 3, 4, up to 20.

“Is this enough?” I asked him.

“No,” the young man replied. “Pull farther. Pull till you find a knot.” I pulled till I reached the number 47 and, after it, a large knot. The rope extended beyond that point, but divided into many smaller cords that radiated out toward the east, the west, and the south.

“Is this enough?” I asked him.

“What is the number?” he inquired in turn.

“The number is 47.”

“And what does 47 plus 3 make?”

“50!”

“And 50 plus 5?”

“55!”

“Watch carefully: fifty-five,” he said, and added: “Pull some more!”

“I have reached the end!”

“Well, then, turn around, and pull the rope in the opposite direction.” I pulled on the rope in that direction till I reached the number 10.

“Pull some more,” said the young man.

“There is no more!”

“So, there is no more. Then, look farther. What do you see?”

“It’s water,” I replied. At that moment I had an experience so strange as to defy all explanation. I was standing in that room, was pulling on that rope, and yet at the same time I had a bird’s eye view of a vast panorama that was unfolding before my very eyes, and that stretched out along the full extent of the rope.

[Lemoyne's marginal note]	[Main text]
<p>It seems that the point 47 represents the starting place of the Salesian center from which to reach out to the Falkland Islands and the Tierra del Fuego, and other islands of those farthest lands [<i>sic</i>] in [South] America.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>[marginal note]</p> <p>I saw in concentration all that I later saw in detail. The degrees on the rope where the clues that helped me memorize successive points visited on the journey.</p> <hr/> <p><sup>1</sup> This note by Lemoyne locates a Salesian center at the 47th degree of latitude south. Actually there is no Salesian center at that location. Santa Cruz, which may historically be regarded as the staging base of Msgr. Fagnano's future mission, is located at about the 50th degree of latitude south. Ushuaia, the future southernmost Salesian foundation, is located at about the 55th.</p>	<p>[rope] From the first number 0 to number 47 there stretched a limitless land that was bounded <i>at its end</i> by straits of ocean and then broke up into hundreds of islands, <i>of which one was much larger than the others</i>. To these islands apparently <i>pointed</i> the little cords that radiated from the large knot. Each little cord ended at an island. Some islands were inhabited by fairly large numbers of natives; other islands appeared sterile, stark, rocky, and uninhabited; yet others were entirely capped with ice. To the west [were] numerous clusters of islands inhabited by savages in large numbers.</p> <p>At the opposite end, that is, from number 0 to number 10, stretched more of the same country: and it ended in that [body of] water seen last of all. That [body of] water was (<i>so it appeared</i>) the sea of the Antilles. There it lay before my eyes in a manner I find totally inexplicable.<sup>2</sup></p> <hr/> <p><sup>2</sup> In a (later) note at the end of the dream narrative, Lemoyne states that the bishop of San José, Costa Rica, had requested the Salesians by letter of September 15, 1883. This city is located at the 10th degree of latitude north. (The Salesian work in San José began in 1933.)</p>

[Inexplicable] After my reply, "It's water!" the young man continued: "Now add 55 and 10. What does that add up to?"

I replied: "It adds up to 65."

"Now put everything together, and you have one [unbroken stretch of] rope."

"What happens now?"

"What do you see on this side?"

"To the west I see very high mountains; and to the east, the ocean."

"Excellent! These mountains constitute a bank, a boundary. From the mountains to the ocean lies the harvest entrusted to the Salesians. These



thousands and millions of people are waiting for your help, *waiting for the faith*.” Those mountains were the Cordilleras of South America.

[Scene 2: The Allegory of Unripe Figs]

“But how are we to do this?” I rejoined.

“How? Look.” Immediately Fr. Lago appeared on the scene carrying a basket of small, green figs.

“Here, Don Bosco, take this,” he said to me.

“What have you got there?”

“[Figs] I was told to bring them to you.”

“But these figs are not fit to eat. They are not yet ripe.”

Then the young man took up the basket, which was wide but not very deep. He offered it to me with the words, “This is the present he is giving you.”

“And what am I to do with these figs?”

“These figs are not ripe yet, but they are nonetheless the fruit of the great fig tree of life. It is up to you to bring them to maturity.”

“How? If they were larger, they could be made to ripen on straw like other kind of fruit. But these are so small, so green! That would be impossible.”

“There is more to it than that. You should know that for these figs to ripen you have to re-attach them to the tree.”

“How? That’s impossible.”

“Then watch.” Saying this, the young man took a fig and dipped it first in a small bowl of blood, and next in a little bowl of water. Then he explained: “By sweat and by blood will the savages be returned to the tree and be made pleasing to the Lord of life.”

I was thinking to myself: This will require a lot of time. Instead I turned to the dear young man and said: “I just don’t know what to say.”

The youth replied: “All this will be accomplished before the end of the second generation.”

“What second generation?”

“Not counting the present generation—two generations from now.”

I was thoroughly confused, and could only stammer: “How many years to each of these generations?”

“Sixty years.”

“And after that, what?”

“Do you want to know what lies in the future? Come and see.”

*[Act II: The Railway Journey Southward]*

Without knowing how, I found myself at a railway station, where a lot of people had gathered. We boarded a train. I wanted to know where we were. The young man replied: "Look and pay close attention. We are going to travel along the Cordilleras. But the road is open to you also to the east, as far as the ocean."<sup>11</sup> It is another gift from the Lord."

"And when shall we go to Boston? They are awaiting us there."<sup>12</sup>

"In its own good time." And so saying he took out a map.

"What is that?" I asked. He answered by unfolding the map. On it the diocese of Cartagena was shown on a large scale and in high relief. (Was that to be our starting point?)<sup>13</sup>

*[Scene 1: First Stage of the Journey]*

As I looked at the map, I heard the train whistle and observed that the train had started. During the trip my friend did most of the talking, but I was unable to follow him very well because of the noise the train was making. Nevertheless, I learnt new and wonderful things pertaining to astronomy and navigation; and about the mineral resources, the fauna and flora of those lands. On these subjects he spoke with eloquence and precision. From the very beginning he held my hand and continued to hold it in friendly manner until the end of the dream. Occasionally I would lay my [free] hand on his, but his hand seemed to vanish under my touch, so that my left would only find my right hand. The young man only smiled at this futile attempt of mine.<sup>14</sup> I kept looking out the window and watched the ever-changing and

<sup>11</sup> Some two months before the dream Don Bosco, in response to repeated requests, decided to open a house in Brazil, and asked Father Luigi Lasagna to proceed with the negotiations. The first Salesian foundation was in Niterói (Niteróy), close to Rio de Janeiro, toward the end of 1883.

<sup>12</sup> A proposal to establish a Salesian work in Boston had been received, through intermediaries, toward the end of 1882. The first Salesian work in Boston (the Don Bosco Technical High School) was established in 1945.

<sup>13</sup> The city of Cartagena (Colombia), like San José (Costa Rica), is located at about the 10th degree of latitude north. But at the beginning of the dream narrative the reception hall is said to be located at the equator.

<sup>14</sup> A similar experience of the insubstantial nature of heavenly apparitions is described, with additional elaborate explanations, in the Lanzo Dream of 1876, with respect to Dominic Savio (cf. *EBM* XII, 439f.).

amazing landscape filing by: forests, mountains, plains, very large and majestic rivers, which even so far upstream were far larger than I had thought. We traveled along the edge of a virgin forest, as yet unexplored, for over a thousand miles. My power to see was intensified in such a marvelous manner, that it seemed able to penetrate those regions at will. It could not only peer into the Cordilleras, but it could also see through the isolated mountain ranges rising above those interminable plains (Brazil?).

[Marginal note by Lemoyne]

Between the 15th and 20th degree there lay a very long and wide basin (*seno*) that began at a point forming a lake. Then a voice spoke and said repeatedly: "When mines will be dug in the depths of these mountains (of that valley), then the promised land flowing with milk and honey will be revealed here, and there will be inconceivable wealth."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This marginal note in Lemoyne's hand has been interpreted as pinpointing geographically the future capital of Brazil, Brasília, even though no mention is made of any city, and the geographical description of the site is too general for any determination. At this time Don Bosco had Brazil on his mind, as he had Boston (USA) and San José (Costa Rica).

[Main text]

(Brazil?). The incomparable [mineral] riches of the soil still awaiting discovery were revealed to my gaze. I saw numerous mines of precious metals, inexhaustible coal pits, petroleum deposits more abundant than existed anywhere. And this is not all. At many points the Cordilleras opened up on regions the existence of which is totally unknown to our geographers. They [mistakenly] imagine that in those regions mountain ranges form a kind of sheer wall. In those basins, in those valleys, which may be as long as one thousand kilometers, live dense populations which have had as yet no contact with Europeans, nations which are as yet completely unknown.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These ideas were ridiculed in Rome. Reporting Don Bosco's words, Lemoyne writes in Documenti: "In Rome I made a full presentation to Card. Barnabò [Prefect of Propaganda Fide]; but he ridiculed the project as childish fantasy, especially my statement that in South America there were large populations yet to be discovered. Therefore, he refused to speak to the Pope about it. Don Bosco himself then spoke to the Pope, who at once took the matter seriously and asked Card. Franchi [the next Prefect of the Congregation] to make a report. His Eminence was putting it off, however; and when Pius IX insisted, he would reply: 'These are delusions of a sick mind!' But Pius IX gave the order, got the report, and fully backed the new mission" (Documenti XIV, 143, ASC A063: Cronachette Lemoyne-Doc, FDBM 1024 C4). It should be noted that Pius IX had served as auditor in the apostolic delegations of Chile and Peru from 1823 to 1825.

[Unknown] The train meanwhile kept rolling on and on, turning here, turning there. Finally it came to a stop. At this point a great number of passengers got off and crossed under the Cordillera over to the west. [Don Bosco made reference to Bolivia. The station may have been La Paz, where a tunnel may provide a passage to the Pacific coast, and may connect Brazil with Lima by another railway line.]<sup>15</sup>

[Scene 2: Second Stage of the Journey]

[Lemoyne's marginal note]	[Main text]
<p>+ The name of the river should be noted (the Paraná, I think).  ++ D. Bosco should also put the river's name here (Uruguay)</p> <p>and, as before, it runs over bridges, through tunnels, by lakes, rivers, forests.</p>	<p>[line] The train continued on its journey. We rode along the banks of the Uruguay. I had thought it was a short river; instead it is very long. At a certain point I saw the river +  which flows close to the ++  both of them, rivers of great length. Then they separate and form a wide loop.</p> <p>Meanwhile the train kept on rolling south, turning first one way, then another; after a long haul it came to a second stop. Here again a lot of people got off and crossed under the Cordillera over to the west. [Don Bosco made reference to the province of Mendoza in the Argentine Republic. Hence he believes, the station may have been Mendoza, and the tunnel, that which gives access to Santiago or Valparaiso, the capital of Chile.]<sup>1</sup></p> <hr/> <p><sup>1</sup> The words in square brackets are a comment by reporter Lemoyne.</p>

[Scene 3: Third Stage of the Journey]

The train continued on its run through the Pampas and Patagonia. Fields under cultivation and scattered homesteads were an indication that civilization was making inroads into those deserts.

<sup>15</sup> The words in square brackets are a comment by reporter Lemoyne.

[Lemoyne's marginal note]	[Main text]
<p>Huge heaps of metal partly in ore form and partly refined.</p> <p>It took but a moment. I got off the train and saw them at once. There were more churches, schools, many houses with large numbers of people in them, many hospices, apprentices in trade and agricultural schools, young people and adults together guided by missionaries—Daughters [of Mary Help of Christians?] were working at various domestic tasks. I mingled with them. They looked at me as though I were a stranger.</p>	<p>[deserts] Finally we arrived at the Strait of Magellan. I was looking on. We got off. Puntarenas lay before me. The ground for miles around was strewn with stores of coal, planks, beams and lumber. Freight cars were parked in long rows on the tracks.</p> <p>My young friend drew my attention to all these things. So, I asked him, "What are you trying to tell me by all this?"</p> <p>"That at present," he replied, "this is all at the planning stage. But these savages will one day become so docile that they will freely come and be taught religion, civilized living, and commerce. Here [the development] that has caused people elsewhere to marvel will be so astounding as to surpass that of all other peoples [<i>viz</i>]."</p> <p>"I have seen enough [of this], I said ending the conversation. "Now take me to see my Salesians of Patagonia."</p> <p>He did, and I saw them. There were many of them, but they were unknown to me; and not one of my old sons was among them. They stared at me in utter amazement. And when I demanded, "Don't you know me? Don't you know Don Bosco?"</p> <p>[They replied,] "Don Bosco? Ah yes, we know him all right; but only from pictures, not personally."</p> <p>"And where are Fr. Fagnano, Fr. Lasagna, Fr. Costamagna?"<sup>1</sup></p> <hr/> <p><sup>1</sup> Luigi Lasagna (1850-1895), ordained in 1873, left for the missions with the second group in 1876. As director and then as provincial he developed the Salesian work in Uruguay and initiated scientific and cultural projects. He established the Salesian work in Brazil. He was ordained bishop in 1893 and charged by Leo XIII with the mission of protecting and evangelizing the natives there. But he died in a tragic train collision shortly thereafter.</p>

[Costamagna?] "We have never known them personally. They are the pioneers of old, the first Salesians to come to these lands from Europe. But they have been dead these many years!" On hearing this amazing reply, I began to

ask myself: “Is this dream or reality?” I clapped my hands, felt my arms, and shook myself. I had a distinct perception of the sound of the clapping and of the feel of my body.

*[Conclusion and Awakening]*

In this troubled state, I thought I heard Quirino ringing the morning Angelus; but when I was awake, I realized that the ringing came from the bells of the parish church of St. Benignus.<sup>16</sup>

The dream had lasted all night long.<sup>17</sup>

*[Moralistic Conclusion]*

Don Bosco concluded with these words: “With the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales will the Salesians succeed in drawing the peoples of [South] America to Jesus Christ. At first the task of converting the savages to Christian morals will be a most difficult one; but their children will most willingly accept the teachings of the missionaries. Through them colonies [missions] will be founded; civilization will replace barbarism; and a great number of savages will join the fold of Jesus Christ.”

**[Footnote by Editor Lemoyne:]** N.B. The Bishop of San José, the capital of Costa Rica, in a letter dated September 15, 1883, asked Don Bosco for a few Salesian missionaries. This city is located right at the 10th degree [of latitude north], as indicated in Don Bosco’s dream.

*[Transitional Comment]*

No remarks (except Don Bosco’s moralistic conclusion, above) follow the dream narrative in the archival sources. In the *Biographical Memoirs*, on the

<sup>16</sup> Don Bosco was at San Benigno Canavese (a house of novitiate at this time) for the spiritual retreat with the members of the Third General Chapter, and was awakened by the Angelus bells of the local church of St. Benignus. In his half-waking state he had at first thought that it was the Angelus bell of the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin rung by Brother Camillo Quirino, (1847-1892), “that saintly brother—mathematician, polyglot and bell ringer” (*EBM* XVI, 312, note 34).

<sup>17</sup> Dreams do not last all night, though they may appear to do so. They last only some fifteen or twenty minutes in real time during REM sleep toward the end of a sleep cycle.

other hand, Ceria has extensive comments on the revelatory character of this dream, and on the accuracy of its predictions, apart from and beyond the envisaging of the future for the Salesian work. He states that Don Bosco's knowledge expressed in the dream relating to Andean geography, to the future railway development, to the mineral riches of the Cordilleras, and to the geography and demography of Tierra del Fuego, could not have been derived from human sources.<sup>18</sup>

Also, in the Salesian tradition all geographical references in this and other dreams (such as Boston and San José) are interpreted as prophetic predictions of the establishing of the Salesian work in those places. When (perhaps half a century later) the work was established, the prophetic prediction was thought to have been fulfilled. The same is true of the "Brasilia Myth" constructed on the basis of a passage of the Second Missionary Dream Narrative.<sup>19</sup>



20 – Don Bosco with the Salesian fathers and brothers of the second missionary expedition (1876)

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *IBM* XVI, 395-398; *EBM* XVI, 313-315.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of such questions, and for the "Brasilia Myth" in particular, see below.



### 3. Critical Questions Regarding Don Bosco's Dream of 1883 on the South American Missions

*EBM* XVI, 313-315; cf. A. Lenti, "Mission Dreams II," *JSS* 4:1 (1993).

It is claimed that Don Bosco in this and other dreams evinces knowledge that he could not have obtained by human means. The claim refers especially to the geographical and physical characteristics of the regions seen and the populations observed.

#### *(1) Dream Images of South America*

In the Mission Dream of 1883, Don Bosco speaks of various features of the Andean Cordilleras—of virgin forests, of rivers, of the narrowness of lower Patagonia, etc. This is geographical lore, whether accurate or inaccurate, derived from maps and books, surfacing in the dream as fantastic images. It would be a mistake to take these images as describing real places from revealed knowledge. The same should be said of the idea repeatedly expressed by Don Bosco in this and other dreams as well as in writings of the same period—that Patagonia was a completely unknown land, a no man's land (that is, a land of "savages"), not subject to the Argentine Republic.<sup>20</sup>

Don Bosco's knowledge of hidden things communicated through dreams is claimed especially in connection with this Dream of 1883. On this subject, and with particular reference to what this dream says about Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, Ceria writes: "Don Bosco presents us with a body of positive data which he could have learnt neither from explorers nor from geographers. There had in fact been no exploration of any sort in those southernmost latitudes, whether for tourist or for scientific purposes."<sup>21</sup>

Then, referring to explorations of the Salesian Fr. Albert de Agostini in Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, Ceria lists four areas in which Don Bosco's shows such mysterious knowledge: (1) The structure of the Andean Cordilleras: Don Bosco states that these mountains do not rise as a single, sheer mountain range (as commonly believed), but as a complex system of ranges intersected and divided by great "inlets" or valleys. As an example of

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Jesús Borrego, "Primer Proyecto Patagónico de Don Bosco," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 5 (1986) 21-72, esp. 28-33 (cited as "Borrego, *Proyecto*").

<sup>21</sup> *EBM* XVI, 313.

this latter feature, Ceria cites the “Baker Inlet,” in southern Chile, “the most extensive of the Patagonian fjords, which winds for over 400 km. through the mountains, between the 45° and 52° of latitude south;” (2) The system of railway lines: Don Bosco speaks of railways where none were in existence at the time—railways, that at the time of Ceria’s writing were either already in operation or in planning. (This would be an instance of foreknowledge and prophetic fulfillment); (3) The mineral riches yet to be discovered, such as petroleum and coal: Don Bosco speaks of the great mineral resources [in the Cordilleras] and Ceria cites petroleum strikes at Comodoro Rivadavia,<sup>22</sup> and in other parts of South America; (4) The geophysical character of the Fuegin archipelago and the distribution of the native population on those islands: Don Bosco accurately describes those islands and their populations. Thus far, Ceria.

*(2) Geophysical Features and Mineral Resources*

But here is what Don Bosco says about these matters.

In the long autograph note reporting the conversation heard in the hall at the equator, with reference to the Cordilleras as a whole (not to the Patagonian or Darwin ranges, *pace* Ceria and De Agostini) Don Bosco writes:

People think (and geographers make the same mistake) that the [South] American Cordilleras are like a wall that divides that part of the world in two. But it is not so. Those long and high mountain ranges form numerous “inlets” (*fanno molti seni*) that are more than one thousand kilometers long. Within them are forests as yet unexplored ... Coal, petroleum, lead, copper, iron, silver, and gold lie buried in those mountains, where the Creator’s almighty hand placed them for people’s benefit. O Cordillera, Cordilleras [*sic*], how rich are your eastern slopes!<sup>23</sup>

Further, according to a marginal note in Lemoyne’s hand, “between the 15th and 20th degree [of lat. south] there lay a very long and wide “inlet” (*seno*) that began at a point forming a lake.”<sup>24</sup> The region is not otherwise pinpointed, but is apparently connected with that northern segment of the Cordilleras. As reported, Don Bosco has this to say about the region:

<sup>22</sup> A city on the Argentine coast (not in the Andes range) at about 46° of lat. South.

<sup>23</sup> *EBM* XVI, 304.

<sup>24</sup> See dream text above.

I saw numerous mines of precious metals, inexhaustible coal pits, petroleum deposits more abundant than any discovered anywhere. And this is not all. To my amazement I saw that at many points the Cordilleras opened up and formed valleys, the existence of which is totally unknown to our geographers. They [mistakenly] imagine that in those regions mountain ranges form a kind of sheer wall. In those “inlets” (*seni*), in those valleys, which may be as long as one thousand kilometers, live dense populations which have had as yet no contact with Europeans—whole nations which are as yet completely unknown [to the civilized world].<sup>25</sup>

Thus far in the dream narrative nothing is said about Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego specifically. When he finally got to the Straits of Magellan, Don Bosco did indeed see that “the ground for miles around was strewn with stores of coal, as well as planks, beams and other kinds of lumber.” And a marginal note in Lemoyne’s hand adds that there were also “huge heaps of metal partly in ore form and partly refined.”<sup>26</sup> But, to begin with, there is no mention of petroleum (so much for Ceria’s petroleum strikes). And secondly, with regard to lumber, although forest abounds in those southern regions, it is mostly to be found on the Pacific slopes and islands. Stony steppe and desert shrub are the main features of the Santa Cruz Province on the Argentine side. Coal, on the other hand, is noted.<sup>27</sup>

For an assessment, we should bear in mind that, for historical reasons, a fair amount of reliable information was available to Don Bosco regarding the old Spanish colonies in the upper Andean regions.

Now we also know that by 1876 Don Bosco had gathered quite a bit of information on Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. In 1876, over his signature (though authored by Fr. Barberis) he had submitted to Rome a very substantial study entitled, *Patagonia and the Southernmost Regions of the American Continent*.<sup>28</sup> In his chronicle Fr. Barberis documents the feverish research (his and Don Bosco’s) that led to the production of this essay of 164 large pages. At

<sup>25</sup> See dream text above. This passage is discussed below.

<sup>26</sup> See dream text above.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Hammond Citation World Atlas* (Maplewood, NJ: Hammond Inc., 1977) 141.

<sup>28</sup> As mentioned above this work has now been critically edited, with extensive introduction, notes and appendices: *Giovanni (s.) Bosco, La Patagonia e le Terre Australi del Continente Americano*; Introducción y texto crítico por Jesús Borrego (Roma: LAS 1988) [cited as Borrego, *Patagonia*]. Borrego points out that Ceria knew that Barberis had prepared some kind of report (cf. *EBM* XII, 220) but was not acquainted with the report itself (Borrego, *Patagonia*, 3-4).

one point he quotes Don Bosco as saying: “I have reached the age of 60 and more [1876] without practically even having heard of Patagonia. Who would have thought that the day would come when I should have to research it in its every aspect and in all its detail.” (In the essay on Patagonia, by way of introduction, the author lists his sources—ten titles.) Then Barberis continues: “I had provided two maps, one of Patagonia and the other of So[uth] America. We began to study the geography [of Patagonia] in detail. We spent much time in studying such features as gulfs, the Straits of Magellan, and the islands roundabout.”<sup>29</sup> Don Bosco continued to research what had quickly become *his* mission field with unrelenting determination; so that by the time of the Dream of 1883, beyond his general geographical, historical and cultural background, he must have built up quite a store of specific information, complete or defective, correct or incorrect.<sup>30</sup>

A point made by Ceria concerns the description of the islands in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago. The essay on Patagonia, in the section dealing with the physical geography of the area, describes the islands in the archipelago pretty much as they are described in the dream narrative.<sup>31</sup> And if it is nonetheless true that the essay on Patagonia gives no information on the mineral resources of the region,<sup>32</sup> one should bear in mind, as noted above, that such information was available for the area of the old Spanish colonies. After all the Spaniards had been exploiting the mineral and human resources of those Andean regions since the sixteenth century. On that basis, Don Bosco could easily extrapolate and make deductions applicable, or inapplicable, to other areas. But, even so the dream narrative shows that, while he can confidently describe the tremendous resources of the northern Andean regions, he is not quite as explicit when speaking of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. As mentioned above, the only mineral mentioned for this area is coal. And it is

<sup>29</sup> ASC A001 Cronachette-Barberis (Borrego, *Patagonia*, 8). We also know that before 1876, that is, from the time of the Argentine offer in 1874 to the writing of the essay on Patagonia in 1876, Don Bosco had already accumulated considerable information about the southern regions of Argentina and Chile, whether correct or incorrect. Consul Gazzolo was one of his sources (cf. Borrego, *Proyecto*, 42-50).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Borrego, *Patagonia*, 40-42.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Borrego, *Patagonia*, 46f. For the description of the islands in the dream see text given above.

<sup>32</sup> In a six-line paragraph on “Mineral Resources,” the author merely writes: “The high mountains of the Andean Cordillera [in Patagonia] consist wholly of hard rock. The plain, on the other hand, is a patchwork of limestone, with large portions covered with sand and saline deposits ...” (Borrego, *Patagonia*, 51).

mentioned in connection with the cultural and economic development of the area. On the other hand he mentions petroleum among the resources of the Cordilleras, where none is found.

For the Andean countries of Peru, Ecuador and Colombia some petroleum is noted on Pacific coastal areas and on a couple of lower inland valleys. But all such considerations should not blind us to the fact that it is far more likely that all such ideas about mineral resources stemmed from Don Bosco's own cultural experience.<sup>33</sup>

### (3) *The Natives*

With regard to the demographic situation, that is, the number and distribution of the native populations, in the Dream of 1883 and elsewhere, Don Bosco speaks of very large numbers. In his own autograph note dealing with the conversation heard in the hall, he writes: "A great number of savages in Australia, in India, in China, in Africa, and *particularly* in [South] America are still shrouded in the shadow of death ... Few [European missionaries] have the courage to brave long voyages ... to save those *millions* of souls." Again in the passage already quoted above (though not referring directly to Patagonia) he speaks of "dense populations" inhabiting the great Andean valleys. And concluding the allegory of the rope in the Dream, the Interpreter tells Don Bosco: "These mountains [the Cordilleras] constitute a bank, a boundary. From these mountains to the ocean lies the harvest entrusted to the Salesians. Those *thousand and millions* of people are waiting for your help, waiting for the faith." Again in the dream with reference to the southern islands, Don Bosco says: "Some of these [islands] were inhabited by natives in *fairly large numbers*," other islands appeared sterile, stark, rocky and uninhabited; yet others were entirely capped with ice. To the west, the numerous clusters of islands "[were] inhabited by *large numbers* of savages."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Mining, of coal in particular, was part of Don Bosco's cultural experience. Coal, in its various forms, had been used for power before Don Bosco's times. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the need for increased production of coke and gas for heating and illumination gave new impetus to the coal industry. Likewise, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the introduction of dynamite (replacing gun powder in blasting) and of various rotary drills greatly expanded the production of hard coal. The same may be said for petroleum. The first well was drilled at Titusville, Pennsylvania (USA) in 1859. Within a few decades, oil drilling was widespread not only in the United States, but also in Europe, the Middle East and in East Asia [cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropedia* (15<sup>th</sup> ed., 1987) 3408; 8158; 9344]. For petroleum in the Andean countries (cf. *Hammond Citation World Atlas*, 127 & 130).

<sup>34</sup> For all the quotes in this paragraph see the text of the dream given above.

The author of the essay on Patagonia (hence, Don Bosco) supports such a high estimate of the native population. In fact, after various calculations, he fixes the minimum number of the native population of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego at a cool four million.<sup>35</sup> This he does in spite of information to the contrary received from the missionaries in South America.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise Don Bosco's ideas and descriptions of the natives seen in his dreams is more suited to natives of Romantic literature and of nineteenth-century encyclopedias than to any real Patagonian type.<sup>37</sup>

Other anthropological and ethnographic data referring to the native populations (such as their character, culture, etc.) are largely inaccurate and are derived from Don Bosco's general and special cultural matrix. For example, in the first mission dream (1871/72) the "savages" are characterized as "brutal people" who "slaughtered and hacked [the missionaries] to pieces."<sup>38</sup> Apart from the dreams, Don Bosco writes of the Patagonian natives:

This large population still lies in darkness and in the shadow of death, and lives in a completely savage state. Until now the voice of the missionary could not be heard in that whole immense region, in spite of the many attempts at evangelization over the centuries. This failure is due to the ferocity with which the natives have frustrated every effort on their behalf. For they savagely slaughtered all the missionaries who tried to approach them, and they even ate their flesh.<sup>39</sup>

Such ideas were part of Don Bosco's culture.<sup>40</sup>

#### (4) *Railways*

The same should be said of the question that Ceria raises concerning the railways in Don Bosco's dream. In the first place, Don Bosco's immediate cul-

<sup>35</sup> Borrego, *Patagonia*, 22 and 159.

<sup>36</sup> See for example Letter Cagliero to Chiala, April 4, 1876 in Borrego, *Patagonia*, 22, footnote 80. For further details see statistical data given in Ch. 2, above.

<sup>37</sup> See our comments in an earlier chapter, above, in connection with the natives seen in the First Mission Dream of 1871/72, and J. Belza's statement quoted from Borrego, *Proyecto*, 47, footnote 157.

<sup>38</sup> See Barberis' report of the Dream of 1871/72 given in Ch. 2, above. In the Barcelona Mission Dream of 1886, reported by Charles Viglietti, Don Bosco speaks of the native populations of the places shown (with specific mention of Hong Kong, Calcutta and Madagascar) as "savages who feed on human flesh" (*EBM* XVIII, 52).

<sup>39</sup> Borrego, *Patagonia*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> Borrego, *Patagonia*, 20-21.

tural experience amply accounts for fact that the means of conveyance chosen for the dream journey is the train. Then, if the journey had to cover the length of the continent, from north to south, the route that would logically have been suggested to a person standing before a map of South America, would have run along the lower slopes of the Andes. Likewise, if the train (as would be expected) was to stop to let passengers off, the well known centers of La Paz (Bolivia) and of Mendoza (Argentina) would be immediately suggested. Looking at a map, one can easily see how from these two locations access might be had to important Pacific cities in Peru and Chile respectively—that is, if one did not consider too closely those mighty mountain peaks and other redoubtable natural barriers.<sup>41</sup>

It appears therefore that recourse to a theory of infused knowledge through dreams is not necessary to account for all such elements of the manifest content of Don Bosco's dreams. These elements are derived from the dreamer's cultural experience. Some may be right and applicable, others may be quite inaccurate, as we have noted above. What J. Belza has written on the subject may serve as a general conclusion.

From a psychological point of view, it is certain that dream images, always blurred, may only be interpreted from contents in the dreamer's inner world ... And furthermore, it can be shown that Don Bosco's geographical [missionary] dreams, like so many of his dreams, even as to their origin, are rooted in daily life-experiences, heightened by the missionary fervor that possessed him.<sup>42</sup>

Don Bosco's missionary dreams are revelatory or prophetic in the sense that they are expressions of his hopes and projects for the worldwide expansion of the Salesian work. At this point, however, we wish to address the question of the precognitive or predictive character of these dreams in particular instances, much as above we discussed the question of Don Bosco's mysterious knowledge.

We have already noted an instance of foreknowledge, as claimed, with respect to the location of a future railway system in South America. It has further been claimed that Don Bosco prophetically foresaw the establishment of the Salesian work in particular places, when such places are either named

<sup>41</sup> These cities are Don Bosco's own suggestions according to comments by the reporter (see text of the dream given above).

<sup>42</sup> Juan Belza, *Sueños Patagónicos* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigación Histórica Tierra del Fuego, 1982), 24-26, in Borrego, *Proyecto*, 47, footnote 157.





21 – Church under construction in Rio Gallegos, Province of Santa Cruz  
(Southern Patagonia)

or in some way indicated in these dreams. Thus one often hears Salesians claim, with understandable pride, that this or that other foundation constitutes the fulfillment of one Don Bosco's predictions. As a matter of fact, most of the geographical locations mentioned in these dreams have had, or could conceivably have in the future, a Salesian foundation, and could therefore be eligible for such interpretations.

The reader has already been alerted to some of these claimed instances of prophetic foreknowledge; we now comment selectively on such claims.

*(5) A Salesian Center in Patagonia at the 47° of Latitude South?*

In the allegory of the rope in the dream of 1883 the numbers 47, 50 and 55 (degrees of latitude south) have been taken to refer to Salesian foundations at those locations. At point 47, the rope divided into many strands connecting places to the south. No city is mentioned at this point; but a marginal note in Lemoyne's hand expressly interprets the number 47 as representing "the Salesian center from which one could reach out to the Falkland Islands, to the Tierra del Fuego and to other islands, [to the] farthest lands of [South] America."<sup>43</sup>

No Salesian center historically fulfilling those requirements is located at the 47° in Southern Patagonia. Santa Cruz, situated at about the 50°, though never an important Salesian center, historically served as a point of approach to the missions in Tierra del Fuego. Ushuaia, located at about the 55° on the southern shore of Isla Grande, is the southernmost Salesian foundation, as well as the southernmost city in the world.

*(6) At the 10° of Latitude North: San José (Costa Rica)?*

In the same allegory of the rope, the number 10 represented the 10° of latitude north; but again no city is mentioned. In a footnote Lemoyne writes: "The Bishop of San José, the capital of Costa Rica, by letter dated September 15, 1883 asked Dom Bosco for a few Salesian missionaries. This city is located at the 10°, as indicated in Don Bosco's dream."<sup>44</sup>

But so, for instance, are Valencia (Venezuela) located at the 10°, and Caracas (Venezuela) somewhat to the north. These cities have Salesian foundations, and fulfill the requirement of being on "the sea of the Antilles" (the Caribbean). Cartagena (Colombia), expressly mentioned in the same dream, is at the same position farther west, but it has no Salesian (S.D.B.) foundation.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See text of the dream given above.

<sup>44</sup> See text of the dream given above.

<sup>45</sup> See text of the dream given above. The request for San José was made two weeks after the dream. Salesian foundations were first established in San José (Costa Rica) in 1907; in Valencia (Venezuela), in 1895; in Caracas (Venezuela), in 1894.

(7) *Boston, Massachusetts (USA)*

A little later in the dream, as Don Bosco was about to begin the train journey southward, he inquired of his Guide: “And when shall we go to Boston? They are waiting for us there.” The reply, which was also a dismissal, was: “In its own good time.”<sup>46</sup>

The stimulus for this dream image must be sought in the fact that, as archival documents show, in 1882/1883 a proposal to open a “school for missionary priests” under the title of *Confrérie de Notre-Dame des victoires et de St.-Pierre* (attached to the French church of the same name, in Boston) had been made to Don Bosco through an intermediary, the Abbé J. Moigno, S.S., canon of St. Denis (Paris). After having received several letters from Canon Moigno, Don Bosco directed Fr. Bonetti (through his French secretary, Fr. Camille de Barruel) to decline the offer: “The pressing and numberless commitments ... in Europe and America make it impossible for me at the moment to accept the work in Boston which you have been so good to propose to us.” According to Fr. Bonetti’s note conveying Don Bosco’s instructions, Don Bosco was also asking for a time of grace—three or four years. All this was in reply to a letter from Canon Moigno dated July 13, 1883. But the correspondence continued into August. Thus practically up to the time of the dream (August 31, 1883) Don Bosco had been busy with the Boston offer, and he had not ruled out the possibility of a future commitment.<sup>47</sup>

This would explain why the matter surfaced in the dream. As it turned out, the Salesian work was established in Boston only in 1945, with the opening of the Don Bosco Technical High School.

(8) *Between the 15° and 20° of Latitude South: Brasilia?*

Considerable attention has been given to the passage in the dream where Don Bosco in his fantastic train journey southward along the Cordilleras, with his heightened seeing power, peers into the mountains and over the farthest plains and describes the hidden mineral resources of the region. Now, in the Lemoyne B text given above, within brackets, the plains are conjectured to be “Brazil?” And in a marginal note in Lemoyne’s hand, the place is

<sup>46</sup> See text of the dream given above.

<sup>47</sup> For the story of Boston request see *EBM XVI*, 323-325, See also Fr. Moigno’s letter in *EBM XVI*, 395. The correspondence is in *FDBM* 135 A11-E12 and 136 A2-5.

described as an “inlet” (valley?) beginning at a lake and located between 15° and 20° of latitude south. Although there is again no mention of a city, and no longitudinal position is given, the text has been interpreted as referring to Brasília, the modern capital of Brazil, which is located on a large artificial lake at about the 16° of latitude.

[Text according to Lemoyne B]

Don Bosco’s words as reported in *Lemoyne B* run as follows:

We traveled along the edge of a virgin forest, as yet unexplored, for over a thousand miles. My power to see was intensified in such a marvelous manner that my sight seemed able to penetrate those regions at will. It could not only peer into the Cordilleras, but it could also discern the isolated mountain ranges rising above those interminable plains. (*Brazil?*)

[Lemoyne’s marginal note]	[Main text]
<p>Between the 15th and 20th degree there lay a very long and wide basin (<i>seno</i>) that began at a point forming a lake. Then a voice spoke and said repeatedly: “When mines will be dug in the depths of these mountains (of that valley), then the promised land flowing with milk and honey will be revealed here, and there will be inconceivable wealth.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>—</p> <p><sup>1</sup> As noted above this marginal note has been interpreted as pinpointing geographically the future capital of Brazil, Brasília.</p>	<p>(Brazil?). The incomparable [mineral] riches of the soil still awaiting discovery were revealed to my gaze. I saw numerous mines of precious metals, inexhaustible coal pits, petroleum deposits more abundant than existed anywhere. And this is not all. At many points the Cordilleras opened up on regions the existence of which is totally unknown to our geographers. They [mistakenly] imagine that in those regions mountain ranges form a kind of sheer wall. In those basins, in those valleys, which may be as long as one thousand kilometers, live dense populations that have had as yet no contact with Europeans, nations that are as yet completely unknown.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>—</p> <p><sup>2</sup> As noted above these ideas were ridiculed in Rome.</p>

This is the passage (Lemoyne’s marginal note in particular) that has been construed as predicting the future location of the Brazilian capital.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> In the 1988 edition of *Don Bosco nel Mondo* we read: “Don Bosco came to Brazil long before any of his Salesians; and he did so in the amazing manner of the prophets. If today

In spite of the fact that the Salesians have encouraged such interpretation by every means in their power, and that Brasilia and the authorities in that capital have taken Don Bosco to their heart, this interpretation is highly speculative. Before any comment, we should look at how Lemoyne, presumably reflecting Don Bosco's view, recast this passage in subsequent revisions.

This may be seen in the manuscript, *Lemoyne C*, and (identically) in *Documenti*—which represents Lemoyne's final re-elaboration of the text, and which is also, with secondary editing by Ceria, the text of the *Biographical Memoirs*.<sup>49</sup>

[Edited Texts of Lemoyne C and *Documenti*]

In editing the new text (*Lemoyne C* and *Documenti*) besides inserting the marginal note, Lemoyne made two sizable additions. He also rearranged the material somewhat—as follows: [All editorial additions are shown in *italics*]

We traveled along the edge of a virgin forest, as yet unexplored, for over a thousand miles. My power to see was intensified in such a marvelous manner, that my sight seemed able to penetrate those regions at will.

he is invoked as the holy patron of Brazil's capital, Brasilia, it is because he dreamt of it and prophesied its existence a century before it became a reality ... He had seen the very spot as far back as 1883; and when it became a reality, the builders were greatly surprised to find that they had fulfilled a saint's prophecy. In 1883 Don Bosco related to his close associates how in his dream he had seen himself hovering high over the forests of the Amazon. He told of seeing there the natives' villages, and of witnessing the killing of two Salesian missionaries. (This actually took place in 1934, when Fr. P. Sacilotti and Fr. G. Fuchs were murdered by the Chavantes.) Moreover, between the 15° and the 20° degree of latitude he detected rich mines of [precious] metals and petroleum deposits more abundant than any discovered anywhere. And at a place which was located at about the 50° of longitude and where there was lake, he saw a promised land of incomparable beauty, to be revealed two generations hence (60 and 60 years...) (cf. *IBM XVI*, 385-398 = *EBM XVI*, 303-315.) [Marco Bongiovanni, ed., *Don Bosco nel Mondo*, (Roma: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1988) vol. II, 244f.]. This is an obviously garbled journalistic version of Don Bosco's Second Missionary Dream. Don Bosco never said that he had dreamed of flying over the forests of the Amazon, and of seeing villages and witnessing the killing of two Salesian missionaries; nor did he indicate any longitude for the place and the lake lying between the 15° and the 20° of latitude south. And he spoke of "two 60-year generations not counting the present one," not in connection with the promised land to be revealed, but in connection with the conversion of the natives (in the allegory of the figs, in the hall). But the "Brasilia interpretation" is still popular.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *EBM XVI*, 303-312; for the passage in question, 308-309.

[Editorial Addition I] *Words cannot describe or explain such amazing visual experience. It was as though I were standing on top of a hill with an unimpeded view of an immense region, stretching out below. Imagine that from that vantage point one placed a strip of paper, no matter how thin, in front of one's eyes: one would then see very little, if anything at all. Imagine next that one removed, or raised or lowered even only slightly, that strip of paper: one would then be able to look even to the farthest horizon. Such was my experience, due to my newly acquired extraordinary seeing power. But there was a difference: as I focused my eyes on any point, that scene would zoom into view and then pass on. It was as though stage curtains were being raised one after another, and I could see an endless succession of scenes to the farthest limits.*

I could not only look into the Cordilleras *even when still at a distance*, but I could also see *in all detail* the isolated mountain ranges rising above those interminable plains [Editorial expansion of the conjecture "Brazil?"] (*the mountains of New Granada,<sup>50</sup> of Venezuela, of the three Guyanas, those of Brazil and of Bolivia—to their remotest boundaries*).

[Editorial Addition II] *I was thus able to verify the truth of the words I had heard at the beginning of my dream in the great hall at the equator, for I could now peer into the very bowels of mountains and into the deepest recesses of plains.* The incomparable [mineral] riches of the soil still awaiting discovery were revealed to my gaze. I saw numerous mines of precious metals, inexhaustible coalmines and petroleum deposits more abundant than any discovered anywhere. *And this was not all.*

[Editorial insertion of the Marginal Note of Lemoyne B] Between the 15th and the 20th degree there lay a very long inlet (*seno*, valley?) that began at a point forming a lake. Then a voice spoke and said repeatedly: "When mines will be dug in the depths of these mountains (of that valley), then the promised land flowing with milk and honey will be revealed here, and there will be inconceivable wealth." *And that was not all.*

What surprised me most was to see that at many points the Cordilleras opened up on regions the existence of which is totally unknown to our geographers. They [mistakenly] imagine that in those regions mountain ranges form a kind of sheer wall. In those inlets, in those valleys, which may be as long as one thousand kilometers, live dense populations that have had as yet no contact with Europeans, nations that are as yet completely unknown.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> The Spanish territory of Colombia, an independent republic since 1819, was divided in 1830 into three republics: New Granada (now Colombia in the narrower sense), Venezuela and Ecuador. Colombia retained the name of New Granada until 1858. Thereafter it was called Confederación Granadina (1858-1963); Estados Unidos de Colombia (1863-1886); finally simply Colombia (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* III, 1020).

<sup>51</sup> *Documenti* XVI (ch 37), 529f., FDBM 1090 A3f.

[Comments on the Edited Text of Lemoyne C and of *Documenti*]

[On the reworking of the *Documenti-Lemoyne C* text] In the dream Don Bosco is traveling south along the Cordilleras, and is able to see not only the mountains to his right, but also those rising “over those interminable plains (Brazil?).” Does this mean that he is actually looking across the great rain forest and focusing on the spot in the Brazilian plateau where Brasilia is located? The expansion of the conjecture “Brazil?” to include all the nations of the northern half of South America shows that in the editor’s (and probably also in Don Bosco’s) view the focus is not on Brazil, nor on any particular region,

Moreover, as we read on in the *Documenti-Lemoyne C* version, we perceive that the focus is actually on the Cordilleras. For he says that he was thus able to verify the truth of the words he had heard in the great hall about their great mineral resources: “Oh Cordillera, Cordilleras, how rich are your eastern slopes!”<sup>52</sup>

The focus is still on the Cordilleras in the paragraph that follows, where the marginal note of Lemoyne B is inserted after the remark on the incomparable riches of the Andes, and between the repeated sentence, “And this was not all.” Don Bosco was amazed not only at the riches of the Cordilleras, but also at their immense “inlets” (*seni*) or valleys, and at the large, as yet undiscovered populations that lived there.<sup>53</sup>

[On the Content of the Marginal Note] The (inserted) marginal note deals with the astronomical-geographical position of the place, and with its great mineral riches.

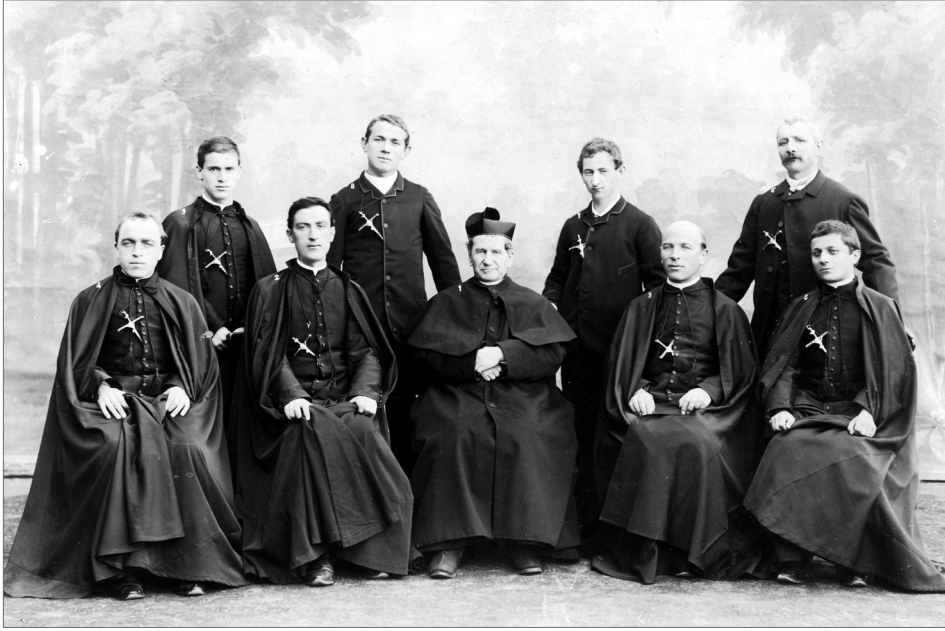
This place is an “inlet” (*seno*, valley?) beginning at a point forming a “lake” and lying “between the 15° and 20° of latitude south. No longitude is given, nor is there mention of any city.

Now, it is true that Brasilia is located at that latitude, some 1,500 miles to the east of the Cordilleras, on Lake Brasilia. And it is also true that Brazil is very rich in mineral resources. But, first of all, there is no feature in the area that could be described as “a very wide “inlet” (*seno*). And secondly, such

<sup>52</sup> See Lemoyne B text of the dream above.

<sup>53</sup> In Italian the word for “inlet,” *seno*, as a geographical term, usually means a body of ocean wending deeply inland [cf Rigutini-Fanfani, *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana* (Firenze: G. Barbera, 1893), 1114]. Don Bosco uses the word several times in connection with the mountains, perhaps (as here) not in the sense of “ocean inlet” or “fjord,” but in the sense of “valley.”





22 – Don Bosco with the Salesian fathers and brothers  
of the twelfth missionary expedition (1887)

resources are prevalently found outside the Federal District and outside the State of Goyas itself, where the capital is located.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, in the light of what has been said above, it is far more probable that Don Bosco was referring to some place situated at that latitude in the Andean Cordilleras. Thus there was no need to specify its longitude. The great Lake Titicaca lying among the mighty Cordilleras astride the 16° of latitude south, and between Peru and Bolivia (with the city of La Paz immediately to the southeast), is a feature which readily comes to mind. This lake is also situated at the northernmost end of that immense valley (altiplano)

<sup>54</sup> Brasilia is located at 15.47° of latitude south and 47.55° of longitude west. As to the location of significant mineral resources in Brazil—petroleum and natural gas, for example, are principally to be found in Recôcavo (Bahía) and Ologoas-Sergipe; coal deposits (generally low-grade) are found in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina; iron is mined primarily in Minas Gerais and in lesser quantity in Mato Grosso do Sul; manganese is abundant in Mato Grosso and less so in Amapa and Minas Gerais. Precious metals, diamonds and other precious stones abound in Brazil, but not significantly in the region of Brasilia [Cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Micropedia* (1987) XV, 192 and 197f.].

that extends some 500 miles between high mountain ranges, southward as far as Argentina.<sup>55</sup> The region is quite rich in mineral resources, though coal and petroleum are not to be found.<sup>56</sup>

Such considerations, however, are not intended to set up a rival claim (since *any* claim would be inappropriate), but only to suggest that such geographical dream images may have a quite natural explanation. What has been said earlier should still be borne in mind—namely that information available to Don Bosco about this area of the ancient Spanish domains explains the dream images satisfactorily enough. The mention of coal and petroleum (where actually there may be none) is also satisfactorily explained from the dreamer's culture. Why resort to theories of prophetic prediction and fulfillment?

## II. Ceferino Namuncurá (August 26, 1886-May 11, 1905)

The Salesian work was established in Argentina in 1875, when Don Bosco sent ten Salesians to the Plata area at the request of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Frederick Aneiros (Aneyros). They took over a church in the Italian section of Buenos Aires and a school some 200 miles up river, at San Nicolás de los Arroyos.

With that ever-growing base, as Don Bosco had planned, they began to look south to the Pampas and Rio Negro regions to make contact with native tribes, in order to establish a mission among them. The natives in those areas were Araucan Pampas. The Pampas region was actually the southern frontier of the Argentine Republic and had at the time been barely "pacified" by the Argentine army. As mentioned in Ch. 3, the government of Buenos Aires had been fighting the Araucan natives to open the frontier southward. The natives had been resisting fiercely, led by their cachiques (chieftans) Juan Calcuturá (from the 1850s) and his son Manuel Namuncurá (from the 1870s).

In 1879 two Salesians joined one of these military expeditions as chaplains hoping to make contact with these natives on the Rio Negro. They succeeded, though their contact was brief. In 1880 The Archbishop gave the Sale-

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Britannica Atlas* (1986), 242f. Lake Titicaca is located between 15.30 and 16.30 degrees of latitude south, and between 69 and 70 degrees of longitude west.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Hannond Citation World Atlas* (1977), 137. The minerals indicated for this region are: tin, tungsten, silver, gold, copper, lead, antimony and zinc, but not coal. And again petroleum is not found at this altitude.

sians the care of two parishes at the mouth of that river at settlements called Carmen de Patagones and Viedma. This may be regarded as the beginning of the Salesian mission in the true sense, because from there they began to make excursions up the river and eventually established mission along the river from Viedma up to the Andes. In 1883 the Holy See erected two missionary territories, a Vicariate Apostolic on the Rio Negro, with Salesian Bishop John Cagliero as vicar, and a Prefecture Apostolic in Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, with Salesian Fr. Joseph Fagnano as prefect.

Meanwhile fighting between the Argentine army and the Araucan-Pampas natives led by Manuel Namuncurá dragged on. But on May 5, 1883, Manuel Namuncurá, the “King of the Pampas” was forced to surrender to General Manuel Rojas. The General allowed him to retain a large tract of land at Chimpay in the Rio Negro Valley. (In later years the cachique was eventually evicted by the settlers and sought refuge in the Andes, wherefrom his people had descended to the plains in ancient times.)

Ceferino Namuncurá was born at Chimpay (Rio Negro) on August 26, 1886, the sixth of 12 children fathered by Manuel Namuncurá. Meanwhile the Salesian missionaries had established missions along the river. One of these was at Choele-Choel, an island of the Rio Negro, not far from Chimpay, and from this mission the Salesian Fr. Dominic Milanesio was catechizing the natives. Ceferino was baptized at Choele-Choel, on December 24, 1888.

Of Ceferino’s childhood practically nothing is known. In 1894 the family with other natives migrated northwest to the Andes. From there in 1897, when Ceferino was 11 years of age, his father took him to Buenos Aires and enrolled him in a public school. But only after a short time, by recommendation of the former President of the Republic, he was transferred to Pius IX Salesian School in Almagro (Buenos Aires). On that occasion father and son met Bishop Cagliero who was visiting the school at the time. A picture taken on that day shows Ceferino and his father (decorated as colonel by the government) on the right and left of the Bishop.

Coming from the freedom of native life and from a different culture and language, he at first found life at school somewhat difficult. But he soon became an example to his schoolmates for diligence and religious spirit. He was admitted to first Communion after the spiritual retreat that year, and from then on his life took on a strong orientation toward holiness. Testimonies agree that under the wise guidance of his spiritual director he made great progress in the Christian life. Before long, he began to entertain the idea of the priesthood, and of becoming a Salesian and a missionary to his tribe.

By and by, however, his health began to decline, to the point that Bishop Cagliero decided to remove him from the unsuitable climate of the big city and to take him to Viedma, the center of the mission. This was in 1903, after five years of study at Pius IX School. His father, the cachique Manuel, however, insisted that he spend some time at home in the mountains for rest and relaxation. Bishop Cagliero, fearing for his health, urged him to go. He went and returned after one month, rested but not really better. In Viedma Ceferino continued his education at St. Francis de Sales School, and began the study of Latin in view of the priesthood. Here, even more than in Buenos Aires, he lived a life of deep spirituality, occupying his days in study, prayer and play. He served God and neighbor cheerfully.

Ceferino did not complete his first school year in Viedma because his chronic tiredness degenerated quickly into real illness, probably tuberculosis. On September 24, 1903, he entered St. Joseph Hospital, founded by Bishop Cagliero in Viedma.

On April 18, 1904, Pope Pius X, made Bishop Cagliero archbishop (titular of Sebaste) and called him to Rome. Hoping that a complete change of climate would be beneficial, the Bishop decided to take Ceferino with him to Italy. They arrived in Turin in mid-August received with great enthusiasm. Ceferino spent some time there visiting all the Salesian places. Father Rua befriended him and introduced him to Queen Margaret of Italy, who opened the second exhibition of Salesian vocational schools in Turin. In September Archbishop Cagliero took him to Rome, where Pope Pius X granted him a private audience.

Ceferino returned to Turin to begin the new school year in the fall of 1904. He was placed in first high at the Oratory. In the cold and humid climate of Turin, however, his health deteriorated quickly. Archbishop Cagliero then took him south to the Salesian school of Frascati, near Rome, a delightful place. He lived there from November 15, 1904 to April 28, 1905. He felt strong enough to resume his studies. But in March and April he suffered a sudden relapse. He was taken to a hospital in Rome, where he died of tuberculosis on May 11, 1905 at the age of 18 years, 9 months and 15 days. He was buried in Rome's general cemetery.

In 1915 Ceferino's remains were exhumed and more securely entombed. In 1924 they were returned to Argentina, where they were given honorable burial in the historic Salesian chapel of Fortín Mercedes.

On September 24, 1944 the Process of beatification was introduced. On June 22, 1972 Pope Paul VI signed the decree of heroic practice of virtue, de-

claring him venerable. This opened the way for his beatification (November 11, 2007) and hoped-for canonization.

The statuary group with Don Bosco Dominic Savio and Ceferino in a young native's dress, is by the sculptor Canonica, and was placed in a niche in St. Peter's in Rome in 1936.



23 – Ceferino Namuncurá (1886-1905)  
in a photograph taken during his stay at Frascati (Italy)



### III. Consolidation and Expansion of the Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Patagonia in the First Rectorate (1888-1898)

E. Ceria, *Annali* II, 48-60.

#### 1. Beginnings of the Mission

The Salesian mission was at first established in 1879/80 at Carmen de Patagones near the mouth, and on the north bank, of the Rio Negro. Bishop Cagliero chose Viedma on the south bank, opposite Patagones, as seat of the Vicariate. The Vicariate had been established in 1883, but the Bishop could take possession only in 1885. (See earlier discussion.)

During the years 1879-1889, the Salesian missionary work in the Vicariate was centered at Patagones and Viedma. The plan was (1) to establish the Church and to develop the Christian life at the centers, with parishes, schools, oratories, workshops, etc.; (2) to visit white settlers near and far for the purpose of bringing people back to the Church, baptizing, instructing, blessing marriages, etc.; (3) to make contact and evangelize the natives living in *ranchos* (fixed dwellings) or in *toldos* (makeshift dwellings), sparsely scattered in small groups all over the territory. The purpose was not only to instruct, baptize, etc., but also to introduce the natives to the settled, civilized way of life.

In this context, in the early phase of the mission, Father Dominic Milanesio (1843-1922) from the parish of Viedma had befriended and baptized the great Chieftain Manuel Namuncurá. When in 1883 Manuel decided to surrender to the Argentine army he asked Father Milanesio to act as intermediary in the negotiations. Later (in 1888) Fr. Milanesio baptized Manuel's son, Ceferino Namuncurá. (See biographical sketch above.)

#### 2. Development of Mission Work (from 1889)

The Vicariate comprised a territory of some 350,000 square miles, mostly undeveloped and hostile. Travel had to be totally on horseback, oxen-drawn cart, and on foot.

Three permanent residences were established in 1889.

(1) Fr. Dominic Milanesio undertook a one-year excursion up the valley of the Rio Negro, and established a residence at Chosmalal (Neuquén, in the Andes), where he had been imprisoned for 3 months in 1887, on the occa-

sion of an earlier visit, by Argentine authorities. There, with his associates Fr. Angelo Savio (1835-1893) and Fr. Bartholomew Panaro (1851-1918), he built a small house, a church (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel), and gave missions throughout the area.

In an 1890 letter to Fr. Rua, Fr. Milanesio gives the following information. Between January and May, he traveled some 1,110 miles through the Rio Negro Valley. He baptized 190 natives and 50 whites; performed 12 marriages; gave 140 communions.

Between May and July, he traveled some 1,250 miles through the Rio Colorado and Balceta Valleys; he baptized 140 natives and 40 whites; performed 6 marriages; gave 80 communions.

(2) Fr. Peter Bonacina (1859-1927) with Fr. Andrew Pestarino (1854-1933) and three Salesian Sisters established a second residence at Pringles (some 50 miles upstream from Patagones on the Rio Negro), with church and school.

(3) The third residence was established at (General) Roca (also on the Rio Negro, much further upstream). Roca was a military fort and a secure town of some 2,000 inhabitants. Under Fr. Alexander Stefenelli (1864-1952), Salesians (SDB and FMA) started a church, schools for boys and girls, etc.

From these three residences mission excursions, each lasting 3 to 4 months, would be undertaken regularly through the Rio Negro and nearby valleys.

In 1889 a pharmacy and then a hospital run by Salesians (SDB and FMA) were established in Viedma, with Fr. Evasio Garrone (1861-1911) as “physician” in residence. (Fr. Garrone was later decorated by the Argentine government, given an honorary degree for medical services, and allowed to practice medicine regularly).

A report of missionary activity in the Vicariate (1884-1889) was forwarded by Fr. Anthony Riccardi (1853-1924) to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, to the Holy Childhood Association and to Fr. Rua.

In 1891 two further missions were established at Conesa and Choele-Choel, on the Rio Negro, thus completing the network: Viedma and Patagones, Pringles, Conesa, Choele-Choel, Roca and (in northern Neuquén) Chosmalal. From this last center, a mission at Junín de los Andes in southern Neuquén was established in 1895, with two schools (1895 and 1897) and the usual mission work.



### 3. Vicariate of Patagonia Extended and New Mission Centers Founded (1890-1895)

#### *Expansion of the Vicariate to the North*

The Vicariate's northern border was the Rio Colorado (dividing the Province of Rio Negro from that of Pampas). By joint action of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith and the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, the Vicariate was extended north of the Colorado into the Pampas in two stages.

(1) In 1890 Bahía Blanca (Lower Pampas) was included. A parish in 1890, schools in 1891 (SDB) and 1893 (FMA), and in 1894 a larger school (SDB) with shops and church, were established. At Fortín Mercedes (near the mouth of the Rio Colorado, south of Bahía Blanca) orphanages were established in 1895 (SDB) and in 1896 (FMA). Later this foundation developed into a large house of formation. (This was understood in Salesian mythology to have been in fulfillment of a prophetic premonition of Don Bosco in his third missionary dream of 1885[?].)

(2) In 1895 greater or central Pampas was included. This had been the land of tribal chief Namuncurá up to the time of the Argentine expedition of 1879. At the time the Araucan and Patagonian natives lived in scattered *ranchos* and *toldos*, together with old *gauchos* and new settlers. In 1895 the Franciscans resigned, and that territory was entrusted to Bishop Cagliero and made part of the vicariate. After extensive missionary excursions, three centers were established: at General Acha (1896), at Santa Rosa de Toay (1896), and at Victórica (1897). Bishop Cagliero's pastoral visit in 1897 marked the beginning of organized missionary activity in the area.

#### *Expansion of the Vicariate to the South (Central Patagonia or Chubut)*

To the south of the Province of Rio Negro lies the large Province of Chubut, dominated by the valley of the Rio Chubut. Welsh Protestant missions had been established here in 1875. Great Britain was suspected of wanting to annex the territory; but Argentina claimed it definitively in 1888. This province would naturally have been regarded as part of Bishop Cagliero's Vicariate. However, an obscure scheme was afoot to take this territory away from Bishop Cagliero's Vicariate in order to make it into a new Vicariate, and pressures were put on Rome to that effect. The schemer was a certain Canon Vivaldi, who had a following of clergy and the support of Card. John

Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda Fide. The scheme was revealed for what it was, when the Cardinal died and Leo XIII learned the real motives behind it. In 1892 he assured Fr. Rua that the Vicariate of Patagonia would remain intact. The Jesuit Fr. Rondina supported the Salesians in the affair.

Before this date the Protestant domination in the area had prevented the setting up of any permanent residence, though Salesian missionaries had made excursions into the territory. In 1892 Fr. Bernard Vacchina (1859-1935) established a residence in Rawson (the capital, still a small town of some 1,000 inhabitants, few of them Catholics) at the mouth of the Rio Chubut. In the face of great difficulties, the Salesians established school and oratory, with music and theater, and organized the care of Italian immigrants. In 1893 Fr. Milanese came for an extended mission among the Tehuelche natives, while Fr. Vacchina organized the Catholic families in that largely Protestant settlement, establishing rules for their Christian life.<sup>57</sup> The Salesian Sisters arrived in 1893. Bishop Cagliari made a pastoral visit to each Catholic family in 1895. When the Tehuelche chief Salpo came to visit, Bishop Cagliari entered into an agreement with him for the instruction (and eventually baptism) of his people. Fr. Vacchina began the mission, and for nearly thirty years he worked indefatigably at evangelizing the native groups. He was appointed vice-vicar for Chubut by Bishop Cagliari.

As was customary, reports were sent in to Fr. Rua. In 1894 Fr. Vacchina distributed 382 Communions; in 1895, 747; in 1896, 1,249; in 1897, 2,021; etc.

#### **4. Patagonian Missions Destroyed by Floods (1899)**

In 1899 torrential rains and the unseasonable thaw of the Andean snow-fields and glaciers caused destructive floods. The worst of these occurred in the winter months of May, June and July. Suddenly all the valleys of the great rivers and of their smaller tributaries that descend from the Andes to the Atlantic were flooded. Practically everything not on higher ground was destroyed—towns, *ranchos*, *toldos*, cattle, etc. Most people, on short notice, escaped to the high ground; but many died nonetheless.

(1) On the Rio Negro, the mission centers of Viedma, Patagones, Pringles, Conesa and Roca suffered almost complete destruction. The two centers of Chosmalal and Junin de los Andes (being on higher ground) were damaged

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Ceria, *Annali* II, 164-168.

but not destroyed. The worst devastation was suffered at Viedma, the capital and the center of the Vicariate.

(2) On the Rio Chubut, Rawson suffered the same fate as Viedma. The floods destroyed or damaged all the Salesian buildings, premises, equipment, animals etc. Civilian buildings and Protestant missions suffered the same fate. Everyone suffered alike, and there was general expression of solidarity. Salesian (SDB and FMA), boys and girls in the schools and orphanages took refuge on nearby heights, built temporary shelters until they could return—only to find almost everything destroyed. The strongest building in Rawson, the Salesian school, survived. Its second floor could be used quickly for shelter, and the rest of the building was rehabilitated within forty days. The devastation was made more painful by the cold, sickness and general lack of food and supplies.

Bishop Cagliero, as Don Bosco's Vicar, was on a visit to the houses of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil at the time. The news of the disaster reached him via telegram from his vice-vicar, Fr. Vacchina. He immediately enlisted the help of government, public and private charities. He also sent Fr. Vacchina in 1899-1900, and Fr. Milanesio in 1901 to Italy to seek help. Father Michael Rua appealed to all Salesian houses, cooperators and benefactors to join in the effort with financial contributions.

The missionaries returned to their stations without delay, and began rebuilding houses, churches and schools.

#### **IV. Vicariate Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza (Ecuador): Mission among the Shuar (Jívaros) in the First Rua Period (1888-1898)**

*EBM* XVIII, 161-166 (The Salesian work first established in Quito, Ecuador, with school or orphanage, January 28, 1888); E. Ceria, *Annali* II, 120-123: Ecuador (Riobamba, 1891 and Cuenca, 1893—arts and trades schools); 549-577 (The Salesians ejected from Ecuador); E. Ceria, *Annali* II, 283-296: Vicariate Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza (mission among the Shuar or Jívaros, established 1893/1894); 603-610 (Mission developments).

#### **1. Beginning of the Church in Southeastern Ecuador**

The Dominicans were the first missionaries to come to southeastern Ecuador, in the 17th century. In the 18th century, the Franciscans and the Jesuits shared that mission.

Throughout most of the 19th century missionary work was impeded by political disorder.

Finally in 1889-1892, upon request from a new government, the Holy See created four Vicariates Apostolic: (1) Santiago-Zamora, entrusted to the Franciscans; (2) Macas y Canelos, entrusted to the Dominicans; (3) Napo, entrusted to the Jesuits, later replaced by the Society of St. Joseph of St. Leonard Murialdo; and (4) Méndez y Gualaquiza, entrusted to the Salesians.

## **2. Salesians in Ecuador**

A request came to Don Bosco for the Salesians to open a school in Quito from the Ecuadorian government and the Archbishop of Quito. The agreement was signed on February 14, 1887. On January 28, 1888, as Don Bosco lay dying, the missionary expedition led by Fr. Louis Calcagno (1857-1899) and including 4 priests, 1 seminarian, and 3 brothers arrived in Quito. They were favorably received, and opened a school-orphanage that was immediately successful. There followed arts and trades schools in Riobabamba and Cuenca (1891-1893).

## **3. The Vicariate—Mission among the Shuar (Jívaros)**

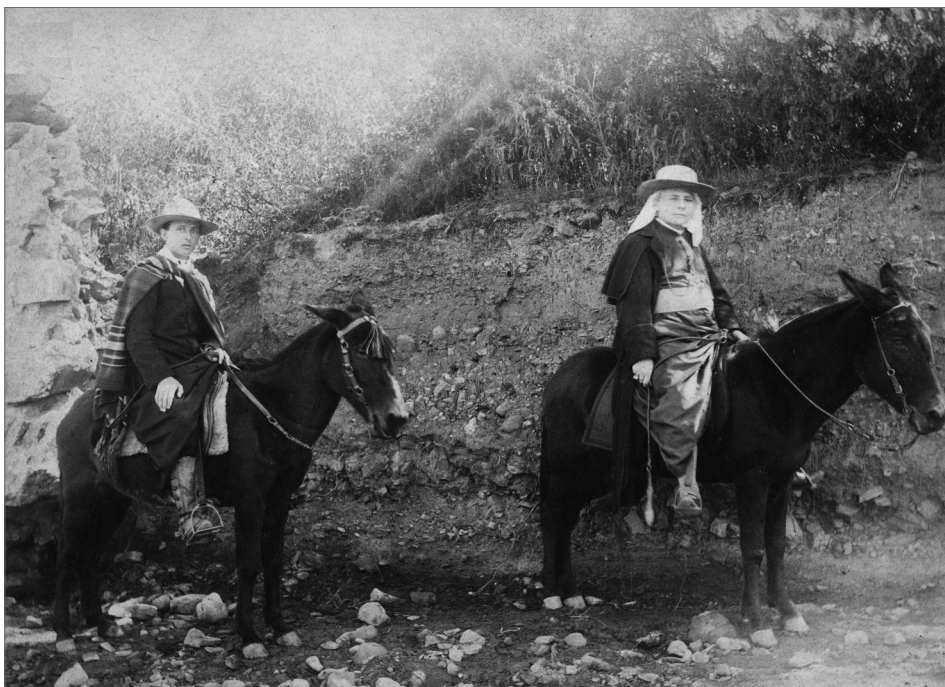
The proper name of this native population is *Shuar*, which was phonetically refashioned as *Jívaro* (Khívaro). The Shuar of Ecuador as of 1975 numbered some 25,000. Of these, some 17,500 form a federation founded by the Salesian Fr. John Sutka for the preservation of their ethnicity and culture. The federation publishes a bilingual newspaper and operates a radio station. A group of Shuar Indios, about as numerous (but not as organized), lives in Peru.

On February 2, 1892 the Holy See entrusted the Vicariate of Méndez y Gualaquiza to the Salesians.

Fr. Michael Rua sent Fr. Angelo Savio (1835-1893) and Brother Hyacinth Pankeri, a building engineer (1857-1947), to establish a house in Cuenca. Fr. Angelo Savio, first financial administrator general of the Society, had been involved in missionary work in Patagonia, Chile, Peru and Paraguay, and had gone as far as the Mato Grosso, Brazil.

The two Salesians landed at Guayaquil, and made their way toward Cuen-

ca, over the cordillera; but forced to spend the night at Mt. Chimborazo, on January 17, 1893 Fr. Savio died of pneumonia. In spite of this, with reinforcements from Quito, the house was established at Cuenca. This city is located in eastern Ecuador near the Shuar territory, and the house was to serve as a base for the mission. Méndez lies some 50 miles to the northeast, and Gualaquiza some 50 miles to the southeast of Cuenca.



24 – Bishop James Costamagna, astride a mule, on the way to Sucre (Bolivia) for the consecration of a newly appointed bishop

#### **4. Bishop James Costamagna (1866-1941), First Vicar Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza**

In October 1893 Salesian missionaries entered the area of Méndez and Gualaquiza for the first time. At Gualaquiza they found practically nothing except the little house and chapel abandoned by the Jesuit, Fr. Pozzi, 20 years earlier. The Salesians decided that the place would be suitable as a center. On February 5, 1894, a missionary team comprising Fr. Francis Mattana, another

priest, 2 brothers and 3 craft masters left Quito and by way of Cuenca arrived at Gualaquiza on March 1. The house and a school with shops were ready by October.

On May 23, 1895, the Vicar Apostolic, Fr. Costamagna, was ordained Bishop at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. But the revolution of 1896 prevented him from entering his see for another 7 years. For the duration, Fr. Rua appointed Bishop Costamagna as his representative for “the Pacific side” of South America. He was active in Chile, Peru and Bolivia.

## **5. The Revolution of 1896**

The liberal anticlerical party came to power under Gen. Eloy Alfaro in 1896. His policies, hostile to the Church led to a decree of expulsion of all religious congregations, including the Salesians (August 23, 1896). The decree, however, left to missionaries the option of remaining. The Salesian missionaries remained at Gualaquiza, in complete isolation and want, without support from the closed-down Salesian base at Cuenca, and in continuous danger from revolting factions of the Shuar natives.

## **6. Bishop Costamagna in His Mission**

In spite of the ban, on June 27, 1902 the Bishop succeeded in entering Ecuador secretly for a time. On July 23 he reached Gualaquiza, and at once he set about organizing the missionary work more efficiently. On November 30, 1902 he brought in the Salesian Sisters. He returned again the following year and stayed on *incognito*. But on January 2, 1906, he was “discovered” and forced to leave Ecuador. The life and work of the missionaries were so imperiled that in 1911 the Salesian Sisters had to leave Gualaquiza. The Salesians Fathers and Brothers left in 1914, retreating to Cuenca. On Sept. 8, 1914, the Salesians returned to the mission, while the Sisters could not return till 1930.

The Bishop was allowed to enter Ecuador legally in 1914, and by June 17 he was in Cuenca, from where he sent Fr. Alvin Del Curto (1875-1954) to establish a mission at Indanza (Méndez). On November 1, the Bishop arrived at Gualaquiza, where he consecrated the Vicariate to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This marked at last the beginning of a renaissance of the mission.



## V. Salesian Mission in the Planalto do Mato Grosso in the Rua Rectorate among the Bororos and later among the Chavantes and the Carajás

E. Ceria, *Annali* II, 267-282; 485-492.

The first Salesian mission in Brazil was among the eastern Bororo tribes. They lived in the eastern part of the plateau called Planalto do Mato Grosso, State of Mato Grosso, South-Central Brazil. Established by the Salesians in 1894, the mission was officially recognized as Apostolic mission in 1914 with the name of Prelature of Registro do Araguaya (a city in the area). In 1969 it was renamed Prelature of Guiratinga (from the city chosen as the new mission center).<sup>58</sup>

What follows is a brief account of the beginning and early development of this mission.

### 1. Salesian Work in Brazil (from 1883)

The Salesian work in Brazil was begun in 1883 with the establishment of a school-orphanage at Nichteroy (Niterói, near Rio de Janeiro). A second school-orphanage was established at São Paulo in 1886. These Salesian works, highly regarded by Emperor Pedro II and the citizenry, were part of the Uruguayan Province under Fr. Louis Lasagna (1850-1895) as Provincial.

In 1889 a military coup exiled the emperor and the royal family, and proclaimed the republic, after 58 years of royal rule. The Salesian houses (two of the SDB and three of the FMA) suffered no damage.

In 1890, a third Salesian house was established in Lorena, thus making Brazil eligible to be a separate province. (The provincial residence would be at Lorena.)

As far back as 1883 Fr. Lasagna had wanted to establish a house in Cuyabá (capital of Mato Grosso), with a view to contacting the natives in that state. Fr. Angelo Savio was the first Salesian to visit the Bororo and Chavante areas in the Planalto do Mato Grosso in a daring excursion from Paraguay in 1892.

<sup>58</sup> A *Prelature* is like a Vicariate, but it takes a different name because, for political reasons or by reason of concordats, it depends officially not on the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, but on a special Secretariat.



## **2. Bishop Louis Lasagna (1850-1895) and the mission of Mato Grosso**

In 1893, Fr. Lasagna, while continuing to be provincial of Uruguay-Brazil was ordained bishop in the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, in view of the planned mission among the Bororos of south-eastern Mato Grosso. This is the second-largest state of the 21-state federation, with capital at Cuyabá. At the time the state's population numbered barely half a million people with an estimated 80,000 natives.

On May 10, 1894, Bishop Lasagna and his secretary, Fr. John Balzola (1860-1927), traveled up the rivers Plata, Paraná and Paraguay by the steamship *Diamantino*, and met the first group of missionaries led by Fr. Anthony Malan (1862-1931) gathered at Asunción (Paraguay). From there, continuing the river journey up the Paraguay and the São Lourenço rivers, the missionaries arrived at Cuyabá. There in June 1894 they established a house to serve as support base for the mission.

After a quick survey of the territory, Bishop Lasagna accepted from the government the Colonia Teresa Cristina. This settlement and military post was located in eastern Bororo country on the São Lourenço River, about 6 hours on horseback from Cuyabá. It was agreed that the soldiers should withdraw, and everything given over to the Salesians. This took place in April 1895. In May Fr. Balzola as Director, Fr. Solari as vice-director, and a group of Salesians took possession of the place.

## **3. Summary History of the Failed *Teresa Cristina* Mission**

Before the Salesians took possession of the mission, Bishop Lasagna was called back to Uruguay and to Paraguay, where he had been active in promoting the resumption of diplomatic relations between those governments and the Holy See. His diplomacy led to the ordination of Fr. Sinforiano Bogarín as bishop of Asunción (Paraguay).

He was never to return to the mission, however. He was killed on November 6, 1895 in a train collision at Juiz de Fora. (ca. 80 mi. NW of Rio de Janeiro). A Salesian priest and four Salesian Sisters were also killed. They were traveling from São Paulo to Minas Gerais where two schools were to be founded.

In spite of the tragic loss, the team took possession of the mission. The mission proper owned 3,600 acres of land. An additional surrounding 48,000

acres were attached to the mission and were later to be distributed to the natives. According to a survey taken later (1910) there were about 1,500 Bororos in the immediate area.

The main language of the Bororos was Guaraní, with many dialects. Fr. Solari prepared a dictionary of over 500 words, nearly the entire language fund of the tribe.

The forest was a difficult and dangerous place, and the Bororo natives were hostile (though generally not as violent and warlike as the Chavantes to the north).

Bishop Lasagna had requested that some Salesian Sisters should be assigned to the mission, but Fr. Albera (spiritual director of the Society and of the Sisters at the time) felt it was too dangerous a place for them. Bishop Lasagna argued that they were absolutely necessary to deal with the womenfolk and the children, and prevailed.

In spite of great (and largely unexpected) difficulties, the mission began to make progress. The missionaries governed, taught, policed, judged, and ministered. They taught improved methods for building huts, and of working in field and forest. A herd of 700 heads of cattle was developed. Agriculture, especially the growing of corn, was increased through the use of new implements.

For the medical care of the natives, Sr. Frederica Husamer (doctor and nurse) set up a hospital-pharmacy. The missionaries tried without delay to suppress vices acquired by the natives from soldiers and settlers (especially drunkenness).

After the settlement and the immediately surrounding area were put on a running basis, Fr. Balzola made plans to contact natives farther afield. In August 1897, with a catechist and 6 natives under their captain (all Christians), he undertook a river journey by canoe to visit outlying villages. He gave gifts, cared for sick, spoke of the mission, and set up large crosses in two of the villages.

In 1898 Fr. Balzola took three Bororo natives to Turin and Rome, where a mission exhibit was being held (on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1848 Piedmontese Constitution!). The three Bororos were baptized by Fr. Rua.

On his return Fr. Balzola found that the Salesians had been forced out of the Teresa Cristina mission by the government. The reason given was that they were not doing enough for the natives. The real reasons were anticlerical hostility and a plot by some politicians to grab the land.

Meanwhile, in 1896, hence after Bishop Lasagna's death, the Uruguayan-Brazilian Province was split into three: The Uruguayan Province (comprising

also some foundations in Paraguay), the Southern Brazilian Province, and the vice-Province of the Mato Grosso Missions. Fr. Malan was appointed [Vice] Provincial there. He would later (1914) be the first prelate (Bishop) of Registro do Araguaya.

The Salesians never returned to Teresa Cristina. But they began other missions among the Bororos under the leadership of Fr. Malan.

#### **4. Sacred Heart Mission Established (1901)**

On November 17, 1901 (an important date in the history of the Salesian mission in Mato Grosso) a group of Salesian SDBs and FMAs started out from Cuyabá for the purpose of founding a mission on the Barreiro River. They arrived on January 18, 1902, and began to put up the basic structures. Thus the Sacred Heart Mission was begun. On August 8, they made first contact with the Bororos. On June 17, 1903 (the eve of the feast of the Sacred Heart) 140 natives of the Bororo-Coroado tribe came to the mission to stay. In June 1905 the first 26 adult natives received baptism.

The following year the Salesians set up and began to operate a meteorological station at the mission, similar to the one they were already running in Cuyabá. Weather forecasts were a necessary prerequisite for the planning of missionary excursions.

The mission became a quasi-parish in 1920. It stretched over 555 sq. mi., from the Rio das Mortes to the Rio das Garças.

From 1902 to 1924 the Salesian personnel working in the mission comprised 17 priests, 2 seminarians, 15 brothers, and 16 sisters. The Catholic native population increased from 20 to 2,100.

#### **5. The Immaculate Conception Mission Established (1905)**

Fr. John Salvetto with 2 seminarians and one brother founded the mission on the right bank of the Rio das Garças on June 22, 1905. On October 29, 90 Bororo natives arrived at the mission from the area of the higher Araguaya River. However, they could not be housed at the mission for lack of provisions and shelter, so they were sent on to the Sacred Heart mission 35 miles to the north. On November 29, a second group of 82 natives arrived. These could be settled in premises and the mission began its work.



25 – Bishop Louis Lasagna (1850-1895) in a photograph taken on the occasion of his episcopal ordination

Some 12 years later, in 1918, the Immaculate Conception mission was transferred to the bank of the Rio das Mortes; and after a few months it was again transferred to the confluence of the Boe-Rigaião River and the Garças River, some 5 miles from the Sacred Heart mission. In 1923 the two missions were joined.

From 1905 to 1923, the Salesian personnel comprised 12 priests, 2 seminarians, 8 brothers, and 14 sisters. The Catholic native population increased from 15 to 9,330.

## **6. The St. Joseph Mission Established (1906)**

On March 15, 1906, Fr. Malan acquired the *fazenda* (ranch) of a Dr. Santos on the Sangradouro River. Immediately Fr. Balzola opened the third mission there under the patronage of St. Joseph. It was located about 50 miles from Cuyabá and 25 miles from the Sacred Heart mission. It was designed to house the Christian families of half civilized or civilized natives.

Because of excellent location, the fertility of the soil, and the discovery of diamonds in the riverbed, the area was quickly settled.

In 1920 the mission was made a quasi-parish covering an area of some 1,300 sq. mi.

From 1906 to 1924 the Salesian personnel comprised 14 priests, 11 brothers, and 14 sisters. Catholics grew from 374 to 8,217 in number.

## **VI. Closing Comment: Culture, Colonialism and the Missions**

### **1. Culture and Acculturation**

Generally speaking, in the nineteenth century Catholic missionaries, Salesians included, were possessed of great zeal and dedication, but lacked adequate *specific* preparation for mission work—with reference, for example, to knowledge of languages and proper acculturation. The failure to properly appreciate native cultures and relate to them, especially with regard to religious beliefs, often hampered evangelization. This failure went hand in hand with the prevailing perception that evangelization necessitated a one-way acculturation of native peoples to European customs and ways of living.

### **2. Colonialism and Christian Mission**

Even more damaging to missionaries and missions was their real or perceived association with colonial powers. In the nineteenth century, in many areas (not, however, in South America) the Christian missions appeared to be associated with a colonial power—perhaps even to be part of a colonial system, or the allies of colonial interests. This was true under the older colonial systems, such as those of Spain and Portugal in Latin America, as well as under the newer colonial systems, such as that of England, France, and Belgium in Africa and Asia in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The “new colonialism” was the offspring on the one hand of European nationalism and of the rival imperialistic systems that it bred; and on the other, of the capitalism that grew out of the industrial revolution. English colonialism during the latter half of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837-1901), and French colonialism in the period of the Third Republic (1871-1914) are only the most outstanding examples. But every major power in Europe vied to establish a colonial empire.

There had been little expansionist activity before 1870. But the nationalism and imperialism that divided Europe into armed camps (Triple Alliance and Triple Entente), and that ultimately led to the conflict of 1914-1918 also bred intense colonial rivalry. At the same time, the industrial revolution had entered a new phase. Not only had industrial development swept over countries other than England and France, such as Germany, Italy and even Russia; but a spate of new inventions and discoveries brought about what has sometimes been called “the second industrial revolution.” As a result there was a great increase in the production of goods, and hence tremendous new amounts of capital available for investment. For this huge surplus of goods and capital the old world provided no adequate outlet. Moreover, with the growing complexity of industry and the rise in the standard of living, raw materials such as rubber, metals, etc. became essential to the life of powerful European nations. Colonialism supported such economic imperialism. Colonies were necessary for three reasons; (1) most importantly, for investment of surplus capital; (2) as sources of essential raw materials; and (3) as markets for manufactured goods. Other forces were also at work, as was the case with France where every cabinet seemed anxious to atone for the defeat of 1871 (Franco-German War) by gaining glory abroad. The chief areas of colonial activity were Africa and Asia.

Every colonial power worked out philosophical rationalizations to explain and justify colonial imperialism: Darwinian or pseudo-Darwinian “survival-of-the-fittest” theories; old notions of racial superiority; an ideology of the “mission” of Europe to “backward” countries; etc.

Colonialism, whether old or new, and even at its most “enlightened,” was essentially exploitation of the natural and human resources of the colony. Because it was an unjust and exploitative system it spawned hatred, and eventually violence and rejection.

The Christian mission and its missionaries could not but suffer the same fate in the process. This was due to the fact that they either were part of the system, or operated under the patronage of the system, or were simply

perceived as representing the interests of the system from the fact that they were Europeans.

The association of the Christian mission with the colonial system was in some cases perceived to be very close, with good reasons.

At about the same time that the Salesian missions were being established in South America in the 1880s, Africa was being partitioned among various European powers by the *Berlin Act* (1885). For example, the *Berlin Act* recognized the possession rights of King Leopold I of Belgium and of his International Association to the Congo region (Zaire). In 1889 King Leopold deeded the Congo Free State to Belgium. In the subsequent Brussels Conference (1890) methods were discussed for “Europeanizing” colonies; and missionaries were counted on to expedite the process. Thus, King Leopold admitted only Belgian nationals as missionaries to the Congo, and financed the missions as colonizing agencies. (It will be recalled that the Salesian work was established in the Congo under this system.)

The rationale for such patronage on the part of the colonial power may have included a desire to support evangelization. However, it must be borne in mind that the colonial power fully expected to reap returns from their patronage. And it is known that in some cases territorial acquisitions were thereby made. Thus rightly or wrongly, missionaries were in many cases perceived as allies of the colonial power. And to that extent, later, the process of de-colonization was to entail also the rejection of the European missionary, and of Christianity itself.

The older colonial systems, such as that established in Latin America by Spain, even though more Christian and humane in inspiration, were not radically different. That type of colonial imperialism was also accompanied by massive exploitation of natural and human resources, by the destruction of cultures and the depletion of populations. The missionaries that worked under the patronage of the system (*Padroado/Patronato*) could not escape being perceived as allies of the system.

One should not, however, even for a moment think that missionaries, even those subsidized by the colonial power, went to the missions motivated by anything but the highest gospel ideals of service and pastoral charity. To share the gift of the faith and to foster the human development of people—that has always been the missionary’s goal. Moreover some missionaries distinguished themselves for their fearless opposition to exploitation (to slavery in particular), as well as for their tireless efforts to foster human development among native populations. Yet, the problem was systemic.



### 3. The Situation of the First Salesian Missionaries

By the time Salesian missions were established in South America the *Patronato* had ceased. The various countries concerned (Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil) had acquired independence as well as modern “European” forms of social and political organization.

As for the cultural problem—none existed when it came to working among Italian immigrants. The cultural problems that arose in connection with the larger population, chiefly of European extraction, were not insurmountable. Overall, the Salesians, following the Bosconian principle of “non-involvement in party politics,” remained remarkably free for missionary activity.

The cultural problem arose when it came to the native populations, small as they were. The Salesian missionaries shared the general view that the natives had to be “civilized” as well as evangelized. “Civilizing” entailed settling and one-way European acculturation.

This included agriculture, trades and basic education in schools. What the natives’ perception of the Salesian missionary may have been is hard to say. What we can say is that the Salesian missionaries have been second to none in defending the rights of the native peoples they evangelized, and in fostering their human development. Moreover, with on-going experience they succeeded in perfecting the methods of the mission on the basis of a deeper appreciation of the native cultures.

## Chapter 5

# THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS AND THE SALESIAN BULLETIN – THE WORK OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS OR SONS OF MARY PROJECT

### Summary

1. Introductory material
2. Four “charter” documents (draft regulations) by Don Bosco representing his developing conception of the Cooperators (1873-1876)
3. Don Bosco’s memorandum of 1877 on the Salesian Cooperators (*Cooperatori Salesiani*)
4. Story of the “founding” of the Cooperators and of the Work of Mary Help of Christians, and Archbishop Gastaldi’s objections.
5. Crash course of study (“School of Fire”) for the Sons of Mary (from Barberis Chronicle of 1876)
6. Appendix: Pius IX’s Decrees on the Salesian Cooperators and the Work of Mary Help of Christians
7. Closing Comment
8. The *Salesian Bulletin* in Don Bosco’s conception, as his personal instrument of liaison with the Cooperators

## I. Introductory Material

### 1. Reading Resource

EBM X, 558-568 (Cooperators, and two “charter” documents; XI, 20-59 (Sons of Mary); XI, 60-77 (Cooperators); XIII, 190-195 (Cooperators and *Salesian Bulletin* at GC I); XIII, 466-491 (Cooperators Organized);

Stella, *DB:LW*, 234-258;

Joseph Aubry, *The Salesian Cooperator: A Real Vocation in the Church* (printed at 2B, Taylors Road, Madras, India, 60010 [Translator, date and other publication data, not given]);

F. Desramaut, *The Founding of the Salesian Family (1841-1876)* (New Rochelle, NY: A Don Bosco Pamphlet Publication, 1985) [Part III on the Salesian Cooperators].

## 2. Complementary Reading

IBM XI, 529-535 (documents on the Work of Mary Help Of Christians); 535-547 (documents on the Salesian Cooperators), both omitted in *EBM*;  
 E. Ceria, *Annali I*, 207-215, 216-225, 226-234, 235-244;  
*La Famiglia Salesiana di Don Bosco* (Roma: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 2002), esp. 62-69;  
 F. Desramaut, M. Midali, ed., *Il Cooperatore nella società contemporanea*. Colloqui 6 (Leumann-Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1975);  
 M. Midali, *Nella Chiesa e nella società con Don Bosco oggi*. Commento del nuovo Regolamento dei Cooperatori Salesiani (Leumann-Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1974);  
 A. Martinelli, "Rapporto tra Cooperatori di Don Bosco e i Salesiani di Don Bosco," in *Costruire insieme la Famiglia Salesiana* (Atti del Simposio di Roma, 19-22 Febbraio 1982), ed. M. Midali (Roma: LAS, 1983), 363-405.

## 3. Introductory Comment

Don Bosco's activity as founder may be conceived as including the following: (1) *Founding I*: Oratory collaborative undertaking (1841-1852); (2) *Founding II*: Salesian Society (1854-1859); (3) *Founding III*: Approval of the Salesian Society and its Constitutions (1860-1874); (4) *Founding IV*: Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1864-1872); (5) *Founding V*: the Salesian Cooperators and the Salesian Bulletin (with the Work of Mary Help of Christians) (1875-1877).

The Salesian Cooperators have been regarded as continuing the idea of External Members (as described in the Constitutions of 1860-1873). But more appropriately they should be regarded as continuing in a new, creative way the collaborative undertaking of the early Oratory, and therefore as an association already in place.

The *Salesian Bulletin*, as Don Bosco conceived it, was a component of the "founding" (re-organization) of the Cooperators. It was intended as his official instrument for liaison and governance.

The Work of Mary Help of Christians, which Don Bosco regarded as an established association is probably to be identified with the Cooperators. They are the "Work of Mary Help of Christians" whose task, it is, among other tasks, to recruit young adult vocations (Sons of Mary). The Sons of Mary therefore are connected with the "founding" of the Cooperators.

## II. “Charter” Document 1 (First of Four, about 1873)

*Note:* This document is edited in *EBM X*, 560-564 as translated from *IBM*. However, the translation that follows is made directly from the archival manuscript in Don Bosco’s hand, in *ASC A230: Cooperatori 2 (2)*, *FDBM* 1886 B7-C2.

### Associates to the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales<sup>1</sup>

*[Introduction: Need and Rationale for This Association]*

Among the Christian people many there are who would very gladly leave the world in order the better to attend to their own perfection and ensure their own salvation. They would thus avoid the dangers that imperil their soul, enjoy peace of heart, and spend the rest of their lives in solitude and in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. But not every one is called to this kind of religious life. Many because of age or condition or poor health, or simply for lack of a vocation, find it impossible to fulfill this desire. It is in order to satisfy this desire in some way that we propose to establish the Pious Association<sup>2</sup> of St. Francis de Sales.

This association would have a double purpose: (1) to offer a means of perfection to those who would wish to enter some religious institute but cannot; (2) to offer the members of this association the opportunity of taking part in the public and private works of charity and religion that the members of the Salesian Congregation undertake for the greater glory of God and the good of souls. These two purposes may be easily attained by the observance of those parts of the rules of this Congregation that are compatible with each person’s state in life.

But there is an additional, perhaps even stronger reason for this association: the need for people to unite in the cause of good. It is a fact that secular people form associations for the spread of bad books and bad ideas through the press and through a bad educational system, by which false principles are purveyed to our unsuspecting young people. And in all this they are tremendously successful. Shall Catholics then stand by idle or disorganized with the result that their activity is paralyzed under pressure from superior evil forces?

<sup>1</sup> Associati alla Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales.

<sup>2</sup> “Pious Society” is cancelled.

This must not be!<sup>3</sup> Let us all unite under the rules of the Salesian congregation; let us [Salesians] form one heart and one soul with the extern members. Let us be true confreres. Let the good of one be the good of all; let the evil which threatens one be repulsed as though it were threatening all. We shall achieve this great common purpose through this association attached to the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales.

### 1. Purpose of This Association

It is the purpose of this association, therefore, to unite good Catholics together in order to advance the cause of our holy religion, and at the same time the better to ensure each member's salvation through practicing such rules of the Society of St. Francis de Sales as are compatible with the condition of persons living in the world. [Note 1 by Don Bosco: The Society or Congregation of St. Francis de Sales was approved by His Holiness Pius IX on March 1, 1869.<sup>4</sup>]

The associates are asked to abide by the following guidelines:

(1) They shall try to help themselves spiritually by the exercise of charity toward neighbor, especially toward poor and abandoned children (*fanciulli poveri ed abbandonati*). If these children are educated in the holy fear of God, the number of juveniles at risk (*discoli*) is proportionately reduced, human society is changed for the better, and a great number of souls are saved for heaven.

(2) To gather together poor children and teach them in one's own house, to help them with good advice when they are in [moral] danger, to take them where they can be instructed in the truths of faith, these are activities in which each associate may usefully be involved. If unable to attend to these things personally, associates should get others involved. They could do this by asking a companion, a relative, a friend, or any acquaintance to do what they themselves are prevented from doing. Associates may also supply by praying for those so involved, or by helping materially where help is needed.

[Note 2 by Don Bosco: The Congregation of St. Francis de Sales operates for this charitable purpose the home in Turin, the home of San Pierdarena, the schools of Lanzo, of Valsalice, of Borgo San Martino, of Varazze, of Alasio, and the oratories in the city of Turin.]

<sup>3</sup> Here Don Bosco had written and cancelled the sentence, "*Vis unita fortior, funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*, says the Lord" (Forces that are united grow stronger, and whereas a single strand is easily snapped, three strands only break with difficulty when joined).

<sup>4</sup> Don Bosco had at first written 1870.

(3) In these turbulent times there is a grave need of priestly vocations. Hence all associates shall endeavor to help those young men who show signs of a vocation, especially if they are poor. They shall help such young men by good advice, and by assisting them in applying to those schools and boarding schools where they may be educated in the principles of our holy religion. For without [such precaution] true knowledge, morality and education are impossible. Consequently, without a careful religious education it is morally impossible to foster a genuine priestly vocation.

(4) All associates shall take the greatest care to prevent any talk or action against the Roman Pontiff and his supreme authority. They will also therefore obey all Church laws and endeavor to promote their observance; they shall likewise inculcate respect for the Roman Pontiff, the bishops and the priests. They shall promote catechetical instruction, novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats, and generally act to encourage others to listen to the word of God. All such activities are in the domain of this association.

(5) In these times of ours, every effort is being made through the press to spread books and principles that are against Christian morality and religion. Hence Salesians [*sic*] shall endeavor by every possible means to prevent the sale of bad books and to disseminate good books, sheets, leaflets, and all kinds of printed matter, in those places and among those people where it may be possible to offer such literature. This activity should begin with one's home, relatives, friends and acquaintances; then it should extend to wherever there is hope of success.

[*Note 1 [3] by DB: The Salesian Congregation is already engaged by diverse means in the dissemination of good books. This it does especially through its two monthly publications: known, one as the *Catholic Readings*, the other as the *Young People's Library of Italian Classics*.]*

## *2. Rules for the Salesian Associates*

(1) Anyone who has completed 16 years of age, is of good conduct,<sup>5</sup> a good Catholic, obedient to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, may enroll in this association.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Don Bosco had at first written and canceled, "from a good family."

<sup>6</sup> The first draft of this article (canceled) read: "Anyone who desires to enroll in this association must be a good Catholic, obedient to the Church and to the Supreme Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth."

(2) No exterior penitential practices are prescribed. All associates, however, must distinguish themselves from other Christians by their modesty in dress, frugality<sup>7</sup> in eating and drinking, [simplicity] in household furnishings, moral restraint in speech, and exact fulfillment of one's duties.

(3) Associates shall make a yearly spiritual retreat, either in their own home or in some church or house designated for this purpose. There is no prescription regarding the duration of the retreat; but each one shall make a general confession or, if this has already taken place, an annual confession.<sup>8</sup>

They shall moreover make a monthly Exercise for a Happy Death, with confession and communion as if preparing for death. If they should own property, they shall make their last will and testament and put their temporal affairs in order as if they were to leave this world for eternity.

(4) Each day, they shall recite one Our Father and one Hail Mary in honor of St. Francis de Sales for the maintenance and extension of our holy Catholic religion. [Added in a separate sheet:] Those who are in the habit of reciting the little office of Our Lady, or the canonical hours, need not say these prayers, but [if they do] they should offer them for the same intention.

(5) They shall recite their morning and evening prayers devoutly, keep Sundays and holy days by abstaining from servile work, and by attending Holy Mass, the Sermon and Benediction [with the Blessed Sacrament].

They shall receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion every fortnight or [at least] once a month. St. Philip Neri and St. Alphonsus, a doctor of the Church, recommend weekly Confession.

All associates shall fill out [a form with] their first and last name, occupation, address and place of residence for the director of the association, who is the rector of the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. For greater convenience, the director of a local Salesian house shall have the power to enroll members, but he shall forward all data to Turin to be entered in the register of the association.

(7) Each associate shall look on the Salesian Congregation as a mother, and shall endeavor to help it<sup>9</sup> by prayer and by promoting its works. This includes helping with catechetical instruction, retreats, preaching, novenas,

<sup>7</sup> Don Bosco had at first written and canceled, "temperance."

<sup>8</sup> Don Bosco had at first written in addition and cancelled, "they shall put their spiritual and temporal affairs in order as if at the point of death."

<sup>9</sup> Don Bosco had at first written instead and canceled, "Let each associate help the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales."



and triduums, as well as supporting its works of charity and its public and private schools. Each one shall also endeavor to help with all those material and moral means that may be available and that are judged to be conducive to the good of souls and to the greater glory of God.

(8) The Superior of the [Salesian] Congregation shall see to it that each day special prayers are offered for all associates. Moreover the latter share in [the spiritual benefit of] all the Masses, prayers, sermons, as well as of all the good works in which the members of the Salesian Congregation are involved through their sacred ministry or through the exercise of charity. On the day following the feast of St. Francis de Sales, all the priests of the [Salesian] Congregation shall offer Mass for deceased confreres.<sup>10</sup> Others who are not priests shall receive Holy Communion and recite the third part of the Rosary with additional prayers [for the same intention].

(9) The Rector [Major] of the Salesian Congregation is the superior of the association, but the Rector of the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin acts as his delegate. To the latter, associates may address themselves as needed. In places where there is a house of the Congregation associates may address themselves to the local [Salesian] director.

(10) Should any confrere become gravely ill, the superior shall be notified so that he may have public prayers offered [for the confrere's recovery]. The same, and without delay, should be done in the event of any one's death. The Rector shall then promptly notify the associates, so that they may offer prayers, including the third part of the Rosary, and may receive holy Communion for the soul of the deceased.

(11) Once a year the superior shall notify [the membership of the following]: [i] of the deaths that have occurred in the course of the year; [ii] of projects to be put into effect for the greater glory of God in the upcoming year.

(12) The principal feasts to be celebrated in the Society [association?] are: St. Francis de Sales, Mary Help of Christians, and St. Joseph. The secondary [*sic*] feasts are all those of Our Lady, of the holy Apostles, of St. John the Baptist, of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, All Saints, and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, which is observed on the second day of November.

<sup>10</sup> Instead of "confreres" Don Bosco had at first written and canceled, "members or associates (*soci od associati*)."

### III. “Charter” Document 2 (Second of Four, 1874)

*Note.* Original pamphlet publication (Turin: Press of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, 1874) — Here taken from *EBM X*, 565-567.

#### Christian Union<sup>11</sup>

##### 1. [Preamble]

Feeble forces, when united, become stronger: *Vis unita fortior*, union makes for greater strength. A single strand may be easily broken, but several, such strands twined together form a strong cord which is very difficult to break: *Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur* [A triple-plaited cord is hard to break].<sup>12</sup> That is what people of the world do in order to succeed in business enterprises. We Christians must act likewise. Like the first Christians, we must stand united as a single heart and soul in order to succeed in the important venture of achieving eternal salvation. This is the objective of the Salesian Association.

##### 2. Salesian Association

The purpose of this association is to offer to people living in the world a way of life somewhat similar to the religious life so that they may at least partially enjoy that peace which is vainly sought in the world. Many would willingly withdraw into a monastery but cannot do so because of age, health, or state of life; very many others, lacking the opportunity or call, stand no chance at all. Still, even in the midst of their usual occupations, within their own family circle, they can lead a life which is helpful to their fellow men and to themselves, almost as though they lived in a religious community. For this reason the Salesian Association may be regarded as one of the ancient third orders, with this difference: those third orders aimed at Christian perfection through pious exercises, whereas this association has as its main purpose the active life, especially on behalf of morally endangered youth.

<sup>11</sup> *Unione Cristiana*.

<sup>12</sup> “*Vis Unita fortior*” is a proverb from the classics. “*Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*” is quoted from Ecclesiastes 4:12 (Latin Vulgate).

### *3. Purpose of This Association*

The same field of activity of the Salesian Congregation is open to all association members:

(1) The first duty of association members is love for morally endangered boys. Gathering them together, instructing them in the faith, warning them of dangers and directing them where they may be instructed are activities in which all association members are invited to participate with zeal. Anyone unable to take part personally may do so through relatives or friends or through prayer or material help. It is also the duty of the association to promote novenas, triduum, spiritual retreats and catechism classes, especially in areas lacking material and moral means.

(2) Since the lack of priestly vocations is keenly felt nowadays, each association member shall take special care of those boys who manifest some sign of a vocation by their good moral and intellectual qualities. They should counsel and direct them to those day or resident schools that will assist them in following their vocation.

(3) They should strive to counteract godless literature by spreading good books, pamphlets, leaflets and printed matter of any kind in those places and among such persons as may be needed.

### *4. [Constitution and Government]*

(1) Anyone who is at least sixteen may join this association, provided that he intends to abide by its rules.

(2) The superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of this association.

(3) Directors of Salesian houses are authorized to enroll members, but must send their full names and addresses to headquarters so that they may be entered in the association's register.

(4) In villages or towns with no Salesian house but with at least ten associate members a leader will be appointed with the title of "Decurion" (Group Leader). Ten "decuries" will also have a leader whose title will be "Prefect of the Association." The local pastor or an exemplary priest shall preferably be chosen as prefect or decurion, and he will report directly to the [central] superior. Where there are less than ten associate members, they shall report to the director of the nearest Salesian house, or directly to the [central] superior.

(5) Decurions and prefects shall maintain contact with their respective

teams, but members may always consult their superior directly on matters they feel pertinent to public welfare, especially of young people.

(6) At the end of each year, the superior shall advise members on priorities for the coming year and inform them of members who have died during the year, recommending prayers for their souls.

### *5. Special Obligations*

(1) There are no annual membership dues, but voluntary contributions to sustain the association's activities are gratefully accepted. They may be given to decurions, prefects, directors, or the [central] superior himself.

### *6. Benefits*

(1) Members may gain many indulgences, a list of which will be mailed to all.

(2) They shall share in Masses, indulgences, prayers, novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats, sermons, catechetical instructions and works of mercy that Salesians perform in their priestly ministry, particularly in those Masses and prayers that are daily offered in the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, to invoke heavenly blessings on them and their families.

(3) On the day following the feast of St. Francis de Sales, every Salesian priest and those priests belonging to the association will offer Mass for deceased members. Lay members shall try to receive holy Communion and say five mysteries of the rosary and other prayers for this intention.

(4) When a member is ill, the superior shall be informed at once so that he can have special prayers said on his/her behalf. The same applies when a member dies.

### *7. Religious Practices*

(1) Members are not bound to perform external penances but are urged to observe modesty in dress, frugality in meals, simplicity in home furnishings, propriety in speech and exactness in performing the duties of their state of life.

(2) They are urged to make a spiritual retreat for a few days each year. On the last day of each month, or on another suitable day, they shall make the Exercise for a Happy Death by receiving Penance and Communion as if it were their last day of life.

(3) Lay members shall daily recite a *Pater* and an *Ave* to St. Francis de Sales for the Church's needs. Priests and lay members who daily recite the little office of Our Lady or the Divine Office are excused from this prayer if they specify this intention in reciting the Office.

(4) Let all members receive Penance and the Holy Eucharist as often as possible.

(5) For everybody's tranquillity of conscience we declare that the rules of this association do not oblige under penalty of sin save in those things that are already commanded or forbidden by God and Holy Mother Church. They should be observed because of their spiritual advantages and the purpose of this association.

#### IV. "Charter" Document 3 (Third of Four, 1875)

*Note:* This document is edited in *IBM* XI, 535-540 from the published pamphlet (Turin: Salesian Press, 1876), but is omitted in *EBM*. It is here translated from *IBM*. All footnotes are by the translator.

#### Association for Charitable Works<sup>13</sup>

##### 1. *Christian Union for the Work of Charity*<sup>14</sup>

This association is aptly named Christian Union or Union for Charitable Works (*Unione Cristiana o di buone opere*) because its purpose is to unite good [Christians] and help them to work together in the cause of good (*ad operare il bene*).

This is the example that the faithful of the early Church left us. Faced with impending dangers every day, they did not give up. United as one heart and one soul, they encouraged one another to be steadfast in the faith and to withstand the relentlessly threatening opposition. This is also what the Lord taught us when he said: "Feeble forces that unite become stronger. A single strand may be easily broken, but a triple cord is not quickly broken: *Vis unita fortior; funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*."<sup>15</sup> This is exactly what secular people

<sup>13</sup> Associazione di opere buone.

<sup>14</sup> Unione cristiana nel bene operare.

<sup>15</sup> "*Vis Unita fortior* (forces that unite become stronger)" is a proverb from the classics.

do to further their temporal interests. Should then the children of light be less farsighted than the children of darkness? Certainly not! We who live as Christians in these turbulent times must likewise unite in a spirit of prayer, charity and zeal, and we must use all possible means that our religion makes available to us. We may then hope to be able to stamp out the evil that puts the important affair of [people's] eternal salvation at risk.

An Association attached to the Salesian Congregation is hereby proposed as the needed secure and stable unifying bond.

## 2. *The Salesian Congregation*

The Salesian Congregation received the definitive approval of the Church on April 3, 1874. Its primary purpose is to unite its members to work for the good of people at large, with special attention given to the young. The number of Salesians is considerable, but it is far inferior to the need and is unequal to the numerous requests for help that are received every day. Insistent requests for Salesian personnel to open religious houses and schools for the education of young people, and for evangelical workers to initiate and sustain missionary activity, have been received from various parts of Italy and of Europe, from China, Australia, and the Americas, the Argentine Republic in particular.

Our little group of Salesians, in spite of our best efforts, can in no way satisfy the great need. This is why we now make this appeal to all those who love our holy Catholic religion and are concerned about the salvation of souls. We invite all such, in fact we beg them for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to get involved and, wherever they may find themselves, to become cooperators in the special works of charity that form the purpose of our congregation. It is hoped that by increasing the labor force the field of activity can be extended, and a more fruitful harvest can be obtained for the glory of God and the good of souls.

## 3. *The Salesian Association*

1. This pious Institute (*questo pio Istituto* [that is, the Salesian Congregation]) can serve as a stable unifying bond [for the association].

*“Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur”* (a threefold cord is not easily broken) is from Ecclesiastes 4:12 (Latin Vulgate). By “the Lord” Don Bosco here means “God or the Bible” generally.

2. The general purpose of this Salesian Association is to offer to those who sincerely desire to save their soul a practical program that would help them live as good Christians and achieve that peace of heart that the world cannot give.

Many would perhaps opt for the cloister; but advancing age, or poor health, or particular conditions, or simply lack of opportunity prevent them from following such a course. But they should know that this association would offer them the opportunity of being united with those who live in the Congregation, even while working at their ordinary occupations and living with their families.

Because of this, the Association might be regarded as a kind of traditional Third Order, but with a difference. While in those [Third Orders] Christian perfection was made to consist in exercises of piety, in this association the principal purpose is the active life engaged in the exercise of charity toward neighbor, especially toward young people at risk (*gioventù pericolante*). This is the special purpose of the Association.

#### *4. Ways of Cooperation*

Salesian associates will not be satisfied with words; they will want action. They should therefore give evidence of their zeal by working at the harvest of the Congregation, with which they want to be associated.

(1) The associates shall undertake the task of promoting novenas, tridiums, spiritual retreats, and catechetical instruction, especially in places where material and moral means are lacking.

(2) Since the lack of priestly vocations is becoming critical in these times of ours, those associates who are in a position to help shall endeavor to take special care of youngsters who have the necessary moral qualities, who show an aptitude for study, and hence show signs of a vocation. They can help by timely advice, and by pointing them toward those schools where they may receive nurture and guidance in their vocation.

(3) Another way of cooperation is countering the irreligious press by the good press. This may be done by spreading good books, leaflets, pamphlets, and all kinds of printed matter, in those places and among those families in which acceptance may prudently be expected.

(4) Finally there is the exercise of charity in behalf of children at risk (*fanciulli pericolanti*). This includes taking them in, instructing them in the faith, introducing them to church services, counseling them when in moral danger



and taking them where they may receive religious instruction. These activities are the field where associates are to exercise their zeal. Those who cannot personally be engaged in such activities may do so through others, for example by involving a relative or friend. Then one may cooperate by prayer, or by helping financially if needs be. The early Christians used to bring their goods to the Apostles, to be used to help widows and orphans, and for other purposes.<sup>16</sup>

### 5. Constitution and Governance of the Association

(1) Anyone who has completed 16 years of age may be enrolled in this association, provided he or she is ready and willing to abide by its bylaws.

(2) The association shall humbly commend itself to the kindness and protection of the Supreme Pontiff, bishops, and parish priests. To them it shall defer *absolutely* and *without reservations* in everything that pertains to religion.<sup>17</sup>

(3) The superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of the Association.

(4) The director of every local Salesian house is authorized to enroll associates. He shall then send the forms with the [member's] first and last name and place of residence to the [central] superior, who will record the enrollment in the common register.

(5) In cities and towns where no Salesian house is established, and where the associates have reached ten in number, the superior shall appoint a head with the title of "Group Leader" (*decurione*).

Ten such groups may [unite and] be given a leader with the title of "prefect of the association." Both positions of prefect and group leader shall preferably be filled by the local pastor or by some exemplary priest. They shall correspond directly with the [central] superior. If the associates number less than ten, they shall correspond with the director of the nearest local Salesian house, or directly with the [central] superior.

(6) Each group leader (*decurione*) shall keep in touch with his ten, and each prefect with his one hundred, associates. But each associate is free to correspond with the [central] superior about whatever may need attention.

(7) On a monthly basis associates shall be given responsibility for things done, in progress or proposed for future action. This shall be done through a

<sup>16</sup> Acts 4:32-37.

<sup>17</sup> Italics by Don Bosco.

printed bulletin or sheet. At the end of each year the superior shall notify the members of projects that should be given priority in the new year. He shall also give them a report about those members who may have been called to eternal life during the previous year and shall commend them to their prayers.

(8) On the first Sunday of each month, or on some other convenient day, each prefect (*centurione*) or group leader (*decurione*) shall call a meeting of their groups (*centuria* or *decuria*). Its purpose shall be to discuss the progress made in activities undertaken, especially when catechetical instruction is being carried forward in a parish or parishes with the consent of the pastors.

(9) Each prefect or group leader (*centurione* o *decurione*) shall gather their groups (*decurie* o *centurie*) together on the feast of St. Francis de Sales, or on the Sunday following the feast. This is to promote devotion to our patron saint, and to provide mutual encouragement to persevere in the activities undertaken in accordance with the purpose of the association.

## *6. Special Obligations*

(1) Members shall do all in their power to promote and support the works of the association, whether by their own financial contributions or by offerings collected from charitable people.

(2) Members shall contribute a yearly fee of one lira for the works undertaken or to be undertaken by the association. These offerings shall be sent to the [central] superior, or to the group leaders (*decurioni*), prefects or [Salesian] directors, who shall then send them on to the same superior.

(3) A collection shall regularly be made on the occasion of conferences, particularly of the one held on the feast of St. Francis de Sales. Members who may be unable to attend such a conference should find some way of forwarding their offering to the superior.

## *7. Advantages*

(1) Associates may gain a great number of indulgences, a list of which will be made available to them.

(2) They will share in the spiritual benefit of all the Masses, indulgences, prayers, novenas, tridiums, spiritual retreats, sermons, catechetical instruction, and of all the works of charity in which Salesians are engaged in their sacred ministry. They will likewise share in the spiritual benefits of the Mass and prayers that are offered each day in the church of Mary Help of Chris-

tians in Turin. These are offered to call down heaven's blessings on all associates and their families, especially on those who may be ill or may find themselves in danger of death.

(3) On the day following the feast of St. Francis de Sales all the priests of the Congregation shall offer holy Mass for deceased confreres (*confratelli* [associates]). Those Salesians who are not priests shall receive holy Communion, or at least recite the third part of the Rosary [for that intention].

(4) Should a confrere [an associate] become ill, the Superior shall be notified without delay, so that special prayers may be offered to God. The same shall be done in the event of the death of any associate.

### 8. Religious Exercises

(1) Salesian associates are not bound to any exterior penitential practice. On the other hand, they are encouraged to cultivate modesty in dress, frugality in eating and drinking, simplicity in household furnishings, moral restraint in speech, and the exact fulfillment of the duties of their state in life. They shall try to get people under them to observe Sundays and holy days.

(2) Associates are encouraged to set aside at least a few days for a yearly spiritual retreat. On the last day of each month or on some other convenient day, they shall make their Exercise for a Happy Death, and make their confession and Communion as if it was really their last.

(3) Each day, they shall recite one Our Father and one Hail Mary in honor of St. Francis de Sales for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff. Priests and those who recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin or the canonical hours need not say those prayers, but they should nonetheless pray the office for the same intention.

(4) They shall endeavor to receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion with the greatest possible frequency.

(5) Every one is strongly urged to observe these rules for the many advantages that may be gained. But to remove any doubt of conscience that may arise, it should be understood that their observance is not binding under penalty of either mortal or venial sin, except when it is a question of things either prescribed or forbidden by God's commandments or by precepts of holy mother Church.

*[Enrollment Form]*

Every associate shall fill out this form, sign it, and forward it, or have it forwarded to the Superior.

I, the undersigned,

living in \_\_\_\_\_

Street, Number \_\_\_\_\_

do hereby state that I have read the rules of the Salesian Association and that, with the help of God's grace, I hope to put them faithfully into practice for the good of my soul.

Turin, (or) Name of City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Profession \_\_\_\_\_

## **V. "Charter" Document 4 (Fourth and Final of Four, 1876)**

*Note:* This document is transcribed from the published pamphlet (Turin: Salesian Press, 1876) in *IBM XI*, 540-545 (omitted in *EBM*).<sup>18</sup> It is here translated from *IBM*. (All footnotes are by the translator.)

### **Salesian Cooperators a Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Civil Society<sup>19</sup>**

#### *1. Christian Union for the Work of Charity<sup>20</sup>*

Good [Christians] have at all times seen the necessity of uniting in order to help one another in doing good and in avoiding evil. This is the example that the faithful of the early Church left us. Faced with impending dangers every day, they did not give up. United as one heart and one soul, they encouraged one another to be steadfast in the faith and to stand ready to overcome the

<sup>18</sup> An *inaccurate* translation of the document is published in Joseph Aubry, *The Salesian Cooperator: A Real Vocation in the Church*. [Translator unknown] (Publisher? — Printed at 2B, Taylors Road, Madras, India, 600010 [no date given]), 183-191.

<sup>19</sup> *Cooperatori Salesiani ossia un metodo pratico per giovare al buon costume ed alla civile società.*

<sup>20</sup> *Unione cristiana nel bene operare.*



26 – First page of the periodical “Bibliofile Cattolico o Bollettino Salesiano Mensuale” (Catholic Book Lover or Monthly Salesian Bulletin), September 1877



assaults that relentlessly threatened them. This is also what the Lord taught us when he said: “Feeble forces that unite become strong. A single strand may be easily broken, but a three-ply cord is hard to break: *Vis unita fortior; funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*.<sup>21</sup> This is exactly what secular people do to further their temporal interests. Should then the children of light be less farsighted than the children of darkness? Certainly not! We who live as Christians in these turbulent times must likewise unite in a spirit of prayer, charity and zeal, using all possible means that our religion makes available to us. We must strive to stamp out, or at least diminish, the evil that puts at risk the moral life, without which civil society itself collapses.

## *2. The Salesian Congregation*

The Salesian Congregation, having been definitively approved by the Church, may provide a sure and stable bond uniting the Salesian Cooperators. Its primary purpose is to work for the good of young people, on whom the happy or evil future of society depends. We make no claim that what we are proposing is the only means to achieve that end. There are a thousand other ways, and therefore we urge everyone to freely use the means that seem most conducive to that great goal. The way we are proposing, one of the many, is the *Work of the Salesian Cooperators*. We are inviting good Catholics living in the world to join their efforts to those of the members of this our Congregation. True, the number of Salesians has grown considerably, but it is unequal by far to the numerous requests for help that we are receiving every day from various parts of Italy and of Europe, from China, Australia and the Americas, from the Argentine Republic in particular. These insistent requests are for sacred ministers [and for Salesians] who would undertake the care of young people at risk, who would open houses and schools, and who would initiate or sustain missionary activity in places where evangelical workers are greatly needed and desired. It is in order to respond to all these needs that we are looking for cooperators.

<sup>21</sup> “*Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*,” “A three-ply cord is not easily broken” is from Ecclesiastes 4:12 (Latin Vulgate). “*Vis Unita fortior*,” “Forces that unite become stronger” is a proverb from the classics. But equivalently it appears in the passage of Ecclesiastes. By “the Lord” Don Bosco here means “God or the Bible” generally.

### 3. Purpose of the Salesian Cooperators

The principal purpose of the Salesian Cooperators is the spiritual good of the members themselves through their embracing a way of life similar, in so far as it is possible, to that of religious living in community. Many people would willingly embrace the cloistered life, but cannot do so because of age, health or state in life, but mostly for lack of opportunity. They may, however, while continuing in their daily occupations and living with their family, become Cooperators and so live in effect as members of the [Salesian] Congregation.

Because of this, the Supreme Pontiff regards this association as a kind of traditional Third Order, but with a difference. While in those [third orders] Christian perfection was made to consist in exercises of piety, in this association the principal purpose is the active life engaged in the exercise of charity toward neighbor, especially toward young people at risk (*gioventù pericolante*).

### 4. Ways of Cooperation

The Salesian Cooperators share the same [apostolic] harvest as the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, to which they wish to be associated.

(1) The associates shall promote novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats and catechetical instruction, especially in places where material and moral means are lacking.

(2) The scarcity of priestly vocations in these times of ours is felt in all its severity. Hence, those associates who are in a position to help shall take special care of youngsters, and adults as well, who have the necessary moral qualities and an aptitude for study, and show signs of a vocation. They can help them with timely advice, and by directing them toward those schools and boarding establishments where they may receive nurture and guidance [in their vocation].

(3) [There's an urgent need to] counter the irreligious press by the good press. Hence [associates can help] by spreading good books, leaflets and all kinds of printed matter, in those places and among those families in which acceptance may prudently be expected.

(4) Finally there is the exercise of charity in behalf of children at risk (*fanciulli pericolanti*). [This includes] taking them in, instructing them in the faith, introducing them to church services, counseling them when in moral danger, and taking them where they may receive religious instruction. These activi-



ties are another field for Salesian Cooperators [to exercise their zeal]. Those who cannot personally be engaged in such activities might do so through others, for example by involving a relative or friend. Then one may cooperate by prayer, or by helping financially if needs be. The early Christians used to bring their goods to the Apostles, to be used to help widows and orphans, and for other [charitable] purposes.<sup>22</sup>

### *5. Constitution and Governance of the Association*

(1) Anyone who has completed 16 years of age may be enrolled as a cooperator, provided he or she is ready and willing to abide by the rules submitted here.

(2) The association is humbly commended to the kindness and protection of the Supreme Pontiff, bishops, and parish priests. To them it shall defer *without reservation (assolutamente)* in everything that pertains to religion.<sup>23</sup>

(3) The superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of the Association.

(4) The director of every local Salesian house is authorized to enroll associates. He shall then send the forms with the [member's] first and last name and place of residence to the [central] superior, who will record the enrollment in the common register.

(5) In cities and towns where no Salesian house is established, and where the associates have reached ten in number, the superior shall appoint a head with the title of "group leader" (*decurione*). The group leader, preferably a priest or some exemplary layperson, corresponds with the superior or with the director of the nearest [Salesian] house.

(6) Any Cooperator is free to report to the [central] superior any matter that, in his/her judgment, may need attention.

(7) Every three months, or even more frequently, through a printed bulletin or sheet, the members shall be given a report on things done, in progress or proposed for future action. At the end of each year they shall be notified of projects that should be given priority during the up-coming year. Information about those members who may have been called into eternity that year shall also be provided, and prayers solicited.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Acts 4:32-37.

<sup>23</sup> Italics by Don Bosco.

<sup>24</sup> The provision of this article was complied with by the founding of the *Salesian Bulletin* (see below).

(8) On the feasts of St. Francis de Sales and of Mary Help of Christians, each group leader (*decurione*) shall call together the members of his own group (*decuria*) for the purpose of providing mutual encouragement to strengthen devotion to these heavenly patrons. Invoking their help is needed for perseverance in the activities undertaken in accordance with the purpose of the association.

### 6. *Special Obligations*

(1) The members of the Salesian Congregation regard all Cooperators as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. They shall call on them for collaboration in things that may redound to the greater glory of God and the good of souls. In like manner the cooperators should feel free to call on the members of the Salesian congregation.

(2) The members shall do all in their power to promote and support the works of the association whether with their own financial contributions or with offerings collected from charitable people.

(3) The members have no financial obligation, but they are encouraged to make, on a monthly or yearly basis, such offering as the charity of their heart may prompt. These offerings shall be sent to the [central] superior for the promotion and support of the works of the association.

(4) A collection shall regularly be taken up on the occasion of the conferences held on the feasts of Mary Help of Christians and of St. Francis de Sales. When members are not numerous enough to form a group (*decuria*) or are unable to attend such conference, they should find some easy and safe way of forwarding their offering [to the superior].

### 7. *Advantages*

(1) His Holiness, the reigning Pius IX, by Decree of July 30, 1875, granted to all promoters of this Work [members of this association] all the spiritual favors, graces and indulgences enjoyed by the Salesian religious, with the exception of those that have to do with life in community. A list of these will be made available to the members separately.

(2) The members will share in the spiritual benefit of all the Masses, prayers, novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats, sermons, catechetical instruction, and of works of charity in which Salesians are engaged in their sacred ministry throughout the world.

(3) They will likewise share in the spiritual benefit of the Masses and prayers that are offered each day in the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin for the purpose of calling down heaven's blessings on all benefactors and their families, especially on those who help our congregation morally or materially.

(4) On the day following the feast of St. Francis de Sales all the priests of the [Salesian] Congregation and the priests who are Cooperators shall offer holy Mass for deceased members (*confratelli*). Those who are not priests shall endeavor to receive Holy Communion and recite the third part of the Rosary [for the same intention].

(5) Whenever an associate (*confratello*) becomes ill, the superior shall be notified without delay, so that special prayers may be offered to God. The same shall be done in the event of the death of any Cooperator.

#### *8. Religious Exercises*

(1) Salesian associates [cooperators] are not bound to any [special] external practice. On the other hand, if their life is to be in some way modeled on that of religious living in community, they are encouraged to cultivate modesty in dress, frugality in eating and drinking, simplicity in household furnishings, moral restraint in speech and the exact fulfillment of the duties of their state in life. They should also see to it that their dependents observe Sundays and holy days.

(2) Associates are encouraged to set aside at least a few days for a yearly spiritual retreat. On the last day of each month or on some other convenient day, they shall make their Exercise for a Happy Death, and make their confession and Communion as if it was really their last.

(3) Each day, they shall recite one Our Father and one Hail Mary in honor of St. Francis de Sales for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff. Priests and those who recite the canonical hours or the Office of the Blessed Virgin need not say those prayers. They should just pray the divine office for the same intention.

(4) Members shall endeavor to receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion with the greatest possible frequency.

*Notice:* Every one is strongly urged to observe these rules for the many advantages that may be gained. But to remove any qualms of conscience that may arise, it should be understood that their observance is not binding under

penalty of either mortal or venial sin, except when it is a question of things either prescribed or forbidden by God's commandments or by precepts of holy Mother Church.

[*Enrollment Form*]

Every associate shall fill out the following form, sign it, and forward it to the Superior.

I, the undersigned, living in

(city or town:) \_\_\_\_\_

(Street and House Number:) \_\_\_\_\_

do hereby state that I have read the rules of the Salesian Cooperators and that, with the help of God's grace, I hope to put them faithfully into practice for the good of my soul.

Turin, (or) Name of City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

(Date—month/ day/ year) \_\_\_\_\_

(Name—first / middle / last:) \_\_\_\_\_

(Title / Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Cooperator:) \_\_\_\_\_

## VI. Don Bosco's 1877 Memorandum on the Salesian Cooperators

The document entitled, *Cooperatori salesiani*, is a manuscript in Don Bosco's own hand, written in 1877 or toward the end of 1876. It was probably meant for publication in the Salesian bulletin, but was never published. It is in ASC A230 Cooperatori 3 (1), 2-3, FDBM 1886 E8 - 1887 A2. The document was apparently set aside (unpublished) and replaced by a "softer" document that was published in the *Bollettino Salesiano* (*Bibliofilo Cattolico*) 3 (Sep. 1877), 6. The manuscript was published in 1930 by E. Ceria (IBM XI, 84-86). A translation from Ceria's text is given in EBM XI, 73-75. For greater clarity, the translation given here is from Ceria's IBM text directly. Ceria's view [*Ibid.*] is that Don Bosco wrote these memorandums to show that his request of Pius IX for "indulgences" for an *already established (and approved) association* was based on fact. Pius IX's Decree merely granted indulgences to an association reported to him as already in existence and approved. Therefore what is often called a Decree of approval was actually only a decree of commendation through the granting of indulgences. When the document *Cooperatori salesiani* is read in the context of Pius IX's Decree on the Cooperators, it appears that Ceria's view has merit. [See further comments below. See also Vol. 3 of this series pp. 293-297 and 303-310].

The text follows (*italics* as in the original).

## The Salesian Cooperators<sup>25</sup>

The history of the Salesian Cooperators dates back to 1841 when we first began to gather together poor homeless boys in the city of Turin. The gatherings were held in appropriate places and churches, where the boys were given instruction, entertained in wholesome recreation, and prepared for a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and Holy Eucharist. A number of gentlemen came together to perform the many varied tasks, and they contributed to the support of the so-called festive oratories either by their personal services or with donations.<sup>26</sup> They were known by the name of the office they held, but as a rule they were [simply] called benefactors, promoters, and also cooperators of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales.

The Rev. [John] Bosco was the superior of these oratories. He acted under the immediate direction of the Archbishop and with his authorization.

The necessary faculties for the exercise of his duties were granted to him both orally and in writing. Whenever any difficulties arose, the Ordinary would deal with them through the Rev. [John] Bosco.

The faculties to administer the Sacraments of Penance and holy Eucharist, to fulfill the Easter precept, to admit children to first Communion, to preach, to hold triduum, novenas and spiritual retreats, to give Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, and to celebrate High Mass were the first concessions that Archbishop Fransoni granted to us.

The so-called Salesian promoters and cooperators were organized in a true Congregation with the title of St. Francis de Sales, and they were first granted a few spiritual favors, also from the Holy See, by the Rescript of April 18, 1845, over the signature of *L. Averardi, Substitute for His Eminence Card. A. del Drago*.

This same Rescript granted a number of faculties to the Superior, such as imparting the apostolic blessing and [conveying] the plenary indulgence to fifty promoters to be selected by the director.

On April 11, 1847 Archbishop Fransoni approved the Sodality of St. Aloysius founded within the Salesian Congregation and endowed it with favors granted by him as well as by the Holy See.

In 1850 Don Bosco informed His Holiness that a Congregation *had been*

<sup>25</sup> *Cooperatori Salesiani*.

<sup>26</sup> The Italian phrase “*oratorio festivo*” is here literally rendered, “festive oratory,” but the phrase meant “oratory gathering on feast days,” that is on Sundays and holy days.

legitimately established in that city [Turin] with the title and under the protection of St. Francis de Sales, and implored more extensive favors on behalf of its members as well as other [spiritual benefits] on behalf of non-members.

These favors were granted by a Rescript dated September 28, 1850 and signed *Dominic Fioramonti*, [Secretary] to our Holy Father for Latin Letters.

Once the Congregation of Salesian Promoters was thus *de facto* established in the eyes of the local ecclesiastical authorities as well as of the Holy See, in view of the vast number of poor boys attending [the Oratory] it was found necessary to open new classes and festive Oratories in other parts of the city.<sup>27</sup> [Consequently,] in order to ensure unity of spirit, of discipline and of command, and to establish oratory work on a firm basis, the ecclesiastical superior by Decree or certificate of March 31, 1852 appointed the Rev. [John] Bosco Director-in-chief, granting to him all faculties necessary or simply appropriate to the office.

After this declaration, everyone always regarded the Congregation of Salesian Promoters to have been canonically instituted, and its superior handled all relations with the Holy See.

A number of [additional] favors and spiritual benefits were granted to it between the years 1852 and 1858. That was the year when the Congregation was divided into two distinct classes, or rather families. Those who were unimpeded and felt they had a vocation joined together to live in community; they took up [permanent] residence in the building that had always been regarded as the motherhouse and headquarters of the pious association. This is the association that, at the Supreme Pontiff's suggestion, was named "Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales," the name it has retained to this day. The rest, that is the "externs," continued to live in the world with their own families, continuing nonetheless to promote the work of the Oratories. These [retained and] still retain the title of *Union* or Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, of *promoters* or *cooperators*. They maintain a relationship of dependence with respect to the members [that live in community as religious], but work jointly with the [religious] members on behalf of poor young people.

In 1864 the Holy See commended the Pious *Salesian Society* and confirmed its superior.<sup>28</sup> The extern [non-religious] members, who were always referred

<sup>27</sup> "Classes" renders the Italian "*scuole*," by which Don Bosco meant evening, day and Sunday classes associated with the oratory.

<sup>28</sup> In 1864 Don Bosco petitioned the Holy See for the approval of the Salesian Society and its constitutions. He only obtained a Decree of Commendation (*Decretum laudis*), but was personally confirmed as superior for life.

to as promoters or benefactors, and recently as Salesian Cooperators, figured as part of the approval [commendation].<sup>29</sup>

In 1874 the Holy See gave definitive approval to the Constitutions of [the institute] that continued to bear the name of Pious [Salesian] Society. But the Holy See continued to regard the members of the early Salesian Congregation as promoters and cooperators of the works undertaken by the [religious] members. The cooperators lent their help [as teachers] in the classrooms, [as leaders] in religious services, [as assistants] in [the oratory boys'] recreation, and [as participants] in [the religious members'] activity among the faithful. For this reason, on July 30, 1875 the Sacred Congregation of Briefs gave the superior of the *Salesian Society* the power *indulgentias et gratias spirituales societati ipsi a S. Sede concessas insignibus benefactoribus communicandi perinde ac si tertiarii essent, iis exceptis quae ad vitam communem pertinent* [to extend the indulgences and spiritual favors that the Holy See had granted to the same [Pious Salesian] Society, to outstanding benefactors, as though they were tertiaries, with the exception of those favors that pertain to the common life]. These benefactors are none other than those who were always known as promoters or cooperators. In the first Salesian Constitutions a separate chapter is dedicated to them under the title of *Extern Members*.

For this reason, therefore, when the Holy See graciously granted new and more generous favors to the Salesian cooperators and reference was made to the *pia Christifidelium Sodalitas canonice instituta, cuius sodales praesertim pauperum ac derelictorum puerorum curam suscipere sibi proponunt* [the pious Association of the faithful, canonically erected, whose members have as their special aim the care of poor and neglected boys], this reference [was to be understood] as made:

- (1) To those early promoters who over [a period of] ten years were ap-

<sup>29</sup> This sentence remains unclear. The initial words seem to be referring to the chapter on "external members" that figured in the early Constitutions; but one of the critical observations Don Bosco received in 1864 demanded the removal of the chapter on "external members." Hence this provision was neither approved nor commended. However in the second part of the sentence Don Bosco says that the "external members" were the very same Salesian cooperators or promoters. This he does even more clearly in the next paragraph. Perhaps he intended to have the Salesian Cooperators figure as a provision of the Salesian constitutions and may be saying that by the Decree of commendation of the Salesian Society (which he calls "approval") the Salesian cooperators were also commended ("approved"). Salesian historians have debated the identity of these "external members" in the early Salesian Constitutions.



proved and acknowledged [to be] *de facto* genuine cooperators in the work of the Oratories, work formally constituted by the certificate [decree] of 1852. They continued as an [approved] association (*ad essere aggregati*) of laypersons living in the world even after 1858, when some of their number began to live in community under their own rules.

(2) To the religious members, that is, the Pious Salesian Society, which always regulated the activities of these benefactors. In compliance with the rules given them, the latter offered themselves with zeal and charity to give moral and material assistance to the religious members.

## VII. “Founding” (Re-organisation) of the Salesian Cooperators and Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) and Archbishop Gastaldi’s Opposition

From: A. Lenti, “The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict II,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* 5:1 (1994) 55-59.

### 1. The Salesian Cooperators<sup>30</sup>

Between 1874 and 1876, Don Bosco finalized the concept apart from the constitutions, and wrote appropriate regulations.<sup>31</sup> His “unveiling” of the association paralleled that of the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary). As in the case of the Work, the Holy Father encouraged the project for the Cooperators early in 1875; then a few months later he granted a commendation and spiritual favors by decree of July 30. Finally the two institutions were presented together for “approval” on March 4, 1876, and were “approved” (that is, “recognized” through the granting of indulgences) by decrees of May 9, 1876.<sup>32</sup>

About a month later, Don Bosco printed a pamphlet describing the objectives of the Salesian Cooperators.<sup>33</sup> It included the Holy Father’s blessing

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 60-67.

<sup>31</sup> See the four charter documents given above.

<sup>32</sup> For the Sons of Mary cf. petition and decree in *IBM* XI, 533-535, Appendix 3 (omitted in *EBM*). For the Cooperators cf. petition in *EBM* XI, 65 and decree in *IBM* XI, 546-547, Appendix 7 (omitted in *EBM*); for the text of the decrees see below.

<sup>33</sup> This was the fourth and final elaboration of the statutes entitled, *Cooperatori Salesiani...*

on the association. Don Bosco hoped to include in his brochure also the Archbishop's approval and blessing. On submitting the pamphlet he wrote: "These Cooperators are a type of *Third Order* through which the Holy Father is granting a few spiritual favors to our benefactor [*sic*]. Now that the Holy Father has granted his blessing, I humbly beg Your Excellency ..." <sup>34</sup>

Faced with this *fait accompli*, relationships being already strained to near-breaking point, the Archbishop was quick to react. Through his spokesman Canon Thomas Chiuso he notified Don Bosco that the ecclesiastical *imprimatur* should have been sought beforehand, and moreover that the decree of canonical erection of the association should have been presented to the ordinary before "such indulgences" were publicized. <sup>35</sup>

Don Bosco's explanations—that the pamphlet was still being edited, that the Cooperators were a general, not a diocesan, association, that he was forced to bypass the chancery, because he was not getting a hearing—were bound to fall on deaf ears. <sup>36</sup>

But the archbishop was out of town for the summer, and Don Bosco did not wait for a reply. He had the material printed in the diocese of Albenga with the approval of friendly Bishop Anacletus Peter Siboni; and that was that.

Some two months later, wishing to publish the decree, Don Bosco submitted a copy to the chancery. The archbishop, through Canon Chiuso, insisted on seeing the original brief before approving any publication. But much more significantly, he pointed out that the brief merely granted "indulgences and spiritual favors" on the basis of an assumed prior canonical approval. Who gave this canonical approval? As a matter of fact, the brief on the Salesian Cooperators, as also that on the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary), was clearly worded to that effect:

It has been reported to Us that a Pious Sodality of the Christian faithful, which goes by the name of Sodality or Union of Salesian Cooperators, has been canonically established ... In order that this Sodality may grow from day to day,

(Salesian Cooperators—an association dedicated to furthering Christian morals and the good of society). This document is given in *IBM* XI, 540-545, Appendix 5 (omitted in *EBM*) (see above).

<sup>34</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, July 11, 1876 in *EBM* XI, 66.

<sup>35</sup> Canon Chiuso to Don Bosco, July 16, 1876 (*Documenti* XVII, 413-414, in *ASC* A066, *FDBM* 1041 A1-2, summarized in *EBM* XI, 67).

<sup>36</sup> Don Bosco to Canon Chiuso, August 1, 1876 (*EBM* XI, 67).

[We] do hereby grant to the Christian faithful of both sexes enrolled or to be enrolled in this Sodality [the following indulgences:]<sup>37</sup>

It is certain that Pius IX supported the establishment of the Salesian Cooperators as well as of the Work of Mary Help of Christians wholeheartedly. Prior to this decree (of May 9, 1876), he had expressed his approval both by word of mouth and through a brief granting spiritual favors; but the fact remains that the brief in question merely granted indulgences, and does so on the assumption of prior canonical approval—clearly not by the Holy See, so by whom?

Apparently Don Bosco did not respond to Canon Chiuso's letter, nor had he any need to. He had never requested the Holy See's approval of a *new* association. He had merely requested spiritual favors for an association *already in existence* and (as far as he was concerned) canonically *erected*.

He argued this point in a famous (and much discussed) memorandum written in late 1876 or early 1877, entitled "The Salesian Cooperators," probably intended for the *Salesian Bulletin*, but never published.<sup>38</sup> In it Don Bosco argues that the Salesian Cooperators were in existence since 1841, were identified with the collaborative work of the oratories, and became known as "the Congregation of St. Francis Sales," over which he presided as "superior." This "congregation" had received encouragement, faculties, and spiritual favors at various dates from the Holy See and from Archbishop Louis Fransoni by the Decree of 1852. In 1858 this "congregation" was divided into two families—one took religious vows and lived in community; the other (still known as "Union or Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, *Promoters* or *Cooperators*") continued "to live in the world, while working on behalf of the oratories." Therefore, when the recent decree speaks of a sodality already canonically erected, it refers:

To those early promoters who over [a period of] ten years were approved and acknowledged [to be] *de facto* genuine cooperators in the work of the Oratories, work formally constituted by the certificate [decree] of 1852.<sup>39</sup> They continued as an [approved] association (*ad essere aggregati*) of laypersons living in the world

<sup>37</sup> For the text of the decree see below.

<sup>38</sup> For this memorandum, finally published by E. Ceria in 1830 (*IBM XI*, 84-86), see above.

<sup>39</sup> This was the document of March 31, 1852, by which Archbishop Fransoni appointed Don Bosco spiritual director-in-chief of the three oratories of St. Francis de Sales, St. Aloysius and Guardian Angel.

even after 1858, when some of their number began to live in community under their own rules.<sup>40</sup>

But one may ask, If Don Bosco's claim was valid for the Cooperators, was it also valid for the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary), for whom the decree of 1876 (issued together with that on the Cooperators) uses the very same formula: granting indulgences to an association already canonically erected?

## 2. The Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary)<sup>41</sup>

Essentially, the Work of Mary Help of Christians was an association designed to foster young adult vocations to the priesthood (to be known as Sons of Mary). Experience had taught him that the perseverance rate in that age group (from 16 to 30 years) was much higher than in the younger age group. As Don Bosco related at a meeting of his council and directors on April 14, 1875, the idea occurred to him as he was reflecting on the scarcity of vocations to the priesthood, and on how he might increase their numbers and accelerate their formation.<sup>42</sup>

Pius IX enthusiastically approved of the project, and Don Bosco drafted a prospectus in which, after a preamble stating the program's philosophy and purpose, he carefully set forth its regulations governing admission and financing, and described its spiritual advantages. Anticipating objections, he added that the work would not interfere with existing recruiting and formation programs, but would rather complement them. With a cover letter, dated August 30, 1875, he specified the program further in such areas as manner of admission, courses of studies, and wardrobe. He sent this material out to some ten bishops favorable to him—hence, neither to Archbishop Gastaldi nor to Bishop Louis Moreno of Ivrea.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum of 1877 (text given above).

<sup>41</sup> For the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) cf. *EBM* XI, 23-42, noting especially the epistolary exchange. For the documentation (Description, Appeal, Program, Petition and Decree, cf. *IBM* XI, 529-535 (omitted in *EBM*).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 11-24. For a description of the accelerated course of study for the Sons of Mary (*school of fire*) see below.

<sup>43</sup> For prospectus and letter, cf. *IBM* XI, 529-533, Appendices 1 and 2 (omitted in *EBM*). Bishop Moreno and Don Bosco became permanently estranged in the 1860s over the issue of the ownership of the *Catholic Readings* (cf. *EBM* VII, 95-98, 378-381).

# OPERA DI MARIA AUSILIATRICE

PER LE VOCAZIONI  
ALLO STATO ECCLESIASTICO

benedetta e raccomandata  
DAL SANTO PADRE PIO PAPA IX



Torino, 30 Agosto 1875.

Ill.<sup>mo</sup> Signore

*Prego V. S. Ill.<sup>ma</sup> a voler con bontà leggere quanto qui espongo intorno all' Opera di Maria Ausil. di cui unisco il progetto e il programma. Senza che a lungo mi spieghi Ella può di leggeri comprendere quale ne sia lo scopo; preparare giovani grandicelli a divenire col tempo buoni Sacerdoti. Credo poi che ella mi possa prestare efficace appoggio in due maniere:*

*1. Col farsi corrispondente di quest'opera, col sostenerla, farla conoscere, promuoverla con que' mezzi morali e materiali, che con zelo e carità la S. V. sa usare a tempo opportuno.*

*2. Conoscendo qualche allievo in cui si avverino le condizioni del programma, sia benevola di indirizzarmelo.*

*Pieno di fiducia nella sua cooperazione, prego Dio a volerla degnamente ricompensare, mentre con profonda gratitudine ho l'onore di professarmi*

*Di V. S. Ill.<sup>ma</sup>*

*Obbl.<sup>mo</sup> Servitore  
Sac. GIOVANNI BOSCO.*

27 – Frontispiece of the circular letter advertizing the “Work of Mary Help of Christians for Late Priestly Vocations” (1875)

Archbishop Gastaldi reacted immediately. He appealed to the bishops of the ecclesiastical provinces of Turin, Vercelli and Genoa to sign a joint protest to the pope, but to no avail.<sup>44</sup> The bishops either supported Don Bosco's

<sup>44</sup> Gastaldi to the bishops, circular letter of July 24, 1875, referred to in *EBM* XI; for text in part, cf. *Documenti* XV, 207 in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1039 B2.

plan or had no objection to it. Bishops Moreno and Gastaldi remained cut off, but neither relented; they each wrote to Cardinal Bizzarri lodging their protests against Don Bosco. Through his secretary, Canon Chiuso, the archbishop forbade Don Bosco to undertake any action relating to this project. To avoid a collision in Turin, Don Bosco had the publicity material printed at Fossano, where friendly Bishop Emiliano Manacorda supported the project. Then at Archbishop Vitelleschi and at Cardinal Antonelli's suggestion, Don Bosco finally established the Sons of Mary at Sampierdarena, in the diocese of Genoa, where he had also Archbishop Magnasco's support. On September 10, 1875, the newspaper *L'Unità Cattolica* announced the establishment of the Sons of Mary in that city.<sup>45</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi's main objection, as expressed in his letters, was that such a work (or seminary, as he called it) would compete with diocesan recruitment and seminary programs. This may indeed have been a real concern as it raised once more the long-standing issue of his control of priestly formation. But bishops who responded to Gastaldi's appeal thought differently, since the Sons of Mary were (young) adults, and they moreover had the option of returning to their diocese and applying to their own bishops. Gastaldi also objected to Don Bosco's initiative because it was not needed, since there were other institutions that fostered vocations. But the institutions mentioned (Apostolic Schools and Cottolengo's Institution) functioned only as small *junior* seminaries. Finally, the fact that Don Bosco was asking for financial support in publicizing the project made the Archbishop wary.

Strangely enough, Gastaldi did not raise the issue of the abbreviated course of studies. Yet he would have been expected to do so, in view of his concern for priestly studies and formation. But perhaps this aspect of the program was not yet public knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, while accommodations were being prepared at Sampierdarena the program was begun at Valdocco with Father Luigi Guanella as director. And even when the program was settled at Sampierdarena under Father Paul Albera's guidance, a contingent of upper classmen remained at the Oratory under Don Bosco's supervision. The program was later transferred to Mathi (Turin, 1883), and finally housed in the new buildings of the St. Aloysius Oratory (St. John the Evangelist, 1884).

<sup>46</sup> The accelerated course of studies (dubbed "school of fire") drew criticism from Salesians at the Oratory, where upper classmen had joined the Sons of Mary housed there, as mentioned (*EBM* XI, 57). For comments on the accelerated course ("school of fire") see below.

### 3. Work of Mary Help of Christians (1876) and “School of Fire:” Accelerated Program of Studies for the Sons of Mary

Cf. A. Lenti, “Saint with a Human Face,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* 8:2 (1997) 188-190.

[From Fr. Giulio Barberis’ original chronicle for 1876 (as referenced below).]

At the beginning of 1876, Don Bosco, as Fr. Barberis reports in his chronicle, began to speak of a “great new project completely aimed at increasing quickly the number of Salesian seminarians.” He would select older boys from the upper classes of the Oratory school, join them to the (young) adults from the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary), and put them all through a specially-devised crash course (from March through October), which he dubbed “School of Fire.” By the end of such marathon they would be ready to don the clerical habit. Barberis records how Don Bosco announced this new program.

I have already discussed the matter with Father Durando, from whom I expected stiffer opposition; but he is in agreement and has no objections.<sup>47</sup> This is what I have in mind. Around the middle of March, once the mid-term exams are over, [I plan] to establish a new course of studies (*aprire una nuova scuola*). I would bring together into this program all those young men who are somewhat advanced in age and who desire to don the clerical habit without much delay, even though they may be only in the third year [of *ginnasio*].<sup>48</sup> I would also bring in as many as possible of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians. An instructor would be appointed especially for them. He would give them a crash course in Latin and Italian only, so that by the Feast of All Saints [November 1] they can don the clerical habit.<sup>49</sup>

Don Bosco spoke enthusiastically of the Sons-of-Mary program, voicing high hopes for its success. He is quoted as saying:

When the Bishops see the success we will have with this experiment, they will hasten to imitate our example ... I entertain the highest hopes for these Sons or

<sup>47</sup> Fr. Celestine Durando (1840-1907) was General Councilor for all Salesian schools, and had a special concern for the quality of the Oratory school. He did not always see eye to eye with Don Bosco in school matters.

<sup>48</sup> The Oratory school was a standard “ginnasio,” that is, a five-year course of secondary study with a liberal arts curriculum, roughly equivalent to the American high school.

<sup>49</sup> G. Barberis, *Original Chronicle*, entry of January 31, 1876, Notebook IV, 32, *FDBM* 837 C4.



ours. They are the most reliable resource of the Church today. I would guess that within five years we shall have over 500 such [young] men in the program, of course counting not only those in our houses but also those in other places where the program will be established ...<sup>50</sup>

In speaking about this and other projects to the directors gathered for the Conferences of St. Francis de Sales, Don Bosco voiced his certainty that he was acting under divine inspiration:

The reason why we press forward and never look back is that we are walking with certainty. Before any undertaking we ascertain that it is the will of God. Once we have this certainty we press forward. From then on difficulties that may be met with on the way are of no consequence. If God wants it, we have nothing to fear.<sup>51</sup>

A couple of days later, in the Good Night, Don Bosco announced his plan to the boys, giving details to explain the accelerated course of study (which he called “school of fire”).

Dear boys, this evening I should like to speak to you about a matter that is not generally known ... To put it briefly, I am after a big catch of fish ... In view of the great need for priests and missionaries, I have decided to set up a special course of studies ... I call it a “school of fire” (*scuola di fuoco*)” because the curriculum would include only essential courses, so that one can complete one’s studies in a short time, without any complication. This program is open to students in the fourth, third, and even second year of *ginnasio*, provided they are already somewhat advanced in age ... By a combination of intense study (*gran fuoco*, great fire), good teaching and the will to succeed this program will make a student ready to don the clerical habit by the feast of All Saints [Nov. 1, beginning in March]. The will to succeed and persevering application are paramount. “But how,” someone may ask, “is one to complete a course of studies in such a short time?” It’s possible under certain conditions, besides good teaching, your will to succeed and, of course, your intelligence and ability.” [General noises of approval at the mention of intelligence and ability.] And here are the conditions:

(1) Those who join the program must elect to join the novitiate here or go to the missions.<sup>52</sup> Those who would join the novitiate here should be from outside

<sup>50</sup> G. Barberis, *Original Chronicle*, entry of February 5, 1876, Notebook IV, 52, FDBM 837 D12.

<sup>51</sup> G. Barberis, *Original Chronicle*, entry of February 6, 1876, Notebook IV, 52-53, FDBM 837 D12-E1.

<sup>52</sup> The first group of Salesian “missionaries” had left for South America but a few months

the Turin diocese, because in this diocese to be admitted to the exam for the clerical habit a candidate, no matter how proficient, must have completed the fifth year (of *ginnasio*).<sup>53</sup> ...

(2) Those who join the program will have to give up the idea of taking public examinations for the diploma.<sup>54</sup> The reason is that to have access to these examinations one must have taken all the subjects required by the state programs, whereas we would require only the basic subjects, such as Latin and Italian ... Those therefore who wish to take examinations for the diploma cannot join this course.

(3) Participants will also have to give up regular summer holidays, except perhaps for a few days' recess, or for the spiritual retreat at Lanzo. We can't afford longer vacations, since our time is short. However, from early March, when the course is scheduled to begin, to the feast of All Saints on November 1 we have some 8 months. In 8 months, with intense and persevering application, much can be accomplished.

One should also bear in mind that ... subjects that are not offered now will be offered later.<sup>55</sup>

Don Bosco lost no time setting things in motion and, as Barberis reports, the "school of fire" started almost on schedule on March 13, 1876 with some 30 students under a talented teacher, a Salesian seminarian named Bodrati [not attested otherwise]. The passage from Barberis' chronicle is worth quoting.

Today [March 13, 1876] the new course of study, called "school of fire," got off to a good start here at the Oratory. I have already spoken of this new venture in earlier entries of this chronicle. I will just add that this course is attached or affiliated to the Work of Mary Help of Christians ... It began during the novena preparatory to the feast of St. Joseph, and it is placed under the protection of our great Patriarch. The appointed teacher of the course is the [Salesian] semi-

before, November 1875. The need of supplying the missions as well as the expanding Salesian work with priests was the reason why Don Bosco established the Sons of Mary program.

<sup>53</sup> Some dioceses did not require a five-year course (that is, completion of the *ginnasio*) for the reception of the clerical habit and for admission to the seminary, but Turin did. Perhaps, however, the real reason for this "condition" was that Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin was against this program and, as narrated above, already strongly objected to the Work of Mary Help of Christians.

<sup>54</sup> On completion of the five-year course of secondary school (*ginnasio*), a student could take a comprehensive examination and be awarded a diploma. This gave access to a higher level of study.

<sup>55</sup> G. Barberis, *Discorsetti* Notebook, 25-28, entry of February 8, 1876, *FDBM* 838 E4-7.

narian Bodrati, a man of great intelligence and talent, who joined us after some experience of [professional] life in the world. He is fully conscious, so it appears, of the importance of the task entrusted to him. He is tremendously dedicated.

There are some 30 students in the program, and the number may yet increase in the next few days with the addition of some who for various reasons could not immediately join the group. Five of the young men are [only] from the second year of *ginnasio*; but, besides being already somewhat advanced in age, they are truly select. They rival St. Aloysius in piety and they are the equals of Dominic Savio. Two or three from of the fourth year of *ginnasio*; they are very good material, but were not doing too well in their studies. In this course they will be doing fine, since they won't have to bother with accessory courses like math, Greek, etc. Most of the students from of the third year of *ginnasio*, and of these a few are [Sons of Mary] from the Work of Mary Help of Christians.

This new program gives us good reason to hope that most of these young men will don the clerical habit and will turn out to be good seminarians ... They study hard and make the most of their time. Besides they have no real need of complementary courses.<sup>56</sup>

#### **4. Pius IX's 1877 Decrees Granting Spiritual Favors to the Associations of Salesian Cooperators and Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary)**

In 1876 Don Bosco petitioned Pope Pius IX for spiritual favors (indulgences) on behalf of existing, canonically established, associations, the Salesian Cooperators and the Work of Mary Help of Christians. In response, the Holy Father by two similarly worded decrees granted the desired indulgences to these associations. These papal documents did not approve new associations, but merely granted spiritual favors to associations that the Pope believed to be already in existence. Had these two associations really prior canonical existence? (See above, and Comments below). We here submit the two papal decrees for comparison.

<sup>56</sup> G. Barberis, Original Chronicle, entry of March 13, 1876, Notebook V, 9-11, *FDBM* 839 A7-9.

1. Pius IX's Decree Granting Spiritual Favors to the Salesian Cooperators <sup>1</sup>	2. Pius IX's Decree Granting Spiritual Favors to the Work of Mary Help of Christians <sup>2</sup>
<p>Pope Pius IX For perpetual remembrance:</p> <p>It has been reported to Us that a Pious Sodality of the Christian faithful, which goes by the name of Sodality or Union of Salesian Cooperators, has been canonically established. Its members are pledged on the one hand to undertake a great variety of works of piety and charity and on the other, and especially, to care for poor and neglected children. We, therefore, rely on the mercy of our omnipotent God and on the authority of God's blessed Apostles Peter and Paul—and in order that this Sodality may grow from day to day, do hereby grant to the Christian faithful of both sexes enrolled or to be enrolled in this Sodality, [the following indulgences:]</p> <p><i>Plenary</i>, at the point of death;  <i>Plenary</i>, once a month, with Confession and Communion;  <i>Plenary</i>, applicable to the faithful departed;  In addition, all <i>indulgences</i>, both plenary and partial, of <i>the Franciscan Tertiaries</i>.  These favors shall be valid, all things contrary notwithstanding, for the present and for the future in perpetuity. It is also Our will that copies of this Letter, handwritten or printed, signed by a notary public and bearing the seal of the ecclesiastical Authority, be given the same faith, upon presentation, as would be given to this very Decree.</p> <p>Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the ring-seal of the Fisherman on May 9, 1876, the thirtieth of our Pontificate.  [Seal]    [Secretaries' signatures]</p> <hr/> <p><sup>1</sup> IBM XI, 546--547 (omitted in EBM).</p>	<p>Pope Pius IX For perpetual remembrance:</p> <p>It has been reported to Us that a Sodality of the Christian faithful, or Pious Work (to use the popular name) under the title of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of Christians, has been canonically established. Its members are pledged to recruit young men of good character and inclined to embrace the priestly life, to strengthen such young men in their vocation, and to give them an education in literary and Ecclesiastical studies. We, therefore, rely on the mercy of our omnipotent God and on the authority of God's blessed Apostles Peter and Paul—and, in order that this Sodality may grow from day to day, do hereby grant to the Christian faithful of both sexes enrolled or to be enrolled in this Sodality, [the following indulgences:]</p> <p><i>Plenary</i>, at the point of death;  <i>Plenary</i>, once a month, with Confession and Communion;  <i>Plenary</i>, applicable to the faithful departed;  In addition, all <i>indulgences</i>, both plenary and partial, of <i>the Franciscan Tertiaries</i>.  These favors shall be valid, all things contrary notwithstanding, for the present and for the future in perpetuity. It is also Our will that copies of this Letter, handwritten or printed, signed by a notary public and bearing the seal of the ecclesiastical Authority, be given the same faith, upon presentation, as would be given to this very Decree.</p> <p>Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the ring-seal of the Fisherman, on May 9, 1876, the thirtieth of our Pontificate.  [Seal]    [Secretaries' signatures]</p> <hr/> <p><sup>2</sup> IBM XI, 534-535 (omitted in EBM).</p>

## 5. Closing Comments

### *On the Salesian Cooperators*

The Decree on the Cooperators expresses the Pope's understanding that the Cooperators were a pre-existing, approved association active in works of piety and charity, especially on behalf of the young. This was also Don Bosco's understanding.

True, he does not state this understanding in his petition,<sup>57</sup> but clearly that is what he had in mind,<sup>58</sup> That is why he petitioned for spiritual favors, not for approval. This is also Ceria's view in his defense of Don Bosco's statements.<sup>59</sup>

The question, as to the origin and character of this pre-existing association is a legitimate one. In our modern "canonical mind" we do not believe that the granting of spiritual favor to the people involved in oratory work amounted to a canonical approval of an Association; nor that Archbishop Franson's decree or certificate of 1852 appointing Don Bosco Director-in-chief of three oratories amounted to a canonical approval of an Association of oratory workers (Congregation of St. Francis de Sales). Don Bosco, however, states as much in the Memorandum of 1877 (see above).

### *On the Work of Mary Help of Christians*

The Decree on the Work of Mary Help of Christians expresses the same understanding. Hence the same question may be asked, "What is the origin and the character of this pre-existing, canonically established association?" We note that:

(1) Don Bosco's two petitions for spiritual favors on behalf of the Salesian Cooperators and of the Work of Mary Help of Christians were presented together in 1876. Likewise the two Decrees were handed down together with the same date and in practically the same words, granting spiritual favors to the members of canonically established Associations.

(2) In the case of the Work of Mary Help of Christians, it is important also to note that the spiritual favors are granted not to the young adults (between the ages of 16 and 30 years) who would be recruited ("Sons of Mary"),

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 65.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Memorandum of 1877 entitled "Salesian Cooperators", given above.

<sup>59</sup> For Ceria's view (also summarized above) cf. *EBM* XI, 72-76.

but rather to the “Sodality,” that is, to a “group” of men and women assumed to exist already as a *canonically* approved association. The work of this association is to recruit and educate priestly vocations. Rightly then one may ask, “What existing association is Don Bosco speaking of? Which Church authority gave canonical approval to the ‘Pious Work?’” Don Bosco could make a case for the prior “canonical” existence of the Cooperators by invoking Archbishop Fransoni’s decree of 1852. But could a similar claim be made in the case of the Work of Mary Help of Christians?

It seems, therefore, that in speaking of the Work of Mary Help of Christians as a pre-existing association engaged in recruiting and educating priestly vocations (Sons of Mary) Don Bosco is referring to the Salesian Cooperators. The association of Salesian Cooperators is the pre-existing “canonically approved” association. As the Charter Documents given above clearly state, the Cooperators were pledged to work for vocations.

## **VIII. The Salesian Bulletin: Don Bosco’s Concept and Aim (1877-1886)**

### **1. Introduction**

The *Bollettino Salesiano* (*Salesian Bulletin*) is the successor of an earlier publication, begun by Don Bosco (through Brother Peter Barale, 1846-1934) in 1875 under the title of *Bibliofilo Cattolico* (*Catholic Book Lover*). Although not a single issue of this sheet has survived, its purpose is known to have been that of encouraging good reading, advertising Salesian books, and providing moral and religious inspiration.

In 1877 Don Bosco turned this sheet into an official publication for establishing and maintaining communication with the recently organized Salesian Cooperators. The new title was *Bibliofilo Cattolico o Bollettino Salesiano Mensuale* (*Catholic Book Lover or Monthly Salesian Bulletin*).

In 1879 the masthead began to carry the simpler title, *Bollettino Salesiano* (*Salesian Bulletin*).

Later, with the expansion of the Society outside Italy, the need was felt to publish the official periodical in other languages. Within the founder’s lifetime—in April 1879 the *Bulletin* began publication in French; and in October 1886, in Spanish.

This raised the question of the *Bulletin’s* contents. Should the *Bulletin* re-

main a central liaison publication, with identical content no matter what the language; or should it be national or local in content? Such a discussion could not but involve statements of nature and purpose both of the *Bulletin* and of the Association of Salesian Cooperators it was meant to serve. At various points Don Bosco expressed his views clearly and firmly.

Transcribed here are texts that express Don Bosco's ideas, as reported in original archival sources. The purpose is to complement and clarify the reports edited in the *Biographical Memoirs*: EBM XI, 60-77 (Cooperators); XIII, 190-195 (Cooperators and Salesian Bulletin at General Chapter I); 466-491 (Cooperators Organized) and XIV, 427-433 (Cooperators).

## **2. *Deliberazioni* (Decisions) of General Chapter I (1877)**

Among the associations to be fostered in connection with the Salesian work, the Salesian Cooperators are to be given pride of place. On the nature and purpose of the Cooperators (and of the *Bulletin*) the *Deliberazioni* of General Chapter [GC] I make the following statement:

4. The Salesian Cooperators, both men and women (*I Cooperatori e le Cooperatrici Salesiane*) are nothing but committed Christians (*buoni Cristiani*) who, though living with their families, make present in society (*in mezzo al mondo*) the Salesian spirit. They also give the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales moral and material help for the purpose of advancing in a special manner the Christian education of young people. They are a kind of third order, but their aim is the practical exercise of charity toward neighbor, in particular toward young people at risk (*gioventù pericolante*).

6. The *Salesian Bulletin* supplies the bond of unity with and among the Cooperators. When a member fails to live as a worthy Cooperator, he/she is written off simply by canceling his/her subscription to the *Bulletin*, without any further formality.

9. All Salesian confreres, directors in particular, should endeavor to increase the number of Cooperators. To this end, they should always speak well of the association, adding that the Holy Father wished to be the first [to be enrolled as] Cooperator. Let it be known that the Association keeps aloof from politics, and that its purpose is simply to work for the good of society, especially by preventing young people at risk from suffering loss. Consequently anybody may be eligible for membership. But only persons who are known to us, or to other trusted people, as religious and upright should be invited to join.



10. The General Chapter has approved and commends the Regulations of the Association [of Salesian Cooperators], which have been published separately.<sup>60</sup>

NB: The very same provisions were re-issued by GC II in its *Deliberazioni*.<sup>61</sup>

### 3. The Minutes of General Chapter II

The minutes of GC II (by Fr. Giulio Barberis) record a discussion on the *Salesian Bulletin*, and concomitantly on the Cooperators, with reported words of Don Bosco. After a debate on qualifications required for membership in the Cooperators, the *Bulletin* came up for discussion. Don Bosco stated that he wanted the *Bulletin* edited and published centrally, in spite of the cost and trouble involved. In a remarkable passage he begins by stating his well thought-out reasons for wanting a centralized publication of the *Bulletin*. Then he goes on to comment on the nature and purpose of the Cooperators.

[Don Bosco:] “There is an advantage in publishing and distributing the *Bulletin* from one [central] location. This will maintain perfect unity of action between the Cooperators and our Society. The associates will thereby gain added spiritual benefit.”<sup>62</sup>

“The Congregation will gain too, for if it should find itself in dire straits, it would dispose of a great number of people able and willing to help.”<sup>63</sup>

[An objection is raised:] “The *Bulletin* is distributed *free of charge*. This costs us a lot of money and it involves a lot of trouble.”

[Don Bosco responds:] “As for the costs of publication and distribution—we get our money back and more. Most of the people who receive the *Bulletin* inquire about the cost of subscription. When they realize that there is no fixed subscription fee, they usually make a more generous offering than would be de-

<sup>60</sup> *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo Torinese nel Settembre 1877* (Torino: Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1878), 92-93, in *Opere Edite*, 29, 468f.

<sup>61</sup> *Deliberazioni del Secondo Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo Torinese nel Settembre 1880* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1882), 62-64 (Appendix IV), in *Opere Edite*, 33, 70-72.

<sup>62</sup> “Associates (*associati*):”—As in the case of the *Catholic Readings*, Don Bosco regarded those who received (and accepted) the *Bulletin* not as “subscribers” but as “associates,” that is, as forming an association to help the Salesian work in some way.

<sup>63</sup> This sentence is a preliminary marginal note added at the beginning of the following passage. It provides a starting point for the discussion that follows.

manded. Others again may not contribute anything at the moment, but they will make an offering on some other occasion during the year, or will help the Oratory in some other way.<sup>64</sup>

“As for the trouble [connected with the work of publication, printing, and distribution] here in Turin—admittedly it is considerable, since [the Oratory] is the sole [production and distribution] center for a very large association. On the other hand, no further trouble is given to any other house anywhere [in the Congregation]. Furthermore, as soon as the operation is placed on a regular [businesslike] basis, there will be much less trouble. We shall have to put someone in charge full time, that’s about all.

[Don Bosco continued:] “I could have easily adopted the less demanding alternative in terms of work, but then the association would not measure up to its purpose. That easier way was to have many autonomous centers empowered to accept members into the association or to reject them. That is how Franciscan Tertiaries are organized. Every Franciscan house may enroll [tertiary] associates at will. As a consequence their membership is always very large. However, this arrangement does not permit centralized, unified action. The best thing I did for these cooperators [of mine] is to have made every effort to find the means whereby they could all be united to their leader, and the leader could reach all of them and share his ideas. I studied the problem for many years, and I think I have found the solution, with some success. At present we cannot even imagine the size to which this work will grow, and the moral influence it will exert when established far and wide. When the number [of the cooperators] is in the thousands (and I am convinced that they will reach the five-thousand mark very soon) then we shall see spectacular results. The Holy Father himself, on hearing me speak of such unity, binding all members to the one leader and vice versa, was struck and exclaimed: “This is the Catholic freemasonry!”

“Another aim we want to achieve is to spread good [Christian] ideas, and to help spiritually the families where the *Bulletin* is received ...<sup>65</sup>

“Then, from a practical viewpoint, suppose that a year from now the Congregation finds itself in grave financial need. If we make an appeal through the *Bulletin*, I believe the response will exceed expectations. I think that there are families

<sup>64</sup> By 1886 the *Bulletin* was running to 40,000 copies each monthly issue at a cost of 25,000 lire for the year’s issues. But publication costs were amply recovered in the way of offerings from the start. In the first 9 years of publication the *Bulletin* was credited with raising 900,000 lire in offerings and contributions—so much so that Don Bosco was accused of having started the *Bulletin* for fund-raising purposes.

<sup>65</sup> Here Don Bosco gives examples: the *Bulletin* might encourage teaching catechism to children (and describes how that is done), making the exercise for a happy death or the spiritual retreat, etc.

[out there] who are willing to let go of some of their [comfortable] lifestyle and money (*lasciar vita e sostanze*) in order to help.

“It is essential that each director have an accurate idea of who and what these Cooperators are, and that he expresses himself accordingly. When asked what the purpose of the association is, one should simply give the following answer: ‘Its true purpose is to help young people spiritually and materially by every means at one’s disposal, with preference given to those that are poorer and more abandoned.’ One may add [by way of encouragement] that the Holy Father himself wished to be the first to be enrolled as Cooperator ...”<sup>66</sup>

Don Bosco then called on everyone to study practical ways of increasing the number of Cooperators. One of the proposals was that the subscribers’ list of the *Catholic Readings* be used as a starting point, and that the Cooperator’s diploma be sent to each person on the list that was known to be a good Christian, as well as a suitable candidate ...<sup>67</sup>

[Don Bosco continued:] “Generally speaking, the Association of Salesian Cooperators is acceptable to people, because it is not involved in politics in any way. It is my conviction that the reason why we are left undisturbed to do our work is precisely that our Congregation keeps aloof from politics entirely. In fact I wanted our Constitutions to have an article that forbade all participation in politics [by members]<sup>68</sup> ...”<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. Minutes of General Chapter III (1883)

The minutes of the GC III (by Fr. John Marengo) are mere summaries of the discussions and of Don Bosco interventions. But they record some important statement on the nature of the *Bulletin*, as Don Bosco conceived it, and on the purpose of the Cooperators.

<sup>66</sup> Here further reasons for joining the association are given.

<sup>67</sup> There follows a discussion on whether religious institutes may be enrolled as Cooperators. There seems to be nothing against it.

<sup>68</sup> ASC D578, Capitoli Generali, GC I, FDBM 1849 B12-C5.

<sup>69</sup> Here Don Bosco describes how Rome struck out the article on politics in 1864, but that he had tried to put it back in 1870 and 1874. He was given the following reason for its removal: “This article is being removed for the third time. Even though in itself it could be allowed, in this day and age it may happen that one is bound in conscience to become involved in politics. Often political issues are inseparably connected with religious belief, in which case good Catholics ought not to remain aloof.”

September 7, morning session.

[...]

2. The draft of regulations for the Pious Society of the Salesian Cooperators is presented and read. Don Bosco interjects:

“The Salesian Cooperators, who are our benefactors, form a group distinct from those who subscribe to the *Salesian Bulletin* as a journal.

“The *Salesian Bulletin* is a means of making the Salesian work known, and of uniting good Christians as one, in spirit and with one purpose. We must not simply look on it as a periodical published for the dissemination of religious truth, etc., much less as a news sheet.

“Nowadays charitable people, given the political situation, do not seem to be able to identify charitable causes that they might help with their money. Hence the *Bulletin*’s purpose is to bring the Salesian works to their attention, so that, God willing, they might be moved to help these works. The *Bulletin* should not simply be promoted as a periodical like any other.”

[Specifically with regard to the Cooperators, Don Bosco added:]

(1) The two [prescribed] conferences should be held faithfully. A collection should be taken up on those occasions, and the money forwarded [to Turin].<sup>70</sup>

(2) The purpose of the Cooperators should be explained—It is “to help with catechisms, to promote good books, to send youngsters to good Catholic schools. As far as we are concerned, receiving one hundred lire more or less in the collection is of little significance. The glory of God—that’s what’s important.”

“If governments do not place obstructions in the way, the *Bulletin* will be a power to be reckoned with, not of itself, but because of the people it will unite [for action].”

[Don Bosco] then urges everyone, especially the directors, to learn about the Cooperators and their purpose, and to make known and foster the association ...<sup>71</sup>

## 5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 17, 1885

The question of what orientation should be given to the *Salesian Bulletin* in the context of the expansion of the Society to nations other than Italy was

<sup>70</sup> The two annual conferences were prescribed in the *Regulations for the Salesian Cooperators*, Ch. VI, Art. 4. Don Bosco held the first conference in Rome on January 27, 1878, and it set the pattern. This was followed by a similar conference held in Turin on May 16, 1878. From then on, the conferences were held regularly on a regional or language basis (cf. *EBM* XIII, 477-491). They became known as the *Salesian Conferences* because, among other obvious reasons, they opened with the reading of a chapter from the Life of St. Francis de Sales.

<sup>71</sup> *ASC* D579, Capitoli Generali, GC III, *FDBM* 1864 A10-11.

taken up in the Superior Chapter meeting of September 17, 1885 (minutes by Fr. Lemoyne). Don Bosco made three principal points: (1) The *Bulletin* should not be a national or local sheet, but the official organ of the worldwide Salesian work. (2) Its contents should be the same, no matter what the language. (3) It should be under the direct control of the Rector Major, and it should be published at the Mother House in the various language editions. Objections were raised, but Don Bosco stood his ground. Then Don Bosco goes on to speak of the *Bulletin*.

“The *Bulletin* should not be a local sheet serving local language areas, such as France, Spain, Italy, etc. It should be and remain the general official organ for the Salesian work serving all areas. The news features should be gathered and edited so as to represent the various regions, but all editions, no matter what the language, should be identical. To ensure unity in contents and orientation, the *Bulletin*, in all its [language] editions, should be printed at the mother house. This most powerful weapon must not be taken out of the hands of the Rector Major; for in other hands the *Bulletin* may take on an orientation not in line with the Rector Major’s purposes. [Were the *Bulletin* to be locally edited] it might even be used by a Provincial to serve his own or his province’s interests against those of the Congregation.

“I conferred with the directors of the Work of the Congregation [*sic*: read “Propagation”] of the Faith on the subject. When I urged them not to yield to pressures, but to continue to publish the *Annals* centrally at Lyons, their reply fully confirmed my views in the matter.<sup>72</sup> One should especially bear in mind that the person who controls the press can influence ideas in any direction. [Whether in the case of the *Annals* or of the *Bulletin*,] this person can give a certain orientation to charity or cause the fragmentation of charitable contributions [for one’s own purposes]. In theory one can defend the local approach [as being more productive], but it is not so in practice. The well-trying experience of other people should help us reach the right policy decision in the matter.

“To put the *Bulletin* on a sound basis we must set up an editorial board (*com-missione*). One editor might be in charge of the missions, gathering material, ascertaining needs, keeping track of the location and activities of missionaries, etc.; another editor might handle the correspondence, etc.; another might be in charge of editing [as editor-in-chief]. Likewise we have to streamline the operation: One who has an assignment should not be burdened with other tasks.”

<sup>72</sup> The Work (or Society) for the Propagation of the Faith (nothing to do with the Roman Congregation *de propaganda fide*) was founded in Lyons in 1822 by Pauline Jéicot for the purpose of supporting the foreign missions. It quickly spread to other countries. Its bulletin, called *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, published letters and exploits of missionaries in the field.

Fr. Rua [says that he personally] accepts the principle, one *Bulletin* in various languages; but [that he sees difficulties]. He points out that the *Annals* of [the Society for] the Propagation of the Faith publish only letters, which are always of general interest, and have no other purpose. Our *Bulletin*, on the contrary, has the purpose of begging for alms; and in order to motivate people to give one must speak of things of local interest. [Fr. Rua adds that] he has been in touch with the Salesians in France and South America, and he was given assurance that they will abide by Don Bosco's word and will do their best to fulfill that purpose. But certain feature stories that are suitable for Italy may not be suitable for use in South America. Conference addresses or reports of feasts celebrated there would have to be sent to Italy for printing and then back again, with the result that cooperators in South America read about them four months later. Notices addressed to Cooperators in those areas would reach them only after the event; or one would have to foresee events four months ahead of their occurrence.

Fr. Durando moves that, at least occasionally, the *Bulletin* [centrally] should be reduced by a few pages, leaving room for a supplement catering to local need.

Fr. Rua moves that the *Bulletin* be printed in two sections: one of general interest serving the whole Salesian work; and a second section of local interest—like newspapers, which run news sections of local interest.

Don Bosco rejects all such suggestions, and adds:

“I maintain the necessity of one undivided *Bulletin*. I have my reasons: first, I must have this most powerful tool, all of it, under my control, for my own purposes; secondly, [once out of my control] the *Bulletin* can be made to deviate from the purpose for which I established it. These reasons confirm me in my belief and justify my position. [Let me ask you.] ‘What features in the *Bulletin* most appeal to the Cooperators? The story of the Oratory and the letters of our missionaries.’<sup>73</sup> The bulk of the *Bulletin* should be made of this stuff. Reports of events, such as conferences and feasts from single nations, including Italy, should be placed in a *news-in-summary* column. Local events of extraordinary significance may be given space, in so far as they are of general interest. When at the local level there is urgent need of bringing something to the public's attention, the Salesians should avail themselves of the services of the Catholic press, with which they should always maintain a good relationship. If this does not suit their purpose, let them make use of circular letters. This is what I think. Please bear in mind that the *Bulletin* is the main support of the Salesian work—in fact, of everything we have going: vocations, schools, [etc.].”<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Fr. Bonetti had been running the *Storia dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales* serially in the *Bulletin* since 1879.

<sup>74</sup> ASC D869, Minutes of Superior Chapter (by Lemoyne), September 17, 1885, FDBM 1880 A5-12.

## 6. *Deliberazioni* of General Chapter IV (1886)

GC III took up more questions that it could do justice to. Most discussions were preliminary, and the Chapter handed everything over to the Superior Chapter, so that the discussions could be resumed and matters finalized at GC IV. Consequently no *Deliberazioni* of GC III were published. After GC IV a detailed set of *Deliberazioni* for both GC III and GC IV were published, which also included material of the first two GCs in final form. The provisions regarding the Salesian Bulletin (Ch. V) remained normative for a long time.

### V. Salesian Bulletin

The purpose of the *Salesian Bulletin* is to foster a lively spirit of charity among the Cooperators; to bring to their attention the apostolates in which the Society is, or plans to be, engaged; to motivate them to help the Society in its work. Consequently the Bulletin ought to be regarded as the official organ of the Society as a whole.

In order that this periodical journal retain unchanged the purpose for which it was founded, the General Chapter lays down the following norms:

1. The *Bulletin* shall be edited and published under the immediate supervision of the Superior Chapter [=General Council]. The Superior Chapter shall see to it that it is translated into its various languages. It shall appoint an editor-in-chief whose duty it is to review and edit all feature articles and news items sent in from various countries, to meet publication deadlines, and to organize distribution.

2. In order that the *Bulletin* may also respond to local needs, its final few pages shall be reserved for the report of news from houses in particular countries. But the main text, in its various editions, shall remain unaltered.

In America, whenever some urgent communication needs to be made, Provincials may have a special supplement printed. They shall then forward a summary thereof [to the central office] for publication in the next issue [of the *Bulletin*].

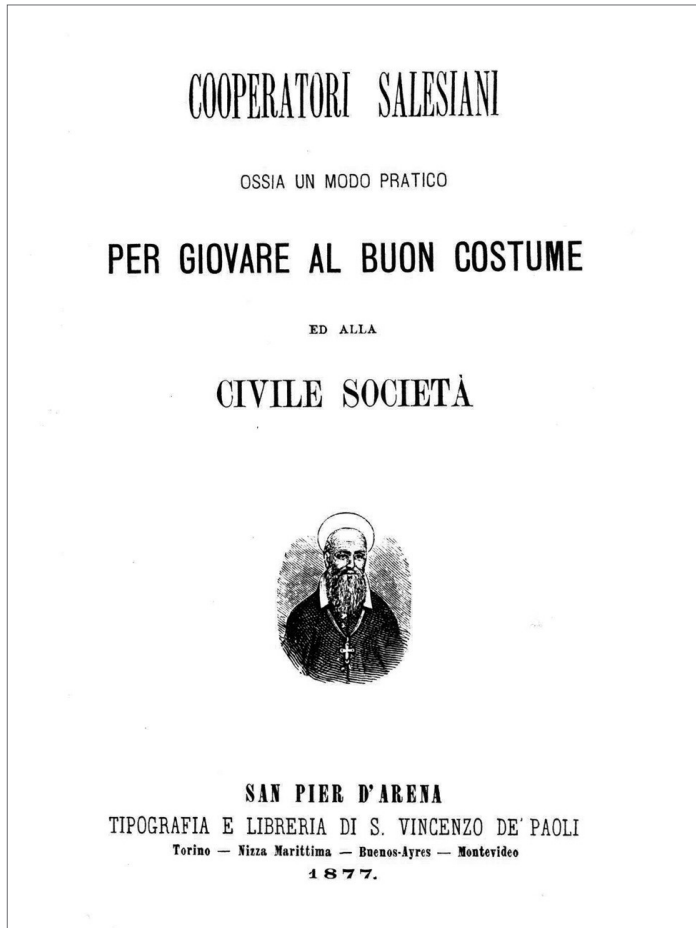
3. Each provincial shall appoint a person in his province, who has both qualifications and time to report in summary on newsworthy events in the province. He shall forward his reports to the editor of the *Bulletin* before the fifteenth of each month for inclusion in the next issue.

4. The offerings sent in by the Cooperators for the Salesian work in response to Bulletin appeals shall be deposited in a special account and sent to the Rector Major.

Offerings earmarked for particular houses may be retained, though the Rector Major is to be notified. Let the intentions of the donor be honored in each case.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Deliberazioni del Terzo e Quarto Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuti in Valsalice nel Settembre 1883-86* (San Benigno Canavese: Tipografia Salesiana, 1887), 24-25, in *Opere Edite*, 36, 276-277.





28 – Frontispiece of the definitive edition of the pamphlet “Salesian Cooperators a Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Civil Society” (1877)

## 7. Closing Comment

From the foregoing Don Bosco’s idea of the *Salesian Bulletin* emerges clearly enough. Especially to be noted is his insistence on centralized publication and on personal control of the *Bulletin* and its contents. Only in this manner, in Don Bosco’s view, would it serve the purpose of uniting head to members and members to head, for united action.

In spite of his conviction that the Salesian work would experience world-wide expansion, Don Bosco could not have anticipated the tremendous growth and diversification of the Society, and the problems this would create for maintaining the *Bulletin* on those terms.

But even so, Don Bosco's idea of what the *Salesian Bulletin* should be like and what purposes it should serve ought to be carefully pondered.

## Chapter 6

# THE BOSCO-GASTALDI CONFLICT FROM THE APPROVAL OF THE SALESIAN CONSTITUTIONS TO THE APPEARANCE OF ANTI-GASTALDI DEFAMATORY PAMPHLETS (1874-1877)

### Summary

Introduction: Establishing a Framework

I. The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict From May 1874 to February 1875—from the Approval of the Salesian Constitutions to Archbishop Fissore's Failed Mediation

1. Recalling the Issues in Context
2. Archbishop Gastaldi's Pastoral Policies
3. Initial Action by the Protagonists: Renewed Recourse To Rome
4. The Planned Spiritual Retreat for School Teachers
5. An Incident Regarding the Giving of the Clerical Habit
6. Don Bosco's Acceptance of Diocesan Seminarians and New Appeals to Rome
7. Further Episodes and Don Bosco's Appeals to Rome
8. Archbishop Fissore's Mediation

II. Developments and Episodes in the Years 1875-1877 Leading to the Break

1. Don Bosco's Petition for More Extended Privileges
2. The Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) and the Salesian Cooperators—and Gastaldi's Opposition
3. Don Bosco's Supposed "Suspension"
4. Gastaldi's Threatened Resignation
5. Don Bosco's Publication of Graces of Mary Help of Christians
6. Archbishop Frederick Aneyros' Visit (July 1-July 17)
7. Former Diocesan Seminarian Father Angel Maria Rocca
8. Father John Perenchio and Father Joseph Lazzero
9. Appeals and Counter-Appeals

The conflict between Don Bosco and Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi began with the latter's accession to the See of Turin in 1871 and ended (officially) with the "Reconciliation" imposed by Leo XIII in 1882. Earlier stages of the confrontation (I) (1871-1874), chiefly over points of the *Salesian Constitutions* at the time of their approval, have been discussed earlier in Vol. 4, Ch. 6 of this series (pp. 184ff.). Before and in connection with these earlier stages,

we gave a somewhat extended biography of Lawrence Gastaldi as archbishop of Turin (in Vol. 4, Ch. 5).

We are here concerned with the later stage of the conflict (1874-1882), and we shall survey it in two sections (1874-1877 and (1878-1882).

The present Chapter surveys the first section; the subsequent Chapter 7 will survey the second section.

## 1. Sources and Literature

*Documentation from the Central Salesian Archive, Archivio Salesiano Centrale [ASC], in Fondo Don Bosco Microfiches [FDBM]*

ASC A000: Cronachette:

Barberis, Cronichetta, Notebook 13, FDBM 845-846.

ASC A118: Persone in relazione con Don Bosco, as follows:

- (1) Franchetti,<sup>1</sup> FDBM 591 B7 - 603 D7;
- (2) Gastaldi, FDBM 614 A5 - 619 A2;
- (3) Gastaldi e i Salesiani, FDBM 619 A3-676 B2; in particular: *S. Congregatione Concilii, Taurin. Rehabilitationis ad audiendas confessiones, pro Johanne Bonetti Societatis Salesianae cum Illma et Rma Curia Taurinesi. Restrictus facti et juris, cum Summario pro Congregatione*

<sup>1</sup> The story of how these Franchetti (Gastaldi) papers came into the Salesians' possession is worth relating. On the death of Archbishop Gastaldi, his personal papers passed to his secretary, chancellor and universal heir, Canon Thomas Chiuso. Finding himself in financial straits, he sold off much of Gastaldi's personal effects. It was under these circumstances that Canon Dominic Franchetti acquired all of Gastaldi's books and personal papers, among which a sizable lot related to the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict. Canon Franchetti, like other priests of the diocese of Turin, was not sympathetic towards Gastaldi's pastoral policies, and sided with Don Bosco, Father Bertagna and others in their disputes with Gastaldi. Don Bosco is said to have blessed him as a child, and to have told his mother: "He will not join our ranks, but he will be of service to the Salesian Congregation just the same." After the Process for Don Bosco's Beatification was introduced in Rome (1907), Canon Emmanuel Colomiatti, one of Gastaldi's men led the opposition and in 1919 he presented fresh motions against Don Bosco, aiming at stopping the cause on the basis of the anti-Gastaldi anonymous pamphlets. It was then that Canon Franchetti made the Gastaldi papers available to the Salesians to help organize a defense and refute Colomiatti's allegations. [Data derived from an unpublished memoir by Father Francesco Tomasetti, postulator of Don Bosco's cause; cf. also Eugenio Valentini, *Il Canonico Domenico Franchetti*; Biblioteca del Salesianum, n. 68 (Torino: SEI, 1946), and Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 60, n. 13; 173-174, 176, and notes].

*Generali diei 17 Decembris 1881* (Romae: Ex Typ. Tiberina, 1881), 50 p.; *Summarium*, 55 p.; *Summarium additonal*, 11 p., FDBM 634 D7 - 636 D3. [The last item is Attorney Leonori's presentation in the Bonetti suspension trial before the Congregation of the Council.]

ASC A118: Pubblicazioni, in particular:

*Esposizione*, FDBM 317 D7-324 A1.

ASC A280 Acts of the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, Documenti ufficiali stampati, in particular:

*Positio super dubio: An adducta contra ven. Servum Dei obstant, quoniam in Causa procedi possit ad ulteriora* (Romae, 1921), FDBM 2243 D3 - 2246 D1 [*An adducta*].

#### General Reference and Critical Studies:

Centro Studi Don Bosco, Università Pontificia Salesiana, *Giovanni Bosco, Opere Edite*, ristampa anastatica, Vol. XXXII (Roma: LAS, 1977) [*Opere Edite*];

Eugenio Ceria, *Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco*. Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, vol. I (1954), II (1956), III (1958), IV (1959);

Francesco Motto, *Epistolario IV* (Roma: LAS, 2003);

Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco: Life and Works*, Tr. by John Drury (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1985) [Stella, DB: LW];

P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, Vol. III: La Canonizzazione (1888-1934) (Roma: LAS, 1988) [Stella, DB III];

P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*; Centro Studi Don Bosco, Studi Storici, 8 (Roma: LAS, 1980) [Stella, DBEcSoc];

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

F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1986) [Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*];

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

G. Tuninetti, "L'immagine di Don Bosco nella stampa torinese (e italiana) del suo tempo," in *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, ed. by Francesco Traniello (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1987), 209-251 [Tuninetti in Traniello];

A. Lenti, "The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict (1872-1882) [Part I]," in *Journal of Salesian Studies* 4:2 (1993) 1-83. [Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993)];

A. Lenti, *Don Bosco: His Pope and His Bishop* (Rome: LAS, 2006) 149-194.

## Biographical Memoirs:

[Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, Angelo Amadei,] Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. An American Edition Translated from the Original Italian, Rev. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B., Editor-in-Chief (New Rochelle, New York, 1965-1988) Vols. XI-XVI passim [EBM], translated from the corresponding volumes of the Italian *Memorie Biografiche* [IBM].

The story as presented in the English *Biographical Memoirs* (EBM): EBM X-XVI (especially XI-XV) — The chief events and episodes, in rough chronological order, are the following:

1874: EBM X, 384-410: L. Gastaldi accuses D. Bosco of insubordination; Difficulties with the spiritual retreat at Lanzo;

1875: EBM XI, 78-97. The Holy See places the dispute between Gastaldi and DB under arbitration by Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli;

1875-1876: EBM XI, 24-41, 53f., 66-71: D. Bosco's difficulties with Gastaldi in connection with the Sons of Mary Project and the Salesian Cooperators (see preceding chapter);

1875-1876: EBM XI, 449-459: L. Gastaldi 'suspends' D. Bosco from hearing confessions;

1877: EBM XIII, 282-285; Ceria, *Ep* III, 175: D. Bosco's difficulties with Gastaldi in connection with the publication of graces of Mary Help of Christians;

1877: EBM XIII, 250-291: Fr. Rocca's, Frs. Perenchio's and Lazzero's troubles with Gastaldi;

1877 [December]: EBM XIII, 290-309; XIV, 189-190: Conflict between Gastaldi and D. Bosco arising from the publication of an anonymous letter critical of Gastaldi (attributed to D. Bosco or to Salesians by Gastaldi); EBM XIII, 269-272: trouble surrounding Gastaldi's own anonymous pamphlet;

1877: EBM XIII, 445-454: D. Bosco's and Bonetti's difficulties with Gastaldi in connection with the church of St. John the Evangelist as a monument to Pius IX;

1878-1879: EBM XIII, 453-464; XIV, 170-190: D. Bosco's and Bonetti's conflict with Gastaldi in connection with the FMAs' St. Theresa's Oratory for girls in Chieri (Fr. Bonetti, chaplain); Bonetti is suspended from hearing confessions;

1880-1881: EBM XV, 154-185: Fr. Bonetti's case is brought before the Congregation of the Council;

1878-1882: EBM XV, 186-217, 235-239: Conflict between D. Bosco and Gastaldi over four additional anonymous pamphlets; libel suit by Gastaldi vs. D. Bosco and trial by the Holy Office;

1882: EBM XV, 218-239: Leo XIII "orders" a reconciliation between D. Bosco-Bonetti and Gastaldi under the terms of a document (*Concordia*) unfavorable to the Salesians. Document is reluctantly signed [July] by Procurator Dalmazzo for D. Bosco;

1882 [October]: EBM XV, 315-326: Consecration of the church of St. John the Evangelist by Gastaldi;

1883: EBM XVI, 56-77: Gastaldi's sudden death (Apr.1, Easter Sunday); Fr. Bonetti's return to Chieri; Ceria's evaluation.

## 2. Introduction: Establishing a Framework<sup>2</sup>

In Vol. 4, Ch. 5 we described the conflict between Don Bosco and Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi through the phase of the approval of the Salesian Constitutions. In that chapter by way of introduction we gave a general description of the nature of the conflict in its historical setting, and noted that the approval of the Salesian Constitutions in April 1874 was followed by a second and more bitterly fought phase of the conflict.

This present chapter 6 deals with the first two parts of this phase of the conflict: The first part, serving as an extended introduction, comprises an initial stage during which the issues and disagreements that had been shaping up during the period of the constitutions are thrown into sharper relief through a series of increasingly bitter episodes and exchanges. This stage spans some ten months, from May 1874 to February 1875 ending with the failed mediation by Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli.

This is followed by a second, more extended stage through which hostility is heightened by a number of increasingly more serious clashes. This stage extends over nearly three years to the end of 1877. The point of no return in the conflict is reached with the appearance of the first of five anonymous anti-Gastaldi pamphlet.

A third and last part of this phase of the conflict will be described in the next chapter (Ch. 7).

We will therefore, in this and the next chapter, trace the development of the conflict by this threefold division. One must perforce be selective, for the countless episodes of conflict, involving numerous issues, intersect and overlap, producing massive epistolary exchanges and abundant documentation. We will strive for clarity rather than completeness.

<sup>2</sup> For this complex story we shall take F. Desramaut's *Chronologie critique* as guide and Desramaut's *Don Bosco en son temps* and G. Tuninetti's *Gastaldi II* as controls. References, however, whenever possible, will be to documents transcribed and translated in *EBM*, since these are accessible to English-speaking readers. When these fail or seem insufficient or unreliable, references are given (in order) to *IBM*, to the *Epistolario* (as edited by E. Ceria and more recently by F. Motto up to 1875), to Lemoyne's *Documenti*, or finally to archival documents.





29 – Bishop Lawrence Gastaldi in a lithographic picture distributed on the day of his installation as archbishop of Turin

## **I. The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict from May 1874 to February 1875 from the Approval of the Salesian Constitutions to Archbishop Fissore's Failed Mediation**

### **1. Recalling the Issues in Context**

The Salesian Constitutions did not signal the end of the disagreements nor bring about reconciliation. The archbishop had carried the day in the matter of religious and priestly formation; and the constitutions, as emended

and approved by Rome, reflected his position. But Don Bosco had prevailed in practice through concessions obtained from Pope Pius IX.

The archbishop's perception that the Salesians' religious and priestly formation was defective at its core continued to be a significant cause of friction. Not only did he perceive this deficiency as harmful to Salesian candidates, but he also viewed it as damaging to his own seminary program because of the unfair competition it created.

Even more basic as a cause of conflict, was Gastaldi's understanding of the demands of his episcopal office and its pastoral policies. These touched all areas of the life, discipline and ministry of the clergy both secular and regular (such as the celebration of Mass, the administration of the sacraments, and preaching).

## **2. Archbishop Gastaldi's Pastoral Policies**

The Archbishop had set forth the goals of his administration without delay on being appointed, and his pastoral policies were spelled out quite clearly in the synod of 1873 and in the statutes emanating from it. The "Letters to the Clergy" and other directives published in the yearly liturgical calendar further specified the archbishop's policies. Holiness and an exemplary moral life among the clergy, in accordance with the high standards established by the Council of Trent and exemplified in the life and pastoral action of St. Charles Borromeo, were for him of the highest priority. Other important priorities were the regulation of clergy discipline, liturgical worship, administration of the sacraments, preaching, religious exercises, and other related matters. To obtain these goals he did not hesitate to threaten (and on occasion enforce) severe disciplinary action, including the *suspensio a divinis*.

Coherently enough, the archbishop believed that the way to achieve those goals was a thoroughgoing reform of the priestly formation process—hence his determination to control the whole process from vocation recruiting to ordination. The seminary was to be both the means and the place for such a reform. The seminary regulations that were finalized and scheduled to go into effect in 1874 were an explicit expression of the archbishop's principles regarding seminary formation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a description of Archbishop Gastaldi's reform program, cf. Lenti, *JSS* 4 (1993), 21-28.

Obviously Archbishop Gastaldi expected as much, if not more, of religious institutes in terms of holiness and formation. He had the highest regard for religious life and the evangelical counsels. And, as Giuseppe Tuninetti has emphasized, to understand the archbishop's rocky relationship to some religious communities in the diocese one should bear in mind his concept of religious life and situate his demands and actions within the larger context of an ecclesiology in which the bishop figured as the fulcrum of *all* diocesan life and activity, including that of religious institutes. The same author cites Gastaldi's 1874 report to the Holy See (*relatio ad limina*) in which this very conception is given articulate voice. After criticizing the Salesians for their inadequate formation, Gastaldi expressed the hope that the Vatican Council, once reconvened, would establish new norms regarding novitiate, and formation and studies programs of religious congregations. And even more significantly, he suggested that the Holy See should officially recognize an ordinary's right to verify vocation and suitability of religious for perpetual vows and for ordination, and to examine them in depth on these subjects.<sup>4</sup>

The archbishop had clearly stated his policy to Don Bosco on these matters. Specifically, he had consistently maintained his right and his duty to examine religious candidates for ordination in compliance with the ruling of the Council of Trent and after the example of St. Charles Borromeo.<sup>5</sup> He did not wish to deviate from such a course of action, notwithstanding the concessions that Don Bosco had obtained from Rome.

Don Bosco, however, apparently felt that past favors and decrees obtained from local ordinaries, as well as the more recent concessions obtained from Rome, and generally his Society's status as an approved religious congregation, entitled him to exemption from the general policies established by the archbishop.

These concepts and attitudes may help us understand first the archbishop's strong objections to the Salesian constitutions, and then the harsh measures he felt obliged to take, for example, against Salesian candidates for ordination.

<sup>4</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 248-249.

<sup>5</sup> "The bishop, with the help of priests and other persons who are prudent, well versed in the knowledge of God's law and of Church discipline, shall carefully investigate family background, personal life, age, education, moral conduct, doctrine and faith of candidates seeking ordination, and examine them on these very subjects" (disciplinary canon cited in Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 895).

### 3. Initial Action by the Protagonists: Renewed Recourse To Rome

In the months following the approval of the Salesian Constitutions, the two protagonists (from May to December 1874) sought to establish their respective positions officially with letters and memorandums addressed to the Roman authorities. As explained above, the main issue remained that of episcopal authority and pastoral policy in the matter of seminary priestly formation and ordination.

Don Bosco thought it necessary to restate his case to Secretary Salvatore Nobili Vitelleschi of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in a letter dated May 21, 1874.<sup>6</sup> In this letter Don Bosco, focusing on the matter of ordinations, recounted the oppressive demands he had been subjected to during the preceding years and the archbishop's recent refusal to confer orders on Salesian candidates. He also described the trouble he had experienced when he had presented the approved constitutions and the decree relating to dimissorials, for Gastaldi had adopted a "negative attitude" with respect to everything that had to do with the Salesian Society. Don Bosco closed his exposition with the request that his grievances be brought to the Holy Father's attention; and then asked coyly: "Would it be too daring a step to take to ask for the power to issue dimissorial letters *ad quemcumque episcopum* (to any bishop)?"<sup>7</sup>

Archbishop Gastaldi likewise presented his case by letter a little later, but directly to the highest tribunal, the pope himself. While vacationing at Santa Margherita Ligure (after the labors of the diocesan synod of June 30, 1874), Archbishop Gastaldi on July 15 addressed a long letter to Pius IX.<sup>8</sup> This was in reply to one received shortly before in which the pope himself saw fit to bring to his attention the serious charges leveled against him and to offer fatherly advice. Now the archbishop presented his defense, devoting the last three pages of his 20-page manuscript to Don Bosco. There was no disguising the fact that the unnamed person whom he was accused of treating unjustly could be none other than Don Bosco. He made three main points: (1)

<sup>6</sup> Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 287-290; IBM X, 822 (omitted in EBM).

<sup>7</sup> "To any bishop," not just to the ordinary of the diocese where the motherhouse was located. The Rescript of April 3, 1874 granted to the rector major the faculty to issue dimissorial letters for ten years (cf. EBM X, 373).

<sup>8</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Pope Pius IX, July 15, 1874 Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 901-903 and p. 914, note 47. The letter is in the *Secret Vatican Archive*, Epistolae latinae. Positiones et minutae, 126 (20-p. Ms.).

It was not true that he was opposed to Don Bosco's institutions. He had at all times helped the work and had even exempted the Oratory from parochial jurisdiction. He had also shown his continuing esteem for Don Bosco personally by naming him confessor at the synod of 1873 and at the same time one of the *testes synodales*. (2) The archbishop had insisted on examining Salesian priestly candidates before their ordination because the Council of Trent and the Roman Pontifical expressly enjoined this duty on the ordinary. His action had the approval of a number of Piedmontese bishops. (3) In justification of this last point he cited two instances in which permissive ordination of Salesian candidates had caused much grief: one had been dismissed from the congregation as an alcoholic and had joined the diocese of Saluzzo where he was stirring up trouble; the second had been found guilty of immoral conduct and had fled to America to avoid prosecution.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. The Planned Spiritual Retreat for School Teachers

The matter of examining and ordaining Salesian priestly candidates was not the only cause of conflict. Incidents interpreted by the archbishop as flouting diocesan pastoral policy made the exchanges more and more complex. Such occurrences would then be accompanied by renewed efforts on the part of the protagonists to have their grievances heard in Rome—for it was there that the case would finally be decided.

In August 1874 a leaflet authored by Don Bosco and printed by the Oratory Press announced a spiritual retreat “for professors and teachers” to be held at the Salesian school at Lanzo on September 7-12. The Catholic newspaper, *L'Unità cattolica*, praised this retreat as organized “through the efforts of our indefatigable Don Bosco” in response to requests by schoolteachers.<sup>10</sup> Since the diocesan statutes of the 1873 synod forbade all preaching in the archdiocese without the archbishop's written permission, Don Bosco appeared to be evading the ordinance. A short but courteous note from the archbishop's secretary, Canon Thomas Chiuso, notified Don Bosco of the archbishop's position regarding the initiative taken without prior permission. The archbishop, however, would allow the retreat to go forward, but wanted

<sup>9</sup> The first priest may be Father Luigi Chiapale, cf. below. There is no available information on the second.

<sup>10</sup> Both notices in *IBM* X, 828f. (omitted in *EBM* X, 384); *L'Unità cattolica*, August [23] 24, 1874 (cf. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 903-905 and notes 51, 52).

the preachers' names to be submitted to him. Don Bosco simply canceled the retreat, as he states in a letter to Bishop Peter de Gaudenzi of Vigevano.<sup>11</sup> He went forward, however, with the regularly scheduled spiritual retreats for Salesians.

Besides canceling the retreat and writing to Bishop de Gaudenzi to complain of Gastaldi's action, Don Bosco also took the ill-advised step of writing to the archbishop himself, questioning his policy. The tone of that letter only angered Gastaldi all the more. Don Bosco stated that the notice of the retreat published in the newspaper *L'Unità cattolica* had appeared without his prior knowledge. By that time the retreat had already been canceled. This simple fact showed that no opposition to Church authority had been intended. But Don Bosco went on to challenge the claim that the consent of the ecclesiastical authority was needed for such a retreat. He makes the point that, according to the prescription of the Council of Trent, of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and of the diocesan statutes themselves, such consent would be required only for preaching in public churches. He then appealed to faculties already granted to him by the ecclesiastical authority (as far back as 1852!), and to the fact that retreats had been held all along without his having had recourse to Church authority for permission. Don Bosco then reminded the archbishop that both of them would have to appear before the judgment seat of God; and before closing he recalled the old days when "what Don Bosco wanted Don Bosco got." In conclusion he humbly begged the archbishop's forgiveness for "any expression in the letter that may have unintentionally given offense."<sup>12</sup>

The tone of the letter, as well as the contents, certainly gave offense. The archbishop accused Don Bosco of disobedience. He sent a copy of the letter to Bishop Eugenio Galletti of Alba, who also thought the tone of the letter "somewhat blunt" (*un po' sostenuto*).<sup>13</sup> Later the archbishop would send that letter to Rome as a proof of Don Bosco's insubordination.

<sup>11</sup> Don Bosco to Bishop De Gaudenzi, August 30, 1874 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 313).

<sup>12</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, September 10, 1874 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 316-318, *EBM* X, 385-387). It should be noted that the retreat was canceled *after* the newspaper notice and after the archbishop's admonition (cf. Don Bosco's letter to Bishop de Gaudenzi cited above). Furthermore, whatever one may think of the archbishop's policy regarding preaching as expressed in the diocesan statutes, the ordinance would certainly apply to a retreat for non-Salesian schoolteachers. Gastaldi did not interfere with retreats for Salesians.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop Galletti to Archbishop Gastaldi, September 14, 1874 (*EBM* X, 387f.). Gastaldi believed that Don Bosco had printed some letters of his, presumably (so he thought) for use



Gastaldi's immediate concern was to inquire about the spiritual retreats which were being conducted at Lanzo. He therefore asked the local pastor, Father (Blessed) Frederick Albert, to investigate and report on the participants (whether non-Salesians were among them), on the retreat program, and on the preachers. (These retreats were under Don Bosco's and Father Albert's joint direction.) Not satisfied with Father Albert's first response, the archbishop wrote to him a second time. When the printed notice that Don Bosco had originally circulated to announce the retreat came to his attention, he wrote a third bristling letter. Voicing his suspicions and recriminations, he accused Don Bosco of acting out of spite by canceling the retreat, and of writing to him in a disrespectful way. The archbishop's perception of the events is revealing.

... Over his signature, and without notifying me, he circulates a printed announcement for a retreat that is designed for schoolteachers—laymen and priests, most of whom happen to be priests of my own diocese. He sends this announcement out to pastors without forwarding a copy to his own archbishop. And this is being done while I am trying to organize three retreats for my own priests at Bra ... I first hear of this retreat when I read of it in the *Unità Cattolica*. Then I write to that superior that I am only too glad and *willing to give him full permission* to hold the retreat, requesting only that he send me the names of the priests who are to conduct it, and that he notify me in advance in the future. A few days later, someone (not he) informs me that the retreat has been canceled. Why cancel a good thing because of a simple warning? Was it not my duty to admonish him? Could I have admonished him more charitably? Am I not bound to see to it that the authority of my office is not infringed upon? ... Besides, should not this superior have notified me that two other retreats were scheduled exclusively for Salesians? Moreover, his disrespectful letter (*parole irriverenti*) was completely uncalled for ... While he promotes the good of souls, there is no reason why he should upset my administration—it is my duty to demand as much. In this whole issue, the archbishop is the competent judge, not the priest in question. If he thinks he has been wronged let him write to the pope. But who does he think he is in setting himself up as a judge in this affair?<sup>14</sup>

against him. Bishop Galletti in a prior letter to the archbishop assured him that the only letters of Gastaldi in Don Bosco's possession were the two that had been printed by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and included in the *Positio* for the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (September 3, 1874, *IBM* X, 832-835, only briefly summarized in *EBM* X, 387). Concerning the archbishop's belief that letters were being printed for use against him, cf. also the exchange reported in *EBM* X, 382f.

<sup>14</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Father Albert, September 19, 1874 (*EBM* X, 390-391).



Clearly this passage reveals the archbishop's frustration at not being able to get through to Don Bosco. But on reading the correspondence relating to this episode, one is struck by the seemingly neurotic over-reaction on the archbishop's part.<sup>15</sup> But something even worse begins to surface: his mistrust of Don Bosco. The saintly Father Albert made heroic efforts to convey Don Bosco's regrets and to "explain" Don Bosco to him, but to no avail.<sup>16</sup>

## 5. An Incident Regarding the Giving of the Clerical Habit

Don Bosco's repeated appeals to "faculties" granted to him in the old days only increased the archbishop's aggravation, and another incident occurred even while the retreats were in progress. Don Bosco had asked a diocesan pastor to give the clerical habit to a young man of his parish who intended to join the Salesians. This immediately drew fire from the chancery. Don Bosco, while offering some explanation for his action ("in complete deference to his ecclesiastical superior," according to the *Biographical Memoirs*), appealed again to the old faculties granted him in 1852 by Archbishop Louis Fransoni then in exile, and interpreted by the then vicars, Frs. Philip Ravina and Celestine Fissore, to include the giving of the clerical habit.<sup>17</sup> Canon Chiuso replied for the archbishop:

With respect to your faculty of investing young men of this archdiocese with the clerical habit, His Grace the Archbishop wishes me to point out to you that the present situation is very different from that obtaining in the times of vicars Ravina and Fissore. In those days Don Bosco's house functioned as a diocesan seminary, of which you were the deserving rector ... Now, however, your house can no longer be regarded as a seminary, and therefore the faculty given to you to invest young men of the diocese with the clerical habit has ceased by its very nature ... For the sake of safeguarding discipline in the formation of the clergy, His Grace does not acknowledge any seminaries other than those under his jurisdiction ...<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *EBM* X, 388-392 (correspondence).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Father Albert to Archbishop Gastaldi, September 22, 1874, *EBM* X, 391-392.

<sup>17</sup> Canon Chiuso to Don Bosco, September 21, 1874 (*IBM* X, 844f., omitted in *EBM*); Don Bosco to Canon Chiuso, September 27, 1874 (*EBM* X, 844f., omitted in *EBM*); Don Bosco to Canon Chiuso, September 27, 1874 (*EBM* X, 394f.).

<sup>18</sup> Canon Chiuso to Don Bosco, September 28, 1874 (*IBM* X, 846, only briefly summarized in *EBM* X, 395).

## 6. Don Bosco's Acceptance of Diocesan Seminarians and New Appeals to Rome

An ongoing and more serious cause of friction came into play again as the year 1874 was winding down: Don Bosco's acceptance of former diocesan seminarians.

In the perception of the diocesan authorities, by harboring young men who left or were dismissed from the diocesan seminary (whether they intended to join the Salesian Society or simply sought "a change of venue") Don Bosco was interfering with the diocesan program of priestly formation. This alarmed the archbishop, and his concern on this score was probably justified. Statistics in the matter are not available, and the correspondence on hand specifies but a few cases of such transfers. However, the number of seminarians who would gladly have exchanged the rigid discipline of the diocesan seminary, under the stern rectorship of Father Joseph Maria Soldati, for Don Bosco's house was probably rather high.<sup>19</sup>

### *Gastaldi's Brief*

The archbishop again appealed to Rome. He did so first in a letter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. After renewed inquiry as to the juridical status of the Salesian Congregation, namely if it was definitively approved and in any way exempt from the ordinary's jurisdiction, he asked specifically: Could the Salesian rector major accept diocesan seminarians without the ordinary's consent? Such a practice, he added "seriously interferes with the formation of my seminarians."<sup>20</sup>

He did not wait for Archbishop Vitelleschi's reply.<sup>21</sup> With the date of October 4, Gastaldi addressed a mighty epistle to Pius IX himself in which he rehearsed and illustrated his grievances in detail. An almost neurotic quality is disclosed in this document; the intensity with which the archbishop strains to clarify his policies and motivations, while castigating Don Bosco for creating

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 269, note 47; 270, note 50.

<sup>20</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. September 23, 1874, (*EBM* X, 393, excerpt).

<sup>21</sup> Vitelleschi's reply is dated October 5. Beyond reassuring Gastaldi that the Salesian constitutions had been definitively approved, it merely stated that other questions would be taken up by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in November (cf. *EBM* X, 394).

diversions and putting obstacles in the way of his program of clergy formation, is disturbing.<sup>22</sup>

The first part of the letter is a defense of his administration and way of acting. He has asked Canon Louis Anglesio, rector of the Cottolengo institutions, to examine his personal conduct and administration, and the saintly and learned priest has found nothing deserving of blame. He (the archbishop) is ready, however, to submit to the judgment of an independent investigator if the Holy Father so wishes. This special counsel might be Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli or some other bishop familiar with the Turin situation. He goes on to assure the Holy Father that throughout his administration he has had no other aim than the glory of God and the salvation of souls, taking St. Charles Borromeo as his model. But just as St. Charles had trouble with the Jesuits who recruited his best seminarians, so he too has trouble with Don Bosco who in looking out for his congregation's interests interferes with the diocesan priestly formation program.

This sets the stage for his elaborate presentation. He states that the Salesian Society, approved to continue Don Bosco's expanded educational undertaking, has always received his support, but that he cannot remain silent before the lack of formation structures in the new congregation, especially the lack of a proper novitiate and the informal lifestyle of its members. This, coupled with easy financial arrangements, makes Don Bosco's congregation attractive to young men who are tempted by the prospect of an "easy time" and a "free ride." He adds that Don Bosco also accepts diocesan seminarians, even those who, for whatever reason, are dismissed from the seminary. Such a course of action amounts to unfair competition and is damaging to the diocesan formation program. He has been warned, but he appeals to canon law, to a person's right to freely choose one's vocation, and to authoritative endorsement he claims to have received.

After giving three instances of diocesan seminarians accepted by Don Bosco with undesirable results, he begs to be allowed to set forth the principles that have thus far guided him in the matter of clergy formation. (1) The good of the Church requires that parishes be staffed by priests who are "learned, saintly, hard-working, and ready for any sacrifice." It is the bishop's duty to provide such priests, for religious cannot be expected to supply this need. (2) Seminaries are the means to that end, as the Council of Trent wisely directs. St. Charles Borromeo has emphasized in his constitutions that the seminary

<sup>22</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Pope Pius IX October 4, 1874 (*EBM* X, 396-402).

must be a place of holy discipline, a religious house of prayer where Christ forms his apostles and where all necessary virtues are cultivated. (3) The seminary must also be financially viable; and, since revenues are no longer available under the present juridical order, at least moderate fees must be charged for room, board and tuition.

He then addresses the problem he has had with Don Bosco: Salesian houses constitute a threat to the diocesan seminary program because, perhaps under the pretext of testing their religious vocation, diocesan seminarians can find shelter in them, and thus escape from a program of formation which is more demanding in terms of discipline, study, and financial obligations. Then there is the further attraction of being ordained *titulo mensae communis*, without ecclesiastical dowry; and, although a Salesian candidate must have made his perpetual vows before being eligible for ordination on that score, “Don Bosco can dispense even from this requirement.”

Repeating with increasing emphasis that Don Bosco is interfering with his seminary program, he finally comes to the point:

I find Don Bosco’s way of acting extremely disturbing. Therefore, I earnestly ask Your Holiness to speak the *decisive word*. I beg you to forbid explicitly the rector of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in Turin to accept in any one of his houses any of my seminarians as a novice or student, or in any other capacity, without my written consent; and likewise any seminarian of mine whom I may have ordered to discard the clerical habit. I pray that this be done as soon as possible ... If any seminarian of mine shows signs of a genuine vocation to the said congregation, he shall not be prevented from applying; but it seems only right that I should be the one who personally examines and renders judgment in such a case.<sup>23</sup>

Gastaldi ends his lengthy jeremiad with an account of the ill-fated retreat for schoolteachers, mentioned above, and encloses the “less than respectful” letter that Don Bosco had written on that occasion.

### *Don Bosco’s Own Defense*

Archbishop Vitelleschi meanwhile had warned Don Bosco of Gastaldi’s inquiry of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.<sup>24</sup> More significantly, Pope Pius IX, instead of pronouncing the “definitive word” that Gastaldi

<sup>23</sup> EBM X, 401f. (from letter of October 4 cited above).

<sup>24</sup> Archbishop Vitelleschi to Don Bosco, October 1, 1874 (IBM X, 855f., briefly summarized in EBM X, 404).

had so fervently requested, passed the archbishop's letter on to Don Bosco, presumably to enable the latter the better to answer the charges.<sup>25</sup> Some time later, Cardinal Joseph Berardi, undersecretary of state, "in strictest confidence" also advised Don Bosco of the complaint that Gastaldi had lodged against him with the same congregation: that Don Bosco was "stealing" his seminarians.<sup>26</sup>

Don Bosco then took up his own defense on this and other issues. He did so first in a letter dated October 12, 1874, to Cardinal Joseph Andrew Bizzarri, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.<sup>27</sup> Then after receiving Gastaldi's letter from Pius IX and Cardinal Berardi's "confidential" communication, Don Bosco penned a second letter to this same cardinal dated November 7, 1874, adding a memorandum to be used as the cardinal saw fit.<sup>28</sup>

In the first letter, the more significant of the two, Don Bosco (in summary) makes the following points: (1) The archbishop has demanded that forty days before ordination our candidates should submit to a thorough examination on their background, prior studies, reasons for leaving their dioceses, religious profession, work in the congregation, vocation. (I have complied *pro bono pacis*; but does an ordinary have the right to examine religious candidates as to their religious life and vocation?) (2) The archbishop has refused to ordain Salesian candidates, unless I promised in writing not to accept any of his seminarians into the congregation. (I have given the written promise as demanded, though with a clause aimed at safeguarding a person's freedom regarding his vocation; but does an ordinary have the right to interfere with a seminarian's vocation and to demand such a promise from a religious superior?) (3) Recently the archbishop has objected to a spiritual retreat for teachers and lay people of the kind we have been holding since 1844[!] with Archbishop Frasoni's authorization—this, on the ground that I had not asked for his permission. (I canceled the retreat, but he continued to harass us with letters and demands; but may not a religious superior hold a retreat for teachers and lay people in one of the houses of his congregation, and may an ordinary investigate retreats scheduled for religious?)

<sup>25</sup> This was on October 18, according to Berto's note on a copy of Gastaldi's letter in *Documenti* XIV, 271-281 in *ASC* A063, *FDBM* 1026 C9-D7.

<sup>26</sup> Card. Berardi to Don Bosco, October 26, 1874 (*EBM* X, 407).

<sup>27</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Bizzarri, October 12, 1874 (*Motto*, *Epistolario* IV, 333-337; *EBM* X, 404-406).

<sup>28</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Berardi, November 7, 1874, with 7-point memorandum (*Motto*, *Epistolario* IV, 344-346; *EBM* X, 407-409).

The second letter takes up the issue of seminarians who left, or were dismissed from the seminary, and criticizes seminary policies. Don Bosco makes the point that many Salesian alumni enroll in the diocesan seminary; but those who do not succeed in gaining the young rector's approval are dismissed in spite of their good qualities. We receive them and help them, because it would be cruel to abandon them after so much care has been expended on them. But the archbishop refuses to give them a testimonial letter if they manifest their intention of coming to the Salesians.<sup>29</sup>

One already senses in these letters a certain ambiguity in Don Bosco's statement of the facts. The memorandum attached to the second letter is even more problematic. Besides reviewing "the facts" of the ill-fated spiritual retreat, mentioned above, and denying (rightly enough) that he had ever wished to print and circulate private letters of the archbishop (as mentioned above), Don Bosco is determined to set the record straight regarding points on which "the archbishop has been misinformed." (1) It is not true, as alleged, that "Father [Louis] Chiapale and Father Pignolo were ever members of this congregation." (2) It is not true, as alleged, that seminarians who have given a bad account of themselves while teaching or assisting at the Institute for the Hearing-Impaired were ever Salesians. (3) It is not true, as alleged, that Salesians who left the congregation were the cause of trouble in dioceses, because no Salesian (up to 1874) has left the congregation except Brother Federico Oreglia (now a Jesuit priest).<sup>30</sup>

Some of the statements made by Don Bosco in the memorandum, specifically those regarding the status of Father Chiapale and the defections from the Society, can easily be questioned on the basis of available documentation.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The "young rector" was the thirty-five-year old Father Giuseppe Maria Soldati, the main agent of Gastaldi's seminary reform. In a letter dated November 10, 1874, addressed to the Archbishop, Don Bosco states that no diocesan seminarian has been accepted into the Society without the archbishop's consent—although some were indeed given temporary shelter because they were in need. This was done "to mitigate the resentment of their families and friends who kept spewing abuse against you [the archbishop] as one who wanted those former seminarians to be forsaken by all." In the preceding paragraph he had reminded the archbishop of his duty to ordain candidates who were not unworthy, arguing the point from Roman decisions (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 350-352; excerpt in *EBM* X, 410f.).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *EBM* X, 409 for points 1, 2, and 3 of the memorandum.

<sup>31</sup> With regard to Don Bosco's claims one may note: (1) Aloysius Chiapale was a professed Salesian. He is listed as one of the group of eighteen (or nineteen) who "founded" the Salesian Society on December 18, 1859 (cf. *EBM* VI, 181f., where he is referred to as a "lay

As the year 1874 dragged to a close, exasperation was mounting on both sides. Don Bosco's impatience is apparent in the opening paragraphs of the already-mentioned letter of November 10, 1874 to Gastaldi. He tells the archbishop: "you must certainly know what conditions need to be present for an ordinary to refuse to ordain a candidate."

He finally decided to apply to Rome for the faculty to issue dimissorials to any bishop (*ad quemcumque episcopum*). This concession would have made it possible for him to bypass Gastaldi by applying to another bishop. He enclosed his petition in a letter to Cardinal Berardi, dated November 18, 1874. "I dare not ask myself," he writes, "but I entrust the matter to your prudence ... Your Eminence is in a position to discuss the subject with the Holy Father."<sup>32</sup>

## 7. Further Episodes and Don Bosco's Appeals to Rome

Meanwhile, Archbishop Gastaldi was resorting to reprisals. Having learned that Father Louis Guanella of the diocese of Como was contemplating joining the Salesian Society, he dispatched a note to the bishop of that diocese,

member" because at the time he was only a sixteen-year old student and had not yet received the clerical habit). Further, as recorded in the register of professions, Aloysius Chiapale was one of the twenty-three who made their first profession on May 14, 1862. He made perpetual vows on August 10, 1867. (2) Of the twenty-three who professed in 1862, five left the Society before 1870. Chiapale is not listed among them, but he did leave the Society before 1874. And as recorded, thirteen Salesians left the Society between 1862 and 1874 (cf. Stella, *DBESoc*, 295, 297, 301, 313-315). Don Bosco himself in a letter dated October 11, 1874, wrote to Vicar General Canon Joseph Zappata: "Tell [the Archbishop] that of those [priests] who once belonged to the Salesian Congregation not one has given him cause for complaint by censurable conduct, and that I hope they never will. Indeed, some fifty are now exerting all their energy in his archdiocese" (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 331-332; *EBM* X, 403). With regard to Father Pignolo and the seminarians who worked at the Institute for the Hearing-Impaired no information is available.

<sup>32</sup> For the letter with petition, in Latin cf. Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 353-356; for letter only *EBM* X, 411-412; for the petition cf. *IBM* X, 1003-1004, Appendix X, n. 6 (omitted in *EBM*). Of the reasons given for requesting the favor, the last is the most pressing: "So that finally the objections, on the basis of which a certain ordinary has been refusing to ordain Salesian candidates for the past three years, might be disposed of." Cardinal Berardi may or may not have processed Don Bosco's request at the time. In any case, on February 26, 1875 Don Bosco submitted a double request for the faculty of issuing dimissorial letters and for traditional privileges. Pius IX set up a commission of cardinals to study the question (cf. *EBM* XI, 163f.), but on September 22, 1875, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars denied both petitions, as will be noted below.



warning that the priest would not be permitted to celebrate Mass, hear confessions or stay in the diocese if he came to Turin.<sup>33</sup> This was in early December. Don Bosco had enthusiastically accepted Father Guanella's petition and had told him to come by all means.<sup>34</sup> Father Guanella, alarmed and mystified by the warning received, notified Don Bosco and suggested that he could perhaps stay in some Salesian house away from Turin. Shortly thereafter he joined Don Bosco in Turin nonetheless.<sup>35</sup>

Archbishop Gastaldi immediately issued a decree abrogating all favors, faculties and privileges granted to the Salesians by him and his predecessors. Notice of the decree was served on Don Bosco on December 24, 1874.<sup>36</sup>

These pressures resulted in Don Bosco's decision to appeal again to Pope Pius IX. He did so in a letter dated December 30, 1874. After referring to the approval of the constitutions by which "the Salesian Congregation and all its members were placed under the lofty protection and tutelage of the Holy See," he presented six complaints against Archbishop Gastaldi: (1) for claiming the right to examine Salesian candidates for ordination as to their vocation, and for demanding that no former seminarian of his be accepted into the Salesian Society; (2) for refusing (with one exception) to ordain Salesian candidates during the previous three years; (3) for refusing to let diocesan priests enter the Salesian Society (examples: Frs. Ascanio Savio, John Olivero, and recently Louis Guanella); (4) for refusing to admit Salesian priests to ex-

<sup>33</sup> For the story and correspondence cf. *EBM* X, 412-415.

<sup>34</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Guanella, December 12, 1874 (*Motto*, *Epistolario* IV, 362; *EBM* XI, 1-2).

<sup>35</sup> Fr. Guanella to Don Bosco, December 14, 1874 (*EBM* X, 413; and cf. mention in *EBM* XI, 2). Luigi Guanella (1842-1915) was ordained in 1866 for the diocese of Como, and distinguished himself in the priestly ministry by his zeal and concern for the poor. Having come into contact with the Salesians, he desired to join them and eventually establish the Salesian work in his home diocese. He was a Salesian from 1875 to 1878. During this period he was associated with the development of the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) in its early stages (*EBM* XI, 48-50), and served as director and in other capacities (*EBM* XI, 57, 287, 319-320; XII, 54, 357-359). Having returned to his diocese in 1878 (*EBM* XIII, 628-631), he founded a hospice for orphaned and abandoned children, and subsequently the House of Divine Providence in Como (1886), and similar institutions in other towns. To perpetuate his work he founded the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the Servants of Charity (1904). He was active in the apostolate of the press, authoring some fifty works; and in association with various Catholic laymen he took a pioneering and active interest in the social question. He was beatified in 1964 (cf. also *New Catholic Encyclopedia* VI, 823-824).

<sup>36</sup> Mention in *EBM* X, 413-414.

aminations for faculties to hear confessions (example: Father Francis Paglia); (5) for revoking faculties and privileges needed in Salesian houses granted for the good of souls (permission to administer Holy Viaticum, Extreme Unction, etc.); (6) and as a consequence of all the above, for hindering Salesian work on behalf of poor and abandoned boys, such as the opening of new schools.<sup>37</sup>

## 8. Archbishop Fissore's Mediation<sup>38</sup>

Pius IX could not remain unaffected by the many briefs received from both parties, and he must have been under considerable pressure to take action. He personally favored Don Bosco, but he was not unaware of Gastaldi's favor in certain quarters in Rome, including the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Moreover, he could not just oust the archbishop. Hence he thought of submitting the dispute to arbitration. Following Gastaldi's own suggestion,<sup>39</sup> he chose Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli, a friend of Gastaldi, acceptable also to Don Bosco, to act as mediator. A letter by Cardinal Berardi to Archbishop Fissore requesting his mediation in the pope's name was followed by an epistolary exchange designed to clarify the issues involved.<sup>40</sup>

At Archbishop Fissore's request, Don Bosco first stated his case by letter, in which he rehearsed his accumulated complaints.<sup>41</sup> He may also have enclosed a copy of the memorandum already cited and discussed above. He was able to refine his arguments in person on the occasion of a visit from Archbishop Fissore.

On February 4, at the archbishop's palace, the contending parties confronted each other in the presence of the mediator. It was what in diplomatic circles is usually referred to as a "frank" exchange, with no compromise and no meeting of the minds. According to Don Bosco's report, they parted out-

<sup>37</sup> Don Bosco to Pope Pius IX, December 31, 1874 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 376-379; *EBM* X, 414-416).

<sup>38</sup> For the story in detail see *EBM* XI, 78-97.

<sup>39</sup> See Gastaldi's letter to Pope Pius IX of October 4, 1874 cited above.

<sup>40</sup> Card. Berardi to Archbishop Fissore, January 9, 1875 (*Documenti* XV, 23-24 in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1027 A 10-11).

<sup>41</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Fissore, January 12, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 391-393; *EBM* XI, 83-85, with the date of January 16).

wardly “on good terms (*di buon accordo*).” But all three were admittedly “deeply embarrassed (*assai umiliati*)” by the inevitable disclosures.<sup>42</sup>

In his official report to Cardinal Berardi, Archbishop Fissore records Gastaldi’s complaints in the body of the letter and Don Bosco’s replies, mostly denials, in marginal notes, no doubt introduced after the latter had been shown the report. As in the memorandums referred to above, Don Bosco flatly denies ever having received into the Society diocesan priests or seminarians, especially seminarians judged unsuitable and dismissed from the seminary. He denies ever having given the habit to dismissed seminarians and using them as teachers and assistants in Salesian houses located in other dioceses. (Fissore, however, has information, so he states, that Don Bosco did receive some undeserving seminarians.)

From the report it emerges that Archbishop Gastaldi did agree to ordain Salesian candidates, but only on condition that they be perpetually professed and take the required examination. Don Bosco disputed the necessity of perpetual profession in the case of candidates belonging to a congregation in which triennial vows were the norm. (The papal Rescript granting the power to issue dimissorial letters clearly required perpetual profession.<sup>43</sup> (Perhaps Don Bosco had obtained a concession *vivae vocis oraculo* from Pius IX.) Archbishop Fissore took no stand and made no recommendations. But he did voice a wan hope: “I trust that there will be mutual understanding in the future and that, if difficulties should arise, it will be possible to get the parties together.” He added in conclusion: “I would have liked the parties to agree on some points in writing, but Don Bosco’s preference was for leaving everything on a verbal basis.”<sup>44</sup>

As has been noted, Don Bosco’s blanket denials are somewhat baffling. In another “factual memorandum (*promemoria sicuro*)” dated March 12, 1875, and presented in Rome to counter Gastaldi’s allegations, Don Bosco vehemently denied that “these people, seminarians, priests or laymen, ever in any way belonged to the Salesian Congregation.”<sup>45</sup>

Punch and counterpunch, the fighting continued: Archbishop Fissore’s mediation had failed.

<sup>42</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Berardi, February 7, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 411-414; *EBM* XI, 87-90).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. decree in *EBM* X, 373.

<sup>44</sup> Archbishop Fissore to Card. Berardi, February 12, 1875 (*IBM* XI, 548-550, Appendix 8, omitted but referred to in *EBM* XI, 91).

<sup>45</sup> *Documenti* XV, 77 in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1028 A4; excerpt in *EBM* XI, 92.

For a closing comment, it bears repeating that, neurotic and unreasoning though he is made to appear in the *Biographical Memoirs*, Gastaldi was proceeding from clearly defined premises. He was truly concerned with clergy reform and formation; he was particularly sensitive and protective with regard to his own seminary program; and he saw Don Bosco's recruiting and formation practices as a threat. Add to this his unimpeachable conviction that it was his right and his duty, as ordinary, to ascertain the suitability and worthiness of candidates for ordination, whether secular or regular. After all, as Desramaut aptly remarks, Salesian candidates had not lived in a closed seminary community; they did not reside in monasteries away from the world; they claimed to be preparing themselves intellectually and spiritually while fully engaged in activities of a largely secular nature. And the ordinary was being asked to confer orders on such candidates without the possibility of ascertaining their suitability. Further, he could not discount the real possibility that, once ordained, they might choose to return to the diocese. In conscience, therefore, as well as in virtue of Church law in force, the archbishop felt obliged to examine Salesian candidates on the subject of their "vocation," that is, religious formation, and on their real suitability for priestly ministry. Nor did he wish to see presented as Salesian candidates for ordination his former seminarians who, after leaving, or after having been dismissed from the seminary, had been accepted by Don Bosco.<sup>46</sup>

No doubt, throughout the distressing developments of the confrontation that followed, misunderstandings, frustration, anger, spite, and even unworthy motives played a part. But the conflict can be neither explained nor understood merely in those terms. Real issues and real points of view were involved that had larger reference than the character of the protagonists.

In any event, it would surely be unfair simply to blame it all on Gastaldi's authoritarian, despotic temperament, and even less on a petulant, unreasoning hostility conceived toward Don Bosco and the Salesians.

## **II. Developments and Episodes in the Years 1875-1877 Leading to the Break**

In the first part of this sordid ecclesiastical saga, by a fairly extended and detailed examination of epistolary exchanges, we sought to clarify the real is-

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 898.

sues in the conflict. Concomitantly, we described certain episodes that seemed significantly to reinforce the contrasting points of view of the protagonists.

Through this second phase of the conflict (1875-1877), on the other hand, since the issues and positions remain unaltered, in fact even more forcefully stated, we will selectively focus our attention on some events and episodes which gradually drove the two contenders to the breaking point. The following seem important: (1) Don Bosco's petition for more extended privileges; (2) the confrontation relating to the Work of Mary Help of Christians and to the Salesian Cooperators (already discussed in the preceding chapter); (3) Don Bosco's supposed suspension; (4) Gastaldi's threatened resignation; (5) Don Bosco's publication of graces attributed to Mary Help of Christians; (6) Archbishop Aneyros' visit; (7) the trouble relating to Father Angelo Rocca's "illicit" celebration of Mass and his suspension; (8) the Perenchio-Lazzero affair and its aftermath.

### 1. Don Bosco's Petition for More Extended Privileges<sup>47</sup>

Don Bosco journeyed to Rome in February 1875 for the express purpose, among others, of petitioning for the privilege of dimissorials to any and all bishops (*ad quemcumque episcopum*), and for the other privileges of exemption globally. He had desired these concessions since 1864, had petitioned for them again in 1873, and more recently had submitted a memorandum to the same effect to Cardinal Berardi, hopefully to be presented to the Pope (already mentioned above).<sup>48</sup> But now he felt driven to seek them out of sheer exasperation. He compiled an awesome list hoping to obtain exemption by "assimilation" to a congregation that already possessed the corpus of traditional privileges, such as the Redemptorists or the Vincentians. That Pius IX, who had himself ordered the curtailment of privileges, was personally favorable to Don Bosco is evidenced by the fact that on February 26, 1875 (or not long thereafter), he appointed a commission of four cardinals to examine the petition. It would take the cardinals some time to come to a decision in the matter, Don Bosco knew. He returned to Turin with the assurance of

<sup>47</sup> For the story in detail cf. *EBM* XI, 160-184.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. footnote 32 and related text above: Don Bosco to Card. Berardi, November 18, 1874: for letter with petition in Latin cf. Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 353-356; for letter only *EBM* X, 411-412; for the petition cf. *IBM* X, 1003-1004, Appendix X, n. 6 (omitted in *EBM*).

the pope's support and with a decree granting various spiritual favors to the Salesian Congregation. Then by the end of March he was back in Rome to be on hand to answer objections and give explanations.<sup>49</sup>

It took nearly six months for the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to reach a decision. Briefly stated, this congregation was not disposed to grant concessions at a time when the Holy See was seeking to curb such a custom, the pope's favor notwithstanding. Gastaldi's pleas may or may not have brought pressure to bear on the decision. Cardinal Prefect Bizzarri, and Secretary Vitelleschi himself, who had otherwise supported Don Bosco for the approval of the constitutions, did not favor granting such concessions.

Pending the decision, on June 16, 1875, Don Bosco submitted a petition to Pius IX to have a certain number of priests ordained by other bishops and out of canonical time (urgent necessity being the reason adduced), and for a dispensation from the canonical age for certain others. Much to Don Bosco's disappointment (and dismay), the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, to which the petition was referred, granted only a minimal part of what was asked.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps this was an indication that the Roman climate was undergoing a change, but not in Don Bosco's favor.

Be that as it may, Attorney Charles Menghini, whom Don Bosco had engaged to represent his interests in Rome, prepared a learned brief on the subject of dismissorial letters and privileges for Secretary Vitelleschi to present to the cardinals.<sup>51</sup> Don Bosco followed with a personal letter to the same cardinals.<sup>52</sup> On September 16 (after Archbishop Vitelleschi had already been elevated to the cardinalate) the cardinals met, and the decision was in the negative on both counts (dismissorial letters and privileges).<sup>53</sup>

Lemoyne and Ceria view the defeat of Don Bosco's righteous cause as due to the "legalistic outlook" of those prelates, and to their fears "of a split between the Turin ordinary and the Holy See." They also hint at baser mo-

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 162-170. Don Bosco's reply to a query by the cardinals ("What progress has the Salesian congregation made in the year since the approval of its constitutions?") contains the usual inflated statements (p. 168). And referring to Gastaldi's complaints Don Bosco's denials are again emphatic: "Not a single professed Salesian has ever left. None, therefore, can be cited as having caused trouble in any diocese (p. 169).

<sup>50</sup> For Don Bosco's disappointment and subsequent action, cf. *EBM* XI, 170-173.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 173-178.

<sup>52</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Bizzarri (and Cardinals Martinelli, Patrizi and De Luca), September 11, 1875 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 517-520; *EBM* XI, 180-181).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *EBM* XI, 183.

tives. But, they observe not without a note of triumph, Don Bosco's cause was vindicated when Providence struck down the chief culprit, Secretary Vitelleschi, who died of typhus barely a month after his elevation to the college of cardinals. In their view, Don Bosco's cause always prevailed, even when it entailed the elimination of his opponents, because he was unfailingly on the side of the right. Letters from Don Bosco's so-called friend and counselor in Rome, Msgr. John Baptist Fratejacci (letters which are full of malicious interpretations) seemed to provide corroboration.<sup>54</sup> And yet, Ceria had introduced this particular chapter with a learned disquisition on the privileges tradition, clearly indicating the fact that their proliferation was an abuse which the Holy See in the latter half of the nineteenth century was again seeking to eliminate.

## **2. The Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) and the Salesian Cooperators—and Gastaldi's Opposition**

The story of Don Bosco's troubled relationship with his archbishop in the matter of the Work of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Cooperators, and questions relating thereto, has been presented in the preceding Chapter 5.

<sup>54</sup> Fratejacci to Don Bosco, September 17, and October 17, 1875 (*IBM* XI, 564-569, Appendices 18 and 19, the first transcribed only in part from *Documenti* XV, 259-262 in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1031 A6-9; both omitted in *EBM*). These letters are replete with malevolence and venom. In the second letter the writer gloats over Vitelleschi's demise: "He has handed down his last decree!" By way of conclusion to the story of the privileges, Ceria quotes "comforting words" from another letter of Fratejacci to Don Bosco: "It will then be manifest that [the Salesian Congregation] was not the work of man but of God ... The gratuitous hostility and the hatred of which the Psalmist speaks ... are hallmarks of all works dear to God ... Your enemies should be afraid, very much so" (Letter of December 5, 1875, *Documenti* XV, 344-348 in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1032 C6-10; excerpt in *EBM* XI, 447f.). Archbishop Enea Sbarretti succeeded Vitelleschi as secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Shortly thereafter Cardinal Innocenzo Ferrieri was appointed to succeed Cardinal Bizzarri as Prefect of this Congregation. In the Salesians' perception, Card. Ferrieri inherited the mantle as Don Bosco's "enemy" par excellence in Rome.



### 3. Don Bosco's Supposed "Suspension"

To add insult to injury, the year 1875 was to end with a sensational incident: Don Bosco's "suspension" from hearing confessions. That is what the Salesians thought; the chancery instead maintained that there had been no suspension. What really did happen?

Faculties for confessions were renewed routinely every year or every six months, and the document would routinely be picked up at the chancery or delivered. Don Bosco's faculties had been renewed in March for six months; but for some reason the document was held back at the chancery and was delivered to Valdocco only in October. His faculties had by then expired. Father Cagliero and Father Rua, who received the envelope by messenger, not wanting to upset Don Bosco withheld the information from him. In the absence of the archbishop, the Vicar General Canon Joseph Zappata, contacted by Father Rua, granted temporary renewal. But Father Rua for some reason failed again to notify Don Bosco, and the latter only learned of the expiration of his faculties on Christmas Eve. Availing himself of a special concession obtained from Pius IX, he heard the confessions of many penitents that night. But, believing himself suspended, on December 26 he applied to the archbishop for a renewal, before retreating in great distress to Borgo San Martino (in the diocese of Casale). Don Bosco truly believed that he had been the object of such severe canonical penalty.<sup>55</sup> But there was no canonical suspension, and the archbishop's reply through Canon Chiuso is additional proof of that.<sup>56</sup>

The incident, however, caused anger and consternation in Salesian circles. The fiery Father John Bonetti, having learned of the occurrence from Don Bosco at Borgo San Martino, complained to the pope directly, decrying "the unjustifiable measure of suspending this worthy priest from hearing confessions ..., a punishment usually given only to priests of scandalous conduct." And, referring to Gastaldi's hostile behavior, he dared ask the pope "to take more effective action to put an end to such a great evil."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> For the story, cf. *EBM* XI, 449-459. Don Bosco's letter to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 26, 1875 reflects Don Bosco's conviction that there had been a suspension: "I respectfully implore you to let me know the reason (...) in order that I may make amends for any fault I may be guilty of" (p. 451f.).

<sup>56</sup> Canon Chiuso to Don Bosco, December 27, 1875 (*EBM* XI, 456): "Your faculties for confession are still valid ... These faculties would never have expired, had you done at the proper time what is customary in such instances."

<sup>57</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Pope Pius IX, December 28, 1875 (*EBM* XI, 453-454).

It is hard to see clearly into this murky affair. Fr. Rua's failure to notify Don Bosco is puzzling; but so is the chancery's handling of the matter. Was it a simple oversight? Or was it a spiteful gesture designed to let the "rebellious" founder know who wielded the authority in the diocese? If so, while Don Bosco was indeed made to suffer humiliation, the chancery and the archbishop himself must be held responsible for what can only be described as an outrageous maneuver.

Don Bosco feared that if the "suspension" was given publicity the question of morals would be raised in his regard. Fortunately several months went by before the anticlerical press got wind of what had happened. And again fortunately, the *Lanterna del Ficcanaso* [the Meddler's Lantern] was the only tabloid to report Don Bosco's "suspension." It lauded the archbishop for putting Don Bosco in his place.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps the "suspension" was too private a matter to have reached the wider public. But by the end of 1875 relations had soured to the point that the rift had become common knowledge. The daily *L'Opinione* of Rome carried a dispatch from its Turin correspondent that spoke of Don Bosco as the only priest in Turin who had the gumption to stand up to the authoritarian archbishop.<sup>59</sup>

The satirical sheet *Il Fischietto* [The Whistle] was even bolder in its jabs at the two protagonists:

<sup>58</sup> "The midnight train. Don Bosco in Rome," *La Lanterna del Ficcanaso*, May 6, 1876: "Newspapers have thus far failed to publish an interesting bit of news. The so-called *Holy Man of Valdocco*, that hypocritical and fearless hunter of bequests, known to the duped populace by the name of *Father John Bosco*, was *suspended a divinis* by Archbishop Gastaldi. It is true! For once the archbishop deserves to be commended: he has done his duty." According to this paper, Don Bosco had journeyed to Rome to have the suspension lifted! (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 271, note 57). The same paper returned to the subject in its issue of October 9-10, 1876, "Don Bosco and the Archbishop:" "The *official* reason behind the suspension is this: Like the true scoundrel that he is, Don Bosco uses the confessional to frighten and intimidate the old dotards and the addled-brained old bags who confess to him. What he is after is their estates, whole or in part ... But the *real* reason is the power Don Bosco has acquired in Turin, a power greater perhaps than that of Archbishop Gastaldi—a simple case of professional jealousy ..." (Tuninetti in Traniello, 230).

<sup>59</sup> "Clerical Squabbles, from our correspondent, Turin, October 1, 1875": "The archbishop governs his diocesan empire with a harsh, absolute rule. His priests, as is to be expected, must bow to his will and to his every whim. But one priest, one only, has successfully declared his independence: the Reverend Don Bosco" (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 270, note 55; cf. *Documenti* XV, 282-284 in ASC A064, FDBM 1032 C4-6).

Sounds of battle are heard from the sacristies ... Two formidable opponents, armed to the teeth, are about to enter the list. One answers to the name of Father Revalenta and specializes in butting. The other poses as a great miracle-worker, and is popularly known as Don Bosco, *sive Dominus Lignus*. The contest between these two *giants* is of the utmost seriousness. Don Bosco, fully relying on Vatican support, refuses to bow to Father Revalenta's authority. Much like Italy in 1848, he is declaring his independence. Father Revalenta on the contrary fully intends to subdue the rebellious miracle worker, and has sworn to press forward till he succeeds. The clash is imminent. Let's see who will be the first to fall. Both are strong—at least in wringing legacies from people on their deathbed.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Gastaldi's Threatened Resignation<sup>61</sup>

Archbishop Gastaldi had been a favorite target of the anticlerical newspapers since his accession in late 1871. The attacks and the vilification never slackened in the years that followed. This put great pressure on him and added to the mounting cares created by his temperament and his policies. His harsh rule and despotic ways had turned a part the clergy against him.

And then there was Don Bosco. The archbishop's chief complaints in this regard are worth recalling. At the core of his thinking was his deep conviction relating to the dignity and authority of the episcopal office and the rights and duties of an ordinary as specified by the Council of Trent and in recent trends in canonical practice. It was the bishop's chief duty to ensure clergy formation, to regulate ecclesiastical discipline, and to provide outstanding pastoral care in the diocese and the parishes. Much of Gastaldi's chagrin with regard to Don Bosco arose out of a perception that the latter's ideas and action conflicted or interfered with these objectives. Don Bosco's continuous recourse to Rome for concessions was perceived by the archbishop as a challenge to his office and authority, and Don Bosco's activities, apparently at

<sup>60</sup> "Around Town" (*Cose del giorno*), *Il Fischietto* (The Whistle), October 14, 1875, n. 123, 1, (Tuninetti in Traniello, 228, cf. *Documenti* XV, 284f., in *ASC* A064, *FDBM* 1032 C6f., cf. also *EBM* XI, 460-469, esp. 465-468). "Revalenta" is a nickname this satirical sheet used for Archbishop Gastaldi. In other articles the name is explained as "*l'uomo del bosco*" (the Man of the Woods, the Wild Man). Caricatures depict him with a simian countenance. These epithets do not seem to refer to any character from the fund of folklore or mask. They were probably just coined by the paper. "*Dominus Lignus*" is a Latin rendering of "Don Bosco". *Lignus* in Latin and *Bosco* in Piedmontese mean "wood."

<sup>61</sup> For this section I am guided in particular by Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 271-274.

variance with the archbishop's policies, were construed as acts of disobedience or even insubordination.

Another old issue, that of the status of the Salesian Society and its constitutions, continued to chafe and increase the archbishop's irritation. The questions he had addressed to Rome on the subject had not yet been answered to his satisfaction. He had recently learned that the constitutions published by Don Bosco differed from the text approved by Rome. It was Attorney Charles Menghini that first alerted him to this discrepancy late in 1875.<sup>62</sup> In December, even as the affair of Don Bosco's "suspension" was reaching its denouement, Gastaldi accused Don Bosco with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for tampering with the constitutions. Attorney Menghini reported Gastaldi's accusation back to Don Bosco. The Holy Father, Menghini added, intended to take the matter up with the archbishop on the latter's next visit to Rome.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Attorney Menghini to Archbishop Gastaldi, November 22, 1875 (*ASC* A109, Persone, Franchetti, *FDBM* 601 A2-4). Charles Menghini, an attorney of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, provided legal services with the Roman congregations for both Gastaldi and Don Bosco. He acted as a "contact" and "informer" for both—a kind of "double agent," but (until replaced) with greater generosity shown toward Don Bosco. His role in the conflict is best described as ambiguous.

<sup>63</sup> Attorney Menghini to Don Bosco, February 7, 1876 (*Documenti* XVI, 135-136, *ASC* A065, *FDBM* 1036 B10-11). As mentioned in Vol. 4, Ch. 6, pp. 211-214 (approval of the Salesian Constitutions, which Gastaldi opposed), in preparing the "official" printed Latin and Italian editions of the constitutions for the confreres, Don Bosco had not been faithful to the approved manuscript text of 1874. Both the galley proofs and the published Latin text (mid or late 1874) show considerable variants relating not only to Latin usage and style, but also to content. Most important among the latter variants was the note introduced into the chapter on the novitiate, to the effect that Pope Pius IX *vivae vocis oraculo* had allowed the novices to be engaged in the work of the Society, setting aside what the Roman Congregation had approved. The "official" printed Italian text (some time in 1875) was a translation neither of the printed Latin text nor of the approved manuscript text. With respect to style and usage it harks back to the earlier Italian tradition of the text (1864). It also features variants with respect to content. Chief among these is the reduction of the chapter on the novitiate from seventeen to seven articles (cf. Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 37-40 and 192-197). These were the facts, but for various reasons the matter was not pursued by Rome. The Salesians continued to read their constitutions as Don Bosco had edited them in 1875 until 1900. At General Chapter VIII (1898) Father Gioachino Berto noticed a discrepancy between the text in use and the approved text of 1874 with regard to the majorities needed for the election of major superiors. As a consequence of this "revelation" and of the research that followed, Fr. Rua had the authentic Latin text of the constitutions printed in 1900. The Italian translation followed in 1903.

To make matters worse, in spite of numerous letters and memorandums addressed to the Roman authorities against Don Bosco, Gastaldi had received little satisfaction. He felt that the Roman congregations, and the Holy Father himself, were not giving him the support he had hoped for. Driven by mounting exasperation, the archbishop took a drastic action—he threatened to resign. He hinted at such a possibility in a letter of March 20, 1876 to Cardinal Bizzarri, in which he strongly objected to Don Bosco's renewed efforts to obtain "privileges that conflict with the rights of episcopal authority." He lodged complaints against Don Bosco for his "spirit of *independence*, or more nearly, *superiority* ... that has also taken root among his followers—a situation which only increases the worries and troubles that already daily assail me in this vast archdiocese." He made an impassioned, almost desperate plea for support from the Holy See for an archbishop who is already "totally stripped of all civil dignity, ... reviled, derided, mocked, and insulted daily by almost all the Turin newspapers, because ... of his very loyalty to the Holy See." He closed with the words: "If more privileges are to be granted to the Salesian Congregation here in Turin to the detriment of my jurisdiction, then [Rome] should at least await my demise ..., or allow me time to resign from this office ..."<sup>64</sup>

On April 3 he declared his "intention and desire to resign" to the pope; and he gave Don Bosco's conduct toward him and the failure of the Holy See to support him as the chief reasons. He wrote:

I have to deal at close quarters with a priest who has indeed done much good in my diocese, but who also has done and is doing much harm to my administration by running me down with priests and people within my diocese and with the bishops of neighboring dioceses. Now he is about to gain new privileges; and I have no desire to tangle with him any further ... I also perceive that the Church's central authority does not place in me the trust that I must have as an indispensable prerequisite for the fulfillment of my duties.<sup>65</sup>

On April 5, 1876, Don Bosco arrived in Rome for a stay of over one month, and there he first learned of the archbishop's threatened resignation. One of the reasons for this trip was to obtain more privileges from Pius IX.

<sup>64</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Ferrieri, March 24 [20], 1876 (*EBM* XI, 443). Here (as in *IBM*) the date is given as March 24; March 20 is the date given in *Documenti* XVI, 186-187, *ASC* A065, *FDBM* 1037 B1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Pope Pius IX, April 3, 1876 (*IBM* XII, 642-643, Appendix 9, omitted in *EBM*).

He succeeded—thus provoking further protests from Gastaldi. These concessions, subsequently confirmed and even expanded, related to ordinations *extra tempora*, dispensation from testimonial letters for Salesian pupils seeking admission into the Society, the establishment and use of private chapels in Salesian houses, and parish privileges for all Salesian institutes.<sup>66</sup> Gastaldi raised strong objections against this last-mentioned concession, for basic to his program for the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline was the principle that the sacramental life of all the faithful should be centered on the local parish and should be administered by bishop and pastor.<sup>67</sup>

The archbishop was still debating the pros and cons of resigning through the remainder of 1876, and his resignation was still a real possibility in 1877. The anticlerical press got wind that something big was about to break. But the satirical journal *Il Fischietto* (The Whistle) thought it was Don Bosco who intended “to resign,” that is, concede, cut his losses, and move out of Turin—an indication that the press (and the general public) were still trying to piece rumors together and to figure out who would eventually prevail.<sup>68</sup>

Toward the end of January 1877 Archbishop Gastaldi, accompanied by Father Joseph Soldati, rector of the seminary, journeyed to Rome for his *ad*

<sup>66</sup> For Don Bosco activities in Rome, cf. *EBM* XII, 127-156. “Realizing that the Holy See would not grant him privileges en masse, he had to wrest them a few at a time” (*Ibid.* 127). For various papal briefs granting and expanding privileges, cf. *IBM* XII, 646-647, Appendices 11 and 12; *IBM* XII, 675-677, Appendices 35 and 36 (all omitted in *EBM*); cf. also Don Bosco to Fr. Cagliari, Rome, April 27, 1876 (*Ceria, Epistolario* III, 51).

<sup>67</sup> “Episcopal authority,” so Gastaldi wrote to Attorney Menghini, “will suffer greatly and church life will be seriously disrupted by such a concession. If young people are allowed to attend catechism, perform their Easter duty, receive Confirmation, etc. in Salesian churches, then a portion of the flock would be withdrawn from the legitimate pastoral care of the parish with grave consequences (Archbishop Gastaldi to Attorney Menghini. May 5, 1876, *IBM* XI, 600-601, Appendix 36, omitted in *EBM*).

<sup>68</sup> “Irreparable Loss (*Una perdita irreparabile*),” *Il Fischietto*, May 23, 1876, # 72 (in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272 and note 61). An excerpt is worth quoting: “Vicious rumors are heard everywhere in the city, in these days of bad weather. One rumor has it that Father Revalenta [Gastaldi], much angered by Don Bosco’s *omnipotent* attitude, has been pursuing him with such ruthless determination that the man may be forced to leave the fair shores of the Dora and the Po, perhaps for good. The conflict ... has taken on such alarming proportions that the Holy Shack (*Santa Baracca*) of Rome has had to intervene ... Let’s not fool ourselves, it seems that *Dominus Lignus* [Don Bosco] has had enough of Father Revalenta’s persecution, and there is a real chance this time that he will leave us *for good*. What irreparable loss that would be for us! Who will perform the miracles if the miracle worker has flown? ... But one can’t really blame him. If Father Revalenta will not rest until he sees him dead, it is inevitable that sooner or later the man will make a getaway”.



*limina* visit—and obviously to deal with questions relating to his own resignation and to Don Bosco. *La Libertà* of Rome commented on the resignation, giving Gastaldi's Rosminianism and his clash with Don Bosco as the reasons:

Archbishop Gastaldi is in Rome, and he is seriously considering resigning from his See. The reasons are his Rosminian position and the charges brought against him before the Roman Congregations by Don Bosco. This priest enjoys the protection of some cardinals and of Pius IX himself, and the archbishop sees him as a competitor and a rival in his diocese.<sup>69</sup>

Following up on the Roman report, the *Gazzetta del Popolo* of Turin announced the archbishop's resignation for a fact, and added:

Gastaldi ... thought he could spar with Don Bosco, but down he went. While in Rome, he has delivered his ultimatum to the Vatican. Either he is recognized as master in his own house, that is, his diocese, and is allowed to squelch Don Bosco's attempts at usurpation, or he resigns. The Vatican has accepted his resignation.<sup>70</sup>

*Il Fischietto* [The Whistle], which never missed an opportunity to revile the Church, was not to be outdone. It asks mockingly: "If Father Revalenta [Gastaldi] leaves us (God forbid!), what will become of us? ... One trembles at the very thought!" And it goes on to explain that the real reason for the Vatican's displeasure was not the archbishop's Rosminian leanings, but his clash with Don Bosco, "a holy war aimed at eliminating the opposition."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> "A Bishop Resigns," *La Libertà*, January 30, 1877 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272; mention in *EBM* XIII, 12-13, note 20). Gastaldi held strong Rosminian opinions, gave a Rosminian orientation to seminary studies in the archdiocese, and defended the philosopher under attack by the Jesuits and under Roman censure. His well-known Rosminianism was obviously "a strike against him" in Rome. Gastaldi was in fact admonished (for a detailed discussion cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 307-329).

<sup>70</sup> "The Archbishop of Turin," *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, January 31, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 50; mention in *EBM* XIII, 13, note 20). The *Gazzetta* continued to carry the story and to harp on the conflict. The defrocked priest Anthony Bertetti wrote: "Here are two saints, experts both in relieving people of their money for the greater glory of God. For the same greater glory one, Gastaldi, wants to enforce his authority by the rod, ... while the other, a good amateur in his own right, piously professes his independence" ("Archbishop Gastaldi's Troubles," in *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, February 4, 1877, # 35, 1, in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272 and note 64).

<sup>71</sup> "Our Diocese is in Danger," *Il Fischietto*, February 3, 1877, # 15 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 273 and note 65). An accompanying caricature showed Gastaldi and Don Bosco in a wrestling match. Portrayed with simian features, stripped to the waist, and showing strong biceps,



What passed between Pius IX and Gastaldi in the official *ad limina* audience cannot, of course, be known. Apparently the archbishop withdrew his threatened resignation. But under the circumstances the archbishop's trip to Rome fed all kinds of rumors. The matter had become public knowledge, and tension ran high in the diocese both among both clergy and laity. It was obviously to allay fears and unfounded expectations that on February 4 Gastaldi addressed a pastoral letter to his diocese on the Roman trip. It emerged that the archbishop had changed his mind.<sup>72</sup>

It was not long before the *Gazzetta del Popolo* gave its readers the "facts" in the case:

Lawrence Gastaldi, as you may know, has decided to accept the martyrdom of continuing as archbishop. He has pointed out to the pope the words written on the Cross, *I. N. R. I.*, and interpreted the acronym as meaning, "I shall Never Resign, not I" (*Io Non Rinunzierò In eterno*). The pope was dumbfounded. But we are not at all surprised. We have no information as yet on Don Bosco's reaction. Meanwhile His Phony Excellency is back, and justifies his return by claiming conveniently to have been recalled by popular demand.<sup>73</sup>

The "popular demand" was in the form of letters of congratulation and solidarity from various ecclesiastical bodies (Metropolitan Chapter, the theological faculty, College of Pastors, etc.) and from individual priests. These were published, and the *Gazzetta del Popolo* was quick to notice the absence of Don Bosco's name from the official list.

We sifted through the various expressions of support addressed to Gastaldi by the institutes of the Turinese clergy. We looked in vain for one from Don Bosco and from his religious family. And yet this would have been the one significant document, in view of this priest's notorious relationship to Pope Pius ... As

Gastaldi is lying on the mat, apparently taken down by Don Bosco. The caption reads: "In spite of feeding on *revalenta* and of his mighty, bulging muscles, the *Man of the Woods* [Gastaldi] has taken a fall in his all-out struggle with the miracle-worker of Valdocco." (*Revalenta* is this paper's nickname for Gastaldi, but here perhaps it stands for *polenta*, corn grits.)

<sup>72</sup> "Report on the Roman Trip of January 1877," *Lettere Pastorali*, 353ff. (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 273, note 67).

<sup>73</sup> "The Archbishop's Pockets," *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, February 25, 1877, # 56 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272, note 64). The newspaper pursued the subject again in its March issues, at one point addressing the pope directly: "Pius, if there is any mettle left in you, do us a big favor: take away our Gastaldi and make him cardinal. You are the only one who can do this and shut him up for good" (*Ibid*).

long as Don Bosco himself does not give the lie to the rumors that are abroad, the other expressions of support are a laughing matter.”<sup>74</sup>

Actually Don Bosco did respond with an amicable letter (which the archbishop acknowledged, but which was not made public). He wrote: “On behalf of myself and of all Salesians, I am happy to join [the clergy] in expressing our deep esteem and veneration ... Please accept our heartfelt sentiments; may they help give the lie to rumors spread by a hostile press ...”<sup>75</sup>

In his “*Letter to the Clergy*” published in the liturgical calendar for 1878, Gastaldi wrote (in Latin):

First of all We wish to render heartfelt thanks to you for your unanimous and solemn demonstration of respect and of love. I am referring to the moral support you gave Us in the months of March and April past, when disturbing reports reached you from Rome. Some people in the Eternal City thought that the clergy and people of the diocese of Turin were disaffected toward their archbishop, and that the archbishop was thinking of resigning on that account.<sup>76</sup>

He goes on to list various expressions of support received from diocesan and religious groups, but makes no mention of the Salesians or of the Jesuits. He concludes, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas: “The office of bishop is a kind of martyrdom.”

The expressions of solidarity just mentioned were really no spontaneous “plebiscite.” It is in fact believed that they were orchestrated by Gastaldi himself from Rome and solicited in Turin by the vicar general Canon Joseph Zappata. This is confirmed by a report to the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal John Simeoni, by Monsignor John Tortone, Vatican *chargé d'affaires* in Turin, dated March 19, 1877. He had been asked to investigate accusations made anonymously in Rome against Gastaldi. The latter was accused of wanting to enforce policies tending to set aside the doctrine of St. Alphonsus and to reintroduce the old cesaro-papalism of the university, of defending Rosmini’s philosophy, of public hostile actions against Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation. All of this was at variance with Roman positions and smacked of Jansenism. This was the brief against Gastaldi. By his letter of March 19, Tortone reported that after discreet inquiries he had been able

<sup>74</sup> Cf. “Don Bosco’s Silence ...,” *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, April 29, 1877, # 118 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 273, note 69).

<sup>75</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, March 28, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 161).

<sup>76</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272, note 67.

to learn that the demonstrations of support had been solicited through an initiative of Gastaldi himself. Gastaldi had learned of his own clergy's deep dissatisfaction from a cardinal and had thus attempted to dispel this notion in Rome by getting his vicar general to organize the show of support. This may indeed have been meant as a public recognition of the dignity of the archiepiscopal office, but not (as authorities in Rome had feared) as a conferral of approval on the archbishop's theories, policies and actions. Tortone wrote in conclusion:

If he does not adopt more objective and more prudent ways of governing this archdiocese, these outward expressions of support will not avail to quell the complaints arising from every category of the clergy. These are occasioned by arbitrary decisions on his part, by his precipitate actions, by his inexperience in the government of this diocese, and especially by his ill-advised innovation relating to the teaching of moral theology, which everyone has criticized.<sup>77</sup>

By February 1877, then, Gastaldi's threatened resignation had been withdrawn. But he, and everyone else who considered the matter, whether friend or foe, knew that the root causes that had forced him to even consider such a step remained. Chief among these was his conflict with Don Bosco. At the end of February, Archbishop Gastaldi had a short pamphlet printed and distributed to cardinals in Rome, entitled, *The Archbishop of Turin and the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in Turin*.<sup>78</sup> By it the archbishop hoped to refute the accusations made against him, that he harbored malevolent intentions toward the Salesians. The pamphlet listed the many tokens of benevolence the archbishop had shown to Don Bosco and his congregation from 1848 to 1877. Don Bosco saw no need to respond.

Such an apologia, however, did not signal any let-up in the struggle. The remainder of 1877 continued to be filled with strife resulting in deeper wounds.

<sup>77</sup> Representative Tortone to the Holy See, March 19, 1877 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 273-274, note 69, citing the document from the *Secret Vatican Archives*). In an earlier letter (February 2, 1877), Representative Tortone stated that Gastaldi had indeed confided to a trusted friend that he intended to resign, and that the chief reason was Don Bosco's opposition, and added: "Archbishop Gastaldi possesses deep learning, is animated by genuine piety and driven by untiring zeal. With such qualities he could be a great bishop, if only these were accompanied by comparable prudence, patience and gentleness." He also mentioned that the clergy complained about his "too frequent recourse to suspension *a divinis*" (*Ibid*).

<sup>78</sup> *L'Arcivescovo di Torino e la Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales in Torino* (*Documenti* XVIII, 86-88, ASC A067, FDBM 1046 A9-11; briefly in *EBM* XIII, 249-250).

## 5. Don Bosco's Publication of Graces of Mary Help of Christians

The next clash occurred over two pamphlets written by Don Bosco to publicize graces obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians: *Mary Help of Christians* (a reissue, first published in 1875) and *The Little Cloud of Mt. Carmel*.<sup>79</sup> The first pamphlet had been published in Turin with ecclesiastical approbation. The latter pamphlet, however, had been printed in the newly established print shop at Sampierdarena, in the diocese of Genoa, with that chancery's *imprimatur*, since Don Bosco had been having trouble with obtaining the *imprimatur* in Turin. The archbishop objected especially to the publication of this pamphlet outside the archdiocese, for he claimed for himself and his chancery the right to judge the authenticity of miracles reported as taking place at a church in his own diocese.<sup>80</sup> Don Bosco's responded without delay, pointing out that he had merely transcribed the reports, had carefully avoided the labels, "miracle" and "supernatural," and had merely followed the style of the Lives of the Saints, and done what was being done at other shrines and in their publications (La Salette, Lourdes). Ceria remarks that the Archbishop was not satisfied with this explanation, and that the argument continued for some time.

The archbishop had a notice published in the *Emporio popolare* (People's Book Buyers' Guide) to the effect that this publication (*The Little Cloud*) carried a "foreign" *imprimatur*. In the *Monita* (Reminders) of the liturgical calendar for 1878, he laid down stricter provisions with regard to this and related matters.<sup>81</sup>

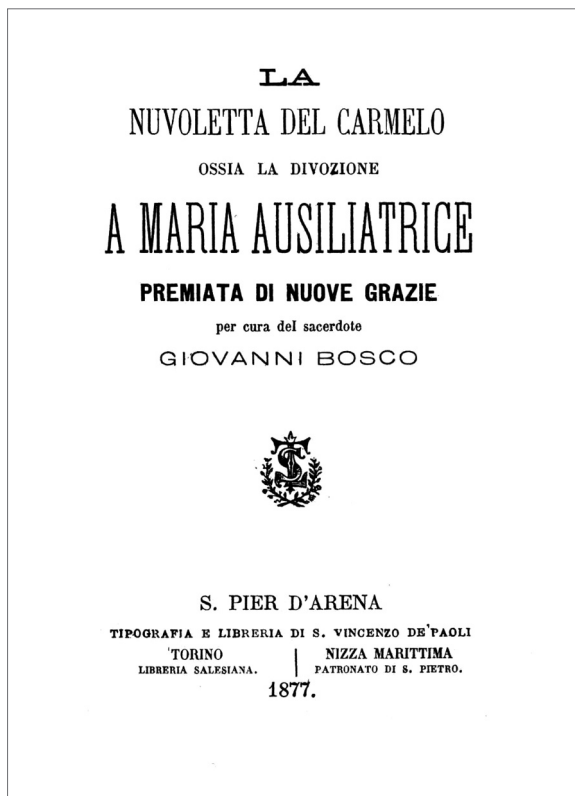
There was also at work in the dispute an underlying difference in attitude regarding the "miraculous" in the two men. Archbishop Gastaldi was trying to discourage the kind of hagiography and popular religiosity purveyed in

<sup>79</sup> *Maria Ausiliatrice col racconto di alcune grazie ottenute nel primo settennio dalla Consacrazione della Chiesa a Lei dedicata in Torino*, per cura del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino: Tipografia e Libreria dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1875), published in *Letture Cattoliche* 23:9 (September 1875), reissued in 1877, text in *Opere Edite* XXVI, 304-623; *La Nuvoletta del Carmelo ossia la divozione a Maria Ausiliatrice premiata di nuove grazie*, per cura del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (S. Pier D'Arena: Tipografia e Libreria di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli, 1877), published in *Letture Cattoliche* 25:5 (May 1877); text in *Opere Edite* XXVIII, 449-565.

<sup>80</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Don Bosco, May 17, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 142, ASC A067, FDBM 1047 A5).

<sup>81</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, May 18, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 175-176, EBM XI, 421-426; XIII, 282-284).

such publications as the *Catholic Readings*. His university education made him personally more critical as well as more sensitive to the ridicule that the liberals heaped upon “religious credulity.” Don Bosco, on the contrary, could look upon these “graces” with the untroubled faith of an earlier age.



30 – Frontispiece of the pamphlet “La Nuvoletta del Carmelo” (The Little Cloud of Mt. Carmel) in the Sampierdarena edition (1877)

## 6. Archbishop Frederick Aneyros’ Visit (July 1-July 17)<sup>82</sup>

Another unpleasant episode concerned none other than Archbishop Federico Aneyros of Buenos Aires. He arrived in Italy with a retinue of fifteen people on June 1 for a fairly extended visit, and Don Bosco acted as his host

<sup>82</sup> EBM XIII, 102-103, 106-118 (story of the visit in detail).

and guide till the middle of July when the prelate embarked at Marseilles for Argentina.

After visits and appropriate receptions in Rome and other cities, Archbishop Aneyros spent a few days in Turin, the honored guest of the Salesians. But the way Archbishop Gastaldi and his chancery treated the distinguished visitor can only be described as “shabby.” Archbishop Gastaldi, on Don Bosco’s request, gave the visitor permission to hold a pontifical Mass in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, and then revoked it the following day, due to a conflict with his own pontifical service in the cathedral. Archbishop Aneyros called at the archiepiscopal palace twice to pay his respects. The first time Gastaldi was not available; the second time he had gone to his country house. To make amends, Gastaldi invited Aneyros (“alone”) to dine with him at lunch. The Archbishop’s secretary delivered the invitation, but not directly; instead he handed it to an Oratory boy for delivery and departed. At this lack of courtesy, Archbishop Aneyros, pleading “previous commitments”, declined the invitation. It was all very distressing. In letters to Father Cagliero and Father Lasagna Don Bosco gave his missionaries an account of the visit, successful in all other respects. He, however, expressed his disappointment with Archbishop Gastaldi’s inexplicable, or perhaps all too explicable, behavior.<sup>83</sup>

## **7. Former Diocesan Seminarian Father Angelo Maria Rocca**

At this same time another regrettable episode occurred involving Father Angelo Maria Rocca, and an old wound was reopened. In 1873, Angelo Rocca had incurred the archbishop’s displeasure for leaving (or being dismissed from?) the diocesan seminary. Don Bosco had likewise incurred Gastaldi’s ire for harboring the “fugitive” in the Salesian house of Lanzo. We have conflicting statements regarding the manner in which Rocca left the seminary. The chancery first claimed that Rocca had left the seminary “against the Archbishop’s wishes;” later that he had been dismissed from the seminary, as we learn from Canon Francis Maffei, the secretary who handled the Rocca affair for the archbishop.<sup>84</sup> Don Bosco maintained instead that he had left the semi-

<sup>83</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Cagliero, June 30 and to Fr. Lasagna, July 16, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 194-195 and 198-200; to Fr. Cagliero *EBM* XIII, 114-115).

<sup>84</sup> Canon Maffei to Fr. Rua, November 9, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 274-275), and Canon Maffei to Don Bosco, December 4, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 396-397 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1051 B7-8).

nary because of illness, had been given a few weeks' convalescence at Lanzo, then went back to his family, and later joined the Salesians.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, as Don Bosco later had occasion to state emphatically, testimonials had been requested several times and had been denied—a claim that the archbishop rejected.<sup>86</sup> Father Rocca himself substantiated this last point in a letter to Father Ceria.<sup>87</sup> Eventually, Rocca joined the Salesians (without obtaining testimonial letters) and was ordained by Bishop Salvaj of Alessandria in 1876 (by virtue of the decree of January 25, 1848, see footnote 86 above).

The newly ordained priest wished to celebrate Mass in his hometown of Rivara, a parish of the archdiocese of Turin, on the feast of St. John the Baptist, patron of the town (on June 24, 1877). When the pastor requested the archbishop's permission, as Rocca himself explains,<sup>88</sup> the chancery demanded information regarding his theological studies, religious profession, ordination, etc. The reply was found unsatisfactory, and he was forbidden to celebrate Mass in the diocese. Nevertheless, he later took it upon himself to offer Mass in an oratory which Don Bosco had allowed (on the strength of the privilege of private chapel for Salesian houses) to be set up in the Rocca family's home, part of which had been deeded to the Salesians [I]. The matter surfaced at the beginning of November, and the chancery was quick to react and point out the irregularity of the celebration and of Rocca's very position as a Salesian priest.<sup>89</sup> Don Bosco's explanations (if any were at all possible under the circumstances), delivered in the already quoted strong letter of November 22 (first paragraph, cf. footnote 86 above), were rejected. In replying the Archbishop wrote, "The best thing you can do is to come before your

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIII, 275.

<sup>86</sup> Don Bosco to Gastaldi, November 22, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 279-281). In this strong letter (which could not but anger the archbishop) Don Bosco explicitly wrote: "I cannot let go unchallenged the charge ... that I admitted into the Congregation without testimonials a seminarian (now Father Angelo Rocca) who had been dismissed from the respected seminary of Turin. Permit me, Your Excellency, to remind you that five distinct requests for testimonials were made by the seminarian Rocca himself; once more they were requested by Father Rua, and once also by me, and we were never able to obtain them. As a result, following the instructions of the Sacred Congregation [of Bishops and Regulars] of January 25, 1848 (*Collectanea*, 891) we had recourse to a higher authority" (final paragraph of the letter).

<sup>87</sup> Fr. Rocca to Fr. Ceria, March 4, 1931 (*EBM* XIII, 289, note 26, emend date).

<sup>88</sup> Fr. Rocca to Fr. Rua, November 7, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 363 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1050 D10).

<sup>89</sup> Maffei to Rua, November 9, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 274-275).



archbishop moved only by humility and charity.”<sup>90</sup> Later Canon Maffei was instructed to write to Don Bosco in sternest terms:

In your letter of May 29, 1873 you wrote of Rocca: “Seminarian Rocca has not been admitted either as a member of our Congregation, or as a diocesan seminarian, but *solely* as a patient for a few weeks’ convalescence at the Lanzo school. This was granted him under the explicit condition that he obtain written permission of his ecclesiastical superior [if he wished to apply for the Society].” Obviously when a seminarian deserves to be dismissed from the seminary, he is certainly unfit for a religious congregation ... Your reassurance led His Excellency to assume that Rocca had left the Salesians. Only recently did he discover to his surprise that Rocca is now a priest, ordained who knows by whom? Furthermore, Father Rocca believes he has the privilege not only of a private chapel but of a portable altar as well ...”<sup>91</sup>

The Rocca affair and the bitter and tortuous arguments it evoked clearly show that by the end of 1877 a meeting of the minds was no longer possible. And perhaps the clearest indication that the point of no return was not far off is the fact that each of the parties was willing to stretch the truth, even if only for argument’s sake.

## 8. Father John Perenchio and Father Joseph Lazzero<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile an even more serious clash was taking place. It involved Father John Perenchio, a priest of the diocese of Ivrea (where Louis Moreno was bishop) and by association the vice-director of the Oratory, Father Joseph Lazzero—and, of course, Don Bosco himself.

### *Initial Events*

Father John Perenchio arrived in Turin on August 3, 1877 with the intention of joining the Salesian Society and was quickly admitted as an aspirant

<sup>90</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Don Bosco, November 23, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 281, excerpt).

<sup>91</sup> Letter of December 4, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 396-397, in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1051 B7-8; without date in *EBM* XIII, 288-289; cf. also letter of November 9, *EBM* XIII, 274-275).

<sup>92</sup> The story is told in detail (together with that of Father Rocca, as related above) in *EBM* XIII, 250-282.

(or novice?). Bishop Moreno (an “enemy” of Don Bosco’s over the ownership of the *Catholic Readings*) suspended him *a divinis* and sent the document to the Turin chancery, asking that it be served to him personally. The delivery of the decree, however, was put off, and an epistolary exchange followed between Canon Hyacinth Chiaverotti acting for the archbishop and Father Lazzero.<sup>93</sup> In response to the chancery’s expostulations, the latter admitted that Father Perenchio had been at the Oratory for some time and had been permitted (on the word of an associate parish priest who was accompanying him) to celebrate Mass. He had asked to become a Salesian, and steps were being taken to obtain the testimonial letters from his bishop.

*The Archbishop’s Letter of August 24 and the Salesians’ Response*

The crucial pressure point was the letter of August 24, 1877 to Father Rua, written (according to Fr. Chiaverotti’s later statement) under dictation from the archbishop himself.<sup>94</sup> It set the course of the disputes that followed. The letter made three distinct points: (1) It restrained Father Perenchio from saying Mass; (2) It questioned the validity of Father Perenchio’s admission into the Society without his bishop’s testimonial letters; (3) It stated that “neither Father Perenchio nor any professed member” might celebrate Mass in churches other than those of the Society without the ordinary’s permission.<sup>95</sup> This revived long-standing issue relating to the harboring of “foreign” clerics by Don Bosco and their admission to the Society without their ordinary’s consent, and the unusually worded prohibition regarding “any professed member” practically drove the contestants to the brink.

First of all, then, Father Perenchio received a restraining order forbidding him to celebrate Mass. Thus, even though (as he later stated<sup>96</sup>) he had never been served the decree of suspension, he was nonetheless asked by Father

<sup>93</sup> In writing to Canon Chiaverotti, Father Lazzero speaks of Father Perenchio as a novice (Letter of August 25, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 253). In a statement submitted to the chancery in Don Bosco’s name, Father Rua states that Father Perenchio “has been admitted as an aspirant to the Congregation” (September 7, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 259). In writing to Cardinal Ferrieri, Don Bosco speaks of Father Perenchio as “having been received into the Salesian Congregation” (Letter of September 14, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 255). In practice, under the circumstances, it made no difference.

<sup>94</sup> Fr. Chiaverotti’s statement, reported in *EBM* XIII, 258.

<sup>95</sup> Fr. Chiaverotti to Fr. Rua, August 24, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 211 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1048 B2; excerpts in *EBM* XIII, 250-252).

<sup>96</sup> Fr. Perenchio’s statement, quoted in *EBM* XIII, 277-278.

Lazzero to desist from celebrating. He was then quickly transferred from Turin to Sampierdarena (Genoa).<sup>97</sup>

Secondly, the letter raised again the thorny question of the testimonial letters required for admission of a novice into a religious congregation. Perenchio was branded as an irregular novice for not having obtained the required testimonial letters from his ordinary (and “enemy”), Bishop Moreno of Ivrea. As in seminarian Rocca’s case, so here also Don Bosco later assured Cardinal Ferrieri that testimonial letters had been requested and denied. He wrote: “[Father Perenchio’s] ordinary was asked for a testimonial letter, but he did not see fit to grant it or even to send a reply. I then [informed] the Sacred Congregation [of Bishops and Regulars], in compliance with the papal decree of January 25, 1848.”<sup>98</sup>

In this respect it should be recalled that Don Bosco had obtained a *viva-vocis-oraculo* dispensation from Pius IX in this matter. Don Bosco’s statement to Cardinal Ferrieri is unambiguous: Pius IX had first granted a limited dispensation with regard to Salesian pupils who wished to enter the Society, and had subsequently extended the privilege generally. Both concessions had been recorded with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.<sup>99</sup> Apparently, however, the concessions notwithstanding, Archbishop Gastaldi, and for that matter the Prefect of the Roman Congregation, Cardinal Ferrieri, demanded that the canonical prescription be followed without exception. We have here a further instance of conflicting positions: papal privilege favoring Don Bosco over against the Roman Congregation’s canonical practice supporting episcopal authority. It is in this context (it would seem) that Cardinal Ferrieri’s reply to Don Bosco should be interpreted:

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIII, 252.

<sup>98</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Ferrieri, October 12, 1877 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 227-229, *EBM* XIII, 266-268). The September 7 statement, already cited (*EBM* XIII, 259, cf. footnote 93 above), is nearly identical: “In conformity with the prescriptions of the Holy See, it was thought advisable to request a testimonial letter from Father Perenchio’s bishop, who did not see fit to issue one. This is to notify Your Excellency in accordance with the decree *Regulari Disciplinae* of January 25, 1848.” Bishop Moreno’s enduring opposition to Don Bosco (a matter of record) may explain his refusal to issue testimonial letters for a priest who, in his view, had deserted and had joined the “enemy.” However, Father Perenchio had already been suspended *a divinis*, which would obviously negate the giving of testimonials. Why then was he suspended? Was it for wanting to become a Salesian, or (as the decree apparently stated) because “he was guilty of misdeeds?” (*EBM* XIII, 251).

<sup>99</sup> For Don Bosco’s statement to Cardinal Ferrieri, cf. *EBM* XIII, 257.

This Sacred Congregation can only exact your strict observance of papal decrees [of canon law in force] concerning the admission of candidates to the Salesian Society. You realize how important it is for your institute that applicants present testimonial letters from their respective ordinaries, since they inform you of both good and bad points of said applicants. While your scrupulous adherence to papal decrees on this matter is urged, it is understood that you are not barred from presenting the relevant documents on which you seem to base your conviction that you are dispensed from such observance.<sup>100</sup>

In the case of seminarian Rocca and Father Perenchio, however, Don Bosco had not appealed to this privilege, but (perhaps in order to avoid further irritation) he had requested the testimonial letters, if only as a formality. One way or the other, whether in such cases of admission he obtained testimonials or not, he was covered.

In the third place, and much more seriously, the August 24 letter delivered a prohibition which (misconstrued, though clearly in good faith by Father Lazzero) caused a veritable fracas and much grief to all concerned.

#### *The Fracas of August 26*<sup>101</sup>

The letter stated: "Neither [Father Perenchio] nor any professed member may celebrate Mass in churches which do not strictly belong to the religious order without the ordinary's permission." Father Lazzero took this to mean that henceforth Salesians priests in the archdiocese could no longer supply Masses in the parishes and religious communities they served on Sundays or on weekdays. It is in this sense that he replied to Canon Hyacinth Chiaverotti. It was a cruel and unusual retaliatory measure by the archbishop, but the Salesians would abide by his decision. He added: "I am now hastening to inform ... pastors to make other arrangements."<sup>102</sup> It was Saturday afternoon. He waited till Sunday morning for a reply from the chancery; receiving none, he notified the various churches (parish and religious communities) that the usual Salesian priest would not be available for Mass, unless "a *written* permis-

<sup>100</sup> EBM XIII, 266. These concessions had not been granted by written brief, but verbally (*vivae vocis oraculo*); they had then been notified to (and filed with?) the Roman Congregation (cf. EBM XIII, 297, footnote 98 above).

<sup>101</sup> For the story and related correspondence cf. EBM XIII, 251-274.

<sup>102</sup> Fr. Lazzero to Fr. Chiaverotti, August 25, 1877 (EBM XIII, 252-253).

sion was obtained from the ecclesiastical authorities.”<sup>103</sup> The result was that a large number of the faithful were deprived of Mass that Sunday. The Archbishop would later describe the confusion that took place in the numerous churches where Salesian priests were engaged to celebrate as “bedlam in the sacristies.”<sup>104</sup>

Father Lazzero read the phrase as a general prohibition and no doubt acted in good faith.<sup>105</sup>

But Archbishop Gastaldi obviously never expected his statement to be so interpreted and held Father Lazzero fully responsible and accountable for “the debacle of August 26,” and for the scandal given and the spiritual harm done to the faithful. Consequently, he suspended him from hearing confessions for eighteen days. Salesians who applied for permission to celebrate in accordance with a literal reading of the letter were told that the archbishop had never issued a prohibition in those terms. Some religious communities likewise were told that the Salesians had permission to say Mass if they so desired. Through his vicar general, Canon Joseph Zappata, the archbishop requested that Fr. Chiaverotti’s letter of August 24 be returned, perhaps for the purpose of verifying its exact wording. It was subsequently given back to Father Lazzero—accompanied by a decree suspending him for an indefinite period of time.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *EBM* XIII, 254. Father Lazzero specified that the permission should be in writing as additional insurance.

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum *The Archbishop ...* of October 15, 1877 (to be cited below).

<sup>105</sup> Don Bosco likewise understood the prohibition at face value. In submitting to the Holy Father the memorandum he had addressed to Cardinal Ferrieri earlier, he noted: “The archbishop ... stated ... that his letter had been misread. Yet, anyone who reads it, I think, cannot but perceive it as a genuine prohibition” (*EBM* XIII, 270).

<sup>106</sup> The wording of the prohibition in the letter is certainly obscure; and it would indeed lend itself to a generalized interpretation if understood apart from that special diocesan context. No priest coming from another diocese for whatever reason could celebrate Mass in any church or oratory without presenting his credentials to the archbishop and obtaining permission. Moreover, the archbishop had stringently established the policy in the recent liturgical calendar, that no priest, diocesan or religious, could celebrate Mass or administer the sacraments in churches of the archdiocese without his explicit (not necessarily *written*) permission. This then is how Gastaldi explained the prohibition to Cardinal Ferrieri: “the words ‘neither he nor any professed member, etc.’ were added only to state that, even had Father Perenchio been a *novice* in good standing or a professed member ..., the archbishop could still forbid him to celebrate Mass in churches of the diocese ... But the decree did not cancel any formerly issued, explicit authorization on the strength of which a considerable number of priests had ministered through the years ...” (Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Fer-

The archbishop then demanded an apology for “the enormous blunder” of August 26 either from Father Lazzero, or Father Rua, or Don Bosco. The ultimatum for a written apology came on September 9, 1877: If the Salesians apologized, “the archbishop would consider the distasteful matter closed to his satisfaction; otherwise he would be forced to resort to all necessary means to safeguard his position and authority.” In this letter, Gastaldi conceded that Lazzero had not acted in bad faith; but (he added) “flagrant blunders were committed that, although unintentional, were nevertheless the result of poor judgment and starry-eyed thinking, and thereby compromised the divine authority of the bishop and of the ecclesiastical See.”

In spite of the rhetoric of “divine authority” and its seeming arrogance, the archbishop (in this writer’s view) was offering a realistic way out of the impasse by conceding that it all had been an honest, if stupid, mistake.<sup>107</sup> The Salesian superiors, however, offered no apology, for admitting wrongdoing where in their view there was none seemed unacceptable. In a letter of November 4, 1877, gentle Father Rua did assure Canon Francis Maffei (of the chancery) that the Salesians “were deeply grieved to learn of His Excellency’s vexation caused by last August’s unpleasant incident of the Masses.” Such an avowal, however, was not found acceptable for it fell short of the formal apology requested.<sup>108</sup>

Be that as it may, an apology might have closed the book on this particular episode to the archbishop’s satisfaction, but there were too many unresolved issues and too many continuing situations of conflict for it to have made any difference. The wrangling continued unabated.

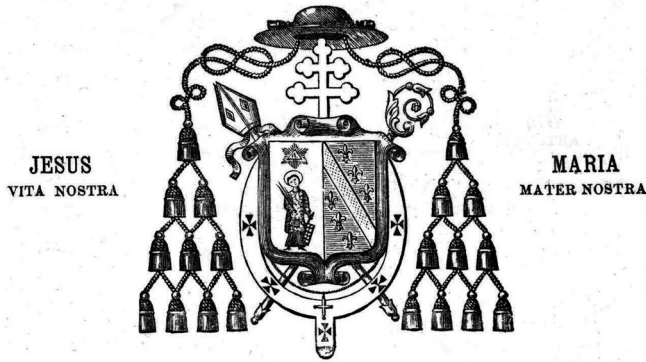
## 9. Appeals and Counter-Appeals

This episode, added to the others that preceded it and accompanied it, occasioned a lively epistolary exchange throughout the latter half of 1877.

rieri, September 19-28, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 236-243 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1048 D3-10; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 257-258).

<sup>107</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Fr. Rua, September 9, 1877 (excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 269-270).

<sup>108</sup> Fr. Rua to Canon Maffei November 4, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 272-273); in reply, Canon Maffei to Fr. Rua, November 23, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 284-285).



# LORENZO GASTALDI

DEL COLLEGIO TORINESE DEI TEOLOGI

PER GRAZIA DI DIO E DELLA SANTA SEDE APOSTOLICA

ARCIVESCOVO DI TORINO

PRELATO DOMESTICO

ED ASSISTENTE AL SOGLIO PONTIFICIO DI S. S.

A tutti i diletteissimi Ecclesiastici e Laici della sua cara Arcidiocesi  
salute e grazia dal Signor Nostro Gesù Cristo.

*Amatissimi Fratelli e Figliuoli,*

Chiamati dalla divina Provvidenza a governare questa antichissima ed illustre Porzione del Gregge di Gesù Cristo nostro Redentore, immediatamente rivolgemmo ogni sollecitudine all'educazione del giovane Clero ed all'incremento de' buoni studi fra gli Ecclesiastici; ed a questo scopo importantissimo, per quanto cel permetteranno le forze, mai non cesseremo dal dirigere le Nostre premure; conciosiachè nella santità e dottrina dei Ministri dell'altare stia la forza e potenza principale della Chiesa di Dio.



Of particular interest are the letters addressed by the protagonists to Cardinal Ferrieri, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars—accusations and appeals by Gastaldi; counter-accusations and counter-appeals by Don Bosco. It was evident at this point that the final act of the drama was to be played out in Rome, though no one at this point could have anticipated the tragic character of its resolution.

Archbishop Gastaldi presented his complaints to the cardinal in three lengthy and detailed letters that drubbed Don Bosco and the Salesians without pity. Besides rehearsing the recent vexing episodes, the archbishop accused Don Bosco and the Salesians of unfairly recruiting young vocations, of harboring “fugitive” clerics, of undermining episcopal authority, of setting up a diocese within a diocese, of running the archbishop down with clergy and people.<sup>109</sup>

Twice warned of these attacks by Cardinal Louis Oreglia (soon to be protector of the Salesian Society), Don Bosco countered with letters of his own. They were feeble in tone by comparison, but they were nonetheless an attempt to “set the record straight” on the recent disagreements.<sup>110</sup> In reply, far from giving Don Bosco any satisfaction, Cardinal Ferrieri (as already mentioned) merely urged him to act in accordance with established canonical procedures.<sup>111</sup> Since Don Bosco kept on citing special privileges received from Pius IX (one of Gastaldi’s constant complaints), Card. Ferrieri finally asked him to submit a complete list of them “so as to aid the eminent cardinals in their review of this grievance.”<sup>112</sup> To view this as a hostile act, as Don Bosco’s biographers do, is perhaps unfair. But it is a fact that among the cardinals Ferrieri was perhaps the most sympathetic to Archbishop Gastaldi’s cause and the least to Don Bosco’s.

The accumulated charges against Don Bosco, with particular emphasis on the Perenchio-Lazzero affair, were the subject matter of a second pamphlet written and published anonymously by the Archbishop on October 15, 1877, for exclusive circulation among Roman cardinals and a select number of bish-

<sup>109</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Ferrieri: [1, 2] August 26, and 31, 1877 (*ASC* A114 Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 659 B5-8 and 9-11; brief excerpts in *EBM* XIII, 254); [3] September 19-28, 1877, mighty letter already cited above (*Documenti* XVIII, 236-243 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1050 B8-C7; brief excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 257-258).

<sup>110</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Ferrieri, September 14 and October 12, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 255-256 and 266-268).

<sup>111</sup> Card. Ferrieri to Don Bosco, October 10, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 266).

<sup>112</sup> Cardinal Ferrieri to Don Bosco, November 14, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 276).

ops. It was entitled, *The Archbishop of Turin and the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales*.<sup>113</sup> Don Bosco's extended reply, consisting of thirty-two observations, was not late in coming.<sup>114</sup> But by letter of November 25 the archbishop defied Don Bosco to write, or have anyone write, anything further against him that was not addressed to higher authority in Rome—this, under threat of suspension from hearing confessions.<sup>115</sup>

Even as these exchanges were in progress, the saintly Father Robert Murialdo, in a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi, offered to act as mediator in the dispute. A little later the Jesuit theologian, Father Louis Testa, discussed the possibility of a mediation with Gastaldi's trusted adviser, Father Felix Carpinano of the Congregation of the Oratory. Neither initiative ever advanced beyond the proposal stage.<sup>116</sup>

At the beginning of 1878 both Gastaldi and Don Bosco were in Rome at the time of Pius IX's death and Leo XIII's succession, trying to further their cause with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Back in Turin, on Attorney Menghini's advice, the Archbishop wrote to Father Thomas Tosa, O.P., an attorney of the same Congregation, to inquire about the status of the Salesian Society and to sound him out on various other issues. Fr. Tosa's reply specified: (1) that the Salesian Congregation, since its definitive approval in 1874, enjoyed the basic privilege of immunity from episcopal jurisdiction with regard to its internal regimen, in spite of the fact that the body of traditional privileges had not yet been extended to it; (2) that, without a special privilege, testimonial letters must be obtained for entering religious life, but that an ordinary may not deny them to a worthy applicant, whether layman or priest, for the Church upholds personal freedom with respect to religious vocation; (3) that the "absolute wording" of the letter leading to the disorders of August 26 "at first sight" justified the

<sup>113</sup> *L'arcivescovo di Torino e la Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales* (detta perciò salesiana). Stampato riservato per gli eminentissimi cardinali ed alcuni arcivescovi e vescovi [The Archbishop of Turin and the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales (hence commonly called Salesian). Presentation printed exclusively for the most eminent cardinals and for some archbishops and bishops] (Torino: Marietti, 1877), Documenti XVIII, 337-348 in ASC A067, FDBM 1052 A5-B4; excerpt in EBM XIII, 269. This eleven-page pamphlet dealt chiefly with the grievances pertaining to the year 1877.

<sup>114</sup> Don Bosco as in *Documenti* XVIII, 349-354 in ASC A067, FDBM 1052 B5-10.

<sup>115</sup> EBM XIII, 285-286.

<sup>116</sup> Fr. R. Murialdo to Archbishop Gastaldi, September 18; Fr. Testa to Don Bosco, September 29, 1877 (EBM XIII, 261-265).

interpretation given to it by the Salesians. In conclusion Fr. Tosa exhorted the archbishop to act on his suggestions (he had apparently outlined terms for a reconciliation) and make peace.<sup>117</sup>

But meanwhile another incident had occurred which gave new impetus to the conflict. At the beginning of December 1877, as if in answer to Gastaldi's memorandum to the cardinals and his threats of suspension, there appeared the first anonymous anti-Gastaldi pamphlet, the so-called *Salesian Cooperator's Letter*, for which naturally the Salesians were immediately held responsible.<sup>118</sup> It was but the first in a series of anonymous pamphlets written against the archbishop. These pamphlets and the bruising clashes that ensued over their authorship closed off all avenues of accord, if any still lay open, marking the point of no return.

These developments and related questions are taken up in the next chapter.

<sup>117</sup> Attorney Menghini to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 29, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 395), excerpt from Fr. Dominic Franchetti's Gastaldi papers (see bibliographical note heading this chapter); Fr. Tosa to Archbishop Gastaldi, March 28, 1878 (*EBM* XIII, 394-398), from Franchetti's Gastaldi papers.

<sup>118</sup> *Lettera sull'Arcivescovo di Torino e sulla Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales* (cf. following Ch. 7).

## Chapter 7

# THE BOSCO-GASTALDI CONFLICT FROM THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANTI-GASTALDI PAMPHLETS TO THE RECONCILIATION ENFORCED BY LEO XIII (1877-1882)

### Summary

- I. Third Period of the Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict—the Phase of the Defamatory Pamphlets and of Father Bonetti's Suspension (1878-1880)
  1. The Five Anonymous Anti-Gastaldi Pamphlets
  2. Pope Leo XIII and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars' Action to End the Conflict
  3. Origin and Early Development of the Bonetti-Gastaldi Confrontation leading to Bonetti's Suspension (1878-1879)
  4. Development of the Bonetti-Gastaldi Controversy with Don Bosco's Involvement (1879-1880)
- II. The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict after the Appearance of the Defamatory Pamphlets to the Conclusion of the Bonetti Affair and the *Concordia* (1880-1882)
  1. Don Bosco's Definitive Turning Away from Archbishop Gastaldi
  2. Archbishop Gastaldi Definitive Break with Don Bosco
  3. Gastaldi's Lawsuit for Libel against Don Bosco and Bonetti
  4. Colomiatti's Proposal for an Out-Of-Court Settlement of the Bonetti Case
  5. A Failed Verbal Agreement to Drop the Lawsuits
  6. Moves and Countermoves Preparatory to Legal Action
  7. The "Settlement" of the Bonetti Suspension Case in Rome and Don Bosco's and Bonetti's Arraignment to Stand Trial in Turin for the Pamphlets
  8. Don Bosco's "*Esposizione*" to the Cardinals
  9. Don Bosco Helpless in Rome
  10. Pope Leo's Initiative and the Enforced Reconciliation (*Concordia*)
- III. Concluding Comments
  1. The Pamphlets
  2. The Concordia
  3. General Concluding Comments and Evaluation
- Appendix: Cast of Characters in the Conflict: 1. The Chancery of the Archdiocese of Turin under Archbishop Gastaldi; 2. Other Persons Sympathetic to the Archbishop's Cause. 3. The Salesians (other than Don Bosco and Father Rua); 4. Persons Sympathetic toward the Salesian Cause; 5. Roman Authorities (other than Pius IX and Leo XIII); 6. Other Persons Involved in the Conflict

### **I. The Third Period of the Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict: the Phase of the Defamatory Pamphlets and of Father Bonetti's Suspension (1877-1880)**

The third phase of the conflict was played out in a new scenario: the “changing of the guard” and the resulting climate change in Rome. As already indicated, a changing of the guard, and with it a climate change, had taken place at the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1876, when Archbishop, then Cardinal, Aeneas Sbarretti succeeded Archbishop Vitelleschi as secretary, and Cardinal Innocent Ferrieri succeeded Cardinal Bizzarri as prefect of that Congregation. The difficulties Don Bosco experienced with Cardinal Ferrieri through 1877 have been described above. It was perhaps for this reason (beyond Charles Menghini’s ambiguous position) that Don Bosco in late December 1877 decided to engaged a different attorney, Constantine Leonori, as his new counsel in Rome.<sup>1</sup> But the most important change was the succession on the papal throne itself: Pius IX died on February 7, 1878 and Leo XIII was elected pope on February 20. This then is the new scenario in which are set, over the next four years, the debate over the anonymous pamphlets, the Chieri affair involving Father Bonetti, the Roman trial, and finally the enforced Reconciliation (*Concordia*).

These topics will form the subject matter of the third period of the conflict.

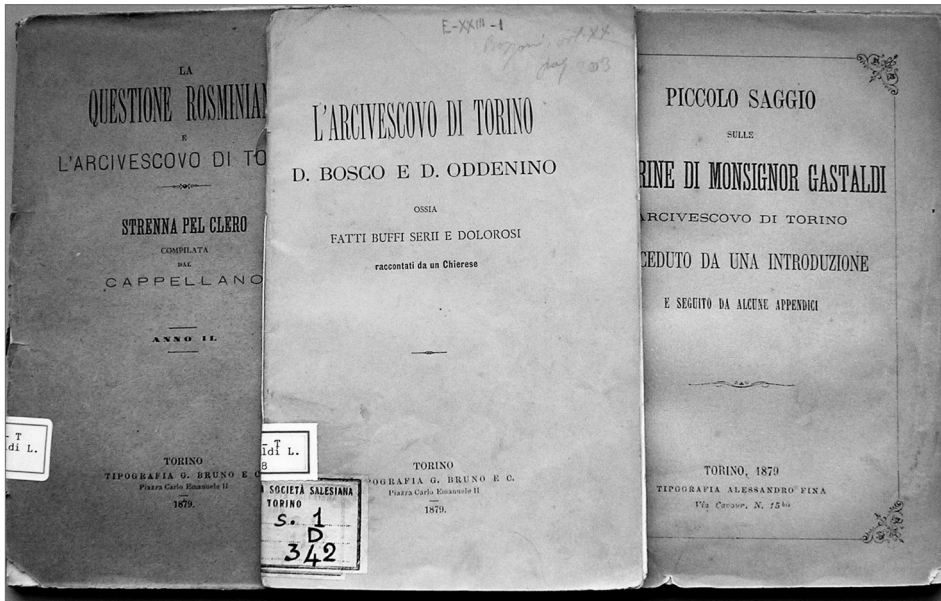
#### **1. The Five Anonymous Anti-Gastaldi Pamphlets**

The reforms enacted by Archbishop Gastaldi in the archdiocese certainly brought about good results. But the measures employed, especially his harsh rule by synods and decrees, his disputed appointments and dismissals, and his frequent recourse to suspension, made him many enemies. As a consequence some of them, as it often happens, sought revenge through anonymous writings.

##### *The Salesian Cooperator's Letter*

The aforementioned *Salesian Cooperator's Letter* was the first of these to appear. The archbishop naturally assumed that the Salesians were involved.

<sup>1</sup> EBM XIII, 395, note 4. Don Bosco seems to have simply dropped Attorney Menghini, who will hereafter appear as Gastaldi's own counsel in Rome.



- 32 – Some anonymous defamatory pamphlets published against Archbishop Gastaldi in 1879: (1) The Rosminian Question and the Archbishop of Turin; (2) The Archbishop of Turin, Don Bosco and Father Oddenino; (3) Brief Essay on the Teachings of Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin

The bitter dispute that ensued spanned the month of December 1877 and the early part of the year 1878, and was then reinforced by the appearance of further anonymous writings.<sup>2</sup>

In Don Bosco's and the Salesians' perception, the facts related in the *Letter* were true. This finds confirmation in a statement in the Barberis *Chronicle*, reflecting Don Bosco's own view.<sup>3</sup> But the archbishop, through Canon Maffei, demanded that Don Bosco publish a repudiation of the offending *Letter* in one of the leading Catholic newspapers by December 15. Don Bosco had already written to the archbishop to assure him that neither he nor any Salesian

<sup>2</sup> For the story and the controversy surrounding the anonymous *Cooperator's Letter*, and related correspondence, cf. *EBM* XIII, 290-309.

<sup>3</sup> Barberis writes: "In the meantime an anonymous author, calling himself 'a Salesian co-operator,' published an [open] letter (which see) in defense of Don Bosco. Its content is true to fact, but it is presented with some hostility and in a disrespectful manner. The archbishop took great offense ..." (Barberis, *Cronichetta*, Notebook 13, 17-18, in *ASC* A000, *FDBM* 845 C2-3).

had any part in its publication, and to express his revulsion at its offensive tone. Now that a public repudiation was demanded, he wanted to know what specifically he should repudiate apart from its insolent tone.<sup>4</sup>

After an inconclusive attempt at mediating the dispute by Count Caesar Trabucco of Castagnetto, on December 18 Don Bosco left for Rome; from there he kept in touch with developments in Turin. The Chapter of Canons in a statement of support addressed to the archbishop condemned the *Letter*, but advisedly refrained from mentioning Don Bosco or the Salesians. The fourteen city pastors, on the other hand, were split over the issue and did not address a collective letter to the archbishop.<sup>5</sup> Gastaldi meanwhile did not reply to Don Bosco; instead, he published a rebuttal to the *Letter* (in twenty points) and sent it to Cardinal Oreglia.<sup>6</sup> The latter showed it to Don Bosco in Rome on December 26.<sup>7</sup> In response to appeals received, Cardinal Ferrieri forbade the Salesians and their Cooperators to publish anything having to do with the dispute, now before the Roman Congregation.

Since the *Letter* was by now in the public domain, Don Bosco composed a carefully worded disclaimer, intended for the press, in which on his own and on the Salesians' behalf he condemned "the offensive language and scurrilous style" of the *Letter*. This would be the statement reported in the *Biographical Memoirs* as that purportedly published in the January 1878 issue of the *Salesian Bulletin*, and praised by Father Maximilian Bardessono.<sup>8</sup> But the statement actually published in the *Salesian Bulletin* is considerably different. Before condemning the language and style of the *Letter*, the Declaration (now

<sup>4</sup> Canon Maffei to Don Bosco, December 5; Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 9; Canon Maffei to Don Bosco, December 10; Don Bosco to Gastaldi, December 12, 1877 (*EBM* XIII, 291-294; Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 248-250).

<sup>5</sup> *Documenti* XVIII, 426f. in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1051 D11f.

<sup>6</sup> *Risposte alle accuse della lettera stampata a Torino coi tipi di Camilla e Bartolero* (A Reply to the Accusations Contained in the Letter Published in Turin by the Printing House of Camilla and Bartolero), Turin, December 21, 1877 (*Documenti* XVIII, 430-433 in *ASC* A067, *FDBM* 1051 E3-6).

<sup>7</sup> The date according to Father Berto's notes (*FDBM* 662 C4).

<sup>8</sup> For the statement purportedly published in the Salesians Bulletin, cf. *EBM* XIII, 298; For the letter Fr. Bardessono to Don Bosco, January 20, 1878, cf. *Documenti* XIX, 52 [51-54] in *ASC* A068, *FDBM* 1053 D2 [1-4]; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 298. Father (Abbé) Massimiliano Bardessono, esteemed but conservative priest of the archdiocese and one of Gastaldi's "illustrious victims", in this lengthy letter (otherwise marked by bitter words against the Archbishop and his chancery) praised Don Bosco's *Declaration* for its calmness, prudence and discretion. For a negative judgment on Bardessono and his letter, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 61.



no longer from Don Bosco in the first person—perhaps from editor Bonetti?) expresses the Salesians' gratitude to the anonymous writer for rising in defense of the Society, and denies none of the accusations made in the *Letter*.<sup>9</sup>

*The Five Anonymous Anti-Gastaldi Pamphlets*

The *Cooperator's Letter* (discussed above) was by no means the worst of the anonymous anti-Gastaldi publications of the period 1877-1879. In the interest of clarity we will immediately list and give a brief description of the five pamphlets that concern our discussion:<sup>10</sup>

(1) The *Cooperator's Letter* (just discussed), early December 1877.<sup>11</sup> This short (three-page) exposé is concerned with Gastaldi's harassment of the Salesian Society from 1873 to the time of writing.

(2) The *Chaplain's First Strenna*, April 2, 1878.<sup>12</sup> This first "literary offering" to the clergy by "the Chaplain" consisted in a "review" of the diocesan liturgical calendar for that year. The calendar was the normal vehicle used by Gastaldi to address the clergy on various topics. The Chaplain lambastes the archbishop's pastoral policies and directives, with special reference to his opposition to the Salesians.

(3) The *Chaplain's Second Strenna*, March 1879.<sup>13</sup> Entitled "The Rosminian

<sup>9</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano* 2:1 (1878), 12, FDBM 107 B2: "We, for our part, are grateful to this unidentified writer, and we thank him for his willingness to speak out in our defense ... On the other hand we unreservedly disapprove of the kind of language (*disapproviamo altamente il modo*) he used in speaking of the archbishop of Turin." As later revealed by Father John Turchi (and as will be discussed below) the mystery author was none other than Father John Baptist Anfossi, an alumnus of the Oratory and a close friend of the Salesians.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. EBM XV, 186-188; Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1145-1149.

<sup>11</sup> *Lettera sull'Arcivescovo di Torino e sulla Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales. Un po' di luce* (Letter on Archbishop Gastaldi and on the Salesian Congregation. To Shed Some Light). Turin: Tip. Camilla e Bartolero, [no date], 3. It is addressed to a "vicar", who had sent the author a copy of Gastaldi's pamphlet *L'Arcivescovo di Torino* in which Gastaldi related his benefactions toward the Salesian Society. [As mentioned above,] the writer signs himself as "an alumnus of the Oratory who prides himself on being a Salesian Cooperator" (*Documenti* XVIII, 405-407, in ASC A067, FDBM 1051 C3-5; brief excerpt in EBM XIII, 290).

<sup>12</sup> *Strenna pel Clero, ossia Rivista sul Calendario liturgico dell'Arcivescovo di Torino*, scritta da un Cappellano (A Gift for the Clergy. A Review of the Liturgical Calendar of the Archbishop of Turin, by a Chaplain) (Turin, Tip. G. Bruno e C., 1878), 88 pages. For the purposes of this discussion, it seemed appropriate to retain the Italian term "*strenna*." The word means a New Year's gift or offering.

<sup>13</sup> *La Questione Rosminiana e l'Arcivescovo di Torino. Strenna pel Clero*, compilata dal Cappel-

Question,” this second offering to the clergy by the Chaplain was a collection of articles written by Gastaldi in defense of Anthony Rosmini and published by him in his own journal, *Il Conciliatore*, in the late forties. The object of this anthology, larded with abusive comments, was to smear the Archbishop’s name and paint him as unorthodox.<sup>14</sup>

(4) The *Brief Essay*, March 1879.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most important of the five writings, this booklet was a systematic attack on Gastaldi for holding and defending Rosminian doctrine “against the teaching of the Church.”

(5) The *Chieri Story*, May 1879.<sup>16</sup> This was a detailed defense of Father Bonetti and of the Sisters’ oratory in Chieri, attacking the archbishop and the pastor, Father Oddenino, for their opposition and punitive actions. As will be discussed below the Chieri affair leading to Bonetti’s suspension was to become the *cause célèbre* of the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict.

### *Comments on the Anti-Gastaldi Defamatory Pamphlets*

Globally viewed, these pamphlets, the *Brief Essay* in particular, were evil, abusive and libelous concoctions intended to poison people’s minds against the Archbishop, and tending even to suborn the clergy: “Your Grace, your actions have shown you to be unworthy of the post you occupy. Your quarrels with the Holy See ... have made you the object of contempt among the clergy and among the people ... Resign!” He is accused of being a “rebel”: “Gastaldi has gone ‘off his rocker’, that’s common knowledge. His Rosminian, rigorist, disruptive ideas have progressively come to the fore ... Gastaldi supports Rosmini; he praises Rosmini’s works without exception; he predicts

lano, anno II (The Rosminian Question and the Archbishop of Turin. A Gift for the Clergy, by the Chaplain, Year II) (Turin: Tip. G. Bruno e C., 1879), 144 pages.

<sup>14</sup> For Gastaldi’s newspaper, *Il Conciliatore* cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 53-88. In the years of the liberal revolution in Piedmont (1848), Lawrence Gastaldi took part in the political dialogue and was greatly attracted to the ideas of the great philosopher and theologian, Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, whose writings later were condemned.

<sup>15</sup> *Piccolo saggio sulle dottrine di Mons. Gastaldi, Arcivescovo di Torino*, preceduto da una Introduzione e seguito da alcune appendici (Brief Essay on the Teachings of Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin, with a Foreword and a Few Appendices) (Turin: Tip. Alessandro Fina, 1879), 155 pages.

<sup>16</sup> *L’Arcivescovo di Torino, D. Bosco e D. Oddenino, ossia fatti buffi, seri e dolorosi, raccontati da un Chierese* (The Archbishop of Turin, Don Bosco and Father Oddenino. Incidents Droll, Serious and Painful narrated by a Resident of Chieri) (Turin: Tip. G. Bruno e C., 1879), 52 pages. The foreword of this piece is signed, “Un Padre di famiglia (Head of a family).”

that the Church will remove the censures of which Rosmini is the object.” He has been treating his priests like dirt: he has persecuted Father Bertagna, our “most learned moral theologian”; Don Bosco, “the gentlest, most humble and most zealous priest in Turin”; Father Margotti, “Italy’s ablest journalist,” the Abbé Bardessono, “the most skilled, active and honorable preacher in Turin.”<sup>17</sup>

The *Chieri Story*, which concerned Father Bonetti, was probably the least insulting of these writings. Nevertheless it delivers some telling blows. With regard to Bonetti’s suspension, the author writes: “[This suspension document] is well worthy of an archbishop on whose tombstone the names of many worthy priests, capriciously ruined by his suspensions, will be inscribed. His epitaph should be: ‘Here lies Archbishop—, who deserved to have a rope, not a cross, hung around his neck’.”<sup>18</sup>

One (though not the only one by any means) of the recurring themes in these writings was the archbishop’s harassment of the Salesians. The pamphlets, claiming to be written in defense of Don Bosco and of other “victims” of the archbishop, complicated a relationship already strained. Don Bosco was now caught on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, he had to disavow and condemn such writings, or be regarded as an accomplice; on the other, he felt duty-bound to denounce as true to the authorities some of the very “misdeeds” the pamphlets charged the Archbishop with. Thus, by condemning only the offensive manner and the evil purpose of such writings, not the contents as a whole, Don Bosco came by that very fact under suspicion.

Don Bosco, however, was never directly challenged with regard to the *Chaplain’s Second Strenna* and the *Brief Essay*. Perhaps the style and the issues involved tended to locate them elsewhere. Neither was he apparently specifically blamed for the *Chaplain’s First Strenna*. With respect to this pamphlet, Father Barberis included some interesting paragraphs in his chronicle for May 1878, commenting on Don Bosco’s and on his own position. Don Bosco had not read the booklet nor did he know who its author might be; but he had grave misgivings. Barberis himself apparently admired the *Strenna*. He also refers to a mysterious meeting of Don Bosco with Gastaldi. Barberis writes:

<sup>17</sup> *Brief Essay*, 27 and 38-39 (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 280-281). James Margotti (1823-1887) was the conservative editor of the leading Catholic newspaper, *L’Unità Cattolica*.

<sup>18</sup> Free rendering of: “Qui giace Monsignor tale / Cui stava meglio il laccio che il pastorale” (*Chieri Story*, 38, in Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1146, note 54).

Don Bosco has not read the book; in conversation he told us that he had no time to read it and would not read it. I said that it would be good to know what it contained; he replied that at the moment he could not spare the time. [He added:] “Some people have spoken to me about it and have reported on some of the things it contains. That’s all.” Asked if he knew who the author was, or if he had any suspicion in that regard, he replied that he really had no idea. The fact is that what this book says is very much to Don Bosco’s credit and serves to make his name ever better known among the clergy. The reverse side of the coin, however, causes Don Bosco to have misgivings. The book (or something else) must have greatly affected the archbishop, for he asked Don Bosco to go and see him. They had a long conversation: on what, nobody knows. Later the archbishop himself wrote to say that he would hold ordinations on Trinity Sunday, and if there were any Salesians to be ordained, to send them along. Hope for the best.<sup>19</sup>

The *Cooperator’s Letter* and the *Chieri Story*, the latter arising out of the Bonetti affair, to be discussed below, lay “nearest” to the Salesians. Later, Gastaldi’s lawyer sought to establish a Salesian connection with the other pamphlets as well. But for the duration, after the hubbub surrounding the publication of the *Cooperator’s Letter*, the fires of discord seemed to die down somewhat. This was due principally to the fact that after the accession of Pope Leo XIII, certainly at his behest, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was taking matters in hand.

## 2. Pope Leo XIII and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars’ Action to End the Conflict

Shortly after the election of Leo XIII, and the consistory held on March 3, Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi were both back in Rome. On March 5, the Archbishop had a long audience with the pope. In the audience granted to Don Bosco on March 16, 1878, when the subject of the dispute with Gastaldi came up, Leo XIII told Don Bosco that he was expecting a report from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and that he had a plan for a settlement which would be acceptable to both parties. Don Bosco immediately drafted a report of the audience and attached it to the letter he wrote to Cardinal Oreglia, newly designated Protector of the Salesian Society.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Barberis, *Cronichetta*, Notebook 13, 38-39 in *ASC A000, FDBM 845 D11-12*.

<sup>20</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Oreglia, March 25, 1878 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 327-332). The



33 – Pope Leo XIII (French print, 1878)

The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars meanwhile had examined the privileges for which Don Bosco, on order from Cardinal Ferrieri, had submitted documentary proof. The new approved list showed that many concessions had been canceled, including that relating to testimonial letters for the

subjects covered in the audience were: the church of St. John the Evangelist and other undertakings; the pope's "enrollment" as a Salesian Cooperator, and the need to work for young people at risk; a cardinal Protector (Cardinal Oreglia); "unfinished business" regarding the Salesian Society, and the difficulties with Archbishop Gastaldi; favors, advice, and blessing.



admission of candidates to the Salesian Society. The Roman Congregation on March 22, 1878 also acted on a six-point petition that Gastaldi had presented on December 27, 1877. The request that accompanied Gastaldi's petition is revealing: "I do not ask for more and earnestly beg the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to refrain from any investigation of past incidents, since I gladly forgive Don Bosco ..., in order that things may proceed peacefully from now on." He was asking for an official acknowledgement of his episcopal authority.

The Roman Congregation's decision was in Gastaldi's favor. Don Bosco and the Salesian Society had to abide by the Church's law and practice and respect the ordinary's right in the matter of testimonials, preaching and the administration of the Sacraments, publicizing "miracles", the celebration of Mass, and in all other areas of episcopal jurisdiction. Attorney Leonori informed Don Bosco of these decisions, urging him to abide by them and to seek an understanding with Archbishop Gastaldi. Cardinal Ferrieri notified Don Bosco and included a copy of his response to Archbishop Gastaldi's petition, expressing the hope that the decisions of the Roman Congregation would end the conflict. Don Bosco called on the Archbishop and the latter appeared quite forthcoming, well disposed and eager for reconciliation. Things seemed to be taking a turn for the better—and let bygones be bygones.<sup>21</sup>

At this point hostilities flared up again on account of a series of events involving Father John Bonetti.

### **3. Origin and Early Development of the Bonetti-Gastaldi Confrontation leading to Bonetti's Suspension (1878-1879)<sup>22</sup>**

John Bonetti had been one of the early followers of Don Bosco, and at 17 years of age a slightly older companion of Dominic Savio. At the founding of the Society on December 18, 1859, Bonetti, not yet ordained, had been elected a council member. In 1878, at 40 years of age, he was one of Don Bosco's most trusted collaborators. He was quick-witted and intelligent, yet

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIII, 432-436 (Cardinal's Ferrieri's letter and description of the change of mood).

<sup>22</sup> For this section I am guided by pertinent sections of Desramaut's *Don Bosco en son temps*, and *Chronologie critique*.

somewhat simplistic in his perceptions; he was emotional and daring even to rashness; he was a facile, yet incisive, writer of unquestionable Roman Catholic, ultramontane persuasion. Don Bosco was not afraid of such temperaments; on the contrary, he admired Bonetti and had all along encouraged his penchant for action. In 1877 he had appointed him editor-in-chief of the nascent *Salesian Bulletin*. In that capacity Bonetti came to share with Father James Margotti, the conservative editor of the daily, *l'Unità Cattolica*, the reputation of being the scourge of the liberal establishment.

Like other Salesians, Bonetti had also come to regard Gastaldi and his chancery as “the enemy.” In the conflict everything had to be either black or white, either good or evil, with no middle ground. It was his adamant conviction that the Salesian Society was God’s work; hence, anybody or anything opposed to it had to be from the devil.

Father Bonetti was instrumental in putting the conflict on a new footing, first as editor of the *Salesian Bulletin* and later as director of the girls’ oratory run by the Salesian Sisters at Chieri.

#### *Father Bonetti, the Salesian Bulletin and a Memorial to Pius IX*

In the April, 1878 issue of the *Salesian Bulletin*, at Don Bosco’s express request, Bonetti published an article on the church of St. John the Evangelist, in its initial stages at the time, describing it “as a monument to the memory of Pius IX.” This set him in opposition to Archbishop Gastaldi; for the archbishop supported Father Leo Prato, who was at the time engaged in the construction of the church of St. Secundus with its rival claim of being the archdiocese’s own “monument to the glorious Pius IX.” Gastaldi may at one time have believed, as some letters of Don Bosco to Rome seem to indicate, that the Salesians would surrender that honor to St. Secundus.<sup>23</sup> But he was

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e. g. Don Bosco to Card. Alexander Franchi (Secretary of State), May 28, 1878 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 348-349). This letter was written (in response to one by the cardinal) to counteract Gastaldi’s own letters to Rome complaining about the church of St. John the Evangelist and about the *Salesian Bulletin*. After stating that the *Salesian Bulletin* was a publication of St. Vincent’s orphanage in Sampierdarena (Genoa), hence not under Gastaldi’s jurisdiction, Don Bosco writes: “I am not competing with anyone; other people are competing with me ... However, the archbishop has been assured that ... in the future no mention will be made of the church as a monument to Pius IX. We promised this in spite of the fact that the Salesian Cooperators regard the prohibition to build a monument to the memory of the founder of their association as unjust.”



wrong. The June issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* carried a stronger article entitled, “In Defense of the Church [of St. John the Evangelist] as a Monument to Pius IX.”<sup>24</sup> It was a transparent attack aimed at Fr. Prato and at the Archbishop. Don Bosco disliked debates through the press and, as recorded in the Barberis chronicle, he let Father Bonetti know his feelings on the matter.<sup>25</sup>

But the thrust had struck home. A first strong letter from the Archbishop put Don Bosco on notice that Bonetti’s articles were regarded as insolent. He first asked Don Bosco to supply him with exact information as to the laying of the corner stone of the church of St. John the Evangelist, a ceremony over which he intended to preside himself. Next he forbade the editor of the *Salesian Bulletin* ever again to refer to the church of St. John the Evangelist “as a monument to Pius IX.” He reminded Don Bosco that as bishop he was teacher in his church, and that Catholic journalists are not to usurp that role:

I ask you again, and I insist, that you tell the editor of the *Salesian Bulletin* to leave the archbishop of Turin and the other bishops alone. The arrogance with which some self-styled Catholic journalists usurp the role of teachers, censors, judges and chastisers of bishops is scandalous and most damaging to our holy religion. The mission, “*Docete omnes gentes*,” was given to bishops. Therefore, I regard such arrogance as working against religion and as leading to schism. I condemn it with all my might. Likewise, tell your editor never again to publish any news, notice, invitation or exhortation that makes reference to the above-mentioned church as a “memorial to Pius IX.”<sup>26</sup>

Instead of obeying, Bonetti (the “editorial staff”) responded by writing and publishing in the *Salesian Bulletin* an (open) letter to Don Bosco, questioning the Archbishop’s statement, not without some biting irony, that Bonetti had ever written irreverently or ever played the teacher, the censor, etc. of bishops.<sup>27</sup>

Five days later, Don Bosco forwarded this letter to Gastaldi with the note that he was doing so not because he approved of it, but “solely for the archbishop’s information.”<sup>28</sup> Under the circumstances, the clever formula could

<sup>24</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, June 1878, 4-5, excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 453.

<sup>25</sup> Barberis, *Cronichetta*, May 18, 1878, Notebook 13, 61-64 in *ASC* A000, *FDBM* 846 A10-B1.

<sup>26</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Don Bosco, July 20, 1878 (*Documenti* XIX, 202-203 in *ASC* A0068, *FDBM* 1056 A8-9, excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 454).

<sup>27</sup> “The Editorial Staff of the *Salesian Bulletin*” to Don Bosco, Sampierdarena, August 1, 1878 (*EBM* XIII, 458-460).

<sup>28</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, August 6, 1878 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 373-374).

not hide the fact that Don Bosco, at the risk of provoking the Archbishop, was taking his man's side. Bonetti had after all written in response to the warning that Don Bosco himself had received. Furthermore Don Bosco on the occasion of the blessing of the corner stone of the church of St. John the Evangelist on August 14, 1878, in the presence of the Archbishop, spoke of the church as "this memorial of love and thanks to the great Pius IX, ... the church that we now erect in honor of the beloved apostle and in memory of Pius IX who bore the name of John."<sup>29</sup> This added fuel to the debate.

Four days after the laying of the cornerstone, the *Unità Cattolica* carried an article entitled, "The Church of St. Secundus in Turin," in which this church was presented as "a monument to the memory of Pius IX."<sup>30</sup>

*Father Bonetti and the Salesian Sisters' Oratory of St. Theresa in Chieri*

At this point, on September 24, 1878, Don Bosco named Father Bonetti spiritual director of the girls' oratory run by the Salesian Sisters at Chieri, a decision that was to have grave consequences.<sup>31</sup>

The Oratory of St. Theresa had been established in the house of the Bertinetti family in Chieri and had been approved by Archbishop Gastaldi on June 18, 1876. The pastor of the *Duomo*, Father Andrew Oddenino, had expressed his misgivings about this work, but the Archbishop assured him that he would stand by him in case of any trouble, and that all rights of the parish would be safeguarded. In establishing the work, the archbishop's action favored Don Bosco rather than Father Oddenino. With the Archbishop's delegation, then, Fr. Oddenino proceeded to the blessing of the chapel on July 20, 1878. Don Bosco, however, thought it his right to bless a chapel in his own house, since the Salesian Sisters belonged to the Salesian Congregation. Thus he greatly resented this action by the Archbishop. He records his disappointment in writing to Bishop Peter de Gaudenzi: "A good, resounding slap in the face would have been less humiliating for me than my being refused permission to bless that chapel."<sup>32</sup> In addition, as was to be expected, the Archbishop's instructions specified that religious

<sup>29</sup> EBM XIII, 463-464.

<sup>30</sup> *Unità Cattolica*, August 18, 1878 (*Documenti* XIX, 225-226, in *ASC* A0068, *FDBM* 1056 C7-8).

<sup>31</sup> For the story of the foundation of St. Theresa's Oratory and its problems, cf. EBM XIII, 537-540 (where documents are omitted).

<sup>32</sup> Don Bosco to Bishop De Gaudenzi, October 6, 1878 (*Ceria*, *Epistolario* III, 392).

services in the chapel were to be held only occasionally and were never to conflict with parish services.

“Unfortunately”, the oratory was a huge success, also due to the fact that the parish lacked any sort of youth activity for the girls. The young and dynamic Salesian Sisters, supported by Father Bonetti’s zeal and irrepressible enthusiasm, created a bustling center of activity for the girls of the area. Besides providing the traditional activities of a Salesian oratory, the Sisters added an educational dimension. Sunday classes were started to teach reading and writing to the girls, especially the poor young girls who worked in Chieri’s many small factories. The classes were instantly popular. By December the girls attending the oratory activities numbered about 400. Obviously the parish was to that extent the loser.

The clergy of Chieri stood divided over the activities of the oratory. A group, among whom a Canon Matteo Sona stood out, strongly supported the work. Riding this crest of popularity, Father Bonetti, naively enough, thought that he had won the day. Father Oddenino’s protest, however, first by word of mouth and then by letters, was not long delayed. In early December he wrote to both Don Bosco and the archbishop.<sup>33</sup> The complaint was that religious services at St. Theresa’s were being held “at the same time” as those at the parish. This was in defiance of the understanding that had been reached.

Answering for Don Bosco, Fr. Bonetti explained to Fr. Oddenino that the services at the oratory in Chieri were the norm in every oratory, and no one had ever complained. Furthermore, the January 1879 issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* carried an article by Father Bonetti entitled: “A Hope Not Unfulfilled: St. Theresa’s Oratory at Chieri.” After describing the victorious progress of the oratory, he concludes: “For a complete picture, I should perhaps also speak of *someone* who has recently led the opposition against the Oratory. I may do so in a future issue, if that seems appropriate.”<sup>34</sup> That *someone* (Father Oddenino) immediately canceled his subscription.<sup>35</sup>

At this time, without publicity and with gentle Father Rua acting as a buffer, Don Bosco threw his full support behind Father Bonetti. Father Rua wrote to the Archbishop enclosing a copy of the decree by which Pius IX had

<sup>33</sup> Fr. Oddenino to Don Bosco, December 3, 1878 (*Documenti* XLV, 6 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 C6; summarized in *EBM* XIII, 539).

<sup>34</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, January 1879, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Fr. Oddenino to Don Bosco, December 28, 1878 (*Documenti* XLV, 7f. in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 C7-8).

given the Salesians faculty to celebrate Mass, to hold catechetical instruction, and to give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in all their churches and oratories.<sup>36</sup> Respectful as the letter was, it was no “masterpiece of diplomatic finesse,” as Ceria would have it, for the mere mention of privileges granted to Don Bosco by Pius IX (in circumstances that Gastaldi regarded as dubious) simply infuriated the Archbishop, especially when such concessions were a cause or an occasion of disorder.

In the middle of January 1879, the archbishop tried to arbitrate the dispute in person. He went to Chieri and met with the pastor and the canons. But Bonetti’s penchant for “picking a fight” was to prove his undoing. A few days later, ever more sure of his ground, he forwarded a letter to Father Oddenino, asking him to desist from his hostile attitude toward St. Theresa’s Oratory for the greater good of souls and so as not to give encouragement to malicious people.<sup>37</sup> Father Oddenino, shocked and offended, denounced the letter to the archbishop.

Thus it was that on February 12, 1879, Archbishop Gastaldi, as he was in the habit of doing in similar circumstances, at least as a temporary measure, suspended Father Bonetti from hearing confessions. This was the beginning of a bitter conflict, in which Bonetti’s contentious spirit were to take Don Bosco himself to lengths he could not have anticipated in 1879.

#### **4. Development of the Bonetti-Gastaldi Controversy with Don Bosco’s Involvement (1879-1880)<sup>38</sup>**

With Father Bonetti’s suspension, Don Bosco’s own position with respect to the Archbishop became more complex and precarious. The latter did not lack good will, whatever the Salesians may have thought. But the fact that Bonetti “had to be defended” placed Don Bosco in frontal opposition. The battle was joined both in Turin and Rome; it involved not only the protagonists but also those who supported and those who opposed on other grounds the reformer-archbishop whose strong disciplinary attitudes had alienated quite a number of the clergy in Turin and throughout Piedmont.

<sup>36</sup> Fr. Rua to Archbishop Gastaldi, January 1879 (*EBM* XIV, 171).

<sup>37</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Fr. Oddenino, January 20, 1879 (*Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 14-15 in *ASC* B516: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 635 D11-12, referred to in *EBM* XIV, 171-172).

<sup>38</sup> Also for this section I am guided by pertinent sections of Desramaut’s *Don Bosco en son temps* and *Chronologie critique*.

In February 1879 Don Bosco (already for some time away from Turin) set out for Rome, “at the Holy Father’s request.”<sup>39</sup> He arrived there accompanied by Father Bonetti, who needed to get away from the diocese. A letter to a cardinal (in secretary Berto’s hand) seems to indicate that Don Bosco had already undertaken Bonetti’s defense, but it is not certain.<sup>40</sup> Five Chieri canons (perhaps not on friendly terms with Father Oddenino) had written a letter in support of Father Bonetti.<sup>41</sup> On March 6 (1879) Bonetti petitioned Leo XIII to be released from the suspension.<sup>42</sup> At the same time (on March 7), without mentioning Bonetti, Don Bosco petitioned Leo XIII for two favors: that Salesian priests already approved in one diocese for the confessions of the faithful be allowed to hear confessions in the Salesian house where they lived through simple deputation from their superior; that parochial faculties granted by Pius IX to superiors of Salesian houses be renewed.<sup>43</sup> These privileges would have helped solve Father Bonetti’s problem in Chieri, for he was both confessor and superior in a “Salesian house.”

In Turin meanwhile Archbishop Gastaldi was giving tokens of his good will toward the Salesians. On February 20, he and two canons appeared unannounced at a play given at the Oratory, to everybody’s satisfaction.<sup>44</sup> At the middle of March, the archbishop declared his willingness to restore Bonetti’s faculties, though he believed it unwise for Bonetti to return to Chieri. Father Rua wrote to Bonetti in Rome:

For your guidance and Don Bosco’s, I have some news. The archbishop has asked me to notify you that you may hear confessions any time you wish. As for picking up the document, you have to wait until after Easter, as is customary. During the interview the archbishop said: “Father Bonetti is a good priest, but it is not wise that he should return to Chieri. What can I say? (*Che mai?*) He just can’t cope [or, “get along”?] with those priests (*Non può farsela con quel clero*). I made a visit there and I summoned the clergy to a meeting. The vicar forane, the

<sup>39</sup> Don Bosco to Professor Peter Vallauri, February 9, 1879 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 444).

<sup>40</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Ferrieri, undated but written by Fr. Berto in February 1879 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 445-446; *EBM* XIV, 174-175).

<sup>41</sup> Letter in *Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 20-21 in *ASC* A118: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani. *FDBM* 635 E5-6; excerpts in *EBM* XIV, 175.

<sup>42</sup> Petition in *Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 23-25 in *ASC* A118: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 635 E8-10.

<sup>43</sup> Petitions in *IBM* XIV, 705-706 and 707, Appendices 10B and D (omitted in *EBM*).

<sup>44</sup> Charles Cays to Don Bosco, February 21, 1879 (*IBM* XIV, 699-700, Appendix 6; letter omitted but episode mentioned in *EBM* XIV, 173-174).

pastor, and several canons (but not Canon Sona) agreed that it would not be wise for Father Bonetti to return to Chieri.”<sup>45</sup>

Four weeks later, Canon Chiaverotti wrote to Father Bonetti confirming that the Archbishop had restored his faculties, on condition that he would not go back to Chieri.<sup>46</sup>

Surely this called for a compromise; but Father Bonetti would not accept the condition.<sup>47</sup> On March 24, from Rome he wrote a long public letter to the “girls of the Oratory of St. Theresa” in Chieri, in which he related the incidents leading up to his suspension and spoke of the injustice done to him: “Whether in good or bad faith, by this action [suspension] the Archbishop has done me an injustice: first, because my letter to the pastor cannot be faulted; secondly, because he failed to give me or my superior, Don Bosco, previous warning ...” In a postscript he also involves Don Bosco: “I will only say that [Don Bosco] is very perturbed, and were it not for the love he bears the city of Chieri, where he studied as a youth and as a seminarian, he would have closed this institute long ago ...”<sup>48</sup>

Canon Sona was advising Fr. Bonetti to resist.<sup>49</sup> Bonetti on the other hand, undertook a series of actions that cannot be construed as anything but defiant. On April 30 he went to Chieri to open the month of May with a public sermon. Back in Turin, after receiving faculties with the same proviso on May 2, he wrote to the archbishop protesting the condition attached; and on May 4, 1879 he again appealed directly to Leo XIII.<sup>50</sup> He had already made a first

<sup>45</sup> Fr. Rua to Fr. Bonetti, March 22, 1879 (*Documenti* XLV, 20 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 D8; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 176). Throughout the conflict, Father Rua acted discreetly to bring the parties together.

<sup>46</sup> Fr. Chiaverotti to Fr. Bonetti, April 18, 1879 (*ASC* A113: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 644 D11).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIV, 176, where Ceria defends Bonetti for rejecting the condition.

<sup>48</sup> Original of Bonetti’s letter, in *ASC* A115: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 633 B11-C2, transcribed in *Documenti* XLV, 2122 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 D9-10. Father Ceria states (*EBM* XIV, 176) that the letter was confidential to a friend, and that this friend edited it and made it public. However, the original in Bonetti’s hand (see cited *FDBM*) contradicts this statement; the letter begins, “Rome, Mar. 24, 1879. - To the Girls of the Oratory of St. Theresa.”

<sup>49</sup> Letters of March 28, April 20 and 28, 1879 (*Documenti* XLV, 23-24, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 D11-E3). Canon Sona of Chieri sided with Bonetti.

<sup>50</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Archbishop Gastaldi, May 2, 1879 (*Documenti* XLV, 28, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1194 E4, briefly in *EBM* XIV, 178); Bonetti to Leo XIII, May 4, 1879 (*Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 34-43 in *ASC* A115: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 636 A7-B4). For

appeal in March. The pope gave the matter over to the Congregation of the Council. This action signals the opening of the file of *Bonetti vs. Gastaldi* with this Congregation.

The Archbishop, irascible and temperamental as he was by nature, could not but show impatience with what appeared to be willful provocation. Moreover, the appearance at this time of the fifth libelous pamphlet, listed above as *The Chieri Story*, made matters worse. As indicated above, this pamphlet ridiculed the local clergy and the Archbishop, while recounting “unfortunate Father Bonetti’s” misadventures. Subtitles show that the pamphlet was meant as a tirade against the Archbishop for suspending a priest unjustly: “An Unheard-of Sentence,” “Nobility and Dignity in Humiliation,” “Either Ignorance or Bad Faith,” “Rome Can Do Justice,” “Lies and More Lies,” etc. Immediately Bonetti came under suspicion of having had something to do with the defamatory writing.

The appearance of the pamphlet at this time (with suspicion pointing to Bonetti) would throw light on an action of the archbishop that the Salesians have always interpreted as willful, erratic behavior. After receiving (on May 26) a copy of Bonetti’s May 4 appeal to the Pope, Gastaldi had sent for Don Bosco and had restored Bonetti’s faculties without condition (leaving Bonetti’s return to Chieri to Don Bosco’s discretion). The following day (May 27), however, without any explanation, he revoked the faculties while he “personally conducted a new investigation” in Chieri. The Salesians found this turn-about incomprehensible as well as outrageous, as maybe seen from the account of the *Biographical Memoirs* and from Bonetti’s immediate recourse to the Holy Father. It would be comprehensible, however, if one supposes that on the morning of May 27 the archbishop found the defamatory pamphlet on his breakfast table. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that, according to the Valdocco chronicle (which Lemoyne cites in *Documenti*) the pamphlet came to the knowledge of Don Bosco and his council at their meeting of May 29, 1879, just two days after Gastaldi’s sudden reversal.<sup>51</sup>

By this time Don Bosco had lost all hope that the archbishop would ever again show himself well disposed toward him. He believed that Archbishop

Ceria’s description of the Archbishop’s actions relating to Bonetti’s faculties see *EBM* XIV, 177-179.

<sup>51</sup> *EBM* XIV, 178-179; Archbishop Gastaldi to Don Bosco, May 27, 1879 (*Documenti* XX, 203-204, in *ASC* A069, *FDBM* 1061 D5-6); for Fr. Bonetti’s appeal to Pope Leo XIII see *EBM*, XIV, 179.



Gastaldi was the ally of Cardinal Ferrieri in their opposition to the Society. The latter had made extensive objections to Don Bosco's 1879 *Report to the Holy See on the State of the Society*. Some of his objections related to "institutes for women" and to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and their spiritual direction by Salesians. The cardinal makes no reference either to Chieri or to Father Bonetti, but there may be a hint in his statement that such institutions and their spiritual direction are under the ordinary's control, and that the Salesians' ministry in them "is limited to administering the sacraments and preaching the word of God, and only as specified by the ordinaries."<sup>52</sup>

The summer of 1879 was a difficult one for Don Bosco on other counts as well. Among other things, it was the summer when the Oratory school was closed down by the government.

Fr. Bonetti was eager to have his suspension lifted, and not finding a hearing in Turin, he appealed to Rome. In July and August he stated his case in letters to Archbishop Isidore Verga (secretary of the Congregation of the Council) and to Attorney Leonori who promised to take his case.<sup>53</sup> But in spite of Archbishop Verga's and Attorney Leonori's endeavors, by October there still had been no progress.

Fr. Bonetti then decided to make a fourth appeal to Pope Leo XIII, through Cardinal Nina, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council (newly-appointed Protector of the Salesian Society). The petition was to be handled by Archbishop Isidoro Verga (secretary of the same Congregation) and Attorney Leonori.<sup>54</sup> Don Bosco wrote an endorsement of Fr. Bonetti, commending him without any reservation as "a praiseworthy and exemplary religious", and as "a zealous and self-sacrificing priest" in his ministry in Chieri.<sup>55</sup> However, Archbishop Verga and Attorney Leonori thought it best not to go to Pope Leo at this time.

<sup>52</sup> For Don Bosco's response to Cardinal Ferrieri's critical observations to the Report (August 3, 1879 and January 12, 1880) see *EBM* XIV, 160-168, esp. 161 and 166-168, and discussion in Vol. 7 of this series.

<sup>53</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Archbishop Isidore Verga, July 16 and August 20, 1879, and Fr. Bonetti to Attorney Leonori, July 27, 1879 (*Documenti* XLIV, 33-34 in *ASC* A093, *FDBM* 1194 E9-10; excerpts in *EBM* XIV, 183-184).

<sup>54</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Card. Nina and Fr. Bonetti to Attorney Leonori, October 24, 1879 (*Documenti* XLIV, 39 and 42, in *ASC* A093, *FDBM* 1190 E7 and E10). Don Bosco's reference to Father Bonetti's conduct confirms what Bonetti himself had written to Leonori on July 27, "My censure has aroused a grave suspicion that I might be guilty of immoral conduct."

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Don Bosco's statement of October 28, 1879 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 528-529, *EBM* XIV, 184-185).

Don Bosco took a further step: in January 1880 he appointed Father Francis Dalmazzo his permanent procurator in Rome.<sup>56</sup> Father Dalmazzo's first task was to expedite Bonetti's case before the Congregation of the Council. He was to act as Don Bosco's representative until the end of the conflict and the signing of the reconciliation document (*Concordia*). He too regarded Cardinal Ferrieri as "the enemy."<sup>57</sup>

Don Bosco followed this appointment by a personal visit to Rome (March 12-April 23, 1880), with Father Berto, in order to press for the privileges, and thus indirectly also to resolve the Bonetti case. When finally, after a long delay, on April 5, 1880, he was received by the pope, Leo XIII told him that he was "systematically opposed to the privileges of religious." Don Bosco settled for having only a few minor ones renewed.<sup>58</sup> Don Bosco felt slighted by being sent "from pillar to post" to get an audience, by the delays, by the small concessions obtained. He was especially irked and disappointed by Cardinal Ferrieri's aloofness and hostility, and he gives vent to his feelings:

Had I been successful, in the past three years, or even this year, in obtaining an audience with Cardinal Ferrieri, I would have been in a position to give any required explanation. Such a step would have prevented much trouble and much harm to our Congregation. But this I have not been able to do. I cannot hide my bitter and painful disappointment in not being allowed to explain myself. I and all Salesians are committed to working for the Church to our dying breath. I do not ask for material help. I only ask for that consideration and that charity which [I believe] is compatible with authority in the Church.

It was under these circumstances (intending it perhaps as a gesture for the Roman authorities) that on March 28, 1880, Don Bosco accepted the proposal of the Cardinal Vicar, Raphael Monaco La Valletta, to take over the construction of the church of the Sacred Heart, with adjoining "hospice"—the whole "as a monument to the revered memory of Pius IX."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, January 12, 1880 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 539-40, cf. *EBM* XIV, 163, 186).

<sup>57</sup> Fr. Dalmazzo to Fr. Rua, [January (?) 1880] (*Documenti* XXII, 69 in *ASC* A071, *FDBM* 1069 C1, mention of audience and of Ferrieri's hostility; *EBM* XIV, 346-348, report of Dalmazzo's first audience with Cardinal Ferrieri).

<sup>58</sup> Fr. Berto to Fr. Rua, April 8, 1880, and Fr. Berto's recollections (*EBM* XIV, 357-360).

<sup>59</sup> Fr. Berto's notes, *Documenti* XXII, 87-88 in *ASC* A071, *FDBM* 1069 D7-8; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 348. As noted earlier (cf. Vol. 5, 374-376), the traditional version is that Leo XIII requested Don Bosco to take over the building of the church of the Sacred Heart when the project had stalled; and the latter exclaimed "I regard the pope's wish as an order—I obey!"

## **II. Final Phase — The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict After the Appearance of the Defamatory Pamphlets to the Conclusion of the Bonetti Affair and the Concordia (1880-1882)**

The Bonetti-Gastaldi confrontation had proceeded hand in hand with the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict since 1878. The old issues with related recurring episodes still remained the cause of irritation and frustration on both sides. But with Don Bosco's decision to stand by Bonetti to the finish, the two aspects now merged. Then, as indicated above, the series of defamatory pamphlets appeared, published at intervals over nearly two years. Readily imputed to the Salesians by the Turin chancery, in particular by its trial lawyer, Emmanuel Colomiatti, and by the archbishop himself, they were responsible for the definitive breach. By 1880 all the strands had come together and coalesced as one—finally to be judged before the highest tribunal in Rome.<sup>60</sup>

### **1. Don Bosco's Definitive Turning Away from Archbishop Gastaldi**

Psychologically, Don Bosco's alienation from Gastaldi was already accomplished. In writing to Bishop de Gaudenzi of Vigevano October 6, 1878, Don Bosco (still smarting from the "slap" received in not being allowed to bless the chapel of the Chieri oratory) expressed himself in words which could have been lifted out of the *Chaplain's First Strenna*: "As you yourself have said—poor unfortunate A[rchbishop]; but also, and more so, poor, unfortunate diocese; and unhappy those who have to stay in this diocese and be

(EBM XIV, 461; cf. *Documenti* XXII, 90-92 in *ASC* A071, *FDBM* 1069 D10-12) It seems instead that in his audience with Leo XIII on April 5, 1880, the church was not mentioned (cf. *EBM* XIV, 356-359). Before leaving Rome, however, he wrote a well thought-out proposal of acceptance for the Cardinal Vicar, asking him to present it to the pope for his approval and blessing (Memorandum dated April 10, 1880, *EBM* XIV, 462-463). The pope must have been gratified, and we know that Don Bosco went forward with the project. This was perhaps the real achievement of this visit to Rome (Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1141-1142).

<sup>60</sup> For this final part of the conflict to its conclusion (the Concordia) cf. detailed treatment by Ceria in *EBM* XV, 153-239. Throughout this section, for the presentation, interpretation and some references, I again take Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, and *Chronologie critique* as guide.

in his power (*nelle mani di lui* [in his hands])! Let us pray!”<sup>61</sup> Some time later (November 1878), in a conversation dealing with the diocesan synod and with Gastaldi’s speech to the assembly, Don Bosco asked the Salesians who were with him if they thought their criticism of the archbishop’s speech was sinful. Someone answered that they were guilty of “idle words.” Don Bosco retorted:

Idle words? Not when one [Bosco?] goes through a lot of trouble to warn the one responsible [Gastaldi?]: “Look out; this grass on which you feed and on which you pasture your [flock] is poisonous.” In order to establish one’s defense, is it not necessary to assess the dangers, survey the terrain, discover what weapons the attacker is likely to use?<sup>62</sup>

Don Bosco seems to have meant that the archbishop’s course of action was ruinous for the Church and harmful to the Salesian Congregation; and that he (Don Bosco) had to find ways of defending himself and the Society against an enemy. If this is so, one should conclude that, whereas in 1878 and for a part of 1879 Gastaldi was still making overtures, for Don Bosco the parting of the ways had already been reached.

One may then understand Don Bosco’s chagrin when on October 22, 1880 he received a letter from the Archbishop rebuking him for the lack of respect shown him by some of the boys at San Benigno. Unannounced he had visited that Salesian school with two canons. Some boys in the shops failed to greet him properly, and some Salesian seminarians on the playground “hastily ran off” on seeing him. He wanted Don Bosco to remind all in his charge “of the exalted and divine character of the episcopacy, and of the duty they have ... to pay him the homage that is due to him. For the bishop shares our Savior Jesus Christ’s own character. Christ’s character is continued on earth in the person of the bishops, who share with Christ the fullness of the priesthood.”<sup>63</sup> Did Don Bosco laugh or cry?

<sup>61</sup> Don Bosco to Bishop de Gaudenzi, October 6, 1878 (Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 391-392).

<sup>62</sup> *Documenti* XIX, 255 in *ASC* A068, *FDBM* 1057 A1 (source unknown); conversation toned down in the *Biographical Memoirs* (cf. *EBM* XIII, 691).

<sup>63</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Don Bosco, October 22, 1880 (*IBM* XIV, 800, Appendix 62, omitted in *EBM*).

## 2. Archbishop Gastaldi Definitive Break with Don Bosco

The archbishop's definitive break with Don Bosco came in December 1880, and for a much more serious reason than that incident of disrespect at San Benigno. It was brought about by an unfavorable judgment rendered by the Congregation of the Council against him in the Bonetti suspension case. Furthermore, the humiliation of this defeat was aggravated by the manner in which the decision was conveyed to him. Briefly, this is the story.

After a long delay, Father Bonetti's case came up before the general session of the Congregation of the Council about mid-November 1880, perhaps in consequence of a new appeal made by him directly to the Holy Father.<sup>64</sup> Attorney Leonori was duly notified of the proceedings, and without delay he sent a notification to Don Bosco in Turin. Inexplicably he enclosed also a letter bearing the seal of the Congregation of the Council addressed to the archbishop to notify him of the proceedings.<sup>65</sup> On December 3, Don Bosco (at San Benigno at the time) entrusted the task of delivering the letter to Father Louis Deppert. The latter tried to do so but was rebuffed. The following day Father Deppert, accompanied by a confrere as witness, tried again to deliver it to the archbishop personally. When the latter refused to see them, they left it with a secretary. But the letter was returned to Don Bosco without acknowledgment.<sup>66</sup>

On December 5, Archbishop Gastaldi wrote to Cardinal Caterini, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, to protest in strongest terms the Congregation's way of handling the notification: "I have been deeply humiliated and hurt by the way I have been treated." Again he repeated his accusations against Don Bosco, stressing his ingratitude in spite of all he had done for the nascent Congregation: "Forgetting my zealous and tireless cooperation, ... he keeps persecuting me and never neglects an opportunity to discredit and aggravate me."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> EBM XIV, 187: "Tired of being left in suspense for twenty-two months, Father Bonetti, on November 17, 1880, sent directly to the Pope the appeal of October 24, 1879 that Archbishop Verga had held up" (October 10 is the date given in Desramaut, *Chronologie critique*, 121).

<sup>65</sup> Attorney Leonori to Don Bosco, November 29, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 47 in ASC A094, FDBM 1195 A11; description in EBM XIV, 187-189).

<sup>66</sup> Fr. Deppert to Fr. Dalmazzo, December 18, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 52-53, in ASC A094, FDBM 1195 B4-5; description in EBM XIV, 188-189).

<sup>67</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Caterini, December 5, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 49-50, in ASC A094, FDBM 1195 B1-2, excerpt in EBM XIV, 189).

### 3. Gastaldi's Lawsuit for Libel against Don Bosco and Bonetti

On December 11(?), 1880, Archbishop Gastaldi received a report of the Roman Congregation's proceedings in the Bonetti suspension case, and on December 24, the archbishop in turn notified Bonetti through Canon Chiuso.<sup>68</sup> On receiving the note from Rome, Gastaldi decided, with all the resources at his disposal to strike back at Bonetti, Don Bosco, and the Salesians: he would present his own case against them and prosecute them for the libelous pamphlets. He proceeded to build his case by collecting statements from people who were willing to testify that the Salesians were responsible for the anonymous pamphlets.

(1) In early December both Canon Stephen Lione, vicar forane, and Father Andrew Oddenino, pastor of the *Duomo* at Chieri, accused Bonetti of being the author of the *Chieri Story*.<sup>69</sup>

(2) At about the same time, Father Anthony Musso, who was interrogated at the chancery, connected Don Bosco with one of the pamphlets, by stating that he had spotted a passage relating the Archbishop's closure of the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*)—information that Musso had relayed confidentially to Don Bosco.<sup>70</sup>

(3) Far more damaging to Don Bosco was the testimony given by a priest of the Pious Schools, Father Louis Leoncini. He stated that conversations he had with the ex-Jesuit Anthony Pellicani tended to show [i] that Don Bosco had encouraged Pellicani to write against Gastaldi, [ii] that Pellicani had denied having accepted Don Bosco's "proposition," [iii] but that, after comparing a book written by Pellicani with the *Chaplain's First Strenna*, he (Leoncini) was convinced that Pellicani was its author, and hence the author also of the *Second Strenna*. This would implicate Don Bosco.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Canon Chiuso to Fr. Bonetti, December 24, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 54 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 B6; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 154).

<sup>69</sup> Canon Lione to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 5, 1880 and Pastor Oddenino to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 13, 1880 (*Rehabilitation, Summarium, Addendum*, 1-2 and 5-8, in *ASC* A118: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 636 C5-6 and 7-12, with indignant hand-written marginal notations).

<sup>70</sup> Deposition by Joseph Corno, (a secretary of the Archbishop) in the *Processiculus* of June 28, 1917 (Desramaut, *Don Bosco en sons temps*, 1151 and note 80). The *Processiculi* (Little Processes) were secret investigations held during the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification between 1915 and 1922. They were made necessary by the depositions brought against Don Bosco by Gastaldi's lawyer, Canon Emmanuel Colomiatti.

<sup>71</sup> For the story cf. *EBM* XV, 191-192. This would remain Gastaldi's position, supported

Armed with these “testimonies”, on December 29, Archbishop Gastaldi replied to the note from Rome, and to Cardinal Caterini, with an immense brief. After recalling again his benevolence and liberality toward Don Bosco and his Society, he formally accused Don Bosco and Father Bonetti of complicity in the compilation of the pamphlets.<sup>72</sup> Thus it was that the conflict over the pamphlets (to which the Bonetti case was also attached) became officially a criminal lawsuit.

At the same time, the representative of the Holy See in Turin, Monsignor Gaetano Tortone, sent in a report on the Chieri affair and suspension that was generally unfavorable to Bonetti. Among other things, he faulted the Salesians for acting without due regard to “the ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>73</sup> Such a judgment was bound to make Gastaldi’s charges more believable.

In January 1881, to conduct his lawsuit at the Congregation of the Council, Gastaldi appointed his thirty-four-year old trial lawyer (*avvocato fiscale*), Canon Emmanuel Colomiatti. Although the Salesians “have reckoned him with the wicked,” he was, according to Tuninetti, “an honest and competent person.”<sup>74</sup>

#### **4. Colomiatti’s Proposal for an Out-of-Court Settlement of the Bonetti Case**

On February 4 (1881), Canon Colomiatti arrived in Rome to take charge of the defense in the suspension case (the suit brought against Gastaldi by Bonetti), and of the prosecution of Don Bosco and Fr. Bonetti for the pamphlets (the suit brought against them by Gastaldi). He went to work immediately with unbounded energy and consummate skill. He immediately obtained access to Bonetti’s file at the Congregation of the Council; by February 8 he

by Leoncini, but in the end disavowed by Pellicani. In any case, Leoncini’s deduction was wrong for, as will be indicated below, Father Turchi (who was also interrogated at the time) later confessed to authoring the *First Strenna* and contributing to the *Second Strenna*.

<sup>72</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Caterini, December 29, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 55-64 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 B7-C4; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 190).

<sup>73</sup> Msgr. Tortone to Holy See, December 30, 1880 (*Documenti* XLV, 65-68 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 C5-8), where printed within the text one reads also parenthetical disparaging remarks about the author (Tortone).

<sup>74</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 64: “That he was a competent and honest person is substantiated by his subsequent career ...” Tuninetti then mentions honors bestowed on him by Gastaldi’s successors, Cardinal Alimonda and Archbishop David Riccardi.



had already obtained an audience with Leo XIII, thanks to the Pope's chamberlain, Monsignor Louis Macchi (the same who had left Don Bosco to cool his heels for weeks the previous year). And after discussing the case with Leo XIII, Colomiatti immediately reported to Archbishop Gastaldi. Two days later (February 10) he visited Cardinal Nina, Protector of the Salesian Society. In this interview, Colomiatti proposed an out-of-court settlement of the suspension case, which he had already suggested in his report to Archbishop Gastaldi.<sup>75</sup> Cardinal Nina was at first more inclined to let the lawsuit run its course at the Congregation of the Council. But on second thought he accepted Colomiatti's proposal and immediately wrote to Don Bosco advising him to seek an out-of-court settlement of the Bonetti case.<sup>76</sup>

Don Bosco (in France at the time) was not convinced, and his reply to Cardinal Nina reveals his misgivings.<sup>77</sup> He also wrote to Father Rua on the same day instructing him to present to Colomiatti his reasons for refusing the offer—a position that was to remain unchanged until Pope Leo XIII “ordered” the “reconciliation.”

... I have never wanted anything more than to close the book on this and other unhappy affairs. And I don't see any simpler way of doing this than the one already outlined last year: namely that the archbishop remove a suspension that he has already removed once and then immediately reapplied [as related above]. Now, however, there is an added serious obstacle, namely, the action which Dr. Colomiatti is threatening us with—that is, should Don Bosco not agree to negotiate for a settlement, the archbishop will sue him for libel on the basis of the pamphlets published against him. I reject this threat with its implications—namely, that we are in any way responsible for these publications. I have had no part in them, either directly or indirectly. I feel all the more forced to take this position by the fact that I am under a similar threat repeatedly made against me by the archbishop: namely, that if Don Bosco, either personally or through others, whether by printed or hand-written documents (except if addressed to the Holy Father or to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars) at any time speaks

<sup>75</sup> Canon Colomiatti to Archbishop Gastaldi, February 8, 9 and 10, 1881 (*ASC* A113: Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 645 D4-E4).

<sup>76</sup> Card. Nina to Don Bosco, February 10, 1881 (*IBM* XV, 707-708, Appendix 15, omitted in *EBM*). Colomiatti's actions in Rome at this point are reported in *EBM* XV, 156-167. Ceria may be wrong in thinking that Colomiatti made his proposal because he had a weak case (p. 157). Colomiatti may well have preferred an out-of-court settlement, even though he felt he could win the case.

<sup>77</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, February 27, 1881 (*EBM* XV, 157-158; date in *Documenti* XLV, 74 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 D2).

against the Archbishop, he incurs automatic suspension ... You may present these ideas of mine to the Rev. Dr. Colomiatti ...<sup>78</sup>

Later, on his way back from France, responding to a pressing letter from Colomiatti, Don Bosco himself restated his position in writing.<sup>79</sup>

## 5. A Failed Verbal Agreement to Drop the Lawsuits

Meanwhile Father Rua was working quietly and cautiously to bring the parties closer to a reconciliation. As letters and meetings followed one on the other, the goal appeared to be that of getting the parties to drop *all* legal action (not just the Bonetti lawsuit) and request the Roman congregation to return the briefs. This would pave the way for a negotiated settlement.<sup>80</sup> At one point Rua may have thought to have made a breakthrough. For on May 27, following an encouraging letter from the Archbishop,<sup>81</sup> Don Bosco had a long meeting with Colomiatti, in which (so he believed) a verbal agreement was reached that all legal action would be dropped. On that basis he handed Colomiatti a handwritten statement (pertaining to the Bonetti lawsuit) that was meant as a working text to which the archbishop would respond. That would serve as a basis for developing petitions to the Congregation of the Council to drop all legal action. The working statement ran as follows:

I, the undersigned, in my capacity as Rector of the Pious Salesian Society, satisfied that the matter outstanding between Father John Bonetti and His Grace the Archbishop has been resolved amicably (*ultimata amichevolmente*), begs His Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, to return the documents relating to the legal action.<sup>82</sup>

The substance of the oral agreement was that Don Bosco would withdraw his brief against the archbishop on condition (1) that the archbishop also refrain from all legal action against Father Bonetti, Don Bosco and the Salesian Society; (2) that Father Bonetti be freed from the suspension and all further

<sup>78</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Rua, February 27, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 28).

<sup>79</sup> Don Bosco to Canon Colomiatti, Alassio, April 5, 1881 (*EBM* XV, 161-162).

<sup>80</sup> For some of Fr. Rua's moves at this point, cf. *EBM* XV, 160-163. Desramaut (*Chron. critique*, 126-128) lists as many as ten.

<sup>81</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Fr. Rua, May 10, 1881 (*Documenti* XLV, 82, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 D10; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 164).

<sup>82</sup> Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 58, note 1; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 164-165.

vexation. Were these orally agreed conditions part of the total agreement? This is the crucial point that will forever be the bone of contention. The Salesians have always thought so; but apparently the Archbishop did not think so, or did not accept what Colomiatti had agreed to verbally in his name. He took Don Bosco's working statement as final and sent it to Archbishop Verga, Secretary of the Congregation of the Council, instead of returning it to Don Bosco with a statement of his own. In his cover letter to the Roman Congregation he matched Don Bosco's statement by withdrawing the action against Bonetti (but against Bonetti only, with regard to the suspension) and asking that the pertinent documents be returned.

A week later Don Bosco received from the chancery through the mails notification of the step the archbishop had taken in Rome, namely, that he had *reciprocated* by dropping legal action against Bonetti. The Salesians immediately cried, "Foul!": the archbishop had acted in bad faith, and Colomiatti's negotiations now appeared as entrapment. For, by the settling of the Bonetti case the Salesians were dropping *all* legal action against the archbishop, because that was their only legal action pending. But without a commitment on the archbishop's part to drop *all* legal action against the Salesians (presumably in accordance with the verbal agreement), the Salesians were still being sued for the pamphlets. This is the traditional Salesian view; but it could have been a genuine misunderstanding. In any case, seeing that the conditions agreed to orally had not been met, first by telegram and then by letter of June 2, Don Bosco reversed his decision to withdraw the lawsuit.<sup>83</sup>

"Back to square one," the conflict increased in intensity through the second half of 1881 and the first half of 1882. All efforts were concentrated on the upcoming trial.

## 6. Moves and Countermoves Preparatory to Legal Action

The actions on the Archbishop's part may be summarized as follows:

(1) Father Louis Leoncini readily testified in writing to Archbishop Galsaldi that, according to Father Pellicani's statement made to him, Don Bosco

<sup>83</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Verga, Don Bosco to Canon Colomiatti, June 2, 1881, and Don Bosco to Canon Colomiatti, June 11, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 57-9); Fr. Bonetti to Archbishop Verga, June 7, 1881 (IBM XV, 708-710, Appendix 16, omitted in *EBM*). For story, excerpts and interpretation cf. *EBM* XV, 164-165.

was responsible not only for the *Chaplain's Strennas* but for all the defamatory pamphlets globally, and that Father Pellicani had confirmed this allegation.<sup>84</sup>

(2) The Archbishop denounced Father Bonetti to the Congregation of the Council as the co-author, if not the author, of the defamatory pamphlets; he also asked that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians be placed under diocesan authority.<sup>85</sup>

(3) Canon Colomiatti wrote to Cardinal Protector Nina, to bring him up to date: since attempts at reconciliation had failed, Archbishop Gastaldi was pressing forward with the case.<sup>86</sup>

Don Bosco also took decisive action:

(1) He engaged Attorney Leonori specifically to prepare and conduct the Salesians' defense before the Congregation of the Council, giving priority to Bonetti's suspension case.<sup>87</sup>

(2) Leonori went to work immediately. Among other things, he prepared a pamphlet on the Salesian Society to provide background information for the case. In September he notified Bonetti that he had almost completed it.<sup>88</sup> A little later, however, he told Don Bosco of his fears that the chapter he was working on (entitled "Harassment and Spiteful Actions by the Archbishop of Turin against Don Bosco and His Congregation") might be interpreted as a contravention of the restraining order not to write about the case, or as an additional defamatory pamphlet.<sup>89</sup>

(3) Don Bosco was well aware that Leoncini's testimony, recalling Pellicani's conversation, was bound to be damaging, unless the latter denied the al-

<sup>84</sup> Fr. Leoncini to Archbishop Gastaldi, June 18, 1881 (*Documenti* XLV, 90-91, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 E6-7). For the story, cf. *EBM* XV, 191f. For the earlier Leoncini-Pellicani testimony, cf. discussion above.

<sup>85</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to the Congregation of the Council, June 21, 1881 (Desramaut, *Chronologie critique*, 131). With the same date, Attorney Leonori urged Don Bosco to petition Rome for approval of the constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (*EBM* XV, 295). At this point in time their juridical status was unclear.

<sup>86</sup> Canon Colomiatti to Cardinal Nina, June 25, 1881 (*IBM* XV, 712-713, Appendix 18, omitted in *EBM*).

<sup>87</sup> Don Bosco to Attorney Leonori, July 8, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 68-69).

<sup>88</sup> Attorney Leonori to Fr. Bonetti, September 25, 1881 (*Documenti* XLV, 94, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1195 E10).

<sup>89</sup> Attorney Leonori to Don Bosco [—October 1881] (*Documenti* XLV, 100-101, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1196 A4-5). The little pamphlet was submitted to Don Bosco and published a little later: C. Leonori, *Notice on the Society of St. Francis de Sales founded by Father John Bosco* (Rome: Tip. Tiberina, 1881).

legation. Hence on October 14 Don Bosco wrote to Pellicani reminding him of what, as far as he could recollect, had passed between them on the latter's business visit to the Oratory. When the conversation drifted on to the subject of Don Bosco's troubles with Gastaldi, Pellicani had wondered: Should the pope perhaps not be informed. Don Bosco had replied: "You might do so, since you have both the time and the ability." That was all. Don Bosco had never asked him to write anything against the archbishop.<sup>90</sup>

Further actions followed. The same day (October 14) Colomiatti notified Archbishop Gastaldi that he had started legal action concerning the "Sisters of Mary Help of Christians" with Cardinal Ferrieri and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He had also called on Attorney Achilles Carcani. The latter was shocked at seeing in writing the allegations of "Don Bosco's complicity" in the matter of the pamphlets; but his position prevented him from giving advice.<sup>91</sup> The following day, Colomiatti sought Cardinal Ferrieri's opinion. When shown Leoncini's testimony implicating Don Bosco, the cardinal is reported by Colomiatti later to have said:

In a number of questions involving Don Bosco taken up by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, he proved to be a person impossible to deal with. It is a good thing that a fact-finding investigation has been conducted by the chancery for the purpose of unmasking him ..., and showing him up for the impostor that he is."<sup>92</sup>

Father Bonetti, too, printed a memorandum dealing with the details of his own case with the date of October 15, and sent it "insured and by special delivery" to Pope Leo XIII.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Pellicani, October 14, 1881 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 87-88, *EBM* XV, 192). A recantation from Pellicani came later, perhaps too late to do any good, as related below. Ceria (*Ibid.*, note 1) gives the text of Pellicani's recantation.

<sup>91</sup> Canon Colomiatti to Archbishop Gastaldi, October 14, 1881 (*ASC* A113: Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Colomiatti, *FDBM* 646 A 8-9; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 193). Colomiatti's brief focused on the juridical status (especially regarding exemption) of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and of their convents and oratories, the very issues that surfaced in the Chieri affair (*EBM* XV, 171).

<sup>92</sup> Desramaut, *Chronologie critique*, 134. This is Colomiatti's testimony given in 1921 at the *Processus* within the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification. Ceria (*EBM* XV, 193-194) records the impressions of various other persons in Rome at the time—that Colomiatti seemed to have a *prima facie* case against Don Bosco and Fr. Bonetti.

<sup>93</sup> Bonetti, *Promemoria* (Turin: Tipografia Salesiana, 1881), 16 pages, *Documenti* XLV, 103-118 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1196 A6-B8; reference in *EBM* XV, 172.



34 – Portrait of Don Bosco by Photographer Michael Shemboche  
(Turin, June, 1880)

Don Bosco insisted on keeping Bonetti's suspension case separate from that of the defamatory pamphlets, and had so instructed Leonori. The Archbishop had to prove the legality of the disciplinary action he had taken against Bonetti. But, as far as the Archbishop was concerned, the case against Bonetti and Don Bosco for the pamphlets took priority over the case of Bonetti's suspension. As a matter of fact, Attorney Menghini in drafting the defense of the archbishop had combined both suits.

Leonori, after perusing Menghini's voluminous brief, sent a copy to Don

Bosco.<sup>94</sup> Don Bosco then wrote at length to Cardinal Nina (by then Prefect of the Congregation of the Council) asking “that the forthcoming session of the Sacred Congregation consider only the question of Father Bonetti’s suspension imposed some three years ago, and not other irrelevant matters.”<sup>95</sup>

## 7. The “Settlement” of the Bonetti Suspension Case in Rome and Don Bosco’s and Bonetti’s Arraignment to Stand Trial in Turin for the Pamphlets

The last few months of 1881, then, were filled with feverish activity in both camps in preparation for the forthcoming hearing of the case by the cardinals of the Congregation of the Council. Archbishop Gastaldi seemed to be holding the stronger position. But meanwhile changes at the Congregation of the Council had occurred that were bound to affect the case. Cardinal Prefect Prospero Caterini died on October 28, and was succeeded on November 7 by Cardinal Lawrence Nina, who as cardinal protector of the Salesian Society would obviously be sympathetic to Don Bosco’s cause. It was in this belief that Don Bosco addressed to him his near-desperation plea in the letter mentioned above. And it was with this new situation that the two voluminous briefs for the Bonetti trial, both with the date of December 17, were presented to the Congregation of the Council. They were Leonori’s presentation for the defense, that is, for Bonetti’s reinstatement, entitled *Rehabilitationis ...*;<sup>96</sup> and Menghini’s (and Colomiatti’s) presentation of the circumstances of Bonetti’s suspension for the archbishop’s part, entitled *Interdicti ...*;<sup>97</sup>

The battle that had lasted some seven months, and was joined in Rome was now about to be decided under arbitration of the Holy See. On De-

<sup>94</sup> EBM XV, 199.

<sup>95</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, December 10, 1881 (EBM XV, 199-202).

<sup>96</sup> S. Congregatione Concilii, *Taurin. Rehabilitationis ad audiendas confessiones, pro Johanne Bonetti Societatis Salesianae cum Illma et Rma Curia Taurinensi*. Restrictus facti et juris, cum Summario pro Congregatione Generali dici 17 Decembris 1881 (Romae: Ex Typ. Tiberina, 1881), 50 (Leonori’s presentation); 55 (*Summarium*); 11 (*Summarium additionale*), in ASC A118: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Bonetti-Gastaldi, FDBM 634 D7-636 D3.

<sup>97</sup> S. Congregatione Concilii, *Taurin. Interdicti localis super facultate audiendi Confessiones, pro Rma Curia seu Rmo Laurentio Gastaldi Archiepiscopo cum R. D. Johanne Bonetti Sacerdote Instituti Salesiani. Memoriale facti et juris cum Summario pro Congregatione ... diei Mensis Decembris 1881* (Romae: Ex Typ. Mugnoz, 1881), 48, in ASC A118: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Bonetti-Gastaldi, FDBM 636 D4-637 D4.



cember 17, 1881, the cardinals of the Congregation of Council met to hear arguments in the Bonetti suspension case, and Cardinal Protector Nina succeeded, in spite of majority support for Gastaldi, in preventing a “sentence.” Instead an “arrangement” was reached that favored Bonetti: the latter was to make an apology in writing, to be delivered by Don Bosco to the archbishop personally. Card. Nina notified both Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi of the Congregation’s decision.<sup>98</sup>

Archbishop Gastaldi’s reaction was immediate and fierce. In an angry letter to Cardinal Nina he demanded a stay; he argued that “restoring Father Bonetti to Chieri without delay” in exchange for an apology was against any sense of justice; he called the arrangement, imposed by a cardinal prefect who was also cardinal protector against a majority opinion, “without precedent in the practice of the S[acred] Congregation.”<sup>99</sup> Gastaldi, then, flatly rejected the arrangement and acted accordingly. On January 2, when Don Bosco went to the chancery to convey the required apology, the archbishop refused to receive him.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Bonetti’s triumph was short-lived.

The Archbishop took a further step: he decided to bring criminal charges in Turin against Fr. Bonetti and Don Bosco and for complicity in authoring and publishing the pamphlets against him. For that purpose he set up a court at his chancery and appointed Colomiatti as deputy judge. On December 20 (1881), by order of the Archbishop, Colomiatti arraigned Bonetti to appear in ecclesiastical court to stand trial for authoring the *Chieri Story*. On January 5 (1882) Colomiatti arraigned Don Bosco to appear in for his complicity in the writing of the *Chaplain’s First Strenna* and the *Chieri Story* (both of which attacked the Archbishop’s pastoral action), and of the *Chaplain’s Second Strenna* and the *Brief Essay* (both of which attacked the archbishop chiefly for his defense of Rosmini’s philosophy).<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> For a detailed presentation of successive events cf. *EBM* XV, 177-185, although the *Biographical Memoirs* give a slightly different construction of the outcome (cf. *EBM* XV, 177 and 202-203).

<sup>99</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Card. Nina, December 31, 1881 (*IBM* XV, 723, Appendix 26; excerpts in *EBM* XV, 182).

<sup>100</sup> Report of Don Bosco to Card. Nina, January 2, 1882 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 109-110, *EBM* XV, 183). For the text of the rejected letter of apology, cf. *Documenti* XLV, 151-152, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1196 E5-6.

<sup>101</sup> *IBM* XV, 731 and 733, Appendix 30 and 32 (text of the chancery’s summons to Fr. Bonetti and Don Bosco, omitted in *EBM*). For the story in detail and much of the connected correspondence, cf. *EBM* XV, 186-217.

On receiving the summons, Don Bosco on January 7 wrote to Cardinal Nina about this new development, calling it a ploy “to drag things out and make me waste both time and money.” He also feared that he would be dragged into the controversy, heating up at the time, about Rosmini’s doctrines and orthodoxy, of which Gastaldi had been all along a courageous champion. Don Bosco wrote in conclusion:

These new charges have arisen because I will not alter my stand. I am against Rosmini: that is why I am being falsely blamed for those pamphlets. I am not their author. My [theological] position has always been to profess the truths of our Catholic faith, and to follow every directive, every counsel and every desire of the supreme pontiff.<sup>102</sup>

Obviously Don Bosco couldn’t have authored the two pamphlets that dealt with the Rosminian question, simply because he was not interested in Rosminian philosophy or theology. But his profession of “ultramontane faith” would not have strengthened his defense.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Ferrieri, in replying to Colomiatti’s already-mentioned query concerning the juridical status of the Salesian Sisters, put an additional weapon into Gastaldi’s hand. This institute, Ferrieri confirmed, had to be diocesan, since there was no record on file of its having received even the *Decretum laudis* from Rome.<sup>103</sup> Hence, the Chieri community was subject to the ordinary’s jurisdiction.

A little later, on January 28, 1882, the Congregation of the Council, whose cardinals were already in possession of Don Bosco’s *Esposizione* (to be discussed below), upheld the arrangement regarding Bonetti, and called Gastaldi to order in strongest terms for his insolent letter of December 31. At the same time Gastaldi and his chancery were ordered to desist from proceeding against Don Bosco and/or Bonetti in Turin in the matter of the pamphlets. A special investigation and a change of venue to Vercelli were being arranged, for which Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli was deputed.<sup>104</sup> The Roman Congregation’s verdict in Bonetti’s favor seemed indeed definitive. Attorney Leonori hastened to send a “victory” telegram to Father Bonetti, and

<sup>102</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, January 7, 1882 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 113-114; *EBM* XV, 207).

<sup>103</sup> Card. Ferrieri to Archbishop Gastaldi, January 18, 1882 (*Documenti* XXIV, 278, in *ASC* A073, *FDBM* 1198 E10, omitted in the *Biographical Memoirs*).

<sup>104</sup> Card. Nina to Archbishop Gastaldi, January 31, 1882 (*IBM* XV, 727, Appendix 27, omitted, but briefly referred to in *EBM* XV, 185).

the following day by letter he described to him how the victory had been won in full assembly.<sup>105</sup> However, this was not to be the end of the matter. Archbishop Gastaldi immediately filed an appeal, which suspended the verdict for three months before the case could be taken up again.

Pope Leo was soon to intervene, but meanwhile a decision in both aspects of the trial (the Bonetti suspension and the defamatory pamphlets), still hung in the balance.

## 8. Don Bosco's "*Esposizione*" to the Cardinals

At the time of the first trial session in the Bonetti case, Don Bosco with the help of secretary Berto and Bonetti himself had been compiling a detailed exposition of the many acts of injustice suffered by the Salesian Society over the years at the hand of Archbishop Gastaldi. This lengthy presentation, intended for the Cardinals of the Congregation of the Council and for other Roman authorities, had been dated and signed by Don Bosco on December 20, 1881, but was distributed only on January 26, 1882, a couple of days before the second trial convened. It was entitled, *Presentation (Esposizione) to Their Eminences, the Most Reverend Cardinals ...*<sup>106</sup> It was a documented point-by-point catalogue of grievances against Gastaldi for his harassment of the Salesian Society from 1872 to 1881.

The list of accusations, covering 66 dense pages in 8vo, was preceded by a foreword ("Reasons for this Presentation") and by a brief preamble describing Gastaldi's change from supporter to persecutor. It was followed by three closing paragraphs of decreasing length entitled: "Consequences," "A Prayer," and "Declaration." It was the most serious piece of its kind ever to come from Don Bosco's pen, a ruthless attack, which would later come back to haunt him and the Salesians. As mentioned, he was not its sole author, and probably the body of the work (the catalogue of grievances) expressed the

<sup>105</sup> Attorney Leonori to Fr. Bonetti: telegram, *Documenti* XLV, 179 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1197 B9; letters, January 29 and February 3, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 205-206, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1197 D9f; briefly mentioned in *EBM* XV, 185.

<sup>106</sup> *Esposizione del Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco agli Eminentissimi Cardinali della Sacra Congregazione del Concilio* (S. Pierdarena: Tipografia di San Vincenzo de' Paoli, 1881), 76, in *Opere Edite* XXXII, 49-124. The date of distribution is as given by Attorney Menghini, in *An adducta* (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, 1921), 23-24 (Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1,155 and 1,169, note 109).

feelings of his angry secretaries more than his own. But since Don Bosco signed it and took responsibility for the whole of it, we must assume that it expressed also his own thoughts and feelings at this time.

The “Foreword,”<sup>107</sup> in spite of its calm style and of its being piously dated “on the octave of the feast of Mary Immaculate,” makes some shocking charges: The archbishop’s harassment of the Salesian Congregation has impeded its work “for the salvation of souls;” “all these [evil] actions [of his against the Salesians] seem to have been abetted (*promossi*) by the enemy of all good, with the aim of stifling and destroying our poor Congregation, or at least of placing obstacle upon obstacle in its way, so that it might not attain the end for which it was established and approved by the Holy See.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, Satan had worked his mischief over a period of ten years through the actions of a bishop supposedly endowed with the fullness of God’s Spirit!

After a bristling ten-chapter catalogue comes the first of the concluding paragraphs “Consequences.” Briefly it accuses the archbishop of harming, by his actions, not only the Salesian Society but also of all other religious congregations. This is followed by specific summary statements: (1) Archbishop Gastaldi has shown himself systematically hostile to the Salesians; (2) He has acted in defiance of the prescriptions of canon law; (3) He has interfered in the internal affairs of the Salesian Society contrary to the Church’s dispositions; (4) He has slandered the Salesian Congregation by means of the spoken and written word, and by publications; (5) Finally, by his demands he has forced the Salesian superior into the painful dilemma of having to disobey either him or the Holy See.<sup>109</sup>

From the beginning until nearly the end, therefore, the document is an unrelenting, harsh denunciation of Gastaldi’s malfeasance. Finally, in the “Prayer” (the second concluding paragraph), with its expressions full of zeal and free of rancor, the real Don Bosco seems to emerge. He begs the cardinals and the Holy Father himself to prevent the recurrence of these vexations, which take up time, effort, and money that would be better spent for the glory of God and the good of souls. He begs for help and protection on his young congregation, protection all the more needed “now that, with

<sup>107</sup> The Foreword (“Reasons for this Statement”) is given in *EBM* XV, 174-175 with accompanying comments.

<sup>108</sup> *EBM* XV, 174, cf. *Opere Edite* XXXII, 52.

<sup>109</sup> *Opere Edite* XXXII, 121-123.

God's merciful help, the Salesians have been able to establish 140 houses, in which more than 80 thousand children are give a Christian education, ... for the propagation of the gospel and the salvation of souls."<sup>110</sup>

At mid-January, as the first hearing of the Bonetti case was getting under way, Don Bosco, as was his custom, left for France to visit confreres and benefactors.<sup>111</sup> He returned to Italy in late March, and journeyed to Rome by stages, arriving on April 12 with his faithful secretary, Father Berto. By this time, as we have narrated, the first and second Bonetti trial, Gastaldi's appeal, the arraignment of Don Bosco and Bonetti in Turin for the pamphlets, the restraining order from Rome to the Turin chancery—these and other events had become history. Archbishop Fissore of Vercelli was busy collecting evidence on the pamphlets, the case still pending both in Turin and Rome. This mediator, whom the Salesians apparently no longer trusted, had requested Don Bosco to submit official statements in the matter (Father Rua and Father Bonetti acting in Don Bosco's name).

Nor had Archbishop Gastaldi been idle. On March 14, he addressed an appeal to Leo XIII to be heard in person regarding the Congregation of the Council's decision, which he considered invalid because the chief judge in the matter was also the cardinal protector of the Salesians. At the same time he lodged the strongest protests against the change of venue (to Vercelli and Archbishop Fissore) in the criminal libel trial; and he excoriated Don Bosco for the *Esposizione*.<sup>112</sup> All along he had been instructing his lawyer Colomiatti as to the actions to be undertaken in Rome.

## 9. Don Bosco Helpless in Rome

In Rome Leo XIII could not receive Don Bosco before April 25, but, as usual, he showed himself very gracious. Ceria (on Berto's and Lemoyne's testimony) reports that, on being asked by the pope if he had any enemies, Don Bosco replied: "Cardinal Ferrieri in Rome, and Archbishop Gastaldi in Turin."<sup>113</sup> While in Rome, Berto wrote to Bonetti reporting words attributed

<sup>110</sup> *Opere Edite* XXXII, 123-124.

<sup>111</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, January 7, 1881 (*EBM* XV, 207).

<sup>112</sup> Archbishop Gastaldi to Pope Leo XIII (*Documenti* XLV, 223-226, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 A3-6).

<sup>113</sup> *EBM* XV, 445. As reported in the *Biographical Memoirs*, during this audience Don Bosco dared again ask for the privileges (*Documenti* XXIV, 148-149, in *ASC* A073, *FDBM* 1079

to Cardinal Nina on the same subject: "About this man [Gastaldi], and about Cardinal Ferrieri, too, one can only say that they are devils disguised as lambs, both of them. They may be acting in good faith, but the devil is making use of them. So would you want to make peace with Satan?"<sup>114</sup> Be that as it may, at this point a settlement of the conflict was nowhere in sight.

Leo XIII is reported by Berto to have told Don Bosco that (according to assurances received) Archbishop Gastaldi ("that fox", Berto adds) was seeking common ground for an understanding with Don Bosco.<sup>115</sup> Don Bosco no longer believed in any such possibility. Nothing was left for him now but to try to get to the cardinals hoping for a hearing, and otherwise to claw his way through. To Cardinal Nina, who was closest to the case, on May 8, he restated his position: Father Bonetti must be fully reinstated with no conditions attached, and as for the pamphlets there had been no Salesian involvement. In an attached additional statement he gives vent to his pain:

For the past few days, he, the archbishop of Turin, has been telling people, our own religious as well so I might hear about it, that Don Bosco is a villain and an impostor; that he concocts and hands out miracles, and publishes them in Our Lady's name. He says that Rome makes a mess of everything, and that in Rome what matters is whom you know, and so on.<sup>116</sup>

Don Bosco left Rome the evening of May 9. He was not well, that is certain. But in reading the documentation, one has the feeling that he was also sick and tired of it all. He got to Turin by stages on May 15, in time for the novena to Mary Help of Christians.

D6-7). The pope seemed inclined toward such a concession, which he had not been in the audience of 1880, mentioned above. As a matter of fact, shortly thereafter (May 5) Leo XIII appointed a committee of cardinals to look into the matter (*Documenti* XXIV, 147, in *ASC* A073, *FDBM* 1079 A8).

<sup>114</sup> Letter of Fr. Berto to Fr. Bonetti, May 2, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 260-261, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 D4-5).

<sup>115</sup> Fr. Berto to Fr. Bonetti, April 25, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 249-250, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 C5-6).

<sup>116</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, Rome, May 8, 1882 (*EBM* XV, 210-211, Don Bosco's letter and attached statement). In this letter Don Bosco refers to earlier aborted attempts at reconciliation, and blames the archbishop.

## 10. Pope Leo's Initiative and the Enforced Reconciliation (*Concordia*)

Don Bosco had no inkling that the conflict would soon be brought to a forced conclusion. Even as he was leaving Rome, Gastaldi's skilled envoy and negotiator, Canon Colomiatti, was leaving Turin for Rome, where on May 12 he began a campaign to counteract Don Bosco's *Esposizione*. He rebutted Don Bosco's accusations and countered with the chancery's own charges, making his case with each of the cardinals involved. On May 13, he was happy to learn from Cardinal Jacobini, secretary of state, that Leo XIII had contacted Cardinal Nina and had annulled the Congregation of the Council's verdict regarding Bonetti, and that the Pope himself was preparing an equitable reconciliation.<sup>117</sup> The Salesian position in Rome was further weakened by an unrelated event. In April, a Salesian teacher in the school of Cremona, Father Ermenegildo Musso, had received a three-months sentence for child molestation, and the school itself had been closed. Cardinal Ferrieri was said to be contemplating an apostolic visitation of Salesian schools. Leo XIII vetoed the plan, but was shocked by this report of immorality in a Salesian school.<sup>118</sup>

Don Bosco's absence from Rome at this crucial juncture was perceived by some as a flight from his accusers. Moreover, once "reassured that Archbishop Gastaldi was really seeking a settlement" the Pope, having taken matters in hand, wanted Don Bosco available in Rome. Cardinal Nina told Colomiatti that Leo XIII had decided to tell Don Bosco personally what he wanted done.<sup>119</sup>

This untimely absence seems to have been ultimately responsible for his defeat. Don Bosco had been back in Turin less than three days, when a telegram from the Salesian procurator, Father Francis Dalmazzo, advised him that his presence was urgently required in Rome by the pope's order.<sup>120</sup> A few days earlier, as mentioned above, Fr. Dalmazzo had written to Don Bosco to inform him at length on various aspects of the Salesian position. In par-

<sup>117</sup> *An adducta*, 10-11 (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, 1921), Colomiatti's testimony (*ASC* A280: Docum. ufficiali, *FDBM* 2243 E7-8).

<sup>118</sup> Fr. Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, May 15, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 265-267. in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 D9-11; *EBM* XV, 480-481, fairly detailed report).

<sup>119</sup> *An adducta*, 11 (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, 1921), Colomiatti's testimony (*ASC* A280: Docum. ufficiali, *FDBM* 2243 E8).

<sup>120</sup> Telegrams and messages exchanged, May 18-19, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 271, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 E3; *EBM* XV, 213-215).



ticular he pointed out that Don Bosco's "flight" from Rome had made a bad impression; that the Pope was taking the Pellicani-Leoncini testimony very seriously; that the disavowal by Pellicani to the effect that he had never been suborned by Don Bosco to attack the archbishop, as alleged, was regarded as "insufficient."<sup>121</sup>

Don Bosco, however happened to be totally exhausted and suffering from incapacitating ailments "not diplomatically induced." A railway journey was out of the question.<sup>122</sup> He, therefore, called his procurator to Turin, and gave him instructions and all powers to represent him in Rome.<sup>123</sup>

When Father Dalmazzo went back to Rome, he had with him printed copies of Father Pellicani's disavowal mentioned above.<sup>124</sup> The denial was apparently unavailing to change the course of events; but it did help in lifting the cloud of suspicion hanging over Don Bosco. On the other hand, Father Bonetti on June 6 addressed a long (ill-advised) letter to the Pope in which he repeated his charges against the archbishop and berated him for his Rosminian leanings.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Fr. Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, May 15, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 265-267, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1198 D9-11). Pellicani had apparently waited a long time before responding to Don Bosco's appeal of October 14, 1881 (mentioned above). To my knowledge the original of Pellicani's recantation is not extant. Copies were printed on June 1 for distribution by Father Dalmazzo in Rome (as mentioned below).

<sup>122</sup> Don Bosco to Fr. Dalmazzo and to Cardinal Nina, May 20, 1882 (*EBM* XV, 213-214). He suffered from collapsed arches and open sores ("not diplomatically induced") in his swollen feet, and from a painful abscess or hemorrhoids which prevented him from taking a sitting position. In his testimony in *An adducta*, 11 (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, 1921) Canon Colomiatti cites various testimonies to the effect that Don Bosco did not want to appear in Rome for reasons other than illness (*An adducta* 11, in *ASC* A280: Docum. ufficiali, *FDBM* 2243 E8-9). Telegrams and letters exchanged listed in Desramaut, *Chronologie critique*, 130-132.

<sup>123</sup> Don Bosco to Leo XIII, and to Cardinal Nina, May 30 (1882, *EBM* XV, 219-220, emend date May 20 in *EBM*, taken from Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 140, to May 30).

<sup>124</sup> A printed leaflet entitled, *Smentita di un'accusa contro Don Bosco* (Refutation of a charge made against Don Bosco) (S. Pier d'Arena: Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli, June 1, 1882), 4. This leaflet printed with the date, May 30, 1882 reproduced a statement (*Dichiarazione*) by Father Anthony Pellicani: "I state before God that the only proposal Don Bosco ever made to me was that I write a memorandum for the Holy Father." Pellicani adds that this was all he had ever said to Colomiatti when summoned to testify (text in *EBM* XV, 211-212).

<sup>125</sup> Fr. Bonetti to Pope Leo XIII, June 6, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 290-298, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 A9-B5). On the damaging effect of this letter and Father Bonetti's regret, cf. *EBM* XV, 223, note 5.

Drafts of a seven-point proposal for a settlement had been prepared and submitted by the two parts. They differed considerably, especially in the type of satisfaction and guarantees that they embodied.<sup>126</sup> Now the Holy Father was about to decide on the definitive form of the reconciliation document, and bring the parties together. At this point Canon Colomiatti learned the details of the Pope's reconciliation proposal. He had a long audience with Leo XIII, but Don Bosco's representative was kept in the dark with regard to the contents of the agreement that the pope had meanwhile finalized.<sup>127</sup>

On June 15, Cardinal Nina summoned Father Dalmazzo and Canon Colomiatti, and submitted to them the seven-point settlement document (*Concordia*) for their signature. Colomiatti signed all too eagerly, while Dalmazzo balked on reading the terms of the settlement for the first time. But he was ordered to sign.<sup>128</sup>

The Salesians had the worse of it, especially with regard to the following provisions: Don Bosco had to apologize to the archbishop (article 1); Bonetti was only partially reinstated (article 3); Don Bosco had to denounce the style and some content of the pamphlets—while their authorship remained an open question (article 6).

After appealing to Cardinal Nina in vain, Fr. Dalmazzo reported to Don Bosco. Besides describing Colomiatti as a hypocrite and a liar, Fr. Dalmazzo sought to explain that by a settlement favorable to Gastaldi Leo XIII hoped to win the archbishop over from Rosminian teaching. He also referred to the damage done to the cause by Bonetti, with specific reference to his letter of June 6.<sup>129</sup>

On learning the details, Don Bosco must have understood that he was defeated. But after nearly a week's silence, on June 21, he had Father Rua send a telegram to Fr. Dalmazzo demanding that he explain to "his superior" what had happened. And on receiving Cardinal Nina's official letter (June 23) urging him to fully abide by the terms of the agreement, especially with regard to the apology specified in article 1, he balked. In reply Don Bosco asked

<sup>126</sup> The two seven-point drafts are compared in *EBM* XV, 221-223. The Salesian proposal was written by Fr. Bonetti and approved by Don Bosco.

<sup>127</sup> Fr. Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, June 18, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 301-303, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 B8-10; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 225-226).

<sup>128</sup> For the text of the *Concordia*, cf. Appendix I, below; cf. also *EBM* XV, 224-225.

<sup>129</sup> Dalmazzo to Nina, June 15, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 300f. in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 B7f.); Dalmazzo to Don Bosco (*Documenti* XLV, 301-303 in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 B8-10; cf. note 125 above for the letter of June 6; excerpts in *EBM* XV, 223-226).

Cardinal Nina to allow him “a few days’ time to offer some clarifications,” and wrote to Father Dalmazzo that he was preparing a reply. He wondered why Fr. Dalmazzo had signed the document and expressed his belief that Cardinal Nina had made a fool of Dalmazzo. (Had Don Bosco failed to grasp the situation?) Fr. Dalmazzo assured him that the terms of the *Concordia* had been dictated by the Pope (not negotiated by Colomiatti), and Cardinal Nina’s “shocked” and stern reply must have merely confirmed what Don Bosco already knew: the settlement as communicated to him was final; all that remained for him to do was to carry out its terms, for it represented the will of the Holy Father—and (please!) to restrain Bonetti.<sup>130</sup>

On July 7, Don Bosco read the document to his council. Bonetti was furious; others began discussing ways of recourse. Father Cagliero alone (returned from South America on Missions business) stood for prompt obedience to the Holy Father. And this is what Don Bosco himself had decided on.

On July 8, Don Bosco began to implement the terms of the settlement by writing the required letter of apology to the Archbishop. The exchanges lasted until July 18.<sup>131</sup>

Don Bosco experienced the defeat as a bitter and dishonorable act of injustice, perpetrated not against himself but against the congregation. As he wrote to Cardinal Nina, the Salesians felt humiliated, the chancery was flaunting its victory, and in some places the Congregation had become the laughingstock of the authorities, so much so that some Salesian directors had asked to leave.<sup>132</sup>

The anticlerical press (as it had all along) had a field day when the settlement became public knowledge. A favorite theme was: with Pius IX in command, Don Bosco did what he wanted; now that Leo XIII favors the archbishop (*Don Revalenta*), Don Bosco has been put in his place.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Telegram, Fr. Rua (for Don Bosco) to Fr. Dalmazzo, June 21, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 303, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 B10); Card. Nina to Don Bosco, June 23, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 305-306; excerpts in *EBM* XV, 225); Don Bosco to Card. Nina, June 27 (*EBM* XV, 226); Don Bosco to Dalmazzo, June 28 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 147); Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, June 30 (*Documenti* XLV, 326-328, in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1199 D8-11); Cardinal Nina to Don Bosco, July 5, 1882 (*EBM* XV, 227-228).

<sup>131</sup> Correspondence in *EBM* XV, 228-231.

<sup>132</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Nina, July 25, 1882 and August 4, 1882 (Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 155 and 159-160). In the letter of August 4, Don Bosco speaks of damaging gossip and newspaper articles.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 286; *EBM* XV, 231-232.

The Salesians, Father Dalmazzo in particular, were convinced that the peace or truce would not hold, and that the archbishop would persist in his hostility. However, that was not to be the case. The archbishop did not engage in any further harassment. On the contrary, on October 28, 1882, he insisted on presiding at the consecration of the church of St. John the Evangelist though he did not stay for Don Bosco's Mass.<sup>134</sup>

With the death of Archbishop Gastaldi of a stroke on Easter Sunday morning, March 25, 1883, the conflict was finally resolved, as far as the two protagonists were concerned. But some of Gastaldi's chancery men, especially Canon Chiuso (personal secretary) and Canon Colomiatti (trial lawyer), were later to reappear as the chief opponents of Don Bosco's beatification. This indicates that the factions that formed around and in the name of the protagonists were not so quickly reconciled, and that the memories, as well as the scars, of that decade of strife between the two most important churchmen and their followers in the Church of Turin were not so easily healed.

### III. Unresolved Questions and Closing Comments

At the end of the foregoing brief survey of the final phase of the conflict the reader will no doubt wonder about a number of questions that have been raised and remained unresolved. Even though our answers must remain tentative, it seems nonetheless appropriate to address some of these questions.

#### 1. The Pamphlets

Who authored the defamatory pamphlets that played so conspicuous a role in the long war and were responsible for enlarging the "theater of operations?"

What is known about the matter comes from a written confession addressed by Father John Turchi to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites on October 25, 1895, in connection with the process of Don Bosco's beatification.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>134</sup> A malicious interpretation is given to this by Bonetti writing to Dalmazzo, November 12, 1882 (*Documenti* XLV, 363f. in *ASC* A094, *FDBM* 1200 10-11).

<sup>135</sup> Fr. Turchi to Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Bra (Cuneo) October 25,

This lengthy and involved document begins by stating that he (Father Turchi), as a witness under oath in the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, had previously given to the judges a sealed confidential statement for the exclusive and secret use of the Congregation of Rites, in order to remove all suspicion regarding Don Bosco's complicity in the matter of the pamphlets. His letter (Turchi's of 1895), also to be kept secret and confidential, is written for the same purpose. After taking Archbishop Gastaldi and his chancery to task, he goes on to discuss the pamphlets. Among other things, Father Turchi provides the following information:

(1) The *Cooperator's Letter* of 1877 was written by Father John Baptist Anfossi, a priest of the diocese of Turin, close to the Salesians.<sup>136</sup>

(2) The *Chaplain's First Strenna* of 1878 was the work of Father Turchi himself in its entirety. He was in Rome at the time and in touch with Anfossi. The idea of writing the pamphlet firmed up in his mind as he was reviewing Gastaldi's Liturgical Calendar for 1878, and after receiving a copy of the *Cooperator's Letter*.<sup>137</sup>

(3) The *Brief Essay* of 1879 was authored by Father Anthony Ballerini, S.J.,

1895 (*IBM* XIX, 403-412, Appendix 10, omitted in *EBM*). Desramaut (*Don Bosco en son temps*, 1,162 and note 147) and Tuninetti (*Gastaldi* II, 275-282 *passim*) discuss Turchi's testimony.

<sup>136</sup> John Baptist Anfossi (1840-1913) from Vigone (Turin) was a Salesian alumnus and a seminarian at the Oratory in the fifties and sixties. As a diocesan priest and a canon of Holy Trinity Church in Turin, he maintained a lifelong attachment to Don Bosco and the Salesians. He is often quoted as a source in the *Biographical Memoirs*. He took Don Bosco's side in the dispute, but his grievance with the archbishop transcended this particular dispute. With reference to the polarization of the clergy for or against Gastaldi, Tuninetti writes: "Some supported Don Bosco as a way of getting back at the archbishop for other reasons. This was the case ... of priests like John Baptist Anfossi and John Turchi. Known as intriguers and meddlers, they were the authors of the anonymous pamphlets" (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 277).

<sup>137</sup> John Turchi (1838-1909) from Castelnuovo (Asti) was also a Salesian alumnus and seminarian at the Oratory, a companion and lifelong friend of Anfossi, who remained devoted to Don Bosco and the Salesians. As a diocesan priest, he taught in schools. In writing to Chevalier Oreglia in Rome (ca. mid-December 1867) Don Bosco speaks about the possibility of recommending Father Turchi as tutor in the household of Duchess Sora in Rome (Ceria, *Epistolario* I, 517). Fr. Turchi was living in Rome in 1877-1878 (the time of the pamphlets), where he served as Don Bosco's secretary (Don Bosco to Fr. Rua, Rome, January 3, 1878, Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 263). In a letter dated February 10, 1878 and addressed to Father Berto (in Rome with Don Bosco), Anfossi writes: "Regards to Father Turchi; in fact let him read this letter and tell him that I am eagerly looking forward to *that publication of his*" (*ASC* A116: Persone, Gastaldi, *FDBM* 619 C2-5). It is likely that "that publication" refers to the *Strenna*. Berto then would have known what was going on. (Would Don Bosco perhaps have heard something from Berto?).

with whom Turchi had discussed various matters in Rome, including where the essay should be printed. Father Turchi himself contributed the preamble, the foreword and the appendices. Another Jesuit in Turin, Father John Baptist Rostagno, encouraged Father Turchi in his stance against Gastaldi.<sup>138</sup>

(4) The *Chaplain's Second Strenna* of 1879 (entirely on the Rosminian question) was compiled again by Father Anfossi, who used articles from Gastaldi's journal (*Il Conciliatore*) from the latter's early Rosminian days. Father Turchi merely contributed some footnotes.

(5) The author of the *Chieri Story* of 1879 remains unknown. At first Father Turchi thought that it was the work of Father Bonetti. But then he was told by a "totally trustworthy person" that it was the work not of Bonetti but of some unknown individual not connected with the Salesians.

This is Turchi's information. Don Bosco, then, had nothing to do with the pamphlets, either directly or indirectly. But the existence of a Salesian "channel of information" to those involved cannot be ruled out, at least in the case of some of the pamphlets. Thus Desramaut writes:

[The *Chieri Story's*] authorship is still uncertain, but it appears that Bonetti had a large hand in it. It may be possible to decide this issue in the future on the basis of internal evidence, especially through a study of the style of the writing. It may be regarded as certain that Father Anfossi and Father Turchi were kept informed by the Salesians Father Joachim Berto and Father John Bonetti, both very close to Don Bosco. The two sides maintained an unbroken relationship [through the years], and often corresponded. Hence it appears that the Salesians played an auxiliary role in the production of these writings. But it is likewise certain that they did so without Don Bosco's knowledge. Never would either alumni or Salesians have compromised him in any way [by involving him] in their dark scheme.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Anthony Ballerini, S.J. (1805-1881) was one of the Jesuits who as far back as 1841 had sounded the alarm and fought youthful Gastaldi over what became the "Rosminian question." An author of theological treatises, Ballerini was the leader of the anti-Rosminian Roman Jesuits (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 254, note 49; 256; 282, note 104). John Baptist Rostagno, S.J., former professor of canon law in Belgium, residing at Turin, collaborated with Ballerini and Turchi in the pamphlets (Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 256 and 280, note 94). He attended the First Salesian General Chapter (1877) as a *peritus*. As a friend and adviser, he helped Don Bosco with research in canon law on various questions arising during the conflict: e. g., in the matters of the publication of the graces of Mary Help of Christians, of the Perenchio affair, of Bonetti's suspension and of other disputes. Gastaldi suspected him of complicity in the pamphlets (*EBM* XI, 424; XIII, 185-186, 256-257; XIV, 169170; XV, 236-237; *IBM* XIII, 955-956).

<sup>139</sup> Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1162; cf. also Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 282, note 104.

## 2. The *Concordia*—Text of the Reconciliation Document

Rome, June 16, 1882<sup>140</sup>

His Holiness is aware that controversy on a variety of issues has existed for some time between the archbishop of Turin and the Salesian Congregation. Such disagreements are a source of misunderstanding and friction that demean authority and perturb the faithful. He has therefore notified the parts in the litigation that it is his will that all contention cease and that a genuine and lasting reconciliation be put into effect. To this end the following terms of agreement are laid down:

I. Don Bosco shall write a letter of apology to His Excellency the Archbishop. In it he shall express his regret for the incidents that over the past few years have destroyed the good relationship formerly existing between them, and have possibly been the cause of grief to His Excellency. If His Excellency shall have reason to believe that either Don Bosco or some member of his Congregation is in any way responsible for this state of affairs, Don Bosco shall beg for His Excellency's forgiveness and shall ask him to forget the past.

II. In reply, His Excellency the Archbishop shall acknowledge the sincerity of the sentiments expressed by Don Bosco and the satisfaction they afford. He shall therefore put the past behind him and reinstate Don Bosco to his good graces.

III. Three days after this exchange, His Excellency shall renew Father Bonetti's faculties to hear confessions without restrictions and send the document to Don Bosco. Don Bosco on the other hand shall pledge to wait one year before allowing Father Bonetti back to Chieri. After one year has elapsed Father Bonetti shall not be prevented by the chancery from returning to Chieri on special occasions for the purpose of preaching or hearing confessions.

IV. Although Don Bosco's printed Memorandum describing the archbishop's actions in his regard was intended not for the public but exclusively for the cardinals of the Sacred Congregation, Don Bosco shall nevertheless endeavor to retrieve and destroy all copies distributed.

V. To eliminate the recurrence of strife, His Excellency the Archbishop shall withdraw and destroy the two threatening letters dated November 25 and December 1, 1877. Thus the threat of automatic suspension (*ipso facto incurrenda*), issued against Don Bosco, should the latter write, publish or distribute materials injurious to His Excellency the Archbishop, shall permanently be removed.

VI. As for the pamphlets cited by the chancery in the criminal indictment,

<sup>140</sup> The final text of the *Concordia* is given in *IBM* XV, 269-270, *EBM* XV, 224-225. It was signed on June 15 and officially dated June 16, 1882.



Don Bosco declares that he has always condemned and still condemns the unseemly manner and language used in speaking of ecclesiastical authority, and that he is ready to issue a formal statement on the matter whenever necessary. Likewise, he is fully prepared to denounce the contents of those pamphlets should the Church cite specific points or statements as being reprehensible.

VII. As a result of such declaration, the lawsuit initiated by the archdiocesan chancery shall be dropped.

By the powers granted to me by my most esteemed superior, His Excellency Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi, I herewith agree to and accept all the provisions of the foregoing covenant.

[signed] Canon Emmanuel Colomiatti

By the powers granted to me by my superior general, the Very Reverend John Bosco, I herewith agree to and accept all the provisions of the foregoing covenant.

[signed] Father Francis Dalmazzo, *Procurator General*

### **3. Why was the Settlement Unfavorable to the Salesians?**

A facile interpretation has been that the pope felt he could rely on Don Bosco's holiness to accept any terms, but not on Gastaldi, given his character and his concept of episcopal authority. Another not so satisfactory view is that safeguarding episcopal authority seemed more important to Pope Leo than meting out absolute justice. A similar view, already mentioned, is that by a settlement favorable to Gastaldi the pope hoped to win him over from his Rosminian position. These reasons, if present at all, should not be overrated. The following considerations should be borne in mind.

(1) The Turin chancery had what appeared to be a strong case, based on sworn testimony, against Fr. Bonetti as well as Don Bosco in the matter of the pamphlets; and Leo XIII was not about to launch his own investigation before acting to put an end to the scandal. This may account for the fact that article 6 of the *Concordia* leaves the question open.

(2) The failure on the part of Don Bosco to respond at certain crucial points when the archbishop seemed willing to make concessions, or to seek an accommodation by mutual compromise, was not appreciated in Rome. This failure may have been brought about by one, or by a combination, of the following factors: [i] a belief that the Archbishop was abusing his power,

that is, dealing unjustly or contrary to law, as for instance in the Bonetti affair at Chieri; [ii] a belief that the archbishop's overtures at certain points were "false" and designed to entrap and gain the advantage; [iii] a perception, at least from a certain point on, that the Archbishop had become an enemy seeking to destroy the Society, and hence had to be fought by every legitimate means; [iv] Don Bosco's utter conviction that fidelity to his oath of office as superior general required that he uphold the "honor" and safeguard the good of the Society uncompromisingly; [v] Don Bosco's utter personal faithfulness to his men in response to their faithfulness to him, carried him to great lengths in their support.

(3) Father Bonetti, even if he were not the author of the *Chieri Story*, by his rash manner of speaking and writing went beyond the limits of propriety on a number of occasions, unchecked by Don Bosco. The manner in which the *Concordia* and its terms were brought about would tend to corroborate that this was Leo XIII's judgment, for in the fashioning of the *Concordia*, Gastaldi's part (represented by Colomiatti) was given a hearing, whereas the Salesian part was not.

(4) Don Bosco's *Esposizione* (printed exclusively for the Cardinals, not published), written with the collaboration of Frs. Berto and Bonetti, but signed by Don Bosco, was viewed as an excessive tirade against Archbishop Gastaldi. Apart from the strong language used, each fact listed may have been substantially true from a certain standpoint, but there were also some "weak points" of a more general nature that had to be considered. If we are to believe Canon Colomiatti, Don Bosco, realizing that he had gone too far, at one point tried to pass off the *Esposizione* to Cardinal Nina as the work of his attorney, Leonori.<sup>141</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Don Bosco's *Esposizione* was subjected to careful scrutiny by the official of the Congregation of Rites who examined Don Bosco's writings for the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification. In spite of Canon Colomiatti's memorandums the judgment given by the examiner was fundamentally positive. As Stella remarks, this was indicated even in the headings given to each section of the report—for example, "Don Bosco is not responsible" [for starting the controversy]; [throughout the controversy]

<sup>141</sup> This was Colomiatti's testimony at the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification in 1926. Cardinal Nina confided this to him during an interview on May 13, 1882. Attorney Leonori vehemently denied the allegation, and letters were exchanged (*Positio, Summarium ex officio*, 10 in ASC A280: Docum. ufficiali, FDBM 2244 A6-8).

“the actions and attitudes of the Servant of God were consistently blameless.” After noting that Don Bosco had composed the memorandum with Father Bonetti’s help, the examiner stated that the exposition of the facts could stand some correction, and the tone was somewhat emotional. But he added:

As far as I can see, all this does not affect in the least the nature of the facts presented. Furthermore, one should remember that the author of the memorandum was writing with the conviction that he had to defend his own institute, and therefore he would tend to emphasize or de-emphasize some of the circumstances relating to the facts he was presenting. But he did not knowingly misrepresent the facts. Furthermore, he wrote under great pressure, strain and anxiety about the imminent outcome of the judgment. This memorandum [the *Esposizione*] has been judged inappropriate, to say the least. In my view, such an accusation is groundless and undeserved. For the memorandum was called for by the circumstances. The servant of God felt the need of rising in defense of his own institute, against which the archbishop of Turin had taken action and presented written briefs on no less than six different occasions.<sup>142</sup>

#### 4. The Bonetti Affair in Chieri

With regard to the Chieri affair, one would very much like to know “who was right.” Perhaps the dispute is best understood in the context of the pastoral practice already discussed and to be commented on again below.

(1) Certainly, from our standpoint, it would have been to everybody’s advantage had Bonetti and the Sisters been allowed full scope to their zeal, for whatever they did was clearly for the good of souls. But pastor Oddenino’s objections must be viewed in the light of a pastoral theology and practice that focused on the restoration and reform of the structures of the local Church both at the diocesan and at the parochial level. For, as in Don Bosco’s case in Turin, so in Bonetti’s case in Chieri, the division of the clergy (for or against) looked beyond the persons involved in the dispute to the pastoral policies of the Archbishop himself.

(2) From the Salesians’ standpoint, the Sisters by their constitutions were part of the Salesian Society. Therefore the Sisters’ house at Chieri was naturally regarded as a Salesian house, its “spiritual director” as a Salesian supe-

<sup>142</sup> Stella, DB III: *La Canonizzazione*, 128-29, quoting from: *Positio super revisione scriptorum*, 24-25 (Process of Don Bosco’s Beatification 1906) in ASC A280: Documenti stampati, FDBM 2210 E 1-3.

rior, and the oratory chapel as a public oratory (enjoying parochial rights?). This, however, was not how the Archbishop and Pastor Oddenino viewed the matter. As indicated above, the Archbishop had Canon Colomiatti inquire about the Sisters' juridical status, and Cardinal Ferrieri's response did not support the Salesian point of view.

(3) As far as the suspension is concerned, it is known that Gastaldi, as reformer-bishops before him, not only ruled by synod and decree, but also used suspension and other restrictions rather freely in support of pastoral policy and as disciplinary measures. From our point of view such penalties were often unjust and probably also unlawful. The 1615 Rescript of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars "dug out" by Father Rostagno, S.J., as indicated in the *Biographical Memoirs*,<sup>143</sup> ties suspension to the sacramental act itself in the case of religious. But, whatever its original context, that Decree would not have been regarded as relevant by Gastaldi. He never pretended that the suspension was in any way connected with the sacramental act itself; the reasons (whether good or bad) were pastoral and disciplinary. Furthermore, Bonetti's words and actions, even those preceding the suspension, were such, in the archbishop's view, as to call for stern measures. Later, Bonetti's further attitude and the appearance of the pamphlet imputed to him (the *Chieri Story*) made the suspension seem all the more deserved. It should be noted, however, that Bonetti's reinstatement in December 1881 and January 1882, even though enacted by a partial judge (Cardinal Protector Nina) and later reversed in the circumstances we have described, is proof that the suspension was thought to have been inappropriate.

## 5. Concluding Comments and Evaluation

In this chapter we have tried to tell the story of the conflict in a coherent, albeit selective fashion, with attention given to the issues involved. The original documentation that stemmed from the conflict and is now collected in various archives is abundant. Biographers and historians have since tried to evaluate it and reach some understanding of this prolonged, widely resonant and scandalous affair, involving the two most important personalities of the Church of Turin. As noted in chapter 6, the polemical climate in which the material originated affected its shape then, and renders its reliability problematic now. But a few remarks by way of general evaluation seem possible

<sup>143</sup> EBM XIV, 172-173.

and necessary nonetheless. At various points in the foregoing discussion, we indicated some lines of thought that might help us understand the conflict in its proper context—historical, theological, ecclesiological, psychological, pastoral. It would seem appropriate to add a concluding comment along the same lines.

One should at once dispose of the theory that the real culprits in the conflict were Gastaldi's and Don Bosco's men, rather than the principals themselves. Clearly, it was no single combat, but the engagement was chiefly between the two protagonists. "They called the shots." However, the question of the role and responsibility of subordinates (the people who advised, spoke, wrote, fought for the principals) is legitimate even though to a large extent it still awaits an answer. Here we are concerned with the nature and motivations of the conflict as such.

At first blush, one might be tempted to define the conflict as a classic case of authority vs. charism, for this is its outward face. It would be tempting to see it as another instance of the institution, with all its structural, legal accoutrements and its means of self-preservation, impeding the movement of the spirit and the salvation of souls. It has been so interpreted. But it is a superficial interpretation. For, apart from the difficulty of defining where "charism" lies in any particular instance, it assumes that institutional authority is itself devoid of the Spirit.

One must therefore look deeper. At one level one encounters the problem of *ecclesiology*. Again, one might be tempted to regard Don Bosco and Gastaldi as representatives of contrasting ecclesiologies—ultramontane and "pope-centered" on one side, and pro-Gallican and "bishop-centered" on the other. Even if such terms were used in an extended sense, they would not be applicable without qualifications. A better way of putting it might be that Don Bosco's ecclesiology was radically ultramontane; Gastaldi's only in certain respects.

Don Bosco's ecclesiology was certainly papalist in principle, the bishop being conceived in a subsidiary role. But there was also on the one hand, a pragmatic element that modified its papal orientation, as well as an "anomalous element"—that is, the peculiar relationship of mutual trust between Pius IX and Don Bosco that had come into existence in 1858 and reached its peak by the mid-seventies. This added a peculiar slant to Don Bosco's relationship with Church authorities.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Stella, *DB:LW*, 159-171, 227-231; *DB:RO&S*, 109-114, 122-130.

Gastaldi's ecclesiology is more difficult to describe. Having supported papal primacy and infallibility at Vatican I (certainly not for pragmatic reasons), in his official statements Gastaldi upheld papal authority on the lines of the constitution *Aeterni Patris* (Vatican I). But in the exercise of his pastoral office, hence, also in his dealings with Don Bosco, he claimed autonomy and defended it to the hilt. Nor was this attitude the product of mere authoritarianism, to which unfortunately he was prone. Rather, it was founded on a deep conviction of possessing apostolic authority as a bishop.<sup>145</sup>

Essentially, however, insofar as ecclesiology affected the conflict, the contrast appeared at the pastoral rather than at the theoretical level. These two great and important Church leaders governed and ministered with a very different, perhaps contrasting *pastoral style*. As emphasized in the foregoing discussion, and as Desramaut writes:

Gastaldi stood in the line of the Tridentine reformer-bishops of northern Italy, whose model was St. Charles Borromeo. Like Archbishop Charles, Archbishop Lawrence governed by synod and decree, and was dedicated to a thoroughgoing program of reform of the diocesan clergy and religious, as well as of all the Church's structures. He had imbibed the principles of the Counter-Reformation—that the will of the legitimate religious leader is the will of God, and hence binding on everyone; that hierarchical authority, as representing Jesus Christ, is (by analogy) omniscient and omnipotent, and hence may demand the subject's obedience on grounds of religious faith. In such a system, the strength of the body lies in the head and is guaranteed by the obedience of the members. Gastaldi was not “out” to destroy the Salesian Congregation; but he believed that for the success of his reforms the Salesian Society, and all other institutions in the diocese, had to submit to his pastoral policy. This kind of authority is exposed to two dangerous pitfalls: recourse to violence and prevarication. In the pursuit of his goal Archbishop Gastaldi never resorted to lying, but certain forms of violent authoritarianism were not alien to him.

Don Bosco's pastoral style was very different. Like his educational style, it stemmed from his preventive system, and the result was a pastoral approach imbued and guided by “charity.” This course was certainly more democratic, and probably also more evangelical than that pursued by Gastaldi. Like Jesus, Don Bosco accepted people as they were, appealing to their special penchants and gifts (small though they might be) in the service of the Church. He made use of the charism of each for the good of souls. For him the strength of the body lay in the members working in concert with the head. The great virtue for him was,

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 288.

not obedience, but zeal for God's cause—or better stated, “charity”, practical love of neighbor through which the “greater glory of God” was achieved. Here the great pitfall is a degree of anarchism.<sup>146</sup>

One wonders whether such diverse pastoral styles could be reconciled.

As contributing factors the *personality and character* of the protagonists influenced the course of the conflict considerably. They differed as day from night in point of social extraction, education, philosophy, and politics. They had come along different spiritual journeys, and differed as to prayer style, devotion, and ascetic practice. Gastaldi tended toward rigorist austerity with himself and with others. He was a perfectionist, lacking the pliability that is indispensable to good government. Don Bosco, on the other hand, a “practical probabilist,” was an intuitive and persuasive handler of people. He could even stand accused (with some reason) of some elasticity in the use of means—for good ends: his work for youth, the salvation of souls.

But finally, they were similar in one thing—a strong, stubborn, uncompromising devotion to what they perceived to be their duty. Both friends and enemies have testified to this. The archbishop was never known to yield in anything that, in his view, was even distantly related to his episcopal rights and duties. Don Bosco was never known to yield when the “good of the Society” was at stake, or when it was a question of “the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.” If he met with an obstacle, he went around it. If the archbishop was the obstacle, he went around it by having recourse to “higher authority” (Pope Pius IX). In this respect Don Bosco was unlike his younger contemporary and saint, Leonardo Murialdo, for whom “obedience to the Ordinary” (Gastaldi) was a dogma.

The conflict, therefore, laid bare the all too-human traits and weaknesses of the protagonists' character. Neither could refrain from harsh complaints and accusations against the other, even in the presence of third parties, whether they were subjects or strangers. Gastaldi was impulsive and of a violent temper. He lacked prudence and self-restraint and mercilessly berated Don Bosco and the Salesians on numerous occasions. Don Bosco was neither impulsive nor violent, his speech and writings were never openly disrespectful; but neither were they, in a number of instances, shining examples of prudence and respect.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 1,163-1,164.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 288-289.



Their voluminous correspondence throughout the conflict reveals an unyielding attitude on both sides and a failure to compromise when compromise would perhaps have saved the day. One may ask: what is so sacrosanct about “episcopal rights” or about “the honor of the institute”? Certainly the protection of these values or prerogatives does not justify a decade of scandalous and destructive hostility.

## Appendix

### CAST OF CHARACTERS IN THE CONFLICT

#### 1. *The Chancery of the Archdiocese of Turin under Archbishop Gastaldi*

*Chiaverotti, Hyacinth*: canon, secretary at the chancery (1877-1879); he handled the correspondence for the archbishop, especially in the Perenchio-Lazzero affair.

*Chiuso, Thomas* (1840-1904): canon, theologian, historian, personal secretary to the archbishop up to 1878, thereafter chancellor; as secretary, he acted as correspondent for the archbishop in various instances.

*Colomiatti, Emmanuel* (1846-1928): canon, theologian, canon lawyer, professor, author, Archbishop Gastaldi's acting trial lawyer (*avvocato fiscale*) from 1872, formally appointed in 1882; he conducted legal action in Rome and Turin in the Bosco-Bonetti trial; regarded as the "enemy" by the Salesians, he also appeared against Don Bosco in the Process of Beatification (1917-1925).

*Corno, Joseph* (b. 1856): canon, chancery secretary from 1880, chancellor (1885); he appeared as *ex officio* witness at the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification.

*Maffei, Francis* (1848-1926): canon, secretary at the chancery; he handled correspondence for the archbishop in the Rocca affair (1879-1880).

#### 2. *Other Persons Sympathetic to the Archbishop's Cause*

*Lione, Stephen* (1804-1886): vicar forane at Chieri; he accused Father Bonetti of authoring the *Chieri Story* (1878-1880).

*Oddenino, Andrew* (1829-1890): pastor of the *Duomo* at Chieri, involved as plaintiff in the Bonetti Chieri dispute (1878-1882).

#### 3. *The Salesians (Other than Don Bosco and Father Rua)*

*Berto, Joachim* (1847-1914): Don Bosco's secretary (1870-1888); he was close to Don Bosco and all the Salesians involved in the conflict.

*Bonetti, John* (1838-1891): director of the *Salesian Bulletin* (1878); elected spiritual director of the Salesian Society (1886); as director of Salesian Sisters' oratory at Chieri he was directly involved in the conflict.

*Dalmazzo, Francis* (1845-1895): director at Valsalice (1872-1880) procurator gen-

eral of the Salesian Society (1880-1887); Don Bosco's representative in Rome for the Bonetti case and the final reconciliation (1880-1882).

*Guanella, Louis* [Blessed] (1842-1915): priest of Como, briefly a Salesian; he encountered Gastaldi's opposition when planning to join the Salesians (1875); involved with the early developments of the Sons of Mary; having returned to his diocese (1877), he founded religious institutes.

*Lazzero, Joseph* (1837-1910), Salesian priest, vice-director of the Oratory, involved in the Perenchio affair (1877), suspended for misinterpreting Archbishop Gastaldi's letter regarding Mass supply by Salesian priests ("bedlam in the sacristies" of August 26).

*Perenchio, John*: priest of Ivrea, censured by Bishop Moreno for applying to the Salesians; suspended by Archbishop Gastaldi for celebrating in Turin without permission (1877); unwitting cause of Father Lazzero's suspension.

*Rocca, Angelo Maria* (1853-1943): former diocesan seminarian; Salesian (1873), newly-ordained Salesian priest (1877); prevented from celebrating Mass in his home town; censured by Archbishop Gastaldi for celebrating nonetheless in his private oratory (1877).

#### 4. *Persons Sympathetic toward the Salesian Cause*

*Albert, Frederick* [Blessed] (1820-1876), priest of Turin, theologian, pastor of Lanzo. a friend of Don Bosco and the Salesians; involved in the affair of the spiritual retreats at Lanzo (1874).

*Anfossi, John Baptist* (1840-1913): an alumnus of the Oratory and lifelong friend of the Salesians; as diocesan priest of Turin he opposed the archbishop's pastoral policies; he authored the anti-Gastaldi *Cooperator's Letter* and the *Chaplain's Second Strenna*.

*Fratejacci, John Baptist* (d. 1877): a Roman monsignor, a friend of Don Bosco, he kept the Salesians informed of developments in Rome.

*Sona, Matthew* (1831-1893): canon of Chieri, a supporter of Bonetti throughout the Chieri affair (1878-1881).

*Turchi, John* (1838-1909): alumnus of the Oratory, diocesan priest of Turin, schoolteacher in Rome (1877-1878), self-confessed author of the anti-Gastaldi *Chaplain's First Strenna* and contributor to other pamphlets.

#### 5. *Roman Authorities (Other than Pius IX and Leo XIII)*

*Berardi, Joseph* (1810-1878): cardinal, a personal friend of Don Bosco, and sympathetic to the Salesian cause.

*Bizzarri, Joseph Andrew* (1802-1877): cardinal prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, succeeded by Cardinal Ferrieri.

*Caterini, Prospero* (1795-1881): cardinal, prefect of the Congregation of the Council, succeeded at his death by Cardinal Nina.

*Ferrieri, Innocent* (1813-1887): cardinal, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (1876); perceived by the Salesians as an “enemy.”

*Jacobini, Louis* (1832-1887): cardinal, secretary of state (1879).

*Leonori, Constantine*: monsignor, attorney working at the Roman Congregations, legal counsel for Don Bosco and Father Bonetti (1879-1883).

*Macchi, Louis* (1832-1907): papal chamberlain, later cardinal, opposed to Don Bosco; as chamberlain he delayed Don Bosco’s audiences with the pope.

*Menghini, Charles* (d. 1896): monsignor, attorney working at the Roman Congregations, legal counsel for Don Bosco (1874-1879), legal counsel for Gastaldi in the lawsuit at the Congregation of the Council (1879-1882).

*Monaco La Valletta, Raphael* (1827-1896): cardinal vicar of Rome; he dealt with Don Bosco with regard to the church of the Sacred Heart (1880).

*Nina, Lawrence* (1812-1885): cardinal (1877), secretary of state (1878-1880), protector of the Salesian Society (1879) and prefect of the Congregation of the Council (1880).

*Sbarretti, Aeneas* (1808-1884): archbishop, secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars succeeding Vitelleschi (1875), cardinal (1877).

*Verga, Isidore* (1832-1899), archbishop, secretary of the Congregation of the Council at the time of the Bonetti lawsuit (1879-1882), cardinal (1884).

*Vitelleschi Nobili, Salvatore* (1818-1875): archbishop, secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars under Prefect Cardinal Bizzarri; generally favorable to Don Bosco’s cause, though not in the matter of the privileges petitioned for in 1875.

*Tortone, Cajetan* (1814-1891): as *chargé d’affaires* of the Holy See in Turin, he conducted investigations and reported to the Holy See at various times, especially at the time of Gastaldi’s threatened resignation (1876-1877) and of Bonetti’s Chieri affair (1878-1879).

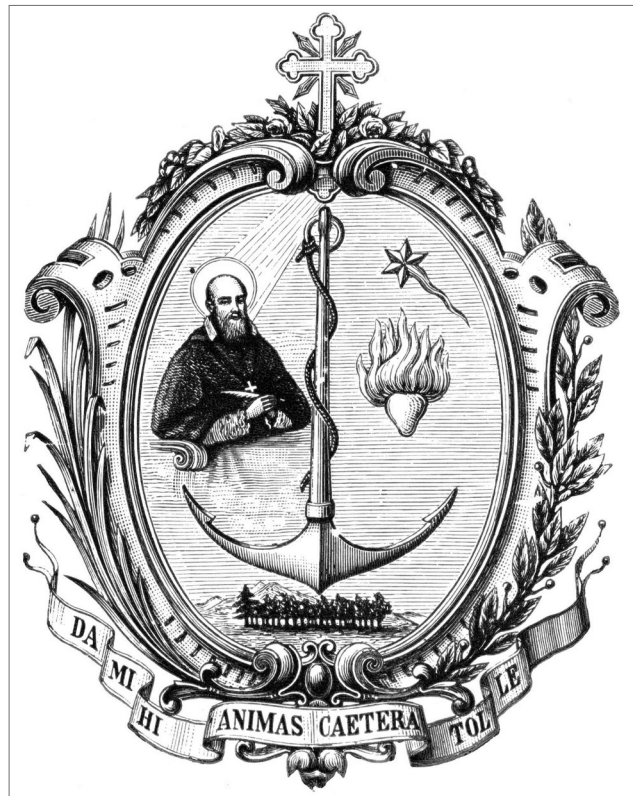
## *6. Other Person Involved in the Conflict*

*Ballerini, Anthony* (1805-1881): Jesuit priest and theologian in Rome, a leader of the anti-Rosmini campaign, author of the *Brief Essay* against Gastaldi’s Rosminian Position

*Fissore, Celestine* (1814-1889): canon, vicar general in Turin in the fifties, archbishop of Vercelli (1871); he was called upon to mediate the dispute (1875) and to investigate the authorship of the pamphlets, a change of venue for the trial having been made to Vercelli (1882).

*Leoncini, Louis*: a priest of the Pious Schools (Piarists or Scolopians); he testified at the chancery against Don Bosco in connection with the authorship of the pamphlets (1879-1880).

*Pellicani, Anthony*: a priest of Savona, former Jesuit; he was cited by Leoncini as having been asked by Don Bosco to write against the archbishop (1879-1882); his disavowal came too late.



35 – Original woodcut of the coat-of-arms of the Pious Salesian Society













