

THE BOSCO-GASTALDI CONFLICT PART II: FROM THE APPROVAL OF THE SALESIAN CONSTITUTIONS IN 1874 TO THE ENFORCED RECONCILIATION [CONCORDIA] IN 1882

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Introduction: Establishing a Framework

In our earlier essay we described the conflict between Don Bosco and Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi through the phase of the approval of the Salesian Constitutions.¹ At the time, we also gave, by way of introduction, a general description of the nature of the conflict in its historical setting. We noted further, by way of conclusion, that the definitive approval of the Salesian Constitutions did not bring about an end to the disagreement, let alone a reconciliation.

Thus the approval of the Salesian Constitutions in April 1874 was followed by a second and more bitterly fought phase of the conflict. This confrontation falls into two distinct periods: (1) 1874-1877 (the last years of Pius IX's pontificate) during which, albeit with some ambiguity, Don Bosco seemed to hold the advantage; and (2) 1878-1882 (the first years of Leo XIII) during which Gastaldi gained the advantage and finally prevailed.

But for the sake of an orderly exposition this presentation will include three parts: The first part, serving as an extended introduction, comprises an initial phase during which the issues and disagreements which 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 phase spans some ten months, from May 1874 to February 1875 ending with the failed mediation by Archbishop Celestino Fissore of Vercelli. This is followed by a second, more

¹ Cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993), 41-83. For the literature and for the abbreviations used, cf. the *Bibliographical Note* at the end of this essay.

In this, as in the earlier essay, I will be guided throughout by Desramaut's *Chronologie critique*. I will also take Desramaut's *Études* and 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 Ceria), to Lemoyne's *Documenti*, or finally to archival documents.

extended phase through which, while the bitter fight over the issues continues unabated, hostility is heightened by a number of increasingly more serious clashes. This phase 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 anonymous anti-Gastaldi pamphlet. The third period, filled with ever increasing hostility, begins with an initial phase coinciding roughly with the beginning of Leo XIII's pontificate. In the context of a change of climate in Rome to Don Bosco's disadvantage and of continuing clashes, a moratorium is enforced in terms worked out by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and approved by Pope Leo XIII (March-April 1878). Then throughout the next four years, after the sensational Chieri affair and Father Giovanni Bonetti's suspension, and the publication of further anonymous defamatory pamphlets attacking Gastaldi on points of pastoral policy and doctrine and imputed to the Salesians, the drama is played out in Rome with a trial before the Congregation of the Council. Finally the *Concordia* of June 16, 1882, enforced by Pope Leo XIII to Don Bosco's discomfiture, brings the conflict *officially*, though not really, to an end.

Therefore with this framework as a guideline, we will trace the development of the conflict in three parts—by force of circumstances unequal in length, and to avoid repetition differing in emphasis. 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.

Part I. The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict from the Approval of the Salesian Constitutions to Archbishop Fissore's Failed Mediation (May 1874 - February 1875)

1. Recalling the Issues in Context

As mentioned above, the approval of the Salesian Constitutions did not signal the end of the disagreements nor bring about a reconciliation. The archbishop had carried the day in the matter of religious and priestly formation; and the constitutions, as emended and approved, reflected his position. But Don Bosco had prevailed in practice through concessions obtained from Pope Pius IX. Gastaldi would not and could not relent. The archbishop and his chancery became increasingly more hostile to Don Bosco and the Salesians, and incidents of conflict continued to occur with alarming regularity.

(1) The Issues

In the final analysis, the cluster of related confrontational issues that continued to fuel the conflict arose from the archbishop's conviction that the Salesians'

religious and priestly formation was defective at its core. 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. That is why he claimed the right to examine Salesian candidates before ordaining them; this was also the reason he objected to Don Bosco's acceptance of seminarians who left or were dismissed from the diocesan seminary; and this explains why he even refused (in retaliation) to ordain Salesian candidates. Even more basic as a cause of conflict, was Gastaldi's understanding of the demands of his own episcopal office, and the pastoral policies arising therefrom. 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).

Archbishop Gastaldi's episcopal platform and pastoral policies have been described in some detail in the earlier essay. But a further brief comment at this point will be helpful.

(2) *Archbishop Gastaldi's Pastoral Policies*

On various occasions Don Bosco complained that he could not understand many of the reasons for the archbishop's actions, nor the motivation of his demands. What does he want me to do? Why doesn't he tell me clearly what he has in mind?²

But Gastaldi's demands could not have been such a mystery. 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 often actually had recourse to) 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

² E.g. Don Bosco's letter of May 15, 1874 to Secretary Vitelleschi [cf. note 6 and 7 and related text, below]; Father Albert's letter to Archbishop Gastaldi, quoting Don Bosco: "Ask [the archbishop] to tell me clearly what he wishes from me and what I must do to win his full approval" [cf. note 16 and related text, below].

ordination. The seminary was to be both the means and the place for such a reform. The seminary regulations which were finalized and scheduled to go into effect in 1874 were an explicit expression of the archbishop's principles regarding seminary formation.³

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 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.⁴

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 following the example of St. Charles Borromeo.⁵ He did not wish to deviate from such a course of action, notwithstanding the concessions regarding dimissorials which Don Bosco had received 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.

³ For a description of Archbishop Gastaldi's reform program, cf. Lenti, *JSS* 4 (1993), 21-28.

⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 248f.

⁵ "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, *Études* VI, 19 and 43, note 31].

2. 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 directed to the Roman authorities. These were the means that were used by them to restate and consolidate their case. 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 15, 1874.⁶ 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 which 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 cooly: "Would it be too daring a step to take to ask for the power to grant dimissorials *ad quemcumque episcopum* (to any bishop)?"⁷

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.⁸ 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) 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

⁶ Ceria, *Ep* II, 383-385; *IBM* X, 822 (omitted in *EBM*).

⁷ "To any bishop", not just to the ordinary of the diocese where the motherhouse was located. The Rescript of April 3, 1874 granted the concession to the rector major [cf. *EBM* X, 373].

⁸ Desramaut *Études* VI, 44, note 47. The letter is in the *Secret Vatican Archive* and was brought to Desramaut's attention by Father Francesco Motto.

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.⁹

3. The Planned Spiritual Retreat for School Teachers

Nor was the matter of examining and ordaining Salesian priestly candidates 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.¹⁰ 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 Tommaso 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 the preachers’ names to be submitted to him. Don Bosco simply canceled the retreat, as he states in a letter to Bishop Pietro De Gaudenzi of Vigevano.¹¹ 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

⁹ The first priest may be Father Luigi Chiapale, for whom cf. note 32 and related text, below. There is no available information on the second.

¹⁰ Both notices in *IBM X*, 828f. (omitted in *EBM X*, 384). *L'Unità cattolica*, August [23] 24, 1874, cf. Desramaut, *Études* VI, 30 and 44.

¹¹ Letter of August 30, 1874, Ceria, *Ep II*, 399.

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 a 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 which may have unintentionally given offense."¹²

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*).¹³ Later the archbishop would send that letter to Rome as a proof of Don Bosco's insubordination.

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) Federico 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 which Don Bosco had originally circulated to announce the retreat came to his attention, he wrote a third bristling letter.

¹² Letter of September 10, 1874, *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.

¹³ Letter of September 14, 1874, *EBM X*, 387f. Gastaldi believed that Don Bosco had printed some letters, of his presumably (so he thought) for use against him. Bishop Galletti in a prior letter to the archbishop [September 3, 1874, *IBM X*, 832-835 (only briefly summarized in *EBM X*, 387)] assured him that the only letters of Gastaldi in Don Bosco's possession were the two which had been printed by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and included in the *Positio* for the approval of the Salesian Constitutions. Concerning the archbishop's belief that letters were being printed for use against him, cf. also the exchange reported in *EBM X*, 382f.

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 and 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?¹⁴

Clearly this passage reveals the archbishop's frustration at not being able to get through to Don Bosco. Indeed, on reading the correspondence relating to this episode,¹⁵ one is struck by the seemingly neurotic over-reaction on the archbishop's part. 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,¹⁶ but to no avail.

¹⁴ *EBM* X, 390f.

¹⁵ *EBM* X, 388-392.

¹⁶ *EBM* X, 391f.

4. 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 Luigi Fransoni then in exile, and interpreted by the then vicars, Filippo Ravina and Celestino Fissore, to include the giving of the clerical habit.¹⁷ 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.[...]¹⁸

5. 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

¹⁷ Chiuso to Don Bosco, September 21, 1874, *IBM X*, 844f. (omitted in *EBM*); Don Bosco to Chiuso, September 27, 1874, *EBM X*, 394f.

¹⁸ Chiuso to Don Bosco, September 28, 1874, *IBM X*, 846 (only briefly summarized in *EBM X*, 395).

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 Giuseppe Maria Soldati, for Don Bosco's house was probably rather high.¹⁹

(1) *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 were 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."²⁰

He did not wait for Archbishop Vitelleschi's reply.²¹ 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 diversions and putting obstacles in the way of his program of clergy formation, is disturbing.²²

The first part of the letter is a defense of his administration and way of acting. He has asked Canon Luigi 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 Celestino 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.

¹⁹ Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 269, note 47; 270, note 50.

²⁰ *EBM* X, 393.

²¹ 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].

²² *EBM* X, 396-402.

Thus the stage is set 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 in which diocesan seminarians were 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 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.*²³

Gastaldi ends his lengthy jeremiad with an account of the ill-fated retreat for school teachers, mentioned above, and encloses the “less than respectful” letter which Don Bosco had written on that occasion.

(2) Don Bosco's Own Defense

Archbishop Vitelleschi meanwhile had warned Don Bosco of Gastaldi's inquiry of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.²⁴ More significantly, Pope Pius IX, instead of pronouncing the “definitive word” which Gastaldi had so fervently requested, passed the archbishop's letter on to Don Bosco, presumably to enable the latter the better to answer the charges.²⁵ Some time later, Cardinal Giuseppe Berardi, undersecretary of state, “in strictest confidence” also advised Don Bosco of the complaint which Gastaldi had lodged against him with the same congregation: that Don Bosco was “stealing” his seminarians.²⁶

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 Giuseppe Andrea Bizzarri, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.²⁷ 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.²⁸

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

²³ *EBM X*, 401f.

²⁴ Letter of October 1, 1874, *IBM X*, 855f. (briefly summarized in *EBM X*, 404).

²⁵ This was on October 18, according to Berto's note on a copy of Gastaldi's letter in *Documenti XIV*, 271-281 in *ASC 110*, *FDBM 1026 C9-D7*.

²⁶ Letter of October 26, 1874, *EBM X*, 407.

²⁷ *EBM X*, 404-406.

²⁸ Don Bosco to Berardi, *EBM X*, 407-409.

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 to safeguard a person's freedom regarding his vocation. 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 Fransoni'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. May not a religious superior hold a retreat for teachers and lay people in one of the houses of his congregation? And may the ordinary investigate retreats scheduled for religious?)

The second letter takes up the issue of seminarians who left, or were dismissed from the seminary, and criticizes seminary policies: 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.²⁹

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,³⁰ 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 [Luigi] 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

²⁹ The "young rector" was the thirty-five-year old Father Giuseppe Maria Soldati, the main agent of Gastaldi's seminary reform [cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993) 20f., 27f.].

In a letter dated November 10, 1874, 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 [*IBM* X, 863; excerpt in *EBM* X, 410f.].

³⁰ Cf. note 13 and related text, above.

were the cause of trouble in dioceses, because no Salesian (up to 1874) has left the congregation except Brother, now Jesuit Father Federico Oreglia.³¹

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.³²

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.³³ He actually lectures the archbishop—directly: “you ought to know what conditions need to be present for an ordinary to refuse to ordain a candidate”; indirectly: by the device of citing a personal admonition supposedly received from Rome. 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; “I entrust the matter to your prudence. [...] Your Eminence is in a position to discuss the subject with the Holy Father.”³⁴

³¹ Cf. *EBM* X, 409 for points 1, 2, and 3 of the memorandum.

³² With regard to Don Bosco's claims one may note: (1) Luigi 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 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, Luigi 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, *DBEcSoc*, 295, 297, 301, 313-315]. Don Bosco himself in a letter dated October 11, 1874, wrote to Vicar General Canon Giuseppe Zappata: “Tell him that of his 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” [*EBM* X, 403].

With regard to Father Pignolo and the seminarians who worked at the Institute for the Hearing-Impaired no information is available.

³³ Cf. note 29, above.

³⁴ *EBM* X, 411f. For the petition cf. *IBM* X, 1003f., 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 dimissorials and privileges, and Pius IX set up a commission of cardinals to study the

6. Further Episodes and Don Bosco's Appeals to Rome

Meanwhile, Archbishop Gastaldi was resorting to reprisals. Having learned that Father Luigi Guanella of the diocese of Como was contemplating joining the Salesian Society, he dispatched a note to the bishop of that diocese, warning that the priest would not be permitted to celebrate Mass, hear confessions or stay in the diocese if he came to Turin.³⁵ This was in early December. Don Bosco had enthusiastically accepted Father Guanella's petition and had told him to come by all means.³⁶ 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.³⁷

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, 1874.³⁸

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

question [cf. *EBM* XI, 163f.]. But on September 22, 1875, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars denied both petitions [cf. note 54 and related text, below].

³⁵ *EBM* X, 412f.

³⁶ Letter of December 12, 1874, *EBM* XI, 1f.

³⁷ Letter of December 14, 1874, *EBM* X, 413; and *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, 319f.; XII, 54, 357-359]. Returning 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, 823f.].

³⁸ *EBM* X, 413f.

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, Giovanni Olivero, and recently Luigi Guanella); (4) for refusing to admit Salesian priests to examinations for faculties to hear confessions (example: Father Francesco 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.

7. Archbishop Fissore's Mediation

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,³⁹ he chose Archbishop Celestino 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 name⁴⁰ was followed by an epistolary exchange designed to clarify the issues involved. At Archbishop Fissore's request, Don Bosco first stated his case by letter in which he rehearsed his accumulated complaints.⁴¹ He may also have enclosed a copy of the memorandum already cited and discussed above.⁴² 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 outwardly "on good terms (*di buon accordo*)." But all three were admittedly "deeply embarrassed (*assai umiliati*)" by the inevitable disclosures.⁴³

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

³⁹ In Gastaldi's letter of October 4, 1874, cf. notes 22 and 23 and related text, above.

⁴⁰ Letter of January 9, 1875, *Documenti* XV, 23f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1027 A 10f.

⁴¹ Letter of January 16, 1875, *EBM* XI, 83-85.

⁴² *EBM* XI, 85f.; and cf. note 31 and related text, above.

⁴³ Don Bosco to Cardinal Berardi, February 7, 1875, *EBM* XI, 87-90.

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 of dimissorials clearly required perpetual profession.⁴⁴ Perhaps Don Bosco had obtained a concession *vivae vocis oraculo* from Pius IX.)

Fissore took no stand and made no recommendation. 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 to some points in writing, but Don Bosco's preference was for leaving everything on a verbal basis."⁴⁵

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 denies that "these people, seminarians, priests or laymen, ever in any way belonged to the Salesian Congregation."⁴⁶

Punch and counterpunch, the fighting continued: Archbishop Fissore's mediation had failed.

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

⁴⁴ *EBM X*, 373.

⁴⁵ Letter of February 12, 1875, *IBM XI*, 548-550, Appendix 8 (omitted but referred to in *EBM XI*, 91).

⁴⁶ *Documenti XV*, 77 in *ASC 110*, *FDBM 1028 A4*; excerpt in *EBM XI*, 92.

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.⁴⁷

No doubt, throughout the distressing developments of the confrontation which followed, misunderstandings, frustration, anger, spite, and even unworthy motives (on both sides), played a part. But the conflict can be neither explained nor understood merely on 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; even less on a petulant, unreasoning hostility conceived, on his part, toward Don Bosco and the Salesians.

Part II. Developments and Episodes in the Years 1875-77 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 issues in the conflict. Concomitantly, we described certain episodes which 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; (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 Aneiros' visit; (7) the trouble relating to Father Rocca's "illicit" celebration of Mass and his suspension; (8) the Perenchio-Lazzero affair and its aftermath.

⁴⁷ Cf. Desramaut, *Études* VI, 23f.

1. Don Bosco's Petition for More Extended Privileges

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.⁴⁸ But now he felt driven to seek them out of sheer exasperation—an action-reaction situation. He compiled an awesome list hoping to obtain exemption by “assimilation” to a congregation which 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 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.⁴⁹

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, were not in favor of 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

⁴⁸ Cf. note 34 and related text, above.

⁴⁹ For the story, 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].”

asked.⁵⁰ 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 Carlo Menghini, whom Don Bosco had engaged to represent his interests in Rome, prepared a learned brief on the subject of dimissorials and privileges for Secretary Vitelleschi to present to the cardinals.⁵¹ Don Bosco followed with a personal letter to the same cardinals.⁵² 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 of dimissorials and privileges.⁵³

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 motives. 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, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Fratejacci (letters which are full of malicious interpretations) seemed to provide corroboration.⁵⁴ 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.

⁵⁰ For Don Bosco's disappointment and subsequent action, cf. *EBM* XI, 170-173.

⁵¹ *EBM* XI, 173-178.

⁵² Letter of September 11, 1875, *EBM* XI, 180f.

⁵³ *EBM* XI, 183.

⁵⁴ 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* 110, *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 of Fratejacci's letters 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* 110, *FDBM* 1032 C6-10; excerpt in *EBM* XI, 447f.].

Vitelleschi was succeeded by Archbishop Enea Sbarretti as secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Shortly thereafter also Cardinal Bizzarri, Prefect of this Congregation, was succeeded by Cardinal Innocenzo Ferrieri, who, in the Salesians' perception, inherited the mantle as Don Bosco's "enemy" par excellence in Rome.

2. The Work of Mary Help of Christians (Sons of Mary) and the Salesian Cooperators—and Gastaldi's Opposition

These chapters in the story of Don Bosco's troubled relationship with his archbishop need no lengthy presentation.⁵⁵ We will merely give an outline and identify the issues involved.

(1) *The Sons of Mary*

Essentially, the Work of Mary Help of Christians was an intensive, that is, accelerated seminary program which Don Bosco designed to foster young adult vocations to the priesthood. Experience had taught him that the perseverance rate in that age group (16 to 30) was much higher than in the younger age group. As Don Bosco related at a council and directors' meeting 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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ He sent this material out to some ten bishops favorable to him—hence, not to Archbishop Gastaldi nor to Bishop Luigi Moreno of Ivrea.

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.⁵⁸ The bishops either supported Don Bosco's plan or had no objection to it. Moreno and Gastaldi remained cut off, but neither relented; they each wrote to Cardinal Bizzarri protesting against Don Bosco's action.⁵⁹ Through his secretary, Canon Tommaso Chiuso, the archbishop

⁵⁵ For the Sons of Mary, cf. *EBM* XI, 23-42, noting especially the epistolary exchange. For the Cooperators, cf. *EBM* XI, 64-73.

⁵⁶ *EBM* XI, 21-24.

⁵⁷ For prospectus and letter, cf. *IBM* XI, 529-533, Appendices 1 and 2 (omitted in *EBM*)

⁵⁸ Circular letter of July 24, 1875, referred to in *EBM* XI; for text in part, cf. *Documenti* XV, 207 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1039 B2.

⁵⁹ Gastaldi's letter of July 25, 1875, *EBM* XI, 29f.; Moreno's letter of August 7, 1875, *Documenti* XV, 221-224 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1030 C4-7.

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 Bishop Emiliano Manacorda supported the project. Then at Archbishop Vitelleschi's and at Cardinal Antonelli's suggestion, Don Bosco finally established the Sons of Mary at Sampierdarena, in the diocese of Genoa, where he had Archbishop Magnasco's support. On September 10, 1875, the newspaper *L'Unità Cattolica* announced the establishment of the work in that city.⁶⁰

Gastaldi's chief 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 that long-standing issue. But bishops who responded to Gastaldi's appeal thought differently, since the Sons of Mary were young adults, and moreover, had the option of returning to their diocese and applying to their own bishops. Gastaldi also objected to Don Bosco's initiative on the grounds it was not needed because there were other institutions which fostered vocations. But the institutions mentioned (the Apostolic Schools and Cottolengo) 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.⁶¹

(2) *The Salesian Cooperators*

Even less attention need be given to the story of the Salesian Cooperators.⁶²

Leaving aside the prehistory of the idea, one might say that the Cooperators are the immediate successors of the "extern" Salesians who had figured in the early constitutions up to 1873. Between 1874 and 1876, Don Bosco finalized the concept apart from the constitutions, and wrote appropriate regulations. His "unveiling" of the association paralleled that of the Work of

⁶⁰ Nonetheless, while accommodations were being prepared at Sampierdarena, the program was begun at Valdocco, with Father Luigi Guanella as director [cf. note 37 and related text, above]. 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 own supervision. The program was later transferred to Mathi (1883), and finally housed in the new buildings of the St. Aloysius Oratory (St. John the Evangelist, 1884).

⁶¹ The accelerated course of studies (dubbed "the school of fire") drew criticism from Salesians at the Oratory, where (as mentioned above) some of the Sons of Mary were housed [EBM XI, 57].

⁶² Cf. EBM XI, 60-77.

Mary Help of Christians. As in the case of the Sons of Mary, the Holy Father encouraged the project early in 1875; then a few months later he granted a commendation and spiritual favors by a decree of July 30. Finally the two institutions were presented together for approval on March 4, 1876, and were approved (actually were “recognized” through the granting of indulgences) by decrees of May 9, 1876.⁶³

About a month later, Don Bosco printed a pamphlet describing the objectives of the Salesian Cooperators;⁶⁴ it included the Holy Father’s blessing on the association. Don Bosco also hoped to include in his brochure 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 benefactors [!]. Now that the Holy Father has granted his blessing, I humbly beg Your Excellency to...”⁶⁵

Faced with this *fait accompli*, and relationships being already strained to near-breaking point, the archbishop was quick to react. Through his spokesman Canon Chiuso he notified Don Bosco that the ecclesiastical *imprimatur* should have been sought beforehand; and moreover the decree of canonical erection of the association should have been presented to the ordinary, before “such indulgences” were publicized.⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷ 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 Bishop Anacleto Pietro 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

⁶³ For the Sons of Mary, petition and decree: *IBM* XI, 533-535, Appendix 3 (omitted in *EBM*). For the Cooperators, petition: *EBM* XI, 65; decree: *IBM* XI, 546f., Appendix 7 (omitted in *EBM*).

⁶⁴ This was the fourth and final elaboration of the statutes entitled, “*Cooperatori Salesiani ossia un modo pratico per giovare al buon costume ed alla civile società* (The Salesian Cooperators—an association dedicated to furthering Christian morals and the good of society)”, *IBM* XI, 540-545, Appendix 5 (omitted in *EBM*).

⁶⁵ Letter of July 11, 1876, *EBM* XI, 66.

⁶⁶ Chiuso to Don Bosco, July 16, 1876, *Documenti* XVII, 413f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1041 A1f., summarized in *EBM* XI, 67.

⁶⁷ Don Bosco to Chiuso, August 1, 1876, *EBM* XI, 67.

Cooperator, as also that on the Sons of Mary, was clearly worded to that effect: "We have been informed that a Pious Sodality of Christian men and women, under the name of Sodality or Union of Salesian Cooperators, has been canonically established. [...] Therefore, to further the increase of such a sodality [...] [we grant the following indulgences]." ⁶⁸ It is certain that Pius IX supported the establishment of both the Sons of Mary and the Salesian Cooperators wholeheartedly, and that 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. ⁶⁹ 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; hence perhaps by an ordinary?

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. ⁷⁰ Here 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 de Sales", of which Don Bosco figured as "superior". This "congregation" received encouragement, faculties, and spiritual favors at various dates from the Holy See and from Archbishop Luigi Fransoni. In 1858 this "congregation" was divided into two families: one bound by vows and living 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 decrees speak of a sodality already canonically erected, they refer:

to those early promoters who were actually (*di fatto—de facto?*) approved and recognized over a period of ten years as true cooperators in the work of the oratories. This association was formally established (*formalmente costituita*) with the decree of 1852. ⁷¹ These cooperators

⁶⁸ "*Cum sicuti relatatum est Nobis, Pia quaedam Christifidelium Sodalitas, quam Sodalitatem seu Unionem Cooperatorum Salesianorum appellant, canonicè instituta sit, [...] Nos, ut Sodalitas huiusmodi maiora in dies suscipiat incrementum, [etc.]*" [cf. note 63, above].

⁶⁹ Cf. note 63 and related text, above.

⁷⁰ Finally published by Ceria, *EBM* XI, 73-75.

⁷¹ 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 the Guardian Angel.

continued as an association (*ad essere aggregati*) even after 1858, when some of their number began to live in common under their own constitutions.

Clearly Don Bosco's repeated claim that the Salesian Cooperators (and the Salesian Society) had some kind of canonical existence as early as 1841, or 1844, or 1846, or 1852, etc. is dubious at best. Salesian scholars have debated the question.⁷²

But one may ask: if Don Bosco's claim was valid for the Cooperators, was it also valid for the Sons of Mary, for whom the decree of 1876 uses the very same formula granting indulgences to an association already canonically erected?

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 him withheld the information from Don Bosco. In the absence of the archbishop, the Vicar General Canon Giuseppe 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,

⁷² Cf. Francis Desramaut, SDB, *The Founding of the Salesian Family (1841-1876)* (New Rochelle, NY: A Don Bosco Pamphlet Publication, 1985). This is a translation of "La Fondazione della Famiglia Salesiana," in *Costruire Insieme la Famiglia Salesiana* (Atti del Simposio di Roma, 19-22 Febbraio 1982; ed. M. Midali, Collana Spirito e Vita, 11. Roma: LAS, 1983), p. 75-102. And this, in turn, is a rewriting of "La storia primitiva della Famiglia Salesiana secondo tre esposti di Don Bosco," in *La Famiglia Salesiana* (Colloqui sulla vita salesiana, 5, Lussemburgo 26-30 Agosto 1973). Torino-Leumann: LDC, 1974, p. 17-45 and 337-343 (Appendix). The "tre esposti" referred to in the title and given in the appendix are three documents authored by Don Bosco (including the one under discussion) in which he speaks of the existence of "a congregation" in the early days.

For a critique, cf. Pietro Stella, *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 2 (1983) 451-454.

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). His faculties were renewed without delay on the following day.⁷³

It is hard to see clearly into this murky affair. 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.

Be that as it may, there was no canonical suspension, and the archbishop's reply through Canon Chiuso is additional proof of that.⁷⁴ The incident, however, was so construed in Salesian circles, where it caused anger and consternation. The fiery Father Giovanni 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."⁷⁵

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.⁷⁶

⁷³ For the story, cf. *EBM* XI, 449-459. The letter of December 26, 1875, to the archbishop 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.].

⁷⁴ Letter of December 27, 1875, *EBM* XI, 456: "Your faculties for confessions are still valid. [...] The faculties would never have expired, had you done at the proper time what is customary in such instances."

⁷⁵ Letter of December 28, 1875, *EBM* XI, 453f.

⁷⁶ "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 October 9-10, 1876 issue: "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

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.⁷⁷

The satirical sheet *Il Fischiello* [The Whistle] was even bolder in its jabs at the two protagonists:

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.⁷⁸

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].

⁷⁷ “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 110, *FDBM* 1032 C4-6].

⁷⁸ “Around Town” (*Cose del giorno*), *Il Fischiello* (The Whistle), October 14, 1875, n. 123, p. 1, Tuninetti in Traniello, 228.; cf. *Documenti* XV, 284f., in ASC 110, *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.”

4. Gastaldi's Threatened Resignation⁷⁹

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 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 his ideas and action conflicted or interfered with these objectives. Don Bosco's continuous recourse to privilege in Rome was perceived by the archbishop as a challenge to his office and authority; Don Bosco's activities, apparently at 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. He was first alerted to this discrepancy by Attorney Carlo Menghini late in 1875.⁸⁰ In December, even as the affair of Don Bosco's "suspension" was reaching its denouement, Gastaldi accused Don Bosco to 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.⁸¹

⁷⁹ For this section I am guided in particular by Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 271-274.

⁸⁰ Menghini to Gastaldi, Rome, November 22, 1875, ASC 123, Persone, Franchetti, *FDBM* 601 A2-4.

Carlo 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.

⁸¹ Menghini to Don Bosco, February 7, 1876, *Documenti* XVI, 135f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1036 B10f.

As mentioned at the end of our earlier essay [cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993), 82, note 178], in preparing the "official" printed Latin and Italian editions of the

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*,[...] which 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 one should at least await my demise [...], or allow me time to resign from this office[...]."⁸²

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:

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 is 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) is 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 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. In consequence of this "revelation" and of the research that followed, the authentic Latin text of the constitutions was printed by Father Rua in 1900. The Italian translation followed in 1903.

⁸² *EBM* XI, 443. Here the date is given as March 24; March 20 is the date given in *Documenti* XVI, 186f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1037 B1f.

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 that trust which I must have as an indispensable prerequisite for the fulfillment of my duties.⁸³

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. 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.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

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 public) were still trying to piece rumors together and to figure out who would eventually prevail.⁸⁶

⁸³ Cf. *IBM* XII, 642f. (omitted in *EBM*).

⁸⁴ 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, 646f., Appendix 11; *IBM* XII, 647, Appendix 12; *IBM* XII, 675-677, Appendices 35 and 36 (all omitted in *EBM*); Ceria, *Ep* III, 51.

⁸⁵ Episcopal authority (so he 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 its legitimate pastoral care with grave consequences [Letter of May 5, 1876, *IBM* XI, 600f., Appendix 36 (omitted in *EBM*)].

⁸⁶ “Irreparable Loss (*Una perdita irreparabile*),” *Il Fischietto*, May 23, 1876, n. 72, Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272 and note 61. An excerpt is worth quoting:

Toward the end of January 1877 Archbishop Gastaldi, accompanied by Father Giuseppe Soldati, rector of the seminary, journeyed to Rome for his *ad 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.⁸⁷

Following up on the Roman report, the *Gazzetta del Popolo* of Turin announced the archbishop's resignation as 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.⁸⁸

"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.

⁸⁷ "A Bishop Resigns," *La Libertà*, January 30, 1877, Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 272; mention in *EBM XIII*, 12f., 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 [cf. Lenti in *JSS 4* (1993), 5-7, 32 note 65. For a detailed discussion cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 307-329].

⁸⁸ "The Archbishop of Turin," *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, January 31, 1877, *Documenti XVIII*, 50; mention in *EBM XIII*, 13, note 20.

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."⁸⁹

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.⁹⁰

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

This scandalmongering *Gazzetta* continued to carry the story and to harp on the conflict. The defrocked priest Antonio 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, n. 35, p. 1., Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 272 and note 64.]

⁸⁹ "Our Diocese is in Danger," *Il Fischietto*, February 3, 1877, n. 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, 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 miracleworker of Valdocco."

(*Revalenta* is this paper's nickname for Gastaldi [cf. note 78], but here perhaps it stands for *polenta*, corn grits.)

⁹⁰ "Report on the Roman Trip of January 1877," in *Lettere Pastorali*, p. 353ff., in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 273, note 67.

Phony Excellency is back, and justifies his return by claiming conveniently to have been recalled by popular demand.⁹¹

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 went 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 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.”⁹²

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 [...].”⁹³

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.⁹⁴

⁹¹ “The Archbishop’s Pockets,” in *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, February 25, 1877, n. 56, Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 272, note 64. The newspaper pursued the subject again in 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.*].

⁹² Cf. “Don Bosco’s Silence [...]” *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, April 29, 1877, n. 118, Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 273, note 69.

⁹³ Letter of March 28, 1993, Ceria, *Ep III*, 161.

⁹⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 272, note 67.

He goes on to list various expressions of support received from diocesan and religious groups. But makes no mention of the Salesians nor 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 Giuseppe Zappata. This is confirmed by a report to the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, by Monsignor Giovanni 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 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.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 273f., note 69 (citing the document from the *Secret Vatican Archives*).

In an earlier letter (February 2) 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. He 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*,"

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, Gastaldi had a short pamphlet published and distributed to cardinals in Rome, entitled, *The Archbishop of Turin and the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in Turin*. 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.⁹⁶

Such an apologia, however, did not signal any letup in the struggle. The remainder of 1877 continued to be filled with strife resulting in ever deeper wounds.

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*.⁹⁷ 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 Sanpierdarena, 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.⁹⁸ The archbishop had a notice published in the

⁹⁶ The five-page pamphlet was entitled, *L'Arcivescovo di Torino e la Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales in Torino, Documenti XVIII*, 86-88 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1046 A9-11; briefly in *EBM* XIII, 249f.

⁹⁷ *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, *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), *Opere Edite* XXVIII, 449-565. Ceria, *Ep* III, 175f.

⁹⁸ Gastaldi to Don Bosco, May 17, 1877, *Documenti XVIII*, 142 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1047 A5.

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.⁹⁹

There was also at work in the dispute an underlying difference in attitude regarding the "miraculous" in the two men. Gastaldi was trying to discourage the kind of hagiography and popular religiosity purveyed in such publications as the *Catholic Readings*. His university education made him personally more critical as well as more sensitive to the ridicule which the liberals heaped upon "religious credulity." Don Bosco, on the contrary, could look upon these "graces" with the untroubled faith of an earlier age. In his reply to the archbishop, he points out that he had merely transcribed the reports, and had carefully avoided the labels, "miracle" and "supernatural". Moreover, he had merely followed the style of the Lives of the Saints, and done what was being done at other shrines and in their publications. Ceria remarks that the archbishop was not satisfied with this explanation, and that the argument on the subject continued for some time.¹⁰⁰

6. Archbishop Federico Aneiros' Visit

Another unpleasant episode concerned none other than Archbishop Federico Aneiros of Buenos Aires. He arrived in Italy, with a retinue of fifteen people, at the beginning of June for a fairly extended visit, and Don Bosco acted as his host 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 Aneiros 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 Aneiros 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 Aneiros ("alone") to dine with him at lunch. The invitation was tendered by the archbishop's secretary who did not deliver the message directly, but consigned it for delivery to an Oratory boy. At this lack of courtesy, Aneiros, pleading "previous commitments", declined the invitation.¹⁰¹ It was all very distressing. In letters to Father Cagliero and Father

⁹⁹ *EBM* XIII, 282f.

¹⁰⁰ Ceria, *Ep* III, 175f.

¹⁰¹ *EBM* XIII, 142-152, *passim*.

Lasagna Don Bosco gave his missionaries an account of the visit, successful in all other respects. He expressed his disappointment with Archbishop Gastaldi's inexplicable, or perhaps all too explicable behavior.¹⁰²

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, 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"; and later that he had been dismissed from the seminary, as we learn from Canon Francesco Maffei, the secretary who handled the Rocca affair for the archbishop.¹⁰³ Don Bosco maintained instead that he had left the seminary because of illness, had been given a few weeks' convalescence at Lanzo, then went back to his family, and later joined the Salesians.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as Don Bosco later had occasion to state emphatically, testimonials had been requested and had been denied—a claim which the archbishop rejected.¹⁰⁵ This last point is substantiated by Father Rocca himself in a letter to Father Ceria.¹⁰⁶ Eventually, Rocca joined the Salesians (without obtaining testimonial letters) and was ordained by Bishop Salvaj of Alessandria. The newly ordained priest wished to celebrate Mass on the patronal feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1877, in his hometown of Rivara, a parish of the archdiocese of Turin. When the pastor

¹⁰² Letters of June 30 and July 16, 1877, Ceria, *Ep* III, 194f. and 198-200.

¹⁰³ Maffei to Rua, November 9, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 274f. and Maffei to Don Bosco, December 4, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 396f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1051 B7f.

¹⁰⁴ *EBM* XIII, 274f.

¹⁰⁵ Don Bosco to Gastaldi, November 12, 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*, p. 891) we had recourse to a higher authority."

¹⁰⁶ Letter of March 4, 1931, *EBM* XIII, 289, note 26 (emend date).

requested the archbishop's permission, as Rocca himself explains,¹⁰⁷ 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[!]. 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.¹⁰⁸ Don Bosco's explanations (if any were at all possible under the circumstances), delivered in the already quoted strong letter of November 12, were rejected. Gastaldi wrote: "The best thing you can do is to come before your archbishop moved only by humility and charity."¹⁰⁹ 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 even of a portable altar [...].¹¹⁰

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.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Father Rua, November 7, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 363 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1050 D10.

¹⁰⁸ Maffei to Rua, November 9, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 1877.

¹⁰⁹ Don Bosco to Gastaldi, November 12, 1877 (the already quoted strong letter) Gastaldi to Don Bosco, November 23, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 281.

¹¹⁰ Letter of December 4, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 396f., in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1051 B7f.; without date in *EBM* XIII, 288f.

8. Father Giovanni Perenchio and Father Giuseppe Lazzero

Meanwhile an even more serious clash was taking place. It involved Father Giovanni Perenchio, a priest of the diocese of Ivrea (where Luigi Moreno was bishop) and by association the vice-director of the Oratory, Father Giuseppe Lazzero—and, of course, Don Bosco himself.¹¹¹

(1) *Initial Events*

Father Perenchio arrived in Turin on August 3, 1877 with the intention of joining the Salesian Society and was quickly admitted as an aspirant (or novice?).¹¹² Bishop Moreno 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 Chiaverotti acting for the archbishop and Father Lazzero. 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.

(2) *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 Chiaverotti's later statement) under dictation from the archbishop himself.¹¹³ 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

¹¹¹ The story is told in detail (together with Father Rocca's account) in *EBM* XIII, 250-282.

¹¹² 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.

¹¹³ According to Chiaverotti's own statement reported in *EBM* XIII, 258.

than those of the Society without the ordinary's permission.¹¹⁴ The renewed raising of the 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 stated¹¹⁵) he had never been served the decree of suspension, he was nonetheless asked by Father Lazzero to desist from celebrating. He was then quickly transferred from Turin to Sampierdarena (Genoa).¹¹⁶

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, Bishop Moreno of Ivrea. As in seminarian Rocca's case, so here 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."¹¹⁷

In this respect it should be recalled that Don Bosco had obtained a *vivae-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.¹¹⁸ Apparently, however, the concessions notwithstanding, Archbishop Gastaldi, and

¹¹⁴ Chiaverotti to Rua, August 24, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 211 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1048 B2; excerpts in *EBM* XIII, 250-252.

¹¹⁵ Statement quoted in *EBM* XIII, 277f.

¹¹⁶ *EBM* XIII, 252.

¹¹⁷ Letter of October 12, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 266-268.

The September 7 statement, already cited [cf. note 112 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 had in his view 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]

¹¹⁸ Cf. note 84 and related text, above. For the statement to Cardinal Ferrieri, cf. *EBM* XIII, 257.

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:

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.¹¹⁹

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.

(3) *The Fracas of August 26*

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 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."¹²⁰ It was Saturday afternoon. He waited till Sunday morning for

¹¹⁹ *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. note 118 and related text, above].

¹²⁰ Lazzero to Chiaverotti, August 25, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 252f.

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* permission were obtained from the ecclesiastical authorities.”¹²¹ The result was that a large number of the faithful were deprived of Mass that Sunday, and the confusion which took place in the numerous churches where Salesian priests were engaged to celebrate would later be described by the archbishop as “bedlam in the sacristies.”¹²²

Father Lazzero read the phrase as a general prohibition and no doubt acted in good faith.¹²³ But Archbishop Gastaldi obviously never expected his statement to be so interpreted. In fact, he 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 Giuseppe Zappata, the archbishop requested that 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.¹²⁴ The archbishop then demanded an apology for “the enormous

¹²¹ *EBM* XIII, 254. Father Lazzero specified that the permission should be in writing as additional insurance.

¹²² Memorandum *The Archbishop [...]* of October 15, 1877, cf. note 131, below.

¹²³ 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].

¹²⁴ The wording of the prohibition is certainly obscure, and it would indeed lend itself to a generalized interpretation if understood apart from the wider 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 laid down, and had again emphasized 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.

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 which, 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.¹²⁵ 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 Francesco 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 acknowledged, nor was it intended, as the formal apology requested.¹²⁶

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.

(3) 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. 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 and come to its tragic resolution in Rome

Archbishop Gastaldi presented his complaints to the cardinal in three lengthy and detailed letters which drubbed Don Bosco and the Salesians without pity. Besides rehearsing the recent vexing episodes, the archbishop accused Don

[...]” [Letter of September 19-28, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 236-243 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1048 D3-10; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 257f.].

¹²⁵ *EBM* XIII, 270 and cf. 259f.

¹²⁶ Rua to Maffei November 4, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 272f. Maffei’s reply, November 23, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 284f.

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.¹²⁷ Twice warned of these attacks by Cardinal Luigi 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.¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹ And since Don Bosco kept on citing special privileges received from Pius IX (one of Gastaldi’s constant complaints), he was finally bidden by Cardinal Ferrieri to submit a complete list of them “so as to aid the eminent cardinals in their review of this grievance.”¹³⁰ 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 Gastaldi’s cause, and the least to Don Bosco’s.

The accumulated charges against Don Bosco, with particular emphasis on the Perenchio-Lazzerio affair, were the subject matter of a second pamphlet written and published (anonymously) by the archbishop on October 15, 1877, for exclusive circulation to Roman cardinals and a select number of bishops. It was entitled, *The Archbishop of Turin and the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales*.¹³¹ Don Bosco’s reply, consisting of thirty-two observations, was not late in coming.¹³² 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.¹³³

¹²⁷ Letters of August 26, and 31, 1877 in ASC 123; Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 659 B5-8 and 9-11; brief excerpts in *EBM* XIII, 254. The mighty letter of September 19-28, 1877, *Documenti* XVIII, 236-243 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1050 B8-C7; brief excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 257f.

¹²⁸ Letters of September 14 and October 12, 1877 [*EBM* XIII, 255f. and 266-268].

¹²⁹ Letter of October 10, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 266.

¹³⁰ Cardinal Ferrieri to Don Bosco, November 14, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 276.

¹³¹ *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. This eleven-page pamphlet dealt chiefly with the grievances pertaining to the year 1877 [*Documenti* XVIII, 337-348 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1052/A5-B4; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 269].

¹³² *Documenti* XVIII, 349-354 in ASC 110, B5-10.

¹³³ *EBM* XIII, 285f.

Even as these exchanges were in progress, the saintly Father Roberto Murialdo, in a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi, offered to act as mediator in the dispute. A little later the Jesuit theologian, Father Luigi Testa, discussed the possibility of a mediation with Gastaldi's trusted adviser, Father Felice Carpignano of the Congregation of the Oratory. Neither initiative ever advanced beyond the proposal stage.¹³⁴

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 Tommaso Tosa, O.P., an attorney of the same Congregation, to inquire about the status of the Salesian Congregation and to sound him out on various other issues. In reply Tosa 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 interpretation given to it by the Salesians. In conclusion Tosa exhorted the archbishop to act on his own suggestion (he had apparently offered terms for a reconciliation) and make peace.¹³⁵

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.¹³⁶ 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.

¹³⁴ Murialdo to Gastaldi, September 18, and Testa to Don Bosco, September 29, 1877, *EBM* XIII, 261-265.

¹³⁵ Letter of March 28, 1878, *EBM* XIII, 395-398.

¹³⁶ *Lettera sull'Arcivescovo di Torino e sulla Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales* [cf. note 146, below].

Part III. The Final Phase Of The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict (1878-1882)

The final phase of the conflict and the conduct of the confrontation were 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, Enea Sbarretti succeeded Archbishop Vitelleschi as secretary, and Cardinal Innocenzo 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 Carlo Menghini’s ambiguous position) that Don Bosco in late December 1877 decided to engaged another attorney, Costantino Leonori, as his new counsel in Rome.¹³⁷ 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 this third part of our essay.

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 aforementioned *Salesian Cooperator's Letter* was the first of these to appear. The archbishop naturally assumed that the Salesians were involved. The bitter dispute which 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.

In Don Bosco’s and the Salesians’ perception, the facts related in the *Letter* were true. This is confirmed by a statement in the *Barberis Chronicle*, reflecting Don Bosco’s own view.¹³⁸ But the archbishop, through Canon Maffei,

¹³⁷ *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.

¹³⁸ “In the meantime an anonymous author, calling himself “a Salesian cooperator,” 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

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 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.¹³⁹ 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.¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹ The latter showed it to Don Bosco in Rome on December 26.¹⁴² 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*.¹⁴³ and praised by Father Massimiliano Bardessonno. But the statement actually published in the *Salesian Bulletin* is considerably

manner. The archbishop took great offense [...] [Barberis, *Cronichetta*, Note Book 13, p. 17f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 845 C2f.].

¹³⁹ Maffei to Don Bosco, December 5; Don Bosco to Gastaldi, December 9, Maffei to Don Bosco; December 10; Don Bosco to Gastaldi, December 12, 1877 [*EBM* XIII, 291-294].

¹⁴⁰ *Documenti* XVIII, 426f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1051 D11f.

¹⁴¹ *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 110, *FDBM* 1051 E3-6.

¹⁴² The date according to Father Berto's notes, in ASC: 123 Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 662 C4.

¹⁴³ *EBM* XIII, 298.

Father (Abbé) Massimiliano Bardessonno, esteemed but conservative priest of the archdiocese and one of Gastaldi's "illustrious victims", in a long letter (otherwise marked by bitter words against the archbishop and his chancery) praised Don Bosco's *Declaration* for its calmness, prudence, discretion [January 20, 1878, *Documenti* XIX, 52 [51-54] in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1053 D2 [1-4]; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 298]. For a negative judgment on Bardessonno and his letter, cf. Toninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 61.

different. Before condemning the language and style of the *Letter*, this declaration (now no longer from Don Bosco in the first person) 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*.¹⁴⁴

The *Cooperator's Letter* was by no means the worst of the five anonymous anti-Gastaldi publications of the period 1878-1879. In the interest of clarity we will immediately list and give a brief description of the five pamphlets which concern our discussion:¹⁴⁵

(1) The *Cooperator's Letter* (just discussed), early December 1877.¹⁴⁶ 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, 1878.¹⁴⁷ 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 lambasts the archbishop's pastoral policies and directives, with special reference to his opposition to the Salesians.

(3) The *Chaplain's Second Strenna*, March 1879.¹⁴⁸ Entitled "The Rosminian Question," this second offering to the clergy by the Chaplain was a

¹⁴⁴ *Bollettino Salesiano* 2:1 (1878), p. 12, ASC 73 Bollettino, *FDBM* 107 B2: "We, for our part, are grateful to this unidentified writer, and we thank him for having been willing 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 Turchi and as will be discussed below, the mystery author was none other than Father Giovanni Battista Anfossi, a alumnus of the Oratory and a close friend of the Salesians..

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *EBM* XV, 186-188.

¹⁴⁶ *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 p. 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 [cf. note 96, 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 110, *FDBM* 1051 C3-5; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 290].

¹⁴⁷ *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 p. 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, usually in literary form.

¹⁴⁸ *La Questione Rosminiana e l'Arcivescovo di Torino. Strenna pel Clero*, compilata dal Cappellano, anno II (*The Rosminian Question and the Archbishop of*

collection of articles written by Gastaldi in defense of 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.¹⁴⁹

(4) *The Brief Essay*, March 1879.¹⁵⁰ 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 1879.¹⁵¹ 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.

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 was 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 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."¹⁵²

Turin. A Gift for the Clergy, by the Chaplain, Year II). Turin: Tip. G. Bruno e C., 1879, 144 p.

¹⁴⁹ For Gastaldi's newspaper, *Il Conciliatore*, cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993) 6, based on Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, 53-88.

¹⁵⁰ *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 p.

¹⁵¹ *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 p. The foreword of this piece is signed, "*Un Padre di famiglia* (Head of a family)."

¹⁵² *Brief Essay*, 27 and 38f. in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 280f. and in Desramaut, *Études* VII, 145, notes 51-53. Giacomo Margotti (1823-1887) was the

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.'"¹⁵³

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, purported 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 archbishop was charged with. Thus, forced to condemn 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:

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,

conservative editor of the leading Catholic newspaper, *L'Unità Cattolica*. For Bardessono, cf. note 143, above.

¹⁵³ Free rendering of: "*Qui giace Monsignor tale / Cui stava meglio il laccio che il pastorale*" [*Chieri Story*, 38 in Desramaut, *Études* VII, 145, note 54].

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.¹⁵⁴

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 Holy See was taking matters in hand.

Shortly after the election of Leo XIII, and the consistory held on March 3, Don Bosco and Gastaldi were both back in Rome. On March 5, Gastaldi 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.¹⁵⁵

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. The Roman Congregation, on March 22, 1878, also acted on a six-point petition which Gastaldi had presented on December 27, 1877. The request which 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." The Roman Congregation's decision was in Gastaldi's favor. Don Bosco and the Salesian Society had to

¹⁵⁴ Barberis, *Cronichetta*, Note Book 13, 38f. in ASC 110, FDBM 845 D11f.

¹⁵⁵ 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 [Letter of March 25, 1878, Ceria, *Ep* III, 327-332]. 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.

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.¹⁵⁶ Don Bosco called on the archbishop, and the latter appeared quite forthcoming.¹⁵⁷

It was at this point that hostilities flared up again on account of a series of events involving Father Giovanni Bonetti.

2. The Bonetti-Gastaldi Confrontation: Origin and Early Development to Father Bonetti's Suspension (1878-1879)¹⁵⁸

Giovanni 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 somewhat simplistic in his perceptions; emotional and daring even to rashness; a facile, yet incisive, writer of unquestionable Roman Catholic, ultramontane persuasion. Don Bosco was not afraid of such temperament; 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 Giacomo 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.

¹⁵⁶ *EBM* XIII, 432-435.

¹⁵⁷ *EBM* XIII, 435f.

¹⁵⁸ For this section I am guided by Desramaut, *Études* VII, 32-38, 105-108.

(1) 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 Leone 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.¹⁵⁹ But he was 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."¹⁶⁰ It was a transparent attack aimed at Father 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.¹⁶¹ 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 chastizers of bishops is

¹⁵⁹ Cf. e.g. Don Bosco's letter of May 28, 1878 to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Alessandro Franchi, Ceria, *Ep* III, 348f. This letter was written, in response to one by the cardinal, and 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."

¹⁶⁰ *Bollettino Salesiano*, June 1878, 4f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 453.

¹⁶¹ Barberis, *Cronichetta*, May 18, 1878, Note Book 13, 61-64 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 846 A10-B1.

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.”¹⁶²

Instead of obeying, Bonetti (as the “editorial staff”) responded by publishing a letter to Don Bosco, questioning the archbishop’s statements, not without some biting irony, that he had ever written irreverently or ever played the teacher, the censor, etc. of bishops.¹⁶³ 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.”¹⁶⁴ Under the circumstances, the clever formula could 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 which Don Bosco himself had received. Don Bosco then “stuck to his guns” when, 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, he spoke of “this memorial of love and thanks to the great Pius IX, [...] this church which we now erect in honor of the beloved apostle and in memory of Pius IX, who bore the name of John.”¹⁶⁵ 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.”¹⁶⁶

(2) *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.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Letter of July 20, 1878, *Documenti* XIX, 202f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1056 A8f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIII, 454.

¹⁶³ “The Editorial Staff of the *Salesian Bulletin* to Don Bosco,” Sampierdarena, August 1, 1878, *EBM* XIII, 458-460.

¹⁶⁴ Letter of August 6, 1878, *Ceria*, *Ep* III, 373f.

¹⁶⁵ *EBM* XIII, 463f.

¹⁶⁶ *Unità Cattolica*, August 18, 1878, *Documenti* XIX, 225f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1056 C7f.

¹⁶⁷ For the story of this foundation and its problems, cf. *EBM* XIII, 537-540 (where documents are omitted).

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 Andrea 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, 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 Pietro 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."¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, as was to be expected, the archbishop's instructions specified that religious 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 the girls, especially poor young girls who worked in Chieri's many small factories, to read and write. 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.¹⁶⁹ 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, Bonetti explained to 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

¹⁶⁸ Letter of October 6, 1878, Ceria, *Ep* III, 392.

¹⁶⁹ Oddenino to Don Bosco, December 3, 1878, *Documenti* XLV, 6 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1194 C6; summarized in *EBM* XIII, 539.

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."¹⁷⁰ That *someone* (Father Oddenino) immediately canceled his subscription.¹⁷¹

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 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.¹⁷² 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 which 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 consulted 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 the St. Theresa's Oratory for the greater good of souls and so as not to give encouragement to malevolent people.¹⁷³ 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 arrogance and contentious spirit were to take Don Bosco himself to lengths he could not have anticipated in 1879.

2. Development of the Bonetti-Gastaldi Controversy with Don Bosco's Involvement (1879-1880)¹⁷⁴

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

¹⁷⁰ *Bollettino Salesiano*, January 1879, p. 8f. in Desramaut, *Études* VII, 37.

¹⁷¹ Oddenino to Don Bosco, December 28, 1878, *Documenti* XLV, 7f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1194 C7f.

¹⁷² Rua to Gastaldi, January 1879, *EBM* XIV, 171.

¹⁷³ Letter of January 20, 1879, *Rehabilitation*, 14f. in ASC 123: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 635 D11f.; referred to in *EBM* XIV, 171f.

¹⁷⁴ Also for this section I am guided by Desramaut, *Études* VII, 105-112.

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.

In February 1879 Don Bosco (already for some time away from Turin) set out for Rome, "at the Holy Father's request."¹⁷⁵ He arrived there accompanied by Father Bonetti, who needed to get away from the diocese. A letter to a cardinal (in Berto's hand) seems to indicate that Don Bosco had already undertaken Bonetti's defense, but it is not certain.¹⁷⁶ Five Chieri canons (perhaps not on friendly terms with Father Oddenino) had written a letter in support of Father Bonetti.¹⁷⁷ On March 6 (1879) Bonetti petitioned Leo XIII to be released from the suspension.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ These privileges would have helped solve Father Bonetti's problem in Chieri, for he was both confessor and superior in a "Salesian house."¹⁸⁰

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.¹⁸¹ 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

¹⁷⁵ Don Bosco to Professor Pietro Vallauri, February 9, 1879, Ceria, *Ep* III, 444.

¹⁷⁶ Undated (but written in February 1879), *EBM* XIV, 174f.

¹⁷⁷ Letter in *Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 20f. in *ASC* 123: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani. *FDBM* 635 E5f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 175.

¹⁷⁸ Petition, in *Rehabilitation, Summarium*, p. 23-25 in *ASC* 123: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 635 E8-10.

¹⁷⁹ In *IBM* XIV, 705f. and 707, Appendices 10 B and D (omitted in *EBM*).

¹⁸⁰ Cf. note 283 and related text, below.

¹⁸¹ Carlo Cays to Don Bosco, February 21, 1879, *IBM* XIV, 699f., Appendix 6 (omitted in *EBM*).

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 pastor, and several canons (but not Canon Sona) agreed that it would not be wise for Father Bonetti to return to Chieri."¹⁸²

Four weeks later, Canon Chiaverotti wrote to Father Bonetti confirming that his faculties had been restored by the archbishop, on condition that he not go back to Chieri.¹⁸³

Surely this called for a compromise. But Father Bonetti would not accept the condition.¹⁸⁴ 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[...]"¹⁸⁵

Canon Sona was advising Bonetti to resist.¹⁸⁶ Father Bonetti, on the other hand, undertook a series of actions which 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 he again appealed directly to Leo XIII.¹⁸⁷ He had already made a first appeal in

¹⁸² Letter of March 22, 1879, *Documenti XLV*, 20 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1194, D8; excerpt in *EBM XIV*, 176. Throughout the conflict, Father Rua acted discreetly to bring the parties together.

¹⁸³ Chiaverotti to Bonetti, April 18, 1879 in *ASC* 123: *Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani*, *FDBM* 644 D11.

¹⁸⁴ *EBM XIV*, 176, where Ceria defends Bonetti for rejecting the condition.

¹⁸⁵ Original in *ASC* 123: *Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani*, *FDBM* 633 B11-C2, transcribed in *Documenti XLV*, 21f in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1194 D9f. Father Ceria states [*EBM XIV*, 176] that the letter was confidential to a friend, and that this friend edited it and made it public. This is contradicted by the original in Bonetti's hand, which begins with: "Rome, Mar. 24, 1879. - To the Girls of the Oratory of St. Theresa."

¹⁸⁶ Letter of March 28, April 20 and 28, 1879, *Documenti XLV*, 23f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1194 D11-E3.

¹⁸⁷ Bonetti to Gastaldi, May 2, 1879, *Documenti XLV*, 28 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 194 E4; briefly in *EBM XIV*, 178; Bonetti to Leo XIII, May 4, 1879, *Rehabilitation, Summarium*, 34-43 in *ASC* 123: *Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani*, *FDBM* 636 A7-B4.

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 of a violent temper 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 which the Salesians have always interpreted as willful, erratic behavior. After receiving a copy of Bonetti’s appeal to Rome, on May 26, Gastaldi had sent for Don Bosco and had restored Bonetti’s faculties without condition. The following day, however, without any explanation, he revoked the faculties while he “personally conducted a new investigation” in Chieri. This turn-about the Salesians found incomprehensible as well as outrageous, as the *Biographical Memoirs* and Bonetti’s immediate recourse to the Holy Father show. 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.¹⁸⁸

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 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. He 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’

¹⁸⁸ *EBM* XIV, 178f.; Gastaldi to Don Bosco, May 27, 1879 and information, *Documenti* XX, 203f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1061 D5f.; Bonetti’s appeal to Leo XIII, *EBM*, XIV, 179. Cf. Desramaut, *Études* VII, 108f.

ministry in them “is limited to administering the sacraments and preaching the word of God, and only as specified by the ordinaries.”¹⁸⁹

The summer of 1879 was a difficult one for Don Bosco on other counts as well. It was the summer when the Oratory school was closed down by the government. Bonetti refers to this event in writing to Attorney Leonori complaining about his plight and asking for advice: “The government has put us to the sword, and the archbishop has put us on the cross. We are being slanderously portrayed as unworthy priests and as betrayers of souls [...]”¹⁹⁰ Bonetti was eager to take legal action in Rome against the archbishop. Don Bosco had to temper his impatience.¹⁹¹ But then Bonetti decided to make a fourth appeal to Pope Leo XIII, through Cardinal Nina, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council and the newly-named Protector of the Salesian Society. The petition was to be handled by Archbishop Isidoro Verga, Secretary of the same Congregation, and Attorney Leonori. Don Bosco enclosed an endorsement of Bonetti, commending him without any reservation as “a praiseworthy and exemplary religious”, and as “a zealot and self-sacrificing priest” in his ministry in Chieri.¹⁹² However, Archbishop Verga and Attorney Leonori thought it best not to go to Pope Leo at this time.

Don Bosco took a further step. In January 1880 he appointed Father Francis Dalmazzo his permanent procurator in Rome.¹⁹³ 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 to the end of the conflict and the signing of the reconciliation document (*Concordia*). He too regarded Cardinal Ferrieri as “the enemy.”¹⁹⁴

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

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Don Bosco’s response, August 3, 1879 and January 12, 1880, *EBM* XIV, 160-168, esp., 161 and 166-168.

¹⁹⁰ Letter of July 27, 1879, *Documenti* XLV, 33f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1194 E9f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 183.

¹⁹¹ *EBM* XIV, 183f., with excerpts of Bonetti’s letters to Archbishop Isidoro Verga, Secretary of the Congregation of the Council and to Attorney Leonori.

¹⁹² Letter of October 28, 1879, *EBM* XIV, 184f.

Don Bosco reference to Father Bonetti’s conduct confirms what Bonetti himself writes to Leonori—that his suspension had aroused suspicions that he might have been guilty of immoral conduct [cf. *EBM* XIV, 183 cited in note 191 above].

¹⁹³ Don Bosco to Nina, January 12, 1880, *Ceria*, *Ep* III, 539f., cf. *EBM* XIV, 163, 186.

¹⁹⁴ Dalmazzo to Rua [January (?) 1880], *Documenti* XXII, 69 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1069 C1 (mention of audience and of Ferrieri’s hostility); *EBM* XIV, 346-348 (report of Dalmazzo’s first audience with Cardinal Ferrieri).

him that he was “systematically opposed to the privileges of religious.” Don Bosco settled for having only a few minor ones renewed.¹⁹⁵ 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.¹⁹⁶

It is 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, Raffaele 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.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Berto to Rua, April 8, 1880, and Berto’s recollections, *EBM* XIV, 357-360; cf. 351.

¹⁹⁶ Don Bosco to Dalmazzo, S. Pierdarena, May 7, 1880, Ceria, *Ep* III, 585; cf. comments regarding Ferrieri in *EBM* XIV, 345f.

¹⁹⁷ Berto’s notes, *Documenti* XXII, 87f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1069 D7f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 348.

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!” [*EBM* XIV, 461; cf. *Documenti* XXII, 90-92 in *ASC* 110, *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, 462f.]. 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, *Études* VII. 111].

3. The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict after the Appearance of the Defamatory Pamphlets to the Conclusion of the Bonetti Affair and the *Concordia* (1880-1882)¹⁹⁸

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, Emmanuele 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.

(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 the diocese and be in his power (*nelle mani di lui* [in his hands]). Let us pray!"¹⁹⁹ 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 that 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?²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Throughout this section I am guided by Desramaut, *Études* VII, p.121-141 and *Chron. critique* for the presentation, interpretation, and some references.

¹⁹⁹ Don Bosco to De Gaudenzi, October 6, 1878, Ceria, *Ep* III, 391f.

²⁰⁰ *Documenti* XIX, 255 in ASC 110, FDBM 1057 A1 (source unknown); conversation toned down in the *Biographical Memoirs* [cf. *EBM* XIII, 691].

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 which 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."²⁰¹ Did Don Bosco laugh or cry?

(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 mere 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.²⁰² 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.²⁰³ On December 3, Don Bosco (at San

²⁰¹ Gastaldi to Don Bosco, October 22, 1880, in *IBM XIV*, 800, Appendix 62 (omitted in *EBM*).

²⁰² *EBM XIV*, 187: "Tired of being left in suspense for twenty-two months, Father Bonetti, on November 17, 1880, sent directly to the pope his appeal of October 24, 1879, which Archbishop Verga had held up" (October 10 is the date given in Desramaut, *Chron. critique*, 121).

²⁰³ Leonori to Don Bosco, Letter of November 29, 1880, *Documenti XLV*, 47 in *ASC 110, FDBM 1195 A11*; brief description in *EBM XIV*, 187f.

Benigno at the time) entrusted the task of delivering the letter to Father Luigi 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.²⁰⁴

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."²⁰⁵

(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.²⁰⁶ 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 by presenting his own case against them and prosecuting 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 Stefano Leone, vicar forane, and Father Andrea Oddenino, pastor of the *Duomo* at Chieri, accused Bonetti of being the author of the *Chieri Story*.²⁰⁷

(2) At about the same time, Father Antonio Musso, who was interrogated at the chancery, connected Don Bosco with one of the pamphlets, by stating that he had spotted a passage relating to the *Convitto* affair which contained information which he had relayed confidentially to Don Bosco.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Deppert to Dalmazzo, December 18, 1880, *Documenti* XLV, 52f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1195 B4f.; brief description in *EBM* XIV, 188f.

²⁰⁵ Gastaldi to Caterini, December 5, 1880, in *Documenti* XLV, 49f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1195 B1f.; excerpt in *EBM* XIV, 189.

²⁰⁶ Letter in *Documenti* XLV, 54 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1195 B6; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 154.

²⁰⁷ Leone to Gastaldi, Chieri, December 5, 1880, and Oddenino to Gastaldi, December 13, 1880, *Rehabilitation, Summarium Add.*, 1f., and 5-8 in ASC 123: *Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani*, *FDBM* 636 C5f. and 2-12, with indignant handwritten marginal notations.

²⁰⁸ Deposition by Giuseppe Corno, a secretary of Gastaldi, in the *Processiculus* of June 28, 1917 in Desramaut, *Études* VII, 124, 147, note 80.

(3) Far more damaging to Don Bosco was the testimony given by a priest of the Pious Schools, Father Luigi Leoncini. He stated that conversations he had with the ex-Jesuit Antonio Pellicani tended to show: [i] that Pellicani had been encouraged by Don Bosco 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 was convinced that Pellicani was its author, and hence the author also of the *Second Strenna*.²⁰⁹

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.²¹⁰ 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, which was generally unfavorable to Bonetti. Among other things, he faulted the Salesians for acting without due regard to "the ecclesiastical authority."²¹¹ 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 Emmanuele Colomiatti. Although the Salesians "have reckoned him with the wicked," he was, according to Tuninetti, "an honest and competent person."²¹²

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 Colomiatti's depositions against Don Bosco.

²⁰⁹ For the story, cf. *EBM* XV, 191f. This would remain Gastaldi's position, supported by Leoncini, 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*.

²¹⁰ Gastaldi to Caterini, December 29, 1880, *Documenti* XLV, 55-64 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 B7-C4; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 190.

²¹¹ Tortone to Holy See, December 30, 1880, *Documenti* XLV, 65-68 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 C5-8, where printed within the text one reads also parenthetical disparaging remarks about the author.

²¹² 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 Davide Riccardi.

(5) *Colomiatti's Proposal for an Out-Of-Court Settlement of the Bonetti Case*

On February 4, Colomiatti arrived in Rome to take charge of the defense in the suspension case, and of the prosecution (of Don Bsoco and Bonetti) for the pamphlets. 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 had already obtained an audience with Leo XIII, thanks to the pope's chamberlain, Monsignor Luigi 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 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 Gastaldi.²¹³ 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.²¹⁴ Don Bosco (in France at the time) remained unconvinced, and his reply to Cardinal Nina reveals his misgivings.²¹⁵ 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 the pope "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 which he has already removed once and then immediately reapplied.²¹⁶ 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

²¹³ Colomiatti to Gastaldi, February 8, 9 and 10, 1881, *ASC* 123: Gastaldi e i Salesiani, *FDBM* 645 D4-E4.

²¹⁴ Nina to Don Bosco, February 10, 1881, *IBM* XV, 707f., Appendix 15 (omitted in *EBM*). Colomiatti's actions in Rome are reported in *EBM* XV, 156f. 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 have won the case.

²¹⁵ Don Bosco to Nina, February 27, 1881, *EBM* XV, 157f. (date in *Documenti* XLV, 74 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 D2.).

²¹⁶ Cf. note 188 and related text, above.

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 against the archbishop, he incurs automatic suspension. [...] You may present these ideas of mine to the Rev. Dr. Colomiatti [...].²¹⁷

Later, on his way back from France, responding to a pressing letter from Colomiatti, Don Bosco himself restated his position in writing.²¹⁸

Meanwhile Father Rua was working quietly and cautiously to bring the parties closer to a reconciliation. As letters and meetings followed one another, 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.²¹⁹ At one point Rua may have thought to have made a breakthrough. For on May 27, following an encouraging letter from the archbishop,²²⁰ 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) which 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 Giovanni 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.²²¹

²¹⁷ Don Bosco to Rua, February 27, 1881, Ceria, *Ep* IV, 28.

²¹⁸ Don Bosco to Colomiatti, Alassio, April 5, 1881, *EBM* XV, 161f.

²¹⁹ For some of Rua's moves at this point, cf. *EBM* XV, 160-163. Desramaut [*Chron. critique*, 126-128] lists as many as ten.

²²⁰ Letter of May 10, 1881, *Documenti* XLV, 82 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 D10; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 164.

²²¹ Ceria, *Ep* IV, 58, note 1; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 164f.

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 vexation. Were these orally agreed conditions part of the total agreement? This is the crucial point which 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) 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 (in accordance with the verbal agreement), the Salesians could still be 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.²²²

"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 of the archbishop's part may be summarized as follows:

(1) Father Luigi Leoncini readily testified in writing to Archbishop Gastaldi that, according to Father Pellicani's statement made to him, Don Bosco

²²² Don Bosco to Verga, Don Bosco to Colomiatti, June 2, 1881, and Don Bosco to Colomiatti, June 11, 1881, *Ceria*, *Ep* IV, 57-9; Bonetti to Verga, Turin, Jun. 7, 1881, *IBM* XV, 708-710, Appendix 16 (omitted in *EBM*). For story, excerpts and interpretation cf. *EBM* XV, 164f.

was responsible not only for the *Chaplain's Strennas* but for all the defamatory pamphlets globally. Father Pellicani had confirmed this allegation.²²³

(2) The archbishop denounced Father Bonetti to the Congregation of the Council as the coauthor, if not the author, of the defamatory pamphlets; he also asked that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians be placed under diocesan authority.²²⁴

(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.²²⁵

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.²²⁶

(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.²²⁷ 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.²²⁸

(3) Don Bosco was well aware that Leoncini's testimony, recalling Pellicani's conversation, was bound to be damaging, unless the latter denied the allegation. 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

²²³ Leoncini to Gastaldi, Savona, June 18, 1881, in *Documenti* XLV, 90f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 E6f. For the story, cf. *EBM* XV, 191f. For the earlier Leoncini-Pellicani testimony, cf. note 209 and related text, above.

²²⁴ Gastaldi to the Congregation of the Council, Turin, Jun. 21, 1881, Desramaut, *Chron. 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.

²²⁵ Colomiatti to Cardinal Nina, June. 25, 1881, *IBM* XV, 712f., Appendix 18 (omitted in *EBM*).

²²⁶ Don Bosco to Leonori, July 8, 1881, Ceria, *Ep* IV, 68f.

²²⁷ Leonori to Bonetti, September 25, 1881, *Documenti* XLV, 94 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1195 E10..

²²⁸ Leonori to Don Bosco [—October 1881], *Documenti* XLV, 100f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1196 A4f. 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.

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.²²⁹

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 Achille 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.²³⁰ The following day, Colomiatti sought Cardinal Ferrieri's opinion. When shown Leoncini's testimony implicating Don Bosco, the Cardinal is reported by Colomiatti 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."²³¹

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.²³²

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 the two. Leonori, after perusing Menghini's voluminous brief, sent a

²²⁹ Don Bosco to Pellicani, October 14, 1881, *EBM* XV, 192. A recantation from Pellicani came later, perhaps too late to do any good [cf. note 261 and 264 and related text, below].

²³⁰ Colomiatti to Gastaldi, October 14, 1881, *ASC* 123; Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Colomiatti, *FDBM* 646 A 8f.; 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].

²³¹ Desramaut, *Chron. critique*, 134. This is Colomiatti's testimony given in 1921 at the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification. Ceria [*EBM* XV, 193f.] records the impressions of various other persons in Rome. It looks like Colomiatti had a *prima facie* case against Don Bosco and Bonetti.

²³² *Promemoria*, Turin: Tipografia Salesiana, 1881, 16 p., *Documenti* XLV, 103-118 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1196 A6-B8; reference in *EBM* XV, 172.

copy to Don Bosco.²³³ 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.”²³⁴

(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 which were bound to affect the case. Cardinal Prefect Prospero Caterini died on October 28, and was succeeded on November 7 by Cardinal Lorenzo 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 [...]*;²³⁵ and Menghini’s (and Colomiatti’s) presentation of the circumstances of Bonetti’s suspension for the archbishop’s part, entitled *Interdicti [...]*;²³⁶

The battle joined in Rome and arbitrated by the Holy See which had lasted some seven months was now about to be decided. On December 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

²³³ *EBM XV*, 199.

²³⁴ Letter of December 10, 1881, *EBM XV*, 200 [199-202].

²³⁵ 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 Generali diei 17 Decembris 1881. Romae, Ex Typ. Tiberina, 1881, 50 p. (Leonori’s presentation); 55 p. (*Summarium*); 11 p. (*Summarium additioale*), in *ASC 123: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Bonetti-Gastaldi, FDBM 634 D7-636 D3*.

²³⁶ 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*. Roma: Typ. Mugnoz, 1881, 48 p., in *ASC 123: Persone, Gastaldi e i Salesiani, Bonetti-Gastaldi, FDBM 636 D4-637 D4*.

“arrangement” was reached which favored Bonetti, although it also required that a written apology from Bonetti be delivered by Don Bosco personally to the 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.”²³⁷ 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.²³⁸ Thus, Bonetti’s triumph was short-lived.

The archbishop took a further step: he decided to bring criminal charges in Turin against Don Bosco for authorship of the pamphlets. For that purpose he set up a court at his chancery and appointed Colomiatti as deputy judge. On January 5, by order of the archbishop, Colomiatti arraigned Don Bosco to appear in ecclesiastical court to stand trial for his participation in the writing of the following pamphlets: the *Chaplain’s First Strenna* and the *Chieri Story* (both attacked the archbishop’s pastoral action); the *Chaplain’s Second Strenna* and the *Brief Essay* (these attacked the archbishop chiefly on grounds of his Rosminianism).²³⁹

On receiving the summons, Don Bosco on January 7 wrote to Cardinal Nina about this new development, 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, every desire of the Supreme Pontiff.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Gastaldi to Nina, December 31, 1881, *IBM XV*, 723, Appendix 26; excerpts in *EBM XV*, 182. For a slightly different construction of the outcome, cf. *EBM XV*, 177 and 202f.

²³⁸ Report of Don Bosco to Nina, January 2, 1882, *EBM XV*, 183. For the rejected letter of apology, cf. *Documenti XLV*, 151f. in *ASC 110*, *FDBM 1196 E5f*.

²³⁹ Summons in *IBM XV*, 733, Appendix 32 (omitted in *EBM*). Colomiatti’s deputation, *Documenti XLV* 159f. in *ASC 110*, *FDBM 1197 A1f*.

²⁴⁰ Don Bosco to Nina, January 7, 1882, *EBM XV*, 207.

Obviously Don Bosco couldn't have authored the two pamphlets that dealt with the Rosminian question, simply because he was not interested in Rosminian theology. But his profession of "ultramontane faith" would not have strengthened his defense.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Ferrieri in reply 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.²⁴¹ 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 was being arranged, for which Archbishop Celestino Fissore of Vercelli was deputed.²⁴² The Roman Congregation's verdict in Bonetti's favor seemed indeed definitive. Attorney Leonori hastened to send a "victory" telegram to Father Bonetti, and the following day by letter he described to him how the victory had been won in full assembly.²⁴³ 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.²⁴⁴

Pope Leo was soon to intervene. 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 Don Bosco, with the help of secretaries Berto and Bonetti, 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

²⁴¹ Ferrieri to Gastaldi, January 18, 1882, *Documenti* XXIV, 278 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1198 E10.

²⁴² Nina to Gastaldi, January 31, 1882, *IBM* XV, 727, Appendix 27 (omitted in *EBM*); briefly in *EBM* XV, 185.

²⁴³ Telegram, *Documenti* XLV, 179 in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1197 B9; Letters Leonori to Bonetti, January 29 and February 3, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 205f. in ASC 110, *FDBM* 1197 D9f.; briefly mentioned in *EBM* XV, 185.

²⁴⁴ *EBM* XV, 185.

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 to Their Eminences, the Most Reverend Cardinals[...]* (“*Esposizione*”).²⁴⁵

This 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 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”,²⁴⁶ 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.”²⁴⁷ 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

²⁴⁵ *Esposizione del Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco agli Eminentissimi Cardinali della Sacra Congregazione del Concilio*. S. Pierdarena: Tipografia di San Vincenzo de’ Paoli, 1881, 76 p., in *Opere Edite* XXXII, 49-124. The date of distribution given according to Attorney C. Menghini, in *An adducta* (Process of Don Bosco’s Beatification, 1921), 23f. [Desramaut, *Études* VII, 149, note 109].

²⁴⁶ The Foreword (“Reasons for this Statement”) is given in *EBM* XV, 174f. with accompanying comments.

²⁴⁷ *EBM* XV, 174, cf. *Opere Edite* XXXII, 52.

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.²⁴⁸

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 which 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 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."²⁴⁹

At mid-January, as the first hearing on the Bonetti case was getting under way, Don Bosco, as was his custom, left for France to visit confreres and benefactors.²⁵⁰ 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. The case on the pamphlets, still pending both in Turin and Rome, was being investigated by Archbishop Fissore of Vercelli. This mediator, whom the Salesians apparently no longer trusted, was busy obtaining Don Bosco's official statement on the pamphlets, with Father Rua and Father Bonetti acting as go-betweens.²⁵¹

Nor had Archbishop Gastaldi been idle. On March 14, he addressed an appeal to Leo XIII to be heard in person regarding the Congregation'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*.²⁵² All

²⁴⁸ *Opere Edite* XXXII, 121ff.

²⁴⁹ *Opere Edite* XXXII, 123f.

²⁵⁰ Don Bosco to Cardinal Nina, January 7, 1881, *EBM* XV, 207.

²⁵¹ Cf. exchanges through the second half of April and the beginning of May in Desramaut, *Chron. critique*, 146-148.

²⁵² *Documenti* XLV, 223-226, in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 A3-6.

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."²⁵³ While in Rome, Berto wrote to Bonetti reporting words attributed 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?"²⁵⁴ 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.²⁵⁵ 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

²⁵³ *EBM* XV, 445. As reported in the *Biographical Memoirs*, during this audience Don Bosco dared again ask for the privileges [*Documenti* XXIV, 148f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1079 D6f.]. 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* 110, *FDBM* 1079 A8].

²⁵⁴ Letter of May 2, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 260f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 D4f.

²⁵⁵ Berto to Bonetti, April 25, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 249f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 C5f.

makes a mess of everything, and that in Rome what matters is whom you know, and so on.²⁵⁶

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.

(10) Papal 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.²⁵⁷

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.²⁵⁸

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" and having taken matters in hand, the pope wanted Don Bosco available in Rome. Cardinal Nina told Colomiatti that Leo XIII had decided to tell Don Bosco personally what he wanted done.²⁵⁹ This untimely absence seems to have been ultimately responsible for his defeat. Don Bosco had been back less than three days, when a telegram from the Salesian procurator, Father Francesco Dalmazzo, advised him

²⁵⁶ Don Bosco to Cardinal Nina, Rome, May 8, 1882, *EBM* XV, 210f. In this letter Don Bosco refers to earlier aborted attempts at a reconciliation, and blames the archbishop.

²⁵⁷ *An adducta*, 10f. (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification 1921), Colomiatti's testimony, *ASC* 163: Docum. ufficiali, *FDBM* 2243 E7f.

²⁵⁸ Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, May 15, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 265-267 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 D9-11; fairly detailed report in *EBM* XV, 480f.

²⁵⁹ *An adducta*, 11 (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification, 1921), Colomiatti's testimony, *ASC* 163: Docum. ufficiali, *FDBM* 2243 E8.

that his presence was urgently required in Rome by the pope's order.²⁶⁰ A few days earlier, as mentioned above, Dalmazzo had written to Don Bosco to inform him at length on various aspects of the Salesian position. In particular 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."²⁶¹

Don Bosco, however happened to be totally exhausted and suffering from incapacitating ailments "not diplomatically induced." A railway journey was out of the question.²⁶² He, therefore, called his procurator to Turin, and gave him instructions and all powers to represent him in Rome.²⁶³

When Father Dalmazzo went back to Rome, he had with him printed copies of Father Pellicani's disavowal mentioned above.²⁶⁴ 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, with his usual poor judgment, on June 6 addressed a long letter to the

²⁶⁰ Telegrams exchanged, May 18-19, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 271 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 E3. The story is told in *EBM* XV, 213.

²⁶¹ Letter of May 15, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 265-267 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1198 D9-11 [cf. note 258 above]. Pellicani had apparently waited a long time before responding to Don Bosco's appeal of October 14, 1881 [cf. note 229 and related text, 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 [cf. note 264 and related text, below].

²⁶² Don Bosco to Dalmazzo and to Cardinal Nina, May 20, 1882, *EBM* XV, 213f.: 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) Colomiatti reports various testimonies to the effect that Don Bosco did not want to appear in Rome for reasons other than illness [*ASC* 163: *Docum. ufficiali*, *FDBM* 2243 E8f.]. For telegrams and letters exchanged, cf. Desramaut, *Chron. critique*, 130-132.

²⁶³ Don Bosco to Leo XIII, and to Cardinal Nina, May 30, 1882, *EBM* XV, 219f. (emend date May 20 in *EBM*, taken from Ceria, *Ep* IV, 140, to May 30).

²⁶⁴ A printed leaflet entitled, *Smentita di un'accusa contro Don Bosco* (Disavowal of an accusation against Don Bosco). S. Pier d'Arèna: Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli, June 1, 1882, 4 p. This reproduced a statement (*Dichiarazione*) by Father Antonio Pellicani, dated May 30, 1882; Text in *EBM* XV, 211f.: "I state before God that the only proposal Don Bosco ever made to me was that I write a memorandum to be sent to the Holy Father." Pellicani adds that this was all he ever said to Colomiatti when summoned to testify.

pope in which he repeated his charges against the archbishop and berated him for his Rosminian leanings.²⁶⁵

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 which they embodied.²⁶⁶ Now the Holy Father was about to finalize the document and bring the parties together. At this point 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 which the pope had meanwhile finalized.²⁶⁷

On June 15, Cardinal Nina summoned Father Dalmazzo and Canon Colomiatti, and submitted to them the seven-point settlement document (*Concordia*) for their signature.²⁶⁸

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.

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, Father Dalmazzo reported to Don Bosco. Besides describing Colomiatti as a hypocrite and a liar, Dalmazzo sought to explain that by a settlement favorable to Gastaldi Leo XIII hoped to win the archbishop over from Rosminianism. He also referred to the damage done to the cause by Bonetti, with specific reference to his letter of June 6.²⁶⁹

On learning the details, Don Bosco must have understood that he had been defeated. But after nearly a week's silence, on June 21, he had Father Rua send a telegram to Dalmazzo demanding that he explain to "his superior" what had happened. Cardinal Nina's official letter of June 23 urged him to fully abide by the terms of the agreement, especially with regard to the apology specified in article 1. But in reply Don Bosco asked Cardinal Nina to allow him "a few days'

²⁶⁵ Bonetti to Leo XIII, June 6, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 290-298 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 A9-B5. On the damage done by this letter and for Father Bonetti's regret, cf. *EBM* XV, 223 and note 5.

²⁶⁶ Text in *EBM* XV, 221-223. The Salesian counter-proposals were written by Bonetti and approved by Don Bosco.

²⁶⁷ Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, June 18, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 301-303 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 B8-10; excerpt in *EBM* XV, 225f.

²⁶⁸ For the complete text, cf. Appendix I, below; cf. also *EBM* XV, 224f.

²⁶⁹ Dalmazzo to Nina, June 15, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 300f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 B7f.; Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, *Documenti* XLV, 301-303 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 B8-10 [cf. note 267, above; excerpts in *EBM* XV, 223-226.

time to offer some clarifications.” Likewise, he wrote to Father Dalmazzo that he was preparing a reply and wondered why Dalmazzo had signed the document. He also expressed his belief that Cardinal Nina had made a fool of Dalmazzo. Had Don Bosco failed to grasp the situation? Dalmazzo assured him that the terms of the *Concordia* had been dictated by the pope (not negotiated by Colomiatti). And Cardinal Nina’s “shocked” reply must have merely confirmed what Don Bosco already knew: the settlement as communicated to Don Bosco was final; all Don Bosco had to do was to carry out its terms, for it represented the will of the Holy Father—and (please!) to restrain Bonetti.²⁷⁰

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 18.²⁷¹

The defeat was experienced by Don Bosco as a bitter and dishonorable act of injustice—not for himself, but for the congregation. As he wrote to Cardinal Nina, the Salesians felt humiliated; the chancery was flaunting its victory; in some places the Congregation had become the laughingstock of the authorities, and some Salesian directors had asked to leave.²⁷²

The anticlerical press, as it had all along, enjoyed 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.²⁷³

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

²⁷⁰ Telegram, June 21, *Documenti* XLV, 303 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 B10; Nina to Don Bosco, June 23, *Documenti* XLV, 305f.; excerpts in *EBM* XV, 225; Don Bosco to Cardinal Nina, June 27, *EBM* XV, 226; Don Bosco to Dalmazzo, June 28, *Ceria*, *Ep* IV, 147; Dalmazzo to Don Bosco, June 30, *Documenti* XLV, 326-328 in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1199 D8-11; Cardinal Nina to Don Bosco, July 5, 1882, *EBM* XV, 227f.

²⁷¹ *EBM* XV, 228-231.

²⁷² Don Bosco to Nina, July 25, 1882 and Aug. 4, 1882, in *Ceria-Ep* IV, 155 and 159f. In the latter Don Bosco speaks of damaging gossip and newspaper articles.

²⁷³ Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 286; *EBM* XV, 231f.

presiding at the consecration of the church of St. John the Evangelist though he did not stay for Don Bosco's Mass.²⁷⁴

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 which formed around and in the name of the protagonists were not so quickly reconciled. And the memory, as well as the scars, of that decade of strife between the two most important churchmen and their followers in the Church of Turin have lasted to this day.

Concluding Comments on the Final Phase of the Conflict

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 which have been raised and have been left 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, which 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 Giovanni Turchi to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites on October 25, 1895, in connection with the process of Don Bosco's beatification.²⁷⁵ 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. The present letter (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:

²⁷⁴ A malicious interpretation is given to this by Bonetti writing to Dalmazzo, November 12, 1882, *Documenti* XLV, 363f. in *ASC* 110, *FDBM* 1200 10f.

²⁷⁵ Turchi to Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Bra (Cuneo) October 25, 1895, *IBM* XIX, 403-412, Appendix 10 (omitted in *EBM*). Desramaut [*Études* VII, 137f.] and Tuninetti [*Gastaldi* II, 275-282] discuss Turchi's testimony.

(1) The *Cooperator's Letter* of 1877 was written by Father Giovanni Battista Anfossi, a priest of the diocese of Turin, close to the Salesians.²⁷⁶

(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*.²⁷⁷

(3) The *Brief Essay* of 1879 was authored by Father Antonio Ballerini, S.J., 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 Giovanni Battista Rostagno, encouraged Father Turchi in his stance against Gastaldi.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Giovanni Battista 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 grief 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 Giovanni Battista Anfossi and Giovanni Turchi. Known as intriguers and meddlers, they were the authors of the anonymous pamphlets" [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 277].

²⁷⁷ Giovanni 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, *Ep I*, 517]. Turchi lived in Rome in 1877-1878 (the time of the pamphlets), where he served as Don Bosco's secretary [Don Bosco to Rua, Rome, January 3, 1878, Ceria, *Ep 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 123: Persone, Gastaldi, *FDBM* 619 C5(2-5)]. It is likely that "that publication" refers to the *Strenna*. Berto then would have known what was going on. And would not Don Bosco have heard something from Berto?

²⁷⁸ Antonio 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].

Giovanni Battista 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

(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 from the latter's early Rosminian days (*Il Conciliatore*). 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 Oratory.

Thus far Turchi's information. Don Bosco, then, had nothing to do with the pamphlets, either directly or indirectly. But a Salesian connection 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.²⁷⁹

It may be regarded as certain that Father Anfossi and Father Turchi were kept informed by the Salesians Father Gioacchino Berto and Father Giovanni 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.²⁸⁰

(2) *The Concordia*

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

research in canon law on various questions arising during the conflict: e.g., in the matter of the publication of the graces of Mary Help of Christians, in the Perenchio affair, in the Bonetti suspension dispute, etc. Gastaldi suspected him of complicity in the pamphlets [*EBM* XI, 424; XIII, 185f., 256f.; XIV, 169f., XV, 236f.; *IBM* XIII, 955f.].

²⁷⁹ Desramaut, *Études* VII, 138.

²⁸⁰ Desramaut, *Études* VII, 138. For a similar opinion, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 282, note 104.

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. These reasons, if present at all, should not be overrated.

(1) It should be borne in mind that the Turin chancery had what appeared to be a case against Bonetti as well as Don Bosco, based on sworn testimony, 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, at certain crucial points, when it seemed that the archbishop was willing to make concessions, to come to an accommodation by 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 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 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, taking 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 many occasions, as has been mentioned, unchecked by Don Bosco. The manner in which the *Concordia* was brought about, and its terms, 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 Berto and Bonetti, but signed by Don Bosco, was viewed as an excessive tirade against Gastaldi. Apart from the strong language used, each fact listed may have been substantially true from a certain standpoint, but there were also nuances arising from considerations of a more general nature which had to be considered. If we are to believe Colomiatti, Don Bosco, realizing that he had gone a bit too far, at one point tried to pass off the *Esposizione* to Cardinal Nina as the work of his attorney, Leonori.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Cardinal Nina is supposed to have said this to Colomiatti in an interview, May 13, 1882, according to the latter's testimony in Process of Don Bosco's Beatification 1921. Leonori vehemently denied the allegation, and letters

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] "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.²⁸²

(3) *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

were exchanged [*Positio, Summarium ex officio*, 10 in ASC 163: Docum. ufficiali, FDBM 2244 A6-8].

²⁸² Stella, *DB III: Canonization*, 128f. Quotes from: *Positio super revisione scriptorum*, 24f. (Process of Don Bosco's Beatification 1906) in ASC 163: Documenti stampati, FDBM 2,210 E 1-3.

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 Gastaldi's pastoral policies.

(2) From the Salesians' standpoint, the Sisters 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 superior, and the oratory chapel as a public oratory (enjoying parochial rights?) This, however, was not how the archbishop and the pastor viewed the matter. As indicated above, the archbishop, through Colomiatti, inquired about the Sisters' juridical status, and Cardinal Ferrieri's response did not support the Salesian point of view.²⁸³

(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 restriction 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*,²⁸⁴ ties suspension to the sacramental act itself in the case of religious. But, whatever its original context, the 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, certainly assumed that the suspension was inappropriate.²⁸⁵

General Concluding Comments and Evaluation

In this essay, guided by the few available critical studies, we have tried to tell the story of the conflict in a coherent, albeit selective, fashion, with some concern for the issues involved. The original documentation which was produced and is

²⁸³ Cf. notes 224, 230, and 241 and related text, above.

²⁸⁴ *EBM* XIV, 172f.

²⁸⁵ Cf. notes 237 and 242 and related text, above.

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 conflict, involving the two most important personalities of the Church of Turin. As noted in the first essay, 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 and necessary nonetheless. At various points in the two foregoing essays, we indicated some lines of thought that might help us understand the conflict in its proper context—historical, theological, ecclesiological, psychological, pastoral. Having reached the end of our journey, it would seem appropriate to add a concluding comment along the same lines.

How is this bitter and damaging fight involving such otherwise outstanding churchmen to be explained and evaluated?

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 papalist on one side, and philo-gallican and episcopalist on the other. Even if such terms be used in their 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 the papalist tendency, 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.²⁸⁶ Gastaldi's ecclesiology is more difficult to describe. Having supported papal primacy and infallibility at Vatican I (certainly not for political reasons alone), in his official statements Gastaldi upheld papal authority on the lines of the constitution *Aeterni Patris*. 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.²⁸⁷

Essentially, however, insofar as ecclesiology affected the conflict, the contrast appeared at the pastoral rather than at the theoretical level. These two great important Church leaders governed and ministered with a very different, perhaps contrasting *pastoral style*. As emphasized in both the foregoing essays, 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 thorough-going 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

²⁸⁶ Cf. Stella, *DB I*, 159-171, 227-231; *DB II*, 119-124, 131-138.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 288.

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, 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 certain anarchism. One wonders if these two pastoral styles can be reconciled.²⁸⁸

On a related level, 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 rigorism and austerity with himself and with others. He was a perfectionist, lacking the pliability which is indispensable to good government. Don Bosco, on the other hand, a practical probabilist, was an intuitive and persuasive handler of men. He could even stand accused (with some reason) of a certain 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.²⁸⁹

Their voluminous correspondence 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

²⁸⁸ Desramaut, *Études* VII, 239f.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 288f.

“the good of the institute”? Certainly the protection of these values or prerogatives does not justify a decade of scandalous and destructive struggle.

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²⁹⁰ 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 Tommaso Chiuso. As related earlier, Father Chiuso was later suspended and stripped of his benefices [cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993), 20, note 43 and related text]. Finding himself in financial straits, he sold off much of Gastaldi's personal effects. It was thus that Canon Domenico Franchetti acquired all of Gastaldi's books and personal papers, among which a sizable lot relating 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 Emanuele Colomiatti, one of Gastaldi's men [cf. Lenti in *JSS* 4 (1993) 21, note 46 and related text], 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 under these circumstances 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 from Eugenio Valentini, *Il Canonico Domenico Franchetti* (Biblioteca del Salesianum, n. 68. Torino: SEI, 1946); and Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 60, n. 13; 172f, 176, and notes.]

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APPENDIX I: THE TEXT OF THE *CONCORDIA* DOCUMENT

Signed June 15 and officially dated June 16, 1882

(IBM XV, 269f., EBM XV, 224f.)

Rome, June 16, 1882

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 which 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 effected. 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 which 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 against the event that he should 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, 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 if specific points or statements are cited by the Church 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 Emmanuele 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 Francesco Dalmazzo, *Procurator General*

APPENDIX II: CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Basic data derived from Desramaut, *Chron. critique*)*The Chancery of the Archdiocese of Turin (other than Archbishop Gastaldi)*

Chiaverotti [—]: canon, secretary at the chancery (1877-1879); he handled the correspondence for the archbishop, especially in the Perenchio-Lazzero affair.

Chiuso, Tommaso (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, Emmanuele [—]: 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, Giuseppe [—]: canon, chancery secretary from 1880, chancellor (1885); he appeared as *ex officio* witness at the Process of Don Bosco's Beatification.

Maffei, Francesco [—]: canon, secretary at the chancery; he handled correspondence for the archbishop in the Rocca affair (1879-1880);

Other Persons Sympathetic to the Archbishop's Part

Lione, Stefano [—]: vicar forane at Chieri; he accused Father Bonetti of authoring the *Chieri Story* (1878-1880).

Oddenino, Andrea [—]: pastor of the *Duomo* at Chieri, involved as plaintiff in the Bonetti Chieri dispute (1878-1882).

The Salesians (other than Don Bosco and Father Rua)

Berto, Gioacchino (1847-1914): Don Bosco's secretary (1870-1888); he was close to Don Bosco and all the Salesians involved in the conflict.

Bonetti, Giovanni (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, Francesco (1845-1895): director at Valsalice (1872-1880) procurator general of the Salesian Society (1880-1887); Don Bosco's representative in Rome for the Bonetti case and the final reconciliation (1880-1882).

Guanella, Luigi [Blessed] (1842-1915): priest of Como, briefly a Salesian; he met with 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, Giuseppe (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, Giovanni [—]: 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 (b. 1843): 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).

Persons Sympathetic toward the Salesian Cause

Albert, Federico [Blessed] (1820-1876), priest of Turin, theologian, pastor of Lanzo, a friend of Don Bosco and the Salesians, he was involved in the affair of the spiritual retreats at Lanzo (1874).

Anfossi, Giovanni Battista (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 of the *Chaplain's Second Strenna*.

Fratejacci, Giovanni Battista (d. 1877): a Roman monsignor, a friend of Don Bosco, he kept the Salesians informed of developments in Rome.

Sona, Matteo [—]: canon of Chieri, a supporter of Bonetti throughout the Chieri affair (1878-1881)

Turchi, Giovanni (1838-1909): alumnus of the Oratory, diocesan priest of Turin, school teacher in Rome (1877-1878), self-confessed author of the anti-Gastaldi *Chaplain's First Strenna* and contributor to other pamphlets.

Roman Authorities (other than Pius IX and Leo XIII)

Berardi, Giuseppe (1810-1878): cardinal, a personal friend of Don Bosco, and sympathetic to the Salesian cause.

Bizzarri, Giuseppe Andrea (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, Innocenzo (1813-1887): cardinal, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (1876).

Jacobini, Luigi (1832-1887): cardinal, secretary of state (1879).

Leonori, Costantino [—]: monsignor, attorney working at the Roman Congregations, legal counsel for Don Bosco and Father Bonetti (1879-1883).

Macchi, Luigi (1832-1907): papal chamberlain, later cardinal; opposed to Don Bosco, as chamberlain he delayed Don Bosco's audiences with the pope.

Menghini, Carlo [—]: 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, Raffaele (1827-1896): cardinal vicar of Rome; he dealt with Don Bosco with regard to the church of the Sacred Heart (1880).

Nina, Lorenzo (d. 1885): cardinal (1877), secretary of state (1878), protector of the Salesian Society (1879), prefect of the Congregation of the Council (1880).

Sbarretti, Enea (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, Salvatore Nobili (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, Gaetano (d. 1891): *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 the Bonetti Chieri affair (1878-1879).

Other Person Involved in the Conflict

Ballerini, Antonio (1805-1881): Jesuit priest and theologian in Rome, a leader of the anti-Rosmini campaign, author of the *Brief Essay* against Gastaldi's Rosminianism.

Fissore, Celestino (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 for a change of venue to Vercelli (1882).

Leoncini, Luigi [—]: 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, Antonio [—]: 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).