

Don Bosco's Beatification and Canonization Story, Highlights and Sidelights

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Introduction

I. Proposal and Aim

Don Bosco was beatified on June 2, 1929, and canonized on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934, by Pope Pius XI. Remembered today, seventy and sixty-five years later, those events, so glorious and epoch-making for the Salesian Society, still stir the soul of every son and daughter of Don Bosco. To keep these anniversaries, a recounting of those events in the pages of this *Journal* seemed both timely and fitting.

The story of Don Bosco's beatification and canonization has been told in detail by Don Bosco's biographer, Father Eugenio Ceria, in Volume XIX of the *Biographical Memoirs*. More recently the process of Don Bosco's canonization has been critically investigated by one of the deans of Salesian scholarship, Father Pietro Stella. My presentation will be based on these and other works, as well as on archival documents as need arises—as listed below¹ My

¹ Basic Literature and Archival Sources:

Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, Volume III: La Canonizzazione (1888-1934) (Roma: LAS, 1988). [Stella, *DB III*]

Eugenio Ceria, *Memorie biografiche di san Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XIX: *La glorificazione (1888-1938)* (Torino: SEI, 1939), 32-368. Ceria provides a detailed description of the processes of beatification and canonization. He either omits or softens their more nationalistic aspects. [Ceria, *IBM XIX*]

Pietro Stella, "La canonizzazione di don Bosco tra fascismo e universalismo," in *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, ed. by Francesco Traniello (Torino: SEI, 1988), 350-382. This article, as translated by Arthur J. Lenti, is given below as Appendix II. (The same material is edited as Chapter V of Stella, *DB III*, 235-268.)

Francesco Tomasetti, *Don Bosco's Beatification and Canonization. Confidential Memoir*. Typescript, translated by Arthur J. Lenti. This "eyewitness" report is given below as Appendix I. [Tomasetti, *Memoir*]

Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di don Bosco: Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino* (Turin: SEI, 1935), 244-274. Giraudi gives a summary presentation of the process of beatification and canonization, and in greater detail of the celebrations both in Rome and in Turin. The photographs chosen to accompany the text and the detailed description of the official exhumation and examination of Don Bosco's body in 1929 are especially engaging. [Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*]

task, however, will simply be to tell *in summary* the story of the processes leading to the canonization in fact almost schematically, allowing for occasional emphases and limited digressions.

This, my principal task, accomplished, I will submit two additional pieces that I believe to be of some interest to our readers. The first is a personal memoir by Father Francesco Tomasetti who, as procurator of the Salesian Society in Rome and as postulator of the cause was close to the persons and the events connected with Don Bosco's beatification and canonization. The second is an article, again, by Father Pietro Stella. In this article, as also in Chapter 5 of his critical work just referred to, Stella discusses the socio-political and religious aspects of Don Bosco's canonization and of the celebrations attending it.

II. Schematic Preview

The process conducted by a specially appointed tribunal in Turin and by the Sacred Congregation of Rites [SCR] in Rome, now known as the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, involved many people at different times over a period of some 44 years. Popes and Archbishops help us set the time frame and may be mentioned right away. Others will be noted as they come on the scene. The process took place during the pontificate of four popes: Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), Benedict XV (1914-1922), and Pius XI (1922-1939). Five archbishops held the See of Turin during the same period: Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda (1883-1891), Archbishop Davide Riccardi (1891-1897), Cardinal Agostino Richelmy (1897-1923), Cardinal Giuseppe Gamba (1923-1930), and Cardinal Maurilio Fossati (1930-1965). Four rectors major, successors of Don Bosco, governed the Salesian Society during the process: Father (now Blessed) Michael Rua (1888-1910), Father Paolo Albera (1911-1921), Father (now Blessed) Philip Rinaldi (1922-1931), and Father Pietro Ricaldone (1932-1951).

Carlo Salotti, *Il Beato Don Bosco* (Turin: SEI, 1929), especially 655-681. Monsignor, later Cardinal, Salotti served for a period as lawyer and then as promoter of the faith in the apostolic process.

The *Salesian Bulletin* of the period in its Italian, Spanish and French editions carries detailed accounts of the events of the beatification and canonization. See, e.g., the special number of *Bollettino Salesiano* 58:4-5 (April-May, 1934).

The *official documentation* relative to the process of Don Bosco's beatification and canonization may be found principally in three archives, namely, the archive of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the archive of the archdiocese of Turin, and the Central Salesian Archive in Rome [ASC].

The Don Bosco files of the ASC are available in Microfiche form. The documents of the process of Don Bosco's beatification and canonization are given in the *Fondo Don Bosco*. [FDB 2062-2557]

It may be helpful right at the start to keep in mind the basic structure and pivotal dates of this very complex process. It spanned nearly 44 years, with interruptions, from June 3, 1890, to April 1, 1934.

1. Basic Structure of the Process of Beatification

The process of beatification lasted from June 3, 1890 to June 2, 1929, and it took place in two stages: the diocesan (or ordinary) informative process by the Turin archdiocesan chancery, and the apostolic process by the SCR in Rome.

(1) Process on Virtues, Holiness, Gifts

(i) *Diocesan or Ordinary Process*

The diocesan or ordinary process in Turin lasted nearly 7 years, from June 3, 1890 to April 1, 1897.² The principal task of the diocesan process was to investigate Don Bosco's reputation of holiness, virtues and supernatural gifts through the deposition of witnesses. Following the diocesan process, with various delays, the SCR examined and approved its Acts and their procedural validity.

(ii) *Apostolic Process*

On July 24, 1907, Pope Pius X signed the Decree authorizing the introduction of the cause before the SCR, thereby instituting the *apostolic* process, which ended with the beatification on June 2, 1929.³ The apostolic process was held in two venues, the Turin chancery, and the SCR in Rome.

[*Turin Phase*] The SCR instituted the apostolic process on Don Bosco's reputation of holiness, virtues, and supernatural gifts in Turin on April 4, 1908, and brought it to a close with the first official examination of Don Bosco's body on October 13, 1917. Its Acts were reviewed by the SCR and then approved by Pope Benedict XV on June 9, 1920.

[*Little Process*] At about the same time, between 1915 and 1922 a number of investigations took place following presentations by Canon Colomiatti against Don Bosco in the matter of the latter's conflict with Archbishop

² The diocesan process is officially called "ordinary" because it takes place under the authority of the ordinary (that is, bishop) of the diocese to which the Servant of God belonged. It is also called "informative" because the bulk of the information regarding the candidate is collected at the diocesan stage through the deposition of witnesses.

³ This stage of the process is called "apostolic" because it takes place under the authority of the "apostolic see" (that is, the pope) through the SCR.

Lorenzo Gastaldi. These investigations, the most important one of which took place in 1915-1916, go by the name of "Little Process" (*Processiculus*). The Salesians filed a rebuttal in 1922.

[*Roman Phase*] From 1922 to 1927, the SCR heard testimony on the heroic practice of virtues by Don Bosco in Rome. In spite of new difficulties necessitating an additional meeting (preparatory congregation) by the cardinals, Pope Pius XI, on February 20, 1927, authorized the reading of the Decree on virtues.

(2) Process on Miracles

Diocesan investigation followed by Roman Phase

Meanwhile the Salesians had chosen the two miracles required for beatification. After the diocesan investigation, they were submitted to the SCR for approval in March 1927. In three required meetings (congregations) by the cardinals, the miracles were approved, and Pius XI authorized the reading of the Decree on miracles on March 19, 1929. The Decree *De Tuto* (safe to proceed) followed on April 21, 1929, and on May 17 there took place the formal (second) examination of the body at Valsalice.

Don Bosco's was beatified in St. Peter's basilica in Rome on June 2, 1929.

2. Basic Structure of the Process of Canonization

(1) Savio Process on Virtues

The cause (for Don Bosco's canonization) was resumed on June 18, 1930, while the cause for Dominic Savio's beatification was being moved along, with considerable opposition centering on Don Bosco's biography of the young Servant of God. The attack on the biography reflected on Don Bosco, in spite of his beatification.

(2) Bosco Process on Miracles

Diocesan Investigation and Roman Phase

The required two new miracles attributed to Blessed John Bosco's intercession were submitted for investigation first to diocesan tribunals, then to the SCR for examination and approval. One was set aside and a replacement was provided. Testimony was heard through three congregations, and, in spite of objections, the miracles were approved. On November 19, 1933, Pius XI authorized the reading of the Decree on miracles, and on December 3, the reading of the Decree *De Tuto* (safe to proceed).

Don Bosco's canonization was celebrated in St. Peter's in Rome on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934. A week later a triumphant celebration was held in Turin.

These, schematically, are the landmarks along the arduous road of Don Bosco's beatification and canonization. Surely those memorable events are a source of rightful pride for all sons and daughters of Don Bosco. Hopefully this commemoration will also inspire our renewed commitment to Don Bosco and his spiritual legacy, "the stone out of which we were hewn."

Part One: Process of Don Bosco's Beatification

From the moment of his death on January 31, 1888, Don Bosco had been the object of veneration. Even while he still lived, his reputation of holiness and of miraculous powers had spread far and wide, and kept growing. In particular, his tomb at the Salesian college of Valsalice was attracting increasing numbers of devotees. This groundswell of devotion, coupled with the Salesians' personal conviction of Don Bosco's holiness, persuaded Father Michael Rua to make preparations for the eventual introduction of the cause of beatification. In his first circular letter as rector major (March 19, 1888),⁴ he called on all the confreres to record recollections and collect testimonials, and send the material to the central office. The confreres needed to be completely truthful in their statements and to be prepared, if called, to testify under oath.

Between February 1888 and December 1889, Father Giovanni Bonetti with Father Gioachino Berto's assistance composed the "articles" (*articoli*), namely, statements dealing with the life, work, virtues, supernatural gifts, etc. of Don Bosco to be submitted to the archbishop with the petition for the introduction of the cause. The Salesians then engaged the distinguished Roman canon lawyer and civil attorney Ilario Alibrandi as lawyer. He reviewed the articles, 807 in number. On his advice they were reduced to 408. Meanwhile the Archbishop, Cardinal Alimonda, appointed Canon Michele Sorasio promoter of the faith, and a panel of judges who were to take the depositions. On the other hand, Father Rua, who was postulator of the cause by right of office, appointed Father Giovanni Bonetti postulator, and Father Domenico Belmonte vice-postulator, for the diocesan stage of the process.⁵

⁴ *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesiani* (San Benigno Canavese: Scuola Tipografica "Don Bosco", 1910), 12-24.

⁵ For the terms Lawyer, Promoter of the faith, Postulator, see notes 16, 17, 18 and related text, below. The first postulator of the cause for the diocesan stage of the process was Father Giovanni Bonetti (1890-1891), assisted by vice-postulator Father Domenico Belmonte, who was at the time prefect general (vicar) of the Society. At Father Bonetti's death, Father Giovanni Marengo, who was also procurator of the Society in Rome, was appointed postulator (1891-1897). When Father Belmonte died in 1901, Father Rinaldi, newly appointed prefect general (vicar), also succeeded him as vice-postulator.

The members of Salesian General Chapter 5 (meeting in September 1889) wrote and signed the petition for the introduction of the cause. Father Rua, through Father Bonetti, submitted it, together with his own personal petition, to Cardinal Alimonda, on January 31, 1890.

**A. Process of Beatification:
Ordinary, or Diocesan, Informative Process
(June 4, 1980 - April 1, 1897)**

I. Diocesan Court in Turin

The archbishop acted without delay to institute the diocesan process. As mentioned above, he appointed Canon Sorasio promoter of the faith. On the basis of the articles, the promoter developed the "questionnaire" (*interrogatoria*). This list contained over 100 questions relating to Don Bosco's reputation of holiness, virtues, supernatural gifts, etc., to be put to each of the witnesses.

One would have expected Canon Emanuele Colomiatti to receive that appointment, for he was the chancery's head canon lawyer and attorney. But he had held that same post under former Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi and had been Gastaldi's front-line man during the archbishop's decade-long dispute with Bosco. Under such circumstances, his appointment would have seemed highly inappropriate. When his name was mentioned for the post, the archbishop dismissed the proposal. However, down but not out, he did not remain inactive during the process in Turin, for he could still wield considerable influence. Later he would appear in Rome against Don Bosco in an effort to derail the cause.

After appointing a promoter, the archbishop set up the tribunal with three judges: Canons Bartolomeo Roetti (vicar general), Stanislao Gazelli and Luigi Nasi. Serving as notary and court recorder was Canon Mauro Rocchietti, and as usher, Mr. Pietro Aghemo. The panel of judges underwent modifications along the way. Canon Sorasio remained in office throughout the diocesan process and beyond.

Most of these appointees had been involved in the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict. For example, Canons Sorasio and Rocchietti had served as promoter and as notary in the (suspended) criminal trial against Don Bosco and Father Bonetti for the defamatory pamphlets.⁶ Now Father Bonetti was serving as postulator of the cause for the Salesians! It appears, therefore, that, except for Colomiatti, the other officials regarded that unfortunate confrontation as past history. Things had changed in the Church in Turin.

Canon Colomiatti, though not part of the process, continued his adversarial activity. Among other things, perhaps with Cardinal Alimonda's permission, he sent the dossier of legal documents from the (suspended) criminal trial referred to above to the SCR in Rome with a cover letter dated November 12,

⁶ For these pamphlets, see note 24 and related text, below.

1890. For the next 25 years, he would continue to bring charges, and his files would later figure importantly in the apostolic process.

II. Sessions and Witnesses (1890-1896)

On June 3, 1890, Father Bonetti submitted the required written petition, it was accepted, and the process began with the first session the following day. The tribunal held a total of 562 sessions, the first few at the archiepiscopal palace, subsequent sessions at various venues and with various panels of judges. At the first session (June 4), the court was sworn in. At the second session (June 27), Father Bonetti presented the articles. At the third session (July 23), the 19 *ex officio* witnesses called by the court were sworn in.

Deaths, illness, and other factors (such as Father Giuseppe Cafasso's own ordinary process) caused changes and delays.⁷ But, in spite of such contretemps, the process went forward.

The 28 witnesses called by the Salesian postulator were heard from session 4 (July 26, 1890) to session 439 (January 23, 1896) in the following order.⁸

- Auxiliary Bishop Giovanni Battista Bertagna (sessions 4-8)
- Father Gioachino Berto, SDB (sessions 10-46)
- Father Secondo Marchisio, SDB (sessions 57-66)
- Father Giovanni Francesco Giacomelli, diocesan (sessions 68-74)
- Father Felice Reviglio, diocesan (sessions 75-86)
- Mr. Giacomo Manolino, bricklayer (sessions 87-88)
- Mr. Giuseppe Turco, farmer (sessions 89-90)
- Mr. Giovanni Filippello, businessman (sessions 91-92)
- Mr. Giorgio Moglia, farmer (sessions 93-94)
- Canon Giacinto Ballesio, diocesan (sessions 95-104)
- Father Angelo Savio, SDB (sessions 105-108)
- Father Francesco Dalmazzo, SDB (sessions 109-125)
- Brother Pietro Enria, SDB (sessions 127-136)
- Father Leonardo Murialdo, OSJ (sessions 137-142)
- Bishop Giovanni Cagliero, SDB (sessions 143-168)
- Father Francesco Cerruti, SDB (sessions 169-192)
- Father Giovanni Battista Piano, diocesan (sessions 193-200)
- Brother Giuseppe Rossi, SDB (sessions 201-210)
- Mr. Giovanni Villa, confectioner (sessions 211-220)
- Father Giovanni Battista Francesia, SDB (221-248)
- Father Luigi Piscetta, SDB (sessions 250-267)
- Father Giulio Barberis, SDB (sessions 268-308)
- Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, SDB (sessions 309-347)

⁷ For example, Cardinal Archbishop Alimonda died on May 31, 1891, and was succeeded by Archbishop Davide Riccardi, who supervised most of the diocesan informative process.

⁸ List of witnesses and data relating thereto are given in Stella, *DB III*, 117-124.

Mr. Giovanni Bisio, businessman (session 348-357)
 Father Michael Rua, SDB (sessions 358-396)
 Father Giovanni Turchi, diocesan (sessions 397-410)
 Father Ascanio Savio, diocesan (sessions 411-420)
 Canon Giovanni Battista Anfossi, diocesan. (sessions 421-439)

Three *ex officio* witnesses (that is, called by the promoter) were heard from January 27 to March 23, 1896.

Father Domenico Bongiovanni, diocesan (sessions 440-448)
 Canon Giuseppe Bernardo Corno, diocesan chancellor (sessions 449-455)
 Canon Antonio Berrone, diocesan (sessions 456-464)

Finally the promoter called 14 *ex officio* "corroborating" witnesses, to testify on special matters, e.g., miracles, needing additional confirmation.

Father Giovanni Branda, SDB (sessions 126; 466-478)
 Mrs. Marina Della Valle (session 466), wife of
 Mr. Carlo Matteo Della Valle, merchant, wholesale foods (session 467)
 Sister Paolina Dessanti, Daughter of Charity (session 469)
 Marchioness Azelia Ricci Des Ferres, landowner (session 470)
 Mrs. Luigia (Fagiano) Piovano (session 471), wife of
 Mr. Tommaso Piovano, in home for the aged (session 472)
 Sister Filomena Cravosio, OP (session 473)
 Sister Teresa Laurentoni, FMA (session 474)
 Sister Rosa Ferrari, FMA (session 475)
 Dr. Giovanni Albertotti, physician, surgeon, psychiatrist (476)
 Mrs. Domenica (Ronco) Pennazio (session 477), mother of
 Giovanni Pennazio, typesetter (session 478), son of
 Mr. Tommaso Pennazio, miller (session 478)

Two further witnesses were called *ex officio* to give their opinion on the "miraculous cures" of the above-mentioned Giovanni Pennazio, Mrs. Luigia Piovano, and Mrs. Marina Della Valle.

Dr. Giuseppe Fissore, physician (session 480)
 Dr. Celestino Vignolo-Lutati, physician (session 481)

III. Nature and Sampler of Depositions

1. Types of Witnesses

Postulator Bonetti presented 28 primary witnesses, all men of various ages and stations in life. Thirteen of them were Salesians: Bishop Giovanni Cagliero, 10 priests, and 2 brothers. There was one other religious: Father Leonardo Murialdo, rector of the Josephites. Eight were diocesans, including Auxiliary

Bishop Giovanni Battista Bertagna. The six remaining were laymen, some of whom were "friends of the family" from Castelnuovo.

The 17 remaining witnesses were called by the court (*ex officio*), either to give independent testimony (3) or to corroborate points in the testimony of others (15). For example, Canon Giuseppe Corno, archdiocesan chancellor, was called in the first category; the Salesian Father Giovanni Branda was called in the second category, to corroborate testimony regarding Don Bosco's so-called Barcelona bilocation.

In the matter of Don Bosco's holiness and practice of virtues, the most sensitive point was the unfortunate Bosco-Gastaldi affair, particularly for what concerned the defamatory pamphlets. The promoter had devised questions designed to elicit information on the subject. Other important concerns were Don Bosco's alleged extraordinary powers, such as miracles and prophecies (predictions).

2. Don Bosco's Conduct with Archbishop Gastaldi, His Holiness and Extraordinary Gifts⁹

(1) Testimony of the Primary Witnesses

On questions regarding the Bosco-Gastaldi dispute, as on all others pertaining to Don Bosco's holiness, the Salesians who testified were unanimous in their depiction of Don Bosco's unimpeachable conduct. Unanimous in their praise of Don Bosco were also the lay people called by the Salesians, although most of them stated that they had no information on that specific subject.

Father Leonardo Murialdo, who had worked with Don Bosco in the oratories, but who also had a good working relationship with Archbishop Gastaldi, stated that his knowledge of the dispute was just hearsay. He had never learned the reason or the outcome of the conflict.

Of the diocesan clergy called as witnesses, some had been at the Oratory, or had sided with Don Bosco in the conflict, for example Fathers Reviglio and Anfossi. Not only did they give favorable testimony, but even hinted that the archbishop was to blame. Others on the other hand expressed themselves ambivalently. Such was the testimony given by Bishop Bertagna, who had been lecturer in moral theology at the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*), and had himself had theological disagreements with the archbishop and had suffered thereby. On Don Bosco's relationship with Gastaldi's predecessor, Archbishop Alessandro Riccardi di Netro, Bertagna testified that the archbishop was critical of Don Bosco's priestly formation program at the Oratory, perhaps with good reason. Bertagna also admitted hearing reports of Archbishop Gastaldi's clash with Don

⁹ Cf. Stella, *DB* III, 86-96.

Bosco, "over the Salesian Congregation, I think." However, not having lived in Turin at the time, he knew nothing more.¹⁰

Bertagna went on to testify that Don Bosco was regarded as a holy person, and that especially in his later years he had set an admirable example, in spite of little human foibles (*alquanto di umanità*). He added, however, that he could not tell whether Don Bosco's holiness was holiness in the technical sense. But it was real, not just credited to him by his idolizing followers, although the *Salesian Bulletin* contributed to his reputation.

Asked about Don Bosco's supernatural gifts, Bishop Bertagna confessed that he did not really believe that Don Bosco had made true prophecies or that he had had the gift of supernatural knowledge of hidden things. He had a keenly perceptive mind (*sottilissima intelligenza*) and knew what was going on at all times. He could therefore make predictions on that basis. The bishop, however, was convinced that Don Bosco had the gift of miraculous healing, and testified that Don Bosco during a spiritual retreat had sought his advice whether he should continue to impart the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians, which produced such results.

Bertagna was the first witness to be called. His testimony, supposedly secret but perhaps not so secret, coming from a bishop and from a person who had not been in Gastaldi's graces, must have been disturbing to the Salesians. Their calling on Cagliero, himself a bishop, to testify (March-May, 1893) may perhaps be seen as an attempt at repairing the damage.

A reason for far greater concern, however, was the possibility of an attack from the old Gastaldi chancery, specifically from Canon Colomiatti in the matter of the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict. It may be for this reason that the Salesians persuaded Father Giovanni Turchi to testify (1895). As it later emerged, Father Turchi had much to do with the writing of the defamatory pamphlets against the archbishop. In his deposition, however, he did not incriminate himself, but he categorically denied that Don Bosco had anything to do with those pamphlets. At the same time, he entrusted to the court a sealed affidavit to be sent to the SCR in Rome. This action amounted to a confession that he knew who had authored the pamphlets that Colomiatti stubbornly attributed to Don Bosco.

Here again one might ask why the two people closest to Gastaldi, Canon Tommaso Chiuso and Canon Colomiatti, were not called by the court as *ex officio* witnesses. Unfortunately, Canon Chiuso, the eminent Church historian who had served as Gastaldi's secretary and was even in possession of the archbishop's personal papers, was at the time embroiled in a nasty lawsuit for embezzlement of diocesan assets, and was under interdict. Promoter Sorasio had thought of using Canon Colomiatti as a witness, but perhaps the same reasons that had ruled him out as promoter under Archbishop Alimonda prevailed now

¹⁰ In the last years of Archbishop Gastaldi's tenure in Turin, Bertagna served as professor of moral theology in the diocesan seminary of Casale, before being appointed coadjutor bishop to Gastaldi's successor, Cardinal Alimonda.

also under Archbishop Riccardi. Promoter Sorasio then decided to summon the three *ex officio* witnesses mentioned in the list above: Father Domenico Bongiovanni, Canon Giuseppe Bernardo Corno, archdiocesan chancellor, and Canon Antonio Berrone.

(2) Testimony of the Three *Ex Officio* Witnesses

Canon Corno's deposition, like that of Father Murialdo, was cautious. He stated that he had heard that Don Bosco had clashed with Archbishop Gastaldi as well as with Gastaldi's predecessor. The reason was that Don Bosco often acted on the basis of privileges he claimed to have from the Holy See, which the archbishop regarded as an abuse. Some people took Don Bosco's side, others the archbishop's. Corno himself had no personal knowledge and no opinion in the matter.

Equally cautious was Corno's deposition on the subject of Don Bosco's extraordinary gifts. He had no knowledge of any miracles worked by Don Bosco either before or after his death. He knew, however, that devotees had received graces through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco's prayers. Canon Antonio Berrone testified along the same lines.

Father Domenico Bongiovanni's testimony, on the contrary, was more detailed and less favorable. He had been a pupil at the Oratory as a boy and for a time a Salesian seminarian, before leaving to join the diocesan clergy. Subsequently, he had taken Don Bosco to court in a civil suit over money that an aunt of his had left to Don Bosco. The verdict was in his favor. He had remained a friend of the Salesians, and had high praise for Don Bosco's charity and zeal, but he thought that Don Bosco had been insincere and unfair to him. His testimony was probably tainted by this perception. For example, on the subject of Don Bosco's supernatural gifts he testified that he had not observed anything extraordinary for the time he had lived at the Oratory. Don Bosco's predictions of boys' deaths were based on simple calculation. Other "predictions" were made in jest, or as a way to introduce a good thought. As for Don Bosco's reputation of holiness, it was based largely on widespread works of charity. Bongiovanni expressed his view that Don Bosco would never be canonized, and that his cause would crumble (as many believed) when his clashes with Archbishop Gastaldi and with Bongiovanni himself were investigated. In the court's opinion, as noted by Sorasio in the cover statement of the report, this witness was "an unreliable and contentious clown."

3. Special Problem of Miraculous Cures Ascribed to Don Bosco¹¹

In testifying about Don Bosco's supernatural gifts, several witnesses (Salesians in particular) had mentioned miraculous cures obtained through his interces-

¹¹ Cf. Stella, *DB* III, 96-110.

sion. The uneven testimony heard from some witnesses on the subject led Promoter Sorasio to investigate five of these cures. He therefore decided to call as corroborating *ex officio* witnesses the persons involved.

(1) The case of Mrs. Marina (Cappa) Della Valle

This "miraculous" cure concerned a well-to-do woman name Marina Cappa, married to Carlo Matteo Della Valle, a wholesale grocer in Turin. Both were devout Catholics and acquainted with the Salesians. They were 56 and 60 years old respectively at the time of their appearance as witnesses in 1896. Each had a separate certification of their credibility signed by Bishop Basilio Leto (*emeritus* of Biella).

Their reports of the events, which had taken place a good decade earlier, were in agreement. Mrs. Della Valle had had 12 children with no complications. However, the thirteenth pregnancy had to be terminated in the spring of 1884, due to a diseased uterus. The operation left the uterus badly damaged, resulting in a serious infection and a large festering, bleeding ulcer. After a stay in the hospital, she chose to go home, where in May 1885 she came under the care of Dr. Candido Ramello. The physician was summoned as a witness, but he declined. Instead, a letter, written by him on May 22, 1889, at the Salesians' request, was submitted. Addressed to the husband, the letter describes the case as it had come under his observation from May 1885 to February 1889. He confirmed that the treatments gave only temporary relief, and that the disease grew progressively more serious. Cervical cancer was feared, but Mrs. Della Valle would not submit to any further procedure for a biopsy. Dr. Ramello repeatedly alerted the husband that death was a real possibility.

Convinced that she was suffering from irreversible carcinoma, she began to pray for a cure to the Virgin Mary under various titles. On the first anniversary of Don Bosco's death, two Salesian sisters brought her a picture and a cloth relic of Don Bosco, and the Salesian Father Francesco Dalmazzo, her confessor, suggested that she begin a novena to Don Bosco. Mr. Della Valle promised to make an offering and to allow his young daughter Antonietta to join the Salesian sisters. At the end of the novena, after receiving Holy Communion, Marina Della Valle felt cured. In a second letter dated April 19, 1896, Dr. Ramello stated that the festering uterine lesions had healed, perhaps permanently. In both letters Dr. Ramello makes the point that the presence of cancer had not been ascertained, and that healing of a diseased uterus by natural processes was not impossible. But he revealed his agnostic bias, when he said to Canon Sorasio, who had been to see him in person: "Yes, to those who believe in miracles it is a miracle!"¹²

¹² Father Lemoyne reports the miraculous cure in his *Life of Don Bosco*, and so does Father Ceria in the *Biographical Memoirs*, without, however, reporting Dr. Ramello's reservations. Ceria adds that Mrs. Della Valle died shortly after her testimony in 1896 at the age of 56 "of an unrelated illness" [G. B. Lemoyne, *Vita del*

(2) The Case of Luigia (Fagiano) Piovano

Luigia Fagiano, a poor servant woman of 31, in 1877 had married the much older widowed Tommaso Piovano. After three successful deliveries, the fourth pregnancy had to be terminated by an operation that again left her uterus badly damaged. Severe infection, hemorrhages, pain and depression grew worse. The Piovanos were poor, but in 1885 by the good offices of Sister Paolina Desanti, Daughter of Charity, and Marchioness Azelia Ricci de Ferres she was hospitalized. After treatment she returned home, but was never well. At the Marchioness' suggestion, in 1889 she made a novena to Don Bosco for her cure and for the conversion of her husband who was not a practicing Catholic. During the novena one night she dreamt of Don Bosco, and on the night of Easter Sunday, she was wakened from sleep and saw Don Bosco standing by the bed. He told her that her trust in him would not be disappointed, and that she would be well. She was cured.

The physicians who had her under their care were called to testify. But Dr. Francesco Borgna had died; Dr. Luigi Colomiatti declined on grounds that he had no clear recollection of the case; Dr. Costantino Alvazzi Delfrate, responded with a fairly detailed letter. In earlier short reports filed with the hospital the physicians had noted the seriousness of the illness. Dr. Borgna had even spoken of incurable uterine cancer. But in his letter Dr. Alvazzi Delfrate firmly maintained that the cure was due to medical treatments and to the natural healing powers of the organism.¹³

(3) Other Miraculous Cures

Three other miraculous cures were investigated. Called to testify on April 29, 1896, Dominican Sister Filomena Cravosio described her instant cure from stomach and liver ailments, when Don Bosco appeared to her the morning of January 31, 1888. Don Bosco had just passed away, though she did not know it.

Salesian Sister Adele Marchese recovered her sight when on February 2, 1888, she placed her head on the hand of Don Bosco, as the body lay in state in the Church of St. Francis de Sales at the Oratory. She had since passed away, but two Salesian Sisters testified to the cure. Dr. Giovanni Albertotti (The Oratory house physician, and an avowed agnostic) called the cure "extraordinary."

venerabile servo di Dio Giovanni Bosco (Turin: SEI, 1913) II, 657-660. Ceria, *IBM* XVIII, 604-606]

¹³ Both Lemoyne and Ceria [*ibid.*] report Luigia Piovano's cure together with Marina Della Valle's.

Finally we have the case of young Giovanni Pennazio. In May-June 1896, the parents testified that the boy had lost his eyesight at the age of 9. The doctors advised the removal of one diseased eye, but the boy resisted desperately. The parents then took him to the Church of Mary Help of Christians to receive Don Bosco's blessing. He regained his eyesight. This was in 1886. He was now 19 and working as a typesetter.

(4) Final Expert Opinion Sought

In a final attempt at certainty, Promoter Sorasio called in two expert witnesses, the eminent physicians Drs. Giuseppe Fissore and Celestino Vignolo-Lutati, both of whom had attended Don Bosco in his last illness. They were to examine and evaluate the documentation on the cures of Giovanni Pennazio, Luigia Piovano, and Marina Della Valle. Their verdict was inconclusive because the medical evidence was either insufficient or flawed.

III. Conclusion of the Ordinary (Diocesan) Process: Preparation of the Protocols

Twenty Salesian seminarians and novices were employed in transcribing the original minutes of the process. They were sworn in at session 482 (July 28, 1896) and they worked, perhaps under Father Giulio Barberis' supervision, until they handed the finished copy of the Acts to the judges in session 483 (November 3, 1896).¹⁴ A notary appointed by the tribunal checked and collated the "authentic" copy to be sent to the SCR. This work lasted until session 561 (February 22, 1897).

The "original" Acts were filed in the Turin archdiocesan archive. The authentic copy, consisting of 22 volumes, 5,178 pages in legal size, was sealed for delivery to Rome. The officials of the court, gathered in the chapel at Valsalice, elected Father Belmonte as the bearer of the document. This was the 562nd and final session of the diocesan process, April 1, 1897.

¹⁴ Father Lemoyne at some point in time came into possession of a complete copy of the Acts. He used that material in the compilation of his monumental *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione salesiana*, the forerunner of the *Biographical Memoirs*. It is thought that he obtained the Acts (illegally?) during their transcription at the Salesian college of Valsalice.

**B. Process of Don Bosco's Beatification
Apostolic Process by the Sacred Congregation of Rites
(1907-1929)**

I. Initial Considerations and Introduction of the Cause

1. People and Roles

The apostolic process of beatification (and canonization) played out in Turin and Rome under the authority of the SCR involved many people serving in official roles.

The Cardinal Presenter (*Ponens* or *Relator*) acting on behalf of the Society and of the Church, is responsible for presenting the cause to the SCR.¹⁵

The Promoter (General) of the Faith (*Promotor Fidei*), acting for the Church, is a prelate appointed to supervise, review and critique the actions and presentations of the postulator and his team. He is assisted by a Vice-Promoter.¹⁶

The Postulator of the Cause (*Postulator Causae*), as the word implies, is the person who officially petitions the competent Church authority to initiate and conduct the process of beatification and canonization, and remains the respondent for the duration of the process.¹⁷

The Lawyer (*advocatus*) is a canon lawyer and attorney who is engaged by the postulator to act as counsel. With the help of other experts, the lawyer

¹⁵ Six cardinals succeeded one another in the role of presenter: Lucido Maria Parocchi, vicar of Rome and cardinal protector of the Salesian Society (1897-1903), Luigi Tripepi (1903-1906), José Calasanz Vives y Tuto, OFM Cap (1907-1913), Domenico Ferrata (1914-1915), Antonio Vico (1915-1929), and Alessandro Verde (1929-1934).

¹⁶ In Don Bosco's cause, the following served as promoters of the faith: Monsignor Alessandro Verde (from 1907), Monsignor Angelo Mariani (from 1914), Monsignor Carlo Salotti (as vice-promoter, from 1916; as promoter from 1925 to 1930), Monsignor Salvatore Natucci (1930-1934). In his role of critic the promoter of the faith is sometimes referred to as "devil's advocate" (*advocatus diaboli*), which is not an official title. In any case, this title might apply to Monsignor Verde, but it in no way describes Monsignor Salotti, a Salesian at heart, who even in his role as promoter sought to advance Don Bosco's cause in every possible way.

¹⁷ In the apostolic process the Salesian procurators in Rome acted also as postulators of the cause. Four Salesian procurators served as postulator in the apostolic process: Fathers Cesare Cagliero (1897-1899, from the end the diocesan process until his death), Giovanni Marengo (1899-1907, before the introduction of the apostolic process, and 1907-1909, when named bishop), Dante Munerati (1909-1923, when made bishop), Francesco Tomasetti (1924-1934). From 1901 the postulators were assisted by Father Filippo Rinaldi. He was replacing Father Domenico Belmonte, who had died that year, both as prefect general and as vice-postulator.

prepares legal documents, responds to critical observations made by the promoter, and argues the case.¹⁸

2. Preliminaries to the Introduction of the Cause in Rome

(1) Initial Dossier (*Positio*) for the Introduction of the Cause

At the earliest opportunity, Father Marengo, the postulator, requested from the SCR the authorizing letter (*litterae remissoriales*) empowering the Turin chancery to start the process *de non cultu* (that the servant of God had never been the object of *public* veneration). This investigation took place in 1901-1902 and was completed by June 4, 1904. It took place in various dioceses, but it was naturally focused on Turin, and specifically on Don Bosco's tomb-shrine at Valsalice and on Don Bosco's rooms at Valdocco.

Petitions in support (*litterae postulatoriae*) addressed to the Pope were required for the introduction of the apostolic process. Through 1902 and 1903, 341 such letters were obtained from all over the world, 23 of them from cardinals.

Lawyer Morani, with the assistance of Attorney Melandri, put together the dossier for the introduction of the cause (*positio super introductione causae*). This dossier contained the printed docket (*summarius*) of the Acts of the diocesan process, the information documents (*informatio*) and a selection of the letters of petition.

(2) Examination of Don Bosco's Writings and Little Process

In 1898 the SCR had ordered Don Bosco's writings prepared for examination, and Archbishop Cardinal Richelmy had appointed a commission to assemble, order, and check the writings for completeness and authenticity. The team, meeting at Valdocco, completed that task in 10 sessions, from June 5, 1900, to January 30, 1901. Between 1902 and 1904 Don Bosco's writings, as prepared in Turin, were examined by the SCR for orthodoxy, morality, spiritual doctrine, etc. The verdict was favorable.

¹⁸ The distinguished Monsignor Ilario Alibrandi was engaged as lawyer by the Salesians in 1890 to prepare for the diocesan process. At his death in 1894, in preparation for the apostolic process, Monsignor Ferdinando Morani was engaged as lawyer, but he died in 1907. For the introduction of the cause in Rome (1907), the Salesians engaged Monsignor Carlo Salotti, who served as lawyer until he was made vice-promoter of the faith in 1916. His successor as lawyer was Monsignor Giovanni Romagnoli. When Romagnoli was censured for a sex scandal in 1926, Monsignor Giovanni Della Cioppa was retained as lawyer and saw the cause to its conclusion in 1934. Attorney Chevalier Pietro Melandri collaborated with the lawyers through much of the apostolic process in the writing of legal documents and in other legal matters.

The Acts of the diocesan process contained a lot of material on Don Bosco's clashes with Archbishop Gastaldi. Canon Colomiatti, by now vice-vicar general, had continued to present arguments against Don Bosco's cause. It was felt that Don Bosco's writings having to do with the affair should be examined more closely in a secret "little process" (*processiculus*). The writing that was given greatest attention was Don Bosco's *Esposizione* of 1881, in which he reviewed the conflict as he saw it and voiced his grievances against the archbishop in a forthright and emotional style.¹⁹ The questions of religious discipline in the Salesian Society and of the publication of graces attributed to Mary Help of Christians, strongly objected to by Gastaldi, also came under scrutiny in the little process. The judgment of the examiner was fundamentally positive, even with regard to the *Esposizione*. The little process was completed by August 22, 1906.

(3) *Critical Observations and Response*

Monsignor Alessandro Verde, in his role as promoter of the faith, examined the dossier prepared for the introduction of the cause and drafted the critical observations (*animadversiones*). They were ready by March 16, 1907. The promoter, starting from the proposition that successful works of charity do not guarantee the holiness of the founder, called into question Don Bosco's motivations, his claimed supernatural revelations or dreams, and above all his virtue or holiness. Don Bosco might merely have been an ambitious pragmatist bent on success, a stubborn and contentious competitor, a clever manipulator, a man devoid of ascetic concern and solid virtue. Verde begins by citing Father Cafasso's reported words: "As far as I am concerned, Don Bosco is a mystery. If I were not certain that he labors for God's glory, that it is God who guides him, that God alone is the goal of all his striving, I would say that he's a dangerous individual, more for what he hides than for what he shows."²⁰ Apparently, Verde did not possess Cafasso's certainty.

¹⁹ *Esposizione del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco agli eminentissimi cardinali della sacra congregazione del Concilio* (S. Pier d'Arena: tip. di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli, 1881, 76 pp. in *Opere Edite* 23, 40-101). This extensive and detailed tract was written by the fiery Father Bonetti at the height of the conflict in response to Gastaldi's briefs filed with the SCR. It bears Don Bosco's signature.

²⁰ Quoted in French from Charles D'Espinay, *Don Bosco* (first published in 1881). Lemoyne quotes Father Cafasso's reported words [cf. *EBM* II, 274 and IV, 411], but omits the last sentence.

(4) Second Dossier (*Positio*) and Introduction of the Cause for the Apostolic Process (July 24, 1907)

To respond to such a devastating critique the Salesians, as mentioned above, engaged a new lawyer to replace Ferdinando Morani who had died a short time before. He was the learned and dynamic Monsignor Carlo Salotti, a brilliant young professor and attorney with the SCR, and a great "devotee" of Don Bosco from his own seminary days. Salotti produced a trenchant and stylish response (*responsio*) in good Latin to each of Verde's interpretations. But his answers to the objections, especially to those regarding dreams and prophecies, were not such as to meet the standards of a critical historian. The debate would continue for a long time. Meanwhile, a new dossier (*positio*) was put together in view of the introduction of the cause. It contained the critical objections and the response, in addition to the earlier documents

Cardinal Luigi Tripepi, the presenter, had died in December 1906, and the Salesian postulator had engaged the services of a new presenter in the person of Cardinal José Calasanz Vives y Tuto, OFM Cap. He was officially appointed on February 23, 1907. A friend of the Salesians and eager to advance the cause, he acted without delay and on July 23 he obtained the favorable vote of the cardinals of the SCR for the introduction of the cause. Pope Pius X signed the order of introduction on July 24, and the Decree was issued on July 28, 1907.²¹

In accordance with canonical procedure, the apostolic process of beatification would comprise two sections: the process on virtues, including holiness and supernatural gifts (1908-1927, with interruptions), and the process on the two miracles required for beatification (1927-1929). Each section would take place at two venues: the diocesan court in Turin and the SCR in Rome—for the process on virtues, 1908-1917 and 1922-1927 respectively. Roughly between the Turin stage and the Roman stage of the process on virtues there took place the summoning of Canon Colomiatti and the secret little process (*processiculus*) to investigate the charges brought against Don Bosco (1915-1922).²²

²¹ In the older practice, the title "Venerable" went with the introduction of the cause in Rome. As a result Don Bosco's burial place at Valsalice could be opened to the public for veneration. Since 1913, the title "Venerable" is conferred with the Decree on the heroic practice of virtue, which for Don Bosco would have been in 1927.

²² It should also be noted, as will be mentioned, that the ordinary process of Dominic Savio's beatification was introduced in Turin in 1908 and the apostolic process in Rome in 1914, while the initial phase of Don Bosco's apostolic process was in progress in Turin.

II. Apostolic Process on Virtues, Holiness, Supernatural gifts (1907-1927)

1. Apostolic Process on Virtues in Turin (1908-1917)

The canonical format for the Turin section of apostolic process comprised two phases: Initial phase (*inchoativa*) and continuing phase (*continuativa*). Attached to phase one was the intermediate process on reputation of holiness and supernatural gifts. Attached to phase two was the first official examination of Don Bosco's body.

To set in motion the process, Postulator Father Marengo petitioned the SCR for the authorizing letter (*litterae remissoriales*). The letter was issued and sent to Cardinal Archbishop Richelmy of Turin on April 4, 1908. On May 2, 1909, vice-postulator Father Rinaldi petitioned the archbishop to execute the order, and the court began its work on May 28, 1909.

Meanwhile Procurator-Postulator Father Marengo was appointed bishop of Massa-Carrara (1909) and was succeeded in both offices by Father Dante Murerati.

(1) Initial (*Inchoativa*) Phase of the Process on Virtues in Turin (1909-1911)

The initial phase of the process on Don Bosco's heroic practice of virtue spanned the years 1909-1911. This phase was devoted to hearing witnesses who were old or ill, *ne pereant probationes* ("lest proofs be lost", i.e., lest these witnesses died before they could be heard). The connected process on Don Bosco's reputation for holiness and supernatural gifts continued intermittently and was concluded on January 9, 1913. The court held 219 sessions, and heard the testimony of 13 principal and 9 additional witnesses, the principal ones being mostly Salesians. The SCR approved the Acts of the initial phase on July 13, 1915.

(2) Continuing (*Continuativa*) Phase of the Process on Virtues in Turin (1916-1917)

On August 2, 1915, the papal authorizing letter for the continuation of the process on virtues was issued in response to Postulator Murerati's petition. Upon petition by Vice-Procurator Rinaldi, Cardinal Archbishop Richelmy reconvened the court in Turin. The continuing phase began on February 12, 1916, and ended on March 20, 1917, during which 19 witnesses were heard. It was a mixed group that included a number of Salesian Sisters.

The official Acts were concluded on October 13, 1917, with the simple examination of Don Bosco's body. The remains were officially exhumed from the tomb-shrine at Valsalice. The outer wooden casket had suffered some decay,

while the middle one appeared sound and properly sealed. The inner zinc box, however, showed signs of corrosion. Parts of the body inside were mummified, while parts had crumbled.²³

The apostolic process in Turin was thus concluded. From December 6, 1918, to July 1, 1919, the SCR reviewed its Acts for procedural validity. Pope Benedict XV gave his approval on June 9, 1920.

Between the opening of the apostolic process in Turin in 1908 and its ratification in 1920, there had been all kinds of delays. World War I (1915-1918 for Italy) and slow-moving canonical procedures were in part responsible. But the chief reason lay in the fact that the Salesians had to labor hard and long to prove Don Bosco's holiness, heroic virtue and supernatural gifts. Don Bosco's clashes with Archbishop Gastaldi had been a particularly sensitive spot from the start, and his conduct in the matter had been investigated twice before (with positive results). But perhaps in the perception of some at the SCR gray areas remained. On the other hand, Canon Emanuele Colomiatti had been constantly on the attack, since for him a successful outcome of the cause amounted to a canonization of injustice. For these and other reasons, while the process on virtues was taking place, the SCR decided to institute a secret little process (or processes) to investigate Canon Colomiatti's allegations.

2. The Secret Little Process (*Processiculus*) to Investigate Don Bosco's Conduct in His dispute with Archbishop Gastaldi (1915-1922)

(1) Colomiatti's Summons and Deposition before the SCR (1915)

As noted above, as early as 1890, at the opening of the diocesan process, Canon Colomiatti had sent the files of the (suspended) criminal trial instituted by the Gastaldi chancery against Don Bosco to the SCR. He had kept pressing charges. He had in fact sent to the promoter of the faith, Monsignor Alessandro Verde, an affidavit containing testimonies from some 50 witnesses received at the chancery in the years 1888-1910. From these depositions he had formulated 28 charges. Don Bosco's interior life, virtues, supernatural gifts, reputation of holiness, all came under attack. The charges tended to depict Don Bosco, among other things, as a stubborn pragmatist, a shrewd manipulator of people. But the charges stemming from his conflict with Archbishop Gastaldi were by

²³ It should be noted that there had been an earlier exhumation of Don Bosco's body. In 1904, the casket had been opened for private viewing by the members of General Chapter 10. This exhumation took place with the city's permission and in the presence of Cardinal Archbishop Richelmy. On that occasion, before the zinc box was re-sealed, a physician had doused the body in a deodorant solution. The chemical used had corroded the zinc, while exposure to the air caused parts of the body to break up. Don Bosco's remains would again be officially and solemnly examined, and parts removed as relics, before the beatification in 1929.

far the most damaging, especially those that had to do with the authorship of the defamatory pamphlets, which Colomiatti stubbornly imputed to Don Bosco and the Salesians. Father Giovanni Turchi's confession filed in a sealed envelope with the SCR, as mentioned above, should have taken the wind out of Colomiatti's sails in that respect. But there remained Father Antonio Pellicani's testimony to the effect that Don Bosco had asked him to write against Gastaldi. Colomiatti regarded Pellicani's later recantation as having been "extorted" by Don Bosco and the Salesians.²⁴

In December 1914 and in January 1915, Archbishop Pierre La Fontaine, secretary of the SCR, had begun to interrogate some witnesses in Turin, with Archbishop Richelmy's knowledge. He had also conferred with Colomiatti about the file of four note books which the latter had sent to the SCR in 1890 and had since been lost. He asked Colomiatti if he would provide a second exact copy from original documents, and if he would himself testify. Colomiatti had responded affirmatively to both requests. This is how Colomiatti came finally to testify before the SCR.

²⁴ For a discussion of the libelous pamphlets and their authorship, cf. A. Lenti, "The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict Part II [...]," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 5:1 (1994), 80-86 and 115-117.

The pamphlets in question (using shortened English titles) are the following. The *Cooperator's Letter* (by a "Salesian Cooperator", early December 1877) described Archbishop Gastaldi's unjust treatment of the Salesians. The *Chaplain's First Strenna* (by a "Chaplain," April 2, 1878) attacked the archbishop's pastoral policies and directives, especially with regard to the Salesians. The *Chaplain's Second Strenna* or *The Rosminian Question* (March 1879) took the archbishop to task for his espousal of Antonio Rosmini, a Catholic philosopher come under suspicion. The *Brief Essay* (March 1879) was a vicious attack on Gastaldi for following Rosminian doctrine "against the teaching of the Church." *The Chieri Story* (May 1879) was a detailed defense of Father Bonetti and of the Salesian Sisters, who had come under attack for the way they ran the oratory in Chieri.

Globally viewed, these pamphlets (the *Brief Essay* in particular) were abusive and libelous concoctions intended to poison people's minds against the archbishop.

The archbishop through his lawyer Canon Colomiatti brought criminal charges against both Don Bosco and Father Bonetti before the congregation of the Council in Rome. The decisive ground for this action was the testimony of Father Luigi Leoncini claiming to have heard from the ex-Jesuit Antonio Pellicani that he (Pellicani) had been suborned by Don Bosco to write against the archbishop. Later Pellicani pressed by the Salesians wrote a disclaimer. [Cf. A. Lenti, *ibid.*, 98-99]

Father Giovanni Turchi, a diocesan priest engaged in teaching and a friend of the Salesians, clarified the authorship of all but the last of the pamphlets, naming himself and others as their authors. He did this in 1896 by a sealed letter sent to the SCR at the time of ordinary process in Turin, and again in a second confidential affidavit submitted at the time of the little process in 1915.

(2) Little Process Conducted in Turin to Investigate Colomiatti's Charges (1915-1918)

Traditional practice demanded that all charges be investigated and all doubts resolved. Hence the SCR instituted the secret little process. It took place in Turin, even while the process on virtues was in progress and before the same court.

Only 16 witnesses, including nine by Colomiatti, were summoned. They contradicted each and all of Colomiatti's charges, rejecting his interpretations of the facts and his attempt to denigrate Don Bosco.

It should be noted that the Gastaldi generation of both bishops and clergy had largely passed away, as had a number of people whose testimony against Don Bosco Colomiatti had collected. Others could not be called for various reasons. In any case, the situation of the Turin Church had changed, and many of the clergy, such as Father Giuseppe Allamano of the *Consolata*, had distanced themselves from the position of the old chancery.

On November 26, 1918, the Turin court sealed and sent the Acts of the Little Process to the SCR together with those of the process on virtues. As mentioned above, from December 6, 1918, to July 1, 1919, the SCR examined the Acts of the Turin processes and approved them on June 8, 1920. Pope Benedict XV ratified them on June 9.

(3) Rebuttal of the Charges by the Salesians

Whether because there still remained lingering doubts regarding Colomiatti's allegations, or because the SCR wished to give the Salesians a chance to dispose of Colomiatti for good, the Salesians were asked to state their case. On October 16, 1921 the SCR handed to Postulator Father Dante Munerati the Acts and the files of the little process, so that the Salesians, under obligation of secrecy, "might conduct further investigations and shed further light for the guidance of the cardinals." This led to the writing of the Rebuttal.

The Rebuttal was compiled between October 1921 and May 1922. Although written in the first person and signed, "the Postulator of the Cause," it was the work of a team of researchers, led by Father Angelo Amadei. Monsignor Carlo Salotti, vice-promoter of the faith since 1916, acted as adviser. The Rebuttal was published on May 24, 1922, a volume of 424 pages in 4^o.²⁵ It did

²⁵ *Confutazione delle accuse formulate contro la causa del ven. Giovanni Bosco* (Roma: Stabilimento poligrafico per l'amministrazione della guerra, 1922).

By this time, the authors of the Rebuttal had fresh materials at their disposal. These were personal papers that Archbishop Gastaldi had bequeathed to his secretary, the historian Canon Tommaso Chiuso. Canon Chiuso, in disgrace and in debt, as mentioned above, sold the papers to Canon Domenico Franchetti, who made them available to the Salesians. [Tomasetti, *Memoir*, in Appendix I, 103-105 below. The papers are in ASC 123: Persone, Franchetti, *FBDM* 591 B7 - 603 D7]

indeed offer documentary proof on most, but not all, the questions raised by Colomiatti. In style it was a relentless attack on Colomiatti and Gastaldi.

With Colomiatti's defeat, the cause of Don Bosco's beatification appeared to be headed for a quick and favorable conclusion. Newly elected Pope Pius XI's address to the Salesians and boys in a general audience on June 25, 1922, strengthened that impression. He spoke in the most affectionate and optimistic terms of Don Bosco and his cause. When on July 4, 1922, the cardinals and prelates of the SCR approved all the foregoing apostolic processes, and the cause could now proceed to the next stage (*ad ulteriora*), hopes rose even higher. But difficult hurdles remained to be surmounted in the years ahead.

3. Apostolic Process on Virtues in Rome (1922-1927)²⁶

The apostolic process on Don Bosco's heroic practice of virtues in Rome consisted of three phases, each concluded with a "congregation": ante-preparatory, preparatory, and general congregation in His Holiness' presence (*coram Sanctissimo*).²⁷ Preparatory congregations were conducted in two segments: the first, with cardinals and advisers (both prelates and theologians) together, and the second, in which votes were cast, with cardinals only.²⁸

(1) Preliminaries

Three preliminary actions were required.

Between 1923 and 1925, under the direction of Advocate Romagnoli, Attorney Melandri prepared the docket (*summarius*) from the foregoing processes

²⁶ Cardinal Antonio Vico was prefect of the SCR and presenter of the cause since 1915. Archbishop Angelo Mariani, secretary of the SCR, was promoter general of the faith, and Monsignor Carlo Salotti, vice-promoter. The latter would be named promoter general in 1926.

In 1922, Father Rinaldi was elected rector major, and Father Stefano Trione was appointed vice-postulator. Toward the end of 1923, Father Dante Munerati was made bishop of Volterra, and Father Francesco Tomasetti was appointed procurator and postulator of the cause.

Monsignor Giovanni Romagnoli was lawyer of the cause for the Salesians, using the services of attorneys Pietro Melandri and Michelangelo Tellina. When Romagnoli was censured by the Holy Office in 1926, Monsignor Giovanni Della Cioppa was engaged as lawyer. Even as vice-promoter and promoter of the faith Salotti privately continued to act as strategist of the Salesian defense, guiding postulator Father Tomasetti and the lawyer. This activity could be construed as conflict of interests.

²⁷ A "congregation" is a meeting of the cardinals alone or with the "advisers" (prelates and theologians), in this case of the SCR.

²⁸ "Advisers" throughout this article translates the Italian *consultori*. They are theologians, canon lawyers, and other professional people attached to the Roman congregations (such as the SCR).

and collated the information documents (*informatio*). All this material was printed.

In 1925, the promoter general of the faith, Archbishop Angelo Mariani, wrote up the critical observations (*animadversiones*).

The lawyer with the assistance of Augustinian Father Michelangelo Tellina compiled the response (*responsio*) to the critical observations.

The lawyer then collated these documents in the dossier (*Positio I*), which he had printed and distributed to some 50 members of the congregation (cardinals and advisers, both theologians and prelates).²⁹ The case would be argued in the congregations on the basis of the documents contained in the dossier.

(2) Congregations

Once the preliminary requirements were complied with, the cause could be taken up in the congregations.

(i) *Ante-Preparatory Congregation*

The ante-preparatory congregation met on June 30, 1925, at the residence of Cardinal Presenter Antonio Vico. The vote was favorable. But, as required, the discussions led to a re-writing of the critical observations (*animadversiones*) by the promoter of the faith, and consequently to a drafting of a new response (*responsio*) by the lawyer. This in turn necessitated the compiling of a new dossier, *Positio II*.

Meanwhile disturbing rumors began to circulate due to a visit by Monsignor Alfonso Carinci to Turin, where he conferred with Canon Colomiatti. The purpose of Carinci's visit was simply to resolve certain doubts, for he also conferred with Father Rinaldi. (His vote in the congregations was always favorable.) But opposition to Don Bosco's cause was by no means dead, as the objections raised in the preparatory congregation would show. (This situation would call for, contrary to custom, a second preparatory congregation.)

(ii) *[First] Preparatory Congregation*

The [first] preparatory congregation was held on July 20, 1926, in the Hall of Congregations. In the first (common) segment of the congregation, the distinguished Jesuit canon lawyer Benedetto Ojetti spoke for the opposition and presented a barrage of 17 objections. Four of them stood out. (1) The fact that as far back as 1858 Don Bosco had sought and obtained dispensation from the recitation of the Breviary left his spirit of prayer in doubt. (2) The methods

²⁹ Since because of the debates in each preparatory congregation new dossiers would have to be collated, we designate this first one as *Positio I*, and the ones to follow as *Positio II, III, and IV*.

with which Don Bosco obtained offerings from charitable persons seemed reprehensible. (3) "Prophecies" that were never fulfilled cast Don Bosco as a manipulator and an impostor. (4) Don Bosco's innocence in the matter of the libelous pamphlets against Archbishop Gastaldi was not evident.³⁰ These objections took the Salesian defense by surprise. To make matters worse, Advocate Romagnoli did not attend the congregation. He had just been censured, stripped, and banished by the Holy Office for moral lapses.

In the second segment of the preparatory congregation for cardinals only, as it later emerged, it was Cardinal Gaetano Bisleti (of the *Consolata*) that led the opposition. He was at the time prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, and had been the presenter of Father Cafasso's cause. Cardinal Camillo Laurenti, at the time prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, also close to the *Consolata* Fathers, supported him.³¹ The answers of the defense were found insufficient. Salotti, who spoke also for the defense, found himself in an awkward position as promoter of the faith. Aging Cardinal Vico, the presenter, could have argued against the objections but preferred instead to move for an adjournment. He did thereby prevent a negative vote, which would have scuttled the cause.

(iii) [Second] Preparatory Congregation

The adjournment meant that Holy Father had to grant permission for a second extraordinary preparatory congregation to be held. When Monsignor Salotti presented his report and his regrets to Pius XI, permission was readily given, for Pius XI wanted Don Bosco's cause to go forward.

At this point, as a replacement for the unfortunate Romagnoli, on Monsignor Salotti's advice, the Salesians engaged a new lawyer, Monsignor Giovanni Della Cioppa. He was extremely skilled, well known and well liked in Roman circles. But even with Salotti's and Tomasetti's thorough briefing, he still had to master almost overnight 30 volumes of documentation.

Meanwhile the promoter of the faith, Monsignor Salotti, prepared new critical observations (*animadversiones*) based on Ojetti's objections. To strengthen the response (*responsio*), Father Pietro Cossu, the canon lawyer of the Superior Chapter, supervised the gathering of new documentation. With respect to Don Bosco's alleged complicity in the writing of the infamous pamphlets against Archbishop Gastaldi, the Turin chancery gave an affidavit, since the original letter by Father Pellicani, referred to above, could not be found.³²

³⁰ Stella, *DB* III, 193-195.

³¹ Tomasetti, *Memoir*, in Appendix I, 107-108, 110 below.

³² Cf. notes 24 and 26 and related text, above. Father Pellicani's reported statement, later disavowed by him in the letter, was to the effect that Don Bosco had asked him to write against Gastaldi. The Salesian defense did not appeal to Father Giovanni Turchi's affidavit, by which he practically settled the matter of the pam-

Father Rinaldi himself wrote a letter to explain the dispensation from the breviary (owing to Don Bosco's failing eyesight) and the alleged prophecy regarding Bishop Cagliari's participation in Vatican I (Father Bonetti's interpretation!). In any case, the response (*responsio*) was made ready and a new dossier was compiled (*Positio III*). Presenter Cardinal Vico had wanted the files of the little process instigated by Canon Colomiatti to be distributed so as to make all documentation available. Pius XI gave permission, but the presenter changed his mind when he saw how voluminous they were.

The (second) preparatory congregation was held on December 14, 1926. During the debate Cardinal Laurenti and Monsignor Salotti engaged in a heated exchange, for the cardinal would not yield.³³ However, the vote was heavily in Don Bosco's favor.

A new dossier (*Positio IV*) was compiled for the general congregation before the Holy Father.

(iv) *General Congregation before the Holy Father (Coram Sanctissimo)*

The general congregation before His Holiness was held on February 8, 1927. All the cardinals voted aye, as did 23 of 25 advisers with 2 abstentions.³⁴

(3) Papal Decree on Don Bosco's Heroic Practice of Virtue (February 20, 1927)

Pius XI read the Decree on Don Bosco's heroic practice of virtue in a semi-public ceremony held at the apostolic palace on February 20, 1927, with a large crowd in attendance. After the reading, Father Tomasetti (representing Father Rinaldi, who was ill) read an address voicing the appreciation of all the Salesians. The pope responded by speaking enthusiastically of Don Bosco's holiness.

II. The Apostolic Process on Miracles (1927-1929)

1. Format of the Investigation

Postulator Father Dante Munerati first, and after him Postulator Father Francesco Tomasetti, had already researched and chosen the two miracles to be submitted.

(1) Each miracle is investigated by the ordinary of the diocese in which it occurred (in Don Bosco's case Turin and Piacenza). Physicians and other wit-

phet's authorship. In Pellicani's case the issue was not authorship but suborning by Don Bosco.

³³ Tomasetti, *Memoir*, in Appendix I, 110 below.

³⁴ Stella, *DB III*, 203.

nesses are part of the investigation. A detailed technical report is produced and sent to Rome.

(2) The SCR studies and approves the report as document, but conducts its own investigation. On the basis of its results, the lawyer compiles the dossier (*positio*). Then a cardinal presenter is engaged. He will later present the dossier on the miracle to the three congregations that follow. Experts called in for the purpose check all documentation, and must be unanimous in their vote. Another expert re-checks their work and submits a report.

Each miracle is then debated (as is the case with the virtues) in three congregations: ante-preparatory, preparatory, and general *coram Sanctissimo* (before the Holy Father).

2. Diocesan Stage (Turin and Piacenza) of the Apostolic Process and the Two Miracles

The first miracle, brought before the Turin chancery, had already been investigated between 1924 and 1926. It concerned Sister Provina Negro, FMA, of Giaveno (near Turin). Ill with a hemorrhaging stomach ulcer, she had been instantly cured when she prayed to Don Bosco on July 26, 1906. She was 31 years old at the time.

The second miracle, brought before the diocese of Piacenza (Emilia) had been investigated in 1925-1926. It concerned a Miss Teresa Callegari of Castel San Giovanni (Piacenza). She had been ill with chronic arthritis and a combination of other illnesses affecting vital organs, and had been continuously bedridden in the local hospital. In January 1921, at 26 years of age, she had made a first novena to Don Bosco with no results. One morning during a second novena, she had a vision of Don Bosco standing by the bed on which she lay. She was cured.

The rather voluminous documentation on the two miracles, which included physicians' reports and affidavits, was filed with the SCR.

3. Roman Stage of the Apostolic Process on the Two Miracles

(1) Preliminaries to the Congregations

On the basis of the dossier (*positio*) compiled by Advocate Della Cioppa and Attorney Melandri, on March 22, 1927, the SCR approved the Acts of the diocesan investigations.

There followed an examination of the two miracles by the SCR. It was chiefly a discussion among physicians. Some doubts were voiced with regard to Miss Callegari, for she had psychological problems besides being physically ill, and had described the Don Bosco of the vision as "in his late thirties, rather tall, with ruddy complexion and curly hair." But both miracles were allowed.

On the basis of the foregoing investigations, the promoter of the faith, Monsignor Salotti, developed the critical observations (*animadversiones*), and Advocate Della Cioppa (with Monsignor Salotti's help) drafted the response (*responsio*). Advocate Della Cioppa gathered all the above-mentioned documents in the new dossier (*positio*) to be presented in the congregations. (The critical observations and the response would be revised after each congregation, and new dossiers prepared.)

Throughout all this preliminary work the Salesians could count on the expertise and help of Dr. Lorenzo Sympa, resident physician of the SCR.

(2) Congregations on Miracles

The ante-preparatory congregation was held on January 24, 1928. The Salesian part satisfactorily responded to the objections raised. The preparatory congregation was held on December 11, 1928. In spite of the doubts regarding Teresa Callegari's miracle, mentioned above, the vote was favorable. On March 5, 1929, the general congregation *coram Sanctissimo* debated the two miracles before the Holy Father, with unanimous approval.

Pope Pius XI read the Decree on miracles on March 19, 1929, and followed it with a memorable speech on Don Bosco's holiness and work of charity.

(3) Decree *De Tuto* (Safe to Proceed) and the Solemn Examination of Don Bosco's Body

The question *De Tuto* (whether it was safe to proceed to the beatification) was put before a general congregation of the SCR on April 9, 1929, and the vote was favorable. Pope Pius XI authorized the pertinent Decree to be issued on April 21, 1929.

On April 27, 1929, the SCR ordered the solemn identification and examination of the body. Cardinal Giuseppe Gamba, archbishop of Turin, performed the examination on May 16, 1929, before a large gathering of witnesses. Ecclesiastical and civil authorities, and numerous Salesian fathers, brothers, sisters attended the ceremony. Later relics were taken from the remains for Rome and the Salesian Society.³⁵

³⁵ For a detailed account, cf. Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 246-251. The *Biographical Memoirs* [Ceria, *IBM XIX*, 123-124] carries a description of the partly mummified body (on the whole well preserved, the tongue in particular!). On contact with the air, however, the body suffered partial disruption, as expected.

It should be recalled that a first simple examination of the body had taken place in connection with the second stage of the process on virtues in 1917. Furthermore in 1904 the city authority and Archbishop Agostino Richelmy had allowed a private exhumation of the body for viewing by the members of General Chapter 10. [Cf. note 23 and related text, above]

Conclusion to Part One: Don Bosco's Beatification

On June 2, 1929, Pope Pius XI proclaimed Don Bosco Blessed. Dignitaries of Church and state and an unusually large crowd completely filled St. Peter's basilica in Rome. On June 6, the beatification was celebrated in Turin. A solemn pontifical Mass was offered in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in the morning, while in the afternoon Don Bosco's remains, enclosed in an urn of crystal and silver, were transferred triumphantly from Valsalice to Valdocco.³⁶

The theme song of the procession *Giù dai colli* was composed by the Salesian musician, Father Michele Gregorio, with words by another Salesian, Father Secondo Rastello.³⁷

Part Two

Process of Don Bosco's Canonization

Early in 1930, the dust of the solemn celebrations having barely settled, the Salesian procurator and postulator in Rome, Father Francesco Tomasetti, submitted a new petition to the Holy Father, through the SCR, for the resumption of the Don Bosco's cause. Letters from distinguished persons, ecclesiastical and lay, were also submitted in support.

The Salesians again retained Monsignor Giovanni Della Cioppa as lawyer, and Chevalier Pietro Melandri as attorney. Cardinal Alessandro Verde served as presenter, and Monsignor Salvatore Natucci as promoter of the faith. (He replaced Monsignor Salotti whom Pius XI had appointed secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1927.³⁸

In their meeting of June 17, 1930, the cardinals of the SCR gave a favorable vote for resumption, approved by the pope without delay. The Congregation then with a highly laudatory Decree ordered the cause for canonization instituted. It was at this point that the cause of Dominic Savio's beatification was paired to that of Don Bosco's canonization.

³⁶ For details on the celebration, see Appendices below.

³⁷ Text and musical setting in Ceria, *IBM XIX*, 414-417. This is the familiar song, "St. John Bosco, our loving father [...], Don Bosco, thy children on many a shore [...]."

³⁸ Cf. Tomasetti, *Memoir*, in Appendix I, 110-111 below.

I. Causes of Dominic Savio's Beatification and of Don Bosco's Canonization.

1. Early Progress of Dominic Savio's Cause

On April 4, 1908, Cardinal Richelmy opened the diocesan (ordinary) informative process of Dominic Savio's beatification. The articles of introduction (drafted by Father Luigi Piscetta) and the witnesses called were few. The diocesan process lasted less than 2 years.

The letters of petition (*litterae postulatoariae*) for the introduction of the cause in Rome numbered 518 (Don Bosco's had been only 341). On March 1, 1912, Advocate Monsignor Carlo Salotti presented the information documents (*informatio*) and the docket (*summariium*) of the diocesan process. On October 30, 1913, Promoter of the Faith Monsignor Alessandro Verde drafted his critical observations (*animadversiones*), to which on December 8 Salotti made his response (*responsio*). On February 10, 1914, the SCR introduced the cause, a decision that was immediately underwritten by Pope Pius X.

It appeared that, in spite of certain objections specified in the critical observations, Dominic Savio's cause was going to "breeze through" under the newly elected Pope Benedict XV. Then the war broke out, and Don Bosco's own cause, as discussed above, was about to face its severest test (Colomiatti's attack). In 1922 with the election of Pope Pius XI, whose sympathies for Don Bosco were well known, the Salesians decided to concentrate on Don Bosco's cause and see it through to beatification.

2. Process on Dominic Savio's Heroic Practice of Virtue and Don Bosco's Savio Biography

(1) Ante-preparatory Congregation

Now that Don Bosco's beatification was a reality, and the cause for his canonization had resumed, Father Tomasetti took steps to have the SCR schedule the congregations for Dominic Savio. On July 1, 1930, the ante-preparatory congregation was held with positive results. But 8 out of the 19 votes were to suspend.

(2) [First] Preparatory Congregation

The real problem arose at the preparatory congregation, held on May 3, 1931. The votes were largely favorable, but not all. "A formidable adversary" came forward in the person of Father Henry Quentin, OSB.³⁹ The scholarly Father Quentin, a Benedictine from Solesmes, was head of the historical department of

³⁹ Cf. Tomasetti, *Memoir*, in Appendix I, 114-117 below. Stella, *DB* III, 213-223.

the SCR, an office created by Pius XI the previous year to ensure critical quality in causes of beatification. Father Quentin found Don Bosco's *Life of Dominic Savio* gravely defective from the historical point of view. Consequently he asked Father Tomasetti for the documentation relating to the Savio's process, and specifically to the biography as discussed in Don Bosco's process. Instead of giving a simple opinion, he produced a critical essay that he addressed directly to Pope Pius XI. A response by the Salesians, likewise addressed to the pope, became necessary. While Advocate Della Cioppa and Attorney Melandri drafted a critique of Father Quentin's action from a procedural standpoint, Fathers Angelo Amadei and Alberto Caviglia in Turin responded to Quentin's reading of the Savio biography. Amadei attacked his interpretation; Caviglia, dealt with the "substantial" historical value of the biography, stressing also the existence of independent testimonies. Father Tomasetti added two other testimonies, one from a companion of Dominic Savio, the other from a person who himself was a historian. When Father Tomasetti submitted the Salesian response to the editor of the SCR, the latter cut and weakened the text drastically. Tomasetti, however, printed the unedited text separately and submitted it privately to the Holy Father. When Pius XI learnt of the facts of the case from Archbishop Alfonso Carinci, secretary of the SCR, he ordered both Quentin's tract and the Salesian response to be stricken from the record, and to proceed with the cause.

(3) [Second] Preparatory Congregation and General Congregation

A second preparatory congregation was held on February 21, 1933. Father Quentin restated his position, pointing out places where Don Bosco had taken liberties in quoting his sources. But the vote was favorable. On June 27, 1933, the general congregation with the Holy Father present (*coram Sanctissimo*) was held. Father Quentin did not relent in his attack, and the pope himself intervened to silence him and bring the long discussion to an end. Obviously the vote was positive. The Decree on Dominic Savio's heroic practice of virtue, with the title of Venerable, came on July 9, 1933.

After these experiences, however, the Salesians decided to leave Savio's cause on the backburner, and move forward with Don Bosco's process of canonization. From a procedural standpoint, the alleged deficiencies of Don Bosco's Savio biography could no longer be charged against him after beatification. The processes leading to the beatification had already dealt with the key questions regarding Don Bosco's eligibility for sainthood, such as reputation of holiness of life, heroic virtue, etc. It remained now to move toward the canonization.

Before proceeding to the canonization, two new miracles, obtained through Blessed John Bosco's intercession, were to be presented, investigated and approved.

II. New Miracles for the Canonization⁴⁰

Father Tomasetti out of several possible cases chose two miraculous cures. The first concerned Dr. Heinrich Rudolph Hirsch, a young physician from Innsbruck (Austria); the second, Mrs. Anna Maccolini, an elderly lady from Rimini (Emilia).

1. Two Miracles Described and Presented

Dr. Hirsch had contracted tuberculosis while working with TB patients, and in 1929 at the age of 33 was very seriously ill. At the suggestion of some Salesians whom he had known at Treviglio (Lombardy), he began a novena to Don Bosco with his family. On the last day of the novena, May 24, 1929, he had the experience of being cured. In effect, X-rays showed that the many lesions in his lungs had disappeared.

In late 1930, Mrs. Anna Maccolini, 74 years of age, lay bedridden in a rest home in Rimini under the care of a community of nuns. She suffered from a very severe case of phlebitis in her right leg and thigh, with complications affecting her lungs in particular. Toward the end of December 1930 she began a triduum of prayers to Blessed John Bosco, at the end which she felt cured. She could get out of bed, and in a matter of months the phlebitis disappeared.

With Dr. Lorenzo Sympa's help, Father Tomasetti prepared the articles for the investigation to be conducted by the chanceries of Innsbruck and Rimini. With some delay, in August 1931, the SCR issued the empowering letters (*litterae remissoriales*). Father Tomasetti was pressing for an early approval of the miracles themselves by the SCR in the hope that the canonization would coincide with Father Rinaldi's golden jubilee of priestly ordination due to be celebrated in December. But Father Rinaldi passed away on December 5, 1931. On the other hand, flaws in the canonical procedure at Rimini and the subsequent preparation of the documents again caused delays. But on April 12, 1932, the legal papers were filed with the SCR. On April 20, the congregation approved the investigation by the two chanceries.

2. Congregations on the Miracles

As in the case of the approval of the miracles for the beatification, three congregations had to be held: the ante-preparatory, the preparatory and the general congregation before the Holy Father (*coram Sanctissimo*).

⁴⁰Cf. Stella, *DB* III, 224-233; Ceria, *IBM* XIX, 226-229.

(1) Ante-Preparatory Congregation

On July 26, 1932, the ante-preparatory congregation was held at Cardinal Verde's residence. The vote was favorable on both miracles. But since one of the physicians expressed some doubts concerning Dr. Hirsch' case, Cardinal Verde shelved that miracle and called for a replacement.

The new miracle submitted concerned a lady from the diocese of Bergamo (Lombardy) named Caterina Lanfranchi Pilenga. She had been confined to a wheel chair with severe arthritis affecting both legs. Her family was very religious, and one of her sisters was a frequent visitor to Lourdes. Caterina determined to go on a pilgrimage with her sister, even though that particular train had no facilities for the sick. Her pilgrimage, however, proved ineffective. On their return trip through Turin the pilgrims visited the Oratory. On May 6, 1931, Caterina was cured instantly in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians as she prayed at Blessed John Bosco's altar-tomb. She began to run up and down to stairs to Don Bosco's rooms, telling everybody about the miracle.

In spite of new bureaucratic delays, empowering letters were obtained from the SCR, so that the investigation by the Bergamo chancery could take place between August 31 and September 3, 1932. A thorough report describing the lady's disease, the medical procedures, her instantaneous cure, her continued good health with no adverse symptoms thereafter, and the wide resonance of the miraculous event, was filed with and approved by the SCR.

(2) Ante-Preparatory and Preparatory Congregations

A veritable sense of exhilaration took possession of the Salesians at this point, for the miracles seemed certain to be approved, and the cardinals of the SCR seemed to want to see the process come to a conclusion. Thus, on January 24, 1933, the Rimini miracle was approved in a successful preparatory congregation. On February 1, the Bergamo process was approved, and on May 9, the ante-preparatory congregation on it was held, with a favorable result.

(3) [Second] Preparatory Congregation

On July 25, 1933, a second preparatory was held on the miracles. Father Henry Quentin tried desperately to have the miracle involving Mrs. Caterina Lanfranchi Pilenga thrown out. In a heated debate with Archbishop Salotti, he argued that Mrs. Pilenga had obtained her cure at Lourdes and not in Turin. The vote was favorable.

(4) General Congregation with the Holy Father (*Coram Sanctissimo*)

The general congregation in the pope's presence was held on November 14, 1933. Father Quentin stubbornly reiterated his objections, for which, as it later

emerged, he was reprimanded.⁴¹ Both miracles were approved, and Pius XI read the Decree on November 19.

III. Consistories and Canonization

Pope Pius XI held the three ritual consistories (secret, semi-public and public). The first two took place on December 31, 1933, the third on January 15, 1934. These meetings were held to allow the Holy Father to hear the final opinions of the cardinals, in a matter regarded as closely related to the papal infallible magisterium. They also allowed the postulators to make their final pleas in favor of their candidates for sainthood—four in this case, including Don Bosco.⁴² Lastly the pope assigned the date on which the solemn ceremony of canonization of each candidate was to be held.

Don Bosco was canonized on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934. The ceremony in St. Peter's basilica was solemn beyond description, with the highest authorities of Church and state in attendance. The following day Don Bosco was honored on Capitoline Hill at a commemoration attended by the Salesian superiors, cardinals, and high-ranking members of the Fascist government, including Benito Mussolini.

One week later, the canonization was celebrated in Turin with comparable solemnity. The Salesian Father Giovanni Pagella, a musician of note, composed the hymn *Campane Suonate* ("Let All Bells Be Chiming") for the occasion.⁴³

⁴¹ Tomasetti, *Memoirs*, in Appendix I, 118-119 below.

⁴² The four candidates were Blessed Pompilio Maria Pirrotti, Blessed Maria Michela of the Most Holy Sacrament, Blessed Louise de Marmillac, and Blessed John Bosco.

⁴³ For a description and evaluation of the celebrations in Rome and Turin, see Stella, "Don Bosco [...]" in Appendix II, below. For the words and music of the hymn, see Ceria, *IBM XIX*, 429-431.

Appendix I

Sidelights of Don Bosco's and Dominic Savio's Causes for Beatification and Canonization

Confidential Memoir by Father Francesco Tomasetti,
SDB

Translated by Arthur J. Lenti

Translator's Note.—Father Francesco Tomasetti served as Salesian procurator general and as postulator of the causes of beatification and canonization from 1924 to 1953. In this latter capacity he managed the causes of Don Bosco, Dominic Savio, Mary Mazzarello and others. This unpublished "confidential" memoir, originating in an address delivered in 1944, offers valuable sidelights and comments from a person "in the know."

Text in square brackets and footnotes are the translator's.

Part One: Don Bosco's Beatification

[Ordinary Process Begun and Lines Drawn]

The reputation of holiness (*fama sanctitatis*) which Don Bosco enjoyed while still living kept growing both in and outside Italy. It was thus possible to initiate the informative or ordinary process a mere two years after his death. This process is so called because it takes place under the authority of the diocesan ordinary—in Don Bosco's case, the Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Alimonda. It is an investigation of the Servant of God's virtues and miracles. A number of Salesian priests, brothers, sisters, past pupils, cooperators, as well as members of the diocesan clergy and Catholic laity, appeared as witnesses before the chancery and testified on Don Bosco's behalf.

While the cause was in progress, Canon Emanuele Colomiatti, trial lawyer at the chancery and leader of the opposition, filed a brief against Don Bosco with the Sacred Congregation of Rites [SCR] in Rome in the hope of stopping the cause. The move did not succeed in its intent, but it delayed the process' resolution by some ten years, as will be seen.

The informative or ordinary process was brought to a close in 1897, and its findings were forwarded to the SCR. The SCR ordered its chancellor to prepare and annotate copies of the authentic documents and to make them available to those who were to study the case.

[*Apostolic Process Begun in Rome*]

In 1906, after the examination of Don Bosco's writings (a prerequisite for the introduction of the cause), the SCR ordered a separate "little process" to investigate Don Bosco's dispute with Archbishop Gastaldi. Its findings were favorable to Don Bosco. In 1907 Don Bosco's cause was finally introduced in Rome; and Pius X's magnificent Decree, so liberal in its praise of the Servant of God and his work, served as a fitting introduction.

[*The Varazze "Scandal" and Its Repercussions*]

Having suffered this defeat, the devil was quick to seek revenge with the terrible Varazze affair.⁴⁴ Fortunately, the base accusations, and the subsequent outcry instigated by Freemasonry, were soon disposed of through court action. The Salesian school, which had been closed in August 1907, opened its doors again in October of the same year. But what a painful trial for Father Michael Rua and for all Salesians!⁴⁵ Pope Pius XII himself referred to Father Rua's ordeal in speaking of the heavy crosses which the Lord is wont to send to chosen souls.

By attacking the Salesians at Varazze through accusations of immorality, a scandal which had wide resonance, the Freemasons had hoped to launch in Italy the same kind of smear campaign against religious institutes engaged in education that had been successfully conducted in France. But, they underestimated the people's sense of fair play. For, as soon as the people had recovered from the initial shock caused by lurid reports in newspapers controlled by Freemasonry, they reacted by taking to the streets and demanding a stop to all such unjustified attacks. The story was told about the army officer who demanded satisfaction from one of the more vociferous calumniators by challenging him to a duel! Of course, Minister Augusto Ciuffelli was quick to label such demonstrations in support "mob madness."

Limiting my remarks to Rome, I would like to mention some welcome instances of support for the Salesian cause in those terrible days. The *Corriere*

⁴⁴ Varazze, a holiday town of the Italian Riviera, was the site of two Salesian schools, one run by the Fathers and Brothers for boys, the other by the Sisters for girls. In July 1907, the police entered the boys' school without warning to conduct a search. The Salesians and some of the local clergy were being accused of various crimes, including acts of immorality against pupils. A Salesian seminarian and a brother were arrested and imprisoned. The two Salesian schools were closed down. There followed a swell of public outrage, inflamed by sections of the press and anti-clerical groups. Demonstrations against Salesian and other religious institutions took place in various cities. The Salesians took the case to court. But, while the two jailed Salesians were released and the schools were reopened, the people responsible for the scheme could not be brought to justice.

⁴⁵ Father (now, Blessed) Michael Rua (1837-1910) served as rector major of the Salesian Society from 1888 to 1910.

d'Italia and its courageous editor-in-chief immediately took an unambiguous stand in support. The timely initiative by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honorable Tommaso Tittoni, was also very supportive. He telephoned Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, urging that action be taken to restore public order in the squares and streets of the city by stationing armed contingents, if necessary; and that the German Chancery be advised that the attack on the Salesians was a vicious fabrication.⁴⁶ The newspaper *Il Popolo Romano*, in editorials signed by Mr. Costanzo Chauvet, called for restraint and fair play. Prime Minister Giolitti himself in a press conference expressed his determination to see that justice was done. Her Majesty Queen Margaret of Italy and a number of her advisers (among whom Count Adeodato Bonasi, Urbano Rattazzi [Jr.], [...]) expressed her interest and concern. The Honorable Luigi Facta, undersecretary of state, gave Father Arturo Conelli, Salesian provincial at the time, valuable advice on how best to bring the conspirators to justice. Salesian Co-operators, such as Mr. Giuseppe Serafini, provided the financial help that made it possible for the Salesians to mount an extensive publicity campaign. It covered the whole city and it advertised the court actions planned against such newspapers as *La Tribuna*, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, *Il Messaggero*. The campaign by itself had a sobering effect on the conspirators.

On the evening of the day on which the vicious accusations against the Salesians were made public, groups of past pupils quartered themselves at the [Sacred Heart] Hospice, ready to act in defense of their educators. On that occasion the local chief of police came by to see if precautionary measures were necessary and was shocked by the sight of such a crowd. He begged the Salesian superiors to ask all concerned to use restraint, and above all not to make any alcoholic beverages available. He feared that if a hostile mob were to gather in front of the school, the confrontation might degenerate into a bloody mêlée, and the police might have to use force against two warring mobs. Fortunately his fears did not materialize.

The Queen Mother's visit to the Sacred Heart Hospice a few months earlier also helped to promote sympathy for the Salesians in many circles. The visit had been given wide press coverage, and its pleasant memories still lingered in everybody's mind. It even had seemed to forecast a thaw in state-Church relationships.⁴⁷

Meanwhile Voltaire's evil advice proved true: "Slander, throw mud, and some will stick!" And thus it was that later the vile accusations had an adverse

⁴⁶ Since the glory days of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and of German influence on Italian politics, Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti sought to maintain good relations with Germany.

⁴⁷ Ever since the taking of Rome by the Italian state in 1870, the pope ("a prisoner in the Vatican") and the Italian state remained estranged. Only in 1929, shortly before Don Bosco's beatification in that same year, a kind of reconciliation took place through a treaty and a concordat.

effect also on the preparatory congregation that was to examine Don Bosco's virtues.⁴⁸

[First Stage of the Apostolic Process]

With the decree of introduction of the cause, in accordance with the older practice, the title "Venerable" was conferred on Don Bosco. In 1913 the SCR issued a directive, subsequently written into the *Code of Canon Law*, by which Servants of God would receive the title "Venerable" only with the Decree on the heroic practice of virtues.

Immediately after the introduction of the cause the postulator took steps with the promoter general of the faith, Monsignor Alessandro Verde, to have the authorizing letter (*litterae remissoriales*) and the questionnaire (*interrogatoria*) required for the apostolic process sent to the Turin chancery without delay.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Father Giovanni Marengo was made a bishop and was succeeded [as procurator general and postulator] by Father Dante Munerati. In 1914 the presenter of the cause, Cardinal Vives y Tuto, died and was succeeded by Cardinal Ferrata. As the latter died shortly thereafter, Cardinal Antonio Vico was appointed presenter. It was Cardinal Vico who had the [ordinary] informative process approved and, at the postulator's request, had the SCR send the authorizing letter to the Turin chancery. The Turin section of the apostolic process began on February 12, 1916, and ended on November 26, 1918, when a copy of its Acts was forwarded to Rome.

[Attack by Colomiatti and Consequent Little Process]

Everything seemed to be moving along swimmingly, when Canon Colomiatti mounted a new attack. In 1916 he personally submitted to the SCR in Rome a brief against Don Bosco and his virtues on the basis of some writings [allegedly authored by the Venerable Servant of God]. Colomiatti also made an oral deposition on the matter. Don Bosco was not the author of the writings being denounced, but the canon persisted in attributing them to the Servant of God.⁵⁰

Repeated accusations and pressures from the opposing faction forced the prefect of the SCR to halt the customary work in Rome and to mount a secret investigation through the Turin chancery. After a thorough investigation, the Turin court was to report back to Rome as canon law required. The prefect also

⁴⁸ Tomasetti is referring to the preparatory congregation of July 20, 1926. Cf. note 30 and related text, above.

⁴⁹ For such technical terms as "promoter," "presenter," etc., cf. notes 15, 16, 17 and 18 and related text above.

⁵⁰ For these "writings" (the libelous pamphlets against Archbishop Gastaldi), cf. note 24 and related text above.

dispatched a skilled and prudent investigator to look into the matter. His report showed all accusations to be groundless and to have been the invention of psychologically unbalanced persons.

However, a detailed list of these accusations was drawn up, and the postulator, Father Dante Munerati, forwarded it to the Salesians in Turin for their cognizance and response. The Salesian superiors then sent Father Pietro Cossu to Rome to work on a reply. Under the guidance of skilled lawyers, and drawing upon a large body of documentary evidence that had meanwhile providentially become available to the Salesians, he prepared a cogent rebuttal of each accusation brought forward by Don Bosco's implacable adversaries. Monsignor Carlo Salotti, lawyer for Don Bosco's cause, and Father Dante Munerati lent Father Cossu their invaluable assistance. Thus a brief was readied that, even though it did not possess legal status with the SCR, served as a reliable source for the attorney who drew up the official documents.⁵¹

[Franchetti Papers]

At this point it may be well to relate how certain very important documents became available to the Salesians. Among Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi's men, there was a certain Canon Tommaso Chiuso, who had been a friend, but had somehow turned into a bitter enemy of Don Bosco. He had so worked himself into the Archbishop's good graces that the latter bequeathed all his personal effects to him: clothes, sacred vestments, chalices, miters, books, personal papers, etc. But under Archbishop Gastaldi's successor, no doubt on account of some serious lapse, Canon Chiuso was suspended *a divinis* [priestly duties], dismissed from the chancery and stripped of his benefices.⁵² Finding himself in financial straits, he was forced to sell off the valuables he had inherited from the Archbishop. It was thus that the Salesians were able to acquire at a bargain price, among other things, a precious miter, which was used for many years, and perhaps is still being used, in solemn services at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Similarly, Canon Domenico Franchetti, wishing to be of help, acquired from Chiuso all of Gastaldi's books and personal papers, including some of a very confidential nature. Among this lot there was a sizable file of papers that referred to the archbishop's dispute with Don Bosco. Canon Franchetti graciously made the pertinent papers available to the Salesians, thus providing the evidence by which the libelous accusations could be refuted. Ah, the designs of Divine Providence!

Canon Franchetti was a priest of the diocese of Turin. The story goes that his mother had brought him, still a child, to Don Bosco, asking the saint to bless him so that he might grow up as a good Christian and become a

⁵¹ For the rebuttal referred to here, cf. note 25 and related text, above.

⁵² Canon Tommaso Chiuso, Archbishop Gastaldi's secretary, lost all his money in the stock market. In an attempt to get out of debt, he tried to sell Church property. [Cf. p. 75 and note 25 and related text above.]

Salesian. Don Bosco blessed him, but is said to have told the mother: "He will not join our ranks, but will be of service to the Salesian Congregation just the same." I [Tomasetti], who have had the honor and the responsibility of seeing Don Bosco's cause of beatification and canonization through to a successful conclusion, can appreciate the magnitude of the service rendered by Canon Franchetti to Don Bosco and the Salesians.

[Second Section of the Apostolic Process on Virtues and Monsignor Salotti's Role]

The report of the Turin court was, as expected, in Don Bosco's favor. Hence, on July 4, 1922, the SCR decreed that the apostolic process could go forward, reserving to itself the right to reexamine any of the objections brought forward, as need arose. In any case, the process reached the first of three important phases: the ante-preparatory congregation, which would be followed by the preparatory and the general congregation in the Holy Father's presence (*coram Sanctissimo*). At this point the process was not expected to suffer any further delay. Instead, for some reason, while the causes of French Servants of God were sailing along, those of Don Bosco and of some other Servants of God came to a halt.

It was at this point that Monsignor Carlo Salotti assumed an important role. As former lawyer of Don Bosco's cause, and now as vice-promoter of the faith, he was in a position to know what the obstacles were and where they stemmed from. He mentioned the fact to His Holiness Pius XI in a private audience. A few days later the Holy Father received the former Salesian procurator, Dante Munerati, by then bishop of Volterra, who wished to thank him for his appointment. Immediately after him he received the secretary of the SCR, Archbishop Alexander Verde. In the course of the audience Pope Pius XI inquired why the causes of some Servants of God, Don Bosco's for instance, were not going forward, and wondered if it were not because of external interference in the workings of that Sacred Congregation. The secretary took offense at the Pope's insinuation, and wrongly assumed that it had been prompted by complaints stemming from the bishop of Volterra. However, Bishop Munerati's successor in the office of procurator-postulator [Tomasetti], was acquainted with the real situation. He had quite a time of trying to convince the secretary that Bishop Munerati had nothing to do with the distasteful matter, since the subject had not even come up in his talk with the Holy Father. It was, in fact, Monsignor Salotti, as vice-promoter of the faith, and much attached to Don Bosco and his cause, who had taken the matter up with the pope.

How did [Carlo] Salotti become such a friend of Don Bosco? Born in 1870, he first became acquainted with the Salesians while still a seminarian at Orvieto. In 1892 Father Matteo Ottonello [a Salesian] was appointed rector of that seminary. He was an accomplished Dante scholar, with degrees in literature and theology, and an able composer and organist. As it was hoped, the appointment of this gifted and creative rector brought about a renewal in the

life of the seminary. In 1893, by Pope Leo XIII's express desire, the Salesians opened the *Lazzarini School* at Orvieto. Under Father Arturo Conelli's direction the school quickly acquired a high reputation as an educational and academic institution. A few years later a Eucharistic Congress was held at Orvieto. Father Conelli served as its executive secretary and distinguished himself as a speaker and as an organizer. His contribution was widely acknowledged in the press. The young seminarian Salotti had great admiration for these two outstanding Salesians. When Salotti [after ordination in 1894] transferred to Rome to pursue further studies, he drew even closer to the Salesians. He was a frequent guest of the Salesian community at the Hospice and Church of the Sacred Heart, and was actively involved in parish activities there, especially as a lecturer and a leader in the Catholic youth and men's associations.

When, in 1907, Attorney [Ferdinando] Morani, the lawyer of Don Bosco's cause, died, Monsignor Salotti succeeded him in that capacity. Through his painstaking study he acquired a deep knowledge and love for Don Bosco, and was henceforth his staunch defender. In 1912 he also took on the role of lawyer in the cause of Dominic Savio, of whom he wrote a biography. A few years later, in 1916, as one of Rome's more accomplished churchmen, he was appointed vice-promoter of the faith, a post which he held until 1925. Obviously, on being appointed vice-promoter he had to leave the office of lawyer for Salesian causes.

[As procurator general and postulator] I [Tomasetti] asked Monsignor Salotti for guidance in my efforts to move Don Bosco's cause forward. He suggested that I write directly to the pope and also indicated to me what I should write. I treasured his advice, as Father Giovanni Trione, who typed the letter, well knows. Father Pietro Ricaldone himself, vicar general at the time, concurred that it was the right course of action to take. He had come to Rome to confer with His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, secretary of state. I accompanied Father Ricaldone to the Vatican for the conference, and we met the cardinal as he was returning from a papal audience. He had my letter in his hand and, pointing to it, said: "The pope says that you are right...." This took place early in 1925.

Later that year, on December 14, 1925, Archbishop Alessandro Verde was made a cardinal, and Monsignor Angelo Mariani succeeded him as secretary of the SCR, while Monsignor Carlo Salotti succeeded Mariani as promoter general of the faith and as moderator of the causes of beatification and canonization. As promoter general of the faith, Monsignor Salotti rendered distinguished service to the Salesian Society, not by showing partiality, but by his wisdom and his determination in seeing that justice was served in the matter of our holy founder's cause. For the hostile coalition that had formed from an alliance of Turin clergy with officials of the SCR did not relent in its opposition. Had Monsignor Salotti's reports to the Holy Father not been favorable, Pius XI, for all his well-known personal attachment to Don Bosco, would not have set aside due process and declared Don Bosco Blessed.

[Let's get back to the apostolic process on virtues and its second (Roman) phase.]

[Ante-Preparatory and (First) Preparatory Congregations]

The ante-preparatory congregation was held on June 30, 1925, in the residence of Cardinal Antonio Vico, prefect of the SCR and presenter of the cause. It was a routine session. On the contrary, the preparatory congregation (held on July 20, 1926), turned into a near brawl. The protocol requires that the advisers and officials read out their opinions or votes in turn. When Father [Benedetto] Ojetti, SJ, who seemed to have been designated spokesman for the opposition, was given the floor, he began by recalling the tradition of secrecy and confidentiality, and accused one "high ranking" Salesian of having revealed what had been discussed and decided at an earlier meeting.⁵³ The speaker then proceeded to present no less than seventeen accusations against Don Bosco. After the opinions (or votes) had been heard, the advisers (theologians and prelates) retired, leaving the cardinals and the officials to continue the debate. Cardinal Vico, the presenter of the cause, made his report on Don Bosco's virtues and on the objections that were being raised. Immediately after him Cardinals Gaetano Bisleti and Camillo Laurenti launched their attack. The latter especially spoke with such extraordinary asperity that Cardinal [Aurelio] Galli, among others, was heard to exclaim, "Why such accusations against Don Bosco of all people!" The promoter of the faith [Salotti] was quite unprepared for this, since all objections had been answered in the response [to the critical observations]. So, to forestall a damaging vote, he promised to make incontrovertible documentary evidence available at another session, if it could be scheduled. Thus it was that the cardinals decided to petition the Holy Father for permission to hold a second preparatory congregation.

Shortly before the [first] preparatory congregation was convened, an unfortunate situation had developed which may well have been responsible for the adverse outcome of the congregation. The Holy Office had dismissed Monsignor Romagnoli from the SCR by reason of serious moral lapses. Romagnoli was Monsignor Salotti's successor as lawyer of the cause. With the assistance of Augustinian Father Michelangelo Tellina he had prepared the dossier for this preparatory congregation, but obviously he could not be present. Besides his name appeared on the title page of the dossier, not a good recommendation at that critical juncture.

Be that as it may, when Monsignor Salotti went in to make his report to the Holy Father, Pius XI greeted him with the words, "I know, you are here to tell me that Don Bosco's cause is off to a good start." "On the contrary, Your Holiness," Salotti replied sadly, "Don Bosco is a great saint, but he has implacable enemies." "What do you mean?" Pius demanded. Salotti then explained

⁵³ The Salesian referred to, according to Monsignor Salotti, was Father Giovanni Trione, secretary at the Salesian procurator's office in Rome.

that the opposition was coming from Cardinals Bisleti and Laurenti who had held repeated conversations with Canon Colomiatti.... "And who is this Canon Colomiatti," the pope inquired, "and why is he against Don Bosco?" Salotti replied: "Canon Colomiatti is the trial lawyer at the Turin chancery. He has put his whole life's energy into fighting Don Bosco.... It has become such an obsession with him that he will not listen to reason. But we have documentary evidence in our possession that will definitively answer any and all objections, if we could only present it. For this purpose we need to hold a second preparatory congregation, if Your Holiness will permit it." The pope gave his permission. Had the report been made by someone other than Monsignor Salotti, by someone who was indifferent, even if not hostile, the pope might well have enjoined a "Delay" [*Dilata*], just to follow established procedures, if for no other reason.

Once permission for a second preparatory congregation was obtained, Monsignor Salotti personally called at the Salesian procurator's office for a luncheon. A meeting was then held in the Major Superiors' conference room. Salotti listed and discussed all the objections that had been raised at the preparatory congregation [and outlined a response]. But, to ensure confidentiality in such a delicate matter, he asked that the response should be typed not by Father Giovanni Trione, but by Father D'Alessio.

The two Trione brothers [Giovanni and Stefano] did not rank high in Monsignor Salotti's opinion, perhaps for good reasons. Only a short while before, over the procurator's head, Father Giovanni Trione had written to Father Rinaldi and committed a couple of egregious blunders. He claimed that the pope, under pressure from the opposition (that is, from some of the Piedmontese clergy), had ordered the whole process shelved. Then again he wrote about the number of miracles required for beatification. In this respect, the code of canon law requires *two* miracles if the witnesses testifying at the [apostolic] process on virtues knew the Servant of God personally, or received reliable information from people who knew him or her personally. It requires *three* miracles if the witnesses testifying at the ordinary process had their information merely from trustworthy persons. It requires *four* miracles if the testimony given at both the ordinary and the apostolic process is based solely on tradition and records. Now, Father Trione claimed that, whereas four miracles were in all cases required for beatification, in view of Don Bosco's great works of charity, the SCR was satisfied with two only. Needless to say, neither claim was true.

[Awaiting the Second Preparatory Congregation]

To get everything ready for the second preparatory congregation another lawyer had to be engaged [in Romagnoli's place]. On Monsignor Salotti's advice, and with Father Rinaldi's consent, the choice fell on Monsignor Giovanni Della Cioppa, an experienced, skilled, and very reliable attorney. But, given the critical nature of the situation, I asked the rector major also for the services of Father Angelo Amadei, the Society's able archivist. The three of us [Della

Cioppa, Amadei and Tomasetti], hammered out a concise and fully documented refutation of each of the accusations leveled at Don Bosco and his work by the opposition. It turned out to be an interesting brief.

Meanwhile, pessimistic assessments of our chances of success were being voiced everywhere. For instance, Father Marco Sales, OP, superintendent of the Vatican palaces [*Maestro dei Sacri Palazzi*] and hence by office a member of the SCR, had been so overwhelmed by the debacle of the first preparatory congregation that he regarded Don Bosco's cause as dead, buried and immured. Such pessimism seemed not at all ill founded at the time. Monsignor Salotti himself noted that some of Colomiatti's accusations were making inroads among the very members of the SCR.

Among other things, Colomiatti accused Don Bosco of leaving the Society without proper programs of religious, ecclesiastical and intellectual formation, so that the Salesians were ignorant and uncouth. Father Giovanni Simonetti and Father Raffaele Antolisei will recall that I sought their advice for a factual and effective response to this charge. Moreover, in my conversations with the officials of the SCR I stressed certain important points. For example, in founding a congregation attuned to the times and moved by a new spirit, Don Bosco was forced to form its members himself and to choose them from the ranks of his own youngsters. Father Antonio Angelici, SJ, a noted Latin scholar, remarked that he regarded the exceptional number of intelligent and willing young men Don Bosco had at his disposal as a sure sign of God's approval. These youngsters were only the raw material. Don Bosco had to work on them gradually and slowly steer them towards programs of ecclesiastical study for the priesthood, and of secular studies for degrees and teaching careers. (The Decree of Don Bosco's canonization credits him with having been the first to send his young candidates and his priests to public universities.) A group of very talented individuals, with degrees in various fields, were soon available to Don Bosco, people like Fathers Michael Rua, Giovanni Battista Francesia, Celestino Durando, Francesco Cerruti, Paolo Albera, Giovanni Garino, Giuseppe Bertello, Clemente Bretto, Luigi Piscetta, etc. These men were proficient teachers, as well as authors of excellent textbooks that the very members of the opposition had probably used, perhaps unaware of their authorship. As for religious and ecclesiastical formation, I could assure them without fear of contradiction that all Salesians formed by Don Bosco exemplified a genuine evangelical lifestyle and unswerving Christian commitment. Some were regarded as outstanding for holiness of life and even worthy of the honors of the altar: Dominic Savio, Michael Rua, August Czartoryski, Andrea Beltrami. And what is remarkable, too, is that in imparting this religious formation Don Bosco did not stifle individual personality, but sought only to bring it to Christian perfection.

[The second preparatory congregation]

The second preparatory congregation was scheduled sooner than expected, for December 18, 1926. Because of illness, aging Cardinal Antonio Vico, prefect of the SCR and presenter of the cause, would not be able to attend. But Monsignor Salotti asked him to be allowed to speak for him in matters of greater moment, and the Cardinal consented. Salotti himself came to the meeting fully prepared. Likewise, the postulator and his team had collated the new dossier and were ready with all necessary documentation. Everyone felt the electrically charged atmosphere of the Hall of Congregations and awaited the impending confrontation.

As objections were raised and accusations hurled, Advocate Della Cioppa delivered his poised and trenchant replies. But some of the opposition, Cardinal Laurenti in particular, were unyielding. The cardinal's booming voice resounded through the hall, as he embarked on loud and reckless diatribes against Don Bosco and his work. Here again, Monsignor Salotti's firmness in insuring that justice would prevail cannot be sufficiently commended. With equally loud voice he responded to the cardinal point by point, and ended with the challenge: "Either Your Eminence submits evidence in support of your claims, or I will, as my duty demands, report your offensive remarks to the Holy Father." At these words, Cardinal Laurenti chose the strategic retreat. The promoter's boldness, however, shocked even some of his friends. Cardinal Verde whispered a warning to him: "Dear Carlo, remember you are talking to a cardinal." Later, Laurenti's supporters complained that Salotti had spoken and acted more as a lawyer than as the promoter of the faith. He simply replied that the promoter's first duty was to speak for the truth.

[The Salesians and Archbishop Salotti]

The Salesians should never forget their indebtedness to Carlo Salotti, especially since his fearless stand eventually cost him his job with the SCR. On February 25, 1929, the prefect of the SCR, Cardinal Antonio Vico, died and was succeeded by Cardinal Camillo Laurenti himself. Shortly thereafter also the secretary of the SCR, Archbishop Angelo Mariani, died. Monsignor Salotti was next in line for this post, but Cardinal Laurenti made no appointments and preferred to use the services of Monsignor Alfonso Carinci, thus bypassing Salotti. Monsignor Salotti appealed to his friends for support in his efforts to obtain justice. The procurator general of the Salesians [Father Tomasetti] made three separate "trips to the Vatican" to plead Monsignor Salotti's case. Everyone agreed that indeed Monsignor Salotti was next in line for the secretary's job, but nothing came of it. Later Monsignor Salotti had occasion to acknowledge his debt to the Salesians in the matter. He said: "Friends are tested in time of trial. I had applied for support to postulators of various congregations, but

none, except the Salesians, had the will and the courage to act on my behalf. I had pinned my best hopes on the Jesuit postulator, but he sent his regrets and explained that his general did not approve of his getting involved in affairs of this kind."

The pope, judging that Salotti's position within the SCR was becoming increasingly more difficult, sent for him and told him, "Monsignor, I am removing you from the SCR." Monsignor Salotti replied: "Your Holiness, do whatever you judge best in the Lord." Then Pius XI added: "I am appointing you, instead, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and I am making you an archbishop!" This gracious act of the Holy Father was for Monsignor Salotti both a vindication and a reward for what he had done for Don Bosco. He was consecrated bishop in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in a joyful Salesian celebration.

[General Congregation and the Decree on Virtues]

The second preparatory congregation closed in favor of Don Bosco. The general congregation with the Holy Father (*coram Sanctissimo*) was held on February 8, 1927. After the affirmative vote of cardinals and advisers, the pope took a few days to pray over the matter before taking a decision. On Archbishop Salotti's advice, I posted myself near the passage that led to the papal apartments. When Pius came by, I knelt to kiss his ring and asked him whether we could hope to have the Decree on heroic practice of virtue by February 20, Septuagesima Sunday. His answer was in the affirmative. Toward evening, Archbishop Caccia Dominioni called at the Salesian procurator's residence to share the Pope's happiness with us. He added that His Holiness had already spread the good news in Vatican circles, and wanted books on Don Bosco and his work in order to prepare a suitable reply to the address which the Salesian superior would read, as was customary, after the proclamation the long-awaited Decree. The happy event is still etched in everyone's memory.

After the Decree on heroic practice of virtue, the postulator without delay petitioned the SCR to proceed with the examination of the miracles. The Salesians presented two previously chosen miraculous cures for the beatification. The investigation was speedy and uneventful.

[Don Bosco's Beatification and the Lateran Treaty]

Shortly before Christmas [1928], I went to Turin to share with the superiors what had already emerged, that the beatification would take place during the first half of 1929. I also was able to apprise the superiors of what I had learned from a reliable source, that the "Conciliation" (or, as Pius XI preferred to call it, the "Settlement of the Disagreement between the Holy See and the Italian Government") would take place at about the same time. Such advance knowledge would be useful to the superiors in planning official invitations to repre-

sentatives of the Italian Government. As it turned out, the "Conciliation" did take place a few months before Don Bosco's beatification; but Italian government officials could not be invited to the celebrations. A serious clash had meanwhile occurred between Pope Pius XI and the *Duce* [Mussolini].⁵⁴ If I remember rightly, the Salesians were indirectly involved.

[*Beatification Celebrated: Lights and Shadows*]

The beatification festivities in Rome and in Turin are sufficiently well described by Father Ceria in the *Biographical Memoirs*.⁵⁵ I have nothing to add in this regard, except to lament the fact that the postulator and his team, for some reason, were not invited to the Turin celebrations. This caused no little consternation among many (Pius XI and officials of the SCR included) who knew how hard the team had worked and how much they had suffered for the cause.

I will only add a brief comment on the disgraceful mishandling of the tickets issued for the afternoon ceremony in St. Peter's. (This was the *afternoon* service, at which the pope would venerate the relics of the new *beatus*.) It was understood that, with no exception, all tickets for the afternoon ceremony, delivered by the Vatican to the postulator's office, would be handed over to the organizing committee based at the Sacred Heart Hospice and headed by the provincial, Father Calogero Simonetti. At one point, Father Simonetti, and Father Calogero Gusmano in the rector major's name, came to claim the tickets. The tickets, however, were not yet available, for they had not yet been delivered to the procurator's office. When the packet with the tickets arrived some time later, Father Antonio Fasulo had just come in to pick up some tickets for the Cooperators' leadership and for distinguished benefactors. He offered to take consignment of the whole packet of tickets and deliver it to the head of the organizing committee, Father Simonetti. Now, the packet contained also special tickets for the diplomatic corps, which Monsignor Caccia Dominioni had included by mistake. Father Fasulo could not have been telling the truth when he later claimed that he had only general tickets in consignment, since the pope's chamberlain was forced to set up a new stand and to print a new block of tickets for the ambassadors. Nor is it true, as Cardinal [August] Hlond was given to believe, that the tickets were lying around at the procurator's office for anyone to take. We did indeed have extra tickets available, but they were for the *morning* ceremony, and were not even much in demand. We had no tickets for the *afternoon* ceremony. Nobody at the procurator's office had tampered with the packet sent over by the pope's chamberlain. It had been entrusted to Father Fasulo sealed for delivery to Father Simonetti.

⁵⁴ On July 20, 1929, the Fascist police confiscated issues of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, published by the Jesuits. The journal had printed comments on the way the Lateran treaty was understood and implemented. Mussolini and Pius XI had already clashed on this issue during the month of May.

⁵⁵ Ceria, *IBM XIX*, 131-223.

The day after Father Fasulo had taken the tickets in consignment, Father Rinaldi himself came to request tickets, that is, to ask us to see if we could obtain tickets from the Vatican for distinguished guests. He did not come because he thought that we had tickets in our possession. In response to our request, the pope's chamberlain was kind enough to have a good number of tickets delivered to Father Rinaldi. It should be borne in mind that beatification and canonization ceremonies in St. Peter's are organized by the Vatican, and not by the diocese or by the congregation to which the Blessed or the Saint belongs. Hence tickets for such ceremonies are issued and allotted solely by the Vatican organizers, as they see fit. There is nothing the postulator can do about that, nor should he be blamed or given credit on that score.

Again, some Salesians later complained of not having been able to enter St. Peter's for the afternoon ceremony, even though they held tickets, because of the great surge of people. Actually the postulator's office should be given credit for the unusually large crowd in attendance, being partly responsible also for this aspect of the celebration. This Father Rinaldi clearly recognized. The pope himself expressed his satisfaction at the tremendous throng of people come from all parts of the world. When he heard that some Salesians were complaining, he merely remarked: "They should have made a sacrifice and gotten up here earlier.... Did they expect to be carried in seated on the papal chair?" He made an amusing comment on the different attitudes of the Turinese and the Milanese:⁵⁶ "Take Turin and Milan, and imagine that on a solemn occasion such as this, the two cities were overflowing with visitors in numbers beyond the organizers' expectation, and beyond the capacity of hotels and other city services. The Turinese would look on and say, 'What a horrible mess!' The Milanese would say instead: 'What a tremendous success!'"

Part Two

Dominic Savio's Cause and Don Bosco's Canonization

[Sidelights from the Process of Savio's Heroic Practice of Virtue]

By the time the three congregations (ante-preparatory, preparatory and general) on the heroic practice of virtue by the Servant of God, Dominic Savio, were to be held, Carlo Salotti was no longer promoter of the faith. As has been mentioned, on June 30, 1930, the Holy Father had appointed him secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and had named him archbishop at the same time. Vice-Promoter Monsignor Salvatore Natucci was appointed to succeed him in the office of promoter of the faith.

⁵⁶ Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti) was from Milan.

[Ante-Preparatory and Preparatory Congregations: Attack on Dominic Savio and on Don Bosco's Savio Biography]

The ante-preparatory congregation was routinely held on July 1, 1930. At the preparatory congregation, held on May 3, 1931, on the contrary, a formidable adversary came forward in the person of Father Henry Quentin, OSB, chairman of the historical department of the SCR, an office that had been created by Pius XI only a short time before. He seemed to have been suborned by our old adversaries (the name of Cardinal Laurenti was frequently mentioned in that connection). He stated his case in clear and simple terms: "All the witnesses who had testified in Dominic Savio's process were dependent on the Savio biography written by Don Bosco. But this biography has no historical value. Therefore none of those testimonies has any value with respect to that young man's holiness."

It should be borne in mind that when this objection was raised Don Bosco had already been beatified. And remarkably enough, this historian was overlooking the fact that all those who had testified had been eyewitnesses. In any case, he published a tract wherein, by subtle argument and by deftly slanted interpretations of passages in the Savio biography, he sought to portray Don Bosco as given to exaggeration and embroidering, if not to falsifying the facts outright. He hoped that this exposé would induce the cardinals, officials and advisers of the SCR to quash the cause of this young Servant of God.

A short time after the pamphlet's publication, in an audience with the postulator, Pius XI gave him to understand that he himself attached no importance to the tract. The pope expressed the view that "Don Bosco [in the Savio biography] may indeed have been selective, may have emphasized or slanted some aspects of Savio's life, but went no further." "Your Holiness," the postulator assured him, "I believe that the Salesians can come up with an exhaustive rebuttal." The Pope replied: "That's good!"

Some advisers of the SCR, however, were taken in by the speciousness of Quentin's arguments, and doubts began to be voiced about the viability of the cause. Monsignor Della Cioppa himself, certainly a clear-headed, capable lawyer, seemed to have been unsettled by the attack. Even Cardinal Alessandro Verde, presenter of the cause for Don Bosco's canonization, had his doubts.⁵⁷ Once, as we were discussing the ante-preparatory congregation for Don Bosco's miracles, he had occasion to voice his misgiving on Dominic Savio. He said to me: "Frankly, as far as Dominic Savio's cause is concerned, I would not want to be counsel for the defense." The postulator assured him that the Salesians themselves would come up with whatever materials would be neces-

⁵⁷ As promoter of the faith, Monsignor Verde had not been favorable to Don Bosco and his cause, and had lived up to his role as "Devil's advocate." By the time of his appointment as cardinal presenter he experienced a "conversion" and supported the Salesian cause.

sary to the defense—something that the cardinal may not have been able to do. I say, “may not have been able,” because the discussion had left the factual plane, and had degenerated into subtle text criticism and into linguistic arguments. To such quibbling Advocate Della Cioppa was by nature and temperament most averse.⁵⁸ In any case, I told the cardinal what we planned to do. He wholeheartedly concurred and asked Attorney Melandri to make notes for their guidance.

[Salesian Response]

The work of preparing the defense would include four steps and three drafts.

(1) [A presentation to the Holy Father.] Father Quentin bypassed the promoter of the faith and had addressed the tract to the pope. Likewise the postulator, departing from protocol, was to make a presentation directly to the Holy Father. By this means the pope would learn directly the sources which the author had drawn upon for the attack. They could be traced to certain Turinese “circles,” with which highly placed Roman prelates had become associated through contact during summer holidays. They accused Don Bosco of using Dominic Savio’s name and person to create [out of whole cloth] the model of holiness he wished to place before young people for imitation. He had then encouraged prayers to be addressed to Dominic and had recorded “the graces” received. By this means he had succeeded in making Dominic a candidate for the honors of the altar. In effect these people portrayed Don Bosco as an impostor, in spite of his beatification. Our rebuttal, signed by Advocate Della Cioppa and Attorney Melandri, was buttressed by direct quotes from depositions given at the process. The Holy Father was impressed with the method.

(2) [Enlisting Father Rinaldi’s and Father Amadei’s help.] We sent Father Quentin’s tract to Father Rinaldi with the request that he would get Father Angelo Amadei to draft a rebuttal, drawing upon Salesian archival sources. Father Amadei did an outstanding job.

(3) [Calling on Professor Costante Rinaudo.] Costante Rinaudo, PhD, had been professor of history at the Military Academy in Turin for 40 years. He had been a student at the Oratory at the time when Don Bosco was writing and publishing the Savio biography. We asked him for his comments and for a written evaluation of Don Bosco’s *Life of Dominic Savio* and of Father Quentin’s tract. As the third and definitive draft of our defense shows, Professor Rinaudo did rise to the occasion.

⁵⁸ The preceding lines are obscure in the original. I took them to mean that the Salesians would come up with a solid, factual response from sources not available to the cardinal. This kind of response would be needed for an effective rebuttal of Quentin’s subtle quibbling. Advocate Della Cioppa would have that kind of documentation in his arsenal, material that would suit both his personal temperament and his professional style.

(4) [The Honorable Alessandro Luzio's contribution.] Having involved Salesians and an alumnus, we thought also of calling on a Cooperator, His Excellency Alessandro Luzio, of the Italian Academy. He was a historian of note and the author of several important studies on the period of the Italian *Risorgimento*. Again, as may be seen from the definitive draft of the defense, he also made a valuable contribution.

The first draft of the defense was given to Attorney Pietro Melandri for editing in correct form. Special attention was to be given to passages where the language might appear too harsh or polemical. This edited second draft was then submitted to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, to Bishop Luigi Olivares [SDB], and to Father Antonino dell'Assunzione, superior general of the Trinitarians and dean of advisers at the SCR, and to other prelates. It received their approval both as to substance and form. It was finally sent to the Salesian superiors in Turin for their approval and for permission to publish it. Father Ricaldone, who had meanwhile succeeded Father Rinaldi as rector major, had the late lamented Father Alberto Caviglia examine the manuscript. His very valuable comments were chiefly concerned with Father Quentin's critical method. Father Caviglia's critique was to carry much weight with some of the advisers. This third and definitive draft appeared in print from the presses of Guerra and Mirri. The galley proofs, as protocol demanded, were sent to the newly appointed vice-promoter of the faith, Monsignor Luigi Traglia, for the official revision. The vice-promoter, no doubt in concert with his superiors, made such drastic cuts in the text that in effect our defense lost most of its cogency. He cut much of the Amadei documentation and of Caviglia's critique, and eliminated the Rinaudo and the Luzio sections completely. This emasculated fourth draft would be the official defense presented at the congregation.

This turn of events notwithstanding, the postulator, in agreement with his advisers, had a number of copies of the third definitive draft printed privately *pro manuscripto*. (The Code of Canon Law forbids any publication on Servants of God whose causes are in progress without previous approval by the vice-promoter of the faith. Likewise the number of official copies to be used for preparatory congregations, and the manner of their distribution, are under his control.) The postulator then presented a copy of the privately printed third draft to the pope with the words: "Your Holiness, a much reduced draft of the defense is to be officially used in the cause of the young Servant of God, Dominic Savio. But please accept this copy of the complete text of the response that the Salesians wish to make to the objections raised by the chairman of the historical department." Pius XI accepted it graciously and promised to read it. He added a word of warning, not without a chuckle: "Be careful! If your attachment to Don Bosco and to Dominic Savio has led you to transgress protocol, only grief could come of it." I [the postulator] replied: "I believe we are within the bounds dictated by complete respect for both protocol and truth."

[Pius XI's Decision]

A few days later, the postulator visited the SCR to find out if there had been any new developments. Cardinal Laurenti, the prefect, was indisposed. It was then that the procurator learned of the words that had passed between Pius XI and the cardinal. It was Monsignor Carinci who related the incident. After perusing Amadei's defense, the cardinal kept repeating that Don Bosco had been beatified too hastily. A little later Cardinal Laurenti went to make his official report to the pope, and Dominic Savio's cause came up for discussion. Pius XI angrily interjected: "For the honor and good name of the Sacred Congregation, throw out Father Quentin's report! Throw out the Salesians' rebuttal, too! Let's hear no more of this, and let us proceed with the business on hand!" After this rebuke, Cardinal Laurenti returned to his apartment and took sick. Because of these unpleasant developments, there was a real possibility that the Salesians would become the object of the wave of resentment that was sure to follow. Therefore the postulator wrote a letter to the Holy Father in which he called his attention to some of the positive aspects of the situation.⁵⁹ The following day, Monsignor Natucci, promoter of the faith, had his audience and reported back that Pius XI had been pleased with the letter. However, the pope still maintained that for the good of the SCR, both Father Quentin's tract and the Salesians' rebuttal should be set aside. Monsignor Natucci pointed out that this could not be done without seriously damaging Dominic Savio's chances, because the charges made by Father Quentin were public knowledge, and an answer to the charges was both necessary and expected. The Holy Father then relented and agreed that both Father Quentin's objections and the Salesians' response should be sent to the cardinals, officials and advisers in sealed envelopes, and destroyed after the discussion.

[Second Preparatory Congregation]

Thus it was that the second preparatory congregation could be scheduled for February 21, 1933. Each of the charges was convincingly rebutted [and the vote was favorable], though Father Quentin stubbornly stuck to his guns and refused to yield. To forestall new arguments, on February 25 the promoter of the faith directed that the cause of the Servant of God's heroic practice of virtue should proceed without further reference to Don Bosco's Savio biography.

[General Congregation with the Holy Father]

Despite the unyielding attitude maintained by Father Quentin, the general congregation *coram Sanctissimo* was held on June 27, 1933. By this time the majority of the advisers had found Quentin's highhanded manner unreasonable and offensive, and had turned against him. But even in the Pope's presence he persisted in his attack, as though for the first time, without any acknowledgment of the congregation's previous actions. Cardinals Giulio Serafini and

⁵⁹ Tomasetti does not indicate what these "positive aspects" might have been.

Carlo Raffaele Rossi requested the floor, but the Holy Father motioned that he himself would take charge. He had perused the unedited draft submitted to him by the postulator and was now in a position to act for the defense. The debate lasted from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. I recall that Father Quentin, disraught and put to shame, tried to make a quick exit amid a chorus of disapproval.

[Sidelights from Don Bosco's Process on Miracles for
Canonization]

[Father Quentin and the Miracles for Don Bosco's Canonization]

After the failure of his indirect attack on Don Bosco through Dominic Savio, Father Quentin mounted a direct attack on Don Bosco in the preparatory and in the general congregation convoked on July 25 and November 14, 1933, respectively. These congregations were to examine the two miracles submitted for Don Bosco's canonization.⁶⁰ [In the preparatory congregation] he tried with all his might to have the miracle involving Mrs. Caterina (Lanfranchi) Pilenga thrown out. She had failed to obtain a cure at Lourdes, but obtained it instead on her way back in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, while praying before the remains of Blessed John Bosco. Father Quentin clashed with Archbishop Salotti, arguing that Mrs. Pilenga had obtained her cure at Lourdes, not at Turin. He claimed that in moving to the grotto at Lourdes, Mrs. Pilenga [according to the records] had taken "about one thousand steps, and numbers aren't an opinion! (*circa mille passus, et numeri non sunt opinionones*). Therefore she was cured at Lourdes. Archbishop Salotti replied: "Yes, numbers aren't an opinion; but Mrs. Pilenga moved to the Grotto not on foot, but on a carriage; and therefore it is the horse, not she, that took the one thousand steps! (*Utique, numeri non sunt opinionones; sed Domina Pilenga accessit ad specum non pedibus, sed vehiculo; et ideo non ipsa, sed equus mille passus confecit....*)."⁶¹ At this all participants, the Holy Father included, burst out laughing.

Later I had occasion to visit Cardinal Verde to introduce [my successor], Father Luigi Pedussia. The conversation drifted on to Father Quentin and his inexplicable perversity. It was then that I learned from the cardinal prefect that the Holy Father had asked the SCR to give him a stern reprimand.

⁶⁰ The first miracle originally submitted concerned Dr. Heinrich Rudolph Hirsch, an Austrian physician, who was gravely ill with tuberculosis and was completely cured after making a novena to Don Bosco in 1929. The second miracle concerned Anna Maccolini. She was bedridden with a serious case of phlebitis and was cured after a triduum and a vision of Don Bosco. Questions were raised with regard to Dr. Hirsch' case, and it was set aside. The new miracle submitted was the instantaneous cure on May 6, 1931, of Caterina Lanfranchi Pilenga, ill with crippling arthritis and confined to a wheel chair. [Cf. note 39 and related text, above]

⁶¹ In the congregations, the discussions were conducted in Latin.

[Closing Comments]

In 1929 Bishop Angelo Mariani remarked that the cause of Don Bosco's beatification would be regarded and studied by historians as a milestone in the annals of the SCR. I can add, from my own experience, that not only historians, but also postulators and lawyers involved in causes have frequently asked for permission to consult the documents of Don Bosco's process, hoping to find useful tips out of difficulties. They have, of course, been disappointed. No tricks were resorted to in Don Bosco's cause. Don Bosco's holiness was so solidly evident, that any charge leveled against him could be shown to be unfounded and false by incontrovertible evidence.

Don Bosco's enemies, as numberless times before, so also in this instance, came to grief, by disposition of Divine Providence. Cardinal Camillo Laurenti suffered a kind of mental breakdown and faded away. He died shortly thereafter on September 6, 1938. Father Henry Quentin was found dead in his bed one morning. These coincidences did not escape the notice of those who were familiar with Don Bosco's life.⁶²

God be praised! (*Laus Deo!*) — June 1944.

⁶² The doctrine of divine retribution expressed here is suspect at best. Don Bosco's biographies make frequent reference to this kind of "justice" and relate anecdotes in which Don Bosco's enemies come to a bad end.

Appendix II

Don Bosco: Italian Saint or Catholic Saint?

Aspects of Don Bosco's Canonization and its Celebration⁶³

Pietro Stella, "La canonizzazione di don Bosco tra fascismo e universalismo," *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, ed. by Francesco Traniello (Turin: SEI, 1987), 359-382.

By Pietro Stella, translated by Arthur J. Lenti

[*Translator's Note*] In this essay Pietro Stella investigates the socio-political circumstances of Don Bosco's canonization and analyzes the nationalistic overtones of the celebrations attending it. He discusses the relations cultivated by the Salesians with the royal house, the ruling (Fascist) regime, and industrial capitalism in Italy. These links, in the author's judgment, were in the nature of a transitory, open-ended strategy, and did not entail a political commitment. They are rather to be understood in the context of a general tendency on the part of Catholic forces at the time to cope with socio-political situations. In the

⁶³ The official documentation relative to the process of Don Bosco's beatification and canonization may be found principally in three archives, namely, the archive of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the Central Salesian Archive in Rome, and the archive of the archdiocese of Turin.

Chronicles of the events of the beatification (1929) and of the canonization (1934), rich in detail but not completely consistent, may be found in the Italian *Salesian Bulletin* and the corresponding Spanish and French editions. Other editions of the *Salesian Bulletin* (such as German, English, Portuguese, and Polish) give accounts of celebrations in their respective countries.

Father Eugenio Ceria gives a detailed account of the processes and the celebrations in *Memorie biografiche di san Giovanni Bosco*, Vol. XIX (Turin: SEI, 1939). This author, however, either omitted or softened whatever smacked of nationalism. Moreover, his account of the public celebrations in Turin does not correspond in every respect with what actually took place. The reason for this is that he relied more on written programs and less on chronicles of what actually happened.

The life of Don Bosco written by Cardinal [Carlo] Salotti is useful. He served as lawyer and as promoter of the faith in the apostolic process.

Excerpts from the Fascist newspapers of the time may be found in E. Vercesi, *Don Bosco: Il santo italiano del secolo XIX* (Milan: Bompiani, 1929).

A summary presentation of the process of canonization, together with an interesting selection of photographs, may be found in Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di don Bosco: Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino* (Turin: SEI, 1935), 244-74.

final analysis, such association did not rob Don Bosco and his canonization of their Catholic, spiritual significance, either for Salesians or for the Church at large.

[Text in square brackets is added by the translator.]

I. Don Bosco's Canonization and the Lateran Treaty⁶⁴

Don Bosco's canonization was celebrated in Rome on Easter Sunday, [April 1] 1934, and a week later in Turin. The published reports of those events would lead one to think that the whole production was conceived as a spectacular finish put on the accords signed under Fascist auspices between Italy and the Holy See.

On the other hand, surviving Salesians who lived through those days also remember the event as an unforgettable experience, but for a different reason. For them it was nothing less than the supreme glorification of their holy Founder, long hoped-for, now finally a reality. The objection that the event was the occasion of a questionable association of Church dignitaries with Fascist party leaders, of Catholic bodies with groups of Fascist affiliation, is invariably dismissed. "You can't imagine," these Salesians will counter, "the enthusiastic mania for Don Bosco that took possession of everyone in those glorious days!" Perhaps so; nevertheless, the suggestion that the celebration was responsible for creating a new kind of bond between ecclesiastical, civil, religious, political, and economic institutions in Italy, seems amply supported by the kind of people who were part of it, as well as by the images that were projected.

1. Participation of Royalty and of the Fascist Leadership in the Celebration of Don Bosco's Canonization

On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934, a great throng of the faithful filled Saint Peter's Basilica for the canonization ceremony. On a grandstand by the apse sat Crown Prince Humbert of Savoy, representing the king [Victor Emanuel III] in an official capacity. On April 2 the highest state honors were paid to the new saint by the Italian [Fascist] government in an orchestrated "triumphant" cere-

⁶⁴ [Translator's Note] Don Bosco was beatified on June 2, 1929, and canonized on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934. The Lateran Treaty was signed on February 11, 1929, by Benito Mussolini (head of the Fascist government) and by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (for Pope Pius XI). It was definitively ratified by Italy on March 25, 1929. The Lateran Treaty was a kind of "reconciliation" (*conciliazione*) between the Italy and the Holy See, estranged since the forcible taking of Rome from the pope in 1870. The "reconciliation" contained a threefold arrangement: a *treaty*, granting full sovereignty to and redrawing the Vatican state; a *concordat*, redefining Church-state relations in ecclesiastical matters; and a *financial compensation* by Italy to the Holy See.

mony held on historic Capitoline Hill. The most distinguished dignitaries were invited and took their seat in the Hall of Julius Caesar. At 4:00 P.M. sharp [Benito] Mussolini made his entrance. On his right, at the presidential table, sat the [Fascist] quadrumvir Cesare Maria De Vecchi, who was Italy's ambassador to the Holy See and the designated official speaker for the occasion.⁶⁵ At the *Duce's* left sat Prince Francesco Boncompagni Ludovisi, governor of the city of Rome, and next to him the Salesian rector major, Father Pietro Ricaldone. Seated on special chairs to the right of the presidential table were five cardinals—first among them, Pietro Gasparri, papal secretary of state and cardinal protector of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

On April 28 the King opened the 29th Parliament at the Montecitorio Palace, and in his address alluded to the recent historic events and their significance: "Stronger bonds of unity and mutual understanding have been forged between the civil and religious authorities. The celebrations just concluded testify to this."⁶⁶

2. Don Bosco and the House of Savoy: A Tradition

Nor should such tributes be viewed merely as the result of recent political developments, something born, perhaps contrary to expectation, out of the favorable soil of the concordat and come to fruition in a climate of Fascist good will. Such a manifestation should rather be seen as rooted in Don Bosco's own lifetime, for some of his attitudes and actions seem to have been a natural antecedent to the events of the canonization.

The presence of the Crown Prince at the ceremony in Saint Peter's harked back to ancient patterns, not merely sporadic episodes. As far back as 1865, Prince Amadeus of Savoy, Duke of Aosta, a son of King Victor Emmanuel II, was among the notables present at the laying of the cornerstone of the Church of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco. That same year Don Bosco obtained due authorization to hold a raffle. It was officially "placed under the special patronage" of Prince Amadeus of Savoy, Prince Eugene of Carignan, and of Princess Mary Elizabeth of Saxony, duchess of Genoa.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ [Translator's Note] A "quadrumvir" in ancient Rome was a member of a "quadrumvirate," a form of government in which power was held equally by four men—here, a member of the four-men Fascist junta, under Mussolini. The four quadrumvirs had taken part in the march on Rome (October 26, 1922) as leaders of the Fascist squads. They were Michele Bianchi, Emilio De Bono, Cesare Maria De Vecchi and Italo Balbo.

⁶⁶ *Bollettino Salesiano* 58 (June-July 1934), 186.

⁶⁷ Cf. the program of the raffle of 1865 entitled, *Lotteria d'oggetti posta sotto la speciale protezione delle loro altezze reali il principe Amedeo di Savoia duca d'Aosta [...], il principe Eugenio di Carignano, la principessa Maria Elisabetta di Sassonia duchessa di Genova* (Torino: tip. dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales, 1865). It lists and describes the prizes of the raffle of 1865.

True, ten years earlier, at the time of the dramatic Calabiana crisis, Don Bosco had warned the king that there would be "state funerals at court."⁶⁸ But this action was meant to warn the king against his political advisers rather than as a criticism of the legitimate monarch himself. In this regard Don Bosco's feelings were the very same that traditionally nourished popular thinking about the monarchy. He believed in fact that the monarch was endowed by nature and by divine grace with all the qualities of a wise and loving father. His were a deep love for his children, his subjects, and integrity and wisdom in governing them. In his thinking Don Bosco drew a clear distinction between the sovereign and his cabinet. This he did out of a religious instinct, more than out of pragmatic tactical considerations, such as were voiced with aggressive rhetoric in newspapers like *L'Armonia* and similar clerical sheets of that era. For Don Bosco, the king, unlike the ministers, acted with all the right intentions. On the contrary, after the French revolution, and more so after [the liberal revolution of] 1848, ministers appeared driven by malevolent hostility toward the Church.

Don Bosco's collaborators and successors entertained similar views and sentiments. As a result, on various occasions, princesses and other members of the royal house of Savoy sat as chairpersons on honorary committees on behalf of Salesian charitable works. This is especially in evidence from the last years of the nineteenth century to the time that preceded the canonization. At Father Rua's death in 1910, messages of condolence were received by the Salesians from Queen Helena and Queen Mother Margaret of Savoy, from the royal princesses Clothilde and Laetitia, and from the duke of Genoa.⁶⁹ In June 1918, on the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, the Italian military forces honored the occasion with an impressive tribute, while Prince Eugene, duke of Ancona, officially represented the royal house and bore Queen Helena's gift, a crucifix of solid silver.⁷⁰

By this time, the political and social climate had undergone a profound change since the years preceding Don Bosco's death. With time the earlier intransigent opposition of Catholics to the liberal establishment began to dissolve, giving way to attempts at reconciliation—a story that need not detain us here. Then the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a noticeable involvement by politically active Catholics in public institutions. The appearance at Salesian events of the Duke of Aosta and other members of the royal

⁶⁸ [Translator's note] On April 26, 1855, Bishop Luigi Nazari di Calabiana of Casale, in the name of the Piedmontese bishops, offered to subsidize parishes with a large yearly sum, if the bill of suppression and confiscation of Church property were withdrawn. King Victor Emanuel II supported the proposal. The whole cabinet headed by Count Camillo of Cavour resigned in protest. This is referred to as the Calabiana crisis. However, the Cavour cabinet was immediately reinstated, and the bill passed. It was at this time that Don Bosco dreamt of "state funerals at court," and sent a warning to the king. [Cf. Lemoyne, *EBM* V, 115-126]

⁶⁹ *Bollettino Salesiano* 34 (May 1910), 156-60.

⁷⁰ *Bollettino Salesiano* 42 (June-July 1918), 103-104.

House could be seen as part of a strategy aimed at encouraging reconciliation and acceptance of the national unity achieved under the royal crown of Savoy. Such strategy would also promote political participation by the "court party," thus checking the tendency of constitutional cabinets, from Cavour to Crispi and Giolitti, to manage public affairs autocratically.

3. Working Relationship with the Ruling Classes: Also a Tradition

Don Bosco and his Salesians had carefully sought the favor and support of public authorities, or (perhaps more accurately) sought to reach an understanding with the ruling classes.

It was not by chance that the governor of the city of Rome [Prince Francesco Boncompagni Ludovisi] and the president of the Senate, [Luigi] Federzoni, took part in the triumphal tribute paid to Don Bosco on Capitoline Hill on April 2 [1934]. Nor was it by chance that the mayor and the prefect [of Turin] were among the distinguished participants in the celebrations held in that city on April 8 and on the following days. Senator Count Eugenio Rebaudengo, who happened to be also the secretary general of the Salesian Cooperators, was actively involved in the Turin celebrations. On April 10 he took part in the dedication of the Missionary Technical Institute that bears his name, the munificent gift from the senator and family to the Salesians of Don Bosco. The *Salesian Bulletin* describes the scene:

At 3:30 P.M. sharp, to the sound of the royal march and the Fascist national anthem, and greeted by the most enthusiastic ovations, Her Royal Highness Princess Mary Adelaide of Savoy and Genoa entered the courtyard. She was accompanied by Cardinals [Maurilio] Fossati and [August] Hlond, both in their splendid purple. Her retinue included His Excellency Count Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, Italy's ambassador to the Holy See, representing His Majesty's government, His Excellency Minister [Pietro] Fedele, the Honorable Andrea Gastaldi, federal secretary, and Senator Count Paolo Thaon di Revel, mayor [of Turin]....

It may be argued that this and similar showings of high-placed support were but the predictable outcome of a tradition of patronage that had deep roots in Salesian history.

Among Don Bosco's huge correspondence preserved in the Central Salesian Archives one finds countless requests for help addressed by him to departments and officials of the national and local state administration, as well as their replies. One immediately realizes the extent of the network of high-level connections he cultivated. When the national government was moved to Florence [1865] and later to Rome [1871], Don Bosco intensified his traveling in order to maintain this network of friendships and support.

During the Cavour period [1950-1861], of all the people in high political office Urbano Rattazzi was perhaps the most supportive of Don Bosco and his

work. The financial subsidies he allotted to Don Bosco during the years in which he served as minister of the interior were relatively substantial and frequent. What motivated his generosity, of itself not unique, was Don Bosco's humanitarian and charitable work on behalf of the poor children of the working class.

When the capital was moved to Florence [1865], Prime Minister Giovanni Lanza and others in government positions made use of Don Bosco's services in the matter of bishops' appointments. Thus it was that Don Bosco became involved in the negotiations to fill vacant diocesan sees in Italy, those in Piedmont in particular, which obviously were closer to his heart.

When the government passed into the hands of the liberal Left [1876], Don Bosco continued to find ways of fostering good relationships and mutual understanding. He did this in spite of criticism and reservations voiced in Vatican political circles, and in spite of a new hard-line stance adopted by the intransigent Catholic coalition. In 1876, for the inauguration of the Turin-Lanzo railway trunk line, Don Bosco hosted the official reception at the local municipal school staffed by the Salesians. Thus he had an opportunity personally to meet Prime Minister [Agostino] Depretis, Minister of the Interior [Giovanni] Nicotera, and Minister of Public Works [Giuseppe] Zanardelli. Then, in the years that followed, Don Bosco continued to address memorandums and requests to those politicians in particular whom he perceived to be sensitive to the problem of emigration and to the plight and opportunities of Italians abroad.

In 1885 Foreign Minister [Count Carlo Felice Nicolis] di Robilant presented [to Don Bosco] a plan for a school in Cairo that the Salesians would staff. Only in 1895, however, did the Salesians establish a school in Egypt, [not in Cairo but] in Alexandria. Educational activity by Italians abroad fitted into [Prime Minister Francesco] Crispi's political strategy for the Mediterranean area. To counteract what France had already been doing for some time, Crispi used schools also as a means of political expansion.

Such "collaboration" may perhaps explain Prime Minister Crispi's decision on February 1, 1888, to authorize Don Bosco's entombment at the Salesian School of Valsalice, rather than let his mortal remains be interred in the city's general cemetery. It was a concession made to a distinguished Italian whose educational and civilizing work deserved particular recognition.

4. Don Bosco, an Italian Saint?

Thus were the logical premises laid down that resulted in the great civil and religious tribute given to Don Bosco at his beatification in 1929. To the strains of the song, *Don Bosco ritorna trai giovani ancor*,⁷¹ Don Bosco's body

⁷¹ [Translator's Note] "Don Bosco, return yet to be with the young," This is the tune that in English-speaking areas is sung to the words, "Don Bosco, thy children on many a shore. [...]"

was conveyed in an endless, triumphant procession from Valsalice to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco. The beatification of the founder of the Salesian Society had suffered setbacks for a number of years due to unexpected difficulties. When it finally took place, however, it could be viewed as the culmination of a cycle of events rooted in earlier times, particularly in the Crispi and Giolitti years.⁷² To those same times might be traced the patriotic and nationalistic lineaments of Don Bosco's image which De Vecchi exalted in his grandly rhetorical oration on Capitoline Hill [in 1934]:

Don Bosco is an Italian saint, the most Italian of all the saints. A whole nation unites in claiming him as its own; yet the greatness of his spirit is felt the world over. One might say that his being perfectly Italian confers on him the quality of Roman universality.⁷³

When, however, things are seen in their proper context, it would be anachronistic to expect Don Bosco to have been Italian in any political sense. True, he did write a *History of Italy* (1855), but his "fatherland" was primarily the "land of Becchi" or, to widen the boundaries somewhat, the "region of Piedmont." The sense of "nation" as understood and advanced by the French Revolution, was foreign to him. And true, the language of his writings, even prior to his *History of Italy*, was Italian, an Italian fairly correct grammatically and of the kind most people could understand, but the language he habitually spoke was the Piedmontese of the people of Turin.

Naturally by and by, Don Bosco's own and his Salesians' awareness of being "Italian" deepened with the development of the Salesian work outside of Italy, in Europe and in the Americas. The monthly issues of the *Bollettino Salesiano* regularly carried letters from the missionaries. They spoke about the compatriots they met, Piedmontese, Ligurians, Neapolitans, who had migrated to various countries of the American continent [and were globally identified as "Italian"].

By the time of Don Bosco's death, the Italian Catholic coalition was beginning to adopt nationalistic themes. It is not surprising, therefore, that eulogies delivered in honor of Don Bosco at his death should express such concepts. For example, Bishop Thomas Reggio of Ventimiglia apostrophizes America as a "land open to conquest by the Italian genius." He draws a parallel between Columbus and Don Bosco, and contrasts the followers of the Piedmontese priest to former "barbaric" colonizers:

Columbus first won you for the civilized world; the Apostle of Youth will give you new life with the knowledge of the true God. (...) Blessed is the ship that will convey to your shores the apostles of the faith and of true civilization.

⁷² [Translator's Note] Francesco Crispi served as prime minister intermittently through three cabinets from 1887 to 1896; Giovanni Giolitti, through five cabinets from 1892 to 1921.

⁷³ *Bollettino salesiano* 58 (June-July 1934), 185.

Patagonia for centuries has nursed fierce hatred for the white people who invaded it. The reason for this may have been the very nature of its inhabitants, as hard-hearted and cruel as they are big and strong. But it was more likely due to the painful memories from the past, of [Pedro de] Mendoza, the [Hernán] Cortés of South America. But you need no longer have any fear. The barbaric practices of the Spanish conquerors play no part in the teaching of the priest of Turin who has so loved young people. (...) The Salesians, who follow the methods of the master, will know how to tame and convert the nomadic tribes of Patagonia, just as they have tamed the little nomads of the cities of Europe.⁷⁴

In the years between the two great wars, the theme of the Italian character of Don Bosco and his spiritual sons was voiced with particular frequency. This went hand in hand with a similar attribution to other sainted stars of the Italian religious firmament, such as Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena. It was no different in Germany, where Luther was exalted for his Germanic soul; in France, where the Maid of Orleans was held up as the symbol of heroic patriotism; in Spain, where Theresa of Avila and Ignatius of Loyola were enshrined as the embodiment of the Spanish spirit.

5. A Working Relationship with Industrial Capitalism

A like situation seems to have existed in relation to industrial capitalism in process of consolidation at the time, as a whole series of events would suggest. In this regard also the canonization was no mere ritual performance.

In Turin the FIAT took part in the canonization festivities for the Piedmontese saint in its own peculiar style.⁷⁵ [FIAT's president] Senator Giovanni Agnelli put twenty *Ardita* limousines at the disposal of the Salesian leadership and guests. On April 8, while the surging procession marched along under a steady downpour, those automobiles were the godsend needed for the safe conveyance of some one hundred bishops who had come for the celebration from Italy and from other countries. The morning following that exhausting day, the rumble of engines broke the quiet stillness of Valdocco, rousing everyone from sleep. As reported by the Spanish *Salesian Bulletin*, the sound came from thirty magnificent *Ardita* limousines and two huge, brand-new motor coaches from the FIAT factory. They were to take the Salesian superiors, His Eminence Cardinal [August] Hlond, and that select company of bishops to the factory for a tour. On hand to receive the distinguished visitors, so wrote the *Boletín Salesiano*, was FIAT's entire board of directors. The visitors were then

⁷⁴ *Nelle solenni esequie di trigesima in suffragio del sacerdote D. Giovanni Bosco fondatore dei salesiani fatte per iniziativa del r.mo capitolo nella cattedrale di Ventimiglia il 1° marzo 1888. Orazione letta dal vescovo mons. Tommaso de' marchesi Reggio (S. Pier d'Arena: tip. e libr. salesiana, 1888), 20-21.*

⁷⁵ [Translator's Note] FIAT is an acronym for *Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino*, an automobile manufacturing company.

escorted into the grand exhibition hall, where they signed the firm's huge guest book. At this point Senator Agnelli welcomed the visitors in the name of management and employees. The speech was *lleno de la mas noble cordialidad* ["at once elevated and cordial"]; it was also subtly allusive.

As Italians, as Piedmontese, as workers, we are proud to have among us, at the FIAT plant, a prince of the Church and so many Salesian bishops and priests. They represent and carry forward Don Bosco's worldwide work, a holy, Christian and civilizing undertaking of heroic proportions. It is also a work devoted to systematic training of a skilled labor force.

As a child, I had the good fortune of knowing Don Bosco. I seem to see him still, simple and familiar, seated at my grandfather's table. In those days there was as yet no FIAT. Turin was not yet the industrial city it is now. But Don Bosco had already begun the great beneficent undertaking that was destined to become a worldwide educational network. All of us at FIAT are well aware of the social and religious importance of the work of the Salesians. Wherever our automobiles are delivered to travel over new highways in strange lands, there are Salesians, "pioneers" and bearers of civilization, to be found without fail. There Don Bosco's banners are displayed, gloriously flying.

All of FIAT's workers, many of whom were trained in Salesian schools, bow reverently before our new Saint in his glory, for he was a great worker and a great workman all his life. They are highly honored by the presence of so many dignitaries of the Catholic Church, as I am honored to have this opportunity to welcome you in their name, and to express our deepest gratitude to you for having so graciously accepted the invitation to visit our House.⁷⁶

While the prelates were touring the various buildings of the plant, over fifty cars ran "the Bishops' Grand Prix," in a dizzying exhibition of speed around the proving speedway." At the same time two airplanes, skillfully piloted by officers of the Italian Air Force, executed daring acrobatics in the visitors' honor in a sky brilliant after days of rain.

The Salesians' link to FIAT should not be regarded as a chance encounter to be understood in isolation. It is a fact that Don Bosco had always sought to coordinate two aims: financing his works and providing outlets into life for his youngsters, whether they attended his oratories or his schools, academic or vocational. Alert businessmen, such as the Poma brothers of Biella and Turin, and Alessandro Rossi of Schio, realized the importance of oratories, whether parochial or Salesian, whether for boys or for girls. They were also reliable meeting places for working adults in their free time.

⁷⁶ *Boletín salesiano* 49 (June 1934), 220-221 (Spanish edition). Agnelli's short speech is reported, also, with some variations, in the Portuguese edition: *Boletim salesiano* 31 (May-June 1934), 1845-1846. This speech of April 9, 1934, revisits and develops the earlier speech addressed to the bishops at the celebrations of Don Bosco's beatification, June 10, 1929.

As early as 1911, just a few years before World War I, Father Pietro Ricaldone had been recalled from Spain to Turin. He began to upgrade schools of arts and trades to technically advanced vocational schools, as well as to establish agricultural schools more attuned to scientific and managerial progress in agriculture.

After World War I, and precisely during the "two red years,"⁷⁷ the Salesians of Turin and FIAT's management entered into close collaboration. The Salesian vocational schools insured the insertion into the work force of workers less likely to engage in class struggle or to be swayed by radical ideologies. Furthermore, in Salesian schools numerous skilled craftsmen and crafts masters specialized in one of the most advanced fields of Italian industrial capitalism. Such a specialization had the concomitant good effect, from the Salesian point of view, that confreres, brothers above all, could be sent abroad who were capable professionals and thoroughly reliable masters. They became envied and respected leaders especially in countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa which were then in the process of agricultural and technical development.

In 1898 a monument was dedicated to Don Bosco at Castelnuovo d'Asti, on the tenth anniversary of his death. It typically represented the Piedmontese priest with a European young man and an American native at his side. It was meant to symbolize the valuable Salesian contribution to the education of young people and to the civilizing of primitive peoples. Later, a different kind of monument was designed and began to be set up in Salesian educational institutions. It portrayed Don Bosco with an academic student at one side and a trade apprentice on the other.⁷⁸ Such an image aptly evoked the new historic moment confronting the Salesian Congregation, the new idealization of its saintly founder, the new contribution made by the Salesians in response to real needs of society. But it also came to symbolize the contribution of "Italian know-how" to civilization and to human progress in societies committed to industrial capitalism.

II. Catholic Aspects of Don Bosco's Canonization

The connections discussed in the foregoing paragraphs represent interesting typical aspects of Don Bosco's canonization, but they do not give us the whole picture. Such features do not describe the canonization in its deepest structure and in its most significant historical elements. Any thought to the contrary is illusory and is quickly dispelled the moment we move on to a consideration of

⁷⁷ [Translator's note] The expression "two red years" (*biennio rosso*) refers to the years 1921-1923, between the founding of the Communist Party of Italy as the Italian section of the Communist International, and the Fascist coup that brought Benito Mussolini to power.

⁷⁸ Such sculpted images could be seen at the Moglia farm (Chieri), at the Rebaudengo institute (Turin), etc. Corresponding printed images appeared in publications from the presses of Salesian vocational schools, intended for celebrations or for publicity.

other important factors at work at the time. An understanding of these factors is essential if the historian is to appreciate not only the true meaning of Don Bosco's canonization, but also how the Salesian work could survive the collapse of Fascism without serious injury and consolidate its base in Italy and throughout the world.

To put it briefly, hand in hand with features that might encourage a restricted nationalistic understanding of the saint, factors of a Catholic order came into play. In the first place, there was a sense of the universal character of Don Bosco's and his Salesians' mission as educators of the young, "especially the poor and abandoned." Secondly, there was a sense of the specific nature of the educational system that powered Don Bosco's and his spiritual sons' educational activity. Thirdly, from a specifically Christian point of view, there was an overarching sense of the supernatural character of the mission, formally institutionalized by the Church's approval, and definitively validated by the Church's solemn acknowledgment of Don Bosco's holiness. The founder now appeared surrounded by a halo of holiness that reflected on to his pupils, his spiritual sons and daughters, his collaborators and cooperators. This small but fairly cohesive group, basically stronger than its Fascist-nationalistic counterparts, received endorsement from those people, even outside the Catholic fold, who maintained a spiritual outlook. These factors tended to clear Don Bosco's image of objectionable and inauthentic overlays.

1. Salesian Worldwide Expansion and Worldwide Educational Undertaking

The rapid expansion of the Salesian work from Piedmont to the whole of Italy, to France, to Spain, and from Argentina to the whole of South America, was already in effect during Don Bosco's lifetime. This achievement, expressed more often than not in somewhat inflated statistics, provided the starting point for a Salesian hagiography. It tended to present Don Bosco as the saint of young people, and his mission as transcending all national and cultural boundaries. It also brought the Salesians to the fore as a promising new educational institute. Historians at the beginning of the twentieth century had no difficulty in pinpointing the circumstances that prompted the charitable activities of Don Bosco and of other charismatic educators. One may mention the flow of young people to cities in times of initial industrial development, the increased need of education and the state's initiatives in the field, the population explosion causing deep economic and social crisis, and mass migration. To these one must add the expansionist politics of [European] nations for power and economic gain on the one hand, and on other related increased missionary activity by both Protestants and Catholics. Don Bosco and his spiritual sons found educational opportunities in all such developments.

Father Rua, Don Bosco's immediate successor as rector major, died in 1910. By that time the consolidation of the Salesian work of education could be regarded as a reality, guaranteed by the very numbers of the Salesian labor

force. From less than 800 at the time of Don Bosco's death the number of Salesians had risen to about 4000. By the year of Don Bosco's canonization they were 9500 strong. The congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians had grown in membership from 489 in 1888, to 2922 in 1910, to 7768 in 1934.⁷⁹

Historians of the period between the two World Wars were already working with data later confirmed by demographic and social research. Population patterns underwent a radical transformation during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, for a number of reasons. Increased life expectancy resulted in greater numbers of individuals in the younger generations. Great changes took place through industrial development and city-ward migration, resulting in a rapid increase in the population of industrial or otherwise important cities of national states. This situation caused a relaxation of the family structures within which children had traditionally been educated before setting out on their own. More efficient nationwide organization of elementary and middle school systems in late nineteenth and early twentieth century resulted in a redistribution of times and spaces allotted to various age groups for their schooling. On the other hand, political parties and state institutions were less than successful in their efforts to bond together and organize those young people, as ideology would have required, in ways appropriate to their age and development. This failure explains the rise of numerous diverse associative projects for the young. They ranged from the oratory model, such as Don Bosco's, to the Boy Scouts' organization; from Catholic Action (mostly for students) to working young people's associations.⁸⁰

The rapid, worldwide expansion of Don Bosco's work in behalf of young people sparked research into the theoretical underpinnings of the method which Don Bosco himself called "the preventive system in the education of the young." Between the two world wars, besides Salesian scholars, other educators, especially in Germany, were involved in such research. These researchers were interested in educational practice as such, and in any experiment that might be in effect in their own areas or that might come to their notice from reports or publicity. Their contributions were, therefore, of a purely scientific

⁷⁹ A comparison of the figures quoted in Catholic newspapers and in eulogies at Don Bosco's death in 1888 with those (for the same date) published with the 1910 statistics (after Father Rua's death) shows that the former were grossly inflated. Even the figures of 1910 were, in their turn, increased to emphasize the continuity and the prodigious development of the Salesian work under the direction of Don Bosco's revered successor. The figures for the Salesians given in our text above (rounded off) are those published in *Dati statistici sull'evoluzione nel tempo e sulla situazione attuale dei salesiani e delle loro opere*, ed. by Silvano Sarti (Rome: Opere Don Bosco, 1971). The figures for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are taken from the [French] *Bulletin salésien* 56 (May 1934), 157.

⁸⁰ A helpful account (though without reference to the Italian situation) may be found in H. E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1976).

nature, little, if at all, concerned with nationalistic agendas and confessional interpretations, and free from Fascist manipulation.⁸¹

2. Widespread Religious View of Don Bosco and of the Salesian Work

From a purely religious standpoint, the Catholic world viewed Don Bosco and his work on behalf of young people as an epiphany of God's grace in the Church, for modern times.⁸²

Both popular and learned hagiography readily put a supernatural construction on the evident worldwide growth of the work, sprung from the humblest beginnings like the mustard seed of the gospel parable. In the same light were regarded the extraordinary happenings which Don Bosco himself related and which his admirers were fond of repeating. It was out of a conviction that the supernatural had been at work that, for example, in 1925 the Salesians celebrated the centenary of the revelatory dream that young John Bosco had in the little house of Becchi at the age of nine. As soon as Don Bosco was declared "Venerable" in 1907, the *Salesian Bulletin* in its various languages began regularly to publish miraculous cures or other extraordinary graces attributed to Don Bosco's heavenly intercession. The image of the saintly educator and creative organizer acquired greater vividness and power by the superimposition of the image of the wonderworking saint and prophet. For the *Salesian Bulletin* and the popular biographies also carried accounts of Don Bosco's prophetic dreams, and sought to document the fulfillment of the most varied predictions attributed to the remarkable apostle of youth. Outside of Italy especially, such supernatural attributions easily relegated to the background, or blocked out altogether, references to his Italian character and genius which occasionally came through. In Italy itself, when the Fascist regime firmed its dictatorial hold, Pius XI and Mussolini clashed repeatedly, particularly over the role of Catholic Action and its associations.⁸³ In this context, [even in Italy] the religious appreciation of Don Bosco as he was being perceived and celebrated all over the world greatly lessened the significance of the massive Fascist participation in the canonization ceremonies.

⁸¹ See F. Schmid, *Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Don Bosco-Literatur. I. Bücher und Broschüren* (Benediktbeuern: Salesians, 1973); U. Heroven, *Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Don-Bosco-Literatur. II: Zeitschriftenartikel und Aufsätze* (Both mimeographed. Benediktbeuern, 1974).

⁸² See, e.g., *Don Bosco nell'augusta parola dei papi* (Turin: SEI, 1966).

⁸³ [Translator's Note] The Catholic Action was the most important Catholic youth association in Italy during the Fascist period and the apple of Pius XI's eye. In spite of the concordat of 1929, the Fascist regime sought to eliminate youth associations that were not part of the Fascist organization. The Catholic Action became the main target in 1931, and clashes continued on and off until an uneasy accord was signed in 1938.

3. Political Non-Involvement

A disciplinary norm that went back to Don Bosco forbade Salesians to engage in politics, to read unauthorized newspapers, or to raise issues of nationality. A study of the root causes for this line of conduct, especially at the central and at the provincial levels of leadership, would be of great interest. In any case, it was partly due to this norm that at the beginning of the twentieth century Salesian involvement with the Catholic movement in Italy experienced a setback. For the same reason, cultural circles in Salesian oratories were partly phased out, for such activities brought together young adults in secondary or higher studies for discussions of social issues not free of political implications.⁸⁴ Adolescents once again made up the bulk of the oratory population. Young adults either left the oratory to make lives of their own or were attracted to other organizations. In the years immediately following World War I, Salesians in Italy distanced themselves from the People's Party for the same reason.⁸⁵

Salesians, obviously, deeply mistrusted the [ruling] Fascist Party and the youth organizations sponsored by it. In fact sporadic episodes of clashes and confrontation with young Fascist or Socialist groups were recorded at various Salesian oratories in Turin, Rome, and elsewhere. But the beatification of Don Bosco in the year of the Concordat [1929] and later his canonization in 1934 gave rise to forms of mutual acceptance and coexistence. A parish at Littoria was entrusted to the Salesians;⁸⁶ Father Michelangelo Rubino made a career as chaplain of the Fascist militias;⁸⁷ Salesians who had been openly supportive of

⁸⁴ See some notices on the youth groups of Parma and Turin in Pietro Stella, "I salesiani e il movimento cattolico in Italia fino alla prima guerra mondiale," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 2 (1983), 223-51.

⁸⁵ [Translator's Note] The People's Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano*) was founded in 1919 by a group of Catholics led by Father Luigi Sturzo. Although Catholic, it was not clerical and was not connected with the institutional Church. It was the forerunner of the Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana*) that governed Italy for many years after World War II.

⁸⁶ [Translator's Note] The town of Littoria (later renamed Latina) was founded in 1932 by the Fascist regime on reclaimed land near Rome for the agricultural development of the region. It was part of a larger project designed to bolster the economy and national pride.

⁸⁷ Born at Minervino Murge (Puglia) in 1869, Michelangelo Rubino was a student at Valdocco and knew Don Bosco. He died in Rome in October 1946. As a Salesian he was director of the oratory at Trieste (1908-22) and the Italian schools at Smyrna (1922-24), Port Said (1924-26), and Cairo (1926-33). After returning to Italy he served as chaplain of the *Bersaglieri* military corps with the grade of captain, before being appointed chief inspector of military chaplains with the grade of general in the Fascist militia. On the occasion of a meeting of Christian Democrats in Rome, a number of them, among whom Alcide De Gasperi, attended Mass in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. Father Rubino was one of the priests who distributed holy Communion. After Mass, DeGasperi, who knew Father Rubino, met him in the

young Catholic groups in clashes with Fascist youths were "removed from circulation" by the Salesian superiors. Though not exactly silenced, they were nonetheless told to avoid overt criticism or provocative postures.⁸⁸

III. A Strategy for the Canonization?

Much can be learned from Father Francesco Tomasetti's correspondence with the superiors in Turin about the intricate relationships that developed in the interval between the consolidation of the Fascist regime and Don Bosco's canonization [1924-1934]. But even more enlightening are Father Tomasetti's personal notebooks and the many confidential memos contained in them.⁸⁹

Father Tomasetti was director of the Sacred Heart hospice in Rome between 1903 and 1917, superior of the Salesian Roman province from 1917 to 1924, and procurator general of the Salesian Congregation with the Holy See from 1924 to 1953. In this last capacity, Father Tomasetti also served as postulator of the causes of the Salesian servants of God being processed at the Sacred Congregation of Rites.⁹⁰ Whether as procurator or postulator, he had the opportunity of dealing with the complex Roman world at its highest levels, and he did so with distinction. He was even called upon, on occasion during the pontificate of Pius XI, to act as an intermediary between Cardinal [Pietro] Gasparri, first, and later Cardinal [Eugenio] Pacelli, and their Fascist counterparts, to sound out the government's views or to carry informal proposals.

1. A Look at Fascist Youth Organizations

In the 1926 notebook, on page January 22, with regard to the [Fascist Young People's Association known as] *Balilla*, Father Tomasetti has the following comment:

sacristy. He laid hold of Rubino's white beard and chided him half-jokingly: "There's a lot of black underneath this [white] beard!"

[Translator's Note] The Fascist uniform included a black shirt. Alcide De Gasperi was a leader of the Christian Democrats and served as prime minister for many years when the Party came to power after World War II.

⁸⁸ Among the "reassigned" were Fathers Giuseppe Bistolfi, Paolo Barale, Guido Borra, and Spirito Polledro.

⁸⁹ Besides the notebooks cited in the text, the Central Salesian Archive preserves those of 1892, 1894, 1913, and 1914 (ACS 275 Tomasetti).

⁹⁰ [Translator's Note] Francesco Tomasetti (1868-1953) met Don Bosco as a young boy and entered the Oratory at Valdocco in 1881. He became a Salesian in 1886 and was ordained in 1892. He served as director of novices in Belgium before being assigned to Rome in 1903. In Tomasetti's personal diaries Stella discerns the outline of a strategy to advance the Salesian cause both with Church and with state authorities. Note that references to the notebooks, such as "On page January 22," designate not the date of the entry but the page of the calendar-notebook on which the entry was made.

We can look at them either from a [political] point of view as a [hostile] faction or party, or from a gospel point of view. If I view them from a political point of view, I would have to fight them, because they are an image of the Fascist Party, which is opposed to the People's Party [*Partito Popolare*].⁹¹ Whether we like it or not, the People's Party has its roots in our organizations, including those that are not supposed to have anything to do with politics. If, on the other hand, I look at them from a gospel point of view, then I am reminded that Jesus left the ninety-nine sheep to run after the lost one, which he came into the world to save. (...)

Again, I belong to a congregation that is committed to taking in young rascals roaming the streets, luring them with games, in order gradually to develop in them the critical sense. Then, why should I be afraid of these Fascist youngsters? (...)

2. Don Bosco's Cause

On pages March 6-7 (1926) he outlines a plan to advance causes of beatification: Don Bosco's, Mary Dominica Mazzarello's (the cofounder of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians), and Dominic Savio's (a student of the Oratory between 1854 and 1857). [He writes:]

We have only three causes in Rome: Don Bosco's, Mazzarello's, and Savio's. The others have not yet been introduced in Rome. (...) What we really need to do is to advance Don Bosco's cause first, because in his process on virtues we have a strong case and stand a good chance of success. Once he has been declared "Blessed," it will be less difficult to tow the others along. Dominic Savio in particular is a problem because it would be difficult to prove his heroic practice of virtues without Don Bosco's witness.

On July 30, 1926, the preparatory congregation on Don Bosco's heroic practice of virtues was held at the Chancery palace. To the Salesians' and even to Pius XI's surprise and disappointment, the outcome was negative. The team therefore had to work feverishly to bring about a successful outcome at the [additional preparatory] congregation held on December 14 the same year.

In the notebook of 1926, on pages March 8-9, Father Tomasetti remarks:

How did we fare at the preparatory congregation [of July 30]? [Badly.] Everything seemed set to ensure a happy outcome. But it was not to be.

1. A bishop whom I believe to be Piedmontese brought further charges [against Don Bosco]. The promoter of the faith [Monsignor Carlo Salotti] dealt with them satisfactorily.

2. The cause of certain French martyrs suffered total shipwreck in the very congregation *coram Sanctissimo* [before the Holy Father]. Cardinal Ehrle raised serious objections and made the point that it was not clear whether they had been killed for their religion. (...) Because of this, the Pope ordered the

⁹¹ [Translator's Note] For "People's Party," see note 85, above.

cause remanded for further and deeper study, and urged that the strictest standards be applied. (...) ⁹²

3. Friends of Colomiatti and the [former] canons of the Consolata (Bisleti and Laurenti) revived Canon Colomiatti's slanderous charges. (...) ⁹³ This is what happened. (...) These two cardinals voiced their dissatisfaction with the responses of the lawyer and (Laurenti in particular) cited some of [Colomiatti's] basest accusations. Here is one example. Don Bosco supposedly told a lady that if she gave him 20,000 lire he would cure her little boy. The lady gave [only] 10,000 lire, and the boy died. (...) Then the miracle of the count of Chambord [was brought up]. ⁹⁴

Archbishop [Angelo] Mariani and Monsignor [Carlo] Salotti were unable to rebut these accusations (...). Hence Cardinal [Antonio] Vico decided that, since the Pope recommended strictness, appropriate explanations should be sought.

3. Father Tomasetti as Mediator

On page May 12 [Father Tomasetti] set down some points for a letter addressed, it would seem, to [Minister Luigi] Federzoni:

[Your Excellency] should know that Cardinal Gasparri often summons me and has long chats with me, usually about matters of no importance. Nevertheless, at times he makes interesting disclosures to me. (One of these concerned the tensions between the government and the Vatican in [Fascist Party Secretary Roberto] Farinacci's time. Another piece of information dealt with the Italian government's participation in the Prague celebrations.)

⁹² Those were martyrs of the French Revolution (1792). Their names are listed in P. Deloiz, *Sociologie et canonisations* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1969), 481-485.

⁹³ The reference here is to Canon Emmanuele Colomiatti (1846-1928), who served as trial lawyer of the Turin archdiocese during the tenure of Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi (1815-1883). During this time he also served as treasurer of the metropolitan chapter of canons. He testified in Rome in 1915, and his adversarial depositions nearly derailed Don Bosco's cause and prompted a new investigation ("little process") of the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict. The Salesians responded with an extensive rebuttal. Cf. *Positio super dubio: An adducta contra Ven Servum Dei ob-stent quominus in Causa procedi possit ad ulteriora* [On the question, Whether the matters brought against the Venerable Servant of God would prevent a continuance of the cause] (Rome: tip. Augustiniana, 1921); and *Confutazione delle accuse formulate contro la Causa del ven. Giovanni Bosco* [Rebuttal of the charges brought against the cause of the Venerable John Bosco] (Rome: Military Administration Press, 1922).

⁹⁴ Don Bosco visited the Count of Chambord [Bourbon pretender to the French throne, who was seriously ill] at Frohsdorf [Austria] on July 15, 1883. The count died shortly thereafter on August 24, in spite of the illusion of having been miraculously cured. The episode is discussed on pp. 275-287 of the *Confutazione*. [Cf. Ceria, *EBM XVI*, 260-269]

On page May 17 we find notes for a letter to another important official of the Fascist Party:

I hope Your Excellency is well. Cardinal Gasparri often asks me to run little errands for him, which I either am unable to carry out or carry out with Your Excellency's help. (...) He spoke to me about the tense situation and of his fears that new attempts will be made on Mussolini's life.⁹⁵ He added: "The reason why Fascism has won completely and with ease lies in the fact that it is trying in every way to make peace. (...) Now it is extending a hand [in friendship] even to its foes, not to all but to a good number of them. (...) For example to the leaders of the People's Party, who would be happy to return to the government's good graces. In any case, [Giuseppe] Micheli came to ask me. (...)

[Mario] Cingolani begged me to continue.

[Giovanni Maria] Longinotti came looking for me.

The Honorable (Mario) Gino.⁹⁶

On page June 10 Father Tomasetti comments on reports regarding the [Italian] Salesians in Egypt and Palestine:

The Salesians working in the [Middle] East have come under criticism (...). I am trying hard to clear them of the charge of nationalism. I've had a conversation in that regard with the bishop of Malta, who is in the service of British nationalism.

From notes entered on pages May 29 and June 4, we gather that Father Tomasetti was available to relay information. He writes on June 4:

Cardinal Gasparri asks me to relay the following [message] to Mussolini....⁹⁷

⁹⁵ [Translator's Note] On April 7, 1926, an Irish woman named Violet Gibson, probably psychopathic, fired a shot at Mussolini in Rome and wounded him superficially.

⁹⁶ Unfinished sentences in the original. On Joseph Micheli and John Longinotti, see the respective entries, and on Mario Cingolani various references, in *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia* (Casale: Marietti, 1981-84). On Mario Gino, born at Nizza Monferrato in 1890, a highly decorated veteran and a member of the Fascist leadership in Turin, see *Chi è? Dizionario degli italiani d'oggi* (Rome: Cenacolo, 1940), 454. [Micheli, Cingolani, and Longinotti were members of the People's Party or Christian Democrats]

⁹⁷ Left incomplete by Tomasetti.

4. Don Bosco's Canonization and Strategy for Its Celebration

Unfortunately the notebooks for most of the years that follow 1926 are missing. Notebooks exist only for 1931, 1934, 1944, 1947, 1948, 1952 (first and fourth quarters).

The 1934 diary strikes a note of triumph on page January 1:

The canonization of Blessed Don Bosco is soon to be a reality, but this has been achieved only after very fiercely fought battles. It will be regarded as a milestone in the history of [the Sacred Congregation of] Rites. It seemed that all the powers of hell had formed a coalition against Don Bosco. After the case on the [heroic practice of] virtues of the Servant of God was won, new attacks were leveled against him when the virtues of young Dominic Savio came up for discussion. But this time, too, the enemies were roundly defeated. To put it briefly, we've come out victorious all down the line. Last year we won the Decree acknowledging young Dominic Savio's heroic virtues. On April 1 Don Bosco will be declared a saint. (...)

On page January 3 he adds:

Extraordinary preparations for the celebration [of Don Bosco's canonization] are being made throughout Italy, in Rome and Turin especially. In Rome St. Peter's church and square will not be large enough to hold all the people who will be in attendance from all over the world.

After the ceremony in St. Peter's we would like to have Don Bosco commemorated on Capitoline Hill, for example. But who would be in a position and willing to take the necessary steps to bring this about? I am thinking of a committee composed of at least [some of] our past pupils. There are many of them in Rome, some of them in important positions: His Excellency [Edmondo] Rossoni, His Excellency [Attilio] Fontana, the Honorable [Elia] Rossi-Passavanti, the Grand Officer Paolo Augella, Professor Chevalier Gaetano Pulvirenti, Professor Chevalier Luigi Longo, (Professor [Nazareno] Padellaro). (...)⁹⁸

On page January 4 the entry [notes for a letter] reads:

⁹⁸ Edmondo Rossoni, born at Tresigallo in 1884, founded the Italian Workers' Union in 1918 before being involved full time in organizing the Fascist syndicates. He was a member of Parliament and a minister in the government. Attilio Fontana, born at Turin in 1876, was also a member of Parliament, undersecretary of the treasury in the second Facta ministry, and a member of the committee on rural migration. Count Elia Rossi Passavanti, born at Terni in 1896, was a Fascist member of Parliament, mayor of Terni, and federal secretary of that province. Nazareno Padellaro, born at Mazzarino in 1892, was superintendent in the school district of Rome. On all of these, see the individual entries in *Chi è? Dizionario degli italiani d'oggi*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Formiggini, 1931).

Who should be invited to speak [at the commemoration on Capitoline Hill]?... [Cesare Maria] De Vecchi perhaps. He would be the obvious choice since he is willing to try to get His Excellency Mussolini also to attend.

Information will have to be made available to the press. I've requested resource material of our confreres in Turin. Articles on the following topics are needed: (1) Don Bosco and Italy; (2) Don Bosco and the House of Savoy; (3) Don Bosco and the Concordat; (4) Don Bosco and the princely families of Rome; (5) Don Bosco and the Pope.

I've given [Paolo] Mattei (Gentili) some books that will help him for the article about which Your Excellency spoke to me some time ago. (...)

As for senators [to be appointed?], I believe that His Excellency De Vecchi will suggest [Beniamino] Donzelli's name to the Head of the Government [Mussolini].⁹⁹

On page January 18 he notes:

Yesterday I attended the reception that His Excellency De Vecchi gave on the anniversary of the signing of the [Lateran] treaty and concordat between the Holy See and the Italian government. His Excellency the ambassador [De Vecchi] made a number of points to me. (1) He has been to see the king and has conveyed to him the hope of the Salesians that some member of the royal house, Prince Humbert for example, might attend the ceremony in St. Peter's. The king agreed. (2) Today De Vecchi will notify His Excellency Mussolini [of the king's decision], so that the Italian government may make suitable arrangements with the Vatican. (3) He is hard at work preparing a first-rate commemoration, but he would like to have a look at letters exchanged between Don Bosco and members of the royal house: Charles Albert, Victor [Emmanuel II], Humbert I, the queens. (4) His Excellency Monsignor Ugo Boncompagni (the "little Ugo" of Don Bosco's letters) was present as De Vecchi and myself were having this conversation. He told me that his son, the governor of Rome, would gladly make the hall on Capitoline Hill available [for the event].¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Beniamino Donzelli, born at Treviglio in 1863, was named a senator on April 8, 1939; see *Chi è?* (Rome, 1940), 352.

¹⁰⁰ Ugo Boncompagni Ludovisi, born at Rome in 1856, was the son of Rodolfo and Agnese Borghese Boncompagni Ludovisi. In the administrative elections of 1871, he was among the chief candidates of the Roman Union. After his wife died in 1892, he entered the seminary and was ordained in 1895. He subsequently was made a prelate and in 1921 was named vice-chamberlain of Holy Roman Church. He died in Rome on November 9, 1935. His son Francesco was born at Foligno in 1886 of his second wife, Laura Altieri. As a candidate of the People's Party in 1919, Francesco was elected to the 25th and 26th legislatures; then he joined the Nationalist Party, crossed over to the Fascists, and was a member of Parliament and under-secretary of finance (1927). From September 13, 1928 to January 1935, he was governor of Rome, where he died on June 7, 1955. On both, see the entries in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 11 (Rome, 1969), 709-710, 719-720.

5. Jottings for a Letter to the Pope

On pages March 22, 23, and 24 we read Father Tomasetti's notes for a letter to the Pope [after the commemoration of April 2 on Capitoline Hill]:

People like [Luigi] Federzoni, [Enrico] Corradini, Pierazzi, Tommaso Marinetti, Maurizio Maraviglia, [Roberto] Forges-Davanzati, Francesco Coppola (...) have come from our ranks and are becoming increasingly Catholic in attitude. They actually are the best people in the Fascist government.

We have been to see His Excellency Mussolini. He was most gracious to us, and his response to our expressions of thanks was extremely sensible. He urged us to hold up the Italian name abroad, but at the same time to shun all nationalism, for the missionary who thinks of fighting the battles of religion under a partisan flag contributes to the advancement neither of religion nor of that flag. But since the Founder and the Congregation were born in Italy, he expressed the hope that appreciation for their work would also draw people's good will on Italy. In a word, his moderation was such that his remarks were well received also by the French and the Americans in the group.

We have also been to thank His Majesty the King, and were solemnly received. (...) He has aged, and I don't think he has much longer to live. (...) He wanted to know the names of each member of the [Salesian] superior chapter present, and he stopped to speak with each of them individually. (...) When we recalled the good will shown to us [Salesians] by his royal predecessors (Charles Albert, Victor Emmanuel II, Humbert I), he replied, "They only did what was right." (...) We subsequently had a visit with Prince Humbert. He was still excited over the canonization ceremony, and expressed sentiments of filial affection toward Your Holiness.

Where [in St. Peter's] shall we place Don Bosco's statue?¹⁰¹ (...) Wherever Your Holiness desires. With your permission, however, I should like to put before you what I heard as a seminarian. (...) In those days Don Bosco's so-called dreams were often a subject of conversation. On one occasion, Don Bosco dreamt that he was in St. Peter's during some solemn celebration. Beside himself and ecstatic with fervor, he lost track of where he was going. At one point he found himself standing beneath Pius IX's feet [as the pope was being carried in on the papal chair]. (...) Then the next moment he saw himself standing inside the [empty] niche located high above [the statue of] St. Peter. In a quandary he thought, "Dear me! How am I going to get down from here?" (...) ¹⁰²

Finally, I think it my duty to report to Your Holiness two items that have come to my attention. (1) When the reconciliation, or as Your Holiness more accurately puts it, the settlement of the Roman Question, was effected, Your

¹⁰¹ [Translator's Note] It was customary after the canonization of a founder to place the statue of the new saint in Saint Peter's.

¹⁰² [Translator's Note] Ceria in *IBM XVII*, 11-12, mentions this dream as having occurred "we don't know in what year." The dream, "heard by some Salesians when they were but youngsters," and its "fulfillment" are again recalled by Ceria in *IBM XIX*, 367-368. The dream was not "fulfilled" without some prodding from Father Tomasetti.

Holiness presented Mussolini with a gold medal. (...) Now, whether because he usually sends all the gold that comes to him to the mint, or because he was uneasy over the recent incidents involving the Holy See and the [Fascist] Party, Mussolini sent to the mint also the gold medal that Your Holiness had given him. The mint, however, returned it to him with the note that it was only gilded lead. I expressed my disbelief, but that gentleman insisted that his information was correct. My reply was that either the Holy Father has been deceived, or people hostile to the Church misled Mussolini intentionally. It may be that some people at the mint, intent on causing trouble, had a lead imitation of the Pope's gift coined and sent to Mussolini. (...) (2) Solaro del Borgo assures me that people [in the administration] at the Quirinal palace are hoping that Your Holiness will pay them a visit. They are not talking of a "return visit," but of a friendly gesture, especially since (as rumor has it) Your Holiness is about [to leave the Vatican] to spend some time at Castelgandolfo.¹⁰³

IV. Relationships in Transition and Debts Paid

After the canonization, the story of the Salesians' good relationships with those who contributed to its successful celebration passed into a new phase.

1. Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon

This may be seen in the case of Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, who was particularly prominent in the Fascist organization.

On July 23, 1943, De Vecchi, together with other members of the Fascist Grand Council voted for the Grandi Resolution, therefore against Mussolini.¹⁰⁴ On January 10, 1944, De Vecchi, Galeazzo Ciano and other Fascist party leaders were condemned to death [*in absentia*] for high treason by an extraordinary court meeting at Verona. Even before that, in early October [1943] the Fascist authorities of Turin were already hunting for De Vecchi. It was then that his family approached the rector major of the Salesians [Father Pietro Ricaldone] begging him to provide a safe hiding place [for the fugitive]. Father Ricaldone was not the man to shrink from what he perceived (even if only on humanitarian grounds) to be a moral obligation. De Vecchi was at first given shelter in the philosophical studentate of Montalenghe. He arrived in street clothes, but sporting his characteristic mustache. On October 6 a warrant for his arrest was issued. He was hastily spirited away to the theological studentate of Bollengo,

¹⁰³ [Translator's Note] Castelgandolfo, a hill town overlooking a lovely crater lake a few miles south of Rome, is the pope's summer retreat.

¹⁰⁴ [Translator's Note] By 1943 it became clear that Italy could no longer sustain its disastrous war. On July 22-24, 1943, Dino Grandi, president of the Fascist Corporations (*Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni*) presented first to Mussolini, then to the Fascist Grand Council a motion calling for the transfer of all powers to the king, and hence for the resignation of Mussolini. The resolution passed in the Grand Council, the king assumed powers, and Mussolini was placed under arrest.

near Ivrea. Disguised in priestly garb, without the mustache, and going by the name of Father Antonio Porta, he was presented [to the community] as "a priest just arrived from Abbasanta in Sardinia." He was housed in the infirmary and given two young, completely trustworthy, Sardinian Salesians as bodyguards (Father Mario Grussu and Father Francesco Lâconi). Otherwise, only the director and the treasurer of the house knew the guest's true identity. In early January 1944, however, some Salesian seminarians came upon the portrait of the Fascist *quadrumvir* in the *Italian Encyclopedia* and made the identification. His cover blown, news of his whereabouts could easily leak out. It was therefore imperative that he be taken elsewhere. In spite of the bitter cold, the snow, and serious transportation problems, on January 5 the two Salesians escorted Father Antonio Porta to Castel Verrès [in the Alps], where the local parish priest put them up for the night. In the morning they continued up the [Aosta] valley to Challant-Saint-Anselme, in the parish, and after a few days, still farther up to Emarese. In that little hamlet, they found uncomfortable lodgings at the church. By this time De Vecchi was completely exhausted, and it was apparent that he could not have endured the winter cold at that altitude much longer.

Meanwhile, word was deliberately circulated that De Vecchi "had defected to the partisans," or, according to another rumor, that from the Aosta valley he had crossed the Alps into France.¹⁰⁵ Instead, he was taken back to Ivrea (an eventful trip!), from there to Turin, and finally to the Salesian house at Castelnovo Don Bosco. There "the Monsignor," amid the suspicions of the local people and of the partisans in the area, spent over a year. On one occasion the house harbored at one and the same time (besides the Salesians) partisans hiding in the attic, Fascists quartered on the first floor, and Germans on the second, while Monsignor Porta kept prudently to his room. (When all is said and done, the Salesians of Castelnovo, like many others, were forced to resort to expedients for the protection of their works, and for their own and other people's survival.)

At the end of the war, De Vecchi was moved to the Salesian house at the catacombs of St. Callistus near Rome. From there, with the help of the Salesians and under an assumed name he made good his escape to Argentina. As late as the '50s and '60s members of De Vecchi's family in Turin still visited the Salesian houses of Valdocco and of the Crocetta out of friendship and gratitude for the Salesians they had known in "the difficult years."

¹⁰⁵ L. Romersa, ed., *Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon: Il quadrumviro scomodo. Il vero Mussolini nelle memorie del più monarchico dei fascisti* (Milan: Mursia, 1983), 270: "A number of writers have built fancy constructions to explain the mysterious disappearance of the former Fascist *quadrumvir*, and some have even written about his joining the partisan war. (...) Nonsense, all of it!"

2. Anti-Fascist Partisans

At about the same time, the Germans without warning conducted a search of [the Oratory of] Valdocco, hunting for partisans. The partisans managed to escape, all of them except one. Father Luigi Cocco, director of the festive oratory at the time and later a missionary among the natives of Venezuela, hid him in a closet in his own room. A German soldier came into the room and searched the closet, as Father Cocco stood by in a cold sweat. The soldier may have chosen not to see, and walked out. In his heart Father Cocco always believed that Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco had worked a miracle.

In 1944-45 a number of Czech soldiers had deserted [from the German army] in Piedmont and had joined the partisans active in the Lanzo and Susa valleys. Father Ricaldone authorized three Czech Salesians (Karel Krcmár, Jan Krhút, and Frantisek Krtilek) to keep in touch with these compatriots of theirs and with others who could be found in areas between Turin and Milan.¹⁰⁶

3. The Monarchy and the FIAT

The Salesians' sympathy, gratitude and respect for the royal house of Savoy did not end with the war. In 1946 a people's referendum in Italy was to decide whether the monarchy should be retained. At that juncture, the royal family asked the rector major for the electoral support of the Salesians. Father Ricaldone, somewhat reluctantly but coherently with his personal inclination, took the compromising step of asking his Italian confreres in a restricted circular letter to vote for the monarchy. In making this request, however, he appealed not to institutional and political reasons of a general character but to the support which the house of Savoy had given to the Salesian work from the start. [The monarchy was defeated.] A [supposed] prophecy of Don Bosco, transmitted only in Salesian oral tradition, was recalled and circulated at the time. It concerned the monarchs of Savoy as kings of Italy: "Three and only three."¹⁰⁷

Be that as it may, the members of the house of Savoy in their exile in Portugal found the Salesians there consistently courteous, welcoming and hospitable.

Neither were the good relations between the Salesians and the FIAT industries cut short. Such association provided excellent employment opportunities for the young graduates of Salesian vocational schools. Furthermore, one such Salesian school in Turin, the Edoardo Agnelli Institute, was built with funds

¹⁰⁶ The names of the three Salesians are given in V. Stauder, *La resistenza cecoslovacca in Italia 1944-45* (Milan: Jaca, 1975), 15, 64, 268, where, however, the author fails to specify that they had the approval of the rector major.

¹⁰⁷ [Translator's Note] Italy was first united as a nation in 1861 under King Victor Emanuel II (1861-1878). He was succeeded by Humbert I (1878-1900), and the latter by Victor Emanuel III (1900-1946). When the monarchy was defeated in the referendum, the crown prince, Humbert II, went into exile to Portugal.

made available to Father Ricaldone by Senator Giovanni Agnelli [FIAT's president], and named in memory of his son, dead in an airplane crash on July 14, 1935. The anniversary book, *FIAT at Fifty: 1899-1949* also featured "Father Pietro Ricaldone's Personal Recollections." These reflections express Father Ricaldone's vision of religious education: equipping the young to defend the Christian way of life, and society at large, against the danger of atheistic communism.¹⁰⁸

V. Conclusion: Don Bosco's Canonization a Complex Event¹⁰⁹

What, then, can be said of Don Bosco's canonization in the context of European nationalism and specifically of [Italian] Fascism? Should it be viewed as a significant and symbolic instance of a supposed alliance of Italian Catholicism with the ruling Fascist regime and industrial capitalism?

The answer would depend on whether the facts submitted in this essay are understandable uniquely under those categories. Useful pointers for a critical evaluation of the matter may be garnered from recent studies dealing with the links forged between middle-class capitalism, Fascism, and the Catholic movement [in Italy]. This would take us far afield. Here a cautious interpretation must suffice.

The structure of the *public* events attending Don Bosco's canonization is complex. It exhibits diverse, even unrelated elements, brought together some by sheer circumstance, others by design.

We note in the first place that the events worked to the advantage both of Fascism and of the Church [of Pius XI] in their search for a *modus vivendi*.

Secondly and in particular, they worked to the advantage of the Salesians. In Italy and elsewhere, the Salesian work was thereby strengthened and gained an ever-widening circle of support. This was due in part to the pervasive influence of substantial numbers of Salesian alumni active within the social and economic systems of the times: in public life and in the professions, as entrepreneurs and as members of the working force.

Thirdly there was undoubtedly, in Italy and elsewhere, a certain link forged between the Catholic forces and the [political and economic] systems in power. The Salesians could not just look on as innocent bystanders. However, in the final analysis, the link was only partial, temporary, provisional, and therefore unresolved. It was subordinate to religious concerns and commitments that could never be integrated into the systems of Fascism or of industrial capitalism. At a certain point Fascism collapsed and, in quick succession, the monar-

¹⁰⁸ *I cinquant'anni della FIAT, 1899-1949* (Milan: Mondadori, 1950), 107-115.

¹⁰⁹ [Translator's Note] The closing paragraphs give some evaluation of the facts submitted in the essay. They should be read in connection with "II. Catholic Aspects," above. I have taken the liberty of simplifying the language somewhat, I hope without loss of integrity.

chy in Italy was voted out of office. Industrial and economic systems underwent such transformations on a global scale that the way in which the Salesian work related to them, in Italy and elsewhere, had to be restructured.

After all, the canonization could have taken place at any other time and under different economic and political circumstances. But in any scenario, it would be safe to say, the proclamation of Don Bosco's holiness, even at its most Catholic, would probably still have had to cope with institutions which by their very nature would have promoted it.