

DON BOSCO THE EDUCATOR

Writings and testimonies

Pietro Braido

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Pietro Braido (Ed.)
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Introduction

In the summer of 1877 one of Don Bosco's writings appeared under the title of *The Preventive System in the Education of Youth*. Although later it was often called the *Treatise*, or *Small Treatise on the Preventive System*, it was simply an appendix to another promotional work in Italian and French entitled *The Opening of St Peter's Patronage in Nice-by-the-sea*. The scope of this work as presented by Fr John Bosco with an appendix on the preventive system in the education of youth.¹

A few days after the text was drawn up Don Bosco himself explained it to his trusty master of novices, Fr Giulio Barberis, because in the brief news item concerning the opening of the new place in Nice, on 12 March 1877, and in the draft of the address he had given there, these pages were extra to what had been planned for the event. "I believe this little work can do very much good in France. They are not as positive there as we are here, but they speaking of doing more, are enthusiastic and accept new things more readily. . . we need them to get to know us better. The preventive system especially will be received and spoken of frequently by the newspapers. Word will get around".² We will see how in the space of four months Don Bosco had seen to three editions (one bilingual, then one in Italian, one in French) and included pages on the preventive system when he printed the *Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (*The Regulations for the Houses*) raising the unforeseen text of 1877 almost to the status of a *lex fundamentalis* in his rules for the boys and the Salesians for a century or so, and it found its way into various languages as Salesian work spread. The text was then published in the *Salesian Bulletin*: Italian and French in 1880, Spanish in 1887 in Argentina and 1889 in Spain, in German in 1899 (preceded by the Mehler edition in 1892) and many others.³

Reference to the pages spread through biographies of Don Bosco which grew in number even while he was alive: C. Conestabile and L. Mendre (1878), Ch. D'Espiney (1881), A. du Boÿs (1884). . . and even more explicitly through admirers and scholars of his preventive system.⁴

¹*Inaugurazione del Patronato di S. Pietro in Nizza a Mare. Scopo del medesimo esposto dal Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco con appendice sul sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù.* Turin, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, San Pier d'Arena - Nizza Marittima 1877, 68 p. The preventive system text - in Italian on the left hand side pages and French on the right, is on pages 44 to 65.

²G. Barberis, *Cronichetta* 12, p. XI, ASC-Rome

³A quick overview of editions from 1877 to 1924 can be found in Giovanni (s.) Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù*. Introduction and critical texts ed. Peter Braido, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 4 (1985), pp. 208-213.

⁴At the same time awareness of the universal nature of his system was growing in Don Bosco. It was applicable within Salesian institutions and in the broader range of institutions of education or re-education. Given the world of youth in all their social, cultural, psychological circumstances, the possibilities of prevention and recovery and how to achieve it, he did not have the forces on hand to tackle it all. What he was doing was modest in quantity and limited in terms of well-developed instances. It is obvious that today too and in the future, the potential sphere of action for his preventive message goes well beyond the matter of his own personal and institutional choices: cf P. Braido, *L'esperienza pedagogica di don Bosco nel suo «divenire»*, in «Orientamenti Pedagogici» 36 (1989), pp. 32-35 (*Il sistema preventivo pubblicato e proposto come metodo universale di educazione*

“Preventive” has many dimensions

Aside from terms like “preventive system”, “repressive system” as used in 1877, the features of Don Bosco’s educational and social work had already been evident for some thirty years in what he was doing and how he reflected on it: in his first contacts with young people in Turin, in the Oratory, in the attached home for boys, in his journalistic activity, in drafts of regulations for boarders and day students, in his memos and historical outlines regarding the first oratories and the Congregation, in the biographies of young people he wrote in the 1850s and 60s, and in the guidelines he gave Rectors of the homes (*ospizi*) and boarding schools (*collegi*) in the 1860s and 70s.⁵

Indeed, when compared to such a rich and variegated experience the contents and references of what he wrote in 1877, other than being an expression of certain principles, seem rather thin. The preventive system was seen in exclusively pedagogical terms and in relation to an all-embracing institution such as a home or boarding establishment.⁶ Instead, considering all of Don Bosco’s experiences together, and his reflection on them, this pedagogical dimension of the system translates into many notably different methodological versions which correspond to the variety of practical initiatives and institutions they arose from and were shaped by: oratory, groups, popular culture, working-boys home, seminary, boarding school, community of religious and educators.

And beyond the educational dimension, in all these various methodological configurations there is one fundamental one which precedes it and also supports it. This is its charitable, social, political nature. We see evidence of this early on in what he did and how he spoke or wrote; we see it even more urgently expressed in his words and writings in his final decade, 1877-1887: requests for financial aid from authorities and private bodies, his circulars regarding lotteries and building operations, the *Salesian Bulletin* which came into being in 1877 and in which he printed a letter to Cooperators at the beginning of each year; his sermons on charity, conferences, addresses. This aspect was strongly evident, alongside the educational one, already in the final years of the 18th century, which was confronting the ‘social question’, and in the first years of the new century, often in antithesis to solutions of socialist or anti-Christian inspiration. Through his multiple preventive activity on behalf of poor and abandoned youth who were both at risk and a danger to others, Don Bosco seemed to be the most effective individual in the Catholic camp and in moderate or conservative ecclesiastical and civil settings, for resolving a troubling problem of great concern. He set in motion a huge work of social restoration and “a providential work for modern times”.⁷

giovanile); Idem, *La prassi di don Bosco e il sistema preventivo. L'orizzonte storico*, in *Il Sistema Preventivo verso il Terzo Millennio*. Rome, Edizioni SDB 1985, pp. 165-177 *Gli operatori, gli educatori*.

⁵P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di don Bosco alle origini (1841-1862). Il cammino del «preventivo» nelle realtà e nei documenti*, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 14 (1995) 255-320.

⁶See the appropriate and persuasive comments of P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità* (Rome, LAS 1981), pp. 459-466 *Valori e limiti dell'opuscolo sul Sistema Preventivo*

⁷Cf P. Braido, «*Poveri e abbandonati, «pericolanti e pericolosi»: pedagogia, assistenza, socialità nell'«esperienza preventiva» di don Bosco*, in «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni

The various patterns which belong to the preventive system and especially its basic educational and social dimensions, constantly accompany Don Bosco as his experience and reflection developed. At any one time one of these might take precedence over the other. His writings mirror this too. We need a chronological presentation of his most concise and significant expressions, according to when they were formulated or in order of the events to which they refer. Here we have a vast production to draw from and many angles mirroring his ever-present preventive concern.⁸

None of these is connected with a fully-elaborated theoretical system. Casual circumstances at times intervene when we are trying to work out the order of things, but always related to the ongoing, unfaltering ideals which inspired him.

Personal and community tradition

Don Bosco soon formed clear ideas on what he wanted to do and how; his programmes and approaches. The corresponding structures and shape they took help provide detail on how all this activity expanded: so we need to look at concrete programmes of animation and leadership and their relevant documents: constitutions, regulations and their details, chapter and council acts, the many directives that grew out of meetings with individuals and communities, visits and inspections or which were entrusted to letters to individuals or circulars.

In the constant effort to regulate matters, guided by a patient willingness to adapt to changing circumstances he reveals outstanding qualities which might be missed by someone who overly insists on the mysterious or enigmatic dimension: his far above-average intelligence, which resulted in quality decisions, his depth of observation and grasp of the situation, his bent for organisation of a wide range of outstanding activities, the original nature of his discoveries, and the continuity in his activity.⁹

There is one very relevant feature of his activity as rule-giver and leader which we see in practice and in his writings, especially those selected for this book. It is the constant reference to the individuals on the ground, a sharing of life and work, listening, formal and informal consultation. As a consequence we find a gradual elaboration of experience, reflection expressed both in person, individually, in community and through the institutions. This interaction grew more intense as Don Bosco gradually drew some of his young students into his activity. He formed them according to his ideals, made a 'religious society' out of them and set them on the path of becoming co-actors with him in his educational and social activity. This way he almost inadvertently moved from teacher to disciple – in collectively constructed experiences. How otherwise could he have acted, spoken, written about the Rector as he did, or assistance, the preventive system, the educative 'family', study and work, piety, play and cheerfulness, without habitually discussing it all with rectors, assistants, teachers, instructors? They were immersed in

scolastiche», 2 Brescia, La Scuola 1996, pp. 183-236.

⁸Cf. P. Stella, *Gli scritti a stampa di S. Giovanni Bosco*, Rome, LAS 1977, 176 pp. Writings published after Don Bosco's death, so not contained in Peter Stella's work, will be indicated as we go along.

⁹Cf G. Moretti, *I santi nella loro scrittura. Esami grafologici*. Rome, Edizioni Paoline 1975, pp. 300-301.

the daily grind with him – and sometimes more than him, working for the young, with them, part of their successes and failures, problems, difficulties. It is natural that this absorption in action and reflection should grow with the expanding number and age of his collaborators and institutions and the consequent multiplication of meetings, debates, discussions and decisions agreed on at consultative and decision-making assemblies. And of course there were also just the daily conversations.¹⁰

As a consequence, material not immediately written by him but certainly desired by him or inspired in unity with a common experience, could be given legitimate place in this historical and living tradition. We include in this the letter dated 10 May 1884 and the circular on punishments, 29 January 1883. We could consider other documents similarly, transcripts or echoes of experiences such as the state of the Oratory in 1849, the discussion with Urban Rattazzi in 1854 and the dialogue with Francis Bodrato in 1864.

All this material would seem to have persuasive historical validity even if some items were ignored or remained unpublished or were handed on in bits and pieces over a long period of time. They are an expression of a collective, institutionalised tradition which guaranteed their survival and continuity at the level of fact and passed on the same inspiration, demands and sensitivities as other material that they originated from.

Convergent and dissimilar documents

From the first group of documents we have reproduced (1845-1862) at least two aspects emerge regarding Don Bosco's gradual awareness of his peculiar mission to the young and ordinary people: reviewers had begun to perceive certain germinal features of his educational style beginning to flourish in the oldest of these documents (1845, 1847); and the growing persuasion of those who were looking at all this activity with greater attention and interest – seeing relatively original ways of intervening, a 'system' which seemed both typical and new.¹¹ These initial developments reach a peak with the discussion with U. Rattazzi in April 1854. The contents of this seem a bit too refined, and we can almost

¹⁰Perhaps, though what we thought it reasonable to say of the two well-known letters in 1884, neither of them actually written or dictated by Don Bosco, could also be said of all this documentation to varying degrees. Beyond the problem “of the people immediately involved and unique direct testimonies as to the genesis of these documents, it is evident that both (letters) are a good synthesis of collective experience of Don Bosco's which grew over decades along with his collaborators and which he had rethought and formulated on various occasions. We see this in the critical apparatus of regarding sources in the critical edition. The letters come out of a living, consolidated tradition which they express and reformulate in original and trenchant terms. They are perfect and enrich it on a theoretical level. So they should be understood and interpreted in the context of an entire historical experience, which in turn becomes better illustrated and which makes up the ideal legacy shared by an educative community which recognises itself in Don Bosco and his style of life and activity” (P. Braido, *Luce intellettuale piena d'amore. Per il centenario di una «lettera pedagogica»*, in «Orientamenti Pedagogici» 31 (1984), pp. 1068.

¹¹It is worth bearing in mind that with the *Patente* of 31 March 1852 from the Archbishop of Turin, Luigi Fransoni exiled in Lyon, Don Bosco is appointed chief spiritual director of the three oratories in Turin: St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius and the Guardian Angel. This occurs between the *Cronichetta* by C. Danna (1849) and the discussion with Minister for Justice Rattazzi (1854).

certainly put this down to the fact that the text was first published in the *Salesian Bulletin* in November 1882. But it is completely plausible that when talking with a secular Minister about educational systems, instead of referring to his weekend oratory and the attached home for boys, Don Bosco might have preferred to propose extending his pedagogical experience to some of the penal establishments or institutions run by the State or even more broadly to the public schools and educational houses.

However, Don Bosco's educational system, before and more than being a reflection on things, is a lived experience, a 'narrated pedagogy' as we see in the 'Historical Outline', *Cenno storico* (1854) and the 'Historical Outlines', *Cenni storici* (1862) on the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. We can regard these two as the oldest and most significant formulation of his view of the youth problem and his own style of intervening, to which we can add the interesting pointers on the early oratory found in *La forza della buona educazione*, (The power of a good education, 1855)¹² and *Severino* (1868).¹³

On the contrary, aims content and method undergo varied emphasis in the biographies of Dominic Savio (1859), Michael Magone (1861), Francis Besucco (1864) and in Valentino (1866), all of which are allied in many respects.¹⁴ The discourse in fact is strictly connected with the life of a boarding school which is almost a minor seminary dealing with young aspirants to the ecclesiastical state.

Features very similar to these can evidently be found in the *Ricordi confidenziali ai direttori*, 'Confidential Memo to Rectors', which came out of a letter addressed to Fr Michael Rua, who in November 1863 was placed in charge of the boarding school or minor seminary at Mirabello Monferrato. But we also see a new element in these: the 'system' or style is not just a rule of life for institutional education; it becomes a way for 'religious' to live together (that is, the educators belong to a society of people consecrated by vow to the mission of education) and, beyond this, a typical way of relating to the broader civil and ecclesiastical world around them.

The discussion Don Bosco has with primary teacher Francis Bodrato at Mornese in Monferrato in October 1864 is not, *per se*, to do with his own institutions for young people but the more general educational setting. In fact the less 'systematic' and older discussion with Urban Rattazzi in 1854 (though not published as we said until 1882) limits itself to hinting at some general inspirations of religion and reason, and more indirectly still, love.

Instead the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales* has an entirely different formulation and importance. It is not an autobiography of Don Bosco nor even primarily the history of the Oratory but intentionally offers an ideal programme, an actual, refined and multi-dimensional model of 'educational assistance' for young people. It is written for the Salesians, who more directly see themselves as consecrated to the work of the oratory already prefigured in the dream at nine years of age and then en-fleshed in all the various

¹²Cf. J. Scheppens, «*La forza della buona educazione*». *Étude d'un écrit de don Bosco*, in *L'impegno dell'educare*, ed. J. M. Prellezio. Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 417-433.

¹³Cf. B. Decanq, «*Severino*». *Sstudio dell'opuscolo con particolare attenzione al «primo oratorio»*, in «*Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*» 11 (1992) 221-318.

¹⁴Cf. G. Bosco, *Valentino o la vocazione impedita*. Introduction and critical text ed. by Mathew Pilingathil, Rome LAS 1987.

kinds of presence amongst young people which circumstances suggested, “according to the needs of the times”.¹⁵

The 1877 pedagogical reflection of Don Bosco’s, then, was produced for an occasion but it is where the happy expression ‘preventive system’ appears for the first time. It goes along with promotional material, information, management in practice; put together with other norms, he would eventually describe it as “our rule”.

The *Preventive System in the Education of Youth* which he gave to the Minister for Internal Affairs, Francis Crispi, in February 1878 is more openly promotional and informative in nature. The contents are almost entirely new when compared to the 1877 version. Context, solutions, even the beneficiaries are new. They bear some resemblance to those he hypothesised in his discussion with Rattazzi in 1854.

The *Circular on Punishments* 1883 has a narrow focus and audience. In the 1877 document on the preventive system this topic was only just touched upon, almost as if he wanted it removed.

The *Letter of 10 May 1884* is of limited import both regarding its origins and its immediate results. Its horizons are the small world in Valdocco, Turin, and it does not mirror the system in its totality even though we find the central theme of educative love therein.

The final writings instead (1885-1886), the so-called *Spiritual Testament*, and the three letters to the Americas broaden the horizons, offer detail to and enrich what was already found in the *Ricordi confidenziali*. The preventive system becomes a global style of life and activity, spiritual and religious pedagogy, Salesian spirit. It is only an apparently closed circle, because at the practical level as well as the level of formulas and codification there are lots of silences and lacunae which other occasions could fill in. Probably neither the fluidity of the experiences nor personal inclinations and thinking (and precariousness of pedagogical and pastoral understanding) would have allowed Don Bosco to achieve the complete theory that he seems to be predicting in what he wrote initially about the preventive system. That was more rhetorical than realistic.

Criteria for reading

The different origins and quality of the writings, the heterogeneity of contexts and settings within Don Bosco’s overall field of activity necessarily imply particular attention for reading and interpretation.

As has already been emphasised we need to especially bear in mind the inevitable problem of the relationship between the writings and the works.¹⁶ Don Bosco is first of all a man of action, interested in resolving concrete problems and tirelessly seeking out

¹⁵Cf. G. Bosco, *Memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Introduction, notes and critical text, ed. Antonio da Silva Ferreira Rome, LAS 1991.

¹⁶In this light there has been lengthy discussion of the alternatives: Don Bosco as educator or pedagogue. Cf P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di don Bosco*. Turin, PAS 1955, pp. 25-30; more explicitly in the second edition (1964), pp. 59-73 (*L’«arte» educativa di don Bosco*) and in the introduction to S. G. Bosco, *Scritti sul sistema preventivo*. Brescia, La Scuola 1965, pp. XXXIV-XLIII (*Don Bosco artista dell’educazione*).

practical solutions. What he wrote responds to the need to intervene when faced with situations requiring persuasive and effective responses rather than speculative ones which follow a consistent line of thinking. They either go with or follow on from experience in order to describe it, guide it, prescribe or regulate it.

It follows that if awareness of his writings is essential for a full understanding of his complex activity, their reading and interpretation will be full of lacunae and also misinterpretations without the constant control of experience.¹⁷ Writings and works may be considered two inseparable dimensions of the practical vitality of Don Bosco, his collaborators and institutions where they interact and act. We cannot say that we will always get a fully consistent and unified result: theory does not always measure up to practice, and practice can sometimes seem more advanced or narrower than theory. And both can be notably conditioned by psychological, environmental and cultural factors.¹⁸ A second task of discernment and integration is required of the reader by the relatively fragmentary and occasional nature of the theoretical and policy-oriented writings of Don Bosco. Nowhere does one find an exhaustive and systematic exposition of his approach. They cannot be regarded as parts or chapters of a complete system. So they need to be read, mused upon, critically studied and interpreted not only in reference to his overall experience but in their mutual connection and in the context of everything he wrote.

In this essential task it could be useful to privilege, other than the collection you find here, at least a double series of writings which can be placed in the same historical, reflective and policy-oriented category: the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, which is fundamental and paradoxically perhaps Don Bosco's most intentional, theoretical and normative document;¹⁹ and the biographies of Dominic Savio (1859), Michael Magone (1861) and Francis Besucco (1864), along with the other three that are more or less treated as novels: *The Power of a Good Education* (1855), *Valentino or a Vocation Obstructed* (1866) and *Severino or The Adventures of a Young Man from the Alps* (1868).

Even with all this in hand, no complete and exhaustive system emerges, not then and even less so today. Besides, an objective understanding should bear a hierarchy of topics in mind, their number and quality, the intensity of developments, and especially the many eloquent silences. This is why we cannot ignore a broadly cultural contextualisation. This final criteria for reading cannot but choose to have as much information as we can find on Don Bosco, the history, mentality and the genesis, development, and even the material

¹⁷For broader motives and developments see the introduction to S. G. Bosco, *Scritti sul sistema preventivo*, pp. XI-LVII (*Significato e limiti della presenza del sistema preventivo di Don Bosco nei suoi scritti*) and the collection *San Juan Bosco, Obras fundamentales*, ed. J. Canals Pujol and A. Martinez Azcona. Madrid, BAC 1978, pp. XIII-XXXII (*Los escritores en la experiencia pedagógica de Don Bosco*).

¹⁸On this, which is key to an exact perception of the historical significance of Don Bosco, exposed to dangerous contrasts of reductionism and hyperbole, we propose some brief considerations on the topic of the presence of laity in the Church and society according to Don Bosco (praxis and ideas), extensible to his entire practical experience and reflection: cf. P. Braido, *Laicità e laici nel progetto operativo di don Bosco*, in *Laici nella famiglia salesiana*. Acts of the 12th Spirituality Seminar of the Salesian Family. ed. M. Cogliandro and A. Martinelli. Rome, 1986, pp. 32-34.

¹⁹We will present only the preface where he points out who it is written for, and why.

circumstances of his works. There is no lack of rigorously developed and well-founded historical contributions²⁰ nor of suggestions and ideas for research.²¹

Biographical summary

- 1815** (16 August) born at the Becchi in the municipality of Castelnuovo d'Asti.²²
- 1817** His father dies
- 1824** Fr Joseph Lacqua starts him off with reading and writing.
- 1827** (Easter) he is admitted to First Communion.
- 1829** (November) he continues study of Italian and Latin with Fr John Calosso (who dies on 21 November 1830).
- 1830** From January on he attends the local Castelnuovo primary school (Christmas 1830 – summer of 1831).
- 1831** From November he becomes a student at the public school of grammar, humanities and rhetoric in Chieri.
- 1835** He enters the seminary in Chieri where he begins study of philosophy and theology.
- 1841** 5 June, vigil of the Feast of the Holy Trinity, he is ordained priest in Turin.
- 1841** (November) he enters the Pastoral Institute in Turin for a practical study of moral theology and homiletics; at the same time he is involved in catechetics for boys in the city, and for immigrants.
- 1844** (October) he is chaplain in one of the institutes belonging to the Marchioness Barolo, and sets himself up at the Refuge.
- 1845** (May) – 1846 (March) the oratory has to move between St Peter in Chains to the Mills, Dora, the Moretta House and the Filippi field.
- 1846** In April the Oratory moves definitively to the Pinardi House in Valdocco and his mother comes to live there with him in November; evening school begins in winter where he teaches reading and writing, then drawing and arithmetic.
- 1847** The hospice, or boys home begins; the St Aloysius Oratory opens at Porta Nuova and the St Aloysius Sodality starts.
- 1848** (October) publication of *L'Amico della gioventù, giornale religioso, morale e politico*, 'The Friend of Youth, a religious, moral and political journal' (which would last only six months, then amalgamated with

²⁰Fundamental is research by P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I *Vita e opere*. Rome, LAS 1979; vol II *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità*. Ibidem 1981; Idem, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*. Ib. 1980.

²¹Cf. for example, P. Braido, *Il progetto operativo di Don Bosco e l'utopia della società cristiana*. Rome, LAS 1982 and *Luce intellettuale piena d'amore/... pp. 1063-1073, in particular pp. 1071-1073 (/Amore razionale e creativa)*.

²²Cf. F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)*. Turin, SEI 1996, XIX-1451 pp. Peter Braido.

- l'Istruttore del popolo*, 'The People's Instructor').
- 1849** He accepts the running of the Guardian Angel Oratory at Vanchiglia; he founds the Workers' Mutual Aid Society (with its own statutes in 1850).
- 1852** (31 March) Archbishop Fransoni appoints Don Bosco as the "Director and spiritual head" of the oratory of St Francis de Sales, to which the oratories of St Aloysius and the Guardian Angel are to be "joined and dependent".
- 1853** Publication of the *Lecture Cattoliche*, 'Catholic Readings', begins and he opens a modest boot-makers workshop.
- 1854** Book-binding workshop opened; Don Bosco proposes to two clerics (Rua is one) and two boys (Cagliero is one) that they form an apostolic association which is the seed that leads to the Salesian Society; first contacts with Minister Urban Rattazzi; Dominic Savio becomes a pupil at Valdocco (1842-1857).
- 1855** First year secondary level classes (*terza classe ginnasiale*) begin within the boarding section (up until this time students went out to private teachers).
- 1856** Carpentry and tailoring workshops are opened and the next two levels of secondary classes are added (*prima e seconda ginnasiale*); The Immaculate Conception Sodality is set up.
- 1857** The Blessed Sacrament Sodality and Altar Servers group are set up; also a youth Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society.
- 1858** Don Bosco goes to Rome for the first time to submit his plan for a religious society of men consecrated for boys, to Pope Pius IX; a first draft of the Constitutions is drawn up.
- 1859** Secondary classes are completed (five in all); the St Joseph's Sodality is set up; the Salesian Society comes into existence as a *de facto* private religious association.
- 1860** The first two lay Salesians ("Coadjutors") join the privately constituted religious Society.
- 1861** (31 December) the opening of a printing workshop is authorised.
- 1862** The metalwork workshop begins; first Salesians take religious vows (14 May).
- 1863** The first institute outside of Turin is opened at Mirabello Monferrato, under the direction of Fr Rua to whom Don Bosco writes a letter for this occasion which contains the early text of the *Ricordi confidenziali*, or *Confidential Reminders* (this institute would be transferred to Borgo S. Martino in 1870).
- 1864** The boarding school at Lanzo Torinese opens; *Decretum laudis* in favour of the Salesian Society.
- 1865** The *Biblioteca degli scrittori latini* (Series of Latin authors) project is set up: its first product in 1866 was "Selecta ex latinis scriptoribus in usum scholarum").
- 1868** The Church of Mary Help of Christians is consecrated.

- 1869** (19 February) pontifical approval of the Salesian Society (decree on 1 March); Cherasco institute opens; the first volume of the *Biblioteca della gioventù italiana* (Series of works for Italian youth) is published (in 1885 the 204th and final work would be published in this series).
- 1870** The boarding school for the Alassio municipality opens.
- 1871** The boarding school for the Varazze municipality opens, along with a school for young trade school students (*artigiani*) in Marassi (Genoa) which would transfer to Sampierdarena (Genoa) the following year.
- 1872** He accepts the running of a school for the nobility at Valsalice (Turin); Foundation of the religious women's Congregation under the title of Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
- 1874** The Constitutions of the Salesian Society are definitively approved by the Holy See.
- 1875** Don Bosco's work begins to spread to France and the South American continent (Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil etc) – educational institutions broadly speaking, schools, technical schools, social assistance to migrants, and missionary activity.
- 1876** Pontifical approval of the Salesian Cooperators Association.
- 1877** first General Chapter of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, followed by a further three while Don Bosco was still alive: 1880, 1883, 1886. In 1877 also the publication of his classic pages on the 'preventive system' and the *Regulations* (for schools, boarders and day students). In August he begins the *Salesian Bulletin*.
- 1880** Don Bosco agrees to build the Sacred Heart Church in Rome (which would be consecrated in May 1887).
- 1881** Salesians go to Spain (Utrera).
- 1883** Triumphant journey to Paris.
- 1884** Trip to Rome (his 19th) for problems connected with the building of the church of the Sacred Heart and with the consequent special juridical guarantees for his Religious Society.
- 1886** 8 April – 6 May: receives an outstanding welcome when he stays for a while at Barcelona, Spain.
- 1888** 31 January: Don Bosco dies.

Rome, 31 January 1997

1. The beginnings: fragments and documents (1845-1854)

Introduction

Between May and June 1863, following an inspection by school authorities of his secondary classes at Valdocco, Turin, and a discussion to clarify matters with Michele Amari (1806-1889) and with [those responsible for] Public Education from 1862-64, Don Bosco wrote to the Minister regarding some of his own books: "... I am telling you that amongst the various books printed under my name I would list the *Storia Sacra* (*Bible History*), *Storia Ecclesiastica* (*Church History*), and the *Storia d'Italia* (*History of Italy*). These three brief works were written under the eye of the Government and revised by them. I gave copies of each edition to all the authorities as soon as they had been printed. And since my purpose, which everyone can see in any chapter, was to instil moral thinking and to lead the young reader to consideration of the divine law which obliges every individual to observe human law, I received nothing but encouragement".²³

Don Bosco, a master of *captatio benevolentiae*, is pushing things a bit there. Amongst other things it is certain that his 'Histories', especially of the Bible and the Church, pursued religious aims above all and decidedly catechetical and apologetic ones at that.²⁴ Moral and civil aspects were included, naturally. An anonymous reviewer of his *Storia sacra* in *L'Educatore Primario*, (*The Primary Teacher*), also noted this when he described it as "really meticulous. Other than exhortation to virtue and abhorrence of vice running through every page, we see that man must really add work to the virtues".

In the second edition (1853) of this happy effort (it went to more than a hundred editions in Italian and several dozen reprints, along with many translations in foreign languages) we see a marked 'theological' attention to the history of salvation, "the providential aim of the Scriptures being that of keeping faith in the Messiah alive".²⁵

The inspiration to 'piety' is even more emphasised in the *Il giovane provveduto*, (*The Companion of Youth*), which explicitly sets out to be a book of prayer and a "Christian approach to life".²⁶

The 'theological' elements concerning the readiness of youthful age for moral and religious education are also found in the brief text taken from the *Piano di regolamento* (*Draft Regulations*) dated some time in 1854.

The same intentions are found in the *Storia d'Italia* which might really have been giving space to more secular items. Instead, "Don Bosco put episodes and personalities in his Histories rather than weaving a story of events, as he did similarly in some of his

²³ *Em* I 585.

²⁴ As for the *Storia Ecclesiastica*, P. Stella observes: "Don Bosco, while he sat down to write this History, did not have educated lay people or Churchmen around him but public school boys, or boarders or seminarians or young working boys eager to learn something at Night school... Don Bosco... did not choose passages on the relationships between Popes and Emperors or about heretics battling more orthodox Catholics, but edifying episodes, depictions of saints, miracles and virtuous deeds that studded the Church's story, showed its 'progress' (his own term) and 'how it grew and was preserved in the midst of so many difficulties'. More than Loriguet (and Lhomond on whom Loriguet drew), Don Bosco asked himself which saints flourished in the Church, which charitable works were promoted..." (P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, p. 230).

²⁵ Cf. N. Cerrato, *La catechesi di Don Bosco nella sua storia sacra*. Rome, LAS 199, pp. 71-80.

²⁶ *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de' Suoi Doveri degli esercizi di cristiana pietà*. . . Turin, Paravia and Co. 1847, OE II 185-532.

principal models. The plain, clear storytelling that Don Bosco was well-trained in after some decades of practice was really appropriate for the intelligence of those for whom he was writing. These are pages by an educator who tells stories. Although we might well be concerned about the truth and basis of what he is presenting, his dominant concern is to teach, present the facts which offer more possibilities for morality and usefulness for teaching trying, like Parravicini, to get moral teaching out of his exposition of facts, avoid political discussions (which we find in other books of the kind, especially of Ghibelline origin), stress the religious sense of history instead, as he had learned to do when putting together his bible and church histories: revealing, that is, how God governs human deeds, how good and evil are rewarded in this life too, how Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the head, the judge, the one who recompenses the good".²⁷

There is a faithful and gradually maturing echo of this in the news items and notes that appear in the *Letture di famiglie* by L. Valerio in 1846 and, in 1849, the two Catholic newspapers, *L'Armonia* and *Il Conciliatore Torinese*, encouraged by the ecclesiastics Guglielmo Audisio and Lorenzo Gastaldi respectively, and in the pedagogical journal *Giornale della Società d'istruzione e d'educazione*, in a regular column by C. Danna. It is a significant clue that Don Bosco's early work is seen as being very close to other instances of moral and civil uplifting of the popular stratum of society and of a planned, generalised basic education which journals of the kind were vigorously fostering.²⁸

The prefaces of Don Bosco's books are taken from the following editions:

Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole utile per ogni ceto di persone dedicata all'Onorat.mo Signore F. ervé de la Croix, provinciale dei Fratelli D.I.D.S.C. Compilata dal sacerdote B.G. Turin, tip. Speirani e Ferrero 1845, pp. 7-12-OE I 165-170.

Storia sacra per uso delle scuole utile ad ogni stato di persone arricchita di analoghe incisioni compilata dal sacerdote Giovanni Bosco. Turin, dai tipografi-editori Speirani e Ferrero 1847, pp. 5-8-OE III 5-8.

Storia sacra per uso delle scuole utile ad ogni stato di persone arricchita di analoghe incisioni compilata dal sacerdote Giovanni Bosco. Turin, tipografi-editori Speirani e Ferrero 1847, pp. 5-8-OE III 3-6

Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de suoi doveri degli esercizi di cristiana pietà. . . Turin, tip. Paravia 1847, pp. 5-8-OE III 185-188.

La storia sacra d'Italia raccontata alla gioventù da' suoi primi abitatori sino ai nostri giorni corredata da una Carta Geografica d'Italia dal sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Torino, tip. Paravia 1855, pp. 3-5-OE VII 3-5.

We can add further bibliographic material for anyone wanting to read and interpret the prefaces included in this book in relation to the works from which they have been taken.

P. Braido, *Stili di educazione popolare cristiana alle soglie del 1848*, in *Pedagogia fra tradizione e innovazione*. Milan, Vita e Pensiero 1979, pp. 383-404.

²⁷P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, pp. 231.232. This way of looking at things fits into a broader historical and theological perspective.. Cf P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, chap. IV, *Storia e salvezza*, p. 59-100.

²⁸Cf. A. Gambaro, *Movimento pedagogico piemontese nella prima metà del secolo XIX*, in «Salesianum» 12 (1950) 215-228.

A. Caviglia (ed.), *Opere e scritti editi e inediti di «don Bosco»*:

Vol I, Part I *Storia sacra*. Turin, SEI 1929. Introductory note: *La «Storia sacra» e la «Storia ecclesiastica» nell'idea e negli scritti di Don Bosco*, pp. VII-LI

Vol I, Part II *Storia ecclesiastica*. Turin, SEI 1929. Preliminary note: *Gli originali superstiti degli scritti di Don Bosco sulla storia ecclesiastica*, pp. VII-XXIV and pp. 5-8.

Vol III *La storia d'Italia*. Turin, SEI 1935. Introductory word: *La storia d'Italia capolavoro di Don Bosco*, pp. IX-CVI.²⁹

N. Cerrato, *La catechesi di Don Bosco nella sua storia sacra*. Rome, LAS, 1979.

P. Stella, *Valori spirituali nel «Giovane provveduto» di San Giovanni Bosco*, Rome, 1960.

The educational intent of Don Bosco's first most important books, "useful for all kinds (or status) of people", but in first instance for young people, is explicitly added in as part of "social prevention". This is highlighted by Don Bosco himself and by an admirer and friend, Canon Ottavio Moreno, who was emotionally and professionally involved in the problem of abandoned youth.

This first set of documents concludes with the report, which is not easy to situate, of a "pedagogical conversation" between Don Bosco and Minister Urban Rattazzi in 1854. But it was written up long after the event. Certain concepts, especially the formulation of terms like 'preventive system' and 'repressive system' seem premature for 1854. Don Bosco, very faithful to the use of pithy, well-chosen phrases would not have just left these in abeyance for some twenty three years. They simply betray the familiar style of the compiler, editor, Fr Bonetti, in what he wrote in 1877. All the rest however could have been said at any point, especially in conversation with a Minister for Justice involved in reforming the legal scene and the penal code, as indicated further on.

The text provides a good bridge between the documents of the first and second edition of the collected anthology, representing – in reference to difficult boys and those in prison – a summary of both aspects of preventive, educational, social activity in the first and third of these.

²⁹Regarding A. Caviglia's work we need to bear in mind some comments by P. Stella: "It is clear that the *Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole* (1845) ought not be compared with the *Storia ecclesiastica* by Fleury nor with similar histories by Bercastel, Rohrbacher, Döllinger or Salzano's Corso. Cf. *Bibliografia delle opere riconosciute o citate come fonte o modello per la «Storia d'Italia» di Don Bosco*, in Caviglia, *Discorso introduttivo*. P, C-CVI. Unfortunately there are lacunae, inaccuracies and contradictions. Works by the Jesuit Loriquet and others are presented and confused under the heading of anonymous works published by Marietti. These were written about Rollin and manipulated according to Sommervogel by Jesuits Acacio Aracinelli and Paolo Beorchia (*Biblioth. Del la Comp de Jésus*, I, cl. 1317); there is no mention of the *Serie di biografie contemporanee per L.C.* Turin, De-Agostini 1853, 2 vol, source of a profile of Pellico and Manzoni, from whom Caviglia sought in vain for a model (op. cit p. 579). Giannetto's edition, which DB used is certainly not the Turin edition of 1838 (Caviglia, op. cit p. CII), but most probably the one from Livorno, reprinted many times. As for Lamé-Fleury, what DB said is closer to Piuccio's translation than Mellini's or Galeffi's. For Bérault-Bercastel, DB did not use the Venice edition of 1793-1805 nor the Florence one of 1842-46 but the Turin edition of 1831-1835... And as for the *Storia ecclesiastica by Don Bosco*, Fr Caviglia provided no research into the sources". (P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, p. 230, text and no. 7).

Expressions and echoes of Don Bosco's activity

Texts

1. From the *Storia ecclesiastica* (1845)

Preface

Having dedicated myself for some years to the education of youth, and eager as I am to offer them knowledge which would be most useful for them, something I am capable of doing, I did some research on a brief Bible history mostly and part Church history, which would be appropriate for them.

I read books on the Old and New Testaments which are already very good to put in the hands of the young, and I was very satisfied, but once it came to Church history nothing satisfied me.³⁰

I found many, but they are either too long or they focus too much on secular history. Some you might call polemic dissertations on the pomp and circumstance of the Church, while others have been translated from foreign languages and fall under the heading of partial, rather than universal histories. Then there was something I could not read without feeling indignant about it: it seems that some writers are embarrassed to speak of the Roman Pontiffs and some of the enlightening facts that directly regard the Church.³¹

Moved therefore by necessity and with encouragement from many zealous and authoritative people, I got down to compiling the current compendium of Church History.³² I have read everything written in our languages that I could, and some in foreign lan-

³⁰“At first news of a new course on Bible History, someone will say that this is a useless effort given the broad range of writers and editions around that can satisfy individuals of any kind. I thought as much myself, but once I took a closer look I was soon disabused of this idea” – *Storia sacra* (1847), preface, p. 5. - “I do not intend here to review all the Bibles that come to us translated from foreign languages. I only mean to deal with digests useful to young people, reduced versions printed aside from the original. And since there are many of them I limit myself to noting the best of them: the bible history by Schmid entitled, *Racconti cavati dalla Sacra Scrittura*, and the *Storia Sacra ad uso delle case di educazione*, printed by Marietti, 1847. A bible history for schools, it seems to me, must rigorously demonstrate three qualities: 1 truth 2 morals 3 reserve. . . These three fundamentals are lacking in the histories we are talking about – *Avvertenza intorno all'uso da farsi nelle scuole delle Storie sacre tradotte da lingue straniere*” – [A. Caviglia]. *Opere e scritti editi e inediti di «Don Bosco»* I, 1, pp. 17-18.

³¹“The Church. . . is the congregation of everyone who professes the faith, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, and who are governed by a Supreme Head who is his Vicar on earth” – *Storia ecclesiastica*, p. 14. - “Thus Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. . . He deputed St Peter to govern his Church and from this point Church history begins” – *Storia ecclesiastica*, p. 206. - “It is One, because true Catholics. . . all depend on the one head who is the Roman Pontiff, who as a universal father rules and governs the entire Catholic family. . . the Roman Pontiff, as father of a huge family, guided the past and will guide the future for all good believers who are his children, on the path of truth, till the end of time”. – *Il giovane provveduto* (1851, p. 324 – *Fondamenti della cattolica religione*).

³²“It is obvious that the *Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole* (1845) should not be compared with Fleury's *Storia ecclesiastica* or Salzano's Corso. Don Bosco. . . has at hand and in view the brief works by Jean-Nicolas Loricquet (1767-1845), translated into Italian and published by Marietti. These too bore the title “ad uso della gioventù”. Where he adds or substitutes, Don Bosco in general does this from Bercastel” – P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica* I, p. 230.

guages, and pulled sentiments and expressions out of them of a more Italian kind, simple enough for youngsters to understand.

Facts that are only secular or civil or dry or of less interest I have either queried or left out altogether, or merely hinted at. Those which seemed more sympathetic or moving I have dealt with in more detail so that not only the intellect may be instructed but the heart may be moved, to great spiritual benefit.

For me there is nothing more necessary for whoever was born into and grew up in the bosom of the Catholic religion than to go back to a more pleasing time, that of history which points out the beginnings and progress of this religion and makes it clear just how it was propagated and preserved amidst so many difficulties.³³

So the more important aspects of this history can be more easily understood I have divided it into periods and everything is expressed in dialogue form. I did all this with the advice of prudent individuals.

May Heaven bless this small effort whose aim is for the greater glory of God and to facilitate a better knowledge of this history which, after Bible history, is the most recommendable of all, and the kind reader who picks it up to benefit from be likewise blessed by Heaven.

Useful books ³⁴

Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole, utile per ogni ceto di persone, dedicata all'onoratissimo sig. F. Ervé de la Croix provinciale dei fratelli D.I.D.S.C. Compilata dal sacerdote B.G. Torino, Tip. Speirani e Ferrero 1845.

A new and very useful book aimed at the education of children has come out in recent days, a *Church History*. Its author is a learned and good priest who, out of modesty, has not put his name to it. He notes with regret that in the abundance of books on Church history there was a lack of an elementary one which took account of the birth, growth and finally the marvellous development of the Church of Jesus Christ and determined to fill this gap by writing one of his own. It leaves aside the political and the polemical and anything that does not closely touch on religion, but it includes the main things.

He is convinced of the great educational principle that the mind needs enlightenment in order for the heart to be good and so his entire history hinges upon this focus. Therefore he hints at some things and remains silent about others which are so widely known that they do not belong in a compendium like this. Not only do we not criticise him for this but instead we praise him for being savvy and of good judgement. Some small defects you will find, but what human work is free from such? The sentences are straightforward and simple, the language quite clear despite occasional forced eloquence. Overall it is moving and attractive. This valuable little work comes from the Speirano and Ferrero press; it is economical despite having engravings and a very attractive typeface.

Fr (Prof.) Ramello³⁵

³³“The history of the Church is nothing but a narration of facts that were adverse or favourable to the Church since its foundation up to our own times” – *Storia ecclesiastica*, p. 13 cf. pp. 387-388.

³⁴*L'Educatore Primario*, a Journal of educational and elementary instruction 1 (1845) No. 34, 10 December, pp. 575

³⁵Giuseppe Luigi Ramello, priest, born in Bra 1820 and died in Turin 1861, school inspector (primary)

2. The beginning of the 'oratory' at Valdocco, Turin (1846)³⁶

A letter to the Marquis Michael Benso di Cavour³⁷

Your Excellency,

The role which Your Excellency plays in everything to do with the public good, both civil and moral, leads me to hope that you will welcome some information concerning our catechism program. Since its purpose is the good of young people, you yourself have shown favour and support for it on a number of occasions.

This catechism program began three years ago in the Church of St Francis of Assisi and, since the Lord blesses his own work, young people attended in greater number than the place could accommodate. Then in 1844, for reasons of employment, I established myself at the *Pia Opera del Rifugio* [the charitable work named after Our Lady of Refuge, or more simply known just as 'The Refuge'] and these good young people continued coming there for religious instruction. It was precisely at that time that Rev. (Dr) Borelli and Rev. Fr Pacchiotti and myself presented a petition to the Archbishop, who then authorised us to convert our room into an Oratory where we could teach catechism, hear confessions, celebrate Mass for the above-mentioned youngsters.

But since their number grew and they could no longer fit in there, we put the issue to our illustrious City authorities and they authorised us to relocate our catechism classes to St Martin's Chapel at the City Mills. Lots of youngsters turned up there; at times more than two hundred and fifty of them.

But the City authorities asked us to relocate our catechism program elsewhere, come January, without offering us a reason. This was a serious dilemma for us, since to have to abandon the good work we had begun seemed such a pity. Only his Excellency, Count Collegno, after speaking with you, gave us the courage to continue.

During the winter we carried on using our own room and some other rooms we rented. Finally, this week we negotiated a site with Mr Pinardi. We agreed on the sum of two hundred and eighty francs for a large room which we can use for the Oratory plus another two rooms with some adjacent land. This place seems convenient to us, because it is very close to The Refuge and also because it is far from any Church but close to some homes. It remains for you to indicate that this is acceptable for the neighbourhood and the wider community.

in Susa and promoter of many evening schools in the city and around Pinerolo. He was a teacher of Method at Voghera and was also a grammar teacher in Don Bosco's schools at the Oratory from 1857-1858: cf. «L'Educatore. Giornale di educazione ed istruzione» 4 (1848) March, pp. 173-178; «Giornale della Società d'istruzione e d'educazione» 1 (1849), p. 120 and 2 (1850), p. 476.

³⁶G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note*, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 66-68

³⁷Don Bosco went to speak personally with Marquis Michael Benso di Cavour, the Vicar of the City, concerning the transferral of the Oratory to the Pinardi house on the outskirts of Valdocco, in the Borgo Dora. Michele Benso, Marquis of Cavour (1781-1850), father of Gustavo and Camillo, was a member of the Turin city leadership (a syndic, effectively) from 1819 and from 1883 one of its mayors. In 1853 he was appointed Vicar of the City (or the Police) a position he held until 1848. The text of the letter was published by G. Bracco in his essay *Don Bosco e le istituzioni, in Torino e don Bosco*, first part ed. By G. Bracco (Turin, Turin City Historical Archives 1989), pp. 126-128.

The purpose of this catechism program is to gather young people on weekends and holy days who, left to their own devices, would not attend any church for instruction. We do this by encouraging them to be good through our words, promises, gifts and the like. Our teaching is limited simply to this: 1. Love for work, 2. Frequenting the holy Sacraments, 3. Respect for all their superiors, 4. Flight from bad companions.

These principles which we make every effort to inculcate in the hearts of the young have produced marvellous results. In the space of three years more than twenty have embraced the religious state, six are studying Latin so they can undertake an ecclesiastical career, many others who now have better sentiments go to their respective parishes. This is noteworthy given the quality of these boys, most of them between ten and sixteen years of age, without any religious or educational background and most of them prey to vice and at risk of being cause for public complaint or being placed in a house of correction.

You are good-hearted and love whatever can redound to the public good, civil and moral. Hence we ask you to protect our efforts which, as can be well seen, have no shadow of material gain in mind but only gaining souls for the Lord.

The costs involved in finding and setting up the place indicated have been considerable. Count Collegno, gratefully mentioned above, has offered to help us and gave us permission to put our case to Your Excellency. He indicated he would then explain the matter to you in detail. Whenever you should wish to speak with me and my colleagues, we are ready at the slightest indication. It is our most eager wish.

And in asking you to look kindly on the liberty I have taken, I wish you everything that is good from the Lord and regard it as the greatest honour that I can express my esteem and profound respect.

Your Excellency's most humble and obliged servant.

Fr John Bosco

Spiritual Director at the Refuge.
Turin, 13 March 1846.

Reply

I have spoken with his Excellency the Archbishop, and with Count Colegno saying that there is no doubt that a catechism program is of advantage and that I will gladly speak with Fr Bosco on Monday 30th at the Office at 2 p.m.

28 March

Benso di Cavour.³⁸

³⁸The tone of this answer and the positive results of the meeting justify some doubt as to the full objectivity of what Don Bosco writes in the *Cenno storici* (see further on).

3. From “*Letture di famiglia*” (1846)³⁹

Schools and Sunday amusements for the poor: Letter to the editor of the *Letture*

I write these few lines in haste to notify you, good Sir, how already to some extent your fine opinion piece (published in no. 21) regarding the gathering up and instruction of many of Turin’s ragamuffins has been happening since the beginning of this year thanks to a small group of young priests.⁴⁰

They have rented two small houses with an adjacent garden area. One of these homes is not very far from the Marchioness Barolo’s Refuge, near Porta Palazzo and the other is located near the Po and, if I am not mistaken, in the new suburb of Vanchiglia.

A large number of the real ragamuffins and mischievous youngsters in Turin come to these two homes on Sundays and holy days and it is simply amazing to see how cheerful they are and how they love to go there. Their behaviour is exemplary and modest.

And what is so good about what they do, these young vendors of matches, lottery tickets etc., etc., apprentices, shop hands, serving lads, or from every kind of trade or work? Here is what they do or at least what is so kindly done for them.

First of all these zealous priests offer them some brief religious instruction, they sing psalms or hymns, then they have some classes, are taught how to behave properly and then finally they have lots of things to play games with (in the Po one they also do gymnastics), and sometimes they are also given something to eat.

³⁹ «*Letture di famiglia*. Giornale settimanale di educazione morale, civile e religiosa» 5 (1846), No. 25, 20 June, p. 196 (*Annali dell’Italia beneficenza LXVIII*). The *Letture di famiglia* rose out of the ashes of the *Letture popolari*, begun in 1837 and suppressed by Lazzari on 27 March 1841. It came out weekly, published by Pomba, with the idea of offering information, proposals and projects useful for the less educated classes in order to raise them up both morally and civilly; the pedagogical contents, aimed at a broader organisation of popular education, were often worthy of note, with contributions from V. Troya, C. Bon-Comagni, I. Petitti, G. F. Baruffi, etc. On the title page of each instalment was the motto: “Ignorance is the greatest and worst poverty”, and then a double series of key words defining the journal’s thinking: “Religion, Association, Education, Morality – Instruction, Work, Social security, Charitable work”. It too would eventually be suppressed by decree on 27 May 1847 following an article considered offensive to the Jesuits and written by a certain lawyer Paolo Alda. Cf. F. Lemmi, *Censura e giornali negli stati sardi al tempo di Carlo Alberto*. Turin, Società Subalpina Editrice 1943, pp. 35-36. Count C. Solaro della Margherita makes negative reference to this in his Memorandum storico-politico, chap XI, num. XIII (Turin, Speirani and Tortone 1851, pp. 281-282). Founder and director of the *Letture popolari* and the *Letture di famiglia* was Lorenzo Valerio (Turin 1810-Messina 1865), a businessman, journalist and politician. He was Director of a silk manufacturing business but left Piedmont in 1831 because of its liberal thinking. He made a long journey through France, Germany, Hungary, Russia. Returning home in 1835 he took up the management of a silk factory at Agliè Canavese where he founded a children’s nursery along Aporti’s lines, the first in Piedmont. When the Statute was proclaimed, in 1848 he became one of the leaders of the democratic left, managing first the *La Concordia* and then *Il Progresso* and *Il Diritto*. He also sat in the subalpine parliament as deputy. He was fiercely opposed to Cavour but in 1860 accepted an appointment from him as royal commissioner at Marche. A Senator of the Kingdom in 1862, he was appointed Prefect of Messina in 1865, dying a few months later.

⁴⁰The priests, working autonomously in their respective areas included Don Bosco and the chaplains at The Refuge, Dr John Borel (1801-1873) and Fr Sebastian Pacchiotti (1806-1884), and Fr John Cocchi (1813-1896), assistant priest at the Church of the Annunciation. He had opened an oratory in Vanchiglia in 1840.

No need for me to say much more but you, good Sir, would do well to find out about this new philanthropic and charitable institution all due to the zeal of Turin's clergy. And when you are willing to write about it in your excellent journal, (may it last forever, along with its editors), I really hope you strongly recommend that similar homes open in various parts of the city. . .

NOTE

We will check the facts you offer in your letter, which we regret was unsigned but for which we willingly take responsibility. Later the *Letture* will speak at length of the new institution which brings such honour on the clergy of Turin.⁴¹

The Editors.

4. From *The Companion of Youth* (1847)

For Young People

There are two main tricks which the devil uses to tempt young people away from virtue. The first is to get them to think that serving the Lord consists in a sad life far from any enjoyment and pleasure.⁴² It is not so, my dear young people. I want to teach you a method⁴³ of Christian living which will make you happy and content, pointing out to you what real pleasures and enjoyments are so you can say with the Prophet David: let us serve the Lord in holy cheerfulness: *servite Domino in laetitia*. This is the purpose of this little book, to serve the Lord and always remain cheerful.⁴⁴

The other trick is the hope of a long life where you can easily convert in old age or at the point of death. Be careful, my children; many have been deceived in this manner. Who can be certain of growing old? We cannot expect death to await our convenience at old age since life and death are in the Lord's hands and he may do as he pleases. If God should grant you a long life, listen to what he tells you: a young man according to his way – even when he is old he will not depart from it. *Adolescens iuxta viam sumam*

⁴¹The «Letture» spoke no more about it. The journal was suppressed by the authorities in May 1847.

⁴²«But (some say) if we start serving the Lord now we become sad. This is not true. The one who serves the devil becomes sad. . . Who was more pleasant and jovial than St Aloysius Gonzaga? Who was more pleasant and cheerful than St Philip Neri? But they constantly practised all kinds of virtue. So courage, my dear young people, start practising virtue now and I assure you your heart will always be happy and content, and you will know how pleasant it is to serve the Lord» – *Il giovane provveduto*, p. 13. – Cf. Certain tricks that the devil uses to trick young people, *ibid*, pp. 28-29.

⁴³«method». A habitual way of doing things, acting or behaving in a determined instance. . . according to S. Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. X, Turin, UTET 1978, p. 277.

⁴⁴«Although he was so focused on things of the spirit, you would never see him with clouded face or sad but always happy, always content, and with his pleasant way of speaking he made everyone he spoke with happy. He used often say that he liked the words of the Prophet David: Serve the Lord in gladness: Serve the Lord in holy cheerfulness. He liked to talk about history, poetry, the difficulties of Latin or Italian, but humbly, amiably enough such that while offering his opinion he always deferred to others». – [G. Bosco], *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo*. . . Turin, tip. Speirani e Ferrero 1844, pp. 23-24. – «What often aroused particular wonder in me was to see how committed he was not only to eliminating any behaviour unbecoming to a cleric, but how he acted with such an attractive promptness, grace, and cheerfulness» - P. Giordano, *Cenni istruttivi di perfezione proposti ai giovani nella vita edificante di Giuseppe Burzio*. Turin, tip. Artisti tipografi 1846, p. 138 [Testimony of Don Bosco's].

etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea. This means to say that if we lead a good life when we are young we will be good when we are old, we will have a good death which will be the beginning of eternal happiness. Contrariwise, if vice takes hold of us when we are young, in most cases it will continue to do so until we die. That is too much of a deadly down payment for an unhappy eternity. So that such a misfortune will not happen to you I am offering a scheme of life, brief and easy enough, which will enable you to be the consolation of your parents, a glory to your country, good citizens on earth and one day blessed inhabitants of heaven.⁴⁵

This little book is in three parts. In the first part you will find what you must do and what you must avoid to live as good Christians. In the second there is a collection of devout practices. In the third part you will find the Office of the Blessed Virgin with the main Evening Prayers throughout the year. Some hymns are added.

My dear young people, I love you with all my heart;⁴⁶ it is enough for you to be young for me to love you very much. You will certainly find good books written by people who are much more learned and virtuous than I am, but I assure you that you would be hard put to find someone who loves you more than I do in Jesus Christ or who cares more about your true happiness than I do. May the Lord be always with you and grant that by practising these few suggestions you can save your souls and so give more glory to God, the only reason for which this book has been written.

May you have a happy life and may the Lord be with you.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,

Fr John Bosco

5. From the *Bible History* (1847)

Preface

On first hearing of a new course in Bible History, some will say this effort is of little value given the broad range of editions and authors that can already satisfy people of all kinds. I thought the same, but once I began to examine them, I was disabused of this opinion. So, apart from the fact that many of these Histories are too long or too short, I can just say that some, for their high-flown ideas or language detract from the nice and simple and popular nature of the holy Scriptures while others almost entirely omit the chronology of events making it hard for the reader to determine if what he is reading concerns the creation of the world or the coming of the Messiah. And in all of them I find certain ways of saying things that are likely to give rise to less pure ideas in the fickle and tender minds of the young.

⁴⁵“The Lord lets you know that if you lead a good life as a young man, you will be that way for the rest of your life, which will be crowned with glory and happiness. On the contrary whoever leads a bad life as a young man will too easily stay that way until death, and it will inevitably lead you to hell. Therefore if you see old men given to drunkenness, gambling, blasphemy, you can mostly say that these vices began when they were young: *adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea.* Prov. 22ⁿ - *Il giovane provveduto*, p. 12.

⁴⁶I love you with all my heart – *Il giovane provveduto* (1863 ff).

So I set about writing a course in Bible History. It contains all the most important information about the sacred books without danger of revealing the less appropriate ideas and you could give it to any young person and say 'Take and read'. With a view to succeeding in this I told any number of young people of various levels all the different biblical facts noting carefully what impression the stories had on them and what results they produced.⁴⁷

This helped me to know what to leave out or what to treat in more detail. I had many digests of Bible Histories with me and I drew on them for whatever things I felt convenient, enlarging on some that I found clearly and properly explained.⁴⁸

As for the chronology, I relied on P. Calmet,⁴⁹ except for some small variations which are demanded by modern critics.

For every page I had one principle in mind: enlighten the mind to make the heart good and (as one gifted teacher put it)⁵⁰ to popularise knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures as much as possible, since it is the foundation of our holy Religion, while keeping to dogma and its proofs. It is then easier to pass from the stories of Holy Scripture to the teaching of morals and religion.⁵¹ No other kind of teaching is as important and as useful as this.

⁴⁷“The facts. . . then that seemed more tractable and moving I gave more details about so that not only might the intellect be instructed but the heart might also be moved to its spiritual benefit” – *Storia ecclesiastica*, preface, p. 10. – “He is convinced of the great educational principle that the mind needs enlightenment in order for the heart to be good and so his entire history revolves around this focus.” – G. Ramello, review of *Storia ecclesiastica*, in «L'Educatore Primario» 1 (1845) N. 34, 10 Dec. p. 576.

⁴⁸“His models for the *Storia sacra per uso delle scuole* (1847) would not be so much Tirino or Calmet or Martini (which he had with him, however) but the small books by Loriguet, and especially *Storia del popolo ebreo compendiata dal prof. Francesco Soave C.R.S. Ad uso delle scuole d'Italia*, and the *Storia Sacra* by Fr Cipriano Rattazzi, who imitates the excellent *Storia del Vecchio e Nuovo testamento ossia della Bibbia Sacra con riflessioni morali*, by Le Maître de Sacy, or Royaumont, published by another printer friend of Don Bosco's, Giambattista Paravia” – P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, p. 231.

⁴⁹P. Calmet Antoine, Dom Augustin, Benedictine (1672-1757), one of the most fruitful and esteemed exegetes of the 18th century, author of *Commento letterale* on the Old and New Testaments in 23 volumes (1707ff), amongst other works, and a *Dizionario storico, critico, cronologico, geografico e letterale della Bibbia* (1719) and a *Storia sacra dell'Antico e del Nuovo testamento* (1718). In the *Dizionario* we find a classic *Table chronologique générale de l'Histoire de la Bible*. – “Given that I had read Calmet, *Storia dell'Antico e Nuovo testamento*. . .” – MO 110.

⁵⁰Fr Feccia in the *Educatore Primario*, editorial. Agostino Feccia, priest, born at Biella in 1803, died in Turin in 1876. He was a prolific author of Italian language textbooks and founder and editor of *L'Educatore Primario. Giornale d'educazione ed istruzione elementare (1845-1846)*, then *L'Educatore. Giornale di educazione ed istruzione (1847-1848)*. In the second version the magazine was also aimed at teachers and came out in two monthly installments of 32 pages each. The pedagogical and didactic topics were systematically developed, so that – as the editors wrote – a year's collection can be “almost a theoretical and practical course in Pedagogy and Method”. The magazine's plan for 1848 foresaw the division of material into the following five sections: 1. General Method and Pedagogy. 2. Special method and practical exercises. 3. News and documents on public education 4. Bibliography, announcements and reviews of the better books on education and teaching. 5. Various, stories and poetry for children.

⁵¹“It is not untimely then that children get to know the main events of this history that is also the history of mankind. You add that nothing else could be more useful and we responded to the first two observations: since I would like it to be considered as the essential tool for learning the teachings

Since we know however from wiser teachers⁵² that Bible History should be taught using the aid of illustrations related to the facts, I have sought to include some engravings concerning the more important facts.⁵³

This History is divided into periods; these in turn are divided into chapters written in dialogue form; this approach, in my view is easier because any kind of story can be understood and remembered by the easily distracted youngster.⁵⁴

6. Bibliography⁵⁵

Letter: From a school teacher regarding the *Bible History for use in schools*, written by Don Bosco

Dear Friend and Colleague,

In your letter of 31 December 1847 you asked me to express my feelings regarding Don Bosco's *Bible History*, which you would like to introduce into your school. Although it is not a heavy book, after having read it carefully I judge it to be like a good friend. I do not know the priest apart from the good that I hear he does through his sacred ministry and for his various valuable writings. He spends his time completely with young people and explained the Bible to them in its entirety during Sunday sessions, noting the impression that this made on the tender minds of his listeners. Then he went back to his desk to adjust, expand, think about what might not suit his purpose and succeeded in producing a digest of the Bible that I would call truly a work of value.

Other than the encouragement to virtue and the abhorrence of vice that runs through

of religion, because I believe that it does more than a little damage to religious belief to explore it as a tradition without life, as a series of unconnected dogmas, abstractions that do not have any corresponding reality; while Bible History implicitly contains dogmas and the proofs and also at times explicitly. This way one can more easily and gradually pass to religion and morals. Whoever realises how necessary it is for truth to be presented in its light, life and reality knows at the same time that no other teaching can be more useful" - Vincenzo Garelli, *Dell'insegnamento della storia col mezzo di tavole*, in «L'Educatore Primario» 1 (1845) N. 24, 30 Aug., p. 406.

⁵²V. Varelli [=Garelli] *Educat. Prim.* Vol 1, p. 406. Vincenzo Garelli, born in Mondovì in 1818 and died 1879, a lover of philosophical and pedagogical studies and professor of Method at Mondovì, Genoa and Turin. From 1859 he was a school inspector in Genoa and Turin and was particularly good to Don Bosco and his works.

⁵³“Coming then to Method, here are the rules that Aporti prescribes: 'Bible history needs to be taught to children with the aid of illustrations which represent the facts they refer to...'". This approach has great advantages, makes the teaching more gradual, involves and guides the imagination of the children, educating it to the good and the beautiful. So we warmly recommend this collection of tables to those in charge of kindergartens and nursery schools and to better-off families who can adorn the walls of the rooms they normally live in" - V. Garelli, *Dell'insegnamento della storia col mezzo di tavole*, pp. 406-407. - Cf. Ferrante Aporti, *All'onorevole Commissione degli asili infantili di Torino*, and *Manifesto da Gallo Gallina pittore storico* - «L'Educatore Primario» 1 (1845) N. 13, 10 May, pp. 207-208.

⁵⁴“Briefer outlines have their proper place in today's circumstances that not only our times and habits entrust to them but also the requirements of science; because they have the task of breaking knowledge down and giving it out in small doses or as we say today, popularising it" - Fr Agostino Fecia, *Introduzione* to N. 1 of the «Educatore Primario» 1 (1845), 10 Jan. p. 1.

⁵⁵«L'Educatore. Giornale di educazione ed istruzione» 4 (1848) Sept., pp. 542-543.

every page, one sees that man really has to make work part of virtue. So for example Noah stand out for leaving the Ark and then beginning to cultivate the earth. Abraham is a peaceful, charitable and obedient man. Isaac works tirelessly to support himself and his family. Jacob's sons look after the sheep. Ruth gathers corn in the field. David visits his brothers. Habakkuk brings dinner to the workers in the countryside. And so, as he reads the reader becomes convinced that he was born to work, respect all authority, hate vice and corruption and love virtue. The language is in popular but clear Italian and it is in dialogue form so that the youngster immediately understands what he is reading. It is illustrated with engravings which arouse the curiosity of the youngsters and the facts thus illustrated help them remember. So I would say that you will do very well to introduce this book into your school, as I have already done. My students compete with one another to get hold of it and read it eagerly. They are happy to give it to others and talk about it, a clear sign that they understand it.

You mentioned Can. Schmid's *History*, but however good this one might be it can hardly be considered a Bible History. I think you might recall that last autumn Professor Danna said that Bible History must be first divided into periods and these into chapters in dialogue form. This is all missing in Schmid. I also see that this writer talks about many things that you do not find in the sacred text, as I will show you when we have our first discussion. And what it most lacks is a sense of chronology without which the reader is not sure whether he is closer to the creation of the world or the coming of the Messiah. And finally, Schmid only has some parts of the Bible, which he has written extensively about; this is not appropriate to the brevity that primary school teachers want in education of the young.

All these inconveniences are missing from the Bible History I am proposing to you. I can heap the same praise on it published in the newspapers about a Bible History addressed to the young, where the writer says: "The sentences are straightforward and simple, the language quite clear despite occasional forced eloquence. Overall it is moving and attractive". This excellent little book has been published by Speirani and Ferrero. Although it has many illustrations it is relatively economical.

Please pass on these thoughts of mine to our friends and give it your consideration,
Hoping that we remain friends always,
2 February 1848
Yours affectionately, Fr M.G.⁵⁶

7. From the *Bible History* (1853)

Preface

Undertaking a new course on Bible History might certainly seem to seem to be a useless effort given that there are already many such that can already satisfy people of all kinds. I thought the same, but once I began to examine the ones that everyone reads, I was

⁵⁶The priest might be Michele Garelli from Monrega, brother of Vincent who, like him, had always worked as a teacher in primary schools. Born 4 October 1806, he was ordained in 1830. He died at Mondovì 12 April 1867.

disabused of this opinion. So, apart from the fact that many of these Histories are too long or too short, I can just say that some, for their high-flown ideas or language detract from the nice and simple and popular nature of the Holy Scriptures while others almost entirely omit the chronology of events making it hard for the unpractised reader to determine what period he is reading about, whether it is closer to the creation of the world or the coming of the Messiah. And in almost all of them, including those written for the young, I find certain ways of saying things that are likely to give rise to less pure ideas in the fickle and tender minds of the young.

These things made me decide to write a course in Bible History. It contains all the most important information about the Scriptures and you could give it to any youngsters without fear of arousing dangerous or less appropriate ideas. With a view to succeeding in this I told any number of young people of various levels all the different biblical facts noting carefully what impression the stories had on them and what results they produced.

This helped me to know what to leave out, just hint at, or what to treat in more detail. I had many digests of bible histories with me and I drew on them for whatever things I felt convenient.

As for the chronology, I relied on Fr Calmet, except for some small variations which are demanded by modern critics.

For every page I had one principle in mind: enlighten the mind to make the heart good and (as one gifted teacher put it)⁵⁷ to popularise knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures as much as possible.

The providential purpose of the Scriptures is to keep alive faith in the Messiah promised by God after Adam's fall. Above all the Old Testament history is a continuous preparation for that most important event, so I wanted to especially note the promises and prophecies regarding the future Redeemer.

Following wiser teachers⁵⁸ who recommend that Bible History should be taught using the aid of illustrations related to the facts they refer to, I have sought to include some engravings concerning the more important facts.

This History is divided into periods; these in turn are divided into chapters which are then broken down into progressive numbers indicating the topic in each part of the chapter. Experience suggested this to be the easiest for a story to be understood and remembered by the youngster. Experience also suggested that boys often run aground on the long names of places and towns mentioned in the Scriptures, since these names can no longer be found on maps today. So in this second edition I set out to compile a small dictionary where the ancient names are compared with the modern ones. This means that it is easy to recognise the ancient names on any map.

⁵⁷Fr Feccia in the *Educatore Primario*, editorial.

⁵⁸V.F. Aporti *Educat. Prim*, vol. 1, p. 406. Ferrante Aporti, priest, born in San Martino dell'Argine, Mantova, 1791, died in Turin in 1858. He was the founder of the first Italian nursery school towards the end of 1828. He was teacher of biblical exegesis and Church history at the seminary at Cremona, and ran a course in Method in Turin in the summer of 1844. He ran into trouble with the Austrian government in 1848 and was exiled in the sub-alpine capital. He became a senator of the Kingdom and president of the University Council and the permanent Commission for secondary schools. He knew Don Bosco and attended some demonstrations of night classes that Don Bosco was promoting

Bible History study is excellent in itself and has no need of further recommendation, given that Bible History is the most ancient of all histories, the most certain, since it has God as its author. It is the most precious of all because it contains the Divine Will shown to men. It is the most useful because it contains and proves the truths of our Holy Religion⁵⁹. Since no other study is as important as this there must be no other dearer or more precious for whoever truly loves his religion. If any of my efforts can be helpful to someone, may it give glory to God which is the only reason for which I have undertaken this task.

8. From *L'Armonia* (1849)⁶⁰

The Oratory of St Francis de Sales

In the poorest of the suburbs of this metropolis, inhabited almost exclusively by workers who earn a living from what they can produce in their daily labour and who are often reduced to abject poverty following illness or unemployment, there arose, some years ago, one of those works of charity of which the Catholic spirit is an inexhaustible source.

A zealous priest, intent on the good of souls, has devoted himself entirely to the pious task of rescuing a great number of children from vice, laziness and ignorance. These children live around the district and because their parents are very poor or just don't care, these youngsters grow up unfortunately bereft of religious and civil culture. This priest, called Don Bosco, rented out a few small houses and a small plot and then went to live there, where he has opened a small Oratory under the name of the great Bishop of Geneva, St Francis de Sales. He has sought to attract poor youngsters there who were previously neglected and left forlorn. In that simple and modest Oratory he has given them the only education that is necessary above all other disciplines: religious instruction. He gets them used to doing their duty, worshipping God, living together amicably and sociably. Next to the Oratory there are schools where these youngsters are taught the first elements of reading and arithmetic and there is also a fenced in area where they play harmless and innocent games on Sundays and Holy Days, during recreation time.

⁵⁹“It would be very useful to tell children the most outstanding facts of Bible history, especially the ones which help prove the divine nature of our Religion, or which can serve as example or encouragement to virtue. It would also be helpful to assist their little minds with pictures representing those facts” – F. Aporti, *Manuale di educazione ed ammaestramento per le scuole infantili*. Cremona, Manini, 1833, p. 32.

⁶⁰«L'Armonia della religione con la civiltà» 2 (1849), no. 40, Monday 2 April, pp. 158. The *L'Armonia*, a Catholic paper, was moderately conciliatory at the beginning (4 July 1848) and towards the end of 1849 then, under the editorship of Dr. Giacomo Margotti, San Remo, became a symbol and voice of intransigence. This leaning towards intransigence was even more characteristic of *L'Unità Cattolica*. Which Margotti founded in 1863, directing it until his death in 1887. *L'Armonia* came into being through the initiative of Dr Guglielmi Audisio, the bishop of Ivrea, Luigi Moreno, the brother of Canon Ottavio, a friend of Don Bosco's, and the Marquises Birago di Vische and Gustavo di Cavour. At first a weekly, then three times a week and in 1855 a daily, it was always favourable to Don Bosco's initiatives. This grew even more in the case of *L'Unità Cattolica*. Volume XXXVIII of the *Opere edite* of Don Bosco contains copious articles and news items regarding the educator from Turin and his work, published by these two papers in two different periods, 1849-1863, 1864-1888 (respectively, pp. 9-63, 64-286).

Thus they pass their time in honest cheerfulness which makes them healthy in body and mind, especially at such a tender age. Amidst them you find Don Bosco always. He is constantly their teacher, companion, exemplar and friend.

On Sundays and Holy Days you would usually find four hundred youngsters in this place which, given its ordinary appearance from the outside, is not noticed by many people, but the good that is being done there is immense. All these boys, most of whom were growing up in vice and ignorance, are on the road to virtue and work. In fact their zealous tutor and friend is fully intent on finding some honest tradesman who will take them in and apprentice them to his trade. If Don Bosco recommends a boy who is a pupil of his, the shop owners know it is a guarantee of good behaviour that makes it easier for them to take him in and start him off in their trade. So from this seedbed of upright workers a good number of teenagers come out each year who are able to provide for themselves, and who maintain, we have reason to hope, the habits of good behaviour they learned at a tender age throughout their lives.

We can further add that amongst these boys there are often some who, through the death or ruin of their parents, have fallen into total neglect so some of these are also taken in and given a place in the rooms in the little houses indicated above. There they are supported while they are out learning their trade until such time as they can keep themselves by the sweat of their own brow.

Two members of the Committee for Peter's Pence went to this charitable hostel on the Feast of the Annunciation. They were invited there by the deserving founder of said Oratory. He was receiving a donation that these good and exemplary youngsters had wanted to give for his work. Aware of the sorrowful events in Rome, and that the common Father of the faithful had been exiled, they spontaneously decided to offer their contribution to increase the tribute of filial veneration from Turin to be given to the Vicar of Christ.

When the members of the committee entered these modest precincts where such good work is being done, they were welcomed by the director with exquisite courtesy. Then they were very much moved when they were surrounded by the boys who celebrated the occasion by giving them a beautiful wreath.

Two of the boys soon approached and while one stood up on a platform and presented the thirty five francs they had collected from amongst themselves the other gave a simple but heartfelt speech which we will now offer a quick summary of for our readers.

The young orator said: "If our voices could ever reach the ears of the Holy Father, we would all run and gather at his feet and say with one voice: 'Most Holy Father, this is the luckiest moment of our lives. We are a bunch of young boys who consider it our greatest fortune to be able to give a sign of our veneration to Your Holiness. We tell you that we are Your most affectionate children, and despite all the evil efforts to alienate us from the unity of the Catholic Church we declare that we recognise the Successor of St Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in Your Holiness. Anyone not united to this belief is destined for eternal loss. We declare that we are intimately convinced that nobody can belong to the true Church if separated from You. We are ready to spend everything we have, even our very lives, to show that we are worthy of such a kind father".

The delegates felt such a wave of emotion come over them on hearing these affectionate

words spoken so intelligently and expressively by a young lad who carries buckets of mortar and bricks for the bricklayers but nonetheless was capable of such noble and generous thoughts. They responded to the boys with a few words saying that they gloried in having them as members of something that is a sincere profession of the Catholic Faith which exalts human beings of any status or circumstance wherever they are found. They then asked the young orator for a copy of his speech and this copy was in turn given to the Apostolic Nuncio who indicated that he was especially pleased and said he would send it to the Cardinal Pro-Secretary of State for the Supreme Pontiff as an example of the most commendable sentiments if one looks at the position and earlier situation of those who were manifesting them.

For our part we believed it a duty to go to some length in bringing to public knowledge an event we believe to be worthy of the highest commendation.

9. From *Il Conciliatore Torinese* (1849)⁶¹

The Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Turin

If someone leaving the city via Porta di Susa were to have in mind wandering along the avenue that runs off to the right and, skirting the military quarters and the walls of the hospitals of St Louis and the Pazzarelli, were to descend along the pleasant decline as far as the large building that lies ahead, then turning left, take the delightful lane hugging the walls of the various buildings there, he would shortly come across a wooden gate. Entering it he would find himself in a fairly large enclosure. There is a long, low building there, decent enough but more rustic than something of the town, running north, and dividing the enclosure into two parts. One part is larger and has been worked into something of a garden. The other is narrower and has been left as is. The individual might think that the building is where the gardeners live; there are many people of the kind living in this area. But with a more attentive glance at the humble edifice and the various religious inscriptions that can be read there, at the small bell tower surmounted by a cross that rises above the roof, and at the notice: THIS IS THE LORD'S HOUSE written above the exit to the west, the person would not take long, though not without some surprise, to understand that here is a sacred Oratory.

His amazement would grow all the more as he asked himself why and by whom such a

⁶¹ «Il Conciliatore Torinese. Giornale religioso, politico, letterario» 2 (1849), no. 42, Saturday 7 April. «Il Conciliatore Torinese», first twice weekly then thrice weekly was founded by the initiative of the Turinese Canons Lorenzo renaldi (appointed bishop of Pinerolo in July 1848) and Lorenzo Gastaldi, who was its editor and manager. It came into being with the aim of “reconciling religion and civil life” and in its brief life of 15 months (15 July 1848-28 September 1849) held a political and ecclesiological line inspired by Gioberti and Rosmini. Amongst its collaborators were Benedetto Negri, Francesco Cavalleri, Pietro Baricco, P. G. Rossi who followed Gioberti and Lorenzo Gastaldi, Giuseppe Buroni, Carlo Gilardi (from the Institute of Charity), Paul Barone who followed Rosmini. Less able to be pigeon-holed are G. A. Bessone, Pier Giuseppe Berizzi, prof. G. Gerini. Cf. G. Tunnetti, Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883, vol I *Teologo, pubblicista, rosminiano, vescovo di Saluzzo 1815-1871*. Casale Monferrato, Edizioni Piemme 1983, pp. 57-88; F. Tranello, *Cattolicesimo conciliatorista. Religione e cultura nella tradizione rosminiana lombardo-piemontese (1825-1870)*, Milan, Marzorati 1970, pp. 168-175.

modest place had been consecrated to the practice of religion; the answer he would receive is that a humble priest with no other means than immense charity has been gathering some five to six hundred youngsters there every Sunday and Holy Day to teach them Christian virtues and gradually turn them into children of God and excellent citizens. This remarkable priest, filled with philanthropy which comes from no other source than the Catholic Faith, was heart-stricken seeing that on Sundays and Holy Days, hundreds upon hundreds of children left to their own devices were flocking into the squares, the streets, and the fields on the outskirts of the city instead of going to Church to learn how to become holy, squandering the whole day in dangerous pursuits, then were returning home even more dissolute, godless and unruly.

The sight of so many boys growing up in crass ignorance of what matters most to the human being, through the lamentable negligence of their families and masters, and exposed to all the corruption that comes from idleness and bad companions and example, so affected him that he decided to apply the remedy he knew best. So what did this new disciple of Philip Neri do? Moved by zeal and armed with patience that could handle any trial, clothed in humility and kindness which he knew would demand the best of him, he set about roaming through Turin on weekends. When he found groups of boys playing he would approach them and ask them to let him join their games, then later when he had befriended them somewhat, he would invite them to continue their games in a place he had that was better equipped for recreation than where they were at the moment.

It is not hard to imagine how much scorn his invitation received and how many rebuffs he had to suffer, but little by little his consistency and kindness triumphed wonderfully. The wildest children, the most reckless boys, won over by so much humility and meekness, allowed themselves to be led to this lowly enclosure that I have described. One part of the building had been turned into a modest but devout little chapel, and Sundays were divided up into innocent games and religious services. Once the first boys invited there had tasted the sweetness of piety and experienced the ineffable pleasure of a soul rescued from the abyss of corruption, or had been uplifted by the firm hope of eternal reward, became little apostles themselves, amongst their colleagues and companions in vice or dissipation. They promised their friends that they would find much better fun with Don Bosco (which is this excellent priest's name) than they would where and with whom they were now. News of the new oratory spread from mouth to mouth and soon an endless crowd of youngsters were flocking there. One can imagine how excited they were.

A swarm of bees buzzing around the hive while others inside the hive are quietly working away making honey – this is a true image of that enclosure on Sundays and Holy Days. Along the streets leading there you might meet a crowd of boys at any point singing and heading in that direction in high spirits as if it was a feast they were going to. Inside you would see children split up into groups for their games, some running around, others playing ball, others bocce, still others on a see-saw, or doing gymnastics, or playing 'pyramids'. Meanwhile in the chapel others would be learning catechism, or preparing for the sacraments and in the nearby rooms others would be learning to read or write, and some would be learning arithmetic, calligraphy, or how to sing. A number of priests would be keeping an eye on such a diverse mob of lively boys each with his own particular inclinations; they are doing their best for each one, offering thoughts,

affection, religious activities and being careful that at times set aside for prayer and common instruction they all stop their games and come together in the oratory.

Doubtless it is an unutterable pleasure to see the submissiveness with which all these boys with such bad past experiences obey the priests, the joy on their faces, the devotion with which they pray, go to the Sacraments, attend religious instruction which is also available during the week for who needs it, or take part in retreats for a number of days. It is a wonder to see the affection and gratitude these children have in their hearts for their benefactor, Don Bosco.

No father receives more signs of affection from his children, who hang on to him, everyone wanting to talk to him, kiss his hand. If they see him walking through the city they rush out of their workplace to see him. His word has a prodigious effect on their tender hearts as he teaches them, corrects them and guides them to do good, educates them to virtue to the point of wanting to be perfect. His humble abode is a refuge which is always open to any young lad who wants to escape the corrupt world, be freed from the clutches of guilt, receive advice or be helped in any honest intention.

Unable to take all the boys who come to him in this oratory, some months ago he opened another outside Porta Nuova and appointed some priests already formed in his school of charity. We hope it will bear no less fruit in terms of Christian behaviour. So hail, new Philip, hail remarkable priest! May your example find many imitators in every city. Let them open sacred enclosures to youngsters where piety is surrounded with honest recreation. Only this way can we heal one of the deepest plagues of civil society and the Church: the corruption of the young.

Gastaldi⁶²

10. From *Il Conciliatore Torinese* ⁶³

The Metric Decimal System made simple for use of artisans and country folk

The remarkable Fr John Bosco, evermore intent on doing good for the ordinary people, never ceases to act to their advantage with every measure that he knows best. Filled with

⁶²Lorenzo Gastaldi, first born son of Bartolomeo, and Margherita Volpato, was born in Turin on 8 March 1815. He completed his classical studies at the Carmel school. When he was 14 he took on the clerical habit and as an external student at the seminary, he also attended the university where he gained a diploma in Philosophy and then in liberal Arts (1831) then his Bachelors (1833), Licentiate (1835) and doctorate (1836) in theology. In 1838 he was co-opted for the college of theology at the faculty of theology at the university. He was ordained priest by Archbishop Fransoni on 23 September 1837. Meanwhile he had begun to follow the thinking of Rosmini, which he continued to strenuously and loyally defend until the end of his life. After a brief experience as editor and manager of *Il Conciliatore Torinese*, he became interested in religious life and joined the Institute of Charity (1851-1862), carrying out an intense missionary activity and as a teacher in England (1853-1862). He rejoined the diocesan clergy on his return and was made a Canon of the Holy Trinity in St Lawrence's Church in Turin where he was known for his results as a preacher at missions for the people, and retreats, and also for his religious writings. He was bishop of Saluzzo from 9 June 1867 until 27 October 1871. He was finally elevated to the Archbishopric in Turin (1871-1883) where he died suddenly on 25 March, Easter Sunday, 1883. Cf. G Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883*, 2 Vol. Casale Monferrato, edizioni Piemme 1983/1988.

⁶³«Il Conciliatore Torinese. Giornale religioso, politico, letterario» 2 (1849), no. 69, Saturday 9 June.

true philanthropy of the kind we call Christian charity he is not content with words but with deeds and can already demonstrate these in abundance to merit the affection and gratitude of his fellow citizens. Those who have the moral and civil progress of the people very much at heart and who seek to instruct them with the light of truth and form them to virtue, not corrupt them demoralise them, excite their passions and steal the only good thing they have such as simplicity of mind and heart and love for religion. . . these people should be invited to follow in the footsteps of Don Bosco. As this paper indicated on 6 April last, he has opened a school of religion and basic education, Christian and civil morality. He gives all of his time and energies and reserves nothing for himself seeking no other recompense than the benefit he can bring to his dear pupils and the consolation of working for the glory of God. Although he spends the entire day in a thousand different activities on behalf of youngsters who for whatsoever reason have need of him, teaching them catechism, administering the sacraments, showing them some trade and seeking an employer who will take them in, reconciling them with their parents, just the same he finds some hours to write books that can help them.

Now that we are approaching 1850 when by Royal Decree the metric system will be in universal use, he sees the great importance of the people getting to know this system as soon as possible, so he has written this small book to facilitate such knowledge. It is the book indicated above. This brief work seems to us to be well ordered and likely to achieve its purpose. He has taken an easy, clear, popular approach. The subject matter has been dealt with fully. All the weights and measures of the old system have been converted into the new so that with little effort even the less-educated person could accustom himself to the conversion. So we warmly recommend this work both for its excellence and for the author.

11. Don Bosco's Oratory as presented in a magazine for teachers and educators (1849)

Meeting of the Central Committee of the *Società d'Istruzione e d'educazione* ⁶⁴, 3 May 1849⁶⁵

... The order called next for proposals to similarly set up normal schools for teachers in the provinces. But the desire to indicate, so society could appreciate and know about them, all the private institutions run by generous people who without much fanfare and almost in the shade educate a great number of children of both genders, brought to light a handful of schools and practices mostly unknown, and the names of their well-deserving directors, almost all of whom belong to Turin's clergy. The meeting was moved to hear the details from the lips of various members recalling one or another of these. And it decided that it would make honourable mention of each of them in the society's magazine.

The first to be nominated was the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Carmel, the theologian of Porta who has for some time already set up a school for teachers. The second was Fr Francis [= *Giovanni*] Cocchi, assistant priest at the church of the Annunciation, who teaches girls in the school in the Parish when they can be free from work, which is after lunch. He runs a similar school for both genders in the St Philip's Oratory at Vanchiglia, every Sunday and holy day. Another worthy candidate was mentioned, Don Bosco who gathers almost 300 children in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, where he catechises them, teaches them and lets them play games, gymnastics.

The name of another similarly well-deserving priest from the provinces was mentioned at the meeting, Dr. Borelli from Castagnole. He has set up a similar school for instruction and exercise in his parish. The Vicar Forane of Busca was also mentioned, Dr. Vacchetta, who helped in the charitable work of the widow, Mrs Garro and where in the Autumn of 1835 he gathered poor children of both genders who had been orphaned and left without any means of support by the terrible Cholera outbreak. Others finished by mentioning another case in Turin in Dr Carpano, a priest who has set up a school for education

⁶⁴ «Giornale della Società d'Istruzione e d'educazione» I (1849) May, p. 240.

⁶⁵ The *Giornale della Società d'Istruzione e d'educazione* came out during 1849 as a continuation of *L'Educatore*, while the 'Società di istruzione e d'educazione' (already set up on 1 March) was taking shape. This society founded and ran "a journal that is a bond between committees and members wherever they are and is the public account of the Society for the country". Apart from the first year, which was necessarily irregular, the magazine gradually began to appear in monthly installments of 64 pages (in reality there were 8 in 1849, 12 in 1850, 13 in 1851 and 11 in 1852, of different dimensions). In the first three years the material was distributed across the following sections: 1. Critical scientific, literary studies, statistics related to education and teaching. 2. the Acts of the Society. 3. Official acts of the University (1851: Official Acts of Public Education). 4. Miscellaneous, bibliography and correspondence; in the fourth and final year: 1. History of the state and progress of university, secondary, primary and technical education. 2. Theoretical and practical works on the four branches of public education and especially primary. 3. Acts of the Society and committees. 4. Summary of official acts of public education. For 1853 the Society decided to split the magazine into two weekly periodicals: *L'Istituto*, edited by Prof. Domenico Berti, for primary and technical schools, and the *Rivista delle Università e dei Collegi* for secondary schools and universities. Cf. G. Corallo, *La Società d'Istruzione e d'Educazione e la sua attività*, in «Rassegna di pedagogia» 10 (1959) 70-87.

and various exercises at Porta Nuova. Professor Danna took charge of collecting all these details which will be then presented in a part of this magazine entitled *Cronichetta* (regular column).

***Cronichetta* by Casimiro Danna⁶⁶**

... While Racheli was spreading the spirit of education amongst classes who could send their children to school, another no less generous person was thinking of the children of people who were either so poor that they could not, or so brutalised by ignorance that they neglected to give the least glimmer of instruction, any love to their offspring, the 'last link in the social chain', who were out on the muddy street. I am talking of Don Bosco's Sunday school, a priest about whom I cannot speak without frankly feeling the deepest sense of veneration. Beyond Porta Susa, in the group of houses that everyone knows as Valdocco, he set up an oratory under the name of St Francis de Sales. It was not a random choice nor was it in vain. Because more than the title itself, he transfused the spirit of that zealous apostle into his institute, that clearly directed zeal that burned so fiercely in his heart. He has devoted himself to lessening the sorrows of poor people, ennobling their thinking. It is praise indeed to talk about what he did and does every day, demonstrating how our religion is a religion of civilisation. On weekends he gathers some 400-500 boys over eight years old in that enclosure, in order to remove from danger or dissipation and instruct them in the precepts of Christian morality. He does this by engaging them in pleasant and honest recreation after they have attended the ceremonies and exercises of religious piety. He is the presider and minister, teacher and preacher, father and brother, and carries out his priestly duties in the most edifying way. He also teaches them Bible and Church history, Catechism, the principles of arithmetic. He gives them practice in the metric decimal system and other things they do not know. He also teaches them to read and write.

All this is for moral and civil education. But he does not overlook physical education; he lets them do gymnastics in the closed-in playground that runs alongside the oratory. They grow up stronger in body playing on stilts or the see-saw, throwing discs or playing skittles. The bait with which he attracts this huge number of boys, apart from a medal as a prize, or a raffle or sometimes a bite to eat, is his calm and vigilant approach. He is constantly trying to propagate the light of truth and mutual affection amongst these young souls. When one thinks of the evil avoided, the vices he prevents, the virtues he sows, the good that results, it seems incredible that his work could find obstruction and disagreement. On whose part? On the part of people whose many defects we might forgive, except their ignorance. They are ignorant of the fact that to educate is a noble part of the evangelical ministry, and that they should indeed be thanking Don Bosco. Far from distracting these youngsters from religious practices, he is fully intent on instructing them in these, since abandoned as they are by their parents, they would never ever go to their parish or if they did, the catechists would have little good influence on them.

⁶⁶Casimiro Danna (1806-1884) from Mondovì like Garelli, author of school texts for Italian language and literature, but also an aficionado of pedagogy. He was regent of the Chair of Pedagogy at the University of Turin in 1845; in 1847 he took up the Chair of *Instituzioni di belle lettere*, while G. A. Rayneri was appointed to pedagogy.

The world sees the poverty of these poor wretches as a reflection of less precious souls and sometimes evangelical workers themselves give little thought to nurturing piety and precepts in this overcrowded city when its people turn up in rags. This is how the evil seeds of vice take root, and while the courts are handing out severe penalties for society's disorders, the evildoers are taking root in the city.

Don Bosco's institute has been running for seven years and Charles Albert has protected it with wisdom that goes beyond the merely Royal. He has recognised the immense use it is to public morality. Meanwhile the number of youngsters has grown so much that the oratory has divided into two. Another Oratory called St Aloysius has opened at Porta Nuova between the viale de' Platani and viale Valentino. This is directed by Fr Carpano, a pious, zealous and worthy collaborator of the man we are praising. The life, spirit and purpose of both oratories is the same. A third had already been set up in Vanchiglia thanks to the alert concern of the assistant priest, Fr Cocchis, but how sorry I am to say that for reasons unknown it is no longer running!

But what gives Don Bosco the most right to the citizens' gratitude is the hospice or home that he has offered in his oratory to the most needy and ragged children. When he knows of or encounters someone mired in the most squalid poverty he does not lose a moment; he brings him home, restores him, gets rid of his filthy clothes and gives him new ones, feeds him morning and evening until such time as the lad has found an employer and work where he can provide for the future, and where also he can find a more secure education of mind and heart. Some priests contribute to the many expenses incurred by this inestimable work. But most of it comes from the personal resources of this true minister of the One who is meek of heart and restores troubled spirits. What an imitable example he gives others who are accustomed to wealth! It is not always useful to earn money from a good piece of ground when in the right hands it could be an instrument of generous charity. Poverty can be stripped away as much by the wealth you do not have as by the wealth you in fact have.

12. To King Victor Emmanuel II⁶⁷

[Turin, 14 November 1849]

Your Royal Majesty,

Fr John Bosco, who lives in this Capital, humbly describes for Your Majesty how he wanted to provide for the needs of the most abandoned youngsters, and so began to gather them on Sundays and Holy Days in one or other place around the city, always with the consent of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. The Lord blessed this work and now it has been established at Valdocco between Porta Palazzo and Porta Susa as an Oratory under the title of St Francis de Sales. More than five hundred boys flock there,

⁶⁷G. Bosco, *Epistolario, Introduzione, testi critici e note*, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 89-91. Victor Emmanuel II (1820-1878) had come to the throne a few months earlier (23 March 1849), after the abdication of his father, Charles Albert (1798-1849), after the defeat at Novarra. Note the strong emphasis on the danger that abandoned youth pose for society. This is the concern of the oratories ("youngsters, a large number of them having been released from prison. . . cf. Above].

a large number of them having been released from prison or who are in danger of ending up there. The place indicated above then became too small for the great number who wanted to come, so in 1847 another Oratory, under the title of St Aloysius, was opened at Porta Nuova between the viale de' Platani and R. Valentino.

Given that in present times abandoned youth find themselves in greater need of both education and religion, the Vanchiglia Oratory run by Fr Cocchi, assistant priest at the church of the Annunciation which was closed for a year, has now been reopened under the title of the Guardian Angel.

In all three places using sermons, catechism lessons and school, we constantly nurture love for work, respect for authority and law according to the principles of our Holy Catholic Religion.

There are also Sunday schools for teaching the metric system, for those who can come. We also have a home with twenty five beds to provide for the most urgently in need of these boys. The usual number who attend these Oratories together amounts to around a thousand, for Sundays and Holy Days.

Up until now everything has gone ahead with the help of some charitable individuals and with the help of a good number of zealous priests and also lay people.

Now the supplicant, finding himself in charge of the three Oratories, is in difficulty, given that between the three places the rent costs two thousand four hundred francs, including expenses for maintaining the three chapels respectively, where we have all the sacred functions every Sunday and Holy Day, and then there is the difficulty of the other daily expenses, the result of the extreme poverty of some of the children, and despite all the efforts the supplicant has made he now finds himself in the tough position of not being able to continue.

He therefore begs Your Royal Majesty to give kind consideration to a work that has already provided and we hope will continue to provide for the well being of so many abandoned individuals. It is a work that already received charity from Your august father. The supplicant beseeches You to grant the charitable aid that Your father would look kindly upon.

I have the honour of remaining, Sir, Your Majesty's most humble and obedient subject,
Supplicant,
[Fr John Bosco]

[*Note*: the closing valediction above is merely an English official (royal) version for DB's "Che della grazia etc"].

13. Report of the Treasurer General, Ottavio Moreno, in Don Bosco's favour⁶⁸

Subject
Subsidy in favour of
Fr John Bosco for three Oratories

Turin, 6 December 1849

Most Honourable Sir,

It is a point about which I have no doubt, and the Minister would already know of the outstanding and active zeal which Fr John Bosco has shown for some years by instructing, gathering young abandoned or unruly boys who wander about the streets and lanes of the capital, doing what they want and as their whims suggest, with sad result. I am only confirmed in what I see and feel about these youngsters when I see them unfortunately arrested and taken off to prison.

Everything Don Bosco explains in the petition Your Lordship has passed on to me is absolutely true. So it is desirable that the Government become seriously involved in the current and future lot of these boys. This would be a great service rendered not only to the City of Turin, which is disgraced by their behaviour, but to many mothers and fathers of families, and society throughout Piedmont, because the example of the capital easily and effectively spreads out into the provinces where there is no lack, indeed they are on the increase, of unruly youth. It is a real torment and scandal for good people.

Don Bosco does what he can, but a poor priest does not have sufficient means for the most essential expenditure and trusts in Christian charity as well as that of government which is also very interested in guiding and ensuring the good behaviour of a class that is on the increase, homeless, without education, without restraint, seduced by anyone who offers money, a price paid for breaches of peace, yelling and whatever else.

Don Bosco, as he has told me, at least would like some help to pay rent for these places he occupies and which he uses to gather the boys and instruct them and also to feed a good number of famished boys at times. He has to pay rent for the three places, which amounts to two thousand four hundred lire. Then there is the maintenance of the three chapels which necessarily have to have sacred vessels, and a few bust at least decent furnishings.

If he has no help the aforesaid priest declares that he can no longer meet these expenses. And he is well aware that his benefactors can tire of their charity. He will find himself then at the same point that the deserving Fr Cocchis found himself when for lack of funds

⁶⁸The request by Don Bosco sent to Victor Emmanuel II was sent, as was usual practice, to the Grand Chancellor's office so that the official could ask the opinion of the person holding the position of the Royal Apostolic Treasurer General who was at the time Canon Ottavio Moreno. The Report, a favourable one, led the King to grant a subsidy of 400 lire, a rather conspicuous sum of money according to the monetary value of the day. Cf. A. Giraud, «*Sacra Real Maestà*»... in «*Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*» 13 (1994), pp. 302-303. Ottavio Moreno (1779-1852), from Savona, Canon of the Cathedral in Turin, Senator in 1849, was Treasurer General from 1836 until his death. We find him in the *Cenno storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, presiding at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the Church of St Francis de Sales on 20 July 1851.

he had to abandon a similar that he had been successfully managing for some years. He had to close because he had too many debts.

I would propose, then, that His Majesty might deign to provide, this time, a subsidy of four hundred lire to Fr Bosco and we can hope meanwhile that the Government will take to heart a serious situation growing daily and that could have the saddest consequences for the future.

I have the honour of returning the said petition to Your Lordship,

With all respect,

I am Your Lordship's most Devoted Servant,

Fr Moreno

14. To the Administrators of the *Mendicità Istruita* (Royal Institute for the Education of the Destitute)⁶⁹

Honourable Gentlemen,

In an effort to promote the social, religious and moral advancement of the most neglected young people, in 1841 Father John Bosco began by gathering several such young people in a place attached to the church of St Francis of Assisi. By dint of circumstance, their number was limited to seventy or eighty.

In 1844 the writer transferred to the Pious Work of the Refuge for reason of employment, but continued to gather these youngsters, to whom others were added until the number reached three hundred. Without a suitable place to come together, they met sometimes in one place sometimes in another in the city, always with the knowledge of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

In 1846 he succeeded in renting a place in Valdocco and the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was established there. The number of young people between the ages of 12 and 20 reached as high as six or seven hundred. Many of these youngsters had just been released from prison or were in danger of ending up there.

The Lord blessed this work and since the aforesaid Oratory had become too small, at the end of 1847 another was opened at Porta Nuova under the title of St Aloysius. In response to the ever more pressing need to educate and help neglected young people, in October 1849 the Oratory of the Guardian Angel was re-opened. Father Cocchi, assistant priest at the church of the Annunciation and a most zealous priest, had been forced to shut it down the previous year. The number of young people attending the three oratories considered together often reaches a thousand. By offering pleasant recreation and a few

⁶⁹G. Bosco, *Epistolario, Introduzione, testi critici e note*, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 96-98. The Royal Institute for the Education of the Destitute arose in Turin in 1743 as the initiative of a group of priests and lay people with a view to gathering up the poor of the city, instructing them in the catechism and helping them in their most urgent needs. Towards the end of the century it added the aim of helping the children of the poor find work and study instead of being left to idle and as vagabonds. This led to the setting up of the Schools of Charity, to teach trades. In the 1820s the Work entrusted schools for girls to the Sisters of St Joseph (April 1842) and schools for boys to the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1892). Cf. G. Chiosso, *La gioventù «povera e abbandonata» a Torino nell'Ottocento. Il caso degli allievi artigiani della Mendicità Istruita (1818-1861)*, in *L'impegno dell'educare*, ed., J. M. Prellezso. Rome. LAS 1991, pp. 375-402.

amusements, and with catechism, classes and singing, some of these boys improve in their temperament and begin to love work and their Religion. Every evening there are singing classes, and Sunday classes for those who can attend. Sometimes we have opened these up to the public and the people who have come have shown themselves to be completely satisfied.

We also have a Home capable of accommodating from twenty to thirty youngsters of the kind that find themselves in dire need, as is all too often the case.

Up to now the work has gone forward with the help of a number of charitable people, both priests and lay people. The priests who are committed to this work in a special way are: Fathers Borelli, Carpano, Vola, Ponte, Grassino, Murialdo, Giacomelli and Marengo.

The undersigned, finding himself in charge of the three oratories, and given the cost of the rent for the three places, which amounts to two thousand four hundred francs a year, as well as the cost of maintenance of the three chapels where we hold all the functions for Sundays and Holy Days, as well as expenses incurred for the essential and serious needs of some of the youngsters, the fear is that we cannot perhaps continue, since we need to go too often to people who have provided charitable help up until now.

The undersigned, having seen that the origins and purpose of the aforesaid Oratories is the same as the Institute for the Education of the Destitute, humbly invites the Honourable Gentlemen of administration to give kind consideration to what has been explained hereto, and by consider these Oratories as an appendix to the Institute, grant the subsidies that the Honourable Gentleman wisely judge appropriate. This way a work that has already provided and we hope will continue to provide for the spiritual as well as temporal well being of so many neglected individuals of human society can continue.

In the hope of a favourable response,

Fr John Bosco

15. Report of the Treasurer General Ottavio Moreno in favour of Frs Cocchi, Bosco and Dr. Saccarelli⁷⁰

Proposal for a subsidy
Royal Apostolic
Treasurer General

Honourable Minister,

There are four petitions which the Treasurer General has the honour of explaining to the Honourable Minister for Church Affairs, regarding his opinion as to whether they should be granted.

⁷⁰Canon Ottavio Moreno's positive opinion regarding Don Bosco relates to a report on a petition sent to Victor Emmanuel in July 1851, to obtain an extraordinary subsidy to build the church of St Francis de Sales. Don Bosco was given a subsidy of 10,000 lire "3 thousand to be paid immediately and the remainder little by little as the public purse allowed". Cf. A Giraudo, «*Sacra Real Maestà*»... , in «*Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*» 13 (1994), pp. 176, 296-297, 307-310. Dr Gaspare Saccarelli (1818-1864) had founded a similar oratory for poor girls in Borgo S. Donato, next to Borgo Dora where the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was. Its purpose was to catechise them and give them the opportunity of fulfilling their religious practices, and teach them to read and write and add up, as well as engaging them in 'honest recreation' (A Giraudo, «*Sacra Real Maestà*»... , pp. 303-304).

Three have been presented by very zealous priests who with extraordinary charity are involved in the recovery, instruction and education of poor girls and boys and older youth who are left to themselves. They wander the streets and the squares, are given to unruly behaviour and are caught up in all kinds of vice and turpitude. The subsidies that the Treasury can provide are certainly insufficient to support so much zealous effort, but it is important that the Government itself becomes involved and assists and fosters this with funds which it has in hand and which it can make available.

We are speaking of a generation that is growing, and growing in vice; a generation that is already numerous, unruly and insolent, open to any kind of inducement or trick or ill-omened outcry. Youngsters of this kind can be imprisoned... but what does this imprisonment do? What use is it? The writer, who visited the prisons for many years, knows what he is talking about.

Two of the priests began gathering up these boys who had been abandoned and left to sleep under the porticoes, or along alleys or in some doorway. Some responded to the voice calling them to shelter and bread; others followed the hand that led them to a place with a roof over their heads. This how the wonderful and truly priestly work of two priests, Cocchis and Bosco, began. I am happy to name them, however this communication speaks favourably of them.

Fr Cocchis is in a more confined area which he zealously cares for, in all charity and with good success. The Treasurer General does not hesitate to recommend, in the light of his petition, the renewal of his subsidy of 800 lire.

Fr John Bosco operates on a much vaster scale and is running three meeting places for youngsters under the label of religion and which he calls, as did St Philip Neri, Oratories. The principal of these is the one that he looks after in the Valdocco area of the capital, under the title of St Francis de Sales. We cannot even begin to say how useful this gathering that takes place every Sunday and Holy Day is; it grows ever more numerous and exemplary, to the point of sheer edification.

Good Father Bosco is always there presiding, helped by some of his priestly friends and confidants. They copy him in his zeal and charity. During the week he keeps some of the boys who are most in need of religious instruction, beginning with the first elements of the catechism. But he adds other things to this: calligraphy, arithmetic etc., with a view to finding them a tradesman or workshop so they can be apprenticed to a trade.

On Sundays or Holy Days the lads who he has found work for run excitedly and impatiently to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales and there they surround the loveable Don Bosco and show their gratitude and affection. After religious instruction and singing morning prayer, they have some gymnastics or play bocce, or some jousting (just the informal kind!), or do some marching, and lots of other games all played with much fun, harmony and in good tradition. You never hear a bad word or see an altercation; never insolent or shameless yelling. Everything instead is guided by the presence, respect, and love which this kindly priest inspires. Despite the fact that he has little, he does not hesitate to give bread to someone who is hungry, or a glass of watered down wine to someone whose thirst has grown during a very active game. The Treasurer General is writing all this because he is an eyewitness, an admirer and can see what great good must come from setting up Oratories of this kind if supported, encouraged and protected

by the Government.

Given the great success demonstrated by Father Bosco he would like now to build a church at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, capable of holding a good number of the boys who come there; a church, since the place where they hold religious functions at the moment is not a church, but a long and stuffy room where it is very difficult to carry on and stay there. Don Bosco's wish was supported by the good and effective will of pious and kind people including the master builder entrusted with the building. Calculation of costs has reached 25 thousand lire. The foundations are laid and work is proceeding. But through lack of funds and despite the good will of the master builder, the hardly begun construction may have to cease, much to the regret of the active and impatient (in charity) Don Bosco.

He trusts in the kindness of His Majesty, through the Treasury, but he is not ignorant of the limitations of the Treasury and the many things weighing upon it, so he will be happy with whatever subsidy will be possible.

The writer does not hide the fact that he believes this institution to be very useful, and recommends that when the Treasury is able to support all the costs of this building it should not hesitate to present it for His Majesty's Charity. While the adult generation wants to be careful about spending, it is up to governments to see that the growing generation is instructed, educated in religion and morality. The good or sad future of society lies with this decision and the practical execution of this principle. This is what the writer believes.

If then this excellent priest Father Bosco can be supported and encouraged in his religious and eminently socially-friendly activity, and in the hope that charitable people continue to assist this wonderful work, and hoping above all that Government will be convinced of the importance of supporting this high and enlightened principle, the Treasurer General proposes a subsidy of ten thousand lire to be allocated in portions, that is, 3 thousand lire immediately, and the rest over the following years at a time when the treasury is able to fulfil the allocation.

Following the example of Fathers Bosco and Cocchis, Dr Saccarelli, His Majesty's chaplain, has begun to gather poor girls in a house which he rented with his own resources in Borgo S. Donato (is it possible that there is no thought to building a parish church in a suburb without a church but with a population of more than twenty thousand souls?). Up until now it has been supported by donations from pious people but largely from his own funds.

The number of girls coming for instruction and education has grown and the well deserving Fr Saccarelli has indicated that he wants to build a small church which will very much help the girls to fulfil their religious duties and will help the residents of the suburb to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.

Noting the tone of the Minister for Church Affairs' bulletin, the writer believes that he is convinced of the importance and usefulness of such an establishment when the time comes for it to be built. It would have been appropriate for Dr. Saccarelli to have indicated the cost of the building, however, it is to be noted that construction has already begun and that they cannot proceed for lack of funds.

For the support and encouragement of the charitable institution in difficulties, the

Treasurer General proposes a subsidy of two thousand five hundred lire, hoping that the priest can then provide further information and that other people might want to help him in his good work.

Then finally there is the reminder from Count Ceppi in his role as President of the Commission set up by the Delegate Council for the City, to promote the various interests of the people of Borga Stura.

The Treasurer General wanted to bring all these proposals together in a single item of correspondence because all the questions concern matters which interest the people of Turin, however all of them can come to the attention of the Government for its consideration.

The Treasurer General submits these proposals for the attention of the Minister for Church Affairs and has the honour of returning the relevant documents of petition.

The Treasurer General
Fr Moreno

To the Minister Secretary
of State for Church Affairs and
Justice
Turin

16. Circular concerning a public lottery in favour of a work of social and religious welfare⁷¹

Turin, 20 December 1851

Your Lordship,

A modest charitable work was undertaken some ten years ago in a district of this City, under the title of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, directed solely to the intellectual and moral good of that portion of youth who through parental negligence, bad companions or lack of means, finds itself exposed to the constant risk of corruption. Some individuals keen on the proper education of the people regretfully noticed that there was a growing number of young people who were idle and ill-advised, living on what they can borrow or by fraud on street corners or in the squares. They weigh on society and are often instruments of all kinds of misdeeds. They also saw with great sadness that many who had spent some time at work, were going out on Sundays and Holy Days spending their time in gambling or drinking away the little they had earned during the week. Wanting to remedy an evil that can only have very sad consequences, they decided to open a house for Sunday gatherings, where everyone could be at ease in fulfilling his religious duties and also receive some instruction, some advice or guidance for living his life in an upright and Christian way.

⁷¹G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note.* ed., Francesco Motto, vol I (1815-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 139-141. The circular concerns the first of the big lotteries which Don Bosco thought up to support his work financially. Giuseppe Bracco dedicates significant pages to this in an essay entitled *Don Bosco e le istituzioni*, in vol I (*Saggi di Torino e Don Bosco* (Turin, *Archivio Storico della Città di Torino* 1989), pp. 130-133.

Therefore the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was set up with the charitable help of generous people who usually spend money on things to do with the public good. Items useful for celebrating religious functions and for giving the youngsters moral and civil education were made ready. Similarly for games equipment that would help develop their physical strength and provide honest recreation, in this way trying to make their stay in the place useful and pleasant.

It is difficult to explain how the youngsters took to the invitation extended without any real publicity; it was just of the kind that usually gets passed on amongst family members, to come to the Oratory every Sunday or Holy Day. But it gave encouragement to enlarge the enclosure and over time introduce the improvements that ingenious and prudent charity suggested. Then on Sundays and later on winter evenings classes began: reading, writing, elements of arithmetic and Italian, and a special opportunity for getting the youngsters familiar with the use of the measurements they felt they had most need of, given that many were working with trades.

The aim was to instill in them affection for the families, fraternal charity, respect for authority, gratitude to benefactors, love for work, and more than anything else instruct them in Catholic and moral teaching, lead them away from the road to wrongdoing, infuse in them the holy fear of God, and give them timely instruction on the observance of religious precepts. These are the things that for the last ten years zealous priests and lay people have worked hard and given most of their concern to. So while there are people who have worked laudably at spreading scientific knowledge or helping the arts progress, assisted industry and the education of better-off young people in boarding schools and senior high schools, in the modest Oratory of St Francis de Sales it has been mainly a case of religious and civil education for young people who also have the strength and will to be useful for themselves, their families and the country although they are less favoured by fortune.

However, recognising that the chapel was too small to accommodate the great number of boys, and not wanting to leave off halfway in such an effort that had begun so well, the promoters, full of confidence in the generosity of their fellow citizens, decided to put their hand to a bigger building better suited to the purpose and so ensure the lasting nature of such a useful educational institution. Putting aside any delay and overcoming any doubts, they courageously laid the foundations for the new Oratory. Donations, gifts, encouragement have not failed thus far and so much progress was made in the work that in a few short months the building has reached as far as the roof. But ordinary means are no longer enough to bring this building to completion, and it is necessary for the inexhaustible charity of the public to come to the aid of private charity. It is to this end that the undersigned promoters of this pious work turn to Your Lordship, asking your agreement to and proposing a way that has already been successfully employed by other well-deserving institutions and will certainly not fail for the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. The proposal is a lottery of items which the undersigned are thinking of undertaking to supplement the cost of completing the new chapel and which Your Lordship, we have no doubt, will agree to considering the excellence of the work it is to be directed to.

If Your Lordship could offer us any item of silk, or wool, metal, wood or some craft item or something by some charitable noblewoman it will all be gratefully accepted,

because when it comes to charity, any small help is a big one, and because even the small offerings of many when put together may be enough to complete the desired work. The undersigned trust in your Lordship's kindness, certain that the idea of agreeing to the proper education of abandoned youth could do no less than encourage you to give something. For the rest it is enough to remind you of the singular kindness that people of every kind and status have shown and promised to achieve the extension. Especially valuable has been the vote of the first legislative body of the State which after having taken things into kind consideration, appointed a commission to receive precise details, and once knowing them warmly recommended it to the King's Government. Also valuable has been the generous two year subsidy decreed by the unanimous vote of the Turin City Council. His and Her Majesties have shown extraordinary largesse, deigning to offer help, and venerable bishops and distinguished people pleased to recommend it to public charity have shown a special kindness.

The undersigned extend their anticipated thanks to Your Lordship for the courteous cooperation you will offer for the successful outcome of the proposed lottery, and we implore Heavens blessings upon you.

Your most obliging servants,
The Promoters.

17. Conversation with Urban Rattazzi (1854)

by Antonio Ferreira da Silva

Introduction: Don Bosco's Preventive System and young people with social

problems

History of the text

The history of the text that describes the first meeting between Minister Urban Rattazzi⁷² and Don Bosco begins in 1882 in two references in the *Salesian Bulletin*.⁷³ No original documents nor almost any indication have been found in reference to a visit of the kind in the Cronache (Notes) of various writers kept in the ASC.

During Don Bosco's Beatification process two witnesses spoke explicitly of the visit by Urban Rattazzi to the Oratory. Fr Giulio Barberis (1847-1927), who had known Don Bosco when he was only seven years old and had entered the Oratory in 1861, says: "Minister Urban Rattazzi was often witness to the good that Don Bosco was doing, given that he visited the Oratory and was even present for one of Don Bosco's sermons. With his own eyes he saw the change for good in boys whom he had known to be unruly. . ." (*Positio super introductione causae*, p. 300). Fr John Baptist Francesia (1838-1930; entered the Oratory on 22 June 1852) instead was certain that he had been in Valdocco on the day of Rattazzi's visit: "I was at that conference" (*Positio super introductione causae*, p. 204). But would he have seen and recognised the Minister? "It seems to me", he said in one of his Good Nights, "that I saw the man who was looking to speak with Don Bosco and that he said he was Urban Rattazzi, already very famous and a strong opponent of Count Cavour".⁷⁴

⁷²Urban Rattazzi was born in Alessandria in 1808 and died in Frosinone in 1873. He was a lawyer, member of the Subalpine parliament and on one occasion the Minister for Public Education, then twice President of the Council of Ministers for the Kingdom of Italy. There is a lot of discussion about him regarding the Roman question and Church-State relations, first in the Kingdom of Sardinia, then the Kingdom of Italy. He was Minister for Justice and Minister for the Interior in various Governments of the Kingdom of Sardinia and – after the unification of Italy – in the La Marmora ministry he carried out an intense activity aimed at reforming the judiciary, regulating admission to inheritance benefits for lawyers for the poor, modifying the code of penal procedure and especially modifying the penal code which was in force in the Kingdom of Sardinia. Amongst the many differences to be found between the penal code of 1839 and that of 1859, we could look at those regarding minors of twenty one years of age. The 1839 and the 1859 Codes are in agreement in asserting that a fourteen year old, acting without proper discretion would not be subject to punishment. If it was a case of serious crime, the magistrate or courts would order that the one charged be handed over to the family, who were obliged to educate him well and watch over his behaviour or otherwise be fined (1859). But for the rest there is considerable difference between the two Codes. The 1839 Code considered life imprisonment (a work penal colony) for a fourteen year old not handed over to the family. For young people over 14, until they turned 21, it was assumed they would be sent to prison, although with some reduction of term compared to adults. The 1859 Code, which carries Rattazzi's signature, said that all young people with social problems who were not handed over to the family would be placed in custody in a house of education and work, or be placed in a public work institution if the person charged was under 14. There was only a difference in name between custody and life sentence, if the intention was re-education. So there were serious problems of a pedagogical nature in preparing the regulations for custody spoken of in the 1859 Code. It seems however that imminent political events prevented Rattazzi from having the chance to carry forward his task of providing more appropriate treatment for young people with social problems.

⁷³Cf. BS 6 (1882) no. 10, Oct. pp. 166-172 and no. 11, Nov. pp. 179-182.

⁷⁴G. B. Francesia, *Buone notti autografe di D. G. B. Francesia*, ed. By Eugenio Valentini, Rome, PAS, 1977, p. 29.

The author

The text you find here is part of chapters VII and VIII of the second part of the *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, published by Fr John Bonetti, the main editor of the *Salesian Bulletin*. One could suppose, then, that he would be the author of the text itself.⁷⁵

Amongst his many writings – apologetics, hagiography, ascetics – of interest here is the *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*.

Published in instalments in the SB, it was completed and collected in a book known as the *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio Salesiano*.⁷⁶ (This came out in English eventually as *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*).

The aim of the *Storia dell'Oratorio* was to give readers exhaustive information on the origins and nature of the Oratory, correcting errors and impressions that had arisen here and there.⁷⁷

As for the structure of the work, other than information provided by Don Bosco, others were given by past pupils from the Oratory, both boarders and day boys, and clergy and lay people.

Publication began in January 1879 and continued uninterrupted until August 1881. It began again in October the same year and continued until May 1882. The text relating to Urban Rattazzi's visit to the Oratory in Valdocco and the discussion that took place is contained in the 10th and 11th instalments (Oct-Nov) 1882. The publication of the *Storia* took up again from March to July 1883; it concluded with the instalment in August 1886.

Probable sources

The lack of earlier texts than those that recalled the episode in the SB 28 years later poses problems that go beyond the scope of this collection. However, a contribution to a correct understanding comes from parallel texts that are brought together as a useful comparison with the published text. It would seem that the trustworthiness of Bonnetti's account is strengthened, but read within the context of editing the SB and not as an historical account as such.

Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato, drawn from the *Cenni biografici del sacerdote D. Bodrato Francesco*, of which we have the manuscript print proofs in ASC 275 *Bodrato Francesco*, is quoted by the critical edition published in RSS 3 (1984) no. 2 (5), July-December, pp. 384-387. For G. Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù*, instead, follow the printed text as a preface to *Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (Turin, Tip. Salesiana 1877), in OE XXIX 99-107 (pp. 3-13).

TEXT

Leaving his political views to one side, truth demands that we acknowledge that the lawyer Rattazzi both as a member of Parliament and as a Minister has always looked

⁷⁵See further on for a brief biographical profile. Footnote 110

⁷⁶Turin, Tip. Salesiana 1892.

⁷⁷Cf BS 3 (1879) no. 1 Jan., p. 6.

upon our Oratory and Home with a kindly eye. He used to say that the Government was obliged to protect an Institute such as ours, because it operated very efficiently to lessen the prison population and to produce intelligent citizens at the same time as it was making good Christians of them. In fact, he himself set a good example in this regard. Therefore he encouraged Don Bosco in his work, made grants, recommended the admission of young people, and even entrusted a young cousin to him, Cesare Rattazzi by name,⁷⁸ so that he could bring him to a positive point of view, and be guided by sound principles. Then, each time he was appointed to the Ministry, he would be so kind as to inform Don Bosco that he would have nothing to fear. He showed these kindly dispositions from the time of his first meeting with Don Bosco, coming to our Oratory incognito. The event is worth noting.

It was a Sunday morning in April 1854, about ten-thirty. The young people from the Home with many who attended during the day, were in church for the second time. They had sung Matins and Lauds of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, had heard Mass, and Don Bosco had gone up into the pulpit and was recounting an episode from Church history, a topic he had taken up some time ago. In the meantime, a gentleman comes in through the main door of our Church, one whom no one recognised, not even Don Bosco. Hearing the sermon in progress, he sat himself down on one of the benches provided at the back for the faithful, and stayed there listening till the end. Don Bosco had begun on the previous Sunday to tell the life of Pope St Clement⁷⁹ and that morning was telling how the saintly pontiff, because of hatred for the Christian faith, had been sent by Emperor Trajan into exile to the Chersonese, today known as the Crimea, where the war mentioned above broke out this year. Finishing the story, it was his custom to question some of the boys to see if they had questions to ask, or what moral could be got from this fact of history. He made sure in this way that every one paid attention, and at the same time it added great interest to the telling. So doing, this morning he questioned one of the young day attenders.⁸⁰ Contrary to what might have been expected he came

⁷⁸Cesare Rattazzi, born in Alessandria in 1843, entered the Oratory in 1856 as a trade student and remained there until February 1858.

⁷⁹After preaching to the boys for some years on the lives of the Popes, Don Bosco published these in the *Lecture Cattoliche (Catholic Readings)*. In the *Vita de' Summi Pontefici S. Lino, S. Cleto e S. Clemente*, Turin, Paravia 1857, Don Bosco writes: "So the governor, although in his heart he found repugnance in doing evil, nevertheless out of fear of losing the friendship of his Sovereign, he committed an abominable injustice by sending an innocent man into the hard and sever punishment of exile. The journey that S. Clement made to get to his place of exile was long and hard. It was called Chersoneso Taurico, today Crimea. . .".

⁸⁰He was Giacinto Arnaud, born Turin in 1826. He entered the Oratory at Valdocco as a working boy in 1847 and left there in February 1856. "It was still in the small Oratory and I was very young. But I remember very well what the older companion said and that the observation of Arnaud's on the arrest and exile of the Archbishop of Turin, Mons. Fransoni, was not a very appropriate question" (G. B. Francesia, *Buone notti. . .*, p. 29). "Sincerely, for those who read the fact in the *Salesian Bulletin* or then in the Life of D. Bosco, the boy's question seemed strange; but not for us who still recalled the removal of the holy Archbishop who was such a good friend of ours and of Don Bosco's. Archbishop Fransoni was then the target almost every day in the newspapers and especially in the *Gazzetta del popolo*. In the workshop, at home, in conversations they were always talking about him and repeating what they had read in the papers, which had to be the truth. Some at the Oratory too were convinced that Archbishop Fransoni had conspired against the country and had been justly

out with a question which, while appropriate, was inopportune considering the place, and for the times very dangerous. He said, "If Emperor Trajan committed an injustice by driving Pope St Clement out of Rome and into exile, has not perhaps our Government done wrong to exile our Archbishop Fransoni?" To this unexpected question Don Bosco replied without at all losing his composure, "This is not the place to say whether our Government has done good or evil by sending our most revered Archbishop into exile. This is something that can be discussed at the right time. But it is true that through the centuries and right from the beginning of the Church the enemies of the Catholic Faith have always had its leaders in their sights - popes, bishops, priests - because they believe that if you pull down the columns the building will fall down, and that having struck down the shepherd, the flock will be scattered and become easy prey to ravening wolves.⁸¹ Meantime, whenever we hear or read that this or that bishop, this or that priest has been condemned and sentenced, for example to exile, or even to death, we should not immediately believe they are guilty as these people say they are. It could be that on this occasion he has been a victim of his duty, that he is a confessor of the faith, a hero of the Church as were the Apostles, the martyrs, so many popes, bishops, priests and simple faithful. And then let us always remember that the world, the Hebrew people, Pilate, condemned the Divine Saviour himself to death on a cross as an impious blasphemer and subverter of the people while in fact he was truly Son of God, and had urged obedience and submission to the constituted authority and while he had ordered to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's".

After adding a few other words on the duty of keeping oneself strong in the faith and spiritual life, and respect for the ministers of the Church, Don Bosco came down from the pulpit whilst we, having said the usual Our Father and Hail Mary in honour of St Aloysius⁸² and having sung the *Praise for Ever be the Names of Jesus & Mary*, left the chapel by the side door. The unknown gentleman came out behind us, and coming into the playground, asked to speak to Don Bosco. The latter had gone up to his room just at this point, and a young man accompanied him up there.⁸³ After the first greetings, a

punished" (G. B. Francesia, *Buone notti...*, p. 29).

⁸¹In the *Vita dei Sommi Pontefici S. Ponziano, S. Antero e S. Fabiano*, Turin, Paravia 1859, pp. 41-42, Don Bosco writes: "There were and still are those who crazily said: kill the head, put an end to the Church. No, said God, do not fear the assaults by men, I will defend you, I will protect you and I will be with you all days: ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus [Mt 28,20]. Perhaps some Christians not very well educated in the truths of the faith would say: what will become of the Church when they send into exile or put to death our pastors? Let men do their worst: they will never succeed in changing God's decree. Kill one bishop and God sees another is put in his place. One Pope is sent into exile? He will govern the Holy Church from there. He will be condemned to death? Another soon takes his place who with equal courage and strength takes up the government of the Church, preaches the same Gospel, the same faith, the same law, the same baptism instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ. So it was and will be in the future until the number of elect is complete".

⁸²MB IV speaks of a *Pater, Ave* and *Gloria* to St Aloysius with the invocation *Ab omni malo libera nos Domine*. We do not know if here it is a case of the same practice of devotion to St Aloysius Gonzaga.

⁸³"During that day he asked for a special audience with Rev. Don Bosco and was given it the same evening... What we can possibly claim is that one of the first topics of conversation was how he declared his admiration at the behaviour, dependence, affection and sincere warmth for such a huge number of boys, all of which struck Bodrato. Questions therefore followed concerning the system

brief dialogue occurred between Don Bosco and Rattazzi, heard by the same young man, who as was the custom in those unhappy times, remained there until told by Don Bosco to leave, in case anything happened. This is the dialogue.⁸⁴ D. Bosco: May I know with whom I have the honour of speaking?

Rattazzi: With Rattazzi.

D.B.: With Rattazzi! With the great Rattazzi (*coul gran Ratass*),⁸⁵ Member of Parliament, Former Speaker of the House, and now Minister of the Crown?

R: Precisely.

D.B.: (Smiling) Then I had better hold out my wrists for the handcuffs, and prepare myself for prisons dark.

R: For Heaven's sake why?

D.B.: Because of what Your Excellency heard a few moments ago in the Church concerning the Archbishop.⁸⁶

R: Not at all. Leaving aside the matter of whether the question asked by the boy was appropriate or not, you replied, and you got out of it admirably, and no Minister in the world could proffer the slightest rebuke. In any case, although I am of the view that it is not a good idea to discuss politics in Church, much less with young people who are not yet capable of weighing things up correctly, nevertheless, one should not have to deny one's personal convictions on anyone's account. I might add that in a Constitutional Government Ministers are responsible for their actions, which can be verified by any citizen and therefore also by Don Bosco. As for myself, although not all Archbishop Fransoni's ideas and actions meet with my approval, I am happy that the severe measures taken against him did not occur during my term of ministry.

D.B.: If that's the case (Don Bosco concluded merrily) I can rest assured that this time Your Excellency will not throw me in the cooler, and will let me breathe the free air of Valdocco. So let us pass on to other things.

After this pleasant beginning, there followed a serious conversation lasting nearly an hour. Rattazzi plied Don Bosco with questions, had him recite chapter and verse how the Institution of the Oratory, and the Home attached to it began, what its aims were, how it had progressed, what results it had achieved.⁸⁷ Being as he was a good-hearted man, he gained such a good impression of it all that from that day forward as we have mentioned above, he became our advocate and defender. This was a real stroke of good

that Don Bosco used to get such an extraordinary result" – Cf. *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, pp. 384-385.

⁸⁴Cf. MB IV 626-629.

⁸⁵Piedmontese dialect *rat/=rat; /ratass* = big rat

⁸⁶Amongst the modifications Rattazzi proposed for the Penal Code and which were approved in 1854 by Parliament we find that it was to be punishable by prison with the addition of a fine for ministers of worship who in public meetings in the course of their ministry would include speeches against the institutions or laws of the State.

⁸⁷Cf. MO 219-220 and 217-218.

luck for us, insofar as the times are becoming harder year by year, and with Rattazzi frequently having the reins of government in his hands, and continuing to be a man of influence, our Oratory had such support from him without which it would have taken some very hard knocks and even suffered very heavy losses. Instead it was just the opposite. It seemed as if the Lord wanted to use him for our good and to not allow us to come to harm, as was the case under King Nebuchadnezzar, when a powerful minister was used to favour young Daniel and his companions. God never changes. He is always like a father who provides. Happy he who loves him and trusts in him.

Among the various questions asked of Don Bosco by Mr Rattazzi in the above-mentioned conversation, one concerned the means he used to keep order among the many young people who flocked to the Oratory.

“Does not Your Reverence have at his orders at least two or three constables in uniform, or in civilian dress?”, asked the Minister.

“I have absolutely no need of them, Your Excellency”.

“Is that possible? But these youngsters of yours are simply no different from young people everywhere. They too will be unruly, troublesome, quarrelsome, to say the least. What censures, what punishments do you use then, to restrain them, prevent disorders?”

“Most of these young people are as smart as they come, as the saying is. Notwithstanding this, here we do not use violence, or punishment of any kind”.⁸⁸ “This is a mystery to me. Explain the secret!”⁸⁹

“Your Excellency would know that there are two systems of education; one is called the repressive system, the other is called the preventive system.⁹⁰ The former sets itself to educate people by force, repression, punishment when they break the law and commit a crime.⁹¹ The latter seeks to educate them with kindness, and gently helps them to observe the law, and it provides them with the most suitable and efficacious means for the purpose. This is precisely the system we use.⁹² Above all here we try to inculcate in the hearts of the young the holy fear of God. We motivate them with love for virtue and horror of vice by teaching them their Religion, and with appropriate moral instruction.⁹³

⁸⁸“What rule should we have for inflicting punishments? Where possible, never use punishments. . .” – *Regolamento per le case* . . . p. 12.

⁸⁹“ . . . He felt the need and ardently wished to know the secret of the extraordinary success of this education” – *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, p. 395.

⁹⁰“There are two systems that have been used throughout the ages in the education of the young: Preventive and Repressive” – *Regolamento per le case* . . . , p.3.

⁹¹“The Repressive system consists in letting subjects know the law then watching over them to see who are the transgressors and, where it is useful, inflicting due punishment” - *Regolamento per le case* . . . pp. 3-4

⁹²“I would say that the Preventive system is different, indeed opposite. It consists in letting the prescriptions and rules of an Institute be known and then keeping an eye out in such a way that the pupils are always under the eye of the vigilant Director or assistants who like loving fathers talk to them, serve as guides for every occasion, give advise and lovingly correct, or in other words: put the pupils in the impossibility of committing faults. This system is based on reason, religion and above all loving-kindness; therefore it excludes every violent punishment and tries to avoid even the least punishment” – *Regolamento per le case* . . . p. 4.

⁹³“When, with God’s help, one succeeds in inculcating into their souls the principal mysteries of our religion, which being all love, makes us think of the immense love God has for mankind. When you

We direct them on the path of good and sustain them with appropriate and kindly counsel, and especially with the life of prayer and religion. Over and above this we surround them, as far as is possible, with loving assistance in recreation, the classroom, the work place. We encourage them with kindly words, and at the first sign they are neglecting their duties we remind them in a kind way and recall them to a good way of behaving. In a word, we do all the things Christian charity suggests so that they might do good and avoid evil ruled by a good conscience and supported by Religion".⁹⁴

"Certainly this is the best method of educating rational beings, but does it serve for every one?"⁹⁵

"For ninety out of a hundred this system offers consoling results. On the other ten nevertheless, it has such a good influence as to make them less stubborn and less dangerous, because of which only occasionally do I have to send a young person away as untameable and incorrigible.⁹⁶ So much so that in this Oratory, and also in Porta Nuova and Vanchiglia, young people arrive or are brought along who were the despair of their parents and their employers, either on account of a bad disposition or refusal to be led, or even through sheer malice, yet before many weeks are out, they were no longer the same; from wolves, so to speak, they change into lambs".

"It is a pity that the Government is not able to adapt this system for use in their penal establishments in which hundreds of guards are needed to prevent disorders. And the prisoners get worse every day".⁹⁷

succeed in touching the strings of gratitude in their hearts, how much we owe Him because of what He has so generously done for us. When, with the force of reason they have become convinced that real gratitude to the Lord should be expressed by doing His will, by respecting His precepts, especially those that require the doing of our duty to one another, believe you me, the greater part of our work of education is already done! " – *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, p. 386

⁹⁴"The practice of this system is all based on the words of St Paul who says: *Charitas patiens est, benigna est, omnia suffert, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet.* . . Reason and Religion are the tools which the educator must constantly make use of, teach, practice, if he wants to be obeyed and achieve his purpose" - *Regolamento per le case.* . . , p. 6. - "Religion in this system is like the bit in the mouth of a fiery steed, which dominates and rules it: reason then is like the bridle which, pulling on the bit gives you the results you seek. True religion, genuine religion, which can control the actions of the young; reason which correctly applies those holy precepts as a guide for all his actions: there you are, summarised in two words the system I use, and which you wish to know the secret of" – *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, p. 387.

⁹⁵Don Bosco made short work of the answer: "Reason and Religion are the mainsprings of my whole system of education. "The educator should be convinced that all, or nearly all, of these fine young people are intelligent by nature, and can recognise the good done to them personally, and at the same time they are gifted with a good heart which is readily open to gratitude. – *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, p. 385-386.

⁹⁶"Whatever the character, disposition, moral state of a pupil when he is taken in, his family can be sure that their son will not get worse, and one can almost certainly say that he will make at least some improvement. Indeed, certain boys that were the scourge of their parents for a long time and were even refused by houses of correction, nurtured with these principles, change their character and disposition, live a moral and upright life in society and thus become the support of the family, and a credit to the place where they live" – *Regolamento per le case.* . . p. 11.

⁹⁷"These places of misfortune and the unfortunate are the ones most in need of the priestly ministry. But the difficulty of gaining access, the unwholesomeness of the place, the horror and fear that everything there strikes into one make the sacred ministry difficult in those places" – G. Bosco,

“And what prevents the Government from following this system into its penal establishments? Bring Religion into it;⁹⁸ set down appropriate times for Religious Instruction and Prayers. Let the one in charge give to these things the importance they deserve. Let God’s minister come in frequently, and let him mix freely with these poor souls and let them hear a word of love and peace, and then the preventive system will be well and truly in use. After a while the guards will have little or nothing to do, but the Government will be able to boast that it has given back so many good-living and useful people to their families and to society. Otherwise it spends good money in order to correct and punish difficult and culpable individuals for a more or less prolonged period, and when they are set free, it will have to follow them up and keep them under surveillance in order to protect itself from them, because they are ready to do worse”.

Don Bosco continued in this vein for a good while, and given that since 1840 he had known the situation of juvenile and adult offenders, because following the example of Fr Cafasso and Fr Borel⁹⁹ he was accustomed to visit these wretches frequently, he was in a position to emphasise to the Minister the good effects of Religion on their moral rehabilitation.¹⁰⁰ “When he sees the priest”, he added, “when he hears a word of comfort, the prisoner remembers the happy years when he took part in catechism classes. He remembers the good advice given him by his Parish Priest and his teacher. He realises that if he has landed up in this place of punishment it is either because he stopped going to church, or because he did not put into practice the teaching he had received. So, calling to mind these happy memories, he more than once feels his heart moved, a tear springs from his eye, he repents, he suffers with resignation, he determines to improve his

Biografia del sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso esposta in due ragionamenti funebri dal sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Turin. Paravia 1860 p. 81.

⁹⁸“III. The Repressive system can stop a disorder but with difficulty will it improve the delinquents” – *Regolamento per le case...* p. 5.

⁹⁹“At the time, working zealously and successfully in the prisons were Fathers D. Mattis, of happy memory, and Borselli, Canon of the Metrop. of St John’s. At almost the same time Fr Caffasso began as well as Fr John Borrelli, Rector at the Refuge” – G. Bosco, *Biografia del sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso...* p. 81, no.1 – Fr Joseph Cafasso was born at Castelnuovo d’Asti in 1811. Ordained priest in 1833. According to testimony from Fr Giuseppe Sassi and Canon Pelletta he began his apostolate in the prisons in Lent 1835. - Cf the deposition of Canon G. Allamano in *Positio super virtutibus*, pp. 102-103 and *Positio super introductione causae*, p. 88. He succeeded Fr Luigi Guala in running the *Convitto ecclesiastico* (Pastoral Institute) in Turin in 1848. He died in 1860 and was canonised in 1947. – Fr John Borel, was born in Turin. While still a cleric he was aggregated to the Palatine clergy. He received a degree in theology and was appointed chaplain of His Majesty and the Royal Chapel, which he refused. Archbishop Fransoni appointed him as Spiritual Director of the Refuge and connected institutions (1839-1873). He also distinguished himself for charity to the poor, his work for prisoners and the care of the sick at Borgo Dora and surrounds. In the difficult years at the beginning of the Oratory he was always of excellent help to Don Bosco. He died in 1873. - Cf *L’Unità Cattolica*, 1873, no. 216, 16 Sept. pp. 866.4-867.1. As for Don Bosco, he entered the Pastoral Institute in November 1841 and was invited by Fr Cafasso to assist him in the work amongst prisoners.

¹⁰⁰“As soon as he began to deal with and talk to this new kind of audience, Fr Cafasso soon began to notice that they had become miserable, brutalised, but that their misfortune derived more from lack of religious instruction than from real malice. He spoke to them about Religion and they listened. He offered to return and they eagerly awaited him”. – G. Bosco, *Biografia del sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso...* p. 82-83

conduct, and when he has finished his sentence, he goes back into society determined to make up to it for the scandal he has given. If on the other hand the kind face of Religion and its gentle precepts and practices are removed, depriving him of the conversations and good advice of a friend of his soul, then what will become of that wretch in that hideous enclosure?¹⁰¹ Never to be invited by a loving voice to lift his soul above the earth; never urged to reflect that in sinning he has not only broken the laws of the land, but offended God, the Supreme Law-giver. Never urged to beg God's pardon, nor solaced so that he might suffer a temporal penalty in place of the eternal one God wishes to condone; in his miserable condition he will never see anything but the evil act of contrary fortune. Hence, instead of bathing his chains with tears of repentance, he will gnaw at them with ill-concealed rage. Instead of resolving to change his life, he will stubbornly cling to his evil ways. From his companions in crime, he will learn fresh malice, and plot with them one day to commit crime more secretly, so as not to fall again into the arms of Justice, but he will not consider bettering himself, or becoming a good citizen".

Given the favourable occasion, Don Bosco indicated to the Minister the usefulness of the Preventive System especially in the Public Schools and houses of education where one is dealing with souls still innocent of sin, souls that willingly resound to the voice of persuasion and love. "I know well", Don Bosco concluded, "that promoting this system is not a task assigned to your Excellency's Department. But a remark from you, a word from you, will always carry great weight in the deliberations of the Ministry of Public Instruction".

Mr Rattazzi listened with keen interest to these and other remarks of Don Bosco's. He was completely convinced of the goodness of the system in use in the Oratories, and promised that for his part he would see that it be preferred to any other in the Government institutions. If then he did not always keep his word, the reason is that also Rattazzi at times lacked the courage to display and defend his religious convictions.

¹⁰¹"When then these holy principles of the Christian and Catholic Religion have taken root in these tender hearts it becomes very easy to rejuvenate them and get them ready to produce excellent results in daily life through constant and timely reasoning. This makes progress almost without their knowing it and they then want to flee evil and do good". – *Il dialogo tra Don Bosco e il maestro Francesco Bodrato*, p. 386-387

2. Documents of narrative pedagogy (1854-1862)

Introduction

The events which led Don Bosco to remain in Turin were of themselves natural and to some extent completely obvious. He was a priest from the countryside who had rapidly acclimatised to the city and to problems which responded perfectly to the aspirations and concerns that had guided his priestly commitment. This is why his first steps back home had been demanding ones, marked by the practical difficulties of study and following the vocation he had glimpsed when he was but nine or ten years of age.

The decision he took at the end of his priestly studies in 1844 was a decisive one. He could theoretically have opted for where he had come from, his family and cultural roots, and been a simple country curate. But in practice the experiences from 1841-44 had led him in a precise direction, one that matured into a radical life choice in the two years that followed: dealing with boys who had particular moral and religious problems other than their material poverty and who were different from the boys he had encountered at home and in quiet, traditional Chieri where he had been formed as a student and seminarian.

Thus began an adventure that propelled him in ever-widening concentric circles, before and after his death, towards a universal outreach and being an admired “father and teacher of the young” in every continent with a preventive, spiritual, pedagogical and social message that went well beyond the institutions he had personally put into place and run.

Much has been and will be written concerning the worldwide historical significance of his experiences and proposals. But it is perhaps especially important to focus on essential features at the explicit moment of his decisive choice; by making one choice he had automatically excluded all the others. Better still if we are able to extract this from documents that he himself left us.

But in truth, as a man of action Don Bosco never undertook the task of systematically outlining his thinking about what he was doing, in preventive fashion, for the young whom he constantly referred to as “poor and abandoned”, even “at risk and risky”. The only time he did attempt to do so, in 1877, he limited himself to offering “some thoughts” on the preventive system within the narrow confines of education, hoping at most to finally arrive at offering something on the difficult art of educating the young and publishing “an appropriately prepared brief work”.

He made up for this by enjoying the narrative form; he loved telling stories; in the *Cenni storici* or historical outlines, and in historical notes, informative circulars in which he also justified his actions, in memoirs, as well as humble pedagogical novels like *La forza della buona educazione* (1855), *Valentino o la vocazione impedita* (1866), *Severino ossia avventure di un giovane alpigiano* (1868) and similarly through significant testimonies of narrative pedagogy which we find in the biographies of Dominic Savio (1859), Michael Magone (1861) and Francis Besucco (1864).

Again, in his confidential addresses and conferences during the 1860s Don Bosco recalls the important moments of his ‘prehistory’ for the early members of the Salesian Society who were in formation, stressing the extraordinary aspects somewhat. He recalls elements that coincide with the key stages of events connected with the oratory, which is his main

concern: therefore, a 'congregation of the oratories'.

Given the impossibility of dealing with the extent of documentation there is of this kind, we limit ourselves to presenting three series of brief documents in what follows.

In the first instance, two remarkable manuscripts of Don Bosco's on the oratory are reproduced here. The oratory is not at that stage 'Salesian' history but a creation of Don Bosco the diocesan priest and reflects the early developments of his work in Turin: The Introduction to the Regulations for the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, and the Historical Outline of the same, both of which can be dated as 1854. Added to this is a twin document from 1862, the *Cenni storici...* or 'Historical Outlines', similar in content and significance (though it makes no reference to the incipient Salesian Society).

Some short pieces then follow related to a book that is intended to be a history but is more a handbook of moral, Christian and civic education. This is the *Storia d'Italia raccontata alla gioventù* (1855), his *History of Italy*. There are items which echo Turin's view of activities in the oratories, so still strictly tied to the diocesan and city context: a circular regarding his 1857 lottery and an article in the most important of the Catholic newspapers in the metropolis, *L'Armonia*. This is a sympathetic and faithful reference to the style of life at the Oratory.

The section concludes with the first significant document of narrative pedagogy that is not the initiative of just one person but tends towards a style of educational and welfare activity for an incipient religious congregation. The genesis and developments of interest in the young and preventive concern for them in Don Bosco's more functional recall end up coming together with the genesis and developments of the Society of St Francis de Sales, the common point being the 8th December 1841. In the *Memoirs of the Oratory* in the 1870's this point is also seen in the light of Don Bosco's fateful encounter with the first symbol of the oratory, Bartholomew Garelli.

Early memories of the Oratory

1. Introduction

There are three texts:

- 1) An *Introduzione (Introduction)* to the *Piano di regolamento (Draft regulations)* of the festive Oratory,
- 2) A *Cenno storico* or historical outline of the development of the work of the oratories in Turin from 1841 to 1854, and
- 3) Other *Cenni storici* or historical outlines of the development of the work of the oratories in Turin from 1841 to 1862.

The *Introduction* and the *Outline*, in early drafts of the *Regulations for the Oratory*, made up a kind of preliminary historical section in which he justifies his choice. In copies of manuscripts that followed they disappeared. These manuscripts were drawn up by those responsible for the oratories or were prepared for printing. The two items were ignored when it came to the definitive official edition in 1877.

The *Introduction* was published for the first time, but incompletely (lines 1-25. 47-51), by Fr Lemoyne in the second volume of the *Biographical Memoirs*, and tied to 3

November 1841 when Don Bosco had only been a priest for a few months and had settled in Turin. “It seems we might find what his thoughts and feelings were at that solemn moment”, the biographer writes, anticipating the real history, “reproduced in an old letter written in his hand at a time shortly after that year”.¹⁰² All in Don Bosco’s handwriting, it probably appears for the first time in the collection *S. Giovanni Bosco, Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell’educazione della gioventù*, ed. P. Braido.¹⁰³

The *Cenno storico*, or *Historical Outline*, the oldest and most interesting testimony written by Don Bosco on the beginnings of his work has up until now remained unpublished. But the best scholars on Don Bosco know it and refer to it.¹⁰⁴

The *Cenni storici*, or *Historical Outlines* would have been printed,¹⁰⁵ in Fr Lemoyne’s opinion, and it is listed as such in P. Stella, *Gli scritti a stampa di S. Giovanni Bosco*.¹⁰⁶ An excerpt was reproduced in MB VI 804-805. Successive corrections and clarifications make one think it was a text gradually being prepared for publication. But no trace of it remains, not even in archives and libraries of people who would have been the most obvious readership (for example the bishops whom Don Bosco asked for letters of commendation to obtain approval of the nascent religious Society).

The *Cenni*’s terseness and consistency seem to represent how Don Bosco simply handed on the real facts of the Oratory at a level of information, without superstructure, interpretation, comment.

It seems very interesting, on the other hand, that the oratories were not yet presented as ‘Salesian’ work but simply as a youth institution run by priests and lay people from Turin, amongst whom Don Bosco himself,¹⁰⁷ flanked by local and private authorities, bodies and people who were concerned about or at least kindly disposed in accordance with their various mentalities and opinions.¹⁰⁸

We have the advantage that Don Bosco’s intentions and the initiatives he promoted appear in the most elementary form in their essential features after and along with others, hence with increased potential and possibility for being proposed more universally as a pedagogy.

Don Bosco appears to be above all a man of his own time and place who knows what it is to eke out a living off the land, is sensitive to the risks and disorientation of country and mountain lads lost in the anonymity and toughness of big city life. He presents himself as believer and priest, convinced that without moral and religious principles one cannot

¹⁰²MB II 45-46.

¹⁰³Brescia, *La Scuola* 1965, pp. 360-362.

¹⁰⁴Cf. for example E. Ceria in *Memorie dell’Oratorio* (1846), p. 146, line 103; p. 165, line 7; 172-173, line 18; P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale* (1815-1870), p. 160, no. 6.

¹⁰⁵“As for the workers, we will tell how in 1862 Don Bosco wrote an historical outline on the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. This document was printed” - MB IV 31.

¹⁰⁶Cf. P. Stella, *Gli scritti a stampa...*, p. 40. The title is listed on the basis of Lemoyne’s barely credible testimony.

¹⁰⁷Still in 1861, a date which is problematic for this discussion, Don Bosco wrote to the Rector of the Diocesan Seminary, Canon Alessandro Vogliotti: “Of course, you know that for twenty years I have always worked and still work, and I hope to consume my working life for our Diocese; and I have always recognised God’s voice in the ecclesiastical Superior” - letter of 3 Sept. 1861, E I 208.

¹⁰⁸Cf. G. Bracco, *Don Bosco e le istituzioni, in Torino e don Bosco*, vol I, *Saggi*. Turin, Archivio Storico della Città di Torino 1989, pp. 125-159.

even adequately and stably resolve their financial precariousness, problems of lodging, food, clothing or lack of a point of reference.

The humble oratory, a festive, weekend meeting place which would also become a school in its most varied forms, a house attached, a home (hostel and full-time boarding), immediately showed itself to be the most adaptable to the needs of the time. It is an early realisation but also a symbol of how much should and could be done for boys in difficulties, neglected, poor and therefore at risk and, potentially, a risk to others.

It defines, if you like, a vast humanitarian and religious, moral and social aspiration along with a concrete programme translatable into the most varied kinds of initiatives: "Do good as much as you can, and evil to no-one".¹⁰⁹

Description of existing documents in the ASC (Rome)

The *Introduction* and the *Historical Outline*

The two texts are found in four different manuscripts. The first, *ms A*, in Don Bosco's hand, seems to have been conceived as an introductory addition to the Regulations of the first festive oratory, drawn up earlier and appears as the first or one of the first drafts written by Don Bosco. Two other manuscripts are copies by two different scribes, and contain the *Introduction*, the *Historical Outline* and the *Regulations*. The fourth, *ms B*, presents only the text of the *Introduction* and the *Outline*. Other manuscripts of the *Regulations* are found in the ASC but without the *Introduction* and the *Outline*. They appear to reflect an intermediary phase between the manuscript of the early tradition and the printed one in 1877.

We offer a schematic description of the manuscripts involving the *Introduction* and the *Historical Outline*.

1. A= ASC 132 Oratorio 1 – micros. Fondo Don Bosco 1.972 B 3 -C 5.

The document is made up of 4 double sheets, foolscap size 300x208 mm, juxtaposed, numbered in Roman numerals from I to XV; the last page is blank. The paper is quite yellowed from age and rather light, for handwriting.

The manuscript is handwritten by Don Bosco in his characteristic fast, discontinuous hand. The ink is black and generally heavier for corrections.

Many corrections and additions cover the broad margin, 70/80 mm on the left hand side of each page. The text of the Introduction occupies pp. I-II; the text of the Outline pages II to XV.

Another is added to this group of sheets which is the real continuation containing the manuscript text of the *Piano del Regolamento dell'Oratorio...* (*Draft Regulations*) in Don Bosco's hand – ASC 026 (1) *Regolamento dell'Oratorio* – micros. 1.955 B 1-D 5. It is a block of simple sheets of paper (the 1st and the 3rd) and double sheets (the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th), numbered from 1 to 28.

The paper, margins, ink and writing present the same features as the sheet with the text of the Introduction and the Outline. But two details can be pointed out: the size

¹⁰⁹MB IX 416

of the sheets is slightly different, 290/300x215 mm, and the writing is lighter in the corrections.

As for dating: maybe it is not legitimate to assign the same time to the three texts, since there may be one or two years between them.

2. B = ASC 026 (2) Regolamento dell'Oratorio – micrsch. FDB 1.955 D 6-1.956 B 3.

A single undivided manuscript copied by a single scribe containing three elements in sequence under the same title: *Regolamento Primitivo dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*: the *Introduction*, the *Historical outline*, immediately followed by the text of the *Regulations*.

An unnumbered cover page, single, detached by use from the other half (which make up pages 33 and 34 of the manuscript), 300x205/206 mm. Slightly torn and shows signs of having been folded horizontally. The *recto* (facing side) is slightly darker, the page is unruled and in the upper right margin, in script in black ink is the title: *Regolamento Primitivo dell'Oratorio*. For the rest both the *recto* and *verso* are blank.

The *Introduction* is on a single sheet detached from the block with the other, 306x206 mm. The paper is ruled with a large left margin of around 50 mm on the face side and 70 mm on the reverse side. The two pages are numbered 1 and 2. The ink is sepia in colour. The title INTRODUZIONE is written in large Gothic letters underlined by three curved lines and two leafy sprigs. There is a squiggle closing page 2 at the end of the text.

Following in order: 5 double sheets inserted one after the other; 3 single sheets; one double sheet; one single sheet: together they make up a small booklet of 32 pages numbered 3 to 33; the last is not numbered and is left blank. From pp. 3-13 the numbering is also in Roman numbers. The size of the sheets until p. 24 is the same as the page that contains the *Introduzione*, 306x206 mm, with a left margin of around 70 mm created by a light blue vertical line. This as far as p. 6 and in pencil beginning with p. 7. The other sheets number from 25 to 33 [and p. 34 not numbered] have the same dimensions as the cover page, 300x205/206 mm.

The writing throughout the manuscript is firm, regular, rather light, sloping slightly to the right – a confident hand. The ink is brown.

On the upper part of p. 3-III is the title *Regolamento Primitivo dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* and immediately beneath *Cenno Storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*.

The *Cenno* occupies from page 3 to halfway down p. 13 (III-XIII). Then from halfway down page 13 to p. 33 is the entire text of the *Regolamento*. In the lower margin on p. 33 between the spirals of the squiggle the two words *LAUS DEO* are written in upper case characters and intertwined with them *W.GGM* (= *Viva Gesù, Giuseppe, Maria*). In the lower right margin on p. 34 (not numbered and blank) the reader and user of the manuscript is indicated – we are still a long way before any intention to print: *Direttore*.

3. B = ASC 132 Oratorio, 1 (Introduzione) – ASC 026 (3) Regolamento

dell'Oratorio (Cenno storico) – micrsch. FDB 1.972 C 8-9 and 1.956 B 4-C 2.

For this manuscript, all one piece, the *Introduzione* has an anomalous collocation both as regards the Archives and the microfiche. It has been copied by hand by a single scribe. In order: the *Introduzione*, the *Cenno storico* and the text of the *Regolamento*.

It is lacking a presumed cover page with general title, similar to *ms B*.

The *Introduzione* occupies the first and half of the second page of a single sheet, 305x208 mm. The paper is rather firm with light blue ruling. There is one tear which has been fixed with adhesive tape. The left margin, indicated by a pencilled vertical line, is 50-56 mm wide.

The writing is neat though not beautiful penmanship, sloping lightly to the right. The ink is black and heavy in the title and in the quotation from John: colour is sepia, faded in the text.

The title INTRODUZIONE is written in large Gothic characters, with three concave underlinings, with a decoration as represented by two leafy sprigs that spread out from the centre of the page towards the sides.

Immediately beneath the final line of text the scribe has added a small squiggle.

In another part of the archives, 026 (3) we find, preceded by a single sheet blank on both unnumbered sides, a bundle of 8 double sheets (the 6th and the 7th have been split, making 4 single sheets), 305x208 mm, numbered with a pencil probably by an archivist, from 1-31. Page 31 is only half taken up and page 32, unnumbered, is blank. Each page has a vertical line for a margin about 60 mm, drawn in pencil. The paper is ruled almost imperceptibly in blue.

The features of the writing and ink are the same throughout, for title and text, as indicated for the *Introduzione*.

The *Cenno storico* takes up from page 1 to half of page 11; the text of the *Regolamento* from halfway down page 11 to halfway down page 31.

**4. B = ASC 132 Oratorio, 1 (Introduzione) – ASC 026 (4) Regolamento
dell'Oratorio (Cenno storico) – micrsch. FDB 1.972 C 6-7 and 1.956 D 11-E 10.**

The manuscript is in two different places in the Archives and microfiche, but these should not be considered apart. The two texts have been copied by the same scribe. And as will be seen, in the upper margin of the sheet containing the *Introduzione*, Fr Bonetti writes: "There is some lack of precision regarding the date", a lack of precision which he then notes in the pages that contain the *Cenno storico*. The *Introduzione* fills the first two unnumbered pages of a double sheet, 360x210 mm; the other two pages, also without numbering, are blank. The paper is slightly marked with imperfection. The left margin of the page with text is indicated by a pencilled vertical line. 60 mm. The righting, sloping slightly to the right, is controlled, flowing, full and pronounced with a curled 'd' providing some elegance. The ink is sepia in colour. The title is in Gothic lettering but without the underlinings and frieze of *B* and *C*. Instead, like *C*, there is a modest squiggle at the end of the text.

The *Cenno* is contained in a collection of 4 double sheets inserted one after the other and sewn together. Size is 308x208 mm. The paper and margins are the same as for the *Introduzione*. The ink is black for the titles, brown for the text, the latter being

somewhat faded and the paper yellowed with age.

The text leaves something to be desired in terms of its fidelity; sometimes the scribe has confused the letter S with L (*Li=Si; Lassi=Sassi*); sometimes he has misunderstood (*sequire=regime; appositori* corrected to *apparatori=apparitori*), influenced or sometimes influenced by *ms C* or some other unknown *ms*. On the first page, in large script, some of it Gothic, the title reads thus: *Regolamento Primitivo dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, and beneath that *Cenno storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*. No trace has been found of a text of the *Regolamento* similar in paper, writing, features. As indicated we will exclusively follow *ms A*, the only trustworthy one we can undoubtedly refer to Don Bosco. The minor variations in the others are mostly due to oversight or misunderstandings. Three interventions by Fr John Bonetti¹¹⁰ in *ms D* will be indicated in footnotes for the respective texts.

The *Cenni storici* or *Historical Outlines*

Four examples of the *Cenni storici* are found in the ASC, the first fully in Don Bosco's hand, the other three written by scribes but with various interventions, corrections and clarifications signed by Don Bosco.

1. A = ASC 132 Oratorio 2,1 – microschr. FDB 1.972 C 10-D 4.

The text is contained in three double sheets inserted one after the other (the first, which contains the others, has two single detached sheets), 310x208 mm. The paper is light, no rules, yellowed by age, and the ink shows through on both sides. The left always has a margin which varies from 40 to 50 mm. The ink is sepia in colour, somewhat faded, sometimes black where there are corrections. The pages are numbered from 1 to 7; the eighth is blank.

One tear in the upper margin of the first sheet has been repaired with adhesive tape.

The manuscript is entirely in Don Bosco's hand, studded with corrections in the text and margins which are not easy to read; some are illegible.

The composition can be dated with certainty as not being before 1860 since Fr Rua already appears as a priest (ordained 29 July 1860) and as such had already been for some time collaborator and almost successor of Fr Robert Murialdo in managing the Oratory of the Guardian Angel; and not after halfway through 1863 when Don Bosco was close to founding the school at Mirabello of which Fr Rua would be the Rector,

¹¹⁰Fr John Bonetti, born at Carmagna (Cuneo) on 5 November 1838. He entered the Oratory at Valdocco when he was 17. He already had some knowledge of Latin so completed his first three years of secondary in two. At the Seminary in Chieri he did the humanities and rhetoric course over 1857 and 1858. The first group making up the Salesian Society elected him as the 2nd councillor of the Superior Chapter in the opening meeting held 18 December 1859. He did philosophy and theology at the Turin seminary and was ordained Deacon on 22 April 1864 and priest on 17 May, Tuesday of Pentecost. He graduated as a teacher in lower secondary in 1863 and in autumn of the same year was teacher, catechist or spiritual director at Mirabello. He became Rector at Mirabello from 1865-1870 and when it moved to Borgo San Martino from 1870 to 1877. He was called to Valdocco as editor of the *Salesian Bulletin* (1877-1886). He was elected by the 4th General Chapter as Spiritual Director of the Congregation (1886), a position he held until he died (5 June 1891). A writer and polemicist he often reviewed Don Bosco's writings in new editions and was one of his trusted men.

in November. The contents exclusively concern the Turin oratories, 1862. Some of the copies, especially *C* and *D*, have been located in 1863.

2. B = ASC 132 Oratorio 2,2 – micros. FDB 1.972 D 10-12.

The text is contained in a booklet made up of three double sheets inserted one after the other and bound with thread, 275x212 mm in size. The paper is resistant, typical of accounting registers; horizontal green colour rules, and red vertical lines left and right. The paper is yellowed, the ink brown but faded. There is a margin of around 50 mm on the left of each page. The unidentified scribe writes in a slightly right-sloping hand, not always neat and flowing but a regular, adult hand nonetheless.

The text seems to have been copied from Don Bosco's original and is the only one truly faithful to it.

Don Bosco occasionally corrects the text or makes brief additions and twice has put longer additions in the margin.

3. C = ASC 132 Oratorio 2,4 – micros. FDB 1.972 E9-1.973 A 6.

The text is contained in two double sheets and one single one, on rough, low-quality printing paper. The first sheet is 278x190 mm and the other two 300x215 mm. Normal margin on the left of around 25/30 mm. The pages are numbered from 1st to 9th. Only a part of the latter has been filled. The tenth, not numbered, is blank. The ink is black and shows through on both sides. The writing is flowing, but sure and mature, slightly sloping to the right. It belongs to Salesian Brother, cav (*Cav* = Knight, or 'Sir') Federico Oreglia di S. Stefano.¹¹¹ Every now and again the text is interrupted by white space almost as if to leave space for additions which would not fit in the narrower margin.

There are two types of intervention in the text: Don Bosco who corrects and clarifies; the other by an unidentified writer who has copied into this text some corrections and clarifications introduced by Don Bosco into document *D*.

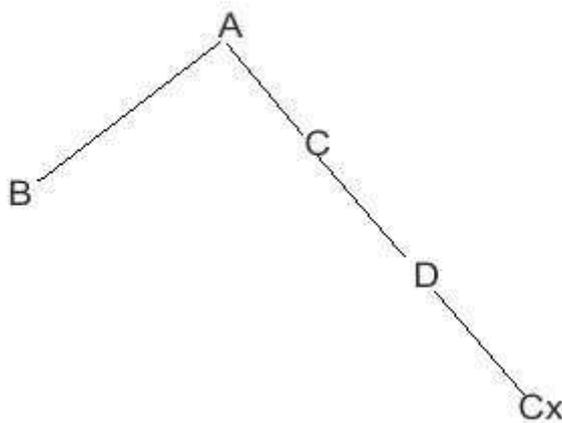
Document *C* ignores document *B* and anything Don Bosco had written there. It depends directly on *A* but with fairly significant variations in content and style. Besides, in seven distinct places, as will be noted in the texts, the scribe adds brief observations in parentheses or requests for clarification, doubts. It would not be unjustified to think that in the light of future publication of the document or its official use, as the one in charge of the printing press Oreglia had been (or felt he was) authorised, in recopying the text, to introduce and propose improvements in facts and style. He was an educated man; he had done his studies in humanities at the Jesuit school (Our Lady of Mt Carmel) in Turin; when he joined the Jesuits he only had to do his theology after novitiate before

¹¹¹*Cav.* (Sir) Federico Oreglia di S. Stefano, son of Baron Carlo Giuseppe Luigi (1795-1851), was born at Benevagienna (Cuneo) on 15 July 1830. He met Don Bosco at a Retreat at St. Ignatius above Lanzo Torinese in the summer of 1860 and came to the Oratory on 16 November of that year. He professed triennial vows in the Salesian Society as a Coadjutor or lay religious on 14 May 1862 and perpetual vows on 6 December 1865. He already appears as the secretary of the lottery in 1862 and Don Bosco put him in charge of the bookshop (1862/3) and printing press right from the outset. In 1869 he left the Salesian Society and entered the Jesuits in their Roman Province (one of his brother's was already a Jesuit priest at the «Civiltà Cattolica», and another, from 1866, inter-nuncio in Holland, then Cardinal), He became a professed Jesuit in 1870 and was ordained priest. He died 2 January 1912.

being admitted to the priesthood.

4. D = ASC 132 Oratorio 2,3 – micros. FDB 1.972 E 1-8.

The manuscript is made up of three double sheets inserted one after the other and sewn together, 308x207 mm. The paper is light, unruled printing paper, much yellowed, ink of sepia colour showing through on both sides. The writing is neat, elegant, sloping right with flourishes in the 'd' and double 't'. Pages are not numbered; the first two are blank. The text is contained in pages 3-10; pages 11 and 12 are blank. There is a margin of some 40 mm on the left of each page. The scribe seems to be cleric Paul Albera who had taken triennial vows with the first group on 14 May 1862.¹¹² The relationship between the four documents can be represented in the following diagram:



Dates when texts were composed

The composition of the three documents, the *Introduzione*, the *Cenno storico* and the *Cenni storici* can be placed between 1854 and 1863/1863. It is possible to attribute and more precise date to each.

All the material and formal elements, resulting also from description of the manuscripts, lead us to assign relatively similar dates to the *Introduzione* and the *Cenno storico*. We can say with similar certainty that the handwritten text in our possession is the first draft of the text. The final lines of the *Cenno* also enable us to establish the time the draft was completed; not long after it was begun. Don Bosco concludes his historical recall by giving a few brief details of the decoration introduced into the church of St Francis de Sales. It was a gift from Count Cays elected as Prior of the St Aloysius sodality, Easter

¹¹²Paul Albera was born at None (Turin) on 6 June 1845. He came to the Oratory on 8 October 1858 and was part of the group that opened the school at Mirabello Monferrato (20 October 1863). He was ordained priest in 1868 and was appointed rector of the Home at Marassi (1871), transferred in 1872 to Sampierdarena. He remained there till 1881 when he was appointed provincial in France. At the 5th General Chapter he was elected Spiritual Director General of the Salesian Society. He spent several years visiting almost all Salesian Houses in the world. He was elected to Succeed Fr Rua as Rector Major of the Congregation in 1910, and remained in office until his death on 29 October 1921.

1854, for the second time. He then highlights the problems of that year (though Don Bosco does not refer to the cholera which broke out in Turin at the beginning of August). He also indicates the number of boys in the Home: 86, a figure that seems to correspond exactly with what we know of 1854.¹¹³

The date of composition of the writing would not be beyond the summer of 1854.

The *Regolamento* has its own separate history and, at least in the parts of the primitive draft we have, could go back to 1851/1852 when Don Bosco had not yet been appointed by Archbishop Fransoni as head of the three oratories of St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius and the Guardian Angel.

It is significant that the title *Piano di regolamento per l'Oratorio maschile di S. Francesco di Sales in Torino nella regione di Valdocco* (*Draft Regulations for the boys' oratory of St Francis de Sales in Turin in the Valdocco district*) is first found with some variants, at the head of the page containing the beginning of the text of the *Regolamento*, and that in the upper left margin of the same page is the Johannine quote: *Ut filios Dei qui erant dispersi congregaret in unum* Jn. 11:52. These two items are cancelled on the primitive page and the title is added to the upper left margin of the page with the *Introduzione*, which in turn begins with the Johannine passage. From these variations it seems that, contrary to the intentions expressed in the *Introduzione*, the primitive *Piano di Regolamento* intended to regulate only the Oratory at Valdocco, and so was thought

¹¹³This figure is very close to those given between November 1854 and January 1855 in two letters sent respectively to the *Mendacità Istruita* (13 November 1854 – Em I 235; 90 boarders) and to the Mayor of Turin (25 January 1855 – Em I 243: 95). “In 1854 Don Bosco was able to take in around 80 boys, amongst whom some orphaned or without support because of the cholera that had broken out in Piedmont and especially in Turin’s outskirts” (P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, p. 114). In a letter to Salesian Fr Joseph Bologna, Rector at Marseilles, on 6 January 1879, the Master of Novices Fr Giulio Barberis says: “Maybe you will have a manuscript of a set of Regulations of the old Oratory – they were never printed – preceded by a historical report written by Don Bosco himself – very important” (*Cronichetta*, quad. 14, p. 75.)

The *Cenni storici* were not intended by Don Bosco to have his own collaborators as their principal audience. Instead they can be considered as an almost essential instrument of correct information on his work for various others: more or less benevolent judges, benefactors, Church and civil authorities. In 1860 and 1861 the Oratory had been subject to searches or inspections and Don Bosco may have wanted to emphasise the primarily charitable scope of his work.

Dating the handwritten draft is relatively easy to do. In the list of workshops we find the printing press but not the metalwork one. The idea of having his own printing press had become a real one for Don Bosco in the last months of 1861. Authorisation for it from the Prefect of Turin was given on 31 December 1861 and communicated by the public authority to Don Bosco on 2 January 1862. It began work in the following months and reached consistent production in May with the instalments of the *Letture Cattoliche* (Catholic Readings) under the title *Teofilo ossia il giovane romito* (Theophilus or the young hermit). Manuscript *B*, the most faithful to the original text and revised by Don Bosco, changes nothing. The metalwork workshops appear in the copy transcribed with some liberties by Cavalier (Kt) Oreglia di S. Stefano who was put in charge of the printing press in 1862. He clearly indicates the date 1863 for the manuscript, repeated in manuscript *D* strictly dependent on manuscript *C*. It would not be incongruous to suppose that the two manuscripts *A* and *B* go back to the first half of 1862. Meanwhile in the second half the metalwork workshop came into being and was involved in works connected with the construction of a new workshop (lasting from summer 1862 until 1863). It is probable that, from what has been said, Oreglia was asked to take up the manuscript again in view of its likely publication and that in 1863 the two transcriptions *C* and *D* occurred, obviously then including reference to the metalwork workshop.

out and drafted before a unified control of the three oratories had been determined.

Editing criteria

The *Introduzione* and the *Cenno* have been edited here based exclusively on the original manuscript (Don Bosco). We will not take account of the others; they contain inaccuracies and they do not include some of Don Bosco's own notes. Some reference will be made to *ms D* – the three notes, already indicated, by Fr Bonetti who was one of the first authoritative witnesses in time and importance, of Don Bosco's educational initiatives.

We proceed differently for the *Cenni storici*.

The work of editing could choose the most obvious route. Take document *D* as a basis which with all probability was the last one Don Bosco checked and corrected, and add into it the compatible corrections that he introduced into document *B*. The apparatus of variants would have to show evidence of the evolution the text underwent beginning with the original draft *A*, completely written by Don Bosco, until the final document *D*.

But we have preferred to choose the one that Don Bosco effectively and directly wrote in his own hand. Along the *A-C-D* line something has been added that came from Oreglia and not from Don Bosco, and so is not rigorously his; and this was reversed in *D*.

So we have chosen to start with the original document *A* enriching and reconstructing it on the basis of explicit interventions by Don Bosco later in *B*, *C* and *D*, very rarely with some discoveries in *D* that are incompatible with something in *B*. But all the variants have been noted as part of the critical apparatus wherever and by whomsoever they have been introduced.

Given the archaic nature of the published texts we have tried to keep to Don Bosco's *mens* or mindset, understood in the literal sense. This does not exclude the legitimacy and validity of another kind of editing. At the level of interpretation of intentions and ideas this has been considered the most significant approach guaranteeing that every word and syllable came exclusively from Don Bosco's pen, even though texts by the two scribes may have had tacit approval.

In this editing, more interested in the substance of the document than some morphological and graphical detail, we have not included purely formal variants, anomalies and details as part of the critical apparatus: punctuation (when it is not essential for an exact understanding of the text) different ways of indicating the plural of words ending in *-io/* (e.g. *laboratorii* or *laboratori*, *oratorii* or *oratori*...), exchange of upper and lower case for many common nouns (e.g. *Oratorio* or *oratorio*, *Falegname* or *falegname*, *Istruzione* or *istruzione*...), absence or presence of underlining in the titles, use of accents and elisions in certain verbal forms (e.g. *fù-fu*, *fà-fa*) and the imperfect indicative (*facea-faceva*, *avean-avevano*...).

Useful abbreviations that will be used for notes regarding source material

ASC = *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* or Salesian Central Archives – Via della Pisana 1111 – Rome.

Baricco, *L'istruzione popolare* = *L'istruzione popolare in Torino*. Monograph by T.C. Pietro Baricco, town council member and Royal inspector for primary studies in Turin

province. Turin, tip. Eredi Botta 1865, 236 pp.

Baricco, Torino descritta = Torino descritta, by Pietro Baricco. Turin, tip. G. B. Paravia e comp. 1869, [IV]-972 pp.

Breve ragguaglio = Breve ragguaglio della festa fattasi nel distribuire il regalo di Pio IX ai giovani degli oratorii di Torino. Turin, tip. Eredi Botta 1850, 27 pp. – OE IV 93-119.

BS = Bibliofilo cattolico o Bollettino Salesiano mensuale (began in Turin in August 1877) and *Bollettino Salesiano* from January 1878, year II, no. 1.

Cafasso = Biografia del sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso esposta in due ragionamenti funebri dal sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Turin, tip G.B. Paravia e comp. 1860, 144 pp. – OE XII 351-494.

Casalis, Dizionario XXI = Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale degli stati di S.M. Il re Sardegna compilato per cura del professore. . . Goffredo Casalis. . ., vol XXI, Turin. G. Maspero librarian and G. Marzotti printer 1851, 1144 pp.

Costituzioni [Constitutions] SDB = G. Bosco, Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1858-1875. Critical texts ed. Francesco Motto, Rome, LAS 1982, 272 p.

E = Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco, vol I *Dal 1835 al 1868*. Turin, SEI 1955, XII-624 pp.

Em = G. Bosco, Epistolario. Introduction, critical text and notes, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991.

FDB = Archivio Salesian Centrale, Fondo Don Bosco. Microfiche and description. Rome, 1980, 629 pp.

La forza = La forza della buona educazione. Curioso episodio contemporaneo, per cura del Sac. Bosco Giovanni, Turin. Tip G.B. Partavia e comp. 1855 – OE VI 275-386.

Giraudi, L'Oratorio. . . = F. Giraudi, L'Oratorio di don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino. Turin, SEI 1935, VIII-367 ill., tav.

GP (1847) = Il giovani provveduto per la pratica de' suoi doveri degli esercizi di pietà per la recita dell'uffizio della Beata Vergine e de' principali Vespri dell'anno colol'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacri ecc. Turin, tip Paravia e comp. 1847, [VI]-352 – OE II 183-352.

MB = Memorie biografiche di Don [del Venerabile – del Beato – di San] Giovanni Bosco. 19 volumes in non-commercial edition. San Benigno Canavese, Turin 1898-1939.

MO = G. Bosco (S.), Memorie dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855, ed. Eugene Ceria, Turin, SEO 1946, 260 pp.

Motto, L'«Oratorio». . . = F. Motto, L'«oratorio» di Don Bosco presso il cimitero di S. Pietro in Torino, in «Ricerche Sotriche Salesiane» 5 (1986), pp. 199-220.

OE = G. Bosco, Opere edite. First series, *Libri e opuscoli [ristampa anastatica]*, 38 vol. Rome, LAS 1977-1987.

Il pastorello = Il pastorello delle Alpi ovvero vita del giovane Besuccio Francesco d'Argentera pel sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Turin, tip. Dell'Orat. Di S. Franc. Di Sales 1864, 193 pp. - OE XV 242-435

Ricordi confidenziale = F. Motto, I «ricordi confidenziali ai direttori» di don Bosco, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 3 (1984) 125-166.

Stella, Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica, vol I, vol II = P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica, vol I. Vita e opere*. Rome, LAS 1979, 303 p.; vol II *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità*. Ibid 1981, 585 pp.

Stella, Don Bosco nella storia economica... = P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*. Rome, LAS 1980, 653 pp.

Storia ecclesiastica = Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole utile per ogni ceto di persone dedicata a F. Ervé de la Croix Compilata dal sacerdote B.G. Turin, tip. Speirani e Ferrero 1845, 398 pp. - OE I 160-556.

Storia sacra = Storia sacra per uso della scuole utile ad ogni stato di persone arricchita di analoghe incisioni Compilata dal sacerdote Giovanni Bosco. Turin. Tipografi-Editori Speirani e Ferrero 1847 - OE III 1-212.

Other abbreviations used in the critical apparatus and comments on the texts:

add = addit (added)

corr = corrigit (when corrections to a word or sentence are made using elements of the corrected word or sentence)

del = delet (deleted)

em = emendat (when correction involves completely new elements from the word or sentence being corrected)

eras = erasit (rubbed out with an eraser)

il-infra lin = infra lineam (between the lines)

it-iter = iterat (repeated)

lin subd = underlined

mrg = in the margin: i-inf = lower; s-sup = upper; dext = right side; sin = left side

om = omittit (omitted)

res = rescribit (rewritten)

sl = super lineam (above the line)

trsp = transponit (transposed, moved) a-ante (before); p-post (after).

Texts: *Introduzione, Cenno storico, Cenni storici*

The *Introduction* and the *Historical Outline*

A = Don Bosco's original document

A2, A3 = later notes introduced by Don Bosco

1. Draft Regulations for the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Turin, District of Valdocco¹¹⁴

Introduction¹¹⁵

Ut filios Dei, qui erant dispersi, congregaret in unum [To gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad, Jn 11:52]. It seems to me that the words of the Holy Gospel, which tell us that our divine Saviour come down from heaven to earth¹¹⁶ to gather together all the children of God scattered all over the world, could be applied literally to the young people of our times.¹¹⁷ These young people, the most vulnerable yet most valuable portion of human society,¹¹⁸ on whom we base our hopes for a happy future, are not of their nature depraved. Were it not for carelessness on the part of parents, idleness, mixing in bad company, which happens especially on Sundays and other Holy Days, it would be so easy to inculcate in their young hearts the principles of order, good behaviour, respect and religion. For, if it so happens that they are ruined at that young age, it is due more to their thoughtlessness than to ingrained malice.

These young people have a real need of some kind person who will take care of them, work with them, guide them in virtue and keep them away from vice.¹¹⁹ The problem lies in finding ways of gathering them, being able to speak to them, and of instructing them in the moral life.¹²⁰

The Son of God was sent for this purpose, and his holy religion alone can achieve it. This religion is of itself eternal and unchangeable, and has been, and will always be, the teacher of people. But the law it contains is so perfect that it can adapt to changing times and suit people's different characters.¹²¹

The oratories are regarded as being amongst the most fitting means for instilling the spirit of religion in hearts that are uncultivated and abandoned.¹²² These oratories

¹¹⁴Draft. . . Valdocco (*Piano. . . Valdocco*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹¹⁵Introduction (*Introduzione*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹¹⁶which. . . earth (*ci. . . terra*) show the scope of the Saviour's coming from A which has 'ci fanno conoscere essere il divin Salvatore venuto dal cielo in terra per radunare insieme tutti i figliuoli di Dio, dispersi nelle varie parti della terra' *em mrg sin A2*

¹¹⁷"A modest work of charity was undertaken some ten years ago in a district in this city, under the title of the Oratory of St Francis of Sales, aimed solely at the moral and intellectual good of that part of youth which through parental neglect, mixing with bad companions, or lack of means, finds itself exposed to the constant dangers of corruption". Appeal for a lottery, 20 December 1851, Em I 139 - "Things which youth must absolutely flee from. Art. 1 Flee from idleness. . . Art. 2 Flee from bad companions. . ." - GP (1847) 21-23.

¹¹⁸"That portion of human society on which hopes for the present and the future are based, the portion worthy of our most attentive concern is, without doubt, youth". - *Esercizi spirituali alla gioventù. Avviso sacro* (1849).

¹¹⁹These. . . vice (*Questi. . . vizio*) *om A add mrg sin A*

¹²⁰instructing them in the moral life (*post moralizzarli*) *add A* 'this is the purpose of the Oratories of St Francis de Sales in Valdocco, St Aloysius at Porta Nuova and the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia. There, through moral and religious instruction, pleasant recreation, Sunday and evening schools we gain satisfactory results. The efforts over the last twelve years have assured me of the good results from these oratories *A del A2*

¹²¹The. . . characters (*Questi. . . uomini*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹²²The oratories. . . abandoned (*Fra. . . Oratori*) *om A mrg sin marg A2*

are gatherings¹²³ in which young people, after they have attended church¹²⁴ services, are entertained with pleasant and wholesome recreation.

The support which the civic and Church authorities have given me, the zeal shown by many worthy people who have given me material aid, or have helped directly with the work, are a clear sign of the Lord's blessing and of the public's appreciation.

It is now time to set out a regulatory framework that might serve as a plan for a proper organisation of this part of the sacred ministry, and as a guideline for the numerous priests and lay people¹²⁵ who work in it with such dedication and charitable concern. I have often begun [to draft such a framework], but have always given up on account of the innumerable difficulties I had to overcome. Now, to ensure the preservation of unity of spirit and uniformity of discipline,¹²⁶ ¹²⁷ ¹²⁸ ¹²⁹ as well as to comply with the wish of

¹²³“Some individuals keen on the proper education of the people regretfully noticed that there was a growing number of young people who were idle and ill-advised, living on what they can borrow or by fraud on street corners or in the squares. They weigh on society and are often instruments of all kinds of misdeeds. They also saw with great sadness that many who had spent some time at work, were going out on Sundays and Holy Days spending their time in gambling or drinking away the little they had earned during the week. Wanting to remedy an evil that can only have very sad consequences, they decided to open a house for Sunday gatherings, where everyone could be at ease in fulfilling his religious duties and also receive some instruction, some advice or guidance for living his life in an upright and Christian way... Similarly for games equipment that would help develop their physical strength and provide honest recreation, in this way trying to make their stay in the place useful and pleasant”. Appeal for a lottery, 20 Dec. 1851, Em I 139. “The purpose of this Oratory is to deal with young people on Sundays and Holy Days with pleasant and honest recreation after they have attended Church services” – first draft of the original manuscript of the Regulations for the Oratory which Don Bosco wrote towards 1852. “. . . I dare once again to present my most serious needs. . . 1. Rent for these two Oratories which are sufficiently big enclosures to accommodate a considerable number of young people who gather there for recreation after having attended Church services - Request for a subsidy made to the Pious Institute for the Education of the Destitute (*Mendacità Istruita*), 12 Nov. 1854, Em I 235.

¹²⁴in which. . . church (*in cui. . . chiesa*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹²⁵numerous (*in buon numero*) *om A add sl A2*

¹²⁶now. . . discipline (*è perché . . . disciplina*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹²⁷“Up to now the work has gone forward with the help of a number of charitable people, both priests and lay people. The priests who are committed to this work in a special way are: Fathers Borelli, Carpano, Vola, Ponte, Grassino, Murialdo, Giacomelli and Marengo.”. To the administrators of the Pious Institute for the Education of the Destitute (*Mendacità Istruita*), 20 Feb. 1850, Em I 96. - “This is how I feel: note however that the government and the City, keen on public education, have shown themselves favourable to the Oratories and have often shown the desire to establish day schools in all three Oratories, something I have not been able to do until now for lack of teachers” - letter to Fr Carlo Gilardi of the Institute of Charity, 15 April 1850, Em I 102.

¹²⁸“Someone might ask: how is it possible to keep discipline and order amidst a thousand young people like that? It is not as difficult as it looks at first sight. You have the Regulations for the festive Oratories where various responsibilities in reference to the Church are shared out, and a playground for some good recreation. A Director who directs and others who carry out their assigned tasks and then everything goes ahead satisfactorily without ever needing threats or punishment of any kind” - BS I (1877) Sept. p. 2.

¹²⁹Don Bosco is referring to serious problems that arose between himself and some of his collaborators on how to unify leadership of the Oratories in 1851-1852. We find reflections of these in MB IV chaps. XXVII and XXXII-XXXIII, in pp. 309-317, 366-386 respectively on documents of that time and the testimony of a lay collaborator of Don Bosco's, Giuseppe (Joseph) Brosio (1829-1883), ASC

persons in authority who have counselled me to do so,¹³⁰ I have decided to complete this work, no matter what the outcome may be.¹³¹

But I wish it understood from the start that it is not my purpose to lay down law or precept for anyone.¹³² My one aim is to set out what we do in the Boys' Oratory of St. Francis de Sales at Valdocco, and the way it is being done.

Some expressions found herein may lead some people into thinking that I am seeking my own honour and glory.¹³³ Let them not think so; let them rather put it all down to my commitment to write [about the oratory] as things actually developed and as they are even at the present day.

When I dedicated myself to this part of the sacred ministry, I fully intended to consecrate every effort of mine to the greater glory of God and to the good of souls. My resolve was to work to make these young people good citizens for this earth, so that they might be one day worthy inhabitants of heaven.¹³⁴

May God help me and enable me to continue in this endeavour to my last breath. So be it.

2. [p. 3] *Historical Outline (Cenno Storico) of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*

This Oratory, a gathering of young people on Sundays and holy days, began in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi.¹³⁵ For many years during the summertime, the Rev. Fr. [Joseph] Caffasso¹³⁶ used to teach catechism every Sunday to bricklayers' boys in a little room attached to the sacristy of the aforementioned church. The heavy workload this priest had taken on caused him to interrupt this work, which he loved so much.¹³⁷ I took

123 Brosio (Memoria, pp. 16-19). on 31 March 1852 Archbishop Fransoni appointed Don Bosco as "Chief Director" of the Oratories and Frs Robert Murialdo and Paul Rossi as directors, respectively, of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia and St Aloysius at Porta Nuova.

¹³⁰ who have counselled me to do so (*che. . . consigliano*) om A add sl A2

¹³¹ whatever the outcome may be (*comunque. . . riuscire*) om A add mrg sin A2

¹³² om A add mrg sin A2

¹³³ "I have heard some of the clergy speak unkindly of the opening of these Don Bosco Oratories because they considered them a work where he was seeking ambition of his own, but I never saw that this was his intention and always admired the happy and beneficial outcome of his work" – testimony of St Leonard Murialdo at the Ordinary Process for Don Bosco's Beatification (20 Feb. 1893), *Copia publica transumpti processus*. Fol. 1046r. – Cf. MB IV 310.

¹³⁴ "I am offering a scheme of life, brief and easy enough, which will enable you to be the consolation of your parents, a glory to your country, good citizens on earth and one day blessed inhabitants of heaven." – GP (1847), *Alla gioventù*, p. 7.

¹³⁵ The church of St Francis of Assisi had annexed the ex-convent of the Conventuals, from 1817-1818 the location of the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) founded by Frs Luigi Guala and Brunone Lanteri – Cf. Casalis, *Dizionario XXI* 559-561, 473-477.

¹³⁶ Joseph Cafasso, priest, Saint: born at Castelnuovo d'Asti, Turin diocese in 1811, died in Turin as Rector of the Pastoral Institute in 1860. He had entered there as a student in January 1834 a few months after his priestly ordination (Set. 1833). Lecturer in Moral from 1837 he was responsible for the daily 'conferences' private and public, from 1843. Along with his vast activity as a moralist, confessor, formator of priests and laity, apostle amongst the prisoners, he gave solid support to the work of catechism programs and oratories.

¹³⁷ On the origins of the catechism programs at the Pastoral Institute under St Joseph Cafasso who was lecturer in Moral there from 1837 cf. G. Colombo, *Vita del servo di Dio D. Cafasso*. Turin, Canonica

it up towards the end of 1841, and I began by gathering in that same place two young adults who were in grave need of religious instruction. These were joined by others, and during 1842 the number went up to twenty, and sometimes twenty-five.¹³⁸

From these beginnings I learned two very important truths: first, that in general young people are not bad in themselves but more often than not they become such through contact with evil companions; second, that even these bad youngsters, if separated one from the other, are susceptible to great moral change.

In 1843 the catechism classes continued on the same footing and the number increased to fifty, the most that the place assigned to me could accommodate. All the while, while visiting the prisons of Turin,¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰ I was able to verify that the¹⁴¹ poor unfortunates committed to that place of punishment are generally poor young men who come into the city from far away either because they need to find work, or encouraged by some rascally companion. These young people are left to themselves particularly on Sundays and holy days and spend the little money they earn during the week on games [of chance] or on sweetmeats. This is beginning of many vices; in no time at all, these young people, who were good, are found to be themselves at risk and putting others at risk.¹⁴² Nor can the prisons better them in any way, because while detained there they learn more refined ways of doing evil, so that when they are released they become worse.

[p. 4] I turned therefore to this class of youngster as the most abandoned and at risk; and during the week, either with promises or with little gifts, I tried to win over more pupils (*allievi*). I succeeded, and their number increased greatly, so that, when in the summer of 1844 larger premises were placed at my disposal, I found myself at times with some eighty youths around me. I experienced great happiness at seeing myself surrounded by pupils (*allievi*) who behaved as I wanted, all of them started on a job, and whose conduct both on weekdays and Sundays I could some how vouch for. As I looked over them [seated before me],¹⁴³ I could visualise one returned to parents from whom he had fled, another placed with an employer, all of them well on the way to learning their religion.

1895, pp. 188-189; L. Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del venerabile Giuseppe Cafasso...*, vol II Turin, Scuola Tip. Salesiana 1912, pp. 8-9; P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, Rome, LAS 1979, p. 95; Salesian Fr Gioachino Berto radically disagrees in his testimony (ASC 123 - Miscrosch. 556 C 8-11) but especially Fr Abbondio Anzini, also a Salesian, in *Vita popolare del Ven. D. Giuseppe Cafasso* (San Benigno Can., Libr. Salesiana 1912), pp. 96-103, and in a polemical Memorandum, a manuscript in Feb. 1925 (ASC 123 . micros. 556 B 1-C 4).

¹³⁸No reference to the encounter with Bartholomew Garelli who became the progenitor of the oratories in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*: MO 124-127.

¹³⁹Cafasso had priests from the Pastoral Institute accompany him to the Turin prisons or entrusted them to Fr John Borel for the Latin catechism programs in preparation for Easter, for retreats and for confessions. Amongst them was Don Bosco. Before the opening of the "Correctional school" for young hoodlums (the Generala) in 1845, some rooms were reserved for men at the Holy Martyrs Church - L. Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del venerabile Giuseppe Cafasso*, vol II, p. 81, 94, 96.

¹⁴⁰Cf OE IV 149-154 *Appello della Commissione alla pietà dei concittadini* 16 January 1852.

¹⁴¹that the] (*che gli*) (*il maggior numero di quelli che sono condotti*) the greater number of those taken
A *che gli em sl A2*.

¹⁴²These young people...others at risk (*I quali... altri*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹⁴³behaved...looked over (*tanto... vedeva*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

But the community life characteristic of a place like the Pastoral Institute of St. Francis of Assisi (*Convitto*), the silence and good order required by the services conducted in that public and very well attended church, got in the way of my plans. And even though the well-deserving, late-lamented Dr. Guala¹⁴⁴ encouraged me to persevere, nevertheless I clearly perceived the need for new [and larger] premises. Because religious instruction occupies the young people for only a certain period of time, after which they need some outlet: hikes, games, and the like.

Providence arranged that in late October 1844 I should be appointed to the Refuge (*Rifugio*) as spiritual director.¹⁴⁵ I invited my boys (*figli*) to come and visit me at my new residence, and the following Sunday they gathered there in much larger numbers than usual. My room served both as oratory and playground.¹⁴⁶ What a sight! No chair, table or anything else in the room could escape the attack of that friendly invasion.¹⁴⁷

Meanwhile, I and the Rev. Dr. [John] Borrelli,¹⁴⁸ who from then on became the Oratory's staunchest supporter, had chosen a room that was intended as dining room and common room for the priests working at the Refuge, and that seemed big enough for our purposes, and adapted it as a chapel. The Archbishop¹⁴⁹ gave his kind approval,

¹⁴⁴Dr (Fr) Louis Guala (1775-1848, doctor of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Turin, and prime exponent of the *Amicizia Cattolica*, a friend of Fr Brunone Lanteri, Rector of the church of St Francis of Assisi, in 1808 he began a course in moral theology inspired by St. Alphonsus; the course was legally recognised by Victor Emmanuel I in 1814 and became the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) in 1817-1818 and had definitive ecclesiastical approval from Archbishop Colombano Chiaveroti. "A new school for priests was born, formed in Alphonsian morality and ultramontanism" – G. Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883*, vol I. Rome, Edizioni Piemme 1983, pp. 35-37.

¹⁴⁵spiritual director (*spirituale*) /om A add sl A2 post 'spirituale' add 'dell'ospedaletto di S. Filomena ivi annesso' (the little hospital of St Philomena annexed to it) A del A2

¹⁴⁶"Recreation is the major lure for the youth, and we wanted everyone to take part but only with the games that we normally use... Recreations was from 10 until 12 in the morning, from 1 until 2½ in the afternoons and after the end of the services until evening" – chap 2 of the 2nd part of the *Regolamento*, original *ms* by Don Bosco's 1852.

¹⁴⁷The *Opera Pia del Rifugio* (under the protection of Our Lady of the Refuge of Sinners) was founded by Marchioness Giulietta Falletti di Barolo, nee Colbert, to take in women (for free) who had been in prison or were wayward and wanted to change their lives. They were looked after by the Sisters of the Institute of St Joseph. The Magdalenes and the Little Magdalenes were, women and girls respectively, were added to these. They had chosen a path which could lead to a monastic vocation. Frs John Borel and Sebastian Pacchiotti were already spiritual directors there. Don Bosco joined them while waiting to become the spiritual director of the Little Hospital of St Philomena's, for sick children which was to be opened on 10 August 1845.

¹⁴⁸Fr Giovanni (John) Borel, a priest from Turin (1801-1873), chaplain in the schools of St Francesco da Paola then in the Barolo works, was a popular preacher and fervent collaborator of Don Bosco's in the work of the oratories as he was earlier of Cafasso's in the apostolate of the prisons. – On Borel we find a brief profile by Salesian E. Calvi, *Il teologo Gio. Battista Borel e il beato Don Bosco*, Turin, SEI 1931, 40 p.

¹⁴⁹Archbishop Louis Fransoni, born Genoa 29 March 1789, took refuge in Rome from 1797 until 1814, but was a priest in his home city and entered the Congregation of the Urban missions. Then he was made Bishop of Fossano from 1821, apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Turin in 1831-1832, Archbishop from 1832 until his death. He was exiled in Switzerland in 1848-1850 and expelled from the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1850 after which he set himself up in Lyon until his death on 26 March 1862. Don Bosco had much faith in him and had decisive support from him.

and on the day of Mary's Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1844),¹⁵⁰ the chapel we had long hoped for was blessed, with the faculty of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and of giving benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.

The news of a chapel destined exclusively for the young, the liturgical services prepared especially for them, a bit of open space to romp around in, proved to be powerful attractions; so that our church, which began to be called Oratory at that time, [p. 5] became quickly overcrowded. We made do as well as we could. Catechism classes were held in every corner: in rooms, kitchen and corridors. It was all oratory.

Things were moving along when an occurrence (or better, Divine Providence acting with hidden purposes)¹⁵¹ turned our oratory upside down. On August 10, 1845 the Little Hospital of St. Philomena was opened, and the premises we had been using for nine months had to be given over to other uses. Another meeting place had to be found.¹⁵²

Following a formal request, the Mayor of the city allowed us to go to St Martin's chapel near the *Molazzi* or city Mills.¹⁵³ So on Sunday we announced the change of place.¹⁵⁴ The boys were partly sad at having to leave a place they had come to like as their very own and partly anxious about something new but they readied themselves to go. You would have seen one carrying a chair, another a bench, some carrying a picture or statue, others the vestments or altar cloths or cruets. Some of the more playful ones would have stilts or bocce balls or throwing discs, but they were all keen to see the new oratory.¹⁵⁵

Two months went by peacefully there, although we could not do things perfectly since we couldn't celebrate Mass or have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, nor was it all that easy to have recreation. [p 6.] But that period of calm was a prelude to a storm that would put the Oratory to a more severe trial.¹⁵⁶ ¹⁵⁷ Word got around that these

¹⁵⁰ Don Bosco writes: November and Bonetti corrects it to December.

¹⁵¹ or better... hidden (*o meglio... segrete*) / *om A add mrg sin A2 107 post 'city' add 'che allora era il sig. Cav. Pinchia' (who was Cav. Pinchia at the time) A del A2*

¹⁵² "Within the area between the Refuge and the Magdalenes' Monastery in 1843 (=1845) this hospital called St Philomena's was founded for poor girls from 4-14 years of age, preferably the littler ones. There were 56 beds. After some years of trial the pupils at the Refuge made up a kind of religious body called the Oblates of the Virgin Mary and 26 of these helped out at St Philomena's which was under the direction of the Sisters of St Joseph. The girls were taught reading and writing while convalescing". - Baricco, *Torino descritta*, p. 826.

¹⁵³ Molazzi *om A add sl A2*

¹⁵⁴ Don Bosco along with others like Fr Michael Rua, Fr Joachim Berto, Fr John Cagliero (future Cardinal) locate the Oratory at St Martin's chapel at the Dora Mills (or Molassi) before taking over the cemetery of St Peter in Chains. Documentation available to us reverses that order without doubt. On 12 July the *Ragioneria* (Accounts Dept) gave Fr Borel (and his priestly colleagues at the Refuge) "the faculty of using the Mills Chapel for catechising the boys... fixing the hour for this as from midday until three" - quoted by Motto, *L'«oratorio»...*, p. 215.

¹⁵⁵ The catechism lessons at St Martin's - excluded however were Mass and other religious services - began on 13 July and finished towards the end of the year because on 14 November the *Ragioneria* (Accounts Dept) ordered Fr Borel to cease using the Mills chapel from 1 January 1846 - cf. Motto, *L'«oratorio»...*, p. 214-215.

¹⁵⁶ put... trial (*mettere... provare se*) *A 'mettere a dura prova' corr A2 'mettere a più dura prova' corr A3*

¹⁵⁷ *ante 'l'oratorio' add 'se' A del A2 post 'oratorio' add 'era opera di Dio o degli uomini' (it was a work of God's or of men) A del A2*

gatherings of youngsters were dangerous and that at any moment they could move from having recreation to creating a riot. What kind of riot could ignorant, penniless boys with weapons cause! They were only gathering to learn catechism; they would have trembled even at hearing the fluttering of a crow! But despite this the rumours kept growing and a report was sent to the mayor where I was described as the head of the gang, and that at the mills they were making an intolerable racket, a disturbance that nobody could put up with, damage down to the walls, benches and even the paving in the courtyard.¹⁵⁸ I had quite something to say about the fact that these claims had no substance but it was all in vain. An order was issued that we had to immediately evacuate the locale we had been previously given to us.¹⁵⁹

I then asked if we could go to the Holy Cross cenotaph church, known as St Peter in Chains. Permission was given.¹⁶⁰ We happily went off there but it was just a single festive occasion, because new reports¹⁶¹ were written and sent to the mayor where our gatherings were described as acts of insubordination and we were soon prohibited from setting foot there ever again.

I make no mention of names of individuals who sent these acrimonious reports off to the City [authorities]; I merely observe (God forbid that I take any delight in it) that one person lived just one more day and the other three days after having made their report.¹⁶² This was something that made a deep impression on the youngsters who were aware of the fact.¹⁶³

So what were we to do? I found myself with a heap of materials for the church and for games, a crowd of youngsters that followed me everywhere and not an inch of ground where we could go to.

Afraid that my children would stop coming, I hid all my worries and on Sundays took them off one day to Sassi, another to the Madonna di Campagna, and another to the Cappuccini del monte. The number of boys grew rather than diminishing.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Don Bosco expands on and dramatises the amount and significance of these protests. They simply came from the people living around the Mills area (Pizza Emmanuele Filiberto or Porta Palazzo), who had been disturbed by the boys' racket-making. A Council deputation heard their complaints on 7 November thus opening the way for the Accounts Dept decision indicated above.

¹⁵⁹ Before the Law of 17 October 1848 the Vicar was the head of the city administration, helped by two syndics and fifty seven decurions (we might say council members). In 1845 the two syndics were Count Joseph Bosco di Ruffino and Count Joseph Pochettini di Serravalle.

¹⁶⁰ The very brief stay at St Peter in Chains took place before the Dora Mills one and precisely on Sunday 25 May 1845. St Peter in Chains had been one of two cemeteries in Turin in 1777 (the other was St Lazarus on the east side). "Both were of the same shape, a square with porticoes on three sides, the church at the back and in the middle a courtyard where the common burial places were – the bodies and coffins were placed one on top of the other, and the more prestigious coffins were placed in an underground crypt running beneath the portico. It was more commonly called (vulgarly so) St Peter's of the cabbages. It remained open exclusively to families who had private graves there. The Turin Council kept a resident chaplain there" – Casalis, *Dizionario* XXI 196.

¹⁶¹ new reports (*novelle relazioni*) 'una relazione' (a report) *A 'novelle relazioni' em A2*

¹⁶² I make no...fact *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹⁶³ Throughout this event at St Peter in Chains and adjusted documents which have been handed down cf. Motto *L'«oratorio»*. . . , pp. 204-2011.

¹⁶⁴ These festive trips to various churches around Turin and surrounds are best assigned to the time they were at the Mills where they could only hold catechism lessons. Sassi was a small town of about 100

[p. 7] In the meantime, as the winter was drawing near, and the weather no longer favored excursions into the countryside, I and Dr. [John] Borrelli rented three rooms in the Moretta house,¹⁶⁵ a building not far distant from the present site of the Oratory in Valdocco.¹⁶⁶ During that winter our activities were limited¹⁶⁷ to simple catechism lessons on the evening of each Sunday and holy day.¹⁶⁸

At this time the gossip that had already for some time been making the rounds, that the oratories were a deliberate way of getting young people away from their own parishes in order to instruct them in suspect principles, grew more insistent. This allegation was grounded on the fact that I allowed my young people every kind of recreation, a long as they did not sin, or do anything that could be regarded as reprehensible conduct. In response to the allegation¹⁶⁹ [that I was drawing young people away from their parishes], I pointed out that my purpose was to gather together only those young people who did not belong to any parish. As a matter of fact most of the youngsters were from out of town and did not even know to which parish they belonged. But the more I tried to explain the truth of the matter, the more sinister was the cast thrown upon it.¹⁷⁰

Furthermore, certain events took place that forced us to leave the Moretta house,¹⁷¹ so that in March 1846 I had to lease a small grass field from the Filippi brothers,¹⁷² at the

inhabitants, many of them launderers, around 3 km from the city along the right bank of the Po on the left of the royal road to the Superga. The Parish (St John's) had been added in 1821. The parish priest Fr Peter Abbondioli (1812-1893) was a friend of Don Bosco's. The Parish church of the Annunciation, known as la Madonna di Campagna, run by the Capuchins, is around 3 kms north-east of Turin beyond the left bank of the Dora and on this side of the right bank of the Stura, not far off the right of the road that leads to Venaria Reale. At the time Fr Nicolò di Villafranca Piemonte was parish priest. In 1842 he had opened a school for 150 boys and girls, providing food and clothing for the poorest. – Casalis, *Dizionario* XXI 156-162; Baricco, *Torino descritta*, pp. 208-209. The Monte dei Cappuccini is a hill above the Borgo Po on the right bank of the river, with a Capuchin convent and church.

¹⁶⁵The house with a ground floor and first floor had about 20 rooms. It belonged to ex-Capuchin John Baptist Anthony Moretta (1777-1847). The oratory was there between December 1845 and March 1846.

¹⁶⁶Valdocco: area west of Borgo Dora between the right bank of the river to the north and Borgo S. Donato on the south-west side.

¹⁶⁷our activities were limited to (*I nostri... limitaronsi*) 'L'oratorio si limitò' A 'I nostri esercizi limitaronsi' *em sl A2*

¹⁶⁸St Philip Neri "ran through the squares, along the streets gathering up especially the most neglected boys huddled together in some spot where with innocent and pleasant amusements he kept them far from the corruption of the century and instructed them in the truths of the faith". – *Storia ecclesiastica* p. 315. – "I want to show them an approach to Christian living so that they may be both happy and content, teaching them what are the true amusements and true pleasures". - CG *Alla gioventù*, p. III-IV. – "You can also amuse yourselves I mean with proper games and amusements which will allow you recreation and not lower you" - GP 20.

¹⁶⁹In response to the allegation that... (*In quanto... prima*) *om A add sl A2*

¹⁷⁰There is no mention at this point of the evening classes Don Bosco writes about in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*: "In that same winter we began night school. It was the first time that there was talk of such... (MO 151). We will say more of these and the Sunday schools further ahead in the *Cenni storici*.

¹⁷¹Complaints from the residents forced Fr Moretta to not renew the rental.

¹⁷²The field belonging to brothers Peter, Anthony and Charles Filippi lay alongside, to the east of the Moretta house. At least two hundred metres to the north-east was a shed under construction,

location where at present stands the pig-iron foundry. And there I was under the wide and starry sky, in the middle of a field bordered by a sorry-looking hedgerow that kept out only those who did not want to come in.¹⁷³ There I was with some three hundred young men who found their heaven on earth in that oratory — an oratory the roof and the walls of which were nothing but sky.

To make matters worse, the Vicar of the City, Marquis [Michael] Cavour,¹⁷⁴ informed and prejudiced against these weekend gatherings, sent for me. He briefly reported what was being rumored about the oratory, and then said to me:

“My good Father, let me give you a sound piece of advice. Get rid of those villains, because these gatherings are dangerous”. [p. 8] I replied:

“All I am trying to do is to better the lot of these poor boys. If the City would care to provide any kind of premises for me, I have every hope of being able to very much lessen the number of troublemakers, and at the same time, the numbers of those who go to prison”.

“You are fooling yourself my good priest; these efforts are all in vain. Where will you get the money? I cannot allow such gatherings”.

“The results we have had convince me that these efforts are not in vain: the money is in the Lord’s hands, and sometimes he uses the most paltry of instruments to carry out his work. . .”.

“But I cannot allow such gatherings”.

“Don’t grant them for me, Sir, but grant it for the good of these boys (*figli*) who will end up badly left to their own devices”.¹⁷⁵

“I am not here to argue; this is a disorder and I want to put a stop to it. You do know that without permission no assembly is allowed”.

“My assemblies have no political aim; they are merely to teach catechism to poor boys and I do this with the Archbishop’s permission”.

“The Archbishop has been informed of these matters?”

attached to the Pinardi house.

¹⁷³ *assai om A add sl A2 'e nel tempo stesso' (and at the same time) (om A add sl A2/ 'talvolta' (sometimes) om A add sl A2*

¹⁷⁴ From 1687 until 1848 the vicariate of Turin “was a complex magistrature with legal offices, and administrative and municipal police”. It was the supreme municipal authority. As for the police roles, the Vicar had to “promote observance of orders concerning religion, good behaviour, wholesomeness, enough economical food; peace and safety in the squares and public streets” – Casalis, *Dizionario XXI* 424. Michael Benso, Marquis di Cavour (1781-1850), firstborn son of Marquis Philip di Philippine de Sales, was a keen anti-Jacobite in his youth, but later grew closer including for practical reasons to the regime of the Empire. He married Adele de Sellon from Geneva in 1805. From 1819 he was a decurion and from 1833 to 1835 one of the two syndics of Turin. In 1835 he was appointed “vicar and general superintendent, including the police” of the city. After the first two years the position was renewed for another four. He gave the job “not only boundless energy and the immense and insatiable activity that he could but also a certain dose of implacability” that brought some severe judgement on him from liberals of his time and afterwards – R. Romeo, *Cavour e il suo tempo (1810-1842)*. Bari, Laterza 1984, pp. 607- 610. Joseph Bracco offers some reasoned and reserved documentation on exactly what Don Bosco recalled of the Marquis Michael Cavour’s attitudes, in his important study *Don Bosco e le istituzioni in Torino e don Bosco I*. Turin 1989, pp. 126-130), where he includes the significant letter of Don Bosco’s to the Vicar of the City, 13 March 1846.

¹⁷⁵ left to their own devices (*abbandonati a loro stessi*) *om A add mrg sinA*

“He is informed and I have never put a foot out of place without asking him for his advice and consent”.

“But I cannot allow these assemblies”.

“I do believe, Sir, that you would not want to prohibit me from teaching catechism, which has the Archbishop’s permission”.

“Go, and I will speak with the Archbishop, but do not be obstinate when the orders are issued otherwise you will force me into measures I would prefer not to take”.

The Archbishop had knowledge of everything and urged me to be patient and have courage. In the meantime¹⁷⁶ in order to be able to attend more directly to the care of my boys (*figli*), I was forced to resign from the Refuge, and as a result,¹⁷⁷ I was without employment and without means of support.¹⁷⁸ Every project of mine was given a sinister interpretation, I was physically exhausted with my health undermined, to the point that the word was put around that I had become insane.

[p. 9] Failing to make others understand my plans, I sought to mark time, because I was deeply convinced that events would prove me right in what I was doing. Furthermore, I wanted so much to have a suitable site that in my mind I imagined this to be already a fact. This was the reason why even my dearest friends thought that I was out of my mind. And my co-workers, since I would not give in to them and desist from my undertaking, abandoned me entirely.¹⁷⁹

Dr. Borrelli went along with my ideas. However, since no other course seemed open to us, he thought we should pick [just] a dozen of the younger children and teach them their catechism privately, and wait of a better opportunity to go forward with our plans.

“No” I replied, “This is not the way. This is the Lord’s work; he began it, and he has to bring it to completion.”

“But meanwhile”, he insisted, “Where will we gather our boys?”

“In the Oratory”.

“But where is this Oratory?”

“I see it there in readiness: I see a church, a house, and an enclosed playground. It is there, and I see it.”

“But where are these things?”

¹⁷⁶In the meantime (*Intanto*) ‘Ma la molteplicità delle occupazioni’ A ‘Intanto io oppresso dalla molteplicità delle occupazioni’ *corr A2* ‘Intanto’ *corr A3*

¹⁷⁷Once the first year of employment with Marchioness Barolo offering spiritual assistance at the Little Hospital of St Philomena’s was over, in summer 1846, having chosen to work with the boys of the incipient oratory, Don Bosco left the Refuge, and his belongings were taken to the place he had sublet on the upper floor of the Pinardi house, from 1 July; this is where he would come back to with his mother on 3 November 1846 after a long convalescence. On 1 December Pancrazio Soave sublet the entire Pinardi house with the land around it – Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁷⁸without... support (*per poter... sussistenza*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

¹⁷⁹This was the reason... abandoned me (*e ciò... abbandonarono*) ‘Li miei più cari amici mi consigliavano a desistere da tutto, a cui non volendo accondiscendere mi abbandonarono’ A ‘e ciò era motivo che li medesimi più cari amici mi qualificassero di testa alterata; e non volendo loro accondiscendere, e cessare dalla mia impresa, intieramente mi abbandonarono’ *em mrg sin A2* ‘e ciò era motivo che li medesimi miei più cari amici mi qualificassero di testa alterata; e li miei cooperatori, poiché non voleva loro accondiscendere, e cassare dall mia impresa, intieramente mi abbandonarono’ *corr A3*

“I do not know where they are, but I see them.”

I insisted because of my lively wish to have these things. I was thoroughly convinced that God would provide them.

Dr. Borrelli felt sorry for me in that condition, and he too reluctantly expressed doubts about my sanity. Father Caffasso kept telling me not to take any decision for the duration. The Archbishop [Louis Franson], however, was inclined to agree that I should stay with the work.

All the while Marquis Cavour firmly held to the position that these gatherings, which he claimed were dangerous, should stop. But not wanting to take a decision that might displease the Archbishop, he with [p. 10] his office staff¹⁸⁰ (the equivalent of our city council) arranged for a meeting at the Archbishop's palace. The Archbishop later confided to me that it looked like the last judgment. The discussion was brief, but the verdict was that such gatherings must absolutely stop.

Fortunately Count [Luigi?] Provana di Collegno¹⁸¹ at the time was serving in the Vicar's Council as Head of the Accounting Department. He had always encouraged me and supported my work financially both from his own private purse and on behalf of His Majesty King Charles Albert.¹⁸² This sovereign, gratefully remembered, appreciated the work of the oratory and would send financial help in times of special need. Through Count Collegno he often expressed to me his satisfaction with our special priestly ministry. He placed our ministry on a par with the work of the foreign missions, and would have liked to see such gatherings of young people at risk held in every city of the realm. When he learned of my predicament, he sent me 300 francs by the same Count with words of encouragement. He also let the Vicar's office know that he wished such Sunday gatherings of young people to continue. The Vicar should take care to prevent any disorder that might arise.

The Vicar obeyed and took steps to that effect. He ordered a number of security guards¹⁸³ to attend our meetings and report. The guards sat through catechism, sermon, and hymn singing, and stood by during recreation, and then reported everything to the

¹⁸⁰The *Ragioneria* (Accounts Dept) was not the same as the general municipal council. Don Bosco refers either to the Council which met at least once a month to manage daily concerns in the city or to the general staff which met once a week but which had “particular oversight of the financial management of the city” (hence Accounts Dept). – Casalis, *Dizionario XXI* 423.

¹⁸¹“Faceva parte della Ragioneria il conte Giuseppe Provana di Collegno” (Count . . . Collegno was part of the Accounts Department) - MO 179 (Count Giuseppe, 1785-1854) - “Rather than Joseph he was probably Louis Provana di Collegno, father of cav. Saverio, long benevolent towards the oratories and the Salesians” – P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica. . .*, p. 80. It was an office of the Ministry of Finance with the task of registration and control of everything that concerned finance, the general treasury and the State budget – Casalis *Dizionario XXI* 309-310.

¹⁸²Charles Albert of Savoy (1798-1849), Prince of Carignano of an associated branch of Savoy, succeeded Charles Felice on the throne of the Kingdom of Sardinia for want of a male heir in the main branch (1831-1849). – In the monograph by N. Rodolico, *Carlo Alberto negli anni di regno 1831-1843* (Florence, Le Monier 1936), it is emphasised several times that the King was practically interested in all charitable works: hospitals, nurseries, the Little House of Cottolengo's, Don Bosco's oratories, unruly boys. . .

¹⁸³In reference to the various powers of the Vicar, the security guards might have been simply civic security people or they might have been the ore feared public security guards.

Vicar. By and by his attitude changed for the better,¹⁸⁴ and so did the situation at the oratory.

[p. 11] **The beginning of the current Oratory at Valdocco and its growth until the present day**¹⁸⁵

It was a Sunday evening on the fifteenth of March, a memorable day for our Oratory, when seeing such a huge number of boys playing, and seeing myself alone in their midst, my health and strength at an end, without knowing where I could go now that the field we had rented was to be put to other use, I became so emotional that I burst into tears. "My God", I began saying, raising my eyes to heaven, "Why don't you let me know where you want me to gather these dear boys of mine? Oh please let me know, tell me what I must do!"

These were the kinds of words that were churning in my heart when at that moment a certain Soave Pancrazio¹⁸⁶ came to me saying that there was a Mr Pinardi¹⁸⁷ who had a place I could rent which would be very suitable for my purpose. I went immediately. It was a shed. We spoke about it, agreed on a rental price and on how we could turn the place into a chapel. It all took just a few minutes. I ran back quickly¹⁸⁸ to my boys, called them together and overwhelmed with happiness began to shout: "Courage boys, we have an Oratory. We will have a church, a sacristy, a place for school and for recreation".

This news was greeted with enthusiasm and on Easter Sunday in April¹⁸⁹ we carried all the equipment for church and recreation there and the new chapel was inaugurated. A little later other rooms in the same Pinardi house were rented where we started the Sunday and evening schools. Cav. Gonella,¹⁹⁰ an outstanding benefactor of this Ora-

¹⁸⁴ changed for the better (*migliore*) 'buona' A 'migliore' *em sl A2*

¹⁸⁵ until the present day (*e suo... presente*) *om A add A2*

¹⁸⁶ Pancrazio Soave was an immigrant from Verolengo (Turin) who on 10 November 1845 had rented Francis Pinardi's entire building, other than an attached shed which was under construction. His intention was to set up a starch factory. On 5 June 1846 he sublet it three rooms to Don Bosco and on 1 December, the entire building. P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁸⁷ Francis Pinardi had immigrated from Arcisate (Varese). On 1 April he rented out the shed to Don Bosco that would become his first stable oratory. From 1 April 1849 when the contract with Soave had finished, he rented the whole house to Don Bosco and then sold it to him on 19 February 1851 for 28,500 lire - Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 75-76, 84-85.

¹⁸⁸ quickly (*precipitoso*) 'con trasporto di gioia' A 'precipitoso' *em sl A2*

¹⁸⁹ In 1846 Easter Sunday fell on 12 April.

¹⁹⁰ The explicit reference is to cav. Mark Gonella (1822-1886), very generous in lending help to Don Bosco, but as for the schools we cannot leave out his father, cav. Andrea (1770-1851), who was generous to the MendicITÀ. The administration of the latter, in a manifesto on 3 December 1845, announced that it had "petitioned His Majesty for the faculty of establishing evening schools for adults, entrusting them to the Brothers of the Christian Schools", and that while waiting for appropriate locations one, meanwhile would be "opened in the first days of January in the house of the Brothers of the Christian Schools itself (contrada delle Rosine)", and next to St Pelagia's church, entrusted to the MendicITÀ Istruita by the Archbishop, Colombano Chiaveroti. - Cf P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 64-65; C. Verri, *I Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane e la storia della scuola in Piemonte (1829-1859)*. *Contributo alla storia della pedagogia del Risorgimento*. Erba (Como), Casa Editrice «Sussisi» [s.d.]. pp.120-121; S. Scaglione, *Don Bosco e I Fratelli della Scuole Cristiane*, in «Rivista Lasalliana» 55 (1988) no. 1, pp. 18-23 (*Tempi e priorità delle scuole seriali in Torino*).

tory, was so pleased with these classes that [p. 12] he set out to introduce them at St. Pelagia's.¹⁹¹ The city itself took the evening schools into consideration and opened them in various suburbs around the city where today it is easy for any artisan who so desires to get basic education.¹⁹² Since the things that followed this period are well known to everyone, I limit myself to noting them briefly.

1846. One Sunday in April the current church was blessed and given faculties for celebrating Mass, teaching catechism, preaching and having Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁹³

The Sunday and evening schools made good progress teaching reading, writing, singing, bible history, arithmetic and Italian. Oratory pupils put on public demonstrations of what they were learning.

In November,¹⁹⁴ I took up residence in the Home attached to the Oratory.¹⁹⁵ Many priests, including Frs Vola,¹⁹⁶ Carpano and Trivero took part in what was happening at the Oratory.

1847.¹⁹⁷ The St Aloysius sodality was set up¹⁹⁸ with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. A statue of the Saint was arranged for and the six Sundays leading up to the feast of St Aloysius were grandly celebrated. On the feast day itself the Archbishop came to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to a large group of boys and we enacted a comedy with singing and music.

¹⁹¹ *post* 'Pelagia' *add* 'e quindi dilatate ne' varii quartieri' *A del A2*. 'Lo stesso... città' (the city itself) *om Add mrg sin A2*

¹⁹² In the first half of 1849 at the proposal of two communal councillors, businessman cav. Gabriel Capello and cav. Zenone Quaglia, a Commission was set up to study suitable initiatives for "promoting the moral and material improvement of the working class"; and "the communal council adopted their proposals, consisting essentially in the setting up of evening schools exclusively for young workers. On 17 November that year the first school was solemnly opened" – Baricco, *L'istruzione popolare*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁹³ The celebration of the religious services were preceded by a blessing Don Bosco gave the same day at the entrance on 12 April Easter Sunday; the official blessing was on Easter Monday, by Fr Borel who was delegated by the Archbishop, and on the back of this decree authorising the blessing he wrote: "The undesigned carried out the blessing of the Oratory on 13 April, second day of Easter".

¹⁹⁴ *post* 'novembre' *add* 'anno medesimo in seguito a grave malattia' *A del A2*

¹⁹⁵ On 3 November, along with his mother, Margaret.

¹⁹⁶ Fr John Baptist Vola (1805-1872) is often recalled in Don Bosco's letters to Fr Borel from 1856 to 1850 and amongst the benefactors whom these list. Fr G.B. Francesia gave the eulogy at Canon Giacinto Hyacinth Carpano's (1821-1894) funeral (*Il canonico Giacinto G. Carpano*, Turin, tip. Salesiana 1894); from a well-to-do family from Bioglio (Biella), he helped Don Bosco with funds and collaborating in the oratories, then extending his activity to other youth welfare works and for ex-prisoners. Fr Joseph Trivero (1816-1894) also helped Don Bosco and his oratories and work with donations. He looked after the chapel of the Holy Shroud. In a letter to Fr Borel on 31 August 1846 Don Bosco wrote: "It is ok for Fr Trivero to lend a hand at the Oratory, but note how he deals with the boys. I know that some are already upset. See that the oil covers every dish at our Oratory" (Em I 71) – Cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 78-82.

¹⁹⁷ *post* '1847' *add* 'In questo anno' *A del A2*

¹⁹⁸ Once the Oratory was set up and steady, the St Aloysius sodality began. In early 1847 Don Bosco wrote the Regulations, approved by the Archbishop on 12 April – cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, pp. 347-349; Idem, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 259-260. Cf *Le sei Domenich e la novena di s. Luigi Gonzaga* in GP (1847) 55-71; P. Stella *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 260-261.

Additional rooms were were rented¹⁹⁹ thanks to which a number of evening classes were added to.²⁰⁰ ²⁰¹We took in two poor²⁰² young boys, orphaned, without a trade and ignorant of religion.²⁰³ This is how the Home began and it continued to grow.

Given the large number of boys that were coming²⁰⁴ to the Oratory and because the church and the enclosure at Valdocco had become too small, a new Oratory [p.13] was opened at Porta Nuova in the Vaglietti, now the Turvano house, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception under the title of St Aloysius Gonzaga,²⁰⁵ and Fr Giacinto Carpano was put in charge. This new Oratory began using the same rules and had the same aim as the one at Valdocco; soon it too was filled with boys.

1848. The number of boys (*figli*) taken in as boarders had increased to fifteen. Following a number of problems²⁰⁶ that had arisen because we were preparing the boys for admission to Holy Communion, the Archbishop²⁰⁷ formally gave faculties for preparations for Confirmation and Communion and for fulfilling the Easter duties in the chapel²⁰⁸ at the Oratory.

The first Retreats²⁰⁹ were held for a selected group of boys at the Home attached to the Oratory and we saw excellent results. The City council sent a commission to visit the

¹⁹⁹Pancrazio Soave kept the ground floor of the Pinardi house for his business until 1 March 1847. On that date Don Bosco could use the whole building – Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, p. 76.

²⁰⁰In the Oratory of St Francis de Sales “Then on Sundays and later on winter evenings classes began: reading, writing, elements of arithmetic and Italian, and a special opportunity for getting the youngsters familiar with the use of the measurements they felt they had most need of, given that many were working with trades”. – Appeal for a lottery, 20 December 1851 Em I 140.

²⁰¹Two display programmes have been preserved from 1848 and 1849: *Saggio dei figliuoli dell’Oratorio di san Francesco di Sales sopra la storia sacra dell’Antico Testamento 15 ag. 1848 ore 4 pomeridiane*. Turin. Tip. G. B. Paravaia e Comp. 1848; *Saggio che danno I figliuoli dell’Oratorio di S. francesco di Sales sul sistema metrico decimale in forma di dialogo il 16 dicembre 1849 ore 2 pomeridiane*. Assiste l’ill.mo professore D. G. Ant. Rayneri. Turin. Tip. G.B: Paravia e comp. 1849. For both there is indication that F. Aporti was present: MB III 428 and 601.

²⁰²poor (*overi*) om *Add mrg sin A2 post* ‘religione’ (religion) *add* ‘ed abbandonati’ *A del A2*

²⁰³In the MO 199 it describes how the first occupant of the ‘attached home’ at the Oratory was a fifteen year-old from Valesia. But the registers show, instead that the first two were from Turin, one a student the other a working lad – cf. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 175-176.

²⁰⁴the great number of boys that were coming (*la grande affluenza*) ‘Crescendo in maniera straordinaria il numero’ *A* ‘La grande affluenza’ *em sl A2*

²⁰⁵The decree from the Archbishop erecting the oratory of St Aloysius carries the date of 18 December 1847. It began, then, on the 19th. It was initially entrusted to Fr Giacinto Carpano and Fr Trivero then in 1849 to Fr Peter Ponte, the Marquis Barolo’s secretary. The place that was rented out belonged to the widow Vaglietti who appointed as heir Mr Joseph Turvano who was, amongst other things, a notary for the *Mendicità Istruita* and Don Bosco and a municipal councillor around 1852. In 1858 he was secretary of the Misericordia sodality to which Cafasso also belonged.

²⁰⁶a number of problems... (*difficoltà insorte*) ‘inconvenienti insorti’ *A* ‘difficoltà insorte’ *em sl A2*

²⁰⁷l’Arcivescovo *om A add sl A2* ‘diede... facoltà’ ‘autorizzò’ *A* ‘diede facoltà’ *em A2* ‘diede formalmente facoltà’ *corr A3*

²⁰⁸chapel (*cappella*) ‘chiesa’ *A* ‘cappella’ *em sl A2*

²⁰⁹These were preached by Fr Federico Albert (1820-1876), then Palatine chaplain, and parish priest and vicar forane in Lanzo Torinese – MO 207 and note on line 72. The retreats in 1849 are documented on a printed page, *Esercizi spirituali alla gioventù. Avviso sacro*. Turin, tip. G.B. Paravia e comp. 1849.

Oratories and after sending a letter expressing their satisfaction they offered a subsidy of 600 francs. The Institute for the Education of the Destitute (*Mendacità*)²¹⁰ also came to the aid of the Oratories with a temporary subsidy. We made a solemn procession to Our Lady of Consolation (*Consolata*)²¹¹ for Communion in May in honour of Our Blessed Lady. We had already done that for two years, but without the procession. The pictures of the Stations of the Cross were blessed and together we made a visit to the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday,²¹² then in the evening that day for the first time we held the ceremony of the *Lavabo*²¹³ (Washing of the Feet).²¹⁴

This same year piano and organ lessons began, and the boys (*figli*)²¹⁵ began to go out to sing Mass and Vespers with church choirs in Turin, Carignano, Chieri, Rivoli etc.²¹⁶

1849. The entire Pinardi House,²¹⁷ the area in front and behind the house was rented.²¹⁸ The church had been extended by at least half. The number of boys in the Home was now thirty. The Pope²¹⁹ fled Rome and went to Gaeta in the Kingdom of Naples and the boys at the Oratory took up a collection which deeply moved the Holy

²¹⁰The first formal request for “charitable grants” made to the administrators of the *MendicITÀ Istruita* seems to have been on 20 February 1850 (cf *Em* I 96-97). The Work granted 1,000 lire. Don Bosco made mention of it in a new request on 16 November 1852, “still recalling and grateful for the grant that the worthy Gentlemen of the *Pia Opera della MendicITÀ Istruita* gave some three years ago... on behalf of the three Oratories set up in this city” (*Em* I 172- 173).

²¹¹The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation (*Consolata*) was often the goal of feast day trips in 1845 and 1846. Close to Valdocco and especially dear to Turinese piety, it was an ideal place for nurturing Don Bosco’s Marian devotion and that of his boys. In 1834-1857 it was run by the Oblates of the Virgin Mary founded by Lanteri.

²¹²After the Holy Thursday Mass “In Cena Domini” the consecrated hosts are carried in procession to a “place of repose” in a specially decorated chapel open for visits by the faithful for a short time of adoration. In the colloquial language of the day this was called “visite ai sepolcri” or visiting the tombs.

²¹³Don Bosco incorrectly calls the ceremony of the washing of the feet the *Lavabo*, the ceremony which recalls when Jesus washed his disciples’ feet (Jn 13:1-7). It used to be a separate ceremony but is not part of the Mass.

²¹⁴In...etc om A add mrg sin A2

²¹⁵The *figli* is the Italian term for Don Bosco’s Piedmontese dialect term *fiel* or *fielj* (*figli, ragazzi*).

²¹⁶Carignano, Chieri, Rivoli: cities 18, 15, 11 kms respectively south, east and west of Turin.

²¹⁷post ‘è’ add ‘tutto’ A del A2 (refers to ‘the area behind and in front of the house was [all] rented’)

²¹⁸Once the term for the sublease from Pancrazio Soave of the whole Pinardi house and grounds had finished Don Bosco rented it all from the owner, Francesco Pinardi on 1 April 1849. cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, p. 76. The so-called Pinardi shed was more than 290 metres long and 6 wide. The chapel was 15 metres long. By transferring the sacristy to a small room in the Pinardi house and turning the space left into a choir area the chapel now ran the full length of the shed. Cf Giraudi, *L’Oratorio...*, pp. 70-73.

²¹⁹Pius IX (1792-1878; Pope: 1846-1878) left Rome and fled to Gaeta in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies on 24 November 1848 after the assassination of his Minister Pellegrino Rossi (15 Nov); he returned after the retaking of Rome by French troops (4 July 1849), on 12 April 1850. On the involvement of the boys at the Oratory during the exile and the feast on his return on 20 July 1850, Don Bosco invites people to read the brief work he put together: *Breve ragguaglio della festa fattasi nel distribuire il regalo di Pio IX ai giovani degli oratori di Torino*. Turin, tip. Eredi Botta 1850, 27 p. – OE IV 93-119.

Father²²⁰ and he had Cardinal Antonelli²²¹ [p. 14] write a letter of thanks and sent his blessing on the boys at the Oratory. Then from Gaeta²²² he sent a packet of 60 dozen rosaries for the boys at the Oratory and these were distributed with much celebration on 20 July. See the booklet printed for that occasion.

Because of the war Fr Cocchis²²³ closed the Guardian Angel Oratory²²⁴ and it remained closed for a year and was then entrusted to us. Fr Vola was asked to run it.

The Senate and the Ministry sent a commission to visit the Oratories²²⁵ and their report and discussion was favourable. See the Piedmontese Gazzette 29 March 1849.

Savio Ascanio²²⁶ was the first young man in the Oratory to receive the clerical habit.

1850.²²⁷ We bought the Pinardi House and the house attached. The number of boys living in was now fifty. The number of boys coming to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was extraordinary so we planned a new church and on 20 July Cav. Cotta²²⁸ laid the

²²⁰was deeply moved (*per... teneramente*) 'di cui è grandemente' A 'per cui il Santo Padre ne è teneramente' *em sl A2*

²²¹James Antonelli, born in Sonnino on 12 April 1806, died in Rome on 6 November 1876, was apostolic delegate at Orvieto, Viterbo, Macerata, and treasurer of the Apostolic Chamber in 1845, then cardinal and president of the Advisory Body in 1847; he was a key figure in organising the Pope's flight to Gaeta at the end of November 1848 and the return to Rome in spring 1850. He was Secretary of State from 1850 until his death.

²²²Then from Gaeta... occasion (*Manda... circostanza*) *om A add mrg sin A2*.

²²³Fr Cocchis: actually John Cocchi, born in Druent (Turin) in 1813, ordained priest in 1836, a man of many initiatives. In 1849-1850 he was amongst the leaders of the *Società di carità a pro dei giovani poveri ed abbandonati*; he later founded the College (boarding) of the Artigianelli (young craftsmen or working boys), St Martin's Oratory, the farming community at Moncucco. He died on 25 December 1895, written up in BS 20 (1896), p. 49.

²²⁴Don Bosco notes the participation of a group of boys from the Guardian Angel Oratory with Fr Cocchi at the head during the 1848-1849 war between Piedmont and Austria. The Guardian Angel Oratory was re-activated by Don Bosco in autumn 1849 in a place he had rented from lawyers Bronzini Zapelloni and Daziani and it remained under his direction until 1866 when it was transferred to the new parish of St Giulia.

²²⁵According to MB 4, 16-25, 42-51 the visit by the Senators Count Fed. Sclopis, the Marquis Ignatius Pallavicini and Count Louis di Collegno would have occurred in January 1850 and the discussion in the Senate on 1 March – "The Senate of the Kingdom unanimously decided that the King's Government should support such a worthy institution of religion and society. The Municipality set up a Commission to recognise the good done there and help it" - *L'Armonia*, 26 July 1850, cited in *Breve ragguaglio*, p. 22.

²²⁶"Savio received the clerical habit in 1848 at the Cottolengo House, because the Turin Seminary had been closed. Afterwards, he gained permission not to go to the seminary in Chieri but to stay at the Oratory and help Don Bosco... In the Oratory the first clerical investitures were in 1851" – E. Ceria in MO 216, note on line 73. Savio (1831-1902) became a priest and was Rector at the Refuge.

²²⁷In the left-hand margin of manuscript B Fr John Bonetti writes: "The year is wrong; bought 15-2-51 and the foundation stone on 20-6-51". "In an official act drawn up by Turvano, on 19 February 1851 Francis Pinardi sold the land and buildings for 28 thousand five hundred lire to Fathers J. Bosco, J. Borel, Robert Murialdo, Joseph Cafasso. This land and these buildings were bounded by the Filippi brothers' holdings to the east and north, the Giardiniera street to the south and Mrs Bellezza's establishment to the west" – Giraudi *L'Oratorio...*, p. 99.

²²⁸Joseph Cotta, born Turin on 4 April 1785 and died there on 29 December 1868, Senator from 1848: the "banker of charity" left huge sums to charity in life and in death. Don Bosco was not amongst his legacies but he had helped him considerably in life – cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 65-66.

foundation stone and Canon Moreno²²⁹ blessed it amidst a huge crowd of people. The acts of this function are in writing.²³⁰

The Bishop of Biella²³¹ in a circular of his recommended the building of the new church and collected a thousand francs. Since we lacked money to continue the church we organised a Lottery which was held the following year and was very favourably received.²³² We collected²³³ three thousand three hundred items which, deducting expenses, produced a net result of 26 thousand francs.

On the first of June the Mutual Aid Society began.²³⁴ The statutes can be seen in the printed booklet.²³⁵

1851.²³⁶ On 20 June, the Feast of Our Lady of Consolation (Consolata) the new church was blessed with much pomp, many distinguished people in attendance and much joy, and the first sacred ceremonies were held there. The attached poem gives a hint of how much was done on that day: 'Come augel di ramo in ramo' etc.²³⁷

Various purchases were made for the church; the St Aloysius altar was bought. The choir loft was built.

[p. 15] **1852.** The explosion at the powder mill²³⁸ on 26 April the year before²³⁹ rocked

²²⁹ Canon Ottavio Moreno (1779-1852): see earlier comment. In the left margin of the other manuscript *B* Fr John Bonetti notes: "only the stone was blessed". Effectively the blessing of the foundation stone happened on 20 July 1851. The solemn blessing of the church took place on 20 June 1852.

²³⁰ are in writing (*trascriva*) 'trascrive' *A* 'trascriva' *corr A2*. It was not written in fact.

²³¹ John Peter Losana was bishop of Biella, born Vigone (Turin) in 1793, titular bishop of Abido and Vicar Apostolic at Aleppo (Syria), he was transferred to Biella in 1833 where he remained until his death in February 1873. Two copies of the circular the bishop sent to parishioners of the diocese exist in the ASC, one a ms and the other printed. The date was 13 September 1851. Cf. Letter of Don Bosco, 4 May 1852, thanking the bishop for the circular and the donation of a thousand lire – Em I 155-156.

²³² which was held the following year (*che... seguente*) / om *A* add *mrg sin A2* / 'favorevolissima accoglienza' (very favourably received) 'un favorelissimo entusiasmo' *A* 'favorevolissima accoglienza' *corr A2*

²³³ collected (*vi si ottiene*) 'si fa' *A* 'vi si ottiene' *em sl A2*

²³⁴ The Mutual Aid Society began months earlier; the regulations were printed around June 1850 with a note signed by Don Bosco. Article 18 and final reads thus: "The current regulations will come into force on the first of July 1850". Cf. *Società di mutuo soccorso di alcuni individui della compagnia di San Luigi eretta nell'oratorio di San Francisco di Sales*. Turin, tip. Speirani e Ferrero 1850, 8 p. – OE IV 83-90

²³⁵ The first... printed (*Il primo... stampato*) om *A* add *mrg sin A2*

²³⁶ 1851 om *A* add *mrg sin A2* More precisely, the Lottery initiative begins 1851 (authorised 9 December) and concluded 1852 (tickets extracted on 12, 13, 14 July). For aims, regulations, promoters etc cf *Catalogo degli oggetti offerti per la lotteria a beneficio dell'oratorio maschile di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco*. Turin, tip. Dir. Da Paolo De-Agostini 1852, XVIII p. – OE IV 145-162. Cf. G. Bracco.

²³⁷ Don Bosco had a flyer printed by Marietti with the text of the Ode in 21 verses. Above was the title: On the day the new church of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was blessed, the young people there filled with joy and feelings of sincere gratitude to Benefactors expressed thus. At the end of the Ode a signature: 'In the name of all the Clergy and children at the Oratory, Fr Bosco John'. The text is reproduced in MB IV 437-438 with this notice: "Thousands of copies of this Ode were printed. It was put to music and the youngsters learned it".

²³⁸ (The explosion... year) (*Lo scoppio... anno*) om *A* add *mrg sin A2*

²³⁹ The factory of piles of gunpowder and explosives belonging to the army was located close by St Peter in Chains' cemetery and a little more than 500 metres from the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. The

the Home at the Oratory so this year we built a new construction workshop and damaged it considerably. It was close to being finished (2 December) when it almost completely collapsed²⁴⁰ causing much fear and damage. Nobody, fortunately was injured.

Mr Michael Scanagatti offered a set of elegant candelabra for the main altar²⁴¹. The bell tower was built. Since there was no further space for evening classes, some were held in the new church. The old church was turned into a dormitory and study and classrooms.

Fr Cafasso had the current pulpit built²⁴².

1853. Building started on the part of the house which had collapsed: it was completed, furnished and by October was being lived in²⁴³. The new area meant that the dormitories, refectory for the boys who were living in could be better organised. By now there were 65 of them.

Cav. Duprè²⁴⁴ bought a communion rail (*balaustrina*) of marble and embellished the St Aloysius altar. The Marquis Fassati²⁴⁵ provided a marble railing for that, and a set of brass candelabra for Our Lady's altar.

Count Cays,²⁴⁶ the prior of the St Aloysius sodality bought a bell²⁴⁷ which was blessed by the parish priest of Borgo Dora. He provided the current Baldacchino.

For the first time we held the Forty Hours²⁴⁸ and the Octave for the Easter festivities.

We rented out the entire Belleza house²⁴⁹ in order to get rid of the disturbances from

explosion occurred on 26 April 1852 at 11.45 a.m. And not the 'previous year'. It resulted in some 30 victims amongst its workers.

²⁴⁰There were two collapses: a partial one on 20 November 1852 when a scaffolding or bridge broke, and the second, when nearly the entire building collapsed two weeks later on 2 December. The foundations were restarted in spring. The house was completed in October 1853. – Giraudi, *L'Oratorio...*, pp. 122-124. The works indicated were done after the opening of the church halfway through 1852.

²⁴¹Michael Scanagatti was a fairly well-off citizen who appears several times amongst the list of benefactors. He is also found in the list of members of the Lottery Commission in 1852 along with lawyer Gaetano (Cajetan) Bellingeri who worked at the St Aloysius Oratory, and Engineer Joseph Blachier and Mr Federico Bocca, involved respectively in drawing up the plans and managing the building of the church of St Francis de Sales.

²⁴²Fr Cafasso... built (*D. Cafasso...attuale*) om A add A2

²⁴³'e nel... ottobre ed è tosto' A 'e nel mese di ottobre' em A2

²⁴⁴Banker Joseph Louisi Duprè (died 1884), city councillor, member of the Lottery Commission in 1852, son of Joseph Duprè (1767-1852), also a banker.

²⁴⁵Marquis Dominic Fassati Roero San Severino was a great benefactor of Don Bosco's. Born at Casale on 4 August 1804, he was a Major in the Royal Body Guards for King Charles Albert. He died in Turin on 3 May 1878.

²⁴⁶Count Cays, Count of Gilletta and Caselette, was born in Turin on 24 November 1813. He had a Doctorate in Jurisprudence and was a widower at 32 years of age. He was prominent in charitable and social activities in Turin, president of the St Vincent de Paul Conferences, a catechist and benefactor at Don Bosco's Oratories. He was also a member of the Sub-alpine Parliament from 1857 until 1860. In 1877 he asked to join the Salesian Society and in 1878 was ordained priest. He died on 4 October 1882. He was Prior of the St Aloysius sodality for 1853-1855.

²⁴⁷The bell was blessed by Fr Agustine Gattino, priest at St Simon and Jude's parish in Borgo Dora. He had solemnly blessed the church on 20 June.

²⁴⁸The Forty Hours: not a liturgical rite, but regulated by the *Instructio Clementina* by Clement XI (1705), during which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the Monstrance for the veneration of the faithful for 40 hours, usually over 3 consecutive days – Octave: the eight days following Easter Sunday.

²⁴⁹Don Bosco rented Mrs Teresa Caterina Novo's entire house. She was widowed (her name returned to

this tavern and all the people of suspect behaviour who went there.

1854.²⁵⁰ Because of the financial crisis this year no new works were undertaken. We simply finished off some of the most essential things. Count Cays was re-elected as prior of the St Aloysius sodality and provided a long new frieze²⁵¹ which ran the length of the church cornice.

The lack of food,²⁵² work which exposed many young people to danger in body and soul meant that we took in many more boys and their number increased to eighty six.

3. The *Historical Outlines (Cenni storici)*

Historical outlines concerning the Oratory of St Francis de Sales

The idea of the²⁵³ Oratories came from frequenting the prisons in this city.²⁵⁴ In these places of spiritual and temporal misery,²⁵⁵ we found many young lads in the bloom of youth; clever, good-hearted and able to be the consolation of their families and an honour to their country²⁵⁶ but instead they were locked up there, coarsened, made the opprobrium of society. Giving careful thought²⁵⁷ to the reasons for this misfortune, one came to understand that in most cases they were unfortunate more for lack of education

Bellezza). Don Bosco first rented from 1st October 1853 through September 1856, then renewed the contract from 1 October 1856 until September 1859. – Cf. *Stella Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 91-92.

²⁵⁰“Had he delayed by a year Don Bosco would have found himself caught up in the general financial crisis of 1853-1854 with building costs and supporting three times the number of boys who were living in compared to 1850” - Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 90-91.

²⁵¹The word used is 'panta' (translated here as frieze) a Piedmontese dialect term from the French *pente*, drapery which decorates the top part of the baldacchino. In this case it was a ledge or cornice running right around the top of the wall of the church of St Francis de Sales.

²⁵²“Lack of any kind of food, a larger number of abandoned and wretched boys, the fewer donations from private individuals who now just could not afford it has put me in such a situation of need that I do not know where to turn” – letter to Count Clement Solaro della Margherita, 5 January 1854, Em I 212. – “Now finding myself in an exceptional situation I dare once again to explain my most urgent needs, convinced that they will be kindly listened to... 3rd Keeping some of the poorest and most neglected whose number this year have increased to ninety due to many boys being orphaned and abandoned after the sad outbreak of cholera” – To the Administrators of the Pious Work for education of the Destitute (*Mendicità*), 13 November 1854, Em I 235. – “The great lack of food to eat and lack of work put some abandoned and at risk boys at even greater risk. They would have ended up badly if they had not been helped with material and moral support. Some of them, around a hundred, most of them orphaned in the fatal outbreak of cholera last year, are actually living in at Valdocco” – Memo to the administrators of the *Mendicità*, 21 Nov. 1855, Em I 271-272.k,

²⁵³of the (*degli*) of these (*di questi*) A 'degli' em sl A2 om A add sl A2

²⁵⁴An evident discrepancy between here and what Don Bosco wrote at the beginning of the *Cenno storico*.

²⁵⁵spiritual and temporal misery (*miseria... temporale*) 'punizione' A 'di miseria spirituale e temporale' em sl A2

²⁵⁶to their country (*della patria*) 'de' paesi' A 'della patria' em sl A2

²⁵⁷Giving careful... misfortune (*Ponderando... svenuta*) am A add sl A2 'di quella sventura | delle loro sventure' ACD 'della loro sventura' B 'di quella sventura' corr Bb

than wickedness.²⁵⁸ One could note also that²⁵⁹ little by little they could be led to appreciate their dignity as human beings,²⁶⁰ that they could reason, and that they must earn their bread in life through honest effort and²⁶¹ not by stealing. In other words as soon as their minds²⁶² were enlightened by a moral and religious principle they began to feel something good in their hearts which they could not explain²⁶³ but which made them want²⁶⁴ to be better people. In fact many changed their behaviour while still in the prison, while others when released lived in such a way that they would not end up there again.

So we had confirmation²⁶⁵ that these young men were unfortunate for want of religious and moral instruction and that these two educational means were ones that together could²⁶⁶ keep good boys good and lead the unruly ones to make wise judgement²⁶⁷ when they were released from these places of punishment.²⁶⁸

As a trial,²⁶⁹ some appropriate catechetical programs were begun in the prisons around the capital and a little later in the sacristy of the church of St Francis of Assisi. And thus the Sunday gatherings began.²⁷⁰

²⁵⁸“As soon as he began to deal with and speak to this new kind of audience Fr Caffasso soon came to realise that they became miserable and coarsened, but more for want of religious instruction than through malice on their part. He spoke to them about religion and they listened. He offered to return and they awaited him with pleasure. He continued his catechism program, invited other priests to help him, especially those living at the Institute and soon began to win over the hearts of these lost individuals. He began to preach, heard confessions and soon these prisons, which with their cursing and blaspheming and other ugly vices seemed to be infernal madhouses, changed into places where men who knew that they were Christians began to praise and serve God their Creator, lifting up their voice in hymns to the adorable name of Jesus” - *Cafasso*, pp. 82-83.

²⁵⁹that... (che... inoltre) *om A add mrg sin A2*

²⁶⁰dignity as human beings (*la dignità... che è*) 'che l'uomo ha l'anima' *A 'la dignità dell'uomo che è' em sl A2*

[fn:261 through... and (*con... e*) *om A add sl A2*

²⁶¹con...e (through...and) *om A add sl A2*

²⁶²minds (*mente*) 'orecchie' *A 'mente' corr A2*

²⁶³feel something good... explain (*piacere... ragione*) *om A 'un piacere di cui non sapevano darne ragione' add sl A2 'un piacere di cui non sapevansi dare ragione' corr DbCx*

²⁶⁴made them want (*11 loro... desiderarsi*) 'si proponevano' *A 'li faceva risolvere' em il A2 'li faceva risolti' B 'li faceva risolvere' CD 'loro faceva desiderare' corr DbCx*

²⁶⁵So we had confirmation) *si confermò col fatto*) *om A add sl A2 'd'istruzione (instruction) di educazione' A 'di educazione' corr A2 'd'istruzione' em sl A3 morale (om A add sl A2/*

²⁶⁶together could (*potevano... cooperare a*) 'potevano far buoni i discoli, tanto più' *A 'potevano efficacemente cooperare a' em mrg sin A2*

²⁶⁷make wise judgement (*1a far senno*) *om A add sl A2 'a far bene' B 'a far senno' corr Bb 'alla buona strada' CD*

²⁶⁸unruly ones... punishment (*I discoli... punizione*) *om A 'qualora fossero già traviati' add sl A2 'quando fossero già traviati' B 'quelli che ne fossero usciti' C 'i discoli quando fossero usciti da que' luoghi di punizione' em sl Cb*

²⁶⁹As a trial (*Per... prova*) 'Con tale scopo' *A 'Con questo scopo per prova' corr A2 'Con questo scopo, per prova' C 'Per venire a qualche prova' corr Cb 'nelle carceri' (in the prisons) om A add mrg sin A2 'e poco dopo' (and a little later) om A add mrg sin A2*

²⁷⁰And thus... began (*e quindi... festive*) *om A 'e quindi si diede principio alle radunanze festive' add mrg sin A2*

Boys released from prison were invited²⁷¹ as well as others who we found and collected here and there in the streets and squares and workshops during the week. Moral and religious stories, hymns, small gifts, some games were the lure we used to deal with them on Sundays and other holy days. Throughout 1841 on average²⁷² around seventy boys²⁷³ attended. With great satisfaction the oratory continued at²⁷⁴ St Francis of Assisi²⁷⁵ for three years, until the extraordinary number of boys forced us to choose a larger place. Then in 1844 Don Bosco, for reasons of Church employment, had joined the administration²⁷⁶ of the pious work of the Refuge²⁷⁷ in Valdocco. There a suitable place²⁷⁸ was selected and on 8 December 1844²⁷⁹ the first chapel²⁸⁰ destined exclusively for the young people²⁸¹ was blessed. This chapel consisted of two rooms next to the building used by the two priests who were running the aforesaid work of the Refuge. The Oratory lasted²⁸² a year here.²⁸³

In autumn 1845,²⁸⁴ because of the growing number of boys, a number that often exceeded two hundred, the building which up until then had served as a chapel was now to be used for something else,²⁸⁵ so it was necessary to seek a more appropriate place.

²⁷¹were invited (*erano invitati*) *om A* 'accogliévansi' *add mrg sin A2* 'raccogliévansi' *B* 'si raccogliévano' *CD* 'erano invitati' *em sl DBCx* 'quelli... carceri e' (those... prisons) *om A add mrg sin A2*

²⁷²on average (*in media*) *om A add sl A2*

²⁷³This is the figure we find mostly in the *Cenno*.

²⁷⁴With...at (*Con...questo*) *om A add sl A2*

²⁷⁵at St Francis of Assisi (*sito... di Assisi*) *om A* 'locale' *add sl A2* 'locale' *BC* 'sito di Francesco di Assisi' *em sl Cb*. In place of "Francis of Assisi" Don Bosco had used the generic term "locale". In doc. *C* the scribe asks the question: "(Which?)". Don Bosco corrects it, specifying which.

²⁷⁶the administration (*alla Direzione*) 'all'Opera' *A* 'alla direzione' *em A3* 'della (of the) *del A* 'della' *corr A2* 'pia... Rifugio'

²⁷⁷pious work of the Refuge (*pia... Rifugio*) 'piccolo ospedale detto di S. Filomena' *A* 'pia opera del Rifugio' *em sl A2* 'pia opera del Rifugio' [Rifugio *corr Db*] *CD*

²⁷⁸place (*sito*) *posto A* 'sito' *em 'al' A2* 'adattato al bisogno (suitable) spazioso per la ricreazione, ed una' *part A* 'adattato al bisogno' *em 'il' A2*

²⁷⁹8...1844 (*otto...1844*) *om A add sl A2* '8 dicembre anno 1844' *B* 'il giorno otto Dicembre 1844' *CD*

²⁸⁰The first chapel...blessed (*era... cappella*) 'L'edificio era consacrato in chiesa' *A* 'era consacrata la prima' *em il A2* 'era benedetta la prima cappella' [chiesa *A3* 'capella' *emend sl A4*] *em A3 post cappella add* 'dall'autorità ecclesiastica ed anche' *A* 'previo il consenso dell'autorità ecclesiastica ed anche dell'autorità civile municipale' *corr A2 del A3*

²⁸¹destined...people (*destinata... gioventù*) *om A add sl A2*

²⁸²This...lasted (*Questa durò*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

²⁸³a year (*un anno*) 'circa due anni' *A* 'due anni' *corr A2* 'due anni circa cioè sino al principio del 1847' *corr Cb* 'quasi due anni cioè sino alla fine del 1846' *corr Cb2* 'un anno cioè sino al principio del 1846' *corr Cb3* 'un anno' *corr Cb4 post 'anno' add* 'l'oratorio fu stabile nel sito accennato' *A del A2*. "a year": we could hypothesis a succession which is debatable if we take the variants introduced into the manuscript *ms C* from *Cb*; Don Bosco corrects and re-corrects to try to find chronological consistency, but does not succeed. From the blessing of the chapel (8 December 1844) to the forced abandonment because of the opening of the little hospital of St Philomena's (10 August 1845), exactly 8 months went by.

²⁸⁴In...1845 (*Nell'...1845*) 'ma' *AB* 'Ma' *C* 'Allora' *em sl Cb* 'Nell'autunno del 1845' *em Cb2*

²⁸⁵had served...else (*aveva... destinazione*) *om ABC* 'aveva servito dovendo avere altra destinazione' *add il Cb del Cb2* 'aveva servito di chiesa dovendo avere altra destinazione' *add sl Cb3*

For about four months²⁸⁶ we went to St Martin's²⁸⁷ near the city Mills but finished there to give way to another catechism program for young people.²⁸⁸ St Peter's in Chains cenotaph, the Moretta House, an enclosure belonging to the Filippi house served as an Oratory up until spring 1846.²⁸⁹

That year we rented and then bought the Pinardi house in the Valdocco district, and this is where the Oratory of St Francis de Sales arose. The number of boys grew such that in 1850²⁹⁰ it often went beyond two and also three thousand.

With a view to providing for this need, in 1851 the current church was put up and that was done with help from the Lotteries²⁹¹ of items and other private donations.

*The Oratory of St Aloysius*²⁹² at Porta Nuova. In 1847, seeing that such a huge number of boys could no longer be contained in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales,²⁹³ another was opened at Porta Nuova between dei Plantini and Valentino street. Administration of this was entrusted to Fr Giacinto Carpano,²⁹⁴ and then was passed on to others. Currently Fr Leonardo Murialdo²⁹⁵ it is zealous director. The average number²⁹⁶ of boys is around 500.²⁹⁷

The Guardian Angel Oratory. The extraordinary number²⁹⁸ of boys coming to the

²⁸⁶For... months (*per... mesi*) *om AB* 'qualche tempo' *C* 'per lo spazio di circa quattro [tre *Cb* quattro *em Cb2*] mesi /*em* 'il' *Cb*. "For the space of around four months (Don Bosco corrects an earlier 'three')": it is a clarification that Don Bosco introduces into doc. *C*, at the invitation of the scribe, which follows the indication in the first draft "for some time", and adds "(if you could clarify the time")

²⁸⁷Cf *Cenno* and the information concerning the wandering oratory.

²⁸⁸Following the words "young people" in doc *C* the scribe adds ("it seems to me that there would have been still another reason"). Don Bosco does not intervene in the text. The *Cenno storico* is more exact and explicit.

²⁸⁹until... 1846 (*sino... 1846*) 'fino all'anno 1846' *ABC* 'sino alla primavera del 1846' *corr Cb del Cb2* 'sino alla primavera del 1846' *add sl Cb3*. Following the indication "1846" in doc. *C* the scribe adds: "(it seems to me that the time periods indicated with this last year are not in agreement)". Don Bosco makes a correction, clarifying: "up until spring 1846".

²⁹⁰1850 | 1860 *CD* 1850 *corr Db*

²⁹¹Lotteries | 'una lotteria' *CD post 'oblazioni' (donations) /add 'l'economato vi concorse colla vistosa somma di franchi 10000' A del A2*

²⁹²A concentrated summary of different events spread over five years.

²⁹³The church of St Francis de Sales.

²⁹⁴Fr Carpano Giacinto: cf *Cenno*

²⁹⁵Fr Leonard Murialdo, Saint, Cousin of Fr Robert Murialdo born Turin 26 October 1828, priest on 21 Sept. 1851, director of the St Aloysius oratory from July 1857 to autumn 1865, when he went to Paris for a year of study at the seminary of St Sulpice. He was then Rector of the Artigianelli school (boarding) from 1886 and in 1873 founded the Pious Society of St Joseph. He died in Turin on 26 March 1900.

²⁹⁶The average number (*Il numero*) *om A add A2*

²⁹⁷The figure refers, certainly, to all the oratories together at a single moment. Writing on 10 July 1850 to a young priest who was already helping in the first oratory and went back to Portugal in 1848, Don Bosco tells him that at the recent feast of St Aloysius there were 150 Confirmations and 500 Communion and that at the evening services the number of boys exceeded 1,600 – letter to Daniele Rademaker (1828-1885), Em I 104. – *L'Armonia* 26 July following says that the Oratory of St Francis de Sales: "Is not yet ten years old and it already has more than a thousand youngsters who regularly come there". – cited in *Breve ragguaglio*, p. 22.

²⁹⁸The extraordinary number... coming (*Lo... concorso*) *om A add sl A2*

Oratory at Porta Nuova soon made us²⁹⁹ realise that another site was needed where the greatest need was felt.³⁰⁰ Vanchiglia³⁰¹ is a heavily populated part of Turin and full of youngsters who just wander about on Sundays and holy days. The worthy Fr Cocchi³⁰² had already opened an oratory there but had to abandon it due to other things he had to do. So in the same place with an almost identical purpose,³⁰³ in 1849 we reopened the Guardian Angel Oratory there, near the Po. Administration was entrusted to Fr Robert Murialdo,³⁰⁴ but since his health is currently up and down it has been entrusted to Fr Michael Rua.³⁰⁵ The average number presently³⁰⁶ attending this Oratory is around four hundred.

General observations. We could call these Oratories places aimed at dealing with youngsters at risk³⁰⁷ on Sundays and other holy days³⁰⁸ by offering them pleasant and honest recreation after they have attended the church services. So as well as the churches there are enclosures that are large enough³⁰⁹ for recreation and other suitable places for lessons and to bring the pupils under cover during bad weather in the cold season and when it rains. Ways of attracting them to come are: small prizes, games and a kind welcome. Medals, holy pictures, fruit, something to eat or a snack; sometimes a pair of socks, shoes or other clothing item for the poorest ones; finding them work,³¹⁰ going to see their families or their employers. The games are: *bocce* (bowls), *piastrelle* (throw-

²⁹⁹made us... needed) (*fece... indispensabile*) 'non potè soddisfare al bisogno' A 'fece tosto conoscere essere indispensabile' *emend sl A2*

³⁰⁰another... felt (*nuovo... bisogno*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

³⁰¹Borgo Vanchiglia occupied a wide populated area to the north-east of the city between the Po, Dora and corso San Maurizio. Properly speaking Vanchiglia was not regarded as part of Turin but it belonged to the Dora district. The other three districts in Turin were Po, Monviso, Moncenisio. The borgo (*borghi*) were minor units: Po, Dora, San Donato, Pallone, Vanchiglia, Rubatto, San Salvatore, San Secondo, Crocetta, Borgo Nuovo.

³⁰²Before Don Bosco, Fr John Cocchi, assistant priest at the Annunciation parish in Vanchiglia had begun the work of the oratories in Turin, founding one dedicated to the Guardian Angel: cf. Programma of the Oratory and *Progetto di scuole domenicali e serali*, in «L'Educatore» 3 (1847) 762-765; they are signed by the Priest directors, Frs John Cocchi and Robert Murialdo.

³⁰³In... scopo (So... purpose) *om A add mrg sin A2* 'vicino a Po (near the Po) in Vanchiglia' A 'vicino a Po' *em A2 post 'Po' add 'dei Signori Daziani e Bronzini che l'appigionavano' CD*

³⁰⁴Fr Robert Murialdo (1815-1883), from Turin, chaplain of His Majesty the King. From the outset his charitable activity was tied in with Fr Cocchi's and Don Bosco's, with a growing preference for his cousin's initiatives and in particular for the Artigianelli school.

³⁰⁵Administration... Michele (*La direzione... Michele*) *om A add mrg s A2*. Fr Michael Rua, Blessed, successor of Don Bosco in governing the Salesian Society (1888-1910) born Turin on 9 June 1837, died 6 April 1910. As a young clerical student he was active in the oratory of St Aloysius already in 1853; from 1854 to 1856 he collaborated with Fr Paul Rossi, then Fr Leonard Murialdo. At the end of 1857 he went to the Guardian Angel Oratory in Vanchiglia. Ordained priest on 29 July 1860, "he could have called himself Director since he carried out the most important roles in administration, but instead in deference to Fr Robert Murialdo, who continued working there, he called himself vice director for three years" - E. Ceria, *Vita del servo di Dio Don Michele Rua*. Turin, SEI 1949, p. 49.

³⁰⁶*post* 'presentemente' *add* (1863) *CD*

³⁰⁷at risk (*pericolanti*) *om A add sl A2*

³⁰⁸on Sundays and other Holy Days (*ne' giorni festivi*) *om A add sl A2*

³⁰⁹large enough (*spaziosi*) 'grandi' C 'spaziosi' *em sl Cb*

³¹⁰finding them work (*al lavoro*) 'a padrone' A 'al lavoro' *corr A2*

ing discs), stilts, see-saws³¹¹ of various kinds, leap-frog, gymnastics, military exercises, singing, concerts with instruments and vocals. But what attracts the youngsters most is the kind welcome they receive. Long experience has made us understand³¹² that the good result of education of the young³¹³ consists especially in knowing how to make oneself loved so that one can then be feared.³¹⁴

The religious services on Sundays and other holy days³¹⁵ are as follows: Mass followed by a story from the bible or Church history,³¹⁶ or an explanation of the Gospel of the day; then recreation. After midday catechism in classes, vespers, a brief instruction from the pulpit, Benediction and then followed by the usual recreation. Once religious services are over everyone is free to stay and play or to go home. Once night falls we send everyone home and the Oratory is closed.

There is a set of rules guiding everything in church, recreation and school. Those taking part are priests, clerics and some good citizens who help out with everything. During Lent, in all three places there is catechism each day at midday³¹⁷ for those who are not free at other times during the day. We even celebrate Mary's month with a sermon or spiritual reading,³¹⁸ rosary and Benediction at sunrise or at the time in the evening when we say the Hail Mary, according to circumstances.

People taking the most active part at the beginning of the Oratory have been, as well as those already mentioned, Frs Ponte, Trivero, Pacchiotti, and John Vola. Of particular help has been the worthy Fr John Borelli.³¹⁹ He has been the soul and support of things exercising his priestly ministry and in material and moral help. Also Cav. Baricco³²⁰

³¹¹ seesaws (*altalene*) *altalena* AB 'altalene di vario genere' *corr Bb* 'altalena' CD

³¹² Long. . . . understand (*Una lunga. . . conoscere*) *om ABCD add sl Bb*

³¹³ good. . . young (*il buono. . . gioventù*) *om A* 'per ottenere buoni risultati nell'educazione della gioventù' *add sl A2* 'per ottenere buoni risultati nell'educazione della gioventù' *B* 'buono risultato dell'educazione nella gioventù' *corr Bb*

³¹⁴ consists. . . feared (*consiste. . . temere*) 'bisogna che facciamo do farci amare e non mai di farci temere' *A* 'bisogna studiare il modo di farci amare per farci poi temere' *corr A2* 'bisogna studiare il modo di farci amare per di poi farci temere' *B* 'consiste specialmente nel saperci fare amare per farci di poi temere' *corr Bb* 'bisogna studiare il modo di farsi amare per farsi poi all'uopo temere' CD. "Learn how to make yourself loved before making yourself feared" - *Ricordi confidenziali* (Confidential Memo for Rectors), p. 146. After 'feared' in doc *C* the scribe adds "(and the catechism books? And the lotteries?). Don Bosco does not intervene.

³¹⁵ on Sundays and other holy days (*ne' giorni festivi*) *om A add sl A2*

³¹⁶ or Church (*od ecclesiastica*) *om A add sl A2*

³¹⁷ "I have around four hundred coming to catechism every day at midday. This means that morality in our poor boys has not yet been lost" - letter to Fr Peter Abbondioli, priest at Sassi, 4 April 1854, Em I 224-225.

³¹⁸ or spiritual reading (*o lettura spirituale analoga*) *om C add sl Cb*

³¹⁹ Fr Peter Ponte (1821-1892), from Pancalieri (Turin), for some time boarding with Don Bosco (1847-1848), a friend of Silvio Pellico, chaplain and secretary to Marchioness Barolo, often mentioned in the biographies of the Marchioness and of the second superior general of the Sisters of St Anne, Maria Enrichetta Dominici (1829-1869). Fr Trivero: cf note in *Cenno*. Fr Sebastian Pacchiotti (1806-1884), chaplain at the Refuge along with Fr Borel, collaborator in the 1st oratory, then canon at Giaveno (Turin). Fr John B. Vola, cf. *Cenno*. Fr Borelli, John Borel: cf *Cenno*.

³²⁰ Fr cav. Peter Baricco (1819-1887) was a collegial theologian of the University, a member of the *Accademia Solariana*, of which he was president from 1846 to 1860; he was a town councillor, education inspector and deputy mayor. His publications were mostly to do with public education in Turin.

has taken part several times.³²¹

*Sunday schools.*³²² Many youngsters, either through want of means or facilities are already moving on in years but have not had the necessary instruction for learning trade. During the week they were not able to attend school of any kind, so this need suggested Sunday schools. We³²³ started these in 1845. It seemed difficult at the beginning given that there were no books or people to give advice or direction.

We had school, we taught things but during the week,³²⁴ what had been taught and learned³²⁵ on Sundays was mostly forgotten. Just the same we mostly overcame this serious obstacle by taking just one³²⁶ area of study at a time and having just one lesson to be learned through the week. This way we succeeded in getting them to learn how to read and write and then³²⁷ the four arithmetical operations, and then the elements of the metric system, Italian grammar³²⁸ and Bible history, but without ever passing on to something new if what we already had in hand³²⁹ was not yet well understood.³³⁰

³²¹He... times (*Esso... parte*) om A add mrg sin A2

³²²“In the festive oratories, thanks to the zeal of priests and charitable lay people as well, we began in 1846 to teach the first elements of reading, writing and arithmetic, and thus began the Sunday schools” - Baricco, *L'istruzione popolare*, p. 126 - The date 1846 (winter 1846-1847) is the more realistic one and coincides with the *Cenno storico. - Le letture di famiglia (1842-1847)* by L. Valerio gave some news on the opening of Sunday and evening schools here and there. - On the spread of the Sunday schools in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, England, United States, the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom, see J.M. Degérando, *Della pubblica beneficenza*, t. III. Florence, C. Torti 1884, pp. 349-353; F. Aporti, *Sulle scuole festive di Lombardia*. Letter to Alessandro Torri in Pisa, 11 January 1834. Pisa, tip. Nistri 1834; R. Lambruschini, *Sulla istruzione del popolo*. A Memo read to the Academy of the Georgofili in Florence at its meeting on 4 December 1831, now in R. Lambruschini, *Scritti politici e di istruzione pubblica* collated and illustrated by A. Gambaro. Florence, La Nuova Italia 1937, pp. 437-450; he speaks, amongst other things, of the *scuola delle feste* which he founded at Figline Valdarno (Florence) for working boys “in which we taught linear design applied to arts, perspective, and some more obvious principles of geometry and mechanics” (p. 445); the aim was “not to take them away from work during week days and to get them away from idleness and gambling on Sundays” (letter of 3 June 1833 to his uncles, Card. L. Lambruschini, in defence against an article that appeared in the «Voce della Ragione» that saw in this initiative a danger to liberalism and disregard for Sundays. A. Gambaro, *Primi scritti religiosi di Raffaello Lambruschini*. Florence, Riv. Bibl. Italiana 1918, pp. 308-310, no. 1.

³²³(*tra noi*) om A add sl A2 'Per la prima volta' (for the first time) om A add sl A2 '1845 | 1846' ABC '1846' D '1845' corr Db Cx 'Sul principio (at the beginning) da prima' A 'Sul principio' em sl A2

³²⁴we...week...forgotten (*non... settimana*) om A add mrg sin A2 'in gran parte' (mostly) om ABC add sl Cb

³²⁵and learned (*ed imparato*) om A add sl A2

³²⁶one (*sola*) om AB add sl Bb

³²⁷then (*successivamente*) om A add sl A2 'di poi' (and then) om A add sl A2

³²⁸Italian grammar (*della grammatica italiana*) om A add sl A2 'ma' (but) om A add mrg sin A2 'senza... passare' (without ever passing) om A 'sempre continuando' add mrg sin A2 'senza mai passare' em A3 'un novello ramo' (something new) om A 'materia novella' add mrg sin A2 'un novello ramo' em A3

³²⁹what... hand (*insegnamento... mani*) om A add mrg sin A2

³³⁰Giving information on the *scuola festiva* he founded at Cremona in 1822-1823, Ferrante Aporti offers the following clarification of his programme: “This Sunday (festive) school includes: 1. Teaching of freehand and geometric drawing applied to the arts and includes also those taught in 4th class, who were let go from the schools giving them thus an opportunity to progress and perfect themselves; 2. Teaching proper to the first two elementary years, We liked to also introduce subjects from the

Public performances that were offered satisfied important personages who honoured us with their presence, amongst which Fr Aporti,³³¹ the City Mayor, Cav. Bellono and Cav. Fr Baricco.

Evening schools. Amongst the multitude of boys who came another need appeared,³³² since although the Sunday classes produced good results, nevertheless it was not sufficient for many. So we began to invite them to come during the week on days and at times that were most convenient for the pupils. One boy encouraged another and in a short while it was considered appropriate to set a fixed time and this was in the evening, just when the working boys had finished their day's work.

In 1846³³³ the evening classes began for the first time. Attendance was extraordinary to the point where we had to limit ourselves to the number of pupils we could physically take in the squeezed circumstances. Since evening schools were then opened by the city administration in many parts of the city it was not necessary to offer them in the other oratories.³³⁴ They continue until the present only in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales.

first class to open the way up to more adults who are near to becoming fathers of families, so they could acquire the first understandings of religion and morals, and reading, writing, counting, spelling etc needed by everyone of whatever circumstance".— F. Aporti, *Scritti pedagogici*, ed. A. Gambaro, vol II. Turin, Chiantore 1945., pp. 221-222. — In Lombardy in 1834 there were 228 of these Sunday schools. And in the country schools mostly they taught elementary subjects. In the city especially they taught geometry and drawing applied to the most useful arts: cf. G. Sacchi, *Intorno all'attuale stato dell'elementare istruzione in Lombardia in confronto di altri Stati d'Italia. Memoria statistica.* Milan, Stella 1834, pp. 7-8.

³³¹ Ferrante Aporti, born in the province of Mantova in 1791, died in Turin in 1858, priest, professor of biblical exegesis in the seminary at Cremona and director of the largest primary school in the city (1821-1848). He founded the first infant nursery school in Italy. Between the end of August and the beginning of October 1844 he ran an extraordinary course in method in Turin. He ran into trouble with Austria in 1848 for supporting the war of liberation and was exiled in Turin where he was made a senator by King Charles Albert and in 1849 appointed as President of the University Council in the capital and of the permanent Commission for secondary schools, so became the first school authority of the Kingdom after the Minister for Public education. In doc *C* we find an indication: "mayor of the city of Turin" after which the scribe writes, "(Do we know the name?)" above the line Don Bosco adds, "Cav. Bellono": he was lawyer George Bellono, member of parliament for Ivrea, mayor of Turin from 1850 until 1852, and was benevolent towards Don Bosco's oratories. He died in Turin on 4 December 1854.

³³² Amongst... (*In mezzo... nel*) /om *A* add *mrg sin A2*

³³³ 1846 | 'quaranta sette' *A* '1847' *em A2* '1847' *BCD* '1846' *corr Db Cx* 'per la prima volta' (for the first time) *om A* add *sl A2*. Don Bosco corrects the date indicated in the first draft of *A*, 1847. As was said for the evening schools, it seems more probable and realistic that it was winter 1846-1847. "In 1847 daily evening classes were added in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales for teaching Italian, French, the metric system, calligraphy and singing.- Baricco, *L'istruzione popolare*, p. 138. - There seems to be no solid basis for anticipating such a date to the end of 1844 at the Refuge, supported by E. Ceria (and by Don Bosco himself in the MO 183), or to winter 1845-46 in the Moretta house as indicated by Don Bosco in MO: cf. MB XVII 850-858; MO 151, - Cf also: "In 1846 the evening schools began, and were visited by a deputation of city councillors. They were highly satisfied and gave a report to the full Council whereupon a grant of a thousand francs was granted with an annual subsidy of 300 francs for the evening schools, a subsidy that continued until 1877" — *L'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales ospizio di beneficenza. Esposizione del Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco.* Turin, Tipografia Salesiana 1879, p. 4 — OE XXXI 260.

³³⁴ (Since... Oratories (*Siccome... questa*) *om AB* 'Ma poco dopo il Municipio di Torino accorse efficacemente a questo bisogno ed aprì in vari quartieri della città molte classi di scuole seriali ben provvedute

The subjects taught are: Reading, writing, the metric system, Italian, plainchant, vocal music, instrumental music and some drawing, pianoforte, organ and also French.³³⁵

Day school during the week. Another type of boy can be found on the loose wandering the city and these are the ones who are either very poorly dressed or since they cannot settle down to discipline are not accepted in the public schools or are expelled from them. For the most part they are either orphaned or neglected by their parents even at a tender age and so they wander the streets and squares brawling, cursing and stealing. We opened a school for them in the Oratory of St Francis de Sales³³⁶ and another in St Aloysius. A considerable number attend in both oratories³³⁷ and through the careful and kindly concern of the teachers satisfactory results have been obtained in terms of proper behaviour (*moralità*) and discipline. A few of them were then admitted to classes in town, others in evening schools and some others yet found employment.³³⁸

*The Home*³³⁹ at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales.³⁴⁰ Amongst the young people

di maestri' add mrg sin Bb 'Motivi particolari impedirono si contuasse questa' CD 'Siccome le scuole seriali furono di poi aperte dal municipio in molti quartieri della città, così cessò il bisogno di questa' em mrg sin Db il Cx

³³⁵"Given his consistent attendance at evening classes, Peter had learned his arithmetic and metric system with elements of Italian very well and his employer considered him equal in his work to a good number of his companions" – *La forza*, p. 54. - "The Quartermaster Corporal himself having been informed that Peter had a good writing hand and knew his arithmetic and metric system well, assigned him to some special work which the Quartermaster would not normally be allowed to do". – *Ibidem* p. 77.

³³⁶"I do not cease to recommend myself to your proven charity... also to open a day school at Ognissanti" – letter to Duchess Laval de Montmorency, 12 August 1856, Em I 297. - "At the sight of the ever-growing need to instruct boys belonging to the lower class of people I decided to open a day school to take in at least some of the huge numbers who go wandering about during the day either because their parents take no care of them or because they are far from public schools; therefore around Borgo Dora, S. Barbara, Piazza Paesana, Borgo S. Donato, Collegno, Madonna di Campagna one finds no fewer than three thousand inhabitants without either church or a public school. It is to meet the needs of these boys that I gave my hand to constructing a school able to take about five hundred. But since we need money to pay the teachers, for construction works, for school materials and other scholastic items, I am appealing to your kindness asking you to help me, which means helping these youngsters whom we can call truly abandoned, at risk and risky". Circular of 1st October 1856 – Em I 304. Between the entrance to the Oratory on the Giardineria road and the church of St Francis de Sales "Don Bosco put up two classrooms... In a short time these classrooms were ready to take in students. At the beginning of 1857 many (extern) youngsters came to the new elementary school during the day from home, from places around the Oratory" – Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*... p. 129.

³³⁷in both oratories (*in ambidue gli oratorii*) om A add sl A2

³³⁸A few... employment (*Parecchi... padrone*) om A add sl A2

³³⁹Home (*Casa dell'*) '*Ricovero annesso all'*' / AB '*Casa dell'*' em sl Bb

³⁴⁰"Amongst the youngsters who attend the Oratories in the city there are some of them who find themselves in such circumstances as to make any spiritual approaches useless unless they are given temporal help. Sometimes there are boys already somewhat older, orphans, and without fatherly assistance because the parents cannot or do not want to look after them, and they are without a trade, without instruction. These ones are exposed to the most serious spiritual and corporal risks and we cannot prevent their ruin unless there is someone to extend a kindly hand to them and accept them, set them on the way to work, order Religion. The home attached to the oratory of St Francis de Sales has as its purpose to receive boys in this situation" – *Piano di Regolamento per la Casa annessa all'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco. Scopo di Questa, ms* written in 1852 ca. ASC 026 *Regolamento*. – "The word Oratory can be taken in various senses. If considered as a Sunday gathering it means a place where the boys can play nice games after having satisfied their religious

who come to these Oratories we find some who are so poor and abandoned that almost anything we did for them would be almost³⁴¹ useless without providing somewhere where they could live, eat and be clothed. We tried to do this with the attached Home at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. At the beginning we rented out a small house³⁴² there in 1847 and began to gather up a few of the poorest³⁴³ boys. At the time³⁴⁴ they went out to work in the city coming home to the Oratory to eat and sleep. But the serious need that we became aware of from various towns around the province made us determine to extend our acceptance also to boys who were not attending the Turin oratories.³⁴⁵

One thing happened after another. Abandoned³⁴⁶ young people swarmed in from everywhere. So we established a platform whereby we accepted only boys between the ages of twelve and eighteen, without father and mother, completely abandoned and

duties. Places of this kind in Turin are the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Valdocco, St Joseph's at St. Salvatio, St Aloysius near dei platani st, the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia, St Martin's near the city Mills. Also called daily oratories are the day and evening schools in the above-mentioned places where during the week there are classes for boys who for lack of means, or who are down-at-heel, cannot attend the schools in town. If then the word oratory is taken in its broad sense, we mean the Home at Valdocco in Turin which comes under the name of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. The youngsters can be taken into this Home either as working boys or as students. . . . "– *Il pastorello*, pp. 70-72, no. 1.

³⁴¹ almost (*quasi om ABCD add sl Db Cx*)

³⁴² The Pinardi house, sublet by Soave on 1 December 1846; on 1 March 1847 Don Bosco was able to use the whole building.

³⁴³ *post* 'poveri' (poorest boys) *add* 'o orfani o trascurati dai parenti' *CD*

³⁴⁴ At . . . they (*In. . . essi*) 'che' *A* 'Allora' *em sl A2* 'Allora' *B* 'In quel tempo essi' *em sl Bb* 'Nei di feriali' *CD*

³⁴⁵ The first drafts of the *Piano di Regolamento per la casa annessa*. . . reflect this situation: "The purpose of this. Amongst the youngsters who attend the Oratories in the city there are some of them who find themselves in such circumstances as to make any spiritual approaches useless unless they are given temporal help. . . we cannot prevent their ruin unless there is someone to extend a kindly hand to them and accept them, set them on the way to work, order Religion. The home attached to the oratory of St Francis de Sales has as its purpose to receive boys in this situation. . . Chapter 1. Acceptance. For a boy to be accepted, the following conditions must be met. . . 4. That he goes to one of the Oratories in the city: because this Home is to help the boys of the Oratories and experience has taught us that it is of utmost importance to know something of the character of the boys before receiving them" – *ms* copy with corrections by Don Bosco, microschede FDB 1.958 C 9 – ASC 026 *Regolamenti*. - The daily coming and going between the Oratory and the city concerns not only the working boys but also the students: cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*. . . pp. 177-178. In following drafts of the *Regolamento* for the attached Home, in pamphlets and in newspapers simpler and less restrictive acceptance conditions appear: "For the working boys, 1. That they are orphaned of father and mother 2. That they are already twelve years old and no older than eighteen 3. Poor and abandoned. For students 1. They have completed primary classes and want to do secondary 2. They can be recommended for intelligence and morality" – original *ms* from the 1860s, ASC 132 Oratorio 11, 2; cf also «La Buona Settimana» 2 (1857), no. 47, 15-21 Nov., p.392; "For a young man to be accepted in the Home known as the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Valdocco. . .". Turin, tip dell'Oratorio di S. Franc. Di Sales 1862, 1 fol.

³⁴⁶ Following "abandoned" in doc *C* the scribe adds: "(probably here we could copy in the printed acceptance conditions)". Don Bosco does not intervene. Certainly the scribe is referring to the sheet printed at the Oratory Press in 1862, cited above.

poor. But since³⁴⁷ going into the city into public workplaces³⁴⁸ had bad consequences, we extended our place, rebuilt existing parts and built new (we have seven hundred boys) workshops³⁴⁹ so that everything is now here at home. The trades taught are tailoring, boot-making, book-binding, carpentry, printing and study for those whose behaviour and attitude to academic subjects make them suitable for it.

The earnest desire many showed for taking regular academic courses³⁵⁰ meant we had to make exceptions in our acceptance conditions. So for studies were also accepted boys who were not abandoned nor completely poor so long as their behaviour and attitude to study was such that it left no doubt that they could hope for an upright and Christian success³⁵¹ in an academic career.

*Administration.*³⁵² In the house we even have a set of regulations to guide everything. There is a Rector on whom everyone depends.³⁵³ He has a prefect as his vice and who is responsible for accounts and correspondence. A Director looks after the school, keeps in touch the teachers and study assistants, catechists or spiritual directors. A bursar looks after service staff, repairs and all the domestic arrangements in general. The shop heads or master craftsmen in each workshop also depend on him. There are no fixed

³⁴⁷ But since...extended (*Siccome... così*) *om A add mrg sin A2 'poi' om AB add sl Bb*

³⁴⁸ public workplaces (*nelle... officine*) *om A2 'presso ai pubblici opifizi' add sl A3 'presso ai pubblici opifizi' B 'nelle pubbliche officine' corr Bb 'presso ai pubblici opifizi' CD*

³⁴⁹ (workshops (*gli...laboratorj*) 'Le arti cui' A 'Gli opifici o laboratorj' *em A2*. From 1853 to 1856 the Home attached included in its building and started from scratch a number of workshops: shoe makers (1853), binding (autumn 1854), tailoring, carpentry and cabinet-making (1856), printing (1861-62) metal-turning (1862) and finally a bookshop (1864). Almost at the same time the first three secondary classes were opened (1855-1857) and then the fourth and fifth (1859-1860).

³⁵⁰ regular academic courses (*scientifici regolari*) 'ginnasiali' *AB 'scientifici regolari' em sl Bb 'ginnasiali' CD*

³⁵¹ upright and Christian (*onorevole e cristiana*) *om A add A2 'scientifici | dello studio' A 'scientifica' em A2*

³⁵² Administration (*Amministrazione*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

³⁵³ A Rector...depends (*un Rettore...dipende*) 'un amministratore unico' A 'un Rettore da cui ognuno dipende' *em sl A2*. Chapter 2 on the Rector. 1. The Rector is the head of the establishment. It is up to him to accept or send away boys from the house. He is responsible for the duties of all employed members and for the morality and education of the boys of the house... Chapter 3. The Prefect. 1. The prefect takes care of the business side of the house and takes the place of the Rector in his absence for administration and in everything that he is expressly charged with doing... 9. The Bursar (Economer) the Director of the school, those looking after food purchases are in direct rapport with the prefect... Bursar (Economer) 1. The administration of the economic sector is divided into three parts: service of the house, discipline of the boys; preservation and repair of domestic items... 4. He is in charge of everything that concerns cleanliness – for people, for the boys' clothing and he also sees that the working boys are on time for their duties... 9. He keeps in close contact with the Master Craftsmen... Fourth Chapter regarding the Catechist 1. The catechist or spiritual director has the role of watching over and providing for the spiritual needs of the boys... 13 The catechist fro the working boys keeps in direct touch with those in charge of the dormitory, with the Bursar, the prefect to give and receive details on the conduct of each one 14. The students' catechist will be helped by the study assistants, and will keep directly in touch with the teachers and the school directors. Regarding the school directors, 1. The school director is in charge of everything regarding the students, teachers, and matters concerning them... “ – original ms of Don Bosco's in the *Piano del Regolamento della casa annessa* [NB. Only the 1st article concerning the Catechist has been drawn from a copied *ms/*] – *ASC 026 /Regolamenti*, microschede 1.958 D 6-10.

fees, so the house is supported only by charity coming mostly from private donations. The city council usually gives an annual grant of 300 francs for lighting and wood for the evening classes during winter. It is not possible to calculate the precise expenses for the whole house or for each individual but we could establish somewhere around 60 cents per day per person all up. The church, the buildings, the site for the house and oratory at Valdocco are the property of Fr Bosco.³⁵⁴ Those at Porta Nuova and Vanchiglia are leased.

Results. To understand the results obtained in these schools, the Oratories and the Home at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales³⁵⁵ we need to divide the pupils into three groups:³⁵⁶ the undisciplined,³⁵⁷ the restless and the good. The good ones stay that way and make marvellous progress in goodness. The restless type, those already accustomed to wandering around not doing much work achieve some success through a trade, with assistance, instruction and by being kept busy. The undisciplined ones mean we have a lot to do. If we can get them to gain some taste for work we can mostly win them over.³⁵⁸ By the means already indicated we can obtain some results³⁵⁹ which could be explained thus: 1. That they do not get worse. 2. Many improve in common sense, so can earn their bread in an upright manner. 3. Those who seemed to be insensitive under vigilance over time³⁶⁰ become more pliant if not completely, at least to some extent. We leave it to time to profit from the good principles and know how to put them into practice.³⁶¹

³⁵⁴As for Don Bosco's ownership via the legal method known as "società tontinaria", cf letter to Can. Lorenzo Gastaldi on 24 November 1852, Em I 174-175; Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 84-85, 157.

³⁵⁵the Home...Sales (*casa...Sales*) 'questo ricovero' *AB* 'casa detta Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales' *em al Bb* 'questo ricovero' *CD*. On the movement of acceptances in the Home at the Oratory in Valdocco in a complete year from 1847 to 1869 see Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp. 175-178, 194-196. 439-470.

³⁵⁶Regarding Don Bosco's classification of boys on a moral and educational basis cf. P. Braidò, *Il «sistema preventivo» in un «decalogo» per educatori*, in *RSS* 4 (1985) 143-148 (and in the same volume, pp. 277-278, 280-283).

³⁵⁷dissolute (*dissipati*) 'e disviati' *B* 'dissipati' *corr Bb*. Braidò offers a number of synonyms in Italian for *discolo* (undisciplined) which we include here in English: rebels against any kind of discipline, amoral; too lively, habitually undisciplined, cannot stand discipline; *biricchino* (mischievous): lively, shrewd, cunning, cheeky; *monello* (urchin): left to his own devices, street kid, very lively, alert, restless (and then, pejorative: corrupt or led astray)

³⁵⁸If...over (*se...guadagnati*) *om A add mrg sin A2*

³⁵⁹By...results (*Coi...risultati*) 'ma si è provato coll'esperienza che co'[con *A* co' *em A2*]/ *mezzi accennati si ottenne con' /A* 'Coi mezzi accennati si poterono ottenere alcuni risultati' *em mrg sin A2*

³⁶⁰over time (*col tempo*) 'non sono ed' *A* 'col tempo' *corr A2* 'col tempo' *B* 'a lungo andare' *CD*

³⁶¹become...practice (*fanno...praticare*) 'I buoni principj se non fruttano immantinenti, fruttano più tardi' *A* 'lasciano che i buoni principj acquistati giungano a produrre più tardi il loro effetto' *corr A2* 'lasciano che i buoni principj acquistati giungano più tardi a produrre il loro effetto' *B* 'fanno luogo ai buoni principj acquistati che giungono più tardi a produrre il loro effetto' *corr Bb* 'si fanno se non in tutto almeno in qualche parte più arrendevoli, e si lascia al tempo di rendere profittevoli i buoni principj che se non appresero a praticare impararono almeno a conoscere' *C* 'si fanno, se non in tutto almeno in qualche parte, più arrendevoli. Si lascia al tempo di rendere profittevoli i buoni principj che se non appresero a praticare, poterono almeno conoscere' *D* 'si fanno, se non in tutto almeno in qualche parte, più arrendevoli. Si lascia al tempo di rendere profittevoli i buoni principj che poterono conoscere come debbansi praticare' *corr Db Cx*

This means that every year we have been able to place more than a hundred boys with good employers where than can learn a trade.³⁶² Many have returned to the families they fled from and are now more docile and obedient. Not a few were placed with upright families as domestics.

The coming and going of boys from the Home at this Oratory is around three hundred a year. A few of them have a found a place with the National Guard or Military Band, others continue with the trade they learned here while some serve in upright families³⁶³ and yet a sizable number of others take up teaching. These ones sit for the regular exams or remain here at home or go as teachers to towns that are asking for them. Some also take up other civic careers.

Amongst the students many tackle an ecclesiastical career.³⁶⁴ These, once they have finished their secondary studies, are mostly sent off to the various bishops who look after them lovingly to help them and allow them to continue in the career they have aspired to. Amongst these we have chosen a number who carry out a teaching role in this house,³⁶⁵ teach catechism in the Oratories, assist in the various workshops and dormitories. When they become priests they continue to exercise their sacred ministry on behalf of the boys here or those who attend other oratories in the city. Others follow their inclination and are assigned to other aspects of ministry which the ecclesiastical superior judges them suitable for.³⁶⁶

One very deserving person³⁶⁷ in the oratories and this house is Fr Victor Alasonatti³⁶⁸

³⁶² a trade (*un mestiere*) 'o si perfezionarono nell'arte loro' CD

³⁶³ alcuni... famiglie (some... families) om CD

³⁶⁴ In the process of drafting the text of the *Constitutions (Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales)* in 1860-1861, to the 1858 earlier text Don Bosco adds the following article: "In view of the serious risks run by youth wanting embrace the ecclesiastical state, this Congregation will take care to nurture in piety and vocation those who show a special aptitude for study and an observable disposition for piety. In taking boys in for study the poorest will be accepted by preference, because they lack means for doing their studies elsewhere"; In 1863/1864 the article was added in the following manner: "so long as they offer a well-founded hope of success in the ecclesiastical state. In the Home at Valdocco there are around 555 and at Mirabello more than a hundred boys who are doing the classics courses with this end in mind" – *Costituzioni SDB*, p. 76. "For some years on seeing the few workplaces and given the very frequent requests by boys to be taken in, I had a larger number of boys take up studies. Now I have a good number who earn their living elsewhere, some as qualified teachers, some in music, and others who have followed an ecclesiastical career in various towns in the sacred ministry" – letter to the Minister for Public education, Terence Mamiani (1799-1885), 12 June 1860, Em I 409. – ... these boys living in... have made very satisfactory progress, so that many of them now earn their living honestly either as school teachers, or in the printing press, others are military graduates, and others still in an Ecclesiastical career, while others finally are working at a desk in various Government Departments – letter to the Minister, Michael Amari (1806-1889)

³⁶⁵ Home (*ospizio*) 'casa' AB 'ospizio' em sl Bb 'casa' CD

³⁶⁶ Others... suitable for (*Altri... idonei*) om A add A2

³⁶⁷ One person... works (*Una persona... beneficenza*) om AB add mrg sin Bb om CD

³⁶⁸ Victor Alasonatti, first prefect of the Salesian Society, born at Avigliana (Turin) on 15 Nov. 1812, ordained priest in Turin on 13 June 1835, teacher, he entered the Oratory on 14 August and was professed with the first group of Salesians on 14 May 1862. He was a close collaborator of Don Bosco's especially in administration. He died at Lanzo (Turin) on 7 October 1865. *post 'sua'* (his) *add 'Fra gli ecclesiastici che si resero benemeriti per l'ajuto morale e materiale prestato agli oratorj festivi*

who has tirelessly dedicated all his efforts for many years in these charitable works.

As for all the personnel of this house and the oratories, including domestic staff,³⁶⁹ nobody receives a stipend,³⁷⁰ but each offers his work for free.

To understand the critical apparatus, note the following:

A = Don Bosco's original document

A2, *A3* = later successive interventions by Don Bosco

B = manuscript written by the scribe

B2 = later intervention by the scribe

Bb = interventions by Don Bosco in document *B*

C = the manuscript copied by cav. Oreglia di S. Stefano

C2 = later interventions by scribe cav. Oreglia

Cb = interventions by Don Bosco in document *C*

Cx = copying into manuscript *C*, by scribe P. Albera, some of the variants introduced by Don Bosco in *ms D*

D = Manuscript copied by scribe

D2 = later interventions by the scribe

Db = Don Bosco's interventions in manuscript *D*

4. From the *Storia d'Italia (History of Italy)* to the *Brevis Notitia (Brief notice)* regarding the Salesian Society

Introduction

The short documents offered in this concluding section represent a summary of the two fundamental dimensions, real and temporal, of Don Bosco's overall personality and activity: his 'consecration' to the young as a diocesan priest in Turin, working in what had become his city, through the oratory (understood in its broadest possible sense), and the transition to a further specific 'consecration' as a 'religious' and founder of a religious society totally dedicated to prevention for young people, the "Society or congregation of the oratories".³⁷¹

The first three documents belong to the first dimension, two of which fully belong to the early 'oratorian' tradition in Turin. Connected are also the *Storia d'Italia* (History of

furono D. Pacchiotti Sebastiano; T. Giacinto Carpano, T. Vola Gioanni; D. Trivero Giuseppe, D. Ponte Pietro, T. Leonardo Murialdo, T. Cav. Roberto Murialdo, Sac. Rua Michele; Sac. Alasonatti Vittorio. Ma il Teologo Borrelli Giovanni fu in modo particolare, il promotore, il sostegno prestandosi con opere in modo efficace in tutti i tempi e in tutti i modi' *A del A2*

³⁶⁹ *ante* 'oratorj' *add* 'altri' *D* 'comprese... servizio' (including domestic staff) *om AB add Bb*

³⁷⁰ "Nobody receives a stipend and all these teachers give their efforts charitably" – letter to the Chief Inspector of Studies in Turin, Francis Selmi (1817-1881), 4 Dec. 1862, Em I 542. - "These teachers for more than seven years have been freely offering the work their charity on behalf of the boys who live here" – letter to the Minister for Public education, Michael Amari, 7 March 1863, Em I 559. - Amongst those responsible for workshops or also other staff lending a hand were, obviously, some who did receive a stipend: cf Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica...*, pp.243-246.

³⁷¹ The term recurs in the first draft of a memo attached to the request for approval of his incipient association of Salesians, sent to Rome on 12 February 1864: cf ASC *Autografi-Società Salesiana*, micros. FDB 1.924 D 9-10.

Italy), faithful to the style and purpose of the *Storia ecclesiastica* (*Church History*) 1845 and the *Storia sacra* (*Bible History*) 1847. even though the subject matter he is working with is secular the purpose is identical: “enlighten the mind to make the heart good”, educating in a moral, religious and civic manner, three adjectives that are connected and cover much the same ground together. Beyond everything else, in putting together the *Storia d’Italia*, in all probability Don Bosco came across language that approached or identified with the pedagogical programme that we find often in his writings: “make yourself loved rather than (or ’before’) making yourself feared”.³⁷²

As for passing to a kind of narrative pedagogy tied to a gradual arrival, between the final years of the 1850s and the early years of the 1860s, other than elements of fact we can count on an explicit testimony from Don Bosco himself. On Wednesday 2 February 1876, talking with Rectors of his institutions who were meeting at Valdocco about needing to be concerned about each place’s history, almost as a basis for the overall history of the Salesian institution, he said: “I have already summed up and put in writing various things regarding the oratory from the beginning until now, and in fact up until 1854 I had written out many things more at length; in 1854 we began to talk about the Congregation and things broadened out immensely and began to take on another aspect. Nevertheless I considered that it would be very helpful for those who are to follow and for giving greater glory to God, therefore I would continue to write”. So although Don Bosco would not write something similar to the Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales for the Congregation, he would write a number of ’brief notices’ about it even though these had a different purpose, which was to gain approval for it.³⁷³

The first testimony is published here; it has a number of forced issues in it including chronology, due to the purpose for which it was put together: in fact he was after fast approval for an institution that, because of this, had to look as if it began years back and was already well tried and proven.

Encouraging Don Bosco in organising a Religious Congregation for those who wanted to share his mission to the young with him might also have been the fact that despite the lack of legal entity or civic ’personality’ for religious corporations – following explicit declarations in parliament on the part of Urban Rattazzi who had drawn up the legislation - “full and free faculty [is given] to members of religious communities to come together and live the kind of life that pleases them”.³⁷⁴

³⁷² There is a more extensive analysis to be found in the introduction to the text of the *Articoli generali* of the *Regolamento per le case* (further on).

³⁷³ A list of ’informative’ documents of this kind can be found in an essay by P. Briado, *L’idea della Società Salesiana nel «Cenno storico» di Don Bosco del 1873/1874*, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» (1987), pp. 255-256. The last of them, longer, is represented precisely by the *Cenno storico* itself and he includes the annotated text in his essay. (pp. 276-310).

³⁷⁴ U. Rattazzi, *Discorsi parlamentari*. Collated and published under the editorship of lawyer Giovanni Scovazzi, vol III Rome. Eredi Botta 1877, pp. 218-219. “The freedom of the cloister... will remain sacred and intact, notwithstanding the adoption of this law, so that the effect of the same, as I have indicated, is not to prevent whoever wishes to live together with others; whoever wishes to depend on superiors, let them depend, and in this leaving full and absolute freedom to each one” (p, 234). “While we claim that civil personality should be taken away from religious corporations, on the other hand we admit that it is licit for anyone who wishes to to dedicate himself to the life he considers convenient, including to an ascetic and contemplative life”. (p. 397).

The text presented here is the one contained in the opening to the first draft (*ms A*) known as the Salesian Constitutions, which had as title *Regolamento della Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales*, based on the critical edition by Francesco Motto, as will be indicated at the time. It goes back to a time which goes from 1858 until the beginning of 1859.³⁷⁵ A few variants will be indicated, contained in the text of the Constitutions sent to Lyon to the Archbishop of Turin, Luigi Fransoni, on 11 June 1860 (*ms D*).³⁷⁶

2. Texts

1. From the *Storia d'Italia* (1855)³⁷⁷

Purpose and arrangement of this history

It is a universally admitted fact that books should be adapted to the intelligence of those they wish to address, just as food must be prepared according to the physical makeup of individuals. Following this principle I have set out to recount the history of Italy for young people following the same rules I have used for other books of similar scope regarding subject, language and contents.

So keeping to facts that are certain and the most fruitful for morality and useful teachings, I have left aside things that are less certain, frivolous conjecture, over many footnotes and also high-sounding political discussions which are useless and sometimes damaging for young people. I can assure the reader that I have not written a sentence without checking it with the best, and as far as possible contemporary, authors or ones who are at least closer to the times to which the events refer. I have not spared any effort in reading modern authors writing about Italy, drawing from each of them what has seemed best suited to my intentions.

This history is divided into four particular periods; the first begins with the early inhabitants of Italy and extends as far as the vulgar era, when the entire Roman Empire

³⁷⁵ Cf G. Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales -1859*. Critical texts ed. by Francesco Motto, Rome, LAS 1982, pp. 22-26.

³⁷⁶ G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note* ed Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, p. 406.

³⁷⁷ *La storia d'Italia raccontata alla gioventù da' suoi primi abitatori sino ai nostri giorni (1855)* [The history of Italy recounted for youth from the first inhabitants until our own time] takes its title (and some of the contents) from a *Storia d'Italia dai suoi primi abitatori dopo il diluvio fino ai nostri giorni* from a small handbook published by Giacinto Marietti (1834) which it seems was a reworking by the Jesuit Paolo Beorchia (1795-1859). But Don Bosco's work does not draw on Denina or Botta or Cesare Balbo nor even maybe Murattori; and it needs to be seen in connection with sentiments and ideas of the neo-Guelphians and the neo-Ghibellines from halfway through the 1800s, not because it draws inspiration from the great historians in that current of thought but rather because it breathes the same atmosphere, same climate. At the same time it places itself amongst the more ordinary echelons of explanations for the ordinary people and the young, along with compendiums of the same nature by Sforzosi, Ricotti and Zini; or in even more humble company with books that it actually draws from: the *Racconti morali tratti dalla storia d'Italia*, which are a section in Giannetto, the excellent reader for primary schools written by pedagogue Luigi Alessandro Parravicini (1799-1880) and the *Corso di storia raccontata a' fanciulli* by Jues Raymond Lamé-Fleury (1797-1878)" (P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, p. 231.

came under the domination of Augustus. This period can be called ancient or pagan Italy.

The second runs from the beginning of the Roman Empire until its fall in the West in 476, and we will call this Christian Italy, because it was during this time that Christianity was propagated and established throughout Italy.

The third runs from the fall of the Roman Empire in the West until the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492, and it is the History of the Middle Ages.

The fourth takes in the rest of History up until our times, commonly known as Modern History.

I have done what I could so that my work can be useful for that portion of human society that is our hope for a happy future, youth. The final purpose of every page has been to expound historical truth, instill love for virtue, flight from vice, respect for religion.

The good acceptance by the public of some of my earlier published works leads me to hope for the best for this one however it may be. If it can be of advantage to someone let that give glory to the One who is the Giver of all good things, to whom I wish to consecrate these slender efforts of mine.

2. Reviews of the *Storia d'Italia* ³⁷⁸

The History of Italy recounted for young people, from its early inhabitants until our days, by Fr John Bosco. Turin, tip. Paravia 1856. One volume, 16mo (55/8 x 43/8 in), 558 pages.

The name of the eminent Fr Bosco is by now more than sufficient anticipation of the good value of his writings filled with zeal and aimed at the culture of youth for whose benefit he has worked with praiseworthy effort for so many years. This History of Italy of his in particular merits high praise for the rare discretion with which he writes such that in the short space of 558 pages in 16mo he has diligently brought together all the main events in our land. To say that there are no defects in such a painstaking work would be an injustice. At any rate it gets our vote, because given the appearance of so many superficial histories of Italy or even less well-intentioned ones, this one by Bosco will be eagerly picked up and read by young people starting out in their study of the events of our most noble Country.

Free copy, asking Niccolò Tommaseo for a review ³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸ «La Civiltà Cattolica» 8 (1857), vol I, 482.

³⁷⁹ In 1865 Niccolò Tommaseo dedicated his *Nuovi studi su Dante* to three priests in Turin: the pedagogue G.A. Rayneri, the professor of Church History at the Faculty of Theology, Francesco Barone, and the editor of *L'Istituto*, Giovanni Lanza. He emphasised in it the 'moral values' of Piedmont amongst which he pointed to "the considerable exercising of religious faith through works of charity"; and a few lines further on he listed amongst the "monuments of charity" in Turin "The school (boarding) run by Fr Bosco which happily takes the name of Francis de Sales, where even better than giving bread to hundreds of poor boys he teaches them how to earn it for the rest of their lives". His sympathy for the Subalpine area had been growing since 1854 when he had arrived in the capital and was living at Borgo Vanchiglia where Don Bosco was running the Guardian Angel Oratory (1849-1866). It would

Most kind Sir,

If I may disturb your Lordship to ask you for two favours: that you would accept a free copy of *Storia d'Italia* which I have had printed, with the request that you make a note regarding it in the *l'Istituto* using whatever words in your wisdom you judge best.

My purpose was to recount for youth the facts of our history that seem most suited to their young age. I have also made it suitable for use in the curriculum for the teacher's certificate for teachers of primary and technical schools.

However you should approach it, I am very happy to take this opportunity to wish you health and Grace from Heaven, while I respectfully express my highest esteem.

From home, 23 September 1859

Your most obliged servant, Fr John Bosco

[*Em I* 178]

3. The *History of Italy*³⁸⁰ recounted for youth by Fr J. Bosco – Turin

If books could be judged by the usefulness they really have, we would have a truer measure than the one that literary types usually adopt and maybe they would correct or at least temper many of their heavy opinions of servile admiration or dictatorial scorn. But here is a modest book that biblicists or historians of the erudite and rhetorical kind in the field might hardly consider worth a glance, but which could fulfil the role of a history for schools far better than certain books of a more celebrated nature.

Certainly, the experience of the teacher is not enough to write books for the young, but it is of great help, and complements the other gifts required for this difficult ministry. It is remarkably difficult, in an area where we are dealing with compendiums which need to be complete works in their field, not to end up with bits and pieces of ideas or a dry skeleton. Fr Bosco, in a not so ponderous volume, manages to offer a complete history of Italy using the most memorable facts: he knows how to choose and throw vivid light on them. For the Piedmontese he does not omit to highlight things that regard Piedmont in particular and he teaches other teachers how to do the same, that is how to illustrate more distant and less noted items with additional and more recent notes. I mean then that each teacher ought know how to refashion school texts, even as good as they happen to be, for his own and his pupils' use. He needs to liven up stories, as lively as they might be in the books, with new colour in the classroom. And he needs to apply history and other teachings for each of his pupils, inasmuch as he can.

Amongst the multitude of things that can be said, Fr Bosco preserves order and clarity which come from his own calm mind and which instil a pleasing serenity in young minds. What helps clarity, according to me, is to place general considerations on religion and the institutions of the people, their customs and traditions in the chapter where they belong.

have been natural for Tommaseo to kindly accept the offer of a free copy of the second edition of the *Storia d'Italia* in 1859 and write a kind review in the *Rassegna bibliografica* of the *Istituto*, for which he was a hard-working collaborator. The brief note on the following 17 December was aimed at those who had found his evaluation too generous and acritical.

³⁸⁰ «L'Istituto. Foglio ebdomadario d'Istruzione e degli atti ufficiali di essa» (A weekly concerning education and public acts regarding it) 7 (1859) No. 48, Saturday 26 November, pp. 764-765.

This was done in some histories of the last century, and required that such items were inserted into the narrative as it went along and this gave movement and a sense of life. I do not say that every general observation needs to be divided out amongst the facts that are being explained, which would end up in one or other part being imperfect. But I do say that more ancient historians too, who were masters at this, either prefaced or mixed in a brief summary of customs with the facts. And I say that especially in the case of books for young people's use this concern is an aid both to memory and intelligence. Not that it is possible in this case to provide due evidence of everything concerning the character of the people, without the tedious need to repeat the same ideas in each part.

I do not say that the author might not sometimes have profited greatly from historical notes that modern science has verified, by better studying his sources; I do not say that all his judgements on facts appeared to me to be without doubt, nor that all the facts were recounted with exactitude, but I feel obliged to add that not a few of the somewhat overly-praised discoveries of modern criticism also remain rather open to doubt and tend to deal too often with situations which are not essential to the intimate truth of history. And I would add that most of the author's judgements appear to me to conform to true civilisation and certain morality. In the almost familiar style of narration that he has with his youngsters, he wisely treats public matters from the point of view of private morality, which is more accessible to everyone and more profitable. Wanting to treat boys like men of state and teach them to express an opinion on the lot of empires and the reasons why one or another captain won a battle is a not an always innocent kind of pedantry, because it accustoms inexperienced minds to judge things they cannot understand on someone else's word; because it doesn't prepare them to modestly apply historical documents to the practice of common life. We see the great ancient historians and poets happy to retire under the standards and almost the masks of the public and private man, to judge the father, son, brother in the citizen and prince. So, along with wisdom and usefulness, is the greater beauty of the works, and histories and poetics of the ancients. Not a few of the moderns, instead, propose an argument that has to be demonstrated in history and even in poetry itself and they follow that from the beginning until the end, and bend and twist the facts to fit it. They end up only letting themselves and their fixations be seen, and they persist in making the same side always appear in the most different aspects of their argument, and under different forms, but repeating the same things ad nauseam. They are neither narrators nor artists but tactless orators. And they do not seem to be aware that history, and all of nature is almost a great parable which God proposes for mankind. So wanting to provide a single application sterilises the inexhaustible fertility of the truth, impoverishes the divine concept.

4. Further [comment] on *The History of Italy* by Fr Bosco³⁸¹

In what I wrote concerning Fr Bosco's History, indicating that "I do not say that all his judgements on facts appeared to me to be without doubt, nor that all the facts were recounted with exactitude" and noting that "each teacher ought know how to refashion

³⁸¹ «L'Istituzione...» 7 (1859) No. 51, Saturday 17 December, pp. 810-811

school texts, even as good as they happen to be, for his own and his pupils' use", I think I said a lot. My opinions and those of Fr Bosco's differ somewhat on certain issues and I have no need to change my views but it seems to me, amidst the examples of excoriating criticism [I have received] that makes life dignified and interesting, it seemed less ungenerous for me to spend time on the praiseworthy aspects of the work. I gave my attention to a careful reading of it amongst the many other weighty things I have to do. But I do not want to excommunicate those who think differently from me.

N. Tommaseo³⁸²

5. Circular for a Lottery³⁸³

Turin, (21) February 1857

The Gospel charity that inspires man to the most wonderful works of charity, although it shuns calling others' attention to oneself, nevertheless where the glory of God and the advantage of one's neighbour demand it, does not hesitate to overcome its reluctance and extend a hand to charitable people and sometimes tell of the good done when it serves as an invitation and encouragement to others to help the needy. This reflection has made the Commission set up for this Lottery decide to offer an indication of the main works accomplished in these Oratories, thus letting everyone know what the proceeds we gain from it will be going towards.

We believe it is an already publicly known fact that Fr John Bosco, wanting to foster the moral advantage of abandoned youth has seen to the opening of three boys' Oratories

³⁸²Writer, philologist, lexicographer, pedagogue, born at Sebenico in Dalmatia in 1802, died in Florence in 1874. Friend of A. Rosmini, A. Manzoni, R. Lambruschini, G. Capponi, he collaborated in Florence with the «Antologia» and wrote the *Dizionario dei sinonimi* (1830). He had a difficult life: he was in France (1834-1839), Venice (1859-1874), Corfu (1849-1854), Turin (from May 1854 to October 1859), Florence (1859-1874). He wrote much on literary, moral, political. Historical and pedagogical topics.

³⁸³G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note*, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863) 1991, pp. 317-320. Cf. *Invito ad una lotteria d'oggetti a favore degli oratorii di S. Luigi a Porta Nuova, di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco, del S. Angelo Custode in Vanchiglia*, in the brief work *Catalogo degli oggetti posti in lotteria a favore dei giovani dei tre oratorii di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco, di S. Luigi a Porta Nuova, del S. Angelo Custode in Vanchiglia*. Turin. Tip. Di G.B. Paravia e comp. 1857, OE IX 3-6. Very similar is the circular of 30 January 1862 for the biggest lottery organised by Don Bosco, when the Oratory of St Francis de Sales was notably extended and the number of boys living in had tripled. There he adds: "Some of these boys are from the capital but the greater number of them come from the cities and towns of the province and have come to the capital seeking work or for study. For example, those who have been gathered up and who are actually living in the house annexed to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Valdocco have grown to around 570, and of those only 50 are from Turin. The others come from the cities and towns of the province. It is for this reason that while we recommend this lottery to our deserving fellow citizens we also invite charitable people living outside of Turin to help a work that besides being directed towards promoting the good of the most needy classes of society in general, is extended to whoever wishes to benefit from it, from whatever city, town or province he belongs to". G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note*, ed. Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863) Rome, LAS 1991, p. 479. Cf. *Invito ad una lotteria d'oggetti a favore degli oratorii di S. Luigi a Porta Nuova, di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco, del S. Angelo Custode in Vanchiglia*, in the brief work *Elenco degli oggetti graziosamente donati a beneficio degli oratorii di S. Francesco di Sales in Valdocco, di S. Luigi a Porta Nuova, del S. Angelo Custode in Vanchiglia*. Turin. Tip. Di Giulio Speirani e figli. 1862, pp. 3-4 OE XIV 199-200.

on the three main sides of the city, where on Sundays and other holy days, there is a gathering of as many young people at risk as is possible, who come to this capital from the cities and towns of the province. There is a chapel for religious services in these Oratories, some rooms for classes, and a garden for recreation. They are enticed to come with prizes and can do some gymnastics and have honest recreation, after they have attended the services. The number who come sometimes exceeds three thousand. When the seasons permit it there are classes in reading, writing, singing and music. A considerable number of good gentlemen have lent our work a hand by coming to teach catechism. We have also seen that unemployed young lads are found work with an upright employer who can continue to offer the loving assistance that a good father can.

So in the Oratory at Valdocco there are also day classes as well as evening classes offered during the week, especially for boys who either because of their humble, worn-out attire, or their unruliness, are not accepted into public schools.

The evening classes are very well attended. There we teach reading, writing, vocal and instrumental music, and all this to keep them away from bad companions where they run the risk certainly of losing whatever little they have earned, as well as morality and religion.

Amongst these boys, whether from the city or from the towns of the province some (mostly orphans) are so poor and abandoned that they cannot be started of in a trade or other work without providing shelter, food and clothing; this is a need we have met through a Home attached to the Oratory where we have taken in more than five hundred boys. There they receive whatever they need to become good Christians and upright workers.

Having thus pointed out the state of the Oratories, people can easily understand where the proceeds of the Lottery will be directed: the costs of rental in the respective locations, the maintenance of the classes, the churches, giving bread to five hundred boys who live in are the reasons for considerable expenditure.

Besides, some three years ago, the fatal outbreak of cholera meant we had to set up an appropriate place to take in some forty orphans, some of whom still remain in the Home. Then this year we needed to complete a workshops that had been under construction for some years. All these works, though undertaken with careful economy made it necessary to spend more than forty thousand francs. With the help of charitable individuals this sum has largely been paid off, but we still have a debt of twelve thousand francs.

To deal with such expenses and provide the opportunity to continue with the good we have begun, we have not been able to find any other means than a Lottery of items, like this one that opens the way to people of all kinds to help in the way and to the extent that their resources and charity suggests.

With this in view we requested authorisation from the Royal Government who looked favourably on our request and with a decree on the 2nd February gave all permissions that seemed appropriate for the Lottery to be successful.

We are deeply convinced that our fellow citizens and charitable individuals from the provinces for whom the benefits of the Oratories and the Home are also available, will want to be associated with us and take no small part by sending along items that can be used as prizes, and buying tickets. A select number of deserving people graciously

accepted to be promoters and have committed to gathering items and selling tickets according to the attached regulations.

We have only outlined the purpose of the Oratories and the principal measures taken to pursue the work. But the work is pretty much its own recommendation, it seems to us, without our needing to add further words. We note only that by taking part in this work of charity, one is doing something of public and private usefulness, and you will be blessed both by God and men; by God whose recompense never fails, and by men from whom you will have the most heartfelt gratitude, while one group of young people will forever bless the kind hand that removed them from the dangers of the street, set them on the right path to work and to the salvation of their soul.

The Commission.

6. One Feast Day at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales³⁸⁴

FESTIVITIES AT THE ORATORY OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES. - Last Sunday was a day of solemn and happy festivity for the good young lads at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. Horace, who taught that *omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*, would never have considered Christianity to have given rise to such people who through the secret and gentle impulse of divine grace or, as someone else might say, by natural goodness, have largely applied his maxim in every deed, not to earn praise but to set a huge crowd of people on the path to Heaven. One of these men is, precisely, the remarkable and well-deserving priest, Don Bosco.

Those who were at the oratory yesterday have proof of this. It was the feast day of the titular Saint of the church there, and throughout the day enjoyable and holy things were so wisely apportioned and distributed that for the crowd of youngsters it seemed like a single moment.

There was a general Communion in the morning at which some four hundred boys with radiant and happy faces attended. There was a solemn Mass, sung with the help of Professor Ramello, who has happily and lovingly helped Don Bosco in the work which Divine Providence has assigned him. The choir was fully made up from these boys, some students, others at work, in general good boys and some of them outstanding. Whoever knows how restless and flighty children are by nature would have easily wondered at the sense of recollection that reigned in the packed church, and the devotion, given that there were few assistants. But that's how it was and it is enough to explain it by the virtual presence of their dear director.

The period after lunch was brightened up with varied and well-performed items by the band. It was enchanting to watch the happy, honest entertainments that this very lively crowd [of boys] was involved in. After Vespers, the Baptism of a swarthy adult took place, solemnly administered by His Grace, Most Reverend Bishop Balma, the godparents being the Count and Countess Clavesana, to whom the aforesaid black man owes his double redemption, temporal and spiritual. Once the rite was over, the bishop, going up to the altar, said some impromptu but moving words about the occasion, which his crowded audience listened to religiously and with great benefit.

³⁸⁴ «L'Armonia della religione con la civiltà» 11 (1858) Thursday 4 February, pp. 107-108.

When the religious functions had concluded with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, prizes were distributed by the distinguished Prelate. Those who received prizes included students and working boys, and it was not the superiors who had made the choice for the awards but the free and conscientious choice of their companions. The usual band livened up things during the intervals. The distribution of prizes concluded with a popular song called: *Pianto dei Romani per la partenza di Pio VII* (The Romans lament the departure of Pius VII), well conducted by young Carlo Tomatis with a choir of more than twenty voices.

Since the bishop then had to leave the group of boys blessed by his presence, he would certainly have carried tender memory of such a happy and devout function with him, and his wise words and fatherly approach would likewise have remained indelibly present in the boys' hearts.

There was still a play performance to take place, a drama entitled: Baldini, with an excellent moral and educational plot. It was about a noble heart who, dragged into crime by a companion's bad advice, finally ends up as the chief of a band of brigands. But just at the right moment, he recalls his mother's advice and returns to honour and virtue. The long and spacious hall which serves as a gas lit study hall, was soon converted into a theatre. The young actors performed honourably but above all they won the sympathy and applause of Mr Fumero, who had been a pupil at the Home. When the play was over, and the curtain once again raised, we saw a casket on the stage and a young man placing a garland of flowers on it. Then slowly, from behind, a white-clothed ghostly figure emerged bearing a torch and singing a beautiful but funereal song, reproaching the young man, his son, for the vanity of his garland and the sterile nature of his tears. It was the ghost of Vinciguerra, and the actor was the already praised Tomatis, an artist.

And so, *miscendo utile dulci*, with great intelligence and fatherly love, the distinguished and reverend Don Bosco knew how, in a single day, to sanctify and cheer up the boys whom he loves as his children and who love him as their father.

7. Regulations of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales ³⁸⁵

The Congregation of St Francis de Sales

In every age it has been the special concern of the Church's ministers to do whatever their strength allowed to foster the spiritual good of youth. The good or unhappy future of society's way of behaving depends on their good or bad education. The Divine Saviour Himself gave us clear proof of this when he carried out His divine mission on earth inviting the little children to come to Him with special affection. *Sinite parvulos venire ad me*. The Supreme Pontiffs [The Bishops and especially the Supreme Pontiffs' D] following in the footsteps of the eternal Pontiff, the Divine Saviour, whose vicar they are on earth, have in every age fostered the good education of the young through voice and in writing, and have especially favoured institutions that have dedicated their efforts to this aspect of the sacred ministry.

³⁸⁵G. Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1859*. Critical texts ed. Francesco Motto, Rome, LAS 1982, pp. 58-70.

In our days the need is felt much more. The negligence by many parents, the abuses of the Press, the efforts of heretics to draw in followers, demonstrate the need to come together to fight for the Lord's Cause under the Standard of the Faith [of the Vicar of Jesus Christ' *D*] and to preserve the Faith and good morals [*add* 'especially' *D*] amongst that class of young people who because they are poor are exposed to greater risk for their eternal salvation. This is the purpose of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales which began in Turin in 1841.

The times being so difficult and calamitous for Religion, the ecclesiastical superior, in a stroke of kindness, approved the Regulations for these oratories and appointed Father Bosco as chief Director, granting him all the faculties needed and appropriate for achieving this purpose.

Many bishops adopted the same draft Regulations for introducing these festive oratories into their diocese. But a serious need appeared in looking after these oratories. Many youngsters, already advanced in age, were not able to be sufficiently instructed just by Sunday catechism classes, and it became necessary to open weekday and evening classes for catechism. Indeed, many of them being so poor and abandoned, were brought into a Home where they could be removed from danger, instructed in religion and set on the path to work.

We still [do] this especially in Turin in the Home attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, where those who live there are around two hundred. We do similarly in Genoa at the work called the Artigianelli, where the director is Fr Francis Montebruno: there are about forty who have been admitted there. We also do this in Alessandria where for now Cleric Angelo Savio is in charge: 50 have been admitted there.

8. The origins of this Congregation

Since 1841 Fr John Bosco joined with other clergy in welcoming into appropriately provided locations the most abandoned boys from Turin City with a view to entertaining them with games and giving them at the same time the bread of the divine word. Each House was set up with the agreement of the ecclesiastical authority. The Lord blessed these tenuous beginnings and the number of boys coming was huge. In 1844 His Grace Archbishop Fransoni allowed us to turn one building into a church and gave us the faculties to conduct religious services there needed to make holy Sundays and other feast days and to instruct the ever-growing crowd of boys that turned up each day.

The Archbishop came there on several occasions to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and in 1846 he allowed everyone coming to this institution to be admitted to Holy Communion and fulfil their Easter duties there. He allowed us to have a sung Mass, have triduum and novenas when this seemed to be appropriate. These took place until 1847 in the oratory known as the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. That year, given the growing number of boys, and given the inadequate size of the current church, again with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority we opened a second oratory in another corner of the city, known as the St Aloysius oratory, which had the same purpose as the earlier oratory.

When these two locales became insufficient, another was opened on another side of the

city in 1850, under the title of the Guardian Angel.

Given the usual gathering of boys in the festive oratories, the day and evening schools, and the ever-increasing number of boys who have been taken in to live there, the Lord's harvest has become particularly abundant. So to preserve the unity of spirit and discipline on which the good results of the oratories depends, since 1844 some ecclesiastics have come together to form a kind of Congregation, helping one another through mutual example and instruction.

They have taken no vow properly so-called; they have all limited themselves to a simple promise to be concerned only with what their superior judges to be for the greater glory of God and to their neighbour's advantage. They recognise their superior in the person of Fr John Bosco. Although they have not made vows, in practice they observe the rules that are laid down here. There are fifteen individuals who presently profess these rules, viz., 5 priests, 8 clerics, 2 laymen.

3. Policies and norms (1863-1878]

Introduction

The period we are dealing with here is the one in which Don Bosco developed most of his thinking on the Preventive System. It peaked with the surprising formulation that would then ensure its place in the history of pedagogy.

This development and gradual elaboration show two basic features:

1. Experience and reflection which is no longer that of Don Bosco the diocesan priest running the oratories as his own personal responsibility. Instead they become the efforts of a religious founder who now carries out his earlier initiatives in harmony, collaboration and solidarity with the members of the Society of St Francis de Sales, giving them unity of spirit and method of approach;
2. The gradual evolution of a work which, along with the oratories, gives increasingly more room to boys living in (it began with the 'Home attached' to the Valdocco Oratory) and was also influential in giving a new shape to his 'system' which would then take on far more features belonging to the 'colleges' or boarding schools, in the 1887 treatise.³⁸⁶

As the Superior of the recently constituted Salesian Society,³⁸⁷ even though it was not yet approved (it lacked the so-called *Decretum laudis*), Don Bosco sent a letter to Fr Rua at the end of October 1863. He was the first Rector of a Salesian religious community involved in education outside of Turin, at Mirabello Monferrato. It was a letter offering guidelines and by 1871 had become an important document of spirituality and pedagogy for the Congregation. It is known in Italian as the *Ricordi confidenziali ai direttori*, which could be (and will be from here on) translated as the *Confidential Reminders for Rectors* (or just 'Reminders for Rectors', or even 'Reminders') for short.

The *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales* are a splendid document of oratorian pedagogy obviously belonging to the narrative genre. The *Memoirs* are many things together: they recall, have an apologetic function, offer a theological interpretation, a paradigm and they present policy. According to the original intentions of the author, they were to be reserved strictly for the members of his religious society. This is the first summary of spirituality and pedagogy addressed to the Salesian Congregation coming from Don Bosco's hand at a time of intense restructuring and stabilisation of his religious society as represented by his *Ricordi ai missionari* (*Keepsakes for missionaries*) (1875), and the *Treatise on the Preventive System* (1877), soon to be inserted (in November) in the *Regolamento per le case* (*Regulations for the houses*), the 1st General Chapter (1877) and the two sets of other regulations he had printed (for boarders and for day boys). It is an indicator of things that a few months after writing his words on the Preventive System and but a handful of weeks after publishing this, Don Bosco was recommending "our preventive system" at the General Chapter.

³⁸⁶This process was known in Italian as the collegialisation of his institutes. Cf. P. Stella *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol I, pp. 121-127; *idem*, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*, pp. 123-157.

³⁸⁷The first group of members made its profession of vows on 14 May 1862.

With regard to his educational and social emphases we can note that there are at least two documents that take up these two distinct positions. The *dialogo tra don Bosco e l'insegnante elementare Francesco Bodrato* (*Dialogue or discussion between Don Bosco and Francis Bodrato, primary school teacher*) in 1864 is decidedly educational in character. It is interesting to note that compared with the discussion with Urban Rattazzi published in October-November 1877, the first part of the discussion, written between 1880 and 1881, is older: it does not speak of the preventive system and spells out only two of the principles which would later become classic: reason and religion. On the social front instead, we have his memo (*promemoria*) to Francis Crispi in 1878.

Confidential Reminders for Rectors (1863/1886)

by Francesco Motto

Introduction

Don Bosco did not always have the possibility in his lifetime of remaining in direct and immediate contact with his closest helpers, his Salesians. His frequent trips, constant visits to communities and their works and to benefactors but especially when people of this kind left Valdocco in Turin for other places in Italy, France, Spain, Latin America, meant that he found himself separated from his 'sons' for months and even years. So to keep in contact with them he necessarily had to resort to writing letters.

Amongst the hundreds of letters addressed to Salesians, one of the most valuable and significant is the one he sent to Fr Rua (1837-1910) towards the end of October 1863). His fatherly tenderness emerges there in wonderful combination with his wisdom as a master of spiritual life and pedagogy.

Having grown up with and learned directly from Don Bosco, Fr Rua had been one of his earliest most valuable helpers from the first days of the Oratory at Valdocco. When he was nine years of age (1845) he had already started coming to Don Bosco's place. In 1852 he received the clerical habit from him. He was one of those who attended the meetings with Don Bosco that resulted in the Salesian Congregation and while he was still a deacon he became its first spiritual director. When Don Bosco went to see Pius IX in 1859, Rua was by his side. So, to put it succinctly, he grew up, studied and worked in Don Bosco's home.

The young nine year old pupil, by now a teacher and priest, left Turin in autumn 1863 to found the first Salesian house outside of Valdocco: the minor seminary of St Charles at Mirabello Monferrato. He was now some distance away from Don Bosco and the latter, moved by the desire to always remain at the side of his "beloved son", and by the need to support this relatively young man in the difficult role of Rector of a community of confreres, young people, other staff, passed on to him the spiritual guidelines and pedagogical experiences which had come to maturity at Valdocco. He wanted it to be a model for the educational and apostolic service that would take place in the house at Mirabello.

It is a real treasure as a document, dictated by immediate needs but, under cover of practical advice, concrete examples, brief notes and insights. It bears the mark of Don Bosco's deep certainties and keen concerns. So convinced was he of these things that in 1863 he wrote a simple and strictly private letter to Fr Rua and then, from 1871, with some retouching and additions coming out of subsequent experience and reflection, he would present it as *Confidential Reminders for Rectors of Individual Houses of The Salesian Society* or also *A Testament that I address to Rectors of Individual Houses*.³⁸⁸

In this 'circular' to Rectors, the 26 original points of the personal letter to Rua are enriched in content and almost doubled in number, arriving at 47. Don Bosco goes through the entire life and activity of a Rector of a Salesian House. The titles of each little section are immediate testimony to this: With yourself – with the teachers – with the assistants and those in charge of the dormitories – with the coadjutors and service personnel – With the young pupils – With the day boys – With people outside – Giving orders.

Knowing who he could turn to to share his 'Salesian' mission to the young, Don Bosco has no inhibitions in setting out his, and therefore their, deepest ideals in life: salvation of one's soul and the souls of others as an absolute; the sincere fraternal charity that should reign amongst confreres and between them and the youngsters; exact and diligent carrying out of one's duties as given by the Superior or found in the Constitutions; eliminating any occasion for wrongdoing by carrying out all the educational expedients and other things assistants should do. The customs of the time and experience at Valdocco had shown these to be effective to this end.

Don Bosco's affection went beyond reminders of virtue and the educational approach that should reign at Mirabello, Borgo S. Martino, Lanzo, Sampierdarena etc. His fatherly heart and – why not? – motherly concern reaches out to the Rector's and confrere's physical health, how long they needed to sleep ("Each night get seven hours of sleep"; "Never command things that are injurious to health or that get in the way of needed sleep"), how they should be treated at meal times ("Avoid austerity in food. Your mortification will be diligence in your duties and putting up with any annoyance from others"), to the risk of being overworked ("Share things out in such a way that nobody has too much to do"). Kindness, affection, sharing ideals, desire to be part of and give moral support lie at the basis of these brief and succinct pages that in Don Bosco's mind would have needed to draw a clear and precise line of conduct for all Rectors of Salesian works.

³⁸⁸ Don Bosco was in the habit of leaving, either in writing or 'viva voce' a brief 'reminder' or piece of advice to boys in his houses, especially for certain occasions like when they were leaving for holidays, or on their name day, or First Communion day. MB III 607-608; IV 439; VI 446-449; VII 292-293; XII 673-674. But there is also abundant documentation preserved regarding some 'reminders' Don Bosco gave groups of Salesian confreres, the Salesian Sisters, individual Salesians, Rectors or not: MB VI 40-41; VIII 445-446; IX 384; X 647-652, 1018-1023, 1047-1052; XIII 209-210, 792, 880; XIV 257, 293; XVII 376, 628-631, 640-641; XVIII 266, 537. The 'Keepsakes for Missionaries' are famous in Salesian tradition and have some points of contact with the *Confidential Reminders*. These too can be found here. We note finally that the Testament spoken of above should not be confused with the *Spiritual Testament*, or better *Memoirs from 1841 to 1884-5-6 by Fr John Bosco to his Salesian sons*, which was written in an even more intimate and heartfelt tone than the *Confidential Reminders*. The text can be found at the end of the collection in this section.

Those who succeeded him in his general responsibility for the Salesian Congregation have been of the same persuasion. The various Rector Majors saw to its diffusion through various editions and commentaries.³⁸⁹

While Fr Rua was Rector Major, he had the *Reminders* read bit by bit at the beginning of each of the sittings of the 6th and 7th General Chapters³⁹⁰ and Rua himself highlighted, so Fr Ricaldone tells us, “their beautiful, invaluable nature, almost as if we were dealing with inspired words and heavenly advice”.³⁹¹

The Regulations of the Salesian Society, then, from 1924 to 1966 uninterruptedly included the following: “[The Rector] will himself frequently read Don Bosco’s (St John Bosco’s) *Confidential Reminders for Rectors*.³⁹² It is hardly necessary to add that they found space and comment in the *MB* and the *Epistolario* and *Annali*.³⁹³

By now it had become a classic text of the Salesian tradition, and was called a “brief Gospel” of the Rector’s role,³⁹⁴ with “value almost as a code and testament”,³⁹⁵ a mirror in which every Superior and Salesian could make an examination of conscience.³⁹⁶ Quite rightly it became part of anthologies of Don Bosco’s pedagogical or spiritual writings.³⁹⁷

The final and definitive draft of the *Confidential Reminders* carries the date of 8 December 1886, a little more than a year before Don Bosco’s death. But this draft is preceded by others (1863, 1871, 1875, 1876) in turn the result, as we have already indicated, of corrections and additions that can be documented. The network of variants – almost all of them the result of the original author, inasmuch as they go back to various

³⁸⁹As well as the Turin edition in 1902 and the various printed versions of reduced dimensions (70/80x110/120 mm), also minus the least indication of who the Printers were, the *Confidential Reminders* were reproduced in the 177 page *Rectors’ Manual* edited by P. Albera and published at S. Benigno Canavese in 1915, then re-published numerous times with variations: 625 pages of vol II, P. Ricaldone, *Don Bosco Educatore* (Colle D. Bosco 1952, and 22 pages of *Il Direttore salesiano. Un ministro per l’animazione e il governo della comunità locale*, published by the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Rome 1982. Also ACS 5 (1924) no. 23, pp. 244-248 have them where they are expressly quoted, in the preceding pages, in article 158 of ‘Regulations of the Salesian Society’. Unfortunately on occasions there is no indication which manuscript or copy was published. On other occasions, despite explicit claims to the contrary, the text is not a faithful copy of the original and in fact amongst other things produces an error... from 1886. And finally on other occasions printed texts have been put into circulation which were altered according to later events but which carry the original dates from Don Bosco’s time. (The pontifical decree of 24 April 1901 which explicitly forbade Salesian superiors from hearing the confessions of anyone who was dependent on them had forced article 4, entitled “With the young pupils” to be left out because it was in clear contradiction to the Holy See’s demand”.

³⁹⁰SC 046 *Capitolo Generale VI Verbale Riunioni*; ASC 046 *Capitolo Generale VII. Verbale*.

³⁹¹ACS 17 (1936) no, 74, p. 87.

³⁹²*Regulations of the Salesian Society* 1924, 1942, 1954 art. 158; 1966 art. 152.

³⁹³MB VII 524-526; X 1041-1046; E I 288-290; Annali I 50-53.

³⁹⁴P. Albera, *Manuale del Direttore*. . . p, 177.

³⁹⁵P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, p. 447.

³⁹⁶ACS 34 (1953) no. 175, p. 11.

³⁹⁷See P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*. Turin, PAS 1955, pp. 453-458; G. Bosco, *Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell’educazione della gioventù*, ed. P. Braido. Brescia, La Scuola 1965, pp. 282-290; G. Bosco, *Scritti spirituali II* ed. J. Aubry, Rome, Città nuova editrice 1976, pp. 210-215; San Juan Bosco, *Obras fundamentales*, por J. Canals Pujol y A. Martinez Azcona. Madrid, Biblioteca de autores cristianos 1979, pp. 548-556.

drafts and copies that Don Bosco saw and corrected, and so in every respect authentic – document the formation process of this text from its first original draft by Don Bosco in 1863 until the lithographed copy in 1886. Every detail, every variation, once noted, allows the attentive reader to gain a precise understanding of how Don Bosco’s thinking matured and developed, his basic concerns and his concrete guidelines.

Thinking, concerns, guidelines that become more authentic inasmuch as inspired by Don Bosco, more than by other sources, his experiences which reflected his priestly, zeal, educational wisdom and his reflections as a founder of a Congregation who was keen to pass his ideals and spirit on to his ‘sons’. The principles of spiritual pedagogy that Don Bosco enunciated were rooted in his daily practice as an educator. Material and suggestions immediately came to him from the *Regolamento dell’Oratorio* (*Regulations of the Oratory*)³⁹⁸ and the attached Home,³⁹⁹ and also from the religious and pedagogical tradition that he might have come into contact with. Thus, for example, the saying around which the entire policy of the letter turns: “See how to make yourself loved before (‘rather than’; ‘if you want’) before making yourself feared” has a pedigree that goes way back to Augustine⁴⁰⁰ but was taken up again by Benedict,⁴⁰¹ the Jesuit Constitutions,⁴⁰² as well as other orders or congregations that had adopted the Rule of St Augustine.⁴⁰³ So also for the method that should be at the basis of the Rector’s activity - inspired by kindness and charity – it is enough to recall, amongst others, the writings of Binet,⁴⁰⁴ de

³⁹⁸ASC 026(1...) Compare for example the text of the *Confidential Reminders* with the following statements in the ‘Regulations of the Oratory’: “[The Rector] should ... constantly be friend, companion, brother to all; therefore always encourage each one to fulfil his duties, but as a request, not a command... Once a month let him meet together with the staff at the Oratory to listen and propose whatever can be of good for the young people [*corr ex* ‘confratelli...’] ... He should be ready to kindly accept members of staff who turn to him with suggestions that could be useful in keeping order, promoting the glory of God and the spiritual advantage of souls [*corr ex/* ‘dei confratelli’].

³⁹⁹ASC 026(20...) In the *Confidential Reminders* we find expressions similar to the following in the ‘Regulations for the houses’: “[The catechist] will see that those looking after the dormitories are diligent in their duties and keep good behaviour... If someone is sick he will see that he lacks neither spiritual or temporal help... The [Director of the school] will keep in frequent touch with his staff to listen to their reflection on the moral behaviour of the boys and also to give them advice that could be useful for the greater glory of God and the good of souls”. We recall here that the Regulations in turn were nothing but the “collection of observations, precepts and maxims that some years of effort and experience (1841-1855) had suggested”: *Bibliofilo Cattolico o Bollettino Salesiano Mensuale*, year I, no. 2 October 1877.

⁴⁰⁰PL 33 965 Epist. CCXI 15. The saying has more distant origins in the classical Roman world. Cf. K. Gross, *Plus amari quam timeri. Eine antike politische Maxime in der Benediktinerregel*, in «*Vigiliae Christianae*» 27 (1973) 218-229.

⁴⁰¹*Regola di S. Benedetto*, chap. LXIV.

⁴⁰²Part VIII: Ways to meet with the head [of the community] and with their subjects wherever they are. Jesuit N. Lancius in *De conditionibus boni Superioris necessariis tum ut a subditis ametur, et ut ejus jussa libenter exequantur, tum ut ei suam conscientiam sincere aperiant, et alia omnia; ac in religione, vel congregatione, cum gaudio spiritus et profectu spirituali, vivant et perseverent* (I ed. 1640; altera ed. 1901) quoted the saying more than once (p, 18, p. 74, p. 295).

⁴⁰³For example, *Regola di S. Agostino per le monache cavata dalla Pistola CCXI colla sposizione di Ugone da S. Vittore*.

⁴⁰⁴E. Binet, *Dell’Arte di governare. Quale è il governo migliore, il severo o il dolce?* (Trans. P, Antonio Brescianai). Modena 1839, Turin 1843, Naples 1852. First edition in French goes back to 1638.

la Salle,⁴⁰⁵ Rollin and Monfat,⁴⁰⁶ Bro. Agatone,⁴⁰⁷ all published, reprinted or at least known in those years. Evidently we are only dealing with points of contact, quotations ad sensum, partial affinity in thinking and approach that Don Bosco rewrites in unpublished and personal ways, but where ideas and positions remain which do not coincide. But Don Bosco's humble advice to Fr Rua and other Salesian Rectors are far from being a systematic treatment or are only partial theoretical ideas for the quoted authors.

The text of the *Confidential Reminders for Rectors* has come down to us from a series of manuscripts and copies still kept in the ASC.⁴⁰⁸ For a brief description one could go to RSS 4, Year 3, No. 1, 1984, pp. 129-143.

Here we are publishing the version printed on 8 December 1886. The critical apparatus registers only the broadest and most significant variations that were introduced between the copy Don Bosco sent to Fr Rua in Autumn 1863 [=A/] compared with the definitive text. Regarding the entire process of formation of the document, from the first written draft until the lithographed copy, see the critical notes in the RSS edition cited above, pp. 145-160. There is one exception: no. 5, where Don Bosco makes a correction based on a copy in 1875-1876 [=Eb/].

Text

A = first handwritten draft of Don Bosco's of the letter sent to Fr Rua in Oct/Nov 1863

E = copy of the 'Reminders' presumably made by Fr Berto at the end of 1875

Eb = Don Bosco's intervention in Fr Berto's copy

⁴⁰⁵In his writings, de la Salle often made reference to kindness, love as essential for educational work. E.g. cf. Meditations for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, the Feast of St Anselm, St Francis de Sales.

⁴⁰⁶Cf. J.M. Prellezio, *Fonti letterarie della circolare «dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane»* in «Orientamenti Pedagogici» 27 (1980) 625-642; *Idem Dei castighi da infliggersi nella case salesiane. Una lettera circolare attribuita a Don Bosco*, in RSS 5 (1986) 263-308.

⁴⁰⁷*Le dodici virtù di un buon maestro accennate dall'ab. De LA Salle, Istitutore dei Fratelli della scuole cristiane spiegate dal P. F. Agatone Superiore generale del suddetto istituto.* Turin, Marietti 1835. See chap VIII: «La dolcezza». We recall here other volumes of the time that dedicated some pages to 'doceur' in the area of religious congregations: *Du Gouvernement des Communautés religieuses* par R.P.B. Valuy, 2a ed. Paris, J.B. Pélaugaud 1866; *Le bon Supérieur ou les qualités d'un bon frère directeur d'après l'esprit du vénérable père Champagnat fondateur de l'Institut des Petits-Frères-de-Marie.* Lyon-Paris 1924. The *Avvertimenti per gli educatori ecclesiastici della gioventù* by Alessandro Teppa, Barnabite (Rome, Poliglotta 1868) and *L'Eduzione morale e fisica del clero conforme Ai bisogni religiosi e civili* by Guglielmo Audisio (Turin, stampa reale 1845; Naples, G. Dura 1854), the already quoted *De conditionibus boni Superioris...* by Lancicius. Also pages by Aporti, Lambruschini, Dupanloup, or French educational literature (Fénelon, Lancelot, Fleury, etc.) contained particular items that Don Bosco could have assimilated and incorporated into his educational and religious thinking. See also G. Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù. Introduzione e testi critici*, ed. P. Braido, in RSS 4 (1985) 197-208.

⁴⁰⁸Recently the ASC has received another copy of the 'Reminders' from the Salesian Sisters' General Archive. It is a copy by Fr Berto on two double foolscap sheets to which Don Bosco in his own hand has added the date (27 October 1873) and signed it. The document is addressed to the Rector at Valsalice who that year was Fr Francesco Dalmazzo.

[p.1] Confidential reminders for the Rector at the House of . . . 409

1. Let nothing disturb you.
2. Avoid austerity in food. Let your mortifications be diligence in your duties and putting up with the annoyances of others.⁴¹⁰ Get seven hours of rest each night.⁴¹¹ That can vary more or less for you and others when there is some reasonable motive.⁴¹² This is useful for your health and that of your dependents.
3. Celebrate Holy Mass and recite the breviary *pie, attente ac devote*. This is for you and for your dependents.
4. Every morning never omit meditation and during the day a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. For other things, do as indicated in the Rules of the Society.
5. Learn how to make yourself loved rather than feared.⁴¹³ Let charity and patience constantly accompany you in commanding and correcting and act in such a way that everyone knows⁴¹⁴ by your words and deeds that it is the good of souls you are seeking. Put up with anything when it is a matter of preventing sin. Let your concerns be directed to the good of the youngsters whom Divine Providence has entrusted to you: their spiritual good, their health and their learning.
6. In matters of greater importance always lift your heart briefly to God before making a decision. When some report is made to you, listen to everything but try to discern the facts well and listen to both parties before making a judgement. Often on first hearing of them, things seem like wooden beams that are merely splinters.

With the Teachers

1. See that teachers are lacking nothing they need regarding food and clothing. Note their efforts and if they are ill or simply unwell, quickly send someone to substitute them in class.

⁴⁰⁹Confidential. . . .at (*Ricordi. . . .di*) To his beloved son Fr Michael Rua, Father John Bosco greets you in the Lord. / *Since divine providence has made it possible for us to open a House aimed at promoting the good of youth in Mirabello I thought it might be to God's glory and the advantage of souls to entrust its running to you. But since I cannot always be at your side to suggest those things to you that perhaps you have often heard or seen practised amongst us adnt hat I would often like to say to you, so I hope to do something that you will be pleased with by writing down some advice here that could serve as a guide in your work. I speak to you in the voice of a tender father who opens his heart to one of his dearest children. I want to write in my own hand so that you can always have with you a pledge of the great affection I have for you and may it be an ongoing reminder of the keen desire I nurture that you will gain many souls for the Lord. /A*

⁴¹⁰Let. . . others (*Le tue. . . altrui*) om A

⁴¹¹Get seven (*farai sette*) 'non fare meno di sei' A

⁴¹²That. . . motive (*È stabilita. . . causa*) om A

⁴¹³rather than (*piuttosto che*) 'prima di' A 'Se vuoi' corr Eb

⁴¹⁴Let. . . knows (*La Carità. . . conosca*) 'Nel comandare e correggere fa sempre vedere' A

2. [p.2] Speak with them often individually or together; see that they do not have too much to do, or if they lack clothing or books, or have some physical or moral concern or if they have pupils in class who need to be corrected or have particular disciplinary needs⁴¹⁵ regarding the level and way of teaching them. As soon as you know of some need do whatever you can to accommodate it.
3. In appropriate Conferences recommend that their questions in class cover all the pupils without distinction. They should read each one's work in turn. Let them avoid particular friendships or favouritism and they should never allow pupils or others into their rooms.⁴¹⁶
4. If they need to give tasks or advice to pupils, they should use a room or hall made available for this purpose.⁴¹⁷
5. When there are Solemnities, Novenas or Feast Days in honour of Our Lady or the Patron Saint of some town, the school, or one or other Mystery of our Religion, they should speak about it beforehand with a few words and should never omit to do this.⁴¹⁸
6. Keep an eye out to see that teachers do not ever send pupils away from the school or where that might be absolutely necessary, see that they are accompanied by the Superior. They should never hit delinquent or negligent boys. If something serious happens they should immediately advise the Director of studies or the Superior of the House.
7. Outside of school teachers cannot exercise any authority over their pupils and should limit themselves to advice, warnings or at most corrections that allow or suggest that they mean to do so charitably.⁴¹⁹

With the Assistants and those in charge of Dormitories ⁴²⁰

1. Whatever has been said concerning teachers can mostly be applied to those in charge of the dormitories.
2. [p.3] Try to share out tasks so that both for teachers and for these they can have the time and ease for attending to their studies.⁴²¹
3. Deal willingly with them to listen to their opinion about the behaviour of the boys entrusted to them. The most important aspect of their duties is to arrive punctually

⁴¹⁵disciplinary needs (*nella discipline*) *om A*

⁴¹⁶never...rooms (*né mai...loro*) *om A*

⁴¹⁷If...purpose (*Dovendo...uopo*) *om A*

⁴¹⁸Speak about...this (*annunzio...mai*) 'cenno con un semplice annuncio' *A*

⁴¹⁹Keep an eye...charitably (*Si vegli...intesa*) *om A*

⁴²⁰those in charge of dormitories (*Capi di Dormitorio*) 'coi capi di camerata' *A*

⁴²¹Share out...studies (*di distribuire...studii*) 'che abbiano il tempo e la comodità di andare a scuola, studiare, sempre per altro in modo compatibile coi loro doveri' *A*

where the boys gather to rest, or for school, work, recreation or the like.⁴²²

4. If you see that one of them has engaged in a particular friendship with a pupil, or that his role or his morality may be in danger of being compromised, change his duties with all prudence; if the danger continues, you should immediately let your Superior know.
5. Bring the teachers, assistants and those in charge of dormitories together every now and then and tell them to make efforts to prevent bad conversations, keep out every book, writing, image or picture (*hic scientia est*) or anything that endangers purity, the Queen of virtues. Let them offer good advice and be charitable to everyone.⁴²³
6. Let them make it their common concern to discover the more risky pupils. Once they have been found, encourage them to let you know who these are.⁴²⁴

With the Coadjutors and service personnel ⁴²⁵

1. See that every morning they can hear Mass and approach the Sacraments⁴²⁶ according to the rules of the Society. Service personnel should be encouraged to go to Confession every fortnight or at least once a month.
2. Employ great charity in giving commands, letting people know by your words and actions⁴²⁷ that you want the good of their souls; keep a special eye out to see that they do not engage in familiarity with the boys or people from outside.⁴²⁸
3. [p.4] Never allow women into the dormitories or the kitchen or allow them to deal with people in the house unless it is for charitable matters of something absolutely⁴²⁹ necessary. This article is of the greatest importance.
4. If arguments or disputes should break out amongst service personnel, assistants, the boys, or others, hear each one out charitably, but ordinarily I would say offer your view separately, so that one does not hear what is being said about the other.
5. A coadjutor of known probity should be appointed head of the service personnel, to watch over their work and their moral conduct, so that there is no theft or bad conversation. And take special care to prevent anyone taking commissions,

⁴²²The most... like (*La parte... simili*) 'Si trovino puntuali al loro dovere; facciano ricreazione coi giovani' A

⁴²³to everyone (*con tutti*) 'coi giovani' A

⁴²⁴Let them... are (*Sia oggetto... svelati*) 'Conoscendo qualche allievo pericoloso a' suoi compagni inculca che ti sia rivelato, e se ne faccia oggetto delle comuni sollecitudini' A

⁴²⁵With the Coadjutors and (*Coi Coadiutori e*) om A

⁴²⁶See that... Sacraments (*Fa' in modo... Sacramenti*) 'Non abbiano familiarità co' giovani, e fa' in modo che possano ogni mattina ascoltare la santa messa ed accostarsi ogni quindici giorni od una volta al mese ai santi sacramenti' A

⁴²⁷with your words and actions (*colle parole a coi fatti*) om A

⁴²⁸Keep a special... outside (*veglia... esterne*) om A

⁴²⁹absolutely (*assoluta*) om A

or engaging in business affairs with relatives or other people outside whoever they may be.⁴³⁰

With the young pupils

1. Never accept pupils who have been expelled from other [boarding] Colleges or whom you judge to be of bad conduct. If, despite due caution, you happen to accept one of this kind, appoint a companion you are certain of who will stay with him and never let him out of his sight.⁴³¹ When he gets involved in some misdemeanour advise him at least once and if he falls again, he should immediately be sent home.
2. Let the pupils get to know you and get to know them by spending all the time possible with them, seeing that you say whatever word of affection you know best in their ear as, little by little, you see the need.⁴³² This is the great secret that will make you master of their hearts.
3. You might ask: What are these words? They are the same ones that once upon a time were said to you. For example, 'How are you?'. 'Good'. 'And your soul?' 'Just so-so'. 'Would you like to help me in a great task; will you help?' 'Yes, but what is it?', 'Doing something good for you', or 'Saving your soul', or, 'Making you the best of all our boys'. And with the wilder ones: 'When do you want to start?'. 'Start with what?'. 'Being my consolation, behaving like St Aloysius'. And for the ones who are a bit resistant to approaching the Sacraments: 'When would you like to break the devil's horns?'. 'How?' 'With a good confession'.⁴³³ 'When would you suggest?'. 'As soon as possible'. On other occasions: 'When will we have a good clean up?' or, 'Do you feel you could help me break the devil's horns? Do you want us two to be soul friends?'. *Haec aut similia*.
4. In our Houses, the Rector is the ordinary Confessor, therefore see that you willingly hear anyone's confession but give them full freedom to go to confession to someone else if they wish. Make it well known that you take no part in the marks given for good conduct and try to eliminate any hint of suspicion that you make use of or even recall what was told you in Confession. Let there not be even the least hint of favouritism shown to one who goes to confession to one rather than the other.
5. The Altar Boys, the St Aloysius, Blessed Sacrament, Immaculate Conception Solidarities should be recommended and promoted. Show good will and satisfaction towards those who are enrolled, but you [p. 5] should only be a promoter, and not

⁴³⁰A Coadjutor... be (*Alle persone... siano*) 'Sia stabilito una capo alle persone di servizio di probità conosciuta. Costui invigli specialmente sul lavoro e sulla moralità de' subalterni, e si adoperi con zelo affinché non succedano furti né facciansi cattivi discorsi' A

⁴³¹stay with him... sight (*lo assista... vista*) 'non l'abbandoni più' A

⁴³²Let... seeing that you (*Procura... adoperandoti*) 'Fa quanto puoi per passare in mezzo ai giovani tutto il tempo della ricreazione, e procura' A

⁴³³You might ask... Confession (*Dimanderai... Confessione*) 'Fa' vedere che li ascolti volentieri in confessione ma da loro libertà di confessarsi da altri se lo desiderano. Studia di allontanare fin l'ombra di sospetto, che tu ricordi quanto du detto in confessione' A

their Director. Consider such | things as belonging to the boys. They are entrusted to the Catechist to run.⁴³⁴

6. When you succeed in discovering some serious misdemeanour, have the guilty one or the suspect called to your room and in the most charitable way try to get him to admit his fault and the wrong he has committed. Then correct him and invite him to fix up his conscience. This way and by continuing to give kindly assistance to the pupil wonderful results are obtained and improvements that one would never have thought possible.

With people outside

1. We willingly lend our efforts for religious services, preaching, celebrating Masses for the public and hearing confessions any time that charity and our duties of state allow us to,⁴³⁵ especially for parishes our houses are in. But never take on tasks or other things that mean you have to be away from the house or that can affect the roles that each one has.
2. Out of courtesy priests from outside are sometimes invited to preach or are invited to a Solemnity, musical entertainments and the like. Similar invitations can be made to Authorities or any well-deserving or charitable people who have given us favours or who would be able to able.
3. Charity and courtesy are the characteristic features of a Rector towards people inside and outside.
4. In case of questions regarding material matters be as agreeable as you can, even if there is some disadvantage so long as anything that is matter for dispute or other thing that could cause a loss of charity are kept far away.⁴³⁶
5. If it is a case of spiritual matters, questions are always resolved with whatever gives greater glory to God. Tasks, puntigli, spirit of vengeance, self-love, arguments, pretensions and also honour: everything must be sacrificed to avoid sin.⁴³⁷
6. In matters of grave importance it is good to ask time to pray and take advice from some pious and [p.6] prudent individual. |

With people in the local community ⁴³⁸

1. The exact observance of the rules and especially obedience is the basis of everything. But if you want others to obey you you must also obey your superiors. Nobody who is not able to obey is suitable for being in command.

⁴³⁴The Altar boys...run (*Il piccolo...Catechista*) 'Inizia la società dell'Immacolata Concezione; ma tu ne sarai soltanto promotore e non direttore; considera tal cosa come opera de' giovani' A

⁴³⁵We willingly...allow us to (*Prestiamo...usarne*) om A

⁴³⁶anything...away (*si tenga...carità*) 'si conservi la carità' A

⁴³⁷to avoid sin (*per evitare il peccato*) 'in questo caso' A

⁴³⁸(With people... (*Con quelli...dell'Oratorio*) om A

2. Try to share things out in such a way that nobody is overburdened but see that each one faithfully does what is entrusted to him.
3. Let nobody in the Congregation draw up contracts, receive monies, offer loans, or lend things to relatives, friends or others. Nor let anyone keep money or administer temporal matters without being directly authorised by the Superior. Observance of this article will keep far away from us some of the problems that have been fatal for other Congregations.
4. Abhor any modification of the Rules like poison. Their exact observance is better than any variation. The best is the enemy of the good.
5. Study, time, experience have allowed me to have close-hand knowledge that greed, interest and vainglory were the ruin of flourishing Congregations and respectable Religious Orders. Time will also allow you to see the truths that perhaps you only think are unbelievable right now.
6. Take the greatest care to foster common life through word and deed.

In commanding

1. Never command things that you judge to be beyond the strength of your subjects or that you see they will not obey. Try to avoid repugnant commands; indeed, take the greatest care to support the inclinations each one has by preferably giving them roles that you know they will enjoy fulfilling.
2. Never command things that are injurious to health or that prevent the rest they need or which clash with other tasks or orders from another superior.
3. In commanding always use charitable and meek words and manner. Threats, anger, and even more so violence should always be far from your words and actions.
4. [p. 7] where you have to command a subject to do difficult or repugnant things | say, for example: 'Could you do this or that other thing?', or: 'I have something important that I would prefer not to ask you to do because it is difficult, but there is nobody other than yourself who is up to it. You have time and the health; it will not keep you away from other tasks' etc. Experience tells us that approaches of the kind used over time have been every effective.
5. Be economical in everything, but see absolutely that those who are ill lack nothing. This, amongst other things lets people know that we have made a vow of poverty, therefore we ought not seek comfort, nor even desire it, in anything. We must love poverty and poverty's companions, so avoid any unnecessary expense in clothing, books, furniture, trips etc.

This is like a Testament that I address to the Rectors of individual Houses. If this advice is put into practice, I will die happy because I will be certain that our Society will flourish

even more before men and be blessed by the Lord, and it will achieve its end which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Yours affectionately in J.C.

Fr John Bosco

Turin, 1886, Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy,
45th anniversary of the founding of the Oratory.

The dialogue between Don Bosco and Master Francis Bodrato (1864)

by Antonio Ferreira da Silva

Introduction

Don Bosco at Mornese

One of Don Bosco's famous autumn walks is the one where he brought his boys to Mornese in 1864. Coming from Genoa where they stayed from 3 until 6 October, the walkers stayed in the Monferrino town from the sixth until the eleventh. It was the first time that Maria Mazzarello and her companions had seen the Saint and it confirmed their intention to allow themselves to be guided by him in the enterprise that ended up in the founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.⁴³⁹

Given the importance in the Church of this Institute, it is no random fact that most of the documents that recall the excursion mentioned above focus attention on this encounter, overlooking a secondary but significant event: the discussion on the evening of the eighth of October, with Master Bodrato.

Francis Bodrato: from Mornese to Buenos Aires

Born in Mornese on 18 October 1823, Francis Bodrato did his studies while helping his father in his delicatessen business. However, he soon had to leave his studies aside to take up shoe-making. When he was 17 his father died. When he was twenty he married Brigid Pizzarino who gave him two children. When she died he opened his own shop where her served coffee and liqueurs.

He was well regarded by everyone for his uprightness and enterprise. Fr Pestarino,⁴⁴⁰ who was assistant priest and admired his ability and zeal, sent him to Chiavari to attend

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Copia publica transumpti Processus Apostolica auctoritate constructi in Curia ecclesiastica Aquensi super virtutibus et miraculis in specie Servae Dei Mariae Dominicae Mazzarello primae Superiorissae Instituti Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatricis*, art. 41, pp. 54 and 539. Fernando Maccono, *Suor Maria Mazzarello prima Superiora delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice fondate dal Venerabile Giovanni Bosco*. Turin, Libreria Editrice Internazionale [1913] p. 108. Fernando Maccono, *L'Apstolo di Mornese Sac. Domenico Pestarino*. Turin, SEI [1927] p. 106.

⁴⁴⁰ Fr Domenico (Dominic) Pestarino, born at Mornese (Alessandria, Italy) on 5 January 1817, completed his studies at the Seminary in Genoa. He was ordained priest in 1839 but remained at the Seminary until 1846 when he went to Mornese as assistant priest. In 1862 he came to know Don Bosco in Turin, became a Salesian in 1863 and remained in Mornese until his death, collaborating with Don

the school of method.⁴⁴¹ Bodrato finished his course on 6 October 1858 with positive results and on 12 November that year gained his teacher's licence for lower primary. He was then assigned to the village school at Mornese. He also dedicated time to catechesis of the children and to the Society of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, as a vocation.

That Saturday 8 October 1864 marked his life with a totally new direction. Attracted by Don Bosco's kindness and desirous of dedicating himself to the practice of his educational method whose results he had seen in the happy band of youngsters from the Oratory who were staying in Mornese, he decided to go to Turin, entrusted the education of his two sons to Don Bosco and donned the clerical habit on 29 October 1864.

Don Bosco immediately sent him to Lanzo as a teacher of third and fourth primary grades. The [boarding] school had begun its activities that autumn, also taking on the management of the local schools of the town. Up until then there was such a lack of discipline in them that the teachers had completely abandoned the area.

With the experience he had gained in Mornese, the new teacher set to work in such a way that the government inspector, making a careful visit to the schools, was very happy with the transformation that had taken place and heaped much praise on the teacher.

On 2 December 1865, in Novara, Bodrato passed his exam for upper primary teaching and was given his licence on 14 December that year.

Don Bosco received his perpetual profession on 29 December that year. He then appointed him as prefect (administrator) of the college, a role he combined with that of teacher. He had been practical since a young man, and was inspired by Christian affection towards the boarders, so Bodrato became master of the boys' hearts and spent six years exceptionally fruitful years at Lanzo.

His priestly ordination on 29 December 1869 added new possibilities for his educational commitment.

In 1871 he went to Alassio and two years later to Borgo S. Martino, always as prefect. He was known as the doctor of the incurables in the college so well could he prevent evil and foster good through this role, which put him in contact with everyone in the house.

Bosco in the founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He died 15 May 1874.

⁴⁴¹Schools of method were obligatory for all practising teachers under 50 years of age. Also people who were not teachers could be admitted, having done an exam. The Chiavari school was opened in 1848. The course lasted three months, from 1 August to 20 October. Classes were taught by a professor, an assistant and a calligraphy master. The programme included some pedagogy and some subject content taught in primary schools, along with their specific methods. At the end of the course the students had to take an oral and written exam which was also for receiving the licence as a primary teacher. Aimed at forming teachers for primary schools and spreading universal knowledge and the practice of the best teachings (cf. 'Regie patenti' 1 August 1845, N. 515) the provincial schools of method the early core of what would develop into the normal schools set up firstly by the Lanza law (1858) and then the Casati law (13 November 1859). But broad needs and programmes often underwent notable reduction either because of the State's economic problems or the need to adjust to the cultural circumstances of hopeful students, who were needed in greater numbers because schooling was being expanded. So there were various kinds and ways of preparing primary teachers, lower and upper grades. "Exams were open to all takers 'wherever and however' they had done their studies, so long as they were 18 or older, if male and 17 if women, for lower grades, and 19 and 18 respectively, if for upper grades" (I. Zambaldi, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*. Rome, LAS 1975, p. 229; cf all of chapter VII, *Scuole per i maestri*, pp. 221-239).

In 1875 Don Bosco called him to the Oratory as prefect of the sacristy at the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians. However, he soon had to take on the role of Economist General of the Salesian Society, but remained in that office only for a year.

In 1876 Don Bosco was preparing for the second missionary expedition and saw in Bodrato a wise and mature man who could lead it.

On 7 November he left Turin with a group of 22 missionaries setting off first for Rome and then leaving from Genoa, from whence they sailed on the 14th of that month. He reached Buenos Aires on 22 December. In Argentina he was parish priest at Boca, a populous suburb of Buenos Aires. In 1878 he became Provincial of the American Province which included the Salesian houses and missions in Argentina and Uruguay. He died at Buenos Aires on 4 August 1880.

A biography in three drafts

When Bodrato died, Count Cays⁴⁴² was asked to write a biographical sketch. He was able to do this making use especially of testimonies by Don Bosco and many others who like himself had personally known the individual. He also had letters at his disposition that Bodrato had written and a short biographical summary – which gave special attention to his missionary activity – already published in the *Salesian Bulletin*.⁴⁴³

Cays, however, never completed the work. On 27 March 1881 he sent a letter to Fr Rua attaching letters from Fr Bodrato and other information along with what he had succeeded in putting together to that point.

The time we can assign to Cays' work goes from September 1880 to March 1881. It is contained in an exercise book, 20.9x13.3 cm, unruled, with pages numbered only at the back from 1 to 119. The paper has yellowed and has many marks on it, but it is in a good state of preservation. This is the text we will indicate as *A*. This draft of a biography does not include the *Dialogue between Don Bosco and Master Francis Bodrato*. The story of the encounter at Mornese is, in fact, exclusively focused on showing how Bodrato decided to become a Salesian.

Cays has left us with three drafts of the encounter; all three ignore this discussion on pedagogy. The first is contained in pp. 28-31 of text *A*. The other two, texts *B* and *C*, are found at the back of the exercise book on unnumbered pages. The first of the two, text *B*, was rejected by Cays himself, who cancelled it by drawing a pencil line from top to bottom through it. It is the only one with the expression “e fattane più intima conoscenza dopo particolari colloqui seco lui tenuti” (And he came to a better

⁴⁴²Father Carlo (Charles) Cays born Turin on 24 November 1813, of an ancient and noble family, gained a degree in jurisprudence from Turin University. He was widowed at 32 years of age and dedicated the rest of his life to the education of his only child and good works. He was a member and then president in Turin of the St Vincent de Paul Conference. Young people at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius and the Guardian Angel often had him as their catechist, prior, benefactor. From 1857 to 1860 he was a member of the Sub-alpine Parliament. In 1877 an earlier desire to embrace religious life was re-awakened in him. On 26 May that year he entered Valdocco. In September 1878 he was ordained priest in Turin. He was first made Rector at Challonges (Savoy) and was then recalled to Turin as director of the *Catholic Readings*. He died on 4 October 1882.

⁴⁴³Cf BS 4 (1880) no. 9, September, pp. 1-3; no. 10, October, pp. 1-4.

understanding after he had had particular discussions with him). This makes us suppose that a dialogue existed concerning educational problems which was then handed down.

But there is more. Between pages 31 and 32 of exercise book *A* Cays had inserted two unnumbered sheets with the same features as the exercise book. They contain two different drafts of the first part of the dialogue. We have called these as *D* and *E*. As you can see here these drafts substantially coincide, and differences are more of a formal nature.

In the manuscripts the draft of the second part of the dialogue is missing. This is not Cay's fault. As indicated, he gave Father Rua what he had completed and this, it seems, had also been reviewed by Cagliero.

The page proofs

The print proofs for Bodrato's biography were produced. We call these text *F*. It is a bound booklet of 152 pages with a grey cover. The paper has yellowed but is in a good state of preservation. The dimensions are 18.8x13.4 cm.

Between these and Cays' manuscript there would have been an intermediate manuscript that could justify the notable differences between texts *F* and *A*. The main difference is that the proofs text has the second part of the dialogue which does not exist in Cays' text. The entire dialogue runs from page 35 to 38. From page 33-35 there is a description of lunch at Mornese. On page 35, line 12, there is a characteristic cross-reference in pencil to line three, after 'Bodrato'. The content indicated by the two references from page 35-39 is reported in its entirety and faithfully in volume VII of the *Memorie Biografiche* (1909) on pp. 761-763.

We have no certain information on the date of the print proofs, but in all probability it would go back to 1881-1882.

The "Vade-mecum"

Only in 1901 with publication of the *Vade-mecum degli ascritti salesiani (Handbook for novices)* by Fr Giulio Barberis, did some sketchy biographies of Bodrato appear. Printed at S. Benigno Canavese by the Salesian Printing School there, the *Vade-mecum* came out in its first edition in two volumes making up a total of 1188 pages, 13.8x9 cm.

As noted, the *Vade-mecum* contains teaching and advice given by Fr Barberis to the novices of the Pious Society of St Francis de Sales. At the time he was celebrating twenty five years as novice master. At the end of each chapter the author adds a reading to clarify the theoretical explanation. With this in mind there are facts regarding Don Bosco's life and other Salesians whom Barberis had known personally.

The biographical summary of Fr Francis Bodrato takes up two of these readings in the second volume of the work, and precisely from pages 975-985, recalling Bodrato's life at Mornese and Buenos Aires, and from pages 1001-1015, describing the circumstances of his death and the solemn funeral.

There is little about his life at Mornese. The encounter with Don Bosco is reported in just eleven lines on page 977, and the dialogue is reduced to the sentence: "Those

two souls understood one another perfectly”. Evidently Barberis was keen to show how Bodrato became a Salesian and nothing else.

Sketches of Salesian Chapter members

In 1951, Eugene Ceria published 24 sketches of Salesians who had died between 1865 and 1950. They were published by the *Libreria della Dottrina Cristiana* (Colle Don Bosco). The 24 Salesians had all held some position in the Superior Chapter (= Council) of the Salesian Society. The volume also contained a summary history of the Salesian Society and some historical outlines on the development of the Constitutions. It was a book of 507 pages, 15.5x11 cm, in which, Ceria says: “there are no panegyrics but sketches describing the individuals in their personality and specific activity”. It is a book intended for a Salesian readership. In fact, as the author says, “they also serve to enrich our experience and will provide general edification”.⁴⁴⁴

Bodrato’s outline takes up pages 98-107. It offers various impressions. The information is taken from the *Memorie Biografiche* and mainly from Barberis’ readings. The author keeps to what he has said in the preface to the book: he speaks of the work Bodrato did in his various roles and highlights his personality. But he remains silent on the entire period at Mornese simply noting his encounter with Don Bosco the dialogue which took place. All this, however, is condensed into 17 lines, keeping exclusively to the material in the *Memorie Biografiche*.

The Biographical Memoirs

Lemoyne and Ceria abound in news about Bodrato in the *Biographical Memoirs*, after the 1864 encounter. Lemoyne assumes the version of the dialogue contained in the print proofs (text) reporting on pp 761-763 of volume VII [These and other page references are all from the Italian *Memorie Biografiche* rather than the English version] content which is identical to pp. 35-39 of the proofs. In our edition then we will take no account of the text in the *Biographical Memoirs*.

It should be noted that in the preparatory document for the *Biographical Memoirs* (known as *Documenti* for writing up Fr John Bosco’s history), the dialogue is not found. It only appears twenty five years later in the seventh volume of the *Biographical Memoirs*.

We have not succeeded in identifying the sources which the *Biographical Memoirs* used to talk about the lunch that preceded the dialogue. It corresponds neither to Cays’ texts, nor to the print proofs, nor to documents which Maccono used to write the biographies of Mother Mary Mazzarello and Fr Pestarino, and not even to the testimonies which are part of the Saint’s Apostolic process.

The dialogue’s content

One can observe that the contents of the dialogue correspond with what is repeated in Good Nights and other of Don Bosco’s teachings. For example, it would be enough to

⁴⁴⁴E. Ceria, *Profili dei Capitolari Salesiani morti dall’anno 1865 al 1950 con sintesi storica della Società Salesiana e cenni storici delle Regole*. Colle Don Bosco (Asti), LDC 1951, p. VII.

cite MB VII 507 and 824; MB XI 221 and 253; MB XII 133.

The three substantial texts agree on the first part of the dialogue. In general terms this first part deals with the young man's conversion. To arrive at this the educator employs reason and religion. God is love and as love he must be known and understood by the young. Consideration of the benefits that God's love has bestowed on us gives rise to gratitude in the young man's heart. It is not a merely emotional and sterile gratitude but a reasonable and active one that leads the young man to sincerely decide to follow the path of the commandments and fulfil his duties. The work of education has arrived at a good point.

The viewpoint presented in the second part of the dialogue is different. Bodrato makes reference to the use of the stick (cane) – which was even obligatory in school regulations prior to the Casati law – and claims that a third element was essential to education, that is the threat of punishment.

Don Bosco, in response, reminds him that religion already carries with it severe and terrible censures that affect the life of a young person in his most secret thoughts and actions. Religious practices carried out in sincerity, frequent use of the Sacraments and the constant work of the educator tend, with the Lord's help, to see that the young person is convinced of this and changes his behaviour without any need for recourse to outside punishments.

A gleam of light concludes this discourse, tying things back to the first part of the dialogue: once young people are persuaded that the one directing them sincerely loves what is to their benefit the educator no longer needs to have recourse to other punishment than that of having a more constrained form of behaviour which makes visible the displeasure felt at corresponding badly to his fatherly concern.

A possible source and author

Amongst the material in Cays' possession and preserved along with his manuscript and the print proofs we find two interesting indications in the *Salesian Bulletin* from 1880. The first speaks of Bodrato's death in Argentina and provides a brief outline of his life with particular regard to his missionary activity. The other instead touches on an argument that at first sight seems to have little to do with Bodrato. It is an instalment of the *History of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales* by Fr John Bonetti,⁴⁴⁵ in which he records some original reflections on the life style at the Oratory in its early days (cf. BS 4 (1880) no. 10 October p. 7). Bonetti attempts an analysis of the 'signs of the times' drawing on the need for authentic educational innovation. The system introduced and practised by Don Bosco in the education of youth, besides conforming to reason and religion, seems to be more in conformity with the nature of the times.

The conceptual scheme is somewhat similar to the second part of the dialogue. Bodrato calls on severe and strong measures to govern young people (cane). Don Bosco answers instead by saying that punishment from outside is almost completely superfluous once conscience has presented eternal punishment and the young person understands that the

⁴⁴⁵On John Bonetti, cf. earlier references, especially footnote 110.

educator has no other purpose in mind than freeing him from such terrible punishment. The more effort we put into helping a young person grow in the holy fear of God the easier and more constructive it is to transform the image of the educator as a dominant absolute into a more affectionate and fatherly figure, which corresponds to the new expectations of young people in changed times.

We know that the author of the first part of the dialogue is Cays. We also know that the author of the second part is not Lemoyne. The similarity between the instalment in the *BS* and the second part of the dialogue has firstly led us to find the author of the latter in Bonetti. But Bonetti's 'periodical' approach has a structure that starts from one idea which then becomes more explicit in new explanations and with new indications which complete his thinking. The architecture of the dialogue is simpler. But since we lack a document which is a bridge between between Cays' manuscripts and the print proofs, we don't have items in hand that allow us to claim with certainty who the author of the print proofs is and therefore of the second part of the dialogue.

If we compare the number of books and publications that reproduce the text of the dialogue with those that report on Don Bosco's preventive system we see that the dialogue has not spread much either within the Salesian setting or beyond.

Critical apparatus

A = original manuscript by Count Carlo (Charles) Cays

D = unnumbered sheets inserted between pages 31 and 32 of *A* with the report by Cays of the first part of the dialogue between Bodrato and Don Bosco

E = unnumbered sheets inserted between pages 31 and 32 of *A* with another report drawn up by Cays on the first part of the dialogue between Bodrato and Don Bosco

F = print proofs of the biography of Fr Bodrato coming from the original manuscript by Fr Cays but with notable variations.

Text – Doc F [p. 35]

Not simply satisfied with admiration, Bodrato wanted to know something more about it and to this end requested a special audience of Don Bosco, which he was given that same evening.⁴⁴⁶ He asked him what his secret was for such control exercised over these youngsters that he could make them so obedient, respectful and docile that one could not want more than this.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ not... evening (*Non... sera*) 'Nel decorso di quel giorno chiese un particolare udienza col Rev. D. Bosco, e l'ottenne nella stessa sera. Quali siano state le confidenze di quel colloquio solo Iddio lo sa' *D om E*

⁴⁴⁷ He asked... this (*gli... più*) 'Ciò che possiamo asserire si è che uno dei primi temi della conversazione si furono le proteste d'ammirazione per contegno di dipendenza e d'affetto, e di sincera cordialità che tanto avevano colpito il Bodrato, in quel grande numero di ragazzi, vennero quindi le domande sul sistema tenuto dal Sac. D. Bosco onde ottenere così straordinario effetto D ciò che possiamo dire si è che Bodrato meravigliato della condotta di quei ragazzi così dicili, obbedienti ed affettuosi verso D. Bosco si sentiva il bisogno e desiderava ardentemente conoscere il secreto di così straordinaria risucita di tale educazione' *E*

Don Bosco put it into two brief words: Religion and Reason are the mainsprings of my entire system of education.⁴⁴⁸

The educator should be convinced that all, or nearly all, of these fine young people are intelligent by nature, and can recognise the good done to them personally, and at the same time they are gifted with a good heart which is readily open to gratitude.⁴⁴⁹

When, with God's help, one succeeds in inculcating into their souls the principal mysteries of our religion, which being all love, makes us think of the immense love God has for mankind. When you succeed in touching the strings of gratitude in their hearts, how much we owe Him because of what He has so generously done for us. When, with the force of reason they have become convinced that real gratitude to the Lord should be expressed by doing His will, by respecting His precepts, especially those that require the doing of our duty to one another, believe you me, the greater part of our work of education is already done.⁴⁵⁰

Religion in this system is like the bit in the mouth of a fiery steed, which dominates and rules it: reason then is like the bridle which, pulling on the bit gives you the results you seek. True religion, genuine religion, which can control the actions of the young; reason which correctly applies those holy precepts as a guide for all his actions: there you are, summarised in two words the system I use, and which you wish to know the secret. When Don Bosco finished speaking, Bodrato took up in reply, "Your Reverence, using that image of the bit which controls the young colts, you spoke to me of the moderating force of religion, and the good use of reason in directing all their actions. This is very good, but it seems to me that you have said nothing about a third means always used

⁴⁴⁸ Don Bosco. . . education (*D. Bosco. . . educazione*) 'D. Bosco se ne sbrigava con due sole parole: Religione e Ragione. Veda Signor Bodrato. Queste sono le due molle del mio semplicissimo sistema' *D* 'Interrogavane D Bosco, il quale se ne sbrigava con due sole parole. Veda signor Bodrato vuol essa sapere le due molle potenti che mi sorreggono nell'esercizio del mio sistema? Queste sono quelle appunto che hanno da adattarsi ad esseri razionali, ad esseri fatti per conoscere Iddio, per amarlo, per servirlo e poi poterlo andare a godere nel Paradiso. Queste due molle potentissime sono la Religione e la Ragione' *E*

⁴⁴⁹ The educator. . . gratitude (*L'educatore. . . riconoscenza*) *om D* 'L'educatore deve persuadersi che tutti, o quasi tutti questi cari giovani hanno una naturale intelligenza per conoscere il bene che loro vien fatto, ed un cuore sensibile facilmente aperto allo riconoscenza' *E*

⁴⁵⁰ When. . . done (*Quando. . . fatto*) 'Quando io posso giungere a far penetrare nel cuore dei giovanetti a me affidati I sublimi principi di nostra S.a Religione, e non solo conoscerne I misteri, ma innamorarsene, e metterne in pratica le conseguenze, colla frequenza dei Sacramenti coll'amore di Gesù ed a Maria e finalmente così osservare i precetti di Dio e della Chiesa, creda pure che gran parte del mio compito è già fatto *D* Quando siasi giunto a far penetrare nelle loro anime I principali misteri di nostra Religione, che tutta amore ci ricorda l'amore che Iddio ha portato all'uomo, quando si sia arrivato a far vibrare nel loro cuore le corde della riconoscenza che si deve al Signore, in ricambio dei benefizi che ci ha sì largamente compartiti, e quando ancora la Ragione li abbia fatti persuasi che chi vuol essere grato sinceramente a Dio, deve ascoltarne i precetti, osservare i comandamenti e praticare quanto ci proponiamo per tenerci nella via retta; insomma quando si abbia ottenuto da essi la pratica delle opere buone colla frequenza dei Sacramenti, si persuada pure che s'è quasi a metà dell'opera' *E post* 'fatto' (done) *add* 'Quando poi questi santi principi della Cristiana Cattolica Religione abbiano messo radice in questi teneri cuori riesce assai facile di rinvigorirli e renderli atti a produrre ottimi frutti, con applicarli alle azioni quotidiane della vita mediante opportuni continui ragionamenti, che insensibilmente si facciano strada in quelle anime che quasi senza avvedersene si avvezzeranno a fuggire il male ed operare il bene' *E*

by horsebreakers, I mean he is never without his whip, which is the third element of his success".

To this remark of Bodrato Don Bosco replied, "My dear sir, allow me to say to you that in my system the whip, which you say can't be done without, that is, the salutary threat of future punishment, is not excluded in all absolute sense. Just recall that many and terrible are the punishments that religion threatens for those who, paying no heed to the Lord's precepts, dare to despise his commands: severe and terrible threats, which frequently recalled, will not fail to produce their effect, all the more so when we don't limit ourselves to emphasising external actions, but we strike at their most secret ones, and their most hidden thoughts. In order to make the conviction of this truth penetrate even more deeply, one includes also the sincere practice of the faith, attendance at the Sacraments and the persistence of the educator, and one is certain that with the help of the Lord, one will have much more chance of making good Christians of very many, even of the most difficult boys.

"In any case, when the young come to be convinced that those in charge of them truly want to do good to them, more often than not it will serve as sufficient punishment to be a little withdrawn, to show the displeasure you experience at getting so little return for your fatherly care.

"Believe me, dear Sir that this system is perhaps easier, and certainly more effective because with its background of religious practice, it will also be blessed by God. To give you proof you can see for yourself, I am moved to invite you to come for a few days to see its practical application in our houses. Come at any time to spend a few days with us, and I hope that at the end of the experiment you can assure me that what I have said to you is verifiably the most functional and the surest system." This invitation, made partly jokingly and partly seriously, made an impression on our Bodrato. He thanked Don Bosco, saying he would give a firm reply later, but bearing in his heart the thought that he would take it up later with good results.⁴⁵¹

From oratorian pedagogy to missionary ministry

Introduction

More than being a history of the past, the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales* could be considered as a more mature and significant document of narrative oratorian pedagogy. The two dimensions, social and educational, flow together, even if the latter predominates, enabled by strong pastoral and catechetical connotations. As we can see from the preface, the only text presented here, this is the perspective which the author himself suggests. It seems then, that beyond the limited historical use that these can allow us, it is the clearest value that we can get from reading it.

Written almost completely during the period 1873-1875, it is logical that it reflects the way Don Bosco saw and evaluated events of the past in the light of the unforeseeable results that followed and in function of the future prospects he indicates to members

⁴⁵¹ Religion...satisfaction (*La religione...soddisfazione*) om DE

of his religious Society precisely when it was being definitively approved (1874). It is inevitable that time plans and different psychologies interfere in and are superimposed on his thoughtful recall: facts and insights from the past and a mature awareness of their significance for the present that he sees more precisely enriched and broadened by difficulties, clearer and completed following developments and a future which needed to be guaranteed and organised.⁴⁵²

It would not seem historically irrelevant that the beginning of the drafting of the *Memoirs*, known only then to his secretary Fr Joaquim Berto, coincided with the writing in 1873 of the *Cenno istorico sulla Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales*, that Don Bosco would then use to support the approval of the Constitutions in February-March 1874. The *Memoirs* thus are a kind of prehistory, not to be understood as an ascetic re-evocation but as a prelude, pre-announcement, initial phase of a partially realised history or one on the way to completion to be entrusted to his collaborators for future developments which are to follow the same lines.

We should note that the three decades, 1825-1835, 1835-1845, 1845-1855 are preceded by 1815-1825, an introduction of a few pages on his childhood years, where he tells the 'dream' that he had when he was nine or ten, for the first time. This part can only be read with the same criteria used for the entire book.

The text has been taken from the last critical edition: G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855. Introduzione, note e testo critico* edited by Antonio da Silva Ferreria. Rome, LAS 1991. It is followed by another critical edition independent of it, and more carefully written, without indication of variants, with introduction and notes by the same A. da Silva Ferreira. Rome, LAS 1992.

The so-called *Ricordi ai missionari, Keepsakes for Missionaries*, refer to a totally different though ideally homogeneous world. These are from 1875, so are chronologically contiguous with the *Memoirs of the Oratory*.

Don Bosco's first agreements with the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and with parish priest Fr Peter Ceccarelli foresaw the involvement of the Salesians in pastoral and youth activities in Argentina, in the capital and at San Nicolas de los Arroyos. But in Don Bosco's deepest intentions, the priority in his ideas for the future went to the 'missions' in Patagonia. Don Bosco refers exclusively to these when announcing to Salesian Rectors at a meeting at Valdocco on 29 January 1875 that he had accepted the American enterprise. The farewell address he gave Salesians leaving on Thursday 11 November that year focused in first place on the missions even though there was no lack of explicit reference to a broader priestly ministry, including one for Italian emigrants.⁴⁵³

Towards the conclusion of this farewell speech, addressing those departing in particular, Don Bosco announced the 'Keepsakes' which he gave each one of them in a small printed booklet at the end of the ceremony.⁴⁵⁴ "To everyone in particular I have already said

⁴⁵² Cf S. G. Bosco, *Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell'educazione della gioventù. Introduzione, presentazione e indici alfabetici e sistematici*, ed. P. Braidò. Brescia, La Scuola Editrice 1965, p. 4. This is broadened out and further plumbed in the more recent essay: P. Braidò, «*Memorie*» del futuro, in «*Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*» 11 (1992) 97-127.

⁴⁵³ Cf the text of this address in MB XI 383-387.

⁴⁵⁴ E II 516-517.

viva voce what was in my heart or that I thought useful; I am leaving everyone some special written keepsakes that are my testament for those going to far-off countries and whom I may not have the consolation of seeing again on this earth".⁴⁵⁵

The original manuscript, which can be dated between the beginning of September and the first fortnight in October 1875, carries the title *Ricordi speciali per colo che vanno in lontani paesi* (*Special keepsakes for those going to far-off countries*). In later developments the 14 'items of advice' grew to 20 'keepsakes'.⁴⁵⁶

The text here is reproduced in its original draft by Don Bosco, corrected by him and added into the same manuscript. It is the one that has been established by Jesús Borrego in the work indicated.⁴⁵⁷

Texts

1. Preface to the Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales

Memoirs for the Oratory and the Salesian Congregation

Many a time I have been urged to write my memoirs concerning the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales. Though I could not readily say no to the authority of the one who advised me to do this, I found it hard actually to set about the task because it meant too often speaking about myself. But now there has been added the command of a person of supreme authority, an authority that brooks no further delay. Therefore I am now putting into writing those confidential details that may somehow serve as a light or be of use to the work which Divine Providence has entrusted to the Society of Saint Francis de Sales.

But I must say at the outset that I am writing these for my beloved Salesian sons; I forbid that these things be made public during my lifetime or after my death.

Now, what purpose can this chronicle serve? It will be a record to help people overcome problems that may come in the future by learning from the past. It will serve to make known how God himself has always been our guide. It will give my sons some entertainment to be able to read: about their father's adventures. Doubtless they will be read much more avidly when I have been called by God to render my account, when I am no longer amongst them.

Should they come upon experiences related maybe with complacency or the appearance of vainglory, let them indulge me a little. A father delights in speaking of his exploits to his dear children. It is always to be hoped that the sons will draw from these adventures, small and great, some spiritual and temporal advantage.

I have chosen to divide my account into ten-year periods, because each decade saw a notable development of our work. So, my dear children, when you read these memoirs

⁴⁵⁵ MB XI 386.

⁴⁵⁶ For the history of the text, its likely sources, analysis of its contents, and its part in the Salesian tradition to follow, the research by Jesús Borrego is fundamental: *Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco a los primeros misioneros*, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 3 (1984) 167-208.

⁴⁵⁷ Jesús Borrego, *Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco*. . . pp. 206-207.

after my death, remember that you had a loving father who left these memoirs as a pledge of fatherly affection before he abandoned this world. And remembering that, pray for the happy repose of my soul.

2. Keepsakes for missionaries

Keepsakes given to Salesian Religious on 11 November as they depart the church of Mary Help of Christians to undertake their journey to the Argentine Republic

1. Seek souls and not money, honors, or dignities.
2. Be kind and most courteous toward all, but shun conversations and familiarity with persons of the other sex or with persons of questionable conduct.
3. Do not go visiting except for motives of charity or necessity.
4. Never accept invitations to dinner except for very serious reasons. In these cases arrange to go with another confrere.
5. Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged, and the poor, and you will gain the blessing of God and the goodwill of people.
6. Show respect toward all in authority, whether civic, religious, municipal, or state.
7. On meeting a person in authority, take care to greet him with respect.
8. Do the same toward priests and religious.
9. Shun idleness and disputes. Practice great moderation in eating and drinking and sleeping.
10. Love, reverence and respect other religious orders, and always speak well of them. This is the way of winning the esteem of all and of promoting the good of the Congregation.
11. Take care of your health. Work, but only as much as your strength allows.
12. Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food, and dwelling, and you will be rich in the sight of God and will conquer people's hearts.
13. Love one another, advise one another, correct one another, and never be carried away by envy or rancor. Rather, let the good of one be the good of all, and let the pains and sufferings of one be regarded as the pains and sufferings of all, and let each one strive to remove or at least to mitigate them.
14. Observe your rules and never neglect the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death.
15. Every morning commend to God the occupations of the day, especially confessions, classes, catechism, and sermons.

16. Constantly recommend devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
17. Recommend to the boys frequent confession and Communion.
18. In order to foster vocations to the priesthood, you should recommend: (1) Love of chastity; (2) horror of the opposite vice; (3) avoidance of bad companions; (4) frequent Communion; (5) and treat the boys with special charity, affability, and kindness.
19. Hear both sides before judging on reports and matters in dispute.
20. In your labours and sufferings do not forget that a great reward is prepared for us in Heaven. Amen.

3. The Preventive System in the Education of Youth

Introduction

Don Bosco's fame as an educator and pedagogue has been mostly tied, at certain periods, to his brief work on the 'Preventive System', certainly within the religious institutes he founded and in the wider circle of imitators and those who have known about him.

Interest in the text and how it was drafted can be an initial contribution to a broader research already enriched by many consistent expositions of the overall educational and pastoral experience of this very active 'friend of youth'.

Genesis of the text

From a strictly literal and editorial point of view the 'outline' of the preventive system which Don Bosco offered somewhat unpredictably in the summer of 1877, pointing to a more complete work that was never written, presents completely new features and finds confirmation in very brief notes (especially in the General Articles of the Regulations for the Houses) written up at much the same time.

At the same time, the certainty and lucidity of what is said, the usual result of a complicated process of composition, would not allow us to hypothesise that it was improvised.⁴⁵⁸ It supposes experiences and ideas which slowly matured and then were

⁴⁵⁸ Referring to a time very close to the drafting of the pages on the preventive system, Fr Barberis notes in his *Cronichetta* on 21 April 1877: "I was walking together with him yesterday evening for a long time; he has given me so much work that one might say he gave me something new every day, but I have the good fortune that he corrects them with his own hand before they are printed; but he had me observe the following – "You look for the ideas first and order them and adapt the order to the thoughts; instead something has to be first given order and then the ideas need to be adapted to that— It often happens that we only end up repeating ideas under different forms and in different words. It is one of the things that writers like to do: as soon as an idea has been expressed, they quickly go onto another" *Cronichetta* 12 [pp.XII-XIII]. Salesian Father Giulio Barberis (1847-1927) is an especially valuable testimony at this stage of Don Bosco's life. He spent his first five years as master of novices at Don Bosco's side (1874-1879) and at certain times was in daily conversation with him. The dozens of *cronache* and *quaderni* (notes, exercise books) that he left contain extremely

finally jotted down with almost natural spontaneity, covering ground that had long been cultivated in unity of intention and approach with his disciples and collaborators.

In fact there are known precedents even if the content, significance and interpretation of some of them, given what they were written for, are problematic.⁴⁵⁹

The work done in preparation for publishing the Regulations could have contributed to crystallising the ideas expressed in the 'Preventive System', and we notice that there was more focused interest in these right in the very weeks that gave birth to this little work on pedagogy.⁴⁶⁰ The *Articoli Generali* (General Articles) are especially significant in this context, stylistically and chronologically close to the work. These can be found in this collection.

Regarding the circumstances which determined the text dealing with the 'Opening' and the important appendix there is essential and valuable documentation which allows us to establish the broad idea of the genesis and development of the three 'sections' which make up the text as a whole: the news release, Don Bosco's 'speech', and the pages on the preventive system.

Direct sources, other than the written documents reviewed in the following paragraph could be: the invitation and programme that were printed diramato for the opening ceremony, various letters almost all of which can be found in the *Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco*, and interesting pointers from Fr Barberis's *Cronichetta* (unpublished). Indirect sources, mostly reconstructed from the indicated dates come from what was written by Eugene Ceria in the *Biographical Memoirs*⁴⁶¹ and the *Annals*⁴⁶² and from what can be drawn from the monograph by Francis Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice*.⁴⁶³

After various negotiations in November 1875 two Salesian priests, a cleric and a brother (coadjutor) began a modest youth activity in Nice: an oratory and a boarding section for working boys and students. Don Bosco came to Nice for various events aimed at encouraging Charity. Called by telegram he came to the *sermon de charité* run by

valuable information and first hand evaluations.

⁴⁵⁹The main documentation is found in this collection. Many of the published texts with their introductions and historical and critical notes can be considered as preparation and complement to the famous pages in 1877.

⁴⁶⁰Writing to Fr Rua from Sampierdarena on 24 March 1877 Don Bosco asks: "When I get to Turin on the 8th, give me the Regulations for the house and I will immediately read through it. Has Fr Barberis finished his part?" E III 160. A month later Barberis notes in his *Cronichetta* (21 April): "For some time now Don Bosco has been taken up with having the Regulations of the Oratory and the Colleges printed. I hope I can be of real and great use to him in this. He left it with me to see to. Everything concerning the superiors has been read by the Rectors meeting for the [feast of] St Francis de Sales. Then he insisted with Fr Rua that he soon read the rest. He gave me the disciplinary part to be retouched and to add many things which I have spoken about with him many times. He is now pressing us a lot for this part. It is just like someone who has a lot to do and to consolidate but is afraid he is soon about to die, so wants to hurry along with the most important things and cutting off the less useful ones. All this however is done with real and perfect calm, without agitation of any kind" *Cronichetta* 12, p. XII.

⁴⁶¹Cf MB XI 421-428 and XII 113-124, but especially MB XIII 106-126.

⁴⁶²Cf *Annali* I 280-284.

⁴⁶³F. Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice. La vie d'une école professionnelle catholique entre 1875 et 1919*. Paris, Apostolat des Éditions 1980, pp. 41-55.

bishop Mermillod on 23 February 1876.⁴⁶⁴

The solemn opening took place of the new and more extensive location (ex-villa Gautier, Place d'Armes) on Monday 12 March 1877. The invitation and programme, prepared by a group of signatories with elderly bishop Sola at its head was as follows:

M[onsieur, adame]

Lundi, 12 courant, à 2 heures et demie de l'après-midi Monseigneur l'ÉVÊQUE inaugurerà le PATRONAGE DE SAINT-PIERRE, Placed'Armes, 1 ancienne villa Gautier, nuovellement ouvert pour retirer les enfants abandonnés et leur apprendre un métier. Persuadé que cette Œuvre éminemment populaire et moralisatrice ne peut que recontrer la sympathie de toutes les personnes qui s'intéressent au bien-être de la classe ouvrière, le Comté vous prie, M., de vouloir bien honorer de votre présence cette cérémonie.

Monseigneur l'Évêque.

Abbé Bosco, Directeur et Fondateur

Le Comté: Comte de Bétheune

Comte Michaud de Beautour

Comte de la Ferté-Meun

Ernst Michelangelo

Baron Héraud

C. Gignoux

Auguste Faraut.

Nice, le mars 1877.

ORDRE DE LA FÊTE:

Musique religieuse par les enfants de la Maison;

Exposé du but de l'Œuvre, par l'abbé Bosco, suivit du Salut donné par Monseigneur;

Dialogue et chœur par les enfants;

Visite des Salles et des Ateliers.

Typ. S.C. Cauvin et Ce.⁴⁶⁵

In the first part of the programme then, an *exposé* on Don Bosco's part regarding the purpose of the work at Nice was included. Regarding the language he spoke we have the testimony of Fr Francis Cerruti from the *Processus Informativo* for the Canonisation. Cerruti was then the Rector at Alassio: "I always recall him telling me about his first conference at Nice when the first Oratory was opened in the city, the 'patronato' of St

⁴⁶⁴Cf MB XII 112-113, 116-118; F. Desramaut, opus cit p. 39. Bishop Gaspard Mermillod (1824-1892) was at the time the Vicar Apostolic in Geneva, however exiled in France because he had been expelled from the Canton. He was a noted preacher and speaker (he was one of those who prepared the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* 1891). He was appointed bishop of Lausanne and Geneva in 1883 and in 1890 elevated to the Cardinalate.

⁴⁶⁵This has been pasted into page 110 of vol XVIII of the Documenti, in ASC.

Peter – 'I began in French then I slipped into Italian but', he said jokingly, 'I was smart enough to continue mixing both Italian and French. And to think', he added', that I had my French dictionary in my bag'.⁴⁶⁶ We do not know if Don Bosco was following a written text in one or other language or at least an outline he had prepared earlier. And again it is not easy to establish how much of what would eventually be published was actually said. It is more than likely that there were additions, *assestamenti*, re-elaborations; at any rate some episodes could not have been told because they referred to facts that we know occurred later (on 13 and 14 March).

Don Bosco left for Turin the following day, Tuesday 13 March stopping off at Vallecrosia (13-17 March) then Alassio and Varazze (17-23 March), Sampierdarena (23-26/28 March) and arriving at his destination between Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week (26 or 28 March).⁴⁶⁷

But from the various letters it seems he felt he needed to write up his *exposé*, his speech, during his return journey and send it to the Rector of the Patronage in Nice. On 23 March, probably on the point of leaving Varazze for Sampierdarena, he wrote, amongst others, to Fr Ronchail: "... We are on the way. My *exposé* is finished; I'll have it copied and before leaving for Sampierdarena I will send it to you... In sending you the *exposé* I will include other things which we mentioned".⁴⁶⁸ Finally, on a day that has to lie between the 3rd and 10th April he tells Fr Ronchail: "1. I am sending you the *exposé de quo*. I have been extremely busy, delayed my return to Turin; I was somewhat ill-disposed. Thus the reason for not being diligent. Now seek or better ask lawyer Michel and B. Héraud to see to the translation with all the necessary notes. For the printing tell me if we have to do it here or in Nice. There is no need to send back the note book since we have a copy. 2. Very sad to hear of the unexpected death of the well-deserving Lawyer Ferrant. Add whatever may be the case to the exposition...".⁴⁶⁹

Per se, the reference is always to the opening speech, the *exposé* indicated on the programme. There is nothing about the writing on the preventive system. Fr Barberis' *Cronichetta* throws sufficient light on this.

On 16 April the chronicler writes: "6 April – I was called around 7 to walk with Don

⁴⁶⁶Fol 1354r-v. Referring to a meeting with Canon C. Guiol in the first days of March 1877, E. Ceria writes: "When Don Bosco returned from [speaking with] the priest he wanted our help as interpreter because one was having difficulty speaking in intelligible French given the importance of matters to be discussed while the other understood not an iota of Italian" MB XIII 98. In a brief news item some days afterwards the *Semaine de Nice-Revue Catholique* attributed 'une éloquence apostolique' to the speaker.

⁴⁶⁷Cf E III 155 and 156; MB XIII 117 and 120 no. 2. The first letter we have, written from the Oratory after his return is from 28 March and begins thus: "Have just arrived from visiting the houses in Liguria..." E III 161. From Sampierdarena on 24 March he had written to Fr Rua: "On 18th I will let you know if I am arriving Tuesday or Wednesday. There is not a little to do here". E III 160. And in a letter sent to the secretary of the bishop of Casale, Fr Joseph Manzini, he writes: "I have just arrived from a trip to Marseilles" E III 160.

⁴⁶⁸In a letter to Don Bosco from Nice, dated 22 March, the Rector, Fr Joseph Ronchail adds, writing from top to bottom in the left margin on the first page by way of a postscript: "We anxiously await the speech at the opening to be able to translate it and add notes and print it before the foreigners leave". ASC 275 Ronchail Giuseppe.

⁴⁶⁹E III 163. The Ferrant he refers to was in fact Faraut or Faraud.

Bosco in the library. We spoke especially about Marseilles. Don Bosco stayed at the boarding school [College] run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The boys there had already heard of him. He spent some time with them and was amazed at the effect he wrought: he was suddenly surrounded by the boys who were vying amongst each other to hear him; and his kindly words and happy approach, his familiar way of doing things, his kindness attracted their hearts. . . . The directors asked me how it was that wherever I go I seem to attract the benevolence of sympathy of everyone, that with just a few looks that I give, they cannot resist and are attracted almost by force. . . . I explained a little of our system to them, about loving kindness etc, while generally in the boarding schools they only use the repressive system – where the superiors are serious, strict. . . .”⁴⁷⁰

On 21 April he recalls the experience in France more at length and the consequent draft of the pages on the preventive system: “Given that there was the opening of the *Patronato* (Oratory and school, for all intents and purposes) in Nice, the address was a very solemn one and it was a question of having it printed so that the work of the ‘Patronato’ in France could be better known. He described all the festivities and his address and followed it up with a summary of what he believed concerning the educational system which we call ‘preventive’. This work cost a number of consecutive days. He did it and redid it 3 times and ended up almost complaining about himself and his inability to write as he wanted to. I jot things down and then that’s enough. Then when I have done that I rewrite it a few times and still it does not satisfy me so I do it a third time, and more. . . . But I believe this little work will do great good in France: there they are not as positive as here, but they are speaking of doing more immediately and they are enthusiastic about it. They accept new things more willingly. . . . but now we need them to get to know us more closely – The preventive system especially will be received, written about in the newspapers, it will make an impact”.⁴⁷¹

The chronicler, however, writes of things he has recalled, which supposes that the work was finished some time earlier. This leads us to think that in the notebook sent to Nice all the essential elements of the text in question can be found there, except the notes which Don Bosco hints at and the news item attached later by someone, perhaps by Fr Ronchail himself, in the actual document *D*.

⁴⁷⁰ *Cronichetta* 11, p. 68-69. The clear opposition of the two systems and the explanation of the preventive one lead us to think that Don Bosco, while speaking with Fr Barberis, was probably giving him the contents of the pages he had just written. Eugene Ceria thinks that the undated letter to Fr Ronchail in the first days of April refer to the complete text in all its parts: “The exposé is the report on the festivities in Nice with the additions and connections we know about” MB XII 119.

⁴⁷¹ *Cronichetta* 12, p. XI. It is noteworthy that there is no trace of the original effort (or efforts) by Don Bosco on the preventive system when already for some time there was a tendency to carefully preserve whatever he wrote. The copy by Fr Berto in fact supposes at least an earlier draft or original or copy by some secretary, eventually used by Don Bosco during one of his stages on the return journey from Nice to Turin (from 13 to 26/28 March). Just the same there is no doubt concerning the fatherliness typical of Don Bosco in the writing; above and beyond the clear testimony of Fr Barberis, a careful lexical, syntactic and stylistic analysis of the text is sufficient when compared with parallel texts of Don Bosco’s like *The Memoirs of the Oratory*, his letters, the General Articles.

Composition of the text of the Opening of the Patronage Saint-Pierre

As indicated, the text did not come about and develop immediately as a compact, solid unit. It offers three kinds of content. There are some brief initial pages containing a summary news item regarding the opening of the *Patronage Saint-Pierre*. Following that, and precisely in connection with Document *D*, the last before it was printed, there is an addition to the news item which offers information on what happened at the end of the address or exposé.

We do not know who put together the original news item and its elements. But it is made up of documents from various sources: news about the opening, the invitation and programme, a letter from Fr Ronchail to Don Bosco on the 1st April following, notes. It is difficult to say whether these were already sent to Turin or were the items Don Bosco asked Fr Ronchail for in the undated letter in early April: "Add whatever may be the case in the note on the exposition".⁴⁷²

Of autonomous origin, as Document *A* shows, is a second section, perhaps the oldest. It broadens and reconstructs the address that Don Bosco gave for the opening around three topics: history, purpose, reward. It would be obvious to think that this would be Don Bosco's first concern on his return trip, while the news material would probably have been written by someone in Nice.

Instead it is difficult to establish the time and circumstances regarding the writing of the appendix, which has the text on the preventive system. There is nothing, not even a draft, which shows that it might be an original by Don Bosco.

Strictly speaking one cannot exclude the possibility that Don Bosco had some notes in hand, maybe prepared in connection with the *exposé* in Nice. But it is also possible that the pages on the preventive system were written from immediate inspiration at the same time as or immediately after it. One hypothesis could be that having written a draft during his trip and then having had it copied, it could then have been completed after his return to Turin where he would have arrived tired, having lost his voice and then spent a few days indisposed,⁴⁷³ mostly in his room. This would explain the lack of an original copy which was left somewhere else and lost. Trusty Fr Berto, who had the handwritten copy of the complete text would not, as a diligent archivist, have destroyed a document of such importance. However his copy, Document *B*, is the first that gives us the text in a substantially complete draft, which would then undergo some interventions by Don Bosco.

Manuscript *B* would have to be after 1st April given that it mentions the letter Don Bosco sent to the Rector in Nice on 1st April announcing the death of Cooperator August Faraut. Instead, an period of time we cannot determine, and possibly a long time, could have elapsed between Berto's copy and a following copy dependent on it written by someone else, manuscript *D*. Between the writing of *B* and *D* which immediately followed it there is one interesting change in an extremely significant detail. In the *exposé* which

⁴⁷²E III 163.

⁴⁷³In the *Cronichetta* on 1st April Fr Barberis writes: "Don Bosco returned from his trip to France. He returned on Wednesday of Holy Week 28 March. . . On his return he spoke only of Sampiedarena (because he couldn't talk – he had a sore throat)". *Cronichetta* 11, pp. 54.55.

is passed on by *ms A* and *B* there is explicit mention of the granting of some areas surrounding the *Patronage* to workers belonging to the Catholic Circle. In a letter from Nice on 22 March 1877, Fr Ronchail writes regarding this matter to Don Bosco: “Beloved Father, firstly the Catholic Circle business has given rise to rumours around town and has stirred up various opinions about us. The Clergy in general and one part of the Canons do not look kindly upon it so they speak of Don Bosco’s priests saying that they belong to the Chambord Party that wants to interfere in politics. I believe along with those who have spoken with me that we should let people see that we don’t have anything to do with this and that if one of our areas is being used it is only temporary. It also made a bad impression seeing names on the invitation such as Gignoux, Béthune, Michaud, La Ferté, Michel... all because these gentlemen do not approve of the Canons in the Laghetto affair”.⁴⁷⁴

The Catholic Workers’ Circle was set up by Bishop Sola on 19 March. But because of incompatibility between the two kinds of work and by agreement with the Salesians, they transferred after six months to the Villa Pauliani.⁴⁷⁵

In *ms D* no area is assigned to the Circle any longer and areas that they had occupied before are clearly now used by young people. Did the change between *B* and *D* happen as a result of the indications contained in the letter of 22 March or, as would seem more likely, following later developments in the work?

Description of the documents

There are two French translations of the entire document,, including the three ‘sections’ we have spoken of, both reported in *ms D*, the last Italian manuscript before it was printed: the first, unpublished (doc. *E*) ignores following light touching up by Don Bosco though these are kept in the second (doc. *G*) which was sent for printing as a bilingual edition. We have not been able to ascertain who the translators were and when and where the translations were done.

Ms E (unpublished) shows that it had a single translator for the three distinct sections. Undoubtedly it was an Italian with a good knowledge of French. The version keeps to the text, is faithful and generally verbatim, syntactically correct. Overall, though, it is an inferior translation compared to the translation of the printed text (doc. *G*). regarding sections *B* and *C* (the address and the pages on the preventive system), but better than the translation of the news material that contains some vistoso errors.

Instead, the first French text to be printed (doc. *G* identical to doc. *I* except for the larger number of composition errors) reveals that it had three different translators. The poorest of these, clearly an Italian, dealt with the news material and is linguistically drab, clumsy, and sometimes erroneous (*différents couleurs art civilisatrice, étroit limites...*)

The translation of the address (*exposé*) seems relatively better and is the work of an Italian. It is less fluent than its corresponding remaining manuscript. Nevertheless to a

⁴⁷⁴ASC 275 Ronchail Giuseppe.

⁴⁷⁵Cf. *Notice historique des Conférences et œuvres de Saint-Vincent de Paul à Nice depuis la fondation en 1844 à 1883 année des noces d’or de la société.* Nice, Imprimerie-Librairies du Patronage de St-Pierre 1883, p. 57.

French speaker it would look clumsy, often less pleasing and sometimes unacceptable.

The version of the pages dealing with the preventive system presents another picture altogether: secure, fluent, grammatically as well as syntactically and stylistically correct. It was probably a French speaker or at least someone with an excellent command of the language. It does not always show familiarity with everyday Salesian language and so, if we take a particular concept, it may develop it freely, broadening it and almost explaining it also probably because of a personal pedagogical culture on the part of the translator.

There is also some interpretative licence involved. Don Bosco saw the text and the corrections he introduced seem to be irrelevant.

This translation inevitably prevailed over the other, which just the same had clearly been in the hands of the translator of this text on the preventive system, who took significant propositions and phrases and almost all of the final page, *Un mot sur les punitions*.

In the ASC, other than *ms A*, torn in half from top to bottom and therefore in halves, with many corrections by Don Bosco, there are two manuscripts with the complete texts (*B* and *D-E*) and one with only the text on the preventive system (*ms C*), which Don Bosco has intervened in.

1. – *Ms B – Inaugurazione /del Patronato di S. Pietro in Nizza a mare/scopo del medesimo esposto/dal/Sac. Gio. Bosco/con appendice sul sistema prfeventivo/nella educazione della gioventù – microschede 447 A 11-D 4.*

The manuscript is found in ASC 113 «Inaugurazione» [Microfiche 447 A 11. . .] In the upper margin an earlier archival mark is written in pencil: s. 13:301 No. 4.

It is a foolscap bundle, precisely 310x212 mm comprising 16 sheets sewn together, therefore 32 pages. These have been numbered in pencil from 1 to 30; the title page, with title and subtitle, is not numbered either front or back. This latter, as with the last page, remains blank. The subtitle «con appendice. . . gioventù» has been added by Don Bosco who has circled it and underlined the last line with purple crayon.

The printing is on regular print paper, without either horizontal or vertical rules. No empty space has been left on the right hand side, but the left hand margin is 60 mm ca.

The writing is flourishing ariosa and calligraphic, smaller in the notes; it is Joachim Berto's⁴⁷⁶ writing, in brown ink. When Don Bosco intervenes he uses a slightly lighter colour of ink.

The manuscript is generally in good condition. The outside border of some sheets seems to have darkened somewhat because of humidity and has been occasionally strengthened with glued paper (pp. 27-28). There is some transparency on some pages. On page 3 an article (la) has been re-written in pencil, perhaps by Fr Berto or an anonymous archivist.

⁴⁷⁶Salesian priest Gioachino (Joachim) Berto (1847-1914) was already Don Bosco's secretary as a student and was at his side for twenty years helping him with correspondence and copying letters, documents, memos, personal writings of various kinds in a neat, secure hand. "I entrust everything to my factotum Berto who will put everything neatly in order so that it can be sent to you to be read etc" (it is a draft of an outline in a letter of Don Bosco's to Fr John Bonetti, January 1871 – E III 143). His diligent work as an archivist was also very valuable since it allowed the collection, preservation and ordering of important documents in Don Bosco's and Salesian history.

The manuscript contains the substantially complete text in its three sections:
pp. 1-4 News information on the Opening
pp. 5-21 Don Bosco's words: History, pp. 5-11; Purpose of this Institute, pp. 11-17;
Mercede , pp. 17-21
pp. 22-29 The preventive system, pp. 22-29. A copy of this manuscript should have been sent to Nice, including corrections by Don Bosco.

2. – Ms C – Il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù microschede 1.986 B 1-7.

The manuscript is marked with ASC 026 *Regolamenti* 42 [Microschede 1.986 B 1...]. It is made up of two double foolscap sheets inserted one after the other, making up 8 pages overall; The sheets are 302x205 mm. The first, divided into two single sheets has the left hand edge deteriorated and strengthened with folded paper glued to it; similar reinforcement is evident on the upper and lower edges of the first, and the right hand edge of the second (pp. 3-4). Some creasing is due to the fact that the bundle of sheets was folded horizontally. The pages are numbered by pencil from 1 to 7 in a hand different to that of the scribe. Page 8 is blank. The writing is rather elegant, regular, diligent: a nice copy to give Don Bosco to revise. In fact on the left side of the sheets a good-sized margin has been left for corrections and, especially, any additions by Don Bosco, of which there are a number – as we see from the critical edition of the text of the 'preventive system' that came before the *Regolamento* or *Regulations* – The margin on p. 1 and 3 in the lower half, and on page 7 it has remained blank. The ink the scribe has used is of sepia colour. In Don Bosco's case it is black.

Given its destination the manuscript contains only the pages on the preventive system with the following distribution of topics: 1. In what does the Preventive System consist – And why it is to be preferred, pp. 3-5; Usefulness of the Preventive System, pp. 5-6; A word on punishments, pp. 6-7.

3. – Ms D-E – Inaugurazione del patronato di S. Pietro in Nizza a mare/Scopo del medesimo/Esposto dal Sacerdote Gioa. Bosco/Con appendice sul sistema preventivo nella educazioen della gioventù – mircoschede 448 B 1-449 A 1.

Even though the title page only has the title in Italian, the collection contains, written on the facing pages of the sheets, the Italian (*D*) and French (*E*) drafts.

The collection is marked as ASC 133 «Inaugurazione» [microfiche 448 B 1...]. There are a number of archival markings on the title page in biro and pencil, in upper case, red colour; amongst these S.38/44/Nice 1877 12^o copia MS.

The collection is made up of 25 double foolscap sheets, 302x198 mm, sewn with thread like an exercise book. Pages are numbered from 1 to 47; pages 48, 49, 50 are blank and not numbered; from 1 to 29 the numbering is done by the scribe of the Italian text, from 30 to 47 in blue crayon by Don Bosco. The title on the first page is written in elegant calligraphic letters, followed in the lower part by a decoration. In the lower margin, written in pencil and barely legible we find written: *Torino 1877/Tipografia e libreria Salesiana/Sampierdarena – Torino – Nizza Marittima*. The sheet is somewhat smudged on the edges, with inkspots on it. In the same blue crayon he used to number the pages,

Don Bosco indicates – obviously for the printers – with the usual symbol for headings [How the title items need to be arranged: *Inaugurazione* del patronato di S. Pietro/in Nizza a mare/Scopo del medesimo/Esposto dal Sacerdote/Gioa. Bosco/Con appendice sul sistema preventivo/nella educazione della gioventù/.

The two texts, Italian and French, are found in the two pages in front, respectively even, uneven numbers (the title page, page 1, has only the title in Italian).

The paper is sturdy with light blue rules. On the left of the sheets a margin of around 40 mm has been marked vertically in pencil. The ink is black; the ink used for Don Bosco's address in French seems slightly more diluted. There are some spots here and there.

Overall we note three different kinds of handwriting (including that for the 28bis and 29bis): the writing for the Italian text is the same throughout, calligraphic. There are two different kinds of handwriting for the French, one for the pages dedicated to news and the other for the pages on the preventive system (the uneven pages from 3 to 7 and from 31 to 47), another for the pages reproducing Don Bosco's address (uneven pages from 7 to 29). This last one is just as clear, even if it has used a more diluted ink than the one used by the other two scribes. In both texts Don Bosco intervenes with some minor corrections.

On page 9 there is a cross-reference in pencil to a brief note on page 8 (in the Italian text in front): in fact it appears in Italian also in the first bilingual edition, in the French text.

Between pages 28-29 a double letter-sized sheet has been inserted with a heading: *Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales/Via Cottolengo, n. 32/Torino*. The two internal pages of the sheet report (in front, in Italian and French) the account of the collection taken up at the end of the address. The handwriting is identical to that of the scribe who copied the news material and the text of the address. We note minor corrections by Don Bosco. He noted in the upper margin of the two smaller pages, almost as a title, on the left: *Dopo il discorso*, and on the right: *Près du sermon*, (both mean 'after the address' in Italian and French respectively) words which he then cancelled in pencil and in black ink. On the first smaller page under the heading Don Bosco writes *28bis* in blue crayon with a mark indicating to go to the next page, where he again includes the same sign and the scribe numbers it as *28bis*. On the fourth page Don Bosco does similarly, indicating *29bis*, repeated on the preceding smaller page which the scribe then numbers as *29bis*.

On pages 26, 27, 28, 29 we find conventional typographic indications written by Don Bosco in the same blue crayon with which he numbered pages 30 to 47.

On page 30 there is the title *Sistema Preventivo...* preceded by a curved line in red crayon, which closes on the left. On page 34 there is a red mark and occasional fingerprint. Pages 46/47 contain only five lines of text. The rest is blank as are the unnumbered pages 48, 49, 50.

The manuscript contains three complete sections: 1) news items: pp. 2/3-6/7, 28bis/29bis; 2) Don Bosco's address (pp. 6/7.28/29); *Storia – Historique*, pp. 8/9-14/15; *Scopo di questo Istituto – But de l'Institut*, pp. 14/15-22/23; *Mercede-Récompense*, pp. 22/23-28/29; 3) the preventive system, pp. 30/31-46/47.

Translation *E* has been used to good extent by the translator of the text which was

then printed (*G* and *I*), even though we see a notable difference from *E* in the part that reproduces Don Bosco's address, and there are many variations in the pages on the preventive system. Instead it is almost a copy of *E* in the initial news part and in the paragraph on punishments.

4. – Doc F-G – Inaugurazione/del/Patronato di S. Pietro/in Nizza a mare/1877/Tipografia e libreria Salesiana/San Pier d'Arena – Torino – Nizza – Inauguration/du/Patronage de S. Pierre/à Nice Maritime 1877/Imprimerie et Librerie Salésienne/San Pier d'Arena – Torino – Nice Maritime.

The two titles take up respectively the top and bottom half of the cover of a booklet printed in 68 pages, 17.8x11.5 mm. A copy can be found in ASC 133 «Inaugurazione». On alternate pages we find the Italian and French texts throughout. Layout is not so accurate and so there is not a rigorous parallel between the two language versions. There are two titles, p. 2 for the Italian, p. 3 for the French, with indications identical to those pointed out for the cover, and complete with their respective subtitles:

Scopo del medesimo/esposto dal Sacerdote/Giovanni Bosco/con appendice sul sistema preventivo/nella educazione della gioventù – But de l'œuvre/exposé par Mr l'abbé/Jean Bosco/avec appendice sur le système préventif/pour l'éducation de la Jeunesse.

The various sections are distributed as follows: 1) news items, pp. 4/5-10/11 and 42/43; 2) brief history or *exposé* by Don Bosco (pp. 10/11-68/69); *Storia-Historique*, pp. 12/13-22/23; *Scopo di questo Istituto – But de l'œuvre*, pp. 24/25-32/33; *Mercede-Récompense*, pp. 34/35-40/41; 3) *Il sistema preventivo – Le système préventif*, pp. 44/45-68/69.

The composition of the French text reveals haste and carelessness, with accent errors; the writing is clear and easily legible.

Page 68 has the *nulla osta* of the diocese for printing: V. nihil obstat./Taurini, 3 Augusti 1877/Joseph Zappata Vic. Gen.

Halfway down the fourth cover page there is an engraving of around 50x60 mm, of Christ on the banks of Tiberias, handing over the keys giving power to St Peter in the presence of two other Apostles.⁴⁷⁷

5. – Doc H – Inaugurazione/del/Patronato di S. Pietro/in Nizza a Mare – scopo del medesimo/esposto dal Sacerdote/Giovanni Bosco/con appendice sul Sistema Preventivo/nella educazione della gioventù/Torino/Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana San Pier d'Arena – Nizza Marittima 1877.

The booklet, printed, 36 pages, is the same format as the earlier bilingual edition. The title is reproduced exactly the same for the cover and title pages. Its location in ASC is 133 «Inaugurazione» 6. It contains the text of the Italian edition, separate.

The topics are distributed as follows: 1) news items, pp. 3-6, 21-22; 2) Don Bosco's address (pp. 6-21); *Storia*, pp. 7-12; *Scopo di questo Istituto*, pp. 13-17; *Mercede*, pp. 18-21; 3) *Il Sistema Preventivo*, pp. 23-33.

On page 35 there is an Index; on page 36 the *nulla osta* from the Curia in Turin,

⁴⁷⁷ A copy of the bilingual edition can be found in the *Opere edite di don Bosco*, vol XXVIII. Rome, LAS 1977, pp. 380-446.

identical to the one for the bilingual edition. On page 4 of the cover pages there is the already noted engraving.

6. – Doc I Inauguration/du/Patronage de S. Pierre/A Nice Maritime - But de l'œuvre exposé par Mr L'abbé/Jean Bosco/avec appendice sur le Système Préventif pour l'éducation de la jeunesse /Turin/imprimerie et Librairie Salésienne/San Pier d'Arena – Nice Maritime/1877.

The booklet, printed, 36 pages, is the same format as the earlier bilingual edition. The title is set out differently but the layout is identical for the cover and title pages. There is a copy in ASC 133 «Inaugurazione» 7. It contains the French text for the three sections as already noted with the distribution of topics as follows: 1) news items, pp. 3-6, 23; 2) Don Bosco's address (pp. 6-23); *Historique*, pp. 7-13; *But de l'oeuvre*, pp. 14-18; *Récompense*, pp. 19-23; 3) *Le système préventif*, pp. 24-35. More care has been taken of accents.

On the lower half of p. 35 there is the usual *nulla osta* from Turin; and the engraving on page 5.

7. – Ms L – Aggiunte manoscritte di don Gioachino Berto a un fascicolo dell'edizione a stampa separata del 1877 – microschede 447 E 7 – 448 A 12 (aggiunte di don Berto A 11-12]

(*Aggiunte* = additions by Fr Berto).

This is a small collection of sheets in the format already indicated and kept in ASC 133 «Inaugurazione» 3.

In the upper margin of the cover, Fr Berto writes: "For a new edition. From p. 3-32 there is no intervention by Fr Berto. Instead he introduces corrections and additions on page 33 after number III of A word on punishments (*Una parola sui castighi*), in the lower margin of the same page (part of the new number IV) and on page 34, not numbered and with a preceding blank page, that is fully taken up with the new numbers VI and VII.

The new material appears in the *Salesian Bulletin* of September 1880, and was reprinted in the *Cinque Lustrì* (1892) [Note: *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, in English edition] and in MB 4, 546-552 (1904). It will be highlighted in parallel with the critical edition of the text of the *Regolamento*.

8. – Doc R – Regolamento/per le case/della/Società di S. Francesco di Sales/Torino/Tipografia Salesiana/1877. -[pp. 3-13]: Il sistema preventivo/nella educazione della gioventù; [pp. 15-17:] Articoli generali.

The text on the 'preventive system' is contained in a large printed collection of 100 pages, format 18.5x12 cm. The text, that has the name of the author, Sac. Gio. Bosco in large letters, is followed for the first time by the *Articoli generali*, which in a certain sense creates a bridge between it and the regulations strictly speaking. These, in the Index on p. 99, appear together with the various subdivisions of the text of the Preventive System.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ As copied in the *Opere edite di don Bosco*, the text of the preventive system and the *articoli generali* are in vol. XXIX (Rome, LAS 1978) on pp. 99-109 and 11-113 respectively.

9. – Doc M – Storia dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, cap. XXI. . . Sistema preventivo – Sua applicazione – Suoi vantaggi – Una parola sui castighi BS 4 (1880) n. 9, sett. pp. 6-9.

Has almost the complete text of the preventive system: omitted are the introduction and conclusion. The titles are substituted by brief introductory notes by the editor, Fr Bonetti. The text is identical to the one published in the *Regolamento*, with generalised use of initial upper case for terms *Sistema* and *Direttore*. The compiler of the *Storia* also introduces variants and additions from Fr Joachim Berto in the printed, separate text in 1877, which he has described as ‘Per una nuova edizione’ (for a new edition) (Doc L).

Succession of documents and coat of arms

From analysis of the texts and variants it is easier to reconstruct the succession and interdependence of the documents.

We take no account of a manuscript which has been considerably damaged and which contains only parts of the first draft of Don Bosco’s address in Nice (see ASC 133 «Inaugurazione»)⁴⁷⁹.

The first that interests us, because it is complete with all three sections, is doc *B* which draws its material partially from *A* and from other texts we have not found.

Two manuscripts, *C* and *Bb*, derive from *Bb*.

Ms C, which contains only the text of the preventive system, copies *B* with corrections by Don Bosco. Some small divergences can be explained by supposing that the copyist intended to improve the text’s punctuation, some ‘a capo’s and some emphases. Some other changes suggest difficulties in reading Fr Berto’s writing: we find “Su questo Sistema”, because the letter ‘I’ in *B* could also be interpreted this way; “approfittaresene” instead of “approfittarne”.

D certainly supposes *B Bb* and copies it for the most part. But in the report regarding the news in the part reporting Don Bosco’s words we note variations that would suggest at least some partial intermediate document.

A stricter interdependence between *D* and *Bb* is revealed especially in the pages on the preventive system, a text that would logically have undergone minor revisions to the original draft which was decidedly schematic and practical. We find few items that separate it from *B* (and from *C*: naturally, apart from those where *C* is far from *B* and *D*).

Ms E, the unpublished French translation, clearly depends on a draft corresponding to what is offered by *ms D*; for the most part the corrections introduced there (*Dd*) are not taken into account by the translator.

Instead, the printed French text corresponds to document *D*, including corrections introduced there by Don Bosco (*Dd*).

⁴⁷⁹For precise information on doc. *A* which is not important for this collection, cf. Giovanni (s.) Bosco, *il sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù. Introduzione e testi critici* a cura di P. Braido, Rome, LAS 1985, pp. 18-19.

Db also corresponds to the Italian text of the first two editions, both separate and bilingual, docs. *F* and *H*.

There are certain things that make us think that the bilingual edition, docs. *F* and *G*, precedes the separate ones, *H* and *I*. The composition is the same but in passing from *F* and *H* and from *G* and *I*, it is slightly improved, especially in the French text.

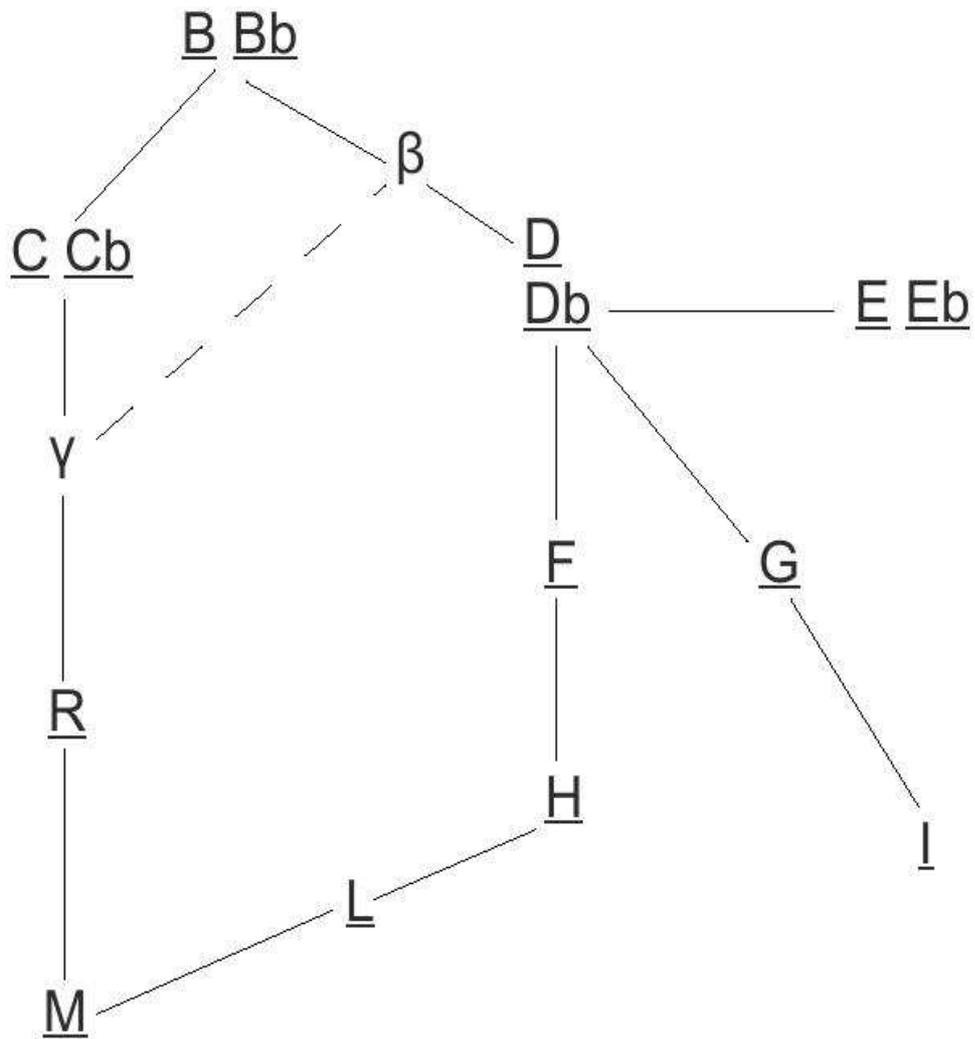
Doc. *R*, that is, the text of the preventive system published along with the *Regolamento per le case* towards the end of 1877, clearly derives from *ms C Cb*.

Many punctuation details and the use of lower case lead us to think that at the printers they added another more accurate manuscript recopied from *ms D Db*. This belief is reinforced if we consider the most significant variants in *R* compared with *C Cb*.

Text *H* (separate Italian edition) is the point of departure for further editions of the preventive system which are no longer associated with the Opening.

Additions to *H* seem to be those of Fr Joachim Berto and contribute to enriching the text from the *Regolamento per le case* and that can be found in the Italian *Salesian Bulletin* in September 1880 as well as editions in other languages.

It is a gradual extension that goes hand in hand with diffusion via separate documents, inclusion in books on Salesian pedagogy, its connection with the *Regolamento*.



Historical and literary context

No identifiable immediate certain source has appeared for the pages on the preventive system. The closest, as we will say, seems to be a work by Barnabite Fr Teppa. Rather than there being well-defined texts used in the drafting process, we can refer to a certain approximation to writings that Don Bosco could have had in hand on different occasions during his life, and which could have contributed to creating or confirming a determined way of thinking or could have emphasised particular experiences and insights.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰A Salesian pedagogical scholar wrote, not without emphasis: “It would not be without good value to study the influence that educators and writers on educational questions of the day might have had on Don Bosco, some of whom (other than Boncompagni, Lanza, Berti, Rosmini, Tommaseo, Silvio Pellico, Manzoni ecc., already indicated) were on good spoken and written terms with him and

It is not difficult to find documents, both ancient and recent, that show evident coincidences or analogies with Don Bosco's preventive system. They can be found in a thousand year pedagogical, pastoral, ascetic Christian tradition. Some could have directly or indirectly influenced significant aspects of his educational style.⁴⁸¹ Here instead we try to identify possible remote or proximate sources that Don Bosco could have had in hand and used in drafting the pages in 1877 on the preventive system. Perhaps little can be certified through rigorous historical research. Nevertheless in his concrete journey it is possible to highlight encounters with other experiences without excluding contact with precise literary sources, that could have favoured his acceptance of concepts common to the system, such as the opposition between preventive-repressive, the three-fold reason-religion-loving kindness, assistance-presence, fatherliness, familiarity, modest punishments etc.

In France, the «Moniteur», 13 April 1844 referred to an intervention by Catholic Liberal de Broglie in the Lower House on “rather repressive public education” (that is, rigid, austere) and on “essentially preventive domestic education” (kind, comprehensive). From another perspective, M. Thiers spoke to the French Parliament (House of Deputies) on 13 July 1844 of the “preventive system” and the “repressive system”, referring to the principle of freedom of teaching to be introduced into secondary education. In this case the terminology assumes a censorial and police-like meaning and derives from the claimed

who all, directly or indirectly, looked favourably on his work” (V. Cimatti, *Don Bosco Educatore. Contributo alla storia del pensiero e delle istituzioni pedagogiche*. Turin, SEI 1939, p. 105, n. 2; I ed. 1925). Another, instead, says: “We do not find that Don Bosco, while having occasion to be in contact with people who were real authorities in schooling and pedagogy, like Aporti, Rayneri, Rosmini and more than anyone else Allievo, with whom he had most constant and close relationships, entered into discussions with them on educational and pedagogical topics” (B. Fascie, *Del metodo educativo di Don Bosco*. Turin, SEI 1927, pp. 20-21). Further an anonymous Salesian says: “Given that he lived at a time of the most rigorous re-flourishing of Italian school pedagogy he not only knew what was achieved and written by famous men like Boncompagni, Lambruschini, Aporti, Rosmini, Rayneri, Tommaseo, Parato, Allievo, but he was also bound to some of them with bonds of affectionate friendship”. (*Il beato Don Bosco e l'educatore cristiano* in «Catechesi» 3 (1934), n. 5, January, pp. 332-333.). On Don Bosco and the pedagogy of his day, M. Casotti also advanced some hypotheses in his anthology on *Il metodo preventivo* (Brescia, La Scuola 1937, pp. 7-18). With greater caution in his very valuable essay on *La pedagogia di Giovanni Bosco* (supplement to instalment V of the collection «Aspetti Letterari» 1934), G. Zitarosa established a contrast between the central inspirations of Don Bosco's pedagogy and the more elaborate modern theoretical approaches beginning with Locke (pp. 32-80). Seeking generic and specific preventive motifs in times and contexts not too far removed from Don Bosco can be found in research by E. Valentini, almost variations on a basic theme and explicitly spelled out in an article in 1969: *Don Bosco restauratore del sistema preventivo*, in «Rivista di Pedagogia e Scienze Religiose» 7 (1969) pp. 285-301.

⁴⁸¹ Hypotheses of convergence and dependence have been formulated by, amongst others, P. Braidò *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco* (Turin, PAS 1955), pp. 81-131 and *Esperienze di pedagogia cristiana nella storia*, vol II (Rome, LAS 1981), pp. 302-321; and P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, pp. 450-459). In particular we could highlight his awareness of pre-existing regulations in Lombardy and statutes of works founded by Lodovico Pavoni (cf P. Braidò, *Il sistema...*, pp. 87-100). Deeper research relating to 1844-1845 could, perhaps, throw more light on possible specific awareness of the educational directions taken by Ferrante Aporti (Cf. P. Braidò, op. Cit., pp. 118-122) and the Review «L'Educatore Primario» (1845-1846) and «L'Educatore» (1847-1848) (P. Braidò, op. Cit., pp. 115-117).

legitimacy of surveillance by the State over private educational institutions, who could be given freedom in their teaching: by rejecting the 'preventive system' (that is, preventive repression of freedom) the State reserves the right to use the 'repressive system' (that is, to intervene in cases of abuse and breaking the law): "Il s'agit d'examiner, de surveiller, d'avertir, d'exercer une simple censure disciplinaire" ('It is a case of looking carefully at, keeping an eye on, warning, exercising a simple disciplinary censure').⁴⁸²

Eighty years before, the idea of prevention had been explicitly utilised in the penal and educational field by C. Beccaria in his book *Dei delitti e delle pene* (1764) (Of crimes and punishments) where he wrote: "Finally, the most secure means of preventing crimes is to improve education, a topic too vast and going beyond the limits I have prescribed for myself, and one, I dare say, that is very much tied intrinsically to the nature of government so that it not be, until the end of time, a sterile field of public contentedness, something only nurtured by a few wise individuals".⁴⁸³

It is not improbable that echoes of the contrast between the preventive and repressive systems in the more defined area of education may have reached Don Bosco through discussion and practice in a setting he was familiar with, and which he had indeed visited: the 'house of educational correction' (which was the official term in documents) called the *Generala*, in Turin. It had been opened by Royal Decree on 12 April 1845 and entrusted to Brothers from the French Congregation of St Peter in Chains founded by Canon Charles Fissiaux (1806-1867) for an apostolate amongst young prisoners. They applied a system of educational correction. This formula took on a precise meaning in the practice and formulations of the Brothers and their Director, who was Fissiaux himself, as we can read in the 1st and 2nd *Rapport* in 1846 and 1847. It is especially highlighted in the first of these. It is the task of the "*Maison centrale d'Éducation correctionnelle*" (central house for correctional education) concerning the *jeunes délinquants* (young delinquents) *leur préparer un meilleur avenir, le sauver du milieu du naufrage, les punir sans doute, mais surtout les corriger.* (prepare them for a better future, save them from a situation of shipwreck, certainly punish them but above all correct them)⁴⁸⁴ After difficult beginnings in which – the Canon confesses – *malgré nous il nous fallut déployer la plus grande sévérité, et laisser pour un temps les voies de la douceur prises alors pour de la faiblesse* (despite ourselves, we failed to use the greatest severity, and using gentler ways for a time these

⁴⁸²Cf. *Rapport de M. Thiers sur la loi d'instruction secondaire fait au nom de la Commission de la Chambre des Députés dans la séance du 13 juillet 1844* (Paris, Paulin Editeur 1844), pp. 39-40. Apart from the formulas, further on Thiers contrasts the inflexible discipline of public institutes to the more agile private institutions. In the former, the rules dominate, along with equality, frankness and loyal relationships. In the others one would be giving in to compromise, family pressures, setting up an indulgent and more flexible regime but less appropriate to forming mature and responsible men and citizens (cf. pp. 57-58, 60-61). Article 17 of the Belgian Constitution of 1831 said: "L'enseignement est libre, toute mesure préventive est interdite; la répression des délits n'est réglée que par la loi".

⁴⁸³C. Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, ed. Franco Venturi (Turin, Einaudi 1973), p. 102, no. 45. We can recall, as clarified in an earlier part of this book, that the Minister of Justice and Internal Affairs, Urban Rattazzi, an admirer of Don Bosco's and very familiar with him, was concerned about similar problems in the 1850s.

⁴⁸⁴*Rapport sur les premiers résultats obtenus dans la Maison d'éducation correctionnelle pour les jeunes détenus du Royaume de Sardaigne présenté à la reunion qui eut lieu le 7 juin 1846 pour la distribution des prix par monsieur liabbé Fissiaux...* Turin, Imprimerie Royale 1846, pp. 6-7.

were taken as weakness) *nous pumes enfin appliquer à nos enfans le système d'éducation correctionnelle employer par notre Société dans les autres maisons pénitenciaires confiées à ses soins* (we could finally apply to our children the system of correctional education used by our Society in other penitentiaries entrusted to them).⁴⁸⁵ By giving *un aperçu de notre système* (an overview of our system), he claims amongst other things regarding discipline, that it is not far from the connotations attributed by Don Bosco to the repressive educational system. *La discipline de l'Établissement est sévère, elle doit l'être, il faut que tout rappelle que c'est un lieu de pénitence et de correction. . . Partanta de ce principe nous ne laissons aucune faute sans punition, mais aussi aucun acte de vertu n'est laissé sans récompense* (The discipline of the Institution is severe; it must be so – it should remind them that this is a place of repentance and correction. . . Starting from this principle, we leave no fault unpunished but likewise no virtuous deed is left unrewarded).⁴⁸⁶

Naturally they also highlighted positive factors: emulation, work, school, music, religious and moral potential.⁴⁸⁷ There are plenty of tones of moderation and understanding of youthful fragility. They speak of *pauvres enfans plus malheureux que coupables, de jeunes êtres que l'on s'est trop habitué à régarder comme des criminels incorrigibles, et qu'on a entouré d'injustes préventions, d'un mépris peu mérité* (poor children who are more unfortunate than guilty, young individuals we are accustomed to seeing as incorrigible criminals, surrounded by unfair prejudice, undeserved contempt) and of *enfans victimes seulement de la fragilité de leur âge et du malheur de leur naissance* (children who are only victims of the fragile nature of their age and unfortunate circumstances of birth).⁴⁸⁸ In the second *Rapport* there is even a flourishing of elements that show how the repressive system can exist in connection with the preventive system. The Director, in fact intends to prove *qu'en donnât une vraie éducation correctionnelle à ces enfans, qu'il faut plutôt corriger avec douceur, que punir avec rudesse, notre Société a déjà réalisé, en partie au moins, des bons résultats que vous êtes en droit d'attendre de son zèle dévoué* (that given that true correctional education for these children means we must correct mildly rather than punish rudely, our Society has already achieved, at least to some extent, the good results one could expect from its dedication) and insists on declaring that *la plupart de ces jeunes détenus* (most of these young detainees) *plus malheureux que coupables* (more unfortunate than they are blameworthy), have reacted positively to the *système d'éducation employé à leur égard* (the educational system we use for them).⁴⁸⁹

Reference has been made elsewhere, problematically, to the relationship between the priestly ministry and friendship of Don Bosco with the Brothers of the Christian Schools,

⁴⁸⁵ *Rapport. . .*, pp. 10, 13-14.

⁴⁸⁶ *Rapport. . .*, p. 21. In a *Rendiconto* on 1854 written by chaplain Fr Joseph Giuliano, the 'Establishment' is still presented as "an Institute meant to punish and improve them at the same time" (*Calendario generale del Regno pel 1855, anno XXXII. Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografica-Editrice*, p. 137.

⁴⁸⁷ *Rapport. . .*, pp. 14-21, 27-30.

⁴⁸⁸ *Rapport. . .*, p. 31

⁴⁸⁹ *Second Rapport sur les résultats obtenus dans la Maison diéducation correctionnelle pour les jeunes détenus du Royaume de Sardaigne présenté à la réunion qui eut lieu le 26 septembre 1847 pour la distribution des prix par monsieur l'abbé Fissiaux. . . Turin, Imprimerie Royale 1847, p. 13.*

who ran the primary schools of St Pelagia in Turin.⁴⁹⁰ There are undoubtedly many pedagogical and spiritual elements which are ideally in both Don Bosco's preventive system and Lasallian educational praxis, though with certain differences due to different times, origins, social and cultural context, theological inspiration. We find confirmation of this in reading an important item of pedagogical spirituality, the dense *Méditations pour le tems de la Retraite* (ca. 1730?) by J.-B. De La Salle, which simply points out what he has experienced in his daily work of education: *employez selon la grâce qui vous a été donnée, le don d'instruire en enseignant, et d'exhorter, en excitant ceux qui sont confiés à vos soins, les conduisant avec attention et vigilance; afin de remplir envers eux le principal devoir des Pères et des Mères à l'égard de leurs enfans* (use, according to the grace given you, the gift of instructing and teaching, and encourage those entrusted to your care, guiding them with care and vigilance; you carry out the principle duties of fathers and mothers with regard to their children).⁴⁹¹ Other than concepts of educational fatherliness and motherliness, the terms *vigilance*, *guides vigilans*, *veiller recur* and are aimed at preventing, preserving evil and promoting good;⁴⁹² there is an insistence on love, patience, kindness and charity made visible.⁴⁹³ There is an invitation to take account of natural youthful flightiness and their congenital lack of reflection,⁴⁹⁴ and there is an exhortation to be reasonable and wise in intervening.⁴⁹⁵

Two works familiar to the Piedmontese Lasallian setting were very much closer to the real possibility that Don Bosco had read them: the classic little work by Bro (Frère) Agathon (1731-1798), Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at the end of the 18th century: *Les douze vertus d'un bon maître*, which Don Bosco could find in the Marietti (Turin) edition of 1835, as well as the little book by fratel Théoger, based on the earlier book.⁴⁹⁶

In the interweaving of the twelve virtues (seriousness, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, *ritenutezza*, kindness, zeal, vigilance, piety, generosity; Théoger adds constancy, firmness, good example) there are a number of items that are perfectly congruent with those of Don Bosco even though the emphases might be different (for example seriousness, silence, humility). The teacher "through his amiable qualities tries to win over the loving kindness of the pupils",⁴⁹⁷ "he inspires their affection, esteems and respect for him".⁴⁹⁸ "Prudence means that it is the teacher's duty to take all necessary steps to prevent evil under any form and with it sorrow [repentance] which is always bitter and

⁴⁹⁰ Cf P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di don Bosco*, Turin, PAS 1955, pp. 106-115.

⁴⁹¹ *Méditations pour le tems de la Retraite*, I Med., point 2.

⁴⁹² Cf for example, *Méditations pour le tems de la Retraite*, II Med., point 2; V med. Point 3; VI med, point 2; IX med. Point 2; X med, point 1 and 2 ("vous ne devez pas vous contenter d'empêcher les Enfants qui sont confiés à vos soins, de faire le mal, il faut aussi que vous les engagiez à faire le bien et les bonnes actions dont ils sont capables"; XI med. Point 3; XIV med. Point 2.

⁴⁹³ Cf. IX med. Point 2; XI med. Point 2; XII med. Point 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. XI med. Point 1 and 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. XII med. Point 1; XIV med. Point 3.

⁴⁹⁶ *Virtù e doveri di un buon maestro*. Published and edited by Bro. Vittorio Théoger of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Turin, G:B: Paravia and l'Unione Tipografica Editrice 1863, 64 p.

⁴⁹⁷ *Le dodici virtù...*, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁸ *Le dodici virtù...*, p. 6.

usually too late”.⁴⁹⁹ “Love is gained by love. A teacher, then, first of all and especially, must take on the style of a father and regard himself always as taking the place of those who have entrusted them to him: that is he must be moved by the kindness and tenderness that their parents have. They will approach him inspired by his kindness; he will show them affection, sensitivity and benevolence, obliging and persuasive manners; he will eliminate from his commands what is hard and painful and causes problems”.⁵⁰⁰

“Its [firmness] main effect being that of attracting the pupils to abstain from wrongdoing through fear, it cannot be really useful unless accompanied by kindness which alone get us to love what is good. . . . So a good teacher is praised and valuable not only for firmness but also and especially for kindness. . . . Kindness is the outward form of charity, goodness. . . . So make great account of the fact that the teacher loves his pupils, and loves them for supernatural reasons; everything he does, his speech, his being vigilant, in a word every action of his is inspired by this love, other wise he will not be able to win their affection and establish his authority and it would be impossible for him to educate them”.⁵⁰¹

Within this framework vigilance-presence takes on a characteristic style and so the problem of punishments finds a moderate solution. “Vigilance is the persevering attention of the teacher on what the pupils are doing. This quality produces good results, not only because it stops disorders as soon as they show up and so prevents things from getting worse but also and especially because it prevents. . . . So the teacher should be very attentive to what is happening in the school at the moment; besides, since it is better to prevent wrongdoing than to punish it once committed, efforts should be made to take from the pupils any means or occasion for falling into some fault or breaking a rule; he should act in such a way that they are convinced that they are constantly under supervision”.⁵⁰² “Kindness suggests that the teacher especially: 1. punishes rarely. . . ; 2. punishes only by reason of charity. . . ; 5. Never strikes or pushes the children or forces them or treats them harshly. . . ; 15. Is always easy to approach, shows warmth and kindness. . . ; 20. Tries to win over pupils with moderation who would be irritated or discouraged by harshness”.⁵⁰³

And again: “Do everything possible to see that the children find a certain delight in religious exercises: catechism, parish functions, hymns, sermons etc.; and always speak of these things as of value, love. . . . Encourage them to frequent the sacraments often, helping them to appreciate the great advantages that their frequent use is to the soul; teach them how to make their confessions well, prepare them for holy communion and how to make their thanksgiving. . . . Do not teach the students an austere piety moved by fear but a pleasant piety based mainly on love”.⁵⁰⁴ There is no want of reminders of reason, either: “Do not act according to risky opinions but on the basis of your own judgement; let Christian maxims, divine and human law, the principles of healthy reason

⁴⁹⁹ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , p. 21.

⁵⁰⁰ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 38-39

⁵⁰¹ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 43, 46-47

⁵⁰² *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 50-51.

⁵⁰³ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 47 and 49.

⁵⁰⁴ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 26, 30-31.

guide your actions. . . Always speak justly, reasonably to your pupils whatever their age, and encourage them to do the same. . . Firmness in itself is nothing else but the strength and constancy used to oppose evil, prevent and repress disorder. . . a strength of mind used by reason to keep pupils on the path to doing good”.⁵⁰⁵

Content of writers of various inspiration were theoretically accessible to Don Bosco, and these contained pedagogical elements that were similar to his. But it would be quite a problem to identify possible contributors amongst these to his 'preventive system'.⁵⁰⁶

The hypothesis of some dependence on F. Dupanloup and his *De l'éducation* would seem to have greater probability. The Bishop of Orléans is one of the authors Fr Giulio Barberis credits for his *Appunti per Pedagogia sacra* (1903; 1st lithographed edition 1897). The Italian translation of the *De L'éducation*⁵⁰⁷ was not unknown in Valdocco and there are some notable convergences of content with the preventive system and some of the phraseology which distinguishes the repressive and preventive systems is very close.

In Dupanloup the antithesis between the repressive and preventive systems shows up especially in the contrast between the civil and penal judicial structure in civil society and educational structure of control: “In all civilised societies, the need is always felt not only to repress evil, controlling human passions with the bridle of punishment but there is also a felt need to prevent it by forming people in virtue through education. This is why wiser peoples often appoint a magistrate of the founder's, and a magistrate of the highest degree”.⁵⁰⁸ But differentiation of interventions also occurs where education takes place owing to the youthful reality to be transformed and the understanding of 'discipline' (“discipline has its roots in *discere*, to learn, and the word does not only express outward discipline but also a teaching and virtue”).⁵⁰⁹

A child's is “a curious, fickle, restless age, keen on games, enemy to suggestions. . . childhood is carefree, unattached, presumptuous, violent, stubborn. . . their defects are natural, at least they do not yet have acquired defects. . . Everything in children is new and pliable, and it is easy to straighten up these tender plants and point them to heaven. . . This is why amidst all their defects it is better to see how much reason and virtue is hidden in them. . . despite appearances of flightiness and a too eager readiness for enjoyment, a child can be wise, reasonable and sensitive to virtue. . . I do not have any difficulty, then, in recognising that the child, not excluded for the fact that he might be born with the happiest of natures, is a flighty, talkative being, flitting from one desire

⁵⁰⁵ *Le dodici virtù*. . . , pp. 24, 27, 42-4

⁵⁰⁶ P. Stella documents particularly his relationship with Fr Blanchard and the Vincentian Pier Paolo Monaci (*Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, pp. 453-456). And with even greater reason we could add pedagogical writings by P.A. Monfat, Marist, especially *Les vrais principes de l'éducation chrétienne rappelés aux maîtres et aux familles* Paris, Bray et Retaux (1875). He would have been read and commented on in the teaching community at Valdocco – at least his following work, *La pratica dell'educazione cristiana*. First free version by Fr Francesco Bricolo (Rome, Tip. Dei Fratelli Monaldi 1879, translated from *La pratique de l'éducation chrétienne*. Paris, Bray et Retaux 1878), the immediate source of the “Circular on punishments” 1883.

⁵⁰⁷ *L'educazione* by Mons. Felice Dupanloup, Bishop of Orléans, member of the French Academy. Italian version by Fr Clemente De Angelis. . . , 3 vol. Parma, Fiacadori 1868-1869.

⁵⁰⁸ *L'educazione*, vol II, lib III. *L'istitutore*, p. 379.

⁵⁰⁹ *L'educazione*, vol I, lib III. Chap III, *La Disciplina*, pp. 176-177.

to another, unstable... But they know the pious founders well and that the work and glory of education is there to overcome flightiness and knowing how to turn this lack of constancy into something firm".⁵¹⁰

The core of the educational process for Dupanloup is disciplinary education, that "looks positively at will and character", flanked by intellectual and physical education and crowned by religious education. So it is discipline, understood in its strong sense, pedagogically rich, that is to be expressed in an articulated formation effort, thanks to the different ways of carrying it out. It achieves its intentions: "1. By constant maintenance of the rules through firm exactness, and knowing where they are headed. 2. Preventing the rules from being broken through zealous vigilance. 3. Stopping transgression with punctually administered justice, correcting a disorder as soon as it arises. So discipline has three roles to perform: maintenance, prevention, repression. Attention to seeing that nothing that is blameworthy is left uncorrected is the duty of repressive discipline. Carefully seeing that dangerous situations are kept at a distance is the work of preventive discipline, while taking care to show the right way to be followed is the role of directive or guiding discipline. It is easy to understand that prevention is better than repression, but exactness in maintaining what is good, vigilance in preventing evil render the need to repress much less necessary. Thus the greater importance of directive discipline, which maintains the good. Preventive discipline which prevents evil is of secondary importance and the lowest importance, although necessary, is repressive discipline which punishes".⁵¹¹

Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855) with whom Don Bosco had more than just superficial contact, had already developed similar ideas, including more precise ones, to those of Félix Dupanloup in a letter to Fr Paul Orsi on 6 May 1836:

"The teacher should not place too much confidence in external, and I would also say mechanical measures, which might obtain two benefits but nothing more, that is: (1) Remove the occasions of wrongdoing; (2) Indirectly prepare the soul for doing good.

"But these measures do not provide what is good in itself. They are but a preparation for receiving what is good and consistent in truth and grace. This approach to education, which places all its confidence in the above material, preparatory measures and for this reason overlooks the immediate and formal ones, generates two very serious errors in the minds of the youngsters. Inasmuch as it limits itself to preventive and prohibitive measures, in a word to negative ones, it produces only an apparent goodness, the kind we might call 'college' goodness [he means the boarding school type]. This disappears as soon as the youngster is no longer restrained within those sacred precincts, and is no longer surrounded by the measures he was covered by which, though able to make him good, put him in the impossibility of wrongdoing, at least outwardly. So that kind of education adopted positive measures, yes, but they were only able to prepare the individual for good. The 'good' is the law-giver's kindness, caresses, strategies which make good works, emulation etc materially pleasant. This kind of education has produced a false direction of intention in the youngster, and intention is the eye of the soul on which the clarity of the whole body depends. It does not produce, deep down in the youngster's soul, any true

⁵¹⁰ *L'educazione*, vol I, lib II, *Del fanciullo e del rispetto dovuto alla dignità della sua natura*, pp. 70-74.

⁵¹¹ *L'educazione*, vol I, lib III, chap III. *La Disciplina*, pp. 177-178

love of virtue in itself, its ineffable beauty and intrinsic justice. Instead it produces only human effects towards the law-giver [teacher], love of being praised, caressed, rewarded, a kind of vainglory, self-esteem, ambition, desire to stand above one's equals whom he begins to be jealous of instead of loving them – and true virtue, which we should want to practise, would be in loving them.

“However, it is not that these measures are only harmful, and not be used, but used with other, better measures they are are a preparation for making a young person good. On the contrary, we should make some deal of them, just as we build a hedge to protect the field from armenti. The evil, as I was saying, lies in thinking that they are everything, or the main thing in education, or that education can begin with these measures alone. The field which has been well-protected with a hedge but is not properly sown, produces poor hay. It is not just a case a beginning, nor of providing the first seeds of education. Again I say that these are just preludes to the gran work that makes a youngster good. Once the work begins, and progresses, it is completed only: 1. By getting the child to know of salutary truth in his spirit, comforted by grace; 2. By getting him to contemplate the beauty of this truth which he comes to know; 3. By getting him to fall in love with the beauty of the truth he contemplates; 4. Getting him to act in conformity with the beauty of the truth which he has fallen in love with. And to achieve all of this, one thing only is needed, and it is: that we place before his intellect a clear vision of the moral truth we are dealing with; the omnipotent light of this truth comes from none other than divine grace. And so that moral truth can be seen by the child's intellect, it needs to be explained simply and consistently, not with mushiness and trickery.”⁵¹²

The little book by Barbabite Father Alessandro Teppa (1806-1871) is worthy of special mention. He was their Superior General from 1867-1871. His *Avvertimenti per gli educatori ecclesiastici della gioventù* (Advice for clergy who are educators of the young)⁵¹³ was a book Don Bosco knew and recommended.⁵¹⁴

Teppa aims at gathering together in “a small book, advice and general norms that the experience of many years and the authority of better-known writers. . . have been shown to be the most necessary and important for everyone to succeed in the difficult work of education”. It is directed especially to “those are are still not expert in the difficult art of educating”.⁵¹⁵

We also find there the contrast or comparison, substantially, of the preventive and repressive systems, considered as an opposition between material and moral authority: “If you want to succeed well in the work of education, anyone with that task needs first of all to know how to acquire and keep moral authority over the youngsters, and then see that this authority is used as is appropriate. This moral authority is nothing other than the power of directing other souls and making them want what we want for their

⁵¹² *Epistolario completo*, vol V, pp. 618-620.

⁵¹³ Rome, Tip. E Lib. Poliglotta/Torino, Marietti 1868, 71 p.

⁵¹⁴ In a letter to Fr Rua on 14 January 1869, Don Bosco write from Florence: “10. Idem, get hold of Fr Teppa's little book, *Avvisi agli ecclesiastici etc.*: send one to Lanzo, the other to Mirabello and at gatherings of clerics and priests read a chapter every Sunday while I am away. Do the same in Turin” (E II 4)

⁵¹⁵ *Avvertimenti*. . . , pp. 4-5.

benefit... It ought not be confused with material authority that others gain through firmness of will and severity of manner. It means making them fear and obey at any cost. This material authority can also be useful at times as an aid to moral authority, when the voice of reason is not listened to. It can also be ordinarily useful, if not necessary, in maintaining discipline amongst the pupils, especially when they are gathered in large numbers. But if it is not tempered by moral authority it can only produce servile fear, outwardly restrain, but cannot win over and govern souls. These can only be won over by persuasion and will only allow themselves to be governed by moral authority. You cannot gain this without deserving it and you cannot deserve it without being esteemed, respected, loved".⁵¹⁶ As a result, he favours "the way of kindness and persuasion".⁵¹⁷

"Whoever wishes to be in charge of a youngster's heart has to also see that he is loved. Someone who is loved is always willingly listened to and obeyed. But to be loved, there is no other way than to love. *Si vis amari, ama*. And not just through words or by natural inclination but loving with sincere, warm love and for reasons of charity... So let the one who wants to be loved by his pupils, love them first with a true heart and as a father and friend".⁵¹⁸

From this comes the effort to understand the individual pupil, awareness of his character, and thus a positive presence amongst them, a constructive and encouraging presence, never a repressive one and not even needing correction or punishments. "Since young people are at various stages of readiness, have different temperaments, the first task of someone who wants to educate them is to know each one's character well so as to be able to adjust to it... But because the teacher can know what the character of each of his pupils is like and what is the best way to be with them according to their different natures and according to the situation, he needs to very carefully observe what each one says and does, especially when they are speaking and acting freely, as often happens in recreation".⁵¹⁹

"Let him know how to adapt to his pupils' abilities and show them with appropriate examples the beauty of virtues and the ugliness of vice".⁵²⁰ "Along with instruction and exhortation there can also be advice and loving correction, because young people by nature are unstable, inconsiderate and distracted and so often need to be reminded of their duty. They do not need to be castigated and picked up for every minor problem... But to be able to carry out this important role of his it is clear that he must be always attentive and vigilant over his pupils, and at the same time full of zeal and charity, looking to their benefit rather than their comfort, and knowing how to have sympathy for the defects of a young age without growing too impatient, almost as if they liked being corrected all at once".⁵²¹

In the case of giving warnings, "He should think about himself, that is, his internal disposition, and see that he is able to speak with loving kindness and the effective reason

⁵¹⁶ *Avvertimenti...*, pp. 14-16.

⁵¹⁷ *Avvertimenti...*, pp. 27.

⁵¹⁸ *Avvertimenti...*, p. 21-22.

⁵¹⁹ *Avvertimenti...*, pp. 25-26.

⁵²⁰ *Avvertimenti...*, p. 32.

⁵²¹ *Avvertimenti...*, p. 33-34.

which can persuade and move the pupil's soul".⁵²² "When real need demands it, and it seems advisable, not to punish someone who deserves it would be culpable weakness and a cruel kind of mercy. . . . Need and usefulness must be the norm for determining the quality and quantity of punishments and the way of carrying them out. And in first place the best quality of punishment that a Teacher can give when he is truly loved and respected by the pupil will be that of showing displeasure at the fault committed, or openly scolding him seriously, or even quietly by using a more reserved attitude towards him and abstaining from any show of kindness and familiarity which he has been accustomed to show. . . . Hitting boys in any way, pulling their hair, their ears or similar should be absolutely forbidden, because it is inappropriate to well-educated people, always useless and often harmful not only physically but also morally".⁵²³

Finally, we find the explicit coincidence of an appeal to charity with the same reference to 1 Cor 13 as the basis and the summit of the educator's mission: "Whoever carries out such a role ought always keep in mind the beautiful words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, where he lists the gifts and circumstances of true charity".⁵²⁴

Texts

Opening of the *Patronage Saint-Pierre* in Nice-by-the-sea.

1. *Doc. H* – printed text of the separate Italian edition *Inaugurazione del patronato di S. Pietro in Nizza a mare. Scopo del medesimo esposto dal Sacredote Giovanni Bosco con appendice sul sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù*. Torino. Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana 1877.

B = Fr Joaquim Berto's edited version of the manuscript

B2, B3 = Berto's later notes in the manuscript

Bb = Don Bosco's notes in *ms B*

D = Italian manuscript edited for the bilingual publication

D2 = further notes by the editor in *ms D*

Db = Don Bosco's notes in /ms /D

Dc = text contained in the sheet added to *doc. D* between pages 28 and 29.

F = Italian printed text of the bilingual edition.

Opening of the *Patronage Saint-Pierre* in Nice-by-the-sea

Purpose of this as explained by Father John Bosco with appendix on the preventive system in the education of youth.

[p. 3] OPENING

The *Patronage de Saint-Pierre*, opened in the city of Nice on behalf of youngsters at risk, was welcomed by the city's inhabitants with much good will. Everyone, however,

⁵²² *Avvertimenti*. . . , p. 35.

⁵²³ *Avvertimenti*. . . , p. 43-44, 47

⁵²⁴ *Avvertimenti*. . . , p. 61 (and comment on pp. 62-69).

wanted the Pious Institute to be opened with a family feast, so that everyone could be in a certain sense publicly assured that their wish has been satisfied.

The Civil and Church Authorities cordially and sincerely accepted the invitation. Cav. Raynaud, the City's Mayor, caught up in unforeseen business was represented by Councillor Cav. Tosselli. Bishop Peter Sola and the clergy from the Bishop's Chapel came to celebrate solemnly.

Since the newspapers had already published information on the Opening, it was presumed there would be a large crowd in attendance. To avoid confusion in the restricted confines of place, a circular was sent out to those who would be most likely to be interested. |

The circular ran as follows:

“Monday 12 inst. At two thirty in the afternoon, his Lordship the Bishop will open the *Patronage de Saint-Pierre*, No. 1 Place d'Arms, the former Villa Gautier. This building and garden has been recently acquired and destined to bring together abandoned children to help them learn a trade. Convinced that his eminently popular and morally beneficial work will have the sympathy of everyone taking part, inasmuch as it contributes to the good of the working class, the Committee asks you to honour this function with your presence.

Mons. Peter Sola, Bishop

Fr John Bosco, Superior.

Fr. Joseph Ronchail, Rector

The Committee:

Count di Béthune Count Michaud de Beuretourt Count De La Ferté-Meun

Lawyer Ernest Michel Baron Héraud C. Gignoux August Faraut (I). Nice, 9

March 1877. |

In Church – Religious music presented by students from the Institute – Purpose of this work explained [p. 5] by Fr Bosco – Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, imparted by His Lordship the Bishop. |

In the garden – A dialogue written by His Lordship Bishop Sola – Music and various entertainment [p. 6] – Visit to the classrooms and workshops and other rooms. On the day established, long before the function began, the small chapel and adjacent rooms were packed with people who had already arrived. The courtyard and the pathways dividing it and running alongside it were decorated with many-coloured flags. The youngsters from the establishment performed soprano, contralto and choral pieces. Everyone was amazed that in such a short space of time the pupils had made progress in the civilising arts of the human heart. After Vespers had been sung, Fr Bosco explained the purpose of the Institute in the following words:

Your Most reverend Excellency

And very respected Benefactors,

Your presence, Your Rev. Excellency, Honourable Mayor, Gentlemen, is of great consolation to me, since it gives me the [p. 7] opportunity to publicly thank you for the charity shown me in the person of the poor children of the Patronage Saint-Pierre. At the same time it give mes a chance to freely express the purpose of a work that you

founded, supported and which has so often been the object of your charity and that now I intend humbly but warmly to place and keep forever under your kind protection. But so I can give you a clear idea of the Institute you have protected, I ask you to listen to a brief history that you should not find unpleasant and that will help you to understand what we want. Listen.

HISTORY

Some years ago the Bishop of this Diocese came to Turin and after having spoken of other things lamented the multitude of youngsters exposed to danger to body and soul, and expressed the ardent desire to provide for their needs. A little afterwards, two gentlemen from this city (1) in the name of the members of St Vincent de Paul Confraternity expressed similar regret especially for the number of boys

(1) Baron Héraud and Lawyer Ernest Michel

who at the weekend were running around the streets, wandering through the squares, brawling [p. 8], cursing, stealing. But the anguish of these two benefactors of the unfortunate only increased when they learned that these poor boys, after a life of vagabondage and disturbing the public authorities, mostly ended up filling the prisons. Great God, they exclaimed, can we not prevent the ruin of so many young people, whom we can call unfortunates not because they are perverse but only because abandoned? We have, it is true, the Dominican Patronages who offer some help but they are not able to sufficiently provide for the needs of those living without a roof, food, clothing. To this we can add the lack of priests who have time free to tackle this important ministry.

It was then that with the approval of the beloved Bishop of this Diocese, the good gentlemen we have spoken of write letters and then came in person to Turin to observe the Home we have there which is for boys of this kind. (2) They came and were soon clear about the need for a home where workshops

(2) The reference is to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales where some 900 poor boys are gathered and readied for some trade, or areas of study according to their inclination and ability.

could be set up and the most abandoned be gathered in, instructed and set on the road to a trade. But where was this home to be found and how could it be paid for and maintained? This home was to be opened here in Nice, on behalf [p. 9] of boys from this city; in Nice which is a city of charity, good works, an eminently Catholic city. So then, as for the material means we have unanimously given this answer: "The Brothers belonging to the St. Vincent de Paul Confraternity will do what they can; and Nice will not refuse its charitable support. It is a case of society's good, of saving souls. God is with us. He will help us".

And so two priests left Turin just with their hands and no other corredo other than trust in the Lord's providence and in the charity of the people of Nice. Everyone welcomed the two priests with kindness because everyone judged that it was necessary to have an

Institute to help youngsters at risk. It was then, Gentlemen, that you saw your Bishop, good Shepherd that he is, and at the advanced age of 85, going from square to square, street to street, seeking a place, a refuge for the orphans, for youth at risk. This refuge was found at No. 21 via Vittoria; and the brothers of St Vincent de Paul took the lease temporarily on themselves.

The Bishop opened the new *Patronage*, blessed the chapel, celebrated Mass on 28 November 1875, expressing in an appropriate sermon his great consolation at the mustard seed that had been sown, which he hoped would grow and be for the good. The new Institute was called St Peter's in honour [p. 10] of the Bishop who had opened it and in honour of St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, as well as in homage to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX who deigned to bestow a special Blessing on the Institute and all its promoters, adding the generous offering of two thousand francs. Without delay it began immediately to gather boys at weekends and gave shelter to some of the most abandoned. But all of this place consisted, however, in just a few rooms on the ground floor and below. What is just a few rooms faced with so many children who might at any moment ask shelter from their misfortunes? The place was too confined, only a few boys could be taken in, but above all we wanted to assure ourselves that the more unruly types for whom sometimes it is judged that Christian education is fruitless, could be kept far from the danger of certain companions, bad press, closed away in some secluded place, could be easily led back on the right path, become useful citizens, an honour to their country, and be the glory of our Holy Religion. That small flock, and small number of boys living in showed the need to provide for a growing number of poor children on the wider scene. So, we went in search of another building which could serve as a Home and a garden big enough to deal with those who just visited in pleasant and honest recreation at weekends [= Sundays and other Holy Days]. This place was found and it is the Villa Gautier where we, honourable gentlemen, are currently gathered. [p. 11] This site was considered very appropriate because it is outside the hustle and bustle of the city but close enough for boys who just want to come in. After many incumbenze the establishment was bought for the sum of (100,000) a hundred thousand francs between purchase and accessories. With the Holy Father's donation and those of other charitable people we have already paid half. We hope that the other half will soon be paid.

Now, gentlemen, if at midday you take a look around, you will find one site that is closed and detached. This has been put at the disposal of the St Vincent de Paul Society for their charitable works. Another part of the garden, on the other side and behind the house is for working boys who come in from outside from various parts of the city and want to spend Sunday here. Not far from this but completely separate, the boys who live in have recreation, that is the boys who have been given shelter and live in the house we are opening. One part of the garden remains free and this will be used for activities on Thursdays, the idea being to gather young students, let them play, have gymnastics, recitals, music, little theatre activities, so they can have a day far away from danger and to some advantage to their learning and their good behaviour. But all these categories of pupils, before they take part in amusements, always fulfil their religious duties. [p. 12]

If, gentlemen, you have the honour of visiting this building you will find some rooms that have been turned into a chapel and it is the church we presently occupy. Other

appropriate places serve as a kitchen, refectory, dormitory for boys of the Home; then there are places for singing lessons, catechism reading which we do during the day and then again for the day boys who come in large numbers to attend evening classes. In other places there are shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, book-binders at work in the workshops of our humble Institute.

So this is the brief history I wanted to recount and also had to in order to express ever more our gratitude for the Lord's goodness from nothing He knows how to bring out whatever He judges suitable to fulfil His adorable will.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS INSTITUTE

[p. 13] Hearing us talk of schools. Trades, boarders, day boys, adults workers, working boys, you will say: What is the situation of these boys? That is like asking: what is the purpose of this Institute?

It is a good and appropriate question to which I will respond immediately.

There are two categories of pupil: there are day students who come and spend the Lord's day with us, then during the week they attend the evening classes. The other category is the boarders whose political, moral, educational circumstances you could begin to understand a little by listening to what I am about to say: A youngster came along this morning asking if we could take him in.

"Who are you?" He was asked.

"I am a poor orphan lad".

"Is your father alive?"

"He died before I could even get to know him".

"And your mother?"

"My mother is very poor and she cannot give me bread. She sends me out to find whatever I can live on".

"How do you earn your bread?"

"I do it by playing the violin".

"Where?"

"In the inns and cafes but if I could learn music well I hope later to be able to play in the theatres and so earn myself some money".

"How old are you?"

"I am 15 or 16".

[p. 14] "Do you know how to read and write?"

"Very little".

"Have you made your First Communion?"

"Not yet".

Then when we gave him a brief exam on his religious knowledge we came to know that he was ignorant of even the basic elements and more than that was heading to lose his honour, his soul and would end up being taken join the unfortunate wretches in prison.

(3)

(3) When the religious service was over the listeners in fact were anxious to see the young lad I referred to. So we gathered in the garden and formed a circle and along

came our violinist who gave a concert in the presence of everyone. One of the spectators, amazed at the simplicity of the player and moved by the wretched clothes he was in, gave a pledge that he would be immediately given clothes by the Our Lady of Nice Conference. The following day he presented himself with his violin to receive his clothes and played a little number to cheer up the charitable gentlemen who gathered there to work for the poor. The young man is still in the Patronage and show he is very willing to be instructed in learning and religion.

The day after (13 March) another young man, 16 years old, presented himself and he had never been to confession or communion. He was an orphan, a foreigner, had nothing and had already entered the path to no good. He was immediately taken in. On the 14th we met another boy whose parents in desperation he placed him in a Protestant Home. Terrified there by the things he heard said about Catholics, the boy managed to escape but was found and led back there by force. He could have fled a second time but it was then by good fortune [p. 15] that he met the Rector of the *Patronage de St Pierre* who, understanding the sad situation, accepted him immediately. From these and other similar facts you can understand the circumstances of our boys. Picking up boys who are poor and at risk, instructing them in Religion, finding work for the day students with some honest employer, keeping the boarders busy in the workshops set up here, helping them learn a trade with which they can eventually earn their living... but you will ask me again in this regard: are there many boys of this kind? Those who attend each day are relatively large in number, but there are only 65 for now living in. But there are more than two hundred others who are asking to be taken in, and this will take place little by little that we have the place ready, and we get the discipline all in order and Divine Providence sends us the means to maintain them.

At this point of our explanation you will ask another reasonable question. The confined size of the place, the multitude of requests for acceptance, the repairs, the extensions, indeed this church itself where we are demand a much bigger building higher one that could serve better for the celebration of Mass, for hearing confessions, teaching catechism [p.16] to the little ones, for preaching to adults and people who live nearby. These things are essential if the Institute is to pursue its purpose which is the good of mankind and the salvation of souls. How to provide for these needs? How find money needed to give bread to those who live here, clothe them, provide teachers for them, assistants, trade masters? How continue the works undertaken and those that we should begin[?]

It is all true, and there is still more I would add, that to support the work already began we have contracted a number of debts and this very house is only half paid for. Despite all this we must not sgomentarci. Divine Providence and our Merciful Mother looks after all these things. If they look after the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, the animals on the earth, the lilies of the field, will they not provide for us who before the Creator are much more precious than all those other material beings? And more. The God who has inspired generous thoughts in you, in your kind hearts to promote, found, support this work up till now, will he not continue to infuse grace, courage, and provide the means for continuing it? And even more again: The God who has seen that Institutes are founded from nothing, in which more than fourteen thousand children are

housed [p.17], without them having a penny to advance, would that God want to leave us in the lurch without his help for these works.

4. Documents and writings
belonging to the final five years
(1883-1887)

Introduction

In the final decade of his life (1877-1887) Don Bosco was on a tireless search for financial assistance for his works in Italy and abroad. There are at least a hundred appeals, spoken and written that are testimony to this, made to benefactors, Cooperators, past pupils, civil and religious authorities. We find them in conferences, talks, circulars, begging requests, and regular items like the *Salesian Bulletin* which he began in 1877 and which became a more effective and better 'spokesperson' for him. The greater number of these, especially public conferences along the lines of his *sermon de charité* [in Nice], follow similar lines to the first address, his *exposé* of which we have the complete text drafted, corrected and published by Don Bosco personally. It can be read in the 1877 *Inaugurazione del patronato di S. Pietro a Nizza a Mare* [or in its French translation if you prefer] along with a news account of the event and the pages on the preventive system, all included in the same booklet. His 'preventive' theme comes back again, seen in its twin perspective of the educational and the social: the dramatic situation (and one that he dramatised) of 'poor and abandoned' youth; the institutions that took care of them such as the oratory, the *patronage*, the home or hospice; the urgent need for funds to build and support things, by seeking alms; the guarantee of abundant heavenly recompense, both temporal and eternal as well as the prayerful and affectionate recognition from those who benefited from the help received; the certainly of good personal, professional and social results.

The discussion is not a new one. It belongs to the Don Bosco of the early oratories in Turin, and of the lotteries. But by now it had become far more universal and organised once he had achieved a new catch-phrase which dominated the final decade: "society will be good if you give young people a good education; society will be perverted if you allow young people to turn to wrongdoing".

At the same time Don Bosco was at work within his own Congregation raising the awareness of its members, and the family of Cooperators helping him, concerning the requirements of the preventives system which had become the typical Salesian way of educating. At the conclusion of the 1877 text on the preventive system published in the Italian *Salesian Bulletin* in September 1880 (followed by the French in December 1880 and the Spanish in September 1887 and November 1889), the editor, Fr Bonetti, wrote: "The system described above which he has used and recommended since the beginnings of the Oratory and Home, is the one studied and practised still today in every Salesian House; and we know that they flourish and offer good results the more the said system is understood and practised in detail. It would be desirable for it to be introduced into all Christian families, all public and private educational institutions, male or female. Then there would be no delay in having a more moderately behaved and pious youth that would be the consolation of their families and a good support to society in general".⁵²⁵ Salesians were sent a recommendation recorded up by the secretary of the General Council of the Salesian Society, Fr John Baptist Lemoyne, dated 12 September 1884: "I recommend something else. Study and effort to introduce and practice the Preventive System in

⁵²⁵BS 4 (1880) no. 9 September, p. 9

our houses. Let the Rectors hold conferences on this important topic since there will be incalculable advantages for the good of souls and the glory of God”.⁵²⁶ The system also became an essential point of reference in negotiations and controversies over works already accepted and others under discussion, such as the house in Lyon in September 1879 and Madrid in 1885. In the first case Don Bosco considered certain requests as unacceptable since they would have created situations, he said, “that cause problems for our educational system”.⁵²⁷ In the second instance he recalled “our system” in the failed negotiations to take on a Madrid-based work.⁵²⁸ “Despite the good will we could not diverge from the practice established in our Regulations, a copy of which I sent in September”.⁵²⁹

The documents brought together in this section testify to the two perspectives, educational and social. Of pastoral and pedagogical relevance are the first, the *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane* (*Concerning the Punishments to be inflicted in Salesian Houses*), what Fr Cerruti wrote in his *Storia della pedagogia* (*History of Pedagogy*), the two letters from Rome bearing 10 May as the date, and the final *Memorie* or *Memoirs of Don Bosco from 1884-1886*.

Clearly of social import is his address to past pupils on 24 June 1883. However, it also takes on a particular educational value because of its context. It is an eloquent testimony of one of the results of what Don Bosco wrote in 1877: “The preventive system makes the pupil affectionate so that the educator can still speak with the language of the heart during the time of education and after it”; “The pupil will always remain a friend of the educator and will recall with pleasure the advice given and will consider his teachers and other superiors as fathers and brothers”. Also, the ‘glory’ of the disciples becomes the ‘glory of the Master’: “If Don Bosco has a name in the world, it would not be for his virtues or talents, but would be due to the good success, the good conduct of his children. I would like said of me what we read in the Scriptures: *Gloria patris filius sapiens*. So continue to be good Christians and wise citizens, and thus you will be my consolation, joy and crown”.⁵³⁰

The letters to the three Salesians working in Argentina which can be found at the end of the collection, are representative of the ‘system’s highest expression, not only pedagogically and socially but also in terms of general lifestyle and relationships, the beginning of a true spirituality of religious, personal and community life.

Concerning punishments to be inflicted in Salesian Houses

A circular attributed to Don Bosco
by José Manuel Prellezio

⁵²⁶ *Verbali* (Minutes) *del Capitolo Superiore*, 12 Sept. 1884, fol. 55r.

⁵²⁷ Letter to Canon C. Guiol Sept 1879, E III 520.

⁵²⁸ *Verbali del Capitolo Superiore*, 22 Sept. 1885, fol 80r-v.

⁵²⁹ Letter to Senator Silvela, 17 March 1886, E IV 354. “our Regulations” in this case means the printed text on the preventive system as seen in the *Regolamento per le case*.

⁵³⁰ Address to past pupils, laymen and priests who came to Valdocco to wish him greetings on his name day on the morning of 24 June 1882: BS 6 (1882) no. 7, July, p. 123.

Introduction

In recent Salesian historiography, the *Dei castighi* has drawn the attention of the best scholars on Don Bosco. For example, Peter Stella writes: “Amongst the documents which followed chronologically from the Preventive System, a circular on “Punishments to be inflicted in Salesian houses”, written in 1883, especially deserves consideration”.⁵³¹ But it immediately needs to be noted that although it bears the date of 29 January 1883, this circular on the topic of punishments remained unpublished until 1935, almost fifty years after Don Bosco’s death. His name appears at the bottom of the final page of the copies kept currently in the *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* (ASC) in Rome.

For his part, Fr Eugene Ceria reconstructs the facts in the following way: “Before going away from the Oratory and Italy for a considerable period of time, Don Bosco left Fr Rua to give or send Rectors of the houses a long letter of his concerning an issue of key importance in applying the preventive system. He offered a good amount of thought on it on the Feast of St Francis de Sales, not only because it was the vigil of his departure but especially because the topic turned on a theme involving interpretation of the Salesian spirit in one of the most delicate tasks of the educator’s work. Don Bosco had seen that a sufficient number of copies were prepared. But gradually the text of his exhortation was completely forgotten”.⁵³²

The ‘long letter’ came to light for the first time in Volume XVI of the *Biographical Memoirs* of Don Bosco [Italian edition] in 1935.⁵³³

Its circulation and meaningful silences

Once published, the work found consensus with pedagogues and educators especially in the Italian setting. Non-Salesian scholars too, like Prof. Mario Casotti of the Catholic University of Milan, considered Don Bosco’s circular letter to be important, where he “justifies the preventive through Jesus’ words and example”.⁵³⁴ Giovanni Modugno quotes it to document the need to follow the spirit of the Gospel in correcting pupils, and he copies any number of paragraphs when he refers to the question of punishments in Don Bosco’s educational thinking.⁵³⁵

Clearly enough Salesian scholars are the ones who have given most attention to the 1883 work and emphasises its worth. Fr Peter Ricaldone, Rector Major of the Salesian Society at the time, spoke in 1951 of the “great circular on punishments” in the first volume of his work, *Don Bosco educatore*.⁵³⁶ He provided a substantial sample of its

⁵³¹ P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, p. 466.

⁵³² E IV, 201

⁵³³ MB XVI 439-447

⁵³⁴ Giovanni Bosco (s.), *Il metodo preventivo*. With testimonies and other unpublished educational writings. Introduction and notes by Mario Casotti. Brescia, La Scuola 1942, p. 121.

⁵³⁵ Don Giovanni Bosco, *Il metodo educativo*. Introduction and notes by Giovanni Modugno (=Ancient and modern educators). Florence, La Nuova Italia 1941, pp. 50-54; 144-145: «(Da una lettera di D. Bosco del 1883)»

⁵³⁶ P. Ricaldone, *Don Bosco educatore*, vol I. Colle Don Bosco (Asti), Libreria Dottrina Cristiana, p. 456. Cf. Also *Uffici propri della Società di San Francisco di Sales*. [Rome], Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana 1974, pp. 15-17 («Dalle lettere di San Giovanni Bosco, sacerdote»).

content, wanting to explain Don Bosco's thinking on the matter of punishments (pp. 456-457).

Similarly there are many quotations that can be found in the first volume of the *Annali della Società di San Francesco di Sales (The Annals of the Society of St Francis de Sales)* in the chapter on the preventive system. The author is E. Ceria.⁵³⁷

The complete text of the circular was published in various collections of the Piedmontese writer's works. Mario Casotti copied it in his appendix of the earlier quoted work. Gennaro R. Zitarosa also includes the whole document in his work: *Pensiero e metodo di Giovanni Bosco (John Bosco's thinking and approach)*.⁵³⁸

In Spanish in the Salesian context the *Biografía y escritos de San Juan Bosco (St John Bosco's Life and Writings)* 1955, by Rodolfo Fierro Torres has had wide circulation. In presenting the letter, he adds this note: "As the reader will note, there is a sad tone to the writing. He wrote it at the request of Salesians in Argentina, some of whom had allowed themselves to be infected by a degree of militarism".⁵³⁹ However this statement is not backed up with any documentation.

When the second edition of *Biografía y escritos* had sold out a 'nueva obra' was published in the same series, which brings together Don Bosco's main works. The 1883 circular letter can be found amongst these.⁵⁴⁰ We do not find Rodolfo Fierro's note there concerning the Argentine origins of the circular.

The most authoritative and widespread collection is undoubtedly the one prepared by Peter Braidó and published in 1965 by La Scuola publishers, Brescia. Three years before, Braidó had included the text of the circular on punishments in his *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco* (1962). In the introductory pages the Salesian scholar stated: "In our opinion, its importance lies not so much in presenting a broad case study on punishments as in the motivations and more general suggestions which inspire it. The spirit, the general educational approach, the positive view it takes of young people, its optimism and clear predilection for a pedagogical policy of love are certainly Don Bosco's and in complete harmony with his approach".⁵⁴¹

In the *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos* cited above, Pedro Castellví writes: "A little known work, despite its great interest, is Don Bosco's letter on punishments".⁵⁴² Prob-

⁵³⁷ *Annali* I 664. Cf. Also A. Auffray, *Comment un Saint punissait les enfants*. Lyon, Emmanuel Vitte 1946, pp. 27-43.

⁵³⁸ G.R.Zitarosa, *Pensiero e metodo di Giovanni Bosco*. Documentation and analysis of Don Bosco's educational approach as a classic work of pedagogy for State and competitive examinations. Rome/Naples/Città di Castello, Società Editrice Dante Alighieri 1956. (Copy of the letter: pp. 43-59): «La punizione che libera dal male»).

⁵³⁹ R. Fierro Torres, *Biografía y escritos de San Juan Bosco*. Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 1955, p. 470, no. 1.

⁵⁴⁰ S.J. Bosco, *Obras fundamentales*. Ed. Juan Canals Pujol and Antonio Martínez Azcona. *Estudio introductorio de Pedro Braidó*. Madrid, BAC 1978, pp. 595-608.

⁵⁴¹ P. Braidó, *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco*. Turin. SEI 1962, p. 94. The anthology Braidó prepared is: *S. Giovanni Bosco, Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell'educazione della gioventù*, introduction, presentation and alphabetical and systematic index, by Peter Braidó. Brescia, La Scuola 1965. The text of the circular: pp. 305-316. We note that "it reproduces the edition found in the *Memorie Biografiche*, vol. XVI and the *Epistolario*, vol. IV" (p. 277).

⁵⁴² S.J. Bosco, *Obras fundamentales...*, p. 595.

bly, when he says 'little known', Castellví is referring to the limited circulation the 1883 letter had in the non-Salesian Spanish context.

We need to recognise that in other contexts too, along with enthusiastic opinion and long, explicit quotations, certain omissions and silences might at least seem a bit strange. We don't find the text of the circular letter attributed to Don Bosco, for example, amongst the documents reproduced by Fr Bartolomeo Fascie in his book on the Preventive System, even though the author offers other testimonies and unpublished writings on educational issues.⁵⁴³

Fr Giulio Barberis, first pedagogy teacher amongst young Salesians (1874), and a strict collaborator with Don Bosco and careful compiler of everything he said, has a number of pages on the question of punishments in his *Appunti di pedagogia sacra* (Notes on religious pedagogy), but makes no reference to the 1883 letter. This is a fairly significant silence if one considers that Barberis' comments on the matter are taken from a book by A. Monfat, translated into Italian, as a basis – as we shall see – for his draft of this work.⁵⁴⁴

No reference has been found to “Don Bosco's long letter” even in the writings of one of the first and most authoritative Salesian scholars of pedagogy, Fr Francis Cerruti, the author of many pedagogical publications and various works on Don Bosco the educator and on his thinking regarding education and schooling.⁵⁴⁵ This, despite the fact that Fr Cerruti, then director general of studies and Salesian schools, was involved, even before Don Bosco's death, in collecting his circular letters, as we can deduce from this: on 14 January 1887, replying to Fr Bellamy, a French Salesian, while recognising the difficulty in finding a complete collection, he wrote that he had made “every effort” to do what could be done, “since it was something not only to his liking but also very useful”.⁵⁴⁶

Without wanting to give too much weight to the argument of 'silence', I think the facts I have alluded to mean we have to give some space to the problem of the authenticity of the document: a question that is really significant.

The author

On this it would be appropriate to hear out the first editor once more. After referring to having found a chance copy, Ceria adds that he had not been able to find an original copy by Don Bosco. Despite this he had no doubt: “some copies with Fr Berto's features, Don Bosco's secretary, show that we have an authentic document of the Saint's before

⁵⁴³B. Fascie, *Del metodo educativo di Don Bosco*. Sources and comments. Turin SEI 1927.

⁵⁴⁴G. Barberis, *Appunti di pedagogia sacra esposti agli scritti della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales*. Turin, Litografia Salesiana 1897. See, for example, pp. 352-354 of the *Appunti...* and A. Monfat, *La pratica dell'educazione cristiana*, first free version by Fr Francesco Bricolo. Rome, Tipografia dei Fratelli Monaldi 1879, pp. 158-178; cf. Especially J.M. Prellezzo, *Fonti letterarie della circolare «Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane»* in «Orientamenti Pedagogici» 27 (1980) 625-642.

⁵⁴⁵See for example F. Cerruti, *Le idee di D. Bosco sull'educazione e sull'insegnamento e la missione attuale della scuola. Lettere due*, S Benigno Canavese, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1886; Idem, *Educazione e istruzione sistema preventivo ispezioni scolastiche e civili*. Turin, Tip. S.A.I.S. «Buona Stampa» 1910.

⁵⁴⁶ASC 272 *Cerruti Francesco Corrispondenza*. Charles Bellamy (1852-1911) was the first Rector at Oran-Eckmühl (1891).

us, and this is confirmed by its contents, style and tone”.⁵⁴⁷ Ceria wrote this around 1955 in the introductory note to the text on the circular on punishments, included in volume IV of the *Epistolario*. It was made available in 1959, after the author’s death, by Eugene Valentini. In 1935, he had simply written: “Dated 29 January 1883 we find in the archives (32-I) a long circular entitled: *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane*, written out in Fr Rua’s hand, and signed: Fr John Bosco. No indication that it was ever published”.⁵⁴⁸

Currently, amongst the documentation kept in ASC, no written copy (By Rua), collaborator and first successor of Don Bosco, can be found. It is true that there is a copy bearing the mark *32-I*, but it was written by Fr John Baptist Francesia.⁵⁴⁹ We will take this up further on when examining each of the documents used in this edition. And we will see that we cannot state for certain that one of the copies shows evidence of Fr Berto’s handwriting.

To the external criteria pointed to by Ceria to document the authenticity of the letter on punishments, we need to add internal criteria as well (contents, structure, style, tone...). These two need some clarification. In fact, those who are well acquainted with the pedagogical writings of the founder of the Salesian Congregation speak much more carefully. Peter Braido wrote that: “its ideal direction and formulation is in perfect conformity to the spirit of the ‘preventive system’” but he also suggests that it is likely that it was drafted by one of his collaborators and that “Don Bosco had simply approved it and made it his own”.⁵⁵⁰

Peter Stella arrives at conclusions that are very similar: “The prosody of the entire document leads us to think that the editing work was prevalently by someone else. This was already the habit in Don Bosco’s last years. Just the same we can recognise terms and concerns of Don Bosco’s that belong to that period”.⁵⁵¹ Stella refers, for example, to hints on the preventive system, the warning never to correct in public but in camera caritatis. And he concludes by stating that, at least as far as it seems, the document was never sent out to Salesian houses during the founder’s lifetime, nor printed, nor lithographed as was usually done at Valdocco.⁵⁵²

Earlier, in 1964, Peter Braido had also referred to the fact that the 1883 circular letter was never sent to those to whom it was addressed and remained unpublished for many

⁵⁴⁷“As we have had occasion to say, presenting the third volume, the complete collection is the work of the late Fr ceria who spent his final years at it and also the final efforts of his long life” (E. Valentini, «Presentazione» E IV, p. V).

⁵⁴⁸MB XVI 15. A. Auffray writes: “Circulaire, dictée un an avant sa mort, à son bras droit, le vénéré Don Rua, circulaire portant cette mention: Des châtements à infliger dans les maisons salésiennes” (Auffray, Comment, p. 27).

⁵⁴⁹Giovanni Battista Francesia (1830-1930). One of the first 16 pupils who joined Don Bosco to found the Salesian Society (1859). Ordained priest in 1862. First Salesian to receive his Arts Degree; author of many publications of a literary nature (Italian and Latin). Cf. E. Valentini – A. Rodinò (editors), *Dizionario biografico dei salesiani*. Turin, Ufficio Stampa Salesiana 1969, p. 128.

⁵⁵⁰Giovanni Bosco, *Scritti*, p. 277.

⁵⁵¹Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, pp. 466-467

⁵⁵²We can see Don Bosco’s circulars and those of members of the Superior Chapter and other writings of an ascetic or pedagogical nature (like for example the *Appunti di pedagogia sacra* by G. Barberis or the *Elementi di pedagogia* by F. Cerruti).

years. He deals with it when examining Don Bosco's teaching on punishments. In a classic Good Night to the youngsters in 1863 Don Bosco told them: "I have to tell you this clearly, I abhor punishments and I don't letting people know about something and threatening punishment if they don't carry it out: it's not my system".⁵⁵³ After including this statement Braido asked: "Could this not be the reason why the long circular entitled *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane*, in the Salesian Chapter Archive, with the date of St Francis' day 1883, was never sent and remained unpublished? While it fully corresponds to Don Bosco's thinking, his ordinary practice and way of giving commands, does it not seem to give too much importance to a subject that was barely touched on in his pedagogy of loving kindness?"⁵⁵⁴ In a more recent publication (1981), the well-known scholar on Don Bosco takes up the question again. He again draws attention to the 1863 Good Night. Then he sums up and adds to his earlier reflection in a significant way (now without questions marks): "Probably this is the reason why the long circular on *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane* (1883) was never sent out and remained unpublished. While matching Don Bosco's thinking in substance it gave too much importance and organisation to a topic that was hardly touched on in his pedagogy of loving kindness".⁵⁵⁵

Doubtless that this is a clarifying hypothesis, but keeping this in mind still, a degree of surprise would not seem to be completely unjustifiable that it was never sent out if in fact it carried Don Bosco's name on it. We know the authority the founder of the Salesians enjoyed amongst his collaborators and sons. And we also know that Fr Rua was not one to let any advice or indications of the Superior be completely forgotten.

So in the midst of all these issues we clearly see the need to get to know the setting in which this 1883 letter was written. At least theoretically this approach could offer the right things we need to clarify who was behind the letter and identify its sources.

Context and sources

The expression Peter Stella used is a good one, in my view, when summing up his thinking on *Dei castighi*: "However, it must always be considered a significant product of the live-in situation that had been so solidly set up in those years at Valdocco and in many Salesian houses".⁵⁵⁶

It was in the early 1880s. Don Bosco would have given the letter to Fr Michael Rua before going away for some time from the Oratory and from Italy. Eugene Ceria, who tells the story, is certainly referring to the long trip Don Bosco made to France in the early months of 1883. The journey is well documented. But at this time it might also be very pertinent to note the testimony of Fr Rua who, in a circular he sent out from Turin on 25 January 1883, said: "This year we will have our dear Father, Don Bosco, with us

⁵⁵³ MB VII 503.

⁵⁵⁴ P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di don Bosco*, Zürich, PAS-Verlag 1964, p. 179, no. 76.

⁵⁵⁵ P. Braido (Ed.), *Esperienze di pedagogia cristiana nella storia*. Vol II; Sec. XVII-XIX. Rome, LAS 1981, p. 380.

⁵⁵⁶ P. Braido (Ed.), *Esperienze di pedagogia cristiana nella storia*. Vol II; Sec. XVII-XIX. Rome, LAS 1981, p. 380.

to brighten up the feast of St Francis. Deo gratias! But on the 30th this month he will be leaving for the usual long and tiring journey".⁵⁵⁷

Over the following months, Fr Rua, amongst other things, sent out some news on events relating to the journey from Bordighera to Ventimiglia, Marseilles, Paris... On 31 August he wrote, finally, to all the confreres: "With Divine assistance our dear Father arrived home safe and well after a long trip that lasted a good four months". He then added that on a separate sheet he would be sending "Something that Don Bosco has been dreaming of" that could be made public and be of edification and encouragement for everyone. Neither in this circular nor the one before (at least in the ones we can find in the ASC) does he make any reference to what it was that he would be sending, according to what Ceria writes, to Salesian houses after Don Bosco was to leave Turin.⁵⁵⁸ On the other hand neither the chronicle entries for the Oratory at Valdocco nor the minutes of meetings or 'conferences' for the personnel at the house make any reference to any letter on punishments even though, at the time (1882-1884) the topic of discipline, and more practically, punishments, had frequently gained the attention of superiors, teachers and assistants.

We need to immediately add, however, that despite this silence, the news found in the quoted documents offer information of undoubted interest for reconstructing the 'collegial [understand 'boarding environment'] setting' in which the 1883 document would have been produced. These were tense times for the way things were going in the first institution Don Bosco founded. In the often brief notes on what participants at these meetings said, one notes a certain insistence on the urgency of everyone knowing and observing the Rules. And there is no lack of allusion and comment on topics and facts of a disciplinary nature. In the meeting or conference held on 27 June 1882, someone said that "the youngsters do not have a good spirit; they are insubordinate".⁵⁵⁹ As one of the factors provoking such a situation, the members of the administrative council at Valdocco indicate a lack of unity in administration of the centre. It was a topic for reflection and dialogue in the following meetings. There was a 'grand conference' on 16 November which everyone took part in: priests, teachers, and the clerics who were assistants; around 35 in all. Some pages from A. Monfat (*Pratica dell'educazione cristiana*), the French pedagogue, were read out and commented on, and then reflected on. The pages concerned precisely the issue of "discipline amongst the teachers". At the same meeting they also spoke about order amongst the boys: two aspects of the same problem that those running the Oratory were very concerned about. We can say

⁵⁵⁷ Asc 9.131 Rua Michele *Circolare agli ispettori* (25.1.1883) *ms* copy and original signature of Fr Rua's; cf also ASC 0529 Rua Michele *Circolari*. Circulars have been kept for the following dates: 26.1.1883; 25.2.1883; 28.4.1883; 31.5.1883; 26.6.1883; 24.7.1883; 24.10.1883; 24.11.1883; 28.12.1883.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. A Amadei, *Il servo di Dio Michele Rua*. Vol I, Turin, SEI 1931. The biographer gives ample space to recounting the events of 1883 (pp. 317-331). He reports news given by Fr Rua in his circulars on Don Bosco's journey. He recalls that at the end of April, "Don Bosco saw the need to have Fr Rua at his side, and called him" (p. 320).

⁵⁵⁹ ASC 38 *Torino San Francesco di Sales*, fol. 53. Cf. Other references in J.M. Prellezio, *Fonti*, pp. 627-628; Idem, Valdocco (1866-1888). *Problemi organizzativi e tensioni ideali nelle «conferenze» dei primi salesiani*, in RSS 8 (1989) 289-328; P. Braidò, *La Lettera di Don Bosco da Roma del 10 maggio 1884*. Rome, LAS 1984, pp. 81-82.

this, if we consider that at the beginning of the following year, on 8 March 1883 (while Don Bosco was in France), there was another conference in which everyone who had some responsibility for the running of the house took part. There was a central topic on the agenda: discipline. With a view to finding some precise guidelines on this delicate issue, a chapter on punishments was read out from Teppa's brief work: *Avvertimenti per gli educatori ecclesiastici della gioventù (Advice for religious educators of the young)*.⁵⁶⁰ Don Bosco's words in the Regulations on this matter were also commented on. (Nor is it out of place to highlight the fact once again that the minutes of this meeting make no reference to the circular on punishments; because, in the context we have quickly presented, such an allusion might be considered as taken for granted, if things were going like Fr Ceria said they were).

The 8 March meeting closed with an earnest exhortation to keep to Don Bosco's and Fr Teppa's spirit: two "models experienced in the education of the young". And we also know that the issue was of great interest to the participants because they decided to meet again the following day. The central issue to be faced was this: "To find out why the boys fear us rather than love us". They observed that "this is contrary to our spirit or at least to the spirit of Don Bosco".⁵⁶¹ They discussed "this important topic" for "around two hours", but without finding the "true cause". They then felt the need to make some book available that would serve as a guideline. They decided to give everyone a copy of the *Avvertimenti...* by the Barnabite Fr Teppa. It was handed out at the April meeting 1883.

If we compare the pages of the *Avvertimenti* with the text of the *Dei castighi*, we find ideas that have affinity: punishment, like medicine, must only be applied out of necessity and the last remedy; the teacher ought not castigate severely or when emotional; punishments ought not be a danger to health. . . . But these are common enough themes in the pedagogical literature of the 19th century.⁵⁶² Instead the structure and general layout of the two items are very different and certain statements reflect somewhat different points of view: while Teppa advises immediate, though not precipitous chastisement, the author of the circular believes that a boy should not be punished right at the moment of the fault, but after some time of reflection. There is another curious detail: Teppa speaks of inflicting punishment with "loving kindness", while in the item attributed to Don Bosco this very characteristic term of his does not appear, at least at certain periods.⁵⁶³

We can conclude then that overall the traces found from Fr Teppa's book in the circular on punishments are rather light. But on the other hand we see that the other work used in Valdocco, by Monfat, offered abundant material to whoever wrote the circular.

⁵⁶⁰ A. Teppa, *Avvertimenti per gli educatori ecclesiastici della gioventù*. Rome/Turin, Marietti 1868, pp. 41-51 (Chap. VI *Dei castighi*).

⁵⁶¹ ASC 38 Torino San Francesco di Sales, foll. 78-80. Cf. Critical text of this document in *L'Oratorio di Valdocco nelle «Conferenze capitolari» (1866-1877)*. Introduction and critical texts (ed.) J.M. Prelezzo, in RS 10 (1991).

⁵⁶² Cf. B. Schnapper, *La correction paternelle et le mouvement des idées au dix-neuvième siècle (1789-1935)*, in «Revue Historique» 1980, no. 534, 320-349; A. Cumming, *Discipline: an historical examination*, in «Pedagogica Historica» 9 (1969) 366-379.

⁵⁶³ A clarification on this appears in S.J. Bosco, *Obras fundamentales*, p. 596: "Todas su páginas subrayan en forma reiterativa la amovevolezza, expresión típica, verdadero tecnicismo ensu léxico pedagógico".

Comparison of the texts gives us a solid basis for maintaining that between these two items there are not only topical coincidences and conceptual parallels but true and real dependencies. This conclusion is amply documented in an earlier work, while at the same time CH. Rollin demonstrates the inconsistency of any hypothesis that claims direct dependency between⁵⁶⁴ the two. In the current edition we complete the copy of the texts, since even the paragraphs where the likeness seems most tenuous could turn out to help explain parts which were copied almost literally in other parts of the 1883 document.

With the help of the Marist pedagogue, the writer of the circular addressed to Rectors of Salesian houses was in touch with the teachings and writings of other educators and pedagogues: Seneca, Quintillian, Fénelon, Dupanloup, Rollin. . . In such cases, we should speak only of indirect sources, obviously. The same should also be said of books and authors added by Bricolo in his Italian translation and adaptation: Lambruschini, Tommaseo, Arrò Carroccio, Alfieri. . .

There is one point where the literary source is clearly different: it is the paragraph on “our dear, meek” Saint Francis and his example of charity and kindness. The text brings in a section of the *Vita di San Francesco di Sales*, by André Jean Marie Hamon, a work that was no unknown in the Salesian context of Valdocco.⁵⁶⁵

The good number of materials collected were, in general, not elaborated on all that much. The reader can see this easily enough by comparing the text with the apparatus regarding sources. The writer of the 1883 text comments on and illustrates his main pedagogical arguments with references to Holy Scripture: examples of Jesus (love, kindness and patience with Mary Magdalen and the apostles), the example of St Paul, Moses, David, Elijah. . .

These, and exhortations to have recourse to prayer, the fear of God and other supernatural means contribute to giving the circular *Dei castighi* a stronger and more characteristic religious and spiritual tone. There are also other elements that contribute to personalising the content. More than once the writer speaks in first person to “my dear Salesians”; he hints at educational and apostolic experiences familiar to the Valdocco setting: “I have had true conversations”; “The Lord has consoled me often”; “I have often encountered people so stubborn... who were bent only on charity”; “Often when I called some of these wild little characters to me and treated them kindly...”...These are things that suggest Don Bosco’s intervention but they do not allow us to draw certain and definitive conclusions.

The work of research and identification of literary sources lets us see clearly that the originality of content of the circular *Dei castighi* is modest. When such sources have been analysed there are open questions remaining concerning the author of the 1883

⁵⁶⁴In the work quoted in note 12 (*Fonti. . .*) there is an effort to document the contribution by the French pedagogue Ch. Rollin. This was a rather indirect contribution: through the work that we know, by A. Monfat. It seems that the writer of the circular *Dei castighi* did not use the original French but the ‘free version’ by F. Bricolo.

⁵⁶⁵[André Jean Marie Hamon], *Vita di San Francesco di Sales vescovo e principe di Ginevra*, compiled on the basis of manuscripts and contemporary writers by the priest at St, Sulpice in Paris. Turin, Cav. Pietro Marietti 1877, 3 vol.

draft and his choices and presentation of the documentation he had gathered. Despite this one thing seems clear enough: on the basis of trustworthy data and taking a new perspective, we can confirm the hypothesis that in the long letter of 1883 we see the prevalence of a person other than Don Bosco in the editing process.⁵⁶⁶ But also, even if it seems a paradox, we need to add that the number of texts taken literally from earlier publications does not help us in the task of identification. The book the writer has used most of all was already known in Valdocco since 1882. It is enough to recall that a good 35 of the people involved in the boys' education were present for the 'grand conference' on 16 November and were able to listen to the reading on some pages from the *Pratica dell'educazione cristiana* by A. Monfat and its commentary: it was a work, it seems, warmly recommended to his collaborators by Don Bosco himself. In fact, Fr Giulio Barberis, after having drawn liberally from Monfat's work when writing his *Appunti di pedagogia sacra* in the chapter dedicated to the topic of discipline, says: "I will say along with the famous A. Monfat (a Marist whose book D. Bosco has much recommended for reading...)"⁵⁶⁷

It is another question if we are talking about affinity between writings of the French pedagogue and certain educational guidelines that appear in early Salesian pedagogical texts. These however are not a sufficiently solid basis for claiming that in fact Don Bosco had put his signature at the bottom of the final page of something that surely one of his collaborators had drawn from or summarised from Monfat. And prescindendo from questions of literary dependence, it would not seem too much to suppose that in the choice and use of these texts there was a desire to respond to particular issues that were being felt at the time within Valdocco in the early 1880s, as indicated earlier.

The presentation to follow of each of the documents handed on to us through the circular letter might offer some useful elements .

The original documents

There has been no original document of Don Bosco's found of the text that is published here. Nor is there any news at any time in history of any copy with his signature. After a thorough consultation of the ASC's *fondo Don Bosco*, we can verify that there are seven copies (five manuscripts and two typewritten copies) numbered as 131.03 *Lettere*

⁵⁶⁶Taking up the pages regarding repression, punishment again (pp. 156-193), it doesn't seem that the editor had overlooked certain passages on the basis of precise criteria for his choices. In some cases the changes that we find in his work could betray a less favourable attitude to punishments. For example, while Monfat says not to punish "until other means have been exhausted" (p. 157), we read in the circular: "after having exhausted all other means" (p. 1). It is to be noted however that the French pedagogue, on another occasion, invites the educator "not to have recourse to punishment except as a last extreme".(p. 169). In the work attributed to Don Bosco we do not find a recommendation that, in Valdocco's family atmosphere, would seem terribly austere: "Let the educator's world be serious" p. 161. On the other hand we need to add that there is no collection or indication of Monfat's (nor any added by Bricolo in his version) which might be considered close to guidelines of Don Bosco's: condemnation of "general punishments" (p. 177); boys knowing "that they are loved" (p.158); treating them with "loving kindness" (p. 159). For other elements see Prellezio, *Fonti*, pp. 640-642.

⁵⁶⁷Barberis, *Appunti*, p. 303.

Circolari ai Salesiani. A further typewritten copy numbered 0509 is held in the ASC under *Superiori Maggiori Circolari 1867-1907*.

Only in a few cases have we been able to identify the scribes with any solid probability. We can add with certainty that in none of these eight copies are there any interventions which can be attributed to Don Bosco's hand. Research into other archives has not turned up anything positive either, in this regard.

As well as the manuscript copies, we will be keeping in mind the published texts of the *Memorie biografiche* and the *Epistolario* of Don Bosco, given the authority and circulation they have had. The former will be indicated, in what follows, by *J* and the latter by *K*.

Examination of the different copies leads us to one provisional hypothesis: it seems that all these documents derive from a single draft (which has disappeared?) of the *Dei castighi* circular. All the preserved copies have the substantially complete text. The variants (omissions and/or additions of phonemes, change of word order...) can be attributed to simple errors by the copyists and in some cases might betray difficulties in reading the manuscript which was being copied. Only on a few occasions do we note variants of a certain importance (omitting a line) and likely intentional interventions by the scribe-editor to improve the text. But in none of these cases is the substantial integrity of the text compromised.

In the current edition here we have chosen as a basis the manuscript copy kept in the ASC 131.03 *Lettere Circolari ai Salesiani*, which will be indicated here as *A*.

Manuscript *A* is made up of two double sheets inserted one after the other and making up 8 pages in all, unnumbered, unlined and without margins, 220x140 mm in dimension. The final page is blank. The paper, now yellowed and faded with time, is thin. On the second sheet we can read the letterhead used at the time at Valsalice: «COLLEGIO-CONVITTO VALSALICE - Torino».

The manuscript is a bit worse for wear. It has a number of blotches, probably due to humidity. The small, neat and regular writing is Fr John Baptist Francesia's.⁵⁶⁸ It is he, too, who writes 'Fr John Bosco' at the end. Given the kind of paper used, it would not be saying too much to suppose that Fr Francesia wrote it when he was Rector at Valsalice (1883-1884) or slightly later. The manuscript has few corrections; sometimes however it is difficult to determine a word that has been substituted; often the final vowels (*a, e, o*) give rise to doubt. He used brown ink.

This is the oldest and most authoritative copy. There are a number of considerations that lead to this conclusion and that go beyond its features and extrinsic aspects which already tells us much. Copy *A* was done before the versions which Ceria saw to. In fact an archival note says: "Not published". The copy bears, as well, the marking "32-I" handwritten in black ink, indicating the position in an old ASC catalogue where various circular letters of Don Bosco to Salesians could be found (or at least attributed to him).

The systematic presence of 19th century grammatical forms in text *A* (*aveva, era, in-*

⁵⁶⁸In 1884-1886 John Baptist Francesia was the director of the student section at Valdocco. At the same time he was also provincial in Piedmont (1878-1902). Cf. E. Valentini - A. Rodinò (eds.) *Dizionario*, p. 128.

tiera, instead of *avevo, ero, intera'*/) offers new elements of trustworthiness. We might say something similar concerning a few Piedmontese-falvoured forms (/chiamare ai parenti in place of *chiedere ai parenti*). All of these have been 'modernised' in the *Memorie biografiche* (1935) and the *Epistolario* (1959).

Analysis of the text highlights a clear affinity between text *A* and two other manuscript copies of the circular.

The first (*B*) is a common school exercise book of 23 unnumbered pages, 201x152 mm. The second (*D*) is also an exercise book. This time of 36 numbered pages, 201x153 mm. These two copies were made by two different scribes; the writing, lightly slanted to the right, is clear and, in manuscript *B* it has a certain elegance.⁵⁶⁹

Comparison of the variants, while confirming affinity between the three, does not allow us to speak with certainty of a direct dependence. In fact the presence of a relative number of common variants means we cannot dismiss the hypothesis that the scribes for *B* and *D* could have used a manuscript other than *A* to copy from. We will bear this in mind in this edition.

Similar considerations could be had for the relationship between *A* and *J*. Fr Ceria says he had worked from a copy kept in the Salesian archive marked as '32-I'. This is precisely the old marking for manuscript *A*. This, and the closeness of the texts, could lead us to think that *J* depends on *A*. The differences we see could be explained by copying errors or simple typos (for example, *curandola* instead of *curvandola*, *sogliono* in place of *vogliono*). And we cannot exclude, in some cases, an intentional intervention on the editor's part to improve the text (corrections of some oversights in the original, substitution of older verb forms).

These are not considerations though that allow us to come to definitive conclusions. For his part, Fr Ceria says he used a copy in Fr Rua's handwriting for his work. Instead copy *A* was certainly made by Fr Francesia. Without excluding the possibility of inexact attribution on the part of Don Bosco's historian,⁵⁷⁰ his testimony is one more item meriting consideration. So the data we have available today leave the matter of a true and proper dependence between *A* and *J* at least partly open. Less problematic instead is the relationship between *J* and *K*. The *Epistolario* reproduces, other than for some minor retouching, what is in the *Memorie biografiche*.

The other two manuscripts (*C,E*) kept in the position shown by ASC, are with all probability copies of *B* and *D* respectively.⁵⁷¹ Similarly, two of the nicely typed copies

⁵⁶⁹Is this the manuscript Ceria refers to when he speaks of a "copy with Fr Berto's features" (E IV, 201)?

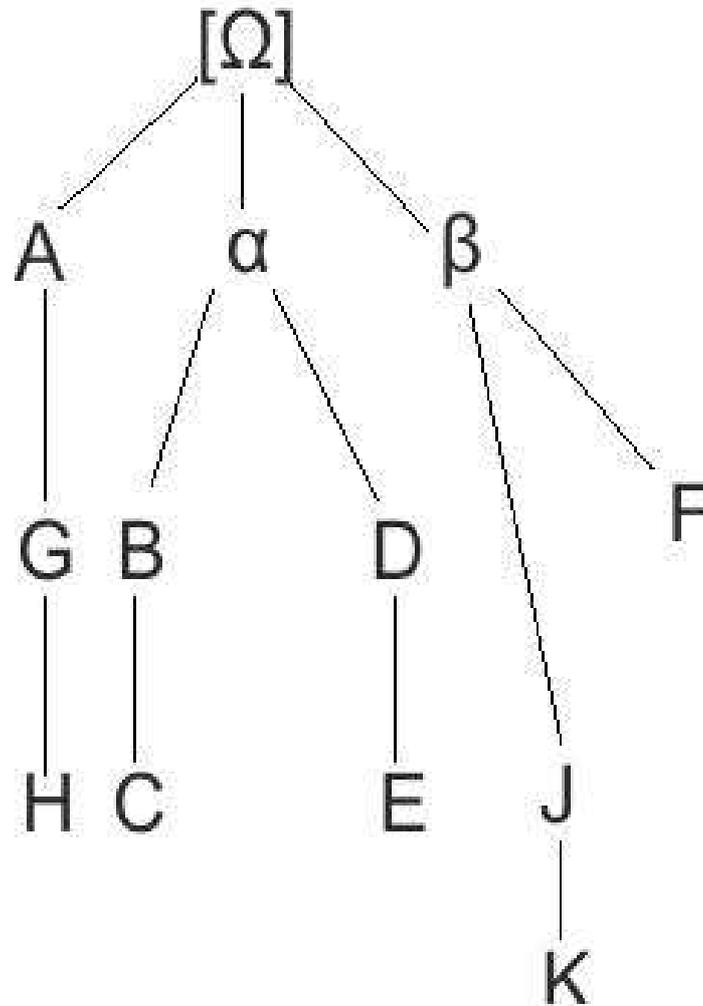
Amongst the manuscripts currently kept in the ASC, copy *B* is the one that could seem closest to Fr Berto's writing. But there are no certain data which allow us to be sure.

⁵⁷⁰There are notable similarities between the handwriting of Fr Rua and Fr Francesia, two of Don Bosco's collaborators. This could also explain some inexactitude found in the *Fondo Don Bosco*. Microfiche and description by A. Torras. Rome, *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* 1980, presenting copy *A* as «MS Rua» (p. 256).

⁵⁷¹*C*'s handwriting is the same as that in the other documents in ASC, where we read this note by an archivist: "written by the Gerard family – worked in the Archive between 1923 and 1926" (Cf. ASC 123 Rinaudo). Copies *DE* most probably were made by the same scribe. The writing in these manuscripts has certain likeness with *C* and seems to be the same as documents copied by the Gerard family, as the archivist's note says. (Cf. For example, Fr Ruffino's diary, ASC 110.1).

(*G, H*) depend directly on *A*. The second (*H*) is kept at 0509 *Superior Maggiori Circolari*. A third typewritten copy (*F*), is kept, like *G*, at 131.03 *Lettere Circolari ai Salesiani*, and is quite defective: it contains many material errors that have not been corrected.

On the basis of the internal analysis of the texts, variants and testimonies from outside, we present – also for clarity and usefulness for the reader’s sake - an hypothesis by way of a diagram while recognising that it has some problem aspects to it.



The current edition

The critical text of the circular *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane* presented here faithfully reflects the one handed down from manuscript *A*, the document considered to be the oldest and most authentic.

To facilitate the reading, we have preferred to correct the occasional oversight due

probably to distraction or material error on the copyist's part. The items added have been inserted between square brackets. While being rigorous with regard to the copied text, it was considered convenient to introduce light retouching to the spelling preferring, for example, the regular use of lower case in words like *casa*, *collegio* [and this will be followed in the English translation too]. It is a case of a very few light variations of a formal nature. In other words, in the following pages we have the critical text presented in an earlier publication.⁵⁷² The apparatus regarding variations has been reduced to essentials: only the things concerning meaning. For the reader's sake instead we preferred to fully reproduce a second level of apparatus with: indications of literal or paraphrased quotations from Holy Scripture and authors quoted in the text; some notes of an historical, explanatory kind and references to parallel passages by Don Bosco and his first biographers which could help to contextualise the 1883 item. To facilitate the reading, the direct literary sources are not in an appendix but part of the corresponding critical apparatus after the text.

Text

Concerning punishments to be inflicted in Salesian Houses

My dear sons,

Often, and from various places, I receive a request or at times even an entreaty saying that I should offer some rules to Rectors, Prefects and teachers, which might give them a guide-line in the difficult case where one is obliged to inflict some form of punishment in our Houses. You know the kind of times we live in, and how easily a small imprudence could bring serious consequences in its wake.⁵⁷³

Wanting to respond to your wishes, and so avoid significant displeasure for both you and me, and better still, to obtain the best that is possible from the young people whom Divine Providence has entrusted⁵⁷⁴ to our care, I am sending you some directions and some counsels which, as I hope is the case, if you manage to put them into practice, will be of great assistance to you in the difficult art of moral, religious and intellectual education.

In general, the system we ought to adopt is called *preventive* (1),⁵⁷⁵ which consists in so disposing the hearts of our students that they ought to be willing to do what we

⁵⁷²Cf. *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane. Una lettera circolare attribuita a Don Bosco.* [Introduction and critical text by] J.M. Prellezio, in RSS (1986) 263-308. In this work one can find a longer and more detailed description (pp. 274-286) of the documents that contain the text of the circular attributed to Don Bosco.

⁵⁷³Cf., for example, *Regolamento per l'Istruzione elementare approvato con R. Decreto* [No. 4336] 15 September 1860, in *Codice dell'Istruzione secondaria classica e tecnica e della primaria normale...* Turin, Tipografia Scolastica di Seb. Franco e Figli e Comp. 1861. p. 389.

⁵⁷⁴entrusted (*affiderà*) *corr ex* 'concederà' A.

⁵⁷⁵"Quite different from this and I might say opposed to it, is the preventive system. It consists in making the laws and regulations of an institute known, and then watching carefully so that the pupils may at all times be under the vigilant eye of the Rector or the assistants, who like loving fathers can converse with them, take the lead in every moment and in a kindly way give advice and correction; in other words, this system places the pupils in the impossibility of committing faults" - *Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, Turin, Tipografia Salesiana 1877, p. 4. Cf. G. Bosco, II

ask of them without need of external violence. With such a system I want to say that coercive means are never to be used; only and exclusively those suggested by patience and charity.

(1) See *Regulations for the Houses of the Society of St Francis de Sales*.

Given that human nature, too much inclined to evil as it is, sometimes needs to be held back by severe treatment⁵⁷⁶, I believe it is worthwhile offering you several approaches, which I hope will bring consoling results by the grace of God. Before all else, if we wish to be seen as friends wanting the real good of our pupils, and require them to do their duty, you must never forget that you represent the parents⁵⁷⁷ of these dear young people who have always been the object of my efforts, my study, my priestly ministry and that of the Salesian Congregation.⁵⁷⁸ If therefore you are going to be true fathers⁵⁷⁹ to these children, then you also must have a father's heart, and not turn to repression or punishment without reason and without justice, and only in the manner of one who does this under duress, and for the sake of duty.

I intend to set out for you what should be the genuine motives that ought to lead you to turn to repression, and what punishments to use⁵⁸⁰, and who should apply them.

I. Never punish until you have exhausted all other means ⁵⁸¹

My dear sons, how often in my long career have I had to convince myself of this great truth! It is certainly easier to lose one's temper than to be patient,⁵⁸² threaten a young person rather than reason with him. I would say that it better suits our lack of patience and our pride to punish those who resist us, rather than bear with them firmly and with kindness. The charity I am recommending to you is the one St Paul used⁵⁸³ towards

sistema preventivo nella educazione della gioventù. Introduction and critical texts by Peter Braido. Rome, LAS 1985, p. 83.

⁵⁷⁶“When surveillance is unable to contain his instincts for wrongdoing, it is the educator's duty to repress them” - A. Monfat, *La pratica dell'educazione cristiana*, first free version by Fr Francesco Bricolo. Rome, Tipografia dei fratelli Monaldi 1879, p. 156.

⁵⁷⁷“Teachers represent parents, and they have the right and title of being second fathers of the families who entrust their offspring to them. But if they are fathers of their pupils then they need to feel like that. A father never represses or punishes with pleasure; he resigns himself to it because it is right or just, but always shows himself to be a father while doing so. The attitude, mindful of his title as father, that he has while repressing then is as follows: 1. not to do so until after all other means have been exhausted”. - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 157.

⁵⁷⁸“I have promised God that I will spend myself until my last breath for my poor boys” - MB XVIII 258. “You know how much I have suffered and put up with for a good forty years and how much I suffer and put up with still now” - *La lettera di Don Bosco da roma del 10 maggio 1884* [by] P. Braido, in RSS 3 (1984), p. 344.

⁵⁷⁹Cf. Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo*, p. 83 “But now the Superiors are seen as Superiors and not as fathers, brothers and friends” - *La lettera di Don Bosco da Roma*, p. 344.

⁵⁸⁰to use (*adottarsi*) adattarsi BD

⁵⁸¹“Where possible, never make use of punishments” - Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo*, p. 91.

⁵⁸²“In fact it is easier to be annoyed than to be patient; easier to threaten a child rather than persuade him; more convenient to one's pride and human impatience to beat those who object rather than support them and correct them firmly and kindly” - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 159.

⁵⁸³Cf. 1 Cor 1:10; Gal 4:15-20; Phil. 2:1-5

the faithful newly-converted to the religion of the Lord, who often made him weep and implore them when he saw them less docile, and less responsive to his zeal.

Hence I recommend all our Rectors that they should be the first to practise fatherly correction in respect of our dear young sons, and this correction be done in private,⁵⁸⁴ and as the saying goes, in *camera charitatis*. Never directly rebuke anyone in public, except to prevent scandal, or to make it good when it has already occurred.⁵⁸⁵

If there is no improvement after the first warning, speak to another staff member who has some ascendancy over the guilty one. In the last resort, talk it over with the Lord. I would wish the Salesian always to be like Moses, who sought to appease the Lord, justly angry with the people of Israel.⁵⁸⁶ I have rarely seen any advantage gained from improvised punishments, inflicted before other means were tried. Nothing, says St Gregory can compel a heart, which is like an impregnable city,⁵⁸⁷ and which it is necessary to conquer with affection and gentleness. Be firm in wanting the good and preventing evil, but always gently and prudently. Persevere in being amiable, and you will see that God will make you masters of less-than-docile hearts. I know, this is perfection, and one does often meet it in teachers and assistants, who themselves are often young.⁵⁸⁸ They are not used to approaching children the way they should be approached. Either they hand out standardised punishments and achieve nothing, or they let everything go bad, or they just strike out, right or wrong.

This is the reason why we often see evil multiply, discontent spreading even among the better ones, and the corrector is left unable to do any good at all. For this reason I must also in this instance put before you my own experience. I have often met certain types who were so stubborn, so reluctant to receive any good advice, that they offered me no more hope of saving them, and in whose regard it was seen as necessary to adopt severe measures, and who were turned around only by charity.⁵⁸⁹ Sometimes it would

⁵⁸⁴“To obtain good results when correcting, do not give reprimands in the presence of others” – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel Sac. Gio. Bosco a’ suoi figliuoli salesiani* [/Testamento spirituale/], F. Motto in RSS 4 (1958), p. 92. “The Rector . . . should never reprimand nor give strong rebukes in the presence of others. HE should try to do this in camera caritatis, that is kindly, strictly in private” (Ibid, pp. 115-116). “Except in very rare cases, corrections, and punishments should never be given publicly but always privately, away from companions” - Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo*, p. 9.

⁵⁸⁵“When you have to blame someone, give advice or corrections, never do it in the presence of their companions” – *Regolamento per le case*, p. 17. “Call him to come to you in particular and in a fatherly tone of voice” - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 184.

⁵⁸⁶Cf. Ex. 32:11-14.

⁵⁸⁷“It is precisely because nobody can force their way into the impenetrable fortifications of the heart that it behoves you to win that heart over, win his esteem and affection. Kind, constant, loving and wise firmness alone can help him begin again. This is what moral discipline is all about. But we need to say that this is a rarely found perfection, especially in young teachers, even if they are good ones; most of them don’t correct as they should. Don’t take the children in hand as would be the right thing to do; all they do is punish physically and nothing else; they let everything go or they hit out rightly or wrongly” – Monfat, *La pratica*, pp. 159-160.

⁵⁸⁸“Let’s not be in a hurry to set him right: he could think he is being persecuted and disliked. The usual thing with faults like this is that a thoughtless boy commits them almost without realising it and too frequent scolding doesn’t achieve any kind of breakthrough” – Monfat, *La pratica*, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁸⁹“Let’s not be in a hurry to set him right: he could think he is being persecuted and disliked. The usual thing with faults like this is that a thoughtless boy commits them almost without realising it and too

seem to us⁵⁹⁰ that a particular child was taking no notice of our corrections, whilst deep inside he was well-disposed to cooperate, and meanwhile we were ruining him by a poorly-understood harshness, and by demanding that the guilty one make immediate and complete amends for his mistake. I say to you first of all that perhaps he did not believe himself to have deserved so much for his fault, which he committed more out of thoughtlessness than out of malice.⁵⁹¹ Quite often, when I have sent for these little trouble-makers, treated them in a kindly way, and asked them why they were so unruly, I was given the answer that they were being "picked on",⁵⁹² as the saying goes, or persecuted by one or other superior. When I would look into the matter calmly and without making a fuss, I had to admit that the fault was not nearly as bad as it seemed at first,⁵⁹³ and sometimes simply wasn't there at all. For this reason I must say to you with sorrow that we always must bear part of the blame for the insubordination of some students.⁵⁹⁴ I have often noted that those who demanded silence, handed out punishments, exacted prompt and blind obedience, were nonetheless those who showed little respect for the useful advice I and the other superiors found it necessary to give, and I became convinced that a teacher who forgives his pupils nothing, are in the habit of forgiving themselves everything.⁵⁹⁵ So if we want to know how to command, let us be careful to first learn how to obey, and let us set out first and foremost to make ourselves loved rather than feared.⁵⁹⁶ When then repression becomes necessary, and we must change system, because there are certain characters who can only be controlled by strict dealing, one needs to know how to do it in a way that does not let any sign of anger to show. And so we come spontaneously to the second recommendation which I will entitle thus:

frequent scolding doesn't achieve any kind of breakthrough" – Monfat, *La pratica*, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁹⁰to us (*a noi*) *ms D*

⁵⁹¹"The primary reason is the thoughtlessness of the young, who in one moment forget the rules of discipline and the penalties for their infringement; Consequently a child often becomes culpable and deserving of punishment which he had not even thought about, and which he had quite forgotten when heedlessly committing the fault he would certainly have avoided had a friendly voice warned him" – Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo*, p. 83.

⁵⁹²facevano [this is not actually translated – understood in the phrase: . . . answer they were being 'picked on'] *faceva A*

⁵⁹³quasi (simply [which does not translate 'quasi, almost!]) *om BD*

⁵⁹⁴of some (*della*) *nella J*

⁵⁹⁵"Nor should we forget that the teacher himself through his negligence can sometimes be the reasons for chastisement. . . No freedom, says Fenelon, no open heart, always school, silence, uncomfortable positions, corrections, threats, always exactitude and the kind of seriousness that even those who demand it are not capable of: teachers who never forgive anything the pupils do but forgive all their own faults" – Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 160.

⁵⁹⁶"Try to make yourself loved before being feared" – I *Ricordi confidenziali ai direttori di Don Bosco*, F. Motto in RSS 3 (1984) 146. "Let each one try to make himself loved if he wants to be feared" – *Regolamento per le case*, p. 15.

II. Try to select the opportune moment to correct ⁵⁹⁷

Everything at its proper time, says the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹⁸ I tell you that whenever one of these unhappy but necessary affairs arises, one needs to be very prudent to know what moment to choose, so that this act of repression might be useful. It is clear that maladies of the spirit require at least the same level of treatment as those of the body. Nothing is more dangerous than a malady applied incorrectly, or at the wrong moment. A knowledgeable doctor waits until the patient can accept the remedy, and with that in mind waits for the right moment. And we can get to know (the right moment) only from experience which has been fine-tuned by the goodness of our hearts. First of all then, wait until you have mastered yourselves; do not let it be understood that you are acting because of a bad mood, or in anger. In this event you would put your authority at risk, and the punishment would become harmful.

You may recall from the profane authors that saying of Socrates to a slave he was not pleased with: "If I was not angry, I would strike you".⁵⁹⁹ Our pupils watch us keenly, and are good at judging from little signs like the expression on our face or our tone of voice, whether we are worked-up because of our devotion to duty, or because we are angry. Then, nothing more is needed to cause the benefit of the punishment to be lost. Even though they are young, they know that only reason has the right to correct them. Secondly, do not punish a child at the very moment the fault is committed, for fear that because he is not yet able to own up, or overcome his emotions, and recognise the importance of the punishment, he might become embittered, and commit the same, or even worse, faults. You need to give him the time to think it over, to get hold of himself, fully recognise his fault and at the same time the justice and necessity of the penalty, and so make it possible for him to profit by the experience. I have often thought that

⁵⁹⁷"2. Knowing how to choose the right moment" – Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 157. "II. Once still needs a certain prudence to judge the right moment where repression could be useful. 'Everything has its moment' Savio says: knowing and putting that into practice are two valuable and practical conditions that real fathers have. So what are the successful circumstances an educator might overlook trying to be a father when he needs to carry out such a delicate and critical task as punishment? 'The sicknesses of the soul', says Rollin, 'need to at least be treated in the same way as those of the body. Nothing is more dangerous than a poorly selected remedy which is not right for the moment. A wise doctor waits until the patient is ready to put up with it and so looks out for the right opportunity'. This is the mature experience of the good heart, that can see such moments... Never deal with things when either he or you are acting from first impulse. If you act this way according to whim and anger and not from reason or out of friendship, you will have lost your authority forever..." – Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 162.

⁵⁹⁸Cf Eccles 3:1,8,6.

⁵⁹⁹"In this regard, Rollin recalls the famous slogan of Socrates to the slave he was not happy with. 'If I was not angry I'd hit you' and finishes with this profound and correct advice: 'when the superior's face or tone or voice shows even the slightest emotion, the pupil immediately notices and no longer feels he should do what he has to but is caught up in the passion that has fired him up. No more is needed to lose the results of punishment; because pupils, although youngsters, still feel that only reason has the right to correct them'. '... The first rule', Rollin continues, 'is never to punish the child right at the moment he makes a mistake for fear that, not being free to recognise his error, overcome his anger and understand the punishment and its importance, he will become bitter and might commit the same fault again but to extreme. Leave him time to understand, come back to himself, see what he had done wrong and the justice of and need for the punishment. This way you make him capable of drawing some benefit from it" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 163.

this was⁶⁰⁰ the way the Lord treated St Paul when he was still "breathing threats and murder" against the Christians.⁶⁰¹ It seems to me that the same rule is proposed to us when we encounter certain spirits who stubbornly oppose our wishes. Jesus does not throw him to the ground at once, but after a long journey, after he has had the chance of reflecting on his mission. And he did this far away from those who in any way could have encouraged him in his resolve to persecute the Christians. There instead, outside Damascus, he showed himself to him in all his power and might, and with gentle strength he opened his mind to see the error of his ways. And it was precisely in that moment that he changed Saul's attitude, so that from persecutor he became the apostle of the Gentiles, a chosen soul. It is upon this divine example that I would want my Salesians to mould themselves, so that with enlightened patience and diligent charity, in God's name they await that opportune moment to correct their pupils.

III Get rid of every notion that could lead people to believe that you act from resentment. ⁶⁰²

When you are administering a punishment, it is difficult to preserve that calm which is necessary to assuage any doubt that you might be acting to impose your authority, or to vent your anger.⁶⁰³ The more one acts from spite, the less you are likely to be heeded. The heart of a father, which we ought to have, condemns this way of acting. We should regard those over whom we must exercise authority as we would our own children. Let us place ourselves as it were at their service, as Jesus did, who came to obey and not to command.⁶⁰⁴ We should be ashamed of anything in us that might savour of authoritarianism. We are put over them only to serve them with greater pleasure. This is how Jesus acted with his Apostles, putting up with their ignorance and lack of refinement, with their wavering loyalty. He dealt with sinners with an informality and familiarity such as to amaze some, almost scandalise others, and inspire many with the hope of gaining God's forgiveness.⁶⁰⁵ This is why he tells us to learn from him to be

⁶⁰⁰ was (*era*) *om ABD*

⁶⁰¹ Cf Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-18

⁶⁰² "3. excluding everything, that might make someone suspect anger" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 157. "III. The third attitude, that is excluding all anger" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 165.

⁶⁰³ "A calm tone of voice and calm demeanour, is rare when an educator is punishing. Some think it is acceptable to raise their voice, signalling an attitude of resentment that certainly is not in their hearts. Others without falling into this silly pretence, take on a lofty approach or also, whether intentionally or without noticing it, act quite without the tenderness or calm they should have, to give their words a tone anything but fatherly. 'What is so distasteful', says Rollin, 'is that the ones who show their annoyance the most are the ones that notice they are doing so the least'. The title father condemns that, if it is true, is too severe; it is affectation, pedantry. 'We consider as our children', says Saint Augustine, 'all those over whom we hold some power. Let us put ourselves at their service, being ashamed of anything that makes us look like people who dominate, and let us not dominate them but serve them with all the more pleasure... From the moment they are our children let us do away with all anger in dealing with their faults or at least be moderate and show that we are holding back'. No hardness of heart, no hard looks, no insults on our lips, compassion for the moment. Hope for the future. This is the father, this is true correction" - Monfat, *La pratica*, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Mk 10:44-45

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. Lk 5:29-35; Mt 9:10-13; Mk 2:15-17

meekest and humblest of hearts.⁶⁰⁶ Given that they are "our children", let us rid ourselves of all anger when we have to curb their faults, or at least hold it in check, so that it appears to be suppressed. No commotion of spirit, no scornful looks, no hurtful words on our lips. Rather, let us feel compassion for what is happening, hope for the future. Then you will be true fathers, you will indeed correct.

In certain more serious moments it is more useful to turn to God, to humble oneself before him, than to let loose a torrent of words which,⁶⁰⁷ if on the one hand only harms the one who hears them, on the other hand does nothing for the one who deserved them. Let us call to mind our Divine Saviour who forgave that city which did want to receive him inside its walls, despite the protestations on his behalf made by two of his ardent apostles, who willingly would have had him call down lightning on it as a just punishment.⁶⁰⁸ The Holy Spirit urges us to this calm using those sublime words of David, Be angry and do not sin.⁶⁰⁹ If we frequently see our work prove useless, and we gain nothing but thorns and brambles from our labours, believe it, dear friends we must sheet it home to defective methods of discipline. I do not believe it opportune to spell out for you in detail how God wanted to give a serious practical lesson to his prophet Elias, who was not a little like some of us in his ardour for God's cause, and a hasty zeal for repressing the scandals he saw spreading among those of the house of Israel. Your superiors can give you the full account as it is written in the Book of Kings.⁶¹⁰ I will limit myself to the final expression, which serves our purpose well, and it is, God is not in the whirlwind,⁶¹¹ which St Teresa interpreted as, Let nothing disturb you.⁶¹²

Our dear, gentle St Francis (of Sales) as you know, fixed a strict rule for himself that his tongue would not utter a word when his heart was agitated. In fact, he used to say, "I am afraid to lose in a quarter of an hour that little gentleness that I have managed to put together drop by drop over twenty years, like dew falling into the receptacle of my heart."⁶¹³ A bee takes several months to make that little bit of honey that a man

⁶⁰⁶ Mt 11:29

⁶⁰⁷ which (*le quali*) *emend ex che A2*

⁶⁰⁸ Cf Lk 9:51-55

⁶⁰⁹ Eph 4:26; Ps 4:5

⁶¹⁰ I Kg 19:1-11

⁶¹¹ *post* 'Dominus' [here translated as 'whirlwind'] *add* III Reg., XIX, II J

⁶¹² "1. Let nothing disturb you" - *Confidential Reminders for Rectors*, p. 145 Cf. MB VII, 524

⁶¹³ "Just as gentle in his conversation as he was in the tribunal of mercy, Francis never gave orders... One day he was reprimanded for not dealing seriously enough with a young man who had been extremely rude to his mother to the point of hitting her, and she had brought him to Francis to get him to see the seriousness of his action: 'What do you want?', he replied, 'I did what I could to express my outrage without sounding threatening and, to tell you the truth, I fear losing in a quarter of an hour the little bit of gentleness that I have accumulated bit by bit over twenty years like rust in the vessel of my poor heart. A bee takes many months to make a little bit of honey that a man eats in a single mouthful; and then, what good would it do to someone who has not understood? This young man was unable to benefit from my reprimands, since his poorly disposed heart had deprived him of reason and sense. Severe correction would not have done anything for him and would have done me some damage by making me like those who drown trying to save others'. ... This gentleness gave the holy bishop such power over hearts that, unless they were extraordinarily hard, like the unnatural child we have just spoken about, he could do what he wanted with them and nobody could resist him" - [A.J.M. Hamon], *Vita di San Francesco di Sales vescovo e principe di Ginevra*, written on the

eats in one mouthful. And then, what's the point of talking to someone who is not listening?" One day he was reproached for having dealt with excessive gentleness with a young man who had seriously offended his mother.⁶¹⁴ He replied, "This young man was not capable of gaining anything from any rebuke of mine, because his poor attitude had deprived him of reason and common sense. A harsh correction would have done nothing for him, and would have done me a lot of harm, causing me to act like those people who drown trying to rescue another". I have wanted to emphasise for you these words of our revered Patron, wise and mild educator of hearts, so that they could better command your attention, and you might also better commit them to memory.

In certain cases it can be useful to speak to others, in the presence of the guilty party, about how unfortunate people are⁶¹⁵ who are so lacking in good sense and self-respect⁶¹⁶ as to merit punishment. It can be useful to suspend the usual signs of confidence and friendship until one becomes aware that (the student) needs cheering up. The Lord has often consoled me when I have made use of this simple device. Public shame should be the last resort. On occasions, you might make use of another person in authority to counsel (the student), and say to him the things you yourself would like to say, but cannot. This person can take away his shame, dispose him to approach you. Look for someone to whom the boy can open up in his trouble, in a way that perhaps he cannot do with you, because he is not sure he will be believed, or because he is too proud to admit he should. These are the means to be used, as the disciples of Jesus did, whom he sent before him to prepare the way for him.

Let it be seen that no other rule is required other than what is reasonable and necessary. Try to act in such a way that (the student) blames himself, so that all that is required on your part is to mitigate the penalty he had already accepted.⁶¹⁷ I have one final piece of advice for you in regard to this serious matter. When you have managed to win over this stubborn spirit, I beg you not only to leave him the hope of being forgiven by you, but that it is still possible for him, through good behaviour, to cancel the black mark he got for his faults.

basis of manuscripts and contemporary authors by the parish priest of St. Sulpice in Paris. Turin, Cav. Pietro Marietti 1877, vol III, pp. 356-357.

⁶¹⁴ One day he (*Essendogli*) *corr ex Avendogli A2* post 'giorno' (day) del trattato A2/

⁶¹⁵ "Speak to other people in his presence about how unfortunate people are who lack all reason and self-respect and need to be punished. Withdraw ordinary signs of friendship until you can see that he needs consoling. Make the punishment public or keep it secret according to what you judge most useful for the pupil or that would cause him the most shame, or show him that you would like to spare him of it. Keep public shaming as a last resort and make use of some reasonable person occasionally who can console him and tell him what you yourself are unable to; heal him of his sorrowful shame make him disposed to come back to you so that the child can open his heart more freely, something he would not dare to do with you. But see especially that you do not demand additional punishment other than what is reasonable or necessary. Try to act in such a way that he condemns himself and that the only thing to do now is to lessen the punishment he has accepted. Bend all general rules according to particular needs" - Monfat, *La pratica* p. 168.

⁶¹⁶ self-respect (*onore*) *cuore BD*

⁶¹⁷ accepted (*accettata*) *corr ex meritata A2*

IV Act in such a way as to allow hope of pardon to the guilty one ⁶¹⁸

We must avoid the fear and the worry caused by correction and put in a word of comfort.⁶¹⁹ To forget, and cause to be forgotten the unhappy days of his mistakes, is the supreme art of the good educator.⁶²⁰ One does not read that the good Jesus reminded Mary Magdalen of her offences,⁶²¹ in the same way as, with uncommon paternal kindness, he brought St Peter to confess his fault and make amends for it.⁶²² Also the child needs to be convinced that his teacher has high hopes that he will make amends, and so feel himself once more set along the road to virtue by his kindly hand. You can get more with a friendly look, with a word of encouragement that gives his heart new courage, than you can with repeated blame, which serves only to upset him, and put a damper on his enthusiasm. Using this system, I have seen real conversions among those one would otherwise have believed impossible. I do know that some of the sons I hold most dear are not ashamed to make known that this was the way they were drawn to the (Salesian) Congregation, and therefore to God. All youngsters have their black days - you have had them yourselves! Heaven help us if we do not try to help them to pass them by quickly and without trouble. Sometimes simply having them understand you do not think they acted from malice is enough to ensure they do not fall again into the same fault. They are guilty, but they would rather they were not seen as such. We are lucky, if we are able to use this method to educate these poor fellows! Be sure, my dear sons, that this art, which appears so facile, and contrary to good outcomes, will render your ministry profitable, and you will win over certain spirits who were and would have remained for a long time incapable, not only of good results, but of reasonable hope thereof.

V What punishments should be used and by whom

But should punishments never be used? I know, my dear sons, that the Lord wanted to compare himself to a "watchful rod",⁶²³ in order to discourage us from sin, also for fear of punishment. And so we also ought sparingly and wisely imitate the conduct God wishes to trace out for us with this telling figure. Let us then use this "rod", but let us know how use it with intelligence and love, so that betterment will be the effect of our chastisement.

Let us remember that force punishes the offence, but does not heal the offender.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁸"4. Act in such a way as to leave hope for forgiveness" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 157

⁶¹⁹"Let (the Rector) for his part open his heart to all without letting anyone feel any bitterness; do not recall past faults unless to give some fatherly advice" - *Memorie dal 1841*, p. 116.

⁶²⁰"Never tell a child what he has done wrong, says Fenelon, without suggesting to him some way of overcoming it; therefore you need to avoid the bitter feelings which correction causes when not accompanied with a comforting word". The boy needs to be convinced that the superior feels there is a good hope he can change, and thus feel he is being set on the right road by his fatherly hand" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 172. "Above all, the educator should not forget that there is always or nearly always a kind of crisis of adolescence in a youngster's life, and it is a very difficult time to pass through" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 170.

⁶²¹Cf. Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9;

⁶²²Jn 18:16-27; Lk 22:54-62; Mk 14:26-31; Mt 26:31-35

⁶²³Jer 1:11-12

⁶²⁴"Force punishes the vice but does not heal it" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 180.

One does not cultivate a plant⁶²⁵ by bending it with harsh violence, and so one does not educate the will by burdening it with a yolk that is too heavy.⁶²⁶ Here are a series of punishments which are the only ones I would want used among us. One of the best means of non-physical repression is the unhappy, severe, and sad look of the superior who makes the one at fault see - given that he has some sort of heart - that he is in trouble, and which might inspire him to sorrow and amendment.⁶²⁷ Private, fatherly correction. Don't overdo the scolding.⁶²⁸ Make him understand that his parents will be upset, and that there is a chance of making up. Eventually, he will feel constrained to show gratitude, and even generosity. If he falls again, let us not be kind too quickly. One may move on to more serious and sharp warnings. In this way you will, with justice, enable him to see the difference between the way he is behaving,⁶²⁹ and the way you are treating him, pointing out to him how he is repaying so much good will, so much effort to save him from shame and punishment. However, do not use expressions calculated to humiliate;⁶³⁰ show that you entertain good hopes for him, declaring that we are ready to forgive, the moment he has given sign of better conduct.

For more serious faults, one can arrive at the following punishments: taking one's meal standing at one's usual place, or at a table apart. Dining in the middle of the dining room, or finally, at the door of the dining room. But in each of these cases, the offender must be served the same meal as is served to the others. Being deprived of recreation is a serious punishment, but never put anyone in the sun, or out in bad weather, so that he might come to harm.⁶³¹

A heavy punishment could be to ignore him for a day in class, but not beyond that.⁶³² There are other ways he can make amends for his fault. Now, what will I say to you about

⁶²⁵not (*non*) *corr ex con A2* 'curvandola' (correct) 'curandola' *J*

⁶²⁶"One does not get a plant to grow by bending it forcibly... one does not educate the will by putting an iron yoke on it and stopping it from developing and acting" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 181.

⁶²⁷"It has been noticed that in the case of some boys a reproachful look is more effective than a slap in the face would be" - Bosco, *Il sistema preventivo*, p. 91. "I have spoken of the look", Dupanloup says; "I have to say that amongst the means of moral repression, one of the most effective in fact is the reproachful, severe, sad look from the educator. A look kept up like that for some time can make the youth feel that he is in trouble and it provokes repentance and amendment"... Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 184.

⁶²⁸"Not too many scoldings after the first warning has been ignored; let him see some rewards after some days of good will, his family's happiness etc... Eventually he will feel constrained to show gratitude and even generosity" - Monfat *La pratica*, p. 185.

⁶²⁹he is behaving (*sua nostra ABD*)

⁶³⁰"Let's not be too quick with kindness... After a new failure, we can move on to more serious and sharp warnings; thus it will be right to get him to see the difference between his behaviour and how he has been treated by the one dealing with him. One can go back over everything that has happened since the first warning, showing him how he has treated such condescension, so many efforts to save his honour, with insubordination and triviality. Never with humiliating words; in fact show him you always have good hopes for him and say that you are ready to forget everything from the moment he shows signs of better behaviour". - Monfat *La pratica*, p. 186.

⁶³¹Rollin says: "The merit of the good educator is to be able to think up different kinds and degrees of punishment to correct his pupils" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 188.

⁶³²"The educator must absolutely avoid humiliating punishments; also those that could be harmful to health; for example, keeping him out in cold weather, or exposure to the sun or similar" - Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 188.

lines?⁶³³ This kind of punishment is unhappily too frequent.⁶³⁴ I have taken the trouble, in this matter, to consult those who are said to be famous educators. There are those who approve, there are those who disapprove, as useless and as harmful to the teacher, as it is to the pupil. Therefore I will leave you free in this matter to do as you please, warning you that for the teacher there is the danger of going to excess with no benefit (to anyone), and the pupil is offered the occasion for grumbling and garnering a lot of sympathy on account of seemingly being persecuted by the teacher. Lines put nothing to rights, and they are always a shameful burden. I know that some of our confreres are accustomed to give as lines the study of some piece of poetry, whether sacred or profane, and that using this means they got greater attention, and some intellectual benefit. On those occasions one saw the truth of the saying that all things come together for good to those who seek God and his greater glory,⁶³⁵ and the salvation of souls. This confrere of yours was converted through doing lines. I⁶³⁶ regard it as a special blessing from God and a case more unique than rare. But it worked, because the teacher was able to be seen as charitable.

But one should never come to adopt the so-called reflection room.⁶³⁷ There is no misadventure by which a student can be thrust into anger and discouragement, as that which assails him when he is punished in this way.⁶³⁸ The devil uses this punishment to take violent hold over him, and drives him into grave faults,⁶³⁹ almost as if to avenge himself on the one who wanted to punish him in this way.(2)

(2) In the fear that in some colleges by way of rare exception and absolute necessity one should believe these rooms should be used, these are the precautions I would want adopted. The Catechist or other superior should frequently go and visit the poor culprit, and using kind and compassionate words, he should seek to pour oil onto that much-

⁶³³“Lines, unless simple repetition of work badly done” are forbidden – *Regolamento per l’istruzione elementare*, art. 98.

⁶³⁴Dupanloup says: “There is another way of striking poor students, which seems to be to be no less terrible, no less painful than blows: this is giving lines, and giving far too many of them. Unfortunately this kind of punishment is all too frequent. In our view it is a material punishment which is just as damaging and useless for the teacher as for the pupil... lines gain nothing and are always a pain and shameful” – Monfat, *La pratica*, pp. 192-193.

⁶³⁵Cf. Rom 8:28

⁶³⁶I (*io*) ciò *J* special (*speciale*) om *J*

⁶³⁷“We have indicated that certain pupils, referred to the Oratory by the Police and other public authorities, often rebel against any advice or improvement... To try any means of correcting them and not arrive at expulsion, with permission from Don Bosco, we set up some reflection rooms where those who publicly rebelled against every rule, were completely inflexible, were kept apart during school and recreation, so that without causing damage to their companions, they could stay at the Oratory for some days still and understand the imminent peril they were threatened with and make a good resolution to improve”. – Amadei, *Il servo di Dio Michele Rua*, p. 224.

⁶³⁸“The educator should not punish with a few days of ‘imprisonment’; that would be to not know the heart of a young man. There is no misadventure by which a student can be thrust into anger and discouragement, as that which assails him when he is punished for such a long time... The devil uses this punishment to take violent hold over him, and drives him into grave faults, almost as if to avenge himself on the one who wanted to punish him in this way” – Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 169.

⁶³⁹faults (*falli*) follie *J*

tried heart. He should sympathise with his situation, and take the trouble to help him understand how all the superiors regret having to use such an extreme punishment, and he should enable him to ask pardon, and make acts of submission, and request that he be given another chance to show amendment. If it seems the punishment is effective, get him out before time, and you will certainly win him over.

A punishment should be a remedy. Now, we should be quick to put a stop to it when we have attained our dual purpose of heading-off the wrong, and preventing its re-occurrence. Succeeding in this way in granting pardon, one also gets the precious result of healing the wound caused to the heart of the child. He sees he has not lost the good will of the superior, and he courageously⁶⁴⁰ goes back to his duty.

In the above-mentioned punishments, I have only had in mind offences against school discipline. But in those sad cases where a pupil may have given grave scandal,⁶⁴¹ or may have committed an offence against the Lord, then he should be brought at once to the Superior, who will take those efficacious measures he deems appropriate. If anyone then should remain deaf to all these wise means of amendment, and should prove to be a bad example, or scandalous, then he should be sent away without hope of returning, with the provision however, that as far as it is possible his good name should be protected.⁶⁴² This can be done by counselling the young person to ask his parents to take him away, or by directly advising the parents to have him change school, in the hope that their son will do better elsewhere. This act of charity usually has a good effect at all times, and even in some painful circumstances, leaves a happy memory in the minds of the parents and of the pupils.

All that remains for me is to indicate who should give the directions concerning the time and manner of punishment.

This must always be the Rector, without however his seeming to be the one. His role is private correction because he is more able to approach with ease certain less-sensitive souls. His role covers general and also public correction. And it is also his role to determine the punishment, without, however his announcing it or carrying it out. Therefore I would wish no one to take the decision to punish without previous agreement or approval of his Rector, who alone decides on the time, the manner, and the nature of the punishment. No one should exempt himself from such loving dependence,⁶⁴³ and pretexts should not be sought for eluding his supervision.(3)

(3) Teachers or assistants should not put an offender out of class, but when this is not observed, then he should be accompanied to the Superior.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰courageously (*coraggiosamente*) maggiormente J

⁶⁴¹grave (*grave*) *corr ex qualche A2*

⁶⁴²“Those who are a bad example and scandal for their companions, should be sent away, without hope of returning, with the provision however, that as far as it is possible his good name should be protected... Such an extreme measure should not be arrived at without the family being told and without getting the parents to help us get him to change his mind” – Monfat, *La pratica*, p. 190.

⁶⁴³loving (*amorevole*) autorevole J sought (*ricerchi*) cerchino

⁶⁴⁴“If there is a need for punishment, they should happen at school, but no one should be sent out of class as a punishment. If there are serious cases, call for the Prefect of Studies or have the student

There should be no excuse for making exceptions to this most important rule. Let us then be obedient to this recommendation I leave you, and God will bless and reward you for your virtue.

Remember that education is a thing of the heart, of which God is the sole master, and we will be unable to achieve anything unless God teaches us the art, and puts the key in our hands. Let us attempt in every way, including this humble and complete dependence (on the Rector), to take possession of this impenetrable fortress always closed to rigour and harshness. Let us strive to make ourselves loved,⁶⁴⁵ to inculcate a sense of duty, and of the holy fear of God, and we will see the doors of many hearts open with great ease, and join with us in singing praises and blessing of Him who wished to make himself our model, our way, our example in everything, but especially in the education of the young.

Pray for me, and believe me yours always in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Feast of St Francis of Sales

Your loving father and friend,

Fr John Bosco.⁶⁴⁶

Social responsibility and the pedagogical nature of the preventive system

Introduction

When Don Bosco met the past pupils (lay men) in Valdocco on 23 July 1882, at the end of the meal, amongst other things said, one of their representatives, Prof. Alessandro Fabre, read out his address on *Don Bosco's Politics, a Joke*.⁶⁴⁷ He developed a semi-serious argument against certain newspapers that were seen to have part-political implications in Don Bosco's activity. A viewpoint of the kind persisted and was further strengthened the following year especially when he was triumphantly welcomed to Paris, almost a national event, and after his quick visit to Frohsdorf Castle, near Vienna, to Count Chambord, who was seriously ill. In Paris, beyond being the miracle-worker, he was seen to be the educator concerned about the lot of society; his work of "education of youth" was seen to be for an ordered, conservative society where justice was called almsgiving (giving financial aid and receiving recognition). It was called the highest form of charity, and so social responsibility. His listeners saw it as the ideal solution to the 'social question'.

This is the context for Don Bosco's words when he spoke to his past pupils of the 'political' significance of his educative and welfare choice for at risk and risky youth. What he said here explained and developed what he had already told the Cooperators

brought to him" – *egolamento per le case* chap. VI, 6. "If punishments need to be inflicted outside of school, or decisions of great importance taken, refer everything to the Prefect of Studies or the Rector of the House" – Ibid., chap VI, 7.

⁶⁴⁵"Whoever wishes to have power over the hearts of young people must try to make himself loved" – Teppa, *vvertimenti* p. 21.

⁶⁴⁶John (*Giovanni*) Gio. J.

⁶⁴⁷Published by tip. G. Derossi, Turin, 1882, 16 p.

in a Conference in Turin the evening he came back from France, 21 May: “Do you want me to suggest to you a relatively easy work, one of most advantage and benefit for most places? Well, work for the good education of youth, especially poor and abandoned youth, who are in larger numbers, and you will easily succeed in giving glory to God, gaining benefit for Religion, saving many souls and cooperating effectively in the reform, well-being of civil society; because reason, Religion, history and experience demonstrate that religious and civil society will be good or bad according to whether the youth around us are good or bad”.⁶⁴⁸

In 1883 Salesian Francis Cerruti (1884-1917), Rector of the municipal secondary school at Alassio, and provincial superior for Don Bosco’s works in Liguria and Toscana⁶⁴⁹ published a summary *Storia della pedagogia in Italia dalle origini a’ tempi nostri* (*History of pedagogy in Italy from the beginnings to our own time*).⁶⁵⁰ Two years later he was appointed, then the following year (1886) elected as General Councillor for Schools or Director general of Studies for the Salesian Society and remained as such until his death. His ‘History’ is divided into three great eras: ancient or pagan until the 4th century a.d., Christian until the beginning of the 1500s, modern. It was also a history of ideas and opinions, as we see clearly from the introduction. In fact it aimed to be a history of the struggle between two circumstances that could proceed in harmony in education: authority and freedom, “the first being symbolic of superiority, hierarchy, and the second of autonomy, independence”: “not separation, then, not an unnatural lack of unity between authority and freedom, but a mutual link, a nice harmony between them respecting mutual rights and harmonious agreement between their strengths. This is what pedagogy should offer. Here are its foundations on which it rests, like a steady rock”.⁶⁵¹ This is where the nobility of pedagogy comes from, the “moral knowledge”, as befits “a noble place amongst the many sciences like anthropology, ethics, economy, politics”, “first-born child of philosophy”.⁶⁵² In the first era, “we see the splendid Italic school of Pythagoras, immortal monument to the pedagogical wisdom of our ancestors”.⁶⁵³ The second period marks the advent of superior Christian pedagogy, distinguished by two fundamental features, “universality and unity”, that reach their full expression in the Middle Ages.⁶⁵⁴ In conformity with Ozanam’s thesis, this balance was broken in the last period of this era, the Renaissance and the Reformation, and restabilised in the modern era: “when reason rebelled against revelation”, “the revolt of liberty against authority”, “fostered and fuelled first by the naturalism of byzantine scholarship, then by the Reformation or better the Lutheran heresy”.⁶⁵⁵ “Pedagogy in the third era that follows and

⁶⁴⁸ BS 7 (1883) no. 7, July, p. 104.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. J.M. Prellezso, *Francesco Cerruti Direttore generale della scuola e della stampa salesiana (1885-1917)*, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 5 (1986) 127-164.

⁶⁵⁰ Turin, Tip. E libr. Salesiana 1883, 320 p. Cf. J.M. Prellezso, *Don Bosco y la Storia della pedagogia de Francesco Cerruti (1844-1917)*, in *L’impegno dell’educare*, by J.M. Prellezso, Rome, LAS 1991, pp. 435-450.

⁶⁵¹ F. Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 5

⁶⁵² Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 7

⁶⁵³ Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 10

⁶⁵⁴ Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 81

⁶⁵⁵ Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 10

runs to our own time bears the imprint of this servitude under the aspect of intellectual independence".⁶⁵⁶ "Essentially Christian Italian pedagogy" does not submit, however, "set in motion and supported by the Catholic Church and the many religious Congregations. . ."; his champions are people like Rosmini, Rayneri, Tommaseo, Lambruschini, Molino-Colombini, Franceschi-Ferrucci, rebuilders of "that chain of noble and glorious traditions that reunite, through Vittorino da Feltre, Pythagoras to Rosmini, the ancient Italic pagan school with the modern Italian Catholic one".⁶⁵⁷

Other than Pythagoras, however, from the ancient era he highlights "Quintillian, or the most famous ancient pedagogue", "who lived almost always in Rome from 42 to 118 a.d.". The author dedicates a good number of pages to him.⁶⁵⁸ In fact he represents the first occasion, a "humanistic" one, of a preventive synthesis [although Cerutti reduces this in Quintillian to a 'disciplinary system'] which would find its "Christian" moment in Vittorino da Feltre,⁶⁵⁹ and finds its perfect synthesis in Don Bosco.⁶⁶⁰

Texts

The 'political' choice of education of youth⁶⁶¹

The Father's name day and his sons at table with him

We had given hope that we would return to D. Bosco's name day, as indicated in the preceding number, and here we are keeping our promise, both to at least briefly recall the fine words he spoke on that occasion and to speak briefly of the meal that took place at the Oratory on the 15th and 19th of July last, as a result of the name day.

Above all we recall the show of affection that D. Bosco's past pupils gave him on the morning of 24 June, the Feast of St John the Baptist. Since 1841 until recent years they have received a Christian and civic education from him at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. A good number of them living in the city or its surrounds, in their own name and in the name of of hundreds more of their school mates spread around the towns and villages, came to greet him accompanied by the sound of the band. Once they had gathered in the hall, they offered him gifts which they had bought with money collected spontaneously from each one. The main gift was a magnificent gilded crown about which we spoke in the report on the novena and for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. From there they went on with some presentations. Fr Onorato Colletti, Provost of Faule, read out an affectionate address in everyone's name. Then after reading out the names of everyone present and absent, who by letter or other means had shown their desire to be

⁶⁵⁶ Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. 11

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia*. . . , p. p. 69-73

⁶⁵⁹ Cerruti gives a whole chapter to this: Ibid, pp. 151-161.

⁶⁶⁰ The historical scheme is represented by Cerruti 15 years afterwards in his brief work, *Una trilogia pedagogica ossia Quintiliano, Vittorino da feltre e Don Bosco*, Rome, Scuola Tipografica Salesiana 1908, 19 p.

⁶⁶¹ BS 7 (1883) no. 8, August, pp. 127-128.

part of this demonstration of acknowledgement and gratitude, he then recited a poem that was deservedly applauded.

At the end, D. Bosco, visibly moved, took his turn to speak. He spoke of his real joy at seeing so many of his beloved sons. He assured them that he always loved them and loved those too who were not there in body but were certainly there in affection. He thanked them for their filial demonstration, and that their numbers were constantly growing. He praised their pious thought in offering him a gift that would look very nice in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, and he spoke with special affection of the Provost of Faule.

“It is true”, D. Bosco said, “that the orator and poet, speaking of D. Bosco, broke into pious exaggeration and used the rhetorical manner of speech that we call hyperbole, but this was forgivable licence for his dear boys whose expression of feelings was a response more to the dictates of their heart than their mind. However, always remember that D. Bosco was not and is none other than a poor tool in the hands of a very competent artist, indeed a most wise and omnipotent artist, who is God. Let there be praise, honour and glory given to God”. “Then”, D. Bosco added, “our D. Colletti spoke well when he said that the Oratory had done great things up till now, and I add that with God’s help and with the protection of Mary Help of Christians it will accomplish other things still. Other than Heaven’s help, what helps us and what will help us to do good is the very nature of our work. What we aim to do is looked upon well by everyone including those who do not share our idea of religion. If there is someone who creates obstacles for us we need to say that they either don’t know us or they do not know what is being done. Civil instruction, moral education of youth who are either abandoned, or at risk, removing them from idleness, wrongdoing, disgrace, and maybe even prison – this is what our work aims at. So what wise man, what civil authority could possibly stop us? Recently, as you know, I went to Paris, and I spoke in various churches to plead the cause of our works and, let us put it in frank terms, to find money to give bread and soup to our boys who never lose their appetite.

Now amongst the audience there were some who came only to get to know D. Bosco’s political thinking. Some even thought I had gone to Paris to stir up a revolution, others thought I was there to find people for a political party, and so on. There were some benevolent people who feared that someone would play some silly prank on me but from the moment I began speaking all these weird ideas ceased along with their fears and D. Bosco was left free to go from one end of France to the other. No, truly, we do not engage in politics with our work. We respect constituted authority, we observe the laws that have to be observed, we pay our taxes and we keep on going, asking only that they let us do good for poor youth and save souls. If you want, we also play politics but in an entirely innocent way, indeed to the advantage of any Government.

Politics can be defined as the art and science of governing the State well. Now the work of the Oratory in Italy, France, Spain, America, in every country where it has been established, working especially to offer relief of those most needy young people, tends to lessen the number of vagabonds and unruly types. It tends to decrease the number of young wrongdoers and thieves. It tends to empty out the prisons. In a word it tends to form upright citizens who, far from causing grief to public authorities, help them to keep order, calm and peace in society. This is our politics. This is the only thing we

have been concerned about up till now and which will be our concern in the future. It is precisely this approach that has allowed D. Bosco to do good firstly to you and then to so many other young people of every age and place.

So why enter politics? With all our efforts what could we obtain? Nothing else, maybe than to make it impossible to carry out our work of charity. Political matters today are like a steam train charging along the rails dragging a wagon behind it, probably heading for a cliff and ruin. Would you like to stand on the rails to stop it? You would be run over. Would you like to shout at it and scare it? It doesn't hear anything and you would go hoarse for nothing. So what do you do? Stand off to the side and let it go either until it stops of its own accord, or God stops it with his omnipotent hand. Certainly there must be those in the world who interest themselves in political matters, to give advice, to point out perils and the like, but this is not a task for us poor people. For us, religion and prudence tell us instead: Live as upright Christians, concern yourself with the moral education of your children, teach your children their catechism properly in [boarding] schools and parishes, and that's it. This, I repeat, is D. Bosco's way of behaving. He is so unpolitical that he doesn't even read a newspaper. So let this be your way of behaving, my dear sons and you will have that great good that I want you to have, I mean harmony, peace in your families, prosperity in your temporal business affairs, a long life free of serious preoccupations and suffering, and especially the best of all good things which is to persevere in God's grace and happiness in Paradise, where I hope that through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ and through the intercession of Mary Most Holy we will one day find ourselves together again singing his eternal glory".

These words of D. Bosco were given very keen attention, but since he had called the praises heaped on him earlier pious exaggerations and rhetorical figures of speech, Prof. Germano Candido stood up and defended the orator's expressions referring to the trustworthy testimony of a Milan newspaper which had repeated the same praises in recent days. Is it possible that good or bad, the professor observed, they had both agreed to piously exaggerate and speak in hyperbole about D. Bosco? No, but it is the truth and these are splendid facts they are speaking of. So, long live D. Bosco, may he live on in our hearts, may he live on in everyone's heart.

The Preventive System in a "History of pedagogy in Italy"⁶⁶²

Quintillian's (ca. 35-95) pedagogical wisdom

Where Quintillian's pedagogical wisdom appears especially is in the disciplinary system that should be, in his view and the view of other wise persons, not repressive but preventive. Keep physical blows right out of it; that's for slaves and only hardens hearts. Instead the teacher should try to form his pupil with constant vigilance, kind – or severe – assistance as needed, that keeps a balance between being lax and too strict and prevents possible wrongdoing, without having to immediately repress. He is prudent in his way of acting and does not demand more than the child's age requires. He zealously

⁶⁶²F. Cerruti, *Storia della pedagogia in Italia dalle origini a' nostri tempi*, Turin, Tip. E Libr. Salesiana 1883, pp. 72, 151, 159-161, 269-270

encourages him to study keeping beauty and grace before his eyes. No does he forget praise, reward, emulation and whatever else his shrewd approach suggests.

The most outstanding educator, Vittorino da Feltre (1373 - ca. 1446)

Amongst the many outstanding educators Italy can boast of, from Pythagoras to our own times, one name shines forth in immortal light. We find that he said and did some of the wisest and greatest things with regard to teaching and education. He is Vittorino Rambaldoni da Feltre, from Belluna, who revived and continued not only the glorious pedagogical traditions of the Italic school but brought them to perfection under the divine and enlivening inspiration of an essentially educational religion, Christianity... Who could tell me what wise direction Vittorino gave to moral education of his pupils? Convinced that in such an important work there should be nothing that holds back learning or diminishes its effectiveness, he would only allow teachers who were religious and courteous into his school, and with a strictness that might seem excessive to anyone who does not know how easy it is to create a contagious impression on the minds of the young, he also denied entry to people who were not well known. He did not abandon his pupils, either by day nor by night, and he kept them under his own gaze for as long as he could. He prevented most faults by his vigilance, so that no one would forget the fact that leaving children alone is a great incentive to their doing wrong. If he came to know of anyone who was corrupt or impious, he gave them firm and severe warning, and sent them away forever if they were incorrigible and a danger to others. He abhorred excessive and inconsiderate speech in his boys, as well as lying. He instilled tender love in these tender hearts, as we see from many wonderful details illustrated by his Institutes. Prendilacqua talks of one concerning himself when he fell into a lake and was about to drown, and a number of Vittorino's followers threw themselves into the lake to save him, which they succeeded in doing to the enthusiastic and happy cries of those watching. He was meek and easily forgave excesses of youthful liveliness or lack of foresight or at least recognised and immediately dealt with the fault. But he punished with just severity when the fault was the work of malice or people showed that they were obstinate. He was dismissive of his own life and weakness but strongly loved meekness. He preached it in word and example and wanted it to be observed along with the virtues that are clear signs of nobility of soul: courtesy, good-naturedness with inferiors, kindness with equals, respect and love for one's elders.

He reserved his best efforts for forming his pupils in piety and religion, since the educational edifice built upon any other foundation quickly crumbles into ruin. Vittorino knew this and never tired of reminding his followers of it. Not only would he not suffer any frivolity or irreverent word regarding religious matters, nor suffer impious people, but he did everything he could so that they could attend to their religious duties and made efforts to lead them to Christian perfection. There were not too many practices of piety, but they had to be willingly kept up. In the morning, after devout prayers, they attended Mass. Weekends and feast days were mainly dedicated to church functions and works of charity. To this we can add the frequent reception of the Sacraments, which he recommended in keen and faith filled exhortation as being the best support for virtue. So, let me put it in the words of Jacopo Bernardi: every word and action of Vittorino's

was religious instruction, if it is true that religion has as its unchanging goal the good of the individual and society, and consecrates every duty and right that improves mankind in family, city and nation.

This man's humanitarian work: Don Bosco

The male working class needed wise and zealous workers above every other. History will certainly list amongst its immortal names in this regard the name of the glorious man from Piedmont, the venerable Fr John Bosco, native of Castelnuovo d'Asti. Moved by the deplorable intellectual, moral and material state he saw many youngsters lost in, in 1841 and helped by his wonderful mother, this humble priest set up the first foundations of a Home at his house, that soon grew enormously under the title of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. Boys were given lodgings and support there for free, and during the day were sent to work with good tradesmen, taught to read, write and count in at least an hour's schooling each day, when evening and Sunday schools were something quite new in Piedmont. Or they were given gymnastics, educated in religion and good behaviour with catechism lessons and retreats. This was the humanitarian work of this man. It is hard to say which was best in him, the zeal of his charity which covered everything or the degree of common sense with which he tackled everything. Certainly he gave singular proof of the former when he published a small work in 1848 to make the metric-decimal system known. It was praiseworthy for its simplicity, popularity and precision. And it was for the working class and country folk. He did this at least a year and a half before the Kingdom of Sardinia brought this system in by law. As for the latter, it is enough to mention the few pages he wrote on the preventive system in education, a humble little work where you will find many excellent pedagogical sayings of the kind you would not find in many of the much larger works of the kind. In fact you will find here in just a few words the best of ancient pagan civilisation as well as the essence of the new Catholic-Christian civilisation, the theoretical wisdom of Quintillian and the practical common sense of Vittorino da Feltre, in a word, the Gospel and whatever is good in the legacy of the human spirit.⁶⁶³

Two letters from Rome, 10 May 1884

Introduction

While the 1877 pages on the preventive system enjoyed almost uninterrupted fame from the beginning, the *Letter from Rome*, 1884, went through times when it was remembered and forgotten. It was read in its shorter version, as addressed exclusively to the 'ancient, tiny' world of the Oratory in Valdocco, Turin, then in its twofold edition, along with the dreams, as part of the novices' exercise books at the end of the century (19th), but in its longer version it seemed to enter a new historical and ideal phase around 1920, as a

⁶⁶³ Obviously this testimony is from a man who is fervently close to the one who, from his childhood, had been his "father, brother, friend" and who is even more so now that he has become his close collaborator. What we have seen from the documents in this present work are enough to adjust what the author writes about Don Bosco's presumed priority with regard to certain educational initiatives.

universal pedagogical message.

That year on 6 April, the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, Fr Paul Albera, referred to it explicitly in a circular which was a comment on the invitation to the blessing and opening of the Monument to Don Bosco in the square in front of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. It was not possible to hold this event on the centenary of Don Bosco's birth in 1915.⁶⁶⁴ For this event he developed reflections that concluded with an invitation to Salesians to erect "another monument . . . an imperishable monument, *aere perennius*": "revive his virtues, educational system, all of his spirit in you".⁶⁶⁵ and in relation to the "heavenly pedagogy" which "Don Bosco's educational system", recommending that its norms be read in the "context of his brief treatise on the preventive system", his aim was to evoke an essential point which was highlighted in a special way in the letter from Rome: We need to know how to love the young.⁶⁶⁶

In the first number of the Acts of the Superior Chapter of the Pious Salesian Society of the 24th June the same year, the Councillor General for Schools, Fr Bartholomew Fascie, said: "In his last circular of 6 April this month, Fr Albera, after indicating he would see to a separate printing, so it could be in everyone's hands, of Don Bosco's *Treatise on the Preventive System*. For now he merely wanted to recommend for imitation – that love, affectionate interest in the young that was the secret of his marvellous ascendancy over them – supporting his recommendation with norms and excellent advice taken from our Venerable founder's letter from Rome, 10 May 1884. In the hope of being able to soon make everyone aware of the entire letter from Don Bosco, I simply, for now, want to make the recommendations of our Rector Major my own, letting you know that the Treatise has been done and is now being sent out to Provincials".⁶⁶⁷

In the second edition of the Acts of the Chapter the text appears with a brief presentation by the same School Councillor: "Here is the complete letter of our Ven. Founder which I announced and promised. I would certainly be lacking respect for D. Bosco's word and for you if I believed it necessary or even appropriate to present it with some recommendations and comments. It speaks for itself, clearly and effectively and is a living picture of how our houses are going according to how the preventive system is alive in them and is practised and informs the house and its operation. Or it may be that it is overlooked or weakly applied or badly or wrongly understood. Each one can draw the appropriate conclusion and apply it to his own behaviour for encouragement or to adjust it. May the Lord help us to read this letter with filial and devout attention in order to gain the fruit of true charity of which the preventive system is the life and soul".⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁴ *Invito all'inaugurazione del Monumento a Don Bosco*, a circular to Provincials written on 24 March 1920, in *Lettere Circolari di D. Paolo Albera ai Salesiani* (Torino, SEI 1922), pp. 306-307. The day set for the inauguration, postponed from 1815 because of the First World War, was 23 May, the vigil of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians.

⁶⁶⁵ Circular, 6 April 1920, *Per l'inaugurazione del Monumento al Venerabile Don Bosco*, in *Lettere Circolari*/. . . , p. 311.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 312-313

⁶⁶⁷ *Atti del Capitolo Superiore della Pia Società Salesiana*, Anno 1. N. 1, 24 Giugno 1920, p. 14.

⁶⁶⁸ *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*, Anno 1, N. 2, 24 Agosto 1920, pp. 39-40. The text of the letter is on pp. 40-48, according to its transcription, close to the original by Fr Lemoyne, copied by Fr Joachim Berto (cf. Further on *ms E*)

Fr Albera also called attention to the 1884 letter a few months before his death (29 October 1921 in his last important circular On Vocations on 15 May 1921. He indicates “family spirit” as “the best soil for vocations”, at the same time exhorting that it be inspired by the 1884 message: “So let us revive amongst us the familiarity that our Good Father warmly and effectively described in his memorandum from Rome on 10 May 1884, the most authentic commentary we have on the Preventive System. You can read it or re-read it, my dear confreres, in the Acts of the Superior Chapter (p. 40-48); I also warmly recommend that our students in the Novitiate and Studentate study it along with the Preventive System with true filial love, so it can be deeply imprinted on their hearts and minds. In fact to make such a study easier, shortly I will have it separately printed”.⁶⁶⁹

A few years later, along with some local circulation, the letter was published in its longer version in two works of an official kind: the *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*⁶⁷⁰ and the *Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco*⁶⁷¹, both by Eugene Ceria. The shorter edition, the only one that is certainly ‘original’, was completely forgotten.

Up until very recent times we spoke of the “Letter from Rome”, referring exclusively to the longer version. It found a place, though not always, in anthologies of Don Bosco’s writings, beginning obviously with the good and timely one by Fr Bartholomew Fascie, *Del metodo educativo di Don Bosco (On Don Bosco’s educational method)*.⁶⁷²

It also aroused some interest in some scholars of Don Bosco’s educational system. We can recall: E. Valentini, *La pedagogia mariana di Don Bosco*, in «Salesianum» 15 (1953) 100-164: he dedicated pp. 137-154 to this “Magna Charta of the Salesian educational System” as he called it; P. Braido, *10 maggio 1884*, in «Orientamenti Pedagogici» 6 (1959) 545-558; and *Il poema dell’amore educativo. S. Giovanni Bosco: Lettera da Roma del 10 maggio 1884*, in *Don Bosco educatore oggi*. Zürich, PAS-Verlag 1963, pp. 77-96 (the text published by E. Ceria is presented); P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità*. Rome, LAS 1981 (I ed. 1969), pp. 467-469, which concludes the brief analysis with some pertinent questions and a neat evaluation: “But what did Don Bosco actually dictate? The letter or a kind of ‘canvas’? A series of reminders or a complete document in all its prosody and energy and a style that can even be found in the secretary’s note in parenthesis? There is no original letter by Don Bosco (in his own hand) but only an original, in two versions, written by Fr Lemoyne and undersigned by Don Bosco. Despite this it should be considered to be one of Don Bosco’s most effective and rich pedagogical documents”.⁶⁷³

More recently St John Bosco Letter from Rome on the state of the Oratory has been included in an appendix to the *Constitutions and Regulations* of the two Religious Congregations Don Bosco founded, the Society of St Francis de Sales and the Institute of the

⁶⁶⁹ *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*, Anno II, N.4, 15 May 1921; then in the *Lettere Circolari di D. Paolo Albera*, pp. 458-459.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. MB XVII 107-114. The text is close to the one prepared for the MB by Lemoyne in the Documenti.

⁶⁷¹ Cf. E IV 261-269. The text is similar to the one reproduced in the MB

⁶⁷² Cf D. B. Fascie, *Del metodo educativo di Don Bosco. Fonti e commenti* (= Letture di pedagogia 4). Turin, SEI 1927, pp. 73-80. The text is identical to the published in 1920 in the *Atti del Capitolo*.

⁶⁷³ P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II, p. 469

Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.⁶⁷⁴

The editor and his inspirer

In various documents, manuscripts and proofs the text of the letter in its more extended form is preceded by a note by G.B. Lemoyne who was the writer and only witness. An examination of the documents suggests that this letter is largely unreliable although there is no doubt as to who inspired and who wrote up both versions. “Don Bosco, during the nights he was not feeling well, had one of his most famous dreams. He narrated it to Fr Lemoyne on various occasions then asked him to write it down and read it and make corrections. Then he was to redo it and recopy it. Since it particularly concerned members of the Salesian Congregation, a new work was required so that it could be read out in public to all the youngsters at the Oratory. So the second part was kept while the first part, which spoke at length of the two recreations, was set aside. This letter was sent on 10 May. When Fr Rua read it out in public it had a great impact; it had been some years since the boys had been accustomed to hearing letters addressed to them by Don Bosco. For the Oratory it marked a reform of which we will speak during our account. The first effect of this dream was that Don Bosco knew the state of many consciences, including of some individuals who had seemed to be good but were then sent away from the house”.⁶⁷⁵

John Baptist Lemoyne⁶⁷⁶

(in Italian, G.B., For *Giovanni Battista*)

J.B. Lemoyne (1839-1916), a priest from Genova, entered Don Bosco’s incipient religious society in 1864. He was the Rector of the school at Lanzo Torinese from 1865 to 1877 and the beginning from 1883 became secretary and a close collaborator of Don Bosco as well as the secretary of the Superior Council of the Salesian Society. He was an intelligent, creative individual and had the ability to speak to the hearts of the youngsters as we see from the collection of letters he wrote during his forced absence from the educational community. At Don Bosco’s side he carried out his task with extraordinary finesse from the outset: “I entrust myself to you as poor as I am. Be charitable, especially

⁶⁷⁴Cf. *Costituzioni e Regolamenti della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*. Rome, 1972, pp. 267-280 and 1984, pp. 243-252; *Costituzioni e Regolamenti dell’Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausilatrice*. Rome, 1982, pp. 265-277. In the *Costituzioni dei salesiani*, 1972 the text is taken from the MB; in the 1984 Constitutions from the *Atti del Capitolo*, 1920.

⁶⁷⁵The text is contained in a manuscript prepared for the vast collection of *Documenti* that were need to draft the *Memorie Biografiche*. At the end Lemoyne, who was the editor, added this note: “Fascio LXV p. 189 – 10 mag. 1884”. (cf further on *ms D*.)

⁶⁷⁶Cf. E. Ceria, *Profili dei Capitolari salesiani morti dall’anno 1865 al 1959 con sintesi storica della Società Salesiana e cenni storici delle regole*. Colle Don Bosco (Asti), LDC 1951, pp. 382-400; F. Desramaut, *Les Mémoires I de Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. Étude d’un ouvrage fondamental sur la jeunesse de saint Jean Bosco*. Lyon 1962; *Première partie. L’auteur des Mémoires et son œuvre*, pp. 166-167; G. Favini, *D. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne primo grande biografo di Don Bosco* (pro manuscripto). Turin 1974; P. Braido-R. Arenal Llata, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne attraverso 20 lettere a don Michele Rua*, in RSS 7 (1988) 89-170.

in hearing me out. I will keep no secrets from you, neither those in my heart nor of the Congregation. When my final hour arrives I am going to need a close friend to give me a final word in all confidence".⁶⁷⁷ We seem to find exactly the same style in the 1884 letter, fully in harmony with his immediate acceptance of his role as we see in a letter to his mother on 18 December 1883: "I have been brought back to Turin. . . Don Bosco wanted me with him to give him a hand and work with him. The Lord could not give me a better position. . . For my part had he made me King I would be no happier than I am now".⁶⁷⁸

It was not the first time nor would it be the last that he would be more than just a scribe in what Don Bosco wrote, inspired or signed, as we can see from certain quite important documents.

On 15 October 1883 in a letter to Fr Lemoyne: "Dear Fr Lemoyne, please do me the favour of completing the dream about America and then send it back to me soon. Count Colle would like it but would like it translated into French; I will try to do that immediately".⁶⁷⁹

Instead, in reference to 1884, the biographer writes: "The saint had a dream in July. . . In the days that followed he briefly told Fr Lemoyne what he had seen but gave him only a general idea of what he had heard. . . ; then he told him it could be a good outline for developing it more freely. The secretary carried out this order but there was never a chance to read him the longer version".⁶⁸⁰

And still in relation to a time immediately after this, E. Ceria writes: "Concerning the question of readings, Don Bosco had been thinking for some time of the idea of sending everyone an authoritative word. In fact in 1883 he had told Fr Lemoyne: 'I will give you some work at the right moment'. Then, after a year had passed he asked him: 'Remember when I told you about some work I'd ask you to do? Well, the time has come'. He outlined the topic of a circular on the readings (what books could be read) that were then to be sent to the houses at the beginning of the school year. Fr Lemoyne wrote it, Don Bosco reviewed it and this long letter was then sent to the colleges at the beginning of November".⁶⁸¹

Naturally in this collaboration styles merge although preserving certain individual features. In the 1884 letter it does not seem too difficult to discover motifs and tones from earlier letters the Rector at Lanzo had written to his pupils, as we can see from a number of examples.

The first letter would have been written around 1868: "My dear children, our Divine Saviour tells us that where our treasure is there too is our heart. You are my treasure, the precious treasure that the Lord has given me, a treasure that was worth the blood of Jesus Christ, a treasure for which one day I must render strict account. So although I am far from you my heart is always amongst you and in the Mass, in my prayers and

⁶⁷⁷ MB XVI 419

⁶⁷⁸ ASC 272 Lemoyne

⁶⁷⁹ E IV 237

⁶⁸⁰ MB XVII 194

⁶⁸¹ MB XVII 197. This was the circular on readings in the houses, signed by Don Bosco and dated in Turin 1 November 1884 – MB XVII 197-200.

in everything I do I remember you constantly and year for the time when I can see your angelic faces again and continue with my mission of leading you to Paradise”.⁶⁸²

Another two are from 1875. “Dear children, I do not know how to explain it but some irresistible power urges me to write to you when I have to be away from you for some days. I question my heart and it does not stay silent! The older I get the more I feel I love you, love you as a friend, brother, father. My affection is not simply the kind in people who spend time together, it is keener still, more compelling; it is a reason for me living. In affection, correspondence, obedience to those whom the Lord in his goodness has allowed me to call my children I find all happiness, all interest, all my wealth, after God and Mary”.

“My dear children! I have told you that you are my crown and joy and my hope”.

Don Bosco

In the Spring of 1884, to be precise, from 14 April to 14 May, Don Bosco was in Rome, assailed by financial problems to do with the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart at the Castro Pretorio, and involved in obtaining a sure juridical and canonical status for his religious Society. We see a greater concern, that he had had for some years, to provide stability and unity to its structures and spirit, in clear awareness of the increasingly precarious state of health he was in.

In fact, after his triumphal trip to France from February to May 1883, his health has declined with particularly critical moments before and after the month he spent in Rome.⁶⁸³ The *Salesian Bulletin* in April 1884, after having referred to a comment from the Rector at Alassio, Fr Francis Cerruti, that Don Bosco did not speak on 2 March when the Cooperators met, drew a rather alarming picture: “And since this seems a propitious occasion, we once again recommend our beloved Don Bosco to the prayer of the Cooperators. For some time he has felt his strength weakening. There is nothing to be alarmed about at the moment, but a good doctor from Turin, visiting him before he left for his journey, said that we should not kid ourselves too much concerning his life. Then he added, with regard to how tired he was, Don Bosco seemed to be a man of a 100 today instead of 70. So let us pray with all our heart that although by nature and weakness he should succumb, he will live on for many years yet with our help and comfort, through grace and by God’s omnipotence”.⁶⁸⁴

Don Bosco himself offered a discrete but significant confirmation of this in his correspondence. “My health is not bad, but it is not good. I get increasingly tired”.⁶⁸⁵ “My

⁶⁸²This and the following letters can be found in ASC 272 Lemoyne, in the envelope entitled *Corrispondenza ai familiari*

⁶⁸³In reference to the first months of 1884 until his return from Rome, the *Memorie Biografiche* are full of news about his state of health, by then alarming: cf. MB XVII 21, 22, 23-24, 26, 27, 29-32, 34-35, 36, 38, 40, 42, 56-58, 65, 80, 83-84, 88, 89, 105, 119, 121, 122; then in following months: MB XVII 204-207, 458-459.

⁶⁸⁴BS 8 (1884) no. 4, April, p. 58.

⁶⁸⁵Letter to Count Bonmartini, from Turin, 4.2.1884 – E IV 253.

health is a little better but I am in much need of prayer”.⁶⁸⁶ “My health is struggling; I hope to get better as soon as possible and. . .”.⁶⁸⁷ “Your Honour will understand that it is a half blind man who is writing”.⁶⁸⁸ “You have heard that for some time I have been in poor health and unable to work. . .”.⁶⁸⁹

At the same time we see emerging a strong emotion that often leads him to tie nostalgic memories of the past to lively predictions of the future. His dreams multiply, while the one who accompanies him assures us: “Our beloved father cannot speak now without going back to the heroic days of the Oratory”.⁶⁹⁰ Along with the great topic of salvation there was this insistent appeal to the method, style, the preventive system; love, confidence, familiarity, friendship; “it often happens that youngsters are less blameworthy than we think, as we know from experience”, he said at the last meeting of the 3rd General Chapter on 7 September 1883. And on 25 April 1884, in the *Journal de Rome*, we could read his answer to a journalist who asked him about his preventive system: “It is very simple. I let the youngsters do what they love best. The trick is to discover the germ of their good will and to develop it. As each one loves to do what he knows he can do, I apply this principle rigorously and my pupils make every effort, not only because of my activity but also because of my love”.⁶⁹¹

So the letter comes about within this especially favourable context. As regards what lies behind its immediate circumstances, how it was thought out, communicated, written down and then checked we have certain very enlightening information from E. Ceria collected from direct testimony from G.B. Lemoyne.

“The other times that Don Bosco was in Rome he visited lots of people. But in 1884, either because of his difficulty in walking or because of other discomfort, he had to limit his visiting considerably”.⁶⁹² “At the end of each day his poor head was so tired that he could no longer collect or connect his ideas; so every evening he went out to take a breath of fresh air, walking for three quarters of an hour holding on to Fr Lemoyne’s arm”.⁶⁹³ “So much effort aggravated by serious problems increased his physical discomfort even more. His liver gave trouble and he had an inflamed eye. On 27 April he came down with fever which lasted three days. One night he was so poorly that he even had to get

⁶⁸⁶ On return from France, letter to Fr Berto from Sampierdarena, 6.4.1884 – E IV 255.

⁶⁸⁷ From Rome, 3 May 1884 to the Archbishop of Turin, Card. Alimonda – E IV 259.

⁶⁸⁸ From Rome to the Hon. Paolo Boselli, 6 May 1884 – E IV 259.

⁶⁸⁹ Address to the Cooperators in Turin, 23 May – NS 8 (1884), no. 7, July, p. 95. At his meeting with the past pupils on 13 July 1884, one of their representatives, Prof. Germano, says: “I recall older times while I am thinking of the present. I look at Don Bosco and my heart shrinks out of tenderness. How he has changed from the man we knew when we were children! He is bent over, his hair is gray, and he walks with difficulty and uncertainly. May the Lord hold off for some time the day when he must receive the reward for all the efforts he has made for us. May he remain amongst his sons until he has celebrated his Golden Jubilee of ordination. But the years go on inexorably. . .” (BS 8 1884 no. 8 August, p.112). Don Bosco answers: “. . . Firstly I want to tell you that I am very happy to see you here in this place, even more so this year when at a certain point I was unwell and ill-disposed and thought that I could no longer be with you. . .” (Ibid, p. 113).

⁶⁹⁰ Letter of G.B. Lemoyne from Sampierdarena, 8 April 1884 – ASC 272 Lemoyne

⁶⁹¹ MB XVII 85-86

⁶⁹² MB XVII 80

⁶⁹³ MB XVII 83-84

up from his bed; at certain hours of the day his illness forced him to lie down".⁶⁹⁴

This was precisely the situation he refers to in his 'dream' which was the proximate occasion for the genesis of the 'letters'.

But at this point it is essential to provide a detailed analysis of the documents available, which together with the information from other sources can allow us to establish the authentic texts with reasonable trustworthiness, what order they came in, who they were addressed to and each one's significance.

Description of the documents

The publication of the letters in two distinct versions was done on the basis of manuscripts, typewritten or in drafts found in the ASC in Rome in addition to printed versions of particular historical and literary authenticity. We do not exclude transcriptions that are more or less faithful, of the original texts that can be found in other Salesian archives, the result of novices or clerics who were students of Fr Giulio Barberis and Fr Eugenio Bianchi or their disciples who were in turn masters of novices and formators of new Salesians as one century ended and another began. Nor should we exclude the possibility that an accurate inventory of material kept in the ASC could hold some surprise.

Those found up till now, which should include all the most important ones, are kept in three different places: ASC 110 *Cronachette*; ASC 111 *Sogni*; ASC 131 *Torino-Oratorio*.

In the description of the documents we follow this order: first we indicate preparatory documents (nos. 1-3); we then describe the documents drawing from the long version (nos 1-7); finally we review the original of the short version (no. 8).

1. A = ASC 111 Sogni-Lemoyne

The *ms* is a single sheet of note paper with light blue lines, format 209x268 mm. The two pages are numbered in pencil on top as 1 and 2. In the left hand margin on page 1 in blue crayon 1884 is written, vertically.

The writing is in brown ink; it is Lemoyne's and consists of fragments of notes, with few connections, items used for the versions that immediately followed.

From comparisons we see that the fragments come together both in document *K* and, via this, in *ms D*; more precisely in the short version (*K*) the complete contents of the first page are included and half of the second. The first lines of page 1 are only found in this version.

There is none of *A* in *B*; the areas of reference of *A* and *B* are different.

Points of contact can be found between the last six lines of *ms A* and *mss C* and *D* (lines 129-131, 174-176, 204-206).

2. B = ASC 111 Sogni-Lemoyne

This is a double sheet of paper of the same format and quality as the earlier one, *ms A*, with identical ruling.

On the left side of page 1 in pencil there is a vertical line forming a margin of 30 mm.

⁶⁹⁴MB XVII 89

On the four pages, rubbed out but still visible is the earlier numbering in pencil: 3,4,5,6 (the *ms* was brought together with the following *ms C*).

It is an original by Fr Lemoyne that seems to be a trial first partial version of the letter in its longer version.

The text is written on the right half of the page while the left half is for corrections and additions.

Through *C* the contents of *ms B* (mostly similar to *ms C*) come together in *D*. No immediate or mediated relationship exists between *B* and *K* (the short version); in fact *B* is in reference to the Salesians and not to the youngsters.

In this book it is reproduced in its entirety with indications in the comments of what Fr Lemoyne had cancelled out.

3. **C = ASC 111 Sogni-Lemoyne**

This is a collection of 3 double sheets inserted one after the other of the same format and identical ruling as the two earlier ones, *ms A* and *B*.⁶⁹⁵

The pages are numbered in pencil at the top from 1 to 10; the last two are blank and not numbered. The first page carries the indication 1884 on top, in pencil. This is an original by Fr Lemoyne. The text is written in the same right half while the left half is left free for any corrections or additions; these can be found only on pages 2,6 and 9.

Inc: Una di queste sere... Exp:.. scriver a voi o miei cari queste righe.

Ms C uses material from *C*, writing it up in better and more expansive literary form. In turn it reveals direct causal relationships with the short version (*K*) and the long version (*D*). Its immediate influence is clearly visible in the first part of *ms K* with regard to things this has in common with the long version, on which it does not seem to depend in this first section. But above all, including the dream on the first night, manuscript *C* in its overall content covers two thirds of the long version. Instead for parallel content *D* seems to depend rather immediately on *K* rather than *C*, which seems to be confirmed by the fact that in *K* we find handwritten corrections by Fr Rua that *D* presumes and uses, and *D* presents variations which belong to *K* that *D* corrects.

4. **D = ASC 111 Sogni-Lemoyne**

This is a collection of 7 double sheets inserted one after the other and stitched together with strong thread. The format is 270x380 mm. The first sheet which contains the others is solid foolscap, lined and with a left margin (37 mm) and a right margin (14 mm). The other sheets are a light notepaper with well-marked blue ruling and no margins. The pages are not numbered; only on page 3 is the number 5 in pencil visible at the top. The first page is blank and on the left up top is written 1884, in pencil. The second page is blank. The third and fourth pages contain the text of diary notes where it says: *Inc: Don Bosco in quelle notti... Exp: furono allontanati dalla casa: Fascio LXV p. 189 – 10 mag. 1884.* From which it is clear that the *ms* was prepared in view of the Documenti. From page 5 to 26 we find the text of the letter. Pages 27-28 are blank. On page 5 we see a faded mark; on page 6 in the left margin there are two marks made in red ink.

⁶⁹⁵It would be good to keep in mind that *ms K* (short version) for the youngsters has the identical features of *ms A, B* and *C*. Not so for *ms D*.

The *ms* is entirely in Fr Lemoyne's hand; he writes in the right hand part of each page keeping the left for any corrections or additions, which are found only on pages 15 and 16.

We should not exclude the hypothesis that the text with these diary notes and of the letter itself were written at different times: more precisely that the first foolscap sheet was destined for a pre-existing collection with the text of the letter.

In each case *ms D* should be considered as the oldest of those known which contain the complete text of the letter in its longer version; it could be the original text of the letter.

This is what we find in this version which reproduces it with complete fidelity, except some essential additions of punctuation.

5. E = ASC 131 Torino-Oratorio

This is a collection of 5 double foolscap sheets sewn together to make a total of 20 pages numbered with a pencil. The last page is blank. The paper is solid, ruled and with margins in blue ink. It is a manuscript.

It is a good copy done by Fr Joachim Berto and takes up all of each page.

In the first page, on top, we find the title: Dream in the form of a Letter 10.5.1884 from Rome.

Ms E derives directly from *D*, of which it copies both the brief diary information and the complete text of the letter in the longer version: the historical diary material takes up all of page 1 and a good part of the second page. It ends with indications given by Fr Lemoyne; only *Fascio* is corrected to *Fascic*. The text of the letter take up pages 3-19.

In general Berto's copy is more accurate than the original with regard to punctuation and Italian diction (certain archaic forms which Lemoyne liked: *avea* = *aveva*; *faceano* = *facevano*. . . ;). However there are on or two errors or omissions from distraction.

Berto's *ms* is the last one that is faithful in substance to the original one of Lemoyne's. It is found in a printed edition of the letter which appeared in the Acts of the Superior Chapter 1920 (in the critical apparatus noted as *J*).

6. J = version printed in the Acts of the Superior Chapter 1920

The publication of the letter in its longer version was done under Fr Bartholomew Fascie in the Acts of the Superior Chapter (1920, Anno I, N. 2, 24 Agosto, pp. 40-48) and copies Fr Berto's *ms (E)*, with some additional punctuation and minor improvements.

7. F = ASC 111 Sogni-Lemoyne

This *ms* is a booklet made up of 5 double foolscap sheets inserted one after the other and sewn with rather strong thread. Only in the first sheet have the two pages become detached through use. The format is 208x311 mm. The notepaper is ruled with blue ink. The first page is not numbered, the second is blank and not numbered. The numbering begins on page 3 with number 2 and continues to 17; the last two pages are blank. On the first page in the left margin written vertically in blue crayon, the same used to number the pages: 1884.

The diary note is on the first page. The text of the letter is on pages numbered 2 through 17.

The writing tries to be elegant but becomes more in haste and less neat in the final pages. The scribe would have been young, diligent, had a light and fairly elegant hand; the ink is brown.

In the upper margin of the first page which has the historical note, Fr Lemoyne adds in black ink: Chapter XXXI Dream: the old and the current oratory – Charity and familiarity that the Salesians should show to the boys – Confessions and the boys' conduct.

The manuscript text takes up the right half of each page.

The copy is accurate and improves, in formal terms, the punctuation and lexical aspects of *ms D* on which it evidently depends. It differs from it in some important aspects with the systematic substitution of the term *amore* (love) with synonyms like *affetto* (affection) and *carità* (charity). We have not found an intermediate *ms* that allows us to identify who introduced these modifications, which Fr Lemoyne himself accepts in the *Documenti* (draft text *G*) and Fr Ceria re-publishes with some marginal variations in the *Memorie Biografiche* (*H*) and the *Epistolario* (*I*).

Ms E was out of the picture at this stage and was only brought in, as already indicated, in 1920, when the General Councillor for Schools, Fr Bartholomew Fascie, sees to its publication in the Acts of the Superior Chapter (= Council) of the Salesian Society.

8. *K* = ASC 131 Torino-Oratorio

The *ms* is made up of two double sheets, on inside the other, to make a small booklet of 4 sheets numbered by the writer from 1 to 4, making 8 pages numbered in pencil from 2 to 7. Dimensions, quality, ruling of the paper are identical to *ms A, B, C*. The ink is dark but fading (diluted).

It is written by Fr Lemoyne.

In another hand, Fr Rua's, there are some additions in the dialogue indicating who is speaking: *Io* (I) = Don Bosco), *a* (= *allievo* or pupil), *V.* (= Valfré). These are indicated in the critical apparatus.

Don Bosco's signature is appended at the end.

We are certain this is the letter that left Rome on 12 May and which was read out to the boys at Valdocco, in Turin by Fr Rua.

Worth bearing in mind that the publisher of the *Epistolario* ignores it.

Events to do with the publication and handing on of the texts

The examination of the documents allows us to identify distinct moments in the drawing up of the two versions, the short one for the boys and the longer one for the Salesian educators. This, nevertheless, supposes a period which followed the other manuscripts *A, B, C, K*, which in material elements betray a chronological closeness. The story of the shorter letter, addressed directly to the boys, seems much more linear and accomplished within a short period of time.

It would be useful, then, to identify the various stages of composition of the texts, referring overall to information from the direct witness, Fr John Baptist Lemoyne.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁶This means correcting the rather imaginative reconstruction by E. Ceria: "On 6 May he had him write to Fr Rua: 'Don Bosco is preparing a letter which he intends to send to the boys, in which he wants

Regarding the “nights when Don Bosco felt poorly” Fr Lemoyne writes in the Documenti: “27 April, D. Bosco has a fever that lasts for three days. Lat night he felt so poorly that he had to get out of bed. The constant opposition to the lottery and the granting of privileges is having a physical effect on him”.⁶⁹⁷ In a letter to Fr Rua the following day he confirms this: “In the avalanche of letters I have to work through, I steal a moment to let you know again about D. Bosco. His health is not too bad but for the last two mornings the fever has returned”.⁶⁹⁸

It is in these circumstances that a solid increase of memories, insights, family-style exhortations emerge which are then further articulated by the secretary. There was plenty of time for him to tell, develop and organise his material. It is true that there was no lack of work for Don Bosco, his health situation and the attention he received from his helper meant there were frequent pauses during the day and opportunity for some quiet chats.

In the various stages of the letters’ composition and its various drafts we never find any trace of Don Bosco’s intervention in the editing process: just the final signature (unless it was cleverly copied) at the end of the short version.

But the immediate echo of what Don Bosco was saying can be found, at least in part, in the quick notes which Lemoyne provided for *ms A* and, more consistently, in the first draft of the characteristic elements of the letter to the Salesians contained in *ms B* and then taken up and broadened in *ms C*. All three were then used by Lemoyne in drafting the letter to the youngsters, *ms K*, and later the one for the Salesians.

Instead it is difficult to establish the time and place of the composition of the longer version (*ms D*) which was then passed on as a manuscript and printed, with significant variations. It could have been put together later in Valdocco.⁶⁹⁹

In all probability, Lemoyne drew up the letter for the youngsters then came to *ms K*, when on 6 May he wrote to Fr Rua as follows: “5. Finally, I am telling you that Don Bosco is preparing a letter he intends to send to the boys in which he wants to tell his beloved boys many nice things”.⁷⁰⁰

From an overall perspective which seems to be confirmed by what happens at Valdocco in the weeks immediately following, it seems more probable that of the two texts dated 10 May 1884, the short version was sent to Turin. We can gather this from the two

to tell his beloved children all kinds of good things’. The letter was sent on 10 May, but Fr Rua, not believing it was appropriate to read it all out in public, asked him to send a copy that could be addressed just to the pupils. Fr Lemoyne extracted parts of it for them that did not regard the superiors. It was read out by Fr Rua in the evening after prayers and the boys listened with much concern since the Saint was saying that he knew many of their consciences. After his return there was a procession of boys to his room to know how he saw them [= what the state of their conscience really was, as he saw it]” (MB XVII 107).

⁶⁹⁷ *Documenti*, vol XXVII, pp. 158-159

⁶⁹⁸ Letter to Fr Rua, 28 April 1884, ASC 9126 Rua-Lemoyne G.B. Cf P. Braido and R. Arenal Llata, *Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne attraverso 20 lettere a don Michele Rua*, in «Ricerche Storiche Salesiane» 7 (1988), p. 151.

⁶⁹⁹ We should keep in mind that *ms K*, differently from *ms D*, has the same features (paper, ruling, ink) as *mss A, B* and *C*.

⁷⁰⁰ Letter to Fr Rua, 6 May 1884, ASC 9126 Rua-Lemoyne; Cf. P. Braido and R. Arenal Llata, art. cit., p. 154.

letters by Lemoyne to Fr Rua, one from Rome on 12 May (just before Don Bosco and his secretary left Rome), the other from Florence on 15th. In the first, Fr Lemoyne writes: “I am sending you a letter that Don Bosco is sending to all the boys at the Oratory. Be good enough to read it in the evening after prayers, and if you can’t do it, then ask Fr Lazzero. This is what Don Bosco wants, that before reading it out to the boys you give it a look over and adjust anything you feel needs to be adjusted and soften any sentence you think might be a bit strong. If you find something of the kind, forgive me, just correct it, because it took me the whole night to write it”.⁷⁰¹ From Florence on the 15th he write to Fr Rua again: “Today we arrived in Florence... With this I end my correspondence with you unless there is something new. I hope htat you have received the letter to the boys, the one Don Bosco addressed to them”.⁷⁰²

Some of the heightened concerns at Valdocco in the weeks and months after Don Bosco’s return from Rome also seem to refer to the short version. There was the constant problem of order at the Oratory and, especially, of disciplinary, moral and religious reform amongst the boys, with special attention to the student group, feeding hopes for new vocations, both for the Salesians and the Church.

From the Minutes of Superior Chapter meetings of the Salesian Society and from a survey carried out by the Salesians at Valdocco we gain a no less pessimistic view of the climate that reigned there (lack of confidence, suspicion, failures in administration and assistance), in other words the items more exclusively dealt with in the short version. Instead there is a weaker presence of the explicit positive message of love which is proclaimed with exceptional rhetorical warmth in the longer version.

Also, information provided for the Documenti further on in Chap. XXX-VIII refer to the public letter addressed to the boys: “Marvellous effects of Don Bosco’s last dream 12 June - Don Bosco’s dream in Rome led to consequences. Over recent days Don Bosco spoke to many boys in the evening. Yesterday however, for Corpus Domini, many boys went to his room to speak to him about their vocation”.⁷⁰³

As for the circulation of the letter in its two version, we can conclude the following from the scarce data that we have:

1. The short version, addressed to the boys, remained as a manuscript kept in its original in the archives and in copies which were contained in a number of exercise books for novices and formators of the novices.
2. Instead a copy of the shorter version was handed down in manuscript form but including the longer version – between brackets, so ideally excluded, was the central body of the letter (lines 82-206: *acciocché... offesa di Dio*); the one responsible for this, though we do not know on what basis he did this, seems to have been the Master of novices, Fr Giulio Barberis, followed by his immediate successor, Fr

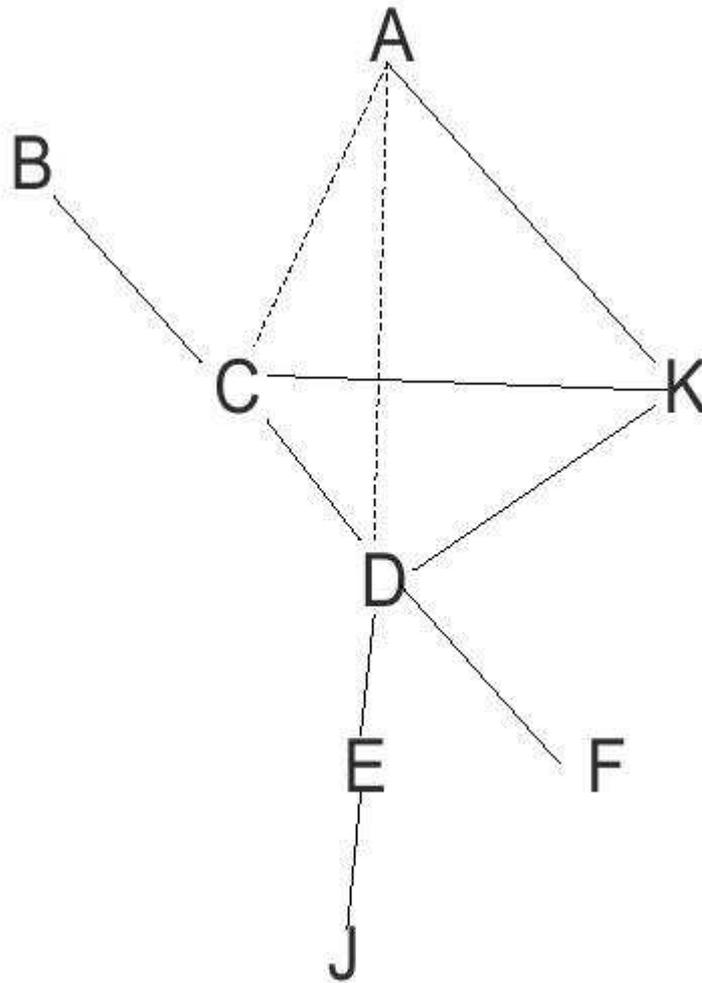
⁷⁰¹Letter to Fr Rua, 12 May 1884, *ibid.*, Cf. P. Braidò and R. Arenal Llata, *art. cit.* p. 157. At the bottom of the letter the diligent Lemoyne adds: “Keep Don Bosco’s letter so it can be put in the archives”. We can believe that this is *ms K* which we have.

⁷⁰²Letter to Fr Rua, 15 May 1884, *ibid.*, Cf. P. Braidò... p. 157.

⁷⁰³*Documenti*, vol XXVII, p. 274.

Eugenio Bianchi; a handful of copies by novices or young clerics make reference to them.

3. The long version instead was handed down in a number of manuscript and printed forms but in two versions: a) the more widespread one which corresponds to *ms F*, backed by Fr Ceria in the *Memorie biografiche* and the *Epistolario*, and then included in the *Constitutions and Regulations* of the Salesian Society and the Sisters (FMA) in 1962; b) the less familiar version but the one closest to Fr Lemoyne's and Fr Berto's original manuscripts (*ms D* and *E*), included in the Acts of the Chapter 1920 and by Fr Bartholomew Fascie in his 1927 anthology. The two versions contain a numerically few variations but they are significant ones in qualitative terms. In the most typical spots the second (doc. *E*) uses the term *amore* (love), which the first (doc. *F*, *MB*, *Ep*), substitutes with *affetto* (affection) and *carità* (charity); in the second, Don Bosco's interlocutor in the dream addresses his old teacher with the much more confidential *tu* (familiar 'you'), while the first, which Lemoyne also has in the *Documenti*, the more respectful *lei*. This one also reveals some more logical changes like, for example when *potuto e saputo* are reversed in a more psychologically appropriate *saputo e potuto*.



Texts

1. *Ms A*

Monday night fol 1.

Saw Buzzetti In amongst asked him Do the boys now seem better to you or rather those from the earlier time

He answered - the difference between these and those is that these ones do not have much confidence in the confessional in your advice but especially in matters of conscience

There is a good number of good boys

But between the boys of former times and these today there is a notable difference in former times their heart was completely open

to the Superiors whom they loved and obeyed
currently the Superiors are not considered as
superiors feared etc. therefore if you want
one heart and soul for love of
Jesus you need to break down the fatal
barrier of mistrust and allow
warm confidence to enter So obedience
that guides the pupil like a mother guides
a child etc. etc. We are not speaking of
frequent confession and communion but
radically lacking firm amendments etc.]

I felt tired fol 2

Is there anything else you want to tell me? Some special advice
- let everyone remember that they are children of Mary Help of Christians
who has brought them here. So also peace of heart
so, mutual love. That hearts may be open, that
there be one heart and one soul like in earlier times
And will we succeed?
Yes so long as the big ones and the little ones want to offer the heavenly
Madonna some small sacrifice and are ready to suffer something for her
some boys but in these few I see things that
have saddened my heart deeply. I do not want to put it down
on paper but I would like to tell each one what refers to him.

Here I tell you only that it is time to pray and make
firm resolutions, not just in words but in need
and let it be seen that the Comollos and the Dominic Savios and the
Bessucco's
and the Saccardis are still alive amongst us.

It is enough for a single boy to enter a Salesian house for him to be immedi-
ately
taken under the special protection of Mary Help of Christians
youngsters

(Let there be a very strict duty of conscience in referring
to the Superiors everything that the Clerics know
about what might offend the Lord in any way at all

(Of the jealousy that each one would like to be loved by the
Boys excluding all the other superiors
Ferocious jealousies

2. Ms B

B = original draft by Fr Lemoyne

B2 and *B3* = following interventions by Fr Lemoyne

“Why so much apathy and so much listlessness”.⁷⁰⁴ [fol 1]

“I saw so much listlessness and this is where coldness in the Sacraments comes from, missing out on practices of piety especially in church, not wanting to be in a place where providence fills them with every benefit; this is where ingratitude, secretiveness, grumbling and all the other deplorable consequences come from”.

“I see,⁷⁰⁵ I understand, but how can we bring these youngsters to life again so that we can get back to the liveliness, the happiness, the warmth of the old days?”

“With love!”

“Love? But my don’t my boys get enough love? You know how much I have loved them. You know how much I have suffered and put up with for them. How many hardships, how many humiliations, how much opposition I had to encounter and suffer for them.

“I’m not referring to you.”

“Then to whom are you referring? To those who take my place? Don’t you see that they are martyrs to work, studying day and night, looking after them, burning themselves out?”

“I can see all that⁷⁰⁶ and I am well aware of it, but it is not enough”.

“What is missing?”

“That the youngsters should not only be loved, but that they themselves should know⁷⁰⁷ that they are loved”.

“But have they not got eyes in their heads? Don’t they see they have a house, bread, profit, career etc., school?”

“No, that is not enough”.

“Well, what else is needed?” [fol. 2]

“By being loved⁷⁰⁸ in the things they like, they are led to see love in those things which they find less attractive, and so learn to do these things too with love”.

“You’ll have to explain that to me”.

“Our Divine Saviour made himself⁷⁰⁹ little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses”.

“I do not understand”.

“Look at the youngsters in recreation”.

I looked, and then asked: “Well what is special about it?”

“You’ve been educating young people for so many years and you don’t understand! Look harder! Where are our Salesians?”

I looked and saw etc. (like in the other sheet)

⁷⁰⁴ why (*Perché*)... listlessness *B del B2*

⁷⁰⁵ I see (*Vedo*) *B del B2*

⁷⁰⁶ all that (*tutto*) *B del B2*

⁷⁰⁷ know (*conoscano*) vedano *B del B2* (see) *conoscano emend sl B2*

⁷⁰⁸ being loved (*essendo amati*) si avvedano *B del B2* *essendo amati emend sl B2*

⁷⁰⁹ made himself (*si è fatto*) ha po *B del B2* *si è fatto emend B2*

Then my friend continued: "In the old days when you were always among the boys was it like that?"

[fol. 3] "Everything was a joy for me then, and the boys used to rush to get near me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my words etc.. But don't you see that now with these visits, and my poor health I cannot do it any more."

"I understand that you can't but why don't your Salesians follow your example? Why don't you insist, why don't you demand, that they treat the boys as you used to do?"

"I do. I talk till I'm blue in the face, but you can understand that even the teachers and assistants are tired of school and not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as we used to".

"And so by neglecting the lesser part they waste the greater, meaning all the work they put in".

"And what is the lesser part?"

"Familiarity!"⁷¹⁰

"If this is not there, they stay away from the Clerics. Something needs a rule, and like the iron rod that when...? exterior. Done without heart it creates enemies. Then there's jealousy between superior and superior. And people don't do things because they might stand out if they do. Human respect. Each one likes his own comforts. Particular friendships".⁷¹¹

"Even I can see that going on like that rules predominate over a fatherly system".

"The familiarity like when Jesus made himself little with the little ones and put up with all our infirmities.|"

"The teacher who is seen only in the classroom is a teacher and nothing more; but if he joins in the recreation he becomes a brother. If someone preaches he is doing his duty, whereas if he says a good word in recreation it is heard as the word of one who loves⁷¹². How many conversions have been brought about by a few words in...⁷¹³ One who loves can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence creates an electric current between youngsters and their superiors. Their needs and weaknesses are made known. Knowing they are loved they open their hearts".⁷¹⁴

3. Ms C

C = original draft by Fr Lemoyne

C2 = later interventions by Fr Lemoyne

[fol. 1r] One of these evenings I was getting ready to go to bed and had begun to say the prayer my good mother had taught me. While I was praying I was distracted or maybe it was a dream and it seemed that two of the boys who were once at the Oratory were standing in front of me. One of these came up to me and greeted me warmly. I looked at him and he said to me: "Do you recognise me, Don Bosco?"

⁷¹⁰Then (*Oh allora*)... familiarity (*famigliarità*) *B del B2*

⁷¹¹Then... friendships (*Ne viene... particolari*) *add mrg sin B2*

⁷¹²Familiarity... loves (*La familiarità... segno*) *B del B2*

⁷¹³How many... in (*Quante... in*) *add mrg sin B2 del B2*

⁷¹⁴One who... hearts (*Chi... cuore*) *B del B2*

“Of course I do,” I answered.

“And do you still remember me?”, the man went on.

“I remember you and all the others. You’re Valfre, and you were at the Oratory before 1860”.

“Tell me, would you like to see the youngsters who were at the Oratory in my time?”

“Yes, let me see them, I would like that very much”.

[fol 1v] Valfre then showed me the boys just as they had been at that | time, with the same age, build and looks. I seemed to be in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping. In one place they were playing leap-frog, in another tig, and in another a ball-game was in progress. In one corner a group of youngsters were gathered round a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a priest was playing with a number of lads at ‘chase the donkey’. There was singing and laughing on all sides, there were priests and clerics everywhere and the boys were yelling and shouting all round them.

I was overjoyed at the sight, and Valfre said to me: “You see, familiarity leads to love and love brings confidence.

At that moment the other past pupil came up to me and said: “Don Bosco, would you like to see and know⁷¹⁵ the boys who are at the Oratory at the present time?”

“Yes, let me see them” I replied. And he showed them to me. I saw the Oratory and all the boys in [fol. 2r] recreation. But no more could I hear the joyful shouts | and singing, no longer⁷¹⁶ was there the lively activity of the previous scene. There was the occasional shout but in general there was evident a weary boredom, a surliness, a suspicion.. I saw many, it is true, who ran about and played in light-hearted joy. But I saw quite a number of others on their own, leaning against the pillars, others were on the steps or in the corridors, so as to be away from the common recreation. Others were strolling about in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction. Sometimes they would laugh, but so listlessly that it was clear they were not enjoying their games.

“Do you see your boys?”, asked my former pupil.

“I can see them”, I replied.

“How different they are from what we used to be”.

“Unfortunately! What an apathetic recreation!”

“This is what gives rise to the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments, to neglect of the [fol. 2v] prayers in | church and elsewhere; to their reluctance to be in a place where Divine Providence⁷¹⁷ heaps every possible blessing on their bodies, their souls and their minds. This is why so many do not follow their vocation, why they are

⁷¹⁵ know (*conoscere*) add *mrg sin C2*

⁷¹⁶ no longer (*più*) add *sl C2*

⁷¹⁷ *post* ‘Provvidenza’ (Providence) add ‘Come sorvegliano giorno e notte, come patiscano freddo e caldo sicché si puon dire veramente sacrificati per i loro allievi?’ (How they watch over them day and night, how they put up with heat and cold so we can say they truly sacrifice themselves for their pupils?)
C del C2

ungrateful to their superiors, why they are secretive and grumble, with all the other regrettable consequences”.

“I understand”, I said. “But how can we bring these youngsters to life again, so that we can get back to the liveliness, the happiness, the warmth of the old days?”

“With love!”

“With love? But don’t my boys get enough love? You know how I love them. You know how much I have suffered and put up with for them these forty years, and how much I endure and suffer even now. How many hardships, how many humiliations, how much opposition, how many persecutions to give them bread, a home, teachers, and especially to provide for the salvation of their souls. I have done everything I knew how and could do for them; they have been the object of my affections all my life.”

“I’m not referring to you”.

[fol. 3r] “Then to whom are you referring? To those |who take my place? To the rectors, the prefects, the teachers, the assistants? Don’t you see that they are martyrs to study and work, and how they burn out their young lives for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them?”

“I can see all that and I am well aware of it, but it is not enough; the best thing is missing”.

“What is missing then?”

“That the youngsters should not only be loved, but that they themselves should know that they are loved”.

“But have they not got eyes in their heads? Have they no intelligence? Don’t they see how much is done for them, and all of it out of love?”

“No, it is not enough”.

“Well, what else is needed?”

“By being loved in the things they like, through taking part in their youthful interests, they are led to see love in those things which they find less attractive, such as discipline, study and self-denial, and so [fol. 3v] | learn to do these things too with love”.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to explain that more clearly”.

“Our Divine Saviour⁷¹⁸ made himself little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses”.

“I don’t understand you well”.

“Look at the boys!”

I looked, and then asked: “Well what is special about it?”

“What? You’ve been educating young people for so many years and you don’t understand! Look harder! Where are your Salesians?”

I looked, and I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. Most of them were walking up and down, chatting among themselves without taking any notice of what the boys were doing or supervised from afar.

Then my friend continued: “In the old days at the Oratory, were you not always among the boys, especially during recreation?”

⁷¹⁸Our Divine Saviour...well (*Il Divin...bene*) *add mrg sin C2*

“Yes, indeed! Everything was a joy for me then, and the boys used to rush to get near me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my advice and put it into practice. But don’t you see that now with these never-ending interviews, business matters, and my poor health I cannot do it any more.”

“Well and good; but if you cannot do it, why don’t your Salesians follow the example you gave? Why [fol. 4r] don’t you insist, | why don’t you demand, that they treat the boys as you used to do?”

“I do. I talk till I’m blue in the face, but even I can see how tired the teachers are and unfortunately not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as we used to.” “What should I recommend to my Salesians then?”

“Familiarity with the boys, especially in recreation. You cannot have love without this familiarity, and where this is not evident there can be no confidence. If you want to be loved, you must make it clear that you love. Jesus Christ made himself little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses. He is our master in the matter of familiarity. The teacher who is seen only in the classroom is a teacher and nothing more; but if he joins in the pupils’ recreation he becomes their respected brother. If someone is [fol. 4v] only seen preaching from the | pulpit it will be said that he is doing no more and no less than his duty, whereas if he says a good word in recreation it is heard as the word of one who loves. How many conversions have been brought about by a few words whispered in the ear⁷¹⁹ of a youngster while he is playing. One who knows he is loved loves in return, and one who loves can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence creates an electric current between youngsters and their superiors. Hearts are opened, needs and weaknesses made known. This love enables superiors to put up with the weariness, the annoyance, the ingratitude, the troubles that youngsters cause, so that everything may have not vainglory as its end, punishing out of wounded self-love, not jealousy of another’s popularity but only the glory of God, the salvation of souls through the example of Jesus Christ. Do you know why the Oratory today is different from the way it was? Because love is replaced with cold rules; because your Salesians have move away from the observance of the rules you gave [fol. 5r] |them; because of the replacement little by little of loving and watchful prevention by a system which is easier for the one in charge: it consists in framing laws and punishing transgressors. This is sure to happen if there is no friendly relationship. So if you want the Oratory to return to the happiness of old, then bring back the old system where Salesians are all things to all, fathers of the boys, always ready to put up with the faults of their youth for as much as charity can allow, taking away all distance, loving everything they love. Then hearts will no longer be closed and deadly subterfuge will no longer hold sway”.

“And what is the best way of achieving this friendly relationship, this kind of love and confidence?”

“The exact observance of the rules of the house”.

“Nothing else?”

“At a dinner the best dish is a hearty welcome”.

“And what other advice would you give me for the smooth running of the house?”

⁷¹⁹in the ear (*all'orecchio*) ‘in cuore’ *C* ‘all'orecchio’ *corr C2*.

“Nothing else but this. Familiarity brings love and love brings confidence and the boys then open [fol. 5v] themselves up without fear to their teachers, assistants, | Superiors. They become frank and open in confession and outside of confession and are obedient to anyone who is in charge and whom they know they are loved by.

While he finished speaking, I went on looking at that recreation with great displeasure. Little by little I felt oppressed by a great weariness that became worse at every moment. Eventually it got so bad that I could resist no longer, and I shook myself and woke up. I found myself standing beside my bed. My legs were so swollen and hurt so much that I could not stand up any longer. It was very late and I went to bed, resolved to write these lines to you, my dear sons.

4. *Ms K* – Letter to the boys at the Oratory in Valdocco, Turin

K = Original draft by Fr Lemoyne

K2 = Fr Lemoyne’s own interventions in his text

R = Fr Rua’s interventions that followed

S = signature: Fr John Bosco.

Rome, 10 May 1884 [fol. 1r]

My dear sons in Jesus Christ,

Whether I am at home or away I am always thinking of you. I have only one wish, to see you happy both in this world and in the next. It was this idea, this wish of mine, that made me write this letter. Being away from you, and not being able to see or hear you, upsets me more than you can imagine. For that reason I would have liked to write these few lines to you a week ago, but constant work prevented me. And so, although I shall be back very soon, I want to send you this letter in advance, since I cannot yet be with you in person. These words come from someone who loves you very dearly in Christ Jesus, someone who has the duty of speaking to you with the freedom of a father. You’ll let me do that, won’t you? And you will pay attention to what I am going to say to you, and put it into practice.

I have said that you are always and exclusively in my thoughts. Well, a couple of evenings ago I had gone to my room, and while I was preparing for bed I began to say the prayers my good mother taught me, and whether I simply fell asleep or became distracted I don’t know, but it seemed that two of the former pupils of the Oratory in its early days were standing there before me. One of them came up to me, greeted me warmly, and said:

“Do you recognise me, Don Bosco?”

“Of course I do”,⁷²⁰ I answered.

“And do you⁷²¹ still remember me?”, the man went on.

“I remember you⁷²² and all the others. You’re Valfre, and you were at the Oratory before 1870”. [fol. 1v]

⁷²⁰ *ante* Sì (Of course I do) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷²¹ *ante* E sì (and do you) *add* ‘V.’ *R*

⁷²² *ante* Di te (You) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

“Tell me”, Valfre continued, “would you like to see the youngsters who were at the Oratory in my time?”

“Yes,⁷²³ let me see them”, I answered. “I would like that very much”.

Valfre then showed me the boys just as they had been at that time, with the same age, build and looks. I seemed to be in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping. In one place they were playing leap-frog, in another *tig* [*bararotta*], and in another a ball-game was in progress. In one corner a group of youngsters were gathered round a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a cleric was laying with a number of lads at ‘chase the donkey’ and ‘trades’. There was singing and laughing on all sides, there were priests and clerics everywhere and the boys were yelling and shouting all round them. You could see that the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors. I was overjoyed at the sight, and Valfre said to me: “You see, closeness leads to love and love brings confidence. It is this that opens hearts and the young people express everything without fear to the teachers, to the assistants and to the superiors. They become frank both in the confessional and out of it.”

At that moment the other past pupil, who had a white beard, came up to me and said: “Don Bosco, would you like to see and know the boys who are at the Oratory at the present time?”

“Yes”, I replied “ it is a month since I last saw them”.

And he showed them to me. I saw the Oratory and all of you in recreation. But no more could I hear the joyful shouts and singing, no longer was there the lively activity of the previous scene. In the faces and actions of many boys there was evident a weary boredom, a surliness, a suspicion, that pained my heart. I saw many, it is true, who ran about and played in light-hearted joy. But⁷²⁴ I saw quite a number of [*fol. 2r*] others on their own, leaning against the pillars, a prey to depressing thoughts. Others were on the steps or in the corridors so as to be away from the common recreation. Others were strolling about in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction. Even among those who were playing, there were some so listless that it was clear they were not enjoying their games.

“Do the boys now seem to be better than those of the past?” I asked my former pupil with the white beard.

He answered: “Even at the moment there is a very large number of good boys at the Oratory”.

“But why such a difference between the boys then and the boys now?”

“The reason⁷²⁵ for such a difference is that a certain number of boys do not have confidence in their Superiors. Previously their hearts were open to the Superiors; the boys loved them and promptly obeyed them. Do you recall those wonderful years, when you, Don Bosco, were able to be with us and deal with us all the time? That was a

⁷²³ *ante* Sì (Yes) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷²⁴ *ante* Ma (But) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷²⁵ *ante* Causa (The reason) *add* ‘a’ *R*

foretaste of heaven and you kept no secrets from us. But now the Superiors are thought of as Superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers, friends; so they are feared and little loved. Therefore if you want to see one heart and soul for the love of Jesus. You need to break down the fatal barrier of mistrust, and substitute it with warm confidence. Let obedience guide the pupil like a mother guides her child. Then the former peace and happiness will reign in the Oratory.”

“Well, how⁷²⁶ do we break down this barrier?”

[fol.2v] “I tell you⁷²⁷ and your Salesians this: Jesus Christ made himself small with the little ones| and bore our sufferings. He did not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smouldering flax. That is your model”.

“And for the boys?”⁷²⁸

“Let them⁷²⁹ acknowledge how much the Superiors, the teachers, the assistants put in and study out of love for them, since if it was not for their benefit they would not put up with such sacrifices; let them remember that humility is the source of all tranquility; let them put up with others’ faults since we do not find perfection in the world but only in heave; let them stop grumbling since this only makes their hearts grow cold; and especially, let them make the effort to live in God’s Grace. Whoever is not at peace with God is not at peace with others.”

“And are you⁷³⁰ telling me that that there are some amongst my boys who are not at peace with God?”

“Among other reasons you already know, this⁷³¹ is the principal cause of bad spirit. There is no need for me to tell you that you must do something about it. The one without trust is the one with secrets to guard, the one who is afraid the secrets will become known and bring him shame and trouble. At the same time, if his heart is not at peace with God he will be a prey to restless anxiety, intolerant of obedience, and get upset over nothing. Everything seems to go wrong for him, and because he has no love himself he thinks the superiors do not love him”.

“But⁷³² see here, my friend; look how many go to confession and communion here at the Oratory”.

“It is true⁷³³ that many go to confession, but what is radically lacking in the confessions of so many [fol. 3r] youngsters is a firm resolution. They tell their sins| but they are always the same, always the same occasions, the same bad habits, the same acts of disobedience, the same neglect of duty. This goes on, month in, month out, even for years and some even continue in this way till they leave school. These confessions are worth little or nothing, and so they do not restore peace, and if a youngster in that state were to be called before God’s judgement seat, it would be a serious matter indeed”.

⁷²⁶ *ante* Come (Well, how) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷²⁷ *ante* A (*te*) (I tell you) *add* ‘a’. *R*

⁷²⁸ *ante* (*E ai*) (And for the) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷²⁹ *ante* (*Che*) (Let them) *add* ‘a’. *R*

⁷³⁰ *ante* (*E tu/*) (And are you) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷³¹ *ante* (*Questa*) (This) *add* ‘a’. *R*

⁷³² *ante* (*Eppure*) (But) *add* ‘Io’ *R*

⁷³³ *ante* (*È vero*) (It is true) *add* ‘a’. *R*

“And are there⁷³⁴ many of these at the Oratory?”

“In comparison with the whole group in the house they are only a few.⁷³⁵ Look”. And he pointed them out to me.

I looked, and I saw those boys one by one. There were not many, but in them I saw things that brought profound bitterness to my soul. I do not want to put such things in writing, but when I come back I want to have a word with each one about what I saw. For the moment I limit myself to saying that it is time to pray and make firm resolutions, with facts and not just words, so as to show that the Comollos, the Dominic Savios, the Besuccos and the Saccardis are still among us.

I put a final question to my friend: “Have you anything else to tell me?”

“Preach⁷³⁶ to all, young and old alike, that they must remember they are children of Mary Help of

Christians. Tell them she has gathered them here to take them away from the dangers of the world, so that they may love one another as brothers and give glory to God and to her by their good behaviour. Tell them that it is Our Lady who provides them with bread and the means to study, by endless graces and wonders. Remind them that they are at the vigil of the feast of their holy Mother, so that with her help that barrier of mistrust will fall which has been raised between boys and superiors by the devil, who knows how to use it to ruin certain souls”.

While he finished speaking I was oppressed by a great weariness, Unable to put up with it any longer I shook myself and woke up. |

[fol. 3v] I found myself standing near the bed. My legs were so swollen and sore that I could not stand up any longer. It was late, and so I went to bed determined to write down these few lines for you, my dear children. There were many other very important things I saw and would still like to tell you, but time and circumstance do not allow me. And now I must finish. Do you know what this poor old man who has spent his whole life for his dear boys wants from you? Nothing else than, due allowances being made, we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old: the days of affection and Christian confidence between boys and superiors; the days when we accepted and put up with difficulties for the love of Jesus Christ; the days when hearts were open with a simple candour; days of love and real joy for everyone. I want the consolation and hope that you will promise to do everything I desire for the good of your souls. You do not realise how lucky you are in having come to the Oratory. I declare before God: it is enough for a young person to enter a Salesian house for Our Lady to take him under her special care.

Let us all agree on this then: may the charity of those who command⁷³⁷ and the charity of those who must obey,⁷³⁸ cause the spirit of St Francis de Sales to reign among us. My dear children, the time is coming when I will have to tear myself away from you and

⁷³⁴ *ante (E di)* (And are there) *add 'Io' R*

⁷³⁵ *ante (Pochi)* few) *add 'a' R*

⁷³⁶ *ante (Predica)* (Preach) *add 'a' R*

⁷³⁷ those who command (*chi comanda*) *quelli che comandano corr R*

⁷³⁸ those who must obey (*chi obbedisce*) *quelli che devono obbedire corr R*

leave for eternity. (Secretary's note: at this⁷³⁹ point Don Bosco broke off the dictation; his eyes filled with tears, not of sorrow but because of the inexpressible tenderness that was evident from his face and voice; after a few moments he went on.) [fol. 4r] "And so I want to leave you, my dear priests and brothers and my dearest boys, on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow. For this purpose the Holy Father, whom I saw on Friday 9 May, sends you his blessing from the bottom of his heart.

I will be with you on the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, before the statue of our loving Mother. I want this feast to be celebrated with full solemnity, and that Fr Lazzero and Fr Marchisio see to it that you have a good time in the dining-room as well.⁷⁴⁰ The feast of Mary Help of Christians should be a prelude to the eternal feast that we will all celebrate one day together in heaven.

With much love, your friend in Christ Jesus.

Fr John Bosco⁷⁴¹

5. MS D Letter to the Salesian Community at the Oratory in Valdocco, Turin

D = original draft of Fr Lemoyne's

D2 = interventions by Fr Lemoyne in his own text

E = copy by Fr Berto

E2 = interventions by Fr Berto in his own manuscript

F = copy by a scribe

F2 = interventions by same scribe in his own text

G = text in Documenti XXVII, 221-228

H = text published in MB 17, 107-114

I = text published in E, 261-269

J = text published in Acts of Superior Chapter (1920)

Rome, 10 May 1884

My dear sons in Jesus Christ,

Whether I am at home or away I am always thinking of you.⁷⁴² I have only one wish, to see you happy both in this world and in the next. It was this idea, this wish of mine, that made me write this letter. Being away from you⁷⁴³, and not being able to see or hear you, upsets me more than you can imagine. For that reason I would have liked to write⁷⁴⁴ these few lines to you a week ago, but constant work prevented me. And so, although I shall be back very soon, I want to send you this letter in advance, since I

⁷³⁹ *ante* (*A questo*) (at this) *add sl* 'Nota Segret'. *R*

⁷⁴⁰ Fr Lazzero. . . well (*D. Lazzero. . . stare*) *che stiamo corr R*

⁷⁴¹ Fr John Bosco (*Sac. Gio. Bosco*) *add S*

⁷⁴² "Thursday next [15 February 1872] God willing I will be in Turin. I feel a serious need to go there. I am living here in the body but my thoughts and even my words are always at the Oratory amidst you. I know this is a weakness but I cannot do anything about it" - Don Bosco to Fr Rua, from Alassio 9.2.72 E II 193. - "Soon I will be with you again, with you who are the object of all my thoughts and my concern, you who have taken possession of my heart" - Don Bosco to the young students at Valdocco (Turin) from Rome on 7.3.1874 - E II 361-362.

⁷⁴³ from.. you (*da.. voi*) *om EJ*

⁷⁴⁴ write (*scrivere*) *scrivervi EJ*

cannot yet be with you in person. These words come from someone who loves you very dearly in Christ Jesus, someone who has the duty of speaking to you with the freedom of a father.⁷⁴⁵ You'll let me do that, won't you? And you will pay attention to what⁷⁴⁶ I am going to say to you, and put it into practice.

I have said that you are always and exclusively in my thoughts. Well, a couple of evenings ago I had gone to my room, and while I was preparing for bed I began to say the prayers my good mother taught me, and whether I simply fell asleep or became distracted I don't know, but it seemed that two of the former pupils of the Oratory in its early days were standing there before me. One of them came up to me, greeted me warmly, and said: "Do you recognise me, Don Bosco?"

"Of course I do", I answered.

"And do you still remember me?", the man went on.⁷⁴⁷

"I remember you and all the others. You're Valfrè,⁷⁴⁸ and you were at the Oratory before 1870".⁷⁴⁹

"Tell me", Valfrè, went on "would you like to see the youngsters who were at the Oratory in my time?"

"Yes,⁷⁵⁰ let me see them", I answered. "I would like that very much".

Valfrè⁷⁵¹ then showed me the boys just as they had been at that time, with the same age, build and looks. I seemed to be in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping. In one place they were playing leap-frog, in another a game of tag, and in another a ball-game was in progress. In one corner a group⁷⁵² of youngsters were gathered round a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a cleric was laying with a number of lads⁷⁵³ at 'chase the donkey' and 'trades'. There was singing and laughing on all sides, there were priests and clerics everywhere and the boys were yelling and shouting all round them. You could see that the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors. I was overjoyed at the sight, and Valfrè⁷⁵⁴ said to me: "You see, closeness leads to love and love brings confidence."⁷⁵⁵ It is this that opens hearts and the young people express everything without fear to the teachers, to the assistants and to the superiors. They become frank both in the confessional and out

⁷⁴⁵with the freedom of a father (*colla libertà di un padre*) *EJ*

⁷⁴⁶what (*quello che*) quanto *EJ*

⁷⁴⁷went on (*soggiunse*) aggiunse *EJ*

⁷⁴⁸Valfrè | quell'uomo *FGHI*

⁷⁴⁹In all probability this is Ferdinando Valfrè, born Pinerolo 1843, student at the Oratory from 1 May 1859 to July 1860 (Accounts, ms original by Fr Victor Alasonatti). The register at Valdocco also indicates a Bartolomeo Valfrè, born Villafranca Piedmont on 22 December 1855, entered the Oratory as a student on 11 August 1866. A young Valfrè, 17 years old, whom Don Bosco says is a relative of B. Sebastian Valfrè, with good qualities and of excellent character, already appears in a letter of Don Bosco's to Rosminian Fr Giuseppe Fradelizio, 5 June 1849 (Em I 85).

⁷⁵⁰Yes (*Sì*) *om EJ*

⁷⁵¹Valfrè | egli *F*

⁷⁵²group (*crocchio*) cricchio *J* dal labbro (from the lips) dalle labbra *EJ*

⁷⁵³lads (*giovanetti*) giovani *EJ*

⁷⁵⁴Valfrè | quell'uomo *F*

⁷⁵⁵love, and love.. (*amore, e l'amore*) affetto e l'affetto /*FGHI*/

of it, and they will do everything they are asked by one whom they know loves them”.⁷⁵⁶

At that moment the other past pupil, who had a white beard, came up to me and said: “Don Bosco, would you like to see and know the boys who are at the Oratory at the present time?” (This man was Joseph Buzzetti).⁷⁵⁷

“Yes”, I replied, “it is a month since I last saw them”. And he showed them to me.

I saw the Oratory and all of you in recreation. But no more could I hear the joyful shouts and singing, no longer was there the lively activity of the previous scene. In the faces and actions of many boys there was evident a weary boredom, a surliness, a suspicion, that pained my heart. I saw many, it is true, who ran about and played⁷⁵⁸ in light-hearted joy. But I saw quite a number of others on their own, leaning against the pillars, a prey to depressing thoughts. Others were on the steps or in the corridors, or up on the terraces near the garden so as to be away from the common recreation. Others were strolling about⁷⁵⁹ in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction. Sometimes they would laugh,⁷⁶⁰ but with looks and smirks that would make you not only suspect but feel quite certain that St Aloysius would have blushed to find himself in their company. Even among those who were playing, there were some so listless that it was clear they were not enjoying⁷⁶¹ their games.

“Do you⁷⁶² see your boys?”, asked my former pupil.

“I can see them”,⁷⁶³ I replied with a sigh.

“How different they are from what we used to be”, went on the past⁷⁶⁴ pupil.

“Too true! What an apathetic recreation!”

“This is what gives rise to the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments, to neglect of the prayers in church and elsewhere; to their reluctance to be in a place where Divine Providence heaps every possible blessing on their bodies, their souls and their minds. This is why so many do not follow their vocation, why they are ungrateful

⁷⁵⁶“The Oratory then was a true family” – MB III 353. – “Until 1858 Don Bosco governed and ran the Oratory as a father would lead his own family, and the boys felt there was no difference between the Oratory and their own home” – MB IV 679. - “D. Bosco was an example of true Christian loving kindness and while he was in charge of us he did away with artificial formalities, the strictness that was creating a divide between the one commanding and the one obeying. He exercised authority in a loving expansive way, inspiring respect, confidence and love. And our souls opened up to him intimately, joyfully and completely. Everyone wanted to go to confession to him. . . I would say this was the most unique system and a rare one between Superior and those who depended on him” – G. Ballesio, *Vita intima di D. Giovanni Bosco nel suo primo Oratorio di Torino*. Turin, Tip. Salesiana 1888, p. 21 – cf also MB VI 592.

⁷⁵⁷This. . . Buzzetti (*Costui. . . Giuseppe*) om F. Joseph Buzzetti, born in 1832, a pupil at the Oratory from the beginning, as a student (1847-1851), then a lay collaborator and finally a Religious Brother in 1877. He died in 1892 – E. Ceria, *Profili di 33 coadiutori salesiani*. Colle Don Bosco, LDC 1952, pp. 17-24.

⁷⁵⁸played (*si agitvano*) om EJ

⁷⁵⁹strolling about (*passaggiare*) passeggiavano EJ

⁷⁶⁰laugh (*sorridere*) sorridevano J

⁷⁶¹were not enjoying (*come non trovaasero*) che non trovano EJ

⁷⁶²Do you (*Hai*) Ha HI tuoi (your) suoi HI

⁷⁶³I see (*vedo*) vidi EJ

⁷⁶⁴past (*quel vecchio*) quell'antico EFGHI

to their superiors, why they are secretive and grumble, with all the other regrettable consequences".⁷⁶⁵

"I see, I understand", I said. "But how can we bring these youngsters to life again, so that we can get back to the liveliness, the happiness, the warmth of the old days?"

"With love!"⁷⁶⁶

"With love?"⁷⁶⁷ But don't my boys get enough love? You know how I love them.⁷⁶⁸ You know how much I have suffered and put up with for them these forty years, and how much I endure and suffer even now.⁷⁶⁹ ⁷⁷⁰ How many hardships, how many humiliations, how much opposition, how many persecutions to give them bread, a home, teachers, and especially to provide for the salvation of their souls. I have done everything I possibly could for them;⁷⁷¹ they are the object of all my affections".

"I'm not referring to you".⁷⁷²

"Then to whom are you referring? To those who take my place? To the rectors, the prefects, the teachers, the assistants? Don't you see that they are martyrs to study and work, and how they burn out their young lives⁷⁷³ for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them?"

"I can see all that and I am well aware of it, but it is not enough; the best thing is missing".

"That the youngsters should not only be loved, but that they themselves should know that they are loved".⁷⁷⁴

"But have they not got eyes in their heads? Have they no intelligence? Don't they see

⁷⁶⁵"There are financial and personal sacrifices, but if the preventive system is practised and we will have vocations in abundance... Patience and kindness, Christian relationships between teachers and pupils will bring about many vocations amongst them" – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6*, RSS 4 (1985), p. 106.

⁷⁶⁶With love! (*Coll'amore!*) Colla carità *FGHI*

⁷⁶⁷Love? (*Amore?*) Colla carità? *FGHI*

⁷⁶⁸"... Our preventive system of education. It has to be love that attracts young people to do good through constant guidance and supervision; not a system of punishment for faults after they have been committed" – Don Bosco in his final conference at the 1st General Chapter (1877), MB XIII 292.

⁷⁶⁹"This morning he told me his head felt very tired but just the same he continues to get involved in matters to do with our Congregation. You can always see how much he loves us and how many sacrifices, humiliations he puts up with for his children. Sometimes when he is talking about his past, he smiles, but if you listen you feel your heart is affected. How much he has suffered over forty eight years! This is the question to preach to everyone, young or old" – Fr Lemoyne to Fr Rua from Rome, 20.4.1884 – ASC 9126 Rua – cf. Also MB XVII 89. – "The only thing we can say for sure, meaning the great love he bears always and still bears for the young, for whose good he is ready to spend whatever is left of his life" – Don Bosco's address, 23 June 1884, BS 8 (1884) no. 7, July, p. 98.

⁷⁷⁰suffered and put up with (*tollero e soffro*) soffro e tollero *EJ*

⁷⁷¹everything I possibly could (*potuto e saputo*) saputo e potuto *FGHI*

⁷⁷²you (*te*) lei *HI*

⁷⁷³burn out their young lives (*consumino*) consacrino *E* consumano *HI* consacrano *J*

⁷⁷⁴"A certain Serega Giuseppe... one day asked Don Bosco what might be the essential gifts for a Rector to be able to control a college or home well, and Don Bosco answered: 'it is necessary... 1. That he is regarded as a saint, 2. that he has a reputation for being learned, especially in things that interest the pupils... 3. That the boys know they are loved" – MB VII 302.

how much is done for them, and all of it out of love?”⁷⁷⁵

“No, I repeat: it is not enough”.

“Well, what else is needed?”

“By being loved in the things they like, through taking part in their youthful interests, they are led to see love in those things which they find less attractive,⁷⁷⁶ such as discipline, study and self-denial, and so learn to do these things too with love”.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to explain that more clearly”.

“Look at the youngsters in recreation”.⁷⁷⁷

I looked, and then asked: “Well what is special about it?”

“You’ve been educating young people for so many years and you don’t understand! Look harder! Where are our Salesians?”

I looked, and I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. The superiors were no longer the heart and soul of the recreation. Most of them were walking up and down, chatting among themselves without taking any notice of what the pupils⁷⁷⁸ were doing. Others looked on at the recreation but paid little heed⁷⁷⁹ to the boys. Others supervised from afar, not noticing whether anyone was doing something wrong. Some did take notice but only rarely, and then in a threatening manner. Here and there a Salesian did try to mix with a group of boys, but I saw that the latter were bent on keeping their distance from teachers and superiors.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁵ ante (*amore*) (love) *add* slancio ed *GHI* amore | slancio *F*

⁷⁷⁶“It is very difficult to get youngsters to like praying. Their fickle age makes whatever requires the serious attention of the mind heavy and boring for them” - G. Bosco *Il pastorello delle Alpi*. Turin, Tip. Salesiana 1864, pp. 113-114, OE XIV 355-356. - “Speaking of penance to youngsters generally frightens them off” - *Ibid.*, p. 119, OE XV 361 - “They liked this mixture of devotion, games, outings and everyone became very friendly with me so that they were not just obedient to what I asked them to do but were anxious for me to give them any task to do” - MO 157-158: Cf. MO 176. - “Give them ample room to jump, run, and have fun. Gymnastics, music, recital, simple theatricals, outings are very effective means for gaining discipline, helping behaviour and health” - *Il sistema preventivo* II 3 - OE XXIX 103.

⁷⁷⁷“As we were saying, he loved recreation. Magone had covered the wide area of this playground in a few minutes... It was wonderful seeing how he was the soul of the recreation and kept everything moving, as he he was driven by a machine, but he was always the first to be where duty called him” - *Cenno biografico del giovanetto Magone Michele* (1861), p. 33. OE XIII 187. - “I have already observed one thing that does not please me. This is always seeing two, three, four or five confreres together, always the same ones and nearly always apart from the others... So I would like you to try always to be in the midst of the boys during recreation, run around and enjoy yourself with them, give them good advice. Vigilance. When you cannot take part in their games at least assist them, walk around the more remote areas of the house and try to prevent wrongdoing. You would not believe the good you can achieve by climbing a staircase, walking along a corridor, taking a walk here or there through the courtyard” - Don Bosco to the Salesians at Valdocco (Turin) 11 March 1869, MB IX 576. - “Act in such a way that the assistants and in general those who are in authority are midst the boys at recreation time” - Circular to Salesians, from Turin on 15.11.1873, E II 320.

⁷⁷⁸ pupils (*i allievi*) i giovani *EJ*

⁷⁷⁹ any heed (*nessun*) nessun *E* neppur *corr E2* neppur *J* dei boys (*giovani*) degli allievi *EJ*

⁷⁸⁰“Those who have some office or lend assistance to the boys that Divine Providence has entrusted to us have the duty to give advice to any boy in the house whenever there is good reason especially when it is a case of preventing an offence against God” - *Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (1877), *Articoli generali*, n. 1, OE XXIX 111.

Then my friend continued: "In the old days at the Oratory, were you not always among the boys, especially during recreation? Do you remember those wonderful years? They were a foretaste of heaven, a period of which we have fond memories, because then love⁷⁸¹ was the rule and we had no secrets from you".⁷⁸²

"Yes, indeed! Everything was a joy for me then, and the boys used to rush to get near me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my advice and put it into practice. But don't you see that now with these never-ending interviews, business matters, and my poor health I cannot do it any more".

"Well and good; but if you cannot do it, why don't your Salesians follow the example you gave? Why don't you insist, why don't you demand, that they treat the boys as you used to do?"

"I do. I talk till I'm blue in the face, but unfortunately not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as we used to".

"And so by neglecting the lesser part they waste the greater, meaning⁷⁸³ all the work they put in. Let them like what pleases the youngsters and the youngsters will come to like what pleases the superiors. In this way their work will be made easy. The reason for the present change in the Oratory is that many of the boys no longer have confidence in their superiors. There was a time when all hearts were wide open to their superiors, when the boys loved them and gave them prompt obedience. But now the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers and friends;⁷⁸⁴ they are feared and little loved. And so if you want everyone to be of one heart and soul again for the love of Jesus you must break down this fatal barrier of mistrust, and replace it with a happy spirit of confidence⁷⁸⁵. Then obedience will guide the pupil as a mother guides her baby; and the old peace and happiness⁷⁸⁶ will reign once again in the Oratory".

"How then are we to set about breaking down this barrier?"

"By a friendly informal relationship with the boys, especially in recreation. You cannot have love⁷⁸⁷ without this familiarity, and where this is not evident there can be no

⁷⁸¹love (*amore*) affetto *EFGHI*

⁷⁸²you (*lei tu D (lei) corr D2 (può)*) (cannot) puoi *D può corr D2* suoi (your) tuoi *D suoi corr D2*

⁷⁸³meaning (*questo om F*)

⁷⁸⁴"To our boys. Your Father, your brother, friend of your soul after three and a half months away, leaves Rome today" – Don Bosco to the boys at Valdocco (Turin) from Rome on 14.4.74, E II 378.

"The pupil will be always respectful to his teacher and will still recall with pleasure the guidance he received, still considering his teachers and other superiors as fathers and brothers" – The preventive system III 1, OE XXIX 107. – "God not as a Superior but as a friend, brother and father". – Don Bosco to Fr Perrot, from Turin on 2.7.78, E III 360. "The new Rector M. 1. Will address some words to the electors, thank them for the trust put in him and will assure them that he loves them all like a father, friend, brother. He will request their cooperation, and where appropriate, their advice" – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 per sac. Gio. Bosco* RSS 4 (1985), p. 101.

⁷⁸⁵"All members will live a common life bound only by fraternal charity and simple vows which bind them into one heart and soul to love and serve God" – *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* in the original manuscript and in all following editions. – "To confreres living in the same house. 1. All Salesian confreres living in the same house must be one heart and soul with their Rector" – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6*, RSS 4 (1985), p. 117.

⁷⁸⁶happiness (*allegrezza*) allegria *E*

⁷⁸⁷love (*amore*) affetto *F GHI*

confidence. If you want to be loved, you must make it clear that you love. Jesus Christ made himself little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses. He is our master in the matter of the friendly approach.⁷⁸⁸ The teacher who is seen only in the classroom is a teacher and nothing more; but if he joins in the pupils' recreation he becomes their brother. If someone is only seen preaching from the pulpit it will be said that he is doing no more and no less than his duty, whereas if he says a good word in recreation it is heard as the word of one who loves. How many conversions have been brought about by a few words whispered in the ear⁷⁸⁹ of a youngster while he is playing. One who knows he is loved loves in return, and one who loves can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence creates an electric current between youngsters and their superiors. Hearts are opened, needs and weaknesses made known. This love enables superiors to put up with the weariness, the annoyance, the ingratitude, the troubles that youngsters cause. Jesus Christ did not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smouldering flax.⁷⁹⁰ He is your model. Then you will no longer see anyone working for his own glory; you will no longer see anyone punishing out of wounded self-love; you will not see anyone neglecting the work of supervision through jealousy of another's popularity; you won't hear people running others down so as to be looked up to by the boys: those who exclude all other superiors and earn for themselves nothing but contempt and hypocritical flattery; people who let their hearts be stolen by one individual and neglect all the other boys to cultivate that particular one.⁷⁹¹ No one will neglect his strict duty of supervision for the sake of his own ease and comfort; no one will fail through human respect to reprimand those who need reprimanding.⁷⁹² If we have this true love,⁷⁹³ we shall not seek anything other than the glory of God and the good of souls. When this love languishes, things no longer go

⁷⁸⁸ He is... approach (*Ecco... familiarità*) *om D add mrg sin D2*

⁷⁸⁹ "With the young pupils... 2. Try to be known by the pupils and to get to know them, spending all the time possible with them and trying to offer them an affectionate word in the ear that you will know well how to give once you learn their needs little by little. This the great secret that will make you master of their hearts". Ricordi confidenziali ai direttori, first draft 1863. – cf. MB VI, chap XXX. *Don Bosco in mezzo ai giovani... La parola all'orecchio*, pp. 400-426. – "I saw a few good priests who worked in sacred ministry but I could not strike up any kind of familiarity with them... A few times I said to myself and also to others: if I were a priest, I would do things differently; I would approach the children, say something good to them, give them good advice" – MO 44. – "Professor Banaudi was the true model of the teacher. Without ever inflicting punishment he succeeded in being feared and loved by all his pupils. He loved them all as his sons, and they loved him as a tender father". – MO 63. – "To succeed well with the boys, make every effort to treat them well; make yourself loved and not feared; show them and persuade them that it is the health of their souls you want; correct their faults patiently and charitably and restrain yourself especially from striking them; in short, act so that when they see you they come around you and not run from you" – Don Bosco to the past pupil priests, BS 4 (1880) no. 9, Sept., p. 11.

⁷⁹⁰ smouldering (*fumava*) *fumigava GHI*

⁷⁹¹ "The teachers, master tradesmen, assistants must be of known good moral behaviour They should avoid like the plague all kinds of particular friendships or affections with the pupils and recall that the betrayal of one can compromise an educational institution" – *Il sistema preventivo* II 2, OE XXIX 103.

⁷⁹² no one... reprimanding (*chi... ammonito*) *add mrg sin D2 un vano... umano* (through human respect) *rispetto vano EJ*

⁷⁹³ love (*all'amore*) *alla carità FGH I*

well. Why do people want to replace love with cold rules?⁷⁹⁴ Why do the superiors move away from the observance of the rules Don Bosco has given them? Why the replacement little by little of loving and watchful prevention by a system which consists in framing laws? Such laws either have to be sustained through punishment and so create hatred and cause unhappiness or, if they are not enforced, cause the superiors to be despised and bring about serious disorders. This is sure to happen if there is no friendly relationship. So if you want the Oratory to return to the happiness of old, then bring back the old system: let the superior be all things to all, always ready to listen to any boy's complaints or doubts, always alert⁷⁹⁵ to keep a paternal eye on their conduct, all heart to seek the spiritual and temporal good of those Divine Providence has entrusted to him. Then hearts will no longer be closed and deadly subterfuge will no longer hold sway. The superiors should be unbending only in the case of immoral conduct.⁷⁹⁶ It is better to run the risk of expelling someone who is innocent than to keep someone who causes others to sin. Assistants should make it a strict duty in conscience to refer to the superiors whatever they know to be an offence against God".

Then I asked a question: "And what is the best way of achieving this friendly relationship, this kind of love and confidence?"

"The exact observance of the rules of the house".

"Nothing else?"

"At a dinner the best dish is a hearty welcome".

With that my past pupil finished speaking, and I went on looking at that recreation with great displeasure. Little by little I felt oppressed by a great weariness that became worse at every moment. Eventually it got so bad that I could resist no longer, and I shook myself and woke up. I found myself standing beside my bed. My legs were so swollen and hurt so much that I could not stand up any longer. It was very late and I went to bed, resolved to write these lines to my sons.

I wish I did not have these dreams, they tire me so much. The following day I was dead tired, and I could hardly wait for the hour to come to go to bed that evening. But I was hardly in bed when the dream began again. Before me once again was the playground, with the boys at present at the Oratory and the same past pupil as before. I began to question him.

"I'll let my Salesians know what you have told me,⁷⁹⁷ but what should I say to the boys of the Oratory?"

"Tell them," he said, "to realise how much the superiors, the teachers, the assistants, plan and wear themselves out⁷⁹⁸ for love of them, since they would not sacrifice themselves so much if they didn't love them. Let them never forget that humility is the source of all peace of mind; let them be able to put up with each other's shortcomings, because there is no perfection in this world, only in heaven. Tell them not to grumble because it

⁷⁹⁴rules (*di educazione*) om EJ

⁷⁹⁵alert (*occhio*) occhi EJ

⁷⁹⁶"You can never be too severe in things that help to preserve morality" – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6*, RSS (1985), p. 92.

⁷⁹⁷have told (*dicesti*) diceste F

⁷⁹⁸wear themselves out (*fatichino*) si affatichino EJ

freezes the heart. But especially, tell them to live in the holy grace of God. If you are not at peace with God, you cannot be at peace with yourself, nor with others”.

“Are you telling me then that among my boys there are some who are not at peace with God?”

“Among other reasons you already know,⁷⁹⁹ this is the principal cause of bad spirit. There is no need for me to tell you that you must do⁸⁰⁰ something about it. The one without trust is the one with secrets to guard, the one who is afraid the secrets will become known and bring him shame and trouble. At the same time, if his heart is not at peace with God⁸⁰¹ he will be a prey to restless anxiety, intolerant of obedience, and get upset over nothing. Everything seems to go wrong for him, and because he has no love himself⁸⁰² he thinks the superiors do not love him”.

“But see here, my friend; look how many go to confession and communion here at the Oratory”.

“It is true that many go to confession, but what is radically lacking in the confessions of so many youngsters is a firm resolution.⁸⁰³ They tell their sins but they are always the same, always the same occasions, the same bad habits, the same acts of disobedience, the same neglect of duty. This goes on, month in, month out, even for years and some even continue in this way till they leave school. These confessions are worth little or nothing, and so they do not restore peace, and if a youngster in that state were to be called before God’s judgement seat, it would be a serious matter indeed. But in comparison with the whole group in the house they are only a few. Look.” And he pointed them out to me.

I looked, and I saw those boys one by one. There were not many, but in them I saw things that brought profound bitterness to my soul. I do not want to put such things in writing, but when I come back I want to have a word with each one about what I saw. For the moment I limit myself to saying that it is time to pray and make firm resolutions, with facts and not just words, so as to show that the Comollos,⁸⁰⁴ the Dominic Savios, the Besuccos and the Saccardis are still among us.

I put a final question to my friend: “Have you anything else to tell me?”

⁷⁹⁹you already know (*tu sai*) tu sai *F* lei sa *corr F2* lei sa *HI*

⁸⁰⁰must do (*devi*) deve *F* ti (you) le *F*

⁸⁰¹“He spoke of the great gift of peace, concluding that to be at peace with God and one’s neighbour one needs first of all to be at peace with oneself” – Don Bosco to the FMA on 28 August 1875, MB XI 363. – “Continue on the path of virtue and you will have peace of heart, the esteem of men and the blessings of the Lord” – Don Bosco to the pupils at St Nicholas College (Argentina) letter of 1.7.1876, E III 67.

⁸⁰²and because... love himself (*e perché... amore*) *om EJ*

⁸⁰³“The things that the children are ordinarily missing in their confessions are sorrow for their sins and good resolutions” – *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6*, RSS 4 (1985), p. 91.

⁸⁰⁴Luigi Comollo (1817-1839), cleric with Don Bosco in the seminary in Chieri; *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo (1844)* by Don Bosco. Dominic Savio (1842-1857), born Riv di Chieri 2 April 1842 and entered the Oratory on 29 October 1854 as a student. He left there 1 March 1857 and died at Mondonio on 9 March; he was canonised on 1954. Francis Besucco, born at Argentera (Cuneo) in 1850; entered the Oratory on 3 August 1863 as a student. He died at the Oratory on 9 January 1864. Ernest Saccardi (1850-1866), born in Lyon on 15 January 1850 and came to Mirabello Monferrato (AL) on 24 December 1865 as a student. He died at the Oratory on 4 July 1866.

“Preach⁸⁰⁵ to all, young and old alike, that they must remember they are children of Mary Help of Christians. Tell them she has gathered them here to take them way from the dangers of the world, so that they may love one another as brothers and give glory to God and to her by their good behaviour. Tell them that it is Our Lady who provides them with bread and the means to study, by endless graces and wonders. Remind them that they are at the vigil of the feast of their holy Mother, so that with her help that barrier of mistrust will fall which has been raised between boys and superiors by the devil, who knows how to use it to ruin certain souls”.⁸⁰⁶

“And will we be successful in breaking down this barrier?”

“Certainly you will, as long as young and old are ready to put up with some small mortifications for love of Mary and do what I have told you”.

Meanwhile I continued to watch my youngsters, but at the sight of those I had seen heading for eternal damnation I experienced such heartache that I awoke. I still have to tell you many important things that I saw,⁸⁰⁷ but I have neither time nor opportunity at present.

And now I must finish. Do you know what this poor old man who has spent his whole life for his dear boys wants from you? Nothing else than, due allowances being made, we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old: the days of affection⁸⁰⁸ and Christian confidence between boys and superiors;⁸⁰⁹ the days when we accepted and put up with difficulties for the love of Jesus Christ; the days when hearts were open with a simple candour; days of love and real joy for everyone. I want the consolation and hope that you will promise to do everything I desire for the good of your souls.

You do not realise how lucky you are in having come to the Oratory. I declare before God: it is enough for a young person to enter a Salesian house for Our Lady to take him under her special care.⁸¹⁰ Let us all agree on this then: may the charity of those who command and the charity of those who must obey cause the spirit of St Francis de Sales to reign among us. My dear children, the time is coming when I will have to tear myself away from you and leave for eternity." (Secretary's note: at this point Don Bosco broke off the dictation; his eyes filled with tears, not of sorrow but because of the inexpressible tenderness that was evident from his face and voice; after a few moments he went on.)

⁸⁰⁵Preach (*Predica*) predichi *F*

⁸⁰⁶“Propose fervent prayer for me from amongst the boys... 2. Because I need lots. Tell this to the older ones and the younger ones” – Don Bosco at the meeting of the Superior Council 28 February 1884, MB XVII 34. – “Don Bosco says *Cereja* [or *ciarèia*, Piedmontese = good morning] to you then to all the others, big and small” – Fr Lemoyne to Fr Rua, letter from Rome 16 April 1884, ASC 9126 Rua. - “This should be the topic to preach to everyone, big and small since unfortunately they do not think about it” – Fr Lemoyne to Fr Rua, letter from Rome 20 April 1884, ASC 9126 Rua.

⁸⁰⁷*ante vedeva* (I saw) *add 'io' EJ*

⁸⁰⁸affection (*amore*) affetto *FGHI*

⁸⁰⁹“I do not want you to think of me so much as a Superior but as your friend. Therefore have no fear of me, no fear, but much confidence. That is what I want, what I ask of you, that we be true friends. – Without your help I can do nothing. I need us to agree and that between you and me there reigns true confidence and friendship” – from two Good Nights of Don Bosco's in August and September 1862, MB VII 503-504.

⁸¹⁰“Let them continue to pray for him, often recalling the great fortune of being children of the Madonna in a special way” – Fr Lemoyne to Fr Rua, letter from Rome, 16 April 1884, ASC 9126 Rua.

"And so I want to leave you, my dear priests and brothers and my dearest boys, on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow. For this purpose the Holy Father, whom I saw on Friday 9 May, sends you his blessing from the bottom of his heart."⁸¹¹

I will be with you on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, before the statue of our loving Mother. I want this feast to be celebrated with full solemnity, and that Fr Lazzero⁸¹² and Fr Marchisio see to it that you have a good time in the dining-room as well. The feast of Mary Help of Christians should be a prelude to the eternal feast that we will all celebrate one day together in heaven.

With much love, your friend in Christ Jesus.

Fr John Bosco

Memoirs from 1841 to 1884-5-6 To his beloved Salesian children

by Francesco Motto

Introduction

"Fr Viglietti, take a look on my table and you will find a small book of memoirs; you know what I am talking about. Take it and then give it to Fr Bonetti, so it does not end up in just anyone's possession".⁸¹³

With these words, then handed down to us in the faithful secretary's notebook, Don Bosco handed down to those who followed him what is known in Salesian tradition as Don Bosco's *Spiritual testament*,⁸¹⁴ but which in reality has the title, in the Saint's writing: *Memoirs from 1841 to 1884-5-6 by Fr John Bosco to his Salesian sons*.

⁸¹¹ Effectively on Friday 9 May Don Bosco had a long and friendly audience with Pope Leo XIII. To his secretary Fr Lemoyne, introduced at the end of the audience, the Pope said: 'You have to look after his health and see that he does not wear himself out too much. Do not allow him to write: his eyes are too tired and badly affected – MB XVII 105.

⁸¹² Giuseppe Lazzero, born at Pino Torinese on 10 May 1837, made his religious profession in 1862 and became priest in 1865. He was a member of the Superior Council of the Salesian Society from 1874 to 1898, vice rector (1875-1879) and rector (1879-1886) of the Oratory. He died at Mathi Torinese on 7 March 1910. Secondo Marchisio (1857-1x914), Salesian priest, prefect (in charge of general discipline and finance) at the Oratory in the 1883-1884 school year. He died in Bologna on 20 May 1914. "My dear Fr Lazzero... Tell our beloved confreres and the dear boys at the house that my health, especially these last two days, has improved notably and therefore on my arrival I want us to have a nice feast in the church to thank Our Lady for the many good things she has done, and also in the refectory to chase away sadness and be happy in the Lord... Rome, 23 April 1884" – letter to the Rector at the Oratory, ASC 131.01, E IV 256.

⁸¹³ ASC 110 Viglietti (8) *Cronaca di Don Bosco dal 23 dicembre al 31 gennaio 1888*, p. 8-9, cited in MB XVIII 492-493. Fr Bonetti was then the Spiritual Director General of the Salesian Congregation.

⁸¹⁴ Fr Rua spoke of "testament" in his circular on 8 February 1888, but a week after Don Bosco's death: *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesiani*. Turin, tip S.A.I.D. - Buona stampa, 1910, p. 4. The term "spiritual testament" has a certain official nature about it in the presentation of the "farewell letter" by Fr Albera in 1916: "This is received and kept as his spiritual testament, coming from the great affection he had for his beloved children in Jesus Christ": *Pratiche di pietà in uso nelle case salesiane*. Turin, Scuola tipografica salesiana (1916) p. 325. True copies are kept in ASC and published in MB X 1331-1336.

The definition, however, is appropriate, both for the date on which the manuscript went from Don Bosco's hands to those who would continue his work (24 December 1887): 38 days before his death) and for the power of its content, from a father getting ready to offer his final farewell to his sons. After having sown in life through word and deed, Don Bosco did not want to leave out this last opportunity: he entrusts his last message and the fulfilment of his resolutions to others ready to carry them out.

It is a work of around 140 small pages in which Don Bosco, having arrived at the zenith of his existence, had written reminders and advice for the members of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales, for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, for Cooperators and benefactors of Salesian works. There are many fine recommendations and items of advice for whoever would exercise authority in the two Congregations he founded: the Rector Major, the General Chapter, the Superior Council, Rectors, etc.

To understand Don Bosco and his spirit, his religious and pedagogical thinking, to appreciate his concern for the salvation of souls and the future of the Salesian Society, the *Spiritual Testament* is without doubt one of his most eloquent writings, this despite certain minor defects in content, lapses in tone of which we will speak.

In addressing himself to his "children" Don Bosco above all reveals educational and pastoral criteria for them, the basic coordinates which he always kept to in his activity as a zealous priest and wise educator, and which he wanted respected in the future. He explains his point of view concerning the functioning and exercise of authority in the Congregation, how people are to be valued, not sacrificed to the demands of asceticism and common life. He makes no mystery of his idea of Salesian religious life as a definitive choice for poor and abandoned youth. He shows his expectations regarding overlooking offences, complete forgiveness, an effective love for the poor, acknowledgement of benefactors, looking after vocations, Marian devotion.

Amongst the lines written in awareness of his coming death, Don Bosco's depth of being is opened to the reader's eyes: his extraordinary humility shining through the request for forgiveness, suffrages, prayers; the fear of having given scandal, even if involuntarily; his reticence and ill-disguised modesty regarding the possible praises that would be heaped on him for the supernatural facts connected with his life; his requests concerning the religious truth of his literary production; fear of God and at the same time his awareness of divine mercy.

Once again, at the end of his earthly day lived in constant expectation and woven in with work, sacrifice, suffering put up with in the calm conviction of winning over souls, we see the leitmotif of his spirituality emerging: trepidation regarding eternal salvation, constant, almost obsessive petition.

The "Spiritual Testament" could be read like a mirror, a self-portrait by Don Bosco, leaving out none of his most intimate secrets in his *scrinium cordis*, neither out of fear, piety nor modesty. In certain passages it is difficult not to feel that we are faced with a "sacred" text: words of faith, gratitude, love, hope, humility, forgiveness, words that his inevitable real, approaching death marks with unarguable sincerity.

In his *Memoirs*, rich in faith and practice but written in a fully confident tone, Don Bosco expresses himself with an immediacy and naturalness that sets aside any shadow of a too easy rhetoric; his simplicity of writing substitutes for any over-eloquence. The

Spiritual Testament's style is plain Jane, substantial, effective more for the effusion of feelings and concreteness of its recommendations than for its conciseness of ideas.

We are struck above all by the moral and spiritual power that comes through what is actually a fairly limited lexicon and a not too carefully controlled style. This power can be seen in certain pages, the incisiveness and definitive nature of certain pithy sayings,⁸¹⁵ the tender supplication of certain passages,⁸¹⁶ the decisive rejection of any triumphalism and celebration of his works post mortem, the solemn tone of the epilogue that is tinged with prophecy and an epic sense, the moving appeal to fidelity to the tradition, the prediction and promise of a bright future.

From what we have been saying one could deduce that the document has had a notable effect with periods where it was particularly well accepted. This is not the case, at least not for the text considered as a whole.

This lack of prominence could be easily put down to the internal character of the document itself, especially the lack of organisation and system in the way it presents its contents, which often repeat themselves in very similar ways;⁸¹⁷ secondly the lack of a harmonious style and unequal tone which breaks the homogeneity of the literary form;⁸¹⁸ then there is the excessive concreteness and the topics that don't quite seem to fit the time frame;⁸¹⁹ finally there are the broad digressions and insertion of letters to individuals that put the logic of his thinking on hold and break the unity of discourse that we are expecting.⁸²⁰

In this regard we need to keep in mind the precarious physical condition Don Bosco was in at the time. He was literally worn out by the efforts of forty or more years of life dedicated to a tirelessly active apostolate. His eyesight was now very weak. He had writ-

⁸¹⁵e.g.; The priest does not go to heaven alone, nor to hell alone; seek to make yourself loved, then you will be easily obeyed; virtues not acquired in the novitiate will mostly not be acquired; when the desire for ease and comfort grows up amongst us our Pious society will have run its course; when it happens that a Salesian yields up his life whilst working for souls, you can say that our Congregation has registered a great triumph and that on it will descend in abundance the blessings of heaven.; if you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future through the exact observance of our Constitutions.

⁸¹⁶See the pages dedicated to the "farewell letter" for all "dearly beloved children in J.C", as also the "recommendation for myself" that comes before the epilogue.

⁸¹⁷Don Bosco addresses Rectors of houses directly on page 43 and again on pages 73-80. The letters to the Vice Countess Cessac and Baroness Scoppa are found on pages 95-96, some 20 pages away from another eleven letters that came earlier. He speaks of poverty in at least 10 pages, between page fifteen and the final page. We note too that Don Bosco occasionally feels the need to say "I note here what I wanted to say elsewhere".

⁸¹⁸From spelling out the concrete demands of poverty he moves immediately to touching expressions of his 'farewell letter'; recommendations for the possible printing or reprinting of Don Bosco's writings follow on immediately from suggestions on common life. The very first pages of the notebook contain true reminders of 'memoirs' of Don Bosco; much of the document instead offers exhortations for the future of the Salesian Congregation. We should not exclude the hypothesis that at the time the first pages were being written Don Bosco had the intention of continuing the Memoirs of the Oratory in some way, which he had stopped writing about ten years earlier.

⁸¹⁹For example the material dealing with the immediate period after his death, letters to people in that period, the topic of the Rector-confessor, etc.

⁸²⁰Cf note 818

ten up his spiritual testament over a three year period whenever he had regained enough strength and also had those rare moments free from other more urgent concerns.⁸²¹

Nor should we undervalue the character of the writing. It aimed at the greatest concreteness and confidence, so demanded spontaneity, familiarity. This meant a certain attention to content and style.⁸²² This remains true despite the many variants, all in his own hand, explaining content, underlining ideas, improving the style.

The manuscript (ASC 132 Quaderni-Taccuini 6) and its editions

The *Spiritual Testament* was written by Don Bosco in a notebook or rather, on an accounting notebook of 308 pages. The manuscript is in the Saint's own hand, except for pages 117-128, where someone else has copied the text on nine sheets pulled out from before page 71 and two sheets detached after the same page.

Pages 72, 94, 105, 106 and 116 are blank; similarly for pages 129 to 166. Maybe Don Bosco thought to leave space for further recommendations that might come to him later.⁸²³ Blank pages to the end of the booklet follow the epilogue on pages 267-276.⁸²⁴

The testament is written in a variety of inks, sometimes dark red or light red, other times brown or black. If we then include the heterogeneity and types of corrections and additions, we get a clear idea of the different times in which the document was written. The beginning of the draft in fact, at least until page 22, goes back to January-February 1884.⁸²⁵ Page 22 onwards until at least page 95 would seem to be dated somewhere

⁸²¹Regarding Don Bosco's health in the final years, there are trustworthy testimonies of doctors, secretaries, and other eyewitnesses. We can see this confirmed too in his original correspondence. In all cases we refer to the *Memorie Biografiche* (Vols XVII, XVIII) and the *Epistolario* (Vol IV). It is also important to keep in mind how the various journeys in Italy, France and Spain had had an impact on his health. The serious illness at the time he handed his 'Memoirs' to Fr Viglietti is officially admitted by Fr Rua in his circular of 21 December 1887, when he writes: "This month I am anticipating the sending out of the usual circular because of Don Bosco's serious state. Already for some time he had been uncomfortable but two weeks ago it got considerably worse and he can no longer walk and when he wants to move he has to be led to a wheelchair; he cannot feed himself and you can hardly hear his voice so weak has he become. So you can better understand the seriousness of his illness, I add that for ore than a week despite his great desire, he has no longer been able to celebrate Mass, something he would never miss unless his infirmity was so serious". See also note 826.

⁸²²Don Bosco had always given attention to language in any text to be presented for the attention of the public. It is significant what he has to say concerning his writings, published and unpublished in the 'Memoirs' themselves (pp. 66-69).

⁸²³On page 70 where it is blank an archivist has written in pencil: "The nine pages pulled out from between 70 and 71 contained letters to various deserving individuals to be given to their addressees after Don Bosco's death. See copy page 117ff". The original of page 127 has been personally discovered as a framed picture on the wall in the Callori Pallazo in Turin, by the author of theses notes.

⁸²⁴Don Bosco's intention of continuing his memoirs after 1886 is possibly testified to by the hyphen next to the number 6 in the title of the manuscript. 7 would have followed 6, meaning 1887. We can observe in passing that while number 5 in the title is written in red ink (like the rest of the title that however goes back to the year before), number 6 is written in black ink, further proof of the different periods of composition.

⁸²⁵The beginning of the 'Memoirs' coincides with a period that was critical for Don Bosco's health. Fr Ceria writes: "On he afternoon of 31 January, Don Bosco went to San Benigno to celebrate St Francis de Sales with the novices. Confessions and audiences tire him. This tiredness, added to the worries which he has had over recent weeks, meant that he was extremely tired even before he

between September 1884 and May 1886. The final pages, from 96 onwards would have to have been written in the last months of 1886. For the *terminus ad quem* of Don Bosco's final intervention in the manuscript we could speak of 24 December without much difficulty, the day on which the notebook was given to Fr Viglietti.

The irregular untidy writing is typical of Don Bosco's writing in the final years of his life: some letters too close other too big, the fact that sometimes a few words and many lines cover the whole page are evidently due to the writer's poor eyesight, physical and psychological tiredness.

ASC has five copies of the document. The first two are the work of the secretary, Fr Berto, who wrote out the entire testament in elegant handwriting. One copy has the seal of the Salesian Society on it as well as the seal of the Archdiocese, Turin. It was put together at the time of the 'de scriptis' process for Don Bosco's Cause.

Of the remaining three in the ASC one, on foolscap sheets, was by a copyist in the archives, Giuseppe Balestra; the second on a black exercise book, is anonymous as is the third, also on foolscap however can be dated in the 1920s.

As for the editions of the document, we have:

1. Eugene Ceria, *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*. Vol XVII, Turin, SEI 1936, pp. 257-273; he publishes the main part. Pages 3-6 of Don Bosco's manuscript were already published by J. B. Lemoyne in vol I of the MB on pages 518-519. Pages 7-23 of the manuscript, with different topics, can be with some difficulty identified in various volumes of the MB. Finally, the letters to benefactors are reported in MB vol XVIII, pp. 839-842 and in the *Epistolario*, by Eugene Ceria, vol IV, pp. 388-391.
2. Angelo Amadei, *Don Bosco e il suo apostolato. Dalle sue memorie personali e da testimonianze di contemporanei*. Turin, SEI 1929, *passim*, especially pp. 720-740, 759-764; he publishes many passages with some words of comment.
3. Giovanni Bosco, *Scritti spirituali*, by J. Aubry. Rome, Città Nuova Editrice 1976, vol I, pp. 82-84; vol II, pp. 270-293; he publishes the entire text, omitting parts which are just of a legal, historical or pastoral practice nature.

A special mention should go to the printed "farewell letter". It was published as a flyer on various occasions during Fr Rua's time as Rector Major and in 1916 was inserted into the *Pratiche di pietà in uso nelle case salesiane*.⁸²⁶ From then on it was in all reprinted

left... Don Bosco's health went from bad to worse. ...stomach... bronchitis... spitting blood... We could not disconnected thinking... writing letters with words frequently left out" MB XVII 25-30. The *Memorie Biografiche* then, drawing on the *Biografie dei Salesiani defunti negli anni 1883 e 1884* (Turin, 1885, pp. 110-116) link the fact that Don Bosco escaped death on this occasion with the fact that the novice Luigi Gamerro, who died on 10 February 1884, had offered his life for him.

⁸²⁶ Cf note 815. We read thus in an archival document: "It was also decided that the moving and affectionate letter of farewell to the Salesians, in Don Bosco's own hand, would be printed. His successor recommended that they would get copies after his burial. This will be done and by choosing a format that can be kept either in the Constitutions or in another book of piety, so it can be read often as a testament by our father" - ASC *Verbale delle riunioni capitolari*, vol I, p. 110.

editions and translated into various languages. At the same time it was included in the practice of piety book for the Salesian Sisters from its first reprinting in 1894, then updated and added to until 1962.

Following the Special General Chapters, the letter-testament was transferred from the practices of piety manuals to the *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis de Sales*, 1972 and 1894 (appendix, respectively pp. 283-287 and 255-258 of the Italian editions: the farewell letter and brief passages from the testament, and the *Manuale-Regolamenti FMA* 1975, pp. 77-79 and the *Constitutions and Regulations FMA* 1982 (Appendix pp. 280-281 Italian edition).

2. Publishing criteria

The original text of Don Bosco's was reproduced faithfully after careful examination by the only witness.

Interventions were limited to:

- normalising spelling (e.g. 'j' becomes 'I')
 - Uniform use of capitals, kept only for terms like *Dio* (God), *Rettor Maggiore* (Rector Major), *Capitolo superiore* (Superior Chapter) and *S.* (St) (Saint).
 - Introduction of italics for quotations in Latin
 - * correction to spelling in French – other copies of the letters already existed.
 - * separation and highlighting of titles, already in the original.

Punctuation follows Don Bosco's with some exceptions for purposes of clarification. Given the nature of this collection we did not consider it essential to present all the variants as published in RSS 4 (1985), pp. 88-127. But we have included the critical apparatus with historical comments, biblical references and the *loci paralleli*.⁸²⁷ If it is true that the *Spiritual Testament* allows us to add to our picture of Don Bosco, things that had escaped interpretations based on other sources or that were suffocated by conventional clichés, it is also true that given the viewpoint of the end of one's life on earth, which tends to quieten down passions and offer a calmer outlook, the *Spiritual Testament* has a touching atmosphere about it which broadens its proportions and significance. Comparison with earlier texts of similar content allows us to better focus and appreciate its more persistent themes thanks to the maturing process which had now, as we can say, reached its end.

⁸²⁷Quotations of the *loci paralleli*, explicit allusions or otherwise, coincidences in content and form is evidently limited to a certain number, to avoid overdoing the critical apparatus. Greater completeness can be achieved by consulting the *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco. Repertorio alfabetico*, by Pietro Ciccarelli. Turin. Edizione extracommerciale SEI 1983. It is undoubtedly a subjective choice but this is inevitable in a heuristic work.

Text

Memoirs from 1841 to 1884-5-6 by Fr John Bosco, to his Salesian children

I began my retreat in the House of the Mission on 26 May, the Feast of St Philip Neri, 1841.

My priestly ordination was at the hands of Archbishop Luigi Franzoni, our archbishop, on 5 June that year.⁸²⁸

My first Mass was celebrated in St Francis of Assisi with the assistance of my outstanding benefactor and director, Fr Joseph Caffasso⁸²⁹ from Castelnuovo d'Asti on 6 June, Trinity Sunday.

My conclusion at the end of the Retreat in preparation for the celebration of my first Mass was: the priest does not go to heaven alone nor to hell alone. | If he does well he goes to heaven with souls he has saved by his good example; if he does evil, gives scandal, he will be lost with the souls that were damned by his scandal.

Resolutions:

1. I will never go for walks unless for serious need: visiting the sick etc.⁸³⁰
2. Use time well.
3. Suffer, act and accept humiliations in everything and always if it is a case of saving souls.
4. The charity and kindness of | St Francis de Sales will guide me in everything.⁸³¹

⁸²⁸“The day of my ordination was the Vigil of the Holy Trinity and I said my first Mass in the Church of St Francis of Assisi, where Fr Caffasso was the dean of the Conferences” MO 114-155. Archbishop Louis Franzoni (Franzoni for Don Bosco) was born in Genoa the 29 March 1789. Ordained priest in 1814 he entered the Congregation of the urban Missionaries. On 13 August 1821 he was appointed Bishop of Fossano and on 24 February 1832 Archbishop of Turin. Imprisoned by the Government of the Kingdom of Sardinia first in the *cittadella* in Turin and then in the fortress at Fenestrelle, he was exiled in Lyon (1850) and died there on 26 March 1862. Archbishop Franzoni's name was linked to Don Bosco's for around 30 years: from Don Bosco's entry into the seminary until his priestly ordination anticipated by a year, then from the foundation of the works of the Oratories (appointed chief Director on 31 March 1852) until its consolidation, and then until the Archbishop's death. *The life of Don Bosco* by J.B. Lemoyne called him a “father, support and friend, confidant of Don Bosco's” - MB 1 242.

⁸²⁹Called by Pope Pius IX 'the pearl of the Italian clergy', Joseph Caffasso (Caffasso for Don Bosco) was born 15 January 1811 at Castelnuovo d'Asti, now Castelnuovo Don Bosco. He was ordained priest on 22 September 1833, and succeeded Dr. Louis Guala in running the Ecclesiastical College (*Convitto*) in Turin from 1848. He died on 23 June 1860 and was canonised on 22 June 1947. He gave spiritual and material help to his fellow townsman John Bosco. Amongst other things he guided him towards an apostolate with the young and passed on a profound priestly zeal. Don Bosco offered a eulogy in his *Biografia del sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso esposta in due ragionamenti funebri*. Turin, tip. G.B. Paravia e comp. 1860: OE XII 351-494.

⁸³⁰“Do not go visiting unless for reasons of charity and need” - *Ricordi ai Missionar*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 207.

⁸³¹“Let us all agree on this then: may the charity of those who command and the charity of those who must obey cause the spirit of St Francis de Sales to reign among us” - *Letter from Rome 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 351. “The time for our Retreat in America is approaching. Insist on the charity and

5. I will always be happy with the food that is put in front of me unless it is harmful to my health.
6. I will water down my wine and drink it only as a remedy: meaning only when and as much as is needed for my health.
7. Work is a powerful weapon against the soul's enemies, therefore I will not give my body more than five hours of sleep every night. During the day, especially after lunch, I will not take a rest. I will make some exception if ill.⁸³²
8. Every day I will give some time to meditation and spiritual reading. During the day I will make a brief visit or at least a prayer to the Blessed Sacrament. I will give at least a quarter of an hour to preparation and another quarter of an hour of thanksgiving to Holy Mass.⁸³³
9. I will not engage in conversations with women outside of confession or some other spiritual need.⁸³⁴

These resolutions were written in 1841. |

1842

Breviary and confession

I will make efforts to devoutly say the Breviary and say it be preference in church as a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

I will make use of the Sacrament of Penance every week and will try to put into practice the resolutions I make each time in confession.

When I am asked to hear the confessions of the faithful, if there is need I will interrupt the Office and also shorten preparation and thanksgiving for Mass in order to exercise this sacred ministry.⁸³⁵

kindness of St Francis de Sales" – ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, quaderno Barberis.

⁸³²"I will love and practise a retiring life, temperance in eating and drinking. I will allow myself only those hours of rest strictly necessary for health. – MO 88 -"Flee idleness and disputes. Great moderation in food, drink and rest" - *Ricordi ai Missionar*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 207.

⁸³³"Besides the ordinary practices of piety, I will never neglect to make a little meditation daily and a little spiritual reading" – MO 88.

⁸³⁴"Avoid meetings with lay people... and especially conversations with people of the opposite sex" – C. SDB pp. 110-111. "Avoid conversation and familiarity with people of the opposite sex or whose behaviour is suspect" — *Ricordi ai Missionari* RSS 3 (1948), p. 207.

⁸³⁵"1. Lovingly receive every class of penitents but especially the young. Help them to open their hearts and insist that they come to confession frequently. This is the most secure means of keeping them away from sin. Make use of every means to see that they put into practice the advice given them to avoid sin in the future. Correct them with kindness; never scold them because if you shout at them today they will not come to confession tomorrow or, if they do, they will not speak of those matters which upset you. 2. When you have gained their confidence, prudently find out whether all their confessions in the past were well made. I say this because famous, experienced authors in both the field of morals and ascetics, and especially a famous author who warrants belief, agree in stating that the first confessions are often null or, at least, defective because of the lack of instruction or the

(different occasions)

Since once I get to the sacristy there are often immediate requests to speak to me or hear a confession, before leaving my room I will try to make a brief preparation for Mass.

I will wash my hands in my room and then again, when time allows it, in the sacristy.

When asked to hear confessions I will always show them that I am cheerful about it and will never show rudeness or let them see that I am impatient. I will deal with children kindly and with much warmth. I will never scold people or express surprise concerning ignorance or things told in confession.

When I see there is a need for someone to be instructed I will | invite that person to an appropriate place and at an appropriate time, but always apart.

What is ordinarily lacking in childrens' confessions are sorrow for sin and good resolutions.⁸³⁶ When one or other of these qualities of confession is lacking I will advise the child to seek instruction by attending catechism class or with printed material if he is able to read and understand | what he is reading.

In these doubtful situations, if there is no serious fault, I will give them just a blessing.

It is very important and useful for young people to ensure that we do things in such a way that no child leaves feeling unhappy with us.

On the contrary he should leave with some little gift, some promise or some word that encourages him to seek us out willingly for confession.

I will keep promises made to children or at least give a reason why these promises were not kept. |

In order to correct with benefit, I will not offer reproach in front of others.

Try to make yourself loved and then you will be easily obeyed.⁸³⁷

You can never be too severe in matters that help to preserve morality.⁸³⁸

The basis of vocations

When a young man shows signs of a vocation try to strike up a friendship with him. It is essential to keep all bad reading or friends who engage in dirty conversations away from him.

With frequent confession | and communion you will preserve in your pupil the queen of all virtues, purity.

wilful omission of matters for confession. Invite the penitent to ponder the state of his conscience well from when he was seven up until he was ten or twelve. At this age he is already aware of certain serious sins but makes little of them or does not know how to confess them. The confessor whilst he must be most prudent and reserved must not avoid asking questions in the area of the holy virtue of modesty. *Cenno biografico sul giovanetto Magone Michele*, OE XIII 181-182.

⁸³⁶“What is radically lacking in the confessions of so many youngsters is a firm resolution. They tell their sins but they are always the same, always the same occasions, the same bad habits, the same acts of disobedience, the same neglect of duty” *Lettera da Roma 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 349.

⁸³⁷“The educator amongst his pupils will seek to make himself loved if he wants to be feared” – *Il sistema preventivo*, OE XXVIII 442. “Try to make yourself loved rather than be feared. Charity and patience should constantly go with giving commands, correcting and act in such a way that by each of your deeds and words they know that you seek the good of souls”. *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 151.

⁸³⁸“Be sure to send away from our houses young people and others who are known to be dangerous in questions of moral and religious behaviour” – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, OE XXXIII 67.

Benefactors

We live off the charity of our benefactors. When someone makes an offering, let him always be thanked and assured of our prayers for him. Our benefactors should always be included in our common and private prayers, adding an intention asking God to bless them a hundredfold for their charity in their present life, with health, prosperity in their harvests, affairs, and that God may protect them from misfortune.

Let them know that the most effective work for obtaining forgiveness for their sins and ensuring eternal life is charity towards poor youth: *uni ex minimis* for an abandoned little one.

We note too that in these times where we lack the financial means to educate neglected children in the faith and good behaviour, the Blessed Virgin herself becomes their protectress. She obtains many temporal and spiritual graces for our benefactors, including extraordinary ones! We ourselves are witness to the fact that many of our outstanding benefactors who have been down on their luck have become | well to do from the moment that they began to give on behalf of our little orphans.

Marquis Fassati has told me more than once: I do not want you to thank me when I give charity to your poor youngsters; I should thank you instead, Don Bosco, that you asked me. Since I have begun giving to you, my good fortune has tripled.⁸³⁹

Cav. Cotta himself came to give money saying: The more money I bring you, the better my work goes. I see that the Lord also gives me | a hundredfold in the present life for what I have given out of love for him. He remained an outstanding benefactor of ours until he was eighty six years old, when God called him to eternal life to enjoy the results of his beneficence.

Outstanding benefactors

It is good to note the names of some of our benefactors whom we constantly thank before God and man. |

Counts Carlo, Eugenio and Francesco de Maistre⁸⁴⁰ continue to follow up the charity

⁸³⁹“Marquis Dominic Fassati... used say: 'It is a curious thing, but true. The more I give to Don Bosco the more I receive'”. MB V 317. “Bishop Cagliero wrote: Cotta often told Don Bosco, 'Oh Don Bosco. You say you do not have words enough to thank us for the little we have done for your Oratory. But it is we who should thank you: first because asking us to help your boys presents us with an opportunity to do a little good; and then because the Lord, through your prayers, blesses us threefold'”. MB VIII 467. The Marquis Dominic Fassati Roero San Saverino was born at Casale on 4 August 1804. He was from a noble Piedmontese family, Captain of the Grenadiers and a major in King Charles Albert's bodyguard. He admired and supported Don Bosco's work from the beginnings. He was a catechist at the Oratory in Valdocco and became an intermediary between Don Bosco and Victor Emmanuel II. He died in Turin on 3 May 1878; on the occasion of the month's mind, Don Bosco sent out a circular to benefactors inviting them to attend. MB XIII 573. Cav. Giuseppe Antonio Cotta, already a Senator of the realm was a grand official of the Order of St Mauritius. Because of his very generous largesse in favour of the poor, he was called “the beggars' banker”, but also “The banker of providence”. He was born 4 April 1785 and died 29 December 1868 at 83 years of age. You can find biographical outlines in *Supplemento perenne alla Nuova Enciclopedia popolare...* 1868-1869. Turin, UTET 1870, vol 29, p. 136.

⁸⁴⁰Carlo, Eugenio and Francesco were sons of Rodolfo de Maistre and Carlotta du Plan de Sieyès. Count Rodolfo de Maistre, son of the famous writer and philosopher Giuseppe de Maistre, was born 22 September 1789. He died at Borgo Cornalese on 4 February 1866: cf. *Il Tempio di Don Bosco*, a.

of their parents and are amongst those who help us most often and most generously. Marchioness Maria Fassati,⁸⁴¹ Countess Carlotta Callori, Countess Gabriella Corsi (Requiem), are our generous benefactors.

Princess Sofia Odescalchi from Rome (Requiem);⁸⁴² Mrs Fanny Chiglini Polleri, from Genoa (Requiem), and Mrs Luigia | Cataldi, and Luigia Dufour also belong to this group. In Nice we must number amongst these glorious names Mrs Visconti, Baron Heraud, Cav.

XX, no.12, December 1966, pp. 147-149, which corrects some of the faulty details in MB VIII 298. Don Bosco was his guest in Rome, in via del Quirinale 49, during his first trip to the Papal city in 1858. On that occasion Count Eugenio was his guide. He was a Commendatore of the Piano Order, died 23-24 July 1908 (BS, a. XXXII, no. 9 September 1908, p. 286) and Count Francesco, an official of the Pontifical army. Count Carlo, born 21 May 1832, was amongst other things, a catechist at the Oratory from 1855. He died in Lourdes on 21 July 1897. *Bulletin Salésien* 19 (1897), no. 9 Sept. p. 235.

⁸⁴¹ Marchioness Maria Fassati Roero San Severino was born in 1824, of Rodolfo De Maistre and Carlotta du Plan de Sieyès. She was a Dame of Court for Queen Maria Adelaide, President of the Dames of St Vicent de Paul, and married at 23 years of age to Marquis Domenico Fassati (cf. Above). She was a Cooperator of Don Bosco's for 40 years and a further 16 years for Don Rua. She died in Turin on 4 February 1905. There are some 20 letters of Don Bosco's addressed to her which survive, without counting the ones to her children. Cf. BS a. XXIX, n. 3, March 1905, p. 94- The Countess Gabriella Callori of the Counts of Sambuy, consort of Count Federico Callori di Vignale, was born in Turin on 6 September 1827. She was a Dame of the Palace of Queen Maria Adelaide, and helped Don Bosco decisively in various enterprises: founding the College at Mirabello, which was then moved to Borgo S. Martino 7 years later (1870), the publishing of the Cattolico Provveduto (1868), the churches of Mary Help of Christians and St John's, etc. etc. Since she was living at Casale and at Vignale Monferrato in summer, Don Bosco had to write to her. We have around 50 letters and from them we can see, other than feelings of esteem and affection for the Countess, , a good amount of information on the life and works of Don Bosco from 1864 onwards. She died 13 August 1911; BS 35 (1911) no. 9 Sept., p. 287; *Celebrazioni centenarie Collegio «S. Carlo»*, Borgo San Martino. Countess Gabriella Corsi di Bosaasco, born Pelletta di Cossombrato, died in Turin on 8 April 1887. From 1871 to her death she stood out as a Cooperator of Don Bosco's, even earning from him the title "good and dearest Mother". She gave particular help to the work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Nizza Monferrato, the place where the Countess had her summer residence. More than 10 letters of Don Bosco to the Countess survive until today; others instead are addressed to her daughter: BS 11 (1887) no. 5, May, pp. 58-59.

⁸⁴² Princess Sofia Odescalchi, born in Branicka at Petersburg in 1821, died at Bassano di Sutri, now Bassano Romano, in 1886, a year after her husband, Prince Livio III, whom she had married in 1842 and from whom she bore 4 children (Baldassare, Maria, Pace and Ladislao). The noble Odescalchi family kept strict contact with Don Bosco especially when he visited Urbe. The same family proposed that Don Bosco open a school in the feudal town of Bracciano. But he did not follow up the idea. Mrs Fanny Ghiglini Polleri, widowed from 1877 after the death of her husband Senator Cav. Marquis Lorenzo Ghiglini, was for some years head of a committee known as "The Dames of Mercy", Genoa, which aimed to promote the work of charity towards the poor, poor youngsters. She was one of Don Bosco's most worthy Cooperators, especially for the Sampierdarena Institue. She died 13 February 1877: BS 11 (1877) no. 4, April, p. 46. Baroness Luigia Cataldi-Parodi was, together with other family members, another of the Cooperators who contributed largely to the foundation of the Salesian Home at Sampierdarena. Don Bosco had words of blessing for her just a month before his death (MB XVIII 503). The Baroness died after a long period when she was blind, on 4 February 1896: BS 20 (1896) no. 3, March, pp. 79-80. The Dufour family (Maurizio, Lorenzo, Carlo, Luigi, Amalia etc) was of great assistance to the Salesian works in Genoa. Mrs Luigia Pavese Dufour remained constantly in contact by letter with Don Bosco in the last decade of his life. Further information on the Dufour family and other benefactors in Genoa can be found in S. Sciacaluga, *Don Bosco a Genova*. Ge-Sampierdarena, Editrice Salesiana 1946, pp. 64-117.

Vincenzo Levrot, and Mrs Daprotis. Mr and Mrs de la Flechiere, Hyvères havev given and continue to give.⁸⁴³

But our greatest benefactor in Toulon is Count Fleury Colle and his wife the Countess. They have truly been of great benefit to our Congregation and if we have been able to found houses, schools | and make progress with our mission in America, we owe it to their charity.

Marseilles owes its foundation to the gentlemen from the Beaujour society,⁸⁴⁴ to generous Mrs Prat, Madame Jacques, Madame Broquier and Mrs Pasquè who generously gave us the use of the house and land where we have currently begun our small novitiate of St Margaret, also called Providence. |

The Quisard family,⁸⁴⁵ Lyon, are also outstanding benefactors, as well as Countess de

⁸⁴³Mrs Marguerite Visconti, Bordeaux, born Labat, lived in Piedmont until her husband, an official with the Sardinian army, retired. She then moved to Nice, where the children at the patronage St. Pierre (But also Don Bosco) called her maman: MB XIII 720, E III 414, *Bulletin Salésien* 8 (1886) no. 9, Sept. p. 104. She died April-May 1891. Baron Héraud de Châteauneuf, a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Commendatore of the Order of St Gregory the Great, 'cameriere segreto' of His Holiness Leo XIII, was a personal friend of Don Bosco's and a very effective supporter of the Salesian work in Nice from the outset. He died 23 October 1902: *Bulletin Salésien* 24 (1902) no. 282, Dec. p. 334. There are various letters of Don Bosco to the Baron and Baroness Héraud. Cf. Also various references to them and other benefactors in Nice in F. Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice*. Paris, A.D.E. 1980. Cav. Vincenzo Levrot, to whom Don Bosco, amongst others, wrote various letters, was one of the greatest benefactors of the Salesian work in Nice. He died 14 December 1912: *Bulletin Salésien* 34 (1912) no. 2, February, pp. 53-54. Cf. F. Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice*, op. cit., *passim*. Also Mrs Daprotis, mentioned many times in Don Bosco's letters to Fr Giuseppe Ronchail, similar to other benefactors already recorded, was affectionately called "Mamma" by Don Bosco. 94-96 The Colle couple, husband Giuseppe Luigi Henry, Count Romano (died 1 January 1888) and his wife Sofia (died 28 March 1909) are amongst the most notable figures in Don Bosco's last years of life. It is sufficient to mention the dozens of letters he sent to their family; we can add that Don Bosco made an impression on the life of their son: *Biographie du jeune Luois Fleury Antoine Colle...*, Turin, imprimerie salésienne 1882. Brief profiles are offered by the *Bulletin Salésien* 10 (1888) no. 2 February, pp. 16-18 for the Count, and BS 33 (1909) no. 9, Sept., pp. 286-287 for the Countess.

⁸⁴⁴The Beaujour Society, Marseilles was "made up of excellent Catholics" and had "for its purpose fostering charitable institutions on behalf og youth at risk": MB XIII 526. The others mentioned are benefactors in constant relationship with Don Bosco who often sent them greetings through the Rector in Marseilles, Fr Giuseppe Bologna, and amongst other things, wrote to them personally. Mrs Anna Prat-Noilly died in summer 1902: *Bulletin Salésien* 24 (1902) no. 280, Nov. p. 280. The Central Archives (Rome) preserves a letter of hers dated 27 July 1883 wherein she thanks Don Bosco for the Mass he promised to celebrate on St anne's day, her name day. Mrs Jacques died 3 February 1915 at 89 years of age: *Bulletin Salésien* 37 (1915) no. 423, April-June, p. 51. In the same Bulletin, (a. XIII, no. 5 May 1891, p. 88) there is news of the death of Mrs Broquier: March-April 1891. Don Bosco addressed one of his last letters to her, dated November 27 1887: E IV 386.

⁸⁴⁵The Quisard family (Guisard for Don Bosco) was bound to him in constant and sincere affection. Proof of this are many letters of his: E IV 435-446. Madame Marie Desvernay, a Religious of the Sacred Heart, Lyon, had helped Don Bosco generously especially in financing his missionary expeditions in in 1880s. It is a correspondence as yet unpublished. The Marchoness of Saint-Seine, dated 10 April 1883 was spokesperson for a group of people from Dijon asking Don Bosco to spend some time with them while travelling through France: ASC 126-1 Saint-Seine, published in MB XVI 558-559. Countess De Cessac-Montesquiou and her husband were outstanding benefactors of the patronage St. Pierre-St. Paul in Paris, which owed its second name (Paul) to the son of the De Cassacs who died at 25 years of age. The Countess, a Dame of Court for the Empress Eugenia, died 24 May 1886, a few months

la reserve, Mrs Desvernay a religious of the Sacred Heart aux Anglais. The Marquis of S. Seine, Countess Parque idem, vice countess de Cessac (Requiem), Paris, Mademoiselle Clara Louvet, Aire sur le Lys.

Then many made generous offerings following graces received while others offered money or different kinds of items. |

These are the names of some of the more outstanding benefactors today, 8 February 1885.⁸⁴⁶

If through the divine mercy after my death and through the protection of Mary I will have been deemed worthy of being received into the heavenly kingdom I will always pray for everyone and especially for our benefactors so that God may bless them and their families so they may lal one day come to sing and praise the majesty of | the Creator for eternity.

Amen.

Superior Chapter

When the time of my death comes let the Chapter meet and be ready for any eventuality; let nobody be absent unless for absolutely necessary reasons.⁸⁴⁷

My Vicar, in agreement with the prefect will prepare and read in Chapter a letter addressed to all the confreres which will give news of my death, ask for paryers for me and for the good choice of a successor.

We maintain that these pages were written in September 1884 before the Holy Father had appointed a vicar with right of succession, therefore it can be modified accordingly.⁸⁴⁸

The day for the election of the new Rector Major will be established and time given so that those in America and other far-off countries can be present unless absolutely serious reasons make this impossible.

I note here two things of maximum importance:

after the death of her husband, who at the time of the Empire held prestigious roles. Strangely the MB XVII 611 date the death of the Countess as being in Autumn 1886. Lemoyne's source (Bulletin Salésien 8 no. 11, Nov. p. 127) explains: "le jour même de Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice". Mademoiselle Clara Louvet: Cooperator of extraordinary generosity for Don Bosco and his successors. From her correspondence with Don Bosco dozens of letters have been preserved as well as many unpublished ones over the final six years of the Saint's life. We see some clear indication of spiritual life in them. Louvet died at 80 years of age on 11 November 1912: *Bulletin Salésien* 35 (1913) no. 1, January, p. 27. An entire chapter of the MB XV 584-610 is dedicated to her.

⁸⁴⁶ 1885 *corr ex* 1884. For internal and external reasons it seems absolutely necessary to exclude the fact that the writing of these first pages happened in the 1840s, as might seem the case at first sight of the dates 1841, 1842, 1845 on pages 6,7 and 9. These dates refer to the years of the resolutions and teachings written there, in other words to the early years of priesthood. The title is explicit: "Memoirs from 1884...". Therefore they should be corrected in various places in the MB, for example, vol II, p. 313.

⁸⁴⁷ "As soon as the Rector [Major] has died, the Prefect will quickly advise the Rectors of all the houses who will immediately see that suffrage is made for the deceased as prescribed by the Constitutions. Then he will invite the same Rectors to come together for the election of the new Rector [Major]. C. SDB, pp. 128-129. 124-125 "But I recommend that you avoid building or acquiring fixed assets not strictly needed for our use. Never things to be sold, neither fields nor land or buildings for pecuniary gain". – Letter to Bishop Giovanni Cagliero, E IV 328.

⁸⁴⁸ Footnote by Don Bosco.

1. Deliberation of the Chapter are to be kept secret, and if there is something to be communicated to others, someone be appropriately appointed for this. But let care be taken not to appoint some member of the Chapter who has voted affirmatively or negatively, or who has offered some sentence or word.
2. It should be kept as a principle never to vary or keep some property of stable things except houses and surrounds necessary for the health of the confreres or of the pupils. |

Keeping stable fruits is an offence to divine providence which in a marvellous way and I would say prodigious way constantly comes to our aid.

In allowing construction or repairs to houses use great care to avoid luxury, grandiosity, elegance.⁸⁴⁹

From the moment that comfort appears in individuals, rooms or houses, the time of the decline of our Congregation will have begun.⁸⁵⁰

To all my dear sons in Christ Jesus.

When I have been buried, my vicar in agreement with the prefect will address these my final thoughts of my mortal existence to all the confreres.⁸⁵¹

My dear and beloved Sons in Jesus Christ,

Before leaving this world for eternity, I wish to fulfill a duty towards you and so satisfy an ardent | desire of my heart.

First of all, I thank you with the most ardent affection of my soul for the obedience you have given me and for all you have done to sustain and propagate our Congregation.

⁸⁴⁹“As for the kind of buildings, choice of materials, manner of construction, the way the work is carried out, internal decoration, never overlook religious poverty. It offends the eyes of the upright individual to see elegance and affectation in buildings, furnishings, or how the table is prepared for one who is asking for charity” – *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale*. . . . 1877. OE XXIX, 444-445.

⁸⁵⁰“Read the *Storia Ecclesiastica* (Church History) and you will find endless examples from which you see that an abundance of temporal goods was the reason for loss of entire communities which, not having faithfully preserved their original spirit of poverty, fell completely into disgrace” – MB VI 328-329.

⁸⁵¹“Meanwhile receive these rules as a testament for the entire Congregation. Receive these thoughts that introduce them as reminders that I leave you with before departing for eternity, something I feel that is rapidly approaching. Recommend the salvation of my soul to the Lord and I will also constantly pray for you that through the exact observance of our Constitutions we can live happily in this life and that through his infinite mercy he may grant that we be all together one day to enjoy and praise him in blessed eternity”. – *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1875. Introduzione*. OE XXVII 49-50. – “This is like a Will that I address to the Rectors of individual houses. If these reminders are put into practice, I will die happy because I will be sure that our Society will flourish ever more before men and be blessed by the Lord, and it will achieve its purpose which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), pp. 159-160. “My dear children, the time is coming when I will have to tear myself away from you and leave for eternity. And so I want to leave you, my dear priests and brothers and my dearest boys, on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow” Lettera da Roma 1884 RSS 3 (1984), pp. 188-191. – “While on the one hand there is much merit won by our works. We must take the greatest care not to overlook them. . . . Therefore let us prepare ourselves well for this heroic consecration, but when we have made it let us try to keep it even at the cost of long and serious sacrifice” – *Regole o Costituzioni*. . . , 1875, OE XXVII 27.

I leave you here on earth, but only for a short time. I hope the infinite mercy of God will enable us all to meet one day in Heaven. There I await you. |

Do not grieve over my death. This is a debt we must all pay; but afterwards, every fatigue sustained for the love of our Master, the good Jesus, will be greatly rewarded. Instead of weeping, make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain staunch in your vocation until death. Watch, so that neither the love of the world, nor the affection of parents, nor the desire of a more agreeable life induce you to make the great mistake of profaning the sacred vows, and so transgress the religious profession by which you are consecrated to God. Let none take back that which we have given to God.⁸⁵²

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions.⁸⁵³

Your first Rector is dead. But our true Superior, Jesus Christ, will never die. He will always be our Master, our guide, our model. But remember that he, in his own time, will also be our judge and the rewarder of our faithfulness in His service.

Your Rector is dead. But there will be another elected, who will have care of you and of your eternal salvation. Listen to him, love him, obey him, pray for him as you have done for me.

Adieu, dear children, adieu. I wait for you in Heaven. There we shall speak of God, of Mary, the Mother and support of our Congregation; there we shall bless eternally this our Congregation, the observance of whose rules will have powerfully and efficaciously contributed to our salvation.

*Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.*⁸⁵⁴ *In te, Domini, speravi; non confundar in aeternum.*⁸⁵⁵

Election of the new superior

Once I have been buried, and the electors have gathered in the appointed place those things laid down and prescribed in suffrage for the deceased Rector will be carried out as well as for the imminent election and recognition of the new | superior of the Congregation.

It is good that everything be quickly communicated to the Holy Father and that a special blessing be invoked upon this most important act.

Then let each one, without regard to human affection or luck shall give his vote to the one whom he judges to be most suitable for procuring the | greater glory of God and for the advantage of our pious society. Therefore:

1. Someone known for his precise observance of our rules.
2. Someone who has never been mixed up with matters that may have compromised him with regard to civil or ecclesiastical authorities or that may have made him unpalatable or contemptible to members of our own society.

⁸⁵² Cf Jn 15:10-14.

⁸⁵³“By the exact observance of our Constitutions and these deliberations which are their practical application, will mostly depend the development and spiritual profit of our pious Society and its members”
– *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale*. . . 1880, OE XXXIII 4.

⁸⁵⁴ Ps. 113:2

⁸⁵⁵ Ps 31:2 and *Te Deum*.

3. Someone known for his attachment to the Holy See and for everything that refers to this in some | way.⁸⁵⁶

Once the election has concluded and the new Rector Major known and proclaimed, all electors will kiss his hand, then will kneel and sing the *Te Deum*. Afterwards they will offer a clear sign of their obedience by renewing their vows as is done at the time of Retreat.

The new Rector Major

1. He will address the electors with a few words, thank them for the trust they have placed in him and assure them that he wishes to be father, | friend and brother of all; he will ask them for their cooperation and, where helpful, their advice.
2. He will inform the Holy Father quickly of his election and offer himself and the Salesian Society to the orders, counsels of the supreme hierarchy of the Church.
3. He will quickly send out a circular letter to all the confreres and another to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. |
4. He will write another letter to our benefactors and Cooperators thanking them on my behalf for what they did for us while I was still alive; he will ask them to continue their help in support of Salesian works. And always in the firm hope of being welcomed into the Lord's mercy, I will constantly pray for them there.

Let it be known, say so, preach always that Mary Help of Christians has obtained and will always obtain particular | graces, including extraordinary and miraculous ones for those who help us give a Christian education to youth at risk through works, advice, good example or simply through prayer.

When these first and important duties have been done the new Rector Major will address himself carefully to getting to know the financial state of the Congregation. He will see if there are debts and when these have to be paid. |

It would be good that at least for some time no new houses be opened or new constructions begun, not even new works that are not strictly necessary.

In my regard then I recommend that not too much be made of the debts left by the deceased Rector. That would make known bad administration by administrators and the superior himself, and might cause some lack of trust in public opinion. |

⁸⁵⁶“For someone to be elected Rector Major he needs to have spent at least ten years in the Congregation, have completed thirty five years of age and have given full proof of an exemplary life and ability and prudence in handling the affairs of the Congregation; and finally he must be perpetually professed” – C. SDB, pp. 130-131. 190-196 Fr Rua would follow up Don Bosco's invitation, sending a printed circular letter to the “good benefactors” on 23 April 1888. The BS of April 1888 announces it as a letter found amongst Don Bosco's signed papers “to be sent” after his death. In reality, Don Bosco's part was limited to the few lines indicated above which were a guide for the real writer, identified as Fr Ceria by Fr Bonetti (cf E IV 393, nota). For historical honesty therefore it would be better to properly attribute quotations from this ‘testament’ found on thousands of holy pictures, bulletins, news items printed everywhere in the Salesian and non-Salesian world

Important reminder for the Superior Chapter

If some members of the Chapter are missing for the election of the Patronage Saint-Pierre new Rector,⁸⁵⁷ the Rector will use his right and complete the number with supplementary councillors for the time that remains of the six years fixed for the general election of individual councillors or members of the Chapter.

But the important reminder that I consider fundamental is to act in such a way that no member has extraneous | tasks not concerned with the administration of our pious society.⁸⁵⁸ Indeed I believe I would not be saying too much by indicating that our congregation will always have a gap unless individual members of the Chapter are exclusively occupied by matters established in the Regulations approved by Chapter deliberations.⁸⁵⁹

Not a few difficulties will have to be overcome to this end, but let us make sacrifices and grant this great benefit to the whole Congregation. |

A reminder for the Rector Major

The Rector Major should read and put into practice the usual advice I gave to all the Rectors of new houses, especially regarding time given to rest and nutrition.

To the Rector of each house

Let the Rector of each house be patient, and study well the personnel or rather | examine well the worth of all the confreres who are working under him. Demand what they are capable of and no more.

It is essential that he knows the regulations that each confrere must abide by in the particular office entrusted to him, so let each one have available at least that part of the regulations that regard him.

Let his concern be addressed in a particular way to moral relationships of teachers, assistants, amongst themselves and with the pupils entrusted to them. |⁸⁶⁰

Particular advice for everyone

1. I warmly recommend that all my sons be careful in never saying or asserting, in speech or writing, that Don Bosco obtained graces from God or performed miracles

⁸⁵⁷“If then someone on the Chapter ceases to remain in office either through death or for any other reason before completing his six year term, the Rector Major will entrust that role to the one he judges best in the Lord; this individual will remain in office until the end of the six year period which the member who held that role had begun” – C. SDB, p. 155

⁸⁵⁸This is the *Ricordi Confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), pp. 125-126

⁸⁵⁹“Try to share things out in such a way that nobody is overburdened but see that each one faithfully does what is entrusted to him ” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 158. “Never command things that you judge to be beyond the strength of your subjects or that you see they will not obey. Try to avoid repugnant commands; indeed, take the greatest care to support the inclinations each one has by preferably giving them roles that you know they will enjoy fulfilling”. *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 159.

⁸⁶⁰“Teachers, master craftsmen, assistants must be of known morality. Betrayal by one can compromise an entire educational Institute” – *Il sistema preventivo* OE XXVIII 53-54. “If you see that one of them has engaged in a particular friendship with a pupil, or that his role or his morality may be in danger of being compromised, change his duties with all prudence; if the danger continues, you should immediately let your Superior know ”. *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 153.

in some way or other.⁸⁶¹ He would be committing a damaging error. Although the good God has been generous in my regard, nevertheless I have never | pretended to know or perform supernatural things. I have done none other than pray and asked other good souls to ask for graces. I have always found the prayers and communions of our youngsters to be effective. The God of mercy and his Holy Mother came to our help in our needs. This was especially true whenever it was a case of providing for our poor and abandoned boys, and even more so when their | souls were in danger.

2. The holy Virgin Mary will certainly continue to protect our Congregation and Salesian works if we continue to trust her and continue to foster her cult. Her feasts and more so her solemnities, novenas, triduums, the month dedicated to Her, should be warmly fostered in public and in private; with flyers, books, medals, holy pictures, by publishing or simply telling of graces and blessings that our heavenly benefactress grants to suffering humanity at every moment.
3. Two sources of grace for us are: recommending every occasion we can and in good time that our young pupils approach the sacraments or perform some work of piety in honour of Mary.

Hearing Holy Mass devoutly, visiting Jesus in the | Blessed Sacrament, frequent sacramental or at least spiritual communion are highly pleasing to Mary and a powerful means for obtaining special graces.

Ecclesiastical vocations

God called our poor Salesian Congregation to promote ecclesiastical vocations amongst poor and lowly youth.

Well-to-do families in general are too mixed up in the spirit of the world which unfortunately they have also often filled their children with and so the beginnings of a vocation which God had placed in their hearts is lost. If this spirit is nurtured and developed, it will mature and bear many fruits. On the contrary not only the seeds of a vocation but often the vocation itself which had already begun to show good hopes is smothered or becomes weak and is then lost.⁸⁶²

⁸⁶¹“Don Bosco . . . would be the least of men if he were to arrogate to himself such power. Extraordinary graces have certainly been granted, but the Holy Virgin has done them to the advantage of our works” – MB XV 502. – “For some time it has been said and also published in newspapers that Don Bosco performs miracles. This is in error. Don Bosco has never pretended and never said that he performs miracles and non of his sons should agree to propagating this false idea. Let us clearly state things as they are: Don Bosco prays and gets his boys to pray . . . and God in his infinite goodness often grants the graces asked for sometimes including extraordinary and miraculous ones. But Don Bosco has so little to do with this that often the graces are obtained without him knowing anything about it” MB XVI 292 – “Preach to all, young and old alike, that they must remember they are children of Mary Help of Christians. Tell them she has gathered them here to take them way from the dangers of the world, so that they may love one another as brothers and give glory to God and to her by their good behaviour. Tell them that it is Our Lady who provides them with bread and the means to study, by endless graces and wonders.” *Lettera da Roma 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 350.

⁸⁶²“Since young people aspiring to the ecclesiastical state run many and serious risks, this society will

Newspapers, bad books, companions and careless conversation in families are often the fatal cause of loss of vocations and often unfortunately the ruin and reason for going astray of those who had already made their choice of state.⁸⁶³

Let us remember that we give a great treasure to the Church when we procure a good vocation: that his vocation or this priest goes to the diocese, the missions or a religious house does not matter. It is always a great gift for the Church of J.C.⁸⁶⁴

But we do not give such advice to just any young person unless we are sure that he will keep the angelic virtue | to the extent that good theology establishes. We can overlook a mediocre intelligence but never the lack of the virtue which we speak of.

The work of Mary Help of Christians

Cultivate the work of Mary Help of Christians according to the programme you already know.⁸⁶⁵

Never refuse, for lack of means, to accept a young man who gives good hopes for a vocation.

Spend everything you have, take up collections and if after that | you still find yourself in need don't panic, since the Blessed Virgin somehow, even miraculously, will come to your aid.

Vocation to the Salesian Congregation

Our work, the good and austere behavior of our confreres will draw and almost compel their pupils to follow their example.⁸⁶⁶ Let the Preventive System be practiced even at the cost of personal and financial sacrifice and we shall have vocations in abundance. |⁸⁶⁷

give maximum attention to nurturing in piety those who show a special aptitude for study and are commendable for their good behaviour" – C. SDB, pp. 76-77. -"The purpose of our Colleges is to form good Christians and upright citizens; it is not a case of forcing into the ecclesiastical state someone who does not have the vocation for it, but of nurturing it and developing it in young men who show clear signs" – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, OE XXXIII 65.

⁸⁶³"Carefully advise the pupils to flee from bad companions and to stay with good ones; to abstain from reading not just bad and dangerous books but those that are useless or less appropriate" – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, OE XXXIII 66 .

⁸⁶⁴"What, then, I have warmly recommended to those I have been able to write to these days, is to cultivate vocations, both for the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Try, set up plans, do not worry about expense if you can gain some priests for the Church, especially for the Missions" - *Lettera a don Luigi Lasagna*, E IV 341.

⁸⁶⁵"Especially to be recommended is the work of the Sons of Mary for vocations to the ecclesiastical state. The Chapter recommends that all members seek to make it known and promote it and if they know of some young man who may have the requisites for the programme, see that he is sent to the houses where they can do the appropriate studies" – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, OE XXXIII 70. – The Work of Mary Help of Christians was promoted with a view to "bringing together older youth [commonly called 'Sons of Mary] who might have a desire to do their studies thanks to appropriate courses so they can embrace the ecclesiastical state" f MB XI 529-535. See also *Opera di Maria Ausiliatrice...* 1877, OE XXIX 1-28.

⁸⁶⁶"The exemplary, pious, exact life of the Salesians, charity amongst them, their good manners and the kindness they show to their pupils are effective means for cultivating vocations to the ecclesiastical state, because, /verba movent, exempla trahunt/" – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, OE XXXIII 65.

⁸⁶⁷"And first of all I see that it is necessary that we treat one another with much charity and kindness and use the same treatment with all our members. By this charity and kindness amongst us the young

If it is not possible to do away with holidays altogether at least try to reduce these days as much as possible.^{868 869}

Patience and kindness, Christian relationships between teachers and students will win many vocations from amongst them. However also here pay great attention to never accepting amongst our members, even less so for the ecclesiastical state, ones who do not offer moral certainty that they will preserve the angelic virtue.

When the Rector of one of our houses sees in a pupil someone of simple habits, | good character, he should try to become his friend. Let him often address a few words to him, willingly hear his confession, recommend himself to his prayers; let him assure him that he prays for him at Mass and let him invite him, for example, to go to communion in honour of the Blessed Virgin or in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, for his parents, or for his studies or the like.

At the end of his secondary studies | let him persuade him to choose the vocation, the place he judges best for his soul and that will console him most at the hour of his death.

Deal with matters of conscience and see if they go better at home, during holidays, at school etc.

But try to impede an ecclesiastical vocation in those who want to embrace such to help their own families because they are poor. In these cases advise them to embrace | another state, another profession, an art or trade, but not the ecclesiastical state.

Aspirants

By aspirants here we mean those young men who want to form themselves in a Christian lifestyle that will then make them worthy in time to embrace the Salesian Congregation either as clerics or as coadjutor confreres.

Particular care should be shown these boys. But only the ones who have an intention to become Salesians or who at least | are not contrary to the possibility should this be God's will, should be listed amongst these.

They should be given a conference at least twice a month. These conferences should

will be much attracted to our way of life because it is of man's nature, and especially for a young person to love and seek to embrace the way of life which guides someone he likes and venerates. When this kindness of ours that we show to our confreres is also directed to our pupils they are electrified by it and we will win their affection and indeed have an effect on their vocation. . . I say and repeat: kindness, charity amongst us and with them are the most powerful means for educating them well and cultivating vocations" – ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale*. . . 1880, quaderno Barberis.

⁸⁶⁸“For holiday time, following on from printed advice we usually distribute, we recommend frequenting the Sacraments and going to religious functions, and also keeping in contact by letter with their Superiors. Encourage them to live a retiring life during holidays and seek to reduce the time spent away from the College, making it easy to continue their holidays in one of our houses, with the necessary support” – *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale*. . . 1880, OE XXXIII 66-67-

⁸⁶⁹“How then do we cultivate the seed of a vocation that the Lord has placed within many in this time of general corruption? Note first of all the need to begin in time and then not to lose sight of them: shorten holidays as much as possible and recommend that even while at home they go to the Sacraments sometimes and do not mix with bad companions. Don Bosco added: 'The seed of a vocation is something that the Lord puts in the hearts of many youngsters and we see that while they are good they love and aspire to the ecclesiastical state. But we see the Lord withdraw when they commit sin and especially when they lose the treasure of chastity" – ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale*. . . 1880, quaderno Barberis.

deal with what a young man should do or should avoid to become a good Christian. *The Companion of Youth* ⁸⁷⁰ offers the main topics for such talks.

However do not talk to them about our Rule or about the vows, or of leaving home or their families; these are matters that will enter their hearts without making them a topic for discussion.

Keep this great principle firmly: one needs | to give oneself to God sooner or later⁸⁷¹ and God says blessed is he who consecrates himself to the Lord in his youth. *Beatus homo cum portaverit jugum ab adolescentia sua.*⁸⁷²

The world then, with all its flattery, parents, friends, home sooner or later either through love or perforce, needs to be abandoned and left entirely and forever.

Acceptance into the novitiate ⁸⁷³

Aspirants who have been tested and are known to be as above can easily be accepted into the novitiate,⁸⁷⁴ but not so for those who are studying or living outside of our houses. For these latter you can faithfully follow the norms established by our constitutions for the aspirants. |⁸⁷⁵

Novices

The time of real trial or novitiate for us is like sifting the wheat to know what is good and see if it is worth keeping. On the contrary we have to weed out what is not good and throw it out of our garden.

We should note well that our Congregation was not founded for those who have lived a worldly life and then want to come to us to be converted. Our Congregation is not for them. We need members who are secure and already proven in secular life. They do not come to improve themselves but to exercise Christian perfection and free poor and abandoned youth from the huge and serious dangers they generally find themselves

⁸⁷⁰G. Bosco, *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica dei suoi doveri degli esercizi di cristiana pietà*. . . Torino 1847. While Don Bosco was still alive it reached 120 editions: OE II 183-532; XXXV 130-684.

⁸⁷¹“If we do not leave the world out of love we must leave it one day anyway” – *Regole o Costituzioni*. . . 1875, OE XXVII 31. See also the entire paragraph “Seguire prontamente la vocazione” in *Regole o Costituzioni*. . . S. Benigno Canavese 1885, pp. 9-11. Cf 1 Jn 2:16-17.

⁸⁷²Lam. 3:27.

⁸⁷³“One thing that must always be kept in mind as a basis for acceptances and must be a norm for all of them is that our congregation is not a reformatory for bad habits: the one with many bad habits and vices who wants to convert and do penance can enter another religious order; there are many established for this purpose but they are not to be accepted amongst us. Our institute is especially for helping our neighbour.” ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale*. . . 1880, *quaderno* Barberis.

⁸⁷⁴“Before accepting a novice find out certain information on his previous moral conduct. Sometimes we can overlook knowledge and material interest but never moral values” *Deliberazione del Capitolo Generale*. . . 1877, OE XXIX 420.

⁸⁷⁵“In accepting an aspirant see that he is in good health and with a good physical constitution. Those whose task it is to find this out should get precise information and in general should not present candidates who cannot fit in with common life and do all the tasks and works proper to our Congregation. Those in triennial vows who are sick are not the responsibility of the Congregation except during those three years, after which if their health does not allow them to continue, they can be sent away. But the perpetually professed, being effectively members of the Congregation, are fully the Congregation's responsibility, especially those who have worked so hard or have done good for our Congregation in other ways” – *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale*. . . 1877, OE XXIX 410-411.

in. For youngsters | who have already been unfortunate victims of human misery or have already been shipwrecked in matters to do with religion or their own behaviour, these either do not become priests or are sent to enclosed orders or orders of penitents. During this year of trial observe well their health, morality, knowledge and give an exact account of this to the Superior Chapter. But the Novice Director should see that he never presents for acceptance those novices of whose morality he could not conscientiously be sure. |

Acceptance

For acceptance follow the norms prescribed by the Holy Church, our Constitutions, Chapter deliberations, both for acceptance into the novitiate and for definitive acceptance for religious profession.

There can be pros and cons spoken of for each candidate but let the voting always be in secret so that one member of the Chapter does not know the vote of another.

Leaving

With regard to those who we send away we should imitate the gardener who weeds and roots out poisonous or simply useless plants. |

But note well that often a meticulous conscience might be fearful of a vocation even when there is no reason to be afraid. Therefore examine the reason or reasons well for which someone is being asked to leave. And the request should be granted only when there is a serious reason, that is, when for a member to remain in the Congregation would cause serious spiritual or even temporal damage to himself or the Congregation.

In such cases see whether it would be enough for someone to leave *ad tempus* or whether it should be absolute. But in any case, everything should be done and sacrifices | made to see that the member leaves agreeably and as a friend of the Congregation. Ordinarily we would only maintain relationships with him that pertain to the good Christian. We would not offer hospitality except in cases of true and recognised need, and only for the time being.

When a member leaves us he is helped to find a job or at least some place where he can earn an honest living.

Common life

Every effort must be made to preserve common life. Let superiors command and require what each can do and no more.⁸⁷⁶

However, when a novice lacks the health to | fulfill the duties our rules prescribe he cannot be accepted for religious profession, and if it seems a chronic illness, he should go back to his family.

⁸⁷⁶“Take great care to foster the common life through words and deeds” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 158. - “Never command things that you judge to be beyond the strength of your subjects or that you see they will not obey”. *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 159. - “Take care of your health. Work, but only inasmuch as your strength allows” – *Ricordi ai missionari*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 207. - “Common life is the bond that supports religious institutions, keeps them in zeal or observant of their Constitutions. Therefore we must take care to introduce it perfectly, preserve it and see that it is observed amongst us very exactly...” – *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale... 1877*, OE XXIX 401.

When it is a case of a professed member, he remains with us and we do what we must for him. But never forget that we are poor and that nobody should act beyond what is expected of a person consecrated to God through the vow of poverty.

Let us have special concern for those who through their labours and other ways have brought notable benefit to the Congregation. Indeed if a change of climate, food, or some time in their home environment would help them let it be done, always however with the advice | of their doctor.

These things are to be limited to the time of illness and convalescence, and see that such treatment does not become a second table. That would be a plague in common life. So when someone who has been convalescing can return to the confreres' table let this be done, but he can still be treated specially with regard to his work and he should not be given work that is beyond his strength.

In this important matter let the highest charity, prudence and effort be practised but always with due discretion, charity and kindness. |

Printed material

In my preaching, addresses and printed books I have always done what I could to support, defend and propagate Catholic principles. Nevertheless if some sentence or word is found in any of these which contains even one doubt or where truth has not been adequately explained, it is my intention to revoke, rectify any idea or feeling which is not precise.

In general then I place every word, writing or printed item under whatever decision, correction or simple advice | Holy Mother the Catholic Church may offer.⁸⁷⁷

As for printed materials and reprints I recommend a number of things:

1. Some of my works were published without my assistance and others against my will, therefore I recommend that my successor draw up or have drawn up a catalogue of all my works, but the last edition of each and if there were reprints.
2. Where a spelling error, or time detail, or grammatical error or error of meaning is discovered these should be corrected for the good of learning and of religion.
3. If it every happens that one of my letters in Italian is printed, pay great attention | to meaning and doctrine because most of these were written in haste and therefore with the danger of lots of inaccuracies.

Letters in French can be burned, but if any should be printed I recommend that they be read and corrected by someone who knows French so that the words neither end up

⁸⁷⁷“If something should be found in my writings or printed material that might be or could be interpreted to be even the least contrary to the holy Catholic, apostolic, Roman Church, it is my intention to withdraw it, because I want to live and die in this Church that alone preserves the religion of Jesus Christ, the only true religion, the only holy one outside of which no one can be saved. In the case where any of the above mentioned books are reprinted after my death, I recommend that the final edition be always used. May the Lord God be pleased with my poor efforts in publishing these writings in reparation for the scandal I may have given in my lifetime; may he pardon my sins in his infinite mercy and grant that I may live and die in his grace, by blessing those young people that divine providence has in some way entrusted to me” – *Testamento del sac. Bosco Gioianni*, Torino 26 luglio 1856, ASC 132 *Testamento*. Published in MB X 1332-1333.

saying what was not intended or cause hilarity or disregard for religion for the person for whom they were written. |

Whoever has items of facts just from memory or taken down in shorthand should have these carefully examined and corrected in such a way that nothing is published which is not in exact conformity with the principles of our holy Catholic Religion.

[Translator's note: rather than translate each of the brief letters below in French or Italian, suffice it to know that the contents run along these lines for most of them:

To [whoever is named, Count or Countess or Baron or Mr or Mrs or other]
Thank you for your charity and may God reward you very much. Our Sisters and the pupils in our apostolic works are your children and they are praying for you.

Please help them.

O Mary, please guide this good benefactor/tress on the way to Paradise.

Pray for my soul,

your humble (or obliged) servant

Fr John Bosco]

A mad.me Prat de Marseille.⁸⁷⁸

Je vous remercie de votre charité. Dieu vous récompense largement. Nos sœurs et nos élèves de l'œuvre apostolique sont vos enfants qui pri|eront pour vous.

Aidez-les.

O Marie, veuillez guider cette bienfaitrice dans le chemin du paradis.

Priez pour mon âme

humble serviteur

abbé J. Bosco

Turin

M.r et Madame le c.te et la c.tesse Colle de Toulon⁸⁷⁹

Je vous attends où le bon Dieu nous a préparé le grand prix, le bonheur éternel avec notre cher Louis. |

La divine miséricorde nous l'accordera. Soyez à jamais le soutien de la congrégation salésienne et l'aide de nos missions.

Dieu vous bénisse

affectionné comme fils

abbé J. Bosco

Turin

Mad.lle Rose du Gas – Marseilles⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁷⁸Madame Prat: see footnote 844

⁸⁷⁹Monsieur et madame le comte et la comtesse Colle: see footnote 843

⁸⁸⁰Mademoiselle Rose du Gas (at other times for Don Bosco, du Gaz or Dugaz): see E IV 121, 188.

Que la Sainte Vierge vous protège à jamais.
Je vous confie nos sœurs et nos pauvres orphelins. Priez pour l'âme de
votre obligé serviteur
abbé J. Bosco |
Turin

A M.me Jacques notre mère en J.C.⁸⁸¹

Dieu m'appelle à l'éternité. J'espère que la miséricorde du bon Dieu vous
conservera une place pour vous dans le paradis. Mais continuez votre
large protection à nos sœurs et à nos orphelins.
Que Marie vous protège et veuillez à jamais prier pour la pauvre âme
du pauvre abbé
Jean Bosco |
Turin

Sig.a march Maria Fassati⁸⁸²

Vi ringrazio, sig.a marchesa, della carità che mi faceste nel corso della mia
vita mortale.
Se Dio mi riceverà nella sua misericordia, pregherò tanto per voi. La vostra
protezione pei nostri orfanelli sarà un mezzo efficacissimo per assicurarvi
il paradiso.
Vogliate pregare per questo antico
ma sempre affezionatissimo amico di casa Fassati,
povero sac. Gio. Bosco | Torino

Sig.ra baronessa Azeglia Ricci⁸⁸³

Signora Azeglia, continuate a proteggere la nostra opera apostolica, ed avrete
tante anime salvate dai nostri missionari che vi porteranno al cielo.
O Maria, guidate questa vostra figlia e il sig. Suo marito B. Carlo a godere
ambidue un giorno il vero premio della loro perseveranza nel bene in par-
adiso.
Pregate per la povera | anima mia.
obb.mo servitore
sac. Gio. Bosco
Torino

⁸⁸¹ Madame Jacque: see footnote 844

⁸⁸² Marchioness Maria Fassati: see footnote 841

⁸⁸³ Baroness Azelia Ricci: daughter of Marquis Domenico Fassati and Countess Maria De Maistre-Fassati
[see footnote 842] born 1846 and died in Turin 7 September 1921; BS 45 (1921) no. 10, Oct. p. 279;
Her husband, Carlo Ricci des Ferres, born in 1847 and died in 1925: BS 49 (1925) no. 3, March, p.
83.

Sig. Barone Feliciano Ricci⁸⁸⁴

O sig. Barone, voi dovete assolutamente salvarvi l'anima; ma voi dovete dare ai poveri tutto il vostro superfluo, quanto vi ha dato il Signore. Prego Dio che vi conceda questa grazia straordinaria.

Spero che ci vedremo nella beata eternità. |

Pregate per la salvezza dell'anima mia.

obb.mo in G.C.

sac Gio. Bosco

Torino

M.me Clara Louvet,⁸⁸⁵

Je dois partir avant vous, mais de ne manquerai jamais de prier pour votre bienheureuse éternité.

Continuez à soutenir nos orphelins, et nos orphelins vous feront couronne quand les anges vous porteront un jour à jouir la gloire du paradis. |

O Marie, protégez à jamais votre fille.

Veillez prier pour le repos éternel de ma pauvre âme

toujours obligé serviteur

abbé J. Bosco

Turin

Caro c.te Eugenio De Maistre,⁸⁸⁶

Vi ringrazio della carità con cui avete aiutato le opere nostre. Continuategli la vostra protezione.

Faccio Iddio che voi, tutta la vostra | famiglia sia un giorno tutta con voi, e col povero vostro amico. Che vi scrive le ultime sue parole, a godere la gloria del paradiso. Così sia.

Vogliate pregare anche pel riposo dell'anima mia

affez.mo amico e servitore

sac Gio. Bosco

Torino

P.S. O Maria, guidate il vostro figlio Eugenio per la via del cielo. |

Sig.a C.ssa Carlotta Callori⁸⁸⁷

O Maria, proteggete questa vostra figlia, ottenete dal divin figlio Gesù larga ricompensa della carità fatta in sostegno della congregazione salesiana. Maria vi conduca al paradiso con tutta la famiglia.

⁸⁸⁴Baron Feliciano Ippolito Ricci, father of Charles, born in 1816 and died 11 November 1893: BS a. XVII no. 12 December 1893, p. 245.

⁸⁸⁵Mademoiselle Clara Louvet: see footnote 845

⁸⁸⁶Count Eugenio de Maistre: see footnote 841

⁸⁸⁷Countess Carlotta Callori: see footnote 841

Continuez ad essere il sostegno delle opere nostre, pregate per la povera
anima mia.

A rivederci nella vita eterna.

obbl.mo in G.C.

sac. Gio. Bosco |

Torino

M.ne Broquier – Marseilles⁸⁸⁸

Que Dieu récompense largement votre charité et la bonté de votre mari;
continuez à aider nos œuvres; priez pour ma pauvre âme.

Je prierai aussi pour vous, et je vous attends dans la bienheureuse éternité,
comme je l'espère de la miséricorde infinie du bon Dieu. Ainsi soit-il obligé
serviteur

abbé J. Bosco |

Turin

C.ssa Gabriella Corsi⁸⁸⁹

Dio vi benedica, o nostra buona mamma in G.C. e con voi benedica tutta la
vostra famiglia e vi aiuti a condurla costantemente per la via del cielo e
trovarla un giorno tutta con voi raccolta in paradiso.

Sia questa la ricompensa della carità usata a me e a tutti I vostri salesiani.

Pregate per me che vi attendo alla vita eterna.

obbl.mo come figlio

sac Gio. Bosco

Torino

Requiescat in pace. Volò alla vita eterna 1887. |

The Rector of a house with his confreres

The Rector must be a model of patience, charity with the confreres who depend on
him, and therefore:⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁸Madame Broquier: see footnote 844

⁸⁸⁹Countess Gabriella Corsi: see footnote 841

⁸⁹⁰“Charity and courtesy are the characteristic features of a Rector towards people inside and outside. . .
In commanding always use charitable and meek words and manner. Threats, anger, and even more
so violence should always be far from your words and actions” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984),
pp. 156-159. – “Charity, patience, kindness, never humiliating reproaches, punishments. Do good
to whoever you can and bad to nobody. This goes for all the Salesians amongst themselves, with
their pupils and others, externs or interns” – *Lettera a mons. Giovanni Cagliero*, E IV 328. –
“The preventive system is especially ours: never penal punishments, no humiliating words or severe
reproaches in front of others. But in your lessons let there be kind words, patience, charity. . . kindness
in speech, in work, and in advising wins over everyone and everything” – *Lett. a don Giacomo
Costamagna*, E IV 332-333. – “With your exemplary manner of living, with charity in speaking,
commanding, putting up with others' defects, you will win over many to the Congregation. . . Always
be a friend, father to our confreres, help them in every way you can in spiritual and temporal matters”
– *Lett. a don Domenico Tomatis*, E IV 337.

1. Assist them, help them, instruct them on how to fulfill their duties but never with hard or offensive words.
2. Let them see that you have great confidence in them; treat matters concerning them kindly. Never reproaches or strong words in the presence of others. | But try to do this *in camera caritatis*, meaning gently, strictly in private.
3. When the reasons for such reproaches or advice are public, it may be necessary to advise publicly, but either in church or in special conferences never make personal allusions. Advice, reproaches or allusions made publicly are offensive and do not | bring about change.⁸⁹¹
4. Never forget the monthly 'rendiconto' [talk with the Rector] as far as possible. On that occasion let each Rector be the friend, brother, father of his dependents. Give everyone the time and liberty to offer their reflections, express their needs and their intentions.⁸⁹²

For his part, then, let him open his heart to everyone without being the cause of rancour for anyone; he should not recall past faults unless to offer fatherly | advice, or to charitably remind someone who is negligent of his duty.⁸⁹³

5. Act in such a way as to never deal with matters that belong to confession, unless the confreres asks for this. In such cases never make resolutions that have to be translated in the *foro esterno* without some understanding with the member concerned.

⁸⁹¹“There are those who want to punish etc. etc. The Rector should warn, but never in public, never in front of the boys. On a one to one basis it is easy to get people to bow to the will of the superior, to the preventive system” - ASC *Verbale del terzo Capitolo Generale. . . 1883*.

⁸⁹²“It is warmly recommended that Rectors never overlook receiving the 'rendiconto'. Every confrere will then know that if he does this well, with frankness and humility, he will find great consolation and a powerful aid for progress in virtue” - *Regole o Costituzioni. . . S. Benigno Canavese 1885. Introduzione*, p. 39. - “Let each one have the greatest confidence in his superior: it will therefore be of great benefit to members if they give a detailed account of their external existence to the main superiors of the Congregation. Let each one simply and promptly manifest to them his external failings against the rules, and also what he has gained in virtue so he can receive advice and comfort and, if it can be helpful, also appropriate admonition” - C. SDB, pp. 96-97. - “ But now the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers and friends; they are feared and little loved. And so if you want everyone to be of one heart and soul again for the love of Jesus you must break down this fatal barrier of mistrust, and replace it with a happy spirit of confidence”. - *Lettera da Roma 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), pp. 54-55. - “Go not as a superior but as a friend, brother, father” - *Lett. A don Perrot*, E III 360. - “Let us see our superiors as brothers, indeed as loving fathers, who want nothing else than the glory of God, the salvation of souls, our good and the proper running of our Society” - *Circolare del 21 novembre 1886*, in *Lettere circolari di D. Bosco e di D. Rua*. Torino, tip. Salesiana 1896, p. 41.

⁸⁹³“Keep it in mind: if we want the Salesian institution to remain as it was conceived to be we need to know that almost everything depends on the monthly 'rendiconto' occurring and happening in a convenient way. . . The only hurdle would be entering into things that are strictly matters of conscience: we don't go into things of conscience which are in fact secret and we are not to know about these things unless the individual wishes to speak of them spontaneously” - ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale. . . 1880*, quaderno Barberis.

6. The Rector is most often the ordinary confessor of the confreres.⁸⁹⁴ But let him prudently give ample | freedom to whoever wishes to confess to another. It should however be understood that such particular confessors are to be known and approved by the superior according to our rules.
7. Since then whoever seeks exceptional confessors is showing little confidence in the Rector he, the Rector, should be alert and draw particular attention to observance of other rules and not | entrust that confrere with certain tasks that might seem beyond his physical or moral strength.
N.B. What I see here is in fact is other than what refers to the extraordinary confessor which the superior, rector, provincial organises for an appropriate occasion.
8. In general then the Rector of a house shall deal with his confreres | often and with much familiarity, insisting on the need for uniform observance of the Constitutions, and as much as possible recalling even the very words they use.
9. In cases of illness observe what the rules prescribe and what the chapter deliberations have established.
10. Easily forget personal offences and annoyances and through kindness and regard try to overcome or better correct the negligent, those lacking in trust or suspicious. /Vince in bono malum./⁸⁹⁵

Confreres living in the same house

1. All Salesians living in the same house must be one in heart and soul with their Rector.⁸⁹⁶
2. But let them keep well in mind that grumbling is a plague to be avoided at all costs.⁸⁹⁷ Let every possible sacrifice be made, but never tolerate criticism of superiors.

⁸⁹⁴“In our houses the Rector is the ordinary confessor, therefore see that you willingly hear each one’s confession but give them ample freedom to confess to others if they wish” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS (1984), p. 156. – “For the good running of the Congregation, to preserve unity of spirit and to follow the example of other religious institutes, a stable confessor is fixed for those who belong to the Society. The Rector Major is the ordinary confessor in any house of the Congregation he finds himself in. In each house the ordinary confessor is the Rector, but in particular cases each one is also free to confess to another priest” – *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale... 1877*, OE XXX 402.

⁸⁹⁵Rom 12:21

⁸⁹⁶Acts 4:32. “All members live strictly in common, their only bond being fraternal charity and simple vows, which unite them in such a way that they form one heart and soul to love and serve God” – C. SDB, pp. 82-83. – “Don Bosco recommended conferences which, according to what was established in the preceding General Chapter, are to be given to the confreres every fortnight. These conferences are like a second unifying element so that confreres and the Rector can be one body and soul” – ASC *Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale... 1880*, quaderno Barberis.

⁸⁹⁷“Let no one find fault with the arrangements made by Superiors, criticise their actions, words, writings and the like” – *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale... 1877*, OE XXIX 417. – “Something that harms Religious communities very much is grumbling which is directly contrary to charity. The grumbler soils his own soul and will be hated by God and men... See then that you steer clear of every word of criticism, especially of your companions and even more so your Superiors” – *Regole o Costituzioni... 1877*, OE XXIX 417.

3. Do not find fault in orders given within the family or disapprove of things heard in sermons, conferences or in what a confrere has written or had printed in a book.
4. Let each one suffer for the glory of God and in penance for his sins, but for the good of his soul let him avoid criticism of the administration, food, clothing, room, etc.
5. Remember, my sons, that harmony and agreement between the Rector and his subjects makes our houses a real paradise on earth. !
6. I do not recommend any special penances or mortifications to you; you will gain great merit and give glory to the Congregation if you are able to bear the sufferings and annoyances of life with Christian resignation.
7. Offer good advice every time the opportunity presents itself, especially when it is a case of giving consolation in some difficulty or helping someone | to overcome some problem, or provide some service both in times of good health or when someone is ill.
8. If you hear of something or some fact that is culpable, especially about things which can only be interpreted as against God's law, communicate this | respectfully to the superior. He will know how to use due prudence to promote what is good and prevent evil.⁸⁹⁸
9. With regard to the pupils see that each keeps the rules of the house and decisions made to keep discipline and moral behaviour amongst students and working boys.
10. Rather than make remarks about what others do, | let each one take the greatest care to fulfill the duties entrusted to him. |⁸⁹⁹

S. Benigno Canavese 1885. *Introduzione*, p. 31. – “Never grumble about the arrangements of the Superiors, but be tolerant of things that are not to your taste, or which are annoying or displeasing. Let every Salesian be friends with everyone else and never seek revenge; forgive easily, and never remind people of things already forgiven. Never find fault with Superiors' orders and let everyone try to give and promote good example” – *Lett. A don Giacomo Costamagna*, E IV 332-333. – “My dear children, let's guard against falling into the serious defect of fault-finding that goes so much against charity, is hateful to God and damaging to the Community. Let us flee fault-finding in regard to any individual, and let us flee it especially with regard to our confreres and above all if they are Superiors” – *Circolare del 21 novembre 1886*, in *Lettere circolari di D. Bosco e di D. Rua*. Torino, tip. Salesiana 1896, p. 42. – “When this fraternal love reigns in a Community and all the members love one another, and each one is interested in the good of the other as if it is his own good, then that house becomes Paradise” – *Regole o Costituzioni*. . . S. Benigno Canavese 1885. *Introduzione*, pp. 30-31. 519-521 “Avoid austerity in food. Let your mortifications be in diligence in your duties and putting up with the faults of others” – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 150. Cf. Gal 6:2.

⁸⁹⁸“Assistants should make it a strict duty in conscience to refer to the superiors whatever they know to be an offence against God” – *Lettera da Roma 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 57.

⁸⁹⁹“Let no one overlook his part. Salesians considered as a whole form one body, meaning the Congregation. If all the members of this body carry out their roles, everything will proceed in order and with satisfaction; otherwise there will be abuses, things gone awry, fits, things falling apart and finally the ruin of that same body. Let each one therefore carry out the role entrusted to him” – *Regole o Costituzioni*. . . 1875. *Introduzione*, OE XXVIII 44. Cf. Mt 7:3-5.

A basic reminder, meaning an obligation for everyone working in the Congregation

All are enjoined and recommended before God to pay particular attention to morality amongst Salesians themselves and amongst those who for any reason at all have been confided by Divine Providence to our care. |⁹⁰⁰

I note here what I would have wanted to say elsewhere

At the time of the Retreat the Rector of the house and all other ordinary superiors are advised not to hear the confessions of their dependents and as far as is possible make use of extraordinary confessors and preachers. If there are not enough of them call on help from well-known confessors. Then if in certain cases some exception is required, the superior can make a judgement. |

When a confrere runs foul of the ecclesiastical authorities in a city, place or diocese his superior will use due prudence and assign another task to him.

Similarly if a confrere meets rivalry or opposition from his other confreres it would be good if he changed community or occupation. But he should always be advised in a friendly way about his own defects and be offered guidelines to act in a better way in the future to avoid friction.

With outsiders

One needs to put up with a lot from outsiders and also put up with penalties rather than enter into litigation.

In the case of ecclesiastical or civil authorities, put up with as much as you can honestly but do not enter into litigation with secular courts.

But since despite every sacrifice and good will sometimes you have to undergo litigation I advise and recommend putting the dispute | to one or two judges with plenipotentiary power, submitting the dispute to their opinion whatever it may be.

This way conscience is saved and the affair can be brought to an end since normally these things go on for a long time and become costly, and it is also difficult to maintain peace of mind and Christian charity. |⁹⁰¹

For the good of every member and for the entire congregation let nobody get mixed up in financial affairs, tasks or recommendations that are tied up with family and friends.

If there are serious reasons why one needs to get involved in matters of the kind, let him speak to his superior about it and strictly follow his opinion.

Strictly observe the rule of never signing promissory notes or becoming a guarantor for payments by others. Experience tells us that this always causes us problems and regret.⁹⁰²

⁹⁰⁰“Whoever does not have a well-founded hope of preserving, with divine help, this virtue in words, deeds, thoughts, should not join this Congregation, since he would be exposed to serious risk at every step” - C. SDB, pp. 108-109. See also the entire circular letter to Salesians of 5 February 1874, E II 347-349, and other references in this document.

⁹⁰¹“In case of questions regarding material matters be as agreeable as you can, even if there is some disadvantage so long as anything that is an excuse for argument or other thing that could cause a loss of charity are kept far away”. - *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS (1984), p. 156. Cf. Mt 5:25; 1 Cor. 6:1-8.

⁹⁰²“Let nobody in the Congregation draw up contracts, receive monies, offer loans, or lend things to relatives, friends or others. Nor let anyone keep money or administer temporal matters without being directly authorised by the Superior. Observance of this article will keep far away from us some

If possible some service can be rendered, or some subsidy offered, but within the limits and permission given by one's respective superior.

Rue Boetie – Paris

M.me la V.sse de Cessac.⁹⁰³

Vous avez protégé nos orphelins et la Sainte Vierge vous fera bien riche dans l'éternité. Là vous verrez vos parents, vos amis; là vous parlerez de Dieu avec eux à jamais.

Continuez votre charité pour nous maisons; priez pour ma pauvre âme.

Obligé serviteur

abbé J. Bosco

Turin. A Paris

P.S. 1886. Requiescat in pace |

Voi, o signora baronessa Scoppa, che abitate S. Andrea del Ionio Napolitano, continuate la vostra carità ai nostri missionari, ai nostri orfanelli e Maria guiderà le opere vostre, e sarete molto consolata negli ultimi momenti di vostra vita. Sia che viviate su questa terra, sia che Dio vi abbia già ricevuta fra I beati in cielo, noi pregheremo ogni giorno per voi, pei vostri parenti ed amici. |⁹⁰⁴

For the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians ⁹⁰⁵

Daughters or Sisters of Mary Help of Christians the Salesians must faithfully observe what has been established in Chapter deliberations.

We should spare no effort, expense or disturbance of any kind in order to look after our relationship as the Church and our very Constitutions have established.

In dealing with material affairs religious men and women should never be alone together, | but let them always have others around, or at least let others always see what they are doing. *Numquam solus cum sola loquator.*

In receiving someone into the Institute of Mary be careful not to receive anyone who does not have good health and a well-founded hope of true obedience.

We maintain that virtues not acquired at the time of novitiate, are for the most part no longer acquired.⁹⁰⁶

Let no Sister after her religious profession keep stable funds for herself or for the religious community she belongs to. There can be an exception for the necessary possessions

of the problems that have been fatal for other Congregations" – *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS (1984), p. 158.

⁹⁰³Madame the Vicecountess de Cessac: see footnote 846.

⁹⁰⁴The Baroness Maria Enrichetta Scoppa di Badolato was born at S. Andre on Ionio on 4 November 1831. The BS calls her a "true apostle" for Calabria in as much as she founded and supported various male and female institutes. She died on the 22nd anniversary of Don Bosco's death, 31 January 1910: BS 34 (1910) no. 4, April, p. 126.

⁹⁰⁵See the entire chapter "Direzione generale della suore", in *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale. . . 1880*, OE XXXIII 34-35.

⁹⁰⁶"What is not done in the year of trial will be done afterwards only with difficulty and, even when it is done, it will be a momentary effort which one cannot count on. . ." MB XIII 250.

| for founding a house of education or health parks.

Neither jokingly or as a prank or for any other reasons or pretext should words be used that provoke laughter or lower esteem or benevolence in persons of the other sex. Read and understand these words well and explained them often. |

The superior general, the superiors of houses are not allowed familiarity with lay people of any kind. If there is a real need, an assistant should intervene and follow the prescriptions of the respective rules.

The superior herself should not keep any sum of money unless for particular situations and only for the time | necessary for dealing with them.

What has been said regarding the superior general is applicable to all the superiors of the other houses.

In this and in similar matters they should submit, without opposition, to the advice and orders of the major superior.

Buildings or repairs should never take place without an understanding with the same superior. |

1. In dealing with important matters in the Superior Chapter or General Chapter, both Salesians and Sisters should present beforehand, in writing or verbally, the matters they wish to deal with.
2. Everyone should be given full freedom to speak for or against the issues as each one sees things before God, but in coming to decisions, make use of secrete voting.
3. Some coloured beans or nuts etc should be placed secretly in some container and each one then extract one. The black is negative and the white affirmative.
4. When a majority vote has been arrived at for some deliberation it should not be changed except by another deliberation in which all the Chapter takes part.
5. Take great care to carry out decisions in detail, | and be careful to see that decisions do not run contrary to each other.

It is a great mistake and wasted effort when things proposed and approved in Chapter are not carried out, and are then forgotten.

Let everyone try to avoid raising new matters in Conferences or Chapters; and act in such a way that things previously approved by tradition, the Rule or General or Particular Chapters are regularly dealt with. |

Amidst difficulties

when in some town or city we meet up with particular difficulties on the part of some spiritual or temporal authority, try to act in such a way as to be present to explain why you have acted in the way you did.

Personal explanation of your good intentions can much reduce and often eliminate the bad ideas | that some people have in mind.

If they are things that are also blameworthy in the face of the law, say you are sorry or at least give a respectful explanation, but if possible always in a personal audience.

This way of acting is most conciliatory and often makes our adversaries look more kindly on us.

This is nothing more than God himself recommends: *responsio / mollis frangit iram*. Or St Paul's maxim: *charitas Dei benigna est, patiens est, etc.*⁹⁰⁷

Rectors of houses should follow the same rules with their inferiors. Speak up, explain yourselves and you can easily make yourself understood without Christian charity coming into conflict with the interests of our Congregation. |

If you wish to gain much from our pupils, never offend anyone. Put up with their defects, correct them, then forget them. Show yourself to be always affectionate to them, and let them know that all your efforts are aimed at doing good to their souls. |

Basic recommendations for all Salesians

Love poverty if you wish to keep the Congregation in a good financial state.⁹⁰⁸

Let no one be able to say: "These furnishings do not suggest poverty; the poor do not eat or dress or have rooms like this. Whoever gives cause for remarks of this kind brings disaster upon our Congregation which must be able to pride itself on its vow of poverty."⁹⁰⁹

Woe to us if those from whom we seek alms are able to say that we live an easier life than they do.

This should always be practised rigorously when we find ourselves in a good state of health, while in cases of illness we do everything that our rules permit.

Remember that it will always be a red-letter day when you are able to win over an enemy or make a friend by charity. |⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁷ Prov. 15:1; 1 Cor 13:4.

⁹⁰⁸ "Let us remember, my dear children, that the well-being of our Pious Society and the advantage to our souls depends in great measure on this observance. Divine Providence, it is true, has helped us up until now, and we can also say in an extraordinary way in all our needs. We are certain that this help will also continue in the future through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, who has always acted as a Mother. But this does not take away the fact that for our part we must use all diligence in reducing expenses wherever we can, like making savings in provisions, journeys, building, and in general in everything that is not necessary". - *Circolare del 21 novembre 1886*, in *Lettere circolari di D. Bosco e di D. Rua*. Torino. Tip. Salesiana 1896, pp. 42-43. "Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food, and abode, and you will be rich in the sight of God and will win the hearts of men" - *Ricordi ai missionari*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 207.

⁹⁰⁹ "Be economical in everything, but see absolutely that those who are ill lack nothing. This, amongst other things lets people know that we have made a vow of poverty, therefore we ought not seek comfort, nor even desire it, in anything. We must love poverty and poverty's companions, so avoid any unnecessary expense in clothing, books, furniture, trips etc." *Ricordi confidenziali*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 159.

⁹¹⁰ "In speaking and dealing with people, use kindness not only with the Superiors but with everyone, and mostly with those who in the past have offended you or who look upon you badly at the moment. Charity puts up with everything; whoever does not put up with others' defects will never have true charity... Whenever it should happen that a brother who has offended you seeks your forgiveness, see well that you avoid dealing with him abruptly or answer with hard words, but treat him properly, with affection and kindness. If it should happen that you offend others, immediately seek him out and pacify him and get rid of any rancour he may feel towards you. And according to St Paul's advice: do not let the sun go down without forgiving from your heart any resentment, and without being reconciled with your brother" - *Regole o Costituzioni...* S. Benigno Canavese 1885. *Introduzione*,

Never let the sun set on your anger, nor recall offences already forgiven, or pain caused, or a fault already forgotten. Let us always say from our heart: *Dimittite nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris*,⁹¹¹ but with complete and absolute readiness to forget everything that has offended us in the past.

Let us love everyone with fraternal love. |⁹¹²

Let these things be observed in an exemplary way by those who exercise some authority over others.⁹¹³

Recommendations for myself

O my dear boys, you who have always been the delight of my heart, I recommend frequent communion in suffrage for my soul.⁹¹⁴

Through frequent communion you make yourself dear to God and men, and Mary will grant you the grace of receiving the holy sacraments at the end of your life.

You priests, Salesian clerics, parents and friends of my soul pray, receive Jesus in the Sacrament in suffrage for my soul so that my time in Purgatory may be shortened. | Now that I have expressed a father's thoughts towards his beloved children, I know speak to myself to invoke the mercy of the Lord on me in the final hours of my life. It is my intention to live and die in the holy Catholic religion with the Roman Pontiff at its head, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth.⁹¹⁵

I believe and profess all the truths of the faith that God has revealed to his holy Church.

I humbly ask God for pardon for all my sins, especially for any scandal | I have given my neighbour through my actions, words spoken at the wrong time; I beg pardon especially for excesses in my own regard on the pretext of preserving my health.

I must also ask pardon if someone has noticed that I often gave too short a preparation or thanksgiving to the Holy Mass. I was sometimes forced into that by the crowd | of people who came into the sacristy and took away any possibility of praying either before or after Mass.

I know that you, my beloved sons, love me and this love, this affection, should not be limited to bewailing my death, but pray for the eternal repose of my soul.

I recommend prayer, works of charity, mortification, holy communions in reparation for the negligence committed while doing good and preventing evil. |

Let your prayers be addressed to heaven especially that I may find mercy and pardon when I present myself to the tremendous majesty of my creator. |

The future

p. 33.

⁹¹¹Eph 4:26; Mt 6:12. Cf Col 3:12-13.

⁹¹²Cf 1 Jn 4:21.

⁹¹³Cf Jn 13:14.

⁹¹⁴"O my dear boys, I love you with all my heart; it is enough for you to be young for me to love you very much" – *Il giovane provveduto* (1885), OE XXXV 135. – "You are truly my delight and my consolation" – *Lettera da Roma 1884*, RSS 3 (1984), p. 337.

⁹¹⁵"... I want to live and die in this Church that alone preserves the religion of Jesus Christ, the only true religion, the only holy one outside of which no one can be saved". *Testamento del sac. Bosco Giovanni*, Torino 26 luglio 1856, ASC 132 *Testamento*. Published in MB X 1332-1333.

Divine Providence has prepared a happy future for our Congregation and its glory will endure as long as the rules are faithfully observed.⁹¹⁶

When the desire for ease and comfort grows amongst us, our pious Society will have run its course. |

The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.

Do not found houses if you do not have | the necessary personnel to administer them.

Do not have too many houses near to each other. There are fewer dangers if the houses are far from one another.

Once a foreign mission has begun, let it continue with energy and sacrifice. Our efforts should be always to establish schools and seek some vocations for the ecclesiastical state, or some Sisters from amongst the girls. |⁹¹⁷

Time will lead us to establish our missions in China and precisely in Peking. But let us never forget that we exist for poor and abandoned boys. Amongst those who know little or nothing of the true God you will see taking place wonders formerly thought incredible but which almighty God will make manifest to the world.⁹¹⁸

Let us not keep any property other than the dwelling places we need.

When we lack the financial means for some religious enterprise, it should be suspended but let the works already begun be continued as soon as our finances, sacrifices permit.

When it happens that a Salesian yields up his life whilst working for souls, you can say that the Congregation has registered a great triumph and that on it will descend in abundance the blessings of heaven.

Three letters to Salesians in America

by Francesco Motto

Introduction

As a founder of a religious congregation contemplating missionary activity amongst its purposes. Don Bosco never had the opportunity of going to so-called 'mission lands'. Perhaps this is also a reason why he nurtured special affection for the Salesian missionaries

⁹¹⁶ "The observance of the Rule is the only way for a Congregation to last" – MB XII 81. – "If the Salesians... without pretending to improve their Constitutions, try to observe them in every detail, their Congregation will flourish ever more" – *Regole o Costituzioni...* 1875. *Introduzione*, OE XXVIII 43. – "The development of your Pious Institute and its spiritual benefit for its members depends in great part on the exact observance of your Deliberations, which are their practical application". *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale delle FMA...* 1880. *Presentazione di Don Bosco*, OE XXXVI 151-152.

⁹¹⁷ "Urge everyone and constantly recommend promoting religious vocations both for the Sisters and our confreres" – *Lettera a don Giacomo Costamagna*, E IV 333.

⁹¹⁸ "So work much, in every way, and everywhere try to preserve what is good in people and in young people... We cannot oppose a malicious world with either miracles or Our Fathers: it needs works; we need to gather up many young people" – *ASC Verbale del secondo Capitolo Generale...* 1880, *quaderno* Barberis.

in Latin America who, in the last years of his life, realised the dream he had long entertained. In his heart and mind he felt they were the ones who had realised his deepest aspirations, he saw them as part of himself, he projected himself through them. The huge admiration and particular tenderness with which his letters to missionaries overseas are overflowing would thus find persuasive explanation.

From thousands of kilometres away, Don Bosco continued to be their "father" and, as such, he wanted to know the moral state of each and all of them: he answered their questions, guided them in their doubts, was concerned about their health, invited them to practise "Salesian" virtues (charity, temperance, hard work...), followed them up with a sure and constant word. It is as if they had a special place in his heart. "A soul friend" thought about their fidelity to their vocation with intimate recommendations and passionate advice: he praised their work, appreciated their sacrifice, made them feel that they were the object of his concern and prayer.

But Don Bosco also felt he was the Superior of a Congregation and while leaving room for personal initiatives he did not fail to intervene so that the constitutions and chapter deliberations would be observed, and especially that religious and missionary life be a credible testimony in the eyes of civil and religious authorities in the place as well as in higher Vatican circles. He wanted to be constantly informed of activities that were under way, of how works were going, of apostolic successes and things that had failed, so that he could get Turin to share the task through courageously facing up to the local reality which they could know about thanks to an uninterrupted correspondence.

In the last years of his life Don Bosco was aware that what the Congregation needed above all, both in Italy where it has already been for some time, and in Latin America where it was being transplanted, was more than just unity and stability of structures. The guarantee of the future, of a Salesian future, was in the hands of the confreres and their helpers while they remained faithful to the spirit of their origins, meaning the method and style of education that had characterised life at the Oratory in Valdocco.

If with the *Letter from Rome* in 1884 he had responded to a particular educational situation that had come about under his very gaze in Turin,⁹¹⁹ the following year a similar and unequivocal circumstance lay behind the report, drawn up in the short space of ten days, of three other letters to missionaries in America. These can be listed amongst the most important of his epistolary output for being aware of and understanding the preventive system and Salesian spirit.

Some members of the Superior Chapter had received some alarming news from Argentina indicating that in certain houses in America, and especially in the house at Almagro (Buenos Aires), severity and rigid discipline was taking the place of familiarity and loving kindness so dear to Don Bosco and essential to his system. And as if that was not enough, there was hint of deep rifts amongst confreres in that house.

The one who had begun this serious report was Fr Antonio Riccardi⁹²⁰ secretary of

⁹¹⁹ Cf. RSS 3 (1984) 295-374)

⁹²⁰ Born at Porto Maurizio (Imperia) in 1853, he came to the Oratory at Valdocco when he was 10. 6 years later he received his cassock and in 1875 was ordained priest. He left for Latin America in 1885 as secretary of the newly appointed Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia, Bishop Cagliero and then worked as a missionary in Peru, Jamaica and Mexico, where he was also Provincial for a time. He spent

Bishop Cagliari. As Visitor for the houses in America and while waiting to take possession of his mission as Vicar Apostolic in Patagonia, Bishop Cagliari had spent some months in the house at Almagro, his secretary with him. This latter had time to observe and then refer to Turin what he had seen with his own eyes.

Ew months after his arrival in Latin America he had already written to Fr Rua that the house at Almagro “was poor in spirit and money”.⁹²¹ But these were just the first signs. The real bombshell exploded in the Superior Chapter a few weeks later after his explosive communications with Fr Lazzero, Fr Durando, Fr Barberis and Fr Rua. In particular, writing confidentially to Fr Rua on 6 June, Fr Riccardi stigmatised the situation thus: “. . . in this college at Almagro the Rector exists only in name, never being in contact with the boys either for confessions or for advice or for any other need, except for ten minutes in the morning, after meditation. He spends almost the entire day with the Sisters, in the schools or elsewhere”. And after presenting the super work which Frs Vespignani, Cassini and Paseri had undertaken, he continued: “Therefore the boys are very much neglected and it is no wonder that they rarely go to Communion and are very ill-disciplined. The assistants have no support and unfortunately, in the eyes of the curt and sometimes uncouth character of the Rector, are unskilled. So to obtain a bit of order and discipline they know no other way than to hit out, so that any day at any hour you hear boys yelling ‘ahi’ in every part of the house. . . The Bishop spoke first privately, then gave three conferences to all the confreres together, encouraging the practice of the preventive system . . . but up to now all without effect. They say that if Don Bosco were here he would do the same!!! And the Rector supports them telling the Bishop that one cannot do otherwise with these little kids”. Fr Riccardi did not finish his letter here. In various other pages he tells of the regrettable circumstances he was witness to, before addressing a steadfast appeal to Fr Rua: “It would be very helpful if you. . . would tell all the Salesians in America in general to: 1. See themselves as brothers, sons of the one father, Don Bosco. . . 2. Not just read the preventive system. . . 3. Not to distance themselves from the customs of the Oratory regarding practices of piety and frequenting the Sacraments. 4. Consider that the name Salesian is not enough if they don’t practice the kindness, patience and charity of St Francis de Sales. 5. Not to hide things from the Superior for fear of his observations. . .”.⁹²²

Unwilling to believe the news they were receiving, the various recipients of the letters answered, telling Riccardi that perhaps his condemnation was exaggerated, that this

the last years of his life in Italy where he died on 15 May 1924. See BS 48 (1924) no. 8, August, p. 233. which is the source for the *Dizionario biografico dei Salesiani*, by E. Valentin-A. Rodinò, Torino, Ufficio Stampa Salesiano 1969, p. 237.

⁹²¹ Letter of Fr Riccardi to Fr Rua of 9 May 1885: ASC 9.126 Rua.

⁹²² Photocopy in ASC 9.126 Rua. The roles of members of the Superior Chapter were as follows: Fr Michele Rua, prefect; Fr Giuseppe Lazzero, councillor, rector of the mother house (Artisan section); Fr Celestino Durando, school councillor; Fr Giulio Barberis, vice spiritual director. Bishop Cagliari had remained spiritual director. We should not wonder at the frequency of correspondence between Riccardi and the Superiors in Turin and especially with Fr Lazzero. As well as knowing them all personally after living with them for many years, he was told when leaving Italy that Fr Lazzero was responsible for correspondence with America. On the other hand everyone expressed their gratitude to him for his letters or invited him to continue his correspondence.

letters were written out of anger and that someone had interpreted his writing to various members of the Chapter badly. Riccardi replied to them in the months that followed. He denied that he had exaggerated his reporting of the facts and in the tone in which he had expressed them and justified his writing to various members of the Superior Chapter. Repeating the information he had given he gave names of people who could testify and who could further details as proof of his earlier distressing reports.⁹²³ Certainly Riccardi was not immune from a spirit of denigration and nostalgia for the “little old world” of the early days at Valdocco;⁹²⁴ but his *j'accuse* was substantially true and the vice rector himself of the house. Fr Joseph Vespignani, through clenched teeth, had to admit it.⁹²⁵

Whatever the case. Riccardi's letters did not pass in vain through the corridors of the Mother House in Turin. Fr Rua gave them immediate credit and already by the end of June wrote to Bishop Cagliero thus: “In your moral account of things also see whether the Rectors are preserving the spirit of St Francis de Sales in their way of doing things, that charity, kindness and forbearance that our beloved father Don Bosco has always recommended and that produces such good effects in everyone, those living in and those from outside. We have understood that there the colleges and Salesian houses are not all run with kindness and with the preventive system but that in some places they use the repressive system. You are there on the spot and can better see things and apply the

⁹²³ On 9 August to Fr Lazzero: “In a few words I would describe things thus in my view: 1. All authority is absolutely focused on the Rector; and since he is not up to it, things go wrong. . . II. Supreme authority of the Rector exercised in harsh, provocative, humiliating and degrading manner. . . III. Lack of constant free correspondence of confreres with Don Bosco and with the Superiors of his Chapter. . . One cannot put blind faith in all the reports that have been sent to Turin in the past. . . these past reports it seems to me speak too much of the good and wonderful things that should be found at the house in Almagro and never hint at the bad and ugly things that were there in fact. . . they were poetic pieces and I believe that in my earlier letters I have sufficiently demonstrated the bitter disillusionment felt by myself and the Bishop. When we arrived the gripes and long-repressed rancour in the hearts of many of the confreres were made evident and sometimes also publicly and certain scenes took place in our presence that perhaps it is better to remain silent about”. Again to Fr Lazzero on 3 September: “. . . I have other negative, but sufficiently eloquent arguments at hand. Before leaving the Bishop was asked to provide frequent information about the houses, the confreres, the Sisters etc. Here in Colón, they do so, Paysandu. . . but from Almagro the only letters that arrive are from d. Costamagna, and when he reads them the Bishop cannot but let certain expressions slip out. . . but then he laughs saying that ‘He’s a man of the old credo, that one!’”: ASC 275 *Ricordi*. And then to Fr Durando on 27 October following: “I believe, dear Fr Durando, that I have never written anything in anger, nor under its influence, indeed I have written very little compared to everything I could have and perhaps should have written. It is enough for you to know that there was someone there (before our arrival) who did not hesitate to declare publicly that in the matter of educating youth Don Bosco and those with him in Turin understood nothing. . . but enough”: ASC 275 *Riccardi*

⁹²⁴ In his letters we often find explicit reference at “Turin of old, at least 20 or more years ago, when the Oratory was a home not a college, and Don Bosco the father not the Rector or Director of his children”: the succinct letter of 19 August.

⁹²⁵ There are other testimonies in C. Bruno, *Los salesianos y las hijas de María Auxiliadora en la Argentina*. Vol 1. Buenos Aires, Instituto salesiano de artes gráficas 1981, pp. 152-154; J.E. Belza, *Luis Lasagna, el obispo misionero*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Don Bosco 1970, p. 195, n. 7. Evidently there could be no lack of a number of pages on the matter in R.A. Entraigas, *Los salesianos en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Plus ultra Vol IV (años 1884-1885) 1972. See pp. 261-265.

necessary remedy where there is a need".⁹²⁶

Bishop Cagliari then intervened directly with the Provincial and Rector, Fr Costamagna, warmly recommending that he "follow the preventive system in everything"⁹²⁷ and also with the Salesian personnel with "conferences on kindness, charity, affability".⁹²⁸ and then following up respectfully what was asked of him he made a report to Fr Rua who in turn passed it on to Don Bosco who at the time was at the house at Mathi.⁹²⁹

In such a way Don Bosco, who for reasons of prudence and respect maybe had been kept somewhat in the dark by Riccardi⁹³⁰ and the members of the Superior Chapter regarding the real situation in the houses in America, now was fully aware and simultaneously intervened through Bishop Cagliari (6 August), Fr Costamagna (10 August) Fr Tomatis (14 August).

This is the context and the immediate circumstances of the three letters that did not pass unobserved by each of their recipients,⁹³¹ and nor did they escape the attention – especially the second – of scholars of Don Bosco's system of education and his religious and spiritual pedagogy.⁹³²

ASC preserves all three handwritten letters: the first and the third in 131.01 *Lettere originali, ms* 11 B 10 – C and 53 B 1-3 respectively; the second, recently arrived, is still to be allocated its definite location.

⁹²⁶ ASC 9.131 Rua: letter of 30 June 1885. While the first part is in the hand of one of Rua's secretaries, the second part (We have understood...) is something the Prefect General of the Congregation added in his own hand.

⁹²⁷ Letter quoted from 3 September 1885.

⁹²⁸ *Ibidem*

⁹²⁹ On 10 August Fr Rua wrote thus to Bishop Cagliari: "I sent the letter to our beloved Don Bosco at Mathi. We will see what he thinks.": ASC 9.131 Rua. Note the coincidences: on 10 August Fr Rua had already sent Bishop Cagliari's letter to Don Bosco. On 6 August Don Bosco had written his answer to the bishop telling him that he was also preparing a letter for Fr Costamagna. He would date it 10 August. Four days later it would be Fr Tomatis' turn.

⁹³⁰ He said to Don Bosco in his letter of 2 January 1886: "You certainly have every reasons to be unhappy with me because I have never written or almost never since departing from Turin and arriving in America. I did this not to add to your concerns. . .": ASC 126.2 *Riccardi*. To be truthful the ASC has preserved various letters sent by Fr Riccardi to Don Bosco during 1885. But perhaps Don Bosco also expected confidential letters from Riccardi, and not only in his role as secretary of Bishop Cagliari.

⁹³¹ See for example the result of the letter to Fr Costamagna in C. Bruno, *Los salesianos...* p. 155 and R.A. Entraigas, *Los salesianos...* IV, pp. 264-265.

⁹³² S.G. Bosco, *Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell'educazione della gioventù*, by P. Braido. Brescia, La Scuola 1965, pp. 346-348 for the letter to Bishop Cagliari, and pp. 348-350 for the letter to Fr Costamagna; G. Bosco, *Scritti spirituali*. Vol 2, by J. Aubry. Rome. Città Nuova Editrice 1976, pp. 258-265 (a Bishop Cagliari), pp. 260-262 (to Fr Costamagna). pp. 264-265 (to Fr Tomatis). It would be superfluous to emphasise that they were reproduced in MB XVII 626-631 in E IV 327-329, 332-333, 336-337 and in many other volumes of Salesian history.

Texts

1. To Bishop John Cagliero⁹³³

Dear Bishop Cagliero,

Your letter⁹³⁴ has given me great pleasure, and although my eyesight has become very weak, I wanted to read it myself from beginning to end, despite that handwriting of yours, which you say you got from me, but which has degenerated from its original form. Others⁹³⁵ will respond to administrative matters for me. For my part what I have to say follows.

When you write to the Propagation of the Faith and the Work of the Holy Childhood be mindful of all that the Salesians have done at various times.⁹³⁶ I understand you have with you the pro-formas that you should make use of in setting our affairs out before their respective Presidents, who are quite happy to receive letters in Italian, whenever there is any difficulty with writing in French. If one does not suffice, write several letters concerning the travels of Fr Fagnano, Fr Milanese, Fr Beauvoir, etc.⁹³⁷ In particular note (the number of) those baptised, confirmed, instructed, given shelter, now or in the past. I am of the opinion that in setting things out for Propaganda, you should cover everything, but in general. For the Propagation of the Faith, travels, trade, discoveries; for the Holy Childhood say in detail the sorts of things that might concern boys and girls, the Sisters, or the Salesians.⁹³⁸

If by chance you do not have exemplars for setting out these reports, let me know, and we will send them to you. There is real good will in wanting to help you. However it is good that at this end I should be aware, at least in general terms, of whatever you write from there, since I could be asked questions at any time.

Regarding the matter of the Coadjutor Bishops,⁹³⁹ I need a positive proposal, and at

⁹³³ Born in 1838 and taken in by Don Bosco in 1851, Giovanni (John) Cagliero was ordained priest in 1862 and consecrated bishop on 7 December 1884. He was head of the first Salesian missionary expedition in 1875, and was then recalled by Don Bosco to Turin where he remained until he left for again for Latin America as Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia, a departure that took place in the early days of February 1885. Only in the following July did he leave Buenos Aires for his apostolic mission on the banks of the Rio Negro. He was made a Cardinal in 1915 and died in Rome on 28 February 1926. Cf. *Profili di missionari salesiani e figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, by E. Valentin. Rome, LAS 1975, pp. 1-8.

⁹³⁴ your letter: this is the letter of 29 June 1885 (ASC 126.2 Cagliero; mc 1466 D 10 – 1466 E 6) and not the one of 30 July 1885, as the MB (XVII 626) erroneously claims. Both were addressed to Don Bosco and not to Fr Rua.

⁹³⁵ others: members of the Superior Chapter and especially the prefect general, Fr Rua.

⁹³⁶ Don Bosco for his part did similarly. A few days earlier, on 27 July to be exact, having received 1,000 francs from the Central Council of the Holy Childhood to be used for the missions in Patagonia, he did not fail to immediately thank the secretary and took advantage of it to emphasise further apostolic developments in those lands: unpublished letter in French, signed by Don Bosco. Archive of the *Opera della S. Infanzia* in the Propaganda Fide archive, Rome.

⁹³⁷ Fr Fagnano, Fr Milanese, Fr Beauvoir: see brief outline in *Profili di missionari...* pp. 12, 42, 64.

⁹³⁸ Cf footnote 937

⁹³⁹ In his letter of 29 June, Bishop Cagliero had referred to the fact that the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Leone Federico Aneiros, had written directly to the Pope asking that his two vicar generals, Antonio Espinosa and Juan Agustín Boneo be named as auxiliary bishops. But having once again failed in his

this stage I am hoping to achieve something. The formalities for getting a Cardinal's Hat for the Archbishop were well-advanced under Cardinal Nina, but now unfortunately for us he has passed into eternal life. I have tested other waters, and I'll let you know in due course.

I am preparing a letter for Fr Costamagna, and for your guidance I will particularly touch on the Salesian Spirit we want to introduce into our houses in America. Charity, patience, gentleness - never degrading rebukes, punishments never - do good to those you can, evil to no one. This holds for the Salesians among themselves, with their students and others, those who live with us, and outsiders. In dealing with our Sisters have great patience, but be strict in the matter of the observance of their Rules.

In general then, although things are tight here, we will make every sacrifice to come to your aid. But urge everyone to avoid putting up buildings or acquiring property that is not strictly necessary for our use. Never buy things with a view to reselling them: neither fields or land or buildings with a view to financial profit.

Try to help us this way. Do what you can to get vocations whether for the Sisters or for the Salesians, but do not take on too many works. Those who want too much achieve little and waste much.

When you have cause to speak to the Archbishop, or to Mons. Espinosa or personalities of that sort, say that I am entirely at their service, particularly in matters regarding Rome.

Tell my niece Rosina⁹⁴⁰ to take great care of her health, and that she take great care not to go to heaven alone. She should go, of course, but accompanied by the many souls she has saved.

God bless all our Salesian sons, our sisters the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. May he grant them all health, holiness, and perseverance along the road to Heaven. We will pray for all of you morning and evening at Our Lady's altar. You too, pray for this poor, half-blind man who will always be yours in Jesus Christ.

Your loving friend,

effort – matters were still in discussion for a number of years with the Roman authorities – he had asked for Don Bosco's mediation. Curiously it would be up to Don Bosco's 'son', Bishop Cagliari to overcome the last Roman resistance and thus favour their promotion in 1892-1893. Also the Bishop of Montevideo. Bishop Innocenzo Maria Yeregui had put forward to Rome the candidature of his vicar general as auxiliary bishop and hoped Don Bosco would intervene. One notes the great trust that Bishop Cagliari had (and with him the two South American Bishops) in Don Bosco's prestige amongst the Vatican hierarchy. He could certainly not overlook the very many mediations by Don Bosco per appointment of Italian bishops, which he had been often testimony to. 20-22 The archbishop spoken of here is archbishop Aneiros (see above) whose promotion to Cardinal Don Bosco had already supported with the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, Card. Lorenzo Nina. Since this man had died just a few days earlier, Don Bosco was letting Bishop Cagliari know that as soon as he had heard of the Cardinal's death he had immediately made contact with others in the Curia.

⁹⁴⁰Rosina: born at Castelnuovo d'Asti on 23 July 1868, in reality she was a grandniece of Don Bosco's, daughter of Francesco Bosco, the Saint's nephew. She was a postulant and then novice in the FMA Sister's house at Nizza Monferrato, and left for America with the 1885 missionary expedition. As soon as she arrived there she got sick and Bishop Cagliari, in his letter to Don Bosco of 29 June wrote: "Sr Rosina is always cheerful although not fully recovered". She died at Viedma on 21 January 1892 at just 23 years of age.

Fr John Bosco.

Turin, August 6, 1885

P.S. A countless multitude of people want to be remembered to you, and to pay their respects.

2. To Fr James Costamagna⁹⁴¹

My dear and always beloved Fr Costamagna,

The time for our annual retreats is approaching, and in my declining years, I would like to have with me all my sons and our sisters in America. This not being possible, I have thought to write you a letter which might serve as a guide to you and to our other confreres at the time of your retreats which are not far off for us, for becoming true Salesians.

Before anything else we ought to bless and thank the Lord who in his wisdom and power has helped us overcome many great difficulties, which we could never have done on our own. *Te Deum, Ave Maria*, etc

Furthermore, I myself would like to give a sermon, or better a talk, on the Salesian Spirit which ought to inspire and guide our actions, and every word we say. The Preventive System is truly ours. Never punishments for their own sake, never humiliating words, no severe dressings-down in the presence of others. Instead, in the classrooms gentle, kind, patient words should be heard. Never biting words, never a blow, heavy or light. Use should be made of negative punishments, and always in a way that those who have been warned become our friends more than ever, and never leave us discouraged.

There should be no grumbling against the decisions of the Superiors; instead we should put up with things not to our liking, or things that give us grief, or displease us. Every Salesian should become each one's friend, and should never seek revenge. He should be quick to forgive and to forget the things he has forgiven.

The orders of the Superiors should never be put down, and everyone should strive to give good example, and encourage the giving of it. Every one should be urged - and it

⁹⁴¹Fr Giacomo (James) Costamagna was born at Caramagna, Piedmont, on 23 March 1846. He was 12 when he came to the Oratory, and was ordained priest in 1868. In 1877 he left with the third missionary expedition for America where, in 1880, he was appointed Rector of the house at Alamagro and Provincial of the houses in Argentina. While Don Bosco was still alive he founded the first Salesian house in Chile and visited various countries in South America in view of possible foundations. He was appointed as titular bishop of Colonia and Vicar Apostolic of Méndez and Gualaquiza (Ecuador) in 1895, and only in 1912 did he gain permission from the local government to set himself up definitively in his mission. He is the author of liturgical, ascetic and musical works and was spiritual director of various religious communities, especially of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He served them both in Italy and in America. He died in Bernal (Argentina) on 9 September 1921. Cf. *Profili missionari...* pp. 38-42. 29 Fr Giuseppe (Joseph) Vespignani: born at Lugo di Romagna in 1854, he became a Salesian after his priestly ordination in 1876. In 1877 he was sent, with the third missionary expedition, as master of novices in the house at Alamagro. In 1880 he was also vice rector of the same house and then succeeded Fr Costamagna, by then appointed bishop, as rector and provincial. In 1922 the 12th General Chapter elected him as councillor for technical and agricultural education, a role that he carried out for 10 years. He died on 15 January 1932 and his remains were transferred in 1948 to Buenos Aires. Cf. *Profili di missionari...* pp. 48-53.

should be a constant recommendation - to promote religious vocations whether to the Sisters, or to the Salesians.

Gentleness in speaking, in acting, in giving advice will win over everyone and everything.

This will be the line you and the others who will share the preaching of the forthcoming retreats will follow.

Give everybody much freedom, show them much confidence. Any one wanting to write to his Superior, or who might receive letters from him, should on no account have these letters read by anyone, unless the one who receives the letter should so desire it. Regarding the more difficult matters, I warmly advise the Provincials and the Rectors to give appropriate talks. Indeed, I recommend that Fr Vespignani should have a clear understanding of these things and explain them to his novices and candidates with due prudence.

As far as it lies in my power, I hope to leave the Congregation without discomfiture. Therefore I have it in mind to appoint a Vicar General⁹⁴² who would be an *alter ego* for Europe, and another for America. But you will receive instructions in this matter in due course.

From time to time during the year, it would be very appropriate for you to call a meeting of the Rectors of the Province to put to them the guide-lines set out above. Read, and encourage the reading and the understanding, of our Rules, in particular the chapter dealing with the regular prayers, the introduction that I have written to these same Rules, and the deliberations taken at our General and local Chapters.

You can see that my words might require a lot of explanation but you are certainly capable of understanding them, and where necessary explaining them to our confreres.

As soon as you can, go and see the Archbishop, Mgr Espinosa, the Vicars General, Mr Carranza, Rev. Dr Terrero,⁹⁴³ and our other friends, and greet each and all humbly and respectfully, as if I were speaking personally to each one.

God bless you, dear Fr Costamagna, and with you may He bless and keep in good health all our confreres and Sisters. And may Mary, Help of Christians guide us always along the road to heaven. Amen.

All of you pray for me.

Your loving friend in Jesus Christ,

Fr John Bosco.

Turin,⁹⁴⁴ August 10, '85.

⁹⁴²Vicar General – this would be Fr Michael Rua, and the Provicar for Latin America Bishop Cagliero, whose appointment would be communicated to him a few weeks later. See MB XVII 620.

⁹⁴³As for Archbishop Esinosa and the vicars general of Buenos Aires, see the note for the previous letter. Edoardo Carranza was the president general of the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul in Buenos Aires. Dr. Terrero, or better, Fr Juan Nepomuceno Terrero (and not Ferrero as was often written following probably the badly transcribed version of Fr Berto's) had studied theology in Rome and was for a time in rapport with Don Bosco. He would then become bishop of La Plata.

⁹⁴⁴Turin: he would more exactly have written from Mathi, a few kms from Turin, where Don Bosco had gone halfway through July to avoid the terrible heat of the city.

3. To Fr Dominic Tomatis⁹⁴⁵

My dear Fr Tomatis,

Since I rarely get letters from you, I must suppose you to be very busy, and I believe it. But letting your dear Don Bosco know how you are getting on surely merits being one of the matters you should not overlook. You will ask, "What should I write about?" Tell me about the state of your health, and that of your confreres; whether the Rules of the Congregation are faithfully observed; whether the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death is made, and how well; how many pupils you have, and what hopes you hold for their success. Do you do anything to cultivate vocations, do you have any hopes in this regard? Is Mons. Ceccarelli⁹⁴⁶ always a friend to the Salesians? I am looking forward with great pleasure to your replies to these matters.

Given that my life is racing at speed to its conclusion, so things I want to write to you in this letter are those I would want to recommend to you in the last days of my earthly exile, that is, my testament to you.

Dear Fr Tomatis, keep firmly in mind that you became a Salesian to save your soul. To all our confreres preach and recommend the same truth. Remember it is not enough to know things, they must be put into practice. May God help us so that the Lord's words, "They speak, but they do nothing" not be addressed to us.

Try to see the things that concern you with your own eyes. When some one is lacking, or negligent, warn him promptly, without waiting for evils to multiply.

Through your exemplary manner of life, by your charity in speaking, in giving orders, in putting up with the defects of others, many will be won over to the Congregation. Constantly recommend attendance at the sacraments of Confession and Communion.

The virtues that will make you happy in time and in eternity are humility and charity.

Always be a friend and father to our confreres. Help them in every way you can both in spiritual and secular matters. Know how to make use of them for every thing that will bring glory to God.

Each of the thoughts expressed on this page need something of an explanation. You can do this on your own behalf, and for others.⁹⁴⁷

God bless you, my ever-dear Fr Tomatis. Give my warmest greetings to all our confreres, friends and benefactors. Tell them I pray for them every morning during the Holy Mass, and that I humbly commend myself to the prayers of all.

God grant we might be able to see each other again in this mortal exile, but that in any case we might one day praise the holy name of Jesus and of Mary in a blessed eternity. Amen.

⁹⁴⁵Fr Domenico (Dominic) Tomatis was born at Trinità (Cuneo) in 1849. He entered the Oratory at a very young age, and was ordained priest in 1875. Don Bosco had him amongst those leaving for the first missionary expedition, but then for a few months he found himself at Varazze as a teacher for the fifth year secondary class. He was Rector of the college of S. Nicolás de los Aroyos in Argentina, and in Santiago, Chile.

⁹⁴⁶Monsignor Pietro Bartolomeo Ceccarelli: parish priest of S. Nicolás de los Aroyos, one of the main supporters of Salesian growth in Argentina.

⁹⁴⁷Each of the thoughts... others: see preceding letter. ("but you are certainly capable of understanding them, and where necessary explaining them to our confrere")

Before long I will write to you, or have others write, on matters of some importance.
May Mary keep us safe and guide us along the path to heaven. Amen
Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr John Bosco.
Mathi, August 14, 1885⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴⁸ Fr Domenico Tomatis answered on 5 November 1885 with a wide-ranging letter in which he responded to all of Don Bosco's questions in an orderly way: health, the Rules, the Exercise for a Happy Death, vocations, Mons. Ceccarelli. He finished by thanking, with singular affection and great practical commitment: "I do not know how to thank you enough for the valuable reminders you have given me in your letter, and that you leave me as a testament. But I think you wanted to do the opposite to what many do, who want to tell you their final will when they can speak no further. Your fatherly approach wanted to pick up things from a distance and leave us well before time with reminders that you want us to carry out later. Meanwhile I will have the consolation of having the help of your prayers to put them into practice from now on and trying my best to arrive at what you want me to be in your truly fatherly love. I have written down your reminders on a page that I have added to our Rules so I can keep them under my gaze more frequently: and so may the Lord help me not to forget them in my work, just as I have them present in my thoughts. Every evening after having thanked the Lord for having created me, made me a Christian and a priest, I bless him for having made me a Salesian and I pray to the Holy trinity for my beloved father, Don Bosco, for my beloved confreres and for the growth of our Society" (D. Tomatis, *Epistolario* (1874-1903). Critical edition by J. Borrego. Rome., LAS 1992, pp. 188-191).