ARTHUR J. LENTI

DON BOSCO

HISTORY AND SPIRIT

2.

BIRTH AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF DON BOSCO'S ORATORY

LAS - ROMA

Don Bosco: History and Spirit

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This second volume of the series, Don Bosco: History and Spirit, surveys the beginnings and early development of Don Bosco's oratory. It is placed against the background of the social situation in Turin, and in the context of the momentous events spanning the period from the liberal revolution (1848) to the unification of Italy (1861).

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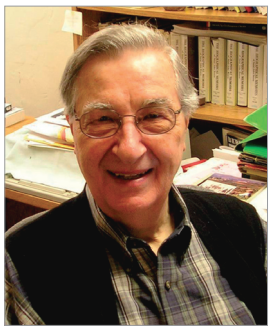

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DON BOSCO

History and Spirit - 2

ARTHUR J. LENTI

DON BOSCO: HISTORY AND SPIRIT

Vol. 2

BIRTH AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF DON BOSCO'S ORATORY

(Edited by Aldo Giraudo)

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DON BOSCO: HISTORY AND SPIRIT

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

A Word to the Reader

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

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

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

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

Acknowledgments

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

To Father Aldo Giraudo, of the *Don Bosco Studies Center* at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, go my most heartfelt thanks for his interest and support. He has devoted precious time and care to reading and editing the material.

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

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Vol. 2

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"POOR AND ABANDONED" YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE TURIN OF THE 1840s

Enciclopedia Italiana (Treccani), s. v. Torino, Savoia, etc. - Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, *Torino e Don Bosco*, a cura di Giuseppe Bracco [with many contributors]: Vol. I: *Saggi*; Vol. II: *Immagini*; Vol. III: *Documenti* (Torino, 1989) [Bracco, *Torino e Don Bosco*]. The essays make abundant reference to archival material and to contemporary literature. - Giorgio Chiosso, "L'Oratorio di Don Bosco e il rinnovamento educativo nel Piemonte carloalbertino" in *Don Bosco nella Chiesa a servizio dell'umanità. Studi e testimonianze* (Ed. by P. Braido. Roma: LAS, 1987 [83-116]) - Davide Bertolotti, *Descrizione di Torino* (Turin: G. Pomba, 1840, Reproduction by F. Garono & C. Turin, 1967) - Pietro Baricco, *Torino descritta* (Torino: Tipografia G.B. Paravia, 1869; two volumes, reprinted by Edizioni L'Artistica Savigliano, 1988), 285 [Baricco, *Torino descritta*] - Natale Cerrato, *Il Linguaggio della prima storia salesiana. Parole e luoghi delle Memorie Biografiche di Don Bosco* (Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi, 7. Roma: LAS, 1991) - Roberto Audisio, *La "Generala" di Torino. Esposte, discoli, minori corrigendi (1785-1850)* (Santena: Fondazione Camillo Cavour, 1987) [Audisio, *La "Generala"*] - A. Lenti, "Don Bosco's Love Affair with 'poor and Abandoned' Young People and the Beginnings of the Oratory" *Journal of Salesian Studies* 6:1 (1995) 1-31.

Summary

In discussing Don Bosco's further priestly formation at the Pastoral Institute under Father Cafasso, we briefly spoke of his "discovery" of young people at risk (the "poor and abandoned") and of how he undertook to respond to their plight through the special ministry that became his oratory.

In the next four chapters, we undertake to look a little more deeply into the phenomenon of the "poor and abandoned" in the social context of the city of Turin, and into Don Bosco's response through the oratory–from its beginning (1841) to is settling in 1846.

I. Turin and the House of Savoy: Brief Historical Survey

Turin Roman and Medieval

The area now called Piedmont was inhabited in ancient times by Celtic and Ligurian tribes. We have no information on pre-Roman Turin except that, according to the Roman historian Polybius, the original settlement was destroyed by the Carthaginians led by Hannibal when they invaded Italy in 218 BCE.

Later the settlement became an advanced post in support of Julius Caesar's military operations in Gaul (58-50 BCE), and was given the name of Julia. In the year 29-28 BCE the castrum (military post) became a Roman colony and was given the honorable name of (Julia) Augusta Taurinorum. The Taurini (a Ligurian people?) inhabited the area.

The Romans plotted a typical square grid of 70 blocks, crossed by the usual main thoroughfares, the cardo and the decumanus, still traceable in today's streets. The high walls were buttressed with defensive towers 70 m. apart. In the time of the Roman empire (2nd-3rd century CE) the colony had a population of some 7,000 people, including the military division.

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 CE), Turin was sacked and occupied several times because of its strategic position. It first became the seat of the Byzantine military command and later the capital of the Lombard duchy.[1] Through the 6th, 7th, and 8th centuries, under the Lombards, the older social structure underwent development: large estates (curtes) were formed over against peasants' small grants of common land (mansi).

[1] The Lombards were a Germanic people from the lower Elbe River who invaded Italy in 568 and founded a kingdom in the valley of the Po River. The Lombard kingdom was overthrown by Charlemagne in 774.

When Charlemagne overthrew the Lombard Kingdom in the 8th century, the region became a county under the Franks. By the end of the 10th century, Turin was the center of a March that included counties in Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy.

Enter the House of Savoy[2]

In the late 10th and early 11th century, Humbert [I] called the White-Handed (*Count Biancamano*) (d. ca. 1048), perhaps of Saxon or Burgundian origin, is known to have held extensive lands in the high Alps of Savoy, including some mountain passes into Italy. He was rewarded with additional territories in the area of Savoy for services rendered to Emperor Conrad II (under whom the Holy Roman Empire had become the German Empire). Count Humbert the White-Handed is therefore regarded as the founder of the dynasty of Savoy (until 1946 the oldest reigning family in Europe).

The March of Turin passed to Adelaide of Susa by inheritance. She married Odo, son of Humbert the White-Handed of Savoy, and thereby Turin came within the reach of Savoy. In 1097 Humbert II of Savoy inherited the March of Turin, though he could not immediately enter into possession of Turin itself, and could only hold Susa and the alpine region.

Turin and the Counts of Savoy in the Late Middle Ages, Savoy a Duchy

For the next three or four centuries, the counts of Savoy and Turin were embroiled in the struggle involving Holy Roman Empire, bishops, and feudal lords, and in a ceaseless game of alliances and warfare. Because of its strategic position controlling the route that from the Alps led to Rome and the Mediterranean, Turin changed hands a number of times.

When the first census was taken in 1377, Turin had just 4,200 inhabitants within its walls, but many villages had meanwhile sprung up in the area under its protection–a fact that changed the social and economic structure of the region.

In 1416 Emperor Sigismund upgraded Savoy to a duchy, and Count Amadeus VIII became the first duke of Savoy and Turin.

[2] See also our earlier discussion of the Kingdom of Sardinia and the House of Savoy.

During the Middle Ages and the age of the Communes, Turin strove at various times for independence in opposition to Savoy. While many cities of Roman origin underwent radical urban developments at this time, Turin mostly maintained both its castrum character and its rural character.

Duchy of Savoy's Struggle for Survival, Turin the Capital

In 1536, Francis I annexed Turin to the French Crown. At this time its inhabitants numbered some 20,000. The 16th century was dominated by the struggle for supremacy between the French Valois-Angoulême and the Hapsburgs of the Empire as well as Spain and England.

In the struggle the dukes of Savoy lost territory to Bern (Switzerland) and were for a time dispossessed by France. But by the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559), Duke Emmanuel Philbert regained control of Savoy and of the March of Turin (Piedmont).

In 1563 Emmanuel Philbert, for strategic as well as political reasons, moved the capital of the Duchy from Chambéry to Turin.

This fact, and the increasing number of inhabitants (through the period of the French annexation) made urban development necessary. Immediately the Duke expanded the city's defenses, beginning with the military fortress (citadel) to the southwest.

The capital's urban development began in earnest at the beginning of the 17th century, and was aimed at eliminating the random medieval buildings and re-establishing the city on the Roman plan.

Duke Charles Emmanuel I (1580-1630) married Catherine of Spain. From them descended the two chief historic lines of the house of Savoy: the Senior or Premier line (Savoy), which reigned from 1630 to 1831 (death of King Charles Felix), and the Cadet line (Savoy-Carignan), which reigned from 1831 to 1946 (beginning with King Charles Albert).

The plague of 1630 reduced the population of Turin to a mere 11,000. Subsequently expansion continued steadily; at the beginning of the 18th century, the population reached 44,000.

Kingdom of Sardinia

In 1706 the French besieged Turin but were repulsed and defeated. Victor Amadeus II built the Basilica of Superga to commemorate the victory. The enmity continued through the 18th century.

By the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) Duke Victor Amadeus II was made king of Sicily, and (by exchange) king of Sardinia (1720), when Sicily was ceded to Emperor Charles VI. From this point on Savoy, Piedmont (including Nice) and Sardinia were known as the Kingdom of Sardinia.

The 18th century was a period of great architects (notably Guarini and Juvarra), who imprinted on the old city of Turin its present architectural character.

Sardinia during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Period[3]

In 1792, at the height of the French revolution, Sardinia joined the coalition of European nations in the war against France, though groups of intellectuals in Turin (as in other important Italian cities) entertained revolutionary ideas.

In the Italian campaign 1796-1800, Napoleon defeated the Austrians and occupied northern Italy. A republican government was set up, and a little later Turin became the capital of the French Department of the River Po.

Charles Emmanuel IV of Savoy and the royal family retreated to the island of Sardinia, which Napoleon did not care to invade.

In 1800 the population of Turin (within the walls) numbered about 60,000.

During the Napoleonic period (1800-1814), the city walls were almost entirely removed to allow greater expansion. Very large and straight thoroughfares (boulevards) were laid out to the north, south and west of the old city.

Kings Charles Albert and Victor Emmanuel II

In 1814 (in the Restoration) King Victor Emmanuel I (1802-1821) returned from Sardinia to Turin. At his abdication during the *Carbonari* uprising, he was succeeded by Charles Felix (1821-1831). At the latter's death (1831) the throne passed to Charles Albert, of the cadet line of Savoy-Carignan, who reigned until his abdication in 1849.

Under Charles Albert, the first king of the Italian Risorgimento, the city saw further expansion. In particular, the 1840s witnessed the first move to-

[3] See our earlier summary discussion of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Period.

ward industrialization, and the gradual reshaping of social life and institutions. Charles Albert granted the Constitution in 1848, and the kingdom of Sardinia became a constitutional monarchy and took leadership in the unification of Italy. In the first war against Austria (1848-1849) the Piedmontese army suffered defeat, and King Charles Albert abdicated and died in exile in 1849.

Charles Albert's son, Victor Emmanuel II (1849-1878) became the first king of united Italy in 1861. In 1866 the capital was moved from Turin to Florence, and after the occupation of Rome in 1870, from Florence to Rome.

It was during Charles Albert's reign (1831-1849) that Don Bosco received his real education, was ordained, came to Turin for his pastoral training, started his work for the young (1841), and established his own Oratory of St. Francis de Sales (1844). He enjoyed the protection and support of the royal House. He lived through the liberal revolution of 1848 and the creation of a new social and political order.

Don Bosco choices, therefore, had to be made in the context of very ancient traditions connected with the Piedmontese capital and the House of Savoy, as well as in the context of recent social and political developments.

II. The Turin of the "Poor and Abandoned"

Young People and Don Bosco (18141-1844)

When Don Bosco enrolled in the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) in 1841 in the reign of Charles Albert of Savoy-Carignan, he began to engage in ministry to the young people who were adrift in the streets of the city and whom he often met in the city's prisons. He would dedicate his life to these young people, referred to in contemporary literature as "poor and abandoned."

Recent publication of archival materials pertaining to the city of Turin and to Don Bosco's early apostolate has called our attention to certain aspects of his work at its origin, and specifically to the young people that became the object of his concern. I am referring primarily to the volumes published by the City of Turin on the one hundredth anniversary of Don Bosco's death.[4]

[4] I am referring to: Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, *Torino e Don Bosco*, a cura di Giuseppe Bracco [with many contributors]: Vol. I: *Saggi*; Vol. II: *Immagini*; Vol. III: *Docu-*

What follows is a summary description of the actual circumstances of the young people to whom Don Bosco's became personally committed through the oratory.

1 – The House of Savoy

Demographic Shift, Population Increase, Urban Expansion and Resulting Conditions

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the period of the Restoration, the population of Turin experienced a quick and remarkable increase. In 1814 Turin, including surrounding villages, registered 84,230 inhabitants. In 1830 the population had risen to 122,424 and in 1848 to 136,849. This re-

menti (Torino, 1989). The essays in Vol. I make abundant reference to archival material and to contemporary literature [Bracco, *Torino e Don Bosco*].

markable demographic development may be understood as part of the general increase in population following the Napoleonic wars all over Italy and throughout Europe–not only in Piedmont. But in Piedmont's case the immediate cause is to be sought in the great migration movement of impoverished peasants from countryside to the city. What were the causes of this migration? One sometimes hears such migratory movement ascribed to the industrial revolution, albeit in its early phase–people flocking to the city looking for jobs in fledgling manufacturing industries and hopefully for a better way of life. This may have been the case earlier in cities like Manchester and London, Lyons and Paris; it was not really the case at this time in the Piedmontese capital. At most one might speak of an industrial awakening, or of an incipient industrial development. Most manufacturing undertakings were still family based, housed in sheds and spare locales within the city, and outfitted in a primitive fashion.[5]

It was certainly a period of transition and shift from the stable demographic model of older times, but the real cause of this shift is to be sought in the worsening condition of the peasant population. In the countryside, family ownership of land was decreasing at an alarming rate, while the formation of large estates was on the increase, with a corresponding increase in the number of impoverished day laborers. Their desperate struggle for survival is described in the darkest tones in the literature. In 1848 the *Farmers Gazett*e noted:

> Going through the country, in areas removed from population centers, one is struck by the looks of farm laborers. Everyone in those areas, men, women and children, are thin, yellow with scurvy, tired-looking, exhausted from hunger as well as overwork.[6]

[5] Cf. Umberto Levra, "Il bisogno, il castigo, la pietà. Torino 1814-1848," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 20-24. In the 1840s in Piedmont (and as late as the 1870s throughout Italy) the credit system which is the basis of capitalism was still in a primitive state. Hence the possibilities for investments remained very limited. Italian economy remained for a long time agricultural. Much of the available capital came from marketing agricultural products. The largest savings percentage was reinvested in land; real estate continued to be the collateral for credit operations to the few individual investors. Some capital, however, began to be invested in manufacturing, in mining, and in the construction of the first railway trunks during the second half of the nineteenth century [*Compact Storia d'Italia*, ed. by V. Ceppellini et al. (Novara: De Agostini, 1991), 77].

[6] Levra, *Ibid.*, 26-29, citing official documents.

Such an ominous trend was everywhere in evidence in the countryside. These were the people who flocked to the city in a desperate move for survival and who were largely responsible for urban growth. Most of these immigrants remained in the city, for they had nothing better to go back to. They settled wherever they could, but especially in the existing poorer districts along the rivers Dora and Po to the north and northeast. This is the area that saw the most significant and quickest urban expansion. It was also the area where some small industries were meanwhile being located, because of available waterpower from the rivers. Urban development in these areas was in the form of tenement houses built to lodge immigrant families and individuals. Soon these northern districts turned into overcrowded slums.

The result was that the condition of laborers and people out of work in the city was no better than in the country, sometimes worse. The consequences are summarized by Umberto Levra,[7] with abundant references to contemporary official sources and literature: (1) inadequate nutrition and hunger, stunted growth, and deformities; (2) huge increase in the number of indigents, homeless and beggars; (3) proportionate increase in the number of the chronically weakened, ill and in need of care; (4) high risk of sickness and high mortality among babies and children; (5) lower life expectancy (35 years in the city of Turin, a little higher than the mean for the whole kingdom); (6) lack of hygiene and bad sanitary conditions, especially in the slums of the northern districts; (7) frequent epidemics, especially of typhus, cholera, and smallpox; (8) high incidence of diseases such as tuberculosis, bronchial and lung diseases, dysentery, and a variety of unnamed fevers and infections; (9) increase in prostitution and venereal diseases; (10) illiteracy; (11) abandonment of religious practice; (12) drunkenness and other domestic vices; (13) rise in criminal activity, especially theft; (14) rise in suicides; (15) rise in illegitimate births; (16) exposure of infants and infanticide.

The Northern Districts: Where the "Poor and Abandoned" Lived

The Moschino District

The *Moschino* district lay along the Po River at the eastern end of the present Corso San Maurizio and was located within the territory of the parish of the Annunciation, where Father Giovanni Cocchi was an assistant. It

[7] Levra, *Ibid.*, 30-43, citing official documents and literature.

was there that he first established his oratory of the Guardian Angel in 1840.[8] It was in every respect the worst district in the city, and it was completely razed as part of the urban renewal of mid-1860s. As one author describes it,

> The *Moschino* was a cluster of hovels whose cracked walls, blackened by time, threatened to come tumbling down at any moment. It was the redoubt of vicious people, hostile to any form of order, greedy of other people's possessions, ever ready to shed blood, driven to evildoing by some fierce instinct. In it crime, poverty and prostitution shared the neighborhood as confederates. In this deadly sewer of vice, scandalous immorality was common, and horrible crimes and cruel murders were regular occurrences. Here was born, developed and grew to power the gang that struck everyone with terror. [...] No one dared set foot in the *Moschino* after dark. Not even the police dared breach the barriers and engage that horde of criminals. At night, no one who was not recognized by the gang had access. It was as though a drawbridge had been raised. [...][9]

A physician reports that "the horror and revulsion one experiences in walking down those filthy alleys, putrid sewers unfit for humans, point up the injustice which favors some with every good thing, while it denies to so many the very space, air and sunshine needed for survival."[10] A sanitation official inspecting the houses in this area at the onset of a cholera epidemic reports that he found "all dwellings overcrowded with migrants, hostile and fierce-looking people mostly engaged in the smuggling of alcohol and tobacco." He goes on to describe the horror and stench of houses and courts filled with sewage and human excrement, and deplores the lack of clean water. The cholera epidemic of 1835 started in the Moschino district.[11]

[8] Father Giovanni Cocchi was the first to establish an oratory in Turin, the Oratory of the Guardian Angel. Fr. Cocchi's biographical sketch is given in Appendix in the next Chapter 2.

[9] G.A. Giustina, *I misteri di Torino*, quoted by Levra, in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 65-56; Cf. also Giorgio Chiosso, "L'Oratorio di Don Bosco […]" in *Don Bosco nella Chiesa […]*, 95. Lemoyne uses this text, with considerable editing, to describe the district of Vanchiglia [*EBM* III, 394]. The description is obviously heavy-handed and somewhat slanted ("vicious people […] driven to evildoing.")

[10] G. Valerio, *Igiene pubblica*, quoted by Levra, in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 66.

[11] Levra, "Il bisogno," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 66-67, quoting official document in Turin's Historical Archive.

The Vanchiglia District

In 1841 Father Cocchi transferred his oratory from the Moschino to better premises in the adjoining district of Vanchiglia, a little further north toward the confluence of the Dora with the Po Rivers. Similar conditions prevailed there. In fact, Vanchiglia experienced a simultaneous outbreak of the cholera. It was an area dotted with stagnant ponds and crossed by little canals and ditches carrying dirty water for irrigation. Sanitation was nonexistent. The public sewer that drained from the center of the city in two covered channels toward the rivers at this point was allowed to run in the open. By ancient feudal right the canons of the Cathedral used this sewage to irrigate fields they owned by the rivers. Moreover, one of the two slaughterhouses of the city was located in this district; it was one of the chief sources of contamination and infection. The chief sanitation officer pointed out that the very royal palace a good distance to the south was exposed to "the evil stench and contamination stemming from the hapless district of Vanchiglia, so that all windows on the north side of the palace were kept tightly shut day and night."[12]

The Borgo Dora District

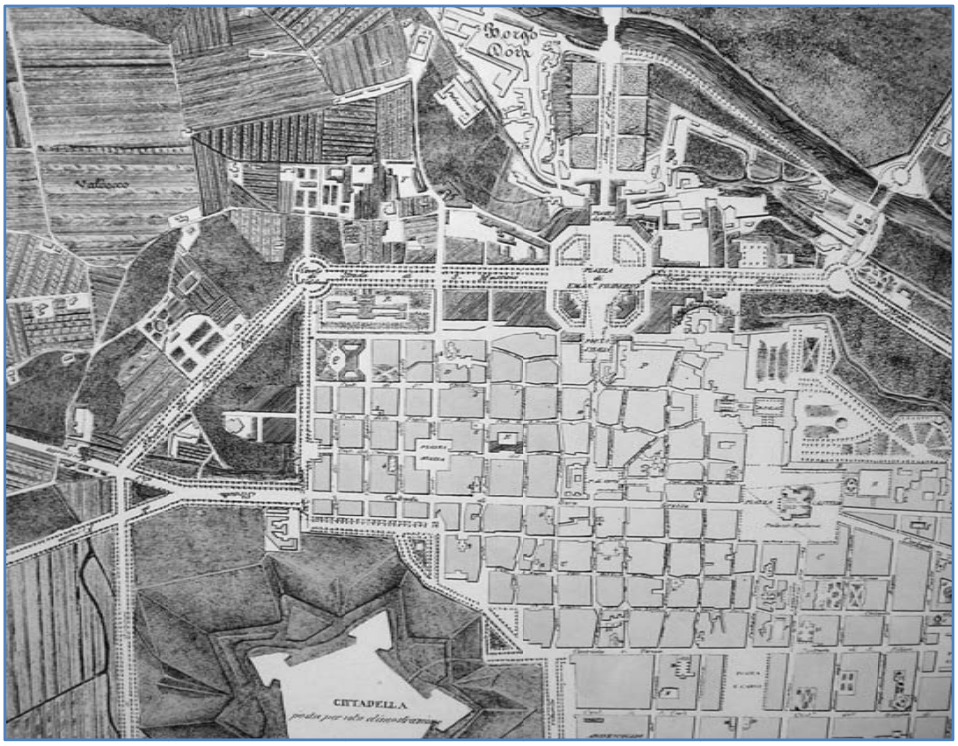
Inevitably, the second slaughterhouse was located at the entrance to the adjoining Borgo Dora district (in the marketplace of Porta Palazzo). This, the most populous of the northern districts lying between Vanchiglia to the east and Valdocco to the west, was at this time experiencing the protoindustrial development that would gradually spill over into adjacent districts. Some manufacturing undertakings, resembling factories, were being established here, all using water power derived from the Dora River: a gun factory, a sugar refinery, a factory for the production of printing machinery, a textile mill, tanning and leather works, a wood-processing factory. These businesses were generally fairly small, but some employed as many as one hundred workers. Numerous tenement houses up to several stories high had been built, and stood out among lower older buildings.

Overcrowded living conditions, with their evil effect on families and individuals, especially young people, prevailed. This was true of all the poorer districts, but here the number of families living in a tenement building, and

[12] G. Valerio, *Igiene pubblica*, quoted by Levra, in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 67f.

the number of individuals per flat or room, was nearly double that of elsewhere in the city. In the late 1820s, so Levra writes,

> Poor people's ghettos, which had been forming through a process of spontaneous agglomeration of migrants gravitating toward the city, were systematically expanded. The first of these expansions took place in the Borgo Dora. Its buildings generally speaking were poor in quality and of modest proportions. At the same time the Piazza Emanuele Filiberto [Porta Palazzo] was redesigned, and the first covered market places, low and unsanitary, were constructed in it. [...] Manufacturing businesses were gradually transferred into the area, most of them noisy, noxious and dangerous. The gunpowder works exploded in 1852, leaving many dead or wounded. A network of canals from the river provided waterpower, but also made the area damp and malodorous. In 1850, out of some 22,000 inhabitants in the area, 14,000 lived by the day's labor, and some 12,000 existed below the poverty level.[13]



2 – Valdocco and Borgo Dora Districts

[13] Levra, "Il bisogno," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 64-65 (and 68-69 for details).

The Valdocco District

Valdocco lies immediately west of Borgo Dora, with the Martinetto district further to the west. The area was undergoing initial development in the 1830s and 1840s. Up until the 1830s it had remained practically vacant. The old city walls and other ancient structures had been demolished (in Napoleon's time) and the rubble dumped in this low-lying, partly marshy area sloping toward the River Dora. To encourage settlement and the city's expansion to the north, King Charles Felix (1821-1831) had approved the gratuitous disposal of these public lands to private individuals. Later, in the 1860s, Valdocco would rival Borgo Dora as a slum. But in the 1840s the settling of Valdocco was still in progress. Looking from the higher ground northward toward the River Dora, one could see a scattering of houses and small factories along the canals. The only "high rise" buildings were the Marchioness of Barolo's *Rifugio* and connected buildings, and Fr. Joseph Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence.

These northern districts fanned out toward the Dora River from the great square and market place popularly called "Porta Palazzo" (the royal palace rising not too far to the south, within the city). The whole area teemed with a great number of young people and children, who in the literature are described as "poor and abandoned." Don Bosco came into contact with them when he enrolled in the Pastoral Institute, situated about one mile to the South in the city.

The northern districts were the area where the first oratories, Father Giovanni Cocchi's and Don Bosco's, were established.

III. The "Poor and Abandoned" – The Young People that Don Bosco Knew

Young People and Children at Risk

Who were these "poor and abandoned" young people that drew Don Bosco's attention from his first days in Turin in 1841? It was no longer a question of poor but normal peasant lads (as at Becchi) or of young students (as at Chieri). This was a new experience, a discovery. To describe this type of youngster Don Bosco writes:

> The oratory was mostly attended by stone-cutters, bricklayers, plasterers, cobblestone setters, squarers and others come from distant places [...]: from Savoy, Switzerland, the Aosta Valley, Biella, Novara and Lombardy.[14]

Lemoyne adds:

> The area adjacent to Porta Palazzo swarmed with hawkers, match vendors, bootblacks, chimney sweeps, stable boys, lads passing out fliers, messenger boys, all of them poor children eking out of such odd jobs a meager livelihood from day to day. [...] Most of them belonged to one of the Borgo Vanchiglia gangs, that is, to one of those groups of hooligans gathered for self-defense under the leadership of older and more daring fellows.[15]

This is confirmed by an early, probably the earliest, non-Salesian testimony on the composition and nature of Father Cocchi's and Don Bosco's oratories:

> In these two houses, Turin's true wretches (*cenciosi*) and true scamps (*birichini*) come together on feast days in great numbers. It is amazing to see how much they love it, how happy they are, and how well they behave while there. We see match vendors, lottery ticket vendors, etc., etc., apprentices, work hands, houseboys, youngsters from all kinds of workshops and trades, all happy together. And what precisely do all these young people do in these new houses of shelter? In the first place, they receive some religious instruction from those zealous priests [... then they pray, they have classes, they play, and occasionally they are given a snack in the afternoon].[16]

We are dealing therefore either with local young people living in the slums of the northern districts of Turin trying to survive by any opportunistic means, or with seasonal immigrant lads marginally employed in the building trade. All of them were at risk. Don Bosco stresses that in fact many of them had been in prison or were in danger of going to prison. These lads, up to 25 years of age,[17] but mostly between the ages of 12 and 20, although presenting different personal problems and reflecting differing family circumstances, all belonged to the category referred to in the litera-

[14] *MO-En*, 197 and 233.

[15] *EBM* III, 33 (translation mine).

[16] "Scuole e sollazzi domenicali pei poveri," [Instruction and amusements of the poor on Sundays], *Letture di Famiglia* 25 (June 20, 1846) 196, quoted by Giorgio Chiosso, "L'oratorio di DB," in Braido, *DB nella Chiesa*, cit, 91.

[17] *MO-En*, 233-234.

ture as "the poor and abandoned." On any given day as many as a thousand of them swarmed the market place area of Porta Palazzo, either waiting to be hired or just "hanging around."[18]

To these older youngsters must be added the large number of younger children, many of them working in manufacturing shops. Such practice, typical of the industrial revolution in England and France, was already significant in Turin as well. Shop owners, to cut wages and therefore production costs, began to employ great numbers of boys and girls as young as eight years of age, as well as women. In 1844 children ten years old or younger working in shops and small factories throughout Piedmont numbered 7,184. A large percentage of these worked in Turin factories, and their working day was as long as 16 hours. In a speech delivered in Parliament in 1850 Count Camillo Cavour, later Prime Minister, deplored the general lack of concern about this situation: "Perhaps we have tried conveniently to ignore the fact that in our factories the working day of women and children is twice as long as it is in England."[19]

According to contemporary testimony, besides being exploited, these children were gravely at risk and exposed to all sorts of physical and moral dangers: A contemporary author writes:

> These poor creatures grow up in idiocy, poverty and pain, in complete ignorance of any religious and moral truth, defenseless against the many dangers to their moral life they meet up with in the work place. This is especially the case where many children of both sexes are grouped together, as is often the practice in factories. Drunkenness, moreover, that most damaging vice so common among factory workers, is not uncommon even among children. [...] The result is immorality, the terrible effects of which are evidenced by the greater incidence of crimes and misdemeanors committed by these children, as compared with their counterparts in rural areas–this, according to law-enforcement statistics.[20]

This same author gives data collected from a number of factories showing that only 1 in 5 working young persons was not attending, or had ever attended, school for any length of time. About 40% of young people below 20 were totally illiterate. Further, a great number of children contracted dis-

[18] Teresio Bosco, *Don Bosco. Storia di un prete* (Leumann-Torino: Editrice Elle Di Ci, 1987), plates 10 and 11, following 112.

[19] Cf. Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980), 159-164 [Stella, *DBEcSoc*].

[20] Carlo Ilarione Petitti di Roreto, *Sul lavoro dei fanciulli nelle manifatture* [On Child Labor in Factories], quoted by Chiosso, "L'Oratorio di DB," in Braido, *DB nella Chiesa*, 95-96.

eases in the work place. This author lists diseases such as tuberculosis, poisonings and various viral infections. The death rate from these diseases averaged around 12%. Those children who survived were often left physically debilitated for life. Children were frequently beaten for the slightest infractions.[21]

Children of the Poor

Poverty, some times dire poverty, was a given, even among those that had a permanent job, including those employed in the building trade (the highest-paid, though for a shorter season). Around 1840 a laborer (without a family) spent an average 60 cents (of a lira) for food alone, a sum equal to his daily wage. Hence, the daily fare of the poor consisted of the cheaper and less nourishing foods, such as bread, polenta, potatoes, dried legumes, some vegetables and fruits in season. Rent was high in the tenements of the northern districts. The rent for a single room cut deeply into a single laborer's earnings, even when the same room was shared, as was the practice with seasonal workers. The inadequacy or minimal buying power of a laborer's wages was painfully evident when it came to clothing and shoes, and even more so when it came to such "non-essentials" as recreation, schooling, transportation. The cost of a pair of common shoes surpassed the average weekly wage of a laborer or of an apprentice. A cup of coffee or chocolate in any city pub cost as much as half the average daily wage.[22]

Thus an absorbing preoccupation and relentless striving for the satisfaction of basic material needs were constants in a laborer's daily existence. And this left little time, possibility or will to pursue other important interests such as education, religious practice, recreation, and the very care of the family. Understandably under these circumstances, laborers would seek the only cheap entertainment available to them: the tavern. Many such cheap establishments had sprung up in the northern districts. Here working people spent their available evening hours drinking cheap wine and gambling. Drunkenness, obscenity and violence were often the results.[23]

[21] Petitti, *Ibid.*, 97. This situation of moral and physical risk explains Don Bosco's practice of visiting his lads at the work place and of demanding written contracts from the employers. It also explains his decision to establish his own in-house workshops.

[22] Chiosso, "L'Oratorio di DB," in Braido, *DB nella Chiesa*, 94-95.

[23] Quoting a contemporary author, Levra gives a horrifying description of one of these drinking places in "Il bisogno," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 72-73.

Young people, mostly jobless or only marginally employed, existed in this situation of poverty, and they were all at risk–material, moral and religious. They all found themselves in grave danger from bad companions, readily available means of corruption, and frequent temptations to delinquency.

3 – Young beggars of Piazza Castello (*Il Fischietto*, 1855)

Juvenile Delinquency

Beggars, Petty Thieves and Runaways

Umberto Levra (mentioned above) citing official reports and contemporary literature gives a grim recital of episodes, involving both adults and young people. He describes the ineffectual response from agencies, departments of government, and the police. He deals especially with the widespread practice of beggary in every part of the city, and the invasion of more beggars during the winter season–adults, both men and women, mothers and their children, whole families, and children on their own. He

describes the various kinds of delinquency and criminal activity that inevitably accompanied such desperate conditions. He speaks of the failure and the inability on the part of public hospitals, shelters for the poor and the sick, State and Church agencies and private charity to cope with the need.[24]

He goes on to give a detailed account of police intervention for the protection of the public, and notes that criminal activity in the city was largely against property not persons, and of the type connected with widespread unemployment and poverty. But there were also sporadic incidents of violence against persons and even of murder. The rise in public concern resulted in a vast increase in public and private charity and in an effort on the part of King Charles Albert's government to institute reforms and to provide jobs.[25]

Other authors complete this scenario with reference especially to juvenile delinquents. [26] Claudio Felloni remarks that in Turin true violent crime was not a frequent occurrence. What kept the police on their toes was the smaller criminal activity of a great number of disinherited people. They were the miserable poor who existed at the margin of the law. They were indeed regarded as "dangerous people" but they were dangerous only to public order (not to the social order).

This was especially true where juvenile delinquency was concerned. Many young people and younger children were forced to live by their wits, and practiced all kinds of dodges and expedients, which were often outside the law.

On one end of the scale, there were those who sold matches and knick-knacks and those who begged in a manner that could be qualified as "aggressive." They were a constant on the streets and squares of Turin, and were a nuisance to the "honest citizenry." They often drew the attention of the police. At the opposite pole, there were the young men, few in number, who in order to make ends meet, engaged in more seriously reprehensible behavior, such as burglary or prostitution.

The vast majority of juvenile delinquents were petty thieves who stole goods from the stands in the open market places, or pickpockets who lifted the wallets of unsuspecting passers-by. Felloni cites numerous instances

[24] Levra, *Ibid.*, 43-61.

[25] Levra, *Ibid.*, 76-97.

[26] The comments that follow are largely based on the first part of Claudio Felloni and Roberto Audisio, "I giovani discoli," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 99-110 [110-119]. The first part, entitled "Juvenile Delinquents (*Giovani discoli*) on the City's Streets and Squares," is by Claudio Felloni [cited as Felloni, "*Giovani discoli*"].

from the "arrests section" of the Vicar's Office (in Turin's Historical Archive).[27] A couple of instances will suffice. A police report reads:

> Following complaints for petty thefts committed in this city, the police department has been watching the movements of a group of juveniles who are repeat offenders, recently out of the Towers prison. They habitually haunt the streets away from their homes and their parents' supervision, and spend their time in idleness and gambling. They live by stealing whenever they get a chance, from stands selling knick-knacks or food. They have been known also to pick the pockets of careless or unsuspecting people.[28]

The reports show that many of these young people had run away from home. Some were orphans or illegitimate children who had been wards of the state for a time, and then had held occasional jobs. All of them were living from hand to mouth. Many of them had been in prison several times, usually for petty thefts. One of these youngsters, Pietro P. by name, told his story to the magistrate on being arrested:

> Both my parents died when I was very young. I had no place to stay, nothing to live on and nobody to help me or guide me. For a time I worked as a shoeshine boy. Then pretty soon I got into trouble and was arrested. Since then I did time in several prisons, the Senate and the Correctional prisons [in Turin], and those in Chivasso. I have never learned or worked at a proper trade, and there is nothing I can call my own in this world.[29]

One is amazed at the number of boys who ran away from home. Many reasons for this are given in the literature: bad companions, inclination to a life of dissipation (!), youthful fickleness, the lure of being on one's own, difficulties at home, abuse by parents, dire poverty of the family, etc. In some cases, it was the father himself who sent the child away. This was the case of Antonio S., arrested for burglary, according to the magistrate's report:

> He left home about a month ago because of dire poverty of the family. Since he was not yet able to earn his own livelihood, he was persuaded by his father to try to make a living elsewhere. And this is what he did.[30]

[27] The "Vicar" (aided by two syndics) was the chief officer appointed by the king to govern the city of Turin.

[28] Felloni, "*Giovani discoli*," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 102.

[29] Felloni, *Ibid.*, 104.

[30] Felloni, *Ibid.*, 104.

One is also struck by the negligence of the people responsible for the youngsters. The authorities complain that all too often parents, teachers and employers did not report runaways. These youngsters thus joined other street children and vagrants, and learned evil ways from this association.[31]

Juvenile Gangs

A special chapter in the story of juvenile delinquency is dedicated to gangs. For at this time (1830s and 1840s) besides the delinquency of single young people at risk originating in poverty, family problems, etc., we witness the practice of violence and intimidation by organized groups. In the forties, at the time when Don Bosco was beginning his ministry, "societies of reckless 'hoodlums'" and "cliques of hooligans" were reported as perpetrating acts of violence with increasing frequency. These gangs, as we would call them, usually composed of young adults (but also mere youths) under the control of a seasoned leader, were given the name of "*cocche*" in the later popular literature of the fifties and sixties.[32] They were active at various times in the northern districts described above. The Gang of the Crab (*Cocca del Gambero*) was active in Borgo Dora in the late thirties. The "Po Gang" (*Cocca del Po*), was based at the edge of the Vanchiglia district near the river, and five of its members were arrested for murder and convicted in 1840. The *Ballon* Gang (*Cocca del Ballon*, name given to the area near Porta Palazzo and Borgo Dora) was charged with the murder of one of their members in 1841. The most notorious, with good reason, was the Moschino Gang (*Cocca del Moschino*). It was active in mid-forties, and was feared for its "scandalous, arrogant and violent activities." Felloni cites the following, among other instances:

> After spending the evening drinking in cheap taverns these ruffians emerge in force to harass or rough up any hapless person whom they come upon in the dark. Then, instead of going home, they knock at the door of some prostitute, and even of women who are not prostitutes, batter the door down if they are not promptly let in, and vent their lust on those unfortunate victims. Then, af-

[31] Felloni, *Ibid.*, 106, citing police reports of 1845.

[32] "*Cocca*" is the name given in Italian (Piedmontese) to a kind of flat, hard hearth cake or skillet bread.

ter eating everything in the house, smashing furniture, and battering the woman besides, they make their exit.[33]

In 1846 the St. Barbara Gang (*Cocca di Santa Barbara*) acquired notoriety in the area near and to the east of the market place of Porta Palazzo. They were "an association of ruffians who time and again perpetrated acts of violence, especially after dark, against honest citizens who promenaded along the boulevard."[34]

The records show that these gangs, composed of young adults from 16 to 34 years of age, were not in the nature of professional criminal confederacies; they were fairly spontaneous groupings of frustrated young adults, lacking guidance and motivation. They were responsible for mischief of every kind, but not generally of serious crimes such as assaults with deadly weapons and murder. But the very fact that the "gang" phenomenon occurred and persisted was symptomatic of the profound malaise that infected society, especially the young.

Public order was only one of the many responsibilities of the Vicar of Turin. In 1841 he could dispose only of four commissioners and a small force of some 40 constables. The force was increased under Vicar Michele Benso di Cavour in the forties, but it was never quite equal to the task. There just weren't enough cops on the street. But with the help of military personnel, they had fair success in breaking up roving groups of young people at night and in bringing some of the miscreants to justice.[35]

Prisons and Penal Policy

It was inevitable that many of these "poor and abandoned" youngsters should get into trouble and should land in jail.

There were four prison facilities in Turin in the eighteen-forties, the time when Don Bosco began his work on behalf of "poor and abandoned" young people. Pietro Baricco writes in 1869, "The prison facilities in Turin are four in number, not including the central facility nearing completion,

[33] Felloni, "Giovani discoli," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 109, citing document in Turin's Histotical Archive.

[34] Felloni, *Ibid.*, 110.

[35] Levra, "Il bisogno," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 79; Felloni, "I giovani discoli," *Ibid.*, 109.

which is not yet in use."[36] Two of them were for men and two for women, all situated within the city.

The Criminal Prison Facility for Men (*Carceri criminali*) was located in Via San Domenico, in the basement section of the so-called "Palace of the Senate"later the seat of the Court of Appeal. It was popularly referred to as Prisons of the Senate, or of the Magistrate of the Court of Appeal. "This facility is cramped and overcrowded, airless, and noisome. Young people are kept together with adults, and those that are merely accused are committed together with those that are convicted of crimes."

The Correctional Prison Facility for Men (*Carceri correzionali*) was located in Via degli Stampatori and was popularly called "*Correctionnel*" from the name given to that street during Napoleon's occupation (*Rue Correctionnelle*). This facility was for lesser crimes. "It was not a great deal better. [...] Here also accused and convicted, young people and adults, were all thrown together."

The General Prison Facility for Women (*Carceri delle Forzate*), in Via San Domenico, was small and ill kept. In the sixties it was turned into a detention facility for young men waiting to be evaluated and assigned.

The Towers Prison Facility for Women (*Carceri delle Torri*) was located at Porta Palatina, and was commonly called "the Towers." It housed women guilty of serious crimes or with a past criminal record. "The women are housed in overcrowded and uncomfortable wards, the place being insufficient and in disrepair." Earlier, in the eighteen-thirties, it had been a place of commitment for juvenile offenders.

When the Central Prison (*Carcere centrale*) in Corso S. Avventore, outside the city, was built at great expense and in accordance with more enlightened standards between 1862 and 1869, gradually the other smaller facilities were phased out.

Baricco also mentions and describes a House of Detention for Women (*Casa di pena*, also called, *Ergastolo*) in Via Nizza, well out of the city. The place had been acquired by the government from the Vincentians for use as a correctional facility for juveniles. In 1838 it was converted into a prison-hospital for women. One section of it, in fact, was used for the isolation and treatment of several hundred women with venereal diseases.[37]

[36] Pietro Baricco, *Torino descritta* (1869), 285.

[37] Data and quotes on the prison system given above are derived chiefly from Baricco, *Torino descritta*, 286. Cf. also *MO-da Silva*, 119, notes to lines 746, 748, 750-752, and Natale Cerrato, *Il Linguaggio della prima storia salesiana.* 226f.

The expensive and "modern" correctional facility for juveniles, located at the place of a large country house called "Generala" on the Stupinigi road, well out of the city, was dedicated in 1845. Such a facility for juveniles alone had been long in the planning and was part of elaborate social reforms sponsored in the reign of Charles Albert (1831-1849). For in spite of ambiguities in both personal philosophy and practical policy, Charles Albert had understood the importance and the necessity of dealing with juvenile problems in a way that took into consideration the physical, psychological and social situation of a young person. His reforms were also made possible by the emergence of a new "ruling class" drawn from a small sector of the middle class and of the aristocracy, non-representative of larger society certainly, yet possessed of great technical ability and driven by authentic moral awareness and concern.[38]

Article 28 of the penal code promulgated by King Charles Albert in 1839 clearly provided that delinquents of minor age should be committed to separate prisons. Other articles provided that a juvenile, aged 14 or under, acting without malice was not liable to prosecution and incarceration; and that only such minors who were found guilty of crime with malice aforethought were liable.[39] But Petitti di Roreto, commenting in 1867 on Charles Albert's principle that "young people convicted of crime must absolutely be kept separate from adult convicts" laments the delays in implementing this basic point of the reform. Prisons were and continued to be for some time the school of moral corruption for young people committed in them with adults.[40]

This was certainly the situation when Don Bosco began to visit the prison in 1841. He visited the first two of the facilities mentioned above, for those were men's prisons, where also young offenders were incarcerated.

Statistics for 1831-1846 show that theft was by far the most common crime, amounting to 30% of all offenses investigated and brought to justice by the police. The next most common crimes were of violence against persons (10%), and over half of these (5+%) were in the nature of threats and battery resulting from squabbles. Other (non-criminal) offenses such as loitering, vagrancy, beggary accounted for over 50% of the cases referred to the "Generala."[41] For the first two years of operation of this institution

[38] Levra, "Il bisogno," in Bracco, *Torino e DB* I, 88.

[39] Audisio, *La Generala*, 29.

[40] Audisio, *La Generala*, 30-31, quoting Petitti and other authors.

[41] Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 168.

(1845-1847) of 295 commitments only 26.1% were by the court for criminal offenses, and of these, 76% were for crimes against property, not persons. The rest were chiefly "precautionary" commitments by the police or (to a lesser extent) by parents.[42]

As a whole, for what concerns juvenile delinquency, statistics show that in the 1840s Turin was a city of the "poor and abandoned" rather than of criminals.

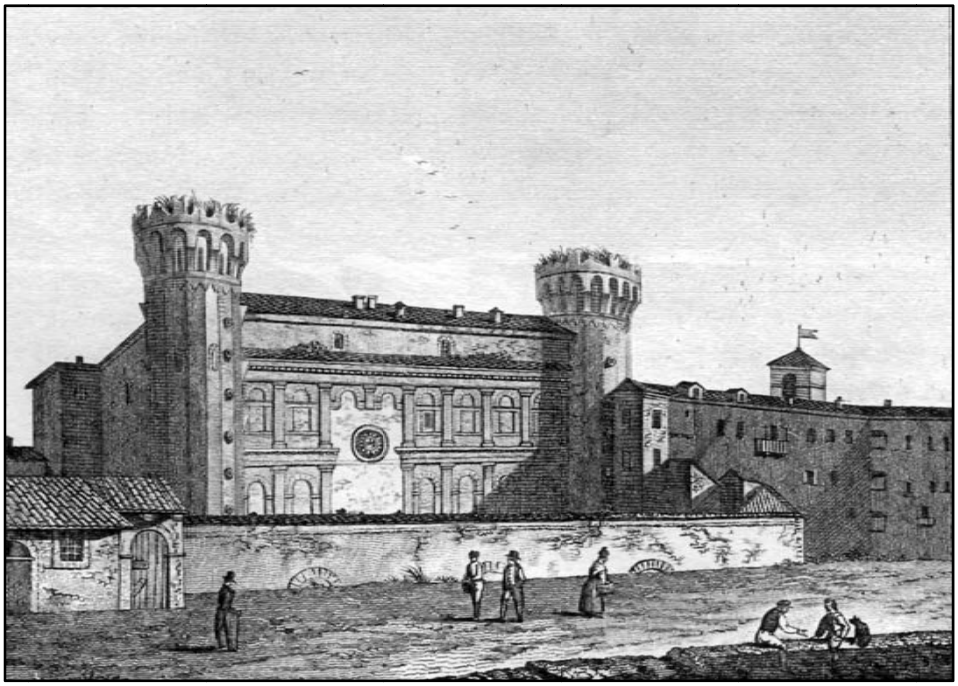
IV. Addressing the Problem

Insufficiency of Parish Structures

We have indicated that a significant effort to reform old structures was being made in the forties by the State. The "Generala" was a case in point. What was the Church doing? The traditional parish structures were unable to deal with the problem for they were being called upon to respond to situations for which they had not been intended. The activity of the priests of the *Convitto*, who after all were not the ones who should have taken the initiative, only served to point up the inadequacy of the established structures. Hence Don Bosco's response to those who complained that he took youngsters away from the parishes made perfect sense. He writes in his *Memoirs*:

> Most of the boys I collect know nothing of parish or parish priest. [...] Most of these boys [either] are neglected by their parents [and are adrift] in this city, or have come into the city [as migrants] looking for employment and have failed to find any. [...] The fact that they find themselves away from home, that they speak a different language, that they have no permanent lodgings, that they are not familiar with the places makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to attend a parish church. Moreover, many of them are already grown up, at 18, 20, or even 25 years of age, but are ignorant of anything that has to do with religion. Who could persuade them to sit with 8 or 10-year old children who are more knowledgeable than they?[43]

[42] Audisio, *La "Generala,"* 193-194.
[43] *MO-En*, 233-234; cf. *EBM* II, 194.



4 – The Towers Prison Facility

The situation before which traditional Church structures seemed powerless began to be addressed by a new generation of priests, Father Cocchi, Don Bosco, and others, who were aware of the problem. An appropriate response would take them beyond, and sometimes set them in opposition to, the inadequate traditional parish structure and the inadequate pastoral practice of the older clergy.[44]

New Understanding and Commitment

In more general terms, the response and the commitments that went with it were motivated by a new understanding of the social situation in which young people found themselves and of the forces that put them at risk. Don Bosco was among the "new priests who understood and re-

[44] Cf. Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work* (2nd ed., tr. by John Drury. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Don Bosco Publications, 1985), 101-107 [Stella, *DB:LW*].

sponded to the challenge. In his "Introduction" to the Draft Regulations for the Oratory of 1854, Don Bosco writes:

> The young constitute the most fragile, yet most valuable, component of human society, for on them we base our hopes for the future. They are not of themselves depraved. Were it not for parental neglect, idleness, mixing in bad company, something they experience especially on Sundays and holy days, it would be so easy to inculcate in their young hearts moral and religious principles–of order, good behavior, respect, religious practice. For if they are found to have been ruined at that young age, it will have been due more to thoughtlessness than to ingrained malice. These young people have real need of some kind person who will care for them, work with them, guide them in virtue and keep them away from evil. [...] Oratories should be reckoned among the most effective means for instilling the religious spirit into the uncultivated hearts of neglected young people.[45]

Don Bosco expressed the same understanding and concern in the Preamble of the first draft of the early Salesian Constitutions (1858). After lamenting parental neglect and other causes of risk, he writes:

> Our efforts must aim at safeguarding the faith and the moral life of that category of young people whose eternal salvation is more at risk precisely because of their poverty. This is the specific purpose of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, first established in Turin in 1841.[46]

[45] The full text of the Introduction and Historical Outline of the Oratory Regulations of 1854 is given in a later Chapter 6.

[46] Francesco Motto, Giovanni Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1875*. Testi critici (Roma: LAS, 1982), 60 [Motto, *Cost. SDB*].

Appendix

THE CLERGY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY NUMBERS, SITUATION AND EMPLOYMENT

A. Giraudo, *Clero seminario e società*, 81-153; P. Stella, *Il prete piemontese dell'800 […]* (Torino: SEI, 1972); *Sussidi* 2, 30-54 (based on G. Tuninetti, *Don Clemente Marchisio (1833-1903)*, 2nd ed. (Torino, 1984), 26-40, *passim*.[47]

1. Number of Priests before, during and after the Liberal Revolution of 1848

In the eighteenth century the clergy had been too numerous, too ill screened, too ill educated and too ill employed. Many priests spent their time in salons, in escorting ladies in their carriages or in various secular pursuits. Some bishops in order to begin to institute some of the reforms ordained by the Council of Trent were forced to dismiss all their seminarians and make a fresh start.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century the clergy in Italy had reached very high numbers. In Turin, just before the French Revolution (1789), the ratio was of 1 priest to 70 inhabitants. By contrast in 1861 (the year of the unification of Italy, a dozen years after the liberal revolution), the ratio in Turin, where the concentration of priests was greatest, was of 1 to 335 inhabitants. The decline in numbers was in some ways offset by improvement in quality,

During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period, the number of priestly vocations and ordinations suffered dramatic diminution. They staged a comeback with the Restoration, but there was no return the numbers in pre-revolutionary days. The ratio fell somewhere in between.[48]

Census of 1833

A census taken by Archbishop Fransoni in 1833, at the height of the Restoration, shows that the clergy's situation had gradually become "normal." The following statistics (referring exclusively to the secular clergy) are given. There were 1,651 secular

[47] Here we give only a brief summary of the situation of the clergy, based on this literature.

[48] *Sussidi* 2, 30.

priests and 455,772 Catholic inhabitants in the diocese of Turin–a ratio of one priest to 276 people. Priests, however, were very unevenly distributed. The vicariate of Turin had 526 priests–one priest to 199 people. The vicariate of Chieri had 98 priests–one to 264 people (Chieri itself had many religious priests). The vicariate of Castelnuovo had 30 priests–one to 336 people. As would be expected, the centers of the vicariates (city or town) usually had a greater concentration of priests. Thus, the city of Turin had 482 priests and 81,550 Catholic inhabitants–one to 169 people. Isolated mountain areas in the northwest had fewest numbers of priests. For example, in the vicariate of Viù the ratio was of one to 520 people. In the mountain parish of Usseglio (in the same vicariate) there was just one discouraged priest for 2,541 people living in scattered isolated alpine villages.[49]

Year of Don Bosco's ordination (1841) and ordinations by decade

In 1841 priests in Turin numbered about 800 for a population of some 160,000 (1: 200). But the decades that followed (after the liberal revolution) saw a gradual diminution in priestly vocations and ordinations. Deaths greatly outnumbered ordinations.

Ordination statistics are a helpful gauge for an understanding of the situation. In 1841 (the year of Don Bosco's ordination) 47 priests were ordained for the Turin diocese. The previous year (1840), there had been 70 ordained. The year after (1842), there were 79. This shows yearly fluctuations that do not of themselves reveal the trend. But over decades, the trend is clear.

Decade	*Number Ordained*	*Notation on Decade*
1831-1840	663	Height of Restoration
1841-1850	581	Onset of liberal revolution
1851-1860	262	1st decade of liberal revol.
1861-1870	249	Unification of Italy - 2nd decade of liberal revol.
1871-1880	196	3rd decade of liberal rev. & Archb. Gastaldi's reforms
1881-1890	412	Regaining normalcy under Archb. Alimonda

In the context of the diminution in priestly vocations during the toughest years of the liberal revolution, one may understand Don Bosco's concern and activity for priestly vocations.[50]

[49] Giraudo, *Clero seminario e società*, 82.

[50] Don Bosco's proactive response to the crisis included the following: the opening of the Oratory as a substitute seminary during the closure of the diocesan seminary (1849-1863), the insertion of the "seminary clause" into the constitutions (1860, Purpose, Art. 5), the start of the Work of Mary, Help of Christians (Sons of Mary, 1875).

On the other hand, the two decades when Don Bosco's was in formation or in early priestly ministry show quite a surplus of priests. Obviously this situation facilitated the choice of various non-diocesan ministries by concerned and committed priests, as was the case with Don Bosco.

2. Ministerial Employment of Priests in the Period of the Restoration[51]

General overview

One may speak of three general categories of ministerial employment of diocesan priests: (1) priests involved in ministry within the diocesan pastoral structures (pastors, assistants, village chaplains, spiritual directors or chaplains of charitable institutes, hospitals, boarding schools and convents); (2) priests in teaching and administration (in municipal and secondary schools, in seminaries and universities, private tutors, administrators and clerks of institutions; (3) priests living on benefices, with or without pastoral obligations (canons, honorary chaplains, retired and sick priests, priests catering to family interests).

(We find that priests in categories 2 and 3 were often involved, by personal choice, in pastoral ministry in a supporting role with Category 1).

Barely one half of the diocesan clergy could be classed in Category 1. In the city of Turin, it comprised perhaps only one-third of the total number of priests. We note therefore a disproportionate number of non-pastoral priests. This is what a seminarian (who lacked the dowry required for ordination) writes to Archbishop Chiaveroti in 1828:

> I am shocked at seeing so many men of the cloth around and so few working priests, when the harvest is so great. I can see no other reason for this except that priests of noble extraction are attached to their comforts: the rich want to enjoy their riches. Those with moderate or small fortunes seek to improve them by serving in the houses of the nobility. Most of the priests one sees around town are of this sort. Your Grace, I assure you, that if I had wanted to follow such a course, I should by now have more than enough for a dowry, for I had a firm offer from the start, provided I promised to follow that course.[52]

[51] For this section see Giraudo, *Clero seminario e società*, 94-115.

[52] Giraudo, *Clero seminario e società*, 95.

Parish Priests (Pastors and Assistants or Associates)

The parish had retained its central pastoral role, and pastors remained largely in place with the return of the ancien régime in the Restoration, for apparently they had not been deeply involved in politics during the Napoleonic period. Religious orders, mostly suppressed during the Napoleonic period, were too concerned with reorganization after their return to seriously affect the central pastoral role of the parish. Vacancies (16 out of 242 parishes in the archdiocese in 1820) were due largely to difficulties encountered by pastors with the local people.

As mentioned above, in 1841 Turin had a population of some 160,000 people and (including religious) some 800 priests. The city was divided into 15 parishes, 12 within the city proper, and 3 in developing outer districts. Each parish was staffed by a pastor and by 1 or 2 (seldom more) assistants.

Within the parish there might also be chapels or non-parish churches attached to confraternities, sodalities, schools, convents, charitable institutions, etc.

They would staffed by chaplains, but they would not be part of the parish system.

The scarcity of priests available for pastoral work is reflected in the small number of assistants in the parishes. The pay of an associate was small (100-150 lire, as compared to a schoolteacher's average pay of 500 lire) and his workload was heavy. Such an appointment would not be attractive in itself. If a young priest competed or volunteered for it, it would be because it could pave the way for an appointment as pastor. Most young priests preferred to seek more secure and permanent gainful employment.

It will be remembered that after ordination Don Bosco received the offer of staying on as assistant to Father Cinzano at Castelnuovo. We cannot say whether the offer was attractive in itself. Father Cinzano, as a friend and mentor, would certainly have made it worthwhile, because an assistant's total revenue depended to a large extent on the pastor's generosity.

Village and Other Chaplains

Villages were numerous (Castelnuovo had four of them), and there was a chapel in each. In cities and towns there were the chapels of confraternities and other institutions. The chaplain assumed obligations of a liturgical (but non-parochial) nature. All obligations would be minutely stipulated in the foundation charter by the patron. (Especially in remote villages chaplains would also act as primary schoolteachers for the local children). Chapels usually had some kind of benefice or foundation attached to them, but not many offered revenues large enough to be attractive. Hence many chaplaincies remained vacant.

St. Peter's chapel at Morialdo (one of the villages of Castelnuovo) had been va-

cant until Father John Calosso accepted the post in 1829. The endowment of the chapel had recently been increased by the patron, Mr. Spirito Sartoris, to a yearly revenue of 800 lire. Father Calosso died in 1830, but the chaplaincy was still vacant in 1841, when it was offered to newly ordained Don Bosco.

After three years at the Pastoral Institute, in 1844 Don Bosco was offered and accepted the post of chaplain (spiritual director) of one of the Marchioness Barolo's institutions, with a stipend of 600 lire. This charitable lady employed a number of chaplains, and offered substantial stipends, with the aim also of helping young priests remain within a setting of pastoral ministry.

Priests in teaching and school administration

Priests-teachers were very numerous. The 1821 census (under Archbishop Chiaveroti) lists 168 teachers or professors in parishes outside Turin, and 27 directors of schools. These priests fulfilled a very important role in support of both the parish and the city, which otherwise in many cases could not provide even elementary schooling. The assistant in a parish was in many cases also the schoolteacher. This was the case of Father Joseph Virano and Father Nicholas Moglia in Castelnuovo and Moncucco respectively, when John Bosco was in school in Castelnuovo in 1830-31. In Turin teachers were even more numerous. For instance, in the parish of St. Eusebius, at the time of the 1821 census, there lived 47 priests, of whom 18 were employed as school teachers, one was a governor of the College of the Provinces, and three were employed at the university (secretary, librarian, prefect).

Non-pastoral priests

There were priests, especially in the capital, who had no pastoral obligations. They lived through gainful employment (e.g., as administrators, or on pensions or from revenues from family estates. In the parish of San Dalmazzo in Turin the pastor reported 32 such priests, "who say Mass elsewhere."

In towns outside Turin resided numerous priests who were old or sick, and former religious priests who had not returned to their community after the Napoleonic suppression. There were also priests who lived off personal ecclesiastical benefices without any obligations, and priests who dedicated their time to the family business. Of the latter two groups local pastors have absolutely nothing good to say in their reports.

To sum up, it appears that a good number of priests (in Turin as many as 400) would have few if any pastoral attachments. Even though one must avoid thinking in eighteen-century terms, when numbers were huge, and controls and discipline were lax, still J. Cottino's judgment as quoted by Stella may be taken, with due reservations, to describe the situation in Don Bosco's times.

> There were a great many priests around at the time. Priests often found employment on their own initiative, e.g., as tutors and instructors in houses of the noble or of the rich, and were not expected to rely on an appointment from the Bishop. For a long period of time [to well into the nineteenth century] priests were left to their own devices as far as employment was concerned, simply because there were too many of them. [...] One had to compete even for such a post as that of assistant in a parish, and it was a coveted appointment. If one was financially independent because of family circumstances, or had other means of support, he would probably be living in his own house, use his time as he wished, and be of no further concern to the Bishop. As many as a dozen priests might be living in a small country town. If such priests chose to spend their time hunting–that would be the least damage they could do.[53]

This being the case, one can see how easily a priest could obtain the blessing of his bishop if he was willing to engage in a special ministry benefiting the people, especially if such work did not tax the diocesan resources.

We may thus understand how zealous priests (such as those out of the Pastoral Institute, Don Bosco among them) could undertake special ministries outside the diocesan and parish structures with the Archbishop's blessing.

[53] Pietro Stella, *Il prete piemontese dell'800*, 92; *Sussidi* 2, 31.

Chapter 2

BEGINNINGS OF THE ORATORY AT ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

MO-En, 182, 187-190, 196-198; *EBM* II, 45-53, 54-61, 71-74; Stella, *DB:LW*, 78-99; Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 152-159; Historical Outline of 1854 (*Cenno storico*) and Historical Outlines of 1862 (*Cenni storici*).[1]

Summary

1. Beginnings of Don Bosco's Oratory at St. Francis of Assisi in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* and in Ruffino's Chronicle
   (1) Young people released from prison
   (2) December 8, 1841 and the "orphan lad" from Asti (Bartholomew Garelli)
2. Beginnings of Don Bosco's Oratory in Early "Official Documents"
   (1) In the *Historical Outline* of 1854
   (2) In the *Historical Outlines* of 1862
3. The Garelli Tradition: the Name and the Symbol
4. Further Statement by Don Bosco on the Origin of His Work–1841 as chief point of reference

Appendix: Biographical Sketch of Father Giovanni Cocchi

[1] Besides Don Bosco's own *Memoirs*, written in mid-seventies, we may now draw on earlier statements of Don Bosco recently published. See Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco per i giovani: l'"Oratorio" una "Congregazione degli Oratori." Documenti* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano, 9. Roma: LAS, 1988). The archival documents critically edited by Braido are the "Introduction" and "Historical Outline" (*Cenno storico*) that served as a foreword to Don Bosco's Draft Regulations for the Oratory (*Piano di regolamento*) of 1854, and the unattached "Historical Outlines" of 1862 [*Historical Outline* of 1854 and *Historical Outlines* of 1862]. Don Bosco's autograph of the Introduction and Historical Outline of 1854 is in *ASC* 132: *Oratorio 1*, *FDB* 1,872 B3-C5. A complete copy of the *Regulations* (not in DB's hand) is in *ASC* 026(2) *Regolamento dell'Oratorio*, *FDB* 1,955 D6 - 1,956 B3. These regulations began to be drafted in the early 1850s on the basis of the experience gained up to that time. The *Draft* under consideration dates from 1854. See full text in later Chapter 6. The Historical Outlines of 1862 is in *ASC* 132: *Oratorio* 2.1, *FDB* 1,972 C10-D4 (Don Bosco's autograph); 2.2, *FDB* 1,972 E9 - 1,973 A6 (copy corrected by Don Bosco and 2.3, *FDB* 1,972 E1-8 (last copy corrected by Don Bosco). The full text of this document will be given in a later chapter.

In the preceding chapter, on the basis of official sources, we focused on the kind and on the situation of young people who were at risk in Turin at the time when Don Bosco first enrolled in the *Pastoral Institute* (*Convitto*) in 1841. The first exercises in practical ministry in which he engaged under the guidance of Father Joseph Cafasso led to a "discovery" that was to change his life forever. From the start he felt drawn to these young people, referred to in the literature as "poor and abandoned" out of a natural and Christian instinct. It was not long before he became fully committed to them, and this commitment became his "vocation." Don Bosco came to believe that the oratory was the vehicle ordained by Providence for gathering, catechizing, educating and assisting such young people in their need. It is our aim now to describe the beginnings of this work, Don Bosco's oratory at the Pastoral Institute and church of St. Francis of Assisi

I. The Beginnings of the Oratory in Don Bosco's *Memoirs*

Through the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, laboriously styled out of his mature reflection in mid-1870s, Don Bosco wished to hand down to future Salesians a definitive and privileged interpretation of the meaning of his work. Hence his description of the *beginning* of the work, and of the type of young people involved, is of the utmost importance.

"Young People Released from Prison or Liable to Being Sent There"

Soon after enrolling in the *Pastoral Institute*, Don Bosco was assigned by Father Cafasso to visiting the prisons, where for the first time he came face to face with the shocking and pitiable condition of the many young people detained there. He writes in his *Memoirs*:

> I saw large numbers of young lads, 12 to 18 years of age, fine youngsters, healthy, strong and alert of mind. But how sad to see them idle there, infested with lice, lacking food for body and soul. I was horrified. [...] What shocked me most was to see that many of them were released full of good resolutions to go straight, and yet in a short time they landed back in prison, within a few days of their release.[2]

[2] *MO-En*, 182.

He wondered if anything could be done for them. After talking the matter over with Father Cafasso, he begins to form a plan–the plan to begin the gather and care for them.

> Hardly had I registered at the *Pastoral Institute* of St. Francis, when I met at once a crowd of boys who followed me in the streets and the squares and even into the sacristy of the church attached to the Institute. But I could not take direct care of them since I had no premises. A humorous incident opened the way to put into action my project [to care] for the boys who roamed the streets of the city, *especially those released from prison*.[3]

After relating the "humorous incident" namely, his meeting young Bartholomew Garelli in the sacristy of the church of St. Francis of Assisi (to be discussed below), he continues:

> During the winter, I concentrated my efforts in helping a small number of young adults who needed special catechetical instruction, above all *those just out of prison*. It was then that I realized at first hand that if young lads, once released from detention, could find someone to befriend them, [...] they began to mend their ways. They became good Christians and honest citizens. *This was the beginning of our Oratory*.[4]
>
> My aim was to bring together only those children who were in greatest danger, *those released from prison by preference*. Nevertheless, as a foundation on which to build discipline and morality, I invited some other boys of good character who had already received religious instruction.[5]
>
> On Saturdays, my pockets stuffed sometimes with tobacco, sometimes with fruit, sometimes with rolls, I used to go to the prisons. My object was always to give special attention to the *youngsters who had the misfortune of being put behind bars*, help them, make friends with them, and thus encourage them to attend the oratory when they should have the good fortune of leaving that place of punishment.[6]

These words of Don Bosco seem to indicate that young people met in prison were Don Bosco's first concern and that once released from prison they became the first to form the oratory. But in the same breath Don Bosco relates the "humorous incident" involving a lad named Bartholomew

[3] *MO-En*, 187 (italics mine).
[4] *MO-En*, 190 (italics mine).
[5] *MO-En*, 196 (italics mine).
[6] *MO-En*, 198 (italics mine).

Garelli, who was not out of prison and had drifted into the sacristy presumably just to get out of the cold.

5 – The Sacristy of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi (photo Leonard von Matt)

Bartholomew Garelli and the Beginnings of the Oratory

In his *Memoirs* Don Bosco relates how on the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1841, hence just a little over one month after enrolling in the *Pastoral Institute*) he met the lad in the sacristy of the church of St. Francis of Assisi. The circumstances of the meeting and the dialogue are

set in Salesian tradition. Here we merely transcribe the pertinent passage from the *Memoirs* together with an account of the same episode from Ruffino's Chronicle. Don Bosco wrote his account some time in 1874. But the story (undated and without mention of the name), presumably heard from Don Bosco, is reported by Ruffino in a chronicle entry of 1860.

The Garelli Episode in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* (1874) *MO-En*, 187-190	The Same Episode (without the Name) Recorded in Ruffino's Chronicle *ASC* 110: Cronachette, Ruffino, Notebook 1, p. 28-30 (1860); *FDBM* 1,206 C9-11
Hardly had I registered at the Pastoral Institute of St Francis, when I met at once a crowd of boys' who followed me in the streets and the squares and even into the sacristy of the church attached to the institute. But I could not take direct care of them since I had no premises. A humorous incident opened the way to put into action my project for the boys who roamed the streets of the city, especially those released from prison.	Beginnings of the Oratory –
On the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (December 8, 1841), I was vesting to celebrate holy Mass at the appointed time. Joseph Comotti, the sacristan, seeing a boy in a corner, asked him to come and serve my Mass.	In the year…… Don Bosco was at the Pastoral Institute of St. Francis. On the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, as he was vesting for holy Mass, he noticed a young man of 15 or 16 years of age standing nearby in the sacristy, waiting to hear Mass. The sacristan asked him if he would serve Mass. When the young man replied that he didn't know how, the sacristan grabbed the [duster] pole and gave him a couple of whacks across the head, scolding [and demanding to know] what he was doing there.
"I don't know how," he answered, completely embarrassed. "Come on," repeated the sacristan, "I want you to serve Mass." "I don't know how," the boy repeated. "I've never served Mass." "You little brat," said the sacristan, quite furious, "if you don't know how to serve Mass, what are you doing in the sacristy?" With that he grabbed the duster pole and hit the poor boy about the head and shoulders.	
As the boy beat a hasty retreat, I cried loudly, "What are you doing? Why are you beating him like that? What's he done?" "Why is he hanging round the sacristy if he doesn't know how to serve Mass?" What's he done wrong?" "What does it matter to you?" "It matters plenty. He's a friend of mine. Call him back at once. I need to speak with him."	Don Bosco heard [the scuffle] and asked the sacristan, "Why are you treating him like that?" "Do you know him?" the sacristan replied. "Yes," said Don Bosco, "I know him; he is a friend of mine." He knew him only from having seen him a few moments before.
"Tuder! Tuder!" [Hey, you stranger!], he began to shout, as he ran after him. Promising him better treatment, he brought the lad back to me. He came over trembling and tearful because of the blows he had received.	The sacristan then said to the boy: "Come, Don Bosco wishes to speak to you." The young man came over.
"Have you attended Mass yet?" I asked him with as much loving-kindness as I could. "No," he answered. Well, come to Mass now. Afterwards I'd like	Don Bosco asked him if he had already been to Mass. "No," he replied. "Go, "hear Mass with devotion," Don

to talk to you about something that will please you." He promised to do as I said. I wanted to calm the poor fellow's spirit down and not leave him with that sad impression towards the people in charge of that sacristy.	Bosco told him; "then come back, because I have something important to tell you."
Once I had celebrated my Mass and made due thanksgiving, I took my candidate into a side chapel. Trying to allay any fear he might have of another beating, I started questioning him cheerfully: "My good friend, what's your name?" "My name's Bartholomew Garelli." Where are you from?" "Asti." "Is your father alive?" No, my father's dead." "And your mother?" "My mother's dead too." "How old are you?" "I'm sixteen." "Can you read and write?" "I don't know anything." "Have you made your first communion?" "Not yet." "Have you ever been to confession?" "Yes, when I was small." "Are you going to catechism classes now?" "I don't dare." "Why?" "Because the other boys are smaller than I am, and they know their catechism. As big as I am, I don't know anything, so I'm ashamed to go." "If I were to teach you catechism on your own, would you come?" "I'd come very willingly." "Would you come willingly to this little room?" "I'd come willingly enough, provided they don't beat me." "Relax. No one will harm you. On the contrary, you'll be my friend and you'll be dealing with me and with no one else. "When would you like us to begin our catechism?" "Whenever you wish." "This evening?" "Okay." "Are you willing right now?" "Yes, right now, with great pleasure."	When the Mass was over, the young man met Don Bosco in the sacristy. "What's your name," Don Bosco asked him?…"N.N.," was the reply "Can you read?" "No." "Can you write?" "No." "Can you sing?" "No." "Can you whistle?" The boy broke into a smile. "Now, tell me, have you been admitted to Communion?" "No." "All right then, later today, at such and such an hour, come back here, and I will teach you."
I stood up and made the sign of the cross to begin; but my pupil made no response because he did not know how to do it. In that first catechism lesson I taught him to make the sign of the cross. I also taught him to know God the Creator and why God created us. Though Bartholomew's memory was poor, with attentive diligence in a few feast days" he learned enough to make a good confession and, soon after, his Holy Communion. To this first pupil some others were added. During that winter, I concentrated my efforts in helping a few gown-ups who needed special catechism, above all those who were just out of prison […] This was the beginning of our oratory.	That evening, the lad was back for his lesson. But first Don Bosco asked the youth to join him in a prayer to Mary Immaculate, that she might help the youngster to learn the basic truths of faith, and that she might inspire many other young people in need to come to him for instruction in those same truths. And so it began. […]

Comparing the two accounts, we immediately notice that the scene and the dialogue in Ruffino's 1860 account are less dramatic than in Don Bosco's 1874 account (though the two clearly make the same point). Ruffino's story makes no mention of the boy's being an orphan and does not

name the boy or date the episode. On the other hand, it carries some details that do not appear in the *Memoirs*–the questions, "Can you sing?" and "Can you whistle?" and the prayer to Mary Immaculate. These details from Ruffino's chronicle became part of the traditional recital of the event.[7]

The Garelli episode from Don Bosco's *Memoirs*, dealing with the beginning of the oratory, leaves us somewhat perplexed as to its precise role. Apparently, this orphan from Asti was not one of those lads that followed Don Bosco around in the streets but that could not be gathered for lack of a place. Nor was he one of the juvenile delinquents just released from prison. Don Bosco calls him his "first pupil" to whom "some others were added." However, he tells us immediately that during that winter he concentrated his efforts "in helping a few grown-ups" in dire need of catechetical instruction, "above all those who were just out of prison"–and "this was the beginning of our Oratory."[8]

Therefore the Garelli story leaves some questions unanswered, which are discussed below.

II. The Beginning of the Oratory in Don Bosco's Earlier "Official" Statements

In documents that may be said to possess an official character Don Bosco describes the beginnings of the Oratory and the kind of young people who first drew his attention and his commitment. These documents are primarily the *Historical Outline* (*Cenno Storico*) of 1854, the *Historical Outlines* (*Cenni Storici*) of 1862. They are used here as critically edited by Pietro Braido.[9]

The Beginnings of the Oratory in the Historical Outline (*Cenno Storico*) of 1854

Twenty years before the *Memoirs*, in the *Historical Outline* of 1854 Don Bosco gave a different account of the beginnings of the Oratory. The following table is given for comparison.

[7] See Lemoyne's inflated account in *EBM* II, 55-60. It should also be emphasized that the *name* Bartholomew Garelli appears for the first time in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* (1874). There seems to be no earlier attestation of it in the Salesian tradition.

[8] *MO-En*, 190.

[9] Pietro Braido, *DB per i giovani*, 30-34, 34-55, 56-70 (cf. footnote 1, above).

Memoirs of the Oratory *MO-En*, 182, 187. 190 and 196	Historical Outline of 1854 *in Braido*, Don Bosco per i Giovani, *34-36*
[Scenario 1(182)] The first thing [Fr. Cafasso] did was to take me to the prisons, where I soon learned how great was the malice and misery of mankind. I saw large numbers of young lads aged from 12 to 18, fine, healthy youngsters, alert in mind, but seeing them idle there, infested with lice, lacking food for body and soul, horrified me. […] What shocked me most was to see that many of them were released full of many good resolutions to go straight, and yet they landed back in prison within a few days of their release. On such occasions I found out how quite a few were brought back to that place: It was because they were abandoned to their own resources. [… Don Bosco talks the matter over with Fr. Cafasso and forms a plan].	[Scenario 1] This Oratory, or gathering of young people on Sundays and holy days, began in the church of St. Francis of Assisi. For many years during the summer time, the Rev. Father Caffasso used to teach catechism every Sunday to bricklayer apprentices in a little room attached to the sacristy of that church. The heavy burden of work put on this priest caused him to interrupt this work that he loved so much. I took it up toward the end of 1841, and *I began by gathering in the same place two young adults* who were seriously in need of religious instruction. These were joined by others, and during 1842 their number increased to twenty, and sometimes twenty-five. From these beginnings I learnt two very important truths: that in general young people are not bad in themselves, but more often they become such through contact with evil persons; and even these bad youngsters, if removed from evil company, are susceptible to great moral change. In 1843 the catechism classes continued on the same footing and the number increased to fifty. This was all that the place assigned to me could accommodate.
[Scenario 2 (187)] Hardly had I registered at the Convitto of St. Francis, when I met at once a crowd of boys who followed me in the streets and the squares and even into the sacristy of the church attached to the institute. But I could not take direct care of them, since I had no premises. A humorous incident opened the way to put into action the plan [I had formed] for the boys who roamed the streets of the city, especially those released from prison. On the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (December 8, 1841, I was vesting to celebrate holy Mass at the appointed time. Joseph Comotti, the sacristan, seeing a boy in a corner, asked him to come and serve my Mass. [… The Garelli story follows, ending with catechetical instruction, and eventually confession and communion (see above)] [Conclusion]To this first pupil some others were added. During that winter, I concentrated my efforts in helping some grown-ups who needed special catechetical instruction, above all those who were just out of prison. […] *This was the beginning of our Oratory.* [196] [development] All my efforts that winter were concentrated on getting the little Oratory established. My aim was to bring together only those children who were in greatest danger, those released from prison by preference. Nevertheless, as a foundation on which to build discipline and morality, I invited some other boys of good conduct that had already received [catechetical] instruction. On [the feast of the Purification] (February 2, 1842) I already had about twenty children. […] By the feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin (March 25), our numbers had risen to thirty.	[Scenario 2] *At the same time* (*In questo frattempo*) as I visited the prisons of Turin, I was able to verify that the poor unfortunates sent 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 on games [of chance] or on sweetmeats the little money they earn during the week. This is beginning of many vices; in no time at all young people who were good are found to be themselves at risk and to put others at risk. Nor can the prisons make them better in any way, because while detained there they learn more refined ways of doing evil, so that when they are released they become worse. *I turned therefore to this class of youngsters as the most abandoned and at risk*; and in the course of each week, either with promises or with little gifts, I managed to gain pupils (*allievi*). By my efforts 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. My soul rejoiced at seeing myself surrounded by pupils (*allievi*) of the kind I was interested in, who had already started on a job. Thus, I could vouch for their conduct, whether on weekdays or weekends. As I looked over them [seated before me], I could visualize 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.

Comparing the *Memoirs'* account of the beginning and formation of the Oratory at St. Francis of Assisi with that of the *Historical Outline* of 1854, we note certain important differences.

(1) In the *Memoirs* the inspiration for the oratory comes from visiting the prisons, seeing at first hand the plight of those young inmates, and understanding the reason why after being released they so quickly returned there. That's what moves Don Bosco to form "a plan." He adds that from the start a crowd of youngsters (he does say what kind) followed him in the streets and squares, but he had no place in which to gather them.

By contrast, in the *Historical Outline* of 1854, Don Bosco's states that from the start he took over Father Cafasso's catechetical instructions in the room (chapel) adjoining the sacristy of the church of St. Francis. And that provided the opportunity for the beginning of his Oratory.

(2) Again in his *Memoirs* Don Bosco goes on to state that the beginning took place *by chance*, when on the feast of the Immaculate Conception an orphan lad from Asti named Bartholomew Garelli drifted into the sacristy, and after Mass Don Bosco catechized him. By and by others were added, including some young adults released from prison. This was cumulatively the beginning of the Oratory, but the absolute beginning was made with *one sixteen-year old orphan*, Bartholomew Garelli. This seems to be the point of the Garelli episode.

By contrast, according to the *Historical Outline* of 1854, the beginning was made with *two young adults* when Don Bosco, toward the end of 1841, took over and revived Father Cafasso' catechetical instructions. No specific occasion (such as the feast of the Immaculate Conception) is mentioned. But he adds that through 1842 and 1843 the number of those attending the catechism "classes" reached as many as fifty. Then, in the *Historical Outline* Don Bosco makes the further point that while he was developing the catechetical instructions, *at the same time*, he was concentrating on the young adults that had been released from prison and were really at risk. He went out of his way to assist them in all their real needs and to entice them to take catechetical instruction.

The two components that jointly provided the occasion for the beginning of the Oratory (namely, Don Bosco's experience with young people released from prison and catechetical instruction) appear in both accounts. But whereas in the Historical Outline the catechetical instructions appear in the context of the catechetical activity of the Pastoral Institute, in the *Memoirs* the Garelli episode, which signals the start of Don Bosco's catechetical activity (and therefore of the Oratory) appears somewhat anomalous in as

much as Garelli is not one of the youngsters that had drawn Don Bosco's commitment in the first place.[10]

The *Historical Outline* of 1854 is of particular importance not only because of its early date but also because it was written as a foreword to the Regulation of the Boys Oratory, which fact confers on it an almost official status. Braido attaches particular significance to it also from another standpoint. He writes:

> The subdued reconstruction of the origins presented in the *Historical Outline* of 1854 and in the *Historical Outlines* of 1862 appears far less idealized [than in the *Memoirs*]. These writings are also far less overlaid with the ideology that is evidenced in later interpretations, such as the *Memoirs of the Oratory* as well as the conferences, and the familiar conversations and recollections handed down by Don Bosco's devoted sons in their chronicles. [...] Generally speaking, in the earlier accounts the emotional drive is muted and under control. Likewise, in these accounts the information is delivered with greater objectivity. Moreover, eyewitnesses and collaborators were still on hand at the time of writing who would not fail to criticize any lack of objectivity.[11]

The Beginnings of the Oratory in the Historical Outlines (*Cenni Storici*) of 1862

In the *Historical Outlines* of 1862, Don Bosco describes the beginnings of the Oratory as a response to the situation of young people on the streets, in factories, and in prison–all at risk for lack of religious instruction.

[10] Don Bosco's own catechetical activity in relation to the catechetical activity of the *Pastoral Institute* is not so clearly documented as one would want it to be. Did Don Bosco take over the catechetical instruction, or did he merely help Father Cafasso, or did he work in collaboration with others? One thing seems certain: the *Pastoral Institute* priests had been holding catechetical instruction in the church of St. Francis of Assisi before Don Bosco became involved, and continued to do so after Don Bosco left the scene in 1844 [Cf. Stella, *DB:LW*, 91-92, citing Nicolis di Robilant, *Cafasso*] The testimony given in this regard by Giovanni Antonio Bargetto at Father Cafasso's Process of Beatification is of interest: "On Sundays [Don Bosco] gathered the youngsters he found in nearby squares and streets in the courtyard of the *Pastoral Institute*. The Venerable [Cafasso] for his part would wait for them, and at a certain hour would teach them their catechism in the private chapel of St. Bonaventure. [...] I had not been long at the *Pastoral Institute* at the time. I was working as a helper in the kitchen, and occasionally I would bring left over food from the kitchen to those youngsters" [As reported in *MO-da Silva*, 12-13].

[11] Braido, *DB per i giovani*, 22.

> The idea of the Oratories arose from my frequent visits to the prisons of this city. In these places, where spiritual and material wretchedness held sway, one met many young people in the flower of their youth, with lively minds, good hearts, who could well become the consolation of their families and the pride of their country. Instead they were detained there in a state of degradation and made the reproach of society. [...] Experience also showed that as one helped them gradually to become aware of their human dignity [...] many of them changed their behavior even while still in prison, and on being discharged lived in such a way as never again to have to be sent back to jail. [...]
>
> To put this perception to the test, we began to give appropriate religious instruction in the prisons of this capital and a little later in the sacristy of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi; and so began *the gatherings on Sundays and holy days* [the Oratory]. These gatherings were open to the young men who were discharged from prison, and to those who during the week gathered [with nothing to do] in the squares and streets, as well as to those who [if they had a job] would be found in the factories. [...] It was the year 1841 [when it all began]. The young people who attended averaged about seventy.[12]

This unattached account, perhaps written for presentation to civil or Church authorities at a time when the Salesian Constitutions were being drafted, would enjoy quasi-official status. In it Don Bosco indicates that contact with young adults at risk occurred in the prisons. The Oratory began with the religious instruction of "young men who were discharged from prison" and "who loitered about the squares" or who were employed "in the factories." This scenario differs from that of the Garelli story, also because Don Bosco seems to be speaking of a *group*.[13]

III. The Garelli Tradition

Tracing the Garelli Tradition

In the *Memoirs*' account (1874) of the beginning of the oratory (1841), Bartholomew Garelli plays a prominent role. However, neither the story nor the name occurs in Salesian documentation, whether published or unpublished, before the writing of the *Memoirs* in mid-1870s, *except* for the occur-

[12] P. Braido, *DB per i giovani*, 56 (italics mine).

[13] For the idea of a "group" beginning, cf. also footnotes 23 and 24 and related text, below.

rence of the story (without name or date) in the above-quoted entry of the Ruffino chronicle of 1860. Ruffino's mention of the story would tend to show that as early as 1860 Don Bosco had spoken of this episode (perhaps without mentioning the young man by name), in connection with the feast of the Immaculate Conception, as marking the beginnings of the Oratory.

But again neither the story nor the name Garelli was recalled by the old oratory boys at their annual gatherings and celebrations. Nor is any reference to either story or name found in the souvenirs left by Joseph and Joshua Buzzetti, the two brothers who faithfully attended the Oratory in earliest times.

As for the public knowledge of the story and its tradition in Salesian literature, the following should be borne in mind: Father Lemoyne succeeded Father Ruffino, after the latter's death in 1865, as director of the Salesian school at Lanzo. He found and transcribed the five notebooks of Ruffino's chronicle but what he may have made of the passage in question is not known. He probably just filed the notebooks of the chronicle for future reference.

The *Memoirs* themselves were not for publication. But Father Giovanni Bonetti used them for his *History of the Oratory* published in the *Salesian Bulletin* serially over a number of years. The Garelli story appeared *in public* for the first time in the *Salesian Bulletin* in 1879.[14] This marks the beginning of the epic tradition in which the orphan lad from Asti was enshrined as a mythical hero. The dialogue between Don Bosco and Garelli recorded in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* and transcribed in Bonetti's *Storia* achieved the status of a sacred text to be reverently recalled and recited for all Salesian generations to come. The episode also was taken as a further sign of divine approval of the Salesian work. For the Lord had willed that Don Bosco's providential work should begin on the day sacred to the Immaculate Mother of God.

From the *Salesian Bulletin*, the story passed into d'Espiney's *Don Bosco* (1881).[15] The year 1891 saw the solemn celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the event. The story was retold in Bonetti's *Cinque Lustri* (1891).[16] A

[14] [John Bonetti,] "Storia dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales," *Bollettino Salesiano* 3:1 (1879) 6-8.

[15] Charles d'Espiney, *Don Bosco* (Nice: Typographie et lithographie Malvano-Mignon, 1881). English translation (from 1883 ed.): *Don Bosco: A Sketch of His Life and Miracles* (by Dr. Charles d'Espiney, Tr. from the French by Miss Mary McMahon. New York, Benziger Brothers, 1884), 13-14.

[16] Giovanni Bonetti, *Cinque Lustri di storia dell'Oratorio Salesiano di Valdocco* (Torino: Tipo-

commemoration of the event also took place at the First International Congress of Salesian Cooperators in 1895. Finally the *Biographical Memoirs* (Vol. II, 1901) became the chief vehicle whereby the Garelli epic tradition was handed down.[17] From then on the story remained in the public domain and was given currency in sermons, biographies, leaflets and pictures.

The Name "Garelli"

With reference to the name, it should be noted that in the original draft of the *Memoirs*, Don Bosco after writing "Bartholomew" had begun to write an "N" not a "G": "*Mi chiamo Bartolomeo ~~N~~ Garelli.*"[18] Had Don Bosco intended to leave the young man in anonymity ("N" for any name), or was that "N" the initial letter of some other name? (Obviously, for the purpose of the story one name would have done as well as any other).

Furthermore, inquiries made into the records of the city and diocese of Asti have not yielded anyone named Bartholomew Garelli, born around 1824-25.

In view of this, one wonders whether to credit certain reports according to which Bartholomew Garelli is supposed to have put in appearances at the Oratory in 1855 or 1856 and, after a long retirement in his hometown, at meetings of alumni after 1890. It is possible that these "sightings" of Garelli had their origin in the tendency to give concrete support to a tradition that conferred such great importance on an event and on a person.[19]

Possible Symbolic Role of the Garelli Story

Don Bosco came to see the origin of his work, and the events that brought it about, as God's doing through the mediation of Mary Immaculate. Hence, in telling the story "in the family" and in writing his *Memoirs* he

grafia Salesiana, 1891), 19-23. English translation: *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1908), 8-10.

[17] *EBM* II, 56-59, with considerable editing.

[18] Don Bosco's original draft is in *ASC* 132: *Autografi-Oratorio*: "Memorie dell'Oratorio," 87, line 14; *FDBM* 58 C4.

[19] For the remarks in the foregoing section see Pietro Stella, *Piccola guida critica alle Memorie Biografiche. Apologia della storia* (Typescript: Professor's notes for 1989-1990), 21-27. For Garelli's reported visits to the Oratory in 1855 and thereafter see *EBM* II, 59.

may have wished to express that very idea in one single inclusive episode set on the feast of the Immaculate Conception and featuring a youngster who was an orphan. The *orphan* Garelli receiving a *catechism lesson* on the feast of the *Immaculate Conception* might represent symbolical rather than historical beginnings. In other words, might not this wandering orphan just be the symbol of all young people at risk in need of help, religious instruction and fatherly care?

There was a root experience and a decisive starting point that turned out to be for Don Bosco a revelation and a personal introduction to the world of the "poor and abandoned." He may have already been aware of this world, but perhaps up to that point he had not yet experienced it as addressing him personally and demanding a personal commitment. This "discovery" may have occurred on the streets of the city, or in the prisons, or in the sacristy of the church of St. Francis of Assisi, or in all of these together. Or again the initial test may have come from one young man or from the two young adults or from a group of youths released from prison. Any of these possibilities would have been less significant for him than the charismatic and compelling nature of the "discovery."

Further Statements by Don Bosco on the Origin of His Work

Don Bosco spoke of the Salesian Society as existing already in that first experience. The Society as the vehicle for the work of the oratory is thought of as originating with that work. Thus in a number of memorandums and summaries submitted to the authorities to explain the Society Don Bosco refers back to the origins, and 1841 is the most frequent point of reference. Although none of these documents mention any specific young people as first contacts, they nonetheless illuminate the beginnings. Some examples will suffice.

In the *Historical Summary* that preceded the chapter on "Purpose" in the earliest Salesian Constitutions (1858), Don Bosco writes:

> As far back as the year 1841, Father John Bosco, working in association with other priests, began to gather together in suitable premises the most abandoned young people from the city of Turin. The purpose of these gatherings was to entertain them with games and at the same time to break for them the bread of the divine word.[20]

[20] "Beginning of this Society," in Motto, *Cost. Testi critici*, 62. Cf. also *EBM* V, 636. Iden-

The year 1841 is the point of reference also in a *Brief Notice on the Society* (1864): "The work of the oratories began with a simple catechetical instruction on Sundays and holy days as far back as the year 1841."[21]

To the same general effect is the statement made to the newly appointed Archbishop Alessandro Riccardi di Netro in 1867: "This Society began with gathering poor youngsters on Sundays and holy days in the year 1841."[22]

The memorandum addressed by Don Bosco to Bishop Pietro Maria Ferrè of Casale to obtain diocesan approval in 1868 begins in the same vein:

> This Society had its origin in a simple catechetical instruction (*catechismo*) begun by Father John Bosco with the consent and advice of Fathers Luigi Guala and Giuseppe Cafasso, both of happy memory. The meetings took place in a hall reserved for that purpose and attached to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. Our aim was to gather the poorest and most neglected youngsters (*i giovanetti più poveri ed abbandonati*) on Sundays and holy days so that [besides receiving catechetical instruction] they could attend church services, and then be entertained with singing and with wholesome recreation. Our special concern was directed towards those young men who were released from prison and were at greater risk.[23]

Again, describing the origin of the Society in a memorandum dated 1870 and addressed to the Holy See, Don Bosco writes: "Year 1841 – The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales […] began as follows: we started by giving catechetical instruction to a group [*schiera*] of poor and neglected youngsters on the day of Mary's Immaculate Conception."[24]

Seeking approval of the constitutions in 1864, Don Bosco submitted a petition to Pius IX and in it he wrote: "Considered in its historical existence, [this Society] has for its purpose to continue what has been in effect for the

tical descriptions are given in *Notitia brevis Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii et nonnulla decreta ad eamdem spectantia* (Torino: Tip. dell'Orat. di S. Francesco di Sales, 1868), in *OE* XVIII, 571-586 (Ms. Bosco in *ASC* 132: *Autogr. Soc. Sal.*, *FDBM* 1,925 E1-10), and in *De Societate S. Francisci Salesii brevis notitia et nonnulla decreta ad eamdem spectantia* (Tip. dell'Orat. di S. Franc. di Sales, 1873) in *OE* XXV, 103-121.

[21] *Breve Notizia della Società di S. Francesco di Sales (1864)*, in *IBM* VII, 890 [omitted in *EBM*].

[22] *Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, in *ASC* 132: *Autogr. Soc. Sal.*, *FDBM* 1,925 A12-B3. Cf. *IBM* VIII, 809-811 [omitted in *EBM*].

[23] *Cenno storico intorno alla Società di San Francesco di Sales* [1868], in *ASC* 132: *Autogr. Soc. Sal.*, *FDBM* 1,924 D11-E2 (Ms. Bosco), E3-6 (good copy), cf. *EBM* IX, 35-37.

[24] *Stato religioso-materiale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales sul principio dell'anno 1870*, in *ASC* 132: *Autogr. Soc. Sal.*, *FDBM* 1,925 C3-11 (Ms. Bosco).

past 20 years in the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales."[25] The reference point here is the year 1844. This is the year in which the group of youngsters meeting at St. Francis of Assisi followed Don Bosco to Marchioness Barolo's Institution, as his own Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. But 1841 is Don Bosco's most frequent point of reference.

Appendix

FATHER GIOVANNI COCCHI (1813-1895)

Sussidi 2, 256-257; *EBM* III, 318-321, 392-393, IV, 217-220, 258-259; F. Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 139-140 & passim; P Stella, *DBEcSoc,* 68-71, 153-155, 169-171, & passim; *Bollettino Salesiano* 20 (1896), 49.

1. Family, Education and Priestly Ordination

Father Giovanni Cocchi (Cocchis) was born at Druent, a fairly large town near Turin, on July 3, 1813. In dire poverty, the family moved to Turin around 1820 and settled in the parish of the Annunciation, located in the eastern part of town, not far from the Po River. They struggled and suffered hunger.

With the financial help of a local parish priest Giovanni enrolled in the seminary and was ordained in 1836. Almost at once he was assigned as assistant to the parish of the Annunciation, where he became immensely popular for his charity and availability to the poor. He established a little hospital for poor old people, a hostel for poor and abandoned girls, and an Association of the Daughters of Mary, the first of its kind in Turin.

In 1839, he volunteered for the foreign missions, and spent a few months in Rome, training in the program of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He soon realized, however, that his mission was with the poor and abandoned in Turin.

2. Founder of the First Oratory in Turin

While in Rome he had opportunity to observe the workings of an oratory for middle class young people. Back in Turin, in 1840, he established the Oratory of

[25] *Cose da notarsi intorno alle Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, in Motto, *Cost.* Testi critici, 229. Cf. *IBM* VII 622-623 [omitted in *EBM*].

the Guardian Angel for poor young people at risk, the first oratory in Turin.[26] Father Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel was located in the worst district in Turin, the Moschino (the Gnat), in the house of a Mr. Ballesio, near an ill-famed tavern that after 1852 was known as the *Eroico Vogherese* (Hero from Voghera). In 1841 he moved the oratory to larger quarters in the nearby, nearly as ill-famed district of Vanchiglia. These two districts, situated along the River Po, were the "gangland" of Turin.[27] The premises of Father Cocchi's oratory consisted of a shed, a chapel, a little theater, and a large, rustic playground, with a vegetable garden next to it. The great attractions were military drills and gymnastics exercises, immensely popular with young people at the time, with specialization in long and high jump. For the young people in the area, "to jump at Father Cocchi's" meant "to attend the oratory."

The oratory program emphasized, but was not limited to, recreational activities. A plan for Sunday and evening classes was published in a current educational journal, over the signature of "Father Gio. Cocchi and Father Dr. Roberto Murialdo, Directors."[28]

3. Father Cocchi's Patriotism and the First War of Italian Independence

The wave of patriotism that swept through Piedmont in the years 1848-49 affected people at large and young people in particular. It could not leave the (younger) clergy unaffected. These "patriotic" priests felt that religion could not be disjoined from the patriotic aspirations of the people. Several bishops also wrote "patriotic" pastoral letters. This patriotism was of the neo-Guelph type, supporting Pope Pius IX as leader of a possible federation of Italian regional states. It also called for the liberation of regions of Italy from Austrian domination.

In March 1849, during the First War of Italian Independence (1848-1849), Father Cocchi accompanied a squadron of oratory young men to the battle of Novara (against Austria). The lads were not allowed to join the regular forces, and re-

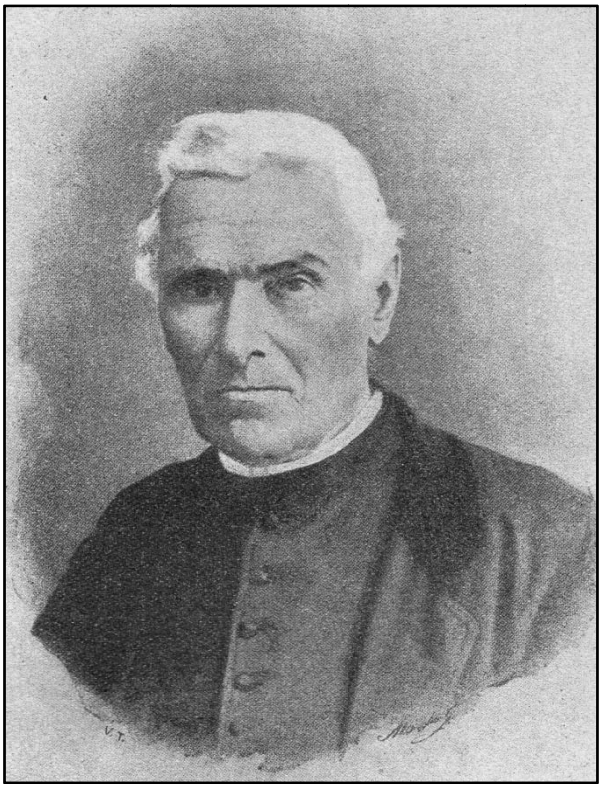
[26] Oratories, mostly parish-based, had already been established elsewhere. In 1850 no less than 15 oratories were operating in Milan, some of which were more than a century old. Similar oratories had been established at Bergamo and Brescia (e.g. by Father Ludovico Pavoni (1784-1849), and at Marseilles (France) by Father Jean-J. Allemand (1772-1836), and elsewhere.

[27] The district of Moschino and Vanchiglia were discussed in the preceding Chapter 1.

[28] *L'Educatore* 3 (1847) 762-765. Father Roberto Murialdo (1815-1883) was an older cousin of Fr. (St.) Leonardo Murialdo (1828-1900), founder of the Society of St. Joseph. Roberto Murialdo was active in oratory work and other works of charity. He was associated with Father Cocchi from the beginning, and worked with him in the oratory (where he demonstrated great skill in dealing with the gangs) and in later undertakings. He also helped Don Bosco, and was one of the backers in the purchase of the Pinardi property.

turned disappointed but safe (The Piedmontese forces suffered a disastrous defeat, which forced King Charles Albert to abdicate and go into voluntary exile). Father Cocchi's patriotic gesture and known patriotic sympathies failed to meet Archbishop Louis Fransoni's approval. The Oratory of the Guardian Angel was temporarily closed, and a little later Don Bosco took it over, presumably by Archbishop Fransoni's decision and with Father Cafasso's mediation, Precisely how Don Bosco was "given" Father Cocchi's oratory, and what specific forces were at work in the transaction, is not clear.[29]

With malice toward none and charity for all, Father Cocchi went on to found other works of charity.



6 – Father Giovanni Cocchi (1813-1895)

[29] The Guardian Angel Oratory became Don Bosco's third oratory (1849), after the Oratories of St. Aloysius (1847) and of St. Francis de Sales (1844-1846). Father Roberto Murialdo continued to run it until 1850 (or 1851?) [Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 172].

4. The Charitable Society for Orphaned and Abandoned Young People and the Artigianelli Vocational School

On October 15, 1849 Father Cocchi announced plan to form a society of priests and "young laymen" to work for the education of "so many youngsters, mostly orphaned and abandoned, that roam the city [...], and to start them on a profession or trade." This was the *Charitable Society [to care] for Orphaned and Abandoned Young People*. It was established on March 11, 1850. Among the priests collaborating with Father Cocchi were Fathers Drs. Giacinto Tasca, Roberto Murialdo, Antonio Bosio, and later Father Pietro Berizzi, who had left a writing and journalistic career in the Biella diocese to work for the poor. The Society's immediate goal was the building of the *Collegio degli Artigianelli* (Home for Young Apprentices). A raffle, many private contributions and grants made it possible. The first stone was laid June 29, 1861, in the *Corso Palestro*, within the city, less than a mile south of Don Bosco' Oratory of St. Francis de Sales; and the building was dedicated on July 23, 1863. It housed workshops for shoemakers, carpenters-woodworkers, bookbinders, and printers. Father Pietro Berizzi was its first director. In 1866, Father Leonard Murialdo, who was working with Don Bosco as Director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius, was prevailed upon to serve as director of the *Artigianelli*, a post he accepted after a year's internship at the St. Sulpice seminary in Paris. Seven years later (1873) Father Leonardo Murialdo founded the Society of St. Joseph at the *Artigianelli*, much as Don Bosco developed the Salesian Society out of the Home Attached (Casa annessa) to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. [30]

5. St. Martin's Oratory

In late 1851, Father Cocchi opened the Oratory of St. Martin at the Dora Mills, There had been catechetical activity there, but it had languished. Father Cocchi revived it as a proper oratory, entrusting its direction to Father Pietro Ponte.[31]

[30] Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 65-67, 120, 169.

[31] Father Pietro Ponte (1821-1892) served as secretary to the Marchioness of Barolo and as chaplain for her Sisters of St. Anne. He lived for a time at Don Bosco's Oratory (1847-1848). He succeeded Father Giacinto Carpano as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius. He clashed with Don Bosco over politics as well as oratory administration and strategies (as will be mentioned in a later chapter) [cf. *EBM* IV, 215-221.254-266]. He is often mentioned in the biographies of the Marchioness of Barolo and of the second Superior General of the Sisters of St. Anne, Maria Enrichetta Dominici (1829-1896).

6. Agricultural "Colonies" and Other Activities

In 1852 Father Cocchi resigned from his post at the church of the Annunciation, (where he was associate) and after visiting a number of agricultural schools in several European countries, in 1852-53 he founded an agricultural "colony" for young people at risk. Situated at first in the hills of Cavoretto near Turin, it was transferred a little later to Moncucco near Castelnuovo, and located on land purchased through a grant from Banker Giuseppe Cotta. He directed the school himself and introduced innovations both in agriculture and education. The colony served also as a juvenile correctional facility, accepting wards of the State from the reformatory of La Generala. Financial difficulties and lack of personnel forced the closure of the colony in 1877. Father Cocchi founded a similar colony at Rivoli, near Turin, and initiated others in various parts of Italy (Perugia, Assisi, Todi and Palermo). In the early fifties, he undertook to visit the landed Benedictine abbeys in Italy in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the monks to turn some of their land into colonies and schools for poor young people in their area.

In 1868 Father Cocchi founded a correctional facility for juveniles at Chieri, transferring it to better quarters in Boscomarengo (Alessandria) in 1870. The institution flourished and quickly reached an enrollment of 400 boys. It was, however, shut down by anti-clerical administrators in 1883.

Father Cocchi's health took a turn for the worse in 1883. He was 70 years of age, but he remained available for service. He accepted to serve as rector of the shrine of Our Lady of Peace near Savona, a post he held until 1889. Subsequently, he accepted the post of rector of the diocesan seminary of Catanzaro at the request of that bishop, a close friend of his. The seminary was much in need of reform, and Father Cocchi's gentle ways, as well as his enthusiasm, brought about a change in its spirit.[32]

7. Retirement and Death at the Artigianelli Vocational School of the Society of St. Joseph

In 1892, at the age of 80, Fr. Cocchi retired to the *Artigianelli* and spent his last years with Father Leonardo Murialdo and the Josephites. He died on Christmas morning, 1895. Father Cocchi was a person totally dedicated to helping poor and abandoned young people. He had a heart filled with Christ's compassion. He was ready for any sacrifice, driven by pure love, and completely free of envy. He had imagination, courage, and patience in devising ways of helping young people in need. He was also an ascetic and prayerful person.[33]

[32] The Salesian Father Francesco Dalmazzo succeeded Father Cocchi as rector at the seminary, and died shortly thereafter at the hand of an assassin, one of the seminarians (1895).

[33] Father Cocchi's eulogy appeared in the *Bollettino Salesiano* 20 (1896), 49.

Chapter 3

DON BOSCO AT BAROLO'S INSTITUTION (1844-1846)

MO-En 202-243; *EBM* II, 182-186, 190-193, 223-229, 231-235, 239 (talk on the cabbages, by Fr. Borel, not DB) 262-332; Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino (*Torino: SEI, 1935); 32 and *passim*; F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 195-200, 202-203, 221-229; Francesco Motto, "L'Oratorio di Don Bosco presso il cimitero di S. Pietro in Vincoli in Torino [...]" *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 5:2 (1986) 199-220; Giraudo-Biancardi, *Qui è vissuto Don Bosco* (Leumann, Turin: LDC, 1988) 143-158.

Summary

1. Don Bosco about to leave the Pastoral Institute in October 1844
   (1) Double Crisis and Vocational Decision in 1844
   (2) The Vocation Dream of October 12-13, 1844
   (3) Second Dream of the Holy Martyrs as Reported by Lemoyne
   (4) The "Other Dream"
   (5) 1844–a Pivotal Point: Don Bosco's Oratory of St. Francis de Sales
2. The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales on the Move (The Wandering Oratory, 1844-1846)
   (1) The Oratory at Barolo's Rifugio (Oct. 20 – Dec. 1, 1844)
   (2) The Oratory at the unfinished Little Hospital of St. Philomena (Dec. 8, 1844 – May 18, 1845)
   (3) The Oratory at Holy Cross Cemetery or St. Peter in Chains (May 25, 1845)
   (4) The Oratory without a place (June 1 – July 6, 1845)
   (5) The Oratory at St. Martin's at the Dora Mills (July 13-Dec. 21, 1845)
   (6) The Oratory at Fr. John Moretta's house (Jan. 4 – March 1846)
   (7) The Oratory using the Filippi Field (March 1846)
   (8) A Permanent Home at last at Pinardi's property (April 1, 1846)

Appendix: Biographical Sketches of Father Giovanni Borel and Marchioness Julia Barolo

I. Don Bosco About to Leave the Pastoral Institute October 1844

In the summer and fall of 1844, after three years at the *Pastoral Institute*, Don Bosco had to make a decision regarding his future ministry as well as some kind of gainful employment. In his *Memoirs* he tells us that he received a request, stemming from Archbishop Fransoni himself, to help old Father Comollo as administrator of the parish of Cinzano, an offer that was politely declined with Father Guala's help. Three other offers were conveyed through Father Cafasso: a post as curate in the parish of Buttigliera, the appointment as tutor in moral theology at the *Pastoral Institute,* and employment as chaplain in Marchioness Barolo's institutions under Father Borel.[1] This last one was the offer he was advised to accept. In the mean time, however, Don Bosco was faced with a double vocational crisis.

Double Crisis and Vocational Decision in 1844

The first of these crises, like the earlier vocational crisis at Chieri, was personal and had to do with the choice of a future ministry. Don Bosco in his *Memoirs* does not speak of this period of vocational discernment, but Lemoyne in the *Biographical Memoirs* gives it considerable space.[2]

As indicated earlier, Don Bosco was considering joining Lanteri's Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary with the foreign missions in view. We have confirmation of this in a statement of Don Bosco himself as reported by Barberis in his chronicle. Father Cafasso, after the June spiritual retreat, succeeded in dissuading him from such a course of action.[3] Obviously Don Bosco's attempt, if historical, raises again the question of his actual commitment to the young people at risk that were "his oratory."

In his *Memoirs* Don Bosco speaks of a second, different crisis that indeed

[1] A letter from Marchioness Barolo to Father Borel, May 18, 1846, gives us to understand that it was Father Borel (acting for the Marchioness) that selected Don Bosco for the post of chaplain of Barolo's Little Hospital (This letter, edited in *EBM* II, 360-361, is discussed in the next Chapter 4). This chapter of the *Memoirs* (*MO-En* pp 202-204) should be read attentively, with the following corrections: (1) 202, line 8: instead of "or at work" read "or wherever there was need of it;" (2) 204, line 5: instead of "made increasing demands on priests" read "increasingly called forth concerned attention from priests."

[2] *EBM* II, 159-164.

[3] See our earlier discussion of this crisis, and reference to Barberis' chronicle [Vol. 1, 478].

supposes his continuing commitment to his young people, but that had to do directly with the continuance of the Oratory. External circumstances seemed to militate against it. At Father Cafasso's request, and with Father Borel's mediation, Marchioness Barolo offered Don Bosco a job and a salary. He was to serve as chaplain of her *Little Hospital*, still under construction at the time, and meanwhile he was to help Father Borel at the *Rifugio*, which was a home for some 400 "poor and abandoned" girls and young women. Lack of suitable premises, as well as commitments to Barolo's *Rifugio*, seemed to countermand any further involvement with the oratory. But to Father Cafasso's question regarding his feelings in the matter his reply was unambiguous: "My inclination is to work for young people. [...] At this moment I see myself in the midst of a crowd of children calling to me for help."[4]

Father Cafasso merely told Don Bosco to accept the chaplaincy of Marchioness Barolo's Little Hospital, and in the meantime to go and help Father Borel at the *Rifugio* and live with him. He assured him: "Meanwhile God will show you what you are to do for the young."[5] This meant that the little oratory activity at St. Francis of Assisi, as good an experiment as it was, had to be left behind, albeit with the expectation that God would eventually make it possible for the work to continue. But Don Bosco accepted the arrangement.

Father Borel's suggested that for the duration they should gather the boys (at least a few of them) in their rooms at the *Rifugio.* But that was not very reassuring, given the situation, as Don Bosco indicates in his *Memoirs*.[6] Thus we can still hear the anguish in his words as he told the story thirty years later to Father Barberis:

> I was very worried about [what I should do with] my youngsters who were attending religious instruction [the Oratory] on Sundays and holy days. I did not know whether I should disband them or continue to look after them. My desire was to continue with [the work of] the oratories, but I did not see how I could. On my last Sunday at the Pastoral Institute I had to notify my youngsters that they should no longer meet there, as they usually did. In fact I was debating whether to tell them outright that there was no need to meet at all anywhere, since the oratory would be terminated then and there. If the oratory were to continue, I would, of course, have to indicate a place.

[4] *MO-En*, 203.
[5] *MO-En*, 202-204. For a biographical sketch of Father John Borel see Appendix below.
[6] *MO-En*, 203.

Don Bosco did not have the heart to disband the group of youngsters that had become attached to him personally at St. Francis of Assisi, and even as he was debating disbanding the oratory, the vocation dream recurred–the so-called Dream of 1844. In his *Memoirs* he gives an account of this Oratory crisis and of the dream that came to reassure him, "a sequel [*appendice*] to the one I had at Becchi at the age of nine."[7]

Don Bosco's Vocation Dream of 1844 in the Context of Vocational Decision

> On the second Sunday in October 1844, I had to tell my boys that the Oratory was moving to Valdocco.[8] But the uncertainty of place, means, and personnel had me really worried. The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart. That night I had another dream, which seems to be an appendix to the one I had at Becchi when I was nine years old. I think it advisable to relate it in detail (*letteralmente*).

Don Bosco admits that he understood little of the dream and put little faith in it. By and by, however, the dream began to come true. He concludes with the words: "Later, together with another dream, it served as a blueprint for my decisions."[9]

The Dream of 1844 is the only other vocation dream that Don Bosco relates in his *Memoirs*. He mentions "another dream" but it remains unidentified.

Lemoyne, however, both in the *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs* records three dream narratives, punctuating the period 1844-1846 pursuant to his idea of supernatural guidance through dreams. The first is the "Dream of 1844" taken directly from Don Bosco's *Memoirs* and set in the same narrative context. The second, usually referred to as the "First Dream of the Holy Martyrs" is taken from an 1875 report by Barberis (a variant narrative of the Dream of 1844), and is placed in a different context in the *Biographical Memoirs*. The third one, usually referred to as the "Second

[7] For the text of Barberis' variant version of the dream of 1844 compared with the narrative in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* see the Appendix below.

[8] The Barolo institutions were located out of the city in the northern district of Valdocco, near Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence. St. Francis of Assisi was located within the city, to the south.

[9] *MO-En*, 209-210.

Dream of the Holy Martyrs" is a compilation by Lemoyne, who gives it two different contexts in *Documenti* and the *Biographical Memoirs*. The following table will facilitate comparison and subsequent discussion.

Sources and Settings of the Vocation Dream Narrative in *MO*, Barberis, *Documenti* and *Biographical Memoirs*–Table for Comparison

Dream of 1844, Source: Don Bosco's Memoirs

Memoirs	Documenti (Lemoyne)	Biograph. Memoirs (Lemoyne)
Setting: night preceding 2nd Sunday of Oct. 1844 (DB is leaving the *Pastoral Institute*) [*MO*: *MO-Berto,* 86-88, *FDB* 61 D2-4; *MO-En*, 209-210]	**Setting**: SAME as *MO* [*Documenti* II, 148-149, *FDB* 972 B3-4]	**Setting:** SAME as *Documenti* and *MO* [*IBM* II, 241-242. 243-245; *EBM* II, 189. 190-191]

Variant of the Dream of 1844 (First Dream of H. Martyrs), Source: Barberis

Barberis	Documenti	Biographical Memoirs
Setting: SAME as *MO* (Dream of 1844) [*ASC* 110: *Cronachette-Barberis*, *FDB* 866 B10-C1, "original" draft – finalized draft: *ASC* 111: *Sogni-Barberis*, *FDB* 1279 C6-11]	**Setting:** SAME as *Barberis* and *MO* [*Documenti* II, 189-190, *FDB* 972 E8-9]	**New setting:** May 1845 (leaving Barolo's Little Hospital) [*IBM* II, 296-301; *EBM* II, 231-235]

Second Dream of the Holy Martyrs, Source: Lemoyne Only

	Documenti	Biographical Memirs
	Setting: SAME as First Dream of the Holy Martyrs in Biographical Memoirs (Leaving Barolo's Little Hospital, May 1845) [*Documenti* II, 157, *FDB* 972 B11-12]	New setting: 4th Sunday of Advent, Dec. 22 [21], 1845 (leaving St. Martin's. at the Dora Mills) [*IBM* II, 341-344; *EBM* II, 266-268]

Comments on the Vocation Dream of 1844 as in the *Memoirs*, Barberis, *Documenti* and *Biographical Memoirs*[10]

The Dream of 1844 in the Memoirs of the Oratory

In his *Memoirs* Don Bosco introduced only one addition to his own original rough draught of the dream, which is remarkably free of corrections. He added in the margin, "[I had another dream] *which seems to be a sequel* (*appendice*) *to the one I had at Becchi at the age of nine.*" This addition, made upon reflection, underscores the vocational significance he saw in the dream at the time of writing (late 1874 or early 1875). When he corrected Father Berto's good copy, he made another addition at the end of the narrative which reveals further reflection on his part on the vocational significance of the dream: "And later, *in conjunction with another dream*, it even served as a guideline *for my decisions*" [*Italics* are Don Bosco's].[11]

It seems that Lemoyne failed to appreciate the true vocational significance that Don Bosco attached to this dream as the oratory faced an uncertain future. Lemoyne believed that Don Bosco's vocation had been decided in advance and he was guided step by step by a supernatural dream line. He simply speaks of the dream as of an experience that came to "comfort Don Bosco by revealing the future to him." He may have regarded the decision confronting Don Bosco in 1844 merely as a troublesome circumstantial difficulty. But it was more than that, although Don Bosco's personal resolve was not in question. Leaving the shelter of St. Francis of Assisi and the *Pastoral Institute*, and creating *his own* oratory was for Don Bosco a major, if not definitive, vocational step.

[10] For the text of the of the Barberis version of the dream compared with that of Don Bosco's in the *Memoirs* see Appendix below.

[11] Lemoyne further misread the Berto MS. for as he transcribed the closing words of the narrative he wrote: "And later, in conjunction with another dream, this [dream] even served as a blueprint for my decisions *at the Rifugio*." The words, "at the Rifugio" [*presso il Rifugio*] belong to the title of the next section in the Berto MS. At that point Don Bosco, speaking of the move from the *Pastoral Institute* to Barolo's *Rifugio*, crossed out what he had originally written "in Valdocco" (where Barolo's place was located) and preferred to write instead, "at the *Rifugio*" (*presso il Rifugio*). The point of Don Bosco's words is that the dream was significant for vocational decision, not for decisions that he would have to take at the *Rifugio*.

The Dream of 1844 as Reported by Barberis from Don Bosco's Narration (so-called "First Dream of the Holy Martyrs")

Source of the Dream Narrative

Lemoyne in Documenti states that his source for this dream is Barberis. He writes: "We shall here report in broad outline the picture seen by Don Bosco [in a dream], just as he himself related it for the first time to Father Giulio Barberis on February 2, 1875." In the Biographical Memoirs, however, he gives as source both Father Giulio Barberis and himself (Lemoyne): "Extraordinary dreams [...] came to comfort Don Bosco, as he confided once and only once to Father Giulio Barberis and to the author of these pages on February 2, 1875." Lemoyne's inclusion of himself as a source is puzzling, in view of Barberis' statement that he was Don Bosco's only companion when the latter narrated the dream on February 2, 1875.[12]

Be that as it may, for the text of the dream narrative Lemoyne used Barberis as his source.[13]

[12] In 1875 Lemoyne was stationed at Lanzo, where he had been director since 1865. However, Barberis himself tells us that Don Bosco later related the dream to other Salesians and to Lemoyne in particular [G. Barberis, *Il culto di Maria Ausiliatrice* (Torino: SEI, 1920), 53] Here, after transcribing his report of Don Bosco's narration regarding the purchase of the "field of dreams," the area where the church of Mary help of Christians was built (1863-1868), Barberis writes: "Thus far, my report. Later the Venerable [Don Bosco] related the same story, with further details, to other Salesians, and to Father John Lemoyne in particular. The latter made use of my report and of what he himself had heard from Don Bosco. He thus compiled the most detailed account yet of those events for the biography of the Venerable that he authored." These additional details do not concern the dream narrative proper but other matters such as those edited in *EBM* VII, 223-224, 227-228.

[13] What appears to be Barberis' "original" draught is an entry entitled, "*2 Febbraio 1875*" in his collection, *Notizie varie dei primi tempi* (Various Items from the Old Times [of the Oratory].) This account was later expanded and 'finalized' by Barberis. For this operation Barberis worked on a good transcription (in another hand), which he annotated and emended profusely. This text seems to represent Barberis' final version. From this "finalized" draught were *derived* other good copies. The text used by Lemoyne both in *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs* is the *derived* text. The original draught is a neatly but densely written report in Barberis's hand, with few corrections. It is remarkable in that it lacks the dream scenes where Don Bosco is shown churches and buildings, but it nonetheless records the scene where the Lady points out the spot of the martyrdom [*Notizie varie dei primi tempi dell'Oratorio su D Bosco ecc.*, 11-12, '*2 Febbraio 1875*' in *ASC* 110: *Cronachette-Barberis*, *FDB* 892 A11-12] This document bears the heavy double slashes at the beginning of each line, the mark of Lemoyne's (intended) use of the text. Barberis' "finalized" report is at *ASC* 110: *Cronachette-Barberis*, "Sogni Diversi a Lanzo," *FDB* 866 B10-C1. One of the features of this

Occasion of Don Bosco's Narration and Setting of the Dream

In his "original" draught Barberis writes:

> February 2, 1875. Today I was asked by the Rev. Don Bosco to go with him and the Consul of the Argentine Republic to dinner at the Occellettis. After dinner Don Bosco and myself left together. We talked about the novices and of our newly established house of novitiate. We talked at great length, and finally reached *Borgo Nuovo* Street. Here Don Bosco stopped to call on Marchioness Doria, who was ill. Then on the way home he discussed very important matters with me. Among other things, he told me of a remarkable vision that he had never disclosed to anyone before. He assured me that I was the first person to learn of it.[14] It should be noted that by February 2, 1875 (when he narrated the dream to Barberis) Don Bosco had already written an account of it in the *Memoirs of the Oratory.*

The introduction of his "finalized" report reads:

> On February 2, 1875 I was walking with Don Bosco back to the Oratory from Borgo San Salvario. We were alone. Among many other things he related to me the following vision. He said that it was the first he had regarding the Congregation [...] He added that he had never opened his heart to anyone about the matter. I was the first person to hear about it. [He said:]
>
> "It was the year 1844. I was due to leave the *Pastoral Institute* of St. Francis for Priests and move to the *Rifugio* to live with Dr. Borel. I was truly worried about [what I should do with] my youngsters who attended religious instruction [the Oratory] on Sundays and holy days. I did not know whether I should let them go or continue to care for them. My desire was to continue with [the work of] the oratories but I did not see how I could. On the last Sunday I was to stay

text is that it gives the most detailed description of Don Bosco's dealings with the Rosminians for the re-purchase of the "field of dreams". Derived copies (all virtually identical) are: *ASC* 111: *Sogni-Barberis*, "Il nastro bianco +Rivelazione della Congregazione" (calligraphic copy), *FDB* 1279 C6-11 and 1282 E8-1283 A1; *ASC* 111: *Sogni-Lemoyne*, "Visione riguardante la Congregazione" (in Lemoyne's hand), *FDB* 1314 B10-C5. This last text should be considered the immediate source for Lemoyne's narrative in *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs*.

[14] The consul is Gianbattista Gazzolo, who was instrumental in bringing the Salesians to Argentina is 1875. The Occellettis lived in the *Borgo San Salvario*, a borough at the southern end of the city. The Oratory of St. Aloysius was established at the northern edge of this borough in 1847 and the church of St. John the Evangelist would be dedicated here in 1882. In 1859 Chevalier Charles Occelletti began, at his own residence, the Oratory of St. Joseph, subsequently staffed and finally taken over by the Salesians. The newly established novitiate was at San Benigno, officially opened in 1876.

> at the *Pastoral Institute* I had to notify my youngsters that they could no longer meet there, as they did usually. In fact I was debating whether I should tell them that they need not go to any place, since the oratory would be terminated; or else I should tell them of a new place where they could meet.
>
> "On the night between Saturday and Sunday, I dreamt […]"

The above two quotes (from Barberis' "original" and "finalized" texts) clearly show that the setting of the *First Dream of the Holy Martyrs* in the source (Barberis) is the same as that of the *Dream of 1844* (*MO*). This was the night before the second Sunday of October, 1844 (October 12-13) when Don Bosco was about to leave the *Pastoral Institute* to take up his duties at the Barolo institution. Therefore the *First Dream of the Holy Martyrs* is a variant narration by Don Bosco of the *Dream of 1844*. When Barberis wrote his account of Don Bosco's narration, that very day ("Today"), February 2, 1875, he certainly set down as accurately as he could what he had heard from Don Bosco. It was Don Bosco himself, then, who established the setting for this dream–that moment of crisis, when he was leaving the *Pastoral Institute* and the future of the oratory seemed in doubt.

The First Dream of the Holy Martyrs in *Documenti* and *Biographical Memoirs*

In *Documenti*, Lemoyne records this dream in an "additional" chapter (as an "epilogue"), retaining the same setting as his source (Barberis)

> In the preceding chapters we mentioned extraordinary dreams that came to encourage Don Bosco step by step. [...] We shall here report in broad outline the picture seen by Don Bosco [in a dream], just as he himself related it for the first time to Father Giulio Barberis on February 2, 1875. [...] "On the last Sunday I was to stay at the *Pastoral Institute* [...]"

In the *Biographical Memoirs* Lemoyne changes the setting of the dream, for after all, how could two different dream narratives share the same setting? Or perhaps in Lemoyne's mind the critical question was less important than preserving a text guaranteed by a source and finding a likely narrative context for it. This procedure is part of his "method." The new setting is May 1845 when the Oratory had to leave Barolo's Little Hospital to begin its "wandering."[15]

[15] For the various "stations" of the Wandering Oratory see below.

Details in the Narrative of the Dream of 1844 (Holy Martyrs)

After the introductory description of the occasion of the narration and the setting of the dream, already discussed, comes the dream narrative proper.

The Dream of 1844 in the *Memoirs*, contains the vocation images of the Becchi dream, and also envisions the establishment of Don Bosco's own oratory in the Valdocco area. The same is true of Barberis' account.

However, in addition, in Barberis' account: [i] Don Bosco speaks of the holy martyrs of Turin and of the spot of their martyrdom that the Lady marked with her foot. There a great church was seen to rise. [ii] He also speaks of helpers bound by "the ribbon of obedience." [iii] After the dream narrative proper, Don Bosco goes on to comment on the certainty obtained from the dream: "From 1844 on I have walked on sure ground both in matters regarding the Congregation and the Oratory and in matters regarding politics." [iv] Next, Don Bosco mentions Canon Lawrence Gastaldi's research on the Holy Martyrs, made at his request. [16] [v] Don Bosco then goes on to recall the planning of the church of Mary Help of Christians (seen as the fulfillment of the dream of 1844) and the buying back of the field ("field of dreams") from the Rosminians.[17] [vi] Finally there is Don Bosco's

[16] Canon Gastaldi's research on the Holy Martyrs was published anonymously in the Catholic Readings as, *Memorie storiche del martirio e del culto dei SS. Martiri Solutore, Avventore ed Ottavio, protettori della città di Torino*, raccolte da un sacerdote torinese (*Letture Cattoliche* XIV: 1, Gennaio 1866. Torino: Tipografia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1866), esp. 42-43. In the Barberis report Don Bosco mentions only two martyrs, since one of the three had escaped, but had been caught and martyred at Ivrea. In the *Biographical Memoirs*, the section on the place of martyrdom and Canon Gastaldi's research are greatly expanded. Lemoyne elaborates on the basis of information derived partly from Gastaldi's publication on the subject and partly from ideas received in Salesian tradition. Then he ascribes the whole explanation regarding the place of martyrdom globally to Don Bosco. Apparently Gastaldi was willing to expand orally for the Salesians what he had set down more succinctly in writing. This may be the origin of the more detailed Salesian tradition about the place. Canon Gastaldi concluded that it was historically probable that the martyrdom took place within the enclosure of the Oratory (!). For a fuller discussion, see E. Valentini, "*Hic Domus Mea: Storia del santuario di Maria Ausiliatrice in Torino (1868-1968),"* in *Aiuto dei Cristiani Madre della Chiesa. Nel Centenario della Consacrazione della Sua Basilica di Torino 1868 - 9 giugno - 1968* (*Accademia Mariana Salesiana* VII. Zürich: PAS-Verlag, 1968), 96-99. The belief that Christian soldiers of the Roman Theban legion suffered martyrdom in the area of Turin is without historical foundation.

[17] On June 20, 1850, Don Bosco had bought that tract of land from the archdiocesan seminary. But in a moment of grave need, on April 10, 1854, he had sold it to Father An-

closing comment on the square and the monument. On this point a curious difference is noted between Barberis' "finalized" draught and the text of *Documenti* and the *Biographical Memoirs*. In Barberis, the appended comment reads: "Also, in front of the church that the Blessed Virgin showed me there stretched a beautiful square with a monument in its center. Now I shall wait and see if all this will be feasible."[18] In Lemoyne, there is no mention of a square, and the monument is seen in the center of the Oratory building complex ringing the church. He writes: "I then saw a huge church rising on the very spot [of the martyrdom] [...] There were many buildings around the church, and in the center stood a beautiful monument."

The Second Dream of the Holy Martyrs

In Don Bosco's narration of the dream (of 1844) made to Barberis, the holy martyrs are mentioned as having suffered martyrdom in a certain spot. That is why the Barberis version of the dream is often referred to as the [First] Dream of the Holy Martyrs.

There is a second dream narrative in which the holy martyrs are mentioned, but there they appear to Don Bosco are active in the dream. It is referred to as the *Second Dream of the Holy Martyrs*. The source is given in the *Biographical Memoirs* as Lemoyne himself (no source is indicated in *Documenti)*. Lemoyne compiled the narrative on the basis of words of Don

tonio Rosmini. Father Rosmini intended eventually to build a house there, and thus bring his congregation, the Institute of Charity, into Turin. He meant also to provide priests to help Don Bosco. But with Rosmini's death in 1855, the plan was set aside. Eventually the land was put up for sale. At the beginning of 1863, needing a site for the church of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco by a ruse bought the field back. This field came to be known later as the "field of dreams," because Don Bosco identified it with the field he had seen in the dream of 1844, as he also identified the church of Mary Help of Christians with the church he had seen in the dream. The question may be asked, "If the field had that much significance, why did Don Bosco sell it off in 1854, 10 years after the dream?." In the *Biographical Memoirs*, the section dealing with the location of the church and the buying back of the field from the Rosminians is omitted at this point. It appears later in an edited and expanded form in its proper historical context (1863, when the building of the church of Mary, Help of Christians was about to begin) [*EBM* VII, 223-224 and 227-228].

[18] Obviously Don Bosco was not speaking of a monument to himself! This, however, is what the Salesian hagiographical tradition understood, as did the Salesian Past Pupils when they erected the monument in the square (begun in 1915 and dedicated in 1920 after the First World War).

Bosco's heard in 1884, and prior to that, over a period of some twenty years. He writes:

> [Don Bosco] related it briefly, and only to a few close associates, in 1884. But he had disclosed the most magnificent aspects of it earlier, at intervals, over a period of some twenty years. [...] The present writer, who was at his side, did not allow his utterances to be lost. He took careful note of them each time, and later compiled them to obtain the following dream scene."[19]

It would not have been difficult for one who heard Don Bosco tell a dream in 1884, to write an account of it on the basis of what he could recall of the narration. And assuming that Don Bosco specified in what connection he had the dream, then it would have been possible for the biographer to set it in its proper context. What is more difficult to understand is how Lemoyne could compile an account of a specific dream for a specific context out of snippets heard over a period of twenty years (!).

The "Other Dream"

After relating the Dream of 1844 in his *Memoirs*, Don Bosco writes: "Later, in conjunction with another dream, it even served as a guideline for my decisions."

On the basis of what's been said above, it is obvious that this "other dream" cannot be identified with either dream of the Holy Martyrs. What this "other dream" was or when it occurred are matters for speculation.

The Year 1844–a Pivotal Point

In speaking of the origin of the Salesian Society Don Bosco, as noted earlier, refers to different dates ranging from 1841 to 1859. Obviously 1841 is an important point of reference, even if only symbolic.[20] But perhaps

[19] *EBM* II, 266-268. The twenty years are reckoned from 1864, when Lemoyne first joined Don Bosco. In 1865 he was sent to Lanzo as director, in which capacity he served until 1877. He was then sent (farther away) to Mornese and Nizza as chaplain to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He was recalled to Turin as secretary at the end of 1883.

[20] See our earlier discussion in Chapter 2 on the beginnings of the Oratory.

more appropriately, in a memorandum addressed to Pope Pius IX in 1864 he writes: "The purpose of [this Society] is to continue [the work] which for about 20 years has been in progress at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales."[21] The reference here is to the year 1844, the year when the oratory was re-founded, so to speak, out of the earlier group, as Don Bosco's very own. The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales may indeed be regarded as a continuation of the earlier experiment at St. Francis of Assisi, provided it is also viewed as the result of a new and definitive vocational option, which must have entailed considerable soul searching on Don Bosco's part. It was in 1844 that Don Bosco's vocational option for "poor and abandoned" young people was finalized never again to waver.

7 – The Little Hospital of St. Philomena (photo Leonard von Matt)

The decision of 1844, however, should not be taken in isolation. Rightly has the period that followed–namely, the time spent at Barolo's institutions, the year of the wandering and finally the settling at Pinardi's, up to Barolo's

[21] [Don Bosco] *Cose da notarsi intorno alle Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, in F. Motto, Giovanni Bosco. *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858-1875]*. Testi critici (Roma: LAS, 1982), 229 (*IBM* VII, 622; omitted in *EBM* VII, 376).

ultimatum)–been characterized as the period of Don Bosco's vocational maturity. It was the time of ultimate testing of the 1844 commitment. There is on Don Bosco's part throughout this period (1844-1846) total dedication, pervasive joy, and bright hope for the future of the work. But there are also daunting trials and difficulties–serious illness, exasperating difficulty of finding a permanent home, objections of parish priests, suspicion and harassment, and defection of friends and helpers. Through it all Don Bosco never wavered: "I had an inner certainty about what I was doing, and felt that events would prove me right in the end."[22]

II. The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales on the Move 1844-1846

The "Wandering Oratory"–a Summary[23]

Don Bosco lived at the *Pastoral Institute* until October 1844, by which time the group that met there for religious instruction and other "oratory activities" had practically become "his oratory."

On leaving St. Francis of Assisi, the oratory moved from place to place (in the same general area, mostly within the district of Valdocco, until it settled on Mr. Pinardi's property (April 1, 1846). This period is comprehensively referred to in the literature as the "Wandering Oratory;" but this designation is especially appropriate for the year, May 1845 (when the oratory had to leave Barolo's Little Hospital) to the settling in April 1846. The stages of the "wandering" are as follows:

The Oratory at Barolo's Rifugio *(October 20 – December 1, 1844)*

On the second Sunday, October 13, 1844, the feast of the Motherhood of Mary (after a recurrence of the vocation dream on the preceding night) Don Bosco announced that the oratory would thereafter meet at Barolo's *Home of Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners* (*Rifugio*) in the *Valdocco* district. It met

[22] *Historical Outline* of 1854 (text given in a later chapter).

[23] The summary that follows in part corrects the presentation of Don Bosco *Memoirs* [*MO-En*, 215-257] and of the biographical tradition. It is based on Pietro Stella, *DB-EcSoc*, 74-76, Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco* (listed above), 32 and *passim*, and on Francesco Motto, "L'Oratorio di Don Bosco presso il cimitero di S. Pietro in Vincoli" (all listed above).

there for the first time on the third Sunday, October 20, and continued to meet in the same place for 6 weeks, until the first Sunday of Advent, December 1, 1844.

In Marchioness Barolo's employ, Don Bosco was to serve as chaplain of her *Little Hospital* (still under construction at the time). Meanwhile he was to help Father Borel at the *Rifugio*. His lodgings (his room) were next to Father Borel's, over the entrance of the *Rifugio*. Thus their mutual acquaintance of several years (from seminary days) and their more recent collaboration in prison ministry turned into a remarkable association. Father Borel became Don Bosco's closest and most devoted collaborator through the formation period of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and for a decade after the settling.[24]

As will be discussed below, Don Bosco was already seriously ill with bronchitis on leaving the *Pastoral Institute*, an illness that became progressively worse and life threatening through this period. But he managed to fulfill his obligations to the Marchioness Barolo. He earned his salary and his keep as chaplain and teacher of some 400 girls at the *Rifugio*. At the same time, with Father Borel's and Father Pacchiotti's help, he conducted his oratory on Sundays and holy days.[25]

At the *Rifugio*, the oratory met in Don Bosco's and Father Borel's rooms, and nearby corridor and stairway. Don Bosco and Father Borel gave religious instruction and heard the boys' confessions; then they would take the group to some church for Mass. Recreation throughout the day would be held wherever they found space.

The Oratory at the Unfinished Little Hospital of St. Philomena (December 8, 1844 – May 18, 1845)

The place available for oratory activities at the *Rifugio* was far too small for the increasing number of boys, numbering up to some 200. The chap-

[24] For a biographical sketch of Father John Borel see Appendix below.

[25] Sebastian Pacchiotti (1806-1886), after serving for a time as an assistant pastor, took the post of chaplain at the *Rifugio* as associate to Father Borel. Like Father Borel, he worked with Don Bosco in the oratory. Back in his hometown of Giaveno (near Turin), he was appointed canon and served as a municipal councilor for 25 years. He was honored with a knighthood in the Royal Order of Ss. Maurice and Lazarus. His tombstone in the cemetery of Giaveno bears the words: "He was loved by all for his boundless goodness and gentleness."

lains presented the problem to Archbishop Fransoni in an interview. The Archbishop, who understood the importance of the work, gave encouragement, blessing and faculties. But he also wanted to know why the boys did not go to their respective parishes for religious instruction. Don Bosco replied that the lads had no parish to go to because they were mostly from out of town. The Archbishop then suggested that they speak with the Marchioness about the problem.

The Marchioness gave permission for the use of two rooms set aside for recreation in her priests' future quarters on the fourth floor of the *Little Hospital of St. Philomena*, of which Don Bosco had been engaged as chaplain-designate. The Little Hospital, the latest addition to the Marchioness' institutions, was to house and care for little girls with disabilities. The two rooms were converted into a chapel (the "first Oratory church") dedicated on December 8, 1844 to Mary Immaculate, though the Oratory itself had St. Francis de Sales for its patron. Don Bosco writes:

> We began to call it the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales for two reasons. The first was that Marchioness Barolo, intending to found a congregation of priest under his patronage, had ordered a painting done of this saint. […] The second reason was that since this special ministry of ours [the Oratory] called for great calm and meekness, we had placed ourselves under this saint's protection."[26]

The Oratory met at the Little Hospital for the first time on December 8, 1844 and continued to use the premises until Sunday, May 18, 1845.[27]

The Oratory at Holy Cross Cemetery (St. Peter in Chains) (May 25, 1845)

As the Little Hospital was nearing completion (it was dedicated on August 10, 1845), Don Bosco had to find a new meeting place for the Oratory.

[26] *MO-En*, 216-217. These words of Don Bosco seem to indicate that although St. Francis de Sales was to be the "official" patron of Barolo's priests, the saint, a principal patron of the Pastoral Institute, had been the special patron of the priests engaged in oratory work since the move out of St. Francis of Assisi.

[27] It is during the stay at the Little Hospital, according to one version, that Don Bosco began evening classes for his youngsters. According to other versions, the evening classes were begun a little later at the Moretta house (see below), or again after settling at Pinardi's. The purpose of the evening classes was to start the youngsters toward literacy through the study of the catechism, so that they would acquire a tool for pursuing religious instruction on their own.

He was also under pressure from the Marchioness to do so as soon as possible because of the noise and confusion created by the young people, steadily growing in number. He would naturally want to keep the Oratory in the area, so that he could continue to live at the *Rifugio* and be close to the place where he would work as chaplain.

Moving out of the Little Hospital on May 18, 1845, the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales met at Holy Cross Cemetery (St. Peter in Chains) on the following Sunday, May 25, but was thereafter forbidden any further use of the premises.[28]

Some kind of explanation seems necessary at this point.

Holy Cross Cemetery was a property of the City located a short distance northeast of the Barolo institutions. It was no longer in use as a burial place, but its sizable chapel (dedicated to St. Peter in Chains) was still serviced by a resident chaplain appointed by the City. The chaplain's name at the time was Giuseppe Tesio, and that of his housekeeper, Margherita Sussolino.

The "eviction" of the Oratory from Holy Cross Cemetery was the consequence of an ordinance of the city council forbidding assemblies at the cemetery (probably motivated by respect for the dead). The chaplain had nothing to do with that, because the cemetery was under the city's jurisdiction.

F. Motto gives the following documented reconstruction:

(1) Through Lent of 1845 (Easter fell on March 23), as described above, the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales continued to meet at Barolo's Little Hospital for catechetical instruction.

(2) In early May, the city allowed the catechetical congregation of St. Pelagia the use of the chapel of St. Peter in Chains for the office of the dead. Thereafter the city council decided to forbid all access to the chapel, effective May 23. This ordinance, however, was not published until the week of May 26-June 1.

(3) Some time between May 18 and May 22 (hence before the prohibition) Don Bosco obtained from the local civil and religious authorities (including the chaplain's) permission to use the premises. The Oratory met at

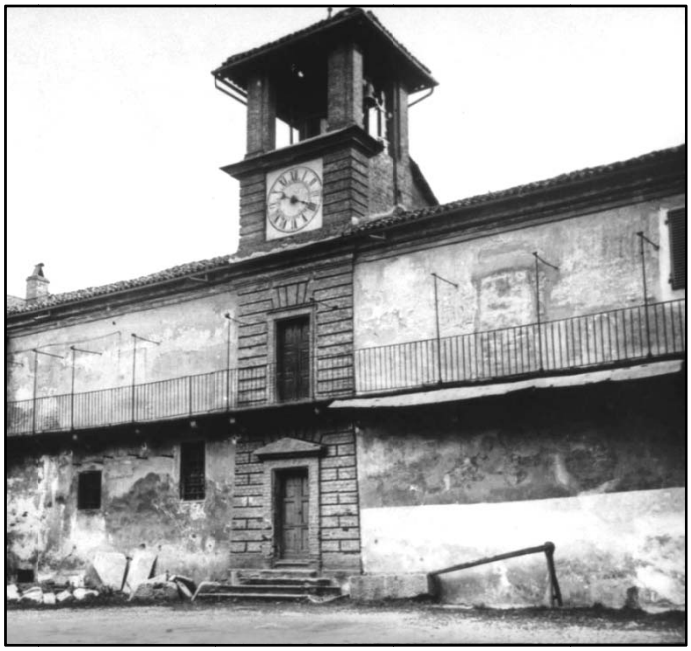
[28] In his *Memoirs* and other writings, Don Bosco places the St. Peter in Chains episode after the stay at St. Martin's at the Dora Mills [*MO-En* 220-221 and 228-229], a lapse in chronology that has been corrected on the basis of official documents. Motto's reconstruction of events in the article cited above shows the melodramatic character of Don Bosco's presentation in the *Memoirs* [*MO-En*, 228-230].

St. Peter in Chains on that Sunday, May 25 (after the prohibition, but before its publication). When Chaplain Tesio returned that evening and heard his housekeeper's report about the disorderly crowd of boys, he wrote the letter that may have adversely influenced subsequent actions by the city.

(4) The week of May 26-June 1 was eventful. Father Tesio died of a stroke (at the age of 68). His death is recorded in Turin as having occurred on Wednesday, May 28. But the housekeeper's death is not recorded in Turin. After the chaplain's death she may have left the city for parts unknown (her hometown perhaps–she may have died there?).

(5) On May 29, Father Cafasso recommended Don Bosco for the post of chaplain at St. Peter in Chains; and the following day (Don Bosco) presented his petition to the city council (supported by Father Borel and Father Pacchiotti), but the petition was denied (Eventually, on June 19, one of 17 other candidates was named chaplain).

(6) By Sunday, June 1, the city council's ordinance forbidding assemblies at St. Peter in Chains was published and posted.



8 – St. Martin's chapel at the Dora Mills

The Oratory without a Place (June 1 to July 6, 1845)

From June 1 to July 6 (six Sundays) the Oratory, using the *Rifugio* (where Don Bosco lived) as a rendezvous point, may have met out-of-doors and at various churches.

Don Bosco did not give up. Toward the end of June, with Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti, he again submitted a written request for the use of the premises at St. Peter in Chains. The request was denied by letter of July 3.

The Oratory at St. Martin's at the Dora Mills (July 13 to end of December 1845)

Some time between July 3 and 9, 1845 Father Borel (acting also on behalf of Don Bosco and Father Pacchiotti) applied for permission to use St. Martin's chapel attached to the public gristmills in the Borgo Dora district, and located between the River Dora (hence, "Dora Mills") and the great square of Porta Palazzo, a short distance east of the Barolo institutions. The mills were powered by water from the Dora River.

The city council by letter of July 10 gave permission, but the permit allowed only restricted use of the church from 12 to 3 in the afternoon for catechetical instruction, with cautions. The morning was reserved for Sunday services conducted by the local chaplain,[29] hence the Oratory had to find some other church for confessions and Mass.

The oratory met at St. Martin's for the first time on Sunday, July 13, and continued to meet there until Sunday, December 21, 1845. At the first meeting, Father Borel delivered the famous sermon on the cabbages, making the point that just as cabbages needed to be transplanted for proper growth, so did the Oratory.[30]

Permission to use the mills' premises was terminated after complaints

[29] Motto, *op. cit.* (summary on 218-219); *EBM* II, 217-230.

[30] *MO-En*, 221. Don Bosco clearly attributes the talk to Father Borel. Father Bonetti in the *History of the Oratory* (in the *Bollettino Salesiano*) follows the *Memoirs* faithfully. But the editors of Father Bonetti's *History* in book form (*Cinque Lustri*, *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*) attribute the sermon to Don Bosco himself (followed by Lemoyne [cf. *EBM* II, 236-239]). The central archives preserve the Ms. in Fr. Borel's neat hand (*MO-En* 221; *MO-Ce*, 143-144; and see Photostat opposite 148). As for the "cabbages," it should be borne in mind that the Oratory's stay St. Martin's followed (though not immediately) the episode at St, Peter in Chains, which was popularly called "St. Peter of the cabbages," from an ancient vegetable market.

and accusations by the locals. The secretary of the mills was their spokesman in a letter to the mayor,[31] and the city council on November 18 (1845) voted to terminate the concession, effective January 1, 1846.

The Oratory at Father John Baptist Moretta's House (Sunday, January 4 to early March 1846)

Having learned of the decision taken by the city council, Father Borel and Don Bosco immediately cast about for another place in which to gather the Oratory. At this point an old retired priest, Father John Baptist Moretta (1777-1847), came to the rescue. He owned a large house situated a short distance west of the Barolo institutions in the Valdocco district. From him Fr. Borel and Don Bosco rented three rooms for 15 lire a month.

Here several priests and a group of young students from the city helped with catechetical instruction. Evening classes in addition to Sunday classes (already begun at Barolo's Little Hospital) using the catechism for both literacy and religious instruction, were established.[32] The boys (numbering over 200) attended Mass and other Sunday services at some church in the area.

The Oratory met at Moretta's early March 1846. Then Father Moretta, under pressure from disgruntled tenants, refused to renew the lease.

The Oratory's Use of the Filippi Field (early March 1846)

In early March (perhaps Sunday, March 1, 1846) the oratory (by now over 300 strong) used a grass field rented from the Filippi brothers.[33] The field lay immediately to the north of the Moretta house, and was surrounded by a sparse hedge. They used the field not only for recreation but

[31] The melodramatic story of the death of the secretary who wrote the letter of eviction [*MO-En* 223], like that of the death of chaplain Tesio and his housekeeper in the preceding episode, implies a theology of divine retribution that was all too common. One fails to see in the prohibition to publish the secretary's name "an example of the saint's delicate charity" [*MO-En* 227, note 16, taken from *MO-Ceria*, 147, footnote to line 104].

[32] *MO-da Silva*, 141; *Mo-En*, 233.

[33] The Filippi brothers were original settlers in the area, and owned a house and quite a bit of land surrounding the Pinardi property (where the Oratory finally settled) on the north and the east sides. Pinardi had in fact bought his tract of land from the Filippi brothers.

also for religious activities, again resorting to various outlying churches for liturgical services.

It wasn't very long, however, before Mr. Filippi regretted having leased the field, because the youngsters were destroying the pasture.

A Permanent Home at Last (April 1, 1846)

At this time, that is, before mid-March 1846, Father Borel and Don Bosco were told of the availability of a shed or lean-to attached to the back of a house nearby.[34] The man who drew their attention to this building was a Mr. Pancrazio Soave who had rented the house, but not the shed from the owner, a Mr. Francis Pinardi. On April 1, 1846 Father Borel signed the lease for the shed. The contract was for three years, and the oratory met there for the first time on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1846.

As will be described below, the shed, the house and the small tract of land attached to it became the permanent home of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.

Appendices

1. Biographical Sketch of Father Giovanni Borel (1801-1873)

Bibliographical Note

1. The Borel box of the Central Archive (*ASC*) has not been issued on microfiches. However *ASC* 123: *Persone in relazione con Don Bosco* is available on microfiches (*FDB* 552 D8-553 E1). This includes Borel's *Memoriale dell'Oratorio* (*FDB* 552 E4-12) and Alberto Caviglia's "L'amico di Don Bosco" (*FDB* 553 B1-E1).

2. Natale Cerrato, "Il teologo Giovanni Battista Borel inedito" [Father Giovanni Battista Borel, Th.D., from Unpublished Manuscripts], *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* (1998), 151-157. This is the introductory essay to Cerrato's edition of heretofore unpublished documents regarding Borel. Cerrato writes: "For this article I have consulted baptismal records and have done research in the historical archives of

[34] Cf. Don Bosco's letter to Michael Cavour, Vicar of the city, March 12 1846 (to be discussed later).

the chancery and seminary of the Turin archdiocese, of the Barolo Institution and its religious congregations, of the University and city of Turin, of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus, and in the city's State archives. Data and documentation of considerable interest have emerged which can provide a better understanding of Borel as a person and as a man of action. It is on the basis of this material that I shall try to present a summary sketch of the life and work of Father G.B. Borel, Th.D, before presenting my edition of a number of unpublished documents."

3. E. C. [Eugenio Ceria], *Il teol. Gio. Batt. Borel e il beato Don Bosco* (Torino: SEI, 1931). This is a modest but informative commemorative pamphlet written on the occasion of the dedication of a bronze plaque in honor of Father Borel, placed under the portico at Valdocco adjacent to the reconstructed Pinardi chapel.

4. Francis Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, esp. 189-191. 228-233. 236-238. 256-259. 325-327.

5. Eugenio Valentini, "Preistoria dei Cooperatori Salesiani" *Salesianum* 39 (1977) 114-150.

6. Pietro Stella, *DB:LW*, and *DBEcSoc* (*passim*: see Index s.v. Borel).

7. *MO* and *BM* (*passim*, see analytical index s.v. Borel).

8. Occasional articles in *Bollettino Salesiano*, e. g., April 1879, 8-9; May 1879, 7; June 1931, 162-164; July 1931, 198.

9. Mention of Borel is found in the biographies and writings of his contemporaries. See e. g., L. Piano, *San Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo* (Torino: Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza, 1996); G. Colbert Falletti di Barolo, *Lettere alle Sorelle Penitenti di S. Maria Maddalena*, 2 vols. (Roma, 1996-97).

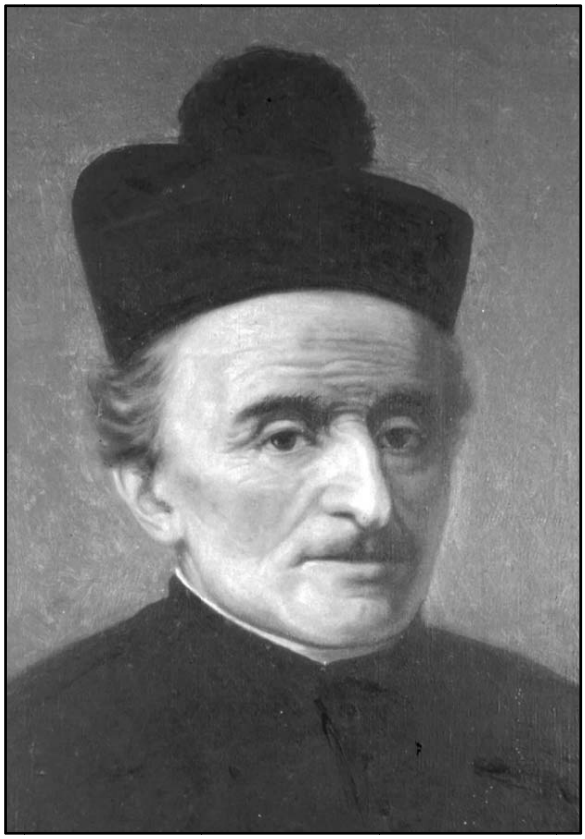
10. *Sussidi* 2, 243-246. The date of Borel's birth is given as 1798, for which see discussion herewith below.

[For this biographical sketch Father Cerrato's article served as my most important source. From it I also took all reference to works that were not accessible to me].

Introduction

Father John Borel, was Don Bosco's invaluable support and collaborator in the work of the Oratory, especially at its origins and in its early phase of development. Just as Father Cafasso stands behind Don Bosco as master and spiritual guide, as moral and financial backer (hence, "co-founder of the Oratory") so Father Borel stands at his side as his first and greatest collaborator, and therefore as the prototype of the Salesian Cooperator. This much is well known.

But other facets of his personality and his other numerous activities are not as familiar. Even his basic registry data, the data relating to his family and his academic and other achievements are but little known.



9 – Father Giovanni Borel (1801-1873)

Birth and Family Name

Little is known about Father Borel's family. From the baptismal records of the parish of St. John the Baptist (the cathedral of Turin), we learn that Giovanni Luigi Teobaldo Maria was the son of Giuseppe Antonio Borel and Carola Motto, and that he was born on July 1 and baptized on July 2, 1801.[35] An older brother, Luigi Giuseppe, was born in 1798, and a younger brother, Michele Gaetano, was born in 1804.

[35] So also E. Valentini, "La vita di comunità nella tradizione salesiana dei primi tempi," in *La Comunità Salesiana* (Leumann-Torino: LDC, 1973), 16, n. 8; P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980), 623; P. Braido, ed., *Don Bosco nella Chiesa a servizio dell'umanità. Studi e testimonianze* (Roma: LAS, 1987), 41, n. 99.

The date 1801, as well as the fact that the recorded name was Giovanni (not Giovanni Battista), is confirmed by civil and Church documents.[36] It seems, however, that he took John the Baptist as his personal patron saint.[37]

As for his last name, the official records always spell it "Borel." Don Bosco, however, in the *Memoirs* and often in letters, spells it "Borrelli," once "Borelli."[38] Perhaps Don Bosco regarded "Borel" as a dialectal Piedmontese form and wished to make it sound Italian. The Marchioness Barolo always calls him "Borel." But it is unlikely that the name and the family were of French origin.

John Borel's Education

John Borel's primary and secondary schooling took place in accordance with the school system in force at the time. Hence one may legitimately assume that between 1809 and 1814 his schooling was under the Napoleonic system, which prescribed three years of primary and three years of secondary studies. On the other hand, from 1814 to 1817 he would have finished his secondary studies under the older Savoy system, which provided for one or two years of primary school, followed by a three-year lower *grammar* course, again followed by a three-year higher course of *grammar*, *humanities* and *rhetoric*. In 1814-1817 he would have attended the latter higher section. He would then have gone on to the prescribed two-year philosophical course (1817-1819), and then to the five-year theological course (1819-1824), of which there is a detailed record at the University of Turin.

In the diocese of Turin the non-resident seminary (*chiericato esterno*) was in use. In this system a seminarian did not reside in the seminary, but lived at home while attending classes at the seminary or at the university. He became moreover part of a "clerical group" (*clero*) of non-resident seminarians that was attached to a church, where they ministered under the care and supervision of a priest known as "prefect."[39] At the time we are speaking of, in Turin non-resident seminarian groups

[36] For instance the military draft list of the eligible young men born in 1801: Borel, Giovanni Luigi Teobaldo Maria [...] - July 1 - diocesan." Likewise in the census of the clergy taken by Archbishop Gastaldi in 1873, the file card filled in by Father Borel himself is explicit. *Name*: Borel, Giovanni, Th.D. / *Born*: 1801 / *Titles*: Doctor of Theology, Knight of the Order of St. Maurice and Lazarus / *Occupation*: Spiritual director / *Residence*: Via Cottolengo 24, ground floor / *Parish*: Borgo Dora / *Church or oratory of eucharistic celebration*: church of Our Lady of Refuge / *Church of ministry*: same / *Householder or tenant*: householder.

[37] It should be noted that in correspondence and in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* Don Bosco never calls him Giovanni Battista, but always simply Gioanni or Giovanni. But others (for example, the *Biographical Memoirs* routinely use the name Giovanni Battista.

[38] Cf. critical editions: *MO-da Silva* and Motto, *Epistolario* (s.v. Borel in Index).

[39] Cf. I. Tubaldo "Il clero piemontese: sua estrazione sociale, sua formazione culturale e sua attività pastorale. Alcuni apporti alla sua identificazione," in *Chiesa e società nella II metà*

(*cleri*) were located at the churches of St. Christina, St. Philip, *Corpus Christi*, and St. Mary on the Square.[40]

John Borel donned the clerical habit in 1817 and became part of the clerical group attached to the church of Corpus Christi. This is confirmed by his own testimony, given at the process of beatification of Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo.[41] That he attended the school of theology at the university as a non-resident seminarian may be argued from the fact that in the seminary records for the years 1817 and 1824 the name Borel never appears. However, since the university was shut down during the uprising of 1821 and was not reopened until 1823. John Borel may have attended courses at the seminary.

Records of his theological studies and of the examinations he sat for in various theological treatises are held in the historical archive of the State University of Turin. He was awarded the Bachelor's degree on March 29, 1821, the licentiate on June 3, 1823, and the doctorate (*laurea*) on May 24, 1824. It is interesting to note that the signature of Father Luigi Guala appears on all of Borel's examination certificates. Father Guala was a professor in the school of theology, and had been approved as rector of the newly established Pastoral Institute (*Convitto Ecclesiastico*) of St. Francis of Assisi in 1822.[42]

At the same time, John Borel advanced toward the priesthood and was ordained a priest on September 16, 1824, at the relatively young age of 23.

A newly ordained priest was required to attend moral-pastoral lectures (*conferenze morali*) for some two years after ordination. They were designed as a complement to the theological course and as proximate ministerial preparation. These lectures in moral-pastoral theology, but differing in theological orientation, were held at three venues approved by Archbishop Colombano Chiaveroti: at the seminary, at the university, and at the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) of St. Francis of Assisi.

We have no documentation as to which of the three courses Father Borel attended. But he is regarded as one of the outstanding nineteenth-century Piedmontese priests of the Cafasso school of moral-pastoral theology.[43] Father Cafasso, ordained in 1833, became assistant lecturer to Father Luigi Guala at the *Convitto* only in 1836, and took over the public lecture from Guala only in 1843.[44] Obviously

del XIX secolo in Piemonte, a cura di F.N. Appendino (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1982), 214.

[40] Cf. A. Giraudo, *Clero seminario e società. Aspetti della Restaurazione religiosa a Torino* (Roma: LAS, 1993), 194-197.

[41] *POCT* [of Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo], *Summarium*, 7.

[42] Cf. T. Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte dal 1797 ai giorni nostri*, vol. III (Torino: G. Speirani, 1888), 100. For Father Guala and the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) see earlier volume.

[43] Cf. C. Catemme, "Leonardo Murialdo e il movimento operaio e sociale cattolico in Piemonte," in *Chiesa e società nella II metà del XIX secolo [...]*, 283.

[44] Cf. L. Nicolis di Robilant, *San Giuseppe Cafasso* (a cura di J. Cottino) (Torino: Ed. Santuario della Consolata, 1990) vol. III, 49, 52.

Borel did not study under Cafasso, although he could have attended the *Convitto* lectures under Guala, and still be regarded as of Cafasso's school. In 1833-34 Father Cafasso was appointed leader of the team of *Convitto* priests who gave catechetical instruction and ministered to the inmates of the senatorial prison,[45] a ministry in which Father Borel was also involved. In any case, Father Borel's contact with the *Convitto* and its theological-pastoral orientation appears certain.

Father John Borel's Ministry at the Royal Palace (1831-1841)

In 1824, as a newly ordained priest, John Borel was already serving as a "cleric of the royal household and chapel" and in 1831 he was promoted to the post of "royal chaplain" in which capacity he served until 1841.[46]

The clergy of the royal palace at specified times took part in religious services, and together they made up the Royal Chapel, presided over by the Grand Almoner, who was none other than the archbishop of Turin. Under him served six almoners, priests of noble family, who took his place at the court and attended persons of the royal family in liturgical services, wearing only the black cape. In addition there were also a number of chaplains and lower "clerics" (Fr. Borel among them) whose duty it was to perform the liturgical services. The priests celebrated Mass and preached, while the others served at the altar by turn. It was an honorable and desirable appointment, that paid a good stipend while leaving the chaplain ample free time for other pursuits.[47]

In 1837 Father Borel submitted a petition to be released from the royal chaplaincy, and on December 29, 1840, he received the royal decree (*Regie Patenti*) of appointment as spiritual director of the Marchioness Barolo's *Rifugio*, to which position was attached a yearly stipend of 600 lire. On retiring from royal service, "by His Majesty's munificent favor" he was awarded a pension of 500 lire with the honorary title of chaplain for life.[48]

Spiritual Director in the Royal College of St. Francis of Paola (1829-1843)

While still in the service of the royal palace, Father Borel, together with Father Carlo Antonio Borsarelli (Th.D.), also served as spiritual director of the St. Francis

[45] *Ibid.*, 44; Also Cafasso's biographical sketch given in earlier volume.

[46] *Calendario generale pe' regii stati [...] per l'anno 1824* (Torino: Stamperia Pomba e Figli [1823]), 70, and *Calendario generale [...] pel 1831* (Torino: Giuseppe Pomba [1830]), 169f.

[47] Catemme, in *Chiesa a società nella II metà del XIX secolo [...]*, 246; J. Cottino, *Federico Albert* (Leumann-Torino: LDC, 1984), 25, 29.

[48] Documents in the State archive of the city of Turin and in the archive of the Barolo Institutions (cited by Cerrato).

of Paola School for the academic years 1819-20 to 1842-43.[49] The duties of spiritual directors in royal colleges were principally to celebrate Mass and preach (mornings and afternoons) on Sundays and holy days, and give religious instruction at the student congregation.

The St. Francis of Paola School had been established in the former monastery of the Franciscan Friars Minims in the street of that name. It was a school for higher Latin studies preparatory to university (There were two other such schools in Turin, the royal college of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and the royal college of Porta Nuova).

Very little is known of this ministry of Father Borel for this fairly extended period. But the archive of the Don Bosco Studies Center (*Centro Studi Don Bosco*) at the Salesian Pontifical University holds some seventy manuscripts, mostly in Borel's hand, which testify to his preaching activity at St. Francis of Paola. They mostly contain comments on the Sunday gospels; but there are also a number of instruction sermons delivered on Sundays afternoon, during start-of-year triduums or spiritual retreats, or on special feasts, such as Christmas.[50]

Father Borel's Ministry as Confessor in Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence (ca. 1830-1840)

Father Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo was no common social worker; he dedicated himself to alleviating the physical sufferings of the most unfortunate human beings, as a priest. To this end he turned the "Little House" into a "little church" that is, into a community of real Christians.[51] In the early years of the work, Father Cottolengo had the help of various priests who volunteered their services. Among them was Father Borel, who was on the friendliest of terms with the founder. In spite of his other engagements, he spent many years (until 1840) ministering to the spiritual needs of the Little House. He himself testified to this in his testimony given at Cottolengo's diocesan process of beatification held between 1863 and 1873.[52]

Father Borel's Prison Ministry

We cannot say with certainty when Father Borel first became involved in prison ministry. It is certain, however, that when in 1840 Father Guala put Father Cafasso

[49] *Calendario generale [...] pel 1830*, 516.

[50] This material is being catalogued, transcribed and analyzed by Father Aldo Giraudo, Director of the Center, in view of a critical edition.

[51] L. Piano, *San Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo [...]*, 373-374.

[52] *Ibid.*

in charge of organizing this ministry, Father Borel was already part of it. It seems that his presence in the city's prisons was a constant throughout his active years. Father Cafasso's biographer attests to this.[53]

Later, when Don Bosco during his *Convitto* years was initiated by Father Cafasso into this ministry, he found that Father Borel, together with Father Mathis, director of the *Confraternity of Mercy*, and Father Borsarelli were already involved in that work. Father Cafasso, Father Borel and Don Bosco would take turns in assisting convicts on death row.[54] His continuing involvement in this ministry is attested in various sources, including *Unità Cattolica* of September 16, 1873 (Borel's obituary).[55] The *Biographical Memoirs* give interesting details on Father Borel's prison ministry.[56]

Spiritual Director at Barolo's Charitable Work of Our Lady of Refuge (Rifugio) *(1840-1873)*

As mentioned above, on December 29, 1840, Father Borel was appointed to succeed a Father Luigi Delrivo, who had recently died, as spiritual director of the *Rifugio*, and served the Barolo institutions for over 30 years. This ministry was by far the most important of all his ministerial endeavors in terms of length, intensity, and dedication; it was also the most demanding, and it carried a heavy responsibility. He was spiritual director and teacher of the young women who were given shelter and education at the *Rifugio*. He also provided the same service for the Sisters of St. Joseph (founded for that very work) and for the Sisters Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene (popularly called *Maddalene*) who lived as semi-cloistered nuns near the *Rifugio*. His work included daily celebration of Mass, preaching, confessions, religious instruction of the young women, spiritual direction of both religious communities, and spiritual care of the sick.

Nor was this all; the Marchioness Barolo over a period of 25 years founded no less than five charitable works in addition to two religious congregations.[57] To minister to these institutions she obtained qualified priests from the Church authorities, but Father Borel was the leader of the group, and assigned a special sector to

[53] L. Nicolis di Robilant, *San Giuseppe Cafasso [...]*, 543.

[54] *EBM* II, 136, 286-287; also Cafasso's biographical sketch given in earlier volume; G. Nalbone, *Carcere e società in Piemonte (1770-1857)* (Santena: Fondazione Camillo Cavour, 1988), 101-143, 181-182 (information on the situation of the inmates in the city's four prisons, and the activity of the Confraternity of Mercy, to which Borel almost certainly belonged).

[55] Cerrato transcribes this article in his essay.

[56] *EBM* II, 120-122, 167-169.

[57] [A. Tago] *Giulia Colbert marchesa di Barolo* (Milano: Grafmil, 1989), 9-15.

each. The following priests are mentioned in the archives of the Barolo institutions as Father Borel's associates: Father Pietro Ponte (1821-1892, chaplain of St. Anne's Institute), Father Sebastiano Pacchiotti (1806-1884, associate chaplain of the *Rifugio*), Don Bosco (1815-1888, assistant chaplain of the *Rifugio* and designated chaplain of the Little Hospital of St. Philomena from 1844 to 1846) and Father Giovanni Giacomelli (1820-1901), chaplain of the Little Hospital (from 1854). The Vincentian Father Marcantonio Durando (1801-1880) was the official religious superior of the semi-cloistered Magdalenes.

Besides Father Borel, Fathers Ponte and Pacchiotti were closely associated with Don Bosco in the work of the Oratory.

Father Borel's Decisive Support of and Collaboration with Don Bosco in the work of the Oratory

Father Borel's name occurs repeatedly in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, in the *Biographical Memoirs* and in the earlier portion of Don Bosco's collected letters. He is Don Bosco's great friend, collaborator and supporter in the work of the oratories. The Central Salesian Archive holds a number of manuscripts with letters and administrative accounts, etc. that testify to his personal involvement with Don Bosco's oratories.

Don Bosco had first met Father Borel, when the latter, with Father Borsarelli, preached the Lenten retreat at the Chieri seminary in 1839. Asked by John how one might safeguard one's vocation, he replied: "A vocation is perfected and preserved, and a real priestly spirit is formed, by maintaining a climate of recollection and by the frequent reception of communion."[58]

Don Bosco is quoted as saying:

> Whenever I could spend time with him, I would always hear and see lessons of priestly zeal, and receive good advice. During the three years I spent at the Pastoral Institute, he would often invite me to take part in sacred functions, to hear confessions and to preach with him. With his help I gradually became acquainted with the work at the *Rifugio* and became somewhat familiar with it. We would often talked at length on how we could help each other when visiting the prisons or carrying out our priestly duties.[59]

In the autumn of 1844, Father Borel (at Father Cafasso's request, and with Marchioness Barolo's agreement) took Don Bosco in at the *Rifugio* when the latter

[58] *MO-En* 157. Don Bosco recalled this piece of advice on his ordination to the subdiaconate [*MO-En* 166].

[59] *EBM* II, 188.

needed a place to live and a paying job. He was offered the post of chaplain of the *Little Hospital* (which was under construction) and of assistant to Father Borel. From this point on Father Borel became Don Bosco's closest and most faithful associate in the work of the oratory.

Father Borel relates that when Don Bosco first arrived in Turin he seemed bashful and at a loss, especially as he found himself obliged to beg for his oratory. Father Borel gradually introduced him to well-to-do people who would be his benefactors. The first of these was the chevalier Marco Gonella, with whom Father Borel was on friendly terms. Father Borel sang Don Bosco's praises to that family, and then urged Don Bosco to pay them a visit. He was at first reluctant, but he finally did go. It was a happy visit, and they were very impressed. They gave Don Bosco 300 lire and became his supporters.[60] Father Borel helped Don Bosco in a similar manner on other occasions, for he had many acquaintances among the Turinese nobility.

Father Borel helped, sustained and defended Don Bosco through the wandering phase of the oratory (1844-1846), and acted for him, as when the Oratory was "evicted" from St. Peter in Chains (1845) and moved to St. Martin's chapel at the Dora Mills.

At the beginning of 1846 at a meeting of pastors, the oratory was discussed and the fear expressed that it would interfere with the works of the parishes. Father Borel rose in its defense and easily convinced the pastors that this could not be the case. (It was at this time that some "well meaning" priests tried to commit Don Bosco to the insane asylum).

Don Bosco suggests that Father Borel at one point wavered and left him.[61] As will be seen, Father Borel did not abandon Don Bosco even when others did. He was at his side on the Filippi field in that moment of crisis, and helped financially with the leasing and the purchase of the Pinardi property for the settling of the oratory. After the establishment of the oratory at the Pinardi property, Father Borel dedicated the chapel, and continued to work with Don Bosco in the areas of preaching, hearing confessions, public relations, and administration. He kept the oratory books, noting the offerings received with various comments. He notes, for instance, that the youngsters who celebrated the feast of St. Aloysius in 1846 numbered 650.[62]

As will be seen in some detail, by the end of 1845, Don Bosco's health had become a cause for concern. Father Borel had written to the Marchioness Barolo (who was in Rome at the time) that Don Bosco could no longer carry the work of the chaplaincy and of the oratory. The Marchioness was also concerned, for (as she wrote to Father Borel) Don Bosco had been ill since leaving the *Convitto*. Don

[60] E. Ceria, *Borel*, 17.
[61] *MO-En*, 246.
[62] *Memoriale dell'Oratorio* in *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *FDB* E4-12; *EBM* II, 381.

Bosco finally fell seriously ill in 1846. Father Borel assisted him and persuaded him to pray for his recovery. During Don Bosco's convalescence at Becchi (August-November), Father Borel directed the oratory himself, with the help of Fathers Vola, Carpano, Trivero and Pacchiotti.

Goffredo Casalis writes:

> These four priests, together with Father Borel, during a period of four months replaced the founder of the institute and implemented its program in a manner that soon gained them the esteem and affection of all the youngsters. Such esteem and affection had to be gained, as was the case with the founder, at the cost of patient endurance and numberless sacrifices. For at its beginning this institution was much poorer than it is at present, the lads were unruly and completely uneducated, and many of them more often than not had nothing to eat, wore nothing but rags and were extremely dirty. Moreover, as is always the case when one is devoted to a good work, those priests had to face strong opposition from many quarters."[63]

On December 8, 1847, Don Bosco established the Oratory of St. Aloysius near Porta Nuova (later to become the southern and main railway terminal). Father Borel dedicated this oratory, just as he had dedicated the Pinardi shed at Valdocco. He helped this oratory get under way, as he also helped with the establishment of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel (1849) in the Vanchiglia district.

Father Borel was an able preacher in the popular style and was often in demand for sermons and missions in Turin and throughout the diocese. He never refused a request. His sermons were simple, entertaining, rich in humor and story, but profoundly Christian, moving and effective. As Father Cafasso himself testifieds.

> Father Borel may well be the best preacher in the whole diocese for his fluent Piedmontese, and for the wealth of anecdotes, humor, and catching phrases, but more importantly for the convincing ease with which he explains even difficult Christian doctrines to the people.[64]

For this ministry he was unfailingly available to Don Bosco. One Sunday, after spending the morning in liturgical services at various churches, he received word that he needed at the Oratory for a sermon. The messenger found him in the vegetable garden munching on bread and a bell pepper. A few minutes later he was on the pulpit of the Pinardi chapel preaching to a crowd of waiting youngsters.[65]

[63] Goffredo Casalis, *Dizionario geografico, storico-statistico-commerciale degli Stati di S. M. il Re di Sardegna*, vol. XXI (Torino, 1851), 716.

[64] *EBM* II, 187. As mentioned above, a number of Borel's sermons in Piedmontese delivered on the occasions of Forty Hours devotions in nearby towns, and others preached to the Magdalenes, are preserved in the archive of the *Centro Studi Don Bosco* at the UPS.

[65] *EBM* VIII, 58.

In the Church of St. Francis de Sales (built in 1852), he would join Don Bosco in dialogued sermons, usually taking the part of the "fall guy." He would sit among the youngsters and play the part of a penitent, of a pupil, of a rogue in the most entertaining manner, while Don Bosco would instruct and moralize from the pulpit. The news that Father Borel would "dialogue" on any given Sunday was enough to fill the church with eager listeners.[66]

In 1849 Father Borel, with the help of Father Borsarelli, Father Pietro Ponte and Father Lorenzo Gastaldi, preached a seven-day spiritual retreat (December 22-28) to the boys of the three oratories (St. Francis de Sales, St. Aloysius and Guardian Angel) jointly in the Church of the *Confraternity of Mercy*. It was a great success.

By 1854 with the entrance of Father Vittorio Alasonatti as administrator and the formation of a core group of young men around Don Bosco, the first nucleus of the Salesian Society, a new period began for Don Bosco and the work of the oratories. The expansion of the work of the oratories made a redistribution of personnel necessary. At the same time, because of increasing commitments to the Barolo institutions, Father Borel was forced to scale down his activities with the mass of young people at Valdocco. He continued to help with undiminished attachment, but in a secondary capacity.

Father Borel's Last Years, Illness and Death

Father Borel's lifestyle and daily regimen were evangelically simple and frugal in the extreme. He kept a man in the house whom he was helping toward the priesthood in exchange for house chores and cooking. When asked what Father Borel had for dinner, this man would invariably reply, "The usual boiled onions."

Since he had never spared himself or taken care of himself, in the sixties Father Borel's health began to fail. With increasing frequency he was forced to keep to his rooms at the *Rifugio* and to his bed.

On March 25, 1869, Don Bosco had returned from Rome with the news of the approval of the Salesian Society. From his rooms at the nearby *Rifugio* Father Borel heard the boys at the Oratory shouting and the band playing. It was about 8 in the evening. He got out of bed, hobbled down the street leaning on his cane, and was

[66] An interesting sidelight is recorded in *Bonetti's Chronicle*. Don Bosco had heard confessions from 6:30 to 9, and was telling some of his helpers that whenever the sin of "blasphemy" was mentioned in confession he felt nauseated. Someone remarked that Father Borel in his sermons, when speaking of "blasphemy," would some times give choice examples. Don Bosco replied that there was no denying that Father Borel was a paragon of zeal and obtained numerous conversions through his sermons, but that he (Don Bosco) felt sick at hearing those words. "I have cautioned him, in fact begged him several times, but sometimes the force of habit and the flush of eloquence carry him away" [G. Bonetti, *Annali* II, (Easter, April 20, 1862), *FDB* 922 B7; *EBM* VII, 80].

crossing the courtyard of the Oratory just as Don Bosco was going up to his rooms. The two met and Father Borel learnt of the approval. "Thanks be to God, now I can die happy!" he exclaimed; and without another word he returned to his rooms.[67]

On May 8, 1870, in recognition of a lifetime of dedicated ministry and charitable work, Father Borel was awarded one of the highest honors in the realm: the knighthood in the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus.[68]

On occasional periods of relief he would do a little priestly work, but for the last couple of years was confined to bed. We have no information about the grave illness that finally claimed his life on the evening of September 8, 1873, at 72 years of age. The immediate cause of death may have been a cerebral hemorrhage.

At his death there was not enough money in his estate to take care of his burial. A group of Salesian directors (who were meeting at Valdocco for the fall conferences) carried the casket on their shoulders. The whole of the Oratory followed, led by the Oratory band.[69]

Lemoyne, in speaking of Father Borel's dedication to Don Bosco and the Oratory, transcribes a short eulogy by "a well known Turinese priest" that he found among Don Bosco's papers,[70] a loving tribute to a great priest and human being. Under the picture of St. Francis de Sales that hung in Borel's stark and practically unfurnished room he had placed the inscription: "*Omnibus omnia factus* (Made all things to all people)."[71]

2. Biographical Sketch of Julie Falletti née Colbert de Maulévrier Marchioness of Barolo (1785-1864)

EBM, passim [cf. *Indice*]; *Sussidi* 3, 236-239: Giraudo-Biancardi. *Qui è vissuto Don Bosco* (1988), 140-143; Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 181-189; G. B. Borino, *Don Bosco. Sei scritti e un modo di vederlo* [Don Bosco. Six Essays from a Point of View] (Torino: SEI, 1939), 39-76; G. De Montis, *Giulia di Barolo […]* (Turin, 1964); [A. Tago] *Giulia Colbert marchesa di Barolo* (Milano: Grafmil, 1989), 9-15.

[67] *EBM* IX, 256.

[68] *Calendario generale [...]*, 66 (Florence: Tip. Barbera, 1871); Document in the archive of the Order. Lemoyne reports the event and adds that when asked the reason for the decoration Father Borel facetiously replied: "I am not sure, but I suspect it is in recognition of my heroism, when one day I saved Queen Maria Teresa's life by dousing a fire that had broken out among paper flowers on the altar of the royal chapel [*IBM* VIII, 92; omitted in *EBM*].

[69] *EBM* X, 521 (519-521, Amadei's eulogy of Borel).

[70] *EBM* II, 186-187. This one-page manuscript is in *ASC* 132: *Persone*, *FDB* 553, A10.

[71] Latin Vulgate, 1 Cor 9:22; cf. *FDB* 553 A11 (A10-12: biographical notices on Borel).

Early Years

Julie-Victurnienne-Françoise Colbert, a descendant of Louis XIV's minister of that name, was born in the castle of Maulévrier, Vendée (France) on June 27, 1785. She received a thoroughly Christian and "finished" education in spite of the tragic experiences in childhood and adolescence. She lost her mother at the age of 7. Her paternal grandmother was guillotined during the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. During this period, with her father, a brother and a sister, she lived in exile in Germany and Holland. Restored under Napoleon, the family returned to Paris in 1800 and lived as members of the Imperial court.

Married to Carlo Tancredi Falletti, Marquis of Barolo

It was at the court that she met the rich Piedmontese gentleman, Carlo Tancredi Falletti, Marquis of Barolo (1782-1838), at the time attached to the court of the House of Savoy. Napoleon himself arranged their marriage in 1807. Up to 1814 the couple lived alternately in Paris and Turin. But in 1814, with the fall of Napoleon and the Restoration, they made Turin their permanent home, and lived in the handsome seventeenth-century Barolo palace. They had no children, a circumstance that, coupled with their deep faith and lively charity, prompted them to devote their great wealth to works of charity.

During the early Restoration, Turin was experiencing terrible economic crises. The number of the poor and of people needing basic assistance was enormous. As they traveled, the Barolos had the opportunity of observing what was being done in the field of social assistance and charity in France, especially in Paris. They began to do the same in Turin. On this point the Marchioness and the Marquis were in agreement, and acted together. And when the Marquis died in 1838, leaving Juliet in possession of vast holdings, she continued what she and her husband had begun together, founding and supporting numerous works on behalf of the poor and the needy. The patriot and writer, Silvio Pellico, employed at the palace on his return from political imprisonment also helped in his capacity as her secretary-librarian.

Borino (listed above) reports that one day in 1819, during Easter week, as she knelt in the street to the Viaticum being carried to the sick, she heard a "blasphemy" uttered from a barred window of the women's prison nearby. She entered the prison, demanding to talk to that person, and after passing through many barred gates she saw the horror of the ward and the abject condition of those women. Sweeping aside objections from friends, prison authorities, and even her confessor, she began to visit the jail regularly and to teach hygiene, the rudiments of literacy, and religion to the women. In spite of opposition, she succeeded in establishing a classroom, a workshop, and religious exercises in the prison. Conse-

quent on this experience, she and her husband were instrumental in having a proper women's prison built, and in having chaplains appointed for prison ministry.

The desperate conditions of the poor throughout the northern districts of the city prompted the Barolos to become actively engaged in social reform and charity. They founded a number of institutions devoted to charity several of which survive to this day.

Before the Marquis' Death

Besides supporting existing works, the Barolos established the Barolo Foundation for Works of Charity (*Opera Pia Barolo*) still in existence,

In 1819 they were instrumental in bringing in from France the de la Salle *Christian Brothers* to take direction of all the primary boys' schools in the city.

In 1821 they began the first primary schools for girls in Turin, and brought in the *Sisters of St. Joseph* from Chambéry (Savoy) to staff them.

Her experience with prison ministry alerted her and her husband to the plight of girls at risk, and of young women and women fresh out of prison. Having been acquainted with the work of Father Légris Duval in Paris, the Barolos founded, in 1821-22, the Pious Work of our Lady, Refuge of Sinners (*Pia Opera di Nostra Signora "Refugium Peccatorum"*), popularly called simply the *Rifugio*. It gave shelter and training to some 300 of young women–from 1840 under the spiritual direction of Father John Borel (see above).

In 1825 with King Charles Felix' understanding they brought the Sacred Heart Nuns (*Dames du Sacré Coeur*) to Turin for the education of young women of noble families.

In 1829, after the example of Mme Pastoret in Paris, the Barolos established in their own palace the first nursery school or kindergarten for young children of both sexes.

In 1832 they started a tuition-free school and a soup kitchen for the poor that served 250 soups daily, to which a dish of meat and vegetables was added on Sundays. During the winter season each received a week's supply of wood for cooking and warmth. In 1832, next to the *Rifugio*, they founded the *Convent* or *Retreat of St. Mary Magdalene*, for those women who, after 2 years of residence at the *Rifugio*, and 3 of novitiate, felt attracted to a semi-cloistered life. They were known as the *Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene*, or simply the *Magdalenes*.

Also in 1832, next to the *Magdalenes*, and under their care, they established a house to shelter abandoned girls, less than 12 years of age. This community was known as the *Oblates of St. Mary Magdalene*, or simply *Little Magdalenes*.

In 1834, they established the *Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne of Divine Providence*, and opened an educational institution, under the Sisters' direction, for lower middle-class girls, near the church of the *Consolata*. Also in conjunction with the

community of the Sisters of St Anne the Barolos built a house for some thirty orphan girls (*the Juliettes*), who on completing their education received a dowry of 500 francs.

The Marchioness (without meddling in its internal affairs) was closely involved with congregation of St. Anne, for which she obtained the Church's official approval in 1846.

After the Marquis' Death in 1838

After her husband's death, the Marchioness, while continuing to oversee their works of charity, undertook, or contributed to further foundations. For example, she contributed to the building of the convent of the *Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament*, for women who desired to embrace the contemplative life and assured to it a substantial endowment. She also made it possible for the *Association for Perpetual Adoration* to be established in Turin.

In 1844, out of a group of young women from the *Rifugio* who did not feel called to the religious life, but were committed to Christian life and ministry, the Marchioness founded the *Tertiaries of St. Mary Magdalene.*

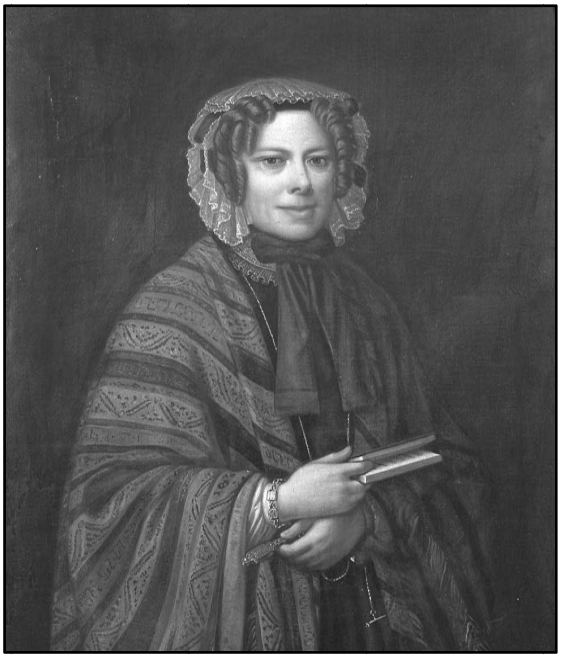
In 1845 the *Little Hospital of St. Philomena* was completed and readied for some 120 severely handicapped girls between the age of 3 and 12, a condition that made their admission to other hospitals difficult. He placed the little hospital in the care of the *Sisters of St. Joseph* (of Chambéry, see above).

On leaving the *Convitto* in October 1844, on Fathers John Borel's and Joseph Cafasso's advice, Don Bosco was employed as chaplain-designate of this hospital, nearly a year before its completion. Meanwhile he drew a salary as assistant to Father Borel at the *Rifugio*. Don Bosco and Father Borel "entertained" the oratory at the *Rifugio* for 6 weeks. By early December 1844, through Archbishop Fransoni's mediation, the Marchioness allowed Don Bosco and Father Borel to gather the oratory at the *Little Hospital* (still under construction). They were allowed to use the separate "priests' quarters," for the Marchioness intended to found a society of priests under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales to care for her institutes. She planned to house them at the *Little Hospital*. The oratory had to vacate those premises when the *Little Hospital* was nearing completion in May 1845 (see above).

The Marchioness founded other works as well. One should mention the *Families* or *Workshops of SS. Mary*, *Joseph*, *Anne*. These were hostels housing groups of young ladies learning a skill and preparing for marriage, under a "mother."

She also endowed the construction of the parish and Oratory of St. Julia begun in 1862 and completed in 1866, after her death in 1864. The church was built specifically for the pastoral and spiritual care of the people of Vanchiglia, one of the poorest of the northern districts of Turin.[72]

[72] After completion of the church in 1866, Don Bosco's Oratory of the Guardian Angel



10 – Marchioness Julie Falletti Barolo (1785-1864)

Relationship between Marchioness Barolo and Don Bosco

Discounting the "bad press" the Marchioness has received from Don Bosco's biographers in the matter, the facts of the relationship may be summarized as follows:

(1) Don Bosco first met the Marchioness in 1844 when introduced to her by Father Borel, though he would certainly have known *of* her before 1844. She was far too important a person in the city to escape notice. She must also have been seen around the Pastoral Institute and the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, for Father Cafasso was her spiritual director and adviser at this time. Furthermore, as mentioned above, Don Bosco had worked with Father Borel at the prisons and at the *Rifugio* itself.

(2) As mentioned above, in the Autumn of 1844, Don Bosco through Father

in that district was closed, and the oratory activities were transferred to St. Julia's nearby. As mentioned earlier, Don Bosco had taken that oratory over from Father Giovanni Cocchi in 1849. Father Cocchi had established it in the *Moschino* District in 1840, before transferring it to *Vanchiglia* in 1841).

Borel's recommendation was employed by the Marchioness as chaplain-designate of the *Little Hospital* and as assistant to Father Borel, at a yearly salary of 600 lire. From autumn 1844 to early 1846, Don Bosco taught classes at the *Rifugio* and briefly acted as chaplain at the *Little Hospital* at its completion (August 1845), all the while taking care of "his oratory."

(3) We may assume that the Marchioness, charitable and generous as she was, at least on occasion, helped Don Bosco and his work financially, over and above his salary.

(4) There is no doubt that the Marchioness esteemed and liked Don Bosco, had designs on him, and wanted him for her institutions. She may have even entertained the idea of building her priestly society (of St. Francis de Sales) around him.

(5) The Marchioness was sincerely convinced that Don Bosco could not possibly continue to work with his oratory and serve her institutions at one and the same time. And she was right. This belief was strengthened by the fact that Don Bosco had been quite ill since leaving the Pastoral Institute in 1844, and by early 1846 he was coughing up bloody sputum (due to a serious bronchio-pulmonary condition). A correspondence between Father Borel and the Marchioness confirms this situation (see separate discussion in Chapter 4).

(6) The *ultimatum* to Don Bosco was delivered in May, 1846, when she returned from Rome, where she had been for 7 months working for the approval of her two congregations, the Magdalenes' and St. Anne's. Again, however, she made very desirable offers to Don Bosco (to send him on a long vacation, to raise his salary, etc.). Don Bosco had by this time settled his oratory at the Pinardi property, had made a definitive option for his poor young people, and would have had to leave the Marchioness' employ in any case. The Marchioness' *ultimatum* saved him from taking the initiative. Don Bosco was dismissed from her employ, although she allowed him to live at the *Rifugio* for a while longer out of a sense of propriety. The confrontation is described in the *Biographical Memoirs*, though the words that passed between the two as reported by Lemoyne, believable as they may be in context, are otherwise without attestation.[73]

(7) Don Bosco and the Marchioness parted less than friends. But, on the one hand, Don Bosco continued to help at the Barolo institutions; and on the other, the Marchioness (so it seems) did not totally cut off her help to the oratory.[74] It should be added that after the Marchioness' death in 1864 the relationship between Don Bosco and the Sisters of St. Anne could not have been more cordial. In drafting the constitutions for the Salesian Sisters (1870-1872), Don Bosco enlisted the

[73] *EBM* II, 356-364. This chapter of the *Biographical Memoirs*, contains the crucial letter written by the Marchioness from Rome to Father Borel about Don Bosco (to be discussed in the next chapter 4).

[74] Father Borel's *Memoriale dell'Oratorio* lists some anonymous donations that may be from the Marchioness [*ASC* 123: *Persone*, *Borel*, *FDB* 552 E4-12].

help of the mother general of the Sisters of St. Anne, Sr. Mary Dominici. One of the sisters of St. Anne also lived with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Mornese for a time to help with their community life.

Marchioness Barolo's Personal Character

The Marchioness was an accomplished and extraordinary woman. She was also a beautiful woman, so much so that people could not believe that she could have remained "a good girl" in her widowhood. In fact, however, her life was saintly and blameless and totally devoted to charity. True, she enjoyed the esteem of the court and the nobility, and participated in some of the social life of that class. Moreover, she was a good writer, an art connoisseuse, and kept a well-attended *salon* in the French style, with such notables as Pellico, Balbo, Cavour, de Maistre, Lamartine, de Broglie, Dupanloup in attendance. But, though high-minded and independent, she was in no way a worldly person. In fact, she was deeply spiritual, and became more so under the spiritual guidance of such masters as Father Pio Brunone Lanteri, Father Louis Guala and Father Joseph Cafasso. She lived a life of prayer and wore the hair shirt. Her regular devotions were to the Blessed Trinity, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Agony (the Three Hours), to the *Consolata*, to the Sorrowful Mother, to the Guardian Angels, and to the Souls in Purgatory. Her favorite saints were St. Joseph, St. Theresa, St. Julia, St. Anne, St. Mary Magdalen, Ss. Cosmas and Damian, And St. Philomena.

She died on January 19, 1864, after making testamentary disposition of her wealth in the furtherance of works of charity.[75]

Her cause for beatification has been introduced.

[75] Cf. *EBM* VII, 370.

3. The Dream of 1844 (First Dream of the Holy Martyrs)

Dream of 1844 as in the Berto Ms. of Don Bosco's Memoirs of the Oratory [*MO* 2nd Dec., 15°, "Un nuovo sogno": *MO-Berto*, 86ff., *FDBM* 61 D2-4.; Cf. *MO-DB*, 944-945.: *FDMB* 58 C11-12. Cf *MO-En*, 209-210].	*Dream of 1844 (Holy Martyrs) as Reported by Barberis from Don Bosco's Narration* *[ASC* 110: *Cronachette, Barberis, "Sogni diversi a Lanzo": FDMB 866 B10-C1 ["original" copy]. For derived (calligraphic) copies, cf. ASC* 111: *Sogni-Barberis, "Il nastro bianco, Rivelazione della Congregazione," in FDBM 1279 C6-11 and 1282 E8 - 1283 A1; also ASC* 111: *Sogni, Lemoyne: FDMB 1314 B10-C5].*
On the second Sunday in October of that year (1844) I had to notify my youngsters that the Oratory would be moving to Valdocco. But the uncertainty of place, means and personnel gave me real cause for concern. The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart. That night I had another dream, which seems to be an appendix to the one I had had at Becchi at the age of nine. I think it advisable to relate it in detail [*letteralmente*]	On February 2, 1875 I was walking with Don Bosco back to the Oratory from Borgo San Salvario. We were alone. Among many other things he related to me the following vision. He said that it was the first he had had regarding the congregation, and it was the longest, since it lasted the whole night. He added that he had never opened his heart to anyone about the matter. I was the first person to hear about it. It was the year 1844. I was due to leave the *Convitto Ecclesiastico di San Francesco* and move to the Rifugio to live with Dr. Borel. I was truly worried about [what I should do with] my youngsters who attended religious instruction [the oratory] on Sundays and holy days. I did not know whether I should let them go or continue to care for them. My desire was to continue with [the work of] the oratories; but I did not see how I could. On the last Sunday I was to stay at the Convitto I had to notify my youngsters that they should no longer meet there, as they did usually. In fact I was debating whether I should tell them that they need not go to any place, since the oratory would be terminated; or else I should tell them of a new place where they could meet.
I dreamt that I was standing in the middle of a multitude of wolves, goats and kids, lambs, ewes, rams, dogs and birds. All together they raised a din, a racket, or better, a bedlam to frighten the stoutest heart. I wanted to run away, when a Lady, very nicely dressed in the style of a young shepherdess, motioned to me to follow and accompany that strange flock, while she walked at the head of it. We kept wandering from place to place, making three stations or stops. Each time we stopped, many of those animals were turned into lambs in ever increasing numbers. After much walking, I	On the night between Saturday and Sunday, I dreamt that I was in a vast plain crowded with an enormous number of youngsters. Some were fighting or swearing; others were stealing or engaged in nasty behavior. The air was thick with flying stones, from the little war that was being waged by those youngsters–all of them abandoned and gone bad. I was about to leave the scene, when I saw a Lady beside me. "Go among those youngsters," [she told me]. "And what can I do with these street urchins?" [I replied]. "Go in and work," [she countered]. I went in among them; but what could I do? No

found myself in a grassy field where all those animals gamboled and grazed together without the least attempt on the part of some to harm the others.

Worn out with fatigue, I wanted to sit down by the side of a nearby road; but the young shepherdess invited me to walk on a little farther. After another short journey, I found myself in a large courtyard. It was ringed round with porticoes, and at one end stood a church. At that point I realized that four-fifths of those animals had turned into lambs, and their number grew very large. Just then several young shepherds came along to care for them; but they stayed only a short time, and were soon gone.

Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were changed into young shepherds, and as they grew up they cared for the others. As the number of young shepherds grew very large, they split up and went to other places to gather other strange animals and guide them into other folds.

I wanted to be off, because it seemed time [for me] to go and celebrate Mass; but the shepherdess invited me to look to the south. I looked and saw a field sown with maize, potatoes, cabbages, beets, [various kinds of] lettuce and many other vegetables. "Look again," she said to me. So I looked again and saw a magnificent, great church. An orchestra and music, both instrumental and vocal, were inviting me to sing Mass. Inside the church a white band was displayed on which was written in large block letters, Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea [Here is my dwelling-place, from hence my glory].

place was available to shelter even one of them. I wanted to do some good to them; but no one [of the people around] paid any attention to me or lent a helping hand. I then turned to the Lady, and she said, "Here is the place," and pointed to a grassy field. "There is nothing here but a field," I objected. She replied: "My Son and His Apostles had no place where to rest their heads." I began to work in that field; but I saw that my efforts were largely unavailing. I had to find some place where I could provide shelter for some [of the lads] that were wholly abandoned.

Then the Lady led me a little farther out and said: "Take a good look." I looked and saw a little church, a small courtyard, with youngsters, etc. But since the church soon proved inadequate, I again appealed to her and she pointed out another church and a much larger building. Then the Lady took me a little farther to the side, and said: "This is the place where the glorious martyrs of Turin, Adventor and Octavius, suffered martyrdom. It is my wish that here God be honored in a very special manner." So saying, she put her foot out and laid it on the place where the martyrdom had taken place, thus indicating the exact spot. I wanted to leave some kind of marker there so as to remember it; but I could not find anything about for this purpose. Nevertheless, I kept the place clearly in mind. In the meantime, I saw myself surrounded by a very vast number of youngsters; but, as I looked to Our Lady, the means and the premises also kept growing apace. I then saw a very large church rising on the very spot that she had pointed out to me as the place where the martyrdom had taken place. There were buildings all around [the church] and a beautiful square in front with a monument at the center of it.

While all this was going on, I had the help

	of priests and clerical students; but they helped me only for a short while, and then ran off. I would make the greatest efforts to win them over, but after a while they would leave, and I would be left all alone. So, I appealed once more to the Lady. "Do you want to know what will prevent them from getting away?" she asked. "Take this little cord or ribbon and bind their foreheads with it." I took the little white ribbon and I notice the word Obedience written on it. I tried to do as Our Lady suggested and began to bind the heads of some [of my helpers] with the ribbon, with immediate and great good results. And the results improved as time went on. Those individuals gave up the idea of leaving and stayed on to help me. Thus did our Congregation come into being.
As the dream continued, I made it a point of asking the shepherdess where I was, and what was the meaning of the journeying, of the stops, of the house, of the first and of the second church. [She replied:] "You will understand everything when with your bodily eyes you see in reality all that you now perceive only with the eyes of the mind." Thinking that I was awake, I said: "I see clearly, and I see with my bodily eyes. I know where I am going and what I am doing."	A lot of other things occurred [in the dream], but I see no point in relating them now (He may have been referring to great things to come). Suffice it to say that from that time on I have walked on sure ground both in matters regarding the Congregation and the Oratory, and in matters regarding politics. It was because of having seen church, house, playgrounds, youngsters, clerical students and priests helping me, and how the whole undertaking should be managed, that I began to mention the matter to others and to speak of it as a reality. That is why many people regarded the story as irrational nonsense. They thought I had lost my mind, and wanted to commit me.
At that moment the bell of the Church of St. Francis sounded the Angelus, and I woke up. This [dream] lasted most of the night. A lot of detail went with it. At the time I grasped little of its meaning since I put little faith in it. But I gained an understanding of it gradually as its premonitions came true one after another. And later, in conjunction with another dream, it even served as a guideline for my decisions.	
	As for the spot which the Virgin Mary had pointed out to Don Bosco as the place of Sts. Adventor's and Octavius' martyrdom, the Rev. Don Bosco had some further comments. He continued: I made it a point of never telling anybody where that had taken place. I simply gave the task of researching the matter over to Canon Gastaldi (now our Archbishop). The object was to determine as nearly as possible,

	on the basis of historical data, where the martyrdom had taken place (In fact I suggested that he publish a book on the life of these saints). He researched the matter thoroughly and concluded that Valdocco, and indeed approximately the area of our oratory, was the most likely place. Meanwhile the decision was taken to build the church at the very place of the martyrdom. That area had formerly been my property. However, since there had been proposals to build the church elsewhere, that is, where the Defilippi house was located, that plot of ground had been sold to the Rosminians, who meant to establish a house of their own there. Negotiations for the purchase of the Defilippi house were already far advanced. The church would be built on the courtyard in front of the house, so that it would have been visible from as far as Dora Grossa Street. But just as the deal was about to be closed, it fell through. The owners were no longer willing to let the house go. Then we again set our mind on the original location; but, of course, the land had been sold to the Rosminians. At this point we received word that Abbé Rosmini had passed away. Under the circumstances the Rosminians were no longer keen on setting up a house in Turin. So they put that land up for sale, but with the condition that [the agents] should not deal with Don Bosco. They refused to sell to him because they had bought the plot from him at a high price, and it was now depreciated by 8/10 [of its former value]. Seeing that they refused to sell to me, I got Mgr. [Bishop?] Negroni's brother to act for me (Negroni, o Negrotti, o Neirotti, o Neironi, or some like name). Without giving anything away, he handled the matter for me, and I appeared only for the signing of the contract. The procurator of the Rosminians was no little surprised at seeing me. He would have none of it, of course, since he had receive clear instructions to the contrary. But the matter was urgent. The notary public had been called in. Several city councilors were also present. There was no time for him to write [for instructions]. Everyone put pressure on him to go along with the terms of the negotiations and sell to me. So that is where the new church was built. Without any reference on my part to any specific place, one of the chapels

	turned out to be situated at the very spot that the Blessed Virgin had pointed out to me. It is the chapel we know as St. Anne's chapel. The altar in it, however, is consecrated specifically to the holy martyrs of Turin. I will not go into the wondrous events that accompanied the building of the church. I could tell you stories that would astonish you, so extraordinary are they. Also, in front of the church that the Blessed Virgin showed me there stretched a beautiful square with a monument in the middle of it. Now I shall wait and see if this will be feasible. All the difficulties that may be lying ahead are forestalled, and I walk in full daylight. I have a clear view of the things that will happen to us, of the difficulties, and of the manner of dealing with them.

Chapter 4

DON BOSCO'S DEFINITIVE VOCATIONAL COMMITMENT (1844-1846)

MO-En, 239-302; Bonetti, *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, 47-95 (sources to be read attentively and compared with the presentation in this chapter); G. Bracco, "Don Bosco and Civil society" in *Don Bosco's Place in History* (Roma: LAS, 1993); G. Bracco. "Don Bosco e le istituzioni"in *Torino e Don Bosco*, vol. I: *Saggi* (Torino, 1989); Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino* (Torino: SEI, 1935), 60-107 (with photographic reproduction of contracts, etc.).

Summary

1. Preliminary Questions
   (1) Don Bosco opposed by parish priests
   (2) Don Bosco persecuted by civil authority
   (3) Don Bosco abandoned and alone [?]
2. Settling of the Oratory on Mr. Pinardi's Property
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3. Confrontation with the Marchioness Barolo–Don Bosco's Definitive Vocational Choice
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Appendices: 1. Three Letters (Borel, Don Bosco, Barolo); 2. Catechetical Instruction in Don Bosco's Oratory

I. Preliminary Questions

In his *Memoirs*, speaking of the Oratory during its wandering period and before telling the story of its settling on Mr. Pinardi's property, Don Bosco deals with opposition encountered because of his commitment to young people at risk.

First he describes himself as the object of hostility from local parish priests who attempt to commit him as insane. He argues back that the young people of his oratory don't belong to any parish. The pastors finally agree that Don Bosco should stay with his oratory for the duration.[1]

Next comes the story of Vicar Michele Cavour's "persecution" of Don Bosco as a potential revolutionary. Don Bosco succeeds in appeasing him "for a while."[2]

He then relates how the Filippi brothers gave notice forbidding any further use of their field, and portrays himself as abandoned by his helpers and left to struggle on alone. Even Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti, left him with his "visions" of playground, house, church and helpers.[3] Finally comes the clincher, an ultimatum from the Marchioness Barolo that he should either leave his youngsters or her employ.[4]

What can we make of all this? Given the character of the *Memoirs*,[5] Don Bosco might be supposed to have emphasized and dramatized these difficulties, but it is unlikely that he would have created them out of whole cloth. We have in fact earlier, weighty attestation to the same effect. The Historical Outline of 1854 (written 20 years before the *Memoirs*) speaks in much the same terms of the local pastors' protest, of Vicar Cavour's and the civil authorities' opposition, and of Father Borel's doubts about Don Bosco's sanity.[6]

There are, however, other documents that seem to call into question certain aspects of the story as given in Don Bosco's account. These call for some comment for, as Pietro Braido points out, some of these "stereotypes" need critical evaluation or correction.

Don Bosco Opposed by Local Parish Priests?

Objections on the part of local pastors are recorded with "impatience" as instances of misunderstanding or willful opposition. Certainly Don Bosco met with opposition, mostly at the start, but the pastors' objections do not appear totally unreasonable in the context of Don Bosco's desire

[1] *MO-En*, 233-234.
[2] *MO-En*, 244-245.
[3] *MO-En*, 246.
[4] *MO-En*, 249-251.
[5] See Braido, "Memorie del futuro," *RSS* 11 (1992) 97-127 discussed earlier.
[6] For the text of *Historical Outline* of 1854 see later Chapter 6.

and strategy of complete autonomy in his oratory ministry. It should also be noted that Don Bosco was an "outsider" who was now gathering young people at the outskirts of the city and outside the parish structure. He was also from a pastoral program (the *Pastoral Institute*) that was still trying to find acceptance among Turin's clergy.

Don Bosco Persecuted as a "Revolutionary?"

In the context and out of the experience of revolutionary uprisings through the period of the Restoration, and with the mounting pressure for political change in the 1840s, it was inevitable that the authorities should look with suspicion on such gatherings as the oratory. In the *Memoirs* (as well as in the *Historical Sketch* of 1854), the Vicar of Turin, Marquis Michael Cavour is represented as harshly opposed to Don Bosco's work.[7] However, such intransigence appears less credible in the context of Vicar Cavour's documented unfailing defense of, and deference to, constituted authority. Now, Don Bosco was catechizing the young with the permission and support of that authority, the respected Archbishop Fransoni and His Majesty King Charles Albert, to name but the highest-ranking. In addition Don Bosco was working in consort with laymen and priests of proven conservative persuasion, connected with the royal house: Count Giuseppe Provana di Collegno, Father Joseph Cafasso, Father John Borel, Father Sebastian Pacchiotti, the last two having been Don Bosco's close associates in oratory ministry almost from the start.[8]

Furthermore, the recent discovery of a letter addressed by Don Bosco to the Marquis, dated March 13, 1846 and bearing the Marquis' brief endorse-

[7] *MO-En*, 244-245, 276-279, and *Historical Sketch* of 1854. (Perhaps the *Historical Sketch* served as source for these passages of the *Memoirs* (1874/75). Marquis Michele Benso of Cavour (1781-1850) was the father of [Marquis] Gustavo and [Count] Camillo (the future prime minister and the political leader of the unification of Italy). The Marquis served as Vicar, governing the city for the king (*vicario e sovraintendente di politica e polizia*), from 1835 to 1847. Before 1848 (the year of revolutions and constitutions), the city was governed by a Vicar, appointed by the king, assisted by two "syndics" and by a council of fifty-seven officials (*decurioni*). After 1848 the city was governed by a mayor (*sindaco*), likewise appointed by the king, and a city council.

[8] Cf. G. Bracco, "Don Bosco and Civil society," in *Don Bosco's Place in History* (Roma: LAS, 1993), [239-244], 241; also Id., "Don Bosco e le istituzioni," in *Torino e Don Bosco*, vol. I: *Saggi* (Torino, 1989), 123-126 (Don Bosco e Don Borel).

ment on the back, makes this representation of a hostile Cavour even less credible.[9] The letter reveals, among other things, that Vicar Cavour had been sympathetic in the past, and that Don Bosco had reason to believe that the Vicar would show his good will now that the Oratory was about to settle at Pinardi's.

> The role which Your Excellency plays in everything that concerns the public good, both civic and moral, leads me to hope that you will welcome a report on a catechetical program we have started. Since its purpose is the good of young people, you yourself have on a number of occasions shown favor and support for it. […]
>
> You are a good-hearted person, and have at heart everything that may contribute to the common good of society. For this reason we seek your protection on these our endeavors. […]
>
> [Endorsement in Cavour's hand for his secretary:] Reply. *I have spoken with His Excellency the Most Reverend Archbishop and with Count Colegno* [*sic*], and I *agree* that, without any doubt, much may be gained from a catechism program. I shall be happy to see the Rev. Father Bosco in my office at 2 P.M., March 26. Benso di Cavour.

Note Cavour's autograph endorsement. But as related by Don Bosco in the *Historical Outline* (1854) and in the *Memoirs* (1874), the meeting turned out to be anything but "happy."

Don Bosco Abandoned and Alone?

The dramatic representation of Don Bosco abandoned and alone with his youngsters, as on the Filippi field, appears even more doubtful. In his *Memoirs* he writes:

> We came to the last Sunday on which I was allowed to keep the Oratory in the field [...] *Finding myself alone with no one to help me*, my energy gone, my health undermined, with no idea where I could gather my boys in the future, I was deeply troubled. I withdrew to one side, and as I walked alone I began to cry, perhaps for the first time. […][10]

[9] G. Bracco, "Don Bosco and Civil Society" in *Don Bosco's Place in History*, 241; and in greater detail, "Don Bosco e le istituzioni" in *Torino e Don Bosco* I, 126-128 (text of the letter), 128-130 (comments). The letter is critically edited in Motto, *Ep* I, 66-68. For the text of the letter in translation, see Appendix below.

[10] *MO-En*, 255.

Certainly Don Bosco experienced difficulties and had disagreements with coworkers. But the difficulty should not be generalized. The continuous presence, alongside Don Bosco, of trusted collaborators, both priests and lay people, is documented for the first fifteen years of the Oratory. These people helped with the work, and lent moral and financial support.

Speaking of the oratory activities in the Philippi field, Don Bosco writes in his *Memoirs*: "Doing the best we could, we held catechism classes, we sang hymns and we chanted vespers. Then Fr. Borrelli or I standing upon an embankment or on a chair would give short sermon to the youngsters, who gathered and listened attentively."[11] In familiar conversations with his Salesians, Don Bosco spoke at various times of that last Sunday on the Fillippi field. Giulio Barberis in his autograph chronicle records one such conversation, in which Don Bosco states: "It was the last Sunday on which I had use of the field, and here [Mr. Pinardi] comes up to me again. I was walking along the edge of the field absorbed in thought *while Dr. Borel was delivering his sermon*."[12]

Don Bosco then was not alone on the Filippi field on that Sunday. Father Borel was preaching the sermon, and possibly other oratory workers were with the lads, three or four hundred of them. That Don Bosco was not alone, however, also finds confirmation from the above-mentioned letter of March 13, 1846 to Vicar Cavour, written as negotiations with Mr. Pinardi were in progress. "Finally, earlier this week we [Rev. Dr. Borelli, Father Pacchiotti and myself] entered into negotiations with Mr. Pinardi for a site." Confirmation is also had from the fact that the contract for the 3-year lease of the shed was between Mr. Pinardi and Father Borel.[13]

In view of such attestations Don Bosco's statement in his *Memoirs* that Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti thought he had gone mad and left him leaves one perplexed.[14] Bracco writes:

> One thing appeared obvious from the moment I began to search the city archives for documents concerning Don Bosco: Don Bosco was *never alone*. He worked with a group of priests who all seemed to share the same objective,

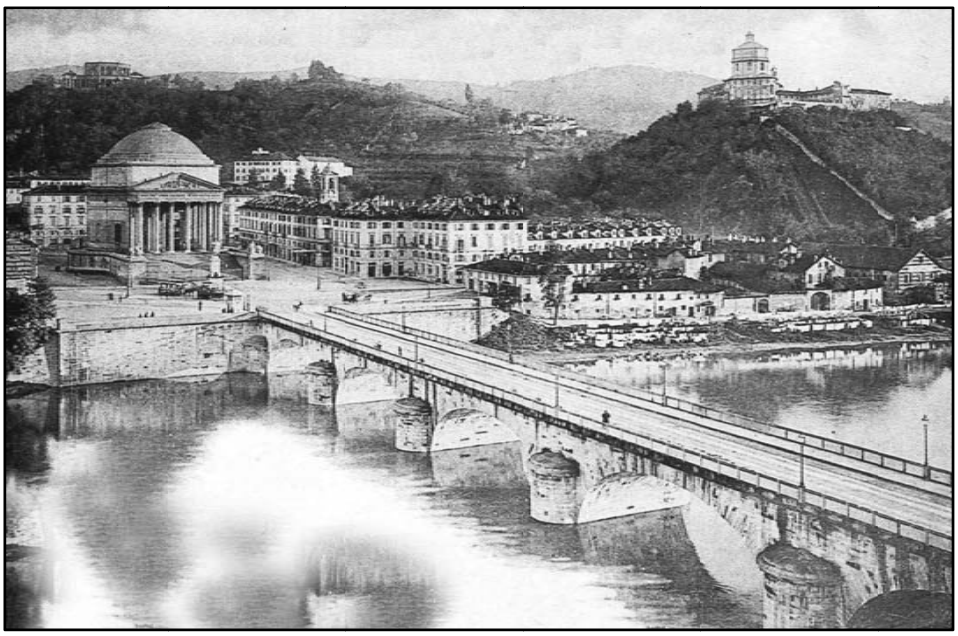
[11] *MO-En*, 239.

[12] Barberis, *Autograph Chronicle*, Notebook III, 49-50, entry of January 1, 1876; *FDB* 835 D12 - E1.

[13] Fedele Giraudi, *L'oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei salesiani in Torino* (Torino: SEI, 1935), 60-107 (with photographic reproduction of contracts, etc.).

[14] *MO-En*, 246.

namely to do something about the under-privileged and about social unrest, using methods that were already well tried.[15]



11 – Church of the *Gran Madre* and Mount of the Capuchins

II. Settling of the Oratory on Mr. Pinardi's Property

Traditional Story of the Settling in Don Bosco's *Memoirs*[16]

In a familiar conversation in 1875 recorded by Barberis in his chronicle, Don Bosco, reminisced about the first settling of the Oratory, and related to his Salesians how he was told of the availability of a place suitable for a "laboratory."[17] He told the story, set on Palm Sunday 1846, in much the same terms as in his *Memoirs*, which he had completed some time before. The bearer of the good tidings was a man named Pancrazio Soave and he was referring to a building owned by a gentleman named Francesco Pinardi.

[15] G. Bracco, "Don Bosco and Civil Society" in *Don Bosco's Place in History*, 241.
[16] *MO-En*, 255-257 and 265-266.
[17] Barberis, *Autograph Chronicle*, Notebook I, 27, entry of May 26, 1875, *FDB* 833 D1.

Francesco Pinardi was an immigrant from Arcisate (Varese, Lombardy). On July 14, 1845, he had purchased a two-story house and surrounding land from the Filippi brothers for 14,000 lire. (The Filippi brothers owned a sizable tract of land in the area with houses on it.) On November 10, 1845, Pinardi leased house and property to another immigrant, one Pancrazio Soave from Verolengo (Turin). Mr. Soave was starting a starch manufacturing business, which he installed on the ground floor of the house. Now, a "shed" (*tettoia*) that was being built at the time for use as a laundry,[18] a lean-to on the north side of the house, was not part of the deal. It is explicitly excluded in the Pinardi-Soave contract: "excluding the shed that is being built behind the aforementioned house and the land adjoining it."

Mr. Soave notified Don Bosco of the availability of the lean-to as the latter agonized over being dismissed from the Filippi field and over not knowing where next to gather the oratory. As quoted above, he writes in is Memoirs: "Finding myself alone with no one to help me, my energy gone, my health undermined, with no idea where I could gather my boys in the future, I was deeply troubled."[19]

At Mr. Soave's news Don Bosco acted immediately; leaving the Oratory in the care of Fr. Peter Merla,[20] who happened "to show up" he followed Mr. Soave to look at the place–and the rest is history.

Reconstructed Story of the Settling as Attested in Archival Documents

Don Bosco's above-mentioned letter to Vicar Cavour, dated (Friday) March 13, 1846 gives us points of reference for a reconstruction of the transaction. Don Bosco writes:

> Earlier this week we entered into negotiations with Mr. [Francesco] Pinardi for a site. We agreed on the sum of two hundred and eighty francs for a large room suitable for use as an oratory, along with two other rooms and an adjacent piece of ground. We think this place will suit our purpose, first because of

[18] The place was situated near the Dora River (to the north) where washerwomen were plying their trade. This explains why Mr. Soave went into the starch business, and why Mr. Pinardi was building a laundry.

[19] *MO-En*, 255.

[20] Father Pietro Merla (1815-1855) helped with Don Bosco's oratory up to 1852, after which he went on to found special works of charity of his own [*MO-da Silva*, 154].

> its close proximity to the *Rifugio*,[21] then because of its location far from any church, though near enough to several houses.[22] The one thing we need to know is whether it is acceptable to you from the standpoint of the neighborhood and of the wider society.

According to the above statement, Mr. Pinardi was contacted between Sunday March 8 and Friday March 13. Having received the information about the shed (from Mr. Soave–so in the *Memoirs*), the Barolo chaplains (Fathers Bosco, Borel and Pacchiotti), who were running the oratory, acted immediately. They contacted the owner (Mr. Pinardi) and negotiated the terms; then Don Bosco was delegated to notify Vicar Cavour by letter and to ask for his permission and support. On the basis of the letter, we may conclude that Soave (on Pinardi's behalf) brought the news of the availability of the lean-to no later than Sunday, March 8, for the negotiations for the lease were already in progress that very week.

Don Bosco had dropped a hint to the Vicar: "Should you wish to speak to me or to my colleagues, we are at your service; indeed we would be anxious to oblige." Vicar Cavour's note for his secretary stated: "I shall be happy to see the Rev. Father Bosco in my office on Monday, March 30 at 2 P.M. March 28, Benso di Cavour." The secretary replied to Don Bosco on March 28.[23] Don Bosco called at the vicar's office, and by March 30 he had the desired permit. The contract for the lease was drawn up and signed by Mr. Pinardi and Father Borel on April 1, 1846.[24]

According to the *Memoirs*, however (both in the original draft and in Berto's copy), Mr. Soave alerted Don Bosco to the availability of the shed on Palm Sunday, which Don Bosco erroneously dated on March 15, 1846.

[21] Don Bosco, since being hired to serve as chaplain of Barolo's Little Hospital of St. Philomena, lived at Barolo's Hospice of Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners ("*Rifugio*") like the chaplains, Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti.

[22] The place was situated in the northern outskirts of the city in the sparsely populated district of Valdocco. The Oratory would thereby not be connected with any parish church, though not totally isolated.

[23] Vicar Cavour to Don Bosco, March 28, 1846, original in *ASC* 38: *Apertura*, *FDB* 228 E5; edited in *EBM* II, 316-317. Lemoyne in his reconstruction of the relationship between Vicar Cavour and the Oratory basically follows Don Bosco's *Memoirs* in speaking of the Vicar's unrelenting opposition. But, as noted above, one is hard put to understand how the Vicar could be so against the Oratory, when Archbishop Fransoni, Count Collegno and King Charles Albert were staunch supporters [see Historical Outline of 1854 in Appendix to Chapter 6].

[24] Giraudi, *L'Oratorio* (1935), 65-67 (photocopy of first page of contract Pinardi-Borel, 69); Motto, *Epistolario* I, 68; *MO-da Silva*, 147 and 153; *MO-En*, 260.

Father Giovanni Bonetti, saw the mistake and took the liberty of emending this date (March 15) in Berto's copy, to April 5, because in 1846 Easter fell on April 12. These are the dates that went into Bonetti's *Storia dell'Oratorio* (published in the *Bollettino Salesiano*), into his *Cinque Lustri* (*Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*), and into the *Biographical Memoirs*.

Comments

It should be noted that neither the letter nor the Pinardi-Borel contract describe the place as a "shed" (*tettoia*), the designation used in the *Memoirs*. The letter has "one large room suitable for use as an oratory [chapel] with two other rooms." This is confirmed by the contract, which speaks of "a great, rectangular three-sectioned room (*tre membri di un gran camerone*) with courtyard in font and on the sides." Obviously, the "large room" refers materially to this lean-to built at the back of Mr. Pinardi's house. The two additional rooms were separate, partitioned back sections of the lean–to, not rooms in the Pinardi house, which was in Mr. Soave's lease.

The Pinardi house was a two-story building of modest dimensions: about 20 m. (ca. 65 ft.) in length, 6 m. (ca. 19.5 ft.) in width and 7 m. (23 ft.) in height. It had 4 rooms and additional spaces on the ground floor, and 6 corresponding rooms on the second story. The "*camerone*" (referred to as a "shed" only because it was not a separate building) spanned the length of the house itself (20 m.) and had the same width (6 m.) But it was no more than 2.5 m. (ca. 8.5 ft.) in height. The main section would serve as a chapel, and the two smaller sections would serve as sacristy and storage room respectively.[25]

Most probably the shed began to be adapted for chapel use even before the signing of the contract on April 1, and continued to be worked on after its inauguration.

Then, according to Don Bosco's *Memoirs*, "the archbishop on April ….. granted the faculty of blessing and dedicating that humble building for divine worship. That was done on Sunday, April ….. 1846."[26] The dates are left blank both in Don Bosco's and in Berto's Mss.

In the Biographical Memoirs Lemoyne notes that Don Bosco had all appurtenances, among them a small, framed picture of St. Francis de Sales,

[25] Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 100.
[26] *MO-En*, 265.

brought from the *Rifugio* and from the shack on the Filippi field. Then he continues:

> That very morning [Easter Sunday. April 12, 1846] Don Bosco blessed and dedicated that modest building for divine worship in honor of the Saint; then he offered holy Mass attended by numerous youngsters, the neighbors and other persons from the city.[27]

12 – The Pinardi house (wall painting of Paolo Giovanni Crida)

However, the chancery document granting the faculty, and dated Good Friday, April 10, 1846, delegates Father Borel to perform the ceremony. On the *verso* of the Archbishop's decree, Father Borel wrote that he "came to bless the Oratory on April 13, the second day of Easter." It is unlikely that he was mistaken. Hence we must conclude that the chapel was first used on Easter Sunday, April 12, and blessed by Father Borel the following day.[28]

[27] *IBM* II, 429; *EBM* II, 334 (translation mine).

[28] Lemoyne, as he notes in *Documenti*, knew "that Father Borel was delegated to bless the new Oratory and that he performed the ceremony on April 13, the second day of Easter [Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 63].

Don Bosco in his *Memoirs* admits that the place was nothing but a hovel and that its immediate neighbors, the Pinardi house (to which the shed was attached) and the Bellezza house next door, were places of ill repute.[29] But at least now the Oratory had a place to call its own, or nearly so, and Don Bosco could look forward to the day when the whole Pinardi property would be in his possession.

III. Confrontation With the Marchioness Barolo – Don Bosco's Definitive Vocational Choice

Context of the Confrontation

Don Bosco had been hired by the Marchioness Barolo to serve as chaplain of the Little Hospital of St. Philomena that was to care for handicapped little girls. While it was still under construction, the Marchioness had agreed that the Oratory could use the "chaplains' quarters" in it for its meetings. But it was inevitable that, as the hospital neared completion, the Oratory should have to meet elsewhere. Moreover, the youngsters, steadily increasing in number, were becoming a serious aggravation to the Barolo institutions. The oratory moved out of the Little Hospital on May 18, 1845 and went through a period of "wandering" an odyssey that that took it through five different "ports o' call." At last, on April 1, 1846 it settled on Mr. Pinardi's property, the place that was to become its permanent home.[30] When the Little Hospital was dedicated on August 10, 1845, Don Bosco began to serve as its chaplain, the job for which the Marchioness had hired him in the first place. As we learn from an exchange of letters between Father Borel and the Marchioness Barolo, Don Bosco had been ill since leaving the Pastoral Institute in 1844, and his illness was getting progressively more serious. But in spite of it on Sundays (with the help of Barolo's chaplains, Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti), Don Bosco would spend the whole day with his boys, and keep himself available to help them as needed also during the week.

[29] *Mo-En*, 265 and cf. 296. In Barberis's autograph chronicle, Don Bosco in telling the story of the settling to some Salesians after supper, is reported to have said: "I would tell you how the first little house was purchased, but it's a long story. It stood in this very space now occupied by this dining room [It was demolished in 1856 to make room for a larger building]. The first thing to note is that it was a whorehouse" [Barberis, *Autograph Chronicle*, Notebook III, 49, entry of January 1, 1876; *FDB* 835 D12].

[30] The "wandering" was described in the preceding Chapter 3.

The Marchioness had formed designs on her young chaplain, whom she admired and valued highly and was willing to do everything in her power to get him back to good health and keep him for her institutions. Don Bosco, however, by this time had made a firm, in fact irrevocable, commitment to the Oratory. It seemed inevitable therefore that he would have to resign from the chaplaincy. The Marchioness, however, looked at things from a different point of view. She fully expected that Don Bosco should give up "his vagabonds" and work full time as chaplain of her institutes. This is the context of the Marchioness' confrontation with Don Bosco and of her "ultimatum" as reported in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* and edited with additional material in the *Biographical Memoirs*.[31]

Don Bosco's Poor Health and Events leading up to the Confrontation

Toward the end of September 1845, the Marchioness Barolo had gone to Rome to seek the approval of the constitutions of her congregations, the Sisters of St. Anne and the Sisters of St. Mary Magdalene. Several months of difficult negotiations were necessary before she could win the approval and could return to Turin. While she was thus occupied in Rome, Father Borel by letter of January 3, 1846 reported to her on Don Bosco's deteriorating health and on what was being done to help him. They had rearranged the Masses at the *Refuge* and at the Little Hospital to allow Don Bosco some extra sleep in the morning. They also had gotten him to promise that after Epiphany (January 6) he would take a long period of rest away from the Oratory and the chaplaincy. Father Guala and Father Cafasso insisted on it.[32] Don Bosco, however, did not keep his promise and elected instead to stay with the Oratory, which on January 4 (1846) had begun to meet at Father Moretta's house (the fourth "station" of the Wandering). After several arduous months in Rome and the successful accomplishment of her goal, the Marchioness on May 6, 1846 returned to Turin to a joyful welcome from her religious communities and her chaplains. The Sisters of St. Anne

[31] For a description of the "confrontation" and "ultimatum" see *MO-En*, 249-252, noting that in the *Memoirs* Don Bosco places the event before the settling of the Oratory at Pinardi's. For Lemoyne's account see *EBM* II, 356-363.

[32] Father Borel to Marchioness Barolo, January 3, 1846, in *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *Borel*, *FDB* 552 D9, edited in *EBM* II, 276-277 (correct the date to January 3, 1846). Perhaps Fathers Guala and Cafasso had offered to sponsor his "vacation." See the complete text of the letter in Appendix below.

and their constitutions had been definitively approved. The Oratory had recently settled at the Pinardi shed (April 1), which had been inaugurated as a chapel on Easter Sunday (April 12), and blessed by Father Borel the following day. From a long letter she wrote to Father Borel, to "avoid" meeting with him face to face, it emerges that the two did not see eye to eye with regard to Don Bosco and his oratory work. The letter bears the date of May 18, 1846, and its salient passages are worth quoting.

> [Dear Father Borel] A conversation with Father Cafasso has led me to see the necessity of our reaching an understanding [about Don Bosco]. […]
>
> When St. Philomena Hospital became the latest addition [to my institutions], we agreed on the necessity of appointing a chaplain for it. […] You selected the excellent Don Bosco and introduced him to me. I liked him instantly, since I noticed that spirit of recollection and simplicity about him that is the mark of holiness. […] The hospital was not expected to be ready for occupancy, and in fact was not, until August 1845. But in my anxiety to secure the services of such a worthy priest, I agreed to engage him then and there at a regular salary. However, a few weeks after he had taken up residence with you, both the Mother Superior of the *Rifugio* and myself realized that his health could stand no work. […]
>
> Don Bosco's health continued to get worse, up to the time of my trip to Rome, but, although he was already coughing with bloody sputum, he kept working. Then I received a letter from you, informing me that Don Bosco was in no condition to carry on the work he had been hired for. I replied immediately that I was prepared to continue his full salary, on the sole condition that he take a total rest, and I am ready to fulfill that promise even now. […]
>
> You have accused me of being against the religious instruction that these boys receive every Sunday, and against the care that Don Bosco takes of them during the week. That's not true. […] I approve and praise the instruction being given to the boys, but because of our type of inmates, I object to the boys' habit of gathering around the doorways of my institutions. I firmly believe that Don Bosco needs a complete rest. […] This is the more important to me as my respect for him has grown apace.
>
> Dear Father, I know that we differ on this point. Were it not for my conscience, I would be ready, as always, to submit to your judgment. […][33]

[33] Marchioness Barolo to Father Borel, May 18, 1846, in *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *FDB* 541 B5-8; edited in *EBM* II, 360-361 (See Appendix below for full text).

The Confrontation

The Marchioness' letter clearly reveals the high esteem she entertained for Don Bosco as a person and for his oratory work. That she wanted him for her institutions, and wanted him healthy, is also evident. All along she had been worried about his deteriorating health and sincerely ("in conscience") wanted this problem resolved. It seems therefore that the inevitable confrontation was not in the nature of a bald "ultimatum." In any case, the Marchioness' proposal came too late. Don Bosco had already entered into a covenant with his Oratory, and his resolve could no longer be shaken–in sickness or in health.

To the Marchioness' advice that he should give up his oratory work and become a permanent chaplain in her institutions, Don Bosco, as he writes in his *Memoirs*, replied:

> You have money and will have no trouble in finding as many priests as you want for your institutes. It's not the same with my poor youngsters. If I turn my back on them now, all I've been doing for them will go up in smoke. Therefore, while I will continue to do what I can for the *Refuge*, I will resign from any regular responsibility and devote myself seriously to the care of abandoned young people.

The Marchioness pointed out that, ill as he was and with nothing to live on, he would not survive. Then she offered some "motherly advice:"

> I'll continue to pay your salary, and I'll increase it if you wish. Go away and rest somewhere for a year, three years, five years. When you're fully recovered, come back to the *Refuge* and you'll be most welcome. Otherwise you put me in the unpleasant position of having to dismiss you from my institutes. Think it over seriously.

Don Bosco replied without hesitation:

> I've thought it over already. My life is consecrated to the good of young people. I thank you for the offers you're making me, but I can't turn back from the path that Divine Providence has traced out for me.

In that case, the Marchioness concluded, "you are dismissed from this moment."[34] To prevent malicious gossip, the Marchioness agreed to allow

[34] *MO-En*, 251-252; *EBM* II, 358-359.

Don Bosco to keep his room at the *Refuge* for another three months. But, having been dismissed from the chaplaincy, he was now without a salary and would also have to find new lodgings.

That is why Don Bosco and Father Borel, acted immediately to sub-lease three rooms in the Pinardi house, in spite of its being a "house of ill repute." The notary public recorded the transaction as follows:

> In the year of our Lord 1846, on June 5, Pancrazio Soave, Father Giovanni Borel and Father Giovanni Bosco, here present, have arranged to sub-lease three adjoining rooms at the eastern end of the second floor of the house owned by Francesco Pinardi. The house at present is in the lease of the above-mentioned Pancrazio Soave. The present contract will be in force from July 1 [1846] to January 1, 1849. […]
>
> Turin, June 5, 1846
>
> [signed:] Soave Pancrazio
> Father Giovanni Borel
> Chiodo Giorgio, Not. Pub.[35]

Apparently, Don Bosco's plan was to rent rooms as soon as they became available until the whole second story of the house (with its 6 rooms) was under his control, and its unsavory tenants were dislodged.[36]

IV. Don Bosco's Illness of 1844-1846

From the foregoing paragraphs we may gain some understanding of the situation in which Don Bosco found himself at that crucial time in his life. The years 1844-1846, the difficult period of his definitive ministerial commitment to "poor and abandoned" young people, were marked by serious, in fact life-threatening, illness. This calls for an additional comment.

[35] F. Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco* (1935), 53.

[36] Words spoken by Don Bosco and reported in Barberis' original chronicle outline the strategy: "Some time later, I discovered that the house attached (*attigua*)] was actually a whorehouse. You may well imagine my embarrassment! I started by renting a couple of rooms, paying as much as double what they were worth, but made no use of them. As I continued to rent more rooms, the landlord would urge me to move in. "I don't really need them now," I would reply. "We'll be moving in as soon as I have got them all rented" [Notebook I, 27-28, entry of May 26, 1875. *FDB* 833 D1-2].

On-going and Worsening Illness

The Marchioness Barolo, in her letter to Father Borel, quoted above, outlined the progress of Don Bosco's quite serious illness. He had been ill since leaving the Pastoral Institute and moving in with Father Borel at the *Refuge* (October 1844). He was coughing up bloody sputum, and his health had been getting progressively worse.[37]

Various factors combined to aggravate the situation. In May (1845) the Oratory had moved out of its space at the Little Hospital and had begun the "wandering." When the Little Hospital opened its doors in August 1845, Don Bosco began fulfilling his duties as chaplain while at the same time attending to the Oratory. Meanwhile he would be working late into the night writing, a practice that aggravated the situation still further. This is the period of his earliest writings. Besides the *Life of Louis Comollo* written while still at the Pastoral Institute and published in October 1844, Don Bosco was able to send to his publishers several other works, compiled during these years, the fruits of his nocturnal labors. We may mention the *Devotee of the Guardian Angel* (1845), he *History of the Church* (1845), the *Six Sundays in Honor of St. Aloysius* (1846), *Practice of Devotion to the Mercy of God* (n. d.), the *Companion of Youth* (1847), and the *Bible History* (1847).[38] The strain and stress from such intensive work were responsible for the serious condition described in Marchioness Barolo's letter to Father Borel.

At the beginning of October 1845, recurring illness forced Don Bosco

[37] Don Bosco was not the indomitable athlete imaged in popular biographies. He was plagued with illness since his teen-age years. While in secondary school at Chieri, so he tells us in his *Memoirs*, he was in the habit of reading late into the night. He adds, "This practice so ruined my health that for some years I seemed to have one foot in the grave." [*MO-En*, 108] When leaving the Pastoral Institute in 1844, Don Bosco (according to the *Biographical Memoirs*) was thinking of joining the Oblates of the Virgin Mary and going to the missions. Father Cafasso told him: "The foreign missions are not for you. […] You can't even stand a minute in a closed carriage […] without getting sick to your stomach […] and you want to cross the ocean? You'd die during the voyage" [*EBM* II, 161].

[38] *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo […]* (Torino: Speirani e Ferrero, 1844); *Il Divoto dell'Angelo Custode* (Torino: Paravia, 1845); *Storia ecclesiastica ad uso delle scuole utile per ogni ceto di persone […]* (Torino: Speirani e Ferrero, 1845); *Le sei domeniche e la novena di san Luigi Gonzaga* (Torino: Speirani e Ferrero, 1846); *Esercizio di divozione alla misericordia di Dio* (Torino: Eredi Botta, [no date]); *Il Giovane provveduto per la pratica dei suoi doveri […]* (Torino: Paravia, 1847); *Storia sacra per uso delle scuole […]* (Torino: Speirani e Ferrero, 1847). For the text of these works see *Opere Edite*, under the year of publication. Don Bosco's writings from various periods are discussed in later chapters.

to take a short vacation. He left Turin for Becchi on foot with a group of seven Oratory boys, but at Chieri he collapsed. The following day he rallied and could reach his destination. He spent the next four days in bed. We learn this from a letter addressed by Don Bosco to Father Borel, a letter however that he could not finish for sheer lack of strength.[39] From a second letter we learn that in the next few days (it was vintage time) his ailment got worse. Gradually he got some of his strength back, but he continued to be plagued by sickness.[40]

Back in Turin and to his hospital and oratory work later in October, he felt no better. But, as the Marchioness writes, "although he was already coughing with bloody sputum, he kept on working."

By December 1845 Fathers Borel and Pacchiotti, as mentioned above, saw the necessity of rearranging the schedule of Masses to allow Don Bosco longer hours of rest. Father Borel on January 3 (1846) reported to the Marchioness (in Rome) that the arrangement was having some good effect. Then he continues:

> Thanks to your solicitude, he will be able to take a complete leave of absence from his duties at the *Refuge*. He will go away for a while and he is also under orders also to drop all other activities. Today he gave me a definite reply about his intentions and promised that the day after the Epiphany [January 7, 1846] he will place himself under our orders. He will have to do a lot of explaining to Father Guala and Father Cafasso, if he does not keep his promise.[41]

He did not keep his promise. The Oratory (meeting at Father Moretta's house at the time) required his presence. In the dead of winter, his condition deteriorated further. It is at this time that Father Borel suggested a scaling down of the Oratory operation, restricting it to a small group of younger children. In response Don Bosco (referring to the Dream of 1844) claimed that oratory premises were already in place, just waiting to be found (Had he lost his mind?).[42]

[39] Don Bosco to Father Borel, unsigned and undated (but postmarked October 11, 1845), Motto, *Epistolario* I, 60; *EBM* II, 251-252.

[40] Don Bosco to Father Borel, October 17, 1845, Motto, *Epistolario* I, 61-62; *EBM* II, 253. The sickness is described as "*flusso*," which may mean diarrhea, rectal bleeding, hemorrhages and the like.

[41] Father Borel to Marchioness Barolo, January 3, 1846, in *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *Borel*, *FDB* 552 D9; edited in *EBM* II, 276-277 (given in Appendix below).

[42] *MO-En*, 246.

Then, as related above, we see Don Bosco and the Oratory evicted from Father Moretta's house and meeting on the Filippi field, before the renting of the Pinardi shed in early spring (April 1, 1846).[43] There followed Don Bosco's confrontation with the Marchioness and his dismissal from her service. Meanwhile, Don Bosco and Father Borel were taking initial steps to secure a foothold in the Pinardi house itself by renting rooms in it.

The Crisis

Immediately thereafter, that is in early July,[44] Don Bosco was again on the verge of collapse. Father Borel sent him to spend some time with the parish priest of Sassi, a salubrious hill town in the eastern outskirts of Turin. It didn't work. Since the place was within walking distance, the youngsters of the Oratory, boys from the Christian Brothers' school and others left him no peace.[45]

He returned to the *Refuge* gravely ill with bronchial pneumonia and took to his bed. At one point he was near death and was despaired of, but the youngsters' prayers and vows obtained for him the grace of recovery.[46]

As soon as the doctor allowed him to leave his room at the *Refuge* in early August, Don Bosco, as had been agreed,[47] vacated the premises and had his belongings transferred to the Pinardi house. The rooms he had rented there may not yet have been ready for occupancy, or he preferred not to move in before he had secured the whole second story of the house. In any case, in the second week in August he retreated to Becchi for a long period of convalescence.[48] Father Borel directed the Oratory himself with the help of Fathers John Baptist Vola, Hyacinth Carpano, Joseph Trivero and Sebastian Pacchiotti. On this point, in a passage already quoted, Goffredo Casalis in his *Dictionary* writes:

[43] When speaking of his own condition on the Filippi field, Don Bosco writes: "With no one to help me, *my energy gone*, *my health undermined*, with no idea where I could gather my boys in the future, I was deeply troubled" [*MO-En*, 255].

[44] *MO-En*, 293.

[45] *MO-En*, 290-291.

[46] *MO-En*, 290-293.

[47] *MO-En*, 251-252.

[48] A few interesting letters (from Don Bosco to Father Borel) from this period have survived [Motto, *Epistolario* I, 68-74; *EBM* II, 388-399].

> These four priests, together with Father Borel, during a period of four months replaced the founder of the institute and implemented its program in a manner that soon gained them the esteem and affection of all the youngsters. Such esteem and affection had to be gained, as was the case with the founder, at the cost of patient endurance and numberless sacrifices. For at the beginning this institution was much poorer than it is at present, the lads were unruly and completely uneducated, and many of them more often than not had nothing to eat, and nothing to wear but rags.[49]

On November 3, 1846, Don Bosco, not yet fully recovered, returned to Turin with his mother Margaret. For the sake of appearances, as already noted, the Marchioness had allowed Don Bosco to keep his room at the *Refuge* for "three months" after his dismissal.[50] In August Don Bosco had had his things moved from the *Refuge* to the Pinardi house. That is where he and his mother took up residence on coming from Becchi. They had brought with them some basic goods and some money from the sale of some pieces of land and a vineyard. Margaret sent for her wedding trousseau, which eventually provided cloth and linen for the church.[51]

There has been speculation on the reasons that motivated Margaret to give up her quiet life with Joseph at Becchi and at the age of 58/59 move to a strange city.

Apart from the need to safeguard her son's reputation in that "house of ill repute,"[52] she may have wished to be near her son, to care for him in his still uncertain health condition. The fact, however, that she had her wedding trousseau brought up would indicate that a permanent move was intended. Perhaps, the dedicated Christian woman that she was, having seen the youngsters' situation she wished to share in her son's work for the poor and be a mother to the children. But, even if motivated by such high-minded motives, at a more practical level she may just have wished not to be a burden to Joseph and his large family, especially that winter, when the wheat crop had failed and a famine was setting in.

This famine, one of the most severe in the century, affected several European countries. Margaret's move could perhaps be seen as one tiny indication of that widespread grave crisis that led to the Paris revolution of 1848 and to Marx' Communist Manifesto.[53]

[49] Goffredo Casalis, *Dizionario [...]*, vol. XXI, 716; *EBM* II, 389.
[50] *MO-En*, 251-252.
[51] *MO-En*, 297.
[52] *MO-En*, 296.
[53] Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 76, Footnote 12 and related text.

Appendix I

1. Father John Borel's Letter to Marchioness Barolo Regarding Don Bosco's Health (January 3, 1846)

ASC 123: *Persone, Borel*, *FDB* 552 D9, edited in *EBM* II, 276-277 (correct the date to January 3, 1846).

January 3, 1846

My dear Marchioness:

Your generous suggestion regarding our beloved Don Bosco, and the goodwill you show him, are a proof of how much you value this devoted priest. He will certainly not fail to profit by it, and, on my part, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Since the beginning of December, when it became obvious that Don Bosco needed rest, Father Pacchiotti said the hospital Mass leaving to Don Bosco the second Mass at the *Rifugio.* The marked improvement in his condition proved that it was a wise move; of course, we don't think that he has made a perfect recovery. I have firm hope, however, that he will soon be well again– especially since, thanks to your solicitude, he will be able to take a complete rest from his duties at the *Rifugio* and go away for a while. He will be under orders also to drop all other activities.

Today he gave me a definite reply about his intentions and promised that the day after Epiphany [January 7] he will place himself under orders. If he does not keep his promise e will have a lot of explaining to do to Father Guala and Father Cafasso.

Incidentally, the two good Fathers have offered to send us another priest for the second Mass at the *Rifugio.* Should all our efforts and diligence prove insufficient to the needs, I will call on the superior of the Oblates for one of the usual confessors. As soon as I come across, God willing, a priest imbued with the spirit necessary for this work, I shall not fail to notify you. Again may I express my gratitude for wanting to provide an additional priest for this ministry.

Your obedient servant,
Fr. John Borel

2. Don Bosco's Letter to Vicar Marquis Michael Cavour (March 13, 1846)[54]

G. Bracco, "Don Bosco e le istituzioni" in *Torino e Don Bosco* I, 126-128 from *Archivio Storico Città di Torino*; edited in Motto, *Epistolario* I, 66-68.

Turin, March 13, 1846

Your Excellency:

The role which Your Excellency plays in everything that concerns the public good, both civic and moral, leads me to hope that you will welcome a report on a catechetical program we have started.[55] Since its purpose is the good of young people, you yourself have on a number of occasions shown favor and support for it.[56]

This catechetical program was begun three years ago in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi,[57] and because it was the Lord's work the Lord blessed it, and the young people attended in greater number than the place could accommodate. Then, in the year 1844, having taken a job [as chaplain] at the Pious Work of the *Refuge*, I went to live there. But those wonderful youngsters continued to attend at the new place, eager to receive religious instruction. It was at this time that we, the Rev. Dr. [Giovanni] Borelli, Father [Sebastiano] Pacchiotti and myself jointly, presented a petition to His Grace the Archbishop for permission to convert one of

[54] Michael Benso Marquis of Cavour, father of Marquis Gustavo and of Count Camillo Benso (future Prime Minister) was Vicar of Turin. Before 1848 the city was governed by a Vicar (*Vicario e sovraintendente generale di politica e di polizia*) aided by two syndics appointed by the King. From 1848 to 1886, it was governed by a Mayor and a city council (likewise appointed by the King).

[55] Throughout the letter, "catechetical program" translates the Italian "*catechismo*," by which Don Bosco almost certainly means "the oratory" as such. In other words, he speaks of the oratory as a "program of religious instruction." One should not think, that Don Bosco's emphasis on catechetical instruction was just part of a strategy on his part designed to allay the vicar's fears. Nor was it just playing on the vicar's feelings, in the certainty that, as a Catholic and a Catholic king's representative, he could not object to a "program for the instruction of poor children in the Catholic faith." It was a fact that catechetical instruction had top priority in Don Bosco's oratory.

[56] This last sentence seems to imply that the Vicar had been aware of the catechetical instructions (the Oratory) and approved of them.

[57] Since this letter was written in 1846, "three years ago" would date the beginnings of the catechetical program (oratory) to 1843. Further on in this letter, Don Bosco again speaks of "three years." This may imply that 1843 was the year when the group gathering at St. Francis of Assisi acquired consistency and became recognizably Don Bosco's own.

our rooms into an oratory,[58] and he authorized us to do so. Here catechism was taught, confessions were heard, and the Holy Mass was celebrated for the above-mentioned young people.

But, as their number increased to the point that the premises could no longer accommodate them, we petitioned the illustrious City authorities for permission to relocate our catechetical program at the Church of St. Martin, near the city's mills, and their reply was favorable. There many boys attended and often exceeded two hundred and fifty.

As it turned out, we were put on notice by the syndics of the city that by the beginning of January our catechism classes should be moved from that church to some other place. No reason was given for such an order.[59] As a result we faced a serious dilemma, for it would have been a great pity to discontinue the good work we had begun. Only His Excellency Count [Giuseppe Maria Provana di] Collegno, after having spoken to you, gave us the encouragement to continue.

During that winter, the catechetical program was conducted some times in our own house, at other times in some rented rooms.[60] Finally, earlier this week we entered into negotiations with Mr. [Francesco] Pinardi for a site.[61] We agreed on the sum of two hundred and eighty francs for a large room suitable for use as an "oratory" along with two other rooms and an adjacent piece of ground.[62] We think this place will suit our purpose, first because of its close proximity to the *Rifugio*, then because of its location far from any church, though near enough to several houses. The one thing we need to know is whether it is acceptable to you from the standpoint of the neighborhood and of the wider community.

The purpose of this catechetical program is to gather those boys who, left to themselves, would not attend religious instruction in any church on Sundays and holy days. We encourage attendance by approaching them in a friendly manner,

[58] This "oratory," with the meaning of "chapel," was at the Little Hospital, though the chaplains lived at the *Rifugio*. The use of the word "oratory" and the activities described in that connection show the essentially religious thrust of Don Bosco's activities.

[59] The administration of the mills had lodged a complaint that "the children under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Borel [... were] causing trouble and disturbance, dirtying up the place besides." [Motto, *Ep* I, 68] The two syndics the Vicar had under him were each in charge of an area of government and administration.

[60] These would be the rooms rented in Fr. Moretta's house.

[61] This letter was written on Friday, March 13. Therefore these negotiations for the Pinardi shed took place between Sunday, March 8, and Thursday, March 12. In his *Memoirs*, however, Don Bosco has a different date and a different scenario [*MO-En*, 255-259, incl. note 2].

[62] There is no mention here of the famous "Pinardi shed." Don Bosco here is in agreement with the original lease contract (signed on April 1, 1846), which mentions "one large room with two other rooms and an adjacent piece of ground." [Motto, *Epistolario* I, 68] The material reference, however, is to the "Pinardi shed."

welcoming them with kind words, promises, gifts, and the like. The following principles are basic to our teaching: (1) appreciation of work, (2) the regular reception of the sacraments, (3) respect for all superior authority and (4) avoidance of bad company.

These principles, which we skillfully strive to inculcate in the hearts of the youngsters, have produced marvelous results. In the space of three years more than twenty entered the religious life; six are studying Latin in view of a priestly vocation; and many others have changed for the better and are now attending their own parishes. This is a great achievement when one considers the caliber of the young people who, though generally ranging in age from ten to sixteen years, lack any kind of education, whether religious or secular. Most of them in fact have already succumbed to evil, and are in danger of becoming public nuisances or of being put in places of correction.

You are a good-hearted person, and have at heart everything that may contribute to the common good of society. For this reason we seek your protection on these our endeavors. As you can well see, profit is not our motive in the least; our sole aim is to gain souls for the Lord.

The costs we must meet to provide all that the place requires are great. Count Collegno, gratefully mentioned above, has offered his generous support. He has moreover given us permission to mention the fact to Your Excellency, after which he himself would explain the matter in detail. Should you wish to speak to me or to my colleagues, we are at your service; indeed we would be anxious to oblige.

I beg you to take in good part the liberty I have taken, and I wish you all the Lord's blessings. With sentiments of highest esteem and greatest respect, I have the supreme honor of being Your Excellency's most humble and obedient servant,

Father John Bosco
Spiritual Director of the *Refuge*

Cavour's notation for his secretary on back of the letter reads: "Reply. I have spoken with His Excellency the Most Reverend Archbishop and with Count Colegno,[63] and I agree that, without any doubt, much may be gained from a catechism program. I shall be happy to see the Rev. Father Bosco in my office on Monday, March 30 at 2 P.M. March 28. Benso di Cavour."

[63] Count Giuseppe Maria Provana di Collegno (1785-1854) was close to King Charles Albert and his government. He was also a friend of Don Bosco and the Oratory.

3. Marchioness Barolo's Letter to Father Borel (May 18, 1846)

Marchioness Barolo to Father Borel, May 18, 1846, in *ASC* 123: *Persone, Barolo*, *FDBM* 541 B5-8, edited in *EBM* II, 360-361.

May 18, 1846

Dear Father Borel:

A conversation with Father Cafasso has led me to see the necessity, dear Father, of our reaching an understanding [about Don Bosco]. Such an understanding, I believe had best be sought in writing than in speaking. This because whenever I have the honor of speaking with you, you never allow me to express my respect for you, my admiration for your virtue and my gratitude for the zealous care you have always shown for my institutions.

When St. Philomena Hospital became the latest addition [to my institutions], we considered it necessary to appoint a chaplain for it. There was no one better qualified than you for advice. You selected the excellent Don Bosco and introduced him to me. I, too, liked him from the very start and noticed a certain spirit of recollection and simplicity about him that is the true mark of holiness.[64]

My acquaintance with him began in the fall of 1844, and the hospital was not expected to be ready for occupancy, and in fact was not, until August 1845. In my anxiety to secure the services of such a worthy priest, I agreed to engage him then and there, and start giving him his regular salary. A few weeks after he had taken up residence with you, both the Mother Superior of the *Rifugio* and myself realized that his health could stand no work. You will recall the many times I told you to give him special consideration and let him rest, and so forth. You did not listen to me, and replied that priests have to work, etc.

Don Bosco's health continued to get worse, up to the time of my trip to Rome, but, although he was already coughing with bloody sputum, he kept working. Then I received a letter from you, informing me that Don Bosco was in no condition to carry on the work he had been hired for. I replied immediately that I was prepared to continue his full salary, on the sole condition that he take a total rest, and I am ready to fulfill that promise now. Do you really think, Father, that hearing confessions and preaching to hundreds of boys is no work? I believe it is injuring his health. He must go far enough from Turin as not to have to subject his lungs to any strain. When he was at Gassino, these lads kept going to him for confession,

[64] According to this statement it was Father Borel who took the initiative in getting Don Bosco appointed as Chaplain of the Little Hospital, and (as the next line shows) the Marchiones had not known Don Bosco before. Then (presumably) Father Borel consulted Father Cafasso and the latter acted on the proposal, as described in *MO-En*, 202-203.

and he used to walk them back to Turin. You are a kind person, Father, and I have doubtlessly deserved the unfavorable opinion you have of me. You have accused me of being against the religious instruction that these boys receive every Sunday, and against the care that Don Bosco takes of them during the week. On the contrary, I do really believe that the work is excellent in itself and worthy of those who have undertaken it. However, in the first place, I am convinced that Don Bosco, because of his poor health, is not up to continuing such work. Secondly, I find it rather improper that these boys, who previously used to wait for Don Bosco at the door of the *Rifugio,* now should wait for him at the entrance of the hospital.

I won't dredge up past incidents, but Father Durando feels exactly as I do about the matter.[65] I will mention only what took place yesterday. Mother Superior of the hospital told me that a girl of loose morals, who had been dismissed from the *Rifugio,* visited the hospital with the family of one of our patients. With her was a woman whose little girl was taken from her at the suggestion of the pastor of Annunciation Church, and is now at the *Rifugio.* I asked both of them to leave the hospital. Now, a little earlier I had seen a group of boys at the door of the hospital and had asked them what they wanted. They told me they were waiting for Don Bosco. Some of them were not so young. Now both this bad woman and this girl, whom I had asked to leave the hospital and who were angry, passed through the midst of these boys. What if this girl had made some gestures to suggest her shameful profession to these pupils of Don Bosco?

To sum up briefly:

1. I approve and praise the instruction being given to the boys, but because of our type of inmates, I object to the boys' habit of gathering around the doorways of my institutions.

2. I firmly believe that Don Bosco needs a complete rest because of his weak lungs. I shall not continue his salary, which he can surely use, unless he agrees to go away from Turin to some place where there will be no cause of harm to his delicate health. This is the more important to me as my respect for him grows.

Dear Father, I know that we differ on this point. Were it not for my conscience, I would be ready, as always, to submit to your judgment.

With unchanging regard and deep respect, I am honored to be,

Your devoted servant,
Marchioness Barolo née Colbert

[65] Father Marcantonio Durando was the Visitor (Provincial) of the Priests of the Mission (Vincentians). He was highly regarded as a preacher, retreat master and confessor.

Appendix II

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION IN DON BOSCO'S ORATORY

Data derived chiefly from Pietro Braido, *L'inedito* "Breve Catechismo pei fanciulli ad uso della Diocesi di Torino" *di Don Bosco* (Roma: LAS, 1979); also Francis Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1999)* (Torino: SEI, 1996), 238-241.

In rehearsing the story of Don Bosco's ministry to young people through the oratory, we cannot but notice the importance he placed on religious instruction. The very word "oratory" suggests a place for prayer where worship and religious instruction was the focal point. Having found such a place, he could tell his boys that the Oratory had a home, when all he had was a shed for a chapel and a small strip of land. "Great news, my sons! We've got a *place* for our Oratory, a more reliable one than we've had till now. We'll have a *church*, a sacristy, *classrooms*, and a place to play."[66] [The ideas expressed in this statement constitute what came to be known as the *oratorian model*].

Catechetical Instruction a Priority in Don Bosco's Oratory

The mention of "church" and "classrooms" is indicative of the Oratory's catechetical purpose. We have Don Bosco's statement that "the Oratory at its inception was simply a catechetical instruction."[67] This might be understood in the light of the fact that Don Bosco's first engagement with "poor and abandoned" young people took place in the context of the catechism lessons sponsored by Fr. Cafasso at St. Francis of Assisi.[68] Or again, it might be understood to refer to the Garelli encounter, which concluded with a catechism lesson.[69]

But the statement may indeed express the *priority* placed by Don Bosco on catechetical instruction as the essence of oratory work. For Don Bosco's work had an educational purpose from the start, and Don Bosco conceived of education (as development of the person) only in terms of the doctrinal and moral guidelines provided by the Christian faith and the Catholic ethos. Hence we note that historically catechetical instruction was the central activity of Don Bosco's early oratory.

[66] *MO-En*, 257.

[67] Memorandum addressed to Bp. Pietro Ferrè of Casale (1868) *FDBM* 1,924 D11-E2; *EBM* IX, 35-37.

[68] Cf. Historical Outline (*Cenno storico*) of 1854, # 1, in Appendix I of Chapter 6.

[69] Cf. *MO-En*, 187-189.

This is how Marchioness Barolo speaks of the Oratory in her letter to Father Borel (transcribed above): "You have accused me of being against the religious instruction that these boys receive every Sunday, and against the care that Don Bosco takes of them during the week. On the contrary…" In the Historical Outlines of 1862, Don Bosco describes Sunday activities.

> In the morning, those who wish to go to Confession are given the opportunity to do so; Then there is Mass, followed by the narration of an episode of Bible or Church History, or by the explanation of the Gospel of the day; then recreation. In the afternoon, we hold catechetical instruction by classes, Vespers, a brief instruction from the pulpit, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by the usual recreation.[70]

Don Bosco gives a similar description of oratory activities in his Memoirs.[71] But perhaps the earliest extended statement on the oratory's catechetical purpose is Don Bosco's letter of March 13, 1846 (mentioned earlier) to Marquis Michael Benso of Cavour, Vicar of the City of Turin. In this letter, he practically defines the oratory in terms of catechetical instruction of neglected youngsters. Nor should we think that this emphasis was just part of a rhetorical strategy on Don Bosco's part designed to allay the Vicar's fears. The Vicar, a Catholic and a Catholic king's representative, would not object to poor children being instructed in the Catholic faith! In point of fact catechetical instruction had top priority in Don Bosco's oratory. The letter states in part:

> The role Your Excellency plays in everything that concerns the public good, both civil and moral, leads me to hope that you will welcome a report on a catechetical program we have started.[72] Its purpose is the good of young people, and you yourself have on a number of occasions shown favor and support for it.
>
> This catechetical program was begun three years ago. [...] Catechism was taught, confessions were heard, and the Holy Mass celebrated. [...]
>
> The purpose of this catechetical program is to gather those boys who, left to themselves, would not attend religious instruction in any church on Sundays and holy days. […][73]

[70] Historical Outlines (*Cenni storici*) of 1862, Section "General Comments," # 2 (text given in a later chapter).

[71] *MO-En*, 266-267 ("A Typical Sunday.")

[72] "Catechetical program" translates the Italian "*catechismo*," by which Don Bosco almost certainly means "the oratory" as such. In other words, he speaks of the oratory as a "program of religious instruction."

[73] Don Bosco's letter of 1846 to Vicar Cavour given in Appendix I above.

The Vicar's colophon to the letter, with instructions for his secretary; expresses the same understanding: "I agree that, without any doubt, much may be gained from a catechism program."

Most of Don Bosco's early writings have a catechetical purpose besides the apologetic one. We may mention the *History of the Church* (1845), the *Bible History* (1847) the *Companion of Youth* (1847, 1851), *Warnings to Catholics* (1850, 1851), the *Catholic Instructed in Religion* (1853).[74] The strictly catechetical activity of the oratory was continued through various types of classes (Sunday, evening and day classes) that Don Bosco had going in response to the youngsters' need. All were part of a comprehensive program of religious instruction and education.[75]

Years later, when Church authorities in Turin, were demanding that Salesian candidates to the priesthood study and reside in the diocesan seminary, Don Bosco objected on the grounds, among others, that they were needed at home to conduct catechism classes. He wrote to Cardinal Filippo De Angelis on the subject of Archbishop Riccardi's demands: "If I allow my clerical students to reside in the seminary, […] *where will I find the one hundred and more instructors to teach as many catechism classes?*[76]

The Catechism in Use in the Oratory

In view of the priority given to religious instruction in oratory work, it seems appropriate briefly to discuss the catechism in use and Don Bosco's idea of what a catechism for the young should be like in content and style.

Archbishop Louis Fransoni in 1846 published a diocesan catechism for young people, the *Short Catechism for Children*.[77] This catechism was based on an older *Digest of Christian Doctrine*.[78] These were the catechisms that Don Bosco used in the oratories: the *Digest* up to 1846, and the *Short Catechism for Children* after 1846.

The older diocesan *Digest* had five sections:

[74] Don Bosco's writings will be discussed in future chapters.

[75] It should be noted that evening classes for basic literacy (first mentioned in connection with the oratory's stay at Barolo's institutions) aimed at giving the youngsters the means to further their religious education on their own. The catechism was used both for religious instruction and as a reading tool.

[76] Don Bosco to Card. De Angelis, January 9, 1868, in Motto, *Epistolario* II, 479.

[77] *Breve catechismo per li fanciulli che si dispongono alla confessione e prima comunione e per tutti quelli che hanno da imparare gli elementi della dottrina cristiana, ad uso della diocesi di Torino* (Torino: Tip. e Libr. Canfari, 1846) [Short Catechism for Children Preparing for Confession and Communion and for All Those Others Who Need to Learn the Rudiments of Christian Doctrine, for Use in the Diocese of Turin].

[78] *Compendio della Dottrina cristiana ad uso della Diocesi di Torino* (Torino: Libr. Giovanni Battista Binelli, no date) [Digest of Christian Doctrine for Use in the Diocese of Turin].

(1) Daily prayers and devotions

(2) A short catechism for children preparing for Confession and first Communion

(3) An intermediate catechism for young people who had already been admitted to Communion

(4) A larger catechism for adults

(5) Instructions for the Acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition.

Basically, only the first two sections would be used for catechetical instruction of the Oratory's young people.

Archbishop Fransoni's *Short Catechism* of 1846, having been devised for basic religious instruction, contained only the first two sections of the older *Digest*, considerably revised and updated:

(1) The first section containing daily prayers and devotions served as a kind of "personal liturgy" in the Piedmontese Catholic tradition. This exercise was designed to consecrate the whole day to God in union with Christ and the Virgin Mary, from rising to going to bed.

(2) The second section contained the basic catechism in question-and-answer form. It was divided into 14 lessons, preceded by an unnumbered preliminary lesson, with a total of 329 questions. [See below].

Don Bosco's Proposal for a Simpler Catechism

Bon Bosco (after 1846) used the diocesan *Short Catechism for Children*, but he found it too long and difficult for a basic sacramental preparation. Accordingly, in 1855 he submitted to Canon Alexander Vogliotti of the Chancery a revised and simplified version of the diocesan *Short Catechism*, rendered more suitable for children as to concepts and language. The Canon reviewed it, but it remained unpublished. The Ms. is entitled, *Short Catechism […] for children preparing to receive the Sacraments.*[79]

As the manuscript shows, Don Bosco simplified Section one by reducing it to morning and evening prayers. He added a second section, a short Bible History, for he considered the diocesan catechism too doctrinal and not "biblical" enough. Finally he greatly simplified the catechism proper (Section three), reducing it to 9 lessons and 79 questions.

[79] *Breve catechismo […] pei fanciulli che si dispongono a ricevere il Sacramento della cresima, della confessione e comunione* (Ms. in *ASC* 133).

The structure of Fransoni's and Don Bosco's Short Catechisms – Compared

Fransoni's *Short Catechism* (Two Parts)	Don Bosco's *Short Catechism* (Three Parts)
[PART I] The Christian's Daily Exercises	[PART I]
Morning Prayers Prayers to God Prayers to Mary Apostles' Creed Prayer to the Guardian Angel The Ten Commandments The Precepts of the Church The Seven Sacrament Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition Sign of the Cross	**Morning Prayer** – Immediately on Rising Sign of the Cross Prayers to God Prayers to Mary Apostles' Creed Prayer to the Guardian Angel The Ten Commandments The Precepts of the Church The Seven Sacraments Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition
Various Prayers and Exercises and Devotions	[Lacking]
In the Evening [About the Same as in the Morning]	Evening Prayers [About the Same as in the Morning]
[Lacking]	[PART II] Digest of Bible History for Children [14 chapters] Creation of the World The Fall and Promise of a Redeemer The Flood God's People, Moses The Israelites after Moses The Prophets Jesus' Birth Jesus' Preaching Ministry Jesus' Resurrection Jesus' Ascension Descent of the Holy Spirit Preaching of the Apostles The Church's Hierarchy Reasonableness of the Christian Faith
[PART II] The Catechism Proper **Preliminary Lesson** – A good Christian's daily exercises (24 q.) **Lesson 1** – Oneness of God (18 q.) **Lesson 2** – Mystery of the Trinity (14 q.) **Lesson 3** – Incarnation of God's Son and our Redemption (42 q.) J. Ch. Incarnate Son and Redeemer (19 q.)	[PART III] The Catechism Proper **Lesson 1** – Oneness of God (9 q.) **Lesson 2** – Holy Trinity (5 q.) **Lesson 3 –** Mystery of our Redemption (10 q.) J. Ch., Incarnate Son of God & Savior (10 q.)

Annunciation to Pentecost: Story of salvation in the life of J. Ch. (22 q.) Ch. In heaven and in the Eucharist (1 q.)	
Lesson 4 – Ch.'s Second Coming and Last Judgment, universal and particular (18 q.) Last Judgment (4 q.) Bodily resurrection (2 q.) Particular and Universal Judgment (2 q.) After the Judgment (1 q.) – Purgatory (2 q.) – Heaven and Hell (7 q.)	**Lesson 4** – Days on which the principal mysteries of the Life of Christ are celebrated (8 q.)
Lesson 5 – The Christian's sign and main virtues, faith in particular (34 q.) Being a Christian, Sign of the Cross (10 q.) Theological Virtues (4 q.) Faith (6 q.) Creed, Symbol of Faith (3 q.) Church and hierarchy (7 q.) Last articles of the Creed (4 q)	**Lesson 5** – Second Coming of Christ and eternal life (14 q.) Last Judgment (3 q.) Mortal body and immortal soul (2 q.) Particular and Universal Judgment (3 q.) Heaven (3 q.) and Hell (3 q.)
Lesson 6 – Hope (15 q.) Hope and prayer (3 q.) The Lord's Prayer (4 q.) The Hail Mary (4 q.) Saints and Guardian Angel (4 q.)	**Lesson 6** – The Christian's sign (11 q.) Being a Christian, Sign of the Cross (3 q.) Most important virtues (theological) (2 q.) Faith (1 q.) Creed, Symbol of faith (2 q.) Hope and the Lord's Prayer (2 q.) The Hail Mary (1 q.)
Lesson 7 – Charity (13 q.) Love of God and neighbor (9 q.) Works of Mercy (4 q.)	**Lesson 7** – Commandments of God and Precepts of the Church (5 q.) God's service and Commandments (1 q.) The Ten Commandments (1 q.) Precepts of the Church (1 q.) Observance and obligation (1 q.) Transgression and sin (1 q.)
Lesson 8 – Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity (9 q.) Why we need to make such acts (2 q.) Formulae of such acts (3 q.) Disposition and grace (4 q.)	**Lesson 8** – The Sacraments (6 q.) Sacraments *in genere* (2 q.) Baptism (1 q.) – Confirmation (3 q.)
Lesson 9 – Commandments of God and Precepts of the Church (15 q.) Love and Commandments (2 q.) The Ten Commandments (12 q.) Precepts of the Church (1 q.)	**Lesson 9** – Eucharist (3 q.) and Penance (7 q.) [Note: DB deals with Eucharist first]. [Penance] Nature and conditions (5 q.) Sincere confession and sacrilege (1 q.)
Lesson 10 – Sin and Sins (14 q.) Sin as Transgression (3 q.) Kinds of sins (6 q.) Capital Sins (3 q.) Sins against the Holy Spirit (1 q.) Sins that call for vengeance from God (1 q.)	Frequency (1 q.) [Holy Eucharist, above] Definition (1 q.) Communion (1 q.) Frequency of reception (1 q.)
Lesson 11 – The Sacraments (25 q.) Necessity of grace (3 q.)	

Grace and Sacraments (1 q.) Sacraments *in genere* (4 q.) Sacraments *in specie* (7 q.) Sacraments and their character – of the living and of the dead (10 q.) **Lesson 12**--Special sacraments: Baptism (19 q.) **Lesson 13** – Sacrament of Penance (52 q.) Definition and conditions for reception (2 q.) Sorrow for sin: Contrition (13 q.) Purpose of Amendment (1 q.) Confession (15 q.) Frequency (3 q.) Penance (5 q.) Pain for sin and Indulgences (7 q.) **Lesson 14** – Holy Eucharist (36 q.) Defin., Consecration, Real Presence (20 q.) Dispositions for reception (8 q.) Frequency of reception (3 q.) Holy Mass (5 q.)	

Brief Comment

As may be seen, Don Bosco abridged Fransoni's *Short Catechism* both by simplifying its contents and by greatly reducing the number of questions. By adding Part II (*Bible History Digest*) he set the whole of Christian Doctrine in the context of Biblical salvation history.[80]

Guidelines for Catechetical Instruction in the Oratories

The *Biographical Memoirs* record a set of "Instructions Repeatedly Given by Don Bosco to the Confreres Prior to 1870 for the Boys' Direction." Among them is a section entitled, "Rules for Sunday Catechism Classes." It is believed that these rules represent the guidelines for catechetical instruction given by Don Bosco to catechists in the early Oratory. They are as follows:

1. Use the Little Catechism (Short Catechism) as your textbook.
2. Do not digress with dissertations or examples. Our task is to instruct the youngsters in the knowledge of salvation. The catechism period is short, and it

[80] The Bible History Digest of Don Bosco's *Short Catechism* is an abridgment of the Bible History published in the *Catholic Readings* in early 1855: G. Bosco, *Maniera facile per imparare la storia sacra ad uso del popolo cristiano*, in *Letture Cattoliche* 3, March 10 and 25 (Torino: Paravia, 1855) [Text in *Opere Edite*, year 1855].

must be taken up entirely with the word-for-word explanation of the questions and answers. To move the affections is the preacher's task. Let us not be victims of the small vanity of seeking praise for fine speeches. The Lord will demand an account of how we have instructed the boys, not of how we have entertained them.

3. Never deviate from the text of the catechism out of a desire to show off theological knowledge. Explain the text word for word. Young people are incapable of following complicated expositions. They either misunderstand or are scandalized. The Little Catechism is not only a symbol of faith; it is also a rule for moral conduct. Therefore let its theological positions speak for themselves purely and simply, and do not add or subtract anything. The Little Catechism should be for young people what the Bible or St. Thomas are for theologians. It is a concise presentation of religious knowledge suited to young people's age. Let us not think that we are more knowledgeable or wiser than the holy bishops who have compiled it. For example, the catechism teaches that doubtful sins should be confessed as doubtful, and certain sins as certain. Theologians, on the other hand, maintain that one is not bound to confess doubtful sins. But are young people able to tell when a sin is doubtful? I think not. They will rather be ready to put those sins that they are ashamed to confess among the doubtful, and will thus commit sacrilege.

4. If the catechist has a high platform from which he can see all the youngsters, he may sit down; otherwise he should remain standing.[81]

[81] *IBM* XIV, 838-839 (omitted in *EBM*).

Chapter 5

PROGRESS OF THE LIBERAL REVOLUTION AND OF THE ITALIAN "RISORGIMENTO" TO 1848-49

MO-En, 323, 346f, 355-364; J.A.R. Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy […]* (Oxford U. Press, 1931; reprinted 1938) 58-68; E.M. Jamison, C.M. Ady, K.D. Vernon and C. Stanford Terry, *Italy Medieval and Modern. A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917); William L. Langer, *The Revolutions of 1848* (Harper Torch Books, 1971); M.E. Barlen, *Foundations of Modern Europe (1789-1871)* (London: Bell & Hyman, 1968) 266-296; Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: a Political History* (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1997), 3-58; George G. Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1969); *Compact Storia d'Italia*, V. Ceppellini and P. Boroli, eds. (Novara: De Agostini, 1991), 82-109; *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani), various entries.

Summary

1. People, Events and Political Ideas leading to the Liberal Revolution of 1848
   (1) Young Italy Association and Mazzini's Republican Ideal
   (2) Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-1852)
   (3) Cesare Balbo (1779-1853)
   (4) Massimo Taparelli d'Azeglio (1798-1866)
   (5) Pius IX (Pope 1846-1878)
   (6) Stirrings of Revolution against Austria and King Charles Albert
2. Revolutionary Year (1848) and Piedmont's First War against Austria (1848-1849)
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   (3) Constitutions of 1848
   (4) The "Five Days of Milan" (March 18-22, 1848)
   (5) Charles Albert, the "Sword of Italy"
   (6) First War of Independence, First Phase (1848)
   (7) Pius IX's "Defection" and Allocution of April 29, 1848
   (8) Charles Albert and the Conduct of the War
   (9) Charles Albert's Defeat at Custoza and the Vigevano Armistice (1848)
   (10) At Rome: Assassination of De Rossi (1848) and the Roman Republic (1849). Pius IX's flight to Gaeta (1849-1850)
   (11) Resumption of the War against Austria (Second Phase). Charles Albert's Defeat at Novara (1849), Abdication and Exile (1849)
   (12) Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and Rome. Fall of the Roman Republic and Pius IX Reinstated

(13) Capitulation of Venice to the Austrians
3. Political Prospects after 1849

Appendices: (1) Biographical Sketch of Pope Pius IX; (2) Biographical Sketch of King Charles Albert; (3) Excerpts from Charles Albert's *Statuto* (Constitution)

Before proceeding with the story of the Oratory and its development consequent upon settling at Pinardi's, a quick survey of the turbulent historical events of the 1840s seems necessary. Our focus naturally will be on the Italian scene, but with the understanding that the Italian scene was only a part of a more widespread and dramatic political upheaval.

I. People, Events and Political Ideas Leading Up to the Liberal Revolution of 1848

Young Italy Association and Mazzini's Republican Ideal

In an earlier chapter, with reference to John Bosco's secondary studies in Chieri, we discussed revolutionary uprisings in the 1830s and the role that Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) and his newly founded *Young Italy* Association played in them. Mazzini and *Young Italy* continued to be major forces in the Italian *Risorgimento*.

Mazzini himself drew up the statutes of the Young Italy Association, defining it as "a brotherhood of Italians who believe in a law of Progress and Duty and are convinced that Italy is destined to become one nation." The means by which the end was to be attained were "education and insurrection to be adopted simultaneously." The expulsion of the hated Austrians was the first prerequisite. But the war must be waged by the people of Italy and for Italy. No reliance must be placed on foreign help, or on regional dynastic rulers. All thoughts of Federalism must be laid aside. Mazzini himself was a strict "republican democrat" and *Young Italy* was to educate the Italian people in that doctrine, though once unity was achieved, the specific form of government would be left to the people's choice through universal suffrage.

Mazzini's political program spread like wild fire among idealistic young Italians, and the *Young Italy* associations sprang up over the length and breadth of the peninsula. Mazzini's republican ideals became a force to be reckoned with.

But other liberals in Italy's regional States had other ideas of Italian unification. They certainly looked for Italian independence and some kind of political unity but not by the methods advocated by Mazzini and *Young Italy*. For example, some looked for leadership to the Pope to head a federation of regional states, others looked to Piedmont and the House of Savoy.[1]

Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-1852)

The party that looked to the Pope for leadership came to be called the Neo-Guelph party.[2] The Neo-Guelphs hoped to see the Pope put himself at the head of a patriotic movement, encourage by precept and example liberal reform in the regional States, and bring them together in an Italian Federation under papal presidency. The spokesman for this concept of Italian unification was the priest Vincenzo Gioberti. He like other political philosophers (such as Balbo, d'Azeglio and Cavour) was Piedmontese and a subject of King Charles Albert.

Born at Turin in 1801, Gioberti was educated for the priesthood and was ordained in 1825. He was appointed chaplain to King Charles Albert, but became deeply interested in the political movement. In 1833 (at the time of Mazzini's revolutionary attempts) he was arrested on a charge of conspiracy, actually for advocating a united Italy. He was briefly imprisoned (1833), and though never brought to trial, he was exiled. He spent the next fifteen years in Paris and Brussels. At Brussels he published (1843) his famous and influential book, *The Moral and Civil Primacy of the Italians* (*Il Primato morale e civile degli Italiani)*. Marco Minghetti, Prime Minister of United Italy in the 1860s and 1870s, in his *Recollections* stresses the significance of this work. As quoted by Marriott, he writes:

> The book seemed to some an extravagance, to others a revelation. […] The purpose of the book was to prove that Italy, though entirely without repute

[1] Cf. J.A.R. Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 57-59.

[2] The name harks back (hence, Neo-) to one of the two great factions in medieval Italian and European politics. One, the Guelphs, supported the pope against the German (formerly, Holy Roman) Emperor. The other faction, the Ghibellines, traditionally supported the Emperor in the long struggle between Empire and Papacy (11th-13th c.). The word Guelph is derived from *Welf*, the name of a German noble family. The word Ghibelline perhaps comes from *Waiblingen*, the name of an estate belonging to Hohenstauffen emperors.

> among foreign nations, contained in itself all the conditions of moral and political revival. There was no need, in order to effect this, of revolutions or foreign models or intervention. *Unity* and *independence* might be attained by a Confederation of the various States under the presidency of the Pope; while *liberty* could be achieved by internal reforms effected by their respective Princes in the several States.[3]

This sounded like a wake up call, but people were not accustomed to thinking "Italian" or of a united Italy, and Gioberti had overrated the willingness or the ability of regional ruler to enact reforms. And, although the election of Pope Pius IX in 1846 and his initial reforms seemed to justify Gioberti's optimism, as long as Metternich ruled Italy from Vienna neither independence nor liberty could be achieved. As Mazzini had perceived, the expulsion of the Austrians was the first essential step. Nevertheless, Gioberti's patriotic argument claimed that "Italy alone had the qualities required to become the chief of nations, and that it was in her power to recover [that position]."[4]

As for Pope Pius IX, his role in the events of 1848-1849 (to be described below) shattered Gioberti's dream and disposed of the neo-Guelph position.

Gioberti himself, after being amnestied by Charles Albert in 1846, returned to Turin in 1848 and served briefly as Prime Minister under the new Constitution, and briefly as a Minister in the Cabinet under Victor Emmanuel II. He finally was entrusted with a mission to Paris, where he died in 1852.[5]

In his last book, *Del rinnovamento civile d'Italia* (1851), Gioberti discusses the problems connected with the civil and moral renewal of Italian Society.[6]

Count Cesare Balbo (1779-1853)

More practical, more clear-sighted, and not less enthusiastic than Gioberti was Count Cesare Balbo, scion of a noble Piedmontese family, from 1808 to 1814 served in various capacities and places under Napoleon,

[3] *Minghetti* in Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 61.

[4] Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 61.

[5] Cf, Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 62.

[6] Apart from his political writing, Gioberti, writing against Cartesianism, developed a philosophy called ontologism, which he expounds in his book, *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia* (1839-1840).

and in the post-Napoleonic restoration he joined the Piedmontese army, though he served chiefly in diplomatic missions to London and Paris. Suspected of complicity in the *Carbonari* insurrection of 1821, he left the army, fled to France and lived for a time, until 1826, in exile. On his return to Turin he held no political office but authored several important works: *Storia d'Italia sotto i barbari* (1830), *Vita di Dante* (1839), *Meditazioni storiche* (1842), *Delle speranze d'Italia* (1844), *Lettere di politica e letteratura edite ed inedite* (1847). By this time he had won recognition as a political philosopher, statesman and patriot. He was appointed Prime minister under the new Constitution in 1848). Thereafter, until his death in 1853, he collaborated with Camillo Benso di Cavour in the journal, *Il Risorgimento* (first published on December 15, 1847), a name "that later seemed immensely prophetic."[7]

His most important and justly famous work, *Delle Speranze d'Italia* [On the Hopes of Italy], was published in Paris in 1843.

Like Gioberti, Balbo thought of unified Italy as a federation of the Italian regional states. Like Mazzini, he perceived that no political solution was feasible until the Austrians had been expelled from Italy. With exceptional political insight he believed that the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans was on the point of dissolution, and that the Austrian Empire could seek and find compensation there, thus loosening its pressure on Italy. Then an *Italian* army could take matters in hand. Like Gioberti, Balbo believed that a Federation was the only possible political arrangement.

Marriott writes: "Whether Balbo looked to Rome or Turin to provide the president of this Federation is a disputed point, so cautious and veiled was his appeal."[8] On the other hand, other historians (such as Martin) think that he was looking to Turin and the House of Savoy rather than to Rome and the Papacy; "As a loyal subject of Carlo Alberto, he envisaged his king, rather than the pope, as the leader of any future confederation."

Massimo Taparelli d'Azeglio (1798-1866)

Massimo Taparelli d'Azeglio was born in Turin of a noble Piedmontese family. When Pope Pius VII in 1814 returned to Rome from his imprisonment, and his father served on a special mission in the eternal city, Massimo lived there for a number of years and studied painting, an art in which he

[7] G. Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy*, 273.

[8] Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 62.

became proficient (1820-1830). After his father's death in 1834, he moved to Milan and lived in that "Austrian" city for some twelve years. There he married the daughter of the liberal writer Alessandro Manzoni, after which he became seriously engaged in writing, mostly of a political nature. In 1845 he undertook an unofficial journey through the Papal States and the Legations (the northernmost part of Papal States). With his painting gear so as not the arouse suspicion, he went from "contact" to "contact" in a covert manner. His mission was to advise the revolutionaries to bide their time and to look to King Charles Albert for leadership. Out of this trip came d'Azeglio's short but significant book in which he described at first hand the brutalities that followed Pietro Renzi's failed insurrection at Rimini in September 1845. The book, a mere pamphlet really, appeared in Florence in 1846 with the title, *Gli ultimi casi di Romagna* (The Recent Events in Romagna). It not only gave a sober description of the brutality of the reprisals but it also pointed up the incompetence and corruption of the government in the Papal Legations (Romagna).

Minghetti, as quoted by Marriott, writes on the significance of d'Azeglio's book:

> "I casi di Romagna" was the first practical exposition of a program advocating the substitution of public, peaceful, serious, courageous discussion of Italian affairs for secret societies and plots. The book condemned the insurrection of Rimini as imprudent, ineffective, disastrous, but at the same time it clearly revealed the evils of ecclesiastical rule.[9]

In spite of being immediately suppressed, the booklet was read all over Italy. D'Azeglio was expelled from Tuscany and returned to Turin, where he became a major political force through participation in government and further political writings. *I miei ricordi* (Autobiographical Souvenirs), published posthumously in 1867, affords a retrospect of a remarkable political career.

Although d'Azeglio does not take a position on the final disposition of the political order of a united Italy, he seems to lean more in the direction of a parliamentary monarchy than a federation. However, he believed that Italian unity could not be achieved without the papacy's cooperation. But for the leadership of the Italian *Risorgimento* he looked not to Rome, as Gioberti did, but to Piedmont.[10] This might may be argued from the assur-

[9] Marriot, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 64.

[10] Cf. Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 64.

ance he received from Charles Albert when he made his report to the king on his fact-finding mission through the Papal States. The king's words, recorded in d'Azeglio's "Autobiographical Souvernirs" are quoted by Martin: "Let them be sure that, when the moment comes, my life, the lives of my sons, my sword, my resources, my army, all will be spent in the Italian cause."[11]

13 – Pope Pius IX (1792-1878)

Pope Pius IX (1846-1878)[12]

The conclave that followed Pope Gregory XVI's death in 1846 acted quickly (before Metternich could interfere) to elect Cardinal Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti, the 54-tear old Archbishop of Imola, who took the name of Pius IX (*Pio Nono*). His long reign as Pope (32 years) was certainly the most eventful and memorable of any in modern times. Because of the reforms

[11] Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy*, 258.
[12] Cf. See also Pp Pius IX's biographical sketch in Appendix below.

instituted in his diocese, he came to the Holy See with the reputation of a liberal reformer, and his election was hailed with enthusiasm by Italian liberals, though he was no liberal in any accepted political sense. In the first few years as Pope he instituted even more important reforms, both because he saw the need to right past wrongs and because he desired to see his dominions honestly and efficiently administered.

The government of Rome and the Papal States was totally in the hands of ecclesiastics, and it was inept and corrupt. The procedures of courts of law were wholly medieval. There was no curb on immorality, profligacy and mendicancy. Strictest censorship was enforced on the press.

The Pope appointed the "liberal" Cardinal Gizzi Secretary of State, and the initial reforms were important. An amnesty was offered to political prisoners, and refugees were permitted to return. The Jews were granted civil rights. In March 1847 the publication of unofficial newspapers was permitted for the first time. A month later the Pope established a *Consulta* (a kind of advisory senate) formed almost exclusively of laypersons nominated by each district. In June of the same year the Pope appointed a Council of Ministers (all of them ecclesiastics, however), and in July he created a Civic Guard.[13]

These reforms scandalized and troubled reactionary ecclesiastics. The Pope, however, pushed forward with his reforms: he approved the creation of municipal self-government in Rome (October 1847), and then in concert with his *Consulta* he developed and published a comprehensive plan of reform.

The Pope's actions stirred Austrian Chancellor Metternich to take "preemptive" measures. He reinforced the Austrian garrison in Ferrara (one of the Papal Legations) with a large body of troops over the protests of the Papal Legate. He also doubled the strength of the Austrian occupation force in the Lombardo-Venetian regions; and, divining the meaning of recent events, warned Italian regional states to make no concession to liberalism, whether moderate or radical, since all liberals were bent on revolution. Meanwhile, keeping a tight hold on Ferrara, he threatened Tuscany, Piedmont and Rome itself with Austrian intervention.

[13] The Civic Guard was a police force distinct from the State police and from the military.

II. The Revolutionary Year – Piedmont's First War Against Austria (1848-1849)

Compact Storia d'Italia (De Agostini), 93-107.

Stirrings of the Revolutionary Spirit against Austria, Liberal Gains and Cautious Moves by King Charles Albert of Piedmont

On the eve of the revolutionary year (1848), the ferment of ideas and the desire for basic liberties were seething throughout Italy. But the situation was curious and even paradoxical. On the one hand the Pope was pioneering liberal reforms that gained him the reputation of a liberal Pope, as he had earlier gained the reputation of a liberal bishop. On the other hand, Austria was threatening to intervene against the Pope whom she was pledged to defend.

Tuscany, where economic and political discontent was prevalent, followed the Pope's example. In 1847 the Grand Duke allowed some liberty of the press and a Civic Guard, and promised to set up a Council of State on the pattern of the Roman *Consulta.*

Modena and Parma were too closely under the control of Austria for them to make a liberal move. In the south liberal movements in Sicily were easily repressed and the University of Naples was closed.

But in Lombardo-Venetia, in the Papal States, in Tuscany and in Piedmont the Pope's reforms awakened a new spirit that challenged Austrian domination. No Constitution had yet been enacted, but the Roman and Tuscan governments no longer were rigidly autocratic. There the press was open for the ventilation of grievances, and the people were permitted to enrol in the Civic Guard in defense of civil liberties.

In Piedmont, the Pope's reforms heartened Charles Albert's timid liberalism. He had fluctuated for seventeen years and had deserved the unflattering nickname of "Vacillating King" (*Re Tentenna*). Now he decided to throw in his lot at last with the patriots and to make a public statement of it in a letter addressed to the Agricultural Congress meeting held at Casale (September 7, 1847) and to the Scientific Congress that would be meeting at Genoa one week later). The King wrote somewhat pompously:

> Austria has declared her intention to retain Ferrara. […] Should Providence call us to a war for the independence of Italy, I will mount my horse and with

> my sons I will march at the head of my army. […] Glorious will be the day on which we can raise the war cry for Italian independence.[14]

Never before had Charles Albert alluded in public to the possibility of war with Austria. His words aroused the wildest enthusiasm among delegates that had come from all parts of Italy. The Congress of Casale responded by pleading with the King to head the Italian movement as the "Sword of Italy" and move against Austria at once. Promises of cooperation poured in from all parts and from all classes of people.

Before the year closed, Metternich yielded to pressure (applied in particular by Lord Palmerston of England) and withdrew the Austrian troops from Ferrara (December 16, 1847).

Widespread Revolutions in 1848 and the End of the Metternich Era

Austrian Chancellor Metternich could read the "signs of the times" and anticipate that 1848 would be a decisive year. The year opened with the Tobacco Riot that broke out in Milan at the beginning of January. It was a strike designed to cut Austrian revenues from the sale of tobacco; it drew bloody reprisals in which many lives were lost. It was only the first of the many insurrections and revolutions that were to follow in the course of that year.

Of great significance was the Paris Revolution of February 22-26 (1848), the coup that overthrew Louis-Philippe (of the House of Bourbon-Orléans) and inaugurated the (short-lived) Second Republic.[15]

In Italy, 1848 was the year in which Piedmont challenged Austria in the first war of independence (see below), and all the Italian states had to face revolts or insistent pressure for freer forms of government.

A revolution broke out in Palermo (Sicily) on January 12, and in February outbreaks followed in Naples, Rome and Turin. In March revolution

[14] Quoted in Marriot, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 68.

[15] Louis-Philippe of Orléans had been put on the throne in the revolution of 1830-1831, which overthrew Charles X, the monarch of the Restoration. The Second Republic was short-lived, because in 1852, following a coup, Louis-Napoléon (1808-1873) was proclaimed Emperor of the French as Napoleon III. He was the nephew of Napoleon I, son of Napoleon I's brother Louis and Hortense de Beauharnais [The less known Napoleon II (1811-1832), king of Rome and Duke of Reichstadt, was the son of Napoleon I and his second wife Marie-Louise, Archduchess of Austria].

broke out in Milan (see below) and Venice, both regions directly under Austria. On March 22, the Venetian republic was proclaimed with Daniele Manin as president.[16]

Outside France and Italy, insurrections by the Viennese liberals in March caused the downfall and flight of Metternich. At the same time, the Berlin uprising and the Magyar revolt in Hungary won civil liberties and some political reforms.

These events seemed to justify Mazzini's belief that the hour of liberation and unification had struck, ushering in a new democratic republican world. As it turned out, this, of course, was not the case.

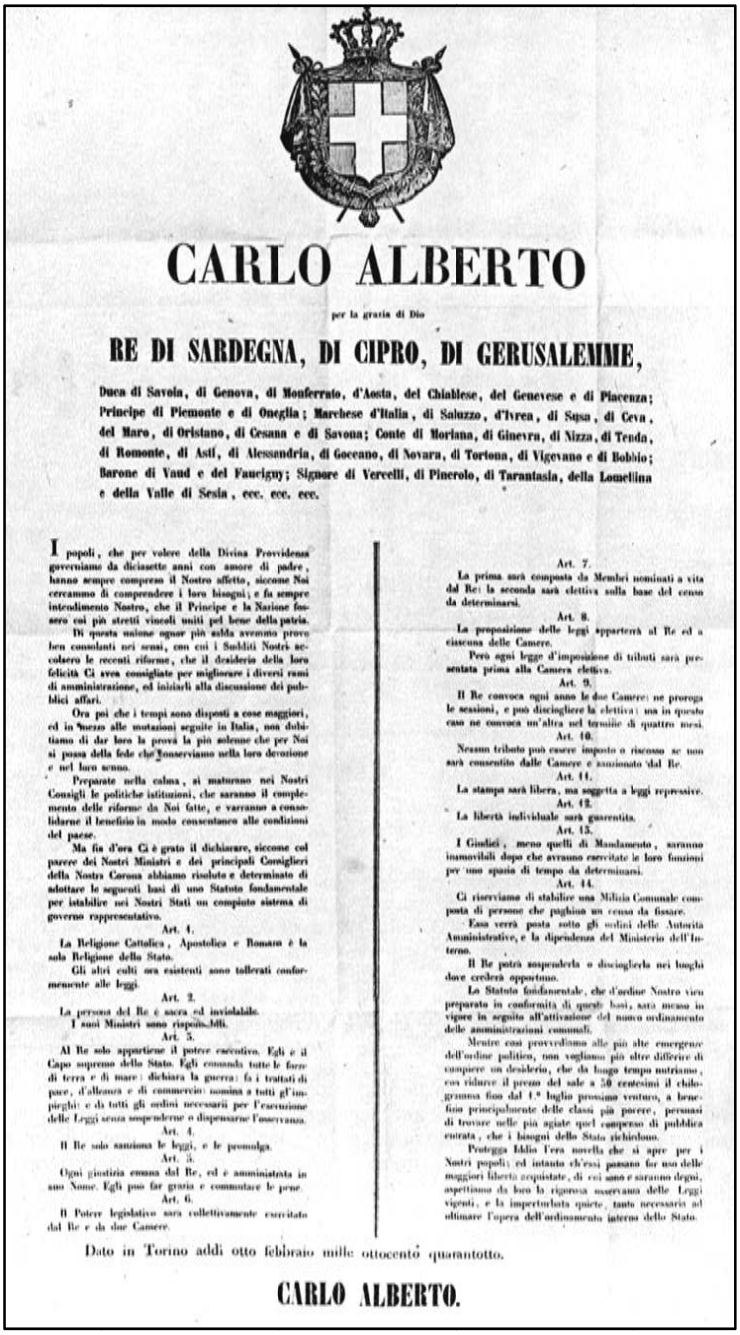
It should be noted that the uprisings in Italy were no concerted effort undertaken by mutual agreement. They were rather regional agitations of lower-middle-class and workers' groups joined by members of the progressive nobility. Specifically the uprisings demanded constitutional government, majority rule and civil liberties for the region, but in the North and the South they ultimately aimed at liberation from Austrian or Bourbon rule and the unification of Italy.

This was especially the case in Lombardy. The signal for action had been the news from Vienna that the people had risen against the government in the Austrian capital and in other parts of the Austrian empire, and that Metternich had fled the country, and was never to return.[17] The news first reached Milan from Vienna on March 17, and the Milanese at once realized that this was the propitious moment. The insurrection, was to be known with pride as the 'The Five Days of Milan" (see below). The Austrians under Marshall Radetzky's command were driven out and retreated to the "Quadrilateral."[18]

[16] Daniele Manin (and Niccolò Tommaseo) had been arrested by the Austrian police and jailed on January 18 for suspected revolutionary activities, but as Milan was preparing to fight the Austrians ("Five Days of Milan"), the citizenry of Venice on March 17 rose *en masse* and freed all political prisoners (see below).

[17] Chancellor Metternich's days were over. Throughout a long and distinguished career, since the Congress of Vienna (1814), he had tried with much success to hold at bay the forces of liberalism and revolution. Now his regime was collapsing. Politically, the subject-nations were stirred with the revolutionary spirit, and the Austrian administration had lost its grip on them. Economically, the finances of the empire were in shambles. The French February revolution provided the example and the incentive. But basically the failure of the system was due to the chancellor's inability or unwillingness to march with the times.

[18] The "quadrilateral" consisted of four fortified cities: Peschiera, Mantua, Legnago and Verona. They commanded the Valleys of the Mincio and Adige Rivers, as well as the military road to the Brenner Pass and into Austria.



CARLO ALBERTO

per la grazia di Dio

RE DI SARDEGNA, DI CIPRO, DI GERUSALEMME,

Duca di Savoia, di Genova, di Monferrato, d'Aosta, del Chiablese, del Genevese e di Piacenza; Principe di Piemonte e di Oneglia; Marchese d'Italia, di Saluzzo, d'Ivrea, di Susa, di Ceva, del Maro, di Oristano, di Cesana e di Savona; Conte di Moriana, di Ginevra, di Nizza, di Tenda, di Romonte, di Asti, di Alessandria, di Goceano, di Novara, di Tortona, di Vigevano e di Bobbio; Barone di Vaud e del Faucigny; Signore di Vercelli, di Pinerolo, di Tarantasia, della Lomellina e della Valle di Sesia, ecc. ecc. ecc.

I popoli, che per volere della Divina Provvidenza governiamo da diciassette anni con amore di padre, hanno sempre compreso il Nostro affetto, siccome Noi cercammo di comprendere i loro bisogni; e fu sempre intendimento Nostro, che il Principe e la Nazione fossero così più stretti vincoli uniti pel bene della patria.

Di questa unione ognor più salda avemmo prove ben consolanti nei sensi, con cui i Sudditi Nostri accolsero le recenti riforme, che il desiderio della loro felicità Ci avea consigliate per migliorare i diversi rami di amministrazione, ed iniziarli alla discussione dei pubblici affari.

Ora poi che i tempi sono disposti a cose maggiori, ed in forza alle mutazioni seguite in Italia, non dubitiamo di dar loro la prova la più solenne che per Noi si possa della fede che Conserviamo nella loro devozione e nel loro senno.

Preparate nella calma, si maturano nei Nostri Consigli le politiche istituzioni, che saranno il complemento delle riforme da Noi fatte, e varranno a consolidarne il beneficio in modo consentaneo alle condizioni del paese.

Ma fin d'ora Ci è grato il dichiarare, siccome col parere dei Nostri Ministri e dei principali Consiglieri della Nostra Corona abbiamo risoluto e determinato di adottare le seguenti basi di uno Statuto fondamentale per istabilire nei Nostri Stati un compiuto sistema di governo rappresentativo.

Art. 1.

La Religione Cattolica, Apostolica e Romana è la sola Religione dello Stato.

Gli altri culti ora esistenti sono tollerati conformemente alle leggi.

Art. 2.

La persona del Re è sacra ed inviolabile.

I suoi Ministri sono responsabili.

Art. 3.

Al Re solo appartiene il potere esecutivo. Egli è il Capo supremo dello Stato. Egli comanda tutte le forze di terra e di mare: dichiara la guerra: fa i trattati di pace, d'alleanza e di commercio: nomina a tutti gl'impieghi: e dà tutti gli ordini necessarii per l'esecuzione delle Leggi senza sospenderne o dispensarne l'osservanza.

Art. 4.

Il Re solo sanziona le leggi, e le promulga.

Art. 5.

Ogni giustizia emana dal Re, ed è amministrata in suo Nome. Egli può far grazia e commutare le pene.

Art. 6.

Il Potere legislativo sarà collettivamente esercitato dal Re e da due Camere.

Art. 7.

La prima sarà composta da Membri nominati a vita dal Re: la seconda sarà elettiva sulla base del censo da determinarsi.

Art. 8.

La proposizione delle leggi apparterrà al Re ed a ciascuna delle Camere.

Però ogni legge d'imposizione di tributi sarà presentata prima alla Camera elettiva.

Art. 9.

Il Re convoca ogni anno le due Camere: ne proroga le sessioni, e può disciogliere la elettiva: ma in questo caso ne convoca un'altra nel termine di quattro mesi.

Art. 10.

Nessun tributo può essere imposto o riscosso se non sarà consentito dalle Camere e sanzionato dal Re.

Art. 11.

La stampa sarà libera, ma soggetta a leggi repressive.

Art. 12.

La libertà individuale sarà guarentita.

Art. 13.

I Giudici, meno quelli di Mandamento, saranno inamovibili dopo che avranno esercitate le loro funzioni per uno spazio di tempo da determinarsi.

Art. 14.

Ci riserviamo di stabilire una Milizia Comunale composta di persone che paghino un censo da fissare.

Essa verrà posta sotto gli ordini delle Autorità Amministrative, e la dipendenza del Ministerio dell'Interno.

Il Re potrà sospenderla o disciorla nei luoghi dove crederà opportuno.

Lo Statuto fondamentale, che d'ordine Nostro vien preparato in conformità di queste basi, sarà messo in vigore in seguito all'attivazione del nuovo ordinamento delle amministrazioni comunali.

Mentre così provvediamo alle più alte emergenze dell'ordine politico, non vogliamo più oltre differire di compiere un desiderio, che da lungo tempo nutriamo, con ridurre il prezzo del sale a 50 centesimi il chilogrammo fino dal 1.° luglio prossimo venturo, a beneficio principalmente delle classi più povere, persuasi di trovare nelle più agiate quel compenso di pubblica entrata, che i bisogni dello Stato richiedono.

Proteggа Iddio l'era novella che si apre per i Nostri popoli; ed intanto ch'essi passano fra uno delle maggiori libertà acquistate, di cui sono e saranno degni, aspettiamo da loro la rigorosa osservanza delle Leggi vigenti, e la imperturbata quiete, tanto necessaria ad ultimare l'opera dell'ordinamento interno dello Stato.

Dato in Torino addì otto febbraio mille ottocento quarantotto.

CARLO ALBERTO.

14 – Charles Albert's 1848 *Statuto* (Constitution)

Meanwhile in Turin Charles Albert was biding his time, thus (as it turned out) missing the opportunity and allowing the Austrians to regroup. But, in spite of incomplete military preparedness, he declared war on Austria (see below).

Constitutions of 1848

As mentioned above, Sicily rose on January 12, 1848 demanding administrative autonomy from Naples and the (Spanish) Constitution of 1812. The revolt spread to Naples, where King Ferdinand was similarly confronted with the demand for a Constitution, which he was forced to grant on February 10.

A week later Tuscany also obtained a Constitution.

On March 4, Charles Albert, succumbing to public pressure and at the insistence of Count Camillo Cavour's newspaper, *Il Risorgimento,* accorded a Constitution, which he called *Statuto* (to avoid the more democratic term) and which alone of the Constitutions of 1848 survived.[19]

Pius IX also succumbed to a movement that so suddenly had captured the greater part of Italy. On March 15 he accorded a similar *Statuto*.

The constitutions of 1848 (with the exception of Charles Albert's *Statuto*) were tentative in character. But they secured a general recognition of constitutional principles, and also checkmated the more drastic program of the Mazzinian Republicans or Democrats. These basic constitutions introduced Italian States to a type of political life that France had adopted in the revolution of 1830 and was at this moment discarding by the February revolution of 1848 that dethroned the Orleans monarchy and established the Second Republic.

These *Statuti* established the elementary safeguards of individual and political liberty, security of person and property, the right of petition, an open press, along with ministerial responsibility, parliamentary control of taxation, and the establishment of a citizen's or national Guard. But in every State, even in Piedmont, the Church maintained its privileges and exclusiveness, and the voting franchise excluded the working classes. For the moment, however, constitutional agitation was satisfied.

[19] Charles Albert's *Statuto* remained the basic constitution in monarchic Italy until the fall of the monarchy in 1946 and the republican constitution that followed. For selection from the text of the *Statuto* see Appendix below.

Now the patriotic movement could concentrate on a challenge to Austria, which hopefully would secure independence. Austrian Lombardy gave the signal for war.

"The Five Days of Milan" (March 18-22, 1848)

Milan was still smarting under the repression that the "Tobacco Riot" had invited, but took encouragement from the progress of the constitutional movement. Moreover, the success of the February Revolution in Paris, and of the uprising in Vienna (March 13) that removed the arch-reactionary Metternich from power and obtained the constitution, set the stage for revolution in Milan. Charles Albert received a call for help with the note that if he failed to respond Milan would proclaim a republic. To stave off revolution, Vienna announced concessions from the Emperor through official posters (freedom of the press, and convocation of Estates.[20]). However, the news of Metternich's flight from Vienna to England, where he joined other reactionaries in exile, reached Milan on March 17, and the uprising was scheduled for the following day. Refusing to wait for Charles Albert who was delaying, the Milanese liberals launched their hazardous attack on the strong Austrian garrison commanded by Marshall Joseph Radetzky. From March 18 to March 22 (the "Five Days of Milan") the engagement was joined in the streets, and after much bloodshed the Austrians were expelled. As mentioned above, they retreated to the "Quadrilateral" awaiting reinforcements.

Venice rose simultaneously, political prisoners were freed and the old republic was restored under a provisional government headed by Daniele Manin. Thus the whole of Lombardo-Venetia rose in revolt.

Volunteers from all parts joined Lombardo-Venetia–a detachment of 12,000 volunteers (in a private capacity) from the Papal States, a detachment of regulars from Naples (the government having been forced by public opinion), volunteers from Florence, Parma and Modena.

From all of Italy calls were urging King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia to lead the fight for independence. Cavour wrote in his newspaper, *Il Risorgimento*, "The supreme moment, has struck for the Sardinian monarchy."

[20] "Estates" would mean organized convocation of representatives from various strata of society.

Charles Albert and First War of Independence–First Phase (1848) - Initial Success

Finally, not without misgivings, Charles Albert decided on war on March 22, and three days later his army crossed into Lombardy.

The war turned out to be both ineffective in conduct and disappointing in result. Radetzky clung to his entrenched position in the "Quadrilateral" until reinforcements arrived. Charles Albert obtained some success against Peschiera (a city of the Quadrilateral), which fell to him on May 30. But it was his last success. Lack of coordination and bad generalship and defections from would-be participants spelled defeat.

"Defection" of Pius IX, Allocution of April 29, 1848

Meanwhile not long after Charles Albert declared war on Austria, Pope Pius IX made his position public and clear in his famous Allocution of April 29, 1848.[21] The Pope was no friend of Austria, certainly, but threats of schism, fear of losing Romagna, and reluctance to go to war against a Catholic country motivated his decision to withdraw from the cause. He would not therefore join the coalition against Austria, even though he could not prevent his subjects from entering the conflict as volunteers on their own recognizance.

In a crucial statement of the Allocution the Pope explained why he could not join the war: "This is because We, albeit unworthy, are upon earth the representative of Him who is the Author of Peace and the Lover of Charity. Hence, conformably to the function of our supreme apostolate, We reach to and embrace all races, peoples, and nations. […][22]

The Allocution infuriated practically everybody. The day after its publication, the Piedmontese and Tuscan representatives met with the Pope, but Pius IX, though sympathetic with the Italian cause, firmly restated his position. That he sincerely desired the liberation of Italy is proven from the fact

[21] A papal Allocution is an address delivered to the cardinals in a private consistory on a matter of importance, sometimes involving international relationships and the policy of the Holy See. In this case the Allocution dealt with participation by the Papal States in the First War of Independence against Austria. Pius IX explains the reason for refusing to take part in the conflict. The *Biographical Memoirs* make no mention of this important papal statement.

[22] As quoted in Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy*, 314.

that by letter of May 2, 1848 he urged the Austrian emperor to recognize Italy as a nation.

But the distinction that Pius IX made between the Pope and other rulers was lost on the Italian populace. With the Allocution of April 29 and its frank statements about the war the Pope appeared to turn his back on Italian aspirations, thereby disposing of the neo-Guelph federation dream.

King Ferdinand of Naples followed Pius IX's example only too gladly, and withdrew from the cause of Italian independence. Mazzinian republican-democrats who attempted a takeover in Naples were defeated in street battles, and the king revoked all prior liberal concessions, including the Constitution. Naples was lost to the patriotic cause, Sicily was ruthlessly punished for seceding, and the troops and fleet were recalled.

The reaction in Rome turned violent and, as described below, it would shortly lead to Pius IX's flight from Rome and to the declaration of the republican-democratic Roman Republic.

The War, Phase One Continued, Charles Albert's Defeat - The Vigevano Armistice (August 9, 1848) and Aftermath

After his initial success against Peschiera on May 30, 1848, Charles Albert did not pursue his advantage. Yet this would have been the time to act decisively. Naples could no longer be counted on in the matter of Italy's unification, but Parma, Modena and Milan declared for union with Piedmont. Venice, in spite of its republican constitution, followed Milan's example. However, Charles Albert did not trust his make-shift, mostly volunteer army, and feared the might of Austria. His indecision led to his defeat and that of the patriots of Lombardo-Venetia (Milan and Venice).

Meanwhile reinforcements had arrived from Austria, and Radetzky took the field with superior forces and superior generalship when the campaign was actively resumed in July. Defeated at Custoza (July 24-25), Charles Albert fell back on Milan, but could not hold it. So he abandoned Milan to Radetzky on August 6 and retreated into Piedmont. On August 9 the King concluded an armistice at Vigevano that restored the *status quo*.[23] Lombardy passed again under Austria, though Venice prolonged its resistance for an-

[23] The Vigevano armistice, so called from the town where it was signed, is also called the Salasco armistice from the name of the Piedmontese general (Carlo Canera di Salasco) that negotiated it with Marshall Radetzky of Austria.

other year. Piedmont was only saved from Austrian occupation by the fear of French intervention.

Throughout Italy the luckless campaign produced a sense of deep depression (though not of hopelessness). It caused a reaction against the moderate liberals, under whose auspices the campaign had been conducted. It also brought down the moderate constitutional governments that had been formed in the regional states of Central and Northern Italy. Thus the Vigevano armistice was a turning point, for after the defeat, the reluctant realization set in that Piedmont could not do it alone; hence both Milan and Turin were inclined to turn to France for assistance, though help from France was unlikely at this time.

It was a moment of weakness and uncertainty, and the Democrats and Mazzinian Republicans found their opportunity. Everywhere, in the latter half of 1848, they pressed for control, even in Piedmont, for King Charles Albert was desperately looking for any available help. In Tuscany a Democratic ministry was forced upon the Grand Duke.

Assassination of De Rossi (1848) and the Roman Republic (1849)

In the crisis that followed the Pope's Allocution of April 29 (1848) there were angry demonstrations and riots in the streets of Rome. As the situation deteriorated, the Democrats pressured Pius IX into accepting their leader, Count Terenzio Mamiani della Rovere as his Prime Minister (May 1-2). The Pope's ministers resigned, but Pius to appease the opposition accepted the new government. The unrest in Rome, however, continued and other countries were alarmed. In August the British government sent a ship with the offer to take the pope to safety. But Pius was resolved to stay in Rome. Conditions worsened, Prime Minister Mamiani resigned. The mobs in Rome continued to riot, and when on August 8 the Austrians attacked Bologna (a Legation of the Papal States) in reprisal for the participation of papal volunteers in the war, they demanded the declaration of war on Austria. In response the Pope acted to end Democratic control. He adjourned the Chambers and appointed the conservative Pellegrino Rossi as his minister. On November 15 when the Chambers were to reopen, Rossi was assassinated. [24]

[24] Pellegrino Rossi, though Italian, had worked as a university professor in France. In 1845 the French government sent him to Rome to negotiate the suppression of the French

On November 16, the Pope was confronted with demands for a Democratic ministry that would summon a Constituent Assembly and declare war on Austria. It would be headed by Father Antonio Rosmini-Serbati as President and again by Count Terenzio Mamiani as Minister of the Exterior (Secretary of State). Rosmini refused out of hand.

As the situation worsened, on November 24, Pope Pius IX, disguised as a simple priest, fled from Rome and took refuge in Gaeta (a fortress situated between Rome and Naples) under the protection of King Ferdinand of Naples.

Almost immediately Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany was forced out of Florence and joined the Pope at Gaeta. A Democratic provisional government was formed at Florence, and almost all of Central Italy appeared under Republican control.

In Rome the Chambers appointed a Supreme Committee of State that immediately summoned a Constituent Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, to determine the new constitution of the Papal States. Mazzini hastened from England, was declared a Roman citizen and was elected to the Constituent Assembly. Taking advantage of the Pope's "abdication" (so Mazzini interpreted his flight), the Constituent Assembly abolished the Pope's temporal power and on February 9 (1849) proclaimed the Roman Republic, while Mazzini continued to press the Assembly to declare war on Austria.

Meanwhile, as related below, when Charles Albert denounced the Vigevano armistice on March 12, 1849 and resumed the war against Austria, Mazzini called for war on Austria all the more insistently. Even Austria's swift and complete victory over the Piedmontese (March 25) did not alter Mazzini's position. He believed that a declaration of war would show the country that what the monarchy could not do the Republic would.

When news of Charles Albert's defeat reached Rome, the Assembly in the belief that Austria would descend on Rome and that war would be inevitable, on March 30 (1849), set up a triumvirate to lead the Republic, with Mazzini as leader.

Jesuits. He commended himself to Pius IX as one who would oppose the Democrats and anyone who attacked the Pope's temporal power. As he stepped down from his carriage on his way to reopen Parliament he was surrounded by a group of Democrats and assassinated.

Resumption of the War against Austria by Piedmont (Second Phase) - Charles Albert's Defeat at Novara (1849)

After suffering defeat at the hand of the Austrians and accepting their terms in the armistice of Vigevano in the first phase of the war (August 9, 1848), Piedmont did not fall to the Republican Democrats that seemed to have taken over Central Italy; its constitutional government was preserved.

After a new uprising broke out in Vienna in October 1848, King Charles Albert came under pressure to resume the war against Austria. The establishment of the Roman Republic and the certainty of Austrian intervention seemed to call for quick action. But Charles Albert could not find allies. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (President of the Second French Republic) was willing to intervene, but his ministers were not so disposed.[25]

Therefore Piedmont challenged Austria alone–a gallant venture, but one that was doomed to failure. On March 12, 1849, Charles Albert denounced the Vigevano armistice. A week later, he advanced upon Milan. Brescia alone among the Lombard cities rose in support, and Radetzky ended the war in one blow. With an encircling move, on March 23 (1849), he began to engage the Piedmontese at various points near Novara (northeastern Piedmont). There the single "three-day battle of the war" was fought. Charles Albert was decisively beaten, and abdicated in favor of his son, Victor Emmanuel II, on the evening of his defeat. He subsequently went into voluntary exile, and died in a monastery at Oporto (Portugal) on July 28, 1849.[26]

The first act of King Victor Emanuel II, Piedmont's new sovereign, was to sign an armistice. It provided for the removal of Piedmontese troops and fleet from the Adriatic, for maintaining a mixed Austro-Sardinian garrison at Alessandria, and for the payment of an indemnity of 3,000,000 sterling to Austria.

Austria's victory re-established her as the dominant power in Italy. Not only was Lombardo-Venetia subdued, but Tuscany, Parma, and Modena saw their former rulers restored and their constitutions abolished. Even in defeat, however, Piedmont, alone of all the Italian regional states, stood firm.

[25] Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, was elected President of the Second French Republic established in the1848 revolution that ousted Louis-Philippe of Orléans. By 1849 he was working toward the coup that would make an end of the Second Republic, and make him Emperor Napoleon III.

[26] Charles Albert's body was returned to Turin on October 13, honored with a solemn funeral, and buried in the royal crypt in the Basilica of Superga.

Not even Austria's offer to waive or reduce the huge war debt availed to induce King Victor Emmanuel II to rescind his father's *Statuto* (Constitution).

15 – Charles Albert abdicated in favor of his son, Victor Emmanuel II (March 23, 1849)

Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and Rome - The Fall of the Roman Republic and Pius IX's Restoration

The Roman Republic and its unrealistic hopes for a united Republican Italy were doomed. It faced the certainty of intervention in Pius IX's behalf. Austria, France, and Naples were all concerned to secure the Pope's restoration. But France saw that to permit Austria a free hand would place almost all of Italy back under Austrian control. Louis-Napoléon therefore decided to intervene. Public opinion in France was for intervention in the Pope's behalf.

Even though Parliament authorized him only to establish a garrison in Italy (as a warning to Austria), Louis-Napoléon had no scruples in extend-

ing the use of the force at his disposal. On April 24, 1849 General Nicolas-Charles Oudinot, in command of the French force, landed at Civitavecchia (a short distance north of Rome). He demanded at once that the Roman Republic step aside while his troops occupied the city and restored the Pope. The Republic resolved to resist, and on April 30, Oudinot was repulsed in an attempt to force the city, Giuseppe Garibaldi and his volunteers fighting in the front lines. Having received reinforcements, Oudinot attacked again in June, and after heavy bombardment entered the city. Mazzini resigned, while Garibaldi and some four thousand who had fought under his command managed to escape.[27] On July 14, 1849 Oudinot proclaimed the restoration of the Pope's Temporal Power, and in the following April 1850 Pius IX returned to Rome.

Louis-Napoléon advised him to grant an amnesty, to place his administration in lay hands, to adopt the Napoleonic civil code, and to continue liberal reforms. After his harrowing experience Pius was not inclined to be lenient; the advice fell on deaf ears.

Capitulation of Venice

As mentioned above, after Piedmont's defeat Austria reclaimed Lombardo-Venetia and her hegemony in Italy. But the city of Venice itself still held on under the leadership of Daniele Manin, president and heroic defender of the Republic. In April (1849) Austria laid siege, but the city resisted until August. It finally fell on August 27, 1849, defeated by famine and cholera, and by bombs dropped over the city from balloons (!). Daniele Manin went into exile and died in Paris in 1857.

[27] Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) participated in military action in Italy for the first time in 1848 fighting in the First War of Independence at the head of a band of volunteers; now he fought in defense of the Roman Republic (See biographical sketch given in a later chapter). Escaping from Rome and from the French, Garibaldi and his men marched northward intending to bring relief to Venice still under siege from the Austrians. The group, however, much reduced in numbers from defections, was intercepted and dispersed by an Austrian contingent near San Marino. Garibaldi with a mere 250 men managed to embark in small boats for Venice, but ships of the Austrian Adriatic fleet quickly disposed of them. Garibaldi's wife Anita, who always accompanied him, died of malaria in the swamps south of Ravenna. But Garibaldi survived, and pursued by the Austrians through Ravenna barely made good his escape to Genoa. There he was arrested in September (1849) and condemned to exile. Unable to gain admission to Tunisia, he settled in Sardinia.

III. Political Prospects after 1849. A Comment

Piedmont remained the one and only Italian State that could be relied upon to fight for independence. The Bourbons in the South had proved worthless. The Pope's Catholic position forbade his participation. Other regional sovereigns were under Austrian directly or indirectly. Piedmont and the House of Savoy instead, during the ten years' truce that followed (1849-1859), was looked to as the leader of the Nationalist movement. Piedmont would "try again" but not alone. The intervention of France in disposing of the Roman Republic and in restoring the Pope added a new dimension to the struggle for Italian independence and unification. Piedmont could not do it alone–a lesson that was not lost on Cavour, the future Prime Minister, who just then was making his way up the political ladder.

Mazzini, Garibaldi and other radical Republicans-Democrats will still be heard from, but Republicanism had lost its role as the maker of a united Italy. That role would be decisively assumed by Piedmont with the help of French Emperor Napoleon III. King Victor Emmanuel II, Prime Minister Count Camillo Benso of Cavour, and (a "converted") Garibaldi himself, would be the protagonists in the drama of Italian unification (1859-1861).

Also and significantly, after 1849 Piedmont as the one free regional state in Italy became the asylum of political refugees from the other states. They numbered in the tens of thousands, among them some of the finest thinkers in Italy, whose influence over the years 1849-1859 was decisive in setting the course of the liberal revolution and the *Risorgimento*. The 1850s were a period of preparation, intellectual activity, and economic and industrial growth in Piedmont. Italy's future depended upon Piedmont, its liberal institutions and its statesmen, of whom Count Camillo Benso of Cavour was the greatest.

Appendices

1. Pope Pius IX (1792-1878)

New Catholic Encyclopedia, s. v. Pius IX; Michael J. Walsh, ed., *Lives of the Popes*; *Compact Storia d'Italia* (De Agostini); *passim* from 89 to 107; Roger Aubert, *Il Pontificato di Pio IX (1846-1878)*, ed. By Giacomo Martina (Turin: S.A.I.E., 1976).

Education and Service to His Election to the Papacy

Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti was born on May 13, 1792, was elected pope as Pius IX on June 16, 1846 (Pio Nono as he was known even in the English-speaking world), and died February 7, 1878. He reigned longer than any Pope in history (32 years) and witnessed some of the papacy's greatest triumphs and some of its most devastating setbacks.

Born in Sinigaglia, on the Adriatic coast, Pius suffered from epilepsy as a child, a condition that prevented him from following his first choice of career, the army. It is said that he became a priest at the suggestion of Pius VII who ordained him in 1819. His rudimentary education in Viterbo and Rome scarcely exposed him to the world of arts and sciences beyond normal clerical studies.

Immediately after ordination he accompanied Mgr. Muzi on a diplomatic mission to Peru and Chile. His rise through the hierarchy was rapid without being meteoric; he was successively appointed Archbishop of Spoleto (1827), Bishop of Imola (1832), and was made Cardinal in 1840.

The "Liberal" Pope

By the time he was elected Pope, in 1846, at the age of fifty-three and after a conclave of only two days, he was a well-known liberal. He had sympathized with the aspirations of Italian nationalists while maintaining traditional views on the Papal States. A month after his election, Pius declared an amnesty for political prisoners and exiles from the papal territories, a move that provoked criticism from the Austrian Chancellor, Klemens Metternich. Aided by his first secretary of state, the liberal Cardinal Pasquale Gizzi, Pius IX's political and social reforms included the creation of a consultative assembly, a council of ministers and a full municipal government for Rome. By March 1848 Pius had granted a constitution for the Papal States for the first time in their history. Freedom of the press was established to a limited extent, railways and gas-lighting were introduced, agricultural and educational reforms were set in place, all of which gave the impression of a truly liberal and enlightened Ruler.

Pius IX's Position vis-à-vis the Liberal Revolution and the unification of Italy

By the end of 1848 the situation had completely changed. Pius had refused to support Charles Albert of Savoy's war with Austria, a refusal that enraged Italian nationalist opinion. Shortly thereafter the papal Prime Minister, Pellegrino Rossi, was assassinated. The Pope himself was forced to flee into exile (to Gaeta, in the Kingdom of Naples) following revolution in the papal territory leading to the establishment of the Mazzinian Roman Republic (1849). By this time Pope Pius had resolutely set his face against liberalism in any form. This was especially the case with the appointment as Secretary of State of the ultra conservative (and somewhat sinister) Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli.

The Roman Republic came to an end through French intervetion, and Pus IX was restored to Rome by April 1850. But the Pope's political troubles were far from over. There followed in the early and mid fifties the secularization of Italian life, monasteries and convents were closed and other laws were enacted against the Church. By 1859-1860 (during and after the second war of Italian independence) despite the measures taken by the papal Minister for War, Xavier de Merode, most of the Papal States had revolted, were invaded and annexed to Piedmont, becoming part of united Italy. Anticlericalism now became a feature of life in those regions previously under papal government.

Giuseppe Garibaldi was a major contributor to the unification of Italy by his conquest of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily in 1860. His repeated attacks on Rome, still under Papal rule (notably that of November 1866) were rebuffed by French troops. Emperor Napoleon III was by this stage the sole guarantor of papal political independence. With the best of intentions, and against advice from many quarters, the Pope could not accept the new political realities. As in 1864 he had faced the liberal onslaught from the religious point of view the Encyclical Quanta Cura and the Syllabus of Errors, so he faced it from the political point of view with the Decree *Non expedit* of February 1868 forbidding Catholics from participating in Italian political affairs.

In September 1870, after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War the Italian army occupied Rome while the First Vatican Council was in session. All that was left of the Papal States was annexed to Italy by referendum, and Rome became the capital of Italy. This spelled the end of the Pope's temporal power. Subsequently Pius IX rejected the Law of Guarantees and all overtures of the Italian government and retreated to a self-imposed "imprisonment" in the Vatican.

Leader of the Church in a Secularized Society

Alongside the ending of papal secular power must be set the astonishing growth in importance of the papacy in the life of the Church at large. In 1854 Pius

IX had defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as an article of faith. In 1863 bishops from all over the world had joined the Pope for the canonization of the Japanese martyrs, and again in 1867 for the 18th centenary of the death of SS. Peter and Paul. Then came the definition of papal infallibility by Vatican I. The papacy's central role in the spiritual life of Catholic Church and the dependence of bishops upon the papacy as a focus of unity were thereby emphasized–a statement of ultramontane ecclesiology.[28]

The encyclical *Quanta Cura* of 1864 (mentioned above), to which was attached the Syllabus of Errors (80 condemned propositions), demonstrated Pius' rejection of modern secularist and liberal ideas. The documents represented the Pope's attempt to assert the primacy of the Church's social and spiritual authority in the context of its collapsing political power and of the inexorable progress of liberalism.

The closing years of Pius IX's reign were shadowed over by the *Kulturkampf* in Germany. There Chancellor Otto von Bismarck tried to restrict the Church's freedom by the expulsion of the Jesuits, the imprisonment of priests and bishops and by the introduction of many restrictions of Catholic life and practice. Pius condemned the *Kulturkampf* with the encyclical *Quod nunquam* (February 5, 1875).

Achievements and Evaluation

Without doubt Pius IX was the most important Pope of the nineteenth century and his failures must not overshadow his many achievements. He negotiated many new concordats. An agreement with the Ottoman Empire facilitated the creation of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in October 1847. Pius also restored the hierarchy in England (1850) and Holland (1853) and presided over an enormous expansion of the Church in the United Sates and the British Empire. In promoting devotion he canonized an unprecedented number of saints and encouraged veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He also established both the newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* and the Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica* (April 6, 1850), as instruments of Papal anti-liberal policy and ultramontane theology. He failed to understand the movement for political and social change in Western Europe, clinging to traditional forms that he regarded as essentially connected with religion.

His political setbacks and the suffering he had to endure were interpreted in the Catholic Church as attacks upon religion. After his death (February 7, 1878) there were calls for his canonization.

[28] The First Vatican Council (1869-70) enlarged the sphere of papal authority considerably. The Declaration of Papal Infallibility of July 18, 1870 was carried by an enormous majority of 533 to 2. However, more than fifty-five bishops (mostly German, French and Piedmontese) had left the Council before the final vote was cast.

He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on September 3, 2000.

In Salesian tradition Pius IX is regarded as the high protector of the Salesian Society and honored as "Don Bosco's Pope." It is unlikely that the Salesian Society and its constitutions would have won the approval Rome without Pius IX's interest and favorable interventions. A number of letters addressed to Pius IX in many of the Pope's difficult moments testify to Don Bosco's devotion to him *personally*.

2. King Charles Albert of Sardinia-Piedmont (1798-1849)

Marriott, *Makers of Modern Italy*, 48, 54-55, 67-68, 72; Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy*, 228-230, 240-243, 257-258, 284-285, 304-312, 318-326, 331-332, 339-343.

Charles Albert (Italian, *Carlo Alberto*), the son of Prince Charles Emmanuel of Savoy-Carignan, was born on October 2, 1798, in Turin, Piedmont (in the Napoleonic French Republic at the time). He belonged to the collateral (cadet) branch of the House of Savoy (Savoy-Carignan). He succeeded his father as Prince of Carignan in 1800 and was named count by Napoleon in 1810. In exile from Italy as a youth, he was brought up and educated in Paris and Geneva, where he was exposed to the ideas of the French Revolution.

When his cousin King Victor Emmanuel I was restored to the throne of Piedmont in 1814 by the Congress of Vienna, Charles Albert returned to Italy, where young liberals from Milan sought his aid in persuading the King to grant a popular constitution. After the revolution in Naples (1820), a plot against the King materialized. After consenting on March 6, 1821 to lead it, Charles Albert the next day refused to participate directly in the conspiracy. The coup erupted on March 10, Victor Emmanuel abdicated on the 13th, and Charles Albert was appointed regent until the arrival of the new king, Charles Felix. Charles Albert promptly promulgated a liberal constitution, which was, however, annulled by Charles Felix, who arrested the Regent and quelled the rebellion. After this liberal escapade, Charles Albert joined the fight against the constitutional liberals in support of the monarchy in Spain (1823).

After Charles Felix' death in 1831 (the last legitimate heir to the crown in the primary line of Savoy), Charles Albert's succession to the throne gave new hope to the liberals. He ruled during the turbulent early period of the *Risorgimento*, the movement for the unification of Italy. His political vacillations, which earned him the nickname of *Re Tentenna* (Vacillating King), make him an enigmatic personality.

Having become, contrary to expectations, a confirmed legitimist and a believer in the divine right of kings, he refused to pardon his accomplices in the plot of 1821, and relentlessly persecuted Mazzinian Republicans responsible for fomenting plots and uprisings, notably in 1831-1834.

Through the decade that followed he maintained his power by adopting a mediating policy between reactionaries and liberals and by forming his cabinet accordingly, though never surrendering his right as absolute monarch and failing to win the trust of either party. However, he continued to institute moderate reforms, to mitigate the harsh administration of the country and to accelerate its economic and social development.

Indecisive in character, deeply devout but tormented by religious scruples, he was nonetheless fired with a desire for glory and by a deep faith in his own heroic destiny. After the election of the "liberal" Pius IX as pope (1846) and the Austrian occupation of Ferrara, Charles Albert felt himself called to lead the liberation of Italy with Neo-Guelph sympathies. He was fiercely anti-Austrian and looked with disdain on the pro-Austrian conservatives. He replaced his reactionary cabinet with a reformist one in 1847, and (with reservations) moderate liberals began to regard him (as he also regarded himself) as the leader who could free Italy from Austrian domination without recourse to revolution.

Meanwhile under pressure from spreading revolutionary ideas, particularly from Mazzinian republicans, he advisedly decided to grant a liberal constitution (*Statuto*) for representative government (March 4, 1848).[29] This was the first step towards a far-reaching political and social liberal reform (or "revolution") in the Kingdom of Sardinia.

When the Milanese revolution against the Austrians (the "Five Days" March 18-22, 1848) raised the question of war with Austria, Charles Albert at first hesitated, but then declared war. After enjoying initial successes through the first part of June 1848, he remained inactive for more than a month, confused by political conflicts between the various Italian states, by their lack of support and especially by Pius IX's refusal to take part in the war. This respite allowed the Austrians to reorganize and mount a vigorous counter-offensive. Defeated decisively at Custoza, and then at Milan, Charles Albert was forced to sign the armistice of Vigevano (Salasco) on August 9, 1848.

Republican and nationalist forces, however, agitated ever more strongly for a new war with Austria. Seeking to vindicate his past failures, Charles Albert broke the armistice with Austria on March 12, 1849. Promptly defeated at Novara on March 23, he abdicated in favor of his son Victor Emmanuel II. Thus ended the First War of Independence (see above).

Charles Albert chose voluntary exile at Oporto, Portugal, where he died shortly thereafter on July 28, 1849.

[29] A partial text of the *Statuto* follows in the Appendix below.

3. Charles Albert's *Statuto* or Constitution (March 4, 1848)

Geoffrey Bruun, *Revolution and Reaction 1848-1852*, Anvil Original (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1958), 173-175; *Compact Storia d'Italia* (De Agostini), 96 (Summary Description).

Introductory Comment

The year 1848 is often called "The Year of Revolutions" for a good reason. Some 50 revolts, insurrections, and revolutions occurred in Europe that year, many of them in Italian regional states. King Ferdinand of Naples, Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany, and Pope Pius IX were forced to grant constitutions to their restive subjects.

In Piedmont, King Charles Albert, forestalling revolution, acceded to similar demands and granted a *Statuto* (Constitution). Archbishop Fransoni absolved him from the oath he had taken not to yield to liberal pressures.

Paris had set the "trend" with a revolution in 1848 that led to the abdication of Louis-Philippe of Orléans (elected in the revolution of 1830) and to the proclamation of the short-lived Second Republic.

Although under the constitution the king retained much power, practically speaking by Charles Albert's *Statuto* the Kingdom of Sardinia became a constitutional monarchy. Parliament and the Ministry (especially under Prime Minister Cavour) became increasingly more powerful in setting state's policy. The *Statuto* remained the law of united Italy until the ousting of the monarchy and the proclamation of the republic in 1946.

Charles Albert's *Statuto* contained important provisions. The following may be mentioned. The Catholic religion remained the religion of the state, but other religions were tolerated in accordance with the law. There were two chambers or houses: the chamber of deputies (elected) and the senate (appointed by the king); they shared legislative power with the king. Individual liberty and freedom of worship and of the press were guaranteed. Every individual was equal before the law. An individual's house and property were inviolable. Archbishops and bishops could be appointed to the senate. Senators and deputies served without pay.

Text of the *Statuto* or Constitution (Significant Articles)

Article 1. The Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion is the sole religion of the state. Other forms of public worship at present existing are tolerated in conformity with the laws.

Art. 2. The state is governed by a representative monarchical government. The throne is hereditary according to the Salic law [male line only].

Art. 3. The person of the Sovereign is sacred and inviolable. His ministers are responsible.

Art. 4. To the King alone appertains the executive power. He is the supreme head of the State. He commands all the forces, both naval and military; declares war, concludes treaties of peace, alliance and commerce; nominates to all offices, and gives all necessary orders for the execution of the laws without suspending or dispensing with the observance thereof.

Art. 5. The King appoints to all of the offices of the state, and makes the necessary decrees and regulations for the execution of the laws, without suspending their execution or granting exemptions from the law.

Art. 6. The King alone sanctions and promulgates all laws.

Art. 7. All justice emanates from the King and is administered in his name. He may grant pardons and commute sentences.

Art. 8. The legislative power shall be exercised collectively by King and the two Chambers.

Art. 9. The first of these Chambers [Senate] shall be composed of members nominated by the King for life; the second [Deputies] shall be elective, on the basis of the census to be determined.

Art. 10. The proposal of laws shall appertain both to the King and each of the Chambers, but with the distinct understanding that all laws imposing taxes or relating to the budget must originate in the elective Chamber [Deputies].

Art. 11. No tax may be imposed of levied if not assented to by the Chambers and sanctioned by the King.

Art. 12. Treaties involving financial obligations or alterations of the territory of the state shall not take effect until after they have received the approval of both Chambers.

Art. 13. The King convokes the two Chambers annually, may prorogue their sessions and may dissolve the elective one [Deputies], but in this case he shall convoke a new assembly at the expiration of four months.

[…]

Art. 24. All inhabitants of the kingdom, whatever their rank or title, are equal before the law. All shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall be eligible to civil and military office except as otherwise provided by law.

Art. 25. All shall contribute without distinction to the burden of the state, in proportion to their possessions.

Art. 26. Individual liberty is guaranteed. No one shall be arrested or brought to trial except in the cases provided for and according to the forms prescribed by law.

Art. 27. The domicile is inviolable. No search of a house shall take place except by virtue of law and in the manner prescribed by law.

Art. 28. The press shall be free, but the law may suppress abuses of this freedom. Nevertheless, Bibles, catechisms, liturgical and prayer books shall not be printed without the previous consent of the bishop.

Art. 29. Property of all kinds whatsoever is inviolable. In all cases, however, where the public welfare, legally ascertained, requires it, property may be taken and

transferred in whole or in part, upon payment of a just indemnity in accordance with law.

[…]

Art. 31. The public debt is guaranteed. All obligations of the state to its creditors are inviolable.

Art 32. The right to assemble peaceably and without arms is recognized, subject, however, to the laws that may regulate the exercise of this privilege in the interest of the public welfare. This privilege is not applicable to meetings in public places or places open to the public, which shall remain entirely subject to police control.

Art. 33. The Senate shall be composed of members who have attained the age of forty years, appointed for life by the King without limit of numbers, and from the following categories of citizens: (1) Archbishops and bishops of the state; (2) The president of the House of Deputies; (3) Deputies after having served in three legislatures, or after six years of service; (4) Ministers of state [Seventeen other categories are listed].

[…]

Art. 39. The elective Chamber shall be composed of deputies chosen by the electoral districts as provided by law.

[…]

Art. 47. The Chamber of Deputies shall have power to impeach ministers of the crown and to bring them to trial before the High Court of Justice.

[…]

Art. 50. The office of senator or deputy shall not carry with it any compensation or remuneration.

Art. 51. Senators and deputies shall not be called to account for opinions expressed or votes given in the Chambers.

Art. 52. The sessions of the Chambers shall be public. Upon the written request of ten members, secret sessions may be held.

Art. 53. No session or vote of either Chambers shall be legal or valid unless an absolute majority of its members is present.

[…]

Art. 56. Any bill rejected by one of the three legislative powers [King, Senate and Deputies] shall not again be introduced during the same session.

[…]

Art. 62. Italian shall be the official language of the Chambers.

Chapter 6

EARLY ORATORY DEVELOPMENTS

MO-En, 313-400; *EBM* III, 147-150, 459; IV, 542-559; Bonetti, *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, 103-117, 159-160; Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 71-100; *DB:LW*, 113-120; Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della casa madre dei Salesiani in Torino*, 2nd ed. (Turin: SEI, 1935), 60-107; Giraudo-Biancardi, *Qui è vissuto Don Bosco*, 157-183.

Summary

1. Gradual Renting and Acquisition of the Pinardi House and Property
2. The "Home Attached to the Oratory o St. Francis de Sales"
   (1) Beginnings and Early Development of the Home (Hospice, Hostel) (*Casa Annessa*)
   (2) Development of the School and Student Community at the Home
3. The Oratory of St. Aloysius at Porta Nuova (1847) [From Bonetti's *Storia*]
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   (2) Choosing the Site and Negotiations for Its Lease
   (3) Announcement Made to the Oratory Boys
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4. Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Vanchiglia District (1849) [From Bonetti's *Storia*]
   (1) Fr. Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Moschino and Vanchiglia Districts
   (2) Reasons for Closing the Oratory in 1849
   (3) The Oratory re-opened by Don Bosco and Fr. Borel in 1849

Appendices: 1. Biographical Sketches (Archbishop Louis Fransoni; Father Giacinto Carpano; Father Leonardo Murialdo); 2. Historical Outlines of 1854; 3. Letter-Report of Father Francesco Puecher to Father Antonio Rosmini

Our survey of the events of the liberal revolution in the preceding chapter provides a political and social context in which such expansion would take place. Those were turbulent times that called for courage and circumspection, especially for a person of undeviating ultramontane persuasion, such as Don Bosco was.

I. Early Development of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales

Acquisition of the Pinardi House and Property (1846-1851)

Once the Oratory was settled on Pinardi's property in 1846, Don Bosco developed a plan for a systematic development of the premises with a view to the further expansion of his work of charity. Immediately Don Bosco and Father Borel moved to sublease and then buy the Pinardi house and property and to develop a building plan.

The actions leading to the definitive acquisition of the Pinardi house and property are amply described and illustrated in Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco* and in Stella, *DB nella storia economica e sociale* (*DBEcSoc*), both listed above. Here a brief summary must suffice.[1]

As indicated, the original Pinardi-Borel contract for the lease of the shed was signed for three years on April 1, 1846. Three additional rooms on the second story of the house were sub-leased by deed signed by Mr. Soave and Father Borel on June 5, 1846. According to Lemoyne,[2] Don Bosco rented a fourth room before leaving Turin in August for a four-month period of convalescence at Becchi.

Back from Becchi with his mother (on November 3), Don Bosco on December 1, 1846 sub-leased from Mr. Soave the entire Pinardi house and adjacent lot for 710 lire a year (with an added bonus of 59 lire), for a period ending on December 31, 1848. Mr. Soave was to retain the use of a section of the ground floor for his starch business until March 1, 1847. Don Bosco signed as the contracting party for the first time.[3]

When Mr. Soave's lease (from Mr. Pinardi) expired, Father Borel (again acting as contracting party) merely took his place as lessee, and signed the lease for the house and property with Mr. Pinardi for an additional 150 lire a year.

This contract was to cover the period April 1, 1849 to March 31, 1852. But, on account of a murder on the premises of the Bellezza house next-door, Pinardi offered to sell house and property to Don Bosco (in partner-

[1] For acquisition and sale of properties by Don Bosco from 1848 to 1884, as recorded in the Deeds' Office of the city of Turin, cf. Bracco, "DB e le istituzioni," in Bracco, *Torino e Don Bosco* I, 145-150.

[2] *EBM* II, 388.

[3] Don Bosco had brought some money from home obtained from the sale of some land [*MO-En*, 297], but it would not have been worth 769 lire. It is believed that Father Cafasso (and others that backed Don Bosco's oratory work) would have put up the money.

ship with Fathers Borel, Cafasso and Roberto Murialdo) for 28,000 lire. The deed was signed on February 19, 1851, and by this final action the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales was definitively settled in its permanent home.

Beginnings and Early Development of the Home (*Casa Annessa*)[4]

Once established at Pinardi's in Valdocco (1846), Don Bosco, again responding to pressing need, opened in the Pinardi house a shelter, that is, a home for needy and homeless youngsters (1847). In this undertaking Don Bosco was following the example of a number of saints in earlier times: St. Philip Neri (1515-1595), St. Joseph Calasanz (1556-1648), St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), St. John B. de la Salle (1651-1719), etc. Some of Don Bosco's own contemporaries were also responding to the same need in much the same way.[5]

The establishment of the Home was a step of major significance in the development of Don Bosco's work. It was conceived as an extension of the oratory and its original inspiration was that it should be a home for oratory boys who were really poorest of the poor. This fact alone places it, if not on a par with, certainly a close second to the work of the oratory itself. It is in fact its logical extension, so much so that when first putting this work on a constitutional basis (1858) Don Bosco wrote by way of explanation:

> Some [youngsters] are found who are so neglected (*abbandonati*) that unless they are given shelter every care would be expended upon them in vain. Therefore, as far as possible houses of shelter shall be opened in which, with the means that divine Providence will provide, lodging, food and clothing shall be supplied to them. While they are instructed in the truths of faith, they shall also be started on some trade or line-of-work, as is presently done in the home attached [*Casa Annessa*] to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in this city.[6]

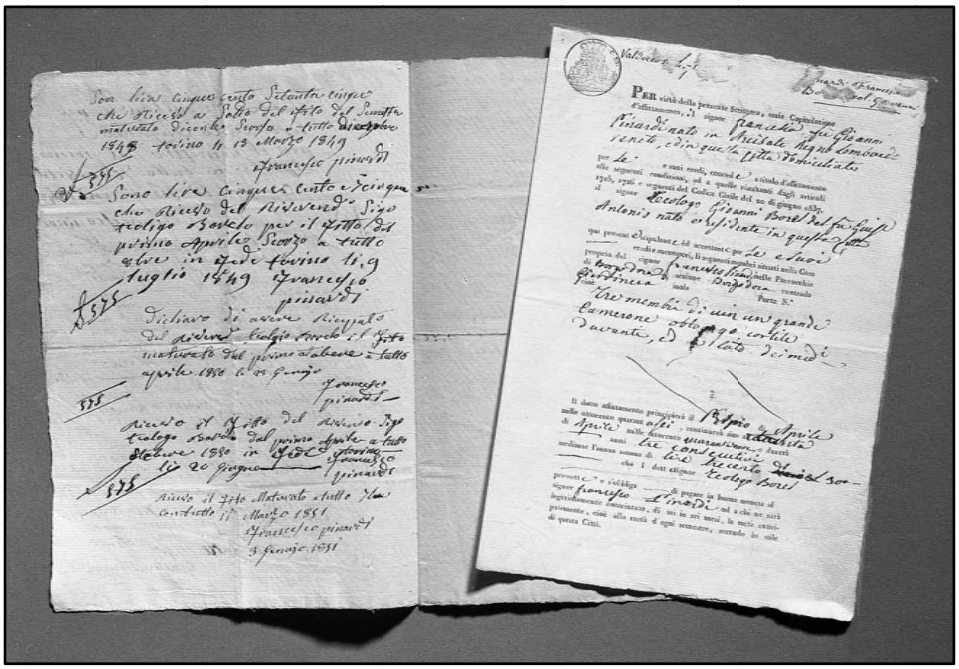
[4] Don Bosco's designation was, *Casa Annessa all'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales* (House or Home attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, also referred to as *Ospizio* (Hostel, "Hospice").

[5] Cf. Stella, *DB:LW*, 114.

[6] *Constitutions of the Salesian Society* (1858), "Purpose of this Society," art. 4, in Motto, *Cost. SDB: Testi critici*, 74. A similar intent is expressed in art. 2 of the constitutions of the *Charitable Society to Benefit Orphaned and Abandoned Young People in Turin* founded in 1849 by Father Cocchi in association with others. This is the group that built the *Collegio degli Artigianelli* [Stella, *DB:LW*, 114-115, n. 37].

But the importance of the Home also lies in the fact that almost from the start it became the laboratory in which the founder broadened his experiment in the education of the young, both working apprentices *and students*, including those also who would eventually carry forward his work.

It was in and through this diversified experiment that "what was done at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales" became the pattern for Salesian work everywhere. It was thus that the "Oratory experience" became *normative*.



16 – The original Pinardi-Borel contract (April 1, 1846)

Beginning of the Home in the Pinardi House and its First Boarders

In his *Memoirs* Don Bosco recalls how the Home had its beginning. On a rainy evening in May 1847, he and Mamma Margaret took in a 15-year old homeless orphan from the Valsesia, and Margaret lectured him before putting him to bed. No name is given. Don Bosco adds: "Very soon we had a companion for him."[7] According to Lemoyne, Don Bosco found this sec-

[7] *MO-En*, 313-314.

ond boy, also a homeless orphan, crying with his head against a tree in the *Corso San Massimo*.[8]

In the *Historical Outline* of 1854, after noting the renting of additional rooms in the Pinardi house, Don Bosco goes on to describe very briefly the beginning of the Home: "Two young men were given shelter. They were poor, orphaned, without a trade, ignorant of their religion. This is how the Home began; it never stopped growing."[9]

It is possible that the two young men spoken of here as the first boarders at the Home are the same as the two mentioned in the *Memoirs*, their social condition being identical. The sequence in the narrative in the two documents also corresponds. It should be noted, however, that in the *Memoirs* the *real* beginning is made in May with *one* boy (the unnamed orphan from the Valsesia), whereas in the *Historical Outline* of 1854, the undated beginning is made with *two* lads.

At the Oratory, *records* were kept by certain departments of the administration. Some of these ledgers contain information regarding boarders in those early times. The first to be considered is entitled *Anagrafe* (Family or Population Register) from 1847 to 1869."[10] This book records the names of boarders accepted at Valdocco during each solar year: 2 in 1847, 1 in 1848, 2 in 1849, and so on, up to 375 in 1869.

With the caution that "the Family Register is a late compilation, made in 1870 or even later" Stella writes:

> For 1847, two young men are recorded as having come to live at the Oratory as boarders, both born in Turin: Felice Reviglio and Giacinto Arnaud. Reviglio, born in 1831, became a boarder as a student on October 10, 1847 and left in September 1858. He was later ordained a priest and served as pastor of the church of St. Augustine in Turin. Arnaud, born in 1826, became a boarder as a working apprentice on October 25, 1847, and left on February 5, 1856. Neither of the two corresponds to the young man from the Valsesia described by Don Bosco [in his *Memoirs*].[11]

Nor, we may add, do these two young adults correspond to the two described by Don Bosco in the *Historical Outline*, cited above, except in number.

[8] *EBM* III, 143f. Corso San Massimo is the present Corso Regina Margherita.

[9] Historical Outline of 1854, final paragraph in Appendix below.

[10] Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 175 describes it (in 1980) as, "the first ledger of the group to come into *ASC* from the secretary's office of the Salesian house at Valdocco, not catalogued."

[11] Stella, *Ibid.*, 176.

Stella next calls our attention to "an older record, all in Don Bosco's hand, entitled *Repertorio domestico* (House List), which contains information on people who were residents at Valdocco between 1847 and 1853."[12] It is a rough draught in which Don Bosco recorded names, dates, fees paid, expenditures incurred for particular individuals, but apparently not exhaustively nor in strict order.

The information which Don Bosco gives regarding certain individuals who took up residence in the year 1847 may be summarized as follows: October 16, Alessandro Pescarmona, monthly fee, 55.50 lire; October 23, Father Carlo Palazzolo, monthly fee, 35 lire; October 29, 1847 to February 20, 1848, Father Pietro Ponte, monthly fee, 50 lire; November 2, Seminarian [Giovanni Battista] Bertagna, monthly fee, 50 lire; November 9, "The boy Luigi Parone came with Don Bosco" [no fee noted] (Notations for later years follow).

What this "House List" represents in terms of the beginning of the Home of the Oratory is uncertain. Certain facts are immediately evident, however. First, people other than young boarders resided at the Oratory (in 1847, two priests and one seminarian). These usually paid for their room and board, as did at least some of the youngsters. Secondly, the record begins with October, not with May (the time when the orphan from the Valsesia was given shelter according to the *Memoirs*). Thirdly, it is unlikely that this is a complete record of the boys taken in as boarders, for to the two mentioned here (Pescarmona and Parone) one should add the two mentioned in the Family Register (Reviglio and Arnaud). Further, it is known that by the end of 1847 the young men "given shelter" at the Home numbered 6 or 7, including a couple of students. Fourthly and more importantly, Alessandro Pescarmona does not qualify as the orphan from Valsesia, for he was the son of Giovanni B. Pescarmona, a well-to-do farmer and a former mayor of Castelnuovo. Fees and other terms were agreed upon by a private convention between Mr. Pescarmona and Don Bosco.[13] The boy Luigi Parone who "came with Don Bosco" (meaning perhaps that he was a charity case) might qualify, except that he was accepted in November, not in May.

The description of the beginnings of the Home in the *Historical Outlines*

[12] Stella, *Ibid.*, 176. This "House List" is in *ASC* 132: *Taccuini-Repertorio domestico*: Orat. dal 16-10-1847 al 14-8-1853, 1-40; *FDB* 753 C6-E12. Trascribed in Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 559-571.

[13] Signed document in Don Bosco's hand in *ASC* 132: *Autografi-contratti*, *Pescarmona*, *FDB* 109 C8.

of 1862, though not specific, still is detailed enough to offer an alternative to the traditional picture, and is worth quoting in full.

> *House Attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales* – Among the young people who attended these oratories some would be found who were so poor and neglected (*abbandonati*) that every care expended on their behalf would have been of little use, unless they were given a home in some place and provided with food and clothing. We sought to supply for this need with the Home Attached (*Casa Annessa*), also [simply] called Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. There we began by renting a small house in 1847,[14] and providing a home *to a few* among the poorest. At that time they used to go out to work at various places in the city, returning to the Home of the Oratory to eat and sleep. But the grave need that was experienced in various localities of the [Turin] province was responsible for our decision to extend admission also to those who did not attend the Turin oratories. One thing led to another. Neglected young people appeared out of nowhere in swarms. It was then that a policy was established according to which only those youngsters were admitted who were between the ages of eighteen and twelve, orphaned of both parents, and in a state of dire poverty with no one to care for them (*totalmente poveri ed abbandonati*).[15]

One may note that the motivation for the home here is given much in the same language as in the draft of the Salesian Constitutions of the same period (cited above). The description of the establishment of the Home in 1847 (the "renting of a small house" as a home "for a few among the poorest") is sufficiently general as to allow further specification. But nothing in the passage suggests a beginning in May with one orphan lad from Valsesia.

Possible Symbolical Role of the "Orphan Boy from Valsesia"

Earlier we raised the question of the symbolical (rather than historical) role of the Garelli story as a description of the beginnings of the Oratory in the *Memoirs*. The same question might be raised with respect to the possible symbolical role of the story of the orphan boy from the Valsesia as marking the beginning of Don Bosco's second great institution. For the importance of the *Casa annessa* as the extension of the Oratory and as the setting for the tremendous developments that followed, cannot be overestimated. The story of the beginning of the "Home attached to the Oratory"

[14] This is the Pinardi House.

[15] The *Historical Outlines* of 1862 is given in a later chapter.

with one (unnamed) orphan from the Valsesia may then be said to form a diptych, as to contents and rhetoric, with the story of the beginning of the Oratory itself with one orphan (Garelli?) from Asti. That both stories might be symbolical, rather than historical, representations cannot be ruled out. For, as will be seen, the type of the "homeless, destitute, orphaned young person at risk" not only motivates the beginnings, but also defines the character of the work throughout its development. This remains true in Don Bosco's thinking and statements even when, for example, his school at the Oratory, and later his schools elsewhere, were attended by young people who were neither homeless, not destitute, nor orphaned, nor (strictly) at risk.

As indicated above, students as well as apprentices lived at the Home from the start. Pescarmona and Reviglio have already been mentioned. They were students at secondary level (high school). Other easily recognizable names appear in the registers. For example we note Angelo Savio (1850) and Giovanni Cagliero (1851), both like Pescarmona from Castelnuovo. Then we have Michele Rua and Giovanni Francesia (1852), both from Turin, who had attended the oratory. At this point in time, the boarders at the Home numbered about 30: some 20 working lads and some 10 students. They all lived (with Don Bosco and Mamma Margaret) in the Pinardi house, which obviously was overcrowded. [16]

The Church of St. Francis de Sales[17]

A new building for the home became necessary. However, after acquiring the Pinardi house and property in 1851 (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 22), Don Bosco's first major building project was the Church of St. Francis de Sales, dedicated on June 20, 1852. This was at a time when his "charity base" was still small and insecure. For this project Don Bosco launched his first large-scale fund raising campaign through a benefit raffle or lottery, the first of nine that were to follow. Father Cafasso, by this time Rector of the Pastoral Institute, also supplied funds.[18]

[16] Father Francesco Puecher, too, in his report to Father Antonio Rosmini of June 1850 (see text below) states that the boarders in the Home (Pinardi house) numbered about thirty.

[17] For a detailed description of the planning and building of the church, dedicated in to St. Francis de Sales just as was the Pinardi chapel, see Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 111-120. For this and the following paragraphs (buildings 1851-1859) see Stella, *DBEcSoc* 86-100.

[18] For the significance of this first great raffle and of others that followed, as instances of Don Bosco's dealings with city authorities, cf. Bracco, "Don Bosco e le istituzioni," in

The Home in "Don Bosco's House" East Wing (1853)

Up to this point in time, the Home *was* the Pinardi House. But the number of working and student boarders increased steadily.

Therefore a few days after the inauguration of the church of St. Francis de Sales, Don Bosco began to develop plans for a large building to replace the small Pinardi house as the "Home attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales." It was to be situated between the church of St. Francis de Sales to the west and the Filippi house (not yet purchased) to the east, hence taking up also the space occupied by the Pinardi house. But since he could ill afford meanwhile to raze the Pinardi house, he decided to put up only the eastern part of the projected building.[19]

The work was well along when, on November 20, 1852, part of the second story to the east collapsed. Three workers were seriously injured. Don Bosco ordered the damage repaired without delay. The work went forward, but as the structure reached the roofing stage, at midnight of December 2, 1852, the whole edifice collapsed, damaging also the near section of the Pinardi house where Don Bosco's room was located. Next morning, while the municipal building inspectors were at work, the last standing wall collapsed. Since it was winter, the work was stopped. To enable the programs to go forward at the Home, Don Bosco turned the old Pinardi chapel into a dormitory and located the day and evening classes in the church of St. Francis de Sales.

In the spring of 1853 work on the building resumed. In March the city commission stopped the work and demanded that a certified architect and contractor be called in. The original contractor was fined for negligence. The building was completed in October 1853 and immediately occupied, not without risk since the grout was not fully solidified. The old Pinardi chapel was now turned into a classroom and study hall. Don Bosco moved into a room on the third level of the east wing of the new house, henceforth to be known as "Don Bosco's house." Later in successive frontal additions to this wing, this room became the waiting room of a "suite"–Don Bosco's rooms.

In 1853, out of a boarding population of 100 boys, some 65% were working apprentices, while some 35% were students. At this time (1853) workshops began to be established at the Home.

Bracco, *Torino e Don Bosco*, vol. I: *Saggi* (Torino, 1989), 130-138. City Hall's response to Don Bosco's requests for permits to float lotteries was constantly reasonable and favorable.

[19] For details of the building of "Don Bosco's House, see Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 120-126.

Building the West Wing of the Home and demolition of the Pinardi House and Shed[20]

A further expansion was made possible by the construction of the second section of Don Bosco's house in 1856. This replaced the Pinardi house, which was demolished together with the old shed-chapel with no compunction. Again during construction an accident occurred as the scaffolding and the supporting beams were being removed. One of these plunged through the ceiling of the top story, which collapsed taking down with it part of the floors below. The damage was repaired, and the building could be occupied by October 1856.

The boarders rose to 200 in number, the students now surpassing the working boys, 65% to 35%.[21] By this time (1855-56) a secondary course of studies (*ginnasio*, high school) began to be established at the Home.

Development of the School and of the Student Community at the Home[22]

From October 1847 (when Don Bosco admitted the first student) to 1850-51 Don Bosco himself, with Father Pietro Merla's help, taught the students (in secondary studies) but by the year 1851-52, Don Bosco began to send them out to private schools in the city. The private teachers Carlo Giuseppe Bonzanino and Father Matteo Picco generously admitted Don Bosco's "poor youngsters" free of charge. Don Bosco's boys were set up as examples of devotion to duty and good conduct before the other students, who were mostly from fairly well off families.

In 1855-56 Don Bosco began to establish a secondary school program at the Home, under the Boncompagni school reform (1848), beginning with the third year of the 5-year *ginnasio*, with 17-year old Salesian seminarian Giovanni Francesia as teacher. By the year 1859-1860 he succeeded in estab-

[20] For details see Giraudi, *L'Oratorio*, 127-132.

[21] For data, cf. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 86-100, 180-181, and Giraudi, *L'Oratorio* (1935), 111-131; also *EBM* IV, 327-328 and 351-361.

[22] Here we give but a brief account of the Oratory School and student community. A more detailed account will be given in the context of the establishment of the first Salesian school in 1863. Likewise, the community of the working boys, or apprentices, and the workshops are discussed in a later chapter.

lishing a complete resident program of secondary studies, with five years of *ginnasio* (high school), under the Casati school system (1859).[23]

From then on, the student community acquired increasing importance for a number of reasons. First of all, in line with the new policy of mass education undertaken by the secular State, Don Bosco saw himself as increasingly committed to education through schools for the poor, with the aim of turning out "good Christians as well as good citizens." Secondly, as the number of students steadily increased and surpassed that of working apprentices (steadily in a ratio of about 2 to 1), the school became the more important vehicle for Don Bosco's educational "experiment." Thirdly and more importantly, through the school Don Bosco aimed at cultivating vocations to the priesthood, and eventually to the Salesian Society, from among those (poor) boys who gave evidence of good conduct, good will, and intelligence.

In this last respect the Oratory school, while trying to comply with the law in academic matters, was otherwise run as it would have been run in the times of the Restoration, that is, ideally as a junior seminary.

Even before the secondary studies program was completely established at the Oratory, Don Bosco began to advertise the Home and Oratory school, stressing their charitable character and purpose. It was for "orphans" who were "destitute and homeless." [!] The November 7, 1857 issue of the Catholic daily *L'Armonia*, published an advertisement stating Don Bosco's admission requirements. It ideally also constituted a manifesto of his commitment to the poor.

> 1. The boy must be at least twelve and not over eighteen.
>
> 2. He must be an orphan with both parents dead and have no relatives able to care for him.
>
> 3. He must be completely destitute and homeless. If a boy fulfills the first two conditions, but has some property of his own, he must bring it with him to

[23] In the wake of the liberal revolution and the constitution in 1848, a school reform took place, the work of Minister of Public Instruction Carlo Boncompagni. It placed all public education under state control (replacing the school legislation of King Charles Felix, 1822) in effect removing it from the Church's control. However, it allowed the operation of private schools, provided they complied with the requirements of the new statutes. A private school was one that was run by a licensed teacher (usually in his own home) or by an institution. There were several such schools in the city. In 1859, Minister Gabrio Casati, continuing the liberal program of secularization, published a new, far-reaching school reform, which necessitated the reorganization of the program of studies in the Oratory school by this time fully established with five years of secondary studies (*ginnasio*).

help defray expenses; since it would not be right for a person who has property to live off the charity of others.

4. A boy must be in good health, and not be physically deformed or ill with some loathsome or communicable disease.

5. Priority will be given to totally destitute and homeless boys who already attend the oratories of St. Aloysius, of the Guardian Angel and of St. Francis de Sales, because this Home has been opened especially for them.[24]

As Lemoyne has noted, this policy statement seems intended to emphasize "for the public" the priority option for the "poor and abandoned" that had inspired the creation of the Home in the first place. But this statement, while perhaps generally reflecting the situation in the working community, did not reflect the *real* situation in the student community. A number of these boys, though generally poor, were neither orphans nor destitute, and at least some of them paid their room-and-board and tuition fees, at least in part. This may be learned from Oratory books such as Don Bosco's own House List mentioned above.[25]

Don Bosco, however, did not make that statement just for publicity purposes, but by it he expressed his real commitment to the needy. Pietro Baricco, in his description of Turin written in 1868, in the two sections devoted to scholastic and to charitable institutions, notes that Don Bosco's Oratory belonged to the latter category. He writes:

> The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, under Father John Bosco's direction, should be classed as a charitable institution rather than as an academic one. The fees charged for room and board are modest in the extreme, and most of its pupils are maintained free of charge. Perhaps less than one hundred of them pay the full amount of 24 lire per month. Of the 504 students in residence at the institute, 445 are enrolled in the secondary school (*corso ginnasiale*). […]
>
> In the program of studies are enrolled young men of good conduct who have completed their elementary course of studies. They are either received free of charge (and these are in the majority) or they pay only a modest fee ranging from 5 to 24 lire per month. On the other hand, working apprentices are all admitted free of charge. They must be at least 12 years old and orphans with both parents dead, with no one to care for them (*abbandonati*).[26]

[24] *EBM* V, 496.

[25] Cf. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 202-204; Lemoyne also notes that even before 1851 some of the boarders paid regular fees [*EBM* III, 410].

[26] Pietro Baricco, *Torino descritta* II, 708 and 813.

The foregoing pages have described the origin and early development of the Home attached to Oratory, the first important addition to the work of the oratory proper. We focused our attention on the students' community and on the establishment of a secondary school program at the Home, leaving for a later discussion the development of the community of working apprentices and the setting up of workshops.

One should also bear in mind that all along the oratory boys continued to meet at the Oratory in ever increasing numbers on Sunday and holy days for religious services, catechetical instruction and recreation. The boarders of the Home would join the oratory boys in these activities, some of them as leaders and helpers.

As the number of boys attending the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales on Sundays and holy days rose to several hundreds, the need was felt of opening a second, and shortly thereafter a third, oratory. The Oratory of St. Aloysius was established in 1847 in the area of Porta Nuova in the southern part of the city, and Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the district of Vanchiglia was re-opened by Don Bosco in 1849.

Giovanni Bonetti describes these developments.

II. The Oratory of St. Aloysius at Porta Nuova (1847)

Bonetti, "Storia dell'Oratorio […]" in *Bollettino Salesiano* and *Cinque Lustri*, translated as *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, 103-117.[27]

The number of boys who attended the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales was increasing steadily. This was due to a large extent to Don Bosco's and Father Borel's efforts in providing both secular and religious instruction for them. On feast-days boys came in such crowds that only a portion of them could get into the chapel. About two hundred had to remain in the playground while devotions were going on. The playground, too, though far from small, was not nearly large enough for so many boys to play in.

[27] We here transcribe Bonetti's description of the founding of this oratory with some adaptations.

Planning a New Oratory

One day in August, after night prayers, Don Bosco took Father Borel aside and spoke to him about the situation.

"You must have seen for several Sundays, and especially today, what a great number of boys we have had at the Oratory. There must be not less than eight hundred. There is not even standing room in the chapel, and the boys are so crowded together that one feels quite sorry for them. As time goes on, the situation can only get worse. It would not be right to reduce the number by sending some away, because that would expose them again to the dangers of the streets, where they may so easily fall into evil ways. Can you think what we can possibly do?"

"I have noticed it, too" Father Borel answered, "and I am convinced that this place, which at first seemed so large, is now far too small to hold so many boys. We shall have to migrate again, as the cranes and swallows do every year."[28]

"It seems to me" said Don Bosco, "that we can do without leaving this place to look for a larger one. From inquiries I have made, I find that a good third of our boys come here from the west side of the town. Some of them walk as far as two miles to get here. If we were to open a second oratory in that district and stay on here as well, do you think that we could make it a success?"

Father Borel thought over Don Bosco's words for several minutes, after which he exclaimed:

"The idea is excellent!"

"In that way we should gain a double advantage" continued Don Bosco. "We should lessen the number of boys at this oratory and so be able to give more attention to those who remain here. We should also attract many others to the oratory who do not yet come to this one because it is too far away."

The project was thus proposed and agreed upon.

Next day Don Bosco went to call upon Archbishop Fransoni, and laid before him the plan of starting a second oratory, asking at the same time his advice on the subject. The Archbishop praised and approved the new design, and suggested that the second oratory should be established in the very heart of the city. Thus encouraged, Don Bosco soon afterwards went in search of a suitable site in that part of the town near Porta Nuova.

[28] It should be recalled that as of 1847 Don Bosco and Father Borel had not yet bought the Pinardi property, merely sub-rented it (from Mr. Soave).

Choice of a Site and Negotiations for its Lease

After weighing the reasons for and against different places, Don Bosco at length decided on one in the *Viale Vittorio Emmanuele,* close to the river Po. That neighborhood, now covered with stately buildings and intersected by spacious streets and pleasant gardens, was at the time only a stretch of vacant land, with a few cottages scattered here and there, inhabited mostly by washerwomen.

On feast-days swarms of young lads were to be found playing about there instead of attending their parish church for services and religious instruction. They grew up ignorant of religion, and exposed to evils of every kind. Don Bosco saw that the place was very well suited for the purpose he had in view, and like an experienced general, he chose it as the strategic position on which to pitch his camp.

There was a small house close by, with an adjoining yard and a tumbled-down shed. Upon inquiry he found that the owner was a woman named Vaglienti.[29] He went to see her, and after explaining the object of his visit, asked her to let him rent the house from her. She was inclined to do this, but they could not come to terms about the yearly rental fee. After a long discussion, during which the negotiations repeatedly threatened to collapse, God provided a solution to the problem. The sky clouded, and almost without warning a vivid flash of lightning threw the excited woman into a state of panic. She turned to Don Bosco terrified and exclaimed: "If you will pray God to preserve me from the lightning, I will let you have the house for the sum you offer."

"Thank you" said Don Bosco, "and I pray Our Lord to bless you now and always." After a few moments the lightning ceased, and the contract was made for four hundred and fifty lire a year.

So the lightning came as a blessing for Don Bosco; it played the part of a benevolent mediator. The tenants of the house were given notice to quit, and workmen were sent in to prepare a chapel.

Announcement made to the Oratory Boys

Don Bosco assembled his boys one Sunday and announced that very soon he was going to open a second oratory. He used a beautiful example in

[29] No other name is on record for Mrs. Vaglienti [Cf. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 644].

telling them the good news. He said: "My dear children, when bees become too many for one hive, some of them fly away and form a new family. There are, as you see, so many of us here that we hardly know where to turn. In chapel we are packed together like sardines. What can we do? We must imitate the bees, go somewhere else to open another oratory and start another family."

These words were hailed by the boys with a shout of joy. When their youthful enthusiasm had subsided, Don Bosco continued:

"I suppose you are all curious to know where the new oratory is to be, when it is to be opened, what its name is to be, and which of you are going there. I will tell you in a few words. The oratory will be located near *Porta Nuova,* a short distance from the iron bridge over the River Po. So those who live in that part of the town can go to it because it will be nearer to their homes, and also because their example will attract other boys in the neighborhood.

"When is it to be opened? Men are already working on the chapel, so I hope we shall bless it on the 8th of next December, the Feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. We should like to open our second oratory on the same feast as our first one–a day consecrated to the great Mother of God. And we shall place our new House under her powerful protection.

"What name shall we give it? It will be called the Oratory of St. Aloysius, and there are two reasons for giving it that name. The first one is that our boys should have a model of innocence and every other virtue to imitate. St. Aloysius is exactly the model we want, for the Church herself proposes it to us, The second reason is to show our gratitude to our venerated Archbishop, His Grace Aloysius Fransoni, who loves us so much and who is so kind in extending to us his patronage. I hope, boys, that you are pleased with this piece of news."

A resounding chorus of assent was the answer, followed by loud, joyous cheers. The news was carried by the boys to their homes, schools and workshops, and very soon went the round of the neighborhood. Bands of children continually went to see the place where the new oratory was to be, and they were full of joy when they saw how well suited it was for their favorite games. The 8th of December was eagerly looked forward to, and several weeks before the opening ceremony everyone in those parts knew about the new institution.

Inauguration of the Oratory of St. Aloysius on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1847)

When the time drew near, Don Bosco petitioned His Grace the Archbishop for permission to bless the new oratory, as well as for other favors that were needed. The zealous and benevolent Archbishop granted them all without restrictions of any kind.

On the previous Sunday, Don Bosco had given notice that the inauguration of the new oratory would take place on the coming feast of the Immaculate Conception. He asked the boys in the southern part of the town to be at the place, already so well known to them, early in the morning, so that they might have an opportunity of going to confession. The chapel would be blessed first, after which holy Mass would be celebrated. "Come, and be part of the celebration" Don Bosco said, "because by doing so we can worthily honor our dearest Mother, the Immaculate Queen of Heaven. We must beg her to turn her eyes upon us, to take the new oratory under her protecting mantle and to make our new work prosper, so that many boys may benefit by coming here." The boys who lived in the part of Turin that was near the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales were asked also to assemble there on the same day and at the same time.

"So" Don Bosco continued, "We shall be like two families that are united in spirit although separated in body. We shall join together in celebrating the praises of the Mother of God."

A crowd of boys gathered round Don Bosco and Father Borel when they came out of chapel, and promised eagerly to bring their parents, friends and companions to the new oratory. The two priests were very glad indeed to see the enthusiasm shown by the boys, and felt sure that, through God's goodness, their labors would not be lost.

On the vigil of the feast, the chapel about to be dedicated to St. Aloysius was illuminated. A picture of the Saint, candlesticks, candles, altar-cloth, alb, cope and veil had been given by various benefactors, as well as other useful articles, such as a table, a press for vestments, seat and kneeler for use in the sacristy. These benefactors were the forerunners of those who are now called the Cooperators of Don Bosco. The few articles still required for carrying out the sacred functions were brought from the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales, or borrowed from a neighboring parish.

December 8, 1847 came at last, and the morning dawned in a perfect whirlwind of snow. It was the third anniversary of the day on which Don Bosco had blessed the first Chapel of the Oratory in honor of St. Francis

of Sales, when he was at the Refuge belonging to the Marchioness Barolo.[30] He had given his first oratory the name of that gentle Saint, and it had prospered and increased in a wonderful manner. The second Oratory, dedicated on Our Lady's day, would likewise be equally successful and do a great deal of good to the young. […]

The bad weather did not prevent the boys from coming to the Oratory in large numbers. About six o'clock in the morning several were already there for confession, and by eight o'clock the chapel was quite full. As Don Bosco was obliged to be at Valdocco, he could not, of course be present at " St. Aloysius." Father Borel performed the service, blessed the little church and celebrated holy Mass. Then he gave from the altar a short and touching address. […]

Director and Staff of the Oratory of St. Aloysius

The rules of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales were introduced at the Oratory of St. Aloysius, and everything was carried on according to the same methods. Since Don Bosco was not able to direct the new oratory in person, he consulted Father Borel, and they decided to entrust it to various zealous priests who every feast day took with them some of the older and more intelligent boys from Valdocco to help them in their task.

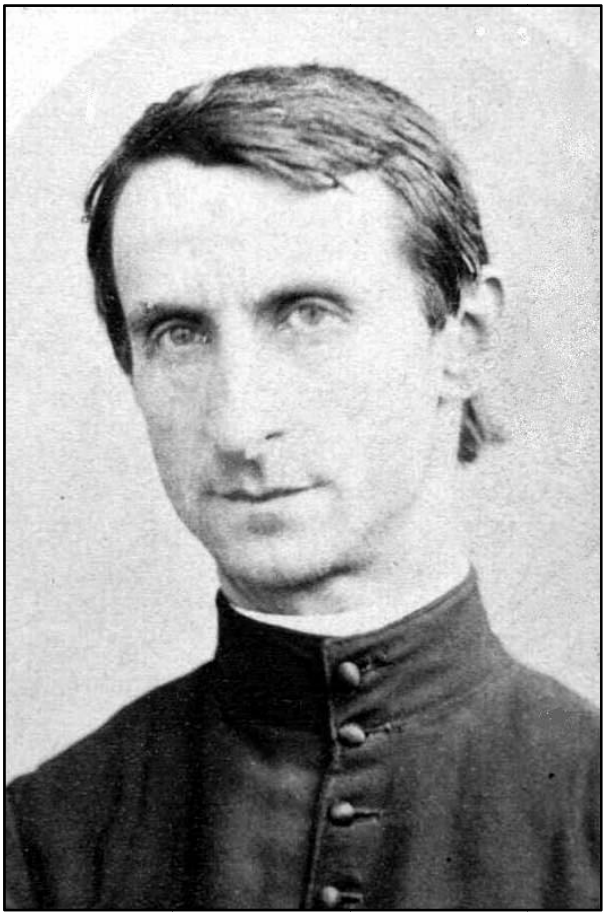
Father [Giacinto] Carpano was nominated first Director of the new oratory, where Don Bosco and Father Borel were frequent visitors.[31] Father [Pietro] Ponte was the next Director, and was succeeded by Father [Paolo Francesco] Rossi, who was a man of great zeal but whose health was not at all good. He died while he was still quite young [28 years of age]. There followed an interval of some years during which there was no fixed Director. By this time Don Bosco began to have at his disposal some seminarians that he sent to "St. Aloysius" on Sundays and holy days. Each week he secured the services of a priest of Turin, who went there for confessions and holy Mass, as well as preaching. Occasionally a priest would be on hand for the sermon and devotions in the evening.

Some time later, Don Bosco asked Father Leonard Murialdo to accept

[30] The first Oratory chapel blessed and dedicated to St. Francis de Sales on December 8, 1844 was located not at the Refuge but in the priests' quarters of the Little Hospital, though Don Bosco lived at the Refuge with Father Borel.

[31] Father Carpano's biographical sketch is given in Appendix below.

the position of Director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius. The boys profited very much while he remained with them, which he did till he undertook the direction of the school for young artisans (*Artigianelli*), another very useful institution in Turin.[32] Father Theodore Scolari became the next Director of the new oratory, and labored there for some years with admirable zeal. Don Bosco finally entrusted it to various priests from Valdocco. The Oratory of St. Aloysius still exists and is now connected with the School and Church of St. John the Evangelist erected on the same property.



17 – Father (Saint) Leonard Murialdo (1828-1900)

[32] Father Leonard Murialdo's biographical sketch is given in Appendix below.

Opposition from Various Quarters

The Oratory of St. Aloysius was one among Don Bosco's foundations that suffered bitter persecution from the very first. The washerwomen who lived in that part began the hostilities. As soon as they heard that Don Bosco had rented the tenement, they became furious, and having warmly discussed the matter among themselves, they resolved to assail the poor priest in a body, and oblige him, by means of invectives and threats, to break off the contract.[33] While Don Bosco and the landlady were examining the house to see what alterations and repairs would be necessary before he took possession of it, they were confronted by about a dozen washerwomen who protested with abusive language and threats. […]

Don Bosco tried to soothe them, but in vain. The landlady finally convinced them: "You are mistaken, my good women, if you think that Don Bosco has come here to do you harm. On the contrary, his presence will be very much to your advantage. He intends, after founding an Oratory here, to establish a school, too, and he means you to have the washing and mending of all the boarders. So be thankful. I intend, too, to find you lodgings somewhere near the River Po, so that you will have no difficulty in going on with your work. You ought to be more than satisfied now that you will have more to do, and earn more money."

The landlady's words had the desired effect. The washerwomen quieted down and begged Don Bosco's pardon for their insolence. After this little incident they left the Oratory and its founder in peace.

But other more severe troubles were in store for Don Bosco. About this time a petition signed by a few citizens was presented to King Charles Albert, asking for the "emancipation" of the Jews and Waldenses.[34] It received his approval, and the Jews soon became the richest landowners in Piedmont.

The Waldenses, also, poured down like a torrent from the mountain valleys where they had lived in isolation. They established themselves in the principal cities of northern Italy and did their utmost to gain converts to

[33] Groups of washerwomen plied their trade at designated spots along the banks of the rivers. The Po River was but a short distance away to the East.

[34] The granting of civil rights and freedom of worship to Jews and Waldenses ("Protestants") was proposed in November 1847 and made into law with the Constitution (*Statuto*) in May 1848). It was part of the liberal reforms instituted by King Charles Albert (discussed in the preceding chapter).

their pernicious heresy. They disseminated tracts and pamphlets setting forth their false doctrines, established schools, held meetings and opened chapels. These followers of Peter Waldo could not have done more in their efforts to win converts over to their sect. Amongst those who suffered bitterly from the effects of this new freedom were Don Bosco and the youngsters of St. Aloysius' Oratory.

The Waldenses, without delay, settled near them and held meetings at which, under pretext of explaining the Bible, they blatantly and grossly insulted the Pope and said abominable things against the Blessed Virgin, the Sacrament of Penance, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the celibacy of the clergy. They hoped that great enthusiasm would be kindled among the people, and that large numbers would be persuaded to join their ranks. But they were quickly undeceived, for only very few came to their meetings, or became their followers. These converts came from the most ignorant levels of the population and were merely looking for a pretext for not practicing their religion. One of them in particular, Pugno by name and a cobbler by trade, quit his trade and took up preaching instead. He became a champion of Peter Waldo's doctrines and several times challenged Don Bosco to a discussion on Religion. Although it was impossible not to feel sorry for the poor fellow, one had to laugh at the ranting and jargon of the ignorant cobbler who had suddenly turned theologian and wished to be an apostle.

The Waldenses, seeing that very few followers were to be gained among grown-up people, resorted to means that have unfortunately been successful at all times in leading souls astray. They were rich, and they used their money to corrupt the young, who, of course, had no suspicion of the designs against them. The evil plot was quickly put into effect, and the first point of attack was the nearby Oratory of St. Aloysius, which was then attended by some five hundred boys. Some sectarians took up stations along the road leading to the Oratory, while others positioned themselves near the playground, with the intention of tempting the boys away by attractive promises of entertainment and money: "You will see and hear wonderful things, and we shall give you some money and a beautiful book to take away with you."

If we consider how fickle children are, it is not surprising that several lads were foolish enough to listen and go along. About thirty of them were induced to attend the Waldensian meeting at the end of which they received the promised money and a small book (which was a pamphlet against Confession written by the notorious apostate, [Luigi] De Sanctis). The lads were invited to return on the following Sunday.

Most of these boys, not understanding what was afoot, frankly told their companions what had happened. The story soon reached the ears of the Director, Father Carpano, who acted at once to put a stop to the scheme. He called those boys together and, after telling them clearly what was afoot, he took away the books they had received. He explained the parables of the Good Shepherd and the Hireling and the Wolf in such a way that the lads understood the evil scheme of the Waldenses and promised never to go near them again for all the bribery in the world.

The confrontations that followed caused great anxiety to Don Bosco and Father Carpano. The Waldenses redoubled their efforts, but the older lads, with Father Carpano's agreement, kept a sharp look out, and when they saw younger boys accosted by the sectarians, they were near at hand to urge them to go straight on to the Oratory. The Waldenses had recourse to taunts and abusive language but to no avail, and would have resorted to violence, but, seeing that they were outnumbered, and fearing that they would get the worst of it, they beat a retreat, muttering that their "time would come."

It can easily be understood from these events, that matters were likely to become still more serious in the future. In order to avoid risks, the boys were advised to pass by their tormentors in the street without saying a word, and to head for the Oratory as fast as they could.

On the following Sunday, a number of Waldensian young men gathered near the Oratory tried to scare the boys away, but the Oratory lads obeyed orders and walked on in silence until they were safely inside. But the others attacked the Oratory building with stones. Stones struck against the doors, rattled on the roof and shattered windows. Several of the boys received bruises and cuts.

The attacks against the Oratory continued, and such episodes were repeated nearly every Sunday for several months, causing Don Bosco and the other oratory workers great anxiety for the safety of the youngsters. Some of those scoundrels began prowling about the neighborhood, and never neglected an opportunity to harass the boys as they passed by. On several occasions they waited until all were assembled in the church, and then, without warning, hurled a shower of stones at the door and through the windows, producing a panic and breaking up the service.

And there were even more serious episodes. One day, as Father Borel and Father Carpano were in the sacristy vesting for Benediction, a man appeared at the window that opened on to the street, and fired two pistol shots at them, fortunately missing his aim.

In spite of such outrages and attempts to close down the Oratory, Don Bosco and his colleagues stood firm and at length had the satisfaction of seeing their enemies retreat.

Many years have passed since then, and the Oratory of St. Aloysius has continued to prosper. Moreover, on the site of the little chapel where the pistol shots were fired, there now stands the beautiful Church of St. John the Evangelist, one of the most perfect religious monuments in Turin. Through the generosity of the Salesian Co-operators, Don Bosco was enabled to erect this church as a permanent mark of love and gratitude to Pius IX.[35]

III. Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Vanchiglia District (1849)[36]

Father Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Moschino and Vanchiglia Districts

To the northeast of the city of Turin lies the district of Vanchiglia, which is inhabited almost entirely by the poorer classes. At the time we are now speaking of, there existed in the southernmost part of this district a group of houses called the Moschino, the inhabitants of which, especially the young people, gave the police a good deal of trouble. Close by this place, Father [Giovanni] Cocchi, one of the priests of the parish of the Annunciation, founded an oratory similar in aim to our own, It was attended mostly by older lads, who were attracted to it mainly by the games and diversions that it offered. By this means the good priest managed to keep them from bad company and dangerous places of amusement.

[35] The church of St. John the Evangelist and a large school building were planned by Don Bosco in the late 1870s and dedicated in 1882. Their story will be told in a later chapter.

[36] This brief description of the re-opening by Don Bosco of Fr. Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel is taken (with adaptations) from Bonetti, *Storia dell'Oratorio* (*Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, 159-160). Bonetti's description of the closure of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel at the time of Piedmont's First War against Austria skirts the issue of Father Cocchi's "patriotism." (See Fr. Cocchi's biographical sketch given earlier in Chapter 2).

Reasons for the Closing of the Oratory in 1849

But in 1849 the Oratory was closed, principally through insolvency. The war had been renewed between Italy and Austria and it had kindled a patriotic, warlike ardor among those lads, who had already been accustomed to handle sword and rifle in mock battles. Anxious to see some active service, many of them enlisted and set off to join the main army. At first they were in high spirits, and in their imagination they already saw themselves performing exploits of valor and returning covered with glory. However, after a long march and before they reached the camp, they heard of the defeat of the Piedmontese army. This was a shock and the end of their unrealistic hopes; so they sadly turned again in the direction of Turin.

But besides the absence of the greater number of the boys, another difficulty helped to bring about the closing of this oratory. Father Cocchi had contemplated a sort of Home for poor artisans, and he had actually made a commencement by renting a small house and taking in several boys. As he was poor he was obliged, like Don Bosco, to seek from charity the means for their support, and this charitable work, together with his many occupations in connection with the parish, prevented him from re-opening the Oratory.

Don Bosco and Fr. Borel Re-open the Oratory in 1849

Matters had been in this condition for some months, when Don Bosco and Father Borel, fully aware of the great need of an oratory for Sundays and holy days in the Vanchiglia district, approached Father Cocchi on the subject. He was of opinion that Don Bosco should take over the work, and shortly afterwards, in the beginning of October, with the approval of the Archbishop, the Oratory was re-opened and rededicated to the Guardian Angels.

Father [Giacinto] Carpano was appointed its first director.[37] He was succeeded by Father [Giovanni B.] Vola, and later by Father [Roberto] Murialdo. This latter priest, well known for his piety and zeal, held this difficult office for several years, and under his direction the Oratory flourished and prospered beyond expectation. The number of boys in attendance often reached three hundred, and sometimes over four hundred, so that in a short

[37] See Fr. Carpano's biographical sketch in Appendix below.

time the little chapel could no longer contain them all and had to be enlarged. Religious services, the practices of piety, the games, etc., adopted here were the same as those in effect at the Oratories of St. Francis of Sales and of St. Aloysius.

Guardian Angel Oratory Closed and United with the Oratory Attached to Barolo's St. Julia Parish

The Oratory of the Guardian Angels continued in the same place and under Don Bosco's guidance until 1866. In that year the parish church of St. Julia, erected through the charity of the Marchioness Barolo was dedicated. This rich and charitable lady also provided for an oratory to be established beside the church for the purpose of giving the children religious instruction during Lent and on Sundays and holy days. When it was opened, Don Bosco seeing that it sufficed for the needs of the neighborhood, closed the old one, and sent the priests and seminarians to the Oratory of St. Joseph, in the southern suburb of San Salvario, where they were greatly needed.[38]

Appendix I

1. Louis Marquis Fransoni (1789-1862) Archbishop of Turin

Sussidi 1, 98-101; *Sussidi* 2, 270-274, citing chiefly M.F. Mellano, *Il caso Fransoni e la politica ecclesiastica piemontese (1848-1850)* (Roma, 1964), *passim*; also: A. Castellani, *Leonardo Murialdo*, vol. I (Roma, 1966), *passim*.

Early Formation

Marquis Louis (Aloysius) Fransoni was born into a noble Genoese family on March 29, 1789, and lived his early years through the turmoil of the French revolution and the Napoleonic period. The whole family went into exile, and wandered to various places in Italy, including Florence, Naples and Rome. These experiences

[38] The Oratory of St. Joseph, taken over by Don Bosco in the 1960s, is discussed in a later chapter.

could not but leave in Luigi a deep and bitter aversion to the revolutionary movement of which his family had been the victim. By family tradition as well as by personal temperament, he championed the conservative cause. It is likely that his later stance against liberal reforms, such as the education of the masses, the establishment of social programs, and the development of industry and technology, was in part rooted in early personal experiences. It was also the result of an intransigent policy in defense of the prerogatives that had been up to that time in the possession of the Church.

Louis' brother James, fifteen years his senior, had become a priest in Rome, and subsequently was made a Cardinal and Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Louis began the study of theology in 1810, but took the clerical habit only after his return to Genoa in 1814. His pastoral formation had an anti-rigorist orientation. But his general education, his theological education in particular, lacked the depth demanded by the important issues he would have to face. This was reflected in easy policies with reference to seminaries and clergy formation.

Archbishop of Turin and the Advent of the Liberal Revolution

In 1821, at the age of 32, he was appointed Bishop of Fossano. Ten years later, at Archbishop's Colombano Chiaveroti's death in 1831, he was appointed administrator of the Archdiocese of Turin, and on February 24, 1832, at King Charles Albert's request, its Archbishop–a post he held for 30 years until his death in exile in 1862.

The first dozen years of his tenure in the Turin Archdiocese were peaceful and characterized by good normal relationships with the monarchy and the State authorities. But from 1844 to 1847/8, when liberal social reforms began to be instituted even though the political situation had not yet changed, the relationship broke down, ending in opposition and confrontation. In 1844 King Charles Albert established the Teachers' Normal School at the university, and invited the noted educator, Father Ferrante Aporti, for a series of lectures on methodology. The Archbishop declared his opposition to the appointment, and forbade the clergy to attend the lectures. In October 1847, in a climate of growing liberal euphoria and of high hopes placed on both Charles Albert and Pius IX, bills on freedom of the press and of religion were passed. These bills allowed the production and circulation of books and newspapers of various political tendencies, and granted civil rights and freedom of worship to both Jews and Waldenses (Protestants). The Archbishop's opposition to liberal reforms, already declared and expressed in various ways, solidified even more.

The first people to be affected by the confrontation were the seminarians and faculty of the theological schools at the University and of the Seminary; and there followed a period of turmoil and severe crisis among clergy and Catholic laity alike (1847-1849). The vocational identity of seminarians and young priests especially

was put to the severest test. For, apart from the lure of widespread patriotic euphoria and the overwhelming excitement stirred up by the historic events of the liberal revolution, they were caught between conflicting allegiances. The just demands of citizenship and the important, urgent issues being debated (liberal reforms, constitution, War against Austria for of Italian independence, etc.) conflicted with the Archbishop's unyielding opposition to all liberal reforms. All political and social change was believed to be the work of the evil revolutionary spirit seeking the undoing of the Church and of the traditional ways of life. The Archbishop's stringent directives forbidding seminarians and clergy to take part in demonstrations and public ceremonies of a patriotic nature were the cause of much anguish. Many seminarians and priests just ignored such directives. Far from relenting, the Archbishop suspended them all from orders or from the exercise of the ministry, and in February 1848 closed down the seminary. Those seminarians that sided with the Archbishop were reassigned to the seminaries of Chieri and Bra.[39]

From January 1848 on, the Archbishop began to be personally the object of attacks in press, of manifestations of hostility and even of insults in public. His public appearances became the occasion of noisy, hostile demonstrations by anticlerical *provocateurs* and by the populace. With the connivance of the police, he often found himself in physical danger. In short, he became the symbol of the deep rift that was forming between the liberal State and the Church.

"Voluntary" Exile and Return

The Archbishop was determined to stand his ground. But in March 1848, under pressure from many quarters and at the "request" of the government, he went into "voluntary" exile to Switzerland, and remained there until September 1849, at which time he re-entered the kingdom at Chambéry (Savoy) at the invitation of that Archbishop. Meanwhile a petition for his return signed by one thousand Turin priests was presented to the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs and of Justice, Count Clemente Solaro della Margherita. Archbishop Fransoni returned to his diocese on February 26, 1850.

Imprisonment and Permanent Exile

The time of his "voluntary" exile had been a time of turmoil. The papal Allocution of April 29, 1848, in which Pius IX declared his neutrality in the First War

[39] The Turin seminary was used as a military hospital during the war of 1848-49. In 1854 it was deprived of juridical status, taken over, and used for military purposes until 1863, when it was returned to the archdiocese by the Italian government and re-opened in December of that year. During this period Don Bosco's Oratory functioned as a seminary.

of Independence, sent a shock wave through the people and spelled the collapse of the neo-Guelph movement. This was followed by the shock of the Pope's flight from Rome and the declaration of the Mazzinian Roman Republic (1848-49). The defeat of the Italian army in the war and the abdication of King Charles Albert added to the political confusion. On February 25, 1850 there followed the shock of the passage of the Siccardi Bill abolishing ancient privileges of the Church. The Archbishop's return therefore could not come at a more critical juncture. King Victor Emmanuel II and his Government tried to persuade him to leave again. In fact they were now determined to get him out of the way. But he stood his ground.

The Siccardi Law afforded him the opportunity to address a circular to the clergy of the archdiocese prescribing a temporary *modus operandi* to be followed (in the event, e.g., of a priest being brought before a civil court), until the issuing of proper norms by the Holy See. The letter was judged to be suborning, and the archbishop was indicted. He ignored the summons and was sentenced by default to one month in jail in the city's military fortress and assessed a fine.

No sooner out of prison (June 2), than he had to face a new crisis. The Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Count Pietro Derossi di Santarosa, who as a member of the D'Azeglio Government and had voted for the Siccardi Bill, was on his deathbed. As the practicing Catholic that he was he requested the last sacraments. The Archbishop sought the advice of a commission of theologians that included Fr. Joseph Cafasso, and their opinion was that the Count must first repair the scandal by a public retractation. He refused, and passed away deprived of the Viaticum, although he did receive sacramental absolution and was given Christian burial from St. Charles Parish. The funeral turned into a riot, and the pastor and his confreres of the Servants of Mary, were expelled from that parish and from their monastery. The Archbishop was accused of abuse of power, of activities against the State and of breach of the peace. On August 7, he was arrested at his country home and imprisoned in the fortress of Fenestrelle. He was subsequently condemned to perpetual exile and on September 28, 1850 he was escorted to the French border. He chose to settle in Lyons. From there, for twelve years, he kept in touch with his diocese by means of a network of trusted business travelers. They would convey reports from and to the diocesan Vicars, with Fr. Anglesio of the Cottolengo institution acting as a go-between. Thus, he "governed" the archdiocese after a fashion. He consistently refused to abdicate, as the Government in Turin was trying to get him to do, even when the suggestion that he should do so came from the Holy Father himself.[40]

Archbishop Fransoni died in Lyons on March 26, 1862.

[40] In the late fifties the Cavour government moved to set to right the situation of the Church of Turin by negotiating the appointment of a new archbishop if Archbishop Fransoni would resign. Don Bosco played a part in these negotiations, but they failed. This phase of the "Fransoni case" is discussed in a later chapter.

Evaluation

Archbishop Fransoni was a man of great integrity, as well as a conscientious, honest, zealous and (above all) courageous bishop. Of this he gave abundant evidence by his fearless defense of what he regarded as the Church's right at great personal cost. On the other hand, whether by reason of formation or of personal character, he was unable to rise to the historic occasion, and more often than not he identified the cause of Religion and of the Church with the cause of extreme conservatism. By clinging uncompromisingly to the ideals of the old political and social order he played into the hand of revolutionaries and Voltaire-type democrats. These were the people who were trying (and were already succeeding) to turn the *Risorgimento* into a crusade against the Church, portrayed as the enemy of progress and generally of the welfare of the Italian people.

Archbishop Fransoni and Don Bosco

Don Bosco was ordained by Archbishop Fransoni in 1841, after being allowed by him to study fourth-theology privately during the summer of 1840. During his years at the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*), Don Bosco conferred with the Archbishop and kept him apprised of his projects. Don Bosco often spoke of how Archbishop Fransoni listened to the plans for the oratories and immediately granted his full approval and blessing. From that moment a warm friendship developed between the saintly prelate and the zealous priest. Don Bosco made no move without first checking with the Archbishop. Later he would claim Church approval for his work. "Ever since 1841 [...] everything was always done with the consent and under the guidance of Archbishop Louis Fransoni.[41]

"[Don Bosco] never undertook a new mission without first apprising Archbishop Fransoni, either in writing, or personally, during his frequent visits to the Archbishop's residence where he was always warmly received. [...] Don Bosco's frequent visits to the episcopal residence enabled him to share his ecclesiastical superior's joys and sorrows."[42]

It appears that Don Bosco visited the Archbishop during his imprisonment. Apart from genuine affection and a sense of loyalty, the fact was that, in theory at least, Don Bosco shared the Archbishop's conservative political views.

The Archbishop supported Don Bosco in his work, and gave him some "jurisdiction" over oratory boys, for example to prepare them for, and admitting them to, first Communion and Confirmation and to the performance of their Easter du-

[41] *EBM* II, 55, 61.
[42] *EBM* II, 146-147.

ties, the pastors concerned being notified.[43] Don Bosco understood thereby that the Oratory could function as a "parish."

The Archbishop first visited the Oratory on the feast of St. Aloysius (his name day), June 21, 1847, to administer Confirmation. The Oratory of St. Aloysius (1847) was so named for Archbishop Fransoni.[44]

During the oratory crisis of 1849-52 (brought on by differences in matters of politics, administration and educational policy), the exiled Archbishop named Don Bosco spiritual director-in-chief of the three oratories by the official decree of March 3, 1852.[45] Don Bosco later cited this decree as a proof of official Church approval of the Salesian Society.

Archbishop Fransoni continued to favor Don Bosco even against his chancery's advice, as for instance in the matter of housing and training diocesan seminarians at the Oratory. In effect the Oratory "functioned as a substitute seminary" for the archdiocese from 1849 to 1863, the years in which the Turin seminary was closed.

In 1858 Don Bosco could show Pius IX a letter in which Archbishop Fransoni urged the establishment of a permanent institution to continue the work of the oratories. In 1860, Don Bosco sent an early draft of the Salesian Constitutions, signed by 22 members, to Archbishop Fransoni in exile. The Archbishop gave encouragement, even though he declined to give an opinion on their merit.

Don Bosco expressed his gratitude by having Archbishop Fransoni represented in relief on the bronze doors of the church of St. John the Evangelist (at the Oratory of St. Aloysius).

2. Father (Teologo) Giacinto Càrpano (1821-1894)

See *"Indice"* of Italian *Biographical Memoirs*; Eugenio Valentini, "Preistoria dei Cooperatori Salesiani" in *Salesianum* 39 (1977) 114-150.

Giacinto Cárpano was born in Turin in August 1821 and died there on May 26, 1894. He was one of Don Bosco's first collaborators at the time of the wandering oratory.

In 1844 as a newly ordained priest he was "assigned" by Father Cafasso to help Don Bosco, and with his help Don Bosco immediately resumed evening classes, which had been discontinued for lack of teachers.[46] When the oratory settled at the Pinardi shed (April 1846), he offered a piece of the finest linen that the ladies

[43] *EBM* III, 134-135.
[44] *EBM* III, 188.
[45] *EBM* IV, 262, 527.
[46] *EBM* II, 272.

turned into an altar cloth.[47] In the summer of 1846, while Don Bosco was convalescing at Becchi, Father Carpano, Father Giovanni Vola, Father Giuseppe Trivero, and Father Sebastiano Pacchiotti, under Father Giovanni Borel, ran the oratory.[48] Father Carpano would often provide the money for the boys' lunch on outings.

To celebrate Don Bosco's recovery and return on November 8, 1846, Father Carpano composed verses that were set to music by Father Luigi Nasi and sung by the boys. Joseph Buzzetti kept those verses and passed them on to Father Lemoyne shortly before he passed away.[49]

On June 29, 1847, the feast of St. Aloysius was celebrated at the Oratory for the first time. Archbishop Fransoni graced the occasion, but could not wear the miter in the chapel because of the very low ceiling. For entertainment Father Carpano staged a farce entitled, "Napoleon's Corporal".[50]

An unusual incident is related in the *Biographical Memoirs* from the autumn of 1847. Don Bosco was visiting Father Rosmini at Stresa, and Father Carpano had been left in charge of the Oratory with two young men named Barretta and Costa. These young men helped at the Oratory and sang as principals in the choir. That weekend Father Carpano and the young men failed to report for their duties at the Oratory. Don Bosco had clairvoyant knowledge of the fact, and on his return he confronted them separately. Father Carpano was very upset, thinking that the young men had reported him. But he humbly accepted the reproach when he learned that Don Bosco himself had learned of their absence.[51]

The Oratory of St. Aloysius was begun on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1847, and Father Carpano was appointed its first director. He had much to suffer, and an attempt on his life was made while he was about to give the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.[52]

In 1849 Father Pietro Ponte became director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius, and Father Carpano moved to the newly re-opened Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Vanchiglia district as director, a post he held perhaps until 1853. The *Biographical Memoirs* describe the difficult situation at the Guardian Angel Oratory and how the Vanchiglia boys were won over.[53]

About Father Carpano's charity Goffredo Casalis writes:

[47] *EBM* II, 334.

[48] *EBM* II, 389.

[49] *EBM* II, 411-412.

[50] *EBM* III, 155.

[51] *EBM* III, 173-175.

[52] Bonetti, *Early Apostolate*, 113-117.

[53] *EBM* III, 394-395. Father Giovanni Vola succeeded Father Carpano as director. The oratory had troubles from the Vanchiglia gang, as described by Giuseppe Brosio, the "Sharpshooter" (*Bersagliere*) in his memoir [Cf. *EBM* III, 395-398].

> I should like to mention that Father Carpano plans to open a hospice for workers who have been freshly dismissed from hospitals and cannot immediately find employment, or are not yet able to go back to work. He has every intention of going forward with the project and bring it to completion, if the hoped-for support will not be wanting."[54]

When Father Carpano was appointed chaplain of Holy Cross Cemetery (St. Peter in Chains), he resigned from the Guardian Angel Oratory.[55] But he did not stop working for the "poor and abandoned." He helped with classes at Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence. Having been introduced to the correction facility, *La Generala,* he established a hospice in his own house for those young men who were released and desired to change their lives.[56] His compassion and generosity toward the needy was proverbial. He also served as spiritual director of the *Mendicità Istruita* (Society for the Instruction of the Poor), and remained ever available for ministry and the preaching of missions.

At his death (May 26, 1894) tribute was paid to him in a public Mass presided over by Father Bartholomew Roetti, Superior of the Little House of Divine Providence, with a performance by the choir of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, and a eulogy by Father John Francesia.[57]

3. Father [Saint] Leonardo Murialdo (1828-1900)

A. Castellani, *Leonardo Murialdo* 2 vol. (Rome, 1966 and 1968); *Biographical Memoirs* (see Italian *Indice*); M. Molineris, *Incontri di Don Bosco* (Colle Don Bosco Press, 1973), 184-194; *Sussidi* 2, 300-304; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v.

Father Leonardo Murialdo, younger cousin of Father Roberto Murialdo, was born in Turin on October 26, 1828 into a well-to-do family. He studied under the Fathers of the Pious Schools, entered the Seminary, and obtained his doctorate (*teologo*) at the University of Turin. He was ordained in 1851. He worked as associate of both Father Cocchi and Don Bosco in the oratories, and later founded the Pious Society of St. Joseph to work for young people at risk.

Even before his ordination he went to work in Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Vanchiglia district. The oratory had been founded by Father Cocchi and entrusted to the direction of Father Robert Murialdo, who had to deal with the gangs

[54] Casalis, *Dizionario* […] XXI, 718 (Case di educazione […]).

[55] In 1853, according to the *Biographical Memoirs* [*EBM* III, 395); in 1851, according to Casalis [*Ibid.* 713].

[56] *Bollettino Salesiano* (1894), 84, in Valentini, 133.

[57] *Bollettino Salesiano* (1894), 84 in Valentini, 134.

that terrorized the area. He had matters pretty well in hand already, when his cousin Leonardo joined "his staff." Leonardo's gentleness and patience did much to win over many of those juveniles and to neutralize others. Here he spent the first years of his priesthood. (When Don Bosco took over Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel in 1849, he prevailed on Father Roberto Murialdo to continue as director).

Don Bosco in 1847 had established the Oratory of St. Aloysius near Porta Nuova, in the southern part of the city, on premises rented from a Mrs. Vaglienti. As at Valdocco, the establishment of this second oratory was motivated by urban development in that area due to immigration of impoverished peasants, incipient industrialization, and especially by the presence in the area of the Waldenses, who had just been given civil rights. The Vaglienti house had been tenanted by washerwomen who plied their trade along the east bank of the Po river not far away. These women strongly objected to an oratory, and above all to being evicted; but were assuaged by Mrs. Vaglienti with the promise that she would find them new lodgings, and that the oratory would mean new customers. During the first decade of the oratory (1847-1857), there had been four directors at St. Aloysius: Father Giacinto Carpano, Father Pietro Ponte, Father Paolo Rossi, and Mr. Gaetano Bellingeri, a lawyer by profession.

One morning in 1857 Don Bosco happened to meet Father Leonardo Murialdo in the Via Dora Grossa (later called Via Garibaldi, where he lived), and proposed breakfast at a nearby café. Over their eye-opener, Don Bosco recruited him as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius. To this job he brought not only his zeal, but also the experience acquired at the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Vanchiglia district. Father Murialdo and Mr. Bellingeri (the latter acting as a kind of vice-director) refurbished the chapel and the oratory premises, and set up choral and instrumental music classes out of their personal resources. The oratory staff under Father Murialdo, besides Mr. Bellingeri, comprised Father Murialdo's brother Ernesto (also a lawyer), Count Francesco Viancini di Viancino, Marquis Ludovico Scarampi di Pruney, and a contingent from Valdocco: Salesian seminarians Rua, Cagliero, Albera, Durando, Cerruti and others. The most difficult undertaking was the establishment of day classes to compete with the much better funded school of the Waldenses (Protestants). Over several years under Father Murialdo aided by such a staff the oratory flourished.

Father Murialdo worked at the St. Aloysius Oratory until 1865. In 1865-1866, desirous to get in touch with different pedagogical experiences and with the French school of spirituality, he went to Paris and attended the seminary of St. Sulpice. After returning to Turin in 1866, he was offered the post of director of the *Collegio degli Artigianelli*, founded in 1861-1863 by Father Giovanni Cocchi, under the auspices of the Society for Orphaned and Abandoned Youngsters.[58]

[58] On the *Artigianelli* and on the Society for Orphaned and Abandoned Youngsters, see Cocchi's biographical sketch (given earlier in Chapter 2).

Father Cocchi after "giving over" the Guardian Angel Oratory to Don Bosco in 1849 had immediately set about doing something for poor and exploited working lads whom he saw in dire need. At first, he planned to establish a home for young workers at the church of the Annunciation in the Via Po (where he was associate). However, he opted to move out of the parish and in association with some other priests he organized the *Society for Orphaned and Abandoned Youngsters*. With funds raised from private and public charity, this society built the *Collegio degli Artigianelli*, which was located within the city in the Via Palestro (less than one mile directly south of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales). It aimed at giving poor youngsters between the ages of 8 and 20 a Christian education and a trade. Father Berizzi of Biella, one of Father Cocchi's associates in the project, became its director, when Father Cocchi moved on to other works.

When recalled by his bishop in 1866, Father Berizzi prevailed on Father Murialdo to accept the post of director. Father Murialdo at first declined because of the uncertain financial situation of the Home. But as he saw the need and the good work being done, especially through the workshops already firmly established, he accepted. Under Father Murialdo's leadership the school gained a high reputation for its modern methods of vocational guidance and for its superior teaching staff.

In 1873, at the *Artigianelli*, Father Murialdo founded the Pious Society of St. Joseph, the work of which in many ways parallels that of the Salesian society.

Father Murialdo achieved distinction in other ways as well:

> "As one of the first in Italy to promote the Catholic worker movement, he established in Turin Catholic workers associations (*Unioni operaie cattoliche*, 1871) and began the weekly, *La Voce dell'Operaio* (The Worker's Voice). To effect the Christian renewal of society and win liberty for the Church, Murialdo participated actively in the *Opera dei Congressi*,[59] served on Catholic committees, and initiated many Catholic associations. At the sixth Catholic Congress in Naples (1883) he established a national federation to coordinate Catholic activities in the apostolate of the press, and then founded the monthly, *La Buona Stampa*."[60]

[59] With the taking of Rome in 1870, the "intransigent" Catholic element, the avowed defenders of the right of the papacy against the "usurping" Italian State, and the advocates of political abstentionism, prevailed over Catholic moderates, who favored an accommodation with the State. The "intransigents" acquired an effective organizational instrument in the *Opera dei Congressi* (Catholic Workers Congress), founded in 1875. It stood as a counterpart to the growing labor movement and in opposition to incipient organized socialism in Italy. Especially from 1885 on, it promoted a range of economic and social welfare activities, mainly in the north and central rural areas. The Salesian Cooperators were founded at about the same time. Although in some respects their purpose matched that of the *Opera dei Congressi*, they differed in that they abstained from political dialogue and were dedicated to helping the cause of Catholic workers especially through cooperating with the Salesian youth apostolate.

[60] *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v. "Murialdo."

On the last day of 1884 Father Murialdo fell gravely ill, and was near death. On January 8, 1885 Don Bosco was asked to go and give him his blessing. He did, and he told the Josephites that Father Murialdo would recover for he was still needed to tend the young plant that was his Congregation.[61]

Father Murialdo died sixteen years later, on March 30, 1900. He was beatified on November 3, 1963 and canonized on May 3, 1970.

Father Murialdo's testimony at Don Bosco's Processes of Beatification and Canonization, restrained as it was, reveals his high regard for Don Bosco, and tells of how he came to know him for the saint that he was.

Father Murialdo and Don Bosco were dedicated to the same type of work on behalf of the same type of youngster and with the same inspiration: the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As different from Don Bosco in personality and style as he was in extraction and education, he was nonetheless very much like Don Bosco in his zeal for souls, and in his calling to minister to poor and abandoned youngsters. And eventually Murialdo founded a religious congregation having the same purpose and the same spirit, generally speaking, as the Salesian Society.

Why, one may ask, did he not become a Salesian? A. Castellani in Murialdo's biography gives some reasons for this (apart from the fact that God had something else in mind for him). Father Murialdo took his duties and ties to family very seriously. His fierce love of freedom (as he himself was to admit later in the autobiographical story of his vocation) kept him from religious life. Only at the age of 45 did he "become a religious" by founding a religious congregation, and that only after a struggle. He was also convinced that he could pursue his ideals of personal holiness and of the apostolate on behalf of the poor as a diocesan priest.

That Don Bosco had designs on Father Murialdo, and regretted letting him "get away" is certain. In 1858 (when Father Murialdo was director of the St. Aloysius Oratory) the two had a papal audience together and Don Bosco presented him to Pius IX with words indicating his hope of keeping Father Murialdo in the family. The Pope wished him success. About 10 years later, in a special audience, Pius IX inquired about that "good priest of Turin." Don Bosco replied with a smile, "I let him get away!" And on chance meeting Father Murialdo Don Bosco would occasionally scold him, "Father, you did give me the slip!" But theirs was a close, lifelong friendship guided by a deep mutual understanding.

[61] *EBM* XVII, 602-603.

Appendix II

1. Introduction and Outline from the 1854 *"Piano di Regolamento"*

Introductory Note

The manuscript of the *Piano di Regolamento dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales* [Draft Regulations for the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin, District of Valdocco] of 1854 has now been critically edited, with introductory study and notes, by Pietro Braido: *Don Bosco per i giovani: L'"Oratorio', una 'Congregazione degli Oratori'. Documenti* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano, 9) (Roma: LAS, 1988), 30-34, 34-55.

We give here (in translation) the first two chapters of these Regulations:

(1) **Introduction** (*Introduzione*)–stating the rationale and principles for the work of the oratory;

(2) **Historical Outline** of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales (*Cenno storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*)–describing the origins and early development of the oratory as a foreword to the Regulations.

Don Bosco's autograph of the Introduction and Historical Outline is in *ASC* 132: *Oratorio 1*, *FDB* 1,872 B3-C5. A complete copy of the *Regulations* (not in DB's hand) is in *ASC* 026(2): *Regolamento dell'Oratorio*, *FDB* 1,955 D6 - 1,956 B3. These regulations began to be drafted in the early 1850s on the basis of the experience gained up to that time. The *Draft* under consideration dates from 1854.

It should be emphasized that these are the Regulations for the original boys' oratory, that is, the gathering of young people on Sundays and holy days for religious services and instruction and for recreation. The Regulations for the boarders of the house and school of Valdocco (later edited as the Regulations for Salesian Houses) are a different matter. Both sets of regulations underwent successive revisions on the basis of further experience until their official publication in 1877.

Prior publication. – A part of the *Introduction* (lines 1-25, 47-51) was published by Lemoyne in the *Biographical Memoirs* [*EBM* II, 35-36]. The *Historical Outline* (*Cenno storico*), however, remained unpublished, although it was known and is referred to by such historians as Ceria and Stella.

Introduction

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 Savior come down from

heaven to earth to gather together all the children of God scattered all over the world, could be applied literally to the young people of our times. These young people, the most vulnerable yet most valuable portion of human society, 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, it would be so easy to inculcate in their young hearts the principles of order, of good behavior, of respect and of 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.

The problem lies in finding ways of gathering them, of being able to speak to them, and of instructing them in the moral life.

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 the diverse character of all people.

The oratories are regarded to be among the aptest means for instilling the spirit of religion in hearts that are uncultivated and abandoned. These oratories are gatherings in which young people, after they have attended church 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 blessing of the Lord, 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 organization of this portion of the sacred ministry, and as a guideline to the numerous priests and lay people who work in it with such dedication and charitable concern. I have often begun [to draft such a framework], but I 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, as well as to comply with the wish of persons in authority who have counseled me to do so, I have decided to complete this work, no matter what the outcome may be.

But I wish it understood from the start that it is not my purpose to lay down law or precept for anyone. 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 honor and glory. 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 portion 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 working to make these young people good citizens for this earth, so that they might be one day worthy inhabitants of heaven.

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

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. For many years during the summertime, the Rev. Fr. [Giuseppe] Caffasso 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. I took 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.[62] These were joined by others, and during 1842 the number went up to twenty, and sometimes twenty-five.

From these beginnings I learnt 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, I was able to verify that the 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 on games [of chance] or on sweetmeats the little money they earn during the week. This is beginning of many vices; in no time at all, young people who were good are found to be themselves at risk and to put others at risk. 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.

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

[62] "Two young adults": compare Don Bosco's statement here (1854) with the Garelli story in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* (1874).

started on a job, and whose conduct both on weekdays and Sundays I could somehow vouch for. As I looked over them [seated before me], I could visualize 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.

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. Guala encouraged me to persevere, nevertheless I clearly perceived the need for new [and larger] premises. For, 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.[63] 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. What a sight! No chair, table or anything else in the room could escape the attack of that friendly invasion.

Meanwhile, I and the Rev. Dr. [Giovanni] Borrelli,[64] 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.[65] The Archbishop gave his kind approval, and on the day of Mary's Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1844), 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,[66] 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.

[63] This was the home for wayward girls founded by the Marchioness Barolo under the title of Our Lady Refuge of Sinners (*Refugium peccatorum*), popularly known as *Rifugio*. It should be noted that Don Bosco does not refer to any dream. He may not have wished to mention dreams in the introduction to a set of regulations. He does, however, relate a dream in his *Memoirs* (the Dream of 1844).

[64] Father John Borel (Dr. = Teologo = Th. D.), with whom Don Bosco was already acquainted, was the head chaplain (spiritual director) of the Barolo institutions. Don Bosco spells the name Borrelli or Borelli.

[65] This "room" was located, not in the Refuge proper, but in the adjacent "Little Hospital of St. Philomena" (under construction) for the care of young handicapped girls.

[66] It began to be called "Oratory of St. Francis de Sales" at that time: cf. *MO-En* 217.

Things were moving along when an occurrence (or better, Divine Providence acting with hidden purposes) 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.

[...][67]

In the meantime, as the winter was drawing near, and the weather no longer favored excursions into the countryside, I and Dr. [Giovanni] Borrelli rented three rooms in the Moretta House, a building not far distant from the present site of the Oratory in Valdocco. During that winter our activities were limited to simple catechism lessons on the evening of each Sunday and holy day.[68]

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 allegation [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.

Furthermore, certain events took place that forced us to leave the Moretta house, so that in March 1846 I had to lease a small grass field from the Fillippi brothers, at the 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. 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 [Michele] Cavour, 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

[67] A description of the "wandering" follows, with the same sequence as in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*: St. Martin's at the Dora mills; Holy Cross Cemetery (St. Peter in Chains), a period of "homelessness;" Fr. Moretta's house [For the correct sequence and details, see earlier discussion]. Again, neither here nor in his *Memoirs* does Don Bosco speak of a dream had on his leaving the Little Hospital, But Lemoyne in the *Biographical Memoirs* sets the [First] Dream of the Holy Martyrs in this context [see earlier discussion].

[68] These evening catechism classes may or may not coincide with the "night classes" which, according to Don Bosco's statement in his *Memoirs* [*MO-En*, 233] began to be given at Father Moretta's house in 1845, or according to his statement in the *Historical Outlines* of 1862 [given in a later chapter] at Pinardi's in 1846.

good Father, let me give you a sound piece of advice. Get rid of those villains, because these gatherings are dangerous." 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 lessen the number of troublemakers, and at the same time, the numbers of those who go to prison."

[...][69]

The Archbishop had knowledge of everything and urged me to be patient and have courage. In the meantime 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, I was without employment and without means of support.[70] 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.

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.

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?" "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.[71]

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 Fransoni], 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

[69] The dialogue continues much as in the *Memoirs*, cf. *MO-En* 244-245.

[70] Even though the Oratory had vacated the Little Hospital, Don Bosco was still in the employ of the Marchioness Barolo, drawing a salary, and living at the Refuge. From late 1845 through early 1846, the Marchioness put pressure on Don Bosco to disband the Oratory and join her priests. This was when Don Bosco resigned (or was fired).

[71] Again note that Don Bosco does not speak of having had a dream at this point. Lemoyne, however, does report a [second] Dream of the Holy Martyrs [see earlier discussion].

that might displease the Archbishop, he with his office staff (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 Collegno 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. This sovereign, gratefully remembered, appreciated the work of the oratory and would send financial help in times of special need.[72] 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 guards 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 Vicar. By and by his attitude changed for the better, and so did the situation at the oratory.[73]

The Beginning of the Present Oratory of Valdocco and Its Development to the Present Time [1854]

[...][74]

A little later we rented other rooms in Mr. Pinardi's house, and we began Sunday and evening classes. Chevalier Gonella, our outstanding benefactor, was so impressed that he had similar classes established at St. Pelagia.[75] The City, too, after

[72] By the time these Regulations were written (1854) Charles Albert had died in voluntary exile (1849) after the defeat suffered in the First War of Independence against Austria.

[73] We have a parallel account of Vicar Cavour's opposition in the same general terms in Don Bosco's *Memoirs* [*MO-En*, 244-246] dating from about 1874. But this paragraph of the Historical Outline of 1854, speaking of Count Collegno and of the King's favor toward the Oratory soften considerably also the image of the Vicar. Also Don Bosco's letter of 1846 to the Vicar [see Appendix to Chapter 4] seems to indicate a different attitude on Vicar Cavour's part.

[74] The story of the last day on the Filippi field, the renting of the Pinardi shed and the settling are related, much as in the *Memoirs* [see *MO-En*, 245].

[75] Don Bosco here refers specifically to the chevalier Marco Gonella (1822-1886) who was indeed a great benefactor. But it was Marco's father Andrea (1770-1851) who on De-

studying the matter, opened evening classes in several districts, so that any apprentice who so desires can receive basic instruction.

In the year 1846, on a Sunday in April, the present church was blessed with the faculty of celebrating Holy Mass, teaching catechism, preaching, and imparting Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. [76]

The Sunday and evening schools made great progress with classes in reading, writing, singing, Bible History, the elements of arithmetic and the Italian language, in which a public display was given by the pupils of the Oratory. By the month of November, I had taken up residence in the house attached to the Oratory.[77] Many priests, including Dr. [Giovanni Battista] Vola, Dr. [Giacinto] Carpano, and Fr. [Giuseppe] Trivero, took part in the life of the Oratory.

Year 1847. –The Sodality of St. Aloysius was established with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. We obtained a statue of the saint, and we celebrated the "Six Sundays" preceding the solemn feast of St. Aloysius, with a large attendance. On the feast day of the saint, the Archbishop [Louis Fransoni] came to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to a large number of boys, and a short play was staged, along with singing and music.

Further rooms were rented, thanks to which some evening classes were expanded. *Two poor young men*, orphans, unqualified, ignorant of religion, were given a place to stay, and so the shelter began and continued to grow.[78]

[...][79]

cember 3, 1845 obtained the royal permit to establish evening classes for adults at St. Pelagia, the church of the Work for the Instruction of the Poor (*Mendicità Istruita*). The classes were entrusted to the de la Salle Christian Brothers [Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 64-65] Both Don Bosco and the Christian Brothers claim to have been the first to have established evening classes.

[76] "The present church" refers to the original Pinardi chapel. But note that by 1854 (presumably the time of writing) the original chapel (though not yet demolished) had been replaced for use by the larger church of St. Francis de Sales built in 1852. It seems therefore that this Historical Outline had been in preparation earlier, and that the expression was never changed.

[77] At the beginning of November Don Bosco had returned from Becchi with his mother, where he had spent over three months convalescing from his illness. At that point in time (end of 1846) the "house (home) attached" was not yet. Its beginning was made in 1847 in the Pinardi house, in which Don Bosco had rented some rooms.

[78] In his *Memoirs* [*MO-En* 313f]. Don Bosco states that the shelter (boarding house or "house attached" [*Casa Annessa*]) began with one abandoned orphan from the Valsesia. On the contrary, according to this 1854 statement of Don Bosco, the shelter began with two young men [see discussion above.]

[79] There follow brief summaries of the growth of the work through the years 1847-1854, relating the opening of the oratories of St. Aloysius and of the Guardian Angels, and other notable events.

2. Father Francesco Puecher's Letter-Report to Father Antonio Rosmini on Don Bosco and the Oratory (July 5, 1850)[80]

Background to the Report: Don Bosco's Letters and Proposal to Father Rosmini (March 11 and April 15, 1850)

By this letter Don Bosco invites Father Rosmini to collaborate in a new Oratory building, which could also serve as a base in Turin for Rosmini's Institute of Charity. The letter is important in the first place because it is Don Bosco's first known direct contact with the great man. (He had been in touch with other Rosminians before this date). It is important in the second place because in it Don Bosco refers, in a veiled manner, to his gaining control of the three oratories, two years before he was officially recognized as "director-in-chief" by Archbishop Fransoni. He writes in part:

> Most esteemed and reverend sir,
> [...]
> The plan is to put up a new building for an Oratory intended to provide civic, moral, and religious education for such young people as are most neglected (*gioventù più abbandonata*). Several (*parecchi*) oratories of this kind have already been opened in Turin. Of them, *as things turned out*, I find myself in charge (*comunque siasi mi trovo alla testa*). The harvest is a thorny one indeed, but it is huge, and much fruit may be hoped from it. The crying need now is for more priests, but priests truly imbued with [pastoral] charity.
> Perhaps step by cautious step we may be able to establish the Institute of Charity in this capital city[81]. For example, you might contribute financially to the new building, then some of the Institute's seminarians might come to live here and gradually get involved in the work of charity, of which there is such great need. You may prudently wish to consider this or other options, and should you come to a decision feel free to call on me for anything that may contribute to the good of souls and redound to God's greater glory. [...][82]

The proposal was spelled out in a subsequent letter, dated April 15, 1850 (addressed to Father Carlo Gilardi).[83] It would be a three-story building, of which six

[80] The significant parts of the report are transcribed in Motto, *Epistolario* I, 102-103, note to line 51, quoting the unpublished document in the archive of the Institute of Charity [*ASIC* A-1, file *S. Giovanni Bosco*, 147r-149v]. The date Motto gives is July 5, 1850.

[81] It was government policy to deny access to the capital to religious communities.

[82] Motto, *Epistolario* I, 99-100, from the archive of the Institute of Charity [*ASIC* A-1 Box 11 S. Giovanni Bosco, 7-8]; see also Ceria, *Epistolario* I, 31; *EBM* IV, 27-28.

[83] Motto, *Epistolario* I, 101-103; *EBM* IV, 28-30.

rooms would be reserved for the use of the Institute of Charity. There would be ample opportunity for work in oratories, hospitals, prisons, schools, etc. The Institute of Charity would contribute the sum, say, of twelve thousand lire, payable in three installments, and secured by mortgage.

Father Francesco Puecher, rector of St. Michael's shrine (which the Rosminians were staffing), met with Don Bosco in Turin to discuss the proposal in Father Rosmini's name, and look over the situation at the Oratory. In reporting to Father Rosmini by the following letter, Fr. Puecher gives an interesting appraisal of Don Bosco and his work, and of the possibility of the proposed joint venture.

Father Francesco Puecher's Report to Father Antonio Rosmini

The report may be dated between Don Bosco's letter to Father Carlo Gilardi (April 15, 1850) and Don Bosco's letter to Father Daniele Rademacher (July 10, 1850). As mentioned above Motto dates it July 5. In Motto's partial transcription, Father Puecher writes:

> I believe [Don Bosco] to be a priest imbued with great devotion (*pietà*), simplicity, and charity, and endowed with a gentle and sweet natural disposition. He is a man of fair intelligence and education (*d'ingegno e cognizioni discrete*), nothing more. His views are somewhat limited and narrow (*ristrette e anguste*), but he manages by exercising considerable discretion and by a more than ordinary practical instinct (*con certa prudenza e convenienza più che ordinaria*).
>
> [...]
>
> For the present, the charitable activity undertaken by his institute is twofold. The first is the oratory for the children in the city, held on Sundays and holy days and run in much the same manner as Father Giulio's oratory.[84] Oratories are much needed in Turin, and [Don Bosco] assures me that till now he has been the only one [involved in this kind of work]. Consequently, he has obtained the archbishop's approval as well as the approval of the mayor of the city, in fact, of the government itself, which has seen fit to poke its nose even into this matter. For this work, [Don Bosco] has enlisted the help of a few priests and seminarians.
>
> The second work of charity has been to gather from the streets and squares of the city a number of lads who, having no one to care for them, in spite of a good natural disposition, run the risk of corruption and of being drawn into all kinds of mischief. He has given shelter to about thirty of these lads, whom he also feeds and clothes as one does with the indigent. They board at the house

[84] Presumably the reference here is to an oratory run by "Fr. Giulio" (a Rosminian?) in that area of northeastern Piedmont.

under his supervision, and under the care of some willing seminarians who act as prefects. Some lay people also help as cook, porter, etc. The lads, as is the case with the *Somaschi*,[85] work as apprentices in workshops in the city under employers chosen by [Don Bosco] himself. In this way they may learn some honest trade and as far as possible suffer no spiritual harm.

Now, for some comments on the material aspects of the matter: – The small house he is renting at present is poor indeed, more poorly furnished than a Capuchin monastery. It is filled with an assortment of beds, chairs, tables, and odd and ends of all kinds and sizes. The costs of running the establishment are defrayed partly from his small personal resources and partly through the charity of kind benefactors. Recently he has also obtained a subsidy from the city. But he certainly needs to build a more suitable house if the twin charitable purposes just described are to be properly served. He has in fact purchased some land measuring one *giornata* [3810 square m].[86]

[...]

The place seems to be healthful and tranquil enough, being situated at the farthest outskirts of the city toward the [north]east. In my view, however, it is inconvenient and too far removed from all the central points of the city. Once having reached the church of the *Consolata* [from the railway station], one still has a good ten minutes' walk to it.

And there's another thing. Don Bosco's idea, so he told me, is to build a house which would in no way resemble a monastery, a house of modest proportions which would not draw attention to itself and would therefore give no cause for speculation. I expressed my appreciation for the idea and for the reasons behind it, but I also made the following observations, on purely theoretical grounds. (1) The house could not be too small, for it has to serve three distinct institutions, each susceptible of further development, namely, the oratory, the orphanage, and our [Rosminian] community. (2) Consequently, plans should be drawn up for a large building, even though for now only a wing of it might be built to serve the present need. (3) Even granting that the building should not resemble a monastery, we should nevertheless not sacrifice our true requirements because of what people might say. Finally, (4) I urged him to come up with plans about which we may perhaps reach an agreement.

I do not think that at this point Don Bosco has made up his mind, or that

[85] The Congregation of Clerks Regular of Somasca founded by St. Jerome Emiliani (1481-1537).

[86] This field the property of the archdiocesan seminary lay immediately to the south. Don Bosco purchased it from the archdiocesan seminary by contract dated June 20, 1850 (Father Puecher attached a copy of the contract to his report). In 1854, being in need of money, Don Bosco sold the field to the Rosminians who intended eventually to establish a house of their own. In 1863 he bought it back (through a ruse) for the church of Mary Help of Christians. It became known as the "Field of Dreams."

he has a clear idea about the direction our relationship in the matter should take. Perhaps it would help if we submitted a plan of our own. [...]

Comment

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Don Bosco had frequent exchanges with the Rosminians and visited their motherhouse in Stresa. It is probably at this time that he toyed with the idea of joining Rosmini's Institute of Charity.

18 – Monument to Father Antonio Rosmini in the Public Gardens of Porta Venezia in Milan (sculptor Francesco Confalonieri: 1896)

Chapter 7

DON BOSCO'S ORATORIES IN 1849-1852 – CONFLICT, CRISIS AND RESOLUTION

EBM IV, 215-221, 254-266, 222-230, 246-253 (Lottery); Borel, *Memoriale dell'Oratorio*, in Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 545-559.

Summary

1. Oratories in Turin in 1849-1852
2. Don Bosco's Associates and Collaborators in Oratory Work
   (1) Don Bosco's Letter, February 20, 1850
   (2) Fr. Borel's *Oratory Record*
   (3) Don Bosco's *Cenni Storici* of 1862
   (4) Don Bosco's Article in *Salesian Bulletin*, September 1877
   (5) Comment
3. Critical Phase in the Oratory Movement in Turin and Don Bosco's Emergence
4. Crisis at the Oratory of St. Aloysius with Fr. Pietro Ponte
5. Crisis at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and the Challenge to Don Bosco
   (1) Archival Sources –Giuseppe Brosio and his *Memoir*
   (2) Brosio's First Report: Efforts to Entice Personnel away from the Oratory
   (3) Brosio's Second Report: The Outrage of the Don Bosco's Lottery Circular
   6. Don Bosco and His Oratories Gain Pre-eminence–Archbishop Fransoni's Decrees
7. Characteristics of Don Bosco's Oratories

Appendices: 1. Giuseppe Brosio; 2. Don Bosco's Statements on the Early Oratory (1. Letter to the *Mendicità Istruita*, February 20, 1850; 2. Early Associates and Cooperators: Don Bosco's Statement in the *Bollettino Salesiano*); 3. Correspondence: Frs. Borel, Cafasso, Ponte on the Oratory Crisis; 4. Archbishop Fransoni's Decrees of March 31, 1852

The general situation of the oratories in Turin in 1851/52 may be briefly described. The priests and lay people who were committed to working for young people at risk were numerous. The personnel staffing the oratories in particular formed a kind of informal association of men and women bonded primarily by the same desire to help poor young people. In 1849

Don Bosco's Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Valdocco was regarded as the most important in terms of numbers and activities, also for being better-staffed and operated. The Oratory of St. Aloysius in the southern Borgo San Salvario, though established by Don Bosco, was run by highly motivated priests and lay people. So was the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the northeastern Borgo Vanchiglia, originally established by Father Cocchi and recently re-opened by Don Bosco. In 1851-52 Father Cocchi opened another oratory at the mills in Borgo Dora, the Oratory of St. Martin.[1] All these oratories were staffed by a director and a sufficient number of catechists, both priests and lay people (some very young) that assisted the boys and supervised activities.

Before discussing the oratory movement and its problems in the years 1849-1852, we should first say a word about Don Bosco's associates and collaborators in the work of the oratories. We shall draw on early documentation in which oratory workers and collaborators are mentioned.

I. Don Bosco's Early Associates and Collaborators in Oratory Work

Don Bosco's Letter of February 20, 1850 to the *Mendicità Istruita*[2]

In an early letter to the administrators of the *Mendicità Istruita* (Society for the Instruction and Care of the Poor), Don Bosco mentions oratory workers and writes:

> Up to now the work has been carried forward thanks to the help offered by a number of charitable priests and lay persons. The priests that are involved in a special manner are: Dr. [Giovanni] Borrelli, Dr. [Giacinto] Carpano, Dr. [Gio-

[1] There were also in Turin a number of parish-based oratories that functioned as part of the parish program of catechetical instruction. These oratories do not concern the present discussion.

[2] Motto, *Epistolario* I, 96, #47. For the full text of the Letter, see Appendix 2/1 below. The *Regia Opera della Mendicità Istruita* (Royal Institute for the Instruction of the Destitute), an association legally established toward the end of the eighteenth century, had the purpose of providing help and instruction to the poor. It was a well-established and well-endowed association. It was approved by royal decree toward the end of the 18th c. In mid-1840s this society established day and evening schools for poor children, entrusting the boys' schools to the De la Salle Christian Brothers and the girls' schools to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy.

vanni] Vola, Fr. [Pietro] Ponte, Fr. [Giovanni] Grassino, Dr. [Roberto Felice] Murialdo, Fr. [Giovanni Francesco] Giacomelli, and Dr. Prof. [Francesco Giovanni] Marengo.

Father Borels's *"Memoriale dell'Oratorio"*[3]

Names of a number of very early benefactors are recorded in a notebook of Fr. Borel called *Memoriale dell'Oratorio* (Oratory Records Book). The *Memoriale* records the name of donors and their offerings. It does not specify in what other way they helped the work of the oratories. The list includes:

> Canons Fissore, Vacchetta, Melano, Duprez, Fantolini and Zappata, Fathers Aimeri, Berteu, Saccarelli, Vola, Carpano, Paul Rossi, Pacchiotti, Pullini and Durando, Count Rademaker, Marquis Gustavo Cavour, General Michael Engelfred, Charles Richelmy; Attorneys Molina and Blengini, Baroness Borsarelli and her daughter, Miss Moia, Chevalier Borbonese, Countess Masino, Mrs. Cavallo and Mrs. Bogner, Benedict Mussa, Anthony Burdin, Gagliardi, and the Bianchi family.

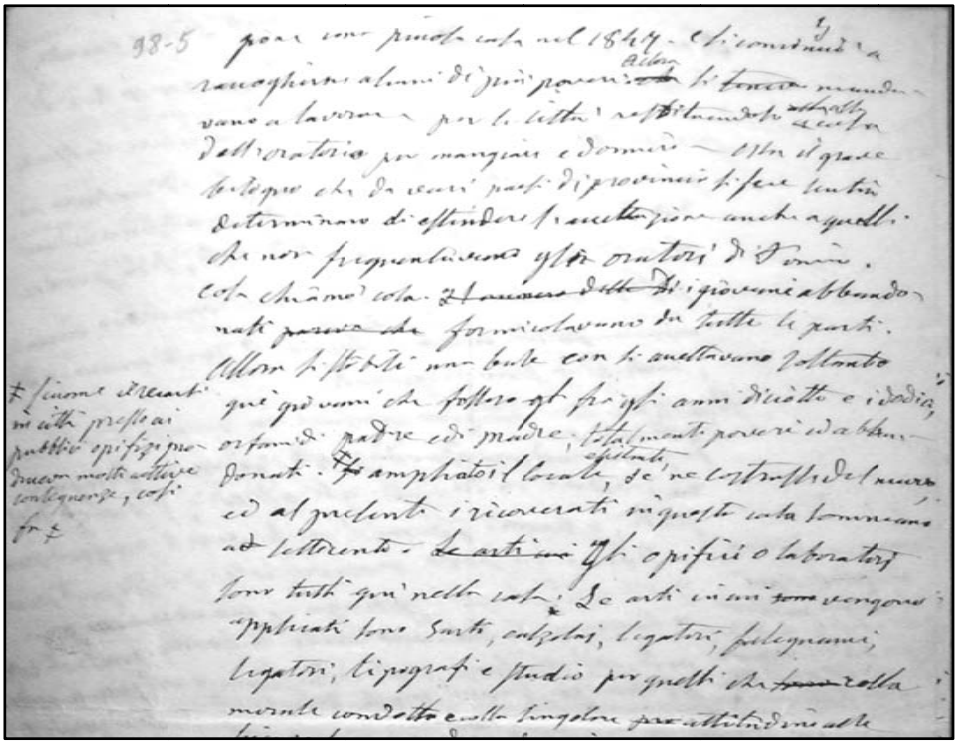
Don Bosco's *"Cenni Storici"* (Historical Outlines) of 1862

In a comment added to the final paragraph of the Historical Outlines of 1862 Don Bosco mentions a number of very close collaborators in oratory work.

> Among the priests who deserve recognition for the moral and material help rendered in the work of the festive oratories the following should be mentioned: Fr. Sebastiano Pacchiotti, Dr. Giacinto Carpano, Dr. Giovanni Vola, Fr. Giuseppe Trivero, Fr. Pietro Ponte, Dr. Leonardo Murialdo, Dr. Chevalier Roberto Murialdo, Fr. Michael Rua, Fr. Victor Alasonatti. But the distinction of having been in a very special way the promoter and support of the work goes to Dr. Giovanni Borrelli. He made himself available, and worked devotedly and effectively, at all times and in all ways.[4]

[3] *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *FDBM* 552 E4-12. Fr. Borel kept the Oratory "books" for a number of years.

[4] The Historical Outlines of 1862 in *ASC* 132: *Oratorio 2.1*, *FDB* 1,972 C10-D4 (Don Bosco's autograph); 2.2 *FDB* 1,972 E9 - 1,973 A6 (copy corrected by Don Bosco and 2.3



19 – A page of Don Bosco's manuscript of the *Historical Outlines* of 1862

Don Bosco's Article in the *Bollettino Salesiano* on the Early Salesian Cooperators

Writing in the recently founded *Bollettino Salesiano in 1877*, Don Bosco speaks of his first and other early cooperators, that is, of the people who were associated with the work of the oratory in various ways. He mentions 58 names, priests and lay people, men and women:[5]

FDB 1,972 E1-8 (last copy corrected by Don Bosco); edited in Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco per i giovani: l'"Oratorio" una "Congregazione degli Oratori." Documenti* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano, 9. Roma: LAS, 1988). The full text of this document will be given in a later chapter. In 1862 (some two years after the founding of the Salesian Society in 1859), Father Michael Rua and Father Victor Alasonatti, both Salesian priests, were Don Bosco's closest associates at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.

[5] Don Bosco's detailed statement was published in the *Bibliofilo Cattolico* or *Bollettino Sale-*

[…] Many zealous priests and Christian lay persons wished to be associated with Don Bosco in this ministry.

First and foremost among them we remember the zealous and much lamented Dr. Giovanni Borel, Fr. Giuseppe Caffasso, and Canon [Carlo Antonio] Borsarelli [di Rifreddo]. These were the first cooperators from among the clergy. But since they had other demanding commitments, they could be on hand only at certain hours and on certain occasions.

Consequently, we turned to gentlemen from the nobility and the middle class for help, and we drew a generous response from a good number of them. They came and were assigned to teaching catechism, conducting classes, supervising the boys in and out of church. With exemplary dedication they led the boys in prayer and song, they prepared them for the receptions of the holy sacraments of penance, communion, and confirmation.

Out of church, they would be on hand to receive the boys as they arrived at the oratory, to assign to them places for recreation, to take part in their games, maintaining order in a kindly manner.

Another important concern of the cooperators was *job placement*. Many boys were from out of town, sometimes from distant places; they found themselves alone, without a livelihood, without a job, without anyone who would care for them. Some of the cooperators then would go after those lads; they tried to clean them up; they placed them with some honest employer, and got them ready to make their appearance at the work place. During the week they would visit those youngsters, and see that they came back to the oratory the following Sunday, so that they might not lose in one day what they had gained by the labor of several weeks.

Many of these cooperators at great personal sacrifice came faithfully every evening during the winter season, and taught classes in reading, writing, singing, arithmetic, and Italian language. Others instead would come daily at noon to teach catechism to those youngsters who were most in need of instruction.

[…][6]

Among the many priests who became associated with the work we may mention the following: the brothers [Giovanni] Ignazio and Giovanni [Battista] Vola; Dr. [Paolo Francesco] Rossi, who died as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius; Dr. Attorney [Giovanni Battista] Destefanis. All of them God has already called to their heavenly home. To these must be added Dr. Fr. Roberto Murialdo, the present director of the *Famiglia di S. Pietro*, and Dr. Fr. Leonardo Murialdo, at present director of the *Artigianelli* Institute.

Among the earliest priest-cooperators who are still with us (may God be

siano 3: #6 (September 1877), transcribed by Eugenio Valentini, "Preistoria dei Cooperatori Salesiani," *Salesianum* 39 (1877) 114-150.

[6] Many laymen are mentioned.

praised) the following should be mentioned: Fr. Giuseppe Trivero; Dr. Chevalier Giacinto Carpano; Fr. Michelangelo Chiatellino; Fr. Ascanio Savio; Fr. Gioanni Giacomelli; Dr. Prof. [?] Chiaves; Fr. Antò Bosio, now pastor; Fr. Sebastiano Pacchiotti; Fr. Prof. [Giovanni Battista] Musso; Canon [?] Musso, a teacher; Fr. Pietro Ponti [Ponte]; Canon Luigi Nasi; Canon Prof. [Francesco] Marengo; Fr. Francesco Onesti, a teacher; Dr. Emiliano Manacorda, now bishop of Fossano; Canon Eugenio Galletti, now bishop of Alba.

[...][7]

We had cooperators not only from among the men, but also from among the women. Some of our pupils (*allievi*) were nothing but dirty, unkempt ragamuffins. No one could stand them, and no employer wanted them in his workshop. A number of charitable ladies came to the rescue. […] The leader of the ladies was Mrs. Margherita Gastaldi.[8]

Comment

All the above "coworkers, helpers, benefactors, cooperators" of the earliest years, were associated with Don Bosco in oratory work in various ways. Fr. Giuseppe Cafasso, and Fr. Giovanni Borel were by far the most important. Next in importance were Fr. Giacinto Carpano, and the cousins Frs. Roberto and Leonardo Murialdo. Of the lay helpers, perhaps the most dedicated were Baron Bianco di Barbania, Marquis and Marchioness (De Maistre) Fassati, Count Balbo di Vinadio, and Margherita Gastaldi.

What this means is that Don Bosco from the beginning conceived of the work of the oratory as a collaborative work to be undertaken and expanded by a coalition of many diverse forces. This was no doubt his earliest concept of the "society" that was to work for poor young people, a voluntary association of concerned people devoting themselves and their resources (in varying degrees) to the work of the oratories.

It is in this sense that Don Bosco could later speak of the Salesian Society, and of the Salesian constitutions themselves, as existing already in 1841. He never left behind the idea of a collaborative ministry, even after the founding of the Salesian Society as a religious congregation with common life and simple vows (1859-1874). For, it should be noted, the Salesian Society was not meant to be a substitute for the older coalition, but was meant

[7] At this point a short paragraph describes how order was kept and the oratory run, according to a set of regulations, without recourse to threats or punishments.

[8] Margherita was Archbishop Gastaldi's mother. Ten other ladies are mentioned.

rather to be the inner group of those that were completely committed to the work. Writing in the Salesian Bulletin in 1877, he saw the recently "founded" Salesian Cooperators as continuing the collaborative ministry of earlier times.[9]

"Spiritual favors" obtained from Rome in 1845 and in 1850, and Archbishop Fransoni's decree of 1852 making Don Bosco spiritual director-in-chief of three oratories (see below) were cited by Don Bosco as documents of ecclesiastical approval of this association of collaborators over which he presided as "Superior."

II. Critical Phase in the Oratory Movement in Turin and Don Bosco's Emergence (1849-1852)

EBM IV, 215-221, 254-266; A. Castellani, *Leonardo Murialdo* (Roma, 2 vol., 1966 and 1968), I, *passim*, esp. 400-401; Teresio Bosco, *Don Bosco. Una biografia nuova* (Leumann (TO): Elle Di Ci, 1979), 159-208, *passim*, and 138-139.

Crisis, Issues and Differences

Through the 1840s, sharp differences in oratory philosophy and organization arose among the various oratory directors and catechist groups. Don Bosco differed in the way he did oratory work and in his concept of what an oratory should be like. Perhaps to a greater degree than any of his associates, he emphasized the *religious and educational* nature of the oratory, as he conceived it. Castellani remarks that Fr. Cocchi's oratory of the Guardian Angel placed such high priority on gymnastics and drills that it resembled a military training camp.[10]

In addition to differences in pastoral practice, there were differences in political ideology, which were accentuated by the political and military crisis of 1848-49.[11] When that crisis passed, the differences did not abate. Indeed

[9] The founding (or reorganization) of the Salesian Cooperators in 1876 was intended to continue on a new basis the original collaborative ministry. The Cooperators were not meant to be "benefactors" of the Salesian Society, but collaborators with the Salesian Society in ministering to poor young people.

[10] Castellani, *Leonardo Murialdo*, 400; also *EBM* III, 319. As will be noted below, Don Bosco saw the necessity of introducing some of the very same forms of recreation.

[11] The turbulent years 1848-1849 were the years of liberal revolutions and of liberal

they grew more pronounced as the movement of the *Risorgimento* accelerated, and as the work of the oratories received new impetus through the induction of new forces and through grants from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. By this time Don Bosco (though outwardly claiming neutrality) had taken a conservative position in solidarity with Fr. Cafasso, Archbishop Fransoni and Pope Pius IX. So had Frs. Borel, Carpano, Roberto and later Leonardo Murialdo and others, both priests and laypeople.

Thus Don Bosco found himself at odds with the more "patriotic" priests engaged in oratory work, such as Frs. Cocchi and Ponte. There also were more practical problems. Oratory directors and catechists would be frequently replaced; clashes and disagreements would arise inside and outside the oratory from questions of competence, from a desire to act independently, from difficulties in dealing with pastors, from uneven sharing of resources, from competition in securing benefactors, etc. Nor should difficulties arising from personal character be discounted.

We should again note that the early oratory movement was a collaborative ministry in which priests and lay people worked together as equals, as associates and colleagues. Don Bosco, on the other hand, sought from the start to create "his own" oratory, regarding coworkers as his subordinate helpers and himself as the "superior" of a "congregation of the oratories."

As early as 1847 a proposal was made to federate the Turin oratories (present and future) and other youth ministries under some diocesan structure that would safeguard the interests of each, and arbitrate cases of dispute. This was the view of a group of highly respected priests such as Fr. Marcantonio Durando (Superior of the of Vincentians), Fr. Prof. Amedeo Peyron, Canon Giuseppe Ortalda and Canon Lawrence Gastaldi. Don Bosco and Fr. Cocchi as directors of oratories were asked to accept these terms. Don Bosco, however, while declaring his willingness to work together with others, declined to enter into any formal union that would jeopardize his independence.

As reported (or as interpreted) by Lemoyne in the Biographical Memoirs, Don Bosco presented his reasons:

1. Strategy in oratory work – "Father Cocchis is all for gymnastics and, to attract boys, drills them with sticks and [mock] rifles; he, however, has little use for church services. The sticks and rifles I intend to use are rather

constitutions, of the First War of Italian Independence waged against Austria by King Charles Albert of Piedmont, and concomitantly the year 1849 marked the establishment of the Mazzinian Roman Republic and the flight of Pope Pius IX from Rome.

the word of God, confession, and frequent Communion; everything else I regard solely as a means to draw boys to catechism class.

2. Political involvement – "The other priests engaged in oratory work are in varying degrees enmeshed in politics, and often their sermons are patriotic exhortations rather than religious instructions. Instead, I intend to steer absolutely clear of politics.[12]

Another attempt in the same direction was made in 1849, under the sponsorship of Fr. Cafasso himself, whose moral authority as spiritual father and patron of most of the priests involved in youth ministry carried much weight. But no agreement was reached. The cataclysmic events of 1848-49 (liberal revolution, war against Austria, etc.) and the imprisonment and exile of Archbishop Fransoni in 1850 prevented further initiatives.

Crisis at the Oratory of St. Aloysius under Father Pietro Ponte[13]

Directors at the Oratory of Saint Aloysius: Fr. Carpano and Successors

Goffredo Casalis in 1851, speaking of charitable institutions active in Turin has words of praise for Don Bosco's three oratories and for the priests who staffed them. He singles out Father Giacinto Carpano for special praise and writes:

> In these oratories boys find an environment that refines and educates their minds and hearts. Within a short time they acquire good manners, develop a liking for work, and become good Christians and upright citizens. Such impressive results should induce the government to lend full support to an undertaking that is of great benefit to the poorer classes. Many zealous priests have dedicated themselves to this social work of rescuing from idleness many boys who would undoubtedly come to a sorry end without their solicitous care.
>
> Here we must also mention the well-deserving Father Carpano, who plans to open a center for workmen recently released from hospitals and unable to return immediately to work either because of poor employment conditions or because of their need of time to convalesce. This project will become a reality as soon as Father Carpano manages to find the support he hopes to receive.
>
> Some may object that we have devoted too much space to these [charitable] institutions. But this is clearly not the view of those who realize that public rec-

[12] *EBM* III, 320-21.

[13] *EBM* IV, 215-221. Here Lemoyne tells the story clearly not without a certain bias.

> ognition is the sole reward these worthy people receive for their constant, tireless labors. These priests dedicate their entire lives to the welfare of the young, and it would be most unjust to deny them the praise they so eminently deserve.[14]

According to Casalis' statement, it seems that Father Carpano was planning to move on to other ministries, though we cannot specify the date and the circumstances under which he withdrew from the oratories. We know, however, on Father John Bonetti's testimony,[15] that Father Carpano served as first director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius when it opened in 1847; then of the Oratory of Guardian Angel when it was re-activated under Don Bosco in 1849. He probably left oratory work in 1853.[16]

At St. Aloysius several directors followed Father Carpano for very short terms, until the appointment of Father Pietro Ponte, a zealous and capable priest, under whom the oratory experienced considerable expansion.[17] He had the assistance of Father Felice Rossi and Attorney Gaetano Bellingeri (among others) and of a group of catechists. Father Ponte was succeeded by Father Paolo Francesco Rossi, a man of great zeal but in rather poor health. He died shortly thereafter at 28 years of age. There followed an interval of some years during which there was no fixed Director. By this time Don Bosco began to have at his disposal some seminarians that he sent to "St. Aloysius" on Sundays and holy days. Each week he secured the services of a priest of Turin, who went there for confessions and holy Mass, as well as preaching. Occasionally a priest would be on hand for the sermon and devotions in the evening.

[14] Casalis, *Dizionario […]*, vol. XXI, 714-718.

[15] Bonetti, "Storia dell'Oratorio […]," in *Bollettino Salesiano* and *Cinque Lustri*, translated as *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*, 103-117.

[16] The date and motive of Father Carpano's withdrawal from the oratories to go on to other ministries are unclear. Regarding the date, Lemoyne makes contradictory statements: in *EBM* III, 395, in 1853, but in *EBM* IV, 215, prior to 1851.

[17] Pietro Ponte was born at Pancalieri (Turin) in 1821. Once ordained, he lived "with Don Bosco" at Valdocco for over one year (1847-1848) [*EBM* III, 176-177], and was one of his early collaborators in oratory work. At the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) he was in charge, under Father Cafasso, of the catechetical instruction of the chimneysweeps in association with Father Carpano. Father Ponte served as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius from 1849 to 1851. He then served as chaplain to the Marchioness Barolo and her works, and as testamentary executor after her death. He supervised to building of the Church of St. Julia, built through the munificent testamentary disposition of the Marchioness in the Vanchiglia district, and served as its first rector. He died on October 2, 1892.

Crisis at the Oratory of St. Aloysius

The crisis we are speaking of came to a head during Father Ponte's tenure, which may be dated to the years 1849-1851.

As noted above, not everyone agreed with Don Bosco's view of how an oratory should be run. There was in fact dissatisfaction among catechists at Don Bosco's three oratories.[18] Dissension erupted in 1851, involving the catechists at the Oratories of the Guardian Angel and of St. Aloysius. Father Ponte seems to have been at the center of it. Perhaps Don Bosco's demand for unity of direction was resented and interpreted as a desire to dominate or to gain recognition.[19]

Probably at Father Cafasso's suggestion, a meeting of oratory priests (six are named including Father Roberto Murialdo and Father John Cocchi) was called. "Father Ponte was invited to attend and state his grievances, but he declined. At this meeting Don Bosco declared himself ready to make concessions but not to abdicate the authority that was his by right."[20]

As a temporary solution, Don Bosco suggested that Father Cafasso should recommend Father Ponte to Marchioness Barolo, who was looking for a personal chaplain. Father Ponte accepted the Marchioness' offer, and in October 1851 accompanied her and her secretary, Silvio Pellico, to Rome.[21] Don Bosco asked Father Felice Rossi to take over as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius (As mentioned above, Fr. Rossi died shortly thereafter).

A correspondence between Father Ponte and Father Borel (writing for Don Bosco) followed. In response to a letter from Father Ponte in which he listed his grievances, with certain related episodes, Father Borel indirectly reveals some aspects of the dispute. He writes:

[18] For an episode that occurred at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales see *EBM* IV, 216-217, cited by Lemoyne from Joseph Brosio's *Memoir*, of which we shall speak below.

[19] See Don Bosco's statements in the Introduction to the *Regulations for the Boys Oratory* of 1854.

[20] *EBM* IV, 217.

[21] Silvio Pellico (1789-1854) was a patriot and a writer, and the founder and editor (1818-1819) of the liberal patriotic journal *Il Conciliatore*. Suspected of revolutionary activity in the 1821 Carbonari uprising, he was condemned to hard labor (1822) for 15 years and imprisoned in the fortress of Spielberg (Austria), but was released in 1830. Thereafter he lived in Turin, and from 1834 served as librarian and secretary to the Marchioness Barolo. He was active in prison reform, as was the Marchioness. He is known especially for the memoirs of his imprisonment, *Le mie prigioni* (1832), but he also wrote plays (tragedies) and produced a translation of Byron's *Manfred*, He was also the author of mystic and religious poetry.

> Concord is impaired when the other oratories are not allowed to use certain things provided for one oratory. Likewise, it is perturbed when, in the same oratory, a member reserves some things for his exclusive use so that no one may use them even when he is absent.
>
> We have therefore agreed that any donation to one oratory must be regarded as given to all the oratories, and the directors are bound in conscience to inform the benefactors of this policy of ours.[22]

In his reply to Father Borel, Father Ponte writes among other things:

> I believe that this deplorable discord resulted from the fact that we have no one in particular to turn to and from a serious lack of communication among ourselves. […] If you can do something about this, I am sure all unrest will vanish.
>
> I cannot go back on the decision that I previously revealed to you. I made this decision only after careful soul-searching and I cannot change it for any reason. If the things I left at the St. Aloysius Oratory are in the way, I'll remove them as soon as I return to Turin. […] From now on (should God will that I continue to work in behalf of the oratories) I shall willingly abide by the decision you mentioned.[23]

Father Cafasso attempted to restore harmony. He addressed a letter to Father Ponte, who by this time had gone to Naples with Marchioness Barolo.[24] With regard to that unspecified decision, he wrote: "I urge you to put aside all worry […] regarding the decision you plan to take in the matter you mention." He gave him assurance that the oratory co-workers bore him no grudge or ill will, and in fact hoped for his continued cooperation. Father Cafasso then continued:

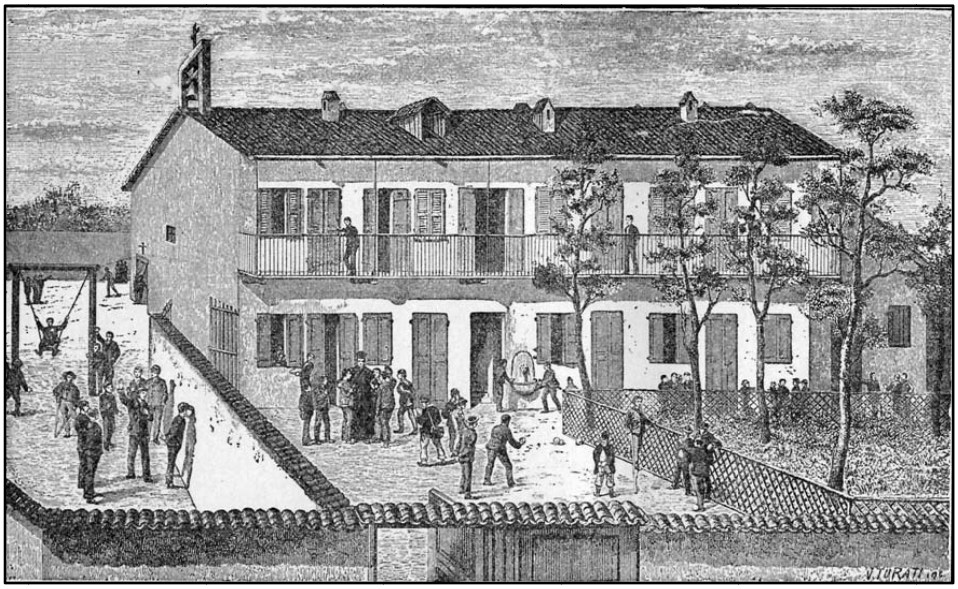
> Since the items under discussion are yours, you have the right to make whatever arrangements you wish as to their use. However, if you want my opinion, […] you would be well advised to put them at the disposal of the oratories. […] You would, in any case, retain priority for their use for as long as you will be able to help in this work so blessed by the Lord.

[22] Fr. Borel to Fr. Ponte, October 23, 1851, in *EBM* IV, 218. See also full text in the Appendix below.

[23] Fr. Ponte to Fr. Borel, November 4, 1851, in *EBM* IV, p, 219-220. See also full text in the Appendix below.

[24] Fr. Cafasso to Fr. Ponte, January 6, 1852, in *EBM* IV, 255-256. See text (re-phrased) in the Appendix below.

Father Cafasso' suggestion went unheeded. Father Ponte went on to serve as chaplain in the Barolo institutions, and a little later as director of the Oratory of St. Martin at the Mills, opened by Father Cocchi.



20 – The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales at Pinardi house
(drawing of Bartolomeo Bellisio)

Comment

What were the precise terms of the dispute? The sources in our possession are insufficient for a detailed reconstruction of the episode. From the texts quoted above, it appears that the issue had to do with the independent direction and independent use of equipment and revenues in each oratory. Father Ponte and his staff were devoting time, and apparently also resources, to the Oratory of St. Aloysius. But did that fact justify a claim to independence? We cannot tell whether other factors of a personal, political or pastoral character were involved. Father Ponte's claim that "we have no one in particular to turn to" is particularly puzzling, as is also Don Bosco's "silence" throughout this whole episode.

Crisis at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales: Challenge to Don Bosco

Introduction: Archival Source and Nature of the Crisis

Father Lemoyne speaks of another, more serious challenge made to Don Bosco and the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales by a group of disgruntled oratory workers led by an unnamed priest to whom he gives the pseudonym, Father Rodrigo.[25]

Lemoyne's source for this new oratory crisis is a 46-page memoir authored by one of Don Bosco's oldest catechists and youth leaders named Giuseppe Brosio. Brosio's memoir is preserved in the Central Salesian Archives.[26]

The memoir was probably written, so it appears, soon after Don Bosco's death (1888) when Father John Bonetti was collecting material in view of Don Bosco's diocesan process of beatification. At one point in his memoir, Brosio addresses Father Bonetti specifically.[27]

As we find it in the archives, the memoir falls into two separate parts: Part I in six chapters (pp. 1-32) and Part II in one continuous narrative (pp. 1-14). The memoir as a whole describes events at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and relates anecdotes in praise of Don Bosco. Quite a bit of space is given to Brosio himself as leader of the oratory boys in their recreation. He portrays himself as a confidant of Don Bosco and as a protagonist in the events of the crisis.

The memoir covers a wide range of Brosio's recollections from different periods. Of interest to our story are two reports of the activities of a clique of priests and gentlemen, led by the Unnamed Priest and followed by catechists and older boys. They were intent on challenging Don Bosco's authority and disrupting the oratory.[28]

[25] *EBM* IV, 256-265.

[26] *ASC* 123: *Persone*, *Brosio Giuseppe "Il Bersagliere*," *FDB* 554 E10 – 555 D8. As far as I know this memoir remains unpublished. For a biographical sketch of Giuseppe Brosio see Appendix below.

[27] Brosio, Memoir, Part I, 23, *FDBM* 555 B10.

[28] The first report is found in Part I, Ch. 4 (16-19), *FDBM* 555 B3-6. The second report is found in Part II (1-5), *FDBM* 555 C7-11. Brosio speaks of priests (*preti*, *signori preti*) and of one priest (*il prete*) in particular who seems to be the leader of the group. He also speaks of "signori," by which he may mean "gentlemen," or may be referring to the same priests. These are the "conspirators." With them are catechists and young men (leaders among the oratory boys) whom the ringleaders have won over, or are trying to win over. No one is ever identified by name.

Both reports speak of a "conspiracy" to wreck the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales by getting oratory workers to leave Don Bosco. Specifically, the first report (Report I) describes efforts to entice oratory personnel away from Don Bosco, while the second report (Report II) speaks of a meeting to accuse Don Bosco of slandering oratory personnel in a circular written for the raffle of 1851-52.[29] Actual confrontations also occurred.

Brosio's testimony has sometimes been called into question, but there seems no real reason to doubt its reliability.

Brosio's First Report: Efforts to entice Personnel away from the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales

It is quite possible that when Father Cocchi's plan to open an oratory at St. Martin's at the mills in the Borgo Dora (less than half a mile to the east) became known, a number of the Valdocco catechists would consider joining the new venture. Father Cocchi was a well-known and colorful oratory worker. He had founded the oratory of the Guardian Angel in the Moschino (District of Vanchiglia), the first of its kind in Turin. After the war of 1848-49, that oratory had been taken over by Don Bosco, while Father Cocchi and other oratory priests in 1849-50 organized a Society to help Young People at Risk.[30] Now Father Cocchi's projected oratory at St. Martin's would need catechists and other personnel. Perhaps a request for help had been made, and some of Don Bosco's catechists found the offer attractive.

It seems, however, that some of the Valdocco catechists and personnel had become disaffected and antagonistic, and they may have been looking in Cocchi's direction because (among other possible reasons) they were dissatisfied with the way Don Bosco's oratory was run. Brosio's report takes us one step farther; he speaks of a real conspiracy (*congiura*) with powerful people behind it. He writes:

> In 1850 or 1851 a secret plot was hatched to destroy the Oratory [of St. Francis de Sales]. [The schemers] themselves admitted as much, and Reverend Priests [… names withheld…] who attended the Oratory were among the leaders of the conspiracy. On Sundays these gentlemen came to the Oratory and

[29] For the lottery and the "offensive" circular letter see below under Report II.

[30] *Società di carità a pro dei giovani poveri ed abbandonati* (announced in October 1849). This society eventually founded the *Istituto per gli Artigianelli* (1861-1863), out of which Father Leonardo Murialdo founded the Society of St. Joseph (1873).

> invited the older lads for outings into the country, treating them to dinners and refreshments in restaurants. Consequently, on most Sundays quite a number of older boys were absent.[31]

Brosio, as the undisputed leader of youth activities at Valdocco, had been approached by the "Protestants" (Waldenses) and offered a lucrative job and security if he would leave Don Bosco and take boys away from the Oratory. He adds: "Not only the Protestants, but Catholic gentlemen as well–and priests too–offered me presents both of money and valuables, if only I would act to disrupt the oratory."[32] Then he relates one such incident.

> One Sunday the Priest […name withheld…] invited me for an outing he was planning into the country. I was to tell no one about it, but I discussed it with Don Bosco, and he told me to accept the invitation. The following Sunday, after morning services, I left the Oratory to keep my appointment at the designated place (Porta Palazzo), where the group of companions and the Gentlemen […names withheld…] were already gathered and waiting for me. I was greeted with enthusiasm, hugs and kisses, and a great show of joy. The Gentleman (Priest?) […name withheld…] announced: "Our party today will be a happy one because our dear and close friend [Brosio] is joining us." (They had thought I wouldn't show up).
>
> We took the Milan road out into the country, and stopped for refreshments at the Inn of the Centaur. At noon we were served a rich and elaborate dinner with choice wines in abundance. We spent the afternoon with games, songs and more wine until evening. Back at Porta Palazzo we stopped for coffee, and before saying good-bye and heading for home, we all agreed to meet on the following Sunday morning at the Church of […name withheld…] On my way home I stopped by the Oratory and made a detailed report to Don Bosco. He listened attentively, and when I told him about the invitation for the following Sunday, he decided that I should go along.
>
> The following Sunday we all met for Mass at the church as pre-arranged, after which the Gentlemen […names withheld…] took us to the St. Charles Gallery Café at Porta Nuova for coffee and breakfast.
>
> On both occasions, the sermons [at Mass] kept suggesting that we should quit the Oratory, since God is everywhere and one can become a saint anywhere.[33] After dinner I reported to Don Bosco and told him that I had been in-

[31] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report I, 16, *FDBM* 555 B3.

[32] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report I, 16, *FDBM* 555 B3.

[33] These people, though bent on mischief, as "good Catholics" they heard Mass and sermon. The Unnamed Priest apparently had arranged to hold Sunday services at the designated church.

vited to a great afternoon party (*grande merenda*) for the following Sunday. He forbade me to go.

The Priest […name withheld…] had offered me six silver dollars (*scudi d'argento*) as a way of obligating me to attend their meetings.[34] I didn't want to accept them, but he kept arguing and pressing the money into my hand. I was so stunned and powerless that I took the money. Immediately remorse began to trouble my conscience, robbing me of peace of mind. I feared that by taking that money I had betrayed Don Bosco. I decided to give it to a man whose family apparently was in real need. […] When I made my report to Don Bosco, he assured me that I could have kept the money without qualms, but added that I had done a good deed by giving it as alms.[35]

From the first report as a whole it emerges that a coalition of Catholic laymen, priests, and one priest in particular, for some reason were determined to undo Don Bosco and the Oratory by going after his Oratory personnel. They tried to entice the catechists away by bribes of money, dinners and a good time, in the hope perhaps of swinging their allegiance to the oratory that Father Cocchi was about to open at St. Martin's.

Brosio's Second Report: The "Outrage" of the Lottery Circular

The enmity of the "conspirators" did not abate, as Brosio related in another episode (to be dated in late 1851 and early 1852). The same group of "gentlemen" (signori) led by the Unnamed Priest (apparently a powerful figure in town), took umbrage at what they construed to be Don Bosco's expansionist plans, for he had decided to build a proper church (St. Francis de Sales) and was launching a great lottery to raise funds for it. They pretended to take offense at the way he described the oratory lads in the appeal circulated on that occasion. Taking advantage of dissatisfaction among oratory personnel at Valdocco, the dissidents attempted again to entice the best catechists away, and so disrupt the Oratory. To this end the "conspirators" called a meeting for the purpose of accusing Don Bosco of having slandered oratory workers in the circular he had written for the lottery.

[34] The *scudo*, worth 5 lire, was equivalent to about one U.S. dollar at the time. This was a considerable sum of money.

[35] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report I, 16-19, *FDBM* 555 B3-6. As an afterthought Brosio adds that a canon of St. John's Cathedral was promising him the earth if he would leave Don Bosco and work instead at St. Philip's parish oratory.

The Lottery and the Circular

Since acquiring the Pinardi house and property (February 19, 1851), which became the permanent home of the Oratory, Don Bosco had been planning to expand the whole facility at Valdocco. His first major building project was the Church of St. Francis de Sales, dedicated on June 20, 1852. His charity base being small and still insecure, on advice from friends, he obtained the City's permit to launch a lottery, the first (and perhaps the most successful) of the nine held in Don Bosco's lifetime.[36] In his appeal Don Bosco gave a brief history and description of the Oratory.

> Its sole purpose is the intellectual and moral welfare of those young people who, because of parental neglect, association with bad companions and lack of material means find themselves in continuous danger of being perverted. […] [Some of us, priests and laymen] were deeply distressed at seeing the increasing number of young people who idly roamed the streets with bad companions and lived by begging and thieving, thus becoming a burden to society and the cause of all kinds of mischief. […] [We] were also saddened at seeing that many of those young men that were already employed in workshops and factories squandered their meager wages on Sundays in gambling and drinking. […]
>
> [The Oratory was established] to rescue these boys from evil ways, to inspire them with a holy fear of God, and to accustom them from their early years to the practice of religion."[37]

By these and similar expressions Don Bosco was guilty (so the opposition claimed) of labeling the whole oratory population, without distinction, as vagabonds and thieves. He had to be confronted, and satisfaction demanded.

The Meeting

To press this point and with the ultimate aim of persuading oratory personnel to leave Don Bosco, a meeting was called. Brosio writes:

> One Sunday, after church services at the Oratory, certain gentlemen (*certi signori*) invited us to a conference, to deal with a matter that concerned our good name. The sole agenda item was to show that Don Bosco had dishonored us

[36] For the story of the lottery in detail see *EBM* IV, 222-230, 246-253.

[37] The circular letter (lottery appeal), dated December 20, 1851, is given in Motto, *Epistolario* I, Letter #94, 139-141, and edited in *EBM* IV, 228-230.

> publicly by labeling us "vagabonds and thieves." This accusation was based on the recent letter that Don Bosco had had printed and circulated for the lottery. […] The circular failed to mention that many young men [the catechists in particular] were persons of good character, from good and even well to do families.[38]

When the terms of the "indictment" were read, the whole assembly was seething with angry excitement. At this point Brosio asked for the floor. In his address he urged everybody to think and act calmly, then he continued [in summary]:

> If Don Bosco apologizes we should accept his apology. If not, then we can decide on an appropriate course of action. However, we should first examine his statements and see if they warrant a violent reaction on our part. His words might sound offensive, but may not be such as to damage our reputation. If the circular failed to make the proper distinctions, the omission might be accidental. Under no circumstance would Don Bosco smear the good name of the people he loves so well. If we respectfully take our grievance to him, I'm sure he will be the first to suggest terms of reconciliation. This course of action would avoid a greater evil for all concerned, something we might later have to regret."[39]

Brosio's conciliatory speech fell on deaf ears. An ominous silence settled over the room; then there were whispers, then angry shouts and catcalls. Most of those present particularly the ringleaders (*fautori e promotori*) had no desire to forego the opportunity of a showdown. A certain person (*individuo*) stood up to speak.[40] His address was punctuated by shouts of approval as he tried to show that Brosio's compromise would not suffice to restore their good name. Don Bosco would only offer hypocritical apologies or explanations. "Is that what you really want?" he concluded. A furious, angry roar (*ruggito*) rose from the audience. It was clear that those gentlemen (*signori*) had put up with Brosio's talk of reconciliation only to test the mood of the audience. Now they were bent on seeking a violent break.[41]

[38] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report II, 1, *FDBM* 555 C7.

[39] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report II, 1-2, *FDBM* 555 C7-8 The paragraph is a condensation of Brosio's tortured text. Lemoyne, while purporting to quote, gives a more elaborate interpretation.

[40] The person may have been the Unnamed Priest (as Lemoyne believes), or one of the gentlemen.

[41] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report II, 2-3, *FDBM* 555 C8-9 Lemoyne (always purporting to

A Confrontation

The following Sunday, a small group of the more angry young men, led by [… name withheld…] cornered Don Bosco in the sacristy. Brosio was at the moment organizing a military drill at recreation, but heard the shouting. Without delay he stepped into the sacristy to see what was going on. That young man had finished talking, and Don Bosco was explaining that the circular spoke in general of youngsters at risk who actually formed a good part of the oratory population, because the oratory was meant for them. Catechists and young men of good character and from good families who came to the oratory should feel honored by the opportunity of helping with this work of charity. The young man who had launched the attack paid no heed, and began to spit out insults. Brosio was about to deal physically with the miscreant. But Don Bosco himself, while holding Brosio back, intervened in defense of the Oratory. Brosio continues:

> [Don Bosco] was furious; he turned on the lad and gave him a piece of his mind, calling him a rascal *("birichino")* and threatening him with expulsion from the oratory. […] I swear, and it's the truth, in my forty-three years of acquaintance with Don Bosco I have never seen him in such a rage. And he had every reason to be angry, for they were trying to destroy his most precious possession, his oratory and his children.[42]

The defection of personnel from the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales was significant and damaging. The dissident group included catechists, priests and gentlemen (*signori*) who were involved directly or in a supporting role in the running of the Oratory.

In February 1852, Father Giovanni Cocchi opened the planned oratory at St. Martin's chapel at the city's mills in Borgo Dora. Many of the dissidents gravitated toward St. Martin's, and Fr. Cocchi (in no way involved in the dispute) accepted them, for they were after all dedicated workers and constituted a valuable resource. At St. Martin's they enjoyed a better table than at Valdocco. The catechists that had remained faithful, Brosio for example, broke off all relation with the dissidents. But others (like Carlo Gastini?) thought they could divide their time between the two oratories.

quote) adds by way of conclusion, "It was finally decided that all present should abruptly quit the Oratory. Thus an open breach was declared."

[42] Brosio, *Memoir*, Report II, 4, *FDBM* 555, D10. Lemoyne softens the language in this passage, by omitting all reference to Don Bosco's fury and anger.

Don Bosco put up with this situation for a while, but then told them to make up their minds.[43] Lemoyne adds that this turn of events forced Don Bosco to train new catechists in a hurry, choosing them also from among the best oratory lads.[44]

Dénouement

Brosio closes his report with the notice that, although the opposition stood defeated in their efforts to disrupt Don Bosco's oratory, steps were taken to increase recreational activities, perhaps to make the oratory more attractive (and competitive with St. Martin's?). Brosio for his part stepped up his military drills and mock war games. Since the oratory playground proved too small, his army used the empty southern field, the field that Don Bosco had recently bought from the seminary and that would later be identified as the "Field of Dreams." From there Brosio's army would wander eastward through the still vacant lands as far as the San Donato district (hence, near St. Martin's). Brosio continues: "Once at our destination, I would buy two large baskets of fruit with money supplied by Don Bosco for that purpose, and I would distribute it to all my soldiers."[45]

III. Don Bosco and His Oratories Gain Pre-eminence

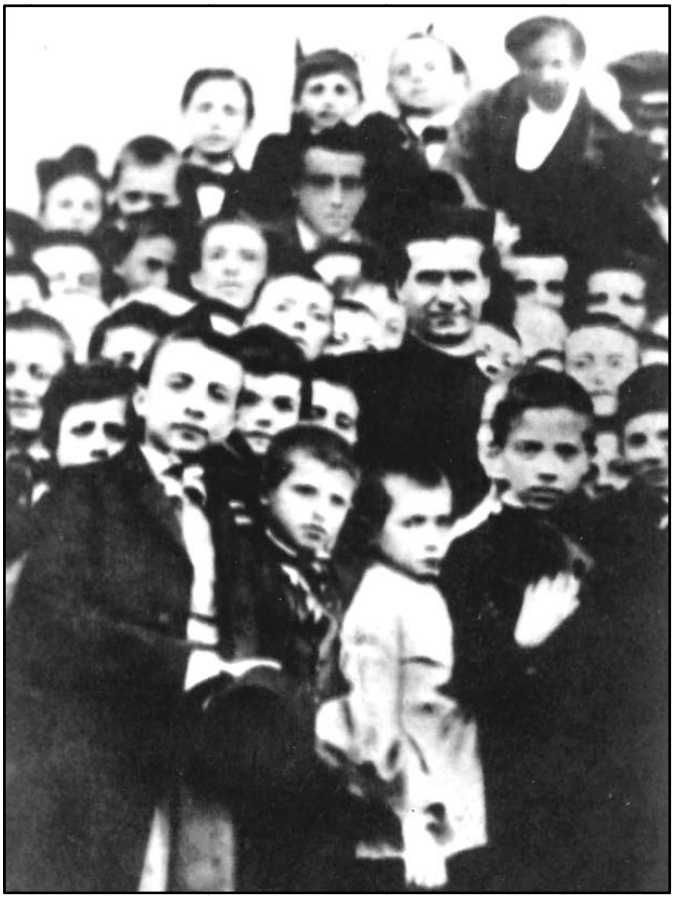
Don Bosco had for some time wanted Church authorities to know about the work of the oratories and to give their approval. For example, in 1850, he had applied to Pope Pius IX for special spiritual favors on behalf of the three "congregations" of which he was Director, and that (in his own words) were "legitimately" established in Turin for the purpose of "instructing abandoned young people in religion and piety." The petition was granted.[46] Don Bosco made much of such encouragement by Church authorities and took them as tokens of "approval."

[43] *EBM* IV, 262-263. Carlo Gastini (1833-1902) was an early oratory boy who became a boarder at the Home of the Oratory (*Casa annessa*). On February 2, 1851, together with Joseph Buzzetti, Felix Reviglio and James Bellia, he received the clerical habit. He was a talented and devoted oratory worker.

[44] *EBM* IV, 262-266. Here Lemoyne speaks of the catechists, old and new, information not found in Brosio's memoir.

[45] Brosio *Memoir*, Report II, 4-5, *FDBM* 555 D10-11.

[46] The papal decrees, dated September 28, 1850, were in reply to petitions by Don Bosco dated August 28 [cf. Motto, *Epistolario* I, 110-111] The decrees granted indulgences to a



21 – Don Bosco among his boys in 1861 (by the photographer Francesco Serra)

More important still was the decree from exiled Archbishop Fransoni of March 31, 1852. By this Decree the Archbishop appointed (recognized) Don Bosco "Spiritual-Director-in-Chief" of the three oratories of St. Francis de Sales, St. Aloysius, and the Guardian Angel. With it he also granted

"Congregation established under the title and patronage of St. Francis de Sales," and to a "Congregation established under the title and patronage of the Guardian Angel." These two papal documents are preserved in the Central Salesian Archives. Presumably there was also a third decree for a "Congregation established under the title of St. Aloysius." The Editor of *EBM* preposterously notes that "this petition is particularly important because Don Bosco for the first time mentions the Salesian Congregation" [!] [Cf. *EBM* IV, 64 and 521 (Appendix 3)].

faculties pertaining to attendance at Mass, the reception of the sacraments, catechetical instruction, etc., which in practice made those oratories independent of any parish. As Don Bosco expressed it, "the oratory is the parish of youngsters without a parish."

A second decree bearing the same date, and equally important at least for its implications, made Fr. Roberto Murialdo "Spiritual Director of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel" but subject to Don Bosco.[47]

These decrees in a real sense brought the crisis to a close and vindicated Don Bosco. The forces at work and the events leading up to this important decision by the Archbishop are not well documented. What has been said above represents the best judgment in the matter.

As far as the action taken by Archbishop is concerned, it would appear that he saw the necessity of giving stability to the work of the oratories. Hence he did not hesitate to prefer Don Bosco to other priests similarly involved. But he did not have the heart to curb Fr. Cocchi's initiatives by subjecting him to Don Bosco. His decree, however, practically eliminated "the opposition" and tied Don Bosco's name permanently to the work of the oratories–thereby conferring on Don Bosco a right that later he would not hesitate to claim.

Closing Comment: Characteristics of Don Bosco's Oratories

Don Bosco had before him earlier experiences and patterns in oratory work: e.g., the oratories in Lombardy (Milan, Bergamo and Brescia), and more distantly the oratories of St. Philip Neri in Rome. In Turin, he had before him a capital experiment, Fr. Cocchi's Oratory of the Guardian Angel. One may therefore say that (as indicated earlier) Don Bosco was following precedents, and that from this prior experience he derived the essential characteristics of the oratory–religious instruction and recreational activities directed towards an educational purpose. The Oratory was, as every Salesian work for young people should be, a home, a church, a school and a playground.

Don Bosco stood in a tradition, but he succeeded in creatively endowing his oratories with the unique characteristics. We may enumerate a few of these with the note that other oratories (Father Cocchi's for example) dif-

[47] The original decrees are in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Turin and (in an authenticated copy of May 12, 1868) in the Central Salesian Archives; they are edited *EBM* IV, 527-529, Appendices 7 and 8 (cf. 262).

fered primarily for their specific emphases. The following remarks have the parish-based oratories especially in view.

Traditionally, the oratories were parish activities, or at least they gravitated around a parish. Don Bosco's oratories transcended the parish institution. Perhaps he had recognized very early the insufficiency of the parish structures and their inability to cope with the new situation of young people. This perception produced a new understanding of how problems affecting young people should be addressed. The isolated location of his Oratory in Valdocco, chosen in spite of the unsavory character of the area, guaranteed independence in its operation.[48]

Traditional oratories were exclusively "festive oratories" that is, they met only on Sundays and holy days, and then only for a few hours in the afternoon. Don Bosco gathered the young people for the whole day, providing all that this required. Then he extended the oratory by establishing evening and day classes, by visiting the young people on their job and by "assisting" them, that is, meeting all their real needs. This approach made for a sustained weeklong contact. This, together with the stress put on religious instruction and education was probably the distinctive character of Don Bosco's oratories.[49]

The traditional oratory was basically defined from attendance at church and meeting in designated parish facilities. The boys who attended the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, even after the wandering phase had come to an end, went "to spend the day with Don Bosco." That's where the oratory was "located." Premises were "tools" used for doing oratory.

The traditional oratories were selective, that is, centered their attention on the best youngsters. Parents would present their children and guarantee their good conduct. Don Bosco, on the contrary, created an oratory for all, giving preference (whenever possible) to the truly poor and abandoned, juveniles released from prison, unemployed and drifting youngsters at risk from the poorest strata of society.[50]

In the traditional oratory the role of play and the playground was very limited. The playground was a "garden of recreation" a term which Don

[48] In his letter of March 13, 1846 to Vicar Michael Cavour [see Appendix in Chapter 4], Don Bosco notes the fact that the Pinardi site was far from any parish church.

[49] For the emphasis placed by Don Bosco on catechetical instruction see Appendix to Chapter 4.

[50] Don Bosco did not permit members of gangs or young men obdurately opposed to religion to join the oratory indiscriminately; but he tried to win them over and often succeeded.

Bosco sometimes uses for convenience' sake to describe the playground his own oratories (!). Don Bosco's playground, and the games played on it, allowed full scope to youthful exuberance, with oratory personnel even taking the initiative.

Appendices

1. Giuseppe Brosio: Biographical Sketch

Who was Joseph Brosio? In his memoir, he claims the honor of having known Don Bosco when the latter was still a seminarian in Chieri and spent time with the local lads. When the seminarians walked to the "cathedral" for church services, everybody sought out the "seminarian with a head of curly hair." Brosio was so impressed with the way Seminarian Bosco approached young people that he wished to know him better. He found it easy because he was close to the Comollos, and when he visited Louis Comollo in the seminary, he always found him in Bosco's company. He thus became Don Bosco's friend.[51]

From his memoir it emerges that he moved to Turin and eventually started in business as a shopkeeper, all the while helping with the oratory. Lemoyne states that Brosio had been helping Don Bosco with the oratory since 1841 and remained close to him for 46 years.[52] At the time of the writing of the memoir, so Brosio himself states, he had known Don Bosco for 43 years.[53] The memoir was probably written, so it appears, soon after Don Bosco's death (1888) when Father John Bonetti was collecting material in view of Don Bosco's diocesan process of beatification. At one point in his memoir, he addresses Father Bonetti specifically.[54]

After an honorable discharge from the *Bersaglieri* Corps, into which he was drafted during the war of 1848-49, Brosio continued to be Don Bosco's faithful helper. Since he always showed up in military uniform he was known as *il Bersagliere* (the Sharpshooter) ever after.[55] The *Bersaglieri* were an elite, highly mobile rifle corps in the Piedmontese army. Mounted on bicycles, they could be quickly deployed. In the context of the First War for Independence (1848-49) patriotic enthusiasm ran high, and Don Bosco permitted the boys at recreation to engage in military drills and mock battles under the *Bersagliere's* direction.

[51] Brosio, *Memoir*, Part I, 1, *FDB* 554 E12.
[52] *EBM* III, 76.
[53] Brosio, *Memoir*, Part II, 4, *FDBM* 555 C10.
[54] Brosio, *Memoir*, Part I, 23, *FDBM* 555 B10.
[55] *EBM* III, 309-310.

When Father John Vola became director of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia (following Father Carpano and Father Grassino), Don Bosco sent Brosio to that oratory to teach catechism and to direct boys' recreation. The area was the home turf of a fearsome gang of toughs. Brosio introduced gymnastics and war games, and occasionally the boys, "armed" and in military formation, had to confront the gang and their leader (*Il Barabba*).[56]

The oratory crisis passed, not without damaging effects, and Don Bosco emerged vindicated by the Archbishop's decree of 1852. Don Bosco occasionally used Brosio's home nearby as a retreat where he could write and work undisturbed. At one point he urged the good man to start studying to become a teacher. Brosio tried, but after a while he had to admit that he had neither the time nor the inclination. But he continued to be part of oratory life to the end.

2. Don Bosco's Statements on the Early Oratory

1. *Don Bosco's Letter to the Administrators of the* Mendicità Istruita *(February 20, 1850)*[57]

> Honorable Gentlemen:
>
> In an effort to promote the social, religious and moral advancement of the most neglected (*più abbandonati*) young people [of this city], 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 force of circumstance, their number was limited to seventy or eighty.
>
> [...The move to the Rifugio and the wandering are alluded to].
>
> In the year 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 liable to being sent there.
>
> [...The opening of the Oratory of St. Aloysius in 1847 is mentioned].
>
> In response to the ever more pressing need to educate and help neglected (*abbandonati*) young people, in October 1849 the Oratory of the Guardian Angel was re-opened. Father Cocchi, curate 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 jointly often reaches one thousand.

[56] Brosio, *Memoir*, Part I, Introduction, 3-4, *FDBM* 554 E12 – 555 A1; edited in *EBM* III, 395-397.

[57] Motto, *Ep* I, 96f. from the archive of the *Mendicità Istruita*; Ceria, *Ep* I, 29f.; *IBM* XVII, 853-854.

[... Oratory activities are described].

We also have a Home (*ospizio*) capable of housing from twenty to thirty youngsters of the kind that find themselves in dire need (*estremo bisogno*), as is all too often the case.

Up to now the work has gone forward with the help of a number of charitable persons, both priests and lay people. The priests that are committed to this work in a special way are: Father Dr. [Giovanni] Borrelli, Father Dr. [Giacinto] Carpano, Father Dr. [Giovanni Ignazio] Vola, Father [Pietro] Ponte, Father [Giovanni] Grassino, Father Dr. [Roberto] Murialdo, Father [Giovanni Francesco] Giacomelli, Father Dr. Prof. [Francesco] Marengo.

[... Financial needs are outlined and a request for help is made on grounds that the purpose of the oratories coincides with that of the *Mendicità Istruita* ...].

Note: In response to this petition, the administrators of the association voted a subsidy. But they did not always respond favorably to Don Bosco's appeals.

2. *Early Associates and Cooperators of Don Bosco in Oratory Work – Don Bosco's Statement in the* Bollettino Salesiano[58]

As far back as 1841 catechetical instruction began to be provided to the poorest and most neglected young people, namely to those youngsters who at any moment found themselves in danger of being sent to prison. The harvest was great, and was increasing by the day. Don Bosco would often find himself surrounded by five or six hundred children, and would find it impossible to keep them properly occupied and to tend to their need. It was under these circumstances that many zealous priests and Christian lay persons wished to be associated with Don Bosco in this ministry.

First and foremost among them we remember the zealous and much lamented Dr. Giovanni Borel, Fr. Giuseppe Caffasso, and Canon [Carlo Antonio] Borsarelli [di Rifreddo]. These were the first cooperators from among the clergy. But since they had other demanding commitments, they could be on hand only at certain hours and on certain occasions.

Consequently, we turned to gentlemen from the nobility and the middle class for help, and we drew a generous response from a good number of them. They came and were assigned to teaching catechism, conducting classes, supervising the boys during services in and out of church. With exemplary dedication they led the boys in prayer and song, they prepared them for the receptions of the holy sacraments of penance, communion, and confirmation.

[58] Don Bosco published this article in the recently founded Salesian Bulletin: *Bibliofilo Cattolico o Bollettino Salesiano* 3: 6 (September 1877). It is transcribed by Eugenio Valentini, "Preistoria dei Cooperatori Salesiani," *Salesianum* 39 (1977) 140-150.

Out of church, they would be on hand to receive the boys as they arrived at the oratory, to assign places for recreation to them, to take part in a kindly manner in their games, to maintain order.

Another important concern of the cooperators was *job placement*. Many boys were from out of town, sometimes from distant places; they found themselves alone, without a livelihood, without a job, without anyone who would care for them. Some of the cooperators then would go after those lads; they tried to clean them up; they placed them with some honest employer, and got them ready to make their appearance at the work place. During the week they would visit those youngsters, and see that they came back to the oratory the following Sunday, so that they might not lose in one day what they had gained by the labor of several weeks.

Many of these cooperators at great personal sacrifice came faithfully every evening during the winter season, and taught classes in reading, writing, singing, arithmetic, and Italian language. Others instead would come daily at noon to teach catechism to those youngsters who were most in need of instruction.

Among the many laypersons who deserve recognition for their charity and dedication one of the most outstanding was Mr. Giuseppe Gagliardi, a businessman. He generously devoted all his free time and all his savings to helping the youngsters of the oratory. He would always refer to them affectionately as *our children*. He passed away only a few years ago; and he will be gratefully remembered as long as the work of the oratory endures. The following dedicated cooperators God has already called to himself: [?] Campagna, a banker; Gioanni Fino, a businessman; Chevalier Giuseppe Cotta; and the well known Count Vittorio di Camburzano.

Among those who are still with us, we wish gratefully to acknowledge Count Carlo Cays; Giuseppe Dupré; Marquis Domenico Fassati; Marquis Gioanni Scarampi; the three brothers, Counts Carlo, Eugenio, and Francesco De Maistre; Chevalier Marco Gonella; Count Francesco [Viancini di] Viancino; Chevalier Clemente di Villanova; Count Casimiro di Brozzolo; Chevalier Lorenzo d'Agliano; Mr. Michele Scanagatti; Baron Carlo Bianco di Barbania and many others.

Among the many priests who became associated with the work we may mention: the brothers [Giovanni] Ignazio and Giovanni [Battista] Vola; Dr. [Paolo Francesco] Rossi, who died as director of the Oratory of St. Aloysius; Dr. Attorney [Giovanni Battista] Destefanis–all of whom God has already called to their heavenly home. To these must be added Dr. Roberto Murialdo, the present director of the *Famiglia di S. Pietro*, and Dr. Leonardo Murialdo, at present director of the *Artigianelli* Institute.

Among the earliest priest-cooperators who are still with us, God be praised, the following should be mentioned: Fr. Giuseppe Trivero; Dr. Chevalier Giacinto Carpano; Fr. Michelangelo Chiatellino; Fr. Ascanio Savio; Fr. Gioanni Gi-

acomelli; Dr. Prof. [?] Chiaves; Fr. Antò Bosio, now pastor; Fr. Sebastiano Pacchiotti; Fr. Prof. [Giovanni Battista] Musso; Canon [?] Musso, a teacher; Fr. Pietro Ponti (Ponte); Canon Luigi Nasi; Canon Prof. (?) Marengo; Fr. Francesco Onesti, a teacher; Dr. Emiliano Manacorda, now bishop of Fossano; Canon Eugenio Galletti, now bishop of Alba.

We must above all acknowledge the contribution of our archbishop, the then Canon [Lawrence] Gastaldi. He would faithfully be available for preaching, hearing confessions, and teaching classes. He always regarded the festive oratories as a providential work, a work guided and sustained by God.[59]

All these cooperators came down to the fields of Valdocco to work. The district is now completely built up, but at the time it was fairly uninhabited. They came and spent time, money, and their best efforts on behalf of young people at risk–to gather them together in order to instruct them in the truths of faith and return them to society as good, productive citizens.

[...][60]

We had cooperators not only from among the men, but also from among the women. Some of our pupils (*allievi*) were nothing but dirty, unkempt ragamuffins. No one could stand them, and no employer wanted them in his workshop. A number of charitable ladies came to the rescue. They washed, they sewed, they patched, they even provided new clothes and linen for these boys, as need demanded.

The leader of the ladies was Mrs. Margherita Gastaldi, who worked at the oratory as a cooperator together with her daughter (both gone to their reward) and her niece, Lorenzina Mazzè. Other faithful workers were the Marchioness Maria Fassati, Countess Gabriella Corsi, Countess Bosco-Riccardi and her daughter Giulietta, Countess Casazza Riccardi, the noble Miss Candida Bosco, Countess Bosco-Cantono, Mrs. Vincenza Occhiena, Mrs. Bianco Juva, and many others. A number of charitable and educational institutes also joined in the effort on behalf of poor young people.

Everyone seemed fired with enthusiasm in this work of mercy, which was very much like "clothing the naked." The youngsters, too, grateful for the benefits received, offered themselves willingly for singing and for serving as altar boys in those same institutes. They also expressed their gratitude by praying morning and evening for their benefactors.

[59] One should bear in mind that this was written in late 1877, at the time when the conflict between Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi was reaching the breaking point, after a long series of clashes, with the publication of the first anonymous defamatory pamphlet.

[60] At this point a short paragraph describes how order was kept and the oratory run, according to a set of regulations, without recourse to threats or punishments. These would be the *Regulations for the Boys' Orator*y of 1854, from which we quoted Don Bosco's own *Introduction* and the *Historical Outline* (see Appendix to Chapter 6).

3. Correspondence Borel-Cafasso-Ponte on the Oratory Crisis

1. Letter: Fr. Borel to Fr. Ponte[61]

[Father Pietro Ponte, in a letter to Father John Borel, had complained about the oratory situation and about alleged hurts he had to endure. Fr. Borel replied:]

Turin, October 23, 1851

Reverend and dear Father Ponte,

Since the welfare of the oratories is very close to our heart, we are convinced that harmony between all members, regardless of their rank, is the best policy. Only thus will God be with us! Therefore, with God's help, we are determined to promote this concord by closer cooperation among ourselves and by the removal of any obstacle that may arise.

Concord is impaired when the other oratories are not allowed to use certain things provided for one oratory. Likewise, it is disturbed when, in the same oratory, a member reserves some things for his exclusive use so that no one may use them even when he is absent.

We have therefore agreed that any donation to one oratory must be regarded as given to all the oratories, and the directors are bound in conscience to inform the benefactors of this policy of ours.

We have reached this conclusion as a result of your letter and a subsequent episode of a similar nature. Since it may happen that, due to our limited supply of sacred vestments, one of the oratories may need to borrow them on special occasions, it is only right that the other oratories come to its assistance just as we already do with personnel and other things. In case one of us sees fit to lend an oratory something he has or to borrow something from others, besides being grateful, he must promptly return the borrowed goods. This has always been our practice. Such was the case, for example, with the crib kindly loaned to the St. Aloysius Oratory.

We must not think that Divine Providence will fail us because we have adopted this procedure. Indeed, we have reason to hope that it will result in even greater blessings. By mutual aid we widen the field of our charity, open new avenues for doing good to the young, share more intimately in the communion of saints, and strip ourselves of selfishness and pride. Our charity will then be more genuine inasmuch as it will be untainted by personal interests. No one has anything to lose, because each oratory, by sharing its material goods with the others, will in turn be entitled to the same benefits. Let us be ever grateful to Our Lord for the blessing of concord. In this spirit let us work on behalf of youth in every part of the city.

[61] Borel to Ponte, October 23, 1851, edited in *EBM* IV, 218.

I am delighted to inform you that the oratories are well cared for and that our boys, docile and devout, keep coming in droves. Father [Robert] Murialdo has generously taken over our dear Father Grassino's post at Borgo Vanchiglia [Guardian Angel Oratory]. Our zealous Father Rossi takes excellent care of the St. Aloysius Oratory, and up to All Saints' Day will preach the afternoon instruction while I shall continue to give the morning sermon. Don Bosco provides the preachers at the St. Francis de Sales Oratory, and when necessary he substitutes for them.

The new church [St. Francis de Sales] is now ready for the roof, and before winter sets in it will be covered.

I have learned that you and the marchioness have safely arrived in Florence, but I am sorry to hear that Mr. [Silvio] Pellico found the journey uncomfortable.[62] Yesterday the Sisters of St. Mary Magdalene again prayed for the safe return of their foundress and benefactress.[63] I pray daily to the Lord that he grant her prosperity, health, and happiness. I have nothing to report regarding the convent or the *Rifugio*. Everything seems to be going well. This should reassure the marchioness and contribute to her peace of mind.

All the priests, including myself, are well. I am now at home and I intend to stay here as long as possible to assist these religious communities and to defer to the wishes of the marchioness who is so interested in them.

I would like to ask you a further favor. Please give me your comments on what I have told you about the oratories and our policy in running them. Let me also know what you want done with belongings that you left behind.

Please accept my sincere best wishes. I remain,

Your devoted and faithful friend,

Fr. John Borel, Director of the *Rifugio*

2. Letter: Fr. Ponte to Fr. Borel[64]

Rome, November 4, 1851

Reverend and dear Father,

I was very pleased to receive your kind, heartwarming letter. I was longing to hear news of the oratories and was beginning to be worried about them. Now, thank God, I feel tranquil.

[62] Silvio Pellico was a writer and patriot who served as secretary and librarian to the Marchioness Juliet Barolo.

[63] The Sisters of St. Mary Magdalene (*Maddalene*) were a cloistered community of repentant women desirous to lead a retired life founded by the Marchioness as an offshoot of the *Rifugio*.

[64] Fr. Ponte to Fr. Borel, November 4, 1851, edited in *EBM* IV, 219-220.

Let me now comment on your letter. I too am worried and desire concord among the directors of the oratories. I wholeheartedly wish all differences of opinion to be resolved so that, united in mind and will, we may with greater reason expect more abundant help from the Lord and a greater reward for our labors. I believe that this deplorable discord resulted from the fact that we have no one in particular to turn to and from a serious lack of communication among ourselves. This opinion is also shared by others. If you can do something about this, I am sure all unrest will vanish.

I cannot go back on the decision I previously revealed to you. I made this decision only after careful soul-searching and I cannot change it for any reason. If the things I left at the St. Aloysius Oratory are in the way, I'll remove them as soon as I return to Turin or, if necessary, before. From now on (should God will that I continue working in behalf of the oratories) I shall willingly abide by the decision you mentioned–namely, that donations made to the director of one oratory should be considered as made to all. Whenever possible, I shall so inform our benefactors.

I am very pleased to learn that the St. Aloysius Oratory is thriving, thanks to your personal efforts and those of our good Father Rossi. For my part, although physically absent, I am constantly with you in spirit and I never cease recommending this work to God. Soon, I hope, I will have an audience with the Holy Father. I shall beg his blessing for the directors and boys of our oratories.

So far our journey has gone well. The Marchioness is in good health and she was very happy to receive such good news about her institutes. Mr. Pellico feels much better now. Pray for me and have the boys pray, too. Give my regards to all the priests in the oratories. Hoping to receive more good news of the oratories, I remain,

Your devoted friend,
Father Peter Ponte

3. Letter: Fr. Cafasso to Fr. Ponte[65]

Rev. Father Peter Ponte
c/o Marchioness Barolo
Naples

Turin, January 6, 1852

Dear Father Ponte,

I thought I would be able to reply to your welcome letter before you left Rome, but a long series of chores and problems made this impossible.

[65] Father Cafasso to Father Ponte, January 6, 1852, edited in *EBM* IV, 255-256.

I shall come immediately to the point. I urge you to put aside all worry and disquietude regarding the decision you plan to take on the matter you mention. Your fellow workers are not motivated by preconceived ideas or animosity toward you, nor do they desire to break with you. On the contrary, I do know that they look forward to your cooperation as soon as–God willing, hopefully very soon–you will return to Turin. The items under discussion are yours, and therefore you are perfectly free to do whatever you wish with them. However, if you want my opinion, I think that, as things are now, you would do well to put them at the disposal of the oratories rather than of any individual. You can, of course, reserve priority rights for yourself as long as you will be able to help in this work so blessed by the Lord. Should you judge otherwise, do what you think is best and disregard my suggestion.

I again advise you to be cheerful, serene, and tranquil. Crosses there will always be, but the Lord loves peace and serenity, too.

Please tell the Marchioness that, though distant, we can pray for each other. I remember her in my prayers. My best regards to Mr. Pellico. With all my heart, I am,

Affectionately yours,
Fr. Joseph Cafasso

4. Archbishop Fransoni's Decrees of March 31, 1852[66]

1. Decree Appointing Don Bosco Officially Head Spiritual Director of the Three Oratories of St. Francis de Sales, of Saint Aloysius and of the Guardian Angel

Marquis Louis Fransoni Knight of the Supreme Order of the Annunciation,
by the Grace of God and of the Apostolic See Archbishop of Turin
to The Very Reverend John Bosco of Castelnuovo, Diocesan Priest.

Greetings

We congratulate you, worthy priest of God, for your zeal and charity in gathering poor boys in the Oratory of Saint Francis of Sales in Valdocco, an enterprise that can never be sufficiently commended. We consider it only proper to register our complete satisfaction for this undertaking by officially appointing you, with this letter, Head Spiritual Director of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and also of the Oratories of Saint Aloysius and Guardian Angel in order that the work undertaken under such felicitous auspices may prosper and develop in a spirit of charity, for God's true glory and for the great edification of the people.

[66] See *EBM* IV, 827-529. Emend *EBM* 527 "of all the Oratories" to: "of three oratories."

Therefore, we herewith confer upon you every faculty necessary and suitable to this holy purpose.

The original of this certificate is being forwarded to our chancery for filing, and the chancellor will be authorized to issue a copy to you.

Turin, March 31,1852

Signed: Philip Ravina, *Vicar General*
Balladore, *Chancellor*

This copy agrees with the original.
Balladore, *Chancellor*

21 – Archbishop Louis Fransoni of Turin (1789-1862)

Editor's Note

The chancery of Turin had granted the following faculties to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales:

1. To celebrate low and high Mass, give Benediction with the Holy Eucharist, hold triduums, novenas, and spiritual retreats.

2. To teach catechism, preach, admit children to First Communion, and prepare them for the sacraments of Penance and Confirmation.

3. To allow children and adults to make their Easter duty in any of the chapels of the oratories, to bless sacred vestments and clerical habits, and to confer such habits on those young men who manifested a vocation for the priesthood but only if they intended to work in the oratories and boarded in the adjoining hospice.

These authorizations in practice frequently gave rise to uncertainties. Therefore, Archbishop Fransoni, with his decree of March 31, 1852, granted them without any limitation and thus included whatever was opportune or necessary for the smooth and proper running of the three Oratories of St. Francis de Sales in Valdocco, of St. Aloysius at Porta Nuova, and that of the Guardian Angel in Vanchiglia.

2. *Accompanying Decree Appointing Father Roberto Murialdo Spiritual Director of the Guardian Angel Oratory in Dependence to Don Bosco*

Marquis Louis Fransoni Knight of the Supreme Order of the Annunciation
Knight of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus by the Grace of God
and of the Apostolic See Archbishop of Turin
to The Very Reverend Father Robert Murialdo, Diocesan Priest.

Greetings!

In consideration of the deep commitment and fervent zeal with which, as a worthy priest, you diligently and assiduously labor on behalf of the Christian education of poor boys gathered in the Guardian Angel Oratory in the Vanchiglia district, We deem it proper to give public testimony of our complete satisfaction by officially appointing you, with this letter. Spiritual Director of the above-mentioned Oratory, under the sole condition that you faithfully preserve its unity and dependence under the Reverend John Bosco, Head Director of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Valdocco and founder of this Guardian Angel Oratory. We therefore grant you all the necessary and opportune authorizations connected thereto.

We are forwarding the original of this certificate for filing to our chancery. Our chancellor is authorized to issue a copy thereof to you.

Turin, March 31, 1852

Signed: Philip Ravina, *Vicar General*
Balladore, *Chancellor*

This copy agrees with the original.
Signed: Balladore, *Chancellor*