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DON BOSCO'S "BOSWELL": JOHN BAPTIST LEMOYNE--THE MAN AND HIS WORK

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As the author of a 45-volume collection of documents preliminary to what turned out to be a 19-volume biography of Don Bosco, with a total of over 16,000 pages, Father John Baptist Lemoyne rendered a unique service to the Salesian Family--one that successive generations of Salesians have not ceased to acknowledge with awe and gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

As Salesian studies on Don Bosco have taken on an increasingly more scholarly and critical character in recent years, it was inevitable that Don Bosco's great biographer, Father John Baptist Lemoyne, and his work should also come under critical scrutiny. It is a Salesian truism that Father Lemoyne is Don Bosco's biographer *par excellence*, and that his work (continued after his death by Father Angelo Amadei and Father Eugene Ceria) is truly monumental.[1]

[1] Lemoyne, himself a chronicler of Don Bosco's words and deeds, collected the chronicles and memoirs of early Salesians, testimonies from various sources and other documentation in a 45-volume "scrap book" entitled, *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione Salesiana.* Printed for private use at San Benigno Canavese or at Turin-Valdocco, 1885 ff. (Held in *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne-Doc; reproduced in *FDB Microfiches* 966 A8-1201 C12) [Cited as ***Doc***]. This was the basis of: *Memorie Biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, San

Yet questions are raised. Who and what kind of a man was he? Is the monumental biographical work on Don Bosco, for which he is responsible as a whole, and which he authored in part, based on reliable sources? How did he work as a historian and a biographer? These and related questions have been addressed at various times in both popular and scholarly writings.[2] The present

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Benigno Canavese and Turin: I-IX (1898-1917 by Giovanni Battista Lemoyne); X (1939 by Angelo Amadei); XI-XIX (1930-1939 by Eugenio Ceria) [Cited as ***IBM***].

English Edition: *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, tr. from the original Italian, Diego Borgatello, Editor-in-Chief, vol. I-XV. New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-1988. [Cited as ***EBM***].

[2] A critical, or at least a serious, biography of Lemoyne has not yet been written. We have a brief, but valuable, biographical sketch in : Eugenio Ceria, "D.G.B. Lemoyne," in *Profili dei Capitolari Salesiani morti dal 1865 al 1950*. Colle Don Bosco (Asti): LDC, 1951, p. 382-400. [Cited as ***Ceria-Pro***]; likewise a handy notice in "Lemoyne sac. Giovanni Battista, scrittore," *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, ed. by Eugenio Valentini and Amedeo Rodinò. Torino: Ufficio Stampa Salesiano, 1969, p. 166f. [Cited as ***Diz***].

On the historical reliability of Lemoyne's work, with an almost exclusively apologetical interest, we have occasional pieces such as, E. Ceria, "Preface," IBM XV, 7-12 [EBM XV, xiv-xix]; "Preface," IBM XVIII, 5-9; E. Ceria, Letter to the Director of the Theological Studentate at Bollengo on the Historical Value of the Biographical Memoirs, Turin, March 9, 1953. Tr. from the unpublished Italian typescript by M. Mendl (9 p.) [Cited as **Ceria-Let**]. In the same category is the longer apologia by Guido Favini, *D.G.B. Lemoyne, salesiano di Don Bosco: Biografo onesto (Primo grande biografo di Don Bosco)*. Torino: Scuola Grafica Salesiana (pro manuscripto), 1874. [63 pp.]. [Cited as **Favini**].

A brief critical biographical sketch, with a delineation of the character of Lemoyne, the man and the writer, as well as a scholarly and comprehensive treatment of the questions may be found in Francis Desramaut, *Les Memorie I de Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. Étude d'un ouvrage fondamental sur la jeunesse de saint Jean Bosco* (Études Salésiennes publiées par le scolasticat des salésiens de Lyon). Lyon: Maison d'Étude Saint-Jean-Bosco, 1862. (xii + 504 p.) [Cited as ***Desramaut-Mem I***].

Specifically on Lemoyne's historical criteria and editorial method in the *Biographical Memoirs* is the recent essay by Francis Desramaut, "Come hanno lavorato gli autori delle Memorie Biografiche," in *Don Bosco nella storia: Atti del 1º Congresso Internazionale di Studi su Don Bosco (Università Pontificia Salesiana, Roma, 16-20 gennaio 1989)* (Pubblicazioni del Centro Studi Don Bosco, Studi storici 10), ed. Mario Midali. Roma: LAS, 1990, p. 37-65. [Cited as ***Desramaut-Aut***]. The planned English language edition of this anthology is not yet available.

There is a scholarly, more restricted study on the same questions, serving as introduction to a critical edition of the text of 20 letters, in Pietro Braido and Rogélio Arenal Llata, "Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne attraverso 20 lettere a don Michele Rua," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 7 (1988) 87-170. [Cited as ***Braido-Arenal***]

A handy survey of these same questions: "Giovanni Battista Lemoyne," in *Sussidi 3: Per una lettura di Don Bosco. Percorsi di storia salesiana.* Roma: Dicastero per la Formazione (pro manuscripto), 1989, p. 99-124. [Cited as ***Suss 3***]

essay will present the results of such inquiries for English-speaking readers, and will therefore address the very same questions. Part I will present a biographical sketch of the man; Part II will deal with the sources and the editorial history of the *Biographical Memoirs*; and Part III will inquire into the historical criteria and into the method with which the author worked, for an evaluation (by way of conclusion) of the historical character of the *Biographical Memoirs*.

I. Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne (1839-1916)--A Biographical Sketch

In 1864 a young Genoese priest, two years ordained, named John Baptist Lemoyne, found himself struggling with vocational discernment: What was the Lord calling him to, now that he was a priest? He himself has given us an account of how the crisis was resolved through a fateful meeting with a saint.

In the present essay, whenever possible, reference will be made to documents held in the *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* , Via della Pisana 1111, Rome, Italy [cited as *ASC*] of which the *Fondo Don Bosco* is available in 3230 microfiches [cited as ***FDBMicro***].

Father Lemoyne's letters and personal papers held in *ASC* 272: Lemoyne, with the exception of the 20 edited in *Braido-Arenal* [cf. above], have not been available to me.

Desramaut's works [cf. above] will for the most part supply reference to sources not otherwise accessible.

Other works cited:

Memorie dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855, written by Don Bosco between 1873 and 1975/76, in *ASC* 132: Autografi-Oratorio: Don Bosco's autograph manuscript, *FDBMicro* 57, A1-60, A2; Father Berto's copy revised by Don Bosco, *FDBMicro* 60, A3-63, E12. First published as [Eugenio Ceria], *San Giovanni Bosco, Memorie dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Torino: SEI, 1946 cited as ***MO-Ce***]. English edition: *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855. The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco*, tr. by Daniel Lyons, SDB, with notes and commentary by Eugenio Ceria, SDB, Lawrence Castelvecchi, SDB and Michael Mendl, SDB. New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1989 [cited as ***MO-En***].

Francesco Motto, *Giovanni Bosco, Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1875: Testi critici*. Roma: LAS, 1982 [cited as ***Motto-Cost***].

Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco per i giovani: l'<Oratorio>; Una <Congregazione degli Oratori>. Documenti* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano 9). Roma: LAS, 1988 [cited as ***Braido-DB***].

Giovanni Bosco, Opere Edite (Centro Studi Don Bosco, Università Pontificia Salesiana, Prima serie: libri e opuscoli), 37 vol. Roma: LAS, 1976-1977 [photo-mechanical reproduction of the original editions] [cited as ***OE***].

Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco, ed. D. Eugenio Ceria, Salesiano, 4 vol. Torino: SEI, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959 [cited as ***Ceria-Ep***].

> In 1864 I was a diocesan priest 2-years ordained. I had a desire to join some religious order but felt no attraction toward any of those with which I was acquainted. Someone had spoken to me of Don Bosco as of a saint, but I had no idea that he was in the process of establishing a religious society. In July 1864, I traveled to Turin in order to meet him; but he happened to be out of town. So I returned home to Genoa. On the last Sunday in September, I happened to be at Belforte, a village in the vicinity of Ovada. I visited the chapel of Our Lady there and prayed that God would manifest His will in my regard. On awakening next morning a voice clearly sounded in my ear that said: "Go to Lerma, and there you will meet Don Bosco." (Lerma is a village one hour's walk from Belforte.) I wish to emphasize that I had no prior knowledge that Don Bosco was to visit the area. The thought haunted me throughout the celebration of Mass that morning. I was afraid, however, that it was only my imagination playing a trick on me. Nonetheless, I took young Marquis Charles Cattaneo into my confidence, and asked him what he thought of it all. He replied: "Dream or no dream, let us go to Lerma and ask the parish priest. So we went, and learned to our great surprise that Don Bosco was due to arrive in a couple of days. And arrive he did. I had a talk with him, and on his invitation I visited him at the Oratory of Valdocco in Turin some time later. From that day on until his death, I have lived with him in the Society.[3]

For the young priest this marked the beginning not only of his Salesian vocation, but also of a life-long "love affair"-- one marked by the unstinted dedication of a son in love and obedience, requited by the father with love, indeed with extraordinary affection. It is out of such love and commitment to his beloved father Don Bosco that Father Lemoyne could render the Salesian Family the unique service that succeeding generations of Salesians have not ceased to acknowledge with awe and gratitude.

1. Early Years

John Baptist Lemoyne was born at Genoa, Italy, on February 2, 1839, the eldest son of Louis, a physician of some standing, and of Countess Angela Prasca. There were five other children.[4] The family was originally from Châlons-sur-Marne, France. They had fled their homeland two generations

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[3] *ASC* 161: Processo di Beatificazione e Canonizzazione-Deposizioni di testi-Lemoyne, Ms copy A, *FDBMicro* 2179 B2f.; also *ASC* 163: Processo di Beatificazione e Canonizzazione-Documenti ufficiali stampati-Summarium et Litterae Postulatoriae, *FDBMicro* 2212 C9f.

[4] Cf. Suss 3, 104.

earlier at the time of the Reign of Terror.[5] In addition to a successful practice, Louis Lemoyne held important medical posts, first for the city and then for the whole Province of Genoa. Angela by her title brought him additional prestige. The family was well off.

Not much is known about John's childhood and youth, nor about his family life and early education. What little is known is derived chiefly from letters from and to the family that have survived among his personal papers.[6] He appears to have been close to his brothers, Vincent and Ignatius, and to have been much devoted to his sister, Maria Bianca. But three persons in particular appear to have exerted a major influence on his early life: a grandmother, his mother and his father. This grandmother, whose name has not been ascertained, was a strong person who provided John with guidance and moral advice through childhood and young manhood, stressing the importance of building a strong Christian character and of acquiring a solid spiritual formation. Her letters also stress devotion to Our Lady.[7] His mother, on the other hand, was a deeply religious and very gentle person who was totally devoted to her husband and to her children.[8] Father Lemoyne repeatedly acknowledges the fine religious upbringing received from her and thanks her for fostering his priestly vocation.[9] His father was also a major

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[5] *Bulletin Salésien* (France) 38 (1916) 147 in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 29. Ceria assures us that Father Lemoyne pronounced his own name not as one would in modern French (le.moan'), but as le.mo.en' [*Ceria-Pro*, 382]. Desramaut (*ibid.*) adds that this reflects the old French pronunciation, le.moo.en'.

[6] In *ASC* 272: Lemoyne. The most significant letters are: 4 letters from and 38 to his father; 23 letters from and 87 to his mother; 10 letters from a grandmother who took a deep interest in him [cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 16].

[7] This last concern, which reflects the type of devotion prevailing in the Lemoyne family and which John took as his own, is clearly expressed in the grandmother's letter of October 7, 1855: "Dear John, continue to be devoted to this good mother. As a true devotee, however, you should not be satisfied with external practices in her honor, but should imitate her virtues. She was pure, humble, obedient, charitable, patient, etc. By imitating her virtues you will be happy in this life and in the next. True, to acquire such virtues, one must do oneself violence; but if you pray to her and exert your best effort, she will obtain them for you from her divine Son. Then she will really be happy with the way you honor her [...]" [*Desramaut-Mem I*, 30, note 11].

[8] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 30.

[9] Letter of Christmas 1879: "The grateful memory of all you have done for me, especially of the care you took in steering me toward the priesthood, shall ever remain engraved in my heart and mind. For, after God, I owe my vocation to you" [*Desramaut-Mem* I, 31, note 13]. Letter of 1880: "Whatever I am and have achieved in society and in

influence. There was between father and son a close relationship, more in the style of brotherly comradeship, as evidenced by the simple familiarity of their exchanges.[10]

The cultured environment of the Lemoyne household provided considerable stimulus to John through his primary and secondary studies. In 1856 and 1857, at the age of 17 and 18, he completed successfully the *licenza liceale* and the *magistero* (roughly, the equivalent of a college degree and teacher's "certificate" in the United States). He immediately took the clerical habit and applied to enter the seminary at Genoa.

2. Seminary Formation and Priestly Ordination

The five-year theological course at the seminary (1857-1862) seems to have been a mixed experience for John. Unlike the seminaries in Piedmont, the Genoa seminary stood in the Alphonsian tradition as to theology and pastoral practice; and therefore presumably John Lemoyne, unlike John Bosco, had no serious rigorist handicap to overcome. Nevertheless, he seems to have found seminary discipline unduly restrictive. In a diary for October 18, 1860 he speaks of petty rules "promulgated" by the Rector.[11] And when considering various religious orders at the time of his vocational discernment as a young priest he writes in a personal memoir: "Now that I have left the seminary and regained my freedom (though I admit I spent some happy years there), do you think I am going to shut myself up again within four walls?"[12] However, the

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the Church, I owe it to you. For it was your upbringing that permanently fired my heart with the love of God and a hatred for sin" [*Ibid.*].

[10] The *Biographical Memoirs* record a reminiscence of Father Lemoyne's: "How often as a young boy, I used to pass in front of St. Cajetan's Church and ask my father, 'Don't they ever open this church?' Then he would tell me its history. I learned how, during Napoleon's reign, the classic paintings in the church had been removed to the sacristy of St. Siro, another church which had been wrested from the Theatine Fathers. He also told me about the 'the bell of Divine Providence' which rang at mealtime to invite the faithful to bring food to the monks, and how the latter had never lacked for anything, though they had nothing of their own" [*EBM* X, 179f.]. In 1872 the church and convent of St. Cajetan were acquired and restored by Don Bosco for the establishment of the Salesian work in Sanpierdarena (Genoa).

[11] Archival document quoted in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 31, note 17.

[12] *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne, "Nell'autunno del 1864", p. 1, in *FDBMicro* 947 B5. By contrast, after he joined Don Bosco, his letters grow lyrical on the subject of the life at the Oratory.

"praise of the seminary" with which he later prefaced John Bosco's seminary period in the *Biographical Memoirs*, may truly reflect, at least in part, his own personal experience and recollections.[13]

As a seminarian John was a model of diligence and piety, and he lived the spiritual life deeply, albeit with certain peculiar emphases. The resolutions taken before his ordination to the subdiaconate, March 16, 1861, testify to this.

> Long live Mary! Dear Mother, I pray, bless these resolutions of mine: 1. I shall remain chaste to my dying breath. 2. I shall pray the office pronouncing the words clearly and distinctly. 3. I shall apply myself to study and shall not waste my time in useless pursuits. 4. I shall fulfill faithfully all my duties as a subdeacon. 5. I shall love Jesus as my closest friend. 6. I shall do everything for the greater glory of God. 7. I shall work hard in the [Lord's] *vineyard*. 8. In the way I dress, act, speak, and go about I shall give evidence of being in Jesus' service. Mary, you have granted me so many graces; you have seen me through so many battles! I trust that you will see me through these as well. If I could only henceforth lead a holy life and never commit even a venial sin! Mary, I pray, obtain this grace from God for me. I know you will, because you were always a good mother to me. Long live Mary! Long live Jesus! Long live Pius IX! Your humble son G.B. Lemoyne, about to be ordained a subdeacon, begging you to obtain for him all necessary graces from God.[14]

Clearly these words reveal a deep spiritual life and commitment with strong Marian orientation. Mary is even given priority: "Long live Mary! Long live Jesus!" Even more remarkable is the reference to Pius IX, and therefore to the papacy, as part of his spiritual program: "Long live Pius IX!"

This outburst of devotion to the Pope is particularly understandable in the context of the unification of Italy (1861), achieved in part through the invasion and the annexation of the Papal States, and through depriving the Pope of his temporal power. More generally this reflects the conservative mentality which John had acquired from family tradition and from education. The Lemoyne household was a conservative one, and that is understandable in view of the family's status and provenance. Furthermore, from childhood John had lived through the experiences of the liberal revolution; and his strictly conservative Catholic upbringing would have fostered in him feelings of

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[13] "The seminary is a sacred precinct where a young Levite hears more clearly the Lord's voice calling him to serve at the altar; it is the holy place where his devotion grows, where his zeal for the salvation of souls becomes more ardent [...]. It is the garden of God where the best flowers of the diocese are gathered [...]" [*EBM* I, 281].

[14] Archival document quoted in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 32, note 19.

solidarity with the Pope, whom the liberals, especially the republicans, attacked with particular viciousness. Besides his family upbringing, John's later education was responsible for shaping his strongly conservative views. These became only more deeply ingrained with the revolution's inexorable progress, and eventually show up in his work as a biographer and historian. Referring to the events of 1861 in the *Biographical Memoirs*, he would later write: "Those were very sad days for the Church."[15] And he laments the government's attacks on the Church and Cavour's demand that Rome should be made the capital of Italy. In comments scattered through the volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs* authored by him (Volumes I-IX) he repeatedly decries not only the excesses, but the very fact of the liberal revolution and its program. Finally, the outrage with which those "very sad days" are recalled betrays not merely the biographer's conservative political views, but also a conservative theology and ecclesiology in which the historical papacy and the Church are seen as one, and in which Mary figures as the symbol of God's saving power in the Church for the eventual defeat of the evil of liberalism and the restoration of the old order. In this respect, John Lemoyne and John Bosco were as "two peas in a pod".

Father Lemoyne's priestly ordination took place on June 14, 1862. There is no record of how he spent the first two years as a priest before meeting Don Bosco in late 1864. Normally newly ordained priests spent their first two years of priesthood attending conferences in moral and pastoral theology in order to prepare for the priestly ministry, especially that of hearing confessions, while serving as assistants in some parish, or the like. There is no reason to suppose that Father Lemoyne was any exception. But of greater significance, is the fact that during this period he was considering entering some religious order, but could not make up his mind. We have already seen from his own testimony how the crisis was resolved, and how he met Don Bosco and cast his lot with him.

3. Meeting with Don Bosco

Don Bosco was traveling through southern Piedmont and Liguria with a large group of lads on what turned out to be the last of the fall outings. The *Biographical Memoirs* give a detailed account of the various stages of the

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[15] *EBM* VI, 503.

outing that took Don Bosco and his boys as far as Genoa.[16] On their way back from Genoa they stopped at Mornese, where Don Bosco had important matters to discuss with Father Dominic Pestarino, and where he met the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and Mary Mazzarello for the first time.[17] Father Lemoyne describes the circumstances that brought about the encounter in a second account in which he refers to himself in the third person as "a young priest":

> In the fall of 1864 a young priest was seeking to discern God's will in regard to his future. One Sunday evening, while visiting the village of Belforte, he went to pray the holy Rosary before Our Lady's altar in the local church. He prayed to Our Lady that she would make known to him what his vocation should be. On the day he received the sacred order of priesthood, a companion of the deacon class, and a close friend of his, had asked him confidentially, "Are you really happy?"
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> "Very happy," answered the newly ordained priest.
>
> "However, your heart is not completely satisfied, right?"
>
> "And why not? How would you know what's on my mind?"
>
> "I know only that you are not cut out to be a diocesan priest," replied his friend.
>
> "What on earth are you trying to say?"
>
> "Be honest with yourself. Deep down you do feel that you should be a religious, don't you?"
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> "That is true. But now that I have regained my freedom (although I admit I spent some happy years in the seminary), do you think I am going to shut myself up again within four walls? Then, to be perfectly frank with you, there isn't a religious order that I like. I find the Capuchins disgusting; I have no respect for the Friars Minors of the Observance; the Dominicans drive me out of church by their preaching; I like and I think a lot of the Jesuits, but I don't feel the calling. So, as you see, I will never become a religious."

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[16] For the fall outing of 1864 cf. *EBM* VII, 445-462. For earlier ones, cf. *EBM* V, 223; VI, 143; IV, 445 (1853); VI, 27 (1858); 140-154 (1859); 436-443 (1860); 608-614 (1861); VII, 158-170 (1862); VII, 332--325 (1863).

[17] Cf. *EBM* VII, 450. Father Dominic Pestarino (1817-1874), had been born at Mornese, had received his priestly training at the diocesan seminary in Genoa, and had returned to Mornese in 1847 or 1848 for political reasons. There he was exercising the priestly ministry with great success. He had met Don Bosco in 1862, and had become a Salesian some time in 1863 [cf. *Diz*, 219; *EBM* VII, 452f.]. He was especially dedicated to the spiritual direction of adolescents and young adults in the parish, with particular attention to the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. They were a group of young women devoted to the spiritual life and the apostolate, founded under Father Pestarino's direction as a branch of the parent group founded in Genoa by Father Joseph Frassinetti (1804-1868). Mary Mazzarello (1837-1881) was the youngest member of the group; eventually she would become the Co-foundress with Don Bosco of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Her first contact with Don Bosco would be decisive for her and for the whole group.

"Well! Our Lady loves you so much that if none of the present religious orders appeals to you, she will come up with one just for you, one you are bound to like. You'll see."

Two years had gone by since that conversation. And now, the morning after praying the Rosary to obtain enlightenment from Our Lady, while not quite awake, [that young priest] heard a voice whisper distinctly in his ear, "Go to Lerma and there you will meet Don Bosco." When he became fully awake, those words still echoed clearly in his mind. He had never heard anyone speak of Don Bosco, except once.[18] He did not know of any friend of Don Bosco's in that part of the country. The Pope would have been a more likely visitor than Don Bosco to those parts, so far did those villages lie off the beaten path. Hence, he took three friends of his into his confidence and related that strange experience to them. They told him, "Lerma is only one hour's walk from here; you can easily indulge your fancy." So he went to Lerma with one of his friends. But not daring to ask around for fear of being ridiculed, he called on a priest, a friend of his, and asked him if he had heard anything recently that concerned Don Bosco of Turin. That priest answered that he had not, but that they could inquire of the pastor, who was personally in touch with the founder of the Oratory. They called on the pastor, and to their surprise they learned that Don Bosco was to visit Lerma in eight days. The young priest was fairly jolted out of his seat on hearing the amazing news. He returned home [to Belforte], where the other two friends were waiting in the high castle courtyard. Laughing at what they thought had been a good joke, they shouted from above, "So, is Don Bosco coming or not?" "Yes he is," rang the answer from below. They ran down to meet their friends and could not believe that the dream had really come true. The following Sunday Don Bosco arrived at Mornese. On the following day, after evening services, the pastor of Lerma, Archpriest [Raymond] Olivieri, and the young priest, who had now been his guest for some days, went to Mornese. Father Pestarino asked them to stay for supper. No sooner had Don Bosco set his eyes on that priest, that he looked at him intently and demanded, "What is your name?"

The priest told him his name.

"Where are you from?"

He told him where he was from.

"Well," he added, "come with me to Turin!"

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[18] In the first person account quoted above [cf. note 3] he states more generally, "Someone had spoken to me of Don Bosco as of a saint, but I had no idea that he was in the process of establishing a religious society." He had very probably heard all about Don Bosco from Father Francis Montebruno (1831-1895), the founder of the *Opera degli Artigianelli* in Genoa, whom Father Lemoyne had helped and on occasions even substituted in the work during absences. Don Bosco and Father Montebruno had been in touch since 1857 [cf. *Braido-Arenal*, 93, note 12 and text relating thereto].

Don Bosco thought so highly of Father Montebruno that he regarded him as a Salesian, and his hospice-oratory as a Salesian work. In the Constitutions of 1864, Purpose, art. 3, note (1), Don Bosco writes: "The priest, Father Francis Montebruno, a member of this Society, in 1855 opened a house in Genoa called the *Opera degli Artigianelli*" [*Motto-Cost*, 76]. Indeed in 1864 they were discussing a "merger" [cf. *EBM* VII, 447f.].

"I wouldn't mind," the young priest answered. After some further conversation they went in to supper.

The next day the whole company [Don Bosco and his boys] trooped into Lerma, where Archpriest Olivieri had organized a splendid welcome for Don Bosco.[19] The young priest walked with Don Bosco, and at dinner Father Olivieri seated him next to the man of God. Consequently he had an opportunity to speak about his future and about the Turin Oratory, but without coming to a practical understanding, because the conversation was about the means of safeguarding young people from the many dangers that beset them.

"I should be happy to return to Turin with you," the priest said to Don Bosco.

"And what is your motive for wishing to join me?"

"To help you in whatever little way I can."

"No," Don Bosco answered firmly. "God's works need no help from any man."

"I'll come and do whatever you will ask me to do."

"Come solely with the good of your soul in view."

"I will come on those terms," the priest replied.

On the way back to Mornese that priest again walked alone with Don Bosco the whole way. He was thus able to tell him all about his past life and about what he had been doing and thinking up to that point. It was a most satisfactory walk. The next day, in the middle of dinner, taking advantage of a lull in the conversation, Don Bosco, speaking so that everyone could hear, suddenly told that priest, "Write to your father and your mother, and notify them of your departure for Turin and of your decision to stay with Don Bosco."

"I must break the news to my father in person for propriety's sake. I already know for sure that my mother will give her consent."

Don Bosco pursued the matter no further. But on Wednesday, before departing for Capriata with his youngsters, he took leave of the young priest and inquired, "When are you coming to Turin?"

"In a week's time. By next Wednesday I will be there," he replied. And he kept his word.[20]

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[19] Cf. *EBM* VII, 455.

[20] *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne, "Nell'autunno del 1864", in *FBDMicro* 947 B5&3 (pages are out of order), referred to above [cf. note 12].

This printed, unpublished account, as may be seen, parallels (with greater detail) the first-person testimony given at the Process, already quoted [cf note 3 above and text relating thereto]. There is a third, shorter but touching, narrative of the event in the *Biographical Memoirs*, also in the third person. Omitting the preliminaries, this begins with the walk to Mornese (after the meeting at Lerma):

> Don Bosco again walked the long way back to Mornese, accompanied by a young priest who had been introduced to him there [at Lerma] by his friend, the pastor. By a stroke of good fortune he found himself alone with Don Bosco. Amiably Don Bosco again asked his name and birthplace and then added, "How about coming to Turin with me?" "Why not?" the young priest replied, as if charmed by Don Bosco's affability. At dinner in Lerma, the pastor had seated the young priest at Don Bosco's side, and the latter had given him descriptions of the Oratory [...]. Quite impressed by it all, the young priest had remarked, "If it's alright with you, I'd very much like to come to

On Tuesday, October 18, 1864 Father Lemoyne arrived at the Oratory of Valdocco in Turin, and so began his Salesian life and his "love affair" with Don Bosco.[21]

4. One Year with Don Bosco and Perpetual Profession

When Father Lemoyne entered the Oratory in October 1864, at the age of 25, the Salesians numbered about 80--11 priests and a few brothers; the remainder were "clerics" studying for ordination while engaged full time in Salesian work.[22] With the exception of Don Bosco, who was 49, and of Father Victor Alasonatti, who was 52 and had joined ten years earlier,[23] all of them

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Turin with you." "Why?" "To help you in whatever little way I can." "No," Don Bosco had countered. "God's works do not need any man's help." "Then, I'll just come and do whatever you ask me to do." "Come only with the intention of doing your soul some good." "Very well," the young priest answered. For an hour and a half, while strolling along together, he confided to Don Bosco his past life and plans for the future. The young priest never forgot that walk. [*Apparently that night "the young priest" stayed at Mornese with Don Bosco as Fr. Pestarino's guest.*].

The following day, Tuesday, October 11, Don Bosco set out after lunch with all his boys for Capriata [...]. [*"The young priest" went along.*] At a certain point where the road forked toward Gavi and Montaldeo, the young priest, who had to go to Serravalle Scrivia, took his leave of Don Bosco. "Will you come to Turin then?" Don Bosco asked with a charming smile. "You don't mind my addressing you in a familiar way (*che le dia del tu*)?" "I surely don't. Count me in as one of your sons. Within a week I shall be with you" [*EBM* VII, 455f.].

As may be seen, the three narratives differ as to length and details, especially with respect to the place where Father Lemoyne and Don Bosco first met (Mornese or Lerma). This, however, is less significant than the fact that the meeting was for Father Lemoyne a charismatic experience that imparted a new direction and a new purpose to his life.

[21] "Tuesday, October 18. I arrive in Turin" [archival document cited in *Desranaut-Mem I*, 24, note 28].

[22] Cf. *EBM* VIII, 3.

[23] Father Victor Alasonatti (1812-1865), a native of Avigliana (Turin) and a "graduate" of the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto Ecclesiastico*) in Turin, was a teacher in his home town. In 1854 Don Bosco asked Father Alasonatti to join him and "give him a hand". He became a Salesian and served as administrator of the Oratory until his death in 1865 [cf. *Diz*, 11f.).

were under thirty. The Salesian Congregation (officially founded in 1859) had already obtained the *decretum laudis* (July 1864) and had established its first two schools outside of Turin: Mirabello (1863) and Lanzo (1864). At Valdocco, the Church of Mary Help of Christians was rising from its foundations. Above all Don Bosco had already become "a legend". The belief that he was endowed with extraordinary powers was widespread, not only among his sons, but also among people at large. This re-enforced Father Lemoyne's recent charismatic experience. He was completely won over.

There was as yet no regular novitiate program in place. Father Lemoyne made his apprenticeship by working full time like the others--"as a Salesian". The so-called heroic decade had come to an end with the sixties, but life at the Oratory was still "heroic" in the highest degree. None of the diocesan priests that joined Don Bosco from time to time could cope with the torrid pace of life at the Oratory. Father Alasonatti had been the first, and now Father Lemoyne would be the second notable exception. He immediately caught the spirit of the motto, "work and temperance". He was happy and never looked back.[24]

Don Bosco had ways of testing his new men, especially as the the date for the profession of vows drew near. In a third-person, but transparent account, derived from "the memoirs of a Salesian, who had been a late vocation and who was preparing himself for his religious profession this very year [1865]," Father Lemoyne describes how Don Bosco sometimes tested the character of candidates "by feigning diminution of benevolence". The puzzling story tells how Don Bosco suddenly and without apparent reason "turned off" his customary show of affection, and how much the object of this feigned disinterest suffered on that account. The person in question had composed and read some verses in Don Bosco's honor on his name day, but he had not received the slightest acknowledgment. The period of trial came to a head, and to an end, on the occasion of a visit of Don Bosco to the print shop, where this person (Father Lemoyne) was busily proofreading some copy for the press.[25]

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[24] In a letter to his parents, December 24, 1864, he writes: "I feel increasingly happier in my new situation [...]. I am extremely busy and haven't got even one minute to idle away; we work, and we work with all our might [...]" [Letter of December 24, 1864, *ASC* 272: Lemoyne, quoted in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 35, note 37].

[25] Cf. *EBM* VIII, 124ff.

A little more than a year after his entrance at the Oratory, on November 10, 1865, Father Lemoyne was admitted to religious profession. He was the first to take perpetual vows in the Congregation, five days ahead of such notables as Fathers Michael Rua, John Cagliero, John Baptist Francesia, Charles Ghivarello and John Bonetti.[26]

5. Director of the Salesian School at Lanzo (1865-1877)

The reason why Father Lemoyne professed ahead of the others must be sought in the urgency of Don Bosco's need to fill the post of Director of the Salesian school at Lanzo vacated by the untimely death of Father Dominic Ruffino, its first Director.[27] He held that post for twelve years until 1877. At first he was the only priest in the school, his immediate staff consisting of half a dozen able "clerics". By 1868 other priests became available. Under Father Lemoyne the Lanzo school prospered. Beginning with primary grades and a modest enrollment, the school program was expanded to the secondary level in 1868, with growing attendance in succeeding years.[28]

It should be noted that thus far Father Lemoyne had spent only one year with Don Bosco. But Lanzo was only a few miles from Turin. Father Lemoyne would visit Don Bosco in Turin when necessary; and though by no means afraid to take decisions on his own, he would consult Don Bosco

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[26] Cf. *EBM* VIII, 126f. Michael Rua (1837-1910), John Cagliero (1838-1926), John Baptist Francesia (1838-1930), Charles Ghivarello (1835-1913) and John Bonetti (1838-1891), Salesians of the first hour all, had been founding members of the Society in 1859 and part of the group of 22 that took temporary vows at the first official profession in 1862 [cf. *EBM* VII, 102].

[27] The *Biographical Memoirs* outline the circumstances of Father Lemoyne's appointment to Lanzo instead of Mirabello, as Don Bosco had originally intended. Fr. Bonetti's appointment, originally to Lanzo, was changed to Mirabello [cf. *EBM* VIII, 128], replacing Father Rua, who was leaving that post to fill the office of Prefect at the Oratory, in turn vacated by Father Alasonatti's death [cf. note 23 above]. For Father Ruffino's death (July 6, 1865), cf. *EBM* VIII, 72, 83, 86f. For Father Alasonatti's (October 8, 1865), cf. *EBM* VIII, 103ff.

[28] Cf. Don Bosco's Letter to the Chief School Administrator, September 28, 1868 in *IBM* IX, 360 (om. in *EBM*). Here the enrollment is given as 124 boarders and over 200 day students. According to Father Lemoyne's report to the Directors at the General Conferences of St. Francis de Sales in 1875 the number of boarders was expected to exceed 200 [cf. *EBM* XI, 14]. In 1876 Father Lemoyne reports an enrollment of 220 boarders and 130 day students [Cf. *EBM* XII, 47].

whenever some problem arose.[29] Don Bosco, on his part, kept a vigilant eye over the school and the Salesian community, and was a frequent visitor there. Thus Father Lemoyne could continue throughout his stay at Lanzo to record first-hand words and deeds of Don Bosco -- an activity in which, in collaboration with others at the Oratory, he had been involved from the start.

6. Local Spiritual Director of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Mornese and Nizza (1877-1883)

Father James Costamagna had been for three years Local Spiritual Director of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Mornese.[30] Since he had requested to go to the missions, he asked Father Lemoyne if he would be willing to take the job. Father Lemoyne replied that he was committed to his children at Lanzo, and that he would go to Mornese only if Don Bosco desired it. But Don Bosco would not give the order. However, Father Costamagna cajoled Father Lemoyne into writing a petition.[31] It was thus that in 1877 Father

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[29] A new building on the verge of collapsing [cf. *EBM* XIV, 271]; slanderous rumors and harassment [cf. *EBM* X, 523f.]; hosting anticlerical State authorities on the occasion of the inauguration of the Turin-Lanzo railway [cf. *EBM* XII, 300-309].

[30] On January 29, 1872 twenty-seven Daughters of Mary Immaculate (soon to be known as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) [cf. note 17 above], with Father Pestarino presiding and with Don Bosco's instructions, elected Mary Mazzarello as Superior. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was officially founded on August 5, 1872 when, in the presence of the newly elected Bishop Joseph Sciandra of Acqui and of Don Bosco, the Sisters (Mary Mazzarello being *the first*) made their temporary profession. Don Bosco confirmed Mary Mazzarello as Superior, but acceded to her wish to be known merely as Vicaress.

At Father Pestarino's death in 1874, Don Bosco appointed Father Joseph Cagliero (1847-1874) to succeed him as Spiritual Director of the Sister's mother house, but he died two months later. Father James Costamagna (1846-1921) was appointed to replace him and served in that capacity for three years (1874-1877). He was then called to lead the third missionary expedition to South America, where he distinguished himself as a missionary and Salesian Superior, and finally as Vicar Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza in Ecuador.

The office of Local Spiritual Director (actually, a Chaplain-Administrator) of the Sisters should be distinguished from that of Spiritual Director General. This latter office was held by Father (later Bishop) John Cagliero, as Spiritual Director General of the Salesian Society. The Salesians provided this double service to the Sisters until their "separation", by decree of the Holy See, in 1906. Later the service was resumed under different juridical forms.

[31] Cf. G.B. Francesia, *Suor Maria Mazzzarello. I due primi lustri delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*. S. Benigno Canavese, 1906, quoted in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 38f, notes 55 and 56.

Lemoyne was appointed to the Sisters' community at Mornese as Local Spiritual Director, a post he held until 1883. His coming to Mornese was like a breath of fresh air; for although the talented Father Costamagna did much to consolidate the community, the Sisters, and Mother Mazzarello in particular, had suffered greatly under his harsh rule. Great spiritual and institutional progress was made under the more gentle Father Lemoyne. At the beginning of 1879 he presided over the transfer of the mother house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to Nizza,[32] and in 1881 he assisted Mother Mazzarello in her last illness and death.[33] But Father Lemoyne was not happy in this appointment. He had become attached to the boys at Lanzo and loved the active life of the school. Moreover, being awkward in the presence of women by nature and upbringing, he found living in the Sisters' house without interruption a severe trial. And further, he regarded himself as an exile from Don Bosco and the Oratory, for both Mornese and Nizza were a lot farther from Turin than Lanzo. To that extent also Father Lemoyne's activity as a chronicler suffered a setback.

7. Secretary to Don Bosco and to the Superior Chapter (1883-1916)

In 1883 Father Louis Bussi was appointed Local Spiritual Director of the Sisters at Nizza.[34] Father Lemoyne, relieved in more ways than one,[35] was recalled to Valdocco as Editor-in-chief of the *Bollettino Salesiano* and as Secretary to Don Bosco and to the Superior Chapter (General Council), holding this last office also under Don Bosco's successors until his death in 1916. Now he would spend over four years close to Don Bosco, as his confidant and confessor. These were years of deep, unalloyed joy. Years of genuine interior life and dedication to the service of others had brought about a remarkable

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[32] For the details of the transfer cf. *EBM* XIII, 137-156.

[33] For Mother Mazzarello's illness and death, cf. *EBM* XV, 295-301.

[34] Father Louis Bussi (1848-1928) served as Local Spiritual Director at Nizza from 1883 to 1886. He subsequently served as Director and Provincial till disabled by illness [*Diz*, 61].

[35] Father Lemoyne writes to his mother: "I am transferred to Turin.[...] Don Bosco wishes me to be near him as his special helper and collaborator. The Lord could not have appointed me to a more desirable post. I shall also be in intimate daily contact with Mary Help of Christians, whose secretary I shall also be [referring to the publication of "graces"] [...]. As far as I am concerned, I could not be happier if they had made me king [...]" [Letter of December 18, 1883 in *ASC* 272: Lemoyne, quoted in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 40, note 65].

human and Christian maturity in the man, otherwise characterized by an emotive-active personality and a certain superficiality. But these were the years of Father Lemoyne's Salesian maturity. His sole concern was to serve the Father and Master, and to gather for posterity everything that pertained to him. His personal attachment to Don Bosco was legendary, even though its external expression did not quite match that of his extraordinary young collaborator, "Cleric" (then Father) Charles Viglietti, who served Don Bosco in the capacity of personal and traveling secretary from 1884 till the Saint's death in 1888. It was in this capacity that, at Father Lemoyne's request, he also chronicled Don Bosco's last years.

Don Bosco appreciated Father Lemoyne's devotion and confidence, and responded in kind. Ceria records Don Bosco's words to Father Lemoyne when the latter returned to the Oratory in 1883:

> "How long do you intend to remain with Don Bosco at the Oratory?" Don Bosco asked. "Till the end of time," Father Lemoyne replied. "Very well then, I entrust my poor self to you. Deal kindly with me, especially by hearing me out. I shall keep no secrets from you, neither those of my heart nor those of the Congregation. When my last hour comes, I shall be in need of an intimate friend to whom I may speak a last word in confidence."[36]

Father Lemoyne's relationship with Don Bosco was so close that there developed deep mutual understanding and affection, and perfect mutual communication, as between two kindred souls. Desramaut writes: "This priest [Lemoyne] felt a great need for tenderness, and this need was satisfied by his spiritual father. A greater and more intimately shared affection between two men would be difficult to imagine".[37]

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[36] *IBM* XVI, 419.

[37] *Desramaut-Mem I*, 45. An extraordinary short memoir (a mere scrap of paper) by Lemoyne reveals the love that bonded the two together: "Don Bosco and I met unexpectedly at Alessandria as we both were traveling to Borgo San Martino for the feast of St. Aloysius. [He said to me:] 'Ah! dear Father Lemoyne, I do love you (*io ti voglio bene*).' 'Thank you, Don Bosco.' 'Yes, Don Bosco has always loved you, and loves you now, very much.' 'Oh! Don Bosco!' 'Because, you know, Don Bosco loves you.' (I am at a loss as to how to correspond to such undeserved affection. Don Bosco knows me, and he knows that for him I am ready for any sacrifice.) He repeated those words to me three times, while holding my hand and looking at me with such tenderness that I was moved to tears." In the same memoir he records Don Bosco's words on another occasion: "I regard you as a brother and I love you as a brother" [ASC 272: Lemoyne, *Desramaut-Mem I*, 45f. and note 88].

Father Lemoyne's familiarity with Don Bosco enabled him to acquire a truly personal knowledge of the master, of his method, and of his spirit, to the extent that he even made Don Bosco's style his own. He became Don Bosco's perfect interpreter. When Don Bosco needed to write a letter to his boys or to his Salesians, he would often get Father Lemoyne to do it for him, certain that his love or concern would be perfectly expressed.[38] Through those last few years Father Lemoyne lived in close contact with Don Bosco and was privileged to accompany him on some of his journeys. Noteworthy was the trip to Rome of 1884, rendered more memorable by the fact that it occasioned the writing of a famous *Letter*, which Father Lemoyne styled in Don Bosco's name.[39]

Through his years of close association with Don Bosco, Father Lemoyne, whenever possible, would be found in his company in friendly conversation. On one occasion, Don Bosco spoke some remarkable words to him. Ceria writes:

> On one of those evenings when Father Lemoyne and Don Bosco, as was their custom, were chatting together, Don Bosco unexpectedly said to him: "You will live to a ripe old age." On another occasion, as Father Lemoyne was following Don Bosco up the stairs, Don Bosco suddenly stopped, turned, and said to him confidentially: "A glorious future lies in store for you." And after a pause he continued: "What you have had to suffer till now is nothing compared with the sufferings that lie ahead. But have courage; nothing in this world lasts forever; and in the end... after all this... Heaven!"[40]

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[38] For instance, writing to Father Lemoyne from Toulon, Viglietti relays Don Bosco's request: "Don Bosco would like you to write a letter in his name, because, he says, no one can interpret his love for the boys better than you can. This letter is for the boys of the Oratory, and it must be written immediately. Make it short but meaty, and let it clearly express the idea that the Oratory is in his thoughts continually--that of an evening, with his little secretary Viglietti, he amuses himself by passing in review the boys, the superiors [...]" [Letter of April 20, 1885, *ASC* 272: Viglietti, in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 45, note 86].

[39] In April 1884 Father Lemoyne accompanied Don Bosco on a trip to Rome [cf. *IBM* XVII, 65-123]. Toward the end of their stay in the Eternal City, Don Bosco had a dream about the Oratory, and had Father Lemoyne record and send it as a letter to Father Rua in Turin. It is perhaps the finest example of how perfectly Father Lemoyne could interpret Don Bosco's spirit. It is the famous *Letter from Rome* [cf. *Ibid.*, 107-114]. For a critical edition, with an extensive introduction and commentary, cf. Pietro Braido, *La Lettera di Don Bosco da Roma del 10 maggio 1884* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'*Istituto Storico Salesiano* 3). Roma: LAS, 1984].

[40] *Ceria-Pro*, 398.

After Don Bosco's death, Lemoyne seemed to die, too, in a way. Understood and appreciated by some, but misunderstood and criticized by others, plagued with physical ailments and troubled by mental and emotional suffering, he practically lived as a recluse for the rest of his life. But he would be up unfailingly at four in the morning and toil till late at night, organizing and editing the immense mass of biographical material he had accumulated on Don Bosco through the years, and laboring tirelessly at the project that would eventually produce the monumental *Biographical Memoirs*.[41] With incredible tenacity and dedication he persevered in this labor of love for over thirty years until his death in 1916.

II. Father Lemoyne and the Biographical Memoirs

1. The Origin of a Biography and the Choice of Lemoyne for the Work

The idea of a "history" of Don Bosco and his work did not originate with Father Lemoyne by any means. By the time Father Lemoyne left Nizza to return to Turin in 1883, Don Bosco and the Salesians around him had already given some thought to the matter. By this time Don Bosco had also done something personally in that direction with his *Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*.[42] A substantial portion of this work had then been brought to a wider readership by Father John Bonetti's serial publication in the *Bollettino Salesiano* under the title of *Storia dell'Oratorio di san Francesco di Sales*.[43] Again, it seems that Don Bosco wished to pursue this very idea when he began

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[41] Lemoyne writes: "I work by day and by night; I take no recreation; I never leave my room; I refuse to take on any other assignment; I am almost always alone. But I hope that my confreres will say a prayer from the heart for me when I am gone. I shall need it; because, as you know this kind of life is totally contrary to my natural bent" [Letter to Bishop Cagliero of December 7, 1886(?), *ASC* 272.31: Lemoyne-Fagnano, in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 42, note 73].

[42] Cf. note 2 above.

[43] [John Bonetti], "Storia dell'Oratorio di san Francesco di Sales," *Bollettino Salesiano* 3:1 (1879) 6-8 and on serially until 1886; later published as *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio Salesiano di Valdocco*. Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1892; and translated into English as Giovanni Bonetti, *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1908 [cf. *Journal of Salesian Studies* 1:1 (1990) 24ff.]

to write his *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 del sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli Salesiani.*[44] Don Bosco had expressed a definite concern for "historical record" at the General Conferences of St. Francis de Sales of 1876 and at the General Chapter of 1877, out of a conviction that his own life and that of the Congregation had been under supernatural guidance, and that the memory of the life and work of early Salesians should not be lost.[45]

Among those who realized the importance of such an undertaking was Father Michael Rua, Don Bosco's right-hand man, and soon (1884) to become his Vicar with right of succession. But to whom could this task be entrusted? The gifted and enterprising Father Bonetti was now Spiritual Director of the Society. Father Francesia, gifted poet and able writer though he was, could not be depended on to accomplish a task of such magnitude and difficulty. Father Lemoyne, on the other hand, freed from his Nizza assignment, was both available, capable, and willing. He had all along been an active recorder and chronicler of Don Bosco's words and deeds, and he already had a well-deserved reputation as an indefatigable collector of historical information and testimonies on Don Bosco and his work. His prior career as a writer fitted him admirably for the task and guaranteed the quality of the final product.[46] He was a proven worker, orthodox, painstaking, reliable. His attachment to Don Bosco was a legend. His job as secretary left him "leisure hours". He was the ideal man for the task.

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[44] This is the title of what turned out to be Don Bosco's *Spiritual Testament*, written in a small note book (*taccuino*) in the mid-1880s, in *ASC* 132: Taccuini, *FDBMicro* 748 D6-750 E4; critical edition, with introductory study by Francesco Motto, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli Salesiani (Testamento spirituale)* (Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano 4). Roma : LAS, 1985.

[45] Cf. *EBM* XII, 51f.; *EBM* XIII, 205ff. For a fuller discussion, cf. P. Braido, "L'ISS realtà nuova radicata in una tradizione," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 1 (1982) 16-33.

[46] Lemoyne's career as a writer had been launched when Don Bosco asked him to write for the *Catholic Readings* a biography of Joseph Mazzarello, a young Salesian who had been a member of Father Lemoyne's community and teaching staff at Lanzo and who had died in 1868: *Biografia del giovane Mazzarello Giuseppe pel Sacerdote G.B. Lemoyne Direttore del Collegio-Convitto di Lanzo*. Turin, 1870. Don Bosco gave him instructions on how and with what aim a biography of that type should be written [cf. *EBM* IX, 350f.]. This is of interest because in so doing Don Bosco described and passed on to Father Lemoyne his own "method"--a method which, while relying on sources (that is, on standard books), yet aims chiefly at religious and moral edification. Subsequently Lemoyne had authored over two dozen historical and biographical, and nearly as many dramatic, works. He had also gained a reputation for his poetic compositions in praise of Don Bosco and his work of charity [cf. *Braido-Arenal*, 100-114; *Desramaut-Mem I*, 47-55].

Lemoyne's words in the Author's Preface to Volume I of the *Biographical Memoirs* would lead us to believe that Father Rua was the prime mover behind the undertaking: "To [Father Rua] I dedicate these volumes that he inspired and approved."[47] And likewise the same preface would seem to indicate that it was Father Rua who set the parameters and the essential goal for Father Lemoyne's preliminary work--that of assembling the vastest possible amount of information on Don Bosco and his work: "I had been instructed by our revered Rector Major, Father Michael Rua, to overlook nothing that should come to my knowledge, even though at the moment I might consider it inconsequential" .[48]

2. Lemoyne's Systematic Search for and Collection of Biographical Documentation

Lemoyne immediately set about gathering documents that could in any way contribute to the narration of Don Bosco's story. One should bear in mind that, generally speaking, for Lemoyne the *story* was paramount. Therefore, he was chiefly interested in *narrative* documentation and in whatever could contribute to the story. As part of the story, letters, dream narratives, Good Night talks, and other utterances of Don Bosco were given important consideration. But such documentation as ledgers, school records, blueprints, photographs, etc. was almost entirely overlooked.

Specifically--What material did Lemoyne research and bring together, and what were his sources?

(1) *Records originating with Don Bosco himself*

Obviously whatever came directly from Don Bosco as a source had priority. This refers primarily to Don Bosco's writings, many of which were related specifically to his work and the institutions he founded. The important *Memoirs of the Oratory* and the *Spiritual Testament* have already been mentioned.[49] Then there were the circulars and the numerous personal letters

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[47] *EBM* I, xiii.

[48] *EBM* I, xii.

[49] Cf. notes 2 and 44 above.

which had been collected.[50] The biographies of Louis Comollo, Dominic Savio, Joseph Cafasso, Michael Magone, Francis Besucco were also among his sources.[51] Accounts, in manuscript and printed form, of the origin and development of his work, [52] of the house searches,[53] of his Roman trip of 1858,[54]

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[50] Cf. *ASC* 131.01: Lettere, *FDBMicro* 1-56. Lemoyne transcribes hundreds of Don Bosco's letters in *Documenti* and in the nine volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs* that he authored. The earliest recorded is the letter describing John's excursion to visit Professor Banaudi at his home town, written while John was in high school at Chieri [cf. *EBM* I, 262-265]. There follow the letter of advice to a certain rich young man, dated August 28, 1840 [cf. *EBM* I, 364f.], and the letter of 1843, which is also a profile of the seminarian Joseph Burzio and the first biographical essay authored by Don Bosco. Then come the important letters of 1846 written to Father John Borel by Don Bosco while convalescing at Becchi [cf. *EBM* II, 390-398]. From Volume III on through Volume IX increasing use is made of the letters, some 200 appearing in Volume IX alone. It may be noted that the letters are used almost exclusively as narrative elements.

[51] *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo, morto nel Seminario di Chieri, ammirato da tutti per le sue singolari virtù*, scritti da un suo Collega, 1. ed. Torino: Tipografia Speirani e Ferrero, 1844 [cf. *OE* I, 1-84].

Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico, allievo dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales, per cura del Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni, 1. ed. Torino: Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1859 [cf. *OE* XI, 150-292].

Biografia del Sacerdote Giuseppe Caffasso, esposta in due ragionamenti funebri dal sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Torino: Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1860 [cf. *OE* XII, 351-494].

Cenno biografico sul giovanetto Magone Michele, allievo dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, per cura del Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Torino: Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1861 [cf. *OE* XIII, 155-250].

Il pastorello delle Alpi, ovvero vita del giovane Besucco Francesco d'Argentera, pel Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni. Torino: Tip. dell'Orat. di S. Franc. di Sales, 1864 [cf. *OE* XV, 242-435].

[52] Don Bosco wrote a number of historical sketches of the Oratory for various purposes and occasions. Examples are: the chapter entitled "Origine di questa Congregazione" in early constitutional texts from 1858 to 1873 [cf. *Motto-Cost*, 62-70 and *EBM* V, 636f.]; *Cenno storico dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* (from the *Piano di Regolamento per l'Oratorio [...]* of 1854; *Cenni storici intorno all'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* of 1862; etc. [cf. critical editions in *Braido-DB*].

[53] Cf. *ASC* 132: Autografi-perquisizioni, *FDBMicro* 522 A9-524 E3. There were eleven house searches [cf. *EBM* VI, 315]. Lemoyne gives a detailed account of the first one (May 26, 1660) [cf. *EBM* VI, 310-329], and quotes Don Bosco's preface to his report entitled, "A Reason for This Memorandum" (*Ragione di questo scritto*) [cf. *EBM* VI, 313ff.]. He also states that the haste with which "compromising papers" were disposed of on that occasion accounts for the lack of documents from the early days of the Oratory. These included documents on "Don Bosco's relations with the Holy See, letters of Pius IX, copies of Don Bosco's letters to the Pope, Don Bosco's correspondence with the archbishop of Turin from 1851 on, Don Bosco's correspondence with former cabinet ministers, notes and

of the consecration of the Church of Mary Help of Christians and of "graces" obtained through her intercession[55] were all available to him. Lemoyne was also able to use the rough drafts and good copies of personal papers which Father Berto, Don Bosco's untiring former secretary, and at that time devoted archivist of the Society, had assembled and carefully preserved through the years.[56]

(2) *Records originating with Lemoyne himself*

Lemoyne himself had been active in recording words and events relating to Don Bosco from the time he entered the Oratory in 1864. As Director of the Lanzo school (1865-1877) he had carefully recorded and filed Don Bosco's conferences, Good Nights, dreams, talks, and his letters to the boys. During his "exile" as local Spiritual Director of the Salesian Sisters at Mornese and Nizza he had less of an opportunity of recording Don Bosco's words and deeds. But even during that period he managed to add occasional items to his collections. When he returned to Turin as secretary, he devoted himself entirely to recording and collecting testimonies.[57] In this latter activity he had Father Berto's priceless help[58] and that of Don Bosco's devoted

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memorandums on dreams [...], accounts of favors granted by Our Lady, miraculous occurrences, and also extraordinary deeds of some boys" [*EBM* VI, 312].

[54] Cf. *ASC* 132: Autografi-viaggi, *FDBMicro* 1352 E3-1354 A5. Account in *EBM* V, 534-602.

[55] Cf. *ASC* 133: Autografi-M.A. Santuario, *FDBMicro* 1973 D11-1974 A3. *Rimembranza di una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice* pel sacerdote Giovanni Bosco. Torino: Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1868 [cf. *OE* XXI, 1-174]. Account in *IBM* IX, 240-293, condensed in *EBM* IX, 125-140.

[56] Joachim Berto (1847-1914), professed in 1865, never left Don Bosco's side and for about 20 years served as his secretary until replaced in 1883 when his health gave way. In his capacity as secretary he accompanied the Founder on his most important trips in the 1870s. His life-long devotion to the Founder was matched by the care with which he collected and preserved every scrap of documentation about him. When replaced as secretary by Father Lemoyne, he devoted himself to the priestly ministry and to writing devotional books and pamphlets; but his chief occupation was that of collecting and filing documents pertaining to Don Bosco and his work. Thus he established what would constitute the basic holdings of the *Central Archives* of the Society [cf. *Diz*, 38f.]

[57] For Lemoyne's chronicles cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne, *FDBMicro* 945 C9-966 A7, and for a description cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 157f.].

[58] Cf. note 56 above and text relating thereto.

personal secretary, the youthful Charles Viglietti.[59] Furthermore, with the aim of tapping all available sources and of collecting the largest possible amount of material, Lemoyne began a systematic interrogation of witnesses and, first among them, of Don Bosco himself. Thus it was, for instance, that he collected the impressive amount of anecdotal material on Margaret Bosco included in volume I of *Documenti* and of the *Biographical Memoirs*.[60]

(3) *Records originating with contemporaries of Don Bosco and with early Salesians who had been the witnesses of Don Bosco's words and deeds*

Lemoyne had at his disposal and used to good advantage such accounts as the *Storia dell'Oratorio*[61] and the story of the *Fall Outings*,[62] both published in the *Bollettino Salesiano* by Father Bonetti during the Founder's lifetime. The minutes of the Superior Chapter (from 1859 on), of the General Conferences of Salesian Directors (from 1864 on), and of the General Chapters held during Don Bosco's life time (1877, 1880, 1883 and 1886) were also given due consideration. Lemoyne himself had been the author of such minutes since 1883.

But it would seem that Lemoyne favored the many chronicles and memoirs produced by early Salesians. The concern among early Salesians, bordering on obsession, to record Don Bosco's every word and deed for posterity is a phenomenon that is remarkable, if not unique, in the history of

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[59] Cf. note 72 below.

[60] A large portion (especially chapters 2-25) of Volume I of the *Biographical Memoirs* is devoted to Don Bosco's mother, Margaret [cf. *EBM* I, 11-170]. Only a small amount of this material is derived from Don Bosco's own *Memoirs*. It is not otherwise documented. This material was first edited in *Documenti* (1885) and later with some additions in the *Biographical Memoirs* (1898). It is probable, if not certain, that Lemoyne obtained most of this information directly from Don Bosco (1883-1885), apparently in view of a short biography of Margaret Bosco he was preparing for the *Catholic Readings*. The popular biography entitled *Scene morali di famiglia esposte nella vita di Margherita Bosco, Racconto edificante ed ameno* was published and presented to Don Bosco on his name day in 1886 [cf. *IBM* XVIII, 57ff.].

[61] Cf. note 43 above.

[62] Cf. *Bollettino Salesiano* 10 (1887) 30-33, 47f., 57f.,116-119, 129-132; 12 (1887) 149-ff., 162-166; 13 (1890) 25ff., 131-135; 202-207, 231ff.; 14 (1891) 37-40, 238-241; 15 (1892) 97-101, 250-254. For the *Biographical Memoirs*' account, cf. note 16 above.

Congregations and their founders. From 1858 on, early disciples of Don Bosco had undertaken to record some of the "marvelous things" they were witnessing.[63] A little later (1861), probably at [Deacon] Rua's suggestion, a *Historical Committee* was formed whose task it was to record anything remarkable that had to do with Don Bosco.[64] By and by, however, the initiative lost momentum due to the fact that all the members of the *Committee* were overworked or were assigned to posts outside Turin.[65] In a letter to Father Rua, written from Lanzo in 1865, Father Lemoyne complains about this failure.[66] But apparently no action was taken until 1875, after the definitive approval of the Constitutions. A new *Committee* was then formed.[67] With the help of his novices, Father Barberis produced a "Little Chronicle", recording words and events from 1875 to 1880.[68] Again the initiative flagged, and for the same reason--everybody was just too busy. But finally in 1883 Father Lemoyne returned to the Oratory and took personal charge of the project, indeed with distinguished results.

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[63] The oldest chronicle in existence is by Bonetti, and it begins with an entry dated Oct. 17, 1858 [cf. note 70 below].

[64] The meetings of this committee began in March 1861. The minutes give the names of fourteen members under Rua's presidency as well as the reason that brought them together: "Don Bosco's outstanding brilliant gifts, his extraordinary experiences which we admire to this day, his unique guidance of young people along virtue's arduous paths, and his grand plans for the future are indications to us of some supernatural intervention; they portend a glorious career for him and for the Oratory. All this lays a strict duty of gratitude upon us; we are bound to see to it that nothing concerning Don Bosco is allowed to fall into oblivion" [*EBM* VI, 505ff.]. It may be noted that the interest of these early Salesians focused on the "extraordinary" and the "supernatural".

[65] E.g., Bonetti to Mirabello and Ruffino to Lanzo [cf. note 27 above].

[66] "Re-assemble the old group, for no one, I believe, is keeping a record of Don Bosco's words and deeds at the moment. They are precious, and we cannot afford to let them fall into oblivion. Everything he says, particularly in his Good Nights, should be recorded [...]. Appoint secretaries and station them in such a way that they may record events in detail. I myself have recorded last year's with all possible accuracy" [Letter November 23, 1865 in *ASC* 9126: Rua-Lemoyne G.B., published in *Braido-Arenal*, 124f.].

[67] "[Father Rua] decided to form a Committee for the purpose of recording [Don Bosco's] words and deeds. They were to meet regularly to examine the reports jointly and to edit them for maximum accuracy.[...] We owe a debt of gratitude to [Father Rua], if records from those years, many by Father Barberis and some by Father Berto, have come down to us "[A. Amadei, *Il Servo di Don Michele Rua, successore del Beato D. Bosco*, vol I (Torino: SEI, 1931), 253f.].

[68] Cf. note 71 below.

The most valuable and informative chronicles were those authored by Dominic Ruffino,[69] John Bonetti,[70] Giulio Barberis,[71] and Charles Viglietti.[72]

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[69] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 142-145. Dominic Ruffino (1840-1865), a slight and frail young man of angelic life and mien [cf. *EBM* VIII, 86], had corresponded with Don Bosco when still in secondary school [cf. *Ceria-Ep* I, 130f.]; After he had completed his philosophy studies, and had begun his study of theology in a diocesan seminary, he entered the Oratory in 1859. Subsequently he completed his theological studies while working full time as a teacher, and was ordained in 1863. Although he had not been among the group that formed the Salesian Society in 1859, he was almost immediately appointed by Don Bosco Spiritual Director of the Society [cf. *EBM* VII, 339-340]. During this time he also served as Prefect of Studies of the schools at Valdocco [cf. *EBM* VI, 282-283]. In October 1864, he was sent as Director to found the school at Lanzo (the second Salesian school, after Mirabello, established outside of Turin). He died, probably of pneumonia, on July 16, 1865, not quite 25 years of age [Cf.*Ceria-Pro*, 68-73].

Ruffino's chronicle filled seven note books. Lemoyne found them at Lanzo when he succeeded him as Director, and he copied them accurately. Only six of the seven note books utilized by Lemoyne, and none of the Ruffino originals, are extant [cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Ruffino, *FBMMicro* 1206 A5-1217 C8].

This chronicle presents two main problems. The first is one of chronology, that is, of dating the single episodes; for Ruffino did not write down his notes in an orderly fashion, one page after another, one note book after another. He rather clustered episodes and used two or more note books at the same time. The second is one of form and content--that is, the episodes are barely sketched in, sometimes as mere jottings. In spite of these drawbacks Lemoyne found a place for all this valuable material in the *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs*.

[70] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 146-149. John Bonetti (1838-1891) entered the Oratory in 1855 at the age of 17 [cf.*EBM* V, 228]. After a two-year stay, he left to receive the clerical habit in his hometown and then entered the diocesan seminary at Chieri. But in 1858 a kind of homesickness drew him back to the Oratory. Immediately he began his preparation for the priesthood, while fully engaged in Salesian activity. He was a member of the group that founded the Salesian Society in 1859 (he was elected second Councillor) and of the group that first professed in 1862. He was ordained in 1864. His stay at the Oratory was interrupted in 1863 when he was appointed teacher in the newly-opened school at Mirabello, under Rua as Director. In 1864 he replaced Rua as Director, a post he held until 1877, when the school was transferred to Borgo San Martino [cf. *EBM* VIII, 128f.]. He then returned to Turin, where he was appointed Director of the *Bollettino Salesiano* (1877), and later succeeded Bishop Cagliero as Spiritual Director General of the Society and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1886). After Don Bosco's death, he served as Postulator of the cause of beatification and canonization. In this capacity, he was entrusted by Father Rua with the task of gathering testimonies and recollections from Salesians on Don Bosco [cf. Letter of March 19, 1888, in *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesiani* (Torino: Tip. S.A.I.D. 1910), 18]. Apart from his valuable contributions as the earliest chronicler, he authored books of special Salesian interest, among which may be mentioned *Biografie dei Salesiani defunti* (Turin, 1878, 400 p.) and the posthumously published *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio salesiano* [cf. note 43 above]. Bonetti also distinguished himself as a brilliant controversialist in speaking and writing, for unlike Ruffino, he possessed a fiery and

passionate temperament, with a tongue and a pen to match. He died prematurely in 1891 [cf. *Ceria-Pro*, 135-152].

As a principal member of the Historical Committee of 1861, Bonetti continued what he had already been doing since 1858--recording words and deeds of Don Bosco. He produced seven note books, five of *chronicles* and two of *souvenirs*, that have come down to us. They passed into Lemoyne's collection at Bonetti's death, and are now held at the *Central Archives* [cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Bonetti, *FDBMicro* 919 A1-926 C7].

Basically Bonetti's chronicles span the period 1858-1863 and record notable words and events, just like Ruffino's. Apart from difficulties arising from inconsistency in dating the entries, questions arise regarding Bonetti 's editorial criteria in giving his text its final form, for the present text is apparently a rewriting of earlier and more sketchy summaries.

[71] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 155f. Giulio Barberis (1847-1927) entered the Oratory in 1861. He was professed in 1865, was ordained in 1870, and in 1874 was appointed first Novice Master of the Society, in which capacity he served for 25 years. He then served as Provincial (from 1902), and as Spiritual Director General of the Society (from 1910 until his death in 1927). He is remembered as an extremely affable and open person, who exerted tremendous spiritual influence on a generation of Salesians. Andrew Beltrami and Prince August Czartoryski, whose causes have been introduced, were among his novices. Among his many writings is the *Vade Mecum dei giovani salesiani* (Spiritual Guide Book for Young Salesians) [Cf. *Ceria-Pro*, 305-324, and Alessio Barberis, *Don Giulio Barberis, Direttore Spirituale della Società di San Francesco di Sales. Cenni biografici e memorie.* San Benigno Canavese: Scuola Tipografica Don Bosco, 1932].

Barberis produced two chronicles. The more important is entitled *Chronichetta* (Little Chronicle). It consists of sixteen note books, containing documentation of words and deeds of Don Bosco spanning the 6 years, 1875-1880. To keep it up to date, and for the work of transcription, Barberis enlisted the help of some of his novices. This raises critical questions, but none (it seems) that would undermine the basic reliability of the chronicle. The second one, produced after the *Chronichetta*, is entitled *Chronichetta anterioriore* (Little Chronicle of Earlier Times) or *Cenni sulla vita del M. R. Sac. Giovanni Bosco [...]*. It consists of eleven note books in which he assembled materials spanning the years 1815-1870, using various sources, chiefly Ruffino and Lemoyne [cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Barberis, *FDBMicro* 792 A1-899 C11].

[72] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 167-175. Charles Viglietti (1864-1915) was accepted as a pupil in the Salesian school of Lanzo at the age of 11. The brilliant young man excelled in everything but "conduct" and came close to being expelled. But to everyone's surprise in August 1882 he was admitted to the novitiate, and in 1883 he took perpetual vows. Don Bosco, who had already noticed him at Lanzo, now took him on as his "personal secretary". Between May 1884 and January 1888, he served Don Bosco with slavish devotion as his reader, his sacristan, his infirmarian, his constant companion and attendant, especially on the last trips to France (1885), Spain (1886) and Rome (1887) [cf. *IBM* XVII, 433-434; XVIII, 72-74]. He daily took dictation from Don Bosco of letters, dreams and other matters. Don Bosco trusted him completely and took him into his confidence. He told him the story of his life and spoke to him of his troubles in detail. He was ordained in 1886. When Viglietti was being considered for a post in South America, Don Bosco arranged for him to remain at Valdocco. After Don Bosco's death, Viglietti was appointed Spiritual Director at Lanzo (1890-1896), and then Director at Bologna (1896-1904), at Savona (1906-1906), and finally at Varazze (1906-1912)--where,

Lemoyne gave these a privileged place. But he availed himself also of the valuable contributions of other less active chroniclers, now held in the *Central Archives*.[73]

(4) *Testimonies given at the Processes of Beatification and Canonization*

At the taking of testimony for the Process in the 1890s over forty witnesses were called to testify–diocesan priests, Salesian priests and brothers (among whom were such notables as Fathers Rua, Cagliero, Berto, Barberis

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in 1907 he lived through the infamous "scandal". He died in 1915 at Valdocco, where he held the post of Catechist [cf. *Diz*, 294].

Viglietti reveals himself at every step as a sensitive and imaginative person, and by far the most original of the chroniclers. Between 1884 and 1888 Viglietti kept a detailed diary on Don Bosco, at Lemoyne's express request. He was faithful to this charge to the last. He left us a great amount of information on Don Bosco's last years. The material of Viglietti's chronicle is chiefly gathered in eight note books covering the period from May 20, 1884 to January 31, 1888. Additional note books cover the same period 1884-1888. This seeming repetition is owed to the fact that Viglietti (writing for future biographers) re-worked the chronicle, or sections of it, in stages, through considerable editorial work. This staged editorial work resulted in the following editorial history: (l) An incomplete copy in two note books (217 p.), covering 1884 and 1885, plus a book of 36 sheets entitled, *Don Bosco's Last Illness and Death*; (2) A complete copy in two note books (403 p.); (3) A second complete copy in two note books (344 p.); (4) a third complete copy, typewritten and bound, dedicated and sent to Mr. Luis Martí Codolar of Barcelona (197 p.). Obviously, such editorial complexities call for critical evaluation. Furthermore, since a good deal of the information can no longer be verified, Viglietti's character and personality are of some importance in determining the degree of confidence we should place in his reports. He was ebullient to the point of passion, all heart and emotion. His attachment to Don Bosco was at once that of an affectionate child, a devoted servant and a reverent worshipper. Viglietti is demonstrably quite faithful in reporting *words* of the master. But he is sometimes given to enthusiastic exaggeration in reporting Don Bosco's activities. His chronicles, however, constitute irreplaceable documentation on Don Bosco's last years.

The author himself assures us: "I have written this chronicle as truthfully as possible. I have taken every care to refrain from wordy descriptions and from personal reflections, etc. I have narrated the events simply and as they occurred, or as I heard them narrated by Don Bosco himself or from others that were asked to report.[...] What is reported here has been set down by a person who never left Don Bosco's side day or night, and was privy to all his secrets [...]" [*Viglietti Chronicle*, in *IMB* XVII, 146].

[73] Lemoyne himself was the author of chronicles and memoirs in this category [cf. note 57 above and text relating thereto]. So were [Fathers] Joachim Berto [cf. note 56 above], Anthony Sala (1836-1895), Francis Cerruti (1844-1917), John Garino (1845-1908), Joseph Lazzero (1837-1910), Francis Provera (1836-1874), John Baptist Francesia (1838-1930), Secundus Marchisio (1857-1914), Michael Rua (1837-1910), [Brother] Peter Enria (1841-1898), and others of lesser stature [cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette, *FDBMicro* 792-1254].

and Lemoyne), and a number of lay people. Obviously, in spite of the importance of the occasion, these testimonies are only as authoritative as the sources from which they stem. The critical biographer would have to ascertain the origin and the tradition of each item of testimony, taking into account also the character and personality of the witness.[74] All this material was available to Lemoyne, and he made use of it.[75]

3. Lemoyne's *Documenti*[76]

After a couple of years of researching and collecting biographical materials, though still in the early stages of the process, Lemoyne decided to organize it in chronological order, distributing it over the years of Don Bosco's life, and to edit it for legibility. Thus he began to print the material, in single copy, in a series of large folio volumes which would eventually reach 45 in number--known as the *Documenti.* [77] The volumes were bound in black cloth, with the title in gold on the spine. The first 40 volumes of the *Documenti* contain material distributed chronologically over the years 1815-1890. To these were added four volumes collecting additional material covering the same period. (A forty-fifth and last volume contains material pertaining to the Bosco-Gastaldi controversy.) New material was entered at different times, for each page contains only one column, printed on separate paper and glued on the blank page of the folio register. This column is only 60 mm. wide, set off center to the right on the page, thus leaving ample room for further entries. Lemoyne continued to affix in their proper place additional items from various sources: handwritten notes, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, etc. In

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[74] For instance, in preparing their testimony Father Berto and Father Barberis, and to some extent also Father Rua, availed themselves of the material edited by Lemoyne in the *Documenti.* To that extent, therefore, their testimony is only as authoritative as the reports edited in the *Documenti.*

[75] Cf. *ASC* 161: Deposizioni, *FDBMicro* 2103 D9-2207 A2; *ASC* 163: Positio super introductione causae-Summarium, *FDBMicro* 2212 A12-2229 B6.

[76] Cf. *Desramaut-Mem I,* 57-68.

[77] Cf. note 1 above. The work bears the title, *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione Salesiana* [Documents preparatory to writing the history of Fr. John Bosco, of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and of the Salesian Congregation]. Place of publication is not given; but that would have been either San Benigno [according to Ceria, cf. *EBM* XV, xviii] or Valdocco [according to *Desramaut-Mem I,* 59]. Nor is a date given; but internal evidence would indicate that the first volume of the *Documenti* was printed in 1885.

time each volume took on the form of a scrap book. Lemoyne's preface to the *Documenti* is important:

> I have written the story of our most loving father Don Bosco. I do not believe that any man has ever lived who loved, and who was loved by, young people more than he. Not only have I brought together marvelous treasures of facts, words, work, and supernatural gifts, but also little episodes that might seem of no importance, but that will help the historically-minded to form a judgment of Don Bosco and his character. I have omitted none of the things that have come to my attention, because anything to do with him was most dear to us. These are scrap books, and perhaps somewhat in disarray; but an index will help consultation. Some items are repeated. The galley proofs have not been properly corrected. This was due to the enormous and arduous task of searching out and organizing the documents, while attending as well to the work that obedience or necessity imposed on me. Time was of the essence. Some passages will have to be judged critically, especially those where Don Bosco relates his own experiences or dreams, or predictions of the future; for it appears that his humility has imparted to them a certain slant; or they may not have been rightly understood by those who kept a record or memory of them. For my part, I recorded faithfully what many boys, priests and clerics of the Oratory handed down in writing, and what I myself saw or heard from Don Bosco's own lips. A word of warning--These galley proofs are no more than a private manuscript, a private memoir. In them I refer to many persons by name in order to establish the factual character of the story. But I absolutely forbid the publication of these names, lest dishonor be brought on these individuals who have a right to their privacy. A prayer--I have done this work out of love for Don Bosco, for my confreres, for our youngsters. What is actually described in these volumes is Don Bosco's own spirit, heart and method of education. God only knows what these volumes have cost me. Therefore, I ask my confreres who will read these pages to remember me at the altar of Mary Help of Christians and to pray for the repose of my soul.[78]

From the tenor of this preface (and of the title as well) one may conclude that Lemoyne printed this work as an intermediate step, to serve him (and his eventual successors) as a basis for a biography of Don Bosco. And indeed it was because of Lemoyne's work that Eugene Ceria was able to publish the last nine volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs* in the short span of ten years. But, important as the *Documenti* are, one should not think that the *Biographical Memoirs* are a mere transcription of their materials. Apart from the necessary editorial work, Lemoyne continued to discover new and relevant documentation, such as chronicles and oral witnesses, as he produced the first nine volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs*. Likewise, both Angelo Amadei

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[78] *Documenti* I, 1 in *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBMicro* 966 A10.

and Eugenio Ceria uncovered new material when editing their respective volumes.

4. The Biographical Memoirs

After Don Bosco's death on January 31, 1888 Lemoyne examined Don Bosco's papers, thus discovering further original documents. Occasional inquiries had already been made at various places connected with Don Bosco's life and work. After Don Bosco's death, at Lemoyne's request, new inquiries, though by no means thorough and systematic, were made and new information gathered.[79] Father Rua asked all the confreres to send in any material on Don Bosco they might have gathered directly or from witnesses.[80] To accommodate all the additional material on hand the *Documenti* would have had to be recast, and perhaps the number of volumes doubled.

Meanwhile social and institutional changes were taking place within the Salesian Congregation. With the passing of the Founder, the preservation and handing down of his spirit became the chief priority of the first decade of the Rua rectorship (1888-1898). And soon transmitting to succeeding generations the knowledge of Don Bosco's life and work would become a necessity and a priority. In his letters and speeches Father Rua makes constant reference to the Founder's words and practice and to the spirit of the Oratory, thus expressing this overarching concern.[81] Lemoyne was not slow in perceiving, and adapting to this shift. It would have been in this context that Lemoyne moved from his original purpose of creating a reservoir of

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[79] "Father Lemoyne stands accused of not having made personal inquiries at sites, in archives, in libraries outside Turin that could have provided detailed information. Father Lemoyne had already on hand a mass of documentation large enough to completely fill his day from four in the morning to late at night when he left his desk for short hours of sleep. He had at his disposal no automobiles nor the means of communication that are common today. Furthermore, up to 1912 he filled the post of Secretary of the Superior Chapter. No matter, he did all that was in his power; and what he could not do personally, he did through others" [*Favini*, 22]. A case in point might be Lemoyne's request to Father Marchisio to make inquiries at some sites of Don Bosco's childhood; another would be a like request to Father Francesia to pursue similar inquiries at Chieri [cf.the reports in *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Marchisio, *FDBMicro* 1203 D1-E4, published in *Desramaut-Mem I*, 421-427].

[80] Cf. *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesiani*. Torino: Tip. S.A.I.D., 1910, p. 18.

[81] Cf. Rua's exhortation to Provincials, *ibid.*, p. 279f.

documentation for future biographers (his *Documenti*) into his production of the *Biographical Memoirs*. As a result his own monumental biography would now constitute a well-digested narrative, written in a fair chronological order and amply documented. It is thus that Lemoyne, no doubt under Father Rua's inspiration and at his behest,[82] set about, not to re-edit the *Documenti*, but to produce an extended biographical narrative. The *Biographical Memoirs*[83] remain indeed a compilation, but one which is ordered as a continuous narration and which gives a coherent interpretation of the life, work and spirit of the Founder.

Lemoyne, who died in 1916, published the first eight volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs* between 1898 and 1912. His ninth and last volume was published posthumously in 1917. Volume X, given its initial shape by Lemoyne, was published by Father Angelo Amadei in a completely recast form in 1939 (the last volume of the series to be published).[84]

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[82] Lemoyne's words in his Preface to Volume I of the *Biographical Memoirs* seem to point to Father Rua as to the person responsible for this change in program: "this work entrusted to me by the Superior;" "I had been instructed by our revered Rector Major, Father Michael Rua, to omit nothing [...];"[...] our Rector Major, Father Michael Rua, to whom I dedicate these volumes that he inspired and approved" [*EBM* I, xi, xii and xiii].

[83] The title of the work, as it appears in Volume I, is: *Memorie Biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco raccolte da Sacerdote Salesiano Giovanni Battista Lemoyne*. The term *biographical memoirs* seems to imply that, even though now the intent was biographical, the conception was more modest than that of a full scale biography.

[84] Angelo Amadei (1868-1945) began his theological studies in the diocesan seminary and then he entered the Salesian school at Faenza in 1887. He visited the Oratory in Turin and met Don Bosco. He was professed in 1888. He continued the study of theology while teaching full time in the Salesian School of Borgo San Martino and was ordained in 1892. After serving in various capacities in several Salesian schools, he was appointed in 1908 by Father Rua to succeed Father Dominic Minguzzi as Director of the *Bollettino Salesiano*, a post he held for twenty years. After Father Rua's death in 1910, he began compiling Father Rua's biographical memoirs (later published by him in three volumes [cf. note 67 above]). After Father Lemoyne's death in 1916, Father Amadei appeared to be the logical candidate to succeed him in the work of the *Biographical Memoirs*, and the then Rector Major, Father Paul Albera, entrusted that task to him. But, as things turned out, Amadei was not to be Lemoyne's real successor, although he did bring to completion and publish the tenth and mightiest volume of the set in 1939. The reasons for this failure and for the delay are many--his work at the *Bolletino Salesiano*, his research for the Rua biography, his manifold involvement in the priestly ministry, his deliberate, painstaking and minute working habits, and the fact that the tenth volume spans the most difficult and controversial years of Don Bosco's life and work (1871-74) [cf. Amadei's Preface, *EBM* X, xxf.]. Volume X utilizes archival materials and other documents far beyond Lemoyne's *Documenti* and initial draft. It is a thorough and careful work, topically organized, but one which abandons the chronological narrative clarity of the other volumes and thereby taxes the reader's endurance.

As may be seen, after Father Lemoyne's death in 1916 and the appearance of the posthumous ninth volume (1917), the publication of the *Biographical Memoirs* was discontinued for a number of years, much to the disappointment of Salesians everywhere. By the time of Don Bosco's beatification (1929) this disappointment had turned to near anger, and demands for a resumption of the work could no longer go unheeded. Thus it was that the then Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, appointed Father Eugene Ceria to continue the work. Ceria published volumes XI-XIX between 1930 and 1939, thus bringing the monumental undertaking to completion.[85]

5. Schematic View of the Publication History of the *Biographical Memoirs* in the Original Italian Edition

[author]	[vol.]	[DB's yrs.]	[place of pub.]	[yr. of pub.]	[pp.of text]
Lemoyne	I	1815-1841	S. Benigno	1898	547
id.	II	1841-1847	ibid.	1901	597

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[85] Eugene Ceria (1870-1957) received his early education from the Christian Brothers and the Oratorian Fathers. He entered the Salesian novitiate in 1885, was professed in 1886, and was ordained in 1893. He earned degrees and achieved distinction in the study of the classics, being involved all the while in secondary education. Later in his scholarly career he devoted himself to the study of Christian writers. He had many publications to his name. In 1929 Father Rinaldi called him from Rome to Turin to continue the work of the *Biographical Memoirs*; and from 1930 until his death in 1957, this elderly, urbane and learned scholar devoted his talents exclusively to Salesian studies and publications. From 1930 to 1939, starting from Lemoyne's *Documenti* and proceeding with a painstaking examination of all archival material then available, he published in quick succession volumes XI to XIX of the *Biographical Memoirs*, the last volume being devoted to the history of the Processes of Don Bosco's Beatification (1929) and Canonization (1934) His writing style is characterized by the simple beauty and clarity of the Latin classics, with scholarship to match. Father Ceria is Father Lemoyne's true and worthy successor.

From the *Biographical Memoirs* Father Ceria went on to further Salesian studies and publications. He authored a survey of the history of the Salesian Society under the rectorships of Don Bosco, Father Rua and Father Albera in four volumes (*Annali della Società Salesiana*. Torino: SEI, 1941, 1943, 1946, 1951). He published the first edition of Don Bosco's *Memorie dell'Oratorio* from archival manuscripts with an introduction and commentary (*San Giovanni Bosco, Memorie dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Torino: SEI, 1846); and likewise from archival manuscripts, the letters of Don Bosco in four volumes (*Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco*. Torino: SEI, 1955, 1956, and posthumously 1958, 1959). He also published valuable biographies and biographical sketches of Salesians.

id.	III	1847-1850	ibid.	1903	663
id.	IV	1850-1853	ibid.	1904	766
id.	V	1854-1857	ibid.	1905	953
id.	VI	1858-1861	ibid.	1907	1,102
id.	VII	1862-1864	ibid.	1909	931
id.	VIII	1865-1867	Turin	1912	1,110
id.	IX	1868-1871	ibid.	1817	1,032
(Lemoyne)-Amadei	X	1871-1874	ibid.	1939	1,387
Ceria	XI	1875	ibid.	1930	617
id.	XII	1876	ibid.	1931	706
id.	XIII	1877-1878	ibid.	1932	1,010
id.	XIV	1879-1880	ibid.	1933	849
id.	XV	1881-1882	ibid.	1934	867
id.	XVI	1883	ibid.	1935	724
id.	XVII	1884-1885	ibid.	1936	902
id.	XVIII	1886-1888	ibid.	1937	879
id.	XIX	1888-1938	ibid.	1939	452
				total pp.:	16,094

III. Lemoyne as Historian - His Method in Editing the *Biographical Memoirs*

We have noted that Lemoyne was an indefatigable researcher of biographical documents and testimonies about Don Bosco. He himself clearly states, with reference to the *Biographical Memoirs*, "These pages have been prompted not by imagination, but by a heart guided by calm reason; they are the result of lengthy investigation, correspondence and comparison of

sources."[86] Again and again he makes the very same claim.[87] At various places in his volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs*, Ceria supports Lemoyne's claim.[88] When Lemoyne's *Biographical Memoirs* came under attack in the forties and fifties, Ceria, and other apologists as well, again rose to his defense and emphasized his conscientious recourse to original sources.[89]

There is no denying it: the *Biographical Memoirs* are no "historical novel" or "novelized history"; their story is based on an awesome array of documents that Lemoyne (and his successors) researched, assembled and collated. This will already have become evident from the foregoing pages, and we do not wish to belabor the point.

But, *How did Lemoyne interpret and use the documentation?* Again, the question has already been raised, at least indirectly, in the foregoing discussion. Here, however, we wish to inquire further into Lemoyne's method and (by extension) briefly into that of his successors. For one should bear in

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[86] *EBM* I, xii.

[87] For instance, when introducing the vocation dream, he carefully refers to his sources, Don Bosco's own *Memoirs* among them [cf. *EBM* I, 92f.]. Later he states: "The documentation is so voluminous that, in a way, it can form a library of its own. We have taken no liberties and have indulged neither in poetic flights nor in exaggerations" [*EBM* VIII, 1]. In reporting one of Don Bosco's dream narratives, he assures the reader: "We have faithfully recorded what we ourselves heard at length from Don Bosco or what was testified to us orally or in writing [...]" [*EBM* IX, 100].

[88] For instance, in his Preface to Volume XV, replying to Lemoyne's critics, Ceria discusses certain episodes in the life of Don Bosco that appear to lack "independent corroboration". In some of the episodes under discussion the critics' objections do seem ill conceived. In others, Ceria's defense is not quite convincing [cf. *EBM* XV, xiii-xix].

[89] In the famous Letter of 1953, Ceria addresses the objections raised by Salesian theological students against the historical reliability of Lemoyne's work, namely: (1) Lemoyne's work is less a history than it is a novel; (2) Certain reports cannot be critically defended; (3) Don Bosco's own *Memoirs*, used by Lemoyne as a prime source, are a didactic rather then a historical work; (4) There are demonstrable contradictions or historical errors in the *Biographical Memoirs*, especially in the earlier volumes; (5) Also Ceria's work, like Lemoyne's, is less of a history than it is a eulogy of the Founder; (6) The *Biographical Memoirs* fail to show the real Don Bosco, his "shadows" and his connections with contextual history. Ceria grants that Lemoyne was no critical historian; but he strongly emphasizes the overall reliability of his work. My assessment again is that while in some instances the critics' objection are ill-conceived, in some others, one remains unconvinced by Ceria's argument [cf. *Ceria-Let*].

More recently Father Guido Favini has published a lengthy and impassioned defense of Lemoyne, making essentially the same points as Ceria [cf. *Favini*, 18-44].

mind that Lemoyne's *Documenti* provided the basic material for Amadei's and Ceria's work.[90]

1. Lemoyne's Compilation Method

The *Biographical Memoirs* are a huge compilation of documents and testimonies sectioned into discrete items and made to fit into a chronological, narrative framework. Lemoyne appears to have believed that the best biography of Don Bosco would be that which had assembled the greatest possible amount of documentation provided by witnesses. He felt that he should neglect nothing, not even a single word that had been reported to him as uttered by Don Bosco.[91] He suffered from what Desramaut describes as a "substantialist" syndrome. This is a pre-scientific mind set which accepts all "historical reports" as having the same value, failing to distinguish between what is substantive and what is merely accessory, what pertains to the depth and what pertains merely to the surface of history. Lemoyne did not ask the real critical questions with respect to the value of those reports, but treated all biographical material as of equal merit. For Lemoyne it was sufficient that the witness be "honest", a quality gauged on the basis of moral criteria.[92]

Lemoyne's concern not to omit anything resulted in a number of literary doublets, or even triplets, that is, a double or triple narration of the same fact on the basis of varying reports by different witnesses. One example will illustrate the point. Members of the Moglia family, Mrs. Dorothy Moglia included, in their depositions to Father Marchisio in 1888[93] and at the Process of Beatification in the 1890s, testified that John had refused to baby-sit for Mrs. Moglia's little girl, even when ordered to do so. For this episode Lemoyne had over half-a-dozen testimonies at his disposal. All but one were in substantial agreement with the Marchisio report of the refusal: "Give me as many boys as

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[90] The paragraphs that follow, dealing with Lemoyne's method of compiling, interpretating and utilizing documents, as well as with his charismatic portrayal of Don Bosco, are based on *Desramaut-Aut*, 45-60.

[91] In his preface to Volume I Lemoyne states: "I had been instructed by our revered Rector Major, Father Michael Rua, to omit nothing that should come to my knowledge, even though at the moment I might consider it inconsequential" [*EBM* I, xii].

[92] Cf. *Desramaut-Aut*, 45f.

[93] Cf. note 79 above.

you like, and I'll look after them; but I don't want to baby-sit for girls."[94] This refusal is rendered by Lemoyne, "Give me as many boys as you like, even ten of them, and I'll look after them. But I must not look after girls."[95] However, one of the testimonies seemed sufficiently different to warrant separate mention. And so Lemoyne has Mrs. Moglia reiterate her demand, and John his refusal, no longer in terms of his personal feelings, but in terms of his "vocation": "I am not destined for this."[96] Now, it seems unlikely that a boy of thirteen in such circumstances could make such a statement about "his calling". But the real point is that Lemoyne had a number of testimonies about the *one* episode. If the testimonies differed, the thing to do was bring historical criticism to bear on the matter and then decide which form of the refusal would be historically more likely, not "double" John's refusal.[97]

2. Lemoyne's Interpretation of Documents

Lemoyne ignored another yet more basic distinction: that which exists between history *as lived* or experienced in real life, and history as *reported*. He forgets that documents stemming even from direct witnesses are *interpretations* of what happened in real life. An historical report cannot be understood apart from the person who reported it. This raises the question of the historical-cultural context of the people involved. We know how important such a question has become in the critical study of the Bible. It is no less important in critical biography. Of particular interest under this heading, is Lemoyne's interpretation of the reports of the "Barcelona Bilocation" in *Documenti*, taken over by Ceria in the *Biographical Memoirs*. The fact that Don Bosco was physically in Turin at the time, and was apparently not in an "altered" state, would rule out "bilocation". Father Branda's "vision" then would have to be understood on the basis of the character and the cultural context of

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[94] *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Marchisio-"Relazioni", 7, *FDBMicro* 1203 D7; *Desramaut-Mem I*, 423.

[95] *BM* I,199, cf. *EBM* I, 149.

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] Desramaut [cf. *Desramaut-Aut*, 46f.] cites further examples of such a procedure: a doublet of John's recitation of the Jubilee evening sermon to Fr. Calosso on the basis of varying accounts, by Don Bosco in *MO* and by chroniclers Ruffino-Bonetti [cf. *EBM* I, 133 & 134, two recitations of over half-an-hour and of ten minutes respectively]; a doublet of the cure of the paralyzed woman at the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians on the basis of varying reports by Don Bosco to Lemoyne and by Don Bosco in the souvenir booklet [cf. *IBM* IX, 257 and 260 (omitted in *EBM*)].

the witness.[98] The historian or biographer must first "understand" his documents.

Lemoyne (and the biographers that followed him) may, therefore, be faulted with a failure of the "critical sense" and with "indifference". It is not enough to say that they were "men of their times". The Bollandists and the historians of Port Royal, working centuries earlier, had already set critical standards for the lives of the Saints. It is true that popular, uncritical hagiography was the rule in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. But it is also true that critical hagiography was gaining momentum late in the nineteenth century, when the *Documenti* and the *Biographical Memoirs* were being fashioned. It is recognized (and lamented at the time) that, generally speaking, the studies and the cultural formation of priests left much to be desired. Hence the quality of seminary formation in the nineteenth century may be seen as an extenuating circumstance.[99] Certainly it provided no exit from the prevailing popular, pre-scientific, uncritical mentality. This is the mentality which Don Bosco and the early Salesians shared with the common people among whom they lived and worked.[100] In spite of this, Lemoyne evidently believed that he had produced biographical work of high critical value, when he writes:

> These pages have been prompted not by the imagination, but by a heart guided by calm reason; they are the result of lengthy investigation, correspondence and comparison of sources. The narratives, the dialogues, everything that I considered worthy of being recorded, are a faithful, literal account of the facts as presented by the witnesses.[101]

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[98] Cf. *Desramaut-Aut*, 48f. and for a fuller discussion F. Desramaut, "La Viellesse (1884-1888): Études préalables à un biographie de saint Jean Bosco, VIII," *Cahiers Salésiens* N. 18-19 (1988) 201-208. For Father Branda's own report cf. *Positio super introductione causae. Summarium*, Rome, 1907, p. 782-788 [*ASC* 163, *FDBMicro* 2225 B2-8]. This is transcribed without any significant changes or additions in *Doc* XXXI, 86-89 [cf. *ASC* 110: Cronachette, Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBMicro* 1118 A12-B3], and in *IBM* XVIII, 34-39.

[99] Cf. *Desramaut-Aut*, 49f.

[100] Cf. P. Stella, "Le ricerche su Don Bosco nel venticinquesimo 1960-1985: bilancio, problemi, prospettive," in *Don Bosco nella Chiesa a servizio dell'umanità: Studi e testimonianze*, Pietro Braido, ed. (Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi 5) Roma: LAS, 1987, p. 383-387.

[101] Lemoyne's preface, *EBM* I, xii.

He regards mere accumulation of reports by witnesses, without evaluation and distinction, as critical biography (one prompted not by "imagination", but by "calm reason"). But such a work may turn out to be merely a monumental example of popular, pre-scientific hagiography.

3. Lemoyne's *Use* of Documentation

Not only did Don Bosco's biographers research and collect documents. They also made them highly readable in the way they transcribed and compiled them in narrative fashion. The *Biographical Memoirs* are a readable and enjoyable work, a good story--but not because they are "romanticized or novelized history". Again let us stress the fact that Lemoyne in his *Documenti*, with little play given to the imagination, brought together all sorts of documents, including letters and articles from periodicals. Amadei and Ceria, while availing themselves of Lemoyne's work, collected additional original documents both in the narrative text and in their increasingly larger appendices. For instance, for the story of Don Bosco's trip to France in 1883, in addition to material gathered by Lemoyne in *Documenti*, Ceria transcribes some seventy original documents.[102]

But, when this is granted, we still find serious flaws in Lemoyne's editorial method. Not only does he transcribe documents so as to make them readable; he also manipulates them and adds to them. On the assumption that the report must represent reality, he fleshes out his document in accordance with what might have happened, usually deriving his material from other documents and contexts. For example, speaking of Don Bosco's first Mass he explicitly refers to Don Bosco's *Memoirs* and quotes the relevant passage. But under the same reference to the *Memoirs* he makes significant additions (here shown in italics):[103]

> My ordination day was on the vigil of the feast of the Blessed Trinity, *June 5, [ordinations being held] by Archbishop Louis Fransoni at his residence.* I said my first Mass in the church of St Francis of Assisi, where Father *Joseph* Caffasso, *my signal benefactor and director*, was dean of the conferences.

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[102] Cf. *IBM* XVI, 465-567 (Appendices 16-78).

[103] The text of the *Biographical Memoirs* [*EBM* I, 385/line 37-386/line 11] is based on Don Bosco's Memoirs [*MO-En*, 166, lines 22-33], but it includes various additions [chiefly *EBM* I, 386/lines 6-10 and 15-19].

> Though a priest had not said his first Mass in my home town for many a day, and my neighbors were anxiously waiting for me to say mine there, I preferred to say it without fuss in Turin *at the Guardian Angel altar, a side altar located in this church on the Gospel side. On that day the Universal Church was keeping the feast of the Most Blessed Trinity; the Archdiocese of Turin, the feast of the miracle of the Blessed Sacrament; the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the feast of Our Lady of Grace, following a very ancient custom.* That day was the most wonderful day of my life. At the Memento of that unforgettable Mass I remembered devoutly all my teachers, my benefactors spiritual and temporal, and especially the ever-lamented Father Calosso, whom I have always remembered as my great and signal benefactor. *It is a pious belief that the Lord infallibly grants the grace requested of Him by a new priest at his first Mass. I prayed most ardently for efficacy of speech that I might therewith do good to souls. It seems that the Lord truly heard my humble prayer.*

Parts of this expansion can be documented elsewhere; most likely each single element of the expansion was derived from documentation. For instance, at Lemoyne's request, priests at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi had ascertained that Don Bosco had said his first Mass at the altar of the Guardian Angel.[104] Further, the expansion occurred in two stages, in the *Documenti* and in the *Biographical Memoirs*, signifying perhaps that additional documentation had become available to Lemoyne. The point, however, is that the quote from Don Bosco's *Memoirs* is actually a compilation of various documentary excerpts, the total effect of which is to put a more elaborate construction on Don Bosco's original reflection.

Another example is the long and learned passage in which Don Bosco relates to his boys the complicated history of St. Michael's Shrine, while on a pilgrimage there.[105] On reading this quote one is struck with awe at Don Bosco's memory and encyclopedic knowledge. In reality, however, the quote attributed to Don Bosco comes from a note which Bonetti (quoting from some

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[104] With respect to the middle addition, Father Lorenzo Romano, writing to Father Lemoyne on behalf of the Rector of the Church, stated: "As you requested, I have searched the Church registers and have ascertained that the V. Rev. Fr. John Bosco did celebrate his first Mass on June 6, 1841, and he celebrated it at the altar of the Guardian Angel, which in this church is located on the Gospel side." And he added, "On that day the Universal Church was keeping the feast of the Most Blessed Trinity; the Archdiocese of Turin, the feast of the miracle of the Blessed Sacrament; the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the feast of Our Lady of Grace, following a very ancient custom" [Letter of December 11, 1891, *Doc* XLIII, 9, in *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBMicro* 1183 C3]. The phrases added at the beginning of the quote are derived from Don Bosco's *Spiritual Testament* [cf. Motto, *Memorie*, 20, as in note 44 above].

[105] Cf. *EBM* IV, 83f.

encyclopedia) appended to that installment of the *Storia dell'Oratorio*[106] and which Lemoyne took over and put on Don Bosco's lips.

Again, Lemoyne presents, as coming from Don Bosco, a "testament" for the Salesian Cooperators, "to be opened after my death", and gives the text of this "precious document".[107] Ceria follows suit.[108] Later, however, Ceria recognized that the document originated with Bonetti.[109]

Likewise, Don Bosco's audience with Pius IX on February 12, 1870[110] is a composition of various authentic pieces, but the reconstruction is totally fictitious.[111] As Desramaut writes: "[Lemoyne] has recourse to such a procedure dozens, perhaps hundreds, of times overall in the *Biographical Memoirs*. His quotes, including those from Don Bosco, are seldom faithful, and never quite reliable."[112]

4. Lemoyne's Charismatic Portrayal of Don Bosco

Lemoyne is not satisfied with telling the story of Don Bosco's life and work. Driven by admiration for his hero, unconsciously perhaps, he gives a portrayal of Don Bosco on the basis of a preconceived, ideal image of the man. Lemoyne (and all of Don Bosco's early disciples would have concurred) basically portrays Don Bosco as a charismatic person, endowed from on high with idealized perfection and power, and even, in a sense, with infallibility and omnipotence. They viewed Don Bosco's mission as arising from a divine predisposition, a predetermined vocation, that bypassed all secondary causes,

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[106] Cf. *Bollettino Salesiano* 4 (1881) 15, in *Desramaut-Aut*, 55f. For Bonetti's *Storia*, cf. note 43 above.

[107] Cf. *Doc* XL, 324-332, in *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBMicro* 1167 E4-1168 A1.

[108] Cf. *IBM* XVIII, 620-623.

[109] Cf. *Ep-Ce* IV, 393, note.

[110] Cf. *EBM* IX, 395ff.

[111] Cf. F. Desramaut, "Le récit de l'audience pontificale du 12 février 1870 dans les Memorie biografiche de don Bosco," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 6 (1987) 81-104.

[112] *Desramaut-Aut*, 54f.

such as human, social, cultural forces. Don Bosco himself, of course, believed that his life and special vocation had been guided by supernatural interventions of God and the Virgin Mary. But he always speaks of such an experience in an open, nuanced manner.

In *Documenti* Lemoyne relates how Don Bosco in 1847 was considering joining the Rosminians, provided he would be allowed to carry on his work for youth. Lemoyne remarks:

> [Don Bosco] would have preferred to carry his plan forward under someone else's guidance [...]. But the Virgin Mary had revealed to him in a vision the field of his labors. He had thought out and worked out a plan from which he absolutely could not and would not deviate. He was totally responsible for its realization. He saw clearly the path he was to follow and the means he was to use to attain his goal; hence he could ill afford to jeopardize such a plan by putting it under someone else's control.[...][113]

How different "this Don Bosco" appears from the Don Bosco who is forever reading the signs of the times, forever shifting, adapting, and "rolling with the punches" of historical events.

In the *Biographical Memoirs*, this reflection is ascribed to Don Bosco himself in the first person: "Don Bosco confided to us: ' The Blessed Virgin had revealed to me in a vision the field of my labor [...].'"[114] The change from "report" to "direct quote" may have been due to Barberis' comment in his *Little Chronicle*. After reporting Don Bosco's explanation of "his plan", Barberis remarks: "It seems to me that he meant to say outright: 'The Virgin Mary had revealed to me in a vision the field of my labors[...].'"[115]

Another example is Lemoyne's construction of the dream line signaling divine intervention at every stage of Don Bosco's vocational development. After speaking about a dream that John Bosco related to his friend Joseph Turco during a summer vacation at the Sussambrino farm, Lemoyne writes:

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[113] *Doc* III, 151 in *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Lemoyne-Doc, *FDBMicro* 975, E7.

[114] *EBM* III, 171f.

[115] *ASC* 110: Cronachette-Barberis, *FDBMicro* 796, E8ff.

> At this point we cannot refrain from dwelling briefly on the logical development of the various dreams that wondrously followed one another. At the age of nine, John Bosco first learned of the great mission that would be entrusted to him; at sixteen he hears the promise of material means for sheltering and feeding countless boys; at nineteen a peremptory order makes it clear that he is not free to refuse the mission entrusted to him; at twenty-one he is told about the type of boys whose spiritual welfare he must especially look after; at twenty-two a big city, Turin, is pointed out to him, as the field and headquarters of his apostolic labors. We shall see how these mysterious instructions will continue as needed until the completion of God's plans.[116]

These additional "mysterious instructions" are the dreams of 1844 and 1855, designating Valdocco as the place where Don Bosco would finally settle.[117] Now, Don Bosco himself clearly states that the original dream was repeated with variations.[118] But Lemoyne's elaborate reconstruction of a predetermined line of supernatural guidance results from the way he edits the multiplicity of testimonies at his disposal, some of which are clearly doublets, that is, variant narratives of the the same event.[119]

From a superhuman charismatic interpretation of Don Bosco's life, one can then pass almost *by simple deduction* to a superhuman representation of Don Bosco's holiness and moral character (the virtues). Lemoyne portays Don Bosco from the start as untouched by human imperfection.

The superhuman portayal of Don Bosco flowed from Lemoyne's predetermined conception of him as a man and a saint. As the biographer saw it, his hero's vocation and character appeared almost completely enveloped in a marvelous and supernatural aura. To that extent, however, the real Don Bosco is hidden from view, and our understanding of his real story is diminished.

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[116] *EBM* I, 317. Such a reconstruction of Don Bosco's vocation dream line is accepted by Ceria [cf. *MO-Ce*, 134, note to line 8].

[117] For the individual dreams in this line of divine guidance cf. *EBM* I, 95f., 181f., 229, 284f., 315f.; II, 190f., 232ff. 267f.

[118] Cf. *MO-En*, 110, 209f.

[119] For a thorough discussion, cf. *Desramaut-Mem I*, 250-265.

Similar reservations may be made with regard to the work of Lemoyne's successors.[120]

CONCLUSION

After looking at Lemoyne and his background, after tracing the origins and progress of his work as biographer, and after a brief examination of the method that guided him in the compilation of the *Biographical Memoirs*, an additional comment by way of conclusion is in order. The question that now arises is a simple one: What fate lies in store for the *Biographical Memoirs* at the hands of critical scholars and biographers?

First of all, it will have been abundantly clear from the foregoing discussion that Lemoyne's work is not of the genre of the historical novel, much less a work of fantasy. Lemoyne's has written an *edifying* and *faithful* story *for* Don Bosco's sons and followers.

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[120] Volume X of the *Biographical Memoirs*, recast and edited by Amadei on the basis of Lemoyne's materials, shares the same basic pre-scientific outlook as the earlier nine volumes by Lemoyne.

Are the nine volumes (XI-XIX) edited by Ceria any different? In some ways they are. They are better organized and more lucidly written. Ceria does not have Lemoyne's obsession with sheer accumulation of documents. He exercises greater editorial freedom and better judgment in selection. His experience with classical literature makes him skeptical of direct dialogue. Hence he recasts Lemoyne's dialogues in indirect discourse. He avoids fleshing out documents with additional material from other contexts. Perhaps, quantitatively, he gives less play to predictions and to the "supernatural" than Lemoyne and the earlier chroniclers.

On the other hand, we should not overlook the fact that Ceria took over some 30 volumes of Lemoyne's *Documenti*, "lock, stock and barrel," without ever questioning Lemoyne's interpretations or trying to ascertain and analyze Lemoyne's sources. Ceria's presuppositions for historical interpretation do not seem to have been much different from Lemoyne's, and historical criticism is never brought to bear on the documents or on Lemoyne's use and interpretation of them. At controversial points (as in the Gastaldi confrontation) he tends to soften the narrative by way of compromise. Likewise, he habitually tones down Don Bosco's emotional reactions to people and events.

Ceria is of a different generation, and his work demonstrates undeniable progress. However, even though more cautious, Ceria did not really transcend the literary genre of pre-scientific biography. He largely followed his sources and made little effort to transcend the religious, charismatic interpretation of Don Bosco's life and work. His is still basically a "transfigured", supra-historical Don Bosco [cf. *Desramaut-Aut*, 60-63].

This is how Lemoyne's work was perceived and received, without any exception, by the Salesians who had known Don Bosco. It may be noted that Father Paul Albera, Rector Major at the time,[121] personally reviewed Lemoyne's volumes before publication, with the exception of volume VIII, which was carefully examined by Father Barberis.[122]

From all of the above it is likewise clear that a definitive and critical biography of Don Bosco has still to be written. Is such a work still possible? Apparently it is. Lemoyne's modern successors have been at work laying the foundations for such an undertaking.[123] As Braido points out, the goal remains that of a critically rigorous, full-scale biography of Don Bosco. The work of critical analysis in progress on the sources and on other documentation does not do away with the need for a "new", comprehensive biographical synthesis on Don Bosco. It must present Don Bosco not in a hyphenated fashion, (Don Bosco-the educator, Don Bosco-the writer, etc.) but whole--his life, his work, his ideas, his projects, his significance and his influence in his century and beyond.

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[121] Paul Albera (1845-1921) entered the Oratory in 1858, became a Salesian in 1860, and was ordained in 1868. After various appointments, he was named Provincial of the houses in France in 1881 by Don Bosco, in which capacity he served for 10 years. The Salesian work in France flourished, and Father Albera became known as the "Little Don Bosco" because of his deep spiritual life and enterprising spirit. In 1891 he was elected Spiritual Director General of the Society, and in 1910 he succeeded Father Rua as Rector Major. He was very close to Don Bosco, indeed a favorite of his; and it is recorded that as the Saint lay dying, in his delirium, he called for his *Paolino* to come to him [cf. *IBM* XVIII, 534].

[122] Cf. E. Valentini, "Don Ceria scrittore," *Salesianum* 19 (1957) 325.

[123] The Salesian Historical Institute [*Istituto Storico Salesiano*] founded at the Salesian Generalate in Rome, under the direction of Father Peter Braido, stands in a tradition of research [cf Braido, *L'ISS*, as in note 45 above]. It is dedicated, as its statutes indicate, to the critical editing and study of archival and other material that may in the future serve as the basis for a critical biography [cf. *Ibid.* 5f., 8f.]. Likewise, the *Cahiers Salésiens* I-IX, published under Father Desramaut's direction, are described as *Études préalables a une biographie de Saint Jean Bosco* [cf. note 98 above]. Aspects of such an undertaking are discussed in P. Stella, "Fare storia salesiana oggi," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 1 (1982) 41-53. At the *Centro Studi Don Bosco* established at the *Università Pontificia Salesiana* , its director, Father Peter Stella, has published a number of scholarly contextual studies on Don Bosco that would significantly contribute toward a critical biography. Such are: *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, Vol. I *Vita e opere*; Vol. II *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità*; Vol. III *La Cononizzazione* (1888-1934). Roma: LAS, 1979, 1981, 1988. (English edition: *Don Bosco in the History of Catholic Religious Thought and Practice*, Vol. I *Don Bosco: Life and Work*, tr. John Drury. New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1985); *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*. Roma: LAS, 1980; *Il Giansenismo in Italia: Collezione di documenti*, Vol. I/i, I/ii, I/iii *Piemonte*. Zürich: PAS Verlag, 1966, 1970, 1874.

Prerequisite to this is a thoroughly critical examination of the sources and of the biographical literature that has come down to us in Salesian tradition, the *Biographical Memoirs* included.[124] But Lemoyne will still have to be called in as a partner. Not only can his work not be overlooked, it will remain fundamental. He was himself an eyewitness; he collected testimonies from numerous eyewitnesses; he drew on sources that have since ceased to exist. The *Biographical Memoirs* are truly an archive which can contribute significantly to a definitive historical interpretation of Don Bosco and his work.

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[124] Cf. Pietro Braido, "Prospettive e iniziative della ricerca su Don Bosco," in *Don Bosco nella storia: Atti del 1° Congresso Internazionale di Studi su Don Bosco (Università Pontificia Salesiana* - Roma 16-20 gennaio 1989) (Pubblicazioni del Centro Studi Don Bosco. Studi storici - 10), ed. Mario Midali. Roma: LAS, 1990, p. 541-549. Braido [Ibid., 545f.] adds that Lemoyne and his successors , realizing perhaps the annalistic character of the *Biographical Memoirs*, have the merit of having seen the importance of a comprehensive biographical presentation of the whole Don Bosco. And that is what they endeavored to do, in an uncritical fashion perhaps, by their *Lives* of Don Bosco: G.B. Lemoyne, *Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio Giovanni Bosco, fondatore della Pia Società Salesiana, dell'Istituto di Maria Ausiliatrice e dei Cooperatori Salesiani*, 2 vol. Torino: SEI, 1911/1914; A. Amadei, *Don Bosco e il suo apostolato dalle sue memorie personali e da testimonianze di contemporanei*. Torino: SEI, 1929, ed. 2, 2 vol., 1940; E. Ceria, *San Giovanni Bosco nella vita e nelle opere*. Torino: SEI, 1938.