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The Convitto Ecclesiastico— “Where One Learnt to be a Priest”

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Introduction

In his quasi-autobiographical *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Don Bosco speaks of the offers of gainful employment made to him after his ordination in 1841. He consulted his great benefactor and friend, Fr. Joseph Cafasso.

Without a moment’s hesitation, this is what [Fr. Cafasso] said: “You need to study moral theology and homiletics. For the present forget all these offers and come to the *Convitto*.” I willingly followed his wise advice; on November 3, 1841, I entered the *Convitto*.¹

Don Bosco then goes on to describe the nature and purpose of this institution. It was a kind of ‘finishing school’ where (he says) “one learnt to be a priest.” He speaks of the people who were responsible for it and for its program; and he makes specific reference to the ideological context and the matrix of thought which had determined its founding.

Most Salesians, familiar as they are with passages on the subject from Don Bosco’s own pen and from biographies of St. Joseph Cafasso, are acquainted with the name, and to some extent also with the nature and purpose of this institution. And yet not a few will be amazed at the terms in which a major modern Church historian assesses its importance:

In Piedmont—according to Doubet—“the people which in Italy took Catholicism most seriously”—apostles like Don Bosco, Cafasso, and Murialdo were only the most outstanding

¹ Giovanni Bosco, *Memorie dell’Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Introduzione, note e testo critico, a cura di Antonio da Siva Ferreira (Istituto Storico Salesiano - Roma, Fonti - Serie prima, 4). Roma: LAS, 1991, p.116 [*MO-da Silva*]; *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855: The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco*, tr. by Daniel Lyons, with notes and commentary by Eugenio Ceria, SDB., Lawrence Castelvecchi, SDB., and Michael Mendl, SDB. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1989, p. 180 [*MO-En*].

examples of a great number of pious and diligent priests who, thanks to their education in the Ecclesiastical Convent of Turin [the *Convitto*], clearly surpassed all the Italian clergy, including the Papal States.²

What precisely was this *Convitto*, and what's the story behind it? This is a question that is often asked. The present essay will attempt a modest answer.

In the literature the common designation for this institution is *Convitto* or *Convitto Ecclesiastico* (resident institute for priests). From another point of view, it is also referred to as *Conferenza[e] di Morale* (conference[s] or course in moral theology), since its program consisted chiefly of lectures in moral and pastoral theology and in the art of preaching. As a matter of fact, as will be explained below, this institution began with lectures in moral theology held by Fr. Luigi Guala in his own rooms; and became the *Convitto* when, with the authorities' approval, it was housed at St. Francis of Assisi's monastery and church.³

It should be borne in mind that both the School of Theology at the university and the archdiocesan seminary had all along provided official lecture programs in moral and pastoral theology. Newly ordained priests were required to spend two years in further study and training before they were given faculties to hear confessions. Attendance at such lectures, which were also made available locally, though not compulsory, was strongly encouraged.

The *Convitto* then was nothing else but a pastoral institute for priests with a two-year residency. What distinguished it from other lecture programs, apart from its seriousness, was its new theological orientation, as will presently be explained.

Historical Context: Trends in Theology and Ecclesiology

In speaking of the circumstances that led to the founding of the *Convitto*, Don Bosco in his *Memoirs* refers to it as "that marvelous seedbed which proved so valuable to the Church, especially as a means of eradicating the

² Roger Aubert et al., *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, Tr. by P. Becker (History of the Church, ed. by H. Jedin and J. Dolan, VIII). New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 1981 (1971), p. 256f.

³ The full name is *Convitto Ecclesiastico di San Francesco d'Assisi*. '*Convitto*' means 'resident or boarding school' (the program specified a two-year residency); '*Ecclesiastico*' means 'for priests'; and the title comes from the fact that it was housed in the former monastery and in conjunction with the church of St. Francis of Assisi. Thus the name might be rendered in English as, 'St. Francis of Assisi Resident Pastoral Institute for Priests'. Throughout this essay, this institution will be referred to simply as *Convitto*.

vestiges of Jansenism that still persisted in our midst.” And after adding that at the time “the question of Probabilism and Probabiliorism was hotly debated,” he goes on to describe the position and function of the *Convitto* in that context.⁴

The theological orientation prevailing in the institutions of higher learning of the diocese of Turin during the first decades of the nineteenth century are succinctly described by Giuseppe Tuninetti in his biography of Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi. He writes:

In moral theology, the teaching imparted in the Schools of Theology and Law of the University, in the Seminary, and in their respective Conferences of Moral Theology [Pastoral Institutes], was clearly probabiliorist. In ecclesiology, the same institutions, in spite of avowed official neutrality, propounded theses against papal infallibility, and were even critical of the papal primacy. In pastoral practice, rigoristic tendencies prevailed. Among the better educated clergy, out of whose number bishops were generally chosen, pro-Gallican ideas were common.⁵

Much has been said and written about the theological orientation of professors at the university and at the seminary, and of the Piedmontese clergy at large, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Were the prevailing moral theology and ecclesiology really Jansenistic and Gallican or anti-papal? P. Stella has clarified the issue, as well as the terminology, and has submitted exhaustive documentation on the subject of Jansenism. On the one hand, the so-called Jansenists in Piedmont were really ‘Port-Royalists’, that is, followers in the wake of the spiritual and ascetical reform of Port Royal; and on the other, Jansenism is often used inappropriately in the extended sense of ‘rigorism’. His assessment is that one can no longer speak of Jansenism in the strict sense, but only of rigorism in varying degrees.⁶

⁴ *MO-da Silva*, p. 117; *Mo-En*, p. 181.

⁵ Giuseppe Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi 1815-1883*. Vol. I: *Teologo, pubblicista, rosminiano, vescovo di Saluzzo: 1815-1871*; Vol. II: *Arcivescovo di Torino: 1871-1883*. Casale Monferrato: Edizioni Piemme, 1883 and 1988: Vol. I, p. 33. [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*]

⁶ Cf. Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, tr. by John Drury. New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1985, p. 78-91 [Stella, *DB I*], with special reference to pastoral and sacramental practice; Id., *Il Giansenismo in Italia*. (Bibliotheca Theologica Salesiana, Ser. I: Fontes), Vol. I/i, I/ii and I/iii: *Piemonte*. Zürich: PAS Verlag, 1966, 1970 & 1974 [Stella, *Giansenismo*]; Id., *Giurisdizionalismo e giansenismo all'Università di Torino nel sec. XVIII*. Torino: SEI, 1958 [Stella, *Giurisdizionalismo*];

A similar conclusion is reached with respect to Gallicanism, a term which may also be loosely used. Stella prefers the term 'Jurisdictionalism' and sees it expressed in varying degrees at the university in the late 1700s.⁷

Giuseppe Usseglio, SDB, "Il Teologo Guala e il Convitto Ecclesiastico di Torino," *Salesianum* 10 (1848) [453-502], p. 476-483 [Usseglio, *Guala*].

Doctrinally, Jansenism stems from the doctrine on grace and freedom set forth by the Dutch theologian and bishop Cornelius Jansen in his (posthumous) *Augustinus* (1640), written against Pelagianism and similar doctrines. The author teaches that an individual's salvation is owed to a totally arbitrary election on the part of God; that is, the individual is the object, not the correspondent, of the divine will. This view leads to an a priori concept of predestination and supposes the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between human corruption and redemption.

Before the middle of seventeenth century Jansenism began to spread in France, though less as a theological system than as a practical way of life. Its chief vehicle was the reform, inspired by the Jansenist understanding of Christianity, undertaken in the two branches of Port Royal, the great convent of Cistercian nuns (in and near Paris), chiefly under the influence of Saint-Cyran (Jean-Ambroise Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbot of Saint-Cyran), and carried forward by Mère Angélique Arnaud, Abbess of Port Royal. From Port Royal and its institutions Jansenism gained influence in French society, acquiring apologists of the stature of Antoine Arnaud (Mère Angélique's brother) and Blaise Pascal, whose sister had joined the convent. The Jesuits were the chief opponents of Jansenism, as well as its target. In the realm of the moral and ascetical life Jansenism strongly opposed the probabilism of Jesuit casuistry, and made the severest demands, with no room for compromise, in calling for complete certainty for moral action (rigorism). This had severe repercussions in the field of pastoral and sacramental practice and in the spiritual life. Arnaud's *On Frequent Communion*, and Pascal's anti-Jesuitic *Letters to a Provincial* are well known expressions of the Jansenist mind.

Conflict with the official Church was inevitable. Controversy, condemnations, and periods of uneasy peace succeeded each other until the suppression and destruction of Port Royal (1707-1712). But, although Jansenism was weakened in its organization and in its theological structure by this event and by the Bull *Unigenitus* that followed (1713), it persisted, and still persists to our day in its rigoristic aspects as a spirituality and as a state of mind. [Cf. Konrad Hecker, "Jansenism," in *Encyclopedia of Theology. The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. by K. Rahner. New York: The Seabury Press, 1975, p. 727-730; L.J. Cagnet, "Jansenism," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967, VII, p. 820-824; [NCE] B. Matteucci, "Jansenistic Piety," *NCE* VII, p. 824]

⁷ Cf. Stella, *Giurisdizionalismo*, p. 9-41.

Gallicanism is a term coined by historians to describe a complex of national claims against papal centralism. "There are two aspects to be noted. One is the historical manifestation of a French nationalism in Church affairs, including the reaction of the monarchy to the centralism of the papal Curia [...]. The other is the theory of canon law [ecclesiology], compounded of conciliarist, episcopalist and nationalist elements, [...] which was given political expression in the 'Declaration of Gallican Liberties' under Louis XIV (1682)." Justification was sought in the notion of the sacredness of kingship and in the historic role of the French monarchy (from the time of the Merovingians and Carolingians), as well as in the claim that Gallican freedoms were nothing but the universally acknowledged freedoms of the early Church.

Tuninetti speaks of a recrudescence of Jurisdictionalism in the early 1800s in consequence of Napoleon's ecclesiastical policies, and notes (with specific reference to ecclesiology) that "the 'Gallicanism' imputed to the theological faculty [at the university] of Turin lay in its specific stance toward papal authority and personal papal infallibility." And after some discussion of opinions, he concludes that the orientation of the School of Theology was indeed anti-papal in that respect, and that the claim of neutrality was more verbal than real.⁸

It may be noted that among Italian bishops opposed to papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council the most uncompromising were some Piedmontese bishops, all graduates of the School of Theology at the university.⁹

In opposition to these established trends, again during the early part of the nineteenth century, there arose a new, contrary force that would gradually gain the upper hand and finally prevail in the latter half of the century. This was St. Alphonsus' theology, the chief characteristics of which were Equi-

After the Gregorian reform (1059-1123), Gallicanism saw itself as opposed to Roman centralization and to the doctrine of 'full papal power in spiritual and temporal matters'. Over the centuries moves and countermoves, negotiations, decrees and Councils did not succeed in bringing the parties together. The accommodation proposed by Bossuet in his Four Articles (1682), one of which denied the Pope's personal infallibility and made his authority to rest on the assent of the Church, fared no better. Gallicanism survived, and found imitators in Josephinism and Febronianism.

Though abandoned in theory by Napoleon, in practice it still obtained in Napoleonic legislation, and it continued in a variety of forms through the Restoration and the subsequent revolutionary period.

'Jurisdictionalism' in the schools of the university and among the Piedmontese clergy in the early nineteenth century appears indeed as a form of Gallicanism, but one stripped of many of its historical and theological connotations.

As would be expected, Gallicanism was bound to produce an equally intransigent contrary reaction. This solidified in the 'ultramontanist party', represented in the nineteenth century by Joseph de Maistre and Hughes Félicité Robert de Lamennais. Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors (1864) and the proclamation of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1870) represent high points of the reaction. [Cf. Émile Delaruelle, "Gallicanism," in *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. by K. Rahner et al. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969, vol. II, p. 373f.]

Apart from its strictly historical references, Ultramontanism (the name referring to what lies beyond the Alps from a French standpoint) came to describe an ecclesiology that gives a central position to Rome and the Papacy, including primacy and infallibility.

⁸ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, p. 33f.

⁹ Bishops Luigi Moreno of Ivrea; Luigi Nazari di Calabiana of Casale; Lorenzo Renaldi of Pinerolo; Pietro Sola of Nizza; and Archbishop Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi di Netro of Turin. [Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* I, p. 33, 193ff.]

probabilism and Ultramontanism, with its loyal support of papal primacy and infallibility.¹⁰

As would be expected, Alphonsian doctrine in theology and pastoral practice found space and support mostly outside the university and seminary. Its success in Turin was due to the activity of outstanding personalities and religious groups: the newly re-established Society of Jesus, in the first place; the 'Amicizie' [Friendship Associations]; Fr. Pio Brunone Lanteri and his Oblates of the Virgin Mary; and Fr. Luigi Guala and the *Convitto*.

The Jesuits and Their Activity

The driving force of the new movement was without any doubt the Society of Jesus. After being reestablished by Pope Pius VII in 1814, the Society was allowed to return to the Kingdom of Sardinia and its capital, Turin.¹¹ In

¹⁰ Born in 1696, Alphonsus Liguori received his doctorate in *utroque jure* from the University of Naples at the age of 16. Disenchanted with the practice of law, he renounced the world and studied for the priesthood. Ordained in 1726, he devoted himself to a variety of ministries, especially those of preaching and spiritual direction. In 1732 he founded the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer, a society of priests and brothers dedicated to mission preaching, catechetical instruction and spiritual exercises, especially for country people. The congregation met with opposition from the civil authorities, but was approved by Pope Benedict XIV in 1749. Alphonsus was appointed bishop of St. Agatha dei Goti in 1762 but resigned in 1775 because of grave illness. Thereafter he devoted himself to the care of his congregation and to writing, a ministry which had distinguished him throughout his life. He died in 1787, was beatified in 1816 (Pius VII), canonized in 1839 (Gregory XVI), and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1871 (Pius IX). His spiritual and devotional writings are voluminous. His writings in dogmatic theology, mostly with an apologetic or controversial orientation, are substantial. But his fame and influence rests especially on his writings in moral theology and on the system which he elaborated and propounded in them. Usually referred to as 'Equiprobabilism', the Alphonsian system of moral doctrine and pastoral practice steers a middle course between 'Probabiliorism' (or Rigorism) and 'Probabilism' (understood as a mechanically applicable, and therefore laxist, solution). The system is also simply designated as 'Probabilism', provided this is understood as weighing each moral decision on intrinsic merit and in the light of both prudence and Christian charity. [Cf. *NCE* I, p. 336-341]

Alphonsus's beatification (1816) and canonization (1839), and his being declared a Doctor of the Church (1871), conferred legitimacy (in fact, quasi-official status) on the system, at a time when the battle between 'Rigorists' and 'Benignists' was being joined. Don Bosco understood this when he wrote in his *Memoirs* in mid-1870s: "[St. Alphonsus'] authority can be called the theology of the Pope since the Church has proclaimed that his works can be taught, preached, and practiced, as they contain nothing worthy of censure." [*MO-da Silva*, p. 117f.; *Mo-En*, p. 181.]

¹¹ The suppression of the Society of Jesus, at first partial in various countries beginning with France, was made general and definitive in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV's Bull, *Dominus ac Redemptor*. Historians recognize that the suppression was due to a

1818 the Jesuits by royal decree were entrusted with the direction of the *Collegio dei Nobili* [School for the Nobility] in Turin. Likewise, after the uprising of 1821 and the temporary shutting down of the University and of the *Collegio delle Provincie* [university-affiliated college for the Provinces], at the instigation of Fr. Luigi Guala and with the support of Archbishop Colombano Chiaveroti, they accepted the direction of the *Collegi Universitari* of St. Francis of Paola (university-affiliated colleges of theology, philosophy and literature, law, medicine and surgery). Here they established conferences in moral theology with an Alphonsian orientation. The ecclesiology taught here was also clearly ultramontane in tendency, that is, in support of papal primacy and infallibility. As may be inferred from what has been said above on the subject of Jansenism, the Jesuits would continue to be active as the historic adversaries of Jansenism and of any offspring thereof.¹²

The ‘Amicizie’

The Jesuits were also responsible, at least as the remote cause and inspiration, for the establishment of powerful associations that became an important religious force in Turin and elsewhere, the *Amicizie* [Friendship Associations]. Of these there were several varieties—covert and overt; priestly, lay and mixed.

In the period of the Restoration, after Napoleon, the *Amicizia Cattolica* [Catholic Friendship Association] was by far the most important. This society was founded in Turin by Fr. Pio Brunone Lanteri in 1817 as a kind of successor to an older and secret society, the *Amicizia Cristiana* [Christian Friendship Association]. This in turn had been founded in Turin by the former Jesuit Nikolaus von Diessbach,¹³ and had been directed after the latter’s death in 1798

ground swell of envy and enmity against the Society that eventually created political forces capable of bringing about its suppression. The Society’s unwavering championing of Rome, that drew the ire of the partisans of Gallicanism and monarchical absolutism; the enmity of the proponents of Jansenism, who had met the greatest opposition from the Jesuits; the radical devotees of the rationalistic Enlightenment, who attacked the Jesuits as a step toward their ultimate objective of abolishing all religious orders, the papacy, and finally the Church itself—these were the chief original movers behind the onslaught. The Society of Jesus was reinstated in 1814 by Pope Pius VII’s Bull, *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*. [Cf. J.F. Broderick, “Jesuits,” in *NCE* VII, p. 894-909, esp. 906f.]

¹² This historic role of the Society of Jesus and its resumed activities were the motivation behind a spate of anti-Jesuit writings. Chief among them was the extended, vicious diatribe by Vincenzo Gioberti, *Il Gesuita Moderno*. Vigevano: Pietro Vitali e Co., Editori, 1848, 5 vol.

¹³ Nikolaus Joseph Albert von Diessbach was born in Berne, Switzerland, in 1732 into a noble Calvinist family. Having embarked on a military career in the Sardinian

by Fr. Lanteri, who had been active in it since 1780. The *Amicizia Cristiana's* purpose and strategy was to utilize the press and secret gatherings for the benefit of the Church, much as the Freemasons were using these very means against the Church. Cells were established in many cities of Italy and Europe. The activities of the Turin branch, model and mother of all affiliates, during the Napoleonic period were especially noteworthy. Fr. Luigi Guala, a disciple and friend of Fr. Lanteri, had also been active in the organization since the mid-1890s. Its successor, the *Amicizia Cattolica*, was no longer a secret society; and its membership, drawn solely from the aristocracy, was limited to lay persons "of proven Catholic and royalist faith."¹⁴ But Fr. Lanteri and Fr. Guala maintained close connections with it as its spiritual directors. The apostolate of the press and the spreading of 'good books' was its declared purpose; and its journal, *L'Amico d'Italia* [The Friend of Italy], as well as the members' public actions clearly showed where the association stood in matters of politics and religion. It was the ally of the Jesuits; it was legitimist in its support of king and Pope, and by that very fact, stood against all contrary doctrines. In particular, it opposed the French revolution and its principles, and all liberal ideologies, including those that fueled the *Risorgimento*; it opposed Jansenism and Gallicanism and all derivative forms of rigorist theology and of anti-Roman ecclesiology. And just as Jansenism and Gallicanism were naturally opposed to anything Roman, so the *Amicizia* was ready to espouse Alphonsian theology and Probabilism together with its ultramontane, papal ecclesiology. It was this society, as a matter of fact, that sponsored the edition of Alphonsus Liguori's *Opera Omnia* at this time.

Prior to these involvements, Pio Brunone Lanteri, while still a student at the university, had also been a member of a so-called *Amicizia Anonima* (Anonymous or Secret Friendship Society), in which he continued to be active after ordination, and of which he became director before 1789. This society had for its purpose, "the religious formation of seminarians and of young priests in

army, he was converted to Catholicism in 1754. After marriage, a daughter and the subsequent death of his wife, in 1759 he joined the Society of Jesus in Turin, where he was active even after its suppression (1773) until 1782. He wrote and spoke in defense of the Church and of religion. He fought against the principles of the French Revolution and Freemasonry, and against Jansenism and Jurisdictionalism. He founded the secret *Amicizia Cristiana*, and became the leader of a new Catholic priestly movement. Leaving a group of disciples under the leadership of Fr. Lanteri in Turin, in 1782 he moved to Vienna, where with a strong group of followers he continued his activity in defense of the Church, and fought Febronianism and the Josephinian Laws [cf. note 7 above]. He died in Vienna in 1798. [*Sussidi 2, Dizionarietto. Alcuni situazioni, istituzioni e personaggi dell'ambiente in cue visse Don Bosco*. Roma: Dicastero per la formazione dei SDB, 1988 [pro manuscritto], p. 260 ff. [*Sussidi 2*]]

¹⁴ C. Bona, *Le 'Amicizie'. Società segrete e rinascita religiosa (1770-1830)*. Torino, 1962, p. 342, in P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*. Roma: LAS, 1980, p. 54. [Bona, *Amicizie*; and Stella, *DBEcSoc*]

the spirit of priestly holiness.” Luigi Guala had also joined the society as a student at the university, and took over its direction during Fr. Lanteri’s exile in the years 1811-1814.¹⁵

The doctrinal and pastoral concerns of these associations (the various *Amicizie*) found more concrete and permanent expression in two ecclesiastical institutions, both of which are regarded as their offspring and successors, and whose influence would be felt in Turin (and beyond) for years to come: the Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary and the *Convitto*.

The Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary

The Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, as we know it, was founded by Fr. Pio Brunone Lanteri.¹⁶ While a student of theology at the

¹⁵ This *Amicizia* had been established in 1702 in the Seminary for the Foreign Missions of Paris, and from there, toward the middle of the eighteenth century it spread to Bordeaux, through southern France, to the Savoy and to Turin. [Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 455]

¹⁶ Lanteri’s principal biographer is Tommaso Piatti, OVM, *Un precursore dell’Azione Cattolica: Il Servo di Dio Pio Brunone Lanteri, Apostolo di Torino, Fondatore degli Oblati di Maria Vergine*. Torino-Roma: Marietti, 1926, with foreword by Enrico Rosa. [Piatti, *Lanteri*] The documents of the process for his beatification also offer ample biographical data: *Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei P. Brunonis Lanteri, Fundatoris Congregationis Oblatorum Mariae Virginis, positio super introductione causae et super virtutibus ex officio compilata*. Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1945. [Not available]

Pio Brunone Lanteri was born in Cuneo, a provincial capital some 50 miles south of Turin, in 1759. After leaving the Carthusians because of ill health, he continued his priestly studies at the University of Turin. In 1779 he joined the secret *Amicizia Cristiana*, of which he soon became the most active member, and later (1798) its leader. He was ordained in 1781, and shortly thereafter he received the doctorate from the School of Theology. Declining all ecclesiastical benefices and appointments, he devoted himself entirely to apostolic and charitable ministries. He subsequently founded and was the spiritual guide of the *Amicizia Cattolica*, which is regarded as the prototype of Catholic lay associations in Italy. In the Napoleonic period he authored a series of pamphlets in defense of papal primacy and infallibility. He was critical of the Piedmontese bishops and their stance, and of the seminary professors and their teaching, while at the same time spreading Alphonsian doctrine and writings. Acting as leader of the *Amicizia Cristiana*, in association with Fr. Guala and others, he did much in support of Pope Pius VII in a covert and overt manner during the latter’s imprisonment by Napoleon at Savona (1809-1812). Because of these activities he was exiled from Turin (1811-1814). He then cooperated in the first founding of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. This congregation was first founded in 1815 at Carignano, a town some 20 miles south of Turin, by the initiative of the priests, Agostino Golzio, Antonio Biancotti, G.B. Reynaudi, with whom Pio Brunone Lanteri had become associated. The congregation was approved in 1816 by the capitular vicar of the Turin Archdiocese, but was forced to disband in 1820 [Cf. Tommaso Chiuso, *La Chiesa in Piemonte dal 1797 ai giorni nostri*, 5 vols. Torino: G.

University of Turin he joined the *Amicizia Cristiana* and was active in it throughout the Napoleonic period. Exiled for his activities in favor of the imprisoned Pope Pius VII, he cooperated in the first founding of the Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. The congregation was disbanded by royal decree in 1820; it was refounded by him in 1825. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, in 1817 Fr. Lanteri had founded the *Amicizia Cattolica*, to counteract the activities of the Protestant Biblical societies of London by distributing Catholic literature, and generally to continue the apostolate of the *Amicizia Cristiana*. But it was by founding the congregation that Fr. Lanteri could give concrete pastoral direction and permanency to his apostolate.

There is no doubt that Fr. Lanteri and the Oblates made a significant contribution toward the renewal of moral theology, of pastoral practice, and of Church life in Piedmont generally. But it was for the *Convitto*, founded by Fr. Guala (not without Fr. Lanteri's cooperation), to make an even more important contribution. For from this latter experiment there emerged a new type of priest—a type that transcended the strictures of rigorism, the Alphonsian priest, embodying the riches and the novelty that the epithet implies: not only a new moral theology and a thoroughly Roman ecclesiology, but a new pastoral practice and a new spirituality.

Projects for the *Convitto*

As indicated, Fr. Luigi Guala had been Fr. Lanteri's disciple and friend, and his associate in a variety of ministries. Like Fr. Lanteri he had been a first-rank member of the various *Amicizie*, and had shared his concern for a reform of

Speirani e figli, 1887-1892, Vol III, p. 39f., in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*, I, p. 35]. Also by this time Fr. Lanteri had developed a close association with the Jesuits, and was actually planning to join the Society of Jesus after its re-establishment. Dissuaded by his disciple and friend, Fr. Guala, himself close to the Jesuits, in 1825 Fr. Lanteri refounded the Congregation of the Oblates at Pinerolo, a town some twenty miles southwest of Turin. Royal policies at the time opposed the establishment of new congregations in the city. The congregation was approved by Pope Gregory XVI in 1826. Besides his activities in the *Amicizie*, Lanteri was active as a spiritual director of people in various walks of life, and in the work of retreats in the Ignatian method. As will be discussed below, Fr. Lanteri is also credited by his biographers with the planning of the *Convitto* for the education of priests in Alphonsian moral theology. This is probable; but the execution of the plan is regarded as Fr. Guala's achievement. Fr. Lanteri died in 1830 and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1989. His congregation continued and expanded his apostolate to include the foreign missions.

It will be remembered that in 1844, during a 'vocation crisis', Don Bosco was planning to join the Oblates in order to go to the missions, but was dissuaded by Fr. Cafasso. [Cf. *EBM* II, 160-164]

theology and pastoral practice, and for the formation of the clergy. It is out of these concerns that the Conferences in Moral Theology and the *Convitto* were born.¹⁷

¹⁷ There is no proper biography of Luigi Guala; and the biographical data in our possession are incomplete. Such data as are available are found in the standard Cafasso biographies: Luigi Nicolis di Robilant, *Vita del Venerabile Giuseppe Cafasso*, Torino: Scuola Tipografica Salesiana, 1912, 2 vol., Vol. I. p. xxxiii-xxxix [Second edition revised and updated by José Cottino: Torino: Edizioni Santuario della Consolata, 1960]; and Giacomo Colombero, *Vita del Servo di Dio Don Giuseppe Cafasso, con cenni storici sul Convitto Ecclesiastico di Torino*. Torino: Tipografia e Libreria fratelli Canonica e Co., 1895, p. 41-43, 54-66. [Robilant, Cafasso; and Colombero, Cafasso] To these may be added the obituary of December 13, 1848 published in the Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia* and cited in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*, I, p. 35, n. 119. For a summary of the data, cf. Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 454-457.

Luigi Maria Fortunato Guala was born in Turin in 1775 to Giovanni Giuseppe Guala, a lawyer, and to Maria Gastinelli. The family was originally from Cassine (Acqui), a town situated some fifty miles southeast of Turin. Luigi began his studies for the priesthood at an early age, and attended the School of Theology at the University of Turin from 1792 to 1796, the year of his ordination. Shortly thereafter he received his doctorate, and was subsequently appointed an associate professor in the same school by royal decree. Thus began a remarkable career, distinguished, more for its intense commitment to, and largely successful efforts at, advancing the cause of Alphonsian theology and priestly education in the Church of Turin than for its academic achievements at the university.

As a matter of fact, Fr. Guala's academic merits have been the subject of debate. Colombero believes that his extensive pastoral involvements would have ruled out true scholarly achievement. [Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 42]. The fact, however, that he never secured tenure in the School of Theology may have been due not to inadequate scholarship, but to ideological differences and to ecclesiastical politics. After all, he was an avowed Alphonsian and a 'Roman' in a faculty of pro-Gallican probabiliorists. On the other hand, he survived as one of only two Alphonsian theologians (both associates) in the School of Theology as late as 1830.

Through the Napoleonic period his story parallels pretty much that of Lanteri, of whom he was a long-time and devoted disciple, friend and associate, although his junior by sixteen years. When, with Lanteri and confederates, he came under suspicion of the French police for his support of Pius VII, he escaped punishment because of a curious case of mistaken identity: in the order of banishment handed down to the Archbishop by the Imperial police he was listed as "Banker L. Guala," and his comrade as "Fr. Dr. A. Gonella," neither of whom could be identified. [Cf. Piatti, *Lanteri*, p. 122-126 and Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 455]

In 1807, Guala obtained permission to reopen the shrine of St. Ignatius in the alpine foothills, where with Lanteri he began to hold spiritual retreats for the clergy. In 1808 he was appointed to the church of St. Francis of Assisi, at first (according to Robilant, *Cafasso* I, p. xxxiii) as director of the Artists Association (*Congregazione degli Artisti*) based at that church, and later as rector of the church itself. Here he began at once a private course (*conferenza*) in Alphonsian moral theology. And here less than ten years later he established the *Convitto*.

The merit of having planned and realized the Conferences-*Convitto* has traditionally been attributed to Fr. Guala. This view rests on Blessed Joseph Allamano's own conviction, and has been propounded in the Cafasso biographies.¹⁸ The Lanteri biographers, on the other hand, attribute this achievement to Lanteri himself, either totally, or at least in so far as the original idea, the planning and the inspiration, if not the actual realization, are concerned.¹⁹ The earliest document adduced is a memorandum in Lanteri's own hand, addressed to the diocesan chancery and dated at the end of 1816. It petitioned that the Congregation of the Oblates (newly founded at Carignano) and the *Convitto* (to be attached to the Congregation itself) should be established in Turin, at the church of St. Francis of Assisi and in the section that was still available of the monastery. This document, however, is paralleled by a copy signed by Guala, of the same date and to the same effect. These and other documents justify the conclusion that the *Convitto* was a project developed in collaboration; and that, obviously, it must have been on the drawing boards for some time previous to that date.²⁰ G. Tuninetti goes further:

Bona's research has made it clear that the *Convitto* was the creation of both Guala and Lanteri, and hence indirectly the product of the *Amicizie* [Friendship Associations] and their milieu, even though admittedly Guala was its principal executor, and after 1830 its chief driving force. Such a view is shared by other historians as well. The *Convitto* is seen as a creation of the *Amicizia Sacerdotale* [Priestly Friendship Association, identical to or associated with the *Amicizia Cristiana*]. And both of these are only sections of a long chain, "the chief links of which are: St. John Bosco, a disciple of Cafasso; St. Joseph Cafasso, a disciple of Guala; Luigi Guala,

Fr. Guala directed the *Convitto* until his death in 1848. But by 1844 he had already handed over the lectureship and the practical direction of the institution to his trusted disciple, Fr. Giuseppe Cafasso, who had been a student at the *Convitto* and then assistant lecturer under Fr. Guala since 1836.

¹⁸ Cf. e. g., Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 48f., with rejection of contrary opinions.

For Fr. Joseph Allamano, cf. note 77 below.

¹⁹ Cf. Pietro Gastaldi, OMV, *Della Vita del Servo di Dio Pio Brunone Lanteri* [...]. Torino: Marietti, 1870, p. 217f., in Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 458f.; Piatti, *Lanteri*, p. 179-186.

²⁰ Cf. Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 458-464. This author discusses the Lanteri claim, and the documentation adduced in its support, at some length.

a disciple of Lanteri; [Bl.] Pio Brunone Lanteri, a disciple of Diessbach and of the Society of Jesus.”²¹

It appears then that one should abandon the traditional view that Guala was simply the founder of the *Convitto*, and Cafasso its co-founder. Without denying the important role of these two great figures, one must view the *Convitto* in a larger context and recognize the essential contribution of Lanteri and of others before him.

And yet at the practical level of execution, one finally must look to Guala. As stated in the process of Lanteri’s beatification, the original Lanteri-Guala project failed, and its final realization at the church of St. Francis of Assisi was Guala’s achievement, with the implementation of a second project, so to speak. The Guala project may indeed have been a replica of the earlier project, but one proposed on a new basis and with new petitions by Guala. The civil authorities opposed the introduction of new religious congregations into the capital; and possibly this is why the first petition came to naught; but the petition of a diocesan priest and theologian already established at a major church found favor, in spite of his notoriously close connections with Lanteri.²²

The *Convitto* Established at St. Francis of Assisi ²³

On being appointed to the church of St. Francis of Assisi in 1808, Fr. Guala lost no time in setting up a private course (*conferenza*) in Alphonsian moral theology. Six years later in 1814, with the agreement of Archbishop

²¹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*, p. 36: reference to Bona, *Amicizie*, p. 311f.; quotation from F. Bauducco, “S. Giuseppe Cafasso [...],” in *Scuola Cattolica* 88 (1960) 286-294.

²² Cf. Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 463ff. This author believes that the first project-petition, addressed to the Capitular Vicar, was indeed submitted to the civil authorities, as Lanteri requested.

The Oblates of the Virgin Mary established a community in Turin, at the church of the *Consolata*, only in 1834, after the founder’s death in 1830.

²³ The church and the monastery of St. Francis of Assisi were built early in the thirteenth century (by St. Francis himself, as tradition has it). They quickly acquired religious and civic importance. Both church and monastery were restored in the early seventeenth century; but the church again underwent considerable rebuilding in the 1760s, thus acquiring the architectural character it has retained to this day. The Franciscans were expelled by Napoleon and never returned. A good portion of the monastery premises were put to other uses, and the church was taken over by the Archdiocese. Fr. Guala, appointed rector in 1808, obtained the part that was still available of the old monastery and established the *Convitto*.

Giacinto Della Torre,²⁴ Fr. Guala obtained King Victor Emmanuel I's approval for the course, and was appointed "Head and Director of the Conference in moral theology with all rights and privileges attached thereto, and with a yearly stipend of 500 *Lire*."²⁵ This meant that the course could be offered publicly on a par with the conferences given at the seminary and at the university. Two years later, in 1816, as indicated above, Lanteri and Guala submitted their project-petition for the establishment of the *Convitto* in the remaining premises of the former monastery attached to the church of St. Francis of Assisi. When this effort failed, Guala (no doubt with Lanteri's support) took steps to save what he could of the project, even if the Congregation of the Oblates could not be involved.²⁶

In 1817 Guala submitted to the Royal Administrator for Church Affairs (*Regio Economo Ecclesiastico*) a completely redrafted petition that, while preserving the principles of the original project, concentrated entirely on the *Convitto* and its program, making no mention of the Congregation of the Oblates. In this memorandum Fr. Guala cogently argues for the need for such an institution on a twofold basis: the woefully small number of well-formed priests to serve the Church; and the increasing difficulty experienced by young priests in obtaining such formation due to lack of opportunity and means. He gives a passionate description of the sad situation in which the younger priests find themselves; and outlines his solution: a three-year residency program in a *convitto* requiring modest outlays for tuition, room and board, and providing an environment conducive to formation. He adds his request for the premises (the third floor of the former monastery of St. Francis of Assisi, still in a state of disrepair) and describes the very scant basic conveniences that would be available even after restoration.²⁷

²⁴ For a clearer understanding of what follows, the archiepiscopal succession should be borne in mind: Giacinto Della Torre (-1814); Vacancy (1814-1818); Colombano Chiaverot[ti] (1818-1831); Luigi Fransoni (1832-1862 [1831, administrator; 1850-1862, in exile]); Vacancy (1862-1867, regency by Capitular Vicar mgr. Giuseppe Zappata); Alessandro Ottaviano dei Conti Riccardi di Netro (1867-1870); Lorenzo Gastaldi (1871-1883); Gaetano Alimonda (1883-1891); Davide dei Conti Riccardi (1891-1897); Agostino Richelmy (1897-1923).

²⁵ Cited in Usseglio, *Guala*, 465.

²⁶ Although there is no record of exchanges between the two regarding the new petition, subsequent letters, by which Guala kept Lanteri apprised of even minute details of the operation, show that Guala's action in 1817 did not indicate a parting of the ways. [Cf. Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 468, citing documents from the process of Lanteri's beatification]

²⁷ "The rooms are small, ranged along one corridor and internal to the building, half of them on the north side. They lack washbasins and any water supply; and there is only one common bathroom available. Access to this floor is had by the stairway

The petition was accepted, and the decree signed that very day, August 8, 1817. It must be supposed that, apart from the recognized urgency of the need and from Fr. Guala's personal prestige, the support of influential Church and lay people was necessary to obtain approval; and that prior to Guala's petition these people had been active in support. After all, the program was meant to be a counterpart and a rival (by its different theological orientation) of similar official conferences already established at the university and at the seminary. The quick approval, therefore, reveals the strength of the Alphonsian movement and the power of the people behind it.²⁸

The *Convitto* began operations for the academic year 1817-1818, with the enrollment of a dozen student priests. In the next five years, a series of official actions put it on a permanent basis.

The Regulations, already mentioned in the original Lanteri proposal and finalized by Guala, were put through a two-year trial period, after which they were approved by the Capitular Vicar in 1819. Two years later, on February 23, 1821, they were approved by the new Archbishop Colombano Chiaveroti. According to a later statement from the Archbishop, by this action the institution itself was regarded as approved.

On October 25, 1822, following a petition from Fr. Guala, the new King Charles Felix permanently assigned to the *Convitto* the section that still remained unsold of the former Franciscan monastery, thus expanding the total capacity to sixty boarders.

On January 17, 1823, a royal rescript empowered the *Convitto* to acquire property, and to receive bequests, subject to approval by the Ecclesiastical Superior.

On June 4, 1823, Fr. Guala, Director in practice from the start and legally so named by royal decree in 1814, received formal ecclesiastical appointment from the Archbishop.²⁹

Thus was the *Convitto* established on a permanent basis. It was staffed by a rector, a 'head of the conference' (that is, chief lecturer in moral theology), who might be the same person, and a prefect or administrator. With the years and the increased enrollment, each of these took on assistants. A 'spiritual

located in the civil and criminal court section of the building. The inner courtyard serves the city school as well as a magazine. The building has no cellar and, being in a state of decay, has no rental value." [Usseglio, *Guala*, 465f., citing the document from the process of Lanteri's beatification]

Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 46 speaks of fourteen rooms.

²⁸ An impressive list of influential lay people, members of the *Amicizia Cattolica*, many of them holding offices in the royal administration, is given in Stella, *DBEcSoc*, p. 54ff.

²⁹ For all the above, cf. Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 46f. Robilant, *Cafasso* I, p. xxxvf.

director' was in charge of religious exercises. There were also additional instructors, as needed, for such subjects as preaching and liturgy. A trusted porter, a cook and and a few servants were employed under the prefect's supervision.

Life and Spirit at the Convitto

For a view of the life at the *Convitto* one has only to peruse its Regulations.³⁰ Written by Fr. Guala, undoubtedly not without Fr. Lanteri's collaboration, these remained in force throughout the nineteenth century. Fr. Cafasso's revision left them substantially unchanged. The Regulations begin with a preamble ("Reasons for the *Convitto's* Existence"), and proceed to outline a comprehensive rule of life through two chapters ("Daily Time Table" and "Rules"). The Regulations conclude with five additional paragraphs ("Academic Year and Holidays", "Temporalities", "Sickness", "Exhortation", "Breach of Rules").

The Convitto's Holy Patrons

In a description of the life and spirit at the *Convitto*, as patterned in the Regulations, one should perhaps begin with the note on its holy patrons appended to the last of the additional paragraphs:

This *Convitto* is placed under the special patronage of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Charles Borromeo, who created and promoted similar institutions; and, [officially] by archiepiscopal decree of November 15, 1834, under the patronage of Bl. Sebastian Valfrè, a genuine model of priestly zeal. By rescript of September 15, 1842 Gregory XVI granted a plenary indulgence to all *Convitto* priests who on the feast of the above-mentioned holy patrons, as well as on that of St. Alphonsus Liguori, receive [the Sacraments of] Confession and Communion, and visit the church of St. Francis.³¹

The *Convitto* priests are here given models that possessed great significance both for the Church in general and for the Piedmontese Church in particular in the figures of two outstanding pastor-bishops, St. Francis de Sales

³⁰ The text is given in Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 357-363 (Appendix A) in the Cafasso version, and is transcribed, with comments, in *Sussidi* 2, p. 70-77.

³¹ *Sussidi* 2, p. 76f.

and St. Charles Borromeo. But they are also presented with a pastoral model closer to home in the person of a priest very much like themselves, the Turinese Oratorian, Bl. Sebastian Valfrè.³² The additional mention of St. Alphonsus, even though not as a patron saint, would clearly remind them of the reasons for the *Convitto*'s existence and of what it stood for.³³

The Preamble: "Reasons"

The Preamble sets forth the "Reasons for the *Convitto*'s Existence" and takes up several of the motifs of the Guala petition of 1817. Starting with a reflection on the need of the Church in "these calamitous times," it notes that newly ordained priests now more than ever need training in moral theology and preaching in addition to the five-year theological course. Many priests in Turin, and most priests in country towns, cannot attend the public 'conferences' in moral theology at the university or at the seminary because of the time or the money required. The results are an insufficient priestly education and a lack of priestly spirit, usually coupled with discouragement or loss of motivation. And this in turn explains the deplorable lack of skilled confessors, the widespread falling away from the Sacraments among the faithful, and finally the fact that all too often the promise of seminary days remains unfulfilled. The *Convitto* is an attempt to address these problems.

Chapter I: "Daily Time Table"

The description of the day's activities is often accompanied by reflections designed to provide added spiritual motivation.

After rising and a period of silence and recollection in the chapel "to prepare one's soul for prayer," morning prayers were recited in common "with clarity, unity and devotion," after which everyone paused for half-an-hour of

³² Sebastian Valfrè was born in 1629 of poor parents and studied for the priesthood in Turin, being ordained in 1652. In association with an Oratorian already active in the area and other priests, he formed the Turin Oratory, over which he presided for many years. Awarded an honorary doctorate in theology for his learning, he served as tutor in the royal family. But what distinguished his life the most was his pastoral charity, his preaching, and his unstinting service to people in need. He died in 1710 and was beatified by Gregory XVI in 1834. [NCE XIV, 521f.]

³³ Gioberti in his attack on the *Convitto* stresses this very point: "It is common knowledge that exercises in moral theology are held daily at the *Convitto* of St. Francis, in which the most ingenious cases are argued and solved. The authoritative court of last appeal is none other than Liguori, whom the *Convitto* priests have all along honored as the 'Blessed One', now the 'Saint', par excellence. [*Il Gesuita moderno* V, p.23, in Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 499]

mental prayer. These exercises were followed by a period of study in the common room until 8:30, when holy Masses began to be celebrated.³⁴ After Mass, each took a quick breakfast and then returned to the study hall.

At 11:00 o'clock the morning conference in moral theology was held, with practical exercises.

At 12:30 the day's main meal was served, during which the priests took turns in reading for the community "in a deliberate, clear and well-modulated voice." Etiquette and good manners were to be observed.

After the noonday meal and a brief visit to the Blessed Sacrament, every one enjoyed a period of recreation until 3:00 o'clock. There followed spiritual reading and study until 4:00, after which the students could take a stroll in the city for one hour. Then at 5:00 they recited the Rosary in common and retired again to the study hall.

The evening conference in moral theology was held at 7:00 o'clock, and was again followed by a practical exercise in the Sacrament of Penance with role playing.

Supper was served at 8:15 and was followed by a short recreation. No further study was permitted after supper as "injurious to health." At 9:00 the bell rang for night prayers in common and the examination of conscience, after which everyone retired for the night.

Chapter II: "Rules"

This chapter consists of fifteen brief numbered paragraphs, of which seven are prescriptions of a disciplinary nature; two pertain to life in community and to personal deportment; three deal with religious practice; two with study; and the last is an exhortation to (older) priests engaged in the ministry of Confession and of visiting the sick. Again brief spiritual reflections occur at various points.

Disciplinary rules recommended: the observance of silence (particularly during study time); the care of one's room (cleanliness inculcated); the priestly traditional dress (with avoidance of both extravagance and negligence); avoiding worldly places on walks (making these, as they should be, healthful exercises). At the same time, they warned against: moving restlessly about; stopping in other students' rooms; loitering in the porter's rooms; entertaining outsiders; dining out without permission; going to shows or stopping at coffee houses.

³⁴ The priests took turns and celebrated their private Mass at various altars in the church of St. Francis of Assisi. This might go on till 11 o'clock. The clerical students not yet ordained (if any), were to attend Mass together in the church.

Other rules permitted students to go out together on Sundays and holy days to attend services and hear the word of God; made the weekly reception of the Sacraments obligatory; prescribed a penitential practice for Fridays (no dessert at supper); and recommended that moral theology, preaching, and liturgy be each given their fair share of study time.

The recommendations relating to community relationships and personal deportment are worth quoting:

Cheerful and all-inclusive love should be the rule. Exclusive friendships, disrespectful familiarity, and hands-on play are to be discouraged. Everyone should make it a point to avoid using nicknames, making critical remarks, or cracking jokes that may give offense or hurt someone's feelings. Let civilized behavior, courtesy and charity be practiced by all. Priests who will shortly be eligible for appointments in the Church should realize the importance of learning how to get along with all kinds of temperaments. And this is more easily achieved by being accommodating than by demanding perfection in others. Everyone should endeavor to conduct himself in accordance with the norm given by the Council of Trent, in session XXII, ch. 1, On [Clerical] Reform: "It is entirely proper that priests should order their moral life and conduct as befits persons called to be partners with the Lord. Accordingly, in the way they dress, act, walk, speak, and in all other ways, they should show nothing but seriousness, self-control and religious commitment."³⁵

The Additional Paragraphs

The first of the five additional paragraphs dealt with the "academic year and holidays." The academic year began on November 1 and ended with the July spiritual retreat at the shrine of St. Ignatius. Applications for enrollment in the *Convitto* had to be submitted by the end of September. There were no 'breaks' during the academic year; and absences had to be prearranged in individual cases. Students could arrange to spend their summer holidays at the *Convitto*.

Among the "material needs" or "temporalities" supplied by the *Convitto* were the following: furnished room with bed; light and heat; bread for breakfast; at dinner: soup, two courses, cheese or fruit, bread and wine; and at

³⁵ *Sussidi* 2, p. 74 (Paragraphs 8 and 9 of Ch. 2, "Rules").

supper: the same, with one course only. The care of a house physician was also provided. The monthly fee was set at 30 *Lire*. Special medical or surgical care in the event of more serious illnesses, was available at the individual's expense. In these cases it was the Prefect's responsibility to make arrangements for the patient to be treated at the hospital, or to be cared for at the *Convitto* infirmary, or to go home to his family.

The two concluding paragraphs ("Exhortation" and "Breach of the Rule") evidenced more than any other the spirit that was to animate the people living at the *Convitto*—the spirit of union and charity modelled on the Apostolic community, thriving in an environment of genuine commitment, free of constraints and of fear.

In view of the modest fees charged for tuition, room and board (fees that must be heavily supplemented), it is hoped that all *Convitto* students will endeavor to correspond by their earnest and undivided application to study and piety.³⁶ It is hoped, moreover, that they will live with their brothers in communion and love, after the example of the Apostolic community. For, before leaving for different regions to proclaim the word (as the *Convitto* students will), the Apostles lived together in community, united by the bonds of the most perfect charity. Further, they strengthened each other by spiritual conversation and by sharing projects for the apostolate. In a word, it is hoped that each student will make the best of the opportunity and means that God places at his disposal, for his own advancement and for the good of the Church. He will thus gain heaven with the many souls that the Divine Redeemer will be pleased to place in his care.

Every community establishes disciplinary sanctions for breaches of the regulations. This community, composed as it is of priests that are soon to be spiritual guides to others, needs

³⁶ As indicated above, the monthly fee, covering 'everything', was set at an extremely modest 30 *Lire*, amounting to 270 *Lire* yearly (November to July). In the preamble to the Regulations the 'charitable' purpose of the institution was clearly stated, conceived as it was to make further pastoral education attractive to young priests even financially. Furthermore, in some cases the fee was condoned in whole or in part. Partial exemptions in Don Bosco's case, for example, were as follows: 72 *Lire* for the year 1841-42; 96 for 1842-43; 173.60 for 1843-44. [Robilant, *Cafasso* II, p. 213; Stella, *DBEcSoc*, p. 44] For what remained to be paid he would have had to rely on his benefactors, as well as on Mass stipends [Cf. Don Bosco's Mass book in ASC 132: Quaderni, 7; *Fondo Don Bosco Microfiche* 750 E11-751 A12, notation in A2].

no such provisions. Therefore, it is hoped that, in the event of breaches of the Rule, the person involved will acknowledge his fault, and make up for the bad example given by a more faithful observance. Should anyone, however, fail to mend his ways even after repeated warnings, he shall be asked to leave [...].³⁷

In a commemoration on the centenary of the founding of the *Convitto*, the spirit and wisdom of the Rule was praised:

Those few, simple regulations evinced great moderation both as to the substance and as to the form of what was demanded. Timetable and rules were so conceived as could be observed also outside the *Convitto*. Indeed it was hoped that the priests would continue to live by that rule even when, on being assigned to a ministry, they would be living among the people free of community commitments.³⁸

As indicated in the Regulations, the program at the Convitto included the following; (1) Conferences in moral-pastoral theology, with an Alphonsian orientation, with practical exercises; (2) instruction and practicum for a renewal of preaching in content and style; (3) liturgical instruction. But opportunity was also given to the students to explore practical applications in a variety of ministries, such as hearing confessions (for senior students), preaching, visiting the sick, assisting poor families, and what might be described as the *Convitto*'s favorite ministries: youth ministry and ministry to inmates in the prisons.

Academic Activity at the *Convitto*

Two conferences were held every weekday at the *Convitto*: a public lecture in the afternoon or evening, and another one the next morning for the *Convitto* students alone, in which the matter would be treated anew in detail. These lectures, which dealt with concrete pastoral situations in casuistic style, would be followed by a practical exercise in hearing confessions, in which students played the roles of confessor and penitent. In the early days, Fr. Guala delivered both lectures. In later years, he would deliver the public evening

³⁷ *Sussidi* 2, p. 76 ("Exhortation" and "Breaches of the Rule").

³⁸ Fr. Giacomo Camisassa quoted in *Sussidi* 2, p. 67; attributed to [Anonymous], *Il Convitto Ecclesiastico di Torino*. Torino: La Palatina, 1940, p. 11, in Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 475.

lecture, leaving the morning lecture to his assistant or 'repeater'. The treatise in moral theology by Giuseppe Antonio Alasia, in an abridged edition, served as the text for the lectures.³⁹ This moderately probabiliorist work by a distinguished theologian was well established in the archdiocesan institutions. Apparently Fr. Guala did not feel free to bypass the established textbook and read directly from Alphonsus; but he would use the Alasia as a starting point for a discussion in which the Alphonsian pastoral practice was thoroughly illustrated.⁴⁰ Later Fr. Cafasso followed the same method. As a student under Guala, he had divided the Alasia compendium into eleven quires, and had it bound interleaved with blank pages, which he had gradually filled with Alphonsian commentaries. As assistant and then as head lecturer, he used the interleaved Alasia text, from which he could deliver the Alphonsian doctrine directly.⁴¹

Homiletics, that is, the art of the sermon, was the other main subject of study at the *Convitto*. For many years the eminent retreat preacher, Fr. Ferdinando Minini, S.J. (1796-1870), lectured and directed the practical exercise. The Regulations also mention Liturgy as one of the subjects in which a practical exercise was prescribed.⁴²

Practical Pastoral Experiences of the *Convitto* Students

The objective which the *Convitto* had set for itself went farther than just forming priests in Alphonsian moral theology and ecclesiology. The ultimate

³⁹ The 10-volume work by university professor Giuseppe Antonio Alasia (1731-1812), written between 1793 and 1809 in a moderate probabiliorist vein, was abridged by Fr. Angelo Stuardi (d. 1829), and later reedited with a commentary and 'Rosminian corrections' by Fr. Lorenzo Gastaldi. [Cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*, p. 29f., esp. note 83; and cf. note 67 below]

⁴⁰ Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 487-490.

Speaking of Guala's first experiment with the conference in 1808, Colombo writes: "When he had gotten together seven or eight priests [...], he began to hold daily conferences for them. For this purpose he read from Alasia's work, which was the textbook used in our schools, and consulted St. Alphonsus, whom he used to refer to as 'our saint'. This was done privately and without any publicity, a wise and necessary precaution, given the situation. For in those days merely to question Alasia's opinions was to invite trouble. Guala's approach was as daring as it was novel." [Colombero, *Cafasso*, p. 44]

⁴¹ Cf. [Anonymous] *Il Venerabile Giuseppe Cafasso. Nuova vita compilata sui Processi di Beatificazione*. Torino: SEI, 1920, p. 24, 37ff. [Process, *Cafasso*]

⁴² Rule 13 reads: "Study time shall be proportionately divided between work on practical moral theology and the composition of exercises in preaching and in liturgy, as assigned." [*Sussidi* 2, p. 74]

aim was to give to the Church priests who were pastorally equipped to meet the real needs of the people, and therefore, were also sensitive to the new real situations in which the common people lived. It will be remembered that in the period of the Guala and Cafasso rectorates (1817-1848 and 1848-1860), the city of Turin was experiencing the socio-economic problems connected with industrialization and consequent urban development. Chief among these were the problems of young people at risk (the 'poor and abandoned'), of pauperism in a new and virulent form, and consequently of delinquency. Both Guala and Cafasso were clearly aware of such developments, of the urgency of the need, and of the inability on the part of the traditional parish structures to respond constructively.

Hence, very early on, the practice was begun of gathering young people, of the kind that crowded the city streets, for religious instruction and other activities at the church of St. Francis of Assisi. This is the famous catechetical instruction program which Fr. Cafasso is said to have begun in the 'chapel of St. Bonaventure' close to the sacristy, which Don Bosco took over upon entering the *Convitto* and which he regarded as the beginning of his oratory. A similar, but more specialized, program had been established on behalf of the Aosta Valley chimney sweeps. These mountain lads were brought seasonally into the city, and cleaned chimneys from November to May. They needed to be gathered, cared for, often also fed, and instructed by someone who understood and spoke their French *patois*. Fr. Cafasso, who again is said to have begun this charitable activity, entrusted it to Fr. Pietro Ponte and other young priests.⁴³

The inmates of the overcrowded jails of the city of Turin were also the object of the ministry of the *Convitto* priests.⁴⁴ It had been the responsibility of

⁴³ Process, *Cafasso*, p. 85ff.

⁴⁴ There were four prison facilities in Turin, and a police detention facility of lesser importance, all located within the city:

(1) The Prisons of the Senate (*Carceri del Senato*), so-called because located in the subterranean vaults of the Palace of the Senate (later, Court of Appeal or Palace of Justice).— This was what might be described as a maximum security facility for criminals convicted of serious crimes.

(2) The Correctional Prison Facility (*Carceri Correzionali*), popularly called 'Correctionnel', from the name given to the street during Napoleon's occupation (Rue correctionnelle).— This was for common crimes.

(3) The Towers Prison (*Carceri delle Torri*), commonly simply called 'the Towers', located in the Towers Palace at *Porta Palatina*.—This facility was for women with a criminal record.

(4) The General Prison Facility for Women (*Carceri delle Forzate*).

The *Convitto* priests visited the first three establishments, but worked especially with the inmates of the 'Senate' prison.

local parish priests in whose territories the prison facilities were located, to supply religious service. The Company of Mercy had been founded for the purpose (among others) of providing spiritual care to the inmates in the various prisons. But, in spite of the best intentions, the inmates were largely ill served. Both Fr. Guala and Fr. Cafasso devoted time to this apostolate, the latter spending three evenings a week. Under their leadership the *Convitto* priests took an active part in this ministry. This included Lenten catechetical instruction, for which the priests had a clear program and methodology traced out for them, visiting and helping the inmates and their families in need.⁴⁵ This ministry afforded them a view of the magnitude of the social problem, especially as it related to juveniles.⁴⁶ In his *Memoirs*, Don Bosco records the shocking degradation of young people in the city's jails, a situation which motivated his resolve to devote his life to the young.

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

These prison facilities were gradually phased out, after the building of the New Prison Facility (*Carceri Nuove*) was begun in 1865. [Cf. *MO-daSilva*, 119, notes to lines 746, 748, 750-752; Natale Cerrato, *Il Linguaggio della prima storia salesiana. Parole e luoghi delle Memorie Biografiche di Don Bosco* (Istituto Storico Salesiano - Studi, 7). Roma: LAS, 1991, p. 226f.]

⁴⁵ Process, *Cafasso*, p. 107-118.

⁴⁶ The Penal Code in force before 1845 provided that a minor, aged 14 or under, acting without malice was not liable to prosecution and incarceration. But a minor who committed a crime with malice aforethought was liable. Only in 1845, with the opening of the new Generala correctional facility for juveniles, were minors guilty of crimes separated from other criminals, as art. 28 of the Penal Code required. This explains in part the presence of children, as well as young men, with older, hardened criminals in the prisons.

As far as young people were concerned, statistics for 1831-1846 show that theft was by far the most common crime, amounting to 30% of all crimes investigated and brought to justice by the police. Other offences such as loitering, vagrancy, beggary, etc. jointly amounted to another 20%. The next most common were crimes of violence against persons (10%), and over half of these were in the nature of threats and battery resulting from squabbles. [*MO-da Silva*, p. 119]

For the history of the juvenile correction facility known as the Generala, cf. Roberto Audisio, *La "Generala" di Torino: Esposte, discoli, minori corrigendi (1785-1850)*. Santena: Fondazione Camillo Cavour, 1987.

During the winter, I concentrated my efforts in helping a small number of young adults who needed special catechetical instruction, above all those just out of prison. It was then that I realized at first hand that if young lads, once released from detention, could find someone to befriend them, [...], they began to mend their ways. They became good Christians and honest citizens. This was the beginning of our Oratory.

On Saturdays, my pockets stuffed sometimes with tobacco, sometimes with fruit, sometimes with rolls, I used to go to the prisons. My object was always to give special attention to the youngsters who had the misfortune of being put behind bars, help them, make friends with them, and thus encourage them to come to the Oratory when they had the good fortune of leaving that place of punishment.⁴⁷

The *Convitto's* Survival and Growth: The Guala Rectorate (1817-1848)

The period of the Guala rectorate was one of strife and confrontation between the *Convitto* and a coalition of opposing forces. If by Guala's death in 1848 and the succession of Cafasso the *Convitto* was to some extent vindicated and found acceptance, the victory was not won without a struggle.

As indicated above, the fees charged to *Convitto* students for tuition, room and board, were not much more than nominal. Fr. Guala's and his family's comfortable circumstances did not apparently amount to real wealth. Hence, it was asked (with malicious intent) where the money needed to operate the institution came from, and what became of it. It was known that in 1823 the *Convitto*, in the person of Fr. Guala, was empowered by royal rescript to receive gifts and legacies. It was also common knowledge that influential and well-to-do people, connected with the movement of the *Amicizie*, stood behind the *Convitto*, which was known in any case essentially as a 'charitable institution'. Thus the considerable endowment that the *Convitto* was known to have built up would have come from private donations, legacies and the like.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *MO-En*, p. 182, 190, 198.

⁴⁸ P. Stella writes: "At Fr. Guala's death in 1848 rumors collected by Goffredo Casalis put the endowment at about half a million lire. Guala left the money, not to the corporation, but to Fr. Joseph Cafasso personally. Fr. Cafasso in turn made Fr. Luigi Anglesio, Superior of Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence, his sole heir. This institution had been exempted from paying succession taxes by decree of King Charles Albert." [Stella, *DBEcSoc*, p. 67f.]

Thus, attempts were made to discredit the *Convitto* and its Rector. The place was accused by Gioberti of being “a bank [...] where money from gifts and revenues are hoarded by the sackful.”⁴⁹ The same Gioberti (writing from Paris) tried to collect information from friends in Turin regarding Fr. Guala’s ‘development’ operations and financial status. One of his correspondents replied that Guala had indeed received many gifts and legacies (in the form of money, land, houses, etc.), some of which had been successfully challenged in court; that he was believed to be worth well over 600,000 *Lire*; but that nothing could be verified.⁵⁰

Much more significantly, however, the opposition to the *Convitto* bore principally on what that institution stood for from a theological and an ideological point of view—moral doctrine and its pastoral applications, in the first place; but also fundamental positions relating to ecclesiology, Church-State relationship, and the liberal revolution. These and other issues were the deeper causes of strife: “the doctrinal warfare raging in Italy throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century reached a climax in Piedmont” in the first few decades of the nineteenth.⁵¹

Episodes in the on-going struggle may be mentioned: the accusations of laxism and corruption of moral doctrine against Fr. Lanteri and the Oblates; the forced removal of probabiliorist university professor John Dettori (1773-1836) and his condemnation by Rome; Fr. Amedeo Pyron’s preferment at the university over Fr. Guala, in spite of the latter’s seniority; above all the vicious attacks by Gioberti and by others of lesser fame.⁵²

Fr. John Baptist Bertagna, in a statement referring to the time when Fr. Cafasso entered the *Convitto* (January 1834), says:

To enroll in the *Convitto* in those years called for extraordinary fortitude and independence of mind. The *Convitto* students were looked upon with suspicious resentment by those priests who disagreed with what was taught in that institution.⁵³

The reference is to Goffredo Casalis, *Dizionario geografico-storico-statistico commerciale degli stati di S.M. il re di Sardegna [...]*. Torino, 1851, Vol. XXI.

⁴⁹ Gioberti, *Il Gesuita moderno* V, p. 23, in Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 499.

⁵⁰ Cf. various letters cited in Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 497f.

⁵¹ Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 491.

⁵² Cf. Usseglio, *Guala*, p. 491-500, pages devoted mostly to Gioberti’s specific charges.

⁵³ Quoted in Robilant, *Cafasso* I, p. 32.

On Fr. Bertagna, see note 60, below.

Robilant himself assesses the situation with reference to the early forties as follows:

In the view of many, perhaps of most, among our clergy the *Convitto* was nothing but a hotbed of laxism, of outright heresy even. Hence, *Convitto* students were regarded with such suspicion and held in such low esteem, that parish priests would refuse to take *Convitto* graduates as assistants.⁵⁴

And yet, in spite of bitter and relentless opposition, the *Convitto* made steady progress. The original enrollment of a dozen students had risen to over sixty by the time Don Bosco enrolled in 1841. Various dioceses, even from outside Piedmont, were represented. In 1844-45 the students numbered sixty-four; and twenty-six of these came from dioceses other than Turin.⁵⁵ By the late forties the Alphonsian proposal for the renewal of moral theology, pastoral practice, and ecclesiology, symbolized in Turin by Lanteri and his Oblates and even more so by Guala and the *Convitto*, had won recognition and was gaining ground. The *Convitto*, moreover, had become an important force in the Church of Turin. Archbishop Luigi Fransoni (1789-1862), as a strategy to cope with a worsening situation in State and Church, came to rely more and more on the *Convitto* priests.⁵⁶ Gradually the conferences in moral theology both at the university and at the seminary lost their prestige, especially with Fr. Cafasso's emergence as 'Head of Conference' and rector of the *Convitto*.

The Convitto's Halcyon Period: The Cafasso Rectorate (1848-1860)

One might say that Fr. Cafasso's rectorate marked the end of the *Convitto*'s embattled existence. He was neither the 'co-founder' nor the 're-founder' of the institution. His merit lies in his having consolidated the institution, and steered it safely through the turbulent period of the revolution. This he achieved by detaching it from controversial, and ultimately damaging,

⁵⁴ Robilant, *Cafasso* I, p. xxxix.

⁵⁵ Cf. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, p. 48; *Sussidi* 2, p. 67f.

⁵⁶ Cf. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, p. 45, 48f. In 1848 Archbishop Fransoni (who had taken a rigidly conservative stance) closed down the seminary and dismissed 75 seminarians for having participated, against his orders, in public celebrations of the Constitution.

forms of patronage, and by conferring authority and prestige on its program through his learning and holiness.⁵⁷

After completing with distinction his course at the *Convitto*, he accepted Fr. Guala's invitation to stay on as assistant lecturer. In this capacity he served from 1836 to 1843, presiding at the morning conference, and taking over both conferences with increasing frequency. When in 1844 Fr. Guala's health took a turn for the worse, he became 'Head of the Conference'. Trusting his protégé in all things, Fr. Guala began to hand over to him the duties of the rectorate, his correspondence, his charities, the bank accounts. It was from such an authoritative position that Fr. Cafasso could take over the rectorate at a moment of the gravest crisis.

The year 1848-49, the year of the granting of the Constitution, of the 'First War of Independence', of King Charles Albert's defeat and abdication, was a turning point for the *Convitto*. The premises had been requisitioned by the Government for use as a military hospital. After the debacle, the new rector, Fr. Cafasso (Fr. Guala having meanwhile died on December 6, 1848), set about retrieving the premises, restoring the building and reestablishing the program. Through the years of the liberal revolution and the unification of Italy (1848-1861), years of turmoil that put both clergy and laity to the severest test, the

⁵⁷ Joseph Cafasso was born at Castelnuovo in 1811 in fairly comfortable circumstances. After private schooling and three years at the royal college in Chieri, he applied to enter the seminary in Turin, but no place was available. Joseph Cafasso then, with his life-long friend Giuseppe Allamano, enrolled in Fr. Pio Eusebio Sibilla's philosophy class in Chieri. Two years later they began theology as private clerics at Castelnuovo, under the guidance of the parish priest, Fr. Bartolomeo Dassano. When Archbishop Colombano Chiaveroti established the seminary in Chieri in 1829, the two friends enrolled there and were ordained in 1833. In November 1833 Frs. Cafasso and Allamano moved into lodgings in Turin for the purpose of continuing the study of moral and pastoral theology and obtaining faculties to hear confessions in preparation for the priestly ministry. They first tried the conferences at the university and at the seminary, but came away disappointed. Hearing that Fr. Guala was holding a conference at the *Convitto*, they attended a lecture and were so impressed that they decided to enroll. After discreet inquiries by Fr. Guala, they were admitted.

Fr. Cafasso quickly distinguished himself in every department; and Fr. Guala showed his approval by placing him at the head of the team that conducted the Lenten catechetical instruction in the prisons. This work, and the spiritual care of prison inmates, was to become Fr. Cafasso's favorite ministry. Fr. Cafasso took his examinations with honors in June 1836. His family hoped that he would then be considered for some honorable and lucrative appointment. But when Fr. Guala asked him to stay on as his assistant, Fr. Cafasso accepted. Not the least among his merits is that of having brought Don Bosco into the *Convitto* in 1841, and of having been ever after his spiritual director, as well as his inspiration, guide and support in the apostolate. Fr. Cafasso died in 1860. Don Bosco eulogized him in two funeral discourses that were later published jointly as Fr. Cafasso's first biography. [Process, *Cafasso, passim*; *Sussidi* 2, p. 246ff.]

Convitto did not swerve from its original principles and allegiances. Like other ecclesiastical institutions, it did experience a diminution in enrollment in some years, as well as the pressures of the policies of the liberal government. But through it all Fr. Cafasso kept it on course; indeed the Cafasso rectorate brought the *Convitto* to its highest point of achievement, prestige and influence. As a matter of fact, it gradually became the established practice for most newly-ordained priests to attend the *Convitto* for at least two years.

In 1851 Fr. Cafasso chose Fr. Giovanni Battista Destefanis as assistant lecturer ('repeater'). Because of the latter's delicate health, Fr. Giovanni Battista Bertagna was designated as a 'second assistant'. At Fr. Destefanis' premature death in 1855, Fr. Bertagna became Fr. Cafasso's assistant.⁵⁸

The rector of the *Convitto* was also the rector of the adjoining church. Under Fr. Cafasso, not only the *Convitto* but also the church of St. Francis of Assisi rose to new heights as a center of ministry, Christian life and spirituality. Already famous and popular under Fr. Guala, it now became known as the church of the frequent reception of the sacraments and of good preaching. Fr. Cafasso's personal commitment to the confessional was proverbial, and his tremendous popularity rested on three universally recognized qualities: knowledge, reading of hearts and efficacy of word. His preaching, with its depth of content and simplicity of style, was truly a vehicle for the Christian life. Here, under such guidance, is where the *Convitto* priests gained their pastoral experience.

The *Convitto* After Fr. Cafasso: Crisis in the Gastaldi Period (1860-1876)

Fr. Cafasso died on June 23, 1860, and was succeeded in the rectorate by Fr. Eugenio Galletti, of Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence (hence, an outsider), not by Fr. Bertagna.⁵⁹ For reasons that remain unclear, the latter was never to inherit Fr. Cafasso's mantle as rector. But he did succeed Fr. Cafasso in the chair of moral theology (perhaps only because Fr. Galletti had

⁵⁸ Giovanni Battista Destefanis (1824-1855) is mentioned as one of Don Bosco's early helpers in oratory work [*Bollettino Salesiano* 3 (1877:6), p. 2, *FDBMicro* 107 A2]

For Fr. Bertagna, cf. note 60 below.

⁵⁹ Eugenio Galletti was born in Turin in 1816. He had been one of Don Bosco's fellow students at the *Convitto* and one of his early helpers in oratory work. [*Bollettino Salesiano* 3 (1877:6) p. 2, *FDBMicro* 107 A2] In 1867 was named Bishop of Alba, and died there in 1879.

declined this appointment, considering himself unsuitable) and indeed held this post for many years, until his removal by Archbishop Gastaldi in 1876.⁶⁰

In 1864 Fr. Galletti resigned from the rectorate to return to the Little House. Msgr. Giuseppe Zappata, capitular vicar and regent of the diocese, delegated Fr. Felice Golzio to act as rector of both the church and the *Convitto* of St. Francis of Assisi, as well as administrator of the shrine and retreat house of St. Ignatius.⁶¹ Fr. Golzio, had spent all his priestly life at the *Convitto* and had been close to Fr. Cafasso. Yet, Fr. Cafasso did not see fit to designate him as his successor. As a matter of fact, saintly and devoted though he was, he seems to have been unequal to the task of governing those important institutions.⁶²

During Fr. Golzio's tenure, in 1871, the *Convitto* was transferred to the church and monastery of the *Consolata*, and was known thereafter as the *Convitto* of the *Consolata*.⁶³ Archbishop Riccardi di Netro had negotiated with

⁶⁰ Giovanni Battista Bertagna was born in Castelnuovo in 1828, attended the seminary in Turin, earned his doctorate in theology at the university in 1850, and was ordained in 1851. He then enrolled in the *Convitto*, and later served as assistant lecturer. Eventually he succeeded Fr. Cafasso in the chair of moral theology. With a reputation of taking Probabilism to extremes, he clashed with Archbishop Gastaldi, who was less than sympathetic toward the Alphonsian system. On being dismissed by Archbishop Gastaldi in 1876, he retired to his native town, and subsequently accepted the appointment of professor of moral theology and vicar general in the diocese of Asti. In 1884, after Archbishop Gastaldi's death, he was named auxiliary bishop of Turin under Card. Gaetano Alimonda. Dismissed by Card. Alimonda's successor, Archbishop Davide Riccardi, he was later named to the post of Vicar General by Card. Agostino Richelmy. Bishop Bertagna died in 1905. An early helper of Don Bosco at the Oratory, he remained his life-long friend and presided at his funeral. [Cf. *Sussidi* 2, p. 241]

⁶¹ Felice Golzio was born in 1807 (?). After his ordination he followed Fr. Cafasso to the *Convitto*, entering in 1835. Upon completion of the course, at Fr. Guala's request, he stayed on as spiritual director, whose chief duties consisted in guiding religious exercises, and in giving a liturgical instruction on Sundays. Noted for his saintliness and learning, though never in good health, he became a mainstay to Frs. Guala and Cafasso, and served the student community with total devotion. His whole life, like Cafasso's, was spent at the *Convitto*. After Fr. Cafasso's death he took on the spiritual direction of many of his penitents, including Don Bosco's. Under his rectorate, the *Convitto* was transferred to the monastery and Church of the *Consolata* in 1871. Fr. Golzio died in 1873. [Cf. *Sussidi* 2, p. 288]

⁶² So Tuninetti, *Gastaldi*, p. 167; and I. Tubaldo, *Giuseppe Allamano*. Torino, 1982, p. 368 in *Sussidi* 2, p. 288.

⁶³ The church of Our Lady, Consoler of the Afflicted (popularly known as the *Consolata*), with its miraculous image of the Virgin, was one of the people's favorite churches in Turin. It had been built on the site of a very ancient shrine dedicated to St. Andrew. A community of Benedictine monks, fleeing before the Saracens, sought refuge there in 929, and the monastery attached to the church came into existence. The Benedictines occupied the monastery until 1589, when they were replaced by a Cistercian community. It was under the Cistercians that in 1679 the present church was built. The

the State's Church Board for the exchange of the premises at St. Francis of Assisi with those at the *Consolata*, an advantageous exchange in many ways. Fr. Golzio, continuing as rector of the *Convitto*, became rector the church also. He died in 1873, and Fr. Bartolomeo Roetti was named to succeed him by Archbishop Gastaldi. Fr. Bertagna continued in the chair of moral theology, assisted by a succession of 'repeaters'.⁶⁴ It was at this point that the *Convitto* and Fr. Bertagna came under Archbishop Gastaldi's critical scrutiny.

The Gastaldi period is known for a number of serious crises and confrontations. The conflict between Don Bosco and the Archbishop is one notorious example. But perhaps the dismissal of Fr. Bertagna from the chair of moral theology and the closing down of the *Convitto* was an even more serious incident, in as much as it affected the life of the church of Turin significantly.⁶⁵ It has been said, and it may well be, that with the passing of Fr. Cafasso the *Convitto* entered a period of decline under three successive weak rectors—good men, but unsuitable for that post.⁶⁶ But the Archbishop's statements and actions clearly show that his quarrel was with the teaching of moral theology as such, with Fr. Bertagna's in particular, and proceeded from a special concept of his episcopal authority, as well as from his theological sympathies.⁶⁷

community was dispersed by Napoleon; and in 1834 The Oblates of the Virgin Mary took over the premises, and officiated the church until 1855, when that congregation was disbanded by Rattazzi's Law of Suppression. From 1857 to 1871 the church and monastery were placed in the care of a small community of Friars Minor by the State's Church Board. Archbishop Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi di Netro negotiated an exchange of premises, and after his death the *Convitto* was transferred to the *Consolata* (1871). [cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 68, note 48; *MO-daSilva*, p. 111, note to line 588].

⁶⁴ Bartolomeo Roetti was born at Cavour, some 20 miles southwest of Turin, in 1823, and served as assistant parish priest at Bra before being appointed rector of the church and the *Convitto* of the *Consolata* by Archbishop Gastaldi in 1873. After his resignation in 1880 he joined Cottolengo's Little House of Divine Providence, and served as Card. Alimonda's vicar general. In 1891 he became Superior General of the Little House. He died in 1894. [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 167f. and note 12]

⁶⁵ For the events of this period, in so far as they relate to the *Convitto*, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 68ff., 165-184.

⁶⁶ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 168.

⁶⁷ Lorenzo Gastaldi was born in Turin in 1815, the first of twelve children, of well-to-do parents; and received his first schooling as a day pupil of the Jesuits at the *Collegio del Carmine* (or *dei Nobili*). He studied philosophy and theology at the university as an a non-resident seminarian, naturally adopting its probabiliorist and jurisdictionalist orientation. He earned his doctorate in 1836 and was ordained in 1837. Having come under the spiritual and philosophical influence of Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855), like Rosmini he retained a probabiliorist persuasion with respect to the natural law, and accepted a kind of probabilism in what pertained to the positive moral law. It is in this vein that Gastaldi updated Alasia's compendium. [Cf. note 39 above] After a period of eager participation in the political dialogue of the liberal revolution, and a

Lawrence Gastaldi's intellectual and spiritual formation had taken place under a double influence: Piedmontese theology as established at the university, and Rosminian thought. As to the first, Gastaldi's education was rooted in moral Probabiliorism, coupled with an austere spirituality, and in the university's moderately Gallican ecclesiology. As to the second point, Rosminian influence on Gastaldi appears in his adoption of the master's Probabilism in matters touching the positive moral law but not the natural law, and above all in the adoption of ideas propounded in Rosmini's *Le cinque piaghe della Chiesa* (The Five Wounds of the Church). Two capital ideas of the book were the necessity of structural, as well as spiritual, reformation in the Church; and the centrality of the role and function of the local bishop. It is this latter idea that was decisive for Gastaldi's conception and exercise of episcopal authority. As a matter of fact, even when speaking in support of papal infallibility at Vatican I (as he finally did as part of his 'ultramontane conversion'), Gastaldi expressed reservations with respect to the manner in which it was presented, that is, without proper reference to the bishops' *magisterium*. These are the positions from which

period of discernment, Gastaldi joined Rosmini's Institute of Charity in 1851. In 1853 he was assigned to England, where the Rosminians had been active since 1835. He left the Rosminians for personal and family reasons in 1862 and returned to the archdiocese and to his former post of Canon of the church of St. Lawrence. In the sixties Canon Gastaldi was very close to Don Bosco and the Oratory; and in 1867 Don Bosco supported his nomination to the episcopal See of Saluzzo, vacant since 1863. During his brief but effective tenure at Saluzzo, Gastaldi attended the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), at which, amid deep rifts dividing the Piedmontese bishops and notwithstanding his own university formation, he spoke and voted in support of papal infallibility. Having returned to his diocese and to his reform program, he was appointed archbishop of Turin in 1871 (again with Don Bosco's support). He entered on November 26, 1871 in the face of opposition from the liberal and anti-clerical forces.

After a protracted struggle (1871-1874) to obtain the State's *exequatur* (that is, the permit to establish his chancery and residence, and to operate the diocese and its institutions as an approved corporation), he set about implementing a bold reform program. Difficulties stemmed not only from the difficult political and social situation of the seventies, but more especially from the fact that since the exile of Archbishop Fransoni (1850) the diocese had been without real leadership. Archbishop Riccardi's short term (1867-1870), marred by ill health, had been largely taken up with Vatican I. Gastaldi's program aimed at establishing Church discipline under his authority, and at clergy reform at all levels and in all areas, with the highest priority set on seminary and priestly formation. He reorganized the seminary placing it under new statutes; he transferred the theological faculty from the university to the seminary; he surrounded himself with able and trusted collaborators; he called diocesan synods; he put his relationship with religious and laity on a new basis; above all he sought to bring all diocesan institutions under his control. It is within this context that his actions relating to the *Convitto* should be viewed. Lawrence Gastaldi's significance as a reforming pastor-bishop of the Church of Turin cannot be overestimated. He died suddenly on March 25, 1883. [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I and II*, passim; *Sussidi 2*, p. 278-284]

Archbishop Gastaldi sought to come to terms with the *Convitto*, and in particular with the person who had held the chair of moral theology for over fifteen years, Fr. Bertagna.

As for Bertagna's stance, the critics are divided into two camps. Those favoring Gastaldi see the Archbishop's action not as proceeding from objections to the Alphonsian system as such, but rather from a perception that with Fr. Bertagna the teaching of moral theology had deteriorated into dry casuistry. Bertagna's teaching is faulted by some precisely for lacking the educational quality that Fr. Cafasso's had possessed to a high degree.

Whenever, for the glory of God and the good of souls, Fr. Cafasso put forward a probable opinion, following St. Alphonsus' example he also qualified it with conditions and cautions. Fr. Bertagna, on the contrary, believed that all such qualifications should be abandoned; and he would invariably press for the farthest limits of the probable. Fr. Cafasso's teaching was educative in that it exhorted to seek the better, and not the minimum allowable; Fr. Bertagna's was the opposite, just "a dry, captious and contentious discussion of the law."⁶⁸

Other authors, on the other hand, maintain that Fr. Bertagna was Cafasso's faithful disciple, and that his (and the *Convitto*'s) undoing was brought about by (older) rigorist elements among the clergy, who had no use for the *Convitto* and for the young priests that were trained there.⁶⁹ If this be the case, then one must assume either that these people succeeded in 'pulling the wool' over Gastaldi's eyes, or (more likely) that the Archbishop's own sympathies lay in the same direction. In any case, the rumors and accusations of laxity that circulated and had come to his attention had to be investigated; and he did so before taking action.

In his letter of February 1875 addressed "to the Young Priests, the Students of Practical Moral Theology,"⁷⁰ Gastaldi emphasizes the bishop's power of *magisterium*. It is the bishop's prerogative and duty to teach and form his priests in moral theology and pastoral practice; and he has the incontestable right to choose, from among those opinions that are free of censure, that which he deems most conducive to the spiritual good of his flock. With this conception

⁶⁸ This is a summary of critics' opinions by Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 168.

⁶⁹ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 168f.

⁷⁰ In ASC 123: Gastaldi e i Salesiani, "Convitto Eccl: Lettera di Gastaldi ai giovani ecclesiastici," *FDBMicro* 647 D9-E4.

of the bishop's office, he goes on to discuss, and give directions on, a number of moral situations encountered in pastoral practice.⁷¹ His discussion reveals not only his opposition to laxist interpretations, but also his unwillingness to go along with Alphonsian solutions. He adheres to the Alasia-Rosmini line that he had made his own. A similar letter, previously approved by Rome and praised for "its moral sensitivity and moderation," was sent to "the Reverend Fathers, the Directors of Moral Conferences."⁷² The Archbishop had also contacted Fr. Bertagna by letter, and had received a respectful reply.

The decisive letter, addressed "to the Very Reverend Canons, Pastors and other Priests in care of souls" on November 20, 1875, was in the nature of a survey.⁷³ It sought the opinion of the diocesan clergy on the way younger priests handled moral guidance questions in and out of the confessional. He had reservations on the way practical moral theology had been taught, and many young priests trained, in the past 15 or 20 years—an unmistakable reference to Fr. Bertagna's tenure and activity. The replies were divided, but there was enough of an outcry to convince the Archbishop that action was indicated.⁷⁴

In September 1876 he relieved Fr. Bertagna of all duties at the *Convitto*. Fr. Bertagna (contrary to character, and perhaps to the Archbishop's expectation) obeyed without a protest and retired quietly to his hometown of Castelnuovo. The event was given little publicity in the press, but the wound it left in the church of Turin was deep and remained festering for many years.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Archbishop Gastaldi, in spite of his espousal of ultramontane ecclesiology in his support of papal infallibility, in reality adhered to a concept of the episcopal office that was more in line with his university heritage, and certainly with his Rosminian indoctrination. He viewed the bishop as pastor and as sole teacher of faith, morals, and discipline in his diocese. On the other hand, real ultramontane priests, such as Guala, Cafasso, Don Bosco, and all those of the *Convitto* tradition, viewed the bishop rather as a representative or subsidiary of the Pope in the territory that was his diocese.

⁷² Published on December 8, 1875 in the diocesan Liturgical Calendar for 1876, it is discussed in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 171.

⁷³ Original in AAT [Archives of the Archdiocese of Turin], cited and discussed in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 171-176.

⁷⁴ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 174ff. discusses the various interpretations given to those events by various historians. He dismisses out of hand any interpretation contrary to Gastaldi as going beyond the evidence. But he recognizes that Gastaldi had never shown any sympathy for Alphonsian moral theology and for the *Convitto*, even under Guala and Cafasso, for whom he had nevertheless had a high regard. [*Ibid.*, p. 176 and note 37]

⁷⁵ As indicated in note 60 above, Fr. Bertagna was almost immediately given a comparable appointment by the Bishop of Asti, and was later re-instated, and therefore vindicated, by Gastaldi's successor, Card. Gaetano Alimonda. Ironically he was re-appointed to the new *Convitto* as lecturer of moral theology, and made rector general of the archdiocesan seminaries as well as auxiliary bishop. Would this indicate that the Cardinal did not regard the Archbishop's action as appropriate?

The *Convitto's* Deepening Crisis and Closure

To the Archbishop's surprise, the drastic action did not solve the problem; on the contrary it resulted immediately in a deepening of the crisis. The new appointment, Fr. Ludovico Chicco, did not work out. The *Convitto* students' reaction was barely short of mutiny. Letters were written; the Archbishop met with the students; but matters did not improve. Fr. Chicco apparently lacked sufficient professional preparation for the task, but the issue went beyond the classroom. The younger priests were not going back to a system of moral and pastoral theology that they regarded as inadequate. The Archbishop dismissed the assistant lecturer, who was the only person acceptable to the students, closed the *Convitto* for the year 1878-79, and brought the students into the seminary. The students protested this action and wrote to the Pope. Fr. Chicco handed in his resignation (1879), and so did the rector, Fr. Roetti (1880), who had also come under suspicion. Archbishop Gastaldi then took over the lectures in moral theology himself, holding sessions at his own residence. He reedited his *Alasia-Stuardi* compendium (1879), making it obligatory for all.⁷⁶

Fr. Giuseppe Allamano and the New *Convitto*

There is no way of telling if or how the impasse could have been overcome. One thing is certain—the *Convitto* and what it stood for had become a fact of life, especially among the younger clergy, most of whom had attended the *Convitto*. The person that made a resurgence of the *Convitto* possible, in such a way that the Archbishop's fears were allayed, while the Cafasso tradition was carried forward, was Fr. Giuseppe Allamano.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ For details on these events, cf. Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, p. 177-180.

An interesting chronicle of the events (with the letters referred to) is found in ASC 123: Gastaldi e i Salesiani, "Convitto Ecclesiastico," *FDBMicro* 647 D9-648 A12.

⁷⁷ The principal biography is I. Tubaldi, *Giuseppe Allamano. Il suo tempo, la sua vita, la sua opera*, 4 vol., Turin, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986. Volumes I and II are cited in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, *passim*.

Giuseppe Allamano was born in 1851 at Castelnuovo, and was not only Fr. Cafasso's compatriot, but his nephew. After completing his secondary studies with Don Bosco at the Oratory, he entered the seminary in Turin and was ordained in 1873. He attended the two-year course in practical moral theology at the *Convitto* (1873-1875) under Fr. Golzio as rector and Fr. Bertagna as lecturer. Already distinguished at the young age of 25 for his deep spirituality, his learning and his loyalty, he was hand-picked by Archbishop Gastaldi to serve as spiritual director and vice-rector of the seminary

Fr. Allamano, young though he was, enjoyed the Archbishop's trust. His appointments to the seminary as spiritual director and to the faculty of theology are ample proof. But the greater proof was his appointment to the church of the *Consolata* as rector (replacing Fr. Roetti) at the age of 29. Moreover, there remained pressing problems at the church and at the monastery, after the closing down of the *Convitto*. Fr. Allamano dealt with them to the Archbishop's complete satisfaction.⁷⁸ But the *Convitto* stood at the center of his concern. It is from his new position that he saw the possibility of getting the Archbishop to agree to reestablishing the *Convitto*. In a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi he presented his case. At the end of the spiritual retreat of July, 1882, the Archbishop sent for Fr. Allamano and declared his willingness to reopen the *Convitto*, on condition that Fr. Allamano himself take over the chair of moral theology. After initial objections on the latter's part and a period of discernment, he accepted. Thus it was that, in the autumn of 1882, the 'new' *Convitto* began its sessions under the new rector and lecturer, in a much improved setting, with a total enrollment of 57 student priests in the two-year program.⁷⁹

The exchange between the Archbishop and Fr. Allamano on the occasion of the official conferral of powers is significant as harbinger of a new era. In accepting the charge, Fr. Allamano is reported to have added: "Your Grace, I accept the lectureship, but I will not use your textbook." And the

(1876-1880). He remained ever thereafter a trusted collaborator of the Archbishop, without ever sacrificing his freedom and his personal convictions. In 1877 he became associate professor in the School of Theology and Canon Law, which the Archbishop had transferred from the university to the seminary. He was thereafter appointed rector of the church of the *Consolata* (1880), which was badly in need of restoration. Under Fr. Allamano the church became a center of Christian and priestly spirituality, as well as of popular devotion.

Fr. Allamano was the person chosen to reestablish and direct the 'new' *Convitto* in 1882.

Later he founded the Institute of the *Consolata* for Foreign Missions (1901) and the Missionary Sisters of the *Consolata* (1910), and was without a doubt one of the most influential personalities in the Church of Turin, especially under Card. Richelmy (1897-1923). He died in 1926 and was beatified in 1990. [Peppino Maggioni, *Un Prete per la missione: Giuseppe Allamano*. Torino: EMI, 1990, *passim*; Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II, passim*]

⁷⁸ Part of the monastery served as a retirement home for old priests, and also housed a small community of three aged Franciscans who had administered the church from 1857 to 1871. Fr. Allamano arranged for their relocation. The church also was in need of repairs. Furthermore, Fr. Allamano, as rector of the retreat house and shrine of St. Ignatius, revived the retreat program there, as it had been conceived by Frs. Lanteri and Guala and expanded by Fr. Cafasso.

⁷⁹ The reinstatement of the senior Fr. Bertagna by Card. Alimonda in 1884 meant that Fr. Allamano for some years was to hold the chair of moral theology in name only. But Fr. Allamano's ability to work with others, and the undoubted moral authority he enjoyed, guaranteed success.

Archbishop is reported to have replied: "That is not important. You, I trust. Do as you see fit."⁸⁰ Tuninetti doubts the literal authenticity of these words, for they run contrary to Gastaldi's character, and indeed contrary to the fact that Allamano did use the diocesan text issued by Gastaldi, albeit with an additional commentary of his own.⁸¹ But the words possess a deeper authenticity and meaning. In the first place, they reveal, on the Archbishop's part the acceptance of a new situation in moral and pastoral doctrine that could no longer be set aside by decree. Secondly, they hint at the fact that Allamano, Cafasso's nephew and Bertagna's pupil, but nonetheless a man Gastaldi trusted for his depth and level-headedness, represented a compromise that the Archbishop, reluctantly perhaps, could live with. Allamano's very youth at the time of his appointment to the chair (age 31) may signify that Gastaldi lacked, or did not dare put in, a man of his very own.⁸²

He had been displeased with Dr. Bertagna's teaching [...], but perhaps he was also unhappy with the whole Guala-Cafasso orientation. In other words, he had reservations about the *Convitto's* very tradition, and his preferred option would have been for a continuance of the Piedmontese theology of the kind that had found expression in the Alsia-Stuardi-Gastaldi compendium.[...] It is most unlikely (and it would have been historically impossible) that Gastaldi advocated a return to the older [rigorist] Piedmontese theology. But it is likely that his sympathies lay in that direction. He may therefore have believed that his man Allamano would be the agent of the reform—not perhaps the reform he himself yearned for, but (as the six-year crisis had brought home to him) of the only reform that was concretely possible under the circumstances.⁸³

Fr. Allamano did indeed turn out to be a unifying and healing force in the Archdiocese. He was also instrumental in bringing the teaching of moral theology and pastoral practice in the church of Turin into modern times. The

⁸⁰ Source cited in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 69f.

⁸¹ This refers to the years 1882-1884. The authors most cited in Allamano's commentary are St. Alphonsus, Fr. Cafasso, Fr. Bertagna, according to Tubaldo, *Allamano I*, p. 416ff., in Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 182.

⁸² Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 69.

⁸³ Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, p. 183.

Convitto prospered under Fr. Allamano's direction and teaching; and the *Convitto* at the *Consolata* has prospered ever since.

Conclusion

In a passage of his *Memoirs*, already referred to at the beginning of this essay, Don Bosco writes of his experience at the *Convitto*: "In the seminary we studied only dogma, and that speculative; and in moral theology only controversial issues. Here one learnt to be a priest."⁸⁴

Fr. Clemente Marchisio, who attended the *Convitto* in the years 1856-1858, speaks of his experience in similar, but more comprehensive terms:

When I enrolled at the *Convitto*, I was just a big, thoughtless kid; I had no idea what to be a priest really meant. I left the *Convitto* a changed person—a person that had been made to realize the greatness of the priesthood. This change in me resulted not so much from Fr. Cafasso's good advice on specific occasions, but from the guidance that he provided for everyone at the *Convitto*.⁸⁵

Don Bosco continues: "Meditation, spiritual reading, two conferences a day, lessons in preaching, and every convenience for study, reading good authors—these were the areas of learning to which we had to apply ourselves."⁸⁶

Tuninetti summarizes Fr. Marchisio's more critical reflections on the type of formation received when, serving in a country parish, he experienced, on the one hand, the contrast between his rigid (even though pastorally 'benignist') formation in Cafasso's school, the kind of bookish jargon acquired, so different from the language of real life, the idealized missionary motivation; and on the other, the country peasant scene, where people struggled with the basic problem

⁸⁴ *Mo-En*, p. 180.

⁸⁵ G. Tuninetti, *Don Clemente Marchisio [1833-1903]. Un profilo storico*, 2nd ed. Turin, 1986, p. 18f., in *Sussidi* 2, p. 77.

Clemente Marchisio was born in 1833. After his ordination in 1856 he enrolled at the *Convitto* under Fr. Cafasso. He served as assistant in country parishes before being appointed parish priest at Rivalba, near Turin, by Archbishop Gastaldi. Taking to heart the plight of young women flocking to the city in search of employment, in 1875 he founded the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Joseph for this ministry and for the liturgical apostolate. He died in 1903, and was beatified in 1985. [Tuninetti, *Gastaldi I* and *II*, *passim*.]

⁸⁶ *Mo-En*, p. 180.

of making a living, unaccustomed to high moral demands, and practicing a Christian life devoid of both praise and blame. Fr. Marchisio realized that the rigid priestly formation, and the standards of priestly discipline and spirituality which Fr. Cafasso inculcated most forcefully to his students by word and example, could be a drawback. And certainly Fr. Cafasso's meditations for priests reveal a spirituality structured by ascetic tension, powered by intense fervor, and certainly rich in saintliness, but also an inherently risky spirituality and one that tended to isolate the priest.⁸⁷

This realization raises real questions concerning the type of priestly formation that even the best institutions (and the *Convitto* was certainly such) could provide in the nineteenth century. But this again is a real problem confronting priestly formation structures and institutions at any time.

⁸⁷ Tuninetti, *Marchisio*, 25f., in *Sussidi* 2, p. 78ff.