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Key-Concepts, Concerns and Fears of a Founder—Don Bosco in his Declining Years

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Introduction

My article on Don Bosco's last years, which saw the light of day in this Journal,¹ was based on chronicles and memoirs held in the Central Salesian Archive.² Besides these chronicles and memoirs, there are other important documents to be found in the archive relating to Don Bosco's last years. I am referring chiefly and specifically to the minutes of the meetings of the general council of the Salesian Society (called "superior chapter" in those days), and to the minutes of the general chapters held during the 1880s under Don Bosco's chairmanship. These official documents contain abundant reports of Don Bosco's words on a great variety of topics. They are, therefore, among the best sources available to us for an understanding of his thought regarding the life of the Society.

Obviously this rich material could not escape the attention of the biographers. Both Giovanni Battista Lemoyne in *Documenti* and Eugenio Ceria in the last volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs* have made extensive, if selective, use of this material.³ But Don Bosco's words have only seldom been quoted in full as reported in the documents; and even when they are quoted

¹ A. Lenti, "Don Bosco's Last Years, His Last Illness and Sainly Death from Eyewitness Accounts," *Journal of Salesian Studies* V:2 (1994) pp. 23-97.

² The Don Bosco files (*Fondo Don Bosco*) of the Central Salesian Archive in Rome (ASC) are available on microfiches (*FDBM*).

The ASC is at present being reorganized and re-catalogued. In this paper I refer to the archive by the former filing system as specified in the *Fondo Don Bosco* manual.

³ [Giovanni Battista Lemoyne] *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione Salesiana*, 45 privately printed volumes [no publication data], specifically Volumes XIX-XXXIX, in ASC 110: Cronachette, *FDBM* 1,053-1,162.

Eugenio Ceria, *Memorie Biografiche del Beato [di San] Giovanni Bosco*. Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1932-1939, Volumes XIII-XVIII. *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. An American Edition. Translated from the Original Italian. Rev. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B. Editor-in-Chief. New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1983-1988, Volumes XIII-XV. [*IBM* and *EBM*]

extensively, they usually do not stand out against the welter of other information which the *Biographical Memoirs* provide.

More recently, Father Francis Desramaut has given careful attention to this archival material in one of his *Études* on Don Bosco, and although I shall follow a different procedure, I am beholden to him for the inspiration to look into these important documents.⁴

This then is the first task I set for myself: to read, transcribe, and translate into readable English, always with an overriding concern for fidelity to the original text, Don Bosco's reported words. It soon became apparent that the vast majority of Don Bosco's utterances reported in the minutes of these official meetings were in the form of interpositions during discussions and debates. In them he gave utterance to key-concepts, concerns, and fears in matters of importance for the life of the Society. My presentation then will focus on such utterances.

But even with this more restricted focus, it would still have been too laborious and repetitious to quote Don Bosco's reported words in their entirety. I have therefore looked for and quoted the essential utterance, while trying to make its specific references clear by providing a context. Furthermore, I saw the necessity of proceeding not chronologically but topically, while at the same time observing within the topic some logical and chronological order. I have moreover refrained from quoting the text in its original Italian, except for occasional words, and phrases which seemed to be required for comparison.

Before specifying in outline the contents of this presentation, it will be useful to look at the archival documents under consideration, which, as indicated above, consist chiefly of minutes of the meetings of the superior chapter⁵ and of the sessions of the second, third, and fourth general chapters.

⁴ Francis Desramaut, "Études VII," in *Cahiers Salésiens* 20-21 (Apr.-Oct. 1989), pp. 195-235.

⁵ "Superior chapter" was the name given to the group of councilors which, under Don Bosco, made up the central government of the Society. In 1966 the name of the enlarged group was changed to superior council; and in 1984 the central government was reorganized and the name was changed to general council. In Don Bosco's times, the superior chapter was composed of the following members: the rector major (Don Bosco), the prefect-vicar (Father Michele Rua), the spiritual director or catchiest (Father Giovanni Cagliero, then Father Giovanni Bonetti), the financial administrator (Father Antonio Sala), and two or three additional councilors.

Part I. Review and Description of the Documents

I. The Minutes of the Superior Chapter from 1875 to 1888⁶

With the exception of a couple of entries by unidentified scribes, the minutes of meetings of the superior chapter (from 1875 on) preserved in *ASC (FDBM)* are the work of Father Giulio Barberis and of Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne.

For each entry, both Barberis and Lemoyne (the latter more consistently) note the date, place and time of the meeting, *ex-officio* participants, Don Bosco or, in his absence, Father Rua presiding, and other invited participants. There follows the report of the discussion, which may run to many pages, or just to a couple of lines.

The meetings were most often devoted to the study of requests for Salesian foundations, and it is interesting to note the meticulous attention given to details regarding the convention to be agreed on by the parties, demands made on finances and personnel, and other practical matters. Often and periodically the agenda included admission of candidates as aspirants or novices, or to vows and holy orders. During Don Bosco's life time and for some time thereafter, all such petitions, including those of candidates from France, Spain, and South America, were submitted to and examined by the superior chapter. But all kinds of matters and problems were presented to the superior chapter for discussion: offices and tasks to be defined, the ordering of the Oratory communities, vocations, building projects, finances, religious life and discipline, and many more. Thus Don Bosco's interjections occur in a variety of contexts. And then there are instances in which Don Bosco (so it appears) convened the superior chapter for the express purpose of voicing his views or delivering directives on important matters.

Barberis is more voluble in his reports, and occasionally he also digresses into comments which, though interesting in themselves, are not part of the acts of the chapter. Lemoyne is more succinct; he is also more thorough in identifying the speakers. Both secretaries appear to have been diligent in recording the process of the meeting, though it appears that both had to make choices, with the result that matters which they considered less important were left unrecorded. This would explain why some matters received only a passing mention, and why occasionally a meeting which lasted over an hour is reported in a couple of lines. I would say that the two show special diligence in reporting Don Bosco's words. The pertinent critical question here is that which has to do with reporting as such; and the question becomes more critical if the report originated after a lapse of time or is an edition of the original notes. In my view, skepticism is unwarranted; both secretaries deserve equal commendation for their work.

Of the two sets of minutes, Father Barberis' is the earlier, and it will be the first to be considered.

⁶ Almost all minutes of the superior chapter are located in *ASC 0592 Consiglio Superiore: Verbali, FDBM 1873 D9 - 1883 E3*.

1. Father Giulio Barberis' Minutes of Meetings of the Superior Chapter⁷

Barberis' minutes span the years 1875-1883, with considerable lacunae. While chiefly contained in three note books, some are found also in other locations.

(1) Most of Barberis' minutes of meetings of the superior chapter have come down to us, as mentioned above, in three note books of medium size. The reports date from December 10, 1875 to June 9, 1879.

Note Book I covers the period from December 10, 1875 to August 17, 1877.⁸ *Note Book II*, from May 15, 1878 to February 8, 1879.⁹ In this note book are also included the minutes of the "General Conference" held at Alassio on February 6-8, 1879.¹⁰ *Note Book III* deals with the shorter span from April 29 to June 9, 1879.¹¹

As noted above, there are considerable periods of time for which the *ASC (FDBM)* preserve no record of superior chapter meetings.

The text of these minutes is all in Barberis' neat hand, and appears to be a good copy, a transcription presumably made from the original notes taken at the meetings, with only occasional marginal and interlinear additions, and some corrections in the same hand.

(2) *Note Book III* (ending with the meeting of June 9, 1879) is followed by a series of sheets in smaller format. These sheets contain two reports in Barberis' hand of meetings of the superior chapter dated August 14 and November 7, 1875.¹² In spite of occasional corrections, these reports appear to be good copy transcriptions either from original notes or from memory. The first report deals chiefly with the projected Work of Mary Help of Christians and

⁷ Father Giulio Barberis was born at Mathi (Turin) in 1847. Befriended by Don Bosco upon entering the Oratory in 1861, he made his first vows as a Salesian in 1865, and was ordained a priest in 1870. After obtaining the doctorate in theology from the University of Turin in 1873, he was appointed novice master by Don Bosco and served in that capacity for twenty-five years, during and after which he also acted as director of formation for the whole Congregation. After Don Bosco's death he served as a member of the superior chapter and subsequently as provincial of the central province, which comprised various formation houses. In 1910 he was elected spiritual director of the Congregation, a post he held until his death in 1927. A gentle and saintly priest, engaged with life-long commitment in the formation of generations of Salesians, he was also a respected writer. And not least among his merits must be reckoned that from mid-1870s on he was active as a chronicler and as secretary of both superior chapter and general chapters. [Eugenio Ceria, *Profili dei Capitolari salesiani morti dall'anno 1865 al 1950*. Colle Don Bosco (Asti): Libreria Dottrina Cristiana, pp. 305-324]

⁸ *ASC* 0592, *FDBM* 1875 B10 - 1876 E12.

⁹ *FDBM* 1877 A1 - 1878 D8.

¹⁰ *FDBM* 1878 C7-D8.

¹¹ *FDBM* 1878 D9 - 1879 C2.

¹² *FDBM* 1879 C3-D11.

requests for new foundations; the second one, on the other hand, describes at some length the arrangements made for the departure of the missionaries to South America.

(3) In another location of *ASC (FDBM)* we find a shorter set of minutes by Barberis. They are found in a note book containing the rough copy of Barberis' own minutes of the Second General Chapter (1880, to be described later). These minutes consist of short reports of meetings of the superior chapter held as a follow-up to the Second General Chapter. The purpose of these meetings was to complete and finalize the general chapter's work as mandated.

These minutes consist of 14 entries briefly describing the work of the superior chapter in meetings held between September 29, 1880 and January 3, 1881.¹³

(4) There are no further minutes of meetings of the superior chapter to be found in *ASC (FDBM)* between January 3, 1881 and September 14, 1883, a lacuna of nearly three years.

But with the date of September 4, 1883, we have a 14-line report, again by Barberis, of a meeting of the superior chapter.¹⁴ This is followed by two other reports in an unknown hand, dated October 2, 1884 and September 17, 1885 respectively, which for chronological reasons will be listed with the Lemoyne minutes. These three reports are located immediately before the book of Lemoyne's minutes (to be described below), in which the first entry is dated December 14, 1883.

A repertory-catalogue of Barberis's minutes of the meetings of the superior chapter in chronological order is given below (Appendix I). The table records date and time, and chairman (if such information is available), followed by pages in book or collection, and by location in *FDBM*. For the period of Barberis' secretarial activity the chairman was usually Don Bosco himself. Apparently, for this period, in Don Bosco's absence no meetings were held. On the contrary, for the Lemoyne period (1884-1888) usually Father Rua presided in Don Bosco's absence.

¹³ *ASC 04 Capitoli Generali presieduti da Don Bosco, FDBM 1856 C7-D1.*

¹⁴ *ASC 0592 Consiglio Superiore: Varbali, FDBM 1879 E12.*

2. Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne's Minutes of the Meetings of the Superior Chapter¹⁵

The Lemoyne minutes of the meetings of the superior chapter in *ASC (FDBM)* follow Barberis' three note books and the three additional reports discussed above. They span the period from December 14, 1883 to February 28, 1888.¹⁶

The reports are written in one large note book or ledger of 110 numbered sheets (220 pages). The printed enumeration is by sheet, not by page. Thus sheet 1 will be treated as pp. 1a and 1b.

The handwriting is vintage Lemoyne: neat in appearance, but small and tight, with characteristic cursive ligatures, and always hard to read. The difficulty is heightened by the peculiar style and at many places jotting quality of the text; for, in spite of the relatively small number of erasures and corrections, the reports appear to be first drafts written by the secretary as the discussions proceeded. The minutes get progressively less detailed and hard to read as one reaches the year 1887-1888.

At the beginning of each report Lemoyne consistently notes the date and the place of the meeting, specifies the chairman (Don Bosco, Father Rua, Father Durando), and lists the participants. He ends with a note of place and date, and with his signature: "Sac. Lemoyne G. B., Segr."

Each year ([1883-]1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888), constitutes a series with a separate Roman enumeration. But all references to text will be made on the basis of the running pagination of the ledger.

As in Barberis' case, a repertory-catalogue of Lemoyne's minutes is given below (Appendix II). In the interest of one continuous chronological sequence, the two

¹⁵ Giovanni Battista Lemoyne was born in Genoa in 1839, entered the archdiocesan seminary in that city, and was ordained in 1862. Looking to enter some religious order, in 1864 he met Don Bosco and joined him at the Oratory. After making perpetual vows in 1865, he was appointed director of the Salesian school at Lanzo, and in 1877, local director of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Mornese and at Nizza. In 1883 Don Bosco called him back to Turin as editor of the *Salesian Bulletin* and as secretary of the superior chapter. Already a prolific writer in many fields and active as a chronicler for a number of years, he now made it his life's goal to collect the material which had accumulated in Salesian tradition for a history of Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation. His close relationship with Don Bosco during the latter's last years enabled him to begin to put this project into execution. He started to assemble the *Documenti* in 1885, which eventually ran to 45 volumes and which became the basis for the *Biographical Memoirs* [Cf. Note 3, above]. After Don Bosco's death in 1888, Father Lemoyne was charged officially with the work of the *Biographical Memoirs* and completed the first nine volumes before his death in 1916. But we also owe him a debt of gratitude for his work as secretary. [E. Ceria, *Profili*, cit., pp. 382-400; A Lenti, "Don Bosco's 'Boswell': John Baptist Lemoyne—the Man and His Work," *Journal of Salesian Studies* I:2 (1990) pp. 1-46.]

¹⁶ ASC 0592 Consiglio Superiore: Verbali, *FDBM* 1880 B1 - 1883 E3.

above-mentioned reports not authored by Lemoyne will also be inserted at the proper place.

II. Minutes of the Alassio General Conference and of General Chapters II, III, and IV

1. Minutes of the Alassio General Conference

From 1865 to 1877, Don Bosco convened general conferences on a yearly basis, to which he summoned, besides his council, the directors of the houses and other confreres. The conferences were normally held around the feast of St. Francis de Sales (January 29 in those days) or on the earliest possible date after the feast: hence their designation, "Conferences of St. Francis de Sales." But in 1873, 1874 and 1875, conferences were also held in Autumn in connection with the spiritual retreats; and in 1875, one was held also in April.¹⁷

As instruments of government of the Society, these conferences were the unofficial forerunners of the general chapters. As in the case of general chapters, their deliberations had the force of regulations. One would expect these conferences to have been discontinued with the approbation of the Constitutions which provided for general chapters to be held every three years. As it is, they were only gradually phased out and continued to be held in 1875 and 1876, and one was held in February 1877, six months before the first general chapter. None was held in 1878; but, one year before the second general chapter, the final one was convened at Alassio on September 6-8, 1879.

As noted above,¹⁸ the minutes of the sessions of the Alassio conference are found at the end of Barberis' second note book. He writes, by way of explanation:

Since Don Bosco was in Marseilles, France, the customary Conferences of St. Francis de Sales could not be held in Turin. But since by February 6 he was to be at the Salesian school of Alassio, arrangements were made to hold the conferences there. To this end he summoned the superior chapter from Turin, and likewise the directors of Salesian houses in Liguria.¹⁹

Barberis gives the participants as 14 in number,²⁰ and he goes on to record four sessions. These sessions, with pertinent data, are listed in a table given below (Appendix III).

¹⁷ Minutes of the sessions of these conferences (from 1868 on) are located in ASC 04 Conferenze Generali, *FDBM* 1869 E6 -1873 D8. Succinct or extensive reports are given in the *Biographical Memoirs* (*EBM*, Volumes 8-13).

¹⁸ Cf. note 9 and related text, above.

¹⁹ Note Book II, p. 60. *FDBM* 1878 A1

²⁰ *Ibid.*

2. Minutes of General Chapter II²¹

The Second General Chapter met at Lanzo on September 3-15, 1880, for 13 days, as may be gathered from the extant minutes. In the letter of convocation dated June 27, 1880,²² Don Bosco summoned to the chapter all directors of Salesian houses, and one perpetually professed confrere from each house elected

²¹ The materials of the First General Chapter will not be used in this paper. General Chapter I was held at Lanzo, from September 5 to October 5, 1877; but, due to two extended recesses, its working time was of only 13 days. Members in attendance were 23, all directors and prefects. (In reality only a few prefects attended, and only for occasional sessions.) The chief purpose of the chapter was to produce something like a set of regulations to serve as a practical guide for the observance of the constitutions. In particular, it was to set up structures for study and formation. This in turn meant raising the standards in philosophical and theological studies for candidates to the priesthood, encouraging the teacher certification of Salesians working in schools, developing the studies program in Salesian schools; strengthening the ascetic aspects of the novitiate as separate from the life of the professed; etc. But the minutes show that the discussion meandered far afield through numerous other topics of a practical nature, sometimes digressing into veritable minutiae. For example, on the subject of thrift in the management of the kitchen, Don Bosco spoke on the need of serving freshly brewed coffee rather than stale coffee, which might then go to waste. [Cf. Session 13, September 13, 1877 PM, Transcribed Minutes, p. 223-224, ASC 04 Capitoli Generali, *FDBM* 1851 C1-2]

Obviously, throughout this chapter Don Bosco had occasion to voice many of the concerns which he expounded in later chapters and council meetings. After all, the chapter was held as the conflict with Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi was reaching its climax; Gastaldi's demands for a more professional approach to studies and formation in the Salesian Society must have carried some weight. But generally speaking Don Bosco's concerns were more emphatically voiced in the later chapters, and in the more intimate circle of his council.

The archival records of General Chapter I are located in ASC 04 Capitoli Generali, *FDBM* 1831 C10 - 1853 A5. In particular the original minutes in three note books by Father Giulio Barberis are in *FDBM* 1842 B4 - 1848 B5. The transcribed and edited minutes (in other hands) are in *FDBM* 1848 B6 - 1853 A5.

The printed convocation and the published deliberations are entitled respectively: *Capitolo Generale della Congregazione Salesiana da convocarsi in Lanzo nel prossimo settembre, 1877*. Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1877, and *Deliberazioni del Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo Torinese nel settembre 1877*. Torino: Tipografia e libreria salesiana, 1878. Both are also reproduced in *Opere Edite* XXVIII, pp. 313-334, and XXIX, pp. 377-472. Cf. also the valuable study by M. Verhulst, "Note storiche sul Capitolo Generale 1° della Società Salesiana (1877)," *Salesianum* 43 (1981) 849-882 (*Quaderni del Salesianum* 5. Roma: LAS, 1982), and E. Ceria's extensive account in the *Biographical Memoirs*. [*EBM* XIII, pp. 177-219]

²² E. Ceria, *Epistolario*, Vol. III, pp. 593-594.

by the perpetually professed of that house. This chapter was to elect all the members of the superior chapter (except the Rector Major), an operation for which additional voting members were required by the constitutions. Not counting the additional electors, the chapter members in attendance numbered 27.

By mandate of the chapter, Don Bosco and his council finalized and published the deliberations, which appeared in print some two years later.²³ But by letter dated December 8, 1880, Don Bosco brought eight important points to the attention of the confreres.²⁴

Ceria is of the opinion that the second general chapter was not too serious an exercise, and he cites the testimony of Father Angelo Maria Rocca, at the time of writing the sole surviving member of that chapter.²⁵ However, such is not the impression which emerges from the minutes that have come down to us.

²³ *Deliberazioni del secondo Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Lanzo Torinese nel settembre 1880*. Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1882 [*Opere Edite* XXXIII, 1-96; in ASC 04, FDBM 1855 A8-E8 (printed copy); FDBM 1854 A7 - 1855 A3 (Ms. with Don Bosco's corrections).

²⁴ *Lettere Circolari di Don Bosco*. Torino: Tip. Sales., 1896, pp. 13-15. Don Bosco's holograph and a copy corrected by him are in ASC 131.03 Circolari ai Salesiani, FDBM 1367 D9-11 and D12-E6, respectively.

²⁵ Ceria bases his judgment of a letter by Father Rocca which is worth quoting: Cuorgnè, May 16, 1932.

Dear Father Ceria,

It is with great pleasure that I am able to reply to your welcome note of the 15th. I shall try to set down, after so many years, what little I can recollect from the General Chapter of 1880. [...] Your perception that this chapter was conducted somewhat informally (*alla buona*), by comparison with the seriousness of the first, is absolutely correct. It was really informal. Many of us directors were too young and inexperienced to be able to give opinions and make judgments on matters about which we were not very knowledgeable. Consequently, we almost always just sat in silence, not daring to speak on anything that was being discussed. I had the feeling that even the older directors were either ill prepared or tired, for they sat through it as if bored.

I remember that on September 8, Feast of Mary's Nativity (still a holy day of obligation at the time) and on the Sunday either preceding or following, quite a few priests went down to Turin for Masses. Our Blessed [Founder] was much displeased by such absences, and later he gently expressed his disappointment, for the work of the chapter had made no progress on those days.

In your note you speculate about prolonged absences by our Blessed [Founder] from the chapter. I have no recollection that such was the case. I think that once, perhaps twice, he failed to attend a session, because some distinguished person had come to call at the very time. What amazes me is that this head of mine has preserved no recollection at all of Reverend Father Rua's presence. Yet I am sure that he was an active participant in any discussion on the floor.

In my estimation, the lack of interest and of the kind of indifference that marked the chapter sessions and discussions were due principally to one person: Father Barberis. Granted, the poor man acted and spoke with the good of the Congregation and the success of the chapter in view; but he did this in a way that turned people off.

Ceria states that the minutes of the Second General Chapter “were either never formally drawn up or were lost.”²⁶ But the minutes (such as they are) are extant.

The minutes of the Second General Chapter were authored, separately and concurrently, by Father Giulio Barberis and by Father Giovanni Marengo, the two secretaries elected by the chapter.²⁷

Written in similar medium-size note books, these records appear in *ASC* and in *FDBM* as follows:

(1) Father Barberis’ rough draft of the minutes, consisting of sparse notes of uneven length, cover proceedings from September 3 up to September 11 only, and are, therefore, incomplete.

He wanted the floor all the time; he insisted till his views prevailed; he found fault with whatever other people proposed; all the time he broke in while others were speaking; he interrupted Don Bosco himself. Finally Don Bosco, annoyed by such a boorish way of acting, took Father Barberis to task with a few well chosen words in idiomatic Piedmontese. Everybody laughed, and I believe he scored.

But the chapter was already drawing to a close. A number of proposals never even reached the floor. Other matters had been hastily dealt with, and no real conclusion was reached. We ended up (and everyone agreed) by handing everything over to the superior chapter. Our Blessed [Founder] was very happy about that. I think that the decisions of this chapter were never published separately, but were published only later together with those of other chapters. [They were published, but with some delay, cf. note 23 and related text, above.] I remember that, when the motion to hand over all chapter matters to the superior chapter was made, some members were not too happy about it. But the debate ended peaceably and with perfect charity. [...]

Sincerely yours [...]

PS: One more thing. While Father Barberis had the floor, some of the younger members (myself included, I must confess) were carrying on, talking about irrelevant things, cracking jokes and having a good time. It got to a point when we had to be called to order and back to duty, I cannot recall by whom. [Rocca’s holograph is in *ASC* 04 Capitoli generali, *FDBM* 1859 A12-B3]

Fr. Angelo Maria Rocca (1853-1943) entered the Oratory in 1875 and was ordained the following year. From 1877 to 1901 he served as director in several Salesian houses. Struck by illness, he retired to Cuorgnè, from where he wrote the letter. At the time of his attendance at General Chapter II (1880) he was 27 years old and director of the seminary at Magliano Sabino, near Rome.

²⁶ *EBM* XIV, p. 408 and *Annali* I, p. 465.

²⁷ Giovanni Marengo (1853-1921) was born at Ovada (Alessandria) and entered the diocesan seminary. He joined the Salesians in 1873 while in his third year of theology, made his profession the following year, and was ordained in 1875. After serving as director in various Salesian houses, in 1890 he was appointed provincial of the Ligurian province, and in 1892 the rector major’s delegate to the Salesian Sisters. In 1899 Father Rua name him procurator general of the Salesian Society, in which capacity he served until, in 1909, he was made bishop of Massa-Carrara by Pope Benedict XV. In 1917 he was sent as internuncio of the Holy See to Central America, where he served with distinction until in 1921 illness forced him into retirement. He died the same year.

A report on the opening session of September 3 (evening) is in different hands with only a few additions by Barberis. It notes the time of arrival of the chapter members and goes on to describe the formalities of the opening session. There follow 14 other entries in Barberis' hand, beginning with the important Session 2 (September 4 AM) in which, after elections, Don Bosco delivered a keynote speech on topics of importance.

These minutes take up 19 pages of one note book.²⁸

(2) Father Marengo's minutes appear to be a good copy with a number of insertions and corrections (including one by Barberis). Marengo's record begins with the evening session of September 5, which he numbers as Session 1 instead of Session 4. Following this, with faulty enumeration and with some intervening lacunae, the minutes record the proceedings to the end of the chapter (September 15). Marengo's reports fill 23 pages of one note book, but are even less detailed than Barberis'.²⁹

(3) Father Barberis' finished, edited minutes are based on his own rough draft, but also make use of Marengo's work. They record the proceedings of the chapter from its inception on the evening of September 3 to its conclusion on the evening of September 15, with some uncertainty toward the end. They fill two note books, for a total of 130 unnumbered pages of text.³⁰ Note Book I contains 87 pages of text;³¹ Note Book II, 43 pages.³²

It should be noted that Barberis devotes the first four pages of Note Book II to "What's been happening," (*un po' di cronaca*), which does not deal with chapter proceedings;³³ and that the last nine pages of Note Book II contain three drafts of the cloture document, in a different hand than Barberis'. The second of these bears the authentic signatures of the 25 chapter members, with the names of the two secretaries added in the same hand.³⁴

A comparison between Barberis' finished copy and both his own rough draft and Marengo's report raises critical questions, obviously. The topics and the discussions have been fleshed out and expanded perhaps from memory. But there is little in the finished work that is not represented in some way in its sources. We may, therefore, confidently regard the finished work as reflecting the proceedings of the chapter. Barberis seems to have been especially diligent in reporting Don Bosco's words. Don Bosco's long speech in Session 2 might be taken as a test case. Every significant point treated in the finished copy has its counterpart in the rough draft.

It appears, therefore, that Barberis' finished report best represents the proceeding of the Second General Chapter.

²⁸ ASC 04 Capitoli Generali presieduti da Don Bosco, *FDBM* 1856 A11-C6.

²⁹ *FDBM* 1856 D2 - 1857 A1.

³⁰ *FDBM* 1857 B7 - 1859 A9.

³¹ *FDBM* 1857 B7 - 1858 D6.

³² *FDBM* 1858 D7 - 1859 A9.

³³ *FDBM* 1858 D7-10.

³⁴ *FDBM* 1859 A1-9. (The signatures appear on A5-6.)

The sequence of the sessions of General Chapter II, as recorded in Barberis' and Marengo's minutes, is given below (Appendix IV).

3. Minutes of General Chapter III

The Third General Chapter met at Valsalice from the evening of September 2 to the evening of September 7, 1883, for a total of 6 days.

Don Bosco's letter of convocation bears the date June 20, 1883.³⁵ As may be gathered from the lists given at the beginning of the minutes and in the cloture document, the members in attendance numbered 35.³⁶

In his letter of convocation, Don Bosco asked directors to call a house council meeting and collect proposals from the confreres to be sent to Father Giovanni Bonetti, chapter moderator.³⁷ In the same letter, he enclosed the topics or schemata to be assigned to commissions and then presented and discussed in general sessions.³⁸

Chiefly due to lack of time, the chapter did not complete its work, but passed a motion to entrust the material to Don Bosco and his council for further elaboration. However, the final elaboration was remanded to the next general chapter. The acts (deliberations) of General Chapter III were never separately published.

Minutes of the sessions were taken by Father Giovanni Marengo and Father Giulio Barberis, the two elected secretaries.

(1) Marengo's report, apparently a good copy albeit with frequent corrections, is transcribed in a fairly large note book with unnumbered pages.³⁹ Twenty-one pages of text in Marengo's hand are followed by two drafts of the

³⁵ ASC 04 Capitoli Generali, *FDBM* 1859 B4 (printed copy); Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, p. 221-222.

³⁶ *FDBM* 1864 B4-6.

³⁷ Many such proposals are preserved in ASC, some of them quite elaborate and running to many pages, *FDBM* 1859 C1 - 1862 A12.

³⁸ The topics are listed as follows: (1) Regulations for Spiritual Retreats; (2) Regulations and Course of Studies for the Novices; (3) Regulations for Salesian Parishes; (4) Education of Salesian Brothers; (5) Direction to be Imparted to the "Working Component" in Salesian houses, and Means to Foster the Salesian Vocation among the Working Boys; (6) Norms for the Dismissal of Members; (7) Establishing and Developing Festive Oratories in Salesian Houses; (8) Revision and Modification of the Regulations for the Houses.

Drafts of the work of the commissions on these topics are located in *FDBM* 1862 C1 - 1863 E6. Their length and detail reveal the seriousness with which General Chapter III did its work. This may have been due in part to moderator Bonetti's fiery and driving temperament. A curious note in Marengo's hand reads: "Father Bonetti, exercising the special authority vested in him, directs that all late comers to the sessions will forfeit dessert, which will then be apportioned to others." [*FDBM* 1864 C1]

³⁹ *FDBM* 1863 E7 - 1864 B9.

cloture document in different hands, the first of which bears the authentic signatures of the 35 Chapter members.⁴⁰

After title page and a list of the participants, the note book begins with the session of September 3 AM; it, however, makes reference to a previous session not recorded in the note book. Three pages of notes on the opening session, in Marengo's hand, are located immediately after the cloture document mentioned above. They bear the title, "Notes for the General Chapter held at Valsalice in September 1883."⁴¹ From this report we learn that the chapter began on Sunday, September 2, not (as Ceria states) on September 1. Otherwise Ceria gives as good an account of the chapter as the minutes allow.⁴² The trouble is that the minutes are generally too scanty for any real understanding of the process of the chapter.

(2) A set of notes in Barberis' neat hand contain short summary reports on the various sessions of General Chapter III.⁴³ The longest of these summaries, reporting the closing words of Don Bosco at the last session, runs to about one fairly large page and a half. The others consist of but a few lines, and in terms of our understanding of the chapter's proceedings add very little to Marengo's skimpy reports.

Barberis' minutes are, like Marengo's, a transcription of the original notes entered in a fairly large note book. When giving references, I will overlook the enumeration by the sheet, and count the pages. The note book, like Marengo's, begins with Monday, September 3, 9 AM (hence with Session 2). But in a footnote Barberis adds that there had been an opening session the evening before, Sunday, September 2.⁴⁴

The sequence of the sessions of General Chapter III is given below (Appendix V).

4. Minutes of General Chapter IV

The Fourth General Chapter was held at Valsalice from the evening of September 1 to the morning of September 7, 1886, for a total of 6 days. Members in attendance numbered 37 (from South America, only Father Luigi Lasagna attended). The calligraphic, lithographed letter of convocation is dated May 31, 1886, and bears Don Bosco's (authentic?) signature.⁴⁵ Since the six-year term of the members of the superior chapter was coming to an end, and elections would be held, the letter directs that in accordance with the constitutions "every director shall have with him a perpetually professed member

⁴⁰ *FDBM* 1864 B4-6 and 7-9.

⁴¹ *FDBM* 1864 B10-12.

⁴² *IBM* XVI, p. 411-418.

⁴³ *FDBM* 1864 C10-D8.

⁴⁴ *FDBM* 1864 C10.

⁴⁵ *FDBM* 1884 D11-12; *Lettere Circolari di Don Bosco e di Don Rua* (1886), pp. 33-35.

elected by the confreres of his house." Thus, with the additional confreres present for the elections, the membership added up to a total of 70.⁴⁶

The chapter's agenda, printed and sent out separately, included topics remanded from General Chapter III, as well as new topics.⁴⁷ Commissions on each theme were appointed, for the first time beforehand, and their work was presented and discussed at the chapter.⁴⁸ After the chapter, by circular letter dated November 21, 1886, Don Bosco presented the newly elected council to the confreres.⁴⁹ The deliberations of General Chapter IV (including those of General Chapter III) were later edited and published in booklet form with the date of July 2, 1887.⁵⁰

A detailed account of the work of the Fourth General Chapter is given by Ceria in the *Biographical Memoirs*.⁵¹

As may be seen from the authentic signatures appended to the cloture document at the chapter's last session,⁵² Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne and Father Giovanni Marengo served as secretaries and were responsible for the minutes. These reports are entered in a large note book and consist of 21 pages of text.⁵³ These minutes are apparently a transcription in good copy of earlier notes, which are not to be found in *FDBM*. With the exception of the reports of Sessions 6, 7, and 8, which are in Lemoyne's hand,⁵⁴ the minutes are in Marengo's hand and are signed by him. The text of the cloture document is in calligraphy and bears

⁴⁶ The list of electors given in *FDBM* 1864 E6-9 contains 70 names. But the election minutes note that 69 were actually present and voting [*FDBM* 1865 A3].

⁴⁷ *FDBM* 1864 E1-5. The topics are listed as follows (1) Regulations for the Parishes (= Topic 3 of GC III); (2) Lay Brothers' and Working Boys' Programs (= Topic 5 of GC III); (3) How to Implement Pius IX's Decree *Regulari Disciplinae* (admission to Novitiate and to Profession); (4) Criteria for Admitting Candidates to Holy Orders; (5) Establishing Studentates in the Various Provinces; (6) Exemption from Military Service; (7) Changes to Be Made in the General Directory of the Society; [(8)] Proposals by Confreres.

A number of such proposals are found in *FDBM* 1865 A8-D6.

⁴⁸ Working drafts of the commissions may be seen in *FDBM* 1865 D7 - 1867 D8.

⁴⁹ The calligraphic, lithographed letter, with Don Bosco's (authentic?) signature is in *FDBM* 1868 A7-9.

⁵⁰ [G. Bosco] *Deliberazioni del terzo e del quarto Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuti in Valsalice nel settembre 1883-86*. S. Benigno Canavese: Tip. Salesiana, 1887, in *FDBM* 1868 A10-D1. Cf. *Opere Edite* XXXVI, pp. 253-280.

⁵¹ *IBM* XVIII, pp. 174-191.

⁵² *FDBM* 1868 A6.

⁵³ ASC 04: Cap. Gen. pres. da Don Bosco, *FDBM* 1867 D9 - 1868 A6. The report bears the title, *Relazione del 4° Capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana, tenutosi nel Collegio Valsalice Dal 1° Settembre al sette del mese medesimo, Anno 1886*.

⁵⁴ Note Book, p. 8-10, *FDBM* 1867 E4-7.

the authentic signatures of the 37 true Chapter members, including those of the two secretaries.⁵⁵

A report on the proceedings of the elections, partly by Lemoyne and partly by Marengo, is contained in a few detached sheets placed earlier in the file.⁵⁶

Again, the sequence of the sessions is given below (Appendix VI).

Part II. Don Bosco's Ideas and Concerns on Salient Issues

In the foregoing section, I have described the archival material on which this inquiry is based, placing in appendices the detailed catalogues of meetings and sessions, and related reports. It is now time to focus on some of the ideas and concerns which Don Bosco voiced in such forums. We are actually dealing with clusters of interrelated ideas which cannot be neatly separated. We are dealing with "fields" of concern. The following appear to be truly salient and important: (1) Ideal and practice in admitting candidates to postulancy, novitiate, and profession, and holy orders. (2) The pressing need of Salesian vocations, especially Salesian priestly vocations, and in that connection, the problem of the school at the Oratory. (3) Religious life and observance, and the Salesian spirit. (4) The overarching question of morals, and in this connection, the concern over objectionable books and readings, and the question of contacts with women and outsiders. (5) The Cooperators and the Salesian Bulletin, and a number of important but less basic issues.

These, among others, were the questions which Don Bosco and his men had to address in their meetings, and they did so with utmost seriousness. Many and daunting were the problems with which the young Society had to grapple and for which solutions must be found. In the course of such discussions Don Bosco voiced his views or handed down norms, not always uncontested, to be sure, but generally prevailing. For, in spite of the great freedom with which opinions were given, whether in council meetings or in general chapter sessions, the debate and the vote were never truly parliamentary. Don Bosco was the father to whom everyone finally yielded in filial deference.

This essay will be concerned almost exclusively with the first point, admission of candidates and related issues. But because of the interconnectedness of the fields of concern, especially with regard to morals, and because of the need of providing intelligible contexts, it was inevitable that complementary material should be used. A second installment is to follow.

I. Admission of Candidates to the Salesian Society

Even during the founder's lifetime, the membership of the Salesian Society grew by leaps and bounds. By the time of General Chapter I (1877), the Salesians

⁵⁵ Note Book, p. 20-22, *FDBM* 1868 A4-6.

⁵⁶ *FDBM* 1865 A3-7.

numbered 241; by 1880 the number had grown to 405; by 1883, to 520; by 1886, to 636. At Don Bosco's death in January 1888, the professed Salesians numbered 863, and the novices, 276. Such rapid growth was not without its problems. When the Salesian constitutions were up for approbation, some of Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi's objections related to this very matter: the manner of recruiting, criteria for admission, the lack of a proper novitiate, the weakness of the formation and studies programs. Nor did he relent after the approbation of the constitutions, an attitude which Don Bosco and the Salesians construed as unreasoning and persecutory.⁵⁷ For a number of years Don Bosco availed himself of concessions granted to him in a private manner (*vivae vocis oraculo*) by Pope Pius IX. But by and by he sought to enforce more stringent criteria. In 1886, speaking of this very thing, he recalls:

When the approbation of the constitutions was being negotiated with the active involvement of His Holiness Pope Pius IX and of the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the separation of novices from the rest of the students, and of both from the professed confreres, was a lively issue. I said: "All of my houses are full of all kinds of people, novices and everybody together. I have no other kind." The pope then replied: "Go ahead, and do the best you can." However, as far as possible we should put this separation into effect, for it is commendable and practical, in fact necessary.⁵⁸

1. Admission of Candidates to the Novitiate

These words were spoken in 1886. But admission of candidates to the novitiate ("second trial" or "practice of the rule") was a regular item on the agenda of the superior chapter through the years.

Besides the "routine" admissions of young men who had gone through the normal channels of the Salesian school (junior seminary), we find reports of applications for admission which were not so routine. They serve in part to illuminate the problem. A few examples will suffice.

We have the case of two diocesan priests from the seminary of Magliano Sabino (partly staffed by Salesians) who asked to join and wished to come to Turin immediately. Don Bosco thought that they should instead remain in place, so as not to irk the authorities, but that they should be regarded as novices (*ascritti*) under the guidance of the Salesian director, Father Giuseppe Daghero. Later, during the summer holidays, they might come to Turin, finish their novitiate, and make their profession at the Lanzo spiritual retreat.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Cf. A Lenti, "The Bosco-Gastaldi Conflict (1872-1882)" [Part I and Part II], *Journal of Salesian Studies* IV:2 (1993), pp. 1-83, and V:1 (1994) pp. 35-131

⁵⁸ General Chapter IV, Session 3, September 2, 1886, Marengo Minutes, p. 5, *FDBM* 1867 E1.

⁵⁹ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, February 16, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, p. 60, *FDBM* 1876 B10.

Another priest, by the name of Peretto, who was an alumnus of the Oratory school and had gone on to join the Oratorians, wanted now to become a Salesian. Don Bosco remarked:

If he were overtly to manifest this intention to his superiors, a fracas would result. So we have agreed that he should leave his community quietly through a ruse. He would ask his superior for permission to travel to Rome in order to speak to the Holy Father. Once in Rome, he would join Father Scappini, director of the Conceptionists,⁶⁰ where an additional priest is needed. There he would make his novitiate under Father Scappini's guidance, after which he would make his profession at Lanzo. Our need for priests is so great that he truly comes as a godsend. His talents and proven saintliness is such that he can be assigned anywhere. Even though he professed as an Oratorian, he always belonged to us in mind and heart.⁶¹

In the same meeting four seminarians were admitted as novices who, like not a few others, had been in diocesan seminaries. One of these was a young adult named Cocco, an alumnus of the Oratory. He had entered the diocesan seminary in Turin, but had left in his fourth year of theology. The report continues:

He has been with us for over three months, and his conduct has been consistently satisfactory. He now asks to don the clerical habit again, as a Salesian. It so happens that our school at Alassio needs just such a mature individual as an assistant to the financial administrator. Since there is no one else available, we will make him happy, admit him as a novice, give him the clerical habit, and send him to that post in Alassio.⁶²

Archbishop Gastaldi viewed Don Bosco's practice of giving the clerical habit to former diocesan seminarians, who had either left of their own volition or had been dismissed, with particular chagrin. He thought it inevitable that some of them, after obtaining ordination under easy terms, would drift back into the diocese as misfits. Don Bosco, on the other hand, on the basis of his experience with the Work of Mary Help of Christians, was eager to give such young adults, whether former seminarians or not, a chance. He willingly considered the application of adult laymen who showed promise. This was the case of Mr.

⁶⁰ The Brothers Hospitalers of the Immaculate Conception were a small congregation of brothers who served in hospitals in and around Rome. Don Bosco had been asked by Pius IX to help that floundering community, and had personally supervised the initial reforms. He had then appointed Father Giuseppe Scappini as director. For the troubled and troublesome affair, cf. *EBM* XII, pp. 359-367 and XIII, pp. 28-44.

⁶¹ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, February 16, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, p. 61, *FDBM* 1876 B11.

⁶² Meeting of the Superior Chapter, February 16, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, pp. 61-62, *FDBM* 1876 B11-12.

Angelo Piccono, a 29-year old widower with a small daughter, a career policeman and a student at the university. He was admitted to the novitiate in May 1877 and was told by Don Bosco to continue attending the university.⁶³ He made his profession a year later: "He was admitted to perpetual vows, and will soon be ordained."⁶⁴ He was in fact ordained in November 1878, and later distinguished himself as a missionary in South America and Mexico.

Don Bosco voiced his conviction about the validity of the practice of admitting adults, when the application of a certain Mr. Battolla, a career seaman awaiting promotion to captain, was discussed. It was felt that he had not yet proved himself (*non é ancora soggetto provato*). Don Bosco added:

I would very much like it if, when one of these young adults comes to us determined to stay, some one were to take him under his care and look after him. In no time such an individual would be ready for work [as a Salesian]. A boy, on the other hand, requires many years of training, and success is never certain no matter how good he may be. All kinds of incidents may occur to lead him astray. Not so with adults. If they are looked after and inspired with good ideals, in a few months they can be sent out into the field.⁶⁵

Granted the validity of the Sons of Mary principle, the minutes show that the need of adopting stricter criteria in admitting candidates was felt as urgent, especially with respect to young adults who came from diocesan seminaries. The records also show that the council members were more concerned perhaps about the gravity of the situation than Don Bosco himself. This perception clearly emerges from the minutes of a meeting held in late 1878. Its primary purpose was the admission of candidates, among whom were some former diocesan seminarians who had come to live at the Oratory as postulants. The application of a young adult named Viandolato was quickly set aside. His performance had apparently been satisfactory, but certain incidents in his past life (left unspecified, but apparently known to the council) advised prudence. Father Cagliero was especially adamant:

The Congregation is not for those who need to do penance for their sins. There are contemplative orders for this purpose. The Congregation is for those who are [morally] equipped to go out into the world and work for the salvation of souls.⁶⁶

⁶³ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, May 6, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, p. 78, *FDBM* 1876 D4.

⁶⁴ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, May 15, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 8, *FDBM* 1877 A9.

⁶⁵ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, May 6, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, p. 79, *FDBM* 1876 D5.

⁶⁶ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, November 4, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 26, *FDBM* 1877 C3.

The applications of two other candidates, Martino Quaranta and Giò Baravalle, were then discussed and set aside, since very little was known about them. Father Cagliero was asked to investigate. Barberis notes:

Up until now the rule was to admit candidates freely, provided they presented the most basic papers. Confidential information was sought later, if at all. Now, however, the policy agreed upon is not to admit any candidate who does not submit the required testimonials.⁶⁷

At the same meeting “a long and painful discussion” ensued about the need of expelling certain undesirable candidates. Barberis writes:

Never has such a drastic measure been taken, not since the Congregation has been in existence. Up till now things were done informally (*alla buona*). We took in and supported diocesan seminarians whose vocation was dubious at best, and whose conduct very poor. Stricter standards in admitting novices are now being enforced in our school at Lanzo. But we have in the house a number of seminarians who, though not necessarily bad, lack priestly spirit. We should get rid of them (*cacciarli via*) sooner than allow them to undermine religious observance. Since opinion was divided over the matter, the motion to dismiss was put to secret ballot. Of the five seminarians in question, four were deemed unsuitable, and the decision was to send them home.⁶⁸

Barberis reports on a meeting, apparently rather stormy, in which three of four candidates asking for admission to the novitiate were rejected. The fourth one, a seminarian from the diocese of Frosinone named Anacleto Ceccarelli, was

The “principle” so emphatically stated by Cagliero, that the society was not to be a haven for repentant sinners, must have originated with Don Bosco himself. He is in fact reported to have spoken clearly on the subject: “In admitting candidates we ought always to be guided by this principle and norm, namely, that our Congregation is no place where one may come for conversion and moral reformation. A person who has been the victim of bad habits and vice and wishes to reform and do penance should apply to one or the other of the many religious orders which were established for that very purpose. We do not admit such persons, for our Society was established with the specific aim of being a help to others through a life of eminently active service. [...] If such persons were admitted in view of their present good disposition, they may do well for as long as their original fervor lasts. But sooner or later, when faced with the dangerous situations of the priestly ministry or of our own special apostolate, they would backslide into their former ways.” [General Chapter II, Session 11, September 10, 1880, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 6. *FDBM* 1858 D12.]

⁶⁷ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, November 4, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, pp. 26-27, *FDBM* 1877 C3-4.

⁶⁸ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, November 4, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, pp. 27-28, *FDBM* 1877 C4-5.

admitted only because Don Bosco intervened in his behalf. Barberis, who is prone to add comments of his own to the minutes, writes with palpable bitterness:

Was such a drastic measure justified? I call it drastic because up until now things were done with greater leniency. The reason for such leniency may have been that we have no separate premises for such individuals, and they share everything in common with the novices: study hall, dining room, dormitory, recreation, chapel, etc. But our concern is grave. We have people in the Congregation who leave much to be desired and end up by causing trouble. Furthermore, we have people in the novitiate who lack religious spirit, and yet we can't dismiss them. This is especially true of these older seminarians. We should therefore be less compliant in allowing them into the house as boarders. However, we are stymied on two fronts: (1) It is Don Bosco's wish that in this matter we continue to be guided by St. Paul's advice, "*Omnia probate; quod bonum est tenete.*"⁶⁹ This means allowing a lot of people in. (2) Before accepting prospective candidates we do indeed require papers and we do seek confidential information. But, apparently, when there is question of a really good prospect, seminary rectors withhold their testimonials, while they readily give papers of commendation in the case of less desirable candidates. And we are stuck with the chaff. Father Cagliero, who has been in charge of admissions for a few months now, is very upset and has been fighting Don Bosco over the issue. [...] He has in fact already asked Don Bosco to take him off this job. As for myself, I am frustrated and angry at what goes on. We do not pass our undesirables on to others; we do not write testimonials for them. Why should others take advantage of us? The individuals we discussed were brought in on orders from Don Bosco. I had to write to them and tell them to come. Now, however, as far as it lies in my power I won't have them joining the others. The matter is serious. The Congregation has been making a name for itself, and applications to join are numerous and from all parts. But the many applicants are in the main individuals who are maladjusted elsewhere.⁷⁰

The situation was aggravated by the specific character of the Salesian novitiate, made as it was in non-traditional manner and environment. It is almost a truism that Don Bosco's idea of the Salesian novitiate was completely at variance with traditional canonical practice and with Archbishop Gastaldi's demands. The Salesian constitutions were criticized for not establishing appropriate structures for religious and priestly formation, a criticism which reflected perhaps a perceived lack of such formation in the group. The lack of constitutional

⁶⁹ Latin Vulgate, 1 Thess 5:21; RSV: "Do not despise prophesying but test everything; hold fast what is good."

⁷⁰ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, December 27, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II pp. 57-59, *FDBM* 1877 E10-12.

provisions for the novitiate came particularly under fire. It is often said that Don Bosco was for an “open,” as opposed to a “closed,” novitiate. But, he was not really thinking in those terms. Novitiate meant only one thing: the spiritual and ascetic internship preparatory to being initiated to the mission work of a congregation. If the Society, as he originally envisioned it, was to be an association bonded by private resolve and a promise to work for youth, then it is probably fairer to say that he was not thinking of a “novitiate” at all. He avoided using the term “novitiate,” and not merely for political reasons. He spoke instead of “a first and second trial” and of “being admitted to the practice of the rule.”⁷¹ That is why the earlier drafts of the constitutions had a chapter on admission of candidates, but none on the novitiate. It appears therefore that even as, bowing to a higher will, he was accepting the traditional model for the congregation, he still insisted on carrying forward concepts from the earlier model that were important to him. One of these was that his candidates were to be initiated into the group that practiced a rule for the work of charity *by practicing that rule for the work of charity*. This initiation was not necessarily bound to a separate house, nor limited to a specific span of time. This seemed especially important since the group as a whole was oriented toward the young and the poor. This concept goes beyond, in fact bypasses, the concept of an “open” novitiate. After the form of the Society was modified, Don Bosco still defended this type of initiation, now perforce called “novitiate.” He continued to favor the way of training candidates in an actual working situation, a way which had all along proved valid by its excellent results (so he claimed). Pius IX seems to have been in agreement on this point. The novitiate which was finally approved in the Salesian constitutions by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was the traditional novitiate of Tridentine congregations. But, availing himself of the special privilege obtained from Pius IX through private oral communication (*vivae vocis oraculo*), Don Bosco continued for some time to admit candidates to “the *practice* of the rule” and not to a traditional novitiate.

As late as General Chapter III (1883), when a house of novitiate had already been established at San Benigno, Don Bosco made this very point. The account reads:

Don Bosco explains the spirit of the rule with regard to the novitiate: “Pope Pius IX told me on several occasions that in our Salesian formation we must aim at enabling our novices (*ascritti*) to become good priests as they ought to be in the world, [supra-linear addition reads:] *such as a priest ought to be among the people*. Therefore appropriate charitable activities conducive to this end are required, and the novices ought to be faithful in performing their appointed tasks so that their aptitude may be made known.

⁷¹ As late as 1886, Don Bosco still insisted on this point: “We should keep the names and terms which have been in use among us, such as “enrolled” (*ascritti*) and trial year (*anno di prova*), and we should avoid the terms “novices, novitiate,” the use of which is neither necessary nor useful.” [General Chapter IV, Session 3, September 2, 1886, Marengo Minutes, p. 5, *FDBM* 1867 E1.

Care must be taken, however, not to let such activity interfere with their religious exercises.⁷²

Don Bosco restated this point on a number of occasions. In 1885, at a meeting in which novices were being admitted, he asked if all the formalities had been complied with, especially in the matter of testimonials. Then he added:

When the constitutions were being examined in Rome, the authorities there demanded that the novices (*ascritti*) should spend a whole year exclusively engaged in the study of the rule and in religious exercises. The Roman Congregation [of Bishops and Regulars] would not yield on this point. I placed the matter before His Holiness, and Pius IX told me: “[...] Just go ahead! The devil has greater fear of a house in which everyone is busy working than of one in which the people are engaged solely in prayer. In such a house, all too often there is idleness. There are other religious congregations which put the novices to work during the novitiate (*prova*). Then why should such strong objections be raised only in Don Bosco’s case?” However, [Don Bosco continued,] while an aspirant may be accepted sight unseen (unless, of course, we are dealing with a known scoundrel) novices should be admitted only after all formalities prescribed by the Church have been complied with. And in our case there is a further consideration, the question of morals. [...] If doubts arise on this score, we should wait and extend the trial period. We should be very cautious.⁷³

According to Don Bosco, Pope Leo XIII agreed with Pius IX. The minutes of General Chapter III report comments by Don Bosco on the name and practice of the Salesian novitiate, and add:

In his first audience with the holy father, Pope Leo XIII, Don Bosco made a report on the concessions granted to him by Pius IX. The pope assured him that [for the moment] he did not intend to change anything that had been established by his predecessor. If changes should be required in the future, he would take care of the matter.⁷⁴

⁷² General Chapter III, Session 2, September 3, 1883, Marengo Minutes, p. 4, *FDBM* 1863 E10.

⁷³ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, October 26, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 85a, *FDBM* 1883 A1.

On another occasion, with regard to the admission of aspirants, “Don Bosco cautioned everyone in strict confidence, not to admit under any circumstances any one as an aspirant to the priesthood who may be known or suspected to have visited a whorehouse.” [General Chapter III, Session 9, September 6, 1883, Marengo Minutes p. 15, *FDBM* 1864 A9.]

⁷⁴ General Chapter III, Session 9, September 6, 1883, Marengo Minutes, pp. 14-15, *FDBM* 1864 A8-9.

On the subject of morals Don Bosco again and again advises utmost caution. When the application to the novitiate of one Emmanuele Gallo, a diocesan seminarian, was being discussed in council, the minutes report:

Don Bosco makes the point that as a rule we ought never to yield when morals are in doubt. In such cases, it is better to reject the petition outright than to bring into the house a person of doubtful morality. We might overlook light-mindedness, lack of education, poor performance in studies, but never doubts regarding morals. This is of the essence.⁷⁵

In admitting a young man as a novice (*ascritto*), especially as a clerical novice, we should take him aside and inquire in strictest confidence into his moral conduct. We might begin by saying to him, "I'd like to ask you a question, do you mind?" He will reply, "No, not at all." "Tell me, then, how has your moral conduct been this past year? Did you fail in thought or in action? How long has it been since you last failed? How long have you had this bad habit?..." If the boy has yet to overcome the bad habit, he ought to be advised against going ahead, unless he gives clear evidence of a vocation and of a firm purpose of using all necessary means to succeed. [...] When examining a young man on his vocation, we should never omit to question him about this matter.⁷⁶

Speaking of examining candidates, as time went by, Don Bosco began to insist on compliance with what was prescribed by canon law and recent papal decrees, Pius IX's *Regulari Disciplinae* and *Romani Pontificis* in particular. Thus, admitting candidates in 1884, he announced:

We have been admitting people on an informal basis (*bonariamente*), in accordance with the concessions made to us by Pius IX, but this will be the last time we do so. Beginning with January of the coming year, 1885, all admissions will be made in accordance with the most holy norms promulgated by Pius IX in his decrees. This includes setting up examining boards as directed.⁷⁷

The examining commissions were to be set up both locally and centrally, and Father Giulio Barberis, the master of novices, was to develop this program and

⁷⁵ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, August 30, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 24b, *FDBM* 1880 E12.

⁷⁶ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, August 24, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 65b, *FDBM* 1882 B10. As may be deduced from the sources, the words "morality," "morals" (*moralità*) and their opposite (*immoralità*) in Don Bosco's usage cover the whole field of sexual behavior and experience. In the case of the young men in question, the word usually refers to youthful sexual experiences such as sexual curiosity, thoughts, masturbatory actions, etc.

⁷⁷ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, October 3, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, pp. 43a-b, *FDBM* 1881 C11-12.

report to the council.⁷⁸ At the Fourth General Chapter, Don Bosco urges compliance with the decrees and explained:

Pius IX's decrees have the purpose of providing general guidelines for evaluating candidates for the novitiate. But more importantly they are intended to place at the disposal of religious congregations a means of eliminating unworthy individuals from religious life. That is probably the reason why these ordinances concern Italy only. Such is the spirit of the decrees.⁷⁹

The texts cited thus far refer largely to clerical novices, hardly ever, at least explicitly, to lay novices and brothers. We know, of course, that in the 1870s and 1880s, the recruiting and formation of lay vocations was one of Don Bosco's major concerns. But, as far as can be gathered from the minutes we have been perusing, very little appears to have been said about lay novices in council meetings. It was to be the task, and one of the major achievements, of General Chapters III and IV (1883 and 1886) to have addressed specifically the problems of lay vocations and of the formation of the brother. The extent and importance of this work may be gauged from the published joint deliberations of these chapters.⁸⁰ Here a few quotes from minutes will suffice.

Speaking about his, and Pius IX's idea of what the Salesian novitiate should be like for priestly candidates, Don Bosco also has a comment on the novitiate program for lay brothers.

As for the lay brothers, what has been the practice up to now should continue to be the basis of their novitiate program. The main idea is to make them into good Christians. If a [lay] novice observes the Salesian constitutions and the regulations of the house, it is enough. What's called for above all is that there be some one who is seriously concerned about them: who will look after them and provide them with help and guidance.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Barberis reported at the Meetings of the Superior Chapter, February 23 and 24, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 54b, *FDBM* 1881 E12 and pp. 55a-b, *FDBM* 1882 A1-2.

⁷⁹ General Chapter IV, Session 8, September 5, 1886, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 10, *FDBM* 18867 E6.

⁸⁰ Cf. note 50 and related text, above. For an exhaustive English-language treatment of the development and interpretation of the Salesian lay vocation, and for all pertinent documents from Don Bosco's times, cf. John Rasor, *The Spiritual Identity of the Salesian Brother in the Light of Official Salesian Documents*. Thesis submitted to the Department of Theology, Salesian Pontifical University (Rome, 1995), pp. 7-56.

⁸¹ General Chapter III, Session 2, September 3, 1883, Marengo Minutes, p. 4, *FDBM* 1863 E10.

At the same General Chapter III,

the question was raised whether a separate novitiate for working novices (*ascritti artigiani*) should be established. Don Bosco wants to strengthen their position by separating them from the rest of the working boys' community. Most chapter members concur on the necessity of a separate novitiate, but no final decision is reached. Some kind of program, however, will be established at San Benigno.⁸²

While a novitiate house had been established at San Benigno for priestly candidates in 1879, the lay novices (mostly working lads) continued to make their novitiate while employed in the workshops at Valdocco together with the rest of the workers ("artisans"). By October 1883, a contingent of lay novices gathered at San Benigno in separate premises and in an appropriate working situation. It is on that occasion that Don Bosco delivered his famous inaugural address on the theme, "Fear not, little flock."⁸³ By the unusual (and, for some, shocking) use of such phrases as "masters not servants," Don Bosco, besides aiming at boosting the spirits of a "downtrodden" group, clearly wished to emphasize the leadership role of Salesian brothers in certain areas of the Society's apostolate, such as the workshops. He also wished to rectify certain false ideas circulating in the Society about the inferior vocational status of the brother. The question was the subject of a heated debate at General Chapter XII (1922).⁸⁴

The Salesian brother's road toward self-identity was long and arduous. In the founding era, this was partly due to the diverse social conditions and ages of some of those early candidates. In 1884 the case of one Vincenzo Giacomuzzi, a 53-year old domestic at the Salesian school of Lanzo, came up for discussion at a council meeting. Father Barberis moved to deny him admission on grounds that he had caused a lot of trouble as a Brother of St. John of God and had to leave that community. The minutes continue:

Father Rua proposes the establishment of two distinct categories of lay brothers (*due classi di coadiutori*) in the Society. He thinks it demeaning for a lawyer, a physician, and the like, to have to associate with uncouth, uneducated individuals (*meschino qualunque*). Don Bosco immediately rejects the idea of dividing the lay brothers into two categories. He urges instead that greater caution be exercised in the case of individuals who may be good fellows, but lack education (*rozzi*) and perhaps even common sense (*di cervello ottuso*). These are people who, given the opportunity, will think nothing of making the rounds of the pubs, with not a care in the

⁸² General Chapter III, Session 9, September 6, 1883, Marengo Minutes, p. 15, *FDBM* 1864 A9.

⁸³ Address of October 19, 1883. The text is given in *IBM XVI*, 312-313. Cf. J. Rator, *Spiritual Identity*, pp. 21-25.

⁸⁴ J. Rator, *Spiritual Identity*, p. 135.

world. Such individuals might be accepted as domestics (*servitori*), never as brothers (*coadiutori*). They should never be admitted to the novitiate, let alone to profession. Father Rua inquires whether it might be helpful to institute tertiaries [as distinct from brothers] in the Franciscan manner, or at least to use the name. Don Bosco replies that for the moment there is no need.⁸⁵

Father Rua spoke again on the subject at a meeting which he himself chaired in Don Bosco's absence. The report reads:

Father Rua makes a case (*dimostra la necessità*) for a two-year novitiate for brothers, before they are admitted to profession. His reasons are, first that we need to get to know this sort of people (*questa sorta di persone*) thoroughly; and secondly, that they need to acquire deeper knowledge of the obligations they take on by the profession of vows. An exception might be made in special cases. Father Cagliero [concurringly] is against making any sort of exception. Father Rua notes that a two-year novitiate for brothers is not a provision made in the constitutions, but [has to be presented as] a practice enacted by the superior chapter out of necessity. [...] Father [Paolo] Albera then presents the applications of two lay novices, [Andrea] Pelazza and Sabaino speaking in their favor. They are about to complete their one-year novitiate. The superior chapter decides to prolong their novitiate for a second year, in accordance with the new practice.⁸⁶

Data on the success rate of novices, whether young or adult, clerical or lay, are not available to me. Don Bosco expressed qualified satisfaction at a meeting in which the case of two novices who had left came up for discussion. One of them had been dismissed; the other one, in connivance with his family, had departed "deceitfully." Both had retained the Salesian clerical habit unlawfully and were applying to a diocesan seminary. Father Rua was asked to deal with the matter. Don Bosco then remarked:

Such cases of desertion from the novitiate, though few, are very much to be regretted. But I had rather that such defections take place in the novitiate than later, as we have had to lament this past year. It is inevitable that some should leave the novitiate but, God be thanked, our losses are few. The Jesuits are happy with a success rate of one-third for the novitiate. And as for the Dominicans, [last year] out of eighteen novices no one was admitted to profession.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 6, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 27b, *FDBM* 1881 A6.

⁸⁶ Meeting of the superior Chapter, October 2, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 40a, *FDBM* 1881 C7.

⁸⁷ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, August 17, 1877, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, pp. 96-97, *FDBM* 1876 E10-11.

In spite of such guarded optimism, Don Bosco had some misgivings about the product, and (as will be seen below) the council on a number of occasions acted to dismiss confreres who lacked the Salesian spirit. At a meeting in which admission of novices to vows was being discussed, Don Bosco remarked that not a few applicants, though not wanting in matters of good morals and other basic prerequisites, they nevertheless lacked motivation, they talked back impudently, they gave bad example. The report continues:

Don Bosco said: "We should perhaps ask Father [Secondo] Franco [S.J.] and find out how they handle the matter [in the Society of Jesus]." However, at this meeting we were rather lenient, and the majority of applicants were admitted to profession. Someone thought that they should only be admitted to triennial vows. "That's worse," [Don Bosco] replied. "They would look upon themselves as being neither fish nor fowl (*nè a piedi nè a cavallo*), and their motivation would be further eroded. No, the way to strengthen their resolve is to admit them at once to perpetual vows."⁸⁸

2. Admission of Candidates to Religious Profession

Admission of candidates to vows was obviously as frequent an item on the agenda of the superior chapter as admission to the novitiate.

With reference to the question of triennial vows (referred to above), Don Bosco's view, voiced on a number of occasions, not only challenged traditional practice but also ran athwart of the constitutions which he himself had written.⁸⁹

In the General Conference held in 1875 during the second spiritual retreat at Lanzo, the session of September 23 was devoted to admissions. Ceria notes Don Bosco's known position in the matter: "As far as I am concerned, I can hardly see any difference between perpetual and triennial vows since I may dispense also from perpetual vows if one is no longer suitable for the Congregation."⁹⁰ In the General Conference of 1879, he made an even clearer statement on the subject. Barberis reports:

When the admission of some who were applying for triennial vows came up for discussion, Don Bosco took the opportunity of reiterating his viewpoint: "Triennial vows hold too tempting a prospect for young men,

⁸⁸ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, December 2, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 39, *FDBM* 1877 D4.

⁸⁹ The early constitutions, from the first draft of 1858 to the last (approved) text of 1874, provide for at least two terms of triennial vows. Cf. Francesco Motto, *Giovanni Bosco, Costituzioni [...] Testi critici [...]* (Roma: LAS, 1982), pp. 172-173 (chapter on admissions, art. 4 [5 or 7]).

⁹⁰ *EBM* XI, pp. 222-223, with Ceria's comments. The minutes of this conference are not available to me.

and many eventually give in. If, on the other hand, they take their perpetual vows, their minds are at rest with no further thoughts [of leaving]. I settled for triennial vows, because I had a different idea of the Congregation, for I meant to establish something a lot different than what was finally approved. We were forced into that mold, and that's the end of it (*ci costrinsero a far così, e così sia*). But, as matters stand, triennial vows leave one too open to temptation. If a candidate has the required qualities and disposition, he should take perpetual, not triennial vows.⁹¹

Ceria quotes what appears to be Don Bosco's final disposition of the matter in a Good Night of September 5, 1879:

I must inform you that this is the last time that vows will be taken for three years. From now on, anyone taking vows must take them in perpetuity. Experience has shown that triennial vows are too serious a temptation for some to cope with."⁹²

At the Second General Chapter, Don Bosco commented on a situation created by triennial vows. A Salesian seminarian named Galvagno had just passed away. Don Bosco (with somewhat dubious theology) urged the directors to notify the confreres of the circumstances of this death, so that they might draw a lesson. As reported, Don Bosco said:

He was a good person, but was extraordinarily attached to his mother, who was very poor. She expected her son to help her financially and therefore she was opposed to his continuing in the Congregation. The son, weak as he was and wanting to help the mother, had not had the courage to take perpetual vows, and at the expiration of his triennial vows did not apply for renewal. But the Lord [...] by this death wished to give us all a lesson: that he who provides food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field does not abandon those who leave everything behind, family included, in order to follow him; and that, on the contrary, he frustrates the hopes of those who rely on people and things rather than on him. In this case, the son was punished by dying without vows; and the mother was punished by being deprived of the son on whom she had pinned her hopes.⁹³

⁹¹ Alassio General Conference, Session 2, February 7, 1879, Barberis Report with Minutes of the Superior Chapter, Note Book II, pp. 76-77, *FDBM* 1878 B5-6. Cf. Ceria's extended comment in *EBM* XIV, pp. 29-30.

⁹² *EBM* XIV, pp. 275-276. Ceria adds, however, that Don Bosco did not enforce his own ordinance strictly, and triennial vows continued to be made. The archival document is not available to me.

⁹³ General Chapter II, Session 7, September 7, 1880, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, pp. 60-61, *FDBM* 1858 B8-9.

Whether admissions were to perpetual or to triennial vows, the discussion frequently issued in characteristic or unusual comments and decisions by Don Bosco. In the missionary band leaving for South America in 1878 were two newly professed, admitted to vows before completing their year of novitiate. The report reads:

Among those who are leaving [for the missions] there is the Salesian seminarian Calcagno who was admitted to profession even though he still needed five months to complete his novitiate. He is an alumnus of ours and has the best testimonials from various places where he has lived, especially from the Carmelites whose novice he was for nearly a year. [...] The young brother Grosso has also been admitted to vows. He came to us three years ago, but has been a novice for only three months. It is a problem; but down there they need someone to head the bookbinding shop. He couldn't be sent off without vows. He is a good young man. Let him go, and may the Lord be with him.⁹⁴

At a meeting held at the beginning of 1884, quite a number of novices were admitted to vows, mostly perpetual. Some, however, were not. This was the case of one Attilio Soffientini.

The house chapter of the novitiate house of San Benigno has withheld its vote. He has been habitually disobedient, doing only what he liked. He is conceited. His real interest is for his family, not for the Congregation. When he went home to see his sister who was ill, he took a number of days off without permission and without any reason. He is, however, very talented, and Father Durando says that he has received fairly favorable reports from Randazzo [Sicily], where he is presently located. [...] The superior chapter decides to put him off on pretext of having interrupted his novitiate by spending one month with his family. His profession is postponed till the Autumn spiritual retreats so that he may complete his novitiate. This is just a pretext, because, according to canon law the novitiate is interrupted when one is absent with *the intention of leaving the Congregation*, even if it be for only one hour.⁹⁵

In the same meeting Father Cagliero moved that a policy be adopted of asking novices seeking admission to vows if they have consulted their confessor and obtained permission, a policy to be adopted, with greater reason, for those seeking ordination. He cited recent theological opinion in support.⁹⁶ The same

⁹⁴ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, December 2, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 41, *FDBM* 1877 D6.

⁹⁵ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, January 15, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, pp. 3a-b, *FDBM* 1880 B5-6.

⁹⁶ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, January 15, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 3b, *FDBM* 1880 B6.

question had come up at General Chapter II, and the provision had been written into a commission's working paper. Don Bosco, expressing his qualified dissent, asked that the provision be removed:

Such an inquiry might be recommended as a good thing in itself, but it should not be laid down as a policy. First of all, some people might put a bad construction on it; and secondly, if one wishes to deceive he can do so with impunity because the confessor may not be queried in any case.⁹⁷

The applications of some elderly lay persons were discussed at a meeting late in 1884. Two of them, 51 and 55 years old respectively, were presented and rejected. Then came the turn of a 72-year old man, named Cattaneo.

He [Cattaneo] is applying for vows. He has the positive vote of the house chapter. Father Cagliero demands to know by what title a 72-year old person may be received into the Congregation. Don Bosco replies that this is an exception. Father Cagliero objects that there are exceptions made every day, and that this one only strengthens the principle that the young must maintain the old. He thinks that in this matter we should be guided by common sense. [...] Don Bosco answers that a note might be added that such persons were admitted by way of exception. If they were priests their age would not be such a great difficulty. Father Cagliero insists that even as priests these older people would be out of place among us. Father Rua looks up the catalogue and discovers that Cattaneo has never been a novice, nor even an aspirant. Don Bosco then suggests that the three be told that they can share in all the spiritual advantages of Salesians by enrolling as Salesian cooperators.⁹⁸

3. Admission of Candidates to Holy Orders

Time and again Don Bosco's position is found to be at variance with that of his council even in matters of substance. A lively discussion took place at a meeting regarding three Salesian seminarians who were applying for holy orders. Their names were Novelli, Giachino and Palmieri.

Father Cagliero reports that the vote of their house chapters is negative. Don Bosco, however, notes that Novelli has assured him that he wants to be a priest and that he has no intention of leaving the Congregation. He has been very much disheartened by the fact that in his community he has been shown no consideration. In his discouragement, he has lost confidence in his director and, neglecting the manifestation, approached him only

⁹⁷ General Chapter II, Session 11, September 10, 1880, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, p. 5, *FDBM* 1858 D11.

⁹⁸ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 12, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 31b, *FDBM* 1881 B2.

when absolutely necessary. However, he has gone to confession every ten or eleven days, and to communion regularly. As for moral conduct, there are no charges against him. Besides, he is certified as a teacher for the third and fourth year of primary school. Father Cagliero adds that his director, Father Bertello, has complained about his disobedience and lack of discipline; but that Father Isnardi thinks him better than either Giachino or Palmieri. Then one should remember that Novelli is a reject (*rifiuto*) of the seminary of Brescia, and Palmieri of that of Rome. [...] Don Bosco thinks he should be transferred to another house, but Father Durando says that he has been transferred three times already. Don Bosco responds that if Father Bertello had reported even the slightest failing in the matter of moral conduct, he would immediately dismiss Novelli from the Congregation. He seems, however, to be in the clear on that score. And moreover he has a teacher's certification. Any Congregation would be glad to have him. Father Cagliero quips: "They can have him as a gift." Father Rua remarks that Novelli's health is poor. Don Bosco brings the discussion to a close: "for the present, let's not commit ourselves. Let's wait and see if he can carry on with his teaching. If his health deteriorates to the point that he is unable to continue, then we will tell him that we can no longer retain him and that he must look elsewhere."⁹⁹

The application of another priestly candidate drew a lively discussion and raised the issue of dismissal from the Society.

Father Barberis reports that [the Salesian seminarian] Testoris requests ordination, so that on his twenty-fifth birthday he may be exempt from military service in accordance with French law. He was ill and unable to do any work up until recently when he got well after receiving Don Bosco's blessing. Now he can work and no longer needs a special fare at table. Father Cagliero remarks that in such cases both illness and cure are problematic. Once ordained he will conveniently suffer a relapse. The real question we must face is: Is it better for all concerned that he be a priest or that he be a soldier? Father Barberis reports that Father Paglia praises Testoris as a scholar. Father Cagliero asks why then Father Ronchail always voted against him. Father Barberis replies that it was because of his illness. Father Bonetti says that Testoris was sent away from the Oratory on account of moral lapses (*immoralità*). At this point Father Rua poses the question, whether perpetually professed confreres may be denied ordination solely on grounds of ill health. Don Bosco poses a slightly different question, which deserves careful attention: Is the Congregation *bound* to retain a perpetually professed Salesian, not yet ordained, who because of illness has not been, nor will any longer be, active in the work

⁹⁹ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 12, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 32a, *FDBM* 1881 B3.

of the Society? Father Lazzero's opinion is that the Congregation may, but is not bound to, retain such an individual. Father Sala thinks that the Congregation is bound if the perpetually professed is a lay brother, but it is not bound to retain a clerical student as such. Don Bosco adds: "I would liken the vow to a contract. If one who has made perpetual vows can leave the Congregation, and the Congregation may not force him to stay if he insists on leaving, why can't the Society dismiss such a one when for whatever reason he has become a burden?" [...] Don Bosco closes the discussion on Testoris' case: "He should be told that a few weeks of good health do not qualify him for ordination, which must therefore be put off. But he should also be told not to come to Italy. If he wants to escape military service let him figure out a way. Such individuals can put us in jeopardy." In conclusion Don Bosco states an important principle: "If one is not ready for profession by the appointed time, he should be dismissed. Likewise, if one is denied ordination he should no longer be regarded as belonging to the Society and should therefore be formally dismissed." Testoris' application is rejected.¹⁰⁰

The issue of ordaining candidates before completion of regular theological studies was the subject of lively debates. Don Bosco's view in the matter contrasted sharply with that of his council. In the face of hundreds of requests for schools pouring in from various parts of Italy, Europe and the world, the scarcity of personnel was felt as a painful reality.¹⁰¹ It seems that during the last decade of his life, Don Bosco was clearly envisioning the worldwide expansion of the Salesian work and was overwhelmed by the urgency of the task.

Don Bosco stresses the extraordinary need for priests in Salesian houses present and future. Priests are needed to supply the lack of Masses in churches and chapels, as well as in our own houses. A priest also wields greater authority, etc. What we need to do is to take a good look at all our clerical students, and present them for ordination if they fulfill the age requirement and are morally qualified. Don Bosco has been propounding this idea for some time now and with great persistence, but he has come up against stiff opposition. For there are those who think that no one should be ordained before completing his theological studies. There are already too many priests in the Congregation who find themselves at a disadvantage in

¹⁰⁰ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, April 5, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 10a, *FDBM* 1880 C7.

¹⁰¹ As already indicated, in meeting after meeting much time was devoted to the examination and discussion of requests and proposals for foundations. Their numbers are truly amazing. In the period we are considering it seems that the whole world was becoming aware of the Salesian Society and its work. It may be of interest to the reader that in 1884 there were requests for foundations of the Salesians and sisters from St. Petersburg and Odessa. [Meeting of the Superior Chapter, February 28, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 8a, *FDBM* 1880 C3.]

this regard, and would cut a poor figure in any circle. In fact, the superiors don't dare assign some of them to certain houses or even to positions of little responsibility for fear that they will make fools of themselves. Don Bosco urges that they just be made to continue their studies after ordination. But members of the chapter believe that it is impossible to obtain this on a regular basis. There may be some who have the desire and will make time for study; but most others will prefer to busy themselves with whatever they have to do, and leave all study aside. Don Bosco, however, stands firm. "We should push forward with this program and promote good candidates to ordination, even if they have not completed their theological studies. We should see to it that they continue their studies after ordination."¹⁰²

At the Second General Chapter from the commission's report on philosophical studies the discussion drifted on to the subject of studies in general, and of priestly studies in particular.

It was remarked that we have priests who have completed only a small part of their theological studies. Such priests can cause much embarrassment for the Congregation. Father Cagliero was particularly articulate in demanding that no one should be ordained before completing the full four years of theology. But Don Bosco spoke against this idea at length and in strongest terms: "If there are priests who still haven't completed their theological curriculum, let some one help them along, tutor them, correct their homework. If they haven't studied all their treatises and taken examinations, the thing to do, as I have so often urged, is to send them to school after ordination and to allow them some leisure for the study of theology. But we must not establish as a norm what no other religious order accepts as a norm. In all congregations priests are ordained before completing their theological studies when it seems opportune to do so. Bishops also follow this practice which is dictated by the great need of priests in these times of ours." Don Bosco went on to state that all the objections which have so insistently been raised against this view are based on a misunderstanding, that is, on a confusion between what should be held in principle and what should be done in practice: "That the major superior, whenever he deems it opportune, should have a margin of freedom to promote to orders candidates who have not completed their treatises and taken their examinations, is a matter of principle. The practice must then be ordered as necessity and prudence demands. As I have already explained, these priests should be made to continue their studies and, when necessary, the ministry of some backward individuals should be restricted. The reasons which move me to accelerate the process are as follows: (1) More effective

¹⁰² Meeting of the Superior Chapter, May 15, 1878, Barberis Minutes, Note Book II, pp. 9-10, *FDBM* 1877 A10-11.

means of perfection are placed at the disposal of the individual. (2) Greater glory is given to God, and more graces are obtained for the Church as a whole and for the Congregation. (3) Greater good is achieved in our houses, since a priest has more influence over the youngsters. [Added:] *Further, directors and principal staff members have greater liberty with no Mass commitments. Also, the people at large are better served.* [(4)] We are poor, and Mass stipends help."¹⁰³

On another later occasion, Don Bosco made the same points with equal force, stipulating, however, that no one should be ordained if he has not mastered, and passed examinations in the treatises on Holy Orders and on the Eucharist.¹⁰⁴

Don Bosco's concern and anxiety over other aspects of the formation of candidates for ordination, especially over their moral conduct, are voiced on many occasions. In his last years time and again he urged vigilance:

"Candidates to holy orders should be watched and examined before the subdiaconate. They should be questioned: Have you been diligent in your studies, or have you wasted your time? And how about your moral conduct? In other words, sufficiency in theological studies and good morals must go hand in hand."¹⁰⁵

"Before allowing some one on to major orders, the superior has a grave duty to ascertain if the candidate is prepared. He should have a talk with him in strict confidence, question him and give him appropriate advice. Questions such as the following might be asked: In God's sight, do you think you are ready for orders? As to moral conduct, how have you fared? Did you fail through voluntary actions? If the answer is in the affirmative, one should inquire whether it was by force of habit or simply through unusual circumstances. [...] Ordination might have to be postponed, in which case one must make it clear that both superior and subject are equally bound in conscience."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ General Chapter II, Session 4, September 5, 1880, Barberis Minutes, Note Book I, pp. 34-35, *FDBM* 1857 E6-7.

¹⁰⁴ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 18, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 79a, *FDBM* 1882 E1; and November 14, 1887, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 108a, *FDBM* 1883 D11. This is the second to the last meeting chaired by Don Bosco.

¹⁰⁵ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 18, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 79a, *FDBM* 1882 E1.

¹⁰⁶ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, September 9, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 72a, *FDBM* 1882 C11. Don Bosco spoke in much the same terms but in greater detail the Meeting of the Superior Chapter, November 29, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 88a, *FDBM* 1883 A7.

Part III. Attendant Problems

On reading the minutes and other documents of the period, one has the distinct impression that not all was well with the formation process leading to vows and to ordination, and that defections and lapses had to be lamented all too frequently. Thus we read about a certain Augusto Bianciardi who had decamped and was threatening Don Bosco.

Father Augusto Bianciardi, after making a mess of things everywhere, is now a fugitive from the house of Magliano [Sabino], his last assignment. He first applied for incardination in Florence, but the archbishop refused to accept him. Then he wrote an abusive letter to Don Bosco threatening to reveal discrediting facts he claimed to know about the Congregation. Don Bosco let him know that he was not going to get any satisfaction unless he displayed normal civility. Bianciardi then wrote a letter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars leveling trumped-up accusations of all sorts against the Society. Without apparent embarrassment, he brazenly declared to have taken religious vows and received holy orders deceitfully under false pretenses. He had no reply from Rome. He followed this up with a request made to Don Bosco through Monsignor Martini to be duly released from vows and orders. Don Bosco's reply to this was that there was nothing he could do now that the case was before the Roman Congregation. Today another threatening letter was received. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars has now made inquiries with [our procurator in Rome] Father Dalmazzo, wanting to know the details of the affair and who had been the ordaining bishop. Don Bosco is planning to write to the Roman Congregation to point out that one who has lied at profession and at ordination deserves no credence. In conclusion, Don Bosco urges that extreme vigilance and caution be exercised in the matter of ordinations.¹⁰⁷

At a later meeting, Don Bosco had to lament numerous defections and widespread lack of the Salesian spirit, He said:

Many confreres show a total lack of the Salesian spirit. Every year we have to lament defections of priests, after so much time and effort spent in their education. No sooner ordained than they apply for dispensation, without allowing any time for their formation. Of course, quite a few priests were ordained [prematurely] in moments of urgent necessity. But from now on we must proceed with much greater caution before promoting candidates to orders and we must demand that they spend at least one year in the house of studies before ordination. Then, sadly, concern for family interests and the

¹⁰⁷ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, January 16, 1884, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 4b, *FDBM* 1889 B8.

families themselves conspire to take confreres away from the Society. We must strengthen our positions.¹⁰⁸

At the Third General Chapter Don Bosco repeatedly voiced his fears and concern over another delicate and painful situation, the moral conduct of confreres. Even before the chapter began its work, he moved that a commission be established to study the problem and suggest means to promote good morals among the confreres.¹⁰⁹ A little later he declared: "The Congregation is in need of a thorough cleansing (*ha bisogno di essere purgata*)." He went on to discuss areas where reforms were needed:

"In the first place, no woman should be living with us in the house (*venga a dormire in casa*). The laundry, too, [where women are employed] should have no communication with the rest of the house. Secondly, what has been laid down [by General Chapter II] regarding separate living and working quarters for our sisters must be implemented without delay. This is of the utmost importance and must be given immediate and serious attention." [...] Don Bosco then relates that the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, acting on reports received, had planned an apostolic visitation [of Salesian institutions] and would have acted accordingly, if the Holy Father had not intervened. This would have been a disgraceful blot on our good name. The Roman Congregation had received a report of immoral behavior [*cosa lubrica*], believable in itself [interlinear addition: *but false, to be sure*]: A Salesian who was in the habit of visiting the sisters' working rooms struck up a friendship with one of them, and together they plotted to elope. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, their scheme was foiled. It was Cardinal [Innocenzo] Ferrieri who received the report and spoke to the Holy Father about a possible visitation.¹¹⁰

Actually the contemplated investigation of Salesian institutions referred to above was motivated by more serious episodes of moral misconduct that had occurred during the three previous years.¹¹¹ It was to be expected that with so many young, sometimes hastily formed and ordained, Salesians scattered in numerous schools, regrettable incidents should occur. The anticlerical press in leftist-liberal

¹⁰⁸ Meeting of the Superior Chapter, November 5, 1885, Lemoyne Minutes, p. 87a, *FDBM* 1883 A5.

¹⁰⁹ General Chapter III, Session 2, September 3, 1883, Marengo Minutes, p. 3, *FDBM* 1863, E9. The appointed commission included Fathers Michele Rua, Giuseppe Bertello, Antonio Notario, Domenico Belmonte, Giacomo Costamagna. The commission's report is not to be found in the files of General Chapter III in *FDBM*.

¹¹⁰ General Chapter III, Session 5, September 4, 1883, Marengo Minutes, pp. 8-9, *FDBM* 1864 A2-3.

¹¹¹ In summarizing these events, while using the published common sources, I am guided by Francis Desramaut, "Études VII," in *Cahiers Salésiens* 20-21 (Apr.-Oct. 1989), pp. 215-218.

Italy was quick to give such incidents lurid publicity. Some, however, could be kept from the public, as was the case, in 1880 of Father Davide Pirro and in 1883 of Father Alexander Porani, both in Nice. They had the good grace of quickly disappearing from the scene.¹¹² But whether secret or public, such moral lapses were a grave concern and a severe trial for Don Bosco.

The incident which occurred at Laigueglia (Liguria) in 1881 was gotten hold of by the press. The Salesian seminarian Venanzio Bertolo, stationed at the Salesian school of Alassio, where Father Francesco Cerruti was director, went every day with Father Matteo Torazza from the same community to the little town of Laigueglia. After spending the day teaching, both would return to Alassio in the evening. The incident in which Bertolo was involved, one of child molestation, was first given publicity by the liberal daily of Milan, *Il Secolo*. This sheet reported that it was a Salesian priest of Alassio who had been guilty of the crime. The Catholic daily of Milan, *L'Osservatore Cattolico*, was quick to make inquiries and to publish the correct version: it was not a priest, nor was the school of Alassio involved. But it was bad enough. Don Bosco, who was returning from France and passing through the area at the time was very much disturbed by the events. The furor died down more quickly than expected.¹¹³

The Cremona episode of February-March 1882 was much more serious in its repercussions. The person in question was Father Ermenegildo Musso, a 27-year old Salesian priest, a primary school teacher at St. Lawrence Oratory and School in Cremona (Lombardy). He was accused of some strange, "sadistic" acts: while on a walk he had shoved some nettles under the shirt of one of the boys; and on another occasion at the school he had undressed a lad and poured hot wax from a candle on his back. One of the parents, after complaining to the director and being rebuffed, went to the police. An investigation began, and in spite of the fact that the parent in question wished to withdraw the accusation, justice was quick to take its course. Father Musso, who had meanwhile made good his escape to France, received a jail sentence of three months, and the school was shut down by order of the prefect of police. News of the affair spread beyond Cremona. Anticlerical newspapers in major cities, under such headlines as "*The*

¹¹² On Father Davide Pirro, the postscript in a letter of Don Bosco to Father Giuseppe Bologna reads: "I am writing to Father Pirro to reprimand him for betraying himself, the Congregation and the Church. I am cautioning him over the pit he has dug for himself that he may take stock, etc. He will discuss the matter with you." [Letter of May 13, 1880, Ceria, *Epistolario* III, p. 588. Cf. also *IBM* XIV, p. 498 and *EBM* XIV, p. 388.] Ceria notes: Father Pirro was from Naples and had already decided to leave the Congregation.

The *Biographical Memoirs* make mention of Father Alessandro Por[r]ani in other connections, but have nothing regarding this matter. For information cf. Francis Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice* (Paris, 1980), p. 367, note 74, which is not available to me.

¹¹³ A summary account is given in *IBM* XV, p. 139 and *EBM* XV, pp. 110-111, where Ceria omits the name and speaks simply of "a teacher." But Bertolo was apparently a Salesian seminarian, according to F. Desramaut, "Études VII," in *Cahiers Salésiens* 20-21 (1989), p. 216.

Cesspool," printed some very nasty things about Father Musso, Don Bosco, the Salesians and their schools, with explicit accusations of immorality.¹¹⁴

Ceria prefers to think that these were the acts of a crazy religious fanatic imposing "penances," and that morals were not in question.¹¹⁵ But not only did such accusations of "moral turpitude" nearly provoke an investigation of all Salesian schools by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (Cardinal Ferrieri), but they also had an adverse effect on the settlement of the Bosco-Gastaldi conflict that was to take place by order of Leo XIII some two months later (June 1882). The Pope himself expressed his grief and disappointment that Salesians should be accused of "most immoral conduct (*de re turpissima*)."¹¹⁶

Such unsavory incidents lay behind Don Bosco's concern at General Chapter III. Toward the end of the Chapter, Marengo reports Don Bosco's urgent warning:

"Up until recently we could be proud of our record (*portar alta la fronte*) in the matter of morals. Now we have been damaged, though perhaps not seriously, by the bad conduct of a few careless Salesians. Our good name is on the mend, but directors should be extremely vigilant, because they are responsible before society for their confreres' conduct. [...]"

"Tell the confreres that by failure in moral conduct they compromise the house and the Congregation before God and society: before God we jeopardize our soul; before society we forfeit our good name."¹¹⁷

In his sketchy notes Barberis reports Don Bosco warning in even stronger terms:

"Let us be vigilant [in this matter of morals], because when moral lapses occur among us we gravely compromise not only ourselves but also our boys, our house, and the whole Congregation. We are thereby liable to the

¹¹⁴ Desramaut names some of these newspapers and quotes excerpts: the *Cronaca dei Tribunali* and the *Gazzetta del Popolo* of Turin, the *Epoca* of Genoa, the *Messaggero* of Rome. *Epoca* wrote: "One is seized by vertigo when faced with such a monstrous abyss of evil and shame." and *Cronaca dei Tribunali*: "Even the justice system is in shock, as it prosecutes these assassins of adolescents working under the cloak of a religious habit. [...] We respect Don Bosco. [...] But his name should not be invoked to protect these criminals, nor the banner of his charity used to cloak over such unheard-of moral turpitude." [Études VII, in *Cahiers Salésiens* 20-21 (1989), pp. 217-218]

¹¹⁵ Ceria's account is given in *IBM* XV, pp. 576-578 and 579, *EBM* XV, pp. 479-481. *IBM* XV, pp. 813-815 (Appendix 85) gives Attorney Villa's brief to the Appeals Court of Brescia on behalf of Father Musso (omitted in *EBM*).

¹¹⁶ Letter of Procurator General, Father Dalmazzo, to Don Bosco, Rome, May 15, 1882, summarized in *IBM* XV, p 578 and less fully in *EBM* XV, p. 481.

¹¹⁷ General Chapter III, Session 11, September 7, 1883, Marengo Minutes, pp. 18-19, *FDBM* 1864 B1.

penalties under the law, not to mention God's eternal punishment. Woe, woe, woe to him who gives scandal in this matter."¹¹⁸

At a meeting following up on General Chapter III, the superior chapter acted, for the first time, to dismiss a group of confreres for their bad spirit.

We turned our attention to a very weighty matter that for a long time has been on the superiors' mind. We are faced with the problem of cleansing (*purgare*) the Congregation by eliminating a number of its members who do not live by its spirit and have become a bad example and a drag on the others. A list of such undesirables who seemed past recovery has been drawn up beforehand. After yielding on many of them, we finally marked eight for dismissal. Two additional confreres were likewise marked, but they will not be notified since they are up for military service in the near future, and they will be let go that way. This is the first time that we acted to dismiss people in a group, and it was an emotional experience. Every one, however, agreed that the measure was called for.¹¹⁹

Preliminary Conclusion

I believe that the foregoing passages, translated directly for the original reports, suffice for a description of the problems connected with the building up of the Salesian "labor force" and with its deployment in the various fields of the Society's work. The Congregation's tremendous growth and expansion in the founding era were not without pain and uncertainties. Ideals had to be tempered in the face of the harsh reality of practical need, but they were never lost sight of. One sees a continuous striving toward establishing those policies and that *modus operandi* which seemed most conducive to the furtherance of the Salesian mission. Contrasting views never degenerated into personal pique, and free and lively dialogue never deviated from the common purpose which was ever held in view.

Don Bosco, who presided at most of the meetings even in the last days of his physical dissolution, was at once the guiding spirit, the catalyst, and the cohesive force in the joint effort at finding the right solutions. Fraternal charity, unity and oneness in heart and soul, fatherly encouragement on the one hand and filial deference on the other, these unique qualities of the Salesian spirit, are what make these texts not only instructive but altogether inspiring.

[to be continued]

¹¹⁸ General Chapter III, Session 11, September 7, 1883, Barberis Minutes p. 10, *FDBM* 1864 D7.

¹¹⁹ Meeting of the Superior chapter, September 14, 1883, Barberis Minutes. loose sheet, *FDBM* 1879 E12.

Appendix I
Barberis' Minutes of the Superior Chapter, 1875-1883

[i] Two Reports by Barberis in Sheets Following Note Book III

date & time	chairman	page	FDBM
[mo./day/yr]			
8/14/1875	DB	p. 1-7	1879 C3-9
11/7/1875	DB	p. 8-21	1879 C10-D11

[ii] Barberis' Principal Collection of Minutes of Meetings of the Superior Chapter (Note Books I, II & III)

date & time	chairman	book & page	FDBM
[mo./day/yr]			
12/10/1875 PM	DB	I, 1-10	1875 B11-C8
1/27/1876 PM	DB	I, 11-13	1875 C9-11
6/18/1876 PM	DB	I, 13-22	1875 C11-D8
11/5/1876 PM	DB	I, 23-32	1875 D9-E6
		I, 33-40 [B's add. comments]	1875 E7 - 876.A2
11/27/1876 PM	DB	I, 40-50	1876 A2-12
12/17/1876 PM	DB	I, 51-59	1876 B1-9.
2/16/1877 PM	DB	I, 59-69	1876 B9-C7
5/3/1877 PM	DB	I, 70-74	1876 C8-12
5/6/1877 PM	DB	I, 75-83	1876 D1-9
5/11/1877 PM	DB	I, 83-89	1876 D9-E3
5/21/1877 PM	DB	I, 89-93	1876 E3-7
8/17/1877 PM	DB	I, 93-98	1876 E7-12
5/15/1878 PM	DB	II, 1-11	1877 A2-12
5/16/1878 PM	DB	II, 11-19	1877 A12-B8.
Jul&Aug, 1876		II, 19-21 [summ. of 2 meetings]	1877 B8-10
10/1/1878	[DB]	II, 22-25	1877 B11-C2
11/4/1878	[DB]	II, 25-28	1877 C2-5
12/1/1878 PM	[DB]	II, 29-35	1877 C6-12
12/2/1878 PM	[DB]	II, 36-41	1877 D1-6
12/12/1878	[DB]	II, 42-47	1877 D7-12
12/27/1878 PM	[DB]	II, 48-59	1877 E1-12
4/15&16/1879	[DB]	II, 87-89 [rep. to Barberis]	1878 C4-6
4/29/1879 PM	DB	III, 1-8	1878 D10-E5
5/7/1879 PM	DB	III, 8-15	1878 E5-11
5/ 8/1879	[DB]	III, 14-19	1878 E11 - 1879 A4
5/16/1879	[DB]	III, 19-24	1879 A4-9

5/19/1879	[DB] [reported to B.]	III, 25-26	1879 A10-11
5/29/1879 PM	[DB]	III, 27-30	1879 A12-B3
6/9/1879 PM	[DB]	III, 30-41	1879 B3-C2

[iii] Minutes of the Meetings of the Superior Chapter [after GC II] from Note Book of Barberis' Minutes of GC II (Rough Copy)

date & time [mo./day/yr]	chairman	page	FDBM
9/29/1880 [1st]	[DB]	p. 20	1856 C7
9/29/1880 [2nd]	[DB]	p. 20-21	1856 C7-8
11/30/1880 AM	[DB]	p. 21	1856 C8
11/30/1880 PM	[DB]	p. 21	1856 C8
12/1/1880 [AM]	[DB]	p. 22	1856 C9
12/1/1880 [PM]	[DB]	p. 22-23	1856 C9-10
12/2/1880 AM	[DB]	p. 23	1856 C10
12/2/1880 PM	[DB]	p. 23	1856 C10
12/3/1880 AM	[DB]	p. 24	1856 C11
12/4/1880	[DB]	p. 24	1856 C11
12/9/1880	[DB]	p. 24	1856 C11
12/20/1880	[DB]	p. 24	1856 C11
12/29/1880	[DB]	p. 24	1856 C11
1/3 1881	[DB]	p. 24-25	1856 C11-12

[iv] Barberis' Last report

date & time [mo./day/yr]	chairman	page	FDBM
9/14/1883	[DB]	1 p.	1879 C12

Appendix II

Lemoyne's Minutes of Meetings of the Superior Chapter, 1883-1888

date & time [mo./day/yr]	chairman	page	FDBM
1883 - 1884			
12/14/1883 PM	DB	pp. 1a-b	1880 B1-2.
12/28/1883 PM	DB	pp. 2a-b	1880 B3-4
1/15/1884 PM	DB	pp. 3a-b	1880 B5-6
1/16/1884 PM	DB	pp. 4a-5a	1880 B7-9

1/22/1884 PM	DB	pp. 5b-6a	1880 B10-11
2/21/1884 PM	DB	pp. 6b-7b	1880 B12-C2
2/28 1884 PM	DB	pp. 8a-b	1880 C3-4
3/16/1884 PM	Rua	pp. 9a-b	1880 C5-6
4/5/1884 PM	DB	pp. 10a-b	1880 C7-8
5/5/1884	Rua	p. 11a	1880 C9
5/19/1884 PM	DB	p. 11b-12a	1880 C10-11
6/2/1884 PM	DB	p. 12b	1880 C12
6/5/1884 PM	DB	p. 13a-14a	1880 D1-3
6/27/1884 PM	DB	p. 14b-15a	1880 D4-5
6/30/1884 PM	DB	p. 15b-16a	1880 D6-7
7/4/1884 PM	DB	p. 16b-17b	1880 D8-10
7/7/1884	DB	p. 18a-b	1880 D11-12
7/19/1884 PM	DB	p. 19a	1880 E1
8/26/1884 PM	Rua	p. 19b-20a	1880 E2-3
8/29/1884 AM	DB	p. 20b-21a	1880 E4-5
8/29/1884 PM	Rua	p. 21b-22b	1880 E6-8
8/29/1884 PM	DB	p. 23a-b	1880 E9-10
8/30/1884 PM	DB	p. 24a-25a	1880 E11-1881A1
9/4/1884 AM	DB	p. 25b-26b	1881 A2-4
9/6/1884 AM	DB	p. 27a-28a	1881 A5-7
9/11/1884 PM	DB	p. 28b-30a	1881 A8-11
9/12/1884 AM	DB	p. 30b-31a	1881 A12-B1
9/12/1884 PM	DB	p. 31b-34a	1881 B2-7
9/18/1884 PM	Rua	p. 34b	1881 B8
9/19/1884 AM	Rua	p. 35a	1881 B9
9/19/1884 PM	Rua	p. 35b-36a	1881 B10-11
9/20/1884 AM	Rua	p. 36b	1881 B12
9/20/1884 PM	Rua	p. 37a	1881 C1
9/21/1884 AM	Rua	p. 37b	1881 C2
9/21/1884 PM	Rua	p. 38a	1881 C3
9/29/1884 PM	Rua	p. 38b	1881 C4
9/30/1884 PM	Rua	p. 39a	1881 C5
10/2/1884 PM	Rua	p. 39b-40b	1881 C6-8
10/3/1884 AM	Rua	p. 41a-b	1881 C9-10
10/3/1884 PM	DB	p. 42a-b	1881 C11-12
10/24/1884 PM	DB	p. 43a-44a	1881 D1-3
10/28/1884 PM	DB	p. 44b-46a	1881 D4-7
11/13/1884 PM	DB	p. 46b-47a	1881 D8-9
12/1/1884 PM	DB	p. 47b-48a	1881 D10-11
12/5/1884 PM	DB	p. 48b-49b	1881 D12-E2
12/9/1884 PM	DB	p. 50a-51b	1881 E3-6
12/27/1884	DB	p. 52a-53b	1881 E7-10
1885			
1/9/1885 PM	DB	p. 54a	1881 E11

2/23/1885 PM	DB	p. 54b	1881 E12
2/24/1885 PM	DB	p. 55a-b	1882 A1-2
3/20/1885 PM	DB	p. 56a-b	1882 A3-4
5/29/1885 PM	DB	p. 57a-58a	1882 A5-7
6/5/1885 PM	DB	p. 58b-59b	1882 A8-10
6/8/1885 PM	DB	p. 60a	1882 A11
6/12/1885 PM	DB	p. 60b-61a	1882 A12-B1
6/22/1885 PM	DB	p. 61b-62a	1882 B2-3
7/10/1885 PM	DB	p. 62b-63a	1882 B4-5
7/13/1885 PM	DB	p. 63b-64a	1882 B6-7
8/24/1885 AM	Rua	p. 64b-65a	1882 B8-9
8/24/1885 PM	DB	p. 65b-66a	1882 B10-11
8/25/1885 AM	Rua	p. 66b	1882 B12
8/25/1885 PM	DB	p. 67a-b	1882 C1-2
9/1/1885 AM	Rua	p. 68a	1882 C3
9/1/1885 PM	Rua	p. 68b	1882 C4
9/2/1885 AM	Rua	p. 69a	1883 C5
9/2/1885 PM	Rua	p. 69b	1882 C6
9/3/1885 AM	Rua	p. 70a	1882 C7
9/3/1885 PM	Rua	p. 70b	1882 C8
9/4/1885 AM	Rua	p. 71a	1882 C9
9/4/1885 PM	Rua	p. 71b	1882 C 10
9/9/1885 AM	DB	p. 72a	1882 C11
9/9/1885 PM	DB	p. 72a	1882 C12
9/10/1885 AM	DB	p. 73a	1882 D1
9/10/1885 [PM]	DB	p. 73b	1882 D2
9/16/1885 AM	DB	p. 74a-75b	1882 D3-6
9/16/1885 PM	DB	p. 76a	1882 D7
9/17/1885 AM	DB	p. 76b	1882 D8
9/17/1885 PM	DB	p. 77a-b	1882 D 9-10
9/18/1885 AM	DB	p. 78a-b	1882 D11-12
9/18/1885 PM	DB	p. 79a	1882 E1
9/22/1885 AM	DB	p. 79b-81a	1882 E2-5
/922/1885 PM	DB	p. 81b-82a	1882 E6-7
9/24/1885 AM	DB	p. 82b-83a	1882 E8-9
9/25/1885 AM	DB	p. 83b	1882 E10
9/25/1885 PM	DB	p. 83b	1882 E10
10/1/1885 PM	DB	p. 84a	1882 E11
10/2/1885 AM	DB	p. 84b	1882 E12
10/2/1885 PM	DB	p. 84b	1882 E12
10/26/1885 PM	DB	p. 85a-b	1883 A1-2
11/2/1885 PM	DB	p. 86a-b	1883 A3-4
11/5/1885 PM	DB	p. 87a	1883 A5
11/16/1885 PM	DB	p. 87b	1883 A6
11/29/1885 PM	DB	p. 88a	1883 A7

12/1/1885 PM	DB	p. 88b-89b	1883 A8-10
12/14/1885 PM	DB	p. 90a	1883 A 11
1886			
2/12/1886 PM	DB	p. 90b	1883 A12
5/26/1886 PM	DB	p. 91a-b	1883 B1-2
6/11/1886 PM	DB	p. 92a	1883 B3
6/25/1886 PM	DB	p. 92b	1883 B4
7/2/1886 PM	DB	p. 93a-b	1883 B5-6
Aug.-Oct., not rec. (prep. for CG IV) — cf. p. 93b — 1883 B6			
10/20/1886 PM	DB	p. 93b	1883 B6
11/2/1886 PM	DB	p. 94a	1883 B7
11/19/1886 PM	DB	p. 94b	1883 B8.
12/20/1886 PM	DB	p. 95a	1883 B9
1887			
2/14/1887 PM	DB	p. 95b-96b	1883 B10-12
3/14/1887 PM	DB	p. 97a	1883 C1
3/28/1887 PM	DB	p. 97b	1883 C2
4/19/1887 PM	DB	p. 98a	1883 C3
5/25/1887 PM	DB	p. 98a-b	1883 C3-4
6/10/1887 PM	Rua	p. 99a-b	1883 C5-6
6/27/1887 PM	DB	p. 100a	1883 C7
7/4/1887 PM	Rua	p. 100a	1883 C7
7/6/1887 PM	Rua	p. 100b	1883 C8
8/18/1887 AM	Rua	p. 100b	1883 C8
8/18/1887 PM	Rua	p. 101a	1883 C9
8/22/1887 AM	Rua	p. 101a	1883 C9
8/22/1887 PM	Rua	p. 101a	1883 C9
8/23/1887 AM	Rua	p. 101b	1883 C10
8/23/1887 AM	Rua	p. 101b	1883 C10
8/29/1887 PM	Rua	p. 102a	1883 C11
8/30/1887 AM	Rua	p. 102a	1883 C11
8/30/1887 PM	Rua	p. 102b	1883 C12
9/12/1887 AM	Rua	p. 102b	1883 C12
9/12/1887 PM	DB	p. 102b	1883 C12
9/13/1887 AM	DB	p. 103a	1883 D1
9/13/1887 PM	Rua	p. 103a	1883 D1
9/14/1887 AM	Rua	p. 103a	1883 D1
9/14/1887 PM	Rua	p. 103b	1883 D2
9/15/1887 AM	Rua	p. 103b	1883 D2
9/15/1887 PM	Rua	p. 103b	1883 D2
9/16/1887 PM	Rua	p. 103b	1883 D2
9/17/1887 AM	Rua	p. 104a	1883 D3
9/22/1887 AM	Rua	p. 104a	1883 D3
9/22/1887 PM	Rua	p. 104a	1883 D3
9/24/1887 AM	Durando	p. 104b	1883 D4

9/28/1887 PM	Rua	p. 104b	1883 D4
9/29/1887 AM	Rua	p. 104b	1883 D4
9/29/1887 PM	Rua	p. 105a-b	1883 D5-6
9/30/1887 AM	Rua	p. 105b	1883 D6
9/30/1887 PM	Rua	p. 106a	1883 D7
10/10/1887 PM	DB	p. 106b-107b	1883 D8-10
10/28/1887 PM	DB	p. 107b	1883 D10
11/14/1887 PM	DB	p. 108a	1883 D11
11/30/1887 PM	DB (last time)	p. 108a	1883 D11
12/21/1887 PM	Rua	p. 108b	1883 D12
12/30/1887 PM	Rua	p. 109a	1883 E1

1888

1/26/1888 PM	Rua	p. 109b	1883 E2
1/31/1888 10 PM	Rua	p. 109b	1883 E2
2/7/1888 PM	Rua	p. 109b-110a	1883 E2-3
2/24/1888 PM	Rua	p. 110a	1883 E3
2/28/1888 PM	Rua	p. 110a	1883 E3

Appendix III.**Repertory-Catalogue of the Sessions of the General Conference
Held at Alassio, February 6-8, 1879.**

session	date & time	chairman	book & page	FDBM
	mo./day/yr			
1	2/6/1879 PM	DB	II, p. 60-69	1878 A1-10
[2/7/1879 AM: private interviews]				
2	2/7/1879 PM	DB	II, p. 70-77	1878 A11-B6
3	2/8/1879 AM	DB	II, p. 77-82	1878 B6-11
4	2/8/1879 PM	DB	II, p. 83-86	1878 B12-C3

Appendix IV**Repertory-Catalogue of the Sessions of General Chapter II as
Given in Barberis' and in Marengo's Minutes**

[i] Barberis' Original Draft

session	date/time	chairman	page	FDBM
1 opening	9/3/1880 eve	DB	p. 1-4	1856 A12-B3
2	9/4/1880 AM	DB	p. 5-9	1856 B4-9
3	9/4/1880 PM	DB	p. 10-11	1856 B9-10
[9/5/1880 AM Sun - superior chap.- Barb. absent] — p. 11 — 1856 B10				
[9/5/1880 PM Sun - superior chap.- Barb. absent] — p. 11 — 1856 B10				

4	9/5/1880 eve	DB	p. 11-12	1856 B10-11
5	9/6/1880 AM	DB	p. 12-13	1856 B11-12
6	9/6/1880 PM	DB	p. 13-14	1856 B12-C1
7	9/7/1880 AM	DB	p. 14-15	1856 C1-2
8	9/7/1880 PM	DB	p. 15	1856 C2
[9/8/1880: nothing recorded]				
9	9/9/1880 AM	DB	p. 16	1856 C3
[9/9/1880 PM: nothing recorded]				
10	9/10/1880 AM	DB	p. 17	1856 C4
11	9/10/1880 PM	DB	p. 18	1856 C5
12	9/11/1880 AM	DB	p. 18	1856 C5
13	9/11/1880	DB	p. 19	1856 C6
[nothing further recorded on General Chapter II]				

[ii] Marengo's Minutes

1 [4 really]	9/5/1880 PM	DB	p. 1-4	1856 D3-6
2	9/6/1880 AM	DB	p. 4-5	1856 D6-7
3	9/6/1880 PM	DB	p. 6-7	1856 D8-9
4	9/7/1880	DB	p. 8	1856 D10
5	9/7/1880 PM	DB	p. 9	1856 D11
[9/8/1880: nothing recorded]				
6	9/9/1880 AM	DB	p. 1--12	1856 D12 - E2
7	9/9/1880 PM	DB	p. 12-14	1856 E2-4
[9/10/1880 AM: nothing recorded — Marengo absent, note p. 14, 1856 E4]				
9	9/10/1880 PM	DB	p. 15-16	1856 E5-6
10	9/11/1880 AM	DB	p. 17	1856 E7
11	9/11/1880	DB	p. 17-19	1856 E7-9
[gap: for 9/11,12,13: nothing recorded]				
12	9/14/1880 AM	DB	p. 19-20	1856 E9-10
13	9/14/1880 PM	DB	p. 20-21	1856 E10-11
[9/15/1880 AM: nothing recorded]				
14 closing	9/15/1880 PM	DB	p. 22-23	1856 E12 - 1857A1

[iii] Barberis' Transcribed and Edited Minutes of General Chapter II

Note Book I				
session	date/AM/PM	chairman	page	FDBM
1	9/3/1880 PM	DB	p. 1-9	1857 B8-C4
2	9/4/1880 AM	DB	p.10-25	1857 C5-D8
3	9/4/1880 PM	DB	p. 26-32	1857 D9-E3
[9/4/1880 AM: private interviews]				
4	9/5/1880 PM	DB	p. 33-38	1857 E4-9
5	9/6/1880 AM	DB	p. 38-48	1857 E9-1858 A7
6	9/6/1880 PM	DB	p. 49-54	1858 A8-B1

7	9/7/1880 AM	DB	p. 55-61	1858 B2-8
8	9/7/1880 PM	DB	p. 62-68	1858 B9-C3
[B. notes: 9/7 session cut short; no sessions held 9/8, Nativ. BVM: p. 68, 1858 C3]				
9	9/9/1880 AM	DB	p. 69-77	1858 C4-12
10	9/9/1880 PM	DB	p. 78-83	1858 D1-6
Note Book II				
11	9/10/1880 AM	DB	p. 88-90	1858 D11-E1
12	9/10/1880 PM	DB	p. 91-95	1858 E2-6
13ab	9/11/1880 AM&PM	DB	p. 96-97	1858 E7-8
14	9/12/1880 [AM]	DB	p. 98-100	1858 E9-11
[9/12&14/1880: nothing recorded]				
15 & last	9/15/1880 PM	DB	p. 101-102	1858 E12 - 1859 A1
Signed cloture document: p. 105-107 — 1859 A4-6				

Appendix V
Repertory-Catalogue of the Sessions of General Chapter III
According to Marengo's and Barberis' Minutes

[i] Marengo's Minutes of General Chapter III

session	date/AM/PM	chairman	page in note bookk	FDBM
1 opening	9/2/1883 PM	DB	3 pp.	1864 B10-12
2	9/3/1883 AM	DB	p. 3-4	1863 E9-10
3	9/3/1883 PM	DB	p. 4-5	1863 E10-11
4	9/4/1883 AM ¹²⁰	DB	p. 6-8	1863 E12 - 1864 A2
5	9/4/1883 PM	DB	p. 8-10	1864 A2-4
6	9/5/1883 AM	Rua/DB	p. 10	1864 A4
7	9/5/1883 PM	DB	p. 11	1864 A5
8	9/6/1883 AM	Rua/DB	p. 11-12	1864 A5-6
9	9/6/1883 PM	DB	p. 13-16	1864 A7-10
10	9/7/1883 AM	DB	p. 16-17	1864 A10-11
11 closing	9/7/1883 PM	DB	p. 18-21	1864 A12-B3
Signed cloture document: p. 22-24 — 1864 B4-6				

¹²⁰ The report is mostly concerned with the narration by Don Bosco of the Second Missionary Dream [p. 6-7, *FDBM* 1863 E12 - 1864 A1]. Cf. A. Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams [...]," *Journal of Salesian Studies* III:2 (1992) pp. 64-68.

[ii] Barberis' Minutes of General Chapter III

session	date/AM/PM	chairman	page in note book	FDBM
[1 opening]				
2	9/3/1883 AM	DB	p. 1	1864 C10
3	9/3/1883 PM	DB	p. 2	1864 C11
4	9/4/1883 AM	DB	p. 3	1864 C12
5	9/4/1883 PM	DB	p. 4	1864 D1
6	9/5/1883 AM	DB	p. 5	1864 D2 ¹²¹
7	9/4/1883 PM	DB	p. 6	1864 D3
8	9/6/1883 AM	DB	p. 7	1864 D4
9	9/6/1883 PM	DB	p. 8	1864 D5
10	9/7/1883 AM	[Rua]/DB	p. 9	1864 D6
11	9/7/1883 AM	DB	p. 10-11	1864 D7-8

Appendix VI
Repertory-Catalogue of Sessions of General Chapter IV,
Marenco-Lemoyne Minutes

session	date/AM/PM	chairman	page in note book	FDBM
*Lemoyne				
1 opening	9/1/1886 PM	DB-Rua	p. 2	1867 D10
2	9/2/1886 AM	DB-Rua	p. 3	1867 D11
			sheets 1865 A3-7	
3	9/2/1886 PM	DB-Rua	p. 4-5	1867 D12-E1
4	9/3/1886 AM	DB-Rua	p. 6-7	1867 E2-3
5	9/3/1886 PM	DB-Rua	p. 7-8	1867 E3-4
6*	9/4/1886 AM	DB?-Rua	p. 8-9	1867 E4-5
7*	9/4/1886 PM	DB?-Rua	p. 9	1867 E5
9/4/1886 PM: nothing recorded				
8*	9/5/1886 PM	DB-Rua	p. 9-10	1867 E5-6
9	9/6/1886 AM	DB/Rua/DB	p. 10-12	1867 E6-8
10	9/6/1886 PM	DB-Rua	p. 13-16	1867 E9-12
11 closing	9/7/1886 AM	DB-Rua	p. 16-19	1867 E12 -1868 A3
Signed cloture document: p. 20-22 — 1868 A4-6				

¹²¹ Barberis (but not Marenco) notes and explains the presence of some lay brothers: “[Pietro] Barale, [Giuseppe] Buzzetti, [Giuseppe] Rossi, [Andrea] Pelazza, and [Antonio] Pavia were invited because the topic concerning lay brothers and working boys was up for discussion.” Actually Topics IV and V on the brothers and working boys were discussed the following day in Sessions 8 and 9.