

DON BOSCO AND THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATIONS IN SPAIN

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0. Introduction

The merest glance at the *Memorie Biografiche*¹ is enough to reveal that Don Bosco was in touch with various Catholic associations of his day, not only in Turin, but also far beyond.²

During his journeys throughout Italy, France and Spain he frequently encountered these associations, which fêted him and offered him help in return for a few words or his blessing. When such meetings occurred both parties – the members of the associations and Don Bosco – felt very much at ease, sharing a sense of mutual sympathy and attraction. The result was that such encounters often produced more or less permanent relationships of friendship and assistance.

This is demonstrated, for example, by the decision of some societies to make Don Bosco an honorary member,³ and by the fact that many early Salesian cooperators were prominent in these societies, such people as Count Carlo Cays di Giletta,⁴ Count de Maistre,⁵ Count de Villeneuve⁶ and Donna Dorotea Chopitea de Serra.⁷ These societies, moreover, played a part

¹ Cf. MB. Although the publication of the Castilian translation is satisfactory (CCS, Madrid 1981 ss.), the notes in this work are given in the original Italian.

² One should refer to the *Memorie*, using the analytical index under the headings *Associazione, Circolo, Congresso, Patronage, Società, Unione*.

³ He was an honorary member of the Turin Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul from 1850, of the Union of Catholic Workers of Nizza Monferrato from 1883 and of the Catholic Association of Barcelona from 1884. Cf. respectively MB IV 66-70; XVI 228; XVIII 84.

⁴ He was first the president of the particular Council of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul in Turin (1853) and then president also of the Superior Council of the same societies in Piedmont (1856). He died a Salesian priest in 1882. Cf. L. TERRONE, *Il conte Cays, sacerdote salesiano*, Colle Don Bosco (Asti), LDC 1947, p. 142.

⁵ Of the Conferences at Nice, according to the MB X 1337.

⁶ President of the agricultural societies of southern France, according to the MB XVIII 150-151.

⁷ Amongst other associations, she had belonged to the Council of the «Damas de las Salas de Asilo» and to the Apostleship of Prayer. Cf. A. BURDEUS, *Una dama barcelonesa del*

in the founding of several Salesian houses, for example, at Marassi (Genoa 1871),⁸ at Sampierdarena (Genoa 1872),⁹ Nice (1875),¹⁰ Buenos Aires (1877-78)¹¹ and Marseilles (1878).¹²

There is no doubt that the Catholic social movements of the last century were sensitive to the Salesian «charism», which they welcomed and sought to spread, even when they could not manage to introduce the Salesians into their own locality. Such was the case with the Workers' Association of Florence in 1880,¹³ the Catholic Association of Valencia (Spain) in 1881,¹⁴ and the General Council of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul in London in 1884.¹⁵

In volume XVIII of the *Memorie* Don Eugenio Ceria writes: «We have frequently narrated in these volumes how the attention of Societies of Catholic Workers was drawn to Don Bosco, because they considered him a standard-bearer in working for the benefit of the working class. The result was that wherever there were Salesian houses, these Associations considered them to be natural places for them to meet».¹⁶

Amongst the groups that had dealings with Don Bosco and his Salesians there were also, of course, those composed of members of the Catholic middle class, who shared the typical Catholic preoccupation of that era with social issues and who devoted themselves, amongst other things, to work on behalf of the proletariat and the underprivileged. A good example is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul founded in Paris by Frederick Ozanam in 1833. Its most typical feature was, and continues to be, the *Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul*.

These entered Italy in 1844 through the small city of Nice, which at that time belonged to the kingdom of Sardinia. They spread to Genoa in 1846, and in 1850 reached Turin. From the start Don Bosco became a zealous promoter,¹⁷ so much so that after only a few years, with the help of Count

ochocientos. La sierva de Dios doña Dorotea de Chopitea, viuda de Serra, Barcelona, Librería Salesiana 1962, pp. 128 and 326.

⁸ Cf. MB X 145, 182, 184-185, 190-191, 230.

⁹ Cf. MB X 364. S. SCIACCALUGA, *Don Bosco a Genova*, Genova-Sampierdarena, Salesiana editrice 1946.

¹⁰ Cf. MB X 1337; XI 421-426; XII 114-116, 120-122, 124, 407-408; XIII 106-112; XV 506-507. F. DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco à Nice. La vie d'une école professionnelle catholique entre 1875 et 1919*, Paris, Apostolat des éditions 1980, pp. 21-41.

¹¹ Cf. MB XII 164-266; XIII 180-181, 784-786, 1005-1007.

¹² Cf. MB XIII 95 et ss., 526-528, 531, 542, 727, 998. See the *index of proper names* in the *analytical index* of MB, under the word *Beaujour*.

¹³ Cf. MB XV 328-334.

¹⁴ See the letter written to Don Cagliero (23/3/1881) in: A. MARTÍN, *Los salesianos de Utrera en España*, Inspectoría Salesiana de Sevilla 1981, p. 183.

¹⁵ Cf. MB XVIII 447-448.

¹⁶ MB XVIII 168.

¹⁷ Cf. MB IV 66-70; V 648.

Carlo Cays, he founded some that were called *Affiliated Conferences* in his three oratories at Turin,¹⁸ and was keen on encouraging their spread to Rome.¹⁹ Don Bosco's links with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were deep and lasting.²⁰

These few facts should suffice to arouse our scientific interest and to direct it into a field which has so far been little studied. What were they like, in their constitution, outlook and work, these Catholic associations which so often surrounded Don Bosco and whose friendship and help he sought? What was the reason for the mutual empathy, and what were its results?

Such will be the scope and content of this present study. It will focus only on Barcelona, which Don Bosco visited in April-May, 1886, and for which he thereafter had a sincere affection. When he died two years later, his solemn funeral cortège passed through the streets of Turin, «the coffin covered with a black flag» – as one reads in the «Salesian Bulletin» – «and on top the symbols of his priesthood, together with the gold medals of the Catholic Association of Barcelona and of the Geographical Society of Lyon».²¹ How interesting! The Salesians of a century ago, when decorating the hearse of their father and founder in the worthiest way possible, considered that no symbols were more significant or nearer to his heart than those of his priesthood and some gold medals of two foreign associations. Could they have chosen a better way of expressing their conviction that Don Bosco already belonged to the Catholic world?

The author of this modest study would wish that other participants at this International Congress would pursue the study of this topic and develop it in relation to Italy and France. This would, it appears to me, help to reveal the full stature of Don Bosco in the history of the Church, and enrich, if only a little, the writing of that history.

1. Don Bosco in Spain and the Catholic associations

All Salesian literature has painted a bright and attractive picture of Don Bosco's visit to Spain. According to Don Ceria, the days that our Founder stayed in Barcelona and in Sarriá (a small town near the capital of Catalonia where there was a Salesian house) from 8 April to 6 May, 1886, were days of «triumph».²²

¹⁸ Cf. MB V 468-477, 782-783; VI 491; VII 12-15; IX 941.

¹⁹ Cf. G. BONETTI, *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio Salesiano*, Torino, Tipografia Salesiana 1892, p. 532; MB V 871.

²⁰ See the *index of proper names* in the *analytical index* of the MB under *Conferenza di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli, Conferenze annesse*.

²¹ March, 1888, p. 34.

²² MB XVIII 117.

This view is confirmed by both Salesian sources²³ and by sources in Barcelona itself.²⁴ The mocking tone adopted by the anti-clerical press merely confirms the fact.²⁵ Don Bosco was constantly surrounded by crowds of people and was most courteously treated by the middle-class Catholics of Barcelona. Objectively speaking, it was unquestionably a huge success. But what was the point of all this splendour surrounding a person who was in reality unknown to the vast majority of the local population? In replying to this question, one must keep in mind various factors, notable amongst them being Don Bosco's reputation for sanctity and the fame of the miracles that had been attributed to him. But what caused his reputation to have such a powerful social impact? It seems to me that, in large measure, it was due to the Catholic social organisations. One has only to glance at the documents to be confirmed in this view.

From the first moment that he set foot in Barcelona at what was called the «French» Station on the morning of Thursday, 8 April, Don Bosco came into contact with the city's Catholic associations. The young chronicler Viglietti was amazed: «The station was a magnificent sight: various societies were lined up in orderly ranks [...] and the Director of the Catholic Societies, the Director of the University of Barcelona and the President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were also there».²⁶

This detail was recorded in the evening papers. According to the «Correo Catalán», Don Bosco was awaited at the station by «numerous commissions [...] representing all the Catholic associations of the capital, the Catholic press and numerous other representatives of these same groups».²⁷ The elderly Founder was moved by this spectacle. As he declared a few days later, «they gave me a welcome I shall never forget».²⁸ From that day on the

²³ The most important is the chronicle of Don Carlo Maria Viglietti. In this work I have used the copy which the chronicler himself gave to the Martí-Codolar family. On the cover of the de-luxe binding one reads: *Don Bosco – The four last years of his life – In grateful homage to the Martí-Codolar family – A chronicle written by the secretary Carlo M. Viglietti - 1886 (= Cronaca).*

²⁴ Amongst the periodicals that were most concerned with Don Bosco we may list the «Diario de Barcelona» (founded in 1792), the «Correo Catalán» (a daily founded in 1878), the «Revista Popular» (a weekly founded in 1871) and «La Hormiga de Oro» (a weekly founded in 1884).

²⁵ The following made particular reference to Don Bosco: «La Campana de Gracia» (a weekly founded in 1870), «L'Esquella de la Torratxa» (a weekly founded in 1872), «El Diluvio» (a daily founded in 1879). For general knowledge of this matter see R. ALBERDI, *Una ciudad para un santo*, Barcelona, Ediciones Tibidabo 1966; ID., *Don Bosco en Barcelona. Itinerario*, Barcelona, Edebé 1986.

²⁶ *Cronaca*, 8 April, 1886, Barcelona.

²⁷ «Correo Catalán», Thursday 8 April 1886, p. 1, evening edition. Cf. also «Diario de Barcelona», Thursday 8 April, 1886, p. 4105, evening edition.

²⁸ See the text of the invitation to the Salesian Conference at Sarriá, 27 April, 1886, in MB XVIII 648.

Catholic groups did not leave him and prepared even more splendid days for him throughout his stay in their city.

On Thursday, 15 April, there was a solemn ceremony at which the Catholic Association presented Don Bosco with the medal of honorary membership and of special merit. Fascinated by all this, Carlo Maria Viglietti recorded details in his chronicle: «At four o'clock the president and other members of the Catholic association arrived to accompany Don Bosco to the extraordinary meeting convoked expressly to honour him. These gentlemen were elegantly dressed and decorated with the insignia of the Society. Three luxurious carriages were in attendance. [...] The carriages moved slowly, attracting the attention of the crowds that had gathered to see Don Bosco. [...] The members who had collected there [in the new quarters that the Association was inaugurating on that day] were numerous enough to fill the three assembly rooms. The flower of the nobility of Barcelona was there».²⁹

The whole thing was a great success³⁰ for Don Bosco and his Salesians and also for the Catholic Association itself, which was thus honored by members of other associations. Its President, Dr. Bartolomé Feliú y Pérez, commenting on the success of the ceremony expressed – as is recorded in the acts of the society – «the satisfaction of the General Council at the many signs of regard received that day from all the members of the Association and from other corporate bodies that took part in the celebration».³¹

Fifteen days later, the Friday of Easter week, 30 April, the so-called *Salesian Conference* was celebrated, called together by Don Bosco on behalf of the *Talleres Salesianos*³² of Sarriá «to ensure», he said, «that greater numbers of boys could be accepted into these schools, in order to give them a solid Christian education, as well as the chance to learn some craft or trade which would, in due course, provide them with an honest living».³³

The friends and Cooperators of the Salesian house passed on these words to the societies to which they belonged. The Catholic Association, as one reads in the volume of its Acts, «received Don Bosco's invitation very favourably»,³⁴ as did the other associations. Their representatives were given

²⁹ *Cronaca*, 15 April, 1886, Barcelona.

³⁰ Cf. *Acta de la sesión solemne celebrada en 15 de abril de 1886 por la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona para imponer la insignia de la Corporación al ilustre y venerable presbítero Sr. D. Juan Bosco, fundador de los Talleres Salesianos*, Barcelona, Tipografía católica 1886, p. 24.

³¹ ASOCIACIÓN DE CATÓLICOS DE BARCELONA, *Actas 1886-1896*. These are the acts of the session of the General Council for 19 April, 1886. This volume and the preceding one (1871-1872 [1886]) can be found in the *Arxiu Diocesà de Barcelona. Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antigues. Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*, Cartella 2. See note 47.

³² This was the name given for the first few years to the schools of arts and trades which the Salesians ran in Sarriá from 1884.

³³ The text of the invitation to the Salesian Conference, Sarriá, 27 April, 1886, in MB XVIII 648.

³⁴ ASOCIACIÓN DE CATÓLICOS DE BARCELONA, *Actas 1886-1896* (referred to hereafter as *Actas II*). The extraordinary meeting of 30 April, 1886.

special places in the parish church of Our Lady of Belén, where the *Conference* was held. The parish priest, Don Juan Masferrer, was at that time a consultor of the central council of the Catholic Association. In the words of the chronicler, «the government and military authorities, with the directors of several societies and newspapers had places on the Epistle side of the altar. The committees of cooperators, male and female, had the best places in church, and the gentlemen wore on their chests the decorations of the various societies of which they were members».³⁵

When the *Conference* ended, the Cooperators took up a collection, assisted by «the youth of the Catholic Society».³⁶ Don Carlo Maria Viglietti was probably here referring to what was called *The Academy of Catholic Youth of Barcelona*, which was more or less the junior branch of the Catholic Association.

The third big celebration, on Wednesday, 5 May, took place in the basilica of Our Lady of Ransom. There in a ceremony that was «both moving and solemn»,³⁷ the owners of the summit of Mount Tibidabo donated it to Don Bosco,³⁸ «in order that you may raise there» [as they wrote in the deed of gift] «a chapel consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which will stay the arm of Divine Justice and bring down the mercy of God on our beloved city and on the whole of Catholic Spain».³⁹

The eleven signatories were either the owners or the heirs or representatives of the original owners. According to what was said later, these people were, or had been, members of the Catholic Association or of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. Some belonged to both. The first signatory, who represented the others in the business transactions that followed upon the donation, Delfín Artós y Mornau, had belonged to the Catholic Association since 1881, and from 1884 had been president of the local Council of the *Conferences* at Barcelona, as also of the Central Council of the *Conferences* in Catalonia.⁴⁰

The acquisition of the land on the summit of Tibidabo and the decision to donate it to Don Bosco were, without doubt, the work of committed members of the Catholic societies of the city.

In addition to these most important contacts there were other occasions when the associations met Don Bosco. According to Don Viglietti, on the evening of Saturday, 10 April, Don Bosco gave a special interview to the

³⁵ *Cronaca*, 30 April, 1886, Barcelona.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 May, 1886, Barcelona.

³⁸ Cf. ALBERDI, *Una ciudad* 176-190.

³⁹ The parchment scroll of donation, with the text signed by the owners or their representatives, can be found in ASC, 38 *Barcelona: Tibidabo*, 1. The names of the donors are in the MB XVIII 653, though not always correctly transcribed.

⁴⁰ Round about this last year he became an honorary member of the «Patronato dell'Operaio», of which he had earlier been president.

President of the Catholic Association, who arrived at the Salesian house at Sarriá «with a great number of the most eminent members».⁴¹ Four days later the same individuals assisted at the Mass celebrated by Don Bosco in the chapel of the house, and, as the chronicler notes, «the President and the Secretary served Don Bosco's Mass».⁴² That same evening (14 April) they returned to the Salesian residence, where, according to Viglietti, «Don Bosco gave a kind of conference to the whole Catholic society assembled in the theatre».⁴³

A similar meeting occurred on the evening of Wednesday, 21 April, between Don Bosco and the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. «There was an impressive gathering of at least 250 gentlemen of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul», Viglietti writes. He continues: «Don Bosco went straight to the theatre and spoke to this large audience, thanking them for their wonderful demonstration of faith and piety. The gentlemen then had a collection which proved extremely generous».⁴⁴

The Catholic societies of Barcelona met with Don Bosco right up to his departure on 6 May, 1886. They gave him a final send-off at the railway station. According to the «Revista Popular», the committees of the religious bodies of the city were all present, such as the Catholic Association, the «Fomento», the Catholic Youth, the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, etc.⁴⁵

It is clear that the associations to which we have briefly referred played an important part in helping Don Bosco, and they accompanied and assisted him throughout his stay in Barcelona. How did they originate in this capital of Catalonia? What were their aims and what was their spirit, which made them so much at one with the founder of the Salesians? The following pages will seek to provide an answer to those questions. It will only be possible, within the limits imposed by a talk of this kind, to mention the most important organizations, giving prominence to those aspects which have most bearing on Don Bosco and his work.

2. The Catholic Association of Barcelona

It is clear from what has been said that this organisation was the one in closest contact with Don Bosco during his visit to Barcelona in 1886. Their friendly contact began in 1884, when the Association learned of the existence

⁴¹ *Cronaca*, 10 April, 1886, Barcelona.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14 April, 1886, Barcelona. See also *Memoria y discurso leídos por el secretario y presidente de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona en la Junta General de Reglamento celebrada el día 20 de marzo de 1887*, Barcelona 1887, p. 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21 April, 1886, Barcelona.

⁴⁵ «Revista Popular», number 805 (13 May, 1886) 297.

of the Salesians and their founder and it was manifested right up to the news of Don Bosco's illness and his death in January, 1888.⁴⁶

2.1. *Origin and development*

The Catholic Association of Barcelona⁴⁷ was founded on 19 March, 1871. As the lawyer José María Vergés, who was in close touch with it, was later to write: «There was a desire for a truly fine and magnificent organization would make Catholicism *fashionable*, if one may use the expression. Catholicism was to become a name to be proud of in front of the world; it would cease to be a tag by which the enemy could expose his hated rivals to the contempt of his own followers; it would become the distinguished quality of Catholics and sons of the Church who gladly boast of how many are members of our association».⁴⁸

Such was the aim of the men gathered in the parish church of St. James, as they celebrated their solemn Mass and *general communion* on the feast of St. Joseph, 1871,⁴⁹ and gave birth to this new movement. They wished only to be true Catholics, in order to win new respect for the religion that they saw criticised everywhere on account of the Revolution of September, 1868.⁵⁰ Even years later the Association remained conscious of the «turbulent era» in which it was born.⁵¹

The chief promoter of all this was José Coll y Vehí († 1876),⁵² professor at the University of Barcelona, writer and literary critic. He had been a pupil of Manuel Milá y Fontanals († 1884) and was in close touch with Juan Mañé y Flaquer († 1901) and Manuel Durán y Bas († 1907). He was considered to represent Catalan conservatism. Within the sphere of the Association he was held in the greatest respect.⁵³

⁴⁶ Cf. R. ALBERDI, *Resonancia de la muerte de Don Bosco en Barcelona*, in «Salesianum» 50 (1988) 191-214.

⁴⁷ It is now possible to reconstruct the history of this association, thanks to the documentation that exists in the provincial archives of Barcelona (on the question of the schools) and, above all, in the diocesan archives of Barcelona. In these latter (Arxiu Diocesà de Barcelona = ADB) one can find various items, printed and otherwise (*Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antigues. Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*). Particularly interesting are the two books of the *Libro de Actas*, the first (= *Actas I*) covering from April 1871 up to March 1886, and the second (= *Actas II*) from March 1886 up to June 1896. See notes 31 and 34.

⁴⁸ «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 11 (March 1881) 170.

⁴⁹ A few months earlier (December 1870) Pope Pius IX had declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. The Catholic Association of Barcelona had been placed officially under the protection of this saint (*Estatutos*, art. 1).

⁵⁰ Cf. *La Iglesia en la España contemporánea (1808-1975)*, en: R. GARCÍA VILLOSLADA (ed.), *Historia de la Iglesia en España*, V. Madrid, Edica 1979, pp. 227-256.

⁵¹ «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 2 (June 1880) 22.

⁵² See this name in the *Diccionari Biogràfic*, I, Barcelona, Albertí 1966, p. 591.

⁵³ «A modest, wise, virtuous and indefatigable defender of the truth» was the description

Amongst others who helped him found the society was José María Vergés, already mentioned, and the Rev. José Morgades y Gili († 1901), who was then canon-penitentiary of the cathedral of Barcelona. With degrees in theology and canon law, he was a professor at the seminary and already well known as a promoter of learning and of works of charity.⁵⁴

The provisional Council under the presidency of Coll y Vehí was dissolved on 30 April 1871, and was replaced by a properly constituted General Council. The president of this was the above-mentioned Señor Coll and the vice-president was José Morgades.⁵⁵ The latter, according to the «Diario de Barcelona», became «the determined protector of the Salesian Institute» of Sarriá.⁵⁶

The Secretary of this General Council was Señor Narciso María Pascual de Bofarull († 1902), a lawyer and the brother-in-law of Luis Martí Codolar († 1915); being married to María Jesús Serra y Chopitea since 1844, he was son in law to José María Serra y Muñoz († 1882) and of Dorotea Chopitea y Villota († 1891). The future «mamá» of the Barcelona Salesians (from 1884) had already (1871) begun to found and organize charitable works and Señor Pascual was her intelligent, loyal and generous collaborator.

The appearance of the Catholic Association was not a phenomenon exclusive to the city of Barcelona; there were similar groups in other Spanish cities, starting with Madrid. The founders – all laymen and political and religious conservatives – exploited the freedom of association, newly conceded by the Revolution of September 1868, to create a common front against the secular anti-clerical spirit of that same Revolution. They wanted to promote a culture based on the integral profession of the Catholic faith and to defend the Catholic unity of Spain.⁵⁷ The movement was already under way before the end of the year of Revolution, 1868, and by the following year it was fully organized, backed up by corresponding junior sections, such as the Academy of Catholic Youth at Barcelona, which drew up its first regulations in the November of 1869.⁵⁸

However, the six revolutionary years from 1868-1874 (the Revolution in 1868; the Provisional Government, 1868-1870; the Monarchy of Amadeus I

of him in the *Memoria y discurso leídos por el vocal secretario 1° D. Juan F. Muntadas y Vilar-dell y el presidente D. José de Sans en la Junta General de socios celebrada el 24 de marzo de 1878*, Barcelona 1878, p. 12.

⁵⁴ See this name in the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana*, vol. 10, Barcelona 1977, pp. 314-315.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Actas I*, on the date indicated.

⁵⁶ Wednesday, 21 April, 1886, p. 4626 of the morning edition. In 1882 he had been appointed bishop of Vic (Barcelona) and, after four years, found time to greet Don Bosco personally in the recently opened Salesian house at Sarriá. Cf. *Cronaca*, 20 April, 1886. Barcelona.

⁵⁷ Cf. *La Iglesia en la España contemporánea* 242-247; J. ANDRÉS GALLEGÓ, *La política religiosa en España 1889-1913*, Madrid, Editora Nacional 1975, pp. 9-15.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Reglamento de la Sociedad Juventud Católica de Barcelona 1870*, p. 14.

of Savoy, 1870-1873; the First Republic, 1873-1874; the Provisional Regime, 1874) hardly favoured the normal development of Catholic associations. Faced with a permanent state of anarchy and anti-clericalism (both governmental and popular), faced, too, with the demonstrations of the First Workers' International and with the return to the Carlist wars, these associations were forced either to disguise or to terminate their activities.⁵⁹

The Catholic Association of Barcelona was soon the object of suspicion and misunderstanding on the part of the government,⁶⁰ which, despite the just representations of the Association, finally stopped all its activities. Consequently, a month after the proclamation of the First Republic (February, 1873), the doors of the premises of the Association at number 11, Calle Rigomir, were closed. The hiatus in the Association's life lasted until September, 1877.⁶¹

According to the records of the secretary Juan Federico Muntadas y Vilardell for the year 1878,⁶² this created a state of «disorganization and fear» for the 260 members. The majority of them, according to the same witness, had to seek «beyond our frontiers the peace they were denied in our own land»,⁶³ because during those years (1868-1874) «the Revolution [...] remained master and arbiter in the ancient city of the Counts, the cradle of famous saints. Churches and monasteries were profaned, images destroyed; the mysteries of our holy religion were vilified, its sacred ministers persecuted, and all Catholics held up to public ridicule».⁶⁴

This language of Muntadas, the man of letters, who was secretary of the Association before the Republic, may well be a little exaggerated, because Barcelona and Catalonia succeeded, on the whole, in preserving some sort of order. However, given the anticlerical hatred – to some extent understandable – the violence did reach the churches of the Catalan capital and, although they may have escaped being burnt down, they had to remain closed, and some were even desecrated.⁶⁵ In this situation the only safety for many priests lay in fleeing the country.⁶⁶

The revolutionary republican movement, with its cruel tactics of repres-

⁵⁹ Cf. J.M. CASTELLS, *Las asociaciones religiosas en la España contemporánea (1767-1965). Un estudio jurídico-administrativo*, Madrid, Ed. Taurus 1973, pp. 224-242.

⁶⁰ See the circular which the Catholic Association sent to its members, dated 4 July, 1872 (Extracts from this circular and from other printed writings can be found in ADB, *Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antigues*, folder 7).

⁶¹ Cf. *Memoria y discurso... 1878*, pp. 11-12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Cf. F. SOLDEVILA (edit.), *Un segle de vida catalana 1814-1930*, I, Barcelona, Ed. Alcides 1961, p. 385.

⁶⁶ Cf. J. BONET I BALTA, *L'Església catalana, de la Il·lustració a la Renaixença*, Barcelona, Publicacions de l'Abadía de Montserrat 1984, pp. 644-645.

sion and secularization, began to fall to pieces at the beginning of 1874, due to Pavía, the «captain general» of Madrid, and the process was completed by the end of that year, when general Martínez Campos proclaimed Alphonse XII King of Spain at Sagunto (29 December, 1874).

Despite the Restoration of 1875, the Catholic Association of Barcelona did not at once recover. The previous Central Council which had been nominated in March 1872 had the task of preparing for the renewal of its activities; it finally received fresh recognition from the civil authorities of Barcelona in the September of 1877.⁶⁷

2.2. The members before the suppression of 1873

The Catholic Association preserved unchanged the social status of its members, who came mostly from the middle classes.

The most significant groups were those that came from the bourgeois intelligentsia (the lawyers, professors, doctors and pharmacists) and those who were financiers (the bankers, industrialists, merchants, and land-owners, builders, administrators). Even those clerics who were assigned to pastoral work were not without their importance, even when they were not teachers or ecclesiastical dignitaries. There were, finally, a few members from amongst the nobility.

2.2.1. Future Salesian Cooperators

The list of members on 1 March, 1872 (the second list that was published but, so far, the oldest one that has been found),⁶⁸ shows that future Salesian Cooperators in Barcelona were members of the Association from its inception. Three important families feature there: the Serra-Chopitea family, the Martí-Codolar family and that of Pascual de Bofarull. It is interesting to note a few names.

– From the first family, José María Serra y Muñoz († 1882), a banker and merchant, the husband of Dorotea Chopitea y Villota (Calle Barra de Ferro 8,1°). His membership number was 100.

– From the second family, Luis Martí [Codolar] y Gelabert († 1915), a merchant and financier, the husband of Consuelo Pascual de Bofarull and head of the Martí-Codolar family,⁶⁹ who welcomed Don Bosco to his country

⁶⁷ The regulations of the Catholic Association of Barcelona were ratified on 7 September, 1877.

⁶⁸ *Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*, number 2. It contains the *Estatutos* (pp. 1-4) and the *Lista general de los señores asociados* (pp. 5-27).

⁶⁹ Luis Martí Gelabert, son of Joaquín Martí y Codolar and María Angeles Gelabert Jordà, obtained from the Spanish crown in 1886 the privilege of using his father's first two

home in Horta-Barcelona on 3 May, 1886, and became his great friend and cooperator (Calle Dormitorio de San Francisco 27,1°). His membership number was 60.⁷⁰

– From the third family:

- Sebastián Antón Pascual e Inglada († 1872), lawyer, politician, banker and impresario, the husband of María Asunción de Bofarull y de Plandolit, and father of Consuelo Pascual de Bofarull (the wife of Luis Martí-Codolar) and of her brothers Narciso María, Oscar, Manuel María, Sebastián and Policarpo (Calle Xuclà 19,1°). His membership number was 52.⁷¹

- Narciso María († 1902), a lawyer and a most active member of the Association. Being the brother of Consuelo Pascual de Bofarull (the wife of Luis Martí-Codolar) and married to María Jesús, a daughter of the Serra-Chopitea family, he formed a link between the three families of Pascual, Martí-Codolar and Serra-Chopitea, which provided a solid and prestigious foundation for the Salesian Cooperators in the early years. It was he who organised the Union of Salesian Cooperators in Barcelona and was «its most zealous president» until his death (Calle Nueva de San Francisco 2,2°). Membership number 32.⁷²

- Oscar († 1904) was a merchant-banker and was married to Antonia Puig y Benítez, referred to as «Donna Antonietta» by Viglietti in his chronicle (Calle Nueva de San Francisco 2,3°). Membership number 33.⁷³

- Manuel María († 1911), a lawyer and a model of the lay apostle.⁷⁴ He became president of the Catholic Association in March 1888⁷⁵ and, after the death of his brother Narciso María, also became president of the Salesian Cooperators in Barcelona (Calle Xuclà 19,1°). Membership number 38.⁷⁶

- Sebastián († 1913) and Policarpo († 1935): were sponsored by their two brothers, Narciso María and Manuel María, and entered the Association in January, 1872.⁷⁷

Sebastián had gained a degree in administrative law and married Isidra Pons y Serra, niece of the Serra-Chopitea couple, thus forming another link between the three families mentioned above (Calle Xuclà 19,1°). Membership number 165.

surnames (separated by a hyphen, Martí-Codolar) as his only proper surname. He did this to avoid confusion, because his first surname was a very common one in Catalonia.

⁷⁰ See the surname Martí-Codolar in the *index of names* of the MB.

⁷¹ Cf. V. GEBHARDT, *Necrología del Ilustrísimo Sr. Doctor D. Sebastián Antón Pascual*, Barcelona 1873, p. 47. In 1872 the author was also a member of the Catholic Association (membership number 63).

⁷² BS 26 (March 1911) 61.

⁷³ *Cronaca*, 30 April, 1886, Barcelona.

⁷⁴ Cf. E. MOREU LACRUZ, *Noticia biográfica de D. Manuel M^a Pascual y de Bofarull*, *Marqués de Pascual*, Barcelona, 1920, BS 26 (July-August, 1911) 230-232.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Actas* II, the members General Management Meeting on 25 March, 1888.

⁷⁶ Cf. BS 26 (March, 1911) 62.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Actas* I, meeting of the General Council on 12 January, 1872.

Policarpo was the youngest of the brothers Pascual. He was a landowner and engineer and an enthusiastic promoter of Christian education. He, too, was a president of the Union of Salesian Cooperators in Barcelona (Calle Xuclà 19,1°). Membership number 155.⁷⁸

The Pascual brothers, brothers-in-law to Luis Martí-Codolar, were all friends of Don Bosco: «amongst the families that showed him most affection were those of the Pascual brothers», wrote Don Eugenio Ceria.⁷⁹ The five of them appear with the Founder on a famous photograph taken in the Martí-Codolar country-house on 3 May, 1886.⁸⁰ They became devoted Cooperators.⁸¹

I must add that right from the beginning in November, 1871,⁸² an uncle of theirs had entered the Catholic Association, Policarpo de Bofarull y de Plandolit, their mother's brother. A man of property and a lover of poetry, he wrote a sonnet in honour of Don Bosco in April, 1886 (Calle Cambios Nuevos 1,1°). Membership number 147.⁸³

2.2.2. Those who later donated the summit of Mount Tibidabo

At least some of those who acquired the top of Mount Tibidabo in January 1876, and donated it to Don Bosco in 1886 (whether in person or by proxy) were already members of the Catholic Association. Delfín Artós y Mornau (a landowner living in Calle Gignás 42,1°) had a membership number 71 in 1872; Jaime Moré y Bosch (a merchant living in Calle Mercaders 32,1°) was number 106; Manuel María Pascual de Bofarull (a lawyer of Calle Xuclà 19,1°), number 38; Santiago Manuel Calafell y Calafell (a merchant of Calle de la Boquería 9,1°), number 101; and Antonio Camps y Fabrés (an industrialist of Calle Pou de San Pedro 7), number 23.⁸⁴

2.2.3. The future founders of the Salesian house in Gerona

Both Juan María de Oliveras y de Estañol, Marquis de la Quadra (a landowner of Rambla de Santa Mónica 27,2°), and two of his executors and beneficiaries, Carlos de Fontcuberta (a landowner of Rambla de los Estudios 4,1°) and Trinidad de Fontcuberta (a landowner of Calle de Montcada

⁷⁸ Cf. BS 50 (November, 1935) 351-352.

⁷⁹ MB XVIII 154.

⁸⁰ Cf. R. ALBERDI, *Don Bosco en Barcelona. Itinerario* 130-131.

⁸¹ See the surname Pascual in the *index of names* of the MB.

⁸² Cf. *Actas* I, the meeting of the General Council on 24 November, 1871. He was presented by his cousin Narciso María Pascual and by the same José Coll y Vehí.

⁸³ Cf. MB XVIII 647-648.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*, number 2. Félix Vives y Amat later entered the Association, in 1878.

20,1°), became members of the Association in January, 1872, with membership numbers of 149, 178 and 159 respectively.

The Marquis de la Quadra had been sponsored by Sebastián Antón Pascual e Inglada (see above) and by Antonio Escolano, manager of the Bank of Barcelona and a great helper of Donna Dorotea Chopitea in her charitable works.⁸⁵ In 1891, his executors donated to the Salesians a country house situated near the city of Gerona so that it could be turned into an agricultural school, dedicated to St. Isidor the Peasant.

2.2.4. *Other references*

Two further names must be mentioned to complete the list of those people who concern us in the present context.

First there is Luis María de Llauder († 1904), a lawyer, who joined the the Association of Catholics on 25 February, 1872, and promoted the cause of the schools that the Association maintained. He was owner and manager of the newspaper «Correo Catalán» from 1878, as well as the founder of a periodical, «La Hormiga de Oro» (1884). Both publications gave news of Don Bosco and of his institutions, and did so with accuracy and in affectionate terms. Some of the best Catholic Catalan writers wrote for these publications, people like Salvador Casañas, Félix Sardà y Salvany, Jaime Almera, Joaquín de Font y de Boter, Cayetano Barraquer, Víctor Gebhardt and Eduardo Vilarrasa. Luis María de Llauder personally visited Don Bosco at Sarriá on 11 April, 1886.⁸⁶

In the second place, Leandro de Mella, who had retired from the army, in 1871 joined the Catholic Association. He, too, was a Salesian Cooperator and was admirable in his work on behalf of the popular schools that the Association supported.⁸⁷

2.3. *After the revival of the activities in 1877-1878*

After more than a four-year suspension of activity (1873-1877), the Association began to function again between the end of 1877 and the beginning of 1878; not all its former members, however, re-entered its ranks. Never-

⁸⁵ He naturally cooperated with her in helping the Salesians of Sarriá. According to the rector, Don Giovanni Branda, Donna Dorotea «urged Señor Don Antonio Escolano and others who are now special cooperators of our house». Letter written to Don Giovanni Cagliero, Sarriá, 23 June, 1884 (ASC 9, *Dorotea corrispondenza*).

⁸⁶ Cf. *Cronaca*, 11 April, 1886, Barcelona.

⁸⁷ Cf. R. ALBERDI, *I primi Cooperatori salesiani a Barcellona (1882-1901)*, in: F. DESRAMAUT - M. MIDALI (edit.), *La famiglia salesiana*, Torino-Leumann 1974, p. 81 (Collana Colloqui sulla vita salesiana 5).

theless, the more fervent members soon began to enlist fresh recruits, even though there were, at times, signs of discord. This was caused both by the habitual disagreements over Spanish «integrism»⁸⁸ and by arguments over the running of the schools.⁸⁹ The Association had its share of disappointments, apathy and neglect, and in 1886 there were less than 200 members.⁹⁰

2.3.1. *The Salesian Cooperators*

The recruiting of members was due, as in the earlier period, to personal contacts, with the result that the Catholic Association continued to be composed of members of the bourgeoisie: propertied people, lawyers, doctors and intellectuals. They lived and worked, for the most part, in the more important districts of the historic city centre, but also in the Ramblas and in the key areas of the new urban developments of Barcelona. This helps one to understand the trips that Don Bosco had to make from Sarrià into the city of Barcelona.

At this point mention must be made of two persons that played an important part in relation to Don Bosco and the Salesians.

First there was Bartolomé Feliú y Pérez (1843-1918). We have on record the words in which a fellow scientist, Fructuoso Plans y Pujol, a professor of Pharmacy at Barcelona University, presented him for membership of the Catholic Association and of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul: «I have pleasure in presenting Señor Bartolomé Feliú y Pérez, professor of the University and dwelling in Calle Ausias March, Number 2, 4th floor, 2nd door, for membership of the Catholic Association».⁹¹

A few days later, on 25 November,⁹² Doctor Feliú was admitted to the

⁸⁸ Cf. *Actas* I, meetings of the General Council on the 11 and 22 February, 1883. For further clarification of this point see C. MARTÍ (who was present and made the transcription of the proceedings), *Intervenció de Salvador Casañas, bisbe d'Urgell, en el conflicte entre la «Joven-tut Catòlica» de Barcelona i el bisbe Urquinaona (1883)*, in: *Anuari 1987 de la Societat d'estudis d'Història Eclesiàstica, Moderna i Contemporània de Catalunya*, pp. 191-194.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Memoria y discurso leídos por el secretario y presidente de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona en la Junta General de Reglamento celebrada el día 20 de marzo de 1887*, Barcelona, 1887, p. 27.

⁹⁰ The president, Señor Feliú y Pérez, analysing the running of the Association in 1886-1887, complained about the «apathy» of many members in carrying out «the activities in common» and about the poor recruitment of members, apart from the «reducidos ingresos de poco más de 160 asociados» (*Ibid.*).

⁹¹ See ADB, *Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antigues. Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona* (document 8 in the file on which there is written *Papeletas de Presentación*). Concerning the personality of the man making the presentation, see J. DE FONT Y DE BOTER, *Bosquejo biográfico del Dr. D. Fructuoso Plans y Pujol*. It was read at the public session of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Society of Saints Cosmas and Damian, celebrated on the 26 June, 1890. Barcelona 1890, p. 27.

⁹² Cf. *Actas* I, sessions of the General Meeting held on 14 and 25 November, 1885.

Catholic Association, through which he got to know and admire Don Bosco's work and to assist in spreading it.

Bartolomé was born on 24 August, 1843, at Peralta in the province of Navarre and the diocese of Pamplona, the son of a confectioner, and was baptised on the same day. He gained his degree in the physical sciences when still very young, and arrived in Barcelona in 1880 to take up the chair of Physical Sciences in the university. Five years later, as already mentioned, he entered the Catholic Association through the good offices of Doctor Plans. Both professors were already members of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and sought to realise in their lives the ideal of a balanced Christian life, showing that it was possible to be a devotee of modern science and yet still live according to the values of the gospel.⁹³

Feliú entered the Catholic Association just as it was in desperate need of a new injection of life. He was elected president after only four months, on 28 March, 1886. «His exceptional qualities made it seem that his arrival was specially ordained by heaven», said the outgoing president, José Oriol Doderó, addressing the general meeting of the members.⁹⁴

As head of the Association from 1886-1888 he had the task of preparing the ceremony in honour of Don Bosco – the presentation of the medal of honorary membership and the medal of merit (15 April, 1886)⁹⁵ – as well as the commemoration of dead members on 5 March, 1888.⁹⁶ On both occasions he manifested in the clearest manner his total devotion to Don Bosco and to his enterprises. From the Salesian point of view he was an eminent cooperator, from a professional point of view he was a wise man and an educationalist whose university texts were widely used; politically speaking, he was an ardent member of the traditionalist party, in which he held various offices. Most important of all, he was an active Catholic. He died at Saragossa on 16 November, 1918.⁹⁷

From March 1886 his secretary on the General Council of the Catholic

⁹³ A few months before entering the Catholic Association, Feliú, at a meeting of the Academy of Catholic Youth of Barcelona, had commemorated the figure of the Association's councillor, Jaime Arbós y Tor, who had worked as a chemist, industrialist and impresario and who, on the death of his wife, had been ordained a priest. According to Feliú, Arbós y Tor represented an ideal of what a Catholic should be, harmonizing science and faith, together with professional creativity and deep religious sense. Cf. *Biografía del Sr. D. Jaime Arbós y Tor...*, Barcelona 1885, p. 22.

⁹⁴ *Memoria y discurso leídos por el secretario y presidente de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona, en la Junta General de Reglamento celebrada en 28 de marzo 1886*, Barcelona 1886, p. 21.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Acta de la sesión solemne celebrada en 15 de April de 1886 por la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*. The discourse of doctor Feliú is on pages 6-18.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Recuerdo de la solemne sesión necrológica celebrada por la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona, en memoria de su esclarecido miembro de honor y mérito, el Rmo. P. D. Juan Bosco fundador de la Congregación Salesiana*, Barcelona-Sarriá 1888, p. 40. The intervention of doctor Feliú is on pages 33-37.

⁹⁷ See the note regarding his death in BS 34 (January-February, 1919) 31-32.

Association was Doctor Joaquín de Font y de Boter, who had been a member since three years. He was a pharmacist, writer and translator, and lived at Ronda de San Pedro, No. 140. He met Don Bosco in 1886, both in Barcelona and in Turin.⁹⁸ He visited him during his final illness in the January of 1888.⁹⁹ When Don Bosco died, he became the best qualified spokesman for the Salesians in Barcelona. Articles that he published in the «Correo Catalán»¹⁰⁰ and the panegyric that he gave during the Mass for dead members mentioned above,¹⁰¹ are still arresting for the knowledge, love and enthusiasm which they display.

2.3.2. *The group of clerics*

Clerics always played an important part in the Catholic Association. The group was composed of the parish priests of the old, traditional churches, of professors from the seminary and a number of dignitaries from the Cathedral. In fact, the movement towards intellectual and pastoral renewal amongst the clergy was largely inspired by this Catholic Association. The following were members: in addition to José Morgades there were, for example, Jaime Almera, Cayetano Barraquer, Valentín Basart, Salvador Casañas (appointed bishop of Seo de Urgel in 1879, made cardinal in 1895 and transferred to the episcopal see of Barcelona in 1901),¹⁰² Domingo Cortés, Ildelfonso Gatell, Francisco de Asís Renau, José Torras y Bages (appointed bishop of Vic in 1899),¹⁰³ Felipe Vergés and Eduardo Vilarrasa.

Juan Masferrer was parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Belén when he joined the Association early on in its life.¹⁰⁴ It was he who, in welcoming Don Bosco to his church to celebrate Mass on 1 May, 1886, said of

⁹⁸ Cf. MB XVIII 150-152, 675. See also *Actas* II, the meeting of 7 July, 1886.

⁹⁹ «Just a few days ago», he wrote on 2 February 1888, «I had the fortune of speaking with him for the last time. He lay serenely in a humble cell and on a miserable bed, amidst the most acute pains...»: «Correo Catalán», number 3900 (Thursday, 2 February, 1888) 9.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Dom Bosco*, in «Correo Catalán», number 3900 (Thursday, 2 February, 1888) 8-10. *Turín ante el cadáver de Dom Bosco*, in «Correo Catalán», number 3908 (Thursday, 10 February, 1888) 7-9 (morning edition).

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Recuerdo de la solemne sesión necrológica* 7-26. He also had to prepare the invitations to the ceremony in honour of Don Bosco on 15 April, 1886, Cf. MB XVIII 647.

¹⁰² Because he had to leave Barcelona in order to take over his first episcopal see, he was made an honorary member of the Association. Cf. «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 2 (June 1880) 19. Casañas y Pagès had the greatest admiration for Donna Dorotea Chopitea de Serra and for all the charitable work she was engaged in. It is easily understandable, therefore, that he should have a «profound affection» for the work of the Salesians (BS 24 [January 1909] 27).

¹⁰³ He had entered the Catholic Association in February, 1872. According to the «Boletín Salesiano», he had «always a profound esteem and a fatherly affection for the Salesians» (BS 31 [April-May 1916] 55).

¹⁰⁴ His name appears on the list of members published on 1 March, 1872. His membership number was 30.

him: «We have a saint in our midst».¹⁰⁵ At that time he was a member of the Council of the Association.

Jacinto Verdaguer († 1901), the famous Catalan poet, entered the Association in March, 1878, and was considered «one of the society's leading members».¹⁰⁶ In 1882 the General Council made him an «honorary member».¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, he did not meet Don Bosco in the April-May 1886, because he was on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He was a Salesian Cooperator when he died.¹⁰⁸

Félix Sardà y Salvany († 1916), who in July 1884 wrote three fine articles entitled *La obra salesiana en Cataluña*,¹⁰⁹ and personally visited Don Bosco in the *Talleres salesianos* at Sarrià on 13 April, 1886,¹¹⁰ had been made an honorary member of the Association.¹¹¹ The Salesians always considered Dr. Sardà y Salvany as one of «their most assiduous cooperators».¹¹²

Finally, there was José Julià, parish priest of the Church of the Angels and professor in the seminary. On 30th April, 1886, in the Church of Our Lady of Belén, he spoke in front of Don Bosco at the *Salesian Conference*,¹¹³ and became a member of the Catholic Association the following year, 1887.¹¹⁴

The names that I have listed belong to some of the most illustrious members of the Barcelona clergy during the second half of the last century and their connection with the Catholic Association helps us to appreciate a most interesting aspect of the early Salesian work in Barcelona, both during the Founder's life and immediately after his death.

2.4. *Objectives, means and outlook*

Periodically the Catholic Association felt the need to clarify its own identity and to take stock of itself, in keeping with the third article of its

¹⁰⁵ Carlo Maria Viglietti adds: «Don Bosco's words ignited something in the hearts of those present and they rushed towards him, so that we had difficulty in escaping from the wave of people that invaded the sanctuary» (*Cronaca*, 1 May, 1886, Barcelona).

¹⁰⁶ Such was the view of him expressed by the General Council, according to the *Actas* I, in the session of 31 May, 1882.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Cf. BS 17 (December 1902) 336.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. «Revista Popular» 27 (3 July 1884) 10-11; 27 (10 July 1884) 20-21; 27 (17 July 1884) 36-37.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Cronaca* 13 April, 1886, Barcelona.

¹¹¹ As a proof of his merits in view of the numerous and valuable services he rendered the cause of God, as an «untiring Catholic propagandist, distinguished writer and virtuous priest» (*Actas* I, deliberations of the executive Council held on 4 April, 1883).

¹¹² The Necrology in BS 31 (March-April, 1916) 55.

¹¹³ Cf. *Cronaca*, 30 April, 1886, Barcelona.

¹¹⁴ In 1888 he was elected as a clerical member and, as such, had a seat in the Central Council.

Statutes which said: «The aim of this Association is the propagation of Catholic teaching in all fields of knowledge». The word «propagation» or «propaganda» expressed the objective which the members set themselves in everything they did.

The meaning and interpretation of this article were explained by the president, Coll y Vehí, when, on 24 March 1872, after the Association had finished its «running in» year, he spoke as follows: «Our objective is this, to proclaim our faith in Christ; to believe, love and defend the truths proposed by our holy mother the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church; to abominate and combat the errors that the Church condemns, and to manifest our clear, determined and total loyalty to the Apostolic See. *Non enim erubescio Evangelium*, that is our motto».¹¹⁵

On the same occasion, explaining the requirements for membership of the Association, he declared: «None has been, or is, excluded from membership because of his ideas or his public conduct, provided these are not contrary to the teaching of the Church. Profession of the Catholic faith, the practice of its religion and complete loyalty to the visible Head of the Church – we ask no more than that, nor can we be satisfied with less».¹¹⁶

The members saw in these words of their founder a perfect expression of the spirit that was to govern their whole lives. These, too, were the words that they kept very much in mind when, after the hiatus between 1873 and 1877, they resumed their activities.¹¹⁷

By what means did the members seek to realise this programme? The answer is provided by the fourth article of the Statutes: «Solely by:

1. The formation of a good library of Catholic writers for the instruction of its members.
2. The holding of academic sessions.
3. The founding of schools, giving preference to primary schools for artisans and their children.
4. The setting up of popular libraries and the publishing of leaflets and books».¹¹⁸

As can be seen, the objectives and methods of the Catholic Association had an intellectual, educative and propagandistic scope. It aimed to operate over quite a wide field: «Catholic societies need to extend their field of ac-

¹¹⁵ *Discurso que en la Junta General celebrada en 24 de marzo de 1872 por la disuelta Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona pronunció su primer presidente, el Sr. D. José Coll y Vehí (Q.E.P.D.)*, Barcelona 1877, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ See the printed circular of 4 January, 1878, signed by the president, José de Sans, and by the secretary, Juan Federico Muntadas y Vilardell, and sent to all members. A copy can be found in the ADB, *Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antiques. Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona*, leaflet 7, folder 3, for the year 1878.

¹¹⁸ There was no change in the lay-out of the Statutes in the various editions that appeared during the 19th century (1871, 1877, 1888, 1891).

tion into every sphere, from the speculative, religious and scientific to the social, economic and industrial. The Catholic element must infiltrate every one of these fields».¹¹⁹

After various discussions and trial attempts, the Catholic Association of Barcelona accordingly organised itself in 1881 into the following sections: literary and artistic; industrial and mercantile; propaganda; scientific; scholastic. The sections that immediately functioned most effectively were the artistic/literary and the scholastic.

In this connection one needs to remember that between March and April, 1880, the Association, following a tradition of some years earlier, had set up an elementary school (day and evening). It was located at number 45, Calle Ferlandina, and the teachers were Brothers of the Christian Schools.¹²⁰ Six year later the Association felt itself in a position to open another school and decided to instal it in Palau Fivaller, at numbers 4 and 6, Calle Lladó, in the old part of the city.¹²¹ The premises for the new school were inaugurated on 15 April, 1886, with the ceremony in honour of Don Bosco.¹²² The next year the Association itself moved into the same premises. It had already moved in 1880 from number 11, Calle Regomir, to number 22, Calle Riera de San Juan. The ceremony to mark the death of Don Bosco (5 March, 1888) took place in the house at number 4, Calle Lladó, which still exists.¹²³

From the details already given one can easily deduce the most significant features of the Catholic Association of Barcelona. Its way of acting and its underlying mentality is determined by the prevailing spirit of the Church to which it belonged, that is, the Church of the Restoration, of Pius IX (1846-1878) and of Vatican I (1869-1870). Another influence was the unpleasant experience of the Six-year Revolution of 1868-1874, with all the accompanying disputes and confrontations in the political, intellectual, social and religious fields.

2.4.1. *Loyalty to the Pope and defence of the priesthood*

The Papacy was of the highest possible importance for those Barcelona Catholics. Pius IX was «a saint and martyr». Leo XIII continued to be a

¹¹⁹ See the article entitled *Nuestro programa* and signed by M.R. y S. in the «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 6 (October, 1880) 84.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Reseña y discurso leídos por el vocal secretario 1° D. Luis Marta de Llauder y el presidente D. Francisco Romant y Puigdemolas en la Junta General de socios celebrada el 20 de marzo de 1880*, Barcelona, 1880, pp. 2-7; «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 1 (May, 1880) 11-15.

¹²¹ Cf. AJUNTAMENT DE BARCELONA, *Catàleg del Patrimoni Arquitectònic Històric-Artístic de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, Barcelona (1987), pp. 243-244.

¹²² Cf. *Cronaca*, 15 April, 1886, Barcelona: MB XVIII 647.

¹²³ Invitation to the ceremony commemorating the saint's death and the programme of the ceremony can be found in ADB, *Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antigues...*, Leaflet 7, folder 13, for the year 1888.

«Pope-King».¹²⁴ They looked forward constantly to the «liberation and independence of the "august prisoner"»,¹²⁵ and supported him by collecting money and joining in pilgrimages to Rome. One can thus understand their pleasure in being able publicly to hail Don Bosco as a friend and confidant of the Pope.

The Association also had a great respect for priests and religious who had been criticised and reviled during the revolutionary period. Don Bosco was accordingly held up as a credit to the Catholic clergy. The fact, too, that the photograph taken on 3 May, 1886, shows a Cistercian Trappist abbot, Cándido Albalat y Puigcerver from Valencia, standing on Don Bosco's right amongst friends and cooperators was probably due to more than mere chance.

2.4.2. *Catholicism and the fatherland*

Members of the Catholic Association valued religion as the foundation of their country's unity. «Our fathers [...] passed on to us the precious gift of Catholic unity as a national principle», affirmed their president, the lawyer Francisco Romani y Puigdemolas in his discourse at the end of the year 1878-1879.¹²⁶ Therefore, religious unity had to be defended if Spanish society were to be saved from disintegration; otherwise Spaniards ran the risk of losing their homeland «as the Jews had lost theirs», concluded Señor Romani.¹²⁷

We read in the *Memorie Biografiche* that when Delfín Artós offered Don Bosco the lands on the summit of Tibidabo, he asked him to raise there a sanctuary to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, «to preserve firm and unshakeable the religion [...] which our fathers gave us as a noble inheritance».¹²⁸

2.4.3. *Public profession of the Christian faith*

Those Catholics felt that they had an inescapable duty to demonstrate that religion was not dead, but alive and operative. From 1881 onwards they adopted the motto which Pope Leo XIII had given to the «Revista Católica de Barcelona», which at that time was the official mouthpiece of the Association: *Nihil timendum nisi a Deo*. If there was anything they feared and re-

¹²⁴ *Memoria y discurso leídos por el vocal secretario 1° D. Juan F. Muntadas y Vilardell y el presidente D. José de Sans... 1878*, pp. 14-15.

¹²⁵ See the circular dated 16 December, 1882 and signed by the president José María Rodríguez-Carballo: ADB, *Entitats Eclesiàstiques Antiques...*, Leaflet 7, folder 7, for the year 1882.

¹²⁶ *Reseña y discurso leídos por el vocal secretario 1° D. Luis María de Llauder y el presidente D. F. Romani y Puigdemolas en la Junta General de socios celebrada el 22 de marzo de 1879*, Barcelona 1879, p. 21.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ MB XVIII 113.

jected, it was the indifference and cowardice of those who passed for Catholics. As they wrote in their «Boletín», they could not resign themselves «to the sad role of Catholics who were ashamed of their faith».¹²⁹

This was the reason for all the ostentation, solemnity and show with which they sought to give prominence to religious functions, such as general communions, processions, pilgrimages, vigils before the Blessed Sacrament, the liturgy of Holy Week, Marian feasts and retreats. This attitude moved them to make really great sacrifices in order to demonstrate the strength of militant Catholicism through social and cultural events. This helps us, once again, to understand why they were so anxious to give public prominence to Don Bosco's stay in Barcelona, from the moment he arrived in the city right down to the moment of his departure.

2.4.4. *Antiprotestantism and antiliberalism*

It was typical of the attitude of these Barcelona Catholics that they indulged in insults against England, North America, France and Russia, countries which they saw as the source of doctrines opposed to Catholicism. Neither could they tolerate the so-called «Catholic liberals». «The *Syllabus* is our standard», said their president José de Sans (a good man)¹³⁰ in their general meeting of March, 1878. «It provides us with our religious, social and political programme. The *Syllabus* without quibble or hesitation [...] the war between the light and the darkness is to the death. No compromise is possible».¹³¹

When faced with any attempts to deviate from or dismantle the truths of the Church, José de Sans and his members unhesitatingly declared: «The immediate object of our association is the propagation of Catholic doctrine in every sphere of knowledge; our ultimate aim, therefore, is to restore the sovereignty of Jesus Christ within society».¹³²

The thinker who exercised most influence amongst the Catholic societies of Barcelona was, without doubt, Fr. Félix Sardà y Salvany (see above), the well known author of *El liberalismo es pecado* (1884). As an honoured member of the Catholic Association, his intellectual influence upon it was unquestionable.¹³³

¹²⁹ «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 2 (June, 1880) 20.

¹³⁰ He was the president of the Catholic Association (from March, 1872) when it was forced to suspend its activities on account of government decrees. After the crisis of 1873-1877 he had the hard task of reorganizing the Association and relaunching its activities. He devoted himself in a spirit of great self-sacrifice and deeply Christian zeal to the development of the schools of the Association. He died in 1884.

¹³¹ *Memoria y discurso leídos por el vocal secretario 1° D. Juan F. Muntadas y Vilardell y el presidente D. José de Sans... 1878*, p. 32.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Within the Association he was considered «an indefatigable herald of catholic propa-

2.4.5. *The union of forces for the struggle*

The vision that these militants had of the Church was frankly gloomy. They saw it «impoverished» by the repressive policy of the Spanish Government, while the clergy «lacked all prestige» owing to the anticlerical propaganda; religious orders were dissolved or repressed following the decrees of suppression, and the Church was invaded by error and the spirit of evil...¹³⁴ In the words of Señor Sans: «At this moment the struggle is fiercer than ever and extends along the entire battle line». There was only one clear solution: «Let us unite, because unity is strength».¹³⁵

2.4.6. *The promotion of culture and popular education*

All the Catholic societies agreed that both the spread of Catholic ideas and the works of charity on behalf of the poor began with the schools. Each had their own schools for ordinary folk, both for youngsters and working adults. The aim was quite deliberately propagandistic. We read in the official publication of the Association: «Protestantism has concentrated its propaganda upon children, seeking to diffuse its own maxims through schools. These schools must be opposed by Catholic schools which provide free, first-class primary-elementary and higher education. [...] This is one of the most valuable and interesting tasks to which we can devote our unwearied efforts and our resources».¹³⁶ It becomes easy to understand, therefore, the impact that was made upon the members of the Catholic Association by the Salesian school, for whose style and merits they had such frequent words of praise.

This mentality was widely shared by other groups of Barcelona Catholics. An awareness of these other groups is essential if one is to understand all that was done, said and written concerning the founder of the Salesians, both during his visit of 1886 and at the time of his death about eighteen months later (1888).

3. Other Catholic societies

Together with the Catholic Association there were other societies that had some kind of contact with Don Bosco and his work. Mention was made

ganda, an effective popular theologian, a virtuous and zealous priest...»: cf. *Memoria y discurso respectivamente leídos por el secretario y presidente de la Asociación de Católicos de esta ciudad, en la Junta General de Reglamento celebrada en 29 de marzo 1885*, Barcelona 1885, p. 7.

¹³⁴ «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 2 (May, 1880) 19-20.

¹³⁵ *Memoria y discurso...* 1878, p. 34.

¹³⁶ M.R. y S., *Nuestro programa*, in «Boletín de la Asociación de Católicos de Barcelona», number 2 (May, 1880) 34.

of these at the beginning of this study. Not only was there an affinity in thinking between these groups; there was also a certain amount of collaboration in their activities. One also needs to remember that many Catholics belonged simultaneously to several societies, male and female. Together they constituted an interconnected, socio-religious and charitable whole. They were *Catholicism* visible through action.

Since it is impossible to deal individually with even the most important of these societies, it seems best to present a general picture of them, with particular emphasis on a few special elements.¹³⁷

Amongst the associations that had most contact with Don Bosco and the Salesians there were some, like the *Catholic Association* and the *Academy of Catholic Youth* whose main aim was to provide Catholic information and education. An outline of the first has just been attempted. As for the second, the second article of its Regulations declared that «the objective of the Society» was «1. To instruct its members through the reading of religious and social studies and through the work which they undertook; 2. To promote in a special way the moral and religious instruction of the masses by both public and private teaching; 3. To publish simple booklets with a view to counteracting every kind of error and to disseminating Catholic principles».¹³⁸

Other societies were concerned more with various works of beneficence, like the *Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul*, whose chief activity was to visit the poor and needy in their homes week by week, or like the society that was originally called *The Friends of the Poor* and then, later, *The Workers Charitable Association*. This latter society aimed, as the second article of its Regulations laid down, «to improve as far as possible the lot of the workers connected with the association».¹³⁹

Other societies that had connections with the Catholic Association were the *Barcelona Philosophical and Scientific Society of St. Thomas Aquinas*, composed of clerics and lay intellectuals, and the *Medical and Pharmaceutical Society of Sts Cosmas and Damian*. This was composed of Catholic professional men and their aim was defined by the title they gave to their periodical: «El sentido católico de las ciencias médicas».¹⁴⁰ The ideals of both these

¹³⁷ Access to the documents is often very difficult, as many of the old associations no longer exist. Moreover, during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, the archives constituted a real danger to the lives of members. For example, during that sad period more than 700 members of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul were killed.

¹³⁸ *Reglamento de la Sociedad Juventud Católica de Barcelona 1870*, Barcelona 1870. In the Regulations of 1881, article 3, it was clearly stated: «The scope of this society is that of forming and instructing its members and of spreading the Catholic faith».

¹³⁹ *Reglamento de la Sociedad titulada Patronato del Obrero*, Barcelona-Sarriá, Tipografía y Librería Salesiana, 1891.

¹⁴⁰ During the decade from 1880 onwards the person who formed the firmest link between the Society of Saints Cosmas and Damian and the Catholic Association was Joaquín de Font y de Boter, who has been referred to above (1857-1916).

societies clearly approximated to those of the Catholic Association and the Academy of Catholic Youth. It becomes clear that there existed a movement amongst the Catholic intelligentsia of Barcelona that cannot be ignored. It certainly had close connections with Don Bosco, the Salesians and their foundations.

Alongside the associations of predominantly beneficent purpose were others more concerned with piety and devotions. The common denominator in these tended to be devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The main promoter of this devotion was the José Morgades y Gili that I mentioned earlier.¹⁴¹

The *Pious Union of St. Michael the Archangel* and especially *The Apostleship of Prayer* and *The Venerable Third Order of St. Francis* were examples of this type of society. The Catholic Association always promoted *The Apostleship of Prayer*, which was centred on devotion to the Sacred Heart, and many members were devout Franciscan tertiaries.¹⁴² This spiritual climate makes it easy for us to understand why they gave Don Bosco the top of Mount Tibidabo, for the precise purpose of erecting there a sanctuary in honour of the Sacred Heart.

In this undertaking – important, amongst other reasons, for the fact that that Sanctuary continues to be a splendid reality in Barcelona today – it is opportune to recall the part played by some of the members of the Conferences of St. Vincent of Paul.

The society had come to Barcelona in 1849 and spread rapidly throughout the peninsula. After seven years, in 1856, it was already possible to set up a Regional Council at Barcelona. Further development was halted when a ministerial decree of 19 October, 1868, suppressed the society and confiscated its possessions. It was only with the Restoration of 1875 that there was a return to normality. A real revival took place in the next decade (1875-1885). By 1886, for example, the Central Council for Catalonia was already based in Barcelona,¹⁴³ so that, when Don Bosco arrived there, the Conferences were flourishing. The Regional Council coordinated the activities of twenty Conferences.

This was the climate of fervour and charity in which was forged the Christian spirit of men like Bartolomé Feliú,¹⁴⁴ and with him many others of

¹⁴¹ Cf. J. BONET I BALTA, *L'Església catalana* 641-658.

¹⁴² They also made their *profession* as members in the parish church of St. Vincent de Paul in Barcelona. The same can be said of a good many members of the Academy of Catholic Youth.

¹⁴³ Cf. SOCIÉTÉ DE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, *Livre du centenaire*, I, Paris 1933, pp. 196-206.

¹⁴⁴ Doctor Feliú recalled: «Where (at the Conference of Vincent de Paul, of Barcelona) we had the opportunity of getting to know this activity (of the Conferences), grow fond of it and where we could envisage so many marvellous examples for our own»: A. LOTH, *San Vicente de Paul y su misión social... Obra traducida y anotada por B. Feliú y Pérez...*, Barcelona 1887, p. 597.

those who, in January, 1876, acquired the summit of Tibidabo: Delfín Artós, Manuel María Pascual de Bofarull and Alvaro Camín. According to Don Viglietti, who was probably using the testimony of Manuel María Pascual, they made the purchase of the land for moral and social reasons.¹⁴⁵

It was for similar religious reasons that they donated the land to Don Bosco ten years later (1886). When the Catholic Association bought the land in 1876 it had barely recovered after being suppressed by the government, so it seems reasonable to conclude that, although the purchasers were members of the Association, they probably preferred, in the circumstances, to act as members of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul.¹⁴⁶

4. Conclusions

It may be useful to conclude by pointing out certain positive features which have appeared in the course of this study and which may help us to understand better not only the personality of the Founder of the Salesians, but also the social context within which he had to operate during the years of his maturity. Concerning Don Bosco's visit to Barcelona and the beginnings of his work in the Catalan capital, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. *The Salesian Cooperators.* The preceding pages reveal clearly the provenance of the first cooperators in Barcelona. Initially it was not the cooperators who swelled the ranks of the Catholic societies but rather vice versa: it was in the societies that they had already forged a spirit of piety and missionary zeal. Once these people had got to know Don Bosco and understood his mission and the means he used, they saw their work of cooperating with the Salesians as an extension of the charitable activities that they were already engaged in as members of their associations. The spiritual and social mentality that was nourished in them by those societies made them feel fully in tune with the work Don Bosco was doing.

2. *Insertion into the local Church.* The Catholic societies and Don Bosco

¹⁴⁵ «The summit of this mountain», wrote Viglietti in 1886, «was, a few years ago, in the possession of a number of evil individuals who wanted to build there a house of ill repute or else a Protestant Church. Seven good gentlemen agreed amongst themselves to buy land...»: *Cronaca*, 3 May 1886, Barcelona. Actually the purchasers were not seven in number but twelve; but their motives seem to have been as indicated by Viglietti.

¹⁴⁶ For clarification of details concerning the story of the transfer of ownership of the summit of Tibidabo see *Copia auténtica de la escritura de venta otorgada por Don Delfín Artós y Mornau, apoderado de los señores D. Jaime Moré, D. Félix Vives, D. Manuel María Pascual y otros, ante el que fue notario de esta ciudad, D. Miguel Martín y Beya, con fecha 18 de agosto de 1888.* These and other official documents can be found in the archives of the Salesian house of Tibidabo (Barcelona).

helped each other reciprocally, the latter being sustained by the moral and material support that the former gave him in opening up new apostolic ventures. In their turn the societies were happy to enjoy the help and prestige that came from close association with such an outstanding man as the Founder of the Salesians had by then become.

In the general meeting of the Catholic Association that was held on 11 May, 1884, the newly elected president, José Oriol Dodero, proposed «the nomination of Don Bosco as an honorary member», and the proposal was passed unanimously. The outgoing president, José María Rodríguez-Carballo, added a further proposal: «that as soon as Don Bosco has accepted, the news should be published in the newspapers of this city». This was similarly approved.¹⁴⁷ The Catholic Association wanted to proclaim to the world that they had taken over the Founder of the *Talleres salesianos*. It was a question of conquest and victory.

This reciprocal relationship between the associations and Don Bosco served, amongst other things, to give the nascent Salesian work proof that it was accepted and to insert it into the life of the local Church. This was all the more true because the various Catholic organizations were usually headed by the bishop of the diocese.

3. *The first public image of Don Bosco.* The societies served another purpose of considerable importance: they acted as interpreters of Don Bosco and popularised and enhanced his public image. The associations were able to carry out this function because they had at their disposal the means of public communication.¹⁴⁸

The individuals in Barcelona who spoke and wrote about Don Bosco most effectively were a cleric, Félix Sardà y Salvany; a university professor, the physicist Bartolomé Feliú y Pérez; a pharmacist, Joaquín de Font y de Boter; and two lawyers, the brothers Narciso María and Manuel María Pascual de Bofarull. All of them, as we have shown in this study, belonged in one way or another to the Catholic associations of Barcelona.

¹⁴⁷ *Actas* I, meeting of the General Council of members on 11 May, 1884.

¹⁴⁸ The printed matter mentioned in notes 95 and 96 were, of course, distributed amongst the members. Both are amongst the oldest written references to Don Bosco and his Salesians produced in Barcelona. It has already been pointed out that the publications to which the associations had access were, for the most part, the daily «Correo Catalán» and the weeklies «La Hormiga de Oro» and «Revista Popular». The first two were managed by Luis de Llauder and the third by Félix Sardà y Salvany. All followed the line of Catholic integrism.