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Performing Catholic Masculinity in Early Twentieth-Century Spain: The International Eucharistic Congress of Madrid (1911)*

This article seeks to establish a new perspective for the understanding of Catholic masculinity by relating men's devotional practices to urban space, to the development of mass culture and politics, and to the development of modern international Catholic spiritual trends. The study of men's piety in the International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) questions the clear-cut dichotomies with which some historians still tend to approach the study of religion, gender, and modernity. Men's presence in public and urban space has traditionally been studied from the perspective of their role as citizens participating in modern types of homosocial gatherings, protests, and political meetings. This view has tended to overlook other forms of social action, particularly new forms of "devotional activism." Firmly rooted in the wider Catholic revival movement, all-male processions are an interesting example of these "reinvented" forms of institutionalized piety with which the Hierarchy and Holy See hoped to reinforce Catholicism's presence in the public and urban spheres, as well as in the masculine universe. The first part of the article explains our specific hermeneutic perspective, in particular with relation to establishing a reconsideration of religion's relationship to urban space. The second part analyses the all-male procession in the IEC of Madrid (1911).

In 1911, Madrid was host to the 22nd International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) (23 June–1 July). Like its twenty-one preceding congresses, this religious assembly marked a transcendent moment for the Catholic Church and for the host country. It encompassed a week-long celebration of Catholic faith, and was attended by a large number of delegates, including European and Latin American archbishops and prelates, representatives of the Roman Curia, members of the European nobility and of the Spanish Royal Family, and a multitude of Catholic laymen and laywomen. Given the size of

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international crowds that gathered and the extensive coverage given by the international press, it was believed that its celebration would promote — and improve — Spain’s damaged international image. Ever since the country’s notorious handling of the violent events of the “Tragic Week” in 1909,¹ the crown’s reputation was a particular concern of the Spanish king, Alfonso XIII.

The Congress opened with the solemn reception of the cardinal legate in the recently completed crypt of the city’s cathedral² and culminated with a massive eucharistic procession. The Sacred Host was processed through the streets of the capital for over four hours under a pitiless Madrilanian summer sun, an experience that put many of these pilgrims to a significant penitential, as well as physical, test. It is estimated that over eighty thousand faithful processed, making it one of the largest international gatherings ever seen in the country at the time. While its neighbour Portugal was consolidating a newly founded republic and advancing a fierce anticlerical agenda,³ Spain’s capital was brought to a complete halt as the crowds gathered in significant urban enclaves, such as the *Calle de Alcalá* or the *Plaza de Cibeles*, to march, sing, pray, and express their faith in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Yet, the protagonist of this impressive religious mass-gathering was not only the Holy Host but the European Catholic laymen who publicly and fervently honoured it because this was an all-male procession.

In the last few years, the relationship between religion and masculinity has increasingly become the subject of academic debates. In this article, I begin by critically revisiting the concepts of masculinization and feminization in relation to Catholicism and urban space before moving into an in-depth analysis of the all-male closing procession organized during the above-cited

1. The call up of Spanish troops for Morocco to protect colonial possessions set off the Tragic Week (1909, Barcelona). Public order collapsed and led to serious anticlerical activity (many churches and convents were burnt, and tombs profaned). Maura’s firm repression of the uprisings led the king to withdraw him from office, partly on the claims of the national and international harm it had inflicted on the monarchy. In 1911, several demonstrations to remember the victims took place in European cities (Paris, Lyon, Lisbon, Rome, Brussels, London, and Berlin). In particular, they commemorated radical freethinker, anarchist, and teacher Francisco Ferrer i Guàrdia (1859–1909). See, Archivo Digital Fundación Ferrer i Guardia, Registro: FG-0401. Archivo General de Palacio: 1911, Manifestación pro Ferrer en Barcelona, Política Nacional 15976/17; 1909 Semana trágica/Asunto Ferrer: C15984/31; C12421/1; 15720/6; 15601/2; 15982/9. F. García Sanz, “El caso Ferrer: imagen y relaciones internacionales de España,” *Analecta sacra tarraconensia: Revista de ciències historicoeclesiàstiques*, no. 82 (2009) (Ejemplar dedicado a: Actes de les Jornades sobre la Setmana Tràgica (1909)): 425–68.

2. When the capital of Spain was transferred from Toledo to Madrid in 1561, the seat of the Church in Spain remained in Toledo. The new capital had no cathedral. Given the implicit power struggle between Madrid and Toledo, the diocese of Madrid would only be created in the late nineteenth century (the city would gain archbishopric status in 1991). Although plans to build a cathedral in Madrid dedicated to the Virgin of the Almudena were discussed as early as the sixteenth century, the city would not have a fully completed cathedral until the end of the twentieth century. For more information on the symbolic and religious transcendence of the use of the crypt of the Cathedral-to-be; see N. Nuñez Bargueño “La ‘Reconquista de nuestro territorio cristiano’: Espacio urbano y religión en el Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Madrid, 1911,” *Itinerantes: Revista de Historia y Religión*, no. 8 (2018): 37–63.

3. On 24 May 1911, Pope Pius X issued the encyclical *Iamdudum* which condemned the anticlericalism of the new republic for its deprivation of religious civil liberties and the “incredible series of excesses and crimes” committed against the Church.

celebrations of the IEC in Madrid. I contend that this eucharistic procession is paradigmatic not only of the local (i.e., Madrilenian, Spanish) but also of the European situation at the time (Madrid's procession had followed that of London — and would be followed by that of Vienna). It also points to further developments of similar all-masculine occupations of urban space that were developed from the 1920s onwards. As such, it offers an excellent illustration of the complex relationship existing between masculinity, ritual, spirituality, and religion.

Masculinization and/or Feminization? Revisiting Central Hermeneutical Aspects of the Study of Gender and Religion within Catholicism

Strongly related to the secularization thesis, the paradigm of the feminization of religion is prevalent in the social and historical study of Christian cultures.⁴ The adequacy of such a perspective has been critically revisited in recent years. One of the proposed revisionist currents involves an exploration of the ambivalent role men — and manliness — played within late modern Christianity. In this context, the concept of “re-masculinization” seemed to emerge as a logical hermeneutic complement of that of “feminization.” Although useful (as our analysis will show), this dual notion of the relationship of religion to gender categories has limitations. Notably, researchers have pointed out the fact that concepts of masculinity and femininity are constantly being redefined by the negotiations that take place among different social groups and individuals, and namely, between the hierarchy and congregations, religious elites, and those in the subordinate and/or subaltern positions. These negotiations happen not only top-down, but more significantly, bottom-up. The variety of relations that Catholicism establishes with other faiths, as well as with secular cultures, also influences Catholic gender norms and practices. Consequently, Catholic concepts of womanhood and manhood should be carefully historicized for each particular case study so that the important dynamics of gender differentiation and construction that shape them can be fully understood (i.e., in all their due complexity).⁵

In this respect, an interesting aspect to consider is the manner in which the secular and the religious intersect to challenge binary understandings of

4. Pasture and Art find that the term feminization can refer to different interrelated phenomena in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in particular to (1) the high and increasing numbers of women participating in religious rites; (2) the growth of female religious orders, as well as the disproportional involvement of women in lay fraternities and associations; and (3) a change in piety customs, which became increasingly associated with emotion and sentimentality, aspects that were generally, although not always, associated with the feminine universe by the normative culture of that time. Parallely, the religiosity of men increasingly became perceived as a problem: they were presented as heathens, more likely than pious women to succumb to sins. P. Pasture and J. Art, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe: Beyond the Feminization Thesis* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 9–15.

5. I. Blasco Herranz, ed., *Mujeres, hombres y catolicismo en la España contemporánea. Nuevas visiones desde la historia* (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2018), 11. For a further discussion of the concept for the Spanish case see, in the same publication, “¿Re-masculinización del catolicismo? Género, religión e identidad católica masculina en España a comienzos del siglo XX,” 115–136.

gender. Too often, researchers have limited themselves to reflect upon religious gender norms — and practices — in isolation from wider secular circumstances. However, when one treats religion as “culture,” one perceives that ongoing — often tacit — interaction is often taking place between the two spheres (the secular and religious), one that simultaneously reinforces and questions current hegemonic⁶ social expectations and constructions. The existence of multiple, sometimes conflicting, ways of being a pious man and woman in different moments and geographical and social contexts supports this idea. For example, in the case of Catholic masculinity, major historical and social developments such as increased interest in sport; the rise of nationalism, totalitarianism, and communism; and the experience of civil, world, cold, and decolonial wars fundamentally influenced discourses and practices on gender and religiosity. These phenomena also created the conditions for the politicization of the faithful and for the construction of a multiplicity of ideals, including that of the Catholic gentleman; the pious soldier; the crusader or *miles Christi*; the militant — or socially engaged — Catholic; and, in the 1970s and 2010s, the religious terrorist.⁷ This reveals that gender categories, and most notably manhood, are eminently relational notions. They should be understood as constructed in confrontation not only to women but also to other men.⁸

Recent studies have shown the extent to which Catholics were encouraged to defend, and to live, religion in ways that complicated simple dichotomies. Values that were gendered feminine by the general secular culture, such as caring for others or showing humility, could be defined as both male and female by Catholic culture. *Zuavi Pontifici* (Papal *Zouaves*)⁹, for example,

6. Borrowing from A. Gramsci, Australian sociologist R. Connell defines the concept of hegemonic masculinity as the symbolic and institutional link between masculinity and authority as a structural relationship of domination both with regards to women and to other subordinate masculinities. The ideal is constructed by social elites, but it is implicitly or explicitly supported by an overwhelming majority of men (and women).

7. The experience of extreme right religious terrorism in the 70s (see e.g., for the Spanish case *Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista* and *Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey*) and its relationship to more contemporary examples of Christian violence is a field yet to be fully explored. For the Italian context, we recommend the fascinating work of G. Panvini, *Cattolici e violenza politica. L'altro album di famiglia del terrorismo italiano*, (Venezia: Marsilio, 2014).

8. For example, warnings against the implicit homoerotic quality of certain homosocial practices (friendship in particular) are a recurrent theme in Catholic manuals and handbooks for young men that were published at the beginning of the twentieth century. See, for example, M. Loyola, *The Soldier of Christ: Or, Talks Before Confirmation* (London; New York: Burns and Oates, 1904); F. X. Lasance, *The Young Man's Guide: Counsels, Reflections, and Prayers for Catholic Young Men* (Benziger Brothers, 1910); A. de Doss, *La perla de las virtudes: una exhortación al joven católico* (Friburg: 1911). F. A. Vuillermet, *Soyez des Hommes. A la conquête de la virilité* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1909). The latter enjoyed an incredible success. It appealed to a wide international audience; was translated to several languages, including Spanish; and was reprinted several times (the last version of the book was published by Broché in 2013).

9. The *Zuavi Pontifici* were a corps of Catholic volunteer soldiers who served in the pontifical army (1861–70). Their mission was to defend Pontifical States from the advancement of the Italian unification process, known as *Risorgimento*. After their dismantlement, they continued to inspire the Catholic imagery worldwide. Upon their return from Rome, some *Zouaves* formed associations which, in some countries like Canada, still exist today. Many men and children were dressed as *Zouaves* for Catholic celebrations and processions.

were portrayed by late nineteenth-century Catholicism as manly soldiers who also had a deep sense of morality and particular spiritual sensibility that would often move them to tears.¹⁰ The example of the *Zouaves* illustrates the dangers of ascribing sentimentality exclusively, and uncritically, to the feminine and/or to the religious sphere because this emphasis on sentimentalism among men was not necessarily unique trait to nineteenth-century Catholicism.¹¹ The same could be argued for other qualities, such as obedience — an important bourgeois value, prevalent in military circles, that would also be increasingly present in certain working-class political cultures. In fact, as Van Osselaer has argued, although the relationship between men and women within Belgian Catholic circles was highly dichotomous and hierarchical, and although women's and men's roles within these organizations changed substantially throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these changes cannot be qualified as a process of simple feminization or masculinization. Instead, she proposes the notion of increasing differentiation within various religious groups along the lines of membership, class, gender, practices.¹² In this sense, it is worth considering whether the simultaneous masculinization and feminization efforts could in fact be two sides of the same coin: a reaction to the ambiguous nature of gender and its complex relationship with the sacred.¹³

Exploring the Post-Secular¹⁴ City: Gender, Religion, and Urban Space in Late Modernity

From the double perspective of the feminization and secularization thesis, religion in Late Modernity has been studied as progressively transforming itself into a private matter, connected to the home and to nature. Because these two spheres (home and nature) were traditionally conceived as intrinsically related to femininity (and to spirituality), faith was understood as something not only incompatible with modern ideals of manhood but also similarly irreconcilable with developing urban and public spaces. In more recent years, however, a change in the critical appreciation of this premise has taken place as researchers have started revealing the way in which studies about the feminization of religion have tended to overlook other contemporary phenomena, such as the development of social and political Catholicism (which relied heavily on the public identity of the faithful). For example, the

10. See, T. Buerman, "Lions and Lambs at the same time! Belgian Zouave Stories and Examples of Religious Masculinity," in *Pasture & Art*, 107–120.

11. See, M. Goode, *Sentimental Masculinity and the Rise of History 1790–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

12. In, T. Van Osselaer, *The Pious Sex. Catholic Constructions of Masculinity and Femininity in Belgium, 1800–1940* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 274–78.

13. N. Núñez Bargueño, "Varón y Mujer los creó: hacia una lectura 'a contracorriente' de la Historia, el Género y la Religión," *Alcores: revista de historia contemporánea*, Número 23 (2019): 17–34.

14. Originally postulated by Habermas, the concept of the *postsecular* has raised criticism. We nevertheless find it stimulating for research. We understand *postsecularism* as the presence — or "reconfiguration" — to cite the well-known concept advanced by D. Hervieu-Léger — of religious life in contemporary cities.

development of social Catholicism took place from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and, in particular in the aftermath of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII, 1891), an encyclical written against a background of growing apprehension not only with regards to the sufferings of the working-classes or the advancement of secularizing efforts *but also* with regards to a rather widespread perception of the ongoing “feminization” of religious practices.¹⁵ The same could, in fact, be argued about Pius X encyclical *Il fermo proposito* (1905), a text which aimed at the development of Catholic Action as a means of rechristening society through the mobilization of the Catholic laity, which could also be read as implicitly marked by the desire to recapture the devotional loyalty — and activism — of Catholic men.¹⁶ Besides significantly qualifying the argument of the quantitative “feminization” of contemporary Catholicism, the study of the development of Catholic social and political *militantism* in cities also helps us critically revisit the related perception that public (and urban) space in late modernity became predominately secular.

Taking Blaschke’s argument regarding the specific male transfer of religion, from the ecclesiastical into the professional, public, and political sphere that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a starting point,¹⁷ this article analyses urban space as a factor in the development of Catholic masculinities. Our preliminary work in the study of the IEC has shown that, motivated by their faith (as well as by their political convictions), men actively engaged in worldly affairs by manifesting themselves as Christians in those spheres (public and urban) that have traditionally been associated with the inevitable process of secularization. Yet, although the recent history, culture, and politics of European cities cannot be grasped without reference to religion, the latter has often been neglected by many historians who have difficulties in associating religious dynamism with urban space in late modernity.¹⁸ Recent studies have shown, mainly from a sociological and anthropological perspective, that cities can in fact “turn out to be vibrant centres of religious innovation.”¹⁹ Cities have been approached as exemplary embodiments of secular (Late) Modernity, that is to say, as vibrant centres of rational planning and as bureaucratic, economic, and cultural nodes of power. Yet, some cities also have consolidated themselves into hubs of religious production and consumption.²⁰ Few works have addressed the

15. A. Harris, “Astonishing Scenes at the Scottish Lourdes: Masculinity, the Miraculous and Sectarian Strife at Carfin, 1922–1945,” *Innes Review* 66, no. 1 (2015): 102–129, 119–120.

16. Men’s Catholic Action regarded itself as responsible for improving men’s religiosity. It also offered laymen a way to reconcile their Christian identity with contemporary normative masculine roles. For the Belgium context, see T. Van Osselaer, “Christening Masculinity? Catholic Action and Men in Interwar Belgium,” *Gender and History* 21, no. 2 (August 2009): 380–401.

17. Pasture & Art, 18–19.

18. As Becci, Burchardt, and Casanova argue, the emergence of secular cities has never been a linear process; rather, it is accompanied by significant periods of religious revival. I. Becci, M. Burchardt, and J. Casanova, eds., *Topographies of Faith. Religion in Urban Spaces* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2013).

19. K. Knott, V. Krech, and B. Meyer “Iconic Religion in Urban Space,” *Material Religion* 12, no. 2 (2016): 123–36; See also, Becci, Burchardt, and Casanova (note 19).

20. In this sense, we recommend the work of J.O. Boudon *Paris, capitale religieuse sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2001).

multiple ways in which religious revivals have affected urban space (and vice versa). The emergence of new pastoral challenges associated with modern urbanization has been accompanied by a diversity of projects for renovation and re-Catholicization of urban space.²¹ These included the celebration of mass cultural events such as the International Eucharistic Congress, many of which involved the use of impressive ephemeral architecture — and sometimes even the development of new city infrastructures and housing.²²

In addition, as the analysis of the particular case of Madrid illustrates, there are specific relationships that connect religion to capital cities. Capitals have their own particular dynamics. Not only are they defined through specific relationships with their hinterlands, with the nation and with other capital cities abroad, but they are also inhabited by alternative, usually conflicting and competing, projects of modernization, regeneration, and national construction — and of course their corresponding masculinities.²³ These hegemonic and alternative projects were territorialized and often negotiated in the space of the capital. Finally, the simultaneous development of modern practices of “eventization”²⁴ (of culture, leisure, and religion) should be taken into account, as well as the contribution of religion to dynamics of (regional or national capital) “city-branding.”²⁵ This is precisely what the case of the IEC illustrates, that is, its power to strategically position specific religious sites and communities within the logic of international religious events and cities.

Eucharistia Tendit Ad Actum. The All-Male Closing Procession in the International Eucharistic Congress

The above-mentioned critical perspective points to the significance of all-male forms of mass piety (including massive processions, communions,

21. See, for example, O. Chatelan *L’Eglise et la ville. Le diocèse de Lyon à l’épreuve de l’urbanisation, 1954–1975*, coll. “Religions en questions” (Paris: L’Harmattan/AFSR, 2012).

22. For the IEC of Barcelona (1952), the city airport was expanded, and other urban areas such as the Pius XII square and the neighbourhood “El Congreso” of Christian funded housing were developed (both are still part of the city today). This later idea would also be pursued at the 1968 IEC of Bogota (which also involved significant urban development), while in Munich (1960) the celebration of the Congress marked the laying of a stone foundation for the construction of a “church of atonement” near the Dachau concentration camp.

23. Frédéric Gugelot, Cécile Vanderpelen-Diagre et Jean-Philippe Warren, “Introduction. Entre Athènes et Babylone,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 165 (2014): 9–29.

24. I borrow the term from Becci, Burchardt, and Casanova, 8.

25. We have extensively dealt with *eventization* dynamics in our doctoral dissertation. In particular, we analysed the symbolic construction and use of the Sagrada Família, a temple that had not received much local nor international attraction till then. The celebration of the IEC facilitated gathering funds to continue construction works, which had been interrupted by the Civil War (1936–1939). Coverage of the Congress in the media gave the first transnational symbolic notoriety to Gaudi’s temple as an emblem of the Spanish, and by extension European, postwar “reconstruction” society. In this way, the Basilic gained certain notoriety leading to its late twentieth-century consolidation as one of the city’s most popular tourist attraction (after the celebration of the Olympic Games in 1992). For more information: N. Núñez Bargaño, *Creencias, prácticas, espacios y política en la España del siglo XX: El Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Madrid (1911) y Barcelona (1952)* (Granada: Comares, 2022).

nocturnal adorations, and holy hours) developed in urban space within the context of the first 80 years of the IEC (1881–1960). These practices were aimed not only at the construction of religious identities but also towards the elaboration and consolidation of gender, spatial, and social ones. Many acts of devotion organized during the celebration of the Congress involved highly staged inscriptions of bodily and material practices in urban space. Consequently, there is a rather pervasive “performative²⁶” element common to all of them. This is particularly prominent in the case of the all-male closing procession, the devotional act with which every IEC was culminated, at least up to the 1960s. This was when closing *Statio Orbi* masses, as a true “Assembly of the World,” would begin to take place. We are particularly inspired by the way philosopher Judith Butler defined the concept of gender performance in works such as *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*. Her work reflects on the way gender has been constructed, imagined, and performed through a set of “performative acts” within the wider power structures of society. Our work extends these ideas to the study of how gender is imagined, lived, and performed in ritual and devotional acts. We consider that the constant repetition of culturally specific spiritual semantics and practices contributes to gender constructions and deconstructions, including those which are implicit or subconscious; that is, they result from the ambivalence that characterizes binary constructions of gender as well as the complex nature of religion. What is interesting in our case study is the context, namely urban and public space, because this is generally associated with the construction of secular modern cultures rather than the construction of religious identities in modernity.

Our working hypothesis is that urban and public space, as well as religious ritual and the development of mass culture and new technologies, magnified the performative aspects of Catholic masculinity within the procession and other related religious mass events such as the all-male mass nocturnal adorations (which will be the work of our next study). The revival of processions in the late nineteenth century has been interpreted as part of the Church’s desire to increase its visibility in an increasingly secularized urban setting.²⁷ The IEC all-male procession is a particular case within this wider processional phenomenon. This form of public and mass piety was aimed at staging a powerful public exhibition of Catholic manhood with which to symbolically illustrate the importance that Catholic men still had for the particular society of the time. This was

26. See, J. Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31; E. Armour and S. St. Ville, eds., *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2006); A. Hollywood, “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization,” *History of Religions* 42, no. 2 (2002): 93–115. Also see, J. Butler “Civil Religion: Secularism as Religion,” in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, 18 May 2018, <https://www.politicalconcepts.org/civil-religion-judith-butler/>

27. Nuñez Bagueño, 37–63.

particularly important given the fact that there was a widespread perception, particularly within Catholicism, that men were abandoning the church.²⁸ The hierarchy considered that it was vital to engage them because they were considered to be the “first of all the laity.”²⁹ They not only held the central positions in the church itself but also in public society (as politicians, businessmen, labourers, journalists, teachers) and in the household (as *pater-familias*). In addition, they were potential voters. As such, they can be conceived as an important implicit target of Pius X’s *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* decree (1905) with which the Holy See searched to stimulate frequent reception of Holy Communion.³⁰ The discourse pronounced by Seville’s Archbishop during the second day of the IEC of Madrid points precisely to this idea:

It is not hard to point out the responsibility of parents, teachers and journalists so that frequent communion continues to influence the social life of families and nations. ... [I]t is them who are called to lay the foundations of the great oeuvre of eucharistic restoration.³¹

The city is one of the fundamental elements of the phenomenon of the revival of eucharistic piety. In particular, Gibson has shown the way in which the development of eucharistic devotion in later nineteenth-century France is related to the taste of certain “urban spiritual elites” for the practice of holy communion.³² This change would be channelled and supported officially from Rome by Pious X’s communion decrees.

For the case of Spanish Catholicism, the context of the aftermath of the loss of the last remaining overseas possessions (Spanish–American War 1898³³) has to be taken into account. As Montero has shown, a significant change would take place in the anticlerical/clerical conflict, which would increasingly be seen as the battle to *fully* secularize society (education, urban, and public space) and not just the state.³⁴ The status of Madrid as a capital city was fundamental to this development. As pointed out in the earlier section, capitals are the nation’s vital façade; as such, they enjoy a fundamental

28. In the complaints of men’s abandonment of religion, one should see — as Pasture has pointed out, himself following Braude — the implicit work of “nostalgia for a world that never existed, a world in which men went to church and were as moved as women by what they heard,” in other words, a lament for a previous golden age of Christianity that in fact masks the upholding of a cherished a romantic idealized notion of a patriarchal past. See, Pasture & Art, 12. For an analysis of the Spanish case see I. Blasco Herranz, “Sí, los hombres se van’: discursos de género y construcción de identidades políticas en el Movimiento Católico,” in *Ayeres en discusión: temas clave de Historia Contemporánea hoy* (2008), 1–19.

29. Van Osselaer, 385.

30. Young boys would be the target of *Quam Singulari* (1910), a decree which established the recommended age for the First Communion at 7 years old.

31. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional celebrado en la villa y corte de Madrid desde el 23 de junio al 1º de Julio de 1911*, Tomo I, Crónica, (Madrid: Asilo de Huérfanos del S. C. de Jesús, 1912), 225.

32. R. Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 259.

33. For more information, see the following section.

34. F. Montero García, “Catolicismo y laicismo en la España de la Restauración (en el marco Europeo Mediterráneo),” in *Iglesia y Estado en la sociedad actual: política, cine y religión*, ed. J. M. Delgado Idarreta, R. Viguera Ruiz & J. Pérez Serrano (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2014), 59.

status in the eyes of political — and religious — elites.³⁵ Among the different Spanish cities that aspired to celebrate the IEC in 1909, Madrid was the only candidature retained by the IEC International Committee. This was mainly due to being the capital of the nation. For example, it was considered that the Royal Palace's main courtyard would be a sublime setting for the closing ceremony to take place.³⁶ In addition, as Leo XIII pointed out when praising the celebration of the National Catholic Congress of Madrid (1889), being the “capital of the monarchy,” the Congress would facilitate the stimulation of “the interest of all Spaniards”; it would also “express the feelings and wishes of the whole nation.”³⁷

One should keep this symbolic spatial significance in mind when considering the decisions taken by the IEC local committee.³⁸ One such decision involved the opposition “by a majority of votes” to the participation of women and children in the Eucharistic procession with which the Congress was usually solemnly closed.³⁹ This points to the fact that the objective of this all-male form of mass piety was not simply to reconquer public space but to also to limit the role played by Catholic women in the Congress. The latter were not systematically excluded from participating in all devotional practices organized in urban space during its celebration. For example, women were the main organizers of the mass communion of children celebrated in Madrid's main central parc “el Retiro.” But the spatial associations and the symbolic significance here are fundamentally different. Whereas men were to occupy Madrid's most significant squares and streets (Cibeles, Sol, Armería by the Royal Palace), the place given to children and women was “el Retiro,” a city park, associated with nature, and through that, with the feminine universe. Likewise, whereas men were allowed to escort the divinity (the Holy Host) in the procession, women were only involved in the logistical organization of the general (i.e., mass, group) holy communion of children; they were thus fulfilling their social and religious roles as caretakers (teachers, mothers). This indicates that the eucharistic procession was partly constructed as a reaction to a perceived inner threat: that of the Catholic woman. Catholic men were taking back their religion, publicly re-inscribing it on urban space — on the political urban centre of the nation — making renewed claims to their right to occupy that space with “virility” and piety, to cite their own wording. The hierarchy was not only favourable to this enterprise but actively engaged in promoting new forms of male piety. Men

35. See, F. Gugelot, C. Vanderpelen-Diagre, and J. P. Warren, “Introduction. Entre Athènes et Babylone. Les catholiques en quête de capitale, XIXe et XXe siècles: le cas du monde francophone,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 165 (2014): 9–29.

36. Archives historiques - Diocèse de Paris, Bulletin d'information, Congrès eucharistiques internationaux (1910), boîte 4b25.

37. *Actas del Congreso Católico de Madrid*, Carta de León XIII 1 de Enero 1889, iii–iv.

38. Although the IEC local and international committees were mixed (they included laymen, laywomen, and prelates) authority fell on the relevant members of the clergy/hierarchy that participated in them. Many of the laymen and laywomen who belonged to the committees were members of the upper classes, and specially of the nobility.

39. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, Tomo I, Crónica, Junta del Seminario del 18 de enero, 169, 188.

were not only perceived to be the pillars of the Spanish (and other) nation(s) but of the future of the Catholic Church as well.

At this point, it is important to note that the IEC all-male procession had a significant international aspect that was closely related to the consolidation of a modern Catholic transnational mass culture which exceeds the confines of the Madrilian case.⁴⁰ The same kinds of ritual occupations of urban space took place in other IEC celebrations, including those in some of the most important cities of the world such as London, Montreal, Vienna, Chicago, Sydney, Dublin, and Budapest. They all included impressive mass demonstrations of piety by men which generally took the shape of a procession or/and a nocturnal adoration, and which systematically received intense international press (and photographic) coverage. From this perspective, we should not only understand the significance of the participation of Catholic lay men in the IEC as an event with purely local (Madrilenian, Spanish) repercussions, but rather, as an act with important international relevance.

This international aspect is not only significant in terms of gender but also in terms of culture. It has often been pointed out that the origin of the IEC in France, at the end of the nineteenth century, coincided with the rise of anti-clericalism and secularization in Europe. However, it should also be noted that this period was also the age of the development of the mass spectacle for carefully staged urban (often imperial) celebrations, including the World Exhibition, the Olympic Games, and Monarchic Jubilees. These were highly politicized celebrations with which the IEC established an intentional dialogue.⁴¹ It is from this cultural perspective that one can interpret the Congress as a late modern Catholic strategy used by Rome⁴² to establish “an empire of the spirit.”⁴³ Of critical importance was the attention given to these events, and by extension to Catholicism, through networks of intense private correspondence; the international press; and later, the radio and cinematic newsreels. Being a widely publicized religious “happening,” the IEC not only helped foster the international romanization of Catholicism, it also contributed to create a transnational emotional, spiritual and political Catholic

40. See V. Viaene, “International History, Religious History, Catholic History: Perspectives for Cross-Fertilization (1830—1914),” *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2008): 578–607.

41. In the words of Marie-Marthe-Baptistine Tamisier, who was the first promoter of their celebration: “perhaps it is time to think for the study of these ideas and the development of these works at a Eucharistic Congress. Nothing is done today in the world of science, commerce, labour, industry, political and social economy, except through the celebration of such Congresses. The latter will be needed, if we are to awaken the masses, to bring them closer to Jesus Christ and to save them.” Cited in J. Vaudon, *L’Oeuvre des congrès eucharistiques, ses origines* (Paris: Bloud, 1910), 156–157. Many of the celebrations of the IEC have coincided with other secular mass gatherings, for example, the IEC of Paris (1888) with the 1889 World Exhibition; the Congress of Philadelphia (1976) was held during the celebrations of the bicentennial commemoration of American independence; and the Congress of Seville (1993) with the celebration of the fifth centenary of the “discovery” (and evangelization) of the Americas (1992).

42. It is important here to remember that the origin of the Congress is due to a Catholic lay woman. The International Permanent Committee would be based in Paris. It would only be transferred to the Vatican after World War II.

43. I borrow the term from Viaene, 599.

community.⁴⁴ It also contributed to spreading normative versions of Catholic gender roles and, in particular, to disseminating masculine modes of devotion which attempted to be more in tune with new or contemporary practices and concepts of masculinity (see our analysis of the procession below and our article from 2016 on the subject⁴⁵).

A Defeated Masculinity? Religion, War, and Cultural Decadence in Early Twentieth-Century Spain

The situation of Catholic men, in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of early twentieth century in Spain was paradoxical.⁴⁶ Whereas the notion that men were less religious than women was widespread in the religious culture of the time,⁴⁷ Catholicism — and, by extension, pious men — remained one of the fundamental pillars of the Bourbon Restoration, of the Spanish nation, and as well as of its hegemonic masculinity.⁴⁸ Catholic men occupied an increasingly ambiguous place within the social structure of the Spanish State and Catholicism itself. While, on the one hand, they benefited from the religious and social patriarchal structures of the Restoration; on the other, they also felt that their social role as leaders was increasingly being questioned not only by alternative (republican, socialist, masonic) secular models of masculinity but also by the liberal party, which was one of the so-called “dynastic” (i.e., hegemonic) parties of the Restoration. In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, they felt threatened by the growing importance that women were acquiring within Catholicism.⁴⁹

The Spanish–American War in 1898 was a turning point in this respect. Spain lost its last remaining significant overseas territories (Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico) to the United States.⁵⁰ This embarrassing and widely publicized defeat was widely interpreted as the last episode in the country’s steady decline to a marginal position in international affairs. Associated with this was the idea that the nation, and its men, were in deep

44. Of particular interest is the audiovisual reproduction of images. One of the first Congresses to be filmed was that of Chicago (1926). See *British Pathé* (accessed 10 March 2021) <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/eucharistic-congress>.

45. N. Nuñez Bargeño “A la conquista de la virilidad perdida: religión, género y espacio público en el Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Madrid,” in *¿La España invertida?: masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo XX*, ed. Nerea Aresti Esteban, Karin Peters, and Julia Brühne (Granada: Comares, 2016), 81–101.

46. We use the term “paradox” conscious of its historiographical and hermeneutic echoes to the work of Y. M. Werner, I. Blasco Herranz and J. Scott.

47. See note 29.

48. The fall of the First Spanish Republic in 1874 brought the restoration of the Bourbon royal dynasty (1875). The Bourbons remained in power until the creation of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931.

49. Nuñez Bargeño, 81–101.

50. The context of the Hispano-American war was still very much present in the memory of the Spanish nation at the time of the celebration of the IEC of Madrid.

crisis.⁵¹ When compared to other Western imperial nations such as France or Great Britain (and their men), Spain (and its men) could barely pass the test. The overall impression was that the country had become “a nation of eunuchs,”⁵² to cite the well-known phrase from intellectual Joaquín Costa. As Aresti and Charon-Deutsch have illustrated, the idea that Spain had become a decrepit nation (of men) became commonplace not only in the national and local newspapers and magazines but also in the international press. This feeling was increased by the reactivation of peripheral nationalisms (Basque and Catalan), as well as by the tensions created by the consolidation of alternative political forces (republicanism and socialism), which were actively advancing their own secular projects of cultural, national, and masculine “regeneration.”

As a result, traditional hegemonic models of masculinity, and in particular the religious identity of Spanish Catholic men, were increasingly perceived as problematic. Celibacy, abstinence, and vows of obedience had made priests easy targets for this kind of criticism in the past. Yet, the defeat of Spain in the Hispano-American conflict increased disapproval of the influence of the Church in society at large, and in particular in the domain of its influence on male character. Among other things, critics argued that Catholic laymen were embarrassingly obedient to Rome, the hierarchy, and sometimes to their Catholic wives (who were themselves controlled by the clergy through the confessional), thus, unable to properly govern the nation. The regeneration of the country (and of Spanish men) was associated in this way to the general objective of the privatization of religion and secularization of society (and urban space). It is important to remember here that local contexts interacted with wider international ones, and that despite obvious differences, this kind of debate was also taking place, often with very similar vocabulary and discourses, in other Christian and non-Christian contexts.⁵³ The ambiguous construction of King Alfonso XIII's public image as the epitome of national hegemonic masculinity reflects the Spanish situation. King Alfonso's manhood was understood as the result of a complicated desire to successfully navigate the paradoxical state of his own kingdom;

51. N. Aresti Esteban “A la nación por la masculinidad. Una mirada de género a la crisis del 98,” in *Feminidades y masculinidades: arquetipos y prácticas de género*, ed. M. Nash (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), 47–74; J. Álvarez Junco, “Oigo, Patria, tu aflicción: National decline and anticlericalism, degeneration and virility in Spanish political rhetoric around 1898,” *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies* 8 (2000): 115–124. For a closer look at how the 1898 context affected the use of gender tropes in political discourse and cartoons see, L. Charon-Deutsch “Cartoons and the politics of masculinity in the Spanish and American Press during the War of 1898,” *Prisma Social: revista de investigación social*, no. 13 (2014) (Ejemplar dedicado a: Narraciones de masculinidades): 109–148. See A. Berlis, “Celibate or married priests? Polemical gender discourse in nineteenth-century Catholicism,” in *Pasture & Art*, 57–71.

52. Joaquín Costa (1846–1911), cited by Aresti Esteban, 67.

53. Y. Werner (Ed.), *Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011). For non-Christian denominations see: M. Dekel, *The Universal Jew: Masculinity, Modernity, and the Zionist Moment* (Northwestern University Press, 2010); N. R. Davison, *Jewishness and Masculinity from the Modern to the Postmodern* (Routledge, 2010); D. Gerster and M. Krüggeler, *God's Own Gender? Masculinities in World Religions* (Ergon Verlag, 2018).

both (king and kingdom) were profoundly divided between the pervasive influence of *Ancient Regime's* cultural, social, and political codes (including religious ones) and the increasing weight of modern ones (also in terms of religion).⁵⁴ This explains the ambiguity of Catholicism within hegemonic discourses and practices of manhood. In other words, Catholic manhood in the 1900s and 1910s simultaneously occupied the hegemonic centre and the periphery of early twentieth-century Restoration culture.

Masculinity, Piety, and Urban Space in the International Eucharistic Congresses of Madrid (1911)

It is only when we take this multi-layered context into account that the urge to show oneself as a pious Catholic man in both public and urban space can be fully understood. Given the circumstances, it was fundamental to create an atmosphere in which participants would feel encouraged to perform their pious “masculinities” publicly. We see this in the way the Eucharistic Movement (along with other Catholic groups, such as the Sacred Heart League and the Apostleship of Prayer) promoted the notion that participating in Holy Communion — and professing one’s faith in public — was not merely a Catholic obligation but rather a “manly” and heroic duty.⁵⁵ In his public speech during the Congress of Madrid, the archpriest of Palencia’s cathedral highlighted the power of the Eucharist to “begotten heroes and decided apostles” which strived “to (honour) Christianity with heroic and superhuman acts.” He also encouraged the faithful to “go out into the world armed with Christian morality,” concluding that “the life of a Christian [was] a battlefield, a competition that only the best athletes [could] aspire to win.”⁵⁶ References to war and sportive cultures reflect the ways in which the secular interacted with the religious and were common to other denominations and spiritual cultures at the time.⁵⁷ For the archpriest of Palencia, it was “Christ’s honour that [was] at stake”; for this reason, “the whole world should know that Spanish men [were] at the vanguard position when this [happened].⁵⁸ . . . *Eucharistia tendit ad actum*, he who receives communion has been

54. See, M. Moreno Seco and A. Mira Abad “¿Un rey viril para una España fuerte? La masculinidad de Alfonso XIII y la Nación,” in *¿La España invertebrada?: masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo XX*, ed. Nerea Aresti Esteban, Karin Peters, Julia Brühne (Comares, 2016), 101–118.

55. From the 1870s onwards, religious behavioural handbooks and treatises addressed to young men and women were increasingly being published. They were oriented to address and clarify questions of morality, devotion, and masculinity and femininity respectively. They were a means to rouse their public engagement on behalf of the Church. See note 9 for books addressed to men in the 1910s. For post-World War I period see: F. A. Vuillermet, *Les Églises guerrières* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1919); J. Lintelo, *De Heilige Communie der Mannen (the Holy Communion of Men)* (Mechelen, 1923); B. Wöhrmüller, *Mannhaftes Christentum: Nachdenkliche Kapitel für Männer und Frauen* (1934); F. Zimmermann *Männliche Frömmigkeit* (2nd ed., Innsbruck and Vienna, 1936).

56. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, Tomo I, Crónica, 310.

57. For the English context see H. McLeod “The ‘Sportsman’ and the ‘Muscular Christian’: Rival Ideals in Nineteenth-Century England,” in *Pasture & Art*, 85–105.

58. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 343.

called, and is compelled, to fight.”⁵⁹ Although women would also be exhorted to defend their faith “heroically” during the procession, they would be asked to do so in very different terms. Whereas men would be encouraged to play an active (public and militant) part, women would be instructed to remain in the tribunes “as mothers of soldiers.”⁶⁰ Their role prior to its celebration would be to “exhort their men, husbands, sons, fathers, to participate in the procession,” and while it was taking place, to create a “tunnel of prayer” for them. In this way, women would be asked to emulate Catholic women disciples Magdalena, Marta, and María, as well as martyrs of early Christianity such as Tecla, Cecilia, and Eulalia, who remained “constant in their faith.” It is important to remember here that women were not always asked to perform a passive role within Catholic culture at the time. But the fact that the procession took place in urban space, within the context of a highly orchestrated international and mediatic event, probably contributed to this specific (and highly codified) division of religious labour and occupation of space.

Through the different acts of the Congress, men were recurrently encouraged to participate in the procession. They were repeatedly reminded of the manly courage it took to stand up for one’s religion and to publicly demonstrate one’s piety in urban space. This is particularly true if we consider the troubled local and international anticlerical context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶¹ The risk of the procession being a target of anticlerical violence was high. This had been the case during the celebration of the first National Eucharistic Congress in Valencia (1893). Press reports indicate that it could have also been the case at the IEC of Madrid.⁶² In addition, the Church’s presence in the street was legally and politically contested in many European major cities at the time. It was a context in which the right to express one’s religious convictions in urban space was deeply and violently contested. For example, in 1904 organizers of the IEC had to cancel the closing procession in Angoulême (France), and H. H. Asquith’s liberal government banned it in London (1909)⁶³ as well. Under such adverse circumstances, participating in an all-male international eucharistic procession was not simply a religious statement but a political and social one, more so if one considers that the local — Madrilian — and national governments

59. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 347.

60. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, Tomo I, Crónica, “Conferencias para señoras en la iglesia parroquial del Carmen,” 353–359.

61. The separation between Church and State in France (1905); the 1st Republic in Portugal (1911); the Tragic Week (anticlerical riots) in Barcelona (1909); and social and diplomatic conflict caused by the ongoing negotiations over the Padlock Law (1911).

62. “Bomb Causes Madrid Panic. Explodes as Eucharist Procession Passes—Sixty Hurt in Fleeing.” *New York Times*, 1 July 1911, 4.

63. In London, Catholic men did finally take to the streets, only they did not have the Holy Host with them. Priest also processioned with their garments on their arms, as a sign of protest. To better understand this European context, see: P. D’Hollander and O. Zimmer, “Beneath the ‘Culture War’: Corpus Christi Processions and Mutual Accommodation in the Second German Empire,” *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 2 (June 2010): 288–334; C. Devli, “The Eucharistic Procession of 1908: The Dilemma of the Liberal Government,” *Church History* 63, no. 3 (September 1994): 407–425.

were in republican and liberal hands, respectively, and that relations with the Holy See had been interrupted due to ongoing negotiations over the “Padlock Law.”

In this respect, it is significant that the procession brought the heart of Spain’s capital city to a full standstill for nearly four hours. Its participants consciously sought to impress the male spectator by publicly reaffirming the social and symbolic power of men of faith. A local newspaper would describe the procession in the following terms:

[T]he International and Spanish lay gentlemen sections were the most populated of the procession. They formed in an impressive phalanx that did not include a single woman, nor a prelate, denying in this way the well-known anticlerical claim: that the latter are the only support -and only force- of Catholicism. We do not dare to come up with a tentative number [*of participants*]; all we can say is that they completely occupied the whole of the Calle Mayor [*Madrid’s central Main Street*].⁶⁴

Thus, the procession had multiple objectives. On the one hand, it aimed to illustrate the “masculine” character of Catholicism to others, and in particular, the desire to explicitly challenge the idea (generalized in liberal and progressive circles) that Catholic laymen were emasculated and controlled by their submission to male clerical authority.⁶⁵ On the other hand, it communicated Catholicism’s social and political strength (each man represented a potential Catholic vote), implicitly seeking to discourage further anticlerical actions. Reports in the press seem to point out the effectiveness of this display of Catholic manhood. For example, the Republican newspaper, *El País*, expressed its disappointment at the success of the procession by denouncing liberal hypocrisy (“*¡hay tantos falsos liberales!*”⁶⁶ (“there are many fake liberals”). According to this newspaper, liberals, unlike republicans, had fallen prey to the procession’s “magic spell.” The reporter refers to some of the comments, to which he only ascribes to liberals, that he claims to have overheard while covering the event: “It is impressive. They [Catholics] have strength, they have money, they are more than us and have more power that

64. The Calle Mayor was one of the central arteries of the city of Madrid at the time. The citation comes from the Archivo General de Palacio, Alfonso XIII, Actos Culturales, caja 12419 exp. 6.

65. Clerical masculinity was itself being questioned by the hegemonic culture of the time; see, for example, R. Mínguez-Blasco, “Between Virgins and Priests: The Feminisation of Catholicism and Priestly Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain,” *Gender & History* 33, no. 1 (2021): 94–110. For an international context, see Werner. It is interesting, because the feminization of religion along with worries over manipulation of the laity by the priesthood, and over clerical masculinity (vs. lay masculinity) all pre-date the nineteenth century. In addition, they are part of ongoing controversies between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians that date as far back as the Reformation — and even the Middle Ages. Although the motive that sparks concern over these issues may vary over the centuries and particular geographies, the expression of these fears and some of the responses given to them, such as effecting a reassertion of Christian masculinity, seem to build on a common thread, or at least a common imagery and vocabulary. See, for example, J. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066–1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015)

66. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 415.

we do, Canalejas [*the liberal President of Spain at the time*] has to take this force into account.”⁶⁷

Further, the procession not only sought to convert those who had left Catholicism but to equally bolster the faith of “weaker” Catholic men.⁶⁸ To cite Bishop T. Heylen of Namur (Belgium), president of the IEC International Committee, the procession was one of the key moments when it came to inflaming “the ardour of the fervent,” as well as dispelling “the torpor of the lukewarm and the indifferent” and giving “life to the wretched souls who have ignored and abandoned the practices of their Christian duties.”⁶⁹ Many strategies were used to achieve this end, for example, impressive temporary architecture and street decorations; careful orchestrations of sound (bells, songs, prayer, silence, speeches); lighting (when the procession would take place at night); and smell (incense). These traditional practices were increasingly ramped up by technological advances, especially after the First World War and the development of mass culture, increasing the emotional and spiritual appeal of the event. In the case of Madrid, the local press on both sides of the political spectrum made reference to the effervescence provoked by the carefully staged ritual and its capacity to move spectators. The procession was “sublime” (*La Prensa*) and “solemn” (*El Nacional*), and it provoked “enthusiasm,” “rainy-eyes with tears,” “fire in everybody’s hearts,” “ecstasy” (*El Debate*); in this way, “not only the believers, but also the unbelievers could be impressed . . . surrendered completely to aesthetic emotion” (*El País*).⁷⁰

The particular interplay between religiosity, emotion, and gender that took place in the procession was meant to be educational. The development of emotional piety is one of the central characteristics of ultramontanist’s concept of piety; still, at the beginning of the twentieth century, other practices started to spread. They were inspired, among other things, by the nascent liturgical movement, to which the development of the eucharistic movement is closely related. Specific emotional qualities, such as austerity and sobriety, were linked to a particular understanding of manly affect that reflected the taste of the elites. We see this trend in the development of ritual practices, which communicated a kind of “emotional chastity”⁷¹ in the participants and were carefully oriented to provoke awe in the faithful. This latter emotion was not directly linked with the kind of overtly “sentimental” piety that was commonly associated not only with women’s devotion, but more importantly,

67. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 414.

68. Another later, though similar example, has been studied by Van Osselaer with regards to the presence of the Belgium Sacred Heart Leagues in Fascist Rome in 1925. T. Van Osselaer “Masculinity and Catholicism: The Leagues of the Sacred Heart in Belgium, 1900–1940,” *European History Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 2012): 422–43.

69. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 212.

70. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 212.

71. A parallel development would take place within the liturgical movement to which the celebration of the congress is closely related. See, for example, A. Meissner, “Against ‘Sentimental’ Piety: The Search for a New Culture of Emotions in Interwar German Catholicism,” *German History* 32, no. 3 (September 2014): 393–413.

with popular devotion whose intensity was often perceived as a destabilizing force by the all-male authorities of the church.

Another powerful message communicated by the symbolic occupation of urban space was Catholicism's potential as an integrative social and national force. The closing procession was aimed at the creation of an imposing sense of unity, harmony, and brotherhood. It is important here to remember that, for the most part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Spanish Catholics were fiercely divided with regards to the so-called *thesis* and *hypothesis*, in other words, to the desirability of establishing a dialogue with liberalism, the liberal state, and modern society.⁷² Leo XIII's encyclical *Inmortale Dei* (1885) encouraged the use of the "available legal liberal frameworks" (freedom of speech and parliamentary politics) as a legitimate way to defend religious interests. In this way, partisans of the *thesis*, who had previously spurned dialogue and defended an *integralist* reading of the *Syllabus Errorum* (Pius IX, 1864), were now encouraged to accept liberalism as a "lesser evil" that could be changed from within. With *Inter Catolicos Hispaniae* (1906), Pius X continued this approach by asking Spanish Catholics to unite in their fight and embrace the strategy of "accidentalism."⁷³

Following this trend, all-male mobilizations during the IEC were aimed at creating a crucial feeling of Catholic solidarity indispensable to sustaining an effective fight against anticlericalism. The Eucharistic devotion, as it was promoted by Rome, and the local and international hierarchy were oriented to create a sense of brotherhood among Catholics of different political and class orientations. To achieve this end, it was often presented as being "apolitical" *strictu sensu* because it did not promote a particular political force. Obviously, in practice this was never the case because in a situation in which the occupation of urban space for religious purposes was being questioned, processions automatically acquired a militant orientation, and sometimes they even turned into pseudo-demonstrations, particularly when Catholics did not hide their animosity towards liberal governments and their secularization measures.⁷⁴

The Eucharist as a sacrament was associated with an organic social and spiritual organization of society — and the Church — as a *Corpus Mysticum* (Mystical Body) in which every member had its fundamental place and was attached to the whole by the collective act of Communion. Consequently, as a symbolic

72. For an excellent illustration of this quarrel, see: S. Hibbs-Lissorgues, "La prensa católica catalana de 1868 a 1900 (II)," *Anales de literatura española*, no. 9 (1993): 85–102.

73. *Accidentalism*, as it was conceived from Leo XIII onwards, is a doctrine based on the ideological distinction between liberalism (as an ideology) and liberal regimes (as a practice). The *accidentalist* strategy of the "lesser evil" in social action and politics did not imply a simple acceptance of secular and liberal values, nor a complete renunciation of the Christian reconquest of society. Rather, it affirmed the pursuit of those same objectives by adopting a variety — including modern — of means and methods available within the framework of liberal regimes. The "congress" being a typically modern and liberal phenomenon, was adopted by Catholics as a strategy to advance their militancy. It should thus be understood as an example of this ongoing negotiation of religion and modernity.

74. J. de la Cueva Merino, "Católicos en la calle: la movilización de los católicos españoles, 1899–1923," *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, no. 3 (2000) (Ejemplar dedicado a: La religión y la política): 55–80.

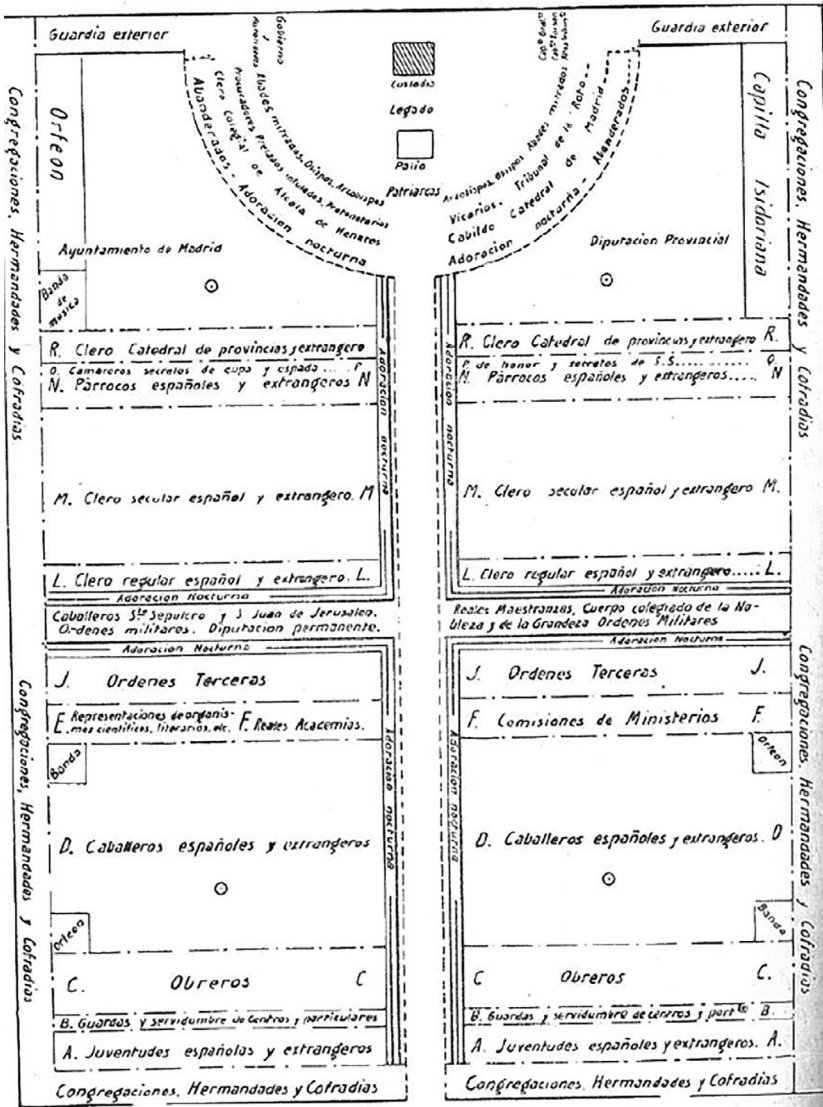


Figure 1 Guidelines for the arrival of the procession to the Plaza de la Armería, Royal Palace. From: *Actas del XXII. Congreso Eucarístico Internacional celebrado en la villa y corte de Madrid desde el 23 de junio al 1º de Julio de 1911*, Tomo I, Crónica, (Madrid: Asilo de Huérfanos del S. C. de Jesús, 1912), 433.

representation of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the procession was also conceived as peaceful fraternization of men belonging to different classes and even nations. It was therefore constructed as an antidote to class struggle as well as to national and imperial tensions. This idea of "equality" was not democratic in a

liberal or progressive sense but “organic” in a Catholic one. It was based in the strong hierarchical structure of Catholicism and consequently was symbolically expressed in the occupation of urban space. As Figure 1 illustrates, members were ranked according to their role in society. The image shows the logistical organization of the procession’s arrival to the Royal Palace courtyard, where it would be solemnly received by the king. Proximity to the altar indicates social and religious importance. Members of the hierarchy occupied the first ranks, followed by representatives of the local and national governments, the clergy, and all other laity. The latter was also placed following a hierarchical organization (from the perspective of social and religious transcendence) starting with regular members of the Nocturnal Adoration and the flourishing third orders; immediately followed by the national and international Catholic gentlemen; and then by the workers, the youth, congregations, and confraternities.

In this orderly way, the procession wished to oppose its spatial semantics to non-hegemonic symbolic occupations of urban space and other homosocial actions, such as the political “meeting,” the protest, the strike, or the first of May celebrations. These gatherings were often associated with groups, such as socialists and republicans, that were still very much on the margins of the established political culture because the latter was dominated by the “dynastic” parties (liberals and conservatives). At the same time, the procession consciously recalls other hegemonic practices and occupations of urban space, such as monarchic jubilees and military parades. In this respect, Spanish Catholicism’s early twentieth-century renewed efforts to increase its relationship to fundamental markers of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., values of nationalism, imperialism, camaraderie, and military self-control) can be interpreted as a direct reaction to the negative impact of the earlier mentioned post-1898 context of cultural and political crisis. Because certain Catholic ideals (such as abnegation) would increasingly be perceived as not fully corresponding to the new emerging dominant and alternative models of masculinity, an intensification of martial metaphors (fused with exalted notions of patriotism) would be used as a privileged framework from which to facilitate the reinvention of the public performance of men’s piety.

One can see this phenomenon permeating different aspects of ultramontanism, a movement which originated as a defensive reaction, and as such often adopted the symbolic universe of military prowess to mobilize the faithful (both women and men⁷⁵) for spiritual and political fights. Whereas the imagery used was sometimes common to both sexes, militaristic metaphors allowed Catholic men to strategically downplay what was frequently perceived as the “negative” connotations of the more sacrificial and sentimental aspects of devotion.⁷⁶ As a result, Catholic self-denial and obeisance to the

75. As explained at the beginning of this article, the Catholic Church actually developed different strategies and discourses appealing to various audiences that cannot be reduced to a simple binary opposition based upon gender distinctions considered without history and context. See T. Van Osselaer, “Une Oeuvre Essentiellement Virile’: De ‘Masculinisering’ Van De Heilig Hartdevotie in België?,” *Gender: Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 3 (2008): 33–45.

76. I. Saarinen, “Boys to manly men of God: Scottish seminarian manliness in the nineteenth century,” *The Innes Review* 65, no. 2 (November 2014): 113–27.



Figure 2 Noblemen in military uniform. From: Museo de Historia, Colección de *El Correo Español*, Madrid; XXII CONGRESO EUCARÍSTICO INTERNACIONAL, Núm. 16. - Caballeros hijosdalgos de la nobleza; J.L. Lacoste. Biblioteca Digital *memoriademadrid*: http://www.memoriademadrid.es/buscador.php?accion=VerFicha&id=34071&num_id=9&num_total=36.

hierarchy would increasingly be recoded as military-like virile self-regulation and discipline. We see this particularly in the Study Sessions of the *Iberoamerican* section of the IEC of Madrid, which included a panel in which pseudo-historical re-readings of the imperial past and military imperial glories were associated with the Eucharist as a source of bravery and power. Besides this particular rereading of the past, concerns about secularization in the armed forces were also recurrently expressed, and repeated calls to achieve the “restoration of the Christian military spirit”⁷⁷ were made by different speakers.

This movement towards the military symbolic universe is also evident in the spatial and bodily semantics of the closing procession. Men were given precise instructions by the local organization committee.⁷⁸ They were advised to march “solemnly” in uniform “phalanxes” of eight participants “exactly” one meter apart from each other. They were also advised to pay particular attention to their attire. Depending on their situation, they were asked to wear a uniform (see Figure 2); typical clothing from their regions; or elegant and gentleman-like garments (see Figure 3). In this way, the procession gave the overall impression of men dressed for all kinds of social

77. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 656.

78. *Actas del XXII Congreso Eucarístico Internacional*, 397–403.



Figure 3 Nocturnal Adoration in the closing procession (International Eucharistic Congress, Madrid). From: Museo de Historia, Colección de *El Correo Español*, Madrid; XXII CONGRESO EUCARISTICO INTERNACIONAL, Núm. 14. - La Adoración Nocturna española por la calle de Alcalá; J.L. Lacoste. Biblioteca Digital *memoriademadrid*: http://www.memoriademadrid.es/buscador.php?accion=VerFicha&id=34067&num_id=25&num_total=36.

actions.⁷⁹ There was a particular emphasis in the use of military uniform, which, as Morgan argues, absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while also suggesting a control of emotion and subordination to a larger rationality.⁸⁰ In this respect, the participation of the law enforcement forces (and in particular, of the military) not only sought to give protection (should any anticlerical violence happened to occur) but was also aimed at increasing the overall solemnity of the procession.⁸¹ The army was

79. The ability of the body and clothing to illustrate political actors was by no means a discovery of interwar totalitarianisms. For an analysis of the transcendence of clothing for the performance of gender and political identities after WW1, see J. F. Fuentes, "Shirt Movements in Interwar Europe: a Totalitarian Fashion," *Ler História*, 72 (2018), <http://journals.openedition.org/lerhistoria/3560> (accessed 10 March 2021).

80. David H. J. Morgan cited by Aresti, "The Battle to Define Spanish Manhood," in *Memory and Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War*, ed. A. Morcillo (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 151. A similar idea is expressed by M. Vincent with regards to the Falangist blue shirts in "La reafirmación de la masculinidad en la cruzada franquista," *Cuadernos de historia contemporánea*, no. 28 (2006): 142.

81. D'Hollander, "Processionner au XIXe siècle," *Sources Travaux Historiques*, n° 51–52, Processions et parcours en ville, Actes de la table ronde organisée par Histoire au Présent, 153–161.

advised to “escort” and formally “salute” the Holy Host as it passed by their positions. In addition, participants from the Third Orders were encouraged to use military-like flags and standards (see Figure 3) so as to contribute to the overall impression of gravity.

We conclude with a final thought. Our article has illustrated the way in which IEC all-male processions were conceived as occasions in which to stage a powerful public display of Catholic homosocial prowess and unity. The concluding all-male procession aimed at confirming participants’ identity as Catholic men by simultaneously setting them apart from the world of Catholic women and non-Catholic men. It achieved this end by adopting a particular emphasis on national reparation, Catholic patriotism, and military associations. This particular conjunction of the military and religious spheres foreshadowed (and probably contributed to paving the way for) the development of National Catholic practices of spatial occupation (as well as the imagery of the religious soldier, or crusader) in the 1930s and 1940s.⁸² The celebration of the IEC of Barcelona (1952) would be one of the final expressions of such masculine religious spatial practices. Temporarily revamped by early Cold War religious revival in the 1950s, this model of devotion would increasingly lose its former symbolic power — both nationally and internationally — at the end of the decade. But no doubt this is the content of another article, a future work, in which we will deal with the evolution of the multi-layered relationship existing among religion, masculinity, and urban space in the second half of the twentieth century.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

82. I. Winchester, “Soldiers for Christ and Men for Spain: The Apostolado Castrense’s Role in the Creation and Dissemination of Francoist Martial Masculinity,” *RUHM* 4, no. 8 (2015): 143–63. M. Vincent, “The Martyrs and the Saints: Masculinity and the Construction of the Francoist Crusade,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 47 (Spring 1999): 68–98; Z. Box, “Cuerpo y nación: sobre la España vertical y la imagen del hombre,” *Ayer*, no. 107 (2017): 205–228; G. Di Febo, *Ritos de guerra y victoria en la España franquista* (Bilbao: Deesclée de Brouwer, 2002).