

Catholic politics of the past. Culture war, National Catholicism, and commemorations in Spain, 1881-1908

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This article aims to analyze the politics of the past implemented by Spanish Catholics during the so-called "age of anniversaries". The promotion of Catholic commemorations in Spain was a reaction to the culture war which was waged around the role of religion in the public sphere during the Spanish Restoration (1874-1923). Historiography has tended to analyze these commemorations in the light of the political tensions that existed between factions of the Spanish right. This focus has obscured the important role that these commemorations played in the development of a Catholic reading of the past as well as in the formation of a National Catholic political culture. This essay offers a complete study of the catholic commemoration in Spain from the pioneering celebration of Calderón de la Barca in 1881 to the first centenary of the War of Independence in 1908. By doing so, this article aims to demonstrate the role played by these politics of the past in the construction of a National Catholic political culture in Spain.

Keywords: National-Catholicism; Culture War; Politics of the Past; Commemorations; Spain

During the period of the Bourbon Restoration (1874-1923), different political and cultural actors threw themselves into seeking, promoting, and celebrating significant festivals that they considered decisive for the formation of the national past (Moreno Luzón 2009). Spanish Catholics were also enticed by this commemorative fever and tried to imprint a religious meaning onto these celebrations of national history. In doing so, Catholics sought to confront their enemies in one of the spaces where one of the most intense battles of the culture war between clericals and anticlericals was being fought: the definition of Spanish national identity.

Spanish historiography has tended to underestimate the importance that these religious campaigns had. Fundamentally, some authors continued to view Catholicism as incompatible with the development of modern national identities due to its global

nature. Even when these commemorative events were explicitly presented as national ones, scholars emphasised that as such, they were only seeking to defend religion and the Ancien Régime (Junco 2005, 2006). Celebrations such as the second centenary of the death of Calderón de la Barca (1881) and the thirteenth centenary of Recarred's conversion have been the objects of interesting studies that aimed to demonstrate the political tensions that existed between factions of the Spanish right: unionists and Carlists in the commemoration of Calderón de la Barca, and Integrists and Carlists in that of Recarred (Hibbs-Lissorgues 1994; Canal 2007; Fernández Escudero 2014). The interest that these struggles have generated in the field of right wing politics has, however, obscured the important role that these commemorations played in the development of a Catholic reading of the past as well as in the formation of a National Catholic political culture.

This article therefore has a double objective. Firstly, it tries to offer for the first time a complete analysis of the diverse commemorative practices promoted by Spanish Catholic factions, from the pioneering celebration of Calderón de la Barca in 1881 to the first centenary of the War of Independence in 1908. Secondly, the article proposes the hypothesis that the rise of these politics of the past contributed to the construction of a National Catholic political culture in Spain. Before addressing these centenaries themselves, therefore, this paper begins with a discussion of the culture war in Spain in order later to analyse the formation of a National Catholic political culture and its particular reading of the national past.

An intermittent culture war in Spain

The 1870s, one of the most decisive decades in the nineteenth century, was marked by the so-called culture wars. Many European and American states began to develop legislation that neutralised Catholicism as a political force and limited its influence in

the public sphere.¹ Although the confrontation between Catholics and anticlericals on the place of the religious in politics was not new, what was new was the fact that it was articulated in a ‘mass mobilisation and societal polarisation’ embracing ‘virtually every sphere of social life: schools, universities, the press, marriage and gender relations, burial rites, associational culture, the control of public space, folk memory and the symbols of nationhood’ (Clark and Kaiser 2002, 1). The response by Catholics to this legislation was similar and essentially focussed around the papal agenda and new devotional cultures. European Catholics also adopted modern resources to mobilise: communication media, male and female lay associations, mass demonstrations, and the education of the poorest in society (Clark 2002).

In Spanish historiography, the idea of a Culture War has been used to describe the confrontations between clericals and anticlericals in the first decade of the twentieth century (Cueva Merino 2000a, 2000b and Salomon Chéliz 2002). In the Sexenio Democrático (1868-1874), however, it is already possible to observe the key features of this conflict (Louzao 2013; Ramón Solans 2015a). It was during this period that both public and private religious freedom was declared for the first time. Although the state’s obligation to uphold Catholic worship was retained, this measure was seen by Catholics as a real insult to their beliefs since it equated them with other religions and broke the principle of national confession. This measure was accompanied by other secularising decrees, such as civil matrimony and the suppression of religious orders founded after 1837 (Callahan 1989, 241; Fuente Monge 2001). The Catholics also saw the shadow of a new enemy appear, with the beginnings of proletariat organisation and the

1 In Germany, Bismark took the decision to limit the power of Catholicism in what has been called *Kulturkampf*; the new Italian state was built upon the annexation of the Papal States; in France the elite of the Third Republic openly confronted the clergy; in Belgium, the Liberals started the difficult School Wars.

introduction of Marxist and anarchist doctrines. Beyond this incipient and still limited workers' mobilisation, however, what most frightened the Church was the population's political participation through debating societies, rallies, demonstrations, and other events that 'socialised the Spanish popular classes politically, who had until then been marginalised from political society and even from civil society' (Miguel González 2007, 460-461).

Faced with these threats, Catholics mobilised all the resources they had at their disposal. As well as the press and the development of Catholic publishing, various campaigns were undertaken to gather signatures, which culminated with the famous crusade that united four million Catholics against freedom of worship and which was carried to Parliament in a cortège of coaches that crossed the city. In these and other campaigns, religious associations such as the Society of St Vincent del Paul, the congregation of Hijas de María, Milicia apostólica, and Sunday schools played a fundamental role. Societies for laypeople were also established, especially for young people and women, and the Asociación de Católicos was founded in 1868, inspired by Daniel O'Connell's legendary Irish Catholic Association. In this Catholic mobilisation the organisation of the first Carlist pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1873 stands out, to pray for France, Spain, and the Pope. Finally, another reason to consider this period as part of a culture war is the importance its memory had in the Catholic ideological rearmament during the first Restoration and, in particular, in the articulation of national histories, which like those of Menéndez Pelayo and Merry and Colón emphasised the consubstantiality between Spanish and Catholic identity. In the same way, the memory of the Sexenio Democrático would be present in the organisation of the first mass national pilgrimages to Spanish sanctuaries such as those of Pilar and Montserrat (Andrés-Gállego and Pazos 1999; Ramón Solans 2015a, 2016; Palacio Cerezales 2019).

During the Bourbon Restoration (1874-1923), a *modus vivendi* developed that facilitated relations with the Vatican, above all with Leon XIII, which recognised the legitimacy of the monarchy and defended the political independence of the clergy. Despite this more favourable climate, however, the tensions between the government and the Catholic Church did not disappear. After restoring the church budget to pre-revolutionary levels, reinforcing canonical marriage, suppressing academic freedom, and expelling the Krausist academics Gumersindo de Azcárate and Francisco Giner de los Ríos from university, the government entered into the question of religious liberty. The nation would remain Catholic although nobody would be harassed for their religious opinions so long as these were confined to the private sphere. They also authorised the establishment of the pioneering and innovative *Instituto de Libre Enseñanza* in 1876 and, later, in 1881, the return of the academics previously expelled. These decisions were extremely controversial and viewed with great hostility both by Catholics and Liberals.

The main tensions erupted during the first decade of the twentieth century, however, when the Spanish Church felt seriously confronted in a space that until that point it had considered its own: the street. Particularly important in this respect was the rise of a series of regional political groups based on popular leadership and a visceral anticlericalism, such as those of Lerroux in Barcelona and Blasco Ibáñez in Valencia (Reig 1987; Álvarez Junco 2005). The liberal governments that held power between 1901 and 1913, moreover, made timid secularising efforts that contributed to increasing this sense of persecution. The government of Sagasta proposed measures such as a reduction in the clergy budget and the inclusion of religious orders in the provisions of the association law of 1887.

Meanwhile, the anticlerical violence in the Tragic Week ‘reinforced the view of the Church as a social bastion’ and further strengthened Catholicism’s identification with the monarchy and army (Callahan 2002, 76). The brutal repression and consequent debate in the public arena, however, forced the King to dissolve Maura’s government and request Segismundo Moret to form a new liberal cabinet. The religious question returned to occupy the political agenda, above all after the ‘Padlock Law’ was passed at the end of 1910 which banned the establishment of new religious foundations for two years. This measure further heightened the Catholics’ sense of persecution and brought them to redouble their assertions for ‘rights of God’ in the public space. The era of the ‘great battles’ between Liberals and the Church ended in 1913, with the controversy over the removal of the catechism from compulsory education. From that moment, the religious conflict would enter a state of *bypass* until the Bolshevik Triennial crisis (1918-1920).

In short, during this period we encounter secularising measures, freedom of worship, attempts to separate Church from State, Catholic mobilisation, a rise in other forces that questioned the Church’s supremacy on the street, etc. The only difference is that the ‘religious question’ was not resolved in a stable legislative framework, as in France, Germany, and Belgium, but instead remained on the political agenda for a long time. Thus, in the Spanish case we witness more of an intermittent culture war, combining periods of low intensity and ideological rearmament with others of high tension and even political violence (Louzao 2013, Ramón Solans 2015a).

National Catholic political culture and history

Although the concept of National Catholicism had been used previously, its use became widespread in the context of the anti-Franco opposition in the decade from 1960 to 1970 as a factor for criticising the clergy’s political involvement during the dictatorship (Botti

2005, 3). The first to analyse this phenomenon systematically was the theologian and philosopher Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, for whom National Catholicism was the ‘dominant political theology that at least partly explains and legitimises the behaviour of the Catholic Church on the eve of and during our civil war’ (Álvarez Bolado 1976, 194). Its roots were so deep that this theological strand was used unconsciously and intuitively.

It has four main features. The first is the *National Catholic mediation* of the faith that refers to the vision of Catholicism and the nation as something consubstantial, so that ‘the Church and its traditions are the fundamental criteria for discerning what is the authentic “entity of Spain”’ (Álvarez Bolado 1976, 195-196). Its second characteristic is that of *ecclesiocracy*, which implies that the Catholic state should be subordinate at least culturally to a Church which is understood as the moral heart of the country, which entailed a type of divine totalitarianism. It is, furthermore, its anti-modern, anti-Enlightenment, and counter-revolutionary roots that attempt to modernise the country, while maintaining its national and Catholic character. Finally, a theology of reconquest attempts to excise all ideological opposition from modern cosmovisions (Álvarez Bolado 1976, 198-205).

This study, however, excessively attached to the analysis of Francoism, did not take into account two questions which are key: the origins of National Catholicism, and the use of modern elements in its structure. Both gaps were filled by the research undertaken by the Italian Hispanist Alfonso Botti in his work *Cielo y dinero* (1992). Without a very precise definition of this phenomenon, this historian entered rather into what was a working hypothesis and an interpretative approach in which this concept defined a politico-religious ideology of Spanish Catholicism whose genealogy could be

traced back to the War of Independence, and which began to unfold from the end of the nineteenth century and retained its influence until the 1970s (Botti 1992, 17).

For Alfonso Botti, within this movement mediocrity prevailed, the absence of originality and of ideologues with a dichotomous view of the history of Spain in contrast with those who were presented as heterodox. According to this author, despite its commonness, National Catholicism was not an archaising and anti-modern ideology, but rather one that tried to incorporate those elements of modernity that it considered compatible with its ideology (Botti 1992, 18-20). Although his work essentially centres on journal articles and works by the most important National Catholic authors, his analytical approach is more ambitious because he understands it as:

an elastic ideology, complex and enduring. Its scope included values, references, symbols, myths, historical interpretations, feelings of identity and belonging, economic and political objectives; little to make it a coherent system of thought; considerably more than necessary to qualify it as a state of mind, yet with the adjective of ideology (Botti 1992, 141).

There remained, however, the need to offer a more concrete definition of what National Catholicism was. In his study of Francoist Nationalisms *España contra España* (2003), Ismael Saz distinguished two large anti-liberal political cultures in Spain, a Fascist one and a National Catholic one understood as a discourse that is

conscious and explicitly reactionary and counter-revolutionary [which] starts from the assumption of the consubstantiality of the Spanish and the Catholic, makes the elimination of the non-Catholic – the *anti-Spain* – the heart of its nationalising project, accepts capitalist modernity, and proposes a return to the systems of values and institutions that existed before the liberal revolution: Church, Monarchy, bodies and regions (Saz 2003, 53).

Although *España contra España* does not use the concept of political culture to refer either to National Catholicism or to Fascism, this book can be said to make an

‘implicit contribution’ to its study. In fact, in successive articles, Saz included this concept to the point of asserting that National Catholicism is a transversal political culture that crosses the Spanish right, from traditionalism to CEDA, via Renovación Española, and part of Falange. He also raises the necessity of addressing the study of political practices, sociability, and symbolic elements (Saz 2008, 227-228).

National Catholicism constituted the unifying factor among the Spanish right, supplying a symbolic, ritual and discursive framework in which to insert and explain its various different propositions. It should be noted, however, that this political culture excluded the more secularising components of Spanish fascism, such as the Nationalist Catholic right from the Basque Country and with some nuances from Catalonia (Saz 2003; Canales Serrano 2006). It should, moreover, be borne in mind that the channels of distribution of National Catholicism are infinitely wider than the ideological ones since in reality they enjoy a parastatal structure capable of organising even as far as the most obscure Spanish population: the Catholic Church. Ultimately, National Catholicism transcends the political sphere, benefitting from the heteronomic character of religion to derive its legitimacy from a higher authority and become a system that encompasses and controls all aspects of the nation’s life.

National Catholicism can therefore be understood as a monarchical political culture, anti-liberal, anti-communist, anti-individualist, and profoundly authoritarian and militaristic. This project was nourished by the fertile cultural substrate of a Catholic worldview strongly rooted in the community, using religious symbols with a strong emotive association; highly mobilising discourses such as those of martyrs or crusades; liturgies that sanctified this political culture; religious myths and interpretations about the past; and renowned sacred spaces for these ceremonies.

The National Catholic project began to take shape in the middle of the nineteenth century with the loss of the representativeness of Carlism in the Catholic space, the progressive abandonment of its confessional character by a section of Spanish liberalism, as well as with a series of changes in European Catholicism. Its birth and later evolution were nevertheless related to events that are considered critical, such as the Sexenio Democrático, the loss of the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico in 1898, the Bolshevik Triennial crisis (1918-1920), and the emergence of the Second Republic. Its theoretical references are very rich and varied, stretching from the first counter-revolutionaries like Joseph de Maistre to the Regenerationists, via Balmes and Donoso. Above all, however, the figure of Menéndez Pelayo stands out, a man who was capable of distilling a century of Spanish counter-revolution in his three volumes on the *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (1880-1882). In this book is embedded the exclusive nature of National Catholicism, for which nothing less than the elimination or extirpation of that which was considered anti-Spain would suffice, abandoning any desire for integration of the country.

This is also a modern political culture, as long as it was the values and principles of Catholicism that governed that modernity. In fact, as well as increasingly accepting capitalism, National Catholicism made intensive use of the new media of organisation and mobilisation of the masses. Likewise, in a third way between liberalism and communism, it advocated a corporate vision founded upon an idea of social harmony of clearly conservative stamp that banished any type of understanding of the conflict of the classes. On the other hand, within that political culture, the incorporation of a vision of the regional as part of the Catholic nation should be emphasised. In fact, National Catholicism accepted that variety as long as it did not involve the rupture or

compromise of the unity of Spain, which became the basis of the split from the Basque and Catalan nationalist right wings.

Finally, National Catholicism possessed a potent reading of the providential nature of the history of Spain which between crises and restorations bore it through the centuries through the imagery of the Reconquest and the Empire. This confessional reading of the national past was structured between the middle of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the Restoration, affirming the indissoluble union between Catholicism and Spanish identity (Boyd 2000, 98; Pellistrandi 2002). After its refounding with the arrival of the moderates in 1844 and above all following its rapprochement with the Catholic Church in the 1850s, the Real Academia de la Historia contributed to creating a Catholic providential reading of the Spanish nation. Fundamentally, those studies were centred on the period of the Reconquest, to demonstrate how:

Spain is also a Catholic civilisation. Lost to herself when the Muslims invaded, she continued to exist as resistance and Reconquest. The academic rhetoric frequently associates Covadonga and Granada in the same paragraph: this elegant manoeuvre created the legend of the Reconquest as a continuous and coherent action, the fruit of a teleological reading of history which situated in the heroic action of Pelagius of Asturias the inevitable victory of Isabel and Fernando. The Spain of this discourse identified itself fully with the cross that was raised over the walls of the Alhambra and the corresponding one Christopher Columbus planted on the Island of Hispaniola (Pellistrandi 2004, 325-326).

This interpretation of Spanish history was not limited to the most conservative sections of society, but was in fact shared by large sections of Spanish liberalism from the middle of the nineteenth century. Modesto Lafuente, the epitome of liberal historiography, drew on Divine Providence to explain how the national soul of Spain

came into existence (Pérez Garzón 2001). In his *Historia General de España* (1850-1867), Catholicism was the cement that had bound Spain together and had endowed it with the spirit of resistance against the invader:

Faith is what had encouraged those few Spaniards to undertake that selfless crusade against the sectarians of Islam, which began in Covadonga. This is what joins the fallen society to the nascent society. This is what connects the ages and the beginnings. The conversion of Constantine to the Christian faith was the link that united the old Roman society with the new societies formed by the northern races. The conversion of Recarred to Catholicism was the link that united Gothic Spain with independent Spain (...) Thus Spain will go on taking from each domination and from each age the bases that will gradually perfect its organisation (Lafuente 1888: XXVII).

It is interesting to observe how Catholic clergy and intellectuals prepared diverse histories of the Catholic Church in Spain that reinforced this confessional interpretation of the past and shaped a mythical narrative of the Catholic origins of the Spanish nation (Ramón Solans 2015b). The Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Vicente de la Fuente thus used in his *Historia eclesiástica de España, o adiciones a la Historia General de la Iglesia* (1855-1859) the myth of Tubal – a Biblical character who had supposedly populated Spain after the fall of the Tower of Babel (Juaristi 1992, 18-25) – to argue the native population's predisposition to receive Christianity from the Apostles Paul and James. Vicente de la Fuente made the preservation of traditions a national issue and therefore those who questioned them immediately became foreigners:

The Spanish nation has, so to speak, made Saint James' preaching in our country a question of national decency, stressing it more and more, and so the effort to combat it has grown accordingly. This tradition had always been here, national, constant, and unanimous; and if something is worth tradition among Catholics, respectable should it be that draws upon the unanimous sentiment of a great nation that has been Catholic from the earliest times, a nation that rests its tradition upon an immemorial religious cult, in the irrefutable witness of foreign men from the

fourth century onwards, and in the steadfast opinion of national and foreign sages, until it was put in doubt by a ridiculously apocryphal document, whose admission gives very little honour to the judgement of those who have founded their invectives in it (La Fuente 1855, 34).

The objective of these works is to historicise tradition and make it credible for a society influenced by new criteria for truth. For example, in his *Historia de la Iglesia de España* (1856), the Catalan Franciscan Ramón Buldú thus demonstrates his intention of prefixing his opinion with ‘the evidence of the facts’, although he also recognises the problem of the absence of sources for early Christianity in Spain ‘except for certain traditions about the subject which have been preserved and are preserved’. Given these gaps, therefore, ‘we should not be afraid to use the few documents available to us advantageously’. Once again, as in the work by Vicente de la Fuente, Buldú (1856, 19) indicates that these traditions had enjoyed general acceptance ‘until some foreigners, for whom the glories of our country sit badly, dared to contradict them’.

After the revolutionary period of the Sexenio Democrático, history was summoned to confront secularist ideals, French rationalism, and Krausism. In this way, the religious nature of Spanish identity was emphasised even more, nationalising the Catholic faith and at the same time Catholicising the nation (Boyd 2000, 98; Pellistrandi 2002). This process was accompanied by a commemorative fever which, as we will see, also proclaimed a vision of the national past as Catholic from Integrist and conservative factions. To legitimise their positions, traditionalist Catholics invoked essentialist arguments,

appealing to a higher historical truth discernible beneath “the accidents” of history. Not all history was historically “true”; some historical events or even whole epochs might be factually verifiable but might nonetheless be “false” to the spirit or legitimate historical trajectory of the nation. The epistemological foundation of

historical knowledge of this kind was metaphysical and intuitive, rather than empirical (Boyd 2000, 100)

Against the backdrop of the first Restoration, one of the classics of the National Catholic political culture made its appearance, the abovementioned *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (1880-1882) by Menéndez Pelayo. The work posed a challenge to Integrist historiography as it reinforced and strengthened many of its myths (Boyd 2000, 101). The book's principle innovation is that it organised and structured traditionalist thought to offer a narrative that globally refuted the liberal progressive view of history according to which the influence of Catholicism had impeded the development of Spanish science, thereby causing its decline (González Cuevas 2000, 170-175). Its importance was rooted in its provision of a clear and coherent blueprint to the National Catholic political culture based upon two elements that would become key in all the counter-revolutionary melting-pots: Catholicism, and a negative definition of those who were communal enemies.

In *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, furthermore, the national being is defined as a unity deeper than that of language or race: 'the unity of beliefs', founded in Catholicism since 'because of it we are a nation, and a great nation, rather than multitudes of raw recruits, born to be the spoils of the stubborn waywardness of any covetous neighbour' (Menéndez Pelayo 1978, 656-657). In one of the most famous passages in this work, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo emphasises that there is only one possible definition of the motherland, that

Spain, evangelist of half the Earth; Spain, hammer of heretics, light of Trent, sword of Rome, cradle of Saint Ignatius...; this is our greatness and our unity; we have no other. The day we lose that, Spain will return to the Cantonalism of the Arevaci and of the Vaccae and the kings of Taifas (Menéndez Pelayo 1978, 658).

The introduction of foreign ideas, as well as anything that may lead to the rupture of Catholic unity, was therefore claimed to be the origin of Spanish decline. This decline had been compounded after “two centuries of incessant and systematic work to produce revolution artificially, here where it could never be organic, [which] have managed not to renew the national way of being, but instead to vitiate, bewilder, and pervert it” (Menéndez Pelayo 1978, 658).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the National Catholic vision of the world began to be articulated around a certain reading of the past and a negative definition of the entity of Spain. This dichotomous and providential reading of the national reality was structured around the bases of corruption, decline, and regeneration. These grand Catholic interpretations of the national past were disseminated, furthermore, in every kind of space, from schools to churches, via every kind of civic-religious ceremony that exulted in the union between nation and religion in Spain. For example, in one of the most widely distributed textbooks in Spanish schools, the *Compendio de Historia de España* (1889) by the Catholic historian Manuel Merry y Colón and his son Antonio Merry y Villaba, it was explained in the introduction that the aim of the book was

to present and demonstrate that in Catholic Unity is discovered the foundations of our magnificence of past centuries (...) And since History teaches us truth, as our distinguished Cervantes tells us, we have turned to it to defend the deeply violated interests of Catholic Spain, contrasting our modest but well-founded account with those of other foreign and even national authors (Merry y Colón and Merry y Villaba 1889, 7).

Catholicism and commemorative practices in Spain

Observance of centenaries began and developed in Spain during the first period of the Restoration. In the decade between the centenary of Calderón de la Barca (1881) and the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America (1892), many commemorations were

organised that extolled various moments and people who were considered central to the history of Spain. With the memory of the *Sexenio Democrático* alive, and in a mood that was inclined to be rather more understanding of the political authorities, Catholics found themselves not only infected with this commemorative fever but also trying to appropriate it. Accordingly, both in Spain as in the rest of the Catholic world, the possessive 'our' was often used to speak of the people commemorated (Hibbs-Lissorgues 1994). Despite the alternative interpretations that could be made of people and life stories as multifaceted as Christopher Columbus and Joan of Arc, Leon XIII and Archbishop of Aix, François Xavier Gouthe-Soulard, the world was thus reminded that these people were 'ours', that they belonged to Catholicism (quoted in Winock 1997, 4446).

The celebration of the Second Centenary of the death of Calderón de la Barca in 1881 inaugurated the era of commemorations in Spain. The festivities were marked by tensions that the rise of the Unión Católica had created in the heart of political Catholicism, since the party, launched by Alejandro Pidal, had received the approval of the episcopate and of Leon XIII. The arrival of this new political option was not received well by Carlist and Integrist factions, since they saw in it a legitimation by the Catholic Church of the new regime and of conservative-liberal principles. At the heart of political Catholicism, the centenary thus created some friction between the two factions, and attempts by the Integrists and Possibilists to appropriate the celebration (Hibbs-Lissorgues 1994).

Beyond these tensions, however, the centenary was marked by the elevation for the first time of the progressive Sagasta to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in February 1881 as part of the establishment of the rotating system. Sagasta and the progressive factions tried to convert Calderón into a symbol of reconciliation, and praise

his more secular aspects. The complexion of the celebrations meant that Unionists and Integrists both praised the purely Catholic aspect of the poet of the Inquisition. The famous toast by the young and promising Catholic intellectual Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo in the Retiro should be placed in this context. Enticed by both Integrism and Unionism, the Spanish polymath reclaimed Calderón de la Barca as a Catholic, royalist, and Spanish poet in the face of the secular interpretations that were being made by progressives. In fact, his toast ended with a condemnation of this interpretation: ‘I firmly state and declare that I will not observe this centenary with its semi-pagan festival, informed by principles that I abhor and that would so little have pleased such a Christian poet as Calderón, could he but see it’ (as quoted in Gago y Fernández 1881, 397).

For the third centenary of the death of Saint Teresa on the 4th October 1882, Integrist factions seized the initiative with the organisation of a pilgrimage to Rome, with the aim of demonstrating their loyalty to the pope in the name of the Spanish mystic. On 8th December 1881, the Nocedal brothers asked the Pope to support this pilgrimage and to allow the organisation of diocesan councils presided over by their respective prelates. The pilgrimage was intended as an act of atonement for the attack upon the remains of Pius IX in his funeral cortege on 13th July 1881. This pilgrimage was likewise associated with another that had been organised in 1876 to prostrate themselves before the feet of Pius IX on the Feast of St Teresa. In doing so, they were trying to present themselves as the most faithful representatives and strongest defenders of the Holy See in Spain. Leon XIII acceded to the wishes of the Nocedal brothers and gave them his Apostolic Blessing for a pilgrimage, although he cautioned that it should have a ‘pure and exclusively Catholic character’ and should seek ‘to offer solemn proof of faith and loyalty to the Apostolic See’ (*El Siglo Futuro*, January 7, 1882).

The Integrists established the main councils in Madrid and Barcelona with a majority of Carlists and Integrists, and only afterwards invited the prelates to join. This obviously generated unease among a significant proportion of the Spanish episcopate, which protested against what they considered a partisan and exclusive act. They particularly condemned the collective letter of the Catalan prelates as well as meddling from the press and lay people in religious matters. The Integrist press endorsed the accusations made by the episcopate and indicated that only true Catholics – that is, Integrists – could join the pilgrimage, and attacks were launched upon ‘Transactionist’ prelates and Catholics. Cándido Nocedal himself told the Vatican that he refused to accept non-Carlist Catholic organisations on the pilgrimage. Eventually, the Holy See decided to transform the national pilgrimage into a series of regional ones spearheaded by the various Spanish dioceses. At the end of the year, Leon XIII published the encyclical *Cum multa* (1882) in which he admonished Carlist and Integrist factions for attempting to be the only voice of Catholicism and for the lack of respect they had shown the bishops.

Once again, the tensions that existed in the Catholic camp should not blind us to the fact that the centenary of St Teresa was a relative success and served to articulate a Catholic memory of the national past. Various tributes were made to St Teresa throughout the Spanish world, including the Philippines and Cuba, but the majority of the events were concentrated in Alba de Tormes, where the tomb of St Teresa is located, and the diocese to which it belongs, Salamanca. The Bishop of Salamanca, where the town of Alba de Tormes is located, along with the Archbishop of Toledo, agreed to establish centenary commissions in Madrid and Salamanca in order to organise a pilgrimage to Alba de Tormes (*La Ilustración española y americana*, October 15, 1881). Alongside the Brotherhood of St Teresa, they also organised a literary

competition for praising the religious virtues of the Castilian saint (*La Ilustración española y americana*, July 22, 1881). On the occasion of the pilgrimage to Alba de Tormes, the Catholic historian Vicente de la Fuente prepared a kind of guide to the sites of national remembrance of St Teresa so that those who could not go could know first-hand the influence of the Castilian mystic in their places of origin (La Fuente 1882).

The pastoral from the Bishop of Salamanca, Narciso Martínez Izquierdo, offers a good example of the importance that commemorative practices were accruing within the Catholic Church as well as the differences that existed with other contemporary politics of the past. The fact that the centenary was dedicated to a saint ‘suffices for it to differ [...] from those that are dedicated to the heroes of the century as far as the Earth is from the Heavens’. He again indicated that pagan celebration of the saint was not possible, given that

If she brings honour to the motherland, it is because she was a saint, and if the Motherland wishes to honour her, it should be through the Church, to whom the saints belong, because in her breast they were formed. Saint Teresa is by herself capable of commemorating the existence of the Spanish Nation with glory forever; but if Spain, God forbid, were to stop being Catholic, Saint Teresa would be the glory of a nation that had passed. No more incomparable disgrace could befall Spain. The possession of so powerful a Saint who manifestly protects her is a strong assurance for her. The fear alone of losing the right to utter the name of Saint Teresa of Jesus would be highly effective in keeping a Spaniard in his beliefs (quoted in Carbonero y Sol 1882, 6).

The prelate also reminded people, however, that celebrating ‘men who honour the history of a nation is not an unequivocal sign of progress in itself; in the past it was often the case that nations that see themselves diminished and powerless to produce new glories revive the old ones’ (quoted in Carbonero y Sol 1882, 6). The prelate therefore proposed that the commemoration should not be limited to recalling those heroes but

instead that it should become an incentive to emulate their lives and recover the country's lost glories.

Paying homage in Valencia for Catholic youth, the school teacher and prominent Valencian Carlist leader, Manuel Polo y Peyrolón, positioned St Teresa as the greatest glory of the golden age of 'Catholic Spain' and indicated along the same lines as the Salamanacan prelate that it was only possible to praise her by recognising her sanctity and connection with Catholicism:

She is praised by those who deny sanctity and miracles, forgetting that Teresa did and does not a few of the latter and is venerated at altars as a distinguished saint; and she is praised by those who ridicule the writings that are untainted and devoted to the old customs, forgetting that Teresa is mistress of holy words and things; and she is praised by... but why exhaust myself? She is praised by all (a great triumph for the Catholic Church!) (Polo y Peyrolón 1882, 18).

In 1889, two centenaries coincided with two contrasting meanings: the French Revolution and the conversion of King Recarred to Catholicism. For Spanish Catholicism, the second celebration became a counter-commemoration that redeemed the nation's Catholic essence in the face of the exaltation of the evils of the century. In the Integrist *La Revista Popular*, Félix Sardá y Salvany thus contrasted the commemorations of the two countries: 'Today Providence places these two Centenaries face to face, a representation of two ideas and two flags, whose ultimate victory still constitutes the crux of the challenge today' (*El Siglo Futuro*, January 14, 1889). Carlos VII in turn in his manifesto 'To my faithful' on 10th July 1888 warned that approaching was 'the anniversary of two famous events: the conversion of Recarred and the establishment of Catholic unity in Spain, and the French Revolution'; one was 'Catholic affirmation' and the other 'its denial' (quoted in Canal 2007, 249-250). Both Integrist and Carlist historiography 'located the origins of the Spanish nation in the conversion of

the Visigothic King Recarred to Catholicism in 589 AD, which initiated both the Catholic unity of the nation and the historic alliance of throne and altar' (Boyd 2000, 100).

As occurred in the two previous commemorations, the eighteenth centenary of the conversion of Recarred revealed the tensions that ran through a Catholic political arena that was in the middle of complete restructuring. In 1885, intransigent factions had launched an offensive against papal possibilism. Led by the newspaper *El Siglo Futuro* and its director Ramón Nocedal, their attacks went so far as to question the authority of the nuncio. These criticisms led the secretary of state, Cardinal Jacobini, to urge a public correction of the newspaper and to stress the authority of the nuncio and prelates rather than the Integrists. The tensions between Carlos VII and the Nocedal brothers over the 'purity' of the political agenda of the pretender to the Spanish throne likewise led to a split between Carlists and Integrists in 1888. Between 1885 and 1888, therefore, the positions of both factions had been significantly weakened by the corrections from the Holy See and the division at the heart of the Carlist party. In turn, the integration of the Unión Católica into Cánovas' Conservative party had reinforced the Catholic *ralliement* with the Restoration's new regime, further weakening Carlist and Integrist options.

Once again, this centenary has been analysed through the lens of the differences it created between Integrists and Carlists over the commemoration. These interpretations ignore, however, the participation of a third actor – the episcopate – on the one hand, and on the other the fact that the three groups agreed when it came to attributing an essentially Catholic and national meaning to the celebration. While the episcopate limited itself to promoting religious ceremonies with papal indulgences, Integrists and Carlists planned with little success the establishment of a sanctuary to the

Sacred Heart the former, and of a great pyramid at Recarred in Toledo the latter (Canal 2007; Fernández Escudero 2014). Despite the suspicions that existed between the supporters of these projects, however, they all agreed about their meaning: to strengthen the identification of nation with Catholicism, and to fight the legacy of the French Revolution. In fact, in the instructions sent by the Count of Melgar to the Marquis of Cerralbo in January 1882, he told him that Carlos VII wanted to use this commemoration to combat the Revolution and that they should join – or at least not obstruct – other initiatives that pursued these religious ends (Fernández Escudero 2012, 144).

The Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America in 1892 features several innovations compared to previous anniversaries. Firstly, it was a commemoration celebrated in several countries – the United States of America, Canada, Latin America, Spain, and Italy – and which, in its Catholic component, acquired a strong transnational dimension. This is in part due to the encyclical *Quarto abeunte saeculo* (1892) in which Leon XIII invited the episcopacies of America, Spain and Italy to celebrate the festival on the 12th October with a *Te Deum* and other religious festivals (Ramón Solans 2020).

Unlike the centenaries of Calderón de la Barca, St Teresa and Recarred, furthermore, this commemoration did not awaken tensions between the various factions of political Catholicism although it did involve parallel celebrations. The centenary was promoted by the leader of the Conservative party and prime minister, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo. The festivities were envisaged as a way of strengthening the cultural and commercial ties with Latin America and slowing the growing hegemony of the USA on the continent. They would serve, moreover, to reinforce the nationalist rhetoric around a ‘glorious’ imperial past and the regeneration of Spain (Bernabeu Albert 1987, 53-57; Krauel, 2013; Rama 1982, 180-191; Sepúlveda 2005; Marcilhacy 2010). Madrid would

host the majority of the scientific activities with various congresses and three exhibitions, while the key events were celebrated in Huelva with the commemoration of the departure and arrival of the caravels in America (Bernabeu Albert 1987, 57-72). It was in La Rábida monastery that the principle *Te Deum* was celebrated in the presence of the Queen Regent and Cánovas. At the end of the ceremony, a monument to Columbus was unveiled, which was blessed by the Archbishop of Seville (*El Siglo Futuro*, October 7, 1892 and October 13, 1892.).

The Integrists organised a parallel celebration in Montserrat, where all the Catalan prelates assembled (Moliner Prada 2000, 149-150). The famous author of *El liberalismo es pecado* (1884), the priest Félix Sardá y Salvany, underscored the dual Catholic and Spanish dimension of these festivals and framed them as a fight against the ‘usurping liberalism’ that wanted to appropriate Columbus for itself. For this reason, he stated that the centenary was ‘above all an eminently Christian remembrance’ and to deny that its protagonists were inspired by Catholicism would be ‘knowingly to twist the History of Spain and criminally misrepresent the august significance of the centenary’ (*El Siglo Futuro*, August 16, 1892, August 26, 1892, August 30, 1892, and September 5, 1892). The daily newspaper *El Siglo Futuro* praised the dual Catholic-Spanish dimension of the discovery in its pages and claimed that the Spanish population’s return to their faith would allow them to free themselves from ‘the claws of liberalism’ and ‘continue the colonising mission that God assigned to our country, bearing the cross that Columbus drove into the New World to the vast and unexplored regions of the lands of Africa’ (*El Siglo Futuro*, August 3, 1892).

Along the same lines, at the Third Catholic Congress which was celebrated in Seville in October 1892, the Arabist and Integrist historian, Francisco Javier Simonet y Baca, associated the discovery of America with the divine and civilising mission of the

Catholic Church and the Spanish nation. For him, Spain was the nation chosen ‘in the modern age to promote the religious interests of mankind’. In this divine mission, Columbus appeared as the quintessentially Christian hero:

a man providentially baptised with the name of *Christophorus*, or Christ-bearer, whose spirit, sustained by the Christian faith, bore great labours, trials, and setbacks, deserving through his zeal, which we may call apostolic, and other virtues, the fullest praises of the Catholic Episcopate and of its august Head. It is well-known and celebrated that only a few years ago almost five hundred Princes of the Church – cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and superior generals – approached the Roman Pontiff, weighing his merits and requesting his beatification (*El Siglo Futuro*, October 11, 1892).

After this first, intense commemorative cycle, the observance of centenaries declined. Over a decade after the fourth centenary of the discovery of America, in 1905, the third centenary of the publication of *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes was celebrated. The commemorations of the 1900s are marked by the abovementioned confrontations between clerical and anticlerical factions. Particularly, the centenary of don Quixote took place at an especially tense moment since the government of Segismundo Moret tried to push through secularising measures such as the secularisation of cemeteries and civil matrimony.

Among the official acts in honour of Miguel de Cervantes’ magnum opus, the lectures given by Juan Valera at the Real Academia Española and that of Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo at the Universidad Central stand out. Although not wanting to enter into the political dimensions of Cervantes, Menéndez Pelayo stated that the author’s values were founded in the motherland, faith, justice, and social discipline. In what is probably one of the Catholic Church’s greatest triumphs in its battle for control of the past, there was also a mass dedicated by the Real Academia Española to the memory of Cervantes. The sermon was delivered by the Mexican bishop and corresponding

member of the Real Academia Española, Ignacio Montes de Oca, who extolled the hero of the Battle of Lepanto as the perfect Christian and Spanish gentleman, and situated the origin of Spanish decline precisely in the lost values of Cervantes. During the centenary, other authors, clerics and laypeople asserted the importance of Catholicism for Cervantes and his work, in opposition to those intellectuals who highlighted his criticisms of the Catholic Church and condemned the intolerance of his time (Storm 1998, 625-654).

The First Centenary of the Sieges of Zaragoza in 1908 constituted the culmination of this National Catholic interpretation of the past and the first celebration of a modern political event in Spain. Unlike other political events from the Peninsular War, such as those of the Cádiz Cortes, the ‘heroic’ defence of the city during the two Napoleonic sieges on the Aragonese capital kindled a broad consensus among conservative and progressive factions. Like the commemoration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America, furthermore, no great tensions were seen in the heart of political Catholicism, which agreed when it came to endowing the Sieges of Zaragoza with National Catholic significance.

The commemoration remained on the Aragonese political agenda for a long time. It was the Conservative senator and director of the Real Sociedad Económica Aragonesa de Amigos del País, Luis Franco y López, who in 1891 asked to create a commemorative exhibition of the Sieges. There was a few years’ delay, however, until it started to take shape with the creation in 1902 of a Junta Magna de los Sitios, promoted by the ex-mayor, Rafael Pamplona Escudero, and the canon of the Cathedral, Florencio Jardiel. Zaragozan Catholicism threw itself into the commemoration of the defence of ‘the national independence’ and of the ‘traditions of the motherland’ that were ‘inspired by religion and by religion sustained’ (*El Pilar*, June 17, 1905).

In 1906, the Archbishop of Zaragoza, Juan Soldevila, proposed using the commemoration to transform the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar into a 'national monument commemorating the Sieges' and the 'divine destiny of Spain'. The cathedral thus became the symbol of a Catholic nation triumphant over the Saracens, the Protestants, and finally over 'French materialism' (Soldevila y Romero 1906, 8-13). In this context, it should be recalled that within the National Catholic interpretation of the Sieges, Our Lady of the Pillar and her basilica had played a central role in sustaining the Zaragozaan resistance during the siege (Ramón Solans 2014). In the end, the ambitious architectural project planned by the Archbishop to renovate the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar could not take place because of the exorbitant cost. In place of the mammoth reconstruction, the Junta del Centenario organised a fundraiser to illuminate the shrine to Pilar with 'religious and historical emblems and motifs associated with religious and national History' (*Homenaje* 1908a, 7-9, *Homenaje* 1908b).

In 1906, the Comisión Ejecutiva del Centenario de los Sitios was founded with a conservative complexion, since it was presided over by the conservative mayor Antonio Fleta and the recently-appointed dean Florencio Jardiel. In the face of the conservative turn that the commemoration was taking, the progressive liberal Basilio Paraíso tendered his resignation and went to head the committee for organising the Hispano-French Exposition. With Paraíso's resignation, two parallel projects took shape to commemorate the Sieges of Zaragoza: one of liberal and Republican character, the commercial and industrial event, and another religious and conservative, which would materialise in a series of events and monuments that would attach a National Catholic narrative to the Zaragozaan resistance (Peiró Martín 2008, 28-33). These local initiatives were completed in January 1907 with a grant of 2.5 million pesetas promoted by

Segismundo Moret in Parliament, which transformed the Zaragozan commemoration into the main national celebration of the Peninsular War (Demange and Géral 2008, 109-138).

The principal public events of the centenary were associated with obsequies and religious ceremonies in honour of the heroes and important moments of Spain's resistance. The main ceremony took place on 15th June, the anniversary of the start of the first siege and of the Battle of María, a victory accredited to the intercession of Our Lady of the Pillar. In the funeral rites celebrated in the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, Florencio Jardiel, the vice president of the Junta para la Conmemoración del Centenario de los Sitios, delivered the sermon. In the presence of the King, the government, and civil and military authorities, the dean praised 'what [the city] represents for the nation', this 'ideal [city] of self-denial and sacrifice'. At Jardiel's hands, imperial eagles, sacrilegious invasions, and innumerable martyrs passed before the eyes of those present, exploits in which 'history does not reflect – cannot reflect – the profound meaning of these epic glories'. Above all, Our Lady of the Pillar stood out,

the inheritance of a glorious past, united with her by bonds that have never cooled; (...) this statue represents for Zaragoza, for Aragon, and for the whole of Spain the indestructible strength of her religious faith, loyalty and nobility, constancy and vigour, decency and diligence, encouragement and hope, a vision of glory that reveals to her generous spirit the happy conclusion of these earthly rigors (as quoted in Azara y Vicente 1910, 464-465).

From that glorious past, Jardiel projected into the present and claimed that 'the level of our greatness will correspond to the level of our religiosity, which is to say, to the level of our patriotism'. 'The best way forward in our affiliation to those defenders of Zaragoza in 1808 and 1809,' therefore, 'is to maintain unabated that faith that they adored' (469-470). The association between Catholicism and patriotism was, in the eyes

of the dean, indissoluble, and should therefore serve as inspiration for the present and the future. After paying homage to the dead, he therefore urged,

Let us pray for the living; let us pray for Spain, our beloved motherland; let us pray that the Spanish people do not squander the treasure of their piety, the strength of their heart and the august motto of their flag; let us pray for those who fight us, that they cease from cultivating in their madness the ruin of our nation; let us pray that every man, each in his place, nobly doing his duty, obey his fair character as Spaniard and Christian' (470).

Following Jardiel's words, there was a civic-religious procession – as though these were the relics of saints – to deposit the remains of the heroines Casta Álvarez, Agustina of Aragón and Manuela Sancho in a chapel created for the occasion in the Church of Our Lady of Portillo. The Catholics thus used the commemoration to fix their project in the public space. As well as the monument to the martyrs of the religion and the motherland that they built in 1904 and the chapel of the heroines itself, they erected a monumental cross on the Puente de Piedra commemorating Fathers Sas and Boggiero, two priests killed after the city's surrender, a monument to the Sieges of Zaragoza at the Hispano-French Exposition, and another in honour of the defenders of the *Reducto del Pilar* with the text 'Zaragozans: for Our Lady of the Pillar. Death or Victory' (Rincón García 1984).

The only sphere that had until this point remained free of the Catholic campaign was the Hispano-French Exposition. Directed by Basilio Paraíso, this exhibition portrayed positivist principles and the ethic of liberal progress that inspired a section of the local bourgeoisie. At the end of 1907, however, the Catholic publicist José María Azara y Vicente proposed constructing a Marian pavilion in a place of honour, dominating the other structures at the Exposition. After various meetings, Basilio Paraíso granted them a plot of some 500 m² where they constructed an edifice in which

they organised a Marian exhibition (*Anales del Pilar*, December 25, 1907 and January 30, 1908). This display was intended to awaken the enthusiasm of Spanish Catholics about the spectacle of ‘seeing all these images assembled alongside Our Lady of the Pillar, who is like the Queen over all’. They also assembled the standards of those who fought in the name of Mary and Spain, such as Pelagius and Ferdinand III of Castile (*Anales del Pilar*, March 30, 1908 and Azara y Vicente, 1908).

The commemoration was a triumph for local and national Catholicism. The Junta Central del Centenario de los Sitios congratulated itself on the ‘success achieved’ in the report it presented to the President of the Council of Ministers (Memoria 1910). The Junta also sent a message to Pius X with a catalogue of the exposition of sacred art organised on the occasion of the Centenary as proof of its love, loyalty, and obedience to the Holy See, in which it asked at the same time for ‘your paternal blessing upon it, for the Junta Magna, and for all who took part in the patriotic celebration of the First Centenary of Spanish Independence’ (Soldevila 1909, 4). The Archbishop of Zaragoza in turn also indicated his pleasure about the progress of the festivities although he lamented the presence in ‘our patriotic and religious festivals’ of France – not of the ‘Christian and Catholic France’ but the ‘official France, persecutor of the Holy Church and pursuer of the revolutionary work that spawned Napoleon and his armies, besiegers of Zaragoza’ (5). The Aragonese population nevertheless ‘rectified and harnessed the expansion of patriotism, and beholding in Our sacred Lady of the Pillar the foundation of their independence, bestowed upon the festivities of the Centenary of the Sieges an eminently religious character’ (5). Thanks to the Centenary, ‘it seems that the dormant forces of Spanish Catholics have been awakened from some time in this part of the population, and they are revealing them with renewed activity and energy in Congresses, in pilgrimages, in social works, in good newspapers’ (15).

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, various Western states and actors launched themselves into commemorating those moments and personalities who, according to them, condensed the essence of the nation. It is no accident that this era of commemorations coincides temporally with and is nourished by the so-called Culture Wars between clericals and anticlericals, since one of the central elements in dispute was the definition of the national identity – and, therefore, its past – as confessional or not.

In Spain, the diverse factions that acted within political Catholicism were capable of launching a wide variety of politics of the past, which ranged from speeches and academic works to pamphlets, via public sculpture, events, congresses, processions, and pilgrimages. Standing out within these politics of the past were the centenaries of those moments and figures that condensed the essence of the nation. The Catholics succeeded not simply in participating in and even capitalising upon numerous official commemorations, but in fact all the centenaries also included religious ceremonies as a central feature on the commemoration programme.

While the centenaries revealed the tensions that existed within the realm of the diverse political options that stood for Catholicism, what is certain is that all of them agreed when it came to highlighting the centrality of religion in the shaping of the national being. In this respect, these politics of the past played a central role when it came to shaping and consolidating a National Catholic political culture that crossed almost the entire Spanish right, from Carlism and Integritism to Cánovas' Conservative Party.

Despite the tensions that existed between these different political options, these interpretations of the past through the National Catholic prism contributed to creating a common reference space for the Spanish right wing from which to legitimise their positions and, above all, fight their common enemies.

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