“God Give Us Men!”
MANLINESS, THE AMERICAN PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION, AND CATHOLICISM IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1893-1896

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In July of 1895, an article published in San Francisco’s A.P.A. Magazine appealed, “God give us men! A time like this demands... Men who possess opinions [sic] and a will; Men who have honor—men who will not lie.”¹ In a later issue, the magazine noted that the Catholic church, “can and does so far degrade and stupefy the intellectual nature of the man, that he loses the ambition to be free, to think for himself.”² A publication of the American Protective Association (APA), A. P. A. Magazine warned each month of a Catholic threat to American government and institutions, and it urged in stirring language that its readership make a manly defense of the American way of life.

Much of the APA’s language revealed concerns about masculinity and assertions that Catholics were inherently not manly. The APA was an all-male secret society, with a complementary women’s auxiliary (WAPA) and youth group (JAPA). Like the Masons, the Knights of Pythias, and so many other organizations, the APA affirmed its members’ masculinity through ritual and homosocial interaction. The APA frequently used gendered language in denigrating the Catholic Church; not only did such sallies attack the Catholic religion, they attacked the manliness of Catholic men.

Men such as Father Peter C. Yorke responded in kind, defending Catholic manhood and belittling that of their opponents. The two camps used the term “manly” to refer to a variety of attributes, including independence, virility, patriotism, militarism, honor, and respectful treatment of women. By calling into question any of these characteristics, an attacker could raise doubt as to the manliness of his opponent. As such, the APA controversy was not just a controversy about religion; it was a contest over manliness and an arena in which the
contours of masculinity were outlined. Religion, ethnicity, and gender were inextricably linked.

The APA has been treated at the national level by several writers. Generally, their works detail the political rise and fall of the organization, particularly its years of heightened influence from 1892 to 1896. At the San Francisco level, the APA has been studied by historians of its chief opponent, Father Peter C. Yorke. These biographers include Joseph S. Brusher, Mary Camilla Fitzmaurice, and James P. Walsh. Additionally, Priscilla Knuth treats San Francisco’s APA movement in her 1947 Master’s thesis, “Nativism in California, 1886-1897.”

Brusher, Fitzmaurice, and Knuth agree that the APA made substantial inroads in San Francisco, claiming success in the election of 1894. Brusher and Fitzmaurice depict in worshipful prose the struggles of a heroic Father Yorke to save the city from the APA’s grips, a struggle that succeeded when APA candidates were repudiated in the election of 1896. Their arguments have been largely supplanted by that of Walsh, who points to San Francisco’s substantial Catholic population and reasons that the APA was never strong enough to dominate local politics. Walsh argues that the APA was an easy target for Yorke, who deliberately exaggerated the threat that it posed, using it as a means to rally Catholic voters and ultimately to advance his own career.

Both the APA and Catholics used gendered language in their debate; however, none of these studies employs a gendered analysis. The examination of masculinity is a relatively new field of inquiry within the historical profession. Taking their cue from women’s history, scholars have begun to ask how men’s understanding of themselves as men has shaped their lives. A few of the influential works in this field include Mark C. Carnes’s and Clyde Griffen’s collection of essays, Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America, Anthony E. Rotundo’s American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era, Gail Bederman’s Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917, and Michael Kimmel’s Manhood in America: A Cultural History.

Synthesizing the essays in their volume, Carnes and Griffen conclude that whereas a variety of styles of manhood had previously been acceptable, the latter decades of the nineteenth century marked a shift to a more monolithic, rigid construction of gender for men. Anthony Rotundo sees a crucial shift occurring between 1880 and 1920 from a “self-made manhood,” which emphasized hard work and restraint, to a “passionate manhood,” centered on aggression, vigor, and the body. Gail Bederman uses a gendered analysis to discuss fears of “race suicide,” arguing that gender and race became linked for white men: by the turn of the century, the fathering of white children was an arena for asserting masculine virility along with racial dominance. Michael Kimmel argues that the self-made man of the nineteenth century was challenged by the social changes surrounding industrialization and came increasingly to define himself through exclusion and opposition. Manly came to mean not immigrant, not black, not feminine, and not homosexual. The rise of fraternal associations and nativism thus reflected anxiety about the nation’s masculinity.
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In light of this recent scholarship, an analysis of masculinity in the rhetoric of the APA and its detractors seems appropriate. Carnes, Griffen, Rotundo, Bederman, and Kimmel all see some sort of shift occurring in the late nineteenth century within societal notions of masculinity. Bederman has identified the challenge to male virility represented by race suicide; but, as one reviewer points out, she evaluates “white” in modern terms, ignoring the contemporary racial distinction made between Anglo-Saxons and other Europeans, particularly Catholics and Jews. Michael Kimmel explores the perceived Catholic threat to Protestant manliness in some detail, but he does not look at the ways Catholics perceived their own masculinity and how they responded to gendered challenges from Protestant men.

I propose to evaluate the rhetoric of the APA along with the counter-rhetoric of Catholic men, asking how their masculinity and ethnicity interacted, looking both at perceived differences between the two groups and the way broad agreement as to the nature of manliness allowed them to phrase attacks upon one another. Although the APA and its Catholic opposition clearly disagreed on major issues, they largely agreed about the nature of masculinity and could therefore couch their disagreement in a shared discourse, trading stinging insults about the inherent manliness of the two religions, the relative patriotism of APA members and of American Catholics, their willingness to take a public stand on controversial issues, and their success at protecting women’s virtue. The major difference between APA and Catholic conceptions of gender is in the role they envisioned for women: the APA felt that by rejecting marriage, Catholic nuns posed a threat to masculinity; at the same time, the APA model of masculinity allowed room for the woman suffrage movement, while the Catholic model did not.

The American Protective Association was founded in Clinton, Ohio in 1887. Fearing a Catholic conspiracy against American institutions, members aimed to keep Catholics out of government offices, to protect the public schools from encroaching parochialism, and to tighten immigration laws. (The APA did, however, welcome non-Catholic immigrants to its ranks.) Unlike the earlier Know-Nothing movement, the APA did not form a separate political party but instead supported major-party candidates sympathetic to its platform. The APA, comprised mostly of working-class men and small-business owners, grew slowly at first and then took off in the early 1890s. By 1893, it had chapters in every state and was able to push its candidates through nominating conventions in many parts of the Middle West.

The APA came to San Francisco in 1893, when national president W. J. H. Traynor toured the west coast on an organizing drive. Two local events garnered added publicity for the organization. The first was an offer by the Examiner to pay for the entry of all public school children to the Midwinter Fair in February of 1894. Some Catholics saw the invitation as an unfair slight to children of parochial schools, and a controversial letter to the Examiner suggested that Catholic parents might “exclude your paper from their homes,” just as the paper had
excluded their children from the fair. This boycott never materialized, but the threat roused local anti-Catholic sentiment. Later that spring, a group of Catholic high school students complained of the use of Philip Meyer’s *Outlines of Medieval and Modern History* in the public schools, arguing that the book contained an anti-Catholic bias and thus violated the state constitution’s prohibition on sectarianism in the public schools. Although the San Francisco school board eventually ruled that the book would stay, many locals saw the episode as an alarming attempt by Catholics to dictate public-school curriculum. Together, these two events helped the APA to gain strength but also gave rise to a vocal opposition on the part of San Francisco’s large and highly politicized Irish-Catholic population.

The APA spread its message through regular lectures and “Good Citizenship” meetings held at San Francisco’s Metropolitan Hall. The most frequent speakers were Protestant ministers; additionally, the meetings featured politicians, professors, members of the military, and “reformed” priests and nuns. A counterattack emanated from the pulpits of local Catholic churches and from another series of Metropolitan Hall meetings. The controversy also generated ample ink in local publications. Predictably, the most invective language appeared in the Catholic Archdiocese’s newspaper, *The Monitor* (which Peter Yorke edited beginning in 1894) and in two APA publications, *The American Patriot* and *A. P. A Magazine*. Of the city’s daily papers, the *Chronicle* and *Bulletin* were mostly silent on the APA controversy; they rarely covered the organization’s activities as front-page news and they neither supported nor repudiated its platform. The *Examiner*, on the other hand, denounced the APA roundly and often. The *Call* offered extensive coverage of both APA and Catholic viewpoints.

With Republican gains in the election of 1894, the APA claimed victory in San Francisco and nationwide. To what extent the APA actually held the swing vote in 1894 is debatable; at any rate, the APA celebrated and local Catholics sounded the alarm. In November of 1895, Peter Yorke wrote to the *Chronicle* complaining of the paper’s regular coverage of the weekly APA lectures and challenging anti-Catholic remarks made by APA minister Donald M. Ross. Ross had made various inflammatory statements, claiming to be quoting from Catholic text. Yorke’s letter denied the authenticity of Ross’ sources and challenged him to submit these sources to an independent panel for verification. Depending on the outcome, either Yorke or Ross would be obliged to donate one hundred dollars to charity. When the *Chronicle* did not publish Yorke’s letter, he sent it to the * Examiner*, launching a spirited newspaper correspondence among Yorke, Ross, and others; this correspondence appeared in the * Call* and the * Examiner* over a period of four months. With the election of 1896, the APA fractured because of leadership quarrels and a lack of tangible success in its legislative program. For all purposes, the organization dissolved in San Francisco and nationwide.

San Francisco’s historically large Catholic population makes the city an especially appropriate locus for a study that considers both the APA and its opponents. The record in newspapers, magazines, and APA pamphlets provides a rich documentation concerning the nature of masculinity from the perspective of both APA members and Catholics.
Manly Religion: Popes, Priests, and World Civilization

Throughout San Francisco’s APA controversy, the broadest attacks on masculinity consisted of debate over how a man’s religion shaped his manliness or lack thereof. APA lecturers posited that the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church sapped initiative and independence, resulting in ineffective men who comprised weak, impoverished, Catholic countries. Catholics countered that their church in no way diminished manhood; by illustration, they pointed to Catholic accomplishments throughout history.

According to A. P. A. Magazine, the elaborate trappings of the Catholic Church were themselves effeminate; Jesus had not ordered the church to be made “so ‘sweet pretty’ by tiaras, and crosiers, and mitres, and albs, and surplises, or any other kind of ecclesiastical millinery.”9 And if the church was not manly, the root of the problem was a lack of vigor in the pope himself. A. P. A. Magazine asked whether Leo XIII was “a man that the world honors for his intellectual greatness, for his scientific achievements, for his legal ability, for his qualities as a statesman, for his literary triumphs, for his moral zeal, for his philanthropic enterprises” and answered a resounding no. The pope had “done nothing that the world honors a man for doing” and neither had the rest of his church. Catholicism, said the writer, could not have produced Emerson, Darwin, Spencer, or Garibaldi.10

As defined by the APA, priests were inherently unmanly. If a priest was sexually active, he was an ignoble predator who defiled women. If a priest honored his vows, he could not match the male ideal of strength and virility and was thus the subject of derisive joking. One APA speaker quipped, “as to the custom of calling priests by the name of ‘father,’ I insist that if a man is not good enough to get married and to claim his own children, he is not worthy to be called a father.”11 A poem in A. P. A. Magazine contained the lines, “I fail to see a proof of Christ’s divinity/in the unnatural creed of male virginity.”12

The APA argued that, given the church’s hierarchical nature, Catholic clergy controlled its members and kept Catholic men from being men. H. W. Quitzow, chairman of San Francisco’s Good Citizenship meetings, warned that “When Romanism has the power she compels submission.” He described in horror the recent degradation of military men in Spain who had purportedly been compelled to kneel to an image of the Virgin Mary on penalty of eight years in prison.13 The Protestant religion, by contrast, affirmed APA members’ sense of manliness. The San Francisco APA’s president, Reverend Donald Ross, saw a link between priestly dominance and patriotism, declaring, “Only in Protestantism, which asserts that a man is a man, can patriotism be found. You cannot have patriotism in a man who has as many strings to him as a Catholic has.”14

Looking at world history, APA members perceived the results of a domineering clergy and weak-willed parishioners. Ex-priest and APA lecturer Father Chiniquy proclaimed that the only truly great, powerful, and free nations in the world were Protestant. In fact, he added, “The Protestant nations are the only ones that acquit themselves like men in the arena of this
world." Protestant nations led the civilized world, "leaving far behind the unfortunate nations whose hands are tied by the chains of popery."\[13\]

Catholic men challenged such APA criticism by pointing to Catholic accomplishments in world history. In response to sneering comments about the state of Spanish civilization, Peter Yorke argued that the Spanish empire was at its height when Spain was most Catholic.\[16\]

In a similar vein, Catholic priest J. P. Ferguson invoked the discovery of the New World as evidence of Catholic accomplishment, praising the "Catholic enterprise," "Catholic genius," and "Catholic sailors," who set out "over the unknown seas through unknown perils." Ferguson did not stop there but went on to contrast Catholic success with Protestant inactivity: "While the Puritans of New England were disputing about questions of religious belief the Jesuits, Brebe Lallemand and others, were traversing the principal rivers from Quebec to Minnesota. Brave, fearless of danger, trusting only in the Master, they sought out and preached the unchangeable truths of the Catholic Church to the warlike red men in the heart of trackless forests."\[17\]

On another occasion, Ferguson contrasted the native peoples of Catholic South America with those of the Protestant United States. Whereas the United States Indian was "fast disappearing from the face of the earth," his South American counterpart was "alive and developing rapidly," flourishing under the civilizing influence of Catholicism. He pointed to the Mexican Cabinet, the majority of whom were "full-blooded Indians who, in intelligence and ability will compare favorably with the rulers of other countries."\[18\]

Thus, the APA and its opponents justified their positions by pointing to the ways that each religion did or did not encourage manliness. For the APA, an unmanly pope and a spate of unmanly priests wielded a choke-like influence over those below them, frustrating manhood and weakening civilizations. According to the counterargument of Fathers Yorke and Ferguson, Catholic civilization had made a manly variety of accomplishments, from discovering the New World to civilizing the tribes of South America.

Patriotic Ancestry, Patriotic Deeds:
The Founding Fathers, the Civil War, and the Ongoing Battle for America

Speaking in San Francisco, APA minister J. Q. A. Henry announced that he spoke "not as a minister but as a man; not as a preacher but as a patriot."\[19\] In staking out their positions, APA and Catholic thinkers frequently invoked notions of manhood and patriotism, harkening to the legacy of such American heroes as the founding fathers and the soldiers of the Civil War. Equating the APA controversy with a battle over America, they portrayed themselves as brave warriors and their opponents as traitorous cowards.

The founding fathers loomed large in San Francisco during the 1890s. The Monitor, for example, invoked the name of George Washington as a would-be opponent of the APA. Giving readers a choice between membership in the APA and in an opposing group called the
American Liberal League (ALL), the paper quoted the Constitution's prohibition of religious tests for office holding, then offered, "If any man is in favor of the sentiments to which GEORGE WASHINGTON was proud to put his name, his place is with the A.L.L. If however, his mind is warped by bigotry that he elevates the behests of a secret society above the laws of his country, then let him herd with the A. P. A." APA lecturers likewise pointed to the founding fathers for validation of their cause. Donald Ross claimed that "Not a man in America who is a true patriot would give a cent for persecution. The idea that brings [the APA] together is the same as that which inspired men during the revolution." J. Q. A. Henry closed an APA address by saying, "In an hour like this we cry with our fathers, 'No peace with the papacy and no compromise with Rome.'"

Peter Yorke and his Catholic compatriots frequently made a point of listing specific patriotic deeds of Catholics. Describing the American flag, Yorke claimed that "There is not one white stripe but what is made whiter by Catholic virtues; there is not one red stripe but what is made brighter by the blood of Catholic patriots." Yorke pointed to founding father John Carroll, Bishop of Baltimore, and to the Civil War contributions of John Hughes, Archbishop of New York. The Christmas 1893 edition of the Monitor contained a lengthy section on the gallant deeds of Catholic soldiers, and in 1896 the Monitor sold leaflets describing Catholic Civil War contributions and countered a contention that seventy-two percent of Irish had deserted during the war. Father J. P. Ferguson claimed that during the Civil War Catholics had volunteered for the Union army in disproportionately large numbers. By contrast, he charged that the APA consisted mostly of recent immigrants, and he reasoned that during wartime these had been "far away on the hills of Ulster or 'deep in Canadian woods'" rather than fighting for America.

APA minister Ray Palmer countered such slurs by asserting his family's multigenerational patriotic pedigree, saying, "If I am not a patriot, I should be, for my grandfather, Major Noes-Palmer, fought in the war of 1812, and my great-grandfather, Colonel Sanford Palmer, fought in the Revolution." Major T. C. Ryan claimed that California soil was "made holy by the blood of those who have fought and died for the liberty which Romanism seems incapable of comprehending." In general, though, the APA does not seem to have been as anxious to cite specific instances of wartime patriotism as was the Catholic opposition. Presumably, the country's debt to Protestant patriots was widely accepted and did not require explanation.

Seeing themselves as torchbearers for the American heroes of yore, both the APA and its Catholic opponents depicted the current religious controversy in military metaphors. In addition to sponsoring lectures by Protestant ministers and former priests or nuns, the APA often asked members of the military to speak on the perils of Romanism. By doing so, the APA could add a masculine and patriotic legitimacy to its cause. Major T. C. Ryan, who gave a series of lectures in spring of 1896, spoke as if he were still in battle. Accusing his Catholic opponents of mudslinging, he charged, "We don't believe in that brute method of warfare."
During his farewell address, he warned, “There is a revolution coming in this country, and I would have the young men prepare for the shock of battle.” At the close of this speech, he mused, “On your next election day I shall probably be at Washington and I will climb to the apex of the great monument there that I may see the smoke of battle go up above the field of victory won by the A. P. A. of California.” The Monitor mocked the fighting abilities of APA lecturer Reverend W. W. Case, writing that his “idea of warfare seems to be founded on the motto that ‘he who fights and runs away will live to fight another day;’” and it approvingly compared Peter Yorke to a skillful warrior, saying that “an Indian war-chief might feel proud” if he had Yorke’s collection of APA “scalps dangling from his belt.”

Through references to the founding fathers and to the Civil War, the APA and the opposition ascribed a manly patriotism to themselves. The APA controversy was not just an argument about religion, it was a full-scale battle for the future of America. Though Catholics were most defensive about their religion’s contributions to the country’s history, both groups were eager to link their positions to the ideas of the founding fathers and to cast themselves as modern-day war heroes.

Taking a Manly Stand: Speaking Out for Truth and Justice

If the APA controversy was a war, then speaking up for one’s country was the equivalent of bravery in battle. Both sides of the debate commended their fellows for their manly stands in the public sphere and castigated their opponents for being afraid to speak the truth.

Peter Yorke, in a letter to the Call, praised the editor’s “honorable and manly conduct” in airing both sides of the APA controversy. In response to 1896 mayoral candidate Charles L. Taylor’s refusal to sign a document that stated that he was not an APA member, The Monitor called for a united stand against him. The front-page headline proclaimed that “All True Men Must be Ready to Combine Against This Un-American Bigot” and the article called on citizens to “be as men with their loins girt and their staves in their hands.” The Monitor praised newspapers (itself included) that had “the manliness to oppose the APA.”

The APA made similar appeals to their constituency. H. W. Quitzow urged APA membership to be undaunted by criticism and to continue “bringing patriotism to the front and raising up our voices manfully in the utterance of true American principles.” In recognition of Peter Yorke and Donald Ross’s letter-to-the-editor battle, APA Council No. 68 passed a resolution formally commending Ross on his “dignified manliness” in standing “for the cause of historical truth and principles and political righteousness with undaunted zeal and courage.” Additionally, they recognized his “ability and learning, his eloquence and his liberal intelligence” along with his “personal virtues as a man and a citizen.”

The Yorke-Ross newspaper controversy began in November of 1895, when Yorke questioned certain inflammatory remarks Ross had made. Ross claimed to have been quoting
directly from Catholic texts; Yorke challenged him to produce these alleged sources. Depending on the ruling of three carefully selected lawyers, Yorke offered, either he or Ross would admit to being incorrect and would donate one hundred dollars to charity. When Ross offered to debate publicly but declined the wager, Yorke cast Ross's refusal to gamble as cowardly, writing "I have no time to waste in a vain attempt to teach Mr. Ross the manliness of standing by his word." Ross responded that Yorke was the one who was backing down, afraid to be shown up in public debate. "Why don't you stand to your guns like a man?" Ross challenged.

A man who let others intimidate him from a patriotic position was no man at all. In the words of The Monitor "no man, lay or clerical, has the privilege of silence if he has a word to say [about the APA], unless he forfeits his manhood." In 1894, mayoral hopeful Adolph Sutro did not necessarily support the APA but was nonetheless unwilling to repudiate its political endorsement. In an article about him, The Monitor wrote, "The Nominee who is not strong enough to come out and denounce [the APA] is not worthy of the suffrages of freemen. And no man who is tainted by the support of the A. P. A. can be loyal to the Constitution under which he lives." Regarding Catholics who had actually voted for APA-endorsed candidates, The Monitor wrote, "These miserable hirelings ... went back on their race, their faith, their very manhood."

The APA, by contrast, saw such emasculating intimidation to be inherent in Catholicism. When Peter Yorke wrote that he expected the Methodist Church to repudiate the inflammatory writings of Reverend W. W. Case, Case retorted swiftly. The Methodist Church, said Case, would neither repudiate nor support him because a Methodist minister was independent and could speak his own mind, as opposed to Catholic priests who needed advance approval from the pope. Similarly, APA lecturer Major T. C. Ryan boasted that "If the Methodist church, with which I affiliate, should undertake to dictate my vote, I should leave Methodism. No minister, priest, Cardinal or Pope shall use my brains for me."

As manly patriots, San Francisco men spoke out about important issues affecting the country. Speaking one's mind during controversy was thought to take courage and independence. Those who stayed silent or recanted under pressure—be it political or priestly—had failed a test of manhood.

**Manliness in Context: Men and Women in San Francisco Society**

Some of the most emotional rhetoric of the APA controversy centered on women. If it is true, as Michael Kimmel contends, that men in industrialized America increasingly defined themselves *vis à vis* women, then understanding men's perceptions of women is crucial to understanding the men themselves. Further, Catholic and APA men often invoked womanhood as a means of impugning the opposition's manliness: a man who treated women
inappropriately forfeited his claim to being a man. Examining APA and Catholic rhetoric about women reveals that both groups perceived manliness in protecting female virtue but that they held divergent attitudes toward women's changing role in society. Within the limits proscribed by woman's traditional place as wife and mother, the APA tended to grant women a greater role in the public sphere than the Catholic opposition did. Beyond these limits, men of the APA showed a profound anxiety about possible reversal of gender roles.

One of the APA's most potent weapons against the Catholic Church was stories of priestly lechery toward women. Lecturers and writers told in lurid detail of nuns held in thralldom behind locked convent doors or of docile young girls seduced in the confessional. Such tales held scintillating appeal and called upon Protestants to rescue womanly virtue from the horrible—and unmanly—clutches of the priesthood. One APA tract warned that "There are hundreds of sorrowful, deluded women behind those [convent] walls, to whom escape means almost certain death... we have positive proof that there are sensual, brutal men among the priests, who would murder their paramours before they would let them escape and denounce them before the world." Further, the writer wondered why American fathers and mothers would "permit their beautiful young daughters to enter, alone, the confessional to have their young souls and lives blighted by the hot breath of wine-besotted priests." A particularly sensational article in San Francisco's APA organ, The American Patriot, gave an improbable account of brainwashing and seduction in the Catholic Church, describing a secret society of Catholic women called the "Blessed Creatures" or "Brides of Heaven." After an elaborate, marriage-like initiation ritual, a Blessed Creature (often already married to a duped, unsuspecting husband) would dedicate herself to a secret, double life of satisfying priestly lust. In the vestry of every church was a board with the names of the parish's Blessed Creatures; after mass a priest would mark the name of the woman he desired. A priest away from home needed not fear: Blessed Creatures everywhere were recognizable by the secret insignias and rings that they wore. Such a tale, regardless of its basis in fact, cried out for the rescue of degraded Catholic women and attacked the manliness of the licentious priests they served and the cuckolded husbands they deceived.

Catholic response to such comments came with a fury. Not only did Yorke and his cohort deny the charges against priests, they turned the charge of mistreatment of women back on the APA. Peter Yorke excoriated the Reverend W. W. Case, writing that, "The man who could utter [derogatory words about women] is a grade lower than a wife-beater. The brute who maltreats a woman at least can only hurt her body, but the wretch who slanders the innocent hurts that which is dearer than life itself—a woman's good name." Similarly, The Monitor complained of the "unmanly, un-Christian attack against the good Sisters of the Church." This tactic promised to be a powerful mobilizer for the anti-APA vote. Shortly before the 1896 election, The Monitor published an article titled "The War on Women and the Men Who Endorse It." Quoting from an article in The American Patriot, The Monitor complained
of pornographic slander toward Catholic women. "How long shall the men of San Francisco, the fathers, the brothers of these Sisters, stand this slander upon their flesh and blood?" the writer wondered. Then, he listed the APA’s endorsees for office, commenting that a vote for any of them was a vote for literary lechery and the defamation of women.50

APA members hastily backpedaled, claiming that they were attacking the priests, not the women, and that, in fact, they wanted to help the women.50 The APA also attempted to ascribe anti-woman slander to the Catholic Church. Several writers claimed that the Catholic Church had declared all non-Catholic marriages illegal, thus insulting Protestant women as morally lax and Protestant children as bastards. J. Q. A. Henry charged, "Can a man who looks upon a Protestant home in this country as a house of prostitution be a patriot?"51 Another writer wondered that "Protestants have meekly submitted to those insults from foreign priests, in every city of America, when American husbands and fathers should have taken them out and shot them as traitors to the flag that protected them."52

Historian Hasia R. Diner has argued that Irish men, particularly recent immigrants, felt threatened by the economic success Irish women found in America and worried that these women would join the American feminist movement. Protestant feminism, as represented by such organizations as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, was perceived as an attacker of Irish manhood, particularly through campaigns for temperance.53 Given this context, it is not surprising that Peter Yorke and other Monitor writers did not support woman suffrage and that they would be suspicious of female activism. The Monitor frequently derided the women of the WAPA. The paper smirkingly referred to WAPA organizers as lecturers, setting the term in quotes to make its patronizing attitude clear.54 Peter Yorke sneered at Mrs. M. E. Richardson, president of the WAPA, as the president of the petticoat protectors. (Mrs. Richardson, not to be outdone, said that a woman was but “slightly affected by slurs thrown at her by a man who writes in female attire.”)55 Yorke often insulted men by comparing them to women, calling his opponents “scolding fishwomen” or “garrulous old women.”56 In another instance, he suggested that the cowardly Donald Ross hire himself a nursemaid for protection.57 The Monitor was, however, supportive of activist women who helped the Catholic cause, crediting APA losses in the 1896 election to the “noble and brave women” of the American Women’s Liberal League (AWLL), who volunteered, organized, and canvassed against the APA.58

The APA, by contrast, showed a more progressive attitude toward women’s changing lives. As women moved increasingly into the public sphere, the APA praised them for their organization and patriotism.59 Pointing to women's role in training the rising generation, APA literature stressed the importance of female education.60 APA members generally supported woman suffrage, presumably because enfranchising the women of the WAPA would mean more votes for public schooling and for temperance. Support for women’s enfranchisement was secondary to achieving the APA’s anti-Catholic platform and came with cautions that women not step outside of their roles as wives and mothers.61
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Indeed, the APA saw a deep threat to the male-female order lurking in the Catholic Church, as the APA’s contradictory attitude toward nuns evidences. As discussed, the APA portrayed nuns as noble, pious, long-suffering victims of lecherous priests. At the same time, the APA saw nuns as a subversive group who had chosen to eschew married life and the authority of a husband. APA speaker Reverend Ray Palmer looked forward to an end of Romanism when nuns and priests would join the ranks of the married. At the same time, he was careful to praise the good works of the sisterhood:

There will not be a single old bachelor priest on this continent or on any other continent. The priests will all be married men. There will not be a nun living as nuns live to-day. I have not one word to say against these women, for many of them lead the highest kind of life and do much in the way of good, but fifty years hence they will be married to the best men they can find.62

One APA advocate of public education asked, “How can a nun teach our daughters womanly duties, when she acknowledges none herself?”63

Most APA writers negated this perceived threat to male power by blaming priests rather than blaming Catholic women. Priests, they argued, manipulated Catholic women, thereby sapping the manliness of Catholic men. By luring young women into nunhood, priests took these women off the marriage market, gaining authority that rightfully should have gone to a husband.64 As for women who married, The American Patriot charged that “while priests are not permitted to have wives of their own, the Papal power justifies them in having somebody else’s wife.” The same article told of a priest who had convinced a woman to refuse sex to her husband until he contributed a certain amount of money to the church.65 Priests likewise used women to control men’s political choices. Describing the Catholic Church’s role in New Mexico’s constitutional convention, J. Q. A. Henry complained that Catholic women were “commanded” to ensure that their husbands voted as instructed by the church.66

The way the men of the APA controversy discussed women provides insights into their notions of manliness. The APA cried out to protect female virtue from priestly debauchery. Both the opposition and the APA decried slander against women as unmanly. The APA allowed a more expansive role for women than their Catholic counterparts did, but nonetheless limited that role to one of marriage and family. Women who strayed too far from traditional female activities posed a threat to male authority.

The gendered rhetoric used by the APA and its Catholic opponents provides a lens through which to view the way San Francisco men conceived of masculinity. The constant invocation of manliness suggests a pervasive anxiety about men’s ability to be men in the 1890s. By harkening to the founding fathers and to Civil War heroes and by employing military language, those engaged in the APA debate cast themselves as patriotic warriors and their opponents as weak-willed, traitorous cowards. The APA and its detractors fought this
debate over four broad territories: the inherent manliness of Catholicism or Protestantism, the patriotism of the APA and of American Catholics, the willingness of a man to stand up for truth and country, and the proper role for and treatment of women.

The APA described the Catholic Church as inherently effeminate. An ineffectual pope presided over his constituency, setting a weak example that trickled down to the rank and file by way of unnaturally celibate priests. Paralyzed by ecclesiastical authority, Catholic men did not have the manliness to succeed individually or to come together and form a successful country. Catholics responded to this synthesis by pointing to various Catholic contributions to world history, including the great Catholic empires of old, the voyage of Columbus, and the church’s Europeanizing influence upon native peoples in South America.

The APA and its detractors sought legitimacy by comparing their ideas to those of the founding fathers and by appealing to heroes of the Civil War. The anti-APA movement was especially anxious to cite examples of Catholic patriotism throughout American history. Both sides employed military metaphors, likening the APA controversy to a war over America. Manly heroics and patriotism would overcome sniveling cowardice and treason.

In this war, the greatest example of valor was the willingness to stand up for principle. Both the APA and the opposition saw themselves as representing the interests of the country against lies and treachery. Those who were willing to speak out were men; those who would not were cowards. The APA argued that the Catholic Church systematically prevented men from thinking for themselves and thereby from speaking out in a manly way.

The APA controversy reached its most emotional in the discussion of women. The APA charged lecherous priests with seducing young girls, wives, and nuns; and the opposition quickly charged the APA with unmanly slander against these women’s reputations. The APA made similar charges against the Catholic Church for not recognizing Protestant marriages and for thus impugning the virtue of Protestant wives. As to the appropriate role for women in society, the Catholic view was the more conservative, coming out against woman suffrage and mocking female reformers. However, *The Monitor* did praise Catholic women who engaged in anti-APA political campaigning. The APA supported suffrage, female education, and women’s reform groups but allowed women to take an increased role only within the traditional bounds of wife and mother. Women who received guidance from the church rather than from a husband represented a threat to the American home and to traditional male authority.

An examination of masculinity in the APA adds a new dimension to previous APA scholarship. Such an analysis sets a political and ethno-religious controversy in the context of contemporary concerns about gender. This study compliments the work of Michael Kimmel, who has posited an ethnic challenge to Protestant manliness in the 1890s, and that of Gail Bederman, who looks at tensions between white and black manliness but does not investigate Catholic-Protestant tensions. Looking at the APA in San Francisco, one can see the way contemporary notions about gender shaped men’s perceptions of themselves and of
women, along with their understanding of religion, of patriotism, and of what it meant to be American.

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NOTES


2 "Men Wanted.,” A. P. A. Magazine March 1897, 1762.


7 San Francisco Examiner, 18 March 1895, 9.

8 For further treatment of the APA’s rise and fall, see especially Kinzer and Knuth.

9 “Romish Church Claims,” A.P.A. Magazine, June 1895, 93.


11 Clipping from San Francisco Call, 30 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 27, Peter C. Yorke Papers, The Gleeson Library, Geschke Center, Rare Book Room, University of San Francisco.


13 Clipping from San Francisco Call, 23 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 16.


16 Clipping from San Francisco Call, 24 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 18.
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"Catholic Pulpit Speaks. Father Ferguson on Charges of the A. P. A. Catholic and Protestant Mission Work in Spanish America and Hawaii," San Francisco Chronicle; 7 October, 1895, 7. Ferguson did not mention the lesser fortunes the Catholic Church had brought to the "warlike red men in the heart of trackless forests" in Minnesota and Quebec.


Henry, "The Relation of Romanism to Crime," Rome's Hand in Our Public Schools, 40.


Clipping from San Francisco Call, 21 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 14. Yorke made a point of citing favorable comments that President Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward made about Hughes; it seems a Protestant endorsement was helpful in legitimizing Yorke's Catholic hero.


Clipping from San Francisco Call, 30 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 27.

Clipping of "Known by Their Fruits: Major Ryan Compares the Product of Protestantism and Romanism. Pointed Advice to Voters. The Orator From Ohio Makes His Last address to the People of This City," San Francisco Call, 30 March 1896, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 2, p. 70.


Clipping of "Known by Their Fruits," Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 2, p. 70.


Clipping from San Francisco Call, 24 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 18.

"Taylor's Pledge. He Refuses to Sign a Document Stating He Is Not an A. P. A. All True Men Must Be Ready to Combine Against This Un-American Bigot. Conspiracy of the Political Bosses to Elect the Standard-Bearer of the Beetle-Browed," The Monitor 17 October, 1896, 1.


Clipping from San Francisco Call, 23 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 16.

Clipping from San Francisco Call, 22 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 15.

Clipping of "Rev. Father Yorke Makes Vigorous Reply. Rev. Donald M. Ross Must Either 'Put Up or Shut Up.' He Will Not Debate. Denies Emphatically the Charges Against the Minotaur, Bishop, Quotes the New York Sun. 'The Catholic Champion Says That Ross Is Either a Liar or an Idiot, or Perhaps Both,'" San Francisco Call, 3 December 1895,
God Give Us Men

Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 2.


41 "Our Stand," The Monitor, 13 October 1894, 4.

4 Clipping from San Francisco Call, 17 October 1896, 2.


34 The "Mother of Harlots" and Our Free Public Schools (n.p., [1894]), 44.


36 Clipping of Yorke letter to the editor, San Francisco Call, 12 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 7.


39 See, for example, clipping from San Francisco Call, 11 December 1895, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 6.


312 Mother of Harlots, 10.


39 Clippings from San Francisco Call, 16 and 17 December 1896, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 8-9.


5 Clippings from San Francisco Call, 6 December 1896, and San Francisco Examiner, [8?] December 1896, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 1, p. 4-5.


39 Mother of Harlots, 22.


36 Clipping of "Mr. Hubbell on Father Yorke. The American Patriot Editor Quotes Alleged Priestly Instructions," San Francisco Call, 1 January 1896, Yorke Scrapbooks, Controversy vol. 2, p. 68.

39 Mother of Harlots, 22.


36 "Horrible Exposure of the Priest's Substitute for Marriage," 4.

39 Henry, "The Relation of Romanism to Illiteracy," Rome's Hand in Our Public Schools, 16.