From Tine
What is a hero? Although there is no widely accepted definition, various attempts to describe this category and its implications have been formulated. Heroes have been presented as an exemplary personification of ideal characteristics that vary considerably according to class, denomination, historical period and gender, and as the object of both veneration and imitation. However, Christian heroes, and Christian heroism in general, have not yet received ample attention. This edition of JMMS includes three papers which focus attention on Christian heroic men and how they occupy the intersection of gender and religious ideas and ideals. Since religion contributes to the construction and transmission of masculine ideals, a focus on these idealized men and their (problematic) acceptance, use and imitation, contributes not only to a better understanding of the historicity, fragility and complexity of Christian “masculinity” but also to a better comprehension of the acceptance and diffusion of ideals and idealized models. Variations on the Christian heroic theme have blended in nationalism and historicity; therefore, these heroes should not be regarded solely as the incarnation of a religious message, but have to be placed within the broader perspective of idealization within various historical, national and denominational contexts. As such, attention to their diffusion and acceptance improves our understanding of their exemplarity, (ab)use and their unifying (community creating) qualities.

The articles on Christian heroes included in this issue of JMMS started off as papers presented at the 2008 European Social Science History Conference in Lisbon in a session on Christian heroes entitled Myths & Men: Historical and Fictional Christian Heroes. As the contributors accessed this subject from various denominational, historical and geographical perspectives, the combination of the papers provided a complex and differentiated view on Christian heroes and heroism. The issue of JMMS at hand explores this complexity and diversity in three papers on Christian heroes in a European context. In the first article, The Exemplary Lives of Christian Heroes as an Historical Construct, Alexander Maurits addresses the use of heroes in the Lund High Church Movement (Sweden) and places them at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, gender and religion. He indicates how historical heroes were widely referred to by theologians during the 1850s and 1860s and how they have to be placed in an evolving nationalistic discourse. Focusing on the Catholic devotional discourse, Tine Van Osselaer accesses the heroic theme in her article, “Heroes of the Heart”: Ideal Men in the Sacred Heart Devotion through an analysis of heroes and heroism in the Sacred Heart Devotion. The article focuses on the changeability and variety of Christian heroic men within the context of Belgian
devotional movements (*Apostolat de la Prière* and *Leagues of the Sacred Heart*) and studies the alleged particularity of Catholic heroism(s). In her article *Domestic Heroes: Saint Nicholas and the Catholic Family Father, 1830-1900*, Josephine Hoegaerts reassesses domestic religious practices as she focuses on the modelling of one particular Christian hero, Saint Nicholas. She highlights the diversity of his images and legends and points out how this Christian hero confirmed domestic constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Our articles on Christian heroes all focus on European cases; as such they are in line with the increasing attention on Christian masculinities in European research. The interest in the interaction between masculinity and religiosity has materialized in recent European research projects such as the Scandinavian *Christian Manliness, a Paradox of Modernity: Men and Religion in a Northern-European Context, 1840 to 1940* and the Belgian *In Search for the Good Catholic M/F: Feminization and Masculinity in Belgian Catholicism (c 1750-1950)*. Both these projects have authors contributing to this (and previous) editions of JMMS: see also issue 1(1) for Yvonne Maria Werner’s *Manliness and Catholic Mission in the Nordic Countries* and Anna Prestjan’s *Christian Social Reform Work as Christian Masculinization? A Swedish Example*. Our contributions have profited from the amount of work already published and discussed by these research groups and similar projects.

I have been very lucky to meet Josephine and Alexander and have them cooperate on this subject; I thank them for all their work and enthusiasm. I would also like to thank the editor Joseph Gelfer and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and support. A special thanks also goes to Prof. De Smaele who acted as a discussant at the Lisbon Conference and stimulated our work. I hope the readers enjoy the articles on Christian heroes and heroism as much as we did working on them.

**From Joseph**

Thanks to Tine for guiding these three papers to the point of publication in JMMS. I believe it is fair to say that the Scandinavian and Belgian projects to which Tine refers result in the Northern European region currently leading the way in the study of masculinities and religion. Indeed, the Nordic countries are the source of a huge wealth of research into masculinities in general, enough to sustain their own regional journal, *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*.

The final paper in this issue is by Curtis Coats. His paper, *God, Man, Then ... Wait, How Does That Go? Emerging Gender Identities in 20-something Evangelicals* analyzes gender identities in the evangelical ministry Lamphouse. Curtis argues that while the gender identities of Lamphouse are largely framed by a patriarchal discourse, there remains a spectrum of subject positions which comprises strong traditionalism, interpretive traditionalism, cultural traditionalism, apolitical egalitarianism, and egalitarianism.

In the book review section Philip Culbertson reviews Chris Brickell’s *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand*; Klaus-Peter Adam reviews Ken Stone’s *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective*; Marc Beard reviews Colleen M. Conway’s *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco Roman Masculinity*; Shane McCorristine reviews Malcolm Gaskill’s *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy*; J. Shola Omotola reviews Deborah Orr’s *Feminist Politics: Identity,
I want to conclude with a word about aggregation of JMMS content. As JMMS embarks upon its third year of publication it is more important than ever that our potential readership is maximized. To this end, we have arranged for three aggregators to carry JMMS content, which are in the process of going live: EBSCO, Gale-Cengage and Informit. JMMS will still remain an open access journal available at the same website, but the content will also be carried in those three journal databases. This gives JMMS a wider readership, particularly for academics searching on terms within those databases who might not otherwise find us. It also provides a level of backup and archival functionality: if, for example, you were to visit this website on one of the rare occasions it is not working properly, you should be able to access JMMS in one of the above three databases via your library’s institutional subscription.

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The Exemplary Lives of Christian Heroes as an Historical Construct

Alexander Maurits

In this text I examine how leading theologians within the Church of Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century elaborated on historical men as heroes in public speeches and in their works on the history of Christianity. The Christian hero as a prototype for contemporary Christians was emphasized within an evolving nationalistic discourse. The historical hero was of crucial importance for the idea of society as an organism and the conception of history and its development which some of the leading theologians within the Church of Sweden fostered. By analyzing the hero we can also elucidate the theologians’ view of manliness and masculinity. Thus the role of the heroes can be found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

Background
This article is part of my ongoing Ph.D. project on the so-called Lund High Church Movement within the Church of Sweden during the second half of the nineteenth century. The men who formed this movement had a conservative ecclesiology, a conservative political agenda, and a major influence on Swedish intellectual and academic discourse. From a broader perspective the aim of my project is to analyze the interaction between religion and the construction of masculinity in Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is clear that the theologians I investigate tried to protect the dominating and normative position that the Church of Sweden, a state church with a Lutheran confession, had held in Swedish society from the end of the sixteenth century up until the mid-nineteenth century. They directed severe criticism towards the modernization of society, the abolition of class society and the incipient female emancipation. They opposed liberal reforms and defended the very strict laws regarding religious worship. The moral and ethical standards of society were dependent on the protection of the family as an institution.

Since like-minded persons were appointed to positions of authority at the theological faculty in Lund during the mid-nineteenth century this faculty’s influence upon theology in Sweden grew strong. This coincided with major changes in leading positions in the Church of Sweden, which strengthened the influence of the men at the Faculty of Theology in Lund even more. The plan of action put forward by the
Lund High Church theologians, which comprised both theological and political aspects, was distinguished by its conformism and was presented to the public in *The Swedish Church Journal (Swensk kyrkotidning)* between 1855 and 1863.

The position of the theologians can be regarded as a comprehensive European religious tendency, which was a reaction against the progress of liberalism and an augmented secularization of society (McLeod, 2000a, pp. 3–12, 285–289; Blückert, 2002, p. 115; Lehmann, 1997, pp. 10–13; McLeod, 2000b). This conservative program had an influence on the theologians’ view on gender and masculinity. By studying High Church theologians Wilhelm Flensburg (b. 1819, d. 1897), Anton Niklas Sundberg (b. 1818, d. 1900) and Ebbe Gustaf Bring (b. 1814, d. 1884), my intention is to give an example of the conception of manhood, ideals of masculinity, friendship and the role of women, as well as the interrelationship of the church and Swedish society.¹

**Aim and Questions**

In this paper I aim to analyze how the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement used history and the concept of the historical hero. Obviously they were influenced by the concept of the hero as elaborated on by Luther and Hegel (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 80–137), but how did they apply this idea? Did they use historiography to further their political and theological aims within the Church of Sweden? It is my intention to describe how Flensburg, Sundberg and Bring interpreted history in a way which gives legitimacy to a certain kind of Lutheran faith and social order. In this paper I analyze the articles in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* which, by other scholars, have been considered examples of the theologians’ view of the concept of the Christian hero and how this hero could promote a moral and religious social order. By looking at the text from a gender perspective and analyzing the characters of the heroes, I go further than previous research. In addition to this, I also scrutinize two speeches held in an ecclesiastical context: 1) a meditation held by Sundberg in the Riddarholm Church in Stockholm on the remembrance of the king Gustaphus II Adolphus in 1882, and 2) a sermon by Bring in the Cathedral of Linköping 1883 in commemoration of the reformer Martin Luther.

A hypothesis of this paper is that the heroes presented in the material were used to express a certain ecclesiology, the distinctive historiography of the Lund High Church Movement, a nationalistic conviction, and a sex-typing ideology formed by the Lutheran system of *tabula oeconomica* (the idea of three estates). Thus the hero of the theologians is found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

To get a clear focus on the question of the use of history and gender, I explore the concept of history as articulated by the theologians, and how they depicted the heroes which they described in their works on ecclesiastical history. On a theoretical level I am inspired by the current debate among historians about the uses of history and historical consciousness. The Swedish historian Peter Aronsson relates historical relics (historic culture) with the use of history and historical consciousness. The historical relics are different kinds of source material: statements, traditions and so forth that make it possible to connect the past with the present and the future. Use of history occurs when parts of the historical relics are used to form an historical consciousness. Thus, use of history means manipulating

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¹ For more information, see McLeod, 2000b.
historical relics to form specifically meaningful and action-based entities. Accordingly, historical consciousness is the sum of different uses of history or, in other words, the perception of the relationship of the past, present and the future which exists at any given time. Aronsson argues that the use of history and the reinterpretation of history are intensified during periods characterized by a revolutionary or subversive stance (Aronsson, 2004, pp. 7, 17–19).

From the theories outlined by Aronsson, and in connection with the assumption that the nineteenth century was a second confessional age, I argue that it would be relevant to speak of a confessional use of history (Blaschke, 2000 pp. 38–58; Blaschke, 2002, pp. 7–9, 13–18; Jarlert, 2003). In such a use of history, historical relics are activated to support confessional aims. I consider it important to include religion as a category of analysis. Unfortunately it has been common to exclude religion within historical research and especially when discussing the use of history (Karlsson, 1999, pp. 57–61). In addition to the discussion of the use of history, the gender perspective and the question of masculinity are of major interest in my work on the Lund High Church Movement. The historian Mary Spongberg has emphasized that ideals of masculinity were an immanent part of the historiography of the nineteenth century and that history writing was used as a tool to foster men (Spongberg, 2002). Clearly the historiography of the time was male gendered and reproduced a patriarchal system. It would thus be reasonable to consider ideals of masculinity as a constituent part of a confessional use of history.

In his book Chosen Peoples Anthony D. Smith argues that nationalism and national identity have their roots in religion. Consequently, ethnicity and religion are key concepts to understanding nationalism and national identity. Smith argues that the ideas of the nation as a chosen people, the hero and the golden age were constitutive for national identity. As to the heroes, Smith argues that they were models of conduct, and that they exemplified true virtue and thus were worthy of emulation (Smith, 2003, pp. 1–25, 41). According to the Swedish theologian Kjell Blückert, an ecclesial type of nationalism grew stronger within the Church of Sweden during the nineteenth century as a response to sectarian movements and changes towards a multi-ideological society. The purpose of this ecclesial nationalism was to “preserve, reconstruct and develop a lost unity”. Blückert also emphasizes that a pronounced ecclesiology and a touch of nationalism was central in Church history writings of the period (Blückert, 2002, pp. 106, 159–161; in addition to this see Thorkildsen, 2006).

From the works of the historian George L. Mosse it could be argued that there also is a connection between nationalism and masculinity (Mosse, 1985). Blückert argues that both the national and the ecclesial discourse of the nineteenth century were male gendered (Blückert, 2002, p. 105).

The Concept of History in Swensk Kyrkotidning
According to theologian Erik Wallgren, German idealism and the philosophy of history accentuated by Hegel had a vast influence on the Lund High Church Movement. From this ‘right-wing’ Hegelianism the theologians could make a critical judgment of contemporary ideas such as rationalism, liberalism and pietism. A central point of departure for them was the conviction that history should be judged not from the abstract terminology of the present time, but rather seen as an
organically evolved entity. The concept of personality was closely related to the idea of society and history as an organism. This concept was not interpreted in the narrow sense of our time. For these theologians it referred to larger entities such as the nation and the people, and it was these larger entities that shaped history (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 80–83; Beiser, 2005, pp. 261–281).

In this structural system the freedom of the individual was restricted. It was only in interplay with the organically evolved social order that the individual had the possibility to create something new. Thus the concept of history and social order was an essential component of a collectivist way of thinking in which individualism and autonomy were strictly prohibited. Within society the individual was assigned to a certain position and function as a part of the organism. This theoretical superstructure corresponded well to the Lutheran teachings of the three estates, which was crucial for the theologians (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 83–84).²

Hegel’s philosophy of history had a theological touch, since divine intention was said to manoeuvre historical development. The goal for this development was complete liberty, and was fulfilled when divine intention was brought to perfection. The goal was the victory of the divine spirit in all human domains. This predetermined development could be seen as an explanation of the insistence of the theologians on a certain Lutheran social order and uniformity. It could also help to explain the maintenance of what the theologians considered to be a God-given social order and their frenetic criticism of what they considered to be dissolving tendencies within society. The upholders of the ideas articulated within the Lund High Church Movement considered the Church to be an essential part of social progress. Accordingly, the Church should avoid isolation and express its divine message on all level of society (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 85–101).

Earlier Research on the Hero Theme in Swensk Kyrkotidning

Closely related to this concept of history was the idea of the hero. This doctrine could even be considered a condensate of the concept of history accentuated by the theologians. As mentioned above, divine spirit was seen as the creator of, and the driving force in, history. Progress occurred when the intention of this holy spirit was made fully manifest within the human social order (according to the theologians within the three estates) and in different individuals (Wallgren, 1959, p. 103).³ But in addition to this, God could further mankind’s development in a resolute way. By choosing different persons in which God planted his intention for history and the future, God made further development possible. The men which were chosen were described as heroes. Initially God intended to let his spirit be active through all humans, but this plan was overthrown by mankind’s sinful nature. In contrast to other humans, these heroes could grasp God’s true intention as reflected throughout history (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 99, 102–104, 112–114).

The heroes distinguished themselves by their capacity to establish new epochs. They also had the gift to articulate the characteristics and ideas of a new epoch and they could transform these ideas into action. In this they symbolized, and actually were, the ideas of the new epoch incarnated. Thus, most of the heroes could be identified during historical periods which the theologians considered to be foundational. These periods were seen to be prophetic and they were normative prototypes for all other periods in Christian history. If contemporary times seemed
chaotic, these historical periods and their heroes could help with advice and guidance.

In his solid survey of the theological system of the movement, Erik Wallgren has shown that Flensburg was the one among the three theologians who, on a theoretical level, emphasized the role of the heroes most fervently. He viewed them as leaders and educators. The theologians held the opinion that society in general and the Church in particular were characterized by the work and progress of these great men. These manly heroes illuminated divine guidance in the history of the Swedish nation. According to Wallgren the theologians were of the opinion that a salubrious people should look to the exemplary lives of their great men. It was in these heroes that the idea of the nation was incarnated (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 104–106, 109–110). Thus Wallgren sees the connection between the nation and the historical hero in the work of the theologians, but he does not connect these ideas to the fervent nationalism of the latter nineteenth century. Written in 1959, Wallgren’s research also leaves out the question of gender.

According to Swensk Kyrkotidning, heroic efforts were most common during the apostolic period and the Reformation. The apostolic period was considered to be a prototype for the Church in all times. In the Reformation, the hero Martin Luther appeared and reunited the Church with the lost principle of the apostolic time. It is important to note that Flensburg made a distinction between the earthly heroes who fostered the causes of religion and morality, and Jesus Christ who was seen as the absolute hero of all times. While earthly heroes try to restrict the sin of humans, Christ had defeated sin once and for all.

The Concept of the Hero in Swensk Kyrkotidning
The theme of the hero occurs in several essays in the Swensk Kyrkotidning (1855–1863). One example is an article about the relation of the sectarian movements to the Church published in 1855. According to Flensburg a sectarian tendency can be traced within every ecclesiastical community. The reason for this tendency is that the ideas and convictions of the Reformation tend to be defused as the Church is organized with a constitution, an established dogma and cult. This results in a spiritual slumber. In this situation certain men with a reformatory personality appear in order to restore the Church. Despite the heroic character of these men there seems to be some flaws:

The endeavors of these men are easily to be regarded as something separatist since they are considered to oppose the permanent social order of society. This feeling is even more supported since they often are afflicted with the character of humans to refrain from revolutionary tendencies. (Flensburg, 1855, p. 216, translation mine)

Thus, according to Flensburg, certain elected men, the heroes, could restore the Church according to its true nature. In times of crises and hardship these men stand out with their reformatory personalities. Like prophets they promote an alternative order which contrasts with the prevailing order. But as the quotation above shows, these men also have their flaws. They may even abandon the good
cause because of the temptation to receive earthly recognition by giving way to revolutionary tendencies.

In a review of the book Die Zeichen der Zeit of the German liberal theologian C. C. J. Bunsen, Sundberg surveyed the ecclesiastical situation in Sweden and emphasized the organic concept of history which was of crucial importance for him and the other theologians. Sundberg emphasized how the divine spirit worked in the present time and manoeuvred the further development of moral ways of life. However, the divine spirit itself seldom interfered in history. Instead God used different institutions in society and humans as tools to bring the divine plan to fulfillment. This caused a problem since there was a discrepancy between the intention of God and what actually occurred in the human domain due to mankind’s weak character and sinful nature. In that sense the spirit of the times was a mere caricature of divine intention. Luckily there were certain humans that had a better understanding of divine intention:

A chain of witnesses for the truth could be found in history. In defiance of the flaws of humanity they are the tools through which God’s intention in different times is executed. This task is not performed with the consent of the majority, but rather in strong opposition to it. (Sundberg, 1856, pp. 113–114, translation mine)

Once again we see that the hero (in the quotation referred to as a “witness of truth”) was a man who gave utterance to the divine message and thus stood in opposition to society. The quotation shows how the theologians regarded different individuals as divine tools.

In another book review, Flensburg discusses three books of the German church historian Karl Rudolph Hagenbach. It is interesting to note that Flensburg appreciates the books of Hagenbach due to the fact that they go beyond the general trends within the history of the Church. According to Flensburg the book is worthy of appreciation since Hagenbach paid great attention to the important Christian individuals of different periods. Flensburg is of the opinion that such a biographical historiography is of great value when it comes to describing the endeavor of the true Church throughout history:

It is not sufficient for the author to give a general and thus rather colorless account of the state of the Church during different epochs. Instead the innermost thought of the Church, its intention and strife during different periods appears in individual form in its magnificent characters. In men such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, as Athanasius, Augustine and Chrysostom, as Luther and Melanchton and Zwingli and Calvin, as Johan Arndt and Paul Gerhard, as Spener and Schleiermacher the Church has a concentrated revelation of the divine spirit which leads the Church in truth and righteousness. The inner thoughts of these individuals are the examples brought to our attention by the author. We will forget ourselves to live and fight and suffer with them, we take joy in their courage of faith, we take part in their interest, we take great joy in their victories. In connection with the men mentioned here and their equals, the survey of the author presents us
with a sky full of holy witnesses. They have all sealed the truth of Christianity and the Reformation with their blood or renounced the happiness and welfare of the present time to plant the Cross of Christianity in surroundings where the name of Christ wasn’t mentioned before. Surely, it’s difficult to imagine a more marvellous gallery of holy pictures. (Flensburg, 1857, p. 95, translation mine)

The innermost thought of the Church became obvious in great Christian legendary figures. As we can see in the quotation, Flensburg exemplifies this with some acknowledged priests or theologians throughout Christian history. Since the theological position differed among these great theologians it seems that the theological standpoint was of minor importance for Flensburg. Rather he seems to have considered their faithfulness towards the Church and the confession of the Church as the most important part of their heroic conduct. Flensburg considers these men to be role models and sources of inspiration for all Christians. With their lives and conduct these men were regarded to be holy witnesses of the faith. There are also other examples of Flensburg emphasizing the role of the heroes as a prototype and encouragement for high morals among other Christians (Flensburg, 1868, p. 13).

It is somewhat strange that Flensburg seems to regard all theologians or priests mentioned in the quotation above as guardians of the truth brought about by the Reformation since most of them were dead by that time. How then should one interpret Flensburg in this quotation? Could the emphasis on some of the great fathers of the Church be seen as if Flensburg himself belonged to another time, a time of upheaval from the Christian order? Perhaps great men of history and golden ages of the Church were inspirational for Flensburg in a time when the Church was being scrutinized. It is obvious that Flensburg regarded the way that Hagenbach surveyed history almost as a religious tract. In some sense edification seems to have been the most important part played by the historical heroes. According to Flensburg the exemplary lives of the heroes gave Christian leaders the strength to resolve the most critical ecclesiastical problems (Flensburg, 1857, p. 95).

In the passage quoted above, Flensburg also discusses the character of the great men of the Church. To have good, moral character was a major theme in the discourse on masculinity within the bourgeoisie and other groups during the nineteenth century (Tjeder, 2003). The characters of the heroes were marked by their courage of faith and their willingness to give their lives for the Christian faith if necessary. The quotation above also verifies that stated earlier in this paper: divine spirit and intention were expressed through certain chosen people, and obviously they were all men.

In another review, Sundberg discussed some published lectures by the Swiss theologian Jean Pierre Trottet. Amongst other things Sundberg reflected upon the first Christians, their community and ideals. At the outset of the review Sundberg stated that the apostolic period was normative for the Church in all times and he also considered it to be the age of Christian heroes. For Sundberg these heroes served as a model for everyone in all times. Since they were the Disciples of Christ they were fully aware of divine intention. The apostles were to be regarded as the pillars of the Church and its most distinguished teachers. Their great work during the
foundation of the Church rendered them a good example for the whole Church throughout history (Sundberg, 1857, p. 161).

Once more we can conclude that heroic conduct was reserved for men. As we have seen, Sundberg regarded these men to have a special position in the history of Christianity. The apostolic period was a normative epoch and Sundberg even claims that in this age the seed was planted for everything that was to happen later in the history of the Church. This position was motivated for Sundberg with the idea that at the beginning of each new epoch there were brave men who could designate the direction which should be taken in the future. Accordingly there were men other than the apostles who had this gift, though the influence of the apostle was not only restricted to the apostolic period but was to give guidance to all future generations (Sundberg, 1857, p. 161).

In another article Flensburg discusses the relation between the individual and divine spirit. At some point a person becomes aware of the will of the divine spirit. When this occurs the individual receives real freedom. He is then fully aware of the will of God. It is only when such a relation occurs that the spirit begins to influence the individual and use the person as a divine tool. The heroes are examples of individuals with such an understanding of the will of divine spirit. It is the hero who possesses the most sincere and highly developed personality. Divine intention takes its uttermost expression in the hero (Flensburg, 1859, pp. 19–21).

With regard to this quality the heroes are considered by Flensburg to play a certain role within society that can be likened to being the eyes, reason, leaders and educators of other humans. According to Flensburg some people adapt to this order and follow the heroes faithfully. Others dismiss the ideas of the heroes, and this insubordination causes consequences for all of society (Flensburg, 1859, p. 112–114). In this regard Flensburg has his contemporary Swedish context in mind—especially the current difficulties of the Church of Sweden. The hero in Flensburg’s article is the defender of the existing order against tendencies of religious separatism. In accordance with the Lund High Church Movement the hero defends the social order based on the Lutheran teaching of the three estates. Thus the hero is important as the promoter of the political and the ecclesiastical agenda of the Movement.

The use of the hero to provide answers to contemporary difficulties also becomes obvious when Flensburg makes a comparison between the sectarian movements of his own times and the Reformation. Flensburg dismissed the idea that there were any similarities between these two. Even if the Reformation could be regarded as something new, it was not the intention of Martin Luther to abandon the principles of the Church as the contemporary sectarian movements were about to do. The only intention of Luther was to purify the Church from false tradition and to restore faithfulness to God. It was this subordination to God and his eagerness to work for the salvation of all people that drove him to lead the work of the Reformation with a submissive mind. This, Flensburg considered an act of a true Christian hero (Flensburg, 1859, p. 374). Thus, Flensburg used Luther to counteract the ecclesiastical initiatives in his own time which he rejected.

The obedient Lutheran had a true Christian faith and he made great sacrifices to bring other Christians to salvation. This is one of the most important characteristics of the Christian hero according to Flensburg, though it would be going
too far to say that the hero of the Reformation was able to fulfil his mission by himself or due to his good character. According to Flensburg, Luther and the other reformers doubted if they should overthrow the old system. For these heroes the Reformation meant sorrow and spiritual agony beyond words. In this difficult situation “the true and holy spirit” came to rescue them and gave them the courage to complete the work of the Reformation (Flensburg, 1859, p. 375). Thus, a hero was in need of divine support to succeed.

An important aspect of Flensburg’s hero ideal is the division he makes between the heroes of this world and Jesus Christ, who he regards as the ultimate hero. While earthly heroes merely restrict sin, Christ totally defeats it. Thus the position of Christ is unique and Flensburg considers him to be the only true hero of freedom. Compared to this, the achievements of earthly heroes are but momentary (Flensburg, 1859, p. 116).

The Exemplary Lives of Two Great Christian Heroes

Gustavus Adolphus

The Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1632) occupies a special place in Swedish nationalist historical writing. Traditionally he has been regarded as the great king who gave his life for the cause of Sweden and Protestantism during the Thirty Years' War. Some decades after his death on the battlefield close to the German city of Lützen he was considered to be a hero. At a commemoration on 6 November 1882 Archbishop Sundberg held a meditation during a sermon in the Riddarholm Church in Stockholm. In this meditation Sundberg spoke from the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt 16:25). This Bible passage refers to a certain demand on the Christian disciple where Jesus says that the one who saves his life will lose it and the one who loses his life for the sake of Christ will find it. According to Sundberg, Christ refers to two different attitudes. On the one hand is the selfish person who only seeks to satisfy his/her earthly needs. According to Sundberg such an attitude negatively affects the person’s relationship with God. Sundberg also emphasizes that selfishness has had devastating effects on both individuals and nations throughout history (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 3–4; Oredsson, 1992). On the other hand the latter part of the gospel speaks about the opposite kind of personality. In this case the passage refers to:

...those people who wander the roads of the Lord, those people who ignore their own needs and take the cross and follow Him, those who realize that the gift of life is His gift and that this is a gift that should be managed for eternal purpose and thus not be used arbitrarily. Instead it should and must be sacrifice, to honor his name when it’s requested. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 4, translation mine)

Sundberg states that the self-sacrificing human bears his cross and follows Christ. Such a person took his vocation very seriously and was even prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Christian faith if necessary. Such a person was like Christ himself and the martyrs of the Church. A Christian had to walk the narrow path of Christ to be able to win his own life. In doing so, a Christian gained the
greatest victory of all; when arriving at the end of their earthly life, they could defeat the power of death (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5).

The theme of putting one’s life in the hands of God was a current one on the 250th anniversary of the death of Gustavus Adolphus. Since the subject of the commemoration was the foremost king of Sweden who died for a divine cause, Sundberg considered the day to be most important (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5). According to Sundberg, Gustavus Adolphus was a hero chosen by God who was given the task of glorifying His name. Thus, Gustavus Adolphus held a unique position in Swedish historical accounts:

Could there be any Swede—man or woman—who rejects to recall the glorious memory of the brief legend of his short life? Is there anyone who isn’t called upon to send a sincere prayer of gratitude to God for the unconquerable force he bestowed upon the hero? In a difficult time he was elected to glorify the name of God. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5, translation mine)⁶

For selecting the king as a divine tool, God deserves all the thanksgiving. It is God alone who makes the king a hero, with the purpose of glorifying His holy name. In that sense the king reminds us of the biblical story of Jesus.

In his résumé of the situation in Sweden during the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, Sundberg is eager to emphasize that the country faced major challenges in both the political and ecclesiastical domains. He especially considered the threat against the ideas of the Reformation to be evident. According to Sundberg the strengthened position of the Roman Catholic Church together with the alliance of this church and the emperor, threatened to overthrow liberty within both the domains of society and religion. All that had been won during the Reformation was now under attack (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5). In this difficult situation Gustavus Adolphus came to rescue the liberty won by the Reformation:

Without considering the risks for his life he entered, he won victory and fell. ‘The best precautionary measure is to put trust in God,’ he was recalled to have said on a previous occasion. In accordance with this humble and noble-minded idea of his heart he acted. This idea was the foundation for when he decided upon, and when he accomplished, his great achievements to defend the faith and the fatherland, which in his mind were one and the same. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 6, translation mine)

Here we can see clearly what characteristics Sundberg ascribes to Gustavus Adolphus. His reason to enter the Thirty Years’ War and all of the political efforts of the king were a result of his humility and noble mind. For the king the major task was to defend both the Lutheran faith and the fatherland, which he, according to Sundberg, considered to be the same thing. In this respect the king had the same conviction as the Lund High Church Movement theologians. Sundberg was also of the opinion that the duty of the king to intervene in the European conflicts of the time was more important than listening to critics who considered the war to be a reckless undertaking.
It was Sundberg’s opinion that the campaign of Gustavus Adolphus was marked by self-denial and outspoken confidence. According to Sundberg the success of the king during the war was a consequence of his Christian faith, and especially his devoted prayer life. Sundberg meant that the sincerity of the prayers of the king were the core reason for—and also the best way to portray—the success of the king and the Swedish people (Sundberg, 1882, p. 7). Sundberg also sees the intense prayers of the king as evidence of his altruistic intentions.

From accounts of the king’s endeavors on the battlefields of Lützen on 6 November 1632 we gather that Sundberg was of the opinion that the king’s political aims coincided with the protestant cause. Sundberg also had the opinion that the king sacrificed himself for the cause of the Christian faith and thus gained immediate entrance to the Kingdom of God. In this regard it is worth mentioning that Sundberg connected the act of the king with the condition of the Swedish people. Even if the war occurred on the European continent, the actions of the king had repercussions for those living in the fatherland. As a consequence of this, the entire population mourned the death of the king. Due to the symbiosis between Gustavus Adolphus and his subjects, the Swedish people were part of his extraordinary act of sacrifice (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 6–8).

At the end of the meditation Sundberg raises the question whether or not the listeners had lived up to the heritage of the king. Were people faithful to the confession of the Church and the fatherland in the same way as the king had been? By this emphasis on the close relationship between thanksgiving and critical self-examination Sundberg thus uses the hero as a corrective role model. Is the audience prepared to make the same sacrifice as the fallen hero? Sundberg seems to be of the opinion that the people of Sweden had inherited a great country from the heroes of previous epochs, but that they had forgotten to uphold the same moral standard for which the heroes gave their lives. Instead, Swedes of the nineteenth century tended to behave contrary to the heroes of earlier periods. According to Sundberg the people of contemporary times seemed to prioritize the needs of the individual instead of the good of society as a whole. As a result it was possible to disregard things that during earlier periods were considered holy and inviolable (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 8–9). It is obvious that Sundberg used history to promote a social order that he cherished. In this case an historical confessional event becomes normative for the duties of the Swedish citizen.

Martin Luther
If Sundberg meditated on a national hero, the bishop of the diocese of Linköping had another perspective when preaching about Martin Luther. At a memorial service in connection with a Luther jubilee in the Cathedral of Linköping on 10 November 1883, Ebbe Gustaf Bring speaks from the Book of Proverbs (10:7). This Bible passage says that the memory of the just is blessed. According to Bring this passage reminds us of the fact that there are phenomena and ideas which last in a world that is mostly perishable. If God supervises the act of a person, the consequences of this act can go beyond the lifetime of this particular person. Bring refers to the Lutheran teaching of the three estates and emphasizes that all persons, without regard to class, can strive within the domains of his or her vocation to promote the intention of God further than one’s own lifetime. However, such individuals chosen by God are few and
therefore more important in this respect. These divine tools are leaders and pioneers on the road of righteousness (Bring, 1883, p. 5–6).

In his sermon Bring speaks about one of these selected men—the reformer Martin Luther. But Bring finds it important to emphasize that the jubilee and the sermon should not be seen as a cult offering to a genius, or as praise to Luther for having an unimpeachable theological standard. The thanksgiving should be directed to God and not Luther, since God was the one to choose Luther as a divine tool. Throughout his life Luther was brought up by God to become a reformer of the Church and according to Bring it was God who planted the ideas of the Reformation in Luther (Bring, 1883, pp. 10–11).

From Bring’s point of view it is obvious that God used Luther for divine purposes. In some sense the intention of God is incarnated in Luther. Therefore, it is important to be careful with the tribute to the hero, since it is not the hero but rather God within the hero who accomplishes the good things. A sincere faith is a prerequisite to being a hero. According to Bring it was when Luther became aware of the importance of the principles of the Reformation that he was able to commence the fight for evangelical emancipation (Bring, 1883, pp. 11–12).

In his sermon Bring also reflects upon the concept of liberty and he argues that Luther was an advocate of freedom but that he had to fight misleading concepts of freedom. According to Bring he had to do this since there was a widespread misuse of the concept of evangelical freedom in his own times. Such false understandings of freedom caused some people to misinterpret divine intention and threaten the social order established by God. Since Luther, according to Bring, was faithful to the word of God, he could avoid such misinterpretations. Thus Luther purified the Christian faith but also defended the established social order (Bring, 1883, pp. 15–17). It is clear that Bring criticized certain trends within Swedish society in the late nineteenth century by preaching about these issues. As mentioned above, he and the other Lund High Church Movement theologians considered the established social order to be challenged by a dissolution promoted by religious movements who considered themselves faithful to the gospel.

Like Sundberg, Bring ends his sermon by emphasizing that gratitude toward God and Luther must include penance and soul-searching. Everyone had to ask themselves whether he or she had administered the heritage of Luther correctly. The question was if a person was truly Lutheran. Even if the purpose of a sermon is rather different from the purpose of historical writings, this sermon by Bring can be seen to be another example of confessional use of history. If this use of history is implicit in the first part of the sermon it becomes explicit at the end. Bring takes the example of Luther’s adversaries to emphasize that even in the nineteenth century there were many people who searched for a false freedom not supported by the Bible. Many people are also only searching for their own success and welfare in the world. In accordance with his picture of Luther, Bring repudiates the widespread tendencies in his period to ignore the Church of Sweden for the sake of other religious communities. Even if these communities claimed to represent the Christian message and freedom, they resembled the false doctrines that Luther had to fight. Both then and now such communities formed a threat to the established social order (Bring, 1883, pp. 18–19). It is clear that the question of social and ecclesiastical order and the definition of freedom are central to Bring’s use of history. In connection with
Aronsson’s terminology, Bring uses historical relics to form an historical consciousness that promotes his ideology. To this end and to strengthen his argumentation, he used the great Martin Luther.

**Conclusion**

The idea that God chooses certain men to serve as a model for other Christians and to impel social change is an essential part of the concept of history held by the Lund High Church Movement. In research on nationalism it has been argued that the idea that certain countries were chosen by God, who furthered the development of that particular nation, was an important component in the nationalistic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century. This investigation also shows that the idea that certain men were chosen was widespread (Hutchison & Lehmann, 1994). It is of interest to note that nationalistic fervor played a prominent part in the rhetoric of the theologians. In the Swedish context it has been common to regard fervent nationalism as a phenomenon which had an impact on a broader scale and at all levels of society primarily in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

At an earlier stage the nationalist discourse was confined to the upper strata of society and among academic historians (Edqvist, 2001, pp. 17–18). Among the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement a nationalistic rhetoric and the promotion of Christian ideals were already interwoven during the mid-nineteenth century. Thus the texts analyzed contained a distinct nationalistic pathos. To take Flensburg as an example, he seems to have held the opinion that a nationalistic ideal was an inherent part of people’s mentality and that this idea is epitomized by the chosen hero (Flensburg, 1858, p. 52; Flensburg, 1859, p. 24). It is clear that the Lund High Church Movement theologians expressed what Blückert refers to as “ecclesial nationalism”. It is also evident that ecclesiology and nationalism was a central theme in the history writing within the Lund High Church Movement.

The theologians regarded the chosen men, i.e. the “heroes”, as tools of God, having as their main task the defense of the Christian faith. This position often meant an exposure to criticism from people who offended the faith. The high ideals that the heroes expressed were often in opposition to existing trends within society. It is my conviction that the aim of the heroic deeds as articulated by the theologians, was that they would serve as role models. The hero symbolized a good Christian. He was characterized by his trust in God, his religious zeal and his willingness to refrain from the success and the wellbeing of this world to promote the cause of the Christian faith. Like Christ, he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the salvation of his Christian sisters and brothers. Due to his faithfulness and strong belief he was the perfect example and source of inspiration for Christians in all times. Since the hero was well acquainted with the intention of the spirit of God he was considered an obvious leader and educator. He could subordinate himself to the will of God and was humility and self-denial personified. In a traditional Christian context these men were generally Christian paragons of virtue, but during the nineteenth century they often became associated with femininity.

Although the Christian hero was in possession of all these exemplary virtues he couldn’t accomplish anything without the help of God. The Christian worship of the hero was strongly restricted and on several occasions the theologians emphasized that the hero was only a divine tool and thus the gratitude and the glory
was God’s alone. Obviously it was impossible to focus only on the hero within an orthodox Lutheran context.

The Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus was considered to be a true hero. Like Christ he bore the burden of the cross. The fallen king had taken his vocation seriously since he had not hesitated to sacrifice his life for the sake of the faith. For Sundberg the king was an imitator of Christ and with his act of sacrifice, he like Christ, glorified the name of God. As to Gustavus Adolphus as a hero, it is important to note that Sundberg emphasized the importance of prayer for the king. Sundberg regarded this as the most important explanation of Gustavus Adolphus’ success as king. It is also interesting to reflect upon the fact that his heroism was intensified by his death on the battlefield. According to Sundberg this heroic act—to give one’s life for the faith—rendered the king even more glorious and gave him direct entrance to the Kingdom of God.

Looking at the two speeches held to honor the memory of Gustavus Adolphus and Martin Luther it becomes apparent that the myth of the hero was used as a corrective device for the people who listened to or read the speeches. To me, positioning the hero as an ideal role model seems to be the most important function of the myths about these brave men. In both speeches the question is asked whether or not the listener is prepared to make an equal sacrifice for the faith and the nation. In this regard one should note that the historical heroes were used to promote the nationalistic discourse of the nineteenth century. This is most obvious when considering Sundberg’s description of the heroic king Gustavus Adolphus. In this king, the Christian hero and the national hero merged into one. In the case of the king, his deeds should be considered equal to the highest sacrifice of losing one’s life for the Christian faith and the fatherland.

In the sacred roots of nationalism the hero as corrective and exemplary was very important, according to Anthony D. Smith. The sacred past stimulates emulation and results in an eagerness from the public to adopt the virtues of the hero. It is, as Smith emphasized, not the person of the hero which is important, rather their virtues, conduct and qualities (Smith, 2003, pp. 41, 171).

In connection to the discussion above concerning the use of history it is interesting to note that Smith (2003) says that, “Documents and artefacts and oral traditions could be used by nationalist movements, under the influence of Romanticism, to seek and recover a golden age for the designated nation, and to draw from it the moral lessons needed to mobilize and unify the people.” (p. 190). Such a description fits very well with the actions of the Lund High Church Movement.

Even though the Christian hero often held a high moral standard, he did not have to be perfect. Even a hero could yield to a temptation and in his zeal for the Christian faith go too far. Christ was considered by the theologians to be the only perfect hero. He was the only one who had defeated the sinfulness which held humanity as a whole imprisoned. Thus, Christ was the only true hero of freedom (compare Throughton, 2006). Tine Van Osselaer (2008) has emphasized that Christ as the supreme hero was a distinctive feature of the Catholic Sacred Heart Devotion; thus the same role was given to Christ within both a Catholic and a Lutheran context. However, the strong emphasis on the grace of God within Lutheranism made this idea more obvious within this confession. If the grace of God was more salient within Lutheranism this confession lacked the devotion of the Mother of Christ which was
so important within Catholicism. This difference may be one of the reasons why heroism within Catholicism could be achieved also by women, while the heroes in the current material were only men.

The countertype of the hero was the person who only strove for success and wealth in the world. According to the theologians such selfishness had consequences, not only for the individual but also for the people surrounding them and sometimes even for nations as a whole. In some ways the ideals accentuated by the theologians seem to be in opposition to the middle-class ideals so strongly emphasized during the end of the nineteenth century (Tjeder, 2003, pp. 199–232).

Even if the context has a distinct character, the speeches made by Sundberg and Bring in remembrance of Gustavus Adolphus and Luther could be considered evidence for an opinion that certain men brought about historical change. However, the actions of the heroes depicted by Sundberg and Bring include contradictions. Sometimes the historical hero is honored because he upholds an existing social order, and sometimes the hero’s contribution to societal change is emphasized. The hero is considered the upholder of the social order at the same time as he founds a new era.

According to the theologians one of the more important tasks for the hero was to protect the freedom of the church. As an example, a hero like Luther prevented the church from becoming a sectarian group. Thus, the hero ensured that the church remained faithful to its divine mission. As such a guardian, the hero personified the pure essence of the true Church. The hero also was considered to be a watchman for a certain ecclesiastical and social order, and the heroes that occur in the material analyzed in this paper closely mirror the ecclesiastical and political agenda propagated by the theologians of the Lund High Church Movement. Therefore, it is relevant to regard their efforts as a confessional use of history in this context. For example, it is clear that Bring utilized Martin Luther’s life history to criticize contemporary phenomena to which he was opposed.

In relation to the work by Van Osselaer on ideals and heroes within the Sacred Heart Devotion we can see that heroes such as Gustavus Adolphus and Martin Luther are used to illustrate a confessional contrast. The most obvious example is of course Luther and how he’s depicted as the guardian of the true church. In spite of these clearly defined confessional antagonisms the characteristics of the heroes are rather similar if one compares the results put forward by Van Osselaer and the ideals accentuated by the Lutheran theologians in my research. However, one difference between the heroic ideals described by Van Osselaer and those described by me is that the Catholic heroes focused more on pious activity, while the heroes described by the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement focused on defending the social order as it is formulated in the Lutheran teaching on the three estates.

Neither Bring, Sundberg nor Flensburg mentions women when speaking or writing about heroic deeds. In this regard I have not found any heroines in texts written by the Lund High Church Movement theologians. Despite this fact, it is not impossible that women could possess heroic qualities. However, I will have to include more material in order to shed light upon this question. Thus it is with some uncertainty that I argue that the confessional use of history only included masculine connotations. But from the texts analyzed in this paper it would be accurate to
consider the confessional use of history as an expression of masculinity. In accordance with Blückert and Spongberg I also argue that both the national and ecclesial discourse and historiography during this period were male gendered.

Gender is seldom expressed explicitly in the material. However, we can conclude that it was men—and only men—who founded new epochs, gave voice to new ideas and showed how the concepts behind these ideas should be interpreted. Even if gender is a subordinate theme in the texts, the theologians chose to emphasize men as heroes in a time which they considered to be revolutionary. Because they regarded the ecclesiastical order in Swedish society to be under attack, they used the exemplary lives of different heroes to “save” the Church and the orthodox Lutheran faith and society. In so doing they formulated a Christian masculinity which, to some extent, was in contrast to normative middle-class ideals. Furthermore, the theologians who wrote about these heroic men were men themselves. Certainly this must have had an impact on the view of history and heroic conduct.

The concept of history was fundamental to the theologians’ views on ecclesiastical and societal order. For example, the idea of previous golden ages can be seen in the material of the theologians. The idea of certain epochs in history as cultural models and a source of inspiration was a feature in both nationalist and ecclesial discourse. These periods were considered “extraordinary, canonical and sacred” according to Smith (2003, p. 171). Important and normative periods in the past and central figures from the past were used to put emphasis on the indispensability of the political and ecclesiastical agenda of the Lund High Church Movement.

An historian takes a risk if claiming that decades like the 1860s and the 1870s were times of unrest more than any other time. Is there any time which has not in some way been regarded as a period of transition and upheaval? Nevertheless, from the perspective of Bring, Sundberg and Flensburg this period, and especially the ecclesiastical context, was characterized by a paradigmatic shift. The intense philosophical/religious debates of the times could be regarded as the reason for an intensified use and reinterpretation of history. From the perspective of the Lund High Church Movement theologians one could regard the times and the future as uncertain. In such a situation, they believed it was wise to look for guidance from the exemplary lives of the heroes, even if that in many ways was an historical construct. With this survey I have illustrated that the heroes of the Movement could be found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

References


**Notes**

1 Biographical information: **Ebbe Gustaf Bring** (b. 1814, d. 1884), minister in the Church of Sweden 1837, professor in Lund 1848, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Linköping 1861; **Anton Niklas Sundberg** (b. 1818, d. 1900), minister in the Church of Sweden 1845, professor in Lund 1852, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Karlstad 1864-1870, archbishop of the Church of Sweden 1870–1900; **Wilhelm Flensburg** (b. 1819, d. 1897), minister in the Church of Sweden 1849, professor in Lund 1858, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Lund 1865.

2 The *tabula oeconomica*, which were a part of Luther’s Catechism, constituted three fixed classes, *ecclesia, politia* and *oeconomia*. Privileges and duties differed in this system, though all Christians are equal. The idea of the state as an instrument to infuse Christian standards and morality led the theologians to repudiate all utterances of religious freedom that were introduced during the mid-nineteenth century.

3 The inspiration for the idea of the hero came from both Luther and Hegel. Luther used the concept *viri heroici* when he spoke about the hero. More on this in Gustaf Wingren (1942, pp. 166–170, 223–238). Hegel speaks about the hero and *heroenzeit* in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

4 In relation to the Lund High Church Movement, Bunsen represented an opposing view in theological matters. In *Die Zeichen der Zeit* Bunsen assailed the anarchy existing in political, religious and intellectual life, advocating toleration and liberty of conscience, and opposing the doctrines of Stahl and Kettler. The former of these two scholars was of vast importance for the Swedish theologians.

5 The Riddarholm Church is the final resting place of the Swedish kings. Almost all succeeding rulers of Sweden from Gustaphus II Adolphus († 1632) to Gustaphus V († 1950) are buried in the Riddarholmen Church.

6 Similar comments in A. N. Sundberg (1893, pp. 98–99). Also here Sundberg speaks of the king as a hero, though he emphasises that “soli Deo Gloria”.

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‘Heroes of the Heart’: Ideal Men in the Sacred Heart Devotion

Tine Van Osselaer

The article focuses on the complexity of Catholic heroism(s) and more specifically on the rhetoric on heroic men in the Apostolat de la Prière and its spin-off movement, the League of the Sacred Heart. It points at the specificity of Catholic heroism and its (partial) correlation with sanctity. It thereby discusses the recurring “types” of heroes and their “heroic qualities” and questions the importance of these heroes’ “masculinity”.

In 1937, the Jesuit father A. De Pauw published an article in the Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus in which he criticized the ease with which the label “hero” was used. “Sometimes”, he remarked,

[O]ne gets the impression that heroism is for sale among the other articles in the warehouses and costs almost nothing. Succeed in no matter what exploit, win a race, knock someone knock out, and you are put on a pedestal. There is no end to the admiration and devotion. We have sunk that low. Recklessness and ambition, stupid contempt of death and muscle strength incite the enthusiasm of the people that no longer know how to value the silent sacrifice and invisible dedication for what it is worth. It proves that paganism and deification of material have polluted the people of the twentieth century. Someone who is able to perform a valiant action is not necessarily a hero.¹

His criticism on the adoration of contemporary “heroes” did not only point at the importance De Pauw attached to values that were (supposed to be) at the core of a heroic personality, but also indicated the changeability and variety of those personifications of “heroic” principles.

This article focuses on this complexity of heroism, and more specifically it analyzes the rhetoric on heroic men in the Belgian Sacred Heart devotion. This Catholic cult became very popular in nineteenth-century Belgium and characterized a sentimental and vivid ultramontane Catholicism. As there were various devotional organizations dedicated to the Sacred Heart, this analysis concentrates primarily on the discourse of one of the most important movements, the Apostolat de la Prière. This organization, which aimed at the restoration of Christ’s honor, was introduced in Belgium in the 1860s and developed into the Leagues of the Sacred Heart at the turn of the century. These Leagues presented themselves as part of the Apostolat,
but as they were gender exclusive, they clearly differed from the *Apostolat de la Prière* which was a mixed movement (although the central boards consisted solely of women under direction of a male religious). To gain a clearer view on the historical variability and to take into account possible shifts in the nature of the cult, this analysis concentrates on and compares two time spans. Since it does not cover the years in between, no general conclusions on the evolution of Catholic heroic discourse can be drawn. Yet, by analyzing two time spans, similarities and differences might be detected. The first focus is situated around 1868, i.e. the moment Belgium devoted itself to the Sacred Heart for the first time. These years also witnessed the start of the Belgian *Apostolat de la Prière* movement and the creation of its periodical *Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus* in 1869 (Gevers, 2004; Rion, 1981; Marx, 2005; Gabriëls, 1991; Quaghebeur, 2002). The previous years the French version circulated in Belgium and would continue to do so, therefore both periodicals have been included in the analysis. Other sources for this first period are the devotional books on the cult of the Sacred Heart that were edited in Belgium. The second focus is on the 1930s, one of the heydays of the cult since it was the blooming period of the *Leagues of the Sacred Heart*. These *Leagues* have been described as “la formule belge de l’Apostolat de la Prière”. Originally, only all-male *Leagues* were founded, but a women’s movement developed as well (Van Osselaer, 2008). Therefore, the sources of this interwar period include, next to the Belgian periodical of the *Apostolat de la Prière*, the periodicals and books published by these *Leagues* and other devotional books.

This article focuses on heroic men in the devotional discourse. Some of these heroes were explicitly associated with the cult, for example the martial hero fighting under the banner of the Sacred Heart; others were depicted as an “apostle along the line of Jesus Sacred Heart” but often there was no direct relation between the devotion and these exemplary men.

However, it must be noted that heroism was not only the province of men and it was not only the proverbial “great men” who excelled and rose above the Catholic crowd. On the contrary, it was explicitly stated that heroism was a quality that might be achieved by women as well. Accordingly, as he contemplated the heroic souls of Moses and Paul, the Jesuit author Toussaint Dufau, one of the main promoters of the cult of the Sacred Heart in Belgium, remarked that “God loves to operate through the persons who are the frailest”. He thereby revised his former stance since he had believed the “weaker sex”—created by God “solely to be man’s help”—to be incapable of this “angelic ardour”.

**Heroism**

*“Catholic” Heroisms*

As pointed out by Max Jones (2007), heroes have been defined in various terms, for example as men of extraordinary bravery, superhuman strength and as the chief male characters of an epic. However, in his opinion, the last few decades the definition has shifted towards the depiction of a hero as “any man or woman” who is “endowed by others” with special “symbolic significance” (Jones, 2007, p. 441). Accordingly, the central focus of most recent studies is no longer a character study of male warrior heroes, but an analysis of the social construction of a heroic reputation (p. 442). Heroic individuals are thereby analyzed as an instrument of propaganda and
also as “a site on which a range of cultural attitudes and social practices can be examined” (p. 447). Similarly, Wilhelm Frijhoff (2004, p. 12) describes a hero as a representation of virtues and a role model inspiring imitation and veneration. In this depiction of the hero as a model, heroism depends upon the appreciation of certain characteristics and their taxonomy as “more than human”. Given that there were variations in their appreciation, the heroic constellation has changed historically, geographically and according to nation and denomination. It all depended on who created the (image of the) heroes and stressed certain qualities, neglecting others. Vassilis Saroglou (2006) however, not only points at a hero’s function as a model and his potential to become the object of sanctification and identification, but also stresses the heroic ability to surpass ordinary humans. Although he thereby accentuates the similarities between saints and heroes (for example in the heroism of the saint), in his opinion there remains a clear distinction: “If the hero is an exemplary figure of the city, the saint is an exemplary figure of religion” (Saroglou, 2006, pp. 314–317) [my translation].

Although these definitions offer interesting starting points, the selection of the heroes analyzed in this article did not depend upon a restrictive definition of the term “hero” or “heroism”. This open approach makes it possible to define how heroism is described in the sources and how it is characterized as “Catholic” heroism. It focuses on those sections which offer descriptions of the “heroic” and explicitly allude to “heroism” and “heroic” men. The analysis thereby gives a clear view on the complexity of “heroism” and its expressions within religious discourse. Apparently heroism very easily coincided with “sanctity”. The parallelism of both terms runs along the lines of Frijhoff’s remark that both heroes and saints are presented as role models one has to strive to imitate, but whose example is hard to follow (Frijhoff, 2004, p. 36). In the hagiographic accounts that were published in the devotional literature (both periodicals and books), the label “saint” was easily replaced by “hero”. Saint Joannes Berchmans, for example, was described as someone whose “sanctity was heroic” and whose “heroism was saintly”. Sanctity might therefore be regarded as the ratification of heroism by the Catholic Church since heroic virtues, or to be more precise, the exercise of virtues up to a heroic degree, are one of the conditions to be proclaimed a saint (Frijhoff, 1998, p. 14; Wilhelm, 1910, pp. 292–293). A lot of the heroes described and promoted within the Sacred Heart devotion were, in fact, saints. Therefore this attention to the male hero also leads towards a better understanding of the male saint. As such, it contributes to the study of the construction of masculinity in hagiography that is, in spite of the numeric preponderance of male saints, still in its infancy according to Teresa Berger (2005, pp. 64, 75). Even though numerous saints were described as heroes in the devotional literature, there was no complete interchangeability. Since other variations on the heroic theme were attested as well, this analysis covers more than a male hagiography.

“Male” and “Masculine” Heroism?
Since a hero can represent virtues and figure as a role model (Frijhoff, 2004, p. 12), it is interesting to pause a moment at the “maleness” of heroic men depicted in the devotional literature. Although these men embody virtues, do they (as biological “men”) explicitly symbolize “masculine” qualities? According to Wilhelm Frijhoff
“great men” have always outnumbered women in the course of history, “at least in public memory”. In his opinion this is due to the fact that “exemplary values and ways of life belong to the public realm” in which women could only play “a minor part, if they were not excluded”. However, men’s preponderance also has to be linked to the “public discourse” that “has assigned the realm of virtue, intelligence and action to men, and that of emotions, spiritual experience and self-denial to women” (Frijhoff, 1998, p. 9) [my translation].

If “spiritual experience” is defined as a women’s thing, then the Catholic heroes represent an interesting case. However, there are various sides to Catholicism and next to the “spiritual experience”, Catholicism offers a male dominated hierarchy, an ideology in the political field and military campaigns. As such its heroes can fit into the ideal images that populate the “escapism” that Martin Francis (2002) describes. They offer a means through which “Men constantly traveled back and forward across the frontier of domesticity, if only in the realm of imagination, attracted by the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood, but also enchanted by fantasies of the energetic life and homosocial camaraderie of the adventure hero” (Francis, 2002, p. 643). Since heroes can represent ideal qualities, the analysis of Catholic heroes offers an insight in which characteristics were considered exemplary.

Heroes

*Jesus, an Exemplary Catholic Hero?*

According to the Catholic authors who commented on heroism in the devotional publications of the cult of the Sacred Heart, Catholic heroism was not to be equated with “ordinary” heroism. They illustrated this idea by the description of that prototypical Christian hero, who inspired and surpassed all other Catholic champions, Jesus. As noted by the abbot H. Saintrain who published his book *Le Sacré-Cœur de Jésus, étudié dans les livres saints* in 1868, the Gospel was a strange book since it stressed the humiliations of his main hero, did not even hesitate to describe his moment of despair in the garden of Gethsemani and treated those moments with the same calm and simplicity as it recounted his glories, without any regard for the effect that it may have on the mind of its readers.

One might even say that it treats the humiliations of the son of men more elaborately than his glories. It thereby differs from human writers as they like to hide all that could diminish the reputation of their heroes, or present it in more favorable colors or even change it completely, so that they can go on focusing gladly on all that might exalt them.

What was stated in the 1860s was also observed in the interwar period: Catholic heroism had its own quality and differed from other forms of heroism. Apparently it was not perceived as heroism by everyone and in 1935, the Jesuit R. Hardeman commented upon this depreciation: “In the broad German circles, the religion of the crucified is considered to be too weak, and not heroic enough, and they try to replace Christ by some other pure German god and heaven by the Walhalla”. In spite of these criticisms, the Catholic authors explicitly stressed Jesus’ heroism as they depicted him and his qualities as “more than human” and placed him at the
center of a Catholic epical history. “Other heroes of human history have succeeded in placing themselves for some time above the mediocrity of their environment, by their exceptional bravery, perseverance, contempt for death.” However, these heroes were apparently not of a constant and all-comprising quality and failed from a moral and religious point of view. Since “many of these men” that were “celebrated as heroes fallen in the field of honour, did not have the courage in the normal way of life to fulfil their duties as husbands and family man as they should”. They did not place the love of God above all other things and their “glorious deeds” were driven by “thirst for power, a longing for glory, greed, self-love, haughtiness, vanity, or other not so honourable passions”. Therefore, according to these Catholic authors, these heroes did not measure up to Jesus’ heroism that was a constant feature of a moral and supernatural quality based on humility, self-denial, sacrifice and the love of God.14

Cataloguing Heroes
Although Christ was depicted as the Catholic hero par excellence, he enjoyed the company of other Catholic heroes. Since Catholic heroism and sanctity were quite often synonymous, the attention these heroes received in the periodicals often coincided with the processes of their canonization or beatification. In spite of this temporarily increased attention on specific heroes, the depictions of Catholic heroic men in both the second half of the nineteenth century and the 1930s were similar. Throughout both time periods, the various “types” of heroes were largely the same: they were martial men, missionaries and martyrs, presented as an “encouragement” and “model” for the Catholic public.15

The heroes that populated the Catholic epics were quite often martial men. The battlefield offered an ideal stage to outshine one’s fellow man and demonstrate more than human qualities. Within the Catholic context the “miles Christi” has worn the armor of the crusader, of the zouaves, of army chaplains and of the common soldiers of World War One.16 The martial qualities of these military men and a romantic idealization were combined in reminiscences with knighthood.17 These nostalgic identifications were apparent in descriptions of, for example, St. Joannes Berchmans, a young Catholic “hero”, and by no means a martial man, portrayed however as a knight in service of his lady, Mother Mary.18 Contemporary Catholic soldiers (for example the portraying of the zouaves in the 1860s) were also presented as heroes and soon became the subject of a nostalgic idealization as they would come to personify an idealized past in the interwar period.19 The close connection between the martial, the most common field for the lay heroes, and heroism was also apparent in military metaphors that were used to define other (non-martial) heroic categories, for example the Christian martyrs of Japan who were portrayed as a “glorious army” or the “battlefield” of a religious sent to a remote place.20 Martial metaphors were also used to arouse the Catholic readers, both in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources: they were presented as “soldiers of Christ” with “a duty to battle” and in the middle of “a crusade”.21

Martial activities were not the only way to demonstrate heroism. The missionary field was at least as successful as the battlefield in creating and inspiring Catholic heroes.22 This attention to mission was to be expected since the Jesuits, the main promoters of the Sacred Heart cult and publishers of the various periodicals,
were in both time periods active as missionaries. As apostolic activities were to be
carried out in “savage” areas among the enemies of the Catholic faith, missionary
activity was presented as almost synonymous with a martyr’s death, “a sacrifice
without return”.23 Although heroic religious were most often missionaries, there
were other heroic religious whose heroism was not earned by a martyr’s death in
the missions but by their heroic qualities as a founder of a religious order, as a
religious author or through their exemplary life as “angelic youth”.24 Their heroism
mostly consisted of the display of virtues up to heroic degree, such as “charity”,
“discipline”, “humility” and “obedience”.25 In spite of the fact that these qualities
might seem a little un-heroic to our modern eyes, it was precisely this kind of
heroism that was presented as attainable for readers of devotional literature.
Heroism was above all the victory over themselves: “It is the quality of a heroic
disciple of my heart to pray and make all efforts to conquer himself both in the
things that bad nature repulses and in the things towards which she carries
herself”.26

Just like some of the portrayals of the martial men, most of these
descriptions of missionaries situated their heroic biographies in a distant past.
Through this historical framing these martyrs of their faith resembled the first
Christians, also presented as Catholic heroes, ready to sacrifice their lives as the
ultimate testimony of their faith.27 So, although heroism was by no means described
as the province of personalities of the past, it was quite often connected to the
heroic qualities of these bygone periods as if to render contemporary heroism part
of a Catholic heroic tradition and increase its worth. As such the first Christian
martyrs and the Crusaders were portrayed as an example for the readers of the
nineteenth-century devotional periodical and the zouaves were depicted as with the
“features of the Christian heroism, worthy of the age of the martyrs”.28 The
twentieth-century public on the other hand was encouraged to live up to the
example of the martyrs and at that time already mythical zouaves.29 Heroic ages
were therefore echoed not only through descriptions of their heroes, but also
through comparisons of the qualities of these heroic men with those of
contemporary heirs of that heroic tradition.

**Heroic Qualities**

Although one should not strive to standardize Catholic heroes and make universal
claims within this wide range in heroic categories, the lay and religious heroes had
some basic qualities in common. These features were significant both for the
champions of the second part of the nineteenth century and for those of the
interwar period. The most prominent quality among them was a hero’s readiness to
strive, battle and die for Catholicism. In the various narratives Catholic heroes
considered it a privilege to sacrifice their lives for the Catholic faith and Catholic
martial and missionary actions.30 These activities, for example missions among the
heathens, Crusades, wars against anti-popes and the Roman question, were
rendered “heroic” through the heroic qualities of their participants. The reverse
however, was also true: taking part in these heroic missions could put someone on
his way to heroism. As the price to contribute to these actions was often the sacrifice
of one’s life, the descriptions often paid explicit attention to a hero’s reaction upon
his looming death. One missionary, for example, “could not control his joy” after
hearing his death sentence; another was disappointed that he was not selected for the missions and was therefore not able to shed his blood in Christ’s honor. However, one could also sacrifice one’s life without the interference of an enemy of the Christian faith. Sickness and trials were therefore to be regarded as divine favors. In this less bloody scenario the basic idea remained the same as the Catholic hero who dedicated his whole life to a (Catholic) cause. In the description of Pierre Canisius, for example, his whole life was summarized in the following phrase: “He dedicated himself completely to the Mother Church ... constantly and with a heroic generosity”. In these Catholic narratives it was therefore not the victory over an enemy that revealed heroic qualities, but the victory over life and its challenges.

The will to sacrifice oneself was expressed within the wide field of “Catholic courage”. This bravery might be demonstrated in the readiness to fight (military) enemies, to face challenges of the missionary field (environment, lack of food, sickness) or the willingness to make an all-comprising sacrifice. However, Catholic courage apparently also included the declaration and representation of one’s Catholic faith in more ordinary circumstances. Openly professing to be a Catholic proved, according to the Catholic periodicals, that Catholic courage was as present in day-to-day experiences as it was in the missionary field or battlefield. However, there were some conditions to this Catholic courage as it had to be accompanied by “dry eyes” and although it was considered suitable (for a man) to express enthusiasm, sadness and grief in tears, it was not proper to cry when faced with a challenge. Henri Suson, a German Dominican mystic, who had the bad luck to forget that code of comportment, was reminded of it by Jesus himself who asked him if he was not “ashamed to cry like a woman”.

These heroes were presented as grand examples to the Catholic public because of their courage and self-sacrifice. Yet, their modesty and the humiliations they suffered were valued as highly as their bravery. It was mainly because they stayed humble at heart that they reached a true magnanimity. Their modesty was thereby described as a challenge to the so-called heroes that lived on praises and attention. Catholic heroes, on the contrary, did not like to be praised for their efforts and accordingly did not want to take positions that were honored highly. It was the obedience towards the ecclesiastical hierarchy that pushed them to climb the professional ladder as one could not refuse an honorable job imposed by one’s superior. In their modesty they mirrored the “soft humility of Jesus’ heart” and in their gentle disposition they echoed its loving and caring nature (symbolized in Jesus’ bleeding heart, the main symbol of the Sacred Heart devotion). As such, Catholic heroes were praised in the devotional discourse for their gentle, soft and loving character. In the descriptions this tenderness and love were sometimes reflected in the physical appearance of these men and the gentleness of their character was mirrored in the “softness of their traits”. Their compassionate nature thereby triggered the somewhat surprising use of the metaphor “as a mother”: Jesus, St. Jérôme Emilien and General de Sonis were all compared to a “mother” in their activities.

However gentle towards their companions and fellow men, towards themselves, Catholic heroes, and primarily heroic religious men, displayed a strict discipline. As they disciplined their body they embodied their own heroism, or more precisely saintly heroism, by fasting, lack of sleep, flagellation and wearing a
Although this might seem a practice that could easily become outdated, it was still part of heroic descriptions in the interwar period. “Heroic” discipline was also presented as a (difficult) path to sanctity. Joannes Berchmans thereby figured as an example of how discipline not only implied corporal discipline but also strict obedience of every rule one felt subject to. His biography illustrated how one could attain sanctity through a strict observation of every rule that one was expected to obey or imposed upon oneself. As such he presented a model that might be imitated by the Catholic public. Although this self-control appeared to be an important component of Catholic heroism, it could be counterbalanced through the descriptions of visions and ecstatic experience that in some cases were an important part of saints’ portrayals as well.

**Heroic “Men”**

Gentleness was often a central heroic quality in these Catholic narratives. As such, soft physical traits were a positive thing (as it mirrored the mental disposition of the heroes) and did not make Catholic heroes less heroic. The gentleness and dedication of heroic men could even take on a comparison with women. In the passages in which heroes were compared to “mothers”, they were equipped with “feminine” qualities that were positively evaluated (contrary to the negatively evaluated “weeping like a woman”). These descriptions can be linked to Martina Kessel’s (2003) definition of the “whole man” who combines both “masculine” and “feminine” characteristics (contrary to a more polar model).

However, although this article focuses on heroic men, there were only very few references to “men’s” bodies and characteristics in the descriptions of these nineteenth-century heroes. Most of these were made within the context of the depiction of heroic soldiers and more specifically the papal zouaves. These martial heroes clearly had “male figures”, wrote songs of “a simple and masculine poetry”, and were incited to show themselves to be “men”. They were praised for physical qualities such as their vigor in a fight and their ability to take a bullet. The “maleness of their bodies” was mentioned only once, but that was more than could be said about other Catholic heroes. Although the heroism of other (non-martial) Catholic heroes might also be incorporated in their bodies, as for example the martyrs, who were described as “athletes of Christ”, and the heroes that excelled in the heroic corporal discipline (fasting and flagellation), the “maleness” of their bodies was not mentioned. This might appear a bit strange but the same was true for the interwar period: a “male body” of a military hero might be mentioned once, but there were no references to the “maleness” of the body in the description of the non-martial heroes although there were references to their physical beauty. Maybe it was due to the fact that the maleness of their bodies could not render an extra quality to their heroism (contrary to that of martial men) and therefore did not need to be included in the description, or because Catholic heroism did not require the physical strength and vigor of a (male) body (contrary to martial heroism)?

References to “masculinity” in heroic descriptions were also not very frequent in the sources of the interwar period and primarily alluded to the courage of men and their seriousness. This poor concern for their heroes’ “masculinity” is remarkable since the general discourse of the Leagues of the Sacred Heart frequently alluded to “men’s character” and presented the movement as a “masculine”
movement (Van Osselaer, 2008). The periodical of the *Apostolat* that provided most of the “heroic” references also demonstrated explicit attention to religious “masculinity”; however its heroes were not defined more “masculine” than those of the *Leagues’* periodical. Therefore one could wonder whether these exemplary Catholic heroes figured as models of heroic Catholic masculinity or of a more general Catholic heroism and thereby a step away from binary (gender-exclusive) thinking. However, one would have to keep in mind that *Leagues’* periodicals of the interwar period were aimed at an all-male audience and therefore did not need explicit mention of being “for men”. The periodical of the *Apostolat de la Prière* however, remained non-gender exclusive in the 1930s and so did the periodical’s heroic narratives. There is no explicit mentioning of the (gender-exclusive) intended audience. Still, one should hesitate to draw any final conclusions since an analysis of the rhetoric on heroic women will contribute to a better understanding of the specificity of Catholic heroic men.

**Catholic Heroisms**

The analysis of the devotional discourse indicates that Catholic heroism was described as differing from other forms of heroism as it focused on sacrifice, humility and humiliations and not on “grand” actions. As Catholic heroism did not build upon the great reputation of its heroes, but on their ability to humiliate themselves in service to God, it was, according to various authors, not always perceived as heroism. Expressions such as “heroic victim” made sense within the devotional discourse as a Catholic hero attained heroism by sacrificing and humiliating himself. The Catholic authors realized that this kind of heroism raised problems with their contemporaries as they saw little distinction between an “act of heroism or foolishness”. However, heroism was explicitly presented as part of a Catholic tradition in which characters such as General de Sonis proved that “Christianity grows heroes and knights”. According to the Jesuit Henri Ramière it was through the actions of these heroes that God saved the people. Their courage, however, had to be maintained by the “less brilliant bravery” of others and it was the fervor of a large number that gave birth to heroes. Heroes could only exist and shine thanks to the existence of other Catholic souls; therefore the readers had to try to imitate or at least support these Catholic heroes, as their salvation depended upon their efforts.

However, heroes did not only function as a kind of a *pars pro toto* for a general package of ideals, but also as reference points upon which to build an identity. Therefore they could figure as a self-affirmation in moments of despair and defeat, shaping a collective identity through commemorative rites and a shared history (Gerbod, 1982). Catholic heroes were presented as part of a unifying Catholic tradition. They were the contemporary heirs of heroic ages that witnessed Crusaders, missionaries and other “great” men. However, these heroes could become outdated and to make them attractive their historical context was presented as comparable to the public’s own situation.

Catholic heroes were not only a part and representation of a Catholic (unifying, Rome-focused) tradition, they could also belong and contribute to a national or regional identity. Since the love of one’s country and the service a hero owed his nation were recurring themes, they could be presented as national or regional heroes and contribute to a people’s myth. This “appropriation” is hard to
analyze in the two time periods that were studied. Although it is clear from the sources of the interwar period that the “Flemish” roots (and not the “Belgian” roots) were a common feature in the description of the heroes in the Flemish sources, heroic narratives also frequently described other (non-Flemish) heroes.\(^7\) For the first period (1860s) a large proportion of the publications that circulated in Belgium were created in France.\(^7\) Therefore it is hard to decide whether or not it was at that time as important as it was in the interwar period to have one’s own (Belgian or Flemish) Catholic heroes depicted.

In a description of Joannes Berchmans’ life in the 1930s, the Jesuit Lode Arts remarked that “The Middle Ages had a hard time imagining their Saints other than buried in a desert, or hidden in a lonely cell, with rigid, gaunt faces, in stiff, grubby, hair shirts, and with an annoying aureole around their heads!” He countered this image with what he believed to be a modern Saint: Saint Joannes Berchmans. In his opinion Berchmans was “A Saint in weekly clothes, who speaks and acts like other people, and walks with them the ‘normal’, the ‘small’ way of daily life!” He believed that it was a “special sign from God” that the “modern Saints were common people”.\(^7\) Notwithstanding the fact that Saints were frequently regarded as heroes, the heroic category was, as we have noted before, broader than the Catholic Saints. However, Arts’ remark indicated that he believed that there had been a change in the representation and appreciation of these Catholic Saints.\(^7\) Is the same to be said about the category of the Catholic heroes? The basic heroic typology (martial men, missionaries, heroic religious, lay martyrs) was mostly the same during both time periods. It is, however, remarkable that lay heroes such as Matt Talbot became very popular in the *Leagues of the Sacred Heart* as he was neither a military man (as for example the nineteenth-century General de Sonis who was also popular during the interwar period\(^7\)) Catholic author or politician, and he did not suffer a martyr’s death. He therefore might be indicative of a new kind of hero, whose popularity depended as much on his working-class background as on his exemplary life.\(^7\) However, one could wonder whether his popularity was due to the laicisation of Catholic heroes in general or if it should be linked to the broadening of the cult’s public and the working-class adherence of the *Leagues*.

In their study of the cult of the Sacred Heart, Norbert Busch (1995) and Olaf Blachke (2006) noted a “(re-) masculinisation” of the Sacred Heart devotion at the beginning of the twentieth century. With this term they described (among other things) the stress on male involvement and the changes in the nature of the devotion (Bush, 1995, pp. 203-219; Blachke, 2005). Nonetheless, the analysis of Catholic heroism indicates that Catholic heroic men do not appear to be depicted as very “masculine” in the interwar period. Catholic heroic men could do without the references to their male bodies and characteristics. If a hero represented a “mould of imagined masculinity” (Davin, 1997, p. 137) then the Catholic exemplars left the reader various options. Although the main characteristics of Catholic heroes were very similar, there was no unifying way to be a Catholic hero, and there were as many (or even more) Catholic heroism in the interwar period as there were in the second half of the nineteenth century. This variety of Catholic heroic men warns us not to define heroism too strictly and points at the importance attached to having one’s own heroes.
References


Notes
1 De Pauw (1937, p. 73). All translations of the source material in this article are the author’s.
2 The French periodical was called Le Messager du Sacré Coeur de Jésus. Bulletin Mensuel de l’Apostolat de la Prière; the Flemish version was called De Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus. Maandelijksch Tijdschrift van het Apostelschap des Gebeds en van het aartsbroederschap van het H. Hart was introduced in 1869 (Van Bode, 1991, p. 2).
3 E.g. Belgian promoters of the Apostolat de la Prière were stimulated to promote the Messager. Archives of the Flemish Jesuits (Heverlee), Archives of the Leagues of the Sacred Heart. III. Apostolat de la Prière 1. Old documents. Reports of the Association du Sacré Coeur de Jésus et de l’Apostolat de la Prière (1868).
4 Letter (2.2.1944) on the centenary of the Apostolat de la Prière. Archives of the Flemish Jesuits (Heverlee), Leagues of the Sacred Heart, III. Apostolat de la Prière, 5. Correspondence.
5 Maandelijksche Mededeelingen over de Bonden van het H.Hart, Bondsblad voor Bonden van het Heilig Hart. The periodical for Leagues of Wallonia, Regnum Christi, has not been studied thoroughly. The one issue I was able to track down gives the impression that the periodical was a translation of the Flemish periodical Maandelijksche Mededeelingen.
6 Smit (1930, p. 14); Le Bienheureux Pierre Canisius (1865b, p. 131).
7 Dufau (1869, p. 557).
8 What Wilhelm Frijhoff remarked about the saints, might be true for heroes as well: in the hand of other producers and protagonists, accentuations change (2004, p. 43).
9 Stoffels (1938, p. 17).
10 Since I use an open approach of “heroism”, there does not necessarily have to be a relationship between masculinity and heroism. However, gender-exclusive approaches might be signaled as well: Max Jones (2007), for example, exposes in an analysis of the principal usages of the term “hero” that are described in the Oxford English Dictionary, an inter-relationship between masculinity, warfare and heroism (p. 440).
12 Saintrain (1868, pp. 245–246).
14 Vermeulen (1937, p. 525).
17 As “a knight in armour” the missionary Jean de Brébeuf had passed three years in prayer and penance (De Pauw, 1939, p. 204). General de Sonis is described as an example of how Christianity grows heroes and knights. The general is also portrayed as a “miles Christi” (Smit, 1930, pp. 4, 21). On General de Sonis see: Jonas (2000, pp. 164–168).
Arts (1938a, pp. 225–229). Fighting for Mary’s honor: Arts (1938b, p. 299). The same comparisons can be noted in the descriptions of the zouaves: Gevoelens (1869, pp. 169–170); Les zouaves hollandaise (1869, p. 219).

Over een vaandel (1937, p. 6).

H. R. (1864, p. 20); Alexander Briant asked when they tried to take away his crucifix: “Does a soldier throw away his banner?” (De Pauw, 1935a, p. 107). Carlo Spinola is described as “a first-class general”, “blood of a general” (De Pauw, 1936a, pp. 101, 102).

Le bienheureux Pierre Canisius (1865a, p. 27); A.D. (1864, pp. 264–265); G. D. (1868, p. 282).


J.D. (1866a, p. 189); De Pauw (1935b, pp. 207–214; 1939a, p. 82); Een missieheld herdacht (1935, pp. 294–298). The missionary J. Marquette, “happily sacrificed his life for that grand task (Van den Daele, 1938, p. 9). Description of the missionary Noël Chabanal as a “hero not of the brilliant action, but of the secret passion”: he stayed while he detested his whole environment (De Pauw, 1939b, p. 155).

Régnauld (1865, pp. 78–93); Arts (1938b, p. 299); Stracke (1938b, pp. 249–253).

These qualities will be discussed in the next section.

Arnold (1864, p. 383). Saint Stanislas’ life incited “humility”, “obedience” and “self-denial” (A. D., 1864, p. 264). The example of the heroes had to stimulate the readers to resist bad impulses and strive constantly towards an exalted Christian life (Gedachten, 1937, p. 276).

Dufau (1869, p. 198).


Over een vaandel (1937, p. 6); Gedachten (1939, p. 276).

On the tension between the sacrificial (based on revenge), anti-sacrificial ideal (based on forgiveness) and the idea of self-sacrifice (conflates prowess and piety) in knighthood see A. Frantzen (2003, p. 3).

N. P. (1868, p. 24). Others regarded it as “the greatest blessing that could happen to me” (Dufau, 1869, p. 367).

Patron du mois de Février (1863, p. 71). Paulus Navarre jumped for joy when he heard he was going to be put to death (Gedachten, 1937, p. 275); Spinola hopes that God will not deny him a martyr’s death (De Pauw, 1936b, pp. 164, 165).

“My dear sickness is a great treasure to me” (G. D., 1867, p. 377); “The memories of those sufferings were nothing but soft” (J. D., Saint Patrice, 1866b, p.16).

Le bienheureux Pierre Canisius (1865a, p. 30); Arts (1936b, p. 225); Van Mierlo (1939, p. 250).

“[B]ut nothing could lessen his courage” (G. D., 1867, p. 382). “courageous and indefatigable servant” (H. R., 1864, p. 17); “courageous defender of virtue” (A. D., 1864, p. 262); “apostolic courage” (Le bienheureux Pierre Canisius, 1865a, p. 29).

“[H]e was not afraid to present himself as a Christian” (G. D., 1869, p. 286).

General de Sonis facing laughter of co-soldiers (Smit, 1930, p. 25). Courage in every
day life: “And nowadays it is much harder for most people, much more heroic, not to sin in public against the first commandment that commands us to recognise God as Creator and Father and to worship him, than to obey the nine other commandments in secret” (Stracke, 1938a, p. 99).

37 Even in the case of a child martyr (Béatification, 1867, p. 249). About the life of Joannes Berchmans: “Not a single moment tears are mentioned” (Arts, 1938b, p. 300).

38 G. D. (1869, p. 289); Les zouaves hollandais (1869, p. 217); Les défenseurs de la papauté et ses ennemis (1867, p. 404).

39 On this emotional element of the Catholic heroes see: Heywood (2007, pp. 215–216: “For the ultramontanes, tears play a very important role as the expression of the soul. Religion, that is love, and love affects” (“Pour les ultramontains, les pleurs jouent un rôle primordial comme expression extérieure de l’âme. La religion, c’est l’amour, et l’amour émeut”) [my translation].

40 G. D. (1866a, p. 248).

41 Saint Ignace behaved “soft, humble, patient and loving” (Patron du mois de Février, 1863, p. 78).

42 E.g. H. R. (1864, p. 25); G. D. (1866b, p. 370); Longhaye (1868, p. 102); L. D. (1865, p. 191). Hyacinth Hermans commented on the missionary Ter Maat that “The old ascetic was apparently afraid of to be regarded as a hero” (1936, p. 272). A description of the heroic gentleness of the Jesuit Cayron: Hillegeer (1932, p. 71).

43 “that saintly obedience that sometimes is asked by not-saintly superiors and is acted out by not-yet-saintly inferiors to a heroic degree” (Stracke, 1937, p. 54).

44 S. O. (1863, p. 280). Lazarus was “soft and humble as his Master” (L. D., 1863, p. 265).

45 “[L]ife of heroism and charity” (L. D., 1863, p. 269); “a living image of the charity of Jesus’ Heart” (H. R., 1864, pp.17, 24); Pierre Canisius is “an apostle along the lines of Jesus’ Heart” and shows “softness towards his enemies, that love of souls” (Le Bienheureux Pierre Canisius, 1865b, p. 135); “He was very soft, very affable for those who came to see him” (L. D., 1865, p. 196).

46 “[T]he softness of his traits, the modesty of his face” (J. D., 1866b, pp. 13, 18): “tender charity”; “He became the softest of men, never, neither on his face nor in his words, did one remark the slightest irritation” (G. D., 1866b, p. 369); “his face reflected the beauty of his soul” (G. D., 1869, p. 286).

47 Saintrain (1868, p. 19); G. D. (1866b, p. 374). Joannes Berchmans is described as “a little mother” (Schoeters, 1940, p. 65). De Sonis took as “a mother” care of those who were entrusted to him (Smit, 1930, p. 32). On the cult of Jesus as a mother in the Middle Ages see Walker Bynum (1982); on the cult in nineteenth-century France see Gibson (1993, pp. 84–86).

48 “He prolonged his prayer and multiplied his fastings” (Régnauld, 1865, p. 84; L. D. (1865, p. 194); G. D. (1866b, p. 374). Carlo Spinola flagellated his body every night and wore a rough hair cloth, his life seemed to be one long period of fasting. The only thing he asked after years of prison was a new whip (De Pauw, 1936a, p. 105; 1936b, pp. 162–168).

49 In perseverance one recognises the hero: in the silent, continuous, courageous perseverance” (Arts, 1938b, p. 299). Cf. Arts’ comment on Joannes Berchmans: “nothing is as heroic as this silent, constant dedication of every day, every hour,
“every moment!” (Arts, 1939, p. 538). “One shivers if one thinks what a colossal effort of will, what a continuous self-mastery such a life must have demanded. One cannot deny that: the strong, heroic sanctity of Saint John Berchmans is really to be found in the stubborn lovingly observance of the smallest duty, in the ruthless loyalty towards God in the smallest deed” (Schoeters, 1940, pp. 212–213); on his fasting and flagellating: Schoeters (1940, p. 263).


This soft expression is not the same as women’s face that was clearly negatively evaluated in the interwar period: “Fat Paul and his girl’s face, white and pink”: (T Haakstertje, 1937, p. 253).

One exception: Nicolas de Flue is described as having a “candid and masculine eloquence”. However, it has to be kept in mind that he was a former military man, and part of the laity (L. D., 1865, p. 191).

“Most of them are men of a magnificent figure and appearance: several of them were more than 6 feet”; “the manly figures of those warriors” (Départ des zouaves pontificalx, 1868, pp. 381, 382). Zouaves were not only described as “young men” but also “fathers of a household” and “old men”. Some were even described as a “child” (Les défenseurs de la papauté, 1867, pp. 398, 400).


Les défenseurs de la papauté (1867, pp. 401–404); Les zouaves hollandais (1869, pp. 216–218).

Dufau (1869, pp. 199, 365); N. P. (1868, p. 22). Athletic references also in the description of the missionary father Damian: “God had made this Fleming athletic. His body and soul appeared to be created in order to break and build” (Arts, 1936b, p. 223).

It was a comment on General de Sonis: “With a tall stature, a well-featured face, manly and supple, of a simple refinement in his manners, he had won with his liveliness of spirit and frank cheerfulness the friendship of many” (Smit, 1930, p. 18).

In another passage (p. 34) the general is described as a “robust, proud man”.

“[Supernatural beauty],” “charm” (De Pauw, 1935a, pp. 105, 106).

“Man’s earnestness”, “a man full of courage and earnestness” (Arts, 1938a, p. 225. “Manly” (Stracke, 1938c, p. 304).

E.g. in the article by L. Arts (1936a, pp. 32–35).

The explicit mentioning of an audience was the case for those articles that aimed at a younger audience: they explicitly mentioned their audience in the introduction (A. D., 1864, pp. 257–266; Stoffels, 1938, pp. 16–20).

As for example the reference to a commentary of Machiavelli in which he stated that religion did not create “great men” because it focused on humbleness and self-denial (Goetstouwers, 1939, pp. 36–37).

A. D. (1864, p. 265).

Not comprehended by contemporaries (G. D., 1866b, p. 370). Not comprehended by the author’s contemporaries (Arts, 1936b, p. 223).

“General Louis Gaston de Sonis is known in our century as a kind of bolder times. In him God has given an example, how Christianity grows heroes and knights. Christian in heart and soul, lightened by the fire that Christ brought on earth, he was a Saint in soldiers’ clothes, impressive because of his heroic courage in the service of
his country, even more impressive because of his heroic courage in the service of his Redemptor” (Smit, 1930, p. 4).

“Elite souls are never wanting in a society in which the masses are animated by an ardent religious zeal. The fervour of a large number brings heroes into existence; and it is through the exploits of heroes, supported by the less brilliant courage of the other soldiers, that God saves the people” (Ramière, 1862, p. lxvii).

For a reference to the “heroic times” of the Jesuit Missions in the new world and India see Schoeters (1940, p. 147). For the Crusaders as a popular reference point see Frantzen (2003, p. 2).

E.g. Stracke’s comment that a lot of people consider Vincentius a Paulo outdated (Stracke, 1938c, p. 302); on the lack of attraction in Saint Joannes Berchmans’ life (Stoffels, 1938, p. 17).

Saint Berchmans was a “child of his time: but that time looked a lot like ours: war, revolution, uproar, change”. Therefore he could be called “a man of our times” (Arts, 1938, p. 298).

“Flemish soul” (Van Mierlo, 1939, p. 11); “Flemish boys” (Quirijnen, 1935, p. 3); “young Fleming” (Arts, 1936b, p. 223); “Flemish hero” (Een missieheld herdacht, 1935, p. 294).

As noted above, the Belgian periodical Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus was created in 1869. However, the French periodical (Messager du Sacré Cœur) circulated in Belgium from the moment it was first published (1861).


For example, Smit (1930).

See Dewickere (1935, p.69) for the “heroic soul of Talbot”. His popularity might be illustrated by the fact that the Leagues’ visited his grave on their journey to Dublin. Archives of the Flemish Jesuits (Heverlee), Archives of the Leagues of the Sacred Heart, IX. Bondsleven, 8. Thinking about the Leagues, text of the Dublinfilm.

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Domestic Heroes: Saint Nicholas and the Catholic Family Father in the Nineteenth Century

Josephine Hoegaerts

This article focuses on Saint Nicholas, a “hero of the hearth”. Retracing the narratives and imagery on Nicholas in the Catholic region of Flanders from the end of the eighteenth until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Saint is brought forward as a romance-related patron, a stern authoritarian figure and a sentimental grandfather. Rather than simply restating researchers’ observations on the “sentimentalization” of Saint Nicholas throughout the last two centuries, the article argues that Nicholas can be seen as an icon of Catholic domestic masculinity and as an ongoing support to paternal authority. The construction of Saint Nicholas by folklorists and artists as well as teachers, priests and parents is analyzed with particular attention to the interaction between the Saint and the nineteenth century pater familias. Saint Nick, it turns out, faithfully followed the path Catholic grandfathers had laid out towards a construction of old age and masculinity that legitimated and supported paternal authority, all while weaving emotion and sentimentality into a “manly” identity.

Suddenly, as if on its own, the door opens widely: the holy man “in his Sunday best,” with mitre and crosier, stately enters; the headmistress follows with two little angels who carry, besides a basket full of goodies in the middle, a book with locks on the one side and a rod on the other. (Rudolfsz, 1868, p. 548)¹

In 1868, this scene is described in a Belgian teachers’ journal as an old, disappearing custom in schools. The “stateliness” and purity of the tradition surrounding Saint Nicholas, so the author stated, were in decline in the “unchildly” times of the late nineteenth century and Saint Nicholas was slowly disappearing from children’s lives.

He could not have been more wrong. It is true that the ritual of Saint Nicholas’ Day has gone on changing ever since: the Saint no longer delivers sermons to children, he stopped citing the bible and—as many of the quoted authors’ successors have lamented—became “commercial”. Nevertheless, Saint Nicholas remains, especially in the southern Low Countries, one of (if not the) most important and best-known “Catholic” figure in children’s lives. The Saint still visits numerous schools, appearing in

¹This article refers to p. 548 of Rudolfsz, 1868.
his Episcopal garb and flanked by playful figures (no white angels but, since the turn of the century, black Moors\textsuperscript{2}). The night before the Saint’s visit, children still sing the songs that originated in the nineteenth century, hoping that Nicholas will bring them candy and toys, and parents still make great efforts to keep Saint Nicholas alive and hidden from children’s eyes.

It is therefore surprising that so little has been written on the cultural history of this tradition. Apart from a handful of studies on the protestant, Northern Low Countries (Van Leer, 1995), the history of Saint Nicholas has remained in the hands of various folklorists.\textsuperscript{3} Looking for the “origin” of the Saint, these studies have uncovered much of the changing habits and practices regarding Nicholas and along the way, have constructed their own Saint Nicholas story. The older folklorist work, especially, forms a chronicle of the invention of Saint Nicholas’ tradition. The first “scientific” work on Nicholas started to appear in the 1830s. From the middle-ages onward, Saint Nicholas of Myra / Bari\textsuperscript{4} had been venerated and celebrated as the patron saint of sailors, merchants, students and many others, but in the nineteenth century the holy bishop started to act as the ultimate children’s friend. He became (and remains to be) one of the most popular religious figures appearing in households of the Low Countries. In the Netherlands, he turned into a vehicle of middle-class domesticity and family values as he offered an unambiguous model of child-rearing for the entire nation (Van Leer, 1995, p. 67). Simultaneously, various folklorists started to publish on the origins of Saint Nicholas and the development of the traditions accompanying the yearly visitor.\textsuperscript{5} Authors such as Eelco Verwijs and Joseph Schrijnen, locked many newly invented “traditions” into a perceived national past,\textsuperscript{6} thus engaging in the activity of creating a powerful cultural symbol of Dutch society.

For the American Santa Claus, a parallel story can be told. His feast— and especially the “physical” image of Santa—became part of popular practice at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But his middle-class antiquarian inventors immediately propelled him into public memory, thus creating the illusion that Saint Nicholas had traveled from Holland to New Amsterdam with the first migrants (Nissenbaum, 1997, p. 49). In America, too, the child-loving bringer of sweets and gifts went on to act as a quintessentially domestic “Victorian” sentimental symbol of family structures, much in the way that Father Christmas came to embody British family values (Tosh, 1999, p. 146). Significantly, all these mysterious guests lose much—if not all—of their religious connotations throughout the nineteenth century. Santa was, in the words of Stephen Nissenbaum, “defrocked” in the course of the nineteenth century (1997, p. 78). Father Christmas lost his reputation as a stern punisher and his patriarchal authority to replace it with sentimental, new paternal care. Saint Nicholas, meanwhile, turned into a secular Weihnachtsman in Germany. In Holland, the bishop received civil and modern characteristics. From Sint Nicolaas he turned into Sint Heer Klaas (“Sir’ Klaas), which later became Sinterklaas\textsuperscript{7} (Van Leer, 1995, p. 66).

Protestantism and Bürgerlichkeit, so it seems, were crucial to Saint Nick and the likes. The question remains if the figure of a bishop could so easily be “defrocked” and reframed as a symbol of domesticity, modernity and consumption in a Catholic region. Flanders possibly presents a specific case of bourgeois domesticity and—thus—of a specific reflection thereof in the figure of the children’s favorite saint.\textsuperscript{8} An analysis of the image of the Saint and especially the relation between him and the families in which he performed his role can therefore not only add the “confessional” perspective to existing
interpretations of Sinterklaas/ Santa Claus, but also—more importantly—start to sketch the contours of a “Catholic” version of nineteenth century middle-class domesticity. So far, there is no research tradition on the Flemish middle-classes matching the German, French and English canon on Bürgerlichkeit, bourgeoisie or Victorianism. As a consequence, the question of domesticity has been largely disregarded. In this paper I will, therefore, aim to relate my questions on Saint Nicholas’ function as a model of behavior and his place in the Flemish family not only to constructions of masculinity but also to the construction of domesticity in a Catholic region of nineteenth-century Western Europe.

Gathering Round the Hearth

The question of domesticity is of particular interest, since Saint Nick guides us necessarily to the center of the nineteenth century home: the fireplace. As the Saint’s feast took place in the midst of winter, he visited families at a time when they would spend their evening huddled round the stove, a situation that was heavily romanticized in the second half of the century: “O, how gay and attractive was the Flemish hearth”, the December issue of Belgische illustratie recounted in 1868, “The lamp on the table was lighting a whole ring of elderly and youths. The nodding grandfather was sitting there, like the little boy of only a few months old on his mother’s lap.” Small children, too, were reminded of the importance of the family fireplace. A picture in a schoolbook for beginning readers showed how “Sweet Peter” kneels in front of the fireplace in search of goodies (see illustration 3). Multiple poems vividly narrated how children hurried to the fireplace on the morning of December 6, to see if Nicholas had filled their shoes with toys and candy. The shoes were reminiscent of the old Christian legends surrounding the Saint; in several versions, the story was told that Saint Nicholas had helped an old poor shoemaker by throwing three purses with gold through an open window. The next day, the shoemaker found the purses in some unfinished shoes, and although he had not seen his nightly visitor, he immediately came to the conclusion that it had to have been Nicholas.

The centrality of domesticity to Nicholas’ visits is perhaps best exemplified through a counter image. In 1858, Jan Van Beers wrote a tear-jerking poem he called “Sint Niklaas” (Van Beers, 1859, p. 11). The poem is not so much a “popular” text, directed at children, but rather a part of romantic “high” literature. It contains vivid depictions of the sensibilities of the nineteenth century Flemish bourgeoisie. In 26 verses, the poem tells the story of a poor young girl and her widowed mother on the night of December 5. Appealing to the middle-class sentimental meaning attached to the hearth, the first line goes “No light, no sparkle scintillated in the low, musty little room.” The cold hearth immediately places the story outside the ideal, cozy domestic setting in which Saint Nicholas normally appeared. And indeed, when “little Mary” (klein Mieken) asks her mother if she, “who had behaved so well” should not put her shoe in the corner in order to receive presents, the widow uses the empty fireplace to explain to her daughter why the Saint will not visit her:

Oh, Mary, yes certainly!
You were always good, but know—the Saint
Only comes in through chimneys,
In which a fire burnt by day.
The poem firmly locks Saint Nick in a middle-class setting, uttering a rather typical critique of social injustice, but also refers to the ubiquity of the Saint. Although klein Mieken has never received any presents or candy, she is well aware of Nicholas’ upcoming visit and the ritual surrounding it. Moreover, both mother and daughter express feelings and show a behavior that would be fitting for their bourgeois counterparts. The mother acts as her child’s confidant, an ideal “loving” mother; not only does she confirm her daughter’s good behavior, she also “warm’s Mary’s cold feet in both her hands”, carries the girl to bed and kisses her goodnight and then “weeps for a long time”, not over her own misfortune, but over her daughter’s upcoming disappointment. Mieken, on her part, acts as the ideal innocent child. Sitting on her mother’s lap, she enthusiastically talks about toys and candy and—above all—of her blind belief in the Saint’s goodness.

The two women—who perfectly fit the mould of what the nineteenth century middle-class believed to be “natural” femininity—are not the cause of the lack of warm domesticity in this poem. What is lacking is a head of the household. A father would not only have been able to provide for the family, but would also have constituted a bridge to the outer world where “dolls with satin clothes (...) sugar and gingerbread, and marzipan ships” were available. The absence of a father not only deprived Mieken and her mother of the financial possibility to create domesticity, but also broke the fine balance of love and authority in which Saint Nicholas operated. Without a domestic hero waiting at the hearth, his heavenly counterpart could not come down the chimney.

Yet, Saint Nicholas visited Mieken after all. Looking through a crack in the roof, the little girl sees the stars and then suddenly hears heavenly voices when angels come down, carrying baskets full of toys and sweets. In the midst of them floats a man:

He wore a golden cloak;
His beard sparkled like the whitest of silver;
And with all his angels, he descended,
Coming ever closer to the earth.

The solemn old man whispers in the girl’s ear, asking her to join him and Mieken immediately trusts the figure that seems to come straight from heaven. When the widow awakes the next morning, she finds her daughter dead.

The staging of Saint Nicholas as a personification of death is rare, but also refers to a broader trope of a dreadful Saint Nicholas. Until well into the nineteenth century, Nicholas not only appeared as a children’s friend, but also as a stern punisher of children, as a martial saint and as a sexualized figure. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the shoemaker’s legend explained that the three purses offered by Nicholas were to be the man’s daughters’ dowry so as to save them from prostitution. The legend was thus at the basis of a far more ‘adult’ way of celebrating the Saint, framing him as a matchmaker. Young women would pray Nicholas to send them a lover, and young men offered gingerbread Klazen to their sweethearts to declare their love. The carnival-like festivities surrounding this “sexualized” Saint Nicholas (such as balls, pub-crawls, and gatherings at the local baker) had disappeared in the course of the eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century Nicholas directed himself exclusively to (young) children (Van Leer, 1995). Nevertheless, it remained clear that the
Saint was not an overall sweet or jolly man. In 1848, for example, the poet Prudens Van Duyse described him as “the one, who exchanged the sword for the crosier” and as a “knight of the poor” (Van Duyse, 1848, p. 134).21

The imagery of the Saint could also be rather “martial”. Early (eighteenth century) Dutch images of Nicholas on cheap prints for children were often revivals of old woodcuts, depicting kings and knights, and the general style of these pictures was maintained in other prints of the Saint (Van Veen, 1976, p. 580). A mid-nineteenth century image printed in Turnhout shows Nicholas as if in an equestrian statue (on a very “active” horse, lifting one leg). He sports a long but dark beard, and his stature is one of forceful lead, rather than being carried by the horse.22 (Illustration 4). In the text accompanying the image, the Saint is called a bishop and a children’s friend, a holy man, the patron Saint of Amsterdam and as riding a “courageous” horse.23 Similarly, in the poems, songs and stories directed at primary school children, Nicholas’ mobility (by virtue of his horse) appears as the Saint’s most important characteristic, rather than his physical appearance or his age.

The lack of “physical” or visual descriptions or images of the saint in the early nineteenth century (and even up to the beginning of the twentieth century) is partly due to the way in which the practice of gift-giving through Nicholas was organized. The Saint was presented to children as a mysterious figure, traveling through the night, and Nicholas remaining invisible was crucial to the atmosphere of excitement and anticipation parents attempted to incite in their children (Hamlin, 2003). In the Netherlands, where Protestantism was the dominant denomination, depicting the Saint was prohibited in the beginning of the nineteenth century, a prohibition that was avoided by various printers by ‘adopting’ other images to go with texts about Saint Nicholas (martial pictures of sixteenth century monarchs were used, but images of “civil”, wealthy gentlemen served just as well) (Booy, 2003, p. 30). In Flanders, Nicholas was just as invisible as in the Netherlands when dropping gifts, but in this Catholic region, the depiction of the Saint was not prohibited and the population could draw on their experience in identifying Saints through their attributes. Hence, he appears in songs and poems “Seated on a snow-white horse, with golden saddle and reigns” (Van Duyse, 1849, p. 6),24 as “the Illustrious, with mitre and crosier” (Van Duyse, 1848, p. 133),25 or he is simply addressed as “bishop”. In “Catholic” images of the Saint (printed in the Southern Low Countries), too, his mitre and crosier are prominently present, and sometimes the tub with the three rescued children is used as a tool of recognition (Illustration 5). Although it is hard to stake any claims, due to the small amount of sources and the difficulty to pin down exact dates for several images and songs, there does seem to be an evolution throughout the nineteenth century, in which the depiction of Saint Nicholas moves from youthful yet stern and mature to an older, more sentimental figure. But various imagery and text are likely to have interfered with each other, and much of Saint Nicholas was probably left to the children’s and parents’ imagination.

Young and Old Voices: Conversations with Saint Nicholas
If children could rarely see Saint Nicholas, they had ample opportunity to hear him. On the night of December 5, when the Saint was riding his horse on the roofs, children would hear him galloping about, knocking on doors and invisibly throwing candy in. At the end of the nineteenth century, the scary sounds of the nightly visitor were gradually
replaced by Nicholas’ calming voice. Especially towards the turn of the century, that voice was mainly used as a bridge between the children and God: Nicholas was often presented as innocent children’s intercessor. In 1903, Le patriote illustré devoted two pages to “the miracle of Saint Nicholas”, in which Gagnard has killed and pickled three school children to steal their precious clothing (Vicaire, 1903, p. 572). Seven years later, the Saint passes his house and forces him to open the cupboard in which he has stored them. When la gagnarde finally opens the cupboard, the children look “as if they were sleeping”. When the Saint sees them, he shows himself versed in the romanticism of the late nineteenth century, and offers a shining and highly sentimental description of the “ideal” children: “Still their beautiful smile and their curly hair! Death has not withered this flower of innocence. They sleep, as pure as on the day they were born, the dream of their lives has hardly been achieved, and on their lips still floats a last ave”.26

Although this is a rendition of one of the traditional legends of Saint Nicholas, the children (and not their father) are at the center of this story. The journal, directed at Catholic adults, presents the wealthy children as similar to angels: they are innocent, pure and pious. The devotion to Mary, expressed in the children’s “last ave”, is mirrored by Nicholas, who calls to the Virgin to resurrect the children. Like a model bourgeois grandfather, Nicholas acts as a go-between between the children and their Holy Mother, apparently governed by a “natural” (or divine?) bond of affection. Rather than aiming to convince children of the rewards of domestic obedience (as was often the case in stories in schoolbooks), this story wanted to provide a model for parental behavior. Especially fathers would have recognized the intercessor’s role, as they were commonly expected to act as a bridge between the private and public world, between the safe and soft environment of the home and the stern hierarchy outside: legal, confessional and common-sense codes of behavior all stipulated that fathers were to guide, protect and govern their wives and children.27 This particular interpretation of fatherhood, expressed and reinstated in stories, poems and songs for the night of December 5, granted the household’s head a particular kind of authority, based on “paternal love” (which differed greatly from the “maternal love”, that was equally present in Nicholas stories and poems, as we will see). For fathers, loving their children was equal to sternly controlling and—if need be—punishing them.

A poem by Prudens Van Duyse, “Children’s hope fulfilled” (Van Duyse, 1849, p. 17), makes blatantly clear how the Saint Nicholas ritual reinforced the family father’s authority over his wife and children. “The mother”, who is the first personage in the poem, announces that the children’s “joy will be heightened” as Nicholas will “reward them”. After that statement, “the father” interrupts her and starts questioning his wife on their children’s behavior: “Mother, have they been obedient?” he asks, “do they both deserve the Saint’s visit?” He then goes on to specify various desirable acts and behavior for his son and daughter, thereby reinforcing the gender-dichotomy the poem reflects for him and his wife in the norms he sets for his children.28 “Say, was Pieter sweet and kind?” the questionnaire on his son starts, “studious in school and quite, well-behaved at home and outside, did he always obey your will?” Daughter Clara is expected to be “sweet, never angry, never cross, never neglectful of needle- and knitting-work, well-behaved at home and outside”. Finally, he asks after the children’s piety: “did they kneel, their hands together, when they read the Our Father?” After every verse, the mother answers affirmatively to every question, as if going through a checklist. The poem reaffirms the mother’s simultaneous roles as her children’s
confidant and supervisor, while also endorsing the father’s authority over the family without the necessity to be present in the home to actively exercise control. The question on the children’s prayers is particularly telling about the position of the Catholic family father within the home: as head of the household, he is also responsible for the family’s spiritual guidance, but as women were considered more apt for both child care and piety, the actual confessional “work” was left to the mother.

Domestic religiosity, so it seems, was a woman’s job, and a man’s responsibility. Fathers represented their family in the public world, and—as the poem suggests—also in front of Saint Nicholas. The position of the father as an intermediary between his children and the Saint is strikingly similar to the position he holds in the civil code as the executor of state power within his household. And just as his “civil” responsibilities grant him the power to “speak” on a state level, his religious responsibilities allow him to “speak” with regard to higher spiritual authorities. The family father holds the privilege to speak to the Saint: in another poem by Van Duyse, written for his five-year-old son, the poet promises: “I will have a word with the good man then”, and as a true representative of the child he will “bid him for some toys for you” (Van Duyse, 1849, p. 7).

And the communication monopoly also worked the other way around: the family father held the highest authority in speaking about Saint Nicholas, in order to inform the children of Nicholas’ demands and upcoming visits. “Listen, darlings, to your father” the father in Van Duyse’s poem says, confidently claiming knowledge on the Saint’s criteria for granting children their sweets and toys. In Zweer’s cantata, the father’s knowledge is even more elaborately shown: all children gather around the fireplace and remain very still, because—as the full choir joyously announces “father will tell about Saint Nicholas”. What follows is a baritone-solo (“father”) occupying almost a full quarter of the cantata in which a version of the legend of Saint Nicholas and the poor shoemaker is told. Significantly, the center of attention in this version of the story is the poor father, rather than his children.

The shared role as “intercessor,” then, gave rise to a fascinating solidarity between Nicholas and the pious father. In yet another Van Duyse poem, published in 1848, this solidarity between the Saint and the unfortunate father is presented as a form of comradeship in a martial context: the poor father of three beautiful daughters is introduced as an “old warrior”, and therefore similar to the “knight of the poor, son of the church” (Van Duyse, 1848, p. 134). Rather than assuming a role complementary to the one fulfilled by the parent in need (as is the case with the loving mothers who delegate the stern, authoritative element of parenthood to Nicholas), the Saint carries a part of the burden of fatherhood. By anonymously throwing money through the window, Nicholas helps to provide for the family, without exposing or blaming the father who fails to do this himself. And whereas, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a man had to prove worthy to deserve the Saint’s money (by his past as a courageous warrior), at the turn of the century fatherly love and concern were the criteria to receive a helping hand.

In many ways, then, the family father and the invisible Saint joined forces in order to perform the role of the ideal Catholic man. Nevertheless, the way in which Saint Nicholas and Catholic family fathers were interrelated is not identical to the strong bonds between Father Christmas and the Victorian family father. Rather than allowing the family father to become a playful companion or (temporarily) neglect his duty of
controlling and punishing his children, Saint Nicholas fortified the family father’s authority. He did so partly by confirming children’s subordination through the practice of gift-giving (Hamlin, 2003, p. 857), but even more so by providing various narratives that recreated fathers as the bridge between the domestic and the public world.

The role of mothers within this hierarchy of children–father–Nicholas–God is not always clear. Obviously, mothers were central to the tradition around the hearth, and poems and songs hardly ever failed to mention them. Yet, they seem to have had no responsibility in family life: mothers did not tell Saint Nicholas stories; they did not punish children and did not mediate between their children and Nicholas. Their main role seems to have been that of their children’s accomplices. Mothers urged their children to ready their shoe or basket because they “believe that Saint Nicholas will bring something” (Segers, 1894, p. 26) or assured them that they “need not be afraid” of the rod. In these narratives, mothers seem to seek the support of Saint Nicholas for their educational task: more specifically, the Saint takes on the duty of exerting authority over the children, as his visit invariably results in children’s promises to behave “even better next year” (Segers, 1894, p. 27). Nevertheless, even though a mother’s love was unconditional, the Saint’s presents had to be earned: delegating the exercise of authority to an invisible figure gave mothers the possibility to act as their children’s supervisors, without losing the sentimental, love-based bond with their children.

Despite the presence of these two authoritative intercessors, children could occasionally also converse directly with the Saint. The contact between the old bishop and his young wards was usually a matter of one-way traffic, in which children praised Nicholas, asked him for presents or thanked him after receiving them. Although devoid of all authority, children’s voices were a crucial part of the celebration of Saint Nicholas. Most Saints could count on a number of songs dedicated to them that were sung in churches or processions in their honor, but only in Nicholas’ case was the practice of singing such a vital part of his celebration and—therefore—such an important tool for the construction of his “identity”. Every Flemish songbook for primary schools contained at least one song dedicated to the Saint and Edouard Grégoir even included one in a booklet entitled “to the Belgian nation”, by which he accorded Nicholas the statute of national importance (Gregoir, n.d.). These songs, and other tunes that were not included in the school curriculum, were apparently meant to be sung around the fireplace.

It seems plausible, however, that the songs originating in the nineteenth century resounded at least as often in classrooms as around the domestic hearth. The collections and song-cycles in which Saint Nicholas poems and songs appeared, were largely school-oriented and part of a more general effort to promote (children’s) singing in an educational context. To which extent children brought the songs home remains unclear, but the texts chosen obviously befitted the bourgeois domestic world. Texts referred to the shops filled with toys and confectionery, recounted conversations between loving mothers and obedient children, pointed out children’s piety to the saint and, above all, described how on the morning of December 6 all kinds of gifts were to be found around the fireplace (Willems, n.d., p. 108; Grégoir, n.d., p. 1; Rutens, 1893, p. 16). In most of these songs, Nicholas’ capacities as children’s friend and as stern bishop were both mentioned, showing that—in the Catholic region of Flanders—Nicholas’ Catholicism and his symbolic place in the hierarchical structure of the Christian family
remained important throughout the century. In a song published in a Songcycle for Catholic schools for example, children addressed Nicholas as a “noble man”, a “great bishop”, a “holy man”, and as a “child’s friend”.\footnote{42}

In 1898, the heightened attention that went to singing voices in the Saint Nicholas ritual reached an apotheosis when Bernard Zweers composed a full Saint Nicholas cantata. The work consisted mainly of a compilation of popular children’s songs. It was richly orchestrated, echoing the romanticism of the great composers of the nineteenth century, and staged—besides a children’s choir—a pious family father and, strikingly, the Saint himself. The cantata is of particular interest here, not only for its collection of popular Nicholas songs, but also because of its acoustic image of a Catholic hierarchy of masculinity. In the cantata, the relation between the children and their father on the one hand, and the relation between the family father and Nicholas are clarified not only in text, but also in music. In the first part of the cantata, especially the father’s knowledge-monopoly is elaborately shown: all children gather around the fireplace and remain very still, because—as the full choir joyously announces—“father will tell about Saint Nicholas” (Zweers & De Rop, 1892).\footnote{43} What follows is a baritone-solo (“father”) occupying almost a full quarter of the cantata in which a version of the legend of Saint Nicholas and the poor shoemaker is told. In the second part of the work, after a long and monumental choral intervention, father welcomes the Saint and urges the children to make room for the holy man. In the last quarter of the cantata the Saint appears on stage and addresses the children in a deep, basso voice to ask them “did you lovingly honor your parents? Were you obedient in school and did you learn well? And have you handsomely read your prayers? Have you not teased each other? Did you always speak the truth when asked?”\footnote{44}

**A Grandfatherly Hero: Domesticity, Old Age and Heroism**

The difference between the father’s clear baritone and Saint Nicholas’ sonorous bass was all but coincidental: composing at a time when masculine voices became more and more defined as low chest-voices rather than the previous idea of a sharp, “penetrating” masculine voice;\footnote{45} Zweers efficiently used the contrasting timbres to evoke Nicolas’ authority and age versus the fathers’ acoustic volatility and youthfulness. In many ways, the Nicholas appearing in Zweers’ cantata and in late-nineteenth century imagery came to resemble a nineteenth century grandfather, rather than being domesticated into a bourgeois father as seems to have been the case for the English Father Christmas.

The Catholic Nicholas, at the turn of the century, carried many of the “grandparental” characteristics identified by Vincent Gourdon. In nineteenth-century France, “the grandparent is a mixture of the dominant image of the ‘spoiling’ grandparent and biblical references” (Gourdon, 2001, p. 112)\footnote{46}—a mixture of sentimentalism and religiosity. It is hard to pin down if Nicholas would have corresponded to what Gourdon calls the Catholic-reactionary conception of grandfatherhood, or to the construction of grandparenthood he identified as part of the “modern” family in which “the supposed key-principles are affection and autonomy” and “the power of the grandparent over the father and the grandson (...) is a complete aberration” (Gourdon, 2001, p. 113).\footnote{47} It seems fitting, though, that in a society steeped in Catholicism such as Flanders, the so-called “modern” family was Catholic by definition, and that the stark differences Gourdon observes in France were more blurred or even absent in Belgium.\footnote{48} Moreover, the very characteristics Saint Nicholas shared with grandfathers were those
who provided the bridge between the authoritarian and the sentimental elements of the nineteenth century family. Gourdon noted that grandparents could often play a part in the cementing of paternal authority within the “modern” (bourgeois, companionate) family.

Much like the figure of Nicholas did in various songs and poems, grandfathers acted as adults to whom children could turn to ask for a favor (and—as the term “grandpère gateau” indicates, many grandfathers showered their grandchildren with presents); nevertheless, this role as the child’s accomplice never lead grandfathers to question parent’s punishments or authority (Gourdon, 2001, p. 120). Even though grandfathers often offered a “softer” image of paternal authority, “in front of the child, they guaranteed the legitimacy of parents’ repressive actions” (Gourdon, 2001, p. 122). 49 Urging children to behave well, and rewarding them with presents when they did so, Nicholas legitimized, like an ideal grandfather, the norms and limits set out and controlled by children’s parents. (If a father could communicate with the Saint on his children’s behavior, obviously their rules and demands were in keeping with Nicholas’ standards). A last parallel between the white-haired Saint and his earthly counterparts was the unconditional sympathy of children for both: even if she had never seen her grandfather, a child was expected to love him nevertheless. And even though one would expect that children’s sympathy for Saint Nicholas greatly depended on his willingness to present them with sweets, the unshakable belief in the goodness of Nicholas expressed by the idealized poor children in romantic stories and poems reflects the general belief that children’s love for their forebears was “natural” (Gourdon, 2001, p. 116).

The parallels between grandfatherly love and Nicholas’ care were—more than in children’s songs—explicitly present in texts directed at adults. In 1890, a Catholic grandfather published a short article in Le patriote illustré, entitled “Should we tell?” 50 Summarizing “scientific” as well as “theological” arguments, the author pondered upon the question if one should tell children about the “real” course of the Saint Nicholas ritual. His most developed consideration, at the end of the article, stages the author in the role of grandfather. “Let us try”, he begins, implicitly assuming the responsibility to tell his grandchild the ‘truth’: “my granddaughter stands before me, opening her eyes wide and waiting for me to tell her what she already accepts as the truth. What is there to say? One hesitates, and fears to be pedantic and cruel”. 51 Again referring to the presupposition that children unconditionally loved and trusted their grandparents, this grandfather shows himself reluctant to break the hierarchal structure of the family (in which children are subordinate by virtue of their innocence and ignorance). His most compelling argument to preserve this structure is a sentimental one, thus framing both the grandfather and Saint Nicholas as reconciliatory figures in the household, serving as catalysts for the mixture of vertical authority and horizontal affection in the “modern” Catholic family.

As a Catholic domestic hero, then, Saint Nicholas aimed for inspiration rather than imitation. In his old age, the Saint reflected a particular interpretation of justice and wisdom that was mainly directed at younger men: young children’s fathers. Even though mothers and grandparents could play an important part in the Saint Nicholas ritual, the Saint was hardly their hero. To a certain extent, he was not a children’s hero either, but rather a foil on which all kinds of expectations regarding domestic authority and the “fairness” legitimizing that privilege of authority could be projected. Although
Saint Nicholas was clearly not a fatherly figure (and therefore not a model of paternity), his “grandfatherliness” was understood as a stage surpassing paternity, which placed him in a more privileged position both within the family and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Conclusion
It is striking that many of Nicholas’ characteristics that could have been termed ‘heroic’ had disappeared by the turn of the century: apparently Nicholas did not need his martiality, his “courageous horse” or his initial scariness to be a Catholic hero. Rather to the contrary: with his long beard, his warm voice, his apparent lack of sexuality and his increasingly less impressive stature, he provided a counter image for the “virile” ideals of manliness of the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the feeble body, the lack of offspring and other markers of “masculinity”, Nicholas was in every respect a man—or, to frame it another way, he was not and could not be a woman or a child.

Nevertheless, Nicholas’ masculinity and authority greatly depended on precisely women and children, and the course of the Nicholas ritual showed how fathers’ positions within Catholic families were for a large part defined by their wives and offspring. Especially the different roles fathers and mothers played vis-à-vis their children as respectively spokesmen and accomplices showed how a continuing negotiation went on among parents, constantly re-establishing their respective gendered roles within the family as well as within society at large. Mothers who delegated the work of punishing their children to their husbands and Nicholas not only secured their self-image as sentimental home-makers, but also underpinned their husbands’ paternal authority. And fathers acting as spokesmen for their children in front of Saint Nicholas repeated and practiced the behavior they were expected to show in the public sphere. By the end of the nineteenth century, then, Saint Nick was no longer “the hero who rides on roofs and chimneys” (Van Veen, 1976, p. 580), but rather the hero who fortified paternal domestic authority by reverting to ecclesiastical structures of power and the provision of a Catholic alternative image of forceful masculinity.
Illustration 2: “Nicolas – le grand Saint chez une famille Hollandaise”, in *Le Patriote Illustré*, 1898. The ‘great Saint’ is accompanied by a black boy with turban.
References


Rutten, P. (1893) Liederkrans voor de lagere school.


Van Osselaer, T. (2008a). ‘A lot of women have good reason to complain about their husbands’. Ideals of Catholic masculinity. Sextant (autumn).


Notes

1 “Op eens, daar gaat de deur als van zelve wagenwijd open: de heilige man ‘met zijnen besten tabbert aan’, gemijterd en den staf in de hand, komt statig binnengestapt; de grootjufvrouw volgt met de twee engeltjes, die, benevens eene mand vol lekkernijen in het midden, het eene een boek met sloten, het andere eene roede dragen.”

2 Saint Nicholas had long time been accompanied by dark, “devilish” figures, but it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that “Black Pete” turned into his regular helpmate. The little Moor was introduced in the Netherlands by Jan Schenkman and gradually spread throughout the Low Countries. In Belgium, the childish black helpmate and the solemn white angels coexisted until well into the twentieth century (see illustrations 1 & 2) (Booy, 2003).

3 The work of linguist Rita Ghesquiere forms a notable exception. Her book is the only study considering Flemish material and consists of an analysis of narrative tropes in Dutch and Flemish children’s stories (Ghesquière, 1989).

4 Saint Nicholas performed his miracles in Myra, but was buried in Bari, both coastal towns in Turkey.


6 The focus of most of these studies is on the “Germanic” origins of the traditions and imagery surrounding Nicholas. Discussions among the folklorists usually entail the question if Saint Nicholas as was a truly “religious” figure (and his miracle stories the basis of the tradition of presenting children with gifts through Nicholas), or rather an adaptation of an earlier, mythical figure (Germanic or classic) by early missionaries trying to Christianize already existing feasts.

7 Fritz Booy, in his book on the Saint's black helper, talks about this change to Sinterklaas and frames it as a “civilization” of the Saint (2003, pp. 7, 24).

8 Or one of their favorites. In Flanders, Saint Martin and Sinte Greef were also active as generous givers. Both bear striking resemblances to Nicholas (Saint Martin, for example, was also accompanied by a black helpmate, and Sinte Greef also multitasked as a matchmaker and a bringer of gifts), but will not be dealt with in this paper.

9 This is not to say that there has been no interest in the middle-classes, but rather that most of these studies adopt a socio-economic perspective, focusing on entrepreneurship versus labor (the lower-classes) or leisure (the nobility). The work of Peter Heyrman, for example, is concentrated on the middenstand (self-employed middle-class), and themes such as female entrepreneurship, domestics or middle-class individuals (biographies) have been explored, but larger syntheses are still lacking (Heyrman, 1998; Van Molle & Heyrman, 2001; De Maeyer, Ghesquière & Van Rompaey, 1996).

10 Works on religion and gender are often strongly centered on the theory of the “feminization of religion”, that presupposes a lack of religiosity in men (“home heathens”) and a strong association of femininity with piety (“domestic angels”).
Calumn Brown, in his work on Britain, offers an example of this usage of the theory of feminization (Brown, 2001). For a critical examination of the thesis and its possible applications to the Belgian context, see the survey by Tine Van Osselaer and Thomas Buerman (2008). Since the thesis of feminization has its flaws and cannot easily be translated to the Belgian context, I prefer to understand Catholic fatherhood and domesticity in terms of “differentiation” (as has been suggested by Van Osselaer) rather than as defined by processes of feminization and masculinization. This does not only avoid running into the trap of essentialism, but also allows for an analysis of Catholic masculinity within the household (Van Osselaer 2008a, 2008b).

11 In Flanders, Nicholas visits households on the night from December 5 to 6, in the Netherlands, he arrives one day earlier.

12 “O, hoe vroolijk en aantrekkelijk was de Vlaamsche haard! De huislamp brandde op tafel en verlichtte gansch eenen kring van ouderen en jongeren. De knikkende grootvader zat daar, gelijk de kleine knaap van pas eenige maanden op moeders schoot”.

13 In a reading lesson in La vie de tous les jours, a schoolbook from 1903, the text on Saint Nicholas recounts how the children rise at six in the morning to find their presents (Swagers & Finet, 1903). In songs, too, children’s impatience was addressed: in a Saint Nicholassong in a 1893 songbook, the third verse sketches how the children go to bed “bursting with impatience”, after which, in the fourth verse, they immediately look for what Nicholas has brought them at night (Rutten, 1893).

14 In an 1848 poem, Prudens van Duyse makes the rescued father say “That shadow, it must have been Nicholas...only he can flee human rewards” (Die schaduw, ‘t was vast Nicolaes...hij alleen kan vluchten voor menschenbelooning) (Van Duyse, 1848, p. 134).

15 “Daar vonkelde licht noch laaie, in ‘t lage vunzige kamerkijn”.

16 “Och, Mieken, ja voorzeker! / Gij waart steeds braaf; maar weet – de Sant / Komt enkel in langs schouwen, / Waar bij dag heeft vuur gebrand.”

17 Saint Nicholas’ annual visit often served as an opportunity to practice charity. From the 1850’s onwards, the Vincentians, for example, organized the distribution of toys and sweets for poor families and orphans on Saint Nicholas’ day. Even in this context, though, the celebration of the Saint remained a “domestic” occasion: Nicholas’ visit would be celebrated within the bourgeois or genteel home, after which well-off families would visit the less fortunate to hand out gifts (De Maeyer, Heyrman & Quaghebuer, 1992, pp. 279-312; De Maeyer, 1994, p. 196).

18 Several studies on ideal femininity and motherhood have been conducted in the last decades, for example Elisabeth Badinter, for France (1980), Teresa Kulawik for Sweden and Germany (1999) and Carol Smart with an edited volume on Canada, the US and the UK (1992).

19 “Hij droeg eenen gouden mantel; / Als ‘t witste zilver blonk zijn baard; / Hij daalde, met alle zijne engeltjes, / Steeds nader en nader tot de aard!”

20 Of one particular song, several versions were sung in the Low Countries throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It was later also recorded by Prudens Van
Duyse in his folklorist work on songs of the low countries (Van Duyse, 1903-1908, p. 1367). The song was framed as the plea of a young girl for a lover and was also known under the title “Complaint of a love-sick maiden” (Klagte van een min-sieke Maegt). The text repeatedly stressed the need for a lover who would “satisfy my lust” (Die mijn minne-lust voldoet) and “knows how to treat his wife in bed” (zijne vrouw ‘in het Bed onthalen kan’). In exchange for this lover, the girl singing the song promises to call her son Nicholas (De naam van ‘t kind zal Klaasje zijn), as Saint Nick would be its godfather.

21 “hem, die het zwaard verruilde voor kerkstaf”, “ridder der armen”.
22 The image refers to the older woodcuts, and therefore also to older notions of horsemanship, which constituted an important element for early modern “manliness” (Mattfeld, 2006).
23 “Hier siet gij hem sijn giften deelen / gezeten op zijn moedig paard.”
24 “Op een sneeuwwit paard gezeten / met een gouden zaël en toom”.
25 “die Doorluchte, met mijter en staf”.
26 “Toujours leur beau sourire et leurs cheveux boucles!/ La mort n’a pas flétri cette fleur d’innocence. Ils dorment aussi purs qu’au jour de la naissance, / le songe de leur vie est à peine achevé / et sur leur bouche encore / flotte un dernier ave”.
27 On father’s authority in the Catholic household, see Van Osselaer (2008a). The civil code, too, contained a basis for marital/paternal authority (Hoegaerts, 2008).
28 The cementing of gendered family values was further reflected in the gifts the children received (Hamlin, 2003, p. 7).
29 A fathers’ role to represent the family in the public sphere has been noted especially in Britain (Tosh, 1999; Nelson, 1995). The idea of the family as a state within the state, in which the head of the household acted as a representative of the state within the family, and as a representative of the family within the state, was also translated into a more religious perspective on the family. According to Pope Leo XIII, the Catholic family should be a “little Church”, in which the pater familias should aim to love his wife and children like Christ loved his church, and vice versa (Gevers, 1995; De Maeyer, 2000).
30 “k zal den goeden man dan spreken / en wat speelgoed voor u smeken”.
31 “Luistert, lieven, naar uw vader”
32 “Vader gaat vertellen van Sinterklaas” (Zweers & De Rop, 1892).
33 “er was een oud krijger”(...) ‘O ridder der armen, o zone der Kerk’”.
34 The definitions of manliness and heroism, and the blurred distinctions and unstable relations between both were subject to radical changes throughout the nineteenth century. The combination of martial heroism and sentimental fatherhood proved to be a field of continuous friction, but was never entirely impossible (Francis, 2002).
35 In the Victorian family, the transformation of Father Christmas into Santa Claus parallels a shift from an interpretation of fatherhood as the exercise of authority to one as “material largesse”. According to Tosh, “Father Christmas was now the apotheosis of the generous, indulgent father” (1999, p. 149).
“Moeder zegde: ‘Pieter, gij moet uw korf zetten, want ik denk wel, dat Sint Nikolaas iets voor u zal brengen’.

“o moeder lieve moeder / zyn wy wel braef geweest / wel kindjes lieve kindjes / weest daer niet voor bevreesd”.

“Pieter bedankte Sint Nikolaas, en beloofde het volgende jaar nog braver te zijn”.

A number of these songs are still well-known today. Two very famous songs (“Hij komt” and “Zie ginds komt de stoomboot”) were based on music by Schubert and Mozart (“Fröhlicher Landmann, von der Arbeit zurückender”, from the Album für die Jugend” and “Menuet” from the “Haffner serenade”), and thus probably originated in the middle-classes. Most Nicholas songs, however, were adaptations of popular folksongs that were rarely written down and could be arranged according to the singer’s fancy.

Nineteenth century songbooks for children carried titles such as “Songs for school and hearth” or “Song-collection for school and home”.

Especially Edouard Gregoir was very active in promoting musical education for young children at the end of the nineteenth century.


“Vader gaat vertellen van Sinterklaas”.

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Throughout the nineteenth century, the popularity of male alto’s and soprano’s waned, castrato’s disappeared and male operatic roles were transposed, so as to fall into the lower chest range (Barbier, 1998).

“I’aïeul est un mélange entre l’imaginaire dominant de la grand-parentalité ‘gâteau’, et les références bibliques”.

“les principes-clés supposes sont l’affection et l’autonomie” and “le pouvoir de l’aïeul sur le père et le petit fils … une complete aberration.”

More generally, one can hardly claim that Catholicism was opposite to modernism by definition. (Hellemans, 1997 & 2001).

“ils se font auprès de l’enfant les garants de la légitimité de l’action repressive parentale”.

“Doit-on le dire ?”

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Even though John Tosh’s idea of a late-nineteenth century “retreat from domesticity” has been questioned, the general image of this period is one of a construction of masculinity based on martiality, adventure and authority (Frances, 2002).

In a sense, the Saint Nicholas ritual concretized the very abstract dependence of constructions of masculinity on its feminine counterpart that has been recently pointed out by Christoph Kucklick (2008).

“Dit’s de Held, die op zyn tyd/Over dak en schoorsteen ryd”.

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God, Man, Then ... Wait, How Does That Go? Emerging Gender Identities in 20-something Evangelicals

Curtis Coats

In this article, I analyze the gender identities of Evangelical Christians involved in a non-denominational, Evangelical ministry called Lamphouse, which is designed for 20-something adults. This analysis explores the rhetorical fluidity of gender and the structural concreteness of patriarchy within this space. In addition, this analysis proposes a typology of gender identity. Rather than creating a duality of egalitarianism and patriarchy, I propose a spectrum of gendered subject positions taken up by my respondents.

In the past 20 years, gender scholars have produced a significant literature detailing the gendered identities of Evangelical Christians. According to John Bartkowski (2007), Evangelicals have been a hot topic of study in the past two decades because they are perceived to be “the arbiters of patriarchy” (p. 154). In particular, this scholarship has been most concerned with the notion of “headship,” a term used in many Evangelical circles to describe the relationship between God, men, women and children. In short, “headship” typically assumes a patriarchal chain of being in which children should be submissive to their parents, wives submissive to their husbands (and to God), and husbands submissive to God (the Father).

A good portion of this scholarship has analyzed Promise Keepers (Messner, 1997; Bartkowski, 2007, 2004; Claussen, 1999, 2000), its female counterparts, Women of Faith, Chosen Women and Women’s Aglow Fellowship (Erzen, 2000; Griffith, 1997), and Christian media products, like Wild at Heart (Gallagher & Wood, 2005). Much of this literature has focused on official texts and rhetoric, but a growing body of literature also analyzes “men and women in the pews” who identify with these movements and texts, yet negotiate them into everyday life in a variety of ways (Bartkowski, 2004, 2001; Gallagher & Wood, 2005; Griffith, 1997).

Some of this literature highlights the fundamental gender conservatism embedded in movements like Promise Keepers and books like Wild at Heart, paying particular attention to essentialized, patriarchal discourses about gender and normative discourse about the heterosexual family. Michael Messner (1997), for example, wrote: “Promise Keepers can be viewed...as organized and highly politicized antifeminist and antigay backlash” (p. 35). Tanya Erzen (2000) argued that Women of Faith and Chosen Women furthered “an agenda advocating divine and worldly submission” (p. 252). Michael S. Kimmel (1999) suggested that the sensitivity rhetoric of Promise Keepers did little more than produce “a kindler, gentler
patriarchy ... [with] male domination as obligation, surrender and service” (pp. 114–5). Finally, Julie Ingersoll (2003) suggested that despite whatever negotiations of power occurred within Evangelicalism, the dominance of patriarchy still does symbolic and material violence, particularly to women and homosexuals.

That said, a growing number of scholarship has also focused on the negotiation of varied gender symbols into more fluid gender identities (Bartkowski, 2004; Gallagher & Wood, 2005; Gallagher & Smith, 1999). This scholarship has argued a) that official rhetoric is diverse, b) that the spaces created by Promise Keepers and other groups are empowering to constructive masculinities, and c) that Evangelical men and women negotiate patriarchal rhetoric in a variety of ways.

Bartkowski (2004), for example, argued that Promise Keepers offered a “diverse array of godly masculinities” (p. 45). This diverse array, he suggested, existed within a spectrum anchored on one end by “rational patriarchs” and on the other, “expressive egalitarians” (p. 20). Gallagher and Wood (2005) supported this idea, arguing for a more nuanced view of official Evangelical rhetoric. They note, for example, the divergent ideas of masculinity that exist within Promise Keepers and the book, *Wild at Heart* (Eldredge, 2006).

Longwood (1999) argued that rather than thinking of Promise Keepers as repressive, scholars should think of broader American culture as repressive to men and Promise Keepers as a positive space “for personal healing and self-growth” (p. 13). Further, according to Stoltenberg (1999), this space offers men a “redemptive theology,” as well as groups of compassion that help men transform their everyday ethics, particularly in relation to the objectification of women through pornography (p. 94). Finally, Don Deardorff (2000) suggested that masculine space like Promise Keepers offers men a space for “ritualized resistance” to broader cultural norms, “a refuge where [men] can cope with alienation that they feel on several fronts” (p. 77).

If such diversity exists within official discourses and the social spaces in which they form, it should not be surprising that “men and women in the pews” express various ideas about gender. Thus, following Gallagher and Wood (2005), researchers need “to attend to multiple meanings as well as messages” (p. 56). Wilcox (1989), for example, suggested “a good deal of variation among evangelical women in their attitudes toward women’s issues” (p. 149). Gallagher (2003) argued that only 50 percent of Evangelical respondents believed that headship was rooted in some Great Chain of Being. Further, while 84 percent believed that the husband was the spiritual leader of the household, 98 percent offered what Gallagher called “qualified” responses, softening headship language with the language of mutual submission and partnership. Finally, 78 percent of her respondents believed in both headship and equal partnership.

Griffith (1997) and Brasher (1998) both highlighted the ways in which Evangelical women have been able to negotiate power under ideas of headship. One strategy of negotiation employed by Evangelical women is to understand terms like “submission” and “headship” as mutual servanthood and respect (Jaffe, 1999). In this negotiation, marriage, for example, is seen as a triangle, with God at the apex and man and woman at either point of the base. Similarly, Gallagher (2003) highlighted a rhetorical strategy of power negotiation whereby women felt it their duty to “submit” their ideas to their husbands in a way that helps him make decisions.
It is not simply women who have negotiated gender ideals, however. Bartkowski (2007) has suggested that Evangelical men have begun to focus more on partnership and less on chain of command. Further, leadership, for these men, involves humility and servanthood more than power. Gallagher (2003) argued that both men and women engaged in “practical reciprocity” where “wives acknowledge their husbands are accountable; and husbands willingly delegate decisions to their wives” (p. 102). Bartkowski (2004) argued that men employed a rhetorical strategy of “discursive tacking” in their negotiation of gender (p. 53). Tacking is a sailing term that describes how boats reach shore during an offshore wind. Tacking involves turning starboard and port repeatedly until the destination is reached. Bartkowski extended this term to a discursive strategy of Evangelical identity. He argued that men oscillate between rational patriarchy and expressive egalitarianism in the construction of masculine identity. This tacking leads predominantly to what W. Bradford Wilcox (2004) called “soft patriarchs,” i.e., men who believe leadership involves kindness, affectivity, humility, and servanthood.

Even with such variance, however, only five percent of Evangelical Christians, according to Gallagher and Smith (1999), espouse fully egalitarian views. Further, according to Gallagher’s research above, 84 percent of her respondents still believed that the husband was the head of the household. These numbers lead scholars like Kimmel (1999) to suggest that any “tacking” really only leads to softer forms of patriarchy. Gallagher (2003) argued that tacking toward egalitarianism was not simply a spoonful of sugar that helps male domination go down. Rather, it should be considered a negotiation and reinvention of gender identity.

Further, Gallagher and Smith (1999) argued that the patriarchy in Evangelicalism today is merely symbolic. Thus, while most Evangelical men and women might espouse “symbolic traditionalism,” their everyday lives revealed practices of “pragmatic egalitarianism.” Gallagher (2003) argued that regardless of ideals “nearly all Evangelicals end up in the same place in practice: a pragmatic egalitarianism in which decisions are made according to who has the most knowledge or expertise in a particular area” (p. 95). Bartkowski (2007), in fact, argued that “traditional gender ideologies in evangelical homes often give rise to progressive practices” (p. 163).

Clearly, there is a lively debate among scholars surrounding the negotiation of headship by Evangelicals. Current trends in scholarship seem to point to a nuanced understanding of official discourses and negotiations. In this paper, I intend to engage this debate in two ways.

First, by offering a case study of a 20-something Evangelical ministry, Lamphouse, I will highlight the variance and negotiation of gender within official discourses, for example teachings, in this social space. At the same time, I will highlight structural and rhetorical limitations to gender negotiations within this space. Following Julie Ingersoll (2003), I will highlight some “little things” that reinforce and reproduce patriarchy, in spite of egalitarian negotiations (p. 110). Thus, it may be that “tacking” in this setting involves the reworking of gender identity, as Gallagher (2003) argued, but these “little things” define and constrain the parameters of this space, thereby placing limitations on what gender negotiations are legitimate.

Second, I intend to expand the notion of “discursive tacking” by developing a typology of discursive strategies regarding gender. This typology will offer more
detail about how particular Evangelicals negotiate their gender identities. This, to use the tacking metaphor again, will give more detail about where certain Evangelicals come ashore, as it were, in their gender identities. In addition, this typology will show that it is not simply a matter of choosing headship or egalitarian symbols in this navigation. Rather, other discourses, particularly regarding theology and cultural relevance, enter into this negotiation of gender in a variety of ways.

Method
This study involved four weeks of structured participant observation after two months of informal participant observation with Lamphouse in 2004, during which time I served as a barista in their café. In addition, I conducted a focus group and six semi-structured interviews. More a “method of instances” than a sample, my research group included seven men, four of whom participated in the focus group, and three women, leaders and non-leaders, new members and members who had been involved with Lamphouse for more than a year.

Setting the Stage: Lamphouse Structure and Official Rhetoric
On Tuesday nights, 50 or more, mostly white, 20-something men and women gather at Lamphouse, a ministry of a large, Evangelical, non-denominational congregation located in a suburb of a metropolitan city. Meetings were held in the café area of the church.

Lamphouse was designed for intimacy. Though the room was large enough to comfortably hold 200 people or more, the seating arrangement was broken into tables that would seat no more than eight. A small candle adorned each table, symbolizing the group’s name and offering a small amount of ambient light in the dimly lit room. The tables formed a semi-circle around a stage, which typically hosted a band offering up contemporary Christian worship lyrics to acoustic or alt-rock music. Two television sets—anchored from the ceiling above the band—and one large screen to the side of the band projected lyrics, then teaching notes, and, often, popular movie clips. In case this techno-café atmosphere was not enough to draw in the 20-something crowd, Lamphouse also provided free food from a variety of fast food chains in the area.

Despite the use of cutting-edge technology or trendy music in a café setting, the gendered structure of Lamphouse was traditional. Men led each facet of Lamphouse. Upon entering the building, each person was greeted by the male “welcome coordinator” and his complement of female “greeters.” Men controlled the audio-visual presentations. Men led worship (with the occasional female back-up vocalist), and men always taught.

Compounding this structure, every media message during my fieldwork presented a hierarchical structure of male power. Of course, all of the worship songs exalted a male God, and despite concerted efforts to make scriptural teachings gender neutral, illustrations either offered a male perspective or an essentialist perspective about gender. Also, reinforcing this male perspective, every movie clip used focused on men—whether Al Pacino in Scent of a Woman (1992) defending Chris O’Donnell’s honor, Tom Cruise exhibiting courage in Last Samurai (2003), or Jack Black showing Lamphouse members how not to pursue or think about members of the opposite sex in Shallow Hal (2001).
While this patriarchal structure and practice was in play at Lamphouse, leadership employed rhetorical strategies that made this traditionalism less overt, if not ambiguous. Lamphouse leadership attempted to make teachings gender-neutral. In fact, one of the pastors apologized to the women at Lamphouse for the malcentric references in particular biblical passages. While this may seem like a small, pragmatic concession to keep women interested, it should be viewed as a challenge (if only a tacit one) to one of the core beliefs of Evangelical Christianity—the inerrancy of Holy Scripture—in an effort to be culturally relevant.

Apart from this rhetorical strategy, women were encouraged to take leadership positions in Lamphouse. At the end of each session, the leadership team joined near the stage to counsel and pray for any who had “come forward.” Half of the team was female.

This structural and rhetorical “wiggle room,” as it were, is well established in current scholarship about the negotiation of power in Evangelicalism (e.g. Gallagher, 2003; Griffith, 1997; Brasher, 1998; Bartkowski, 2004), and it is reflected in the following comments from two leaders, Ken and Ned.

**Interviewer:** How would you feel about a woman teaching?

**Ken:** I think it would give the women more of a comfort as far as knowing that they can step up and actually become a leader. I think the majority of the leadership team is men, and I kind of feel that women are just hesitant in taking that next step because it doesn’t look right for some reason.

...  
**Ned:** I think women do have a lot to offer because they are not stupid. They can read the Bible and interpret it and teach that to other people.

Of course, this negotiation of power, as expressed by both Ken and Ned, was couched in strong language of headship (discussed in more detail below). But their comments, mixed with the gender-neutral rhetoric of the teaching pastor and the material and symbolic practices of visible, female leaders, suggest that Lamphouse, in rhetoric and practice, if not in structure, employed a strategy of tacking toward egalitarian ideas, if only to remain relevant to 20-something Evangelical women. These discursive and material practices should not be dismissed simply because they occur within a structure of patriarchy. Yet, neither should the structure (and practices) of patriarchy be discounted. Instead, both help constitute the gendered space—fluid yet within concrete boundaries—of Lamphouse. Thus, both help constitute the gender identities of Lamphouse members.

**Discursive Tacking: A Typology**

What follows is an attempt to locate the constituted gender identities of my respondents along a spectrum between traditionalism and egalitarianism. Doing so will hopefully refine the concept of “discursive tacking” by identifying certain “identity” points between the two poles and by showing how certain individuals put together an array of symbols and practices into gendered notions of self.

The typology proposed here has five points. Either end of the spectrum includes “strong traditionalism” or “egalitarianism.” In between, and moving from
traditionalism to egalitarianism, are: interpretive traditionalism, cultural traditionalism, and apolitical egalitarianism. Each of my respondents fit in one of these categories: five in strong traditionalism, one each in interpretive traditionalism and cultural traditionalism, two in apolitical egalitarianism, and one in egalitarianism.

Before discussing these categories, it is important to note that gender is a “touchy issue,” as one respondent called it, in this group. There seemed to be dueling positions of social desirability in some of the respondents – a desire to be in line with the legitimated position of the church and a desire to be in touch with the culture at large. Most respondents believed the “church” and “culture” opposed one another, yet respondents desired to belong to both. This duel, of course, stems from a long history of non-fundamentalist, Evangelical belief that Christians must be “in the world, not of it.” In addition to the methodological implications of social desirability, this “touchiness” about gender is notable because of the ultimate significance gender plays as a pivotal axis between biblical truth and cultural relevance. In many ways, gender is a defining moment of belief and identity, a point on which to stake one’s identity as inside or outside legitimated, Evangelical beliefs about not only gender but also scriptural authority, biblical inerrancy and the nature of God and God’s plan for humanity. There is much at stake here in the negotiation of gender identity, the magnitude of which is felt by most of the respondents in each of these categories.

Strong traditionalism
Five respondents fit in this group. Three will be excerpted below. Each respondent had been involved in Lamhouse for at least a year. One of the respondents, Kevin, was in a leadership position at Lamphouse. By the end of my fieldwork, he had moved up to the primary leadership position of the group. Another respondent, Rebecca, had also been involved in leadership, but she had since stepped down for personal reasons.

Respondents in this group take a definitive, essentialist position toward gender that is based on a literal understanding of the Bible. Men and women have clearly defined, and divinely-given, traits and roles that situate them in a Divine hierarchy of headship, where women are “covered” by the headship of men and where men are under the authority of God.

Rebecca
Summary Analysis: Rebecca used traditional language in her discussion of gender and readily admitted that she was not a feminist. In addition, she indicated natural differences between men and women, namely that women are naturally more compassionate and nurturing and men naturally want to lead. She relied on biblical references for her position but also tradition.

I: Do you think it would be beneficial if a woman taught at Lamphouse?

R: Yeah, I think it would be great. Like, you know, one night a month or a couple of nights a month, just to bring a different flavor into the atmosphere because men view things differently than women and relate things differently than women. Like, you know, when the pastor teaches and when
a man teaches, it’s from their heart and they are wanting to pastor you, to lead you, to guide you—like, this is what God’s word says, it’s really awesome. In a different way, a woman would be—there is more compassion there, and maybe God can use that in different ways.

I: Would you have a problem if [the leader’s wife] took over [the leader’s] role?

R: (Pause) You know, that’s a touchy issue. Personally, my stand on that whole thing is that I think there should always be a man at the head and always in charge of a ministry because God made Adam first ...

I: How would you respond to someone who said your statement was sexist?

R: That’s a tough question. ... I’m not a feminist obviously. ... I think I would say what I just told you about showing what God says in Scripture—this is the way [God] planned it to be. ... And like personally in my life, God sent Jesus, he didn’t send Mary. It was his son, and not that men are better than women or women are better than men or anything like that. I just think from biblical past and history and the way the family is set up as a unit and how history has been, I think that’s just the way it’s supposed to be.

Adam
Summary analysis: Adam was the most adamant in his expressions of patriarchy. He shared the same basis for his essentialism as Rebecca. He also introduced the notion that women should be allowed to teach 1) to bless women and 2) so men could learn something about women. The latter comment is an important one for understanding female teachers in this category. When men speak, as Rebecca noted, they are attempting to lead and guide (“they speak from the heart”). Because of this, male teachings, Adam argued, are applicable for both genders. Yet women, according to Adam, could teach men something about women, implying that they could not necessarily teach them about anything else. There was an undercurrent in his language that men can impart Truth or remove gender from their teaching, but women could not.

Interviewer: Would it make a difference to you if there were a female leader at Lamphouse?

Adam: Like preaching?

I: Yeah, preaching or actually in charge.

A: I think that would be awesome because right now we have teaching pastors and maybe a guest speaker, which normally turns out to be a guy... I think maybe getting his wife up there, just even a woman in general, would, number one, I think bless the women so much because now she’d be giving the woman’s perspective, teaching to women specifically, but also she’d be
teaching us men something because now we’re going to start learning some things about women that we may not even know, and it could help our walk as men, to even bless us...

... 

A: I believe women should be in leadership, but I don’t think they should be the head. I think the farthest a woman should go in leadership is as high as maybe assistant pastor, but I don’t think a woman should be pastor-pastor because that is usurping the natural authority God laid out of God, man, then woman, because if a woman becomes the head pastor, where is that—that covering of a man to guide her and lead her?

Ken

Summary Analysis: Like others in this group, Ken expressed the view that women should be in leadership for other women, not for their abilities to impart Truth to both genders. Ken seemed less sure than Adam or Rebecca in his comments, and he tacked toward egalitarianism more than the others in this group. At the end of his segment, he mentions the idea of co-partnering in leadership (i.e., husband and wife), indicating a level of egalitarianism, but he still clung to an idea of headship.

I: How would you feel about a woman teaching?

K: I think it would give the women more of a comfort as far as knowing that they can step up and actually become a leader. I think the majority of the leadership team is men, and I kind of feel that women are just hesitant in taking that next step because it doesn’t look right for some reason.

I: What is the extent, talking about women in leadership, how far can they go? Is it possible for a female to assume a position like [the leader’s] position, or is there always a situation to where—like in the family you mentioned there is a spiritual headship—should there always be a man above?

K: I think it should be a man at the head. Now, if it is a man and a woman co-partnering it, sharing it, I’m fine with that, but I don’t know, I just don’t think a woman should be in headship.

As a final note to this category, the idea of partnership in leadership, as expressed by Ken, might seem to indicate an egalitarian position in marriage (and elsewhere), but it also serves to protect patriarchy and normative, heterosexual ideas about the family. On the one hand, partnership seems like a negotiation of feminist politics into traditional Christian views. On the other, partnership, as expressed in this category of strong traditionalism, presents a scenario in which a woman can only reach her highest position in leadership through marriage—under the headship of her husband. A single woman, it would seem, would not be able to attain a position of co-partnership with the senior leader. Only pastor’s wives are afforded this position. Thus, any woman who might seek such a leadership position
should consider marriage as the rite of passage, not only seminary, a “calling” or any other routes to said positions taken by men. In short, the “wiggle room” afforded women in this category is tied directly to normative ideas about heterosexual marriage.

Interpretive traditionalism
Differences in this category from the above category are more a matter of degree than substantive change. The respondent in this category, Ned, the staff intern training for leadership, was simply less convinced. He repeatedly used phrases like “my personal opinion” or “my interpretation” when offering biblical explanations for his traditional view of gender. This could be related to the issue of social desirability mentioned in the beginning of this section. It could be that Ned was not as settled in his position as those in the category of strong traditionalism. Ned was almost apologetic in his position. He recognized that women have much to offer the Christian community, but he felt God simply does not allow women in primary leadership.

In the end, this category is necessary because it speaks to those who might use language like, “my interpretation” instead of “the interpretation.” The interpretation may be the same, but the degree of certainty does not appear to be. The difference here may be small, but it speaks to a growing fluidity of identity in late modern life, a fluidity that begins to question ultimate, universal sources (Taylor, 1989, 2004), even if only tacitly. Certainly, Ned would not question ultimate, universal Truth if asked directly about it, but as mentioned previously, gender is a terrain in which this late modern fluidity and tension between truth and relevance becomes most apparent, creating ambiguities and tensions that otherwise might not appear.

I: Could part of the problem be that only men teach?

N: Wow. Really, you know, and I don’t want to be, you know, because I am a man, and I don’t want to get all, to come across sexist or anything, but I think, and this is just my personal opinion, this is what I believe the Bible says, I don’t think that ... I agree with men teaching. I think having, like when Rick and Anna were speaking, it was a man and a woman, it was a relationship, I thought that was really, really applicable. But, it seems to be an uncomfortability, and maybe it’s just me, when there is a woman teaching everyone. Personally, something rises up in me because I feel like that God tells us differently—not to be sexist. I believe that I’m following God in believing that. It says it in 1 Timothy. If I’m misinterpreting that, then I hope to be proven wrong ... I’m very open to hearing what everyone has to say. I think women do have a lot to offer because they are not stupid; they can read the Bible and interpret it, and teach that to other people. But I just think that it is important that we are following the Bible and what God wants us to do, whatever that is....
Cultural Traditionalism

Cultural Traditionalism represents respondents who believe gender roles are more cultural than natural. Jim is the respondent who fits partly in this category. I say partly because he believed that gender roles in church leadership are cultural, but male headship in the family is Biblical (thus natural, he would say). In either case, he would prefer things to be as they are, mentioning that he would be uncomfortable with a female pastor even though he is not opposed to it generally. There is much overlap between this category and “interpretive traditionalism.” The main difference is that “interpretive traditionalism” is grounded more in an understanding of canonical texts, whereas “cultural traditionalism” is grounded less in scripture and more in cultural tradition.

Interviewer: What would you think about a woman teaching regularly at Lamphouse?

Jim: It might turn me off a little bit personally. If they were an occasional speaker or a guest speaker, I wouldn’t think twice about it. If they were the number one, regular main speaker, I personally would be turned off by it just because I’ve ... I was raised and grew up always listening to men. I just don’t ... not that I’m against women at all ....

I: Men teaching: Is that the way it should be, or is it just a cultural thing? Is it designed by God? Is there a natural order, or is it something that we’re just used to as a culture?

J: That’s debatable. I’ve had a lot of people saying or quote Scripture where it seems to be in their opinion very clear that only men should be behind the pulpit, that it’s really not a woman’s place. However, I think a woman can be just as effective for Christ as a man can be. ...

I: Moving away from church leadership to relationships ... is there a hierarchy there? I mean traditionally, there is an idea of spiritual headship. Do you think, again, that is a natural order, or is that something that we’re used to?

J: I believe that’s the way God intended it to be in the Scripture. I believe that on that one it is very clear that the man is supposed to be the head of the household, especially spiritually, and, you know, I’m not going to go through it all, but I agree with the guidelines of the Bible as far as that’s concerned.

I: But not necessarily the head of the church? You wouldn’t have a problem with a woman being a senior pastor or...

J: I wouldn’t have a problem with it. I may not attend that church because it’s not something that I’m particularly used to, but I wouldn’t be judgmental of it.


Apolitical egalitarianism
There are also those who simply do not care about the political implications of gender. Two of the respondents, both women, fit in this category. Shari, who is excerpted below, recognized gender roles as historically created and even discriminating, but she did not have a major problem with them. For her, gender equality was not a battle worth fighting. Instead, she opted to use her gifts and her influence as a leader’s wife. Incidentally, Shari was Ken’s spouse, who became the new primary leader at Lamphouse after my fieldwork ended.

Shari: It would be nice to see more female leaders maybe teaching every now and then. Maybe showing that women who are leaders also have the knowledge and can teach and people can grow from that. But I think that is almost within the church in general. ... I think that’s just the way—pastors are males and you’ve got pastors’ wives, and that’s just kind of the dynamics of how things are set up.

Interviewer: When men teach, there is an idea that it is universally applicable. If a woman were to teach, would that still be the case, or do you think that it would be more for women than for men?

S: The unfortunate thing is that I think women would think it would be for both, but I think men would think that it would be for women. I don’t know, that’s me making a statement, but I’m not a man, so it’s hard for me to say that. I think that some—kind of the way society is—that [teaching] is maybe not the woman’s place in this day and age that we are in ... that men are the leaders. So, I think that maybe it would be looked upon that way.

I: You also mentioned that the dynamic generally in this church and in a lot of churches is that men are pastors, leaders. Is that the way that it should be, or is that just the way that it is?

S: I think that is just the way that it is. I think that if it were different then it would take a long time for people to really accept that. ... I personally think that the reason you have leaders in the church that are so strong is because of their other half—because of women. I think they are kind of the ... under. And they may not be as visible, but I know that there is definitely ... the women are not just sitting back. They are definitely a part of it, and I think a crucial part of it, but I just don’t think... I don’t necessarily think there is anything wrong with it [male headship]. I just think that is the way it is.

I: Would you think there would be a problem with it if it were reversed?

S: No.

Being unconcerned with patriarchy is not an uncommon position among Evangelical women. Messner (1997) claimed that women are able to tame “men with patriarchal bargains,” meaning that they will subscribe to the notion of
headship if their husbands become the loving providers that groups like Promise Keepers advocate (p. 31). Also, Gallagher and Smith (1999) noted overwhelming support of headship, even in families that were egalitarian in practice. For these, headship was a non-issue because it was symbolic. The difference with Shari, it seems, is that many of the women discussed in both Messner and Gallagher and Smith claimed to subscribe to the ideal of headship as a natural order. Shari took her “patriarchal bargain” a step further. She seemed willing to abide by headship, even though she didn’t believe in it as a natural order. She believed in egalitarianism but saw no need to push this idea. For her, there were more important battles to fight, and she felt comfortable negotiating power under patriarchy as a spouse.

**Egalitarianism**

Members in this category believe in mutual submission in all matters, discounting the notion of spiritual headship. Further, unlike the category above, people in this category would express moral outrage at the traditional gender types discussed previously. One respondent, Karl, fitted into this category. He not only subscribed to the idea of egalitarianism, but also he attempted to position egalitarianism on spiritual ground—as the “Christian thing to do.” Further, he commented that women had been put down in society and in the church for far too long.⁵

Karl: I just want to say for any possible future political career that I am all for women in leadership positions. I honestly mean this. I have no problem with women in leadership positions at all. I’ve worked with phenomenal leaders in different aspects that were females, and I think that they can lead just as well, and I don’t want to say better because it depends on the individual. I truly believe that. As far as religion is concerned ... here we just talked about how we should have more women presenters and then the next topic we talk about, well, they should only reach this height. ... I have no problem [with women leaders] at any level of society. They are still held down by society. Women are still held down in the workplace, in leadership positions—that’s just ridiculous. I think that society in general holds women down still ... so why should the church still? I mean, if you really want to walk the Christian walk, then open up your eyes to every aspect of things. Don’t just sit there and say women can have a partial leadership role ....

Interviewer: Okay, that’s a societal level. How about a relational level between man and woman, dating or marriage? Does it matter to you there?

K: No. ... I think you have a truly blessed relationship when you both look at each other on an equal playing field and it’s not this power struggle....

Adam: But what about leadership as in the spiritual leadership of the relationship? What about you just being the natural leader of it?

K: I’m not the leader in our relationship. I’m an equal partner, so that transcends all aspects of things. I don’t ever force my—I share my opinion and she shares hers ....
A: Well, you know what I mean, just the guiding force of the relationship as a spiritual...

K: I don’t need to be a guiding force. I mean that’s just how ... I haven’t been brought up that way, but I don’t believe that I need to force my will on anybody. I don’t believe that I need to guide anybody. If I guide somebody, then I’m not getting out of it what she’s getting out of it. And she is not getting out of it what I’m getting out of it. So, it’s unequal. We are very much on an equal playing field.

Summary and Discussion
This analysis supports the idea that Evangelicals negotiate gender in a variety of ways. My intent has been to add detail to this idea by showing how different individuals “tack,” leading them toward distinct gender positions. The resulting typology provides detail to some of the subject gender positions taken up by individuals. This typology is certainly not exhaustive. Rather, it is a tentative beginning to understanding subject positions taken up by 20-something Evangelicals between patriarchy and egalitarianism.

To date, much of the understanding of various Evangelical gender negotiations follows Wilcox’s “soft patriarchy.” It is my hope that the typology provided here offers a more nuanced understanding of “soft patriarchy,” both in terms of the resources used to construct this gender position, for example canonical text or cultural tradition, and in terms of the degree of certainty applied to gender ideals, a certainty, or lack thereof, that expresses a profound tension between literal Biblical interpretation and cultural relevance. Both the array of resources and the tensions embedded therein are important in understanding the re-production of gendered identity.

Yet this typology did not only address variations of patriarchy. Also, it showed variations in egalitarianism. For respondents like Karl, egalitarian ideas are central to gendered identity; for others, like Shari, egalitarian ideas are secondary, or even trivial. Shari, in effect, neutered gender by marginalizing it as a locus of identity or as a structure of power. Because she did not believe that patriarchy held any power over her, she saw no need to challenge it. This suggests a reflexive understanding of patriarchy’s presence, as structure, yet it is a presence perceived to be powerless and therefore meaningless. Perhaps Shari’s narrative was simply the result of taming men “with patriarchal bargains,” as Messner (1997) indicated, allowing her to negotiate a position of power. Or, perhaps for Shari, feminist politics simply did not compare to more pressing matters in this community, particularly the most pressing matter to her—ensuring that people have a personal relationship with God through Jesus. Whatever the case, apolitical egalitarians are perhaps the most compelling people in this typology because their gender egalitarianism, since it is also apathetic, reproduces patriarchy.

In each category, gender positions were conditioned by the structural social space in which they were formed, a space defined by patriarchy. Certainly, there was room for fluidity within this space, but it was a fluidity with definite bounds. That is,
there was space for gender negotiation within Lamphouse, but each negotiation, whether strong traditionalist or egalitarian, was a negotiation with, and in most cases a reproduction of, “headship.” Because patriarchy set the boundaries of legitimate gender identity in this space, it should not be surprising that seven of the ten respondents mentioned here embraced patriarchy and reproduced it in their narratives. Nor should it be a surprise that apolitical egalitarians felt comfortable under, and powerless to change, this patriarchal system. Finally, it should not be surprising that the vocal egalitarian became defensive as he staked out his minority, subversive position. Each of these negotiations of “headship” bespeaks patriarchy’s normative power in this space.

In conclusion, the gendered space of Lamphouse provided an array of resources for the construction of gender identities, yet also provided a normative structure of patriarchy in which to construct a gendered self. The results in most cases were gender narratives that reinforced patriarchy, yet employed various expressions of equality. This should not suggest that the language of “equality” is simply an ideological weapon of patriarchy in this space. As Gallagher (2003) argued, the dynamic negotiation of equality and patriarchy, or perhaps better put, equality through patriarchy, must be read as a re-working of gender identity. However, optimism that such re-working is a reflective confrontation of patriarchy is largely unwarranted since it is clear that patriarchy still defines legitimacy in this space and is still the axis point on which gender identity turns.

References
McFarland and Company.
Ransomed Heart Ministries.

Notes

1 Wild at Heart (2006), written by John Eldredge, “invites men to recover their masculine heart, defined in the image of a passionate God. And he invites women to discover the secret of a man’s soul and to delight in the strength and wildness men

2 Norman K. Denzin (2001) preferred the term, “method of instances,” as a way to move beyond the quantitative trappings of the term, “sample,” which is burdened with quantitative measures of reliability and generalizability (p. 63). This method captures complexity and nuance, not generalizability, and it seeks trustworthiness, not statistical reliability.

3 Additional attempts were made to conduct a focus group with women, but these attempts were unsuccessful because of lack of interest and time.

4 These categories draw on categories presented by Gallagher and Smith (1999), “strong traditionalism” and “pragmatic egalitarianism,” as well as by Bartkowski (2004), “rational patriarch” and “expressive egalitarian.”

5 It is notable that much of the following exchange occurred between Karl and Adam, the most adamant strong traditionalist above.

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How does the erotic past relate to the ways we understand and experience our lives today? This is an eternal question within research and writing on the history of sexuality… (p. 373)

Though this pressing question is asked quite late in Mates and Lovers, it seems to me that the most interesting vantage point from which Chris Brickell’s book can be read is from position of “nuanced historical construction”—that how we understand masculinity today is necessarily a product of the way it was both understood and practiced in the past. Of course, Brickell’s book can be read from other points of view as well: as straight historiography, as a collective memoir of men in New Zealand who have had sex with other men, as a pictorial essay because of the nearly-300 photos in the book, as a “memory-tweaker” for gay men in New Zealand who are old enough to have been “out” since the 1960s, or as a history lesson for younger gay men who have never thought about why they have the opportunities and protections that they do. For all these reasons the book is worth savoring, but as an academic, I found Brickell’s constructionist approach (p. 382) to be particularly fascinating and extremely informative.

Questions are asked at the beginning of the book as well, which also set the tone for Brickell’s subsequent explorations:

When in our history has mateship become erotic; what have been the complex relationships between eros and affection; when has sexual desire suggested a particular identity; and when has it not? When, where and how have these distinctions been understood, underlined or undermined? (p. 8)

All of these questions, argues Brickell, reveal the “ambiguity” of New Zealand masculinity. That topic was addressed thirty years ago by prominent New Zealand historian Jock Phillips, in an article in The Listener, but it has taken this encyclopedic work of Brickell’s to plumb those depths further. Careful and intensive investigation doesn’t always, of course, lead to clear answers, and part of the fun of this book is the author’s creativity in “exploring the spaces in between what is known and what is not” (p. 8). Brickell’s book is as much about what isn’t said as what is, and about how what is seen is interpreted.

The book is ordered more-or-less chronologically, spanning the decades from the arrival in Aotearoa of Anglican missionary William Yate in 1828, to Auckland’s 2001 Hero Parade and Maori Television’s successful show Takataapui. Brickell admits that his “available documentary sources overrepresent Pakeha lives, but...
other experiences are reported too, most notably those of Maori” (p. 16); in passing, he also references same-sex activity in the Chinese and Samoan communities. Over this nearly-175 year historical span, the author examines literature, an astonishing collection of photographs, court records, diaries, and newspaper archives, and supplements these with the recorded interviews with senior members of the contemporary gay community.

The “usual suspects” are here: Samuel Butler, Norman Gibson (so touchingly euologized by his daughter Miriam Saphira in her book A Man’s Man), Frank Sargeson, Chris Carter, Witi Ihimaera, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Noel Virtue, Carmen, Fran Wilde, and Peter Wells. But moreso, this book is about the many men whose names are not so well-known (except on occasion from court records), who acted out their same-sex attraction, whether furtively or flagrantly. New Zealand’s lesbian life gets very little mention, and a companion volume one day would be most welcomed.

From the wopwops of the Wairarapa to the shearing-sheds of Southland to the bogs of Blockhouse Bay, few locations are outside Brickell’s curious gaze. Of necessity, the primary focus of the book is on New Zealand’s cities, particularly Auckland and Wellington. In this manner, the author addresses not only the physical geography of the country, but also the social geography of masculinity. “Antipodean men found sex and sociability in many places, and urban and rural areas provided different sorts of cultural and sexual opportunities for their inhabitants” (p. 14). Men met, and continue to meet, in pubs, movie theatres, public parks, outside the Auckland Ferry Building, and in the street, in order to play out this history of male-male love and sex in New Zealand.

I particularly appreciated Brickell’s exploration of words and terms, learning that “drag” and “camp” entered the Kiwi vocabulary when police arrested two Londoners, Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, in 1870, and whose relationship was skillfully fictionalized in Peter Well’s novel Iridescence (2003). The term queen—derived from the Middle English “quean”, or a disreputable woman—was already in use in the 1930s (pp. 83–84); “cocksucker” was already in use in 1890 (p. 119); by the 1930s men who had sex with men were known as “queers”; that in New Zealand patois of the first half of the twentieth century, “going gay” referred to married males who committed heterosexual adultery (p. 278), and that political advocacy to “come out” began in New Zealand in the very early 1970s.

In his brief discussion of the overlap between gender and sexuality in the Pasifika community, Brickell displays his informed accuracy that the Samoan fa’aafafine “is predominantly a gender identity rather than a mode of sexuality, but New Zealand has attended to provide little room for third-gender categories, and until recently most Pakeha assumed fa’aafafine to be gay” (p. 368). Rarely do non-Samoan writers capture this significant distinction, though of course, the traditional definition of fa’aafafine is increasingly deconstructed today by gay Samoans who perform in drag in Auckland clubs. This may seem a small point within such a vast history, but it illustrates the care with which Brickell conducted his research.

At the end of the book, Brickell answers his own question with which I began this review. He writes:
In many ways, the history of sexuality is like a long, idiosyncratic rope, a hank of twisting strands that pick up and drop off, split and recombine along the way. We modern New Zealanders grasp those homoerotic threads that stretch back in time, just as we spin and grab hold of our own. (p. 384)

This is a masterful work, in so many ways. It includes 1101 endnotes, plus extensive photo credits and an index. In that sense, it holds its own as a major scholarly contribution to the study of sex and gender in Aotearoa New Zealand. But no reader should be cowed by this academic apparatus, for the book is an enjoyable and brilliant read.

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Books written by authors with a thoughtful opinion are fun to read. Not only is it most enjoyable to profit from the specialist’s expertise but one also listens to a voice of an outspoken authority who provides irredeemable testimonies of the state of the art for readers that are less acquainted with the field. *Practicing Safer Texts* offers an example of a fresh and inspiring hermeneutical reflection on the multifaceted interface between food and sexuality in the bible.

Methodologically, Stone understands *Practicing Safer Texts* in analogy of safer sex. He compares the positive and negative effects of texts on particular readers and for particular contexts and thus takes a “pragmatic” approach on the reading of biblical texts. With respect to food and sex, Stone’s main intention is to take scripture seriously in contemporary matters and to read it from an informed perspective that understands the religious links between ethics of food and sexual ethics as pointed out by Michel Foucault (p. 17). In order to come to terms with modern conceptions of sexuality relating to biblical texts, the author presents “anthropological insights as a valuable reading lens” of biblical texts (p. 17). This approach is most fruitful when it comes to sexuality. Stone points to numerous, partly misleading attempts in the history of understanding biblical narratives. His core question is how to decide whether a particular biblical text sheds light on our contemporary understanding of sexuality (p. 24). For example, with respect to Gen. 2-3, a story that has often been read as referring to sexuality, Stone points to the diversity of a number of interrelated sets of concerns: mortality and immortality are connected to food, just as they are in the epic of Adapa and in the Gilgamesh-epic. There, notably, Enkidu’s transition from beast to human is marked by practices of eating and drinking. Also, agricultural production and the securing of food as well as sexual reproduction are part of the issues of Gen. 2-3 that cannot be neglected (p. 43).

Undoubtedly, Stone’s scholarly investigations are of great value in the current field of biblical studies. Scholars continue to misinterpret Gen. 2:23-24 as an etiology for the coupling of women and men, and some can state that the “bodily state as men and women...brings with it the acceptance of our mortality” (23, quoting C. R. Seitz). Here, the complex diversity of interrelated concerns in Gen. 2-3 offers a more adequate interpretation of Gen. 2-3.

Chapter 2 is concerned with food and sex ethics as a means of constructing ethnic and religious boundaries of identity. The argument builds on a dialogue with anthropology (Mary Douglas) and ends with addressing questions of queerness in the story of Tamar, the Canaanite (Gen. 38) in order to challenge boundaries currently used to construct identities. Chapter 3, “Before the eyes of all Israel—
Public sex, marriage and food in the bible,” begins with a queer perspective on the public or private character of sex and confronts biblical passages with this understanding. Stone comments on the spectacular instances of public sex in a number of the David narratives. When Absalom goes to the concubines of his father David “before the eyes of all Israel” (2 Sam. 16:22), his concern is prestige and power vis-à-vis other male, and, notably, royal characters. Here, Stone suggests that Israel’s god must be understood as a cause of public sex, similar to the case of David and Bath-Sheba in 2 Sam. 11-12. These sexual actions send obvious messages of judgment and approval to David, the protagonist. More specifically, Stone understands this as a narrative about the interrelation of sexuality and a male hierarchical system. He concludes that public, non-monogamous sex is not divinely prohibited but is, instead, divinely sanctioned and even involves divine participation (p. 77). This is most plausible on the level of the narratives. One may add, however, a comment on the genre and intention of these narratives within the Hebrew Bible. The assumptions surrounding the public character of sex in these narratives are part of a complicated structure in the royal court and, more specifically, in the Davidic Judean court. As such they are part of a dynamic historiography with a specific mixture of critical and legitimizing intentions. Hence, one may question their direct ethical relevance in a modern discourse about public sexuality. Stone is well aware of such objections and carefully deals with the difference between contemporary presuppositions about sex, gender and marriage when comparing his insights to the ideas of most adherents of Judaism and Christianity (pp. 82-89). One of the numerous strengths of this chapter is Stone’s critical view on these often neglected biblical texts in the books of Samuel. In order to challenge the contemporary readers’ assumption about the biblical view on sexuality, food and gender, Stone presents a well-informed perspective in his close reading. He also deals with the narratives of Gen. 19 and Judges 19. The textual samples with which Stone argues here in the context of modern issues are most inspiring. While the narratives in Samuel are dealt with in numerous scholarly contexts, the idea to relate them to current issues of sex and food fruitfully opens up the view for the variety of possible readings.

Gender-related matters and their possible impact on his own argumentations are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5. “Pleasure and danger in biblical interpretation—Food, sex and women in 2 Samuel 13 and in the Song of Songs” is the fourth chapter which dives into power relations and exploitations, especially of women. Here, Stone holds that in a world of oppression, both food and sex serve as tools of oppression. This is demonstrated in analogies between two very diverse texts: the narrative about Amnon and Tamar and the Song of Songs.

The fifth chapter, “Lovers and raisin cakes. Food, sex and manhood in Hoshea,” moves on to the rhetoric of this complicated and fascinating prophetic text with its overlapping of language about food and sex and language about sex and gender. Here, Stone is interested in reconstructing the biblical notions of “manhood” on the basis of the prophet Hoshea. Attentive to gender theory, Stone points to the tensions and instabilities of the constructions of manhood that need to be pointed out in order to challenge a view of compulsory heterosexuality in biblical text.

The final and sixth chapter considers the role of food and sex in Proverbs and Qohelet. Among the numerous interfaces between food and sex, Stone puts forth his
most thought‐provoking idea: to think of Qohelet, with his refrain of “utterly absurdity” in the context of Israelite wisdom literature, as a “queer” text (pp. 142‐149). This sociological category may prove helpful for the contemporary reader in order to realize this biblical book’s unique conceptual framework. As a matter of fact, Qohelet’s framework is “queer” within the canon of Israelite wisdom literature and is in many respects in tension with ancient Israelite wisdom literature. Qohelet was, and indeed may currently, be called heterodox (p. 145).

One of the most compelling features of this book is the diversity of textual samples, which cover patriarchal, historical, prophetic and wisdom traditions. Stone applies a sophisticated hermeneutics to these biblical texts. The conceptual and hermeneutical reflections are deeply rooted in current discussions about gender theory and queer theory; they resemble a sophisticated menu of healthy foods that invite readers to come and eat.

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Colleen M. Conway explores the connections between the images of Jesus in the New Testament and conceptions of idealized masculinity in the Greco-Roman world in this provocative new book. Conway’s study adds gender analysis to the array of other investigations of Jesus, showing how the writers of the New Testament construct and explore Jesus’ masculinity. What they say about Jesus reveals much about their concerns over gender as well as about important social and cultural details concerning the relationship between Jesus’ gendered portrayals and the broader Greco-Roman society. Conway argues that the New Testament contains responses to Greco-Roman ideas of manhood and she explores this thesis by examining the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, and the book of Revelation. The intersections, according to Conway, show how the writers of the New Testament dealt with cultural ideas of masculinity and responded to them in ways that helped shape the development of ideas not only about Jesus, but also Christianity. Conway adds a new resource to investigations and analyses of gender in the New Testament, and also freshly applies gender theory and masculinity to early Christian writings about Jesus.

Conway’s sources are broad and wide-ranging, drawing not only from works on gender but also from postcolonial theory. It is at the meeting point of these two frameworks that she constructs her arguments about the New Testament. Conway is interested in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the accepted and dominant cultural idea of masculinity usually associated with an elite group and held up as ideal in comparison to other forms of masculinity. Conway argues that early Christian writers accepted as well as opposed Greco-Roman hegemonic ideas, at times even mimicking them in order to promote Christianity. According to Conway, one of the ways Christianity legitimated itself was by imitating the prevailing cultural ideas of masculinity, occasionally smoothing over some of the disconnects between Christianity and Greco-Roman culture, while at other times resisting and subverting the dominant culture. Conway explores constructions of gender hierarchies, the disconnect between biology and gender, and how ancient masculinity was “learned”: one trained oneself to be a man rather than being born one. Among the men she studies regarding hegemonic masculinity we find Caesar Augustus, Philo’s Moses, and Philostratus’s Apollonius of Tyana.

Turning to the New Testament texts themselves, Conway notes, for example, how Paul overcame the potentially humiliating and emasculating crucifixion of Jesus by emphasizing how Jesus went willingly to his death, making this voluntary bravery the mark of a true man. In doing so, Paul helped to transform Jesus’ death into an act of masculine heroism. Conway then devotes a chapter to each of the four...
Gospels and explores, for example, how Jesus has been portrayed as an ideal man and representative of masculinity in relation to other humans, although he remained subordinated to God. She also argues that associating Jesus with Sophia, from the perspective of Greco-Roman gender, is not necessarily an act of feminization. She points out that many of the teachings of Jesus as recorded in Matthew that are viewed as countercultural may not be distinctive when seen from the perspective of gender analysis, as, for example, turning the other cheek, which reflects ideal masculine notions of self-control. For each of the Gospels, Conway shows in detail how the masculinity of Jesus is portrayed in light of the dominant culture. An exception we may find in the book of Revelation: its use of images of military might when portraying Jesus deviates from standard ideas of masculinity, like the emphasis on violent vengeance, which contradicts notions of disciplined self-control. What all the texts have in common, though, is that they make a conscious use of hegemonic masculinity as a way of dealing with imperial Rome and of asserting an image of Jesus both as a new man and a Roman man. Jesus may at times mimic or reflect the values of Greco-Roman masculinity, but he also differs from traditional masculinity in subtle ways.

Conway’s analysis is adept and insightful, but I believe her arguments could be made stronger by paying more attention to the context of the texts she is dealing with. In her chapter on Paul, for example, she includes both the letters generally accepted to be authentic and the Deutero-Pauline letters, but she needs to make a sharper distinction between the world in which Paul was writing and the world of the pastoral epistles. The same could be said for her analysis of the Gospels: a discussion of the different settings, audiences, and authors of the texts would flesh out the differing portrayals of masculinity she identifies. Conway does this fairly well in her chapter on Luke, but I was left wondering about the other Gospels. In her chapter on Revelation, more context would have helped to explain why the masculinity of Jesus is portrayed in such violent and vengeful ways and how this is related to Christian resistance to Roman imperialism.

Overall, however, Behold the Man is a valuable contribution to both gender and New Testament studies. Conway carefully explains the connections between these early Christian texts and the broader cultural ideals of manhood. Her arguments and analysis provide a deeper look into the ways that the authors of the New Testament portrayed and constructed Jesus, not just as a divine figure but also a man.

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Between 1645 and 1647 two minor gentlemen, Matthew Hopkins and his associate John Stearne, directed a brutal witch-hunt in East Anglia in which three hundred people, the vast majority women, were arrested and upwards of one hundred hanged. This episode will be known to many through Michael Reeves’ cult movie of 1968, Witchfinder General, in which Hopkins was played by an austerely lascivious Vincent Price. Indeed the subject-matter of the witch-hunt was perfectly suited to a horror film in which sadism and Bataille-like visions of excess were notoriously dominant. It is the achievement of Malcolm Gaskill’s thoroughly researched and readable study, Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy, that he debunks many of the popular myths surrounding Puritan fanaticism and places the witch-hunt firmly in its historical context as a manifestation of civil war mentality. Yet Gaskill achieves this at the cost of neglecting to analyze the innumerable manifestations of male psycho-sexual anxiety exhibited throughout his narrative.

Gaskill opens his account by stressing the power of occult beliefs in seventeenth-century England, an era in which the Devil was not an abstract idea but a reality in the daily lives of ordinary people. This is of course a standard approach in the history of mentalities, but Gaskill shows how through this satanic presence the “godly” of East Anglia felt justified in accusing, torturing, and condemning their neighbors. Such people, he suggests, resembled “the provincial nobodies of the twentieth century who engaged in genocide” (p. xv). Yet for all its horror, the witch-hunt was an exceptional event which came about because of the chaotic circumstances of England in the 1640s.

Gaskill is at pains to point out that witchcraft executions were in steady decline in the first half of the seventeenth century; when James I became embarrassed by his early interest in witch-hunting, magistrates all over England took the hint, making prosecutions more difficult and unusual during the reign of Charles I. However by 1645 the order of things seemed to be upside down. Parliament was ruling without a king as various armies clashed throughout the Three Kingdoms, while appalling weather conditions seemed to presage a curse on God’s people, a fate supported by astrologers such as William Lilly. From this melting pot of fear and paranoia came two men who offered their services as professional witchfinders.

In the absence of many of the details surrounding Hopkins’ biography, Gaskill reconstructs his youth in Suffolk with attention to his clergyman father’s fierce opposition to the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, and the coalescing of Puritan vitriol towards the “idolatry” and “popery” of Catholics, royalists, and anyone else considered ungodly. The main theme of Gaskill’s study is the superimposition of paranoia about witches on to these political and religious
causes of the Civil War: “The battle-lines were ideological, even metaphysical, the fighting thought to mirror the conflicts of the celestial sphere, where Christ would vanquish the forces of evil” (p. 21). Therefore local misfortunes became acts of spiritual malevolence as marginal, poor, older women were accused, typically, of causing the deaths of children and livestock through the intercession of their “familiars” – devilish imps in the form of animals which they were believed to suckle and let loose to cause havoc. One such case in Hopkins’ hometown of Manningtree in March 1645 kick-started the career of the self-styled “Witch-finder General”.

Hopkins and Stearne, the latter of whom had connections with local magistrates, announced their interest in addressing the problem of witchcraft and were given leave to interrogate Elizabeth Clarke, a local widow accused of causing the deaths of a landowner’s newborn son and some of his cattle. Clarke, who admitted that she was a witch, was duly arrested and her body thoroughly searched by local women for signs that she had suckled familiars. This process of searching for teats became the central investigative tool of the witchfinders, a sign, argues Gaskell, that

English law was becoming more inquisitorial, in the Continental style, meaning that authorities were increasingly demanding and discerning in the matter of evidence...Rather than discouraging accusations, however, the call for material proof actually encouraged humiliating ordeals, tests and examinations: in 1645 the job of the searchers at Manningtree was not to prove that Elizabeth Clarke had committed acts of maleficium, but to lay bare her demonic pact. (p. 47)

This shift in the history of English witch-hunting was manifested by the witchfinders’ obsession with the unnatural suckling of familiars and whether Satan had ejaculated or not when he lay with the suspect witch. Despite this aggressively legal framework, what we have here are the basic ingredients of a significant study into the male psychology of the period. The fact that the Manningtree case was replicated in its basic characteristics as Hopkins and Stearne traversed the region suggests the power of psycho-sexual motivations, both on the part of the witchfinders and on the part of their suspects (many of whom confessed and accused others). For the witchfinders, vaginal polyps, genital warts, and hemorrhoids were taken as signs of a demonic covenant when discovered on the body of the post-menopausal woman.

If we take a step back and examine the cases which the witchfinders investigated, it becomes clear that what they had in common was a male response to female infertility (or to be more general, female sexuality), played out on the level of spiritual warfare. Lyndal Roper has argued this point in the German context in her studies Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe (1994) and Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany (2004), which detailed how old and isolated women became scapegoated by their communities when things failed to thrive—be they children, crops, or livestock. Marginalized women, in their turn, were fearful of the aging, unproductive, and un-reproductive future they faced, or already experienced. As Gaskell writes, their “life-force became a death-force” (p. 97). Yet Gaskell does not expand upon this comment and fails to pose the obvious questions: Why did men target older women as
witches, and why did some of these women readily admit to heinous crimes and erotic flights of fantasy?

To be sure, the historical causes for the emergence of the witchfinders were central. The social disarray caused by the Civil War had given opportunities to men of faith and action willing to open up a new front in the spiritual war between the godly and the forces of the Antichrist. Hopkins and Stearne were both young (Hopkins in his twenties, Stearne in his thirties), educated, and highly mobile men committed to rooting out witchcraft wherever their crusade took them. Gaskill’s analogy between the witchfinders and the crusaders of Cromwell’s New Model Army is therefore not an unsound one, especially as accusations of royalism and witchcraft tended to overlap during the period. Yet for all the exceptional status of these men, the horrible truth at the heart of Witchfinders is that Hopkins and Stearne did not emerge from a vacuum as fully-formed villains in the Vincent Price mode, but were rather the figureheads of a widespread network of magistrates, ministers, and whole communities committed to mapping evil on the bodies and souls of its womenfolk. The applications of psychoanalytic insight to this episode of mass paranoia would greatly benefit our understanding of the masculine subjectivities involved in directing such a terror.

Gaskill does not ignore dissenting voices in his study, pointing out how Colchester rejected the advances of the witchfinders due to concern at their exorbitant fees and the danger of prison overcrowding should a general witch-hunt commence. On a more intellectual level, the beginning of the end for the witchfinders came when people of influence began to cast doubt on the confessions garnered by Hopkins and Stearne. Hopkins’ nemesis proved to be a Puritan minister named John Gaule who published a tract in the summer of 1646 attacking the bloodthirsty methods of the witchfinders as an inversion of the divine order: “The Country People talke already, and that more frequently, more affectedly, of the infallible and wonderfull power of the Witchfinders, then they doe of God, or Christ, or the Gospell preached” (cited p. 223). Hopkins’ death in 1647, probably from tuberculosis contracted during his interrogations, brought an end to this particular tragedy. Stearne soon published his own account of the witch-hunt, but as the years passed and stability returned to East Anglia, he encountered constant hostility from the local community, appalled at the inquisitions carried out on their behalf.

Witchfinders will appeal to the general reader on witchcraft in the early modern period and will no doubt become the standard text on the East Anglian witch-hunt of 1645-47. Gaskill is an authoritative historian with a sharp understanding of the daily lives of people in the midst of war, both spiritual and temporal. References are made to social ambiguity, female guilt about sexuality, and the fantasy of witchcraft as an escape from suffering. However, this reviewer cannot help but feel that more could be said on this subject from an analytical perspective. This, of course, is a hope only made feasible now that Gaskill has so strongly researched its historical content.

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Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality :: www.jmmsweb.org ::
In 1998, the International Association of Women Philosophers (IAPh), founded in the 1970s “to give German-speaking philosophers and later women philosophers from other countries and culture, a place to share their work and ideas on philosophical topics” (p. vii), organized its eighth symposium in Boston, USA, with the original theme: political divisions and identity politics. Deborah Orr et al. edited the volume *Feminist Politics*, based on updated versions of the presentations at the symposium, representing another important leap towards the fulfillment of the objectives of the IAPh. It is above all an exceptionally brilliant philosophical interpretation of feminist politics in the contexts of subordination and domination, and is an effort geared towards redressing it from an international perspective.

The book contains fourteen chapters evenly organized into two main parts. The first, “Reconceptualizing Challenges to Entrenched Political Divides” opens with Deborah Orr’s panoramic introductory chapter, which basically sets the main problematic of the study and provides a terrific recapitulation of the contributions of chapters. In the first substantive chapter, Deborah Orr offers a critique of the mind/body paradigm in feminist theory, especially rationalism, anti-rationalism and post-rationalism. She draws on the influential works of Wittgenstein, Harowitz and Nagarjuna to argue persuasively about the shortcomings of each of these theories in explaining identity and difference. She also calls for “a de-essentialized” woman that avoids the mind/body binarism and associated dissonance with feminist theories (p. 34). Drawing on the works of Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles and Karen Barad, Jutta Weber explores the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of “denaturalization” in contemporary feminist thought. Reflection on what she calls “confusion of borders” between culture and nature, she usefully argues for the reinvention of nature such that feminists will no longer be afraid of nature as has been the case in the last decades.

Marie-Claire Belleau, Sigal Ben-Porath, Cathryn Bailey and Marlene Benjamin reflect on different aspects of feminism and identity. Belleau’s examines the nexus between feminism and identity politics in Quebec-Canada. Relying on the concept of “strategic intersectionality,” she makes a case against both essentialism and universalism, calling for a feminist approach that allows for unity in diversity through coalition building for mutual relations between contending feminist identities. Ben-Porath focuses on the links between militarism and patriarchalism. For her, a “security state” produces “belligerent citizenship” (limited citizenship; p. 64), showing how this negatively affects women to make interesting arguments for reinvigorating the educational system in strengthening democracy. This not only
serves to “diversify the public sphere,” but also offers “further options, further visions, and further voices beyond the oppressive unity of belligerent citizenship” (p. 78). Contrary to the relative indifference of older feminists to the representation of “third wave” feminist activism, discarding it as “just a TV show” (p. 95), Bailey’s offers a useful argument that third wave activism does exist, albeit in a cultural and not in a traditionally political version. Yet the cultural representation of activism represents some form of politics by other means: “that young feminists have focused so much on cultural images need not be seen as representing a retreat from reality as much as how the reality is mediated through such images” (p. 83). Benjamin’s explores the relationship between catastrophic illness and the workings of the body on the one hand, and language and experience vis-à-vis connections and confusions, on the other. Drawing from her personal experiences, she argues about the gross inadequacy of analytic philosophy to effectively capture reality: “So far, analytic philosophy on its own somehow misses me on the table, misses the truth of my experience. The cold language of analytic philosophy often tramples on, rather than elicits, nuances moral response” (p. 110).

The second part, “Putting Identity Back into Politics,” begins with Morwenna Griffith. Deploying the methodology of “critical autobiography,” and the theory of feminist ontologies of the self, she identifies authenticity as “a serious business” that has to do with being “true to oneself in how one conducts oneself” (p. 119), underscoring the importance of playfulness—especially naughty playfulness—in coming to terms with feminist authenticity at a personal level. Alison Bailey engages the problematic of how to describe and understand the location of those who belong to dominant groups, yet resists the usual assumptions and orientations of those groups to offer a critical reappraisal of traitorous identity, with focus on privilege-cognizant white character. Bailey rearticulates existing insights in a way that avoids “the confusion often associated with the margin-center cartography of feminist stand-point theory” (p. 155), suggesting a focus on traitorous performances rather than on traitorous identities and locations. Birge Krondorfer assesses the nexus between feminist political theory and experience, reaching the conclusion that there is currently a disconnect between theory and practice: “women have not found or invented their bodies yet. It seems as if the temptation to become absorbed into the male-dominated symbolic order of the social fabric is as strong as rendering subjectivity” (p. 161).

Marjorie Miller inquires into the nexus between empowerment, place, movement and identity, the objectives of which were to distinguish between a feminist goal of empowerment and power; and to offer a conception of identity that disentangles it from the static and fixed dimensionality of place (p. 173). After a clarification of the concepts, Miller underscores “the circularity of identity and interest, the inseparability of the being and acting that are reciprocally constituting” (p. 182). Critically re-reading Spelman, Aristotle and Jewish law, Marla Brett Schneider sees identities as not only multiple and intersecting, but also mutually constitutive, arguing for self-consciousness in the analysis of the power dynamics in the countertext to avoid a situation where the method of the countertext itself becomes imperialist. Smy Baehr interrogates the question of whether it is possible or not to do feminist political theory without theories of gender in plural settings. Drawing from the works of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, which she considers incompatible
(possibly because of their reliance on different gender theories), Baehr submits that feminist political theories can better be developed in the absence of theories of gender: “feminist political theories depending for their validity on the truth of a particular theory of gender pose a problem in the context of feminist pluralism” (p. 232). This is not to foreclose any possible linkages between the two: “Surely feminists should not stop doing gender theory! . . . An account of feminist politics might be more viable if it can be presented without grounding in a particular theory of gender” (p. 234). In the last chapter, Dianna Taylor critically appraises the significance of the works of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault for contemporary feminist politics, identifying two important areas of relevance. First, both were pragmatic thinkers deeply interested in negotiating problems pertaining to thinking and acting in the world in a manner that promotes freedom and resist domination. Second, both asserted the idea of politics without blueprints. These represent the core concerns of philosophical feminist politics.

Overall, the book offers critical but refreshing insights into complex philosophical questions about identity and feminist politics, with many exemplary contributions. Although the length of essays vary widely, each offers theoretically and practically grounded analyses of the issues they engaged in a way that enriches our understanding of contemporary feminist politics from philosophical perspectives. However, one may wonder why it took so long (nearly a decade) for the book to get published. Given the overlap of contributions, one may also query the criteria used for grouping chapters into the two broad parts of the book. Interestingly, the lead editor already did justice to these concerns in the preface/introduction to the book. Nevertheless, the tendency of the book to reinforce the intellectual dimension of what it sets to counter politically and culturally—marginalization/exclusion/domination—remains a noticeable limitation of the book. How do we account for the complete exclusion of African feminists in an ambitious project of this nature, which seeks to be international in outlook? It is hoped that subsequent symposia and publications by the IAPh will truly be international. This shortcoming notwithstanding, there are many interesting things about Feminist Politics, including its theoretical and practical insights into crucial philosophical questions underlying feminist politics, clarity of expression and multidisciplinary outlook. The lead editor did a fabulous job providing a panoramic overview of each chapter in the introduction. These and related virtues make the book an outstanding scholarly work on identity and feminist politics in comparative perspective.

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For Matthew Fox, the spirituality of men is hidden largely due to self-preservation. Society expects certain things from men, and anything that does not align with those expectations must be hidden and silenced. Spirituality, so often perceived as feminine, is one such element that men must hide and silence, both from other men and women, and even themselves. *The Hidden Spirituality of Men* seeks to shed light on that hidden spirituality and is divided into two parts: “ten archetypes of authentic masculinity” and “sacred marriages”.

The ten archetypes of authentic masculinity of which Fox writes are: Father Sky; the Green Man; Icarus and Daedalus; Hunter-Gatherers; Spiritual Warriors; Masculine Sexuality, Numinous Sexuality; Cosmic and Animal Bodies; the Blue Man; Earth Father; Grandfather Sky. Father Sky refers to a range of ancient and contemporary “sky Gods” which offer men metaphors for a masculine framing of the spiritual. The Green Man provides a masculine earthly complement to Father Sky (and Mother Earth), connecting men to the earth and providing an ecological consciousness more typical of feminist and women’s spiritualities. Icarus and Daedalus speaks to communication between the generations, either between father and son, or more generally in society which often undervalues the passion of youth while over-valuing the wisdom of elders. Hunter-Gatherers resonates with men’s historical and contemporary desire to engage with this activity, the need for ritual, individual and collective intelligence, and the ability to appropriately address shame and anger. Spiritual Warriors find appropriate ways for men to channel aggression with nobility rather than mindless militarism. Masculine Sexuality, Numinous Sexuality is concerned with bridging the gap between spirituality and sexuality and also between gay and straight men. Cosmic and Animal Bodies refers to a celebration rather than denial of the body within spiritual pursuits. The Blue Man resonates with an expansion of masculine spiritual consciousness, compassion and creativity. The Earth Father calls for a more generative and caring model of paternalism directed towards the whole community as well as our own children. Grandfather Sky is a metaphor for how older men are of value, of how they can both guide and learn from younger people.

The second, shorter, “sacred marriages” part of the book deals largely with the theme of complementarity and the union between masculine and feminine. Fox also expands sacred marriage to include other types of union: between dualism and non-dualism, East and West, humanity and the Divine, ecumenism, lay and monastic practices, indigenous and postmodern ceremonies, left- and right-brain thinking, gay and straight orientations, young and old.
It is evident from this brief outline that Fox takes a notably populist approach to the theme of men and spirituality, rather than academic. As such the book intersects on a number of occasions with themes from the mythopoetic men’s movement. Clearly the use of archetypes as a tool locates the book firmly within a neo-Jungian discourse; Fox also makes a significant number of references to Robert Bly. Indeed, the success of this book depends upon the reader’s willingness to engage with yet another archetypal vision of masculine spirituality. However, critics of the archetypal worldview will find Fox’s employment counters some of its more problematic aspects. For example, while Fox is a fan of Bly, he criticizes Robert Moore’s use of archetypes as “bent on defining masculinity in a crazy macho way” (p. x). Furthermore, Fox is keen to point out the dangers of taking archetypes too literally, and connecting the “gender” of the archetype with actual gender. Instead, Fox sees the archetypes as “ten stories, ten images, ten ways that men and boys, women and girls can relate to the masculine inside themselves” (p. xxi) rather than something men should specifically aspire to as a way of manifesting their masculinity. This metaphorical framing of masculine archetypes for both men and women goes some way to mitigating the usage of writers like Moore, but the problem of essentialized models of behavior does not fully disappear. This is a problem Fox seems aware of on a number of occasions and results in curious distinctions such as between “warriors” and “soldiers” (p. 78). The warrior may indeed be mindful and noble compared to the soldier who is violent and militaristic, but one wonders whether it might not be more useful to simply do away with all forms of archetypal combatant in explorations of masculinity. Furthermore, these masculine archetypes may well be applicable to both men and women, but they are still very much metaphors of normative masculinity: Fox draws upon a wide range of sources, but Judith Butler is not among them!

Fox’s admiration of Bly and criticism of Moore is one of several odd combinations within the book which stop Fox being pigeon-holed too easily. While it is arguable that Fox is a mythopoet, he makes a number of departures from this position. For example, he makes a welcome call for unity between gay and straight men, whereas mythopoetic literature has a tendency towards homophobia. Mythopoetic literature tends towards depoliticized speech and assigning automatic value to other forms of men’s movement, however Fox is critical of the “very strange and right-wing” (p. 96) Promise Keepers. His choice of literature can be equally contrary: he praises Rosemary Ruether and Mary Daly on the one hand, and then bases his treatment of masculine sexuality on David Deida’s farcical The Way of the Superior Man.

The value of The Hidden Spirituality of Men depends ultimately on its audience. Academic readers may find a number of problems with Fox’s assumption of normative masculinity, and his whirlwind tour of the world’s indigenous and mystical traditions. However, the book was not written for an academic audience. Non-academic readers whose understanding of masculine spirituality is derived from neo-Jungian and Christian men’s movement literature will find a good deal in this book which challenges their assumptions. In particular, I would recommend this book to young people exploring the spirituality of men for the first time: while the book has its limitations, it opens up more possibilities than alternative popular literature on the subject. And in the end, Fox concludes that the “Great Secret of
Masculinity” is being “capable of compassion” (pp. 295–6); it’s hard to argue with that.

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