



Cecil B. DeMille: Hollywood Macho Man and the Theme of Masculinity within His Biblical (and Other) Cinema

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Cecil B. DeMille, the legendary co-founder of Hollywood, progenitor of Paramount studios and unsung auteur was a macho man and master of the American cinema whose indelible biblical epics strongly exuded the resonance of masculinity. Not only were many of his sacred characters scripturally correct, but they frequently reflected DeMille's own virile persona-cum-ethos. Utilizing textually based, humanist film analysis as the guiding methodological lens, the critical film, religion and DeMille literature was reviewed and his biblical (and other) cinema selectively scanned to reveal the theme of masculinity engineered therein. It was concluded that DeMille's trademark aesthetic style and phenomenal box office successes were firmly rooted in his personal courage ethic, directorial control needs and manly idiosyncrasies. Further research into gender studies, masculinity studies, DeMille studies and the emerging interdisciplinary field of religion-and-film was warranted, highly recommended and is already long overdue.

Introduction: The Master of the American Biblical Epic

Producer-director¹ Cecil B. DeMille² (1881-1959), affectionately known as "C.B." (to close friends), "Generalissimo" (to commentators) and "Mr. DeMille" (to everyone else), was a seminal co-founder of Hollywood and a progenitor of Paramount studio who helped turn an obscure Californian orange grove into an international movie center that became *the* synonym for commercial filmmaking worldwide (Birchard, 2004; DeMille & Hayne, 1960; Edwards, 1988; Essoe & Lee, 1970; Higashi, 1985, 1994; Higham, 1973; Koury, 1959; Louvish, 2008; Noerdlinger, 1956; Orrison, 1999; Ringgold & Bodeen, 1969). Not only was DeMille a legitimate if frequently unsung auteur, but in Gore Vidal's (1995, p. 303) estimation, he was the "*auteur of auteurs*," and according to film historian Sumiko Higashi (1994, p. 5), he had "left enormous traces of his authorship long before Francois Truffaut and Andrew Sarris made the term *auteur* fashionable in cinema studies."

DeMille was a confirmed Episcopalian Christian³ and a self-confessed pop culture professional (DeMille & Hayne, 1960, p. 195) who grew to become the undisputed master of the American biblical epic with such indelible classics as *The Ten Commandments* (1923), *The King of Kings* (1927), *Samson and Delilah* (1949) and

The Ten Commandments (1956). As Jon Solomon (2001, p. 175) noted: “DeMille’s parting of the Red Sea in 1956 and his Samsonian destruction of the temple of Dagon [in 1949]...will be remembered as the most representative and iconographical Old Testament depictions of the twentieth century.” Not surprisingly, DeMille was variously tagged “high priest of the religious genre” (Holloway, 1977, p. 26), a “prophet in celluloid” (Billy Graham quoted in Andersen, 1970, p. 279), and the “arch apostle of spectacle” (Clapham, 1974, p. 21), amongst many other honorific titles, artistic hosannas and industry accolades (see Essoe & Lee, 1970, pp. 245-247). Indeed, one Protestant church leader proudly proclaimed that: “The first century had its Apostle Paul, the thirteenth century had St. Francis, the sixteenth had Martin Luther and the twentieth has Cecil B. DeMille” (Manfull, 1970, p. 357).

Despite all this professional praise, and having successfully achieved one of his life’s ambitions, namely: “my ministry was making religious movies and getting more people to read the Bible than anyone else ever has” (Orrison, 1999, p. 108), DeMille’s accomplishments were frequently ignored, dismissed or disdained by academia, the cognoscenti, literati and aesthete. For example, film commentator Barry Norman (1985, p. 182) claimed that *Samson and Delilah* “was certainly the worst and most absurd of all his films in that genre,” and that DeMille “was a man who thought big—not often deeply, but big” (p. 160). Biographer David Thomson (1995, p. 182) considered DeMille to be “silliest in his biblical and Roman films,” auteur advocate Andrew Sarris (1968) had excluded DeMille from his list of pantheon directors whilst film historians Giannetti and Eyman (1996, p. 40) argued that: “It is no longer fashionable to admire DeMille.”

Even Art Arthur’s (1970, p. 283) decades old claim still rings annoyingly true today, namely: “Cecil B. DeMille was Hollywood’s best known unknown” despite having been an active filmmaker from 1913 to 1959, a filmmaking pioneer, and an industry legend with over seventy feature films to his directorial credit (52 silent, 18 sound). Not long after his 1959 death, many professionals were still ignorant of DeMille’s filmic output, let alone his numerous industry advancements and artistic accomplishments. For example, in 1967, the Museum of Modern Art critic, Kirk Bond opined: “DeMille does really seem a major filmmaker...Perhaps in another few years...we can—with, let us hope, more films to go by—begin to have some real idea of what DeMille actually did” (Card, 1979, p. 119). Regrettably, the academic community and the general public is still waiting for this to happen, with only a few tantalizing dribs-and-drabs arising in the meantime. For example, DeMille’s directorial peer George Cukor recently confessed:

A long time ago I thought what he [DeMille] did was a big joke, just preposterous, and I couldn’t understand why the audience went for it in such a big way. There were always all sorts of orgies with belly dancers, veils and all the trappings. The eroticism was a joke. Then I saw *The Ten Commandments* [1956]...it was preposterous from the word go but I suddenly saw something new there, something which had escaped me before: the story telling was wonderful. The way that man could tell a story was fascinating—you were riveted to your seat. That’s exactly what he was: a great, great story teller. It was often ridiculous with all those excesses and froth but the man did *tell a*

story. That was De Mille's great talent and the secret behind his popular success (Long, 2001, p. 27).

Of course, this very same storytelling talent was behind the success of the rest of DeMille's filmic *oeuvre*, and a significant part of that great ability was the masculine resonance that he injected into his character constructions, which itself was often a muted reflection of DeMille's own macho man persona. Indeed, the redoubtable C.B. was legendary throughout Hollywood as a man's man, a virile filmmaker and an *enfant terrible* whose creativity and forcefulness sometimes bordered upon the dictatorial.

Consequently, not many scholars have attempted an encomium of DeMille's work, or explored his complex, multi-faceted nature, or even tried to extract the constitutive elements of his trademark auteur signature. Let alone explore his other personal stamps embedded within his films that had spanned the genesis of Hollywood, the birth of feature length silent films, the arrival of sound films, the rise of Technicolor, the advent of the wide screen and the challenge of the small screen. As Eric Smoodin (2000, p. 251) lamented: "De Mille rarely receives the serious academic recognition and study that he deserves." This is a scholarly shame in need of urgent correction. Therefore, utilizing textually based, humanist film analysis as the guiding methodological lens (i.e., examining the textual world *inside* the frame, but not the world *outside* the frame—Bywater & Sobchack, 1989), the critical film, religion and DeMille literature was selectively reviewed, and the theme of masculinity within his biblical (and other) cinema was briefly explicated herein to begin to redress that scholarly oversight; especially given the paucity of Hollywood-masculinity studies today (Cohan, 1997; Cohan & Hark, 1993; Jeffords, 1994; Lehman, 2001; Mellen, 1977; Trice & Holland, 2001).

DeMille's John Wayne Masculinity Before John Wayne

Authentic American masculinity in the iconic John Wayne mould is comprised of a combination of the following personal attributes, namely:

- rational, practical, objective
- courageous, independent, adventurous
- aggressive, athletic, strong
- stoic, tough, competitive (Meek, 2007, p. 1).

These masculine attributes are also an apt description of both DeMille-the-man and DeMille-the-pioneering-producer-director whose rugged individuality and dogged persistence during the Golden Age of Hollywood pre-dated John Wayne's archetypal maleness by decades (Freedman, 2007; Sanderson, 2002, 2004). Put simply, DeMille was a man's man who "loved gutsiness!" (Basquette, 1990, p. 132) and was full of energy, ambition, self-confidence, passion and artistry. He also admired strong-willed and independent-minded people and thus lauded courage but despised weakness in his personal, professional and on-screen life. He could not "forgive psychic disabilities...The immature, although gifted, were not to be nursed. If you had guts you could get what you wanted; he had got his, without help" (de Mille, 1990, p. 174). This basically essentialist conception of masculinity became a key

DeMillean theme and an often-overlooked component of his auteur signature that stayed virtually unchanged during his 1913-1959 career; despite the public's changing perceptions of masculinity. As his adversarial niece Agnes de Mille described him:

Cecil was like a young bull: dynamic, male, determined, and sassy. Wasting no time in subtlety, he went directly after what he wanted. He was without physical fear. "He had the courage of a lion," said Gloria Swanson to me in later years. He had no patience with fear, within himself or anyone else. He demonstrated this a thousand times over throughout his career. The same was true of pain, for which he had an almost limitless tolerance – so why didn't others? I once heard him offer an extra playing a naked Aztec warrior [*The Woman God Forgot* (1917)] forty dollars for sliding down a wall. The man's back was flayed, but he got his forty bucks. (I think Uncle Ce would not have accepted forty bucks for the same pain, nor four thousand. Possibly a hundred times that amount – possibly – but certainly he would have delivered for free, without question, if he had a guarantee that his pain would benefit the picture). (de Mille, 1990, pp. 162-163)

Nor was such DeMillean machismo⁴ transient or limited to youthful enthusiasm during Hollywood's stumbling steps towards establishing a uniquely American screen culture. As Jean Arthur (playing Calamity Jane) reported regarding his bravura behavior during filming of his 1937 Western, *The Plainsman*: "I had to learn to use a bullwhip, because Calamity was a two-fisted bullwhacking beauty. Practicing on DeMille, I cut him across the wrist with it. He's been so splendid. He wouldn't let me strike an extra he had hired to be struck until I had first practiced on *him*" (Tomlinson, 1994, p. 16). This tough masculine ethic infused all of his films, and with the very willing support of his spirited scriptwriter Jeanie Macpherson. As Alexa L. Foreman explained regarding their working relationship:

Macpherson and DeMille held a common belief that would be the basis for every screenplay on which they collaborated: they despised weakness in men and women. In Macpherson's scripts, weak men were taken advantage of and degraded, and weak women were shallow, gold-digging, and destructive creatures who went from one rich man to the next. The screenwriter believed that men and women could learn from experience, however, and change weak or evil ways, and she demonstrated this in her early social dramas. Both Macpherson and DeMille celebrated the hero and the heroine—biblical, historical, or fictional—and praised their courage and perseverance. (Foreman, 1998, p. 254)

Even during the famous clash with John Ford over the Screen Directors Guild loyalty oath near the end of DeMille's directorial career, Ford claimed: "I admire C.B.'s guts and courage" (McBride, 2003, p. 483), if not his politics and power tactics fuelled by anti-Communist hysteria during the McCarthy era.

DeMille's machismo also helps explain why his screen "heroes were equally stereotyped: untroubled by doubts, though frequently tempted by sin. If they were

true DeMille heroes, however, they repented, and after suffering intense remorse, they recognized God in time. The mind divided, the mind doubting and lost, was not for the Boss. God always came through for him in the nick, right on schedule" (de Mille, 1990, p. 186). DeMille's admiration of strength and courage coupled with his own personal power and persistence helps account for the storytelling success of his nearly failed foray into the musical genre, *Madam Satan*. As Richard Barrios (1995, p. 259) argued, the music was not good and DeMille was poor at handling the staging but: "It's that cocky damn-the-torpedoes DeMille spark that pushes it on. As he does in even his silliest pseudo-historical opuses, he goes for the hard sell with conviction and flair and force, and darned if he doesn't make it work." In effect, DeMille's masculine spirit had exuded through the silver screen.

Since DeMille-the-macho-man "liked a show of spirit in a girl" (de Mille, 1973, p. 274), he greatly admired courage in his female actors, which he actively sought and they frequently supplied. For example, Barbara Stanwyck was cast in his Americana railway film, *Union Pacific*, playing the plucky Mollie Monahan because: "Barbara's name is the first that comes to mind, as one on whom a director can always count on to do her work with all her heart" (DeMille & Hayne, 1960, p. 333). Why? Because as Joel McCrea (playing Jeff Butler) put it, "in everything she is fearless and has more guts than most men." To prove it, a high-energy Stanwyck "scrambles over the top of a railroad car, spins on a brake wheel between two of them, operates a handcar with McCrea, runs after a wagon and jumps onto it, and battles her share of attacking Indians" (Reid, npd, p. 174).

DeMille's appreciation of bravery also helps explain his championing of the courageous Gloria Swanson circa 1920s, especially when she let a lion actually paw her naked, prostrated back in *Male and Female* during the Babylonian flashback scene enticingly entitled "The Lion's Bride." This scene went on to become one "of the most famous in the De Mille filmography" (Bowers, 1982, p. 691). To achieve this dramatically dangerous pose: "Canvas was laid on her bare back and the front paws of the lion placed on top. The canvas was gradually eased out from under the animal's paws until they were directly in contact with her flesh. Finally the lion was induced to roar by having whips cracked in its presence" (Wise & Ware, 1973, p. 75). Swanson was "terrified" (Swanson, 1981, p. 506) but continued working like a trooper, which made DeMille even happier. As Agnes de Mille (1992, p. 57) reported: "The cameras ground safely from above, and Cecil's heart swelled with pride as the brave and beautiful young girl, his 'Little Fella,' dared expose her flesh to laceration at his bidding." This was a particularly brave act by Swanson, but even more so considering that the very same "lion clawed a man to death two weeks after the scene was shot" (Charyn, 1989, p. 99). DeMille-the-brave had found another gutsy girl whom he could admire, deploy and make world-famous in his repeated role as a Hollywood star-maker.

This same admiration-cum-expectation for actor bravery persisted until the other end of DeMille's directorial career, notably in his 1950s Oscar-winning circus epic, *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Gloria Grahame (playing Angel) pleased DeMille immensely by refusing to have a stand-in and let an elephant place its foot inches away from her face whilst she lay on the ground. As she recalled: "I was petrified. You know there was one retake on the scene. The elephant came so close he left a smudge on my nose" (Hannsberry, 1998, p. 182). Such demonstrable courage was

not only approved of by DeMille-the-brave, but DeMille-the-publicist utilized it for its immense PR value (Parish & Bowers, 1973, p. 286) to keep DeMille-the-businessman satisfied. As a corollary of courage, DeMille also admired the virtues of firmness and perseverance. As cameraman Karl Struss told actor Julia Faye: "You know, C.B. admires you because you make up your mind and you stick to it" (Eyman, 1987, p. 5). It was another quintessential masculine trait championed personally and professionally by DeMille. Not surprisingly, trial-by-fire was also a common plot element within many of his films; but most notably in *The Godless Girl*, *The Golden Chance*, *The Road to Yesterday*, *Saturday Night* and *Triumph* (Birchard, 2004, pp. 171, 191), thus further cementing DeMille's master of macho reputation.

Some Power Permutations and Machismo Traits within DeMille's Biblical Cinema

DeMille's machismo found its natural home in *Samson and Delilah*, the Old Testament story about the world's strongest man and his affair with the deliciously duplicitous Delilah. Denise Noe (2007, p. 4) considered this film's masculine and feminine archetypes to be "classic cinematic cheese," just as DeMille had proudly pitched it to the Paramount executives of his day:

...I asked Dan Groesbeck to draw a simple sketch of two people - a big, brawny athlete and, looking at him with an at once seductive and coolly measuring eye, a slim and ravishingly attractive young girl. When the executives trooped in...I...brought out the Groesbeck sketch. "How is that," I asked them, "for the subject of a picture?" They were enthusiastic. That was movies. That was boy-meets-girl--and what a boy, and girl! "That, gentlemen," I said, "is *Samson and Delilah*" (DeMille & Hayne, 1960, pp. 364-365).

As DeMille argued elsewhere: "We'll sell it as a story of faith, the story of the power of prayer. That's for the censors and the women's organizations. For the public it's the hottest love story of all time" (Koury, 1959, p. 206).

This sacred narrative is full of physical acts of bravado, including Samson's bare-handed battle with a young lion (Judg. 14: 5-6)⁵, the killing of a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass (Judg. 15:14-15), and the single-handed collapsing of Dagon's temple (Judg. 16:25-30). The muscular star of this DeMilleian epic was the beefy Victor Mature who, unfortunately, exhibited many personal phobias and other character weaknesses (Broccoli & Zec, 1998, pp. 117-121; Ragan, 1985, p. 131) that eventually triggered DeMille's now legendary "100 per cent yellow" (Higham, 1973, p. 287) berating of him. As DeMille bitterly claimed: "The man [Mature] is the greatest coward ever born. I've never seen a man or a child as afraid as he. He was so terrified to stand between those two columns and pretend to push. Now those columns were steel inside—they were steel. You couldn't have pushed them down—grappling chains and vices wouldn't have pulled them down" (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 13, Folder 18, 10 June 1957, *Samson and Delilah* Notes, npr).

Despite the inherent physical safety on this absolutely necessary film prop, the excessively worried Mature "sent for his agent [Herman Citrom]...Well, he finally went up there, but...he laid his hand gently on the columns and pretended to push. The man who pushed the columns was Kay Bell, shooting from the back of Samson. All that terrific stuff was Kay Bell. You couldn't get Victor Mature...I led a lion in on a

leash and he went out the other door so fast...Now there were 25 or 30 women standing around, there were children, there were 50 men probably, and nobody moved. But M. [Mature] went out of there like a dose of salts. I have never seen such complete fear" (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 13, Folder 18, 10 June 1957, Samson and Delilah Notes, npn, LHS 199, RHS 10). "I've never seen such abject cowardice. I've never seen anything like it. Jody [DeMille's young grandson] could go up and lick him [Mature]—he could do it—if he could catch him" (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 13, Folder 18, 10 June 1957, Samson and Delilah Notes, npn, LHS 217, RHS 111).

Of course, the theme of weakness was another unavoidable feature of Judges 13-16 and *Samson and Delilah* that Victor Mature could embody splendidly. For example, Samson's *spiritual* weakness towards his holy duties as God's judge led to his demise. Samson's *acquisitive* weakness for Semadar (Angela Lansbury) made him a target of scheming Philistine authorities that led to his public humiliation. Samson's *perceptual* weakness in overlooking the young, sexually frustrated Delilah (Hedy Lamarr) and the rejection of her puppy love obsession that drove her down the path of revenge. Samson's *lustful* weakness for the mature, sultry and very seductive Delilah (Hedy Lamarr) led to his entrapment, maiming and imprisonment. Samson's *intellectual* weakness (and/or low frustration tolerance) of Delilah's nagging led him to reveal the secret of his phenomenal strength that led to his subsequent capture, blindness and death. Samson's lone wolf habits-cum-*military* weakness led to his capture by Philistine soldiers. Samson's eventual *physical* weakness led to the Philistines destroying his eyes, enslaving and humiliating him, and Samson's weakness of *faith* kept him a mill-slave suffering physical, mental and spiritual torments.

However, when rejecting his weaknesses, Samson's strength returned (along with his long hair) and he redeemed himself by collapsing Dagon's temple upon himself and his Philistine captors in a revengeful act of suicidal terrorism (Wicker, 2003). DeMille's Samson is now a hero in God's eye, his people's eyes, the audience's eyes, and DeMille's directorial eyes. The weak strongman was made powerful again, just as DeMille had turned the incredibly phobic Victor Mature into an on-screen (if not an off-screen) hero. Not surprisingly, Louis H. Evans (First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood) wrote to DeMille after a preview of *Samson and Delilah* and said: "Thank you for your own type of *virile ministry*...God bless you in your work of making the Bible a living book" (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 13, Folder 18, 13 July 1949, Letter from to Louis H. Evans to Cecil B. DeMille) [my emphasis]. The DeMille-the-virile-filmmaker would have been very happy with that comment, one feels.

DeMille's lauding of strength, courage and masculinity also helps explain his virile Jesus (H.B. Warner) in his silent Christ film, *The King of Kings* and his non-meek, non-stuttering Moses in both versions of his *The Ten Commandments* (played by Theodore Roberts and Charlton Heston respectively), particularly the construction of Moses-as-a-warrior-king in his second Moses movie (which differed from his Moses-as-a-wild-eyed-prophet in his silent version). Indeed, Charlton Heston's Prince Moses had admired, supported and rewarded courage amongst his subjugated Hebrew workers. When the plucky stonecutter Joshua (John Derek) struck an Egyptian overlord (itself punishable by death) to stop a trapped old woman, Yochabel (Martha Scott) being crushed to death by massive stone blocks, and then boldly spoke the

truth about the poorly fed workers, an aggrieved taskmaster immediately wanted Joshua put to death. However, Prince Moses intervened claiming: "The man has courage," he allowed Joshua to live and even accepted his grassroots criticism. They then broke into the Egyptian temple granary to gather the stores therein and feed the Hebrew workers; much to the chagrin of the self-serving priests who wanted all the grain for themselves and their gods.

DeMille's courage trait and desires also helps explain his support of Mormon biblical artist Arnold Friberg and his painted illustrations of Moses for the second *The Ten Commandments*. DeMille considered his art to be masculine and claimed: "Everything this man does is strong" (Andersen, 1970, p. 201). Friberg also held similar masculine views to DeMille and claimed: "I believe that a tremendous religious leader like Moses or Jesus should be presented as commanding and strong, not a weakling or a victim" (Orrison, 1999, p. 66). DeMille's desire for powerful presences also explains why Prince-cum-Pharaoh Rameses (Yul Brynner) was a strongly drawn character. He needed to be a worthy adversary of God-the-Almighty (voiced by Charlton Heston, DeMille and indistinct others), Moses-the-God-supported-leader (Charlton Heston), Nefretiri-the-wilful (Anne Baxter) and also be a worthy successor of the commanding Pharaoh Sethi (Sir Cedric Hardwicke) after his death and journey into the afterlife.

This power presence need also helps explain why actor Yul Brynner was chosen to play Rameses. As DeMille claimed: "Yul is the most powerful personality I've ever seen on the screen...a cross between Douglas Fairbanks, Snr., Apollo, and a little bit of Hercules" (Robbins, 1987, p. 64), in addition to Brynner looking "incomparably royal, masculine, and implacable" (Seville, 1993, p. 49) and "strikingly ancient Egyptian" (Searles, 1990, p. 18), all of which secured him this desirable DeMillean role. The wisdom of DeMille's powerful depiction was vindicated by the box office success of the film, and yet again fifty years later by the failure of Robert Dornhelm's Rameses (Paul Rhys) in the 2006 TV film *The Ten Commandments*. As film critic Yo (2006, p. 1) complained about this remake: "Pharaoh...was a simpering weakling who wasn't intimidating at all. I had a hard time buying that he was the imposing powerful leader of one of the most glorious nations in the ancient world. Why Moses [Dougray Scott] was worried about confronting him is a complete mystery." Whereas, DeMille's powerful Moses suffered no such doubts on that score after accepting his Divine commission, thus turning Charlton Heston's Moses into a cultural icon of manliness that still remains unrivalled today and into the foreseeable future.

The few times that DeMille did laud weakness was for cunning, honorable or romantic reasons. For example, in *Samson and Delilah*, Delilah was a physically weak woman who used her small size and vulnerable femininity as an asset to capture the strongest man in the world. As the Saran of Gaza (George Sanders) perceptively said to Miriam (Olive Deering) about Delilah's (Hedy Lamarr's) conquering of Samson (Victor Mature): "He was not captured by force of arms, but their softness." Samson also demonstrated honorable-cum-cunning uses of weakness when he let himself be captured, bound and dragged off to Gaza by the Philistine soldiers in their first military encounter. He did not resist them and even feigned weakness along the way to lull the soldiers into a false sense of security. However, at the Lehi pass, after confirming that he had honorably fulfilled the bargain made between them and his

people, he burst forth from his bonds effortlessly and triumphantly slaughtered a thousand of them (aka Judg. 15:14-17). DeMille's machismo also found a good home in his silent Christ film, *The King of Kings* starring a muted macho Messiah. It was a genre full of inherent problems that only the brave would dare tackle and even less could succeed in.

Whom Say Ye That I Am?: A Cadre of Celluloid Christs

"The portrayal of Jesus...is a perilous undertaking, subject to great moral outrage for any blasphemous misstep" (Beck, 2005, p. 27), thus needing delicate balancing due to Jesus' divine-human nature (itself fraught with knotty theological problems). As David Jasper (2006, p. 591) explained: "the struggle by film-makers to preserve Jesus' divine nature too easily detaches him from the rest of humanity, while the too human Jesus fails for the opposite reason." Therefore, making Jesus fit the exigencies of coherent narrative drama and balance the battle between high and low Christology, whilst also traversing the well-known pageant of preordained events (i.e., his life, death and resurrection), plus market the movie Messiah to the masses, adds further filmmaking complications needing even greater skill to be artistically and financially successful. Since Hollywood Christology is inherently hard to do, historically speaking, there was frequent directorial reticence and an iota of industry inhibition towards inscribing Jesus on-screen, and if done, then usually in a subdued manner via back shots (*The Redeemer*), distance shots (*Monty Python's Life of Brian*), by inferring his presence via reaction shots (*The Last Days of Pompeii*).

This industry reluctance partially explains DeMille-the-brave's full-faced close-up of the Messiah (H.B. Warner) in his 1927 film, *The King of Kings*, which was his first freestanding and unencumbered Bible film (i.e., no modern, ancient or flashback storylines were tacked on). Furthermore, Jesus' face was framed by an ethereal white halo whose hazy luminescence implied holiness. DeMille-the-showman wanted to stun audiences out of their visual complacency and force them to come face-to-face with the man whose compassionate countenance and glorious glow gazed down upon them eternally, whether from heaven, churches, museums, art galleries or items of holy kitsch found within everyday homes (e.g., statues, paintings, prints, cards, crucifixes—see Brown, 1975). It was a skilful balancing act between showmanship and reverence, the spectacular and the mundane, the secular and the sacred as DeMille built onto and simultaneously differentiated himself away from the usual portrayals of Jesus. Indeed, this powerful DeMillean cine-aesthetic tactic was not repeated again until the church sponsored 1954 movie *Day of Triumph* and their disappointing reconciliation of the mundane with the holy (Forshey, 1988, p. 801).

DeMille's Christ film can be seen as the US equivalent of the German Oberammergau play, especially since DeMille failed to secure the film rights from the villagers in 1922 (and failed again a decade later—see Friedman, 1984, p. 150). As Jayne Loader (1997, p. 204) described DeMille's opening scene: "We see a black screen and then a dazzling light, which resolves itself into Jesus' face, wise and kind, looking down upon us, father to child, teacher to pupil. Our blindness is cured and Jesus is our first sight. This is one of the most spectacular and effective entrances in film history." It is also "as close as some people have ever come to a religious experience" (DeBona, 2000, p. 61). Not surprisingly, *The King of Kings* was hugely

successful, frequently screened long after silent films went out of fashion, and was repeatedly praised by the public and critics alike thereafter. For example, William H. Cooper said it was “perhaps the highest expression of the art of the screen in the realm of the spirit that has yet been given to the world. All previous attempts to portray the Christ in the motion picture are dwarfed by the master role of H. B. Warner” (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 288, Folder 1, dated 28 April 1927, No. 98). Louise Trapper said: “The Christus of H. B. Warner, is an epoch-making portrayal. It will go down the ages. This Jesus is no molly-coddish personage—It is a man of human understanding with God-like sublimity in dealing with his fellow men and women” (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 288, Folder 1, 21 April 1927, Letter from Louise Trapper to Revd. Dr. George Reid Andrews, p. 1). Mark A. Noll (1993, p. 606) saw “a diffident Jesus” whilst Peter Matthews (2006, p. 1) thought: “he comes through with a performance of absolute iconographic conviction.”

Concern over the depiction of Christ is of course understandable for religious, theological, political, ethical, historical and pragmatic reasons, especially considering the inherent difficulties and ideological battles over the sacred source material *before* projecting it onto the silver screen. The “Gospel accounts are certainly contradictory, partial and tendentious” (Reinhartz, 2006, p. 10) simply because:

The New Testament, the gospels, were neither biographical nor historical documents, at least as we in the twentieth century conceive of “scientific” history and biography, but rather they were faith proclamations, and the number of straight biographical details in them is limited. Clearly, the Gospel provides no physical description of Jesus. Further, the individual gospels are not always in agreement among themselves. At times, in fact, they seem to contradict one another (Baugh, 1997, p. 3).

However, Christian educator Dick Murray (1993, p. 97) claimed: “I have always been grateful that the New Testament never tells us what Jesus looked like. We do not know his build, his height, the color of his eyes or hair—nothing, thank God! Jesus’ looks can fortunately be ignored as people who are black, yellow, brown, and white come to love and worship him.” Yet, how do these very same multicolored people privately imagine Jesus and publicly worship him in their pictures, statues and jewelry? Are they true, valid and authentic images worthy of love and devotion? Furthermore, a film image of Jesus cannot avoid Murray’s delicious scriptural ignorance because it must make audiovisually *explicit* what may only be *implicit* in the Bible.

The above problems are also compounded by the Gospel’s telescoping of time, elliptic stylistic, episodic disconnectedness and gaping lapses in factual detail. Since the scriptural stress is usually upon Jesus’ spoken words, the concrete circumstances of his preaching, miracles and ministry are often ignored (Baugh, 1997, p. 3), but which filmmakers *must* recreate to tell their audiovisual stories. Moreover, the “Jesus of scripture and popular culture, like the Jesus of history and theology, has been drawn into the polemics and the politics of many of Jesus’ interpreters, readers, and consumers” (Reinhartz, 2005, p. 165), and therefore this fact has impacted significantly upon filmmakers’ aesthetic decisions in re-telling the greatest story ever told.

As a result, the popular cinema has not been backwards in coming forwards with its many cultural interpretations of Christ that either confirm, oppose or supplement these rival scriptural interpretations. For example, the movie Messiah has been portrayed as an **ethical, non-violent, non-revolutionary** in *Ben-Hur*, a **pacifist loner** in *King of Kings*, a **subversive** in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, **mystical and neo-Gnostic** in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, a **humanist thinker** in *The Messiah*, **human and sexual** in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, **passive and neo-canonical** in *Jesus of Nazareth*, a **musical clown** in *Godspell*, a **counterculture hero** in *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, a **neo-airhead** in *Judas*, **accessible** in *Jesus*, **troubled** in *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, **patriarchal** in *From the Manger to the Cross*, **laid back** in *The Book of Life*, **spaced out** in *The Gospel Road*, **blessed-out** in *Johnny Got His Gun*, **gay** in *The Garden and Him*, a **borderline, psychotic loner** in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a **murderous alien** in *God Told Me To*, **joyous** in *Matthew* and a **blood-spattered torture victim** in *The Passion of the Christ*, which was dubiously dubbed “*The Gospel According to the Marquis de Sade*” (Matthews, 2006, p. 1) and was supposedly “a pseudo-snuff film of unbelievable mean-spiritedness” (Gibron, 2005, p. 2). Exploring the historical changes in the public’s perception of Jesus’ masculinity within these films would itself be very interesting and valuable, but beyond the scope of this piece.

The above interpretations strongly suggest that objectivism (whether biblically based or cinematically located) does not exist, only shades of subjectivism, or as Fr. Leclerc (Gilles Pelletier) cynically said in *Jesus of Montreal*: “[The Bible] can be made to say anything. I know from experience.” Therefore, every practical decision in a biblical film is a theological choice that either supports or opposes a belief stance, which in turn generates sighs of praise or cries of desecration because the filmmakers’ choices may or may not match the viewers’ personal biases, aesthetic preferences or theological understandings. DeMille experienced this same dilemma first-hand making *The King of Kings*. As William C. de Mille (1939, p. 244) reported: “Leaders of various Christian denominations gave him [C.B.] to understand that they held a virtual copyright on the New Testament...The matter was further complicated in that each one of these great leaders of religious thought differed radically from all the others in his conception of what should or should not be done.” Nevertheless, like all directors before and after DeMille, they made their cinematic choices and lived or died accordingly.

DeMille’s Sensitive, Handsome and Masculine Messiah

H.B. Warner’s portrayal of Christ within *The King of Kings* was virtue incarnate and variously considered “the sweetest, if not the softest Christ on film” (Sultanik, 1986, p. 238), “a triumph of sensitiveness and beauty” (Taylor, Peterson & Hale, 1949, p. 199), “a spiritually glowing, if slightly effeminate savior” (Phy, 1985, p. 13), a “somber, kindly, bland, fatherly figure” (Grace, 2004, p. 57), “upright, patriarchal, and somewhat distant” (Grace, 2004, p. 51). DeMille himself described him as having: “all the virility, tenderness, authority yet restraint, compassion tempered with strength, touch of gentle humor, enjoyment of small and simple things, a divine love of his brethren and enemies alike that the Man of Nazareth must have had” (Essoe & Lee, 1970, pp. 113-114). DeMille courageously employed the over-50-year-old actor H.B. Warner to depict his emotional, warm, friendly, stern, non-despairing,

fatherly Jesus in the tradition of God-the-Father, rather than the biblical 30-33 year old Jesus, the excitable son of God according to some views of Scripture. And especially considering that in Jesus' day, a Jewish man was not considered to have reached full maturity and could not take on full adult responsibility until he was at least thirty years old (Gen. 41:46; Num. 4:3; 2 Sam.5:4; Luke 3:23). Yet, such was DeMille's aesthetic skill that the aging Warner was perceived by Yael Ohad-Karney (2005, p. 191) as a "very human, loving Jesus, a nice, Nordic-looking *young man*" who was a "loving *young man*" (p. 194) [my emphasis].

At *The King of Kings* debut screening at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, many walked out in disgust, only seeing the salacious first half and not the pious second half (Higham, 1973, p. 177). This walkout was due to frayed nerves resulting from an annoyingly ponderous theatrical prologue, an 11:00pm start, and a long screening, thus leaving the fatigued audience in a foul mood (Beardsley, 1983, pp. 18-21). However, when screened under better circumstances in New York, it got rave reviews and it ran for over two years in Europe (Higham, 1973, pp. 174-175, 179). Of course, DeMille's Christ film was not the only victim of negative reception or harsh criticism because scathing comments are almost a rite of passage for *any* exemplar of the Jesus genre (Reinhartz, 2007).

Nevertheless, DeMille-the-harmonizer solved his Jesus image problem in typical auteur fashion by mixing scriptural record, historical license and public expectations of a beautiful Messiah derived from fine arts masters. As David Shepard put it, the historical "Jesus was probably short, squat and Semitic, but he's not in *The King of Kings*" (Lybarger, 1997, p. 3), yet, DeMille's decision to use the aging and "supremely non-Semitic Warner" (Thomas, 2006, p. 2) was key to his success and greatly admired because it was a holy ideal. Historically, the "founder of the Christian church is usually portrayed in film as white, middle class and handsome. His Jewish faith has never been centre stage, and except for Pasolini his ethnicity has not counted for much either" (Leonard, 2004, p. 15). Indeed, Jesus' Jewish ethnicity was comically highlighted in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* when Brian (Graham Chapman), the mistaken Messiah of this Jesus film parody was stung to be called a Roman and so he defensively retorted saying: "I'm a kike, a yid, a hebie, a hook-nose, I'm kosher mum, I'm a Red Sea pedestrian and proud of it." In addition to probably being short, squat and Semitic, the historical Jesus may have been ugly or deformed if one accepts the prophetic description of the Lord-to-come in Isaiah 53:2-4. Namely: "when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him....and we hid our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not...smitten of God, and afflicted."

However, only extremely courageous or foolish filmmakers would dare portray an ugly or deformed Jesus, and by implication suggest an ugly or deformed Christian God if making a physiognomic interpretation of Jesus' claim: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:7). DeMille-the-Christian-apologist did not take this alienating path. DeMille-the-businessman and DeMille-the-professional-pleaser knew that the public would expect no less than a positive, neo-perfect image of Jesus, just as Philip Yancey (1995, p. 87) discovered when he asked contemporary Bible students to describe Jesus. He found that: "Virtually everyone suggested he was tall (unlikely for a first-century Jew), most said handsome, and no one said overweight. I showed a

BBC film on the life of Christ that featured a pudgy actor in the title role, and some in the class found it offensive. We prefer a tall, handsome, and above all, slender Jesus," DeMille-the-people's-director included, or as Sonny said in Jeffery Deaver's (2001, p. 115) novel *Hell's Kitchen*, "the Vatican-approved, souvenir shop, Cecil-B.-DeMille version: lean, narrow of face, wispy goatee, long blond hair, hypnotic blue eyes. Skinny." DeMille constructed the stereotype so well in 1927 that Myra Breckinridge mused in Gore Vidal's (1977, p. 122) novel of the same name: "Could the actual Christ have possessed a fraction of the radiance and the mystery of H. B. Warner in the first *King of Kings*?"

As indicated previously, a key element of DeMille's success was his full-faced, bravura portrayal of Jesus Christ on-screen, but his directorial audacity bothered Baroness Ravensdale who had visited the set. As she reported:

...Natalie Galitzine...and I and another Russian woman with a child pursued the eternal argument, whether Christ should be portrayed on the films or not, and that anyway it should be done by an unknown man, and not H. B. Warner, the famous New York actor. The woman, pointing to her child, said that she had a dream the night before, and saw Christ come out of a passage looking very sad. He met Mr. de Mille in his riding clothes who said he was going to put Him on the map again. Jesus smiled sadly, saying, "You cannot do this to Me", and walked away in loneliness (Ravensdale, 1953, p. 71).

Yet, others enjoyed Warner's performance, particularly the aesthetic close-up that thrust Jesus into the public consciousness and earned him a place in film history forevermore. As Carl King claimed:

H. B. Warner as Jesus. A beautiful performance. Haunting. Warner's best, of course, but he doesn't so much as seize the role, as fit right into it. We forget all about Warner the actor, as we see before us Jesus come to life. Warner not only has the saintliness and simplicity we associate with the Sunday-school Christ, but the vigor, the passion, the sympathy, the intolerance-of-corruption that were also the hallmarks of the real Messiah. DeMille doesn't hesitate to use many close-ups because he knows Warner can truly transcend this scrutiny. (King, npd, p. 129)

Warner's Messiah subsequently became *the* pop culture image of Jesus in its day and a leading prototypical Christ for decades thereafter. As Peter Matthews (2006, p. 1) claimed: "DeMille's Christ is the serenely glowing effigy of stained-glass windows, plaster figurines, and a million dog-eared holy pictures. Despite the baloney (or because of it), *The King of Kings* captures the fervor of naive devotion. On that level, the movie is a genuinely uplifting experience" and thus greatly helped make DeMille "virtually the Sunday school teacher for the nation" (Beck, 2005, p. 27).

Conversely, others enjoyed the cinematic Christ but they were not as forgiving of the performance and complained about its kitsch dimensions saying: "Christ, as played by H. B. Warner, is static, other-worldly, dignified, and a trifle effete; he is a Hallmark-card Jesus, pious and untroubling. John Steinbeck's epigrammatic reaction

was most revealing: ‘Saw the movie; loved the book’” (Keyser & Keyser, 1984, p. 22). Alternatively, Warner’s Christ was seen as “a kindly, paternal figure serenely aloof from politics and society” (Hirsch, 1978, p. 65) with a face that “solidifies into its single, messianic expression, a kind of mournful, almost pouting unease...He’s the Man of Constant Sorrow” (Thomas, 2006, p. 3). In short, DeMille’s restrained, serene but sorrowing Jesus matched Philip Yancey’s (1995, p. 88) definition of “the Prozac Jesus.”

DeMille’s Jesus as Cultural Role Model

Despite the derogatory assessments, DeMille-the-pop-culture-professional had tapped into an essential scriptural truth about Jesus-the-human-being that is still greatly unappreciated today. As Adele Reinhartz (2005, p. 163) argued: “on the whole he [Jesus] is a ‘flat’ character. He does not develop over time, he does not change in response to events, and he keeps himself aloof from even his closest companions. In reading the Gospels, one searches in vain for the rough-and-tumble narrative world of the Hebrew Bible, with its vibrant, epic characters.” Therefore, DeMille’s “static,” “untroubling,” “aloof” Christ was more biblically authentic than one could have possibly imagined, and it had a remarkable effect upon its production crew during filming. As Fr. Daniel Lord reported:

Christ began to take over. It was a motion-picture Christ. It was a Christ of synthetic whiskers and grease paint. H. B. Warner was a good actor but by no means a great one...Christ was doing to the film what Christ does to all life, once He has been given a chance. He was so dominating it that no one else mattered. His figure was becoming so overwhelming that the other characters faded into secondary positions. He was the Great Man, the compelling personality...We were sitting watching rushes one evening, when Mr. De Mille leaned over and touched my hand. “He is great, isn’t He?” he said. “Warner?” I asked, pretending not to understand that he had capitalized the pronoun. “Jesus,” he replied. “He is great.” There was a long pause, and then he spoke very quietly. “I doubt if we shall need the story of Mary Magdalene and Judas.” I grinned at him through the dim light of the projector. “That is the wisest decision you have made,” I answered, and we turned to watch Jesus Christ, played by an actor straight from Alias-Jimmy-Valentine roles, walk through make-believe scenery and yet dominate the hushed audience of actors, technicians, and make-up people, who watched Him and hardly breathed. (Lord, 1956, p. 282)⁶

DeMille had deliberately constructed his Jesus to be “magisterial” (Hirsch, 1978, p. 64), “rugged” (Allen, 1998, p. 186), “a living figure of super-manhood; not the cold, sad, almost effeminate Christ most other children were taught to worship” (Williamson, 1928, p. 67). As DeMille-the-man’s-man argued about his holy man’s man:

All my life...I’ve wondered how many have been turned away from Christianity by the effeminate, sanctimonious, machine-made Christ of Sunday school books. The Christ was actually a man with a body hard enough to withstand 40

days fasting and long journeys on foot and nights of sleepless prayer...There could well have been a note of admiration in the voice of Pilate when he said of Him: 'Behold the Man!' (Essoe & Lee, 1970, p. 113)

Moreover, his Christ was also a muted DeMillean self-portrait, a reflection of the "Spirit of the de Mille Studio...dignified, kind, and distinctly masculine" (Williamson, 1928, p. 71). It also reflected DeMille-the-people's-director-with-the-common-touch for his Jesus was a man of the people who had no trouble associating with children, or in mending a little girl's doll as a kindly act of service, caring and compassion.

In addition to DeMille's doll scene humanizing the divine-human Jesus, it gently de-emphasized the sometimes heavy-handed importance of the Jesus narrative, which can take itself too seriously because of the cosmic importance of the man, mission and holy subject matter. As Gordon Thomas (2006, pp. 3-4) noted regarding the doll scene: "It's all so nicely underplayed you can imagine Jesus thinking, *You see? – not everything has to be such a big deal.*" Or as Jack Jungmeyer viewed it in its day: DeMille "BUILDS JESUS FROM THE GROUND UP, RATHER THAN FROM HEAVEN DOWN" (BYU, MSS 1400, CBD, Box 278, Folder 8, circa 1927, Comment on King of Kings—Jack Jungmeyer). "For all the 'humanization' of Christ in more recent films such as *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1966) and *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (1973), this scene in *The King of Kings* seems much more expressive of Christ's human personality" (McIntosh, 1982, p. 629). For Bill Gibron (2005, p. 6): "Unlike other Christs who seem, pardon the pun, holier than thou, DeMille's Messiah is a completely three-dimensional entity, a near perfect epitome of consecration in human form."

Tellingly, "H. B. Warner in the role of Jesus, was said at the time to "out-De Mille De Mille"" (Koury & Thompson, 1994, p. 75), with Cecil's dead preacher father, Henry, helping him shape his masculine Messiah because:

The Christ his father had made him see was a strong man, with a magnificent intellect, a swordlike wit, a keen, quick sense of humour, and a sympathy that reached up to heaven and down to hell. His Christ was not that meek, emasculated saint which so many old masters painted. Boys were ashamed to worship so dim a figure when, apart from religion, they were taught to thrill over historic heroes of courage. Cecil de Mille's Christ was braver than any other hero of history. (Williamson, 1928, p. 68)

The conception of the Divine who "looks and behaves like a hero" (Ohad-Karny, 2005, p. 194) was also consistent with DeMille-the-auteur because the heroic element in his early films surrounded his "characters in a sort of halo, in a mysterious aura of myth" (Eisner, 1968, p. 212). Indeed, Jesus films *cannot* help but reflect their directors in some fundamental way. For example, the Christ of the courageous heterosexual DeMille was not wimpish, inhuman or gay, and was in sharp contrast to the gay Pasolini's gay-like Jesus in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, which Pauline Kael (1987, p. 133) claimed was so offensive that she "could hardly wait for that loathsome prissy young man to get crucified." Nor did DeMille-the-Episcopalian distort his Jesus like Scorsese-the-Catholic did with his excessively literalist *The Last Temptation of Christ* in which Jesus physically removed his heart from his body in an

episode not far removed from a gory splatter movie. On the other hand, the manly Mel Gibson did mirror DeMille's masculine Messiah in his *The Passion of the Christ*. As Lisa Tyler (2007, p. 157) reported: "Gibson himself has conceded that he wanted to show us a different and more overtly masculine side of Christ than the usual Hollywood version: 'He's usually fairly effete and not a powerful presence, which clearly he must have been.'"

Unfortunately, H.B. Warner's iconic Christ embodied a serious flaw when the pressure of "playing the role sparked off an old drinking problem, kept secret by DeMille and the publicist Barrett Kiesling" (Higham, 1973, p. 167) because adverse PR would fatally damage his pious project and quickly end DeMille's career as an independent film producer. DeMille successfully managed the crisis, but the Hollywood-based iconography of the divine gaze inspired by Warner's crucified Christ appears based more upon a drunken stupor than inner spiritual radiance or good acting (i.e., the vine rather than the divine). Maybe DeMille's masculine Christ was more of a man's man than anyone dare imagine or would want to condone today.

Indeed, some commentators playfully equated DeMille with the Messiah. For example, in a publicity shot for *The King of Kings*, "De Mille unabashedly fills in for a notable absentee [i.e., Jesus], surrounded by the twelve apostles" (Babington & Evans, 1993, p. 92), and when the Theosophical Society's prophesized savior-figure, Jiddu Krishnamurti, visited the set: "An alert studio press agent had him photographed between De Mille and H. B. Warner...the actor who played the Savior. I [Krishnamurti] left soon after this...as I thought three Saviors on the same lot was perhaps a little too much" (Kobler, 1977, p. 229). The God-DeMille nexus was even more pronounced in his auteur role as a dictatorial director wherein he was sometimes referred to as "Almighty God himself" (Swanson, 1981, p. 93) with all the masculine power implications associated with that phrase.

Conclusion

So why bother with the holy screen at all? Because as the above has demonstrated, this genre provides a vast and fertile area of interdisciplinary research into gender, masculinity and religion studies, of which DeMille's biblical epics are only a small but significant part. Not only did DeMille's cinema exude strong resonances of masculinity via the deft deployment of strong actors, dynamic storylines and bravura character constructions, but he also infused them with his own cocky brand of damn-the-torpedoes machismo, even if sometimes deliberately muted for aesthetic or plot reasons. This intense artistic effort, albeit frequently ignored, derided or dismissed, and with only one scholarly English textbook produced to date (Higashi, 1994), self-reflexively created a key component of his auteur signature that helped make him the undisputed master of the American biblical epic and a *bona fide* Hollywood legend.

As a pop culture professional *par excellence*, DeMille's films were eagerly awaited by the paying public. As a seminal founder of Tinsel Town and a co-creator of the rules of the classical Hollywood narrative style, DeMille's machismo, coupled with his directorial longevity and prodigious on-screen output, enormously influenced the American sense of manliness. The subsequent effect of his virile persona-cum-ethos upon 20th (and now 21st) century culture is impossible to

calculate or safely ignore. Nevertheless, his masculine Messiah, take-charge Moses and marauding Samson came to dominate the biblical genre for well over half-a-century and are good examples of DeMille's power over the public's perceptions of what constitutes masculinity that would be professionally irresponsible or churlish to deny, especially *The King of Kings* which some critics still consider "the best Jesus movie ever made" (Grace, 2004, p. 48).

Of course, DeMille's Messiah, Moses and Samson, all of whom had guts if not hunky abs, were not the only flickering reflections of DeMille-the-macho-man. Many of his female characters paraded these same masculine qualities on- and off-screen and are equally worthy of explication. Particularly, the devious Delilah (Hedy Lamarr) versus the courageous wannabe wife Miriam (Olive Deering) in *Samson and Delilah*, the willful princess-cum-Queen Nefretiri (Anne Baxter) versus the steadfast shepherdess Saphira (Yvonne De Carlo) in the second *The Ten Commandments*, and the holy harlot-cum-passionate penitent Mary Magdalene (Jacqueline Logan) in *The King of Kings*. Overall, further research into gender studies, masculinity studies, DeMille studies and the emerging interdisciplinary field of religion-and-film is warranted, highly recommended and certainly long overdue.

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Notes

1. There is not one DeMille persona but many DeMille personas who did numerous jobs and played multiple roles. His career was so long, complex and multi-faceted that to describe, let alone justify each aspect would be prohibitive. Therefore, concise hyphenated compound terms will be used herein to help disentangle his various roles and avoid needless explanation, repetition or reader boredom.

2. Many scholars have spelled his surname as “De Mille” or “de Mille” or “deMille” however, the correct professional spelling is “DeMille” (DeMille & Hayne, 1960, p. 6), and so this spelling will be used herein, along with its concomitants “Cecil” and “C.B.” as appropriate. His other family members and relatives spelled their surnames sometimes differently and inconsistently.

3. DeMille was the biological son of a Christian father, Henry Churchill DeMille, an “Episcopal lay reader” (de Mille, 1990, p. 161) who studied for the church but was never ordained (DeMille & Hayne, 1960, pp. 12-13), and a “Sephardic” (Edwards, 1988, p. 14) Jewish mother, Matilda Beatrice “Bebe” DeMille nee Samuel (Edwards, 1988, p. 14), an “English Jew” (de Mille, 1990, p. 161). Consequently, Cecil has sometimes been described within the academic literature as a “half-Jew” (Herman, 2000, p. 18).

4. Although the term “masculinity” (i.e., maleness, mannishness, strength, boldness) and its concomitant terms “machismo” (i.e., a strong sense of manliness that encompasses courage, virility, strength, toughness, power, aggressiveness and an entitlement to dominate) and “macho” (i.e., assertive, dominating, aggressive manliness) differ slightly in meaning, shading and usage, and are susceptible to different constructions within differing theoretical models and contexts, they will be treated herein as essentially interchangeable terms used to add variety to the text.

5. The Authorized King James Version of the Bible (KJV aka AV) will be used because it was frequently used by DeMille, especially in his early days (Higashi, 1994, p. 180). Furthermore, most of “the biblical phrases that are embedded in our culture are from the King James Version” (Taylor, 1992, p. ix) and today it is still “the most widely used English translation of the Bible” (Taylor, 1992, p. 71).

6. Originally, “DeMille was insistent on developing a love story between Judas and Mary Magdalene, which was derived “out of some ancient and little-known German legend of the Middle Ages” (Birchard, 2004, p. 219), but the idea was eventually abandoned. Nevertheless, a significant echo of this relationship did feature within *The King of Kings*, particularly in the lengthy opening sequence.

Filmography

Ben-Hur (aka *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*) (1959, dir. William Wyler)

The Book of Life (1998, dir. Hal Hartley)

Day of Triumph (1954, dir. Iving Pichel & John T. Coyle)

From the Manger to the Cross (1912, dir. Sidney Olcott)

The Garden (1990, dir., Derek Jarman)

The Golden Chance (1915, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)

The Godless Girl (1928, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)

Godspell (1973, dir. David Greene)

God Told Me To (aka *Demon*) (1977, dir. Larry Cohen)

The Gospel According to St. Matthew (1964, dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini)

The Gospel Road (1973, dir. Robert Elfstrom)

The Greatest Show on Earth (1952, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)

The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965, dir. George Stevens)

Him (1974, prod. Edward D. Louise)

Jesus (1999, dir. Roger Young)

Jesus Christ, Superstar (1973, dir. Norman Jewison)

Jesus of Montreal (1989, dir. Denys Arcand)
Jesus of Nazareth (1977, dir. Franco Zeffirelli)
Johnny Got His Gun (1971, dir. Dalton Trumbo)
Judas (2001, dir. Charles Robert Carner)
The King of Kings (1927, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
King of Kings (1961, dir. Nicholas Ray)
The Last Days of Pompeii (1935, dir. Merian C. Copper)
The Last Temptation of Christ (1988, dir. Martin Scorsese)
Madam Satan (1930, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
Male and Female (1919, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
Matthew (1993, dir. Reghardt van den Bergh)
The Messiah (1975, dir. Roberto Rossellini)
Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979, dir. Terry Jones)
The Passion of the Christ (2004, dir. Mel Gibson)
The Plainsman (1937, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
The Redeemer (aka *Los Misterios del Rosario*) (1959, dir. Joseph I. Breen Jr.)
The Road to Yesterday (1925, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
Samson and Delilah (1949, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
Saturday Night (1922, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
The Ten Commandments (1923, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
The Ten Commandments (1956, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
The Ten Commandments (2006, dir. Robert Dornhelm)
Triumph (1924, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
Union Pacific (1939, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)
The Woman God Forgot (1917, dir. Cecil B. DeMille)

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