



Editorial

Tine Van Osselaer and Joseph Gelfer

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,*

Difference and Agency; finally, I review Matthew Fox's *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*.

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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