



Instilling the “Manly” Faith: Protestant Masculinity and the German *Jünglingsvereine* at the *fin de siècle*

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*The “feminization of religion” during the nineteenth century has received a great deal of attention by historians of religion over the past two decades, but less work has been done to examine the Church’s response to this feminization. This article seeks to make a contribution to the historiography on gender and religion by examining the German *Jünglingsvereine*, or religious youth groups, at the end of the nineteenth century. Analyzing the practical and theoretical writings of the founders of these groups, as well as group newsletters and internal publications, this article suggests that the Church responded to the feminization of religion by creating young men’s clubs into which an older generation of Church leaders instilled its morals and beliefs. These groups, in their program of religious edification, continued education, and carefully fostered atmosphere of sociability, advanced a religiously defined notion of masculinity aimed at producing upright, strong, continent, and patriotic members of German society. Church leaders pinned their hopes for cultural relevance on German teenagers using patriotic and gendered discourse. An examination of this discourse offers a glimpse at the dynamics of masculinity, religion, and youth in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany.¹*

“Is Christianity unmanly?” This question appeared in February 1916 as the title of the front-page article of the *Monthly Newsletter* of the CVJM-Nuremberg, a branch of the German YMCA. Directed at the young men of the Protestant Church’s youth group movement, the article was a polemic against the prevalent notion that Christianity inherently lacked manliness. The author asked rhetorically if Reformation-hero Martin Luther was not manly when he “looked death in the eye” and declared, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.” The author also recounted the valor of the Salzburgers who, in the winter of 1732, gave up house and home and trudged through the snow for the sake of their Evangelical faith. In

setting up one manly hero after another—culminating with Christ as the ultimate man—the author made explicit the manly characteristics of true Christian men.²

The Church's response to this question—"Is Christianity unmanly?"—offers a glimpse into the masculine ideal of both these youth groups—called *Jünglingsvereine*—and, by extension, that of the late nineteenth-century German Protestant Church. In this essay, I locate the *Jünglingsvereine* in their historical context and examine both the structure of the groups and the discourse of their literature in order to access the masculine ideal that the leaders of these Protestant clubs advocated for their predominately working-class male members. I argue that the *Jünglingsvereine*, in their program of religious edification and continued education, and their carefully fostered atmosphere of sociability, advanced a religiously defined, middle-class notion of masculinity aimed at producing cultured, assertive, strong, chaste, and—above all—Christian men. Moreover, I suggest that when considered in the context of the "feminization of religion" of the nineteenth century, these groups are best understood as vehicles by which an older generation of beleaguered Church leaders defended themselves and the Church from increasing cultural irrelevance and sought to restore the Church's unraveling sense of manliness. Responses to the feminization of religion were not limited to the Catholic Church or to attacks on Catholicism's manliness by Protestants, though these are the major themes in much of the relevant historiography (Hastings, 2008; Gross, 2001, 2004). Rather, as this study suggests, Protestants also feared becoming "feminized" themselves and took action to combat the emasculation of their public image. As such, the *Jünglingsvereine* provide a unique glimpse into the internal and external (or inter-confessional) "masculinity dynamics" of the Protestant Church at the *fin de siècle*.

Jünglingsvereine, like the CVJM-Nuremburg, were formed in the 1850s alongside similar groups for young women and have generally been understood as a response to the perceived moral crisis of sex and alcohol afflicting youths in the industrial age.³ And while this is, indeed, accurate, a gender analysis of these all-male groups at the *fin de siècle*—when they acquired greater importance in the minds and discourse of their leaders—suggests a different reading: that they were a reaction to the "feminization of religion" of the nineteenth century.⁴ As historians of this trend have demonstrated, economic modernization separated men from the Church *physically*, while Enlightenment ideals (such as rationalism, liberalism) led them to reject religion *intellectually* (Blackbourn, 1997). For a variety of reasons, the religious participation of women remained strong, the result being what some historians have called the "feminization" of religion. Though, as Lucian Hölscher (1996) points out, the clergy and even the assumed gender of God remained fundamentally masculine, this dramatic shift in male and female religiosity was nonetheless significant, especially for the amount of concern it evoked from Church leaders. As Strasbourg Religious Inspector Gustav Ungerer remarked in 1877, "[i]f one were to count the number of Protestant men in Strasbourg and then compare that to the number of men attending services in all eight of Strasbourg's churches on any given Sunday, one would come to the truly shocking conclusion that only about one in one hundred showed up" (quoted in Steinhoff, 2005, pp. 224ff). Given this percentage for Strasbourg and similar figures for the rest of the German empire, it is,

indeed, accurate to characterize this shift, as does Anthony Steinhoff (2005, p. 246), as the “demasculinization” of the Church.

Connected to the “de-churchification” of German men was the fact that women, for their part, were using religion to find access to a realm of sociability, avenues to the public sphere, and even empowerment through their autonomous direction of outreach organizations. Moreover, while women’s right to vote in Church elections was not granted until 1918 (when political suffrage was extended to women in Germany), some churches had offered women the vote long before this. For example, Free Religious communities (those churches outside the official Evangelical or Catholic Church) aroused the ire of Evangelical Church leaders, who argued that in granting women the vote they were further weakening men’s control of the Church and endangering proper religious practice (Götz von Olenhusen, 1995, p. 17).

As an examination of the discourse of the Church leaders who created the *Jünglingsvereine* suggests, these changes in the composition and image of the Church threatened both the Church’s public image, as well as its own sense of masculinity (or that of its leaders), particularly in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century, where alternative expressions of manhood and womanhood created for many men a sense of masculine uncertainty (Schmale, 2003, pp. 149-201; Hagemann, 2002). These Protestant Church leaders responded in several ways, the best documented being a smear campaign against their Catholic counterparts. As historians of the period have noted, Protestant pastors and writers frequently impugned the manliness of Catholic men, arguing that they were emasculated by their unquestioning submission to papal authority (Hastings, 2008, p. 40; Gross, 2004). Yet Protestant Church leaders did more than just lash out at their Catholic counterparts; as this paper suggests, they also looked inward, establishing (new) enclaves of young men (and rejuvenating existing ones) who would both adopt the masculine ideals of their Church elders, as well as give the Church a masculine face for secular society. Through these groups, they would increase the number of virile, masculine young men in the Church and, in doing so, fortify the social presence and perceived masculinity of the Church.

In the minds of Church leaders, the industrial age and the dilemmas of modernity posed particular challenges to the proper Christian rearing of young men. Looking specifically at the *fin de siècle*, where this sense of masculine insecurity was most pronounced, two prominent Church figures and theorists provide excellent examples of the uncertainty this older generation of Evangelicals felt about the future of the Church. Ludwig Tiesmeyer (1835-1919), an evangelical pastor known for co-founding the German brand of Sunday school (Voigt, 1997), expressed the dire situation of male youth in the preface to his handbook on the *Jünglingsvereine* (1885), asking, “[i]s there anything more important than to wrest the masculine youth—who, hardly confirmed, is ensnared by the love of pleasure, gluttony, salaciousness, and a false sense of educational arrogance—from these powers and to win them for Christ and His kingdom?” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. vi). Tiesmeyer proceeded to enumerate the various developments responsible for the corruption of Germany’s youth, noting first the clergy’s tremendous task of pastoring “not 50-80 but rather several hundred” children. This problem was compounded by the lack of a “Christian atmosphere” in the home and the “stepmotherly” handling of religion in

schools (p. 5). Further causes included the decline of the apprenticeship system—a development best explained by the rise of the modern labor market of advanced industrialism (Mooser, 1986)—which, “earlier, stood under the most exact control and [by which] young people were held to proper religious development.” Tiesmeyer lamented that there was hardly a master who “still knows of [his] true fatherly duties towards the apprentice” and that Sunday morning labor was becoming the norm, keeping youths from a proper religious edification. Taverns and the press created even more temptations, and Tiesmeyer referred to them as “spiritual robbers” of Germany’s youths (p. 6).

The Evangelical clergy’s concern about the state of Germany’s youth, if perhaps exaggerated, was a direct result of the high value they placed on a man’s formative years. Karl Krummacher, both a club superintendent and a historian of the CVJM, began his 1895 history of the *Jünglingsvereine* with an ode to (male) youth: “The male age of youth is the beautiful May-time of life. It is here that the bud of youth opens itself to full blossom and spreads its fragrance.” More concretely, Krummacher wrote, “Freedom and fatherland, friendship and love, nature and art, the tapping into the well of knowledge, and the training of technical skills find understanding and nurture in the male age of youth” (Krummacher, 1895, p. 1). He also suggested that the severity of the crisis of youth was especially great, noting—like Tiesmeyer—the erosion of the old “patriarchal” apprenticeship system and its built-in checks on the private lives of apprentices (Krummacher, 1895, p. 2).

In their respective tracts on the *Jünglingsvereine*, both Tiesmeyer and Krummacher agreed that the direct result of this crisis of youth was the moral degeneration of those they saw as the very backbone of German society. Increasingly visible prostitution, venereal diseases, and illegitimate children were great sources of anxiety for the Church as the markers of increased sexual activity. Krummacher lamented that “[f]ornication is so widespread among the youth that there are entire classes of young men in which there is hardly a single one who preserves the *noble good of chastity* for his later years” (Krummacher, 1895, p. 7; my italics). Though Krummacher’s diagnosis may have verged on hyperbole, there was an undeniable increase in (male) sexual activity among teenagers around the turn of the century. One 1911 study found that 85 percent of university students had had sexual intercourse, with 70 percent of these having had their first sexual encounter during *Gymnasium* (age 10-19) (quoted in Taylor, 1992, p. 60). The doctor who administered this survey recounted the story of trying to warn a sixteen year-old male about the dangers of sexual intercourse. The youth interrupted, saying, “I know all about it. There are in my class already a few classmates who have contracted gonorrhea because of their frequenting of bordellos” (quoted in Taylor, 1992, p. 59). Statistics on the prevalence of venereal diseases across all classes support the claims of this young man: a 1900 study reported that 1 out of every 100 Berliners was being treated for venereal diseases. By 1919, these numbers had become representative of the nation as a whole (Sauerteig, 2001, p. 76).

Krummacher and Tiesmeyer also expressed great concern about the religious implications of the crisis of youth. Quoting from a lecture at a conference of the Inner Mission in Magdeburg, Krummacher asked, “Look in our churches on Sundays: where are the apprentices, the young merchants, students and technicians? And now look in the evening of the same day in the dance clubs, theaters, restaurants,

beer houses.” This, he concluded, was where young people congregated (Krummacher, 1895, p. 6). Instead of “following God’s path,” Tiesmeyer continued, in deep Biblical allusion, youths followed “paths which resemble that of the Jordan, which, like a fresh, happy boy, bursts forth on the foot of Mount Hermon, but then meets his end in the dull Dead Sea” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 3). Moreover, noting that fewer and fewer confirmands were likely to follow the godly path, Krummacher found troubling the trend of youths to join the Free Religious communities whose “atheistic teachings” of “authority-less morals” threatened to completely supplant the Christian morals of German youths (Krummacher, 1895, p. 12). As noted above, these churches supported emancipatory voting policies for women, which especially made them anathema to Krummacher and the Evangelical Church in their attempt to reassert the masculine identity of the Church.

It is clear that the rapid decrease in the numbers of confirmands who stayed in the Church endangered the Church’s viability and social reputation. Since the “usual means do not suffice,” Krummacher noted, these Church leaders at the *fin de siècle* needed to turn to (or rejuvenate) the *Jünglingsvereine* as the best way to stem the tide of the crisis: through these groups they would increase the number of virile, masculine young men in the Church and, in doing so, fortify the social presence and masculinity of the Church (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 7).

The gendered assumptions of the Evangelical Church are revealed in the structure of the *Jünglingsvereine*. Most obviously, *Jünglingsvereine* were exclusively male. Although the groups’ single-gendered aspect evoked little comment from group organizers, it is nonetheless of great significance, for *Jünglingsvereine* were not mixed spheres of male/female interaction. Instead, Church leaders conceived of *Jünglingsvereine* as male-only contexts in which a pure, masculine religion was to be instilled into youths, and contact with the groups’ more popular, more successful feminine counterparts (the *Jungfrauenvereine*) appears to have been prohibited or at least limited. “Of course,” read one article of the group’s monthly newsletter, “Christianity is also something for women and children or any person, for that matter, but first and foremost, it is something for men” (MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1). Founded upon these gendered beliefs, the *Jünglingsvereine* were thus the means by which men would be brought back into the Church. Church leaders were clearly trying to masculinize their ranks by depicting Christianity as something just for men, and to have included women—at whom, they believed, Christianity was not primarily directed—would have undermined this process of masculinization. Moreover, as Petra Brinkmeier (2003) notes in her study of the *Jungfrauenvereine*, men’s and women’s groups, though similar in some ways, differed significantly in their social “orientation”: whereas women’s clubs were inwardly focused and emphasized chastity and preparation for motherhood, *Jünglingsvereine* were oriented outwardly; that is, toward the State and German society more generally (pp. 22ff).

Age was also an important consideration for the founders of the *Jünglingsvereine*. In his handbook on how to form and run the groups, Tiesmeyer admitted that there was no set age at which young men should become members, but wrote that most “more or less agree that admittance could take place after Confirmation—so at the end of the 14th or 15th year.” Confirmation was ostensibly chosen as the determiner of eligibility for admittance to the *Jünglingsvereine*

because it was at this age that a boy sought to “differentiate himself from those who are still in school” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 50). More importantly, though, in defining the time at which a boy became a man at his Confirmation, the Church equated manhood with the completion of a religious rite of passage. A man’s secular maturity (his manhood) was thus connected with his religious maturity (his Confirmation), and as such, the Church took further steps to reassert itself as a manly fixture in the lives of men.

As for the group activities themselves, the *Jünglingsvereine* offered their members a three-tiered program of religious edification, continued education, and sociability. Each of the three types of activities was meant to instill into the members a specific masculine trait deemed desirable by Church leaders. First and foremost, *Erbauung*, or religious edification, was led by the pastor and was aimed at eliminating the deficit of spiritual nourishment for youths in the modern age. Accordingly, it was with *Erbauung* that group meetings began. Several verses of a choral were sung, and the evening’s Bible passage was read. The pastor generally chose selections from the Gospels, the book of Acts, or the Old Testament, and gave a homiletic introduction to the context and meaning of the passage. Led by the pastor, the members then went through the passage verse by verse, discussing its meaning and significance. Tiesmeyer wrote that this was done so that each member might become “an independent Christian,” able to “think as a Christian and express [his] thoughts” to others. This is of great significance, for, as Tiesmeyer commented, Bible study gave men the tools to speak to others authoritatively on scripture, especially to women. Tiesmeyer wrote, “Through this, they [...] learn the duties of a *Christian patriarch [Hausvater]* and later feel themselves to be priests of the home” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 63; my italics). *Erbauung*, then, was meant to give men the hermeneutic skills necessary to convince others—particularly their future wives—of the validity of their interpretation of the Bible. As such, the Church reaffirmed the man as the family patriarch and priest (attempting to reverse the feminization of religion in the home) and taught him the ways to convince those under him (i.e., women) of their *biblically justified* subordinate status. This focus on a personal interpretation of the Bible stood, moreover, in stark contrast to their Catholic counterparts’ ultramontane adherence to the authority of papal scriptural interpretation, and the *Jünglingsvereine* thus represent the “constructive” efforts of Protestant Church leaders in establishing the manliness of Protestantism vis-à-vis Catholicism.⁵

The second aspect of the *Jünglingsvereine* was continuing education. Though the topics covered varied according to the needs of the individual members, instruction was usually aimed at improving the grammar and mathematical skills of the members, who suffered from insufficient instruction at school due to their obligations in the factories or the fields (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 83). Through both conventional teaching and the opportunity for the members to give individual *Referate*, or presentations, members were tutored primarily in grammar and math so that they were not “outperformed by those who attend the state-privileged schools of advanced education.” In doing so, Church leaders attempted to instill into working-class youths a requisite aspect of an ideal Christian man: culture. In addition to lessons and presentations, *Jünglingsvereine* also provided appropriate reading material for their members and “tirelessly [pointed] out the damage of such rubbish-

literature” being turned out by the modern press (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 88). Tiesmeyer’s suggestions for proper texts reveal that much of the reading material took the form of newsletters published every fourteen days by the bigger *Jünglingsvereine* (such as the CVJM), as well as other Christian literature. Titles such as “The High Road,” “Be a Man!” (MAdCVJM, April 1916, p. 9) and “Tranquility in the Lives of Believers” (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 7) suggest the nature of acceptable books. By directing youths to its own literature, the Church was able to filter the messages transmitted to young Christian men through the written word.⁶

The third focus of the *Jünglingsvereine* was sociability, whereby the groups offered members a Christian environment in which they could be social with one another. Common activities included singing, letter writing, games such as chess, dominos or Bible trivia, reading aloud, and, weather permitting, walking and skiing. As Tiesmeyer wrote, the clubs were designed to “offer members a spiritual home in which they [could] feel secure from bad company and from the temptations of debauched peers” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 28). Indeed, Church leaders were very careful to promote only “pure” activities; consequently, bowling, dancing, gambling, the theater, and, above all, drinking, were strictly prohibited. Furthermore, while singing was encouraged, only spiritual songs (chorals, arias, motets) and patriotic *Vaterlandslieder* were permitted. Tiesmeyer made clear that love songs should not be sung, as “there are really very few chaste love songs” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 100). By fostering a place of sociability while designating only certain activities as permissible, the Church thus sought to insulate young men from the temptations of modern urban life and substitute constructive, wholesome entertainment.⁷ Importantly, this insulated atmosphere of sociability was closed off to women, as these groups were about creating “pure” masculinity.

In addition to these three pillars of the *Jünglingsvereine*, certain clubs also offered gymnastics programs as well as other sporting activities by which youths could complement their spiritual and intellectual edification. Gymnastics were an obvious choice for those overseeing the *Jünglingsvereine*, for since the beginning the nineteenth century, gymnastics had been considered the perfect means of approaching the male ideal (Mosse, 1996, p. 43). Interestingly, though, gymnastics and other sports were slightly modified for inclusion in the activities of the *Jünglingsvereine*, where they were always connected with a spiritual lesson. Indeed, every week, in the list of weekly activities in the group newsletter, gymnastics was followed by a listing of the Bible passage to be discussed (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 2). In this way, the Church was able to connect male physicality with Christianity and Bible study. Gymnastics and sports also served as a means of demonstrating publicly the Church’s manliness to the rest of German society, especially as it was competing with Social Democrats and other secular clubs for the attention of young men. One spring issue of the monthly newsletter of the CVJM-Nuremberg included a lengthy report on the group’s success in a recent track meet. “The purpose of our participation in this event,” wrote the author, “was not only to give our members the chance to test their strength on others, but also to show our cause [...] to the opposing populace: that we too know how to successfully awaken the physical strength of our members and that even in our groups, vivacious, happy people feel at ease” (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 5). The defensive language of the report suggests that the Church was aware of its “un-masculine” public image, and these gymnastics

and sport groups within the *Jünglingsvereine* thus served as one means to prove Christianity's inherent masculinity in the public sphere.

Just as the structure of the clubs and their activities illuminate our understanding of the masculine ideals taught to members of the *Jünglingsvereine*, the discourse of the clubs is also revealing in this regard, as a short analysis of the group literature confirms. One reoccurring aspect of club discourse was an emphasis on moral purity and the call for youths to denounce the unwholesome penchants for drinking, entertainment, and sex so common among their peers. In fact, as has already been noted, it was against these vices that the *Jünglingsvereine* fought most vehemently. Accordingly, these topics appeared frequently in the discourse of the clubs. In an article in the September 1916 issue of the *Monatlicher Anzeiger*, the author warned that these modern temptations, while seemingly appealing, could be deadly. "Debauchery, intemperance, unrestricted sensual pleasure, fornication, boasting, and the squandering of money—these are not true joys! The consequences of these are disgust, tedium, hangover, bad conscience, and possibly even sickness and early death." "He who has true lust for living," continued the author, "has to keep himself pure and chaste, temperate, and under control. Not a single one who has done that has ever regretted it" ("Jünge Männer und das Christentum," MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 1). At heart, these were appeals to members of the *Jünglingsvereine* to emulate wholesome, Christian youths rather than their secular counterparts. In *Youths of the Bible* (1883), a small book dedicated to "pious youths in and outside of our Evangelical *Jünglingsvereine*," Berlin pastor E. M. Quandt traced the lives of select Old and New Testament youths worthy of emulation. After discussing a few ideal youths of the Old Testament, Quandt turned to "the youth without equal": Jesus Christ, whose hard work, honoring of his parents and frequent presence in the temple made him the paragon of a young man (1883, p. 30).

Yet perhaps more persuasive than suggesting that intemperance and sex could lead to early death (which, of course, was true to some extent) were the Church's claims that Christianity was inherently manly, and nowhere was this claim expounded upon so adamantly as in the article with which this essay began, "Is Christianity Unmanly?" It is here that we see most clearly the Church's attempts to equate Christianity and Church membership with manliness. The article opened with a quotation from the Apostle Paul—"Be manly and be strong!"—and the author went on to challenge notions of the Church's lack of masculinity: "Many young men say, 'No, Christianity, that's nothing for men, we leave that to women and children.' [...] Is that true?" he asked. The author, of course, answered his own question, pointing out that Luther, the apostles, and the early Christian martyrs were certainly manly in standing up for their faith. "Were those women and children who spoke like that? [...] True religion makes one brave, strong and manly; if it doesn't, it just isn't a religion." The author then turned to the "greatest, most awesome, most incomparable man in all of humanity": it was Christ, he wrote, who "fought the hardest battle of all, [...] who, with a troop of enthusiastic men, conquered the world." Driving the point home, the author continued, listing the qualities the Church deemed most essential: "Jesus wants upstanding, manly love of God and of all people. He wants justice, truth, and self-control. *He does not want weaklings but rather men.* [...] *His kingdom is an army of true men,* [...] *the Bible is a book of*

heroes" ("Ist das Christentum Unmännlich?" MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1; my italics). In concluding, the author wrote,

Truly, you young men, when you think that Christianity is unmanly, you are not yet familiar with Christianity. [...] Yet now we know that Christianity is manly, through and through. Manly is the unshakable trust in God in need and death; manly is the mastering of sinful desires in one's heart; [...] manly is the courage not to let oneself be dissuaded from rightness [...]; manly is everything that Christianity demands and that it gives—o awesome, manly Christianity, if we only had more of you! ("Ist das Christentum Unmännlich?" MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1)

It is in these rhetorical, rhythmic assertions about Christianity's inherent manliness that these Church leaders' most fundamental beliefs about gender and religion were articulated. The appeals to manliness and the contrasting of strong men with "weaklings," women, and children were clearly part of an effort by Church leaders to ground Protestantism in the values of the hegemonic masculinity of *fin de siècle* Germany and to reestablish both the Church in the lives of German men and men in the public face of the Church.

Conclusion

How successful, then, were *Jünglingsvereine* in achieving the goals set out by its leaders? The Church conceived of *Jünglingsvereine* as an effective means of combating the crisis of masculine morals in Germany in the industrial age, which, to clergymen, had created a sense of masculine uncertainty and nurtured an increase in sexual liberty among German men, especially teenagers. In this, the Church seems to have at least partially succeeded. Though it is difficult to say with certainty, it is reasonable to believe that those German youths who joined and stayed in the *Jünglingsvereine* most likely adopted the (middle-class) masculine ideals being propagated. As such, they would have served to the larger society as examples of men who were simultaneously religious and masculine—or at least in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity of the day. Contemporary novels and plays confirm this, portraying group members (albeit satirically) as dutiful, upright moralists.⁸ It stands to reason that this satire was based on a real perception of club members exhibiting these traits. Moreover, while they may not appear to have reached a statistically great number of youths (the 69,724 members counted by Krummacher in 1894 represented just over 0.1 percent of the total population of 49.5 million) (Krummacher, 1895, p. 425), it is no less true that they touched the lives of a significant number of young men and, indeed, were part of the association-life of the time.

As for the second purpose of *Jünglingsvereine*—used as a means by which Church leaders, in instilling members with qualities that gelled with hegemonic masculinity, sought to re-establish the Church's public masculine image and cultural relevance—one must conclude that the project was ultimately unsuccessful. Instead of evolving with the rest of society, the Church closed in on itself and created—with limited success—a remnant founded on negative values (for example, do not drink,

do not have sex); in short, it was an institution on the defensive. Instead of creating a space for “manly Christianity” in the public sphere, the *Jünglingsvereine* remained more or less fringe organizations that others viewed as places of questionable manliness and restricted enjoyment.⁹ It appears that the Church’s vehement insistence on the groups’ single gendered nature—intended to cultivate masculinity—sometimes backfired, causing outsiders to question members’ virility and masculinity. Ultimately, the Church seems to have only lost cultural relevance from the 1920s up to the present, as church attendance and religiosity in contemporary German society have reached an all-time low. Nevertheless, the fact remains that through the *Jünglingsvereine*, the Church impacted the lives of tens of thousands of young men with its religiously defined and religiously authorized masculine ideal, and these groups represent an often overlooked Protestant response to the feminization of religion at the *fin de siècle*.

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Notes

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² "Ist das Christentum unmännlich?" *Monatlicher Anzeiger des CVJM Nürnberg*, Feb. 1916. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Signatur: 4 Bavar. 3141 q-18, 1. This collection of newsletters will hereafter be referenced as *MAdCVJM*.

³ On the *Jungfrauenvereine*, see Petra Brinkmeier (2003), and for their role in stemming the moral crisis of youth, see Derek Linton (2002) and Jürgen Müller-Späth (1988).

⁴ Particularly interesting here is that while membership figures for the *Jünglingsvereine* and *Jungfrauenvereine* were more or less similar until the 1890s (each with around 1000 clubs nationwide), the *Jungfrauenvereine* grew more rapidly in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s. This would appear to offer confirmation for the feminization of religion thesis, as religious groups for women appear to have been more popular than those for men (or at least had greater numbers; there were, of course, more secular clubs for men than for women). See Brinkmeier (2003, p. 159, and fn. 47). On the feminization of religion in Germany, see Ann Taylor Allen (2007), Lucian Hölscher (1990; 1996, pp. 46-62); Hugh McLeod (1988), 134-156; Rebekka Habermas (2000), Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen (1995), John C. Fout (1992), Relinde Meiwes (2000), David Blackbourn (1994) and Anthony Steinhoff (2005).

⁵ For the "reformed" Catholic response to ultramontanism and its masculinity, see Hastings (2008, p. 41).

⁶ On Catholic reading, see Jeffrey Zalar (2001), where he asserts that Catholic promotion of books and reading took a similar form of, to quote Thomas Nipperdey, “nervous aggression against everything non-Catholic” (p. 126).

⁷ Interestingly, discussion/fear of creating environments conducive to homosexuality do not appear in this literature. For a discussion of homosocial themes in all-male, pseudo-religious groups, see Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (2001).

⁸ Cf. the character Julius Weber in Otto Ernst (1895).

⁹ Cf. “Jünge Männer und das Christentum.” *MAdCVJM*, Sept. 1916, p. 1. See also Pamela J. Walker (1991) who argues that prohibitions against drinking and fighting in the British Salvation Army were viewed by outsiders as evidence of a lesser masculinity in the groups.

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