



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Heroic Men and Christian Ideals

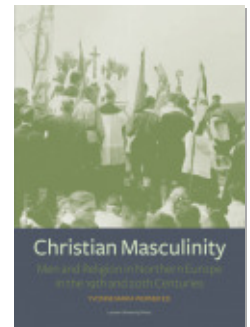
### Published by

Werner, Yvonne Maria.

Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

01 ed. Leuven University Press, 2011.

Project MUSE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.29224>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/29224>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[148.135.83.86] Project MUSE (2025-02-16 13:10 GMT)

# HEROIC MEN AND CHRISTIAN IDEALS

---

TINE VAN OSSELAER AND ALEXANDER MAURITS

Heroes have been defined in various terms, be it as men of extraordinary bravery or superhuman strength, or as the chief male characters in an epic. In recent decades the definition has shifted towards a hero who is ‘any man or woman’, ‘endowed by others’ with special ‘symbolic significance’.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the central focus of the latest studies is no longer a character study of male warrior heroes, but an analysis of the social construction of a heroic reputation. Heroic individuals are analysed as instruments of propaganda, and as “a site on which a range of cultural attitudes and social practices can be examined”, meaning that a hero could be seen as the embodiment of virtue and a role model who inspired imitation and veneration. In this depiction of the hero as a model, heroism depends upon the appreciation of certain characteristics and their estimation as ‘more than human’. Given that there were different degrees of appreciation, the heroic constellation has varied according to history and geography, to nation and denomination. It all depended on who created the heroes or their image, stressing in the process certain qualities, neglecting others.<sup>2</sup>

Although these definitions are interesting starting points, the selection of the heroes analysed in this article did not depend upon a restrictive definition of the terms ‘hero’ and ‘heroism’. This open approach makes it possible to define how heroism is described in the sources, and how it is characterised as ‘Catholic’ or ‘Lutheran’ heroism. It focuses on different texts that offer descriptions of the ‘heroic’ and explicitly allude to ‘heroism’ and ‘heroic’ men. By focusing both on the Catholic (Belgium) and the Lutheran (Sweden) situation, this article gives a view of the confessional landscape in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth century. To this end we have studied the Belgian branch of the Sacred

<sup>1</sup> Cubitt and Warren, eds, *Heroic Reputations*, 3; Jones, “What Should Historians Do With Heroes?” 441, 447.

<sup>2</sup> Frijhoff, “Témoins de l’autre”, 12. Frijhoff’s observation that in the hand of other producers and protagonists, accentuations change (*Ibid.*, 43), may well be as true of heroes as of saints.

Heart devotion, primarily led by the Jesuits, and a group of leading Swedish Lutheran theologians, strongly influenced by so-called *Neuluthertum* (New Lutheranism). The source material consists of periodicals and books published on the Sacred Heart devotion, and academic articles and speeches by the theologians of the Lund High Church movement. Thus our material offers a glimpse of the normative level - of how Catholic and Lutheran authors wrote about heroes and heroism, and what ideals they brought to their subjects.<sup>3</sup>

## ‘HEROES OF THE HEART’

In 1937, the Jesuit father A. De Pauw published an article in *Bode van het Heilig Hart* (Messenger of the Sacred Heart) in which he criticised the way in which the label ‘hero’ was bandied about. “Sometimes”, he remarked,

one gets the impression that heroism is for sale with the other articles in the shops, and costs almost nothing. Succeed, no matter what the exploit, win a race, knock someone knock out, and you are put on a pedestal. There is no end to the admiration and devotion. We have sunk that low. Recklessness and ambition, a stupid contempt of death, and brute force incite the enthusiasm of a people who no longer know how to value silent sacrifice and invisible dedication for what they are worth. It proves that paganism and the deification of materialism have polluted the people of the twentieth century. Someone who is able to perform a valiant action is not necessarily a hero.<sup>4</sup>

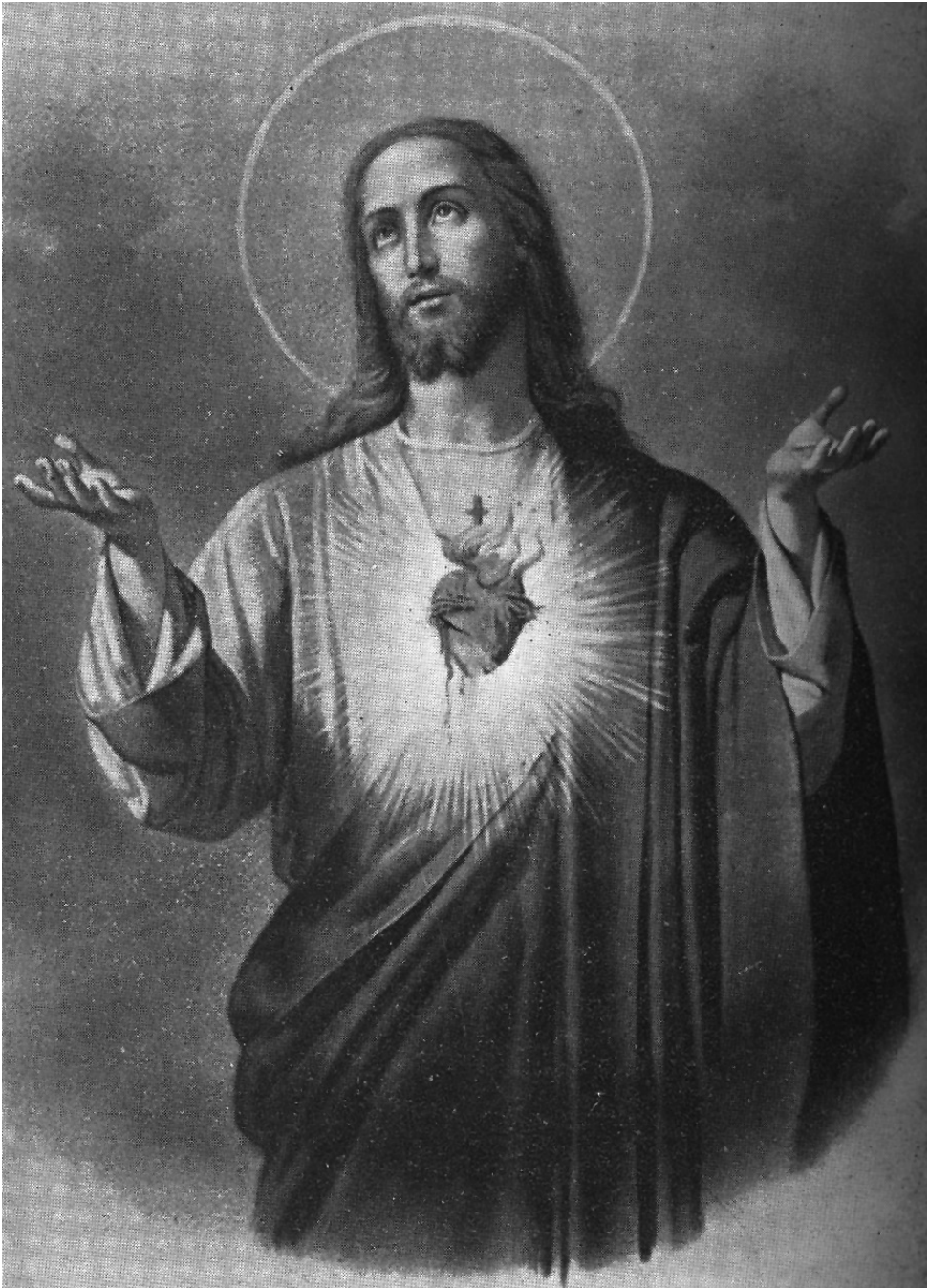
His criticism of the adulation of contemporary ‘heroes’ not only points to the importance De Pauw attached to values that were - supposedly - at the heart of a heroic personality, but also to the changeability and variety of those personifications of ‘heroic’ principles.

It is the complexity of heroism that is the theme here, and more specifically the rhetoric of heroic men in the Belgian Sacred Heart devotion.<sup>5</sup> This Catholic cult became very popular in nineteenth-century Belgium, and characterised a sentimental and vivid ultramontane Catholicism. As there were various devotional organisations dedicated to the Sacred Heart, this analysis concentrates on one of the most important movements, the *Apostolat de la Prière*. This organisation, which aimed at the restoration of Christ’s honour, was introduced to Belgium in the 1860s, and evolved into the Leagues of the Sacred Heart at the turn of the twentieth century. These Leagues presented themselves as part of the *Apostolat*, but since they were gender exclusive they clearly differed from the *Apostolat de la Prière*, which was a mixed movement.

<sup>3</sup> Sections of this article were presented at the European Social Science History Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 1 March 2008, and have been published online (Maurits, “The Exemplary Lives of Christian Heroes”; Van Osselaer, “Heroes of the Heart”).

<sup>4</sup> A. De Pauw, “48 Jaar bij de Melaatsen”, *De Bode van het Heilig Hart* (hereafter *BHH*), 69 (1937), 73-76 at 73. Our translation here *et passim*.

<sup>5</sup> See Van Osselaer, *The Pious Sex*, III.



Devotional image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.  
[Louvain, KADOC-K.U.Leuven]

To gain a clearer view of any historical variations and possible shifts in the nature of the cult, the analysis compares two time spans, an approach which though it does not permit generalisations on the evolution of the Catholic heroic discourse, does allow similarities and differences to be detected. The first is the period immediately following the consecration of Belgium to the Sacred Heart in 1868; years that also witnessed the beginnings of the Belgian *Apostolat de la Prière* movement and the founding of its periodical *Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus* in 1869.<sup>6</sup> Prior to this the French version, *Le Messager du Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, had circulated in Belgium, and since it continued to do so both periodicals have been included in the analysis. Other sources are devotional books on the cult of the Sacred Heart that were edited in Belgium. The second is the 1930s, something of a hey-day for the cult, with the blossoming of the Leagues of the Sacred Heart. These Leagues have been described as “la formule belge de l’Apostolat de la Prière”.<sup>7</sup> Originally only all-male Leagues were founded, but a women’s movement developed as well.<sup>8</sup> For this reason the sources for this inter-war period necessarily include the *Apostolat de la Prière*’s Belgian periodical as well as other periodicals and devotional books published by the Leagues.<sup>9</sup> Some of the heroes described in this devotional discourse were explicitly associated with the cult, as was the case with the martial hero fighting under the banner of the Sacred Heart. Others were depicted as an “apostle along the line of Jesus’ Sacred Heart”, but often there was no direct connection between the devotion and these exemplary men.<sup>10</sup>

However, it must be noted that heroism was not only the province of men, nor of the proverbial ‘great men’ who excelled and rose above the Catholic crowd. On the contrary, it was explicitly stated that heroism was a quality that might be possessed by women too. As he contemplated the heroic souls of Moses and Paul, the Jesuit author Toussaint Dufau, one of the main promoters of the cult of the Sacred Heart in Belgium, remarked that “God loves to operate through the people who are the frailest”, reversing his earlier belief that the “weaker sex” were created by God “solely to be man’s help”, and were incapable of this “angelic ardour”.<sup>11</sup>

It seems heroism readily coincided with ‘sanctity’. The parallelism of both terms finds an echo in the Dutch historian Wilhelm Frijhoff’s remark that both heroes and saints are presented as role models who with strenuous efforts can be imitated, but

<sup>6</sup> Gevers, “De ‘belle époque’ van de kerk in België”; Rion, “Une illustration du patriotisme du cardinal Van Roey”; Marx, “De cultus van het Heilig Hart”; Gabriëls, *De Bonden van het Heilig Hart in het bisdom Gent*; Quaghebeur, “De Eucharistische Kruistocht”.

<sup>7</sup> Heverlee, Archives of the Flemish Jesuits, *Bonden van het Heilig Hart*, III. *Apostolat de la Prière*, 5. Correspondentie anderen: Letter on the centenary of the *Apostolat de la Prière*, 2 February 1944.

<sup>8</sup> Van Osselaer, “‘From That Moment On, I Was a Man!’”.

<sup>9</sup> *Maandelijksche Mededeelingen over de Bonden van het H. Hart*; *Bondsblad voor Bonden van het Heilig Hart*. The periodical produced by the Leagues of Wallonia, *Regnum Christi*, has not been studied in detail, but seems to have been a translation of the Flemish periodical *Maandelijksche Mededeelingen*.

<sup>10</sup> Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 14; “Le Bienheureux Canisius, apôtre selon le coeur de Jésus”, *Messenger du Sacré Coeur de Jésus* (hereafter *MSC*), 8 (1865), 131-135 at 131.

<sup>11</sup> Dufau, *Beautés de l’âme*, 557.



whose example is hard to follow.<sup>12</sup> In the hagiographic accounts in the devotional literature (both periodicals and books), the label 'saint' was easily replaced by 'hero'. St Joannes Berchmans, for example, a Belgian Jesuit who died in 1621 at the age of twenty-two, was described as someone whose "sanctity was heroic" and whose "heroism was saintly".<sup>13</sup> Sanctity might therefore be regarded as the ratification of heroism by the Catholic Church, since heroic virtues, or to be more precise the exercise of virtues to a heroic degree, are one of the conditions for being proclaimed a saint.<sup>14</sup>

Many of the heroes described and promoted within the Sacred Heart devotion were in fact saints, which is why an analysis of the male hero may well result in a better understanding of the male saint and, as such, contribute to the study of the construction of masculinity in hagiography which, despite the numerical preponderance of male saints, is still in its infancy according to the theologian Teresa Berger.<sup>15</sup> Even though in the devotional literature numerous saints were described as heroes, it was by no means the case that the two were interchangeable. Since there were evidently other variations on the heroic theme, this chapter considers more than a male hagiography.

## 'MALE' AND 'MASCULINE' HEROISM

Since a hero can represent virtues and figure as a role model<sup>16</sup>, it is worth pausing a moment to reflect on the 'maleness' of the heroic men depicted in the devotional literature. Although these men embody virtues, do they as biological 'men' explicitly symbolise 'masculine' qualities?<sup>17</sup> According to Frijhoff, "great men" have always outnumbered women over the course of history, "at least in public memory". In his opinion this is because "exemplary values and ways of life belong to the public realm" in which women only could play "a minor part, if they were not excluded". However, men's dominance must also be linked to the "public discourse" that "has assigned the realm of virtue, intelligence and action to men, and that of emotions, spiritual experience and self-denial to women".<sup>18</sup>

If 'spiritual experience' is defined as a matter for women, then the Catholic heroes represent an interesting case. However, there is more to Catholicism than

<sup>12</sup> Frijhoff, "Témoins de l'autre", 36. To Saroglou, however, a hero is the exemplary figure in an urban context, while the saint has the same function in the religious sphere (Saroglou, "Saints et héros", 314-317).

<sup>13</sup> R. Stoffels, "Bij het 50-jarig jubileum van Berchmans' Heiligverklaring", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 16-20, at 17.

<sup>14</sup> Frijhoff, *Heiligen, Idolen, Iconen*, 14; Wilhelm, "Heroic Virtue".

<sup>15</sup> Berger, "Femininity and Sanctity", 64, 75.

<sup>16</sup> Frijhoff, "Témoins de l'autre", 12.

<sup>17</sup> Since we have an open approach to 'heroism', there does not necessarily have to be a relationship between masculinity and heroism. However, gender-exclusive approaches might be signalled as well. Jones, for example, in his analysis of the use of the term 'hero' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, shows the interrelationship between masculinity, warfare and heroism (Jones, "What Should Historians Do With Heroes?", 440). The same connection is pointed out by Dawson, though he adds national identity as well (Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1-8).

<sup>18</sup> Frijhoff, *Heiligen, idolen, iconen*, 9.

‘spiritual experience’, for it offers a male-dominated hierarchy, a political ideology, and military campaigns, and as such its heroes can fit into the ideal images that populate the ‘escapism’ that Martin Francis describes in his study of modern British masculinity. They offer a means by which men “travelled back and forward across the frontier of domesticity, if only in the realm of imagination, attracted by the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood, but also enchanted by fantasies of the energetic life and homosocial camaraderie of the adventure hero”.<sup>19</sup> Since heroes can represent ideal qualities, an analysis of Catholic heroes offers an insight into which characteristics were considered exemplary.

According to the Catholic authors who commented on heroism in the Sacred Heart devotional publications, Catholic heroism was not to be equated with ‘ordinary’ heroism. They illustrated this idea with the description of the prototypical Christian hero, who inspired and surpassed all other Catholic champions - Jesus.<sup>20</sup> As noted by the abbot Henri Saintrain, who published his book *Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, étudié dans les livres saints* in 1868, the Gospel is a strange book since it stressed the humiliations of the main hero, not even hesitating to describe his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and treating those moments with the same calm simplicity as they recounted his glories, without any attention to the effect that it may have on the mind of the reader. “One might even say that it treats the humiliations of the Son of Men more elaborately than his glories. It thereby differs from human writers, as they like to hide all that could diminish the reputation of their heroes, or present it in more favourable colours or even change it completely, so that they can go on focusing gladly on all that might exalt them.”<sup>21</sup>

What was true of the 1860s was also true of the inter-war period: Catholic heroism differed qualitatively from other forms of heroism. Not everyone perceived it as heroism, of course, and in 1935 the Jesuit Renatus Hardeman commented upon this disparagement: “In many German circles, the religion of the crucified is considered to be too weak and insufficiently heroic, and they try to replace Christ with some other pure German god, and heaven with Walhalla.”<sup>22</sup> Regardless of such views, Catholic authors explicitly stressed Jesus’ heroism even as they depicted his qualities as ‘more than human’, and placed him at the centre of a Catholic epical history. Secular heroes, as one author expressed it, had “succeeded for a time in placing themselves above the mediocrity of their environment by their exceptional bravery, perseverance, contempt for death”, yet they were not of a constant and all-encompassing quality, and failed from a moral and religious point of view: they did not place the love of God above all other things, and their “glorious deeds” were driven by “thirst for power, a longing for glory, greed, self-love, haughtiness, vanity, or other not so honourable passions”. To this Catholic author’s mind they did not measure up to Jesus’ heroism, a moral and

<sup>19</sup> Martin, “The Domestication of the Male?”, 643.

<sup>20</sup> For representations of Jesus as an ‘ideal man’ see, for example, Troughton, “Jesus and the Ideal of the Manly Man in New Zealand”; Gill, “Ecce Homo”.

<sup>21</sup> Saintrain, *Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus*, 245-246.

<sup>22</sup> R. Hardeman, “Liefdevolle kennis van den Gekruiste (Pauselijke Maand-intentie)”, *BHH*, 67 (1935), 138-142 at 138.

supernatural quality that sprang from humility, self-denial, sacrifice, and the love of God.<sup>23</sup>

Although Christ was the Catholic hero par excellence, he was far from alone. Since Catholic heroism and sanctity were often used as synonyms, the attention the Catholic heroes received in the periodicals often coincided with the run-up to their canonisation or beatification. In spite of the temporary concentration on specific heroes, the depictions of heroic Catholic men in both the 1860s and the 1930s were rather similar. In both periods the various 'types' of hero were largely the same - martial men, missionaries, and martyrs - and were presented as an 'encouragement' and 'model' for the Catholic public.<sup>24</sup> The heroes who populated the Catholic epos were frequently military men. It seems the battle field offered an ideal stage to outshine one's fellow man and demonstrate qualities that were more than human. In the Catholic context, the *miles Christi* had worn the armour of the crusader, of the Zouave, of the army chaplain, and of the ordinary soldier in the First World War.<sup>25</sup> The martial qualities of these men were combined with their romantic idealisation to evoke medieval knighthood.<sup>26</sup> These nostalgic identifications were apparent, for example, in descriptions of Joannes Berchmans, the young Catholic 'hero', and by no means a martial man, who was hailed as a knight in service of his lady, Mother Mary.<sup>27</sup>

Contemporary Catholic soldiers were also presented as heroes, among them the Zouaves who defended the Papal States in the 1860s, who in turn became objects of a nostalgic idealisation in the inter-war period, the personifications of an idealised past.<sup>28</sup> The close connection between the military, that stamping ground of lay heroes, and heroism was also apparent in the military metaphors used to define other (non-martial) heroic categories. The Christian martyrs of Japan, for example, were portrayed as a "glorious army"; a religious sent to a remote place entered a "battlefield".<sup>29</sup> Warlike metaphors were also used to stir Catholic readers in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources: they were saluted as "soldiers of Christ" with "a duty to do battle" and in the middle of "a crusade".<sup>30</sup>

Military nerve was not the only way to demonstrate heroism. Missionary work was at least as fruitful ground as the battlefield in creating and inspiring Catholic

<sup>23</sup> S. Vermeulen, "De Beminnelijkheid van Jezus", *BHH*, 12 (1937), 523-526 at 525.

<sup>24</sup> S. O., "Patron du mois de juin: Saint Pierre et Saint Paul, Saint Jean-François Régis", *MSC*, 3 (1863), 279-292 at 280; A. D., "Saint Stanislas Kostka", *MSC*, 6 (1864), 257-266 at 259.

<sup>25</sup> "Het dagboek van een Spaansch legeraalmoezenier", *BHH*, 69 (1937), 35-37; Quirijnen, *Soldatenziel*, 3-4; Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 4, 21; for the Belgian Zouaves, see Buerman, "Lions and Lambs"; for the Zouaves as atypical heroes, see Harrison, "Zouave Stories"; for the Zouaves and their connection to the cult of the Sacred Heart, see Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence"; Id., *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart*, 147-176.

<sup>26</sup> A. De Pauw, "De Heilige Jean de Brébeuf", *BHH*, 71 (1939), 203-209 at 204; for similar comparisons, see "Gevoelens van een christenen krijgsman", *BHH*, 1 (1869), 169-170.

<sup>27</sup> L. Arts, "De H. Joannes Berchmans en Maria", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 225-229.

<sup>28</sup> "Over een vaandel", *Bondsblad voor Bonden van het Heilig Hart*, 6 (1937), 6.

<sup>29</sup> H. R., "St. Pierre II, archevêque de Tarentaise et fondateur de l'abbaye de Tamié", *MSC*, 5 (1864), 16-29 at 18-27; N. P., "Les deux cent cinq Martyrs japonais", *MSC*, 14 (1868), 18-27 at 19; see also A. De Pauw, "Carlo Spinola (1564-1622)", *BHH*, 68 (1936), 101-106 at 101-102.

<sup>30</sup> "Le bienheureux Pierre Canisius", *MSC*, 7 (1865), 14-30 at 27; A. D., "Saint Stanislas Kostka", *MSC*, 6 (1864), 257-266 at 264-265; G. D., "St Jean de Capistran (1389-1456)", *MSC*, 14 (1868), 282-291 at 282.



heroes.<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on the mission was only to be expected given that the Jesuits, the main promoters of the Sacred Heart cult and publishers of the various periodicals, were active as missionaries in both periods studied here. Since by its very nature their mission took them to ‘savage’ areas among the enemies of the Catholic faith, it was presented as being virtually synonymous with a martyr’s death, “a sacrifice without return”.<sup>32</sup>

Although heroic religious were more often than not missionaries, there were others whose heroism was not revealed by their (martyr’s) death in the missions, but by their heroic qualities as the founders of religious orders, as religious authors, or through their exemplary life and ‘angelic youth’.<sup>33</sup> Their brand of heroism consisted in the display of virtues to a heroic degree - charity, discipline, humility, and obedience. Although these qualities might seem unheroic to modern eyes, it was precisely this kind of heroism that was presented as attainable for readers of devotional literature. Heroism was above all a victory over the self: “It is the quality of a heroic disciple of my heart to pray and make every effort to conquer himself, both in the things that bad nature repulses and in the things towards which he carries himself.”<sup>34</sup>

Just like some of the portrayals of the military men, most of these descriptions of missionaries situate their heroic biographies in a distant past; a historical framing in which these martyrs of the faith resemble the first Christians, who are likewise presented as Catholic heroes, ready to sacrifice their lives as the ultimate testimony of their faith.<sup>35</sup> Although heroism was by no means described as a thing of the past, it was often linked to the heroic qualities of bygone ages as if to render contemporary heroism part of a Catholic heroic tradition and increase its worth. As such, the first Christian martyrs and the crusaders were held up as examples to the readers of nineteenth-century devotional periodicals, and the Zouaves were depicted with the “features of Christian heroism, worthy of the age of the martyrs”.<sup>36</sup> The twentieth-century public, on the other hand, was encouraged to live up to the example of the martyrs or indeed the Zouaves, who had already attained mythical status.<sup>37</sup> Bygone heroic ages were thus echoed not only in descriptions of heroes, but also in compari-

<sup>31</sup> For the image of the Catholic missionary, see Dujardin, “Gender”, 293, 295; for Protestant missionaries and gender differences in heroism, see Rowbotham, “Soldiers of Christ?”, 88.

<sup>32</sup> J. D., “Le B. Jean de Britto martyr apôtre du Marva”, *MSC*, 9 (1866), 188-197 at 189; “Een missieheld herdacht”, *BHH*, 68 (1935), 294-298; A. De Pauw, “De zalige Andreas Bobola”, *BHH*, 67 (1935), 207-214; Id., “De H. Charles Garnier”, *BHH*, 71 (1939), 80-84 at 82; Id., “De Heilige Noël Chabanal”, *BHH*, 71 (1939), 151-156 at 155; A. Van den Daele, “Bij het eeuwfeest van Pater J. Marquette, S.J.”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 8-9 at 9.

<sup>33</sup> E. Régnauld, “Saint Pierre Damien”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 78-93; L. Arts, “Berchmans ... onze man”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 298-302 at 299; A. Stracke, “Piotr Skarga (1563-1612)”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 249-253.

<sup>34</sup> Arnold, *Imitation du Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, 383.

<sup>35</sup> Dufau, *Beautés de l’âme*, 198.

<sup>36</sup> “Les défenseurs de la papauté et ses ennemis”, *MSC*, 12 (1867), 397-409 at 397; “Départ des zouaves pontificaux canadiens”, *MSC*, 13 (1868), 380-388 at 380; G. D., “Antonio Goldoni, artilleur pontifical”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 285-295 at 287; for the use of the Crusades as a reference point, see Knobler, “Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past”.

<sup>37</sup> “Over een vaandel”, *Bondsblad voor Bonden van het Heilig Hart*, 6 (1937), 6; “Gedachten”, *BHH*, 69 (1937), 275-278 at 276.

sons of the qualities of heroic men with those of the contemporary heirs of the heroic tradition.

Although it is not wise to attempt to standardise heroes, even Catholic ones, or to make universal claims, it is still true that across the wide range of heroic categories, lay and religious heroes seem to have had some basic qualities in common that were significant both in the 1860s and 1930s. The most prominent quality was a hero's readiness to strive, battle, and die for Catholicism. In the various narratives, Catholic heroes consider it a privilege to sacrifice their lives for the Catholic faith and Catholic military and missionary actions.<sup>38</sup> These activities, be they missions among the heathens, Crusades, wars against anti-popes, or the Roman question, were rendered 'heroic' by the heroic qualities of their participants. The reverse, however, was also true: taking part in these heroic missions could set someone on the path to heroism. As the price of participating in these actions was often one's life, the descriptions often pay great attention to a hero's reaction to his looming death. One missionary for example "could not control his joy" after hearing his death sentence<sup>39</sup>; another was disappointed that he was not selected for a mission and was therefore unable to shed his blood in Christ's honour.<sup>40</sup>

However, one could also sacrifice one's life without the intervention of an enemy of the Christian faith. The trials of sickness were therefore to be regarded as divine favours.<sup>41</sup> Less bloody though the scenario might be, it remained the same in all essentials as the Catholic hero dedicated his whole life to a Catholic cause. There is an illuminating description of the Dutch Jesuit Petrus Canisius, one of the main representatives of the sixteenth-century Counter-Reformation, whose life was summarised in the following phrase: "He dedicated himself completely to the Mother Church, and that constantly and with a heroic generosity."<sup>42</sup> In these Catholic narratives it was therefore not victory over an enemy that revealed heroic qualities, but victory over life and its challenges.

The will to sacrifice oneself was found expression in the broad field of 'Catholic courage'. This bravery might be demonstrated in a willingness to fight (military) enemies, to face the challenges of a mission (an unforgiving environment, lack of food, sickness), or to make an all-encompassing sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> However, Catholic courage apparently also included the avowal of one's Catholic faith in more ordinary circumstances. According to the Catholic periodicals, openly professing to be a Catholic proved that Catholic courage was as present in daily life as it was in the

<sup>38</sup> For the tension between the sacrificial ideal (based on revenge), the anti-sacrificial ideal (based on forgiveness), and the self-sacrificing ideal (conflating prowess and piety) in knighthood, see Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> N. P., "Les deux cent cinq Martyrs japonais", *MSC*, 14 (1868), 24; similarly "Gedachten", *BHH*, 69 (1937), 275.

<sup>40</sup> "Patron du mois de Février: Saint Ignace, Evêque d'Antioche", *MSC*, 3 (1863), 70-80 at 71.

<sup>41</sup> G. D., "Le P. Libermann", *MSC*, 11 (1867), 374-385 at 377.

<sup>42</sup> "Le Bienheureux Pierre Canisius", *MSC*, 7 (1865), 30; L. Arts, "De moderne St. Rochus. Pater Damiiaan", *BHH*, 68 (1936), 223-225 at 225; Van Mierlo, *De dienaar Gods Adolf Petit*, 250.

<sup>43</sup> G. D., "Le P. Libermann", *MSC*, 11 (1867), 382; H. R., "St. Pierre II", *MSC*, 5 (1864), 17; "Le bienheureux Pierre Canisius", *MSC*, 7 (1865), 29.

missions or battlefield<sup>44</sup>, yet with the proviso that Catholic courage was ‘dry-eyed’<sup>45</sup>, for although it was considered suitable (for a man) to express enthusiasm, sadness, or grief in tears, it was not proper to weep when faced with a challenge.<sup>46</sup> Henri Suson, a German Dominican mystic who had the bad luck to forget how he should comport himself, was reminded by Jesus himself, who asked him if he was not “ashamed to cry like a woman”.<sup>47</sup>

These heroes were held up as grand examples to the Catholic public because of their courage and self-sacrifice. Yet their modesty and the humiliations they suffered were valued as highly as their bravery. It was because they remained humble at heart that they showed true magnanimity. Their modesty was thus described as a challenge to so-called heroes who lived for praise and attention; how unlike the Catholic heroes, who did not like to be praised for their efforts, and for that reason did not want to take positions that were honoured highly.<sup>48</sup> It was their obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy that pushed them to climb the professional ladder, for after all no one could refuse an honourable job imposed by one’s superior.<sup>49</sup> In their modesty they mirrored the “soft humility of Jesus’ heart”<sup>50</sup>, and in their gentle disposition they echoed his loving and caring nature symbolised in Jesus’ bleeding heart, the main symbol of the Sacred Heart devotion. As such, Catholic heroes were praised in the devotional discourse for their gentle, soft, and loving character.<sup>51</sup> In the accounts, this tenderness and love were sometimes reflected in descriptions of the men’s physical appearance, while the gentleness of their character was mirrored in the “softness of their traits”.<sup>52</sup> Their compassionate nature thereby triggered the somewhat surprising use

<sup>44</sup> G. D., “Antonio Goldoni”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 286; Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 25; A. Stracke, “Opdat iedereen, in ’t openbaar; God erkenne en vereere als aller Schepper en Vader”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 98-102 at 99.

<sup>45</sup> Even in the case of a child martyr, as evident in “Béatification de deux cent cinq martyrs japonais”, *MSC*, 11 (1867), 248-253 at 249; for the absence of tears in Joannes Berchmans’ life, see Arts, “Berchmans ... onze man”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 300.

<sup>46</sup> G. D., “Antonio Goldoni”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 289; “Les zouaves hollandais du Saint-Pierre”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 215-225, 217; “Les défenseurs de la papauté”, *MSC*, 12 (1867), 404; as Heywood writes, in discussing this emotional aspect of Catholic heroes; “Pour les ultramontains, les pleurs jouent un rôle primordial comme expression extérieure de l’âme. La religion, c’est l’amour, et l’amour émeut.” (For the ultramontanes, tears play a very important role as the expression of the soul. Religion is love, and love affects.) (Heywood, “Les ‘petits garçons modèles’”).

<sup>47</sup> G. D., “Le B. Henri Suson”, *MSC*, 9 (1866), 243-253 at 248.

<sup>48</sup> For example, H. R., “St. Pierre II”, *MSC*, 5 (1864), 25; G. D., “Saint Jérôme Emilien”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 366-375 at 370; G. Longhaye, “A Saint Stanislas Kostka”, *MSC*, 13 (1868), 99-103 at 102; L. D., “Le Bienheureux Nicolas de Flue”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 187-199 at 191. Hyacinth Hermans commented on the missionary Ter Maat that “The old ascetic was apparently afraid to be regarded as a hero” (Hyacinth Hermans, “Melaatschheid”, *BHH*, 68 (1936), 270-273 at 272).

<sup>49</sup> A. Stracke, “St. Canisius-Erasmus”, *BHH*, 69 (1937), 54-57 at 54.

<sup>50</sup> S. O., “Patron du mois de juin”, *MSC*, 3 (1863), 280.

<sup>51</sup> L. D., “Les amis du Cœur de Jésus: Saint Lazare, Sainte Marthe et Sainte Marie-Madeleine”, *MCS*, 4 (1863), 262-272 at 269; H. R., “St. Pierre II”, *MSC*, 5 (1864), 17, 24; “Le Bienheureux Pierre Canisius”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 135; L. D., “Le Bienheureux Nicolas de Flue”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 196.

<sup>52</sup> J. D., “Saint Patrice, apôtre d’Irlande”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 13-21 at 13, 18; similarly, G. D., “Saint Jérôme Emilien”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 369; and G. D., “Antonio Goldoni”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 286.

of the metaphor “as a mother”: Jesus, St Jérôme Emilien (the founder of the Society of the Servants of the Poor who was canonised in the eighteenth century), and general Louis-Gaston de Sonis (who led the defence of the Papal States) were all compared to a ‘mother’.<sup>53</sup>

However gentle towards their companions and fellow men, towards themselves Catholic heroes - and above all heroic religious men - displayed a strict discipline. As they disciplined their body they embodied their own heroism, or more precisely their own saintly heroism, by fasting, depriving themselves of sleep, flagellation, and wearing a cilice.<sup>54</sup> Although these might seem practices that could easily become outdated, they were still part of the descriptions of heroes in the inter-war period. ‘Heroic’ discipline was also represented as a stony path to sanctity. Joannes Berchmans thus figured as an example of how discipline not only implied physical discipline but also strict obedience of every rule to which one felt subject. His biography illustrated how one could attain sanctity through strict observation of every rule that one was expected to obey or imposed upon oneself. As such, he represented a model that might be imitated by the Catholic public.<sup>55</sup> Although this self-control appeared to be an important component of Catholic heroism, it could be counterbalanced in the descriptions of visions and ecstatic experience that in some cases were an equally important part of saints’ portraits.<sup>56</sup>

Gentleness was often a central heroic quality in these Catholic narratives. As such soft physical traits were a positive thing (for they mirrored the mental disposition of the heroes), they did not make Catholic heroes less heroic. The gentleness and dedication of heroic men could even enlist a comparison with women. In the passages in which heroes were compared with ‘mothers’, they were equipped with ‘feminine’ qualities that were viewed positively, a far cry from the depreciatory “weeping like a woman”. These descriptions can be linked to the German historian Martina Kessel’s definition of the ‘whole man’ who combines both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ characteristics (contrary to a more polarised model).<sup>57</sup>

However, although this chapter focuses on heroic men, there were only very few references to men’s bodies and characteristics in the descriptions of the nineteenth-century heroes. Most of them are found in the depictions of heroic soldiers,

<sup>53</sup> Saintrain, *Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus*, 19; G. D., “Saint Jérôme Emilien”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 374; De Sonis took as “a mother” care of those who were entrusted to him (Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 32), Joannes Berchmans is described as “a little mother” (Schoeters, *De H. Joannes Berchmans*, 65); for the cult of Jesus as a mother in the Middle Ages, see Walker Bynum, *Jesus as a Mother*; for the cult in nineteenth-century France, see Gibson, “Le Catholicisme et les femmes en France au XIXe siècle”, 63-93; Arts, “Berchmans... onze man”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 299; Arts, “Het ‘kleine’ met ‘grote liefde’ gedaan...”, *BHH*, 71 (1939), 538-542 at 538; Schoeters, *De H. Joannes Berchmans*, 84-86.

<sup>54</sup> Régnauld, “Saint Pierre Damien”, 84; L. D., “Le Bienheureux Nicolas de Flue”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 194; G. D., “Saint Jérôme Emilien”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 374; De Pauw, “Carlo Spinola”, *BHH*, 68 (1936), 105, 162-168.

<sup>55</sup> Schoeters, *De H. Joannes Berchmans*, 212-213.

<sup>56</sup> For example, G. D., “St Jean de Capistran (1389-1456)”, *MSC*, 14 (1868); Id., “Saint Jérôme Emilien”, *MSC*, 10 (1866), 367.

<sup>57</sup> Kessel, “The ‘Whole Man’”.

and more specifically the papal Zouaves.<sup>58</sup> These martial heroes clearly had “male figures”, wrote songs of “a simple and masculine poetry”, and were encouraged to show themselves to be ‘men’. They were praised for physical qualities such as their valour in battle and their ability to take a bullet.<sup>59</sup> The “maleness of their bodies” was mentioned only once, but that was more than could be said about other Catholic heroes. The heroism of other (non-military) Catholic heroes might also take a physical form - as was the case with the martyrs, who were described as “athletes of Christ”<sup>60</sup>, or the heroes who excelled in heroic physical self-discipline (fasting and flagellation) - yet however strange it may seem the ‘maleness’ of their bodies was not mentioned. The same was true of the inter-war period: a military hero’s ‘male body’ might be mentioned<sup>61</sup>, but there were no references to the ‘maleness’ of the body in descriptions of non-military heroes, even though much was made of their physical beauty.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps, unlike military men, it was because the maleness of their bodies brought no extra quality to their heroism, and therefore did not need to be included in the description. Or was it because Catholic heroism, as opposed to military heroism, did not require the physical strength and vigour of a (male) body?

References to ‘masculinity’ in descriptions of Catholic heroes are equally infrequent in the inter-war sources, and such as exist primarily allude to men’s courage and seriousness.<sup>63</sup> This lack of concern for their heroes’ ‘masculinity’ is remarkable since the general discourse of the Leagues of the Sacred Heart frequently touched on ‘men’s character’ and presented the movement as a ‘masculine’ movement.<sup>64</sup> However much the periodical of the *Apostolat de la Prière*, the main source of ‘heroic’ references, drew attention to religious ‘masculinity’, its heroes were no more ‘masculine’ in definition than those in the Leagues’ periodical.<sup>65</sup> Did these exemplary Catholic heroes figure as models of heroic Catholic masculinity, or, in a step away from binary, gender-exclusive thinking, of a more general Catholic heroism?

It must be borne in mind that the Leagues’ periodicals in the inter-war period were intended for an all-male audience, and perhaps did not need to mention explicitly that they were ‘for men’. The periodical of the *Apostolat de la Prière*, however, remained gender inclusive in the 1930s, as did its heroic narratives. There is no

<sup>58</sup> The exception is Nicolas de Flue, who is described as having a “candid and masculine eloquence”, although it should be borne in mind that he was a layman and ex-military (L. D., “Le Bienheureux Nicolas de Flue”, *MSC*, 7 (1865), 191).

<sup>59</sup> “Départ des zouaves pontificaux canadiens”, *MSC*, 13 (1868), 381-382; “Les zouaves hollandais du Saint-Pierre”, *MSC*, 15 (1869), 216-218, 220, 222; “Les défenseurs de la papauté et ses ennemis”, *MSC*, 12 (1867), 401-404.

<sup>60</sup> Dufau, *Beautés de l’âme*, 199, 365; N. P., “Les deux cent cinq Martyrs japonais”, *MSC*, 14 (1868), 22; athletic references are found also in the description of the missionary Damian (*Arts*, “De moderne St. Rochus. Pater Damiaan”, *BHH*, 68 (1936), 223).

<sup>61</sup> Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 18, 34.

<sup>62</sup> De Pauw, “Ralph Serwin en Alexander Briant”, *BHH*, 67 (1935), 104-108 at 105, 106, uses terms such as ‘supernatural beauty’ and ‘charm’.

<sup>63</sup> Arts, “De H. Joannes Berchmans”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 225; Stracke, “Piotr Skarga (1563-1612)”, *BHH*, 70 (1938), 302-305 at 304.

<sup>64</sup> Van Osselaer, “From That Moment On, I Was a Man!”.

<sup>65</sup> For example, in the article by Arts, “Mannelijk Christendom”, *BHH*, 68 (1936), 32-35.



specific mention of the (gender-exclusive) intended audience.<sup>66</sup> Still, any conclusions are at best provisional, given that an analysis of the rhetoric of heroic women would contribute to a better understanding of the specificity of Catholic heroic men.

## CATHOLIC HEROISM

An analysis of the devotional discourse shows that Catholic heroism was described as differing from other forms of heroism because it focused on sacrifice, humility, and humiliations, and not on 'grand' actions.<sup>67</sup> As Catholic heroism did not build on the reputation of its heroes, but on their ability to humble themselves in the service of God, it was, according to various authors, not always perceived as heroism. Expressions in the devotional discourse such as "heroic victim" made sense because a Catholic hero attained heroism by sacrificing and humiliating himself.<sup>68</sup> Catholic authors realised that this kind of heroism raised problems with their non-Catholic contemporaries since they were thought to find it difficult to make the distinction between an "act of heroism or foolishness".<sup>69</sup> However, heroism was deliberately presented as part of a Catholic tradition in which figures such as General de Sonis proved that "Christianity grows heroes and knights".<sup>70</sup> According to the Jesuit Henri Ramière it was through the actions of these heroes that God saved his people. Their courage, however, had to find continuation in the "less brilliant bravery" of others, while it was the fervour of the many that gave birth to the heroic few.<sup>71</sup> Heroes could only exist and shine thanks to the existence of other Catholic souls, so it behoved readers to try to imitate, or at least support, these Catholic heroes, as their salvation depended upon their efforts.

However, heroes did not only function as the *synecdoche* of a general package of ideals, but also as reference points on which to build an identity. They offered self-affirmation in moments of despair and defeat, and shaped a collective identity through commemorative rites and a shared history.<sup>72</sup> Catholic heroes were presented as part of a unifying Catholic tradition. They were the heirs of the heroic ages that witnessed crusaders, missionaries, and 'great' men.<sup>73</sup> However, the heroes of bygone

<sup>66</sup> Articles aimed at a younger audience explicitly mention their audience in their introductions. See, for example, A. D., "Saint Stanislas Kostka", *MSC*, 6 (1864), 257-266; Stoffels, "Bij het 50-jarig jubileum van Berchmans' Heiligverklaring", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 16-20.

<sup>67</sup> For example, much is made of Machiavelli's comment that religion did not create 'great men' because it focused on humbleness and self-denial (J. B. Goetstouwers, "1513 or 1938?", *BHH*, 71 (1939), 36-37).

<sup>68</sup> A. D., "Saint Stanislas Kostka", *MSC*, 6 (1864), 265.

<sup>69</sup> G. D., "Saint Jérôme Emilien", *MSC*, 10 (1866), 370; Arts, "De moderne St. Rochus", *BHH*, 68 (1936), 223.

<sup>70</sup> Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ramière, *L'Apostolat de la Prière*.

<sup>72</sup> Gerbod, "L'Éthique héroïque en France".

<sup>73</sup> For the 'heroic times' of the Jesuit Missions in the New World and India, see Schoeters, *De H. Joannes Berchmans*, 147; for the Crusaders as a popular reference point, see Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 2.

ages ran the risk of being regarded as outdated<sup>74</sup>, and to make them attractive their historical context was presented as comparable to the public's own situation.<sup>75</sup>

Catholic heroes were not only part and parcel of a unificatory and explicitly Roman tradition; they could also belong, and contribute, to a national or regional identity. Since love of country and the service a hero owed his nation were recurring themes, Catholic heroes could be presented as national or regional heroes and so contribute to popular myth. This 'appropriation' has proved elusive in the two periods studied here. Although it is clear from the inter-war sources that 'Flemish' roots (and not 'Belgian' roots) were generally mentioned in the description of the heroes in the Flemish sources, heroic narratives also frequently described other non-Flemish heroes.<sup>76</sup> In the 1860s a large proportion of the publications that circulated in Belgium were produced in France<sup>77</sup>, making it uncertain whether it was as important then as it was in the 1930s to have one's own - Belgian or Flemish - Catholic heroes depicted.

In a 1930s' description of Joannes Berchmans' life, the Jesuit Lode Arts remarked that in the Middle Ages, Christians could not imagine saints "other than buried in a desert, or hidden in a lonely cell, with rigid, gaunt faces, in stiff, grubby, hair shirts, and with an annoying aureole around their heads!" He countered this image with someone he believed to be a modern saint: Joannes Berchmans. In his opinion, Berchmans was a saint "who speaks and acts like other people, and walks with them the 'normal', the 'small', way of daily life!" He believed that it was a "special sign from God" that modern saints were common people.<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that saints were generally regarded as heroes, the heroic category was, as we have noted before, broader than the Catholic saints. However, Arts' remarks indicate that he believed that there had been a change in the representation and appreciation of Catholic saints.<sup>79</sup>

Can the same be said of Catholic heroes? True, the basic heroic typology (military men, missionaries, heroic religious, lay martyrs) remained much the same in both periods studied, yet this is why it is remarkable that lay heroes such as Matt Talbot, a pious Irish labourer who died in 1925, became very popular in the Leagues of the Sacred Heart. Talbot was neither a military man (like General de Sonis, for example)<sup>80</sup> nor a Catholic author or politician, nor did he suffer a martyr's death. He therefore might be indicative of a new kind of hero, whose popularity depended as much on his working-class background as on his exemplary life<sup>81</sup>, although it should be noted that

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, the comments in Stracke, "Piotr Skarga (1563-1612)", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 302; and Stoffels, "Bij het 50-jarig jubileum van Berchmans' Heiligverklaring", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 17.

<sup>75</sup> Arts, "Berchmans... onze man", *BHH*, 70 (1938), 298.

<sup>76</sup> For "Flemish soul", see Van Mierlo, *De dienaar Gods Adolf Petit*, 11; for 'Flemish boys', see Quirijnen, *Soldatenziel*, 3; for "young Fleming", see Arts, "De moderne St. Rochus. Pater Damiaan", *BHH*, 68 (1936), 223; for "Flemish hero", see "Een missieheld herdacht", *BHH*, 68 (1935), 294.

<sup>77</sup> As noted, the Belgian periodical *Bode van het Heilig Hart van Jesus* was started in 1869. However, the French periodical (*Messenger du Sacré Coeur*) circulated in Belgium from its launch in 1861.

<sup>78</sup> Arts, "Het 'kleine' met 'grootte liefde' gedaan", *BHH*, 71 (1939), 539-540.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Frijhoff's note on the 'democratisation' of the Saints (Frijhoff, "Témoins de l'autre", 10).

<sup>80</sup> For example, Smit, *Generaal de Sonis*.

<sup>81</sup> M. Dewickere, "Heilig Hart. Wederliefde", *BHH*, 67 (1935), 67-72 at 69, writes on "Talbot's heroic soul", whose popularity is illustrated by the fact that the Leagues visited his grave on their journey to Dublin (Heverlee, Archives of the Flemish Jesuits, Bonden van het Heilig Hart, IX Bondsleven, 8).

he was a member of the third order of the Franciscans and lived an ascetic life marked by mortification and prayer. However, the question remains whether his popularity was due to the laicisation of Catholic heroes in general, or whether it should be linked to the broadening of the cult's base and the working-class adherents of the Leagues.

In their study of the cult of the Sacred Heart, Norbert Busch and Olaf Blaschke posited a 're-masculinisation' of the Sacred Heart devotion at the beginning of the twentieth century, having noted the renewed stress on male involvement and the changes in the nature of the Sacred Heart devotion.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, an analysis of Catholic heroism indicates that its exemplars were not depicted as particularly 'masculine' in the inter-war period. It seems Catholic heroic men could do without the references to their male bodies or male characteristics. If a hero represented a "mould of imagined masculinity"<sup>83</sup> then the Catholic heroes left the reader various options. Although their main characteristics were very similar, there was no one way to be a Catholic hero, and there were as many, or perhaps even more, Catholic heroisms in the 1930s as there were in the 1860s. If nothing else, these Catholic heroic men show why we should avoid defining heroism too strictly, and point to the importance attached to having one's own heroes.

## THE LUTHERAN EXAMPLE

Of course, heroes and heroism were not only a matter for Catholics. In the Protestant parts of Europe the concept of the Christian hero was equally important, and it is for this reason we will now shift our focus from Belgium to the Lutheran kingdom of Sweden, and more particularly to the dons at the theological faculty of Lund University who formed the so-called Lund High Church movement. These theologians had an ecclesiology and political agenda that was notably conservative.<sup>84</sup> Like-minded men were appointed to positions of authority in the Church of Sweden, and since until 1867 Sweden had a four-estate parliament, and the clergy, not least the bishops, had a great influence on politics in Sweden, it meant that the Lund theologians came to exert great influence upon both theology and Swedish politics.

Whatever else, the High Church theologians were eager to defend the dominant position of the Lutheran Church of Sweden and maintain its normative position in Swedish society. In speeches and in articles in periodicals such as *Swensk Kyrkotidning* (The Swedish Ecclesiastical Journal) they were severely critical of the consequences of modernisation, especially the effort to abolish the estate-based society and the budding female emancipation movement. They opposed liberal reforms and

<sup>82</sup> Busch, "Die Feminisierung der Frömmigkeit"; see Olaf Blaschke in this volume and Id., "Field Marshall Jesus Christ".

<sup>83</sup> Davin, "Historical Masculinities", 137.

<sup>84</sup> For an introduction to *Neuluthertum* and the conservative ecclesiology that informed the Movement, see Fagerberg, *Bekennnis, Kirche und Amt in der deutschen konfessionelle Theologie*; see also Nordin, *Romantikens filosofi*, 383-390. The term 'High Church' should in this context be understood as an expression of a neo-Lutheran revival, not as a counterpart to the Anglican High Church (see Jarlert, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*, VI, 179-181).

defended the strict laws on religious worship and restrictions on religious dissenters.<sup>85</sup> Like their Catholic counterparts, they reacted against the progress of liberalism, rationalism, and secularisation.<sup>86</sup>

According to the Lund theologians, the moral and ethical standards of society were dependent on the safeguarding of the family as an institution. This idea was part of their understanding of the Lutheran theological-political doctrine of the three estates, which held the family, the church, and the state to represent the natural order of creation and God's presence in the earthly kingdom. Each estate had its 'natural' authority exercised by the head of the family, the priest, and the king. Each estate had its task: the family to raise the new generation and form the basis of society; the church to lead the people to God through scripture and the sacraments; and the state to punish crime and maintain order and peace in society.<sup>87</sup> The teaching of the three estates was well known from the *tabula oeconomica*, a collection of biblical quotations appended to the Swedish translation of Luther's Catechism and thus widely available to the Swedish public.<sup>88</sup>

From a strictly Lutheran perspective the High Church theologians emphasised personal vocation, and held that the nature of any vocation was closely connected to gender. In accordance with traditional Christian teaching, they believed in gender equality on a spiritual level but that man was superior to woman. Both sexes had to fulfil a function but within certain constraints, however, so it is reasonable to see the ideology of the three estates as a sex-typing ideology, which in ideological terms accorded women a deprived and often subordinate position.<sup>89</sup>

By studying the main representatives of this Swedish High Church theology - Wilhelm Flensburg (1819-1897), Anton Niklas Sundberg (1818-1900), and Ebbe Gustaf Bring (1814-1884) - we can obtain a sense of the movement's use of history, and more specifically the concept of the historical hero.<sup>90</sup> How did they apply this concept? Did

<sup>85</sup> The agenda of the Lund High Church theologians, which comprised both theological and political aspects, and was distinguished by its conformism, was presented to the public in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* (hereafter *SK*), for example. The Movement's opposite number in Germany, which the theologians often referred to, was Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802-1869), the editor of the conservative Protestant journal *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* (McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 35-36).

<sup>86</sup> McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 3-12, 285-289; Blücker, *The Church as Nation*, 115; Lehmann, "Von der Erforschung der Säkularisierung", 10-13; McLeod, "New Perspectives on the Religious History".

<sup>87</sup> Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 7, 93, 100, 109-110. The idea that the state was an instrument that would instil Christian standards and morality led the theologians to repudiate all mention of religious freedom from the mid nineteenth century onwards.

<sup>88</sup> Wallgren, *Individen och samfundet*, 271-285, 291-301, 320-321; Jarlert, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*, VI, 179-181; Aulén, *Hundra års svensk kyrkdebatt*, 26-27.

<sup>89</sup> Jarlert, "Fostran till man". For an example of the Lutheran theology as a sex-typing ideology, see Roper, *The Holy Household*, 253-267.

<sup>90</sup> Wilhelm Flensburg was a minister in the Church of Sweden (1849), a professor in Lund (1858), a member of parliament, and bishop of Lund (1865-1897); Anton Niklas Sundberg was a minister in the Church of Sweden (1845), a professor in Lund (1852), a member of parliament, bishop of Karlstad (1864-1870), and archbishop of Sweden (1870-1900); Ebbe Gustaf Bring was a minister in the Church of Sweden (1837), a professor in Lund (1848), a member of parliament, and bishop of Linköping (1861-1884).

they use history to promote their political and theological aims within the Church of Sweden? And does this reflect their ideas on Christian manliness? To answer these questions we will analyse a number of articles in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* in a gender perspective, with particular focus on the characters of the heroes, and scrutinise two speeches given in an ecclesiastical context: a meditation delivered by Sundberg in Riddarholm church in Stockholm in 1882 in memory of King Gustavus Adolphus; and a sermon by Bring in Linköping cathedral in 1883 in commemoration of Martin Luther.

According to the theologian Erik Wallgren, who published a book on the Lund High Church theologians in the 1950s, German idealism and the particular philosophy of history of which the German philosopher Friedrich Hegel was a leading proponent had an important influence on the Lund theologians. From this philosophical standpoint the theologians made critical judgements on contemporary ideas such as rationalism, liberalism, and Pietism; equally it was their conviction that history should be judged not using the abstract terminology of the present but rather as an organically evolved entity. The concept of personality was closely related to the notion that society and history formed a single organism, a concept that in turn was connected to larger entities such as the nation and the people - and it was these larger entities that shaped history.<sup>91</sup>

In this structural system the freedom of the individual was very restricted. It was only in interplay with the organically evolved social order that the individual was thought to have the opportunity to create something new. Thus the concept of history and social order was integrated in a distinctly collectivist mindset. The individual was assigned a certain position in society and expected to function as a part of the organism. This theoretical superstructure corresponded well with the Lutheran teaching of the three estates, which was central for the theologians in question. Hegel's philosophy of history had a theological aspect, since historical development was seen as the result of divine will, and for the Lund High Church theologians it was this that informed their view of the prevalent political system as a God-given social order, and prompted their determined criticism of what they considered to be divisive tendencies within society. The church had a crucial function to ensure 'true' social progress, and accordingly should fight all manner of religious separatism, avoid isolation, and convey its divine message at all levels of society.<sup>92</sup>

For the High Church theologians, the concept of the hero was not merely related to the concept of history; it amounted to its distillation. They saw the divine spirit both as the creator of history and its driving force, believing that progress occurred when the intention of this spirit was made fully manifest in the human social order, in other words in the three estates and in various individuals. Yet in addition, God could work his purpose for mankind by electing individuals for specific divine purposes

<sup>91</sup> Wallgren, *Individen och samfundet*, 80-83; Beiser, *Hegel*, 261-281.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-101.



and missions. These chosen individuals were described as heroes.<sup>93</sup> Initially God intended his spirit to be active through all humans, but this plan was overthrown by mankind's sinful nature. Unlike others, heroes were able to grasp God's true intention as reflected throughout history.<sup>94</sup> This stress on 'great men' was an expression of the historical-Romantic emphasis on the importance of great figures in history that was so widespread in the nineteenth century. Heroes distinguished themselves by their ability to establish new epochs. They also had the gift to articulate the main ideas of such a new epoch and put them into action. In this they were the ideas of the new epoch incarnated. Some periods were seen as more important than others, and their heroes were thought prophetic and normative prototypes for all other periods in Christian history. If contemporary times seemed chaotic, the key historical periods and their heroes could help with advice and guidance.

In his useful survey of the movement's theological system, Wallgren has shown that Flensburg was most keen to emphasise the role of heroes as leaders and educators. The three theologians analysed here considered that society in general, and the church in particular, were characterised by the work and progress of these great men. These manly heroes revealed the workings of divine guidance in the history of the Swedish nation, and in an ideal world Swedes would look to the exemplary lives of their great men. It was in these heroes that the idea of the nation was personified.<sup>95</sup> Thus Wallgren sees the link between the nation and the historical hero in the theologians' work, but he does not make the connection with the fervent nationalism of the period. Moreover, Wallgren's book, published in 1959, also leaves out the question of gender.

According to *Swensk Kyrkotidning*, heroic efforts were most common during the apostolic age and the Reformation. The apostolic age was considered the prototype for the Church in all ages. In the Reformation, the hero Martin Luther appeared to reunite the Church with the lost principles of the apostolic past. It is important to note that Flensburg made a distinction between human heroes who promoted the causes of religion and morality in their own time, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was seen as the absolute hero of all times. While human heroes tried to curb sin, Christ defeated it.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. The inspiration came from both Luther and Hegel: Luther used the concept *virii heroici* when writing about the hero (see Wingren, *Luthers lära om kallelsen*, 166-170, 223-238); Hegel speaks about men of action that can lead others since they have insight in the inexorable course of history (Beiser, *Hegel*, 269). Thomas Carlyle was another nineteenth-century exponent of the cult of the hero, for whom the hero was far more autonomous than for Hegel. In Carlyle's view the course of history was sometimes subordinated to the will of the hero (Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 17).

<sup>94</sup> Wallgren, *Indviden och samfundet*, 99, 102-104, 112-114.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-106, 109-110.

<sup>96</sup> Wilhelm Flensburg, "Om den enskiltes förhållande till det kyrkliga samfundet", *SK*, (1859) 24, 375. See Ebbe Gustaf Bring, "Om kyrkan", *SK*, (1855) 1, 5.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE HERO IN *SWENSK KYRKOTIDNING*

The theme of the hero occurs in several essays in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* (1855-1863).<sup>97</sup> One example is an article about the relationship of the sectarian movements to the Church published in 1855. According to Flensburg, sectarian tendencies can be traced in every ecclesiastical community whenever established dogma and cults are brought into question by the spread of abuse and spiritual lethargy. In this situation great reformers appear in order to restore the Church. Despite the heroic character of these men, there are flaws: "The endeavours of these men can easily be regarded as separatist since they seem to oppose the permanent social order of society. This feeling is all the greater since they often are afflicted by the human trait of refraining from revolutionary tendencies."<sup>98</sup> True heroes are characterised by their ability to restore the Church in a manner that befits its true nature; like prophets they promote the emergence of a new religious order. Yet they also have their faults. They may even abandon the good fight because the temptations of earthly recognition lead them to give in to 'revolutionary tendencies'.

Sundberg, in a review of the German liberal theologian C. C. J. Bunsen's book *Die Zeichen der Zeit*, surveyed the ecclesiastical situation in Sweden, placing particular emphasis on the organic concept of history that he and his fellow theologians thought so important.<sup>99</sup> He described how the divine spirit worked in the present to ensure the advent of a more moral way of life - yet the divine spirit itself seldom interfered directly in history. Instead God used different societal institutions and individuals as tools to bring his divine plan to fruition. This was a problem, since there was a discrepancy between God's intention and what actually came about, because of mankind's weak character and sinful nature. In that sense the 'spirit of the times' was a mere caricature of divine will. Luckily, Sundberg pointed out, there were certain individuals with a better understanding of divine will: "A chain of witnesses for the truth could be found in history. In defiance of humanity's flaws they are the tools by which God's intention in different times is executed. This task is not performed with the consent of the majority, but rather in strong opposition to it."<sup>100</sup>

Once again we see that heroes, 'witnesses for the truth', were men who gave utterance to the divine message and thus stood against the prevailing wickedness of society. In another book review, Flensburg discusses three books by the German church historian Karl Rudolph Hagenbach, which he welcomed for their attention to the great men in church history. Flensburg argued that this biographical brand of historiography is of immense value in the presentation of the endeavours of the true Church throughout history:

<sup>97</sup> The articles in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* were unsigned. On the question of the authorship, see Ölander, "Författareproblemet i *Swensk Kyrkotidning*".

<sup>98</sup> Flensburg, "Om förnufts- och samvetsfrihet", *SK*, (1855) 14, 216.

<sup>99</sup> Compared to the Lund High Church theologians, Bunsen represented the opposite theological view. In *Die Zeichen der Zeit* Bunsen attacked the anarchy of political, religious, and intellectual life, advocating toleration and liberty of conscience, and opposing the doctrines of Stahl and Kettler (Stahl in particular was of major importance for the Swedish theologians).

<sup>100</sup> Anton Niklas Sundberg, "D:r C. C. J. Bunsen om tidens tecken. Ett bidrag till vår tids behandling av de kyrkliga frågorna", *SK*, (1856) 8, 113-114.

It is not sufficient for the author to give a general and thus rather colourless account of the state of the Church in different epochs. Instead the innermost thought of the Church, its purpose and strife in different periods, appear in individual form in its magnificent characters. In men such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, as Athanasius, Augustine and Chrysostom, as Luther and Melancton and Zwingli and Calvin, as Johan Arndt and Paul Gerhard, as Spener and Schleiermacher, the Church has a concentrated revelation of the divine spirit which leads the Church in truth and righteousness. The inner thoughts of these individuals are the examples brought to our attention by the author. We will forget ourselves to live and fight and suffer with them, we take joy in their courage of faith, we take part in their interest, we take great joy in their victories. With the men mentioned here and their equals, the author's survey presents us with a sky thronged with holy witnesses. They all have sealed the truth of Christianity and the Reformation with their blood, or renounced the happiness and welfare of the present to plant the cross of Christianity in surroundings where the name of Christ was not spoken before. Surely it is difficult to imagine a more marvellous gallery of holy images.<sup>101</sup>

Thus the innermost thought of the Church became apparent in the thoughts and actions of its great theologians and reformers. Given that the theological position differed among these great men, it would seem that the theological standpoint was of minor importance for Flensburg; he seems to have considered their faithfulness towards the Church and the Christian confession as the most important part of their heroic conduct. He considers these and other great Christian men as role models and sources of inspiration for all Christians<sup>102</sup>: it was not only theologians but also representatives of the old Church who were guardians of the true Christian faith. The weight he accords some of the great fathers of the Church was perhaps the consequence of feeling he was living through a period marked by upheaval in the Christian order. It is obvious that he regarded Hagenbach's work on church history almost as a religious tract because it underlined the importance of the great Christian men. According to Flensburg, the exemplary lives of the heroes gave Christian leaders the strength to resolve the most critical ecclesiastical problems.<sup>103</sup> In the passage quoted above, Flensburg also highlights the character of the great men of the Church. The possession of high morals and good character was a major theme in the discourse on masculinity in middle-class circles in the nineteenth century.<sup>104</sup> The characters of the heroes were marked by their courage of faith and willingness to give their lives for their Christian faith if necessary.

A few years later Sundberg reviewed a collection of lectures by the Swiss theologian Jean Pierre Trottet. Sundberg reflected upon the ideals and community life of the first Christians, concluding that the apostolic age was normative for the Church in all times, when, as he put it, the seed was planted for everything that was to occur later in

<sup>101</sup> Flensburg, "Utländsk litteratur", *SK*, (1857) 6, 95.

<sup>102</sup> Id., *Om den naturliga viljans förmåga i andligt hänseende*, 13.

<sup>103</sup> Id., "Utländsk litteratur", *SK*, (1857) 6, 95; for how other nineteenth-century Swedish theologians used the example of 'great men', see Göransson, *Folkrepresentation och kyrka*.

<sup>104</sup> Tjeder, *The Power of Character*.

the history of the Church, and was thus the principal age of Christian heroes who, to his mind, served as universal models for all times. The Apostles, as the first disciples of Christ, were to be regarded as the pillars of the Church and its most distinguished teachers. Among all these heroes not a single woman was mentioned, not even the Virgin Mary. Clearly, Christian heroism was thought the privileged domain of men, and not only in the apostolic age, for Sundberg believed there were other great periods when brave men determined the course of history and gave guidance to future generations.<sup>105</sup>

Flensburg elsewhere takes up the problem of the relationship between the individual and divine spirit. The crucial point comes when a person becomes aware of the will of the divine spirit and receives 'real freedom'. He then has to make his decision whether to fulfil the will of God and make himself a divine tool. Heroes are seen as examples of individuals with a sense for the will of the divine spirit, and thus possess the most sincere and highly developed personality. Divine will takes its uttermost expression in the hero.<sup>106</sup> According to Flensburg, Christian heroes can be seen as the eyes, reason, leaders, and teachers of other humans. Some people adapt to this order and follow the heroes faithfully, whereas others dismiss the ideas of these great men, and this insubordination has negative consequences for society.<sup>107</sup> The hero in Flensburg's article, which clearly relates to the contemporary difficulties of the Church of Sweden, is the defender of the existing ecclesiastical and social order against tendencies of religious separatism. In accordance with the Lund High Church movement, the hero defends the social order based on the Lutheran doctrine of the three estates, and is thus important as a promoter of the political and ecclesiastical agenda of the movement.

The use of the hero to provide answers to contemporary problems is equally evident in Flensburg's comparison between the sectarian movements in his own times and during the Reformation. He rejects the idea that there were any similarities between these two periods. Even if the Reformation could be regarded as something new, it was not the intention of Martin Luther to abandon the principles of the Church, as the contemporary sectarian movements were about to do. Luther wanted to purge the Church of false tradition and to restore faithfulness to God. It was this subordination to God and his eagerness to work for the salvation of man that was the main force behind his actions. Flensburg considered this to be an act of true Christian heroism - and used Luther (whom he considered to be a tremendous man and the hero of the Reformation) to counteract the ecclesiastical disorder of his own time.<sup>108</sup>

The most important characteristic of the Christian hero in Flensburg's view was his willingness to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the Church and the true faith. He underlined that this was not due to their own good character, and that Luther and the other reformers sometimes felt doubt as to the rightfulness of their actions. For these heroes the Reformation meant sorrow and spiritual agony beyond words. In this difficult situation "the true and Holy Spirit" came to their rescue and gave them the courage to complete the work of the Reformation.<sup>109</sup> A hero was in need of divine support if he was to succeed.

<sup>105</sup> Sundberg, "Svensk literatur", *SK*, (1857) 11, 161.

<sup>106</sup> Flensburg, "Om den enskiltes förhållande till det kyrkliga samfundet", *SK*, (1859) 2, 19-21.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, (1859) 8, 112-114.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, (1859) 24, 374.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.



The death of a hero: Soldiers mourning the dead king Gustavus Adolphus.  
[Photo Scanpix]

## THE EXEMPLARY LIVES OF TWO CHRISTIAN HEROES

The memory of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) occupies a special place in Swedish nationalist history writing, but also in a wider Protestant context.<sup>110</sup> Traditionally he has been regarded as the great king who gave his life for the cause of Sweden and Protestantism in the Thirty Years' War. Almost from the moment of his death on the battlefield near Lützen in Germany he was hailed as a hero. At a commemoration on 6 November 1882 in Riddarholm church in Stockholm, Archbishop Sundberg gave a sermon in which he reflected on Christian heroism.<sup>111</sup> He took as his starting point Matthew 16: 25, where Jesus says that the one who saves his life will lose it and the one who loses his life for the sake of Christ will find it. According to Sundberg, Christ refers to two different attitudes, selfishness and willingness to make

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Friedrich's examination of the importance of the German *Gustav-Adolf-Verein* as an exponent of nationalism and *Vermittlungstheologie* (Friedrich, "Das 19. Jahrhundert als 'Zweites Konfessionelles Zeitalter'?", 108-109; Oredsson, *Geschichtschreibung und kult*).

<sup>111</sup> Riddarholm Church is the final resting place of the Swedish kings, and almost all Sweden's monarchs from Gustavus Adolphus (d. 1632) to Gustav V (d. 1950) are buried there.



sacrifices. The selfish person only seeks to satisfy his or her earthly needs, which according to Sundberg not only destroys the person's relationship with God, but also has devastating effects for society as a whole.<sup>112</sup> Willingness in this pericope refers to: "those people who wander the roads of the Lord, those people who ignore their own needs and take the Cross and follow Him, those who realise that the gift of life is *His* gift, and that this is a gift that should be managed for eternal purpose and thus not be used arbitrarily. Instead it should and *must* be sacrificed, to honour his name when it is demanded."<sup>113</sup>

The self-sacrificing human thus takes his vocation very seriously and is prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Christian faith if necessary. Such a person was like Christ himself and the martyrs of the Church. A Christian had to walk the narrow path of Christ to be able to win his own life and thereby gain the greatest victory of all: eternal life.<sup>114</sup> According to Sundberg, Gustavus Adolphus was such a man, a real hero chosen by God to fulfil a great task: "Can there be any Swede - man or woman - who declines to recall the glorious memory of the brief legend of his short life? Is there anyone who does not feel impelled to send a sincere prayer of gratitude to God for the unconquerable force he bestowed upon the hero? In a difficult time he was elected to glorify the name of God."<sup>115</sup>

Sundberg describes the king in a way that calls to mind the biblical story of Jesus. In his résumé of the situation in Sweden during the king's lifetime he is eager to emphasise that the country faced major challenges because of the strengthened position of the Roman Catholic Church and the emperor.<sup>116</sup> In this difficult situation Gustavus Adolphus came to the rescue of liberty won by the Reformation:

Without considering the risk to his life he entered, he won victory and fell. 'The best safeguard is to put trust in God', he was recalled to have said on a previous occasion. In accordance with this humble and noble-minded idea of his *heart* he acted. This idea was the foundation when he decided, and when he accomplished, his great achievements to defend the faith and the fatherland, which in his mind were *one* and the same.<sup>117</sup>

Here we can see clearly the characteristics Sundberg ascribed to Gustavus Adolphus. His reason for joining the Thirty Years' War and all of the king's political efforts were the result of his humility and noble mind. For the king the major task was to defend both the Lutheran faith and the fatherland, something that in Sundberg's version he considered to be the same thing. In this respect the king had the same convictions as the Lund High Church theologians.

It was Sundberg's opinion that Gustavus Adolphus's campaign was marked by self-denial and outspoken confidence, and that his military success was a conse-

<sup>112</sup> Sundberg, *Vid Gustaf II Adolfs minnesfest*, 3-4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; similarly, Sundberg, *Om den svenska kyrkoreformationen*, 98-99, where Sundberg speaks of the king as a hero, though he emphasises that '*solī Deo Gloria*'.

<sup>116</sup> Sundberg, *Vid Gustaf II Adolfs minnesfest*, 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

quence of his Christian faith, and especially his devoted and sincere prayers, and bore witness to his altruistic intentions. From the account of the king's endeavours on the battlefield at Lützen we can conclude that Sundberg was of the opinion that the king's political aims coincided with the Protestant cause, and that the king sacrificed himself for the cause of the Christian faith. Since Sundberg believed that there was a symbolic connection between a king and his people, this symbiosis between Gustavus Adolphus and his subjects meant that the Swedish people were part of his extraordinary act of sacrifice.<sup>118</sup>

At the end of his sermon Sundberg raised the question whether or not the listeners had lived up to the memory of the king. Were people faithful to the Swedish Church and fatherland in the same way as the king had been? By this emphasis on the close relationship between thanksgiving and critical self-examination, Sundberg thus used the hero as a corrective role model for contemporary Swedes, exhorting them to be grateful for their heroic heritage and to uphold the same moral standards as the royal hero had done. He regretted that many Swedes seemed to prioritise the needs of the individual instead of the good of society as a whole, abandoning principles formerly considered holy and inviolable.<sup>119</sup> It is obvious that Sundberg used history to promote a social order that he cherished, making an historical event with confessional implications normative for the duties of contemporary Swedish citizens.

Whereas Sundberg reflected on a national hero, Ebbe Gustaf Bring, bishop of Linköping, chose a different perspective to preach about Martin Luther. At a commemorative service for the fourth centenary of Luther's birth in Linköping cathedral on 10 November 1883, Bring spoke from the Book of Proverbs (10: 7), which deals with the memory of the righteous. According to Bring, the verse reminds us of the fact that human acts and ideas can have consequences beyond the lifetime of the person. One of the most important of those leaders and pioneers on the road of righteousness was Martin Luther.<sup>120</sup> Yet Bring found it important to stress that neither the centenary nor the sermon should be seen as a cult-offering to a genius, or as praise of Luther for having unimpeachable theological standards. The thanksgiving should be directed to God, and not Luther, since God was the one to choose Luther as a divine tool. From Bring's point of view it was obvious that God used Luther for his divine purpose. In some sense the intention of God is rendered incarnate in Luther. Sincere faith is a prerequisite of being a hero. According to Bring, it was only when Luther became aware of the importance of the principles of the Reformation that he was able to commence the fight for evangelical emancipation.<sup>121</sup>

In his sermon Bring also reflected upon the concept of liberty, and argued that Luther was an advocate of liberty but that he had to fight misleading concepts of freedom. Such false understandings of freedom caused some people to misinterpret divine will, and threatened the social order established by God. Since Luther, from Bring's point of view, was faithful to the word of God, he could avoid such misinter-

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>120</sup> Bring, *Minne från Lutherfesten*, 5-6. Olaf Blaschke sees the different anniversaries in Germany in connection with Luther's birthday 1883 as an expression of confessionalisation, Blaschke, "Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?", 53.

<sup>121</sup> Bring, *Minne från Lutherfesten*, 10-12.

pretations, and so it was he who could purify the Christian faith but also defend the established social order.<sup>122</sup> It is clear that Bring was criticising certain contemporary trends in Swedish society by preaching about these issues. After all, he and the other High Church theologians considered the established social order to be on the brink of collapse brought on by different religious movements who regarded themselves faithful to the gospel.

Like Sundberg, Bring ends his sermon by emphasising that gratitude toward God and Luther must include penance and self-examination. Everyone had to ask themselves whether he or she had administered Luther's heritage correctly. Bring takes the example of Luther's adversaries to argue that even in the sixteenth century there were many who searched for a false freedom unsupported by the Bible, and for worldly success and welfare. In accordance with his picture of Luther, Bring directed sharp accusations against the separatist evangelical movements of his time, whom he likened to the false doctrines that Luther had to fight. Both then and now such communities formed a threat to the established social order.<sup>123</sup> It is clear that the question of social and ecclesiastical order and the definition of freedom were central to Bring, and he used Luther as a tool to strengthen his argument and to promote his own political and ecclesiastical views.

## LUTHERAN HEROISM

The idea that God chooses certain men to serve as a model for other Christians and to impel social change was an essential part of the concept of history held by the Lund High Church theologians. Historians of nationalism have pointed out that the idea that certain countries were chosen by God, who furthered the development of that particular nation, was an important component in the nationalistic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>124</sup> This study shows that the idea that certain *men* were chosen was equally widespread.

Anthony Smith has argued that nationalism and national identity have their roots in religion, and that consequently ethnicity and religion are key concepts to understanding nationalism and national identity. In his view the ideas of the golden age, the hero, and the nation as a chosen people were constitutive for national identity. As for heroes, Smith argues that they were models of conduct and that they exemplified true virtue, and thus were worthy of emulation.<sup>125</sup> According to the Swedish theologian Kjell Blücker, 'ecclesial nationalism' grew stronger in the Church of Sweden in the nineteenth century in response to the sectarian movements and shifts towards a multi-ideological society. The purpose of this ecclesial nationalism was to "preserve, reconstruct and develop a lost unity". We would argue that this was equally true of the prominence the theologians gave certain heroic men. Blücker also

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>124</sup> Hutchison and Lehmann, eds, *Many are Chosen*.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 1-25, 41.

emphasises that a pronounced ecclesiology and a touch of nationalism were central in Church history writing of the period.<sup>126</sup>

Nationalistic fervour played a prominent part in the rhetoric of the theologians. In the Swedish context it has been common to regard fervent nationalism as a phenomenon that had a broad impact at all levels of society, primarily in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and at an earlier stage the nationalist discourse was confined to the upper strata of society and academic historians.<sup>127</sup> Among the theologians of the Lund High Church movement, nationalistic rhetoric and the promotion of Christian ideals were already interwoven by the mid-nineteenth century. Their writing has a distinct nationalistic flavour. To take Flensburg as an example, he seems to have held the opinion that a nationalistic ideal was an inherent part of people's mentality, and that this idea was epitomised by the chosen hero.<sup>128</sup> It is clear that the Lund High Church theologians expressed what Blücker refers to as ecclesial nationalism. It is also evident that ecclesiology and nationalism were central themes in the history writing of the Lund High Church movement.

The theologians regarded the chosen men - the 'heroes' - as tools of God whose main task is the defence of the Christian faith. This position often meant exposure to criticism from people who were enemies of the faith. The high ideals that the heroes expressed often ran directly counter to existing trends in society. We would argue that the heroic deeds as articulated by the theologians were intended to serve as role models, for, as Geoffrey Cubitt has found, the exemplary and pedagogical aspect of the hero was very important, and the exemplar of a certain individual, the hero, was much more effective than abstract ideas concerning morals and behaviour.<sup>129</sup>

The hero symbolised a good Christian. He was characterised by his trust in God, his religious zeal and his willingness to refrain from the success and wellbeing of this world to promote the cause of the Christian faith. Like Christ, he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the salvation of his Christian sisters and brothers. Due to his faithfulness and strong belief he was the perfect example and source of inspiration for Christians in all times. Since the hero was well acquainted with the will of the spirit of God, he was considered the obvious leader and teacher. He could subordinate himself to the will of God, and was humility and self-denial personified. In a traditional Christian context these men were generally Christian paragons of virtue, but in the nineteenth century ideals such as humility and self-sacrifice were increasingly associated with femininity. Yet although the Christian hero was in possession of all these exemplary virtues he could accomplish nothing without the help of God. Christian hero worship was meant to be limited, and on several occasions the theologians emphasised that the hero was only a divine tool and thus the gratitude and the glory was God's alone. Obviously it was impossible only to focus on the hero in an orthodox Lutheran context.

The Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus was considered a true hero. Like Christ he bore the burden of the cross. The fallen king had taken his vocation seriously since

<sup>126</sup> Blücker, *The Church as Nation*, 106, 159-161; see also Thorkildsen, "Scandinavia".

<sup>127</sup> Edqvist, *Nyktra svenskar*, 17-18.

<sup>128</sup> Flensburg, "Om den enskilt förhållande", *SK*, (1859), 24, 52.

<sup>129</sup> Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 10, 14.

he had not hesitated to sacrifice his life for the sake of the faith. For Sundberg the king was an imitator of Christ, and with his act of sacrifice, he, like Christ, glorified the name of God. It is obvious that Sundberg used Christ as a role model, and this seems to have been common among different denominations and churches in the period.<sup>130</sup> The similarities between the picture of Gustavus Adolphus that Sundberg painted and religious texts in other parts of Europe do not stop there. Jeremy Gregory has showed that the hero of the long, British eighteenth century was often used “to define the character of the ideal Christian man”. In the prescriptive literature studied by Gregory, religious faith evolves as the most important component of true heroism. The hero in Gregory’s account of the eighteenth century was an unselfish man who could control his passions, had strength of character, and was able to show considerable magnanimity. According to Gregory these characteristics could be regarded an example of evolving bourgeois gender roles.<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile, Sundberg also emphasised the importance of the king’s intense prayers, which he regarded as the most important explanation of Gustavus Adolphus’s success. It is also interesting to reflect upon the fact that his heroicness was intensified by his death in battle. According to Sundberg this heroic act - to give one’s life for the faith - bestowed even more glory on the king and gave him a direct entrance to the Kingdom of God.

Looking at the two texts that honoured the memory of Gustavus Adolphus and Luther, it becomes apparent that the myth of the hero was used as a corrective device for the people who heard or read the addresses. Positioning the hero as an ideal role model seems to have been the most important function of the myths about these brave men. In both addresses the question is asked whether or not the listener is prepared to make an equal sacrifice for God and nation. It is not irrelevant that the historical heroes were used to promote the nationalistic discourse of the time. This is most obvious when considering Sundberg’s description of the heroic king Gustavus Adolphus. In this king, the Christian and the national hero merged into one, and his sacrifice for the sake of the nation was considered equal to the sacrifice of losing one’s life for the Christian faith.

In the sacred roots of nationalism, the hero as corrective and example was very important, according to Anthony Smith. The sacred past stimulates emulation and leaves the public eager to adopt the virtues of the hero. It is, as Smith emphasised, not the person of the hero that is important, rather his virtues, conduct, and qualities.<sup>132</sup> A similar point is made by Cubitt, who argues that the function of the story about the hero is twofold. On the one hand the hero is an important historical agent, and on the other his agency is as an exemplar and a role model. At some point the latter became the most important function.<sup>133</sup>

Given the Lund theologians’ concept of history and their work on heroes and ‘great men’, theories of the ‘use of history’ could be of some help. In short, the use of history means using historical sources to form specifically meaningful and action-based entities. Accordingly, historical consciousness is the sum of different uses of

<sup>130</sup> Gregory, “Homo Religiosus”, 100-101.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>132</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 41, 171.

<sup>133</sup> Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 9.



history; the perception of the relationship of the past, present, and future which exists at any given moment.<sup>134</sup> From the theories of the use of history, and bearing in mind the assumption that the nineteenth century was a second confessional age, it seems reasonable to speak of a confessional use of history.<sup>135</sup> In such a use, the historical sources (in the present case, the stories of certain heroes) are marshalled to support confessional aims. It is interesting to note that Smith argues that oral traditions could be used by nationalist movements to “seek and recover a golden age for the designated nation, and to draw from it the moral lessons needed to mobilise and unify the people”<sup>136</sup>, while Cubitt stresses that heroes are often “presented as elite representatives of the values on which society is or ought to be based”.<sup>137</sup> Such descriptions fit very well with the actions of the Lund High Church movement.

The countertype of the hero was the person who only strove for worldly wealth and success. According to the High Church theologians, such selfishness had consequences, not only for the individual but also for the people surrounding him and sometimes even for the nation as a whole. In some ways the ideals the theologians accentuated seem to contradict the middle-class ideals so prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>138</sup> Even if the context has a distinct character, Sundberg’s and Bring’s words on Gustavus Adolphus and Luther could be considered evidence of an opinion that certain men brought about historical change. However, the actions of the heroes depicted by Sundberg and Bring do display certain contradictions. Sometimes the historical hero is honoured because he upholds an existing social order, and sometimes the hero’s contribution to societal change is lauded. The hero is considered the upholder of social order at the same time as he founds a new era.<sup>139</sup>

According to the theologians of the Lund High Church movement, one of the more important tasks for the hero was to protect the freedom of the Church. As an example, a hero like Luther prevented the Church from becoming a sectarian group, and ensured that the Church remained faithful to its divine mission. As such a guardian, the hero personified the pure essence of the true Church. The hero was also considered the watchman of a certain ecclesiastical and social order, and the heroes in the material analysed here closely mirror the ecclesiastical and political agenda propagated by the Lund theologians. In this context it seems reasonable to regard their efforts to be a confessional use of history. For example, it is clear that Bring utilised Luther’s life to criticise contemporary phenomena that he and his fellows opposed - the hero was used to uphold the prevailing order of society, which for them meant a society based on the Lutheran doctrine of the three estates.<sup>140</sup> This finding is important, if perhaps unsurprising, since it has been showed how the conception

<sup>134</sup> Aronsson, *Historiebruk*, 7, 17-19.

<sup>135</sup> Blaschke, “Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles zeitalter?”, 38-58; Id., ed., *Konfessionen im Konflikt*, 7-9, 13-18; Jarlert, “State Churches and Diversified Confessionalization in Scandinavia”.

<sup>136</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 190.

<sup>137</sup> Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 8.

<sup>138</sup> Tjeder, *The Power of Character*, 199-232.

<sup>139</sup> Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> Cubitt also sees the hero as an element in moral indoctrination and the maintenance of society’s traditional order (Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 13).

of Luther was used and transformed in different epochs, and during the nineteenth century we can find several Swedish examples where Luther was seen as God's chosen instrument. Luther was the hero and the reformer who made the world a better place, and the virtues that he held were an intense faith, a horror of violence, and unselfishness.<sup>141</sup>

The historian Mary Spongberg argues that ideals of masculinity were an inherent part of the historiography of the nineteenth century, and that history writing was used as a tool to foster a strongly masculine mentality.<sup>142</sup> Clearly the historiography of the time was gendered male and reproduced a patriarchal system. It would thus be fair to consider ideals of masculinity to be constituent parts of a confessional use of history. Following the historian George Mosse, it could be argued that there also is a connection between masculinity and nationalism.<sup>143</sup> Blücker argues that both the national and the religious discourse of the nineteenth century were male, and Gregory hints at the connection between religion, manliness, and national identity.<sup>144</sup>

Neither Bring, Sundberg nor Flensburg mentions women when speaking or writing about heroic deeds. In this regard no heroines could be found in texts written by the Lund High Church theologians. Despite this, it was not thought impossible that women could possess heroic qualities.<sup>145</sup> Even though the confessional use of history seems only to have included masculine references, further research is needed to shed light upon this question. Yet from the texts analysed in this chapter, it must be concluded that the confessional use of history was an expression of masculinity. In accordance with Blücker and Spongberg it also could be argued that both the national and ecclesiastical discourse and historiography in this period were male.

Gender is seldom expressed explicitly in the material. However, it was men - and only men - who founded new epochs, gave voice to new ideas, and showed how the concepts behind these ideas should be interpreted. Even if gender seems to be a subordinate theme in the texts, the theologians chose to emphasise men as heroes in an age they considered revolutionary, and indeed the description 'implicit misogynies' would not be misplaced.<sup>146</sup> Because they believed the ecclesiastical order in Swedish society to be under attack, they used the exemplary lives of a variety of heroes to 'save' the Church, the orthodox Lutheran faith, and society. In so doing they formulated a Christian masculinity that to some extent was in contrast to normative middle-class ideals. Furthermore, the theologians who wrote about these heroic men were men themselves, and this had an impact on their view of history and heroic conduct.

<sup>141</sup> Aurelius, *Luther i Sverige*, 14-15, 114-117, 144-145.

<sup>142</sup> Spongberg, *Writing Women's History*.

<sup>143</sup> Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*.

<sup>144</sup> Blücker, *The Church as Nation*, 105; Gregory, "Homo Religiosus", 109-110. The connection between Protestant religion, manliness, and national identity to which Gregory refers was often seen in the anti-Catholic rhetoric of nineteenth-century Britain.

<sup>145</sup> Gregory, "Homo Religiosus", 105. Gregory emphasises that the role models (and thus the heroes) in the prescriptive literature he has studied are predominantly masculine. In the British case, the heroines often transcended traditional gender roles.

<sup>146</sup> See Tjeder, *The Power of Character*, 282-283.

The concept of history was fundamental to the theologians' views on ecclesiastical and societal order. For example, the idea of previous golden ages can be seen in their material. The idea that certain epochs in history were cultural models and a source of inspiration was a feature of both the nationalist and religious discourses. These periods were considered "extraordinary, canonical and sacred" according to Anthony Smith.<sup>147</sup> Important normative periods in the past and central figures from the past were used to emphasise the indispensability of the political and ecclesiastical agenda of the Lund High Church movement. When it comes to Lutheran heroes and 'great men' presented in the articles and speeches analysed here, the heroes were used to express the ecclesiology and historiography of the Lund High Church movement, a nationalistic conviction, and a sex-typing ideology shaped by the Lutheran *tabula oeconomica*. Thus the hero of the theologians is found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism, and gender.

Any historian takes a risk when claiming that decades such as the 1850s and the 1880s were times of greater unrest. Is there any time that has not in some way been regarded a period of transition and upheaval? Nevertheless, from the perspective of Bring, Sundberg, and Flensburg these two decades, and especially the ecclesiastical context, were characterised by a paradigmatic shift. The intense philosophical-religious debates of the times may have been one reason for the intensified use and reinterpretation of history. From the perspective of the Lund High Church theologians the present and the future were more than uncertain.<sup>148</sup> In such a situation, they believed it was wise to look for guidance to the exemplary lives of the heroes, even if in many ways those were historical constructs.

## THE CATHOLIC HERO, THE LUTHERAN HERO

Our analyses of a Catholic devotional discourse and Lutheran heroic examples show something of the complexity of 'heroism' and its expression in a religious discourse. Although our case studies only represent small parts of the Catholic and Lutheran landscapes, they offer useful material with which to compare our findings, for despite the dissimilarities - and here it is important to note that in the Catholic context it was possible to speak of 'heroic women' whereas no such allusions are found in the Lutheran texts - there is one thing that must be stressed: both the Catholic and the Lutheran heroes were types of the Christian hero. It was their Christian identity that made these men worth referring to for the authors studied here. It was their Christian faith that was portrayed as the important factor in their lives.

It seems that both Catholic and Lutheran heroes functioned as role models, used to encourage the laity to live a Christian life according to the teaching of their respec-

<sup>147</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 171; similarly, Cubitt sees the 'Golden Ages' as periods against which to measure the achievements and heroic attitudes of the present day (Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 5).

<sup>148</sup> Aronsson argues that the use and reinterpretation of history are intensified in periods when revolutionary or subversive views are ascendant (Aronsson, *Historiebruk*, 7, 17-19) and Cubitt underlines that heroes were more important in times of uncertainty (Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations*, 14).

tive churches and to defend the morals of family and society. In both case studies the hero is found to symbolise a good Christian. He was characterised by his trust in God, his religious zeal, and his willingness to refrain from the success and wellbeing of this world in order to promote the cause of the Christian faith. Like Christ, he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the salvation of his Christian sisters and brothers. Due to his faithfulness and strong belief he was the perfect example and source of inspiration for Christians in all times.

In both the Catholic and Lutheran discourses Christ was depicted as a prototypical Christian hero<sup>149</sup>, although the fact that Christ was the hero without parallel was expressed rather differently. Lutheran heroes (Luther and Gustavus Adolphus) showed similarities with the Saviour, whereas in the Catholic devotional discourse, Christ's heroism was compared to that of secular heroes in history (war heroes). He excelled all these 'heroes' because of the constancy of his heroism, and his moral and religious superiority. Catholic heroes, however, were not really compared to Christ in their biographies. As there was a Rome-based ratification of heroism - the processes of beatification and sanctification - Catholic heroes did not necessarily need to be compared to the ultimate hero in order to grow in importance.

For the Catholic devotional discourse, it was stock-in-trade to present the heroes as heirs of heroic ages that had witnessed crusaders, missionaries, and other great men. Apart from his historical circumstances, a hero's geographical contextualisation often received special attention (as was the case with the 'Flemish hero'), and he could belong and contribute to a regional or national tradition. In the Catholic discourse not only the national but also the Catholic context has to be taken into account. More specifically, it must be borne in mind that the *Apostolat de la Prière* and the Leagues of the Sacred Heart were Rome-oriented. In looking at these devotional movements, the importance of this becomes apparent, on the one hand in the increased attention paid to certain heroes while their canonisation or beatification was in hand, and on the other hand in descriptions of contemporaneous heroes with Roman connections such as the Zouaves who were enlisted to help the Pope when the Papal States were under siege.

History was a key theme in the writings and speeches by the Swedish theologians. This may well reflect the significance of a particular view of history and the nationalism that was so dear to many Lutherans; equally it may be a product of the subject matter of the speeches and reviews analysed. A 'shared' primal history cannot be ignored, however, for in both Catholic and Lutheran examples there are references to the first Christians. Yet one difference between the Catholic heroic ideal and its Lutheran counterpart is that the Catholic heroes focus more on pious activity - or rather on activities inspired by their Catholic beliefs such as missions or crusades - while the heroes described by the Lund High Church theologians focus on defending the social order as it was formulated in the Lutheran teaching of the three estates.

If we take a closer look at the Christian heroes' heroic qualities, then we might conclude that some of these were fairly similar in both case studies. In a traditional

<sup>149</sup> Cubitt elaborates on Christ as 'the supreme heroic reference', and emphasises the duality inherent in the Christian hero: better than other humans, but not as great a hero as Christ (Cubitt and Warren, *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, 7-8); see also Gregory, "Homo Religiosus", 100-101.

Christian context these men were generally Christian paragons of virtue. In both examples we find that giving one's life for the faith was regarded the ultimate sacrifice and expression of heroism. A hero should be able to subordinate himself to the will of God and should be humility and self-denial personified. Yet bravery and courage were as highly valued as humbleness and modesty. What was true for Catholics was true for Lutherans: to stay humble at heart would lead to true magnanimity. In both confessions heroes were meant to avoid praise and attention. The Lund High Church theologians express this common notion by saying that the focus should be on God alone.

In some sense it could be argued that the heroic ideals for Lutherans were harsher, while the ideals found in the Sacred Heart devotion focused on charity, discipline, humility, and obedience, and gentleness is an essential character trait among the Catholic heroes. This 'soft' ideal occurs nowhere in the Lutheran material analysed. Masculinity is seldom mentioned explicitly in the Catholic periodicals, nor in the reviews and speeches by the Lund High Church movement, although in the latter case it was perhaps closer to the surface - and definitely not mixed with female metaphors. It seems as if the Catholic heroes were less gender exclusive than the Lutheran heroes.<sup>150</sup> What could be the reason for this? Could it be the connection between church, state, and fervent nationalism in the Swedish context? Whatever the case, the Catholic hero is the more transnational.

In the Christian discourse, heroism could easily be combined with ideals of sacrifice and humility. Where Christian values were mixed with nationalism the 'masculine' virtues became more important, as some of Lutheran examples discussed here show. In the depiction of both Lutheran and Catholic heroes, their Christian faith was portrayed as the major principle in their lives. Both confessional discourses could refer to the same heroes, be they Jesus or the first Christians. What might be more important is that there was something that was constructed as Christian heroism, that there were Christian heroes to be extolled, and to be compared with other forms of hero.

<sup>150</sup> See Yvonne Maria Werner and Gösta Hallonsten in this volume.