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A Manly Queen with Feminine Charm

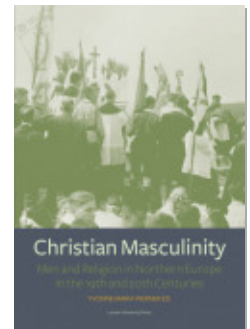
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A MANLY QUEEN WITH FEMININE CHARM

INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER

ANDERS JARLERT

Many have said that she is the manliest man in the Royal family.” This description of Queen Victoria of Sweden (1862-1930), noted down in 1912 by Bishop Gottfrid Billing of Lund (1841-1925) and subsequently published in his memoirs in 1975, has often been taken as the bishop’s own and complete opinion of the queen. However, on the very same page Billing writes that “no one can exceed her in feminine charm”.¹ Here ‘manliness’ is not primarily defined by biological sex or sexuality, nor does it exclude feminine charm, while both manliness and femininity are used as positive labels.

Queen Victoria of Sweden was not described as ‘masculine’. For a woman to be ‘manly’ did not mean that she was manlike in terms of physical build or sexuality, and instead ‘manliness’ implied maturity, reliability, courage, and spiritual strength, all of which were qualities that could be combined with feminine charm. Bishop Billing’s memoirs in their entirety reveal that he thought the same was true of men. Of Carl David af Wirsén (1842-1912), the secretary of the Swedish Academy, Billing writes that he showed his manly sense of independence by refusing to yield, regardless how many his opponents were. Billing thought this ‘manly’ firmness remarkable since Wirsén otherwise showed a ‘womanly’ sensitivity to kindness or ill-will.² Here, manly independence is combined with womanly sensitivity - though without ‘femininity’.

Similar descriptions are common in upper-class correspondence from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A mix of womanly and manly qualities in the same person was often appreciated, as when the Swedish author Ann Charlotte Leffler (1849-1892) wrote in a letter 1887 that Dr Axel Munthe combined “manly inde-

¹ Billing, *Levnadsminnen*, 26. My translation here *et passim*.

² *Ibid.*, 80.

pendence” with the “softness and delicacy of a woman” in a “very rare variant of man”.³ This confirms the observations of John Tosh, who has emphasised the difference between manliness and masculinity: “Certainly, if we take nineteenth-century discourses of manliness at face value there is no scope for exploring the meanings given to sexual identity and sexual desire which are fundamental to masculinity.” Further, Tosh notes that “the distinction that exercised them ... was that between men and boys: worries about immaturity counted, for much more than the fear of effeminacy, at least until the 1880s.”⁴ Before Tosh, Norman Vance stated that manliness was “the opposite of childishness and sometimes of beastliness, counter not so much to womanliness as to effeminacy”.⁵ It has been argued that this was more the case in Northern Europe, whereas for men in the Mediterranean countries, manliness existed in opposition to women more than to boys.⁶ Be that as it may, the rhetoric of a positive combination of womanly and manly qualities both in men and in women forms an important horizon in interpreting the correspondence between Victoria and Bishop Billing.

A GENDER CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

An individual’s spirituality is not formed by personal spiritual experience alone, but by a variety of factors such as class, ethnicity, religious tradition, and gender. Rather than identifying which of these might be decisive, the crucial step is to recognise that it is their intersectional character that is important. That said, although at first glance ethnicity might be thought the factor least relevant to Victoria’s spirituality, on closer examination her German origins appear to have been of the utmost importance. She was the daughter of Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden (1826-1907) and his wife Princess Luise of Prussia (1838-1923), the daughter of Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany. As Olaf Blaschke has explained, the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke viewed Luther and the German Reformation as manly, while Catholicism, France, and the ‘galant’ eighteenth century were described as *weibisch* (effeminate). Manliness was an important mark of identity in German Protestantism and anti-Catholicism.⁷ Similar sentiments were expressed by the English clergyman and writer Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), to whom Roman Catholicism was an effeminising religion and dangerous for both men and women.⁸ The British historian Francis Knight has pointed out that Catholicism, in its Roman and Anglican forms, was thought particularly insidious in “encouraging men to adopt effeminate, unmanly attitudes”.⁹

³ Jangfeldt, *En osalig ande*, 195; see Ljunggren, *Känslornas krig*.

⁴ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 34.

⁵ Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit*, 8.

⁶ See, for example, Lorentzen and Ekenstam, eds., *Män i Norden*, 35 ff.

⁷ See Olaf Blaschke’s chapter in this volume; and Blaschke, “Fältmarskalk Jesus Kristus”, 36. Similar reactions were seen in Britain as well.

⁸ Fasick, “Christian Manliness and Fatherhood in Charles Kingsley’s Writings”, 1-3.

⁹ Knight, “Male and Female He Created Them”, 34. It was widely believed “that Anglo-Catholicism was the seed-bed of homosexuality” (see further Hilliard, “Un-English and Unmanly”).

In religious language, both ‘manly’ and ‘womanly’ virtues are re-coded as Christian virtues, open to both men and women, and desirable in both sexes. This implies that no one is a manly Christian by birth, whereas both men and women may receive and develop a manly, Christian faith. As John Tosh puts it, “the subsuming of manliness in the Christian virtues clearly had androgynous implications”.¹⁰ Norman Vance singles out St Paul as the inaugurator of this tradition of ‘moral manliness’, since “athletic and military imagery enliven his account of the Christian life”,¹¹ although this apostolic imagery is not unusual in other classical texts. In early Lutheran literature, biblical references dominate the religious language. In books with a mystical tendency, spiritually reborn men might very well be ‘daughters’; witness Johann Arndt (1555-1621) in his commentary on Psalm 45: 11. The Christian as a new, spiritual creation is not devoid of gender, but lacks the limitations of gender. Men can thus be addressed as daughters, and women as manly.

According to the songs of Philipp Friedrich Hiller (1699-1769), often combined with the daily meditations of Magnus Friedrich Roos (1727-1803), men weep “aus zartem Triebe auch in Bruderliebe, wie Maria tat” - in brotherly love, as Mary did.¹² This cross-gendering in religious language, where both godly men and women are regarded as examples to women and men alike, is much in evidence in early religious literature. Then something changes. Not suddenly, and never totally, but change nevertheless. It was a slow process that ran throughout the second half of the ‘long’ nineteenth century, in parallel with the continued use of the old rhetoric in conservative or traditional religious circles.

The prerequisite for this change was the shift from a ‘one-sex’ to a ‘two-sex’ model of the human body, as postulated by Thomas Laqueur.¹³ Laqueur’s views have been criticised, but, as John Tosh puts it, “there is little dispute that early nineteenth-century medicine emphasised the biological differences between men and women to a greater extent than ever before. With this came an exaggeration of secondary differences, particularly as regards sexual character. Manly independence was dramatised by feminine dependence, manly action by feminine passivity, and so on. Both body and mind were now sexed.” Tosh quotes a contemporary educational reformer who sadly noted that “whatever is manly must be unwomanly, and vice versa”.¹⁴ The obvious fact that this sexualisation of gender also had an enormous impact on religious language has been overlooked by both historians and theologians alike.

¹⁰ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 92.

¹¹ Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit*, 26.

¹² Roos, “Morgen-Andacht am 1. November”.

¹³ Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

¹⁴ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 91.

As manliness became masculinised, the semantic consequence was that only a man could be a manly or brotherly Christian, and, similarly, as womanly qualities were feminised, only a woman could be a womanly or motherly Christian. When Christian concepts of manly virtues were united with the contemporary, dominant ideal of masculinity, they not only remained manly, but were masculinised in a new way.¹⁵ The crucial point is that formerly ‘womanly’ virtues were renamed, and thus accepted and interpreted as ‘manly’. In reacting against ‘feminisation’, church leaders did not return to the old, cross-gendered reading of Christian spiritual texts, but fell into a new way of reading, where the same virtues could be attributed to both sexes, but now labelled as different virtues for men and women, respectively. This often had strong class overtones, for as Frances Knight puts it, “The Victorian ideal of femininity had little relevance to a female coal miner or a female docker”.¹⁶ The same is evident in Erik Sidenvall’s study of male Swedish missionaries from working-class backgrounds¹⁷, and in David Tjeder’s chapter in the present volume, where he considers Bishop Eklund’s experience of masculinising doubt in a context where similar doubts were felt by women, but were silenced by the feminine ideal.

To Frances Knight’s emphasis on the importance of denominational affiliation for gender in religion, we must add an observation of the attitude, conservative or modern, to tradition within the denominations. When Knight writes that “a female Quaker was likely to find it easier to communicate something of the essence of her religious life to a male Quaker than to a female Catholic, and vice versa”,¹⁸ we can add that a female traditionalist of any denomination would find it easier to communicate her religious thoughts to a male traditionalist within that denomination than to a female modernist. This does not contradict the obvious fact that “there were distinctive patterns of men’s spiritual experience”,¹⁹ but confirms that these patterns were to some extent formed by the change in religious language.

In his religious writings, Charles Kingsley, an author who meant a great deal to Victoria, described ‘wickedness’ as “unmanliness, in being unlike a man, in becoming like an evil spirit or a beast. Holiness consists in becoming a true man, in becoming more and more like the likeness of Jesus Christ.”²⁰

¹⁵ Blaschke, “Fältmarskalk Jesus Kristus”, 44.

¹⁶ Knight, “Male and Female He Created Them”, 55.

¹⁷ Sidenvall, *The Making of Manhood among Swedish Missionaries*.

¹⁸ Knight, “Male and Female He Created Them”, 55.

¹⁹ Bradstock et al., “Introduction”, 2.

²⁰ Charles Kingsley, *Village Sermons; and, Town and Country Sermons* (London, 1884), quoted in Klaver, *The Apostle of the Flesh*, 183.

A NURSING FATHER, A MANLY MOTHER, AND OTHER EARLY INFLUENCES

Queen Victoria (1862-1930) was born Princess Victoria of Baden to parents who broke with the conventions of social gender. Whereas Grand Duchess Luise was a demanding and authoritative princess towards her subjects, her husband, and her children, Grand Duke Friedrich in all these relationships is perhaps best described as a ‘nursing father’.²¹ For a German prince, he was a man of relatively liberal opinions. His standing amongst the German princes was described as unique, for everyone looked up to him.²² He was an authoritative and imposing figure, while an important element in his understanding of himself as a sovereign seems to have been his effort to be a father to his people. His daughter, who was very much his favourite²³, described him as a man who gave his life and all his strength for others, with an unusual unselfishness and humility²⁴, and his great-grandson found something of Santa Claus in his good-natured appearance.²⁵ The Grand Duchess in turn was described as an untiring woman with inexhaustible energy. She gave the impression of being a very dutiful person, who never compromised over her conscience - or her opinions.²⁶

Among the books of her youth, Victoria was to keep A. F. Huhn’s *Samenkörner. Meditationen* (1872) and *Licht auf dem täglichen Pfad* (1877), with a dedication from a friend. She also kept *Aus der Heimat für die Heimat* (1888) as well as *Festflammen. Gedanken und Bilder zu den hohen Festen der Kirche* (5th ed., 1891), both by Emil Frommel (1828-1896), Court preacher in Berlin and Emperor Wilhelm I’s confidant, who had prepared her for her confirmation. Her copy of *Festflammen* has a dedication from the author to “seiner theueren Schülerin”. There were no Pietistic books, with the exception of Carl Heinrich von Bogatzky’s *Des Güldenens Schatz-Kästlens Erster und Zweyter Theil in Eins gebracht* (9th ed., 1889).²⁷

Her mother herself edited a couple of devotional books, of which the most famous, *Ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebt! Glaubensworte für Tage der Prüfung* (I know that my Redeemer liveth. Words of faith for days of trial), ran to fifteen German editions between 1900 and 1936, as well as in three editions in Swedish and two in French.²⁸ A copy addressed to “mein geliebtes Kind!” is in the Bernadotte Library in the Royal Palace in Stockholm. Naturally, the Swedish edition was dedicated to the then Crown Princess Victoria. It contains chosen words from the Bible and numerous

²¹ The sympathetic concept of nursing fathers, noted in books such as Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, has been met with great surprise among non-specialist readers.

²² Lunds universitetsbibliotek, A.G.L. Billings samling (Lund University Library, Gottfrid Billing’s archives, hereafter LUB): Victoria to Billing, 20 April 1902. The full correspondence is edited in Jarlert, ed., “*Bäste biskop!*”.

²³ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 29.

²⁴ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 11 February 1902.

²⁵ Bernadotte, ‘*Käre prins, godnatt!*’, 29.

²⁶ Trolle, *De voro ett lysande följe*, II, 104 ff.

²⁷ There is also a copy in the royal collection (Bernadottebiblioteket, Royal Palace, Stockholm).

²⁸ Grand Duchess Luise of Baden, *Jag vet att min förlossare lefver*; Id., *Paroles de foi pour les jours de l’épreuve*.

extracts from Christian authors such as St Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, Emil Frommel, Gerok, Macduff, Monod, Perreyve, 'Sous La Croix', and Vinet.²⁹ The book ends with Luise's own thoughts on the road from death to life in the shape of twenty-five short meditations on the grief and comfort of Christians at the graves of their relatives, all very much one with the 'death cult' for which she has long been remembered: her bedroom was crammed with drawings and pictures of her deceased relatives, sometimes on their deathbeds, while she kept special chapels and chambers in memory of her late husband and son.³⁰ Her meditations are characterised by a clear Christian creed that centres both on the Father and on the Saviour as crucified and risen, and her lingering on the graves of the deceased is balanced by a faith in eternal life through Christ. Special emphasis is put on *work*: God's 'work on us', 'inner work', 'work in God', 'resignation as work', works of love, social work, and so on. She writes that for mourning hearts the return to life is a heavy burden, and if Providence invokes a determination to continue by creating a 'must', this is to be met with thankfulness.

KINGSLEY AND MANLY FAITH

Especially interesting is the inclusion in *Ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebt!* of several quotations from the Broad Churchman and Social Christian author Charles Kingsley, who emphasised the intermediate state as a key Catholic doctrine.³¹ In her library, Victoria kept the 1900 edition of his *Daily Thoughts*, with a dedication "für Mein Kleines", probably from her intimate, Lita zu Putlitz; and *Out of the Deep*³², in which Victoria kept an envelope with a lock of hair from her sick son, Prince Erik (1889-1918)³³, a sign of her close relationship to the book, which in 1887 was published in Swedish (*Ut ur djupen. Ord till de bedrövade*). The birth of Prince Erik was crucial to her spiritual and physical development. During her pregnancy, she took morphine on her doctors' advice, and her child was born an epileptic and probably with developmental disabilities. This traumatic situation seems to have caused a permanent rift in the royal marriage and established Victoria's state of continuing physical and mental frailty.³⁴ If, as seems possible, it was at this point she read Kingsley's *Out of the Deep*, which had been given to her the year before Prince Erik's birth, it must have meant much for her future spiritual development and personal conduct. Her copy is well-worn, and is marked in six places: one dried flower, four slips of paper, and Edward Henry Bickersteth's hymn 'Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?'³⁵ - a hymn said to have been a favourite of Queen Victoria of England.³⁶

²⁹ Dahlström, *Drottningarnas böcker*, 154. The quotation from Victor Hugo in the French edition was not included by Grand Duchess Luise, but by M. Ernest Naville in the preface.

³⁰ Bernadotte, *Käre prins, godnatt!*, 77 ff.

³¹ Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley*, 321-323.

³² The 1887 MacMillan edition, a present from her best friend, Thérèse Duchess d'Otrante on 24 February 1888.

³³ Dahlström, *Drottningarnas böcker*, 138.

³⁴ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 86 ff.

³⁵ Bickersteth (1825-1906) was bishop of Exeter.

³⁶ Aglionby, *The Life of Edward Henry Bickersteth*, 118.

Kingsley is strongly associated with ‘muscular Christianity’. However, recent research has found that he was also ‘intensely emotional’, often even described as ‘feminine’ in this regard. ‘Muscular’ would then be the opposite not of ‘feminine’ so much as ‘ascetic’ Christianity.³⁷ Kingsley also seems to “repudiate the ideal of heroic male toughness” implied by the muscular label, which he himself did not enjoy.³⁸ His “healthy and manful Christianity, one which does not exalt the feminine virtues to the exclusion of the masculine”, as Sean Gill suggests, implies “a clear sense of gender boundaries and an anxiety lest they be subverted”.³⁹ A mystical tendency has also been suggested.⁴⁰ Kingsley’s *Out of the Deep* confirms this, with its emphasis on personal resignation and its references to the German mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624). Sometimes Kingsley repeats a mystical saying but adds distance, as for example, “And ‘till thou art emptied of thyself, God cannot fill thee’, though it be a law of the old Mystics, is true and practical common sense.”⁴¹ Kingsley also wrote a preface to the 1858 English edition of the fourteenth-century German mystic Johannes Tauler’s life and sermons.⁴²

Further, the very fact that Kingsley features in the present context makes it relevant to ask whether his ‘muscular Christianity’ has not been overemphasised in books on masculinity that have paid no regard to his devotional books. He was not only the author of several fictional books, but also a famous preacher, and chaplain to Queen Victoria of England. The problem is much in evidence when reading *Out of the Deep*, for we cannot know for certain how reading women, such as Victoria, understood him. In my opinion, his Christianity in this book is not ‘muscular’, but rather a ‘manly’ faith in the Pauline sense of the word, and was thus reading matter for men and women alike. His emphasis on a ‘manly’ faith was obviously essential to both Victoria’s and her mother’s spirituality. That a woman could have a ‘manly’ faith was an important part of the spiritual environment in which Victoria was brought up as a princess, and served as a personal model for her development that was later strengthened by her own reading of Kingsley amongst others.

Kingsley’s views, often labelled as ‘liberal’ and ‘Broad Church’, seem to have been surprisingly compatible to Old Lutheran teachings, the latter, for example, being “strongly opposed to all attempts to divide the world into sacred and secular spheres, which saw the pursuit of truth in all its different forms as a God-given task”⁴³, or, as Kingsley put it: “May God keep you from the same snare, of fancying, as all ‘Orders’, Societies and Sects do, that they invent a better system of society than the old one, wherein God created man in His own image, viz., of father and son, husband and wife, brother and sister, master and servant, king and subject.”⁴⁴

³⁷ Engelhardt, “Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary”, 45.

³⁸ Wee, “Christian Manliness and National Identity”, 86.

³⁹ Gill, “Representations of Christ in Victorian Art”, 170 ff; see also Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit*.

⁴⁰ Bloomfield, “Muscular Christian or Mystic?”. Bloomfield suggests that Kingsley was influenced by the Swedish mystical philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772); see Klaver, *The Apostle of the Flesh*.

⁴¹ Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 101.

⁴² Tauler, *History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler*.

⁴³ McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 114.

⁴⁴ Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley*, 160.

In his younger days, Kingsley had had difficulties with the Athanasian Creed⁴⁵, but later he became prominent in its defence, not least because of its inclusion of the belief in an intermediate state.⁴⁶ He attacked David Friedrich Strauß, the German theologian and rationalist biographer of Jesus, by using a combination of Christian Socialism and conservative theology: “Christ reigns, as Luther used to say, Christ reigns - and therefore I will not fear, ... Who will answer Strauss? Who will denounce Strauss as a vile aristocrat, robbing the poor man of his Saviour - of the ground of all democracy, all freedom, all association - of the Charter itself.”⁴⁷ The contents of *Out of the Deep* cannot be labelled ‘liberal’ in any advanced theological meaning. Although Kingsley seems to limit eternal punishment to thoughts, words, and deeds⁴⁸, excluding the human individual, he writes in a fairly orthodox way about Christ: “He is a man still, though He is very God of very God, He rose from the dead as a man”.⁴⁹ Neither is Kingsley’s description of God ‘muscular’, but rather traditional, when he writes that God “can be more strong than man, more tender than woman likewise; and when the strong arm of man supports thee no longer, yet under thee are the Everlasting Arms.”⁵⁰ Thus, it is not unexpected to find that extracts from Kingsley’s sermons and novels were edited in a German series on eternal matters addressed by great thinkers, that at least five of his religious books were translated into German (some in several editions), and that his acquaintances with Germany were studied even on an academic level.⁵¹

In *Out of the Deep*, Kingsley places great stress on resignation. In the very first chapter, he emphasises the need to distinguish between false and true, holy resignation, and says that he is beginning to find that continual resignation is “the secret of continual strength”, or, as Boehme interprets it, “the path of daily living”. It should not be thought this excluded activity, and indeed on the very next page Kingsley writes that it was “simply by not struggling, doing my work vigorously where God had put me, and believing firmly that His promises had a real, not a mere metaphorical meaning, and that Psalms X., XXVII., XXXVII., CVII., CXII., CXXIII., CXXVI., CXLVI., are as practically true for us as they were for the Jews of old.”⁵² Resignation in the spirit of the Psalms permeates the whole book. It is an equally important concept in Kingsley’s non-theological works, such as *Madam How and Lady Why* (1889), where in the first chapter true resignation is distinguished from the ‘stupid’ saying “What can’t be cured Must be endured”, acting “like a donkey when he turns his tail to a hail-storm”, which “is no resignation at all”: “but the true resignation, the resignation which is fit for grown people and children alike, the resignation which is the beginning and the end of all wisdom and all religion, is to believe that Lady Why knows best, because

⁴⁵ Colloms, *Charles Kingsley*, 50.

⁴⁶ Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley*, 321 ff.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 94 ff.

⁴⁸ Kingsley explicitly repudiated ‘Puritan Eschatology’, “that the fate of every man is revocably fixed at the moment of death” (Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley*, 322).

⁴⁹ Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 132 ff., 142. The Swedish edition gives ‘Hades’ for ‘hell’, which might be understood as a spiritualisation.

⁵⁰ Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 100.

⁵¹ Samtleben, ed., *Charles Kingsley*; Jacobson, *Charles Kingsleys Beziehungen zu Deutschland*.

⁵² Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 11-13.

she herself is perfectly good; and that as she is mistress over Madam How, so she has a Master over her, whose name - I say again - I leave you to guess."⁵³

WAGNER AND MANLY FEMININITY

Music played an important part in Victoria's life. She was given music lessons by Felix Mottl, one of the leading conductors of the day and a key figure in the Bayreuth festival, and she was probably once Franz Liszt's page turner.⁵⁴ She was a passionate Wagnerian who learnt to play the piano score of the operas, and played them well and often. The strong, passionate, adventurous, and redeeming women of Wagner's operas and music dramas - Senta, Elisabeth, Isolde, Brünnhilde - are simultaneously manly in their courage and rage, and feminine in their sacrificing love and care. Through music Victoria could experience sentiments and adventures otherwise strictly limited by her strong sense of duty. It is not hard to imagine that Wagner's operas, to which she was especially attached, offered the prospect of another world and other views on human feelings than the strict ethics to which she adhered in her daily life. Such a combination was not unusual in the later nineteenth century, though in Victoria it probably served as a mental lifeline when she felt herself under pressure. In Wagner's world, princesses and queens were first and foremost human beings, who could put aside their royal duties and responsibilities in order to meet other duties: love, passion, and sacrifice. Here she could forget her control and her pretensions. The bridge between these two worlds was mysticism, religious and philosophical.

THE QUEEN'S HUSBAND, HIS ADJUTANT, AND HER DOCTOR

In 1881, Victoria married Crown Prince Gustaf of Sweden (1858-1950). In 1907 he succeeded his father as King Gustaf V, and she duly became Queen Victoria of Sweden. In 1900 she had begun to correspond with Bishop Billing, prompted largely by her loneliness; there is a strong impression that she always felt very lonely when in Sweden, and her husband, though neither a nursing father nor a brutal father, was very much an absent father. As Crown Prince he was often away on state business, which since Norway was part of Sweden until 1905 meant a great deal of travel. He found relaxation in fishing, hunting, tennis, and activities outside the home, such as playing cards, and he did not share his wife's cultural interests.

The royal couple travelled to Egypt in 1890-1891 where Victoria pursued her passion for photography. During their stay she grew very close to her husband's adjutant, Captain Gustaf von Blixen-Finecke, who, of royal descent himself, resembled her husband in looks, but has been described as a more muscular and charming man.⁵⁵ What really happened far out in the Egyptian desert in the tent that served as

⁵³ Id., *Madam How and Lady Why*, 8 ff.

⁵⁴ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 38 ff.

⁵⁵ Hadenius, *Gustaf V*, 41-47.

Victoria's darkroom is immaterial, but the whole setting, if not the plot, could have been taken from the second act of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*: the queen meets her beloved in the dark, while her husband, the king, is away hunting. The end of the adventure was not as tragic as in the opera, and the royal couple remained together, but all the twists and turns were reported assiduously in letters to the royal families in both Sweden and Baden.

Later, Victoria fell in love with her doctor, Axel Munthe, a very different sort of man with whom she could share something of the philosophical mysticism that informed many of her cultural ambitions. Wagner's world was also his. On a medical and mystical level, their relationship continued even after Munthe's second marriage in 1907.⁵⁶ His biographer, Bengt Jangfeldt, has observed that they always spoke English to each other because of the servants, their secret correspondence was written in English, and, according to Munthe's own relation, her last words on her death-bed to Munthe were "Come soon".⁵⁷ As we have seen, this was not unique. English was also the language of Victoria's most private religious thoughts. It was a language independent of her royal duties.

In his memoirs, Bishop Billing describes how Victoria, in organising her sons' confirmations, acted in a manner becoming a pious, sensible, and modest mother of any standing.⁵⁸ According to her lady-in-waiting Baroness Cecilia Falkenberg's description, she lived in the belief that royalty were predestined by God to fulfil their high vocation.⁵⁹ Yet Victoria's own self-image was more complicated. In a letter to Billing in 1911 she wrote that her patriotic heart and her soldier's heart suffered more than she could say.⁶⁰ In addition to the duties of her position as the mother of the kingdom, she also had a special care for the armed services, especially the Swedish navy; something born out by her deep commitment to the navy's spiritual guidance. In several letters to Billing she mentions church services and sermons in a way that shows her sense of special responsibility for others, for she was involved in the production of a short manual and hymnal to be used in the navy, while she wrote exclaiming over the appointment of boring preachers to the court, for example.

Her views on the navy manual throw some light on her understanding of the Christian faith, especially in the discussions over addition to the book of short sermons on the occasion of the King's birthday and after serious accidents. Her wishes were based on personal experience. At the celebration of the King's birthday aboard the royal ship *Drott*, the Queen noticed the men lacked the appropriate words, so she had let them sing a verse of a hymn that included a prayer for the King's good fortune. When a sailor was seriously wounded aboard the cruiser *Fylgia* during a meeting between the Russian and the Swedish sovereigns in the Finnish archipelago

⁵⁶ Ibid., 41-47; Jangfeldt, *En osalig ande*, 285.

⁵⁷ Jangfeldt, *En osalig ande*, 286, 522.

⁵⁸ Billing, *Levnadsminnen*, 22.

⁵⁹ Cecilia af Klercker, *Förgången glans*, 312.

⁶⁰ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 12 October 1911.



Queen Victoria of Sweden.
[Lund University Library, Manuscript Department]

in 1912, Victoria cared for the wounded man and was at his side when he died. On the following Sunday she felt the service wanted for the right words to say to the men.⁶¹

Within her historical limits, Victoria's perspectives may be regarded as almost post-modern, since she emphasised the special task of the Church at times of national celebration or catastrophe, two roles that are especially relevant - and indeed expected - today. The most striking element, perhaps not unusual in its day, is the way in which the Church, the people, and the Queen's own duties were united. Moreover, her 'soldier's heart' should perhaps be interpreted as a 'manly' compensation for the 'feminine' fragility caused by her lasting infirmity. From 1889 she was severely afflicted in both her lungs and her nerves year in, year out, which led her to stay in Baden or Italy most winters until her death in 1930.

A RESIGNED FAITH IN PROVIDENCE IS A 'MANLY' FAITH?

Was Victoria equally 'manly' in personal, religious matters? Had the 'feminine' Queen a 'manly' faith? Certainly, Victoria's letters to Bishop Billing are full of expressions of faith in God's providence and the need to resign to God's will. Nations, peoples, and individuals are all subject to the actions of God, but also to his providence. God does not instigate all that happens, but his purpose lies behind everything that happens, and the individual has to accept this, in the knowledge that he or she is an object of godly education, grace, and mercy. As Kingsley put it: "If I did not believe in a special Providence, in a perpetual education of men by evil as well as good, by small things as well as great - if I did not believe that - I could believe nothing."⁶²

It has been overlooked that in Victoria this attitude was founded on the Psalms. They were of great importance to her, both singly, such as Psalms 90 and 91⁶³, and as the general foundation of her spirituality. Her reading of Kingsley's *Out of the Deep*, with its emphasis on the Psalms and resignation, probably strengthened this. After the German Revolution of 1918 she wrote: "God's will be done, but it is difficult to understand! Nevertheless I am convinced that He would not have permitted all these horrible, incomprehensible [things] without a thought of love, and He surely has a plan of wisdom that we cannot fathom, but He shall one day reveal, and on that day we will *understand* what he meant, if only we could abide and believe."⁶⁴

After her mother's death, she wrote of "the infinitely hard blow that has stricken me". Even so, she was thankful that God had taken her to Him so quietly and peacefully, since "her life was complete and she might return home to the Father's heart, on which her longing was bent".⁶⁵ In the last years of Billing's life their roles were

⁶¹ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 19 August 1912. No such words were included in *Gudstjänstordning jämte korta betraktelser till användning å svenska flottans fartyg* (Stockholm, 1912), but the enlarged edition 1917 contains special prayers for the King's birthday, the gravely ill, and accidents and funerals at sea (*Gudstjänstordning jämte korta predikningar för alla sön- och helgdagar i kyrkoåret till användning å svenska flottans fartyg* (Stockholm, 1917)).

⁶² Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 15.

⁶³ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 27 April 1921 and 13 October 1918.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 August 1919.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1923.

reversed, and it became Victoria's part to comfort him: "Oh, that one cannot put a softening hand on this poor worried heart and tell it to be in good spirits! *One* only can do it, and I pray to Him [for] help, so there will be calm and peace again. He is so much greater than our poor hearts, and mighty in help and comfort."⁶⁶

In her letters to Billing she was often personal, but still somewhat controlled, writing as her mother would have written a devotional book. On only three occasions was this rhetorical mask torn away. The first is in her comment on the Russian-Japanese war in 1904 as "more appalling as words can describe. This slaughtering of thousands of people is too horrible; and why??"⁶⁷ Her outcry is interesting not least because such a strong, general critique of the cruelty of war is wholly absent from her many comments on the First World War, when her belief in a just German victory remained strong to the bitter end. The second occasion conventional rhetoric failed her was when her daughter-in-law, Princess Margaret of Connaught (1882-1920), died suddenly, leaving her husband and five children. Victoria wrote: "The ways of the Lord really are impenetrable and one can only keep quite still and not leave hold of His hand and believe, even if one understands and grasps nothing. May God help the poor Crown Prince and his motherless children!"⁶⁸ The third time was when her mother died, and she wrote that "my whole life seems at a blow to be totally changed".⁶⁹ It might be possible to argue that even these outbursts follow a rhetorical pattern of a kind, but be that as it may it is still different, and the interesting point is that Victoria adopts it only in these cases - and that she does so in the first place.

Victoria's faith in Providence has been regarded by her biographers as very traditional in a Lutheran way. Heribert Jansson even describes her upbringing as having been "in a strict Old Lutheran spirit", and portrays her religiosity as "a conservative Lutheran faith".⁷⁰ By this he means that she was "strongly convinced that nothing happens without the will of God and that God has a distinct intention in all that happens", and that she resigned herself to God's will in even extremities of sickness and misfortune.⁷¹ Her great-grandson Count Lennart Bernadotte, whom she brought up, has described her faith as one founded on the heritage from her mother. In his view, Victoria's religious practice was an ethical construct. She had the deepest confidence in the grace of God and the wisdom of his decisions, and was familiar with his loving righteousness and infinite good will. This formed "the structure of the emotional part of her conviction". God was her source and her support, and "only with Him she was capable of liberating herself from her pressing burden". Personal duty was to the fore, but her "religious system" contained a "slave-driver's paragraph": sins of omission. In her striving for perfection, she was well aware that God alone is infallible, while humans had to constrain themselves as far as possible.⁷²

The weight Victoria accorded self-discipline, emotional restraint, tolerance, and the common good was also inspired by her philosophical reading, for example of the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 December 1924.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 August 1904.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1920.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1923.

⁷⁰ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 65, 244.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁷² Bernadotte, *Käre prins, godnatt!*, 50-53.

Stoic emperor Marc Aurel, whose *Meditations* she read in Swedish (*Själfbetraktelser*). Her copy of this book has been much underlined.⁷³ Victoria put her religious ideals, and perhaps her picture of her own upbringing, into words when in 1924 she described Heinrich XXXIV, Prince Reuss-Köstritz, in a letter to Archbishop Nathan Söderblom as “grown up in the old tradition, and a serious, god-fearing young man”.⁷⁴

My impression is that Victoria’s reading of the Lutheran tradition was somewhat selective. She was open also to other religious influences, with the exception of the Pietistic Evangelical religiosity, which at the Swedish court was represented in particular by her mother-in-law Queen Sophia, brother-in-law Prince Oscar Bernadotte, and his wife Princess Ebba Bernadotte, although she read the Moravian Brethren’s annual *Losungen* (Daily Watchwords).⁷⁵ In theology, she was more conservative than her father-in-law King Oscar II, who united the gospel of Christ with a liberal Christology and idealistic philosophy.⁷⁶ Victoria would have had little difficulty in applying Kingsley’s words to her own experience, for example: “For it is certain that the harder a man fights against evil the harder evil will fight against him in return; but it is certain too that the harder a man fights against evil, the more is he like his Saviour Christ, and the more glorious will be his reward in heaven.”⁷⁷

Her emphasis on resignation was far from passive or sentimental. On this specific point, she probably found Kingsley’s words offered a solution to her needs:

Never let us get into the common trick of calling unbelief Resignation; of asking, and then because we have not faith to believe, putting in a ‘Thy will be done’ at the end. Let us make God’s will our will, and so say, ‘Thy will be done.’ There is a false as well as a true and holy resignation. When the sorrow is come or coming, or necessary apparently for others’ good, let us say with our Master in the Agony, ‘Not what we will, but what Thou wilt!’ But up to that point, let us pray boldly.⁷⁸

This bold prayer sat well with a ‘manly’ faith in its Pauline sense. As the bookmarks in her copy of Kingsley’s *Out of the Deep* indicate, Victoria set great store by the book. If she wrote the following lines in Italy with regard to her sons, or in Sweden with regard to her parents, we do not know: “Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away? In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.” But the word ‘soon’ she used not only on her deathbed when calling for Munthe, but also in the religious context: “It is enough: earth’s struggles soon shall cease, and Jesus call us to heaven’s perfect peace.”

⁷³ Dahlström, *Drottningarnas böcker*, 136.

⁷⁴ Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), Nathan Söderbloms samling: Victoria to Söderblom, 23 September 1924.

⁷⁵ Bernadotte, *Käre prins, godnatt!*, 50. In the Bernadotte Library these books are catalogued under King Gustaf V rather than Queen Victoria, but sequence ends in 1930, the year of her death.

⁷⁶ Åhfeldt, *Kung Gustaf*, 162 ff.

⁷⁷ Kingsley, *Out of the Deep*, 106 ff.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11 ff.

The Queen was personally interested in the choice of hymns to be sung in the Royal Chapel. Beside an emphasis on old Lutheran hymns and hymns for special occasions, including the prayer for the King, she was also attached to Sarah Adams's 'Nearer my God, to thee', included in the 1921 supplement to the Swedish Hymnal. Other hymns she held dear were Julia von Hausmann's 'So nimm denn meine Hände' and Friedrich Räder's 'Harre, meine Seele',⁷⁹ of which the former was sung at her funeral. However, the persistent rumour that she herself translated Räder's hymn for the 1921 Hymnal supplement is false.⁸⁰

MONARCHICAL PRINCIPLES

The foundation of Victoria's views on the monarchy was divine calling. Every effort to limit the king's responsibilities and power was thus interpreted as a blow against the God-given order. The king was responsible to the whole people to fulfil his duty as a *Landesvater*.⁸¹ It is my contention that Victoria combined the ideals of her 'nursing' father and her dominant mother in a manner facilitated by her husband's natural and educated interest in mediating from a sovereign position. While the Queen could intervene in politics and display a distinct Conservative party view, the King - as Conservative in his mind as his consort - in accordance with Swedish dynastic tradition kept his independence of all parties. For him, personal confidence ought to be the foundation for the relationship between the sovereign and his prime ministers, with due respect for parliamentary circumstances.⁸²

In her letters to Bishop Billing, Victoria explains her political interests and actions using the important defence of the monarchical principle: "My worries are not so much of moment, but for the future and for the maintenance of the monarchical principle here in the country." This implied that the momentous struggle of the Swedish general strike in August-September 1909 was in her view not between employers and workers, but between Conservatives and Liberals.⁸³

It was because of her emphasis on monarchical ideas that political and personal ethics were united in her view. Her ecclesiastical opinions were definitely High Church in its nineteenth-century Swedish sense, with its emphasis on the precedence of clerical office over lay preaching (although not to the extent of Episcopalianism), on the sacraments in the liturgy (mostly without sacrificial interpretations), and on a strong belief in the efficiency of the Word of God (without fundamentalism or sentimentality). To this extent her views coincided with Bishop Billing's beliefs. On Sundays, she attended services in the Royal Chapel in Stockholm or at Drottningholm. At Tullgarn Palace, in the summers of the 1890s, she arranged a short service in the dining-room for her household and neighbours. During her Egyptian journey, 1890-1891, her

⁷⁹ Åhfeldt, *Kung Gustaf*, 171 ff.; Fjellman, *Victoria*, 211 ff.

⁸⁰ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 248; Fjellman, *Victoria*, 211, following *Minnesalbum. Drottning Victoria*, 7. The translation of this hymn by Anna Ölander was first published in 1896.

⁸¹ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 155.

⁸² Nyman, *Högern och kungamakten*, 267.

⁸³ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 20 August 1909.

husband read a sermon for the travelling court each Sunday, and during her long foreign journeys in later years, it was the task of the chamberlain on duty to read. She kept strictly to the tradition of Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday, even when abroad.⁸⁴

It was a self-evident part of her upbringing for Victoria to regard Roman Catholics in Baden and Sweden as her subjects. A Catholic bishop had been present at her christening. She often visited Pope Leo XIII, and her relative, Cardinal Hohenlohe, is said to have been influential in her spiritual development.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Victoria was often accused by her contemporaries of being more German than Swedish. If that were indeed true, then it would have been the lesser problem. Instead she regarded German principles as Swedish, and took for granted that close cultural and political ties between Sweden and Germany were both self-evident and necessary.

In this context, we are reminded of the question of the ‘monarchic instrumentalisation’ of religion. Christian ideals were frequently adduced in the defence of the monarchy, yet it is impossible to determine whether this sprang from the Christian religion and faith or from a struggle for political position. They are so intertwined that one can speak of a union between the throne and the altar rather than an alliance. What seems to have been an instrumentalisation of religion for the purposes of personal political power might also be understood as a self-evident consequence of Victoria’s religious faith.

GENDER LIMITATIONS IN POLITICS

In a letter from Rome on 24 February 1906, Victoria wrote in a bitter tone that she had long tried to make others understand the dangers inherent in the way the Norwegian question was being handled, but what would her weak voice count for when everyone knew everything so much better. “And since I am of the opinion that women should not interfere into politics, I did not see myself entitled to say more than a word of warning.”⁸⁶ Indeed, Victoria’s impressions of women and emancipation are partly revealed through her reading, for her library contains several books on women, for example Angelika von Lagerström’s *Deutsche Frauen* (1873), which portrayed a series of famous men’s wives who spent their lives in the shadow of their spouses, and Leonore Kühn’s *Wir Frauen*, with its attempt to unite old and new ideals of women.⁸⁷ The question remains whether she paid more than lip-service to the idea of women’s political inferiority, since she was very active in her correspondence with Conservative politicians such as Bishop Billing, and sometimes even played an important role in political events.

In 1912 she wrote from Anacapri about the happy continuation of the national subscription being taken up for a coastal battleship, which had started as a reaction against the then Liberal government’s defence politics: “However, I find it terri-

⁸⁴ Åhfeldt, *Kung Gustaf*, 70 ff.

⁸⁵ Jansson, *Drottning Victoria*, 26, 104.

⁸⁶ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 24 February 1906.

⁸⁷ Dahlström, *Drottningarnas böcker*, 130 ff.

bly hard not being allowed to show my intense, warm interest for this enterprise by making a contribution of my own. But this is regarded as impossible, and of course I adhere to this.”⁸⁸

The Queen had to act behind the scenes, and her efforts to take public political steps were limited by her Conservative advisors and by parliamentary tradition. Her activities reached a peak shortly before *bondetåget*, a Conservative manifestation by more than 30,000 farmers in Stockholm on 6 February 1914 to protest at the Liberal government’s cuts in military defence and to demonstrate their sympathy with the King. The speech delivered by King Gustaf V was written by Sven Hedin and Carl Bennedich. Several members of the royal family and their advisors had tried to moderate some of the more expressive sentences, but the Queen insisted that the King should give the speech as written.⁸⁹ Without doubt the royal speech ran roughshod over parliamentary principle. The Social Democrats even announced that the Constitution of 1809 had been flouted in favour of a ‘Prussian’ order.⁹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

Existential biography does not so much search for a logical development in a person’s life as for the opportunities to shape and choose between different paths. Instead of using identities, which are often ambiguous in the extreme, I follow the Swedish historian Henrik Rosengren in his use of different cultural identifications that together form an identity. Identifications are changeable and manifold, but they are also communicable.⁹¹

Victoria’s cultural identifications may be understood as three different fields, replete with intersections. They are dependent on her fundamental yet unformulated identifications as a woman and as a frail and suffering person. In the first field, *citizenships*, we find her identifications as German, Swedish, and Christian. In the second field, *social functions*, we recognise the positions of the Lutheran *Haustafel*: Crown Princess or Queen, listener, and matron. In the third field, *inner models*, we encounter both the praying self of the Psalms, the suffering Christ, and the women of Wagner’s operas, all displaying both resignation and passion in a setting of either Christian mysticism or romantic philosophy, and sometimes in combination.

In studying ‘the manly Queen with feminine charm’ the differentiation between manliness and masculinity is thrown into relief, for ‘manliness’ in a positive sense has also been open to women. In older devotional literature, the Christian person as a new, spiritual creation is not devoid of gender characteristics, but certainly lacks gender limitations. Godly men and women were regarded as examples for women and men alike. In the nineteenth century this changed, and gender categories became sexed. This change had an enormous impact in turn on religious language. Religion was feminised and masculinised.

⁸⁸ LUB: Victoria to Billing, 24 February 1912.

⁸⁹ Nyman, *Högern och kungamakten*, 242-257, 266 ff., 269.

⁹⁰ Palmstierna, *Orostid*, 14 ff.

⁹¹ Rosengren, ‘*Judarnas Wagner*’, 38, 43-45.

This concept permits of a greater understanding of the gender positions of both sexes than R. W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity, by which women are reduced to passive positions.⁹² This chapter emphasises the need for gender studies to focus on both women and men, especially where positive results on manliness and masculinity can be obtained from the study of women in history.

Victoria has been described as a manly queen with feminine charm. Her faith may also with reason be described as manly. In her personal life, her strong sense of duty was balanced by the impression made by Wagner's passionate and forceful women characters as models of a manly femininity. She was clearly influenced by Charles Kingsley's devotional books and his emphasis on active 'true resignation'. As a queen, she regarded herself in the light of old Lutheran social teaching as the mother of the nation. The importance of monarchical ideas to Victoria meant that in her view political and personal ethics were as one. Her position was in many ways unique, which magnifies similar observations that could be made in other women as well. 'A manly queen with feminine charm' was one of several manly women with feminine charm.

⁹² For Connell, see Yvonne Maria Werner's introduction to this volume.