Yvonne Maria Werner

Katolsk manlighet. Det antimoderna alternativet – katolska missionärer och lekmän i Skandinavien [*Catholic Masculinity in Scandinavia: the Anti-modern Alternative*].

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Since the time of the Reformation until the mid-twentieth century, Lutheran state churches in Scandinavia dominated the whole culture and shaped national identity. In contrast, Catholics were only a “quantité négligeable.” Among the few historians who have studied the Catholic presence in Scandinavia during this period, Yvonne Maria Werner, professor of history at the University of Lund, is especially prominent. Her studies about the Catholic Church in Denmark and Sweden have resulted in a number of outstanding books and articles. She previously focused on Catholic women’s contribution in her book *Nuns and Sisters in the Nordic Countries after the Reformation; a Female Counter-Culture in Modern Society* (2005). Her current book examines Catholic masculinity.

Werner’s starting point is the nineteenth-century bourgeois-liberal perception that all religious practice was to be private, something practiced at home and in the church, in short, a feminization of European Christianity. This was in opposition to the public role of modern science and secular society, female piety versus male enlightenment. But in reality, during the second half of that century one could observe a religious upswing and new vitality in the churches, with political parties, strong lay movements, and worldwide missionary outreach. Particularly, the Catholic confessionalism known as “ultramontanism” established itself in contrast to more liberal views of society. It was counter-cultural, imbued with anti-modern characteristics, enjoyed grassroots support of the laity, and was triumphalist in its manifestations. In this way, the Catholic Church again became a cultural and political power in many countries in Europe.

But in Scandinavia there were too few Catholics to similarly affect liberal society and Protestant culture. Werner’s research here concentrates on the question of manliness in this environment, how did Catholic discourses differ from the common convictions about masculinity in Nordic Protestantism? She explores the answer through the experiences of members of the Catholic minority—priests, male religious, and male converts.

In the mid-nineteenth century, liberal laws allowed Catholic missionary activities after centuries of Lutheran isolation, which led to several national, religious, and cultural conflicts, like those Werner explores. A Catholic “North Pole mission” (56) planned to convert Lapps and other indigenous people in

Northern Norway and the whole Arctic area. Conflicts between local Catholic priests and these missionaries and the bizarre character and fate of their leader Djunkowsky soon ended the mission. Another conflict affected Italian Barnabite Fathers who came to Sweden and Norway in 1864. Differences in culture, mentality, and pastoral strategies between these Italian *padres* and the local German secular priests split small Catholic communities, eventually compelling the Barnabites to return to Italy in 1887. After World War I, a group of French Dominicans settled in Oslo in 1921 and Stockholm in 1931. Bishop Müller of Sweden wanted them counterbalance the dominating position of the Jesuits who already arrived in 1879 from Germany. Dominican spirituality and their ideal of manliness, including asceticism, devotion, brotherhood, and humility, combined with a strong national French loyalty, demonstrated a Catholic male religiosity that seemed quite strange to locals in a liberal Protestant environment.

Werner also writes about secular priests and their ideals. She writes that while they were formed in seminaries to live a quasi-monastic life, in reality life in their tiny parishes made it difficult to fulfill these ideals. Obituaries often praised their piety, humility, and ascetic lifestyle, while contemporaneous obituaries about Protestant pastors underlined other forms of manliness like sense of duty, hard work, and strong character.

In all descriptions of priests and male religious, Werner shows that women played a double role. On the one side, priests expected subordination, devotion, and obedience. On the other, women religious, housekeepers, and other female coworkers often were independent and equal in the pastoral field, which created much conflict and drew the ire of the male clerics they worked with.

A central chapter in Werner's rich book (104–191) that is of particularly interest to the audience of this journal is entitled "The Jesuits and the ultramontane manliness." In 1879, the Jesuits arrived in Stockholm. It was not their first mission in Sweden. As a matter of fact, they already tried in the sixteenth century to convert King John III and re-unite Sweden with the Catholic Church. They had no success. But they came back in 1650, when Queen Christina, daughter of King Gustavus II Adolphus, defender of Protestantism during Thirty Years' War, sent a letter to the superior general of the Jesuits, asking for instruction in the Catholic faith. As a result she left the throne, converted to Catholicism in Innsbruck in 1655, and lived in Rome for the rest of her life and was then buried in the crypt of St. Peter. This historical background combined with strong Protestant prejudices made the Jesuits unwelcome in Sweden during their nineteenth-century return. They were personifications of ultramontanism and the "Catholic peril." The pious Catholic Queen Josefina used her influence on Pope Pius IX to stop any Jesuit activities in Sweden to avoid deterioration of the

delicate situation of the Church in her country. Three years after her death in 1876, however, they arrived in Stockholm.

In 1872, a group of Jesuits from the German province came to Denmark. They built a college in Ordруп, where until its dissolution in 1920, more than 200 Jesuits worked. They also founded colleges in both Copenhagen and Aarhus. Their Sacred Heart church in Copenhagen, well known for liturgy and lectures, became a center of Catholic activity in Denmark. Similarly, the newly-arrived Jesuits in Stockholm also planned to build a great Catholic center with a church and college. But Bishop Bitter blocked the plans. The Jesuits then decided to withdraw from the Swedish mission. Lay people fought for “their Jesuits” and convinced both the pope and the superior general to change their decisions.

Werner has written in detail about the Jesuits’ modern history in Sweden in *Världsvid men främmande. Den katolska kyrkan i Sverige 1873–1929*. This current research concentrates on concepts of masculinity during the same period. The rich sources are found mainly in the correspondence between missionaries in Scandinavia and their superiors in Rome and central Europe. In different aspects the main characteristics of masculinity are described as having intellectual capacity, initiative, self-control, and self-sacrificing devotion. Pastoral activities were concentrated on men, in spite of the fact that the majority of converts were women. Liturgy was a totally male sphere. The genus-order of the theology of creation—woman’s subordination under men—was accepted as complementary; but of course always men were the dominant partner. But as Werner points out, the religious virtues that the Dominicans, Barnabites, and Jesuits emphasized were genderless, i.e., they were practiced by both male and female saints. In contrast to some ideals which the Lutheran churches looked at as masculine or un-masculine, Jesuits and other Catholic priests in Scandinavia described religious virtues as independent of gender. Our Lady and the saints personified the “new humanity” which reflected the genderless “hierarchy of holiness” (304).

Werner’s investigation is a valuable contribution to the gendered aspect of the first generation of Jesuit missionaries in Sweden, which is not usually covered by historians. She opens a window into how the male missionaries adapted to life in a hostile, liberal, and Protestant culture in the nineteenth century and does it by focusing on gender, which is unusual in books of this sort.

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