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RELATED ENTRIES

Agrarianism; Class; Democratic Manhood; Dueling; Individualism; Native American Manhood; Patriarchy; Patriotism; Politics; Race; Republicanism; Southern Manhood; Violence; War; Western Frontier; Whiteness; White Supremacism; Working-Class Manhood

—Caryn E. Neumann

JAMES, WILLIAM

1842–1910

Philosopher, Educator, and Author

Through his research and his teaching, the philosopher William James sought to mediate between two concepts of middle-class manhood that developed in U.S. culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The first concept, rooted in antebellum intellectual, religious, and reform movements such as the Second Great Awakening, transcendentalism, and abolitionism, emphasized moral idealism and the authority of individual conscience. The second concept, which emerged after the Civil War, eschewed this antebellum idealism and defined true manliness in terms of duty, obligation, and a “strenuous life”—understood as a struggle toward masculine physical fitness. James sought to combine the ethical principles that informed antebellum reform movements with the new emphasis on the strenuous life to generate a manly, intellectual individualism.

James’s vision of manliness had several sources. First, James drew on an Emersonian transcendentalist insistence that truth could never be received secondhand, but had to be discovered, tried, and tested firsthand. Second, James conceptualized manhood in terms of growth and individual autonomy—both of which were part of transcendentalist philosophy and Second Great Awakening theology. Third, James built upon new findings in experimental psychology that challenged the notion that all men possessed distinctive rational and emotive capabilities that could be shaped and reinforced in exact, uniform ways. For example, while James appreciated

religious spirituality, he rejected simple solutions such as building moral behavior through physical exercise, as suggested by proponents of “muscular Christianity.” Finally, the experiences of Civil War soldiers, such as his brother Wilkinson, confirmed for him both the power of moral idealism and the practical and difficult wartime realities of discipline and perseverance.

Based on these ideas and experiences, James developed a new concept of masculinity. Manhood, he argued, was not a fixed state of being that could be attained and held onto, but an intellectual method and dynamic process by which the self was continually reshaped through ongoing mental struggle. Masculinity, like truth, had to be strenuously fought for—though James defined strenuousness in terms of intellectual rather than physical fitness. James developed this method most fully in *Pragmatism* (1907), where he combined an empirical, rationalistic “tough-minded” stance and an idealist, ethical “tender-minded” stance into a “pragmatic method” by which truth is evaluated and revised based on actual lived experience.

Ultimately, James urged men to believe actively and willfully in a spiritual, transcendent order of the universe and to remain open to continual rethinking, rather than resting passively on old-fashioned, inherited dogmatism. He wished to hold on to moral and ethical values and foundations of society as long as they could be concretely applied in real life; at the same time, he placed a premium on the rigorous use of empirical data, while insisting that their value stood in direct relation to the extent they served larger ethical purposes.

Many others would borrow from James’s ideas about manly individualism: He counted among his students President Theodore Roosevelt (whose interpretation of the strenuous life in support of imperialism James publicly opposed); the author Van Wyck Brooks, who advocated the founding of a new, democratic culture that would transcend inherited ideas about manliness; the Harvard philosopher George Santayana; the psychoanalyst Granville Stanley Hall; and the black civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois, whose thoughts on race and manhood in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) reflects James influence.

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RELATED ENTRIES

Civil War; Education; Emerson, Ralph Waldo; Gilded Age; Hall, Granville Stanley; Imperialism; Militarism; Muscular Christianity; Passionate Manhood; Progressive Era; Religion and Spirituality; Sentimentalism; Strenuous Life; Victorian Era; War

—Thomas Winter

JESUS, IMAGES OF

Images of Jesus have articulated changing, and often conflicting, ideas about Christianity and masculinity in the United States. Americans have imagined Jesus as a figure at once human and divine. Yet in depicting him as both a heroic warrior against evil and a compassionate friend, as both conqueror and sinless innocent, they have also imagined him as both masculine and feminine. This has created differing views of Jesus because of the traditional gender division in American society, with traditional masculine traits associated with men and feminine traits with women.

American images of Jesus come primarily from European antecedents. Traditional Catholic images, drawn from a lively tradition of European art, have tended to portray Jesus not as markedly masculine or feminine, but as a sufferer, as the son of Mary, as an innocent child, and, occasionally, as an active adult male. The most common images—those appearing in the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross, the step-by-step process leading to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection—portray

Jesus' humanity through his pain, tears, and blood, but they do not emphasize masculine qualities over feminine ones. Only occasionally in the past did European and Euro-American Catholic artists portray such masculine images as an angry Jesus (e.g., arguing with Satan or driving merchants from the temple) or a working Jesus.

Most American Protestant groups, on the other hand, have associated iconography with idolatry, and they have therefore been slow to create visual images of Jesus. Leaders of the Protestant Reformation, especially John Calvin, believed churches should refrain from picturing God or Jesus, and most Puritan churches followed suit. But Puritans did depict Jesus in their poetry and sermons, portraying him as decidedly masculine—as the bridegroom of mankind, as a suitor and husband to Christians' souls, and as a stern and righteous savior. Believing that women inherited Eve's sin of disobedience and were more naturally immoral than men, Puritans saw emulation of a masculine Jesus as a key to a Christian social order.

In the nineteenth century a more Romantic version of Christianity produced what some scholars have called a "feminization" of American culture. This coincided with a flowering of apparently feminine physical images of Jesus that depicted him as a great friend to children and a lamb-like innocent with long hair and a flowing robe. Images typically identified Jesus as divine, symbolized by the light surrounding his head, while his direct gaze invited intimacy with Christian believers and characterized him as human. Such images conformed to Victorian ideals of affectionate domestic life, in which parents, especially mothers, offered religious lessons to innocent children. Exemplifying such images of Jesus were deathbed letters during the Civil War, in which soldiers imagined a smiling Jesus welcoming them into a heaven where their families would be reunited.

By the late nineteenth century a growing number of male church leaders—especially evangelical Protestants—began charging that such feminine images of Jesus alienated men from the church. They responded by attempting to masculinize both Jesus and Christian commitment. The Men and Religion Forward movement of 1911–12 wanted an active and vigorous Jesus to help mobilize humanity, both to build strong bodies and to create organizations capable of improving the world. Evangelists such as the former baseball player Billy Sunday offered images of Jesus as an athlete, a carpenter, and a leader of men. During the 1920s, as American notions of manliness became increasingly associated with business success, Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows* (1924) directly countered the image of Jesus as a self-sacrificing, effeminate kill-joy with images of Jesus as a strong and decisive executive,