



## BTB Readers' Guide

# Masculinity in the New Testament and Early Christianity

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### Abstract

Building on the work of feminist queries regarding the social construction of gender, scholarship beginning in the 1980s began to interrogate masculinity as a culturally constructed category. Scholars focusing on the New Testament and early Christianity, building upon significant studies in both gender theory and the social construction of masculinity in ancient Greek and Roman contexts have produced a substantial amount of significant research in the last thirty years. Despite the proliferation of scholarship, significant questions remain as to how best to understand Jesus and his early followers in light of Greek and Roman understandings of masculinity. Some scholars see descriptions of Jesus, his disciples, and other key figures in the Jesus movement significantly resistant to key elements of Roman or Greek understandings of what it meant to be a man, while others argue that New Testament authors present these same figures substantially corresponding to hegemonic masculinity in the Roman world.

*Key words:* Masculinity-New Testament; Gender theory; Roman masculinity; Greek masculinity

Although historiography has focused predominantly on the world of men, the treatment of men as gendered beings has a surprisingly short history (Kimmel 1993; Clines 1998; 2003). Michael Kimmel, a leading scholar of masculinity in the United States says of American men that they “have no history as gendered selves; no work describes historical events in terms of what these events meant to the men who participated in them as men” (Kimmel 1993: 28). Biblical studies, too, has a limited track record regarding the study of masculinity. Feminist scholarship produced much of the early work on gender in biblical studies, and it focused primarily upon women. In fact, early efforts to focus on gender, both within and outside of biblical studies, were sometimes treated as synonymous with women’s studies (Burrus 2007: 2). Feminist scholars’ analyses of women’s lives in the ancient Mediterra-

nean world have added vastly to our knowledge of the social contexts of the people, both men and women, who inhabited the “worlds” of the Bible and to our understanding of gender in ancient contexts. While such studies are far too numerous to list here, key studies by feminist scholars approaching the Greek, Roman, and Judean contexts of the New Testament

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include Schüssler Fiorenza (1994), Torjesen (1995), Kraemer & D'Angelo (1999), Osiek & MacDonald (2005), and the various volumes of *The Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings*, edited by A. J. Levine and others (Levine 2001a; 2001b; 2002; 2009; Levine & Blickenstaff 2003; Levine & Robbins 2008). These studies shed light on the lived experience of women in antiquity and show how women (and sometimes men) embodied, negotiated, and challenged gender expectations.

Without ignoring the important contributions made by feminist scholarship, historians of the Jesus movements and developing Christianity have somewhat recently turned their attention to men's gendered lives (Vander Stichele & Penner 2009: 11–43). Stephen Moore (2003: 4–16), surveying studies of masculinity and the New Testament until 2003, included only eleven such studies. Since 2003, however, many more studies on the masculinities represented in the New Testament have appeared, alongside a number of texts that examine masculinities of Christianity in the second, third and fourth centuries CE. All of these studies show that men also embodied, negotiated, and challenged gendered expectations in ancient Mediterranean contexts of the first several centuries of the Common Era.

## Performance of Masculinity

Being sexed male does not make one a "man" (Gilmore 1990: 6). Gleason, speaking of the rhetoricians in the second century CE, confirms this perspective for ancient Mediterranean contexts, even as she notes how rhetorical competition gradually displaced martial contexts as the battleground upon which manhood could be acquired: "Manliness was not a birthright. It was something that had to be won" (Gleason 1995: 159).

To be "manly" is about one's gendered performance relative to cultural expectations for such performances. These performances are evaluated constantly by various people and groups. Not all masculine performances are the same, and there are a variety of performances that might be acceptably "manly" depending upon other factors. (For such varieties in the United States, see the important studies on how masculinity and its performance vary among specific groups: Majors & Billson [1992, on African American men], Mirandé [1997, on Latino men], and Pascoe [2005, on teens].

If manhood or manliness is a state to be won rather than something granted due simply to anatomical maleness, it is

also a state that can be lost. A passage from "unmanliness" into manliness is not an irrevocable event. Attacks on the manliness of others and defenses against such attacks animate much of the preserved record of men's lives from the ancient Mediterranean world. Gender was something that had to be performed in the public eye, which West and Zimmerman call "doing gender."

If sex category is omnirelevant (or even approaches being so) then a person engaged in virtually any activity may be held accountable for performance of that activity as a woman or man, and their incumbency in one or the other sex category can be used to legitimate or discredit their other activities [West & Zimmerman 1987: 136].

Here doing gender does not necessarily entail living up to the "normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity" but rather means "to engage in behavior *at the risk of gender assessment*" (West & Zimmerman 1987: 136). Such gender assessment comes from public viewing of "doing gender." Various publics might evaluate different behavior in different ways, so that whether an activity is "manly" or not is constantly up for negotiation.

## Hegemonic masculinities

The dominant form of masculinity in any particular culture is referred to by scholars as "hegemonic," and it provides one way of conceptualizing how gender can be contested (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832–33). The phrase hegemonic masculinity typically refers to at least three discreet things: "(1) a position in the system of gender relations; (2) the system itself; and (3) the current ideology that serves to reproduce masculine domination" (Levy 2007: 254). While hegemonic masculinity represents that model of masculinity to which men, in any given context, are expected to aspire, it is also worth noting that typically "only a minority of men might enact it" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). Though it might be practiced by a small minority of men in any given locale, hegemonic masculinity casts its shadow over all forms of masculinity. While it can be enforced through violence, it more often exerts influence on men "through culture, institutions, and persuasion" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832), such as name calling and criminalization of unsanctioned activities.

While the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not without its critics (see Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836–45), scholars of gender widely agree that societies and cultures create hierarchies of masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt have noted four ways in which the concept, as originally expressed in the 1980s, needs (and has received) revision. First, scholars have come to focus on the way in which women both support and resist hegemonic masculinity. Second, scholars acknowledge that there can be competing hegemonic masculinities, as when Judean “regional” masculinities in the first century CE protested against Greek or Roman masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 849). Third, masculinities are always embodied. The actions of physical bodies reproduce or challenge social practices regarding gendered expectations (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 851). Hegemonic masculinities must be enacted through the actions of physical bodies (in however approximate or fictional a form) in order to exist. Finally, hegemonic masculinities are neither self-reproducing nor are they static and fixed. Both those who practice/endorse hegemonic masculinity and others who resist or protest exercise agency.

### *Crisis in masculinity*

A number of the studies of masculinity in the New Testament and early Christianity have pointed out various “crises” that shaped the masculinities of the Roman world in the first through fourth centuries of the Common Era. Two of these crises are especially significant in reconstructing the tableaux of masculinities against which historians of early Christianity chart the masculinities represented in documents written by the followers of Jesus. The first is the founding of the Principate, the period during which Octavian, having won the civil war against the opponents of his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, became the sole ruler of the newly-founded Roman Empire. This series of events caused all other elite Roman men to become subjects (some more willingly than others) to a single ruler, represented in some propagandistic efforts as the *pater patriae*, the father of the fatherland (D’Angelo 2003a; 2003b: 266–271; Elliott 1990).

A second crisis came in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, as the Roman Empire began to succumb to the advances of armies from the east. Since public life was no longer available to many Roman men in the same way that it had been during the period of the late Republic (2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE)

and early days of the Principate (late 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) some men began to withdraw from the life of the city (*polis*) and participate in the life of the growing Christian churches instead (Kuefler 2001: 37–69).

While it might be true that certain crises prevailed, the fact is that masculinity is a contested and augmented social construction; from this perspective, masculinity is “always already in crisis” (Liew 2003: 10; Solomon-Godeau 1995). Attempts to define manhood, then, are usually undertaken in relation to other (sometimes prior and sometimes contemporaneous) efforts to construct it differently. Such efforts are particularly noticeable in periods and places in which civilizations, cultures, and ethnic groups come into contact with one another. The Roman Empire was one such place in the first several centuries of the Common Era.

### *Intersectionality*

In addition to sex categorization, several other elements of one’s identity played a part in the assessment of whether one was masculine by ancient standards. Intersectionality focuses on two main issues related to a person’s identity. First, it alerts us to the fact that “different social divisions cannot be understood in isolation, but are mutually modifying and reinforcing each other” (Kartzow & Moxnes 2010: 189). In other words, ethnicity, class, gender, and other factors (including age, disability, educational level, sexual orientation, etc.) together create a person’s self-perception and the perception of that person by other people. Second, since each person belongs to multiple categories (e.g. a middle-class, middle-aged white woman who suffers from schizophrenia; an elderly, educated, gay Latino male), some of which involve being oppressed, “it might be difficult to articulate which correlative system of oppression is at work” (Kartzow & Moxnes 2010: 190).

Kartzow and Moxnes (2010; see also Wilson 2015: 113–149) note several identity markers of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts that alert the ancient reader/auditor of the text to his marginal status. In addition to his status as a eunuch, he is a “foreigner” in at least two senses: first, he is not a Roman, and second, he is in a region, Judea, from which he does not come. He is designated as “Ethiopian.” It is also likely a comment on his manhood that he serves the Ethiopian queen Candace rather than a king (Acts 8:27). Though he does not belong to the ethnic category “Judean,” he is apparently interested in the cultic practices of that ethnic group, given that he

has come to Jerusalem to participate in activities at the temple (Acts 8:27). The eunuch's blackness, his participation in Israelite cult, and his status as a eunuch qualify his designation as a "man," calling it into question due to his foreignness, his status as eunuch (a lack of ability to produce offspring), and his participation in a minority religious group. In the contexts of Acts, however, these marginal identity markers might make this Ethiopian eunuch a harbinger of the messianic age, one who carries the message about Jesus to the ends of the earth (Kartzow & Moxnes 2010: 198–202).

## Greco-Roman Masculinities

In keeping with the theory summarized above, masculinity in Roman and Greek thought was not one particular thing, and its performance cannot be limited to any one particular factor. A number of important and recurring ideas in both Greek and Roman texts indicate some of the cluster of characteristics of what it meant to be "manly" in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Given the time frame of early Christianity, Roman thought regarding masculinity is especially important for understanding the way that early Christians positioned themselves vis-à-vis other claims to manhood. Greek masculinities heavily influenced Roman ideas of manliness from at least the Republican period (McDonnell 2006: 72–141).

Most of the information preserved from the ancient sources about what it meant to demonstrate manliness comes from sources written by and for elite men (Conway 2008: 15–16). We need to understand these sources then as examples of hegemonic masculinity, and not assume they represent the only way of constructing or expressing manhood (McDonnell 2006: 165–66). Five factors cluster to produce Greek and Roman manliness: avoidance of unmanliness, penetration and impenetrability, power and dominance, education, and self-control.

### *Relational—avoid what is unmanly*

Put most simply, to be manly was to avoid being feminine. When one achieved less than the (hegemonic and elite) ideal of manliness, it was because one had taken on feminine qualities. This is seen even in the ancient vocabulary: the Greek word *andreia*, meaning courage, is derived from the word for man (*anēr/andros*), and the Latin word for manliness, *virtus*, is derived from *vir*, meaning man. Ancient Greeks and Romans thought of biological sex in a "one-sex model" in which to "be

a man or woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to be organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes" (Lacqueur 1990: 8).

In the one-sex model, women were viewed as "less perfect" men (Lacqueur 1990: 26). Both Aristotle (*On the Generation of Animals* 1.20.728a 17–20) and Galen (*On the Usefulness of Body Parts* 14.2.296–97) held that the perfection of the male and the relative imperfection of the female were due to the heat of the former and the lack of heat in the latter. Galen considered heat "Nature's primary instrument" (Galen, *On the Usefulness of Body Parts* 14.2.299; [translated in May 1968]). It is due to this heat that men's genitalia project outward from their bodies while women's remain inside (Lacqueur 1990: 4). In this view, in which women were considered "imperfect" men, "[f]emale is a non-category apart from its definition as imperfect male" (Conway 2008: 18).

For the Greeks and Romans, "nature" dictated that males be active (penetrative in sexual terms, assertive in public affairs), powerful, rational, spiritual (as opposed to "fleshly"), and superior, while females were passive, weak, irrational, fleshly, and wet (Ivarsson 2007; Williams 1999). These distinctions, however, were not due to considering male and female "opposite" sexes. Rather, on the one-sex model, it was acknowledged that "all bodies were thought to contain more-perfect (masculine) and less-perfect (feminine) elements that required constant maintenance to produce the perfect male/masculine body, females/women and other gendered beings (e.g. *androgynes*, *kinaidoi* [effeminates], and *tribades* [dominatrices])" (Glancy 2003: 198). Those few men who were able to demonstrate publicly these values of manhood, however, were small in number in the Greek and Roman contexts. Males who were not able to demonstrate these values due to social status (e.g. slaves, non-elites, foreigners) simply were *homines*, humans, rather than *virī*, men (Barton 2001: 38; Conway 2008: 15–34).

### *Penetration*

To be an elite Roman man meant to be impenetrable (Parker 1997: 32–35; Richlin 2007: 265–67; Williams 1999: 172–78), inviolable both in terms of a man's ability to protect his own body from being penetrated sexually or struck, marked, pierced. "To be of high status meant to be able to protect one's body from assault even as a punishment; the mark of those of low status was that their body was available

for invasive punishment” (Parker 1997: 38). Though low-status persons were unable to protect their bodies, Walters notes one exception to high-status persons’ inability to protect themselves from beatings. The Roman soldier could be beaten by his superiors, but unlike low-status males, “the body of the Roman soldier is sexually inviolable” even by superior officers (Parker 1997: 40–41). Plutarch (*Mor.* 202b–c) relates the case of Lusius, nephew of Marius, who attempted a sexual assault on a subordinate soldier named Trebonius. Trebonius, charged for killing Lusius, related the circumstances of the murder, and rather than punishing him, Marius rewarded him with a crown for excellence.

Especially in the imperial period, the ability to maintain one’s bodily integrity against penetration was a chief characteristic of elite Roman males (Ivarsson 2007). Most men were not able to protect themselves from penetration, though Roman law protected free-born males from being sexually penetrated. A freeborn male youth (Latin *praetextatus*) “is an object of special concern, precisely because Roman protocols of sexuality place him in a marginal state in the pattern of ‘gender.’” As a “young male who is not a full-fledged man,” he is “‘naturally’ an object of sexual desire to adult males” but also “a man-to-be” (Walters 1997: 33). If he is penetrated in his youth, his status as a *vir* in adulthood is put in jeopardy. High-status women also were protected from penetration by men other than their husbands. They also occupied an ambiguous place in the gender system given that they are objects of desire for *viri*, but due to their high social status, they are protected (Walters 1997: 34).

Parker describes Roman sexuality in terms of a “teratogenic grid” (Parker 1997). This grid creates two “normal” gender expressions and two “abnormal” gender expressions. The grid itself consists of three “holes” available for sexual penetration: vaginas, anuses, and mouths. “Normal” gender expression, in terms of the contrast between “active” for males and “passive” for females, is for the male phallus to penetrate any of these holes while the female is penetrated. Parker points out, however, that Romans also conceded that males could be penetrated and females could penetrate. These roles, however, were considered deviant for these respective sexes. Phallic penetration of a vagina, an anus (whether it be a male’s or female’s), or a mouth (again either a male’s or female’s) was considered the proper sexual role for a *vir*. Romans did not distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual in the same way as modern Westerners do (Ivarsson 2007; Walters 1997;

Williams 1999). Passivity, being penetrated, was considered the proper role for the female. The man who is penetrated is a *pathicus*. For a free-born adult male to play this role is to make him something other than a *vir*.

### ***Power and Violence***

Roman manliness, particularly in the pre-Classical period, was related to courage shown especially in martial contexts. McDonnell (2006) describes two types of Roman manliness (*virtus*) in early Roman thought. The first, more common meaning, relates to aggressiveness in battle, while the second involves bravery in the face of death and pain. It is certainly easy to list any number of Greek and Roman men who established their manliness through violence. Obviously, Achilles, the greatest of the Greek warriors, springs immediately to mind. Octavian also codified his manliness through both violence and the threat of violence.

Beyond martial contexts, Roman fathers, in particular, were able to exercise authority over the members of their households. The *paterfamilias*, the “father of the family,” usually the oldest living male in a household, exercised power (*potestas*) over the other members of the household: wives, sons, daughters, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and slaves (McDonnell 2006: 168–72). The *paterfamilias*’ authority was wide-ranging. Legally only the *paterfamilias* could own property, while property acquired through purchase or inheritance by other members of the family belonged to the *paterfamilias*. For members of the household, the permission of the *paterfamilias* was needed for both marriage and divorce, and he could make them divorce. “In addition, the *paterfamilias* had the ability to sell sons, daughters and agnatic grandchildren into slavery, and to surrender sons into bondage, as well as the right of life and death” (*vitae necisque potestas*; McDonnell 2006). McDonnell notes that this power did not always sit easily with *virtus*, due to the sometimes conflicting demands for adult sons to act as *viri* in public while still acting under the authority of the *paterfamilias* in the domestic setting. In the public setting of the Republic, adult sons and fathers were equal (McDonnell 2006: 173–80).

### ***Education and manliness***

Students in Greek and Roman contexts learned to write by copying the works of others. For Greeks, a good deal of this

copying came in the form of maxims, traditional proverbial wisdom. These maxims often stressed the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women. Romans relied more heavily on examples than maxims, though they frequently reinforced the theme of men's dominance over subordinates, including women (Conway 2008: 30–34). A competitive nature, both in military education and in rhetorical training, marked the educational practices of both Greece and Rome.

In Roman contexts, education served several roles related to manliness. McDonnell (2006: 181–195) describes that fathers taught their sons to throw javelins, fight in armor, and ride horses (at least among the elite). In addition, male Roman citizens apprenticed for a year as soldiers after they donned the *toga virilis* ("toga of manhood"). In addition to the education in war making, Bloomer (1997) shows that the school practices of declamation and the adoption of *personae* of people who were accused of misdeeds and illegalities prepared boys for lives both as *patresfamilias* and as public people. Learning to speak on behalf of those who lacked public voice (e.g. women, slaves, and children) prepared boys for their public lives, especially to represent the interests of members of their households in legal contexts.

### ***Self-control and the virtues***

McDonnell describes the shift from the older meaning of *virtus* (as courage) to a meaning related to the Greek word *aretē* ("excellence") which stressed moral excellence (2006: 110–28). In classical Latin and in the Late Republican period, philosophical literature portrayed *virtus* as encompassing the four cardinal virtues: prudence (Gk: *phronēsis*, Lat: *prudentia*), justice (Gk: *dikaíosunē*, Lat: *iustitia*), self-control (Gk: *sophrosunē*, Lat: *temperantia*), and courage (Gk: *andreia*, Lat: *fortitudo*). These four virtues, sometimes accompanied by others (e.g. Cicero, *Pro Murena* 30; *Cat.* 2.25), represented *virtus* for Cicero (McDonnell 2006: 128–34). This usage only developed in Latin in the first century BCE, and it did not totally displace other usages of the word, particularly its relation to martial courage.

Manliness represented by these four virtues stresses a man's control over himself (Conway 2008: 21–29; Moore & Anderson 1998). Mastery of others was dependent upon mastery over one's self. This idea originates in Greek thought, but Romans came to accept it as part of their conception of masculinity as well. Though Cicero borrowed heavily from

the Greeks in linking masculinity to the cardinal virtues, somewhat ironically, he also argued that *virtus* was a special possession of the Romans, one that enabled their dominance over other ethnic groups.

But *virtus* usually wards off a cruel and dishonorable death, and *virtus* is the badge of the Roman race and breed. Cling fast to it, I beg you men of Rome, as a heritage that your ancestors bequeathed to you. All else is false and doubtful, ephemeral and changeable: only *virtus* stands firmly fixed, its roots run deep, it can never be shaken by any violence, never moved from its place. With this *virtus* your ancestors conquered all Italy first, then razed Carthage, overthrew Numantia, brought the most powerful kings and the most warlike peoples under the sway of this empire [Cicero, *Philippics* 4; quoted in McDonnell 2006: 3].

### **Jesus's Masculinity in the Gospels**

A number of important studies focus on Jesus' masculinity as depicted in New Testament and early Christian texts (Clines 1998; Neyrey 1998; Conway 2008; Moore 2001; Anderson & Moore 2003; Liew 2003; Thurman 2003; Moxnes 2003). These studies vary significantly in their assessment of Jesus' masculinity. Clines, for example, assesses Jesus in light of cross-temporal and cross-cultural markers of masculinity: strength (he does mighty deeds), violence (he performs the temple act), powerful and pervasive speech (he often persuades the crowds and silences his critics), male bonding/homosociality and womanlessness (he spends most of his time with male companions among whom there is "no wife, no female friend" [367]), and binary thought (1998: 367; see Moore 2003: 9, for a critique of this final characteristic as indicative of masculinity). Clines concludes by calling Jesus a "traditional man...unaware of his masculinity" and stressing "that masculinity is only one way of being human" (1998: 375). It is also important to note that Clines is speaking here of a composite, "fictional character Jesus" rather than the Jesus of any single Gospel or the historical Jesus.

While Clines reads Jesus as a traditional male, others have seen far more complexity in the case of Jesus. Neyrey, for example, (1998; 2003) reads Matthew's Jesus as a rather typical Mediterranean male. He spends time outdoors, with mostly male company, has public voice, is labeled publicly with public titles (e.g. son of God, son of David, prophet), defends

his honor when it is challenged, but ultimately suggests to his disciples not to pursue the defense of their honor. Anderson and Moore see Jesus' masculinity in Matthew as a complex picture of producing "spiritual" heirs (2003). Though neither Jesus nor his disciples produce biological heirs, there is a hierarchical dimension to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples (2003: 75). The disciples stand in the position of slaves and children relative to God, the patriarchal ruler of all people (2003: 77–81). Finally, the eunuch saying (Matt 19:12) puts the disciples in the position of "a physically impotent but spiritually potent masculinity that engenders not literal children, but spiritual children, spiritual fruit" (2003: 90).

Liew (2003), Conway (2008), and Thurman (2003) all stress the fact that Jesus is pierced by his crucifixion. According to traditional standards of masculinity, his inability to keep himself from being pierced would disqualify Jesus from achieving the status of "manhood." Liew notes many ways in which Jesus does perform traditional masculine roles: he is consistently located outdoors, his parable of the seeds is a metaphoric rendition of childbearing, he routinely wins public contests for honor, and he acts as the *paterfamilias* for the absent deity, but at the same time, he undergoes the shameful public spectacle of crucifixion. Liew, in the end, however, sees patriarchy as substantially reinforced by Mark's hierarchically-ranked characters being forced to submit to authorities. Thurman reads Jesus as mimicking the colonial hegemonic practices of Roman masculinity but turning them on their head by "strategically taking up a 'feminized' positionality of servile suffering in explicit resistance to Roman colonial models of domination" (Thurman 2003: 144). To this end, Thurman disagrees with Liew that Jesus reproduces the patriarchal order of the Romans.

Conway gives perhaps the fullest picture of Jesus' masculinity when she addresses Jesus' masculinity in several New Testament writings. Mark's Jesus possesses the Spirit, which provides power for Jesus to best the demons in competition by driving them out and the scribes by outdoing them in verbal jousting (Conway 2008: 91–96). His death can also be viewed as a noble death on behalf of others. At the same time, Jesus submits to the superior authority of God and is killed in an emasculating way (2008: 100–04). Matthew's Gospel presents a Jesus who challenges the household structure and family hierarchy "with a life of ascetic renunciation" while at the same time offering a Jesus who dominates public honor contests and is labeled son of David, king and lord (Con-

way 2008: 107–25). Luke's Jesus looks more like an elite Roman male in that he impresses the temple authorities with his learning, is referred to as "savior," acts as a pious follower of God, and critiques the Gentile rulers at the last meal with the disciples (2008: 127–42). Finally, Jesus' masculinity in John features complete self-mastery as "he faces death with the strength and courage of a superhero" (2008: 147). Jesus is in control of every situation in John, and he is submissive only in relation to the one higher power, God.

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The disciples are not manly in the Gospel of Mark, particularly because they are often motivated by fear. . .

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Moxnes (2003; 2004; 2007) has written a number of studies assessing the masculinity of Jesus. He uses a queer studies approach to argue that Jesus rejects the traditional patriarchal structure of households and offers an alternative located in "queer" space. The household is place in two senses: it is physical space, and it is the set of relationships comprised by the authority of the *paterfamilias* and the obedience of his subordinates (Moxnes 2003: 28–45). Jesus' own constant movement, as well as the movement to which he called his disciples, locates them in "queer space," a place where the traditional authorities of patriarchal rule could be called into question.

## The Disciples' Masculinity

Though Jesus' masculinity is complex in the Gospels, the disciples' masculinity frequently lacks most markers of hegemonic masculinity. As noted above, Jesus calls the disciples to adopt the metaphorical position of slaves and children. There is further evidence for the "unmanning" of the disciples. Neyrey has argued rather forcefully that the manner in which Jesus instructs his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew removes them from the "playing field" of the pursuit of honor (1998: 212–28; 2003). They are not to pursue honor through traditionally masculine means like public recognition (e.g. Matt 6:1–4; 23:6–12), vengeance (e.g. 5:38–42), or the accumulation of wealth (6:19–21). Liew suggests that the disciples are not manly in the Gospel of Mark, particularly because they are often motivated by fear (2003: 114–18).

Moxnes (2007) paints a slightly more complex picture of discipleship in Luke. In his reading, Luke presents the first disciples whom Jesus calls as householders rather than as working for their fathers. They themselves leave the role of householder for the space of following Jesus. Males are called to operate in queer spaces "without any indication of where male identity is to be located" (2007: 164).

D'Angelo (2002: 68), on the other hand, says that, in Luke–Acts, Jesus' disciples represent hegemonic masculinity. Jesus' followers are presented as

suited both by their qualifications and by their investment with divine power to be its ambassadors before the Roman world. The audiences they draw are men of their city, solemn civic assemblies well suited to give appropriate hearing to their message.

The disciples in Acts are public orators (and wonder workers) whose appeal to the crowds inspires loyalty to the new movement at the same time it provokes envy in others.

### ***Paul's masculinity***

As with other figures in the New Testament, the studies of Paul that focus on masculinity in his letters are relatively few. Although space precludes a full discussion of all of the available works that treat Paul from a gender-critical perspective (see, for example, Kahl 2010), works by Bartchy (1999, 2003, 2005, 2014), Ivarsson (2007, 2008), Swancutt (2003), Kahl (2001), and Glancy (2004) deserve special attention here.

In a series of articles, Bartchy has argued that Paul, following Jesus, rejected a dominance-based masculinity for the Christ groups. Bartchy notes that almost all of the members of Paul's groups would have been reared to consider dominance a manly virtue, and Paul's gospel of "weakness" and "service" would have seemed quite counter to typical Mediterranean manliness. Bartchy argues that Paul's lack of "father" for a title within his communities and his stress on his own weakness indicates that Paul resisted the urge to assume the role of dominant male within these groups (2003). Paul created fictive kinship groups, but these groups were "brothers and sisters" without a *paterfamilias*. For Bartchy, Paul's refusal to respond with typical male dominance likely cost him adherents to his group. They might have preferred that Paul come "with a stick," though Bartchy helpfully suggests that it is

difficult to imagine what kind of "stick" Paul might have been able to use against them (2005; 2014).

Kahl's (2001) assessment of Galatians 3:28 fits nicely alongside Bartchy's reading of Paul's undermining of ancient patriarchy. Noting that Galatians deals extensively with masculine bodies, particularly with the issue of circumcision, Kahl argues that Paul ultimately undoes the connection between men and their human fathers through the use of the motherhood language in Galatians 4. "But this time the definition rests on the female part alone: Abraham's heirs are qualified exclusively by their mother, the free woman rather than the slave woman (4.30–31)" (2001: 43). Paul's appeal to himself as mother and his rejection of the pursuit of honor further Paul's insistence on "the end of the social hierarchies and exclusions (re)produced by" any kind of difference, including sexual difference (2001: 44).

Glancy's reading of Paul's "marked body" also supports the conclusion that Paul resists a masculinity of dominance. Unlike warriors whose wounds are typically on the front of the body, wounds from being whipped normally conveyed being dominated by another person, typically a sign of unmanliness (2004: 108). For some Stoics, however, the ability to receive whippings without being mastered was a sign of the "hegemonic masculine virtue of self-control" (2004: 116). The "superapostles" of 2 Corinthians appealed to Paul's beating as a sign of his lack of manliness, though Paul turned their reading upon its head by suggesting that his marks were in the service of Christ and therefore did not represent being dominated. Paul suggests instead that the Corinthians have subordinated themselves to Paul's gospel, and it is they who are unmanly rather than Paul (2004: 130).

For Ivarsson and Swancutt, Paul does rhetorically invoke traditional masculine ideals of dominance and self-mastery in order to shame his opponents. Ivarsson argues that Paul does, in fact, wield a stick, but that the stick is rhetorical (2007: 172). Building upon Lacquer's one-sex model and the notion that mastery is the root virtue of masculinity in ancient Greek-speaking contexts, Ivarsson argues that by listing the vices of his opponents in 1 Corinthians 5:10–11 and 6:9–10, Paul rhetorically emasculates his opponents by suggesting that they lack any form of self-mastery (2007: 176–83). Paul's calling attention to the Corinthians' lack of expulsion of the man who has his father's woman, their toleration for *porneia*, and their inability to live in sexless marriages all indicate that they, unlike Paul (1 Cor 6:12) are dominated by women and

unable to master themselves (2008: 188–97).

Swancutt (2003) argues that Paul's appeal to "nature" and "unnatural" acts in Romans 1:26–27 evokes a Stoic discourse about living in accord with nature. Swancutt sees Paul's condemnations in Romans 1:26–27 as being addressed, not against the modern concept of homosexuality, but against men who are sexually passive and women who are sexually active in contrast to Roman ideals about sexual behavior. Ultimately Paul uses Stoic conventions to denounce the Stoics' "life 'in accord with nature'" and "the Stoicized Romanitas" by appealing to "God's superior power (*dynamis* 1:16, 20) and benevolence (2:4)" which "gave him the right to rule over and judge the Roman" (2003: 231).

Glancy (2003), D'Angelo (2003b), and Mendoza (2014) have all recently argued that the "Paul" of the Pastoral Epistles crafts masculinity more in line with the prevailing cultural notions of men dominating women, slaves, and children. D'Angelo argues that these texts, together with the Shepherd of Hermas and Luke–Acts, are early second-century texts that show both "accommodation and resistance to Trajan's and Hadrian's attempts to reassert the 'family values' that played a substantial role in Augustus's consolidation of power" (2003b: 266). All three authors describe how the Pastor of these letters makes control over both oneself and one's household necessary for leadership positions within the Christ communities, accomplished especially by the "man-to-man" advice given from "Paul" to his protégés Timothy and Titus. Through this literary genre, the Paul of the Pastoral Epistles is able to combat alternative types of manhood that threaten the sanctity of households (2003: 249–57).

## Conclusion

Early Christians adopted, mimicked, transformed, and rejected Greek and Roman masculinities. Rather consistent in the New Testament texts is an inability to use violence on the part of Jesus' followers, though several New Testament authors imagined ultimately that God would enact violence on those who opposed God's command and followers. Self-mastery appears as a rather consistent theme in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and early Christian sources. The focus on the virtues and the ability to control oneself with regard to the passions consistently marks manhood in these texts. Women who exhibit these qualities can be seen as "manly," while men who do not do so slide down the gender gradient toward effeminacy or

"unmanliness" (see Burrus 2000; Kuefler 2001; Cobb 2012).

Moxnes (2014: 72–73) concludes his interesting assessment of the role of unexamined gender constructs in historical Jesus scholarship with an appeal to be inclusive when it comes to gender. Noting that many recent studies of Jesus include a section on "Jesus and women", Moxnes laments that lack of corresponding sections on "Jesus and men." The recent studies surveyed here go a long way toward addressing that deficit, but a fuller picture of Jesus and gender, focusing on gender expectations and how people live them out or challenge them for both genders, could provide new answers to the questions about early Christians' own understandings of gender. Many of the studies highlighted in this Reader's Guide showcase the possibility for such gains. Fuller appreciation for how Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians constructed, contested, preserved, and reconstructed ideals of manliness deepens our understanding of New Testament and early Christian texts. Further information on how these ideals were and were not lived out among those producing and contesting them is essential for a more complete sense of the contours of gender in these ancient contexts.

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