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## Correcting the Imbalance: The Masculinity of Jesus in its Original Matthean Context

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CORRECTING THE IMBALANCE: THE MASCULINITY OF JESUS IN ITS  
ORIGINAL MATTHEAN CONTEXT

Presented  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements of:

**Bachelor of Theology (Honours)**

To the Faculty of Theology,  
Avondale College  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2010

Lyndelle Claire Alyse Peterson

## STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Lyndelle Claire Alyse Peterson hereby declare that:

- i. this thesis is my own work,
- ii. all persons consulted, and all assistance rendered are fully acknowledged,
- iii. all references used are indicated in the text and accurately reported in the listed references,
- iv. the substance of this thesis has not been presented, in whole, or part by me, to any other institution for a degree.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks are due for my many illustrious proofreaders who willingly gave their time and effort to edit my work. I am indebted to Eric Livingstone who, in the final hour, graciously found time in his busy schedule to read my work and offer thoughts to give my research the extra padding it desperately needed. Thanks also go to Sharyn Brady. Her outstanding abilities in writing and composition took my research from a grammatical nightmare to a fluid and cohesive piece of work. My thanks also go to James Topp who, though busy with his own academic workload, graciously offered to look at my work and provided an extra eye for mistakes that others had missed. Finally, to my mum who, though unversed in theology, was eager to look at whatever I had produced and was consistently willing and present to offer advice and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

A discussion of the overemphasis of the stereotypically feminine characteristics of Jesus leads to a comparison and analysis of an ancient Jewish male gender ideology against the portrayal of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. A five-point model is developed from an in-depth look at different examples and references to masculinity in Jewish literature of the second temple period. The model is then contrasted with examples and excerpts from the Gospel of Matthew that reveal not only cohesion with the model but also extends to reveal that the message of Jesus is distinctly masculine. The implications of Jesus masculinity is then discussed in terms of faltering male attendance in the Australian Christian church.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The 2001 Australian National Church Life Survey (NCLS) indicated that the majority of church attendees are women over 40 with a university degree; in their first marriage and either employed or retired.<sup>1</sup> Females comprise over 61% of the church's population, which begs the question; where are all the men? Conversely, men are severely underrepresented (39%) reflecting a significant absence from Australian churches.<sup>2</sup> Attendance statistics are even lower for males aged between 18-25. "The stallions hang out in bars; the geldings hang out in church,"<sup>3</sup> is the way David Murrow illustrates the problem. Charles Spurgeon hinted at a similar scenario in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century;

When I say that a man in Christ is a man, I mean, that if he be truly in Christ, he is therefore manly. There has got abroad a notion, somehow, that if you become a Christian you must sink your manliness and turn milksop.<sup>4</sup>

The irony is that this problem can still exist within a denomination that is dominated by male leadership. Unfortunately clergy have long had their masculinity questioned.<sup>5</sup> As one lay person observed, "life is a football game, with the men

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<sup>1</sup> NCLS Research, *Attender Demographics2001* [cited]; available from <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=5073>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 74.

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Spurgeon as cited in Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 4.

fighting it out on the gridiron, while the minister is up in the grandstand, explaining it to the ladies.”<sup>6</sup> Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church, describes the church as manufacturing “a bunch of nice, soft, tender, chickified church boys...” and these are the future leaders of church congregations.<sup>7</sup> What the church seems to lack is a “strong tonic of virility”<sup>8</sup> in the form of good masculine role models. The aspect of church that men find least appealing, argues O’Brien is not the services or programs, but rather the concept of Jesus, as presented by the church.<sup>9</sup> The modern Christian church has feminised Jesus into a caring and compassionate, soft and weak, meek and mild role model when, as Robert Warren Conant suggested in 1905, “Christ stands for the highest type of a strong, virile man, and there was nothing effeminate about him.”<sup>10</sup> Perhaps perceptions of Jesus require a paradigm shift.

## **1.2 Statement and Background of the Research Problem**

Contemporary Christianity has tended to focus on the characteristics of Christ that are typically associated with the feminine, resulting in an unbalanced perception of the humanity of Christ. There is a significant lacuna in the New Testament literature that explores the gender ideology of the first century and more specifically the masculinity of Christ. While fragments of literature discuss the masculinity of Christ

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<sup>6</sup> Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Brandon O'Brien, ‘A Jesus for Real Men: What the New Masculinity Movement Gets Right and Wrong’, *Christianity Today* 52 (2008): 48-52 49.

<sup>8</sup> Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>9</sup> O'Brien, ‘A Jesus for Real Men: What the New Masculinity Movement Gets Right and Wrong,’ 49.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



in terms of Greco-Roman masculinity, there is little discussion of Jewish gender ideology especially considering Christ's Semitic heritage. This literature also lacks a concrete framework and fails to develop a conclusive model of ancient Jewish gender ideology that can be easily contrasted and analysed with the New Testament text.

### **1.3 The Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the construction of gender in the ancient world and how this interacts with the New Testament text. As noted earlier, Christianity in general, tends to focus on what our contemporary culture would categorise as the more stereotypically feminine aspects of Christ's character. These include attributes such as compassion, nurture, understanding and sympathy, and while these may be valid descriptions and well-supported traits it does leave one to question what 'type' of a man Jesus actually was. The aim of this research then is to consider how Jesus fits into his contemporary gender ideology and if indeed he fits the typical masculine stereotype at all. A secondary function of this research is to raise awareness of the importance of sociological and gender studies to the interpretation of the New Testament text. There is a significant void in the research literature that explores gender and social ideologies from the ancient world and how they inform an interpretation of the New Testament text.

### **1.4 Definition of Terms**

The nature of this research and the fluidity of the term 'masculinity' require clarification. This section will provide a brief explanation of the nature of masculinity and how it will be referred to throughout the paper.

## *Masculinity*

Gender studies has faced many difficulties during its short academic life and many have struggled to make sense of the relative nature of the different facets and terminology ascribed to gender and the study of sexual-social definition. There is, however, one consensus that is resoundingly clear throughout the literature; gender and physical sex are two separate entities that neither define nor influence the other. For one to be male in sexual orientation does not automatically make one masculine in gender and likewise, for one to be female in sexual orientation does not automatically classify one as feminine in gender. Being endowed with male biology has little influence on a classification as manly or masculine. Masculinity in itself has little universality or autonomy, but is rather culturally determined, a product of its upbringing.<sup>11</sup> As a result, masculinity becomes something that is fluid and often turbulent, a state that one is constantly fighting to sustain.

Podles suggests that the turbulent nature of this state is explained through the influence of a mother on the male child.<sup>12</sup> As the mother is usually the primary caregiver during the early years of a boy's life, there is a certain bond that must be altered as a boy enters manhood. Only when this bond from the mother is broken can a man attain true masculinity and, as a result, be united with another female.

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen D. Moore Janice Capel Anderson, ed., *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 68.

<sup>12</sup> Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* Podles gives an extensive overview to masculinity in its spiritual and developmental forms in his chapter, *What is Masculinity?* He draws on physiological, psychological and spiritual development as well as drawing on somewhat abstract themes.

Masculinity is a constant fight for separation from the feminine; a struggle that brings purpose and identity to a male.

This struggle is also evident in stereotypical gender roles and functions. Females have the privilege of giving life, a process in which the male is somewhat expendable. For the male to prove and justify their existence they must also contribute to the preservation and continuation of life and, the human race. Gilmore suggests that this course can be achieved through protection of the family and broader community.

Men nurture their societies by shedding their blood, their sweat and their semen, by bringing home food for both child and mother, by producing children, and by dying if necessary in far away places to provide a safe haven for their people.<sup>13</sup>

As previously noted, to be male does not automatically equate to masculinity: it is not a qualifying feature of a man, but rather, supplemental to the masculine potential. It has been argued that gender is primarily a social and culturally determined construct.<sup>14</sup> Masculinity is fragile and constantly evolving, thus understanding the cultural milieu that frames a particular gender ideology is integral to discovering a construction of masculinity.

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<sup>13</sup> David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 230.

<sup>14</sup> Sharon Lea Mattila, 'Wisdom, Sense Perception, Nature and Philo's Gender Gradient', *Harvard Theological Journal* 89 (1996): 103-29.

## **1.5 Limitations**

The progressive nature of this research and masculine studies in general means there are few resources available for gender construction in the context of Ancient Jewish literature. The literature itself imposes a limitation to the success of this study, not just because of the lack of research and resources but also because there are still areas of the literature that are unresolved in terms of dating, genre and purpose. It is difficult to identify a gender ideology when there is a possibility that the author may have never written with the intention to express any specific ideas related to gender. It requires extensive analysis and cautious management in order to ensure that the selected passages that comprise the model are true to both the context of the passage and the authors' intentions for the written work.

This is also true for the literature of the New Testament. When contrasting the model of ancient Jewish masculinity with the portrayal of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew it is difficult to ensure that the overall theme and meaning of the different passages are retained during the analysis. Hence, a further limitation is that the written word itself lacks detail and explanations that are important for contrasting a gender model and for understanding the 'person' of Jesus.

## **1.6 Description of the Structure of the Thesis**

This paper will discuss ancient Jewish constructions of gender ideology and how these relate to the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. A discussion of the main sources used to construct the gender model will introduce the topic and provide important background information, as well as the rationale undergirding the choice of literature. This will be followed by an in-depth analysis at specific sections within

the literature that contribute to and form a gender model. Similar ideas and constructions from the literature will be organised under different characteristics of the gender construct to allow for easier navigation. After the gender ideology has been sufficiently explained and constructed an analysis will take place, which will explore how the model complements or contradicts the characteristics of Jesus portrayed in the Gospel of Matthew. Again, similar inconsistencies and consistencies will be organised under headings to allow for easier understanding and navigation. Finally, a discussion of the findings and their ramifications for Christianity and religious studies will conclude the paper.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the literature that is prevalent in the area of masculine studies as it relates to the New Testament. The area of general masculine studies, especially from a psychological perspective is quite extensive, however, there is a discernable lack of literature that dialogues with masculine studies in a biblical setting, especially with reference to the New Testament. Only recently has academic literature in this area really emerged.

Arising out of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the ‘men’s movement’ was called a response to the growing popularity and authority of the feminist movement.<sup>15</sup> It has been suggested that Joan Scott’s work in 1986, *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, was one of the first to address this issue.<sup>16</sup> Thus, literature related to the discussion of masculinity is limited at best and more so in terms of biblical studies. Through the emergence of feminist theology, femininity and religious experience through textual interpretation provided a new focus where scholars sought to answer these same questions from a masculine perspective. The institution of Men’s Studies in Religion as a study unit in 1990 by the American Academy of Religion encouraged these endeavours and by 1991 approximately 400 courses of a similar

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<sup>15</sup> Locating the inauguration of any sort of intellectual movement is difficult, and of masculinity studies is basically impossible. A rise out of the feminist movement of the 1970s appears to be the general consensus (Lofton 23).

<sup>16</sup> Kathryn Lofton, ‘The Man Stays in the Picture: Recent Works in Religion and Masculinity’, *Religious Studies Review* 30 (2004): 23-28.

nature were being taught across North America.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, there still appears to be a lack of male scholars who are interested in pursuing this discipline.

At the time of writing, published works dealing with the various constructions and representations of masculinity in the New Testament are rare. In relation to Jewish concepts and constructions the literature is limited even more so. As a result, I have chosen to focus on the literature that is of direct relevance to this research.

## **2.2 Masculine Studies in the New Testament**

### *Behold the Man - Colleen Conway*

Perhaps the most recent championing of masculinity as it relates to biblical studies and, specifically, Christology, came from Colleen Conway. In *Behold the Man*, Conway looks at gender and masculinity as it is portrayed in the Gospels, Pauline writings and Revelation. Though a relatively new scholar in the area of masculinity studies, she has made major contributions with regards to gender research in the New Testament.

The first part of the text outlines a brief history of gender ideology in the Christian church, highlighting the need for this type of research. Conway states clearly that her analysis is of “the various ways the New Testament authors related to the ideology of masculinity that was dominant during this particular historical period,”<sup>18</sup> by

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<sup>17</sup> Janice Capel Anderson, ed., *New Testament Masculinities 2*. See the introductory chapter for a full overview of the history and progression of masculine studies in religion.

<sup>18</sup> Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 7.

investigating how the New Testament authors established Jesus' masculinity in the Greco-Roman context.

Conway has two main presuppositions that she brings to the literature, concerning the relationship between context and text and the imperial context of the New Testament writings. She draws on facets of post-colonial theory, specifically the concept of "mimicry" in order to justify the locus of her research. The concept of "mimicry" looks at the influence a dominating power has on the local community. It takes examples from European expansion and colonisation as evidence of the tendency of an indigenous population to adapt and assimilate the ideals and culture of the dominating power. This theory is used as evidence to suggest that a construction of masculinity in the New Testament as it relates to Jesus would be primarily Greco-Roman in nature.

Unfortunately this emphasis doesn't provide insights into the religious context of the people and person of Jesus, a position that this present research will attempt. In Conway's interaction with the book of Matthew there is little reference or regard to the Jewish influences on Jesus' teaching as well as the author of the Gospel. The New Testament texts were undoubtedly influenced by the Greco-Roman cultural surroundings, however, one could argue that this would have had little impact on such an ancient religion that had a rich heritage of social and cultural rituals and practices. Although Judaism in Palestine was diverse, there was nonetheless a national, religious and ethical bond that distinguished Jews from the surrounding and even dominating nations, despite the many influences impacting Judaism during this



time period.<sup>19</sup> This uniqueness was especially true of their belief system but was also present in their lifestyle and practices. Adherence to their sacred scriptures and their other religious observances made up the ethos of the Jewish nation, separating them from the surrounding pagan cultures in terms of values, social expectations and culture. These religious observances and festivals also served as a definitive identity marker in Judaism, thus Judaism is unavoidably set apart on the basis of their religious heritage, an idea that will be explored further in this paper.

*New Testament Masculinities* - ed. Janice Capel Anderson & Stephen D. Moore

*New Testament Masculinities* is a compilation of essays by leading scholars in Biblical and gender studies, dedicated to the expression of masculinity in the New Testament. While not restricted to the gospels or the person of Jesus, it gives remarkable insight into cultural masculinity and men in general during the ancient period, as well as different approaches to gender analysis throughout ancient literature.

Moore, in the introduction, suggests that the world of biblical scholarship was originally and unavoidably masculine, because of the many male scholars who unknowingly read and analysed information through their own masculine framework.<sup>20</sup> This issue of gender bias became apparent when the feminist movement demonstrated the impact and importance of gender in relation to the

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<sup>19</sup> A. B. du Toit, *The New Testament Milieu* (Orion: Halfway House, 1998), 713.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen D. Moore, '“O Man, Who Art Thou...?": Masculinity Studies and New Testament Studies' in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore & Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 2.

biblical text and the way scripture is read and interpreted. The feminist movement brought with it different features and methods that were later adopted by the masculine movement and, while friction continues, it appears that the benefits of ongoing research outweigh the differences. This aspect of the literature essentially laid the foundations for this research. A collaboration of masculinity studies and social-scientific criticism will lay the groundwork for movement into a progressive and unprecedented exploration into biblical research, a definite motivating factor for this research.

The literature that has proven particularly valuable in setting the framework for this research consists of the articles related to the presentation of Jesus in Matthew.

Neyrey, develops the argument that based on an analysis of the Greco-Roman literature, masculinity in Greco-Roman society revolves around a theoretical gender divided space.<sup>21</sup> The framework and methodology that Neyrey employs is integral to this research. Admittedly, Neyrey covers a broader scope, involving more than five centuries of Greco-Roman literature with some aspects of Jewish literature included, however, there are important methodologies and theories that will inform this paper.

#### *The Church Impotent - Leon J. Podles*

Podles work provides integral foundational information for this research. Though lacking an overtly academic nature, it draws on the key issues that have arisen in the Christian church from an absence of gender studies. Of primary importance for this research was Podles' assessment of the nature of gender in the current Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, 'Jesus, Gender and the Gospel of Matthew' in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

culture, and a religious perspective on masculinity. During the introductory chapters, Podles describes an obstacle in Christian expression where masculinity has, in a basic sense, been suppressed through tradition, belief, and Church hierarchy. He attributes this obstacle to the influx of feminist theology and “weak male leadership.”<sup>22</sup>

Podles provides significant contributions to anthropology and developmental psychology, which have been drawn on for this research. Through a discussion of issues related to the nature and gender of God he attempts to express some conclusions on masculinity that will influence and affect the local church and Christianity at large. While Podles employs a contemporary model whereby masculinity is a pattern of union, separation and reunion, his underlying methodology has been useful in creating an ancient Jewish model based on literature interpretation.

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<sup>22</sup> Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* xiii.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Though published works on masculinity and its interaction with the New Testament text are limited, there appears to exist a consistency with their methodology. There are few essays that take a differing approach to the discipline, and, as noted above, these have proven problematic.<sup>23</sup> As a result, there is congruity in maintaining unity in theory and methodology with scholars that have gone before.

The current, prominent and unified methodology, attempts to develop an idea or overview of the prominent gender stereotypes of the literature of choice (nationality and time period of literature have shown differences). This research will draw on this current methodology to provide a framework for gender ideology in ancient Judaism that moves beyond the theoretical and provides a concrete model.

### **3.2 Outline of Methodology**

#### **3.2.1 Socio-Scientific and Historical Criticism**

Independently, historical criticism has been criticised for encouraging ethnocentricity.<sup>24</sup> Uniting this criticism with a social scientific methodology will provide impartiality in the approach and thus avoid this issue.

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<sup>23</sup> Janice Capel Anderson, ed., *New Testament Masculinities*.

<sup>24</sup> Andries van Aarde, 'Methods and Models in the Quest for the Historical Jesus: Historical Criticism and/or Social Scientific Criticism', *Theological Studies* 58 (2002): 419-39 Van Aarde provides an interesting discussion regarding the co-existence of social scientific methods with historical methods.

The main goal of social scientific criticism is to understand how the initial audience would have understood a certain piece of literature in its original oral or written forms.<sup>25</sup> While the document in question expresses what the author actually said, there is little information regarding the author's intentions, premise and the different presuppositions that were present at the time of writing. Unfortunately, a comprehensive analysis of an author from antiquity is virtually impossible, leaving one to 'make do' with what is available. For this reason, social-scientific criticism considers the audience to gain a greater understanding and insight into the intentions of the author - realising that each author is a part of a larger, yet culturally defined, social system that has an undeniable impact on the text in question.

Typically this criticism is used in the analysis of narrative texts and the New Testament. However, different facets have proven useful in biblical gender studies. Gender in itself is a product of social determination and thus a thorough understanding of the social milieu surrounding specific texts is integral to a complete understanding of a writer's philosophy. This in turn has an impact on the way primary sources are regarded: not only do they address certain issues and/or historical or philosophical perspective, they are also representative of the broader social culture itself. As a result, these original texts become determining factors for the social-scientific perspective of gender studies as they do not merely *exist* in a social environment that contributes to our understanding of gender during that time period, but are also involved in *creating* that environment, simultaneously.

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<sup>25</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart, ed., *The Social World of the New Testament* (Peabody: Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 9.

In *Mark & Method*, Rhoads uses an analogy to compare viewing the New Testament texts as though looking through an open door. Rather than entering through the door, we see the opening as a part of the décor of the room on our side. The New Testament texts are social documents that inform us about the first century social world yet are often read with our own social lens. Instead of imposing our own cultural and social understanding on these texts, Rhoads says “we need to enter in imagination through the door into the world on the other side of the door, in order to see the text in the context of the very different cultures of first-century Palestine and the Roman Empire.”<sup>26</sup> Not only are the texts socially conditioned but they are also socially historical in themselves and this requires a delicate and thorough understanding of the original context. This involves reconstructing the worldview of their 1<sup>st</sup> Century context: the everyday assumptions, culture and structure that impacted daily living. Rhoads refers to this concept as sociology of knowledge, looking at how the original audience understood their world, society and the meaning of day-to-day life. This is an essential part of gender studies as it includes an understanding of how the 1<sup>st</sup> Century person viewed themselves, including the different values and beliefs one had in terms of their own person and how they fit into the broader society.

Looking at the 1st Century in terms of the Jewish society provides an even deeper understanding of the text of Matthew. The values, customs, how the society organises and interprets experiences in their everyday life and shared beliefs about the meaning of life and in this case gender and gender roles, constitute the ‘fabric of

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<sup>26</sup> David Rhoads, ‘Social Criticism’ in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Stephen D. Moore Janice Capel Anderson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 146.

meaning' that distinguishes a group. Rhoads describes the sociology of knowledge as "the everyday understandings of the world that people in a culture take for granted, what everyone in that culture "knows" to be true,"<sup>27</sup> a lens through which we need to understand and study gender ideologies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century; gender concepts that aren't officially stated but rather assumed.

This criticism also advocates the identification of a social location, that is, the place of an individual or community within the group factors of ethnicity, gender, social and economic class etc.<sup>28</sup> Rhoads suggests that "group identities are especially important in light of the fact that, in the first-century cultures, people got their identity from their embeddedness in groups."<sup>29</sup> This is especially true of the Jewish culture. Not only are they defined by their customs and rituals but it is important to recognise that they hold a group identity within the broader culture of the Roman Empire. Thus, to look at the Gospel record of Matthew in relation to the Jewish culture is the most logical context with which to compare it. The Jewish group is a community within itself apart from the Roman Empire with its own social group identity.

### **3.3 Design of Study**

The design of the study attempts to cover as much of the literature as possible while still remaining true to the context and intended meaning of the different texts. A preliminary reading of the scope of literature revealed different words and phrases

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<sup>27</sup> Rhoads, 'Social Criticism' 150.

<sup>28</sup> For further discussion see 'Social Criticism' 154.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

that appeared to be commonly associated with different masculine ideals. A thorough search of the literature revealed a number of different references to these individual words and phrases that proved important in building a gender ideology.

To avoid misunderstanding the intended context of each different word or phrase, an analysis of the original language was undertaken and compared with the other uses of that term throughout the literature. Similar uses were then grouped together in order to form cohesive ideas and themes that were apparent throughout. Phrases proved to be the most accurate and extensive in gaining an understanding of masculinity and building a gender ideology. Firstly, this was because the phrases generally were stationed in their own context; secondly, phrases prove more colloquial, thus providing greater insight into the presiding culture.



## Chapter 4 Ancient Jewish Masculinity

### 4.1 Introduction

There is no term in antiquity that denotes the religion we have come to know as Judaism. When an ancient writing refers to *Ioudaiosm* they are not referring to a mere religious group or faith, rather, it would appear that they are referring to an *ethnos*.<sup>30</sup> Cohen tackles this ambiguity, suggesting that in terms of defining *Ioudaios*, terms like “Egyptian,” “Syrian,” or “Cappadocian” prove inadequate, as these terms fail to encompass “culture” or “religion” the way *Ioudaios* does. The *Ioudaios*, as such, weren’t just a religious, geographic or ethnic group but rather had the potential to encompass all three spheres.<sup>31</sup> Mason makes an interesting observation in suggesting that while in modern society we may ask a person “Are you religious?” or “What is your religion?”, these questions didn’t exist in antiquity, as the various elements that contributed to religion were inseparable with the rest of their lives.<sup>32</sup> Essentially, what we would typically define as a religion was more appropriately a culture; a social structure or *ethnos*.

Schafer continues this line of thought by referring to the *Ioudaios* obsession with traditions and customs. In terms of the gentile world the *Ioudaios* separated

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Boyarin, ‘The Christian Invention of Judaism’ in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 150. Boyarin notes that the only text to use this word, II Maccabees, does so not as a religion but as a cohesive and complex society. He argues that the term Judaism never really appears, as a religion, until the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>31</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Mason, ‘Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History’, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457-512.

themselves from the common cultural and religious customs and beliefs; exhibiting an air of exclusiveness.<sup>33</sup> With this in mind, it would seem logical to examine and build a gender ideology from within the *Ioudaios* context as opposed to the larger context of the Roman imperial world. Furthermore, this *Ioudaios* is the context in which Jesus lived, taught and experienced everyday life.

#### **4.2 Survey of Sources: Dating, Authorship, Relevance**

Primary sources for Jewish literature during the second temple period are not extensive, indicating the importance of ensuring that each primary text is thoroughly considered. Following is an overview of each of the primary literature and its impact on the research in regards to date, authorship and relevance.

Dating ancient documents consistently proves difficult and, for this reason, I have chosen to include a larger scope of literature. Jewish Christians didn't arrive in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D in a vacuum; rather they were part of a rich heritage that influenced not only their beliefs and values but every aspect of their daily life.

The movement from oral to written tradition in the latter part of the first century regarding the Biblical texts further exemplifies the difficulty in dating certain texts. The oral tradition may be considerably older than the written yet there will still be different cultural and social influences on both. The Mishnah, containing the oral traditions spanning the works of centuries of Rabbis, creates considerable difficulty

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34.

for dating and relevance. While the written form is attributed to 200CE<sup>34</sup>, some works have been credited to 200BCE<sup>35</sup>, while further studies indicate the inclusion of teachings that can quite validly be ascribed to the contemporary Pharisees of Jesus' time.<sup>36</sup> It must also be remembered that this document will not only contain the social and cultural influence of the different Rabbis along the timeline but will also include the social and cultural background of the editors.

### **4.3 Description of Model**

#### **4.3.1 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Self-Restraint**

Self-restraint as a characteristic of Jewish masculine ideology is a not a new concept in Biblical scholarship and is pervasive throughout Rabbinic literature.

Unfortunately, there is a void in other Jewish sources that champion this principle; however, because of the extensive use throughout Rabbinic literature it is still important to the overall gender construction. As a result, this section will look primarily at the Rabbinic construction, drawing on other sources where relevant.

According to Rabbinic literature, control or self-restraint is paramount to Torah study, a pursuit that is potentially the highest contributor to the validation of a Jewish mans' masculinity. It is not surprising, then, that there would be allusions to this

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<sup>34</sup> Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Downers Grove: Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 452.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 451. Helyer provides an essential resource to any student of the New Testament.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 45.

concept in other ancient Jewish texts. In the Maccabees study of the Torah, self-control and masculinity are delicately intertwined.

Not so, for the Law teaches us self-control, so that we are masters of all our pleasures and desires and are thoroughly trained in *manliness* so as to endure all pain with readiness; and it teaches justice, so that with all our various dispositions we act fairly, and it teaches righteousness, so that with due reverence we worship only the God who is.<sup>37</sup>

The Law reveals the notion of self-control and enables the Jewish male to master pleasures and desire. This mastery means that one is now thoroughly trained in manliness and ready to endure whatever pain may come. The study of the Torah, a practice reserved for the male gender only, is both an act of and lesson in self-control. This emphasis on the male's ability to quench desire and restrain his passions is a common theme throughout the Rabbinic literature.

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: A man once conceived a passion for a certain woman, and his heart was consumed by his burning desire [his life being endangered thereby]. When the doctors were consulted, they said, 'His only cure is that she shall submit.' Thereupon the Sages said: 'Let him die rather than that she should yield.' Then [said the doctors]; 'let her stand nude before him,' [they answered] 'sooner let him die.' 'Then', said the doctors, 'let her converse with him from behind a fence.' 'Let him die,' the Sages replied 'rather than she should converse with him from behind a fence.' Now R. Jacob b. Idi and R. Samuel b. Nahmani dispute therein. One said that she was a married woman; the other that she was unmarried. Now, this is intelligible on the view, that she was a married woman, but on the latter, that she was unmarried, why such severity? — R. Papa said: Because of the disgrace to her family. R. Aha the son of R. Ika said: That the daughters of Israel may not be immorally dissolute. Then why not marry her? — Marriage would not assuage his passion, even as R. Isaac said: Since the destruction of the Temple, sexual pleasure has been taken [from those who practise it lawfully] and given to sinners, as it is written, *Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 4 Maccabees 5:23–24 (emphasis added).

<sup>38</sup> *b. Sanhedrin*, 75a.

“Happy is the man who fears the Lord” [Ps 112:1]. Happy is the man and not happy is the woman? R. Amram said in the name of Rav, “Happy is the one who repents when he is a man.” R. Yehoshua b. Levi said, “Happy is the one who overpowers his desire *like a man*.”<sup>39</sup>

The masculine achievement of self-restraint was especially proven through sexuality. As noted above, even to take pleasure in sex was considered a sin and thus, as will be shown below, without virtue and therefore unmanly. The first excerpt urges men to resist and restrain from love, despite their passion rendering them physically ill. Even at the risk of one’s health, this teaching urges that it is better to exhibit manly self-restraint than to submit to the lust of sexual desire. The second excerpt asserts explicitly that it is distinctly masculine to overpower the sexual desire and that this restraint ultimately leads to fulfillment.

This distinctly masculine ability to restrain oneself is evidenced more clearly in contrast with the portrayal of women and their lack of self-control. In Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal literature women are often depicted as evil and deceptive in this regard. In Sirach 19:2, women are what make the heart lustful; the Testament of Reuben describes how women, because they have little strength or power, use the wiles of their outward appearance to deceive men<sup>40</sup> and in the same Testament men are warned to guard their senses against the wiles of women.<sup>41</sup> In general, there is a common correlation between a women and deception and manipulation through appearance and sexual desire.<sup>42</sup> There are similar sentiments in

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<sup>39</sup> *b. Aboda Zar.* 19a (emphasis added).

<sup>40</sup> *T. Reub.* 5.1-7. See also *T. Judah* 13; *T. Joseph* 6.7, 10:2-3.

<sup>41</sup> *T. Reub.* 6.2.

<sup>42</sup> See also *T. Issachar* 4.4; *T. of Reub.* 4.1; *T. of Judah* 13.2-3.

the Rabbinic literature. In one tradition, counsel is given to ensure that a man is not left alone with two women, because the women, who are unable to control their sexual desire, will seduce the man, thus causing him to fall into temptation.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, two men are allowed to be alone with the one woman because it is believed that a man, so as not to bring his masculinity into question, will control his sexual desire in the presence of another man, thus avoiding shame.

In one example, a woman charged with adultery cannot be escorted by one man alone so two scholars are sent to help restrain the sexual desires of the woman. Thus, it is presumed that scholars are better able to restrain themselves than the ‘average’ man, another indication that scholarly pursuits are the epitome of masculine activity.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Philo also strongly advocates self-restraint as a manly characteristic. A clear link between effeminacy and intemperance is obvious throughout his work.<sup>45</sup> In the context of the fall in Genesis, Philo uses Eve to demonstrate the womanish want of self-restraint. He suggests that the serpent in Eden is allegorical for pleasures, passion and the like. Philo discourages a man from yielding to pleasure in the haplessly feminine way that Eve did.

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<sup>43</sup> *Mas. Kiddushin* 80b This tract also recounts a story of a woman who presumed dead was carried off by 10 men then proceeded to commit adultery with all of them, illustrating that even in the presence of 10 men certain women are still unable to restrain themselves.

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion see ‘4.3.3 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Torah Study and Protection.’

<sup>45</sup> See Philo, *On Creation*, 158; *On Drunkenness*, 131; *On Dreams*, 2.209-11; *On Abraham*, 135-6.

For the indulgences of intemperance and gluttony, and whatever other vices the immoderate and insatiable pleasures, when completely filled with an abundance of all external things, produce and bring forth, do not allow the soul to proceed onwards by the plain and straight road, but compel it to fall into ravines and gulfs, until they utterly destroy it; but those practices which adhere to patience, and endurance, and moderation, and all other virtues, keep the soul in the straight road, leaving no stumbling block in the way, against which it can stumble and fall. Very naturally, therefore, has Moses declared that temperance clings to the right way, because it is plain that the contrary habit, intemperance, is always straying from the road.<sup>46</sup>

Giving into one's notoriously evil desires is counter to the manly pursuit of virtue.

Thus, any action or behavior provoked by passion or pleasure is considered effeminate. As was evidenced in the Rabbinic literature, females were generally portrayed as incapable of controlling their passions thus self-restraint is a virtue exhibited exclusively by the male gender and thus exercising this privilege demonstrates that a man is indeed a man.

This concept is also evident in Philo's theories on Gods' original intentions for man. Ultimately, Philo claims that God intended that man should live in abundance and plenty, with all his needs fulfilled. However, because of irrational pleasure and lack of self-restraint, unmanly cowardice and injustice prevail.

This is the first reason on account of which it seems that man was created after all other animals. And there is another not altogether unreasonable, which I must mention. At the moment of his first birth, man found all the requisites for life ready prepared for him that he might teach them to those who should come afterwards. Nature all but crying out with a distinct voice, that men, imitating the Author of their being, should pass their lives without labour and without trouble, living in the most ungrudging abundance and plenty. And this would be the case if there were neither irrational pleasures to obtain mastery over the soul raising up a wall of gluttony and lasciviousness, nor desires of glory, or power, or riches, to assume dominion over life, nor pains to contract and warp

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<sup>46</sup> Philo, *On Husbandry*, 101.

the intellect, nor that evil councillor—fear, to restrain the natural inclinations towards virtuous actions, nor folly and cowardice, and injustice, and the incalculable multitude of other evils to attack them. But now that all the evils which I have now been mentioning are vigorous, and that men abandon themselves without restraint to their passions, and to those unbridled and guilty inclinations, which it is impious even to mention, justice encounters them as a suitable chastiser of wicked habits; and therefore, as a punishment for wrong doers, the necessities of life have been made difficult of acquisition.<sup>47</sup>

Restraint, in this context, appears to not merely refer to the passions, but rather encompasses the entirety of a male's existence. Desires for glory, power and riches appear synonymous with passions and pleasure. Ultimately, these desires assume dominion over the life of the man leaving him helpless and, as evidenced in previous writings, ultimately effeminate. As a result of these desires men are rendered impious and thus, it becomes difficult to acquire what is necessary for life.

In the works of Josephus there is little direct indication that self-restraint was considered a masculine characteristic. Restraint in general is uncommon throughout the literature, though this isn't surprising considering the narrative and historical nature of Josephus' work. However, there are significant negative undertones with regards to men that fail to restrain themselves, especially in relation to women and sexual lust. In *The Antiquities of the Jews*, lack of self-restraint is what leads to the downfall of Solomon as a king. Herod decides not to send the young boy Aristoboulos to Antony because this "principal man among the Romans"<sup>48</sup> lacked self-control and Josephus gives an unfavourable description of Caius as: "the utmost pitch of wickedness; a slave to his pleasures and a lover of calumny... so difficult it is for those to obtain the virtue that is necessary for a wise man, who have the

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<sup>47</sup> Philo, *On Creation*, 79-80.

<sup>48</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.29.



absolute power to do what they please without control”.<sup>49</sup> While the Rabbinic literature more strongly advocates self restraint as a typically manly trait there is evidence that this line of thought runs through Josephus’ writings also. While not explicit, there is an obvious connection or influence in terms of masculine values.

#### **4.3.2 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Courage and Strength in the Face of Adversity**

For a religious community that has experienced such extensive persecution over its history, one would come to expect courage and strength to be present in a gender ideology. The interesting distinction between contemporary ideas of courage and strength and an ancient gender ideology is the origins of these attributes. Not only is courage and strength an outward expression but it is deeply rooted and affirmed through a man’s social standing, bloodline and, particularly, his values. These different characteristics permeate the Jewish literature and though there is some resistance from the Rabbinic literature in regard to warfare and fighting, the courageous Jewish male spirit is a defining factor in a man’s masculinity.

In the writings of Josephus the story of a man named Jonathon is recounted. Jonathan is σῶμα βραχὺς (lit. low of stature or short), ὄφιν εὐκαταφροντος (of despicable appearance) and comes from an ἄσημος family (a family with no mark, no distinction, without distinguishing mark, unimportant), so not only is he physically unfortunate but he is also disadvantaged in terms of having a recognised family. Josephus is placing the man within his social context and thus providing important

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<sup>49</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 19.210.

information with regards to Jonathon's' masculinity. The story continues to narrate Jonathan's interaction with the Romans, involving mostly insolent remarks and a challenge to one-on-one combat. The Roman troops then proceed to have a discussion on the worthiness of their opponent only to conclude that to challenge Jonathan, "a man that desired to die"<sup>50</sup> was unmanly.

Josephus takes a side note here, and expresses how the Romans are accustomed to this sort of behaviour because "those that utterly despaired of deliverance had, besides other passions, a violence in attacking men that could not be opposed,"<sup>51</sup> obviously desiring to die and that these types of people "had no regard to God himself."<sup>52</sup> Josephus makes a reference to a present social issue: where the majority of the Jewish nation is feeling completely desperate about the ongoing Jewish wars and, because they have lost hope in deliverance, many men have lost their regard for life. This depression and hopelessness among the men is causing some to make reckless attacks on men who they have no chance of defeating. Josephus compares this complete disregard for their own lives and dejected attitude as a lack of respect or approbation for God.

The story resumes when the Romans decide that to participate in this man's apparent suicide attempt would be an example, not of manly courage, but of *θρασύτητος* (unmanly) audacity. It appears that Josephus is contrasting the Romans control with the Jewish man's lack of strength and his disregard for life, and is thus promoting the

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<sup>50</sup> Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 6.170.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.171.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Romans regard for manly courage, as opposed to giving in to the unsanctified actions of the Jewish man. Ultimately, the Jewish man attacks and kills a Roman soldier who has fallen over. The Jewish man's actions are positioned as another seemingly effeminate display: only now is it considered manly for the soldiers to kill the Jewish man.

In Josephus' construction of Jewish history he describes the glorious victories that the Israelite people had achieved as they conquered the land of Canaan. Eventually, however, the Israelites grew 'effeminate' with regards to fighting, preferring instead to "indulge themselves in luxury and pleasures."<sup>53</sup> Rather than continuing in their acts of manly courage, they grew 'womanly' and were no longer interested in war or expressions of courage and strength.

Masculine themes are also present in Josephus' work, *The Jewish Wars*. In one passage he addresses what it means to die, both self-inflicted and in a combat setting. Josephus appears to be writing, once more, in reference to some of the Jewish men who are risking their lives in a non-combatant scenario. The overarching theme is a paradox where cowardice is awarded for one who is not willing to die for liberty at the hands of the oppressor, yet one is also a coward when he seeks to die in order to merely escape the oppression.

It may also be said, that it is a manly act for one to kill himself. No, certainly, but a most *unmanly* one; as I should esteem that pilot to be an arrant coward, who out of fear of a storm, should sink his ship of his own accord.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 5.132.

<sup>54</sup> Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 3.368 (emphasis added).

Earlier in this same document Josephus makes a reference to the Jewish perception of God during wartime. The Jewish people appear to be unnerved at what Josephus calls ‘providential chastisement’ and suggests that this is completely justified given that God is the sovereign power in the universe. However, “to be equally terrified at the invasion of men,”<sup>55</sup> is ἀνάνδρων, or unmanly. It appears then, that in Jewish antiquity, to meet the invasion of men without fear is masculine. To be disheartened by the rebuking that comes from God is completely acceptable and even justified yet πασχειν at the invasion of men is terribly effeminate and unacceptable.

In the Apocrypha there are similar allusions to manly courage, especially in the face of war and, in addition, the protection of the Holy Sanctuary. This is especially true in the second book of the Maccabees.

So, encouraged by those truly heroic words of Judas, which had the power of rousing young souls to *valour* and stirring them to *manliness*, they determined not to pitch camp but *manfully* to set upon the foe and by engaging them right *valiantly* hand to hand, to decide the issue, since the city and the sanctuary and the temple were in danger. For their anxiety about wives and children, as well as about brethren and kinsfolk, weighed less with them than their supreme and chief anxiety about the consecrated temple.<sup>56</sup>

Now Simon, the brother of Judas, had already encountered Nicanor and, thrown suddenly into consternation by the foe, had sustained a temporary check. Nevertheless, Nicanor shrank from deciding the issue at the sword’s point, as he had heard of the *manliness* and the courage shown by the troops of Judas in fighting for their country.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1.373.

<sup>56</sup> *2 Maccabees* 15:17-18 (emphasis added).

<sup>57</sup> *2 Maccabees* 14:17-18 (emphasis added).

The rousing words of Judas brought out the masculine courage and valour in these young men, causing them to no longer need rest but to ‘manfully’ attack the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. It should also be noted that their anxiety over the temple was the paramount motivation behind these attacks. While Josephus indicates some anxiety and a certain obligation for the men to protect their women and cities, the ultimate concern was for the preservation of the temple. What is of interest in terms of gender ideology is that manliness appears to be something that can be aroused, or called upon in a time where courage and valour is needed. Furthermore, they set upon the enemy ‘manfully,’ indicating that manliness can also indicate and describe successful warfare. The significant relationship between manliness, courage and warfare cannot be denied. It would appear, even more so in the book of the Maccabees, that this courageous masculinity is necessary in combat and must be called upon in times of distress. Whether this manly valour is acceptable at other times is doubtful, yet it is undeniably a key aspect of ancient Jewish masculinity.

While the Pseudepigrapha tends to be silent concerning the idea of masculinity as strength and courage there are still underlying allusions to these manly values. In the Book of Enoch, the sea is described as being ‘masculine and strong’ with the power to disperse amid ‘all the mountains of the earth’. Notable men are often described as strong and fearless in the face of danger,<sup>58</sup> and the ‘man of courage’ is often contrasted with the drunkard or soft-hearted.<sup>59</sup> Though few explicit statements regarding the importance of courage and strength for the ancient Jewish male exist,

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<sup>58</sup> See *Jubilee* 22:12; *Jubilee* 24:14; *T. of Simeon* 2.3.

<sup>59</sup> *The Story of Ahikar*, 2.96.

there is still an obvious correlation between the ideal male and the courageous way he faces adversity.

The writings of Philo contain numerous references to ‘ἀνδρεία γενναιότης’ (manly nobility or courage).<sup>60</sup> In some respects a lack of ‘ἀνδρεία γενναιότης’ is often considered a deficiency.<sup>61</sup> But the real problem lies in defining what this ‘manly courage’ is referring to. A passage of counsel from Philo provides insight.

But if, proceeds the lawgiver, a woman having been divorced from her husband under any pretence whatever, and having married another, has again become a widow, whether her second husband is alive or dead, still she must not return to her former husband, but may be united to any man in the world rather than to him, having violated her former ties which she forgot, and having chosen new allurements in the place of the old ones. But if any man should choose to form an alliance with such a woman, he must be content to bear the reputation of *effeminacy* and a complete want of *manly courage* and vigour, *as if he had been castrated...*<sup>62</sup>

This passage provides further insight into the idea of ‘ἀνδρεία γενναιότης’. To yield to a woman who has previously brought shame and reproach upon the marital relationship, a man must accept the negative impact on his manliness. Not only is his social masculinity at stake but also his physical masculinity is brought into question if he should relent to the wishes of his wife. He is no longer in control of his wife but has rather allowed her to dominate the situation, thus deeming him as lacking in manly courage and vigour, and labelling him effeminate. The implications of this concept for ancient Jewish masculinity are staggering. The crossovers from culture to

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<sup>60</sup> See Philo, *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, 27; *On the Migration of Abraham*, 219; *On the Change of Names*, 145; *The Special Laws III*, 30; *On Courage*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Philo, *Hypothica: Apology to the Jews*, 6.6.

<sup>62</sup> Philo, *The Special Laws III*, 30 (emphasis added).

gender ideology to action and perception are so delicately intertwined that masculinity again encompasses a man's entire being. Who they are, what they are, how they relate to women and ultimately how they appear in a public setting are all instrumental to defining manliness in the ancient Jewish setting, a definition that is in constant limbo throughout the man's experience. This further supports the contemporary notion that masculinity is achieved and acquired through work and struggle. Ancient Jewish masculinity is by no means clear-cut, however, it is obvious throughout the literature that the outward expression of it pervades his existence.

The Rabbinic literature appears somewhat quiet when it comes to manly courage. War, it reveals, is something uncontrolled and seemingly irrational. In the Talmud there is a passage that comments on the text in Isaiah 2:4.

MISHNAH: A man must not go out with a sword, bow, shield, lance [allah], or spear; and if he does go out, he incurs a sin-offering. R. Eliezer said: They are ornaments for him. But the sages maintain, they are merely shameful, for it is said, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.<sup>63</sup>

Abaye [asked] R. Joseph: What is R. Eliezer's reason for maintaining that they are ornaments for him? — Because it is written, Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, Thy glory and thy majesty. R. Kahana objected to Mar son of R. Huna: But this refers to the words of the Torah?— A verse cannot depart from its plain meaning, he replied. R. Kahana said: By the time I was eighteen years old I had studied the whole Shas, yet I did not know that a verse cannot depart from its plain meaning. until to-day. What does he inform us? — That a man should study and subsequently understand.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *b. Shabbath*, 63a.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

There is obvious contention regarding the bearing of arms in Rabbinic opinion. In contrast to the consequent gender ideology of courage in adversity, the Rabbis oppose the bearing of weapons unless absolutely necessary. The Rabbinic opinion is divided; Huna suggests, that the Mishnah is referring to a study of the Torah and is not a specific reference to combat. However, there is another concept of gender ideology that becomes apparent, 'that a man should study and subsequently understand.' It would appear that once again the Rabbis consider study of the Torah to be the ultimate pursuit of masculinity.

#### **4.3.3 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Torah Study and Protection**

According to Jewish tradition, Torah study was reserved for the man alone, thus indicating its important role in ancient Jewish gender ideology. Rabbinic literature derives this segregation from an exegesis of Deut. 11:19, "teach them to your sons' - your sons and not your daughters."<sup>65</sup> Satlow suggests that this is a narrow exegesis of the text and asserts that while Torah study is indeed distinctly masculine this was a result of gender ideology that women lacked the self-control that was necessary for this type of activity.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, Cohen suggests that education of women in general was uncommon for this time period and Judaism was no different in their policies than the rest of the

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<sup>65</sup> *Sifre to Deuteronomy*, 46. I am indebted to Satlow for this resource, for further study on the exemption of women from study of the Torah see Joel B. Wolowelsky, ed., *Women and the Study of Torah: Essays from the Pages of Tradition* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> Michael L. Satlow, "'Try to Be a Man': The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity", *The Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 19-40.



Greco-Roman world.<sup>67</sup> Regardless of the reason, there is little dispute that Torah study in the ancient world was reserved for the male population. Torah study was seen as an antidote to desire,<sup>68</sup> thus, manliness and Torah study goes hand in hand with the characteristic of self-restraint. Boyarin notes that a man was to devote his life to the study of the Torah while still maintaining his divinely instituted prerogative to maintain the legacy of his family and sustain the population of the earth.<sup>69</sup>

It was taught: R. Eliezer stated, He who does not engage in propagation of the race is as though he sheds blood; for it is said, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed*, and this is immediately followed by the text, *And you, be ye fruitful and multiply*.

R. Jacob said: As though he has diminished the Divine Image; since it is said, *For in the image of God made he man*, and this is immediately followed by, *And you, be ye fruitful etc.*

Ben 'Azzai said: As though he sheds blood *and* diminishes the Divine Image; since it is said, *And you, be ye fruitful and multiply*.

They said to Ben 'Azzai: Some preach well and act well, others act well but do not preach well; you, however, preach well but do not act well!  
Ben 'Azzai replied: But what shall I do, seeing that my soul is in love with the Torah; the world can be carried on by others.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, Boyarin goes so far as to suggest that the Torah can also have a seemingly erotic nature to it, in rival with women, contending for the time of the

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<sup>67</sup> Naomi G. Cohen, 'Women and the Study of the Talmud' in *Women and the Study of Torah: Essays from the Pages of Tradition*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 2001), 2-5.

<sup>68</sup> For further discussion see the chapter section marked '4.3.1 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Self-Restraint.'

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (England: University of California Press, 1993), 134-166.

<sup>70</sup> *b. Yebamoth*, 63b.

Jewish man.<sup>71</sup> He suggests that as a man may pursue a woman, Jewish men would pursue the Law in an attempt to attain a life of virtue. Interestingly there are illusions to this concept in the apocryphal literature also.

For he that feareth the Lord doeth this,  
And he that taketh hold of the Law findeth her.  
And she will meet him as a mother,  
And as a youthful wife will she receive him;  
And she will feed him with the bread of understanding,  
And will give him the waters of knowledge to drink.  
And he that stayeth upon her will not fall,  
Nor shall he that trusteth in her be ashamed;  
And she will exalt him above his neighbour,  
And will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly.  
Joy and gladness shall he find,  
And she will make him inherit an everlasting name.  
Ungodly men shall not obtain her,  
And the arrogant shall not look upon her.  
Far from the mockers is she,  
And liars do not think of her.  
Praise is not seemly in the mouth of the wicked,  
For it hath not been apportioned to him by God.  
In the mouth of the wise praise is uttered,  
And he who is mighty with her shall teach her.<sup>72</sup>

Here the Law is described using the feminine pronoun, personified as a mother, a youthful wife and the source of knowledge and understanding. Notice also that the unvirtuous man, the ungodly, the arrogant, the mocker and the liar will not obtain her but to the virtuous man she will give an everlasting name, or legacy, another important sign of masculinity. This causes an interesting paradox. Firstly the masculine man is the epitome of self-restraint and control, especially when it comes to sexual desire. It is this characteristic that earns him the right to study the Torah. Yet, paradoxically the Torah and even wisdom is often described in Rabbinic

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<sup>71</sup> Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* 134-166.

<sup>72</sup> *Sir*, 15:1–10.

literature and other Jewish literature as feminine. This further highlights the masculine responsibility to always attain control of self and show restraint when it comes to the opposite sex, only then can one truly study the Torah and essentially control the Torah also.

Possibly one of the most definitive Rabbinic statements on manliness was written by R. Joshua b. Levy; “Happy is he who over-rules his inclination like a ‘man’.”<sup>73</sup> This passage indicates that masculinity, or to be a man, is to over-rule the sinful inclination, and in this case traditional male urges, or sexual desire. Notice again the allusions to self-restraint,<sup>74</sup> indicating that sexual desire becomes a prominent feature in the assertion of masculinity. Not only are men to resist these seemingly unnatural urges but also on account of this restraint they are better suited to study the Torah and thus achieve a virtuous life. The Rabbinic construct of self-restraint as a manly activity is evidenced more clearly when contrasted with the Rabbinic portrayal of woman as unable to exhibit self-control.<sup>75</sup>

Murray considers the Rabbinic construction of masculinity and gender in relation to an individual fitting on a continuum, with manliness achieved at one pole. “To attain a position at this pole, one had to have an automatically male body, be a rabbi, and thus be a master of the Torah.”<sup>76</sup> At the other end of the spectrum was the less

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<sup>73</sup> *b. ‘Abodah Zarah*, 19a.

<sup>74</sup> Satlow, “‘Try to Be a Man’: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity” 28.

<sup>75</sup> “‘Try to Be a Man’: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity” 28.

<sup>76</sup> Michele Murray, ‘Female Corporeality, Magic, and Gender in the Babylonian Talmud’, *Religion and Theology* 15 (2008): 199-224.

perfect human being, the female, thus it was imperative to attain masculine pursuits in order to reach the perfect human state. “For the Rabbis, being a man means using that uniquely male trait, self restraint, in the pursuit of the divine through Torah study... (also) and acquired status that was always a risk, and was thus consistently a focus of anxiety.”<sup>77</sup>

The intertestamental writings are again notably silent concerning the study of the Torah. While the importance of the Law is a common theme in this literature<sup>78</sup> there is little evidence to correlate these themes with masculinity. There is, however, a correlation between war and the Law. A speech from Judas Maccabeus refers to the need to “fight for our lives and our laws” and similarly Simon Maccabeus is quoted saying, “Ye ourselves know what things I, and my brethren, and my father’s house, have done for the laws and the sanctuary and the battles and the distress which we have seen,” which again highlights the importance of the Law and the manly responsibility that is connected with upholding the Law. This is more clearly stated in 1 Maccabees:

And ye, (my) children, be strong and show yourselves men on behalf of the Law; for therein shall ye obtain glory.<sup>79</sup>

This indicates a close correlation between a man’s character and how it relates to the Law. Ultimately, there appears a sense of ownership and honour that a male is

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<sup>77</sup> Satlow, “Try to Be a Man”: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity’ 20.

<sup>78</sup> See *1 Esdras* 1:33; *1 Maccabees* 2:21, 3:20, 13:2-4; *2 Maccabees* 7:2, 8:21.

<sup>79</sup> *1 Maccabees*, 2:64.

obligated to preserve and respect. The Law has a power that ignites an apparently masculine desire to protect and guard it, even if this may be at the expense of his life.

It is no secret that Philo also champions the view that the quest for honour through the Torah is a manly pursuit, and that manly courage in and of itself is described as a virtue.

And then some of them were found to be diligent labourers in the practice of virtue, not disappointing the good hopes which were formed of them, nor dishonouring the laws which were their instructors. Others were found to be unmanly, and effeminate, and cowardly, out of the innate weakness and imbecility of their souls, who, fainting before any real danger or trouble came upon them, disgraced themselves and became the ridicule of the spectators.<sup>80</sup>

There is a strong correlation here between manliness and honouring the law. In contrast, weakness of soul and disregard for the law breeds effeminacy. An educated man himself, Philo is a strong champion of education and study - though it is not always clear if his opinions refer to study of the Torah or the pursuit of knowledge through philosophical thought.

#### **4.3.4 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Evidenced in Physical Reality and Legacy**

A manly eunuch was something of an oxymoron in ancient times. Unlike the more refined concepts of masculinity we hold today, the evidence of one's manhood was first and foremost in the physical presence of male genitalia. Josephus ascribes an air of detestation to be had for those who have been made eunuchs by choice.

Let those that have made themselves eunuchs be had in detestation; and do you avoid any conversation with them who have *deprived themselves*

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<sup>80</sup> Philo, *On Reward and Punishment*, 5.

*of their manhood*, and of that fruit of generation which God has given to men for the increase of their kind; let such be driven away, as if they had killed their children, since they beforehand have lost what should procure them; for evident it is, that while their soul is become *effeminate*, they have withal transfused that *effeminacy* to their body also.<sup>81</sup>

Choosing to have the physical representation of manhood removed has multiple implications, not only has one deprived himself of his manhood, he has also shown complete disregard for his manly ability to propagate the earth. As a result he is denying the generation that God has given him and also his divine prerogative to have children. Hence it is the obligation, the manly responsibility to procure children and populate the earth. Josephus goes so far as to declare that by electing to become a eunuch one is essentially, guilty of infanticide and should be treated as such.

In the Rabbinic literature there is a similar emphasis on the manly prerogative to continue the human race. This gender construct is especially proven through the fathering of male children. Not only was the propagation of the known world the responsibility of the male in ancient Judaism, the fathering of male children was also of great importance to guarantee the continuation of the human race. More importantly, this manly responsibility is delicately intertwined with self-control. As the following excerpt reveals, male children are conceived if the male allows or encourages the woman to 'emit her seed' first.

R. Isaac b. Ammi stated, 'If the woman is first to emit the semen she bears a male child and if the male is first to do it she bears a female child'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.290-91 (emphasis added).

<sup>82</sup> *b. Niddah*, 25b.

Our Rabbis taught... Now is it within the power of man to increase the number of 'sons and sons' sons'? But the fact is that because they contained themselves during intercourse in order that their wives should emit their semen first so that their children shall be males, Scripture attributes to them the same merit as if they had themselves caused the increase of the number of their sons and sons' sons.<sup>83</sup>

Satlow suggests that the “emission of seed” here is referring to orgasm which, depending on the order, determines the child’s gender.<sup>84</sup> The longer a man controls himself, the greater the chance that a male child will be conceived, linking manly self-control and sexual competence, to the reproduction of male children and thus confirming the male’s masculinity. To populate the earth, according to the Rabbis, is a divinely instituted prerogative of every man. This is expressed in both Jewish and non-Jewish sources through a male’s concern for female sexual pleasure as demonstrated through manly sexual competence.<sup>85</sup>

When R. Johanan finished the Book of Job, he used to say the following: The end of man is to die, and the end of a beast is to be slaughtered, and all are doomed to die. Happy is he who was brought up in the Torah and whose labour was in the Torah and who has given pleasure to his Creator and who grew up with a good name and departed the world with a good name; and of him Solomon said: A good name is better than precious oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.<sup>86</sup>

The Rabbinic literature also outlines the importance of a ‘good name’. The duty of a man, though his end will always be death, is to ‘depart the world with a good name’.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 31a-31b

<sup>84</sup> Satlow, “‘Try to Be a Man’: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity’ 31.

<sup>85</sup> “‘Try to Be a Man’: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity’ 31.

<sup>86</sup> *Berakoth*, 17a.

Notice also here that the way to achieve a good name is none other than the study of the Torah, thus a masculine activity signifies the masculine role of creating a legacy.

The fathering of children as a manly characteristic is also present in non-rabbinic Jewish literature. Philo suggests that a female child is evidence of a man with a broken, unmanly, and effeminate mind.

And no unjust man at any time implants a masculine generation in the soul, but such, being unmanly, and broken, and effeminate in their minds, do naturally become the parents of female children; having planted no tree of virtue, the fruit of which must of necessity have been beautiful and salutary, but only trees of wickedness and of the passions, the shoots of which are womanlike.<sup>87</sup>

It is obvious again here that in order to ‘implant a masculine generation’ a man must exhibit the ultimate masculine ideology, which from Rabbinic sources we can see is self-control, with Philo introducing the concept of a whole being who is far from being effeminate, unjust and a slave to their passions.<sup>88</sup> Leaving a legacy is the ‘especial property of the man’.

And let the man who is devoted to the love of boys submit to the same punishment, since he pursues that pleasure which is contrary to nature, and since, as far as depends upon him, he would make the cities desolate, and void, and empty of all inhabitants, wasting his power of propagating his species, and moreover, being a guide and teacher of those greatest of all evils, *unmanliness* and *effeminate* lust, stripping young men of the flower of their beauty, and wasting their prime of life in effeminacy, which he ought rather on the other hand to train to vigour and acts of courage; and last of all, because, like a worthless husbandman, he allows fertile and productive lands to lie fallow,

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<sup>87</sup> Philo, *On the Giants*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 206b; *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, 101 also suggests “to sow and beget children is the especial property of man.”



contriving that they shall continue barren, and labours night and day at cultivating that soil from which he never expects any produce at all.<sup>89</sup>

Philo uses the example of homosexuality to illustrate the manly obligation to use 'his power of propagating his species'. Rather than pursuing his manly nature, Philo highlights that homosexual activity is futile, 'cultivating that soil from which he never expects any produce at all'. Not only does this provide valuable evidence to the role of men in society but also gives important insight in to the construction of gender ideology. Philo here is suggesting that if the effeminate man were only to train himself for acts of courage and vigour and implanting seed into 'fertile soil' as it were, his masculinity would be retained. As a result, this unnatural pursuit of sex for mere pleasure, or devotion to the 'love of boys,' as opposed to propagation of the species, is entirely unmanly indicating that leaving a physical legacy is largely an expression of one's masculinity.

In Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal literature there is little evidence suggesting masculinity is linked to a physical legacy, however, one quotation, from *The Story of Ahika*, has proven valuable. The following extract refers to a man who is beseeching God for a male heir.

And he returned, and implored the Most High God, and believed, beseeching Him with a burning in his heart, saying, 'O Most High God, O Creator of the Heavens and of the earth, O Creator of all created things! I beseech Thee to give me a boy, that I may be consoled by him, that he may be present at my death, that he may close my eyes, and that he may bury me.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Philo, *The Special Laws*, III, 39 (emphasis added).

<sup>90</sup> *The Story of Ahika*, 1.5.

This story illustrates the deep anguish of a man without a son to continue his bloodline. Notice that the man beseeching God concludes that if he were to have a son he would be consoled, indicating that only the birth of a son would lift his depression. Not only does he require a son to continue his legacy but also to assist in his death and burial. Jewish burial customs were extremely important in ancient times and it was required that a male family member would perform the ceremony and the burial rites.<sup>91</sup> As evidenced through this short story, again a male heir was of supreme importance for a man.

It's interesting to note that not only is masculinity linked to the fathering of sons but it is also used alongside the characteristics of following reason, being perfect and being upright. Consequently it appears that the ideal masculine man is as close to the character of God as is humanly possible.

#### **4.3.5 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as the Absence of Luxury**

Throughout the ancient literature there is a stark contrast between the life of luxury and the life of a peasant. The peasant and agrarian classes of society were often illiterate. Formal schooling, apart from the religious education of the synagogue, was rare and often the role of teacher was allocated to the mother or father depending on the sex of the child.<sup>92</sup> As a result, the literature tends to represent only the educated classes of ancient society and, therefore, an understanding of the lower classes

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<sup>91</sup> Byron R. McCane, "Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead" : Secondary Burial and Matt 8:21-22', *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 31-43.

<sup>92</sup> Toit, *The New Testament Milieu*, 13.2.5.

gender ideology is not as obvious. It is interesting then that masculinity would be achieved through what appears to be a peasant lifestyle.

In the writings of Philo there is an admonition against luxury and extravagance. He suggests that a love of opulence is a lack of control and one is sacrificing masculinity to give in to a pleasurable, effeminate and opulent lifestyle. In his discourse, *On Dreams, That They Are God Sent*, Philo examines the narrative where Jacob uses a stone for a pillow and suggests that there are more than just “interior and mystical doctrine contained in these words, but also the distinct assertion, which gives us a lesson in labour and endurance,”<sup>93</sup> that the ‘virtuous man’ should not “adopt a luxurious life, and live softly.”<sup>94</sup> He goes on to describe this effeminate man as follows:

These men, after they have during the whole day been doing all sorts of injustice to others, in courts of justice, and council halls, and theatres, and everywhere, then return home, like *miserable men* as they are, to overturn their own house. I mean not that house which comes under the class of buildings, but that which is akin to the soul, I mean the body. Introducing immoderate and incessant food, and irrigating it with an abundance of pure wine, until the reason is overwhelmed, and disappears; and the passions which have their seat beneath the belly, the offspring of satiety, rise up, being carried away by unrestrained frenzy, and falling upon, and vehemently attacking all that they meet with, are only at last appeased after they have worked off their excessive violence of excitement.

But by night, when it is time to turn towards rest, having prepared costly couches and the most exquisite of beds, they lie down in the most exceeding softness, imitating the *luxury of women*, whom nature has permitted to indulge in a more relaxed system of life, inasmuch as their maker, the Creator of the universe, has made their bodies of a more delicate stamp.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Philo, *On Dreams, that They are God Sent*, 1.120.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.121.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.121-4 (emphasis added).

He describes here a man's desires to be akin to the female, arguing that this is not natural, let alone manly, because females have been created with a 'more delicate stamp' unlike men. Interestingly, Philo associates more than just an internal indication of manliness. It appears that masculinity is also proved through the way a man eats, drinks and even sleeps. After all, a costly couch and an exquisite bed is the epitome of living softly. Thus femininity is also linked with the indulgence of the physical, including food and drink, and this extravagant living is shown to be an unmanly, and thus unnatural way for a Jewish male to act. There are undertones evident that Philo is referencing the Roman population. After all, he refers to this type of man as 'doing all sorts of injustice to others, in courts of justice and council halls,' and, significantly, during this period the Jewish people were under Roman rule and government. Fundamentally, though, Philo is not only attacking the manhood of the Roman rulers but also outlining an obvious principle for his presuppositions on masculinity in general.

Continuing on in the literature, Philo provides a solution to this problem of extravagance and unmanly luxury.

Now no such person as this is a pupil of the sacred word, but those only are the disciples of that who are *real genuine men*, lovers of temperance, and orderliness, and modesty, men who have laid down continence, and frugality, and fortitude, as a kind of base and foundation for the whole of life; and safe stations for the soul, in which it may anchor without danger and without changeableness: for being superior to money, and pleasure, and glory, they look down upon meats and drinks, and everything of that sort, beyond what is necessary to ward off hunger: being thoroughly ready to undergo hunger, and thirst, and heat, and cold, and all other things, however hard they may be to be borne, for the sake of the acquisition of virtue. And being admirers of whatever is most easily provided, so as to not be ashamed of ever such cheap or shabby

clothes, think rather, on the other hand, that sumptuous apparel is a reproach and great scandal to life. To these men, the soft earth is their most costly couch, their bed is bushes, and grass, and herbage, and a thick layer of leaves; and the pillows for their head are a few stones, or any little mounds which happen to rise a little above the surface of the plain. Such a life as this, is by luxurious men, denominated a life of hardship, but by those who live for virtue, it is called most delightful; for it is well adapted, not for those who are *called* men, for those who really *are* such.<sup>96</sup>

Notice again that Philo links the pursuit of virtue and being classed as ‘real genuine men,’ but he goes on further to describe the ideal man as temperate, orderly and modest also, directly in opposition to the immoderate, unrestrained, feminine male. Philo makes distinct use of the physical attributes of the genuine man. He is content to sleep in the soft earth as opposed to a costly couch, he is content to dwell outside, he does not need the luxury or the care that a woman needs, or in this case a non-man needs, but rather prefers a life which the ‘luxurious men’ deem a life of hardship. The point is very clear: hardship is not to be shunned, but rather to struggle, to work and to labour as opposed to being pampered and polished is an obvious indication of a genuine man or a manly man.

According to Philo, the masculine life is also characterised by a denunciation of pleasure. In his work, *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, Philo provides a list of undesirable characteristics that are associated with one, who is a ‘votary of pleasure,’<sup>97</sup>

Know, then, my good friend, that if you become a votary of pleasure you will be all these things: a bold, cunning, audacious, unsociable,

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<sup>96</sup> Philo, *On Dreams that They are God Sent*, 1.124-125 (emphasis added).

<sup>97</sup> Note that votary in this case is used to describe the vow that a nun or monk might make to a religion. Thus indicating an intense devotion to pleasure.

uncourteous, inhuman, lawless, savage, illtempered, unrestrainable, *worthless man*; deaf to advice, foolish, full of evil acts, unteachable, unjust, unfair... stiffnecked, *effeminate*, outcast, confused, discarded, mocking, injurious, vain, full of unmitigated unalloyed misery.<sup>98</sup>

In conjunction with the denial of ‘effeminate luxury’ a true man must also embrace manly labour. There is a strong association between the feminine and inactivity or laziness. One must not give in to ‘effeminate indolence’ but to encounter what is ‘disagreeable’ and shoulder it with ‘fortitude and manly perseverance’ is true happiness.<sup>99</sup> Philo goes on to express another important principle regarding masculinity and manly behaviour. Nature, he suggests, has implanted day and night, knowing the industrious nature of the human race, for work and rest respectively. When the sun breaks the horizon in the morning ‘she’ rouses the body to labour, even to the affect of “compelling those to work who would gladly be accustomed to cultivate the leisure of idleness, and an effeminate and luxurious life.”<sup>100</sup> Notice again that idleness and the cultivation of leisure are associated with the feminine. This ideology is further grounded in the passages following. Philo goes on to argue that this division of night and day has been allocated to men, that they might labour in turns and rest in turns, “so as to have all the parts of their bodies more ready for action, and more active and powerful.”<sup>101</sup> The integral principle here is that labour is allocated to men and is instrumental in characterising masculinity and shaping a more active and powerful body. It is only by avoiding the feminine luxury of inactivity and instead employing the manly duty to labour and work that the physical

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<sup>98</sup> Philo, *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*, 32.

<sup>99</sup> Philo, *On the Life of Moses II*, 183-84.

<sup>100</sup> Philo, *The Special Laws II*, 100-103.

body and characteristics are created that are undeniably masculine to the ancient Jewish male.

Josephus makes a similar contrast in his work *Antiquities of the Jews*. He tells of a man who, though born a Jew, was of striking similarity to Herod's son and he used this as a means of infiltrating the government. However, when the pseudo-Alexandria was brought to Herod, he discovered that though the young man bore a striking resemblance to his son, there were a few key differences. Josephus describes these physical differences using similar language to that which Philo employs when outlining the effeminate versus the masculine man. Herod is described with 'softness of body' a derivative of his 'delicate and generous' education while the Jewish man has a 'rugged body,' 'his hands rough, by the labours he had been put to.'<sup>102</sup> Again there is a stark contrast between the delicate and the rugged, the Jew and the gentile, the masculine man and the effeminate man. In other writings he refers to the son of a King, who returning after a long journey was expected to be less than desirable in physical looks. However, the narrative suggests that he in fact looked taller and finer in appearance than all those that 'dined the most luxuriously,' hence the rugged lifestyle contributed to his overall manly appearance.<sup>103</sup> The story of Daniel in captivity is also used as an example of manly appearance.

Now Daniel and his kinsmen had resolved to use a severe diet, and to abstain from those kinds of food which came from the king's table... but if he [Ashpenaz] saw them look meager, and worse than the rest, he should reduce them to their former diet. Now when it appeared that they were so far from becoming worse by the use of this food, that they grew

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.333.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 5.189.

plumper and fuller in body than the rest, insomuch, that he thought those who fed on what came from the king's table seemed less plump and full... they had their souls in some measure more pure, and less burdened, and so fitter for learning, and had their bodies in better trim for hard labor; for they neither had the former oppressed and heavy with variety of meats, nor were the other effeminate on the same account...<sup>104</sup>

It is interesting to note that the text describes Daniel and his friends as having the look of men who had lived in luxury, yet continues on to describe their practice of self discipline and their ability to toughen their bodies through a diet that is not effeminate, or soft. The text suggests that their abstinence from the luxurious food of the other Babylonians, though giving them the look of luxury, was still a positive masculine characteristic as it led to increased strength, stature and ultimately manliness.

The Pseudepigrapha provides further insight into this idea. In *The Testament of Joseph* the author uses Potiphar's wife to highlight the negativity surrounding the luxurious lifestyle.

And often hath she sent unto me saying: Consent to fulfil my desire, and I will release thee from thy bonds, and I will free thee from the darkness. And not even in thought did I incline unto her. For God loveth him who in a den of wickedness combines fasting with chastity, rather than the man who in kings' chambers combines luxury with licence.<sup>105</sup>

In this example, luxury and self restraint are contrasted again, a principle that is obviously paramount in not only Jewish religious experience but is also used in reference to sexual and gender constructions.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 10:190.

<sup>105</sup> *T. of Joseph*, 9:2.



The inclination of the good man is not in the power of the deceit of the spirit of Beliar, for the angel of peace guideth his soul. And he gazeth not passionately upon corruptible things, nor gathereth together riches through a desire of pleasure. He delighteth not in pleasure, [he grieveth not his neighbour], he sateth not himself with luxuries, he erreth not in the uplifting of the eyes, for the Lord is his portion. The good inclination receiveth not glory nor dishonour from men, and it knoweth not any guile, or lie, or fighting or reviling; for the Lord dwelleth in him and lighteth up his soul, and he rejoiceth towards all men always.<sup>106</sup>

The Testament of Benjamin, noted above, illustrates these similar principles. In this case they are describing the ‘good man’. Notice the emphasis on pleasure: the good man is not interested in pleasure, in neither delighting nor desiring it, and again, luxury is not something to be sought after. It appears, then, that a simple and modest life is the life of a good man and, as seen in Philo, these are also the signifying factors of a manly Jewish man. Similarly, other ancient Jewish literature is filled with exhortation and encouragement for the modest, simple and, as a result, manly life.

Though the concept of manly labour has little emphasis in Rabbinic literature, it is still present in the sense of labouring in the Torah.<sup>107</sup>

R. Meir said: Do [rather] less business, and busy thyself [mainly] with the Torah, and be lowly of spirit before all men. If thou has [once] been idle in [regard to] the Torah, thou wilt have many [more] occasions for idleness before the, but if thou hast laboured at the Torah, there is much reward to give unto thee.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *T. of Benjamin* 6:1-3

<sup>107</sup> See also ‘4.3.3 Ancient Jewish Masculinity as Torah Study and Protection.’

<sup>108</sup> *m. 'Abot*, 4.10

Again, for the Rabbis, Jewish masculinity was explicitly linked with study and pursuit of the Torah. The nuances to Torah study as a form of labour add depth to the gender ideology present in the previous Jewish literature, thus revealing an important consistency in an overall gender ideology.

## **Chapter 5 Christological Comparison**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In order to gain a more complete understanding of the gender construction of Jesus it is important to understand the current gender ideology within the social and cultural context in which Jesus lived. As has been previously noted, there are five clear aspects of ancient Jewish gender ideology that will provide the outline for a Christological comparison with the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. This chapter will examine and compare the ancient Jewish gender ideology that has been constructed with different narrative examples from Matthew's gospel, making note of major components that complement or conflict with the gender model. As a result, a better understanding of Jesus in terms of gender expression and expectation will be achieved.

It is important to note that any resources regarding the nature and person of Jesus are limited to the Gospel accounts. Unfortunately, the Gospel accounts are only available in a written format and because of the nature and culture of the period these consist primarily of dialogue, with little description of the person and character of Christ. Therefore, one must rely on the character descriptions to reveal the values and characteristics that that person holds; a method, which coincidentally proves incredibly insightful. According to the following research, it is not so much the character of Jesus but rather Jesus' message that is distinctly masculine.

## **5.2 The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish Origins**

It is generally accepted, by theological scholars, that the Gospel of Matthew has distinctly Jewish origins.<sup>109</sup> Throughout this Gospel there are consistent and extensive uses of the Old Testament text, and many references to Jewish tradition appear to be assumed. Clear themes in the Gospel of Matthew appear to relate to matters of particular concern to the Jewish people, including the Sabbath, the law and the temple. It is also noteworthy that the genealogy begins with Abraham, a prominent figure in Judaism. This distinctive Jewishness is also evidenced by the author's attention to prophecy, especially Christ as its fulfilment.

## **5.3 Jewish Masculinity Model and Gospel of Matthew**

### **5.3.1 Jesus and Self-Restraint**

As previously noted, for the ancient Jewish male, self-restraint was the key to the study of the Torah, which was perceived as a distinctly masculine activity, and thus one of the major aspects of ancient Jewish gender ideology. A man's ability to restrain his own desires and impulses was a distinction that separated him from the feminine. Women during the ancient Jewish culture were considered dangerous because of their inability to control their emotions and impulses. Thus for a man to

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<sup>109</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005); Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992); Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*, vol. 22 (Nashville: Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973); this is just a small collection of some of the many commentaries and scholars that champion the Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew.

practice self-restraint in all areas was a distinguishing feature and clear assertion of his masculinity.

The Gospel of Matthew provides interesting commentary in the area of self-restraint, with strong evidence to suggest that Jesus exhibited the masculine aptitude for self-control. During the early chapters of Matthew, Jesus is drawn into the wilderness and faces temptation from Satan who attempts to overthrow Jesus on the points of appetite presumption and love of the world. Jesus resisted. In harmony with the Jewish literature, this manifestation of self-restraint is a prime example of masculinity because it is exhibited in the face of severe temptation that is heightened by a weakened state. Strength and control in a situation of enticement is considered far more difficult than merely controlling oneself in a neutral situation. For Jesus to be drawn into the wilderness to meet the temptation of the devil himself further emphasises the masculine expression. Matthew 4:1-10 describes three situations of resistance related to a man's basic needs: food, safety and power - all heightened by the previous 40 days spent without food and water in the desert, rendering any man weak and extremely susceptible to temptation. In Matthew 26:52-56 Jesus rebukes one of the disciples for brashly brandishing his sword in a moment of uncontrollable anger. Jesus further epitomises manly self-control through non-retaliation under physical abuse and torture.<sup>110</sup> **Jesus physical self-restraint is also visible through his harnessing of the power of public persona. Considering his divine nature,**

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<sup>110</sup> Matt 26:27-28; 27:26-33; 27:42 (NKJV). All following quotations will be from the New King James Version unless otherwise stated.

Aside from the physical evidence of self-restraint there is an astounding resonance of self-restraint in the message of Jesus. Throughout Matthew 5 - 7 there is an extensive discourse regarding the law and its implications for the individual. The strong emphasis on self-restraint in this passage highlights the distinctly masculine nature of Jesus message. Rather than retaliating in physical violence, the message is one of restraint - 'turn the other cheek.'<sup>111</sup> In prayer, fasting and acquiring wealth, Jesus teaches his followers to exhibit self-restraint so as not to draw unnecessary attention to your good deeds or achievements<sup>112</sup> and though not explicitly stated, keeping an oath, avoiding adultery and divorce are all matters of self-restraint and are examples of avoiding temptation.<sup>113</sup> The paradox is that self-restraint is taught by the law and constitutes a requirement in terms of its observance and teaching. As alluded to previously in the fourth book of the Maccabees; "the Law teaches us self-control, so that we are masters of all our pleasures and desires and are thoroughly trained in manliness,"<sup>114</sup> and both the law and mastering desire or temptation are pivotal themes in Jesus' message.

This distinctly masculine message is not solely contained in the Sermon on the Mountain in Matthew (5-7). Chapter 12 reveals a discourse that teaches against abundance of idleness in words:

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for

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<sup>111</sup> Matt 5:38-41.

<sup>112</sup> Matt 6:1-21.

<sup>113</sup> Matt 5:27-37.

<sup>114</sup> *4 Maccabees*, 5:23-24.

every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.<sup>115</sup>

Jesus' teaching is linking control of the mouth and what is situated in the heart with justification in the time of judgement. Thus law, restraint and the virtue of a person are again interrelated, becoming integral to the Jewish gender ideology.

While there are obvious correlations between the message of Jesus and the masculine ideal of self-control there are some surprising instances where Jesus appears to consciously surrender control. Gleason highlights this point,

What Jesus clearly did not control was the boundaries of his own body... from violations by agents of the imperial criminal justice system. The *only* thing that the Gospel narratives tell us about Jesus' body is that it was thus violated.<sup>116</sup>

While this example may not be a typical indication of self-restraint it still has some merit. During the passion narrative there is little indication that Jesus has control over his body, yet there still remain underlying allusions to the masculine trait of self-restraint. Matthew 26 describes Jesus' trial in front of the Sanhedrin. In an attempt to acquire any sort of information that may condemn the accused, the Church leaders provoke and interrogate Jesus. It is undeniable that many individuals in this situation would yield to the provocation and end up incriminating themselves. An integral expression of masculinity through self-restraint is evidenced here in Jesus,

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<sup>115</sup> Matt 12:34a-37.

<sup>116</sup> Maud W. Gleason, 'By Whose Gender Standards (If Anybody's) Was Jesus a Real Man?' in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 326.

not succumbing to the pressure of the authorities but choosing to remain composed, manly and even tempering the anarchy by his resolve.

It is also important to note at this juncture that the model of ancient Jewish masculinity generally speaks of self-restraint in terms of sexual desire and abundance of food, yet there is little evidence in the gospel of Matthew to suggest that Jesus was ever guilty of overindulgence or succumbing to sexual desire. Throughout the New Testament there is strong evidence to suggest that Jesus was indeed abstinent throughout his ministry here on earth and the 40-day fast is also strong evidence of Jesus' ability to restrain his dietary needs. It is also important to note that there is little reference to Jesus eating at all, refuting accusations of gluttony.<sup>117</sup> If appetite had been indulged, it would have been alluded to at some point.

### **5.3.2 Jesus' Courage and Strength in the Face of Adversity**

The Jewish male in combat faced distinct implications concerning their structure of gender ideology. While the Rabbinic literature did not advocate an entrance into combat, evidence remains that if in a hostile situation a man should act with courage and strength when meeting the adversary.

Unfortunately, there is nothing to suggest a combat situation was ever present in the Gospel of Matthew, which makes it difficult to assess. However, there are other occasions and instances that indicate courage and strength in adversity were characteristics evident in the person of Jesus. Again, this is especially true, in the

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<sup>117</sup> Jesus is falsely accused of gluttony in Matthew 11:19.



distinct message of Jesus and is attested to in earlier references to courageous restraint when physical combat or abuse was enjoined.

From the very first pages of the gospel, the author highlights the importance of the name Jesus. The reasoning behind giving the child the name Jesus is because “he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>118</sup> This name unveils a key aspect of Jesus role on this earth and institutes his divine function as saviour of the world. The language declares a responsibility that intimates the role a leader might take - a responsibility in some ways similar to a commander who might lead his men into battle and fight to save their people. Courage and strength are needed for such a feat; Jesus’ will face the adversary and deliver his people.

The allusions to a combat setting are further highlighted as Jesus gathers his ‘army’. Calling the disciples, he takes ordinary men and prepares them for the coming ‘end time’ combat. It is through this preparation that the masculine nature of his message becomes especially clear. Throughout the gospel Jesus teaches of a coming time of persecution and tribulation in which his ‘army’ of followers will need courage and strength to face a traumatic future.<sup>119</sup> The primary message is to stand firm and be ‘real’ men in the face of what is to come.

In the storm on the water, Jesus questions the disciples’ fear, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”<sup>120</sup> rebuking them for their lack of manly courage.

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<sup>118</sup> Matt 1:21.

<sup>119</sup> See Matt 4:18-22; 7:13-1; 10:26; 24:9-13, 15-20, 21-22.

<sup>120</sup> Matt 8:26.

He constantly reminds his disciples that following him will require courage and strength:

Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell.<sup>121</sup>

The cost of being a part of this band of believers is clearly expressed: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”<sup>122</sup> Finally, as they enter into Jerusalem and the last stages of Jesus’ life, courage is again required of his disciples, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake...For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world...”<sup>123</sup>

The courageous message taught by Jesus may appear, from a surface reading, to come undone toward the end of the gospel. He has made his band of followers aware of the coming crisis and he has even explained his own impending death. His death is essential to the salvation of the nation, thus the paramount example of courage, the laying down of life for the good of the entire nation. However, as the time of reckoning draws near, Jesus’ asks for a way out. Matthew 26 describes an expression of reluctance and during time alone he brings these concerns before the Father.

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<sup>121</sup> Matt 10:27.

<sup>122</sup> Matt 16:24b-25.

<sup>123</sup> Matt 24:9, 21.

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but you will... Again a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”<sup>124</sup>

Though Jesus appears to falter, his courage here is still evident in that he is willing to complete his divine mission at any cost. However, the reticence should be addressed. Though he is aware that the mission must be complete, he humbly asks if there is another way. Perhaps, according to the ancient Jewish gender construction, this indicates a slight in manly courage. However, it is but the natural, inevitable, and perfectly innocent recoil of genuine human nature from suffering.<sup>125</sup> The resulting completion of the mission dispels any uncertainty. Ultimately, it is the courage to follow through on his salvific mission that displays his manly courage to endure suffering, alienation and oblivion, and so gives greatest evidence of his masculinity.

### **5.3.3 Jesus and Torah Study and Protection**

For the author of Matthew, the Torah and the Old Testament play an important role.<sup>126</sup> This is apparent through the author’s emphasis on Jesus and the law. Not only is Jesus presented as a teacher of the law but there is also a strong representation of Jesus as the fulfilment of the law and teaching a radical transformation of the Law. One could argue that this transformation is not fulfilling his manly obligation to protect the Torah, which proves difficult for the ancient Jewish masculinity model.

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<sup>124</sup> Matt 26:39, 42.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *The Gospel According to Matthew Chapters 18-28* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 265-266.

<sup>126</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 29

Conversely, this transformation could be considered an act of protecting the essence of the law and exonerating it from the Pharisaic influences.

The earliest example of Jesus' knowledge and study of the Torah is during his temptation in the wilderness.<sup>127</sup> There is a certain duality in the expression of masculinity in this passage. Not only is there evidence of the characteristically masculine self-restraint but also a masculine knowledge of the Torah. Jesus demonstrates his extensive knowledge of the Torah against the devil's provocation. Jesus makes three references to the Torah that indicate not only a general knowledge of the Torah but also an ability to interpret and correctly apply scripture in response to its misuse. Torah study and discussion was reserved for men alone, and the dialogue here illustrates an apparent display of this masculine characteristic. Not only is Jesus quoting the Torah but demonstrating his understanding of the scriptures by discerning the devil's misuse and distortion of scriptural truth. This is a strong indication that Jesus is well-versed in the Torah and able to understand and interpret it to the level of debate and rebuke.

Jesus' knowledge of the law is further evident in his discourse on the mountain. In Matthew 5 a sermon is recorded where Jesus' provides his own interpretation of the law. Not only is he honouring the law by teaching and explaining it, but he is also acting out the Rabbis' function, by interpreting the Torah for those who come to hear him.<sup>128</sup> Considering the emphasis on Torah study for masculinity, Rabbis were considered a prime example of manliness. Jesus is portrayed as another 'type' of

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<sup>127</sup> Matt 4:1-10.

<sup>128</sup> See *The Interpretation of Scripture: The New Testament Milieu*, 16.9.

Rabbi in this passage, indicating that perhaps the author considered Jesus of similar influence. If this is the case, the author is also insinuating that Jesus was an example of achieved masculinity.

Through the gospel of Matthew there is evidence to suggest that Jesus was also influential in protecting the Torah and advocating the importance of the law. Again, Matthew 5-7 is an example of Jesus highlighting the importance of the law in his teachings. Indeed, so passionate is Jesus about protecting the law that he goes so far as to denounce anyone who presumes to alter it.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>129</sup>

Jesus not only advocates protection of the Torah but also indicates that he has no intention of destroying the law through his teachings. Again, Jesus' message here is distinctly masculine; the Torah is to be studied properly and its message is to be upheld and protected.

In Matthew 7 there are also indications that Jesus has an interest in upholding the Torah, ("... for this is the Law and the prophets," v.12) after cleansing a leper he encourages the healed man to follow the appropriate sanctions that were put in place during the time of Moses.<sup>130</sup> In Matthew 19 he teaches the young ruler that by

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<sup>129</sup> Matt 5:17-20.

<sup>130</sup> Matt 8:1-4.

observing the commandments he can have eternal life.<sup>131</sup> At some stage Jesus' understanding of the law must have become renowned throughout the country. In Matthew 22 even a scribe comes to seek Jesus' counsel on the law<sup>132</sup>, and, in the following chapter, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their lawlessness.<sup>133</sup>

Jesus' respect for, and preservation of, the Torah is also affirmed through the titles that are bestowed upon him. As Conway suggests, "Jesus' ideal masculinity is accentuated in Matthew via honorific titles, his affluence as a public speaker and agitator/teacher in greater conflict with opponents."<sup>134</sup> Not only is ideal masculinity apparent via the honorific title of teacher but there is also evidence to suggest that his aptitude as a public speaker and the ability to attract large crowds with his message is also a distinctly masculine characteristic. Not only are masculine traits present in Jesus, they are also reflected in his title as teacher and his abilities to interpret and expound scripture.

#### **5.3.4 Jesus' Physical Reality but Deficient Legacy**

In a somewhat rudimentary way, ancient Jewish masculinity is undoubtedly evidenced through the physical male reality. As was noted previously a eunuch was the principal example of effeminacy, thus male genitalia is imperative to masculinity.

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<sup>131</sup> Matt 19:16-22.

<sup>132</sup> Matt 22:14-40.

<sup>133</sup> Matt 23:1-39

<sup>134</sup> Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* 108.

The portrayal of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, gives no reason to doubt his physical maleness. Matthew 1 outlines the birth of Jesus where an angel comes to Joseph and reveals to him that his wife Mary “will bring forth a son.”<sup>135</sup> For further clarification the author of Luke mentions that Jesus was also taken up to the temple for the Jewish male custom of circumcision.<sup>136</sup>

In terms of legacy there is far more to be considered. First, it is important to note that the gospel writer obviously understood the importance of providing a legacy. The opening verses of the gospel outline the genealogical legacy which the birth of Jesus culminates.<sup>137</sup> Since there is no evidence to suggest that Jesus ever continued the legacy himself, and because Matthew shows Jesus fulfilled messianic expectations as “the Son of David,”<sup>138</sup> Jesus is the culmination of the hereditary legacy and need not continue it on the earthly or physical level. Further, one of the primary reasons a man was required to continue a legacy was for the safeguard of his family and in the case of burial practices. Contrast this with Jesus, a man who not only had a loyal following to attend to his burial but also died having declared that he would be resurrected three days later. In a sense, Jesus had no real need of a legacy as it was already enlisted through his band of followers. Furthermore, the reality of the resurrection also indicates the perpetual nature of Christ. Thus, an heir becomes unnecessary because Christ himself is eternal.

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<sup>135</sup> Matt 1:21.

<sup>136</sup> Luke 2:21.

<sup>137</sup> Matt 1:1-17.

<sup>138</sup> Matt 1:1, 6, 20-23; 2:1-6, 13.

In the ancient Jewish tradition, deliberately denying oneself of a legacy is denying the generation that God has given him. This is an idea which Jesus appears to disregard. In a discourse on marriage, Jesus talks about the issue of eunuchs and distinguishes three types: being made a eunuch from birth, from men and from one's own actions. He goes on to suggest that some "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"<sup>139</sup> and does not discourage the practice, suggesting that, "he who is able to accept it, let him accept it."<sup>140</sup> Leaving a legacy is insignificant compared to the work of the kingdom of God and the greater legacy therein. More so, by culminating the messianic line, Jesus is transferring the Davidic legacy from the earthly plane to the eternal, heavenly dimension.

Jesus does not appear to follow the traditional views on the family either, seemingly denying the legacy and importance of the family by encouraging young men to leave their families and disregard the customary parental burial obligations.<sup>141</sup> Jesus is revolutionising the idea of the family and legacy, replacing it with a devotion and obligation to the kingdom of God. While there is obvious merit in this change, it is ostensibly unmanly for Jesus to advocate a total disregard of the importance of fulfilling what the ancient Jewish gender ideology would suggest is his God-given obligation to propagate the earth and care for his family.

There is an interesting paradox here. The above has shown the Jesus was undoubtedly outside of the masculine norm in terms of family and legacy. According

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<sup>139</sup> Matt 19:12.

<sup>140</sup> Matt 19:12b.

<sup>141</sup> See Matt 8:20-21; 11:25-30; 12:46-69; 19:27-30.



to the gospel tradition there is no evidence of a physical legacy. thus Jesus, as a manly Jew, appears to have failed to fulfil his divine obligation to ensure the continuity of the human race. However, to Matthew the more important salvific mission qualifies as the manly obligation to safeguard the human race. In this way, Jesus has moved beyond the requirements of the ancient Jewish gender ideology by not only ensuring the continuity of humanity but redeeming it from total destruction.

### **5.3.5 Jesus and the Absence of Luxury**

From the little that the gospel of Matthew reveals about Jesus' childhood and early life, there is a distinct absence of luxury. As far as the author is concerned the only real riches that Jesus ever received or held were the gold, frankincense and myrrh that were presented to his family as a gift marking his birth,<sup>142</sup> and even then it may have been necessary to use these luxuries to survive while the young family dwelt in Egypt.

Absence of luxury was also a strong theme in the message of Jesus, again rendering it a distinctly masculine message. In Matthew, Jesus teaching against the love of self and of luxury admonishes,

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Matt 2:11.

<sup>143</sup> Matt 6:19, 25.

In stark contrast to the typical splendour and abundance in food of the social elite, Jesus argues that these luxuries are unnecessary, that life itself is more important than the clothes and food that one has. There are strong parallels between the relationship that Philo draws with overindulgence and femininity. Philo and many of the other ancient Jewish writings suggest that this obsession and concern with indulging the flesh is soft and “imitating the luxury of women.”<sup>144</sup>

In the Jewish literature there is also a strong correlation between the pursuit of virtue and the absence of luxury, a teaching that appears in Matthew also. Philo suggests that the virtuous man should not adopt a luxurious life. This indulgence was generally reserved for those who could afford it, thus money was synonymously linked to luxury and extravagance. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus teaches that riches are a master that is incompatible with God, explicitly stating that it is not possible to live both a life of luxury and a life devoted to God. Thus the pursuit of virtue is foiled by a lusty and feminine ambition for the extravagances of life.

This idea of luxury in the Jewish writings is not always concerned with an abundance of food and drinks; there are many references to suggest that luxury of the body is also associated with effeminacy. There are strong correlations between physical appearance and manliness as well as a type of ‘roughing it’ that is alluded to. Philo suggest that only the most effeminate men sleep on a “costly couch,”<sup>145</sup> whereas the masculine man is content with the earth as his bed and is not ashamed of cheap or shabby clothes. As far as Jesus is concerned there is little evidence to suggest that he

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<sup>144</sup> Philo, *On Dreams, that They are God Sent*, 1.124.

<sup>145</sup> Philo, *On Dreams, that They are God Sent*, 1.124-5.

even had a permanent dwelling let alone a bed to sleep in. In Matthew he is recorded as stating that there is no place for him to rest his head<sup>146</sup> and there are multiple references to Jesus stealing away to the country or mountainous areas for rest and prayer.<sup>147</sup> In terms of ancient Jewish gender constructions, this absence of luxury is a clear indication of masculinity. Not only did Jesus teach a simple and temperate, masculine life but he was also a consistent example of his teaching.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a strong correlation between the absence of luxury in the physical appearance of a man and the idea of masculinity. Josephus describes the physical appearance of a true man as having a “rugged body... his hands rough by the labours he had been put to.”<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately Matthew provides no description of Jesus’ physical body, although one could speculate that Jesus’ body would have been strongly affected by a ministry that was primarily outdoors.<sup>149</sup> Being the son of a carpenter<sup>150</sup>, Jesus would undoubtedly have handled wood and carpentry tools at some point during his time on earth. It would be difficult to argue then that his hands would have been soft and smooth.

Jesus’ masculine message also becomes apparent in the latter part of the gospel when a rich young ruler approaches the teacher concerning his salvation. In return, Jesus urges the young man to renounce his life of luxury, selling his possessions and

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<sup>146</sup> Matt 8:20.

<sup>147</sup> Matt 14:13, 23; 15:29.

<sup>148</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.333.

<sup>149</sup> Matt 4:1-2, 8, 18; 5:1; 8:20, 23-27; 9:1, 35-38; 12:1-2; 13:1-2; 14:22; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 26:30.

<sup>150</sup> Matt 13:55.

handing them to the poor. The masculine undertone of the message here is quite clear, as Jesus values and advocates the typically masculine pursuit to abstain from luxury, even going so far as to require it from his followers.

## **Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusions**

Gender ideology in the study of religion, though only recently appearing on the academic scene, is long overdue. Cultural and social implications of the Scriptures are only recently being championed as integral to interpretation and understanding of the Bible. Gender ideologies are an important part of the social construct of an ancient text and, though the examples are often limited, the implications of these for biblical studies are nonetheless worth investigating.

Through a study of the ancient Jewish gender ideology, this paper has attempted to discover to what extent Jesus' masculinity was expressed and how he should be viewed as the ideal male role model. Although the limitations of the paper meant that a translation of these principles into a contemporary model could not be achieved, there is still much to be gained from the principles that have been expressed in this paper.

Most importantly, it should be noted that the evidence discussed has revealed that the typical Christian emphasis on the feminine aspects of Jesus' character is skewed. In terms of the ancient Jewish gender construction, Jesus epitomised true masculinity and even went so far as to extend its meaning and impact in the first century world. According to this research, there should be no reason for the church to have a significant lack in good masculine role models. The evidence suggests that not only is Jesus a consistent example of masculinity but his message was also distinctly masculine. Not only did he reveal manliness in his demeanour but also he encouraged other men, including his band of followers, to act courageously and be

good, masculine role models. Unfortunately, the modern Christian church has often failed to emphasise this important aspect of Jesus' message.

Christianity may have tended to shy away from emphasising the male nature and the human aspect of the divine Jesus because it overplays his humanity. Religious studies and most scholars will agree that the nature of Christ is both human and divine but there is hesitation in picturing Jesus as anything other than doctrinally correct. In other words, we are afraid to attribute a thoroughgoing human identity and ideology to a divine being. This hesitance appears to have caused many problems for Christianity. Rather than exploring Jesus' human nature we have been content to assume that his divinity overrules any human aspect of who he actually was. I would argue that a study of his human character does not detract or discredit his divinity but rather emphasises it. We are made in the divine image, thus for God to take on humanity it must be true, authentic humanity. To study the humanity of Jesus, then, is to study the original intention for our humanity also, even if in a post-Edenic setting. We should not be afraid of what the person of Jesus can reveal for how we should frame our lives.

The ancient Jewish gender ideology reveals the true masculinity of Jesus within the social context of the gospel of Matthew. The research suggests that Jesus epitomised the masculine Jewish male in both his actions and his teachings. This has significant implications for the way we present Jesus in contemporary Christianity. Jesus is an ideal masculine role model for Christian men and we shouldn't shy away from emphasising this particular aspect of his humanity.

In terms of masculinity, what better role model is there for the Christian Church?

Jesus embodies the perfection of the masculine ideology. If we swing back the pendulum and present to Christian men the true model of masculinity there will be a renewed strength and virility in the Christian church.

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