

I ONCE KNEW A MAN: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MASCULINE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND HISTORICAL JESUS STUDIES

by
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To mom and dad,

Who taught me to love like Jesus and loved me still when I lost him

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I still remember my first semester at Ole Miss, going to my first classes and trying to find out what this whole college thing is about. I took a lot of courses freshman year looking for something—looking to be looked for—and that’s where the religious studies department found me. The professors in this department made me feel wanted, and that is amongst the best feelings I have known as an undergraduate. I’d like to thank Dr. Thurlkill, Dr. Lan, and Dr. Moses for the time and energy you all have devoted in my education. I must thank Dr. Moses for allowing me to be the youngest student in her feminism and religion class and opening up my mind to thinking about religion and gender. I want to thank Dr. Cook for teaching me four semesters of Greek, which remains amongst my greatest pleasures of undergraduate, and giving up free time to read, revise and comment on this work. Next, I’d like to thank Dr. Bos for the countless hours you have poured into editing and talking through this work. Many of my absolute favorite memories at Ole Miss have taken place in your office. And finally, I must thank my family and friends—particularly Sam and Hannah—for pretending to care as I talked about this work and for offering wonderful distractions and opportunities for procrastination.

ABSTRACT

JOSHUA CHARLES LAW: I Once Knew a Man: A Case Study Analysis of the Relationship
Between Masculine Social Constructions and Historical Jesus Studies"

(Under the direction of James Bos)

This is a two part thesis. Part I contains a literature survey in which I surveyed published material on the way Jesus' canonical masculinity is constructed in the context of Greco-Roman masculinities. Part II of this work is a case study analysis of the masculinity of Jesus as constructed by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright in their book, *The Meaning of Jesus*. In order to do this, I surveyed literature and compiled profiles of masculinity from the late 20th century western world. Next, I analyzed Borg and Wright's Jesus' in the context of the relevant profiles of western masculinity. The findings of the case study reveal that N.T. Wright's Jesus performs a more traditional and dominant masculinity than Marcus Borg's Jesus.

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INTRODUCTION

*“When faced with his own death, Jesus knew that he had to Man up...
So he crawled up on that cross, and he stuck it out...
And taught us all what real manning up is about”*

- Trey Parker, *The Book of Mormon*

This thesis is about Jesus, masculinity, and me. I am a white, American male, and I have been socialized as such. Raised by an evangelical Protestant family in central Alabama, I quickly learned that to be a real man in my world meant to avoid being a woman or a gay man. Thus, my masculinity—and popularity—growing up depended upon my avoidance of acting feminine or gay. At the center of this gendered order sat Jesus. For my community, Jesus was the son of God, the eternally begotten of the father, the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and the ultimate picture of manhood. As Christians, everyone was supposed to mimic the life of Jesus, but as a *male* Christian, I was also called to mimic the masculinity of Jesus. I have spent the bulk of my life chasing after a model of manhood that I could never attain, and it was not until recently that I began to ask myself: who was this Jesus character, and is he really as manly as everyone says? These questions sit at the forefront of this thesis.

In part one, I will look at the way Jesus’ masculinity is constructed in New Testament texts. In part two, I will turn my gaze to Jesus’ masculinity as it is constructed in contemporary scholarship. I would love to pretend that this thesis is a purely academic endeavor where I am your objective researcher. That is plainly not true. This thesis is about coming to terms with not living up to the masculine standards that my community told me Jesus represents. This thesis is an academic labor of love, hurt, and confusion as I attempt to come to terms with who I am, what I have done, and what is possible. This thesis is about Jesus, masculinity, and me.

PART 1: LITERATURE SURVEY ON JESUS' MASCULINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. The Birth of Masculinity Studies and Its Entrance into New Testament Studies

A teacher of mine once told me a story about a young fish conversing with an older fish. The elder fish said, “The water is nice today, huh?”, to which the younger fish replied, “What the f*ck is water?”. The water, from the perspective of a fish, was so universal that it went unnoticed. This story parallels the history of masculinity and critical masculinity studies. Masculinity has been so dominant, so universal, that it has gone unnoticed for centuries. That men’s studies were only invented within western academia in the late twentieth century is evidence of masculinity’s ability to hide within its own universality. For centuries, elite men have operated systems of power, including academic systems of power, and masculinity had been able to avoid the critical eye of academia. Thanks to the rise of feminist criticism and queer theory, this naive and unquestioned approach to masculinity is no longer possible. Men’s studies, as it was then called, was introduced into western scholarship in the late 1970’s as a response to the common understanding that masculine behavior was natural to male bodies.¹ Masculinity studies now analyze factors that contribute to the social construction of masculine behaviors in varying cultures.

A brief word must be said about exactly what I mean by the word “masculine.” I am defining masculinity in a behavioral sense, referring to a set of behaviors practiced by which the possessor of a male body becomes a man. Thus, I am not defining masculinity as an inherent category to be born into (such as a male body) but a set of behaviors to perform.² While one may

¹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995) 37.

² Whether or not a male body is a prerequisite to behave as masculine and be a man is a contestable issue. Could a person with a female body (or intersex body) perform masculine behaviors? Of course. But would that person be considered a “man” by the dominant culture? The answer to that question is much more difficult to ascertain and varies from culture to culture. Given that it is outside of the scope of this

be born into maleness, masculinity must be performed and practiced. Just as religious, political, and social behaviors vary from culture to culture, masculine behaviors often vary across and within people groups. In any given culture, there are a multiplicity of competing masculinities at play, and the dominant (i.e. hegemonic) form of masculinity is often the one practiced by those at the top of society with the most power and money.³ This paper will apply masculinity studies to both ancient and modern cultures, and it is important to note that masculine behaviors may vary from culture to culture. Thus, it is possible that masculine behavior in ancient Greco-Roman culture is quite different from masculine behavior in twenty first century western culture.

Masculinity studies first emerged within the field of classics before moving over to the neighboring field of New Testament studies in the last twenty years. To date, there has still been shockingly little work done to analyze the masculinity found within the New Testament texts. Once again, masculinity hides within its own universality. However, a few scholars are beginning to study the gendered dynamics of a text written and canonized by males that venerates a male savior and (male?) deity. We are, it seems, firmly on masculine terrain when talking about the New Testament and Jesus, and the lens provided by masculine methodology ought to offer a fresh perspective on a set of texts that have been studied closely for nearly two thousand years.

This project is about the way in which authors construct the gender of Jesus, which is to say that this project is behaviorally based. In what way can it be said that New Testament writers as well as contemporary writers construct a Jesus that behaves according to masculine codes of behavior, whether Greco-Roman or modern western?

paper, I have decided to forgo this discussion and will primarily discuss masculinity as a set of behaviors performed by people who possess male bodies.

³ On this point, I am indebted to the thought of R. W. Connell. See, Connell, *Masculinities*, 28-40.

Although this thesis is about the gendered construction found within New Testament texts rather than the historical value of these texts, a few words must be said regarding historical matters. In spite of constant debates, it is a relative certainty that Jesus was a male-presenting Jewish peasant who was crucified by the Romans in the first half of the first century CE. Following his death, Jesus' popularity continued, and people told stories about him. These stories were written down by elite or semi-elite males in the second half of the first century CE.⁴ These texts were then used in early Christian circles and canonized by male bishops in the 4th centuries C.E.. The canonized texts are not the only texts that contain memories of Jesus, and they, in fact, may be dependent upon other texts that did not get canonized by the male bishops.⁵

There are five primary texts to consider in a discussion of the gendered picture of Jesus that emerges within the New Testament: the epistles of Paul, the three synoptic gospels, the Johannine gospel, and Revelation. These texts contain stories and beliefs about Jesus and his masculinity. Jesus possessed a male body, but the way in which he became a *man* is far more complex, and I will argue that his masculinity is embellished and codified by New Testament portrayals of him. What emerges from the canonical texts is a canonical masculinity of Jesus that has been accepted for nearly 2,000 years.

Part I of this work is primarily a literature survey with minimal commentary of my own. To date, there are two scholarly works analyzing Jesus' constructed masculinity in New Testament texts: the book, *Behold The Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*⁶, written by Colleen Conway and a collection of essays, *New Testament Masculinities*, edited by Stephen Moore and Janice Anderson.

⁴ The dating here is approximate. Paul may have written his first epistle as early as 49 CE, and the Gospel of John may have been written in the early second century CE.

⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins 1988).

⁶ Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Below, I will briefly survey this scholarly literature in order to assess and summarize scholarly positions on Jesus' constructed masculinity within the Greco-Roman world. I will begin with the way Jesus' masculinity is constructed within Pauline literature before moving on to the synoptic gospels, John's gospel, and Revelation.

II. Jesus' Masculinity in Pauline Literature

The Paul that we meet in the New Testament was a writer in the middle of the 1st century C.E., and his name appears on thirteen canonical epistles, though only seven of those letters indisputably belong to Paul. In keeping with modern scholarship, I will analyze Jesus' masculinity first in the undisputed letters of Paul before treating the letters that may have been ancient forgeries. In my survey of scholarly literature, I found only one scholar, Colleen Conway, who dealt with Jesus' masculine identity in Paul's writing.

The Unmanned Christ and the Manly Christian in The Pauline Tradition: Colleen Conway⁷

Conway's position on Jesus' masculinity in Pauline material breaks down into two categories: the unmanned Christ of the historical Paul and the cosmic Christ of the Deutero-Pauline Epistles.

In opening her chapter on the authentic Pauline material, Conway quotes Paul in 1 Corinthians: "I decided to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).⁸ Paul, so it seems, is not embarrassed by Jesus's crucifixion but proud. Conway comments, "In the ancient context, a crucified body was a violated or penetrated body. It was a body subjected to the power of others, and thus an emasculated body."⁹ According to Cicero, crucifixion is the "most savage, most disgraceful punishment" (*Verr* 2.5.66), and he continues, "To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him an abomination, to slay him is almost an act of

⁷ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 67-88.

⁸ All biblical quotations come from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 67

murder, to crucify him is— what? There is not a fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed” (*Verr* 2.5.64).¹⁰ Thus, Paul’s proud presentation of Jesus’ crucifixion presents a challenging question regarding Jesus’ masculinity. On first look, it would seem that Paul is venerating an unmanly hero and advocating for an alternative or protest masculinity. However, a closer look reveals that this is not the case. According to Conway’s reading, Paul has a trick up his sleeve.

Conway argues that self control is a central tenet of Greco-Roman masculinity.¹¹ Though Paul goes against Greco-Roman hegemonic masculine standards in proclaiming Christ crucified, Paul asserts that Jesus was crucified willingly, which makes it a quite manly ordeal: “Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die” (Romans 5:7). In Paul’s scheme, Jesus’ manliness is reinforced by his ability control his will to undergo an unmanly death on behalf of others. Paul’s stressing of Jesus’ noble death shares similarities with accounts of the death of Socrates, the Jewish martyrs in 4 Maccabees and the suffering of Apollonius.¹² Thus, for Paul, Jesus’ death reinforces his masculinity as he is crucified according to his will on behalf of his inferiors. Conway comments, “Making the death an act of one’s will rather than a submission to the power of others turns it into a masculine rather than feminine event.”¹³ Paul stresses that Jesus’ death was willful in order to demonstrate that Jesus’ death was an act of his will. According to Conway, early Christian atonement theories, such as that found in 1 Corinthians 15, serve the purpose of bolstering the masculinity of Jesus and affirming his self control. If Jesus had died for nothing at the hands of Roman imperial strength, his death would have been a remarkably unmanly event. However,

¹⁰ Cicero’s translations come via Colleen Conway. See Conway, *Behold the Man*, 67.

¹¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 25.

¹² Conway, *Behold the Man*, 73.

¹³ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 73.

Jesus' willful death "for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15: 3) is a masculine death. For Conway, Jesus' death was a "manly death" because it displayed his toughness to undergo adversity for others.¹⁴

Jesus' unmanly death is also masculinized by his resurrection. Paul says, "For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (ἵνα καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων κυριεύσῃ) (Romans 14:9). Again, Paul says, "[Jesus] was declared to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness *by the resurrection from the dead*" (Romans 1:4). Thus, Jesus' death and resurrection stand firmly on the map of Greco-Roman hegemonic masculinity as the means by which Jesus gains power and authority. Conway reads Jesus' resurrection as Jesus' apotheosis, a characteristic she finds common in elite men such as Caesar Augustus, Philo's Moses, and Philostratus's Apollonius.¹⁵ Jesus' death does not make him a failed leader; Jesus' death and resurrection is the means by which he becomes a ruler (κύριος) and king (βασιλεύς). Though Paul discusses the unmanly crucifixion, it is really the means by which Jesus becomes the most manly, dominant ruler. On this note, Conway emphasizes that Jesus' means to gain power and authority (his own suffering) may be unorthodox, but Jesus is still presented as an elite man. Conway says this of Jesus' apparent weakness: "[Paul] does not celebrate his weakness as an end in itself or even as virtue, but showcases it as a means of achieving strength."¹⁶

Conway also notes the way in which Paul constructs Jesus' masculinity in the context of royal masculinities of his era. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming (παρουσίαν) of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). As is often noted, the coming (παρουσίαν) of the Lord (Κυρίου) is remarkably similar to the royal presence and return

¹⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 70.

¹⁵ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 81.

¹⁶ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 75.

of the great emperors of Rome.¹⁷ Thus, Jesus' παρουσία serves as a direct comparison between Jesus' masculinity and that of the emperors of Rome. Summing up the masculinity of Jesus as found within the historical Paul is challenging. In death Jesus may have appeared emasculated and defeated, but his defeat, according to Paul, is best understood as a victory that secures Jesus' Lordship to which every knee shall bow (Philippians 2: 9-11). Conway summarizes this well: "If Jesus appeared defeated and emasculate in death, it was only because his vicarious, noble death for others had not been understood."¹⁸

Conway's position on the Deutero-Pauline epistles is quite different from her position on the authentic letters.¹⁹ While the historical Paul knew nothing but Christ and Christ crucified, the Deutero-Pauline epistles erase the historical Jesus' body and humiliating death altogether and replace the suffering Jesus with the cosmic Christ. The historical Paul affirmed Jesus' unmanly death and tried to make sense of it. Deutero-Pauline epistles erase the memory of Jesus' death. There is only one mention of crucifixion in the Deutero-Pauline material, but it is not Jesus' body that is crucified but a "written decree" (Colossians 2:14).²⁰ This serves to obscure Jesus' unmanly death. Conway comments, "As the Pauline tradition develops in this letter, the unmanly crucifixion no longer plays a central role. It is left behind in favor of the masculine cosmic Christ."²¹ Conway sums up the Deutero-Pauline material: "The cosmic Christ of Colossians is the most perfectly masculine of all— an active, creative, coherent principle, responsible for the creation and coherence of the whole created order."²²

¹⁷ NT Wright, "The Future of Jesus," *The Meaning of Jesus* (New York, NY, HarperCollins Publishers: 1999) 201-202.

¹⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 87.

¹⁹ Conway includes Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral epistles in her discussion of Deutero-Pauline material. Conway, *Behold the Man*, 83.

²⁰ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 85.

²¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 85.

²² Conway, *Behold the Man*, 84.

Surveying the Jesus stories found within the letters that bear Paul's name reveals a rich wrestling match in regards to the gendered memories of Jesus. The historical Paul remembers Jesus' penetrated and crucified body, but Paul is quick to remind his readers that this death was actually a strong, manly act that displayed Jesus' courage and self-control. The Deutero-Pauline writer(s), however, handle the unmanly death of Jesus quite differently than the historical Paul. Instead of affirming Jesus' crucifixion and explaining the masculine meaning of it, the Deutero-Pauline letters erase the memory of Jesus' penetrated body and replace it with a cosmic, unambiguously masculine Christ.

III. The Markan Jesus

The Gospel of Mark is typically considered to be the earliest surviving gospel and the template for the other two synoptic gospels.²³ In my survey of scholarly literature, I have found three authors that deal with Jesus' masculinity in Mark's gospel: Colleen Conway, Tat-Siong Benny Liew and Eric Thurman.

The Markan Jesus as a Manly Martyr: Colleen Conway²⁴

For Conway, Jesus' masculinity is unambiguous and obviously elite in chapters 1-14 of Mark's gospel. Conway adequately summarizes the masculinity of Jesus in the early chapters of Mark's gospel:

“The Markan Jesus of the first part of the gospel is a man powered by a divine spirit that descended on him at baptism. He is thus bearer of divine authority, strength, and power. He betters his opponents in various conflicts and competitions, including those opponents who represent the elite leaders in the community. Moreover, he single-handedly (albeit symbolically) defeats an entire Roman legion. What better indicators might there be for

²³ I am not working under the assumption that the writers of the synoptic gospels were named Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I will, however, refer to these names as the authors simply for convenience.

²⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 89-106.

depicting an ideal man for a people who are ruled by Roman power and part of a broader culture that promotes a masculinity based on Greco-Roman models?”²⁵

According to Conway, Jesus’ masculinity is unambiguously elite in the first thirteen chapters, but chapters 15-16 present challenging paradoxes. The behavior of Jesus in chapter 14-16 alternates back and forth between imitating and resisting masculine standards. Chapter 14 of Mark’s gospel begins with Jesus’ anointing as a king or messiah, albeit by a woman in the house of a leper (Mark 14: 3-9). Then Jesus eats a Passover meal with his disciples and likens his body and blood to the bread and wine of the Passover feast which is “poured out for many” (Mark 14: 24). The Passover feast is another prediction of Jesus’ death and affirmation that Jesus’ suffering will take place for others, which will make it manly. However, Jesus’ masculinity takes an eery turn in Gethsemane where Jesus is “sorrowful, even to death” (Mark 14: 34). In the garden, Jesus twice prays that God might “remove this cup from me” (Mark 14:36, 39). Jesus’ anxiety about his own death and twice pleading for an alternate ending to his story does not look masculine in the Greco-Roman world.²⁶ After praying, Jesus is arrested by the men of authority, but he lets the crowd know that he is in control so that “the scriptures be fulfilled” (Mark 14:49).

Jesus’ walk to the cross, towards penetration, has nothing masculine about it. While Jesus once commanded his followers to take up their crosses to follow him (Mark 8: 34), Jesus is no longer strong enough to carry his own cross (Mark 16: 21). After being penetrated and put on the cross, Jesus is mocked and told to “save [himself] and come down from the cross” (Mark 15:30). Jesus cannot save himself; he is powerless. Jesus’ final words have the stench of bitter of defeat: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15: 34). Jesus’ life ends with defeat and confusion. Shortly afterwards, however, Jesus’ masculinity is affirmed by the Roman centurion

²⁵ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 95.

²⁶ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 102.

who says, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). Three days later, three women go to Jesus’ tomb to deliver spices. Upon arriving, the women realize that Jesus’ male body is gone and are told by a young man that Jesus has risen and will meet them in Galilee. The women tell no one, because they are afraid.

This is the ending to Mark’s gospel, beautifully cryptic and ambiguous regarding the masculinity of Jesus. He is penetrated against his will, dies abandoned by his God, and affirmed by a Roman centurion. He is buried like a criminal and visited only by peasant women. Three days later, Jesus’ body is missing, but he is never seen living. His message is not shared because the only women who know are too afraid to say anything; perhaps they are too confused.

Conway argues that Jesus’ death in Mark is vindicated by his resurrection and that his weakness is actually an ideal means to attain strength.²⁷ I cannot fully agree with Conway’s position because Mark’s Jesus does not unambiguously rise from the dead. Instead, there is only a missing body, a mysterious man at the tomb, and three fearful women. There is no victory shouted from the rooftops, only confusion and fear whispered about behind closed doors, which gives Mark’s story about Jesus’ masculinity a dreary and ambiguous ending. However, as will be seen shortly, what Mark’s Jesus lacks in masculinity, Matthew and Luke fill in.

Re-Mark-able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?: Tat-Siong Benny Liew²⁸

Liew’s gendered analysis of Mark’s Jesus shares many features with Conway’s, but also diverges in key places. Liew especially emphasizes the dimension of physical space in Mark’s gospel. Liew argues that outdoor space was the space for male behavior and indoors was the

²⁷ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 106.

²⁸ Tat-siong Benny Liew, “Re-Mark-Able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?” *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 93-136.

space for female behavior.²⁹ For Liew, it is no surprise that Mark places almost all of Jesus' life and ministry outdoors, in the space where men performed.³⁰

Liew also stresses Jesus' public speaking and understands Jesus' debates within the context of masculine competitions. Intellectual battles in public were noted as especially masculine behavior, and Liew understands the Markan Jesus' debates with the Pharisees in this context. He says, "Masculinity, therefore, is measured by one's willingness to compete in the public world. Not for nothing, then, does Mark's Jesus engage himself in various conflicts... 'Manly' men do not just compete, but they also conquer, since ancient Mediterranean masculinity is often associated with success in public competition."³¹

In death, Liew considers Jesus' masculinity comparable to that of Plato and Seneca's ideology of manhood: "In Mark is a picture of Jesus who is less of reckless brute than one possessed of control and strategic wit. Like Plato's 'real' man, he has the internal direction and the self-mastery that enable him to endure many less-than-favorable circumstances and consequences... Jesus endures it all. In the act of death, he affirms his virtues and virility."³² Thus, Liew stresses the Markan Jesus' masculine virtue to face his own death bravely. Liew compares Jesus' masculinity to a noble martyr's masculinity. Liew closes his chapter with this comment: "In short, Jesus' masculinity in Mark focuses on martyrdom, with Jesus and his followers performing the roles of tragic heroes."

***Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity: Eric Thurman*³³**

²⁹ Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 99.

³⁰ Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 99.

³¹ Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 105-106.

³² Liew, "Re-Mark-able Masculinities," 110-111.

³³ Eric Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity," *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 137-162.

Eric Thurman takes a slightly different position on the Markan Jesus' masculinity, arguing that Jesus is best understood as a subversive mimicry of imperial masculinity: "Mark's response to empire... betrays a similar destabilizing of hegemonic masculinity, marked neither by an (impossible) outright rejection nor a simple inversion but by an ambivalent imitation of masculine ideals."³⁴ While Conway and Liew primarily understood the Markan Jesus' masculinity through the lens of martyrdom, Thurman understands Jesus' masculinity through the lens of imperial mimicry: "I will argue that Mark both reinscribes and resists Roman imperial ideology, especially the assumption that the ability to dominate others implies the right to do so."³⁵ Thurman argues that Jesus mimics Greco-Roman masculinity, although the point of the mimicry may be destabilizing.

Even more, Thurman finds points of contact between Jesus' masculinity and ancient bandits and insurrectionists: "Like a bandit or an insurrectionist, Jesus resists Satan's colonial control on behalf of an alternative imperial male power."³⁶ Thus, Thurman sees Jesus as performing a protest masculinity against the imperial powers. While there are points at which Thurman finds Jesus' masculinity to be thoroughly hegemonic,³⁷ Thurman tends to emphasize the destabilizing and protesting nature of the Markan Jesus' masculinity. Thurman concludes his chapter reflecting again on Jesus' challenge to hegemonic masculinity: "Adopting momentarily the perspective of the dominant colonial orders (Rome and Satan), I read Jesus as an 'outlaw,' like the bandits of ancient Hellenistic novels, who challenges colonial hegemony by duplicating the signs of its authority."³⁸ While other scholars might see Jesus' challenges to Rome and Satan

³⁴ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 140.

³⁵ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 140.

³⁶ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 147.

³⁷ See Thurman's comments on Jesus' Parousia on Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 149.

³⁸ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 160.

within the context of masculine competition, Thurman tends to emphasize the destabilizing nature of Jesus' masculinity.

What emerges from the survey of Conway, Liew, and Thurman's discussions of the Markan Jesus' masculinity is not perfect agreement. Nevertheless, all three scholars argue that Jesus' masculinity was constructed in conversation with Greco-Roman modes of masculinity, though they may disagree about which models of masculinity Jesus' is most similar to.

IV. The Matthean Jesus

For whatever reason, the author of Matthew's Gospel believed that Mark's gospel needed some editing.³⁹ I will argue that, among other things, Matthew's gospel attempts to bolster the masculinity of Jesus and provide a less ambiguously gendered Jesus than the one found in Mark's gospel. In my literature survey, I found two scholars that discuss the Matthean Jesus' masculinity in the context of Greco-Roman masculinity: Colleen Conway and Jerome Neyrey.

***The Matthean Jesus: Mainstream and Marginal Masculinities: Colleen Conway*⁴⁰**

Conway argues that Jesus' masculinity in Matthew is quite different from his masculinity in Mark:

“On the one hand, Jesus' ideal masculine status is accentuated in Matthew's gospel, as Jesus becomes the bearer of royal honorific titles, a prolific public speaker, a righteous teacher, and a bold agitator in a heightened conflict with his opponents. On the other hand, the Matthean Jesus also advocates an alternative masculinity, as seen in certain

³⁹ I am arguing from the perspective of the Markan priority hypothesis. Though certainly not a proven fact, it is the majority position and contains a great deal of explanatory power, even to make sense of Jesus' elevated masculinity in Matthew and Luke.

⁴⁰ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 108-125.

antifamily teachings (Matthew 10:34-35) or in the surprising reference to those who become ‘eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:12).”⁴¹

For Conway, the Matthean Jesus’ status in Matthew looks thoroughly masculine, though some of his behaviors seem destabilizing of the very masculine categories that Jesus performs. In the end, Conway supposes that Jesus’ masculinity in Matthew is “mixed”, at times appearing more elevated than Mark’s and other times more subversive. “[The Matthean] Jesus is the ideal masculine ruler, worshipped as divine and honored as one with high status... On the other hand, this same figure is the one who advocates an alternative masculinity, one who resists the standard constructions of family and household and aligns himself instead with a life of ascetic renunciation.”⁴²

Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew: Jerome Neyrey⁴³

According to Jerome Neyrey, the Matthean Jesus’ masculinity is not “mixed” as it was for Colleen Conway. Neyrey refers to the Matthean Jesus as the “male stereotype” and mentions no characteristics of Jesus that would subvert this category.⁴⁴ Neyrey stresses Jesus’ career as taking place in primarily outdoor, masculine space.⁴⁵ Additionally, Neyrey emphasizes that Jesus’ public career looks similar to that of a masculine politician, and that Matthew’s emphasis on Jesus’ teaching and titles are a significant bolstering of Jesus’ masculinity found within the Mark’s gospel.⁴⁶ Neyrey acknowledges that Jesus’ masculinity does not look like that of a ruling father but a ruling politician. He says,

⁴¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 108.

⁴² Conway, *Behold the Man*, 124-125.

⁴³ Jerome Neyrey, “Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew,” *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 43-66.

⁴⁴ Neyrey, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 53.

⁴⁵ Neyrey, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 44-50.

⁴⁶ Neyrey, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 58.

“Matthew locates Jesus in the ultimate public arena of politics, where he is ascribed and acknowledged as having elite public-political roles. According to Matthew, Jesus was no mere head of a household, artisan, or peasant. God has ascribed to him the political roles of ‘Son of David,’ ‘King of Israel,’ ‘Lord,’ and ‘Christ.’ God will make him ‘sit at my right hand’ with power to judge and rule.”⁴⁷

Thus, Neyrey sees the Matthean Jesus’ masculinity as a specifically political masculinity that is more elite and less subversive than Conway understands the Matthean Jesus.

In reading the scholarly material on the Matthean Jesus’ masculinity, I noticed two oversights that I propose further research should stress. First, current scholarly treatments of the Matthean Jesus’ masculinity did not explore the Matthean Jesus’ relationship to Moses, a masculine hero of second temple Judaism who Philo of Alexandria calls “the greatest and most perfect of all men” (*Mos.* 1.1).⁴⁸ Matthew’s Jesus, like Moses, narrowly avoids execution as an infant, spends his childhood in Egypt, and is called out of Egypt by God (Matthew 2: 13-17). Also similar to Moses, Matthew stresses Jesus’ role as a prophet and lawgiver from God. Matthew organizes Jesus’ teaching into five sections (Matthew 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25), which appear similar to the five books of Moses. For quite some time, scholars have stressed the Matthean Jesus’ similarity to Moses,⁴⁹ but there has not yet been a thorough examination of the result this similarity has on the Matthean Jesus’ constructed masculinity.

Next, the scholarly discussions of the Matthean Jesus’ masculinity did not examine the effect of Matthew’s update on Mark’s ambiguous resurrection. While Mark’s gospel ends ambiguously without a clear statement as to whether Jesus’ death was an emasculating defeat or

⁴⁷ Neyrey, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 58.

⁴⁸ Translation comes from Conway, *Behold the Man*, 53.

⁴⁹ Bart Ehrman, *A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, (New York, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004) 101.

manly victory, Matthew's gospel leaves no room for doubt that Jesus' death is a manly victory. Mark's gospel does not have a resurrection appearance, but Matthew's gospel overemphasizes the resurrected body and victory of Jesus. The disciples see the victorious body of Jesus in Galilee, worship him, and Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, the son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28: 18-19). Mark's gospel ends with fear and silence. Matthew's gospel ends with an authoritative Jesus giving order to inferior men. The contrast could hardly be more obvious, and the manliness of the Jesus figure in Matthew could hardly be stressed any further. Matthew's Jesus is unambiguously a masculine victor and I believe Matthew's edit of Mark's ending ought to be understood as a refutation of the ambiguous gendered picture of Jesus found in Mark's gospel.

V. The Lukan Jesus

The Gospel of Luke, too, is an update of Mark's gospel, which means that Luke also offers an edited version of Jesus' masculinity as found within Mark's gospel. Some scholars, such as Mark Goodacre, argue that Luke had access to Matthew's gospel and edited it. From the perspective of Jesus' developing masculinity, Goodacre's theory appears plausible as Luke's gospel tends to elevate Jesus' masculinity even higher than Matthew's gospel.⁵⁰ In many cases, Luke's additions mirror those of Matthew's: emphasizing Jesus' role as a teacher and stressing beyond ambiguity that Jesus' death was not an emasculating defeat but a manly victory. Thus, I argue that both Matthew and Luke agree that the Markan Jesus was not significantly masculine and felt the need to make some changes. In my literature survey, I found only two scholars that discussed the Lukan Jesus' masculinity: Mary Rose D'Angelo and Colleen Conway.

⁵⁰ Luke makes several key deletions from Mark/Matthew's telling of the arrest and death of Jesus. To be discussed below.

“Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household”: Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, Hermas, and Luke-Acts: Mary Rose D’Angelo⁵¹

D’Angelo’s essay contains only a little information on the Lukan Jesus’ masculinity, but the information is very important. D’Angelo sees Jesus’ relationship to his Father and his flock in the context of Roman household codes. D’Angelo writes, “Luke also pays more attention to the image of God as father than does either Mark or Q. The use of ‘father’ for God plays a role in the Christology, particularly in establishing the status of the church as heir to Jesus. Jesus has received a reign from his father, which he can confidently bequeath to his ‘little flock’.”⁵² The important point to note here is D’Angelo’s argument that Jesus’ relationship to his Father and to his subordinates is best understood in the matrix of Imperial masculinity. For D’Angelo, Jesus’ ruling power and reign has been passed down from father to son.

The Lukan Jesus and the Imperial Elite: Colleen Conway⁵³

Conway’s treatment of the Lukan Jesus agrees with D’Angelo’s argument that Jesus’ masculinity is constructed in the context of Roman Imperial masculinity. She writes, “With Luke-Acts, we enter a narrative world that is completely at home within the masculine power structures of the Roman Empire... The frequent occurrence of the Greek word for ‘man’ in this Gospel already signals an interest in masculinity. Luke uses the word *άνήρ* 27 times, compared to the four occurrences in the Gospel of Mark.”⁵⁴

Luke, much like Matthew, is well understood as an update on the masculinity of Jesus as found within Mark. For Conway, the key difference between Matthew and Luke is not that they attempt to make Jesus more manly but the mechanism by which Jesus’ masculinity is updated.

⁵¹ Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household: Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, *Hermas*, and Luke-Acts,” *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 265-295.

⁵² D’Angelo, “Imperial Masculinity,” 289.

⁵³ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 127-142.

⁵⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 127.

Conway argues that the Lukan Jesus' masculinity is compared to the Roman emperors: "Luke uses rhetoric typically reserved for the Roman emperor to speak of Jesus."⁵⁵ Luke alone refers to Jesus as σωτήρ, a title commonly used to describe Caesar Augustus, "who brought an end to war and established peace."⁵⁶ In Luke-Acts, Jesus is twice depicted as being carried up into the heavens (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9), which Conway argues is similar to the apotheosis of the Roman emperors.⁵⁷ According to Conway, the Lukan Jesus' masculinity is elevated to the height of the Roman emperors. Given Luke's audience, it is not surprising that Luke compares Jesus' masculinity to that of the emperors of Rome. Luke's introduction states that he is writing to Theophilus, an elite Roman patron. It is fitting that Luke's construction of Jesus' masculinity is tailored specifically to his audience.

Conway argues that Luke reconciles Jesus' death to his masculinity at Jesus' last meal with his disciples. At this meal, the Lukan Jesus encourages his disciples, who Conway compares to Roman officials, to become leaders who serve, rather than exploitive leaders (Luke 22:25-27). It is best to quote Conway at this point:

"The Lukan Jesus then makes the idea of kingship explicit, honoring the disciple's loyalty by conferring on them a kingdom, just as his Father has conferred on him. He also promises them places on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22: 28-30). In placing this coronation scene in the context of the cultic meal setting, Luke links the cultic remembrance of Jesus' death with a ritual in which the ruling authority of Jesus and his followers is emphasized once more."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 130.

⁵⁶ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 130.

⁵⁷ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 130.

⁵⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 142.

Thus, for Conway, Luke made sense of Jesus' humiliating death by framing Jesus' meal and final hours in the context of a royal coronation. While my reading is not the exact same as Conway's, I appreciate the way that she has outlined the central challenge of Jesus' masculinity: his humiliating death. Conway rightly comments that Jesus' death is a "fundamental ambiguity at the heart of any attempt to stress the manliness of Jesus."⁵⁹

My argument is that Luke bolstered Jesus' masculinity not necessarily with a coronation scene at his death but through a few key deletions from Mark/Matthew and an emphasis on Jesus' resurrection. While Mark and Matthew's Gospels have Jesus pray twice for God to give him a way out of death, Luke deletes one of these requests from the lips of Jesus, making Jesus appear less fearful (Luke 22: 39-46). The Markan and Matthean Jesus' last words signal defeat and betrayal: "My God, My god, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34, Matthew: 27:46). The Lukan Jesus' final words, in contrast, are words of a man in control: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The Lukan Jesus is not a betrayed victim like the Markan/Matthean Jesus; the Lukan Jesus dies because he chooses to. While Mark's gospel ends ambiguously, Luke makes Jesus' vindication by resurrection abundantly clear. After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his followers on their walk to Emmaus and teaches them. Then, he appears to his disciples and says, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24: 36). Much like Caesar Augustus, the Lukan Jesus brings peace to his subordinates.

Luke's gospel, much like that of Matthew's, is designed to amplify and bolster the masculinity of Jesus. Jesus' masculinity is put on trial next to the great emperors of Rome, and Jesus' masculinity rises from what looks like defeat to dethrone the masculinity of the mighty emperors.

VI. The Johannine Jesus

⁵⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 142.

The Gospel of John bears witness to a later strand of Christian tradition than the synoptic gospels. While the Jesus found in the synoptics appears to have a puzzling nature that is certainly human but perhaps divine as well, the Gospel of John makes Jesus' divine nature abundantly clear: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:1,14). John's gospel contains the highest Christology of any canonical gospel: Jesus' humanity is minimized, and his divinity emphasized. In my survey of scholarly literature, I found only one scholarly treatment of the Johannine Jesus' masculinity.⁶⁰

***He Must Increase: The Divine Masculinity of the Johannine Jesus.*⁶¹**

According to Conway, Jesus' masculinity in John is elevated far above his masculinity in the synoptic gospels. Conway comments, "The gospel presents an image of Jesus as one who ranks above all others and models the traits that defined ideal masculinity in the first-century Greco-Roman world."⁶² John's Jesus is his father's son, taking after God in power, authority, and wisdom. John's gospel refers to God as father a massive 118 times and clearly sets up the father-son relationship of male bonding and transference of power. Jesus' power is second only to his dad's.

According to Conway displaying mastery of self and others was a key trait of elite men in the ancient world.⁶³ Jesus possesses mastery over his body and appears to be beyond sexuality and sexual desire (John 4:1-42, 20:1-18). These scenes with females are designed to build sexual

⁶⁰ Colleen Conway has written two essays on the Johannine Jesus' masculinity. Because the two essays are very similar, I will deal with her more recent work in more detail and appeal to her older essay for further illumination.

⁶¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*,

⁶² Conway, *Behold the Man*, 143.

⁶³ Conway, "Masculine Christology," 166

expectations between Jesus and female characters, but Jesus is not daunted and responds only spiritually.⁶⁴

Jesus' mastery of self in regards to anger and sadness is a bit more complex. Jesus drives people out of his "father's house" with a whip of cords in a way that looks like he may have lost his temper. Conway, however, argues that Jesus is actually seen as a "bold, active, hater of evil, exhibiting the appropriately righteous anger of a virtuous man."⁶⁵ Jesus' violent display is under his own self control and demonstrates his control of others, even the religious and political authorities.

For Conway, Jesus' missing body is another facet of his elevated masculinity in the Fourth Gospel. While Jesus' essential identity in the synoptic gospels is situated within his human body, Jesus' primary identity in John is that of the logos, and his human body serves only as his earthly host. Conway argues that the bodies of free males are rarely described in detail, whereas bodies of slaves and women are described in detail. Jesus' body in the Gospel of John almost escapes mention, which is evidence of his elevated divine and masculine status.⁶⁶ The only time Jesus' body is described in any detail is to juxtapose his unbroken body to that of the thieves' legs beside him (John 19:33). Jesus' body, even in death, goes unbroken and undescribed. Conway writes, "If descriptions of a wounded body potentially meant a glimpse at a vulnerable or feminized Jesus, the Gospel [of John] provides the reader little opportunity for such a glimpse. Thus, Jesus' status as a free man is reinforced by the reticence of the Passion narrative."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 146.

⁶⁵ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 147.

⁶⁶ Conway, "Masculine Christology," 171.

⁶⁷ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 150.

For Conway, the highest element of Jesus' masculinity in John is Jesus' divine status in John: "In the Gospel of John the divine Logos becomes incarnate, *necessarily*, as the ideal man. In other words, the desire to show the true divinity of Jesus, a desire that shapes the 'high' Christology of the Gospel, results in a particularly masculine Christology."⁶⁸ For Conway, John's so-called high Christology is paired with a high masculinity, which puts Jesus in a place of dominance over all other beings. Again, Conway writes, "Examining the Gospel of John through the lens of hegemonic masculinity in the ancient Mediterranean world has enable a more nuanced analysis of gender and Christology in the Fourth Gospel. Much of the evidence suggests that Jesus is presented in this Gospel as the manliest of men."⁶⁹

In my view, Conway does not fully explore John's relationship to the synoptic gospels. John not only emphasizes many of the masculine characteristics of Jesus, but John's gospel also does not contain narratives that may have compromised Jesus' masculinity. John's gospel notably does not include a scene where Jesus is baptized by John the Baptizer. This may have been due to a developing discomfort with Jesus' baptism, which would have meant that Jesus was in need of baptism in the first place. Jesus' sinlessness means that he never submitted to the desires of his flesh; furthermore, the desire to see Jesus as perfect is a desire to see him as more and more divine, which is to desire to see Jesus as more and more manly. Also, John's gospel does not include Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane to avoid his death. John's gospel leaves no doubt that Jesus died willingly and thus sustained control over himself and others even in his death.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 149.

⁶⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 156.

⁷⁰ It is up for debate whether or not John knew the synoptic tradition and the stories contained (such as the prayer in Gethsemane and the Baptism of Jesus). It is, therefore, unfair to say that John "deleted" these stories from his account, though that may have been the case. It is equally likely that stories that may have compromised Jesus' masculinity were going out of circulation by the time John wrote or that John knew these stories and deemed them unfit for his narrative.

I agree with Conway that the Johannine Jesus represents a later strand in Jesus' developing masculinity. Jesus' power and wisdom are emphasized over and over again in John's gospel. John's gospel is set apart from the synoptics in that the introduction affirms Jesus' divinity, and the rest of the book explores how a divine human might behave. In this way, Jesus' masculinity in John is elevated above his masculinity in the synoptics.

VII. Jesus in Revelation

Because historical Jesus scholars rarely appeal to Revelation, my treatment of the text will be brief. Nevertheless, in my literature survey, I found two scholarly treatments of Jesus' masculinity in Revelation.

*Ruling the Nations with a Rod of Iron: Masculinity and Violence in the Book of Revelation: Colleen Conway*⁷¹

For Conway, the book of Revelation bears witness to the final chapter of the canonical masculinity of Jesus. If Colleen Conway is correct to argue that elite male bodies were rarely described in ancient texts, then the Jesus revealed in Revelation could hardly be more elite and manly: his human body has disappeared altogether and been transformed into a cosmic, divine body. In Revelation, Jesus is no longer depicted as a human male; instead, Jesus is depicted as a heavenly being who is perhaps equal with God. In the opening chapter of Revelation, the narrator says this of his encounter with the cosmic Jesus:

His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force
(Revelation 1: 14-16).

⁷¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 159-174.

By this stage in the development of the canonical Jesus, Jesus has a cosmic, divine body and no human body. However, Conway argues that Jesus' divine body makes him more masculine, not less: "But if masculinity is equated with perfection, unity, rationality, order and completeness, as it was in the ancient world, God would necessarily be masculine... Rather than transcending gender, God is the perfect example of masculinity."⁷² Thus, Jesus' rise to a divine figure in Revelation is not a step away from his masculinity but the final culmination of it. In Revelation, the fullness of masculinity is found in Jesus.

For Conway, however, the elevated masculinity of Jesus found in Revelation is a violent masculinity which she argues is "more monstrous" than Jesus' masculinity elsewhere in the New Testament. For Conway, Jesus is presented as a violent conqueror that surpasses even that of the Roman emperors.⁷³

Sexing the Lamb: Chris Frilingos⁷⁴

Chris Frilingos's perspective on Jesus in Revelation is similar to Conway's: Jesus' masculinity is ultra-elite and terribly violent. Frilingos discusses Jesus' identity in Revelation as the lamb (*ἀρνίον*, a neuter word in Greek). In the early chapters of Revelation, the Lamb appears unmanned and weak: it is slaughtered, penetrated, and passive (Revelation 5:6).⁷⁵ However, the Lamb's unmaning death is vindicated, and the lamb is raised to elite masculine status. In Revelation 14, the Lamb rises up and oversees the torment of his enemies: "[The enemies of God] will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of

⁷² Conway, *Behold the Man*, 36.

⁷³ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 174.

⁷⁴ Chris Frilingos, "Sexing the Lamb," *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 297-317.

⁷⁵ Frilingos, "Sexing the Lamb," 308.

the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). Frilingos comments on this passage: “By exacting divine vengeance on the bodies of the condemned, I submit, the lamb realizes manliness.”⁷⁶

The masculinity of the Lamb is again stressed by the marriage ceremony in Revelation 21: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb’” (Revelation 21:9). The author of Revelation gives Jesus a wife to be the master over. Oddly enough, his wife is the Church, which is made up (at least in leadership) primarily of men.

Why must the author of Revelation insist that Jesus has a bride? Frilingos suggests that it may have been an early Christian embarrassment over the supposed celibacy of Jesus, which may have destabilized his masculinity.⁷⁷ Maybe the author of Revelation (and Deutero-Paul in Ephesians and Colossians) wanted to stress Jesus’ mastery over others by providing Jesus with a bride to master over. Or, perhaps, Jesus’ having a bride is not the result of an embarrassment but a simple fact. By the end of the canonical development of Jesus’ masculinity, Jesus had attained a masculine status so high that his divine manliness forces his male inferiors to behave like un-men, like his bride.

VIII. Conclusion

I believe that my literature survey of scholarly material on the canonical Jesus’ masculinity elicits an obvious trend to make sense of the masculinities of Jesus that emerge from the canonical texts. The canonical material, as my literature survey demonstrates, does not contain a singular masculinity of Jesus but several masculinities. However, I believe there to be a common trend or trajectory upon which Jesus’ canonical masculinities exist. Jesus’ masculinity, I argue, is elevated to a higher and higher status as the Christian movement develops over time.

⁷⁶ Frilingos, “Sexing the Lamb,” 314.

⁷⁷ Frilingos, “Sexing the Lamb,” 300.

As Conway showed us, the historical Paul says relatively little about the historical Jesus aside from his humiliating crucifixion: “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). However, for Paul, this death is not as unmanly as it initially seems because the death was “for our sins” and vindicated by God through Jesus’ resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3).

The Deutero-Pauline epistles, however, bear witness to a later strand of the Christian movement in which Jesus’ masculinity had developed and grown. The Deutero-Pauline epistles reveal a more thoroughly masculine cosmic Christ. In these letters, Jesus’ crucified, penetrated body is erased and replaced with a cosmic body in which the “fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1: 19).

As seen by Conway, Thurman, and Liew’s writing on the Markan Jesus’ masculinity, Mark’s gospel presents an ambiguous picture of Jesus’ masculinity. Though Mark’s gospel affirms that Jesus was the Son of God, a powerful healer and exorcist, Jesus is not as prominent of a public speaker that he is in other texts, and his death scene looks quite unmanly as he twice asks for the father to let him escape, is abandoned on the cross, and may or may not have actually risen from the dead. While Conway and Liew understood the Markan Jesus’ ambiguous masculinity as an early stage of Jesus’ developing masculinity, Thurman understood the Markan Jesus as performing a type of protest masculinity, similar to bandits and insurrectionists.

Matthew and Luke, however, fill in what was lacking in the Markan Jesus’ masculinity. Here, Jesus is the son of God who heals the sick and exorcises demons, but he is also a profound public speaker. Most revealing, both Matthew and Luke make clear that Jesus’ death was not an unmanly defeat but a manly victory. Both Matthew and Luke finish their gospels with actual resurrection scenes, clearing up Mark’s ambiguity, and the writers end their stories with a heroic

Jesus who possesses all authority (as in Matthew) and rises to the heavens like a victorious emperor (as in Luke).

John's gospel takes the masculinity of Jesus a few steps further than the synoptic gospels. In John, Jesus is a preexistent divine figure who takes on human flesh (John 1). Jesus' divinity is a central to his teachings in John, and as Colleen Conway argues, Jesus' march towards divinity is not a march away from masculinity but towards the perfect realization of it. John does not contain narratives found in the synoptics that might have compromised the masculinity of Jesus such as the baptism and prayer in Gethsemane, and John stresses the willingness of Jesus' death so as to deemphasize Jesus' unmaning.

The Book of Revelation, like the Pastoral letters, bears witness to a late stage in the developing masculinity of Jesus, and it should be no surprise that Jesus' masculinity is elevated to amongst the highest status found within the New Testament. Here, Jesus' human body is missing altogether and replaced with a cosmic, divine body. Jesus is represented by the Lamb, who at first appears to be a sub-human, unmanned character but is later elevated to a manly status as punisher of the condemned and bridegroom of the Church.

Of special importance is understanding the various ways New Testament authors reconciled Jesus' unmaning death with his elite masculine status. Paul, for instance, brags of Jesus' death but makes his point that Jesus' death was "for" a cause, which made his death masculine martyrdom. Mark, I argue, allows Jesus' death to sit as it is and does not stress that Jesus' death was somehow masculine or victorious. Luke, Matthew, and John and Revelation, differ from Mark in that they remember the death of Jesus but stress his resurrection as evidence that the death was victory, not defeat. Pseudo-Pauline author(s) are alone in erasing the memory of Jesus' suffering and death. There is, therefore, diversity of opinion amongst New Testament

authors regarding Jesus' death and masculinity. This same trend will be seen in part two, where modern scholars still utilized differing methods of reconciling Jesus' death and masculinity.

In concluding this literature survey, I must note that the scholarly materials I scanned are not intended to be the definitive statements regarding the way Jesus' masculinity is constructed in canonical texts. I hope to have shown nuances and disagreements within the conversation about Jesus' canonical masculinity. While there may not be one definitive explanation of how Jesus' masculinity is constructed in canonical texts, there is a scholarly agreement that Jesus' masculinity was constructed and embellished in canonical texts. This point must be emphasized and internalized before turning to section two of this project.

The scholars that I have surveyed may disagree about exactly how Jesus' masculinity was constructed by canonical writers, but there is firm agreement that Jesus' masculinity was constructed and embellished in the context of Greco-Roman masculinity. Thus, even the earliest surviving memories of Jesus are inherently gendered, stressing Jesus' masculinity in their own Greco-Roman context. It must not be forgotten that it is from the gendered memories of Jesus in the canon that the men at the Council of Chalcedon concluded that Jesus was "complete in humanness/manhood (τέλειον... ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι)."⁷⁸

The arguments in this literature survey got me thinking: if ancient writers about Jesus constructed Jesus' masculinity in the context of Greco-Roman masculinity, do modern writers about Jesus construct Jesus' masculinity in the context of modern masculinities? This question guides Part II of this work where I will seek to analyze the effects of modern western masculinities on the field of historical Jesus research.

⁷⁸ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 4th ed. (London: Black, 1968) 339. Translation is my own, and I have intentionally emphasized that ἀνθρωπότητι can be translated in a gendered manner (manhood) or a gender-neutral manner (humanness).

PART II: 20TH CENTURY WESTERN MASCULINITY AND HISTORICAL JESUS STUDIES

I. Introduction

Part one of this work analyzed Jesus' masculinity in canonical texts in conversation with Greco-Roman masculinity. Part two of this thesis will analyze Jesus' masculinity within historical Jesus studies in conversation with contemporary western masculinity. The reason for this is quite simple. The canonical writers, as they constructed Jesus' masculinity, did so as members of Greco-Roman society, and the historical Jesus scholars, most of whom are contemporary western men, have done so as members of contemporary western culture. Just as analyzing the canonical Jesus' masculinity against the backdrop of Greco-Roman masculinity offers a fresh perspective to well-trodden texts, analyzing the historical Jesuses' masculinity against the backdrop of contemporary western masculinity ought to offer a fresh perspective on the way historical Jesus studies are carried out.

II. Historical Jesus Studies in Context

The purpose of this section is to situate historical Jesus studies (or critical Jesus studies) within their own historical and social context. The field now known as historical Jesus studies began in the 18th century and can be roughly divided into three historical eras, sometimes known as the first, second and third quest for the historical Jesus.⁷⁹ Historical Jesus studies, as I will demonstrate below, have their roots in enlightenment rationalism, western deism, and—dare I say it— western masculinity.⁸⁰ Thus, what follows below is a brief history of research and researchers of the historical Jesus. In reconstructing this history, I have intentionally relied on

⁷⁹ Recent scholarship has questioned the validity of the three-quest model. For example, see F. Bermejo-Rubio, 'The Fiction of the 'Three Quests'': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm', in *The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, ed, James Crossley and Anthony Le Donne (2009), 211-253.

⁸⁰ By the word "western," I am referring specifically to cultures deriving from Greek and Roman culture and directly associated with Western Europe/North America.

two of the most famous histories of critical Jesus studies: *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* and *The Historical Jesus*, edited by Craig Evans and Gregory Dawes, respectively. It must be noted that both of these texts attribute the development of historical Jesus studies almost exclusively to elite western men.⁸¹ This statement is not intended to diminish significant contributions by females and non-elite men but instead to shed light upon the historical roots from which critical Jesus studies developed and the people who have shaped the field.⁸² To say nothing about gender inequity in scholarship is to pretend that the history of critical Jesus studies is the history of human thought when it is indeed not. It is the history of a very specific subset of human thought: elite western men. Thus, the roots of historical Jesus studies are intrinsically tied to the history and performance of western masculinities.

In retelling the history of critical Jesus scholarship, I have made use of a gendered vocabulary. The purpose of this is not to exclude non-male voices from scholarship but to display the gendered roots of Jesus scholarship and to avoid the conclusion that Jesus studies are not bound up with western masculinity. Therefore, where the texts I relied upon used titles such as “thinker, scholar, researcher”, I have opted to use male thinker, male scholar, and male researcher.

Central to historical Jesus studies is the belief that the Jesus of the New Testament canon cannot be taken for granted as the Jesus of history. Prior to the seventeenth century, biblical authority was taken for granted in western academia, and the Jesus of the canon was taken for granted as the Jesus of history.⁸³ However, early enlightenment male thinkers, such as Benedict

⁸¹ By elite men, I mean men who have access to significant education, are not racial or ethnic minorities, and do not perform marginalized masculinities.

⁸² There is, of course, a need for a feminist history of critical Jesus studies to document the contributions of females to the field.

⁸³ Russell Morton, “Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Craig Evans (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2008) 472-479.

Spinoza,⁸⁴ eroded the western world's trust in biblical narratives, laying much of the groundwork for Hermann Reimarus, the eighteenth century German man, to open up the field of research now known as historical Jesus studies. Reimarus is often considered the founder of historical Jesus studies, for he popularized the scandalous idea that the canonical gospels were fraudulent fantasies rather than historical biographies of the life of Jesus.⁸⁵

Reimarus' controversial work kicked off the so-called first quest for the historical Jesus.⁸⁶ After Reimarus' criticisms became popular, Christian men, such as Heinrich Paulus (1761-1851), responded by rationalizing the life of Jesus, particularly his miracles, in order to make Jesus' life more believable for western intellectuals. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) followed in the rationalist footsteps of Paulus and contributed original research into Jesus' own self-understanding or God-consciousness. The rationalism of Paulus and Schleiermacher would eventually be rejected by David Strauss (1808-1874), who understood the gospels neither as deliberate fraud nor accurate historical reports but as myth. Strauss also contributed a more rigid methodology for discerning historical events from mythological invention in the gospel accounts.⁸⁷ Male thinkers of the late first quest, such as Ernest Renan and Johannes Weiss, considered Mark's gospel to be a somewhat reliable source for historical reconstruction, and they also began to utilize non-canonical sources such as *1st Enoch*.⁸⁸ The skepticism of William Wrede (1859-1906), however, stifled the confidence of first questers to trust Mark's gospel as

⁸⁴ Gregory Dawes, *The Historical Jesus: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2000) 4.

⁸⁵ Reimarus' writings were published posthumously. Reimarus likely declined to publish his ideas about Jesus during his lifetime out of fear of persecution. On Reimarus's contribution to historical Jesus studies, see Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 54-56 and Morton, "Quest," 473.

⁸⁶ On the following section, see Morton, "Quest," 473-475. Jesus studies are undergoing a bit of a terminological revolution in which the three-quest model is now under heavy scrutiny. I have opted to use the terms self-consciously, understanding significant problems with the model but needing convenient markers for the time periods that Jesus studies roughly break down into.

⁸⁷ Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 87-90.

⁸⁸ On Weiss's contribution, see Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 172-173.

reliable for historical reconstruction. Wrede, in his work, *The Messianic Secret in the Gospel*, argued strongly that the Jesus found in Mark is not the Jesus of history but the Jesus of early Christian belief.⁸⁹ Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) put the final nails in the coffin of the first quest, albeit ending it on a more positive note. Schweitzer, while coining the term “Quest” for historical Jesus research, affirmed a historical core to the gospel accounts and took seriously Jesus’ apocalyptic eschatology and intentional death.⁹⁰ The first quest came to an end with the writing of Schweitzer, and after one hundred years of research, there was still no agreed upon methodology or reconstruction of the life of the historical Jesus. However, the key contribution of the first quest was in turning the critical eye of western academia towards the canonical gospels and divorcing the Jesus of history from the Jesus of the gospels.

If the first quest was characterized by a multiplicity of male voices and a lack of methodological agreement, the second quest for the historical Jesus contained fewer voices, more agreement, and focused primarily on the teachings of Jesus.⁹¹ Rudolph Bultmann is an ironic character in historical Jesus studies because, despite having contributed to the growing body of work, Bultmann concluded that the Jesus of history was neither discoverable nor necessary for the modern Christian life. Bultmann considered most of the gospels to be witnesses to early Christian belief in the Christ of faith rather than accurate tales about the Jesus of history.⁹² While Bultmann’s lack of interest may have dampened the fire of historical Jesus research, his (male) students only stoked the flame higher. After nearly thirty years of rest for historical research studies, Ernst Käsemann, a student of Bultmann’s, presented a lecture in 1953 on the historical Jesus. Käsemann reopened the quest for the historical Jesus and believed that many key features

⁸⁹ Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 114.

⁹⁰ Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 185-187.

⁹¹ The second quest is also known as the “New Quest”. On this paragraph, see Morton, “Quest,” 475-476.

⁹² Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 239-242.

of the gospels could be traced back to the historical Jesus, including Jesus' elevated self-understanding and imminent eschatology.⁹³ Günther Bornkamm, another of Bultmann's students, picked up the torch after Käsemann and wrote a book on the historical Jesus in 1956. Bornkamm, in agreement with Käsemann, gave more emphasis to Jesus' teachings than his deeds, and affirmed their historical core. In 1971, Joachim Jeremias carried out the second quest's emphasis on the teachings of Jesus by focusing on the Aramaisms in the gospels and arguing that they went back to the historical Jesus. Jeremias also conducted a lengthy study of Jesus' sayings in the canonical gospels compared to those in *The Gospel of Thomas*. Norman Perrin, another noteworthy second quest scholar, also expressed confidence in many of the teachings of Jesus based upon his criteria of dissimilarity, which argued that teachings dissimilar to both 2nd temple Judaism and later Christianity must have originated with the historical Jesus. Like any scholarly era, the second quest was not a monolithic enterprise, and there were of course voices of disagreement and criticism. However, when compared to the first quest, the second quest can be characterized by relative agreement, emphasis on the teachings of Jesus, and a positive attitude about the historical core of the gospels.

The third quest for the historical Jesus is the movement within which we currently reside and has been noted for sharp methodological disagreement.⁹⁴ The Jesus Seminar, founded in 1985, constructed a Jesus who was primarily a non-eschatological wisdom teacher, while scholars such as N.T. Wright and E.P. Sanders have constructed a Jesus who was a Jewish prophet of the kingdom of God. That the thinkers of the Jesus Seminar and characters such as N.T. Wright are both grouped within the third quest is a testament to the limitations of labels as well as the paradoxes of postmodern scholarship.

⁹³ Dawes, *Historical Jesus*, 276-279.

⁹⁴ On the third quest, see Morton, "Quest," 476-479.

The third quest, a child of postmodernism, contains a multiplicity of voices, methodologies, and conclusions. On one level, the third quest has been noted as the period where the boy's club of exclusively male Jesus scholars has been deconstructed. Scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Paula Fredriksen have employed feminist methodologies. The so-called third quest has also opened its doors, to a degree, to scholars performing marginalized masculinities, such as Theodore Jennings and Morton Smith. However, the simple existence of feminist and queer scholars does not necessarily result in acceptance. Stephen Pearson surveyed literature of the contemporary quest and found that there were 582 male contributors compared to 36 female contributors. Further, he found that even when a female does publish, her work is less likely to be cited than a male's work.⁹⁵ The boy's club, so it seems, has not been thoroughly deconstructed.

In a recent article in the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, the editor, James Crossley, summons scholars to explore the effects of social movements upon historical Jesus studies:

“Increasingly we are learning about the way in which, for instance, nineteenth-century nationalism, philosophical debates on modernity, fascism, the Cold War, radicalism, feminism, religious affiliations, non-religious affiliations, colonialism, Orientalism, liberalism, and neoliberalism, among many other -- isms and periods, have had a profound, but often unacknowledged, influence on the field.”⁹⁶

Noticeably absent from Crossley's list of social factors that affect Jesus studies is masculinity. I find this to be a momentous oversight, for the history Jesus studies reveals deep connections with the history of western masculinity. In order to demonstrate my point, I will first sketch profiles of

⁹⁵ Stephen Pearson, *Gender Bias in Historical Jesus Research*, (Ohio University 2011).

⁹⁶ Crossley, James, “Some Future for Historical Jesus Studies.” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (2016) 7.

relevant masculinities for the contemporary Jesus quest before applying these profiles to my case study: the research of N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg.

III. Profiles of Masculinity in the Late 20th Century

In order to examine western masculinity's impact upon the contemporary Jesus quest, I have surveyed scholarly literature on masculine profiles of the late 20th century that are particularly relevant to historical Jesus research. What follows is an overview of western masculinity followed by key profiles of masculine models within the social world of the third quest for the historical Jesus.

Western masculinity was not created in a vacuum. Instead, it is the product of certain historical and social factors. In her landmark text, *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell argues persuasively that western masculinity took shape in the period from 1450 to 1650 with four key historical events: (1) the Protestant Reformation upending medieval Catholic authority; (2) the creation of overseas empires; (3) the growth of cities and commercial capitalism; and (4) the mass amount of European civil war. Out of this fire emerged the class of hereditary landowning men, the gentry men, who dominated the landscape of western masculinity for two hundred years.⁹⁷ Connell summarizes the rise of contemporary masculinities from these beginnings: "The history of European/ American masculinity over the last two hundred years can be broadly understood as the splitting of gentry masculinity, its gradual displacement by new hegemonic forms, and the emergence of an array of subordinated and marginalized masculinities."⁹⁸ As Connell puts it, contemporary European/ American masculinity is home to a vast "array" of masculinities, many of which have split off from gentry masculinity. It is sometimes joked that there are as many masculinities to be performed as there are men to perform them; this has some

⁹⁷ Connell, *Masculinities*, 186-191.

⁹⁸ Connell, *Masculinities*, 191.

truth to it. Thus, the profiles that I provide below are not static categories but fluid, shifting, cultural archetypes of influential masculinities. There is, of course, significant overlap and bleeding between the profiles I have constructed, and these categories are not intended to pin down and reduce complex male beings to brief, simplified masculine profiles. Most western men are complex concoctions of the profiles I have constructed as well a host of other factors.

Western masculinity, of course, is not the only social factor that determines human behavior. The full story is certainly larger than western masculinity, though I do not believe it to be smaller than western masculinity. Therefore, challenges aside, I believe it is possible to confidently construct profiles of western masculinity and analyze their effects on historical Jesus studies. I have broken down western masculinity into two subtypes of masculinity that I believe to be relevant for my case study: Protestant Christian masculinities and secular western Masculinities. By Protestant Christian masculinities, I am referring to masculinities directly and exclusively tied to Protestant churches and thinkers. Secular western masculinities, on the other hand, connote masculinities practiced within western culture that do not have specific ties to any distinct religious group or denomination.

Protestant Christian Masculinities

Protestant Christian masculinities, of course, trace their roots to the Protestant reformation and the idealized male reformers, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli. The rise of Protestant masculinities contributed several key features to ideal manhood, including an emphasis on individualism, rationality, and celebration of marital heterosexuality.⁹⁹ Even still, there is no such thing as a singular Protestant Masculinity. Instead, there are several conflicting and competing Protestant masculinities to be discussed.

⁹⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 186.

***Protestant Masculinity Profile 1: The Rational Patriarch*¹⁰⁰**

The Rational Patriarch is the most famous masculinity among Protestant masculinities and understood as a very traditional masculinity. In his book, *Do Real Men Pray?: Images of The Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America*, Charles Lippy traces the evolution of traditional Protestant masculinity from the 18th century Puritans to the present day.¹⁰¹ The sails of the Rational Patriarch have caught the wind from several historical movements, most recently by the Promise Keepers movement of the late 20th century. The Rational Patriarch is the preferred masculinity of so-called conservative Protestantism. Preachers for The Rational Patriarch often appeal to gender essentialism and define the traditional man against whom he is not, a woman. Who, then, is the Rational Patriarch?

Despite diversity of opinion and performance, several key points about the Rational Patriarch remain well attested. These points are not designed to be understood as descriptions of actual men but instead prescriptions for how The Rational Patriarch is told to perform.

1. The Rational Patriarch is expected to be excessively rational. The Rational Patriarch makes decisions based upon calculated rationality rather than his emotions. One Pastor at a Church in Florida commented, “We know, probably better than most, that our Father blessed [men] with an inherent rationality that we can draw on in times of struggle, and it’s important for us all to do this and keep our emotions in check as we make necessary changes for the church.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ This profile has been adapted from, John Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers: Servants, Soldiers, and Godly Men* (London, United Kingdom: Rutgers University Press, 2004) 45.

¹⁰¹ Charles H. Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?: Images of the Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005) 40-51.

¹⁰² Edward Sumerau, “‘THAT’S WHAT A MAN IS SUPPOSED TO DO’: Compensatory Manhood Acts in an LGBT Christian Church.” *Gender and Society*, Volume 26 (2012): 474.

2. The Rational Patriarch is performed by emitting strength, both mentally and physically. Edwin Cole, a famous expounder of traditional Protestant masculinity writes, “It is possible to get spirituality from women, but strength always comes from men. A church, a family, a nation is only as strong as its men.”¹⁰³
3. In his career, the Rational Patriarch is expected to be an efficient businessman and primary breadwinner. The Rational Patriarch is expected to be financially stable, make sound decisions with money, and provide for his dependents. The Rational Patriarch is willing to make the sacrifices needed for his dependents.¹⁰⁴
4. The Rational Patriarch is expected to be a natural leader. At home, the Rational Patriarch is the cool-headed decision-maker for his family, and in public space, the man is expected to be the leader in the church and state. Male headship is passed on intergenerationally from father to son. Again Edwin Cole expresses this: “Courage has always been a requirement of leadership... God has planned for someone to take charge. Men— it is you.”¹⁰⁵ Churches that privilege The Rational Patriarch rarely allow female ordination into leadership positions.

The Rational Patriarch is not the only Protestant masculinity, but his influence cannot be ignored as he has shaped popular perceptions of Protestant masculinity for many years.

Protestant Masculinity Profile 2: The Wild Adventurer¹⁰⁶

Although The Wild Adventurer’s recent popularity can be attributed to works such as John Eldredge’s *Wild at Heart*,¹⁰⁷ the Adventurer masculinity is much older than Eldredge. The

¹⁰³ Edwin Cole *Maximized Manhood: A Guide to Manly Survival*. (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982) 72.

¹⁰⁴ Sumerau, “Compensatory Manhood,” 471, Lippy, *Real Men*, 114-115.

¹⁰⁵ Cole, *Maximized Manhood*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ This profile has been largely adopted from, Sally K Gallagher and Sabrina L. Wood, “Godly Manhood Going Wild?: Transformations in Conservative Protestant Masculinity. *Sociology of Religion*, Volume 66 (2005) 135-159.

Wild Adventurer was the favorite masculinity of the early 20th century men's movement, Muscular Christianity, which "represents another effort to cast the Christian message in terms that would appeal to men and to offer a spirituality that resonated with what was assumed to be stereotypical male experience."¹⁰⁸ Muscular Christianity, which was heavily influenced by the YMCA, boasted of a strong, muscular Jesus and found connection between sports, masculinity, and Christianity. Muscular Christianity's core contribution may have been promoting the ideal Christian male as a courageous adventurer. Historical figures such as Theodore Roosevelt "gave political embodiment to muscular Christianity," and the Christian male as a wild adventurer gained tremendous popularity during this era.¹⁰⁹ The Wild Adventurer has received newfound attention since John Eldredge's publication of his men's self-help book, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*.¹¹⁰

The Wild Adventurer masculinity, much like The Rational Patriarch, often claims an essentialist gender ideology in which men are courageous adventures and a woman is, to use Eldredge's term, "A beauty to rescue" (179). Like all masculine performances, there are nuances and exceptions to the characteristics of The Wild Adventurer. Nevertheless, what follows are general sketches regarding the way The Wild Adventurer is expected to perform his wild, adventurous masculinity.

1. The Wild Adventurer is expected to embrace adventure courageously. Eldredge writes, "Too many men forsake their dreams because they aren't willing to risk, or fear they

¹⁰⁷ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Passionate Soul of a Man* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001)

¹⁰⁸ Lippy, *Real Men*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ Lippy, *Real Men*, 99.

¹¹⁰ Gallaher, "Going Wild," 135.

aren't up to the challenge, or are never told that those desires in their heart are good. But the soul of man... isn't made for controlling things; he's made for adventure."¹¹¹

2. The Wild Adventurer is expected to resist being controlled or domesticated. Instead, he is wild and spontaneous in his career, personal, and family life. Eldredge writes, "As John Muir said, when a man comes to the mountains, he comes home. The core of a man's heart is undomesticated *and that is good.*"¹¹² Eldredge imagines that male space is outdoors and female space is indoors.
3. The Wild Adventurer is dangerous and violent when he thinks violence is needed, and if he engages in a fight, he is expected to win. To lose would be unmanly. Eldredge says, "A man is a dangerous thing. Women don't start wars... The whole crisis in masculinity today has come because we no longer have a warrior culture, a place for men to learn to fight like men. We don't need a meeting of Really Nice Guys; we need a gathering of Really Dangerous Men."¹¹³ The Wild Adventurers often valorize war and war heroes, such as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.¹¹⁴
4. The Wild Adventurer is a self-sacrificing hero. He is willing to give up his own safety in order to fight for those he loves. Eldredge writes, "A man wants to be the hero to the beauty... You see, it's not just that a man needs a battle to fight; he needs someone to fight *for*" (15).

The image of the man as The Wild Adventurer is particularly prevalent within Evangelical Protestant circles. The Wild Adventurer agrees with The Rational Patriarch about gender

¹¹¹ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 205.

¹¹² Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 4. Italics are original.

¹¹³ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 82, 175.

¹¹⁴ Dowland, Seth. 2011. "War, Sports, and the Construction of Masculinity in American Christianity: War, Sports, and Masculinity in American Christianity. *Religion Compass* 5 (7): 355-64.

essentialism but the Wild Adventurer insists that man is not primarily rational and calm but wild and heroic.

Protestant Profile 3: The Expressive Egalitarian¹¹⁵

The Expressive Egalitarian is a mode of masculine performance that can be traced back several hundred years. Although this profile of Protestant masculinity has received less press and involves fewer performers, its influence cannot be denied. The Expressive Egalitarian, a more revisionist masculine profile, is most often found in Churches that affirm female ordination and leadership, but it should not be thought that The Expressive Egalitarian can only be found in so-called liberal Protestantism. The Expressive Egalitarian features strongly in the writing of liberal or post-liberal scholars such as Dale Martin, but he can also be found in the work of Promise Keepers authors, such as Gary Oliver.

Below is a list of broad strokes about the character and performance of The Expressive Egalitarian.

1. The Expressive Egalitarian expresses and fosters his emotions and is physically tactile with other men.¹¹⁶ While emotions were contaminating for The Rational Patriarch, The Expressive Egalitarian celebrates his emotions and expresses them often.
2. The Expressive Egalitarian avoids and critiques patriarchal and authoritative models of leadership. In the church, home, and state, The Expressive Egalitarian seeks mutual-decision making models. In his men's book, *Real Men Have Feelings Too*, Gary Oliver says this of decision making in the home: "Deciding on a mutually acceptable solution can sound easy... Remember that you are choosing to bargain some of your personal needs for some of your relationship needs. Read 1 Corinthians 13 out loud.... At this

¹¹⁵ This category has been adapted from Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers*, 45.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, "Overview," 2.

point in workshops men have raised their hands and asked, ‘But what if we can’t agree on a mutually acceptable solution?’ After a brief pause I usually smile and respond by saying, ‘Well, if you can’t agree on a solution, reach into your pocket, pull out a coin, ask the other person if they want heads or tails, and flip it’” (230-231). For The Expressive Egalitarian, masculinity does not include a free-pass to leadership and decision making.

3. The Expressive Egalitarian, perhaps most importantly, resists gender essentialism and “embrace[s] activities and artifacts once coded feminine.”¹¹⁷ The Expressive Egalitarian develops an androgynous morality that is neither male nor female. Gary Oliver says, “All of those words [compassion, tenderness, sensitivity] are descriptors of our Lord Jesus Christ... Those words don’t describe a woman. They are feminine, they’re human! They describe emotions and actions of healthy males and females.” Expressive Egalitarians avoid notions that some behaviors are intrinsically masculine and others feminine.
4. The Expressive Egalitarian denounces violence and bullying.¹¹⁸ This is a head-on collision with the violence encouraged by The Wild Adventurer, who was violent and dangerous when he thought necessary.

The Expressive Egalitarian is a difficult masculinity to pin down, especially due to its status as a minority masculinity and tendency to resist gendered labels. However, what must be seen from this discussion is that there is a legitimate tradition of male egalitarians in Protestant Christianity.

Protestant Profile(s) 4: Pastoral Masculinities

Pastoral masculinities within the Protestant tradition are broad and constantly shifting. Nevertheless, they are worth discussing because both of the members of my case study, N.T.

¹¹⁷ Anderson, “Overview,” 2.

¹¹⁸ Anderson, “Overview,” 2.

Wright and Marcus Borg, have significant ties to church ordination: Wright being an ordained bishop in the Anglican Church and Borg being a canon theologian in the Episcopal Church.¹¹⁹

Performers of pastoral masculinities are ordained leaders within their own Church. They are public figures whose masculinity is on full display all the time but especially in the masculine performance of the sermon.¹²⁰ They are expected to be articulate public speakers. Performers of pastoral masculinities are expected to exist for the good of their communities, putting others over self as the healers and moral authority for their community, and serving as the God's representative and mediator to the people.¹²¹ These characteristics hold weight for most performers of pastoral masculinities. However, there is a growing divide between traditional and revisionist pastoral masculinities.

Traditional pastoral masculinities are well documented. Traditional pastoral masculinity was built to be performed by large male bodies with booming voices to command the attention of his audience.¹²² The traditional male pastor wields a distanced authority over his congregation in a rigid, one-way relationship in which the pastor gives and the congregations takes. The traditional pastor is an intellectual authority on wide ranging topics and rarely utters the words, "I don't know."¹²³ Additionally, traditional pastoral masculinities often think of their pastoring in heroic, battle language. Paul Tripp, writing for The Gospel Coalition says, "Pastoral ministry is war, and you will never live successfully in the pastorate if you live with a peacetime

¹¹⁹ On Wright's biography, see Craig Evans, "N.T. Wright" *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Craig Evans (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2008) 684-686. On Borg's biography, see D. E. Oakman, "In Memoriam: Marcus J. Borg (1942-2015)." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 83 (2015.): 293-296.

¹²⁰ Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press) 62.

¹²¹ Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 47.

¹²² Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 3, 67.

¹²³ Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 77.

mentality.”¹²⁴ Lastly, traditional pastoral masculinities have often excluded female and non-elite male voices. John Rice, a 20th century Protestant pastor, said:

“In New Testament Churches a woman’s place was to be taught, not to teach. A woman’s place was to be silent, not to be a public speaker. A woman’s place was to be in subjection, and not in authority. Certainly, this Scripture forbids any woman to be a preacher or pastor or evangelist... Pastors and preachers have a real authority from God to rule. But a woman is not to have authority over men, and so a woman could not be a pastor of a church, or preacher of the gospel.”¹²⁵

Traditional pastoral masculinities, in line with John Rice, have often excluded voices on non-elite men and women.

However, there is another stream of pastoral masculinities present within Protestant culture. Revisionist pastoral masculinities are diverse and growing. Nevertheless, a few characteristics clearly mark revisionist pastoral masculinities. First, revisionist pastoral masculinities reject the distanced, authoritarian style of traditional male pastors. Instead, revisionist male pastors give relationship building, congregational intimacy, and personal vulnerability centrality within their own practice.¹²⁶ Next, Revisionist male pastors reject the “lone ranger” model of pastoring and instead embrace a “radically less preacher-centered” model in which pastoring is a shared responsibility of the congregation.¹²⁷ In the less-preacher centered model, pastoring is a responsibility shared by both the pastor and the congregation. Lastly,

¹²⁴ Paul Tripp, “*Pastoral Ministry is War*,” in *The Gospel Coalition* (August 8, 2011) 1.

¹²⁵ John R. Rice, *Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers: Significant Questions for Honest Christian Women Settled by the Word of God* (Wheaton, IL: Sword of the Lord, 1941) 43-44.

¹²⁶ Scott W. Alexander, *The Relational Pulpit: Closing the Gap Between Preacher and Pew* (Boston: Skinner House Books 1993) 2-10.

¹²⁷ Alexander, *The Relational Pulpit*, 43.

revisionist pastoral masculinities do not exclude the voices of females and non-elite males. Instead, the contributions of females and non-elite males are celebrated and encouraged.¹²⁸

Secular Western Masculinities

Secular western masculinities are as diverse as secular western culture, and there is, of course, rich overlap between Protestant masculinities and secular masculinities. In a work such as this, a complete overview of secular western masculinities would be unnecessary, so I have refined my scope to secular western masculinities that seem directly relevant the work of N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg. Below, I have outlined profiles of political masculinities, academic masculinities, and gay masculinities.

Secular Western Profile(s) 1: Political Masculinities

Since the rise of western democracies, masculinities of state politicians have become increasingly important fields for study. Sheryl Cunningham sums up this research well: “American politics still seems to function as masculinized space—that is, an arena of society in which men dominate numerically and have become an essentialized presence.”¹²⁹ Given that political figures are often idealized men within western democracies and that historical Jesus studies have been almost exclusively undertaken by male citizens of western democracies, the masculinities found within western democracies are ideal profiles to study in connection with historical Jesus studies.

There is, of course, no such thing as a singular political masculinity. The category is fluid, changing, and refers to characters ranging from George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Al Gore,

¹²⁸ Sarah-Jane Page, “The Construction of Masculinities and Femininities in the Church of England: The Case of the Male Clergy Spouse in *Feminist Theology* Volume 17 (2008) 31-42.

¹²⁹ Sheryl Cunningham, David Domke, Kevin Coe, Anna Fahey, and Nancy Van Leuven, “*Accruing Masculinity Capital: Dominant and Hegemonic Masculinities in the 2004 Political Conventions*” (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications 2013) 503.

David Cameron, and recently Donald Trump. The category of political masculinities is absolutely not a monolith. However, a few key characteristics are consistent across idealized political masculinities.

1. First and foremost, masculine politicians are expected to be powerful and persuasive public speakers and charming personalities. While politicians across political divides may speak about radically different topics, they share in common the fact that they are expected to be effective and charismatic public speakers and personalities. Recent scholars have argued that a politician's personality and speaking skills are more important to public acceptance than policy positions.¹³⁰
2. Idealized masculine politicians are expected to be honest and avoid greed and corruption. They are trusted as moral members of the community and public expressers of truth. They act heroically for the benefit of all people and never for their own benefit. Political men are expected to be the protector of their people.¹³¹
3. Lastly, idealized masculine politicians are expected to act decisively. Masculine politicians are expected to know their positions and hold them firmly. A recent survey of language use, both by democrats and republicans, suggests that phrases connoting decisiveness, such as "firmly committed," "will not hesitate," and "decisive leader" are consistently employed by both democrats and republicans, while members of both parties malign their opponents suggesting that they are guilty of "flip-flopping", "inconsistent positions," and "shifting with the tide."¹³²

¹³⁰ Angela Smith, "Mediated Political Masculinities: The Commander-in-Chief vs. The New Man," in *Social Semiotics Volume 26* (2016) 94-110.

¹³¹ Jasmine Nadua Trice, "Politicians and the Shaping of Masculinities: Mr. Gore Goes to Washington," (Quezon City: Isis International 2007) 3.

¹³² Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 504.

These three points are relatively consistent across party lines for most performances of idealized political masculinities. However, there is ample diversity within political masculinities, especially in recent years.

Traditional political masculinity has several defining features. First is an emphasis on the political man's role as provider and protector for his people. A male politician's role as provider and protector is an extrapolation from his role in the household as provider and protector of his household unit.¹³³ Next, traditional political masculinities celebrate a male politician's strength and toughness. The valorization of John McCain as a war hero able to withstand bodily torture illustrates this point.¹³⁴ Not to think strength a masculine characteristic only celebrated by conservative politicians, a statistical analysis of the 2004 RNC and DNC reveals that democrats were significantly more likely ($p < .05$) to tout their strength and toughness.¹³⁵ Finally, traditional political masculinities are likely to proclaim ideal male politicians as lone heroes taking on evil. While varying political parties may define evil quite differently (social injustice, global warming, the overreach of big government, etc.), they share in common the goal of proclaiming their heroes as "warrior[s] for truth" and "inspiring fighter[s]."¹³⁶

While traditional political masculinity is still widely popular and practiced within western democracies, it is by no means the only option for men in political spaces. Political masculinities are fluid and subject to social change, or, as Angela Smith explains, "the gendered performances of individual politicians mirror social changes which are linked to general change in political culture."¹³⁷ Political culture—and western culture at large—is changing, and political

¹³³ Carol Johnson, "FROM OBAMA TO ABBOTT: Gender Identity and the Politics of Emotion," in *Australian Feminist Studies* Volume 28 (2013) 14-29.

¹³⁴ Smith, "Political Masculinities," 94-110.

¹³⁵ Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 506.

¹³⁶ Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 504.

¹³⁷ Smith, "Political Masculinities," 95.

masculinities have been shifting in tandem. For example, recent surveys of male politician's speeches in the U.S. and U.K. reveal that both liberals and conservatives are more likely to emphasize their emotions, empathy, and compassion.¹³⁸ Additionally, scholars have argued that politicians such as Barack Obama and David Cameron have modeled a non-traditional form of political masculinity that rejects fear in favor of hope and rejects provider/protector models in favor of that of a compassionate listener.¹³⁹

This tour of political masculinities is designed to express both the commonalities found amongst political masculinities as well as the masses of contradictions and exceptions. This category is not so much a monolith as it is a spectrum, but it will come in handy when examining Jesus' masculinity in historical Jesus studies.

Secular Western Profile 2: The Careerist Academic¹⁴⁰

Given that western academic institutions are the primary social location of the third quest, western academic masculinities must be discussed, and the question must be asked, how are men in western academic organizations expected to behave? There has been shockingly little academic material written on this topic as of now; it seems that academia is slow to turn its critical, illuminating eye back on itself. However, the work that has been done focuses on how men in academia balance their career and relationships. The Careerist Academic is described below:

1. The Careerist Academic prioritizes career and work output over intimate relationships.

Dale, a male academic, says his life in academia requires, "in my case a... kind of single mindedness, concentration, the [scientist's] ability to go all OCD and concentrate on

¹³⁸ Carol, "Obama to Abbott," 16-19.

¹³⁹ Johnson, "Obama to Abbott," 17-18.

¹⁴⁰ This category has been adapted from Pat O'Connor, Clare O'Hagan, and Julia Brannen, "Exploration of Masculinities in Academic Organizations: A Tentative Typology Using Career and Relationship Commitment" in *Current Sociology* Volume 63 (2015): 528-546.

something to the exclusion of everything else.”¹⁴¹ For this careerist academic, his work must be placed above everything else.

2. The Careerist Academic either does not engage in intimate relationships or if he does, maintains them as secondary priorities compared to career aspirations. Danny, a male academic, discusses prioritizing career over his family’s geographical preferences, “[Career advancement is possible] if you have the appetite and the ability and [are] prepared to uproot your family and bring them with you. And take the pain that sense. Yeah, there are definitely opportunities.” Dale discussed his career’s effect on his parenting: “I couldn’t do [my career] without the support of my wife... Yeah she puts a lot of time and energy into it. So, if we were sharing that more equally, for instance, it would make a big difference to me.”¹⁴² The Careerist Academic prioritizes his vocation over his relationships.

Secular Western Profile 3: The Balanced Academic

The Balanced Academic is the wonderkid of academic masculinities that makes others scratch their heads in awe. The Balanced Academic, opposed to The Careerist Academic, is able to have his cake and eat it too. He publishes often, moves up the academic ladder, and is able to invest time in the intimate relationships that matter to him. O’Connor describes The Balanced Academic well: “These men manipulated time to enable them to maintain a high level of career and relationship commitment. They used informal arrangements to enable them to meet their domestic responsibilities without availing [themselves] of formal work/family policies.”¹⁴³ Of special note is The Balanced Academic’s ability to “manipulate” time and circumstances for their benefit: this masculinity is in control and displays it through a healthy work-life balance.

¹⁴¹ O’Connor, O’Hagan, and Brannen, “Exploration,” 534.

¹⁴² O’Connor, O’Hagan, and Brannen, “Exploration,” 534.

¹⁴³ O’Connor, O’Hagan, and Brannen, “Exploration,” 535.

Together, The Careerist Academic and The Balanced Academic comprise the dominant masculinities in the academic world. The tour of academic masculinities is not in vain. Rather, it sets the stage to understand the masculine profiles in the lives and minds of historical Jesus researchers who have been primarily western academics. Despite the small amount of research done on academic masculinities, the case study to follow ought to reveal the impact of academic masculinities on historical Jesus research.

Secular Western Profile 4: Gay Masculinities

There is no such thing as a singular gay masculinity, just as there is no such thing as a “straight” masculinity. This profile, then, is not so much a profile of masculine behavior as tribute to the existence of gay masculinities. R.W. Connell says, “Patriarchal culture has a simple interpretation of gay men: they lack masculinity.”¹⁴⁴ Patriarchal assumptions aside, gay masculinities are legitimate masculinities to study. Gay masculinities are typically localized to males engaging in sexual relationships with other males, though recent work is analyzing the possibility of and problems created by heterosexual men performing gay masculinities.¹⁴⁵ The category of “gay masculinities” can be both empowering and problematic, as it can be imposed on males whether they like it or not.¹⁴⁶ Gay masculinities, of course, are not only associated with secular western culture. There is a strong and growing presence of gay masculinities within Protestant Christian culture.¹⁴⁷

This profile of gay masculinities is, in fact, not a profile at all. The purpose of this section is simply to affirm the existence of gay masculinities (a point not always granted by dominant masculinities) so that I may look for connections between my case study and gay masculinities.

¹⁴⁴ Connell, *Masculinities*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ Tristan Bridges, “A Very ‘Gay’ Straight?: Hybrid Masculinities, Sexual Aesthetics, and the Changing Relationship Between Masculinity and Homophobia,” in *Gender & Society* Volume 28 (2014) 58-82.

¹⁴⁶ Connell, *Masculinities*, 151.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, The Gay Christian Network.

Conclusion

None of the profiles of masculinities described in this section is intended to provide exact, quantifiable lists of the way men behave. In reality, most men perform combinations of many of these masculinities and others not mentioned. This mapping of masculinities, then, is intended to provide a framework of the social world from which the third quest for the historical Jesus has been launched. With these profiles of masculinity in mind, it is now possible to answer the question guiding this process: what can be said about the third quest's Jesus[es]¹⁴⁸ in the context of 20th-century western masculinity?

VI. Case Study: Gendering N.T. Wright's and Marcus Borg's Jesuses

This case study is the climax to which this project has been heading all along. My aim is to analyze the gendered character of Wright and Borg's Jesus in the context of relevant western masculinities. In order to do that, I must formally introduce the scholars in my case study.

N.T. Wright (1948-Present) was born in Morpeth, Northumberland, England. He was raised in the Anglican church and educated at Oxford University, where he received his BA (1971), MA (1975), and DPhil (1981). Wright has served in many capacities, both academic and ecclesiastical. Wright served as the Bishop of Durham of the Anglican Church from 2003-2010 and currently resides as the chair of the Department of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews. Wright has published numerous materials on the historical Jesus and early Christianity.¹⁴⁹

Marcus Borg (1942-2015) was born in Fergus Falls, Minnesota and raised in a Lutheran family in North Dakota. Borg earned his BA from Concordia College before receiving his M.Th.

¹⁴⁸ I must admit, the plural of Jesus at first appears odd and out of place. However, I have opted to use it because it is the most accurate term to reflect the current reality. As further reading will show, there is not one Jesus of the current quest, but several Jesuses.

¹⁴⁹ Evans, "N.T. Wright," 684-685.

and DPhil from Oxford University. Borg, although undergoing doubt during his younger years, was a devout Christian, married to an episcopal priest and served as canon theologian in the Episcopal Church while writing popular books about renewing Christianity for the modern age. Borg taught at Oregon State University from 1979 until 2007 when he retired as Distinguished Professor in Religion and Culture and the Hundere Endowed Chair in Religious Studies. Marcus Borg passed away in January of 2015.¹⁵⁰

N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg have been selected for the case study for a number of reasons. First, both of these men are prolific writers who have profoundly shaped the terrain of the modern search for the historical Jesus. Second, both of these writers represent, to a degree, alternative schools of thought in contemporary Jesus scholarship. Borg, in keeping with the Jesus Seminar, understands significant portions of the gospels to represent the voice of the early church rather than the voice of the historical Jesus. Wright, however, traces much more of the gospel material back to Jesus himself. Finally, Wright and Borg are ideal candidates for a case study because they share much in common as well as a few key differences: both scholars were socialized as 20th-century Protestant men and have spent their adult lives in academic institutions. Thus, the commonalities in their writings may reveal a shared influence of 20th century Protestant and/or academic masculinities on historical Jesus studies. Despite similarities, Borg and Wright also have key differences. Wright is associated with a more traditional vision of Jesus and Christian life, while Borg is associated with a more progressive vision of Jesus and the Christian life. Thus, key differences in the work of Borg and Wright may reveal key differences in the masculinities present within so-called traditional Christianity versus so-called progressive Christianity.

¹⁵⁰ Oakman, "Marcus J. Borg," 293-296.

Despite theological and ecclesiastical disagreements, Wright and Borg enjoyed a lasting friendship and co-authored a book, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*.¹⁵¹ In conducting the case study, I am content to leave the question of historical plausibility to the historians and instead only give judgments about what can be said about the masculinity of the Jesuses that Wright and Borg have constructed.

Wright and Borg do not agree about who the historical Jesus was. Though their Jesuses may share much in common, Wright and Borg's Jesuses also have fundamentally different characteristics, which makes it distinctly possible that these Jesuses could have fundamentally different masculinities.

For Wright, Jesus was: (1) a first century Jewish prophet (2) announcing the kingdom of God, (3) believing that the kingdom was breaking into Israel's history in and through his own presence and work, (4) summoning other Jews to abandon alternative kingdom visions and join him, (5) warning of the consequences if they did not, (6) clashing with symbols with people who embraced alternative kingdom visions, (7) and announcing through symbol and cryptic speech that he believed he was Israel's Messiah, the one through whom Israel's God would accomplish his purpose (50).

Analyzing the gendered construction of Marcus Borg's Jesus is complex because Borg distinguishes between the pre-easter Jesus and the post-easter Jesus. Borg says it best, "The name Jesus has two referents. On the one hand, Jesus refers to a human figure of the past: Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean Jew of the first century. On the other hand, other hand, in Christian theology, devotion, and worship, the name Jesus also refers to a divine figure of the present: the risen living Christ who is one with God" (6). Because my study about masculinity deals

¹⁵¹ Marcus Borg and N.T Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999). In future references to this work, I will use in text citations.

primarily with the behaviors associated with male bodies, I will focus my case study on Borg's construction of the pre-easter Jesus because Borg's post-easter Jesus is not an embodied male being but an element of Christian experience. For Borg, the historical Jesus was a: (1) Spirit person (2) healer and exorcist; (3) teacher of unconventional wisdom; (4) social prophet and advocate for social justice; and (5) movement initiator (60).

Below, I will analyze the masculinity of Borg and Wright's Jesuses in conversation with the profiles of western masculinity outlined in Part V of this work. I will alternate between Wright's Jesus compared to a specific profile of western masculinity followed by Borg's Jesus compared to that same profile of western masculinity. I have found that comparing Wright and Borg's Jesuses side by side is the most illuminative lens through which to see the process in which both Borg and Wright construct Jesus' masculinity.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and The Rational Patriarch

The Rational Patriarch is marked by authoritarian male leadership, emotional and physical strength, rational decision making, and an ability to provide for his dependents.

Wright's Jesus' shares many points of contact with The Rational Patriarch.

For starters, Wright affirms the possibility of Jesus being born of a virgin: "I hold open my historical judgment and say: if [the virgin birth] is what God deemed appropriate, who am I to object?" (178). Wright's hesitant affirmation of Jesus' virgin birth is telling. The authority of The Rational Patriarch is passed down intergenerationally from fathers to sons. Jesus' virgin birth is a symbolic passing of power from the ultimate rational patriarch —God— to Jesus. Wright finds continuity between The Rational Patriarch and Jesus by positing that Jesus was the literal, biological son of God.

Next, Jesus' mission as a "prophet announcing God's kingdom" (37) is similar to The Rational Patriarch. For Wright, Jesus' announcement of God's kingdom "denoted, not a place where God ruled, but rather the *fact* that God ruled — or, rather, that he soon would rule" (33). Central to Jesus' message is the ruling power of God, a God that Wright refers to with exclusively masculine pronouns. As The Rational Patriarch stressed male leadership in the family, church, and state, Wright's Jesus preached about male leadership on a cosmic level.

However, there is an alternate side to Wright's Jesus relationship with patriarchal and authoritarian leadership strategies. While Jesus announced the kingdom of a male God, the kingship of Israel's God would not look as many people expected:

"Not only did the kingdom challenge the power and policies of Herod, of Caiaphas, and of Rome itself, as the revolutionaries would have insisted, it also challenged the militant aspirations of the revolutionaries themselves. And it challenged, within all of that, the injustice and oppression that Jesus saw as endemic within his own society" (36).

On the one hand, Jesus' pronouncement of God's ruling power stands in firm agreement with The Rational Patriarch: males are leaders in the home, state, and world. However, for Wright's Jesus, God's kingship would challenge oppressive and authoritarian forms of leadership, even authoritarian forms of leadership propagated by males.

While The Rational Patriarch is an excessively rational decision maker,¹⁵² Wright's Jesus is neither fully rational nor irrational. Wright stresses Jesus' rationality by jesting about scholarly caricatures about Jesus: "Scholars sometimes throw up the Jesus who wandered around totally unreflectively, telling stories without perceiving how they would be heard, announcing God's kingdom, speaking of bringing it about, yet failing to ruminate on his own role within the drama" (165). The rhetorical point here is clear. Wright's Jesus was rational enough to understand the

¹⁵² Sumerau, "Compensatory Manhood," 474.

significance of his teachings and actions. However, Wright's Jesus was not fully rational in ethics and politics: "Jesus was offering as a counter agenda, an utterly risky way of being Israel, the way of turning the other cheek and going the second mile, the way of losing your life to gain it, the way of a new community in which debts and sins were to be forgiven" (38). Again, Wright's point is clear. Turning the other cheek when attacked, giving up your life, and forgiving all debts are not rational ways to accrue power and status. The ethics of Jesus' announcement were not rational tips on maintaining power and order, and in this way, Wright's Jesus stands in contrast with The Rational Patriarch.

Perhaps Wright's Jesus' most challenging feature to connect to The Rational Patriarch (or any form of dominant masculinity) to Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus' suffering and death, what Wright calls his "shameful death" (111), throws a wrench in Jesus' masculinity in modern western society just as it did in ancient Greco-Roman society. The Rational Patriarch is expected to be strong, and Jesus' death does not immediately emit strength. However, for Wright, Jesus' death was a calculated, rational sacrifice that he made so that his followers would not have to. Jesus' death was "effective" so that his dependents would not have to die (103). Wright describes it this way, "Jesus died the death that awaited others, in order that they might not die it" (98). Wright's Jesus, then, although initially appearing weak in death, possessed an inner strength great enough to make a rational decision to sacrifice himself so that others would not have to die. Wright's Jesus, in death, is the ultimate provider and protector over his dependents: Jesus gave up his life to provide for his people.

Jesus's death, for Wright, is not the end. Just as Jesus' resurrection bolstered Jesus' masculinity in canonical texts, Jesus' resurrection bolsters Jesus' masculinity in N.T. Wright's work. For Wright, Jesus' physical resurrection "affirmed that Jesus really was, all along, [God's]

‘son’” (125). Thus, for Wright’s Jesus, the resurrection affirms the truth only alluded to in the virgin birth: Jesus is the firstborn of the ultimate rational patriarch and rightful heir to the ruling power of God. Jesus’ resurrection, for Wright, affirms that Jesus was a rational, strong, provider and protector for his dependents. His death may have looked shameful, but, so says Wright, it was really a rational decision to save his people. Wright’s masculinization of Jesus’ death is quite similar to the way canonical writers reconciled Jesus’ death to his masculinity.

Wright’s Jesus’ relationship to The Rational Patriarch is, of course, complex. Jesus shares many of the features of the rational patriarch: leadership, strength, rationality, and ability to provide for his subordinates. However, Wright’s Jesus’ performance of The Rational Patriarch is, to a degree, an ironic performance as Wright’s Jesus’ strength is displayed in weakness.

Marcus Borg’s Jesus and The Rational Patriarch

Marcus Borg’s historical Jesus shares a few points of contact with The Rational Patriarch, though, to be frank, the similarities are not as strong as they were for N.T. Wright’s historical Jesus. Marcus Borg’s Jesus does not well adhere to the category of The Rational Patriarch.

Borg laments that he sometimes feels like the “designated debunker” when it comes to Jesus because so much of his work is arguing that “this story is probably not historically factual... or Jesus probably didn’t say that” (4). As will be shown, Borg’s debunking of Jesus’ life has weighty consequences for the masculinity of the Jesus that Borg constructs.

First and foremost, Borg objects to using masculine pronouns to refer to God and most often refers to God using the gender neutral term, “the sacred” (60).¹⁵³ This is a large difference between Borg and Wright. Borg’s gender neutrality in God talk makes it more difficult to connect Borg and his Jesus to The Rational Patriarch, who is noted for authoritarian, male

¹⁵³ A scan of Borg’s writing in *The Meaning of Jesus* will reveal that Borg refuses to use “he” to refer to God even one single time.

leadership. In addition to resisting gendered God-talk, Borg objects to the historicity of Jesus' virgin birth: "I do not see the basis of the [virgin] birth stories as history remembered... I do not think the birth of Jesus happened this way" (182). Thus, while Wright's Jesus' virgin birth stood in as a symbolic passing of power from God to Jesus, Borg's Jesus does not receive power from his heavenly father.

Another strong point of contact between The Rational Patriarch and Wright's Jesus to which Borg objects is the father-son language. Borg says, "An exalted self-claim was not part of Jesus' own teaching... I think the inference that he was the messiah, *Son of God*, and so forth, was most likely first made by the early Christian movement after Easter" (56-57).¹⁵⁴ Thus, Borg does not think that Jesus thought of himself as, in any special sense, God's son. This is one more point at which Wright's Jesus is similar to The Rational Patriarch and Borg's is not.

Next, The Rational Patriarch was expected to be financially stable, even wealthy, so that he may provide for his dependents.¹⁵⁵ Borg's Jesus could not be further from this. Borg's Jesus is "from a marginalized peasant class" (58), and he often "spoke harshly against wealth" (73). Borg's Jesus is not an efficient businessman and provider for his dependents. Of course, Wright's Jesus also was not wealthy, but Wright's Jesus proved his ability to provide for his dependents by dying for them. Marcus Borg's Jesus does not do this: "I do not think [Jesus] saw his death as central to a messianic vocation or as in some sense the purpose of his life" (54). Wright's Jesus died to provide for his dependents. Borg's Jesus does not, and in this way, Borg's Jesus also does not conform to the category of the rational patriarch.

I do not find any significant points of overlap with Marcus Borg's historical Jesus and The Rational Patriarch.

¹⁵⁴ Italics are mine.

¹⁵⁵ Sumerau, "Compensatory Manhood," 471, Lippy, *Real Men*, 114-115.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer

Wright's Jesus shares many characteristics in common with The Wild Adventurer, who was noted for his strong sense of vocation, adventurous spirit, violent nature, and self-sacrificing lifestyle.

Wright's Jesus has a strong sense of mission: "The historian must assume that Jesus of Nazareth was gripped by a strong sense of vocation... he had a particular vocation, a role to perform" (35). Jesus' sense of vocation is similar to The Wild Adventurer's desires for adventure and meaning about which John Eldredge writes that all men desire "a great mission to his life that involves and yet transcends even home and family."¹⁵⁶ The overlap between Jesus' sense of vocation and The Wild Adventurer's is striking.

The Wild Adventurer is violent when necessary, and Wright's Jesus has a complex relationship with violence. On one side of the argument, Wright consistently uses warrior/battle language to describe Jesus: "Jesus was launching the real battle for the kingdom. But it was a battle, not against Rome, but against the enemy that stood behind Rome... There is excellent evidence that Jesus saw himself engaged in a running battle with his enemy throughout his short public career and that he saw these skirmishes pointing toward a greater showdown yet to come" (36, 48). Here, Jesus' relationship with violence is similar to The Wild Adventurer. Wright's Jesus is the heroic man who is willing to engage in violence for the right cause.

There is, however, another side of the coin to Jesus' relationship with violence. Despite using battle motifs to explain Jesus' actions, Wright's Jesus consistently warns his followers against violence: "He denounced the use of military action, and he advocated for the deeper revolution of loving one's enemies... His agenda involved neither bricks nor violence" (48).

¹⁵⁶ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 141.

Jesus' mimicry of The Wild Adventurer is subversive to the category. Wright's Jesus engages in battle but does so by nonviolent means.

Just as The Wild Adventurer is willing to fight as the lone hero for those he loves, Wright's Jesus is a lone hero in his (symbolic) battle. Wright says, "Jesus believed himself called to go ahead of the people and fight the battle on their behalf. Like David taking on Goliath, he would face the enemy of God's people alone" (49). Compare this to Eldredge's statement on a man's heroic battle, "There are times a man must face the battle alone, in the wee hours of the morn, and fight with all he's got."¹⁵⁷ Jesus' calling to fight the battle with the real enemy clearly resembles Eldredge's wild man who must sometimes fight his battles alone.

Next, Wright's Jesus possesses The Wild Adventurer's desire for adventure, and Jesus' whole life is like that of a great adventure. Wright says, "[Jesus] was not so much like a wandering preacher giving sermons or a wandering philosopher offering maxims as like a radical politician gathering support for a new and *highly risky movement* (36).¹⁵⁸ Wright's point is that Jesus' life was not safe, boring, or ordinary in any sense. Jesus' life was *risky*, adventurous, and filled with danger. It was, of course, Jesus' adventurous life which led to his death, the subject to which we now turn.

The Wild Adventurer is expected to be victorious in battle. Jesus's death, then, creates an initial problem in applying this category to Wright's Jesus. Wright's Jesus fought his battle with the real enemy, and he lost, it seemed. Jesus chose not to use weapons in his fight against evil, and his decision cost him his life. However, Jesus' resurrection redeems Jesus status as a successful Wild Adventurer.

¹⁵⁷ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 193.

¹⁵⁸ Italics are mine.

The resurrection of Wright's Jesus affirms his status as a Wild Adventurer. Wright puts it clearly, "The resurrection declares that the cross was a victory, not a defeat" (126). Wright's Jesus' risky, adventurous, self-sacrificing battle paid off in the end as Jesus emerged victorious over death. N.T. Wright is a strong proponent of *Christus Victor* theology, which celebrates Jesus' "victory over evil" (105). In his death and resurrection, Wright's Jesus went to battle and decisively won, affirming Jesus' identity as a Wild Adventurer.

Thus, I find significant overlap between Wright's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer. Jesus' warning against violence, however, represents a rare point of disagreement with Wright's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer

As was true of Wright's Jesus, there are several points of contact between Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer with one very noticeable absence: the use of violent metaphors. I find Borg's Jesus' performance of The Wild Adventurer to be less elite and complete when compared to N.T. Wright's Jesus.

Just as Wright's Jesus was gripped by a strong sense of mission, so too was Borg's Jesus who was a "young man on a religious quest" (59) with a "sense of mission" (65). Borg's Jesus' sense of mission is a rare alignment with both Wright's Jesus who "was gripped by a strong sense of vocation" (35) and The Wild Adventurer who is on "a great mission."¹⁵⁹

While Wright's Jesus found commonality to The Wild Adventurer by engaging in "the real battle for the kingdom," (36), Borg's Jesus absolutely does not engage in violence, even metaphoric violence. Borg's Jesus did not think of his death on the cross as a battle against evil. Borg does not use any images of violence, battle, or war to describe Jesus' life, and in this way,

¹⁵⁹ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 141.

Borg's Jesus does not match to The Wild Adventurer. This is a major point of difference between Wright and Borg's Jesuses.

In a small point of comparison between Borg's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer, Borg does tend to depict Jesus as a brave, adventurous, risk taker. Borg says, "I think [Jesus] realized that if he kept doing what he was doing, he risked execution... He may well have known that his journey to Jerusalem could end in his death" (82). Borg's Jesus, just like The Wild Adventurer, is a risk taker. He knew he may well die in Jerusalem, but he went anyways.

While Wright salvaged Jesus' masculinity in his death by positing a bodily resurrection, Borg does not.¹⁶⁰ Wright's Jesus shared a strong point of contact with The Wild Adventurer by battling evil and winning through his resurrection. Borg's historical Jesus does not win in the same sense that Wright's does and does not stipulate that Jesus' death was a "victory" as Wright does. Instead, Borg allows himself to see Jesus' death as a defeat: "Jesus was killed because he stood against the kingdoms of this world and for an alternative social vision grounded in the kingdom of God. The domination system killed Jesus" (91). Borg's Jesus dies, and Borg does not suggest that this was Jesus' plan all along or an odd means Jesus used to gain victory.¹⁶¹ This is another major difference between Borg and Wright's historical Jesuses at which point Wright's Jesus is much more similar to The Wild Adventurer than Borg's.

I find moderate overlap between Borg's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer, but the overlap is not as extensive as it was for N.T. Wright's Jesus.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian

¹⁶⁰ Borg affirms the truth of the resurrection, but he does not suppose that anything happened to Jesus' corpse or that there was an empty tomb. Instead, Borg defines the resurrection as "the continued experience of Jesus as a living reality after his death" (135).

¹⁶¹ That said, Borg does affirm *Christus Victor* Christology and that Easter represents Christ's "defeat of the powers" (138). However, Borg does not trace *Christus Victor* Christology back to the historical Jesus as Wright does. While Borg's "Christ of faith" may have been victorious in death, his "Jesus of history" was not.

The Expressive Egalitarian expressed his emotions, embraces an androgynous moral system, and objected to violence. I have not found significant overlap between Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian.

There is, however, one scene in Jesus' life at which there are minor overlaps between Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian: The Garden of Gethsemane. Wright affirms a historical core to Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the garden, Jesus says to his disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14: 34). This scene depicts Jesus expressing his emotions (fear, anxiety, sorrow) to his companions, which is similar to The Expressive Egalitarian. While in the garden, Jesus prayed, "'*Abba*, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will'" (Mark 14: 36). Wright comments on this scene: "As Gethsemane shows... Jesus did not desire to die" (99). For Wright, Jesus' prayer in the garden displays an act of submission to an authority (not a traditional trait for elite men), and from Wright's perspective, this submission was an ethically good thing to do. Thus, just as The Expressive Egalitarian embraces an androgynous moral code,¹⁶² Wright's Jesus briefly embraces an androgynous moral system in the garden. In affirming a historical core of the Gethsemane scene, Wright's Jesus finds minor overlap with characteristics of The Expressive Egalitarian.

Additionally, Wright's affirmation of Jesus as the Wisdom of God elicits another point of contact between Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian who resists gender essentialism. N.T. Wright says, "Colossians 1.15-20, with its clear poetic structure, is a Wisdom poem, exploring the classic Jewish theme that the world's creator is also its redeemer, and vice versa. But at every point of creation and redemption we discover, not Wisdom, but Jesus" (161). As Wright knows well, the Greek word for wisdom is *Σοφία*, a feminine word. Wright's affirmation

¹⁶² Anderson, "Overview," 2.

of Jesus as the wisdom of God can be interpreted in one of two ways: either Wright is inserting Jesus into a traditionally feminine category or Wright's male Jesus is replacing the feminine *Σοφία*. Wright's Christology, which he traces back to the historical Jesus, either resists gender essentialism by placing Jesus in both masculine and feminine categories or erases female imagery for God by replacing Lady Wisdom with the male Christ. I do not think there is sufficient data here to rule one way or the other.

Apart from a minor narrative in the Garden of Gethsemane and Wright's inconclusive Christology, I have found minimal connection between Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian. Wright gives his readers no reason to believe that Jesus criticized patriarchy, resisted gendered moral values, or was an emotionally expressive person. Thus, Wright's Jesus does not well fit the category of The Expressive Egalitarian.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian

Analyzing Borg's Jesus next to The Expressive Egalitarian was among the larger surprises I experienced over the course of this work. I had anticipated that Borg's Jesus would share countless characteristics in common with The Expressive Egalitarian, and though there are similarities, the data was not as robust as I had anticipated. Instead, I have found a few points of contact between Borg's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian but no characteristics of Borg's Jesus that directly contradict The Expressive Egalitarian.

As noted, Borg opts for gender neutral terms to describe Jesus when it is convenient. For example, while Wright's Jesus' primary identity is a gendered category, a "Jewish prophet" (33), Borg's Jesus' primary identity is a gender neutral category, "spirit person" (53). In this way, Borg is resisting gendered categories for Jesus in a way that Wright does not. Interestingly, this point of diversion for Borg and Wright is not a matter of who their Jesus was but the words

they use to describe Jesus. Borg tends to opt for gender neutral categories, while Wright does not.

Additionally, Borg's Jesus is an active critic of patriarchal and authoritarian modes of leadership similar to The Expressive Egalitarian.¹⁶³ Borg's Jesus was an "advocate of social justice" (71) who engaged in "a radical critique of the domination system of his day" (72). Notably, the domination system that Borg's Jesus critiques were "hierarchical and patriarchal... [and] legitimated by the claim that the social order reflected the will of God. Kings ruled by divine right, and the powers that be were ordained by God" (71-72). Borg's Jesus, then, is an active critic of patriarchy, hierarchy, and male domination of leadership positions. Jesus also critiques the idea that God ordains masculine leadership. Here, Borg's Jesus shares a strong point of contact with The Expressive Egalitarian.

There is one final note to be made on Borg's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian. While Wright affirms the historicity of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Borg does not (87). Jesus' prayer in the garden is contains a brief moment at which Jesus expresses his emotions and submits to a divine agent, both characteristics that could be associated with The Expressive Egalitarian. Borg, by not affirming the historicity of this event, strips away a moment that connects Jesus to The Expressive Egalitarian. In the same light, Borg affirms that the post-easter Jesus is the *Sophia* of God (a feminine category), but Borg does not trace this understanding back to the historical Jesus. In Wright's affirmation of Jesus' prayer in the garden and Jesus' elevated self understanding, Wright is able to find two points of contact with the historical Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian that Borg cannot affirm. This is a poignant example of the way in which the historical rulings (either in affirmation or refutation) affect the gendered portrait of the characters to be reconstructed.

¹⁶³ Oliver, *Real Men Have Feelings Too*, 230-231.

Even still, I have found moderate overlap between Borg's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian. While Borg's Jesus does not appear to be emotionally expressive, Borg's Jesus is an active critic of patriarchy. Borg also seems to opt for less gendered language to describe Jesus than Wright does.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and Pastoral Masculinities

Performers of pastoral masculinities make God known to their congregation through powerful speech and serve as the representative of God to the people. Wright's Jesus shares many features in common with traditional pastoral masculinities.

First and foremost, Wright's Jesus is an exceptional public speaker who is able to captivate a crowd. Wright's Jesus is a "prophet of the kingdom of God, summoning others to join him, [and] warning of the consequences if they did not" (50). All of these characteristics of Jesus, of course, rely upon proficient public speaking skill, which are essential to pastoral masculinities. As a public speaker, Jesus utilizes a "preacher-centered" model, in which Jesus is the only speaker, his words are centralized, and no space is given to other voices.¹⁶⁴ Wright's Jesus also speaks and manages authority like a traditional male pastor. He is not vulnerable about his own struggles, nor is he particularly interested in intimate relationships with his listeners. Wright's Jesus is a distanced speaker of truth, as is expected of traditional male pastors.¹⁶⁵

Jesus' skills as a public speaker are a necessary but not sufficient characteristic to propose a connection between Wright's Jesus and pastoral masculinities. It is, rather, the content of Jesus' public speaking that most strongly connects Jesus' masculinity to pastoral masculinities. Wright's Jesus was the spokesperson for the kingdom of God and the one through whom God's presence could be found. Wright says, "Jesus acted in such a way as to indicate that

¹⁶⁴ Scott, *The Relational Pulpit*, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 77.

he saw his own movement as the god-given replacement for the temple itself... Jesus was claiming to offer all that the temple stood for” (47). Jesus’ claim to offer all that the temple stood for is a weighty claim. Among other things, the temple in Second Temple Judaism was the place at which YHWH’s presence and forgiveness were mediated. Thus, Jesus is claiming to be the mediator of God’s presence and forgiveness, a staple characteristic of pastoral masculinities.¹⁶⁶

Next, Wright’s Jesus’ warrior self-understanding is similar to traditional pastoral masculinities. Wright says that Jesus “saw himself engaged in a running battle with his enemy” (48). Compare that to Paul Tripp’s statement: “Pastoral Ministry is war, and you will never live successfully in the pastorate if you live with a peacetime mentality.”¹⁶⁷ Wright’s Jesus, just like many traditional pastors, made sense of his mission using battle images and metaphors.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps most challenging about Wright’s Jesus is his own God consciousness. In short, Wright’s Jesus believed himself to be God. Wright says, “He believed himself called to do and be what, in the scriptures, only Israel’s God did and was” (166). Jesus’ self-identity does not immediately connect to pastoral masculinities, who mediate God, not become God. Yet, as the pastor is expected to be the mediator of his congregation’s relationship to God, it is possible that the ultimate pastor ceases to be the representative of God and becomes God himself. I submit that this is another point of similarity between Jesus and pastoral masculinities, except that Wright’s Jesus takes this process one step further. Wright’s Jesus, like a traditional pastor, is the representative of God, but Jesus is so good at it that he thought himself to be “the human face of the one true God” (210).

¹⁶⁶ Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 47.

¹⁶⁷ Tripp, *War*, 1.

¹⁶⁸ Jesus’ battle self-understanding is, of course, a feature he shares in common with The Wild Adventurer. This overlap demonstrates the fluid nature of gendered categories, even the ones constructed by Gender Studies scholars.

I have, therefore, found significant overlap between Wright's Jesus and traditional pastoral masculinities in which Wright's Jesus is presented as an ultra-elite male pastor.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and Pastoral Masculinities

Marcus Borg's Jesus, much like N.T. Wright's, shares many points of contact with pastoral masculinities. Borg's Jesus is an articulate speaker who Borg refers to as a "spokesperson of messenger for the kingdom of God" (74). However, I have found Borg's Jesus' pastoral masculinity to be more revisionist than N.T. Wright's.

On his role as a public speaker, Borg's Jesus, just like Wright's, utilizes a "preacher-centered" model in which Jesus' words are central. Jesus is the speaker and everyone else knows to listen. Borg, just like Wright, depicts Jesus as an active public speaker and makes no mention of interaction with his audience.¹⁶⁹ Borg's Jesus, unlike Wright's, speaks personally and intimately rather than as distanced truth teller. Borg's Jesus commonly speaks about his relationship to the sacred and his experience of injustice, and in order to do so, Borg's Jesus draws upon his "firsthand experience" of injustice and the divine. As noted, traditional male pastors do not tend to speak intimately about their experiences, and revisionist male pastors do.¹⁷⁰ This is a minor point of difference at which Wright's Jesus performs a more traditional pastoral masculinity than Borg's.

Borg's most important departure from Wright's Jesus' pastoral masculinity is that Borg's Jesus does not imagine himself as the mediator between God and humans. Traditional male pastors, through their words, are expected to make God known to their congregation. Borg's Jesus does not do this. Borg's Jesus attempted to teach his listeners to commune with God free from a mediator. Borg says, "As one who knew God in his own experience, [Jesus] knew that

¹⁶⁹ Scott, *The Relational Pulpit*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, 77.

God was accessible apart from convention and institutions... [Jesus] pointed to an unbrokered relationship to God, apart from institutional mediation” (68-69). This is a rather important departure point for Borg’s Jesus and pastoral masculinities. Borg’s Jesus, unlike Wright’s, does not attempt to be the mediator between God and humanity. Borg’s Jesus short-circuits the system and encourages his listeners to experience God on their own, apart from pastoral mediation.

Finally, Wright’s Jesus actually thought of himself as divine, not just the mediator of the divine. Borg’s Jesus, however, does not think of himself as divine at all: “Do I think Jesus thought of himself as divine? No... I don’t think people like Jesus have an exalted perception of themselves” (145, 147). Borg’s Jesus, then, emphatically rejects a divine self-understanding, and in this way also, is dissimilar to Wright’s pastoral Jesus.

In conclusion, the data points towards Borg’s Jesus conforming quite well to revisionist pastoral masculinities. Borg’s Jesus is a public speaker who helps make God known (69) and an articulate teacher of “an alternative wisdom” (68). However, I find Borg’s Jesus to be a less traditional, less elevated, example of a pastoral masculinity than N.T. Wright’s as Borg’s Jesus is more personal with his audience, and less convinced that he is the mediator between his audience and God.

N.T. Wright’s Jesus and Political Masculinities

N.T. Wright uses plainly political vocabulary to describe Jesus as a “radical politician” (36) and “rebel king” (101). There are ample connections between Jesus’ characteristics and political masculinities. I have found Wright’s Jesus to represent an ironic yet dominant traditional politician.

For Wright, Jesus’ status as an elite politician is hardly worth doubting: Jesus was the “King of the world” (175) and “Messiah” (125). That Wright’s Jesus is an elite politician is not

surprising, but the means by which he gained political power are quite different from traditional political men. Wright affirms the historicity of the passion narratives and Jesus' suffering and death (96-97). Jesus' suffering and death may seem paradoxical for an elite politician, but, for Wright, suffering and death are the means by which Jesus' political power is demonstrated: "[Jesus] seemed to have believed that [the redemption of Israel] would be accomplished through his own suffering and death" (97). Wright depicts Jesus' death as a great battle with evil, similar to a king going to battle for his people: "Like other Jewish would-be leaders and messiahs before and since, Jesus believed himself called to go ahead of the people and fight the battle on their behalf" (96). Jesus' battle against evil is a strong point of contact between Jesus and idealized political men who are described as "warrior[s] for truth" and "inspiring fighters."¹⁷¹ As discussed, Wright's Jesus did not fight this battle with actual violence; instead, Jesus fought by suffering and dying. For Wright, Jesus was only successful in battle against evil because he had the strength and courage to undergo suffering (41). Wright's valorization of Jesus' suffering looks similar to the valorization of political war heroes. Particularly, Wright's valorization of Jesus' suffering seems similar to the valorization of John McCain and his toughness to undergo suffering.¹⁷² I am, of course, not arguing that Wright's honoring of Jesus' toughness to undergo suffering has been influenced by the valorization of John McCain or any other political war hero. I am arguing that the valorization of Jesus' suffering and the suffering of political war heroes are both examples of honor given to a specific masculine virtue: toughness to undergo pain and suffering for others.

The aftermath of Wright's Jesus' death is, at this point, well rehearsed. Jesus defeated death and walked out of the tomb. What remains to be shown is that, for Wright, Jesus'

¹⁷¹ Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 504.

¹⁷² Smith, *Mediated Political Masculinities*, 100.

resurrection secured Jesus' political power: "The meaning of the resurrection must begin with the validation of Jesus as messiah... It means, therefore, the acceptance and validation of his messianic achievement, supremely in his crucifixion: the resurrection declares that the cross was a victory, not a defeat" (125). Jesus' resurrection declared that Jesus was the messiah, "the king of the world" (175), and the resurrection declared that Jesus had been successful in battle. Jesus, the heroic politician, went to battle—albeit with odd weapons— and came out victorious, vindicated as messiah and king. Jesus' suffering and death are not the only points of comparison between Wright's Jesus and political masculinities.

Performers of political masculinities are expected to usher in social peace and justice;¹⁷³ Wright's Jesus does just this. N.T. Wright affirms the belief that "Jesus is the messiah, the true Lord of the world. At his name every knee shall bow, as he brings justice, peace, holiness and life to the world and judges injustice, oppression, wickedness, and death itself" (201). Wright's Jesus not only goes to battle for his subjects; Wright's Jesus, just like idealized political men, will bring justice and restoration to the people. Wright affirms a future return of the historical Jesus and compares Jesus to a "royal dignitary" being welcomed back into town after a long trip (203). The political language that Wright uses to apply to Jesus is striking and cannot be overstated.

Nevertheless, Wright's Jesus not only mimics idealized political masculinities; Wright's Jesus performs his political masculinity in an ironic, perhaps subversive, way. Political males are expected to protect their subordinated, just as males are expected to protect their wife and children in traditional households.¹⁷⁴ Political males invest in military strength to insure the

¹⁷³ Trice, "Politicians and the Shaping of Masculinities," 2-4.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, "From Obama to Abbott," 16.

safety of their people.¹⁷⁵ Wright's Jesus is the protector of Israel but in an unexpected way. Wright's Jesus does not invest in an arms race or military strength. Wright's Jesus protects Israel by warning against violence: "Jesus was warning his contemporaries that if they did not follow his way, the way of peace and forgiveness, the way of the cross, the way of being the light of the world, and if they persisted in their determination to fight a desperate holy war against Rome, then Rome would destroy them, city, temple, and all" (41). Jesus' warning is a political warning. Jesus is performing the role of the traditional political male by protecting his people, but he is also subverting the category as he protects his people by warning against violence. Sheryl Cunningham found that both democrats and republicans are likely to tout their strength to defend their citizens;¹⁷⁶ Wright's Jesus does not boast of his military strength but of his strength to love and forgive his enemies as the means by which the people can protect themselves. At this point, Wright's Jesus is performing his political masculinity using very ironic, destabilizing means. Certainly Wright's Jesus is still claiming to be the political protector of his people, but the means by which Wright's Jesus is the protector are very unorthodox.

In closing, it is clear that Wright's Jesus is a performer of political masculinities. Wright's Jesus is the ultimate political man. He is the king of the world, to whom every knee shall bow and who crushes those who "oppose his rule" (119). On the other hand, Jesus' dominance in political masculinities also subverts these categories. Wright's Jesus is the ultimate, decisive, protective leader but not in any traditional sense. Wright's Jesus gains his strength through weakness, death, and forgiveness. Wright's Jesus defends his people by advocating for a life free from violence and "frantic and paranoid self-defense" (43). Thus, while Wright's Jesus is an expression of political masculinities, he performs his political masculinity

¹⁷⁵ Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 507.

¹⁷⁶ Cunningham, "Accruing Masculinity," 506.

with surprising, destabilizing methods. Wright's Jesus both fulfills the expectations of traditional political masculinities but does so by unorthodox means.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and Political Masculinities

Marcus Borg's Jesus, much like Wright's, has significant overlap with political masculinities, though I find Borg's Jesus' political masculinity to be less elite and more revisionist than Wright's. For Borg, Jesus was a "social prophet", critic of "an oppressive and exploitative domination system" and "movement initiator" who "the common people heard gladly" (73). Jesus, according to Borg, was a public voice of the people, critiquing injustice and gathering supporters. Thus, Borg sees Jesus in explicitly political categories and compares Jesus to the likes of Martin Luther King and Gandhi (65).

However, while Borg conceives of Jesus as a powerful politician, Borg's Jesus is not nearly as elite of a politician as Wright's Jesus. For Wright, the historical Jesus was the "king of the world" and Jewish messiah (175, 125). Both of these claims are remarkably lofty claims about Jesus' political status. Borg denies that either of these claims go back to the historical Jesus: "I am sufficiently doubtful that we can trace a messianic self-awareness back to Jesus so that I do not use the term *messiah* in my historical reconstruction of Jesus" (55). Thus Borg's denial of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah makes Borg's Jesus a significantly less elite politician than Wright's Jesus. Borg's Jesus, like a politician, was a public speaker, gaining support, but Borg's Jesus was not the long expected king of Israel, the messiah, as Wright's was.

Next, Borg understands Jesus' death very differently than Wright, and this affects the political masculinity of Borg's Jesus. For Wright, Jesus' death was similar to David, the future king, called to go ahead and fight the battle for his people (96). Borg does not believe that Jesus

was acting as a king and fighting a battle on his people's behalf (55). Borg does, however, see Jesus' death as a primarily political death. Borg says,

“Jesus died as a martyr, not a victim. A martyr is killed because he or she stands for something. Jesus was killed because he stood against the kingdoms of this world for an alternative social vision grounded in the kingdom of God. The domination system killed Jesus as the prophet of the kingdom of God. This is the political meaning of Good Friday” (91).

Thus, Borg, much like Wright, conceives of Jesus' death as a political affair. The key difference, however, is that Wright sees Jesus' death as a clash with the kingdoms of the world in which Jesus ultimately wins, while Borg does not. For Wright, the historical Jesus' physical, resurrection vindicates Jesus as the Jewish messiah and king (125). Borg, as he does not affirm Jesus' physical resurrection, does not affirm that Jesus' clash with the elite politicians was a victory. Wright's historical Jesus is the “king of the world” (175) after his vindicating resurrection. Borg's Jesus is not the king of the world.¹⁷⁷

Lastly, N.T. Wright affirms a future return of the historical Jesus and compares Jesus' return to a “royal dignitary” (203). Borg, in contrast, does not affirm Jesus' second coming or look forward to a future date at which Jesus will rule the world with justice (195). This is just one more example at which Wright's Jesus is presented as performing a more elite political masculinity than Borg's Jesus.

Certainly, Borg constructs his historical Jesus using explicitly political categories. However, when compared to Wright's Jesus, Borg's Jesus is not nearly as elite of a politician.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, Borg does affirm the “truth” of Easter, though he does not think this truth goes back to the historical Jesus or implies an empty tomb (130-131). Borg even declares that after Easter, “Jesus is Lord. Rome is not” (136). However, Borg sees this exalted Christology as a Christian invention after the death of Jesus, not as a fact about the historical Jesus.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and Academic Masculinities

I outlined two prominent profiles of academic masculinities: The Careerist Academic and The Balanced Academic. The Careerist Academic achieves remarkably high in his career but fails to invest deeply in intimate relationships. The Balanced Academic finds a way to invest in both career and intimate relationships. The data suggests that Wright's Jesus shares more in common with The Careerist Academic than The Balance Academic. Wright's Jesus has, in his own way, a prolific career. He founds an impressive movement, gains the attention of the highest Jewish and Roman authorities,¹⁷⁸ and battles against evil victoriously. Wright's Jesus is an impressive figure, but he does not seem to have invested in intimate relationships. In the entire book, Wright does not mention a single intimate relationship that was important to Jesus: no friends, family, or loved ones. Wright's Jesus, in this sense, shares a great deal in common with The Careerist Academic who prioritizes advancing in career over intimate relationships.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and Academic Masculinities

In analyzing Borg's Jesus and academic masculinity, I have found a rare point of almost exact agreement between Wright and Borg. Borg's Jesus, much like Wright's, matches well to The Careerist Academic. Borg's Jesus has a prolific career as a public speaker, social prophet, and movement founder (53). However, Borg's Jesus does not develop intimate relationships with other people; Borg even notes that Jesus' life is centered "beyond family" (70). Thus, I find both Borg and Wright's Jesuses to align well with The Careerist Academic.

N.T. Wright's Jesus and Gay Masculinities

¹⁷⁸ Wright affirms the historicity of Jesus' trials before Pilate and Caiaphas. Borg and Wright, *Meaning*, 95.

Despite a relatively new and growing body of work exploring Jesus' sexuality and the possibility of Jesus having had an intimate, sexual relationship with a male,¹⁷⁹ I cannot find any points of similarity between Wright's Jesus' masculinity and gay masculinities. To be fair, Wright makes no mention of Jesus having had any sexual relationship at all. Nevertheless, Wright's silence on Jesus and gay masculinities is worth noting.

Marcus Borg's Jesus and Gay Masculinities

Marcus Borg's Jesus, so far as my research shows, has no obvious points of contact with gay masculinities. Borg, just like Wright, makes no mention of Jesus having had any intimate or sexual relationships at all. Thus, while Borg is considered a more liberal scholar than Wright, Borg equally does not engage with scholarship suggestive of Jesus having had an intimate relationship with a male.

VII. Results and Discussion

I have attempted to show that there are a multiplicity of connections between N.T. Wright's and Marcus Borg's historical Jesuses and popular masculinities in the social world of Borg and Wright. I have found significant overlap between both scholars' Jesuses and varying profiles of masculinity from the late 20th-century. Nevertheless, neither of the constructed Jesuses blindly perform or strictly adhere to any of the masculine profiles. Both Wright and Borg's historical Jesuses are men who share characteristics with ideal masculinities of the late 20th century, but neither Jesus is a static character that can be placed safely into the boxes of 20th century western masculinity. As a researcher, I must be careful not to overstate my claims. I have found significant overlaps between Wright and Borg's Jesuses and 20th-century

¹⁷⁹ See Theodore W. Jennings, *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament*. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2003).

masculinities, but that does not mean that Borg and Wright's Jesuses are reducible to 20th-century masculinities.

I found significant overlap between N.T. Wright's historical Jesus and The Rational Patriarch, The Wild Adventurer, traditional pastoral and political masculinities, and The Careerist Academic. I found minimal or insignificant overlap between N.T. Wright's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian and The Balanced Academic. I found no overlaps between N.T. Wright's Jesus and gay masculinities.

I found significant overlaps between Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Expressive Egalitarian, The Careerist academic, and revisionist pastoral and political masculinities. I found minimal or insignificant overlap between Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Wild Adventurer and The Balanced Academic. I found no overlaps between Marcus Borg's Jesus and The Rational Patriarch or gay masculinities.

In essence, my case study has revealed that N.T. Wright's Jesus' masculinity is far more elite, dominant, and traditional than Marcus Borg's Jesus. While Wright's Jesus is similar to the Rational Patriarch and Wild Adventurer, Borg's Jesus is similar to the subversive Expressive Egalitarian. Wright's Jesus shares qualities with a traditional pastor, while Borg's Jesus' pastoral masculinity appears to be more revisionist. Wright's Jesus is an elite political male who defeats all rival politicians. Borg's Jesus is a less elite politician who is defeated by rival politicians. Borg and Wright's Jesuses both share significant overlap with The Careerist Academic and no overlap with gay masculinities.

Now that I have presented the data, it is time to do the messy work of making sense of it. Why do Borg and Wright's historical Jesuses appear as they do, in which Wright's Jesus is largely traditional and Borg's Jesus largely revisionist?

The Effects of the Gendered Canon

As the literature survey in Part I revealed, contemporary scholarship is currently revealing the way in which Jesus's masculinity has been constructed in canonical texts. In the canonical material, Jesus' masculinity is embellished and constructed in connection to elite men from the Greco-Roman world. While there is not direct continuity between elite Greco-Roman masculinity and elite 20th-century western masculinity, there is significant overlap. Thus, I find that a significant contributing factor to Borg and Wright's differing masculine Jesuses is Borg and Wright's answer to the challenge of the canon.

Wright affirms much more of a historical core to the canonical material about Jesus than Borg does. Thus, Wright has affirmed an historical core to Jesus' elevated masculinity as found in the canon. As seen in Part I, the synoptic gospels stress Jesus' identity as an elite man, so Wright's affirmation of the synoptic gospels as largely historical also functions as an affirmation of Jesus' elevated masculinity. Borg, on the other hand, does not believe as much of synoptics to be historical and, therefore, is free to construct a less-elite masculinity for Jesus.

This point is important and must be stressed thoroughly. Because the canon is gendered and contains an elevated masculinity of Jesus, the historian's answer to the historicity of the canon will drastically affect the gendered identity of the Jesus they construct. Thus, scholars who affirm the historicity of the synoptic gospels also affirm Jesus' lofty masculinity found in the synoptic gospels. Scholars such as Borg, however, who object to the historicity of much of the synoptic gospels, are then free to construct a Jesus of differing masculinity.

Of special importance here is the differing ways that Borg and Wright treat the resurrection scenes in the gospels and the atonement theology in Paul's writings. As was seen in Part I, Jesus' physical resurrection and willful, atoning death served the purpose of bolstering

Jesus' masculinity. N.T. Wright affirms Jesus' physical resurrection and believes early atonement theories go back to the historical Jesus. Marcus Borg denies both of these claims. Thus, Wright affirms the two most significant pieces of Jesus' canonical masculinity, while Borg does not. It is, therefore, no surprise at all that Wright's Jesus turns out to be much more of an elite man than Borg's Jesus.

I believe that this explains much, though not all, of the difference between Borg and Wright's masculine Jesuses. Wright, in saying "yes" to the canon, has said yes to Jesus' canonical masculinity. Borg does not say "yes" to the canon in the same way that Wright does.

Unconscious Borrowing from Their Own Social Worlds

While Borg and Wright's Jesus' had significant differences, they also shared much in common. It must not go unsaid that both Jesuses shared traits in common with 20th-century profiles of masculinity. Wright and Borg's Jesuses shared traits with The Expressive Egalitarian, The Wild Adventurer, pastoral masculinities, political masculinities, and The Careerist Academic.

I find the best explanation for this bit of data is unconscious borrowing. Given that both Borg and Wright have been socialized within 20th-century protestant and academic worlds, it really is not surprising that their constructed Jesuses share characteristics with masculine profiles of their social worlds.

In essence, I find this borrowing to be rather insignificant and easily explainable. It is an immense challenge to describe anything without using references and metaphors to archetypes from one's own culture. Thus, it ought not be surprising that both Wright and Borg have constructed Jesuses using terminology and categories from their own social worlds.

Authorial Bias and Data Selection

I believe both Borg and Wright have shaped their Jesuses' masculinities with both conscious and unconscious bias. Page Dubois wisely comments that "who we are contaminates what we write. I mean contamination in this etymological sense, that contact produces mingling, impurity, hybridity, not necessarily a negative infection or pollution; better to acknowledge this fusion of temporalities than to claim a pure, unmediated access to the past."¹⁸⁰ I have found that both Wright and Borg's Jesuses are significantly contaminated by the personalities and masculinities of Wright and Borg. Given that Borg and Wright both served in official positions in the church, it is not surprising that both of their Jesuses share points of contact with pastoral masculinities. Given that both Borg and Wright were politically active, it is not surprising that both of their Jesuses share points of contact with political masculinities, and given that both Borg and Wright worked as prolific academics, it is not surprising that both of their Jesuses share traits with The Careerist Academic.

Furthermore, the theory of authorial bias and data selection may make some sense of why neither Wright nor Borg engages with scholarship suggestive that Jesus had a sexual relationship. Both Borg and Wright, I believe, wish to construct a Jesus that is palatable and attractive for themselves and their audiences. To write about Jesus' having had a sexual relationship, especially with a male partner, would likely not have been an effective strategy in the 1990's, and I suggest that the goal to construct an attractive Jesus partially explains why neither Borg nor Wright engages with data regarding Jesus' sexuality.

The theory of authorial bias also makes sense of some of the differences between Wright and Borg. For instance, Wright constructs a Jesus that looks like an elite Rational Patriarch, and this is not surprising given that Wright himself is a relatively traditional husband, father and

¹⁸⁰Page Dubois, "Ancient Masculinities" *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature: 2003) 323.

grandfather. Borg's Jesus, however, is not similar to The Rational Patriarch, and this is fitting because Borg was known a progressive on gender roles. This same point also makes sense of why Borg's Jesus is more of an Expressive Egalitarian than N.T. Wright's. Quite simply, I believe that Wright wants Jesus to be more of a Rational Patriarch, while Borg wants Jesus to be more of an Expressive Egalitarian and that these desires have shaped Borg and Wright's historical analyses.

Authorial bias ought not be thought of as a surprising theory to account for some of Borg and Wright's historical analysis: both Borg and Wright express their own biases and the possibility of bias affecting scholarship. Marcus Borg says, "As a Christian, I want Jesus to be an attractive figure. Obviously, wanting Jesus to be attractive cannot be a criterion for making historical judgments, and I must factor this desire into my historical judgment" (82). N.T. Wright is also aware of the biases that affect his scholarship: "If we are only to accept about Jesus those elements which naturally attract us we shall sail close to the wind of making a Jesus-figure in our own image" (99). Finally, in the introduction that Borg and Wright co-wrote, they say, "There is, after all, no such thing as objectivity in scholarship" (viii). I find that both Borg and Wright's subjective desires for an attractive Jesus-figure have shaped the masculinity of the Jesuses they have constructed.

In essence, I argue that some of the differences between Borg and Wright's Jesuses may say more about Borg and Wright than they do Jesus. I, of course, do not believe that when Borg and Wright talk about Jesus they are only talking about themselves, though I do believe that the way Borg and Wright talk about Jesus is shaped by their own identities and biases.

Methodological Challenges

In the previous section I have argued that authorial bias has affected the historical analyses of Borg and Wright. I am, of course, aware that my own biases have affected my research and writing. While I enjoy the writing of both Borg and Wright, I must confess that I deeply hope Jesus is like Marcus Borg says he is and not like Wright says. Quite simply, I want Jesus to be an Expressive Egalitarian rather than a Rational Patriarch. I am uncomfortable with the masculinity associated with N.T. Wright's Jesus. I have, of course, attempted to limit that effects of my own bias upon my work, though I must echo Borg in Wright in admitting that there is no objectivity in scholarship, even my own.

I also am aware of my own preconceived notions that I brought with me to my case study. Having been a fan of both Borg and Wright for quite some time, I have long associated Wright with so-called traditional Christianity and Borg with progressive Christianity. Thus, it is possible that I may have undergone my own self-confirming data selection and dealt primarily with information that made Wright's Jesus out to be a traditional man and Borg's Jesus out to be a progressive man.

I, of course, do not believe that my personal biases make my research invalid or useless. I am, however, aware that when I talk about Borg, Wright, Jesus, and gender that my writing is affected by my own perceptions and biases about these topics

Further Steps

This paper is only the tip of the iceberg in the new and emerging field of meta-criticism. There is much more that could be done to assess the effect of 20th-century western masculinity upon the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus. However, I have devised three specific next steps that could increase understanding and limit researcher bias on a project such as mine.

First, a more robust analysis of the work of Borg and Wright is necessary. I have limited my scope to their arguments put forth in one book, *The Meaning of Jesus*. Both of these men have written much more than this, and a more robust analysis of their work would appeal to a wider base of their writings.

Second, a more complete gender analysis would include more gendered profiles or categories. I found significant overlaps with Wright and Borg's Jesuses and the gendered categories I found in the scholarly literature, but my profiles were by no means extensive. Even more, just as contemporary research has explored the way in which females can perform masculinities,¹⁸¹ it would be possible to explore Jesus' connection to modern feminine categories. My research has focused only on masculine profiles, and this scope could be broadened to include the effect of modern feminine profiles upon historical Jesus research.

Third, in order to explore the effect of masculinity upon contemporary historical Jesus research, the amount of historical Jesus researchers to be surveyed must be increased. While Borg and Wright do represent formative, important, and contrasting perspectives within recent Jesus research, they are by no means representative of the whole of modern Jesus research. Further analysis should increase the amount of scholars to be surveyed. Of special importance would be the inclusion of voices traditionally marginalized. My case study observed the work of two straight, white, Christian males, and it makes one wonder how scholars from different identity backgrounds would construct Jesus' masculinity. Further research should focus on scholars with different, intersecting identities from the researchers that I have analyzed.

VIII. Conclusion

The aim of this section was to analyze the effects of western masculinity upon historical Jesus research. Considering the momentous amount of material published on the historical Jesus,

¹⁸¹ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

a work this size cannot offer a definitive statement on the exact degree to which western masculinity has shaped historical research. However, I can appeal to the data revealed in my case study and argue that there is strong evidence to suggest that western masculinity has been a powerful shaper of historical Jesus studies. That two very different thinkers within the field of Jesus studies both construct Jesuses with significant overlaps with prominent profiles of western masculinity is telling. There is, of course, much more research and hundreds more case studies that could be done. Nevertheless, I feel confident in concluding that just as canonical writers shaped their Jesus in the context of Greco-Roman masculinity, at least some historical Jesus researchers are constructing their Jesuses in the context of western masculinity. While some of the guidelines of masculinity have shifted from Greco-Roman masculinity to modern western, the overall effect, in which authors shape their Jesuses in the context of masculinity, has not changed dramatically.

I, of course, do not suppose that masculinity, whether ancient or modern, is the only key shaper of narratives about Jesus. Both the New Testament and historical Jesus research are subject to forces well beyond masculinity. What I do believe, however, is that narratives about Jesus—who he was and why it matters—are still being shaped by constructs of masculinity. I, therefore, suggest that much more research ought to be done exploring the intimate connections between historical Jesus studies and western masculinities.

EPIGRAPH

I have tried my best to go about this paper as honestly as possible, admitting my own methodological missteps and confessing the effect of my own biases and experiences on my research. From the outset, I have understood that this thesis was about Jesus, masculinity, and myself.

Therefore, having discussed Jesus and masculinity in more detail than I ever thought possible in my undergraduate experience, I find that it is fitting to connect this project to myself. Being raised in a Christian household and now moving on towards a post-Christian adulthood situates this thesis in an odd part of my personal development.

There are many days that I wish to leave Jesus behind in both my personal and academic life. However, the Jesus figure still haunts, harms, and hangs on to me in ways that I don't yet understand. I had boundless topic choices about which I could have devoted hundreds of hours and my sanity, but I still chose Jesus.

Truth be told, I wonder if this project might all along have been my flailing, desperate attempt to rescue Jesus from the patriarchal and homophobic world in which I first met him. I now know that I have failed in that enterprise. I once thought that if I devoted enough time to it, I would be able to scour through history texts and eventually discover the Jesus of history. I thought I'd either expose him as a fraud and know that I could go on with my life without Jesus (good riddance!) or that I would find him to be the subversive, loving, feminist Jesus that I'd always secretly hoped existed. Instead, I've found nothing and run into the hopeless, deconstructed chamber of my own biases and everyone else's.

Today, I'm more convinced than ever that what an individual says about Jesus says a whole lot about that individual but almost nothing about Jesus. Borg and Wright, I believe, have

constructed historical Jesuses that affirm their current choices but say relatively little about the first century Jewish peasant. I, of course, am not immune to the same effect. There was a time when I believed N.T. Wright's Jesus to be the real one. Then I changed, and I preferred Borg's Jesus. My preference for one Jesus over another had almost nothing to do with argument or method and almost everything to do with my own shifting values. What I believe about Jesus says a lot about who I am now and almost nothing about Jesus.

Talk to a democrat about Jesus, and you'll find out that Jesus was a first century version of Bernie Sanders (ethnicity and all). Then talk to my pastor about Jesus, and you'll learn that Jesus wouldn't bake a cake for a gay couple's wedding and neither should you. For those of us in the Christian and post-Christian world, Jesus functions more like a cosmic mirror of our own desires than a knowable character of history. Jesus turns out to be a Rorschach test.

In the introduction, I called this thesis a scholarly labor of love, but I don't think that's true anymore. It was more a scholarly labor of hope, wishing that I could use the tools of modern scholarship to solve my own problems: what am I supposed to do with my life and why can't I get Jesus out of my mind? I haven't answered my own questions. I believe that my meta-analysis of Wright and Borg's work has demonstrated that narratives about Jesus—even scholarly ones—are still stuck within the framework of masculinity. Briefly, I fear that contemporary disagreements about the historical Jesus are really just disagreements about contemporary masculinity and what it means to be a male in the modern world. In a sense, the thesis feels more critical than I anticipated, like I am subtly saying that the historian's attempts to understand Jesus are really just a historian's attempt to understand his/herself. Maybe that is what I'm saying. It sure seems like it.

The problem is, I can't reduce someone else's work to factors of their identity and experience without admitting that my own work is reducible to my own identity and experience. Years from now, another young, idealistic college student could write his/her undergraduate thesis deconstructing my thesis. They could argue that what I say about Jesus' masculinity says a lot about me but almost nothing about Jesus' masculinity. Truth be told, I think their thesis might be right. Dr. Bos tells me that scholars who become too aware of the effects of their biases stop writing, and I think to myself that this might be the last scholarly work I ever write.

So now I'm sitting here in the library—aching for sleep and dreading graduation—wondering how I'm going to pull myself out of this hole and finish this epigraph on a positive note. I think of Paul and his honesty to know Christ crucified—the truth of the world deconstructed—but go on believing in him anyway. I think of Luke, Matthew, John and N.T. Wright who tell the full truth of Jesus' humiliating death but hope against hope that death wasn't the end for Jesus and won't be for them either. I think of the Deutero-Pauline authors with their heads in the sand, acting as if Jesus' death was insignificant. Then I think of Mark and Marcus Borg who have the bravery to tell the full horror of Jesus' death and then stop. Finally, I think about Jesus and wonder what he'd think about this paper anyways and why I still wonder about him.

And after all that thinking, I realize that I'm tired, that I still don't know and don't expect to anytime soon. I guess I'll go home now.