

“Manishness”—For Men

Few are the opportunities to feel “the mannishness of man” (Francis Schaeffer’s term). It possesses me rarely enough--after some sweaty hours with a chain saw or splitting maul, or after lifting weights. Then I jokingly warn my wife of my coming—“I’m feeling the mannishness of man!” It’s hard to feel manly at a keyboard. Car manufacturers are increasingly pitching big horsepower to the male ego, starved to demonstrate maleness. My focus isn’t upon ego, but upon “mannishness.”

Perhaps my greatest fear in becoming a Christian was embracing a feminized, almost effeminate church culture. Perhaps being raised by my mother contributed to this fear. What I experienced was friendly religion without power and male virility. What I was asked to sing was too often Romantic 19th century hymns. Personally I have trouble singing “I come to the garden alone, while the dew...”. I gravitated to real Christian men—Scout leaders, and Rev. Bill Hillemonds, our chaplain at Hope College--a man of godly passion and decisiveness. He didn’t see a Christ with perfect long hair and beatific countenance. Jesus was a muscular carpenter—without power tools he had to have been muscular. Over the years the denomination of which I was then a part became increasingly feminized. It began with female elders, then pastors, and finally denominational leaders, which is contrary to 1 Timothy 2:12. Churches are increasingly pastored or co-pastored by women. I don’t question their spirituality, but their role (1 Tim. 3:2, “husband of one wife”).

Many Christian bookstores seem to be, in part, feminized repositories of gift-shop irrelevance that few men would consider. I love my wife and delight in her femininity. But I don’t want a church characterized by femininity. While I find no biblical evidence that women are natively the more godly gender (cf. Eccles. 7:28), could they grow to be more sensitive and obedient to God’s voice? Women may outnumber men at prayer meetings because they *are* married! Some women don’t work outside the home and have more leisure to pursue the means of grace. Sixty-eight percent of short-term missions trips taken through this ministry have been taken by women. Women may simply do more church work.

How can a man be a manly Christian? Among the metaphors for the Christian life is that of soldier. (Of course, now we have women firing bullets for us.) Paul wrote to Timothy:

You, then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 2:1-3, NIV)

A Christian man’s strength comes by God’s grace. He must steer the family, if he has one, make the final decisions affecting many aspects of family life, while

supporting wife, children and even parents. He is to be concerned also with God's Kingdom, discipling other men. He is to endure hardship--not embrace comfort. How many soldiers do you see who are physically out-of-shape? They are trim and hardened. The Kingdom of God requires Spirit-control and self-control. The Kingdom of Darkness is arrayed against the Kingdom of Light. The Ring Trilogy has tapped into our subliminal understanding of the world as battleground—a spiritual battle requiring brave and protecting men. Why brave and protecting men? Because of wicked and exploiting men (and women). Have you read of the rapine of Darfur¹? The capture of 12,000 children of northern Uganda for soldiers and sex slaves²? There are 27 million slaves today--more than were stolen from Africa in 400 years³. In Kenya there are 45 women with HIV aged 15-24 to every 10 men⁴. The rule of law and superior force is all that keeps any country from the same exploitation of the weak by stronger men. We need also men who are willing to stand against cultural forces bent upon corrupting their children and accept the flack. It's tough to censor music and movies, if you've tried it.

How does a Christian man of courage act? Defend the family as between a man and woman; refuse to spend what you don't have; teach your sons what a man does and how to work, and your daughters how a man treats a lady; teach your family to love God; keep your word; admit your failures; adequately support your family; make the tough and unappreciated calls; keep yourself pure; take on the strongholds of the devil that God places upon your heart. Where are the strongholds of Satan?--the inner city, the gay community, materialism, sexual exploitation, abortion, thievery, cults and many others. Take one on. Consider enduring the hardship of the mission fields of the world—short-term and long-term--wherein are 1.75 billion who are unevangelized. There are 1.27 billion Muslims and 841 million Hindus⁵. Men should not expect the single women to go to the hardest places, although they go willingly⁶.

Paul put it to Christian men: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love." (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Be a man, be courageous, but show love, just as did the God-man Christ, who never flinched before sinners or Satan, and who never stopped loving. God made two genders, and wants it kept that way (cf. Dt. 22:5; Rom. 1:26-27). I want a planet where, as Donald Cole put it, "Men are men, and women are glad of it!"⁷ Christ is a man's Man. In Him, you will not be bound and your house spoiled (Mt. 12:29), and you will assault the beaches of darkness.

1 "Amnesty Condemns Sudan Rapes,"

<http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/africa/07/19/sudan.rapes.reut/index.html>
accessed 7/20/04

2 "Unicef Highlights 'Forgotten' Tragedy of Child Soldiers in Uganda"

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200407190895.html> accessed 7/20/04

3 "21st-Century Slaves," by Andrew Cockburn

<http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0309/feature1/index.html> accessed

7/23/04

4UNAIDS 2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, Pt. II, Exec. Summary

5David Barrett and Todd Johnson, “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2004,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Jan. 2004, p. 25

6I’m grateful for what single ladies are doing on the mission fields—such as Earlene Voss of Christar, who has given her life to reach Muslim women.

7 Heard on an “Open Line” radio program on Moody Radio.

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