The Masculine Language of the Bible: A Response to David Clines

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In the Ethel M. Wood lecture for 2015, David Clines observed that the Bible is marked by language that carries distinctively male perspectives or values, and that this is not much remarked upon in commentaries. Clines finds scandal in both. The current essay responds to Clines by finding that cultural conceptions of masculinity, not limited to the Bible, but well represented by it, tend to conflate masculinity with virtue. As Roy Baumeister (inter alios) has noted, a man is often perceived not to be fully a man unless he serves his society virtuously, often self-sacrificially. Eight "male values" proposed by Clines are tested as standards of virtue, and a new ninth is advanced as a more suitable locus for attention.

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> Those who possess the goods of fortune without virtue are not justified in claiming high worth, and cannot correctly be styled great-souled, since true worth and greatness of soul cannot exist without complete virtue.
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> —Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics 4.3.20 [1124a][1]

In the Ethel M. Wood lecture for 2015, David Clines looked at eight "male values," which I will cross-examine to see how they measure up as putative "masculine virtues," both in biblical literature, and societies in general: (1) strength, (2) violence and killing, (3) size, (4) honour, (5) holiness, (6) womanlessness, (7) totality thinking and (8) binary thinking.[2]

As a "thick" reading of Clines' theses regarding masculinity and the Bible in his lecture, I take it that he was asserting what follows. Firstly, culturally constructed as masculinity may be (I disagree,[3] but this essay will not address that issue in any detail), it has roughly the same sorts

1 οἱ δ᾽ ἄνευ ἀρετῆς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀγαθὰ ἔχοντες οὔτε δικαίως ἑαυτοὺς μεγάλων ἀξιοῦσιν οὔτε ὀρθῶς μεγαλόψυχοι λέγονται: ἄνευ γὰρ ἀρετῆς παντελοῦς οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα.

2 David J.A. Clines, "The scandal of a male Bible: The Ethel M. Wood lecture for 2015", https://www.academia.edu/10977758/The_Scandal_of_a_Male_Bible, 2.

3 "The similarity in gender stereotypes found cross-culturally suggests that the psychological characteristics differentially associated with women and men follow a pancultural model with cultural factors producing minor variations around general themes. Biological differences (e.g. females bear children, males have greater physical strength) serve as the basis for a division of labor, with women primarily responsible for child care and other domestic activities, and men for hunting (providing) and protection. Gender stereotypes evolve to support this division of labor and assume that each sex has or can develop characteristics consistent with

of sets of core values across cultures and down through history, with exceptions only proving the rule (which I accept). Clines lists some of these values (those we have mentioned), and then shows something of where they occur in the Bible, revealing that they occur frequently, and even in contexts significant for establishing doctrines traditionally considered to be relatively central to the faiths of Judaism and Christianity. He finds scandal in this on at least two grounds: firstly, that the values are not precisely—or not at all—virtues; and secondly, that the manly values are exclusive of womanly virtues (or something like that, because Clines sees the Bible to be esteeming men above women).

I will argue that Clines misconstrues masculinity in both its cross-cultural manifestations generically, and in its biblical manifestation specifically. If I am correct, this removes the scandal, and—in so doing—serves as an apologia for the Bible's masculine language, not just as a defence of masculinity. I do, however, concede that the Bible is indeed often noticeably couched in masculine terms, a "thin" reading of Clines' various theses.

The "thin" versions of Clines' theses, as I take it, are the linguistic anthropological ones, that fixed attention in language on the "male values" he lists—and/or others like them—reflects masculine influence on culture (here the idealised cultures summarised in biblical literature) in a more general way than as explicit virtues. Alternatively, the linguistic anthropological hypothesis could be that some fixations in language constrain culture in such a way as they perpetuate masculinity as defined by those fixations (here the potential for uncritical interpretation of biblical literature to proselytise either for generically traditional or for specifically ancient near eastern masculinity).

Clines seems to be fairly reasonably construed as being concerned with these linguistic

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their assigned roles." Deborah L. Best, "Gender Stereotypes", in Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember (eds.), *Encyclopedia of sex and gender: Men and women in the world's cultures*, Volume 1 (New York: Springer, 2003), 27 [quoted in Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Replacing misandry: A revolutionary history of men* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), ix–x].

relativist questions, as to whether "Masclish" or "Givrit" (the masculine language exemplified in the Bible) presupposes unhealthy preoccupations and transmits those through communities that organise themselves according to biblical patterns of thought, "Masclish" or "Givrit" patterns of thought. In regards to these more modest versions of his thesis, as I have said, I am actually in agreement with Clines; though because I believe cultures and the Bible construe masculinity differently to him, in terms of virtues,[4] I do not find the Bible to be scandalous in its use of such masculine language.

Although linguistic relativism is a controversial position, there is enough empirical evidence of at least weak effects that it seems fair to acknowledge both possibilities sketched in the previous paragraphs. Additionally, the Bible is actually explicit in exhorting certain masculine virtues; so, whether there are subliminal messages to be deciphered, there are certainly overt prescriptions regarding masculinity that are also worthy, or even more worthy, of our attention in contemplating a "biblical theology of gender."

Lest it be thought a bit grandiose to consider gendering in biblical language to be a theological matter, one only needs the examples Clines offers of descriptions of Yahweh, Jesus and Holy Spirit as masculine, with their masculinity having clear continuity with masculinity in general, to see that the matters discussed are certainly of theological import. Masculinity is ascribed to biblical personae to whom divinity is also ascribed. The triune God of the Bible is "scandalously" masculine in all three persons. Well may we ask, "In the Bible, is the divine scandalously masculinised, or—even more scandalously—the masculine divinised?"

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4 What I have in mind by this is summarised by Roy Baumeister. ""Manhood must be earned. Every adult female human being is a woman, but not every adult male is a man. … A man is not entitled to respect until and unless he does something to gain it. This is a terrifically useful system for enabling culture to get the most out of its men." Roy F. Baumeister, *Is There Anything Good About Men?: How Cultures Flourish by Exploiting Men* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 188.

1. Strength

A distinction needs to be made regarding the "male value" of strength between brute strength and strength applied to a higher purpose. When training with weights in a gym, depending on one's purpose, one can use high weights with low repetitions to build bulk, or one can use low weights with high repetitions to build strength. The purpose of building bulk is to look "cut," but what is the purpose of building strength? Well, there are many possible uses, employment or hobby related, or just a general desire to be "empowered" to be physically capable in a range of everyday settings. Biologically, men have significant strength advantages relative to women (and children). So what? Strength is not an end in itself (as Clines himself observes),[5] but a means to many ends. "So what?" is a good question. How do men, and cultures training men, shape masculine ethos by directing male strength towards higher purposes?

Clines quotes selectively from Isaiah 40 to make a point. He certainly captures the masculine feel of Yahweh's brute strength by drawing attention to words like "mighty" (קזח), "arm" (עורז), "greatness" (בר), "might" (וא), "strong" (ימא) and "power" (חכ).[6] But, without drawing much attention to it, he also reveals the higher purpose for which Yahweh's strength is applied: to "empower" the weak. Because Yahweh is powerful, he is able—if he is willing—to empower those who need power (for good, higher purposes). Yahweh has strength and power, but gives (without losing): "power" (חכ), "might" (וא), "strength" (המצע) and "strength" (חכ).[7] Strength here is something that can be shared without losing it. Brute strength is nuanced by being useful in the service of a higher purpose.

That is not always how we view zero-sum political power games. Indeed, Clines speaks

5 Clines, "Scandal", 3.

6 Clines, "Scandal", 2.

7 Clines, "Scandal", 2.

of "God's surplus strength" (emphasis added),[8] as though it were in danger of running out, like a limited resource, a zero-sum exchange between God and man. Yet the feel of Isaiah 40, though it is my subjective reading, swayed by common intuition about God as infinitely omnipotent, seems to be one of suggesting that Yahweh's strength is not like human strength: it is inexhaustible, so those who are subject to becoming exhausted can turn to him when they become so. Clines is right in so far as saying: "The text assumes that weakness is bad". Weakness is bad, not in itself, but because it is a lack of strength; and not strength in itself either, but strength with a purpose. The purpose is not mentioned, because it is like a blank in the logic. A generic picture is being painted. There are many good purposes (fill in the blank) we may set our strength to achieving and yet grow weary. Instead of speaking of specific purposes, then, the text speaks only of generic strength in the abstract, the means of working towards higher purposes, whatsoever those may be.

So how does biblical culture view the purpose of masculine strength? How is it constrained? How do other traditional societies nurture the masculine culture of self-disciplining natural, biological, physical strength?

In answer to the first question, it is sufficient to simply look at Isaiah 40:11 unquoted, following verse 10 quoted by Clines. A general answer that many would give to the question is that masculine strength is viewed by the Bible as a means to serving weaker men, women and children. This seems likely, though I will not argue for it here. It is certainly part of western (and other) traditions that priority is given to the needs of "women and children first," at the very least in times of crisis. Isaiah 40 seems to fit this gendered typology. Jerusalem, representative of the potentially repentant people of God, is portrayed as feminine to Yahweh's masculine (40:1ff). Some problems arise if the metaphor is pushed too far, but by verse 11, the metaphor has changed to strong shepherd with weak sheep. To what higher purposes is strength used by the shepherd? We have a picture of protective service (NASB): "tend" (הער), "gather" (יקבץ), "carry" (אשנ) and "gently lead" (להנ).

8 Clines, "Scandal", 3.

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,
In His arm He will gather the lambs
And carry them in His bosom;
He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

Physical strength is a kind of potency. It has the potential to be used for good or for ill. It is arguably a category mistake to consider it a candidate to be listed as a virtue, unless its use for good is already assumed, which rather begs the question of whether it is a virtue. Nonetheless, it is true that the Tagalog creation myth, for example, of the first man Malakas ("Strong") and first woman Maganda ("Beautiful"), resonates with other cultures and intuition that strength is valued in men, by both men and women, as beauty is valued in women, by both men and women. If these are not virtues, which is what I am looking for, they are still values, which is all Clines was claiming to observe. But, according to evolutionary psychology, both are actually valued because they are proxies for something more fundamental: they are cues for recognising reproductive fitness.

Evolutionary psychology is not as controversial as linguistic relativism, but it is controversial, so the reader can accept or reject it as an explanation for widespread valuing of strength and beauty, and will find allies among scholars either way. If there is explanatory power in the hypothesis of reproductive fitness, though, although we do not have a virtue in physical strength, we do find it is valued for what it is useful for: protecting and providing for what is procreated, traditional (and culturally universal) masculine roles indeed. Likewise, physical beauty is not so much valuable in itself, but as a cue to health and fertility (though that is not a concern in this essay).

2. Violence and Killing

Violence and killing are not unproblematically received as masculine virtues with any cultural uniformity. While head-hunting and other cultural practices, like more widespread blood feuding,

that have ascribed virtue to violence and killing have certainly existed in various places and times, these are far from being universal (nor do they reflect a stage that "primitive" societies pass through). Some societies well known for their peacefulness include: the Semai of Malaysia, the Sirionó of Eastern Bolivia, the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, the Mbuti Pygmies of equatorial Africa, the Copper Inuit of Northern Canada, the Hutterites of North America, and the Islanders of Tristan da Cunha in the South Pacific. Douglas Fry, in a non-exhaustive search of the standard cross-cultural sample (SCCS) of 186 societies, found seventy that were non-warring.[9]

At a higher level than societies, the global religion of Buddhism and the Indian religion of Jainism uphold an explicit principle of ahimsa ("non-violence"). Even in a religion that institutionalises a warrior caste, in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna has to provide Arjuna—the archetypical kshatriya warrior—with a theological justification for taking life before the bloodthirsty battle of the Mahabharata can commence. Arjuna asserts (BG 1:34-35, CSL):

> Though they would kill me, [O Krishna],
> I wouldn't want to kill them
> even for the sovereignty of the triple-world;
> how much less, then, for the sake of the earth!

Towards the end of his long reply, Krishna implies that warfare is Arjuna's duty (BG 18:45-47, CSL).

> A man who attends to his own allotted activity attains success; listen as I tell you how.
> A man wins success when by doing his proper task
> he reveres the one from whom all beings came forth
> and through whom all this endures.
> Doing one's own duty imperfectly is better than doing another's well.

9 Douglas P. Fry, *Beyond war: The human potential for peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.

Clines claims "the chief purpose of being strong, and especially of being stronger than other men, is to be able to overcome them, and, if need be, kill them."[10] Although it may not be obvious, this is actually unlikely as an evolutionary claim, given various lines of evidence, as well as unlikely as a cultural claim, given the ethnographic evidence. The "chief purpose" of male strength in evolutionary time has probably not been warfare, but the securing of protein via hunting game. Homo sapiens seems to have tended to hunt to extinction the largest mammals available as sources of food. The strength of the male body is widely held to reflect countless generations of men serving their communities as hunters, killers of other species, not their own.

Unlike tournament species, the success of H. sapiens has not depended on the ability of its males to kill one another. The relatively low level of physical sexual dimorphism between the sexes is evidence towards this conclusion. By contrast with physical sexual dimorphism, it is possible that psychological dimorphism has evolved to support sexual division of labour, not violence and killing directed at fellow men, but directed towards animals as food supply, and defence against predators. Whether or not masculinity is a construction of culture, warfare seems to some scholars to be such, overlaid on biological capacities, but not arising from them by necessity.[11] However, it must be conceded that some elements of this account are still controversial among anthropologists and evolutionary psychologists.

So, perhaps Clines has too dim a view of masculinity, but what of biblical treatment of violence, killing and warfare? Here I think Clines is potentially helpful, being as sharp and confronting about the reality of violence in the Bible as he is in drawing attention to the similarly uncomfortable fact of the ubiquity of its masculine language that is his overall aim. I think it does need to be conceded that the Bible is not a pacifistic corpus of writings. I think it is also fair to suggest that where the Bible reports or condones violence, that it views it as being associated

10 Clines, "Scandal", 3.

11 Douglas P. Fry (ed.), *War, peace, and human nature: The convergence of evolutionary and cultural views* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

with men. When violence is required (according to the Bible), it is men the Bible expects to take responsibility for it. But the Bible does not condone all violence. Clines conflates biblical reports of violence, like that of Moses killing the Egyptian, which it does not unambiguously condone, with some—admittedly shocking—cases of the Bible genuinely condoning killing, like that of the Levites killing other Israelites.

Clines seems to be relying on his audience being pacifistic and against all violence, though this is very much a minority position. Just war theory has always seen a place for defensive warfare. It may be enlightened to incarcerate murderers, but the moral logic of the death penalty for murder is not hopelessly objectionable. In some ways, the death penalty for murder is analogous to defensive warfare. Death for apostasy, however, seems to be theological rationalisation for bloodthirsty tribalistic machismo in Clines' perception. But I would argue the theology is not a rationalisation, but the very message of the Bible itself, and potentially morally analogous to defensive warfare yet again. In the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh, both the Creator and covenant Lord of Israel, defends himself against rebels who would murder his integrity by false worship. In the New Testament, Jesus transforms this same message into eschatological terms: repent for the kingdom of God has arrived; that is, turn from rebellion now, or God will kill you eventually.

If there is no Creator, or he does not deal with mankind this way, then the Bible is hopelessly immoral, whether it is masculine in its tone or not. But if, for the sake of argument, there is a Creator, and he does offer quarter to rebels should they surrender, then this accords with modern moral intuition that ethical conduct of warfare includes the explicit requirement for provision to take prisoners. And it is men that constructed the "honours of war" to treat defeated enemies with respect. Men's behaviour in war has included many barbaric atrocities, but also many spectacular examples of gallantry and generosity.

3. Size

The word "big" is the 13th item on the final Swadesh list of 1971, a list of 100 concepts so common and universal across languages that they are useful for examining the slow evolution of sound changes in specific words. The word "big" still appears on the Leipzig-Jakarta list of 2009, also 100 items long. Hence, it is somewhat difficult to see the word itself as being evidence of masculine influence on language. In many cases, "big" will have a purely functional usage in natural language, referring literally to a pertinent property of many classes of things. So, one has to examine usage carefully to find instances where "male values" might be driving a speaker's or writer's interest in drawing attention to relative size in a "bigger is better" sense rather than a merely prosaic, descriptive sense.

Clines notes that Yahweh is described as being both big (לודג) and high (מור). The question is, are these reflections of a putative male megalomaniacal obsession, or are they natural metaphors for a transcendent deity? Although Clines does not mention it, Yahweh is also described as being weighty (דבכ) and eternal (מלוע). Taken together, all these words are suited to scalar quantification of basic features of the world: space, matter and time. One might as well find evidence of a positive masculine obsession with engineering, systematising the natural world, as with any dark side of masculine megalomania. Yahweh is philosophically infinity in the biblical imagery as much as he is socially a superhero.

4. Honour

With honour, we are certainly dealing with a perceived virtue, or rather it may be that it is the public recognition that a man possesses virtues, that constitutes a good deal of what is denoted by the term in various cultures. Clines actually makes concessions regarding it. "Since honour is granted by the group, a person achieves honour only by embodying the ideals of the group. And if those ideals include integrity, altruism and wisdom, we could only disparage the quest for honour if we dissented from those ideals ourselves."[12] What is most important to Clines in his critique of

12 Clines, "Scandal", 14.

biblical masculinity is that honour is "quintessentially male", i.e. that it is a status that excludes women. Although I think he does a good job of showing how honour in the Bible is attached to men, I think the proposition that it is not attached to women is too much of an argument from silence. The Bible may also be criticised for its main protagonists being almost uniformly male, as well as its general principles often being articulated in ways that assume a male representative. There just is not enough data to decide whether honour could, in the right relational contexts, attach to women in ways analogous to the ways it attaches to men. Although Clines considers it the exception that proves the rule, honouring mother as well as father in the ten commandments seems to me to be just the right sort of evidence that mature women were indeed considered honourable. Every man in Israel had a mother to respect. In the New Testament, all older women are to be treated as mothers (1 Tim 5:2).

There is an interesting recent article by Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, "Microaggression and moral cultures",[13] which has been popularised by Jonathan Haidt.[14] In it they argue that western society is currently moving towards being a morally dependent "victimhood culture," where "victims" seek redress for slights via moral authorities who settle matters on their behalf. This is contrasted with traditional "honour cultures" and modern "dignity cultures." Victimhood culture is a hybrid of traditional honour culture, where people defended themselves against slights, and modern dignity culture, where third parties uphold legally codified individual rights. Victimhood culture returns to being concerned about being slighted, but retains the place of third parties in settling matters. Analogously, it is perhaps interesting to observe that, in western tradition at least, there was a time when gentlemen would defend a woman's honour, without

13 Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, "Microaggression and moral cultures", *Comparative Sociology* 13 (2014): 692–726.

14 Haidt is particularly well known for his classification of six moral categories, like six senses, that appear to be typical of human moral concerns cross-culturally. This was popularised in Jonathan Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2013).

expecting her to do so herself. I am not entirely sure how to integrate that tradition into any cross-cultural patterns, nor how to elaborate on how even the influence of the Bible may have played a part in it developing, but I suspect both might be possible.

Finally, though, one needs to note Elizabeth's assertion regarding Mary, the mother of Jesus, that she had been "blessed" (εὐλογημένη, literally "eulogised") beyond (other) women, the same word (but with a masculine inflection for the passive participle) being used for Jesus himself, even in the womb. Liddel, Scott and Jones actually provide the gloss "honour" in one example of the usage of εὐλογέω, though the dominant sense they make of the word from historical examples is that of praise, the articulation of honouring. Lexicographers and translators are in general agreement, however, that the sense in the context of Mary is that of having received a demonstrable sign of divine approval, i.e. she had been blessed. Logically, other women had also received blessings, though inferior ones, for Mary to be spoken of as having been blessed beyond them. Perhaps the sense is that women are respected as child bearers, but Mary is the child bearer of all child bearers. Surely this includes honour, even if implied by another name. In the following verses the Greek gives way to a more exclusive and technical term for divine blessing (μακαρία). These three uses add to the semantic evidence for the argument I am making, even if the latter terminology is not open to being glossed as honour as is εὐλογέω. It is all the more important to bear this eulogising of Mary in mind, since Clines actually chooses the Magnificat for his deconstruction of biblical language.

5. Holiness

I disagree with Clines about the Bible not admitting women to the category of holiness. All God's people are holy in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. It is easier to see in the New Testament (which Clines does not address), because the cultic apparatus of the Hebrew Bible is subsumed within a more simple conceptual system. The New Testament believers are often traditionally called "saints," literally "holy ones," the sanctified (ἅγιοι), etymologically those

different from what is common by being identified with God and his character.

That the substantive use of the plural adjective defaults to masculine inflections in the original language, does not imply that only men are referred to. Feminine inflections would indeed imply only women, but when men and women are referred to in an epicene way, the masculine inflections were used, just as they would be were only men referred to. It is not possible, without context, to tell from masculine inflections alone whether referents are male or epicene. Context does suggest that nearly all uses of "holy ones" in the New Testament are epicene.

Paul addresses his letter to the Roman Christians to those called to be "holy ones" (1:7), and he explicitly includes women in his list of personal greetings at its conclusion. He is also explicit about there being no male or female when it comes to Christian unity (Gal 3:28), both are heirs (29), "clothed with" Christ in baptism (27), a ritual of purification, and a way of signifying that things are to be treated as holy. "Anointing" with the Holy Spirit could also be advanced as a systematic theological category for understanding each and every believer, irrespective of sex, as being holy.

But stronger evidence that women are viewed as holy in the New Testament comes from Ephesians 5:25–27, where a husband is to give himself up (ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν) for his wife, in order that he might make her holy, cleansing her (ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας), just as Christ acted so the church would be holy (ἵνα … τὴν ἐκκλησίαν … ᾖ ἁγία). At least every married woman is to be holy in the New Testament. Even if this suggests holiness begins with husbands (and it need not do so), holiness does not end there. Holiness is not in short supply in the New Testament; it flows outwards, purifying the common, rather than the common defiling the holy as in the Hebrew Bible. Believing wives can make their unbelieving husbands holy (ἡγίασται γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ ἄπιστος ἐν τῇ γυναικί, 1 Cor 7:14). The children (τὰ τέκνα) of a believer and unbeliever are not unclean (ἀκάθαρτά) but holy (ἅγιά). I think this is the strongest evidence that all believing women are holy in the New Testament.

So much for the New Testament, but Clines argues from the Hebrew Bible. Is there a difference in gender theology between the two? I think perhaps there is. Clines points straight at

the cultic apparatus, especially the all-male priesthood, to establish his point that holiness (שדק) in the Hebrew Bible is loaded towards the masculine gender. I think this may be a fair impression of the holiness system, that tiers of holiness extended upwards towards the Holy One, Yahweh himself, and masculinity is caught up in this movement from Levite to priest to high priest, from the holy temple to the holy of holies to Yahweh himself. In my opinion, Clines has a genuine insight about a feature of the holiness system that is scandalous to modern egalitarian sentiments, and not much elaborated upon by scholars; but is it objectively scandalous that the burden of making formal sacrifices according to the cultic apparatus of the Hebrew Bible fell exclusively on men, even those of only one tribe?

I will leave that to the reader to decide, though I need to disagree with at least one part of Clines' reading of holiness in the Hebrew Bible. It is too technical to argue in detail here, and perhaps instinctive reading is more accurate than technicalities in interpreting the sense of "holy nation" (שודק יוגו) in Exodus 19:6, so I will just assert that I actually find it hard to see how the collectivity of Israelites being considered holy is possible without each individual also being considered holy in so far as they remain within the legal code of the nation. What else is a nation but its people under the constitution that governs them? Indeed, I would argue that this conception of the responsibility of individuals to remain holy by remaining within the lawful bounds of the holy nation is very much part of prophetic calls to individual repentance; and the conception also provides the basis for understanding the import of punishments of exile, not just from the land and proximity to the temple, but from the people of God, living according to his law.

What of cultures outside the Bible? A cross-cultural paradox is that women are more religious than men, but that men traditionally lead religious organisations. Within religions, then, men may be viewed as more holy than women, but viewed from without, women appear to be more holy than men. In societies outside those permeated by biblical categories of thought, holiness is a virtue associated with some men, but also with women. There may be a tendency for the common man to feel excluded from or redundant within religious contexts dominated by other men.

Whether or not women are considered holy in religious contexts, there may be a secular

sense in which women are viewed as inviolably holy in their own right when it comes to the sexual nature of their bodies.[15] The Indian Penal Code (IPC, 1860, still in force), makes it a crime to "outrage" the "modesty" of a woman (section 354). This is reminiscent of biblical language of violation of the holiness of God. It is as if Indian law expects men to treat women as holy in a similar way to the Bible exhorting people to treat God as holy, at least in regards to sexual matters, like those listed in the holiness code of Leviticus. Yahweh's eyes are too pure to look on evil (Hab 1:13).

Interestingly, the IPC has no law against women outraging the modesty, honour or holiness of men. Also, according to the IPC, a man is guilty of rape if he reneges on a promise of marriage he made prior to consensual intercourse (sections 90 and 375), but a woman is not. Likewise, adultery by men is a crime against women (section 497), but adultery by women against men is not criminalised under the IPC. The IPC is probably more a reflection of Victorian British values than local perceptions of sexual propriety, but the fact that it has endured may suggest some harmony between the two, albeit India is very culturally diverse.

There is a great deal of literature on how cultures view sexuality, and how double standards regarding the purity of women may actually work to women's disadvantage. It is beyond the scope of this essay to address those issues in any detail, but it is worth introducing the IPC as evidence that the issues are indeed complex, not necessarily all being to the disadvantage of women. What is most pertinent in the current context is that the Bible expects sexual purity of both men and women; it is more even-handed than what is evidenced in many of the diverse practices of human cultures.

6. Womanlessness

15 "Even atheists have intimations of sacredness, particularly when in love or in nature." Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 193. Haidt claims this insight based on his reading of Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959).

In regards to womanlessness, there are three key responses to Clines I want to make from biblical literature. The Hebrew Bible starts with an explanation for the creation of woman that, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (וּדבל מדאה תויה בוט אל , Gen 2:18). The Hebrew Bible also includes the Song of Songs, which appears to celebrate the union of man and woman. The New Testament, however, does seem to stand in contrast to the Hebrew Bible, but because Jesus and Paul take an eschatological perspective on marriage. Although it is better to be single, because the kingdom of God has arrived and changes priorities, the majority will still find marriage necessary to maintain sexual purity. Singleness is not simply recommended for men, but Paul recommends it for women as well. It is, of course, the flip-side of the "two to tango" principle. For every single man there will be a single woman, and vice versa. So I think Clines misrepresents Jesus and Paul as bachelors under a purported Hebrew Bible ideal, when in fact their singleness is much better explained according to New Testament systematic theology. Their singleness is prompted by perceptions of future ideals not ideals from the past.

That Yahweh has no female consort is an issue of a different order. A fideistic response to this is simply that Yahweh is given no consort by the Bible because that is just the way supernatural reality happens to be. It is hardly exclusive of women either, since Yahweh is not a man but God, and were he to have a female consort, she would not be a woman but a goddess. Across cultures, supreme gods are more often male than female, though pairings of gods and goddesses suitable to explaining the fertility of the world are also common. The advantage of the philosophical parsimony of monotheism need not come at the expense of the one God being masculine (or feminine). In Islam and deism, God has neither sex nor gender. What is Clines' protest regarding the Yahweh of the Bible? Would he rather a sexually neutral or androgynous deity? He does not say, but his concern seems to assume that the only kind of significance humans can have is in terms of power, because he is concerned that women were excluded from that aspect of public life in ancient Israel.[16] He does not explore the fact that most men were also excluded from the Israelite

16 Clines, "Scandal", 10.

priesthood (and by birth, not merit), and even more so from the monarchy (also properly expected in the Hebrew Bible to descend by birth, not merit).

I think Clines holds the strongest ground where he actually appears to be weakest: with King David. Here Clines makes, in my opinion, telling challenges about the apparent failure of the men of the Bible to make much of the female companions God provides them with. David was not single, but he often lived as though he was. I am not convinced, however, that the Bible is unambiguously supportive of all David's patterns of relating to women. He is obviously condemned in regards to Bathsheba. But that is not the only example of the Bible treating his complex character critically. Although it may be fair to suggest the Bible, especially the Hebrew corpus, fails to feature female characters as significant partners with the main male protagonists, I do not think it is fair to suggest that this amounts to a normative ideal of womanlessness. That David's men did not resort to using female "camp followers" when in the field is hardly to their discredit.

Across cultures, although the men of most societies will do war and politics without women, the regular, everyday measure of masculinity is often marriage and establishing a family. Womanlessness is not, therefore, a typical masculine virtue except in very specific contexts, in fact the opposite obtains: a lad does not become a man until he settles down with a woman.

7. Totality Thinking

In turning to "cognitive virtues" (or values as Clines would have it), I believe Clines is clear and precise about what specific qualities of thought he is considering as candidates for typicality in masculine thinking, though he expresses caution in regards to whether they are indeed more characteristic of men rather than women.

As providence would have it, Simon Baron-Cohen's brain research (inter alios) does actually show promise of confirming statistical average differences between the predisposition of male

and female brains towards systematising or empathising functions respectively.[17] I have chosen my words carefully there. The research does not suggest men cannot empathise, nor women systematise, nor that all women empathise better than all men. Indeed, Clines himself presumably does not intend an absolutism in stereotyping men as totality and binary thinkers either. But as a hypothesis, that men may tend towards totalising or oppositional patterns of thought is a proposition with some substantial empirical support from independent but related brain research projects. Admittedly, this research suggests biological explanations for broad tendencies, but it does not preclude cultural reinforcement (or counteraction). Within culture, there may be a net teaching by women of men towards better empathising, and vice versa regarding systematising, if men are culturally willing to share the "power" of systematising cognitive strategies. "More women in tech" is a major contemporary political "conversation," but it begs the question in favour of the utility (or objective value), if not virtue, of systematising thought, like totality and binary thinking.

The way Clines describes what he means by "totality thinking" reminds me of the ancient and medieval philosophical problem of "universals." He describes the essence of universal thinking vividly and with economy. But I think what he actually has in mind is a deeper psychological concern: that to try to grasp universals with the mind reflects a deeply rooted desire to master the world beyond the self and its intimate concerns. Indeed, science is based on establishing theories with universal applicability, hence allowing reliable prediction and control of the material environment. Perhaps Clines is a bit of a Romantic, cautious about the social costs that attend the advance of technology, partly because technology only magnifies the outcomes of our motives, it does not purify them. If I am right about Clines being in the Romantic tradition, I actually share his reticence about some totality thinking up to a point; and I do believe that amoral machismo, if not virtuous masculinity, is a real concern. Do we want more women managing nuclear weapon technicians? If more women managed technicians, would they stop manufacturing bombs? It has not been tried before. We could always give it a try and see what happens.

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17 See Simon Baron-Cohen, *The essential difference: Men, women and the extreme male brain* (London: Penguin, 2003).

There are two important theological comments that should be made in response to Clines in regards to totality thinking. Firstly, and simply, the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 is explicit in inviting men and women to a totality of dominion over the world. Genesis 2 is suggestive of the man rather than the woman leading this enterprise, or rather than both taking turns or leading interchangeably. Yes, this is scandalous in our currently gender egalitarian western civilisation, but—as insightful as Clines' overview of masculine totality thinking in the Bible is—what he really shows is only the consistency implicit in biblical expression with the explicit cultural mandate on page one.

The second theological point is a softer one to make. The philosophers who attempted to resolve conundrums related to universals often tried to do so by appeal to an eternal, omnipresent deity. Natural theology, analogously to Plato's theory of forms, sees the nature of creation as projected by the Creator who stands behind it: man is in the image of God. This is the opposite of the implication by Clines that God is in the image of man, indeed male humans rather than female ones. Yes, perhaps the men that wrote the Bible could not help projecting themselves into the divinity they were creating. But perhaps also, there may indeed be a God, who is known in part by natural theology through his creation, and even through the words of men he inspired with special insight.

Finally, for consistency, I should note that the word "all," like the word "big," is featured on the Swadesh list. Clines gives good examples of its biblical use signalling "totality thinking," but the word itself is so basic and essential across languages that it makes the "top 100 list." In general, it does not just indicate masculine thinking, then, but human thinking: "And I thought you were different to all the other guys!"

8. Binary Thinking

Clines has somewhat of a dim view of binary thinking influenced by Derrida's critique of oppositions conceptuelles in De la Grammatologie.[18] To simplify the problem, as Clines himself puts it, "binary thinking may well be inevitable, but in binary pairs there is always one privileged term".[19] Whether such thinking is "natural" or an arbitrary construction of culture is not always important, though critics of binary thinking tend to view it as cultural. This does not matter much with oppositions like day and night, dry and wet, warm and cool and so on, but has the potential for profound social consequences if applied to people, like male and female, fair and dark, straight and gay for example. Some consider the opposition of presence and absence to lead to a bias in favour of presence in metaphysical thinking, though this is not actually the case in formal logic. And thereby hangs a long tale of a clash in thinking between the two traditions of so-called continental (European) and analytic (U.K. and U.S.) philosophy, with Derrida being a classic example of the continental tradition and Searle, who has challenged the validity of Derrida's thought, being a classic example of the analytic tradition.[20]

Suffice it to say, in the current context, however, that Clines is right in my opinion to follow deconstructionism in so far as it leads to identifying genuine false dichotomies, which are common in human thought and language, especially when it is simplified to aphorisms. However, it is also the case that there are many genuine oppositions in the material world, even if such simplifications are regularly questionable in the social realm. We may again have an example of male-brain systematising, ironically, in opposition to female-brain empathising. Clines may indeed

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18 I infer this from the way Clines describes binary thinking on page 14 of the transcript of his lecture, but also from his work cited in footnote 15 on page 13: Clines, David J. A. "Ethics as deconstruction, and, the ethics of deconstruction", in *Ethics: The second Sheffield colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson et al. JSOTSup 207 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 77–106.

19 Clines, "Scandal", 14.

20 See John R. Searle, *The construction of social reality* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), 159–60.

be finding evidence of masculine language reflecting masculine thinking in the Bible, but it is no more scandalous than the brute physical reality of sexual dimorphism of the human brain is in itself. We might as well take umbrage at the fact that men do not gestate.

If we permit Jesus some latitude to use conceptual oppositions for rhetorical purposes, so long as he does not create socially unhelpful false dichotomies in so doing, Clines' remaining objection to binary thinking in the Bible comes from the Psalms' regular division of people into the class of enemies or, presumably, non-enemies: as Clines puts it, "us" versus "them." But this is not actually binary thinking imposed on reality any more than the first couple being naked in the Garden of Eden sets up an opposition with the usual human tradition of wearing clothing. To assert anything is to deny its opposite. Of course a psalmist is not going to be his own enemy, but the psalms do not assume that all parties other than the psalmist are enemies. In particular, it is often the concern of the psalms that Yahweh is "on the side of" the psalmist against his enemies. This is at least tripartite: conflict comes first, dividing human parties into two camps, and Yahweh is the ultimate "third party" who settles such disputes according to justice.

Clines may be right that conflict (and resolving it) is something of an obsession with men, whereas women may more typically seek to minimise or avoid it. I can see pros and cons to both approaches depending on the specific circumstances of a conflict or perceived conflict. So I am not persuaded that confronting conflict lacks virtue, whether it is typical of men or not, just as I would not deny that avoiding conflict is the path of wisdom in many settings also, whether that is typical of women or not. I actually think Clines may be in line with psychological studies in identifying a gender difference here, but I do not think it is scandalous, nor is the Bible, with its many explicit teachings about resolving conflicts without violent confrontation, even for men.

9. Fatherhood and Sonship – Patriarchy

Clines does not offer a ninth example of a "male value." He did not claim his list was exhaustive, but I offer what I think is a glaring and telling omission. The earliest established universals of human culture established by anthropology were marriage and family, which produce fathers and sons. Whatever masculinity may be in human institutions, biologically prompted or culturally constructed or both, fatherhood and sonship are foundational to it, even more so than brotherhood; for a man can have no brothers, but is always a son to his father. This relationship can be so important that the very structuring of society depends on patrilineal descent groups, for economic and military purposes, and for inheritance. In fact, social structure in the less common matrilineal systems also involves male heads of families, though these may be the mother's brother rather than the biological father, a significant modification of fatherhood, if not of masculinity being associated with family headship, viz. patriarchy.

So much for where anthropology might first direct us to find cultural expressions of masculinity; but what of the Bible? Does the Bible have themes of fatherhood and sonship and language associated with them, like inheritance? Do these have any theological import? Of course my questions are rhetorical. The New Testament is drenched in such language, but especially in John's gospel and Jesus' claims regarding his relationship with God. Additionally, there are "house tables" outlining the responsibilities of household members (including any dependent slaves). Finally, in several places (e.g. Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 4:17), believers are seen to be members of the household (οἶκος) of God. Where the Israel of the Hebrew Bible was a literal family, the New Testament repeatedly encourages believers to view themselves theologically as a spiritual family. It is a conception of intimacy and benevolence within, it is true, a hierarchical ordering. If there is scandal in the biblical condoning of patriarchy, it is only the scandal our contemporary western societies find with all other societies, so it is not unique to the Bible in any way. In fact, the explicit and well developed themes of family intimacy and benevolence really ought to be weighed as significantly mitigating in assessing what patriarchy actually means in the Bible (and perhaps in other cultures too).

Final Comments and Conclusion

The Bible is a book written by men, for men; but is it written so as to exclude women? I think not. Women are addressed as a group in relevant places in New Testament letters, and Paul addresses some individual women by name, several clearly being active and influential members of the community; but even more importantly, the term "brothers" (ἀδελφοί), used frequently, is an epicene term in the Greek plural, albeit with a likely connotation of male representative exemplification.

The Bible enshrines masculine virtues, promotes and inculcates them; but it also enshrines, promotes and inculcates human virtues, like faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13). It portrays a deity infused with masculine virtues, but not—in my opinion—in such a way as to esteem men above women as Clines claims. It is not beneath Yahweh to comfort like a mother (Isa 66:13).

From my perspective, if there is scandal in that the Bible's masculinity is hardly ever noticed or mentioned, this is scandalous because quality literature encouraging specifically masculine virtues is hard to come by in our egalitarian world, and so all the more valuable. Where the Bible genuinely promotes distinctively masculine virtues, these are not scandalous; and nor is masculinity itself typically scandalous in the minor variations on a theme that have existed across cultures throughout history. If I am wrong in my perceptions, I think it will be on grounds other than those raised by Clines in his lecture.

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