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A HANDBOOK FOR GODLY MASCULINITY

# GOOD

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# TO BE

& DOMINIC BNONN TENNANT

# A MAN



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# Introduction

ENTERING THE WORLD OF MEN IS SUPPOSED TO be a process that slowly unfolds with the help of others. Through the oversight of a father, and the encouragement of male peers, a boy—over years—builds the confidence and mastery of manhood. But that has all been burned down. Households are broken. Fathers are absent—often not by their own choice. Male spaces for mutual encouragement are disallowed or opened to girls. Burgeoning manly desires are subdued or redirected by Adderall, video games, and pornography. Feminism reigns in the Church and the broader culture. Little boys grow up thinking there is something wrong with being masculine. Christian men are told the same thing.

Inevitably, many of us, even in adulthood, are lagging far behind where we naturally ought to be. The process of attaining manhood has been sabotaged.

This book is our contribution to the work of repair. In writing it, we did not want to create a timeless work but a timely one: our goal is to help modern Christian men understand what God made them for, and how to start doing it intentionally. We want to help *you* play your part in rebuilding what has been razed.

This is not a book about getting a girl. It is not a book about being a husband. It is not a book about being a father. It is a book about being a man. All of those other things are important to manhood, but if you don't understand what men are made for, and how God intends you to become great at being a man, none of them will matter.

God made men for dominion. That means he made you for dominion. We want you to understand what that means, and how to start taking your place, in faith, serving and fighting for God's kingdom. The world wants you distracted by grand ideas for top-down change. But God accomplishes His will mostly through works that have small, pitiful-seeming, ineffectual-looking beginnings. Consider how laughable Peter, James, and John—uneducated peasants—must have looked to the assembled cultural powers of first-century Israel

and Rome. Then consider Gamaliel's wise insight about them:

Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.  
(Acts 5:35–39)

The walls and gates of society are built by the men who fight with God. Let us get started with that work.





# 1 The War between Patriarchies

PATRIARCHY IS INEVITABLE. GOD HAS BUILT IT into the fabric of the cosmos. It is part of the divine created order. You could as soon smash it as you could smash gravity. It is natural and irrevocable. Cicero was right: “Custom will never conquer nature; for it is always invincible.”<sup>1</sup>

Men were made to rule. They always have and always will. Nothing can change that. Nothing will. It is not a question of *whether* men will be ruling, but *which* ones and *how*.

This is what patriarchy is: the natural rulership of men. The term comes from Greek and means simply “father rule.”

1. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 5.78.

History begins with a man, Adam, commissioned to be fruitful and to multiply and to rule over the earth in God's stead. That man failed to uphold the name of his Father. *How* he ruled quickly turned bad. But *that* he ruled could not be changed. By nature, fathers rule, and he was the father of the human race. This had dire consequences for all those under his fatherhood. The Westminster Shorter Catechism explains, "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."<sup>2</sup>

Though the woman ate the forbidden fruit before the man, we did not fall in Mother Eve. We fell in Father Adam.

The failure of the first patriarch plunged mankind into sin and misery.

But God, being rich in mercy, made a promise of redemption—a promise handed down through the fathers of His people just as the curse was. He Himself told Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:6). Consequently, Scripture traces the "promises given to the fathers" until their fulfillment in the finished work of Jesus

# 2 Masculinity Is Very Good

**GENESIS CONTAINS THE BLUEPRINT FOR RECOVERING manhood.**

It contains the key to explaining our present cultural moment. It contains the information you need to understand women. It contains the clues necessary to interpret God's direction for your life. It contains the landmarks you need to find your way to mature manhood.

Everything is in Genesis.

To explain this, we must first ask a question.

Why did God make man?

We have found that most Christians today have no answer to this question. They may well have

asked why God made *them*, but they have seldom considered this question in light of God's purpose for mankind as a whole. If pushed, they may gesture vaguely toward love as God's motive. If they are better taught, they will say for His own glory. But if you press them further, they will either run out of steam or run into error.

Part of the reason for this is that most Christians today spend very little time in Genesis. When they are not actively embarrassed by it, they are indifferent to it. Their time is spent in the New Testament. After all, isn't that God's final revelation?

Yes—but Genesis is the seed of all Scripture. Everything grows from there, including the New Testament. Without understanding Genesis, you cannot adequately understand the rest of God's word. Nor are you well-equipped to understand His creation. Genesis is the kernel from which everything grows—which is to say that *everything is in Genesis*.

Just as the seeds of Genesis take time to reach fruition in history, so they take time to reach fruition in your heart. Once you have received the implanted word (Jas. 1:21), you must tend and cultivate it before it will grow; before you can discern its full form or taste its fruit.

So why did God make man?

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and

# 3 Sex Is Very Good

THEN THE LORD GOD SAID, "IT IS NOT GOOD for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." . . . So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones,  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man."

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:18, 21–24)

*Sex is the engine of dominion*—what does that mean? It means that the union of male and female in one flesh drives mankind forward in their created purpose of bringing heaven to earth by establishing God's rule.

While it is easy to think of the two halves of the creation mandate as being for Adam and Eve respectively, this is not quite right. Adam *is* best fitted to subduing the world, and Eve is best fitted to filling it. But these duties of dominion fall on them *both*, because the creation mandate is given to mankind collectively. So as the head, the patriarch Adam is responsible for filling just as much as he is for subduing.

Mankind's duties to God therefore require the cooperation of the sexes. This, too, is part of God's design, and nowhere is this more obvious than in man's libido. Just as his aggressive desire to rule and subdue is God-given, so is his powerful desire for sex. Remember, the dominion God made us for is *fruitful*. Sex is the engine that drives this fruitfulness.

This reality has been difficult for the Church to accept throughout the ages. Sex is often seen as dirty in and of itself. There is an earthy animality to it that is embarrassing to heavenly-minded theologians—especially ones saturated in the Greek idea

# 4 The War on Sex

*SATAN HATES SEX. THIS MIGHT SOUND ABSURD*  
to you.

Everything in our culture would have you think otherwise. George Carlin once joked, “The main reason Santa is so jolly is because he knows where all the bad girls live.” In the same vein, Woody Allen quipped, “Is sex dirty? Only when it’s being done right.” The world and its ruler would have us believe that sex is best when it’s dirty, best when it’s with the bad girls. By natural contrast, then, Christians are fastidious prudes, drawing up from our “puritanical” and Victorian roots an embarrassment about sex, and an ethic that teaches us to be naked and ashamed.

On the face of it, the devil is all about sex; the Church not so much.

As we have mentioned, there is some truth to the Church's ambivalence toward sex. But there is actually *no* truth to the devil's love for it. It only seems this way because he is obsessed with sexual *license*. The devil is for fornication, adultery, and every kind of devious sexual immorality. He loves sex like tin-pot dictators love foreign aid. He hijacks something meant for good and twists it for his own purposes. The foreign aid was meant to buy food to feed a starving people; the tin-pot dictator uses it to buy weapons to subjugate them. Sex was meant to knit two people together and fill the world with more servants of Christ; Satan uses it to alienate people and fill the world with more slaves of lust.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul warns married couples not to forgo sex for long, "so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" ( v. 5).

Sex, rightly ordered, is unitive and fruitful.

Sex, perverted, is a source of division and barrenness.

The latter is the sort of sex that Satan loves, because the former is the sort that he hates. And his hatred goes far beyond mere intercourse. He hates the whole *system* of biological sex. He hates the whole righteously embodied expression of it that we call gender. He is an enemy of male and female. Why? Because he hates the divine structure of the cosmos. He hates God's kingdom, and



# 5 Spiritual War & Spiritual Worship

THE WAR BETWEEN PATRIARCHIES IS ULTIMATELY spiritual. As you have seen, Absalom and Pharaoh are the enemies of God's people—but they are not our ultimate enemies. They are captains on the earthly battlefield, directed by generals in the spiritual realm. They represent the earthly forces of the evil patriarchy, established at the fall. The serpent is its father, and mankind his brood of vipers. Behind every bad human patriarch stands his spiritual father, Satan, whose desires he does. In the words of A.W. Pink, “The fall has issued in man's becoming the bonds slave of Satan. . . . [Holy writ] reveals that men are morally the devil's children (Acts 13:10; I

John 3:10), that they are his captives (2 Tim. 2:26) and under his power (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13), that they are determined to do what he wants (John 8:44).”<sup>1</sup>

Remember that Satan’s chief desire is his own dominion, and his critical strategy in achieving this goal is tearing down God’s hierarchy and frustrating the fruitfulness of his image-bearers. Thus, androgyny is a key element in the devil’s project.

The heart of this satanic work in the present day is summarized by clinical psychologist and marriage counselor Randi Gunther:

It became more and more apparent that quality people of both genders would be happier and more fulfilled if they could combine power and nurturing. Men would develop their feminine side and women their masculine. No longer would it be that the bad boys were sexy and the good women were virtuous. Now quality men needed to add chivalry to their power, and women to claim their ability for independent thinking and leadership. They could imagine a relationship where both were equally blended and free to be the best they could be. “She” and “he” became the new idealized “we.”<sup>2</sup>

1. A.W. Pink, *Our Accountability to God* (1969; Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1999), 134

2. Randi Gunther, “Why Great Husbands Are Being Abandoned,” *Huffington Post*, October 13, 2014, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/marriage-advice\\_b\\_5666990](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/marriage-advice_b_5666990).

# 6 Toxic Sexuality

**MEN ARE ALWAYS REPRESENTING, IMAGING,** trusting, worshipping, serving someone. Thus we are always glorifying someone, always seeking to magnify their name. That name is either our own—and thus, indirectly, the devil’s—or it is God’s.

Since the fall, those serving God have been at constant war with those serving Satan. Their goals and priorities are mutually incompatible. To serve God is to seek to raise up His name and kingdom, to put to death the works of the flesh, and to destroy the works of the devil. By contrast, to serve Satan is to seek to tear down the name and kingdom of God

and replace it with murder and lies. This world ain't big enough for two gods.

The struggle for the cosmos, waged between these two lines of descent, these two patriarchies, began with Adam's first two sons. Cain and Abel are seeds for the two houses that still battle today. Understanding this is critical to understanding our own place on the battlefield, and the correct strategy for our spiritual warfare. The characters of Adam's sons will, in one way or another, come to be the distinctive archetypes of their respective lineages. The older brother represents the evil, rebellious, and self-satisfying ways of the serpent—those who corrupt God's way to magnify their own names, and respond in outrage when God is unimpressed. The younger brother represents the pious, obedient, and mission-centered way of life—those who approach God on His own terms and seek to magnify His name: “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous” (Heb. 11:4). “But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell” (Gen. 4:5).

Their differing orientations toward God will always bring these two seeds into conflict, and the intensity of the struggle is made immediately evident as Cain murders his brother. But Yahweh sustains the godly line with the birth of Seth (Gen. 4:8, 26).

# 7 The Church Effeminate

THE CHURCH IS THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD (1 Tim. 3:15). It is the place most focused on serving Him and magnifying His name. It is a spiritual family fathered by the heavenly Patriarch. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is Himself a man. Paul, commissioned by Christ, commands Christians to “be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Churches should be places where effeminate men are nurtured into godly manhood, as grace restores their masculine natures. The Church, of all places, should not just welcome patriarchy—the rule of fathers to magnify

the name of the Father—but celebrate, cultivate, and teach it.

Today, nothing could be further from the truth. Modern Christian men are faced with an impossible dilemma: lay aside their masculinity or lay aside Christianity. In large numbers, they have chosen the latter.

There should be no conflict between church and manhood, but there is. The Western Church is overwhelmingly comprised of women—of both sexes.

This conflict is primarily rooted in the Church's rejection of the biblical doctrine of anthropology—the nature of man. Christian men today are asked to see themselves as androgynous spirits, trapped in bodies that, unlike women's, have nasty, sinful urges.

But to understand how we got to this point, we need to first understand how such aberrant theology becomes accepted. It starts with simple numbers. As Leon Podles documents in *The Church Impotent*,<sup>1</sup> we have had a problem with male membership for centuries. Most churches' numbers have skewed northward of 60 percent women for many generations. A major reason for this is that the men in the pulpit have been recognized even since the Regency period as “fops.” Spurgeon noted this in his day too, and warned his students against it:

1. Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, available at <https://www.podles.org/church-impotent.htm>.

# 8 No Father, No Manhood

**NO ONE IS BORN A MAN. NO ONE IS BORN A FATHER.**

No one is born a patriarch.

Every boy is born male—but manhood is something into which he must mature. To achieve this, he needs the love and discipline of a father to guide him. In other words, to become a father, you must *have* a father.

Although we may think of fatherhood as a metaphor that we apply to God, Scripture has things the other way around. When Jesus calls God His Father, this is not anthropomorphic language. Rather, when we call men our father, that is theomorphic language. God is the archetypal Father.

This is because to image God, we must first fear him—and our fathers are the ones who teach us this fear. It begins at the earliest age, when we hear the difference between his voice and our mother's: one deeper and stronger, a voice of command; the other softer and nurturing, a voice of comfort. It continues as we begin to learn about his physical presence in our home as the one who compels submission and brings order. We learn that although our mother is bigger than we are, she is the one who feeds us from her own body, who draws us close to warm and comfort us; our father, by contrast, is both bigger still and more distant—a force who brings comfort not by folding us into his body but by *subjecting* us to his body. He has a fearful power to impose order upon us. Indeed, both boys and girls tend to love their father *especially* because he is to be feared. It is precisely because he is dangerous that they value his presence in the family—not because he is dangerous to them but because he is dangerous to the sin and chaos that threatens the harmony of the household. He is the center that holds their world together; if he were not dangerous, he could not defend that world against everything that endangers it and threatens to pull it apart.

Without fathers, sons remain boys. They grow up clueless about how to harness and aim their masculine natures. They are functional bastards.

Clueless bastards are destructive to society because they have not had this fatherhood imaged to