

Trading Manpower for the Power of Love

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"How did you learn to be a man if you didn't have a father to show you?" That's the question a college student affiliated with Campus Crusade for Christ asked me while at summer camp my senior year of high school. I had explained to him that my father had left my home when I was six years old and that I hadn't been in contact with him for the last twelve years. His assumption that boys need fathers to lead them to manhood was one he shared with much of evangelical Christian America. Black Americans also shared this assumption and engaged efforts to fill the assumed void through mentoring programs and rhetorical strategies to encourage fathers to stay active in their children's lives. The assumed problem and remedy were so pervasive that President Barack Obama created the fatherhood initiative to that end.

The problem with being a man, however, wasn't a problem of fatherlessness. I didn't need a father to learn how to be a man. The pervasiveness of structures, symbols, institutions, and media that championed the essential dominance of manhood in society — what I call "manpower" — taught me how to be a man every day of my life. The problem was that the lessons I learned of manhood were lessons of domination, intimidation, homophobia, misogyny, and ultimately fear of losing power. In short, the problem is not that some of us do not know how to be men; patriarchy makes it impossible to know otherwise. The problem is that men do not learn how to love. The solution to learning to be a man, then, was not to spend more time with men who had essentially learned the same lessons. Rather, by rejecting manpower as expressed by the majority of American institutions, Christian and secular, the solution to the problem of the crisis in manhood is for men to learn to embrace the power of love.

Manhood is a myth of power, sustained and supported by stories and expectations of socially prohibited and encouraged behaviors. The stories and expectations of manhood are sustained and supported by fathers but also by mothers, individuals, institutions,

not so foreign to black boys in Lansing that his insights can be dismissed as irrelevant. As Baldwin points out, "The American ideal, then, of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity."⁵ To the contrary, the myth of manhood is a deeply rooted US American ideal. While "manhood" is social, it is also historical. Its social construction explains why men—black, Asian, Latinx, American Indian, white, cis, trans, straight, queer, urban, rural—experience it differently depending on social and geographical location; and its multiplicity is rooted in histories on which current iterations of manhood depend.

Gale Bederman captures this history in her description of the events leading up to the heavy weight title fight between Jack Johnson and Jim Jefferies in 1910. Jack Johnson, a black heavy weight boxing champion, defied common white myths of black men. White society taught that black men, though often exploited for physical labor, were physically inferior to white men and were more emotional, which explained the centrality of religion, a feminine domain, in black culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Johnson's boxing successes posed a symbolic threat to the myth of white male power. Thus, a chorus of white people, young and old, cried out for the retired white heavy weight champion, Jefferies, to challenge Johnson and save the future of the United States. Prognosticators predicted that Jefferies, with his physical strength and cunning, would beat Johnson, who relied on his passions and savagery. When Johnson beat Jefferies by knockout, media described him as a menace to society. His flamboyant dress and his propensity to parade white women on his arm did nothing to rebut the white gaze. Instead, he was targeted for a capital crime he did not commit and died in prison. The fragility of manpower is evident in Johnson's story as is the complexity of black men's proximity to it. Society tasks black men, like white men, to grow in manpower, but black men face limits if their possession of power threatens or rivals their white counterparts.⁶

To survive as a black man, avoid prison, mob violence, and poverty, young Black boys must to learn the obstacles society presents or possibly face a similar fate as Johnson. Fathers are traditionally tasked with the responsibility of teaching these lessons. That explains why the Christian student asked me about my father; he called on that tradition. As a young person, I had no grasp of

5 Baldwin, "Freaks and American Ideal of Manhood," 869.

6 Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 1–5.

the power society conferred on fathers to teach their sons about manhood nor the historical factors that would determine what constituted those lessons. While black men who do not live in the homes of their children are the most likely of all races of men to be actively involved with them, my father was not among those who did.⁷ He stopped actively engaging me when I was six years old. Thus, my father did not teach me to become a man. In fact, no one explicitly told me how to be a man. Instead, the first lessons I received derived from pejorative childhood gendered interactions concerning what a man should not be.

Teaching someone what they are not to supposed to be is a common identity strategy that Toni Morrison refers to as the "not-me."⁸ The not-me strategy defines identity by those identities that the core group excludes, often dehumanizing those excluded identities in the process. In elementary school we played a game called "smear the queer" in which one person, whom everyone called "the queer," carried a football and everyone else attempted to tackle him, at which point "the queer" would release the ball. The goal of this game was convoluted. On one hand, no one wanted to be "the queer" for fear of being annihilated by the other boys. On the other hand, if you were fast enough and agile enough to avoid being tackled, then you could gain fame. While the overt lesson was to not be "the queer" or you will be physically overpowered by other men, the more subtle lesson was one that fetishized "the queer."

The game also taught an important lesson on power. Even as a young boy, I was taught that power was something to covet and convey physically. The opposite of exerting power was being overpowered. The problem with being "the queer" was that you became an object who only responded to another person's aggression and never initiated contact yourself. You acted out what traditionalists refer to as the traditional feminine role. But femininity was not a possession boys were taught to embrace if they wanted to become men. Perhaps the most enduring implicit lesson of the game was that, if a boy could not reject the feminine within, then the other men in his world would beat it out of him. The title of the game set the parameters for how a boy was to self-identify and what the consequences were of appearing to identify wrongly. Inability to

7 J. Jones and Mosher, "Fathers' Involvement with Their Children."

8 Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 38.

dominate others through physical power attracted ridicule in the forms of being called a “queer,” “sissy,” “pansy,” and often “girl.”

A boy who couldn’t throw hard, run fast, or endure such games were told they throw, run, or scream “like a girl.” To be a boy, or man, meant not being “like a girl.” The terms “sissy” and “pansy” were meant to illustrate those feminine qualities—emotional vulnerability, physical weakness, and beauty—that a man was supposed to conquer in others and in himself. It was clear to me well before adolescence that qualities marked as feminine would make me vulnerable to the ridicule and violence of other boys. This meant that if I, as a rather sensitive child, wanted to avoid experiencing pain inflicted on me from the other boys, then I had to completely reject my love for things stereotypically reserved for girls: pink, stickers, ballads, conversation, sadness, affection, and love.

Loving myself as a boy, then, proved to be an extremely difficult concept, first, because it was clear that many of my interests were in direct conflict with the goal of manhood and, second, because loving-self was not something that masculine culture taught boys. Our cartoons—from G. I. Joe to He-Man—always portrayed muscular men performing herculean feats without fear or awareness of pain. They had no concern for their own safety or well-being. I recall a white male Christian leader communicating that self-love was a problematic love that needed to be avoided because it was synonymous with pride. This was a confusing lesson for me.

My mother taught me, as a young black boy, that self-love was extremely important. Black communities across the United States attempted to overcome internalized racial oppression through self-love. Whitney Houston’s song “Greatest Love of All” reflected the popularity of this philosophy: “Learning to love yourself / It is the greatest love of all.”⁹ Thus, for most of my childhood, I felt conflicted between being black and being a man. Many other black boys were sensitive like me. However, when we faced the world around us, it sometimes felt like we were under assault. Our love for self exacerbated the pain we felt when it was obvious that society didn’t seem to share that love for us. So our fathers, grandfathers, uncles, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, coaches, pastors, teachers, and peers tried to exorcise our sensitivity to the feminine out of us.

At the same time that our world taught us to reject the feminine within, little outside of my childhood home taught me to love black

⁹ Houston, “Greatest Love of All.”

men—something I was destined to become. How could I learn to love myself when the world around me routinely expressed its disdain? According to bell hooks, this experience is all too common: “Sadly, the real truth, which is a taboo to speak, is that this is a culture that does not love black males, that they are not loved by white men, white women, black women, or girls and boys. And that especially most black men do not love themselves.”¹⁰ Darkness in my cartoons, television sitcoms, and movies regularly represented evil in the 1980s. With all the negative portrayals of black men in the media, no one debated Tupac’s critique of US society, “We ain’t ready to see a Black president.”¹¹ Even seemingly unrelated news stories like those about killer bees managed to teach lessons that anything that originated in Africa, like me, was inherently aggressive and savage. I learned to fear other black men and even to fear myself. I also learned that the world around us feared us and used violence to exert control over us. In this environment, our juvenile sensitivity felt detrimental to my survival. So I learned to suppress any feelings that would make me appear weak.

For a black boy, the rules of manpower permitted me to only express anger and stoicism in public. (I assume this is why young black men often refuse to smile in photographs to this day.) The implications of these rules for me, as hooks writes, were that “in patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity.”¹² I was betwixt and between the expectations of manhood forced on me in US society and the force of white manhood on my young black body, which posed an implicit threat to white manpower. Thus, I learned to embrace manpower—but not too much. I had to restrict my emotional sensitivity, demonstrate the potential of dominance over others, but also confine it to my relationships with black boys and girls and defer to white ones.

Christian manpower

It was not until I converted to evangelical Christianity, through a revivalist campground ministry when I was fourteen years old, that I recall being explicitly taught to “be a man.” Today it is commonplace for men and women to tell men to “man up” instead of

¹⁰ hooks, *We Real Cool*, ix.

¹¹ 2Pac, “Changes.”

¹² hooks, *We Real Cool*, x.

expressing fear or other vulnerable emotions, but in the 1990s and early 2000s, the phrase I heard through Christian groups and books was, "Be a man." These Christian books and groups did nothing to interrupt the lessons of male domination and stoicism I learned in my mostly secular prepubescent years. Instead, I learned that dominance and stoicism were divinely ordained. For a young black evangelical, becoming a man in a divinely ordered fashion appeared both desirable and illusive because in my evangelical community no black men were ordained to lead men's groups or write men's books. Thus, for the remainder of my teenage years and my young adulthood, I wondered what it meant to "be a man."

There's a great amount of history behind my encounter of evangelical manpower. The history of American manpower is an issue not only of gender and race but also of religion. The intersection of gender, race, and religion compounds the issues of power. For most of US history, white people taught that manhood was the God-ordained domain of white men. White men refused to consider black men as worthy of manhood so that they could subjugate them and justify the subjugation of all descendants of Africa. White power exerted over and against black folks had the dual effect of teaching black folks to internalize the debasing attitudes that white society promulgated to justify its exploitation of black bodies and of persuading black men to desire similar types of power. So when black folk broke free from the chains of white institutions to create their own institutions (often churches), many black institutions replicated patriarchy and excluded women from official leadership in similar ways that white men did to white women and black people in general. Richard Allen's exclusive ordination practices against women like Jarena Lee in early the nineteenth-century African Methodist Episcopal Church demonstrates this point.¹³ This pattern persisted in other black institutions well into the twentieth century. Pauli Murray, a civil rights leader and attorney, lamented the restrictions placed on women during the 1963 Civil Rights march on Washington: "Not a single woman was invited to make one of the major speeches or be a part of the delegation of leaders who went to the White House."¹⁴ Still, in spite of black men's imitation of white male power over women, white men refused to view black men as equals. And just as white men

claimed theological authority to make these distinctions, black men did the same to black women.

Though my church family at home was predominantly black, my evangelical campground world was predominantly white. Nevertheless, the lessons I learned on manpower complemented one another. I could not come to these conclusions based solely on my interpretation of the Hebrew Bible or New Testament. Biblical narratives that included women heroes did not lend themselves to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the only significant actors; they shared narratives with Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. Hagar, Rahab, Esther, Ruth, Mary, and other women acted as preachers, saviors, subversives, and teachers throughout the text. To learn the lessons of manpower through Scripture, I needed evangelical Christian books. In the late 1990s there were plenty of them. Men's ministries like Promise Keepers popularized the need for fatherhood initiatives and men's groups, and these movements provided opportunities for authors to teach men how to father and support boys and each other. John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart* emerged shortly after the height of Promise Keepers as the most popular of the men's ministry genre.

Though Eldredge wrote a book for men, unlike the other men's books *Wild at Heart* argues that men do not need to be taught as much as they need to be freed to express their innate manhood. They need to unlock their manpower. In a text replete with dominant metaphors for men—warriors, expansionists, heroes, cowboys, kings—his major argument is that men had been confined by a docile Christianity that subdued and domesticated them. The heart of a man, according to Eldredge, was wild. Eldredge teaches that the secret to men's souls is that they are inherently adventurous and need three things: an adventure to live, a beauty to rescue, and a battle to fight. Though Eldredge tries to distinguish "a false sense of power" from a true God-given power, there is little to distinguish Eldredge's lessons on innate, wild, adventurous warrior power from the secular manpower that I learned as a young person.¹⁵

The notion that we should define masculinity by the power to dominate, initiate, be aggressive, and act in the world became central to the teachings of men's healing ministries. Andy Comiskey, the founder of Desert Stream Ministries, a ministry that aims to "equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken through healing groups and leadership

¹³ Lee, "Life and Experiences of Jarena Lee," 25–48.

¹⁴ Height, "We Wanted the Voice of a Woman to be Heard," 85–87. See also W. Jones, *March on Washington*.

¹⁵ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 152.

training for the local church,"¹⁶ published *Strength in Weakness* as a major teaching tool for this ministry. It defines male sexual brokenness as originating with the original man "cut off from his heart, compulsive and troubled by work-related concerns." This broken man, Comiskey explains, "may use his power harshly toward the woman." The issue here is not the power and authority a man has. "After all," Comiskey writes, "did not God grant him authority over the woman?" Like Eldredge, Comiskey's concern is that a man is supposed to use this power to protect and preserve the honor of women, not to "bolster his own flagging sense of self." The solution to this problem is men and women understanding and expressing their complementary masculinity and femininity. Manpower, in this paradigm, is not a fundamentally flawed concept but rather is simply broken in US American society. To fix or heal manpower, men must learn to use their dominant power correctly.¹⁷ For Comiskey, the problem with homosexual men is not that they misuse their power but that they refuse to use it at all; they are passive or express anger passively aggressively in the way of distorted femininity.

Manpower in both Eldredge's and Comiskey's views needs to be released for the health of men and women. While Comiskey's focus is on the relational world of men, Eldredge concerns himself with men's relationship to the world itself. Perhaps Eldredge's grandiose vision is what allowed him to sell more than four million copies of *Wild at Heart* and for it to remain the top selling book in the Men's Gender Studies section on Amazon. Though I disagree with Eldredge's solution, he highlights a significant problem: "Men are angry, and we really don't know why. And how come there are so many 'sports widows,' losing their husbands each weekend to the golf course or the TV?"¹⁸ He suggests that the problem is that men are bored and lacking adventure. In truth, neither anger or incessant sports watching are the products of men's boredom or wanderlust. Men are angry because it is the only emotion that our society permits them to express. And if men choose sports over their spouses, it is similarly because the emotional world of their partners is not one they have learned to embrace in themselves.

¹⁶ See <http://desertstream.org/>.

¹⁷ Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness*, 39, 46.

¹⁸ Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 45.

The power of love

One should not be surprised to find that Eldredge remains so popular after almost two decades, given the popularity of secular masculinity champions like Warren Farrell and Jordan Peterson. One explanation for Eldredge's continued success is that these authors are promoting the same messages and that church groups contain built-in apparatuses for men's groups: preservation of what Farrell calls "the best of traditional masculinity."¹⁹ Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power* first appeared in 1993 but has received renewed attention and been reprinted in the last two years. Farrell and Peterson's message still resonates and appears to be in resurgence among men today. As I write this, Peterson's *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote for Chaos* is the most read book on Amazon. And it has been in the top four best sellers for twenty-one weeks.²⁰

In *12 Rules for Life*, Peterson claims that the world is in desperate need of masculine order that can be the antidote for feminine chaos. For Peterson, "the primary hierarchical structure of human society is masculine." He then offers a grand narrative of history to support his thesis:

It is because men are and throughout history have been the builders of towns and cities, the engineers, stonemasons, bricklayers, and lumberjacks, the operators of heavy machinery. Order is God the Father, the eternal Judge, ledger-keeper and dispenser of rewards and punishments. Order is the peacetime army of policemen and soldiers. It is the political culture, the corporate environment, and the system.²¹

Conversely, he argues that "the feminine is chaos." And men's direct encounter with chaos is represented when "woman as Nature . . . looks at half of all men and says, 'No!'"²² However, this type of rendering of femininity and masculinity is not historical as much as it is philosophical. The women who ruled Egypt, Carthage, Byzantium, and England and brought about stability in political, religious, and other social structures would, no doubt, refute Peterson's claim. But his point is not that men rule and women cannot; he suggests, rather, that from a male perspective those virtues derived from the

¹⁹ Farrell, *Myth of Male Power*.

²⁰ See https://www.amazon.com/charts/2018-06-10/mostread/nonfiction/index.html?ref=CHRT_BK_RD_NF_1_DP.

²¹ Peterson, *12 Rules of Life*, 40.

²² Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 37.

chaos of the feminine must be controlled and that the failure of our language games to recognize the differences between the genders is bringing instability to our societies.

The idea that the masculine should order the feminine is the main theme of Peterson's gender philosophy, but he downplays the importance of the power involved in making that possible.²³ In an imperialist, white supremacist, patriarchal context, this move makes manpower even more potent because it almost renders it invisible; and positions of power are always most potent when people do not see them, be it due to ignorance or willful refusal. Peterson wants his readers to recognize that power is but one among many factors that determine status in a society, alongside "competence, ability, skill."²⁴ In failing to recognize these factors as forms of power, Peterson enables unequal power relationships to thrive without challenge. Conversely, acknowledging power makes it possible for people to begin to analyze, divest, use, or even share power in humane ways. Peterson both minimizes the role of power and warns of its abuses. His analysis lacks the capacity to view power with complexity. For Peterson, power is force.²⁵ Minimizing the role of power in our relationships to others blinds believers in Peterson's patriarchal philosophy to the problems of manpower because they cannot see their source. This is only possible in the world of abstraction and theory; we need historical and practical knowledge to adequately understand and deal with manpower.

For men to replace manpower with the power of love, I propose three steps: (1) engage the worlds of womanist and black feminist thought, (2) love ourselves, and (3) imitate Jesus. I'm suggesting that the path to this way of being begins with the relational world of women—a world that men are routinely taught to ignore so that they might fearlessly lead, stoically overcome, and forcefully dominate. We must engage women first because we have been hampered in our ability to love ourselves and have traded a human Jesus for a manly one. Women, who are most often harmed by these expressions of masculinity, claim that what men are missing is not unbridled permission to be wild or more rules to live by. Rather, men are missing the ability to love themselves, other men, women, and other humans well. We need women to

²³ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 311.

²⁴ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 313.

²⁵ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 314.

teach us to do that because, as bell hooks writes, "men theorize about love, but women are often love's practitioners."²⁶

Women are mothers, sisters, and friends of men. Some women, hooks suggests, do not speak of their deep desire to experience the love of men because too many have been convinced that to do so would threaten the possibility of gaining forms of manpower.²⁷ The inability of men to love others adequately and the desire of women to gain manpower have produced volumes of literature by women on what it means to "be a man." As a mother reflecting on how to mother her son, Audre Lorde asked, "What does 'acting like a man' mean?"²⁸ For bell hooks, questioning what "acting like a man" means is crucial, but the next step must go beyond rejection or redefinition: "To create loving men, we must love males. Loving maleness is different from praising and rewarding males for living up to sexist-defined notions of male identity. Caring about men because of what they do for us is not the same as loving males for simply being."²⁹

Love, here, is a power that begins with oneself. Love manifests in the strength to create boundaries and also to confront others when those boundaries are crossed. For women to have survived in the US imperialist, white supremacist, patriarchal context, they have had to learn to love themselves in the face of a rampant misogyny and rape culture that promotes the preposterous idea that women are at fault for the gender violence they endure. Womanists have loved themselves enough to reject this notion and have loved men enough to confront them with the truth that manpower has imprisoned them in a patriarchy they preserve even while it imprisons them. To free men from this prison and into solidarity with women, men must learn to love themselves from early in their development. Lorde gives voice to this love: "I wish to raise a Black man who will not be destroyed by, nor settle for, those corruptions called power by the white fathers who mean his destruction as surely as they mean mine. I wish to raise a Black man who will recognize that the legitimate objects of his hostility are not women,

²⁶ hooks, *All About Love*, xx.

²⁷ hooks, *Will to Change*, 4. She writes, "Rather than bringing us great wisdom about the nature of men and love, reformist feminist focus on male power reinforced the notion that somehow males were powerful and had it all. Feminist writing did not tell us about the deep inner misery of men. It did not tell us the terrible terror that gnaws at the soul when one cannot love."

²⁸ Lorde, "Man Child," 72–80, 74.

²⁹ hooks, *Will to Change*, 11.

but the particulars of a structure that programs him to fear and despise women as well as his own Black self."³⁰

Within Lorde's desire for her son is both the liberative future for the individual man and a more equitable and just future for everyone else. Liberation for men imprisoned in manhood begins with rejection of manpower, but it moves towards deconstructing the white supremacist, imperialist, patriarchal systems of domination that authorize it. Solidarity with women is essential to this movement, not only because of the wisdom that women hold as those most harmed by manpower but also because women have learned and encouraged one another in the practice of love much longer than men.

In spite of Scripture's teaching that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), patriarchal Christians emphasize the order, sovereign, and monarchical qualities of divine character. For Christians, the most loving human to ever live was Jesus of Nazareth. As the Word made flesh, he instructed his disciples to love God and to love their neighbor as themselves (Mark 12:29–31). However, US men have challenged this depiction of a loving Christ figure for at least a century. In 1925 Bruce Barton's *The Nobody Knows* criticized the idea of loving Jesus because the idea that "Jesus was the 'Lamb of God' . . . sounded like Mary's little lamb, something for girls—sissified. . . . Jesus was also 'meek and lowly,' a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'"³¹ For Barton, the loving Jesus had been portrayed as a weakling, kill-joy, failure. In contrast, Barton writes, "Only strong men inspire greatly and build greatly."³² Barton concluded that because Jesus was popular and founded a religious movement, he must have been a muscular, strong, popular organization builder. For Barton, this is what it means to be and act like a man. At a time when the domain of men was located in business, commerce, politics, military, and other spaces beyond domestic life and when success demanded physical strength, rugged individualism, and dominance, the meek and mild Jesus had no use to men. So men like Barton made Jesus in their image.

Women, like Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson, have recognized the ways in which men have redefined the divine in their own patriarchal image. In her theological text *She Who Is*, Johnson argues that Jesus is not a prototype for patriarchy, except when those allied to patriarchy distort Jesus to meet that end. The

30 Lorde, "Man Child," 74.

31 Barton, *Man Nobody Knows*, 4.

32 Barton, *Man Nobody Knows*, ii.

problem, she argues, is not with the meek and mild Jesus; it is with patriarchal interpretations. Those who argue that becoming a man involves growing in dominance and control need to see Jesus as transcendent and divine. In studying the Jesus of the New Testament, however, their Christ seems foreign to the compassionate, power sharing, and self-giving man from Nazareth. Johnson's reading of Jesus does not attack the fact that Jesus is a man; rather, she suggests that his expression of manhood is very different from what patriarchy demands men to become. "The heart of the problem," Johnson argues, "is not that Jesus was a man but that more men are not like Jesus, insofar as patriarchy defines self-identity and relationships."³³

This Jesus—the God, self, and neighbor loving man—is a man other men can learn from. Ultimately, the lesson we learn from him is how to become a more loving human. The greatest commandments are centered on love, and his relationship to power is a direct response to his relationships with God, self, and neighbors. The New Testament letter to the Philippians claims that his loving response to power involved emptying himself of it. Paul writes that we should imitate Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself. (Phil. 2:7)

Jesus sought equality with humanity, not lordship over women or other men. He considered himself a brother, a sibling, an equal, not a master. He chose not to dominate. He called his disciples friends, not servants.

Conclusion

Looking back, it is not surprising that the Campus Crusade for Christ student asked me about my father instead of asking if I had considered learning from Jesus how to be a man. Steeped in patriarchy himself, he could not imagine that other sources could offer men something better than the power to dominate and control others. We both would have benefitted from a narrative of a man who rejected manpower and embraced the power of love in his relationships to the world—including every living thing and everyone in it. Today I am choosing to learn from women, embrace

33 Johnson, *She Who Is*, 24.

myself, and follow the narrative of Jesus. In this way, the power of love enables me to live in a way that empowers me to see that the binary constructions of patriarchy that pit women as my enemies are products of manpower that threatens to destroy us all. I am learning that the power of love can inspire my imagination to conceive of new ways to relate to others. Instead of dominating, I can defer to the wisdom of others. Instead of controlling, I can collaborate with others. Instead of struggling stoically through life, I can express the full range of my human emotions. Only the power of love could liberate me from the prison manpower constructed, and that is a lesson men must share for generations to come.

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PEACEFUL AT HEART

Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity

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