

*Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke–Acts.* By Brittany E. Wilson. New York: Oxford University, 2015. Pp. xiii + 341. \$74.

Wilson offers a careful and thorough investigation that challenges many scholars who claim that the masculinity that weaves through Luke–Acts strengthens elite (masculine) ideals. While she acknowledges in part that Luke–Acts may be relatively elite vis-à-vis other Synoptics, when looked at within the norms of the early Roman principate and the Lukan narrative as a whole, Lukan men are refigured to look distinctively “unmanly” according to those ancient mores.

By tracing the history of research on Luke–Acts masculinity and on the construction of masculinity in the Greco-Roman world, W. concludes that Luke–Acts intersects with recurrent patterns of masculinity in the Greco-Roman world which claimed that “real men” had to be socially elite, be able to maintain bodily boundaries (as “impenetrable penetrators”) and project proper bodily demeanor (thus, not have deformities/disabilities, or similar defects), and have power and self-mastery over the body and emotions. W. selects for characters: two minor characters, Zechariah and an Ethiopian eunuch, and two major characters, Paul and Jesus, to see how they measure up to these standards. W. finds that Gabriel’s silencing of and relinquishing of paternal power by Zechariah, the Ethiopian eunuch’s castration/impotency, Paul’s loss of his corporeal control and inability to see in his conversion narrative, and Jesus’ emasculating crucifixion which required the penetration on his body, all point to loss of masculinity. The point of these refigurations is to demonstrate God’s victorious power in a cosmic drama against Satan (or those who ostensibly wield power). God’s paradoxical act of self-emptying power in Jesus’ refiguration sets the standard for how all men ought to fight Satan: by undergoing bodily invasions or an “unmanning” process, by carrying the wound from it, and by depending on God’s power whereby powerlessness and loss become victorious.

W. is careful to acknowledge where these four characters do not fit her thesis (that is, their heroic portrayal). W. is successful, however, in meeting her goal and demonstrates an overall agenda of the Lukan narrative through these four characters: subverting power that overcomes elite power. W. guilelessly leaves out other characters (including Peter) in her study. Readers will have to wait for additional work on these characters to make this study more complete.

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*Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero.* By Dennis R. MacDonald. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015. Pp. xiv + 164. \$34.

Many books have been written about how Jesus became the Christ, or the Son of God, or the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Here is another.

It comes with a certain plausibility. The author has taught at prestigious schools of theology, and he has held regional offices in the AAR and SBL. Moreover, he has been