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Making Men – Weakness, Justification, and *Andreia* in Romans 5:6

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag geht dem Zusammenhang von “Sünde”, “Schwachheit” und “Gottlosigkeit” in Römer 5,6.8 nach. Es wird gezeigt, dass alle drei Begriffe eine besondere Beziehung zum Verständnis von Tugendhaftigkeit in der griechisch-römischen Tradition haben, insbesondere auch in der Tradition des frühen Judentums. Innerhalb des Diskurses über die Tugendhaftigkeit haben diese drei Begriffe zudem eine enge Beziehung zur Tugend der “Männlichkeit” (*andreia*), wie dem 4. Makkabäerbuch zu entnehmen ist. Aus gendersensibler Perspektive werden diese Einsichten nun in die Exegese von Römer 5,6 eingebracht.

0. Introduction*

This paper discusses the notion of “being weak”, or “weakness”, as found in Romans 5:6, where it appears in relation to two other concepts, “being a sinner” and “being godless”. It does so in particular by relating the notion of “being weak” (in relation to the two other concepts) to the contemporary understanding of “manliness”, i.e. the virtue of *andreia*, as was current in the first century Hellenistic world, especially in early Jewish thought. I argue that weakness, sin, and impiety can be understood as the conceptual counterparts of the virtue of *andreia*. Since the three notions together inform Paul’s description of the state of affairs that is solved through justification (see e.g. Romans 5:1-9), the effect of justification may be described as achieving “manliness”. These theses are the result of pursuing the two following related questions: 1) What is the significance of “weakness” in Romans 5:6, regarding the three situations described before justification took place as they appear in Romans 5:6.8, i.e. weakness, sinfulness, and impiety/godlessness? 2) What is the relationship of these concepts to the effect of justification? I will address these questions on a number of levels. First, I will pose the exegetical question regarding the coherence of the three notions just mentioned. Second, I will survey the notion of “weakness” in Romans in general. Third, I will study the background of these concepts, with an eye to connections

between sin, impiety, and weakness. Finally, I will draw some conclusions on the basis of all touching on the interpretation of Romans 5:6.8 within the context of Romans 5:1-11.

1. The Exegetical Question of “Being Weak” in Romans 5:6

The pericope Romans 5:1-11, a clearly identifiable literary unit in Romans,¹ which states a basic Pauline position regarding justification,² poses a number of exegetical questions. One of these is the character of the relationship between the notions of ἀσθένεια (and ἀσθενής), ἀσέβεια (and ἀσεβής), both in v. 6, and ἁμαρτωλός (v. 8).³ In v. 6 the identity of the addressees of Romans is described using the terms of ἀσθένεια (or ἀσθενής) and ἀσέβεια (or ἀσεβής).⁴ In this context, a close relationship between being sinners (ἁμαρτωλός, v. 8) and being weak/impious (v. 6) is presented with the help of two parallels. One parallel consists of ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν in v. 6 and ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν in v. 8, the other of Christ’s behavior in vv. 6.8.; i.e. [Χριστὸς] (...) ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν, v. 6, and Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν, v. 8.⁵ Whereas the meaning and significance of the notions “sin” or “sinfulness” and “impiety” or “being godless” may be regarded as fairly well established, or at least extensively discussed, in the exegesis of Pauline literature,⁶ the notion of “weakness,” specifically as it appears in Romans 5:6, is something of a poor cousin to them. This can be illustrated by reviewing the most common exegetical options available for it.

An overview of the pertinent literature shows that there are three major options for interpreting “weakness” in Romans 5:6, all of which leave something to be desired. They are: A) Weakness is seen as a reference to the *condition humaine*, often specifically mortality. This interpretation is frequently associated with reference to weakness in 1 Corinthians 15:43.⁷ B) Weakness is viewed as merely another term for “godlessness” (or “sin”)⁸ typically without further exploration. C) Weakness is perceived as a reference to human incapability to establish a just relationship with God (apart from God’s preeminent grace).⁹ D) The somewhat unusual use of “weakness” here is explained on the basis of a theory of Paul’s use of an early Christian confession formula (possibly taken from the Roman community).¹⁰ All four options require further inquiry. In shorthand, the issues that these raise are the following. With respect to position “D”, it should be noted that, even when ignoring the uncertainties associated with tradition-historical (and in this instance even redaction-historical) proposals, the question remaining is still what might the possible coherence of “weakness”, “sinfulness”, and “impiety” be.¹¹ Position “C” relies heavily on a particular theological lens in order to interpret a concept that does not obviously carry this particular meaning, here or

elsewhere in Romans (see e.g. the languages of weakness in Romans 14-15, where this interpretation hardly applies). Position B does not really address the question, what additional value would be gained by using the terminology of “weakness”. Finally, position A, while implicitly also taking as its point of departure a particular anthropology (and associated soteriology), does not sufficiently take into account the relationship between weakness and sin as it appears in Romans 5. As Jewett notes, in Romans, Paul views the *condition humaine* before salvation as characterized not by ‘rebellion and hostility against God [but] rather ... by weak finitude.’¹² In other words, it seems that there is no satisfactory interpretation available to “being weak” in Romans 5:6, given that the notion is either reduced to another category or pressed into the mold of overarching theological, specifically soteriological and anthropological, templates.

2. Weakness in Romans and Romans 5:6

The notion of weakness appears in a number of other instances in Romans apart from 5:6, including Romans 4:19, 6:19, 8:3, 26, 14:1-2 (and throughout chs. 14 and 15). In none of these passages is “weakness” used to describe the situation of the (now) faithful before Christ’s death.¹³ In Rom 4:19, reference is made to Abraham being free of spiritual frailty in his old age,¹⁴ in Romans 6:19, the weakness of the flesh is raised, which, in this context, has to do with deficiencies on the part of the faithful;¹⁵ the same applies to Romans 8:3, while in Romans 8:26, weakness appears on its own, but with a usage that is similar to 8:3.¹⁶ In references to the “weak” and the “strong” in Romans 14:1-2 (and throughout chs. 14 and 15),¹⁷ Paul calls upon the “strong” to exercise self-restraint so as not to hurt the “weak” (esp. 15:1, etc.).

In line with other Pauline statements about the body, the flesh, sin, and weakness, the relationship between them in Romans seems to be as follows: The body is closely associated with weakness, given the body’s susceptibility to pain and various kinds of (physical) desire. Weakness, in turn, is related to sin and impiety, conceived as giving in to (particular kinds of) sinful desires (see also Romans 7-8). The flesh, because it is so closely associated with weakness, is therefore also associated with sinfulness; or, put differently, flesh, weak as it is, becomes sinful to the extent that it succumbs to desires that affect the flesh because of its weakness.¹⁸ Being weak, therefore, amounts to being impious and sinful. Regarding Romans 5:6, these considerations would lead one to option “B” mentioned above namely, weakness is just another way of speaking about “sin.” However, as Paul also refers to “sin” (and “impiety”) explicitly in Romans 5:6.8,

the question remains what the added value of “weakness” might be and also whether some further coherence between these three notions may be discovered. In order to pursue this, it is worthwhile to turn to (roughly) contemporary Jewish writings; in these writings, the same notions that are studied in this paper appear in a more coherent manner, while they also stand in the context of a comparison of two “value systems” somewhat analogous to the situation in Romans 5:1-11 (i.e. before and after justification).

3. Impiety, Sin, and Weakness vs. Faith, Manliness, and Virtue in Jewish - Pagan Polemic, Especially 4 Maccabees

Operating in the context of Hellenistic thought, early Jewish thinkers, such as the authors of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 4 Maccabees or Philo, were concerned with weakness, sin, and impiety in the context of evaluating virtue. This makes their writings an obvious place to look for further answers to the question about the coherence of weakness, sin, and impiety. One of the issues that figures prominently in early Jewish discourse on virtue is the need to control one’s passions, which threatened, not least among the virtues, one’s masculinity or “manliness”. Various schools of thought proposed ways of controlling the passions. Of interest for this paper is the venue taken by (Hellenistic) Jewish thinkers.¹⁹ Typically, representatives of this tradition take obedience to the law as their guiding principle, hence combining piety with reason.

4 Maccabees is a good example of this tradition, for it takes pious reason (ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμός) as a philosophical starting point (4 Maccabees 1:1, see also 4:15-17).²⁰ In fact, 4 Maccabees demonstrates at length the importance of “pious reason” by describing how, due to their adherence to it, the Maccabean martyrs were able to retain their virtue, especially their *andreia*,²¹ in the midst of terrible suffering.²² 4 Maccabees uses the demonstration of *andreia* by the Maccabean martyrs as a case (*exemplum*) to prove their virtuousness and the importance of “devout reason”:

(...) [R]eason does not rule its own emotions, but those that are opposed to justice, courage, and self-control; and it is not for the purpose of destroying them, but so that one may not give way to them. I could prove to you from many and various examples that reason is dominant over the emotions, but I can demonstrate it best from the noble bravery of those who died for the sake of virtue, Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother. All of these, by despising sufferings that bring death,

demonstrated that reason controls the emotions. (4 Maccabees 1:6-9
NRSV)

Given its focus on *andreia*, as well as its chronological proximity to Romans, 4 Maccabees provides a good starting point for a further discussion of *andreia* in Hellenistic Jewish thought, because it constitutes a link in a long tradition of authors, schools of thought, and works engaged with virtue (and hence also with *andreia*) which include Aristotle²³ and Stoic philosophers,²⁴ as well as Jewish thinkers such as the author of the Wisdom of Solomon (8:7) and Philo of Alexandria (see e.g. *Leg. All.* 1:63-72).²⁵

Some further observations may be made about *andreia* as a virtue in 4 Maccabees as well. In this book, challenging circumstances provide one with the opportunity to enact and display manliness. Generally speaking, the entire public sphere, as well as sexual performance, could be seen as an arena in which “manliness” was permanently put to the test.²⁶ At the same time, and quite fundamentally, virtuous behavior, in particular the exercise of *andreia*, is threatened by loss of control over emotions, or passions, which is a result of weak reason (4 Maccabees 7:20). Two kinds of weakness as therefore at play: bodily weakness as associated with fear and pain (and hence a threat to manliness)²⁷ and weak reason (e.g. resulting in anger), which threatens virtuous behavior in general.²⁸

It is thus of some interest that 4 Maccabees²⁹ (like many of Philo’s works) also serves an apologetic, not to say polemical purpose.³⁰ The “Jewish way” is promoted as the one providing true control over the passions (see e.g. 4 Maccabees 1:17-18), whereas other ways, associated with non-Jewish groups, are denied this effect.³¹ Strong, rational behavior is associated with one’s own group and irrational, “weak” behavior with the other. Piety (i.e. pious reason), virtuous behavior resulting from exercising control over the passions, and “manliness” appear in close proximity to one another here, as do their opposites.³² In general, weakness, closely related to lack of control over the body, is also associated with deficient piety and vice. True piety appears as both the apex of virtue and of rational behavior. True piety leads to (and is characterized by) virtuous behavior, including “manliness” as displayed by resistance to weakness and to loss of control over the passions due to fear, anger, or pain, while deficient piety leads to the opposite, namely to weakness in all its aspects.

As 4 Maccabees demonstrates, in order to make a case regarding “devout reason”, the characteristics of the (Jewish) actors as they appear in 4 Maccabees are precisely those that were associated with *andreia* in the first-century anthropological discourse.³³ In this context, it is important to underline that “manliness” was conceptualized as a virtue, rather than a physical or biological property.³⁴ This is of some importance, since (Jewish) women can appear as very

manly in these writings,³⁵ even to the extent that they are presented as more manly than their (Gentile) male opponents.³⁶ When considering “manliness” in relation to the anthropology of these writings, it might often make more sense to speak of the characteristics of (an ideal typical) human beings than of men and women in any absolute sense. This is well in line with a long-standing tradition of thought on this subject.³⁷

Following Moore and Capel Anderson, I will now illustrate this assertion. It is eloquently incorporated into 4 Maccabees’ praise of Eleazar in 7:17-23:

Some perhaps might say, “Not everyone has full command of his emotions, because not everyone has prudent reason.” But as many as attend to religion with a whole heart, these alone are able to control the passions of the flesh, since they believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God, but live in God. No contradiction therefore arises when some persons appear to be dominated by their emotions because of the weakness of their reason. What person who lives as a philosopher by the whole rule of philosophy, and trusts in God, and knows that it is blessed to endure any suffering for the sake of virtue, would not be able to overcome the emotions through godliness? For only the wise and courageous man (ὁ σοφὸς καὶ ἀνδρεῖος) is lord of his emotions. (NRSV)

To drive this point about true virtue home, 4 Maccabees notes that the ruler Antiochus, who had Eleazar executed, had failed to conquer the man’s “pious reason” (and hence virtue), while at the same time losing control over his own emotions. In this way, Antiochus is in fact proven the lesser, weaker of the two (4 Maccabees 8:2, for Eleazar’s praise of self-control, ἐγκράτεια, see e.g. 5:33-34).³⁸ In many ways, the confrontation between Eleazar and Antiochus is a competition³⁹ in manliness, both on a personal level, on the level of ethical principles, and on the level of intercultural competition, Eleazar emphasizing precisely that specific virtue in his address to Antiochus. He says:

You scoff at our philosophy as though living by it were irrational, but it teaches us self-control, so that we master all pleasures and desires, and it also trains us in courage (ἀνδρεία), so that we endure any suffering willingly. (5:23; see also 10:9-10; NRSV)

Somewhat later, he repeats this claim with regard to himself:

I am not so old and cowardly (ἄνανδρος) as not to be young in reason on behalf of piety. Therefore get your torture wheels ready and fan the fire more vehemently! I do not so pity my old age as to break the ancestral law by my own act. (5:31-32, see also the seven brothers' statements in 9:6-7 and also in 9:17-18; NRSV).

In fact, Eleazar's bodily weakness is contrasted to his strong reason (or faith), which therefore shines all the brighter:

O aged man, more powerful than tortures; O elder, fiercer than fire; O supreme king over the passions, Eleazar! For just as our father Aaron, armed with the censer, ran through the multitude of the people and conquered the fiery angel, so the descendant of Aaron, Eleazar, though being consumed by the fire, remained unmoved in his reason. Most amazing, indeed, though he was an old man, his body no longer tense and firm, his muscles flabby, his sinews feeble, he became young again in spirit through reason; and by reason like that of Isaac he rendered the many-headed rack ineffective. O man of blessed age and of venerable gray hair and of law-abiding life, whom the faithful seal of death has perfected! If, therefore, because of piety an aged man despised tortures even to death, most certainly devout reason is governor of the emotions. (7:10-16; NRSV, see also Romans 4:19)

Thus, true rationality, as the Torah teaches, leads to virtue, specifically to the virtue of *andreia*; accordingly, true strength is not found in (military) power, but in piety.

Well in line with this argument, Eleazar also names the opposite of his own behavior – the option he does not choose – namely to be weak. As he replied to his friends, who suggest that he should give in, in order to save his skin: 'May we, the children of Abraham, never think so basely that out of cowardice (μαλακοψυχήσαντας, litt. weakness of spirit) we feign a role unbecoming to us!' (4 Maccabees 6:17). Weakness (here: μαλακός), indeed, was precisely the characteristic of everything unmanly, i.e. 'women, girls, boys, youths, effeminate males, catamites, and eunuchs.'⁴⁰ Eleazar also continues in this vein by stating that he would cease to live rationally/piously and give up on virtue, specifically that of *andreia*, if he would give in:

For it would be irrational if we, who have lived in accordance with truth to old age and have maintained in accordance with law the reputation of such

a life, should now change our course become a pattern of impiety to the young, in becoming an example of the eating of defiling food. It would be shameful if we should survive for a little while and during that time be a laughing stock to all for our cowardice, and if we should be despised by the tyrant as unmanly (ἄνανδροι), and not protect our divine law even to death. Therefore, O children of Abraham, die nobly for your religion! And you, guards of the tyrant, why do you delay? (6:18-23)

In analogy to Eleazar, the seven Maccabean brothers are also presented as withstanding the temptation of unmanly (ἄνανδροι, 8:16; see also 8:17-26; 16:5-11) behavior, despite its obvious appeal, given that it would have allowed them to avoid terrible suffering. Their manliness is even recognized by their tormentor:⁴¹

The tyrant himself and all his council marveled at their endurance, because of which they now stand before the divine throne and live through blessed eternity. For Moses says, “All who are consecrated are under your hands.” These, then, who have been consecrated for the sake of God, are honored, not only with this honor, but also by the fact that because of them our enemies did not rule over our nation, the tyrant was punished, and the homeland purified – they having become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an expiation, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been afflicted. For the tyrant Antiochus, when he saw the courage of their virtue (τὴν ἀνδρείαν αὐτῶν τῆς ἀρετῆς) and their endurance under the tortures, proclaimed them to his soldiers as an example for their own endurance, and this made them brave and courageous [γενναίους καὶ ἀνδρείους] for infantry battle and siege, and he ravaged and conquered all his enemies. (16:17-24; see further: 6:12-13; 17:17; NRSV)

It is significant that, in terms of *andreia*, the mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs serves as a female counterpart, a representative of the weaker sex (4 Maccabees 15:4) to the (old and feeble) Eleazar, as well as to her seven sons. She is manly to the extreme – much to the (narrative) detriment of Antiochus, though it should be noted that she is presented as even more manly than Daniel and Azariah, Mishael, and Hananiah (4 Maccabees 16:3-4) as well. As 4 Maccabees comments in its praise of her:⁴²

But devout reason, giving her heart a man’s courage in the very midst of her emotions (τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτῆς ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς

πάθεισιν ἀνδρειώσας), strengthened her to disregard her temporal love for her children. (15:23). (...) ‘O mother of the nation, vindicator of the law and champion of religion, who carried away the prize of the contest in your heart! O more noble than males in steadfastness, and more manly than men in endurance! (ἀνδρῶν πρὸς ὑπομονὴν ἀνδρειότερα)’ (15:29-30). (...) ‘O mother, soldier of God in the cause of religion, elder and woman! By steadfastness you have conquered even a tyrant, and in word and deed you have proved more powerful than a man (ἔργοις δυνατωτέρα καὶ λόγοις εὐρέθης ἀνδρός). (16:14; all NRSV)

This last text may serve to underscore what has been stated earlier about the masculinity of women and men in first-century thinking – a phenomenon that need not surprise us, given the character of *andreia* as a virtue, and not as a bodily characteristic.

4. From Weakness to Glory: Justification as Obtaining *Andreia*?

Returning with these insights to Romans 5:6, a number of observations may be made.

First, the discourse about virtue as found in first-century Jewish writings provides a means of understanding the coherence of the terms “impiety”, “weakness”, and “sinfulness.” Specifically, the loss of virtue can be understood as a result of impiety, demonstrated by failing to follow the Law, and leading to a loss of true piety (or “pious reason”), and hence to a loss of control over the passions. All this amounts to a demonstration of weakness, which results in sin.

Second, Paul describes justification as something that does away with an existence ruled by impiety or vice. In this way, justification in Paul’s thinking has the same function as obedience to the Law has in that of early Jewish thinkers, namely as a means to virtuousness. However, unlike in early Jewish writings, for Paul, it is not following the Law, but the gift of righteousness through Christ which leads to restored virtue.⁴³

Third, as Paul specifically argues within this discourse on justification, the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ does away with impiety, sinfulness, and weakness. The kind of virtue that is restored through justification can thus be understood as that of *andreia*, which is the counterpart to weakness especially as it results from failing to follow moral precepts and leads to sin. Thus, being justified means having one’s “manliness” restored or, indeed, becoming a real (hu)man again. In making this claim, one must bear in mind that *andreia* is a

virtue, not a physical attribute. Both men and women, therefore, can become “manly.”

Fourth, when Paul refers to a shift from one set of “values” (namely: vices) to another one (namely: virtues obtained through justification) in Romans 5:1-11, he includes himself in the group that made this shift. This may be a rhetorical ploy, but it may also be something else, given the prominent role of virtues for the description of the relative merits of belonging to different religious groups (or philosophical schools). If Paul indicates that his obtaining virtue also resulted from justification through Christ, then that would imply a presentation of Christianity as a “third way” for the purpose of living a virtuous life, beyond the (unsatisfactory) alternatives of both Hellenistic philosophy and Hellenistic Judaism. When Paul stated this position in Romans 5:1-11, it may have resonated well with the faithful in Rome of both Jewish and Gentile provenance.

Fifth and finally, the instability of “manliness” or “masculinity” in the Greco-Roman World may also explain how Paul can argue both that weakness and sin have been overcome through Jesus’ death, and at the same time, as is clear from other passages in his letter to the Romans (8:3.26, 14:1-2, as well as the entire discussion in chs. 14-15) that the Christ-believers in Rome are still susceptible to weakness.

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¹ See e.g. Robert Jewett, *Romans. A Commentary Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 346-347, identifying the passage as a classic example of a *transitio*, following the terminology of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 163-164, takes a similar position, as does James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* WBC 38 (Dallas, Word Books: 1988), 242-244. The fact that Romans 5:1-11 is a relatively self-contained literary unit is not fundamentally affected by the problems that Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1988), 150-152, notes with regard to the place of Romans 5:1-11 within the whole of the letter. For a mediating position see: C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans 1* ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 28.252-254. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer 1* EKK 6.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, ²1987), 286-287, takes Romans 5:1-11 as a conclusion to the preceding chapters 1-4, as also: Klaus Haacker, *Der Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Römer* ThHK.NT 6 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 15.

² This is generally agreed upon from a literary perspective, regardless of the different views on Paul's understanding of justification, see e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 348-349, Cranfield, *Romans*, 256, Lohse, *Brief*, 165, Wilckens, *Brief*, 288-289.

³ As Volcker Gäckle, *Die Starken und die Schwachen in Korinth und Rom* WUNT 2.200 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 80, has it: „nicht leicht zu klassifizieren ist der Beleg in Röm 5,6“. Gackle unfortunately, does not address this text extensively in his study. See for the following in general also the concise discussion by Cranfield, *Romans*, 264, identifying those who are called “weak,” “godless,” and “sinful” in Romans 5:6.8 with one another.

⁴ See e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 358, noting that in 2 Corinthians 11:30, 12.5-10 Paul boasts of his own *current* weakness in the context of a theology of the cross (see 2 Corinthians 13:4) and observing that Paul seems to have reversed his position regarding weakness in Romans 5:6. In this context, it may be noted that Paul has, in all likelihood, a physical and status weakness in view in 2 Corinthians, while, at least as will be argued here, in Romans moral weakness is the issue; also Paul's earthly weakness is a temporary phenomenon that is in reality part of his future strength. The two are integrated into one another by means of the notion of the “struggle.” See for this argument my ‘De voorbeeldige man is *queer*. Paulus' mannelijkheid in de brief aan de Filippienzen’, in: Adriaan van Klinken/N. Pruiksmā (ed.), *Onder de regenboog. De Bijbel queer gelezen* (Vught: Skandalon, 2010), 153-163.

⁵ See e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 361.

⁶ See e.g. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 33-46.79-161, L. Morris, ‘Sin, Guilt’, in: Gerald F. Hawthorne/Ralph P. Martin (ed.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1993), 877-881, T.L. Carter, *Paul and the Power of Sin. Redefining ,Beyond the Pale‘* JSNTMon 115 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 1-18, Helmut Umbach, *In Christus getauft, von der Sünde befreit: die Gemeinde als sündenfreier Raum bei Paulus* FRLANT 181 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), esp. 21-64.

⁷ See e.g. Dunn, *Romans*, 254, Michael Wolter, *Rechtfertigung und zukünftiges Heil. Untersuchungen zu Röm. 5,1-11* BZNW 43 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 170, see also Jewett, *Romans*, 358, Gäckle, *Starken*, 59.

⁸ E.g. Lohse, *Brief*, 169, Wilckens, *Brief*, 295.

⁹ See e.g. Lohse, *Brief*, 75, Haacker, *Brief*, 114 (with a quotation from Luther), or also Simon Légasse, *L'épître de Paul aux Romains* Lectio Divina (Paris: CERF, 2002), 344. Cranfield, *Romans*, 264, does touch on human capacity, but leaves open this question of grace by stating ‘[He] did not wait for us to start helping

ourselves, but died for us when we were altogether helpless.’ Dunn, *Romans*, 254 (this formulation is echoed by Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 306). He views “weakness” as having no particularly clear meaning (although he suggests the meaning “morally weak” without pursuing it any further [the same applies to Brendan Byrne, *Romans* SP 6 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 167]), and also reads it as denoting a contrast to God’s power, on 255, Dunn views “weakness” as related to being a creature as such and “godlessness” as related to being a fallen (or rebellious) creature.

¹⁰ See e.g. Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* HThK.NT 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 152, see furthermore Jewett, *Romans*, 359.

¹¹ This question is not answered by positing a tradition-historical solution, as Jewett, *Romans*, 359, seems to do. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, 162-164, does take this route, however, arguing that vv. 6-7 are a later gloss and cannot possibly be Pauline, given the impossibility of integrating them into Pauline thought.

¹² Jewett, *Romans*, 358. Cranfield, *Romans*, 264, does not seem to see a problem here, equating “enemies” with the terms used in Romans 5:6.8; this route is also followed by Lohse, *Brief*, 169.

¹³ The disputed interpretation of κατὰ καιρὸν is not decisive for the current argument: even if it is taken as a further specification of Christ’s death, the references to “sinfulness”, “godlessness,” and “weakness” remain descriptions of the situation of the addressees prior to salvation. For an overview regarding κατὰ καιρὸν see e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 358.

¹⁴ In this way, Abraham provides a striking parallel to the way in which Eleazar is depicted in 4 Maccabees 7:10-16, to be discussed below in section 3. This should be regarded as more than a distant parallel as Jewett, *Romans*, 336, seems to do. For the background that Jewett considers see idem, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Situations* AGJU 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 426-430.

¹⁵ See e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 419-420.

¹⁶ See again e.g. Jewett, *Romans*, 482-483.521-522.

¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of this topic, which is as such not the concern of this study, see e.g. Gäckle, *Starken*, 292-449, and also: Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak . Romans 14.1-15.13 in Context* SNTSMon 103 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Thomas J. Oosterhuis, *The ‘Weak’ and the ‘Strong’ in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. An Exegetical Study of Rom. 14.1-15.13* (Edmonton: Elkon Press, 1992). All studies agree when it comes to placing

Romans 5:6 in a different category than Romans 14:1-15:13 (even if it remains to be seen if this text could not also be read from the perspective of virtue).

¹⁸ See e.g. Dunn, *Theology*, 70.

¹⁹ See on Philo e.g. David Winston, ‘Philo of Alexandria on Rational and Irrational Emotions’, in: John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (New York: Routledge, 2008), 201-220, for Philo and 4 Maccabees, see e.g. David C. Aune, ‘Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity’, in: Wendy Helleman (ed.), *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 125-158.

²⁰ See 4 Maccabees 1:1, 6:31, 7:4.16, 8:1, 13:1, 15:23, 16:1.4, and 18:2.

²¹ On which, in this context, see in general: Stephen D. Moore/Janice Capel Anderson, ‘Taking it like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees’, *JBL* 117 (1998), 249-273, 252-253. For overviews see e.g. Moisés Mayordomo, ‘Construction of Masculinity in Antiquity and Early Christianity’, *lectio difficilior* 2/2006, esp. 3-8, Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man. Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 15-34, Stephen D. Moore, ‘“O Man, Who Art Thou...?”: Masculinity Studies and New Testament Studies’, in: idem/Janice Capel Anderson (eds.), *New Testament Masculinities* Semeia Studies 45 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 1-22, as well as in the same volume Janice Capel Anderson/Stephen D. Moore/Seong Hee Kim, ‘Masculinity Studies: A Classified Bibliography,’ 23-42; for an overview in German, see e.g. Martin Leutzsch, ‘Konstruktionen von Männlichkeit im Urchristentum’, in: Frank Crüsemann et al. (eds.), *Dem Tod nicht glauben: Sozialgeschichte der Bibel* (FS Luise Schottroff; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004), 600–618, Halvor Moxnes, ‘Conventional Values in the Hellenistic World: Masculinity’, in: Per Bilde/Troels Engberg-Pedersen/Lise Hannestad/Jan Zahle (eds.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks* Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 8 (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1997), 263-284, James Davidson, ‘Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality,’ *Past and Present* 170 (2001), 3-51, and also e.g. Jorunn Økland, ‘Sex, Gender and Ancient Greek: A Case-Study in Theoretical Misfit,’ *Studia Theologica* 57:2 (2003), 1-19, Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros. The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality* (Boulder: Westview, 1997), Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1990), 1-62.

²² In general, the author of 4 Maccabees operates with a set of four virtues, of which “rational judgment” (σωφροσύνη) is the most important, while the other three principal virtues in Greco-Roman thought, as they developed out of the

original Platonic tradition (see e.g. *Phaed.* 69C), are also part of his list: φρόνησις (prudence), δικαιοσύνη (justice, righteousness), and ἀνδρεία (courage, manliness, masculinity).

²³ See e.g. Marguerite Deslauriers, ‘Aristotle on *Andreia*, Divine and Sub-Human Virtues’, in: Ralph. M. Rosen/Ineke Sluiter (ed.), *Andreia. Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* Mnemosyne Supplementa (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 187-211. It should be noted that for Aristotle true manliness was only reserved for those who could face death in battle, and therefore women and slaves, for example, were by definition excluded from this virtue. For a critical discussion of the related notion of “emotions” in Aristotle see e.g. Barbara Koziak, *Retrieving Political Emotion. Thumos, Aristotle, and Gender* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), esp. 99-125.

²⁴ See e.g. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 33-79, as well as Helen Cullyer, ‘Paradoxical *Andreia*: Socratic Echoes in Stoic “Manly Courage”’, in: Rosen/Sluiter (ed.), *Andreia*, 213-233.

²⁵ For a discussion of weakness in Philo, see e.g. Gäckle, *Starken*, 69-76.

²⁶ See e.g. the literature referred to above in note 21, as well as Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Of course, this is but a general rule. Aristotle for example reserves only the arena of the battlefield for the display of true *andreia*.

²⁷ The intimate relationship between honor and shame, penetration and being penetrated, strength and weakness, masculinity and femininity (or maybe rather: effeminacy) can only be mentioned here, but is assumed throughout this paper. See e.g. the discussion of (and literature referred to by): Louis van den Hengel, *Imago. Romeinse keizerbeelden en de belichaming van gender* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), 164-179, see also: Jonathan Walters, ‘Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought’, in: Judith P. Hallett/Marilyn B. Skinner (eds.), *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1997), 29-43, Eckhard Meyer-Zwiffelhofer, *Im Zeichen des Phallus. Die Ordnung des Geschlechtslebens im antiken Rom* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1995); for 4 Maccabees, see e.g. D. A. deSilva, ‘The Noble Contest: Honor, Shame, and the Rhetorical Strategy of 4 Maccabees,’ *JSP* 13 (1995) 31-57.

²⁸ For a broad overview see esp. Gäckle, *Starken*, 51-109.

²⁹ This is undisputed for Philo. For 4 Maccabees the dating remains disputed; an earlier (partial) consensus about a date in the first half of the second century is now being questioned, see e.g. Jan Willem van Henten, ‘Datierung und Herkunft des Vierten Makkabäerbuches,’ in *Tradition and Reinterpretation in Jewish and*

Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Jürgen C. H. Lebram [ed. J. W. van Henten et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1986] 137-45); see also the general introduction by the same author: ‘Martyrdom and Persecution Revisited: The Case of 4 Maccabees’, in: Walter Ameling (ed.), *Märtyrer und Märtyrerakten* Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium 6 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 2002), 59-75.

³⁰ Largely the same discourse may be found in the descriptions of Persian culture, subdued by the Macedonians, in the work of some Hellenistic historians. In the case of Philo and 4 Maccabees, however, the polemical tables are turned on the Greeks or Hellenists; now they appear as more effeminate in comparison to the truly virile Jewish faithful and hence more sinful and less pious. See Nathan MacDonald. *Not by Bread Alone. The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 196-218.

³¹ This is well in line with the general understanding that virtues, particularly *andreia*, can be learned, see e.g. Joy Connolly, ‘Like the Labors of Heracles: *Andreia* and *Paideia* in Greek Culture under Rome’, in: Rosen/Sluiter (ed.), *Andreia*, 287-317. On this aspect of Paul’s thought, see e.g. Bert-Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, ‘Paul and the Practice of *Paideia*’, in: Rieuwerd Buitenwerf/Harm W. Hollander/Johannes Tromp (ed.), *Jesus, Paul, and Early Christianity* NTSup 130 (FS H.J. de Jonge; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 261-279.

³² This may be played out in a number of ways, such as behavior at the table, specifically in the case of Philo’s comparison of the meals of the *Therapeutae* with Plato’s description of a (“typical”) Greek symposium (namely as recounted in Plato’s *Symposium*, see *De Vita Contemplativa* 40-90), or, indeed, in face of martyrdom, as is the case in 4 Maccabees.

³³ This notion was often used in (polemical) comparisons of the merits of different cultures or groups, as the anything but flattering descriptions of Persian culture, subdued by the Macedonians, by various Hellenistic historians illustrate.

³⁴ Notwithstanding the fact that in Hellenistic physiognomy particular physical properties were seen as indications of a higher or lesser degree of manliness; the scales of this particular physiognomical perspective were tipped heavily in the favor of biological men, to be sure. See for example Mayordomo, ‘Construction,’ 3-8. See also the remark in 4 Maccabees 15:4 about mothers being the weaker sex.

³⁵ For a brief overview see e.g. various remarks in Mayordomo, ‘Construction,’ 3-8, further also: Hengel, *Imago*, 164-179. See on the complicated relationship between Greek and Roman understandings of virtue and manliness see Myles McDonnell, ‘Roman Men and Greek Virtue’, in: Rosen/Sluiter (ed.), *Andreia*, 235-261. Further relevant studies include: Pamela Gordon, ‘The Lover’s Voice in

Heroides 15: Or, Why is Sappho a Man?', in: Judith P. Hallett/Marilyn B. Skinner (eds.), *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1997), 274-291, as well as in the same volume Judith P. Hallett, 'Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature,' 255-273. From the Jewish-Hellenistic tradition for example the description of the mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs is of interest, given that she is said to have had the 'soul of Abraham' (4 Maccabees 14:20), see: Robin Darling Young, 'The "Woman with the Soul of Abraham" Traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs', in: Amy-Jill Levine (ed.), *"Women like this": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 67-81.

³⁶ Other examples of this would most certainly include the figures of Judith and Esther, who cannot be discussed extensively here; however, they fit well into a (relatively stable) discourse on manliness and unmanliness in the Hellenistic world. See for a discussion that focuses on the way in which Judith's and Esther's strength is played out through behavior at the table – in a way that is strongly reminiscent of *De Vita Contemplativa* –, e.g. MacDonald, *Bread*, 196-218.

³⁷ The seeds for this tradition may be found in the work of Aristotle, though he denies *andreia* in a strict sense to women and slaves due to a deficiency in the rational part of their souls. See e.g. Deslauriers, 'Aristotle,' 192-202. For a survey of some first-century thought on the subject, see e.g. Jeremy McInery, 'Plutarch's Manly Women', in: Rosen/Sluiter (eds.), *Andreia*, 319-344.

³⁸ A topic central to the notion of masculinity, see e.g. Colleen M. Conway, "'Behold the Man!'" Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel', in: Moore/Capel Anderson (eds.), *Masculinities*, 163-180, esp. 166-170. About self-control as an aspect of masculinity, see Fredrik Ivarsson, 'Christian Identity as True Masculinity', in: Bengt Holmberg (ed.), *Exploring Early Christian Identity* WUNT 1.226 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 159-171, 160-161; for a New Testament case-study, see e.g. Abraham Smith, "'Full of Spirit and Wisdom": Luke's Portrait of Stephen (Acts 6:1-8:1a) as a Man of Self-Mastery', in: Leif E. Vaage/Vincent L. Wimbush (eds.), *Asceticism and the New Testament* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 97-114.

³⁹ The extensive athletic imagery in 4 Maccabees, which is closely related to the discourse on *andreia* and masculinity, cannot be discussed here, but see Onno van Nijf, 'Athletics, *Andreia* and the *Askêsis*-Culture in the Roman East', in: Rosen/Sluiter (ed.), *Andreia*, 264-286; for the athletic imagery in 4 Maccabees in relation to virtue and masculinity, see e.g. Moore/Capel Anderson, 'Taking,' 257-261.

⁴⁰ Moore/Capel Anderson, ‘Taking,’ 263. For further reference see the literature referred to in note 21.

⁴¹ See Moore/Capel Anderson, ‘Taking,’ 257.

⁴² While elaborating on 2 Maccabees 7:21, see e.g. Moore/Capel Anderson, ‘Taking,’ 266.

⁴³ In reading this in terms of “moral progress”, I agree with James Ware, ‘Moral Progress and Divine Power in Seneca and Paul’, in: Fitzgerald (ed.), *Passions*, 267-283. Ware emphasizes the importance of God’s (external) action, which leads to a human beings’ moral progress according to Paul (and as different from the Stoic Seneca’s view); what Ware develops from the perspective of Pauline pneumatology can also be shown with regard to Paul’s understanding of justification. See also e.g. Aune, ‘Mastery’, 141. As Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul*, 164-165, argued, Paul follows a Stoic pattern of thought, even if it is different from Stoicism in terms of its content, and see also by the same author: Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Paul, Virtues, and Vices’, in: J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2003), 608-633.

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