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Godly Masculinities: Gender Discourse among the Promise Keepers

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Social Thought & Research, 2002, Vol. 24, 1&2

Abstract

At the peak of its prominence, the Promise Keepers had attracted criticism from many quarters. More recently, this evangelical men's movement has struggled to retain the visibility it once enjoyed. Using insights from cultural theory, I analyze a select sample of best-selling men's manuals representing various advice genres within this movement. I argue that PK gender discourses have given rise to four evangelical archetypes of godly manhood: the Rational Patriarch (traditional masculinity), the Expressive Egalitarian (men's liberationism), the Tender Warrior (poeticized manhood), and the Multicultural Man (interracial masculinity). I explore how PK luminaries utilize two rhetorical devices—discursive tacking and gendered metaphors—to manage the tensions and contradictions that surface within and among these discourses. These archetypes enable the Promise Keepers to define themselves with reference to other new social movements. Multiple depictions of godly manhood contributed to the rapid rise of this evangelical men's movement during the 1990s, and may be one source of its recent decline.

*I express my thanks to the anonymous reviewers at *Journal of Social Thought and Research* for their insightful remarks on a previous version of this manuscript. All interpretations presented here are my own.

Godly Masculinities: Gender Discourse among the Promise Keepers

Introduction

The Promise Keepers arose during the early 1990s and reached its apex at the 1998 Stand in the Gap march on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. This evangelical men's movement was borne in the wake of decades-long changes in American gender relations, including feminism, the stagnation of real wages, unprecedented rates of women's labor force participation, the rise of divorce, and the apparent demise of the New Christian Right. As so often happens in the wake of feminist criticism and rapid social change (Kimmel 1997; Rotundo 1994), American men found themselves in a desperate search for a discernible identity by the mid-1980s. Not coincidentally, wild man gatherings, mythopoetic retreats, fathers' rights movements, men's liberationism, and the Afrocentric men's movement gained a hearing at this time and soon after (Messner 1997). It was on the heels of these developments that the Promise Keepers, an evangelical men's movement, first emerged.

Messner (1997), who locates these men's movements on social terrain of gender politics, has characterized PK as an "essentialist retreat" from progressive gender relations. In some respects, this portrayal seems accurate. As illustrated by Messner (1997: ch. 2), leading Promise Keepers such as Ed Cole highlight what they view as clear-cut biological and psychological differences between men and women, with the implication that such gender differences should "naturally" manifest themselves in a gender differentiated social order. And several of the most outspoken leaders in this movement have urged men to "take back" the reigns of household authority as they resume their rightful place in the divinely ordained patriarchal family.

However, subsequent investigations have suggested that this movement is composed of more complicated visions of masculinity than

would seem to be the case at first blush. Previous investigations of PK men's fellowships—stadium conferences, accountability groups, and dyadic partnerships—have revealed that relationships forged within this movement are characterized by a complex array of social practices—traditional and progressive, hierarchical and egalitarian (Bartkowski 2000, 2003; Brickner 1998). Given the voluminous advice literature that has been produced by its leading spokesmen, considerably more scholarship has explored the contours of gender ideologies articulated by elite Promise Keepers (Bartkowski 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Bloch 2000; Donovan 1998; Lockhart 2000). Both Bloch (2000) and Lockhart (2000) have argued that the rhetoric of PK elites melds traditional and progressive gender ideals. Bloch (2000), in particular, has demonstrated that the writings of leading Promise Keepers deftly combine biblical imagery with the rhetoric of popular psychology to address the struggles faced by men today. In this way, says Bloch, PK presents its members with "something old" and "something new."

More so than most other treatments, Donovan's (1998) insightful analysis of PK advice manuals locates this movement within a broader historical context and underscores PK's unique contributions to contemporary gender politics. Donovan explores how elite PK rhetoric simultaneously reinforces and destabilizes hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, his analysis reveals that PK has effectively confounded public-private boundaries through the marriage and parenting advice it delivers en masse via large stadium conferences and best-selling advice manuals. Among its other merits, Donovan's study is sensitized to the way in which the mobilization of the Promise Keepers has actively reconstructed contemporary gender politics. This perspective is consistent with Connell's (1995: 77) conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity as a "historically mobile relation" with "ebb and flow."

In this study, I seek to extend scholarly understandings of the Promise Keepers and their relationship to masculinity politics in late twentieth century America. Rather than yielding a broad thematic

analysis of PK texts as undertaken in previous studies, I focus my attention on a handful of key manuals that are representative of distinct advice genres within this movement. My focused analysis permits me to examine several distinct archetypes of godly manhood promulgated by elite Promise Keepers. My more pointed focus also allows me to identify and dissect a series of rhetorical devices—namely, the practice of discursive tacking and the deployment of gendered metaphors—through which PK authors construct archetypes of godly manhood. Finally, like scholars who have studied historical shifts in archetypal images of American manhood (Kimmel 1997; Rotundo 1994), I highlight the unfolding of these archetypes over time—from rather simplistic gender constructions imported into PK from the New Christian Right to more complex depictions of godly manhood that emerged from within the movement.[1]

I begin by outlining the contours of PK's traditional discourse of godly manhood. This proto-PK ideology, imported from the New Christian Right, is distinguished by the Rational Patriarch archetype. Although this archetype is linked PK to earlier forms of conservative evangelical mobilization, the movement itself cultivated several other masculine archetypes—largely in dialogue with other men's movements. Men's liberationist discourse within PK yields an Expressive Egalitarian archetype, while the Tender Warrior archetype is fashioned after depictions of "deep masculinity" popularized by the mythopoetic men's movement. Finally, the PK archetype of the Multicultural Man is rooted in the concept of racial reconciliation and PK's engagement with the Afrocentric men's movement.

Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

The manuals chosen for this analysis were selected through a multistage sampling technique.[2] First, I sought to establish the general range of thematic variation in Promise Keeper gender discourse. After reading well over twenty advice manuals[3] written by Promise Keeper conference speakers, sold on the PK website, and available in "men's sections" of local Christian bookstores, I organized these

manuals into various subgroups. The subgroups include manuals characterized by an overriding presence of the following themes: (1) gender traditionalism, (2) men's liberationism, (3) mythopoetic evangelicalism, and (4) multiculturalism. In the case of anthologies with multiple contributors, each of the chapters was analyzed and coded accordingly. All told, the advice of over forty authors was analyzed. I was also careful to select and analyze manuals written by PK authors that were published over a span of time—including the writings of Promise Keeper authors published prior to the emergence of the movement. This sampling strategy allows me to situate PK gender discourses on a temporal trajectory as a post-New Christian Right movement while mapping PK's cultural engagement with other men's movements.

For this study, I purposefully select one representative manual from each of these subgroups on which to focus my attention. Recognizing the inevitable trade-off between analytical breadth and depth, I adopt this approach to render an in-depth, naunced analysis of PK gender discourse. General features of PK discourse have been treated in other works (Bartkowski 1997, 2001a; Bloch 2000; Donovan 1998; Lockhart 2000). My focused analysis of these texts is intended to provide unique insight into this pastoral literature. By opting against a "bird's-eye" analysis of a large textual sample, my analysis is more sensitized to the ways in which particular types of PK authors wrestle with the tensions and contradictions that surface in their advice manuals. These tensions, which tell us a great deal about the embattled state of gender politics (the "con-text," so to speak), are never fully resolved. My particularistic focus enables me to dissect the rhetorical devices these authors deploy in attempting to do so. Moreover, because PK members read these manuals as stand-alone commentaries (rather than through sampled groupings as contrived by scholars), my study is designed to present a more readerly analysis of these texts.

I utilize insights from several theoretical perspectives to analyze these volumes. First, my study draws on poststructuralist theories of

discourse to explore the tensions and contradictions within and among PK gender discourses. Poststructuralists reject the idea of a totalizing, singular ideology governing a particular social group and instead examine the way in which plural forms of knowledge unfold as complex conversations within and among such collectivities (see Rigney 2001: ch. 9). Following Foucault (1970, 1972, 1978, 1980), poststructuralist scholarship recognizes the formative power of discourse—i.e., formidable yet unstable systems of language—in the construction of social relations (see Bartkowski 1997, 1998, 2001a; Fairclough 1995; Frank 1992; Macdonell 1986; Terdiman 1985). Poststructuralists argue that language is an important site of ideological contestation and identity negotiation. Moreover, because the meanings associated with words are subject to conflict and debate, language often functions as a medium for social change.

I contribute to the project of poststructuralism by identifying a key rhetorical device—namely, discursive tacking—evident in the writing of Promise Keeper authors. Taking its cue from sailing parlance, discursive tacking is a form of knowledge construction in which competing themes (traditionalism/progressivism, strength/tenderness) are deftly melded together. Much like a sailboat that must move left, then right, then left again to navigate through headlong winds, PK authors build flexibility into the concept of godly masculinity by deploying a wide range of rhetorics. Discursive tacking occurs within particular PK advice manuals and becomes a broader, collaborative accomplishment when PK advice genres are examined in tandem with one another.

Second, I turn to gender theory to examine the linkages between discourse, gender, sexuality, and the body (Bartkowski 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Bartkowski and Read 2002; Connell 1987, 1995; Fraser 1989; Hollway 1984, 1995; Read and Bartkowski 2000; Smith 1988; Todd and Fischer 1988). To be sure, this scholarly literature is marked by different forms of critical engagement with the matrix of gender, sex, and embodiment. However, gender scholars generally agree that critical analyses of gender discourse must pay attention to the

way in which depictions of sexuality and embodiment are strategically deployed to construct—and, at times, challenge—extant gender ideologies. To this end, I highlight how leading Promise Keepers deploy gendered metaphors—particularly, discursive representations of the male body—to address vexing questions of men's gender identity (cf. Bartkowski 2001b; Murphy 2001).

Finally, boundary work theory (Lamont 1992, 2000; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Nippert-Eng 1996) enables me to interrogate the Promise Keepers' relationship to other new social movements—including the New Christian Right and feminism, as well as liberationist, mythopoetic, and Afrocentric men's movements. Boundary work, clearly evidenced in the archetypes[4] invoked by elite Promise Keepers, enable social movements like PK to adopt a posture of cultural engagement toward groups with whom they are sympathetic while taking a more distant and critical stance toward out-groups.

The Rational Patriarch: Reaffirming Traditional Masculinity

It would be difficult to find a more enthusiastic purveyor of traditional masculinity than Edwin Louis Cole. Cole's *Maximized Manhood: A Guide to Family Survival* (1982), initially written in the heyday of the New Christian Right, is in its eighteenth printing and boasts nearly one million copies in print. This book remains a best-seller and is considered a "classic" by many within the movement. This book's status as a "classic" in the movement is telling. The discourse of traditional masculinity predates the Promise Keepers, but is imported into the movement by the likes of Cole. Traditional masculinity is therefore a proto-PK discourse with which the movement remains conversant, but beyond which it has defined itself. PK traditionalists like Cole therefore serve as a bridge between the Promise Keepers and bygone forms of conservative Protestant political mobilization (namely, the New Christian Right).

The discourse of traditional masculinity invoked by Cole is predicated on a notion of radical gender difference that links manhood to rational

thinking while naturalizing patriarchal authority. The traditional discourse is unabashedly anti-feminist and decries the devaluation of traditional masculinity in contemporary American society. PK discourses of traditionalist masculinity are founded on an ideology of strict essentialism—the notion that men and women are innately, categorically, and immutably different from one another (cf. Bartkowski 1997, 2001a; Schwalbe 1996). According to this ideology, manhood is characterized by rationality and strength. Men, naturally adept at long-range vision and preoccupied with instrumental achievement, are *initiators*. By contrast, PK traditionalists connect womanhood to fragility, intuition, emotional attunement, and relational attachment. Women are portrayed as *responders*.

For his part, Cole (1982: 72) frequently remarks on the significance of dichotomous gender differences: "It is possible to get spirituality from women, but strength always comes from men. A church, a family, a nation is only as strong as its men. Men you are accountable. There is no sleek escape chute. God requires manhood of all men." Cole's treatise is replete with totalizing statements about masculine-feminine difference: "Men and women are different. Really different. For example—Men are head-liners, women are fine-print people" (Cole 1982: 147). Men's ostensible penchant for rational thinking and long-range vision is contrasted with women's apparent attunement to nuance and detail. Cole (1982: 78-79, 82) is relentless in articulating his support for strict essentialism, the ideology that gender characteristics are dichotomous and immutable: "Every woman needs to be unique in her own eyes . . . Every woman craves the intimacy of some man. She was made that way. When she is denied that intimacy with her husband, her nature is to seek out an alternative source . . . Every woman needs to know she is unique to her man." References to women's "intuition" are common in Cole's manual. After discussing his own wife's penchant for intuition, Cole (1982: 96) concludes tersely: "You know how women are."

The clear implication emanating from this strict essentialist ideology is the belief that men's and women's divergent, divinely-ordained natures

predispose them to occupy different social roles. Women's "fine-print" nature makes them more capable care-givers for young children, a point that Cole conveys via a narrative recollection of a visit he and his wife paid to their new granddaughter:

> I flew across the continent and then drove for hours to see my brand-new granddaughter in the hospital. When I saw her, I checked her out thoroughly. There she was—arms, legs, eyes, nose, mouth—all the parts were there, everything was okay. That was sufficient for me. I was ready to leave. Not my wife and daughter. Half an hour later, they were still examining the length of the eyelashes, the shape of the fingernails, the texture of the skin, as if the nursery window were a magnifying glass. Fine print, fine print (Cole 1982: 147).

Cole's (1982: 82, 102) vision of traditional masculinity also leads him to defend a patriarchal family structure in which the husband is the undisputed leader—in his terms, the "priest" or "head"—of the family. Married women are said to desire male leadership within the home (Cole 1982: 77). In case readers might question the veracity of such claims, Cole (1982: 81) quotes the Bible's 1 Peter 3:1-2, a portion of which reads: "You married women, be submissive to your husbands—and adapt yourselves to them . . . [show] reverence for your husband . . . which includes, respect, deference, honor, esteem, admiration, praise, devotion, deep love, and enjoyment."

Traditionalists contend that household authority could not be legitimately allocated in any other fashion. Cole (1982: 68, 108, 109) argues that one of the essential characteristics of manhood is courage, and concludes: "Courage has always been a requirement of leadership . . . God has planned for someone to take charge. Men—it is you" (Cole 1982: 107, 111). Reasserting the connection between masculinity, patriarchy, and rationality, he argues: "*The Kingdom of God is based on truth, not human sentiment*. Decisions must be made the same way. Decision-making is one of the marks of a man. Every man I know that is a success is decisive" (Cole 1982: 66, emphasis in original).

Masculine initiation and feminine submission would seem to be endemic to virtually all aspects of male-female interaction, including sexual relations. Deploying a gendered metaphor that melds together biological sex, sexual intercourse, and submission, Cole characterizes the act of intercourse itself as an encounter in which an emotionally tender woman "submits" herself to the sexual drive of her aggressive male lover. He argues: "even women who are promiscuous feel a measure of guilt in having sexual relations without any love. So, prior to submitting to a man's love-making, they ask the age-old question, 'Do you love me?'" (Cole 1982: 82).

Underlying this strict essentialist view of gender is a belief in the God-ordained appropriateness of heterosexuality, as well as an explicit critique of homosexuality and any attempts at perceived "gender blending" (e.g., feminism, gay rights advocacy). Cole's advice manual even draws connections between sin, apocalyptic imagery, and perceived gender blending. Heaven is a heterosexual haven for Cole, who describes the end times as a point when "the 'problem person' plunges into a Christless eternity . . . and homosexual 'problems' will be no more" (Cole 1982: 34; see also Cole 1982: 126-127). Shifting deftly from such apocalyptic imagery to a more upbeat gendered metaphor based on sports, Cole (1982: 34) expresses his hope that "sins" and "perversion" such as homosexuality can be eradicated in this lifetime if males "begin to tackle sin like men." The alternative to God's plan for patriarchal leadership—what Cole (1982: 108) calls the emerging "matriarchal society" —is a development he finds most disturbing.

Why all of the concern about homosexuality, feminism, matriarchy, and gender blending? Purveyors of strict essentialism engage in such boundary work because they are anxious about a cultural devaluation of masculinity within the contemporary U.S. (e.g., Cole 1982: 107-108). Such authors are especially troubled by the willingness of contemporary "feminized" men to relinquish leadership to women. Deploying feminized terms such as "tippy toe," "tulips," and "pussyfooting," Cole (1982: 35) defines masculinity in opposition to the traditional Woman who exudes softness in her bodily comportment, her emotional sensitivity, and her supple sexuality: "I like real men . . . I don't like the pussyfooting pipsqueaks who tippy toe through the tulips . . . I like men to be men."

The Expressive Egalitarian: Men's Liberation in PK

The Rational Patriarch is only one of several different images of godly manhood promulgated by leading Promise Keeper authors. The Promise Keepers have been wise to incorporate gender traditionalism into their movement without letting themselves being defined solely by this orthodox viewpoint—lest PK risk being dismissed at backward, reactionary, and out of touch with current developments in gender politics. A very different image of godly masculinity—that of the Expressive Egalitarian—emerges from a rival gender discourse in this evangelical men's movement. The emotionally expressive, liberated Christian man depicted in this discourse is most readily championed by Promise Keeper Gary Oliver. Oliver's *Real Men Have Feelings Too* (1993) is one of many advice manuals sold through the Promise Keepers organization, and is heartily endorsed by its founder, Bill McCartney. Like Ed Cole, Gary Oliver is a frequent contributor to Promise Keeper anthologies written by an array of the organization's leading spokesmen. Through this archetype, PK negotiates several boundaries simultaneously—at once distancing itself from the stodgy traditionalism of old-guard evangelicalism (the New Christian Right) and placing itself alongside another popular men's movement (men's liberationism).

Gary Oliver (1993) articulates a discourse of godly manhood rooted largely in androgynous conceptualizations of gender. Androgyny begins with the assumption that gender differences are artificial and pernicious. The concept of androgyny, championed initially by liberal feminists and more recently by men's liberationists (Messner 1997: ch. 3), enjoins both men and women to cultivate admirable "human" qualities beyond the narrow limits imposed by stereotypical gender roles. In stark contrast to the traditional Rational

Patriarch, Promise Keeper writers beholden to the Expressive Egalitarian encourage men to get "in touch" with their own emotions and to exhibit compassion and sensitivity toward the feelings of others. Within this liberationist discourse, the more rational elements of manhood (e.g., logical thought, decisive judgment) are viewed as oppressive straightjackets for the men charged with fitting themselves into such narrow typecasts.

Consistent with the ideology of androgyny, Gary Oliver (1993: 23-32) argues that traits commonly associated with being male (e.g., bravery, strength, stoicism, an insatiable sex drive, a preoccupation with achievement) are not really masculine at all. Moreover, he contends that characteristics typically associated with being a woman (e.g., gentleness, compassion, tenderness, meekness, sensitivity) are not really the property of an essential feminine temperament (Oliver 1993: 19-20). Instead, Oliver contends that personality characteristics often linked with womanliness are actually "human" traits clearly exemplified by Jesus Christ:

> Here's what for many is the shocker. All of those words [e.g., compassion, tenderness, sensitivity] are descriptors of our Lord Jesus Christ. *And that's the problem!* Those words don't describe a woman. They aren't feminine, they're human! They describe emotions and actions of healthy males and females. But sin has so damaged and distorted our culture that what God designed to characterize healthy people now characterizes only women. That's tragic! (Oliver 1993: 20, emphasis in original; see also Oliver 1993: 61-62, 65-66).

The PK discourse of men's liberation, then, has a very different agenda than that which guides its traditional counterpart. Rather than have men "maximize" the rational aspects of their manhood, Gary Oliver (1993: 19) argues for a more sensitized masculinity—one in which men can learn "how to be human, how to feel, how to love, how to be better husbands, fathers, and friends." While he does not single out evangelical traditionalists for criticism by name, Oliver is quite critical of radical views of gender difference. He says that such "myths of masculinity" have "produced a generation of

men who define themselves by the negative. Whatever women are, whatever strengths or attributes they have, whatever characteristics they possess, positive or negative, men aren't. And if women are emotional, then real men aren't. And any attempt to say they could be or should be is [erroneously viewed as] an attempt to 'feminize' men" (Oliver 1993: 37).

In a striking point of departure from PK authors who equate masculinity with rationality and stoicism, Oliver (1993: 46-49, 68, 70-72) encourages men to explore, trust, and express their emotions rather place the "mind over emotions"; to recognize that the free expression of emotions is supported by a careful reading of the Bible; and to acknowledge the benefits of this expressive masculinity—namely, the physical, psychological, and relational benefits of open emotional expression. In articulating this discourse of expressive masculinity, Oliver (1993: 20, 22-32) pays sustained attention to a series of emotional issues with which men in general are believed to wrestle, due to human sinfulness and its pernicious counterpart, gender stereotyping. Oliver provides chapter-length discussions detailing the steps by which his male readers can learn to process a wide range of otherwise unwieldy emotions, including fear (ch. 4), anger (chs. 5-7), loneliness (ch. 8), love (ch. 9), worry and depression (chs. 10 and 11), grief (ch. 13) and—for the somber, overly serious Christian man—joy (ch. 14). From this standpoint, the stress and anxiety produced by the traditional masculine typecast has exacted a toll not only on men's psyches but on their bodies as well—through, for example, higher rates of life-threatening physical illnesses and shorter average lifespans among men.

Evangelical advocates of expressive masculinity articulate support for marital egalitarianism by invoking the principle of mutual submission (see Bartkowski 2001a). PK critics of gender traditionalism argue that a patriarchal family model places an unfair burden on husbands and fathers, who are alone charged with decision-making responsibility in the home. This patriarchal family structure is viewed as similarly oppressive for wives

who are enjoined to submit to their husbands' capricious domestic authority.

Oliver (1993: ch. 12) directs Promise Keepers to implement a very different model of conflict-resolution than that implied by the Rational Patriarch archetype. Whereas the Rational Patriarch holds fast to the reins of husband-headship and expects wifely submission from his mate, Oliver makes a case for marital egalitarianism. He does so by mixing popular psychological rhetoric with biblical references. Using a married couple as an example of this process, Oliver outlines five different "conflict styles" that couples often employ. He then assesses each conflict style with regard to meeting one's "personal needs" and the couple's "relationship needs." Finally, he then provides seven steps to follow so that couples may achieve genuine "resolution"—which is the conflict style that he recommends above all others.

Rather than advocate a patriarchal chain of command for familial decision-making, Oliver (1993: 230) argues that achieving an authentic "resolution" to marital disagreements requires that couples "discuss and decide on a mutually acceptable solution." So, whereas PK traditionalists are dismayed by men's relinquishing of family leadership, Promise Keepers beholden to the Expressive Egalitarian archetype of godly manhood lament that men are often reluctant to find a mutually acceptable solution to family problems. Oliver recognizes that authoritarian tendencies are likely to be entrenched among some of his male readers. Undeterred, he chides them with biblical passages that equate Christlike love with selflessness and other-centeredness:

> Deciding on a mutually acceptable solution can sound easy. Over time it can become easy, but in the early stages of changing your conflict patterns it may be difficult. Be sure to set aside ample time for discussion and prayer . . . Remember that you are choosing to bargain some of your personal needs for some of your relationship needs. Read 1 Corinthians 13 out loud. [1 Corinthians 13 contains the oft-quoted biblical passages describing love as "patient," "kind," "not proud," "not self-seeking" etc.] . . . At this point in workshops men have raised their hands and asked, "But what if we can't agree on a mutually acceptable solution?" After a brief pause I usually smile and respond by saying, "Well, if you can't agree on a solution, reach into your pocket, pull out a coin, ask the other person if they want heads or tails, and flip it." This usually brings a lot of laughter. "I'm serious," I quickly add. "If you can't decide, it's better to try something that might work than something that is a proven failure" (Oliver 1993: 230-231).

Tacking toward the Center: Constructive Contradictions in Traditionalist and Egalitarian PK Discourse

Given the strikingly different views of godly manhood advanced by PK authors (Rational Patriarch here, Expressive Egalitarian there), how can this religious movement have successfully captured the souls of well over one million American men during the course of the last decade? Would not even a cursory reading of PK manuals—or, for that matter, a weekend visit to a PK stadium conference where such authors address thousands of men—highlight the gross contradictions contained in elite Promise Keeper rhetoric? How do elite Promise Keepers write and speak on the topic of godly manhood without recognizing the dramatic disjunctures between their perspectives on this subject?

Elite Promise Keepers who embrace traditionalist and liberationist versions of godly manhood manage ideological contradictions by employing a rhetorical device that can be best described *discursive tacking*. I draw the term "tacking" from sailing parlance. Docking a sailboat against a sea bound wind requires the boater to employ a "tacking" strategy—oscillating the boat left, then right, then left again repeatedly—until reaching shore. Experienced boaters know that they cannot dock their boat by sailing headlong against a sea bound wind.

In a remarkably similar fashion, the gender discourse in traditionalist and egalitarian PK advice manuals does not move in a singular

direction against the headlong winds of secular American culture. Indeed, the popularity of the Promise Keepers is likely connected to the way in which its traditionalist and egalitarian leaders establish a godly man archetype (i.e., Rational Patriarch, Expressive Egalitarian) only to depart from and return to that archetype repeatedly through the manual. By employing this tacking strategy, PK authors such as Ed Cole and Gary Oliver build dexterity into their respective archetypes. In the end, these archetypes seem to overlap rather than overtly contradict one another.

Traditionalist Tacking

Despite his unabashed advocacy of domestic patriarchy, Ed Cole periodically expresses concern that his endorsement of husband headship may be misinterpreted by men who wish to act in a callous, cavalier, or abusive fashion toward their family members. Thus, while Cole unflinchingly crowns the husband and father as the "leader," "priest," and patriarch of the family, he is expressly critical of men who would use their domestic authority in a heavy-handed fashion. Cole (1982: 52) decries such abuses of power as "dictatorial authoritarianism." He argues that patriarchal leadership does not rule out "equality" with one's wife, who is scripturally described as the husband's "joint heir" (1 Peter 3:7) within the home (Cole 1982: 61, 89-90, 93). Cole does not elaborate on this latter contradiction. His readers are thus left to sort through a rhetorical paradox so commonly deployed by traditionalist evangelical authors—an advocacy of strict essentialism and domestic patriarchy set alongside caveats about the purported "equality" of the husband and wife in God's eyes (Bartkowski 2001a). Nevertheless, this form of tacking enables the traditionalist Cole to sound remarkably similar—at times—to men's liberationists like Gary Oliver.

Cole tacks away from—and then returns to—traditionalist notions of masculinity on other subjects as well. He offers various warnings designed to discourage men from indulging in the perceived excesses of the very manliness that he champions. Cole and other

strict essentialists often paint men's sexual appetite as far eclipsing that of their female counterparts (Bartkowski 2001a). However, within particular portions of *Maximized Manhood*, Cole expresses concern that some male readers will misinterpret statements about men's hypersexuality as a license to engage in promiscuous sex. Cole (1982: ch. 3) identifies this issue as the "playboy problem." To circumvent a misinterpretation of his position, Cole reasserts the importance of male rationality and discipline. He argues that the "playboy" is not genuinely manly (i.e., "tough") because such sexually undisciplined men are enslaved to their own prurient appetites: "Affections, desires, appetites, all must be dealt with in discipline. Even love must be disciplined, or what we love will kill us. Discipline requires toughness."

"Toughness" itself is a concept that Cole utilizes to gravitate—i.e., tack—deftly between a thoroughgoing male insensitivity and the liberated man's emotional oversensitivity. Cole (1982: 61) attempts to cast his advocacy of "masculine toughness" as a reasonable middle path to some men's use of excessive force (decried as "roughness") on the one hand, and to other men's capitulation to a feminized contemporary American culture (derided as "softness") on the other. Consequently, in apparent contradiction to his definition of manhood as "ruthless courage" that is not prone to "sentimentalizing" (Cole 1982: 68), Cole (1982: ch. 6) peppers such assertions with periodic admonitions that men must balance "tenderness" with "toughness."

Yet, Cole himself is unable to sustain his rhetorical commitment to this middle path charted between the "tough" and the "tender." In the end, Cole situates himself clearly on the side of the "tough" man rather than his "tender" counterpart: "Perhaps years ago, as a general rule, parents, educators, and political leaders may have erred on the side of toughness—but today it is the softness that is killing us. We must learn to be ruthless with ourselves at times" (Cole 1982: 61-62).

If this rhetoric fails to carry force with his male readership, Cole (1982: 62) points to the person that he considers to be the paragon

of toughness, albeit balanced with a minimal amount of tenderness—Jesus Christ: "Jesus was a perfect balance of the tender and tough." In the end, though, Cole (1982: 62) betrays his preference for toughness over tenderness by relegating Jesus' alleged tenderness to one concise sentence in his manual: "[Jesus] revealed His tenderness in His messages of love, His actions of healing and comforting, His death on the cross." Immediately after conceding this point, Cole lingers over Jesus' apparent toughness in considerably more detail. Make no mistake—Jesus was not a soft, liberated, feminized man:

> The same Jesus who swept little children up into His arms gripped that scourge of cords and drove the money-changers out of the temple. Some "sissified" paintings of Jesus come nowhere near showing the real character of Him who was both Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus was a fearless leader, defeating Satan, casting out demons, commanding nature, rebuking hypocrites. He had a nobility of character and a full complement of virtues which can be reproduced in us today—by the same Holy Spirit that dwelt in Him. God wants to reproduce this manhood in all men. What kind of manhood? *Christlikeness! Christlikeness and manhood are synonymous* ... Since to be like Jesus—Christlike—requires a certain ruthlessness, manhood does also (Cole 1982: 62-63, emphasis in original).

Egalitarian Tacking

The discourse of liberated masculinity articulated by Gary Oliver is also layered with discursive contradictions. Here again, such contradictions move egalitarian PK manuals toward a "sensible center" that overlaps with the commentary of more traditionalist luminaries. Despite the overridingly egalitarian tone of Oliver's *Real Men Have Feelings Too*, Oliver tacks away from the Expressive Egalitarian archetype by:

- strategically weaving gender difference rhetoric into his broader commitment to androgyny, and
- expressing a sense of ambivalence toward feminism.

As noted above, the vast majority of Oliver's book is dedicated to debunking the six "myths of masculinity"— including "Myth 6: Men Are the Opposite of Women" (Oliver 1993: 31). Yet, woven into Oliver's strong dismissal of radical gender difference is a strategic strand of suspicion for what he calls "radical" feminist notions of gender sameness. In a scant but significant four pages of a nearly three-hundred page tome on expressive masculinity, Oliver (1993: 33-36) blasts the "lunacy" and "ridiculous assumption[s]" of those who have "jumped on the gender-same bandwagon." Yet, paradoxically, even this four-page nod toward gender difference is layered with doublespeak that, in the end, returns to Oliver's (1993: 36ff) overarching argument *against* gender stereotyping: "It's true that men and women differ in the physiology of their brains. They are different. However, there is an unfortunate tendency to attribute many differences in individuals to sex/gender rather than numerous other factors that contribute to and shape our development."

Like Cole, then, Oliver (Oliver 1993: 31-35) is interested in portraying his position as a sensible middle course between two discursive "extremes"—strict essentialism on the one hand and radical feminism on the other: "The feminist movement has been correct in emphasizing that men and women are of equal value and equal worth. Unfortunately some of the more radical feminists have failed to emphasize important ways in which men and women are different. They have interpreted equal to mean same. The two are *not* synonymous" (Oliver 1993: 35, emphasis in original). Like the discourse of traditional masculinity, Promise Keepers manuals beholden to an Expressive Egalitarian archetype of godly manhood are replete with discursive contradictions that mix and meld apparently competing gender ideologies. In the end, traditionalist and egalitarian discourses of godly manhood seem overlapping and complementary because authors in these divergent discourses adopt a tacking strategy—embracing and then distancing themselves from their respective archetypes.

Expanding the PK Repertoire: Poeticized and Racialized (Re)Visions of Godly Manhood

If feminism were the only social current against which the Promise Keepers defined itself, the traditionalist and egalitarian discourses of evangelical masculinity surveyed above would exhaust the cultural tools necessary to build a grassroots constituency of godly men. Yet, social debates over gender in contemporary America are hardly so simple. As noted, the last two decades have witnessed the explosion of various men's movements—from mythopoetic men's gatherings and "wild man" retreats to the mobilization of African American men culminating in the Million Man March (Messner 1997). Given this diverse social field of masculinity politics, the Promise Keepers must define themselves not only against the women's movement, but against other men's movements as well. To compete effectively in the social field of men's identity movements, the Promise Keepers have been wise to both poeticize and racialize their notion of godly manhood.

Poetics of PK Manhood: The Tender Warrior

The poetics of godly manhood—a PK rejoinder to the mythopoetic men's movement—is best evidenced in the popular advice manuals of Stu Weber (1993, 1997). PK men with a taste for poetic depictions of godly manhood are likely to find themselves sated by Weber's *Tender Warrior* (1993) and its follow-up volume, *Four Pillars of a Man's Heart* (1997).[5] As implied in the title of the former volume, Weber likens the godly man to a fearless warrior for the Lord. At the same time, Christian men are called to cultivate their "tender" side. Together, these complementary dimensions of godly manhood yield the Tender Warrior archetype. Given the persistence of gender traditionalism within evangelical circles, Weber (1993: 71) is quick to explain that being "tender" is not the same as being "soft"—the latter of which he likens to characteristics such as "mild, effeminate, [and] easily yielding to physical pressure."

Directly quoting the popular work of mythopoetic guru Robert Bly, Weber takes great pains to distinguish tenderness from softness. Indeed, Weber adroitly brings together the emotionally expressive language of fellow Promise Keeper Gary Oliver, the rationalistic rhetoric of compatriot Ed Cole, and the mythopoetic imagery popularized by Bly. Weber contends:

> Underneath a warrior's breastplate beats a tender center. In every man there is the tender side. The side that connects to another. The thirst for relationship. The desire to touch and be touched. To hug. To link. To be with. A real man has feelings and isn't afraid to express them . . . Now don't get me wrong. There is a difference between "tender" and *soft*. That's why they're two different words. I'm not at all advocating what Robert Bly calls the "soft male" of the 1970s. [Weber provides Bly's quote in which the "soft male" is described as "not happy," "lack(ing) in energy," and "not exactly life-giving."] We want Tender Warriors...not "soft males" . . . Masculine sensitivity never will and never *should* match its feminine counterpart . . . It's a long way from macho to soft. Come down somewhere in between (Weber 1993: 69-71, emphasis in the original).

If such double-speak seems strikingly similar to the tacking discourse of Promise Keepers Ed Cole and Gary Oliver, precisely what do the likes of Stu Weber add to the PK cultural repertoire? The discourse of poeticized masculinity expands PK gender discourse through its richly symbolic and deeply metaphorical visions of the godly man. Indeed, Tender Warriors are complex creatures—reducible to neither logical reasoning (the Rational Patriarch) nor emotional release (the Expressive Egalitarian). Whereas advice manuals in the traditionalist and egalitarian discourses are didactic in tone and cerebral in their analysis of contemporary men's gender predicament, poeticized PK manuals invoke deep symbolic imagery to evoke mythic conceptualizations of godly manhood. The qualitative difference between these discourses is striking—analogous to the difference between reading an instruction booklet (the traditionalist and liberationist genres) and curling up with a richly crafted novel (the poeticized genre). Poeticized PK advice manuals are clearly aimed at men who prefer richly

symbolic, metaphorical explorations of godly manhood instead of more detached, seminar-style treatments of Christian masculinity.

The Tender Warrior archetype is predicated on what Weber (1993, 1997) calls the Four Pillars of manhood, which themselves cover a composite of characteristics:

- the King Pillar—symbolizing men's vision and character;
- the Warrior Pillar—representing the strength and power of masculinity;
- the Mentor Pillar—celebrating men's faith and wisdom;
- the Friend Pillar—depicting men's heart and their capacity for love.

These pillars are likened to other four-fold schema that appear in nature (e.g., four points on the compass, four seasons in the year). This rhetorical allusion becomes a gendered metaphor inasmuch as the Four Pillars of masculinity are perceived to be as "natural"—read, essential and formidable—as the four seasons of the year or four quadrants of the earth. And like center posts that work in tandem to support a building, these Pillars are defined by their complementarity and, ultimately, by their strength. In Weber's own words, these Four Pillars work together to "stand against the elements" of the world and "hold one small civilization [the family] intact" (Weber 1997: 13).

Where marital relations are concerned, Tender Warriors are neither status-conscious patriarchs nor full-board egalitarians. Rather, Tender Warrior husbands are "servant-leaders" who "color [their] headship in soft shades of the tender side . . . rather than in the harsh tones of the warrior side (Weber 1993: 96-97). Nevertheless, the "steel strands" that form the "cable-like spine" of a Tender Warrior's masculinity is characterized foremost by "initiation," for "among the ancient Hebrew words for man is one meaning 'piercer.' It's feminine counterpart is 'pierced one' . . . At his core a man is an initiator—a piercer, one who penetrates, moves forward, advances toward the horizon, leads" (Weber 1993: 45).

Consistent with the poetic imagery strewn throughout this discourse, Tender Warriors do not simply raise children but instead "release arrows" into next generation (Weber 1993: ch. 11). On the topic of fatherhood, Weber invokes complicated—but nonetheless gendered—metaphors of active subjects (archer, hunter), passive objects (target, prey), and the relations of interconnectedness (arrows, the hunt) between these otherwise disparate categories.

Weber's exploration of fatherhood begins with him plucking a poetic passage on parenting from the Bible's Psalm 127 (verses 3-4): "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies at the gate." True to his mythopoetic style, Weber's parenting exegesis does not didactically list the "do's" and "don't's" of fatherhood. Instead, he probes the symbolic significance of the archetypical Tender Warrior father who is at once a disciplined archer with arrows in his quiver and a fearless hunter of bull elk:

> As I write these words, I'm looking at three arrows on my desk . . . I'm turning one in my hand, now. Feeling the heft and balance of its shaft. Looking down its length to the round edges of its blunt head. It's a target arrow, and a good one. I wouldn't waste my time with anything less . . . As I write these words, I'm looking at a picture on my desk. It's a picture of my three sons—Kent, Blake, and Ryan . . . Each was crafted by the Lord God in the secret place of his mother's womb. And each was fashioned, balanced, and readied for flight within the four walls of our home. My three arrows were all designed to leap from the bow and split the air. I enjoy bow hunting, and I intend to *use* these arrows—whether on a cedar bale target or on a bull elk stamping on some back-country ridge on a frosty morning. These arrows aren't for show. They were never intended to stay in a quiver . . . They were made to fly. They were made to pierce a target. So it is with my sons . . . When the moment comes...young men—and young women—were made to experience flight. Flight to target, flight for maximum impact on that target . . . Yet parents—and fathers in particular—are also accountable before God. Tender

> warriors are responsible for releasing those few precious arrows with all the sureness of eye and strength of arm that we can borrow from our God and Father (Weber 1993: 155-157).

Like the traditional and egalitarian PK discourse, poetic archetypes of the godly man enlist representations of men's bodies to construct essential masculinity. The archer-father must have a "sureness of eye" and "strength of arm." Such overt references are complemented by more subtle yet profound forms of masculine (phallic) symbolism—the "arrow," with its "long shaft" and "blunt head," "splits the air" and "pierces its target." Yet, poeticized PK discourse rejects two-dimensional, either/or dichotomies (i.e., Rational Patriarch versus Expressive Egalitarian) in favor of symbols defined by their complexity, holism, and polysemy (i.e, Tender Warrior).

The Tender Warrior archetype, then, engages in a form of discursive tacking that is subtle, sensitive, and (true to form) tender. By balancing reason with emotion and strength with tenderness, these tender tacking movements highlight the semi-porous boundary between "the masculine" and "the feminine." Indeed, Weber's archetype is defined by movement rather than stasis. In a metaphorical sense, Tender Warriors are engaged in a dance that synthesizes extremes and integrates disparate elements. The subtlety and fluidity of gender evidenced by the Tender Warrior archetype is complemented by a more contingent answer to the question of gender difference. As noted above, the Rational Patriarch archetype privileges strict essentialism by emphasizing the singularity and immutability of men's thoughts, feelings, and actions. From a strict essentialist standpoint, manhood is evidenced through reason and headship, while womanhood is manifested through their opposites—namely, emotional expression and gracious submission. By contrast, loose essentialism posits predispositional differences between men and women while portraying these differences as malleable and unfolding. Loose essentialism, an ideology prevalent in the mythopoetic men's movement (Schwalbe 1996), gives men license to change over the life course and to find points of overlap with women—such that men are

capable of discovering their "feminine side." Whether they are mythopoetic disciples of Robert Bly or poeticized Promise Keepers in the mold of Stu Weber, these men would generally agree that the well-balanced man has come to terms with both his "inner man" and his "inner woman."

Multicultural Man: Racial Reconciliation as Godly Masculinity

Each of the foregoing PK archetypes is predicated—from start to finish—on the notion of men's sharing a singular "essence." As Rational Patriarchs and Tender Warriors, all men are thought to possess a core set of god-ordained characteristics—strength, vision, discipline—needed to lead their families and the nation. If men have abdicated those responsibilities, it is only because the sinfulness of human nature has corrupted God's design. According to the Expressive Egalitarian archetype, all men have been exposed to pernicious "myths of masculinity" and must reclaim the emotionally alienated aspect of their core masculine identity to become complete human beings.

A fourth discourse found in the Promise Keeper self-help literature wrestles not with men's unity and singularity but with the question of men's diversity. The sixth of the Seven Promises that serve as the PK mission statement encourages each individual Promise Keeper to "reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity." Racialized PK discourses of godly manhood therefore depart from the theme of men's singularity to address the vexing issue of racial difference. PK engagement with the question of cultural difference leads some authors to champion an archetype—what I call the Multicultural Man—quite distinctive from those featured above. By integrating the principle of racial reconciliation into the PK mission statement, the Promise Keepers further expand their cultural repertoire to engage with multiculturalism and racialized men's movements such as the Million Man March, with whom the Promise Keepers shared the National Mall only weeks apart in 1998.

In his contribution to *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, "A Call to Unity" (1994), PK founder Bill McCartney directly addresses the "sin of racism" and advocates "biblical unity" through "racial reconciliation." Weaving together the antinomies of diversity and unity, McCartney predicates inter-racial reconciliation on the presumption of intra-racial homogeneity. McCartney discusses how his eyes were initially opened—and were moved to profuse weeping—concerning racial injustice through his attendance at the funeral of a local black man who played football for the University of Colorado prior to McCartney's tenure with the team. While attending this funeral simply as an official representative of the current University of Colorado football program, McCartney was surprised to find himself "deeply affected" by "the mournful singing of the mostly black congregation [as they] expressed a level of pain I hadn't seen or felt before . . . This wasn't just a funeral; it was also a gathering of wounded, long-suffering believers." Later, as McCartney (1994: 158) began to relate his churchgoing experience to close African American friends and confidants, he was "amazed . . . that despite the wide differences in their ages and the places where they had grown up, they all identified directly with the pain I had felt in the church that day." Experiences such as these ultimately led McCartney (1994: 158) to "come in touch, for the first time, with the pain, struggle, despair, and anguish of the black people."

PK diagnoses of racial injustice bring a distinctively evangelical sin-and-redemption narrative to bear on the vexing problem of racism. In PK parlance, racism is a "sin" and "redemption" from such sinfulness requires "racial reconciliation" in which "seeking forgiveness" and "establishing trust" figure prominently. To be sure, such spiritualized and personalized imagery is more likely to resonate with the individualistic sensibilities of an evangelical constituency than would global and generic appeals to "equal opportunity" or "social justice" (cf. Emerson and Smith 2000; Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink 1999; Smith 2000).

In the PK genre of racial reconciliation, the practice of discursive tacking takes the same hither-and-thither form as manifested in other genres while focusing on a different content—the source and possible solutions of racial inequality. PK writings on racial reconciliation regularly edge toward but then back away from a critical analysis of institutionalized racism. On the one hand, some terse statements by McCartney suggest a willingness to define racism as an institutionalized feature of social life in America. McCartney mentions the lack of head coaching opportunities for one of his black assistant coaches at the University of Colorado—"if he were white, he would have been a head coach somewhere years ago" (McCartney 1994: 159).

Yet, on the other hand, the evangelical penchant to define sin as an individual transgression and reconciliation as a God-inspired personal conversion means that institutions recede to the background where PK solutions to American racism are concerned. Promise Keeper solutions to racism fall largely within the private realm. Drawing on the image of the warrior-like godly man whose personal prayers eclipse all social efforts to eradicate racism, McCartney urges: "Godly men must be impassioned with righteous determination to make amends [concerning racism]. Society tries in vain. Government efforts are losing ground . . . May our prayer warriors work overtime. Let the pulse of the Body of Christ quicken and not rest until we see change. And let it begin with you and me" (McCartney 1994: 165). He continues: "As one missionary said, 'I don't know how to love the poor except one at a time.' We can embrace that same wisdom in overcoming hostility and division in the body of Christ—one relationship at a time" (McCartney 1994: 166).

While Christians in other times and places have urged unity under the "body of Christ" banner, McCartney's reinterpretation of this metaphor as a manifesto for American racial reconciliation—albeit one relationship at a time—represents a distinctly evangelical application of this cultural tool. McCartney (1994: 164) thus challenges each of his PK brothers to *personally* reconcile himself with some*one* of another race," saying that believers must:

- "enlarge our circle of understanding so we can appreciate another's history and experiences";
- "become good listeners and share the pain of those who have been hurt by past domination"; and
- "endure confrontations and crises until we establish trust in one another."

Strikingly, McCartney's vision of racial justice invokes metaphorical notions of "poverty" and "riches" that efface the practical, material dimensions of economic need: "This kind of love means that we come together in our *common poverty*, weaknesses, and sins to receive *God's riches*, strength, and grace—together" (McCartney 1994: 164-165, emphasis added).

How are Christian believers to get there ("racial reconciliation," "God's riches") from here ("the sin of racism")? True to Promise Keeper form, McCartney utilizes a metaphor of the body—in this case, the ultimate male body—to chart the path to racial reconiliation. Citing 1 Corinthians 12: 24-26, McCartney's (1994: 166-167) essay ends with a plea for unity and love to be demonstrated among Christian "brethren" who are all members of the "body of Christ." From this vantage point, then, the unifying forces of men's shared gender ("brethren") and a common faith (membership in "the body of Christ") can trump racial divisions that would otherwise keep men separated from one another.

Discussion

Utilizing insights from theoretical perspectives on discourse, gender identity, and boundary work, I have outlined the ideological contours of four distinct discourses of godly manhood written by leading Promise Keepers. Each of these discourses is organized around a particular archetype that defines the "essence" of the godly man. In the traditional discourse of Promise Keeper advice, the godly man is depicted as a Rational Patriarch. This discursive regime, a reaction against feminism and gay rights, charges godly men to embrace their divinely ordained status as disciplined patriarchs who unflinchingly lead their families with masculine logic. The PK masculine liberation discourse, which is more conciliatory toward feminism, defines the godly man as an Expressive Egalitarian. This evangelized ideology of male liberation subscribes to androgyny while championing men's open emotional expression and marital egalitarianism as the true marks of the godly man.

Borrowing a page from the mythopoetic men's movement, the PK discourse of poeticized manhood depicts the godly man as a Tender Warrior. This archetypal image brings together a uniquely masculine blend of strength, sensitivity, and servant-leadership. Finally, the Promise Keepers discourse of racialized masculinity invokes an archetype of the Multicultural Man. This discourse recognizes differences and divisions among men; however, in the end, the PK discourse of racialized masculinity urges men to unite under the banner of Christian brotherhood.

I have identified two key rhetorical devices that PK writers use to construct their competing visions of godly manhood—the practice of discursive tacking and the deployment of gendered metaphors. Where thematic contradictions arise within and across these self-help literatures, Promise Keeper writers turn inconsistency into complementarity through discursive tacking. Like a sailboat that must "tack" by repeatedly redirecting itself (left, right, then left again) to dock safely against an outgoing wind, PK writers invoke—and then periodically distance themselves from—masculine archetypes such as the Rational Patriarch and the Expressive Egalitarian. Tacking is accomplished in a much more subtle fashion where the Tender Warrior archetype and racial reconciliation motif are concerned. The practice of tacking enables Promise Keeper writers to construct discursive bridges over the chasms that would otherwise place such these ideologies at odds with one another. Discursive tacking enables PK writers to produce flexible visions of godly manhood that appear "holistic" and "well-rounded."

Leading Promise Keepers are linked by another rhetorical device they commonly deploy—gendered metaphors. PK luminaries frequently use men's "maleness"—actually, discursive representations of the male body—as an edifice for "fleshing out" their masculine archetypes. Writers in the traditional and poeticized PK discourses emphasize the strength and hardness of men's bodies—often through a combination of overt and symbolically coded sexual-phallic references to essential masculinity. Liberationist authors highlight the cathartic effects—both physically and psychologically—that can result from men's emotional release and a more egalitarian approach to social relationships. The racialized PK discourse uses differences in men's bodies—black/white skin color—to engage issues of men's diversity and inequality; however, this discourse ultimately invokes the biblical metaphor of integrative embodiment—the church as a singular "*body* of Christ"—in an effort to privilege themes of Christian unity and oneness in the face of racial and denominational diversity.

My analysis of these rhetorical devices, then, lends further insight to Swidler's (1986) conceptualization of culture as a "tool kit." Swidler argues that cultural tools are not "social givens," but rather are capable of being used in many different ways by social actors. Agency is found in the ability of social actors to use cultural tools in creative and unanticipated ways. In this study, PK authors' creative application of longstanding evangelical tools (e.g., the Bible, Jesus Christ) broaden the repertoire of American evangelicalism. Moreover, Swidler attunes scholars to the role of culture as a duality. Culture, she argues, is comprised of both symbols and strategies. My study reveals how PK authors undertake two key cultural strategies—namely, the practice of discursive tacking and the deployment of gendered metaphors. In utilizing these cultural strategies, PK authors draw boundaries (and, at times, build bridges) with reference to other social groups (e.g., the Christian Right, feminism, contemporary men's movements). In this sense, the authors featured here are social agents—i.e., active contributors to the repertoire of Promise Keeper and evangelical culture. The symbolic repertoire of PK and evangelical culture—the archetypes, motifs, and advice genres discussed here—is the product of these complex cultural strategies.

It is likely that this panoply of self-help discourses has enabled the Promise Keepers to attract men with a wide range of gender sensibilities (Bartkowski 2000). In contrast to Messner's depiction of the Promise Keepers as an "essentialist retreat" from progressive gender relations, these diverse discourses of godly manhood situate the Promise Keepers in multiple locations on the cultural terrain of contemporary gender politics. Traditionalist Promise Keepers define themselves against feminists and gay rights activists while, at the same time, taking pains to point out that the Rational Patriarch is a "tender-tough" man who eschews despotism. PK writers who encourage men to emulate the Expressive Egalitarian ally themselves with secular men's liberationists, while poeticized PK manuals are fashioned after the tracts of mythopoetic gurus Robert Bly and Sam Keen. Finally, PK authors who advocate racial reconciliation expand the otherwise one-dimensional frame of this Christian men's movement to become culturally engaged with mobilizations undertaken by men of color (e.g., the Million Man March).

PK simultaneously negotiates boundaries with its evangelical predecessors (e.g., the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition) and with other men's protest movements on the contemporary scene. The discourse of traditional masculinity builds connections with the constituencies of the New Christian Right and harkens back to a bygone era that seems less confusing and less complicated than the contemporary moment. Yet, PK's integration of more contemporary perspectives—discourses of men's liberation, poeticized masculinity, and multiculturalism—help the movement to avoid the charge of being backward, reactionary, and excessively nostalgic. What's more, this array of gender discourses negotiates social boundaries between the Promise Keepers and other men's protest movements. As the analysis presented here reveals, PK shares key points in common with men who have mobilized under the banners of liberationism, mythopoetics, and Afrocentrism. At the same time, PK's distinctiveness from these other men's movements is found

in its explicit use of evangelical cultural tools—the Bible, Jesus Christ—to advance its vision(s) of godly manhood.

Yet, being situated "all over the map" of gender identity politics hardly ensures that the Promise Keepers will have an enduring place in the landscape of America's new social movements. PK stadium venues are plagued by more contingent dates with the announcement of every new conference season. And by the close of the 1990s, the Promise Keepers had canceled several key events—including a proposed January 1, 2000 "millennial march" of Christian men on every one of the fifty state capitols throughout the United States. Despite the Promise Keepers' best efforts to construct a patchwork vision of evangelical masculinity, the new millennium may have ushered in the dismemberment of the archetypal godly man.

Notes

[1]It is beyond the scope of this article to situate PK archetypes within changing historical configurations of American manhood. I leave these connections to be pursued in future work. Two excellent historical analyses of changing masculine archetypes in the United States include Kimmel (1997) and Rotundo (1994). Historical changes in evangelical gender ideologies —including shifting social standards of conservative Protestant masculinity—are reviewed in Bartkowski (1998).

[2]My broader analysis of PK manuals, analyzed alongside other conservative Protestant advice on gender and family relations, is reported elsewhere (Bartkowski 1997, 2001a). As noted, broad thematic investigations yield valuable insights about the general contours of this advice literature. But these same investigations obscure insights that can be gleaned from the more focused and restricted analysis presented here.

It also bears mentioning that my exposure to the Promise Keepers, and to conservative Protestantism at large, is not restricted to the analysis of advice manuals. I am an experienced sociological observer of evangelical culture. I have conducted extensive fieldwork (ethnographic research and in-depth interviews) on gender negotiation within evangelical Protestantism and the Promise Keepers (Bartkowski 2001a, 2001b, 2003). My most sustained treatment of evangelical gender negotiation to date is presented in the monograph, *Remaking the Godly Marriage* (2001, Rutgers University Press) Although field data are not featured here, these lines of research inform my analysis of PK advice manuals.

[3]A bibliography of the original sample of analyzed manuals is available by request from the author.

[4]The archetypal labels Rational Patriarch, Expressive Egalitarian, and Multicultural Man are etic terminology—that is, shorthand references that I have coined during the course of my research. These particular terms are not used by Promise Keeper authors themselves. The use of these shorthand references enables me to identify the implicit masculine archetypes embedded within traditionalist, liberationist , and multicultural PK discourse. By contrast, the Tender Warrior archetype and racial reconciliation motif are emic terminology used by Promise Keeper writers themselves.

[5]As pointed out by Lockhart (2000), much of the imagery used in Stu Weber's volumes is adapted from the mythopoetic framework articulated by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette—amended by Weber to make it suitable for an evangelical audience.

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