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Transforming masculinities towards gender justice in an era of HIV and AIDS
Plotting the pathways

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, men and masculinities have become contested. This is especially so in contexts where HIV is transmitted predominantly through heterosexual contact and men are criticised for spreading the virus and contributing to the impact of the epidemic on women's lives. This has given rise to investigations of masculinities as these are said to inform male behaviour. The intersection of men, masculinities and HIV and AIDS is studied, among others, from the perspective of religion and theology. This chapter seeks to survey the literature on this particular intersection. It further investigates how issues of men and masculinities are addressed, analysed and reflected upon in the context of HIV and AIDS from the perspective of religion and theology.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the concept of masculinity, briefly outlining how it has become central to the study of the HIV epidemic and how it is understood theoretically. In the following section the problematic aspects of masculinity in the context of HIV and AIDS are discussed, investigating in particular scholars' consideration of the role of religion. The subsequent section outlines how scholars imagine a transformation of masculinities, including the helpfulness of religious resources and the theological view from which these are explored. The chapter concludes with a few evaluative reflections.

But, before moving on to the first section, some introductory remarks have to be made on the body of literature to be discussed. First, studying men and masculinities in the context of HIV and AIDS and from the perspective of religion and theology is a very recent development. Therefore, the number of

publications in this area is relatively small and the issues of interest are often only explored briefly. Second, most of the available publications focus on sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular southern Africa. Third, the body of literature is limited not only in terms of number and geographic focus but also in terms of religious scope. Most publications explore masculinities and HIV and AIDS in relation to Christianity, with only a few focusing on African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and Islam.

CONCEPT OF MASCULINITY

Masculinity as a concept has only recently emerged in studies on HIV and AIDS from the so-called gender perspective that increasingly became influential during the 1990s. Initially, this gender perspective focused on women, as they were said to be disproportionately infected by HIV, affected by stigma and discrimination and burdened with care.[1] Women's position with regard to the impact of the epidemic was often (and still is) described in terms of vulnerability and powerlessness. The subsequent intervention strategies are often aimed at the empowerment of women in order to realise gender equality. Over the past decade it has become increasingly recognised that not only women need to be empowered, but also men, in order transform gender relations.

Initially, men were considered simply as those in power who were the cause of women's vulnerability to HIV infection. However, the understanding of gender as two static and monolithic blocs of men and women is increasingly being critiqued. Currently, scholars of gender and HIV and AIDS call attention to differentiation and variability within gender categories, and for the agency of individuals.[2] With attention being paid to men's role in the gender dynamics of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, the concept of masculinity emerged. This concept has been utilised in the social sciences since the 1980s and was later also introduced to disciplines in the humanities. Although there is still some theoretical debate about the concept of masculinity, it is commonly understood as the social construction of male gender identities and of men's place in gender relations.[3]

Masculinity, as with gender, is regarded as a social construct. In gender theory, social constructionism is opposite to essentialism. The latter argues that there are some essential or natural features that characterise the categories of men and women. Social constructionism, in contrast, emphasises that these categories are attached to social and symbolic meanings, which are rooted in social structures and in cultural and religious ideologies.[4] This understanding opens up space to

investigate how masculinity is constructed in relation to particular social factors, for example specific religious traditions. Precisely because of the fact that masculinity is constructed in connection with context-specific structures and relations, it has become common to speak about masculinities in the plural. It is argued that even in one context several masculinities co-exist, placing men in a dynamic male gender order of contesting understandings of what it means to be a man.[5] The theoretical concept of masculinity as a social construction and the insight that multiple masculinities are dynamic both acknowledge the possibility of intervention and change.[6] As will emerge from this chapter, this is crucial to the HIV and AIDS context. Finally, the idea of masculinity as a social construction may prevent blaming discourses that point to men as the cause of the HIV epidemic.[7] Without ignoring the responsibility of men for their behaviour, it is important to realise that the masculinities that inform critical male behaviours are often maintained by both men and women.

Significantly, the historical development outlined above can also be observed in the study of gender, masculinity and HIV and AIDS from the perspective of religion and theology. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle), which has contributed significantly to opening up this field of study, is an example. Having addressed gender inequality and its consequences for women's lives in the context of HIV and AIDS for a number of years, the Circle invited male theologians to its 2007 pan-African conference on gender and HIV and AIDS for the first time and included a session on liberating masculinities.[8] This session challenged male theologians in Africa to work on a project on masculinities, gender and HIV.[9] Scholars in religion and theology who reflect on gender and masculinity in relation to HIV and AIDS largely subscribe to the social constructionist approach outlined above.

Adopting this social constructionist perspective, Ezra Chitando emphasises the importance of acknowledging men's socialisation into masculinities that maintain gender inequalities. He states that 'while being male is a biological factor, the process of expressing manhood is informed by social, cultural and religious factors'.[10] Hence, Chitando does not only offer a call to investigate how problematic masculinities are constructed but also how they can be transformed. Undertaking this challenge, he and other scholars point to religion as a factor contributing to both preservation and transformation of masculinities considered to be critical in the HIV and AIDS context.[11] This ambiguous role of religions is explored in the next two sections.

RELIGION AND CRITICAL MASCULINITIES

The reason why men and masculinities are addressed by scholars in religion and theology is that several critical aspects of dominant masculinities are believed to be informed by religious beliefs and practices. Chitando is one of the few male scholars in religion and theology in Africa who contributes significantly to the debate on masculinities. He denounces three aspects of dominant masculinities in southern Africa that are problematic in the HIV and AIDS context.[12] First, he points to particular constructions of male sexuality that lead men into risky sexual behaviours. This issue will be discussed below. Second, Chitando mentions the issue of care, observing that dominant masculinities dissuade men from engaging in the provision of care to people living with HIV. This observation is supported by women theologians who time and again mention that women are disproportionately burdened with the care of relatives living with HIV.[13] Although Chitando refers to cultural and religious factors that allow men to leave women and children to cope with the provision of care, he does not explore these factors in any detail. The third issue mentioned by Chitando is stigmatisation. He notes that dominant masculinities contribute to the stigmatisation of women living with HIV because they tend to portray women as the source of the disease. He observes:

> [M]asculinities play an important role in the spread of HIV in the region of southern Africa. Masculinities inform and facilitate the tendency by some men to have multiple sexual partners and not to use condoms, limit the participation of men in the provision of care for PLWHA [people living with HIV and AIDS] and contribute to the stigmatization of women.[14]

Chitando and other scholars explain these masculinities from patriarchal religious gender ideologies. These have informed the construction of masculinities that give rise to gender inequalities critical to the spread and impact of the epidemic. Before exploring these ideologies, attention is paid to an area of critical importance to the discussion, namely male sexuality. In this area, two issues have attracted particular attention: sexual decision making and sexual violence.

Sexual decision making

HIV in sub-Saharan Africa is often assumed to be transmitted predominantly through heterosexual intercourse.[15] Much attention has been paid to women's

vulnerability in sexual relations and hence recently men's behaviour in sexual relationships has been the subject of scholarly investigation. African women theologians have constantly insisted that women are not in a position to insist on safe sex because of the dominance of men in sexual decision making. Fulata Moyo, for example, clearly states: 'Sexuality is about power for those who determine the what, when, where and how of sex, be it socio-economic and/or religio-cultural. In heterosexual relationships, those who have this power are men.'[16] She argues that this gendered structure of sexual decision making is informed by Christian as well as traditional religious sexual socialisation. Elaborating upon this, Moyo especially refers to female initiation rites in Malawi, both the traditional one (*chinamwali*) and the Christianised version (*chilangizo*) where women are taught to serve men's sexual needs, subordinating women's sexual life to that of men. This socialisation of women enables men to indulge in risky sexual behaviour.[17] It is significant to note that female initiation rites are organised by women who also provide sexual education to the young girls about to be initiated.[18] This raises the question as to how and why women contribute to the maintenance of unequal gender relations and patriarchal masculinities but unfortunately this issue is not discussed. Further, while Moyo discusses women's initiation into sexuality and womanhood as enabling men to engage in risky sexual behaviour, there is no reference to the way men are initiated into manhood and are educated on issues of sexuality in religio-cultural contexts. She does, however, suggest that cultural and Christian teaching about men as the head of the family contributes to a construction of masculinity and of gender relations in which sexual decision making is carried out by men.[19]

With Moyo, Madipoane Masenya also points to the notion of male headship as contributing to inequality in sexual decision making:

> The view that the headship of men is viewed as God-ordained assigns all authority and power to control to men. This includes the control of women's bodies. The understanding that a wife must be subject to her husband in everything (Ephesians 5:24) would thus also be understood to entail that she must always be willing to avail her body for her husband's sexual gratification.[20]

A similar observation has been made by Trad Godsey with regard to Islam, as he says that most Muslim men expect their wife to be sexually available as the

husband pleases. He notices that this is often justified by religious authorities with reference to the Qur'an (Surah 2:223).[21] As with the Qur'an, the Bible is used to teach women to be sexually available to their husbands, asserts Isabel Phiri.[22] She indicates that religious authorities, in this case Christian churches, support this form of teaching and legitimise male dominance in sexual decision making. Some churches are even found to practise this in their institutional structures, as becomes apparent from Moyo's article on the so-called Phoebe practice. Here, women in a particular church are expected to show sexual hospitality to the male church leadership. While noting its importance to the discussion of this piece of research, it can be questioned whether this particular case legitimates Moyo's generalising conclusion that 'the Church sustains the same mentality [of men's sexual aggressiveness] using the Bible as a tool that justifies the objectification of women's bodies to serve men's sexual gluttony'.[23]

Sexual violence

Related to the issue of sexual decision making is that of sexual violence. This has been discussed predominantly from the perspective of women, especially by African women theologians. In their publications on HIV and AIDS they have addressed different forms of sexual violence: the strategic use of sexual violence as an instrument of war in the recent history of genocide and violence in countries like Rwanda and Congo;[24] sexual violence in formal or institutional relations such as at schools and in the workplace and churches;[25] and sexual violence in domestic spheres.[26] These women theologians, while addressing different contexts in which sexual violence takes place, all understand this violence in terms of power. Phiri states: 'At the centre of violence against women is a demonstration of who is in power.'[27] As with sexual decision making, sexual violence raises the issue of male domination in sexual relationships. Trying to explain situations of sexual violence, Tinyiko Maluleke and Sarojini Nadar point to what they call the unholy trinity of religion, culture and the subsequent power of gender socialisation as reinforcing a culture of violence against women.[28] With regard to the role of religion they note that sacred texts are often used by religious leaders to justify sexual violence. This is supported by Phiri in her work with faith communities on sexual violence where she found the belief that the man owns the woman in a marriage relationship. Phiri notes that this facilitates sexual violence because sex is used as a weapon of domination.[29] Likewise, Moyo points out that women are taught in church to keep silent about violence in marriage and

again she explains this from the notion of male headship: 'As the head, the man deserves all the respect. Therefore anything that would lead to his losing respect should not be made known to others.'[30] Further, Maluleke and Nadar note that women do not receive support from their religious traditions in cases of violence.[31] This observation is confirmed by Beverley Haddad who points to the silence of churches on issues of violence against women and appeals for the breaking of this silence by calling men to account:

> The church can no longer assert to be the moral watchdog of society without challenging men to take responsibility for their sexual behaviour. Issues of gender violence, HIV/AIDS, and the links between the two cannot be dealt with without addressing men's abuse of power in relating to women, and dare I suggest without addressing the abuse of power within the structures of the church. One cannot theologise nor moralise while patriarchy continues unabated . . . Attitudinal and behaviour patterns of men in church communities have to change, and the onus is largely on the primarily male leadership to effect this change.[32]

So here patriarchy is presented as the source of men's abuse of power and churches are challenged to address this.

Male sexuality, fertility and power

As mentioned above, the literature on sexual decision making and sexual violence often points to issues of male dominance and men's power in sexuality issues. It is important to mention here the risk of generalisation as several publications tend to represent African men generally as being dominant, using violence and unable to control their sexuality. This approach echoes colonial and racist essentialising discourse on an African sexuality.[33] Nevertheless, several publications do deal with the question of why male sexuality tends to be expressed through dominance and power. Dealing with this question, Chitando points to the widespread understanding of a man as a sexual predator, meaning that men are possessed with virility and understand themselves as having uncontrollable sexual urges.[34] Likewise, Godefroid Kä Mana notes that masculinities in patriarchal cultures are characterised by power, potency and fertility. Hence, HIV prevention strategies, which often focus on sexual abstinence, marital fidelity and the use of condoms, are not successful because they are often experienced by men as a threat to their manhood.[35] These

observations of Kä Mana are confirmed by Godsey with regard to Muslim masculinities (not particularly in Africa) where sex often serves as a confirmation of male power.[36] None of these authors, however, explores the way religious and cultural traditions inform these notions of male sexuality. Chitando briefly mentions that boys are highly valued in society because they are responsible for perpetuating their ancestral lineage.[37] The connection between sexuality, fertility and ancestry might be a good starting point to understand better the manifestations of male sexuality that have become problematic in contemporary Africa. Significantly, scholars of ATRs such as John Mbiti and Laurenti Magesa have explained the tradition of polygamy from this point of view.[38] They point out that polygamy is informed, among others, by the cultural-religious importance of transmitting the force of life and ensuring immortality. It would be interesting to explore the significance of these beliefs in the light of current understandings of male sexuality in contexts where formal polygamous relationships are no longer possible for socio-economic reasons.

Religion and patriarchal masculinities

From the discussion in the above section it appears that dominant masculinities are often explained through the lens of patriarchy. This is used to understand structural inequalities in the power relations between men and women. Scholars often point to religion as a factor in maintaining patriarchal gender relations. In Christianity the notion of the male headship has been criticised especially, as noted above. In Islam there exist dominant masculinities in which the husband possesses power and authority over his wife, as Godsey makes clear.[39] Indeed, religious gender ideologies generally tend to support patriarchy, whether it is in Islam, Christianity or ATRs.[40] The connection between religious traditions and patriarchy is a recurring theme in the literature.

However, I have some difficulty with the way patriarchy is conceptualised and the way in which the relationship between religion and patriarchal masculinities is explored. Most authors refer to patriarchy in a generalised way, with reference to African patriarchal culture, or similar overarching phrases. Not only can the suggestion of a singular African culture be questioned but also the monolithic understanding of patriarchy that arises from such discourse. This approach does not take into account the different ways in which masculinities are constructed, even within a patriarchal setting. Nor does it take into account the different ways in which men engage in patriarchal gender relations and how they understand

themselves and behave in relation to other men, women and children. Therefore, a more complex conceptualisation of patriarchy is needed: while dominant masculinities may all be patriarchal, not all have the same extent of negative impact in the context of HIV and AIDS. As part of this investigation, the role of religion has to be explored and evaluated in a more complex way.

From my research in Christian churches in Zambia, I found that they reinforce patriarchal masculinities but yet define them in ways that might actually be helpful to HIV prevention.[41] These churches emphasise the concept of the man as the head of a marriage and family but use this concept to point out their related responsibilities in the areas of sexuality, relationships, marriage, the community and so forth. This indicates that religious gender ideologies in themselves, even when they inform patriarchal masculinities, are not necessarily negative in the context of HIV and AIDS. This view is supported by Phiri's observation that girls view male headship positively, as a weapon to help prevent sexual violence against women.[42]

But Chitando suggests that 'men have largely *abused* [emphasis mine] religious and cultural resources to continue engaging in risky sexual behaviour, while dangerously exposing their partners to HIV'.[43] He asserts that religions are misinterpreted and misapplied by men to legitimate negative behaviour, rather than religion directly legitimating this behaviour. This distinction calls for a more nuanced understanding and exploration of the role of religion in the construction of patriarchal masculinities and the way men engage them.

RELIGION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MASCULINITIES

As has become clear from the above discussion, hegemonic masculinities have become contested because they are said to contribute to the spread and impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Hence, there is now a quest for the transformation of masculinities in order to overcome their negative aspects. Significantly, it is believed that religion can provide helpful resources for the transformation of masculinities. In as much as religion is used to reinforce problematic gender ideologies and masculinities, it is argued, religion can be used for transformation.

Religious resources for transformation

Imagining a transformation of masculinities, scholars draw on several religious and theological resources derived from Christianity, ATRs and Islam. Often, these resources are only briefly mentioned and without their meaning being explored in any depth.

Observe, for example, the work of Fulata Moyo, whose critical discussion on the notion of men as head of the family has been outlined above. She calls for a transformation of the concept of headship towards gender equality, and mutuality and companionship in marriage.[44] She mentions several religious notions to inform the call for such a transformation. First, she points to the creational notion that humanity, both male and female, is created in the image of God. For Moyo this means that both women and men deserve equal life and dignity. She not only draws on biblical texts but also on African creation myths in which the God-creator is often portrayed in gender-neutral or bi-gender terms, reinforcing the notion of the equality of men and women as co-bearers of the image of God.[45] Second, she briefly points to Jesus' liberation and life-giving mission in men's and women's sexuality but the meaning of this is not explored. Third, Moyo mentions the biblical notion of *agape* which she uses to argue for mutuality and companionship in marriage. This argument is aimed at preventing men from abusing their power and authority at the expense of women. Moyo briefly equates *agape* with the African traditional notion of *ubuntu* but at the same time she warns that *ubuntu* can easily be understood in a patriarchal way.[46]

The notion of *ubuntu* is central in the accounts of two other scholars, Musa Dube and Ezra Chitando. Dube mentions concepts from different indigenous groups that have similar meaning: *setho*, *isintu*, *chitu*, and *ubuntu*. These concepts, she argues, all refer to the central belief within ATRs that one can only be human by living within community, contributing to its well-being and harmony, and respecting others. According to Dube, this understanding is crucial to the struggle against HIV and AIDS because, among other reasons, it forces men to rethink their understanding of masculinity. Dube proposes a manhood that is characterised by the ethic of indigenous religions, which she describes as an ethic of 'earning respect by first giving it'.[47] In her view, the respect automatically paid to men in patriarchal cultures should rather become something that has to be earned by engagement in the well-being of the community and in healthy relationships with women and their families. A similar ethical ideal for masculinity is explored further by Chitando.[48] He suggests the notion of *ubuntu* as crucial for an African indigenous theology of HIV and AIDS.[49] In a recent publication, Chitando applies this specifically to the transformation of masculinities in the HIV context. Here he proposes the concept of solidarity, which he contrasts to the traditional religious notion of *ubuntu*. According to Chitando, solidarity means standing for, and with, the other. In relation to masculinities:

> [S]olidarity implies the willingness of men to be self-emptying and to stand with women in the battle against HIV and AIDS. Solidarity calls for self-reflection on the part of men in southern Africa, so that they interrogate their position of power and show that they can identify with the cries of pain from women and children.[50]

Chitando points out that a masculinity of solidarity will push men to change their sexual ethics and not to engage in multiple sexual relations any longer. Further, men will be encouraged to participate in care giving to those living with HIV and overcome stigmatising attitudes. It is noteworthy that Chitando mentions that solidarity is related to, but goes beyond, *ubuntu* because the *ubuntu* philosophy is connected to a male-centred definition of community that leaves women and children at the margins. This corresponds with Moyo's reluctance to make *ubuntu* a central concept for the transformation of masculinities and gender relations, as noted above. In order to overcome the patriarchal overtones of *ubuntu,* Chitando suggests the ministry of Jesus, the one who always stood in solidarity with those at the margins, as the perfect model for solidarity.[51] In making this theoretical move, he corrects the tendency of men who approve the community ideal of *ubuntu* while at the same time not caring about the well-being of women and children. Chitando's reference to Jesus as the exemplary embodiment of solidarity indicates that he considers Jesus to be the role model for the transformation of masculinity. Unfortunately, he does not explore this in any great depth.

Africa Praying: A Handbook on HIV and AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy includes a contribution in which Jesus is also proposed as a role model for manhood. The author, Cheryl Dibeela, draws from Mark 9:33–36 where Jesus rebukes the disciples when they are discussing which of them is the greatest. Dibeela points out that the question of greatness is irrelevant to Jesus because his concept of power is different from ours. Subsequently, Dibeela calls upon men to acknowledge that they have not used their power to prevent transmission or care for those living with HIV and challenges them to change their lives according to the standard set by Jesus.[52] While both Chitando and Dibeela present Jesus as an example for men, neither addresses the question of how Jesus, who in the Christian tradition is dissociated from sexuality and marriage, is to be a helpful model for the transformation of masculinities.[53] I therefore wonder if, in the HIV and AIDS context, where men's marital and sexual relations are so crucial to the discussion, another role model who directly addresses these relations would not be more constructive.

As Jesus is presented as a role model for men by Christian theologians, the Islamic scholar Trad Godsey presents Muhammad as the model for a transformative Muslim masculinity in the context of HIV and AIDS. Contrary to prevailing perceptions of Muhammad, according to Godsey the prophet is the ideal man. The particular notion that Godsey derives from Muhammad as crucial to a redefined Muslim masculinity is the aspect of vulnerability.[54] By being willing to be vulnerable and to show his weakness before his wife (or wives), the Prophet is said to encourage contemporary men to express their emotions rather than suppressing them through power, control and authority. According to Godsey, not only Muhammad but also the Qur'an supports this understanding of manhood, which contributes to equality in gender relations:

> The redefinition and reformation of masculinity in the Muslim world to allow manliness to be expressed as weakness and vulnerability has both a Qur'anic and Prophetic precedent. While the AIDS epidemic creates an urgency for change, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* have always contained tools to reconstruct manhood in a way that achieves greater gender equity for men and women alike.[55]

While Godsey gives this positive account of Muhammad, Clara Koh in her article on gender justice and Islam argues that the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition are very ambiguous with regard to gender equality.[56] These contradictory views thus indicate that further exploration is needed to see how Muhammad can become a role model for Muslim men in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Practical implications of transformation

Although several scholars explore religious and theological resources that challenge or redefine masculinities, there is little reference to what this means in practice. Again, it is Chitando who explores some ways for churches to mobilise men and transform masculinities in the HIV context. In his opinion, when churches engage in the transformation of masculinities they have to address men on two fronts: inside and outside the church. According to Chitando, they should address masculinities within the church because there men are just as susceptible to patriarchy as those outside. Therefore, sermons should challenge men to embrace gender justice and new understandings of manhood should be developed in Sunday schools, youth groups and men's and women's organisations. According to Chitando, 'if all church departments were actively involved in the shaping of

new ideals to manhood, society would be transformed in a radical way'. Chitando also considers the transformation of masculinities as an aspect of the church's mission in the context of HIV and AIDS: creative evangelism is needed to reach men at the worldly places where they are to be found. Churches 'need to sacralize such spaces and reach men'. Further, they also need to collaborate with men's organizations and non-governmental organisations that focus on men in order to reach them and transform masculinities.[57]

One way of addressing Chitando's need for the creative evangelism of men may be the use of the contextual Bible study method developed by the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research at the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal.[58] This method could be used as a way of addressing, among others, issues of gender violence and HIV and AIDS in communities, and aiming at women's empowerment.[59] Recently the method has also been applied to involve men in the transformation of masculinities. Biblical texts are read and discussed using guiding questions about the male characters in the text and the type of masculinity they represent.[60] Questions are then offered that force the reader to question how these biblical texts may assist in correcting aspects of these dominant masculinities. In so doing, redemptive masculinities are recovered. The text on the rape of Tamar, 2 Samuel 13:1–22 is offered as helpful to the quest for alternative African masculinities. According to Gerald West, a contextual Bible study on this story produces a social space where dominant masculinities are disrupted and contradicted and where alternatives can be articulated that lead, potentially, to social transformation.[61]

A further resource is the liturgical handbook mentioned earlier that provides practical resources to address men and transform masculinities using sermons at Sunday services.[62] There are a number of essays in the volume that address this issue. Included are: examples of services on the boy child by Chitando and by Augustine Musopole; on men and their role in the community by Tinyiko Maluleke; and on men and the use of power by Dibeela.[63] Although these scholars do not explore the theology of masculinities extensively, they try to point to a way of being a man that is life-giving in the context of HIV and AIDS. This is done by addressing male power, pointing men to their responsibilities and emphasising the equality of women and men.

More of these practical resources are needed from different religious traditions to provide faith communities with materials that can be used when working with men to transform masculinities.

Gender justice as a theological horizon

In the above section, a number of diverse religious and theological notions are proposed by several scholars insisting on a transformation of negative aspects of masculinities. These various resources have one aspect in common: they are adopted within an ideology and theology of gender justice. Gender justice, therefore, can be considered as the horizon for the transformation of masculinities in the HIV and AIDS context.

While gender justice is often only referred to briefly, there are a few scholars who have elaborated upon this concept in more detail. Isabel Phiri and Musa Dube have developed a theology of gender justice in the context of HIV and AIDS from a Christian theological perspective while, recently, Farid Esack and Clara Koh have explored it from an Islamic perspective.[64] According to Phiri: 'African women theologians have argued that as long as there is gender injustice in Africa, HIV/AIDS will continue unabated.'[65] Resisting gender injustice, like other forms of injustice, is therefore a major challenge for these theologians.[66] Elaborating upon what gender justice means, Phiri suggests that the justice of God needs to be embodied in the male-female relationship. This will result in the liberation of all forms of oppression in these relations and in the promotion of responsibility, mutuality and acceptance of duties towards each other. Thus, gender justice is concerned with the humanity of both women and men and it claims the fullness of life for all human beings regardless of their gender. Theologically, Phiri relates the fullness of life to the mission of Jesus, which was to bring wholeness in people.[67] Further, the humanity of both women and men is grounded in the creation of human beings in the image of God.[68] For Phiri, ultimately gender justice is rooted in the character of God because the biblical God is a God of justice, and the practice of Christianity should reflect the character of God.[69] She notes that women theologians are working with God in the transformation of society and seek to construct new male and female identities that are empowering and inclusive for all of humanity. For Phiri, therefore, this engagement with justice occurs within an eschatological perspective as 'justice for all of humanity is not only important but it is necessary for the realization of the presence of God on earth'.[70]

Musa Dube explores the concept of gender justice from a biblical-theological perspective and provides a reading of the parable of Luke 18:1–8 in which the attitude of the unjust judge is compared with God as a just judge. She concludes:

> The parable strongly assures us of a God who is unfailingly in solidarity with the oppressed and exploited. God is a God of justice, the parable underlines. It is this strong expression of God's solidarity with the oppressed and exploited that gives the women writers of this volume the courage to say, 'grant me justice'.[71]

Thus, as with Phiri, Dube understands justice as a characteristic of God. Further, she presents Jesus as the one who embodied this justice. Referring to several passages in the Gospel, Jesus is represented by Dube particularly as someone fighting for gender justice, a programme that should be followed by the Christian church.[72]

From the perspective of Islam, the need for gender justice in the context of HIV and AIDS has been emphasised by Farid Esack. He especially calls men to engage in the struggle for gender justice: 'All of us, particularly Muslim men, need to understand that justice is not just something that we demand from others. It is also something that we demand from ourselves, something that we may give in order that there may be greater justice.'[73] Hence, Esack calls on men to give up their power for the greater good of gender justice in the context of HIV and AIDS, regardless of whether Allah has sanctioned this male power or not. This latter issue is central in Islamic feminism. Clara Koh, evaluating the way Islamic feminists deal with the Qur'an in their quest for gender justice, suggests that the Qur'an is ambivalent with regard to gender justice and therefore cannot function as a helpful resource. She concludes her essay by stating that Islamic feminism should embrace a holistic understanding of gender justice because HIV and AIDS is embedded in multiple inequalities but she does not explore how the Qur'an or Islamic tradition may be helpful to this project.[74] She also does not point out an alternative way to argue for gender justice from an Islamic perspective. So, although there are some Muslim scholars who call for gender justice in the context of HIV and AIDS, there is almost no theologising in this regard.

EVALUATIVE AND REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION

In the introduction it was noted that the scholarly literature on men and masculinities in the context of HIV and AIDS from the perspective of religion and theology is relatively scarce. Indeed, the survey shows that the project of intersecting masculinities, HIV and AIDS, and religion is still in its early stages and

needs further exploration. The literature, as discussed, clearly points out both the negative aspects of dominant masculinities and the need to overcome and transform them. It also makes clear that religious traditions and institutions play an ambiguous role in this area. On the one hand they reinforce or legitimate masculinities that appear to be negative in the context of HIV and AIDS while on the other they can be applied to raise awareness among men and to transform masculinities.

In the above section on the concept of masculinities, it has been mentioned that scholars in the area of gender and HIV increasingly pay attention to differentiation and variability within gender categories and argue for the agency of individuals in these categories. However, with regard to the field of religion there are still important challenges. Too often, men are represented as one monolithic bloc dominating women and spreading HIV. This essentialist discourse is similar to the way the concept of patriarchy is used, as was critiqued above. There is thus a lack of consideration of the plurality of masculinities that are found in social, cultural and religious contexts. Although this plurality is acknowledged in some of the literature, the differentiation among men and masculinities is yet to be explored by religious scholars. A negative outcome of this essentialising discourse is that it often generalises about men and male sexuality. Sometimes men are represented in a way that comes close to the racist representations of an African sexuality in earlier colonial discourses and a more sophisticated conceptual and methodological framework needs to be employed. When a concept such as patriarchy is used, its meaning has to be defined and attention has to be paid to the diversity of masculinities and gender relations. In addition, the question of how religion interferes with the constructions of masculinities needs further scholarly attention.

With regard to the transformation of masculinities, the urgent question is the nature of the hermeneutic. As explored above, gender justice functions as a theological horizon in the work of scholars from Christian and Islamic perspectives. However, the concept of gender justice is somewhat vague and needs further theological reflection. It was noted that if gender justice is about enhancing the life of men and women together, some masculinities that are labelled as patriarchal may be acceptable in certain contexts. They may even be helpful and constructive in the context of HIV and AIDS. However, when gender justice is understood as a radical call for equality of men and women, it does not leave space for a gender ideology that puts men in a primary position in relation to women.

Related to the question of how gender justice is understood is the issue of gender difference. The literature discussed in this chapter suggests notions such as solidarity, mutuality and companionship as a way to define gender relations and transform masculinities. Generally, these notions are mentioned in order to ensure gender relations are more equal. This is important, as the project to transform masculinities originates from the awareness that HIV and AIDS impacts women particularly as a result of gender inequality. The emphasis on gender equality, however, means that not much attention is paid to gender difference in the proposals to redefine masculinity. This may be a problem because in many cultural-religious constructions of masculinity and femininity, the biological differences between the sexes are marked by symbolic meanings that have social implications. These are often firmly rooted in the perception of both men and women; therefore gender difference cannot be neglected. The question, then, is how gender difference can be marked symbolically and socially in a way that promotes the values of solidarity, mutuality and companionship and leads to gender justice. This is a difficult challenge that needs further reflection.

This difficulty can be illustrated by the example of the concept of male headship. This cultural and religious concept marks the difference between men and women by declaring men to be the head in marriage and family relationships. From my research in churches in Zambia,[75] and from the literature discussed in this chapter, it appears that the notion of headship is central in religious constructions of masculinity. It has also been mentioned that the concept of male headship is said to facilitate male behaviour that is destructive in the context of HIV and AIDS. Yet it was also noted that the same concept can be applied in a way that is more constructive in the HIV context, despite the fact that the notion of male headship clearly fits into a patriarchal gender ideology. From a radical understanding of gender equality it has to be deconstructed. Criticising this notion, however, will probably result in men feeling threatened. Practically, it may be easier to respect this notion but redefine its meaning, and to point men to their related responsibilities. This is a possible way to transform masculinities and a few authors suggest that masculinities be transformed within the paradigm of male headship.[76] However, the question is whether the principle of gender justice allows for the concept of male headship at all. This concept not only marks gender difference but qualifies it in terms of headship (men) and submission (women) and therefore facilitates an unequal relationship between men and women. It raises the question whether the concept of headship should, for this

reason, be rejected. If so, are there other religious and cultural concepts that define male gender identity without making a qualified difference between men and women? These are crucial questions that need to be addressed if masculinities are to be transformed.

To conclude, in the literature discussed here, many critical questions have been raised concerning the role of men and the significance of masculinities in the context of HIV and AIDS, and the way these are reinforced by religion. Furthermore, important steps to be taken to overcome the problems concerning men and masculinities revealed by the HIV epidemic are addressed. However, many issues need further analysis and exploration in order to understand and transform negative masculinities and realise gender justice.

NOTES

1. Carolyn Baylies and Janet Bujra (eds), *AIDS, Sexuality and Gender in Africa: Collective Strategies and Struggles in Tanzania and Zambia* (London: Routledge, 2000).
2. Hansjörg Dilger and Johanna Offe, 'Making the difference?: Structure, agency and culture in anthropological research on gender and Aids in Africa'. *Curare* 28(2–3) 2005: 274–5.
3. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2nd ed., 2005): 67ff. A similar understanding of the concept of masculinity is used in the emerging field of men's studies in religion, a concept introduced around the 1990s. See Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood and Mark W. Muesse, 'Men, masculinity and the study of religion' in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, edited by Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood and Mark W. Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996): xviii–xxii.
4. Some social constructionist accounts of gender have an essentialist aspect as well. This has been critically mentioned by recent post-structuralist theories of gender. In the field of HIV and AIDS, however, social constructionism is the prevailing theoretical perspective on gender. For an overview and introduction to theories of gender see Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons and Kathleen Lennon, *Theorizing Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
5. Connell, *Masculinities*: 76ff.
6. This possibility is acknowledged and explored, among others, in Reshma Sathiparsad, 'Masculinities in the era of HIV/Aids: The perspectives of rural male Zulu youth' in *From Boys to Men: Social Constructions of Masculinity in Contemporary Society*, edited by Tamara Shefer et al. (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2007): 191ff; Janet Bujra, 'Targeting men for a change: AIDS discourse and activism in Africa' in *Masculinities Matter!: Men, Gender and Development*, edited by Frances Cleaver (London: Zed Books, 2002): 218, 225.
7. Punima Mane and Peter Aggleton, 'Gender and HIV/AIDS: What do men have to do with it?' *Current Sociology* 49(6) 2001: 28.

8. Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'Major challenges for African women theologians in theological education (1989–2008)'. *International Review of Mission* 98(1) 2009: 116. For an introduction to the Circle's response to HIV and AIDS from a gender perspective see Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'African women of faith speak out in an HIV/AIDS era' in *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003): 3–22.

9. The first outcome of this project is *Redemptive Masculinities: Religion, Men, Gender-Based Violence and HIV*, edited by Ezra Chitando (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2010).

10. Ezra Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa' in *Persons in Community: African Ethics in a Global Culture*, edited by Ronald Nicolson (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008): 51.

11. See Chapter 9 of this book where Chitando addresses the question of construction of masculinities from this point of view.

12. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 52ff.

13. For example, see Musa W. Dube, 'Grant me justice: towards gender-sensitive multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS readings of the Bible' in *Grant Me Justice!: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*, edited by Musa W. Dube and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004): 10–11; Phiri, 'African women of faith speak out in an HIV/AIDS era': 15.

14. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 55.

15. The silence on the homosexual transmission of the virus in the discourse on the HIV epidemic in Africa is mentioned by Marc Epprecht as 'a puzzling blindspot, a troubling silence, a strange consensus' which he explains from the general assumption of Africans as naturally heterosexual. See M. Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?: The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), especially 16–17. The heterosexual assumption also characterises the literature surveyed in this chapter. This could probably be explained by the historical focus on the gendered (female) face of the epidemic, even in more recent discussions on masculinities. Yet the issue of homosexuality in relation to masculinities and HIV cannot continue to be ignored, particularly given the taboo of homosexuality in faith communities and the opposition to homosexuality by religious leaders.

16. Fulata Lusungu Moyo, 'Religion, spirituality and being a woman in Africa: Gender construction within the African religio-cultural experience'. *Agenda* 61 (2004): 73.

17. Fulata Lusungu Moyo, 'Sex, gender, power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi: Threats and challenges to women being church' in *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005): 130ff. See also Ezra Chitando, '"The good wife": A phenomenological re-reading of Proverbs 31:10–31 in the context of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe'. *Scriptura* 86 (2004): 151–9.

18. Fulata Lusungu Moyo, 'A Quest for Women's Sexual Empowerment Through Education in an HIV and AIDS Context' (Ph.D. thesis, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2009): xiii.

19. Moyo, 'Sex, gender, power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi': 131, 133.

20. Madipoane Masenya, 'Trapped between two "canons": African-South African Christian women in the HIV/AIDS era' in *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*, edited by Phiri, Haddad and Masenya: 119.

21. Trad Godsey, 'The Muslim man and AIDS: Negotiating spaces for new conceptualizations of masculinity' in *Islam and AIDS: Between Scorn, Pity and Justice*, edited by Farid Esack and Sarah Chiddy (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009): 133.

22. Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us?: Overcoming violence against women'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114 (2002): 25.

23. Fulata Lusungu Moyo, '"When the telling itself is a taboo": The Phoebe practice' in *On Being Church* edited by Phiri and Nadar: 193.

24. Anne Nkirote Kubai, 'Living in the shadow of genocide: Women and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda' in *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa: Responding to Ethical and Theological Challenges*, edited by Teresia M. Hinga et al. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008): 49–74.

25. Ruth Muthei James, 'Factors that render the girl-child vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Kenya' in *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa*, edited by Hinga et al.: 14; Sophie Chirongoma, 'Women's and children's rights in the time of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe: An analysis of gender inequalities and its impact on people's health'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 126 (2006): 57; Pacificah Florence Okemwa, 'Maid in Nairobi in the age of HIV/AIDS: The plight of female domestic workers facing AIDS: cases from Kenya' in *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa*, edited by Hinga et al.: 20–33; Beverley Haddad, 'Choosing to remain silent: links between gender violence, HIV/AIDS and the South African Church' in *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*, edited by Phiri, Haddad and Masenya: 160.

26. James, 'Factors that render the girl-child vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Kenya': 13; Nyambura Jane Njoroge, 'Daughters and sons of Africa: Seeking life-giving and empowering leadership in the age of the HIV/AIDS pandemic' in *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa*, edited by Hinga et al.: 185–7; Chirongoma, 'Women's and children's rights in the time of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe': 54–7; Phiri, 'Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us?': 19–30.

27. Phiri, 'African women of faith speak out in an HIV/AIDS era': 14.

28. Tinyiko Sam Maluleke and Sarojini Nadar, 'Breaking the covenant of violence against women'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114(1) 2002: 5–17.

29. Phiri, 'Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us?': 24.

30. Moyo, 'Sex, gender, power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi': 133.

31. Maluleke and Nadar, 'Breaking the covenant of violence against women': 14.

32. Haddad, 'Choosing to remain silent': 155, 160.

33. These essentialising discourses on African sexuality are also discussed in Chapter 10 of this book.

34. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 52–3.

35. Godefroid Kä Mana, 'Culture, societe et sciences humaines dans la lutte contre le VIH-SIDA en Afrique' in *Religion, Culture et VIH-SIDA en Afrique: Un Hommage au Docteur Jaap Breetvelt*, edited by Godefroid Kä Mana, Jean-Blaise Kenmogne and Helene Yinda (Yaounde: SHERPA, 2004): 70.

36. Godsey, 'The Muslim man and AIDS': 133.

37. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 50.
38. Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997): 136–40; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 2nd ed., 1990): 138–41.
39. Godsey, 'The Muslim man and AIDS': 130.
40. See Chapter 9 of this book.
41. This research can be found in 'The Need for Circumcised Men: The Quest for Transformed Masculinities in African Christianity in the Context of the HIV Epidemic' (PhD thesis, Utrecht University, Utrecht, 2001). It involves case studies in two local churches to investigate how men in these communities are addressed and masculinities (re)defined against the background of the HIV epidemic. The churches are Regiment Parish and Northmead Assembly of God, both located in Lusaka, Zambia.
42. Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'A theological analysis of the voices of teenage girls on men's role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 120 (2004): 42.
43. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 53.
44. Moyo, 'Sex, gender, power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi': 131ff.
45. Moyo, 'Religion, spirituality and being a woman in Africa': 74.
46. Moyo, 'Sex, gender, power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi': 135–6. This discussion is also addressed in Chapter 7 of this book.
47. Musa W. Dube, 'Adinkra!: Four hearts joined together on becoming healer-teachers of African indigenous religion/s in HIV and AIDS prevention' in *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006): 140, 152.
48. Ezra Chitando's work in this regard is dealt with by Lucinda Manda in Chapter 7 of this book and in Chapter 9 by Chitando himself.
49. Ezra Chitando, *Living with Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS 1* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007): 56ff.
50. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 56.
51. Chitando, 'Religious ethics, HIV and AIDS and masculinities in southern Africa': 57, 58–60.
52. Cheryl Dibeela, 'Men and the use of power' in *Africa Praying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*, edited by Musa W. Dube (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003): 194.
53. For further discussion of this point, see Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (eds), *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
54. Godsey, 'The Muslim man and AIDS': 125.
55. Godsey, 'The Muslim man and AIDS': 125.
56. Clara Koh, 'Gender justice, Islam and AIDS' in *Islam and AIDS,* edited by Esack and Chiddy: 88–104.
57. Ezra Chitando, *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS 2* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007): 46–7, 49–52.
58. For a further discussion of the work of the Ujamaa Centre, see Chapter 5 of this book.

59. Gerald O. West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, 'The Bible story that became a campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and beyond)'. *Ministerial Formation* 103 (2004): 5–13.

60. Ujamaa Centre, *Redemptive Masculinities: A Series of Contextual Bible Studies*. Available at http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/ujamaa/redmasc.ppt (accessed 9 Apr. 2009).

61. Gerald West, 'The contribution of Tamar's story to the construction of alternative African masculinities' (unpublished paper).

62. Dube, *Africa Praying*.

63. Ezra Chitando, 'The boy child' in *Africa Praying*, edited by Dube: 171–3; Augustine Musopole, 'The boy child' in *Africa Praying*, edited by Dube: 169–71; Tinyiko Maluleke, 'Men and their role in the community' in *Africa Praying*, edited by Dube: 190–3; Dibeela, 'Men and the use of power': 193–5.

64. Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'Life in fullness: Gender justice: a perspective from Africa'. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 8(2) 2002: 79; Dube, 'Grant me justice'; Musa Dube, 'Grant me justice: Female and male equality in the New Testament'; *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 2 (2001): 82–115; Farid Esack, *HIV, AIDS and Islam: Reflections Based on Compassion, Responsibility and Justice* (Cape Town: Positive Muslims 2004): 50–1; Koh, 'Gender justice, Islam and AIDS'.

65. Phiri, 'Life in fullness': 79.

66. Nyambura Jane Njoroge, 'Resisting gender inequality and injustice in the name of Jesus' in *Heil und Befreiung in Afrika: Die Kirchen vor der Missionarischen Herausforderung durch HIV/AIDS*, edited by Francis X. D'Sa and Jürgen Lohmayer (Wurzburg: Echter, 2007): 54–73.

67. Phiri, 'Life in fullness': 78, 80.

68. Phiri, 'Life in fullness': 77; Phiri, 'Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us?': 26.

69. Phiri, 'Life in fullness': 77, 79.

70. Phiri, 'A theological analysis of the voices of teenage girls on men's role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa': 44–5.

71. Dube, 'Grant me justice': 19.

72. Musa W. Dube, 'Jesus, prophecy and AIDS' in *Reflecting Theologically on AIDS: A Global Challenge*, edited by Robert Gill (London: SCM Press, 2007): 92–3; Musa W. Dube, 'Who do you say that I am?'. *Feminist Theology* 15(3) 2007: 360–5.

73. Esack, *HIV, AIDS and Islam*: 50.

74. Koh, 'Gender justice, Islam and AIDS': 96–101.

75. See note 41.

76. This is indicated in subtle ways. Fulata Moyo, for example, is very critical of the concept of male headship but yet she wonders 'how can the Church *transform* [this writer's emphasis] the concept of headship' rather than arguing that the concept should be removed completely (see Moyo, 'Sex, gender and power': 131). Isabel Phiri uncritically points out that girls consider male headship a weapon against sexual violence, which may suggest that she considers this a real option (see note 42). Patriarchy in general is discussed by Christopher Isike and Ufo Okeke Uzodike in 'Modernizing without Westernizing: Reinventing African patriarchies to combat the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Africa'. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 14(1) 2008: 3–20. They distinguish between old and new types of patriarchy in Africa and argue that the former should be re-valued as it provides men with a constructive and HIV preventive model of manhood.

Practitioner response

Lilian Siwila

The strategy of working towards the transformation of masculinities in order to achieve gender justice within the field of religion is becoming increasingly significant in addressing the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The question of men and masculinities has emerged as a contested issue in addressing HIV and AIDS. In many activist campaigns and scholarly works, men have been criticised for the spread of HIV. Religion and theology have offered limited practical strategies in dealing with men, although the work of African women theologians, as well as organisations such as the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, referred to by Van Klinken, is beginning to address this issue.[1]

In discussing masculinities, he argues that this is not a new theoretical discourse but its engagement with HIV and AIDS has recently been introduced. The idea of engaging men in addressing the epidemic has meant a paradigm shift to a more holistic approach that does not simply see men as perpetrators but also as partners in mitigating HIV. In order to achieve this, Van Klinken concurs with Zeferino Teka who suggests that it is important to emphasise both the positive and negative aspects of dominant masculinities.[2] This is helpful because it opens up space for men to understand their manhood without becoming defensive.

When discussing masculinities in the context of HIV and AIDS, I agree with Van Klinken that dominant masculinities are informed by religious beliefs and practices. In most Zambian ethnicities, men's emotions are not supposed to be expressed. For example, the Bemba will use such phrases as *shipa uli mwa ume, fisanga aba ume* (a man can overcome all hardship); and there is a Tonga proverb, *mulombwana munyati* (a man is a lion), asserting male power, might and victory. This reinforces Chitando's view, highlighted by Van Klinken, that ATRs do expect men to be strong and assertive. It means that they do not engage in care giving, regarded as work for women. In my experience, it is clear that the women are burdened with the load of providing care during times of illness in the family.[3]

Van Klinken also discusses the problem of sexuality, which he asserts is an issue of power and also related to the way men and women are socialised. An example is that of the headship of a man, power exercised through sexuality. At the centre of forming masculinities, especially in culturally determined settings, men are taught to use their power to prove their sexual authority while women are taught to submit to the sexual demands of their husbands. In order to be recognised as a man you have to be sexually active. Socialisation teaches that men are to lead and control, while women are to

follow and obey. According to Van Klinken, these patriarchal masculinities tend to be protected by religious gendered ideologies. He, however, laments the over-generalisation of men as oppressors and suggests that this essentialist discourse is not helpful to the effort of transforming masculinities. But from my perspective it is important to continue to problematise and analyse patriarchy.

In Africa, central to discussions on gender, men and masculinities is an issue of culture from which dominant masculinities emerge. As Musimbi Kanyoro rightly suggests, Africans cannot live outside their culture, as culture informs who they are as Africans.[4] It is for this reason that I suggest that all methodology used in the transformation of masculinities should employ cultural hermeneutics, as outlined by Kanyoro, in order to address some of the historical and culturally embedded, wounded masculinities.[5] Mercy Oduyoye has observed that the theory of cultural hermeneutics has been used effectively by African women theologians in their effort to engage African culture and the Bible.[6] However, there is a need to be vigilant in identifying the ways in which culture influences men's behaviour both positively and negatively. It is, therefore, important that both the Bible and the Qur'an are engaged in a culturally sensitive manner in an attempt to transform masculinities to mitigate the HIV epidemic.

My own research and activist work has shown the importance of the socialisation process. I have realised just how much people's behaviour is informed by their childhood and family backgrounds. This is also true for me. I was born into a relatively large Zambian polygamous Tonga ethnic family. My grandfather, despite being a learned man, came from a culture that believed in educating only boys as girls were to be married off. As a result he continuously reminded the girls in the family that we were not meant to be highly educated because one day we would marry and remain at home to care for children. As for the boys in the family, he taught them the tough side of life and reminded them to be as fierce and brave as lions in facing the world. As a Christian family, we found the same message in the church. I was fortunate to be one of the girls who survived the storm of my grandfather. This was largely due to my mother, who refused to follow her father's teaching. She stressed that a good wife does not totally depend on her husband for everything (particularly not on his money) yet remains respectful. This, she told me, is only possible through hard work at school that would eventually lead to good employment.

The issue of men and masculinities should not end with scholarly debates. Initiatives are needed that meet men where they are and engage in dialogue with them. Van Klinken commends the Bible study work of the Ujamaa Centre that is attempting to deal with redeeming masculinities through readings of the sacred Christian text.[7] There is a need for more inter-religious readings of the sacred texts, including the Qur'an, around issues of masculinities.

All work towards gender justice needs to be collaborative. Kanyoro poses the following challenge:

The feminist analysis of patriarchy sometimes approaches women's oppression by pointing to men as the oppressors. This approach is a nonstarter in Africa. While African women acknowledge men's role in oppression, they do not throw stones . . . moreover when dealing with cultural matters there is need for collective solidarity.[8]

In this collective solidarity, men need to become full participants in naming oppressive behaviours that perpetuate women's vulnerability to HIV and so become role models for future generations in building a humane society where gender justice prevails.

Notes

1. Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness has produced a documentary 'Men and masculinity'. See http://www.promundo.org.br/Pesquisa/Young%20Men%20SubSaharan_Web.pdf.

2. Zeferino Teka, 'Male honour and HIV and AIDS as a gendered pandemic: An African male reflection on how man can be effectively engaged toward a positive male response'. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 14(1) 2008: 21–33.

3. Lilian Siwila, 'Care-giving in times of HIV and AIDS, when hospitality is a threat to African women's lives: a gendered theological examination of the theology of hospitality'. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 13(1) 2007: 69–82.

4. Musimbi Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002): 14.

5. The term wounded masculinities is used to point to those masculinities that have been imposed on men as part of the socialisation process that deny men their true humanity and suggest, for example, that they should not cry or should be sexually aggressive.

6. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theologies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

7. Ujamaa Centre, 'Redemptive Masculinities: A Series of Contextual Bible Studies'. Available at http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/ujamaa/redmasc.ppt (accessed 20 July 2009).

8. Musimbi Kanyoro, 'Cultural hermeneutics: an African contribution' in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, edited by Musa Dube (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001): 106.