

# Pastoral and practical theology: evaluation of w. m. longwood's claim

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



UV607163 Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology Level H1 Essay

Outline and evaluate the reasons given by W. M. Longwood to substantiate his claim: ' I am convinced that these attitudes, behaviours, relationships and institutions are not a result of something that is inherent in men, but are rather a response to a socialisation process that has not served either men or women well.' Also, describe how the six men's movements as pictured by Longwood are positioned in relation to his point. Word Count : 1423 I

Introduction ' Men's violence represents one of the darkest features of masculinity'. From feminism and women's studies, we have learned that males are prone to regard themselves as generic humans rather than gendered persons conditioned by historical and cultural processes. The tendency to view themselves as generic has often led men to assume that their experiences are universal. A mere glance at men's situations in the American world indicates that success is equated with competitive men who dominate in economic and government leadership, as well as in the sporting and entertainment arena. ' They show a careless disregard for the earth, control the money that funds art and culture and rule their families with an iron hand.' Many studies reveal that in general terms Western men, American in particular, are aggressive and violent. Social science research corroborates this in such documents by Berkowitz 1992, Hong 2000, and Marshall 1993. What has also been discovered is the fact that men are not solely violent towards women and children, but towards other men as well. Such a statement is qualified by the figures which show men are far more likely to be the perpetrators of homicide, physical assault, sexual assault and sexual abuse. ' Violence comes in many forms: the bully in the school yard,

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the university student raping his date, the soldier at war, the aggressive football hero or the abusive husband/lover/father all point to the commonness of violence.' It is in this context that Longwood quotes ' I am convinced that these attitudes, behaviours, relationships and institutions are not a result of something that is inherent in men, but are rather a response to a socialisation process that has not served either men or women well.'

Longwood uses S. Boyd to compliment his theory saying, ' we men are not inherently or irreversibly violent, relationally incompetent, emotionally constipated and sexually compulsive..... we manifest these characteristics .... because we have experienced violent socialisation processes that have produced this kind of behaviour.' It is at this point Longwood explores a possible reason or even justification for violence by saying ' violence is one response that fits all male pain'. A further explanation for violent behaviour is that as boys, some were forced into being ' gender stereo-typed' and were made to repress emotions and any need they felt for love and affection. This resulted in a mixed message of what was expected of them as boys and later as men. A further result is that they view their well-being in competition with others, particularly in the workplace, which can, for some, be a source of identity, and, in that workplace, they not only compete with men but women too. Yet, in their private lives, they display emotional dependence on women. Very few men turn to other men to be nurtured. Men's talk is not often on a personal level. They may hurt but not cry. Because most men do not consciously acknowledge underlying pain, they sadly, and often devastatingly respond in abusive behaviour. Such violence gives them a position of power and control thus covering their feelings of inadequacy or

fear. Social theorist Dorothy Dinnerstein states that 'we have been socialised to stereotypical feminine and masculine behaviour that disempowers women in the private sphere. Such male domination will continue as long as women remain primary care-givers.' Towards the end of the 20th century, some men have sought to respond to the dilemmas they feel by taking part in 'the men's movement'. There are a number of such movements worldwide, but for this essay I will only refer to those found in North America. Conservatism This movement emphasises traditional beliefs about gender characteristics and roles. Emphasis upon traits which are intrinsic to male and female natures is made, for example, men are strong physically, aggressive, competitive and are therefore more suited to provide and protect. Added to that it is noted that men are violent and destructive by nature and women are more able to tame and domesticate them. Such conservatism resulted in a movement called 'The Promise Keepers'. This movement stated that society was failing in every area because men did not accept or carry out their God-given responsibilities as head of the family. Longwood does not agree with the notion that the male-female hierarchy that is lacking should in fact be restored. He does however, see the 'Promise Keepers' and their meeting together serving a purpose in providing inner healing, growth and self-worth for men who have otherwise felt repressed. Profeminism This movement is the total opposite of conservatism. While profeminist men may agree with the description of men, they would disagree with the root of the problem and the offered solution. Profeminist men refute the idea that male aggression stems from a biological nature, but is more likely because of years of 'patriarchal socialisation'. Because of this, masculine conditioning

should be transformed in more creative ways. Men's Rights This perspective came about in response to the women's movement, and, like profeminism tends to emphasise social and political realities. One distinctive however, is that it highlights and addresses the specific legal and cultural factors that put men at a disadvantage, for example in judicial cases which may discriminate against men in custody cases. It also shares the view that men's qualities and characteristics derive from socialisation rather than genetic or biological factors. Contrary to profeminism though, Men's Rights state more about the harmful effects male conditioning has on men themselves, rather than on women and children. It has to be said that such groups can actually display a more anti-feminist view, but Longwood has personally advocated support for such groups while going through a difficult divorce himself. Men's Spiritual Movement This movement is also called the 'mythopoetic movement' and has gained the most attention in national media. It's spokesperson Robert Bly developed the idea of the 'wildman' within. Such a concept is worked out by gatherings of men in the woods for drumming and other rituals in order to 'journey to renewed manhood'. It's focus therefore is on personal change rather than social or political change. Socialism This movement agrees very much with profeminism. Both feel that gender is a social idea and both would feel passionately about political and social change. But profeminism feels that male violence is the key problem whereas Socialism implies it is a consequence of the capital class structure in place. They argue that analysing gender can only be done in the context of economic and social structures. Group-specific Movements One example in the USA of a specific group would be that of African American men. Here the

focus is on the racist stereo-type there is regarding black male sexuality, black violence and the results of poverty. The role of provider/protector in some situations facing this group is harder to fulfil. Conclusion By Longwood's own admission he would align himself with the profeminism position though he also sees the need to be aware of the racial/social elements highlighted by other groups. Longwood's position is obviously one of agreeing that outward conditioning whether socially, environmentally, upbringing or educationally, is in fact the key to resulting violent behaviour. He would, I feel, hold to any view that promoted a broadly evangelical stance of the 'man being the head of the home'. Perhaps this is because of personal experience having suffered or caused his own marital breakdown. Longwood states that progress must be made from the 'patriarchal socialisation that has been detrimental to both men and women.' How does he qualify such a statement? He doesn't address the Biblical interpretation of God —ordained leadership, be it in the home, work or in government. Authority need not mean aggressive power. Longwood seems to agree with the recommendations made by James N. Poling who states the need for 'support for one another, honest confession, courageous confrontation, long-term commitment and accountability.' All such suggestions can surely be seen in the context of godly living and responsibility as outlined in Scripture. With no authoritative parameters or guidelines, then all such musing and ideas are foundationally flawed, though theoretically worthwhile. For theologians to do all they can to 'reimagine what will be necessary to enable men to develop a non-violent understanding of what it means to be a husband, father, son', I feel Longwood needs much caution in the re-packaging of

Scriptural principles under the guise of social or economic reform at the expense of seeking, under God, to present sound teaching about the expectation and responsibility on both men and women to live to their fullest potential as God intends and is pleased with. Bibliography Anderson 2002: 52 Boyd, S 1995: 14 Brooks & Silversteine 1995 Dinnerstein 1976 from Longwood, W. M. Theological and Ethical Reflections on Men and Violence : Toward a New Understanding of Masculinity (SAGE publications 2006 Volume 3) Longwood, W. M. Theological and Ethical Reflections on Men and Violence : Toward a New Understanding of Masculinity (SAGE publications 2006 Volume 3) Poling, J. N Understanding Male Violence (St Louis Chalice Pres 2003)