

PALATABLE PATRIARCHY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WO/MEN¹ IN SOUTH AFRICA – ANGUS BUCHAN’S MIGHTY MEN’S CONFERENCE AS A CASE STUDY OF MASCULINISM

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Abstract

Robert Connell, the immanent scholar on masculinity studies, has urged scholars to undertake more concrete and located studies of the construction of masculinity. Taking up Connell’s challenge, this paper uses The Mighty Men’s Conference (MMC) started by Angus Buchan in 2004 in Greytown, South Africa, as a case study in masculinity and argues that Angus Buchan’s Christian MMC is a step toward masculinism, (destructive male power) not positive masculinity. Using Stephen Whitehead’s and Frank Barrett’s three propositions concerning the ways in which masculine power is created, namely forceful power, positional power and discursive power, the paper argues that the latter two forms of power are most evident in the MMC. Given the researched links between discourses of submission and headship and violence against wo/men, these latter two forms of power which are promoted through such discourses in the MMC is declared as unhelpful. Finally the paper concludes that while men’s movements are certainly important and needed in South Africa, movements that lead men down a garden path to a false sense of what it means to be a man, by appealing to outdated and destructive ways of being a man, will do more to aggravate the problem of violence than overcome it. The paper concludes with three proposals for alternative steps toward positive masculinity, namely a deconstruction and reconstruction of masculinity and a deliberate search for, and promotion of positive role models.

Keywords: Male Power, Construction of Masculinity, Violence, Positive Masculinity

Introduction

*Man’s masculinity in the world today, in this 21st Century, is being eroded and broken down. And young men – some young men – don’t know what a man is supposed to be!*³

So says Angus Buchan, founder of the Mighty Men’s Conference, an annual Christian event for men in South Africa, that started off with an attendance of just about 4 000 men in

¹ I borrow the term ‘wo/men’ from the feminist biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who says she uses this term to indicate that ‘woman/women’ is not a monolithic group or a unitary concept but she also uses it in another way – to include ‘disfranchised men.’ She says: “writing wo/men in this way invites male readers always to ‘think twice’ and to adjudicate whether they are meant or not,” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 186.

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³ <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/cartelanche/story.asp?Id=3523> accessed on 14 October 2008.

2004 with these numbers increasing to 60 000 men in 2008, and a whopping 200 000 men expected to descend on his Greytown farm just outside of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa in 2009.

So, what is the message which Angus Buchan is giving to men, in this 21st century when masculinity, according to him, is being broken down and eroded? What is he teaching them about what a man is supposed to be, but more importantly for me as a feminist, can his message help to overcome centuries of patriarchy within and outside of the church which has contributed to an immeasurable and varied amount of violence against wo/men? Should we welcome Buchan's steps to 'restore masculinity' or should we be afraid of him and his mighty men?

At the end of his essay on "The Social Organisation of Masculinity" in his book, *Masculinities*, Robert Connell says the following of masculinity as a discourse and as an object of study:

To understand a historical process of this depth and complexity [of masculinity] is not a task for *a priori* theorising. It requires concrete study; more exactly, a range of studies that can illuminate the larger dynamic.⁴

If we are to take Connell's challenge seriously and if we are committed to understanding how masculinity functions in our society, whether as a measure to overcome gendered violence (in all its forms), or simply to find some measure of peace between the genders, then theorising outside of concrete experiences will be futile. A few years ago, Charlize Theron, the South African actor now famous in Hollywood, was part of a campaign against rape which used the slogan 'Real men don't rape.' This slogan caused an outcry in certain circles which felt the campaign was too 'hard-hitting.' Notwithstanding the critique of the campaign, it seems in the light of the increasing demand for men to be 'real men,' perhaps the spirit of the campaign which Theron supported needs to be revived. There was a focus on masculinity in that campaign which feminist campaigns to end violence have perhaps paid far too little attention to. In wanting to prove that gender is indeed constructed, perhaps we have focused too much on how women are 'constructed' and yet have been content to accept essentialised views of men and masculinity i.e. that men are violent, controlling and dominant by nature, whereas women are taught by society to be subservient and humble and kind – 'sugar and spice and all things nice.' Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement that 'One is not born, but becomes a woman'⁵ has to pertain equally to men too, so that we begin to unravel the mystery of how a man is made, and how this 'making' of a man in our contexts can either promote or hinder patriarchal violence in our various societies.

The advent of masculinity studies provides a helpful signpost for how we can begin to do this. Masculinity studies is not to be confused with *masculinism*, although students who enrol for our "Issues of Masculinity and Gender" course in the School of Religion and Theology at UKZN easily confuse the two.⁶ Masculinism is the antithesis to feminism. It is

⁴ Robert W Connell, *Masculinities*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995:46).

⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantham, 1952:249).

⁶ Part of the difficulty is that the course is situated within the 'gender and religion' programme which has been traditionally associated with feminist theology. The dilemma is similar to what Sally Robinson has noted: "The problem with lumping masculinity studies in with women's studies or ethnic studies is that masculinity – unlike femininity or blackness – already equates with power, so the empowerment model of women's or ethnic studies is almost embarrassingly inappropriate." Sally Robinson, "Pedagogy of the Opaque: Teaching Masculinity Studies" in Judith Kegan Gardiner (ed.) *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002:142).

an ideological system which not only believes in, but actively promotes male power. As Haywood and Mac an Ghaill have explained:

Masculinism is an ideology that stresses the natural and inherently superior position of males, while serving to justify the oppression and subjugation of females. This ideology of males being naturally more powerful, competent, successful and fundamentally different from females is one that can be located in various historical periods.⁷

Masculinity studies, as opposed to masculinism then helps us to understand and deconstruct male power. Understanding the ways in which male power is created and maintained, is a crucial link in overcoming patriarchy together with all its associated evils such as violence, because as numerous studies have shown, at the heart of violence against wo/men is male power.⁸

The analysis of the Mighty Men's Conference as a phenomenon of masculinity which I provide in this paper, is a concrete study of the construction of masculinity, as Connell urges us to undertake. However, as Connell says, it cannot be the only study – a wide range of studies are needed. And so, I use the Mighty Men's Conference, and its founder Angus Buchan, as a case study to 'illuminate the larger dynamic.' I recognise that there may be other discourses on masculinity happening in the country too, especially in Black communities of faith. Hopefully other studies will pick this up and further illuminate this larger dynamic.⁹ I offer this analysis of this phenomenon as one example of a range of attempts at re-constructing or as Buchan himself puts it 'restoring' masculinities in SA.

Background to the Mighty Men's Conference

The "Mighty Men's Conference" was started in 2004, by Angus Buchan, a South African farmer and evangelist of Scottish background. Unfortunately, apart from Angus Buchan's own book *Faith like Potatoes, the Story of a Farmer who risked Everything for God*¹⁰ the subsequent box-office hit movie based on the book,¹¹ a few interviews with Buchan in the popular media and the DVDs of the conference, scant academic resources on the MMC exist. Therefore, in this paper I will rely heavily on the popular sources of Angus Buchan's 'theology of masculinity,' to construct my analysis.

This is how Angus Buchan, in his own words, describes to Devi Sankaree Govender of the documentary programme, *Carte Blanche*, the "Mighty Men's Conference" and its goals:

Man's masculinity in the world today, in this 21st Century, is being eroded and broken down. And young men – some young men – don't know what a man is supposed to be!

⁷ Chris Haywood and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill, *Men and Masculinities*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003:10.

⁸ See the table 3.1. Amy J Marin and Nancy Felipe Russo, "Feminist Perspectives on Male Violence, Critiquing O'Neil's and Harway's Model" in Michele Harway and James O Neill (ed.) *What Causes Men's Violence Against Women* (Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications, 1999:20). There are also various other articles in this book which set violence against women squarely at the feet of male power.

⁹ Some have already done so. See for example, Thulani Ndlazi, "Men in church institutions and religious organisations: the role of Christian men in transforming gender relations and ensuring gender equality", in *Agenda* 61 (2004), and Radikobo Ntsimane, "Dominant masculinities within the Zion Christian Church: A Preliminary Investigation", in *Journal of Constructive Theology: Gender, Religion and Theology in Africa*, 12, 1 (2006).

¹⁰ Angus Buchan. *Faith Like Potatoes: The Story of a Farmer Who Risked Everything for Go*, (USA: Monarch Books, 2006).

¹¹ See the official movie website: http://www.globalcreative.co.za/FLP_index.htm accessed on 24/02/2009.

There are no role models, no mentors to look up to. What is a man supposed to do? How is he supposed to act? ...And so what we did was – I believe, not we, but the Lord – restored masculinity. They are men! You have got to stand up and be counted! You have got to represent your family, your business, your company. Stop walking around like a, you know, a whipped dog with his tail between his legs. That's no use to anybody...It's getting back to basics... And so that's why we had the men's conference, ok? We take the shambok [whip] out and we give the guys a big hiding. And they can let their hair down, and they can cry, and they can repent, and they can go back.¹²

There are a number of significant insights that one can draw from Buchan's description of the MMC and its goals:

- that there is a crisis in masculinity;
- that God ('the Lord') not the MMC, is going to resolve this crisis and 'restore masculinity';
- that men have to be leaders in their homes and societies – elsewhere he cites their roles as 'prophet, priest and king';¹³
- that men should love their wives and their wives should respect and submit to their husbands;
- and that men should be able to show emotions and remorse, by crying and repenting.

It is clear from the above that Angus Buchan is determined to 'restore masculinity,' and his project looks rather innocuous, perhaps even noble, to the ordinary person on the street. After-all as Gloria Steinem has noted:

Make no mistake about it: Women want a men's movement. We are literally dying for it. If you doubt that, just listen to women's desperate testimonies of hope that the men in our lives will become more nurturing towards children, more able to talk about emotions, less hooked on a spectrum of control that extends from not listening through to violence...¹⁴

Notwithstanding Steinem's plea for a men's movement, my feminist hermeneutic of suspicion will not allow me to consider this movement as either innocuous or noble, nor as an appropriate answer to Steinem's call. In fact, I would argue, as I have done elsewhere, that a theology of headship and submission is simply yet another way of promoting violence (in its varied forms) through the insidious myth that men as the stronger sex need to protect women, or to 'defend the weak.'¹⁵ This is what Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen has called soft patriarchy,¹⁶ it seems innocent enough – i.e. 'men taking responsibility' is hardly an unpalatable idea, but if 'taking responsibility' means asserting dominating and coercive measures, including those in the religious domain, to maintain power, then our justice antennas have to be tuned in, so that we are not deceived by this palatable patriarchy, masquerading as 'restoring masculinity.'

¹² <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> accessed on 14 October 2008.

¹³ In an interview with Joy Magazine, when asked: "What do you hope the results of this conference to be?" Angus Buchan.

¹⁴ Gloria Steinem, Foreword to Kay Leigh Hagan, *Women Respond to the Men's Movement*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992.

¹⁵ See my comment piece in the *Mail and Guardian*, 4 August 2008 "When Did the Rock Become Weak?" can be accessed on <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-08-04-when-did-the-rock-become-weak> – accessed on 26 February 2009.

¹⁶ Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Servanthood or Soft Patriarchy? A Christian feminist looks at the Promise Keepers movement*, *The Journal of Men's Studies*, Vol. 5, 1997.

Based on several studies which show that the principles of male headship and the submission of women to men in most religions and cultures are directly linked to gender violence and, more alarmingly, to women's decisions to stay in abusive partnerships,¹⁷ I will examine in the following section whether Angus Buchan's MMC is a step toward positive masculinity or masculinism. I will do this through an analysis of Stephen Whitehead's and Frank Barrett's three propositions concerning the ways in which masculine power is created and sustained, focusing particularly on the latter two forms of power.

Restoring Masculinity or Promoting Masculinism?

Whitehead and Barrett assert that masculine power is maintained in three ways: the first and most obvious is power as brute force, such as physical violence. The second is power as relational and positional – belief systems that promote hierarchical ideologies which makes it obligatory for men (as opposed to women) to be the heads of homes, leaders of organisations, directors of companies, etc. Finally, they show how masculine power is maintained through 'discourses of power.' 'Discourses of power' refer to the everyday language which maintains binary oppositions such as men are strong, women are weak, or that men are rational and women are emotional etc.¹⁸ It also refers to language that appeals to a 'higher authority' for legitimation, and as will be seen very clearly, Buchan's higher authority cannot get any higher than God.

I think it is true to say that practical efforts to overcome violence against wo/men have often tended to focus on power as brute force and have ignored or paid little attention to the latter two ways in which power is created and sustained, that is that power is positional and that power is also maintained discursively i.e. by the language which we use. The ways in which these latter kinds of power are maintained is nowhere more clear than in the discourses and practices of religion.¹⁹ Christian men's movements like the "Promise Keeper" in North America, and its equivalent in South Africa, *The Mighty Men's Conference* though they will never claim allegiance to the first kind of power, are certainly quite overt about wanting to 're-claim' these two latter forms of masculine power for ordinary men. Their movements are characterised by these so called 'soft' statements about men's power.

Take for example, Angus Buchan's statements to Devi-Sankaree Govender on *Carte Blanche*, on what he believes about the relationship between husbands and wives. He says:

¹⁷ I have noted elsewhere the detailed study conducted by Isabel Phiri in Phoenix on domestic violence in (Pentecostal) Christian homes. Eighty-four percent of the twenty-five women who were interviewed admitted to having experienced domestic violence. They were also all wives of leaders in the church. Her study concluded that it was biblical beliefs, such as those on submission, which made these women stay in abusive relationships. Isabel A Phiri, "Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study," in *Journal of Constructive Theology*, (6, 2 2000:85-110). Mary McClintock Fulkerson makes a similar point about the role of the 'discourse of submission,' when she asserts that "One of the most prominent oppressive outcomes of such discourse is the willingness of women to stay in battering situations. Women's willingness to be battered is often linked to the kind of ecclesiastically supported languages of submission that appear in Pentecostal [Christian] women's stories." Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994:296).

¹⁸ Stephen M Whitehead and Frank J Barrett, "The Sociology of Masculinity," Stephen M Whitehead and Frank J Barrett (eds.) *The Masculinity Reader*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2001:17).

¹⁹ It is easier for us to build shelters for abused wo/men, than to ask the difficult questions of why wo/men are abused in the first place. Perhaps Bishop Camara's statement about the poor can be adapted with regard to gender too – When I build shelters for abused wo/men, they call me a saint, when I ask why wo/men are abused they call me a feminist.

Husbands love your wives, OK? Children, respect your parents. Wives, respect your husbands, submit to your husbands... it's very easy when your husbands love you, you see, when your husbands are doing the job properly. But what happens sometimes is that the husbands are not doing the job: they not [sic] protecting you, they are not putting bread on the table, they are not disciplining the children – it's very hard to respect a man like that.²⁰

By setting up this positional and hierarchical relationships between parents and children and husbands and wives (note the command for women and children are the same i.e. respect but not for men), and then admonishing men to be responsible, Buchan sets up a very palatable patriarchy, that is difficult to argue with. When pushed by Govender on the interview as to whether the above principles were not creating a superiority complex for men, Angus Buchan was quick to defend his beliefs:

It's not a case of saying the man is superior to the woman – never! On the contrary. But there is an order that is established in the Bible. And the Lord Jesus, said, 'Husbands, love your wives.' Now if a husband loves his wife, his wife will gladly submit to him.²¹

Notwithstanding that Jesus actually, never said this, it was the Apostle Paul (or someone writing in his name), it is patent that Buchan establishes a relational power for men, which when maintained and taken to its extreme actually can and does lead to violence against wo/men.

The belief that women must be submissive to their husbands begs the question what are the consequences when women don't submit? And as I have said before, there is enough feminist research to show that the apparent lack of submission from women is what leads to violence; and furthermore that the belief that men are the heads of the homes, is what causes violence to go unchallenged and women to remain in abusive partnerships. This is a link that is often dismissed as a misunderstanding of headship, but surely we should be sitting up and taking notice of the empirical evidence (i.e. the numerous studies conducted on violence) which suggests otherwise.²²

Angus Buchan's wife, Jill Buchan in the same interview, reiterates similar views to her husband regarding headship:

The church of God needs men. They need fathers, they need everything set back in order because it's not in order, because the church is full of homes that are still struggling with headship and God says he's going to sort out the church first. He has to re-instate the men, and when he does that, the women will be very happy.

In addition to the relational power, that is evident in Buchan's statements regarding headship and submission, note also the discursive power evident in both his and his wife's claims that they speak on behalf of God. For example, Angus Buchan says in his interview on *Carte Blanche*:

I don't shy away from controversy...You can't sleep with your girlfriend before marriage and abortion is legalised murder. Homosexuality is against the word of God. I'm not doing this for money. I'm doing this because God told me to.²³

²⁰ <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> accessed on 14 October 2008.

²¹ <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> accessed on 14 October 2008.

²² See the excellent extensive bibliography partner violence on the following website:
<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/biblio.html> accessed on 26 February 2009.

²³ <http://www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/story.asp?Id=3523> accessed on 14 October 2008.

In the first instance he establishes hetero-normative principles for marriage, and then asserts that restoring these norms is God's initiative – not his. It is clear how power is established here through an appeal to religious language – after-all one can argue with Angus Buchan, but who can argue with God?

Note the similar discursive power that is evident in his most recent newsletter on his website:

Dear Brethren [sic]

Greeting [sic] in Jesus name and a very blessed 2009 for each of you. Thank you for your friendship in 2008. I said to the Lord at the end of last year: "Lord I don't know what's going to happen in 2009, but I think it's going to be almost impossible to better 2008" (truly the greatest year of my life thus far)...On the 12th of December, while waiting on the Lord for a Word for us in 2009, the Scripture which the Lord Jesus gave to us was Deuteronomy 1:6 "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain" and in verse eight "See I have set the land before you. Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore (promised) to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them and their descendants."²⁴

In all the DVD's of Buchan's MMC meetings and his interviews, it is very clear that Buchan declares himself as a spokesperson for God, thereby legitimating his views on masculinity. This is often expressed through the phrase "The Lord told me..." Or "Jesus said to me..." etc.

What is also evident in Buchan's rhetoric is a language of conquest and might and strength. Nowhere is this more clear of course, than in the choice to name these meetings the "Mighty Men's Conference," but it is also clear in the passage of Scripture which he claims God gave him for 2009: "Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore (promised) to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them and their descendants."²⁵ It is not insignificant that almost all of the 60,000 men who attended the conference were White and most of them were farmers like Buchan. In the light of the current land crisis in our neighbouring Zimbabwe, and in the light of the bitter debates around land claims in SA, it does not take a leap of the imagination to figure out why Buchan's message is so attractive to White farmers who throng to his meetings. There is another kind of crisis in masculinity going on for White men, particularly Afrikaner men in post-apartheid South Africa. Given that almost 80% of the men who attended the MMC in 2008 were White Afrikaners, one has to ask what their motivations for attending are.²⁶ What are they longing for?

The crisis for White Afrikaner men is that the nature of White Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity is being challenged by the democratic order ushered in 1994; by an increase in acceptance of diverse sexual orientations; and not least of all by a steady rise in women's emancipation. Kobus Du Pisani has described the nature of Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity as 'puritan' and describes in detail what this entails and how it is being challenged in post-apartheid South Africa:

²⁴ <http://www.shalomtrust.co.za/pages/view?id=25> accessed on 24/02/2009.

²⁵ <http://www.shalomtrust.co.za/pages/view?id=25> accessed on 24/02/2009.

²⁶ Buchan claims that it doesn't bother him that most of the people who attend his meetings are White farmers. "I'm preaching to South African people. I don't care if I preach to 100,000 white people or 100,000 black people... I preach Jesus, not politics," Buchan said. "I speak for Jesus, not for or against the government. Change will come through the Lord. If people turn to Jesus, that will change our nation" <http://www.kcionline.org/news/files/Charisma,%20Angus%20Buchan,%20December%202008.pdf> accessed on 21 October 2008.

Initially the puritan ideal of Afrikaner masculinity was expressed in the image of the simple, honest, steadfast, religious and hard-working *boer* (farmer)... Patriarchy, the rule of the father, was justified in all spheres of society in terms of biblical texts... Puritan Afrikaners viewed the male-headed family as the cornerstone of a healthy society. The image of the male head of the family was cast in the mould of the 'good provider'... The Afrikaans churches have held the view that the male head of the family should fulfil a priestly function, by not only providing his family with material things, but also looking after their spiritual well-being.²⁷

The similarities between this puritan ideal which Du Pisani describes and Buchan's message is striking. The focus on the man as priest, provider and king in his home are reiterated over and over again in Buchan's sermons. The greatest threat to hegemonic puritan Afrikaner masculinity was according to Du Pisani 'liberalism and homosexuality.'²⁸ Although homosexuality is still widely frowned upon, liberalism was gradually accepted by Afrikaners, according to Du Pisani. He further hypothesises that the core of Afrikaner masculinity, defined by heterosexuality and conservatism with regard to race and gender, although remaining relatively intact, during apartheid, began to be seriously challenged in post apartheid South Africa, where:

...the number of Afrikaner men in positions of public power is declining and men are not as dominant in the domestic sphere as before... Afrikaner masculinity no longer prescribes ideals of masculinity to South African society at large, to white men in general, or even to Afrikaans-speaking white men. It is thus difficult both to conceive of, and detect a hegemonic masculinity.²⁹

It is not surprising then that Buchan's focus on a crisis in masculinity, and men not knowing what they are supposed to do or how to act, would certainly be appealing for a predominantly Afrikaner group of men. Du Pisani notes that despite the threat to hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity in post apartheid South Africa, "Afrikaner nationalism has not disappeared, and given its record of pragmatic adaptation to circumstances it is conceivable that a new hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity may in due course emerge."³⁰

I would argue that Buchan's MMC is this new version of Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity that is emerging. The difference is that I suspect that in post-apartheid South Africa, and in the highly globalised increasingly Pentecostalist Christian contexts which we find ourselves in, it won't take long before this kind of hegemony becomes normative for men who are not Afrikaner either. The 'universal' message of the bible as word of God for all ages will be a common denominator for men across the racial spectrum, and even if they do not buy into the ethnic implications of this new hegemonic masculinity (remember Buchan doesn't speak Afrikaans), the gender implications of this new hegemony will be appealing to them. If left unchecked, through relational and discursive uses of masculine power the MMC will succeed in restoring not just masculinities, but hegemonic masculinities, in its varied forms.³¹

²⁷ Kobus Du Pisani, "Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period" in Robert Morrell (ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, (Pietermaritzburg, New York: University of Natal Press, Zed Books, 2001), 158, 163-164.

²⁸ Du Pisani, "Puritanism Transformed...", 167.

²⁹ Du Pisani, "Puritanism Transformed...", 172.

³⁰ Du Pisani, "Puritanism Transformed...", 172.

³¹ Robert Connell distinguishes between four types of masculinity, hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginal. Robert W Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in Stephen M Whitehead and Frank J Barrett (eds.) *The Masculinity Reader*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2001:34).

The dualistic and binary nature of Buchan's sermons further entrenches this insidious hegemony – his distinctions between believers and unbelievers (he says that the greatest sin is unbelief in his opening address to the MMC 2008 meeting and that it doesn't matter how good a person is if he[sic] doesn't believe in Jesus Christ). He also draws distinctions between education and experience, as if these are mutually exclusive: "I've never been to Bible College, but I've been to the 'school of life'. OK? The school of hard-knocks," he says to Govender in the *Carte Blanche* interview. Inherent in his dualistic view of the world, is a dangerous philosophy that validates and justifies the power to conquer, to rule, to take over possessions and people, whether they be the so-called heathen or women or land. This is clear in his interview with Joy Magazine where he talks about the aims of MMC:

The Sovereignty of God in a man's life will be looked at. Men will be encouraged to walk by faith and not by sight and to take ownership of what God has given them eg: families, businesses and farms. God will restore men's dignity and break bondages in their lives, setting them free.³²

Alternative Models for Positive Masculinities

In answer to my question at the beginning of this paper – I think I have shown that yes – we have to be very afraid of Angus Buchan and his mighty men. Who should be afraid? Women, men and women of differing sexual orientations, children (because you can be sure that he subscribes to the "spare the rod – spoil the child" philosophy, and even the earth, because patriarchy and domination of the earth goes together – we should all be afraid.

Am I saying that men's movements cannot help us overcome violence? No. Of course we need positive men's movements to help us overcome violence against wo/men, and it is true that men who perpetrate violence against wo/men need help. However, to lead them down a garden path to a false sense of what it means to be a man, by appealing to outdated and destructive ways of being a man, will do more to aggravate the problem of violence than overcome it. So what are the alternatives? I suggest three for consideration, but this is certainly not exhaustive.

Deconstruction of masculinity

What we need to help us overcome violence against wo/men is a deconstruction of masculinity, not a reconstruction of masculinism. This of necessity is an intellectual task as much as it is a popular one. If serious academic reflection on masculinity is not 'translated' for men who are searching for positive masculinities, then Angus Buchan's mighty men will continue to flourish, at the expense of wo/men. As Judith Newton has argued:

...while progressive men actually *do* have something to learn from popular men's movements – how to be rigorous, for example, in *practicing* rather than merely *theorising* new modes of self-transformation, new ways of labouring on behalf of others, progressive academic men have an important role to play in popular movements as well. They might do much, for example, in situating popular identity work for men in the context of unequal structures of gender, race, sexuality, and class that popular men's movements often bracket and/or support. They might help push men's movements, in the

³² Interview taken from <http://www.joymag.co.za/mag/16-2008/16-2008-angus.php> accessed on 20 October 2008.

words of Michael Schwalbe, to ‘turn men’s feelings of grief, of outrage, of affection for each other, and of longing for richer lives in meaning ... toward riskier social action and farther reaching change.’³³

Reconstructing Alternative Forms of Masculinity

Further, this deconstruction of masculinity also necessarily involves reconstructing and transforming – reconstructing values of partnership as opposed to ideologies of headship. In this regard, Carol Flinders³⁴ work on rebalancing the values of belonging (traditionally associated with the feminine) and the values of enterprise (traditionally associated with the masculine) are helpful.³⁵

Flinders makes a convincing case for the fact that the world lost balance, when it moved from a pre- to a post-agricultural society. She posits that people in a pre-agricultural society lived by what she calls the ‘values of belonging.’ This was the hunter-gatherers, and their society was characterised by the values she puts down in the table below. She describes how continued existence in this age depended on inter-connectedness, with the earth, animals and humans. This interconnectedness in turn encouraged mutuality and, partnership and inclusiveness. And of course with the rise of an industrialised society these values were lost. The mistake that we have made over the centuries, she argues, is to think of the values of belonging and enterprise, in essentially masculine and feminine terms. She argues for the need for a ‘rebalancing’ of the two groups of values, combining the values of belonging and the values of enterprise.

VALUES OF BELONGING	VALUES OF ENTERPRISE
Connection with land	Control and Ownership of Land
Empathic relation to animals	Control and ownership of animals
Balance	Momentum and High Risk
Expressiveness	Secretiveness
Generosity	Acquisitiveness
Egalitarianism	Hierarchy
Mutuality	Competitiveness
Alternative Modes of Knowing	Rationality
Playfulness	Businesslike Sobriety
Non-violent Conflict Resolution	Aggressiveness and Violence
Spirituality	Materialism [Religion]

³³ Judith Newton. “Masculinity Studies: The Longed For Profeminist Movement for Academic Men” Judith Kegan Gardiner (ed.) *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002:187).

³⁴ Carol L Flinders, *Rebalancing The World: Why Women Belong And Men Compete And How To Restore The Ancient Equilibrium*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003).

³⁵ I’m grateful to my dear friend Eliza Getman for alerting me to Flinders’ work.

From our foregoing analysis, it is clear that the MMC espouses the values of enterprise, very often to the exclusion of the values of belonging. Flinders assessment encourages us to find a balance, but more importantly to recognise that these values are not functions of our gender. So, for example, with regard to the issue of leadership, we need to develop a sense of human value that recognises and celebrates leadership and responsibility regardless of gender. Leadership is a function of ability and responsibility, not a birthright related to whether one has a penis or not, and as long as we keep promoting this latter belief wo/men will have to continue to live in fear of 'mighty men.'

Finding Positive Role Models

Finally, feminists have often been accused of having problems with the maleness of Jesus. To this we have said: "the problem is not that Jesus was a man, the problem is that more men are not like Jesus!" Inherent in this statement is another alternative, holding up male role models who actually value women (like Jesus), as opposed to those who don't, (like the Apostle Paul). Of course, this does not mean that one should retreat to a 'Jesus to the rescue' kind of theology, but I think both the maleness (in terms of sex) and the masculinity (in terms of gender) of Jesus, may provide us with some sense of what a positive model of masculinity might look like. Perhaps there are possibilities to emulate his *kenotic* act of incarnation (Some men certainly need to learn how to stop thinking of themselves as God);³⁶ his practical acts of servant-hood (washing his disciples' feet); his breaking of cultural and ethnic barriers (his relationships with Samaritans and Canaanites) and of course his transforming of gender norms (his interactions with the woman with the haemorrhage, Mary and Martha, the Samaritan woman etc). Jesus certainly did show the men of his time an alternative masculinity, one that not just tolerates but embraces difference, one that is based on mutuality rather than dominance, partnership rather than hierarchy, and most of all on love rather than fear. He was a mighty man indeed, but fortunately one that we don't need to be afraid of.

³⁶ Take for example the Indian proverb: "Kanavane kann kannda deivum" which means: "The husband is the wife's god in sight – by worshipping her husband she actually worships God."