

The Doctrine of Retribution and Religious Responses to the HIV and AIDS Pandemic

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Abstract

Despite many decades of interfacing with the HIV and AIDS pandemic, religious responses to the plight of the affected and infected still border on the doctrine of retribution. Some religious leaders, particularly from the Christian perspective, are still preaching about the intersection between infection and promiscuity in relation to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Such a message from the pulpit overlooks people born with HIV infection and partners, more particularly women in long term permanent relationships including marriage, who are unknowingly infected with HIV. Additionally, religious doctrines and religious moral positions embody perceptions that regard the infected as deserving due punishment for their sins. Using desktop research and drawing from the Job narrative, our article seeks to explore the influence of religion on HIV and AIDS. It acknowledges the ambivalent interface between sexuality, gender and HIV and AIDS, taking into account how such interwoven issues affect health seeking behavior of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). Espousing the Job narrative as wisdom in revolt, the article acknowledges the complexity of HIV infection and negates the doctrine of retribution. It concludes by proffering an alternative, holistic and sensitive theological response in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Keywords: doctrine of retribution, gender and sexuality, HIV and AIDS, theological response, wisdom in revolt.