

**AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HUMAN DIGNITY OF THE  
SEXUAL MINORITIES IN GRACE BIBLE CHURCH, SOWETO: A CASE STUDY ON  
GENDER, LAW AND RELIGION**

by

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*a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

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The crest of the University of Stellenbosch, featuring a shield with various symbols, topped with a crown and surrounded by a decorative border. Below the shield is a motto scroll with the Latin text "Perfata pulcherrimè cultus recti".

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## *Declaration*

### **Declaration**

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*Abstract***Abstract**

The Pentecostal theological notion of being “born again” stems from the mainstream Evangelical doctrines of “sin,” “salvation” and “baptism in the Holy Spirit” that are inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the Pentecostal church in general. Most theological discourses in Pentecostalism are founded upon these notions. Sexual morality is expected to be grounded on the principle that “marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enters into an exclusive relationship for life, and that is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations.” This study uses the Grace Bible Church (GBC) in Soweto, a dominantly “black” township west of Johannesburg South Africa, as its case study since the church declared in its Statement of Faith (SoF) that it will only allow persons to become members in the church if they adhere to these heterosexual, monogamous, heteronormative principles.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) lifestyles are in most general cases pathologized as being a transgression, spiritual deviance among the conservative and fundamentalist Bible-literalist churches, particularly the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. They are regarded as sinful “unnatural” acts that may result in divine judgement whilst other go as far as asserting that same-sex sexual activities are demonic and “Un-African”. This is mainly because of the widely accepted binarism views and assertions that according to the Bible God created humans as either male or female. This binary view of gender has been largely upheld within the South African religious community while gender diversity has been ignored. People born intersex have been forced to live according to this gender binary. The gender bipartite also problematizes people that are transgender and excludes people that are gender diverse. Gender identity is widely accepted as a person’s private sense of being male, female, both or of the other gender. This may or may not match the biological sex assigned to them at birth. Due to the gender binary that promotes heterosexist theological positions, sermons are preached from the most conservative Christian pulpits with the intention that non-heterosexual members will repent, be ‘delivered’, and transformed by the power of God. Such sermons are viewed by some as being derogatory and discriminatory against members who are of LGBTIQ sexuality. Their argument is based on the premise that these churches do not consider queer members’ lived experiences, but instead insist

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on a literalist hermeneutical approach on the Bible exegesis and the traditional heteropatriarchal views ascribed to the Biblical worldview. Moreover, such views hold that human sexuality promotes only the heterosexual perspective as a religious and societal norm. Queer persons experience a negative impact from stigmatization and victimization due to patriarchal, heteronormative and cisnormative societies, that is even argued to be dominated by the hegemonic masculine mindset. This study shows that international and South African research has found significant negative effects are caused by exclusion and other forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and queer gender identity. Sexual orientation-based discrimination presents the same risks of psychological and other harm as discrimination based on race, religion or gender. Notably, among youth who already identify as, or think they may be homosexual or bisexual, research has found that family rejection and exclusion, as well as bullying by peers, correlates highly with a range of high-risk behaviors and outcomes ranging from truancy to substance abuse to attempts at suicide. Much of the evidence shows that this stigmatization leads to deep-seated and widespread prejudice, discrimination and violence in Africa toward those who are not heterosexual.

Furthermore, many gay and lesbian people suffer from stress due to ill treatment by a homophobic society, especially when confronted with religious condemnation. Public religious speeches can lead to not only grave psychological, but also social consequences, as such speeches may contain a strong element of humiliation and degradation that may promote corrective rape, bullying and belittlement. Religious homophobic speeches may cause a polarization of society as people unconsciously absorb the hidden agenda that is intended to show that people who do not conform to the heterosexual norm are inferior and should be shunned. Research and observation have found that gay and lesbian people are referred to as “detestable” or “unnatural”, which could constitute religious hate speech. Due to what is believed to be a religiously infused homophobia, the LGBTIQ church members and activists have started protesting their churches. While some leave churches, others choose to remain “in the closet” and celibate so that they may be accepted by the Christian community and participate in church activities. In other instances, some closeted LGBTIQ members in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are experiencing heightened homonegativity when anti-gay sentiments are uttered.

## *Abstract*

It is therefore, the purpose of this study to investigate issues related to gender, law and theological discourses within the context of a selected Christian denomination –the Grace Bible Church in Johannesburg South Africa. This study is interdisciplinary, since it is positioned within the fields of Christian theology, the sociological concept of human sexuality with a specific interdisciplinary dimension on the intersection between gender, law and religion. The interconnectedness of the notions on gender, law and religion is the foundational basis of this study. This is pertinent since, historically, law and theology have been accepted as the fundamental grounds of the universal notion of the recognition of the inherent dignity of persons, and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Such laws form the foundations on liberty, justice and the pursuit of happiness of all members of human family in the world. These laws are also contained in the liberal Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The South African Constitution, recognizes and protects, in Chapter 2 Section 9 of its Bill of Rights, the human rights of LGBTIQ persons to not be discriminated against on the ground of their sexual orientation or gender identity. While there appears to be some tension with regard to understanding the Constitution’s definition of religious freedom, churches seem to be generally free to formulate the conditions of their faith and church membership and free from state intrusion and doctrinal entanglement in such matters as relating to faith dictates. Hence this study considers these issues, focusing on human sexuality, theological and legal notions of human dignity, human flourishing, and human rights jurisprudence.

*Opsomming***Opsomming**

Die Pinkster- teologiese begrip van “wedergebore wees” het ontstaan uit die hoofstroom evangeliese leerstellings van “sonde”, “redding” en “doop met die Heilige Gees” wat onlosmaaklik verweef is in die raamwerk van die Pinksterkerk in die algemeen. Die meeste teologiese diskoerse in Pentekostalisme is op hierdie leerstellings gebaseer. Daar word vereis dat seksuele moraliteit gegrond sal wees op die beginsel dat “die huwelik ’n instelling is wat deur God geskep is en waarin een man en een vrou ’n eksklusiewe, lewenslange verhouding aanknoop wat die enigste tipe vennootskap is wat God vir seksuele verhoudings goedkeur”. Hierdie studie gebruik die Grace Bible Church (GBC) Soweto, Johannesburg, Suid-Afrika, as gevallestudie omdat die kerk dit in sy geloofsverklaring stel dat mense slegs as lidmate van die kerk toegelaat sal word indien hulle volgens hierdie heteroseksuele, monogame, heteronormatiewe beginsels leef.

Lesbiese, gay, biseksuele, transgender, interseksuele en homoseksuele (LGBTIQ) leefstyle word in die meeste gevalle deur konserwatiewe en fundamentalistiese kerke wat die Bybel letterlik interpreteer, veral die Pinkster-charismatiese kerke, uitgekryt as ’n oortreding en geestelike afwyking. Dit word beskou as sondige, “onnatuurlike” handeling wat kan lei tot goddelike oordeel terwyl ander so ver gaan om te beweer dat seksuele aktiwiteite tussen lede van dieselfde geslag demonies is en “nie eie aan Afrika is nie”. Dit is hoofsaaklik weens die algemeen aanvaarde sienings en aannames volgens binarisme dat God, volgens die Bybel, die mens óf manlik óf vroulik geskape het. Hierdie binêre siening oor gender is in ’n groot mate in die Suid-Afrikaanse godsdienngemeenskap gehandhaaf terwyl genderdiversiteit geïgnoreer is. Mense wat interseksueel gebore is, is gedwing om volgens hierdie binêre siening oor gender te leef. Die gendertweedeligheid veroorsaak dat transgendermense as ’n probleem beskou word en dat genderdiverse mense uitgesluit word. Genderidentiteit word algemeen aanvaar as ’n mens se persoonlike besef van manlik wees, vroulik wees, van beide of die ander geslag wees. Dit kan ooreenstem met die biologiese geslag waarmee ’n persoon gebore is, maar dit hoef nie. As gevolg van die gendertweedeligheid wat heteroseksistiese teologiese standpunte aanmoedig, word preke van die mees konserwatiewe Christelike preekstoele gelewer met die doel dat nie-heteroseksuele lidmate sal bely, “verlos” sal word en deur die krag van God verander sal word. Sulke preke word deur sommige beskou as neerhalend en diskriminerend teenoor mense met ’n LGBTIQ-seksualiteit. Hulle argument is gebaseer op die veronderstelling dat hierdie kerke nie homoseksuele

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lidmate se belewings in ag neem nie, maar eerder aandring op 'n letterlike hermeneutiese benadering van Bybelverklaring en die tradisionele heteropatriargale sienings wat aan die Bybelse wêreldbeskouing toegeskryf word. Boonop veronderstel sulke sienings dat menslike seksualiteit slegs die heteroseksuele perspektief as 'n godsdienstige en sosiale norm begunstig. Homoseksuele persone ervaar 'n negatiewe impak van stigmatisering en viktimisering weens patriargale, heteronormatiewe en cisnormatiewe gemeenskappe. Daar word selfs aangevoer dat hierdie gemeenskappe deur die hegemonesie manlike ingesteldheid oorheers word. Volgens hierdie studie het internasionale en Suid-Afrikaanse navorsing bevind dat uitsluiting en ander vorms van diskriminasie wat gebaseer is op seksuele oriëntasie en homoseksuele genderidentiteit, 'n beduidend negatiewe uitwerking kan hê. Diskriminasie wat op seksuele oriëntasie gebaseer is, lewer dieselfde risiko's op vir sielkundige en ander skade as diskriminasie wat gebaseer is op ras, godsdiens en geslag. Dit is opmerklik dat navorsing onder jongmense, wat reeds as homo- of biseksueel identifiseer of wat dink dat hulle dalk homo- of biseksueel kan wees, bevind het dat verwerping en uitsluiting deur familie, asook afknouery deur hulle portuurgroep, 'n hoë korrelasie toon met 'n verskeidenheid hoërisikogedrag en uitkomste wat wissel van skool- of werkversuim tot middelmisbruik tot selfdoodpogings. Baie van die bewyse toon dat hierdie stigmatisering in Afrika lei tot diep gewortelde en wydverspreide vooroordeel, diskriminasie en geweld teenoor mense wat nie heteroseksueel is nie.

Verder lei heelwat gay en lesbiese persone aan stres weens swak behandeling aan die hand van 'n homofobiese samelewing, veral wanneer hulle met godsdienstige veroordeling gekonfronteer word. Openbare godsdienstige toesprake lei moontlik nie net tot ernstige sielkundige gevolge nie, maar hou ook sosiale gevolge in omdat sulke toesprake moontlik 'n sterk element van vernedering en afkraking kan bevat wat kan lei tot korrektiewe verkragting, afknouery en verkleining. Godsdienstige homofobiese toesprake kan polarisasie in die gemeenskap veroorsaak omdat mense onbewustelik die verskuilde agenda aanvaar wat ten doel het om te wys dat mense wat nie aan die heteroseksuele norm voldoen nie, minderwaardig is en vermy moet word. Navorsing en waarneming het bevind dat daar na gay en lesbiese mense verwys word as “verfoeilik” en “onnatuurlik”, en dit kan neerkom op godsdienstige haatspraak. Na aanleiding van wat beskou word as 'n godsdiens-geïnspireerde homofobie, het die LGBTIQ-kerklidmate en -aktiviste begin beswaar maak teen hulle kerke. Sommige het die kerk verlaat terwyl ander verkies het om “in die kas” te bly en selibaat te lewe sodat hulle deur die Christen-gemeenskap aanvaar kan word en aan

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kerkaktiwiteite kan deelneem. In ander gevalle ervaar sommige LGBTIQ-lidmate, wat nog nie “uit” is nie en wat lidmate van Pinkster-charismatiese kerke is, verhoogde homo-negatiwiteit wanneer anti-gaygevoelens uitgespreek word.

Daarom is die doelwit van hierdie studie om kwessies, wat verband hou met gender, die reg en godsdienstige diskoerse, te ondersoek teen die agtergrond van ’n gekose Christelike denominasie – die Grace Bible Church in Johannesburg, Suid-Afrika. Hierdie studie is interdisiplinêr omdat dit geplaas word in die velde van Christelike teologie, die sosiale konsep van menslike seksualiteit binne ’n spesifieke interdisiplinêre dimensie op die kruispunt tussen gender, die reg en godsdiens. Die onderlinge verband tussen die opvatting oor gender, die reg en godsdiens is die grondslag van hierdie studie. Dit is tersaaklik omdat, uit ’n historiese oogpunt, die reg en godsdiens aanvaar word as die basiese grondslag van die universele opvatting oor die erkenning van die inherente waardigheid van mense en van die gelyke en onvervreembare regte van alle lede van die menslike familie. Sulke wette vorm die grondslag van vryheid, geregtigheid en die soeke na geluk deur alle lede van die menslike familie in die wêreld. Hierdie wette is ook vervat in die liberale Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 1996. In Hoofstuk 2 Afdeling 9 van die Handves van Regte, erken en beskerm die Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet die menseregte van LGBTIQ-persone en bepaal dat daar nie op grond van hulle seksuele oriëntasie of genderidentiteit teen hulle gediskrimineer mag word nie. Alhoewel daar blykbaar ’n mate van spanning bestaan oor die interpretasie van die Grondwet se definisie van godsdiensvryheid, staan dit kerke oor die algemeen klaarblyklik vry om die voorwaardes van hulle geloof en kerklidmaatskap te formuleer en hulle is vry van staatsinmenging en leerstellige komplisering soos sake wat met geloof verband hou, voorskryf. Daarom word hierdie kwessies deur hierdie studie oorweeg en daar word gefokus op menslike seksualiteit, teologiese en regsopvattinge oor menslike waardigheid, menslike vooruitgang en regspraak oor menseregte.



## *Dedication*

### **Dedication**

- I. To my family, especially my parents Ephraim Sewapa and Josephine Maenetja, without whose encouragement, support and parental blessing this academic exercise would not have been easy to accomplish. Thank you for believing in me!*
- II. To those who stand for the course of Liberty, Justice and the Pursuit of happiness for all.*
- III. To all who read this thesis.*

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*List of Abbreviations***List of Abbreviations**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
ANC	African National Congress
CC	Constitutional Court
CDC	Connexional Disciplinary Committee
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
DDC	District Disciplinary Committee
DP	Democratic Party
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
GASA	Gay Association of South Africa
GBC	Grace Bible Church
GLOW	Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand
GPCC	Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
ILGA	International Lesbian and Gay Alliance
L & D	Laws and Discipline of the Church
LCI	Lighthouse Chapel International
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
MCSA	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
MPNP	Multi Party Negotiation Process
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NCGLE	National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality
NP	National Party
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

## *List of Abbreviations*

OLGA	Western Cape Organization of Lesbian and Gay Activists
PAOC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
PWF	Pentecostal World Fellowship
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SALRC	South African Law Reform Commission
SALR	South African Law Reports
SCA	Supreme Court of Appeal
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UPCI	United Pentecostal Church International
USA	United States of America
WAGF	World Assemblies of God Fellowship
WLD	Witwatersrand Local Division

# CHAPTER 1

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY

#### 1.1 Background and Rationale

A theological idea that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) persons are born with inherent human dignity that should be valued, respected and receive ethical treatment in the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches will be looked at during this research case study. The concept of “sexuality” has been traditionally believed, as taught by churches and families, to only include a binary description of understanding gender as either male or female (Thatcher, 2011:3). Traditionally, an entire church has used and continue using this binary gender definition of sexuality that is also aligned with the concept of male domination and female submissiveness to the point of denying and even violating dignity of other sexual minorities to include homosexuals, bisexuals, transgendered, pansexual, intersex and other gender identities in society (Butler, 1990:35). This controversial and problematic concept is being preached from many pulpits, and the South African society and the most world witnessed this when a well-known Ghanaian charismatic Bishop Dr Dag Heward-Mills delivered a controversial sermon at Grace Bible Church in Soweto, South Africa,<sup>1</sup> stating that the gay lifestyle is worse than that of animals because the latter’s sexual behavior is compatible with “nature” and therefore natural whilst the former’s lifestyle is incompatible with nature and therefore “unnatural” (News24, 2017). He compared gays with animals and argued that the former is unnatural because they prefer members of the same sex whilst the latter, although a male may have “seventy female partners at the same time”, does so because that is “part of nature” though this “nature” has been corrupted by sin (Mail&Guardian, 2017). According to Grace Bible Church (GBC) Spokesperson Pastor Ezekiel Mathole’s subsequent media statement on television “should people choose an alternative relationship with the same sex, it’s their choice” (eNCA News, 2017).<sup>2</sup> In other words, here the

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Bible Church is an evangelical-charismatic mega church founded and headed by Bishop Musa Sono. The church’s headquarters are in Soweto township just few miles away from the City of Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8shU9ogLAQ>, Retrieved on 06 May 2017.

## 1.1

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church believes in a conservative ‘twofold’ form of human sexuality – that of male and female, though the church declared all persons, including sexual minorities, are welcome in its pews.

Thatcher argues human beings are more than their biology, and that “there are many adults who are unable to identify with either label. They are intersex, and transgender, people who cannot easily say they identify with this binary (twofold) division of humanity into separate biological sexes” (Thatcher 2011:3).

For most Christian history, people were inclined to believe that there was a single sex, which is that of man, “which existed on a continuum between greater (male) and lessor (female) degrees of perfection” (Thatcher 2011:4).

The result of the “twofold” definition of human sex resulted in a belief that it is only heterosexual sexuality that is given to us by our maker (Gevisser, 2016:19). Due to this binary description, the church and society viewed and still views that all other forms of sexuality are therefore deliberately chosen perversions of this good and must be condemned (Ratzinger, 1994:42). Churches are influenced by a literal interpretation of some scriptures claiming the fact that God created only two sexes, that of “male and female”(Russel, 2016:9). “So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). The result of this belief and doctrine of sexuality was an assumption that “each member of the different sexes should desire only members of the one” (Thatcher 2011:7). The opposite was condemned as immoral, sinful, and even evil by the church and society at large. As a result, members of sexual minorities suffered marginalization, discrimination and violation of their human sexuality and dignity and were not allowed to express and live their sexual life to the fullest, and even to enter relationships or marriage. Cruel forms of punishment for sexual behaviors other than heterosexuality followed where gays, lesbians, bisexuals and others were tortured and even killed under the state’s penal code as influenced by the religious and cultural dogmas (de Ru, 2013:223).

Most African countries criminalized same-sex relationships and practices claiming this lifestyle was un-African since it is required that people must behave according to their biological sex and gender in ways that are not contrary to a ‘normative’ ways of gender performance. In the South

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African context, sexual minorities saw a liberation of their sexual lifestyle and choices when the country became democratic with a supreme liberal Constitution that included sexual orientation clause in its Bill of Rights (Steyn & van Zyl, 2009:4). Several LGBTIQ liberation movements, to include the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), began to raise their voices to debunk a societal norm that their lifestyle was un-African. This body was established to hold a new Constitution of 1996 accountable to its anti-discrimination clause in terms of section 9 which is the equality clause in the Bill of Rights. Accordingly:

It should, nevertheless, be noted that the re-enforcement of the notion of homosexuality as ‘un-African’ highlights the fact that sexuality is a deeply political issue: Our sexuality is a deeply political issue, continually subject to various contesting discourses of moral regulation. The intersection of various historical strands of political struggle puts sexuality in the political limelight in post-apartheid South Africa – women’s struggles for equality, lesbian and gay liberation, the rampaging HIV/Aids pandemic in Africa. It is through meanings attached to non-hegemonic bodies and their desires that othering is perpetuated, and upon whom different forms of exclusion, oppression and violence are perpetuated. The body becomes the site of discursive struggle (Steyn & van Zyl, 2009:4).

It was because of the discrimination and denial suffered by the LGBTIQ persons that during the 1990s-queer theology began to emerge, as “part of the larger queer movement whose political ideas were never quite realized and which soon fragmented but which lives on in the desire of many sexual outcasts and outlaws to work in solidarity with one another” (Stuart 2007:11, c.f Punt, 2007:243-244). Inspired by the work of Michael Foucault, Judith Butler, Jeffery Weeks, Gayle Rubin, and others, the newly developed “queer theory rejects the view (often termed ‘essentialism’) that sexuality is a drive that is universal and eternal” (Stuart 2007:12).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, medical developments began to classify people using medical models and Thatcher points out that this was then when the concept of “the male ‘homosexual’ was invented to describe those men who would not or could not conform to a type of masculinity that the modern capitalism felt it needed” (Stuart 1997:8). People were then “grouped together” and given an identity that taught them to perform in certain ways according to their given gender identities of

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either ‘male of female’. Those who could not conform to these identity classifications were described as ‘sick’ and ‘abnormal’ and it was then that “the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement was born” (Stuart 1997:8).

Churches developed the heterosexist reading of the Bible and a doctrine that included the notions of morality and good sexual behavior that rejected other sexual attractions and desires other than that of heterosexuality as being immoral, perverse and sinful (de Vos & Barnard, 2007:797). Homosexual and same-sex attractions were rejected and never to be spoken about in churches and religious pulpits. Even to this day, we hear a continued attack and condemnation of the rights and dignities of LGBTIQ persons in churches and other religious institutions. Church members who are LGBTIQ are mostly welcomed into the church but not affirmed, the reasons for such welcoming being that they may seek “the face of God” and be delivered from “that satanic snare” according to some of Position Papers in the Pentecostal churches (Jennings, 2016, c.f United Pentecostal Church International (Statement of Faith), 2018).

In South Africa, the new constitutional dispensation with a supreme Constitution and its Bill of Rights requires that human rights, as enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, must be promoted, protected and fulfilled by the State and its organs. Section 9 in the Bill of Rights forbids discrimination of the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity, either from the state or private parties. The Bill of Rights, according to the Constitution’s Founding Provisions in Chapter 1, is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa and “any law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid”. This means no organ of state or any other institution, including churches, may deny members of the LGBTIQ of their rights to include a right to equality and right to human dignity.

Stellenbosch University’s Professor of Biblical Theology, Jeremy Punt, points out that “a strong, traditional, and ideological conviction is heteronormativity, largely determining that which is considered appropriate sexuality and sexual behavior and informing both public opinion and legislation in this regard” (Punt, 2007:242). He goes on saying that “homosexuals are excluded from heterosexual masculinity in a similar way that the colonized in the colonial narrative was both acknowledged and disavowed, seen as similar and yet also different” (Punt, 2007:242).

## 1.2

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If a heteronormative ideology dominates the state and church, then a freedom and human dignity of the violated sexualities cannot be easily attained. Punt points out that there is a need for a new hermeneutic and vocabulary that will help undo with the notion of gender binary and traditional masculinity that hinders other sexualities to be fully affirmed and embraced in Christian churches and in society (Punt 2007:252).

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

With elements and theories mentioned above, this case study will be looking at the current challenges faced by LGBTIQ persons by considering the case of the recent controversial homophobic sermon delivered at Grace Bible Church in Soweto Johannesburg. There are many critical views on a moral validity of the LGBTIQ sexualities and on whether the church and state institutions should recognize, affirm and embrace these sexualities as happens with heterosexual human sexuality. The sermon was preached on Sunday 22 January 2017 by a visiting Ghanaian Bishop Heward-Mills.<sup>3</sup>

GBC is selected in this study because it involves Pentecostal preachers of the highest popularity in Africa and in their respective countries. The alleged homophobic sermon controversy attracted much media and public attention, especially as it incurred protest by the members of the LGBTIQ community as joined by other allying members of society. Certain members of the church walked out of church auditorium during sermon as a sign of disappointment and protest, and they later protested outside a church building demanding the church to make an apology for what they perceived to be a homophobic sermon against church members who are of the LGBTIQ sexuality. The church later declared their position on homosexuality, that is also controversial, and this is discussed in the following Chapter 2.

Such issues are related to gender, legal and theological themes because they are derived from the notions of human sexuality, sexual orientation, Bible interpretation, and human rights legal philosophies. There are current critical debates about the status of LGBTIQ persons in churches,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnUIUArKil0> Retrieved on 31 May. A sermon preached by Heward-Mills, a founder and Bishop of the charismatic mega church Lighthouse Chapel International based in Ghana. He is also a member of the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

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whether they can be ordained into a ministry, to marry in church and or become open members with the same sexuality status as compared with those of heterosexual identity. The church-state relationship will be looked at in Chapter 4 of this thesis, where it will be unpacked in trying to engage on a question of power and separation between the two institutions, and how human rights culture is received and understood in churches and other religious institutions, particularly by looking at the GBC as a case. The question of regulating churches to ensure protection and promotion of human rights will be looked at as far as a constitutional right to not be unfairly discriminated on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity is concerned. On the same note, the church's religious freedom and immunity from the state's regulating religious dictates and doctrines will also be considered later during Chapter 4.

The Pentecostal movement is large with millions of members and various established and recognized denominations worldwide. This movement is seen to hold many theological notions of Bible hermeneutical literalistic and fundamentalist interpretive modes (Kay & Hunt, 2015:237, c.f Russel, 2016:9). For the purposes of this study, we will look at Bishop Dag Heward-Mills' critical sermon titled *Why Your Soul is Important* as a case study for an event occurred early this year at Grace Bible Church in Soweto, a township west of Johannesburg (Heward-Mills, 2017). Bishop Heward-Mills, whom GBC invited to minister, is one of seven members of the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF)<sup>4</sup> which is a communion of almost all Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the world and which represent churches with more than five-hundred million members (Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2017). Bishop Musa Sono's Grace Bible Church is a member of the PWF, and Bishop Sono also holds a senior office in the PWF (Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2017).<sup>5</sup> The PWF's main objectives include "to promote and encourage regional and continental alliances amongst Spirit-filled networks, to speak to governments and nations when and where social justice and religious rights are compromised and/or violated for the sake of the gospel"<sup>6</sup> (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (History), 2018). For the purposes of this study, PWF will be analysed on the role they play as far as an adoption and enforcement of the Pentecostal church dogma and doctrine is concerned. The reason being

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org/leadership>, visited on 16 November 2018.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org/membership>, visited on 16 November 2018.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org/about-us>, visited on 16 November 2018.



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that both Bishop Musa Sono and Bishop Heward-Mills, as already mentioned above, are leaders in the PWF and represent PWF within the regional context in their respective countries, being South Africa and Ghana respectively. As a result therefore, the PWF has to be looked at since it has much influence on the communal dogma and position papers of most Pentecostal churches worldwide (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (Global Membership), 2018).

The PWF was founded in the 1940s and has since then been hosting conferences where leaders within the Pentecostal movement come together to decide on common basic doctrinal issues in their churches (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (History), 2018). The resolutions agreed upon at these conferences are then adopted on a national level within Pentecostal churches and denominations, as being binding doctrinal positions on issues to include gender and human sexuality amongst others. To understand this movement much better, one ought to consider a fact that the Pentecostal movement is a “church without walls”, meaning the movement believes those Christians experienced biblical salvation and subsequently baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit, with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues, can be regarded as anointed to preach in any church of the Pentecostal tradition no matter which denomination they belong to. One may argue that a reason why the South African Bishop Sono invited the Ghanaian Bishop Heward-Mills to minister in his church, may be because they are of the same Pentecostal tradition and part of PWF leadership. Observation reveals that there is common practice among Pentecostal denomination and ministries to invite one another preach in other Pentecostal denominations, other than their own, as long as they adhere to the Pentecostal tradition and scriptural dogma.

During a sermon delivered on January 2017 at GBC Soweto, Bishop Heward-Mills described homosexuality as sinful and “unnatural” (News24, 2017, c.f Heward-Mills, 2017). Some of his words during the controversial sermon can be summarized thus:

- Homosexuality is unnatural because in nature we don't have two animals of the same sex making love to each other.
- Gays, lesbians and other non-heterosexual sexual practices are worse than animals because the latter, though they may have multiple of partners, they are behaving in accordance with

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their gender roles given them by God and also in accordance with the order of nature (News24, 2017).

The critical sermon, selected and considered as a case in this research study, is related to Christian systematic theology and moral ethical issues since it was explaining the biblical doctrinal views about homosexuality as believed in many Bible fundamentalist churches, particularly most Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations.

Soon after Bishop Dr. Heward-Mills delivered the controversial sermon, certain members of the LGBTIQ community at GBC walked out of a church auditorium and later protested outside the church building because they believed the church was discriminating against them on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, which is something forbidden in the Bill of Rights (SABC Digital News A, 2017). The GBC senior pastor Musa Sono issued a public statement on Sunday 29 January 2017 in response to these protests made by the LGBTIQ community and other concerned members of the public joined by several civil organizations (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017).

In his statement, Bishop Musa Sono emphasized certain theological positions regarding the church's understanding of a freedom of religion on one hand and human rights of the LGBTIQ persons on the other. Pastor Sono declared that:

- GBC is a Bible-based institution of faith,
- GBC respects and holds in high regard the constitution of the land,
- The Constitution guarantees rights not to be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, et cetera,
- Every human being is created in God's image and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth and they are welcome in the church no matter who they are,
- The Constitution further guarantees the freedom to choose one's religion, belief and association,

## 1.2

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- The Constitution further protects the rights of religious communities to enjoy and practice their religion and to form, join and maintain their religions, associations and other organs of civil society,
- The GBC believes it is within their constitutional right, as a legal persona, to determine the rules and conditions of membership for those who wish to join the church; and as part of those condition is the fact that the church statement of faith promotes biblical heterosexual relations and marriage,<sup>7</sup>
- According to GBC's interpretation of the Bible, marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enters into an exclusive relationship for life, and that is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relationships,
- The GBC neither believes nor accepts that holding this theological and ethical views, on the biblical ground, is an unfair discrimination (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017).

This research study will attempt to analyze the above statements made in one of the leading Pentecostal ministries in South Africa, particularly in a black South African context, regarding the LGBTIQ sexualities, their human dignity in churches, and the church's understanding of a freedom of religion within the human rights legal and theological contexts. Most fundamentalist and Bible literalist churches, in Africa particularly, uses the "heterosexist public religious speech" and "heterosexist narratives" to condone LGBTIQ lifestyles and members in churches who live the queer lifestyle, and this is noted to being so since such speeches were influenced by the heterosexual norm that argues homosexuality and same-sex love as being "against the traditional African norms and values," "un-Christian", deviant, "sinful", immoral and detestable practices (Kaunda, 2016:196-215)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The GBC Statement of Faith regarding sexual behaviour and marriage goes thus: 'With regards to sexual behaviour, we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behaviour is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church.' <http://gracebiblechurch.org.za/about-grace/our-statement-of-faith/> (retrieved 31 May 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Chammah J Kaunda, "The Public Religious Speech Acts that Does Justice: Reclaiming the Narrative of Resistance in the Zambian Context of Heterosexism," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (2016): 196-215.

### 1.3

### *Research Questions*

#### **1.3 Research Questions**

##### Primary Question:

How does Grace Bible Church understand the diversity of human sexualities and the importance of embracing all congregants' sexualities in relation to their theological convictions and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa?

##### Secondary Questions:

1. What does this case study show in relation to GBC's theological understanding of the nature of human sexuality?
2. How does GBC's understanding of human sexuality relate to the theological positions of other member bodies in the Pentecostal World Fellowship?
3. What are some of the dominant legal discourses on human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation as intersecting with Christian theology and law in South Africa at present?
4. What theological and legal contribution could help fully develop GBC's theological position regarding a human dignity of the sexual minorities in their congregation and the South African society at large?
5. What aspects of this theological dialogue can enhance, develop and texture the GBC and South Africa society in general with an understanding of the notions of human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation at the intersection of gender, legal and theological discourses?

#### **1.4 Research Methodology, Contribution, Relevance and Goals**

Qualitative methodology will be used to research and investigate the case study involving the Grace Bible Church scenario.

## *1.4 Research Methodology, Contribution, Relevance and Goals*

This research involves a case study as a research method. In his book titled *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods*, Robert K. Yin describes this research method as follows:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin, 2014:16).

On the same note, John Gerring points out that

A case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population) (Gerring, 2007:20).

This method is used mainly in humanities and social sciences qualitative research that focuses mainly on situation where the main research question seek to deal with the how and why questions (Yin, 2014:2). In a context of this study, this research will focus mainly on an occurrence of events as took place in Grace Bible Church Johannesburg where a controversial sermon was not well received by certain members of the church and society as they felt as being derogatory, homophobic and discriminatory against the LGBTIQ persons. The research will be grounded on the video data and other media articles as they covered these events at the GBC. The research will attempt to combine the main case involving GBC with other cases that have occurred in several churches and to examine academic literature and church statements on human sexuality in order to build the thesis. In this regard, selected supporting textbooks and academic articles will be carefully used in data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014:103). The research will mainly be based on video and online media records as a primary source of data since the events at GBC were covered in most media institutions around the world, particularly South Africa where the events took place (Yin, 2014:106).

## *1.4 Research Methodology, Contribution, Relevance and Goals*

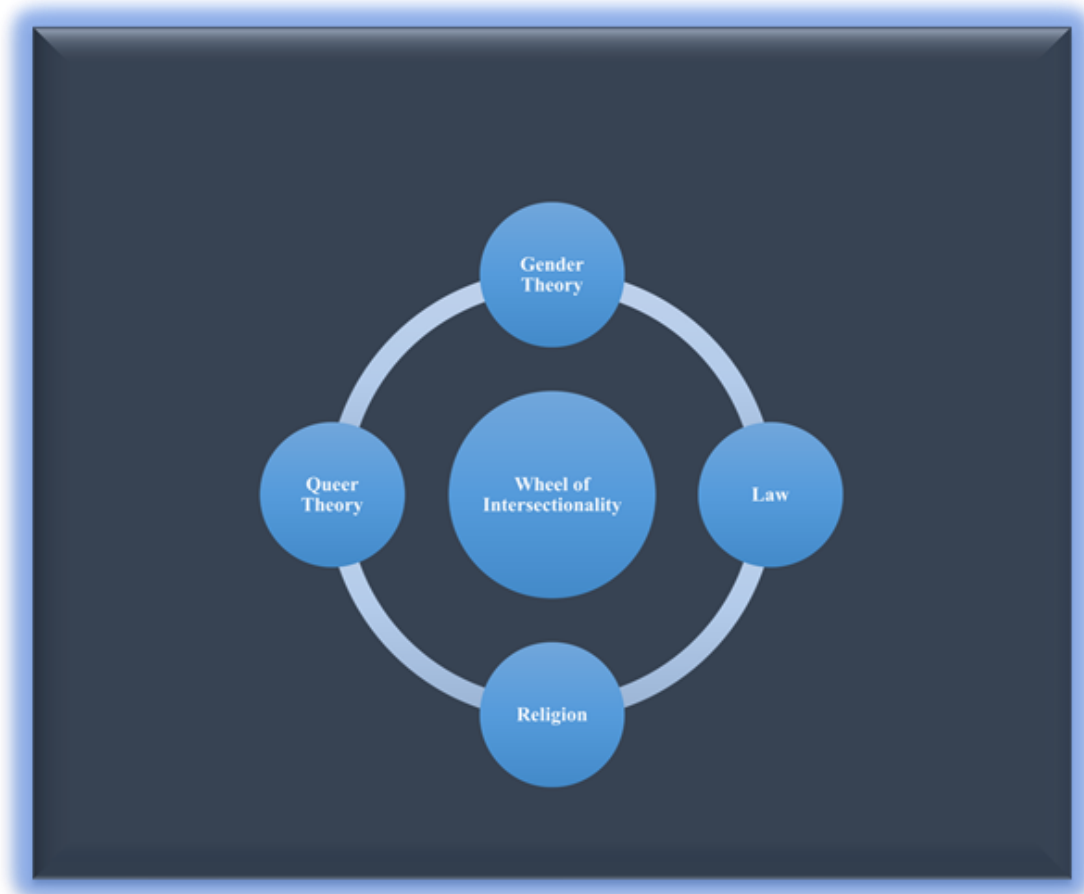
This research will be examining the current heated debate within South Africa, and also as a global phenomenal debate, about status of the LGBTIQ persons in churches and in society. Grace Bible Church is therefore selected as a case study. The GBC case involves an extreme case method because of its value on the independent variable of public interests (Gerring, 2007:101). This case involved issues relating to gender, sexuality, constitutional and human rights law, and Christian theology in general. The church was faced with a moral and theological dilemma on a way members of the LGBTIQ sexuality are being viewed and received, especially in the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches within an African context.

It can be said that there is currently a great deal of societal debates taking place in legislations, churches, cultural institutions and on social media platforms about such matters pertaining to the intersection of LGBTIQ sexuality, religion and law, and it is very interesting to witness and hear how most people have differing view on issues such as gay marriages officiated in churches, ordination of gay pastors, embracing gay lifestyle, legalizing gay marriages, et cetera.

This research's goal is to contribute to what seems to be a current challenge within the Christian and Pentecostal circles in Africa. Most of the African churches are noted as embracing fundamentalist Bible literalism hermeneutical approach since most theologians and biblical scholars seem to be of the view that it poses many challenges due to its failure to contextually engage on Bible passages and as a result labels un-heterosexual persons as deviants, unnatural, immoral and perverts (Russel, 2016:9). The GBC's case study will contribute to the African theologies of development and a need for the contextualization of theological discourses as far as the sexual minorities and other gender diversities are concerned, in order to attempt to open a door for mutual engagement, dialogue and understanding of sexual minorities in churches and society. This research seeks to contribute to the current debates on the legality and morality of LGBTIQ sexuality within the African Christian context, and perhaps the world at large. It is thus necessary to open an inquiry to allow a deeper search for a solution to the challenges of discrimination, stigmatization, and brutality suffered by members of the LGBTIQ sexuality within an African continent, and the church should play a role on this as a prophetic voice to the world especially in solidarity with those suffering abuse, stigma and victimization in communities and this done in line with the ministry theme of the Lord Jesus Christ. This study is unique on its own methodology:

## *1.4 Research Methodology, Contribution, Relevance and Goals*

it seek to intersect the notions on gender, law and religion within the South African and African context, as well as the world at large, as far as the discourse and ongoing dialogues and debates on sexual minorities in church and society are concerned.



*Figure 1. 1: The Wheel of Intersectionality - Gender Theory, Law, Religion and Queer Theory.*

The Pentecostal notion of being “born again” stems from the mainstream Evangelical doctrines of “sin,” “salvation” and “baptism in the Holy Spirit” that are inextricably interwoven into a fabric of the Pentecostal church in general, and upon which almost most theological discourses in the Pentecostal tradition are founded upon. Sexual morality is emphasized to be founded on the theological principle that “marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enters into an exclusive relationship for life, and that is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).” This research considers the Grace Bible Church Soweto, Johannesburg, as a case study since the church

## *1.4 Research Methodology, Contribution, Relevance and Goals*

declared in their Statement that they will allow church membership only to those who will adhere to the heterosexual principle on human sexuality (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The LGBTIQ lifestyles, in most general cases among Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, are being pathologized as being a transgression, a spiritual deviance comprising of sinful “unnatural” acts that may result in divine judgement. Others goes too far by asserting homosexual activities as being demonic. Due to this, sermons are being promulgated from most Pentecostal pulpits in hoping those non-heterosexual persons in church may repent, be delivered and transformed by the power of God (M. Jennings, 2016). In some instances, these sermons are viewed as derogatory and discriminatory against members who are of LGBTIQ sexuality based on an argument that the church does not take into consideration the LGBTIQ members’ lived experiences, but instead insists on a literalist biblical interpretation and hermeneutical exegetical approach. While some members are in protest or even leaving their churches, some are choosing to remain “in the closet” and celibate so that they may be accepted and participate in church activities. However, some closeted LGBTIQ members in Pentecostal-Charismatic and other Bible fundamentalist churches are noted to be experiencing heightened homonegativity whenever anti-gay sentiments are uttered and theological resolutions passed.

Though this study is interdisciplinary, it falls within a field of systematic theology particularly the fields of moral and doctrinal theology, and it involves qualitative research consisting of reviewing academic literature and analyzing case study sources such as media statements and churches’ doctrinal position papers and resolutions, and this is done in a comparative and contextual fashion (Yin, 2014:106).

Resolving the main problem will involve some major steps, which include:

- The study pursues critical engagement with a concept of diversity of human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation
- This study will undertake the doctrinal critical review of a set of key doctrinal statements and position papers, to include selected passages in scriptures, that the Pentecostal Bible fundamentalist churches holds and from which they derive the theological doctrines and resolutions on sexuality and same sex relationships. The question of socio-cultural contexts and various methodological approaches used in biblical interpretation will be briefly



## 1.5

### *Organization of the Study*

introduced in the context of scriptural passages that deals with same sex relationships and by doing so taking into consideration the works of contemporary biblical scholars and theologians.

- This study will also analyze the positivist law and human rights jurisprudential issues involving the churches and the members of the LGBTIQ. Several selected South African court decisions and church policies will be analyzed in a comparative and contextual fashion.

To accomplish these research objectives, various models of analysis will be employed, to include, mainly qualitative data analysis, critically engaging on video and online articles to gather and analyze data. Published academic literature will be used to support any argument and approach to writing this thesis.

## **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The study will be divided into the following chapters:

### Chapter 1

This chapter will serve as an introduction and consist of a research proposal, a general overview of the theme, structure, methodology, background and rationale, research questions, and the hoped-for contribution of this study.

### Chapter 2

This chapter will look at the nature of human sexuality as understood by the Grace Bible Church.

### Chapter 3

Continuing from previous chapter, this chapter will look at the doctrines and position papers within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, how this movement historically developed over time and what are the current theological issues regarding homosexuality or same sex attraction. In this

## 1.6

## *Key Terminology*

chapter, a role played by the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and some of its member denominations and ministries such as the Grace Bible Church, Lighthouse Chapel International and the Assemblies of God World Fellowship, will be considered in a comparative and contextual fashion to understand the human sexuality and marriage doctrines and LGBTIQ position papers in this movement.

### Chapter 4

This chapter will analyze the dominant political and legal discourses on LGBTIQ sexualities in South Africa. It will look at struggles and historical emergence of the liberal queer movements and how they shaped the development and inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the South African Constitution of 1996. Post-constitutional queer jurisprudence will also be briefly analyzed with the relevant common law and court decisions selected and used as case study.

### Chapter 5

This chapter will systematically analyze certain aspects of the human dignity of sexual minorities in the context of the Grace Bible Church case. The theological ideas of Imago Deo, human dignity and human flourishing will be at the core of discussion in this chapter.

### Chapter 6

This chapter will serve as the conclusion of the study. It will consist of a summary on how intersecting gender studies, law and religion could be of great use to the church and society at large, and how this field needs to be enriched, developed and nuanced through critical academic engagement with the aim to make this field a multi-disciplinary area of further research on law and other social sciences such as gender and religion.

## **1.6 Key Terminology**

### a. Pentecostal

A charismatic religious movement that gave rise to several Protestant churches in the United States of America (USA) and across the world in the 20th century. It is unique in its belief that

## 1.6

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all Christians should seek a post conversion religious experience called baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, and to add its theological stands that emphasize on the continuation of the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit as seen during the early apostolic era.<sup>9</sup> In most instances, theologians uses the term “Pentecostal” and “Charismatic” interchangeably though the classical Pentecostal movement may be argued to being an independent from the charismatic movement that began later during the 1960s.

## b. Gender

Refers to the problematic and inaccurate socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men.

## c. Human Dignity

This is a concept that is used in both the theological and legal discourses to denote the idea that a human being was born and crowned with dignity and worth because they were created in the image of God. The concept was further developed into legal discourse and is now the cornerstone of the legal idea of human rights that are being included and protected in most Constitutions of the world, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which requires the state and private parties to recognize and affirm that every person has a right to human dignity, among others, and that this right should be protected, promoted and fulfilled.

## c. Human Sexuality

Refers to the capacity of humans to have erotic experiences and responses. Someone's sexual orientation can influence that person's sexual interest and attraction for another person.

## d. Law

For the purposes of this study, law refer to those institutionalized systems of government legislated rules on which every society is functioning upon. The “law” is made out of community’s moral rules that later become legally binding on all citizens as soon as they are developed and debated

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pentecostalism>

## 1.7

*Limitation of the Study*

upon on their inclusivity as to their binding legal status, and then passed and assented by the competent legislative bodies in South Africa being the National Parliament, provincial legislatures and municipal Councils. Such rules can be democratic and undemocratic. If in the former, they may be accepted and recognized by the international society, whereas if in the latter, they may not be recognized and accepted since they do not pass the international society's standards of proper and just law-making mechanisms.

## d. Liberal

The political, legal and social idea that people should be free to make proper choices about their lives, their bodies and their lifestyles and should respect and tolerate others who differ from them ideologically. The concept of personal liberty and freedom is also related to equality, freedom and justice as far as choices and lifestyles are concerned. Libertarianism and liberalism are both therefore the philosophical ideas based on the notions of liberty and freedom.

## e. Sexual Minorities

In general terms, minorities are defined by Leon Louw and Frances Kendall, in their book *South Africa: The Solution*, as the “individuals with common interests or values which are not shared by the majority. Examples of minorities include...homosexuals, the handicapped and lefthanded people...” (Louw & Kendall, 1986:167). Sexual minority, on the other hand, describe those persons within the society whose sexual orientation, sexual or gender identity and practices are different from most of the surrounding community. Normally, the sexual minorities are those who do not conform to the societal accepted norm of heterosexuality, and the term is primarily used to refer to the LGBTIQ individuals.

**1.7 Limitation of the Study**

This study will be limited to the intersection of gender, law and theology within the context of Grace Bible Church. The ongoing debated issues relating to sexual minorities in churches will be dealt with. It will also be necessary to engage with the Pentecostal World Fellowship member bodies as they are in par with the GBC's theological views on human sexuality and sexual orientation. Since the GBC released a statement on how they understand human sexuality, and the

## 1.8

## *Conclusion to this chapter*

statement contained certain legal and human rights notions, it is therefore necessary to not limit this study to gender and religion only, but to also extend it to law and human rights jurisprudence as well.

### **1.8 Conclusion to this chapter**

In this chapter, the GBC case study has been introduced. The chapter has looked at the background and rationale, statement of the problem, contribution, goals and relevance, research methodology, research questions to be engaged on, provisional organization of the thesis and limitations of the study. The following chapter will, therefore, lay the grounds and a solid foundation that this study will be based mainly on – the GBC’s theological reflection on the nature of human sexuality.

*CHAPTER 2***CHAPTER 2****GRACE BIBLE CHURCH: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY****2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will lay a foundation on which the whole thesis will be based. The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the theological position of the Grace Bible Church on issues involving the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex persons within a church. The GBC has been selected for this case study since this church made headline news at the beginning of 2017 during the sermon delivered by Bishop Dag Heward-Mills in which he made certain statements regarding the way the Pentecostal Churches understand LGBTIQ sexuality and sexual orientation (News24, 2017). As already pointed out in chapter one, certain members of the church and the Soweto community at large protested the GBC sermon and its theological position on the LGBTIQ issues (Mail&Guardian, 2017). Later, during the month of January 2017, Bishop Musa Sono delivered the GBC official statement in response to the protests and public criticism on how the church views human sexuality and sexual orientation, especially in relation to church members who are of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). Therefore, it is the purpose of this case study, and of this chapter, to critically engage and analyze the GBC position papers within the intersection of gender, theology and law.

Since this chapter is purposed to lay a foundation for the whole study, it will be necessary to briefly engage on the nature of human sexuality and sexual orientation by considering some theological discourses from a theoretical perspective. The point of departure will be to briefly reflect on the GBC alleged homophobic sermon and the subsequent official statements. The theological and ethical reflection on sexuality and sexual orientation will also be looked at from the scholastic point of view as this is necessary for this study.

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

### 2.2 Theological sexual ethics and morality

The GBC sermon and statements on human sexuality reveal the heteronormative ideology that a homosexual relationship between consenting individuals is against the order of nature, against what the Bible teaches, against the societal ethical and moral norms, and as such also that people in same-sex sexual relations cannot be ‘born again’ Christians according to the Pentecostal soteriological understanding. The official church statement reveals that the GBC, even though they condemn homosexuality as a sin, do welcome the members of the LGBTIQ to be members of the church. This needs careful consideration; the GBC is aware of the violence against the sexual minorities in society and they seek to discourage societal hostility against LGBTIQ persons. By welcoming sexual minorities into the congregation as members, inference can be made that the purpose is to try reform them by means of a counselling and teaching, so they become ‘normal’ members of the church and society (Jennings, 2016). Dion Forster has noted that one of the views held by certain Christian churches is that they “reject homosexual acts and lifestyles, but lovingly accept those people who have a homosexual inclination and are like any other believer willing to enter a process of Christian conversion and discipleship”<sup>10</sup> (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:139). He notes that this is a flawed view since full acceptance, and true love, would surely not reject an aspect of the person’s identity? However, the GBC follows the constructionist argument that a same-sex orientation is a disorder, deviating from ‘normal’ sexual drives. In their view, such a disorder is caused by various factors in which a person might need a divine intervention. This is regarded as an ethically problematic view by some Christian theologians and ethicists. (cf., Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:138).

The GBC do accept that they are open to different views and opinions of homosexuality in the church among members and guest preachers they invite (eNCA News, 2017).<sup>11</sup> Sometimes there might be conflicting viewpoints and opinions but the church strictly embraces the fact that all

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<sup>10</sup> These churches do accept the LGBTIQ persons as members but on the condition, that they remain celibate. Members cannot date or marry people of the same sex as that will be condemned as sinful. Such members will be accepted, loved, and welcome in the church in hope that God will deliver them from the homosexual bondage by means of prayers for deliverance. Heterosexual members will be discouraged to condemn person of same sex attraction. Homosexual marriage cannot be solemnized or be blessed in most of the Pentecostal churches like the GBC.

<sup>11</sup> See Rev Mathole’s media statement on paragraph 2.2.3.2 above.

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

Christians must love one another and not judge anyone. Foster is of the view that various Christian churches have adopted a certain defined approach to how they view homosexuality – each of these approaches has some social and theological informant and can be critiqued (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:138). Christian churches do not all interpret and approach the Bible in the same way, particularly in matters of morality. Every church has a position paper and doctrinal statement on homosexuality and sexual morality. In his book, *The New Testament and homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate*, theologian Robin Scroggs (1984:11) believes “...people can agree about the meaning of biblical statements yet differ widely as to how they should be applied to the contemporary debate. Obviously, what is at issue, then, is not interpretation of the Bible per se (i.e. exegesis), but extra-biblical theological judgements about the authority of the scripture (i.e. hermeneutics).”

In their statement, the GBC believes that the Bible is “the Word of God and the superior and ultimate instruction for our lives and faith, which informs who we are as well as our statement of faith” (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017)<sup>12</sup>. The GBC follows the fundamentalist or literalist approach to the interpretation of certain texts in the Bible that they feel address homosexuality (Russel, 2016:12-13, Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:139). A fundamentalist approach to the Biblical text can be classified as stressing, “the importance of inerrancy (the biblical text as originally given cannot be wrong) and the literal interpretation of the Bible. Each word, in the original texts, was inspired” (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:139). The fundamentalist and literalism Bible interpretation approach holds to the fact that the Bible should be understood “just as it is” and it need not be interpreted contextually by considering people’s lived experiences and the changing societal norms. Such approach holds a conservative view that homosexuality and same-sex intercourse “was an appeal to the norm of heterosexuality” even in the animal kingdom where animals do not practice homosexual practices (Gagnon, 2001:179)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> See Rev Sono’s statement on paragraph 2.2.3.1 above.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop Dag Heward-Mills hold to this literalist and conservative view. He believes the fact that in the animal kingdom the homosexual practices are not known then such practices are unnatural.



## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

### 2.2.1 The ethic of “unnaturalness” of same-sex relationships

Bishop Heward-Mills’ sermon was that same-sex attraction and sexual relationships are “unnatural” as even in the animal kingdom it is not a normal practice (News24, 2017).<sup>14</sup> He pointed out how he observed various animal and all of them never practiced homosexual relationships. One of the members of the public commented about the sermon and said that “If it is unnatural for a male dog to mate with a male dog, how can it be natural for a man to have sex with another man, before we even come to the Bible” (SABC Digital News C, 2017)<sup>15</sup>. These statements need careful scholarly consideration to identify what is understood about homosexual relationships from a theological and biblical perspectives.

Regarding animal heterosexuality, Gagnon (2001:179) is of the view that “...the minor argument for the unnaturalness of same-sex intercourse was an appeal to the norm of heterosexuality in the animal kingdom”. He goes on quoting the classic text in Plato’s *Laws* (836C, 840D-E) that

joining with males and boys in sexual intercourse as though with females, adducing as evidence the nature of animals and pointing out that (among them) male does not touch male for sexual purposes, because that is not natural.... Our citizens must not be worse than birds and many other animals which...when they reach (the) age (for breeding) pair off male with female according to instinct and female with male and for the remaining time they...(remain) firm first agreements of love (Gagnon, 2001:179).

The above discourse by Gagnon (as adopted from Plato) is problematic as it reveals the position of the ancient Greek society regarding homosexuality as being unnatural. This discourse has been discredited by a fact that the world is in the Christian era where churches seek to establish and interpret doctrines regarding an understanding of homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Gareth Moore came with an opinion regarding the issue of “unnaturalness’ of same-sex relations (Moore 2003:86). He gives an illustration that Christians should seek to consider a single biblical

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<sup>14</sup> See paragraph 2.2.2 above.

<sup>15</sup> See paragraph 2.2.2 above.

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

text on this topic (Moore, 2003:86), which is Romans 1, where Paul gives a picture of Gentile society on the fact that:

their females exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature, and the males likewise abandoned the natural use of the female and burned in their desire for each other, males committing what is shameful with males and receiving among themselves the due reward for their delusion (Romans 1:26-7).

A prominent gay liberation theologian Adrian Thatcher condemns the above argument by Paul. He is of the view that Paul “was wrong” when declaring that homosexual acts were unnatural as in the animal kingdom such acts are not being practiced (Thatcher, 1993:135). He argues that “...in the species after species, right through the animal kingdom, students of animal behavior report unambiguous evidence of homosexual attachments and behavior – in insects, fish, birds, and lower and higher mammals” (Thatcher 1993:135).

Moore (2003:88) quotes the theologian Eugene F. Rogers’ book *Sexuality and the Christian Body* (1999:53) thus:

Nature’ works differently for Paul than for us. For him, nature and morality can be intertwined among Gentiles, slaves, and women, and it comes as a surprise to him and to the circumcision party that holiness appears among the Gentiles, precisely because they regard the Gentiles – in what we would consider a category mistake – as morally inferior by nature. For ‘nature’ applies in Paul’s vocabulary not only to male and female, but also to ‘Jew and Greek,’ which is the most important case of all. And in that case, the Gentile nature proves no barrier to God’s grant of holiness in the Spirit. ‘Jew or Gentile’ is for Paul both a natural and a moral distinction (Rogers, 1999:53).

The question of ‘what is unnatural’ and ‘what is immoral’ has been subjected to much debate and controversy as far as homosexuality and same-sex intercourse is concerned. Many scholars differ on whether the Bible literature does condemn homosexual practices or not, and as pointed out above, the way biblical passages are being interpreted plays a major role. Forster (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:143) suggests that the hermeneutic differences that exist between the intention of

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

a Biblical text, and contemporary issues, cannot be collapsed into one another. For example, Romans 1, which is frequently cited by Biblical literalists in relation to homosexuality, may not deal with what is understood as a monogamous, adult, same sex relationship. Using Biblical texts in this way is irresponsible and dangerous. The reason is that Paul wrote this passage to a specific community living in his own time and the community is different from the community in contemporary society. He believes the whole message of the Bible should be interpreted in context by since in the day Paul when wrote Romans, the sixty-six books of the Bible canon were not yet combined (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:143). When the contextual approach to biblical interpretation is followed then there can be a discernment as to the common insights on human sexuality and moral sexual behavior. For example, while Romans 1 does not deal with homosexuality in its modern sense, we can ‘glean’ ethical value from the text. Forster lists some of the values that can be discerned as, “respect for one’s body and the bodies of others, freedom from lust, not engaging in sexual acts that are abusive or demeaning of other persons, not using sex as a weapon or punishment and ensuring that love and trust are central values in human sexuality” (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:143).

### **2.2.2 The ethic of “naturalness” of same-sex relationships**

As pointed out above (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:143), it is hermeneutically complex to ascertain what Romans 1 says about homosexual person and a homosexual orientation. Yet, this is the biblical passage that is most often used to condemn same-sex relations are unnatural. The reason is that this passage was written to the early Gentile believers many centuries before the modern era, and it was written before the Canon of the whole scripture. But the challenge remains that there is a need to consider the fundamentalist and literalist Christians like the GBC and Bishop Heward-Mills’ discourses. Perhaps it would be necessary to consider the idea of ‘natural order’ as used by many scholars so to ascertain if homosexual activities can be regarded as ‘natural’ or not.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to briefly discuss the historical background for an understanding of the existence of the idea of natural law which serves a significant role in understanding the ethical and theological reflection on the ‘naturalness’ of same-sex relationships according to the Pauline passage in Romans 1. Natural law ideas are relevant to the understanding

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

of the Scriptures and relevant within the African context and contemporary perspectives and concerns like the issue of GBC's understanding of human sexuality and sexual orientation.

Romans 1 is the passage that speaks of same-sex relations being “unnatural”, and this word ‘natural’ must be briefly discussed within the context it was used in this passage. Students of church history agree that Paul wrote the book of Romans to the Hellenistic community that were influenced mostly by the Greek philosophy (Kassa, 2014:20-21). Christianity was then accepted by some in the Hellenistic community in Rome, and there was a tension between philosophical and biblical truth. Some of the early church fathers also considered Hellenistic philosophy as a form of wisdom God gave the Greeks and that it was compatible with Christianity (Kassa, 2014:21). Some, however, rejected the fact that Hellenistic philosophy was compatible with Christianity. Tertullian (AD160-220) is a well-known early church father who rejected the idea that Hellenistic philosophy goes hand in hand with Christianity when he famously argued that:

Heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy...what indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What accord is there between the academy and the church? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon” who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart” [Wisdom of Solomon 1:1]. Away with all attempt to produce a mottled Christianity of the Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the Gospel! With our Faith, we desire no further belief (Tertullian, 1988:43).

The concept of “Natural Theology” drove Paul to mention that same sex relationships are “against nature” in Romans 1. This concept is dependent on the rational ability of humankind to know God and his moral and ethical will without even making an appeal to a special revelation. Paul wrote the Romans 1 passage to the community that had already been enlightened by what they believed to be God's moral will, even before they had a Scriptural revelation. In other words, Paul was not writing something ‘new’ to this society, he was simply reminding them of that which they already knew as being the will of God as revealed in nature. This can be a problematic interpretation if modern contemporary society could be understood studying the society Paul that wrote this passage for.

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

Bonhoeffer (2005:173f) observes that:

The concept of the natural has fallen into disrepute in Protestant ethics. For some theologians it was completely lost in the darkness of general sinfulness, whereas for others it took on the brightness of the primal creation. Both were grave misuse that led to the complete elimination of the category of the natural from the protestant thought; it was left to the Catholic ethics.

According to Durbin (Durbin, 2012:139), the concept of natural theology reappeared again, (after it was dismissed by the Protestant Reformation), in the theological inquiry in the twentieth century when the theologians, natural scientists and philosophers began to be interested in the the relationship between theology and nature. Durbin (2012:139) declares that this was because of, borrowing Alister McGrath, a “‘crisis of confidence’ within the discipline of natural theology in previous years, reaching back to the Enlightenment’s lingering skepticism about our ability to derive God’s existence or attributes through the empirical observation of nature”. This means that natural theology was used to rule “out any appeal to special revelation or supernatural revelation,” even the ones from the Scriptures (Kassa 2014:22)

Natural law, on the other hand, also comes with several misconceptions associated with moral distortions and justifying arguments about what is the proper moral behavior that God intended for humankind (Kassa 2014:23). Nash (2000:229) observes that

Natural law has been used both to promote and condemn democracy, imperialism, gender inequalities, racism, and slavery. Culture-bound values were expressed as timeless truth. Historical biases, antiquated worldviews, and social systems such as medieval feudalism, were absolutized or eternalized.

Natural law is being used mainly in some churches “as a source of ethics that seek to establish an autonomous moral standard” about human conduct and behavior (Kassa 2014:24). Bible scholar Barton quotes Karl Bath pointing out that “God rules the world (and the church, and the individual) by positive law, of which the Ten Commandments are the most obvious example. The good for humanity is what God decrees it to be, not what human beings can deduce” (Barton, 2002:59).

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

The question might be asked that, if homosexuality as a moral issue can then be knowable through Paul's assertion in Romans 1 as a phenomenon that goes against 'nature', does this not accordingly suggest that, *that which is revealed* through Paul is something already knowable in other ways? A faithful response to this question is necessary but must be in the affirmative and in the context within which Paul wrote this passage to the community influenced by the Hellenistic philosophy and culture relating to natural law ideology. It is true that Paul knew that the fundamental principle of morality is derived from the natural law concept and philosophy.

Kassa (2014:53) points out that the concept 'natural' "is loaded with different meanings." Not all meanings are negative in relation to biblical faith. The question can be asked whether homosexuality is an immoral practice that goes against natural law and order. If yes, do persons with a same sex orientation choose or decides to be so on their own self will and lifestyle choice, or are they just in that way 'naturally', i.e. something that it is not in their will to change? If the persons with the same-sex sexuality did not, on their self-will, choose their sexuality, then Paul's assertion in Romans 1 falls away because then homosexuality is not against 'nature'. It will then be necessary to ascertain the correct interpretation of Romans 1. Then it can be argued that since all 'nature' was corrupted by sin, then 'nature' itself and human sexuality must be corrupted entirely and somehow Bishop Heward-Mills might have had some promising proposition that all humanity needs salvation, homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. This will be considered in much detail in the following chapter.

### **2.2.3 The forbidden "immoral" and "abominable" acts**

The Christian moral authority in which the understanding of sex and morality has been drawn from is the Bible. It is believed in many Christian churches that the Bible is a final authority to understand human sexuality and the natural moral law that rules human sexual behavior (Cahill, 1996:3). The "Christian interpretations of human "nature," as divinely created and as directed to certain goods recognizable by reason, have provided a realist approach to morality and promised common ground with other religious and philosophical traditions" (Cahill, 1996:3). The Scriptures have been a central source of sexual ethics in Protestant theological ethics, and the ethics of natural law play a role mainly in the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church (Russel, 2016:14).

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

Michael Foucault has been known to be a disturbing figure on the understanding of Christian sexual morality (Cahill 1996:3). He deconstructed a form of sexual identity and value, applying it more explicitly to sexual orientation and gender identities. His development of the theory of “ethic of resistance” was a result of his struggle to define the meaning of sexuality due to him personally learning from his own homosexuality<sup>16</sup> with which he was never at ease (Miller, 1984). His intention was to awaken individuals to revolutionize and self-review their own struggles against sexual repression that was caused by the institutions of social controls like the Christian churches. As he grew and lived in a predominantly Christian society, Foucault saw Christianity as one of the forms of social oppression toward the homosexual communities because their lifestyles were labelled as ‘unnatural’, intrinsic moral evil and a behavior that is against the Scriptures (Miller, 1984). The modern medicated discourses of sex and sexual psychology were blamed for eliciting individuals’ obsession with sex because of the process of requiring people to ‘confess’ sex secrets to powerful authorities like the church (Cahill 1996:22). Sexual identity, sexual orientation and those sexual lifestyles and preferences other than heterosexual sexuality were labelled as immoral and even subjected to state penal codes and this drove individuals like Foucault to consider a sexual revolution and deconstruction of alternative sexualities and sexual identities. Cahill (1996:22) points out that “according to Foucault the very notion of “sexuality” (as opposed to the body and its pleasures) is a historical construct, developed in the service of bourgeois power.”

The sexual pleasure, desire, and sexuality is a reality that cannot be ignored (Thatcher, 2011:3). It is something that comes by ‘nature’ and the individual’s sexual drive and desire will determine the object of their sexual attraction and sexual orientation (Harding, 2013:283). A body has sexual passion that will be hard to ignore, including sexual stimulus and arousal. Foucault argued that the nature of sexual desire varied with culture and some passages in the human body cannot be culturally constant (Cahill, 1996:22). Sexual desire is a drive requiring integration into full adult life, just as an appetite to eat and drink. Free adult persons experience sexual desires and the only way to respond to this is to satisfy their sexual needs from time to time (Thatcher, 2011:57). This is how the ‘nature of human sexuality’ can be understood in the context of this study. However, the challenge is, as was faced by Foucault (Miller, 1984) also, what if one’s sexual desires are not

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<sup>16</sup> James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1992) provides the details of Foucault’s pursuit of “limit of experiences” by experimentation with gay sado-masochism, which very likely contributed to his death from AIDS in 1984.

## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

in line with the heteronormative social description of the need for male-female sexual relations and unions? In such case, can the homosexual sexual desire towards persons of the same sex be labelled as “unnatural” even if it is something that is experienced in ‘nature’ without a human choice?

### **2.2.4 Curing the incurable – Can love be sick?**

The gender identity that is widely accepted is noted to be the idea of compulsory heterosexuality which is the socially constructed system that regulates sex, gender, sexual behavior and desire according to the stipulated constellations of “male” and “female,” “masculine” and “feminine,” for the purposes of human reproduction (Punt, 2007:247). These binaries of gender and sex condemns the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sexualities as fundamentally unnatural (Cahill 1996:4). Persons who do not identify themselves as heterosexual or the so called “straight persons” are mainly seen as being in need of a “sexual cure” and in some cultures such persons even suffer ‘correctional rapes’ as in the case of lesbians in the RSA context. Even though sexuality and sexual pleasure are good and essential for personal fulfilment, the subjective meaning of sex and sexuality from those who do not conform to the gender binary is much ignored in church and society (Harding, 2013:57, c.f Ratzinger, 1994:42).

Augustine of Hippo wrote on moral teachings about proper sexual behavior and morality. His moral teaching on sex has dominated Catholic thought for sixteen centuries (Kamitsuka & Wiley 2010:103). When the Protestant reformation emerged out of the Roman Catholic Church this doctrine on sexual behavior as a sign of a mankind’s original sin was inherited and it continues to dominate the Christian church today. Augustine viewed the fact that males have erections as shameful and was the result of the original sin that led people to be unable to control their own bodies, and that before the fall the genitals would have behaved rationally (Wiley, 2010:103). To him sexual desire was dominated by lust and sexual immorality to include the homosexual lusts. According to Wiley (2010:103), “Augustine designated everything about sex as evil – sexual appetite, sexual pleasure, the desire for sex.” Sexual intercourse within marriage was considered evil unless its purpose was explicitly procreative, therefore the only legitimate use of sex is for procreation according to the theology of Augustine and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).



## 2.2 *Theological sexual ethics and morality*

Christianity and the Bible teaches the notion of love and that this should be the highest moral order in society.<sup>17</sup> Sex is believed to be an element of love and the question can be asked if persons of the same sex do have sexual intercourse, can that be a sign of them loving each other, or is it just a matter of lust? Does same-sex partner love making diminish their capacity to love? In his book *A Question of Truth: Christianity and Homosexuality*, Gareth Moore (2003:157) argues that of course persons of the same sex do “fall in love, just as straight people do, and this love has a natural sexual expression, just as it does for straight people; that’s why we can call it making love, regardless of whether the couple are of the same sex or not.” He goes on to pointing out that homosexual people do love in a non-sexual way, can give themselves to each other even to the point of self-sacrifice. Moore (2003:157) points out that homosexual people are not closed to God as many are very devout Christians and are trying to live prayerful lives as Disciples of Christ. He goes on to condemn whether homosexuals can know how to love others and God as a “very ridiculous question” (Moore 2003:157). Being against love relationships, even sexual love relations, is to be against God as Moore argues.

Moore (2003:163) points out that being homosexual is not a tendency to sin against love, and therefore not a tendency to sin at all. To commit to a homosexual relationship with another of the same sex is not a sin itself. Any sexual relationship within a loving homosexual relationship, as with heterosexual ones, cannot be condemned as being against love. A loving “homosexual activity is not of itself sinful; it is not ‘an intrinsic moral evil’ because love cannot be evil (Moore 2003:165).

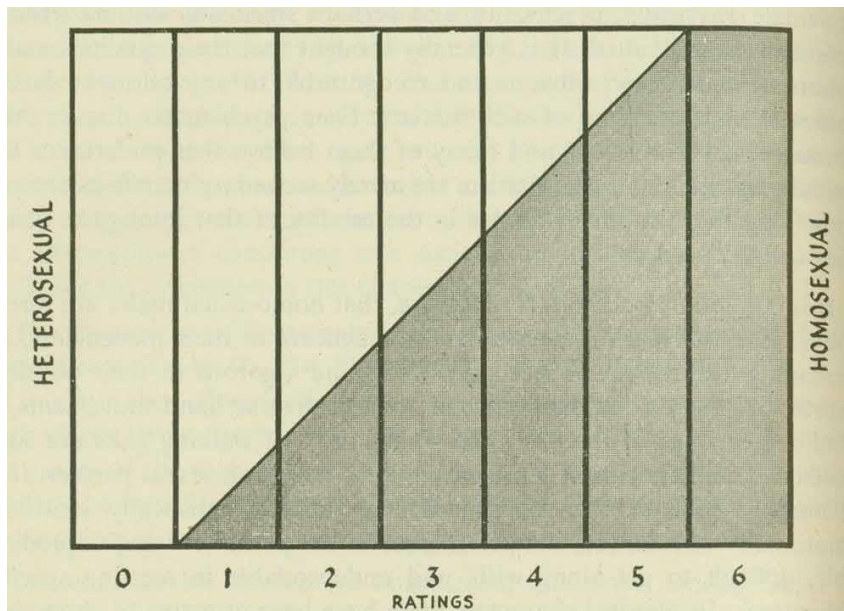
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<sup>17</sup> Several passages in the Bible speaks of love, to include; Matthew 22:35-9 “One of them, a lawyer, to test him, said ‘Which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ And he said to him: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; this is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself;” John 15:12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you;” Romans 13:8 “Owe nothing to anybody except to love each other; for he who loves another has fulfilled the law;” 1 Corinthians 13:13 “Faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love;” and Galatians 5:14 “The whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

## 2.3 *Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*

### 2.3 Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

The main discourse in this study is the theology of sex, gender and sexual orientation. To uncover the accurate description of human sexuality, the discourses of other scholars from the sociological and psychological background will be considered. As pointed out above, the GBC (as with most other Christian churches) holds the position that a human biological sexual organ determines the person's sexuality and sexual orientation, and therefore if one fails to live and behave not in accordance with their 'natural' gender and sexuality then they are not living in accordance with the will of God and nature (Ratzinger, 1994:42). On the other hand, the recent research in the social sciences reveals otherwise. The Kinsey team interviewed thousands of people about their sexual histories. Research showed that sexual behavior, thoughts, and feelings towards the same or opposite sex were not always consistent across time. Instead of assigning people to three categories—heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual—the team used a seven-point scale. It ranges from 0 to 6 with an additional category of "X" as follows:



#### Rating | Description

- 0** | Exclusively heterosexual
- 1** | Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
- 2** | Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
- 3** | Equally heterosexual and homosexual
- 4** | Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
- 5** | Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual

*only incidentally heterosexual*

**6** | Exclusively homosexual

**X** | No socio-sexual contacts or reactions

## 2.3 *Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*

**Figure 2. 1:** *Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale, Kinsey Scale.* (<https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/kinsey-scale.php>). Accessed on 27 November 2018.

**Understanding the above scale:** *People at “0” report exclusively heterosexual /*

*opposite sex behavior or attraction. Those at “6” report exclusively homosexual / same-sex behavior or attraction. Ratings 1–5 are for those who report varying levels of attraction or sexual activity with either sex. In the original Kinsey Report studies, the X category designated the group who reported no socio-sexual contacts or reactions in their interviews.*

Influenced by the modern research findings and discoveries, such as the above Kinsey Institute Scale, most queer scholars and liberation theologians are of the view that the traditional categorization of the human sexuality into male-female binarism needs be reconsidered as it labels those in the same-sex orientation as ‘abnormal’ and ‘unnatural’ due to non-conformity with the heterosexual binary (Weeks, 2003:3). Michael Foucault famously declared that sexuality is “the truth of our being” (Foucault 1979).

### 2.3.1 **Sexuality**

The social science scholars Robert Crooks and Karla Baur, in their book *Our Sexuality* (Crooks & Baur, 2017:261) point out that sexuality, either same-sex or opposite sex relationships, cannot be understood exclusively as a sexual contact between individuals of the same or opposite sex. Sexuality is a much broader concept and, by the very nature of observing individuals, rejects the notion of gender binarism and heteronormative ideology as constructed by societal culture and church. It will be impossible to carry on this study without understanding the intersectionality of other discourses from other disciplines like sociology, anthropology and psychology for instance, because sexuality is not coined in the theological tradition, but it involves the other disciplines to be considered as well.

To understand what the term ‘sexuality’ means, it is of paramount importance to define the meaning of ‘sex’ first as commonly used in society. The term ‘sex’ is often difficult to define because of its historical usage to describe the ‘natural’ sex that “takes place between members of the ‘opposite sex’” (Weeks 2003:4, c.f Thatcher 2011:4). Accordingly, ‘sex’ between people of the ‘same sex’ is therefore seen as ‘unnatural’ as has been pointed out above with the case of GBC.

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If the definition of ‘sex’ is limited to persons of the ‘opposite sex’, then there is a real complexity since the other group is excluded. Weeks (2003:4) points out that:

The term (sex) refers to an act and to a category of person, to a practice and to a gender. Modern culture has assumed an intimate connection between the fact of being biologically male and female (that is, having appropriate sex organs and reproductive potentialities) and the correct form of erotic behavior (usually genital intercourse between men and women).

‘Sex’ is a division of humanity into a ‘male’ section and a ‘female’ section and this is the “biological datum on which the cultural and social divides of gender are built” (Weeks 2003:4, Thatcher (2011:4) point out that “for most of Christian history, people were inclined to believe that there was a single sex, “man” which existed on a continuum between greater (male) and lesser (female) degrees of perfection.” The concept of manhood was invented, based on the hegemonic masculine notions, that continues to “deemphasize issues of power and domination” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:836). The gender roles of ‘male’ and ‘female’ are understood to determine the way individuals will engage in sexual intercourse, meaning it is always required according to this traditional description that a ‘male’ person must penetrate a ‘female’ person, so the ‘sex’ and sexual roles will be in accordance with ‘nature’. The LGBTIQ sexual roles and ‘sex’ will therefore be ‘unnatural’ according to this traditional description. The traditional heteronormative description has proven to be more complicated since it rejects the personalized sexual feelings of the LGBTIQ persons and their quality of being ‘sexual beings’. Weeks (2003:4) points out that “the social processes through which these mutations of meaning have taken place are complex.” He describes that, firstly, there is “the battle of sexes” encouraged by the distinction and popularization between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Secondly, a belief that ‘sex’ is a natural force, a ‘biological imperative’ mysteriously located in the genitals is proven to be not true. Finally, it cannot be possible that ‘sex’ and ‘sexual desire’ is something that spontaneously occurs by nature for heterosexual persons who are the only ones to know how to live as ‘sexual beings’ to the exclusion of ‘homosexuals.’ Scholars assert that “sex is the truth of our being” as experience by the real people, and this has nothing to do persons’ sexuality or sexual identity (Weeks, 2003:4).

It has been observed that societies have changed the way they perceive and understand sexuality, gender roles and sexual desires. There is more toleration of difference since “there has been a re-

## 2.3 *Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*

evaluation of the relationship between men and women” and the fact that there are those persons who do not conform to the gender roles of the biological male and female (Weeks 2003:5, Thatcher 2011:3). Thatcher also points out that “there are many adults who are unable to identify with either label. There is intersex, and transsexual or transgender, people who cannot easily say they identify with this binary (twofold) division of humanity into separate biological sexes” (Thatcher, 2011:4). Weeks (2003:7) challenges the heterosexist norm and declares that “we define...’sexuality’ is an historical construction, which brings together a host of different biological and mental possibilities, and cultural forms – gender identity, bodily differences, reproductive capacities, needs, desires, fantasies, erotic practices, institutions and values – which need not be linked together, and in other cultures have not been.”

### 2.3.2 Sexual Orientation

It is too complicated and difficult to attempt to describe a person’s sexual orientation by a mere fact of who do they make a sexual contact with. This is because they might be individuals who have sexual contacts with persons of the same sex as them, but not really be of the LGBTIQ group. It can be said of persons in prisons who have sexual intercourse with same-sex partners, and what is commonly known as ‘men who have sex with men’ (MSM). Sexual orientation is determined by, though not limited to, erotic attraction, sexual behavior, emotional attachment, et cetera (Crooks & Baur 2017:261, Weeks 2003:17, Thatcher 2011:3). For the purposes of this study, it is important to briefly point out the terminology used to understand human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation as follows:

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Asexual</b>	A person who is not sexually attracted to anyone.
<b>Bisexual</b>	A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical and/or spiritual attraction to people

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	of their own gender as well as another gender.
<b>Gay</b>	A biologically male person who is sexually attracted to men. This term is often used and embraced by women to describe their same-sex relationships as well.
<b>Heterosexual</b>	A term used to define a person who is attracted to someone of the opposite gender (or, literally, biological sex) to their own, often referred to as “straight”.
<b>Homosexual</b>	A definition for a person who is attracted to someone of the same gender (or, literally, biological sex) as their own, it is considered an offensive/stigmatizing term by many members of the queer community; often used incorrectly in place of “lesbian” or “gay.”
<b>Intersex</b>	A person with a sexual anatomy that does not fit within the labels of either female or male.
<b>Lesbian</b>	A biologically female person who is sexually attracted to women.
<b>Queer</b>	This is a historical derogatory slang term used to identify LGBTIQ persons. The term has been embraced and re-claimed by the LGBTIQ community as a symbol of pride,

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	representing all individuals who fall out of the gender and sexuality “norms”.
<b>Transsexual</b>	A person whose gender identity is the binary opposite of their biological sex, who may undergo medical treatments to change their biological sex, often to align it with their gender identity, or they may live their lives as the opposite sex; often confused with “trans-man”/ “trans-woman”.

**Table 2. 2:** *Definition of terms describing gender identity, human sexuality and sexual orientation.*

Homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality are all terms used to describe a person’s sexual orientation – that is, to which of the above sexes one is sexually attracted to. Scholars use psychological and biological theories to determine people’s sexual orientation. Some of these theories conflict with each other and that leads to a serious difficulty in determining the cause of sexual orientation and gender identity. Crooks and Baur (2017: 264-266) point out that, firstly, it is believed that unhappy heterosexual experiences can cause a person to become homosexual. Secondly, that there is what is called the “seduction myth” in which certain people believe that children who were molested by an older person tend to become homosexuals (Crooks & Baur, 2017:264). Thirdly, a notable psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud came up with a psychoanalytic theory that a person’s family background can determine their sexual orientation (Crooks & Baur, 2017:265). Fourthly, psychologist Daryl Ben (1996) proposed a theory that as people move into adolescence, their erotic arousal is fueled by the anxiety they feel relating to someone who is different from them (Crooks & Baur, 2017:265). Finally, it is believed that some people choose their sexual orientation different from their biological sex because in it they find a greater satisfaction and attachment. This is the case with MSM persons. The biological theories used to determine causes of sexual orientation includes hormones, the brain, genetic factors and gender nonconformity (Crooks & Baur 2002:266).

## 2.3 *Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*

The Christian church uses various passages from the bible and natural law to determine and prove that sexual orientations other than heterosexuality are ‘unnatural’. Some even go further and condemn those orientations as ‘sinful’, moral decadence, et cetera, as it will be pointed out in the following chapter. In 1994, the RCC declared their position with regards to homosexual sexual orientation as follows:

Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered” (Vatican, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, para 2357).

Some other churches have also condemned non-heterosexual sexual orientations in the same way (News24, 2017). This will be discussed in the following chapter. The church uses ‘tradition’, reason, natural law or the Scriptures to condemn non-heterosexual sexual orientations (Thatcher 2011:175-185). This has led to disagreements, division and debates as to whether the church’s traditional stand on heterosexist sexual orientation can be justified if certain factors such as medical and psychological science findings, as well as the lived experience and testimony of persons with different sexual orientations could be considered.

### **2.2.3 Gender Identity, Stereotypes and Gender Binary**

Thatcher (2011:3) argues that human beings are more than their biology. This notion is fundamental for a proper understanding of gender diversity and gender difference. There are individuals who are unable to identify whether they are ‘males’ or ‘females’ according to their biological sex organ in society (DeFranza, 2012:65). The traditional Christian definition of ‘sex’, as pointed out above, “is the division of species into either male or female” and their ability to reproduce (Stuart, 1997:8-9, c.f Ratzinger, 1994:46). For centuries the Christian church, religion and human culture believed in the heteropatriarchal twofold division of humanity into either ‘male’ or ‘female’. The question then arises, based on reality and human experience, how many sexes are there? (Thatcher 2011:6). It took and still takes many debates, observations, scientific and social research, human experience, et cetera, to uncover the answer as to how many sexes and genders there are. The challenge in Christendom is that tradition and the Scriptures have always argued that they are only two sexes, ‘male and female’, as created by God in the beginning, and the natural



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biological sex organ of a person will tell which ‘sex’ group they fall into, and it is required that each ‘sex’ must conform and perform according to their sex and gender. Doing otherwise will be ‘unnatural’ according to the traditional Christian and biblical teaching (Russel, 2016:15). The heterosexist binary, however, does not resolve a question of multiple sexualities and sexual orientations.

### 2.2.3.1 **Gender Identity and stereotypes**

The church, almost universally, read the Bible under the assumption that the only ideal, ‘natural’, God-given and normative form of gender and sexual identity is that of heterosexuality (Germond & de Gruchy 1997:193, Stuart 1997). This assumption is based on the church’s interpretation of Christian Scripture, tradition and the use of natural law ideologies. Since the church was a powerful institution in Western culture until the Protestant Reformation, many people failed to examine and challenge this assumption, and because of that, the assumption has been generally received by society as the sexual norm. It is because of heteronormativity that other gender identities and sexual orientations were regarded as ‘deliberately chosen perversions’ over and against the heterosexual norm. Hence, they were to be condemned (Stuart 1997). Lesbian, gay and bisexual persons were, therefore, forced to acknowledge that their relationships and sexual experiences were not ‘natural’ and “could never line up with the ideal of heterosexual marriage”. As a result, such persons must refrain from any same-sex sexual relations altogether (Stuart 1997). Even to this day, they are Christians who read the Bible as an ‘inspired’ text that excludes persons of the same sex sexual orientation from full acceptance in the church. This is due to the assumption that homosexuality is a deviation to the heterosexual norm. Because of this, many LGBTIQ persons have been brutalized, suffered discrimination, and murdered due to the misinterpretation of the Scriptures. The Bible is used “as a powerful weapon” in the hands of the anti-homosexual positioned church and is being interpreted “through hegemonic masculinity and heteronormative frames of references” that include the New Testament (NT) and Old Testament (OT) “six-shooter texts” (Rom 1 vv26-27, 1 Cor 6 v9, 1 Tim 1 v10, Gen 19 v1-29, Lev 18 v22 and Lev 20 v13) (Punt, 2014:9).

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People's gender may not be about their biological sex organ. Gender stereotypes and appearances may be another factor that determine the person's gender identity. The social psychologist and feminist Hilary M. Lips (2005:33) points out that:

physical appearance may have strong implications for how masculine or feminine a person is thought to be. Many a tall, broad-shouldered woman has slouched and crouched through life in a futile effort to appear petite and "feminine." And many a short man has quietly cursed his diminutive stature because it seemed to detract from his ability to project a "masculine" image.

Stereotypical masculinity is reflected in the physical appearance, strength and masculinity of man. Men and women are not immune to concerns about how their bodies will be judged. If a man's body appears more feminine then his masculinity will be questioned by the hegemonic masculinity societal views on who a 'real man' must be and how they must look like. It is generally observed that men who appear more feminine might suffer the societal stereotyping of being labelled as a 'drag queen'. Social science research also shows that the stereotyped views of lesbian women is often centered on the notion that lesbians are not feminine, but they appear more masculine. The same goes with gay men who are believed to be more feminine than heterosexual men (Lips 2005:37).

As just noted, gender stereotypes are linked with social notions of sexuality. A "masculine" man is expected and thought to be desirable to women, and a "feminine" woman is expected to be attractive to men. That's the main reason behind the heterosexist views that same-sex attraction is a violation of gender roles since the LGBTIQ persons do not fit into the requirements for hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity. Due to this gender nonconformity, many LGBTIQ persons experience negative attitudes due to their sexuality and gender identities. Many gay and lesbian persons experience contempt and hostility from their peers when they behave in ways that are too feminine or too masculine and are shown hatred towards their sexuality and gender identity (Lips 2005:37). The research shows that lesbians suffer much prejudice due to the societal belief that they will try to seduce heterosexual women, and the same goes with gay men. It can be argued that due to these prejudices, many gay and lesbian youth are being forced to 'hate themselves' and have low self-esteem, with some resorting even to commit suicide. Some are forced against their own sexual desires and needs to enter sexual relationships with members of the opposite sex to conform

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to what society requires. It may be argued that it is very sad to witness the Christian church not being in solidarity with the sufferings that LGBTIQ persons are going through, but rather encouraging the suffering against them through its interpretation of the Bible and tradition.

### 2.2.3.2 **Gender Binary**

As pointed out above, gender identity is a person's private experience of their own gender: that is the concept of self as male or female. This, scholars argue, has nothing to do with the biological sex organ a person had at birth (Thatcher 2011:3). This idea is such a powerful and important part of a person's self-image and it can never be changed. Research shows that gender identity is not something that develops after birth, but it is something that is always there since the day the person was born. Some people 'struggle' with a same-sex sexual attraction and they find this is a reality that never fades away. As a result, they will have to respond to what 'nature' assigned them and enter relationships with persons of the same-sex. Some are sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex. Some find themselves lost in their own bodies, i.e. they have a body and a sex organ that do not conform to how they feel about themselves. Such persons then later undergo a sex change reassignment so that they can conform to their 'real selves'. Lips (2005:203) points out that "appearance and behavior are susceptible to hormonal influence, but identity seems more likely to be constructed socially – though it might well be affected by appearance and behavior and by the masculine or feminine labels applied to them."

Being "a predominantly heterosexual institution, the Christian church" adopts the assumption "that heterosexuality is the normative form of human sexuality," and all others that do not conform to the heteronormativity are seen as deviant and perverse (Germond, 1997:194). Heterosexism is described as:

a reasoned system of bias regarding sexual orientation. It denotes prejudice in favor of heterosexual people and connotes prejudice against homosexual people. Heterosexism is not grounded primarily in emotional fears, hatreds, or other visceral responses to homosexuality. Instead it is rooted in a largely cognitive constellation of belief about human sexuality' (Germond, 1997:194).

## 2.3 *Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*

Society often constructs gender identification in a way that affects people's lives whether for good or for bad (Bradley, 2007:3,6). People's identification as a 'male' or 'female' determines the way they look, talk, eat, wear, drink, et cetera. Brandley (2007:6) points out that almost all institutions in society "are themselves gendered and are the locations in which the gendering of individuals and relationships takes place." The church is noted as one of those 'gendering' institutions because it is the place where members who attend are being shaped as men and women in mediating the beliefs and practices about their selves and the various groups people belong to and this is difficult to question (Thatcher 2011:18). In South Africa churches play a huge role in the gendering of Christians due to its strong heteronormative biases, and that is why LGBTIQ persons are still suffering from discrimination and prejudice in society. The GBC is a good example of this.

Thatcher (2011:18) argues that:

When Christians are lacking a penis, they are, for that reason, deemed unfit to represent the male Christ as priests, or become preachers, deacons or elders in Nonconformist Churches, or even read the Gospel in others; or when mosques arrange worship for men only; or when synagogues segregate men and women; or when women must cover themselves with a veil in public places; these are practices which already "speak" volumes about how these communities think and practice gender (Thatcher 2011:18).

### **2.2.3.2.1 *Essentialist perspectives***

The idea of gender binary is linked to the idea that originated with Plato (429-347 BCE) that 'essences were more real than "particulars," or existing things' (Thatcher 2011:19). According to this principle, essences do not change as they are eternal. This notion assumes that biological essence, like hormones and genetics, underlies human sexuality (Szesnat, 2007:272). Based on this notion, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) viewed that the purpose of sexual organs in a human being is for reproduction. This means human beings must conform to the sexual role given to them by God and as a result 'nature' and God assigned that only male and female must join in sexual intercourse and the contrary is therefore condemned. The "modern theological views of gender are essentialist in that they assert" that only "two sexes" are what God intended human gender and sexuality to be (Punt, 2007:247). Such a view asserts that there are some subordinate relationships

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between male and female as God created only “two sexes the way they are meant to be, and that is their essence” (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:23). “God intends members of each sex to desire” and have sexual relations with members of the opposite sex only, “heterosexuality is the way we are meant” to be and that is ‘natural’ even though creation was distorted because of the fall of Adam and Eve (Thatcher 2011:19). The essentialism became controversial due to its view against homosexuality and gender identity, and because of this some scholars and secular writers criticized it.

### 2.2.3.2.2 *Constructionist perspectives*

On the other hand, “constructionism” replaced essentialism. According to the gender constructionism theory, due to an individual’s gender non-performativity, “men and women relate to each other in complex and diverse ways which are relative to their social and cultural conditions and contexts” (Thatcher 2011:20). Sexuality is a social construct phenomenon, objectively definable in almost all cultural and historical contexts. Germond (1997:257) refers to Epstein’s observation thus:

Constructionists propose that sexuality should be investigated on the level of subjective meaning. Sexual acts have no inherent meaning, and in fact, no act is inherently sexual. Rather, during interactions and over the course of time, individuals and societies spin webs of significance around the realm designated as “sexual.” People learn to be sexual...in the same way as they learn everything else.

There is no fixed pattern of sexual behavior and identity. Individuals understand their own sexualities differently and subjectively. Each person’s sexual feelings, activities and relationships says much of how they understand themselves sexually. According to the constructionist notion, there are diversities of sexual orientations not only heterosexuality (Thatcher, 2011:4). Biological sexuality is not an end. Though it is noted as a precondition for human sexuality, it can be in contravention with the human reality of sexual expression and identity.

## *2.4 GBC sermon and statement on sexuality: brief overview*

### **2.4 GBC sermon and statement on sexuality: brief overview**

For centuries, especially since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, a Christian pulpit has been a place where community and life situations are interpreted and morally re-defined to be in line with the standards and principles of the gospel and how the Word of God that is being applied to bring about a healthy moralistic society (Perry & Sell, 1983:50-51). A preacher's quest, as it was observed from the GBC case study sermon, is to illustrate the biblical principles that apply to contemporary life and to correct unethical and immoral lifestyles (Perry & Sell, 1983:51). Perry and Sell point out that good preaching is believed to be that is based on the bible texts and deals with ethical, political, pastoral or life-situations (Perry & Sell, 1983:Ch.2).

It has been observed that most of the Pentecostal and evangelical churches believe and preach from the literal and conservative hermeneutical biblical point of view (Jennings, 2018:4, Russel, 2016:12-13). It is not the purpose of this study to try and engage on the theological hermeneutical mechanism as applied in the churches, and particularly the GBC sermon in this study.<sup>18</sup> The sermon and statements in question, as pointed out above, will be briefly considered during this chapter.

On Sunday, 22 January 2017, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills was invited to preach to a full church auditorium of Grace Bible Church in Soweto township west of Johannesburg. His sermon that lasted for about one hour, was titled "*Why Your Soul is Important.*" A review of this sermon shows that it dealt with many theological, ethical and moral issues as believed in most Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (Heward-Mills, 2017). In chapters three and five of this study there will be a critical analysis of both the GBC and the Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI)'s theological positions on sexuality and sexual orientation, from the comparative point of view.

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<sup>18</sup> This study is a systematic theological one and the GBC sermon was selected as a case study to bring the argument livelier. The sermon will not be discussed and analyzed from the hermeneutical and exegetical fashion as this study is not from a biblical scholastic point of view.

## *2.4 GBC sermon and statement on sexuality: brief overview*

### **2.4.1 Bishop Dag Heward-Mills sermon**

Dr. Heward-Mills (1963-) is a medical doctor, founder and Bishop of the largest Pentecostal church in Accra Ghana, the Lighthouse Chapel International. This neo-Pentecostal mega church was founded in 1987 at the University of Ghana campus, and it has more than 1,550 branches world-wide in 70 countries (LCI website:2017). It is very important for this study that the life, contribution and ministry of Bishop Heward-Mills be examined briefly before his sermon is analyzed. According to online sources, Bishop Heward-Mills is a prominent church planter and evangelist who preaches in many churches world-wide (Heward-Mills, 2017). He also serves on the Board as a Director of Church Growth International (Lighthouse Chapel Switzerland, 2018), and also as an Executive Committee member of the PWF (Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2017).

Heward-Mills' controversial sermon that attracted much media coverage and public protest is the case considered for the purposes of this study (Mail&Guardian, 2017). The sermon reveals the controversies in moral and queer theologies involving the way Pentecostal churches, and the GBC specifically, understands the nature of human sexuality and sexual orientation (Jennings, 2018:3). Dr Heward-Mills' sermon was aimed at the life-styles of members of the GBC and other visiting Christians, to remind them of the fate of souls who are 'living in sin' and those who are 'saved from sin' respectively (Heward-Mills, 2017). This type of ethical sermon requires a change of life-style from the hearers, for them to repent and believe the gospel, develop Christian moral virtues and live in righteousness while waiting for the coming of the Lord (Perry & Sell, 1983:29). The sermon was about 'sin and salvation', meaning LGBTIQ lifestyles were preached against as "unnatural" and sinful (News24, 2017). The bishop sought to bring about moral transformation in the lives of the congregants by preaching a sermon on good ethical conduct and life style that is compatible with the Christian way of life. Perry and Sell (1983:30) point out that this kind of "ethical sermon" is not new as it was also known and preached by the church fathers like Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-100) and Quintus Tertullian (A.D. 150-220) who also delivered sermons on moral and spiritual lifestyles. Dark Ages German pastoral preacher Berthold of Regensburg (1220-1272) is noted to have also attacked the sins of his hearers during his sermons (Perry & Sell, 1983:31).

In the post-modern society, with its advanced liberal human rights cultures and the high usage of technology, the sanctity of same-sex relations is one that is the most spoken-of and raises the many

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highly pressing ethical and moral questions and debates faced by many churches (Loader, 2016:9). In the Pentecostal Christian doctrine, topics such as rapture, the millennium, gifts of the Holy Spirit, holiness, et cetera, are being debated but there is nothing that draws the attention of most people as does the topic of homosexuality and the nature of human sexuality. The church viewed and only considered the heterosexual practices between biological and natural male and female persons as the only proper form of human sexuality. This was due to the literalist interpretation of certain biblical passages that led to sermons being preached and interpreted to condemn homosexuality and same-sex sexual behavior (Russel, 2016:12-13). This is due to the fact that most conservative and bible fundamentalist Christian preachers develop and interpret the bible doctrines on human sexuality as guided by the concept of the authority of Scripture (Wink, 1999:42).

Bishop Heward-Mills' sermon was based on the bible passage in the Gospel of Saint Mark, reading "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). As a way of introducing his ethical and pastoral sermon, the Bishop pointed out that:

...everybody has a soul, okay, and there is a soul part of you that is within you. And that soul is very important...and the soul is you, and when you die you find out that your soul is even more real than your physical body...There is a man in you who is hidden, you cannot see him, the day you die the one who is hiding will come out of you...The day you die, the man who is inside called the Inner Man...you will see him clearly. He is an Inner Man, Hidden Man, and another term that is used in the Bible is The Inward Man...Ladies and gentlemen, your soul is important because your soul is the real you! And your outward covering is just a temporary covering that you are having for now...very temporary, and one day you are going to lose it. So, your soul is important because your soul is a real man, Amen! Your soul is important because it can die (Heward-Mills, 2017).

He then read the passage from the Book of Ezekiel as follows "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

The Bishop went on to point out that:



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So, when you sin, you are killing your soul. So even though you do not see any effect when you tell a lie, you get it, it is affecting you...Sin has an effect on your soul, when you come to church we are here not to tell you about ugly things...we are here for the spiritual reasons, okay, and that is why I am talking about your soul. Your soul is an inner man, and whenever you sin, you are killing yourself and you are killing your soul although on the outward it does not show any effects, it is affecting your soul and gradually your soul dies, and when your soul is dead that is the end of you...Ladies and gentlemen Christians today we are playing with God...we are not turning away from sin. If you want to look for practicing sinners, you might well come to the church because you just get a collection quickly and easily. There is no sin that is not found in the church. From lying, stealing... (Heward-Mills, 2017).

The Bishop's "bridge paradigm" was a reflection on the problem of a sin within the GBC members and other visiting people in the gathered assembly. His main purpose was to hit at the main issue, being that specific sins would 'kill' and destroy the soul of a believer and a person (Farley, 2005:66-67). Farley points out that this manner of ethical sermon has a paradigm making us think of the "Bible as a collection of passages, each of which necessarily contains a preaching word or truth of God" (Farley, 2005:67). This is the way in which many protestant and Pentecostal preachers, such as Bishop Heward-Mills, interpret the scripture passages by considering the notions of biblical inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture that must be interpreted in a literal way. Pentecostal preachers are known, mostly, to take many references from the Bible texts by way of making several literal quotes from the Bible in formulating and interpreting the doctrine. A Baptist homiletics author, Lloyd M. Perry, points out that this style of preaching as witnessed at GBC has several positive advantages, one being that "it provides a firm foundation for effective ethical preaching" (Perry, 1990:127). However, he also gives some objections to this kind of preaching by pointing out that "we must strive to reveal the relationship of the doctrine to Christian life and experience. The preacher must therefore always be on the alert for ways of presenting old truths in new ways" (Perry, 1990:128).

Bishop Heward-Mills' mode of delivering his sermon was expository, textual and inferential as it was logical from the outset (Perry, 1990:82). He first exposed the problem of 'sin' in a general

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way by warning members that ‘sin’ will destroy their souls, with references to the above Bible passages. However, that was not the end of the sermon. He changed his style of preaching as the sermon went on by considering the extemporaneous type of sermon delivery in which he stooped down to the audience out of the pulpit with his microphone in his hand and without any sermon notes. Perry points out that during this manner of delivering sermon, a preacher can be used by the Spirit of God in a mighty way (Perry, 1990:83). This is mostly the widespread practice among many Pentecostal preachers who are believed to be preaching while being led and moved by the Spirit during a sermon. From the Bishop’s sermon several things can be observed, as pointed out by Perry, being the process of explaining what is the problem; the description of the discourse about the problem the sermon needs to address; the main object of which is to prove a point; and the urgency for present action (Perry, 1990:83-84). The sermon shifted its paradigm from looking at a general problem of sin that destroys a soul into a specific illustration and analyzing those ‘sins’ that destroy the soul. Bishop Heward-Mills went on further, in this regard, saying:

When you want to look for HIV, fornication and adultery – sex outside of marriage -, you might just as well come to the church and there is a sin called fornication just for your information. And each time we are involving all these things it looks like it is nothing, you know, but it has an effect – “the soul that sinneth it shall die!” It is killing you softly...and so in the end you will find that your soul is totally quenched. So, you must turn away from sin, and you must turn away from sin because it affects you, it affects you spiritually. Your soul is affected by your lies... Your soul is affected by your behavior... Your soul is affected by your jealousy... Your soul is gradually being wiped out. You must be careful! (Heward-Mills, 2017).

The Bishop was careful to modify his sermon when he came to the core of the issue this study is dealing with – human sexuality. He placed his main theme into a declarative sentence that formed part of the essence of his sermon (Perry, 1990:53). The problem of sin was pointed out by listing the acts of sins that are “unnatural” and that will destroy the soul (News24, 2017). His homiletical style was to address the sexual sins that destroy the human soul and the body, which is biblically considered as the temple of the Spirit. Bishop Heward-Mills finally arrived at the main hypothesis of this study thus:

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Many times, you know, people are wondering like ‘There is no animal which stays with only one partner. One time I was in Kenya, and they took me to a wild life place and we were going along and then I saw Antelopes – Impalas. Several, as I counted there were like seventy-five. So, then the guys told me ‘please notice that only one of them has horns, and that is the male. Those are his wives, the seventy-five!’ I said, ‘One to seventy-five? That sounds powerful’. That is nature, yes - dogs, cats, leopards. Mention the animals: which one has one partner? It is just like homosexuality, you do not have male and female! If you use that reasoning to say homosexuality is natural, you do not stand two male dogs or two male lions or two male impalas or two male cats, even lizards, two male elephants, two males...there is nothing like that in nature! It is unnatural! Yes, there is nothing like that in nature. And in the same way, there is nothing like one-to-one. Nature is one to several. So, it takes spiritual power to stay with one person. And that is why you need your soul to be developed, otherwise if your soul is not developed as strong you cannot control your flesh. And your flesh will just do what is natural, yes, that is why you should pray that God will give you a spiritual person to marry. God is going to do it in your life (Heward-Mills, 2017:57:26-1:00:10).

### **2.4.2 Public and media response to the sermon**

After the Bishop Heward-Mills’ sermon at GBC, the LGBTIQ church members were joined by the members of the Soweto community and various civil organizations to silently protest what they believed to be a ‘homophobic sermon’ and ‘hate’ against them, and the fact that the church is promoting ‘religious bigotry’ (Mail&Guardian, 2017, SABC-Digital-News, 2017). Some of the protestors denounced the sermon and declared that:

What the church is doing now is hate in terms of them kicking us out they were spilling out a message which was homophobic and derogatory, and which was a violation of our rights as people. We deserve our dignity as well...To simply label homosexual bodies in that category, it discriminates beyond words...It gives power to the idea that we need to be brutalized, we need to be fired from our jobs, discriminated against, isolated in our families and that is very dangerous. That’s something that we cannot let happen...They preach love, they preach holiness, but

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at the end of the day they are discriminating against us (SABC Digital News A, 2017).

The day after the GBC sermon was delivered, many members of the South African public and the media started to raise their voices either against or in favor of the sermon. Some declared the sermon was not homophobic at all as the Bishop quoted from the bible and preached the Word of God (SABC Digital News A, 2017). Several media organizations covered the GBC saga and interviewed members of the public, activists and some church leaders to hear public opinion about the alleged homophobic sermon delivered by Bishop Heward-Mills. The South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) interviewed the LGBTIQ activist, Motlatsi Motseoile, who declared in a live media statement that the GBC is discriminating against the LGBTIQ persons in the church and this is the issue of injustice, “unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and prejudice” (SABC Digital News B, 2017). Motseoile went on declaring that pastors in churches do not exist in a vacuum, but they serve the people who are members of society from all levels, including the LGBTIQ, who often suffer discrimination, corrective rape and homophobia (SABC Digital News B, 2017). The GBC was condemned for directly perpetuating prejudice and violence against the LGBTIQ community.

The Other Foundation (OF)<sup>19</sup>'s religion program officer, Reverend Teboho Klaas, was also interviewed and he declared that the GBC sermon cannot pass a biblical standard of love and justice as it discriminated against those members of the church who were found not to be conforming to the heteronormative societal norm (SABC Digital News C, 2017). He declared that churches need a dialogue on the matters of sexuality and sexual orientation because there are church members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex and to simply derogate and make them lesser humans and unimportant cannot be justified in a constitutional and democratic society like South Africa where we have the rule of law, respect for human rights and the principle of equal society based on the human dignity of all people (SABC Digital News C, 2017). The Bishop's declaration that homosexuality was “unnatural” is a departure from the

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<sup>19</sup> The Other Foundation is an African trust that advances equality and freedom in southern Africa with a focus on sexual orientation and gender identity. It gathers support to defend and advance the human rights and social inclusion of homosexual and bisexual women and men, as well as transgender and intersex people in southern Africa

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scriptural truth that “all people were created in the image of God” who is love, according to Rev. Klaas’ media statement (SABC Digital News C, 2017).

The SABC observed that there are, however, some members of the public who are in favor of the sermon and who believe indeed it is not ‘normal’ to be of a different sexual orientation other than heterosexual (SABC-Digital-News-B, 2017). Some members of the public commented thus:

The Bible says the truth shall set you free. Pastor Dag did not say he hates homosexuals. He said it is unnatural. The fact that your country's laws permit it does not mean that God permits it. What is wrong is wrong. God has said that fornication is wrong, adultery is also wrong. When men of God preach against fornication and adultery people don't complain. Has any man of God been described as fornication phobic when they preach against fornication? I guess the answer is no. No one is preaching hate against homosexuals. But we are saying that God dislikes it just as he dislikes fornication. But whatever you are doing, do it well because at the end there shall be judgement<sup>20</sup> (SABC Digital News C, 2017)

The other member of the public’s opinion goes thus

If it is unnatural for a male dog to mate with a male dog, how can it be natural for a man to have sex with another man, before we even come to the Bible? (SABC Digital News B, 2017).

Academic research observed that in the African culture, as with the Christian Church, recognition of same-sex relationships is taboo and regarded as un-African and ‘unnatural’ as we have observed with the Bishop Heward-Mills sermon (Motsau, 2015:18, see also Gevisser, 2016:19). Most religions and cultures in the world, including Christianity and Traditional African Religion, maintain the hetero-patriarchal system which maintains that the biological organ a person was born with will determine their sexual orientation and the role they need play in the society (Motsau 2015:18). In their book, *Aliens in the household of God: homosexuality and the Christian faith in South Africa*, Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy (1997:194) point out that the church at large is

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<sup>20</sup> This is a public comment added by some of the members who gave their opinions on this matter. The comments follow immediately after the SABC video.

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dominated by the heteronormative mind-set that only accepts heterosexuality as the only correct form of sexuality. Adrian Thatcher (2011:3) further points out that gender and sexual orientation cannot be said to be a binary norm as held by the churches, but that there are diversities of genders and sexualities that are natural rather than the singular heterosexual norm.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.4.3 Grace Bible Church's response to the sermon**

Homileticians have observed that there are certain kinds of sermons that preachers should be careful in the manner of delivering, since they might preach something that is inappropriate, and does not have a solution at all (Perry & Sell, 1983:18, c.f Kaunda, 2016). Some sermons do more damage than good to the pew, and as a result the public outrages against what was preached and label it as a “hate speech” especially in democratic constitutional states like South Africa where people have a strong sense of the human rights culture that includes the rights of the LGBTIQ persons, as in the case of GBC in this study. The GBC invited the Ghanaian Bishop of the mega Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) church, and it seemed the two churches and their leaders have a different audience and membership as they both come from different settings and socio-cultural backgrounds. In Ghana where the LCI is based, the issue of LGBTIQ human rights is not celebrated as much compared to the South African context where same-sex marriages were recognized by the state decades ago.<sup>22</sup> As it will be discussed later during this study, the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights is liberal and progressive, and the rights of LGBTIQ persons are as protected as those of anyone else.<sup>23</sup>

One of the purposes of preaching is to define and reform morality in society, and the church is therefore the moral fiber of society. Perry observes that “the quality, effectiveness and importance of preaching is being challenged” (Perry, 1990:9). If preaching is not founded on the scholarly and

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<sup>21</sup> Many churches continue to label those deviant sexualities and sexual orientations other than heterosexuality to be “unnatural”, sinful, immoral and abomination as we have witnesses from the GBC sermon. Churches select portions of scriptures to base their doctrine on human sexuality and sexual orientation without even trying to investigate the reality on how things are out there. Church seek to define morality and create a super-moral society in the society that has fallen in many aspects.

<sup>22</sup> In 2006, the Civil Unions Act of 2005 was signed into the law of parliament in terms of which persons of the same-sex can marry.

<sup>23</sup> The Bill of Rights forbid discrimination on any of the listed grounds to include sexual orientation and gender.

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sound principle of what makes a good sermon, then the result may be a protest from the church members and the public who believe that their values and way of life are being challenged in an unjust manner. Churches do deliver “religious speeches” from scriptures that are being interpreted moralistically and with literal exegesis, and sometimes to suit the desired needs of the preacher who believes he was called and entrusted with a divine mandate to define morality in society (Perry, 1990:21, c.f Kaunda, 2016). Preachers do moralistically apply certain Bible passages to achieve a moral reformation apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ and the revelation of the God who is love (Perry, 1990:21). Many preachers use the scriptures as a kind of a ‘magic potion’ that will do good to the listeners, and the GBC situation proves such phenomenon.

Days after the LGBTIQ members and the public voiced their concerns against the GBC sermon, Bishop Musa Sono and the GBC spokesperson issued public statements about the church’s stand on the issue of human sexuality and sexual orientation, which the below paragraph considers.

### **2.4.3.1 Bishop Musa Sono official church statement**

The official statement on how the GBC views homosexuality and human sexuality was delivered by Bishop Musa Sono to the packed church auditorium, after the public condemned and protested the controversial sermon. The bishop declared that the church and its leadership had structured the statement so it could be read to the members and visitors in order to ease the upset souls and those members who felt the church propagated hate and discriminated against them (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The statement will be briefly looked at as follows:

Grace Bible Church is a Bible institution of faith. We have been operating in South Africa for thirty-three years and to date have thirty-four branches across the country...We operate in a constitutional democracy which we accept, appreciate and are grateful for and for the rights and freedoms that it guarantees us, and values of fairness and equality entrenched therein. We respect and hold in high regard the Constitution of our land. The Constitution guarantees rights not to be discriminated against on the bases of race, gender, and among others sexual orientation. We recognize, affirm and respect those rights and freedoms fully with no reservations. We believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has

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intrinsic dignity and worth which is why everyone regardless of their race, gender, sex, and among others sexual orientation, is welcome in our church. Our Constitution further guarantees the rights and freedoms to choose one's religion, beliefs and association. It further protects the rights of religious communities to enjoy and practice their religion, and to form, join and maintain their religious associations and other organs of civil society. We believe in the Bible, as the Word of God and the superior and ultimate instruction for our lives and faith, which informs who we are as well as our statement of faith. As an organization of faith, we believe it is within our constitutional right to determine our rules and conditions of membership for those who wish to be part of us. Part of those rules is what is contained in our statement of faith in relation to the promotion of heterosexual relations and marriage. We believe and affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enters into an exclusive relationship for life, and that is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations. We neither believe nor accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is discriminatory... We are very aware as a church of the abuse that people who are gay are experiencing in our communities. The hate, the killings, and all of that which we are extremely concerned about. We don't think human beings should be treated that way, and we do not subscribe to that view ourselves as a church. We will, and as we always have, make sure that as we work in our communities, we concertize our community and stand against any kind of abuse of any human being that can never be right. If we truly believe that we are God's children and we are created by God, we cannot in any way hate anybody, abuse anybody and dislike anybody. And that is our stance as a church! (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017).

### **2.4.3.2 Spokesperson Reverend Ezekiel Mathole's media statement**

Interviewed by e-TV news, the GBC spokesperson Reverend Ezekiel Mathole pointed out that the church has received several responses from those offended by the sermon and the leadership welcomes those responses and was even willing to set a platform for dialogue and engagement



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(eNCA News, 2017, c.f SABC-Digital-News-D, 2017). He pointed out that the GBC has a multitude of members from various lifestyles and viewpoints. Some of the members were said to be pro-gay and some are anti-gay, and since there was a conflict of views the church stands on its position to encourage that although people may have differing expressions and opinions, they must all be united by love (eNCA News, 2017). Therefore, he pointed out, the GBC is open for debate on issues relating to sexuality and sexual orientation and those members who want a platform for debate must approach the church (eNCA News, 2017, SABC-Digital-News-D, 2017).

Rev. Mathole pointed out that the guest preacher Bishop Heward-Mills expressed his own views on the issue of homosexuality and his view is not necessarily that of the GBC (eNCA News, 2017). Mathole went on pointing out that the nature of the sermons at GBC is always very challenging and this is the nature of all sermons in most churches. Bishop Heward-Mills' sermon is observed to have dealt with several ethical and moral issues about various lifestyles to include smoking, lying, cheating, et cetera, and not only that he spoke against homosexuality. However, LGBTIQ members and the public were outraged as they believed by declaring the homosexual practices as "unnatural", since even animals do not practice such acts, was provocative, discriminatory and degrading the human dignity of the LGBTIQ community (SABC Digital News A, 2017). They argued that such statements cannot be justified at all as it unfairly discriminated against the constitutional rights of the LGBTIQ members at GBC. Mathole pointed out that the GBC membership is open to the LGBTIQ community, as with all other people, and they are welcome at the church (eNCA News, 2017, c.f Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The GBC pointed out that they believe and promote that people may differ about lifestyles and sexual orientation, but still love one another as people and members of the society.

Regarding human sexuality, the GBC's statement of faith declares that:

With regards to sexual behavior, we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

One of the Values Statements of the GBC declares thus: 'We believe that loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life.' (GBC website, 2017).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has established the grounds for the research by discussing the current discourses on the nature of human sexuality as understood by the Grace Bible Church (News24, 2017). The GBC sermon and the statements on human sexuality we introduced and engaged in this chapter as well as the public response to the controversial sermon and the church statements (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The available literature was looked at in the context of the GBC discourses to enable a proper understanding of the problem the study seeks to address which is gender, theology and law intersection (both supporting and opposing discourses were looked at). The theological sexual ethics were considered, also from the secular perspectives. The main theme of the study is centered on an understanding of biblical views on human sexuality, proper sexual orientation and the arguments of natural law and philosophy. The diversity of sexuality and sexual orientation were discussed briefly from the scholastic perspective. The argument that the GBC study raises is whether homosexuality is ‘natural’ or not according to the Christian scripture and theological tradition. It was pointed out in this chapter that it might not be easy to answer the question of the ‘unnaturalness’ of homosexuality, but the lived experiences of the LGBTIQ persons and the modern discoveries of the biological and psychological sciences must be considered (Gevisser, 2016). This makes the research necessary as it purposed to integrate the aspect of human dignity of the sexual minorities into the moral-ethical, gender and legal discourses.

In the following chapter, the theoretical conceptualization of this case study will be considered in a comparative and contextual fashion. The global Pentecostal movement, (as represented by the Pentecostal World Fellowship in which both Bishop Heward-Mills and Bishop Sono are leaders), South African Pentecostalism and the Grace Bible Church will be discussed briefly so that the Pentecostalism view of human sexuality will be broadly understood.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHAPTER 3

#### THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE CASE STUDY: A COMPARATIVE AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

##### 3.1 Introduction

The theological discourse about LGBTIQ sexuality and sexual orientation characteristically raises different and conflicting viewpoints based on different Christian ethical and moral-biblical grounds. These views and objections about the biblical legitimacy of homosexuality are so strong since they have been advocated and believed by the church for centuries. It was only during the modern era that the queer liberation theologies started to emerge out of the broader secular queer liberation movements and gay rights movements and begin to merge into the Christian church claiming that LGBTIQ sexuality and sexual orientation must be embraced and accepted in the church as God's gift of sexuality to his children (Siker, 1994:186). This was mainly because there are Christians within the church who are of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation. Most LGBTIQ scholars, theologians, and people within churches began to form and join movements and civil organizations seeking to address the challenge of LGBTIQ intolerance, inequality and condemnation in the churches. Some churches began dialogues on the issue about the LGBTIQ sexualities, hoping to find a proper understanding about how the sexual minorities understand themselves and how the church should respond to these issues. Certain church denominations are still divided on LGBTIQ issues.

In South Africa, as in many parts of the world, prominent church leaders were not silent on how they view LGBTIQ sexuality within the spheres of the Christian church. The then Most Reverend Desmond Tutu<sup>24</sup> made an interesting remark about the issue of homosexuality and Christian faith in South Africa as follows:

The church of Jesus Christ, far from being inclusive and welcoming of all, has repeatedly pushed many to the periphery; instead of being hospitable to all, it has made many of God's children outcasts and pariahs based on something which, like

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<sup>24</sup> The retired Anglican Archbishop of South Africa, activist and theologian who played a significant role during the South African struggle against apartheid regime.

## 3.1

*Introduction*

race or gender, they could do nothing about – their sexual orientation. The church has joined the world in committing what I consider to be the ultimate blasphemy – making children of God in their rejection by the church, to question why God created them as they were...I have found this official position of the church illogical, irrational and frankly un-Christ like, totally untenable...what the church regards as morally reprehensible is homosexual activity, specifically genital activity. It then advises gays and lesbians to be celibate. Now this begs many questions...my sexuality is a very important and essential part of who I am...can anyone doubt where the Lord of the church stands in this whole sad affair? He will not be found on the side of those who vilify and ostracize others, making them aliens, separated and cast out from the household of God...If the church, after the victory over apartheid, is looking for a worthy moral crusade, then this is it: the fight against homophobia and heterosexism (Germond & De Gruchy, 1997:IX).

In this chapter the basic Christian doctrines, as taught and believed in the Pentecostal churches, will be looked at. This is aimed at developing and clarifying basic concepts related to the Pentecostal and charismatic churches and human sexuality.

Pentecostalism is a global movement. It is a very broad movement that can be categorized into different waves. It will not be necessary to look at the whole movement, but some selected churches and denominations within the Pentecostal movement will be looked at as far as matters of human sexuality and sexual orientation are concerned. This is necessary since Pentecostal churches, though congregational and denominational independent churches, are interlinked to each other doctrinally. To understand the GBC's position and views on homosexuality and those of the LGBTIQ Christians in the church, it is necessary to consider how this church is influenced by the Pentecostal theology relating to human sexuality and sexual orientation.

Pentecostal theology has its distinct language. It will be discovered, during this chapter, how the language used in Pentecostal theology influences the theological views and stances on issues of human sexuality and sexual orientation. This means major theological discourses on human sexuality will be unpacked from various church position papers and statements in a comparative analysis with the GBC. The Pentecostal World Fellowship will be considered for these purposes, since the fellowship seeks to unite many Pentecostal denominations around the world to deal with

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issues affecting these churches. Both Bishops Musa Sono and Dag Heward-Mills are serving in the leadership of the PWF (Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2017).

### **3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement**

Pentecostalism today is a global phenomenon that engages with diverse cultures (Kay & Hunt, 2015:358). Most church historians agree that the movement emerged out of Los Angeles, California, USA, in the spring of 1906 when the African-American Holiness preacher of the Methodist tradition named William Seymour experienced the touch of God that was believed to be like what happened to the early church on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Lederle, 2010:1). That was the first recorded experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit that forms the core theology within the Pentecostal movement and its major denominations. Modern church historians noted that after Seymour experienced the Spirit baptism, he spoke in other tongues as his innermost being adored and praised God in strange and unknown languages (Kay & Dyer, 2004:13). That was the birth of classical Pentecostalism and many varying denominations that were founded by those who experienced the divine supernatural touch of the Holy Spirit (Kay & Dyer, 2004:10).

Seymour, together with many others who have experienced the Holy Spirit baptism and other miraculous signs like divine healing, founded a mission at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, USA (Anderson, 1999:19-20). This mission became known as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) because it was believed that God was reviving the ministry of the Apostles with holiness, Holy Spirit power, signs and wonders (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:41-44). The pioneering leaders of this movement were already Christians belonging to mainline denominations. The same goes for most of the followers. Their purpose in gathering at 312 Azusa Street was not to establish a new denomination. Research shows that their main purpose was to receive the revival through the power of the Holy Spirit, after which they would return to their churches and evangelize the world.

Lederle (2010:1) points out that the Pentecostal meetings attracted various church leaders and denominations in the mainline Christianity who came to the AFM to experience the Holy Spirit. It is reported that many undeniable miracles and supernatural healings took place there and William

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Seymour and others who experienced the divine touch of the Holy Spirit anointing, prayed for people who were coming in great numbers to the newly established AFM in Azusa Street, Los Angeles USA (Kay & Dyer, 2004:13). The prayer meetings were held three times a day, stretching from morning till midnight as various miracles were happening. Azusa Street then signaled the birth of classical Pentecostalism in which many and varied denominations were founded later throughout the whole world. Church historians agree that there was never a Christian movement that grew as rapidly in the history of the church than the modern Pentecostal movement (Anderson, 1999:8). Many members of the already established historical mainline churches later became Pentecostal when their leaders and members experienced the claims of Pentecostalism (Hollenweger, 1999:35).

Lederle (2010:2) points out that after it began, the Pentecostal Movement drew all races together and it became necessary for them to find a name that would make this movement distinct. Various other names were proposed, including the retainment of the name Apostolic Faith, or the using of the other names such as the Full Gospel, the Latter Rain, or simply Pentecostal (Lederle, 2010:3). All these descriptive names communicated the idea of the power of the Holy Spirit and the revival of the apostolic doctrine and were later adopted and used by various Pentecostal denominations worldwide.

For the purposes of this study, it will not be necessary to engage with the historical theological and doctrinal aspects of the Pentecostal movement. The purpose of this chapter is to set a background to have a deeper understanding of this movement, and to engage on how this movement views human sexuality and sexual orientation. The Grace Bible Church, which is a Pentecostal church, is selected as a case study. To engage with church's views on human sexuality, it is necessary to consider Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon. This movement is believed to have more than 500 million adherents worldwide, even though other scholars consider the total adherence to be much greater (Kay & Hunt 2015:357). It will not be possible to discuss all the doctrinal positions of each denomination in this movement regarding human sexuality. Only the GBC will be discussed, and a comparative analysis made with other major Pentecostal denominations that influenced this church. This comparative approach is necessary because many Pentecostal churches are denominational, each church determining its own doctrinal position papers and beliefs. However, this study will try to analyze and compare several selected denominations, to

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discover how the idea of human sexuality differs from denomination to denomination throughout the world.

The Pentecostal movement, in general, holds similar views on conventional moral positions, especially those related to sexuality (Kay & Hunt 2015:357). As pointed out above, Pentecostalism's distinctive theology emphasizes the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. The movement's fundamental tenant of faith is the Trinitarian dogma that a believer must have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and be born again by the Holy Spirit, be baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. Many Pentecostal churches derive this theology from the following Bible passages:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee: Ye must be born again (Gospel of John 3:3-7).

The above biblical passage forms the basis of the soteriological theology in most of the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches that views that a person must be "born again" to qualify for the kingdom of God and be part of God's church. Other branches in the Pentecostalism, often called the "Oneness Movement"<sup>25</sup> base their soteriological theology on the below passage:

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<sup>25</sup> The Oneness Pentecostals, also known as the Apostolic Pentecostals, holds to the theological doctrine of the "oneness of God." In terms of this doctrine, God manifests himself in "three manifestations" as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Oneness Pentecostal theology reject the traditional and historical doctrine of the Trinity and consider it man-made since it is argued that the word Trinity is nowhere in the Bible. Rather than referring to God as three persons in one, oneness theology uses the term "manifestations" to describe that "only one God" manifested himself in three modes throughout history. They view Jesus Christ as Jehovah God of the Hebrews in the Old Testament who revealed himself as the Father. Oneness argues that the same God the Father of the Old Testament came in the form of human being and became the Son of God during the New Testament Israel. This theology goes further saying the same Jesus who rose from the death reveals himself today in the church age as the Holy Spirit, and this terms Father, Son, Holy Spirit refer to "one God" and not three persons that makes one God. Because of this, Oneness Pentecostals does not baptize according to the traditional trinitarian formula. Rather they baptize "in the name of the Lord Jesus" by invoking the name of Jesus aloud, and they quote several passages, to include Acts 2:38 and Acts 19:5, as a reference to this formula. During the early formation of the Pentecostal movement, the doctrine of the trinity was believed by most of the Pentecostal pioneers. Later, some ministers in the Pentecostal churches, especially the Assemblies of God, began to question the traditional doctrine

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Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts of Apostles 2:37-39).

It is believed that a person must believe so they experience the claims of the above passage in their lives. The other passage that is mostly read and preached in the Pentecostal churches is from the Book of Acts (Acts 2:1-4) that records the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early Apostolic church:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The above passage is what makes Pentecostalism distinctive from mainline and evangelical Christianity. Pentecostals believe that a person who receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior must then also experience, what is sometimes called the second work of grace, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance<sup>26</sup> (Lederle,

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of trinity and its baptismal formula by condemning and rejecting it as idolatry and non-biblical doctrine. Due to these doctrinal disagreements, the Assemblies of God resolved in the General Conference around the 1940s that the traditional doctrine of the trinity is a doctrine of the church and must be used. Because of this, most ministers who affirmed the Oneness views were forced to leave the Assemblies of God and other trinitarian Pentecostal denominations. They also required those baptized according to the trinitarian formula to be re-baptized again "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Then later during 1945, they formed the United Pentecostal Church International which is the largest Oneness Pentecostal body in the world today that is found in almost most countries of the world.

<sup>26</sup> Certain Pentecostal denominations, such as the United Pentecostal Church International which is a largest "Oneness Pentecostal" denomination, theologically embraces that water baptism is also included in God's plan of salvation. This view holds that a person who repent and receive Christ in their lives must be baptised by full immersion in water "in the name of the Jesus Christ for the remission of sins". Oneness Pentecostals quotes Acts 2:37-38, Mark 16:15-16, 1 Peter 3:21, and other scriptural passages to support this Soteriological view. On the other hand, the classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, holds that water baptism alone does not save, but what saves is faith in the Lord Jesus. Many Pentecostal theologians attempts to reconcile these two "schools of theological thought" by asserting that though water baptism cannot save as a mere ceremonial obedience, however baptism in water must be accompanied by faith in the Lord God and as such water



### *3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

2010:58). This pneumatological view is held in all Pentecostal churches, including the Grace Bible Church's statement of faith as follows

We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, empowering and equipping believers for service, with the accompanying supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

The LCI holds the same views as follows in their statement of faith "that the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit to believers, as experienced by the early Church, is for us today" (Lighthouse Chapel Switzerland Statement of Faith, 2018). The Pentecostal World Fellowship's pneumatological views are as follows in their statement of faith:

We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance according to Acts 2:4, and in the operation of the spiritual gifts and ministries... We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life (The Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2018).

The above passages, which are important to this study, will be discussed later in this chapter when these denominations will be discussed.

#### **3.2.1 Global Pentecostalism and the Pentecostal World Fellowship**

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baptism is for those who have believed as it is a ritual symbolizing a Christian's union with God. Trinitarian Pentecostals believe that baptism must be performed "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" which is the name of the triune God and that symbolizes a believer has been united with God and in the name of God Almighty. This view asserts that to be baptized in the name of the triune God is to be baptised in the name of Christ and of the Holy Spirit since the "three are one" God almighty. Trinitarians asserts that "in the name of Jesus Christ," as used in Acts 2:38 and other passages in the book of Acts, mean "in the authority of Jesus Christ" and obedience to this authority is when a believed obeys Matthew 28:19 and is baptised "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." On the other hand, the "Oneness Pentecostal" movement denies this trinitarian assertion and this has caused a division and disagreement, that the trinitarian Pentecostals disproved the Oneness Movement and labelled them as "heretics" who denies the Father and the Son Jesus who came in the authority of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Trinitarian Pentecostals assert that the doctrine of Christ requires the church to believe in Jesus the Son of God who came in the authority of his Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit, and as such the true church of God is Trinitarian.

### 3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement

It cannot be denied that the Pentecostal movement has successfully evangelized and populated the entire globe with its distinct message. Many have observed that it seems the whole world is a Pentecostal pulpit. In the book she edited titled *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Candy Brown (2011:3) refers to the survey published by “Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life’s ‘Spirit Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals’” (2006), that more than a quarter of the world’s 2 billion Christians identify themselves as Pentecostal and Charismatic. The following diagram is a survey adapted from the *Pew Research Center for Religion and Public life* website,<sup>27</sup> and it reveals the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches’ statistics as follows:

Pentecostals by Region			Charismatics by Region		
Regions	PERCENTAGE OF REGION THAT IS PENTECOSTAL	PERCENTAGE OF WORLD PENTECOSTAL POPULATION	Regions	PERCENTAGE OF REGION THAT IS CHARISMATIC	PERCENTAGE OF WORLD CHARISMATIC POPULATION
Americas	10.9%	36.7%	Americas	15.8%	48.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	14.8	43.7	Sub-Saharan Africa	6.5	17.4
Asia-Pacific	1.1	15.5	Asia-Pacific	2.2	29.5
Europe	1.5	4.0	Europe	1.8	4.3
Middle East-North Africa	0.1	0.1	Middle East-North Africa	0.2	0.3
<b>World Total</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>World Total</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pew Forum analysis of data from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. Percentages may not add exactly due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life  
*Global Christianity*, December 2011

**Figure 3. 1:** *Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life - Global Christianity (Pentecostal and Charismatic statistics), adapted on October 27, 2017.*

The largest Pentecostal denomination in the world is the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF), founded in the USA in the early 1900s, with a total membership of 68,504,338 in 256 countries of the world (Molenaar, 2009, Burgess, 2002:333, 338). The largest single congregation

<sup>27</sup> <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2006/10/pentecostals-08.pdf>, accessed on 24 July 2018.

### *3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

in the world, which is also affiliated with the WAGF denomination, is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul South Korea with a weekly attendance of 800,000 members (Anderson 1999:27). This congregation was founded by Rev. David Yonggi Cho in 1958. According to Warren Bird (PhD), in Africa the largest single congregation, with a total weekly attendance of 75,000 people, is the Nigeria based Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM) which is a Pentecostal-Holiness church that was founded by the Rev. William Kumuyi in the early 1970s (Bird, 2017).

The Pentecostal movement is associated with the work of the third person of the Holy Trinity. However, there are various ‘streams’ within this movement that evolved over time (Kay & Hunt, 2015:357). The mainline Pentecostalism refers to the classical Pentecostal churches that originated with the founders of this movement. Churches such as the WAGF, the Full Gospel Church of God (FGC) and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) are the classical Pentecostal churches. The second division is what is called ‘Oneness’ Pentecostalism which, unlike the Trinitarian Pentecostalism, does not theologically view God as the Trinity (Lederle, 2010:78), but rather that Jesus fulfils all the roles of the Holy Trinity, i.e. that there are no three persons in the Godhead but rather one person who ‘manifests’ himself in various forms, the Father in creation, the Son in redemption, and the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and that single person is Jesus who is the only one true God (United Pentecostal Church International, 2018, c.f. Burgess, 2002:1164). Because of this view on the Godhead, many Pentecostal denominations rejected the ‘oneness’ claim and some even labelled it as a heresy. The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) is the largest “oneness” Pentecostal group that was founded in 1945 when a large group of Pentecostal ministers withdrew from the Assemblies of God due to the non-Trinitarian views on the Godhead (United Pentecostal Church International, 2018). This church, like many other ‘oneness’ groups, baptizes ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ rather than in the Trinitarian formula as found in the Gospel of Matthew 28:19 (Burgers & Van der Maas, 2002:1164).

The South African theologian Dr Henry Lederle, in his book titled *Theology with Spirit: The Future of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* points out that there are three ‘waves’ of Pentecostalism that emerged over time and are distinct from each other doctrinally (Lederle, 2010:5, 92-93). To understand the position of the GBC regarding the human sexuality, it is necessary to understand how these ‘waves’ of Pentecostalism differ or relate to each other.

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Lederle points out that the first wave is the “classical Pentecostalism” as pointed out above, the second wave is the “denominational charismatic renewal,” and the third wave is the “new independent charismatic churches” (Lederle, 2010:49, 91). All three “waves” belong to the greater Pentecostal body, though they differ theologically and doctrinally. Classical Pentecostals are very formal and ‘morally stricter’ in terms of their conservative theology and doctrinal practices. They are also denominational and mostly congregational in ecclesiastical polity just like some of the mainline churches. The third ‘wave’ is more ‘liberal’ and non-denominational. The second ‘wave’ is the Charismatic renewal movement that began in most mainline churches, to include the Roman Catholic Church, around 1960s when these churches began to revolutionize their theology of the Holy Spirit and accepted that the gift of the Spirit can operate in the church during this age (Lederle 2010:92). This ‘wave’ was influenced by the classical Pentecostal claim. For this study, it is not necessary to look at the theological differences of these ‘waves.’ It is, however, necessary to consider the theological positions on human sexuality as understood in these churches in a comparative fashion with the GBC. It will be discussed later which of the three waves the GBC belongs to.

Observation and experience have revealed that the Pentecostal movement does not have a single organization responsible for doctrinal and theological developments, because the movement comprises many denominations and ministries that are independent from each other. There are no central leaders who are responsible for entire movement government and all its denominations. Because of this, it is very difficult to understand exactly how this movement operates. Each denomination is responsible for its own affairs, and many denominations and churches within this movement have developed a Presbyterian and congregational system of church governance. However, most denominations have general conferences and presbyteries that are responsible for denominational government at international, national, local and district levels. A good example of this is the WAGF that has a General Superintendent who oversees the whole denomination through various international and national executive committees, national overseers for various countries, and district coordinators (Assemblies of God, 2018). Every denomination at international conference develops and passes the doctrinal positions, statements of fundamental beliefs and position papers that must be signed and adopted by the leaders in the respective spheres and ratified by local pastors who must teach members these doctrines (Molenaar, 2009, c.f Assemblies of God, 2018). In some Pentecostal denominations, members must sign the doctrinal statements as a

### *3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

requirement for membership and adhere to them. In case of a serious breach of doctrinal statement, some disciplinary measures may follow and in the worst cases even excommunication. The GBC specifically declared, in their Statement of Faith, that adherence to the heterosexual principles is an inherent requirement at this church (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

The PWF was established on May of 1947 as a fellowship of Pentecostal churches and denominations worldwide (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (History), 2018). Thousands of churches are members of this fellowship, and these member churches and denominations must sign and ratify the statement of beliefs and position papers and adhere thereto (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (Global Membership), 2018). Some of the main objectives of the PWF are:

To promote and encourage regional and continental alliances amongst Spirit-filled networks...To speak to governments and nations when and where social justice and religious rights are compromised and/or violated for the sake of the gospel...To serve as a cooperative fellowship for Pentecostal Theological institutions to promote the development of education and leadership training (The Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2018).

The PWF has adopted nine statements of belief in which all member denominations and churches must ratify and adhere to as a requirement for membership. Both Bishops Musa Sono and Dag Heward-Mills are members of the PWF (The Pentecostal World Fellowship (Global Membership), 2018). Some of the statements of belief, which are relevant to this study, are as follows:

We believe the Bible to be inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God...We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ is absolutely essential...We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life...We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved to eternal life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation...We believe in the practical application of the Christian faith in every day experience and in the need to minister to people in every area of life, which includes not only the spiritual but also the social, political and physical (The Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2018).

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For the purposes of this study, the above doctrinal positions of the PWF will be discussed later in this chapter so it will be uncovered how they influence the GBC and the larger Pentecostal movement in matters related to human sexuality and sexual orientation. Kay and Hunt (2015:357) point out that the Pentecostal theology emphasizes the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, as described above, and that members are expected to live a morally good lifestyle including proper biblical sexual morality. The reformed and empowered lives that had an encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit are expected to ‘bear’ the fruit of the Spirit, and to live holy lives as they will be assisted by the Spirit (Lederle, 2010:50). It will be discovered later in this chapter how the Pentecostal theology of salvation, sanctification, healing and deliverance will influence the teachings and beliefs on human sexuality and sexual orientation. Pentecostalism has long been known to have taken a stand against sex before marriage, divorce, adultery, fornication and homosexuality (Kay & Hunt 2015:357). These ethical and moral vices are believed to be sinful and falling under the divine judgement of God since they go against the teaching of the Bible.

The Pentecostalism view on human sexuality and sexual orientation is not different from the one held in the Evangelicalism movement. Pentecostals and Evangelicals share many similarities and doctrinal practices in a way that it is not always easy to differentiate between the two movements. Evangelicalism is defined by the theologian Karl Barth as a movement “informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ...by the direct return to Holy Scripture” (McDermott, 2010:5). The only difference between the two movements is that Pentecostalism believes in the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. Evangelicalism, on the other hand, does not emphasize speaking in tongues as ‘initial evidence’ of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, however, their doctrinal view is that a Christian receives the Holy Spirit once they accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Keener, 2010:159). The movement also believes in the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

As with Evangelical theology, the Pentecostal theology embraces the authority of scripture as the inspired Word of God that needs a proper interpretation with the help of the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2010:157). It is believed that, through the revelation from the Holy Scripture, individuals have sinned against God and need reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus (McDermott 2010:5). This means an individual need to understand what scripture teaches regarding sin, believe in Christ as Savior, and confess sins to Him for forgiveness. Then a person will be part of the body

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of Christ, the church. This is what causes much debate and controversy about members of the LGBTIQ group.

Literal interpretation of the scripture is criticized by most biblical scholars, as they are of the view that it leaves many questions unresolved due to the lack of a contextual approach to Bible interpretation (Russel, 2016:12-13). This manner of interpretation has been noted to be the core basis for most moral conservatism and the Bible literalist rejection of LGBTIQ sexuality and lifestyle as being incompatible with the scriptural teaching (Furnish, 1994:28) A queer person who has been ‘born again’ to belong to Christ and his church is expected to live for Christ by leading a holy lifestyle as the old has passed away and the new has come, according to Bible fundamentalism theology<sup>28</sup>. Most of the Pentecostal churches believe that a ‘born again’ queer person cannot continue to live a queer lifestyle as that is incompatible with the scriptural teaching.

#### **3.2.2 Homosexuality and Sexual Morality in Pentecostalism: a comparative analysis**

As pointed out above, most Pentecostal churches, including the GBC, views homosexuality as a sin against God and his Word. Various churches, including the GBC, have adopted and passed position papers and statements of faith on proper sexual and moral conduct that is compulsory for members to adhere to. The GBC’s statement of faith, as pointed out above, specifically points out that the church believes and accepts only heterosexual relationships as God ordained form of human sexuality and that is in accordance with the Holy Scripture (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017, c.f Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). Several Pentecostal denominations holds this position.

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<sup>28</sup> The Bible passages in 2 Corinthians 5:17 illustrate this as follows “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Ephesians 4:22-24 also says: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 declares thus: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

### 3.2 *Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

Various sexual conducts are condemned in Pentecostal tradition. These includes adultery, sex before marriage, divorce, masturbation and homosexuality (Kay & Hunt 2015:358). Committed same-sex relationships are also condemned as it is believed they are not ‘natural’ and in contravention of God’s Word. The nature of human sexuality is subject to much debate as mentioned in chapter 2, especially the issue on whether the LGBTIQ sexual orientation is by choice or not. Some theologians are of the view that the church is not doing justice to the members of the LGBTIQ since their sexuality is something they cannot change (Germond & de Gruchy 1997: IX). It is argued that if the LGBTIQ persons are in that way by nature, then why are they not accepted and embraced in the church. On the other hand, Pentecostal churches insist that such sexuality and sexual behavior contravenes the Holy Scripture, especially passages like Romans 1 as pointed out above in chapter 2 in the case of Grace Bible Church and Bishop Heward-Mills (News24, 2017).

The largest Pentecostal denomination in the world, the WAGF, which is also a member of the PWF, declared in 2001 in their statement about homosexuality as follows:

A nation’s tolerance or intolerance of homosexuality is one indication of the nation’s spiritual condition...Since the Bible speaks to the issue of homosexuality, it must be considered the authoritative rule by which a position is established...Scripture considers it as a sin against God and man. The church’s concern about this problem is not a matter of discrimination against a minority group. This is a moral issue...Homosexuality is a sin (1) because it is contrary to the principles of sexuality which God established in the beginning... (2) Because the Bible refers to it as evil... [and] (3) [because] it comes under divine judgement. (The Assemblies of God (Position Papers), 2017)<sup>29</sup>

In August 2014, the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God adopted another statement titled ‘*Homosexuality, Marriage and Sexual Identity*’ and came up with a resolution that is binding to its members worldwide (The Assemblies of God (Position Papers), 2017). It was decreed that the issues of homosexuality, marriage and sexual identity are critical issues facing the world and the church today. The WAGF position statement points out that all matters of faith and belief must be

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<sup>29</sup> This is the General Council of the Assemblies of God statement on homosexuality. It can be accessed in their website ([www.ag.org](http://www.ag.org)) under position papers. About 66 million members of the AG are bound by this statement including those of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation in this denomination.



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determined and evaluated in terms of the Scripture, which has a final authority over the church and believers.<sup>30</sup> The statement further points out that:

We believe, in light of biblical revelation, that the growing cultural acceptance of homosexual identity and behavior (male and male), same-sex marriage, and efforts to change one's biological sexual identity are all symptomatic of a broader spiritual disorder that threatens the family, the government, and the church (The Assemblies of God (Position Papers), 2017, c.f The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

It further condemns homosexuality and homosexual behavior as sinful and points out the reason for this as follows:

- Homosexual behavior is sin because it is disobedient to scriptural teachings.
- Homosexual behavior is sin because it is contrary to God's created order for the family and human relationships.
- Homosexual behavior is sin that comes under divine judgment (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

The statement points out that "those who are guilty of homosexual behavior or any other sin can be reconciled to God" (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014). The Assemblies of God, as a Bible-based moral conservatism Pentecostal institution of faith just like the Grace Bible Church, adheres to the position that during the Apostolic era the Corinthian church that Paul wrote to were under this sin and "had been delivered from the power of sin by the grace of God" (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014). The WAGF denomination, in their statement on "homosexuality, marriage and sexual identity", refers to the Saint Paul's letter to the Corinthians in chapter six verse nine as follows:

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul listed homosexuals along with immoral heterosexuals as those who cannot inherit the kingdom of God. His grammar implies continuing sexually immoral activity until their conversion. Verse 11 follows with a powerful

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<sup>30</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

### *3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

contrast, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” They had been homosexuals in orientation and behavior, but now the power of God’s Spirit had radically transformed their lives, and the lives of their fellow heterosexual sinners (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

The Assemblies of God’s views are very important for this study, especially because this church holds the majority membership in the PWF, where the GBC and LCI are also members, and it is the most influential Pentecostal denomination in the world. It can be argued that the WAGF, as the largest Pentecostal body in the world, influences the other Pentecostal denominations as far as the matter of doctrine and Pentecostal theology are concerned. This church runs several world-renowned theological seminaries in which many leaders in the Pentecostal tradition received a formal theological education. The GBC’s statement of fundamental beliefs is similar to those of the Assemblies of God, including some views on human sexuality and marriage (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018, c.f The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014). The statement that Bishop Sono read to the GBC, as shown earlier in this study, is not different from the position held by the Assemblies of God. The position, as pointed above, is that homosexuality, as an orientation and lifestyle, was known during the apostolic era in the Corinthian church and, however, those engaged in those practices were radically transformed by the power of God’s Spirit when they believed the Gospel of Christ. This mean the Pentecostal theology holds the view that since homosexuality is condemned as sin according to the Bible, such sexual orientation can cease when people believe the Gospel. It is however a position with much critical arguments as some theologians are of the view that this might not be the case based on the homosexual members’ lived experiences and the research findings of the modern sciences. This will be looked later during this study.

The WAGF’s statement on homosexuality, marriage and sexual identity have included the ‘resultant affirmations’ taken by the denomination. These affirmations are as follows:

#### **3.2.2.1 Same-Sex Marriage**

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The Assemblies of God defines marriage as the permanent, exclusive, comprehensive, and conjugal “one flesh” union of one man and one woman, intrinsically ordered to procreation and biological family, and in furtherance of the moral, spiritual, and public good of binding father, mother, and child. (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

### **3.2.2.2 Sexual Morality**

Sexual acts outside of marriage are prohibited as sinful. Sexual acts outside of marriage include but are not limited to adultery, fornication, incest, bestiality, pornography, prostitution, voyeurism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, sodomy, polygamy, polyamory, or same-sex sexual acts. (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

### **3.2.2.3 Sexual Identity**

God created humankind in His image: male (man) and female (woman), sexually different but with equal personal dignity. The Fellowship supports the dignity of individual persons affirming their biological sex and discouraging any and all attempts to physically change, alter, or disagree with their predominant biological sex—including but not limited to elective sex-reassignment, transvestite, transgender, or nonbinary “genderqueer” acts or conduct (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

### **3.2.2.4 Sexual Orientation**

The Assemblies of God affirms the sexual complementarity of man and woman and teaches that all same-sex sexual attractions are to be resisted. Consequently, believers are to refrain from any and all same-sex sexual acts or conduct, which are intrinsically disordered (The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014).

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As pointed out above, many other major Pentecostal denominations that have a global membership including South Africa, take the same theological stance on human sexuality and sexual orientation as does the WAGF. These include the splinter groups such as the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI), which is the largest oneness Pentecostal denomination also present in South Africa. The UPCI General Conference adopted a “*Position Paper on Homosexuality*” in 1997, and they took a resolution by referring to Romans 1 declaring homosexuality to be “vile, unnatural, unseemly and an abomination in the sight of God,” (Kay & Hunt 2015:360). The position paper further declares that the church and believers must pray for those who are “enslaved in that satanic snare” (UPCI website 2017). The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), also a member of the PWF, declared that it “stands firmly in the mainstream of historical Christianity. It takes the Bible as its all-sufficient source of faith and practice and subscribe to the historic creeds of the universal church...Marriage can only be broken by *porneia* which is understood as marital unfaithfulness involving adultery, homosexuality, or incest” (Kay & Hunt 2015:360). The IPHC, which is also member of the PWF, adopted the same resolution regarding homosexuality and condemned it as the “loose moral standards of our society” and warned its more than 4 million members worldwide to maintain disciplined lifestyles regarding their bodies (Kay & Hunt 2015:360).

In 2004, many larger Pentecostal denominations in the United States of America (USA), including the Assemblies of God, International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and the non-Pentecostal churches, joined together to criticize Barack Obama’s endorsement of same-sex marriages in that country (Kay & Hunt 2015:360). This criticism came from almost all Pentecostal churches who are members of the PWF, and it spread worldwide to many parts of the world, including South Africa, as many church leaders were concerned that Obama’s support of same-sex marriages might influence the UN and force churches to allow such marriages which will compromise their religious freedom. Religious freedom and the issue of the LGBTIQ rights will be considered in the following chapter.

In Africa, Kay & Hunt (2015:362), point out that the condemnation of homosexuality by the Pentecostal churches is influenced also by “the political forces forged by the post-colonial nationalism, regional religious movements discourses, and the condemnation of homosexuality by elements of the American Christian Right.” The African continent is strongly influenced by the

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indigenous African traditional belief system, and the idea of homosexuality is condemned by these systems as being ‘un-African’ and viewed as a threat to the national interests and a challenge to the decrees of God. HIV/AIDS is often seen as a divine judgement to the nation due to the evil of homosexuality, since church leaders are noted to have used biblical text to justify the stance that “persons die of AIDS due to their promiscuous behavior” (Haddad, 2005:32). Studies show that it is believed in Africa that homosexuality is so evil that the ancestors and God could not send rain and prosperity to the nation. In most African countries, homosexual acts are punishable as a crime, and homosexual marriages are not allowed (The Other Foundation Report 2016). This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

In Ghana, where Bishop Dag Heward-Mills’s LCI church is based, homosexuality and homosexual acts are punishable as crime. LGBTIQ marriages are not recognized. Most of the Ghanaian church holds to a heteronormative view on human sexuality and marriage (Kay & Hunt 2015:362). Bishop Heward-Mills was highly criticized by the South African society when he made statements that homosexuality is ‘unnatural’ and even animals cannot practice such acts as they understand nature much better. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the public and civil society criticized these statements. The reason is that South African law and the Constitution accept and recognize the rights of the LGBTIQ persons and protect those rights in Chapter 2 of the Constitution. Same-Sex marriage is also recognized and protected by the law. As GBC pointed out above, the Bishop Heward-Mills’ statement reflects his own views and the position of where he came from. The GBC pointed out that they embrace differing views and Heward-Mills’ views are not necessarily theirs.

The Pentecostals in Nigeria are in opposition to same-sex marriage and many deny church membership to homosexuals (Kay & Hunt 2015:363). They strongly emphasize that, just like the UPCI in the USA, persons with homosexual tendencies must be offered deliverance as such behavior will demonize society and African values and as such it is a serious threat to successful living. The document titled “*The Position of Christian Church in Ghana on Homosexuality*” was signed by the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) and it refers to “homosexuals having adopted an open life-style describing their otherwise shameful practice in a more positive term “gay”” (Kay & Hunt 2015:363). The GPCC document is noted by Kay and Hunt to “speak of the significant threat emanating from Western lifestyles, commends the government on preventing a global conference on homosexuality, and calls on ‘traditional rulers’ and ‘decent-

### *3.2 Towards a description of the Pentecostal Movement*

loving Ghanaians’ to campaign against homosexuality, ‘fearing the wrath of God’ should homosexual rights be advanced in the country.” The chairman of the GPCC, Dr Fred Deegbe, assured those struggling with homosexual tendencies that the Church is there to help them overcome them, and by condemning homosexuality it does not mean communities must stone and kill the homosexuals, but “we want to accept them and provide the necessary help they may require to heal them” (Christian Council of Ghana, 19 July 2011).

In Uganda, the 2009 *Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB)*, which was invalidly passed and signed as the Anti-Homosexual Act of 2014, was submitted to Parliament proposing the broadening of the criminalization of same-sex relations domestically, and that Ugandans who engage in homosexual activities outside of Uganda may be extradited back to Uganda to receive punishment (Kay & Hunt 2015:364). The AHB was condemned internationally, and several church bodies criticized it. Many critics believed the proposed Bill was influenced by the American evangelical Christians and were accused of taking advantage of social and economic circumstances of Uganda to export the North American “culture war” to Africa (Kay & Hunt 2015:364). The Ugandan Pentecostal pastor, Martin Ssempe, declared that homosexuality “breaks the laws of God, the laws of nature and the laws of Uganda” (Kay & Hunt 2015:364). He went on organizing several rallies across Uganda claiming that the LGBTIQ activism group Sexual Minorities Uganda wanted to intimidate the Ugandan government to change the law in favor of homosexuality, and which would bring the curse of God upon the nation.

In Nigeria, the same views are being held about homosexuality. Nigeria’s Pentecostal churches are among the largest denominations in the World. As pointed out above, the third largest single congregation in the world is a Pentecostal church based in Nigeria, the DCLM,<sup>31</sup> founded by former mathematician and university don Rev. W.F Kumuyi. Among the largest Pentecostal denominations, that also have a large following in South Africa, is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). Kay and Hunt (2015:364) notes that the RCCG is said to have declared that the LGBTIQ sexual orientation is seen to be on “par with pedophilia and bestiality”, and Leviticus 18 is the authority for this. Gays and lesbians are said to “use their money, intellect, power and position to fight God’s word and invariably to fight God himself”, and the RCCG refers to Epistle

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<sup>31</sup> The DCLM is the largest single congregation in the whole of Africa. Its doctrines are fundamental and conservative. This church is of the Pentecostal-Holiness tradition.

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

to Romans 1:18 saying “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness...” (Redeemed Christian Church of God, 2011).

### **3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality**

It is necessary to analyze the GBC statements and sermon in a dogmatic manner, and to determine how these theological presuppositions relate to the theological understanding of human sexuality and sexual orientation. The GBC sermon, as delivered by Bishop Heward-Mills, carries some theological grounds that need careful consideration. To understand how Pentecostalism, in its three waves, interpret theology, it is important to investigate some of its core doctrinal understandings as related to hamartiological, soteriological, sanctification, healing and deliverance.<sup>32</sup>

The classical Pentecostalism core doctrines are divided into “three works of grace” (Lederle 2010:71-72). The first work of grace is salvation from sin, the second is divine sanctification and the third is baptism of the Holy Spirit (Molenaar, 2009). It is believed that, since ‘all men have sinned,’ Christ came to become a ransom for the sins of humanity and all of humanity must repent and believe the gospel, so God can save them from sin. That is the position in most of the Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic, Orthodox Church and most of the Protestant Churches. Pentecostals, as a form of protestant church, believe that salvation is the first work of grace, then follows the sanctification and Spirit baptism as the second and third works of grace respectively.

#### **3.3.1 Pentecostal soteriological perspective on queerness**

The Trinitarian soteriological theology, in the Pentecostal tradition, begins with the fact that Adam and Eve sinned and became “worth of eternal punishment and separation from God,” and in the

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<sup>32</sup> Pentecostalism is mostly based on the five core doctrines: being salvation from sin, sanctification, divine healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of Christ.

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

same way all humanity are under the power of sin and are liable to the wrath of God and eternal punishment (Grudem, 2007:657)<sup>33</sup>. The GBC's statement of faith states this thus:

We believe that God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of sin which is death physically and spiritually; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt... We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins a substitutionary sacrifice according to the Scriptures and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

When ministering at GBC, Bishop Heward-Mills declared that the soul of man is the real man living in a body and he is invisible. He went on saying that when a human being dies, a real Inner Man living in a body will come out and, if he sinned, then judgment will follow. He warned members to shun sin and be saved from it and live holy lives because life is too short, and they will not be knowing when they will be called out of their bodies.<sup>34</sup> The Bishop went on, as pointed out in chapter 2, declaring that one of the sins that will destroy the soul of a man is the sin of homosexuality. He called on members who commit this sin and other sins, to repent and turn back to God for salvation (Heward-Mills, 2017).

The real controversy is whether homosexuality is a sin. The description of what is 'sinful' and what is not is very important for Christian theology since Christianity is a religion that requires humans to repent and experience divine justification from God through Jesus Christ and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 2007:704). This is firmly grounded in the Protestant and Catholic soteriological theologies, especially with the theological fact that all men are under the original sin that was inherited from Adam and Eve (Blocher, 2010:129). For many centuries, and to this date, the church has been declaring the message of salvation from sin through Christ's atoning work on the cross and reconciliation with God through the sacrificial blood of Christ. The bible is used to determine what is sinful and what is not, and this is the basis of the Protestant theology (Grudem 1994:657). Most evangelical Protestant theologians emphasize that salvation

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<sup>33</sup> The Scriptural reference to this theological biblical fact is Genesis 2:17, Romans 6:23 and 2 Peter 2:4.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to Chapter 2 of the thesis.



### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

from sin through Christ is a door through which a person can become part of the household of God, and it is a prerequisite for individuals to receive the sacrament of water baptism. But sometimes the question of sin and salvation can cause much debate since there are many evils and wrongs being committed inside the church by those who have received baptism. The same can be said of homosexuality, whether a same-sex attraction can be viewed as a ‘sin’ that needs repentance or not. It is true that some Bible passages are used to condemn homosexuality as sinful if read literally, but there has been a lot of debate about whether homosexuality as a tendency a disobedience of God’s law is or not, or homosexual actions and practices.

Regarding the description of sin, Blocher (2010:130) points out thus:

Evangelical theology focuses on sin as the key aspect of the human predicament, and so evangelical preaching and piety...The doctrine of sin requires specific prolegomena. How can one speak responsibly on the topic? Three questions call for consideration. May we listen to universal experience, and especially the voice of “conscience”? If “law” is to play a major role, how should we distinguish among natural law, positive law, laws of nature, and the laws of special revelation? Does the true light on sin ultimately fall from the law or the gospel?

The Scripture and tradition speak of sin and of sins. Pentecostals, as with most of Christendom including Catholics, believe that sin is that state of being born naturally with sin inherited from Adam (Blocher 2010:137). Sins is then understood to be the product of the ethical choices human beings make due to their sin-nature dwelling in them. Blocher (2010:134) describes this from what the Protestant reformer and theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out to be *illegalitas, seu difformitas a lege* (sin is lawlessness).<sup>35</sup> This relates to a previous question on whether homosexuals, as children of Adam and Even as well, cannot be justified and receive grace so they can be part of the church. Karl Barth (1886-1968) pointed out that “without the doctrine of justification...there never can be any true church” (Bloesch, 2010:222). The line should be drawn between Christian LGBTIQ in church and those LGBTIQ non-Christians outside the church. The same analogy applies to all humans in church and outside of church. If LGBTIQ persons in the

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<sup>35</sup> 1 John 3:4 speaking of the fact that “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

church are viewed as ‘not saved’ then the work of grace and justification by grace is limited, and this is controversial as God will then be only saving a selected few in church. Bloesch (2010:223) points out that “the ground of justification is the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ, which takes place apart from us, but justification is realized subjectively when Christ’s saving work is applied to the repentant sinner in the act of faith” (Bloesch 2010:223). Luther and Calvin agreed that “faith is necessary for the assimilation of grace into the life of the Christian”, and this faith is not based on personal merit, but it is an undeserved gift of the Spirit (Bloesch 2010:223). One can argue that to limit the number of LGBTIQ persons within the church who are saved is therefore to deny the sovereignty and power of God who does the work of salvation as he divinely determines, and to deny that these sexual minorities’ lives matter to God is to deny God who works by grace and whose love is unconditional.

#### **3.3.2 Doctrine of Sanctification and queerness**

In his book titled *Holiness*, John Webster illustrates that there are four types of holiness known in Christianity, being “the holiness of theology, the holiness of God, the holiness of the church and the holiness of a Christian” (Webster, 2003: see Preface). He points out that everything that God creates and institutes and calls that his is then holy. Since the church is the body of Christ, who is the head, the church is holy (Webster, 2003:77). The church comprises of humans who come to God by faith and receive a sacrament of holy baptism and partake in the Holy Communion. In the church there are diversities of persons, of all races, colors, sexualities, sexual orientations, lifestyles, et cetera, and every life matter and should be respected and embraced. In the Old Testament, Israel was chosen by God as the holy people of God, and there were diversities of personalities that comprised the nation of God. Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy, in their book titled *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, quote the Archbishop Desmond Tutu declaration regarding LGBTIQ persons in church:

We reject them, treat them as pariahs, and push them outside of the confines of our church communities, and thereby we negate the consequences of their baptism and

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

ours. We make them doubt that they are the children of God, and this must nearly be the ultimate blasphemy” (Germond & de Gruchy 1997: IXII).

Webster (2003:77) points out that “to talk of holiness of God is to summarize the being and works of the Holy Trinity as God elects, redeems and completes holy fellowship between himself and his people.” The dogmatic exposition of God’s holiness, as declared above, can be observed from the church. The church is not expected to attain the ‘second work of grace’ by means of any merits of its own, but this work is of God and His Spirit, Webster observes. God’s people are *sanctorum communion*, and as such it is the Spirit who dwells in each of them to make them attain the desired divine characters according to his sovereign will (Webster 2003:78). No one will be able to determine if the LGBTIQ Christians are holy or not, since holiness is condition of a believer’s heart and as such it is also progressive work of grace. Theological observation shows it is God who does the work. Webster points out that:

The sanctification of the Christian is the work of the Holy Trinity in which the reconciled sinner is renewed for the active life of holy fellowship with God. Grounded in the electing, reconciling and perfecting work of Father, Son and Spirit, the active life of holy fellowship is the work of faith, which is at every moment characterized by mortification and vivification, and which is actual as freedom, obedience and love (Webster 2013:78-79).

The GBC holds to the theological position, in their statement of belief, that only those who adhere to heterosexual relationships between one natural man and one natural woman can be allowed for church membership (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). This specifically excludes the LGBTIQ believers in this church. This theological basis of GBC membership is problematic because it implicitly ignores the fact that God is sovereign and does the work of salvation and sanctification in his own way. The LGBTIQ believers, as with many other believers like those who struggle with different addictions, can be justified and sanctified by the Spirit since they belong to the church, the body of Christ and this mystic body of God is holy, and Christ’s holiness become believers’ holiness since the former is the head of the church. (Webster 2013:79). Sanctification of a believer occurs and increases throughout a lifetime; however, this does not mean any form of angelic perfection (Grudem 1994:748). It is God who transforms all believers in the church and

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

makes them according to his sovereign will and this includes the LGBTIQ believers. To speak of the believers' bodies as being perfect in holiness might be much unscriptural since bodies are not yet redeemed in glory to be spiritually equal to those of angels.

#### **3.3.3 Queer Christians and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The GBC, like most Pentecostal denominations, believes that a person who is 'born again' can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak with other tongues. The Spirit filled life is a pneumatological doctrine that is believed in all Christian churches, though there might be a difference with what the Pentecostals describe as Spirit baptism with accompanying tongues, signs and wonders. Most other believers outside of Pentecostal tradition holds the theological position that every believer receives the Holy Spirit when they are converted or baptized. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is theologically viewed as the "third work of grace" in the Pentecostal churches, particularly the classical Pentecostal churches (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). Pentecostal-Evangelical systematic theologian Wayne Grudem (1994:763) points out that baptism of the Holy Spirit is one of the "orders of salvation." Many other non-Pentecostal denominations like the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant churches embrace the Pentecostal message of revival of the doctrine of baptism of the Holy Spirit in the charismatic movement that began in the 1960s (Grudem 1994:763).

The doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to classical Pentecostalism and Charismatic movement, holds that to be baptized in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent and distinct experience that follows conversion and that means a believer will be immersed by Christ into the Spirit of God, and the evidence for this is when a believer speaks with other tongues as the Spirit gives him utterance (Hollenweger, 1999:29, c.f Kay & Dyer, 2004:87-89).<sup>36</sup> It is also believed that

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<sup>36</sup> This experience is based on the occurrence in the Book of Acts of Apostles chapter 2:1-6, when the Spirit descended to believers at Pentecost and they spoke with other tongues. The Assemblies of God describe this concept thus: 'Since the early days of the twentieth century, many Christian believers have taught and received a spiritual experience they call the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Now, hundreds of millions of believers identify themselves with the movement that teaches and encourages the reception of that experience. The global expansion of that movement demonstrates the words of Jesus Christ to His disciples that when the promised Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power to be His witnesses to all the world (Acts 1:5, 8). The New Testament emphasizes the centrality of the Holy Spirit's role in the ministry of Jesus and the continuation of that role in the Early Church. Jesus' public ministry was

### *3.3 Pentecostal Dogmatic Theology as related to Human Sexuality*

baptism in the Holy Spirit is endowment with power for Christian service and ministry.<sup>37</sup> The GBC, in their statement of faith, points out that:

We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, empowering and equipping believers for service, with the accompanying supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We believe in the divinely ordained ministries of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

Since Spirit baptism is a post-conversion experience, it requires a personal enquiry from queer Christians in the Pentecostal churches if they experienced this experience and if they can speak with new tongues. However, observation proves that indeed the queer Christians in the charismatic churches do speak with tongues and were baptized in the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Pentecostal tradition. This also includes some Pentecostal queer pastors in the charismatic churches that were founded by these pastors and church leaders. The LGBTIQ affirming Pentecostal groups led by queer pastors includes the Assemblies of God Gay Pentecostals, the Gay Apostolic Pentecostals, the National Gay Pentecostal Alliance, the Apostolic Restoration Mission and the larger Affirming Pentecostal Church International that operates many churches worldwide (Kay & Hunt 2015:367-368). These LGBTIQ Pentecostal movements, though in the USA, were founded and led by leaders who were mostly formerly ordained ministers in the classical Pentecostal churches. These leaders are observed declaring that they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak with new tongues and possess other Spirit gifts.

The Apostolic Restoration Ministries claims fifty ministries, including South Africa (Kay & Hunt 2015:386). The National Gay Pentecostal Alliance was founded in 1980 as a Pentecostal church

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launched by the Holy Spirit coming upon Him (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). The Book of Acts presents an extension of that ministry through the disciples by means of the empowering Holy Spirit. The most distinguishing features of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are that: (1) it is theologically and experientially distinguishable from and after the new birth, (2) it is accompanied by speaking in tongues, and (3) it is distinct in purpose from the Spirit's work of regenerating the heart and life of a repentant sinner.' (Assemblies of God website 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Acts of Apostles 1:8, Jesus told his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they are given power from on high. In Acts 2, it is read that the power came like wind and fire and from them they took the gospel to the rest of the world with miraculous signs following.

### 3.4

### *Conclusion*

open for LGBTIQ community. Kay and Hunt point out that the co-founder of this church, Rev. William H. Carey declared in 1993 that:

Given the intense homophobic nature of most Pentecostal denominations, setting up any type of organization within any of those bodies, or even comprised of members of any of those bodies, was not possible. Open homosexuals are not tolerated in Pentecostal churches. Some are excommunicated (Kay & Hunt 2015:368).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The Pentecostal movement holds to the protestant evangelical doctrinal view about the necessity for a personal conversion, repentance, forgiveness of sins and the post-convention experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit by a believer (Lederle, 2010:37). The Holy Scripture is believed to be an inspired revelation from God and all church doctrine and practices must be Bible based. The Bible is believed to be an inspired Word of God, that is mostly interpreted literally, to determine the moral ethics of those who are members of the church and society in general (Kay & Dyer, 2004:267). The preaching of the gospel is a church's responsibility to declare the salvation through Christ and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in a believer and empowers them to live a holy life.

Homosexuality is viewed as a sin and homosexual practices are a contravention of the Scriptural revelation to the proper sexual behavior that God ordained for human life (News24, 2017). Pentecostals are observed to allow the LGBTIQ persons and encouraging them attending church meetings with the hope of offering a "spiritual deliverance" so they become heterosexual and "normal" members of the society. The church doors are opened for everyone as it is believed God can transform people's lives when they hear the gospel, believe and be saved. It is expected of those who 'come to Christ' to bear the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness and holiness, including changing any character and lifestyle that is incompatible with the biblical truth and Christian way of life (Kay & Dyer, 2004:267). Sexual sins are not tolerated, including homosexual practices, bestiality, incest, masturbation, et cetera (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). It is

### 3.4

### *Conclusion*

believed that these practices are not for believers in Christ who have been ‘born again’ by the Spirit, but such practices belongs to the world and unbelievers (Lederle, 2010:50-52). It is also believed that God sends the Holy Spirit to each believer, so they live empowered, successful and holy Christian lives.

As does the Evangelicals, Pentecostals understand grace to be unmerited favor, and each believer receives grace when they hear the gospel and turn to Christ. It has been shown that Pentecostals do not advocate hatred for any sin and homosexual tendencies, but they reach out to all people in the spirit of love and compassion as Christ did (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The GBC pointed out this specifically when saying by condemning homosexuality they do not condemn a homosexual, but they condemn that which God hates – being a sin (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). Pentecostals believe sin is a condition of a fallen people, and all have sinned, and Christ overcame sin when he died for all humanity so those who believe may overcome as Christ did. Pentecostalism, as does evangelicalism, believes that God gives the Holy Spirit and power to the church and the ministry gifts, so the world may hear the truth and turn to Christ for salvation (Lederle, 2010:56). However, most queer theologians are critical of the Pentecostal and Evangelical moral conservatism views and biblical literalism (Russel, 2016:12-13).

*CHAPTER 4***CHAPTER 4****DOMINANT LEGAL DISCOURSES ON HUMAN SEXUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN INTERDISCIPLINARITY SCHOLARLY ANALYSIS****4.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the theoretical conceptualization of the Grace Bible Church case study was overviewed in a comparative and contextual fashion. This case study is the intersection of gender, law and theology, and the GBC was selected to illustrate the theological principle and dogmatic stand of the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition as related to its understanding of human sexuality and sexual ethics (Nisbet & Watt, 1984:72). The single instance, as occurred in the GBC, was that the sexualities of the LGBTIQ persons were viewed as ‘unnatural’ and not in line with natural law and proper biblical sexual conduct. However, it has been shown in chapter two that several queer theologians, like Adrian Thatcher, disagree with the conservative Bible-literalist churches’ such as Pentecostalism view and understanding of the binary of human sexuality as influenced by the heteronormative and hegemonic masculine religiously infused culture as propagated in many churches (Thatcher, 2011:3). As pointed out above, Adrian Thatcher, and other queer theological scholars, are of the view that what makes humans to be either ‘male or female’ is not a truism concept of a biological sexual organ, but gender and sex is rather the result of a comprehensive process as a person grows and experiences their own sexuality (Thatcher 2011:3, Germond & De Gruchy, 1997:3).

This chapter will shift significantly, however, to a discussion of the dominant theological and legal discourses on human sexuality in the RSA. The nature of human sexuality is complicated, especially its dogmatic and ethical understanding in the Pentecostal theological tradition as pointed out above. Most Pentecostal churches, especially the classical Pentecostals, are Bible-fundamentalist and moral conservatism churches that are also confessional regarding their theological church doctrine and position papers. This results in many critical and confusing discourses on human sexuality.



## *4.2 The intersectionality in queer theory and the law*

The rise of the constitutional legal order and the human rights culture cannot be underestimated when related to the dignity of sexual minorities within religious communities, in this context the Pentecostal and Evangelical movement. This interdisciplinary case study reveals that the sexual minorities, those persons other than the heterosexuals, feel offended when the churches view their sexualities to be ‘unnatural’ and to be in contravention with the proper biblical and societal moral standards. The argumentative rationale raised by the sexual minorities is that they feel their human rights, especially the right to human dignity and not to be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation as enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996<sup>38</sup>, were being violated and infringed upon due to the church’s theological interpretation of the doctrine of sexuality that is influenced by heteronormative standards and ideologies. This chapter will engage on a few selected dominant legal discourses as related to human sexuality and religious practice in South Africa. Parliamentary developments, as far as law-making is concerned, will also be considered in this chapter as well as selected court cases that became a precedent and influenced the jurisprudential thought and process relating to the matters of human sexuality and sexual minorities.

## **4.2 The intersectionality in queer theory and the law**

This chapter derives its relevancy to this study on the idea that queer theology, as a variant of the queer liberation movement, must be understood within the context of the liberal principles and ideologies as advocated by the modern liberal and legal theories. Queer liberation movement, in its various forms, cannot exist and be successful in its endeavors if not intertwined with the liberal

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<sup>38</sup> Concerning the Right to Human Dignity, section 10 of the Constitution provides that “Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.” Section 9, which is also known as the Equality and anti-discrimination clause, provides that “Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law...Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms...The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth...No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.” As it will be discussed in the following paragraphs, various legislations were enacted by the Parliament to give effect to section 9 of the Constitution. This includes the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 (PEPUDA or the Equality Act, Act No. 4 of 2000), the Civil Unions Act of 2006 (that legalized the same-sex marriages in South Africa) and other pieces of legislations.

## 4.2 *The intersectionality in queer theory and the law*

and legislated ideologies and enactments. Law should be used as a mechanism through which the human dignity of the queer people should be able to be protected and embraced (Ackerman, 2012: 4-5, 13).

The American civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, coined the feminist legal theory of “intersectionality” to express the “multidimensionality” of the oppressed and marginalized subjects and how they lived their experiences in the oppressive world around them (Nash, 2008:2). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Critical Race Movement (CRM) and Critical Legal Movement (CLM) were born in the legal academy with the mission and commitment to problematizing the law’s purported color-blindness, objectivity and neutrality. The intersectionality, as a liberation legal theory, was centered on the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2008: 2). Initially, this theory embraced the fact that “...the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences” should be followed (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). Intersectionality’s success in challenging the gender and race binaries is derived from:

- Its rejection and subversion of the gender binaries in the service of seeking to re-define and service the theories of gender and sexuality identity in a more complex fashion,
- Its alignment with the fact that the gender, racial and sexuality minority voices and experiences that have long been ignored, due to the heterosexist and hegemonic masculinity norms, should now be heard and embraced and those voices should join forces together to stand for their social well-being,
- The way traditional heteronormative vocabulary was used should be changed and a new vocabulary should be provided to respond to the critiques of gender and sexuality politics (Nash. 2008: 2).

Crenshaw (1991: 1296) believes intersectionality’s main purpose is to expose the differences within a broad category of women, in the context of feminist theory, and gender and sexualities that are more diverse than the binaries that the traditional hegemonic masculine believes in (Crenshaw 1991: 1296, Nash 2008: 2). Ultimately, intersectionality seeks to demonstrate the racial variations of sexuality and “gender and the gendered variations within race through its attention to subjects whose identities contests race-or-gender categorization” (Nash 2008: 2). Now

### 4.3 *Two separate orders in South Africa*

intersectionality has become the scholarly buzzword that combines the notion that gender, sexuality, race and class should be interconnected as far as the oppression of the minorities within these categories are concerned. The main idea is that there are diversities of persons within these categories, and to label each category as unified will not be possible.

### **4.3 Two separate orders in South Africa**

Queers theologies, intersectionality theory and the queer liberation movement at large cannot succeed in the quest to liberate the LGBTIQ community without the intervention of the state legal order, through the legislated enactments that purport in the jurisprudential development and law reform, and that will legally redress the challenges facing the queer community. Without the intervention of the state, the church solely cannot carry out the spiritual and prophetic task of ensuring the dignities of the LGBTIQ community are embraced and all evils and marginalization against the queer sexuality is properly responded to (de Gruchy, 2004:439-440). However, research has shown that churches and other religious communities are of differing opinions regarding the sexual orientation of the LGBTIQ persons as opposed to the heterosexuality that is widely accepted as a proper sexual standard and norm (Thatcher, 2011:135, 139). Though the state positive law's task is to protect all citizens in South Africa, the Constitution<sup>39</sup> forbids any propaganda that seeks to diminish and tear down the wall of separation between the church and the state. This means the state cannot legislate and execute laws against the church's theological positions and doctrines regarding heterosexuality as the only proper and accepted form of human sexuality, as Karl Barth has famously said "let God be God and the World be the World" (Willmer, 2004:126). The church's theological strategy is built on the assumption that God has a freedom to be God in his own ways and those ways can never be fully understood by human beings. The church is the representative of Christ on earth and is called upon to reveal Christ and his Word to the world through the witness of the scriptures. This means, theologically speaking, the church is not bound by any religion, philosophy, man-made laws, culture or societal values, as the Holy

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<sup>39</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996. The Bill of Rights expressly provides the religious communities with the right to determine their own belief system and develop doctrine. It also provides these communities with the freedom of association, belief and opinion.

### 4.3 *Two separate orders in South Africa*

Trinity is not bound by anything that humans do. The postmodernism and secularization of movements in the society is proven to be a challenge to some of the traditional theological views that the church has held to for many centuries as derived from scripture and tradition (Pickstock, 2004:471-472). But the challenge remains that there are LGBTIQ Christians in the church, who just like other members, need pastoral care, welcoming and affirmation. It is interesting to observe that most Pentecostal churches, as does the GBC in this case study, hold the conservative theological position that “God loves the sinner, but hates sin” and in this context a ‘sin’ means those things that the scriptures literally forbid and disprove as sinful, one of them being sexual intercourse between people of the same sex. This case study seeks to critically analyze this position from a contextual theological perspective.

#### **4.3.1 State Order**

Augustine of Hippo (353 – 430AD) wrote a famous book entitled *De civitate Dei contra paganos* (The City of God against the Pagans) in which he differentiated between the “city of God” and the “city of Rome” (Bell, 2004: 424). He argues that the city of Rome, which is the world and its earthly governments, cannot bestow salvation in its fullest forms on humanity and that salvation is only found in the city of God which is the kingdom of God at large as represented by the church in the world. Accordingly, the political theological ideology of Augustine’s day was understood to be greatly influenced by the church’s teachings and practice (Elshtain, 2004:21). As a result, there was no separation between the church and the state and the research shows that, due to this, the Western Church grew stronger as it had a great influence on the political leaders and rulers (Elshtain, 2004:27). Before the advent of modernity, to speak of the church and the state as if they were two distinct social entities was anachronistic. It was during the advent of the Protestant Reformation that the idea of separation between church and state began to emerge, and the democratic liberal revolution also came with the political idea of modern statehood, democracy and constitutionalism (Pickstock, 2004:478). Protestant Reformation challenged the supremacy of the church and the role it played in the social and spiritual lives of the community. The church’s political power was challenged, and the new order required the church to fulfil only the spiritual role of society. The state became a powerful institution that exercises public authority in which

### 4.3 *Two separate orders in South Africa*

people elect their leaders through a popular vote to represent them in terms of the notion of representative democracy (Bell, 2004: 425). Dietrich Bonhoeffer is of the view that the state should be based on the character of man, since it is the “consummation of the rational character of men, and to serve it is the supreme purpose of human life” (Bonhoeffer, 2012:287).

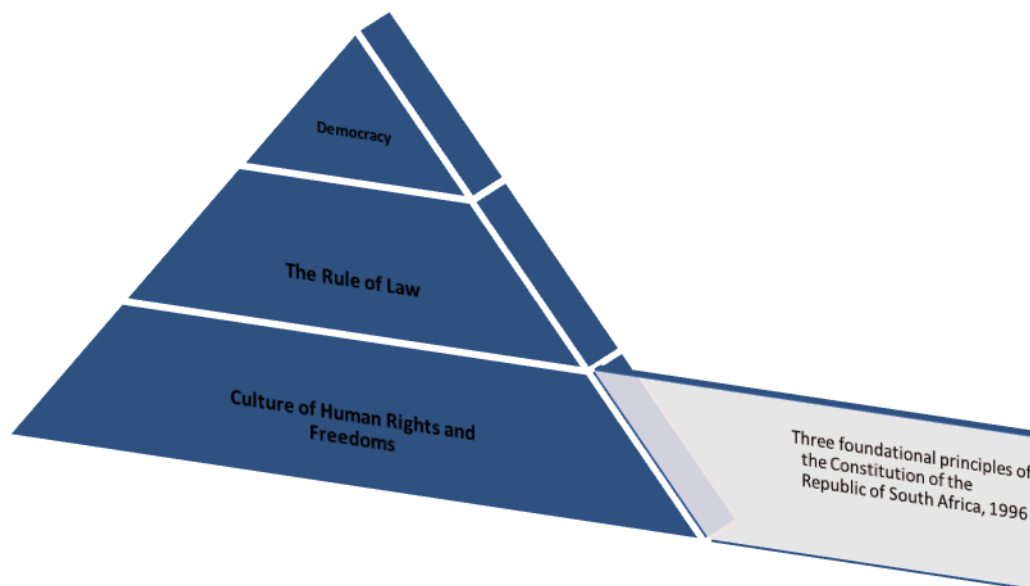
The South African post-apartheid constitutional dispensation began in the early 1990s when many political prisoners were released, one of them being Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918-2013) who was elected the first democratic president of the South African government of national unity in 1994. After two years of him being in the presidency, the final democratic Constitution of the RSA was adopted and passed by the Constitutional Assembly and signed into law by parliament. Known as one of the most liberal and progressive constitutions in the world, the South African Constitution of 1996 carries the foundational system of laws that seek to address the moral, spiritual, economic, social and political dimensions of society.

In this chapter, the legal analyses from a theoretical and scholarly queer context will be engaged. The purpose is to derive the various legal discourses that have changed the way the theological discourses on queer sexuality can be understood. It is undeniable that the South African constitutional and human rights jurisprudence had a great impact and played an influential role in the development and theorization of the church and societal views and moral standing on the LGBTIQ human sexuality.

The new legal and constitutional dispensation has the Constitution as a moral-legal code that seeks to set the guidelines on how government should exercise its powers in a manner that will foster and encourage a respect of human rights and other constitutional values as enshrined in the 1996 Constitution (Ackerman, 2012:5, 20). The basic principles of the South African Constitution are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law, and
- Culture of Human Rights and Freedoms (Freedman, 2013:22).

## 4.3

*Two separate orders in South Africa*

*Figure 4. 1: The three core principles of the South African Constitution.<sup>40</sup>*

The rule of law principle above also entails the political doctrine of separation of powers, which is mainly based on the philosophies of Montesquieu's doctrine of *trias politica*, entailing that the powers between the legislature, the judiciary and the executive arms of government should be separated to ensure smooth running of government, accountability, transparency and the principle of checks and balances (Hahlo & Kahn, 1968:518). This principle has much in common with the Reformation principle of separation between the church and state.

Democracy, a concept traced back from ancient Greece, is a system of governance in which governance must be exercised in accordance with the will of the people (Freedman, 2013: 22, Le Bruyns, 2012: 59, 64). In democratic states, like South Africa, there is a respect for human rights that includes the rights of the LGBTIQ community. The South African Bill of Rights provides that

<sup>40</sup> These principles are enshrined in the Chapter 1 of the Constitution, the Founding Provisions, where section 1 provides that the Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign democratic state founded on the principles of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; non-racialism and non-sexism; supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law. Although the Constitution does not explicitly provide for separation of powers, it does impliedly do so since it requires that there must be separation of state powers between the legislative, executive and judicial spheres of government. The legislative power is vested in the Parliament, provincial legislatures and municipal councils which are tasked to enact the laws. Judiciary involves the courts and their role of interpreting and applying the laws, and the Executive power is vested on the administration being the president and members of cabinet, and the premiers and members of the executive councils.

### 4.3 *Two separate orders in South Africa*

the human rights culture is the “cornerstone of democracy” in South Africa<sup>41</sup> and in it the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom are promoted. Section 7(2) of the Constitution further obliges the state to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.

Nelson Mandela declared that the South African democratic Constitution will succeed and endure only if it reflects the aspirations of the people whose destinies it must serve, and this requires a moral commitment to those aspirations (Freedman, 2013: 1). This Constitution, with its Bill of Rights, binds all institutions of state, all people, including all religions, cultural and civil organizations, that have a duty to respect a culture for constitutionalism, the rule of law, the respect for human rights democracy and all of the constitutional values enshrined in the Constitution, including the human dignity, equality and freedoms of all people.

The Constitution of 1996 protects the rights of the LGBTIQ community and those of the religious communities as already stated in the above paragraphs.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution provides that everyone has a right to equality and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender is forbidden among other things.<sup>42</sup> The rights of religious and cultural communities to form, join and establish the order of their practices are promoted and protected.<sup>43</sup> This means the church has freedom of association,<sup>44</sup> opinion and belief and this should also be respected and protected. It will be discussed in the following chapter how the courts interpreted these rights in cases of conflict of rights between the religious communities and the members of the LGBTIQ as witnessed in the case of GBC as mentioned in previous chapters. It happens that individual or group rights conflict at times and the Constitutional Court (CC) will then be obliged to interpret, balance and declare rights in this regard. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> Section 7 subsection 1 of the Constitution provides that ‘the Bill of Rights is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa, and it enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

<sup>42</sup> Section 9, Equality clause, of the Constitution forbids discrimination based on the listed grounds to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

<sup>43</sup> Section 15, and section 31 of the 1996 Constitution.

<sup>44</sup> Section 18 of the 1996 Constitution.

### 4.3 *Two separate orders in South Africa*

#### 4.3.2 Church Order

Professor of public theology, Dion Forster, notes that in many countries there is a visible line of separation between the church and state relationships (Bentley & Forster, 2012:74-76). He goes on further to point out that some Christians feel obliged to submit to the authority of the state, as this is encouraged in Romans 13:1, and in doing so pray that their leaders submit to the authority of God who is the supreme ruler. However, Forster points out that some Christians are radically opposed to government and to praying that God will overthrow an oppressive government as in the case of apartheid South Africa (Forster, 2012:73). In other countries, the religious institution and the state are but one institution especially in the Muslim countries (Khir & Bustami, 2004:507-508). The secular state what most theologians, such as Forster, observed is the best form of government (Forster, 2012:74-78). This is because in a secular state there will never be discrimination based on religion and that the church, not the state, bears the responsibility for religious matters in society (Forster 2012:76, Bell, 2004:425). The church should bear a prophetic witness in a secular state in speaking against evil, corruption, and a national sin. In the previous chapters it was discussed how the Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke against the church's 'ultimate blasphemy' and sin of rejecting the LGBTIQ communities in the church and treating them as 'pariahs' (Munro, 2012:IV). In South Africa, liberation theologians such as Beyers Naude (1915-2004) stood their ground to speak against the evil of apartheid and the racist regime, even though it was influenced by the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in which Naude was an ordained minister. If a line of separation is not drawn between the church and state, as Forster points out, then a country will have an oppressive regime against those who do not conform to the politico-religious norms. It will mean that, in such instances, the rights not only of sexual minorities but also other minorities will be at stake. This is because many religious organizations, even to this day, seek to influence the state law making bodies so they legislate the laws that only favor the dogmas and viewpoints of these bodies. The PWF has this mission as they declare in their website that their objectives include:

To speak to governments and nations when and where social justice and religious rights are compromised and/or violated for the sake of the gospel (The Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2018).



#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

The above statement needs a critical evaluation. It means the PWF and all its member denominations, to include GBC, has a task to encourage governments' law-making bodies to consider the denominational doctrines, position papers and stand on LGBTIQ issues, for example, when formulating a law. Since the PWF and the affiliated denominations take the stand against homosexuality, this mean the rights of the LGBTIQ may be at stake if governments consider the religious views and submissions regarding same sex sexual attraction. In the following chapter this will be discussed in more detail, and in the following paragraphs an attempt will be made to analyze how the law that determines LGBTIQ sexuality developed.

#### **4.4 Literature and scholarly analysis**

It is necessary to examine the legal discourses that shaped and transformed the recognition and acceptance of LGBTIQ sexuality in South African post-constitutional dispensation. Various landmark court cases and pieces of legislation brought a new dispensation of acceptance and recognition of the LGBTIQ sexualities in both society and the church. Because of these legal and legislative developments, the queer debate started to emerge in churches and other religious institutions to find a common ground for the status of LGBTIQ members and the acceptance of their sexuality.

##### **4.4.1 The timeline on the historical perspective of the acceptance of the LGBTIQ sexuality by the State and the Church in South Africa**

It is necessary to trace the discussion of how the church and state reached their views relating to the status of sexual minorities in South Africa. This will be presented using less detailed analysis but by placing it in a broader historical context. The South African history of the struggles of LGBTIQ persons must be understood within the context of the state and church as both held views that went against these sexualities. For this purpose, the LGBTIQ struggles can be thought of in terms of four periods. The first beginning with the centuries long period prior to South African governance. The second, the colonial period that began with the arrival of the Portuguese in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and continued with the arrival of the Dutch settlers until the British colonization

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

of South Africa (Kretzschmar, 2012:132). During the third phase, the rise of apartheid took place in 1948 when the National Party (NP) came into power bringing segregation and discriminatory laws. Not only was discrimination based on race and skin color, but also, in many instances, on the grounds of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. Apartheid was largely based on the doctrines of the DRC which accepted heterosexuality only as the norm. The other LGBTIQ sexualities were not recognized and accepted, and, in many cases, were even criminalized under the common law crime of sodomy (de Ru, 2013:223). The fourth phase begins when the apartheid regime ended in 1991, when political prisoners were freed, and the African National Congress (ANC) unbanned. This was due to pressure from the international community, particularly the UN, that declared apartheid as a crime against humanity (Kretzschmar, 2012:132). This will be considered in detail in the following chapter.

Church-state relations in the South African post-apartheid constitutional dispensation saw great liberal movements rising and being vocal about the need to break away from the heterosexual and hegemonic masculine norm and to start to embrace the minority sexualities (Punt, 2007:243-244). The Constitution of the RSA, which is seen as a moral and legal document, promoted and protected the rights of the sexual minority and this set a foundation for further legislation and court cases that seek to protect and promote the LGBTIQ community and sexuality (Freedman, 2013:5, 35). The Constitution secularized South Africa and separated the DRC and the nationalist government by bringing in a new constitutional and legal order that requires the separation of church and state, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and the supremacy of the Constitution (de Ru, 2013:229-232). In terms of the Constitution, all organs of the state, private persons, and juristic persons like churches, must act in accordance with the law and the Constitution so that they respect and protect the human rights enshrined therein. Any act or conduct that is inconsistent with the Constitution will have to be declared invalid if challenged in a court of law, and the obligation imposed in it must be fulfilled.<sup>45</sup> This will be considered further in the following paragraphs.

##### **4.4.1.1 The pre-1994 discourses on LGBTIQ sexuality in South Africa**

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<sup>45</sup> Chapter 1, the founding provision, of the Constitution of 1996 declares thus.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

As pointed out in the above paragraphs, pre-1994 discourse on sexuality was rigidly dominated and controlled by the apartheid political and religious system. This system was biased in favor of a certain brand of Christianity, which was the Dutch Reformed Church tradition (de Ru 2013:225). The apartheid government's legal definition of marriage was that of a Roman-Dutch common law definition, as influenced by the biblical concept of marriage advocated by Christendom, which traditionally defined marriage as a "voluntary union for life between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others while it lasts." (de Ru, 2013:222, 224)<sup>46</sup> This definition has been traditionally held by many denominations in Christendom, including the Protestant churches. For marriage in the Roman Catholic Church, for many centuries, the church dogma held that "*nuptiae sunt coniunctio maris et feminae et consortium omnis vitae, divini et humani iuris communicatio*" literally meaning a marriage is a holy institution created by God in which one man and one woman are joined to be one flesh to the exclusion of others and for life (de Ru 2013:221-222). This traditional definition is also held by the Grace Bible Church as discussed in chapter two above. The GBC Statement of Faith declares that:

With regards to sexual behavior, we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

Almost all Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations hold to the similar position and definition of marriage. LGBTIQ unions and life partnerships are still controversial in the church and society to this day, and many churches took a stand to declare LGBTIQ relationships to be 'unnatural', 'sinful' and 'unscriptural'. Observation shows that many denominations, including the RCC, does not allow ordination of LGBTIQ ministers, and even go as far as refusing to solemnize LGBTIQ marriages and unions (Ratzinger, 1994:42).

Before the new constitutional order, sexual relations between persons of the same sex were characterized as a deviation from the natural order and therefore criminal behavior (de Ru 2013:226). The South African government criminalized homosexual activities under the common

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<sup>46</sup> This is much controversial traditional definition of marriage in terms of Marriage Act 25 of 1961.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

law crime of Sodomy (de Vos & Barnard, 2007:797), which has its roots in the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah which reads thus:

They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.” ... With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished...As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!” ... Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus, he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and the vegetation in the land (Genesis 19: 5, 15, 17, 24-25)

Research shows that there are several theologians and biblical scholars who do not agree that God destroyed these cities due to homosexuality, as they believe the above Bible passage is one of the “six-shooter texts” used by the anti-gay church to denounce homosexuals (Punt, 2014:69). They hold a theological position that these cities were destroyed due to their lack of hospitality to the strangers.<sup>47</sup> They go on arguing that God is love, and he will never destroy anyone or any nation due to a committed and loving same sexual relationship. The argument is that in fact these relationships will glorify God if they are based on love which is the greatest commandment of all. The moral philosopher and theologian Stanley Hauerwas (2001:519) argues that the “gays (as a group) are morally superior to Christians (as a group)”. He points out that the church is

confused about sex, why and with whom we have it, and about our reasoning for having children...This moral confusion leads to a need for the illusion of certainty. If nothing is wrong with homosexuality, then it seems everything is up for grabs...but in some ways this prejudice against gays has worked in their favor. They at least know more about who they are and who their enemy is...it seems

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<sup>47</sup> The Bible passage used to support this argument is Ezekiel 16:49, saying: “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.”

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

clear to me that gays, as a group, are morally superior to Christians (Hauerwas, 2001:520-521).

In the period before 1994, South Africa followed the Westminster system of governance in terms of which the courts of law never had a competency to question the legality of parliamentary legislation (Robinson, 2005:489). During this time there was no principle of separation of powers in its purest form as the apartheid parliament was spurious to the courts and the latter had to only interpret the laws of the former even if they were discriminatory and racial in nature, without questioning them (Hosten, 1995:337). Parliamentary sovereignty, as a term acronymic to the current constitutional sovereignty in South Africa, had a direct negative impact on the conventional attitude towards marriage and the LGBTIQ community. Unlike in the current constitutional order where the Constitution is a supreme law of the land, the parliament was sovereign during the apartheid era and it was dominated by mainly heterosexual white males who held the Afrikaner Calvinism doctrines high in promotion of the hegemonic masculine norms that excluded women, people of color and sexual minorities from being recognized and to have a say in spiritual, legal and political issues of society (de Ru, 2013:225, Van der Vyver, 1999:635, 639-640). Van der Vyver accurately noted that “individual church dignitaries who voiced their critique of unjust and repressive state regulations and practices in many instances also experienced the wrath and harsh retributory responses of the powers that be,” due to the apartheid church-state “draconian laws” that were passed to favor the system of oppression of the “others” (Van der Vyver, 1999:640).

Law professor Pierre de Vos (2007:439) notes that during “late 1994, 43 gay and lesbian organizations came together to form the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCLGE) at the First National Gay and Lesbian Legal and Human Rights Conference held in South Africa” (de Vos, 2007:439). These “movements formed political alliances with anti-apartheid organizations and argued that their struggle fitted the same (intersectional) frame: oppression by the apartheid regime” (de Ru, 2013:222).

The concept of sexuality during the pre-constitutional era reflected the position in Canon Law<sup>48</sup> and the Roman-Dutch law. Canon Law was the law as developed and applied by the RCC for

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<sup>48</sup> This is the law as developed and applied by the church. During the dark ages, to include the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church through the Pontiff dominated the world. There was really no separation between church and state during those years. The Church has a final authority on the economic, social, political and legal matters in the society. The Pope was the highest authority, especially since most of the kings and noble men were Catholic.

## 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

centuries, and which was received into many legal systems of the world and is still applied to this day (Mosikatsana, 1996:554).

### 4.4.1.1 *Canon Law influence on the church-state relationship*

Since the sources of Canon Law were primarily the Scriptures, it is very important to consider how the church and the state were united and how Canon Law became the codified legal system in Europe, and later received and superimposed into the legal systems of most countries of the world. Christianity, as with Judaism and Islam, predicts a Messianic King who will one day rise and end all injustices and evils in society by bringing a new political, social, economic and spiritual order that will never end (Storey, 2012:2). The Christian eschatological theologies, in particular, asserts that this Messianic King is Jesus Christ who will come for the second time to judge the world and bring a new dispensation of eternal peace and final victory over death, Satan and all host of evil. The entire book of Isaiah is a prophetic witness to the Messianic King who will rise to first end Israel's suffering and then to end the suffering of all people in the entire world. The promised anointed king will rule for ever, as the Prophet Isaiah declares in Isaiah 9:6-7.<sup>49</sup> The Christian faith teaches that this prophecy was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ who is believed to be the Messiah who was promised by God to the Jews and who the latter rejected as being not the true Messiah. Most Evangelical Christians further believe that the kingdom that Jesus came to establish is not a physical one, but a spiritual one, and that to enter this kingdom one must be 'born again'

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The Canon law, also known as Church law, was developed and used in most of the Catholic nations. Because of this the most legal traditions in these nations were developed from the Canon law that its main source was the Holy Scripture and the church tradition. The South African Roman-Dutch law and the English law was superimposed in the Cape Colony by the Dutch Settlers and later by the English colonizers. It was then that these legal traditions were applied and them having the Canon law as one of their sources. The law of marriage, for example, was derived from Roman-Dutch law having been influenced by the Canon law. Also, family law, law of succession and other aspects of private law can be said to have been developed and mainly influenced by the Canon law.

<sup>49</sup> For unto us a Child is born,  
 Unto us a Son is given;  
 And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
 And His name will be called  
 Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,  
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
 7 Of the increase of His government and peace  
 There will be no end,  
 Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
 To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
 From that time forward, even forever.  
 The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

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of water and Spirit as mentioned in previous chapters. The Pentecostal doctrine of salvation, particularly as held by the GBC in this study, is based on this theological view, and it is believed that if a person is ‘born again’ then the old passes away and the new comes (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018, The Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2018, Lighthouse Chapel Switzerland Statement of Faith, 2018, United Pentecostal Church International (Statement of Faith), 2018, The Assemblies of God (Position Papers), 2017). Then after, it is believed that a born-again person will be sanctified and baptized in the Holy Spirit, speak with new tongues and live a holy lifestyle that is compatible with the sound Bible teaching (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018, c.f United Pentecostal Church International (Statement of Faith), 2018). It was pointed out further that, for this reason, most Pentecostal churches reject the idea of homosexuality and condemn it as a sinful, unnatural, morally intrinsic evil that is incompatible with Scriptural truth (News24, 2017, c.f The Assemblies of God (Statement on Homosexuality), 2014). The case of GBC was addressed, in comparison with other Pentecostal denominations as represented by the PWF.

According to the traditional views on human sexuality and marriage, Christ elevated marriage between the baptized adult persons who must be joined by God through the church into this sacrament (Lynch, 1992:169-170). The traditional view goes on arguing that the institution of marriage was created by God, and not by the state or even the church (de Ru, 2013:223). Theologians holding to this traditional view believe God gave marriage as a gift to human beings for procreation purposes, and the Protestant reformers added that marriage was also for sexual pleasure between a married couple within the confines of holy matrimony (de Ru 2013:223). To this day, many Christian denominations hold the theological view that any sexual relationships outside of a legal marriage, either homosexual or heterosexual relationships, are therefore a sin that will come under the divine judgement of God (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). However, the LGBTIQ Christian scholars argue against the traditional view and point out that since God is love, committed and loving homosexual relationships are not condemned by him as also the heterosexual relationships since they both entail a special “self-giving love” (DeFranza 2015:95-96, Thatcher 1993:53). DeFranza points out that God is a God of love and those joined in same-gender marriage are joined into an opportunity for growth in love and grace and mutuality and also for learning to give the whole of oneself to another person (DeFranza, 2015:96).

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Historically, the church fathers were intolerant of sexual pleasures not directed towards procreation and the rearing of children (de Ru 2013:223). As pointed out in the previous chapter, the church fathers condemned sexual activities and pleasures that were not purposed to procreation, and such acts were contrary to the order of nature and were termed by the old authorities *sodomie*, *venus monstrosa* or *onkuysheyd tegens de natuur* and were therefore seen as criminal activities punishable by death (2013:223).

Constantine the Great (273AD-337AD) became the first Christian Roman emperor, and his conversion, though questioned by many, was seen as the milestone that changed the course of world history as the era of the institutionalized church emerged (de Vos & Barnard, 2007:501). This emperor was seen as a chosen representative and instrument of God who was to bring an order of political and spiritual peace by bringing the church together as one, organizing the church, developing common doctrines, and bringing both believers and pagans to be servants of God in obedience to God's law and the church's teachings (Knowles, 1967:5). The management of both religion and state policy then became the task of the head of state, so that "the church and state became one". Theologians are critical of church-state unions in any country, and the assertion is that a church should be a "spiritual institution" apart from state control (Barth, 2012:304-305). Under this system arose the traditional views of the biblical heterosexual sexuality that was recognized and accepted by both church and state with other sexualities being seen as heathen, unnatural and punishable by death (de Ru, 2013:223). This was even though the ancient Greeks and Romans had accepted and practiced homosexuality. Same-sex intimacy was outlawed by the *Corpus iuris civilis*, a codified Canon Law that was applied by the state and the church, and the crime of sodomy was developed and criminalized as it was believed that God hates homosexuality and those practicing it and therefore the state must do the same (Boswell, 1980:175).

##### **4.4.1.1.2 Roman-Dutch Law influence**

Canon Law was received into the Roman-Dutch Law and the protestant reformation played a part in this. The protestant reformers challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and demanded that the church and the state should be separated in Europe. This was because the Pope was considered as the prince of princes and kings in Europe, especially during the dark ages, and as such the Catholic Church had great power over the political, economic and social spheres of the



#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

society. Influenced by the protestant's church-state separationist notion, Montesquieu (1689-1755) developed a legal and philosophical doctrine of separation of powers, namely that the powers of the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary should be separated (Hahlo, 1968:528). De Ru (2013:224) points out that by virtue of *jus maiestatis circa sacra* (right of the power of religion), state authority was subject to control by government and government's power over the church were limited to the administration of church property. The legal consequences of marriage and other sexual acts performed in Church, thereafter, became the concern of the state. During this time, however, marriage was still described as a relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of others and homosexual activities were still condemned and punishable as a crime, as Crompton points out:

All persons who have the shameful custom of condemning a man's body, acting the part of a woman's, to the sufferance of an alien sex (for they appear not to be different from woman) shall expiate the crime of this kind in avenging flames in the sight of people (Crompton, 2003:136).

It is commonly accepted that the principles of Roman-Dutch Law regarding marriage and sexual relationships were brought to South Africa by the Dutch settlers when Jan van Riebeeck established the first European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. Mostly, they were based on Canon Law as developed and applied in Europe. These principles remained largely unchanged for almost all the pre-constitutional era, and some still exist even to this day. The church in South Africa is mostly a colonial church, and these principles still influence church thought and dogma.

##### **4.4.1.1.3 *The Church-State union during the apartheid totalitarian regime***

Daniel Francois Malan (1874-1959) was elected the first Prime Minister of the government led by the NP in South Africa (de Ru 2013:225). Malan, who was of the Afrikaner tribe in South Africa, was also an ordained Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. Soon after he ascended into power, the DRC propagated the conservative concept of apartheid which legally required the total and absolute separation between black and white South Africans as a matter of necessity to ensure the survival of the white "civilization" in Southern Africa. White heterosexual male South Africans, especially of the Dutch descent, were then seen and promoted by the NP government as the only persons who could be in political power to rule others in matters of economic, social, political, and

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even spiritual aspects of life (Terreblanche, 2002:314). The “white political supremacy” resulted in a religious-political heteropatriarchal dictatorship over other groups which included people of color, women, the LGBTIQ community and other religious and political institutions that were not affiliated or approved by the DRC and NP policies. In terms of these policies, almost all South Africans suffered oppression irrespective of race, color and gender, if they did not conform to the NP religious-political heteropatriarchal dictatorship. De Ru (2013:225) points out that:

A “distinct bias for Christianity” was one of the aspects that denoted the fabric of the apartheid regime. The church-state consubstantiality provided a religious foundation for the “political perpetration of isolation and loneliness (for example of gays and lesbians) that is required for terror to thrive.”

The Roman-Dutch Law, as influenced by Canon Law, is generally accepted as the tradition of laws and part of the South African legal system. Courts of law had to interpret, develop and apply this legal system. The foundation of the apartheid system’s pre-constitutional government of the NP was based upon common law principles and all demeanor were supposed to conform to the Christian doctrine as interpreted by the DRC (Hahlo & Kahn 1968:14-15). In terms of the apartheid religious policy and jurisprudence, the state had to systematically institutionalize its racist structures in the context of the DRC’s religious dogmas and this resulted in the NP apartheid government being biased in favor of a certain brand of Christianity, which was the DRC, to the exclusion of the rest (de Ru, 2013:225-226). Many other political, religious and social institutions were therefore discredited, oppressed, discriminated against and even banned as they were believed to be an enemy seeking to oppose the government. Several people who spoke against the apartheid system were arrested as political prisoners while others were forced into exile. Certain religious leaders also spoke against the apartheid system of the NP and the DRC, such as the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931- ), the Rev Beyers Naude, and theology Professor Albert Geysler, both Afrikaner tribe and ministers in the DRC, of which Beyers Naude’s ministerial license was later revoked by the DRC due to his involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. The South African apartheid totalitarian regime, in terms of which the church and the state became one, can be described as “totalitarianism par excellence” due to the fact that the government was run by “the state’s systematic institutionalization of racist structures; and, in the context of religious matters, a distinct bias in favor of a certain brand of Christianity” (de Ru, 2013:225).

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Almost all members of the apartheid parliament, judges in the courts of law, and government administrators were white, heterosexual males of Afrikaner descent and members, or even ministers, in the Dutch Reformed Church as in the case of DF Malan.

The South African apartheid government's political and legal systems were particularly noted for being totalitarian and dictatorial "in the sense of the state's interference in the private lives of individuals and of the state's regulation of the internal affairs of non-state social institutions" (Van der Vyver, 1999:635) The church-state relationship provided a religious foundation for the "political perpetration of isolation and loneliness (for example of gays and lesbians) that is required for terror to thrive" (Barnard 2007:504). The members of the LGBTIQ were forced to hide their sexuality and some lived celibate so that they would not have to face the state's penal codes that would sentence them to jail for a crime of sodomy and others. This totalitarian domination led to the abuse of the individuals' human rights and freedoms, including the rights of the LGBTIQ community. This caused international communities to start to raise their voices against the system.

At the instance of the DRC, the NP-led parliament drafted and passed several pieces of legislation that were seeking to regulate the individuals' private love and sexual relations (de Ru 2013:226, Van der Vyver, 1999:638-639). The *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949* was passed in terms of which a marriage or any form of cohabitating relationship between white and black persons was criminalized and prohibited (Barnard, 2007:503). The common-law crime of sodomy was developed by the courts in terms of which the unnatural sexual acts and sexual intimacy between males was also prohibited. The *Immorality Act 5 of 1927* was also passed by the apartheid parliament seeking to criminalize these acts and punish those who were proven guilty in participating in them (de Ru, 2013:226). In 1957, the *Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957* was passed to repeal the *Immorality Act*. Section 20A of the Sexual Offences Act then criminalized any act between male persons "if such acts were calculated to stimulate sexual arousal and passion or to give any sexual gratification" (de Ru 2013:226). The penalty prescribed for committing such a prohibited act was a maximum fine of R4000 or alternatively two years of imprisonment or even both such fine and imprisonment.<sup>50</sup> Section 14(1)(b) of the *Sexual Offences Act* further proscribed the "immoral or indecent" acts between young males and boys under the age of nineteen. Parliament further extended the proscription of "immoral and indecent" acts to acts between young

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<sup>50</sup> Section 22(g) of the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957.

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women and girls under the age of nineteen.<sup>51</sup> De Ru (2013:226) points out that this “discrimination was evident since the heterosexual age of consent was sixteen, not nineteen as in the case of the homosexual age of consent.” This discrimination was later declared to be unfair and unjust since it was not proven to be based on any reasonable and justifiable ground. The apartheid regime, and its religious and political policies as developed by the DRC and the NP, resulted in the LGBTIQ community suffering harsh discrimination and rejection due to their sexuality. Because the queer sexualities were criminalized and penalized, the LGBTIQ community were all socially and legally rejected by society and the state and treated as outcasts, perverts and deviants (de Vos, 2007:433). This marginalization and social exclusion resulted in a multiple dimension of suffering for LGBTIQ individuals in South Africa who were already suffering under the yoke of apartheid because of their sex, gender, race, sexual orientation and economic color (Nash 2008: 2, Crenshaw 1991: 1244).

#### **4.4.1.2 The rising of the LGBTIQ liberation movements in South Africa**

##### ***4.4.1.2.1 Pre-Constitutional dispensation***

The DRC, and most conservative Bible literalism churches, theological discourses on human sexuality had a great influence on how the NP led government developed legislation and policies that forbade the acceptance and affirmation of LGBTIQ rights. Because of this, gay people became unimaginatively relegated as fellow citizens in South Africa (Munro 2012: VIII, Germond & de Gruchy 1997:194,). It was due to these political, legal, social and spiritual exclusions in the life of the community and the church that the Christian liberation theologies started to emerge aiming to ‘overturn the whole table’ and argue that “Christian theology was rooted in patriarchy, racism, heterosexist and other exclusionary beliefs and practices, and that it would have to be deconstructed and rebuilt if it were to be truly liberating” (Stuart, 1997:8). To elaborate further, Professor of Sociology Dennis Francis points out that:

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<sup>51</sup> Section 14(3)(b) of the above Act.

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Like all other forms of oppression, heterosexist is based on the prejudice and assumption that heterosexuality is the only natural, “normal,” acceptable sexual orientation (Francis & Msibi, 2011:157).

It was then, in the South African context, when the queer theologies, black liberation theologies, feminist theologies and others began to challenge the traditional heteropatriarchal theology and legislative policies as advocated and promoted by the apartheid government under the influence of the DRC. Stuart points out that during the 1960s, books about the LGBTIQ sexuality and members of this group began to appear in society as they claimed their acceptance and human rights as part of their struggle against the perversity of apartheid (Stuart 1997:2, Munro 2012: VIII).

The LGBTIQ community are noted to have resisted the apartheid system that disqualified the validity and legality of their sexuality, and which is known to have developed prejudicial policies and legislation that seek to authoritatively regulate everyone’s sexuality in the name of purifying the white race against defilement of what constituted unbiblical, immoral and pervasive lifestyles (Munro, 2012:VIII). As a result, therefore, the LGBTIQ community joined forces with other marginalized and prejudiced members of South African society who suffered under the apartheid system to include persons of color, the disabled, women, and all others who felt discriminated and marginalized due to the system.

Brenna M. Munro, in her book titled *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom* published in 2012, points out that during apartheid South Africa, many white queer persons suffered discrimination and injustices equal to what black South Africans suffered due to their race (Munro 2012:138). The LGBTIQ community were rejected and shamed by the apartheid authorities. During that time to be a lesbian woman or a gay man was criminalized and punished by a jail sentence or fine as mentioned in the above paragraphs. Munro quotes thus about how some of the queer persons expressed their suffering through literature:

Being queer is thus presented as the opposite of aspiring whiteness. When Nathaniel comes out to his parents – with his charming, gender nonconforming new boyfriend, Matthew, in town – his father shocks everyone...that he fell in love with a fellow soldier during World War II, but after their post-war relationship was discovered, his boyfriend killed himself (Munro 2012: 138).

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

The above story went on telling how the father was forced to marry his wife, change his family surname and move to stay in a ‘colored’ area because he was ashamed of his bisexuality. Munro identifies this as a type of system that prevailed then and was much influenced by the Christian heteropatriarchal norms which prevailed in those days and shaped the minds of the clergy and the politicians of the day.

Munro quotes Nadine Gordimer, when he says:

There may be a particular connection between sexuality, sensuality, and politics uniquely inside South Africa. Because, after all, what is apartheid all about? It’s about the body. It’s about physical differences (Munro 2012: XII).

According to one of the South Africa’s famous gay rights activists and a law Professor Pierre de Vos, the LGBTIQ movement became successful in advocating for a liberation of these sexualities from the stronghold and exclusionary social discourses of the heteropatriarchal system. He notes that the leaders of the gay and lesbian movements were fortunate and wise in presenting the struggles faced by the LGBTIQ community as part of the broader struggle against the oppressive system of the apartheid regime (de Vos, 2007:435). The gay political activists were very active during the struggle against apartheid. During the 1980s, some of the LGBTIQ activists flew to London with the purpose of arguing the case of gay rights with the African National Congress (de Vos 2007:436, c.f Munro 2012:47-48, 53).

These activists met with Albie Sachs, a Jewish member of the ANC constitutional committee in exile, who was appointed a Constitutional Court judge after the new dispensation and pointed out to him and others the need for the inclusion of gay and lesbian rights in the ANC agenda (Munro 2013: VII-VIII, de Vos 2007:436). It was then that the “new imaginary concept of the “rainbow nation” – a phrase that encodes the intersection of multiracialism and gay rights” was developed (Munro 2012: VII). Albie Sachs is quoted by Munro (2013: VIII) as declaring that:

“The question of human rights for homosexual men and women is not just one of eliminating injustices against a section of the community, of acknowledging fundamental human rights. It is also about the nature of the country we are all going to live in”.

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Various gay and lesbian movements and organizations were formed as part of the struggle against the apartheid system that discriminated against them based on their sexuality and sexual orientation. The first gay and lesbian organization created during the apartheid era was called ‘Gay Association of South Africa’ (GASA) in around 1982 in Johannesburg (Munro 2012:49, de Vos 2007:435). GASA’s main objective was to serve the social needs of white, middle-class gay men and it basically did not align itself with the anti-apartheid struggle that so discriminated against the LGBTIQ community (Munro 2012:49). It was subsequently expelled from the International Lesbian and Gay Alliance (ILGA), due to it isolating itself and being unsympathetic to the struggle of gay and lesbian persons of color. Due to GASA’s failure to meet the needs of the gay and lesbian persons of color, the black gay anti-apartheid activist Simon Nkoli founded the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) during 1988 (Munro 2012:49, de Ru 2013:227). GLOW “committed itself to a “Non-Racist, Non-Sexist, and Non-Discriminatory Democratic Future”” and Nkoli was quoted to have famously declared that:

I’m fighting for the abolition of apartheid, and I fight for the right of freedom of sexual orientation. These are inextricably linked with each other. I cannot be free as a black man if I am not free as a gay man (de Ru 2013:227).

The Western Cape Organization of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) is noted to have eventually replaced the LAGO in that the former, although the majority of members were white, managed to be led by anti-apartheid activists who were highly located within the liberation struggle (Christiansen, 1997:1023). OLGA was affiliated with the powerful organization in the struggle against apartheid called the United Democratic Front (UDF), which was politically aligned with the ANC (Croucher, 2002:324). During this struggle, the ANC basically never had any policy on LGBTIQ matters as some of the senior officials in the party dismissed these matters as being irrelevant (Christiansen, 1997:1025). Ruth Mompati, who was a member of the ANC National Executive Committee, declared thus concerning the gay and lesbian rights:

I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They have nice homes and plenty to eat. I don’t see them suffering. No one is prosecuting them...we haven’t heard about this problem in South Africa until recently. It seems to be fashionable in the West...we don’t have

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

policy on flower sellers either...who are not normal. If everyone was like that, humanity would come to an end (Christiansen 1997:1025).

It was due to statements such as the one above that gay rights activists began to organize pride marches as a form of protest their exclusion from legislative enactments and political policies. Beginning in 1990, Nkoli and the GLOW “organized the country’s first three pride marches” (Munro 2012:49).

##### **4.4.1.2.2 *Post-Constitution dispensation***

The Constitutional dispensation began in 1993 when the transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993 (Interim Constitution) was negotiated, adopted and passed through the Multi-Party Negotiation Process (MPNP) during the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) that took place in Kempton Park Johannesburg, in terms of which the government of national unity was established in South Africa (de Ru, 2013:229-230). This marked the beginning of the democratic and human rights dispensation where the people’s rights and freedoms will be recognized, protected and promoted. During the apartheid regime, rights and freedoms were denied many due to racial discrimination and segregation. This paragraph will not dwell on the Constitutional and human rights legal principles as these aspects will be discussed in more detail during the following Chapter. This serves as a brief discussion on how the current dispensation liberated and advanced the rights and freedoms of LGBTIQ persons, especially the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the final Constitution.<sup>52</sup>

The current dispensation, as it will be discussed in the following Chapter, entails that South Africa is a free society in which all individuals are free to do as they choose if they do not coerce the rights of others. This means the LGBTIQ community can, therefore, also live without any fear of discrimination and marginalization especially from public and private institutions since their rights

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<sup>52</sup> Section 9 of the Constitution forbids discrimination on one of the listed grounds to include sexual orientation. The ground of sexual orientation was much debated whether it should be included in the Bill of Rights. Due to the societal conceptions on homosexuality, several religious bodies, political parties, cultural organizations, and other legal and natural persons voiced their concerns that the sexual orientation clause must not be listed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. However, due to the role played by the LGBTIQ activist this clause was included. Most politicians in the ANC and other political parties were much divided on this issue. However, the ANC as it believed in the liberal democratic principles finally agreed that the sexual orientation clause be included in the Bill of Rights.



#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

and freedoms are now protected by the Constitution. However, this may not be so at times since not all members of the South African community accept the queer lifestyle and sexuality as a normal way of life (Francis & Msibi, 2011:157). It was discussed in the above paragraphs that this is due to the religiously and culturally infused heteropatriarchal societal traditions that is dominating most South African minds. The church is also indirectly, or directly, contributing to the way the heterosexist ideology is marginalizing the LGBTIQ community, and this is arguably so because the Church is the moral voice of society and as such people accept what the church teaches regarding human sexuality. The church interprets the Bible literally and holds the moral conservative theological beliefs that seek to disprove queer sexuality and regard it as sinful, unnatural lifestyle and moral decadency (Russel, 2016:12-14).

The ANC, during their policy conference in 1992, finally and formally recognized LGBTIQ rights and decided to include in its Bill of Rights a prohibition against discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation (Croucher 2002:320). During this period of transition from apartheid to democracy, all registered political parties in South Africa were in the process of drafting their party Bill of Rights that would be used during the CODESA which began on December 21, 1991 at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg and continued until mid-1992 (de Ru, 2013:230). Immediately after the ANC drafted their own Bill of Rights, the Democratic Party (DP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) followed suit by adopting a policy that prohibited any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation (de Ru, 2013:228). During 1993, after CODESA, the interim Constitution was drafted by the Technical Committee of Experts, in terms of which the National Parliament was established (Croucher 2002:320, Stychin 1996:470). Though there were certain conservative civil societies and political parties, especially religious ones, that voiced against the inclusion of the anti-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation clause in the Constitution, the interim Constitution did specify that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation must be forbidden. Croucher notes that:

This victory, recognized by gay activists as an important but not final one, prompted 43 organizations from throughout the country to come together, in 1994, to form the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) (Croucher, 2002:320).

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This was a matter of destiny and survival for the LGBTIQ community because the final Constitution was about to be adopted in 1996, and many conservative moral voices were rising to prevent the Constitutional Assembly from including the sexual orientation clause in the Bill of Rights (de Ru, 2013:228). The NCGLE hired a full-time lobbyist to act on its behalf in lobbying for the rights of the LGBTIQ community, and the organization played a significant role in advocating for the rights of the LGBTIQ by means of fighting legal battles against the state and private individuals from time to time (Munro, 2012:47-49). This will be illustrated in the following paragraphs.

Right from the outset during 1994, Simon Nkoli and Zackie Achmat were both involved in the formation of the NCGLE and the former even met formally with the then President Nelson Mandela (Munro 2012:48). Achmat, who was born and grew up in the Colored Muslim community of Cape Town, was taught from childhood that homosexuality is a disease and a form of complicity with the White rule. Nkoli, who grew up in Soweto, Johannesburg, was raised from a conservative Christian family that did not accept homosexuality as a moral way of life. After discovering that he was HIV positive, he made public his status in 1991 and was involved in HIV/AIDS community projects in Soweto. After he died of AIDS in 1993, streets were named after him in the cities of Amsterdam and Johannesburg, and in San Francisco there is a day called Simon Nkoli Day in his honor (Munro 2012:50).

#### **4.4.2 Selected landmark court judgements contributing to legislative changes on queer sexuality in South Africa**

In this section, the changes that stem from the court judgements will be briefly overviewed to give a background on the legislative changes that took place in the previous decade due to the judicial developments. These court decisions have set a course of legislative and jurisprudential developments that will mark the beginning of the establishment of the new legal and constitutional order seeking to remedy the injustices of the past suffered by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons in South Africa, and this was due to the religious, moral-philosophical and political standpoints that the apartheid government adopted against these sexualities (de Ru, 2013:224). As discussed previously, the apartheid totalitarian regime systematically regulated

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people's sexual life through legislation. These legislated enactments were influenced by the DRC's theological biblical discourses as far as human sexuality was concerned. The church mainly viewed and measured standard human sexuality from the heteropatriarchal theological discourses as briefly discussed in previous paragraphs.

### 4.4.2.1 **Introducing the Post-Apartheid Constitutional Jurisprudence**

The South African Constitution<sup>53</sup> came into effect in 1996 after months of consultation, debates, deliberations and the gathering of public opinion on what should be included therein and what should not be included. The preamble to this document recognizes that the injustices of the past will be remedied, those who suffered for the course of justice and freedom will be honored, and that people's human rights will be recognized, protected and advanced. As discussed above, the LGBTIQ persons suffered discrimination due to their sexuality and sexual orientation, and this discrimination and suffering was institutionalized as the church and the state joined arms to oppress the sexual minorities in South Africa. The Constitution, to remedy the injustices suffered by the LGBTIQ community, became a moral-legal voice with the theme of human rights and freedoms protection.

Since the coming into operation of the Constitution, with its Bill of Rights,<sup>54</sup> the state was required to ensure all citizens are protected against any form of injustice and discrimination due to one or more of the grounds as enshrined in the Constitution.<sup>55</sup> Certain sections explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of marital status and sexual orientation,<sup>56</sup> guarantees a person's privacy,<sup>57</sup> their human dignity<sup>58</sup>, and the fact that all people are equal before the law and have the

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<sup>53</sup> Act 108 of 1996.

<sup>54</sup> Chapter 2 of the Constitution.

<sup>55</sup> Section 9 list the grounds in which discrimination will be forbidden, unless proven to be justified.

<sup>56</sup> Section 9(3) and (4) prohibits both state and private persons to unfairly discriminate persons on the ground of marital status and sexual orientation. This mean the government cannot pass laws that seek to promote heterosexuality and discriminate against those who do not conform to the heterosexual norm.

<sup>57</sup> Section 14 provides that "everyone has the right to privacy..." People sexuality is no one's concern these days. No one owes a duty to explain their sexuality and sexual orientation.

<sup>58</sup> Section 10 provides that "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

right to enjoy the equal benefit and protection of the law<sup>59</sup> irrespective of their sexuality, gender and sexual orientation in the context of the LGBTIQ persons.

After the coming into operation of the Constitution, certain legislative and judicial measures were taken to protect and advance the rights and freedoms of the LGBTIQ community. The below paragraphs will briefly discuss these judicial developments that occurred when people and civil organizations approached the courts of law claiming their sexual rights and freedoms. Various LGBTIQ organizations were established, and the courts were flooded with cases concerning LGBTIQ legal issues. Both churches and state were seen to have been taken to court by the LGBTIQ community which believed their constitutional rights were being violated and they needed to seek relief. In most instances, the courts ordered the state to change law or even create a new law that will remedy the situation. The Constitution demands a legislative and social change in the way in which intimate relationships are legally regulated and acknowledged in South Africa (de Vos 2004:181).

##### **4.4.2.2 National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice, 1999**

In 1999, the Constitutional Court (CC) had to decide on the country's first case involving the discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. This was the case of the *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice 1999(1) SA 6 (CC)* (hereafter Minister of Justice),<sup>60</sup> also known as the "Sodomy" judgement, in which the CC had to give an order confirming the Witwatersrand Local Division's order<sup>61</sup> that the common law crime of sodomy and other statutory provisions prohibiting and criminalizing any sexual conduct between consenting male adults is unconstitutional and invalid. In his majority judgement, Ackerman J held that the CC was obliged by the law to consider the correctness of the high court's legal order regarding the offense of sodomy. The CC held that the WLD's order that the statutory law seeking to criminalize

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<sup>59</sup> Section 9, also known as the equality clause, forbids unequal treatment as follows "everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law."

<sup>60</sup> *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice 1999(1) SA 6 (CC)* in pars [27] and [28].

<sup>61</sup> *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality and Others v Minister of Justice and Others 1998 (2) SACR 102 (W)*.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

any sexual conduct between males was invalid and unconstitutional because such criminalization would amount to discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation against persons who are stimulating sexual passion or giving sexual gratification to one another (South African Law Reports, 1999:19).<sup>62</sup> Ackerman J held that the sole existence and purpose of the offence of sodomy was only to make a crime of a certain form of gay expression which failed to conform to the religious and moral views of a particular section of the society (South African Law Reports, 1999:42).<sup>63</sup> The common law offence of sodomy had been part of South African law for decades, and any consensual sexual relations between males was punishable as a crime. The targeted males were gay men. The Bible was used as a source of the common law in this regard. Since the apartheid parliament and the courts were dominated by the heterosexual Christian white males, their views on human sexuality demanded that all other forms of sexuality not conforming to the heterosexual norm must be criminalized and punished (de Ru, 2013:225).

In *Minister of Justice*, Ackerman J further held that gay men are a permanent sexual minority in any society, particularly South Africa, and in the previous decades had suffered from various patterns of discrimination and disadvantages where their dignity, privacy, personhood and identity as gay men were prejudiced and alienated (South African Law Reports, 1999:26).<sup>64</sup> Such discrimination was held to be a violation of the right to human dignity enshrined in section 10 of the Constitution. He stated that the common law crime of sodomy prohibited all sexual intercourse between men irrespective of the circumstances surrounding their relationship did not pass the constitutionality test, especially because such criminalization meant that the government sought to promote heterosexual relations above homosexual ones, and thus “to state that in the eyes of our legal system all gay men are criminals” (South African Law Reports, 1999:28).<sup>65</sup> The Judge noted that the existence and criminalization of the crime of sodomy degraded and devalued gay persons in broader society and this constituted the invasion of their privacy and dignity as persons, and thus violated section 10 of the Constitution (Ackerman, 2012:15).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Minister of Justice, at par [9].

<sup>63</sup> In Par [69].

<sup>64</sup> Par [26].

<sup>65</sup> Par [28].

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

Ackerman J, at paragraph [30] in the judgement, further held that the criminalization of sodomy violated the gay men's right to privacy as enshrined and protected in section 14 of the Constitution.

The Judge stated:

Privacy recognizes that we all have the right to a sphere of private intimacy and autonomy which allows us to establish and nurture human relationships without interference from the outside community. The way in which we give expression to our sexuality is at the core of this area of private intimacy. In expressing our sexuality, we act consensually and without harming one another, invasion of that precinct will be a breach of our privacy (South African Law Reports, 1999:30)<sup>67</sup>

The judgement finally concluded that the common law crime of sodomy was unconstitutional because it violated the LGBTIQ persons' right to privacy, human dignity and equality as enshrined in the Constitution (South African Law Reports, 1999:29).<sup>68</sup> The Minister of Justice's legal team argued that the LGBTIQ rights as highlighted above need be limited in terms of section 36 of the Constitution which required that the limitation is possible if it can be proven that such limitation is justifiable and reasonable in terms of the law of general application in open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. The CC held that limitation cannot be possible because the Minister of Justice did not provide enough evidence as to why rights need be limited. The court further held that since the reason was to allow the Minister to enforce the private moral views of the heterosexual section of the community, and because such views are based on nothing except prejudice against the LGBTIQ community, then the limitation cannot qualify as it lacks legitimate purpose rather than mostly moral and religious purposes (South African Law Reports, 1999:31).<sup>69</sup> The CC noted that this case sought to lay down a solid foundation for future recognition of same-sex unions on which the Parliament had to deliberate and pass law. It went on to say that the principle of Ubuntu in South Africa requires that one must put oneself in the shoes of others, so one can understand the challenges and pains others are going through. It was noted, in paragraph [22], to be appallingly injurious to say that persons who are handicapped or of different color, religion, race, gender or sexual orientation are less worthy than others.

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<sup>67</sup> In Par [32] of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice.

<sup>68</sup> Par [30].

<sup>69</sup> At Par [37].

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

Since the Constitutional Court delivered the above landmark judgement in *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice*, various other judgements have been handed down by the court since discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was declared to be forbidden.

##### **4.4.2.3 National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Home Affairs, 2000**

In 2000, the CC had to again decide on the concept of “same-sex life partnership” in the case of *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Home Affairs 2000 (2) SA 1 CC*<sup>70</sup> (hereafter *Minister of Home Affairs*). In this case, the CC was challenged with the conservative conformist order of intimate monogamous relationship and acknowledged the fact that there is an existence of another form of partnership and it is different from the concept of a marriage as traditionally defined as a permanent union between one man and one woman in terms of South African family law (South African Law Reports, 2006:24-25).<sup>71</sup> The court held that this form of life partnership is represented by a conjugal relationship between two persons of the same sex and it is therefore valid as protected in terms of the Constitution.<sup>72</sup> The CC held that same-sex life partnerships represent “intimate and mutually interdependent” relationships, and as such gay and lesbian partners deserve the same equal treatment and benefit of the law that is afforded to opposite sex partners (South African Law Reports, 2006:47).<sup>73</sup>

##### **4.4.2.4 Du Toit v Minister of Welfare and Population Development, 2003**

In 2003, the CC decided in the case of *Du Toit v Minister of Welfare and Population Development 2003 (2) SA 198 (CC)*<sup>74</sup> (hereafter *Du Toit*) that the applicants, who were partners in a long-term lesbian relationship, cannot be excluded from adopting a child where they would otherwise be suitable to do so had they be in a heterosexual relationship. The partners in this case were excluded

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<sup>70</sup> *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Home Affairs 2000 (2) SA 1 CC.*

<sup>71</sup> *Minister of Home Affairs* par [36].

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Minister of Home Affairs*, in par [97].

<sup>74</sup> *Du Toit v Minister of Welfare and Population Development 2003 (2) SA 198 (CC).*

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

to adopt a child due to the wording of the now-repealed *Child Care Act 74 of 1983*<sup>75</sup> and the *Guardianship Act 192 of 1993*<sup>76</sup> that required that children can only be adopted by a loving and stable family, and such family, as argued by the Minister of Welfare, had to be a male and female household (South African Law Reports (B), 2003:208-230).<sup>77</sup> The court held this as direct discrimination against persons of a same-sex partnership and such discrimination infringed on their rights to human dignity and equality as guaranteed and protected in terms of the Constitution. It was decided by the CC that this infringement of rights cannot be justified since doing so will be to favor the heterosexual partnerships as the only valid form of partnerships and the same-sex partners will suffer discrimination and unequal treatment (South African Law Reports (B), 2003:208-230).<sup>78</sup>

##### **4.4.2.5 J v Director-General, Department of Home Affairs, 2003**

Again in 2003, the CC decided in the case of *J v Director-General, Department of Home Affairs 2003 (5) SA 621 (CC)*<sup>79</sup> that the birth of a child to lesbian life partners after one of the partners submitted to artificial insemination is deemed to be legitimate and the child can be registered under the names of the partners in the Population Registry of the Department of Home Affairs. In this case, section 5 of the now-repealed *Children's Status Act 82 of 1987*<sup>80</sup> which stated that children born due to artificial insemination will only be legitimate if the birth mother is married, but not if she is a partner in a same-sex partnership or heterosexual life partnership. The CC changed the legal position, and now a child born because through artificial insemination of a woman in a same-sex life partnership is deemed to be the "legitimate" child of same-sex life partners (South African Law Reports, 2003:628). The court held that same-sex life partners cannot be excluded from the ambit as this will infringe on their constitutional rights, particularly the right to not be

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<sup>75</sup> This Act was repealed by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 on 1 April 2010.

<sup>76</sup> The Act was repealed Children's Act 38 of 2005 on 1 July 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Pars [22], [26] and [29].

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> *J v Director General, Department of Home Affairs 2003 (5) SA 621 (CC)*.

<sup>80</sup> This Act was repealed by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 on 1 July 2007.



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discriminated on the grounds of sexual orientation and marital status (South African Law Reports, 2003:632).<sup>81</sup>

##### 4.4.2.6 **Minister of Home Affairs v Fourie, 2006**

The most other landmark CC judgement, after the “sodomy” judgment, is the case of *Minister of Home Affairs v Fourie v Minister of Home Affairs 2006 (1) SA 524 (CC)*, (hereafter Fourie).<sup>82</sup> This case dealt with section 30(1) of the Marriages Act 25 of 1961, and with the common-law definition of marriage which required that for a marriage to be valid there must be one man and one woman joining in marriage to the exclusion of others (South African Law Reports, 2006:529). This definition, as noted in previous paragraphs, originated from the Canon law definition of “holy matrimony” as being a permanent conjugal relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of others. Canon law was later received into Roman-Dutch law due to the church’s influence in the Western world and this was later superimposed into the South African law of marriage (de Ru, 2013:222-223). *Marriage Act 25 of 1961* was passed by the apartheid parliament, and even then, the traditional Christian concept of marriage was still rampant in South African law due to the Dutch Reformed Church and the National Party’s involvement in politics and the law making. From this the concept of marriage was developed and applied legally for many years, and it excluded LGBTIQ marriages and other forms of partnerships. It included some customary marriages, such as Hindu and Islamic marriages, which were not legally recognized and protected because they did not fit the Christian definition. After the Constitution came into operation and forbade any discrimination on the grounds of marital status that laws were required to be passed to remedy the injustices of the past suffered by those who did not conform to the heterosexual Christian marriage norm.<sup>83</sup>

In *Fourie*, the Constitutional Court held that the failure of the *Marriage Act* and the common law to provide for ways and means in which the same-sex couples could enjoy the same marital status, responsibilities and entitlements that are afforded to the heterosexual couples through marital

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<sup>81</sup> Section 9(3) of the Constitution forbids discrimination on the ground of the marital status and sexual orientation, among other grounds.

<sup>82</sup> 2006 (1) SA 524 (CC).

<sup>83</sup> The Preamble of the Constitution, reading with section 1.

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union constituted the violation of the same-sex spouses' constitutional right to equality and equal protection under law in terms of section 9(1) of the Constitution, their right to not be unfairly discriminated against in terms of section 9(3) of the Constitution, and their right to human dignity and to have their dignity respected and protected in terms of section 10 of the Constitution (de Ru, 2013:222, South African Law Reports, 2006:590) . The CC declared the common-law definition of marriage, being marital relations between one man and one woman, to be inconsistent with the Constitution of 1996 and invalid to the extent that it did not allow same-sex couples the enjoyment of the benefits coupled with the responsibilities it affords to heterosexual couples (de Ru, 2013:222). This is the case that the CC tasked the Parliament with giving them the opportunity to correct the legal defect and insuring that same-sex couples will be protected as with heterosexual couples (South African Law Reports, 2006:576).<sup>84</sup> The CC judge Albie Sachs concluded that it was the duty of Parliament to restructure and redefine the institution of marriage.<sup>85</sup> He pointed out that there was a need to remedy the segregationally marital sentiments that were established by the apartheid regime, and in doing so the judge pointed out that there is a need to take cognizance of the law reform process as recommended by the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC). He further pointed out that such a reform process should be conducted in a “holistic, systematic, structured and consultative” manner.<sup>86</sup> Legal arguments were raised by the defense arguing that common-law and the Marriage Act definition of marriage in section 2(1) should be left untouched, but rather that Parliament should create a new law to enforce the “separate but equal” approach. Sachs J pointed that this should not be allowed as it would amount to treating the couples other than heterosexual as inferior and so perpetuating a caste-like status and this could not be tolerated with the current South African constitutional paradigm (South African Law Reports, 2006:582).<sup>87</sup> Sachs J carefully analyzed the Fourie case by considering all relevant arguments and submissions made by the legal teams. This case caused much other civil re-organization, including the churches, to all join as the friends of the court so they can help the CC to arrive at a just decision. The churches felt the long traditional Christian definition of marriage in terms of common-law and the Marriage Act must remain untouched. On the other hand, the LGBTIQ organizations<sup>88</sup> joined

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<sup>84</sup> Fourie case, in Pars [135] and [136].

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Par [125] in Fourie.

<sup>87</sup> Par [152] in Fourie.

<sup>88</sup> Doctors for Life International and Others joined in the case of Fourie as *Amici Curiae*.

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hands with Fourie in requiring that the traditional definition of marriage needed to be changed as it violated their rights to human dignity, equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation among others. The CC was careful in considering the case and was as objective as possible. Sachs J held that in finding a solution, the religious and moral sensitivities of the case demanded that a more tentative approach must be followed so that the entire South African public would have opportunity to have public debates on the sacred and secular views of the definition of marriage (South African Law Reports, 2006:559-560).<sup>89</sup> This was noted to be essential to satisfy the concerns of the various religious groups and the traditional leaders. However, at that time the public sentiment was based on the heteropatriarchal ideology that was predominantly against the recognition and legalization of same-sex marriages. This was because most South Africans came from a background dominated by religious and cultural infused heterosexist paradigms.

##### **4.4.2.7 Gory v Kolver, 2007**

*Gory v Kolver 2007 (4) SA 97 (CC)*<sup>90</sup> is another landmark judicial case that transformed the shape of the South African legal sphere when coming to the issues of equal treatment based on human sexuality and sexual orientation. This case was decided by the Constitutional Court in 2007. The CC had to decide on section 1(1) of the *Intestate Succession Act 81 of 1987* which afforded the rights of intestate succession to heterosexual spouses but excluded permanent same-sex life partners. Van Heerden AJ held that due to this failure, section 1(1) was inconsistent with the applicants' rights to equality and human dignity and that the limitation in terms of section 36 of the Constitution cannot be justified (South African Law Reports, 2007:107, c.f de Ru, 2013:239).

The South African law does not give a formal and definable description of the words "permanent same-sex life partnerships." The question as to who qualifies as a permanent same-sex life partner is determined according to the intention of the same-sex partners as established by the circumstances and facts of each case.

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<sup>89</sup> Fourie case, pars [90] and [91].

<sup>90</sup> *Gory v Kolver 2007 (4) SA 97 (CC)*.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

##### 4.4.2.8 **De Lange v Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, 2016**

The most recent, and very critical case, involving the conflict of religious rights of the churches in the context of religious institutions in South Africa and the rights of the LGBTIQ Christians in those institutions was the case of *De Lange v Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Other 2016 (2) SA 1 (CC)*. (hereafter de Lange).<sup>91</sup> This case became prominent in all legal and church circles locally and internationally due to the fact that the CC was faced, for the first time in the history of the South African constitutional jurisprudence, with the “diverse scholarly insights on what the parameters of religious associations should be, with specific focus on sexual conduct, religious doctrine and membership of religious associations” (De Freitas, 2016:1). Human rights are not absolute, they co-exist as holders of these rights co-exist together in society. In terms of the law, religious associations are legal personae meaning they have certain rights assigned to them by the law and the Constitution. These rights need to be protected and promoted by the state and be respected by natural persons. The Constitution recognizes the existence of the religious associations and protects and promotes their rights.<sup>92</sup> Any right claimed by a natural person can also be claimed by a juristic person, and the Constitution requires that “everyone” can have these rights, and this includes both the natural and juristic person. Constitutional rights such as freedom of religion, belief and opinion,<sup>93</sup> freedom of expression,<sup>94</sup> freedom of association,<sup>95</sup> and most importantly the rights of the cultural, religious and linguistic communities are protected in the Constitution of 1996.<sup>96</sup>

Reverend Ecclesia de Lange, an ordained Minister of Christian Faith in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), came out to her congregants by way of a letter she read to them that she

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<sup>91</sup> De Lange v Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Other 2016 (2) SA 1 (CC).

<sup>92</sup> Section 8(4) of the Constitution provides that “a juristic person is entitled to the rights in the Bill of Rights to the extent required by the nature of the rights and the nature of that juristic person”.

<sup>93</sup> Section 15 of the Constitution protects persons’ freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

<sup>94</sup> Section 16.

<sup>95</sup> Section 18.

<sup>96</sup> In terms of section 31 of the Constitution providing that “Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic association and other organs of civil society.”

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

planned for a marriage with another woman (South African Law Reports, 2016:4).<sup>97</sup> Soon after her declaration of intention to marry a same-sex partner, the MCSA suspended her from ordained ministry in the Church pending the outcome of a disciplinary hearing (South African Law Reports, 2016:4).<sup>98</sup> De Lange was charged by the MCSA in terms of the “*Laws and Discipline of the Church*” (L & D) which required that the only form of marriage allowed for Ministers of the Church is a heterosexual one and that “Ministers shall observe and implement the provisions of the L & D and all other policies, decisions, practices, and usages of the Church” (South African Law Reports, 2016:7).<sup>99</sup> Rev de Lange later approached the High Court seeking relief, among others, in the form of the declaratory order that the decision of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa must be declared unconstitutional and unfair discrimination based on the grounds of sexual orientation, and that the court should review and set aside the decision of the *Church’s District Disciplinary Committee* (DDC) whereby de Lange was suspended as a minister and which had been later confirmed by the Church’s *Connexional Disciplinary Committee* (CDC), and also for an order reinstating her as a minister of the MCSA with retrospective effect (South African Law Reports, 2016:5-6).<sup>100</sup> The High Court held that Rev de Lange’s “application is premature and that she should first submit to arbitration”, thereby her application was dismissed (South African Law Reports, 2016:7).<sup>101</sup>

De Lange appealed the decision of the High Court to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). The latter elaborated on the importance of freedom of religion and for the need for clarification in case of conflict of the rights of the members of religious institutions and of those institutions (de Freitas 2016:6). It was noted during the SCA judgement that associational rights are important in the South African constitutional dispensation, and that members of any particular religion had the right to practice their religion as guaranteed in the Constitution,<sup>102</sup> and also that to practice one’s religion it required that members will be “in association with others and in conformity with the dictates, precepts, ethical standards and moral discipline which that faith exacts” (de Freitas 2016:6, quoting the de Lange at para [31] of the judgement). The SCA concluded that the internal rules adopted by

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<sup>97</sup> De Lange para [3].

<sup>98</sup> De Lange para [5].

<sup>99</sup> De Lange para [7].

<sup>100</sup> De Lange para [9].

<sup>101</sup> De Lange para [15].

<sup>102</sup> Section 31.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

the MCSA should therefore be left to the Church, so they determine internally and without interference from the court (South African Law Reports, 2016:15).<sup>103</sup> In doing so, the court respected the MCSA's right for religious freedom and refused to intervene in the way the church interpreted its doctrines. By doing so, the court being an institution of the state, basically distanced itself from the affairs of churches and thus emphasized the separation between church and state.

The de Lange case raised conflicting critical views on how the law should balance the rights of religious bodies with those of the members of those bodies in a case of conflict of these rights. In the context of the de Lange case, the MCSA was noted by the courts to have a right to formulate their own internal rules, governance and doctrine and this must be left to the church governance's decision without the interference of the courts and the state (de Freitas 2016:18). However, the challenge remained that in the past the same courts had in fact decided on the rights of the members of the LGBTIQ community as far as how their rights need to be recognized, promoted and respected by others, how the state must ensure these individual rights are protected and on how the laws must be developed to ensure human rights are fulfilled.

De Lange's relief was based on her argument argued that for the MCSA to suspend her from the Ministry was unfair discrimination due to her sexual orientation and the fact that she is not a heterosexual as the church rules and policies require (South African Law Reports, 2016:4-5). The SCA, later the CC, was challenged with balancing the conflict of de Lange's right to not be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation and that of the MCSA's rights to autonomously practice their religion, and to form, join and maintain their religious association. This was not an easy task since the Constitution requires the courts to balance rights in case of conflict, to ensure all persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal treatment and benefit of the law, and the fact that rights may be limited only in terms of the law of general application to the extent that such limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom.<sup>104</sup>

The South African courts, as also the courts in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and the United States of America, maintain the legal position referred to as the judiciary's "avoidance of doctrinal entanglement" in that courts do not intervene in matters where members of the church have

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<sup>103</sup> De Lange para [40].

<sup>104</sup> Section 36 of the Constitution.

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

voluntarily committed themselves to being bound by the internal rules and doctrines of the churches (de Freitas 2016:9). However, if churches act not in accordance with their own doctrines and procedures, inequitably and unjustly against the members, then the courts will intervene provided those members' human rights are at stake. This position is subject to criticism, especially because the Constitutional Court has held on several occasions that there is a need to ensure that the rights of the LGBTIQ persons are protected and promoted.<sup>105</sup>

As discussed above, the SCA in *De Lange* highlighted the importance of the associational rights where members of a particular religion or church have the right to practice their religion in association with others and in conformity with the dictates, precepts, ethical standards and moral discipline which that faith exacts (South African Law Reports, 2016:13).<sup>106</sup>

The SCA further emphasized that the internal rules and doctrines adopted by the Church should be left to that church so they determine their rules and doctrines domestically and without interference from the court and the state (South African Law Reports, 2016:15).<sup>107</sup> It was also noted that individuals who commit themselves to the religious association's rules should therefore be prepared to accept the outcome of hearings of those religious institutions, being the MCSA in the case of *de Lange* (de Freitas 2016:10, c.f South African Law Reports, 2016:15).<sup>108</sup> De Freitas (2016:10) points out that The SCA did not find the relief sought by Reverend *de Lange* to be challenging because the rules of the MCSA regarding the recognition of heterosexual marriages only were clear, *de Lange* had voluntarily committed herself to the MCSA's internal rules, and the procedures followed in the MCSA's disciplinary action were in accordance with the Church's internal rules and were also just and equitable (de Freitas 2016:11). The doctrinal matter that led the MCSA to suspend Rev *de Lange* was the fact that the latter was involved in a same-sex civil union and this was in opposition to the MCSA's central doctrine regarding marriage, which the Church held the theological position was that only "heterosexual marriages" were recognized and not homosexual ones (South African Law Reports, 2016:15-16).

The SCA, in *de Lange*, did leave open the question of collision between the MCSA's religious freedom on the one hand, and *de Lange*'s right to equality on the other hand (de Freitas 2016: 12,

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<sup>105</sup> Minister of Justice, Fourie and Minister of Home Affairs cases supra.

<sup>106</sup> *De Lange* para [31].

<sup>107</sup> *De Lange* para [39].

<sup>108</sup> *De Lange* para [40].

#### 4.4 *Literature and scholarly analysis*

c.f (South African Law Reports, 2016:8-9). This has led to much debate on “whether the prohibition of appointments by religious associations based on forms of sexual conduct that oppose the core doctrine of such an association should in fact constitute unfair discrimination (and consequently a violation of the right to equality) in a democratic society that aims to foster diversity” (de Freitas 2016:14). According to de Freitas (2016:262), churches and other religious associations in South Africa have certain official statements of core beliefs and these statements require certain standards that members must meet for proper sexual conduct and these also include some foundational views on marriage, child-rearing, family, and purpose of life (de Freitas 2016:262). These creeds are noted to theologically proscribe as to how and for what purpose church members and other religious institution members must use their bodies and understand human sexuality. As pointed out above, most of these creeds and positions papers are based on hetero patriarchal biblical grounds. As pointed out in Chapter 2, the Grace Bible Church holds the theological position that a marriage is between one man and one woman and only heterosexual relationships are recognized by the church and, further, that the requirement for membership in the GBC is that members must adhere to this principle.

##### **4.4.2.9 Some critical theological remarks**

In *Minister of Home Affairs and Another v Fourie and Another*<sup>109</sup> the CC pointed out the fact that the acknowledgement by the State of the right of same-sex couples to enjoy the same entitlements, status and enjoyments as heterosexual couples does not collide with the rights of the religious organizations to continue to refuse to celebrate same-sex marriages (South African Law Reports, 2006:562-563).<sup>110</sup> The constitutional claims of same-sex couples cannot be negated by invoking the rights of other believers to have their rights and freedoms respected, according to the court.

The theological position papers and core doctrines of churches are noted to have strict moral conservatism sentiments in that they take seriously matters such as homosexuality, consumption of alcohol, divorce, adultery, the use of demeaning language, smoking, dietary laws, pornographic material, shopping on holy days and unhealthy lifestyles. These rules are not to make sense to

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<sup>109</sup> Minister of Home Affairs v Fourie 2006 1 SA 524 (CC).

<sup>110</sup> Fourie para [98].



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those outside churches to obey them, and in the case of insiders the question remains which rule carries heavier punishment or sanction than others (de Freitas 2016:14). Most churches are known to welcome LGBTIQ Christians but by not affirming their sexuality, this kind of welcome is noted to be not welcoming at all (M. Jennings, 2016). Since churches have almost all kinds of people in their pews, it is further observed many of the openly LGBTIQ Christians are not allowed to serve in leadership and volunteer in the life of the church. This is due to the conservative approach to interpreting the Bible and theological belief that ‘God hates a sin and loves a sinner’. LGBTIQ sexuality has been condemned and declared to be “sinful”, an “abomination” and “immoral” as briefly discussed in Chapter 3. In several churches, openly LGBTIQ persons are required to remain celibate if they want to be allowed to volunteer in the church activities. Those LGBTIQ persons who remain in the closet and serve in church for a long period often suffer injustices should they decide to come out of the closet and marry same-sex partners as in the case of de Lange. In such cases they will be subjected to disciplinary action of the church, and most of these persons experience heightened “homonegativity” – that is the feeling of being ashamed, self-condemnation and inferiority because of being unhappy about one’s sexuality. This has been proven to be one of the leading factors for young people’s suicides after they discover that they are not sexually “straight” and therefore do not conform to the societal heterosexual norm (Jennings 2016).

## **4.5 Conclusion**

This Chapter attempted to engage on the dominant legal discourses on sexuality within the theological context in South Africa. The Constitution of the RSA of 1996 is respected worldwide as being one of the most progressive and liberal constitutions in the post-modern world, and this may be because it seeks to remedy the injustices of the past suffered by those who were denied their human rights and freedoms. The LGBTIQ persons were among those who did not enjoy their full rights and freedom since the former apartheid regime created laws that were meant to regulate people’s sexual lifestyles. Most of such laws were meant to regulate people’s bodies as well since people were discriminated on the grounds of their skin color, gender identity, sexual orientation, the language they speak, et cetera. The apartheid system did not take into consideration how people felt about themselves and or even allow them to share their experiences. The system was based on

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religiously infused political dogmas that were even legislated by a certain minority group – being mostly the white heterosexual males who were mostly members of a certain religious institution and a certain political party, in this context being the DRC and the NP. Because of this totalitarian and authoritative politico-religious ruler-ship, most people suffered discrimination including women, the LGBTIQ community, members of other religious organizations, people of color, et cetera.

In conclusion, this chapter engaged on how the church and state order joined arms to create the totalitarian and authoritative political system that led to many people suffering, especially the LGBTIQ community in the context of this study. This analysis is relevant to gaining a deeper understanding of how most churches, especially the GBC in this case study, continue to maintain the conservative moral views that reject the LGBTIQ lifestyle as an acceptable way of life. Due to the church's heteropatriarchal ideology and literalist interpretation of the Bible, a sexual lifestyle other than heterosexuality is condemned and in the context of most Pentecostal churches people who do not conform to the heterosexual norm will not be allowed to become members and volunteer in those churches. Research has shown that most Pentecostal-Charismatic churches do welcome LGBTIQ persons but do not affirm them. Some critics went much further accusing these churches as if “they are shaking the LGBTIQ Christians with one hand, while slapping their cheeks with the other hand” (Jennings 2016).

With the coming of the Constitution of 1996, many hoped for a utopian nation especially since this law is the supreme law of the nation seeking to heal the injustices of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. However, this law also requires that rights are dependent on those of others. Churches have freedom of religion and determination of their own spiritual and doctrinal order. On the other hand, the LGBTIQ Christians in those churches also have rights. Theologically speaking, most conservative churches hold the position that ‘God loves a sinner but hates sin’ and in this context a homosexual lifestyle is accordingly condemned as to be not in line with the biblical testimony. This has led to some of LGBTIQ believers in churches to approach the courts of law feeling that their rights were at stake and infringed upon. In most instances the courts declared that they cannot interfere on how far churches can determine their doctrines and positions regarding the issues of same-sex relationships. The courts were not eager to tear down the wall of separation between church and

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state. Though the laws have been developed to allow same-sex relationships and unions, accordingly, it is up to churches to decide if they can solemnize and recognize those marriages or not. In this, the Constitution, the law and the state does not intervene on the spiritual aspects of churches and how they should practice religion.

This research chapter was critical of how the conservative churches, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in this context, should formulate their doctrines to affirm and include the LGBTIQ lifestyle as a proper God-given lifestyle. There is much worldwide dialogue ongoing on this aspect, and it seems it still has a long way to go.

*CHAPTER 5***CHAPTER 5****SELECTED ASPECTS ON HUMAN DIGNITY OF SEXUAL MINORITIES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH****5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to intersect the dominant theological and legal discourses on human dignity in the South African context. It was pointed out that most Pentecostal churches are moral conservative Bible-believing institutions that interpret the Bible passages literally (Jennings, 2018:2), and that this mode of interpretation poses many critical challenges since it does not completely take into consideration the lived experiences of the sexual minorities in those churches (Russel, 2016:12). Since South Africa is a constitutional democratic state based on human dignity, equality and advancement of human rights,<sup>111</sup> it was also discussed how the state was often challenged with balancing and interpreting the conflicting rights of the LGBTIQ church members on the one hand and those of the church bodies on the other.

The previous chapter also discussed selected court cases involving the church and the LGBTIQ members of churches. These legal cases were carefully selected, within the context of this study, to engage on how courts interpreted the Bill of Rights involving sexual minorities since these cases also have an impact on churches and LGBTIQ believers. To sum-up, the previous chapter attempted to critically engage and analyze the formulation and interpretation of church position papers on the one hand and other legislative and legal discourses that seem to conflict with the churches' conservative theological discourses on human sexuality on the other.

For this study, the concept of human dignity will be looked at in this chapter. This is relevant since the GBC's founder Bishop Musa Sono delivered a statement to the congregation that the church believes in the heterosexual relations between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony, and adherence to this principle is an inherent requirement for

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<sup>111</sup> The founding provisions in Chapter One of the 1996 Constitution provide inter alia that South Africa is founded on the (a) Human dignity, the advancement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism; (3) Supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law; and (d)...the principles of democratic government to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

## 5.2 *Grace Bible Church statement on Human Dignity*

membership at GBC (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). He went on to declare that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is not discriminatory.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, members of the church who joined with concerned members of the public to protest against the sermon believed the church's views and statements against homosexuality and same-sex relations were "derogatory" and in violation of LGBTIQ members' human rights as protected in the Constitution (Mail&Guardian, 2017). Because of these protests, the issues of human dignity of the sexual minorities at GBC arose and are the purpose of this chapter.

## 5.2 **Grace Bible Church statement on Human Dignity**

Bishop Sono's statement declared that the church does not believe the LGBTIQ members should be discriminated against, especially because the GBC operates in a constitutional democracy in which the church "accepts, appreciates and are grateful for and for the rights and freedoms that it guarantees everyone, and values of fairness and equality entrenched therein."<sup>113</sup> Sono further declared that:

"We respect and hold in high regard the Constitution of our land. The Constitution guarantees rights not to be discriminated against based on race, gender, and among others sexual orientation. We recognize, affirm and respect those rights and freedoms fully with no reservations. We believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth which is why everyone regardless of their race, gender, sex, and among others sexual orientation, is welcome in our church."(Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation: January 29, 2017).

The church's declaration that "we believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth..." needs careful consideration. The GBC sermon

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<sup>112</sup> Grace Bible Church web team, "Grace Bible Church Statement to the Congregation & Members of the Church – 29 January 2017", YouTube, January 29, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhoCqlvZDVw&t=15s>, [accessed June 12, 2018].

<sup>113</sup> Grace Bible Church web team, "Grace Bible Church Statement to the Congregation & Members of the Church – 29 January 2017", YouTube, January 29, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhoCqlvZDVw&t=15s>, [accessed June 12, 2018].

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condemned homosexuality as “unnatural” and later the church confirmed that it accepts and affirms that sexual minorities are welcome in the church. The Bible was used as a medium of condemnation of homosexuality and as such the notions of human rights, human dignity and the value of human life were threatened due to the alleged homophobic sermon (Punt, 2010: 623).

The sermon and consequent statements by the GBC are what constituted the “public religious speech” aimed at narrating the church’s theological doctrine on human sexuality in the context of the heterosexist Biblical point of view as believed by the church in Africa at large (Kaunda, 2016: 204, 208). The Bishop Heward-Mills, who delivered a sermon at GBC, can arguably be said to have been influenced by the Christian Council of Ghana, where his church is based, in which sexual minorities are denounced as being “demonic and Satan’s deadly agenda, plotting to destroy Ghana” (Kaunda, 2016: 207-208).

### **5.3 Imago Dei, Human Dignity and Human Flourishing**

Most theologians and legal scholars agree that the concept of human dignity has its roots in the Judeo-Christian theological principles that human beings were created in the image of God<sup>114</sup>, and that since all humans were created in the image of God then their dignity must be absolute (Ackerman, 2012: 35,). Through the theological concept of man as God’s image, the concept of human rights and human dignity in particular came into existence since it is believed that human rights were granted to man by God and for specific purpose which is the accomplishment of an orderly life and for the better of others (Ellul, 1969: 79).

In her book *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition*, Borresen (1995:1) points out that *Imago Dei* (Image of God) “is fundamental in theological anthropology, being a primary example of interaction between the concept of God and the definition of humanity.” However, as such concept is said to have a theological basis, it has been developed theologically

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<sup>114</sup> In Genesis Chapter 1 verses 26 and 27, the Bible declares: “Then God said, ‘Let us create humankind in our image, according to our own likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’”

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by the church institution through the heterosexist point of view that explicitly refers to God's image as being male human gender.

Historically, the church understood the ideal "image of God" to mean male and female persons, since women are considered to have been created later out of man. Male images are mostly ascribed to God, and this implies that men are more like God and even the one much closer to God's image and likeness (Klopper, 2002:426). Due to this hegemonic masculine implication, certain characteristics and expectations are being exclusively ascribed to men and others to women. This has resulted in that those "other" men and women who do not conform to the normalized gender stereotypes being deviants to this societal norm.

Throughout most of the history of the Christian church, the gender roles other than those divided into the twofold model of biological male and female were not recognized and unknown. With the advent of the queer theologians and scholars, such as Adrian Thatcher, Elizabeth Stuart, Michael Foucault, Judith Butler and others, the heterosexual patriarchal label of humanity into twofold division<sup>115</sup> was questioned and challenged because scholars pointed out that "there are many adults who are unable to identify with either label. There are intersex, and transgender, people who cannot easily say they identify with this binary (twofold) division of humanity into separate sexes" (Thatcher, 2011:3). Thatcher, in her book *God, Sex and Gender: An Introduction*, points out that throughout history there has never been only a twofold division of humanity into either male or female as being the image of God. She points out that:

"The standard view is that there are two sexes, male and female. This view is so securely lodged in Western religion and culture that it may appear devious even to question it. The two verses are "opposite"" (Thatcher, 2011: 7).

Thatcher (2011:7) further argues that since the churches held and still hold a position that the "male" gender is a "stronger" and "first" sex, this has resulted in the other sexes, including female and LGBTIQ, being marginalized and seen as "complementary" to the male sex. He points out that this was due to the misreading of the Biblical texts, such as Genesis 1:27, in that the Western church used the concept of "male" gender as a proper image of God and all others were seen as supplementary (Thatcher, 2011:7).

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<sup>115</sup> That of biological male and female.

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The Protestant theologian of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, is noted to have led the way on the “first” and “stronger” sex ideology that has resulted in him developing the doctrine of “complementarity” of sexes originated from the Catholic doctrine of natural law as developed by Thomas Aquinas (Barth, 1961:153-154, Thatcher, 2011:7). In terms of this doctrine, male is the primary sex and gender that God created, and the rest comes from them. So, the argument goes that since God created a male person first in his image, and a female came from male, then male is a proper and true image of God. This theological dogma resulted in, as in the case of GBC, the theological ideology as illustrated by Thatcher that “our sexual identity is male or female, nothing else. Identities such as ‘lesbian’, ‘bisexual’, and so on are excluded” since they cannot “naturally” conform to the idea of complementing each other through a biblical marriage that can work for the betterment of the human family and proper moral societal values as argued by the church (Thatcher, 2011:41).

#### **5.3.1 Image of God (Imago Dei)**

The GBC, as also does almost all of Christendom, asserts that human beings were created in the image of God (Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation, January 29, 2017). This assertion is based on the biblical passage that “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Yet, reading the Bible in context, there are also passages that deem the female being as a “lessor” being to be “submissive” to the male as the Apostle Paul is declaring that:

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor...Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (1 Timothy 2:12-14, Ephesians 5:22-24).

There are various scholastic opinions that conflict with the orthodox Christian description of the image of God. In her book titled *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the origins of sexual*



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*inequality*, Peggy Sanday (Sanday, 1981:227) gives an illustration of how the several Gnostic theologians concluded that the biblical text in Genesis 1:26-7 should be understood to mean that “God is dyadic and that humanity, which was formed according to the image and likeness of God, was masculine-feminine.” She goes further arguing that:

Like Hebrew prophets, the orthodox Christians described God in monistic, masculine, and authoritarian terms. These Christians rejected Gnostic writings for their select list of 26 that comprise the New Testament collection by the time their selection process was concluded (ca A.D. 200), virtually all the feminine imagery of God (along with any suggestion of an androgynous human creation) had disappeared from orthodox Christian tradition (Sanday, 1981:227).

The questions on “what the image of God is”, and also “what a human is”, need be clarified by considering the contributions made by the theologians. Since the Christian Scriptures are often interpreted as speaking of gender inequality, male dominance and female “submissiveness”, much controversy has been debated throughout church history as to whether the roles of females can be equal to those of males in society, the church and home (Martin, 2006:79, Thatcher, 2011:149-150).

In his book chapter titled “*Are Women Images of God*”, Frederick G. McLeod notes the theological view that males more closely reflect the image of God because they are believed to be “more rational and therefore more natural or rightful rulers” than females (McLeod, 1999:Ch. 6, DeFranza, 2012:2) However, on the other hand, most theologians separate “the image of God from being male or female or from human sexuality and procreation” since they believe in the scriptural testimony that “God is a Spirit”<sup>116</sup> and he does not have a body (DeFranza, 2012:2). The argument goes further that since God took the human body and appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, then the fact that “God did not engage in sexual activity by marrying” or child bearing proves that gender difference is meaningless in God (DeFranza, 2012:2-3). Thatcher (2011:118) goes further elaborating that God is “suprasexual”.<sup>117</sup> God is beyond the distinction of male and female and the

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<sup>116</sup> John 4:24.

<sup>117</sup> According to Thatcher, “suprasexuality” of God means that He is above sexual being.

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image of God may be found in both male and females alike. This goes on that since “God is love, then suprasexual God may be found in meaning of sexual love.” (Thatcher, 2011:119).

#### **5.3.2 Human Dignity (Dignitas)**

The GBC’s statement declares that the church “believes every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth which is why everyone, regardless of their race, gender, sex, and among others sexual orientation, is welcome in the church” (Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation: January 29, 2017). By issuing the statement, the church was attempting to respond to the public outcry accusing the church on being homophobic and derogatory to the LGBTIQ members when declaring, during the controversial sermon under this study, that homosexuality is “unnatural” (News24, 2017). The church went further declaring that the concept of human dignity is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the South African Constitution<sup>118</sup> and that the church recognizes, respects and holds the human rights culture in high regard since it operates under the constitutional democracy.

In his book, titled *Human Dignity: Lodestar for Equality in South Africa*, Ackerman (2012:23-24) gives a detailed classical description of what constitutes human dignity as follows:

Each and every human being is a human being by virtue of his or her intellect [*‘kraft seines Geistes’*] which serves to separate them from the impersonality of nature and enables them to exercise their own judgement, to have self-awareness, to exercise self-determination and to shape themselves and nature (Ackerman, 2012: 23-24).

The theological concept of human dignity is closely related with the traditional African philosophical concept of *ubuntu* or *Botho*. *Ubuntu/Botho* is a term used in moral discourse with a Zulu term *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* or Sotho term *Motho ke motho ka batho* literally meaning a human is a human through other humans. The best approximations of this African philosophical term are ‘humaneness’, ‘compassion’, and ‘fellow feeling’ which forms part of the philosophy of Desmond Tutu (Richardson, 2009:52). These terms are a lot in common with the Judeo-Christian

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<sup>118</sup> Act 108 of 1996, particularly Chapter 2 Bill of Rights.

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biblical concepts of “love your neighbor as yourself” which Jesus claimed to be the greatest commandment through which God requires good moral ethical conduct between human beings.<sup>119</sup>

Human dignity refers to human worth, meaning that every person has the capacity for and deserves respect from others who have to treat him as a human being (Ackerman, 2012:23). This description denotes many meanings which include the fact that by virtue of people being human beings created in the image of God, that they deserve those aspects of human personality to include respect of their emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, moral capacity, ability to exercise judgement and choices about their own bodies, to have self-awareness, sense of self-worth and to exercise their own self-determination (Ackerman, 2012:23, van der Ven, Dreyer, & Pieterse, 2004:265-266, 294-297).

The concept of human dignity is further noted by legal scholars to “have always featured prominently in the Christian tradition and continues to do so” yet its “subsequent development was and remains indebted to the interaction between philosophy and theology” (van der Ven et al., 2004:265). On the other hand, scholars also noted that long before the Christian church was established with a biblical tradition, Greek philosophers such as Cicero and Aristotle promoted the notion that each person has concern for their dignity and integrity, “both bodily and spiritually” and these two notions in turn relate to the notion of intrinsic dignity of the human person (van der Ven et al., 2004: 265). On the other hand, the international human rights culture redefined the notion of human dignity “that according to the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Right” an affirmation was made that recognized “the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women” (Claassens, 2008:9).

The Grace Bible Church’s metaphoric statement that a human being was created in God’s image and has an intrinsic human dignity is generalist and demands a proper description as it may cause much confusion. This is since the church, at the same level of description, declared that they recognize and respect the human rights culture that the South African constitutional democracy is operating under in terms of the Constitution of 1996. As the church is a spiritual and religious

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<sup>119</sup> In Matthew 29: 37-40, Jesus declared: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’[d] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

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institution, the religious hegemony in which the statement was issued needs to be understood by interlinking it with the notion of democratic human rights culture and jurisprudential basis.

Human dignity is the “central theme” of the Constitution, which is specified in the preamble and the actual texts of the Constitution of 1996 (van der Ven et al., 2004:280). Since the concepts of human dignity and the image of God are closely interlinked, some critics are of the view that this might mean the Constitution is advocating the inclusion of the Christian concept of human dignity and as a result this might cause further controversy since Christianity promotes the traditional theological discourses on human sexuality that are rooted on heterosexist patriarchal ideologies (DeFranza, 2012:2, van der Ven et al., 2004:280-281, McLeod, 1999)

Human dignity demands not just passive affirmation and tolerance, but goes further to demand that people need to be respected and embraced “unconditionally” whatever their social status, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender might be (van der Ven et al., 2004:290). If in any case, as in the context of GBC’s alleged homophobic sermon, persons who are found in the same environment, i.e. fellowship of congregation, were not treated equally then discrimination will be said to have occurred since section 9(2) of the Constitution declares: “No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3)”<sup>120</sup> (van der Ven et al., 2004:281). The grounds listed in this section includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

Furthermore, the Founding Provisions of the 1996 Constitution of the RSA declare that “The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights.”<sup>121</sup> The question as to whether there was discrimination is much debated in courts and other human rights institution, especially in the context of religious institutions since they maintain the fact that it is within their constitutional right to determine their religious policies, church doctrines and statements of faith. Grace Bible Church also relied on this basis as it was discussed in the above paragraphs.

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<sup>120</sup> Section 9(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

<sup>121</sup> Section 1(a) in Chapter One of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Acts 108 of 1996.

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The GBC declared that every human being has an intrinsic human dignity (Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation: January 29, 2017) furthermore, the church's declaration that they recognize and affirm the South African constitutional parameters that they operate under needs a careful scrutiny. Section 10 of the Constitution of 1996 declares that "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected." Also, section 7 declares that "This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom." Ackerman (2012:23) notes that people are said to have been treated equally if they are given opportunities and also affirmed and embraced equally and without discrimination in any public setting which includes the religious institutions and the state institutions. He also points out that:

The description of human dignity (worth) here proffered that human beings are also able, in a unique way and for a variety of unique reasons, to enter relationships with other human beings. One might call this the 'relationality' aspect of human dignity (Ackerman, 2012:25).

Various scholars and theologians are of the view that most Christian churches are infringing on sexual minorities' human dignity by rejecting and condemning LGBTIQ lifestyles and relationships. Scholars noted that throughout the history of the church, sexual minorities have been condemned as having "shamelessly abandoned themselves to the foulest Sodomitical practices" (Greenberg, 1997:182). The South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu is of the view that the churches, by rejecting sexual minorities, "treat them as pariahs, and push them outside of the confines" of the church communities, and by doing so is to "negate the consequences of their baptism" with the rest of the heterosexual members of the church (Germond & De Gruchy, 1997: IX). Legal scholar Ackerman agrees to this view as he asserts that a human being is said to have been treated with dignity if society, the state and communities allow them to enter into the most intimate personal relationships with others that include a loving same-sex relationship or friendship that will enable them to have a self-worth and to romantically love and commit to each other (Ackerman, 2012:25). The sociologists Ross and Rapp (1997: 161-162) support this view by pointing out that in most cases church policies and legislative enactments are being passed to

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demonize and illegitimate homosexuality since the lifestyle is viewed as a ‘vice’ and abnormal sexual pattern. They further assert that:

But the ideology of sexual freedom and the right to individual self-expression have come increasingly into conflict with both state hegemony and the residual powers of more traditional contexts such as family and community control (Ross & Rapp, 1997:164).

Sylvia Tamale (Tamale, 2014:152), an African legal scholar, feminist and gender activist based at Makerere University, noted “a careful mapping of religions on the (African) continent” that is revealing 86 per cent of the population as subscribing to the “imported monotheistic Abrahamic religions of Islam and Christianity”. She goes further pointing out that “all Abrahamic faiths believe that God is male” as this is described in the Torah, the Bible and the Quran (Tamale, 2014:152). These religious documents are used, especially the Christian Bible as in the context of Grace Bible Church, “as a powerful weapon” in the hands of the anti-homosexuality positioned church, and is being interpreted “through hegemonic masculinity and heteronormative frames of references” that includes the NT and the OT “six-shooter texts” (Romans 1:26-7, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10, Genesis 19:1-29, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13) (Punt, 2007, 2014:9). The ideology is based on the idea that since God is male and created a male human in his own image, then females are subject to males, and those males who do not conform to the heterosexual norm as promoted by the patriarchal religious institutions, are therefore regarded as “deviants” since they are believed to be engaging in the “unnatural” sexual practices that are seen as a “sin against God” and “against nature” (Thatcher, 1993:3-4, Gevisser, 2016:18, News24, 2017).

#### **5.3.3 Human Flourishing**

For the purposes of this study, it is important to make a minor contribution on the sociological and theological idea of human flourishing as it relates well with the concept of human dignity. In theology, this idea is defined accurately by the Reformed theologian David Kelsey (Kelsey, 2008:2) by giving a general description that “to flourish means both to blossom and to thrive.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> This is based on the biblical text in the Book of Isaiah 35:1-2, saying that “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and

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He goes on saying that to blossom is to manifest a kind of beauty in which a given life is capable to produce by virtue of God relating to it.

Blossoming and blooming may be used metaphorically to connote maximum health and wellbeing (Kelsey, 2008:3). Kelsey gave a further elaboration by borrowing Irenaeus's notion that to flourish means "the glory of God is human beings made fully alive" (Kelsey, 2008:3). On the other hand, a social philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is often cited as advocating a "powerful widespread suspicion" that the Christian notion of God, God's power, and glory in man is baseless since the Christian God is noted to have power and dominion over humans by systematically minimizing human beings and making them weak, small and servile which means humans cannot flourish in terms of Christian theological and biblical views as taught by the church (Kelsey, 2008:1). Nietzsche's challenge is that humans cannot flourish if they are totally dependent on God who is all powerful and dominant. This is, according to Nietzsche, because humans are fallen beings in terms of the Holy Scripture and as such their flourishing is never certain and guaranteed.

In one of his greatest books, *On Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, Nietzsche elaborates his view that flourishing means the attainment of the "highest power and splendor of the human type" which he claims to mean the end goal of the human race as a whole of something that might never happen (Nietzsche, 1887:5). This unattainable goal is said to be equivalent to the flourishing of the naturally superior nobles which requires the sacrifices of the non-noble persons and the suppression of their religious desires. On the other hand, Du Bois is critical of Nietzsche's proposition and argues that human flourishing requires humans to co-operate with each other since they all have something to offer to each other (Du Bois, 1903).

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shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God." This may further be read within the contextual interpretation with the story of the creation of man in Genesis 1:27-28, saying that "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" There are however, various theological views on these verses. Some church leaders, such as for example prosperity preachers Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, combine and interpreted these verses according to prosperity theological views that to blossom and boom is to "gain in anything good or desirable." (Kenneth Copeland in his book titled: *The laws of prosperity* [Tulsa, USA: Harrison House, 1999]. While that definition may hold true to some degree in its general usage, the Copelands reduce the meaning of prosperity to redemption that Christ gives a believer "from sickness, poverty, lack and all the curse." Because of this, most Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are viewed to promote the kind of prosperity theology that is meant at material success. Materialism has become the idea in this theology, and most believers in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches sees material success as a sign that one might have been blessed by God.

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Judith Butler, in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, is of the view that since compulsory heterosexuality and phallogocentrism are understood to be regimes of power and discourse then those subjected to the domination of others, meaning women and LGBTIQ in particular, cannot be seen as being flourishing since the societal notion on human happiness is based on the “law of patriarchy” and other heteropatriarchal ideologies as propagated by religious and cultural dogmas (Butler, 1990: Preface, 35). On the same level of argument, Nancy Bonvillain also noted the view that homosexuals are considered to be “unnatural” of the traditional societal and religious notions that “sexual relations supposedly have only one proper purpose, namely, procreation” (Bonvillain, 1998:234). She goes further saying that:

Because of the ‘unnaturalness’ of homosexuality, society protects itself against homosexuals (who by definition “unnatural” or “abnormal”) by using the legal apparatus of the state to enforce adherence to ‘natural’ laws or at least to punish those who violate them. Punishment of homosexual acts in some nations dominated by Judeo-Christian ideology consists even today of prison sentences (Bonvillain, 1998:234-235).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the coming into operation of the Constitution and its Bill of Rights was mainly aimed at recognizing and healing the injustices and “divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights”<sup>123</sup> These injustices were noted in chapter 3 to be mainly created during the apartheid regime when the church and the state joined arms and this resulted in the oppression of those who did not conform to the idea of heteronormativity as promoted by the church and the state (de Ru, 2013:223, 225-226 ). As with the case of GBC, most of the Christian churches are unconditionally promoting the idea of compulsory heterosexuality to this day and non-heterosexual behavior and relationships are condemned to be “unnatural” and “abnormal” (Butler, 1990: 35, Thatcher, 2011:157-158, Bonvillain, 1998:234). It was through the adoption and coming into operation of the Constitution of the RSA that the idea of human dignity was recognized and enshrined therein. A former judge of the Constitutional Court, Laurie Ackerman, points out that:

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<sup>123</sup> The Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.



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For human dignity to flourish certain basic physical (and psychological) needs have to be met...Our understanding of human dignity will be extended as our knowledge of the human being increases, and as we view the human being in the context of the development of the modern natural sciences (Ackerman, 2012:225,226).

In his unpublished paper delivered at Yale University's Centre for Faith & Culture consultation on "*Christ and Human Flourishing*", theologian and church historian Joseph Wawrykow (Wawrykow, 2014:1) noted both Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas's theological views that Christ is important and in the center of all human flourishing. The "Christological dimension of human flourishing" is based on the medieval trinitarian theological notion that God sent Christ to live among humans, die on the cross and rise so humanity may flourish since the Holy Spirit will be given to them.

Theologian Bonaventure is noted to be of the view that "Christ is front and center in the depiction of the good life, and the link between human flourishing and Christ is incessantly, repeatedly, observed" (Wawrykow, 2014:1). Aquinas's views on human flourishing are noted to being fairly based on "incarnational" Christological affirmation of the biblical fact that "the Word was made flesh"<sup>124</sup> and this Word is the second person of God who exited from eternity past into the eternity future (Wawrykow, 2014:2). This theological notion is further described in that by means of divine incarnation, the Word became flesh and was subjected to the conditions and sufferings of humanity in the person of Jesus who was capable of all human activities.

Both Bonaventure and Aquinas are further noted to be of the view that since Jesus was God becoming human, suffered, died and conquered death, then those humans who suffer can also conquer that suffering through Jesus the Word of God by whom all humanity can flourish and live to the glory of God (Wawrykow, 2014:3). Christ is finally noted to be the "perfect liberator whom God made him the mediator between God and humans, as Aquinas unfolds the importance of Jesus for the flourishing of others." (Wawrykow, 2014:36).

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<sup>124</sup> This is the biblical view that denotes the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John 1:1,14 saying that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

### 5.4 The Troubled Image-body of God

In the previous paragraphs, it was discussed that the concepts of human dignity, human flourishing and the image of God are interlinked as they denote the theological idea that human beings deserve those aspects of human personality to include respect to their emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, moral capacity, ability to exercise judgement and choices about their own bodies, to have self-awareness, sense of self-worth and to exercise their own self-determination (van der Ven, Dreyer, & Pieterse, 2004:265-266, 294-297).

It was also discussed further that the church's literalist interpretive views that God is a male being that created a "male" body in his image is often troublesome since these theological views have resulted in the subversion of the female gender identities (Bonvillain, 1998:234). Thatcher elaborates this further that:

The male God creates and underwrites the sex-gender hierarchy, and the male priesthood is divinely authorized by Christ Himself who called 12 men, and no women, to be His disciples. The masculine language says it all. This partial view is of course a partial caricature, but unfortunately it resembles standard Christian teaching too closely, and it may be lodged deeply and unreflectively in believers' minds (Thatcher, 2011:118).

Thatcher further debunks the "male God" theological discourse by saying that "there is definite theological answer to the question of the sex of God. God is beyond the distinction between male and female" (Thatcher, 2011:118). He points out that the purpose God created sex was for procreation and reproduction, and since God is the creator and cannot procreate he therefore cannot be said to be of any sexual identity except that he is "suprasexual" (Thatcher, 2011:118).

It remains a debated issue in Christendom on the nature and meaning of erotic same-sex sexual desire and some scholars are of the view that a desire is a "natural" phenomenon, whether heterosexual or homosexual, and that it has nothing to do with a person's spirituality but is all a matter of sexuality that is hard to even control and overcome (Thatcher, 2011:69).

Queer theologians Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, in their book *Introducing Body Theology (Introductions in Feminist Theology)*, are of the view that the Christian concept of "the body" and

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

how it has to be understood is normative and somehow manipulative (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:8). On the same note, Thatcher (2011:18) highlights the fact that gender is a societal concept that has been constructed. Thatcher further explains that all societal institutions are gendered and are used as mediums in which the gendering of individuals and relationships takes place (Thatcher, 2011:18). Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity clarifies this further by describing that:

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988:519).

Simone de Beauvoir points out in the book *The Second Sex (Le Deuxième Sexe)* that “one is not born a woman, but becomes one” (de Beauvoir, 1973:301). This means gender idea is societal construction and it is all centralized on the persons' bodies. Bodies are “factories” in which gender and sexuality are housed, and Christian theology has always been the “embodied theology rooted in creation, incarnation and resurrection, and sacrament” (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:11). The body is noted by the theologians to have been a subject of much debate as far as attempting to define it and to understand the question on “which type of body is a nearest reflection of the divine likeness” (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:11).

Society defines the body, constructs it and labels it according to various societal norms to include the idea of compulsory heteronormativity (Stuart, 1997:8-9). Such constructions have mainly resulted in the victimization, discrimination, oppression and stigmatization of those who are believed to possess bodies that do not conform to the compulsory heteronormative patriarchal norm that is often propagated through church creeds and legislative enactments. Cheng (2011:85), on the other hand, makes a proposition that since the body of Christ is considered being a “multi-gendered body” and as such, “the body of Christ is queer.” Thatcher goes further noting that the multi gendered body of Christ has breasts as well, metaphorically meaning since females are present in the body of Christ (which also mean the church) then the body of Christ is feminine as well. (Thatcher 2011:5).

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

Female bodies are noted by scholars to be “dictated by male desire and male fear,” and this resulted in that “the bodies of women are used, abused and supposed to be carriers of a political agenda” (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:23). Women and other sexual minorities have been subjected to much abuse due to their sexuality, and this is even happening right in the church where there are many religious taboos about these bodies. The argument may be made that most oppressive discourses that resulted in apartheid, racism, gender-based violence and homophobia are based on the societal construction of the body. Since Christian church is metaphorically known as the “mystical body of Christ,” the question as to who is or is not incorporated into this body is debatable (Thatcher, 2011:136). Some biblical scholars are of the view that it is only God who knows who is a member of his body and this decision is bound up solely on persons’ faith in God irrespective of how the society and the church constructs their bodies (Schnabel, 2012:654).

### 5.4.1 **LGBTIQ Persons as the Image of God?**

The GBC statement declared that the church “believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth which is why everyone regardless of their race, gender, sex, and among others sexual orientation, is welcome in our church.”(Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation: January 29, 2017). However, on the other hand the GBC’s official statement of faith seem to be contradictory as it declares that “with regards to sexual behavior, the church believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony, and adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church” (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). The contradiction rests on the fact that the church acknowledges every human being made in God’s image and having intrinsic human dignity regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation, and yet the same statement of faith declaring that those not adhering to the stated principle of heterosexual relationships may not be allowed for church membership.

It has already been pointed out in a previous paragraph that the image of God is understood to be the catalyst of the concept of human dignity, and as such since God’s image is reflected in human bodies there is much theological debate as to “which type of body is a nearest reflection of the divine likeness” (Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:11). Most church creeds and statements of faith

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

maintain the heterosexist orthodox Christian view that uses the term “man” as being created in God’s image. The GBC’s statement of faith declares specifically that “We believe that God created man in His own image” (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018). Several scholars have noted that it is due to the religious and state institutions promoting heterosexual patriarchal ideologies that has resulted in gender inequality, male domination of women and the societal vices such as homophobia and marginalization of the LGBTIQ community (Sanday, 1981:163-164, Punt, 2014:1-2, Furnish, 1994:18-19).

Megan DeFranza, in the book *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God*, challenges the traditional Christian idea that promotes a heterosexual male personality as being the true image of God (DeFranza, 2012:3). DeFranza noted Karl Barth as being one of the modern theologians “credited for challenging the traditional interpretations of the Imago Deo” saying that the fact that humans have responsibility to rule over creation means they are the image of the Trinity, as they have a soul capable of reasoning (DeFranza, 2012: 3). Barth is noted to have said the image of God is “one flesh” being of male and female equally. This notion is still controversial since the LGBTIQ persons who cannot be joined with persons of the opposite sex are therefore disqualified. To qualify this, DeFranza turns on to the intersex persons in which she challenges the binary model thus:

Intersex is a term used to describe persons who do not fit into standard medical descriptions of male or female. It is important at the outset to establish what is considered normal or typical by the medical community so that variations from the norm can be understood...The abuse of intersex by the medical establishment over the last two hundred years has resulted from the oppressive binary sex model dominant within Western culture, and that this binary sex model is the result of a heterosexual ethic (DeFranza, 2012:23, 65).

Adrian Thatcher points out that there are persons who are not able to identify with the binary mode due to the fact that “there are intersex, and transsexual or transgender, people who cannot easily say they identify with twofold division of humanity into separate biological sexes” (Thatcher, 2011:3).

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

### 5.4.2 The Bible and Same-sex Relationships

In his article titled *The Bible and the Dignity of the Human Sexuality: Compromised Sexual Selves and Violated Orientations*, Jeremy Punt challenges the manner in which biblical texts are being interpreted out of context, and with no culturally informed hermeneutical process that disregards the social contexts of the contemporary society (Punt, 2007:247). He points out that:

It is specifically the heteronormativity of the contemporary global society which poses a great hindrance to our current ability to consider human sexuality in general and “homosexuality” in particular (Punt, 2007:247).

Normative heterosexuality is a societal social construct that depends on homosexuality in order to retail its norm-defining status (Punt, 2007:249). This phenomenon is noted to have resulted, theologically speaking, out of the traditional literalist biblical passages that are quoted in most churches to promote the fact that only heterosexuality is the proper form of sexuality approved by God (c.f. Grace Bible Church Soweto, 2018).

Homosexual activities are viewed as “falling outside the ‘structural’ requirement of heterosexuality in mainstream Christianity and its two complementary genders” (Naidu, 2013:103). The Bible is used “as a powerful weapon” by the anti-homosexual positioned church and is being interpreted “through hegemonic masculinity and heteronormative frames of reference” that include the New Testament and Old Testament “six-shooter texts” (Romans 1 vv26-27, 1 Corinthians 6 v9, 1 Timothy 1 v10, Genesis 19 v1-29, Leviticus 18 v22 and Leviticus 20 v13) (Punt, 2014:9). This has led to the mainstream Christian theological notions that “homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life; and so, it thwarts the call to a life of that form of self-giving which the Gospel says is the essence of Christian living” (Ratzinger, 1994:42). The mainstream conservative church’s views are said limit the personal freedom and dignity of homosexual members. The GBC shares these conservative Christian mainline views since it considers homosexual activities as “unnatural”, and this view also promotes the belief that choosing a person of same-sex for sexual relationship and activities is therefore to annul the goals of the Creator’s sexual design (c.f Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017, Ratzinger, 1994:42).

## 5.4 *The Troubled Image-body of God*

The above texts form the basis of the controversial arguments that the Bible unambiguously condemns same-sex relations and declares such relations as “unnatural” as discussed above in the context of the GBC (News24, 2017, Harding, 2013:57). However, Bible scholars argue that studying these texts carefully in “their socio-historical contexts shows that they are by no means unambiguous about what they condemn, nor is their applicability to modern day contexts evident” (Punt, 2014:10). On the same level of argument, other Bible scholars are of the view that the Pauline NT texts, that are believed to forbid same-sex love and intercourse, are in fact “rhetoric” rather than “realistic” (Loader, 2012:295). Some scholars further observed that since ancient Bible texts never considered or used the concepts of “heterosexuality”, “homosexuality”, and “bisexuality”, to understand such terms as a “condition” or “orientation” can be misleading since the exact meaning of these words is always dependent in part on the ancient context in which they appeared (Furnish, 1994:18-19). This is meant to be based on the fact that, according to biblical scholar Gerald West, the biblical interpretation is based on the assumption that there are two kinds of readers being the “ordinary” and “scholarly” readers who does not approach biblical interpretation the same (West, 2007:8-11). Some go further, arguing that the Bible hardly ever discusses homosexual behavior since there are few biblical texts that speak directly about homosexuality (Hays, 1994:5, Gagnon, 2001:432).

In his book titled *The Love of David and Jonathan: Ideology, Text, Reception*, James Harding points out that there were certain personalities in the Old Testament that may arguably be said to have been involved in a same-sex loving relationship, such as the relationship between David and Jonathan of which most queer scholars have derived a transgressive reading of this Bible story (Harding, 2013:89). Anthony Heacock, in his book *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex*, also considered this view by noting that “the question that is on the tip of virtually every interpreter’s tongue today, ‘are David and Jonathan gay?’” (Heacock, 2011:2). This is a much-debated question in the church, as to the spiritual and biblical legality of homosexuality in the church since Jonathan and David are recorded to have been in an intimate relationship and the latter declaring that the love he had for the former “surpasses the love of a man for a woman” (2 Samuel 1:26). Bible scholars and theologians argue that this passage can only mean a same-sex gay erotic relationship. On the same note, Christian homophobia is believed to be a divine order which is most misleading (Harding, 2013:83). It is, however, subject to the

*5.5**Conclusion*

hermeneutical process to understand Bible passages like this and by adopting various interpretive methods and contexts.

Cheryl B. Anderson, an African American biblical studies scholar, noted the irruption that occurred within biblical studies that led to paradigm shifts and the need to re-interpret the Bible within the diverse social contexts. She writes:

Until recently, the leadership circles in both the church and the academy were able to distance themselves from their readings of the Bible by contending they were merely following divine mandate or scholarly methods. Now, however, there is a sense that the few cannot arrogate to themselves the power to speak to all humanity – and for God. The particularity of one small segment of humanity – the privileged white, Western, heterosexual male – can no longer masquerade as representing the diversity and fullness of God’s creation. Through the tidal wave of publications for “the Other” – those who differ by virtue of race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and hemisphere – God is indeed “troubling the waters” (Anderson, 2009:28).

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, an overview on the selected aspect of the issues pertaining to human dignity of the sexual minorities was given. The Grace Bible Church’s sermon and subsequent public statements were considered within the context of the LGBTIQ believers in the church (News24, 2017, Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The statement was issued declaring those church members who fall into the category of a sexual minority should not be discriminated against on the grounds of their sexuality and gender identity as this will amount to discrimination that the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights in particular, forbids (Ackerman, 2012:24). Bishop Sono’s declaration noted that the church “believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth” (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The GBC’s official statement of faith contradict this declaration as it points that with regards to sexual behavior, the church believes “in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of



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lawful matrimony, and adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church.” This may arguably mean those not adhering to this stated principle may not be allowed as members in the GBC.

The theological idea that a human being was created in the image of God is also noted to be a catalyst for human dignity and human flourishing. Theologians, such as Karl Barth, Irenaeus, Desmond Tutu, David Kelsey, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas agrees that the glory of God is manifest in human beings being fully alive and happy, and that Christ is the center of human flourishing (Kelsey, 2008:3, Wawrykow, 2014:4). On the other hand, scholars such as Friedrich Nietzsche, is often cited as advocating a “powerful widespread suspicion” that the Christian notion of God, God’s power, and glory in man is baseless since the Christian God is noted to have power and dominion over humans by systematically minimizing human beings and making them weak, small and servile, and this means human beings cannot flourish in terms of Christian theological and biblical views as taught by the church (Nietzsche, 1887:5, Kelsey, 2008:4).

In this chapter, it was shown that queer scholars such as Judith Butler, Adrian Thatcher and Elizabeth Stuart are critical of the traditional heterosexist notion of man as the image of God, and argue that this notion is problematic since it exalts a heterosexual male human being as a figure that is the closest to God’s image and subverts female gender identities and also those not conforming with the heterosexual norm (Butler, 1990:51, Bonvillain, 1998:234, Isherwood & Stuart, 1998:8, Thatcher, 2011:118).

*CHAPTER 6***CHAPTER 6****THE CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY****6.1 Introduction**

This final chapter serves as an overview on the research undertaken in the previous chapters of this thesis and makes some summarization on the current theological discourses, debates and propositions on issues related to gender, sexuality and sexual orientation within the context of the Grace Bible Church and the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition in South Africa's post constitutional dispensation. This chapter further aims at the reviewing of the research problem, research questions, research methodology, contribution, relevance and goals of the study to attempt assessing whether the objectives of this study was achieved. Moreover, the possible areas for further study will be suggested during this chapter.

**6.2 A review of the research problem**

In chapter 1.2 of this thesis, it was discussed what the research problem of this study seeks to address. It was thus stated that

There are much critical views on the moral validity of the LGBTIQ sexualities and on whether the church and state institution should recognize, affirm and embrace these sexualities as it happens with the heterosexual human sexuality.

The main research problem in this thesis stems from the moral validity of the LGBTIQ sexualities, and whether such sexualities can be affirmed, embraced and accepted as the valid form of sexual expressions and lifestyles by the church and society at large. To fully attempt to engage on the theories relevant to this study, being the intersection of gender, law and religion, the GBC event that took place during the early 2017 was selected as a case study. It was already pointed that the GBC guest preacher Bishop Dag Heward-Mills delivered a public religious speech that during sermon that declared the LGBTIQ lifestyle to be unnatural and immoral and such lifestyle cannot

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

even be witnessed in the animal kingdom as the latter engage on heterosexual sexual behavior that in “natural” and in line with God’s intention for proper sexual behavior. It was further stated that these statement poses much controversies and challenges in both church and society since they were argued to be being discriminatory against the LGBTIQ persons in churches and inciting violence against these persons. On the other hand, it was also noted that the churches stand on their right to religious freedom as guaranteed in the Constitution of 1996. The research problem noted that there are theologians who asserts that such “heterosexual public religious speeches” that seek to condone the LGBTIQ lifestyles and members in churches who live that lifestyle, and this is noted to being since such speeches were influenced by the heterosexual norm that argues the homosexuality and same-sex love is “against the traditional norm,” “un-Christian,” “un-African” and “sinful” (Kaunda, 2016:196-215). This was further argued that such speeches are based on literalist Bible interpretation that was noted to be much problematic (Russel, 2016;12).

### **6.3 A review of the research questions**

Having reviewed the research problem above, it is important to now briefly consider reviewing the research questions as asked during the first chapter of this study so to attempt uncover the answers for them.

#### **6.3.1 Primary research question**

In the beginning of this study, the primary research question was posed as thus: *How does the Grace Bible Church understand the diversity of human sexualities and the importance of embracing all congregants’ sexualities in relation to their theological convictions and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa?*

#### What was discovered:

Chapter 3 was dedicated to specifically lay a foundation on how the GBC understand the nature of human sexuality from the theological point of views. In chapter 2.1 it was pointed that the primary purpose of this study is to analyze the theological position of the Grace Bible Church on

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

the issues involving the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex persons within this church. The GBC has been selected for this case study since this church made headline news in the dawn of 2017 during the sermon delivered by Bishop Dag Heward-Mills who made some statement regarding the way the Pentecostal Churches understand the LGBTIQ sexuality and sexual orientation (News24, 2017). As already pointed in chapter one, certain members of the church and the Soweto community at large protested the GBC sermon and its theological position on the LGBTIQ issues (Mail&Guardian, 2017). Later during the month of January 2017, Bishop Musa Sono delivered the GBC official statement in responding to the protests and public criticism on how the church views human sexuality and sexual orientation, especially in relationship with the church members who are of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). Therefore, it is the purpose of this case study, and of this chapter, to critically engage and analyze the GBC position papers within the intersection of gender, theology and law.

The GBC's positions on human sexuality problematizes the theology of human sexuality and sexual morality, especially in most of the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches worldwide as it was pointed in chapter 2.2.1 that these churches base their theology on the literalist interpretation of certain biblical passages that led to sermons being preached and interpreted to condemn homosexuality and same-sex sexual behavior as unnatural and immoral (Russel, 2016:12-13). It was further pointed that the main religious paradigm among the Pentecostal and moral conservative churches is the main moral issue, being that specific sins would 'kill' and destroy the soul of a believer and a person, and therefore sermons that seem being homophobic in nature seek to save and deliver those with homosexual tendencies from the divine condemnation and judgement due to sexual sin of homosexuality that is against the order of nature (Farley, 2005:66-67).

Furthermore, it became clear in chapter 3.1 that there are certain theologians and scholars who are of the view that the churches' stand against same sexual behavior and relationships is much based on the heteropatriarchal norm and assumption that was fueled by the Christian heterosexism and patriarchal ideologies that were developed over the time and has now therefore become a societal norm (Germond & De Gruchy, 1997:IX). It was also noted that due to the church's long tradition of embracing the heterosexuality as the only proper standard of sexual behavior bestowed by God,

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

then the modern era of the queer liberation theologies started to emerge out of the broader secular queer liberation movements and gay rights movements, and the queer theories began to emerge into the Christian church claiming that the LGBTIQ sexuality and sexual orientation must be embraced and accepted in the church as God's gift of sexuality to his children (Siker, 1994:186).

#### 6.3.2 Secondary research questions

The below secondary questions, stemming from the primary one, were posed at the beginning of this study. Additionally, to these questions, it will be attempted to provide answers in this study as well.

- 1) *What does this case study show in relation to GBC's theological understanding of the nature of human sexuality?*

#### What was discovered?

Pentecostal preachers are known, mostly, by making much literal references from the Bible texts by way of making several quotes from the Bible in interpreting the doctrine. Farley points that this is due to the moral conservative theological view that sees the "Bible as a as a collection of passages, each of which necessarily contains a preaching word or truth of God" (Farley, 2005:67). The case study's main theme is based on the sermon that was delivered during January 2017 at Grace Bible Church Soweto, where the guest preacher Bishop Dag Heward-Mills pointed declared that:

Many times, you know, people are wondering like 'There is no animal which stays with only one partner. One time I was in Kenya, and they took me to a wild life place and we were going along and then I saw Antelopes – Impalas. Several, as I counted there were like seventy-five. So, then the guys told me 'please notice that only one of them has horns', and that is the male. Those are his wives, the seventy-five! I said, 'one to seventy-five? That sounds powerful'. That is nature, yes - dogs, cats, leopards. Mention the animals, which one has one partner? It is just like homosexuality, you do not have male and male! If you use that reasoning to say

## 6.3

*A review of the research questions*

homosexuality is not natural, you do not stand two male dogs or two male lions or two male impalas or two male cats, even lizards, two male elephants, two males...there is nothing like that in nature! It is unnatural! Yes, there is nothing like that in nature. And in the same way, there is nothing like one-to-one. Nature is one to several. So, it takes spiritual power to stay with one person. And that is why you need your soul to be developed, otherwise if your soul is not developed as strong you cannot control your flesh. And your flesh will just do what is natural, yes, that why you should pray that God will give you a spiritual person to marry. God is going to do it in your life (Heward-Mills, 2017:57:26-1:00:10).

After the Bishop Heward-Mills' sermon at GBC, the LGBTIQ church members were joined with the members of Soweto community and other civil organizations to silently protest what they believed to be a 'homophobic sermon' and 'hate' against them, and the fact that the church is promoting a 'religious bigotry' (Mail&Guardian, 2017, SABC-Digital-News, 2017). As it was seen in chapter 2.2.2, there were various conflicting views on whether the church's sermon and statements were homophobic and discriminatory. Certain members of the public declared that:

"The Bible says the truth shall set you free. Pastor Dag did not say he hates homosexuals. He said it is unnatural. The fact that your country's laws permits it does not mean that God permits it. What is wrong is wrong. God has said that fornication is wrong, adultery is also wrong. When men of God preach against fornication and adultery people don't complain. Has any man of God been described as fornication phobic when they preach against fornication? I guess the answer is no. No one is preaching hate against homosexuals. But we are saying that God dislikes it just as he dislikes fornication. But whatever you are doing, do it well because at the end there shall be judgement"<sup>125</sup> (SABC Digital News C, 2017)

In most of the African culture, as with the majority in the Christian Church, the recognition of the same-sex relationships is viewed as a taboo and regarded as un-African and 'unnatural' as we have

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<sup>125</sup> This is a public comment added by some of the members who gave their opinions on this matter. The comments follow immediately after the SABC video.

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

observed with the Bishop Heward-Mills sermon (Motsau, 2015:18, see also Gevisser, 2016:19). Most religions and cultures in the world, including African culture and Christianity, maintain the hetero-patriarchal system which maintains that the biological organ a person was born with will determine his sexual orientation and the role they need play in the society (Motsau 2015:18). In their book, *Aliens in the household of God: homosexuality and the Christian faith in South Africa*, Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy (1997:194) points out that the church at large is dominated by the heteronormative mind-set that only accepts the heterosexuality as the only correct form of sexuality. Adrian Thatcher (2011:3) support this view saying that gender and sexual orientation cannot be said to be a binary norm as the churches hold to this position, but that there are diversities of genders and sexualities that are natural rather than the singular heterosexual norm. Majority of the Bible literalist and moral conservative churches continue to label those deviant sexualities and sexual orientations other than heterosexuality to be “unnatural”, sinful, immoral and abomination as we have witnesses from the GBC sermon. Churches select portions of scriptures to base their doctrine on human sexuality and sexual orientation without even trying to investigate the reality on how things are out there. Church seek to define morality and create a super-moral society in the society that has fallen in many aspects.

After the alleged homophobic sermon, Bishop Musa Sono delivered the following position statement which is also a doctrinal position of the church on human sexuality:

We believe and affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enters into an exclusive relationship for life, and that is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations. We neither believes nor accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is discriminatory (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017).

The GBC’s official statement of faith declares thus concerning the nature of human sexuality and proper sexual behavior in church:

With regards to sexual behavior, we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony.

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behavior is an inherent requirement of membership of Grace Bible Church (Grace Bible Church Statement of Faith, 2018).

The GBC do accept that they are open to different views and opinion of homosexuality in the church among members and guest preachers they invite (eNCA News, 2017).<sup>126</sup> Sometimes there might be conflicting viewpoints and opinions but the church strictly embraces the fact that all Christians must love one another and not judge anyone. Foster is of the view that various Christian church have adopted a certain defined approach on how they view homosexuality (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:138). Christian churches do not all interpret and approach the Bible in the same way, particularly the matters of morality. Every church has a certain position paper and doctrinal statement on homosexuality and morality.

In his book, *The New Testament and homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate*, theologian Robin Scroggs (1984:11) believes “...people can agree about the meaning of biblical statements yet differ widely as to how they should be applied to the contemporary debate. Obviously, what is at issue, then, is not interpretation of the Bible per se (i.e. exegesis), but extra-biblical theological judgements about the authority of the scripture (i.e. hermeneutics).”

In their statement, the GBC believes that the Bible is “the Word of God and the superior and ultimate instructions for our lives and faith, which informs who we are as well as our statement of faith” (Grace Bible Church Webteam, 2017). The church follows the fundamentalism or literalism approach to the Bible and homosexuality (Russel, 2016:12-13) (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:139). “Fundamentalists stress the importance of inerrancy (the biblical text as originally given cannot be wrong) and the literal interpretation of the Bible. Each word, in the original texts, was inspired” (Kretzschmar & Forster 2009:139). The fundamentalist and literalism Bible interpretation approach holds to the fact that the Bible should be understood “just as it is” and it need not be interpreted contextually by considering people’s lived experiences and the changing societal norms. Such approach holds a conservative view that homosexuality and same-sex intercourse “was an appeal to the norm of heterosexuality” even in the animal kingdom where animals do not practice homosexual practices (Gagnon, 2001:179).

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<sup>126</sup> See Rev Mathole’s media statement on paragraph 2.2.3.2 above.



## 6.3

*A review of the research questions*

- 2) *How does GBC's understanding of human sexuality relate to the theological positions of the member bodies in the Pentecostal World Fellowship?*

What was discovered?

As thoroughly discussed in chapter 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, Pentecostal-charismatic churches at large are noted to being a global movement that is much doctrinally interrelated and yet independent from each other (Lederle, 2010:49, 91). It was pointed in chapter 3.2.1 that “To understand the position of the GBC regarding the human sexuality, it is necessary to understand how these ‘waves’ of Pentecostalism differ or relate to each other.” The GBC’S understanding of the human sexuality, as highlighted in the above paragraphs, is much in common with most of the member bodies in the Pentecostal World Fellowship in which both Bishop Sono and Bishop Heward-Mills are leaders as this was briefly discussed in chapter 3.2.1. Major Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, also maintains the same theological positions regarding human sexuality. These churches have a worldwide membership in almost all countries in the world where there is a vast number of Christian populations.

Pentecostal movement, in general, hold similar views on the conventional moral positions, especially those related to sexuality (Kay & Hunt 2015:357). The soteriological theological stand among the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is based on the fourfold doctrinal basis that a person has to (i) confess Jesus Christ as personal Lord and savior, (ii) be sanctified and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, (iii) be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, and (iv) continue to live a holy lifestyle while waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection of the body from the grave that will be followed by the last judgement of the wicked and the righteous. These theological basics form a core theology of the Pentecostal and Evangelical movement though the latter does not emphasize on the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2010:159).

As with the Evangelical theology, the Pentecostal theology embraces the authority of scripture as inspired Word of God that needs a proper interpretation with the help of the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2010:157). It is due to the literalist interpretation of the Bible that various sexual conducts are

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

condemned in the Pentecostalism, as it was witnessed in the context of the GBC above. These includes adultery, sex before marriage, divorce, masturbation and homosexuality (Kay & Hunt 2015:358). Committed same-sex relationships are also condemned as it is believed they are not ‘natural’ and in contravention of God’s Word. The nature of human sexuality is subject to much debate as pointed above in chapter 2, especially the issue on whether the LGBTIQ sexual orientation is by choice or not. Some theologians are of the view that the church is not doing justice to the members of the LGBTIQ since their sexuality is something they cannot change (Germond & de Gruchy 1997: IX).

- 3) *What are some of the dominant legal discourses on human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation as intersecting with Christian theology and law in South Africa at present?*

#### What was discovered?

The single instance, as occurred in the GBC, was that the sexualities of the LGBTIQ persons were viewed as ‘unnatural’ and to be not in line with the natural law and proper biblical sexual conduct. However, it has been shown in chapter two that several queer theologians, like Adrian Thatcher, disagree with the conservative Bible-literalist churches’ such as the Pentecostal view and understanding of the binary of human sexuality as influenced by the heteronormative and hegemonic masculine religiously infused culture as propagated in many churches (Thatcher, 2011:3). It was pointed above that Adrian Thatcher, and other queer theological scholars, are of the view that what makes human to be either ‘male or female’ is not a truism concept of biological sexual organ, but the results of gender and sex is rather a comprehensive process as people grows and experienced their own sexuality (Thatcher 2011:3, Germond & De Gruchy, 1997:3).

Furthermore, scholars are of the view that the secular law should be used as a mechanism through which the human dignity of the queer people should be able to be protected and embraced (Ackerman, 2012: 4-5, 13). It was pointed in chapter 4.2 that the intersection between the queer theory and the law cannot be underestimated. The American civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, coined the feminist legal theory of

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

‘intersectionality’ to express the ‘multidimensionality’ of the oppressed and marginalized subjects and how they lived their experiences in the oppressive world around them (Nash, 2008:2).

In chapter 4.3.1 it was highlighted that South Africa is a constitutional democratic state based on human dignity, equality and the advancement of freedom to all people, and discrimination that is unfair and in conflict with the Bill of Rights should be forbidden. It was further stated that human rights in terms of the Constitution of 1996 also includes the rights of the LGBTIQ community.

In chapter 4.4, it was discussed how the timeline on the historical perspective of the acceptance of the LGBTIQ sexuality by the State and the Church in South Africa took place. The LGBTIQ community was noted to have suffered struggles, discrimination and ridicule since the colonial period all the way to the apartheid period. This was noted to be due to the religiously infused homophobia that was advanced by the church and the state that joined forces against these sexualities by passing laws and decrees that often condemned same sex relations to being immoral, sinful and crime that was punishable under the state’s penal codes (de Ru, 2013:223).

The church-state relations in South African post-apartheid constitutional dispensation saw great liberal movements rising and being vocal about the need to break away from the heterosexual and hegemonic masculine norm and start to embrace the sexual minority sexualities (Punt, 2007:243-244). The Constitution of South Africa, which is seen as a moral and legal document, promoted and protected the rights of the sexual minority and this set a foundation for further legislation and court cases that seek to protect and promote the LGBTIQ community and sexuality (Freedman, 2013:5, 35). It was noted that Law professor Pierre de Vos (2007:439) notes that during the “late 1994, 43 gay and lesbian organizations came together to form the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCLGE) at the First National Gay and Lesbian Legal and Human Rights Conference held in South Africa” (de Vos, 2007:439). These “movements formed political alliances with anti-apartheid organizations and argued that their struggle fitted the same (intersectional) frame: oppression by the apartheid regime” (de Ru 2013). However, it remains a challenge to even today since the churches insist that they are free under the Constitution to regulate their own theological standards and doctrinal position related to human sexuality and that the state and the law cannot force them to accept what they believe the Bible condemns: homosexuality. In chapter 4.4.2 it was noted how the courts of law attempted to interpret the

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

various conflicting notions related to the LGBTIQ human rights on the one hand and the churches' right to religious freedom on the other hand. In chapter 4.4.2.8 one of such leading Constitutional Court case, *De Lange v Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*, the court was faced with the case on the "diverse scholarly insights on what the parameters of religious associations should be, with specific focus on sexual conduct, religious doctrine and membership of religious associations" (De Freitas, 2016:1). It was thus ruled that the judiciary insist on the "avoidance of doctrinal entanglement" in that courts do not intervene in matters where members of the church have voluntarily committed themselves to being bound by the internal rules and doctrines of the churches (de Freitas 2016:9). However, if churches act not in accordance with their own doctrines and procedures, inequitably and unjustly against the members then the courts will intervene provided those members' human rights are at stake.

- 4) *What theological and legal contribution could help fully develop GBC's theological position regarding the human dignity of the sexual minorities in their congregation and the South African society at large?*

#### What was discovered?

Since the current constitutional dispensation is based on advancement of human rights and freedoms among other things, it is therefore important to note that the churches and other religious institutions in society cannot be exempted from the current constitutional and human rights order that requires all persons to be treated fairly, with human dignity and equality that includes the rights to not be discriminated on the ground of gender and sexual orientation as enshrined in section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The reality is that the sexual minorities are present in churches, and as such they have equal rights under the law as those of the heterosexual members in church. However, as pointed above, the challenge is that the churches are free to formulate their religious doctrines and interpret the scriptures based on their own formulation of doctrines and theological positions to include positions on human sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In chapter 5.2 the GBC is noted to have declared in their statement that:

## 6.3

*A review of the research questions*

“we respect and hold in high regard the Constitution of our land. The Constitution guarantees rights not to be discriminated against based on race, gender, and among others sexual orientation. We recognize, affirm and respect those rights and freedoms fully with no reservations. We believe every human being is created in the image of God, and as such has intrinsic dignity and worth which is why everyone regardless of their race, gender, sex, and among others sexual orientation, is welcome in our church.”(Grace Bible Church Webteam, Statement to the Congregation: January 29, 2017).

Chapter 5.3 was dedicated to attempt give a discussion on the theological idea related to the image of God, human dignity and human flourishing. It was thus pointed that most theologians and legal scholars agree that the concept of human dignity has a roots in Judeo-Christian theological principles that human being were created in the image and likeness of god<sup>127</sup>, and that since all humans were created in the image of God then their dignity must be absolute (Ackerman, 2012: 35.). Through the theological concept of man as God’s image, the concept of human rights and human dignity in particular came into existence since it is believed that human rights were granted to man by God and for specific purpose which is for accomplishment of orderly life and for better of others (Ellul, 1969: 79). Other theologians noted the traditional church stand that advocated the fact that male images are mostly ascribed to God, and this implies that men and more like God and even the one much closer to God’s image and likeness (Klopper, 2002:426). Due to this hegemonic masculine implication, certain characteristics and expectations are being exclusively ascribed to men and others to women. This has resulted in that those “other” men and women who do not conform to the normalized gender stereotypes being much seen as deviants to this societal norm.

Queer scholars’ points that “there are many adults who are unable to identify with either label. There are intersex, and transgender, people who cannot easily say they identify with this binary (twofold) division of humanity into separate sexes” (Thatcher, 2011:3). Thatcher, in his book *God*,

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<sup>127</sup> In Genesis Chapter 1 verses 26 and 27, the Bible declares: “Then God said, ‘Let us create humankind in our image, according to our own likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

### 6.3 *A review of the research questions*

*Sex and Gender: An Introduction*, points that throughout history there have never been only twofold division of humanity into either male or female as only image of God. He points that:

“The standard view is that there are two sexes, male and female. This view is so securely lodged in Western religion and culture that it may appear devious even to question it. The two verses are “opposite”” (Thatcher, 2011: 7).

Thatcher (2011:7) further argues that since the churches held and still hold a position that the “male” gender is a “stronger” and “first” sex then this has resulted in that the other sexes to include the female and the LGBTIQ were marginalized and seen as “complementary” to the male sex. He points this was due to the misreading of the Biblical texts, such as Genesis 1:27, in that the Western church used the concept of “male” gender as a proper image of God and all others were seen as supplementary (Thatcher, 2011:7).

In his book chapter titled “*Are Women Images of God*,” Frederick G. McLeod notes the theological view that males more closely reflected the image of God because they are believed to be more rational and therefore more natural or rightful rulers than females (McLeod, 1999:Ch6, DeFranza, 2012:2) However, on the other hand, most theologians separated the image of God from being male or female or from human sexuality and procreation since they believe in the scriptural testimony that “God is a Spirit”<sup>128</sup> and he does not have a body (DeFranza, 2012:2). The argument goes further that since God took the human body and appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, then the fact that God did not engage in sexual activity by marrying or child bearing proves that gender difference is meaningless in God (DeFranza, 2012:2-3). Thatcher (2011:118) goes further elaborating that God is “suprasexual.”<sup>129</sup> God is beyond the distinction of male and female and the image of God may be found in both male and females alike. This goes on that since God is love, then suprasexual God may be found in meaning of sexual love.(Thatcher, 2011:119).

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<sup>128</sup> John 4:24.

<sup>129</sup> According to Thatcher, “suprasexuality” of God means that He is above sexual being.

## *6.4 A review of the research methodology, and the research goal(s)*

### **6.4 A review of the research methodology, and the research goal(s)**

In chapter 1.4, it was stated that this study follows the qualitative research methodology since its primary aim is to attempt analyze the case scenario involving the sermon that was delivered at Grace Bible Church in the township of Soweto Johannesburg during January 2017. It was further mentioned that this sermon was not well received by most persons and civil organizations, especially those of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation, as they believe the sermon was derogatory, discriminatory and aimed at attacking and inciting hatred towards the members of the sexual minorities in the church.

At the beginning of chapter 1, it was further stated that the current research involves a case study as a research method. In his book titled *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods*, Robert K. Yin describe this research method as follows:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin, 2014:16).

### **6.5 A review of the contribution and relevance of the study**

Regarding the research relevance and contributions, it was stated in chapter 1.4 that:

This research study’s goal is to contribute on what seem to be a current challenge within the Pentecostal circles in Africa since most of these churches are noted to being embracing the fundamentalist Bible literalism that most theologians and biblical scholars are of the view that it poses much challenges due its failure to contextually engage on Bible passages and as a result labelling un-heterosexual persons in church to be deviants, unnatural, immoral and perverts (Russel, 2016:9).

## 6.6

*Limitations of the study*

The GBC's case study will be of great contribution to the African theologies of development as far as the sexual minorities are concerned. This research seeks to contribute to the current debates on the legality and morality of the LGBTIQ sexuality within the African context, and it is thus necessary to open an inquiry, to allow a deeper searching for the solution on the challenges of discrimination, stigmatization and discrimination suffered by the members of the LGBTIQ sexuality within the African continent.

Furthermore, the study is a theological engagement that attempt to intersect the notions of gender, law and religion by mean of engaging various academic discourses, church positions papers, legal materials and the number of published media pieces to attempt uncover how the notions of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation are understood in the church and society at the current period.

## **6.6 Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to the intersection of gender, law and religion. The research did not contain an ethical clearance so as conduct a field research among the selected church, being GBC, in which the research's primary aim is limited to. The research is furthermore limited to the available case material, being the sermon that was broadcasted by the church and published on YouTube during 2017. The sermon was analyzed in chapter 2, particularly chapter 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, and in doing so the rest of other section in chapter 2 were aimed at engaging on various church position papers and theological discourses to engage in more scholastic detail the notions of gender and sexuality in the church.

An attempt was made to limit the study to the GBC context, but this was proven not to be possible since the Pentecostal movement is a broad yet interconnected in theological doctrine and dogma. Therefore, due to this, chapter 3 shifted a bit and attempted to theoretically conceptualize the study by means of analyzing the whole of the Pentecostal movement in a comparative fashion. It was therefore mentioned in chapter 3.1 that:



## 6.7

*Possible areas for future research*

To understand the GBC's positions and views on homosexuality and the LGBTIQ Christians in the church, it is necessary to consider how this church is influenced by the Pentecostal theology relating to human sexuality and sexual orientation. Pentecostal theology has its own language.

The study is limited to the engagement with the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), since the fellowship seeks to unite many Pentecostal denominations around the world to deal with issues affecting these churches. Both Bishops Musa Sono and Dag Heward-Mills are serving in the leadership of the PWF (Pentecostal World Fellowship, 2017). It was further stated in chapter 2 that it will not be possible to understand what influences the development of the Pentecostal doctrine without considering comparing the selected major Pentecostal denominations that may have great influence on the GBC and their theological position on human sexuality.

## **6.7 Possible areas for future research**

This study offered an initial exposure and exploration on how the sexual minorities are received and affirmed in the Bible fundamentalism and moral conservatism churches. An honest interdisciplinary engagement with both sociological legal and political discourses are fundamental to a further understanding on how the sexual minorities in churches can be affirmed and embraced in churches, particularly in the South African context where the democratic Constitution of 1996 guarantees everyone with the right to human dignity and to have their dignity respected in terms of section 10, and also the right to equality before the law and not be discriminated on the grounds listed in section 9 particularly the ground of gender and sexual orientation.

This study involved a much critical, and often difficult, discourses on gender, law and religion. Indeed, the study has uncovered valuable knowledge on the notions intersecting gender, law and religion, it has also raised critical questions that need a further investigation. The theological modus of inquiry pursued in this study endeavors to address the concerns of the marginalized, and often brutalized, in the church and the society – being the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer persons.

Further research is possibly needed to address the questions, but not limited, on:

- 1) Whether it is possible for the church to develop its doctrine on human sexuality so its members who are of the LGBTIQ sexuality could be fully welcomed, affirmed and embraced?
- 2) Is it possible for the church to move away from the traditional, historical and often controversial doctrines that resulted in much marginalization and brutality against the LGBTIQ persons?
- 3) Could the Bible fundamentalist Pentecostal churches, and other Bible literalist churches, begin with the process of dialogue to attempt understand the lived experiences of the LGBTIQ members within their walls?
- 4) Could the state extend its hand of power in promoting the human rights culture related to sexuality and gender rights and justice in the religious sector; and whether there is a need for a new constitutional jurisprudence the courts need to adopt in balancing the religious freedom of a church, on the one hand, and the individual rights of the sexual minorities in church, on the other hand, who feel their rights are violated by anti-homosexuality church positions and doctrinal statements?

## **6.8 Conclusion**

The issues related to theology and human sexuality are proven to be much complicated since most churches and other religious institutions continues to interpret the sacred texts by applying the conservative and literalism interpretive modes. This has resulted in that the sexual minorities in the religious institutions are being sidelined, marginalized and unaffirmed as it is mainly believed that their sexuality in not in line with the divine plan that is believed to be a heterosexual sexuality. The LGBTIQ persons, in mostly Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in the African context, are continuing to suffer a religiously infused homonegativity in that most of these persons are leaving churches whilst others start their own queer churches and other religious movements.

This subsection of the final chapter seeks to be a general conclusion of this study. It is therefore necessary that what was considered in each chapter be briefly summarized here.

In chapter 1, this study was introduced by means of the research proposal. A general overview of the main theme, statement of the problem, research questions, methodology, contribution, relevance and goals, as well as the as well as how the study will be organized are all included in that chapter.

Chapter 2 can be considered as the ground breaker of the study. It was dedicated to the much detailed of understanding how the Grace Bible Church, as a case in this study, understands the nature of human sexuality. The GBC was selected as a case due to the controversial sermon that was preached by Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, a Ghanaian Pentecostal pastor of a mega church Lighthouse Chapel International, who declared that homosexuality is unnatural and incompatible with the order of nature as created by God and therefore unscriptural and sinful.

Chapter 3 continues what was discussed during chapter 2. However, here the role played by the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and its member denominations such as the Assemblies of God, was considered in a comparative and contextual fashion to understand the human sexuality and marriage doctrines and LGBTIQ position papers in this movement. It was said in chapter 1 that this is relevant and necessary because most of the member denominations, of which the GBC is one, in the PWF shares common statements of faith and doctrinal position papers on issues such as human sexuality, same sex marriages, et cetera.

Chapter 4 analyzed the dominant political and legal discourses on LGBTIQ sexualities in South Africa. The struggles and historical emergence of the liberal queer movements, and how they shaped the course of fully developing and inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the South African Constitution of 1996, were engaged upon on this chapter. The post-constitutional queer jurisprudence was also be briefly analyzed with the selected relevant court decision selected and used as case study.

As did chapter 4, chapter 5 intersected theology, gender studies and law. Chapter 5 carefully analyzed the selected aspects on human dignity of the sexual minorities in the context of the Grace Bible Church case. The theological ideas of Imago Deo, human dignity and human flourishing were the core of engagement during chapter 5.

In conclusion to this study, it was learnt how gender, law and theology intersects as far the issues related to the LGBTIQ persons in churches and other religious institutions are concerned. It was also learnt that the sociologists, theologians, legal and other scholars such as Judith Butler, Adrian Thatcher, Elizabeth Stuart, Laurie Ackerman, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Stanley Hauerwas, David Kelsey and others are of the differing opinions on how the issues relating to the queer sexuality needs be understood and received in church and society in general since these issues are all influenced by a various schools of thoughts that were proven to be in much disagreements. The sacred texts, legislative enactments, court decisions and academic opinions have all much influence on the development of the scholastic and religious discourses on the issues relating to gender, law and religion.

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