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Being black and Gay: The ontological Blackness and Gayness

By

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, Monethi William Moshoadiba (student no: 11359082), herewith declare that the content of this dissertation is my original work that has not at any time, totally and partially, been submitted to any other university for the purpose of attaining a degree.

Signed Date

Acknowledgements

The primary impulse to undertake this study came from the numerous conversations and encounters that I had with my peers at the Northern Theological Seminary, family, friends and community of the LGBTQ, and the community of Lakeside south of Johannesburg, while I was still studying with the University of South Africa. South Africa legalised same-sex marriage in 2006 November, and has declared the equality of human rights to the LGBTIQ community in 1994. Having followed the impact that theology had both on sanction of apartheid as it attempted later to challenge the theological legitimacy of this ideology, I always asked myself about the motive for the inclusion of the theological term of *sexual difference* within the society and community, especially with the LGBTIQ sexuality. This became more perturbing when I was introduced to Black Theology, African Theology, Black Theology of Liberation and Liberation Theology, with respect to influence in affirming ontological blackness of the oppressed black people in South Africa and African countries. The perturbing factor was the exclusiveness of sexual difference within these theologies; they were more on heteropatriarchal methodology wherein women and LGBTIQ voices were silenced and unheard. As such, it was very clear that the inclusion of LGBTIQ sexuality was not allowed as it confronted the masculinity ruling and dominance, including demands of the gospel, but to blunt the progress of radical change and transformation was a need. This is because for many years, the bible in South African and global politics has been made a servant of ideology that is to control and segregate people. In my years of studying, I was fortunate to be introduced, among other things, to the theology of sexuality and sexual ethics, including theological ethics. As a result, I was introduced to the Gay liberation movement, doing Gay theology without apology, which was a theology that was not apologetic about sexual differences within the community. However when I looked at the work of BTL, BT and African Theology, through their core fundamental arguments, methodology and other sources, one gets the impression that these theologies had to be tamed to fit the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ. Thus, in my attempt to deal with the subject of ontology (“Being”), I discovered that blacks were ontologically denied by the western epistemology and were regarded as none beings. These theologies did not address the critical questions of justice, equality and dignity of

the LGBTIQ community, which are so prominent in the biblical understanding of human dignity.

Numerous individuals have strongly encouraged and supported me during the past few years as this work progressively nurtured. I was blessed to be part of a family- namely my mother (Mamorena Elizabeth Moshoadiba) my late brother (Ntate Amos Moshoadiba a.k.a. Killer) my late father (Thabo Johannes Moshoadiba), my two sisters (Morongwe and Mmule Moshoadiba and my brother Lekena Moshoadiba a.k.a Shaolin and my niece Nelisiwe Moshoadiba, nephews Lefa and Cinimusi Moshoadiba.) I must say that I am very grateful to my mother (Mamorena Moshoadiba *Ngwetsi¹ ea Bashoadiba*) who supported me emotionally and spiritually, who always reminded me why do I need to study and become what I always wanted to be, a woman who always reminded me that in life, there are things that you need to lose in order to win.

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¹ Sesotho word for daughter in law of...

Gyeke, and Benezet Bujo and others in the hope that I will return with something new, he constantly asked me a question: can you read?...a question that I thought that I knew what it meant, which unfortunately I did not. I am happy to say now I understand what the question entailed. As a Christian of African descent, I affirm:

Meamong a fe kapa a fe Jesu ke molopoli

List of abbreviations

AWT	African Womanist Theology
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BT	Black Theology
BTL	Black Theology of Liberation
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
KD	Kairos Document
LGBTIQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Queer
LGBTIQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender, Intersex and Queer
URCSA	Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

Glossary List

Heteronormativity- the understanding that heterosexual practice and desire is considered normal and anything from this norm is somehow perverse, impossible or deviant.

Heteropatriarchy- is a term that intersects the systems of oppression identified by feminist and gender scholars.

Heterosexuality- being sexually attracted to the opposite sex.

Homophobia- dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people.

Homosexuality- Feeling sexual attraction to people of one's own sex.

Hypersexual- dysfunctional preoccupation with sexual fantasy, often in combination with obsessive pursuit of casual or non-intimate sex.

LGBTIQ- an umbrella term that describes diversity of sexual diversity and difference. In simple terms, it is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer.

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Chapter one

1.1. Introduction

It is befitting to introduce this research by glancing at the 24 years of democracy, the celebration of freedom and political liberation in South Africa. The empire of the apartheid regime has been partly dismantled and everyone has freedom of speech and space. People that were the most oppressed have freedom of owning houses and shops and of walking anywhere and everywhere. The original vision of this monstrous regime—the apartheid regime— was to dehumanize black people and make them feel as outcasts in their own country. Apartheid ontologically denied blackness. In this sense, the existence of blackness was denied. The study is an attempt to contribute to the on-going discussion on blackness and the discourse of gayness. “Being Black and Gay”, my chosen title, drives the discussion of the ontology of blackness and gayness.

Each term in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Qeeur (hereafter LGBTIQ) contains a diverse range of real people and real lives. LGBTIQ people can be found in all walks of life, professions, faith communities, political parties and locations throughout South Africa and African countries. When we all speak about the general or mainstream population, we are speaking about the LGBTIQ people in those communities as well. LGBTIQ people have many different ways of living their lives, just like the heterosexual people; even though they may be involved openly in public places, they are there and they exist within the designated places. According to Rosenstreich (2013:4), “the elevated risk of mental ill-health and suicidality among LGBTIQ people is not due to sexuality, sex or gender identity in and of themselves but rather due to discrimination and exclusion as a key determines of health”.

LGBTIQ people have been demoralized by society because of their sexual orientation. They experience isolation, hatred, rejection and prejudice just because of whom they are, and this has made them go through stigmatization and self-hatred. Many have struggled from as early as the 80s— the likes of Simon Tseko Nkoli, Paul Mokgehti and Paddy Nhlapo (cf Hoad, Martin & Reid 2005). Simon, Paul and Paddy experienced

conflict between their two identities because they perceive racism among white LGBTIQ and heterosexism among black heterosexual blacks.

As Dussel (1985:03) puts it, “ontology did not come from nowhere; it arose from a previous experience of domination over other persons and cultural oppression over other worlds”. In other words, the philosophical view of ontology is deeply related to the conquest, domination and exclusion of the conquered. “Being” (that is, the idea of existing in the world) was heavily influenced by Europeans through their conviction of being “special beings” to those who were conquered. In those years of the apartheid regime, the struggle was not only about ontological blackness, but also the struggle of the LGBTIQs. That is why there was an emergence of what we call black Theology Liberation and the Womanist theology, as examples of response to this. This was to say: stop! To the State Theology and Church Theology as they were pushing the status quo of the apartheid government (cf Kairos Document 1986). Black Theology of liberation (hereafter BTL) in South Africa affirmed the struggles for liberation against all forms of marginalization and has laid the groundwork for a way of thinking that argues and makes plausible the liberation of the LGBTIQ against their ontological denial and exclusion in South Africa.

1.2 Background

This study is concerned with the problem of the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ and the relationship they have with the denial of blackness during the apartheid era and to date. For quite some time now, postmodern and modern philosophers have deliberately worked on the opinion of “Being” in their philosophical reflections. What does “Being Black and Gay” mean? This study asks and does so from the view point of ontology i.e. the ontological existence of homosexuality among black Africans in particular. The likes of Simon Tseko Nkoli, Paul Mokgehti and Paddy Nhlapo (Hoad, Martin & Reid 2005) fought for the affirmation of the ontology of the LGBTIQ within the state during the apartheid era. Since the struggle of the LGBTIQ is not just a new phenomenon, the existence of the LGBTIQ is denied in many instances of life. Many have been arrested because they are regarded as non-existent, non-humans due to their choice to be homosexual, and the church has, in some instances, rejected the LGBTIQ ontologically.

It is the argument of the current study that as long as significant numbers of people refuse to accept the LGBTIQ people ontologically, for a variety of sexual expression, many of the LGBTIQ people will continue to fear the consequences of being open about their sexuality. With the understanding that the birth or emergence of BTL was, in fact, a response to socio-political issues such as poverty, oppression, exploitation, tyranny and identity.

The LGBTIQ are struggling for their identity, and because of this, they are excluded and denied ontologically, be it from the duties of the church or societies. Van Klinken and Gunda (2012:114) argue that “in African public debates, homosexuality is rejected with reference to tradition and culture”. As far as Christianity is concerned, the role of religious and political leaders and their organizations is clearly demonstrated in the debate on LGBTIQs in their gatherings. For example, the Malawian president made a declaration that he had pardoned two gay men but stated “these boys committed a crime against our culture, our religion and our laws” (CF Van Klinken et al., 2012). This is to deny the LGBTIQ ontologically and culturally and implies LGBTIQ do not exist in the African diaspora.

The LGBTIQ, in every aspect of life in this democratic state, still experience, deniality within their residential districts and households. The challenge that the LGBTIQ are facing today is that in many African countries, their humanity is denied. They feel inferior not because of what they do but because their fellow comrades and sisters who deny their ontological reality. They are labeled as “deviant”; they experience suffering because homosexuality is seen as a sin and for others, it is viewed as an orientation against nature and culture. Still, others see it as an illness and legally, in the other states, it may be seen as a crime. Judgment of the LGBTIQ, especially those who are at the centre of the church, is based on the fact that African countries are embedded within the theologies such as African liberation theology, African women’s theology and African reconstruction theology. Many like myself ask questions: what are characteristics of these theologies and what specific questions do these raise concerning the manner in which the issue of homosexuality is addressed within these different paradigms? Nonetheless, the study is not being existentialist, but rather

engages the paradigms of denial of the LGBTIQ within the communities that they are living in.

It is indeed true that blackness has always been a curse during the 60s throughout African countries. The emergence of colonization brought dominion within black people and stripped them of their history and culture and the richness of its inhabitants. When the westernized saw Africa, they saw an opportunity, trade and industry, and turned Africa into a state of oppression of its inhabitants. The question of blackness continues to haunt the post-colonial world. In the case of South Africa, this situation still remains because of the legacy of apartheid. During the apartheid regime, it changed its form in order to create and re-create blackness in order to sustain itself. According to Fanon (1967:26), “blackness is related to pathology and stands in a position that renders it devoid of being; blackness operates on an anti-black world, where the Negro, the African, the native, the black and the dirty was rejected, despised and cursed”. This attitude created inferiority complex, which imposed and reinforced a form of the existence of blackness as the universe of whiteness. Consequently, black people desired to be white, as the inferiority complex created dominion within them.

Sithole (2012:13) argues that “blackness is a negation which exists as a result of the white gaze. This gaze, even if it does not recognize blackness, means that the inferiority complex (since blacks want to be given concessions by whites) makes them to require acknowledgment and affirmation”. To put it simply, black humanity was absent in the world and denied ontologically as it carried with it the undesirable; they ceases to be part of the view and, therefore, had to be registered to the world and be affirmed that blackness is a reality. According to Sithole (2012:12), “blackness symbolizes the negation of being, and this is the aspect of the black life which breeds aggressiveness”. Within the dynamics of black conditions, self-destruction that seems to be the nature of the black being takes centre stage. In short, blackness has been and is still that which is objectified because every ontology is made unattainable in that it does not permit the understanding of the black being in the anti-black world.

Since it is known that “Being” is understood as that which exists (cf. Chalmers 2009:1), this notion was heavily influenced by the Europeans through their conviction that their

being was special; they are “special beings” compared to those who are conquered. The existence of blacks as human beings was always doubtful within the white supremacy system of knowledge. To be black was like being cursed as blacks during the 60s were not accepted by white people in their own country. When Boesak (1984:16) said “we shall never be able to gain better human relations until whites have learned to accept Blacks as Black people and give themselves in service of them”, he was decrying the denial of the being of blacks in South Africa. The argument brought forward by Boesak simply says that when we speak of affirmation of blackness, the affirmation of our creation as black has nothing to do with being resigned to our blackness. Boesak (1984:16) argues for “the affirmation of our blackness, the affirmation of our creation as Black. Black is beautiful. We speak about our rebirth, re-creation, renewal, a revolution to our self”. Following the same cue of Boesak, this study argues that the affirmation of our gayness has nothing to do with being resigned to our homosexual self. In this sense, we offer no apology of Being Black and Gay because we need not discuss every heterosexual absurdity.

Following this black struggle against ontological exclusion and denial, it is imperative to note that today, heterosexual others have to learn to accept LGBTI ontologically first as human beings that exist. The ontological existence of blackness in the apartheid era was indeed a matter of life and death. Boesak’s (1984:16) words are helpful when he says, “When we speak about affirmation of our Blackness, the affirmation of our creation as Black, it has nothing to do with being resigned to our blackness” In other words, taking our cue from Boesak, when we speak about the affirmation of homosexuality or LGBTI, the affirmation of our creation as homosexuals and LGBTIQ persons cannot resign us from being homosexual.

However, the study is to do with the experiences of the LGBTIQ from the perspective of the success of BTL in affirming ontological blackness. The researcher sees the relationship because of the ontological denial of Black people during the apartheid era and the ontological denial of the LGBTIQs today. If it is true that there are human beings that are LGBTIQ, if such human beings exist, Black Theology of liberation argues that

there are human beings that are black and exist in the world. If BTL argued that Blackness is a reality, it is an ontological reality; similarly, the argument of the study is that LGBTIQ is a reality too. Black Theology defended Blackness because it started by affirming the ontological existence of Blackness. In the same way, this study argues that Black theology can defend the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ. If the success of BTL in asserting the existential reality of Blackness and the consequences of Blackness, as the school that is continuing today, then the aim of this research is to add that there is existentiality of the LGBTIQ. Using the same core argument, the fundamental argument of BTL to argue for the affirmation of the ontological existence of blackness and LGBTIQ should be affirmed. If BTL succeeded to affirm the ontological Blackness of a person and affirmed the dignity of the oppressed Black person, Black theology must equally succeed to affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTI. No matter how we may write about homosexuality, Black theology will not succeed to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ.

BTL refused to believe that the gospel is a narrow, racist ideology that white Christianity made. It was indeed born in the community of the oppressed black; it took seriously the black experience and the black situation. Boesak (1976:14) argues that Black Theology (hereafter BT) grapples with suffering and oppression; it is a cry unto God for the sake of the people. It believes that Jesus Christ, the total liberator of all people, had come. In this involvement of BTL, it seeks the God that whites have created and had been for so long preaching to; it produced the ideology that the God of the Bible is the God of liberation rather than oppression. Yet today, we see this paradigm being shifted to the oppression and denial of the LGBTIQ, the very same theology that drives the imperative to stand and do what it is best at, that is, proclaiming the gospel of liberation and justice instead of freedom.

1.3. Preliminary literature review

Smith (2003:1) defines Ontology as a branch of philosophy which is the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality. If then Smith defines ontology in this particular way, how does his definition help the researcher's question of the ontological denial of LGBTIQ existence?

For the researcher, the question is rather one that perceives the existences of the LGBTIQ in every reality. Ontology helps us to confront the nothingness in our own existence and opens our eyes to the being, which contrasts with nothing. So the question of being is not a theoretical question in the sense of one asked by someone for whom being is simply abstract. According to Heidegger (1953), the question of the meaning of Being, and thus Being as such, has been forgotten by 'the tradition' (roughly, Western philosophy from Plato onwards). Heidegger implies that the history of Western opinion has failed to heed the ontological difference, and so has articulated being precisely as a kind of ultimate existence.

Ontology seeks to provide a definitive and exhaustive classification of entities in all spheres of being. Nevertheless, ontology is usually asked to encompass problems about the most general features and dealings of the entities which do survive; it tries to investigate what is there and of the universal features, what there is, and what is involved in resolving questions about what there is in general, especially for the philosophically tricky cases (cf Hofweber 2014). Ontology is indeed a very wide term that can be practiced in many fields to explain certain things that do not have meanings. It can be used in the school of science, philosophy, mathematics as well as in theology; it tries to investigate certain entities that are within the fabric of life in order to commit it to being or existence.

This brings to the design of the research question the issue that there are many Black people within the church and society who deny the ontological reality, the existence of the LGBTIQ and who are failing to accept the ontological being of the LGBTIQ. Dealing with cultural appropriation, the cultural interpretation by Black people to disconfirm something ultimate, to deny the ontological being of the LGBTI, many African leaders have mentioned that homosexuality is a Western phenomenon. According to Johnson (2000:132), "until recently, African scholars and political leaders have asserted that homosexuality is a Western phenomenon and not an indigenous part of African culture". This is to deny LGBTIQ ontologically, and culturally implies that in African culture, LGBTIQ are not a reality but are a reality in Western culture. The cultural element of this debate is important for this research. Everyone following news knows that in

contemporary African societies, the topic of the LGBTIQ raises much controversy. One just has to call to mind the murder of the prominent Ugandan gay rights activist, David Kato, in January 2011, some months after a national newspaper published a list with “top homosexuals” alongside a banner reading “Hang them” (cf Van Klinken et al., 2012: 114). This killing shows the denial of the LGBTIQ ontologically. LGBTIQ are denied not only from the cultural and social perspectives, but also within the church, ontologically.

In 1984, Angola’s ambassador to The Hague stated that “the evil of homosexuality does not exist in our country” (Johnson, 2000:132). Even in African literature, one finds the acute stigmatization of LGBTI as an unequivocally external phenomenon, as they are ontologically denied by their black brothers. According to Wiredu (1990:224), “the Akan (Ghana) were rather familiar with homosexuality; they merely saw it in culturally relevant terms as indicated by the expression for such individuals in Fanti (Kwadwo Basia) language. Black Africans struggle to accept the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, even if they claim to understand Black Consciousness, especially inside the church the researcher belongs to.

The (URCSA) has been talking about the legitimacy of the ordination of the LGBTIQ without any success and conclusion. The study argues that great black scholars are truly not representing the Black Consciousness and BT well. The church has been commissioning commissions to research the subject of the ordination of the LGBTIQ. From 2005 to date, there is indecision on the ordination of the LGBTIQ, and this denies the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. According to Dreyer (2008:1236), the term “gay” is stigmatized. Some churches do not want to stigmatize, but their approach is likewise paramount to “indecision”. The URCSA is following what Dreyer is suggesting about the church not wanting to stigmatize the LGBTIQ. These people are welcomed in the faith community and regarded as devoted Christians, but the church councils are officially excluding gays (LGBTIQ) who are honest about their gay lifestyle.

Manganyi (1973:7) articulates that “a tolerable environment maintains a distinction between people (whose rights and existence are recognized) and non-people whose existence and rights are not seriously considered”. In this regard, the study attempts to argue that “the people” are the subjects, while the non-people are the object; in this

regard, it implies that from the apartheid era to date, blacks were regarded as non-people, while white people were regarded as people. To put it simply, LGBTIQ humanity becomes absent in African countries and other countries, as it is seen as undesirable and ceases to be part of the position and, therefore, has to register to the cosmos. This means that the LGBTIQ suffer principally for not being heterosexual, as much as Zahar (1974) posits that blacks suffer principally for not being white. In many instances, the “Being” of the LGBTIQ is alienated to the “Being” of heterosexuality; they do not only suffer through their sexuality but also through their racialist being as this plays a major role in their oppression of being in the world. According to Dussel, “to approach injustice is always a risk because it is to shorten the distance toward a distinct freedom” (1985:16); this is indeed to show that in every aspect of life, when one is going full force in approaching justice, one is at risk. It is this study’s position to argue that approaching the intersectionality of blackness and gayness is always speculative. As many would argue, it is highly impossible to compare the two as there are no gay (LGBTIQ) plantations but only black slave plantations. In South Africa, as I assume is the case elsewhere in the world, there is a vocabulary that operated during the apartheid era within the social logic of scandal to pervert black people. Within the LGBTIQ community, there is vocabulary that operated such logical scandal to pervert homosexuality. For example, many black gay men, particularly among Zulu speakers, use the word *isitabane* as a form of defiance; the word is a negative description for both male and female homosexuals.

Boesak in one of his works, “Black and Reformed: apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist Tradition” (1984) has testified how a team of the white reformers gave the benefit of doubt of the existence of the blacks. The icon of Black theology, James H. Cone in one of his works “A Black theology of Liberation”, argues, “The focus on blackness does not imply that only blacks suffer as victims in a racist society, but that blackness is an ontological symbol and a visible reality which best describes what oppression means in America”(1990:7). In the same way, this study argues that it is imperative to use the analogy by Cone, which is that blackness, as an ontological symbol, should include the visible reality which best describes what oppression, denial and homophobia mean to the LGBTIQ community. Steve Biko, in one of his well-known works “I write what I like”,

states that “Black Consciousness takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God’s plan in creating black people. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value system, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life (1978:53). The research argues that there is intersectionality between “Being black and gay” as they share the same struggle of marginalization, oppression and dehumanization. As much as “Being black” was a badge of shame with no meaningful future (Cone 2011:6), “being gay” today is acknowledged as a badge of shame in the African culture and in the black church.

1.4. Problem statement

If BTL succeeds to affirm the ontological Blackness of a person and affirm the dignity of the oppressed black person, then BTL should succeed to affirm the ontological being of the LGBTI. The reverse is that if BTL never succeeded to affirm the ontological existence of Blackness and the dignity of the oppressed black person, BTL will not succeed to affirm the dignity and the ontological existence of the LGBTIs. By advancing the gains of a BTL, simply put, the study argues that the LGBTIs can be as ontological affirmed as human beings that exist in black communities themselves.

1.5 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore the intersectionality between blackness and gayness. It attempts, from a black theological approach, to contribute to the discourse on the salient lessons of the ontological denial of blackness and the implications for the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. The dissertation seeks to examine how the Black church is denying the existentiality of the LGBTIQ. For instance, the researcher belongs to one of the black churches that arguably fails to affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ. This is a research project that must be carried out if the Black Church is to understand fully the experiences of “Being Black and Gay” in this homophobic, capitalistic society. Black communities and the Black Church may be perceived as more homophobic than other communities because of the tendencies for individuals in black communities to verbally express antigay sentiments.

It is the aim of this study to examine the manner in which BTL uses its methodology, core and fundamental argument to affirm the ontological existence of Blackness.

1.6. Research methodology

This is predominantly a theoretical project which analyzes various primary texts, as well as secondary written material such as volumes and articles. This study attempts to contribute to the discussions on some of the salient lessons and challenges emerging from the LGBTI community. Most sources of BTL dealt with the background of the worldwide matrix of blackness and were based mainly to patriarchal setting. The current study is shaped by insights from Boesak and Maimela, Cone and other black scholars. King, for example, says “to be black is a confusing proposition, not the colour itself, but the complexities brought to it by the cold, harsh realities of a nation filled with all-encompassing whiteness” (1983:321). This implies that, at the current post-1994 South Africa, to be gay (LGBTIQ) is a confusing proposition, not through sexuality, but through the complexities forwarded by the cold and harsh realities of homophobia.

Black and African Theology stood up for the incorrect, harmful wrath of White Theology. The likes of Mbiti, Maimela, Boesak and others fought to understand the Bible to accommodate the black experiences. This study applies the same tools to engage the black church to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. African churches need to have what Boesak calls a new consciousness; in this, the African church needs to realize that LGBTIQ people are children of God. It is within the study to argue that according to Biko, “black consciousness takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God’s plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with the new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life (Biko 1978:53)”. This study challenges the consciousness of the African church to revisit its consciousness, as Biko alluded that black consciousness seeks to infuse the black community, so the African church therefore needs to realize that. Kornegay argues that “traditionally there has been the repository of our validation, pride, self-worth, wholeness and righteousness: the Bible and the black church” (2004:35). In a manner that the same blacks who reject the ontology of the LGBTIQ are persuaded by the black church, it is surprising that the

church is pushing what Kornegay calls it “Black homophobia” (2004:35) toward their fellow brothers and sisters.

1.7. Limitation

In the African continent, it is still taboo for a black man to be gay, and if one is found claiming that he or she is LGBTI, she/he will either be stoned to death or criminalized. This study might make a contribution towards the alleviation of homophobia in black communities while it continues to engage blackness, sexuality and whiteness. It is a black ethical study done at the level of Master’s degree.

1.8. Scope of the study

This study consists of six chapters whose breakdown is reflected below.

Chapter 1 of the study provides the introduction and discusses the scope of the study with reference to the background (rationale), aims/objective research methodology, limitation and scope (chapter outline). This chapter outlines what the study entails.

Chapter 2 presents a review on Black Theology of Liberation and the ontological affirmation of blackness and sexuality.

Chapter 3 examines African womanist theology and African culture.

Chapter 4 explores on Being black and Gay in the Reformed Tradition AURCSA perspective.

Chapter 5 discusses the Affirmation of Ontological and Ethical realities of the LGBTIs.

Chapter 6 entails the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2

Black Theology of Liberation and the ontological affirmation of blackness and sexuality

2.1 Introduction

Blackness has always been curse during the 1960s throughout African countries. Colonization of most African countries brought dominion over black people and stripped them of their history, culture and religion. The colonial government seized the black masses and destabilized their roots, which, in turn, destroyed the heritage of the colonized nations. The question of blackness continues to haunt the post-colonial world, and in the case of South Africa, this situation still continues because of the legacy of apartheid. During this fourth dimension of the apartheid regime, it shifted its form in order to produce and re-create blackness in order to maintain itself. According to Fanon (1967:26), “blackness is related to pathology and stands in a position that renders it devoid of being, blackness operates in an anti-black world, where the Negro, the African, the native, the black and the dirty was rejected, despised and cursed”.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the Black Theology of Liberation and the ontological affirmation of blackness and sexuality in the following themes: human sexuality and sexual liberation of gayness (LGBTIQness), Black theology of liberation, ontological affirmation of blackness and ontological affirmation of LGBTIQness. The chapter also connects the Belhar confession and BTL with the struggle of the LGBTIQ. The chapter further argues that the LGBTIQ community could be affirmed ontologically by the BTL. BTL is a theology of liberation for oppressed blacks; it could, therefore, serve as the liberation of the LGBTIQ community as well. One of the main reasons for the Belhar confession creation was to fight the injustices that were created by white theology. The chapter argues that behind much of this material is the argument that LGBTIQ people in the BTL are inaccurately represented, and that BTL should start by affirming the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ.

2.2 Human sexuality and sexual liberation of gayness (LGBTIQ)

Sexuality, in many instances, has created patriarchy in many African countries and within culture. Patriarchy is also one of the tools used to give another gender power over the other. In one of her works, Tamale (in Cole, Manuh and Miescher, 2007:18) argues that “one of the most efficient ways that patriarchy uses sexuality as a tool to create and sustain gender hierarchy in African societies is by enshrouding it in secrecy and taboos”. Sexuality, within certain societies, plays a major role in creating divisions. In many occasions, people have often created this hierarchy of sexuality in order to control other genders, especially when it comes to woman and same-sex relationships. According to Tamale (2005:9), “sexuality is intricately linked to practically in every aspect of our lives: to pleasure, power, politics and procreation, but also to disease, violence, war, language, social roles, religion, kingship structures and identity”. In this argument brought by Tamale, it is clear that human sexuality is not only a matter of sexual act, but can be viewed through many interpretations. Narrow interpretations, however, are those made by some scholars and people, generally, who interpret sexuality as procreation.

According to Grenz (1990:21), human sexuality is not to be equated with either physical sexual characteristics or procreative capacity, for it is that dimension of the human existence that lies behind physical features. Sexuality involves at least two vital elements of human personality and experience. This includes how we perceive ourselves, the issue of relationships, how we relate to other people and to God. It is clear that sexuality is intimately linked to how we express and experience affection, warmth, closeness and care for each other. Sexuality has become a cultural and religious battleground. In the past years, there have been hate crimes related to lesbians being raped because of their different sexuality. Gays have been slaughtered like animals in other parts of the country. Women have been disregarded within decision-making spaces for cultural reasons, especially in rural areas. In echoing the BTL, its arguments concerning God’s identification with the most despised of earth has made me interrogate the BTL concerning what I realized as an omission, which is its silence regarding sexuality and sexual difference in black communities.

The chapter, therefore, argues that, when BTL spoke about liberation, it was not clear about what liberation for black people would look like, nor did it consider the fact that there are women and LGBTIQ who also require liberation. According to Reddy (in Sims 2000:164), the struggle of black oppression and racial segregation is the struggle of sexuality. As far as the BTL is concerned, the struggle has always been about racism on black communities and specifically about the masculinities. The voice of women and the LGBTIQ within the BTL has not been adequately heard. If the black experience is constituted by racial oppression and segregation, then it would appear that those who are black LGBTIQ and women are excluded from blackness. It is the argument of the chapter that when the first wave of BTL affirmed the ontological existence of the black people, they definitely failed to acknowledge sexism and homophobia as a problem that needed to be addressed as well. By so doing, it failed to acknowledge sexual differences within the black communities.

In the evolution of the BTL, black womanist scholars critiqued the lack of presence of black women in religious and cultural studies (Sneed, 2010:17). It is understood that they took seriously the black liberation theology's claim that black people are oppressed by white supremacy. They took seriously the use of black people's experience as a point of departure from traditional white theology. However, womanist scholars started their project by questioning the replication of male hegemony in the BTL. In addressing the omission of women's voice and sexual difference, the chapter seeks to expand the BTL discourse in the LGBTIQ life. For example, the BTL needs to address the LGBTIQ existence and experience, their spirituality and how that spirituality sustains and renews the LGBTIQ life.

BTL, in their methodology, did not deal with the issue of sexuality in a broader manner, and that led to womanist and feminist theology's emergence. The struggle of black people was the struggle of justice as they were segregated because of their skin colour. The BTL struggled to understand the connection between their blackness and their Christian faith and wanted to know whether Jesus was for or against their blackness. Within the dominant white, cultural narratives about black sexuality depict black people as hypersexual beasts (Douglas, 1994:54). This portrayed black men and women as

driven by unrelenting urges of their genitalia, their libidos out of control and unappeasable. In this argument, it was clear that black men are irrational people who were only bound to make lots of babies. This narrative reinforced white privileged and justified white violence against black bodies (Douglas, 1994:55). It was indeed difficult to understand why white men were treating black men like that, and it was difficult to understand why black bodies, black sexuality was depicted as hypersexual.

With the whole notion of the ontological denial of the existence of the LGBTIQ, the chapter finds it difficult to understand why the heterosexual hate and despise the LGBTIQ and why LGBTIQ sexuality is depicted as hypersexual. According to Shoko (2010:634), politicians call them (LGBTIQ) the festering finger, endangering the body, if not the nation, the churchmen says God wants them dead, the courts say send them to jail. This is to despise the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ and deny the human sexuality of LGBTIQ. It implies that the LGBTIQ do not fall under the umbrella of human sexuality and does not take the LGBTIQ sexuality seriously. It is the argument of the chapter that heterosexuals have displayed a very weird and curious fascination with LGBTIQ sexuality.

For many centuries, black people's oppression was instigated by a biblical argument, and being black was proven as wrong and inhuman using the bible. Women sexuality was, as well, disregarded and silenced within the BTL and western theology, and women oppression and sexism also began in the bible. It is no surprise then that even the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ is biblically argued and disregarded. Both womanist, feminist and the BTL used the same bible and the same gospel to form their own theological discourse.

Sexuality and race are indeed intertwined, and this is argued by Dyson in one of his books titled "Between God and Gangsta Rap". Dyson examines how sexuality and race are intertwined when referring to domestic violence. He argues that "male sexual ownership of women and the presumption of male discretion over women's bodies that feeds obsession and domination, must simply desist" (1996:34). Domestic violence is one of the charges that relate to sexual oppression. The same sexual oppression is noticed within the LGBTIQ community since their sexuality is seen as a sin, and they

cannot freely practice their sexuality. The world is predominantly heterosexual; there is a tendency to view the LGBTIQ community with suspicion. It is not a secret that the LGBTIQ are sexually oppressed since they are treated as objects to be studied because they are deviant. Rather than being subjects who are neighbours and whom others are commanded to love as they love themselves.

As argued by Douglas (1999:6) “sexuality is about more than what we do with our genitals, but (my emphasis) is a sign, symbol and a means of our call to communication and communion”. In simple terms, sexuality is for us to explore our own humanity as human beings. Douglas (1999:6) engages this issue by saying that “the mystery of our sexuality is the mystery of our need to reach out to embrace others both physically and spiritually”. This cannot be denied, whether we are LGBTIQs or heterosexuals. What matters is that we are God’s good plan of creation, and in that manner, sexuality is who we are in our body-selves, experiencing the emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual need for intimate communion, both human and divine (Douglas, 1999:6). This is initiated by the way in which people view human sexuality since a distinction is not made between sex and sexuality by many people.

However, throughout the church history, Christians have not raised questions about the sexuality of Jesus. It is for this reason that the LGBTIQ are being sexually segregated and oppressed because it is often understood that their sexuality is incompatible with Christianity. Their sexuality is also often distinguished by cultural stereotypes which are hostile towards the LGBTIQ, and that has led them to be verbally and physically assaulted.

2.3. Black theology of Liberation

Black theology of Liberation emanated as a new form of theological consciousness within the black church. Divinity, religiosity and spirituality were inseparable from the black struggles for liberation because liberation songs in Azania had very emotive spiritual tone as church hymns. The emergence of BTL was aimed to restore the humanity of black people within the black church. It was to bring justice to the interpretation of scripture. BTL acted against the spiritual enslavement of black people,

freeing Christianity from its oppressive role. This led to the emergence of the new political consciousness to infuse the oppression that the western Christians were coming with. According to Tshaka (2015:8), BTL emerged in South Africa during the 1960s as a project influenced by the voice of Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X and inspired by Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. During the 1960s, BTL stressed justice of the gospel to those who were oppressed by the western colony. BTL was (is) a critical discourse in the academic study of black life in the African context oriented towards expanding a description of and the possibilities for black existence.

It is argued by Tshaka (2015:8) that “it is commonly held that BTL drew its sources from diverse realities”. These diverse realities, as argued by Tshaka, may be inclusive of the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. BTL has validated that, white supremacy had poisoned white Christianity and rendered it incapable of speaking to and for the oppressed and downtrodden. It is argued by Gutierrez (1973:36) that “liberation expresses the aspiration of oppressed people and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes”. This indeed shows that BTL emerged from diverse realities, as argued by Tshaka; it is not only about the pigmentation of the skin, but of many things that need to be liberated. Within the arguments posed by BTL, it is imperative for the chapter to argue that if BTL were able to start by affirming the ontological existence of the black oppressed, then it could affirm the ontological existence of the black LGBTIQ community.

The theme and basic argument of the BTL was to argue against white Christian theology which oppressed black people. The aspiration of liberation and justice was not within the Western Christian theology. That is this reason Cone (1970: ix) argues that “in a society where persons are oppressed because they are black, Christian theology must become Black Theology, a theology that is unreservedly identified with the goals of the oppressed and that seeks to interpret the divine character for their liberation”.

Reading Cone, Tshaka, and Boesak’s theology, I found their descriptions of black life and their call for a revision of God as a God who liberates the oppressed provocative and compelling. It is the argument of this chapter that if the BTL is able to see that they

need a revision of God as God who liberates the oppressed and those who are denied ontologically, it should have a revision God as a God who can liberate the LGBTIQ community.

BTL responded to the black experience, black culture and black religion. When Cone, Boesak, Mosala and others speak of BTL and black experience, they surely foreground an ontological crisis. As being black was a matter of life and death during the heyday of apartheid, as blacks were called savages, apes and many names, I cite Cone at length when using the black experience as way of describing BTL thus:

There can be no black theology which does not take seriously the black experience- a life of humiliation and suffering. This must be the point of departure of all God-talk which seeks to be black talk. This means that black theology realizes that it is human who speak of God, and when those human beings are black, they speak of God only in the light of the black experience. It is not that black theology denies the importance of God's revelation in Christ, but blacks want to know what Jesus Christ means when they are confronted with the brutality of white racism (1990:17).

It is indeed clear that Cone was all about affirming the ontological reality of the black community. It was vital for him to show that black experience is fraught with misery and travail. The lynching, slave trading and humiliation of black people has made black people to ask what Jesus Christ has to offer them. Thus, BTL was able to recognize that humans, in general, and black people, in particular, cannot speak of God without reflecting upon their own experience. It is clear that BTL is a hermeneutical theology that is concerned with the experience of the oppressed black people and describing their conditions.

Sneed (2010:10) argues, "Black theology depicts black existence as being fraught with turmoil and imposed by the forces of white supremacy". White supremacy has imposed many negative impacts towards black oppressed people and has destroyed them. It used the gospel of Jesus as a point of departure to the oppressed and ruled by the hand of steel, which is why BTL emerged. Due to the fact that it rejected the narrow gospel that was preached, a racist gospel and oppressive gospel, a gospel that

dehumanizes black people, it is imperative to note that black all that people wanted was to connect and relate the gospel with their struggle of being denied existence. Boesak (1976:2) asks: “what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ when one is black and living in a world controlled by white racists”?

Following the argument by Boesak, one can ask: what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ when one is black and LGBTIQ in a world controlled by homophobic and racist people? Cone (1990:18) argues, “there is no black theology without the experience of black people. There cannot be a God talk if black people are rejected by the same God... what will they talk about? Following that argument, it is imperative for the chapter to argue that black theologians started affirming the ontological blackness of their existence. I find it very hard as well to talk about God who does not reflect the experience of the oppressed, dehumanized LGBTIQ. Using the same core, fundamental argument and methodology of BTL, the LGBTIQ community can be affirmed ontologically. It is not that LGBTI deny the relation of God in Christ, but want to know what Jesus means when they are confronted by brutal ontological denial.

BTL realized that it is humans who speak of God, and when those human being are blacks and speak of God in their experience of being black, it is imperative to note that BTL should acknowledge that LGBTIQ are human beings who speak about God concerning their experiences of being black and LGBTIQ. If BTL fought to liberate the internalized oppression of black people, it is imperative that it should as also be able to liberate the oppressive world controlled by homophobic heterosexual people. It is imperative that the scholars² of BTL, who were able to see the need for the liberation of black people in the oppressive world should also be able to see the need for liberation of the LGBTIQ people. In as much as whites are arrogant with their racist tendencies, it is possible to argue that even black heterosexuals are arrogant with their homophobic tendencies.

² Boesak, Cone, Mofokeng, Vellem, Tshaka, Senokoane and Lephakga, in their studies they should as well bear in mind that there are other communities of people that need full liberation. They must, in their fundamental argument, able to descend and make the heterosexual community able to understand that there is sexual difference within communities.

The chapter exposes the heterosexual theology for its homophobic theological justification of the status quo. Boesak (1976:4) was right when he said, “apartheid in South Africa is justified by Christians because it serves a true community, avoids friction (which is sin) and in foregrounds that the myth of apartheid is really based on Christian love”. In the same cue, the chapter argues that, the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ is justified by Christians because it also serves as a true community, and that homophobia is based on Christian love.

This is a stifling love that has no character of justice within it. As much as apartheid was justified by Christians, the ontological denial of the LGBTI is justified by the Christians who claim to be living the Christian love. This study agrees with Boesak (1976:5) that “love creates room for justice and always seeks to do what is right for the other; it does not seek fulfillment of self-interest but serves the other selflessly”. Indeed, this has shown, within the atmosphere of the URCSA³ family, that this Christian love they are preaching is just fulfillment of their self-interest. It is imperative to note that the changed and changing situation in South Africa has posed certain challenges for continued relevance of BTL since post-apartheid South Africa. Maybe BTL is theology of liberation for the LGBTIQ people too to be affirmed ontologically.

2.4 Ontological affirmation of blackness

Ontology is part of metaphysics, and in other instances, is often described as “the science of being” (Putnam, 2004:17). Ontology is the study of being, and in most cases, it is often regarded as ‘what exists’. It strives to give existence to entities which are not regarded as things that exists. According to Smith (2003:1), the term is used by a student of Aristotle to refer to what Aristotle himself called “first philosophy”. Ontology is a branch of metaphysics relating to the nature and relations of being - a particular system according to which problems of the nature of being are investigated. The existence of black people was, and always has been investigated by the westerns. For

³ In 2016 October, in the seventh General Synod of the URCSA sitting, the mandate was that the executive was to appoint another task team for another scientific study to add other perspectives on homosexuality. In the report that was drafted by the task team, there was a questionnaire, and with that the response was that, if very few regions responded, that could be an indication that either people are not ready to discuss it or not willing to discuss.

the western people, the “being” of a black person was questioned and was, at the same time, denied from existing. Blacks were called apes and turned into slaves because the west only recognized itself as human since they were not black.

The oppression, segregation and marginalization of the black people came into existence due to this ontological denial. According to whites, blacks were not civilized as as themselves; therefore, they did not exist as human beings and could be dominated. Lephakga (2015:43) argues that this kind of ontology is “understood as ontology of domination”; this kind of ontology, as argued by Lephakga, is understood against the Dusselian notion of geopolitics of space. According to Dussel (1985:1-3), the notion is based on the understanding that the world is divided into two geopolitical spaces. Within these spaces, there are those who are non-Europeans who are not beings and those who are Europeans, who are beings.

The conquest for Africa resulted in this ontological domination, and that led to the ontological denial of blackness during the apartheid era to date. To ontologically affirm the black person was a matter of life and death, as many died fighting this battle. When black theologians voiced their theological discourse of being sidelined within the geopolitical spaces in the church, they were thrown in jail. Thus, they wanted their own theological discourse that would speak and relate their ontological denial within the world.

When black clergies formulated BTL, they started to affirm the ontological existence of blackness, which affirmed the courage to be black within the atmosphere of the ontology of domination. It gave courage to many black Christians and clergy who were experiencing blackness like a badge of hatred. Thus, Boesak (1976:14) argues that theology is a “rational study of the being of God in the world, in the light of the existential situation of an oppressed community relating to the essence of the gospel which is Christ”. The existential situation of the oppressed community, which was ontologically denied, was to be affirmed through the same gospel that was used against their ontological existence. This study, therefore, argues for the ontological affirmation of gay people on these grounds, that if BTL was able to affirm the ontological reality and existence of black people, it should then affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ.

White supremacy has robbed the dignity and the personhood of black people. BTL scholars flare up in flames of bitterness against those who have castrated their hopes and dreams, worse their existence.

According to Maimela (1987:65), “to affirm blackness is not only a legitimate form of human existence authorized by God the creator of all human beings, but above all, it is to affirm that black is beautiful”. This simply means that BTL was able to recognize that blackness is not only a legitimate form of human existence, authorized by God the creator of all human beings, but that it is also beautiful. It is the argument of the chapter that BTL should affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ and affirm that being LGBTIQ is not a choice. Bradley (2010:18) argues that “it is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people”. The notion of blackness is merely understood as a symbol of oppression that can be applied to all persons of colour who have a history of oppression (Douglas, 2003:999). This can also be applied with the LGBTIQ community, that their LGBTIQness is a symbol of oppression and ontological denial.

Inasmuch as white has created blackness, so have heterosexuals created homophobia, an ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. To affirm the ontological acceptance of blackness, the scholars of BTL had to firstly affirm their existence as human beings and then affirm their ontological reality. To deny the ontological blackness of oppressed blacks, the Bible was used to reject them ontologically. There were texts that were used to oppress black people and deny them ontologically. Mofokeng (1992:3) argues that we shall consequently learn to leave out the texts that hurt and humiliate us simply because the oppressed say that they are being hurt and humiliated by them.

2.5. Ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ

The prophets of BTL were prophets of social justice, reminding the black people that God is the creator of justice. In their argument and in affirming the ontological blackness of the oppressed, they stood up and continuously declared oppression as heresy. To affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ, the BTL has to loudly declare homophobia as heresy and the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ people as heresy. The

ontological denial and the exploitation of persons with a different sexual orientation is the central problem of our life-time. To affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ is to give them justice that the oppressed had fought for. The old game that the white supremacy has played of oppressing blacks has drastically changed, due to the radical revolution that BTL has brought. According to Cone (1970:1), Christian theology is a theology of Liberation. This means that BTL cannot only affirm the ontological blackness of oppressed blacks but should also affirm the liberation of all those who are oppressed and abused.

If BTL cannot argue for the ontological affirmation and existence of the LGBTIQ, then there must be something wrong with that theology (BTL). It is argued by Cone (1970:1) that “there can be no Christian theology that is not identified unreservedly with those who are humiliated and abused”. The study, therefore, argues that indeed, if BTL cannot identify, unreservedly so, with the humiliated and abused LGBTIQ, it is not BTL. The ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ may encourage and push black people and BTL to oppose homophobia, sexism and classism by turning to, and actively critiquing black cultural production. These will simply mean that the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ will condemn heterosexism and homophobia in all spheres of life, be it in the church or community.

Addressing the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ is a matter of life and death. The oppression that the LGBTIQ experience is not only from whites; black heterosexuals, will, at the same time, enable the black church to live what they preach and give the platform to discuss the issue of ontological sexual affirmation of the LGBTIQ. For some time, the LGBTIQ have been forced to remain secretive about their sexuality, Christianity is still being used to oppress the LGBTIQ community to live very uncomfortably to such extent that it still forces them to remain in the closet. For this reason, the LGBTIQ is reluctant to come forward as the very same Christianity that was used to oppress the black community is used to oppress and condemn them. During the apartheid regime, Christianity was used to dehumanize black people to destroy their self-esteem and augment their self-hatred. In this era, it is still being used to oppress

humanity and sexuality of the LGBTIQ to destroy their self-esteem, as well as to make them feel as an unwanted community.

Christianity has been nothing but a pain in the life of the LGBTIQ as it has displayed homophobia towards the LGBTIQ community. Cone (1985:47) argues that “for blacks in white churches, white denial of the theological value of black history and culture meant denial of black humanity and an establishment of white Christianity as normative for all Christians”. Cone was decrying the rejection that white theology was doing to the ontological denial of the black reality; it is the cry of the chapter that denial of the existence and value of the LGBTIQ, in being who they are, is indeed absurd. The 21st century theology still denies the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ as seen by the recommendation and mandate of the URCSA General Synod.

In denying the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ, the black church is proclaiming homophobia and destroying the dignity, identity and the inner and outer identity of the LGBTIQ. It is perpetuating the distortion brought about by society towards the LGBTIQ and characterizations that the society is giving to deny the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ. Calling the LGBTIQ names such as sinners and abnormal, sick and criminals, this has created fear and being stigmatized. It is the argument of the study that the rise of the BTL was to give meaning to the gospel of Jesus to black people. This theology was to decry the human dignity that was ripped off by white supremacy of black people, which denied humanity of black people. Their existence was ripped off, their culture was ripped off, and their theology was not recognized and was made into a pseudo-theology to the master's one.

Due to their experiences and history, the black man should therefore be the last man to oppress and dehumanize the LGBTIQ, just because the bible condemns them. The Bible was used to condemn the black nation, appropriate their land and forced the black man to be regarded as a non-being, an inferior. It is the argument of the chapter that if Christianity is oppressive towards the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, such religion cannot be trusted. A religion that denies humanity of the other human being, a religion that sees other humanity as evil, that religion is nothing but disgrace in the eyes of God of liberation. Black theologians and scholars argued that they cannot trust a theologian

who ignores blackness and denies the ontological reality of blackness, and defends it as God's will. Those are the same sentiments shared by the LGBTIQ, that they too cannot trust a religion that regards them as evil which denies them their ontological existence and reality.

According to Reddy (2000:170), "while these leaders and theologians may be heroes of their post colonies, their tirade against homosexuality is uncritically couched in contradiction, for they use the very same colonial laws that criminalized homosexuality to claim that it is foreign, colonial, and by implication, alien". However, there is a Sesotho proverb, "*sesa feleng sa ya hlola*", which means *everything shall come to pass or that if one has pain it will not last forever*. These words do give hope to those who are still under the pain of oppression saying that hardships, difficulty, exploitation, sexism and homophobia/biphobia shall come to pass.

Bradley (2010:18) argues that "while black theology affirms blackness, theology should not be construed as an anti-white reactionary theology". Bradley was asserting the same argument that was given by Biko, in paraphrasing that blackness is not merely a reference of skin colour but rather a symbol of oppression. The study argues then that BTL should serve as a good tool to those who are marginalized, such as the LGBTIQ. The same way theology was able to affirm the ontological existence of black people, it should be the first as well to affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTI that is in the black church and in the world.

2.6. Connecting the Belhar confession and BTL with the struggle of the LGBTIQ

For many decades, churches have been confessing the Apostles Creed, which was introduced by the apartheid regime theologians. During the heyday of colonialism, very strong voices came up with a confession that would address the experience of the black life. When the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC), in 1984 sat down, they realized that they needed to draft a confession that would refute oppression within the church. They composed, approved and adopted the Belhar confession in 1986. The confession was to refute the theological and so-called biblical

defense of the ideology of apartheid, as well as the policy of the government of South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) at the time used to justify the ideology of apartheid on biblical grounds. The emergence of the confession was to reject this justification and maintain that it is a fallacy or a deviation from what is taught in the Bible. The Belhar confession focuses on the following three concepts or principles: *unity, reconciliation and justice*.

According to De Gruchy (1991:214), the Belhar confession rejects the Synodical decision of 1857 to allow segregation in the church; it equally rejects apartheid as heresy and affirms the true nature of the true church's unity and mission: a confession of Jesus as Lord and commitment to the struggle for God's justice in the world. How then is the Belhar confession helpful to the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ people today, as in the 80s where it was used as a tool of liberation to those who were oppressed? It was used as a tool that removed the face of shame and inferiority among the oppressed black people. The confession, I believe, emphasizes that God is a God of Justice, and that God loves us all, loves the world and loves all humankind, whether LGBTIQ or not, but God loves.

God's love is faithful and just, and God's justice consists of fidelity and care with which God makes abundant provision for our lives. Therefore, as Vellem (2010:3) notes that the goal of black theology is to open the horizon of those suffering vicious oppression and domination, the chapter strongly believes that the Belhar confession stipulates the same ideology that Vellem is arguing around. The goal of Belhar confession is to open the horizon of those oppressed, sexually segregated, discriminated and dominated. Belhar confession stands against an understanding of diversity that is abused because of rejection instead of diversity that celebrates the other and the richness of difference.

The users⁴ of this confession should not use the "state theology" to oppress the LGBTIQ, but be a prophetic theology, because this kind of theology is clear and unambiguous (Vellem, 2010:3). This should show that the times of the Belhar

⁴ URCSA, in 2016 celebrated 30 years of Belhar confession, in unity, reconciliation and justice in obedience to Christ. But the question that has always been in the minds of the LGBTIQ is: how then do we celebrate the confession when the church has indecision about the issue of the LGBTIQ in the URCSA?

confession have truly changed, and these are times of the Belhar confession that emphasize what the Kairos Document is (was) preaching on with the prophetic theology.

It is understood that throughout history, the church has stressed that both Luther and Calvin were aware of the conflictual character of the church. For them, the church's struggle was between the true and false church within one church of Jesus Christ. As the URCSA celebrates 30 years of the Belhar confession, it has always come into the researcher's mind that the Belhar confession (as a gay man) theology is accurate and adequate for the struggle of the LGBTIQ. The point is further argued by Boesak (2009:49) that "our commitment and calling to unity and reconciliation require that homosexual persons, as confessing members of the church, have access to all offices of the church, including the office of minister of the word." The theology of Belhar preaches justice and acceptance, inclusiveness and liberation to those who are oppressed and rejected by the church. Boesak (2009:49) adds, "consideration in the light of the confession of Belhar cannot bring the URCSA to accept and embrace homosexual persons in the fullest sense of the word." This means that the church accepts a homosexual person, on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

In connecting the Belhar confession and the BTL, it is clear that both confession and BTL push the same sentiments. Both the theologies of Belhar and the BTL are all about the justice towards those who are oppressed and marginalized. The connection between the two is that, if blacks and whites are baptized into the same Jesus Christ, then they are part of the same church. They share the same privileges when it comes to serving of the Eucharist, and this will mean that there can no longer be any theological grounds for separating those communities. The chapter, therefore, argues that the LGBTIQ does share the same Jesus and confess the same confession with heterosexuals, since both the Belhar and the BTL affirm blackness and humanity of blacks. The BTL and the Belhar confession, in connecting, should seek doing theology in a manner that they both affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. When both the

Belhar and BTL were composed, they were on the margin of seeking to affirm the humanity of blacks in a way that they believe was previously denied.

In a very precise way, both the Belhar and BTL argue that faith and religion should free people rather than oppresses them and free them to act justly. Both believe that God is on the side of the oppressed and the poor. Oppression never fell with apartheid regime because oppression of the LGBTIQ Christians within the church is still present, as they cannot be ordained, yet we believe that the church is the mother of all those who believe in the Lord and proclaim Him as their Lord and saviour. The confession of the Belhar and the BTL believe that Jesus is the liberator because the understanding is that Jesus was concerned about the consequences of sin and did not only forgive sin, but healed the sick, fed the hungry, encouraged the disheartened, and most importantly, blessed the poor.

The BTL and Belhar confession need to contribute to the struggle of the LGBTIQ community. Since both are preaching slightly the same message that God is on the side of the oppressed, both have emphasized the message of a Jesus of liberation, whose mission is to be here for the oppressed and the marginalized. The connection of this theology and the confession should address the message of liberation and the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ community. Its social analysis has always been to bring a new way of thinking and a new way of understanding the world that we live in. I believe that it is impossible to appreciate the Black theology of Liberation and Belhar confession, or to understand what they are doing in the church today without appreciating the new role of social analysis in theology.

As the researcher read the confession and the BTL, the URCSA family relegated the black LGBTIQ to a problem status. Instead of using the confession and BTL to spread the liberative gospel of Jesus Christ, this is the kind of theology that the black theology of liberation is disputing, “the State Theology” and “church theology”. The church, especially the URCSA, should know that when they cite Belhar, they are sure that they are not against race but against all oppressive forms. URCSA stand firmly when citing the confession in the following manner:

We believe that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the church is called to the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells

With the above citation from the Belhar confession, the study finds it difficult to understand how the church, especially the URCSA, becomes the salt of the earth and the light of the earth when it fails to bring the light within the LGBTIQ, as they are being denied ontologically. Boesak (2009:39) argues that “these three core issues in the Belhar confession (unity, reconciliation and justice) should guide the church in its continuing reflection on its public testimony, and that they are particularly pertinent in the debate on homosexuality”. On the same breath that is argued by Boesak, the study also argues that the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ is precisely one of those issues which the confession raises. Inasmuch as the BTL is still relevant currently, it is so with the Belhar confession, given that the confession grounded itself upon the core issues or principles at the heart of the gospel, i.e. unity, reconciliation and justice. It is clear that Boesak was implying that the confession is surely not about the issue of race and apartheid but includes the debate of the LGBTIQ within the URCSA family.

In spite of 30 years of celebrating the Belhar confession, diversity and inclusion, the way in which the confession is used towards certain groups of congregants is not fruitful. Many theologians and ministers of the URCSA family, it seems, only use the confession based on the idea of racial discrimination and segregation, not the other way round. According to Boesak (2009:41), “Belhar cannot and will not be regarded only as a response to racism, and even more narrowly, apartheid”. It is important to note that the argument Boesak is bringing forward is that the confession is not captive, and it is more inclusive than what others might think. Many theologians within our church claim that the confession defines who we are and what we are, the understanding of the scripture, and how the church responds towards social issues that arise within the communities and the world that we live in.

Both Belhar and the BTL quests were deeply embedded in the black men’s experience in this country. It was disastrous when apartheid ripped off the humanity of the black

people and denied them ontologically. In post-apartheid times, LGBTIQ are encountering the same incidents that occurred during apartheid within the communities that they lived in. The humanity of the LGBTIQ is disregarded, their existence is denied, and within the atmosphere of the church, they are denied being ministers of the word. The Belhar and BTL were on a quest on Jesus to address the cries of the oppressed black people. For this reason, the LGBTIQ are not well represented within the URCSA family, even though they are of God's plan of creation.

As a gay man, it is my argument that since the church is celebrating 30 years of the Belhar confession, I find both the Belhar and the BTL not able to reshape the life of the struggle of the LGBTIQ within a homophobic church and its homophobic theology. Boesak, in Cone and Wilmore (1993:207), argues, "white theology has not been able to reshape the life of the white church to cleanse it of its racism and liberate it from iron claws of the white racist establishment of this nation". Today in 2017, the feeling is mutual that the obsession that BTL has, has not even addressed the oppression of LGBTIQ within the atmosphere of the church. It is the argument of the chapter that, whether Belhar and BTL can be relevant today, it has not yet reshaped the life and ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. A question that has always been on my mind is: how then can Belhar be used to voice that which has always been sidelined and de-humanized? This dissertation is an attempt to return to the question of black LGBTIQ visibility in the BTL and Belhar confession.

2.7. Conclusion

As I read the methodologies of the BTL, the highlighted text in this chapter has showed that the LGBTIQ sexuality has been represented⁵ by many scholars; in that respect, it has been placed in suspense at the margins of the black life. The chapter has gone as far as arguing that, the success of the BTL, in affirming, firstly, the ontological reality and existence of the black life, is still seen as relevant to affirm the ontological reality and existence of the LGBTIQ. Secondly, it has shown that through the science of time, LGBTIQ sexuality has been denied ontologically. In some instances, black LGBTIQ might have been bracketed in order to advance a rhetoric tolerance in black communities. This rhetoric functions within a larger agenda of defeating white supremacy. If then the BTL does not affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ, the rhetoric of tolerance within black religious criticism will remain a stable description of black people by maintaining black heterosexuals at the periphery of black life.

What I propose in the next chapter is to engage BLT and African culture. The engagement will go as far as turning to cultural literature and engaging it, the BTL, with the LGBTIQ. The next chapter will operate out of what the study calls BTL and cultural criticism, since in many instances, culture, especially African culture, has been used as a tool of oppression towards the LGBTIQ. The chapter shall look at seeking coalitions across boundaries of race, gender, class and sexual orientation in order to rescue democracy and freedom of expression for the individuals. Even when it comes to culture, the old understanding has always been based on race, but not on sexuality.

⁵ R. Tshaka, A. Boesak, BB Senokoane, C Landman have never felt the pinching of the shoes that the LGBTIQ are facing. They have extensively argued against the anti-LGBTIQ people, but the agony, hatred, de-humanisation and rejection is only felt by the LGBTIQ.

Chapter Three

African womanist theology and African culture

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed BTL and the ontological affirmation of blackness and sexuality. The accent was on the success of BTL in affirming the ontological reality of LGBTIQ sexuality within the Reformed tradition. This was an exploration of intersectionality between blackness and sexuality. The Chapter examined the ontological affirmation of blackness and sexuality and looked at the connection between BTL and the Belhar Confession towards the struggle of the LGBTIQ. The main argument is that if BTL was able to affirm the ontological existence of the black person, it is befitting to affirm the ontological existence of the LGBTIQ. If BTL was able to see that blacks need a revision God as God who liberates the oppressed and those who are denied ontologically, then it should be able to have a revision God as God who liberates the LGBTIQ.

To be sure, theologians like Allan Boesak, Rodney Tshaka, Tumi Senokoane, Vuyani Vellem and Tshepo Lephakga, have spoken extensively against homophobia. However, the researcher is concerned about the limited attention to the ways in which other black theologians speak and might mislead the understanding of the possibilities for an appreciation of sexual difference in black life. Methodologically, the chapter engages BTL and culture. Womanist theology is chosen as an example of a discourse that analyses culture. The chapter also focuses on what culture is and further examines the aspects of culture, which are culture and life, humanity being at the center of African culture. The chapter looks at culture as a production of humanity and presents the case study of Uganda in relation to the LGBTIQ.

3.2. What is culture?

According to Mugambi (in Kalu, 2005:516), “the term *culture*, in its widest usage, is the totality of a people’s way of life.” The definition given by Mugambi can mean many things as the totality of people’s way of life has many dimensions to it. It means that there exist economics, politics, philosophy, ethics, gender, sexuality in this totality, for example. For this reason, culture can therefore mean an integral part of these spheres in their totality for humanness in the African continent. Culture can include birth, marriage, religion, puberty, death and mourning. If it is a totality of people’s way of life, then all these are ways of people’s life; all these values are how people live and enjoy their lives every day. This is attested by Tangwa (2004:26) when he argues, “I am a cultural pluralist, I perceived great value in the remarkable diversity and variety of human cultures, which seems to me remarkable and analogous to the biodiversity of the living world, in which I find equal value”.

The recognition of plural cultures is like a cultural biodiversity, with each culture as a totality on its own among other cultures. Culture is indeed a totality of a way of life, including and cultures of different peoples as a biodiversity of life to take from Tangwa’s thoughts. The chapter methodologically argues that culture is inclusive of all things that surround and make humanity to live, hence Wiredu’s view (2005:117) that “there is a basic culture common to all human beings”.

This chapter presents culture as a totality of a people’s way of life in the following aspects and dimensions: (a) Life and Culture (b) Humanity at the center of African culture and lastly, (c) A human as the production of culture.

3.2.1. Life and Culture

As we have defined culture as a totality of a people’s life that can be communal, one can ask a question: can culture be understood as life or can life be understood as culture? According to Oduyoye (2001:28), “In Africa’s history, the arrival of Western Christianity was an assault on the African way of life launched by ethnocentric Europeans in collaboration with colonial violence.” In essence, Oduyoye argues that

when Jan Van Riebeck landed in South Africa as a representative of colonialism, and the missionaries who followed, there was an assault and violence against African culture. This means the lives of the African people were assaulted.

The political, economic or religious thought of the natives became ethnocentrically assaulted. For this dissertation, this is what Fanon (1952:2) calls “the zone of non-being.” The discussion is not about colonization per se, but about life and culture, whether culture is life or life is culture. Life can mean many things that are involved in a person’s way of living, which can include happiness, drugs, love and sadness. In summary, life is the existence of a human being or animal– it is a quality which people, animals and plants, as opposed to objects, have.

Our view is that culture cannot be equated to life but a part of life. Does this mean that that one can survive without culture? It is the argument of the study that if culture is a totality of a people’s way of life, it can formulate and articulate guidelines for a better understanding of how people ought to live in harmony with one another. People who were transported by ships from Africa to Europe and the Americas, who were turned slaves, were able to live life in European nations without African culture, but their lives were miserable not because they were crying for the African culture but liberation and life. For many decades, Africans who are in the diaspora have been living without the guidance of the African culture. They did not need culture to live life, African culture in particular. While life may not entirely depend on cultural identity, culture cannot exist where there is no life. Culture in itself needs life in order to be ‘alive.’ It is this broad view and argument that shapes this dissertation and discussion on culture.

3.2.2. Humanity at the Centre of African Culture

According Biko (1978:45) “one of the most fundamental aspects of our culture is the importance we attach to man. Ours has always been man-centred society”. It is argued by Bujo (2001:23) that “for Black Africa, it is not the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”) but an existential *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* (“I am related, therefore we are”). Humanity, being and relationships are at the centre of African culture. Biko (1978:45) argues, “African culture was unsophisticated and simple, the Anglo Boer

culture had trappings of a colonialist culture and was heavily equipped for conquest". He further argues (1978:51), "Whenever colonialism sets in with its dominant culture, it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastardized culture that can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed it by the dominant culture. That is what happened to the African culture." This dominant culture changed the African understanding of humanity being at the center of African culture and its universe.

Humanity is at the center of African culture; it does not conquer, it does not bastardize the people, but serves the principles of Ubuntu, being (*motho ke motho ka batho ba bang*) for the affirmation of life. Biko (1978:46) thus argues, "Hence in all we do we always place men (humanity)⁶ first and all our action is usually a joint community-orientated action rather than the individualism, which is the hallmark of the capitalist approach". Hence, one cannot speak of a human being without the human being part of the society, and one cannot speak of *Ubuntu/botho* outside community or society. Bujo (2003:117) argues, "The human person in Africa is, from very beginning in a network of relationships that constitute his/her inalienable dignity". Humanity in African culture is not an alienable, inferiority complex; this was not known in African culture.

Bujo (2003:17) says, "even the embryo and foetus are already a person, surrounded by the loving relations of the dead and living". A human being is at the center of African culture, whether dead or alive, *Ubuntu/botho* comes in because one cannot live without *Ubuntu/botho*. It is the heart of African culture. According Dolamo (2013:1), "Botho/Ubuntu is an integral part of African ethics steeped in issues of liberation, development, identity, and human dignity" Dolamo (2013:2). Dolamo continues, "The concept of *Ubuntu/botho* embodies an understanding of what it is to be human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment. It is an ethical concept and expresses a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in life". This vision and concept is rooted in history of Africans and is at the center of African culture. *Ubuntu/botho* in African culture is the ideal of being human, and this is derived from the principle of "*motho ke motho ka batho bang*" (I am person through the other person).

⁶ My own inclusion, as the context of the wording seems sexist, hence the inclusion of "humanity".

Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human, and this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. Ubuntu/botho is a way of expressing a way of living that is universal, and this goes back to what Mugambi (2005:516) argued about culture being the totality of a people's way of life. It is the argument of the chapter that, humanity, being at the center of culture, encompasses the values of humanness, caring and respect. Culture is, however, a pillar of Ubuntu/botho, that is, the reason humanity is at the center of African culture, meaning that culturally, humanity is placed at the centre. Humanity being at the center of African culture might imply value in the remarkable diversity and variety of humanity and culture if Ubuntu is applied to all human beings and all cultures other than African. Ng'weshemi (2002:23) mentions a few of the core values of Ubuntu namely, "wisdom, hard work, fidelity, humanity and godliness", for the understanding of humanity at the center of African culture. Ubuntu/botho is based on values of intense humanness, sharing and caring and qualitative community in life.

If humanity is the centre in African culture, then culture cannot be above a human being and human beings in their differences and orientations. To this point we shall return, but for now, let us specifically look at the relationship between humanity and culture.

3.2.3. A Human Person, a Product of Culture

According to Wiredu (1996:21), "a human person is the product of culture". It means that culture produces human beings. Culture being the production chamber of a human person, this means that it is an instrument that can create and shape society and community. So culture has a function in society. According to Mofokeng (1992:5), "culture is a powerful social instrument in our modern society." This powerful tool is capable of producing the human person and many societies have utilized it to maintain the existence of human person dignity and his /her Ubuntu. Human person being produced by culture suggests that culture and humanity need each other, and both need to be very hospitable to each other.

For many decades, African culture has been known to be hospitable. Ubuntu is about hospitality, one could argue. This can even be the case when one looks at how

African culture has played a major role in being host to Eurocentric cultures that unfortunately invaded Africa. African culture has been equally tolerant, resistant and resilient to this invasion of Eurocentric culture which mushroomed with the advent of colonialism since the arrival of Jan Van Riebeck. African culture has played host to the emergence of Christianity and Islam if we illustrate the point with religion. There are dangers to this ability to host and accommodate. In our history in South Africa, this led to the invasion and bastardization of the African culture. Our point, therefore, is that the invasion and bastardization of African culture has implications on the centrality of a human being in African culture.

Colonization meant that a human being is displaced from the centre of African culture. Not only did culture suffer but a human being too as the tool that produces a human being was dented by colonization and apartheid. Culture being the totality of a people's way of life is, at the same time, a production chamber of a human person. As Wiredu has argued, culture produces a human person; it gives a human person a meaning of his/her existence in the world and gives him/her ontological reality and identity.

The chapter has discussed the meaning of culture by Mugambi as the primary source and Wiredu and Biko. The discussion was based on the understanding that the LGBTIQ community are un-African and that they are rejected by the African culture. In summary, the chapter has explained the meaning of culture being the totality of people's way of life and that the human person is at the center of African culture and the product of African culture. In critiquing African Culture, the chapter engaged the dignity of LGBTIQ which is being denied. The emphasis was that such denial of the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ by the African culture is unnecessary since African culture is all about human dignity with the human person at the center of African culture. Thus if African culture can produce human beings, it cannot harm and destroy humanity, and has an Ubuntu principle. It simply implies that each human being is the product of African culture and is not supposed to be contradictory but rather complementary to each other.

3.3. Case of Uganda: The presence of Gayness among Africans

In March 2011, on “*The Big debate*” a programme which is well known which discusses the robust topics that affect the communities, the discussed topic was whether homosexuality was un-African or African. The speakers were David Bahati, the author of Ugandan anti-homosexuality Bill from Uganda, Festus Mogae, the former president of Botswana, Paula Akugizibwe - Human Rights Activists in Rwanda, and Sideeqah Tunde-Lawal - Muslim Youth leader in Nigeria, Eusebius Mckaiser-writer and lecturer in South Africa. David Bahati and Sideeqah Tunde-Lawal were against the idea that homosexuality can be African. They both argued that LGBTIQ does not appear or form part of African culture, as it against African cultural values. The cultural value that they were referring to was a “traditional African family.” For them, the value of African family is procreation. Bahati, as a member of the parliament and of the ruling party, was the one who drafted and presented the bill of anti-homosexuality in Uganda. For Bahati, this Bill imposes a stiff fine and a term of imprisonment for any person found practicing homosexual acts. For him and other people in Uganda, homosexuality put the traditional family in jeopardy as homosexuals cannot procreate. Homosexuality does nothing but harm to the family trends and cultural practices of African people.

According to Tamale (2009:53), the Bill requires the family members to spy on one another. She further argues, “This provision obviously does not strengthen the family unit in a manner that Hon. Bahati claims, but rather promotes the breaking up of the family”. With that note, when Hon. Bahati mentions that during the big debate program, he received lots of applause by the audiences who happened to be South Africans. In a way, they were agreeing with what the bill of Uganda is doing to the LGBTIQ community in Uganda, some in the program were of the opinion that the bill needs to be in South Africa. Within many African cultures, the moral value that is threatened is of this offspring (procreation) as continuation of the family name needs to be adhered to.

There are limitations to this kind of reasoning. African culture, for years, made other arrangements for couples that could not have children biologically. This argument also undermines and insults women in heterogeneous relationships and cannot stand the scrutiny of patriarchal violence and sexism when viewed from that perspective. African

traditionalists that were within the program said that the “Being” of the LGBTIQ among Africans is taboo and cannot be African; it came with Van Riebeck during the invasion of Africa. Shoko proved this when he interviewed the village chief F. Charumbira in Zimbabwe:

“Homosexuality was not there in Zimbabwe when we grew up, in Zimbabwe we do not have precedent of people who had these homosexual relationships. Homosexuality is a borrowed tradition” (2010:635)

During the program, it was clear that LGBTIQ cannot procreate and that if you are LGBTIQ, ancestors do not recognize you as an African, and there has never been a LGBTIQ traditional healer. They agreed with the bill presented by Bahati calling for the death penalty for homosexual people since they are a threat towards African family values, and this would prevent birth, so before it gets to that stage, they need to be hanged. It was in the Ugandan tabloids to attack gay people in the country by prominent figures and even calling for them to be killed “hang them”. As presented by one of the audience members within the program, a Ugandan activist for the LGBTIQ community, because of the bill, a known Ugandan activist, David Kato was found bashed to death in his home, said the audience. Gay bashing in the tabloids did not happen in a vacuum: over the past six years, Uganda’s religious leaders and politicians have embarked on a campaign to rid their country of homosexuality, no matter the cost- and the cost has been high.

Among ordinary people in the streets of South Africa, communities still find love between the LGBTIQ people as taboo and un-African. This shows convergence with the Ugandan anti-homosexual bill that all those caught committing homosexual acts must be put to prison for life, and others support the death penalty since this promotes division within the society. People have questioned how the LGBTIQ community will procreate since extending the generation of the family clan is via procreation. It is clear that there are strong negative sentiment against the LGBTIQ communities through the illustration of Uganda and the Programme. Societies and communities have disregarded same-sex relationships through acts of corrective rape and gay bashing. LGBTIQ among Africans is nothing but troubled sexuality and tabooed by many African traditional leaders. The case of the movie/film “Inxeba- the Wound” is another recent

example. That has proved that LGBTIQ among Africans is much denied ontologically; this is another example of the discourse of culture and the LGBTIQ community. On that note, it is the argument of this chapter that a human person is the product of African culture and is at the center of African culture. Whether they are LGBTIQ or heterosexuals, they are the products of African culture and they are living beings.

3.4. Does Culture Liberate or Eliminate? Liberation and the LGBTIQ

Apparently in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Senegal, the LGBTIQ community is in danger as there are penalties of life imprisonment. Most of these countries have passed the bill that criminalizes homosexuals. One could also argue that this has been a political way to gain publicity and support by some politicians in African countries. According to Shoko (2010:634), politicians call them festering fingers, endangering the body of the nation, while churchmen say God wants them dead, and the courts send them to jail. As argued by Tamale (in Cole et al., 2007:19), “political, cultural and religious fundamentalist have played a crucial role in suppressing and stifling sexual pluralism in Uganda”. This is argued by Reddy (in Simms, 2000:164) that “in 1999, the leader of the Pan African Congress, Methodist minister, Dr. Stanley Mogoba, denigrated homosexuality as un-African”.

The LGBTIQ are regarded as un-African but are also ontologically denied on political platforms, thus, Gevisser (1994:57) argues, “the PAC (Pan African Congress) and the ANC (African National Congress) view gay issues as bourgeois frivolities and irrelevancies”. Can culture really eliminate or liberate the LGBTIQ or any other human being, if not practiced?

Bujo (2003:123) argues, “It is impossible to define the human person purely in secular or purely religious terms, since a human person is both at once”. African leaders and communities cannot hold the LGBTIQ at ransom on cultural grounds. African culture cannot eliminate its people just because they are different from other people, but rather, it should liberate them.

There are moral issues at stake again. Shoko (2010:635) argues, “Homosexuality in Zimbabwe is widely seen because of the moral decadence that has gripped society as originating in promiscuous sexual behaviour”. It is not only Zimbabwe that sees the

LGBTIQ community as being decadent, and most of African traditional countries do. This is absurd and implies that the LGBTIQ are only interested in pleasure. The existence of the LGBTIQ community in the African continent has been declared un-African and unethical and has been seen as an act of defiance.

Bujo (2003:14) asserts, "it must be recalled that African ethics does not define persons as self-realization or as ontological acts; rather, it describes a person as a process of coming into existence in the reciprocal relatedness of individual and community, where the latter includes not only the deceased but also God". In this regard, Ng'weshemi (2002:15) says, "for Africans, one is not human simply by birth. Rather, one becomes human through a progressive process of integration into society". Therefore, one cannot speak of the LGBTIQ being un-African and unethical and decadent people if they are in the process of coming into existence. In this regard, Ng'weshemi (2002:14) asserts, "ontologically, the human being in African thought is best viewed as a living force among other forces in the universe". This means that every human person is constantly interacting with other beings in the universe to which the networking of relationship links; this means that a human being is a unit and a life in a vital relationship with the other life forces in the universe.

African culture, furthermore, does not compartmentalize the human being but situates his/her well-being within a web of relationships, and the source of the web is with the Supreme Being. The dignity of the LGBTIQ within African culture is compartmentalized because of their sexual difference and the threat that they pose toward the patriarchal system of the traditional African family. African culture has always been used as a tool that denies the ontological existence of a woman during the late centuries. Now in the 21st century, it is used to oppress the ontological reality and existence of the LGBTIQ. From both sides of secular world and church world, the LGBTIQ has been disregarded due to being different from other people within the community and society. The struggle of justice continues as the master's tool has not yet dismantled; there are people who still face oppression and marginalization within the black community and society.

To view how African culture has been used is to assume that the LGBTIQ have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, LGBTIQ love to one another and being a part of this African culture. The absence of any consideration of the LGBTIQ consciousness

within the African culture and within the BTL leaves a serious gap within the atmosphere of afrocentricity scholarship. African culture has been used to eliminate LGBTIQ; it has been used to destroy humanity of black LGBTIQ families who have disowned their LGBTIQness because of African traditional family values. Instead of seeking to create a platform of acceptance to sexual difference, it decimally fails to do so. LGBTIQ are denied ontologically by their own culture and seek to create a theology in the gap between black heterosexual theology of liberation (BTL) and African theology. Thus, African culture need to source a constructive African culturist theology that will be inclusive of the sexual difference within black community and society.

According to Griffin (2000:113), it is a racist claim to state that Africans do not express themselves with same sex love or sexual activity like other humans. The implication of what culture has done towards the LGBTIQ is that it has created divisions within the inside and the outside world. This two worlds both rejected and denied the LGBTIQ ontologically within the boundaries of African culture; metaphorically, the inside world is the family and the outside world is the society. The denial that is often posed towards the LGBTIQ is that they cannot procreate, so in a way, they cannot continue the clan of the family. The legacy of the family, culturally, will be destroyed and not fulfilled, but this is just a wrong perception that has been presented by cultural and religious fundamentalists to just deny and implicate the LGBTIQ. It is argued by Tamale (2007:19) that “homosexuality presents a challenge to the deep-seated masculine power within African sexual relations and disrupts the core of the heterosexist social order”.

Griffin (2000:118) argues, “Another anti-gay argument used by many black heterosexuals is that lesbians and gays are a threat to the black families and black communities”. It is very intriguing that the LGBTIQ are a threat to the black family and community... how, this is not understood. Is this black family based on the biblical command of “be fruitful and multiply”? However, Afrocentric thinkers and cultural, religious fundamentalist have conveniently argued against oppression and eurocentrism. Molefi Kete Asante (1995:1), who has extensively argued against eurocentrism, says, “Afrocentricity seeks to re-locate as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of the fringes”. This was because the African people have

been taken off cultural terms and have existed primarily on the periphery of Europe. It is the same afrocentricists who are oppressing, and the LGBTIQ on the periphery of the very same eurocentricised African culture to oppress and marginalize the LGBTIQ. Many have argued that the film mentioned above disgraces the African culture, specifically of the Xhosas; however, this becomes intriguing because there were LGBTIQ scenes that were shown in the film.

The chapter argues that, if then culture in its widest understanding, means the totality of a person's way of life, how does the film become sensitive and disgrace the Xhosa culture as it does not even show any teaching of initiation. Indeed, Asante (1995:1) is correct when he says that "Afrocentricity, as a theory of social change, intends to re-locate the African person as a subject, thus destroying the notion of being objects in the western project of domination". This simply means that this dominion that the African culture has due to being marginalized needs to be re-located; it should stop looking at the LGBTIQ as objects of homophobia just because they are different from heterosexuals.

BTL and African culture should both not be sexually conscious because it is not a matter of sexuality but of humanity that matters in the orientation to ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ sexual orientation. It was BTL that preached prophetically about the affirmation of the ontological reality of black people, that black people are people who exist in the world, and argued against white supremacy that was within the oppressed blacks. BTL responded to the black experience, black culture and black religion. When Cone, Boesak, Mosala and others speak of BTL and black experience, they surely foreground an ontological crisis. Being black was a matter of life and death during the heyday of apartheid, as blacks were called savages, apes and many names. Thus, the chapter argues that if then, BTL was able to change the way the wind was flowing during apartheid era and argued against white supremacy, it should argue against the oppression tools that culture is throwing to the LGBTIQ within black communities and churches.

With the argument always posed by the oppressive systems of African culture towards the LGBTIQ, they cannot procreate, and the fact that Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill discriminates against LGBTIQ based on cultural values. However, one can ask the

question: how then does the LGBTIQ endanger values of African traditional family and the life span of the family clan? As one of the Ghanaian African theologians, Dickson (1984:47) would argue that “culture involves many things such as language, morality, art and generally, material creations, including implements (whether used in agriculture, art, or generally for the purpose of ensuring that life goes on)”. Indeed, this well-articulated argument by Dickson says culture is very much inclusive. It is the understanding of the chapter that African culture needs to proceed on the basis of the conviction that there is one culture which is the spirit of Ubuntu/botho.

According to Bujo (1992:22), “in the African concept of life, it is not religious and political leaders who have an obligation to preserve and transmit life”. This means that every member of the community shares the same responsibility for making sure that the community is strengthened at all times and for all members. It does not necessarily mean that if one does not procreate or his/sexual orientation is different from the tribe or community he/she needs to be persecuted. In that regard, Bujo (1992:22) argues that “the morality of an act is determined by its life-potential: good acts are those which contribute to the community’s vital force, whereas bad acts are those which tend to diminish life”. Homosexual behaviour cannot diminish the society because, as argued by Tamale (2007:18-19), “Among the Langi of the Northern Uganda, the Mudoko dako “males” were treated as women and could marry men”.

It is even argued by Faupel (1962:100), “it was known that Kabaka (king) Mwanga was gay”. Then one can even ask a question: how then can LGBTIQ be regarded as un-African whereas there were those who were LGBTIQ in ancient Africa as cultural fundamentalists and leaders. Cultural fundamentalists are afraid to accept that LGBTIQ sexuality threatens to undermine male power bases in African continent, the private spheres at the level of interpersonal relationships and conventional definitions of the family. Homosexuality presents a challenge to the deep-seated masculine power within the African sexual relations and culture and disrupts the core of the heterosexist social order.

3.5. The LGBTIQ and Theology of Life

The question of meaning of life is perhaps one that is within the minds of many people in academia and social spheres. Historically and today, humankind still believes that humanity is the creation of God and that life was given by this supernatural entity called God. However, the aim is not to question the existence of God and whether or not that God is the creator of life. Life, in many spheres, is defined as existence of an individual humankind or an animal; it means that every humankind, whether women, men, LGBTIQ who exist in the universe, is product of life. As argued in the opening of the chapter, the point of departure was that according to Mugambi, culture is the totality of people's way of life, and further on, it is argued by Mofokeng that culture is a tool, while Wiredu argued that it is a production of humankind.

Culture being a production of humankind, cannot destroy or ontologically deny the existentiality of the LGBTQ. If it can be used to deny the ontological existence and reality of the LGBTQ, it has to deny those women and men that are barren... does that culture denies them existence? As defined by Mugambi, culture is in its totality, a way of life; this means that culture is very much inclusive and cannot be exclusive towards the LGBTQ. In our modern society, the very same society that denies the ontological reality of the LGBTQ, culture is a "powerful instrument" that shapes the society and restores broken pieces of the modern society; it cannot destroy or even reject the human dignity of a person. Some black African scholars have chosen to betray many of the very humanitarian principles on which the African culture is based on - the perception of patriarchal and heterosexual ways. It is the understanding of the study that African culture is the quality of being human, it is the quality of sharing, and cooperation is the spirit of participatory humanism.

Thus, a theology of life is widely needed in this manner since culture is defined by Mugambi as totality of people's way of life. In this regard, a theology of life is one of the theologies that need to engage how African culture has been used to deny the human existence of the LGBTQ. Uganda and other African countries have created and adopted the anti-gay bill to criminalize the LGBTQ if found classified as LGBTQ. Thus, it is argued by Farajaje-Jones (1993:141) that "many black people believe it is acceptable to be openly homophobic/ biphobic". Many culturalists see LGBTQ as un-

African and think it is a good thing to be homophobic. Yet this is another example of power of heterosexual men over the LGBTIQ, a power that is inextricably bound with a capitalist class structure led by racism, homophobia, sexism and classism. The LGBTIQ are oppressed culturally, and as being black. This brings us to the question: does life have to do with culture? Can culture be life or can it be part of life? These are questions that need to be raised when dealing with culture being totality of people's way of life. This way of life includes culture, meaning within that there are people that are LGBTIQ who have a way of life.

If a human person being is a product of culture, then a theology of life needs to be introduced since culture is the production of human person. This means that an empire of culture needs to be dismantled when it destroys and denies the ontological reality of LGBTIQ.

As argued by Smith (1993:163), "life means affirming and celebrating the spiritual inheritance of passed down to us from a kidnapped, tortured, and enslaved people who were determined to be and to become in spite of every attempt to dehumanize them. Life means choosing the God of our forebears who has brought us thus far to be witnesses to the divine purpose of the redemption of all creation through struggle and hope (Roman 8:19-25)". Smith is right when she says that life is affirming and celebrating the spiritual inheritance, the very same sentiment of this affirming and celebration is that it would not be a sin to say that the LGBTIQ also do share this affirmation and inheritance. That is life, not the other way round, of denial of the LGBTIQ just because they cannot procreate; therefore, they cannot be part of African culture.

According to African Health Policy Network (AHPN), "Theology of life is a more adequate model of theological thinking and practice for those who are confronted daily with issues of suffering, death and stigmatization. This is a theology that will express better good news of the Gospel as well as respond to the context where the enemies arise". Indeed, this theology is adequate towards the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ as it will express well the cultural hermeneutics used to deny the LGBTIQ. Vellem (2015:2) argues that "in our case, black theology of liberation is a theology of life". Indeed, BTL is a theology of life because in its core fundamental arguments, it affirms

the denied life of the black masses. He further argues that “the biblical hermeneutics of a Black Theology of Liberation move within the context of the cry for life by the poor” (Vellem, 2015:2). It is within the argument of the study that: a theology of life is explicitly adequate at this stage as it exposes the oppression that the empire (being culture) is used to deny the humanity of the LGBTIQ ontologically.

Vellem (2015:178) argues, “As such, Black Theology of liberation – like Dalit, Minjung, womanist, and Latin American brands of liberation – is quintessentially a theology of life. In our quest to harness life-giving resources to develop an alternative civilization in the context of Empire, the “root” of this school within the praxis of the poor and the marginalized remains a pertinent faith orientation and ethic towards life”. This is a very profound argument that can be explored deeply within the context of LGBTIQ being denied by the empire to exist within African culture. It is within the argument of this chapter that BTL is indeed quintessentially a theology of life. According to Vellem (2015:3), whilst there seems to be very little interest in analyzing colonialism and imperialism as central pivots of modernity, there is more in that omission of racism as part of modernity. In the same cue the chapter argues that there is very little interest in analyzing homophobia and ontological denial of the LGBTIQ as pivots of modernity, as in many discussions of modern BTL and Afrocentricity, LGBTIQ are omitted as part of modernity.

To proceed with the argument, we will briefly turn to the womanist discourse as part of the theology of life so as to present a comprehensive view of the liberation of humanity and a theology of life.

3.6. How do the African Womanist and Feminist argue against culture? Cultural hermeneutics

In many African cultures, women were not allowed in certain places and they are bound to obey and bow down to man. Women have experience culture in various ways, ranging from intense suffering and bondage to genuine liberation. Kanyoro and Oduyoye (1992:1) argues that “African women theologians have come to realize that as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead”. It is indeed

true that, as long as men and other certain people continue to have authorities in various spaces of leadership, the plight of women and other sexual minorities will continue to be a problem. The rise of black African feminism in Africa was to pursue justice in the church and society, particularly with regard to gender justice. The likes of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Puleng LenkaBula, Musimbi Kanyoro, Masenya Madipoane, to mention the few, made their voice loud within the church and society. Their rise to proclaim freedom and liberation was to focused on teaching the patriarchal system that not only black oppressed men who need liberation and freedom, but women need it too. As articulated by Oduyoye (2005:154), “when I think about the church, I think of all women presumed dead, or who are dying, who attend Sunday services and are presented week after week before all-male panels of celebrates”. Women wanted to be included in the decision making body of the church and society, for their silent voice to be recognized. The concern and search for gender justice in the church and society still continues to be a very crucial issue; however, as articulated by LenkaBula (2007:2), “there is evolution and advancement of African feminist theologies in the church and society, as the eruption within eruptions of liberation and contextual theologies occur in Africa and in the countries of the global south”. This eruption, within the eruption of liberation, came about because African women were (are) tired of being put aside when it came to certain places; their voices erupted to say no to the same prejudice black African men were fighting for towards them.

According to LenkaBula (2007:3), African theologies, churches, academic institutions and certain aspects of African culture have tended to disrespect, undermine, exclude and/ or marginalize women from active and full participation in the church (particularly in ordained ministry), academia and society”. This is true because even today, there are churches and communities that still disagree with women being in leadership --- worse even when Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was candidate to be president. Many have argued and attested that our country is not ready to be led by a female president because women are not good with decision-making, and this is absurd indeed. The marginalization of women in African culture has painfully demonstrated the ways in which communities and societies connive with structures of violence and discrimination when it ontologically denies women in decision making of the society. This has also

demonstrated how the church and society connive with unjust systems that create hierarchies of marginalization and oppression which always feed on injustice towards women.

Black African Feminists and Womanist consciousness has demonstrated willingness to grapple with the gender contradictions that exhibited themselves in social relations and in the church and society. According to LenkaBula (2007:6), “feminist theologies have questioned the authenticity of theologies that thrive on exclusion and marginalization”. In the context of exclusion, rejection and intentional marginalization, African feminism has opted to do theology through cultural hermeneutics as influenced by feminists like Oduyoye and Kanyoro. As argued by LenkaBula (2007:8), cultural hermeneutics derives from the view that culture must not be romanticized”. It is articulated by Kanyoro (2002:5) that “it was necessary to come to terms with identifying in our cultures those things that were beautiful and wholesome and life-affirming and to denounce those that were denying us life and wholeness”. African feminists introduced this method of doing theology because they were denounced within the African culture, hence Kanyoro’s assertion that they were denied life and the wholesomeness of it.

LenkaBula (2007:8) further argues that this cultural hermeneutics, “is also based on the notion that theology ought to become relevant and meaningful to African women and their communities, and therefore has to intentionally engage and deliberate (theologically) on the cultural context of Africa”. This cultural hermeneutics concerns itself with the silent and silenced women and perspective of fundamental methodologies, which are marginalized by mainstream and male-stream theologies. LenkaBula (2008:8) argues, “Its hermeneutical function is to unearth, liberate, affirm and overcome violence against women which manifests in the church and in society”. The understanding is that cultural hermeneutics does not only aim at understanding texts from socio-historical literary perspective. Kanyoro (2002:10) argues, “Cultural hermeneutics puts every culture to scrutiny with the intention of testing its liberative potential for people at different times in history”. For LenkaBula (2007:8), “It seeks to engage culture and evaluate it to transform its message from the vantage point of women and men who are on the receiving end of socio-political, economic, ecclesial and ecological injustice”. This is to simply say that, in every angle of life, culture need

not be oppressive, not only to women but to the community of the LGBTIQ who are regarded as un-African. Cultural hermeneutics was helpful in arguing against any form of oppression towards women and other marginalized societies. It also rejects imposed traditions and static notions that fail to acknowledge and accept the full participation of women and the LGBTIQ in society and church.

Feminist scholars have argued against all forms of patriarchy that African culture uses to oppress and marginalize women. Moreover, they came with a very powerful tool to fight patriarchy, as argued by LenkaBula (2007:8) that “feminist theologies have become helpful in dislodging traditional church history alliance with patriarchy and have contributed fundamentally to the process of overcoming the violence which has tormented us, brutalized us and destroyed our spirit of humanness in the church and in society”. Feminist theologies have argued against any form of oppressive structures that were ambushing women, just because their gender was weak. They have become central to the healing of the wounded and broken relationships that were caused by gender discrimination in the church and society.

Today, the sexually oppressed community, through the same sentiments of African culture, are the LGBTIQ. It is true that cultural hermeneutics that was useful for African women can be useful towards the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. This will make it possible for the LGBTIQ to articulate their understanding of God as God is known to them; the way that African culture imposes theology towards the LGBTIQ is not how it is supposed to be understood. It can be argued that justice for the LGBTIQ is not simply a matter of the LGBTIQ only but continually requires active participation of the whole church and society. Historically, in South African societies, members of oppressed, objectified groups are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressors. For in order to survive, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes; LGBTIQ activists are responsible for educating teachers and preachers who dismiss sexual difference within the community and society.

The Black African Feminist has taught the African male about the inclusion of women in ministry and community leadership. They have challenged the status quo of male domination and superiority, they fought fearlessly and conquered, they champion the

course of oppressed masses, and they fought double oppression. However, as argued by LenkaBula (2007:9), “some key inspirations for African women’s theologies are the pathways Oduyoye created, her invitation to other theologians to continue the search for liberation from all forms of dehumanization and degradation, and her proclamation of the full integrity of all God’s earth creation”. Indeed, LenkaBula is right when she says that all theologians should continue the search for liberation from all forms dehumanization, degradation and not oppress the marginalized and sexual oppressed communities. All theologians that proclaim liberation and those who are prophets of social justice must strive to search for liberation and ontological reality of the LGBTIQ within the society and community.

The ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ and upholding the LGBTIQ’s dignity and their rights is not an obligation that derives from people’s desire to live harmoniously as citizens of the world or that which is required by civil virtues such as human rights or church ordinances. It derives from the fact that all human beings are created in the image of God and they all deserve equal rights and freedom, care and liberation. Liberation and freedom of the LGBTIQ is embedded within the very same hands of heterosexuals who proclaim normativity within the corners of the world. Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1986:80) argues, “In Africa, as we have seen, it is the experience of liberation from colonialism and the cry for this liberation that have stimulated theologies that struggle to be relevant to the realities of Africa”. These are realities of the oppression of the peasant black masses and the oppression of the marginalized LGBTIQ whose existence and realities are denied ontologically. The ontological reality of the LGBTIQ is a relevant reality of Africa which needs all the theological tools to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. The very same cultural hermeneutics is one of the tools that can be used to interpret the oppressive culture toward the LGBTIQ. If Black African feminists and womanists were able to use the cultural hermeneutics to argue against the oppressive African culture, a culture that humiliated and ontologically denied women’s existence, then it can be used to assist LGBTIQ.

3.7. Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with the implications of culture towards the LGBTIQ, especially those from black communities. The aim of the chapter was to discuss aspects of culture that are oppressive towards the LGBTIQ in the black communities. The chapter also traced how coloniality was the influencer of LGBTIQ to be denied and that most cultural and Afrocentric thinkers are against the LGBTIQ existentiality.

This chapter further focused on the denying of the LGBTIQ ontologically because the being of the LGBTIQ within the African culture has been understood as un-African. The engagement was based on political influence as political leaders called the LGBTIQ festering fingers - this simply means that the LGBTIQ are a rotten influence towards society. In the study, it was discussed that some PAC leaders were against the LGBTIQ humanity while some ANC leaders were afraid of losing sponsors if they had LGBTIQ leaders. According to Shoko (2010:644), in 1995, at the opening of the Zimbabwean international book Fair, Robert Mugabe openly denied that gays and lesbians had any rights at all. He lambasted them as worse than dogs and pigs and should be hounded by society.

The next chapter engages the issue of being black and gay in the reformed tradition. The chapter will look on the position of the URCSA concerning the question of LGBTIQ, being black and LGBTQ in the URCSA, and lastly, the chapter will critique the URCSA, inclusive of the Belhar confession.

Chapter four

Being Black and Gay in the Reformed Tradition: A URCSA Perspective

4.1. Introduction

Let us begin our discussion in this Chapter with the following excerpt:

The reformed tradition in South Africa is more than three hundred years old. It was brought here by Dutch Calvinists who were followed by French Huguenots, and still later by Scottish Presbyterian and Swiss missionaries. When our Khoi ancestors were confronted with Christianity for the first time, it was the reformed expression of it that they experienced. It was this tradition that was to have a lasting impact on the history of South Africa and on the lives of all people. When our ancestors accepted Christianity three centuries ago, they became the members of a reformed church (Boesak 1984:90).

It is important to grasp at the very beginning that the relationship of the Reformed Tradition and blacks has a very long history. Before we dwell on this history, let us remind ourselves about what we have discussed thus far. The previous chapter dealt with the role of culture and its relevance to the liberation of the LGBTIQ. If African culture becomes tyrannical, then that culture is not a culture that is life affirming, especially with some of the lessons we drew from a theology of life. The current chapter addresses blackness and gayness in the reformed tradition. The above quotation unambiguously suggests that the reformed faith was brought to the African people and had a lasting impact on the lives of our ancestors' view of life and land. It has made them believe in the same Jesus whom this tradition brought as an oppressive Jesus.

In this chapter, the purpose is to engage the following themes: a brief history of the Reformed Tradition, black reformed faith, being LGBTIQ in the reformed faith in the URCSA, and the critique of reformed faith by BTL. The chapter will present the position of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern African on the question of the LGBTIQ ordination; lastly, the chapter will engage the Belhar Confession.

4.2. On Reformed Faith in South Africa

4.2.1. A brief background of the Reformed Tradition

The history of Reformed tradition is more than 300 years in South African, as argued by Boesak above. Reformed faith is rooted in Europe. It landed in South Africa during the arrival of Jan Van Riebeck in 1652 when he was refreshing at Cape of Good Hope. This is argued by De Gruchy (1979:1) that “it is true that the history of the church begins with the coming of the Dutch (1652), the French Huguenots (1668), and the early German settlers a little later”. According to Leith (1981: 50), “the Reformed tradition in Europe was transplanted to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa by emigration”. The Dutch and the French were mostly the Calvinist, and their theological tradition and doctrines were based on John Calvin’s teachings. It is argued by De Gruchy (1979:1) that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), controlled by the classis in Amsterdam, was the established church into which the Huguenots were soon assimilated. Between 1652 and 1665, some thirty ministers of the Netherlands Reformed Church visited Table Bay en route to the east and back; they preached to their isolated compatriots at the Cape and administered the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. The landing of this tradition was nothing but to bring different perspectives of Christianity and convert the natives that they found in the communities that they visited.

Since the arrival of the Reformed tradition, there was a dispute that mushroomed between the settlers and missionaries. This conflict allowed the church settlers and mission church to become a dominant issue for the church and society at the Cape during the nineteenth century (De Gruchy 1979:3). The history of Reformed tradition, influenced by the likes of Calvin, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwilingi and others, shows that reformation aimed to liberate the church from papal rule and corruption. On the other hand, settlers and missionaries aimed to proclaim this reformation to the natives of the African continent, and their mission was to bring different religion to them.

During this period, the church in South Africa was subordinate to the Netherlands East India company and to the Reformed church in Holland. During this period, the Calvinists, when they encountered the indigenous tribes, did not only experience hostility, but also goodwill. However, the goodwill that they received was based on

transforming, oppressing the indigenous people, segregating them and make them feel inferior. As argued by De Gruchy (1979:3), “the church had now finally taken root, even though the soil was largely white”. It was now in a position to take charge and implement the white Reformed tradition into the lives of the indigenous. The DRC was now an official church even after the British took control of the Cape; this meant that the DRC was once more free from the Calvinist control of Amsterdam.

According to Hexham (1980:195), “In a sense, it is indisputable that the Dutch Reformed Church is a Calvinist Church. It originated in the Calvinist branch of the Reformation and has Calvinist statements”. From this tradition of Calvinism, they were able to segregate the churches that they established in the indigenous tribes, even though it can be argued that the DRC, during the Synod of 1829, affirmed and undeterred, maintained that the Holy Communion was to be administered and maintained simultaneously to all members without distinction of colour or origin (De Gruchy, 1979:6). In time, however, this position changed, and there was a move to separate worship based on colour. According to Hexham (1980:197-198), the change “brings in the 'new' evidence of the Dutch Reformed Church's attitude to non-whites, particularly the decision of the 1857 Synod to allow separate worship.”

The church (DRC) decided to take a stance in 1857 that it needed to depart from holding the same service with black people, and this was the decision of a Synod. The decision was to separate the members of the indigenous people and have different congregations. This is well argued by De Gruchy (1979:8) that “due to the weakness of some (i.e. whites), it was permissible to hold separate services for whites and blacks”. Its resolution read:

The synod considers it desirable and scriptural that our members from the Heathen be received and absorbed into our existing congregation wherever possible; but where this measure, as a result of the weakness of some, impedes the furtherance of the cause of Christ among the Heathen, the congregation from the Heathen, already founded, shall enjoy its Christian privileges in a separate building or institution (De Gruchy, 1979:8).

This separation was based on race; this was simply a matter of racial segregation and to be without religion, and this was lack of knowledge and acknowledgement of the fact

that the natives did have religion. There was now Die sendingkerk (the mission church), which was established in 1881 for coloured people. In that manner, it was then followed by the N.G. Kerk in Africa, which was for blacks, then the Indian Reformed Church (De Gruchy, 1979:8). This was the introduction of apartheid through the eyes of Reformed faith, and these separations only led to exclusion of black people from being in the same church with whites. The DRC was more influential in South Africa, and this is evident through how it treated other people, especially the natives; they did all this through the guise of reformed faith, and this is how apartheid was ultimately started.

Blacks, for centuries, had begun to resist the move by the DRC, thus in the 1960s emerged strong black voices that systematically resisted Apartheid such as Boesak, Mofokeng, Goba, Buthelezi, to mention but a few, who became well-known figures within the reformed faith in the forefront against the monstrous regime of Apartheid and its theology. They radicalized the reformed tradition and brought a new dimension of this tradition, thus accommodating and liberating black people. DRC justified apartheid, and to that degree, it segregated and oppressed black people and made them feel inferior in their own land. Apartheid became a crisis in South Africa, a crisis that was created by the DRC which separated human beings based on race. Many black churches declared apartheid as heresy and sinful as attested by Boesak (1984:120) that:

The pseudo-religious nature of the ideology of apartheid has been unmasked unmercifully. Churches in South Africa and elsewhere have branded apartheid a heresy, and have stated quite unequivocally that any church that defends this policy cannot be regarded as an authentic member of the body of Christ.

This was the voice of a black radical reformed theologian from the margins of the reformed faith; he and others saw to it that the reformed faith needed to be radicalized. However, we shall not discuss this radical reformation in this section, and will return to it later. Our purpose was to simply narrate a short story of the Reformed history, so we now must turn to tradition and the question of the LGBTIQ.

4.3. Being LGBTIQ in the Reformed faith

Churches have been struggling to grapple with the issue of homosexuality in affirming their ontological reality. The discussion has been deliberating on full acceptance of the LGBTIQ Christians within the church. The URCSA, in particular, is one of the churches that have been in discussion in accepting the LGBTIQ in the church and being fully recognized as full members in the church. The URCSA has been uncertain about the ordination of the LGBTIQ community; it has deliberated on the decision of ordaining the LGBTIQ people for a number of years. The discussion of the LGBTIQ ordination within the URCSA has been discussed as far as 2005 in Pietermaritzburg, Hammanskraal in 2008, the Synod of Namibia in 2012 and the Synod of Gauteng in 2016. The Church is still 'finding and getting clarification' on ordination of the LGBTIQ and during the sitting of the Namibia Synod adopted the recommendations presented in the report of 2005 which was decision 20, and it was approved, according to the Acta (2012:30):

Decision 20 of the Synod was approved by 10 people

- 1. The General Synod affirms the decision of the General Synod 2005 as the Interim Policy on homosexuality of URCSA.*
- 2. The General Synod classifies the Report on Homosexuality which had been tabled at the General Synod 2008 as a "background resource" offering assistance to church councils, presbyteries and regional synods faced with the task of evaluating homosexuality in church and society.*
- 3. The General Synod calls on all regional synods to actively attend to the Report on Homosexuality of 2008 and supply the General Synodical Commission during the recess with their responses.*
- 4. The General Synod appoints and instructs the task team on homosexuality to move forward in the preparation of reader friendly study material on the biblical and theological appraisal of homosexuality and issue it to the regional synods during the recess after approval by the General Synodical Commission.*

5. The General Synod affirms the URCSA's long tradition of social justice, founded on the fundamental human dignity of every individual, as well as its bearing on the controversial and emotional issues of gay rights. The General Synod URCSA, therefore, calls on all its members to exhibited concern over the protection of homosexuals from discriminatory practices.

6. The General Synod affirms that the denial of human and civil rights to homosexuals is inconsistent with the biblical witness and Reformed theology.

7. The General Synod denounces all forms of homophobic conduct.

8. The General Synod encourages church leaders to enter into constructive dialogue with LGBTI persons or groups representing them with the aim of better understanding them. General Synod requests the task team on homosexuality to organize opportunities for such dialogue.

On that note, with no clarity of ordination of the LGBTIQ persons, during the 2012 General Synod, there was another decision of the General Synodical Commission (hereafter GSC), regarding one candidate for ministry that is a practicing gay person and wanted to be justifiably accepted for being a theological student. The following is the resolution of the GSC to the General Synod (GS).

As the task team of the General Synod (GS) does not finish a thorough study on homosexuality, the status quo in the URCSA remains, (b) the General Synod Commission (GSC) therefore gives not permission for the legitimization for the candidate and request Curratorium to convey this decision to the candidate(s) in a pastoral way, requesting to wait until the GS has made decision. This issue is until now unresolved, the candidate is still waiting on the decision of the GS on the matter (General Synod Agenda, 2012:83).

Decision 20 and the GSC resolution will be discussed in terms of the GS and GSC based on indecision, heteropatriarchy and radical black reformed faith.

4.3.1. Heteropatriarchy

Heteropatriarchy is the combination of male-patriarchal and heterosexual dominance essentially describing gender bias, prevalent among the elite ruling classes of nation states. These demonstrate that the combined aspects of homophobia and heterosexual dominion are oppressive to the LGBTIQ identity and well-being. Reading and looking at the decision of the Synod, it is clear that certain portions of the decision imply heteropatriarchal views. When looking at point 4 of the decision, “a reader friendly study material,” the question is: how reader friendly would that be? The reader friendly material, presented shows a way forward that the church is taking, but most importantly, the Synod is missing the LGBTIQ Christians but speaks about them. The candidate, who wanted to be the minister within the URCSA, because he disclosed his sexuality and became truthful, faced rejection and exclusion. According to Kirby and Hay (1997: 298), “the consequence of disclosure can be severe. Those who choose to disclose their sexual identity to relatives risk rejection, abuse and even exclusion from the family home”. What is said by Kirby and Hay has proven itself toward the candidate, and the decision of the GS is heteropatriarchal. As argued by Smith (2016:5), heteropatriarchy is the building block of empire. The leaders of the church are becoming the empire blocking the LGBTIQ community to become part of the ministers of the word.

According to Boesak (2009:40), “unlike other churches which have grappled with the issue of homosexuality, the URCSA does not have the understanding and interpretation of scripture and the legacy of ecumenical wisdom to work with”. This means that the URCSA has tolerated the issue of LGBTIQ than dealing with it face to face. The resolution that the church has tabled seems to be grounded on the heteropatriarchal thought, a thought that has been very painful and divisive. It is argued by Jackson (1995:131) that “debate on heterosexuality has, however, often been painful and divisive”. Indeed, the same decision of the GSC shows the exposition of the human dignity of the LGBTIQ as neurotic because the candidate has come forward and chooses to tell the truth about what he is.

It seems like the GS is contradicting the decision’s point 7 which reads: “the General Synod denounces all forms of homophobic conduct”. The decision to reject the candidate as cited above contradicts with the GS decision of denouncing all forms of

being homophobic. The GSC gave no permission for the legitimization of the candidate and requested the Curatorium to convey to the candidate the decision of how heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity maintain homophobia and hegemony in matters of sexuality. Second, this also contradicts the decision's point 5 which reads as follows:

The General Synod affirms the URCSA's long tradition of social justice, founded on the fundamental human dignity of every individual, as well as its bearing on the controversial and emotional issues of gay rights. The General Synod URCSA, therefore, calls on all its members to exhibit concern over the protection of homosexuals from discriminatory practices.

The affirmation of the URCSA long tradition of social justice founded on the fundamental respect for human dignity seems not to be working when it comes to the candidate.

According to Dreyer (2007:2):

A postmodern notion of sexuality is that it is not a homogenous entity, but the result of an endless variety of ever changing factors. The logical consequence will be to acknowledge that different times and different societies will produce different sexual practices, experiences, values and meanings and that these will always be changing.

The resolution of the GS seemed to be grounded on hegemonic, heteropatriarchal theology. Sexuality is not homogenous, but it changes with time. The last sentence of the decision stipulates that the GS URCSA, therefore, calls on all its members to show concern over the protection of homosexuals from discriminatory practices. This is a very radical and supporting statement; however, it contradicts the rejection of the candidate as discriminatory practices are done by authors of the decision. Theologians and exegetes of the URCSA should not ignore changes in social life in particular with regard to sexual difference.

4.3.2. Indecision

Since 2005, the URCSA has been discussing the possibility of the acceptance of the LGBTIQ Christians in ministry and to hold office in the church, and the matter has been referred back each time to the GS sitting. This action is articulated by Dreyer

(2008:1235) that “in South Africa, official church resolutions with regard to the position of gays as office bearers and members in the Christian faith community can be described as “indecision”. According to Dreyer (2008:1235-1236), “the term ‘gay’ is stigmatized. Some churches do not want to stigmatize, however, their approach is tantamount to ‘indecision’”. LGBTIQ Christians are welcome in some parts of the church but due to the policy that is always referred back, the church is in a state of “indecision”.

Decision 20 point 1, stipulates that “the General Synod affirms the decision of the General Synod 2005 as the interim policy in homosexuality of URCSA”. This indicates the indecision of the GS, from 2005 to date, still stands, and a prospective candidate still has to wait in order to know if he/she will be accepted in the ministry. Indecision leads to what Dreyer (2007:5) argues against as, “heterosexism leads to prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence, and it is driven by fear and hatred”. In addition, we argue that indecision is related to heteropatriarchy as most resolutions tabled by the GS are somehow stigmatizing. We have already illustrated this point in our discussion of heteropatriarchy.

The discussion of the LGBTIQ ordination within the URCSA has been discussed as far as 2005 in Pietermaritzburg, Hammanskraal in 2008, the synod of Namibia in 2012, and the synod of Gauteng in 2016. In the Seventh General Synod sitting of the URCSA, which was held in Benoni, where the church celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Belhar Confession the matter was also discussed. According to the Agenda of the Synod (2016:192), “the General Synod instructs the executive to appoint another task team for another scientific study which will add other perspectives on homosexuality.”

Elisa Farajaje-Jones in her article “Breaking the silence: Towards an In-Life Theology”, argues, “Many black people believe that it is acceptable to be openly homophobic/biphobic.” She then continues, “The black church definitely encourages this through words and actions” (1993:141). This indecision leads to being homophobic, encourages homophobia and destroys the dignity, identity and the inner being of the LGBTIQ. Postponement of debates on matters of the LGBTIQ and arguments are based on heteropatriarchy which challenges the heritage that BTL must confront.

4.3.3. Radical Black Reformed Faith

Black people and theologians had to respond to the distorted translation of this tradition in Africa and South Africa in particular. Given the history of the arrival of this faith in South African soil, Africans and those of reformed faith, in particular, were challenged to reflect on the essence of their blackness, Africanity and its relation to this reformed faith. The dialogue sought to construct safe and sacred discussions towards this faith since it was pushing the status quo of the apartheid regime to divide the Africans.

It is argued by Tshaka (2007:535) that “the history of the arrival of the Christian in Africa is a history that is fraught with controversy and purposeful ignorance about African people and their beliefs systems”. Regardless of the exploitation, the humiliation that black people had to persevere with the order of this reformed faith, black people and theologians had to embody the knowledge of their own blackness. They had to manifest themselves with developing the black faith that will be able to talk to their experience, situation and the way this faith was bequeathed to them. Tshaka (2007:535) says that “proponents of this new faith managed to make Africans dependent upon them, as they attempted to de-culture Africans of their Africanity and consequently managed to assimilate them into their western beliefs system”. This simply means that the faith of the black person was constructed from the western system; black faith was assimilated to these western belief systems.

This study argues that the white church justified the oppression of black people through use of theological ideologies and biblical interpretation to segregate the church and people. In Allan Boesak’s book entitled *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition*, Sweetman (in Boesak 1984: xiii) argues, “these white Afrikaner Reformed Churches; however, spawned the apartheid or ‘separate’ development model of society that dehumanizes all black people in South Africa”. Thus in South Africa, there emerged black radical voices that argued against the suffering of the black South Africans based on the Reformed Tradition. Names such as Allan Boesak, Takatso Mofokeng, Bonganjalo Goba, Sabelo Ntwasa and Manas Buthelezi were among the voices of the suffering black people in South Africa within the Reformed tradition and in public life. They championed the understanding of the gospel to the stage where they

came with Black theology, a theology that brought blackness to reformed faith, a faith that emancipated the suffering and oppression of black people.

Boesak, Mofokeng, Tshaka, and Goba did not do away with this reformed faith, but rather, they used the same faith and tradition to argue against it. Boesak in particular is the best example who radicalized the reformed tradition since he wrote the book "Black and Reformed: apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist tradition". The book was a response to the oppressive tradition that segregated natives; it was resisting the apartheid regime. For he argues, "being both black and reformed is an expression of a painful paradox" (Boesak 1984:91) because the reformed tradition oppressed and segregated people because of the colour of their skin. According to Boesak (1984:92), "these Reformed Christians have created a political, economic and social dispensation that they call apartheid". It was in the power of Reformed Christians to change and theologially justify apartheid by using the bible, and in that regard, they did win. Nevertheless, their victory was never too long even though black people lost their loved ones during the struggle.

In that regard, black radical reformers argued against this painful paradox they had faced. There was a development of black reformed faith that was mushrooming within the dusty streets of the black masses. The idea was to reconstruct this oppressive tradition that was denying their ontological blackness using the Bible to justify apartness between black and white. For scholars of white reformed faith, equality was something that was not present in their argument. It is argued by Tshaka (2007:543) that "this tale of Reformed hegemony in South Africa exhibits how the Reformed faith managed to give theological legitimacy to a political system that exploited the majority of South Africans".

It was black reformed scholars who started to question this hegemony that was destroying and killing black masses. Black theologians were propelled to question the legitimacy of theology and biblical hermeneutics that supported such subjugation. Black Theologians generally succeeded to use black theology as a means of challenging the paradox of being black and Reformed. According to Tshaka (2007:544), "it is inevitable that Africans in the Reformed ecclesial tradition in South Africa remain completely

indebted to the efforts by some that used black theology as a hermeneutical tool of exposing injustices that Africans were subjected to in the name of Christianity”.

The chapter thus argues that it is imperative to use the same theology to challenge the indecision of the church and the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. BTL was successful in arguing against the oppressive tradition that was destroying the human dignity of the black masses; it started by affirming the ontological blackness of the black person and declared them human beings that are created in the image of God. BTL theologians debunked apartheid and called it heresy.

Thus, radical black reformed faith was introduced to the ecclesial tradition, and its emergence was apparent when those who dealt with the predicament of being black and Reformed had to be aware of the similarities that existed with the Reformed teaching and African cultural understanding of God and faith. Radical theologians of black Reformed faith fought to seize this tradition and shaped the black Reformed faith theology that had to take its people beyond cultural, racial and liturgical deceptions of a European presence in Africa. If there is anything helpful about the Reformed faith, it is just that it was used by black theologians to change the status quo of apartheid and there was no new tradition to change the struggle but the same Reformed tradition. The same ideologies were used to radicalize the oppressive Reformed faith; they used black experience to argue against the church theology that was too oppressive to the black Reformed Christians. The radical Reformed faith was conscientized by the likes of Biko to challenge this evil regime; they used the same Reformed faith to argue against it, for they believed that the word of God gives life.

Black reformed faith scholars have fought against racism and apartness that was happening in the black church and community. They have seen racism and apartheid as sin and heresy, so extent Boesak (in De Gruchy & Villa Vicencio, 1983:3) argued that “racism is an ideology of racial domination that incorporates beliefs in a particular race’s cultural and/ or inherent biological inferiority”. This means that racism and apartheid used these systems of belief to justify and prescribe unequal treatment of people, especially to separate blacks from whites. This all was done through the eyes of white Reformed faith to justify their sinful racial action to denounce black people as inferior.

They basically denied the black people ontologically, and it is well articulated by Tlhagale (in Tlhagale & Tutu, 1987:269) that “in as much as Nazis saw themselves as a different race, the Afrikaners have also belaboured under the belief that they are different people. They even saw themselves as the chosen people, the “Herrenvlok”, a separate nation called by God to create a new humanity”. This was the white reformed faith that was ridiculing black reformed faith and its people, for they saw themselves as the chosen.

Tlhagale (1987:269) argues, “the Afrikaner did not claim to be a specially chosen people; such a viewpoint appears to contradict the practice of the Afrikaner religion which has always been exclusive, denying even those blacks of the reformed tradition common worship with Afrikaners”. To put it another way, a common worship was not that really common as there were different names that were given to the black church; commonality, however, was something that was different for the white reformed tradition because religious exclusiveness and the practice of racialism reinforced the white reformed faith community’s idea of being a race set apart. Black reformed faith theologians and people saw racism and oppression as sin because both racial oppression and marginalisation deny the creatureliness of others. It drastically denies ontologically that all human beings are created in the image of God, the father of Jesus Christ. Boesak (1983:4) argues that “racism has brought dehumanization, has undermined black personhood and destroyed the human-beingness of those who are called to be the children of God. It has caused those who are the image of the living God to despise themselves, for they cannot understand why it should be the very blackness that calls forth such hatred, such contempt, such wanton and terrible violence”.

This was the cry of the black reformed faith theologians and people who were facing terrible oppression, marginalisation and denial of their existence. Theologically speaking, black reformed faith blacks took responsibility by formulating in their own words their belief in God. Black reformed faith theologians and people no longer hid behind the theological formulation that was created by white reformed tradition. This was the moment of truth that was mushrooming in dusty streets of the black community;

they were now moving away from the universality of the western theology and politics to the contextuality of liberation theology and political liberation. It is argued by Boesak (1983:5) that “racism has not only contaminated human society, it has also defiled the body of Christ, Christians and the churches have provided the moral and theological justification for racism and human degradation”. Black reformed faith theologians have critiqued white reformed faith and its tools of oppression and has declared racism as denying the liberation, the humanity and the reconciling work of Christ, the one who was promised to bring liberation to the oppressed.

When looking at indecision and heteropatriarchal theology, it seems to be the same ideologies that white Reformed faith pushed during the heydays of apartheid. The policy of the URCSA seemed to be grounded in the old theology, a theology that was introduced by the white Reformed regime, which denied ontological reality of black people. Boesak (1984:97) asked a question “what shall we say about the equation of South African oppressive society and the Reformed tradition? For it was necessary for him to ask the question as black Christian were killed in the name of the bible. In the same cue, this chapter asks: what shall the church say about the question of ontological denial of the LGBTIQ in URCSA and other churches? It is necessary that such questions be asked because the church believes in social justice, which is founded on the fundamental human dignity of every individual. Then the chapter argues that it is radical for the church to denounce all forms of homophobic conduct because it is blasphemous, thus claiming that being LGBTIQ is sinful and un-Godly and un-African.

4.4 The critique of Reformed faith by Black theology of liberation

BTL have championed the fight against the apartheid regime on the ontological denial of the black people. It is argued by Boesak (1984:94) that “in the Reformed tradition, it is the word of God that gives life to our words. It is the word of God that shapes life and provides the church with the basis on which to stand”. This argument brings to the study’s attention that Reformed faith needs to engage the new social struggles that are mushrooming within the church and community, which is the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Boesak (1984:94) was right when he argued, “manipulation of the word of God to suit, culture, prejudices or ideology is alien to the Reformed tradition”. This was

because he was decrying the ontological deniality that was happening within the reformed faith. For this reason, Boesak (1984:95) argues, “the way in which scripture has been used to produce a nationalistic, racist ideology is the very denial of the Reformed belief in the supremacy of scripture”.

This was the cry of the BTL theologians seeking justice through the eyes of the reformed faith. BTL, in critiquing the Reformed faith, was to address the black existence and white racism; it focused on providing critical analyses and interpretations of the black experience. Its hermeneutical orientation was to keep and strive to speak for the black life and black people who were oppressed under the white Reformed faith supremacy. What was so important about BTL was being the voice of the voiceless, the light and salt of black communities, as it mushroomed as a volcanic eruption within the black church. The gap in the thought-provoking nature of BTL was its failure to include black sexuality and gender within its core fundamental arguments in a clear and meaningful manner. It is argued by Vellem (2010:1) that:

The Kairos Document (hereafter KD) prompted a variety of comments and views across South Africa. To some quarters of the South African church it was like an irritating, vexatious unconventional *vuvuzela* sound that invaded the Confederation Cup in South Africa in 2009. It was a sound of a voice that showed how the church was divided in its response to the apartheid regime.

BTL was like the sound of a vuvuzela that was vexatious to the reformed faith during the apartheid regime. As Vellem (2010:1) would say, “it was probably like a volcanic eruption protruding out of the township belly during the 1985 State emergency”. BTL was like that when it argued against the oppressive system that the DRC and apartheid government were perpetrating against blacks. For BTL to critique the reformed faith was an issue of civil rights and issue of equality, an issue of equal treatment under the law. The scholars of black reformed theology in the heyday of apartheid in the black church were straight to the point as they pushed justice for the poor and oppressed. From the voice of BTL and a reformed theologian, Boesak (1979:170) argues: “through black consciousness, black people discover that they are the children of God and have the

right to exist in God's world. Black people discover that they are part of history and share this history with God, which means that they are responsible to act as human beings". In simple terms, this means that BTL has critiqued the Reformed faith to make it clear that black people realize they are black and that their recognition as black is not questioned. The theology of Reformed faith ridiculed black people, it dehumanized them, and it was the task of BTL to tackle the situation of black oppression and marginalized blacks and realizes the true humanity of black people; for BTL, authentic humanity means black humanity.

It is argued by Boesak (1988 [1977]:27) that "blacks know that racial fellowship and reconciliation will never become a reality unless whites learn to accept blacks as black people". These were volcanic voices that were mushrooming within the black church that were critiquing reformed faith; they were critiquing the evilness of the white reformed faith that was pushing the status quo of the apartheid regime. The situation of apartheid was created by the Reformed Christians, a system that maintained the oppression of black people.

The LGBTIQ are now the ones that are within the Reformed faith. The black Reformed church seems to be in support of this oppression and homophobia; it does the same thing that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) did when it introduced apartheid in this country. According to Boesak (1984:92), it is reformed Christians who have split the church on the basis of race and colour, who now claim that raciality divided churches, which is a true reformed understanding of the nature of Christian church. Based on the same argument by Boesak, this is true for LGBTIQ Christians in the URCSA family.

It is within the core fundamental argument of both black reformed faith and BTL that it can be useful to fight the plight and ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. It is argued by Vellem (2010:3) that "the Black Theology of Liberation challenges forms of power such as racism, patriarchy, sexism and economic exclusion, which perpetuate the oppression of the poor". It challenged the forms of power during the heyday of apartheid regime and oppression of the black people; it faced the ontological reality of the black masses and changed the status quo of the apartheid regime. The chapter then argues that if BTL was able to affirm the ontological reality of the black people, then it should affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ.

According to Vellem (2010:3), Black Theology of Liberation entails that much of science, philosophy and religion are ideological constructions intent on protecting the interests of the powerful against the oppressed". The aim and game of BTL in critiquing the Reformed faith of the apartheid regime was to open the horizons of those who suffer ontologically denial and malicious oppression and domination in their own land. BTL was born in a community and society of the oppressed and wrestled with the suffering and the ontological reality of the oppressed community. It refused to listen and believe the gospel that was narrow, racist, sexist, heteropatriarchal that the white theology presented. It can still be used in the same manner to affirm the ontological reality of LGBTIQ.

BTL needs to intervene without being conditional about the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ to create a safe space where the voices of the marginalized, oppressed, sexually segregated LGBTIQ can be heard. It is within the core fundamental argument of BTL to create safe spaces for voices, words, songs and the silent solidarity to express the trauma experienced by the LGBTIQ. According to Cone (1969:95), "sometimes white northern churchmen want to distinguish their attitudes towards blacks from those of their southern brethren, suggesting that their doors have always been open to blacks. The doors may have opened, but only if blacks accepted their assigned places by whites". That is exactly what the reformed faith did during the heydays of apartheid, in the present era, the church is doing the same with the LGBTIQ, with special reference is the URCSA.

Synod confirms that homosexual people are members of the church through faith in Jesus Christ. Synod rejects homophobia and any form of discrimination against homosexual persons. This is to say they are opening doors for the LGBTIQ, but only if they are ordained are they are not open for they are not to be involved in church leadership. The URCSA community should be reminded that the existence of the black church was based on a fight for the injustice that blacks were facing, and they refused to accept the racism deeply embedded in the structure of white churches. Some of the decisions that the GS drafted bring hope and radical-ness to those who are still in denial of the ontological reality and existence of the LGBTIQ:

The General Synod encourages church leaders to enter into constructive dialogue with the LGBTIQ persons or groups representing them with the aim of better understanding them. General Synod requests the task team on homosexuality to organize opportunities for such dialogue (Acta, 2012:30).

Through this is radical reformation; the church is willing to move forward, so the same BTL can be used in this dialogue to listen to the LGBTIQ experiences for BTL was born out of experiences of the oppressed black people. The URCSA is moving towards a new consciousness as it realizes that LGBTIQ are people of God. According to Biko (1978:53), black consciousness takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It is the argument of the chapter that the radical black Reformed faith and affirmed black Christians took cognizance that they are children of God and God made them black. For that matter, the study finds it fitting to argue theologically that God took into cognizance, thus showing LGBTIQ people and LGBTIQ as God's children.

This chapter challenges the consciousness of URCSA to revisit its consciousness, as Biko (1978:53) eluded that black consciousness seeks to infuse the black community with pride. BLT was appealing to the same sentiments of Biko, that black consciousness takes into cognizance the deliberateness of God's plan in making black people black. It is with the same sentiment that the chapter argues that the core fundamental position of the philosophy of black consciousness and BTL is to take cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating the LGBTIQ people LGBTIQ. Therefore, the affirmation of Black theology of liberation is to teach that those who work enthusiastically against LGBTQ rights are on the wrong side of justice, the wrong side of history, the wrong side of love, and the wrong end of the ever-bending moral arc of the universe. Thus, this will enable the LGBTIQ people to use the personality of Jesus Christ and make it fit into their struggle of being accepted as full members of the confessing church.

What it is witnessed at some occasions in the world today, is that people who live in similar circumstances of poverty, exploitation and oppression are developing much the same ideas about their poverty and about what they need to do. The interesting part

concerning this is that similarity of ideas does not come from direct communication of communist propaganda but from the similarity of their situations, their experiences and their oppression.

Nevertheless the same cry that the LGBTIQ are crying today is a similar cry of the Black people who were oppressed, segregated and needed equality. If then BTL affirms the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, it should be able to help the LGBTIQ to formulate their theology that will be recognized by the church and its seminaries. However, it is the argument of the chapter that, LGBTIQ people must do theology out of their tri-dimensional experiences of homophobia, classism and sexism. To ignore any aspect of these experiences is to deny the holistic and integrated ontological reality of LGBTIQ because this means that the Black theology of liberation enables the LGBTIQ people to say that God is on the side of the oppressed; this will mean that God is in solidarity with the struggle of the LGBTIQ. The LGBTIQ people, because of oppression and rejection determined by homophobia and their subjugation as LGBTIQ, are vulnerable.

The ontological denial of the LGBTIQ communities has revealed the hopeless inadequacy of modern discourse of sexual identity that led to the birth of what is known as Queer theory (Stuart, 2001:91). This theory argues on the basis of the idea that power is something held by dominant groups and used against those or others had less power, for instance, women, LGBTIQ, the poor and so forth. Indeed, those who have power oppresses those who have (has) less power; in this perspective, the LGBTIQ are powerless as the powerful ones use the scripture to oppress them, even when it comes to serving God, they are not seen as the same because God is being used against them. This shows the relationship that ordination and sexuality has; because of issues of sexuality, one cannot be ordained, as a candidate if one chooses to come out to the church, they will use the same procedure of waiting for the decision of the General Synod to be legitimized.

4.5. Conclusion

The aim of the chapter was not to expose the reformed faith but rather to highlight the aspects of the tradition that are irrelevant for the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Therefore, the chapter argued that the Black theology of liberation should give the church a new consciousness that identifies, exposes, and rejects any form of homophobia with regard to the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. The chapter has argued that URCSA should move away from the theology that is oppressive toward the minority within the church. The chapter has demonstrated that BTL has critiqued Reformed faith and its evil and has proclaimed freedom to the destitute and the downtrodden. It has argued that the URCSA has to have an important shift since it is within the reformed tradition and ground itself with the theology of sexuality.

Due to doing theology from the perspective of and with the marginalized, the oppressed sector is not new. The chapter has demonstrated that sexuality is the new struggle, and since the URCSA is within the tradition, it was the black Christians within this tradition that argued that the reform church needs to continuously reform. The study discusses the following topic in the next chapter: affirmation on ontological and ethical realities of the LGBTIQ. Within the chapter, the study proposes the following themes to be engaged: affirmation on ontological LGBTIQness, the affirmation on indecision of the URCSA interim policy, the ethical implication on ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ and ethical realities of the LGBTIQ.

Chapter five

Ontological Affirmation and Ethical realities of the LGBTIQ

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter deliberated on being black and gay in the reformed tradition. The chapter elucidated the importance and the emergence of reformed tradition and theology, on the bases of fighting the division and the wrong way of doing theology. In this chapter, the study focuses on the understanding of the affirmation on ontological and ethical realities of the LGBTIQ. The advent of the chapter is to engage on the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ based on the indecision and heteropatriarchy thrown to the LGBTIQ. The argument of the chapter is concerned with the ethical challenges that the LGBTIQ are facing in the community and society. Being black has always been an ethical issue and challenge within the western theology and epistemology. Western epistemology did not recognise blackness and being black was seen as unethical and immoral.

Western theologians and philosophers have declared black human beings as none beings ontologically, and today, this paradigm shift has turned towards LGBTIQ community. The LGBTIQ are regarded as an unethical creation and cannot even have mutual complementary ontological realities. Some ethicist and theologians regard LGBTIQ as a human disorder dehumanizing ethical realities of God's creation, for it said that God created man and woman to be one. For a variety of sexual expression, many LGBTIQ people continue to fear consequences of being open about their sexuality.

The purpose of the chapter is therefore to present and engage the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ. The chapter will also engage on the ontological blackness and ontological gayness, and then discuss the ethical realities of the LGBTIQ.

5.2. Ontological blackness and gayness

5.2.1. Ontological blackness

In his book *“Beyond ontological blackness: An essay on African American religious and cultural criticism*, Victor Anderson (2016:11) attests that “ontological blackness is a covering term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting black life and experience”. This means that ontological blackness recognizes blackness as a permanent effective category in an identity of each black person. This does not exclude the black LGBTIQ as ontological blackness recognizes sexual difference and the marginalization that exists within the community and society.

Anderson (2016:13) argues, “Ontological blackness signifies the blackness that whiteness has created”, for it was whiteness that created oppression, slavery and segregation in black community. Therefore, the ontological blackness enters a kind of categorical racial reasoning and gives meaning towards black aesthetic, a kind of collective racial consciousness experience and representational of black epistemology and existentiality. This is because for many years, being black was a matter of life and death, as being black was regarded as darkness and the opposite of white. Ontological blackness calls for full acceptance of the existence of a black person in the world.

During the heydays of apartheid regime, the black community was oppressed, segregated and marginalized by the leading governing party because of their skin colour. Blackness has been a curse for black person globally. In the United States of America, a black person was lynched because his/her existence was denied. There was a Ku Klux Klan community that tormented blacks and killed them because of their blackness. The ontological blackness, therefore, signifies the ontological existentiality of the black person and community. The emergence of BTL, Liberation theologies and Black theology affirmed the ontological reality of the black person; its focus was that there are people that are black that exist ontologically in the world. These theologies, in affirming the ontological blackness, had a mandate to develop new cultural politics of black identity.

According to Anderson (2016:13), “ontological blackness renders black life and experience a totality. It is a totality that takes narrative formation that emphasizes heroic capacities of African to transcend individuality and personality in the name of black communal survival”. This simply means that the ontological blackness is a new consciousness and new cultural politics that have to emerge within the black community. The ontology of black community was highly denied because it did not form any of the ontologies that were existing within the parameters of the European world. Thus, the ontological blackness emerged to bring new cultural politics, being that black is a matter of life and that black people are ontologically existing. It is the argument of the chapter that the ontology of whiteness was instigated under the normative approach for instilling the political injunction of the western world. Thus, they created the zone of none being which rejected the being of black person and the whole embodiment of being black.

The white man has negated the weak ontology of blackness of a black person and made the white ontology to be the only existing ontology in the world. A black person had to firstly deal with and affirm his/her ontological existence and start explaining him/herself to the world. Black humanity had to come to terms with their existence, which is why there was Black Consciousness Movement to take into cognizance the ontological blackness. Biko (1978:74) argues that “the philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and determination by blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self. He further argues that Black Consciousness makes the black man (person)⁷ to see him/herself⁸ as a being, entire in him/herself, and not as an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machine”. This was another form of ontological blackness taking its stance with the denial of the black person as a black person; the black person was tired of being on the margin of oppression and not being heard. The work of missionaries and white theologians has made the black person to feel that the white person is some kind of god.

⁷ The author sounds sexist and patriarchal, and the inclusion of the “person” take cognizance of sexual difference and inclusiveness of women and other minorities

⁸ My own inclusion as the sentence sounds sexist, rather use gender to make the sentence inclusive.

The ontological blackness makes the black person to shine from his/her blackness and existentialism. Ontological blackness makes the black person aware of his/her blackness, and that there are people that are black that exist in the world, and if a white person does not understand that, they will have to pack and leave. It ought to be remembered that ontological blackness came into existence because some embraced the white theology and apartheid hegemony that was deliberately keeping its matter ignorant of what transpired to them. A black person existed in the understanding, not in reality; he existed in the mind of the white person but in reality, did ontologically not exist. Ontological blackness takes a leaf off Black Consciousness to reform the oppression that the black masses were feeling. Moreover, ontological blackness makes the black person realize that from now on, when it comes to the question that we are all the same, the only difference is raciality.

In this era, the struggle still continues around ontological reality and difference. This time, the new site of struggle is sexuality. Within black communities, there is sexual difference that most humans have turned a blind eye to. The ontological difference that many philosophers and theologians that dealt with ontology did not deal with is the ontological difference and sexual difference within black communities. BTL and other liberation theologies have argued against the ontological denial of the black person and declared colonialism and apartheid as heresy. These theologies argued and fought to bid farewell to a theo-centric epistemology and the rejection of theo-ontology that led to the destruction of a black person's dignity. BTL, therefore, arose from the need to articulate the religious significance of black people and their presence in a hostile white world. It was black people using BTL to firstly, affirm the ontological blackness and give the meaning of the black life.

5.2.2. Ontological gayness (LGBTIQness)

The paradigm shift is that there is a new site struggle that has emerged, which is sexuality. The moment of truth has come; the second Kairos moment has come, during the heydays of apartheid, the Kairos document gave the church a new way of doing theology. It is argued by West (2016:2) that the "Kairos document was a challenge to the church, calling for repentance and conversion from Church Theology, so prophetic

theology and/ or liberation theology of sexuality challenges the churches to repent from using the experience of heteropatriarchy as its primary dialogue partner". The new challenge that the church is facing today is the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ Christians. This calls for the church to revisit its theology and have a theology of sexuality, a theology that takes cognizance of sexual difference in the community. Thus, now the chapter comes to what is called, ontological gayness. This ontological gayness represents and depicts the reality and the experience of the LGBTIQ. Ontological gayness entails a type of categorical of sexual difference and LGBTIQ aesthetic and argues against all forms of marginalization that deny the LGBTIQ ontologically.

Ontological gayness gives the depiction of double consciousness of existence of the LGBTIQ within the black community and the black church and argues on the same sentiments against the church theology. Ontological gayness takes and represents the lived experienced and reality of the LGBTIQ Christians. Ontological gayness' theology is a theology from the margins of the oppressed LGBTIQ; it does not apply new theology but rather continues to use BTL and the liberation theologies to articulate sexual difference in the black community.

Black communities have been resisting progressively changing to recognize sexual difference, rights and equality of the LGBTIQ. The black church and community has reluctantly ignored viewing the openness of the LGBTIQ within the spaces of the church and society. Nevertheless, ontological gayness gives communities who have ignored, rejected and denied the LGBTIQ in their spaces a challenge to view their way of doing theology. It is argued by West (2016:2) that "the doing of LGBTIQ theologies requires a process that recognizes traumatized realities of the LGBTIQ bodies". It is an immutable fact that traditional theologies have traumatized LGBTIQ Christians, thus churches like the URCSA have a policy of indecision and heteropatraichal theology that prevents the LGBTIQ from becoming ministers of the word.

The ontological gayness is predicated as full acceptance and appreciation rather than mere tolerance of the LGBTIQ Christians. It is orientated on openness instead of closure; it gives knowledge of sexual difference within the community and society. Ontological gayness is oriented towards appreciating LGBTIQ life, as ethical people and

as people of sexual difference within the community. It is the argument of the study that the appreciation of sexual difference in black church and community require black heterosexuals to speak for the black LBGTIQ and does not require LBGTIQ to be apologetic about being black and LBGTIQ. Ontological gayness calls for radical dialogues about sexual difference within societies and communities. The dissertation has showed that African culture finds the sexual difference of LBGTIQ as taboo.

Ontological gayness will lead to an understanding that sexual difference has been a major issue during the past. BTL, during the heyday of apartheid, engages critical dialogues with black masses and scrutinized the diverse range of blackness. It gives constructive, critical contribution to the ontological denial of the LBGTIQ and the human species that has denied the LBGTIQ ontologically. Ontological gayness' main aim is to analyse the content of heteronormative theology; in doing this, it enables the black community and society to be able to see the sexual difference within them. It is the argument of the study that ontological gayness understands the LBGTIQ, and those who advocate for the ontological reality of the LBGTIQ will not make a mistake and limit their freedom as not equivalent to racism. Sexuality and race are inseparable and share the same sentiments of being racially segregated and sexually segregated.

Through an examination of BTL, it is befitting to question the adequacy of description of black LBGTQ life in Africa. The cause of homophobia was the lack of presentation of the LBGTIQ as another struggle for freedom in the heydays of apartheid, even in this particular time, the struggle of ontological denial of the LBGTIQ in black community continues. When Tshaka, Vellem, Senokoane, Lephakga and Boesak identify homophobia as one threat to the well-beings of black communities, in a way, they are arguing for sexual discourse as a need and necessity to correct homophobia in black life and black church. However, it is the argument of the chapter that sources used to assist BTL theologians in achieving that goal should speak on behalf of the LBGTIQ. The voices of the LBGTIQ are silent when it comes to this because of the same homophobic utterances that the black church is holds towards the LBGTIQ.

Being LBGTIQ represents a particular conception of sexual difference that is static and rigidly dichotomous. However, this sexual difference is suggestive towards ontological

gayness; its goal is to suggest an ethical reorientation towards the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ. The ontological gayness, together with ontological blackness, argues that black life ought not to be interpreted solely in terms of race, but that gender and sexuality (inclusive of sexual difference) stand alongside in postmodern African criticism. In this regard, it may enable and conscientises all people who are in denial of the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. It will also enable all Christians to re-read the Genesis 1 to show that the creator God cannot be limited to two sexes simply because that is what heterosexuals are comfortable with this one-sex God. As articulated in the chapter, ontological gayness creates an atmosphere of full acceptance and appreciation of sexual difference within the black church and community. For many decades, the LGBTIQ was taught either to ignore their differences or view them as cause for separation and suspicion rather a force to change.

5.3. Affirmation of ontological LGBTIQ-ness

Years of research on ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ in African countries have created controversy regarding the erotic desire of the LGBTIQ. Sexual relations between same-sex people presented a history of sexuality with problematic moral values and ethical problems with the African fundamentalist. Afro-centric scholars, politicians and church members have declared LGBTIQ existence and reality as not an a-temporal, ethical and cultural phenomenon. Those constructionist view LGBTIQ as an abomination to humankind and reality, especially in African countries. The affirmation on ontological (being) of LGBTIQ-ness has been nothing but torture, execution and rejection, ontologically. However, it is the argument of the chapter that LGBTIQ ontology is a radical concern for is-ness in the context of African life. The affirmation on ontological LGBTIQ-ness primary concern is concrete existence (lived life) and the motivation for a coherent and unified relationship between body, soul and creation.

The affirmation on ontological LGBTIQ-ness rejects dualism and argues for wholeness; this wholeness shapes the rise of sexual difference within the community and society. For this counter the theories and ethos that have always been in the mind of the anti-LGBTIQ, that uttered homophobia and rejection towards the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. The growing black voices in our socio-cultural matrix makes it difficult to

maintain ethical sexual difference toward universalities. Thus, many LGBTIQ are ethically tormented and crushed within the human existence and are excluded within the community and society for they are disordered human beings. More than ever before, the BTL and Afrocentric scholars have to contain the radical nature of wholeness and inclusiveness within the society and community.

It has been in the minds, and core fundamental arguments of the scholars of BTL that, “Being” is physical and spiritual ontologically. Affirmation on ontological LGBTIQ-ness, advocates the very same “being” of the LGBTIQ within the community and society, especially within the black church. The being of the LGBTIQ has been nothing but torture and rejection within the community and society they belong to. Thus, the chapter argues that affirming LGBTIQ ontologically has nothing to do with destruction of the ethos of Christian community but the discovery of the sexual difference. The Christian ethos that has been on the minds of many Christians and ethicists includes the practice of marriage and only to heterosexuals. LGBTIQ humanity has been unknown by both traditional theology and churches because they are unnatural and do not create humanity, and cannot exist ontologically.

The chapter finds it befitting to use BTL and its core fundamental arguments to affirm LGBTIQ ontologically for it argued and attested that being black is an ontological reality that exists in the universe ontologically and ethically. Strong voices emerged within black communities within the dusty streets. BTL in affirming the ontological blackness has arguments pointing to the experiences of oppression that blacks encountered. Roberts in Cone and Wilmore (1993:115) attest that:

God speaks to each man and each people as well as to every man and to every people. God who reveals Himself as creator, Provider and Redeemer is aware of the special needs and cares of each man and of each man, and for each people. God is aware of centuries of underserved Black suffering. He is aware of our experience of oppression. God cares concerning the “wretched of the earth”. Black hope stems from the assurance that God seeks the liberation of the oppressed.

This was to affirm the ontological reality of being black and being human in all spheres of the world. In the same cue, the study argues that God is aware of the sexual

oppression of the LGBTIQ people and is aware of the special needs of the LGBTIQ. God is fully and radically aware of the suffering the LGBTIQ are facing daily; God is concerned of the wretchedness the LGBTIQ are going through. When Roberts argued, “black hope stems from assurance that God seeks liberation of the oppressed, he was affirming the ontological reality of the black people. In the same cue, the study argues that the LGBTIQ hopes stems from the assurance that God seeks liberation of the oppressed LGBTIQ, who experience denial and rejection.

The affirmation on the ontological LGBTIQ-ness comes from the acknowledgement of the existence of the LGBTIQ people. It reveals that there are people that are LGBTIQ that exist within the black community that are human beings like the heterosexuals and are Christian. The ontological affirmation on the LGBTIQ means that enough is enough of the pain, isolation, loneliness and shame had grown. The forced futile relationship with a woman to please the ethicist community, society and the argument with God has gone too far. God has revealed self to them and has affirmed them ontologically; the same revelation that God instilled and manifested to heterosexuals has manifested within the LGBTIQ people.

As argued by Roberts (1993:114), “revelation is the process of unveiling, a divine self-manifestation or self-disclosure. Revelation is transcendent, ontological and existential, and is objective and subjective”. This simply means that every man is free to respond to God’s revelation in terms of obedience and disobedience, not because he or she is LGBTIQ or heterosexual. The ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ is an ideology that LGBTIQ people exist and are human being. Even if people like Yates (1996:87) can argue, “Thus, homosexual practice is essentially disordered and dehumanizing”, this does not mean that the LGBTIQ are not a human beings and cannot exist ontologically the same way blacks existed ontologically.

Yates (1995:85-86) further argues, “I have already spent some time arguing that same-sex relationships lack ontological and so personal differentiation necessary for the intimacy designed by God to be expressed in sexual intercourse”. Yates is radically refuting to affirm the LGBTIQ ontologically; however, his argument is grounded on the golden rule of manhood and womanhood. His argument is obviously about Genesis 1,

and to him, LGBTIQ do not constitute ontological difference. This simply means that even if BTL can affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, for him this is just an illusion. Yates (1996:87) further argues that “In raising the most basic of theological questions, that of ontology, I have tried to show that in attempting to construct a theology of homosexuality, one is pursuing an illusion or raising a structure without a foundation.

Truly, for Yates, LGBTIQ are not God’s creation and do not exist ontologically, as ontological existence is for heterosexuals. However, he lost the battle when he mentions that we cannot construct theology of LGBTIQ because since the beginning of time, all theologies have emerged within the experience they have encountered. BTL was fashioned without affirmation by Western theology. For many centuries, whites have defined black humanity as none beings. In the 21st century, the same sentiments of ontological denial of the other being were targeted at the LGBTIQ by the same people and scholars who know how it feels to be ontologically rejected. Ethically, LGBTIQ are not to be regarded as human species as they are doing the opposite of human morality.

Being silenced and sidelined is what the black church and community do to the LGBTIQ. Doing this shows the unethically of the black church during the heyday of apartheid and segregation. The likes of Boesak, Buthelezi, Mofokeng, to mention the few, were in the forefront of the ontological affirmation of the black community. They proclaim an ethics of openness inclusive of the struggle of the black people. The ethical goal of BTL was to start by affirming the ontological reality of black people and proclaim that being black is an ethical reality, and that moral humanity exists in the world.

Thus, the affirmation of LGBTIQ ontologically means to be accepted for who and what they are as human beings. The struggle of the LGBTIQ will continue to mushroom until the number of people still sees the LGBTIQ as ethical and natural beings that can exist ontologically. For as long as people refer to the LGBTIQ as dogs and non-beings who have made a choice being who they are, this will always bring a question based on their explanation of ethics. Affirmation of the ontological LGBTIQ-ness means full acceptance

of the community of the LGBTIQ. The tool and methodology of BTL was to do theology reflecting upon the experience of black hatred posed by the apartheid government.

BTL argued and fought a revolutionary war in affirming the ontological reality of blacks during the heydays of apartheid when White, state theology declared blacks as sexually promiscuous savages. BTL stood up and declared white, state theology as heresy since it was denying the ontological reality of blacks and seeing them as non- beings.

There are those who do not accept the LGBTIQ ontologically, based on the argument of ethical and moral reality. This has led to violence against the LGBTIQ; lesbian women have been discriminated against and abused physically and verbally for seeking the ontological affirmation. White (2000:3) argues, "In affirming a theory, one also takes on a commitment to the existence of certain entities". One of the entities most thrown into the question of existence is the human subject, specifically the LGBTIQ. Thus, the chapter argues that the BTL and Black church has to take on a commitment on the existence of the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ inside and outside the church. As White (2003:3) attests, "ontological commitment, in this sense, is thus entangled with questions of identity and history, with how we articulate the meaning of our lives, both individually and collectively".

However, it has been difficult for the black church and community to come to terms with the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ in this world. Ontological commitment of the black church and black community has nothing apart from disaffirming and discriminating LGBTIQ in the world in such a way that hate crimes mushroom. The chapter would argue that the struggle of the LGBTIQ in affirming their ontological reality as human beings has been nothing but pain in the lives of the LGBTIQ. Various Christians have affirmed the LGBTIQ as heathens and salvages. For BTL, relevance towards the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ is to proclaim the gospel like they did during the heydays of apartheid.

It is absurd to speak of consistent protection of basic human rights of the personhood of the LGBTIQ; it is meaningless to speak about democracy when the LGBTIQ are still facing persecution and denial by the community and church. LGBTIQ still suffer under

the hands of slave masters who are the heterosexual. Historically, there were degrees of harshness with regard to the ontological reality of Black people. In 2009, international officials asserted that Caster Semenya, an 18-year-old world champion runner who identifies herself as female, undergo testing due to her elevated testosterone levels. This incident displays an ontological denial of the humanity of Semenya and her intersexuality. She underwent tests to determine her sexuality because they ontologically denied her sexuality as much as Yates's (1996:87) concern. This does not differ at all from what Europeans did to blacks when they landed in Africa. Europeans did the same thing with black communities and treated them as savages and slaves and objects to be studied.

5.4. Ethical realities on the LGBTIQ

In some respect, the challenges we face are not new; throughout history, people have struggled with ethical realities and questions. Humans have always asked questions: how can we get along with each other? How should we conduct ourselves as we live together? What constitutes proper behaviour in social groupings or society? Other issues are connected with the purpose of life, and for many years of human existence, have struggled and wondered what is a good life, how should one live an ethical and moral life? However to be a human being means to be confronted with ethical challenges and realities since ethical realities the human species are facing are critical today. The ontological reality of the LGBTIQ is one of critical ethical realities that human existence is confronted with. However, ethical realities and issues vary; they may focus on individual, family, social, national and global issues.

For theological ethicists, understanding ethics is a conduct of good human behaviour associated what is good and bad. However, when it comes to sexual ethics, some controversial Christians and theologians have been struggling to accept and affirm sexual orientation of the LGBTIQ. Some have declared the LGBTIQ bad conduct of human behavior and immoral sexual behaviour not affirmed and not God given. This hetero-normative argument is argued by O'Connell (1986:82) when he attests that "sexual behaviour is right if it conforms to this reality and respects the procreative potential. It is wrong if it attacks that potential". This potential which is attacked

according to what he argued is a procreative norm. This is what causes the LGBTIQ to be rejected and denied ontologically because their sexual behaviour is seen as wrong since they cannot procreate.

According to Bonhoeffer (1955:316), protestant ethics are concerned with man's personality and personality. This means that a human being possesses social obligations in the world to protect and nurture fellow human beings. For a protestant ethicist, his or her obligation ethically is to practice love and charity within the given worldly institutions. With the controversial issue of the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, it is the obligation of the protestant ethicist and theologian to mitigate the protection of human personality and dignity. It is through the voice of the protestant ethicist that Christian ethics and theological ethics become relevant to address ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Ethical realities that Blacks have faced during the apartheid era were oppression, segregation and ontological denial of their existence. Presently, the LGBTIQ, specifically blacks, are facing persecution and ontological denial of their human existence.

Within the community, the society that the LGBTIQ are coming from has experienced rejection, denial and persecution. LGBTIQ's sexual orientation for many protestant ethicists and theologians does not exist. Within the scripture, it does not have any favour for it is prohibited to lie with man like woman. These are the challenges that the LGBTIQ are facing in order to deal with their human dignity that is being denied and denied by their fellow brothers and sisters.

In African culture, LGBTIQ does not have a room since it is believed to originate from Europeans and denies cultural values of African people. Ethical challenges that the LGBTIQ face in African culture have been the issue of procreation by a male and female. It is the argument of the study that BTL seems to have lost its voice and ability to command attention as a distinctive contributor to the ethical challenge and public discourse of the LGBTIQ in the African culture and church.

During the heyday of apartheid, BTL was a very strong speaker of black oppressed masses for racial liberation. It spoke radically and persuasively to the white supremacist

theologians and politicians without sacrificing its own people's integrity as their point of departure. However, this cannot be done with the LGBTIQ, for they are mostly regarded as non-beings whose humanity is questionable. Ethically, they are regarded as wrong doers and morally, they are bad behaviour and spiritually, they are evil doers. The bible has been misused to condemn the LGBTIQ human integrity and dignity; they are far away from the church as well cultural forums because of alienation and rejection. According to Riker (1997:19), a society becomes "ethical" when it centers its value discourse on issues of justification and sees an individual as responsible for choices of values and the consequences of those choices. However, the communities that the LGBTIQ are coming from are missing the ethics mentioned by Riker as they seem to make choices for the LGBTIQ.

Ethical realities of the LGBTIQ are realities of each community and society. It is has been difficult for the majority of Christians to come to terms with understand the sexual behaviour of the LGBTIQ. The sexuality of LGBTIQ has been denied from the beginning of time, politically, socially and ethically. According to Deigh (2010: xi), ethics is one of the main branches of philosophy. It extends fundamental questions about the nature of humanity and freedom to very practical questions about morality and reflects on what is good and bad.

The problem of human sexuality is not new ethical challenges that we are facing today when we have to deal with homosexuality in the church and community. Griffin (2000:100) argues, "Many people, both within and outside church communities, have struggled to accept lesbians and gays as moral and equal human beings within a predominantly heterosexual society". Not accepting LGBTIQ as moral and equal to human being is to deny them ethically and ontologically. This has been seen through the discussion of the African countries like Burundi, Zimbabwe and Nigeria where accepting LGBTIQ as humans is excessively difficult.

This kind of rejection leads to ethical challenges that the LGBTIQ have to face since they suffer to affirm themselves as ethical and moral. In many instances, the LGBTIQ are also in denial of their sexual orientation due to rejection and hatred they face daily. The study argues that LGBTIQ people are human beings just like heterosexuals, and

denying them ontologically is denying their existence. For many years, the LGBTIQ have undergone tremendous persecution by the church and the community ethically. The LGBTIQ have struggled with what they thought God and the church required them to be, and were not able to live a heterosexual life. Due to the high core values of the church and society, LGBTIQ have experienced a great deal of confusion, anguish and suffering. Christians have compelled them to become heterosexuals, so LGBTIQ have to attend services of healing and exorcism in the hope that they would be cured of their homosexual condition.

LGBTIQ fear exposure, let alone openly coming out of the closet. They fear rejection by their families and friends, the loss of their jobs and being homo-prejudiced by the Christian community and humiliated ethically. The argument of the chapter is that ethically, it is high time that churches depart from their traditional views and accept the LGBTIQ person. For some time now, the church has been arguing that the stable, faithful union of the LGBTIQ men and women ought to be reluctantly accepted. Many Christians who do not accept the LGBTIQ, like Yates, point out that only ethical reality of human sexuality is of two sexes since God created human beings as male and female (Mark 10:6). In other words, there are only two sexes, not three.

Manhood and womanhood are mutually complementary ontological realities. Gender differences are not an accidentally acquired property but something essential to our humanity. It belongs to the order of being the human itself. It is more than psychological, biological or cultural; as Anderson put it, "he" and "she" belong to the same theological dogma as *imago dei*. What we are dealing with in human sexuality --- the bi-polarity of man and woman, is not mere order of history but some valid order if all eternity (Yates, 1995:85).

Yates is right when he asserts, "he and she" belong to the same theological dogma as *imago dei*, and we are dealing with human sexuality in the bi-polarity of woman and man. What is truly missing is the fact that the LGBTIQ are as male and female; the only difference is who they love, meaning that they do belong to the same theological dogma and *imago dei*. Regarding Yates' argument of creating Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve, the study would argue that Yates clearly misunderstands human sexuality. This

is because in human sexuality, there are differences, and within differences, there are LGBTIQ and that is a valid order of all eternity.

Yates is being homophobic and being irrational about human sexuality. For Yates, LGBTIQ are dehumanizing. He is unaware that God is the creator of all human beings, whether LGBTQ or not. Moreover, one thing that many misunderstand is that Jesus did not condemn LGBTIQ persons. One of the ethical issues related to LGBTIQ is that there are boundaries to human sexual expression. Will cites Dallas at length for clarifying ethically that LGBTIQ are fully human beings who are of valid order of eternity.

Homosexuality should be considered a normal variation of human sexual expression with no taint of pathology or sin; it is immutable, and attempts to change it are in vain, and therapist who assist patients wishing to change from homosexual to heterosexual expression are actually harming their patients (1996:369). An argument brought by Dallas is an ethical approach that involves normalization and ontological affirmation of LGBTIQ as legitimate sexual orientation and expression. The ethical realities of the LGBTIQ are notions of being unnatural, immoral and unethical. For many years, many theologians, therapists and psychologists ontologically denied LGBTIQ. The study argues, LGBTIQ are responding to ethical and natural affections implanted in them by God as inborn sexual orientation. To deny the LGBTIQ ontologically and ethically is to deny their very nature and identity and deny them the imago dei identity. It is the argument of the study that to deny someone identity and ontologically is to deny God's creation and human dignity.

Ethically, various Christians and cultural fundamentalists have argued that LGBTIQ cannot be part of the African culture since they are invading the values of African culture. The value that has been their point of departure for many anti-LGBTIQ has been procreation. In one of his works entitled *"Vatican II and the challenge of marriage and family in Africa"*, Bujo (2012:1) argues, "marriage was not instituted solely for procreation of children". However, it has been in the minds of ethicists and African fundamentalists that marriage is solely about procreation. Even in church, it is the position of preachers that ethically, LGBTIQ cannot procreate; therefore, their marriage

is taboo and invalid sexual order. For this reason, the URCSA is refusing to ordain the LGBTIQ based on the marriage issue and the procreation norm.

Bujo (2012:2) argues, “African marriage cannot be correctly understood unless we pay attention to the African worldview which forms the basis of the Ubuntu life”. In this worldview, what he mentions is the fact that the African family is not only important but rather broadly, and it should not be understood through the western manner of understanding. This shows that within the ethical reality that the LGBTIQ are facing are “ethics of Ubuntu”. Ubuntu, for many Africans, knows that it is deeply moving, yet an intangible African soul that has been demonstrated among many African people.

Ethical realities are that LGBTIQ are facing of being persecuted, correct raping and marginalized by the very same humans who are like them. The ethics of Ubuntu are used as a platform to justify certain ethical issues used to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Human beings are an emergent category in each day of their existence but fail to consider that people who are LGBTIQ are also an emergent category. It is the argument of the study that ethics is not done in a vacuum, and Christians have championed the idea of a vacuum when it comes to the ethical reality of the LGBTIQ.

It is clear that the original and lasting contribution of BTL was an ability to relate creatively the Christian faith and the black freedom struggle. Ethically, BTL shaped and championed the wrongdoings the western theology toward the black community and black church. Inasmuch as BTL was concerned within its emergence ethically, many black theologians find it hard to accept this theology, and the very same clergies see today deny the LGBTIQ ethically. The most common denominator of these ethical challenges that the LGBTIQ are facing is that LGBTIQ are still regarded as unnatural and unethical people. The black church and community, for many years, have treated the LGBTIQ as what Fanon calls the “zone of none being”.

The most common ethical reality is that being LGBTIQ in the black church and community is critically, a sinful thing and an invalid order of human sexuality. The LGBTIQ have been called sinners against nature and jailed in some African states for being LGBTIQ and for choosing the truth about whom and what they are. These are

challenges that the LGBTIQ have to face every single day of their existence, and they have to come to terms with being told that they are evil spirits whose sexuality is evil.

5.5. Conclusion

It is shocking that even in the 21st century; we live in a highly heterosexual society. Heterosexuals do not have to think about being heterosexuals because being heterosexual is accepted and privileged. Nevertheless, being black and LGBTIQ is not the opposite heterosexual. LGBTIQ have their own definition that the society has impugned and an ontological denial of the LGBTIQ reality. The black church and black community, in their definition of being LGBTIQ, have less to do with sexual differences within the community. In this regard, the community has failed to acknowledge that sexual relations between black LGBTIQ have more to do with black heterosexuals regarding LGBTIQ as people (community) of less worth. The chapter argues that crushing homophobia emancipates the black church and community to carry out a mission of providing comfort and ontological affirmation to the denied and oppressed LGBTIQ.

The chapter has demonstrated that, same-sex people presented a history of sexuality and a problem of moral values and ethics with the African fundamentalist. Such an understanding has always carried a lethal weapon that destroys the ethical reality of the LGBTIQ. The chapter has gone as far as arguing that the Genesis 1 story needs to be re-interpreted critically with the understanding of human sexuality and sexual difference within the communities. This chapter also argued that sexual intercourse is not about the whole analogy of procreation only, but it is of pleasure. The chapter further argued that as part of this constructive move of ontological affirmation, gayness, blackness and reality of the LGBTIQ, ethics is open to the multiplicity of possibilities in black life. That is, black LGBTIQ life in black communities and societies is not necessarily framed and determined by black heterosexuals.

However, the ontological gayness and blackness recognizes such possibilities as possibilities that exist in the world and need to be rectified as the main problem facing the black LGBTIQ. Other engagements that this ontology should look into is to involve practical realities of black life Africa and its communities, as it is known that the black church offers black theology and concerns of cleavages within black life. Controversial Christians and theologians who have been struggling to accept and affirm the

ontological reality of the LGBTIQ have declared LGBTIQ behaviour as immoral and unethical. Nonetheless, it is the argument of this chapter that these ontologies, when engaged in, would be able to understand that ethics is not about right or wrong, bad or good. As argued by Dyson (1996:104):

“A black minister will preach a sermon against sexual ill, especially homosexuality. At the close of the sermon, a soloist, whom everybody known as gay, will rise to perform a moving number, as the preacher extends an invitation to visitors to join the church. The soloist is in effect, being asked to sing and to sign his theological death sentence”.

This is a stereotypical scenario that black churches are always presenting on Sundays; however, it is the ontological gayness and blackness that can change such a scenario if well engaged. This demonstrates that the presence of gay (LGBTIQ) persons in the service serves to negate the preachers to deny the LGBTIQ's legitimacy as a child of God and deny them *imago Dei*. The chapter argued that the affirmation of ontological LGBTIQ-ness rejects dualism and argues for wholeness; this wholeness shapes the rise of sexual difference within the community and society. Thus, it is possible to argue again and say that *imago Dei* is plausible to everyone who is living on this earth, whether black or white, LGBTIQ or heterosexual.

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The chapter has argued that affirmation of the ontological LGBTIQ-ness comes from the acknowledgement of the existence of the LGBTIQ people. It reveals that there are people that are LGBTIQ that exist within the black community, that are human beings

like the heterosexuals, as well as being Christian. The affirmation of the sexual ontological reality of the LGBTIQ enables every human being that is heterosexual to understand that sexuality is not primarily about gender, or genitalia; rather, it is about what propels human beings into a relationship, especially an intimate relationship.

LGBTIQ have been crucified about their sexual orientation as something that does not exist. The chapter has also demonstrated that the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ only promotes pressure for them to exercise choice and to opt for hetero-normativity and a relationship with a different sex person. In affirming the ontological LGBTIQ-ness, all the texts that crush the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ must be challenged in pursuit of justice. Theologically, Jesus was never afraid to challenge unequal social-political structures and was not afraid to stand up for those who are silenced from pursuing justice for the oppressed and marginalized.

The study will propose conclusion in the next chapter.

Chapter six

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation has been to explore the black theology of liberation towards the ontological affirmation of the LGBTIQ and the experiences they face. The dissertation has addressed what the researcher perceived to be a problem within these critical discourses, namely, the marginalization of the black LGBTIQ experience, as well as the ontological denial of the black LGBTIQ by the community, church and society. The study has stressed on, and asked questions around the how, when and where of the LGBTIQ position in black life, the BTL and black African cultural criticism. When addressing the LGBTIQ issue, the core issue has been around sexual activities, procreation and mostly, the HIV/AIDS crisis. BTL and other scholars who have spoken largely about the LGBTIQ facilitated discussions about black LGBTIQ, which does not actually attend to the particulars of the black LGBTIQ experience. The study found that homosexuality within the black church and community appears in and through homophobia, and it is a plague.

The black LGBTIQ experience's ontological denial and alienating result in homophobic discourse and fear within the black society. The LGBTIQ are faced with homophobia and fear in black communities and have to deal with this even in the work space. It is argued by Sneed (2010:145) that "the problem of homophobia in black communities somehow leads to black queers to engage in destructive lifestyles and leads to the spread of plague in otherwise "normal" heterosexual communities". The problem of homophobia has, at the same time, led to the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ within the church and the black community. It seems as though the only hope available for the black LGBTIQ is to have "tolerant" black heterosexuals embrace their wayward LGBTIQ-ness.

The study has demonstrated that it is possible to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ by the BTL. It was within the argument of the study that if the BTL indeed started by affirming the ontological reality of the oppressed black people, it should then use its methodology to validate and affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. If the

BTL was able to voice out that Jesus is black; if the then proponent of BTL was able to voice out and say “can the black God stand”, then the study argues that it is indeed possible to do the same with the LGBTIQ. It is possible to argue critically that if the black God was able to stand, in order to fit in with the struggle and experiences of the black people, then the LGBTIQ God needs to stand as well. BTL was able to validate that white theology is not Christian theology enough to address the experiences of the oppressed black people; in a way it refuted the white theology to speak on their behalf.

The voices of the LGBTIQ are crying to the black church and community for humanity as their blood cries out. The study argued that the BTL made it clear that the Gospel of Jesus is God’s words of liberation for the oppressed black people. It is within the methodology of the BTL that whites have turned Jesus (into) about white supremacy and argued to come to terms with transforming that by affirming the ontological reality of blackness. However, the study argues that heterosexual theologians have now turned Jesus into being a heterosexual and homophobic Christ, which is a very complete contradiction of the gospel that the BTL was preaching during the times of the black struggle. They have transformed Jesus, a poor (one could say a gay) Galilean peasant, who was executed by (homophobic) Roman states government into an oppressive Jesus, who is now not standing with the marginalized and the oppressed.

Black sexuality within the black church was repressed and excessive (Dyson, 1996:80), and this has shown lack of interest of the BTL and the BTL to deal exclusively with the differences that were there in the black community. Thus, Dyson (1996:83-85) argues that “sexuality for black people existed only in the service of breeding more black people for slavery”. However, within the same cue that Dyson argues, the heterosexual sees the homosexual as sexually deviant and very promiscuous, some even say homosexuals brought about HI/AIDS.

In the African continent, it is still taboo for a black man to be gay, and if one is as LGBTIQ, they will either be stoned to death or criminalized. This dissertation makes a contribution to the alleviation of homophobia in black communities while it continues to engage blackness, sexuality and whiteness. It is a black ethical study done to affirm the

ontological reality of the LGBTIQ, not for the sake of promoting and respecting differences in black churches and communities.

The study does not to appreciate the black theology of liberation or liberation theology without understanding what it is doing today in the church. There would not be a need for liberation if there was no social analysis in theology. If the church or the theologians of our churches noted the importance of social analysis, they would really understand that there are people that are black and LGBTIQ. The church would not be having any problem in understanding the struggle of the LGBTIQ because from the time of apartheid, LGBTIQ people were part of the struggle. If the church was aware of social analysis, it would not be so judgmental to its loving congregants.

The dissertation has argued that even in African culture, LGBTIQ has existed within the African history. It has argued that the LGBTI was never imported to the African continent by Jan Van Riebeck with his crew, but it has played a major role in the continent. It is argued by Johnson in Simms (2000:133) that “information regarding homosexuality in both traditional and contemporary African cultures is buried under a pile of Western and African bias”. It is clear that the Afrocentric scholars and African fundamentalists have worn blinders when excavating the history of homosexuality within the African context. It is argued by Johnson (2000:141) that “the Akan (Ghana) were quite familiar with homosexuality, but viewed it in culturally relevant terms as indicated by the expressions for such Fanti language”. This proves that African traditional leaders are beginning to reflect the changing attitude towards the LGBTIQ.

Further on, the dissertation has argued that the black church, which is the African church, stood up and voiced out against injustices. Scholars of the black church globally stood up and became one voice against white supremacy, but today, the black, African church is silent when it comes to the issue of the struggle and the ontological denial of the LGBTIQ within the society and church. By advancing the gains of the BTL, simply put, the dissertation demonstrated that LGBTIQs can be as ontologically affirmed as human beings that exist in black communities. It is argued within the previous chapter that since the struggle of the LGBTIQ is not just a new phenomenon, the existence of the LGBTIQ is denied in many instances of life. As long as significant numbers of

people refuse to accept LGBTI people ontologically, for variety of sexual expression, many LGBTIQ people will continue to fear the consequences of being open about their sexuality.

The study demonstrated and argued that the reformed tradition and theology was a weapon of human destruction. As argued by Boesak (1984:92), “apartheid is unique. But its uniqueness does not lie in the inherent violence of the systems, or the inevitable brutality without which the system cannot survive, or in the dehumanization and the contempt for black personhood”. In the same cue, the study argued that tradition has, in some way, invented a different apartheid within the church, and this different apartheid is homophobia. As it has dehumanized the personhood of the LGBTIQ, and the uniqueness of this apartheid brought through by homophobia, it is destroying the self-esteem of the LGBTI. Somewhere in the study, the argument was brought forward that the very same reformed Christians who understood what it meant to be dehumanized and marginalized are now marginalizing and denying the LGBTI their human rights. Today, the URCSA is in some way, creating apartheid, as it does not ordain the LGBTIQ, which it is to deny the LGBTIQ ontologically. This may create a perception that the LGBTIQ are not human beings and do not exist at all. It is argued by Boesak (1984:93) that “apartheid is the grave of dignity and credibility of the Reformed tradition”.

Today we have come to realize that the reformed tradition has created fruits of the same apartheid that were created during 1940-60s. The same reformed faith that has transformed the church is the same one that oppresses the LGBTIQ in the church. BTL scholars have showed a very strong voice in combating racism and marginalization within the church during the heyday of apartheid. Black theologians argued that they could not even trust theology that ignores blackness and denies ontological reality of blackness, and defends it as God’s will. Indeed, that argument lies still within the same sentiments that the LGBTIQ cannot trust a religion that regards them as evil and denies their ontological reality. It cannot uphold theology that does not see their existence as part of God’s good creation and a theology that sees the LGBTIQ sexuality as pseudo sexuality.

According to Reddy (2000:170), “while these leaders and theologians may be heroes of their post-colonies, their tirade against homosexuality is uncritically couched in contradiction, for they use the very same colonial laws that criminalized homosexuality to claim that it is foreign, colonial and by implication, alien”. This means that our leaders and theologians are not scared of the LGBTIQ because of the above argument brought about by Reddy. However, there is a Sesotho proverb which says “*se sa feleng sa ya hlola*”, which implies that everything comes to an end or that if one has pain, it will not last forever. It is these kinds of words that give hope to those who are still under the pain of oppression; hardships, difficulties, exploitation, sexism and homophobia/biphobia shall come to pass. Heterosexuals have created a situation that was created by the colonialist regime and apartheid regime of exclusion, hatred and injustice when they claimed God as a heterosexual God.

Many heterosexual and cultural fundamentalists argue that the city of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-9) was destroyed because of homosexuals, and they go as far as reading Romans 1:26-27, 1Timothy 1:10 to substantiate their argument. This text has been interpreted as evidence that homophobia and heterosexism are scripturally normative. It is argued by Miller (2007:52) that “the black church and black theologian used these verses to deny same-sex romantic relationships to devalue homosexual genital experiences and refuse ordination opportunities for LGBTIQ aspirants”. It is the argument of the study that black liberation theologians need to apply theology in a manner that affirms the humanity of blacks in a way that they believe that they were denied. It should be the last theology to deny ontological reality of the LGBTIQ and their sexuality, as it should proclaim freedom and justice to the whole nation that is forcefully oppressed and denied their reality and humanity.

Farajaje-Jones (1993:142) attests to this by stating, “Homosexuality is viewed as a threat to the continued existence of the heterosexual family because homosexual unions do not, and of themselves, produce offspring”. Within many African cultures, the moral value that is threatened is of the offspring, as continuation of the family name needs to be adhered to. That is the reason many black Africans condemn LGBTIQ

within the communities that they belong to, and within the church, the argument is the same --- that God did not create Adam and Steve but Adam and Eve. Not so long ago, being black was an immoral and unethical thing; today, being gay (LGBTIQ) is associated with evil, sin and being immoral in the African context, as it devalues the morality and values of being African. It is the position of the study that if BTL was able to fight the status quo of the state theology in order to affirm the ontological reality of the black child, the study finds it relevant that it can affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Blacks and LGBTIQ experience a large degree of discrimination, and it is the argument of the study that the two can create a very strong coalition.

As far as the study is concerned, being black is more noticeable than being LGBTIQ. However, being LGBTIQ is harder than being black, as it is one thing that is rejected by the world, families and friends. These bring back the argument that was brought by Tshaka about our theological methodologies helping to deal with the situation of violence in our communities. This can be a very good starting point in looking at the theological methodologies that we apply within our universities and other platforms. In this manner then, the argument of the study remains that if the BTL was able to affirm the ontological reality of black people, then the study finds it very relevant to the struggle of the LGBTIQ. The BTL can use its methodology and core fundamental argument to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. Scholars of BCM to note that black is beautiful, and through black consciousness, black people were able to affirm the ontological reality of the black person. Within BTL, this has become the new consciousness that looks at the methodology that they were using to argue that blacks do exist and are real. This was affirming the ontology of the black child and say to the western theology that there are people that are black who exist within the corners of the world, just like the LGBTIQ.

Maybe the community does not see the importance or know how it feels to be black and gay. For that reason, many have declared the LGBTIQ as evil, unnatural and un-African. The dissertation has been focused on using the BTL literature and black LGBTIQ literature as a source for theological and cultural reflection on the lives of black LGBTIQ people. While the understanding of the study is that BTL and African religious

discourse seek to highlight and address the crisis in the black life in Africa, the study discusses black LGBTI and black theologian critics who have presented black LGBTIQ people as a problem to be fixed.

The study has shown that the debate within the URCSA, of the ordination of the LGBTIQ, has increased and presented intellectual challenges within the church. Theologians and cultural critics have shown that they are not willing to let the LGBTIQ speak for themselves, as the intellectual part has been that there is a new study that needs to be done. The challenge is that studies have been conducted by some churches of the LGBTI on whether they need to be ordained or not. For many years, there have been questions on what the LGBTIQ literature can offer BTL and the black church. The study is content that black LGBTI literature offers a critical discourse in a different way regarding viewing black LGBTIQ's identity and a different way of describing God.

The study found that within this discourse, the voices of black LGBTIQ become muted. It is very odd that black theologians and African cultural critics who draw heavily on black men and women's literature suddenly fail to draw substantively on LGBTIQ literature when discussing black LGBTIQ experiences. When BTL affirmed that there are people who are black who existed in the world, it should be able to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ as well. The representation of the black LGBTIQ within the black church and BTL has been unfairly treated. As a reformed scholar, the study tends to question the methodologies of the BTL and African religious critics. BTL has preached justice to the poor, downtrodden and marginalized, but has failed to represent the black LGBTIQ, even within the reformed tradition.

Black theology scholars have committed themselves to act justly and see justice done for the peace. Nevertheless, it seems like the black church and BTL scholars are doing what was said by Shirley Caesar in her song titled "Hold My Mule". The song is about John who was in the church that did not believe in dancing and speaking in tongues. The church did not appreciate John's way of worshiping, and ultimately, the church expelled John as he was not doing what the church wanted. The same is being done by the URCSA to the LGBTIQ as they are not appreciating how they worship God as

LGBTIQ. With this view, the black church kills black LGBTIQ's sexuality, coercing them to find them an alternative form of expression of their sexuality. Being marginalized is a state which leads people to develop a low self-esteem, accept their status as non-participants and even prepare an argument for their own exclusion. The black church is the central religious institution in black life, and it should offer life to the black LGBTIQ. The black church is supposed to be a source of comfort in a hostile world, and its members and leaders often prevent black LGBTIQs from receiving that comfort. This was proven when the daughter of emeritus Bishop Desmond Tutu, Mpho Tutu got married to her partner; the church reacted negatively towards her and did not celebrate with her. A church that has its roots in the struggle of being ontologically denied refused to give Mpho love, the love they always preach. The black church and cultural fundamentalist stands as an obstruction to the black LGBTIQ community in search for spirituality that affirms their sexuality.

This brings to the argument of the study that the BTL and the black community need to affirm the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ within the spheres of the community and the church. Therefore, the study argues that sexual difference is not a threat to God's existence. The LGBTIQ seeks theology that does not bind God to such limited conceptions of existence and opens God, as well as human beings, up to sexual difference and multiple accounts of human beings to exist in the world. The existence of God in the world is not made or does not consist of the likes of heterosexuals, but all sexual differences that are in the world. Whether homosexual or heterosexual, salvation will not solely be acquired by those who are regarded as natural, according to those who say LGBTIQ are un-natural. Salvation will be given accordingly to the deeds of certain actions that one has done, not just because one is homosexual.

The study has shown that the black church and communities need to have ethics of openness. The dissertation has argued that the need of ethics of openness will enable acceptance and appreciation instead of ordinary tolerance. This means that the black church and community will be able to appreciate the sexual differences in the community and church. These ethics of openness will enable the black community to accept LGBTIQ and not require heterosexuals to speak for the LGBTIQ but rather allow

the LGBTIQ the space to put their own experiences that they face on a daily basis when they come out. Ethics of openness enable the church and the community to have a very critical theological voice in acknowledging the sexual difference within the church and community. The study believes that ethics of openness in BTL call for critical dialogues between black people of various sexualities.

The LGBTIQ acknowledge that within the black church, there is doctrinal and denominational commitment that would prevent such churches from affirming the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ. The study's argument regarding the ethics of openness does not suggest that the discussion of the ontological LGBTIQ be normative as far as heterosexuality is concerned. Ethics of openness simply seek to represent the golden rule of BTL that Jesus is the liberator of the oppressed, the marginalized and the downtrodden. The purpose of the ethics of openness in this study is to make a constructive contribution to the black church and BTL by critiquing the content of liberation and the ontological reality of the LGBTIQ.

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