

**THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL MINORITIES: A
PASTORAL APPROACH**

By

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iii. Dedication

I dedicate this research to my mother, Cornelia Holtzhausen, and to my father, Fanie Holtzhausen.

My mother has been the greatest influence in my life. She has nurtured my faith from an early age and has been a wonderful example of a true Christian. She has taught me to be authentic, honest and kind to others. She has been my rock through hardships and has enabled me to persevere. I do not know where I would be without her strength.

My father is one of the most hardworking people that I know. He has made innumerable sacrifices for the well-being of his family and has taught me that through hard work and determination you can reach your dreams. Without his support and faith in me, I would not have been able to pursue my passion for religion or have obtained the knowledge that I have today.

iv. Acknowledgements

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- To Prof Y. Dreyer, who helped me to achieve focus with the topic of this study and shared valuable knowledge with me;
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v. Abstract

This study investigated the religious experiences of sexual minorities. It has investigated methods of biblical interpretation that have been used in the debate regarding same-sex attraction. As there are a few Scriptural passages that have been used in this debate, this study has conducted biblical exegesis on these texts. With proper exegesis, the cultural background of these texts could be determined and their reference to homosexuality better understood. The South African history regarding same-sex attraction was briefly investigated to determine the current social climate. The relationship between sexual minorities and the DRC was investigated to determine if there are acceptance and inclusivity. The religious experiences of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons were investigated to determine how their faith has been influenced by either positive or negative attitudes of religious people. This study distinguished commonalities in their experiences and used these to investigate relevant techniques for pastoral care and counselling. The aim of this study has been to determine how to pastorally care for LGBTQ+ persons and to investigate the availability of such care in the DRC.

vi. Key Terms

LGBTQ+; Experiences; Sexual minorities; Gay; Lesbian; Bisexual; Transgender; Christian; Pastoral; DRC; South Africa; Narratives; Mental health; Healing

vii. Language editor

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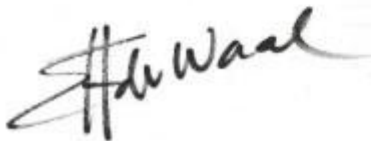
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THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL MINORITIES: A PASTORAL APPROACH
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FOR THE DEGREE MTH PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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- LANGUAGE EDITING
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viii. List of abbreviations

AKLAS	General Commission for Learning and Current Affairs
ANE	Ancient Near East
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
GS	General Synod
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, (The '+' signifies the multitude of other sexual or gender identities that do not conform to heteronormativity, such as pansexual, asexual, polyamorous, etc.)
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

Table of Contents

i.	Declaration	i
ii.	Declaration of Originality	ii
iii.	Dedication	iii
iv.	Acknowledgements	iv
v.	Abstract	v
vi.	Key Terms	v
vii.	Language editor.....	vi
viii.	List of abbreviations.....	vii
1.	CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION	1
1.1.	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2.	PROBLEM STATEMENT	2
1.3.	LITERATURE OVERVIEW.....	2
1.4.	METHODOLOGY	4
1.5.	RESEARCH GAP	7
1.6.	CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	8
2.	CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE	10
2.1.	INTRODUCTION	10
2.2.	HISTORY OF HOW THE BIBLE HAS BEEN READ IN THE PAST	11
2.3.	CURRENT METHODS USED FOR READING THE BIBLE	14
2.4.	BIBLICAL TEXTS USED IN THE LGBTQ+ DISCOURSE	22
2.5.	CONCLUSION.....	33
3.	CHAPTER THREE: LGBTQ+ IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	37
3.1.	INTRODUCTION	37
3.2.	THE HISTORY OF GAY MARRIAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA	38
3.3.	DISCRIMINATION & VIOLENCE IN SA WITH REGARDS TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE	39
3.4.	THE DRC DOCTRINAL BELIEF SYSTEM	41
3.5.	A HISTORICAL EXPLORATION OF THE DRC VIEW ABOUT LGBTQ+	45

3.6.	THE DRC COURT CASE AND THE VERDICT.....	53
3.7.	THE IMPLICATION OF THE VERDICT ON THE DRC AND LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY	57
3.8.	CONCLUSION.....	65
4.	CHAPTER FOUR: RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND PASTORAL CARE AS HEALING	68
4.1.	INTRODUCTION	68
4.2.	EXPERIENCES OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY	69
4.2.1.	<i>Gay and Lesbian Experiences</i>	69
4.2.2.	<i>Bisexual Experiences</i>	84
4.2.3.	<i>Transgender Experiences</i>	96
4.2.4.	<i>Common Experiences</i>	104
4.3.	PASTORAL CARE AND THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY	106
4.4.	PASTORAL CARE & THERAPY TECHNIQUES.....	115
4.5.	CONCLUSION.....	126
5.	CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	129
5.1.	INTRODUCTION	129
5.2.	HOW HAS SCRIPTURE BEEN INTERPRETED AND WHAT WAS DISCOVERED AFTER EXEGESIS?.....	134
5.2.1.	<i>Interpretation</i>	134
5.2.2.	<i>Exegesis</i>	136
5.2.3.	<i>How has Scripture been used, according to this study</i>	137
5.3.	SEXUAL MINORITIES AND THE DRC.....	138
5.3.1.	<i>Doctrinal Beliefs</i>	138
5.3.2.	<i>Evolution of DRC tolerance and acceptance</i>	139
5.4.	OVERALL THEMES IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES	142
5.4.1.	<i>Discrimination</i>	142
5.4.2.	<i>Hate crimes</i>	144
5.4.3.	<i>Acceptance, Rejection & Isolation</i>	144
5.5.	HOW DID THESE EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THEIR FAITH?.....	146
5.5.1.	<i>Reconstruction of faith</i>	146
5.5.2.	<i>Need for inclusivity and integration into communities</i>	147
5.6.	PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING	147

5.6.1. <i>Mental, emotional, and spiritual health</i>.....	148
5.6.2. <i>What techniques could be used to facilitate healing?</i>	149
5.7. FURTHER RESEARCH	152
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	153

1. CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

As indicated by Bamidele (Bamidele 2015:37) and Van Loggerenberg (Van Loggerenberg 2014:13), the sexualities of LGBTQ+ people have become controversial in churches and faith communities as many religious persons and mainline churches have argued against any standards that deviate from the heteronorm. This controversy has been further exemplified by the outcry from DRC members in 2015 after the General Synod decided that same-sex unions would be recognized. Various DRC members argued that same-sex attraction conflicts with the beliefs of the DRC, with what has been proclaimed in Scripture, and with what has been proclaimed through Confessions of Faith (DRC GS Agenda 2019:37-381). However, it can be argued that the gospel message of this denomination teaches that Christ loves everyone equally. Because of the stance of certain conservative members, Christians of various sexual identities have experienced isolation and discrimination. Conservative members of the congregation view the people of different sexual identities as ‘sinners’, as they do not conform to the traditional expectation of a ‘true Christian identity’. Although this study will focus on individuals from various denominations, the DRC will be the main focus. This study will determine how sexual minorities have experienced the DRC and whether this denomination offers them pastoral care. The DRC is also one of the mainline churches to have appeared in the media with regard to same-sex relationships. The arguments and findings of these proceedings will be discussed with relevance to this study.

This study will delve into the Christian belief system as well as Scriptural passages used to argue against same-sex relationships. There are many discussions, and mainly six Scriptural passages have been used to support the arguments against same-sex relationships. Thus, this study will also explore the contexts and historical backgrounds of some Scriptural passages regarding homosexuality. This approach will facilitate a deeper understanding of the core arguments used to argue for or against same-sex relationships.

As a consequence of the conflict in faith communities with regard to sexual

orientation, LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination in both society and the church. This causes tension in their religious experience, impedes their growth in faith, causes pain, and affects their mental and emotional well-being. This study will investigate the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons and determine the effects of these experiences on their relationship with God. The study will also examine how pastoral care and counselling can facilitate healing for believers. Pastoral care could be beneficial for people of various sexualities and can facilitate unity among religious believers. This study will also investigate whether psychological techniques could be utilized alongside pastoral care.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Though the LGBTQ+ people face many obstacles in their lives, practising their faith should not be one of them. This study will investigate the relationship between the religious experiences of these individuals and their sexual identities. This study will also investigate how these experiences have influenced their mental and emotional well-being, as well as the specific type of pastoral care that could be beneficial for them. Emotional and mental health should be prioritised in the current South African society. Religion plays a significant role in South Africa and is central to the lives of many people. LGBTQ+ people could experience isolation and even depression when discriminated against or criticized for their sexual identities. Thus, a decline in emotional and mental well-being could negatively influence their desire to practice their faith or to be a part of a faith community.

1.3. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

As this study will investigate the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons, this term should be discussed first. The acronym is an umbrella term for sexual and gender identities. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. The '+' signifies the multitude of other sexual or gender identities that do not conform to heteronormativity such as pansexual, asexual, and polyamorous (Dyer 2018:58). This study, however, will limit itself only to the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons, as time constraints of this study prohibit the author from fully investigating the multitude of identities.

Presently, the topic of homosexuality and same-sex marriage is widely discussed in faith communities. Some use Scripture to argue that homosexuality is a reprehensible sin while others use Scripture to argue that sexual minorities are loved and accepted by Christ. Brownson distinguishes between two views, namely the Traditionalist and the Revisionist view (Brownson 2013:16,39). He investigates the difference between what a Scriptural text says and what is meant. The exegetical and hermeneutical work of Brownson provides insight into the cultural context of the biblical texts that are used to condemn homosexuality (Brownson 2013).

The work of Rogers (2009) focuses on how historical aspects of these texts have either been misconstrued or omitted entirely. Rogers (2009:66) provides an overview of eight of the most frequently used biblical texts that are used to make a case against 'homosexuality'. Romans 1 is investigated in more detail and Rogers focuses especially on popular 'non-biblical theories' that have been imposed on it. He emphasises that texts should be read in their context — both in the context of the biblical book in which it is located and against the social and cultural context in which it was written. The discussion is then taken to 'real people' where their partnerships or marriages are compared to heterosexual couples (Rogers 2009:88-105). There are also arguments that same-sex relationships are against the teachings of the gospel due to infidelity and promiscuity (Rogers 2009:88). The prevalence of infidelity and promiscuity in same-sex relationships versus living according to the gospel is investigated in depth by Rogers (Rogers 2009:88-105).

Rogers makes a case for the unity of the church which should include LGBTQ+ people as equal members of the body of Christ. He traces the changes that have been implemented by some North American denominations (Rogers 2009:137-145). This study will investigate whether these examples of change could be implemented in South African denominations.

The various elements of diversity in South Africa are discussed in the article 'Diversity: Negotiating difference in Christian communities' (Naidoo & De Beer 2016). The diversity in South Africa has experienced a lot of negativity and exclusivity. Gender, sexuality and racism in the country are briefly investigated with examples of true events. The discrimination and diversity in the Christian communities are

discussed. The discussion is continued with regard to the negative impact of this discrimination on the views on equality and how reconciliation would be more beneficial (Naidoo & De Beer 2016:3). The issue regarding sexuality and gender roles is also discussed in the context of the DRC as well as other faith communities. This article briefly touches on the DRC's General Synod's role regarding homosexuality, to bring light to the current events regarding discrimination in South Africa (Naidoo & De Beer 2016:4). The aim of this article was to shed light on the current social atmosphere in South Africa and how this has seeped into the Christian communities. It is explained that these communities need to have discourses regarding equality and thus bridge the gap created by exclusivity and discrimination.

The definitions and explanations of the various paradigms and fields with regard to pastoral care and counselling are discussed in a collection of works edited by Ramsay (2004). Fields such as Practical Theology, Pastoral Theological Method, Theology, the International Dimensions of Pastoral Care, Counselling, and Theology are discussed (Ramsay 2004:23). The paradigms are discussed in detail with emphasis on the methods of Pastoral Counselling, Care and Theology, from their historical roots to their application in modern-day situations (Marshall 2004:133-154). These methods will be applied to facilitate healing for the sexual minorities whose stories will be investigated.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

This will be a Practical Theology study that will utilize a Practical Theology method as described by Swinton & Mowat. This method is argued to be an interpretative and hermeneutical paradigm that aims to interpret Scripture, scriptural tradition, situations and Christian practices (Swinton & Mowat 2016:72). These aspects will be investigated in this study to determine how Scripture has been interpreted, how religion has evolved in South Africa, and how Christian values have influenced the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons. The experiences of persons as well as a deeper understanding of God is another aspect of Practical Theology (Swinton & Mowat 2016:72). This study will also investigate these aspects to determine if sexual minorities have maintained a relationship with God after experiencing difficulties regarding their identities.

This study will use a qualitative content approach as well as a narrative approach. The qualitative content approach will be used to investigate the textual data regarding the narratives of sexual minorities. This study will use the existing literature that discusses the religious experiences of sexual minorities. Initially, the author of this study aimed to use semi-structured qualitative interviews to determine if the relationship with God has been impacted by the treatment of participants based on their sexual or gender identities. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the author had to re-evaluate this approach. Such interviews would have been greatly beneficial for this study as it would have provided the personal experiences of persons with a South African and Dutch Reformed context and background. As this was no longer an option, this study has moved to investigate the available literature regarding sexual minorities and religion.

This study will still be done from a narrative approach with a focus on the lived experience of the LGBTQ+ people. Available literature will be utilized to conduct a narrative approach as previous studies have conducted interviews with sexual minorities regarding their identities and how they have experienced religious people. As Moschella (Moschella 2018:21) points out, especially with regard to marginalized and oppressed people, it is important to share their narratives. Through the sharing of their stories, they gain a voice as well as an 'audience' to hear their voices. This enables LGBTQ+ persons to become 'real' in the discussion of same-sex relationships and how sexual minorities are treated in the Christian community. In these types of discussions, the experiences of LGBTQ+ people are regularly dehumanised while their contexts are ignored. This 'audience' will consist of people from the faith community. Such an audience is a platform which this study can utilize to humanize LGBTQ+ people, thus, facilitating a deeper understanding of their experiences and how this sexual minority would have preferred to be accepted according to the Gospel of Christ.

Relief could be brought to LGBTQ+ persons by emphasising their voices and experiences in the homosexuality debate, as Moschella (2018:15) suggests. The topic of their emotional state or psychological health is either non-existent or rare in arguments or academic debates. LGBTQ+ persons are usually discussed as if they are not people who have grown up in South Africa, are faithful to God or have

backgrounds, likes and dislikes. Instead, they are discussed as statistics to either be defended or attacked with elements of religion, such as Scripture or Christian ethics. This study will, however, investigate the stories of LGBTQ+ persons to determine their emotional state or psychological health.

However, although this study will focus on narratives, the researcher was unable to conduct interviews. The research is, therefore, a literature study as the researcher makes use of previous research and documented narratives. The religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons will be investigated and analysed to better understand the consequences of discrimination and how these negative outcomes can be modified. The aim is to come to a better understanding of their experiences (in contexts: SA/Church/Christian faith community). Their experiences include their ethnicity, religious background, social upbringing and sexual identity, as the background of each individual plays a role in their experiences of being either accepted or discriminated against. This study will contribute to the spiritual and psychological well-being of LGBTQ+ people who identify with the Christian faith. This contribution will result in the encouragement of believers to create unity by treating LGBTQ+ people with dignity.

To determine commonalities in the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons, this study will utilize the qualitative content approach. According to Hsieh & Shannon, there are three approaches associated with content analysis namely, the summative, directed, or conventional approaches (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1277). This study will utilize the directed approach, which will help to determine commonalities in the narratives and experiences of sexual minorities. If persons have been discriminated against, this approach will determine whether persons have had similar reactions to discrimination or vastly different ones, and which areas have been most detrimental to their well-being (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1281).

The aim of this study is to investigate how the mental well-being of sexual minorities has been affected by negative religious experiences. Thus, the role of effective pastoral care in the facilitation of healing is the main objective of this study. As their relationship with God is the main focus, pastoral and psychological methods that could facilitate care will be investigated to determine how healing could be facilitated

for sexual minorities. Insights from the fields of pastoral care and counselling, as well as from psychology, will be utilised. The work of Bingaman (2014) on the various methods of thinking, spirituality and the brain is also relevant as these methods could improve the mental and spiritual well-being of sexual minorities. Bingaman investigates the effect of mindfulness/meditation and prayer on mental health (Bingaman 2014:59). The combination of neuroscientific and pastoral insights will be employed in the focus of this study on the elements of healing and unity.

To facilitate care, pastoral counselling will be investigated as well as some practices that could be beneficial. According to Snodgrass, pastoral counselling is an approach that facilitates 'mental health care'. This approach utilizes elements from behavioural sciences and psychology. It also involves religion or spirituality. The aim of pastoral counselling is to improve the general well-being of persons, lessen negative symptoms, aid in coping mechanisms and enable persons to experience better relationships with themselves and others by centralising their spirituality, values, etc. (Snodgrass 2015:5-6). In this study, methods will be investigated to aid sexual minorities in their faith and their relationship with faith communities. Their general and mental well-being will also be investigated to determine how they could achieve an improved self. The role of pastoral counselling in terms of spiritual growth will also be examined.

1.5. RESEARCH GAP

The contribution of this study will be to explore the stories of the South African LGBTQ+ people who have been affected by Christian communities. Their experiences, positive or negative, will be beneficial to the aim of this study. Their stories will foster a better understanding of their experiences. By means of this deeper understanding, this study will be able to contribute towards pastoral care in relation to the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of Christ in terms of pastoral care facilitates healing, unity, respect towards one another, and acceptance. As sexual minorities are often discussed but not involved in the discussion, this study will include personal narratives from sexual minorities. The exclusion of sexual minorities exacerbates their feelings of helplessness and restriction. Through the sharing of narratives, sexual minorities are given the opportunity to experience human

connection as they grapple with their experiences and move out of isolation and ostracization. To facilitate unity in the Christian community, this study will investigate the current religious conflict in South Africa and its emotional and spiritual implications for the LGBTQ+ people. The current religious conflict should be investigated to understand the separation in the Christian community.

1.6. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter two will be an overview of certain exegetical works. This chapter will briefly investigate Biblical interpretation of certain texts pertaining to same-sex relationships and sexual minorities. This investigation will facilitate a deeper understanding of these texts as well as their contexts as this is required to practise the Gospel of Christ. This chapter will explore the impact of society on biblical interpretation and how this has changed throughout the ages. This is necessary to distinguish between the contexts of the Biblical era and the current South African era. This will also establish a pattern of growth, acceptance and unity that could be incorporated into the treatment of sexual minorities.

Chapter three will explore the historical background of LGBTQ+ people and their relationship with Christianity. The South African context, as well as the current social climate, will briefly be explored as this will facilitate a better understanding of the experiences and marginalization of sexual minorities. With a particular focus on the DRC, this chapter will also investigate how LGBTQ+ people were treated and viewed in earlier eras up to the current postmodern era. As the DRC has argued that sexual minorities controvert Christian beliefs, this chapter will investigate what the doctrinal beliefs of the DRC are. This will facilitate a better understanding of the foundation of their arguments. The investigation of these beliefs will also determine if the arguments of the DRC against sexual minorities are valid. The relationship between the DRC and sexual minorities will be investigated to determine if it has improved or worsened. This chapter will also investigate the case between the High Court and the DRC as it has had a significant impact on the acceptance of sexual minorities in this denomination. Lastly, this chapter will explore the impact made on the lives and the well-being of LGBTQ+ persons.

Chapter four will investigate the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons with emphasis on their recollections. This chapter will be divided into sub-sections such as Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender, as the experiences and mindsets of these individuals are too diverse to be discussed under one section. The experiences of each sexuality, in the current social and religious climate, will be investigated and the effect on these individuals will be examined. This chapter will investigate how these experiences have affected the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of sexual minorities and determine how their relationship with God was influenced. The chapter will then investigate pastoral and psychological techniques that could be beneficial to sexual minorities based on their experiences.

Chapter five will investigate the findings of this study with regard to pastoral care. The findings regarding the biblical interpretations will be discussed as biblical interpretation is always used in arguments pertaining to sexual minorities. The relationship between the DRC and sexual minorities will be discussed to determine if the church could facilitate healing and acceptance. The religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons will be discussed to determine how their experiences influenced their religiosity and well-being. The pastoral and psychological techniques discovered will be discussed as these methods could be beneficial to the improved well-being and spirituality of sexual minorities. This section will explore what will best facilitate healing and acceptance, as well as methods to prevent further discrimination against sexual minorities in the Christian faith and the DRC.

2. CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Context is required with regard to any religious, political or scientific problem.

Theologians study the ancient world to develop a deeper understanding of biblical practices, beliefs and actions, as biblical society then had a culture different from today (Hornsby 2013:800). A deeper understanding of the culture of the ancient world could lead to more accurate scriptural applications in the postmodern world.

The aim is to discover the methods and Reformation traditions that have been used to interpret the Bible regarding sexual minorities. It is important in all methods and traditions to interpret the Bible without personal prejudice. Interpreters and readers have been implored to refrain from imposing their own presupposed notions regarding homosexuality to differentiate between the meanings of the biblical world and the current world (Hornsby 2013:800).

The heart of the Church lies with Jesus Christ as Redeemer (Rogers 2009:55).

When the Bible is investigated, the themes are quite prominent. The Bible starts with God and his influence in the world. The narrative then moves towards the relationships and experiences that humans have had with God and his love for his people. In the New Testament, God fulfils his covenant and sends his Son, Jesus, to earth. The New Testament records the teachings and ministry of Jesus. Later, the Church is established, and Christian believers are taught how to live according to the Gospel of Christ.

Christian believers are encouraged to live according to the Bible, the Word of God. Since every individual has their own context, the Bible is interpreted differently by everyone. As a result, there are conflicts among believers about the 'correct' interpretation. Scriptural texts were written to different peoples and societies than today. The beliefs were different. It could be a difficult task to analyse texts as the cultures and practices of the Ancient Near East are both vast and from a completely different age. As a result, it is essential to use theological and biblical methods to interpret the Bible. The historical and cultural contexts of the ancient world should be

investigated as the contexts of the scriptural texts are important for proper interpretation. Therefore, the researcher will briefly discuss how the Bible has been read in the past.

2.2. HISTORY OF HOW THE BIBLE HAS BEEN READ IN THE PAST

For centuries, there has been a debate among Christians regarding homosexuality. It has been argued that the Bible condemns any sexual orientation that does not conform to heterosexuality and that Christ views same-sex relationships as sinful (Nkosi & Masson 2017:73). This argument condemning homosexuality and bisexuality is one example of Biblical interpretation. According to Brownson, when people struggle with a controversial subject, they go back to Scripture for guidance. Scripture is not, however, pushed aside when it disagrees with societal changes. Instead, people investigate the passages with new perspectives to uncover scruples and systems of moral logic. Unfortunately, there is room for error in this method as people could discover values according to their own biases (Brownson 2013:10).

Rogers discovered that during times of slavery and the oppression of women, the opinions of the church changed, resulting in inclusion and equality (Rogers 2009:17). Scriptural passages had previously been used out of context to justify and defend these societal prejudices (Rogers 2009:18). After analysing the past actions of church leaders, Rogers discovered a pattern regarding the current homosexuality debate (Rogers 2009:33). Part of the pattern was that people took a pervasive social prejudice and used the Bible to justify it. These people also used certain Scriptural texts out of context and argued that Scripture was read in a literal manner (Rogers 2009:18).

Rogers has identified three key points in the historical pattern of interpretation. The pattern is similar to previous as well as current societal prejudices. These three points are as follows: church leaders use the Bible as a record of God's verdicts against the oppressed (sexual minorities); these minorities are viewed as inferior in character and morals, and as unable to achieve the standards of 'Christian Civilisation'; and, lastly the individuals are regarded as deliberately sinful and sexually licentious, and should be reprimanded for their acts (Rogers 2009:33).

The Scottish Common Sense philosophy and the work of Francis Turretin were used to interpret the Bible. This philosophy did not use the Bible as a unit to interpret texts. According to this philosophy, people should look at the facts of reality and use their common sense to interpret the 'truth' of the Bible (Rogers 2009:30). Rogers explains that '[b]y emphasizing 'facts' over faith and using natural law to organize those 'facts', Turretin and his followers created a method that allowed social prejudice to receive a biblical sanction. If a form of oppression (such as slavery or the ostracization of 'homosexual acts') was mentioned in the Bible and was a common practice throughout history, believers, therefore, assumed that it must be supported by the Bible and sanctioned by God' (Rogers 2009:31). According to Rogers, this method of interpretation is, however, being used again regarding the current homosexuality debate. The Bible is not being used as a unit and the Gospel of Christ is not being applied to the debate (Rogers 2009:34).

There are two views discussed by Rogers (Rogers 2009:35) namely, the Modernist view and the Fundamentalist view. The Modernist view uses the science of evolution and the authors of Scriptural books to interpret the Bible. The Bible is understood as a record of humanity's experiences which leads believers towards God. This record can then be used in any society or era. The Modernist view, however, argues that certain parts of the Bible are not authentic. This view also argues that the church creeds are the attempts of humans 'to express religious experience' (Rogers 2009:35).

The Fundamentalist view, however, argues that God has fashioned the world in a concrete manner that should not be altered. This view also argues that Scripture holds the exact words of God that were written down by humans. It is argued that these humans functioned as conduits. As a result, the Bible should be read in a black-and-white manner. It is also argued that this should be applied to the postmodern world without the influence of science (Rogers 2009:35).

In the early twentieth century, the scholar Rudolf Bultmann developed the Kerygma paradigm. Bultmann specialised in New Testament texts as well as liberalism which 'contributed to the scientific study of the Bible'. Bultmann developed a method of

interpretation where the reader would consider the historical context and present-day experiences of a text. This method also facilitated a greater knowledge of faith (Bongmba 2015:80). The Kerygma (proclamation) paradigm developed as Bultmann studied the historical context of Scriptural passages that discussed the teachings of Jesus. Bultmann argued that the sayings of Jesus, as discussed by the Jewish and the Hellenistic communities, were separate entities. Furthermore, Bultmann argued that the Jewish Jesus and Hellenistic Jesus were not historically accurate but rather the 'Christ of faith'. To prove this problem with historiography, Bultmann used to form and redaction criticism (Bongmba 2015:81). Form criticism analyses the early oral transmissions of the gospels and how these affected the texts regarding Jesus and other New Testament characters. This criticism investigates the individual units that formed a source (Hutson 1951:130) and investigates the oral traditions that influenced the text (Macintosh 1972:141). Redaction criticism, however, examines the methods used by evangelists (Macintosh 1972:141) when they investigated the 'traditional material' given to them by the early church (Igarashi 1970:49). Furthermore, Bultmann developed 'key ideas' that formed the way a text could be interpreted in an objective manner. He argued that objectivity depended on the 'grammatical rules, linguistic analysis', the historical context and the social background of the reader. Bongmba argues that if there are questions regarding God in a biblical text, the questions are related to the position of the reader (Bongmba 2015:82).

The methods of biblical interpretation have changed over the years. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the early twentieth century shifted to the 'neo' movements. These were the neo-Calvinist, -Protestant and -Reformation theologies. Neo-orthodoxy was the most significant movement. This movement used the traditional doctrines of the Christian faith and focused on Christ as he is found in Scripture. It was argued that the Holy Spirit made the biblical message known through preaching. In the 1940s and 1950s, sources of the Reformation, such as Luther and Calvin, were used to develop a deeper understanding of the Bible (Rogers 2009:37).

The church began to re-examine oppressive social institutions because of neo-orthodoxy and biblical theology. These new movements pushed the Scottish

Common Sense philosophy aside. Texts were no longer used out of context to support oppressive arguments. Instead, the Bible was used as a unit against its cultural background (Rogers 2009:39). The passages pertaining to Christ and his redemptive messages were used to decipher biblical texts and to re-examine social problems (Rogers 2009:39-40).

Punt, however, discusses four hermeneutical approaches used after Apartheid ended in South Africa. Punt argues that these methods of interpretation are relevant to the debate regarding homosexuality in South Africa, as the Bible was used in a similar fashion regarding homosexuality in the Apartheid era. The first is called the 'doctrinal-fundamentalist paradigm'. Punt argued that this paradigm is conservative as it views the Bible as a document sent directly from God. This doctrine interprets the Bible literally without considering the 'socio-historical context' of a text nor the societal influences of the postmodern world (Punt 2006:887). The shift to the second paradigm started in the 1980s, known as a 'scientific positivist paradigm'. This paradigm strove to interpret the text as objectively as possible and without any influences from theology, the current society, etc. (Punt 2006:888).

2.3. CURRENT METHODS USED FOR READING THE BIBLE

The Modernist- and Fundamentalist views discussed in 2.2 are similar to two other methods of biblical interpretation, namely the Traditionalist and Revisionist views. Traditionalists argue that homosexuality should be regarded as a sin and that people taking part in homosexual behaviour are in conflict with the moral values of God. According to Traditionalists, people who are homosexual or practice homosexual behaviour should repent of their sins before God, because these behaviours are regarded as sinful. They argue that homosexual people or actions will not be blessed by God and that they cannot be a part of the church if they do not change their 'evil ways'. Traditionalists favour the punishment and exile of people that do not conform to heterosexuality. These arguments are a big part of the homosexual debate. Bamidele however, argues that the Traditionalists views could alter the 'character, image and message of Christianity' (Bamidele 2015:40-41).

Revisionists argue that the Bible does not speak against homosexuality, as biblical

exegesis has not been implemented in a 'balanced' manner. Revisionists argue that any interpretation that encourages discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people is ill-conceived and uses theology as a basis for condemnation (Bamidele 2015:39). Revisionists argue that any sexual orientation that does not conform to heteronormative standards should not be regarded as sinful or wrong as homosexuality in the Bible does not have the same meaning as it has in the postmodern society. Homosexuality, as it is understood today, was a foreign concept for Biblical writers. The Biblical writers did not view homosexuality as a romantic connection between persons of the same-sex. In the postmodern society, it is argued that the sexual orientations and identities of LGBTQ+ people are specifically made by God and that their differences are gifts to be welcomed. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ people should be welcomed into the church as the children of God and not as sinners (Bamidele 2015:40).

Since the advent of neo-orthodoxy, there have been further developments in the methods of Biblical interpretation, such as feminism, social sciences and cultural pluralism. These methods are beneficial to the current discussion of LGBTQ+ people (Rogers 2009:52). Rogers explained that in 1982 the UPCUSA (United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America) released a guideline that encouraged people to be led by the Holy Spirit. This was to implement the faith message with regard to controversy. The controversy regarding homosexuality had, however, begun in the late twentieth century when these guidelines were published. Thus, Rogers explores the seven guidelines for interpretation he has identified in the Reformation confessions. These guidelines will be used in a helpful manner to discuss the interpretation of homosexuality and sexual minorities in Scripture (Rogers 2009:53).

The first guideline is to recognize Jesus as the central figure of the Bible. The entire Bible discusses the redeeming qualities of God. Jesus is introduced in the New Testament as the fulfilment of God's promise to Israel. Jesus should be in the centre of interpreting the Bible as this will teach believers how to assess complications and disagreements. There will always be complications and disagreements as there were in the historical church (Rogers 2009:53-54). Learning to use Jesus as a guideline will enhance the relationships between Christian believers. A Christ-centred

approach could also enhance the spiritual growth of a believer.

The Bible should be viewed as a narrative where Jesus is the central figure. The plot of this narrative is creation, fall and redemption. These form a part of the Christian framework. The life and ministry of Christ should be used to explore the Bible. This is not, however, an easy task as Christ did not live in a legalistic, black-and-white manner. The Old Testament is filled with strict Jewish laws. Although Jesus followed Jewish laws, his ministry is very open to interpretation. It could be argued that his teachings fall in the grey areas of life (Rogers 2009:55). Jesus never spoke about or condemned homosexuality (Kraus 2014:101) but he showed love and compassion to everyone he encountered. This included his friends, family, neighbours, enemies and the outcasts of society. It can become a daunting task for believers to try and imitate his behaviour and compassion (Rogers 2009:55).

Rogers explained that Jesus would never have discarded a victim of discrimination or bullying. He would not have turned away from a person that was experiencing so much despair that they would consider suicide. Unfortunately, sexual minorities regularly experience these hardships. If the guideline of centring Christ is implemented, the gospel will be better understood. Unity should be created between believers and it should be remembered that sexual minorities are also believers (Rogers 2009:55). Homosexuality is often condemned when the Bible has been interpreted literally and without consideration for the original language and context of a text. There have, however, been interpretations that focus on the love that Jesus encouraged and preached. It could be argued that this love would include LGBTQ+ people to the Christian faith and the Christian Church (Kraus 2014:101).

The second guideline is that the attention should be on the basic text of Scripture. The text should not be investigated with a metaphor or with the personal preconceptions of the interpreter. The linguistic and historical context should be investigated. Allegorism was a well-known method used in medieval times. This method allowed the interpreter to discover up to seven meanings in a text. The Scriptural text should not be interpreted in a literal manner. The personal biases and contexts of the interpreter, however, should also not be implemented. Instead, the text should be interpreted according to its own context (Rogers 2009:56).

In 1983, the PCUS (Presbyterian Church in the United States) conducted a study on the requirements for the proper analysis of a text. The proper 'literary units' should be demarcated such as the paragraphs and pericopes. The language of the text comes from a different culture. Thus, the enculturation of the Ancient Near East peoples should be documented (Rogers 2009:56). Lastly, the social and historical circumstances of the text should be comprehended. These principles should be applied responsibly. The only relevant context should be the context of the basic text (Rogers 2009:57). The Ancient Near East did not, however, solely consist of Israelites. Thus, neighbouring countries, their cultures, customs and religions should be investigated as they influenced the Israelites and the original scriptural texts (Van Loggerenberg 2014:106-107).

The PCUS specifically warns interpreters of subjects that are present in both the Scriptural text and current society. If a scriptural text discusses a subject relevant to the present society, this is not an indication that the contexts or backgrounds are similar. For instance, if a biblical text discusses the subject of homosexuality, the interpreter should not assume that the understanding of homosexuality in biblical times is equivalent to contemporary times (Rogers 2009:57). According to Van Loggerenberg, the Hermeneutical Circle is a process used to interpret and read the Bible. This process suggests that the authors of the Scriptural passages wrote with their own cultural and societal contexts in mind. They wrote to their people with their own 'assumptions and implicit messages'. Thus, present-day readers cannot simply interpret or read the text with their own postmodern, cultural, societal, sexual orientation or denominational context in mind (Van Loggerenberg 2014:107).

Rogers argued that in Scripture, idolatry and sexual immorality are condemned. Should these biblical statements be applied to contemporary same-sex relationships if they are neither sexually immoral nor idolatrous? In the original biblical Greek and Hebrew, there was not a notion of a homosexual orientation. Up until the late nineteenth century, the notion of being sexually attracted to the same-sex was non-existent in the European and American language (Rogers 2009:57). It was not until 1869 that Benkert created the term 'homosexuality', as a neutral scientific term for people that primarily experience same-sex attraction instead of opposite-sex

attraction (Van Loggerenberg 2014:106). According to Van Loggerenberg, it has been argued that 'homosexuality' in the Bible was an activity that was done without the argument of genetics or influence of background but was 'freely chosen'. This argument is because of the lack of biblical material regarding sexuality. The Bible solely discusses homosexual behaviour between males and not females, supporting the aforementioned argument (Van Loggerenberg 2014:106). Thus, the meaning of the original Biblical context should be understood before it can be applied to the current context (Rogers 2009:57).

The third guideline states that the interpreter should depend on the direction of the Holy Spirit to properly interpret and apply the message of God (Rogers 2009:57). According to Calvin, interpreters will be guided with regard to Scriptural authority and how to properly interpret the Bible. Calvin argues that the Holy Spirit will give the interpreter a 'receptive attitude'. This attitude allows the interpreter to understand the crucial message that God wants them to receive (Rogers 2009:58).

The PCUS argued that with regard to the church's traditional method of interpretation, Scripture is imperfect. Modification and adaptation will always be required. It is argued that the Holy Spirit encourages transformation in the Christian church (Rogers 2009:58). For instance, the ancient church transformed the mind-sets of the Jewish peoples to accept Gentiles as fellow believers. Later, Christians no longer accepted slavery and the oppression of women as it was originally understood in the Bible (Rogers 2009:59). It is, however, argued that a form of imagination is required to better understand the meaning of a text. This form of imagination refers to the re-arranging of biblical passages to distinguish interconnections, similarities and reverberations in Scripture. This method refers to the capability of seeing 'meanings and patterns' that become visible in the context of cross-cultural interactions. When this methodology is used correctly, the underlying ethics of Scripture could assist the church. The church has grown significantly over the centuries, but progress is not an easy task (Brownson 2013:10). The New Testament church had to decide if the Gentiles should become circumcised and eat kosher food as the Jewish customs originally required (Brownson 2013:09). Brownson explained that the church had to use this form of imagination to interpret what the text said regarding this issue. The Apostle James declared that the Holy

Spirit had led the decision. Brownson however, argues that the Holy Spirit guiding the church should not be understood as a supernatural event. Instead, the Holy Spirit guides members of the church to the ethics and morality present in Scripture. As a result, church members are equipped to make informed decisions (Brownson 2013:10).

Thus, the argument is that the Holy Spirit will guide believers with regard to the current homosexuality controversy. The church will be challenged to review cultural prejudices against sexual minorities (Rogers 2009:58). Currently, some Christian believers do not conform to the heteronorm but are nevertheless faithful believers. Thus, it is argued that the Holy Spirit will transform the mindsets of the church and believers to properly interpret the message of God (Rogers 2009:59).

The fourth guideline states that guidance is required by the 'rule of faith'. This refers to a doctrinal agreement of the church that has gradually advanced over time (Rogers 2009:59). Creeds and confessions of faith are used for the interpretation of biblical issues relevant to society. These interpretations become the rules and guidelines of the church to practise the Christian faith (Rogers 2009:60-61). The Heidelberg Catechism discusses the sixth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and Brownson explains that a text could be interpreted for what it says and what it means (Brownson 2013:5), but the Heidelberg Catechism interprets both. With regard to the sixth commandment, the Catechism explains that a person should literally not kill another person (what the text says). The Catechism, however, also explains the implicit understanding of this commandment. A person will not 'belittle, insult, hate, or kill' his neighbour or bring any form of harm to himself (Brownson 2013:7). The commentary of John Calvin on this commandment is similar to the Catechism. Calvin states that people should not become murderers but should rather become protective of others. He states that people should not create disputes, but rather live peacefully with each other. Calvin also states that people should assist others who 'are unjustly oppressed' (Brownson 2013:8).

The interpretation of the sixth commandment by a renowned scholar and a church confession should encourage Reformed Christians to treat LGBTQ+ people with compassion. Even if a person disagrees with the sexualities of LGBTQ+ people, the

interpretations of Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism suggest that sexual minorities should not be abused or oppressed. In Matthew 5:21-24, Jesus references this commandment and adds that people should not be angry without reason or speak ill of each other, but rather reconcile (Brownson 2013:8). As a result, Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism have interpreted the 'meaning' of the text by considering the Bible as a whole. They did not investigate one passage as a stand-alone text, they analysed it according to the major themes present in Scripture. Until the greater meaning in Scripture has been interpreted, the meaning behind one passage cannot be understood. According to Brownson, this is necessary to extend certain biblical values to the postmodern world. These values allow Christians to better understand exceptions or unusual circumstances that a literal interpretation cannot facilitate (Brownson 2013:9).

The fifth guideline states that all interpretations should be conducted in accordance with the commandment to love God and your neighbour (Rogers 2009:61). Any interpretation of the Bible should promote love. Believers should use this guideline to refrain from behaviour that could cause hurt, unrest or despair. If the interpretation of a biblical text results in practical love and acceptance, the interpretation has been properly conducted. In 1983, the PCUS stated that an interpretation would be incorrect if it promotes or supports contempt for any individual or group of people in a church or outside of a church. Scripture encourages reconciliation and the practice of love for God and fellow human beings (Rogers 2009:61).

The sixth guideline states that to conduct a proper interpretation of a biblical text, it should be analysed accordingly. The text should be examined to discover the best interpretation. This analysis should involve the investigation of the historical and cultural context to discover the message of God (Rogers 2009:62). Scholars argue that the 'best text' should be the result of an in-depth textual analysis. The ancient biblical manuscripts should be compared to one another. The aim is to come as close as possible to the original Bible (Rogers 2009:62-63). To discover the closest form of the original text, the various traditions of interpretation should be regarded. The texts have been interpreted by various cultures, traditions and hermeneutical approaches from their origin to the present day. According to Punt, there are two aspects to the interpretation of the Bible that should be examined. Firstly, the current

form of the Bible was influenced by the traditions of its previous interpreters and the methods they used (Punt 2006:892). Secondly, readers bring their own perspectives and expectations to a text. This could influence the understanding of a text rather than analysing the history and traditions behind the text, leading to misinterpretation. This misinterpretation is, however, the result when a text is not investigated properly with the correct exegetical tools (Punt 2006:893).

The task of biblical exegesis has progressed since the Reformation era. In the Reformation, scholars struggled to reach a consensus with regard to accuracy. Present-day scholars have, however, analysed a significant amount of manuscripts and argue that they are currently quite close to the original text. As a result, scholars have learned about the people and the cultures of the biblical era. When biblical exegesis is done correctly, certain practices of the ANE (Ancient Near East) will be better understood, as will the reasoning behind certain laws and rules (Rogers 2009:63). According to Brownson (2013:6), there are guidelines in certain biblical passages that Christians were told to follow. The culture of the ANE differs from the current cultures. As a result, Christians have chosen to interpret these passages according to their implied meaning and not to what the passage literally says. In the New Testament, Christians are told to greet each other with 'a holy kiss'. The Christians of the postmodern world have chosen to enact what the text means. They greet each other warmly, according to their current culture. Christians are not, however, going to do as the text says by literally kissing each other as this will cause discomfort instead of closeness (Brownson 2013:6).

The final guideline states that a specific passage should only be interpreted if the whole Bible is considered. The Bible is a literary unit that consists of narratives. The Creation, Fall, and the Redemption of Christ are all a part of the Biblical narrative. If this unit is considered when interpreting a passage, the interpreter will have a newfound perspective. If homosexuality is a part of a passage, the Bible as a unit will remind the interpreter that God created everyone (Rogers 2009:64)

According to Brownson (2013), Christian believers are not trained theologians that can easily analyse a text from the Bible. As a result, some Christians take biblical passages at face value. There are, however, Christians that do not take the texts for

granted. They understand that the Bible has central texts as well as secondary texts. The Bible is a unit and thus has various themes. There are central texts that discuss major themes of the Bible as a literary unit, but postmodern Christians can differentiate between these major themes and themes that are relevant to the current social climate. The narrative of Judah and Tamar is an example (cf. Lev. 18:10). Postmodern Christian believers have recognized that the circumstances were extreme in the ANE cultural climate and should not be interpreted as encouraging behaviour for the postmodern world (Brownson 2013:7). Regarding the seventh guideline, people are sinners but are also redeemed by Christ. Thus, believers should treat one another as the gospel encourages, by being accepting and compassionate as the totality of the Bible teaches (Rogers 2009:64).

2.4. BIBLICAL TEXTS USED IN THE LGBTQ+ DISCOURSE

Concerning the homosexuality debate, certain Scriptural passages are well known in arguments. Homosexuality and sexual minorities are currently being discussed with regard to their place in the church, and if they are conforming to the Gospel of Christ. People who discuss these identities use Scripture to defend their arguments. These passages are often taken out of context and used incorrectly. The seven guidelines of Rogers that are discussed earlier in this chapter, should be utilised in the interpretation of these popular passages. These passages should be interpreted without prior biases and according to the Gospel of Christ.

Scholars primarily use six Scriptural passages to discuss the controversy regarding LGBTQ+ people. Rogers, however, discusses eight texts. Namely, Genesis 19:1-29; Judges 19:1-30; Leviticus 18:1-30; Leviticus 20:1-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-17; 1 Timothy 1:3-13; Jude 1-25 and Romans 1. These passages are a combined number of twelve pages in the Bible and they do not discuss Christ or his dialogues. According to the New Testament scholar Richard Hays, homosexuality is a 'minor concern' in Scripture. Scripture rather discusses other concerns, such as economic injustices. These well-known passages are regularly used in debates to support the arguments for or against homosexuality. The historicity, cultural or linguistic backgrounds are not considered (Rogers 2009:66). As a result, the majority of believers have been told (at some point) that the Bible forbids same-sex

relationships or norms that do not conform to heteronormativity. Rogers argues that the Bible has been misused to justify the oppression of sexual minorities. Therefore, these biblical passages will be analysed according to biblical methods and the confessions of the Reformed Church (Rogers 2009:66).

2.4.1. Genesis 19:1-29 Sodom and Gomorrah & Judges 19:1-30 The Rape of the Levite's Concubine

Rogers considers these two texts as parallel to one another. Both texts focus on the ANE customs of hospitality to travellers. In the ANE, hospitality was a sacred obligation and a person was considered sinful if they did not obey this obligation. The ANE was in the desert. As a result, if a person was left outside at night, they would most likely not have survived the elements. In both narratives, there is a host that offers refuge to travelling men. Later, an angry horde of townsfolk from outside of the house demand that the host should turn over his guests. The townsfolk consider the travellers as foreigners, who are unwelcome. As a consequence, these guests may be raped or killed (Rogers 2009:67). Kraus however, adds that the Sodomites were not interested in 'sexual gratification'. He argues that the Sodomites wanted to safeguard the wealth of the city by humiliating the guests (Kraus 2014:102). According to Daniel Helminiak, a psychology professor, homosexual rape was a traditional method used in the ANE by conquerors. This method was used to emphasize domination over captured enemies. In the ANE culture, there was not a greater form of humiliation than to be treated like a woman. To rape a man was considered the most violent form of such humiliation. Dale Martin, a professor of religion, explains that 'To be penetrated was to be inferior because women were inferior' (Rogers 2009:67).

In both stories, the hosts try to calm the angry townsfolk by offering the women of their homes as an alternative. The hosts knew that the women would be abused or killed, but they would have offered their daughters or wives instead of their male guests. This is the result of the ANE culture in which men were superior and more important than women. It was imperative to keep that superiority intact. As a result, the hosts felt obligated to protect their male guests. Gender was important to the ANE culture, not sexuality. According to scholars such as C.L. Seow, both texts have

no connection to homosexuality (Rogers 2009:67). Kraus argues that homosexual rape was never a part of the 'Judges 19' story. The concubine is still raped when she has been given to the angry mob instead of the houseguests (Kraus 2014:102). Thus, the violent action was rather used 'to show power and dominance to strangers' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:75).

These violent acts were against the hospitality customs, which were extremely important in the ANE. Nkosi and Masson argue that this was why God was infuriated, not because of sexuality (Nkosi & Masson 2017:75). According to Van Loggerenberg, homosexual rape on its own was regarded as awful misconduct in the ANE (Van Loggerenberg 2014:109). The preceding biblical references to Sodom are with regard to its wickedness, greed and injustice. Jesus only discusses the inhospitable nature of Sodom in Matthew 10:15 and Luke 10:12. He does not refer to them with regard to homosexuality (Rogers 2009:68). Most scholars, such as Kraus and Nkosi & Masson (Nkosi & Masson 2017:78), agree that Genesis 19:1-29 & Judges 19:1-30 is about inhospitality and violence, not sexual nature. Rogers explains that the connection to homosexuality only comes later, in non-biblical works. Greek philosophy and the Muslim Qur'an influenced these works (Rogers 2009:68).

2.4.2. *Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 — The Old Testament Laws*

In the book of Leviticus, an assortment of laws is identified as the Holiness Code. The Leviticus laws were developed to distinguish the Israelites from the neighbouring cultures. These laws were developed after the Israelites had escaped from Egyptian slavery (Kraus 2014:102), travelled in the desert and inhabited Canaan. The journey from Egypt to Canaan involved attacks from other peoples, famine and transmittable diseases. The Israelites required guidance to stay alive and well (Rogers 2009:68). The Holiness Code encouraged them to become interconnected people, separated from outside influences that could cause them to become ritually impure and lose their unique identity (Kraus 2014:102). The Israelites wanted to keep their individuality, religion and their forms of worship. As a result, the Holiness Code was developed for their physical and spiritual survival. This code promoted separation from other cultures, customs and religious practices. The Israelites were determined to remain pure (Rogers 2009:68).

An Israelite was prohibited from mixing with another culture or breaking the laws. If a law was broken, the person would be sentenced to death, including children. The Israelites were also serious about male superiority. This superiority had to remain intact. Furnish (in Rogers 2009:69) explains that homosexual acts would also result in death sentences as men would become impure if they were penetrated. The other motivation for such a sentence was that women were regarded as inferior and passive. Women as sexual partners were assigned the roles of passivity which resulted in their penetration. If a man was penetrated, he became the passive partner. This passivity was unacceptable as it also meant that the gender roles and the cultures had been mixed. This meant that the men had become impure (Rogers 2009:69).

In the original Hebrew, the word '*toevah*', meaning 'abomination', occurs in these passages. The ANE understanding of this word does not mean the same as the postmodern definition. Rather, this word defines something that would make a person 'ritually unclean' (Kraus 2014:102). A person could, however, also become ritually unclean from other acts such as having sex with a menstruating woman (Rogers 2009:69). According to Kraus, the word '*toevah*' has been misused regarding homosexuality. Kraus argues that the text is not referring to homosexuality but rather to sexual acts between men that disrupt the 'power relations' of the ANE. Kraus agrees with the previous paragraph that this text is discussing the superiority of men and that any sexual act that would deem them inferior, is an abomination (Kraus 2014:102). Regarding homosexuality in the current society, the laws of Leviticus should not be interpreted literally or taken out of context. The time of Leviticus consisted of different historical cultures and contexts, that for the most part are not valid anymore (Rogers 2009:69).

Postmodern Christians are not necessarily sentenced to death for mingling cultures, as those forms of purity are no longer obligatory (Rogers 2009:69). According to Van Loggerenberg, these Leviticus texts intended to protect the identity of Israel from neighbouring cultures. One of the Canaanite practices was that of males becoming temple prostitutes. Thus, the death penalty in Israel was to prohibit 'married men' from becoming temple prostitutes (Van Loggerenberg 2014:109). Van Loggerenberg furthermore, argues that the rites of the Holiness Code rites were related to pagan

fertility rites. As a result, the death penalty associated with homosexuality was not because of sexual orientation. Instead, the Israelites regarded homosexual behaviour as breaking the Holiness purity rites by partaking in pagan rites. If an Israelite partook in pagan rites it was considered idolatry (*toevah*) (Van Loggerenberg 2014:109-110).

Jesus discussed purity in Matthew 15. He explained that a person would not become defiled if they ate unclean foods. Instead, they would become defiled if their heart was wicked. Furthermore, a person would be unclean if they had the wrong intentions, was murderous, committed adultery, stole or fornicated. Jesus did not establish new laws that Christians had to fulfil. He taught that people should love God and their neighbour (Rogers 2009:69). Thus, the Holiness Code should not be used to defend the arguments against sexual minorities as these laws originated in a different historical context. Male superiority and gender roles are not as essential as they once were, especially not with regard to religion. Christians should rather practise the Gospel of Christ regarding sexual minorities. If biblical passages such as Leviticus 18 and 20 are continually used out of context to support arguments, sexual minorities will not be regarded as brothers and sisters in faith. This would be against the Gospel of Christ.

2.4.3. 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 — Vice Lists

These two biblical passages have become widely discussed because of two Greek words, namely '*arsenokoites*' and '*malakos*'. Many scholars have investigated the linguistic background of these words (Rogers 2009:70). According to Van Loggerenberg, the words could be translated as 'homosexuals, sodomites, male prostitutes' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:112). The consensus has, however, been divided. New Testament professor Brian Blount has stated that the meanings are unclear and as a result, the relation to homosexuality has been disputed. The scholar Martin Nissinen has discovered that both words are on ancient vice lists. This would indicate that the Hellenistic Jews were anxious about the disgraceful conditions of the ancient Greek society. These vice lists do not, however, give any type of context for these words (Rogers 2009:70). These words are used to describe people that are regarded as 'unrighteous', 'sinners and ungodly'. '*Arsenokoites*' and

'*malakos*' cannot be interpreted directly from the biblical passages as their meanings differ in every Biblical translation. According to Van Loggerenberg, the modern uses of the words describe the 'active and passive' roles that homosexual partners identify with (Van Loggerenberg 2014:112). The first use of these words in Greek or Jewish literature was by Paul. As a result, it has become a difficult task to interpret these words as each scholar utilizes a different method of interpretation (Rogers 2009:70).

The term '*malakos*', is not as difficult to define as '*arsenokoites*' and has been interpreted as meaning 'soft' (Rogers 2009:71) or 'licentious persons' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:112). The term does, however, also refer to effeminacy. If a man was associated with effeminacy in the ancient culture, it would have been considered a moral flaw as the ANE was a patriarchal society. It has been argued that men who were considered effeminate because they did not possess self-restraint and gave in to their desires (Kraus 2014:102).

Some scholars have argued that '*arsenokoites*' could be interpreted as '*arsen*' (male) and '*koites*' (bed). Therefore, this word could be a term for men having sex with each other, for male prostitution or economic intimidation (Kraus 2014:102). Dale Martin does, however, disagree with scholars that combine '*arsen*' (male) and '*koites*' (bed) to create a new term for men having sexual relations with each other. He argued that such an interpretation would be incorrect with regard to linguistic techniques. Martin has analysed secular and Christian Greek writing and explained that a word can only be interpreted correctly if it has been distinguished in different contexts (Rogers 2009:70). He did, however, conclude that no one could concretely associate the term with homosexuality (Rogers 2009:70-71). Van Loggerenberg agrees that homosexuality should not be linked to '*arsenokoites*'. She agrees that context is pivotal in translation as the term can be neutral if translated as 'males in bed'. However, if the term is translated as men that have sex with one another, a 'sense of sexual immorality' is created. Van Loggerenberg argues that if the term was associated with homosexuality or sodomites, the early Christian communities would have used the term in that context during discourse (Van Loggerenberg 2014:112).

'*Arsenokoites*' is found in 1 Timothy 1:10, which dates after the work of Paul. The term in this passage is, however, interpreted as the word 'sodomite'. Furnish stated

that this term cannot be discovered in the Hebrew of Old Testament literature or in references to inhabitants of Sodom. In 1 Timothy 1:10, the plural form of '*arsenokoites*' is used which translates to 'sodomites'. The term is followed by an interpretation, meaning 'a group who exploited others'. As a result, the argument of Martin could be supported as he examined similar terms of '*arsenokoites*' on the vice list (Rogers 2009:71). Nissinen has, however, argued that the current understanding of homosexuality should not be incorporated into the words of Paul. There is a lack of evidence that these words are linked to 'homosexuality' and the historical contexts of this biblical passage cannot be used for 'generalizations' (Rogers 2009:71).

Kraus argues that homosexuality was understood differently in the Pauline era than today. Homosexuality was a reference to a specific sexual act and not a reference to committed sexual relationships between same-sex people. In the current era, many same-sex couples love and worship God, are faithful to each other and are exemplary Christians. Kraus argues that perhaps the aversion Paul had toward homosexuality was because he did not know any religious same-sex couples, whereas the postmodern era does. He argues that people have drawn similarities between biblical and postmodern same-sex relationships that are misconstrued. Furthermore, he argues that biblical texts do not solely speak against same-sex relationships. Though the Bible interprets same-sex relationships differently than the postmodern era does, certain storylines between 'same-sex relationships' are depicted positively. The Bible encourages and celebrates strong emotional bonds between same-sex people such as with David and Jonathan, and Ruth and Naomi. These relationships are not met with agitation or disdain. Kraus furthermore argues that the biblical era believed that love could only be experienced between two people if they were in a heterosexual relationship. The postmodern era, however, has many LGBTQ+ Christians that disprove this theory (Kraus 2014:103).

2.4.4. Jude 1:5-7

The book of Jude has only one chapter. The New Testament scholar, Thomas Schmidt, has, however, argued that this book discusses homosexuality (Rogers 2009:71-72). The book of Jude is the only biblical book that has linked the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah with 'sexual immorality'. According to Schmidt, the early

Christians drew the same conclusion with regard to same-sex relationships. There are not many scholars who have come to the same conclusion. Rogers, however, chose to discuss this text as it has been used in the homosexuality debate (Rogers 2009:72).

In Jude 1:5-7, the author discusses angels in relation to humans. In verse 6 it is argued that the author discusses the Genesis 6:1-4 narrative with regard to angels having sex with human women. Likewise, in verse 7 he discusses the Genesis 19:1-29 narrative with regard to the Sodomite men who wanted to have sex with the male angels. Scholars argue that the guests of Lot in Genesis 19 were angels. Jude 1:7 compares these two Genesis narratives to describe their similar 'immoral acts'. The author also explains that the instigators in both narratives were punished by God and thrown into the 'eternal fire'. As a result, Schmidt argued that this was a concrete indication that God was against any sexuality that did not fit the heterosexual norm, and that they would be given the same fate as the instigators mentioned in Jude. Rogers, however, argued that many scholars do not support such a judgement with regard to present-day Christians that identify with sexualities different from the norm (Rogers 2009:72).

2.4.5. Romans 1

Romans 1 is arguably the most discussed biblical passage regarding sexual minorities and same-sex relationships. Some traditional scholars argue that this text is relevant to the current debate regarding homosexuality. Other scholars, however, argue that this text should be interpreted with better biblical interpretation methods. It is argued that this text does not necessarily refer to sexuality but rather to idolatry and the cultural customs from the era of Paul (Rogers 2009:72-73). At first, Paul discusses the idolatry that the Corinthian Gentiles were guilty of. These acts included the worship of things other than God, such as humans, reptiles or birds (Rogers 2009:73). In Romans 1:20-24, it is argued that the Gentiles were rebelling against the one true God as they worshipped other things. This rebellion resulted in their punishment that made them impure by Jewish standards (Brownson 2013:150).

The intended readers of Romans were, however, Jews. Jews did not worship things

that were not God (Rogers 2009:73). According to Richard Hays, Paul had a strategy for addressing his readers. At first, Paul discusses the sinfulness of the Corinthian Gentiles. He aims to create emotions of outrage and judgement in his readers for the actions of the Gentiles. When his readers agree with him, Paul turns the argument on them. Instead of condemning the Gentiles and creating a sense of superiority in the Jews, Paul condemns the Jews for their sinfulness (Brownson 2013:150-151). Paul explains the other forms of idolatry that the Jews were in fact guilty of. Some of the sins from idolatry were envy, gossip, slander, cruelty and greed (Rogers 2009:73). As a result, Jews could no longer act blamelessly as Paul deemed everyone sinners before God (Rogers 2009:74).

In Romans 1:26-27, the words 'natural' and 'unnatural' are used. The original Greek manuscripts, however, use the words '*physis*', meaning 'nature' and '*para physin*', meaning 'against nature'. It is argued that '*para physin*' could have been interpreted as 'unconventional' by Paul. This interpretation could have meant that something was shocking or out of the norm. In Romans 11:13-24, the original Greek suggests that God did something unconventional. His act cannot be interpreted as sinful. Therefore, the same interpretation should be applied to the Greek words of Paul. If Paul had rather meant 'unnatural' in terms of 'out of the ordinary', then he was not saying that sexual minorities were against the natural order. Instead, Paul would have meant that sexual minorities were not conventional in the 'first-century Hellenistic-Jewish culture' and Paul was encouraging conventional behaviour (Rogers 2009:74).

Many passages that discuss homosexuality have male dominance as a recurring theme. This theme is also present in Romans 1. Paul used language in Romans 1 which indicated that he was knowledgeable in the Jewish language as well as the language of Greek philosophy. As a result, Paul addressed both cultures. He discussed the impurities in Jewish culture and the erotic and uninhibited desires of the Greek culture (Rogers 2009:74-75). Romans 1:26 states, 'Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural.' Nissenen (in Rogers 2009:75), stated that this verse is a strong indication of the structure with regard to gender roles from that culture. It was also argued that Paul did not recognize gender roles in terms of genitalia or their functionality. Rather, according to the culture of Paul, men and

women had specific gender roles in society that could not be alternated (Rogers 2009:75). Verse 26 describes the women as 'their women'. It could be argued that women were regarded as inferior and belonging to men. If such language is interpreted correctly, the argument regarding gender dominance could be correct (Brownson 2013:160). The first-century Hellenistic-Jewish culture was still quite patriarchal. If these roles were disobeyed, the people would have been regarded as shameful before God. If the margins of gender roles had been violated, Paul would have considered the people as 'impure', and as desecrating the 'Jewish purity code' (Rogers 2009:75).

According to Nissinen, the 'unnatural' acts of women which Paul referred to, were not in relation to same-sex relationships. Rather, women had taken active roles in sexual intercourse. Conventionally, men were designated the active roles and women were designated the passive roles. Thus, gender dominance was being discussed in Romans 1:26 (Rogers 2009:75). In this culture, women would have been condemned if they engaged in sexual intercourse for pleasure instead of procreativity and if they took the superior roles (male roles) in heterosexual intercourse (Rogers 2009:75).

Paul lived in a time where both Hebrew and Greek philosophies were significant. These cultures encouraged moderation in all aspects of life, especially in sexuality and emotion. Anything that was considered excessive was regarded as a 'moral failing.' This included being excessive in eating, sleeping or succumbing to passion. These cultures encouraged such acts to be controlled. As a result, it can be argued that Romans 1:26-27 was not discussing sexual orientation but rather excessive or uninhibited acts of desire (Rogers 2009:75).

Thus, Paul argued that these uninhibited desires caused believers to become idolatrous, which resulted in diminished glorification and appreciation of God. Paul then explained that as God did not receive the glorification and thanks from his believers, he allowed them to lose control as this resulted in their shame (Rogers 2009:75-76).

Brownson supported this argument as he described lust and passion as a form of

idolatry. Paul discusses the mind as well as the body in relation to lust. As a result, Brownson argued that Paul did not perceive lust as an irrational deed. Rather, it controlled the whole person. Brownson argued that Paul regarded same-sex relations as the most dangerous and powerful forms of lust as they were excessive. Thus, God is no longer the central figure for believers. A person becomes driven to fulfil his selfish desires instead of worshipping the one true God (Brownson 2013:153-155). Likewise, Romans 1:29-31 discusses immorality that has been connected to idolatry. It is argued that this immorality was linked to 'self-seeking desire' as it was not controlled with submission to God. Brownson argued that desire was not exclusive to sexuality. Rather, destructiveness was a result of misguided and uncontrolled desire. There should be a desire to fully worship God as the one true God. If, however, that desire becomes misdirected, idolatry, as well as destructiveness, becomes a problem (Brownson 2013:160).

According to Rogers, scholars have wrongfully interpreted Romans 1 with regard to Christian sexual minorities. People do not realise that this passage mostly focuses on idolatry and that all are equally sinful. People that use this text do not consider the cultural background (Rogers 2009:76). Homosexual orientation, people from the same-sex that loved one another, was not a familiar concept in the time of Paul. It is argued that when Paul discusses the lust that same-sex people felt for one another, he was referring to a selfish inclination. Arguably, Paul was discussing the desire for gratification that men pursued. This gratification was not fulfilled by women alone. As a result, the men pursued 'exotic and unnatural forms of stimulation' for selfish reasons (Brownson 2013:155-156).

The people who improperly interpret Scripture, also use the condemnation of sexual immorality by Paul as an argument against same-sex relationships. This argument is unsuitable, because Paul is mostly condemning idolatry, and because there are LGBTQ+ Christians that are faithful, obedient, and not idolatrous. It can be argued that heterosexual couples could as well as homosexual couples could commit sexual immorality. There are however LGBTQ+ Christians that seek God daily, are obedient and faithful. According to Paul, sexual immorality is connected to idolatry. Thus, homosexual couples should not be considered as idolatrous simply based on their sexual identities. Instead, idolatry should be connected to the acts of individuals

regardless of orientation. This interpretation of Romans 1 would suggest that Paul was not condemning sexual minorities but condemning the acts that lure people away from God (Rogers 2009:76).

2.5. CONCLUSION

The primary focus of this chapter was to examine the influence of interpretation regarding same-sex relationships. Some arguments suggest that same-sex relationships are sinful and against the will of God. Other arguments suggest that people who are attracted to the same-sex are children of God and are not going against his will as he loves them for who they are. Arguments from both perspectives are supported by the interpretation (or lack thereof) of certain Biblical texts.

The first half of this chapter examined the methods of interpretation. It was discovered that people generally use the Bible to support their own biases. They use Scripture without studying the historical or cultural influences, linguistics or the age that a text was written in. Every text in the Bible was influenced by things that postmodern people would not know or understand unless they did a balanced exegesis. Rogers discovered the history of oppression follows a pattern. This pattern has been used for centuries, including the current age. When people do not understand something or believe that they are superior, they use Scripture to defend their actions. These types of people defend their prejudices by saying that they read the Bible literally and that they are simply proclaiming what God has said. They speak on behalf of God, stating that minorities are sinners and should be punished or exiled. This is a dangerous method of reading the Bible. Context is essential and no believer can speak on behalf of God. Only the Word of God, analysed properly, can give an indication of what God could have meant in a certain Biblical passage. The Gospel of Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit are essential to achieve a better understanding of the message of God.

There will never be a singular definition or meaning behind a text, but there are certain guidelines that could aid a believer. In this chapter, section 2.3 discusses in detail the seven guidelines that could be utilised when interpreting a Biblical passage. These guidelines ensure that a text will be studied effectively to avoid

prejudice and a certain amount of subjectivity. Subjectivity is inevitable because the reader always attaches some form of their own context to the meaning of a passage. In short, the guidelines are as follows: Jesus and his teachings should be central to any text. The historicity and cultural context of a text should be analysed. This includes studying the cultures and religions that could have influenced the author and message of a text. The reader should allow the Holy Spirit to guide them to the intended message. The 'rule of faith' in creeds and confessions should guide the reader. The commandment to love God and one another must always be applied in any interpretation. Lastly, the Bible should be read as a literary unit that consists of intertwining narratives and a core message.

In the second half of this chapter, these methods of interpretation are used by various scholars to argue for or against same-sex relationships. There are a handful of Scriptural passages that are popular in arguments. This chapter examined these texts namely, Gen. 19:1-29, Jdg. 19:1-30, Lev. 18:22 & 20:13, 1 Cor. 6:9 & 1 Tm. 1:10, Jude 1:5-7 and Rm 1. these passages are regularly used to argue that same-sex relationships should be viewed as sinful and against the Will of God. The Ancient Near East was a patriarchal society that believed in male superiority and believed that women were the inferior and passive sex. The ANE people would have done anything to keep male superiority intact. This was their culture. They were concerned with gender and not with sexuality, as most arguments would suggest. Passages such as Sodom and Gomorrah and the Levite's concubine were not discussing homosexuality. Rather, the main concern was inhospitality. The violent acts described in these two passages were to humiliate the foreign guests and to show superiority. In Mt. 10:15 and Lk. 10:12 Jesus does not discuss homosexuality but rather the inhospitality and immorality of Sodom. Even in the ANE, homosexual rape was considered an 'awful misconduct'.

Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 also do not refer to sexuality but to the Holiness Code and male superiority. If the text is properly analysed, the reader will discover that the Holiness Code intended to keep the Israelites separate from their neighbouring countries. The Code helped them to remain ritually pure and to keep their unique identity. Men would have been regarded as impure if they had sexual relations with other men. This is not because of sexuality but again about superiority. Men were

supposed to take the active roles and women the passive roles during sexual intercourse. If two men had sex with each other, the belief was that the man who was penetrated became the passive partner and thus inferior, like a woman. This was unacceptable in the ANE and meant that this passive partner had become ritually impure. same-sex relations were linked to pagan rites, and if an Israelite took part in a pagan rite, it was considered idolatry.

1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tm 1:10 are quite interesting as their textual analysis is not about gender or superiority. Rather, these texts have two Greek words that have been misinterpreted namely, '*Arsenokoites*' and '*malakos*'. Various scholars have studied these words and their possible meanings, but the fact is that these words have not been used enough in any other passages that they can be connected to a certain contextual use or meaning. Paul was the first person to use these words in Scripture. There are conflicting interpretations and therefore a direct link to today's concept of homosexuality is tenuous.

Rm. 1 is the most popular Biblical passage used to discuss homosexuality. This text explicitly discusses homosexuality and how Paul viewed it as sinful. After this text has been interpreted, however, it has been discovered that the core issue is not with sexuality but rather with idolatry and moderation. This also yet another text that primarily focuses on male superiority. The text refers to sexual acts that are regarded as unnatural, but with proper exegesis, it is discovered that 'unnatural' could also be interpreted as 'unconventional'. The same issues are discussed in Rm. 1 as in Gen. 19:1-29, Jdg. 19:1-30 and Lv. 18:22 & 20:13. Men would be regarded as inferior if they took the passive roles. When Paul discusses unconventional practices, that also includes sexual acts where women would be the active partners. Paul also believed that if believers gave in to their desires, they could not fully give thanks to God. This meant that they would commit idolatry as their focus was more on desires than on God. Many scholars, however, argue that these practices were from a completely different culture and society. They argue that perhaps Paul did not know any believers that were in committed same-sex relationships and were also faithful and loyal believers.

This chapter discovered that if the correct methods are used to interpret a Biblical

passage, the true message of Christ and the text could be discovered. Many people misinterpret these texts because they do not properly investigate the texts' culture, historicity, textual and linguistic aspects, or remember that the Bible is a literary unit. Most of the time, people choose to use a text out of context because it supports their own beliefs or prejudices. This chapter proves that these texts do not necessarily condemn homosexuality or the attraction to the same-sex. Most of these texts are more concerned with male superiority and remaining faithful to God, not with succumbing to foreign practices. God loves his children and would never turn away from anyone that remains faithful, loving and loyal towards God.

In the following chapter, it will be investigated whether LGBTQ+ people have been treated unfairly in South Africa and the DRC Church. Diversity and inclusivity are encouraged in South Africa, but chapter 3 will investigate whether LGBTQ+ people are a part of this inclusivity. The DRC church has also been involved in a lot of controversy concerning same-sex relationships. This will also be investigated in the following chapter.

3. CHAPTER THREE: LGBTQ+ IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will investigate the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in South Africa, as well as their relationship with the DRC. South Africa is a proudly diverse country. It is known as the Rainbow Nation since the country consists of various different cultures, races and religions. LGBTQ+ people are also a part of this diversity. This chapter will begin with the investigation of whether LGBTQ+ people are welcomed in this Rainbow Nation and how they have been treated by religious institutions and the government.

The beginning of this chapter will briefly investigate how Christian institutions in South Africa have treated LGBTQ+ people to establish how these individuals feel in this country. Do they feel safe to be themselves and practise their faith or are they targeted and discriminated against? Are diversity and inclusivity really encouraged, or do LGBTQ+ people primarily experience discrimination and hate crimes? This chapter will also briefly investigate same-sex marriages in South Africa. When did they become legal and was there a primary influence that aided in the legalisation of same-sex marriages?

After these brief investigations, this chapter will then investigate and discuss the DRC in South Africa. This denomination will be the primary focus of this chapter. There have been a lot of disagreements among DRC leaders and members regarding same-sex attraction. Thus, this chapter will firstly examine what the doctrinal beliefs of the DRC are, to facilitate a better understanding of their beliefs and values. Then, the views of the DRC regarding LGBTQ+ people and same-sex relationships will be examined. The chapter will then examine and discuss the DRC court case that occurred in South Africa. This court case was to establish whether DRC pastors and younger reverends that are LGBTQ+, should remain celibate or can enter into same-sex relationships. Lastly, this chapter will investigate the implications of this verdict.

3.2. THE HISTORY OF GAY MARRIAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

When Apartheid ended in South Africa in 1994, the country had established its 'first democratic constitution'. The Bill of Rights enabled equality for all peoples. There were however still 'sodomy laws' that were not removed until 1998. The Criminal Procedure Act protected these laws. Certain people were authorised to arrest suspected sodomites (as it was referred to then) and even allowed to kill such persons if they attempted to run (Van Loggerenberg 2014:127). Laws against 'sodomy' have been known in the Cape in South Africa as early as the Eighteenth Century. According to Ward, there was a court case in eighteenth-century Cape Town regarding two men named, Jiykhaart Jacobsz and Claas Blank (Ward 2013:413). These two men were both prisoners on Robben Island and had a sexual relationship. Their relationship was discovered and they were 'accused of sodomy'. This was regarded as a criminal offence and they were prosecuted in the 'civil court'. The men admitted their accused 'crime' and were executed after a guilty ruling (Ward 2013:414).

Since South Africa became democratic in 1994, it has become known as one of the most LGBTQ+ friendly places on the continent as well as in the world. Ward argued that gay rights in South Africa are just as much a part of the struggle against discrimination as apartheid (Ward 2013:414). The legal approaches that have been used in South Africa are known globally as they have been very successful. It took South Africa about a decade to fully adapt the constitution to give LGBTQ+ people the same rights as heterosexual people. After homosexuality was decriminalized, LGBTQ+ people could immigrate, adopt, receive a pension, and marry (Thoreson 2008:679).

According to Thoreson, the success of the LGBTQ+ equality movement was due to the way the activists phrased their dialogue with the government. The activists classified their movement as a part of 'identity politics'. They argued that every person has a sexual identity, whether that is gay, bisexual, transgender or heterosexual. People do not have a choice in how they feel or who they are attracted to. The activists used this rhetoric to explain that the old laws regarding sexual orientation were similar to racial categorisation (the foundation of Apartheid). When

Apartheid ended, the government pledged that racial and gender discrimination would not be tolerated. The rhetoric of the activist for LGBTQ+ rights suggested that the government was indeed still discriminating against a group of people. Thoreson argued that this also made arguments difficult for religious and political organisations that classified sexual orientation as immoral (Thoreson 2008:681).

The success of the movement did, however, take a few years to achieve all its goals. In 1998, the criminalisation of 'sodomy' was overturned. It was argued that this law was against the 'constitutional right to equality.' In 2002, same-sex adoption was legalised as it was ruled that the Guardianship Act and the Child Care Act was prejudiced against LGBTQ+ persons. Before 2003, children that were conceived through artificial insemination for same-sex couples were regarded as illegitimate (Thoreson 2008:681).

Finally, in 2005, same-sex marriage was legalised by the Court. The ruling petitioned that the definition of marriage be changed from a 'union between a man and a woman' to a 'union between two persons' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:127-128). The Court had come to the ruling undivided and sent the matter to Parliament. Parliament was instructed to legalise same-sex marriage and amend the Marriage Act in twelve months. The Marriage Act would instead use 'gender-neutral' language such as 'spouse'. Parliament, however, drew up a Civil Union Bill to give same-sex couples civil unions instead of marriage. Marriage was thus reserved for opposite-sex couples. Parliament was then accused of violating the ruling of the court and had no other choice but to amend the Civil Union Bill, to state that civil unions, as well as marriage, was available to all people once the Marriage Act could be finalised (Thoreson 2008:682). same-sex marriage was thus finalised on the 30th of November 2006. Shortly thereafter, the first gay marriages were performed in South Africa (Van Loggerenberg 2014:128).

3.3. DISCRIMINATION & VIOLENCE IN SA WITH REGARDS TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

South Africa is known to have a particularly progressive constitution. This does not, however, mean that it is free from discrimination. LGBTQ+ people in this country still

experience difficulties such as hate crimes, violence directed at homosexual people, corrective rape and 'social stigma' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:79). Corrective rape is done to both men and women that do not conform to heteronormativity. West, Van der Walt & Kaoma argue that this violent act is a consequence of heteropatriarchal views. They argue that this act is regarded by some as a method to make victims heterosexual. Many of the LGBTQ+ sexualities are proclaimed as 'socially deviant and religiously demonic' (West, Van der Walt & Kaoma 2016:5).

There is also a lack of dialogue between African Churches and the LGBTQ+ community. According to West, Van der Walt & Kaoma, African Churches and politicians are inclined to worsen homophobia as they would rather debate sexuality than discuss socioeconomic problems (West, Van der Walt & Kaoma 2016:5). According to Nkosi and Masson however, homophobia is not as prevalent in urban South African areas. Cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, etc. host annual Pride events, suggesting acceptance or at the very least, tolerance (Nkosi & Masson 2017:79).

The South African constitution has enabled LGBTQ+ people to become more open about their orientations and identities. LGBTQ+ people are protected and thus given the freedom to be themselves without legal prosecution. There is not however the same freedom regarding religious expression. Many religious organisations do not accept people that do not conform to heteronormativity. There has been tension between the South African constitution and religious institutions that deem LGBTQ+ people as 'deviant' and unwelcome in religious communities (Kamrudin 2018:143). Though the constitution has evolved into the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people, churches and Christians in South Africa still react negatively. These unfavourable reactions have created inner conflict in LGBTQ+ Christians that want to practise their faith and be their true selves without fear of discrimination (Nkosi & Masson 2017:73). Christianity and sexual identity are at times regarded as mutually causing Christian LGBTQ+ people to struggle with their identities and from freely practising their faith as their authentic selves (Nkosi & Masson 2017:73).

There is still much discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people in South Africa, especially in religious organisations. In Cape Town, there is a Christian

Pentecostal-charismatic organisation that practises conversion therapy. This organisation argues that homosexual men can be converted into heterosexual men through the 'healing power of God' (Golomski 2019:47). The men are encouraged to work hard at becoming heterosexual by changing some of their mannerisms, and how they walk and talk. They are encouraged to forsake their same-sex inclinations through emotional — as well as psychological work. They are also urged to date women and to confess to the church if they again experience same-sex desires. These confessionals also require of the men to discuss their sexual history as well as any sexual abuse they might have experienced. The organisation argued that sexual abuse was a core factor in the homosexual desires of the men (Golomski 2019:47).

In some churches, pastoral counselling has been altered to be beneficial to LGBTQ+ people with the help of a manual. Many pastors do not want to counsel LGBTQ+ people as they do not agree with sexual identities. Thus, LGBTQ+ people remain torn between their identities and their faith. The manual, however, facilitates a 'minimum pastoral requirement' that priests and pastors are encouraged to follow. 'Protection and support' are the aim of this manual. According to West, Van der Walt & Kaoma, if LGBTQ+ people do not receive this protection or support, they will be pushed out of the church and have no choice but to turn to alternative methods for counselling and healing (West, Van der Walt & Kaoma 2016:6).

There are, however, areas such as universities that are facilitating positive change. The University of Witwatersrand has advocated for the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people and equality in the institution. They have established their own Pride event for students as well as 'Safe Zones.' These safe zones aim to create awareness of the various sexual identities in the world and the fact that these identities are not choices; to educate heterosexual allies and to create an atmosphere on campus that allows LGBTQ+ people to feel safe (Nkosi & Masson 2017:79-80)

3.4. THE DRC DOCTRINAL BELIEF SYSTEM

Each side of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) discussion regarding LGBTQ+ persons involves the doctrinal beliefs of the church. This section of the chapter will

briefly investigate these beliefs and how they are relevant in the LGBTQ+ debate. The DRC acknowledges six Confessions of Faith, and in this section, the researcher will investigate the Apostle's Creed, the Creed of Athanasius, the Nicene Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

The Apostle's Creed is written in the first person and briefly but clearly states what a Christian believes and confesses. It is constructed to have a narrative flow, starting with the belief in God as the Father and Creator of heaven and earth (Apostle's Creed Art. 1). The belief in Christ follows, stating how Christ is the Son of God. He was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit' and born to Mary. Pontius Pilate ordered the torture and crucifixion of Christ. He died, was buried, and 'descended' to Hell. Christ then rose from the dead after three days and 'ascended' to heaven. In heaven, Christ sits at the right hand of God as he judges the people who are alive and the people that are dead (Apostle's Creed Art. 2-7). The Creed then concludes with the belief in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the community of believers, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body of Christ and the everlasting life (Apostle's Creed Art.8-12).

The Creed of Athanasius is also known as the Confession of the Christian Faith. This Creed explains the Triune God in detail. It is stated that any believer in the Christian Faith worships the Triune God as a unit namely, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Athanasius, Art.5). The Trinity is one person and not three (Athanasius, Art.11). The Creed explains that they are not simply equally glorious, 'incomprehensible', eternal and almighty (Athanasius, Art.12). Rather, it is one that is incomprehensible, one that is glorious and one that is eternal. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three Gods but one God (Athanasius, Art.16). The Father was never made, created or begotten (Athanasius, Art.21). Christ was not made or created, but he is begotten from the Father (Athanasius, Art.22). The Holy Spirit was not made, created or begotten but proceeds from the Father and the Son (Athanasius, Art.23). This Triune God does not have a hierarchy as 'the three Persons' are 'coequal' in everything (Athanasius, Art.26).

The Creed then states that it is imperative that a believer acknowledges and professes the incarnation of Christ (Athanasius, Art.29). Christ should be seen as

God as well as Man (Athanasius, Art.30). He was begotten from God the Father and born as a man from his mother (Athanasius, Art.31). Christ is equally Man and God; he is not more of one entity than the other (Athanasius, Art.32-37). The Creed then confesses the journey of Christ, as does the Apostle's Creed: The journey of his death, his descent into hell, his resurrection and ascent into heaven, his position at the right hand of God, etc. (Athanasius, Art.38-41). The Creed then concludes with the final reference to the Trinity and that these beliefs are essential to the Christian faith (Athanasius, Art.42).

The Nicene Creed is arguably a combination of the Apostle's Creed and the Creed of Athanasius. This Creed is written in short, concise sentences that begin with the confession of one God and the Father that created all (Nicene, Art.1-5). The Creed proceeds to confess the belief of Christ as the Son, begotten of the Father and equally God (Nicene, Art.6-12). Christ came to earth 'by the power of the Holy Spirit' and gave people salvation with his sacrifice. His journey is then professed from his incarnation to his position next to God (Nicene, Art.13-25). This Creed, however, adds that the resurrection of Christ was in agreement with scriptures (Nicene, Art.20). The Creed then proclaims the belief in the Holy Spirit, how Christ enabled life and communicated through the Prophets (Nicene, Art.26-30). It concludes with the belief in the church, that baptism enables the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead and eternal life (Nicene, Art.30-34).

The following three confessions are extensive documents that will only briefly be discussed in this section. For the purpose of this study, only some of the sections most relevant to the LGBTQ+ debate will be mentioned.

Firstly, the Heidelberg Catechism is divided into fifty-two days with a question asked and answered for each day. The answers are a collection of scriptural passages, and these passages are also referenced at the end of each question. The first relevant question asks what the Law requires of a believer. The answer references Mt. 22 that states the most important commandments according to Christ. To love God with one's entire being and to love one's neighbour as oneself (Heidelberg Catechism, Day 2). Another question is whether God created people as wicked and perverse, as they cannot perfectly follow this law. The answer is 'no' and continues to state that

people were created in the image of God, who is righteous and holy (Heidelberg Catechism, Day 3). Another couple of questions discuss the sixth commandment of 'Thou shalt not kill'. This commandment is not solely reserved for murder but also states that a believer should not 'hate, insult, or kill my neighbour either in thought, word, or gesture.' It is stated that God detests the root of this commandment namely, 'envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that in his sight all these are hidden murder' (Heidelberg Catechism, Day 40).

The Belgic Confession is another extensive document that discusses thirty-seven articles in detail. This confession discusses the Christian faith completely. It describes God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, the Church, Sacraments, Doctrines, etc. (Belgic, Art. 1-37). This Confession describes how biblical the Church is. The Word of God, the canonical books, the authority of Scripture, the difference between the canonical and apocryphal books and the sufficiency of Scripture is discussed in detail (Belgic, Art. 2-7). Regarding the LGBTQ+ debate, however, the DRC mostly uses Scripture in the debate as the DRC regards itself as a Biblical, Protestant Church that views Scripture as central to its beliefs (Burrige 2008:161). The Belgic Confession explains that believers trust Scripture because it is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit enables believers to know that Scripture is true and from God. Thus, believers do not doubt the teachings found in Scripture (Belgic, Art. 5). The article, Sufficiency of Scripture, explains that Scripture is the will of God. His teachings and guidelines for 'service' are found in Scripture in great detail. Believers should not trust 'human writings' because God gives the truth. Humans are imperfect and 'liars by nature,' and thus prone to error (Belgic, Art. 7).

The Canons of Dort is the final confession for the purpose of this study. It is a long document that discusses five main points of doctrine. Each main point consists of a number of detailed articles. The first main point discusses the 'Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination' in eighteen articles (Dort, Art. 1-18 of the First Main Point). The second main point discusses the death of Christ and how people have received redemption through it. This section has nine articles (Dort, Art. 1-9 of the Second Main Point). The third and fourth main points discuss 'Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs' with seventeen articles (Dort, Art. 1-17 of the Third and Fourth Main Points). The fifth and final main point discusses 'The

Perseverance of the Saints' with fifteen articles (Dort, Art. 1-15 of the Fifth Main Point).

There are a few points that could be used in the LGBTQ+ debate. The 'Twofold Response to the Gospel' states that anyone that embraces Christ as the Savior and believes that God sent him to die for the sins of humans, will be spared from the wrath of God. They will share in eternal life (Dort, Art. 4 of the First Main Point). 'The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All' again states that if a person believes that Christ was crucified, they will 'not perish but have eternal life.' This article emphasises that this Gospel should be believed, proclaimed and announced 'without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people' (Dort, Art. 5 of the Second Main Point). Finally, 'The Earnest Call of the Gospel' states that anyone called by the Gospel of Christ is called in earnest. This article explains that God wants the called to come to him, and he uses the Word of God to reach them. Lastly, God 'promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who do come and believe' (Dort, Art. 8 of the Third and Fourth Main Points).

All these confessions focus on the grace of God and the redemption believers receive because of Christ's Sacrifice. It is never stated that there are exceptions to receiving forgiveness or eternal life if the believer follows the teachings found in Scripture, accepts, and believes in, the Triune God and upholds the true values of a Christian. Sexuality, race or gender do not occur once in these Confessions as a prerequisite to redemption. Instead, it is stated that there should not be discrimination against someone who upholds the Christian faith as taught in Scripture.

3.5. A HISTORICAL EXPLORATION OF THE DRC VIEW ABOUT LGBTQ+

It is important to investigate the historical relationship between the DRC and LGBTQ+ people to establish possible improvement and how past events influenced the DRC court case. This section will primarily discuss the DRC Synods as they are responsible for the policies and doctrines of this denomination. According to Vorster, the DRC has conducted the most studies and research regarding LGBTQ+ people. Thus, the DRC is well-versed in both sides of the debate (Vorster 2008:323).

The gay debate in the DRC is currently a well-known topic in South Africa. However, before 1997, South Africa did not have the Bill of Rights and LGBTQ+ people were commonly exiled from the church (Vorster 2008:323). The DRC is one of the largest mainstream Afrikaner churches in South Africa. Vorster argues that the size of the DRC makes it difficult to determine when the gay debate started and to identify a specific occurrence that influenced the beginning of a discourse. According to Vorster, the South African Constitution is most likely the cause as the Synod of the Western and Southern Cape in 1995 requested a report regarding LGBTQ+ people. In 1999, the report was submitted with the title 'Pastoral Guidance to the Homosexual Person' (Vorster 2008:324).

Currently, most DRC churches encourage LGBTQ+ people to attend services and become members of the community. However, it is problematic that church councils are entitled to turn LGBTQ+ members away from their church if they do not accept these persons' openly 'gay lifestyle.' This is the result of a policy enforced by the general assembly of the DRC. This policy states that LGBTQ+ people should be welcomed into congregations but that they should remain celibate as their same-sex conduct is regarded as sinful (Dreyer 2008:1236).

When the DRC has gathered as an official electorate, they have consistently emphasised their use of Scripture to support their decisions on same-sex 'lifestyles' (Punt 2006:896). It has been argued that this use of Scripture is rather being abused by some DRC officials, as well as their positions of power, to support their own biases. These actions are harmful to the LGBTQ+ people and their rights as people. It has also been argued that there has been a minimal attempt to correct this situation (Kapp 2020:3). The 1986 DRC GS declared that they were against homosexuality as it was explicitly revealed through Scripture (Punt 2006:896) to be a 'depravity of [intended] normative sexual nature' (Kapp 2020:15). In 2002 however, the opposite was decided with the argument that Scripture was 'conclusive' (Punt 2006:896). These contradictory actions support the argument previously mentioned. Kapp furthermore states that the GS of the DRC decides what the church should believe, what is acceptable and what is not. It is furthermore, questioned whether

they can speak on behalf of the church without the involvement of DRC members that are not appointed by the Synod (Kapp 2020:15).

It is essential for the church to use Scripture to examine homosexuality because the DRC believes in Sola Scriptura — ‘Scripture alone’ — when faith matters are discussed. The ‘official proceedings’ of the church are an example of how this doctrine is utilized. Chapter 2 of this study discussed in detail the importance of biblical exegesis of well-known Scriptural passages consulted in this debate. Reformed Churches are most likely to use any Biblical text that would support their argument as a thorough investigation is required regarding LGBTQ+ matters (Kapp 2020:15).

The DRC has, however, predominantly been against LGBTQ+ matters and has used these Scriptural passages to proclaim that people that do not conform to heteronormativity will never ‘inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. 6:9). This interpretation of the passages met with approval in the DRC but since then it has been questioned if these biblical passages were incorrectly understood (Kapp 2020:15). As this topic is continuously being studied and revised, it is possible that the passages were initially incorrectly interpreted. Newer methods of interpretation are being used in biblical exegesis to accommodate a postmodern society. For instance, the current society is much more welcoming of LGBTQ+ people than the ancient biblical society was. Heteronormativity is no longer regarded as the norm and it is no longer predominantly understood that LGBTQ+ people choose who they are attracted to or how they identify. In South Africa it is now illegal to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people and to do so would be against these persons’ human rights (Kapp 2020:15). It has been argued that as the church has not progressed as the South African law has, the DRC is intolerant. This intolerance, however, is a result of the decisions made by the General Assembly and should not necessarily reflect on the entire DRC community (Kapp 2020:16).

The following section will focus on the General Synod decision regarding LGBTQ+ people. According to Vorster, the 1986, 2002 and 2007 General Synods are most prominent in organized discourse. Vorster states that the ‘period’ since the 2004 GS could be classified as a time of disorder that mostly concentrated on same-sex

marriage (Vorster 2008:323). For the purposes of this study, however, all General Synods since 1982 will be discussed.

Initially, the DRC was completely intolerant of homosexuality. In 1982, the DRC banned homosexual people from the church and even refused them communion. In 1986 it became a matter of knowledge. As Vorster explains this knowledge, the Church leadership knew that homosexuality existed, but it was viewed as a 'condition'. It was known that Scripture had a viewpoint on homosexuality; they knew what Scripture taught about this 'condition' and they understood that the viewpoint was averse to it. These leaders regarded this as the will of God and thus adopted an attitude corresponding to this view. Vorster argues that this knowledge was derivative of a heteronormative culture that insisted that homosexuality was a 'deviant sexual condition.' Before 1986, the common mindset of the church was to ban LGBTQ+ people as well as the public discourse on it. Vorster argues that if it had not been for the South African Bill of Rights, this could still have been the mentality of the church (Vorster 2008:324).

The 1986 GS declared that though homosexuality was still regarded as a sin against the will of God and a type of 'deviant sexuality,' these persons were now allowed to receive communion. The Synod was also asked for financial support by the DRC for 'specialist church services' intended for homosexual people, but it was never stated what these services entailed. The funding for these services was denied in 1990 when it became evident that the government would not approve it (Kapp 2020:17). After 1986, there was a growth in digressive practices regarding homosexuality. A public discourse had erupted and the public began communicating with one another about this topic. There were also 'official meetings, study groups, seminars, conferences and task committees' (Vorster 2008:325). These actions enabled the public in the 'development of a rhetoric' and to become part of the discourse. This would also ensure that the church would no longer be the dominant leader of the discourse (Vorster 2008:325).

The gay debate became a recurring topic in every Synod from the 2002 Synod. This Synod established a positive break in pattern as it declared that the church could no longer support the 1986 decision. The Synod apologized for their previous actions

and declared that LGBTQ+ people would now be welcomed into congregations. Unfortunately, the Synod stated that they still supported the beliefs of the 1986 Synod that defined homosexual behaviour as immoral. The church would only recognise heterosexual marriages. The Synod concluded that they would investigate the topic further for the 2004 Synod (Vorster 2008:325). This Synod also withdrew their support for the Philadelphia in Christ (FIC) church. This church had facilitated conversion therapy. They intended to change the sexual orientation of their LGBTQ+ members but had to discontinue their efforts when the LGBTQ+ community refused to participate (Van Loggerenberg 2008:7).

The 2002 Synod used Scripture, as is customary in the DRC tradition, to discuss the gay debate. Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13, Gn. 19, Jude 19 and 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tm. 1:10 and Rm. 1:26-27 were discussed with their 'reception history,' the contexts of the biblical texts, the literary contexts, and the contexts of the current interpreters. The report of the 2002 AKLAS (General Commission for Learning and Current Affairs) focused on 5 areas regarding homosexuality, namely, how difficult it is for the church to comprehend homosexuality and to do so with moral 'decision-making'; understanding the difference between the law of the Torah and its instructions, prior to discussing the biblical texts that relate to homosexuality and the argument of what Romans 1 means with 'natural' (Punt 2006:897). The report of the 2004 AKLAS added to the 2002 report, stating that terminology was proving difficult and that the ministry of Christ and the early church should be taken into account in the interpretations. Lastly, it stated that the social history of homosexuality should be investigated to better understand the meaning of the texts and the transformation of sexual identity (Punt 2006:897).

According to Vorster, the 2004 General Assembly did not make any decisions regarding homosexuality. Instead, they upheld the status quo as they had only focused on their own interests (Vorster 2008:325). Kapp however, disagrees. He states that the General Assembly had completely overruled the 1986 decision. LGBTQ+ people would now be fully accepted as DRC members as their sexual identity will no longer be a prerequisite for DRC membership. The church, however, remained unchanged with its views on marriage. The church again apologised to the LGBTQ+ community for any grievances caused. The church did, however,

implement pastoral care for LGBTQ+ persons. This suggests that the DRC regards sexuality as intrinsic to a person (Kapp 2020:17). Unfortunately, it has been argued that the DRC still did not truly accept or show love to the LGBTQ+ community (Van Loggerenberg 2008:8).

At the 2005 GS, a task team was constructed. The purpose of this team was to further examine homosexuality and give a report at the 2007 GS. Marietjie van Loggerenberg was among 19 other associates. Dr Willie Botha was the scribe, Dr Ben Du Toit the convener, and Dr Herman Carelsen the facilitator. The other 16 members were chosen for their expertise in homosexuality. These 16 members were then divided into a group that was accepting of same-sex relationships and another opposed to it. Though they were on opposite sides, the 16 members were compassionate toward the LGBTQ+ people (Van Loggerenberg 2008:8-9).

The 2005 GS was partly influenced by prior events. In April of 2005, DRC minister Rev. L.L.B. Gaum from St. Stephen's Church, Cape Town, was accused of homosexual promiscuity. The male partner of Rev. Gaum made the accusation, but, unfortunately, committed suicide afterwards. An investigation was started by the Presbytery of the Cape of Good Hope to establish the validity of the accusations (Punt 2006:898). The investigation did not, however, focus on the accusations but rather initiated a query about whether a minister of the DRC should be allowed to remain in his position as minister if he is a 'practising homosexual.' This question was asked despite the Rev. Gaum's monogamous relationship. The general result of the report stated that there was no evidence that Rev. Gaum was promiscuous. However, the investigation concluded that Rev. Gaum was guilty of lying to the DRC and his congregation about his same-sex relationship. As a result, the church commission suspended his clerical status and advised the St. Stephen's church council to discharge Rev. Gaum as their minister (Punt 2006:898).

Punt argues that this report agreed with the 2004 decision that an LGBTQ+ identity was not a 'punishable sin.' However, the report also favoured the 1986 decision to condemn homosexual relationships (Punt 2006:898). This preference for the 1986 decision is questionable because it was repeatedly stated afterwards that further examination would be required for a better understanding. The 2004 decision

maintained that marriage was only valid between a man and woman, but added that as homosexual relationships do not conform to this, they are regarded as promiscuous, even if the relationship is monogamous (Punt 2006:899). According to Punt, the Registrar of the Western Cape Synod clarified that the decision was reached after hermeneutics were utilized and the church had applied their control. The opinions of the Registrar suggested that LGBTQ+ persons would never be able to escape celibacy as their sexual orientation would always be regarded as promiscuous. Promiscuity is thus regarded as any relationship that does not conform to monogamous heteronormative standards as interpreted from Scripture. The 2005 Synod had the opportunity to practise their 2004 decision; instead, they condemned homosexuality (Punt 2006:899).

Punt argues that it becomes abundantly clear that the report was influenced by a heteronormative culture. This argument is influenced by the statements made by the commission, saying that the Rev. Gaum did not give any indication that he could be incorrectly interpreting homosexuality (Punt 2006:899). They were also 'offended' that Rev. Gaum had not considered the scriptural interpretations that the commission had chosen as correct (Punt 2006:899-900). These reactions suggest that the 2004 Synod decision was disregarded as the 2005 Synod did not critically investigate the relevant texts. Punt argued that this indicated that Scripture was not used as an authoritative interpretation, but that the actual authority lies with the 'historic formulation by the DRC' (Punt 2006:900).

According to Kapp, the atmosphere at the 2007 Synod was tense. This Synod discussed homosexuality in detail. Task members respected each other's views, but the topic still influenced the atmosphere. This Synod was a great improvement from previous meetings as extensive research had been done on homosexuality. The DRC also showed heightened empathy towards LGBTQ+ believers (Kapp 2020:18). According to Van Loggerenberg, this empathy was apparent from the language that the members used as well as their clear respect for each other's perspectives. Van Loggerenberg noted that this was a 'refreshingly different' attitude. The topic of homosexuality was presented to the moderamen of the Synod by various knowledgeable speakers, as well as two primary individuals, that argued for or against same-sex relationships (Van Loggerenberg 2014:51). Dr André Bartlett

argued for same-sex relationships and Dr Jorrie Potgieter argued against same-sex relationships. Each was given the opportunity to present his argument. These arguments led the DRC to a compromise (Van Loggerenberg 2008:118) given later in the day (Van Loggerenberg 2014:51).

Van Loggerenberg received the decision telephonically from Dr Potgieter. He stated that this decision regarding homosexuality was not absolute but rather a 'cease-fire'. The following was decided by the 2007 Synod (Van Loggerenberg 2014:51):

1. Scripture is still used, but the biblical values in the texts are studied according to context.
2. The love of Christ is the only acceptable basis for relationships. God created all believers in his image (Van Loggerenberg 2014:51) and as the Triune God accepts all people, so the Synod will 'accept the human dignity of all people' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:52).
3. Sexual orientation does not exclude people from the love of God.
4. The Synod did not alter the 2004 decision regarding marriage, and promiscuity in heterosexual as well as homosexual people was still condemned.
5. The church does not recognise same-sex unions and marriages as 'an alternative for marriage.'
6. The GS reserves the right to appoint ministers and LGBTQ+ legitimates will be allowed ministership if they remain celibate.
7. The final point declared that the 'General Synod acknowledges the discretion of local church councils to handle the differences on homosexuality in congregations in a spirit of Christian love' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:52).

According to Van Loggerenberg, this final point was a historical moment for the DRC as it was the first time that the discretion of church councils was recognised, allowing them to decide how to manage differences regarding homosexuality in their congregations, as long as it was 'in a spirit of Christian love' (Van Loggerenberg 2014:52).

3.6. THE DRC COURT CASE AND THE VERDICT

This section of the study will investigate the events that led to the DRC Court Case in South Africa. The 2013 Synod will be the starting point as it was the first Synod to begin the journey of change regarding LGBTQ+ persons. This section will then briefly discuss the 2015 and 2016 Synods as they influenced the court case. Finally, the court case and its verdict will be discussed with some reference to judicial procedures.

After the 2007 Synod decision there was satisfaction and silence. It was not until 5 years later (Kapp 2020:19), on the 10th of October 2013 (Van Loggerenberg 2014:58), that the Synod reconvened and reopened the 2007 decision (Kapp 2020:19). The Synod decided to primarily uphold the 2007 decision (Van Loggerenberg 2014:58) with a few additional clauses. Both heterosexual and homosexual DRC students, studying to become a part of the ministry, would now be regarded as equal, provided they uphold the 'Christian-ethical standard' (Kapp 2020:19). Again, the Synod apologized to LGBTQ+ people for 'objectifying' them and for excluding them from the discourse. The Synod stated that in the future they would aim to treat LGBTQ+ persons as equals with more 'human dignity.' After this declaration, Van Loggerenberg contacted a few of her fellow researchers to discuss the outcome. All of them agreed that they no longer believed the validity of the Synod, especially the statements made by Prof. Niemandt. They stated that the decisions of the Synod no longer elevated their emotion. They did not even feel anger, as they had come to view the decisions of the Synod as futile (Van Loggerenberg 2014:58).

The 2015 Synod made history when it declared the acceptance of LGBTQ+ persons. The Synod was led by Nelis Janse van Rensburg (Moderator), and Dirkie van der Spuy (Assessor) (Kapp 2020:19), and announced that homosexual civil unions, defined by love and fidelity, would now be recognised and accepted as moral in the DRC. Ministers willing to perform the solemnization of these unions would now be permitted to do so. This decision was influenced by a biblical interpretation based on a 'culturally sensitive' method (Vorster 2017:2). It was also stated that the Synod recognised the different views regarding same-sex relationships and thus they

permitted church councils to freely decide what their views were and to develop their own practices regarding sexuality. The Synod stated that they would implement a 'Christen-Biblical-ethical model' to teach congregations about sexual orientation to facilitate a better understanding of LGBTQ+ persons (Minnaar 2015:8).

The 2007 Synod clause that accepted homosexual ecclesiastics, provided they remain celibate, had been revoked in 2015. The fifth clause of the 2015 Synod stated that all persons to be ordained are required to live by the same 'Christian-ethical standards,' regardless of sexual orientation. Janse van Rensburg and Van der Spuy wrote an 'emotional Pastoral letter' that explained that the Synod felt strongly that more research was needed on homosexuality in Scripture but that the Synod's prolonged silence needed to end as their silence would proclaim something on its own. The Synod, furthermore, explained that their decision stemmed from humility and that same-sex relationships would still be investigated further (Kapp 2020:19). This 2015 decision was greatly celebrated by society as it was in keeping with the 2006 Civil Union Act (Vorster 2017:2).

There was, however, a large portion of DRC members who were greatly angered and ridiculed this decision. Many congregations contacted the DRC to state that they would not take part in the enforcement of the new decision. This led to the 'executive church council' arranging the 2016 'extra-ordinary session of the general synod.' This Synod reviewed the 2015 decision (Vorster 2017:2) and, unfortunately, this Synod declared that they were disgruntled with it. The approval of same-sex relationships was revoked, and the 2004 decisions, that only acknowledged heterosexual relationships and marriages as valid, were reinforced (Kapp 2020:19). same-sex relationships were now an unacceptable 'alternative' (Kapp 2020:20). According to Vorster, the Synod was threatened with multiple legal actions and decided to re-establish the 2007 decision, stating that same-sex unions 'cannot be founded on Christian morality' (Vorster 2017:2).

The Synod stated that churches could decide for themselves how they wanted to handle the question regarding same-sex relationships. The public objected, arguing that the 2015 decision was one of inclusivity and compassion (Kapp 2020:20). According to Vorster, both the 2015 and 2016 decisions were achieved by using

Scripture as the key to 'reliable biblical hermeneutics.' As the two decisions were so contradictory, the trustworthiness and validity of synods and clerics have been questioned. Furthermore, the moral decisions made by councils and synods have become dubious as they have caused much disorientation about sexual identity (Vorster 2017:2).

After the 2016 decision, the Synod avoided discussing the decision any further until 2019. Ten members of the DRC, including Dr Fritz Gaum and the Rev. Laurie Gaum, approached the High Court of South Africa with an appeal, stating that the GS had ruled unlawfully and that the ruling was discriminatory in terms of Section 9 of the South African Constitution. The DRC responded that they had not discriminated by choosing to recognise only heterosexual unions as valid. The church explained that LGBTQ+ members were still welcome to be a part of congregations and attend worship services. Later, the church confessed that their actions were possibly discriminatory, but also noted that there was a lack of evidence that the ruling was unjust (Kapp 2020:20).

As previously mentioned, the 2015 decision was followed by much anger from various DRC members. This response initiated the judicial process. The GS received various appeals, objections and grievances (*gravamen*). According to regulation 19 section 1.1 of the Church Order, church meetings can review, alter or remove decisions if revisions, appeals, etc. are received. Revision, appeal, objection and *gravamen* consist of the following: A revision takes place when, at the request of a member before or during a meeting, a decision is reconsidered. An 'appeal or objection involves an appeal to a majority meeting when a member and / or church meeting feels aggrieved about the decision of a smaller church meeting.' Gravamen are used as serious enquiries at the GS about decisions made regarding church doctrine (Sutton & Sutton 2019:404).

The Gaum case was heard by three judges in the Pretoria High Court and commenced on the 21 August 2018. The verdict was reached on the 8th March 2019 (Sutton & Sutton 2019:401). It should be noted that, according to the Supreme Court of Appeal, the High Court is not influenced by how Church Law is interpreted by the GS. The High Court can interpret Church Law as it deems appropriate. It can then

make any decision based on such an interpretation (Sutton & Sutton 2019:398). Adv. Schalk Burger represented the DRC during the hearing. He argued that the church did not exclude anyone from the church, nor had LGBTQ+ members been forced to do anything they felt uncomfortable with. The church simply prohibited same-sex couples from marrying in the DRC. Burger then requested that the court permit the DRC to remain in charge of their own 'policies and interpretations regarding homosexual unions.' Gaum, however, argued that the church discriminated against LGBTQ+ people without a *factual basis* to support their actions (Kapp 2020:20). The court decided to address only two key questions as there was no 'material dispute' in the Gaum case. The first question was to determine if the correct procedure was implemented in the 2016 decision, as is stipulated in the 2015 Church Order of the DRC. The second question was with regard to the 'substantive constitutional debate' (Sutton & Sutton 2019:401).

The court concluded that the church was in fact discriminatory with their 2016 decision and that it was not reasonable of the GS to exclude people from the DRC based on their sexual identity. This decision came after the court considered the following: the impact that the discrimination had had on the LGBTQ+ people; what the specific foundation for the discrimination was; the nature of the steps that led to discrimination; and what the intention was — the social purpose — that these steps would initiate; 'the constitutional guarantee of equality that must be interpreted within the South African context and the historical background, the various rulings of the Constitutional Court on characteristics of the context within which a prohibition of unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation must be analyzed'; and the arguments that conducted before the court (Sutton & Sutton 2019:408). It was the responsibility of the respondents to prove why their discriminatory decision was fair because the 'ground of discrimination is part of the grounds listed in Article 9 of the Constitution'. The respondents were unsuccessful in proving that their decision was just (Sutton & Sutton 2019:408).

The respondents failed to indicate what the intended social function was for the 2016 Synod's decision, and whether it had any function to begin with. The 2016 decision deprived the applicants of enjoying all the rights and freedoms of the church that the church had given them in 2015. The respondents also failed to make any arguments

or present any evidence to suggest that the 2016 decision supports the constitutional goal of equality. They were also unable to argue how it was just to exclude LGBTQ+ people. It was argued that it was unjustifiable to prohibit DRC members from enjoying the equal rights and freedoms been offered by the Church (Sutton & Sutton 2019:409). The respondents argued that Gaum should go to another church, become a member, and marry there. This was declared as unreasonable discrimination and the court furthermore declared that the 2015 decision was less restrictive and prejudicial compared to the 2016 decision that did not accommodate diversity. Thus, as the 2016 decision led to discrimination, the church did not produce any facts to argue why their decision was sensible or excusable (Sutton & Sutton 2019:409).

The argument of the respondents is understandable if regarded from a constitutional perspective. It was, however, revealed that it contradicted the decisions made by previous General Synods. Sutton & Sutton explained that people in same-sex relationships should be treated with love, compassion and acceptance in the DRC (Sutton & Sutton 2019:409). The court regularly mentioned the drawbacks (Kapp 2020:20) of the church in their testimony (Sutton & Sutton 2019:399-400). Finally, the court's verdict stated that the church did discriminate unfairly and illicitly, according to 'section 9 of the legal constitution of South Africa' (Kapp 2020:21). Thus, the court settled the Gaum case (Sutton & Sutton 2019:412) and it became clear that the DRC was ruled by the Synod (a dynamic minority). According to Kapp, the Synod represents the majority decision and not the 'implied majority' (Kapp 2020:21).

3.7. THE IMPLICATION OF THE VERDICT ON THE DRC AND LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

The event of the DRC involving the High Court in church matters was highly unconventional. According to Bosman, prior to the court case verdict the newspapers in South Africa were discussing the proceedings. The newspapers intimated that the church was on the brink of splitting as a result of the opposing views regarding LGBTQ+ persons (Bosman 2020:n.p.).

Bosman states that during the years of the conflict, he had heard this notion before. He explains how troubling it is to hear that people are not more concerned about a possible split (Bosman 2020:n.p.). He argues that it is imperative that the church remain united as the core of the church is the testimony about Christ. He explains that Christ prayed for unity in the church in Jn 17 as Christ says, 'I pray that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.' Furthermore, Christ explains that the importance of unity is so that 'the world can believe that you sent me' (Bosman 2020:n.p.). Bosman argues that the credibility of Christ sent by God depends on the unity of the church, and that when believers are divided and in conflict, they are diminishing the message of Christ. Divisiveness in the church emphasises the unfortunate actions of believers. Bosman explains that these actions overshadow the words used to testify to the message of Christ. Thus, there should be unity among members, synods and congregations (Bosman 2020:n.p.).

After the verdict of the High Court on the 8th of March 2019, there were some debates whether the church would appeal the decision. On the 18th of March, the general secretary of the DRC, Dr Gustav Claassen, stated that the GS would not appeal the verdict but rather accept it (Kerkbode 2019c). A proposal was drafted by the 'ATR' (General Commission for Law) that was shared with the GS. According to Dr Claassen, this proposal was electronically voted on by 48 General Synod members. The majority voted that the High Court decision regarding LGBTQ+ persons, should not be opposed. Dr Claassen furthermore noted that there would be future conversations regarding this topic but that they would be handled with respect and that the meaning and ramifications of the verdict would also be considered (Kerkbode 2019c).

After the court case had been won by the twelve DRC members, the Alliance Defending the Autonomy of Churches in South Africa (ADACSA) approached the court. According to Kerkbode, the ADACSA acted as a 'friend of the court' during the court case. On 27 March, ADACSA submitted an application to the court. The Freedom of Religion (FOR) SA declared that the goal of the application was to receive clarification on the court ruling. Was the 2016 decision set aside because of improper procedures or because the decision infringed on the right to freedom of religion and equality? ADACSA submitted this application because they were unsure

what to tell their denominations, religious organizations and churches, and if they should appeal the decision or accept it (Kerkbode 2019a). Laurie Gaum responded on behalf of the 12 members by stating that they would oppose the request as they regard the ruling as clear and precise. Gaum interpreted the ADACSA request as a move to undercut the effectiveness of the ruling and, as a result, 'withdraw the rejection of discrimination' (Kerkbode 2019a).

Dr Gustav Claassen however, responded to the Kerkbode that, as mentioned earlier, the GS had decided to accept the court ruling and that the ADACSA application was not an appeal. Dr Claassen understood that the ADACSA simply wanted clarification on whether the ruling applied solely to the DRC or applied to all churches (Kerkbode 2019a). ADACSA referred to the opinion of the constitutional expert, Prof. Pierre de Vos, found on the Daily Maverick news website. Prof. de Vos stated that he was unsure what the implications of the verdict would be for other religious organisations and churches. The executive director of FORSA, Michael Swain, agreed that clarification was necessary as there was a possibility that the ruling could also be dealing with the constitutionality of the 2016 DRC decision. If this is the case, churches would be restricted when determining their doctrines. Swain concluded that this would be a serious problem that would indeed constitute an appeal (Kerkbode 2019a).

As the GS decided to accept the ruling, they had to review their decisions at a new GS meeting. The meeting was held from the 6th to the 11th October 2019 (DRC GS Agenda 2019:1). Regarding same-sex unions, the meeting developed 11 articles (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158):

1. The GS acknowledges that the church has various methods of interpretation when handling Scripture. These differences have led to an impasse and thus further study of Scripture is required.
2. The unity of the church is based on the foundation of Christ and confession. This unity cannot be dismantled if there is disagreement about 'the handling and interpretation of Scripture', rather, it will be enriched and intensified by the disagreement.

3. The Synod states that it is committed to continuously and humbly listening to the differences in the interpretation of Scripture, and differences in hermeneutics, and to respect these differences.
4. The GS encourages congregations to establish spaces for discourse concerning the faith differences on theological-ethical matters. Furthermore, 4.1 these spaces should be diverse and inclusive; 4.2 people should not speak about others but rather air their own perspectives; and 4.3 the Word of God should be taken seriously (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158).
5. The GS respects the church councils and encourages them to make their own distinctions regarding this matter. The GS also encourages the councils to be thorough and responsible in their decisions.
6. The GS encourages church councils to appoint members to the offices, provided that the councils consider: 6.1 their 'baptism, confession, calling, spirituality and testimony of doctrine and life'; 6.2 their access to the sacraments; 6.3 the integrity of their relationships; 6.4 their suitability for a specific role; 6.5 do not regard their gender, class, race, or sexual orientation and identity (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158).
7. This article encourages the church councils to apply the exact same stipulations from article 6 to the legitimisation of theological students.
8. The GS acknowledges that there are: 8.1 ministers and church councils that do not feel comfortable with performing civil unions of same-sex couples; 8.2 that there are also ministers and church councils that are comfortable with performing civil unions between same-sex couples.
9. The synod would like to encourage members to create room for all persons to act according to their own convictions.
10. The GS has instructed the ATLAS to create a form for confirming civil unions between same-sex couples (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158).
11. The GS:
 - 11.1 Apologises for the hurt and confusion that has resulted from the debate over the past few years (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158).
 - 11.2 Apologises that LGBTQ+ members and their families have been hurt by the violation of their human dignity, either committed consciously or unconsciously (DRC GS Agenda 2019:159).

11.3 Commits itself to facilitate spaces for discussion that will respect the human dignity of all.

11.4 Expresses gratitude for the courageous and constructive discussions that LGBTQ+ people have continued to conduct in the church (DRC GS Agenda 2019:159).

The GS also instructed ATLAS to continue investigating marriage and human sexuality to give feedback at the next GS meeting (DRC GS Agenda 2019:159).

The following are articles regarding same-sex relationships that the GS decided to leave unchanged (Amptelik 2019:n.p.):

1. The GS reiterated that the 2004 decision would remain unchanged, stating that according to Scriptural interpretation, marriage can only be between a man and a woman.
2. The 2004 decision stating that promiscuity is condemnable in both heterosexual as well as homosexual individuals.
3. The GS has decided that same-sex unions will not be recognised or accepted as alternatives to marriage (Amptelik 2019:n.p.).

After this 2019 GS declaration, there was further discussion on the decisions. Dr Frederick Marais, from the Western Cape Synod, stated that church councils, synods and presbyteries would still have the right to decide which viewpoints they agreed with. Dr Marais stated that the synod would no longer facilitate conflict and would respect the viewpoints of others as diversity, as different viewpoints is a gift and not shameful (Jackson 2019:n.p.). Furthermore, the GS has decided to establish a team which will discuss the decision at length with the various synods to avoid confusion. The 2019 GS decision confesses that the unity of the church is founded on the unity with Christ and on the confessions. This statement agrees with Bosman's view, as discussed earlier in this section. Jackson continues to say that differences in Scriptural interpretation will not split the church. The GS also explained that regarding the 4th article of the 2019 decision, church councils are not required or forced to establish spaces for discourse on this matter, they are only encouraged to do so (Jackson 2019:n.p.).

As the GS decided not to oppose the verdict, conflict erupted in the DRC. One of the most notable objections was by DRC Moreletapark. Moreletapark is known as the largest congregation in the DRC as it has ‘14,801 professing members and 5,423 baptismal members.’ Kerkbode reported on the 2nd of May 2019 that after a ‘period of isolation and humility,’ the church was contemplating leaving the DRC (Kerkbode 2020a). This possibility was known as #Morelexit in the media (Kapp 2020:21).

The three-day deliberation was scheduled for between 25 and 27 February 2020 to extensively discuss same-sex unions (Kerkbode 2020a) after the court ruled it illegal to discriminate against LGBTQ+ persons. The deliberation would also facilitate clarity for many church members. About 450 people attended the event where nine options regarding the 2019 Synod decision were discussed. Most attendees were considering whether to leave the DRC or not, and thus the Moreletapark gathering discussed whether it was justifiable to remain a part of the DRC organisation and also to submit to the Synod. Kapp argued that this deliberation was an excuse for the conservative members to ‘uphold dead and archaic theological narratives’ as they were indirectly saying that they would not condone diversity in their church (Kapp 2020:21).

Kapp argued that many of the members that went to the event only wanted clarification on the same-sex matter, and to understand why Moreletapark wanted to break away from the DRC. According to Kapp, Moreletapark decided on nine choices (Kapp 2020:21):

1. ‘Do nothing’
2. Welcome the decision of the GS
3. ‘Become a “church breaker”’
4. Depart from the DRC
5. Involve the Court
6. ‘Lament’
7. Break from the GS
8. Declare contrasting disciplines
9. ‘Explore new church-ties’

Kapp agrees with Dr Claassen, who responded to these options. Dr Claassen stated that it was ‘disappointing’ that none of the options involved ‘acceptance and/or tolerance’ of diverse views (Kapp 2020:21). Finally, Moreletapark stated that they had had a ‘positive discussion’ with senior DRC leaders and, as a result, would remain with the DRC and discuss the same-sex matter later (Kerkbode 2020a). Kapp however, stated that Moreletapark had decided to choose the seventh option of lamenting the 2019 decision (Kapp 2020:22). According to Kerkbode, Moreletapark declared on their website that three options remained for their church to be addressed. Whether they should separate from the DRC, or enact congregational tolerance, or summon an ‘extraordinary session of the Eastern Synod’ to reach a decision through discourse (Kerkbode 2020a).

The final conflict to discuss in this section is with regard to the Goudland Synod of 2020. Goudland is one of the ten DRC regional synods. This synod held an ‘extraordinary synod in Randfontein’ and nearly broke away from the GS due to the same-sex relationships matter (Kerkbode 2020a). On the 12th November 2019, church leaders gathered in Benoni to discuss this matter with the members of the Goudland Synod. Kerkbode noted that the church leaders planned to use a ‘pastoral approach’ (Kerkbode 2019d). The moderator of the GS, Rev. Nelis Janse van Rensburg, met with about ten of the Goudland members a few hours before the proceedings. This meeting functioned as a session to hear the objections of the Goudland Synod. Rev. Janse van Rensburg stated at this meeting, “If one member suffers, the whole body suffers.” Rev. Janse van Rensburg assured the DRC chairmen of the ten regional synods that the delegation was not going to discuss the ‘gay debate’. Dr Dewyk Ungerer, the actuary of the GS, was responsible for answering the questions directed at the GS (Kerkbode 2019d).

According to Kerkbode, Rev. Johan Brink, the Goudland Synod chairman, attended the aforementioned meeting. Rev. Brink also served as a member of the Goudland subcommittee, where this subcommittee described the concerns Goudland had regarding the 2019 decision as these concerns influenced their near exit from the GS. If this exit took place, the effects would be felt throughout the DRC as Goudland represented 130 congregations in the North-West and Gauteng provinces (Kerkbode 2019d). On the 21st November 2019, Goudland declared that they would not

separate from the DRC. Rev. Brink, however, informed Kerkbode that this decision did not influence their views on same-sex unions and that Goudland still identified with the 2015 decision (Kerkbode 2020a).

This section concludes with one of the positive implications of the court verdict and the 2019 decision. Kerkbode argued that the decade's long struggle of the DRC regarding same-sex relationships concluded with the development of a new guidebook that discusses the 2019 decision. As there are confusion and uncertainty regarding the new decision, this guidebook will aid the ten regional synods of the DRC to attain some clarity (Kerkbode 2020c). The guidebook was developed by a 'team of six,' one of which is Dr Pieter van der Walt. According to Dr van der Walt, the team members will distribute the guide at upcoming regional synods, as these synods have invited them to do so. On the 4th March 2020, a draft version of the document was distributed at the ASM meeting in Benoni and reviewed by the moderamen (Kerkbode 2020c).

The convener of the team, Rev. Heerden van Niekerk, interceded for the GS when he explained that the purpose of the guidebook was to explain how the GS reached the 2019 decision and that they were available to discuss any queries and provide 'information and background.' According to Kerkbode, the guide begins with the 1986 decision, as that was the first time the GS discussed homosexuality. Kerkbode states that the guide successfully balances the amount of 'context and detail' required to illustrate the conflict that developed in the church as a result of the decision (Kerkbode 2020c). The guidebook is in A5 format and consists of 36 pages that discuss points such as the journey of the DRC from their 1986 decision to the 2019 decision regarding same-sex relationships; how Scripture has been used; the theological differences that have developed in the church; how "core" and "marginal issues" are regarded in the church; reactions to fundamental discrepancies; Scriptural texts that discuss 'mutual unity'; and, lastly, a 'Christian style' of discourse (Kerkbode 2020c).

Rev. Janse van Rensburg stated that the guidebook was not intended to persuade readers to adopt a specific perspective but rather to facilitate a space where believers could pursue their own convictions. Dr Fanie Cronje, the pastor of NG

Riviera-Jakaranda in Pretoria, responded that the guidebook would be a 'welcome tool' for any members willing to read it. Dr Frederick Marais added that, regarding pastors, the guide emphasises the importance of 'hermeneutical ability'. On the 4th of March, the guidebook was given the green light as the compilers were authorized to add the individual suggestions heard at the GS meeting and to distribute the finalized product (Kerkbode 2020c).

3.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated how LGBTQ+ persons have been treated in South Africa, historically and are treated at present. In 3.1 the history of gay marriages in South Africa was discussed. It was discovered that there was a gradual flow toward acceptance and the availability of equal rights. There was no one event that brought about marriage equality, but this section briefly discussed when equal rights were made available to LGBTQ+ persons. It was, however, discovered that the movement for LGBTQ+ rights developed a stronger voice when South Africa became democratic in 1994, as the Bill of Rights was then introduced. The rights allowed to LGBTQ+ persons gradually improved from 1998 to 2006.

In 3.3., Discrimination and Violence in SA with Regard to LGBTQ+ People, the South African history of violence and discrimination was briefly investigated. It was shown that though there is still discrimination in South Africa, the state of affairs has much improved since 1994. Previously, it was acceptable to facilitate conversion therapy to persons attracted to same-sex, and homosexual behaviour was a criminal offence. Fortunately, South Africa has made great strides to be more inclusive and fight against discrimination. Homosexuality is no longer illegal, conversion therapy is no longer encouraged, and hate crimes are taken very seriously. There are a few cities that host annual Pride events to encourage LGBTQ+ persons to celebrate their diverse identities. It was, however, pointed out that discrimination is most prevalent in religious institutions as many such institutions believe that same-sex attraction is a sin. There has, however, been a gradual change. Some churches have introduced manuals that encourage pastors to pastorally care for LGBTQ+ persons even if they do not agree with the sexual identity of the person. Some institutions have become quite inclusive while others have struggled to allow LGBTQ+ persons to integrate

into the congregations.

Section 3.4 discusses the DRC doctrinal belief system namely, the Creed of Athanasius, the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. These confessions of faith were explored to better understand the perspectives of DRC members when they discuss same-sex attraction. These creeds primarily focus on the Triune God and the belief that Christ rose from the dead. Scripture is also central to the DRC doctrine, but sexuality is only marginally discussed or mentioned in the doctrine. It is not explicitly discussed. Rather, the creeds emphasise the redemption of believers through the grace of God and that anyone who seeks Christ, will be saved.

Section 3.5, A Historical exploration of the views of the DRC about LGBTQ+, intended to determine the relationship between the DRC and LGBTQ+ persons and how it has evolved. This section focused on General Synod decisions from 1986 to 2007. These synods discussed the DRC interpretation of homosexuality. Each synod improved in terms of inclusivity, but much was still needed for LGBTQ+ persons to become integrated into the church without experiencing discrimination. The Synods from 2013 to 2016 were discussed in section 3.6, The DRC Court Case and the Verdict, as these synods played a pivotal role in the involvement of the High Court of South Africa. This section also discussed the judicial proceedings of the court to understand the arguments for the case and what influenced the verdict. The court concluded that the 2016 decision to reverse the 2015 decision (that removed the celibacy requirement of LGBTQ+ pastors) was discriminatory as it was against the constitution. It was also decided that the GS did not follow proper protocol when they made the 2016 decision.

Finally, section 3.6, The Implication of the Verdict on the DRC and LGBTQ+ Community, discussed the impact of the court verdict. As it was now established that pastors did not have to be celibate, the GS had to meet again to implement new stipulations. This section discussed the 2019 decision at length. Many conflicts surfaced in the church as many churches did not agree with the new decision and, as a result, threatened to leave the GS or even the DRC. However, the 2019 decision did bring about much more inclusivity for LGBTQ+ persons. A guidebook

was developed by the church to educate DRC members on sexual identities as well as historical events that influenced the newest GS synod, such as was discussed in Section 3.7. Thus, it can be concluded that growth has been experienced in the DRC as it has become much more inclusive and less discriminatory against LGBTQ+ persons. As further study will be done by the GS, it will be fortunate if the current division in the church should mend.

In the following chapter, the religious experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people will be investigated to achieve a better understanding of their religious experiences and how these experiences have influenced their relationship with God. The following chapter will also investigate pastoral and psychological methods that could facilitate healing for LGBTQ+ people that have had negative experiences related to their sexual identities.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND PASTORAL CARE AS HEALING

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will investigate the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons as well as the implications. Due to time constraints, this chapter will only be investigating the experiences of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons. This study does, however, acknowledge that numerous other sexual identities have similar narratives to disclose.

Initially, this study would have utilized semi-structured qualitative questionnaires with a narrative approach to discover the religious experiences of sexual minorities.

These persons would have been from South Africa and have a Dutch Reformed background. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews could no longer be conducted, and the approach of this study had to be modified. Thus, existing literature will be investigated to discover the narratives of LGBTQ+ persons with a focus on their religious experiences. As there is a scarcity of material regarding South African or Dutch Reformed narratives, this chapter will also utilize some narratives from other countries. This chapter will, however, still focus on Christianity.

A narrative approach will be utilized in this chapter. In pastoral care, there has been a great focus on the importance of hearing and telling stories. It has been argued that persons who seek care could be aided in discovering new meanings in their lives that could result in life-affirming stories (Moschella 2018:20). Hiles, Ernk & Chrz argue that this is because the primary function of narrative is 'meaning-making,' as narrative helps persons to 'code' their concerns, values and actions (Hiles, Ernk & Chrz 2017:2). By sharing their stories, persons can re-interpret the past, present and future actions of others, and themselves. According to Hiles *et al.*, telling stories is an innate human characteristic (Hiles *et al.* 2017:3).

According to Moschella, if caregivers facilitate a safe space where persons can share their stories with someone who will truly listen, they will experience

empowerment. This empowerment is especially important for persons who have experienced marginalization (Moschella 2018:20). The investigation of narratives will be used to determine if there are any common denominators, such as experiences of rejection or acceptance by the church or religious community. Certain experiences can influence the personal relationship a person has with God. This chapter aims to determine whether pastoral care could facilitate healing if the relationship has been damaged. If a person has experienced acceptance, what could be learned to implement a similar strategy?

It has been established in previous chapters that LGBTQ+ persons still experience much discrimination in South Africa and religious institutions. The DRC has made great strides with their 2019 Synod decision to allow LGBTQ+ persons to be accepted in the church without discrimination towards same-sex relationships. This decision, along with the handbook discussed in section 3.7, does not, however, explain if there is emotional support or counselling available to persons who have experienced discrimination or are experiencing personal difficulties involving their sexual identities.

This chapter will investigate various pastoral care and psychological techniques that could be utilized in pastoral counselling. Unfortunately, DRC literature is scarce regarding religious experiences of, and counselling availability to, LGBTQ+ persons. Thus, this chapter will investigate the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons from various denominations, primarily in South Africa. This chapter will also utilize pastoral and psychological techniques that could be regarded as beneficial to these persons. Finally, the findings will be examined to determine how pastoral care and counselling could be utilized in the DRC to facilitate the healing of persons and the healing of relationships with God.

4.2. EXPERIENCES OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

4.2.1. Gay and Lesbian Experiences

The gay identity most commonly refers to persons of any gender that experience attraction to the same-sex. For the purposes of this study, the gay identity will refer to the same-sex attraction of men (Dyer 2018:43). The lesbian identity refers to

women that are attracted to other women (Dyer 2018:59). These sexualities will be discussed in this section. Christians that identify as gay and lesbian struggle to merge or develop a balance in their sexual and religious identities (Nkosi & Masson 2017:73). Naidoo & Mabaso discovered that homosexual Christians could not relate to people of the same-sex that are heterosexual and consequently associated all their experiences with 'anger, guilt and sadness' (Naidoo & Mabaso 2014:6191). Nkosi & Masson conducted a study that correlates with these findings. It was discovered that while their participants realised their attraction to the same-sex, they experienced 'Confusion, Denial, Anger towards God, Bargaining with God (Nkosi & Masson 2017:85) and Shame and self-loathing' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:86). Some of the personal recollections of these emotions follow.

Participants that experienced anger towards God:

- *'I always asked God why did this have to happen to me, why didn't he give me a fair chance at life. (Vuyo, male).'*
- *'My family and I are so devoted to you, why would you punish us so badly (John, male).'*
- *'God said he loves me but why would he give me that is going to make the whole world hate me (Roto, male).'*
- *'God is unfair (Asanda, female).'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:85).

Participants that bargained with God:

- *'I prayed with all my might, I fasted for days just praying that God takes it away (Sihle, male).'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:85-86).
- *'I gave God time frames, I would ask him to prove that he loves me by taking these feelings away.'*
- *'I even got baptised, thinking that my sin would be washed away (Zandile, male).'*
- *'I pray hard and asked God to take it away, I even swore that I would deliver the good news of salvation to everyone I met (Vuyo, male).'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:86).

Participants that experienced shame and self-loathing:

- *'I kept it a secret. It's still a secret to others even now (Nhlanhla, male).'*
- *'I hated myself so much that I tried to kill myself so that I wouldn't be this disgrace that I am (Zandile, female).'*
- *'I was so ashamed of myself; I went through a phase of depression (Sihle, male).'*
- *'I didn't feel clean; I didn't even want to be around other people, that's how much I disgusted myself (Mzwanele, male).'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:86).

Though these experiences illustrate some of the difficulties homosexual Christians experience when they realise their sexualities, these experiences led the persons to a state of acceptance, freedom and satisfaction. Naidoo & Mabaso state that it is a common component for persons to accept their newly identified sexual orientation when 'a form of self-identification' occurs (Naidoo & Mabaso 2014:6191). After persons have made peace with their sexual identities, the process of coming out follows. This process is both intra- and interpersonal. Thus, these persons begin with the analysis of their orientation, then its 'acceptance and revelation' (Boisseau 2015:70). The coming out process enables individuals to recover parts of themselves that have been renounced or undervalued (Boisseau 2015:70-71) as they move to create an identity that includes their sexual orientation (Boisseau 2015:71).

Boisseau discovered that acceptance was not dependent on the approval of others but rather the LGBTQ+ individual accepting themselves holistically. It is argued that coming out is only possible once the individual has made peace with their 'authentic self' and no longer suppresses their sexual identity (Boisseau 2015:71). The journey to acceptance and coming out is different for every person, as each has a different religious understanding and socio-cultural background. Certain individuals have benefited from religion to reach the coming out process, despite the connection between religion and oppression. A respondent of Naidoo & Mabaso explained, 'I believe that I was created by God and he gave me this kind of sexual orientation for a reason' (Naidoo & Mabaso 2014:6191).

Unfortunately, LGBTQ+ persons are often subjected to discrimination. According to Rosen, discrimination is a social construct empowered by beliefs and illustrated in interactions between persons and establishments that do not want to diversify

certain groups. This exclusivity is to preserve certain privileges, despite the negative effects on others. Some discriminatory forms include homophobia, sexism, heterosexism, homonegativity and race (Rosen 2017:7). Homophobia is a well-known concept. It is described as the 'irrational fear of homosexuality' and the prejudice against any sexual identity that deviates from the traditional norm. Homonegativity, however, is directed at persons that are only perceived as homosexual and are then subjected to negative attitudes, perceptions and influenced (Rosen 2017:7).

Nkosi & Masson discovered that homosexual people did not have the same experiences with Christianity. It was, however, discovered that churches in rural areas are much more critical towards LGBTQ+ persons than urban churches. As a result of this discrimination and the expected rejection, homosexual persons decided to keep their sexual identities hidden from their churches (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89). Keeping their identities private enabled homosexual persons to study the attitudes and opinions of church members regarding homosexuality. The persons discovered that congregants were primarily negative towards the homosexual identity, proving to them that it was unsafe to disclose their sexual identities. One common negativity was the judgmental behaviour of congregants. Homosexual persons stated that these judgmental attitudes from Christians were hypocritical and contrary to the Christian fundamentals of love and forgiveness. Consequently, participants were dismayed with the lack of assistance or compassion they had experienced from Christians as they were instead greeted with reproof and judgement. (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).

Some of the participants in Nkosi & Masson's study further explained:

- *'I wonder if Christians are familiar with the commandment that says thou shall not judge. Christians are the most judgemental people on earth. (Asanda, female).'*
- *'I have been judged less by non-Christians (Thami, male)'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).

Another example of intolerance was experienced by Mark, a participant in the study

that Van Loggerenberg conducted. Mark explained that in 2009, he addressed the Algemene Kerkvergadering (AKV / General Church Assembly) about his identity as homosexual (Van Loggerenberg 2014:180). The result of this address was the rejection by the church as well as about forty of his Facebook friends. The Facebook friends initially began to ignore Mark without clarification, and then proceeded to 'unfriend' him (Van Loggerenberg 2014:179).

The following are further accounts by homosexual persons that illustrate the various experiences they had with Christians:

- *'It pains when people treat you like less of a person for something that you didn't even choose yourself, you'd think Christians would be more compassionate (Asanda, female)' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).*
- *'They never tried to understand me as a person, they just saw demons and starting bombarding me with Bible verses (Zandile, female)' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).*
- *'When people look at you in disgust, that you even ask yourself if you're still at church. I don't know if Christians don't realise that they all have their own sins, it's just that we don't know about them (John, male)' (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).*
- *'When you try to talk to them [Christians] they tell us about the scriptures and stuff like that. It really gets uncomfortable because you can't actually argue with them.... Eish, it's a problem when people come to talk to me about God because I know they want to correct me. You know it's about me and God and no one else....' (Nel, Vawda, Mbokodo & Govender 2017:9715).*
- *'Religious organisations on campus are the worst. They don't accept you and they don't want anything to do with homosexuals and they don't welcome us to their churches. When they see you at church they will start preaching about homosexuality being a sin. I say they must repent and stop changing what God has created' (Nel et al. 2017:9715).*

Christianity teaches that all people are equal in sin, yet homosexual persons experience condemnation daily. Christian church members accused them of being sinners due to their sexual identities. As a result, homosexual persons felt that church members were hypocrites as they did not acknowledge their own sins.

Homosexual persons argued that their condemnation was due to the external nature of their sins while congregants ignored their internal sins (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89).

It is argued that LGBTQ+ persons struggle to merge their religious and sexual identities as the 'religious culture' often promotes homophobic conditions. Certain homophobic practices have been supported by religious dogma throughout history such as the interpretation of certain biblical passages. Religion has the capacity to bring people from various contexts together (Rosen 2017:19). Unfortunately, religion has been used to promote inaccurate 'social pathologies' such as racism, heterosexism and sexism. LGBTQ+ people work to reconcile their religious and sexual identities. However, as they are continually told that their sexual orientation is a sin that needs to be cured, and therefore feel isolated in the church, they argue that their only choice is to leave the church (Rosen 2017:19). This decision was also reached after individuals explained that they felt dehumanised and disrespected by the negative labels that were used for them, pushing them further to leave the church. The following quote shows one of the consequences of leaving the church (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054):

'The pastor always talks about verses that condemn homosexuality in the church. So, I decided not to go to church any longer. But not going to church sometimes made me feel spiritually weak. (Gay participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054).

There are certain discriminatory experiences that most homosexual people experience regarding the church. Lulani, another participant of van Loggerenberg's study, experienced many of these discriminatory practices. She had enrolled at the University of the Free State to become a DRC minister. During this enrolment, Lulani entered into a relationship with a woman, and she was met with criticism from her DRC minister. She had asked his opinion about same-sex relationships, to which he replied that homosexuals are destined for hell (Van Loggerenberg 2014:175). As Lulani could not reconcile this statement with her understanding of her sexuality, she left the University and moved to England. There she messaged her minister from her hometown and inquired about the religious texts that condemn homosexuality. He replied that homosexuality was a sin, but that Lulani was not a 'bad person' and that

she should cease her homosexual behaviour by beginning to date men (Van Loggerenberg 2014:176).

Thereafter, Lulani enrolled for the theology course at the University of Stellenbosch (Van Loggerenberg 2014:182). In her third year, she struggled with depression as her animosity towards the church strengthened. She no longer attended church, read the Bible, or prayed. Her sexual and religious identity were at odds. Fortunately, her depression began to improve once she met a woman named Margaret (Van Loggerenberg 2014:186). In her fourth year, she informed the Curatorium that she was gay. They responded with a summons and told her to sign a document, declaring that she would remain celibate for the rest of her life. Lulani responded that she would not sign it as it was 'un-Christlike, inhumane and unconstitutional.' The Curatorium inquired whether she was in a relationship, to which she said yes. As a result, her status as a student was revoked and she was instructed to pay back the DRC bursary she had been awarded (Van Loggerenberg 2014:180). Thereafter, Lulani struggled with her relationship with God. She could not understand how her sexuality could be anything other than a part of her being. She came to the conclusion that her religious and sexual identity did not have to be two separate entities. She was then able to concurrently embrace God and Margaret (Van Loggerenberg 2014:184).

It should be noted, however, that in 2019 the first openly gay DRC minister was appointed. Louis van der Riet followed the celibacy prerequisite of the DRC and thus became a reverend at the Kraaifontein congregation. A year later he told Roux that it was one of the most meaningful days he had experienced (Roux 2020). He further explained that the congregation was very welcoming to him. A group of women promptly directed his attention to the struggles that needy community members were experiencing, thus treating van der Riet like any other minister (Roux 2020).

Initially, some church members and council members left the church after his appointment, but most church members were welcoming. His sexuality was also received in two manners. Some members continued as if his sexuality was irrelevant, while others would approach him and welcome him, but associate his sexuality with sin. For example, one member welcomed him and then proceeded to

explain that the church also welcomed her alcoholic husband (Roux 2020). This statement was not, however, intended to be hurtful. Van der Riet explained that it was rather the statement of a person who could be educated on sexuality. When Van der Riet was first appointed, his sexuality was not made available as a topic of conversation. Van der Riet explained that it was to protect him and to prevent stigmatisation. Overall, Van der Riet has had a positive experience as a gay minister in the DRC, but certain church members and council members left the church after his appointment (Roux 2020).

Van der Riet explained that he received a lot of support and leadership from his colleague, Charl Stander (Roux 2020). Similarly, other homosexual persons have stated that they were astonished to be accepted by some of their priests or ministers. According to Stobie, these accepting behaviours most often occur during religious sects, as was the case with Zanele Muholi at a funeral. Muholi was brought up with traditional religion and had a close relationship with her mother. When her mother passed away, she experienced 'peace and acceptance in the Catholic church.' Muholi wore masculine clothing to the funeral, which was against tradition. She explained that as her clothing was accepted, the church had subsequently legitimized her 'blackness/lesbian identity/sexuality' and helped her to become more integrated into her culture, family and religion (Stobie 2014:9). Nkosi & Masson had a participant that was also accepted unconditionally by his family, and the participant explained that this enabled him to feel peaceful with his identity (Nkosi & Masson 2017:86).

The importance of acceptance by family members is emphasised by a letter that Pieter Cilliers received in 1998. The author of the letter (identified as H), explained that he had realised his sexual attraction towards the same-sex from an early age. Unfortunately, he had started to feel disgusted with himself, became socially isolated and focused primarily on his studies. He had told himself that his homosexual desires were just a phase, but realised during his university years that it was not in fact, a phase. As a result, he became despondent, prayed and 'wept' (Cilliers 2013:334). Unfortunately, H decided to end his life on his birthday. A month before his birthday, his father, a DRC minister, found a pornographic magazine in H's room and confronted him. H explains how this caused him to tell his father everything,

including the planned suicide. He states that he is unsure who cried more. H's mother, brother and sisters were told of his sexuality by his father. H noted that the acceptance by his family made an incredible difference. Since then, H has gone for therapy and has worked to 'repair the damage of many years' (Cilliers 2013:334).

Another letter that Cilliers received shows that some LGBTQ+ persons choose to keep their sexual identity hidden from their parents. The author explains that his upbringing was in a conservative household with parents in the DRC tradition, in Potchefstroom (Cilliers 2013:293-294). He explains that he is very close to his mother as she is his best friend. Unfortunately, his mother views all homosexuals as 'child molesters' and as a result despises them. The author tried to give her a different perspective, but she responded that the topic was making her uncomfortable. Thus, the author concluded that it would be best to keep his sexual identity hidden to preserve his relationship with his parents. He hopes to continue living a 'life with God' and prove to his parents that being homosexual is not a 'life with Satan' (Cilliers 2013:294).

According to Boisseau, there is a lot of substantiation that LGBTQ+ people experience animosity and disapproval from their parents when they do decide to come out. Thus, Boisseau argues that persons that do come out are courageous as they desire to be transparent with their parents, despite the possibility of physical and verbal abuse, shame, despondency, anger, rejection and persecution (Boisseau 2015:72). According to Nkosi & Masson, these negative reactions were actualised when some persons disclosed their sexuality and parents struggled to accept it (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88).

Cilliers received a letter from a mother, Lidia, whose daughter identifies as a lesbian. She explains that she and her husband decided from the beginning that they would not feel ashamed about how they brought up their children and that rejecting their daughter, Liesl, was never an option. Lidia admitted that news of her daughter's death would have been easier to process as she would have had the support of her community. Her family regularly attended their DRC church services and approached the minister regarding Liesl's sexuality (Cilliers 2013:287). The minister explained that the church does not denounce the homosexual person but rather their

homosexual deeds (Cilliers 2013:287-288). At first, Lidia and her husband accepted this teaching. Lidia believed it was her duty as a Christian to try and convert Liesl back to heterosexuality. She notes that they tried three times in five years, but that Liesl would regress each time. Lidia explained that the devastation after each unsuccessful endeavour drove her to see a psychiatrist. She notes that unlike the psychiatrist Cilliers discussed in his book, her psychiatrist tried to usher her to self-acceptance. This caused her to direct numerous questions at God, such as what would be the right thing to do and what would be wrong. Finally, Lidia found solace and accepted her daughter as she was. She ended her letter with her disappointment in the church members. They had not given her any support. She described the members as uncharitable and insensitive, causing her to leave the church (Cilliers 2013:288). Cilliers added that this experience is similar to what many parents experience when their children come out (Cilliers 2013:289).

Though Lidia later accepted her daughter as homosexual, many homosexual people experience more intolerant reactions from family members. According to Nkosi & Masson, it can be troubling and sometimes traumatic for homosexual persons when they lose their family or are pushed out of a prominent social organisation (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88). The following statements are from persons that experience negative reactions:

- *'My mom hates it, my mom is too religious, she hates it she even prayed that God kills me for being gay (Thami, male)'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88).
- *'My mom doesn't want to hear anything about it, its Satanism as far as she is concerned (Vuyo, male)'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88).
- *'My mom always includes it in her prayers, even though she has never said it to me, she has made it quite clear that she thinks being gay is unnatural and we are possessed by some kind of demon (Zandile, female)'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88).

Much of the discrimination that LGBTQ+ persons have experienced is influenced by the religious practices and beliefs of people (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052). In the study of Nel, it was discovered that lesbians have experienced prejudice from Christian churches. They are also subjected to religiously motivated

homophobia and heterosexism that often results in psychological harm. The participants of the study have been attacked by both traditional and Christian healers. These heterosexual Christians frequently claim that lesbians are possessed by demons and that the demons need to be exorcised through physical assault and prayer (Nel *et al.* 2017:9718). Alongside being called 'demon-possessed', LGBTQ+ persons are also called Satanic and sinners (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052):

'Students often tell me that I am demon possessed as they claim that homosexuality is against God's will. They refer to me and my friends as sinners, Lucifer, Adam and Steve, Eve and Eve. So, they often exclude us from their social and educational activities. (Lesbian participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052).

'Ahhh but some people just tell you that is not normal and go on and on about being deviant. They say you have demonic spirits and you must go to a Sangoma to be helped. They say they will pray for you so you won't sin anymore.' (Nel *et al.* 2017:9715).

'People should stop telling us to stop being who we are and that it's wrong. What they tell us from the scriptures is just nonsense, it doesn't make sense. Even the pastor's prayers will not change us, we do not have demons! Others say they are praying for you at church and then they beat you up. When you cry because of the pain they will say you are crying because the demon is coming out.... No, it is because they are beating and kicking us. When you get angry and say leave me alone, Hahahaha they will say it's the demon talking, not you. They carry on so you cry more because you cannot help it which proves to them the demon is coming out of your body... what is wrong with them?' (Nel *et al.* 2017:9715).

According to Nel, Scripture is often misquoted or misinterpreted to condemn homosexuals in Christian 'fundamentalist' churches attended by black South Africans. It is argued that different religious beliefs could exacerbate friction regarding homosexuality. It was discovered that black heterosexuals that attend their church services regularly have the highest amount of negativity toward homosexual

people (Nel *et al.* 2017:9718). The following statement is an example:

'I found a picture of two men kissing on my desk one Monday morning. Just below the picture were my name and that of my sexual partner. A statement was also written in red below our names. It reads: if the devil does not fry you, we shall do it ourselves. (Gay participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052).

Heterosexualisation is another common occurrence where people try to convert LGBTQ+ persons into heterosexuals (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052-1053) by using methods driven by religious beliefs or practices. Many LGBTQ+ persons have stated that religious people would offer to pray for them, 'sprinkling potions and solutions' on them to rid them of the malevolent spirits possessing them. These people argue that these spirits are causing same-sex desires:

'If Venda or Zionist churchwomen suspect that you are non-heterosexual. They will pray for you and even give you their tea to drink as well as sprinkle water on you. These actions are taken to drive away demons in the non-heterosexual individual. (Lesbian participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053).

Along with these actions, homosexual persons are either threatened with physical violence or are subjected to it. It has been discovered that lesbians have either been threatened or raped. This violent act is argued by the perpetrator that 'corrective rape' will cure the individual or homosexuality:

'Some male students threatened to rape me. They said that it would make me "a real lady". They stressed that corrective rape was the best way to change my satanic behaviour. (Lesbian participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053).

Homosexual persons experience isolation and discrimination in their churches. Their sexual identity is shamed, and they are intimidated to become 'good'. Women are also required to visit their pastor or priest once they have revealed their sexual identity. One of the most severe examples of religious bigotry was endured by Keba Sebetoane. She was repeatedly raped by a 'friend' to cure her of her homosexuality

and to then declare her as his 'girlfriend'. After the ordeal, Keba went to receive medical attention. Unfortunately, discrimination was not over. When she informed the doctor that she had been raped because of her sexuality, instead of facilitating a safe and compassionate space, the doctor began to 'cross-examine' Keba about her sexual identity (Stobie 2014:8):

'He said: "Why are you a lesbian at this age? Do you know that it is against the constitution to make such a decision without the consent of a parent? You are wearing the cross of Christ, did you know that it is an abomination in the eyes of God to be a lesbian?" I asked him, "The guy raped me because he wanted to change me, are you saying that was the right thing to do?" He didn't answer me, but instead, he scratched off the report and wrote, "There is no sign of forceful penetration because the girl had already broken her virginity and the bloodstains in the eyes are due to constant rubbing, and they might develop further if they are not treated"' (Stobie 2014:8).

Keba had filed a complaint with the police, but that too was 'lost'. Keba explained that she felt horribly neglected by the medical institution and justice system. They had used religiously motivated hate speech and lied about the Constitution (Stobie 2014:8).

For South Africans who cannot afford medical insurance, receiving quality health care is a struggle (Reygan & Henderson 2019:415). As a result, people must depend on public health organisations that are understaffed and inadequate, and commonly homophobic and transphobic (Reygan & Henderson 2019:415-416). Fortunately, there are still certain medical establishments that are open and accepting of homosexual people. Reygan & Henderson conducted a study with elderly LGBTQ+ persons who acknowledged the discrimination found in certain medical facilities. However, one participant explained that he had quite a pleasant experience (Reygan & Henderson 2019:416):

'I never experienced any discrimination. Two weeks ago I was at Groote Schuur [hospital in Cape Town] and the people that visited me were openly gay coming with flowers and water and juices and all that. The nurses said, "You've got lovely

friends.” I never experienced discrimination, especially in government hospitals and clinics. I think we need to look at the issue of democracy and that people are more educated when it comes to the LGBT community. (Vusi: Black, Male, Gay)’ (Reygan & Henderson 2019:416).

LGBTQ+ university students also experience discrimination and stigma from other students and even lecturers. These students argue that as a result, their physical, emotional, spiritual and social welfare is negatively affected. The circumstances on campus can become so detrimental that students begin to avoid their classes or even drop out of the university when the humiliation becomes unbearable (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053). In the study of Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, one student had already dropped out as the constant labelling, stigmatisation and discrimination had created severe anxiety. Some students had decided to act heterosexual to avoid these circumstances (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054). The students that were still enrolled explained that they were also accused of being possessed by demons and consequently struggled to focus on their studies (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053):

- *‘I feel humiliated when the lecturer sometimes tells me that I am demon-possessed. This affected my performance in class. So, I no longer attend her classes. (Lesbian participant)’* (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053).
- *‘Next year I am not coming back to this university. I am tired of being called a sinner, being labelled as a demon and called all terrible names. (Gay participant)’* (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053).

It is a well-known fact that Scripture has been used to justify homophobic behaviour (das Nair & Thomas 2012:100). People tend to use Scriptural passages to condemn homosexuality, but according to Stobie, there are positive texts to be used (Stobie 2014:8). As the denotation and interpretation of Scriptural passages are important, LGBTQ+ people have struggled to understand how their sexuality could be understood in relation to religion, considering how much disapproval occurs in Scripture. As a result, LGBTQ+ persons have looked for alternative interpretations to achieve self-acceptance for their sexual identities. According to das Nair & Thomas, these are called LGBTQ+ ‘affirming re-reading of texts’ (das Nair & Thomas

2012:100). Nkosi & Masson discovered that their participants did in fact search for texts that in terms of their sexuality were reaffirming the love and acceptance of God. The participants were uninterested in the traditional six or seven biblical texts that are used to condemn homosexuality (Nkosi & Masson 2017:87).

According to das Nair & Thomas:

'Appropriating verses ... that turns them into statements of faith and ontology, underpinned by the unshakeable certainty that one's sexuality (and gender), no matter how despised and persecuted, is not just a choice of random genetic predisposition but divinely willed and planned' (das Nair & Thomas 2012:100).

The participants of Nkosi & Masson stated their position as follows:

- *'After all is said and done I always sit to myself and think that the Bible says that God created me in his own image. Why am I so worried then? (Mzwanele, male).'*
- *'God would never make a faulty productive, after all, I did not choose this, my father created me in His own image (Mbongeni, male).'*
- *'It doesn't make sense that God would create us this way only to condemn us, Isaiah 1 verse 18 says the Lord accepts us as we are (John, male).'*
- *'The Bible says God knew me even before I was born, he knows what is happening to me, and he knows that I have no power to change it (Asanda, female).'*
- *'I know that my Father loves me. In the Bible, it says Jesus died for all our sins. If being gay is a sin then my Jesus has died for it (Vuyo, male)'* (Nkosi & Masson 2017:87).

Though LGBTQ+ persons have experienced a lot of discrimination and stigmatisation from the church and believers, they have not forsaken their religious beliefs. Rather, these persons have focused on the Christian values of love, forgiveness and reconciliation as these values have inspired them to continue on their spiritual journeys. Scripture emphasises love and forgiveness and consequently have given LGBTQ+ persons comfort and inspiration to continue a relationship with

God (Nkosi & Masson 2017:87).

4.2.2. Bisexual Experiences

Bisexuality has generally been missing from literature and discussions. Thus, this section will firstly explain what bisexuality is and the stigmatisation associated with it, to give context to the religious experiences of bisexual individuals. The discrimination and stigma also affect the mental well-being of a bisexual person. These matters should be addressed when a person approaches a pastoral counsellor for help and thus the methods should be investigated.

Bisexuality is a sexuality that is not restricted to one definition or description. It is argued to be ambivalent, variable, and versatile. As this identity is too divergent to be defined, bisexual persons have developed their own composition based on their individualistic interpretations of their identities (Toft 2009:72). As there is not one clear definition, Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs have described a few meanings. Some bisexuals experience attraction to both men and women and become romantically involved with an individual, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Some mostly experience sexual or emotional attraction to the same-sex but believe that the bisexual identity will safeguard them against homophobia. Others feel that the identities of gay and lesbian do not fit their sexualities and that bisexuality is a better description (Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs 2010:86).

According to Toft, understandings of bisexuality also differ between men and women as there is not a universal or all-encompassing distinction. Primarily, a sufficient description is that a person experiences an emotional and sexual attraction to both sexes, but not necessarily simultaneously (Toft 2009:72). Eisner however, referred to the well-known description facilitated by the bisexual activist, Robyn Ochs. Eisner argues that it is the most diverse and permissive definition of bisexuality:

'I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted — romantically and/or sexually — to people of more than one sex, and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree' (Eisner 2013:58).

It should also be noted that bisexuality is a lifelong identity that can be fluid and ever-changing. Clarke *et al.* argue that bisexuality is a valid identity that is an authentic attraction to a 'diverse range of individuals' (Clarke *et al.* 2010:86). A bisexual person does not choose a partner based on their gender or sexuality, but rather on their individual person or some of their characteristics. Toft discovered in his research similar statement from his participants (Toft 2009:73):

'Yeah there were certain things about either sex that I'd find attractive by looking at people, and they were specifically aimed at a certain sex. So this developed towards the end of my High school time, but I guess that's why I'm monogamous, I don't need to have both sexes because I'm just attracted to the person, how I relate and interact with them. (Jim, a 26-year old male from the Midlands, with no official denomination)' (Toft 2009:74).

Gurevich, Bower, Mathieson & Dhayanandhan discovered that their participants were asked the specifics of their attraction:

- *'If I said bi-sexual, people expect me to go 50% with guys and 50% with girls, you know. I think it's more who you meet and you know, like the person rather than their sex... if you meet somebody and you really like them and you become intimate with them, you don't necessarily have to have sex with them to be intimate but, so it depends on if the intimacy is there'* (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:234).
- *'I think that when people say bisexual because you're saying bi, people see it as half and half. So either people identify I think, or understand that you're half, half of you is attracted to men and half to women... I mean what happens if I'm attracted to a transgendered person? Then you know, my bisexual, how can you be bisexual then?'* (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:234).
- *'And, now that I'm in a relationship with a woman, I look back and I say it's difficult being bisexual because when people ask you, "What is your preference?" And you say, "I don't have one." "Well, what do you mean you don't have one?" I have a preference for a person, not a preference of gender. And I think that's the hardest thing for people trying to understand bisexuality is that it's not a gender preference. It's a preference of a person'* (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:223-224).

- *'It means you love people, that your love overflows beyond traditional boxes, that love sometimes surprises us'* (Wingfield 2019:43).
- *'And to me, you don't have to be in a lover's relationship with someone to be out. That's going back to it's not all about sex, that's only part of it. I mean I consider myself a single person. I'm not interested in pursuing anyone right now, I'm not looking for a partner in particular, but I'm still bi. That hasn't changed. That hasn't changed at all'* (Gurevich et al. 2007:234).

People that identify as bisexual have explained that they had always felt apart from the people around them. Their feelings were confusing. One participant of Levy & Harr explained that she had developed feelings in high school towards her lesbian friend. She explained that at the time it did not make sense as she was still unsure of her own sexuality, but she finds it interesting as she looks back now. It was also discovered that many people ignored or suppressed their attractions and experienced confusion as they did not know about bisexuality. A person could only either be heterosexual or homosexual. According to Levy & Harr, this confusion and dissonance could remain for months or even years for some (Levy & Harr 2018:194).

The lack of education regarding sexuality also fuelled this confusion. Wingfield discussed the case of Eve, a bisexual person. Her local church had facilitated an annual youth retreat and every six years, it focused on 'sex ed' that discussed the relationship between sexuality and faith. Eve had already begun to question her sexuality, so she was excited about this retreat as she hoped to receive some clarity. Unfortunately, their student minister was restricted to discuss certain topics, such as homosexuality. Wingfield explained that the church had once before lost six to eight (Wingfield 2019:39) families. These families had discovered that the youth church choir had sung at some LGBTQ+ affirming churches during a tour. Consequently, the 'sex ed retreat' was not LGBTQ+ affirming. Eve explained that it was the first time she had experienced anything LGBTQ+ discriminatory from her church as the retreat was '...not condemning but super-heteronormative' (Wingfield 2019:40). Wingfield argues that this is a problem when a church does not discuss faith and sexuality with its youth as silence also says something. Eve recalled how this experience affected her:

'The larger is that in my family, with popular culture, I had absorbed that there was something wrong or abnormal about being LGBTQ, and I don't remember a strong message from my church at that time to counter that' (Wingfield 2019:40).

Though this youth retreat did not discuss LGBTQ+ persons in general, bisexual persons often feel invisible and isolated as they do not conform to a certain binary concept of gender and sexuality. Bisexuality is also subject to myths. Bisexuality is often referred to as a phase because there have been many individuals who first identify as bisexual before identifying as gay or lesbian (Levy & Harr 2018:189). Clarke *et al.* also discovered that there are people who identify as bisexual before identifying as homosexual. They did add, however, that bisexuality is primarily a legitimate identity that that is for life and that it does not morph into a heterosexual or homosexual identity (Clarke *et al.* 2010:86). Some persons could initially identify as homosexual before accepting the bisexual identity. Others could realise their bisexuality from an early age while others could come to the realisation after being in 'heterosexual relationships or marriages' (Bilodeau & Renn 2005:27).

Further stigmas associated with bisexuality are that the persons are perverted, deceitful, hypersexual or licentious, and that the individuals are just confused or irresolute and enigmatic (Levy & Harr 2018:189). According to Toft, bisexual persons are called promiscuous as they are believed to have numerous partners, are unfaithful and irreconcilable with marriage (Toft 2012:189), and that their relationships are volatile (Clarke *et al.* 2010:87). Bisexuality has also been misrepresented as 'fence-sitting' and 'disease-spreading' (Levy & Harr 2018:189). Clarke *et al.* have, however, studied many of these misconceptions by studying the lives of bisexual persons. They discovered that stigmas are in fact incorrect. If bisexual persons are in polyamorous or non-monogamous relationships, the majority have discussed this fact and received consent from their partners. They have also established certain perimeters. Though not all bisexual individuals are monogamous or non-monogamous, there are some individuals that are in faithful monogamous relationships. These relationships could be with a person from the same or the opposite sex and, according to Clarke *et al.*, the person's bisexuality is respected and acknowledged (Clarke *et al.* 2010:87).

Eve has been asked the question regarding monogamy. People have asked her how a person could be monogamous if they are attracted to multiple sexes. She replied:

'I don't feel the need to date both men and women at the same time. We as people are probably attracted to more than one person. Maybe my friend likes men who are tall, dark, and handsome, and she's dating someone who is short and white. That doesn't mean she needs to have another boyfriend on the side' (Wingfield 2019:43).

According to Eve, at the youth retreat earlier mentioned she learned about having a sexual ethic. Eve learned that faith and loyalty should be a part of a person's sexuality. Thus, she established a 'queer sexual ethic' for herself. She explained:

'I know that I can have a sexual ethic that has integrity. I had these boundaries in my mind that did not change when I started dating women' (Wingfield 2019:43).

As homosexual people have been subjected to homophobia, bisexual people experience biphobia. According to Clarke *et al.*, this marginalisation has been detrimental to mental health. Bisexual people always have to defend their sexuality when they are in a relationship. If they are with someone of the opposite sex, for example, they must constantly 'come out' as bisexual. As bisexuals have experienced so much discrimination, some have chosen to keep their sexual identity hidden from others (Clarke *et al.* 2010:87). Often when bisexual persons identify their sexuality, people respond with 'fears of contamination' and accuse them of treachery (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:228). The following statements are from persons that have had to endure biphobia:

- *'A lot of the lesbians and gay men will say, how can you say that you're bisexual? That doesn't make any sense. Does that mean that you're not going to settle down, or you're not a monogamous person? What are you? You're going around spreading AIDS, what's your problem? Make a decision. So it's kind of like we're stuck in the middle'* (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:227).
- *'We don't seem to belong to the straight community, and we don't seem to belong to the gay community, but most of us don't want to belong to the bisexual'*

community either. Most of us just want to be us. Or just me. We're not deviant. We're not experimenting for the rest of our lives. It's not, for a lot of people it's not a phase. It's not something that they just get into and just toss out later on when they settle down with someone' (Gurevich et al. 2007:227).

- *'The two camps of homosexuality and heterosexuality, neither one wants any bisexual people around because it's just not good for their image, for either one. So, we're left in the middle'* (Gurevich et al. 2007:227).
- *'I talk to a lot of gay women. And certain gay women don't like bisexual women at all. There's a sort of almost a heterosexual fear, the opposite of the homophobic thing'* (Gurevich et al. 2007:228).
- *'I find that in the lesbian and gay community, there's like an out-casting of bisexuals, or bisexual people, which is such hypocrisy and such contradictions... Because of the gay and lesbian community and their opinions on your bisexuality, it makes it hard for certain people to sort of stand up, stand their ground and even admit, so they'll just say they're either gay or lesbian and not bisexual, which is you know, the case. 'Cause there's a lot of anger in that community towards bisexuality. So it's not nearly as open as it could or should be'* (Gurevich et al. 2007:228).

It has been discovered that there is a peak in biphobia when people with orthodox views regarding sexuality are involved. Religion influences the way people perceive certain groups. It influences 'societal values' and the way people such as bisexuals are treated. According to the study of de Bruin & Arndt, university students that originated from conservative religious backgrounds exhibited the most adverse demeanours toward bisexual persons, followed by the somewhat religious group and the nonreligious group. de Bruin & Arndt argued that these 'negative attitudes' likely originated from the beliefs proclaimed by religious institutions that had elevated levels of 'religiosity and traditionalism' (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:244). Furthermore, it was discovered that students who identified as heterosexual were the most opposed, followed by homosexual and asexual identities. It was argued that attitudes could have originated from a lack of education regarding sexuality and bisexuality specifically, as well as stereotypical media portrayals and the South African culture that promote 'sexual taboos' (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:245).

Another myth is that bisexuals cannot be Christian while embracing their sexuality as sexuality is assumed from the perceived gender of their partner (Toft 2009:75). As has been stated before, bisexuals are regarded as either a myth or in the between stage of becoming homosexual. As a result, they are perceived as untrustworthy (Levy & Harr 2018:198). These perceptions are also present in religious communities. As there is a lack of bisexual persons in the public, it has become the general understanding that heterosexuality is the norm and homosexuality is the 'tolerated error.' Thus, it is argued that bisexuality diminishes these preconceptions regarding sexuality. The Anglican Church in England has given such argument credibility with the following statement (Toft 2009:77):

'Instead it is bisexuality that is the norm. Most people have both heterosexual and homosexual tendencies and it is only social pressure that stops more people from accepting or expressing their homosexual ones ... If accepted, this theory means that any argument advanced against homosexuality on the basis that heterosexuality is the norm, loses credibility, and it becomes much more difficult to maintain that God's intention was that people should be heterosexual' (Toft 2009:77).

Levy & Harr argue that it is a continuous 'act of bravery' for a bisexual person to come out to lesbian and gay groups as well as to religious groups (Levy & Harr 2018:189). There are primarily two reasons for churches to turn away from bisexuals. They regard bisexuals as promiscuous and consequently view them as incongruous with the Christian definition of marriage (das Nair & Thomas 2012:101). Furthermore, some churches have informed bisexual persons that they could only fully become accepted by the church if they 'choose to be heterosexual because that is the nature of bisexuality' (Toft 2009:75). Levy & Harr discovered the same prerequisite with their participants as they were simply told to pick a partner from the opposite sex. Bisexual persons have also been taught that their sexual identity is a sin that should be atoned for and that the individual should 'fight the urges'. It was discovered that the actions of churches were condemnatory and sometimes resulted in '*spiritual trauma*'. Some individuals were even excommunicated from their churches and told that they were destined for hell (Levy & Harr 2018:194). Consequently, some bisexuals have decided to keep their sexuality hidden from their

churches, especially if they could 'pass as heterosexual' (Levy & Harr 2018:190).

Some individuals were not asked to leave their churches. Instead, they were isolated and felt unwelcome. Toft argues that this was as the persons were not heterosexual in that they were attracted to the same-sex, and they were bisexuals who could be attracted to more than one gender. Some individuals were told that they could only bring partners to church if they were of the opposite sex. One person did exactly as she was told (Toft 2012:200):

'I do attend Church, with my boyfriend... that is the lucky thing that he is male. The pastor came and spoke to me because I've spoken to him about sexuality things in the past and said not to bring a female partner... (interviewer prompt)... it's something I'll work around when I come to it (Delilah)' (Toft 2012:200).

Unfortunately, some members also could not become a part of a church that was intended for LGBTQ+ persons:

'Yes, absolutely. I recently attended MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) — a gay led congregation. They were totally geared to lesbians and gay men only, and they were also very family orientated. If you had one [a partner] of the opposite sex, you were pretty much ignored and dismissed (Jessica)' (Toft 2012:200).

As has just been described, bisexual people often become isolated, nullified and excluded, and are stereotyped by both the homosexual and heterosexual communities. As a result, bisexuals feel that they do not belong as they have been rebuffed by both communities and thus do not fit into any world they once perceived as a safe haven. According to de Bruin & Arndt, they experience 'a feeling of political and personal homelessness'. Furthermore, it has been substantiated that biphobia is not a variable of homophobia, as bisexuals experience discrimination from gays and lesbians. Thus, the two phobias are quite dissimilar from each other (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:245).

As bisexuals feel that they are rejected by both homosexual and heterosexual communities, they also experience rejection from faith communities. The rejection

and discrimination could lead to feelings of shame accompanied by the aforementioned emotions. Margaret, a participant of Levy & Harr, explained that she was isolated from all three communities and was perceived as untrustworthy by them. She explained that she felt *'out in the cold all around, and that was a damn scary place to be — feeling like I wasn't going to be accepted anywhere'* (Levy & Harr 2018:199).

Another participant, Matt, explained that though he had been accepted by the LGBTQ+ and heterosexual community, he was still rejected by the faith community (Levy & Harr 2018:199). Similar to Matt, Eve struggled to combine her sexuality with her faith and was concerned that she would not be able to hold onto her faith as long as she accepted her sexuality: *'I felt like my two worlds were divided. I went through a process of trying to be authentic with my faith and be authentic with who I am'* (Wingfield 2019:41). As mentioned above, some bisexuals have felt that keeping their sexuality hidden was the best option for them. According to Levy & Harr, this strategy was initially to grapple with their experiences. Considering that some of their participants had been disinherited as well as expelled from their churches, it is understandable that concealment was the invulnerable option (Levy & Harr 2018:200).

It has been discovered that LGBTQ+ people have lived through identity conflict if raised as Christians. As a result, they try to adapt their religious beliefs or change where they go to worship, to correspond with their sexual identity. Counselling has been beneficial in this journey, but unfortunately, some people have had negative experiences with counselling. As these individuals conclude their identity conflict, they realise that the influence of their combined faith and sexuality is positive on their well-being (Levy & Harr 2018:189). If they do, however, struggle to reconceptualize their religion with their sexuality, bisexuals will rather abandon their religious convictions or even the religion itself (Levy & Harr 2018:200-201). There are, however, some individuals who alter their perception of bisexuality to make it more congenial to their faith (Levy & Harr 2018:190). Fortunately, Eve was successful in adapting her identity as a bisexual Christian:

'I can talk about the relationships with my family, being able to have a more

authentic relationship. And I can be more authentic in my relationship with God. I had been a person who wanted to check all the boxes. Now I had to figure out what faith meant to me. I had to trust that God was bigger than the checkboxes I had created' (Wingfield 2019:43).

As some bisexuals experience the process of adapting their identities, they develop a more individualistic version of Christianity. Adapting the religious identity does not necessarily occur after a person has left their church or been excommunicated. Rather, bisexuals have adapted their understanding of religion to correspond with their understanding of their sexual identity. Toft discovered that bisexuals would use the Christian moral sense and beliefs to develop their own 'belief system.' Generally, the ethics used are compatible with postmodern society (Toft 2009:79). There are, however, some bisexuals that do not believe that sexuality and religiosity could co-exist (Levy & Harr 2018:190).

Scripture is, however, central in the journey to better understand this relationship between sexuality and religion. Toft discovered that most of his participants acknowledge the centrality of Scripture in Christianity and their personalised faith. However, they conclude that Scripture has been incorrectly interpreted or understood. Thus, it is not Christianity that is opposed to LGBTQ+ identities but rather the academics that interpreted Scripture in a 'hetero-centric' fashion. The Bible is thus not an obstacle for bisexuals (Toft 2012:190). das Nair & Thomas, however, argue that Scripture will always be either a source of strength for bisexual people or a source that condemns their identities. There will, however, be further investigation of the scriptural passages to determine if conflicting beliefs were used instead of pre-existing absolutism or doctrine. Many bisexuals have hope that the continuation of research will one day facilitate the knowledge they seek (das Nair & Thomas 2012:102).

Though bisexual people accept the Bible as central to Christianity and their faith, Toft discovered that individuals did not integrate the Bible into their daily lives, the reason being that some could not grapple with the condemnation of non-heterosexual attraction. Though bisexuals agree about the misinterpretation of Scripture, the judgment was just too intrinsic for them to continue. They felt that their faith was

stronger once they removed Scripture and developed a Christianity not influenced by preconceived notions and orthodox interpretations of the Bible. Toft discovered that 66.3% of his participants did not prioritise reading the Bible, suggesting that Scripture was more a point of reference to other customs than a core entity of Christianity for bisexuals (Toft 2012:195).

Apart from Scripture, many bisexuals separate themselves from ‘organized religion.’ This separation means that individuals no longer attend church services or utilise the authorized doctrine, but rather focus on receiving support from loved ones. According to Toft, this separation usually occurs when a person differs from certain practices or beliefs of organized religion. As a result, churches have been established that are either LGBTQ+ affirming or are solely intended for LGBTQ+ persons (Toft 2012:190).

According to Levy & Harr, some persons have found it useful to forego labels altogether, especially with regard to their faith. Margaret stated:

‘I would not give myself the Christian label at this point. I would say that my tradition is Christianity, and I may even describe myself as a follower of the teaching of Jesus Christ. But so much has come in the name of Christianity that I don’t even want to be associated with it. And, it’s not so much even that I don’t want to be associated with it, but I don’t identify with it. I don’t identify with those people’ (Levy & Harr 2018:197).

Levy & Harr argue that this aversion to Christian labels was possibly motivated by the lack of acceptance and support of bisexuality (Levy & Harr 2018:197).

There are, however, still many bisexuals who have remained in organized religion. It was discovered that these persons appreciated the encompassment within a community of believers or a religious area. Toft discovered that a third of his participants were actively involved in church activities such as Bible study groups or coffee mornings. The integration into church activities did not, however, function as the primary foundation for spiritual growth. Instead, it acted as ‘a way of topping up one’s religion rather than being the guiding force’ (Toft 2012:194).

Bisexuals still privately use a few Christian practices to maintain a spiritual relationship with Christ (Toft 2012:196). It was discovered that the general theme is for bisexual Christians to follow the teachings of Christ and the Gospels, and to maintain good Christian morals and values instead of adhering to Scripture as a whole. As Christianity is a very personal religion, many individuals have utilised intrinsic observation and meditation (Toft 2009:79), and Toft discovered that 84% of his participants also used prayer (Toft 2012:196). These methods were, however, connected with less rigid practices taken from other religions, resulting in a very pliable form of Christianity (Toft 2012:196). Toft also discovered that 75% of his participants emphasised the importance of creating time to privately consider their religion. According to Toft, bisexual Christians follow more of an agnostic tradition where internal reflection is essential (Toft 2009:79).

There are two practices that are generally used in this regard. Meditation has been utilised from Buddhism and 'silent time' has been taken from the primary method of worship for Quakers. Two participants of Toft used these methods while practising Christian values (Toft 2012:196):

- *'I think about stuff a lot, usually when I drive to work, or if I'm out in the countryside walking. Yeah, that sort of thing... I suppose it could be called meditation.... when I think deeply about spiritual things (Cornelius)'* (Toft 2012:196).
- *'I use prayer as a silent time to be with myself and to be closer to God. I feel more comfortable when I do that. For me it's a way of talking to God, it's a big part ... You find God by spending time with yourself like that ... (Michael, a 27-year-old man, who has not attended church since he was 18)'* (Toft 2009:79).

It could be summarised that bisexuals would rather become harmonious with themselves than being fearful of God or following rigid practices. Bisexuals were especially distrustful of the role that pastors and priests enacted. Bisexuals felt that the understanding of pastors and priests as the messengers of God was troubling. Kimberly, a participant of Toft gave her understanding:

'The God I feel is more real and I must admit I'm going on feelings way more than

the Bible. Or everything I've ever been preached, or maybe it's the sum total of everything I've ever been preached. I just don't know. But I just know he feels real and loving and not condemning and I just can't imagine him making me choose. I mean choosing between 2 people ... If it is wrong then let God deal with it. They don't go on a Sunday morning and go through every single sin that you could possibly commit. If it was wrong, and I can't believe anything would get me to believe it was ... no, can't, let God sort it out. Don't be so obsessed, let it go!' (Toft 2009:81).

To conclude, bisexual Christians investigated varying methods to incorporate their sexual identity with their religious beliefs. This resulted in the disillusionment with their faith rather than with their sexual identity. Their bisexual identity became the central identity to which the religious identity adapted. According to das Nair & Thomas, the process can be defined as 'turning externally-imposed shame to internally-generated pride.' The pride that the bisexual Christian experiences, originates from the belief that God and Christ are 'on the side' of the LGBTQ+ believer, despite what others would proclaim (das Nair & Thomas 2012:101).

4.2.3. Transgender Experiences

Gender identity should not be restricted to only the identification as male or female. Rather, the term should be regarded as a description of how an individual feels intrinsically as male, female or any other identity in between. Traditional gender refers to the biological sex assigned to a person at birth, and also the expected social behaviour associated with the respective genders (Bilodeau & Renn 2005:29). According to Ghabrial, Trans people are individuals that do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth; they do not conform to a certain socially constructed notion of male or femaleness or whose presentation does not identify with any 'male/female binary' (Ghabrial 2016:44).

According to Bilodeau & Renn, the transgender term refers to a diverse range of identities such as male-to-female (MTF) persons, female-to-male (FTM) persons, transsexuals, transvestites, cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, gender nonconforming, gender variation, and ambiguously gendered individuals (Bilodeau &

Renn 2005:29). The associated meanings with transgender do, however, differ in various countries and cultures. According to Bilodeau & Renn, 'transgender' has a different interpretation in the United States than in a non-Western civilisation. It has been argued that sexuality and gender identity are unified identities and should not be regarded as two separate collections, as some psychiatric and medical practices would argue (Bilodeau & Renn 2005:29).

The experiences of persons that are male to female (MTF) and female to male (FTM) are quite distinct from each other, but there are certain commonalities. Generally, individuals realise at an early age that they do not associate with the gender they were given at birth. They experience estrangement that worsens as they reach adolescence. These individuals struggle to adapt to the gender-appropriate apparel, persona and conduct expected of them from their religions, families and schools. As a result, these persons are discriminated against and some even experience transphobia. They struggle to find accommodation; their human rights are desecrated, and they experience resistance when they seek certain assistance. According to Ghabrial, transgender people of colour are some of the most marginalized people in society, and very limited research on them is available (Ghabrial 2016:44).

Once a person has discovered the existence of gay and lesbian identities, they begin to develop a certain amount of understanding regarding their gender identity struggles. However, these sexualities still do not explain to the individual why their sense of self, in terms of male or femaleness, is opposite from the sex they were assigned at birth. When the individuals do discover the transgender identity, they have to bargain with medical professionals about their requested physical transformations, experience problems with medical establishments, family, friends, their children, marriages, the law, their religions, their place of employment, and society in general (Stobie 2014:10). It is extremely difficult for a transgender person to reach self-acceptance and to be accepted by others. These individuals experience renunciation, pain and alienation from their loved ones (including their children) as well as from the gay and lesbian community. Stobie argues that the lesbian community is especially discriminatory as many have an 'anti-male sentiment.' Furthermore, many transgender individuals become depressed, experience nervous

breakdowns, are victims of rape, are imprisoned, have difficulty with therapy, commit self-harm, cut themselves and attempt castration or suicide (Stobie 2014:10).

With the combined experiences of discrimination and transphobia, depression has become a serious problem among transgender people, especially transgender persons of colour. Consequently, they have much difficulty with 'low self-esteem and suicidality' (Ghabrial 2016:44). Transgender individuals have stated that the constant battle with discrimination, labels and stigma has caused their suicidal thoughts to increase (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054):

'My friends on campus have been ignoring me since they became aware of my sexuality. I was also chased out of my local church by the pastor when he became aware of my sexuality. This made me try to kill myself as I saw at the time no purpose in life. (Transgender male-to-female participant)' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054).

Often transgender people are asked if they have undergone body modification or reassignment surgery. It should be explained that this is a highly sensitive area that should rather be met with delicacy and compassion because it is also a private matter (Stobie 2014:10). Persons that conduct therapy or counselling are encouraged to never assume what their client needs or wants. These needs of the transgender individual should solely be defined by themselves. Some do want, and have reassignment surgery, but some are uninterested in the procedure. Some will go part way or cannot afford it (Livingston 2010:116).

It is understandable that discretion is required when interacting with a transgender individual. Many persons have not, however, been treated with kindness by religious organisations. Conservative religious institutions have had an unfavourable reaction to this identity as they argue that transgender body alteration or non-heteronormative sexuality is sinful, 'unnatural' or satanic (Stobie 2014:10). Stobie argues that this judgemental position is due to an intense belief in binarism that does not accommodate grey areas but rather practises a purely 'good and evil, God and Satan' ideology. Transgender persons have struggled with their religion because Christianity proclaims that people have been created in the image of God. Thus, the

question arises whether God can make mistakes and, if so, should they be corrected? Consequently, these persons begin to feel conflicted, confused, guilty and shameful (Stobie 2014:11).

Discrimination often involves unwanted commentary from religious leaders, believers, employers, and even romantic partners (Stobie 2014:11). Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy discovered that transgender university students experienced such actions from students and lecturers who used religion as the foundation for their actions (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052). The transgender individuals also experienced this religious transphobia in both the local and student community. A common practice was for religious people to claim that they were exorcising the 'devil of homosexuality' out of transgender persons (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053):

- *'One lecturer in particular often refers to homosexuality as the 'worst' sin. She sometimes spends an entire class period talking about how all homosexual individuals will burn in hell with Satan. (Transgender female-to-male participant)'* (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052).
- *'A female lecturer and I prayed together in her office. The following week, she requested that I go with her to an all-night miracle service. She stressed that these prayers will help to cast away the demon of homosexuality that resided in me. (Transgender female-to-male participant)'* (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1053).

Transgender persons have explained that despite such discrimination, they personally desire a sense of belonging in the religious community. All the participants in the study of Husakouskaya stated that God was central to their 'life narratives.' They explained that religious factions are ideal for social integration into a newfound community as they could aid transgender persons in achieving a sense of belonging and developing sustainable networks (Husakouskaya 2016:105). Unfortunately, it can be quite difficult to find a group that is not so conservative that it denounces any person that does not fit into the heteronormative norm (Stobie 2014:11).

Transgender people have also experienced many difficulties when coming out to their religiously conservative families. They have explained that the coming out process was very effortful, emotionally taxing, and stressful, as they feared being disowned, denied and embarrassed. Unfortunately, their fears had merit, as Husakouskaya discovered that religious members and loved ones did primarily react adversely (Husakouskaya 2016:105). One example is of Charl, a Christian person (Stobie 2014:11):

'A traditional [Christian] Cape coloured would say what I am doing is demonic. I have to have demons exorcised because it is not Godly and therefore it is satanic. When my mother first discovered she said she could not let me into the house because God would punish her because it means she is condoning what I am doing. In the thirty years, I have been doing this it hasn't changed. My mother has changed towards me but she would still say that what I am doing is satanic'
(Stobie 2014:11).

One way for a transgender person to cope with adversity is to comment when a person is hypocritical and self-righteous. Vanya, a participant in the study of Stobie, gave one example (Stobie 2014:11):

'There was a situation on campus. There was this girl who needed my help with accounting. As I am helping her she says, "You are not going to heaven" I said, "If it is a sin, it is a sin I am prepared to die for"' She said, "Don't say that too loudly." I told her, "I am a virgin, I stay at home, I sleep in my bed the whole night. And you are not a virgin, you spend the whole night with a man and you are not married. Does this mean I am going into the diesel fire and you are not?'" (Stobie 2014:11).

Despite these negative experiences from conservative religious groups, many transgender people still hope to find an accepting religious community (Stobie 2014:10). Livingston noted the inspiring accounts of transgender persons as they exhibited strength and humaneness while endeavouring for inner concordance (Livingston 2010:116). Stobie also discovered that these individuals kept a primarily optimistic and encouraging attitude as they worked to harmonise their bodies with their self-conceptualisations and to find approval from various 'spheres of life' (Stobie

2014:10). Some persons decided to move to urban Gauteng to find acceptance. One person successfully discovered an accepting religious community as they converted from Christianity to Reform Judaism (Husakouskaya 2016:105):

'I feel very at home in my religion and my Synagogue. I don't feel judged or anything. When I told my rabbi I was transitioning and I was gonna change my name, he was like "we should probably have like a naming ceremony". They wanted to be it like the thing when community kind of involved so that they can understand when I don't use the female bathroom. And also Tswana is very gender neutral and Hebrew is a very gendered language, and the way I would be referred to and the way I'd be quoted in the Tora will change as well... So it makes sense kind of to have public spiritual transition as well. Big thing about Judaism is the community — it's not just about my relationship with God, it's my relationship with the community you know... You have just like spiritual family as well — it's nice (trans man)' (Husakouskaya 2016:105-106).

The aforementioned person decided to change his name to Tswana as it enabled him to feel more at peace with himself. The naming ceremony also enabled him to become fully integrated into the Jewish community. Similar to Tswana, many transgender people find comfort in environments that are more liberal and hospitable, such as other cultures, progressive churches or sympathetic priests or pastors. Stobie notes that the 'Muslim Cape Malay community' is LGBTQ+ friendly. Some individuals are, however, forced to attend church services despite the churches being unwelcoming. There are also others that choose to rather develop an individualized, caring religion that aims to embrace persons and is separate from religious pedagogy and compliance (Stobie 2014:11).

As transgender persons seek 'spiritual belonging' and transition, many from the traditional African belief system were concerned about being '(re)introduced to ancestors under a new name and new (affirmed) gender.' In Mpumalanga, Husakouskaya discovered that many persons were concerned that they would no longer have the protection of their ancestors and would become non-existent in their intergenerational family history. Though there are numerous traditional healers (sangomas) that are transgender, there is still a great deal of fear that individuals will

be prohibited from conducting the necessary rituals that will re-establish them with their ancestors. This fear is not, however, limited to rural areas, because a participant of Husakouskaya, from an urban area, explained how he was disowned by his father and was consequently denied the spiritual protection of his ancestors (Husakouskaya 2016:106):

'...if you believe that how it goes. Like we believe we have ancestors, and ancestors, they can plead on your part to God if something is going on... That what we do: we go to the graveside, speak to our grandparents, and we slaughter an animal you know, and we go home... I mean it makes sense, it makes sense for me, you have to go and tell them as it is, like — “look, you see this person that you’ve always known this way, this was about to happen and with your blessing.”... you know...so I thought my father would want to do that. He didn’t...I mean if you really believe in it you as a parent you are supposed to like (crying)... you must make your ancestors meet your children and you make sure they have protection over their lives ... and my father, he never did it’ (Husakouskaya 2016:106).

One example of a transgender sangoma is Tebogo. He has merged his unwavering Christianity with traditional African belief systems (Stobie 2014:11-12). Tebogo added that the majority of sangomas are a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Tebogo explained that the human body is regarded as a ‘house for the spirit’ in the traditional African belief system. Thus, body modification is allowed. It is, however, imperative that the individual informs the ancestors that a change in gender has occurred to preserve a bond with them (Stobie 2014:12).

Though there are many transgender persons that experience restriction by religious groups, these persons have discovered a more concentrated sense of spiritual connectedness through their gender identities. Often body modification and cross-dressing have resulted in social upheaval and banishment as they do not conform to heteronormativity. At the same time, however, being ‘in-between’ or embracing both gender identities, has created a ‘profound spiritual journey’ for some (Stobie 2014:12). Stobie mentions the insight that Lisa Isherwood gave in her book, *Trans/Formations*. She argued that Christianity is actually an ‘incarnational religion’

that has a ‘very “trans” core.’ Thus, she argues that gender should not be regarded as set. Though Christianity has the clearest example, other religions also contemplate the relationship between body and soul. Transgender people have also argued that they understand gender, sex and sexuality as a fluid process that is always ongoing. This understanding diminishes the ‘intolerance and inhumanity of absolutism in religion, heteronormativity and patriarchy’ (Stobie 2014:12).

As mentioned earlier, there are people who choose to depart from organised religion to figure out their own spirituality and to establish a unique relationship with God (Husakouskaya 2016:106):

‘I believe in God and I believe in Jesus, in other words, I am Christian, so I pray to God, I pray to Jesus, but I chose to stay away from organized religion in any form, I chose not to go to church, and I’ve come to this point in my life when I can criticize what the Bible says and I am not guilty about it. I believe that at the moment I’ve chosen a spiritual path and this path is Christian, but that is my spiritual path and I don’t have a right to enforce it on anyone and I don’t want anyone to enforce theirs on me...I am simply spiritual... (intersex person)’
(Husakouskaya 2016:106).

Another method that transgender people have utilised is to completely dissociate themselves from religion and focus on the spiritual life. This is as a result of how some of these persons are treated by religious groups because they struggle to accept themselves and are labelled as sinners. A participant of Stobie explained that as people come to terms with their transgender identity and understand it as intrinsically a part of themselves, they experience freeing spiritual manifestations and ultimately a spiritual cognisance. Joy explained that her epiphany enabled her to feel secure in her transition (Stobie 2014:12):

‘I consisted of a mortal body and an eternal soul, and that all I was doing was bringing my mortal body in line with my eternal soul’ (Stobie 2014:12).

4.2.4. Common Experiences

Common themes were discovered as the experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons were investigated. These commonalities should be used to determine what pastoral care and which psychological techniques will be beneficial to facilitate care and healing.

It was discovered that most individuals were fearful of coming out to their families as their families were homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic. There was also the likelihood that families would disown the individuals, be disgruntled, or ignore the revelation of an identity that did not conform to heteronormativity or binarism (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88). Another element was the fear of physical violence (Ghabrial 2016:48) and being humiliated (Husakouskaya 2016:105). Many persons decided to rather keep their identities hidden, such as was the case in section 4.1.1, with the son that could not disclose his sexuality to his mother (Cilliers 2013:294). Coming out to family members that have conservative religious doctrines was especially taxing. Persons described that it was stressful, difficult, and emotionally challenging. Many families did react negatively to the news of an LGBTQ+ identity (Husakouskaya 2016:105). It was also discovered that it was particularly difficult for LGBTQ+ persons of colour to come out to their families (Ghabrial 2016:49).

LGBTQ+ persons were often called sinners, evil, or demon-possessed. Charl from the study of Stobie was just one example where a person was associated with Satanic elements (Stobie 2014:11). Churches, religious leaders and even religious believers were predominantly discriminatory against LGBTQ+ persons. The individuals primarily experienced Christians as overly judgemental and unwelcoming (Nkosi & Masson 2017:72). LGBTQ+ persons also experienced a lot of stigmatisation. They were told that they were unsuited to the Christian notion of marriage as many were labelled promiscuous (das Nair & Thomas 2012:101). According to churches, this notion of promiscuity meant that all LGBTQ+ persons had several partners and were adulterers (Toft 2012:189). Furthermore, churches spoke against non-marital sex but, as stipulated in chapter three, some churches do not recognise same-sex unions as a marriage. In this way, LGBTQ+ persons are condemned to a life of celibacy (Nkosi & Masson 2017:81). Consequently, LGBTQ+

people feel rejected and isolated by Christian believers who are expected to be supportive and compassionate (Nkosi & Masson 2017:72).

LGBTQ+ persons struggled to reconcile their sexual and spiritual identities. The Christian members proclaimed that these individuals were living against the teachings of Scripture and thus were sinful. Churches told LGBTQ+ persons that they were not welcome if they proceeded to live a life against heteronormativity and binarism. People were told to choose heterosexuality (Nkosi & Masson 2017:80), to fight their desires to be with a person from the same-sex (Levy & Harr 2018:194) and to identify with the gender prescribed at birth. There were, however, some persons that tried to become heterosexual and to suppress their true identity. Unfortunately, this was detrimental to the individual's mental well-being. Depression, anxiety, and suicidality were present across all identities (Nkosi & Masson 2017:80).

Isolation and discrimination were discovered to be the largest causes of suicidal thoughts (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1054) as the symptoms of depression worsened from these experiences (Ghabrial 2016:44). LGBTQ+ persons did not only experience isolation from religious institutions. Rather, certain identities were discriminated against in the LGBTQ+ community itself, causing persons to feel that they did not belong anywhere and were not receiving the necessary support (Levy & Harr 2018:199).

As persons were told that they were living immorally according to Christian interpretations, persons became worried that God would turn from them or that they truly were destined for hell as many were told (Nkosi & Masson 2017:80-81). Some who were university students even heard this condemnation from their lecturers (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy 2015:1052). These actions caused persons to feel ashamed of and guilty about their identities, which resulted in further thoughts about suicide and more experiences of self-loathing (Nkosi & Masson 2017:81).

There is a clear need for support among LGBTQ+ persons. It was noted that some find solace in the LGBTQ+ community as they experience a sense of belonging, and some even describe it as a 'surrogate family.' Some individuals have explained that this support gives them the strength to face adversity (Nkosi & Masson 2017:81).

Despite the various discriminatory experiences from religious organisations, many persons expressed a need to belong to a supportive religious space. The need for a 'support network' and to feel welcome and accepted was present in all identities (Husakouskaya 2016:105).

Another commonality was the integration of sexual identity with religious identity. Certain strategies were utilised by most identities. Some persons rejected the Christian faith and either became atheists or converted to another religion (Nkosi & Masson 2017:81). Tswana, from section 4.1.3, is one example that converted from Christianity to Reform Judaism (Husakouskaya 2016:105). Others found spiritual awareness (Stobie 2014:12). Some persons rejected their attraction to the same-sex and tried to live a life as heterosexual persons. Others developed a compromise between their sexual and religious identities. Lastly, some persons were able to combine the two identities into a holistic identity as an LGBTQ+ Christian (Nkosi & Masson 2017:81). The majority of LGBTQ+ persons followed the final strategy. People were more inclined to combine their identities than to reject one (Levy & Harr 2018:200-201). They did not abandon their relationship with God. Some left organised religion and began to utilise non-Christological practices to maintain a spiritual relationship with God, such as meditation and 'silent time' (Husakouskaya 2016:106).

4.3. PASTORAL CARE AND THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Pastoral care has a multitude of functions. Pastoral care takes place when a family or an individual is experiencing a crisis such as a crisis in their personal lives or a spiritual crisis. A pastor or counsellor should handle these crises judiciously and professionally because their actions could either result in 'hope or hopelessness', responsibility or dependency, and bravery or cowardice (Hatch-Rivera 2018:8). Pastoral care is regarded as 'a ministry of compassion and its source and motivation is the love of God' (Hatch-Rivera 2018:9) The caregiver should facilitate a nurturing relationship between people on the foundation of religion (Hatch-Rivera 2018:9-10). As persons seek pastoral care, they could be in a space of despondency and uncertainty, and the caregiver should facilitate the visualisation of a new life filled with hopefulness (Hatch-Rivera 2018:10).

Often people struggle to maintain a balance in their daily and spiritual lives. Pastoral care aims to help these individuals to grow in their faith and to develop skills that empower them to deal with struggles independently (Hatch-Rivera 2018:11). As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, LGBTQ+ persons often feel conflicted about their religious and sexual identities, and sometimes reject the religious identity to feel whole again. Thus, Sollenberger argues that caregivers should remember the importance of identity integration and that it is an unequalled and personal process. This process could help a person to integrate those identities rather than to feel they should reject one to achieve peace (Sollenberger 2017:32).

It was discovered that LGBTQ+ persons experience many mental health problems related to their religious experiences as LGBTQ+ persons. According to Young, much research on mental health has discovered that religion has a positive influence on mental health because it engenders confidence, optimism, happiness, hope, self-efficacy and well-being. It was discovered that the positive influences were consistent during the lifetime of a person and despite the differences in race, gender, ethnicity, social class, and religious association. Religion is also beneficial to persons who struggle with depression (Young 2014:24). Research has discovered that LGBTQ+ persons are more susceptible to suicide than the general populace and that rejection by their families and communities plays a large role (Paul 2016:92). Religious participation and beliefs also improve the psychological health of a person. Young discovered that this health improvement was especially prevalent among sexual minorities. LGBTQ+ persons who regard their religious or spiritual beliefs as integral to their being, experienced decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety (Young 2014:47).

Before a pastoral caregiver becomes involved in the counselling of an LGBTQ+ person, there are questions that caregivers need to answer about themselves, to establish whether they could facilitate proper care without prejudice. According to Hatch-Rivera, the caregivers need to ask if they are open, if they can work with LGBTQ+ persons, if they will be able to hear the needs of the persons and then be able to help them fulfil those needs. Will they be able to listen to the struggles, concerns, and life and sexual experiences of the person? Another question would be

whether the caregiver cares. Do they care to interact with LGBTQ+ persons? Do they care what happens to them, or do they only care about the heterosexual community members? Are they homophobic, transphobic or biphobic (Hatch-Rivera 2018:16)?

According to Sandil & Henise, a caregiver will facilitate care to a transgender or genderqueer person at least once in their lives, even if they are unaware of the gender identity of the person (Sandil & Henise 2017:57-58). Thus, the caregiver should be informed and equipped to facilitate knowledgeable care to these persons. Just as caregivers should ask themselves if they are capable of working with LGBTQ+ persons, they should also investigate their own presuppositions and prejudices to be able to work with persons that have a cultural context different from theirs. Furthermore, caregivers should investigate any assumptions they may have toward a specific group culturally different from them, to be able to work according to ethical regulations. They should also be able to respect the culture of the persons as well as their autonomy. To be able to follow these guidelines, caregivers should investigate their own gender identity and how it is influenced by their personal worldview (Sandil & Henise 2017:58).

Self-awareness is essential in pastoral care as many caregivers have been brought up in rigid circumstances where gender binarism was absolute and anything not heteronormative was disapproved of. Consequently, transgender persons have experienced domineering and unwelcoming attitudes from mental healthcare providers. Sandil & Henise argue that transphobia does not necessarily occur in transparent ways. A caregiver who is discomfited in the presence of a transgender person will likely refrain from asking about the pronoun preference of the client. Consequently, the caregiver could use incorrect pronouns as the appearance of a person is not necessarily an indication of their preferred identification. There are transgender persons that also prefer gender-neutral pronouns. Thus, the caregiver should not make any assumptions about their clients. The caregiver should examine themselves to avoid damaging the well-being of a client or being transphobic (Sandil & Henise 2017:58).

To be self-aware, however, should not be limited to transgender persons because

gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals also experience discrimination based on assumptions and stereotypes. Hatch-Rivera and Cavanagh explain that if a caregiver reaches the conclusion that they are truly negative toward LGBTQ+ persons, the client should rather be referred to another caregiver (Hatch-Rivera 2018:16), counsellor, community group or agency that is LGBTQ+ affirming, is still accepting of church teachings and will be able to help family members too (Cavanagh 2017:39).

The caregiver and the church should decide in advance what their beliefs are and then publicise their acceptance or intolerance of LGBTQ+ persons (Hatch-Rivera 2018:42). Many LGBTQ+ persons have had negative experiences with a caregiver. Sandil & Henise argue that this is the result of a power imbalance in the caregiver-client relationship because the caregiver behaves as both a 'gatekeeper and confidant'. If the caregiver is also unenlightened, or homo-, trans-, or biphobic, the counselling environment becomes unsafe for the client and they will consequently feel invalidated and hurt rather than authenticated and encouraged (Sandil & Henise 2017:59).

According to Hatch-Rivera, there are three basic steps to implement to develop a 'community of care for LGBTQ people.' Firstly, establish a sincere welcome. Secondly, incorporate LGBTQ+ persons into the congregation. Thirdly, establish a coalition with other queer communities (Hatch-Rivera 2018:42). When LGBTQ+ persons are welcomed into the congregation, the pastors should also look for any individuals who are on the borders. Cavanagh, furthermore, adds that these persons should not experience any denunciation or stereotype. The congregation should endeavour to listen to these persons and refrain from making any assumptions (Cavanagh 2017:39).

It has been argued that the 'Christian gospel of kindness' should be utilized to decrease the marginalisation of LGBTQ+ persons. This gospel could encourage people to enact 'kindness and appreciation' towards the general humanity of others, thus practising a life influenced by Christ. Often believers take part in the debates regarding same-sex relationships without understanding how their personal beliefs influence the debate. If they enact this gospel of kindness, LGBTQ+ persons could experience less discrimination (Paul 2016:90). Hatch-Rivera described a

congregation that had been educated on the terms used in the LGBTQ+ community, including what the acronym stands for. By educating the congregation, LGBTQ+ persons experienced a more welcoming environment. The church members were also taught the proper etiquette when speaking to transgender persons. They were taught that it was appropriate for them to ask the individuals which pronouns they preferred, but that it was extremely inappropriate to ask whether they had had gender reassignment surgery or had had their bodies modified (Hatch-Rivera 2018:43).

According to Minnix, it is important for believers to listen and be empathetic with LGBTQ+ persons, and they should inspire other believers to do the same (Minnix 2015:198). The congregation Hatch-Rivera referred to, prioritized an open and honest dialogue with LGBTQ+ persons. It is encouraged to have such a dialogue, to genuinely be interested in the individuals and to not classify them as the LGBTQ+ members of the congregation. These persons will also become more integrated into the religious community if the proper terminology is known and used (Hatch-Rivera 2018:44). Being integrated will help these persons to develop a social support system. Further integration could be achieved if the individuals become a part of church events and attend church services. It has been discovered that social support improves the life satisfaction of a person. It also partially plays a role in the relationship between religion and the depreciation of psychological distress. Social support has also been linked to the improved mental health of LGBTQ+ persons as these persons find strength in families and friends. Young refers to them as 'families of choice' (Young 2014:29).

It has also been discovered that LGBTQ+ persons experience greater improvement of mental health such as depression when they belong to the general community rather than solely belonging to the community that their sexuality places them in. For example, Young discovered that lesbians experienced fewer symptoms of depression when they belonged to the general community than they did belonging to the lesbian community (Young 2014:29). Family is an important support system. The various family therapy conceptualisations have discovered that a family is an emotional unit that consists of 'unique rules, communication networks and dynamic intergenerational influences'. As families are the first social group that a person

belongs to, it is important to understand the relationship dynamic of the family members. According to Sollenberger, families are regarded as the most important facilitator of social support. Furthermore, it was discovered that a person who has 'low interpersonal social support (ISS),' will most likely experience mental and physical health problems. Persons with a high ISS, however, were healthier even during stressful times (Sollenberger 2017:34).

To facilitate pastoral care for the LGBTQ+ community and the obstacles they face, a relationship needs to be constituted (Hatch-Rivera 2018:13). The quality of the relationship between the client and caregiver will determine if the counselling is successful because the relationship has a greater influence than the techniques used during counselling (Sollenberger 2017:33). Thus, caregivers need to establish an environment that is safe and trustworthy as LGBTQ+ persons require a safe haven — a place where they do not have to fear discrimination or mental or physical harm, and where they can be their true selves (Hatch-Rivera 2018:15). Some churches have established sanctuaries where LGBTQ+ persons can go if they need protection from harm or need a place to stay. These sanctuaries aid in spiritual growth and are free of judgement and discrimination. Likewise, the pastoral caregiver should also function as a sanctuary to facilitate shelter and to help LGBTQ+ people discover their total spiritual potential. This also establishes a space where the person will be protected and can trust the caregiver (Hatch-Rivera 2018:15). Alongside this, caregivers should purposefully help LGBTQ+ persons feel welcome to share their spiritual gifts with the faith community (Hatch-Rivera 2018:15-16).

LGBTQ+ persons experience struggles similar to those of heterosexual persons, such as depression, death, abuse, or dysfunctional families. There are, however, challenges reserved for LGBTQ+ persons, such as the process of coming out and the experience of rejection (Hatch-Rivera 2018:12). In the study of Hatch-Rivera, participants agreed that they expected people to listen, be present and encourage them during their coming out process. When they were asked about rejection, they still agreed that encouragement and listening were the most important attributes. Regarding depression, participants asked that the caregiver should listen, hear and refer (Hatch-Rivera 2018:21). According to Cavanagh, HIV/AIDS is another

challenge prevalent among LGBTQ+ persons, and pastors should aim to become educated in this matter and implement an awareness program (Cavanagh 2017:39).

The coming out process can be defined as a crisis for an LGBTQ+ person as well as for the person's social network. Once individuals have come out, they can no longer enjoy the advantages of heterosexual persons, as they have become a part of a disadvantaged minority group (Hatch-Rivera 2018:26). Being a minority can result in minority stress, which means that a person who is identified as a minority, experiences increased 'daily stress.' According to Paul, minority stress should be met with empathy, and strategies should be prioritized to lessen the negative influences that LGBTQ+ persons experience and to better facilitate access to resources (Paul 2016:91).

To properly facilitate pastoral care to LGBTQ+ individuals, bisexual and transgender identities should not be grouped, as they often are, with the gay and lesbian identities. These identities have different experiences regarding society and intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, and consequently have different religious struggles (Young 2014:58). For example, it has been discovered that bisexuals experience greater mental health problems than homosexual or heterosexual persons (Young 2014:16-17). Arguably, this is because bisexuals struggle with questions regarding their sexual identity; bisexuality is labelled as invalid, and these individuals are discriminated against by both the heterosexual and the gay and lesbian community. It has also been discovered that bisexuals are more inclined to cope with their 'increased social stressors' through substance abuse than their homosexual counterparts (Young 2014:17).

It has been discovered that narrative therapy, humanistic approaches, and cognitive-behavioural therapy were favoured by therapists as it was most advantageous to their clients. These methods are regarded as beneficial to LGBTQ+ persons as they are constructive and affirming toward LGBTQ+ problems (Sollenberger 2017:31). Some professionals utilize a person-centred approach during counselling sessions with LGBTQ+ persons. This approach allows for information and support to be given when necessary. It is important that the caregivers do not allow their personal sentiments and preconceptions to enter the counselling space (Sollenberger

2017:31). Likewise, caregivers should consciously keep themselves from enforcing their own values on their clients (Minnix 2015:198), and to develop an interactive understanding of the conflict, religiosity and same-sex attractions that their clients might be experiencing (Sollenberger 2017:31). Minnix mentions two participants that also utilized the person-centred approach. One of the persons explained that this approach is utilized when there is no conflict present in supporting and validating LGBTQ+ persons. He explained that counselling is not about the caregiver, it is about the client. The caregiver is allowed to enter their world and witness the struggles of the client. The client is in control of the narrative, and if the caregiver takes control, they will sabotage the 'very power of therapy' (Minnix 2015:199).

As discovered by Hatch-Rivera, the core requirement LGBTQ+ persons mentioned was that their caregiver should listen to them and hear them (Hatch-Rivera 2018:46-47). The study of Hatch-Rivera mentioned that the majority of LGBTQ+ clergy they interviewed stated that they wanted to be listened to, talked with, and heard. 73% of the interviewees wanted to be heard, listened to, and given the opportunity to discuss their experiences regarding 'coming out, rejection and depression' (Hatch-Rivera 2018:47).

According to Hatch-Rivera, when LGBTQ+ persons seek a pastoral caregiver, they are interested in someone that is compassionate and spiritually wise — a person who has a deep connection with God, feels called to ministry and can be trusted with their most private experiences. LGBTQ+ persons also seek a person that can naturally speak about the role that religion plays in everyday life, as well as the joys and struggles associated with it (Hatch-Rivera 2018:47). They seek someone who is 'centred in God' and who will understand the culture of their sexual identity, their needs, and the challenges they face as sexual minorities (Hatch-Rivera 2018:47-48). Cavanagh added that the caregiver should familiarise themselves with the sexual identities and church doctrines to implement properly informed and effective preaching, counselling and teaching methods (Cavanagh 2017:39). It was noted in the study of Hatch-Rivera that the client does not want to be the teacher during their counselling session. They require that their caregiver should already be informed about the LGBTQ+ community, culture and struggles (Hatch-Rivera 2018:48).

Hatch-Rivera discussed the six ways of listening presented by James Miller, a grief counsellor and spiritual director (Hatch-Rivera 2018:50):

1. Casually: This refers to listening that is not attentive. The person is not concentrating or is unfocused (Hatch-Rivera 2018:50).
2. For comprehension: The listener is more involved and wants to listen to understand, learn and appreciate the information (Hatch-Rivera 2018:50). Some caregivers have to aid their clients as they work through identity conflicts regarding their religion and sexuality. If the caregiver listens comprehensively, they will be able to achieve a better understanding of the circumstances of the client (Sollenberger 2017:32).
3. Critically: The caregiver listens to be able to make a decision or form an opinion. The caregiver also listens to establish whether the method they want to implement will be appropriate for the situation (Hatch-Rivera 2018:50).
4. Appreciatively: The caregiver listens to things that are pleasurable such as music or poetry (Hatch-Rivera 2018:50).
5. Therapeutically: The caregiver hears to be able to help the speaker (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51). Sollenberger gives the example of a counsellor with a transgender client. The counsellor could use a conflict-resolution model to normalize the situation that the transgender client is experiencing. This model could help the counsellor give advice, such as helping the client distinguish the gender expectations in their church and family. The counsellor could then help the client identify which areas they would like to alter (Sollenberger 2017:32).
6. Healing: The caregiver listens with the objective of hearing 'more than the words that are spoken'. The caregiver is listening to be present with the client, to rather be with them than to be doing anything (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51).

Hatch-Rivera argues that the final method of listening is essential for pastoral counselling as the caregiver is not simply listening but is rather invested in being present with the speaker. There is no hidden motive (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51). Cavanagh argues that the caregiver should listen to the needs, hopes and experiences of the client as it will facilitate a dialogue. Dialogue promotes the exchange of information and conveys respect toward the dignity and conscience of the client (Cavanagh 2017:42). Ultimately, the caregiver is solely focused on the

speaker and not thinking of methods to 'fix' any problems. Hatch-Rivera argues that 'healing listening is what will enrich a ministry of listening' (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51).

4.4. PASTORAL CARE & THERAPY TECHNIQUES

According to Brunsdon, the primary objective of pastoral care is change. During pastoral therapy, God is involved in the lives of the clients (Brunsdon 2014:2). As change is a part of pastoral care, so is healing. According to Dreyer, the pastoral connection enables individuals to 'become whole' by merging their spirit, soul, and body. Once the person has achieved this integration, they will be better equipped to handle life events (Dreyer 2003:721-722). Dreyer further argues that healing is the revelation that human wounds are connected with the suffering of Christ. Human suffering should be related to the suffering of Christ as healing does not necessarily mean that the pain will be removed from the individual. Rather, the pain should be linked to the 'greater human experience of pain.' It has been argued that psychology and psychological techniques are not required to facilitate healing as the brokenness that has occurred in a person can only be mended through the grace of God, and that pain is a part of God's work in the world. It is furthermore argued that the person in pain will be able to actualise legitimacy by 'a way of being' and not through psychological competency (Dreyer 2003:720).

Brunsdon, however, disagrees with this argument as he has investigated the use of a collaborative approach to pastoral care where he combines pastoral care, narrative therapy, and positive psychology. This approach is defined as the 'three-musketeering approach' after an analogy of the characters by Dumas. Brunsdon argued that the characters Athos, Porthos and Aramis were successful when they combined their efforts to defeat their enemies. Though these characters remained three differentiable individuals, their collaboration was remarkable (Brunsdon 2014:2). Though Brunsdon has combined pastoral care, narrative therapy and positive psychology, he stresses that there are various forms of collaborations available when using these approaches. He has, however, chosen to use a practical theological perspective to facilitate healing to the human soul, meaning that he utilizes Scripture, prayer and Pneumatology. He also regards pastoral care as a theological enterprise that can utilize the journey of self-identification to help clients

make their lives correspond with the life-goals discussed in Scripture (Brunsdon 2014:8).

Positive psychology was developed to shift the focus of therapy away from the worst aspects of human behaviour to the best in their behaviour. Previously, psychology used a long-standing disease model to study mental illnesses (Brunsdon 2014:7) and mainly concentrated on psychopathology (Bar-On 2010:55), but positive psychology aims to develop a language that describes the human behaviour to what it calls a 'wellness model' that rather concentrates on mental health and the encouragement of human welfare (Brunsdon 2014:7), as well as on the improvement of average and superlative human development (Bar-On 2010:55).

Bar-On refers to positive psychology as 'the scientific study of positive characteristics and strengths that enable individuals to thrive'. Positive psychology is not, however, a specific psychological field, but should rather be regarded as a movement within psychology very similar to the 1960's humanistic movement. The primary intention of this movement is to establish equilibrium for psychology as the experiences, characteristics and end results of individuals need to be positively improved. Furthermore, this movement works on the assumption that individuals seek a life filled with meaning, want to improve their best attributes, and intensify their experiences of love, enjoyment and work (Bar-On 2010:56).

Furthermore, Brunsdon argues that positive psychology could be defined in two ways. Firstly, it is regarded as a scientific-theoretical endeavour and explained as follows:

'Positive psychology is the scientific study of the personal qualities, life choices, life circumstances, and sociocultural conditions that promote a life well-lived, defined by criteria of happiness, physical and mental health, meaningfulness and virtue' (Brunsdon 2014:7).

Secondly, it is regarded as a therapeutic device. This device previously focused on the furtherance of gratification, well-being, and happiness. Currently, hope has become prominent in this movement (Edwards 2011:2), as well as flow and joy,

whereas it is expected that a care seeker will become optimistic about the future. Some scholars view this movement as simply the quest for happiness (Brunsdon 2014:7). There are, however, other benefits associated with this movement, such as the improvement of both physical and psychological health, better functioning and accomplishment, creativeness, rational decision making, 'self-actualisation and finding meaning in life,' wellness, joy and the competency to prosper and grow. It should also be noted that there is a great overlap between positive 'psychology and emotional intelligence' (Bar-On 2010:56).

As this movement aims to facilitate happiness, certain human characteristics are examined, such as resilience, constructive emotions and attributes, morals and strengths of character and connections. It is surmised that persons can achieve a prosperous life and happiness through their relationships with others and with certain characteristics such as the aforementioned attributes (Brunsdon 2014:7). Currently, positive psychology primarily focuses on the ability to be self-aware, to accept oneself, on the comprehension of empathy, the capability for social skills, selflessness, compassion, moral fibre, cooperation, emotional self-control, hope and problem-solving (Bar-On 2010:56).

Brunsdon however, discussed the importance of resilience in pastoral care. He listed the various definitions associated with resilience, which can be defined as the human capability to still function after experiencing an illness, a loss or trauma. It could be regarded as an advantageous result despite severe 'threats to adaptation or development', or it could be regarded as betterment or recuperation after an obstacle has been overcome (Brunsdon 2014:7). Another definition could be that resilience is a procedure which results in the cognizance of the strength a person possesses, and psychological resilience could be regarded as the belief that a person could still execute certain tasks despite any obstacles they may be facing (Lightsey 2006:100).

According to Lightsey, psychological resilience could be related to social cognitive theory and the stress-coping theory from other scholars. This theory suggests that before an individual responds to an environmental stressor, they will assess its relevance to determine what they have at stake in the confrontation. They will also assess the available coping strategies before deciding which will be most beneficial

to them. Lightsey also suggests that this is not simply a coping strategy but also a method to develop and mature as an individual (Lightsey 2006:100). Psychological resilience could furthermore be defined as a comprehensive understanding of self-efficacy, and could also be regarded as a determinable, adaptable psychological mechanism that could help people to cope successfully when confronted with adversity. As a person becomes aware of their strengths and realises what they are capable of, they will not become overwhelmed by future obstacles as they will be better equipped to cope with those stressors and able to utilize 'available resources' (Lightsey 2006:101).

According to Brunson, resilience has been regarded as 'common or ordinary magic' as an individual of any age is capable of this characteristic. This characteristic can be utilized in various ways during pastoral care and could become an outcome in therapy with underprivileged youth, persons struggling with loss, etc. (Brunson 2014:7). Brunson notes that one advantageous outcome derived from resilience is known as posttraumatic growth. It is argued that when persons experience trauma, resilience can facilitate emotional and spiritual maturation. The psychological class of posttraumatic stress is well-known, but positive theology regards posttraumatic growth as a constructive result of trauma (Brunson 2014:7). Tedeschi & Calhoun argues that posttraumatic growth could be confused with stress-related growth, but these two are contrary to one another. Posttraumatic growth does not aim at lower stress levels of individuals as its aim is rather to assist individuals after they have experienced a large-scale crisis. For substantial posttraumatic growth to become a factor, an individual will firstly experience a particularly severe threat or have their fundamental schemas shattered by an event. Tedeschi & Calhoun explain that often an individual will experience profound psychological distress before considerable posttraumatic growth occurs (Tedeschi & Calhoun 2004:4).

When persons experience a traumatic event, their understanding of their worlds and themselves are destroyed. As their previous worldview has been destroyed, these individuals must redefine the new unknown world they are in, to be able to cope with the trauma. According to Janoff-Bulman, a strategy is needed to achieve a balance, as these individuals now must learn to both confront and avert certain thoughts, images and feelings as a result of the trauma. Over time, most trauma victims can

begin to reconstruct their inner world through individualised ‘meaningful cognitive reappraisals’ and with sincere support from loved ones. These persons can then begin to live their lives again as they will no longer solely be defined as victims but rather become survivors (Janoff-Bulman 2004:30).

It should be noted, however, that to successfully recover or cope with a traumatic event does not mean that an individual will ignore the event and continue unchanged. The person will not return to their previous fundamental suppositions but will rather integrate the traumatic event with an ‘assumptive world’ that is newly developed and comfortable (Janoff-Bulman 2004:30). To achieve posttraumatic growth, therapy will concentrate on the “‘meaning-making’ process’. This means that there will be an active process to reinterpret the traumatic event to determine its importance (Brunsdon 2014:7). According to Janoff-Bulman, individuals become heightened to the reality of loss after trauma and consequently develop a new interpretation of events where questions are asked about magnitude and quality. As they recognize this new worth and how much significance there is in life, survivors begin to make decisions and commitments that develop rejuvenated meaning in their lives (Janoff-Bulman 2004:33).

As mentioned earlier, the three-musketeering approach also utilizes narrative therapy. Narrative therapy indicates that a story can be surmised from the lives of people and that this story could be used as a ‘therapeutic tool’. Brunsdon argues that narratives are established by the life events that occur sequentially and according to a specific plot (Brunsdon 2014:5). Naidoo argues that storytelling is intrinsic to being human and that it can function as a powerful tool for developing multiculturalism and rapprochement. The practice of reconciliation takes place when people share their personal life stories with others, and their experiences of pain, regret and anticipation (Naidoo 2019:2). Naidoo further argues that storytelling is rudimentary to being human as storytelling enables people to facilitate meaning to their lives and experiences (Naidoo 2019:3).

A few approaches and aspects of narrative therapy are beneficial to counselling. Firstly, there is the position of ‘not knowing.’ This approach is where the therapist is simply a listener to the narrative of the client. The client is given the opportunity to

tell their story without reserve; they are given a voice and are regarded as the expert of their stories. The therapist will not compare the stories to a certain framework as this approach acknowledges that people have various perspectives on life (Brunsdon 2014:6). Storytelling allows individuals to tell their life stories as they choose. This is understood to be very empowering and enables a person to further develop their identity. Stories also teach individuals about themselves as they discover how they evolve based on their experiences (Naidoo 2019:4). This also allows individuals to better comprehend their emotions, feelings, experiences, and consequent meaning (Naidoo 2019:4-5). This method enables the individual to coordinate meaning and legitimize their identity. Narrative identity theory surmises that the identity of a person is influenced by the stories they remember, and the stories they choose to divulge about themselves (Naidoo 2019:5).

Secondly, it is emphasised that ‘the problem is the problem.’ A clear distinction is required between the individual and the problem discussed during therapy. The person is never the problem. Rather, the true problem is identified in the relationship a person has with a specific problem (Brunsdon 2014:6). Thirdly, there is the process of externalisation, where the individual revises their relationship with the specific problem. As they externalise their story, they can remove themselves from the problem and alter their relationship with it. This enables the client to better deal with the problem as they can personify it or identify it. Fourthly, there is deconstruction. This process involves the study of how a person’s thinking and assumed truths have been influenced by their culture. This analysis will enable the client to determine if those ideas have influenced the problematic stories, what the repercussions are, and how they can remove themselves from these influences (Brunsdon 2014:6). When persons critically ponder and share their stories with others, there is the probability for their history to be altered. Naidoo explains that storytelling enables people to be released from their narratives that are engulfed by oppression and have been labelled as sinful. They will also be released from similar mindsets, which will enable them to actively alter their thoughts, activity, and contexts (Naidoo 2019:5).

Fifthly, there is co-construction and unique outcomes. The first stance explained that the client is the expert of their narrative, thus freeing the counsellor from providing solutions to the problems, as they would normally have to do if they worked from a

position of knowing. Co-construction, however, means that the counsellor primarily listens to the client and journeys with them as they share their narrative. The counsellor is thus defined by Brunsdon as a co-traveller. To be able to effectively co-construct, the counsellor should truly be inquisitive about the narrative to be able to ascertain unequalled outcomes for the 'problem-saturated stories.' Brunsdon explains that a unique outcome could be defined as something 'that does not fit with the problem-saturated story' and could help the client to defeat the problem. Furthermore, the unique outcome could result in alternative narratives for the client by functioning as a gateway, starting point or clue (Brunsdon 2014:6).

The final stance is the construction of alternative stories. Brunsdon argues that this could be regarded as the final result of narrative therapy as it aids the client in creating new, liberating stories, and helps them to rediscover their hopes and aspirations. Stories that are drenched with problems have the capacity to subdue the life of the client. Alternative stories, however, are freeing as they encourage and sustain life. It is thus argued that alternative stories are the goal of narrative therapy as they integrate the essential aspects of the 'lived experience' previously disregarded by the client due to their struggles (Brunsdon 2014:6).

According to Brunsdon, counsellors have moved away from the practice of diagnosing their clients according to set guidelines. They also do not analyse the 'grand narratives' of their clients as it has been discovered that examining the smaller narratives enable counsellors to determine specific problems that the client may be experiencing. Narrative therapy also enables the client to determine, validate and fortify their innermost resources (Brunsdon 2014:6). Thus, clients are enabled to become self-sufficient as they will be able to better assess smaller narratives and apply alternative meanings to those narratives (Brunsdon 2014:7).

Storytelling is not, however, reserved for counselling and is quite beneficial in other circumstances. Church congregations are regarded as subcultures of society, but, unfortunately, there is division in many congregations. Cultural differences or differences of beliefs or opinions have caused people to separate from one another and tensions to grow (Naidoo 2019:1). This division should be mended because the welfare of individuals is correlated to the welfare of the larger society. Steyn &

Masango argue that individuals find meaning in life when they are a part of a larger community. They had also pointed out that people who did not belong to a larger community frequently experienced detachment and despondency (Steyn & Masango 2012:1). Thus, it is argued that people should openly converse with each other about identity and 'social relations' to stop the rise of stereotyping and fearfulness in congregations. Naidoo argues that persons and communities cannot be reconciled with each other if they continue to avoid each other. Rather, persons should deliberately take part in open dialogue as 'humans-in-relationship' (Naidoo 2019:5). Storytelling will enable these persons to speak with each other about controversial matters. Naidoo argues that churches should establish safe spaces for a person to engage in such conversations as it will benefit the community and enable growth (Naidoo 2019:2).

Pastoral care aims to assist and console people as they experience hardships. Hardships can result in the weakening of faith, but people can find strength when others become present and offer comfort (Naidoo 2019:5). As persons often feel hopeless during difficulties, they can experience the presence of God through the compassion and company of other persons (Dreyer 2003:723). Naidoo argues that narrative pedagogy is basically when a person learns which narratives can be utilized to discover their intrinsic individuality and that relationships can be developed or improved. It is also a point of departure for persons to behave increasingly ethically and to develop fresh comprehension of the 'cultural, social and political' context of a person (Naidoo 2019:5). Steyn & Masango also noted that people can remember each other because God remembers his people and he is with them. He is present during times of difficulty and has not left his people, though they could feel this way (Steyn & Masango 2012:1).

Hope plays an important role in pastoral care. It has been argued that this hope comes from having faith in God and being capable of trusting him with the uncertainty linked to the future. As Christians believe that God cares about them, their faith and hope can become stronger. Steyn & Masango argue that hope is only possible through faith in God because care stems from him. It should be noted, however, that this hope in God will not remove any suffering, including pain, endured by humans (Steyn & Masango 2012:2). Dreyer argues that the caregiver is

responsible for keeping their clients from hurting for the ‘wrong reasons’. It is argued that wounds and suffering are a part of being human and if a person does not understand this, they are suffering for the wrong reasons. Dreyer argues that to begin the process of achieving hope and liberation, the care seeker needs to come to terms with the fundamental human condition. Once this has been achieved, community members can help each other by sharing their experiences and ultimately coming closer to God (Dreyer 2003:723).

Hope is also present in certain psychological techniques such as the practice of meditation, prayer, healing and breathing (Edwards 2011:5). According to Edwards, the ‘practical theological mission and message’ aims to transmute and heal society and the universe by utilizing an individualized and transpersonal modification of cognizance through prayer, reflection, meditation, and breath control. Hope is needed to achieve such a shift as hope is regarded as a matter of consciousness. This implies that when the aforementioned methods are utilized, an advantageous state of consciousness is achieved, and hope can be experienced and communicated (Edwards 2011:6).

Certain neuroscientific findings can be implemented during pastoral care and counselling as many persons struggle with anxiety in postmodern society. Bingaman explains that the amygdala can be located within the temporal lobe of the brain and is better known as the ‘stress centre’. The amygdala is a ‘limbic-system’ structure responsible for the commencement and the processing of emotions such as fear and anxiety that stimulate the survival instinct. These emotions and the amygdala are essential for survival and are even active on average days. However, it is psychologically and physically harmful for this limbic system to become overactive as it controls the production of emotional states. Fortunately, it has been discovered that if a person partakes in ‘daily contemplative spiritual practice,’ especially mindfulness-based meditation and prayer, they can successfully lower their amygdala activity and their stress levels (Bingaman 2014:11).

Bingaman explains that as a person practises mindful awareness or mindfulness, they can focus on their ‘anxious memory patterns’ that respond to certain situations and events as they are happening. These patterns also fire automatically and

reflexively. As mindfulness is practised, a person becomes capable of observing their actions and emotions, and can consequently supervise, adjust, and alter their internal being as required (Bingaman 2014:12). These actions are possible as mindfulness relates to the 'self-regulation of attention to the conscious awareness' of the event an individual is experiencing. The most favourable mindfulness results are achieved if individuals allow themselves to become inquisitive, accepting and open as they perform mindfulness (Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012:174).

According to Bingaman, the method behind mindfulness is that the individual must notice their own feelings and thoughts from the viewpoint of a 'nonjudgmental third party'. Bingaman explains that sometimes an anxious thought or feeling surfaces while a person is busy practising mindfulness. When this happens, it is essential that the individual does not fight the feeling nor let it consume them as this will only worsen the anxiety. Thus, the individual should be 'nonjudgmental' to be able to develop an all-encompassing awareness of their experiences. This will allow them to observe their feelings and thoughts as they arrive and depart (Bingaman 2014:12).

Mindfulness meditation has various definitions and methodologies. One definition is that the individual directs their attention to their bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions by observing them as they come and go (Hölzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman-Olivier, Vago & Ott 2011:538). Eberth & Sedlmeier agree that the person should only be observant. They should sit softly and try not to alter or create any experiences. The object that the individual focuses on can vary, depending on the specific meditative technique they have utilized (Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012:174). One such technique is discussed by Bingaman, namely 'mindfulness- and acceptance-based behavioural' therapy (Bingaman 2014:12). This technique encourages the person to focus on what they are currently experiencing, intrinsically or extrinsically. As they do this, they should attempt to avoid getting engrossed with scrutinizing their experience or desiring matters to be different (Bingaman 2014:13).

An example of becoming too engrossed with personal judgement is when a religious person struggles with anxiety and succumbs to the accusations of their 'inner critic', which tells them that they should not be anxious at all since they should place their trust in Christ. In Scripture, Christ teaches that people should not feel anxious about

tomorrow, but Bingaman adds that it is not clear how this should be applied to everyday life in a practical sense. Consequently, the believer who feels anxious, likely due to their responsibilities (such as work, families, finances, health, etc.), will experience added guilt for not trusting Christ with tomorrow. Bingaman explains that this snowball effect of guilt and anxiety is not because the believer is opposing the teaching to ‘feel less anxious.’ Instead, the believer does not know how to practise this teaching in their life (Bingaman 2014:13).

Thus, the mindfulness- and acceptance-based approach would be used to teach the believer to be kind to themselves and not judgmental toward their anxious feelings, and only to observe their thoughts and emotions. This approach is necessary as many people struggle to silence their thoughts when they practise mindfulness meditation or prayer. The most important thing to remember with this practice is that the quality of mindfulness is more important than the quantity. When a person criticizes their performance or the progress they are making, they are feeding the ‘negativity bias of the brain’ as they still wonder whether their meditation is long enough or good enough. When the person does a contemplative-meditational exercise, it does not matter whether they are active for five minutes or an hour. It is, much more valuable, neurologically and spiritually, for them to do it with a minimum amount of criticism (Bingaman 2014:13).

One aspect of mindfulness is breathing. According to Edwards, though breath control is beneficial on its own, the effect is even greater when combined with ruminative and intercessory prayer, healing action and meditation (Edwards 2011:6). Edwards discusses the practice of One Breath. During meditation, the breath becomes ‘slow, soft and stilled’ until the person feels as though they are being breathed. This experience is described as curative and incorporative (Edwards 2011:3). A person can achieve One Breath by focusing on their breathing, the way their body moves and by becoming profoundly relaxed as they forego any thoughts or feelings. Edwards explains that the breath of the person will then become ‘slow, still, silent, smooth, soft and stable.’ As the person continues this practice, they become more and more relaxed until they experience the phenomenon of being breathed instead of being the one that is breathing. This moment is what is known as One Breath. Edwards acknowledges that silencing the mind will initially be difficult, but that it will

improve if the person practises daily. The most advantageous time for the exercise is argued to be after a person wakes in the morning (Edwards 2011:4).

There are various health benefits to mindfulness meditation, including physical, psychological and stress-related improvement, which is why this practice is a popular therapeutic tool (Hölzel *et al.* 2011:537). If mindfulness meditation or Centering Prayer is practised daily, a person will also experience spiritual growth (Bingaman 2014:59) as well as the improvement of certain clinical disorders such as depression, eating disorders, chronic pain, anxiety and substance abuse (Hölzel *et al.* 2011:537). Further benefits include improved memory and learning ability, reduced irritability and emotional stability (Bingaman 2014:59).

Hölzel *et al.* have described the key steps in mindful meditation. Firstly, the person should try to keep their attention focused on a certain object and return to it when they become distracted; they should be aware of their breathing, body sensations or emotions as these will focus their attention on the internal experience; they should be nonjudgmental and aware of their fluctuating emotions; they should allow the emotions to be present without trying to alter them and they should try to disconnect from their perceived selves (Hölzel *et al.* 2011:539).

Likewise, to the steps that Hölzel *et al.* suggest for mindful meditation, Bingaman has stated that there are four basic steps in Centering Prayer: Find a peaceful place to sit comfortably; decide on a word or mantra ('sacred object') that will function as an anchor for the person's attention; this sacred object will symbolize the focus of being wholly present with God; and, lastly, if the person's thoughts become clamorous or distracting, they gently return to the word or mantra as it will help them to become centred in God again. This final step is essential as it has been substantiated that the more a person resists criticising themselves for not meditating perfectly, the more they soothe the amygdala and decrease the 'stress-provoking neurochemicals' brought forth by criticism (Bingaman 2014:72).

4.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter discovered that the primary religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons

are negative because they experience discrimination, rejection from loved ones, and even hate crimes such as corrective rape. Though there were positive experiences such as accepting parents or churches, these accounts were rather scarce. Feelings of isolation, depression and suicide were prevalent among individuals as they were disowned by their families, rejected by their friends, cast out of their churches or religious communities, and even isolated from certain LGBTQ+ groups. Bisexual and Transgender persons felt especially isolated because they experienced the gay and lesbian community as unkind, and bi- and transphobic. Bisexual and Transgender people were also labelled as promiscuous or deviant by the gay and lesbian community, society, and religious sects.

Individuals struggled to harmonize their sexual identities with their religious identities as they were called sinners and demon-possessed and were taught that God and Scripture were against them. They were taught that anything outside of heteronormativity should be cast out. Consequently, these persons had to investigate their own personal beliefs and interpretation of God to achieve peace. It was discovered, however, that most people reconciled their sexuality with their relationship with God as they felt that a life without God would be unfulfilling. Some persons left organized religion; some converted to a different religion; some became spiritual rather than religious or became atheists. The core theme, however, was that people wanted to be at peace with themselves. The majority did not alter their sexual identities as they felt these identities were too significant in their sense of self.

It was also discovered that many LGBTQ+ persons experienced mental and even physical health problems, of which depression, anxiety, suicide and trauma were the most prominent. It was established that sexual minorities, especially LGBTQ+ persons of colour, had higher rates of suicide and suicidal thoughts than their heterosexual counterparts. Thus, it can be argued that pastoral care is essential to facilitate healing. As many persons have had negative experiences with pastoral care, it was discovered that the main culprits were a lack of education regarding sexual minorities and intolerance. Persons that had positive experiences with counselling stated that their counsellor was respectful, had knowledge of their sexual culture, listened, and facilitated a safe space. These attributes are thus necessary for counselling sessions. The health benefits of a relationship with God and a

community were also discovered because people are relational beings and thrive in supportive circumstances.

Certain therapeutic devices were investigated, such as pastoral care techniques, mindfulness meditation, centering prayer, narrative therapy and posttraumatic growth. With the proper techniques and a counsellor that is accepting, persons could experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety and could recover from trauma. Thus, it can be concluded that a holistic approach is required when journeying with LGBTQ+ persons. There is an obvious need for a relationship with God and people, and to feel supported and accepted. If the proper techniques are implemented and proper etiquette is followed, LGBTQ+ persons will be able to live prosperous lives and enjoy a relationship with God, and their well-being will also improve.

In the following and final chapter, the findings of each chapter of this study will be discussed in detail to determine if the aim of this study was achieved.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of this study is Practical Theology. Practical theology has been distinguished as hermeneutical and interpretative regarding Scripture and Christian behaviour. Practical theology also investigates the interpretation of God and the relationships believers have with him (Swinton & Mowat 2016:72). This study investigated biblical interpretation, the relationships between members of faith, and how in sexual minorities their relationship with God was influenced as a result of discrimination and violence against them.

The personal experiences of sexual minorities were investigated by using existing literature because as a result of COVID-19 semi-structured qualitative interviews could no longer be conducted. It was discovered that there is limited research available regarding the personal religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons, especially in connection with the DRC. Narratives by transgender and bisexual persons were the most difficult to find, especially the narratives from South African individuals. Consequently, this study also used literature from other countries to determine the implications of discrimination or prejudice by religious persons. This study still focussed on a narrative approach because the personal recollections of sexual minorities give a greater indication of their joys and suffering. If the voices of the marginalized are included, it enables them to facilitate a better understanding of their experiences and contexts. It is easier for heteronormative persons to argue about non-heteronormativity if LGBTQ+ persons are not involved in the debate (Moschella 2018:15). The perspectives and contexts of LGBTQ+ persons enrich the knowledge of others and remind them that LGBTQ+ persons are not statistical or theoretical, but persons with feelings and personal relationships with God.

This study aimed to determine the religious experiences of LGBTQ+ persons to determine whether their relationship with God was adversely affected by negative experiences, or whether they persevered in their faith. As religion is intrinsic to individuals, this study aimed to determine how their religion could be strengthened if they experienced hardships. This study also aimed to investigate the relationship between LGBTQ+ persons and the Dutch Reformed Church to determine if healing

and pastoral care should be utilized to reconcile the individuals with the church and the faith community. As the DRC centralises Scripture in the debate regarding homosexuality, this study aimed to find proper biblical interpretation methods to determine the historically accurate meanings of the Scriptural passages that discuss same-sex behaviour or actions. This study also aimed to investigate pastoral and psychological techniques that could facilitate healing to persons who have been negatively impacted by religious persons because of their sexual identity.

It was determined that Scripture is the primary source used by laypersons, DRC members, faith communities, religious persons, and even sexual minorities themselves, to defend arguments regarding sexual minorities. The importance of proper biblical exegesis was discovered in this study as Scripture is often used out of context to condemn sexual minorities. If proper exegesis is conducted, perhaps discrimination toward sexual minorities will lessen. In chapter two, it was discovered that even if a person does not agree with same-sex attraction, they should still regard the Bible as a unit, meaning that the Gospel of Christ should be implemented in every interpretation. Chapter three, furthermore, discovered in the doctrinal beliefs of the DRC that Christ should be central to biblical interpretations and to how persons treat each other. Christ stated that the most important commandments are to love God with your entire being and to love your neighbour as yourself. The sixth commandment was also discussed, and it was pointed out that this commandment also speaks against hate. Thus, it could be argued that unity could begin to form between believers, regardless of their differences.

This study also determined, in chapter three, that the relationship between the DRC and sexual minorities has improved significantly since 1986. Initially, it was shown that discrimination was a part of the General Synod decisions as the 2015 and 2016 decisions were complete opposites, yet the DRC argued that the same methods were used to interpret Scripture to reach their decisions. These two GS decisions created division in the church. DRC members who argued against same-sex unions were outraged about the acceptance of such unions, while LGBTQ+ members as well as LGBTQ+ affirming members were disgruntled at the reversal of the 2015 decision in 2016. Consequently, the church was taken to court and the verdict was that the church was discriminatory against sexual minorities and had not followed

proper protocol with the 2016 decision. The improvement, however, was that the church decided that they would not appeal the decision of the High Court and would accept as well as integrate sexual minorities into the DRC. Thus, it was shown that DRC has accepted sexual minorities. The manual discussed in section 3.6 indicates that there is growth in the DRC despite personal differences between some members. Unfortunately, the availability of pastoral care for sexual minorities could not be determined as there was a lack of literature.

This study also discovered that the emotional, mental and spiritual health of sexual minorities have been deeply affected by how they have been treated by religious believers. Chapter four discovered that most persons have experienced some form of discrimination. It was also discovered that violence was significant toward sexual minorities as the narratives discussed hate crimes such as corrective rape and physical assault. Sexual minorities struggled to reconcile their faith with their identities as they were often told that they were sinners and unwelcome in their churches or faith communities. It was, however, found that despite hostile treatments by others, most LGBTQ+ persons persevered in their faith. It was determined that sexual minorities are more likely to abandon their religion than their sexual or gender identity. Most of these persons established a personal faith in God that was removed from organized religion. The persons that did not choose this route, considered themselves spiritual and merged practices from various religions to establish a belief system that promotes peace and acceptance. It was notable that persons focused on integrating the teachings of Christ into their beliefs, regardless of whether they regarded themselves as religious or spiritual. Furthermore, it was found that faith communities could also become more united by means of storytelling because storytelling enables people to be in control of what they want to share, and the act in itself also brings people closer. It was discovered that this was as a result of new perspectives. As persons shared their experiences, context and perspective were discovered by congregants.

It was also found that when LGBTQ+ persons were called sinners or made to feel unwelcome in their churches, they experienced isolation, rejection and depression, to name a few. Transgender and Bisexual persons also experienced discrimination from the gay and lesbian community as well as from certain gay-affirming churches,

which worsened their aforementioned feelings. It was discovered that suicide has been documented as highest amongst sexual minorities, especially LGBTQ+ persons of colour. Thus, the narratives in this chapter confirmed that pastoral care and counselling could be beneficial to sexual minorities.

Finally, this study investigated pastoral and psychological tools that could be beneficial to LGBTQ+ persons who experience the emotional, mental and spiritual health struggles determined in the first half of chapter 2. Due to time constraints, only a few methods and techniques were investigated. It was determined that to facilitate proper care, the caregiver should first become self-aware of their own prejudices, preconceived notions, beliefs, culture, etc., to ensure that they are capable of facilitating care for sexual minorities without enforcing their own ideals onto the careseeker. If the caregiver realises that they are not equipped to counsel LGBTQ+ persons, they are obligated to refer the careseeker to someone who is capable and understands the importance of religion. This study discovered how various practices could be used to achieve a holistic approach, as was demonstrated by 'the three musketeer approach' that combined pastoral care, narrative therapy and positive psychology. It was discovered that narrative therapy could enable persons to work through their experiences. Chapter four discussed how important the telling or sharing of stories is because it enables the careseeker to revisit and re-interpret life events that may have caused harm. The careseeker can then redefine these events by attaching meaning to them and creating alternative narratives. After a traumatic event, these methods enable persons to move forward with a positive outlook on life.

It was also determined that focusing on the self was important in prayer and meditative practices. This study examined mindful meditation as a psychological technique that facilitates mental, emotional and spiritual healing and growth. The individual focuses on their thoughts, feelings and body movements until they become centred in themselves. It was discovered that practices such as mindful meditation, centering prayer and One Breath are extremely beneficial to the well-being of individuals. It was discovered that these practices enable careseekers to recover from traumatic events, to regulate emotions such as irritability and depression, to grow in their faith, and to experience less inclination to suicide or substance abuse. It was discovered that the overall health of individuals greatly improved with proper

pastoral care and counselling, as well as with the availability of support and safe spaces.

The second chapter focused on Scriptural interpretation and exegesis regarding sexual minorities. Scripture is the primary source used to justify arguments for the acceptance or intolerance of sexual minorities. Thus, this chapter investigated which methods would most properly examine biblical passages to avoid biased interpretations. The third chapter investigated the social climate and discrimination in South Africa concerning sexual minorities. This chapter also investigated how sexual minorities have been treated in the DRC by focusing on how the Synod resolutions have changed from 1986 to 2019. It was important to investigate these decisions as this study aimed to determine the relationship between LGBTQ+ persons and the DRC.

There is a scarcity of literature regarding this relationship, and this study aimed to determine if sexual minorities are accepted by or turned away from the DRC. This study aimed to better understand the pastoral needs of sexual minorities to establish how the DRC could facilitate pastoral care and counselling as it is argued that the religiosity of sexual minorities should be nurtured regardless of their sexual identities.

Thus, the fourth chapter investigated the religious experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons to facilitate a better understanding of their experiences with religion, religious persons and religious institutions, focusing primarily on Christianity. The persons discussed in this chapter were not primarily DRC members as there was little literature available. However, common denominators were discovered and discussed in section 4.3. These commonalities were used as a reference point for sections 4.4 and 4.5, where certain pastoral care, counselling and psychological techniques were analysed to determine which methods could benefit the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of LGBTQ+ persons. Because these practices were too many to be fully discussed in this study, only a few methods were investigated based on the findings of the first half of this chapter. These methods could contribute to the knowledge of pastoral care and of how sexual minorities could be better cared for in the DRC and other religious institutions.

This final chapter discuss the most prevalent themes discovered in the study to illustrate the findings and how this knowledge can be applied to facilitate healing and compassion to sexual minorities.

5.2. HOW HAS SCRIPTURE BEEN INTERPRETED AND WHAT WAS DISCOVERED AFTER EXEGESIS?

5.2.1. Interpretation

It was discovered that, for centuries, Scripture has been incorrectly interpreted regarding same-sex attraction and that heteronormativity has been influential in the condemnation of sexual minorities (Nkosi & Masson 2017:73). Scripture has not, however, been solely misinterpreted regarding sexual minorities as it has been determined that Scripture was similarly used to support slavery and segregation. It was discovered that Scripture was read in a literal manner to give weight to certain texts that justify social prejudice. The contextual history of that specific text was never analysed (Rogers 2009:18).

In section 2.2, the historical methods of interpretation were investigated as the current debate regarding sexual minorities still utilises certain elements. Two views were discerned for Biblical interpretation, namely the Modernist view and the Fundamentalist view. The Modernist view interprets Scripture by using the biblical authors and the science of evolution. It has been argued that there are sections in Scripture that are inauthentic and that church creeds are the result of humans trying to convey 'religious experience' (Rogers 2009:35). The Fundamentalist view, however, supports the literal interpretation of Scripture. It argues that Scripture was produced by people that functioned as human conduits for the precise word of God. This view does not support the use of science in biblical interpretation (Rogers 2009:35).

Another method of interpretation discovered was the Kerygma paradigm by Rudolf Bultmann. This method by Bultmann encouraged the use of contextual analysis of biblical texts. The historical background, context and culture of the ANE should be considered during interpretation as they are greatly different from the postmodern

society (Bongmba 2015:80). This method aims to encourage objective interpretation. Objectivity could be achieved by using form criticism, redaction criticism (Bongmba 2015:81), linguistic analysis and grammatical rules. The context of the reader should also be regarded as it will influence any questions associated with the text (Bongmba 2015:82).

The Traditionalist and Revisionist views were also discovered in section 2.3, as methods used to interpret texts that discuss sexual minorities. Traditionalists interpret same-sex attraction as sinful and in conflict with Christian morals (Bamidele 2015:40-41). Revisionists, however, argue that a balanced exegesis has not been conducted to determine whether same-sex attraction should be regarded as sinful or not. Furthermore, they argue that any interpretation that encourages violence or discrimination is against the teachings of Christ (Bamidele 2015:39).

The seven guidelines in section 2.3 could encourage a balanced method of biblical interpretation when analysing homosexuality. If these guidelines are used properly, discrimination could be countered and subjectivity could be minimal. The first guideline requires Christ to be central in Scripture (Rogers 2009:53-54) as his life exemplified compassion and will encourage believers to treat each other with kindness (Kraus 2014:101) regardless of their sexual identity. Furthermore, there is no instance in Scripture where Christ would reject a person or ignore their pain. Believers should therefore acknowledge this when they interpret texts (Rogers 2009:55).

The second guideline is that the text itself should be the focus and be interpreted with the historical context in mind. This is to ensure that personal biases do not influence the interpretation (Rogers 2009:56). This method also ensures that the interpreter will recognize the cultural differences between the ANE and the postmodern society as homosexuality then had different meanings than today (Rogers 2009:57). The cultures were also influenced by neighbouring societies and the authors wrote with the understandings of their intended readers in mind (Van Loggerenberg 2014:106-107).

The third guideline encourages the interpreter to utilize the direction given by the

Holy Spirit as this will enable them to properly interpret the authority of Scripture (Rogers 2009:57-58). The fourth guideline states that the creeds and confessions of faith should be used as they will ensure that the text is understood by the current society and with the church doctrines in mind (Rogers 2009:59-61). The fifth guideline emphasises the importance of the love of God. When a text is interpreted, this love should be present. Violence, hurt and pain are not encouraged or justified by the commandment that states that a person should love God and their neighbour (Rogers 2009:61). The sixth guideline states that the message of God will be discovered if the best possible interpretation is discovered through textual analysis (Rogers 2009:62-63). This textual analysis involves comparing previous interpretations of the text to determine the closest form of the original text. Again, cultural and traditional contexts should be investigated (Punt 2006:892) as postmodern persons have attached their own understanding to ANE practices such as the 'holy kiss' in section 2.3.

The final guideline states the importance of taking the entire Bible into account when interpreting a text as the Bible is a literary unit. The narratives and teachings in Scripture are all connected and should thus be considered as a whole. A certain passage cannot be interpreted without this unit. Scripture as a whole ensures that all teachings will be implemented in an interpretation (Rogers 2009:64). For example, a reference to homosexuality in one passage should be related to the teaching that God created everyone (Brownson 2013:7).

5.2.2. Exegesis

When proper exegesis is conducted, a balanced and more accurate interpretation could be discovered regarding homosexuality. This study examined the well-known Scriptural passages associated with homosexuality, namely Genesis 19:1-29; Judges 19:1-30; Leviticus 18:1-30; Leviticus 20:1-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-17; 1 Timothy 1:3-13; Jude 1-25 and Romans 1. It was discovered that these passages are, in total, twelve pages in the entire Bible, that they do not refer to the teachings of Christ, and that interpretations do not consider their historical background (Rogers 2009:66).

5.2.3. How has Scripture been used, according to this study

It has been discovered that LGBTQ+ persons often struggle to harmonize their spiritual and sexual identities due to how they have been treated by other Christians. Christian believers often use Scripture to condemn LGBTQ+ persons and to call them sinners (Nkosi & Masson 2017:80). In section 4.1.1, it was discovered that such believers would physically approach sexual minorities and cause them to feel uncomfortable (Nel *et al.* 2017:9715).

As Scripture is often used against sexual minorities, LGBTQ+ persons have begun to search for reaffirming Biblical texts (das Nair & Thomas 2012:100) that promote love and acceptance. These persons have explained that Scripture is central to their religious identity, but to reconcile their sexual identity with their religious identity, they must reject the condemnatory texts (Nkosi & Masson 2017:87). However, some sexual minorities acknowledged the centrality of Scripture in Christianity but regarded it as incorrectly interpreted. They concluded that it was not Christianity that was condemnatory towards them but rather the heteronormative interpretations of Scripture (Toft 2012:190). Some persons could not reconcile their identities while these misinterpreted Scriptures affected their spiritual lives. They felt religiously stronger once Scripture was removed and they had begun a more personalised faith based on the foundation of Christ-centred teachings (Toft 2012:195).

In section 3.5, it was discovered that the DRC centralised Scripture in their discussion about LGBTQ+ identities as they regard themselves as 'a Biblical Protestant Church' that considers Scripture as central to their beliefs (Burrige 2008:161). As this study investigated the General Synods from 1986 to 2019, Scripture was seen to be prevalent in the decision-making processes (Punt 2006:896). Each Synod used Scripture when they investigated the matter of homosexuality. They emphasised the importance of proper interpretation and always concluded that further investigation was required, the results of which would then be discussed at the following GS meeting. However, it was never established which methods of interpretation were used. Because of the contradictory decisions of the GS in 2015 and 2016, their methods have been regarded as questionable, as the GS claimed that Scripture was used to reach each decision (Kapp 2020:15).

5.3. SEXUAL MINORITIES AND THE DRC

5.3.1. Doctrinal Beliefs

This study investigated the doctrinal beliefs of the DRC as it has been argued that same-sex attraction conflicts with these beliefs. In section 3.5 the Apostle's Creed, the Creed of Athanasius, the Nicene Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort were investigated. It was discovered that the Triune God was central to all creeds and that Creation to the Ascension of Christ was also a key element. God, Christ and Holy Spirit were also discussed separately in each creed, while still affirming God's unity. It was discovered that homosexuality was not the primary focus in any of the confessions. The focus was rather on the importance of proclaiming Christ as God incarnate and as the risen God.

The Heidelberg Catechism discussed various elements of the Christian faith in detail. For the purposes of this study, only a few elements were investigated regarding sexual minorities. Matthew 22 was discussed because it speaks of the most important commandments according to Christ, namely to love God as the only God and to love your neighbour as you love yourself. It was also explained that because people have been created in the image of God, they are 'righteous and holy.' The sixth commandment stating, 'Thou shalt not kill,' was also discussed. It was explained that this commandment does not solely refer to physical murder but also to hate, insults, anger, revenge or envy. These indicate that though a person may not support sexual minorities, they should still treat people with compassion and kindness as everyone has been created in the image of God.

The centrality of Scripture was discussed extensively in the Belgic Confession, as well as the apocryphal and canonical books, the authority of Scripture, etc. (Belgic, Art. 2-7). It is also emphasised that people should read Scripture as the Word of God, adhere to God's teachings, and not trust the writings of people as people are 'liars by nature' (Belgic, Art. 7). It was discovered that the Canons of Dort specifically addressed discrimination. It stated that anyone who acknowledges, believes and proclaims that Christ was sent to earth by God and died for the sins of humans, would be able to share in eternal life (Dort, Art. 5 of the Second Main Point). If a

person believes that Christ was crucified, they will also be saved. It is also stated that the Gospel should be believed, announced and proclaimed 'without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people' (Dort, Art. 5 of the Second Main Point). Furthermore, it is stated that anyone that has been called by God, has sincerely been called by him because he also uses his word to reach them (Dort, Art. 8 of the Third and Fourth Main Points). Thus, this study discovered that if a person believes, proclaims and lives a life according to Christ, they will share in eternal life. This study did not discover any preconditions such as race, gender or sexual identity.

5.3.2. Evolution of DRC tolerance and acceptance

This study discovered that the DRC has become increasingly tolerant towards sexual minorities since 1982. Initially, sexual minorities were banned from taking part in communion (Vorster 2008:324). In 1986, they were labelled as sinners and deviant but were allowed to receive communion (Kapp 2020:17). In 2002 the GS rejected the 1986 decision, apologized to sexual minorities and declared that they would now be allowed into congregations. However, they still declared that homosexuality was regarded as immoral (Vorster 2008:325). In 2004, the DRC stated that sexual minorities could become full members of the church and pastoral care was made available to them, suggesting that their sexual identities were intrinsic. The DRC apologized again for any grievances caused (Kapp 2020:17). This study discovered that after every GS decision on LGBTQ+ identities, the church apologized to LGBTQ+ persons but did not work to improve or alter the decisions that had caused the grievances in the first place.

This study discovered that though the GS decisions had become increasingly tolerant, there was still much discrimination against sexual minorities. This was emphasised by the 2005 GS meeting that was influenced by the circumstances connected to Rev. Gaum, as discussed in section 3.4. Though Rev. Gaum had been in a committed and monogamous relationship, the GS queried whether a 'practising homosexual' should remain active in the DRC. The DRC concluded that Rev. Gaum had lied to them about his same-sex relationship and should consequently be dismissed from the DRC (Punt 2006:898). It was argued that sexual minorities would

always be regarded as promiscuous and ultimately LGBTQ+ ministers would have to remain trapped in a life of celibacy. As Rev. Gaum was in a monogamous relationship, promiscuity should thus be defined as any relationship that is not heterosexual (Punt 2006:899).

The 2007 meeting was, however, more respectful of sexual minorities and it was discovered that much research had been conducted regarding the matter and that the DRC had shown empathy towards minorities (Kapp 2020:18). It was stated that the contextual background of the Scriptural passages had been examined and that Christ should be the only foundation of a relationship. This decision reflected the Canons of Dort as it stated that, regardless of sexual identity, the Triune God loves all people because they have been created in his image, and that the Church will not exclude sexual minorities from the love of God (Van Loggerenberg 2014:51-52). Though this decision was more inclusive, the DRC still did not amend the 2004 decision regarding promiscuity and marriage (further discussed in section 3.4). Lastly, this GS declared that LGBTQ+ ministers and legitimates would be allowed to become ministers in the DRC whilst they remained celibate (Van Loggerenberg 2014:52).

The 2013 decision remained mostly unchanged but stated that as long as the 'Christian-ethical standard' was upheld, both homosexual and heterosexual DRC students would be regarded as equal (Kapp 2020:19). It was discovered that the 2015 decision had, however, made history in the DRC as it declared that the civil unions of same-sex relationships would be recognised and could be officiated by a willing DRC minister. The DRC was becoming more accepting of sexual minorities and change for the better was implemented. The GS furthermore, stated that they would implement a 'Christen-Biblical-ethical model' to educate congregations on sexualities to facilitate a deeper comprehension of the various sexual identities (Minnaar 2015:8). This study regarded this model as a method for reconciliation between congregants and sexual minorities, establishing deeper connections and further integration for sexual minorities into the religious community.

It was discovered, however, that though the GS had become accepting of LGBTQ+ persons, many DRC members were disgruntled by this decision. The GS was

flooded by letters from DRC members and ministers that implored the GS to revoke their decision. Unfortunately, the DRC succumbed to these demands and held an 'extra-ordinary session of the general synod' in 2016 (Vorster 2017:2), where they revoked their decision and re-established the 2004 decision that only recognised heterosexual marriages (Kapp 2020:19).

These actions resulted in the DRC being taken to the High Court in Pretoria by a few DRC members, led by Laurie Gaum, with the accusation that the DRC had acted discriminatorily toward sexual minorities. This case is known as the Gaum case. The court had to decide whether the DRC had acted discriminatorily against sexual minorities, whether the DRC had implemented the correct procedure with the 2016 GS, and whether they were in violation of the South African constitution (Sutton & Sutton 2019:401). Ultimately, the court ruled that the church had in fact been discriminatory and had consequently acted against the constitution (Sutton & Sutton 2019:408). The court stated that the DRC could not disallow LGBTQ+ persons from enjoying the same rights that heterosexual members had in the church (Sutton & Sutton 2019:409).

In section 3.6, it was discovered that after the verdict had been given, the GS ultimately decided that they would accept the decision and not appeal it (Kerkbode 2019c). The GS therefore, held a meeting at the end of 2019 to revise their decision (DRC GS Agenda 2019:1). This study discovered that the DRC had evolved from a prejudicial and condemnatory institution to an institution that promotes acceptance and change. Though the journey was unfavourable due to the discrimination that sexual minorities experienced, it was discovered that compassion and acceptance are promoted in the DRC.

The 2019 decision concluded that congregations should establish safe spaces for open but respectful dialogue regarding faith disputes. These spaces should be inclusive and diverse; people should enter into a dialogue about their own personal perspectives, and the Word of God should be involved in the discussion. Furthermore, it was stated that all church practices should be accessible to LGBTQ+ persons, such as church council positions, the sacraments and how suitable a person is for a role, regardless of their sexual identity. There should be no

differentiation between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ theological students as they should be held to the same standards, and willing ministers of the church may officiate at same-sex unions (DRC GS Agenda 2019:158). Furthermore, it was discovered that the DRC has developed a manual to be distributed to congregations. This manual will give DRC members the needed information regarding how the church has amended its interpretation of sexual minorities in the period from 1986 to 2019. The aim of this manual will be to ease the confusion and doubt members may have about the former conflict in the Church and where the Church currently stands (Kerkbode 2020c).

5.4. OVERALL THEMES IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

5.4.1. Discrimination

This study discovered that sexual minorities experience a lot of discrimination in South Africa and within religious communities. The South African constitution protects LGBTQ+ persons from discrimination and violence and this has caused many LGBTQ+ persons to feel safer to express themselves (Kamrudin 2018:143). In section 3.2 it was pointed out that there are annual Pride events in urban areas such as Cape Town and Johannesburg that facilitate safe spaces for LGBTQ+ persons. These events enable such individuals to be more open about their identities and establish connections with like-minded people (Nkosi & Masson 2017:79). Unfortunately, the constitution has not prevailed against individuals who inflict pain on sexual minorities and do not treat them as equals, therefore it was evident that discrimination is still a serious problem in South Africa.

In section 4.1.3 it was discovered that once transgender persons have discovered their identity, they experience discrimination from medical establishments, the law, family, friends, places of employment and society (Stobie 2014:10). If these persons do not wear gender-appropriate clothing or act in a manner that is heteronormative, they experience discrimination and even transphobia from their religious communities and loved ones, and even from spaces or institutions supposed to facilitate care and protection. It was discovered that transgender persons of colour are categorized as one of the most marginalized groups in society (Ghabrial 2016:44).

In section 4.1.2 it was discovered that bisexual persons are subject to myths, stereotypes and stigmas by religious, heterosexual and homosexual communities. They are labelled as promiscuous, deviant, and confused about their orientation. Often bisexual persons are told that they are only going through a phase, because some homosexual persons first identify as bisexual before coming out homosexual (Levy & Harr 2018:189). These persons are also labelled as unfaithful, unfit for marriage (Toft 2012:189) and inconsistent in relationships (Clarke *et al.* 2010:87). This study, however, discovered that these stereotypes are without merit as bisexuality is a life-long sexual identity and many of the individuals are in committed, faithful and monogamous relationships. These relationships could be with either a person from the same-sex or the opposite sex and not necessarily at the same time. However, the persons that were polyamorous or non-monogamous were transparent about this fact with their partners (Clarke *et al.* 2010:87).

It has also been ascertained that most religious communities are condemnatory towards sexual minorities and that some South African religious institutions still conduct conversion therapy (Golomski 2019:47). LGBTQ+ persons experience much more rejection from rural communities than from urban communities. Consequently, many LGBTQ+ persons choose to keep their identities hidden (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89). This secrecy was discovered with all the sexual identities discussed in this study. LGBTQ+ persons also experienced Christians as primarily judgmental because they would call LGBTQ+ persons sinners, deviant or even demon-possessed (Nkosi & Masson 2017:89). The transgender identity has also been called satanic or 'unnatural', and these persons have also received unwanted criticism from religious people (Stobie 2014:10-11). Likewise, bisexual persons have experienced higher levels of biphobia from conservative religious groups and people (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:244). The two most prevalent reasons why churches reject bisexual persons are the stigmas of promiscuity and incompatibility with marriage (das Nair & Thomas 2012:101). Churches have also told bisexual persons to choose heterosexuality as it is perceived to be the 'nature of bisexuality' since same-sex attraction is regarded as against nature (Toft 2009:75) and also that these individuals are capable of fighting the impulses (Levy & Harr 2018:194).

5.4.2. Hate crimes

Many sexual minorities have been subjected to hate crimes due to their sexual identities. These persons were told that they were possessed by demons, but unfortunately, many persons stated that they were physically confronted or harmed by religious people who wanted to exorcise the demons from them (Nel *et al.* 2017:9718). This study discovered that these acts were most prominent towards homosexual and transgender individuals and noted some of the personal accounts regarding this issue. One person had been physically assaulted by a group of religious people. When this person cried that they were causing pain, they laughed and replied that the demon was talking and that the assault was working (Nel *et al.* 2017:9715).

In section 4.1.1, it was discovered that lesbians are regularly threatened with rape and some have had to endure the physical assault. The perpetrators argued that this act would 'cure' the women of homosexuality. One such example was of Keba Sebetoane that had been repeatedly raped. When she sought medical attention afterwards, the practitioner altered his report after learning about her sexuality. He condemned her and did not give her the care she desperately needed (Stobie 2014:8).

5.4.3. Acceptance, Rejection & Isolation

There were a few instances in this study where sexual minorities were accepted. They explained that they were shocked when religious leaders accepted their identities. In section 4.1.1, a lesbian wore masculine clothes to the funeral of her mother. Her church accepted her choice and sexual identity and, as a result, aided her acceptance and integration into the community and her family (Stobie 2014:9). It was apparent that acceptance was essential for sexual minorities. One participant explained that his family helped him to make peace with his identity (Nkosi & Masson 2017:86). Another was on the brink of suicide when his family discovered his sexuality. Their acceptance gave him hope for the future and enabled him to heal and grow (Cilliers 2013:334).

Unfortunately, the study discovered that acceptance was not the norm. LGBTQ+

persons feared rejection, being disowned, humiliation or being a disappointment to their loved ones. These fears were substantiated as most sexual minorities did experience these adverse reactions (Husakouskaya 2016:105). The mother of one homosexual person even prayed that God would kill her child for being gay (Nkosi & Masson 2017:88).

It was also discovered in 4.1.2 that bisexual persons experience rejection and isolation in both the heterosexual and homosexual communities (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:245). They are told to decide to be either homosexual or heterosexual (Gurevich *et al.* 2007:227) and are regarded as untrustworthy. In 4.1.3, transgender persons also experience much discrimination from lesbian persons as it is argued that they have an 'anti-male sentiment' (Stobie 2014:10). Consequently, they feel there is no place for them, or they feel stuck between communities (de Bruin & Arndt 2010:245). Similar discrimination, resulting in feelings of disgrace, is experienced in religious communities (Levy & Harr 2018:199). There are even gay-affirming churches that make bisexual persons feel unwelcome, especially if they bring a partner from the opposite sex with them (Toft 2012:200). Some persons have been told that they were going to hell and have consequently been excommunicated by their churches (Levy & Harr 2018:194).

It was also discovered that before the 2015 or 2019 decision by the DRC, some theology students experienced discrimination in relation to their sexual identities. This study discovered that one such student had told the Curatorium that she was homosexual and in a relationship. Initially, the church asked her to sign a document stating that she would remain celibate for the rest of her life. When she refused, they revoked her student status and her bursary, and demanded that she pay the bursary back (Van Loggerenberg 2014:180). Thus, it can be understood why certain LGBTQ+ persons have decided to keep their identities hidden from their churches, especially bisexual persons that could come across as heterosexual (Levy & Harr 2018:190). It was also discovered that to keep the identity hidden was initially a coping mechanism as some persons were also displaced from their homes after they came out (Levy & Harr 2018:200).

5.5. HOW DID THESE EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THEIR FAITH?

5.5.1. *Reconstruction of faith*

This study discovered that as sexual minorities struggled with rejection and discrimination, the majority shared the same reactions to integrate their spiritual and sexual identities. It has been established that many religious institutions were discriminatory, but sexual minorities also struggled to harmonize their Christian upbringings with their understanding of their sexual identity (Rosen 2017:19). Consequently, individuals have struggled with identity conflict. Fortunately, many of these individuals have reached the conclusion that if their spiritual and sexual identities become integrated, their well-being improves drastically (Levy & Harr 2018:189).

It was discovered that if bisexual persons struggle to harmonize their identities, they are more likely to abandon either organized religion or religion altogether than to reject their sexual identities (Levy & Harr 2018:200-201). Their reason for leaving the church is that the constant criticism and judgmental remarks have caused them to feel isolated further and that it would be detrimental to their well-being to stay (Rosen 2017:19). Transgender persons have similarly struggled as they have been told that God has created them in his image, but this has resulted in the question of whether God makes mistakes and, if so, is it then acceptable to rectify this mistake? Such questions have also caused individuals to feel guilty, conflicted, ashamed and confused (Stobie 2014:11).

Many persons have decided to rather adapt their religion to be able to experience peace and self-acceptance. Through adaptation, these persons experience a much more individualistic (Toft 2009:79) and personal relationship with God and Christianity where compassion and acceptance are integral and removed from the influence of 'religious pedagogy and compliance' (Stobie 2014:11). One example of positive integration was discovered in section 4.1.3 with Tebogo, a transgender sangoma, who successfully integrated Christianity with the 'traditional African belief systems' (Stobie 2014:11-12). Tebogo explained how he was able to re-introduce his new gender identity to the ancestors to keep their relationship intact (Stobie 2014:12). This study discovered that many transgender persons were concerned

that they would be left without the protection of their ancestors if they transitioned. Unfortunately, this fear was actualised by one person. His father refused to re-establish the connection after he had come out to him, thus leaving this individual without the protection of his ancestors (Husakouskaya 2016:106).

Most persons who had left organized religion still implemented and followed the guidelines and moral teachings of Christ. It was also discovered that many persons used meditation, observation (Toft 2009:79), prayer and silent time (Toft 2012:196) to practise their Christian faith.

5.5.2. Need for inclusivity and integration into communities

Though most sexual minorities were rejected by their faith communities, it was discovered that there was still the need to belong to a faith community. LGBTQ+ persons explained that God was central to the narratives of their lives and that faith groups could be beneficial for social support and integration into new communities. These social groups could also help persons to experience a sense of belonging (Husakouskaya 2016:105). Likewise, bisexual persons also enjoyed being a part of a faith community. It was discovered that many persons were active in the activities or events of their churches such as coffee mornings or Bible study groups. This involvement was not, however, the core of their religion but rather functioned as a way to sustain it (Toft 2012:194). Finding such an accepting group has proved to be quite difficult as the majority of churches are conservative or intolerant (Stobie 2014:11).

5.6. PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING

This study aimed to determine whether there is pastoral care or counselling available to LGBTQ+ persons in the DRC church. Apart from the 2004 GS decision stating that pastoral care had been developed for LGBTQ+ persons, literature could not be discovered to corroborate this statement. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine which pastoral care or psychological techniques could be utilized by the church to facilitate care and healing for sexual minorities.

5.6.1. Mental, emotional, and spiritual health

It was discovered religion is beneficial to the mental health of individuals as it improves self-efficacy, confidence, happiness, optimism, and hope. These positive effects are consistent during the life of a person regardless of their social background, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. It has also been discovered that religion improves the health of persons that struggle with depression (Young 2014:24). This study determined that sexual minorities experience many adverse mental, emotional and spiritual health problems when they are rejected, isolated, discriminated against or physically assaulted. Depression was one of the most prominent side effects and it was determined that sexual minorities have higher rather of suicide than any other social group (Paul 2016:92). Thus, sexual minorities must nurture their faith and receive care as religion has also been linked to the improvement of psychological health. Symptoms of anxiety and depression have also been lessened as a result (Young 2014:47).

The mental health struggles of transgender and bisexual persons are quite different from the struggles of a homosexual person with regard to their societal, religious, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences. Thus, these individuals should not be grouped together when pastoral care is facilitated (Young 2014:58). Bisexual persons, for example, have been diagnosed with more severe health problems than heterosexual or homosexual individuals as their sexuality is regarded as invalid and they experience rejection from both the heterosexual and homosexual communities. Bisexual persons are also more inclined to struggle with substance abuse to be able to cope with 'increased social stressors' (Young 2014:17).

Transgender persons, however, struggle with nervous breakdowns, depression, suicide, attempts at self-castration, self-harm, imprisonment, being raped, or difficulties in therapy (Stobie 2014:10). It was also discovered that transgender persons primarily struggle with suicide, suicidal thoughts or low self-esteem, especially transgender persons of colour (Ghabrial 2016:44). Furthermore, it has been established that sexual minorities struggle with minority stress and should therefore experience empathy from their caregivers. It should also become a priority to develop strategies to decrease the negative effects listed at the start of this

paragraph (Paul 2016:91).

5.6.2. What techniques could be used to facilitate healing?

This study discovered that there are various methods that could be utilized for pastoral care. A holistic approach to facilitate healing and spiritual growth could be most beneficial to sexual minorities as most of these individuals experience trauma and identity conflict. It was established that religion is beneficial to the overall health of a person and that despite adversity, these persons strive to remain religious or spiritual rather than reject their sexuality. Thus, the aim of pastoral care should be to integrate these identities to facilitate acceptance and integration, and the tools needed for independent growth and healing.

It was discovered in sections 4.3 and 4.4 that pastoral care should involve God in the process of counselling and use religion as the foundation for a nurturing relationship between the caregiver and careseeker (Hatch-Rivera 2018:9-10). The caregiver should aim to facilitate 'the visualisation of a new life filled with hopefulness' (Hatch-Rivera 2018:10).

Before pastoral care could be facilitated, it was determined that caregivers should first become self-aware of their own opinions, assumptions or prejudices (Hatch-Rivera 2018:16) to avoid conflict or counselling detrimental to the health of the careseeker. Caregivers should determine if they can care for an LGBTQ+ person, whether they are educated well about their cultural differences, and whether their own cultural biases will be ethically appropriate. Caregivers should also investigate their own gender identity and how this identity has been influenced by their personal perspective (Sandil & Henise 2017:58). If the caregiver determines that they will not be able to facilitate care as they are in fact discriminatory, it is advised that they refer the careseeker (Hatch-Rivera 2018:16) to another therapist or organisation that is both affirming and well-versed in church doctrine (Cavanagh 2017:39).

It was also discovered that there are three steps that could be taken to establish a faith community of care for sexual minorities. An earnest welcome should be established, the individual should be integrated into the congregation, and the church

should form alliances with other LGBTQ+ affirming organisations (Hatch-Rivera 2018:42). These steps could facilitate a safe space for the person where they can feel free to express their authentic selves and be protected against discrimination and judgment. It is also important that the relationship between the caregiver and careseeker is a safe haven (Hatch-Rivera 2018:15).

Furthermore, the 'three-musketeering approach' was discovered to be a collaborative approach that utilizes elements from pastoral care, narrative therapy, and positive psychology (Brunsdon 2014:2). Pastoral care is necessary for the integration of spiritual beliefs; positive psychology focuses on improving the general happiness of a person by improving the 'ability to be self-aware,' compassionate and many more aspects further discussed in section 4.4 (Bar-On 2010:56). As a part of positive psychology, the importance of resilience and posttraumatic growth was discovered. These elements enable the careseeker to recover from a traumatic experience by discovering new meaning in life and realising that they have the strength to face their obstacles. These persons will also achieve lower levels of stress with these practices (Brunsdon 2014:7).

It was also discovered that LGBTQ+ persons require that their caregiver listens, hears and respects them (Hatch-Rivera 2018:46-47). Thus, section 4.3 distinguished six methods for listening, namely casually, for comprehension, critically, appreciatively, therapeutically, and healing (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51). It was noted that healing listening is the most important method as the caregiver has no hidden agenda but is simply present with the speaker as they share their story (Hatch-Rivera 2018:51).

The importance of narrative therapy was also examined. It was determined that narrative therapy is affirmative and helps LGBTQ+ persons to overcome their struggles. This approach allows the speaker to share their stories and give the caregiver necessary information about their struggles (Sollenberger 2017:31). This approach has also been classified as empowering to the careseeker (Naidoo 2019:4) as they are the expert of their story (Brunsdon 2014:6) and can choose what they want to disclose (Naidoo 2019:4). By telling their story, the person will be able to better understand their own feelings, experiences, and emotions (Naidoo 2019:4-5).

The aim of narrative therapy is to enable the person to develop alternative stories for their struggles, to encourage a new, validated and sustaining life (Brunsdon 2014:6).

Lastly, meditative techniques were analysed to determine if they could aid the well-being of the careseeker. It was discovered that mindful meditation, Centering prayer and One Breath could be utilized in pastoral care. These methods all promote the improvement of emotional stability and a decrease in anxiety and depression. These methods were investigated in section 4.4. The practice of mindful meditation focuses on lowering the amygdala activity so as to lower the levels of stress that a person may be experiencing (Bingaman 2014:11). It requires that the person become aware of their emotions, bodily movements, and thoughts without trying to alter them or be critical. The core idea is that the exercise is done from the viewpoint of a 'nonjudgmental third party' (Bingaman 2014:12). One Breath is similar to this practice as the person should practise silencing their thoughts and solely focusing on their breathing until they no longer feel as though they are breathing but rather that they are being breathed (Edwards 2011:3). Centering Prayer is quite similar as well because it also involves a form of meditation. This exercise focuses on being present with God and using a word or mantra to become centred in God (Bingaman 2014:72). It has been discovered that these meditative practices are beneficial for lower levels of anxiety, improvement of depression, chronic pain, substance abuse (Hölzel *et al.* 2011:537), spiritual growth and emotional stability (Bingaman 2014:59).

This study argues that these methods could benefit persons that have experienced traumatic events such as being disowned, disconnected from ancestors or faith communities, and being the victim of rape because these methods, combined with pastoral care, will facilitate healing, strength, spiritual growth and the improvement of a person's well-being. As was discovered in this study, sexual minorities experience a lot of adversity in their religion, but if proper methods are utilized, individuals could strengthen their relationship to God and the faith community as they evidently have a strong desire to belong and to feel whole and integrated.

It was determined that more research is required regarding the availability of pastoral care and counselling in the DRC. According to the knowledge of the researcher, there was no literature available regarding this aspect. Thus, this study could

contribute knowledge to future practice because the methods and techniques discussed in this study could be used as a starting point for effective pastoral care. It was determined that LGBTQ+ persons have the same everyday problems as their heterosexual counterparts. However, sexual minorities primarily have specific needs that need to be examined during pastoral care if they experience rejection after disclosing their identities to the people close to them; if they are victims of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic attacks, and if they experience difficulties when they seek employment or medical attention. They also struggle to harmonize their sexual and religious identities. This study discovered that narrative therapy as well as meditative practices were greatly beneficial to the well-being of sexual minorities. These practices facilitated healing after troubling events and aided in identity integration and spiritual growth. These practices also enabled careseekers to become self-sufficient in their care as they learned how to self-regulate their emotions and become better equipped with assessing certain situations that could cause anxiety. This study could contribute to the body of knowledge regarding LGBTQ+ pastoral care in the DRC.

5.7. FURTHER RESEARCH

This study determined that there are areas that require further research. The most prominent is the lack of research on bisexual and transgender persons in South Africa. There is especially a lack of material regarding bisexual persons. Further study could be done on their religious experiences and mental health difficulties. The involvement of the DRC with bisexual and transgender persons could benefit from further research as these identities are quite different from homosexual persons but still require theological guidance. Lastly, further research could be implemented on conversion therapy that is still prevalent in South Africa as well as on the implications of these practices on the mental and spiritual health of individuals.

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