

# THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN ZIMBABWE

A Socio-historical analysis of the political, cultural and Christian arguments in the homosexual public debate with special reference to the use of the Bible

Masiwa Ragies Gunda



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Joachim Kügler, Lovemore Togarasei & Masiwa R. Gunda

in  
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with  
Ezra Chitando  
and  
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**Masiwa Ragies Gunda**



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## On the Series

*"I do not know of any positive association with bias in English but I think it is ironical and I would suggest we keep it. My reasons are simple, first; there is indeed a lot of bias in the manner the Bible has been used in Africa, and Europe etc. BiAS would be an interesting series title for us. Second, the series is taking a deliberate decision to focus more on the Bible in Africa, which essentially is a bias also. I therefore think this title should clearly explain the core of what we are going to do, and maybe at the end of the series people will realise bias is not always bad." (M. R. Gunda)*

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*Joachim Kügler – Lovemore Togarasei – Masiwa R. Gunda*

## *Epigraph*

The search for meaning must always precede the search for truth.  
The search for meaning leads to understanding, while the search  
for truth is a search for power.

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## ***Acronyms/Abbreviations***

ACHPR	African Charter for Human and People's Rights
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts
AIDS	Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
BCE	Before the Common Era
CAR	Central African Republic
CBR	Catholic Bishops of Rhodesia
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CE	Common Era
CPCA	(Anglican) Church Province of Central Africa
DCT	Divine Command Theory
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FOG	Family of God Church
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTI	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals and Intersexed
MCZ	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
MP	Member of Parliament
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCC <sup>1</sup>	Women's Cultural Club
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZANU	Zimbabwe National African Union
ZAOGA	Zimbabwe Assembly of God Africa
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference
ZCBC-SCD	ZCBC – Social Communications Department
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZCC <sup>M</sup>	Zion Christian Church (Mutendi)
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZIBF	Zimbabwe International Book Fair
ZINATHA	Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association

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## ***Preface***

From the famous “Reconciliation Speech” of Robert Mugabe at independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has enjoyed its fair share of international limelight, initially as the beacon of hope for Africans but in 1995, through the famous “worse than dogs and pigs speech” at the ZIBF in reference to homosexual persons, Zimbabwe once again hogged the international limelight though this time as a brutal abuser of human rights. This study sought to investigate and understand the central problems exposed in the debate following the 1995 speech, with a special interest on the manner in which the Bible was used in the debate. While the Bible occupies a privileged position, attempts have been made to understand the debate within its socio-historical context.

A socio-historical analysis of the Zimbabwean debate on homosexuality in this study has demonstrated widespread agreement that homosexual persons do exist in Zimbabwe and have been in existence for much longer than many Zimbabweans are willing to admit. The existence of same-sex sexual practices in the colonial and post-colonial eras in Zimbabwe is testified to in some sources, while some traditional notions point to the existence of some forms of same-sex practices in the pre-colonial era. While many would argue that the debate was about the origins of homosexuality, this study has argued that the debate was centred on the acceptability or unacceptability of homosexuality or homosexual persons within Zimbabwean communities. The Zimbabwean debate shows that there are apparent double standards in the manner in which homosexuality and heterosexuality are treated in contemporary Zimbabwean communities. Homosexuality is ridiculed because it is violent and criminal. Homosexual persons are ridiculed because they are promiscuous and indecent since they seek “to have sex in public” according to Mugabe. The same actions seen as private issues for heterosexual persons are made public concerns for homosexual persons. In all this, the Bible has been invoked to justify and legitimize the negative perceptions and stereotypes people have of homosexual persons.

This study further observes that homosexuality has exposed a fundamental dilemma for Zimbabweans. Zimbabwe like many other African nations stands at a cultural crossroads and face the challenge of choosing between monadic Western cultural heritages upon which the modern state is based or dyadic pre-colonial cultural heritage whose survival is attested to in many practices in contemporary Zimbabwe and to which some aspire to return. With no clear guidelines on how to compromise between the two cultural heritages, the cultural crossroads appears to be a dead-end. It is argued in this study that the homosexual debate should be seen as one of many issues that have been at the centre of many North-South cultural tussles in the 20th and 21st centuries. The sexual rights lobby represented by GALZ bases its arguments on the primacy of the individual and the existence of “inalienable individual rights” for all while the responses from politicians, traditional leaders and Christians have tended to emphasize the primacy of the community. Most Zimbabwean communities remain undecided or uncommitted as to whether they are dyadic or monadic. The post-colonial communities in which the debate played out appear to be the most affected due to the existence of these two competing cultural systems in both of which they have been thoroughly socialized.

Throughout this study it is contended that the Bible is a culturally, socially, geographically and historically limited collection of writings and the most influential book among contemporary Zimbabweans of whom about 70% profess to be Christian. On this basis, an exegetical analysis of the key biblical texts (Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:24-26, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10) used against homosexuality appears to sustain the general conclusion that these texts are neither general statements nor universal injunctions. The argument in this study is that these texts are reactive not proactive. They respond to existential circumstances of their time within the parameters of their knowledge at that time. This study therefore rejects the assumption that on homosexuality the Bible is timeless! It is further ar-

gued that the Bible was deployed in the Zimbabwean debate to justify prejudices; hence the call to study the Bible critically. Instead of seeking to understand the Bible in its own context, the contributors sought to justify their perceptions. However, taking cognisance of the fact that the Bible remains critical for the Christian faith, it is argued that the texts on homosexuality clearly provide guidelines for deplorable and condemnable same-sex practices, particularly those meant to dominate and humiliate others.

## **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1 Statement of the Problem***

This study has as its major focus the Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe. These two subjects are essentially challenging and controversial in almost all Christian communities throughout the world. In this context therefore, the central problem lies in the interface between the Bible and homosexuality in Zimbabwe. This interface has invoked political, cultural, religious and social controversies in Zimbabwe for the past two decades, with an unprecedented public participation between 1995 and 2000. Owing to the different perceptions that scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible have, there have been marked differences on how one can deal with homosexuality or sexual minorities within studies of the Bible. What then is the relationship between the biblical injunctions on homosexuality and contemporary attitudes to homosexuality and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe?

Homosexual persons have challenged the Zimbabwean society to honour individual sexual rights and have asked to be tolerated and not to be hated. Politicians have called homosexual practice a criminal offence and have threatened to send homosexual persons to jail; traditional leaders with the support of both politicians and Christian leaders have labeled homosexuality un-African and a clear case of Western cultural imperialism and therefore totally unacceptable. Christians with the consent of politicians and traditional leaders have invoked the Bible in labeling homosexual practice a sin roundly condemned by the “Word of God”, the Bible. The Bible has been invoked mostly as the final authority on the subject of homosexuality, and two contending modes of reading have emerged: on the one hand, the majority of Christians have insisted on using the “explicit texts” (namely, Gen. 19:1-29; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1Cor. 6:9-10; Rom. 1:18-32; and 1Tim. 1:10), while, homosexual persons have emphasized the central message of the Christian faith represented in the empathy and love demonstrated by Jesus towards those on the fringes of society.

The central problem can therefore be sufficiently represented through a number of questions that this study sets out to investigate: What is the understanding of homosexuality in the Zimbabwean debate? Did the biblical authors know homosexuality as it is known now through the acquisition of scientific knowledge? Are there other issues that could have influenced the debate? Further, should the Bible be literally transplanted into contemporary debates irrespective of contemporary knowledge that challenges some biblical assertions?

### **1.1.1 The Bible as a Problem**

The idea of making the Bible part of the problem in this study is itself problematic because the Bible is treated by most Zimbabwean Christians as “the Holy Scriptures originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, without error and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.”<sup>1</sup> This has had the effect of making the Bible the last “court of appeal” on any subject that may confront faith communities including non-members who happen to live within the community’s sphere of influence. The inspiration and infallibility of the Bible have remained fertile grounds for scholarly disputes. In the Zimbabwean context these concepts are invoked to silence those who are inquisitive yet as Martin Prozesky writes;

Deference to scriptural authority is not in practice a straightforward matter, for when a man regards the Bible as a supreme authority he will face a number of problems: the Bible does not contain provisions for all conceivable situations; it does not always speak with one voice on a given subject; its meanings are often far from clear.<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, the Bible is problematic because Zimbabwean users of the Bible have tried to extract from it more than the Bible can

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe Statement of Faith 1992 in: Frans J. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses: Contemporary Aspects of Christianity in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Martin H. Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual: Some Reflections“ in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Nr. 10, 1975, pp17-24, 20.

provide and conveniently ignored the fact that “no text [including the Bible] comes to us without the plural and ambiguous history effects of its own production and its former receptions.”<sup>3</sup>

Even though believers perceive the Bible as the supreme authority, they almost always want and have to interpret it. The result of this need for interpretation is important for this study. Norman Gottwald raises a question that remains valid to date: “Why is it that people have such different, even contradictory, understandings of the religious meaning and value of the Bible?”<sup>4</sup> Further, “the ease with which one can use a passage of scripture to one’s advantage shows the need for serious Bible study in a critical sense and not in a merely literal sense.”<sup>5</sup> The Bible therefore forms part of the problem because it is a site of struggle<sup>6</sup> and in it the debate on homosexuality is being fought. The problems of interpretation are exacerbated in the Zimbabwean debate because of the apparent disregard of the importance of the socio-historical context within which the “explicit texts” were coined, hence the question, is the Bible a historically, socially and culturally unlimited and timeless book?

### **1.1.2 Homosexuality as a Problem**

That homosexuality is considered here as part of the problem is also problematic. Homosexuality is frequently dealt with at various levels in different communities, from political, cultural, biological and religious perspectives. Homosexuality is a challenge that cuts across all these spheres and despite the fact that it has

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<sup>3</sup> Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publ., 1995, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-literary Introduction*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Deotis J. Roberts, *Africentric Christianity: A Theological Appraisal for Ministry*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 154-162.

been under discussion in the West since the nineteenth century<sup>7</sup> no country, including Zimbabwe, can assert that homosexuality is no longer a challenge in their societies. In spite of the few numbers of out-gays and lesbians, Zimbabweans from all walks of life responded as though their very 'survival' depended on this subject. That homosexuality inspired and instigated such a heated debate in Zimbabwe is part of the reason why it is a part of the study's problem.

Homosexual is an unusual word in that it is a compound word, made from the Greek prefix *homo* and the Latin root *sexualis*. The Greek prefix *homo* is translated 'same' in English hence when translated into English *homosexualis* is same-sex. Homosexual which is compounded macaronically of a Greek prefix and Latin root, its most obvious meaning is 'of one sex' (as homogeneous, 'of one kind'). This definition is quite adequate in reference to a relationship or sexual act: sexual relation involving two parties 'of one sex' is indeed a homosexual one.<sup>8</sup>

While John Boswell gives the impression that homosexuality can refer to either relationship or activity, this is not universally accepted. According to Bebson Igboin homosexuality is the "persistent preoccupation with erotic encounters involving members of the same sex, which may or may not be acted out with another person"<sup>9</sup> essentially raising doubts about the possibility of same-sex relationships.

In Zimbabwe, it has been argued that homosexuality has always been part of Zimbabwean societies from the pre-colonial times<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. David M. Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and other essays on Greek Love*, New York: Routledge, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the 14th Century*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Bebson Ohihon Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“ in: S. O. Abogunrin (ed), *Biblical View of Sex and Sexuality from African Perspective*, Ibadan: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS), 2006, 340-1.

<sup>10</sup> See Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*, London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004 and William Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Phenomenological Investigation, Unpublished Dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2002.

while for others homosexuality is a western attempt at culturally re-colonising Zimbabwe hence Chris Dunton and Mai Palmberg rightly observes that “the push by predominantly foreign individuals and institutions for the recognition of gay rights was interpreted by the [*Harare*] *Sunday Mail* as ‘an attempt to manufacture the gays and lesbians of Zimbabwe as a burning human rights issue’ as an attempt to re-colonise Zimbabwe.”<sup>11</sup> The challenge therefore is, whether homosexuality is indeed part of the neo-colonial agenda of Western nations or is it being used as a ruse for undermining individual human rights under the pretext of protecting cultural identity and sovereignty?

## **1.2 The Bible and Homosexuality in Previous Studies**

There exist substantial pieces of literature on the subject that it is impossible to deal with all the literature here. This section is therefore not exhaustive of the literature in circulation. Instead, this section seeks to give a sample of the discussions that have characterized most of the written works. Three sub-sections focusing on literature from the Western world, from Africa but outside Zimbabwe and finally literature from and about Zimbabwe will be deployed.

### **1.2.1 The Bible and Homosexuality in the West**

The Western world is rightly credited for trend-setting in biblical studies, of special importance being developments leading to and during the Enlightenment era and beyond. The Enlightenment era greats “believed that human reason could be used to combat ignorance, superstition, and tyranny and to build a better world. Their principal targets were religion (embodied in France in the Catholic Church) and the domination of society by a hereditary

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<sup>11</sup> Chris Dunton & Mai Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality in Southern Africa*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996, 10-11.

aristocracy.”<sup>12</sup> While emphasizing rational thought, it was an era that sought to challenge the authoritarian nature of the Church then hence Paul Briens writes;

One way to undermine the power of the Church was to undermine its credibility, and thus Voltaire devoted a great deal of his time to attacking the fundamentals of Christian belief: the inspiration of the Bible, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the damnation of unbelievers.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to this era, the Bible had largely been studied dogmatically in most cases with the Church deciding all issues to do with interpretation. The Enlightenment opened the doors to the critical study of the Bible.

Similarly, there have been wide ranging developments also surrounding the subject of homosexuality in the Western world, from the hey days of the Inquisitions and burning of homosexual persons on the stakes, then the medicalization of homosexuality during which time homosexuality was associated with some developmental challenges on the part of homosexual persons. Finally, the Western world has now reached a stage of relative political tolerance hence people in the Western countries need to be “politically correct” when addressing this subject. This section seeks to highlight the impact of these developments on contemporary perceptions apparent in the Zimbabwean debate and on this study.

### **1.2.1.1 On the interpretation of the Bible**

Many names can be given when the history of the critical study of the Bible is retold, among the leading figures being Baruch Spinoza, arguably the father of the historical-critical methods<sup>14</sup>, Julius Wellhausen<sup>15</sup> who popularized source criticism and Her-

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Briens “The Enlightenment” 11/03/1998 available online: [www.wsu.edu/~briens/hum\\_303/enlightenment.html](http://www.wsu.edu/~briens/hum_303/enlightenment.html) accessed 10/12/ 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Briens “The Enlightenment”.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Julius Wellhausen is author of the groundbreaking text, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, New York: Meridian Books, 1957.

man Gunkel<sup>16</sup>, the father of form criticism. Subsequent methods were developed in the West and these can be classified under the historical-critical methods, the literary-critical methods and social-scientific methods of studying the Bible. These methods arose mainly as a reaction to the confessional and religious methods that had been in use in biblical studies as sponsored by the churches prior to this era.<sup>17</sup> It is important to highlight that these developments changed the people's perceptions of the Bible in the West and their influence spread from Europe throughout the world, at least in those areas where the Bible is studied critically.

These different methods have particular and sometimes exclusive contentions and have had varied impact on the contemporary usage and perceptions on the Bible. "The historical-critical approaches were/are concerned with the relationship between the text and the author or source."<sup>18</sup> These approaches emphasized the historical nature of the Bible hence they raised questions regarding authorship, date and place of writing and intended audience. To this effect John Barton argues "Historical critics are interested in genetic questions [...] in the 'original' meaning of the text, what it meant to original readers."<sup>19</sup> The assumption behind this is best summed up by Robertson Smith who writes, "[...] the main reason why so many parts of the Old Testament [the Bible] are practically a sealed book even to thoughtful people is simply that they have not the historical key to the interpretation of that wonderful literature."<sup>20</sup> The infallibility of the Bible and the meaning of the inspiration of the Bible became highly debatable owing to the fact that these methods went a long way to demonstrate that the Bible had a history and that it was produced by

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<sup>16</sup> Herman Gunkel is the author of the book, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical saga and history*, Chicago: Open Court, 1901.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 5-33.

<sup>18</sup> West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> John Barton (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> W. Robertson Smith „Preface“ in Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, vii.

human beings who lived at a particular time and place. Essentially, the Bible became a historical document to be studied like other historical productions.

The historical critical approaches with their scientific claims became the dominant methods of biblical interpretation of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries and remain so in biblical studies in Zimbabwe. This does not at all imply their death in the West; rather it is an acknowledgement of the rise of other approaches. The rise of other approaches after the successes of the historical-critical approaches is predicated on the realisation that historical-critical approaches tended to rely heavily on extra-biblical sources. The biblical text was thus not seen as complete in itself. This saw approaches that viewed “the Bible as a literary production which creates its own fictive world of meaning and should be understood as a literary medium, that is, as words that conjure up their own imaginative reality.”<sup>21</sup> Literary approaches to the study of the Bible focus their attention on the text itself and were greatly influenced by developments in literature studies. The Bible was once again taken off the pedestal of a divine revelation and/or a historical document to literature. This interest in the text itself led to the development of structuralist, literary and canonical approaches.<sup>22</sup>

Owing to various theories from the social sciences, biblical studies were again influenced in the manner in which they could study the Bible. The central argument from the social sciences being that the text witnesses to the social processes within a particular community. In this light, “the Bible [was then viewed] as a social document that reflects the history of changing social structures, functions, and roles in ancient Israel.”<sup>23</sup> While earlier attempts had emphasized that the Bible is a religious book, with the input from social sciences it became apparent that “religion deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the

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<sup>21</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 22.

origin of society and groups within the society, the relationship of individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature.”<sup>24</sup> The implication of this observation is that within religious texts, one meets all the vicissitudes of social life in the community behind the creation of such a religious document. The Bible was then understood as a book that upon social scientific inquiry can illustrate the social life, social processes and social conflicts in ancient Israel. These developments in the study of the Bible in the West led to the waning of biblical influence in the West, particularly in the public sphere.

### 1.2.1.2 Homosexuality and Christianity in Europe

The word homosexuality is in every way conceivable linked to Europe, first because of its derivation from Greek and Latin and secondly because it was coined in Europe, “in the late 19th century by a German psychologist, Karoly Maria Benkert.”<sup>25</sup> While its first usage was in Germany, “Charles Gilbert Chaddock is credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* with having introduced ‘homo-sexuality’ into the English language in 1892, in order to render a German cognate [*Homosexualität*] twenty years its senior.”<sup>26</sup> The proclamation of a century of homosexuality as carried in the title of David Halpern’s book has other implications besides the coinage of the term itself and this has been aptly captured by Michel Foucault when he writes;

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The Sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology Third Edition*, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987, 314.

<sup>25</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, „Homosexuality“ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/homosexuality> accessed 08/10/2007.

<sup>26</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, 43.

This proclamation has as its centre the idea that homosexuality as an identity is a nineteenth century European development. This however does not at all imply that homosexuality was celebrated rather, as James Jones writes, “by the nineteenth century European societies generally viewed sexual relationships between persons of the same sex negatively and it became a ‘crime against nature’.”<sup>28</sup> With the Church having been such a powerful institution in the West, the earliest positions regarding same-sex activities were understood as falling in the domain of the Church. It is not surprising that the Bible became influential and this can be seen in the ideology of the sodomite, which is based on Gen. 19. In that regard Louis Crompton writes, “Christian Europe, from the fourth century onward, regarded same-sex relations as anathema, and its nations competed in devising punishments for ‘unnatural’ crimes. Homosexuality became the *peccatum non nominandum inter Christianos*, ‘the sin not even to be mentioned among Christians’.”<sup>29</sup>

The Enlightenment era in the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw homosexuality being removed from the exclusive domain of the Church into the public domain;

during which time much was written about lesbians and gays in Europe, psychiatrists, doctors, judges, politicians and the clergy seem to have known very well who ‘the homosexual’ was and what ‘he’ was like. The discourses about homosexuality and ‘the homosexual’ were still shaped by those who had the power, the money and the facilities to publish their opinions and points of view.<sup>30</sup>

Jones observes that different institutions took turns to condemn same-sex sexual acts from the twelfth century: the Church, governments, Medicine.<sup>31</sup> Could homosexuality be viewed positively

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<sup>28</sup> James W. Jones „*We of the Third Sex*“: *Literary Representations of Homosexuality in Wilhemine Germany*, New York: Peter Lang, 1990, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Germond & Steve de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, 154-5.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jones „*We of the Third Sex*“, 44-51.

during an era when according to Halpern for “modern gynaecologists [of that time] ‘the fundamental biologic factor in women is the urge of motherhood balanced by the fact that sexual pleasure is entirely secondary or even absent’.”<sup>32</sup> In this context, “sexual relations between women are here classed as ‘unnatural’ because ‘nature’ assumes that what are significant in sexual activity are (i) men, (ii) penises that penetrate, and (iii) the articulation thereby of relative statuses through relations of dominance.”<sup>33</sup> The fact that homosexuality was only struck down from the list of the American Psychological Association (APA) as a disorder in 1973 meant that it was understood for long periods as a sickness.<sup>34</sup>

As the medical branch in this widespread interest on homosexuality continued to grow in influence, divisions rocked the perceptions that people had. According to Jones two camps emerged within the medical branch, one advancing the innate theory from a biological aspect while the other advanced the social construction of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular.<sup>35</sup> This division is popularly understood as the nature/nurture dichotomy and continues to date under the categories of essentialism and constructionism. The divisions themselves have not been aided by researches from biology, physiology and genetics because none of these researches so far has provided irrefutable and absolute conclusions and findings.<sup>36</sup> With these researches remaining tentative, scholars of homosexuality and sexuality in general have largely relied on conjectures and imagination.

Among scholars arguing for the social construction of homosexuality and sexuality in general Halpern argues that “unlike sex,

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<sup>32</sup> Willard R. Cooke in: Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 141-2.

<sup>33</sup> Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 39.

<sup>34</sup> The information on the APA move to delist homosexuality as a disorder was obtained online: [www.narth.com/docs/normalization.html](http://www.narth.com/docs/normalization.html) accessed 10/07/2008.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Jones „*We of the Third Sex*“, 80ff.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Robert Ehrlich, *Eight Preposterous Propositions: From the Genetics of Homosexuality to the Benefits of Global Warming*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

which is a natural fact, sexuality is a cultural production.”<sup>37</sup> Michel Foucault seems to have played the role of the god-father for this line of argumentation as he argued on the role of the capitalist society in the construction of the homosexual as a species.<sup>38</sup> These scholars have also studied same-sex activities from ancient Greece and Rome and their conclusion has been that “contemporary homosexuality differs from Greek pederasty but both are socially constructed.”<sup>39</sup> The arguments are predicated on the understanding that “the social body precedes the sexual body”<sup>40</sup> by which it is implied that sexuality is determined and must conform to the expectations laid on the social body by the society. The social body on the other hand is defined by society resulting in the construction of the masculine and feminine bodies, in which case “masculinity is the aggregate combining the congruent functions of penetration, activity, dominance and social precedence [while] femininity signifies penetrability, passivity, submission and social subordination.”<sup>41</sup> These are central arguments within the constructionist perspective.

The essentialist argument has drawn inspiration from the biological and genetic researches which have tentatively suggested there could be a possibility that homosexuality can be caused by hormonal, biological or genetic factors. Martti Nissinen writes, “The late John Boswell’s *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (1980) is a classic essentialist work.”<sup>42</sup> Central to the essentialist argument is the idea that homosexuality has always been in existence and is not limited to human beings only. Further, it is argued that there is enough room to suspect biological,

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<sup>37</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> This argument runs through the *History of Sexuality* volumes of Foucault in which he identifies the rise of the capitalist state and the transformation of people into populations in what he calls the commodification of persons into producers/labourers and consumers.

<sup>39</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 130.

<sup>40</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 37-8.

<sup>41</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 130.

<sup>42</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homosexualities in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998

genetic or hormonal bases for sexual orientation as can be seen from the samples below.

Twin studies show a higher concordance for homosexuality among homozygous twins (identical) than among heterozygous twins (fraternal). Among identical twins, concordance rates for homosexuality are reported in the range of 48-66%, which indicates that genetic factors most likely play a role but are not the only factors in the expression of homosexuality. Molecular linkage studies have suggested chromosomal regions that may be involved in conferring a susceptibility to homosexuality (for example, Xq28), but a specific gene has not yet been identified.<sup>43</sup>

This self-generation of homosexuality is also demonstrated by studies of non-human species, from which studies it seems that there *may* be a connection between sexual orientation and biological make up. According to Patricia Bazemore;

Same-sex domestic and sexual relationships are a phenomenon found not only in humans but also in animals. Intensive studies involving several animals (for example birds and sheep) have also shown same-sex domestic and sexual relationships. Rosselli notes that studies have shown that 8-10% of rams are male-oriented in partner selection. Comparative studies of female-oriented and male-oriented rams have not identified social factors to explain the dichotomy.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the fact that these researches are not absolute and conclusive, essentialist scholars see these results as not disproving the innate nature of homosexuality. These inconclusive results are good enough to show that homosexuality has always existed from ancient Greece and Rome to the present. What happened then may not have been explicitly named homosexuality but with the benefit of hindsight, essentialist scholars have concluded that it was indeed homosexuality. If homosexual persons have existed from ancient societies as well as where they are persecuted it would suggest that homosexuality is not socially constructed but innate.

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<sup>43</sup> Patricia H. Bazemore „eMedicine-Homosexuality“ available online [www.emedicine.com/Med/topic3359.htm](http://www.emedicine.com/Med/topic3359.htm) accessed 27/10/2007.

<sup>44</sup> Bazemore „eMedicine-Homosexuality“.

### 1.2.1.3 Homosexuality in/and the Bible

Owing to the different perceptions that scholars of the Bible have, there have been marked differences on how one can deal with homosexuality within biblical studies. Two major positions can be identified, that is, on the one hand there are those who argue that the Bible condemns all forms of homosexuality, in all places and at all times, while on the other hand, there are those who argue that the Bible condemns some forms of same-sex practices that were known to biblical authors but does not say anything regarding the dominant form of contemporary homosexuality. There are texts that have been identified within the Bible, texts that in contemporary translations mention homosexuality. The first critical question in this is whether the Bible talks about homosexuality as it is defined today, particularly the fact that it is seen as consensual.<sup>45</sup> Liberal<sup>46</sup> western scholars have called for a critical study of the texts to understand exactly what they condemned in ancient Israel hence Steven Greenberg writes, “In the few sources where male homosexual relations do appear, they are part of a depiction of exploitation, violence, selfishness and cruelty.”<sup>47</sup> In this line of argumentation the Bible is taken as condemning some forms of same-sex sexual practices, which practices are not necessarily similar to contemporary homosexuality.

There are other scholars who argue that within the Bible there exist two forms of values, that is, cultural values and transcultural values. The tradition in Christianity has been to ignore cultural values, that is, values that are culture specific to the Israelites but

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 37ff.

<sup>46</sup> The terms liberal and conservative will be used in this piece to differentiate between those scholars and users of the Bible who approach the Bible as a collection of religious books and authoritative but the former recognizing that such books are closely connected to the actual history of the ancient Israelites hence demanding that interpreters be conversant with that historical reality while the latter are those scholars who argue that the Bible is timeless and inerrant. These designations are contested hence it is always important to highlight the narrow sense in which they will be used in this work.

<sup>47</sup> Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Man: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, 67.

it has also maintained the transcultural values because these are absolute and cannot be compromised. It is therefore argued by William J. Webb that homosexuality is dealt with in the Bible under the realm of transcultural/Kingdom values and since it is condemned it means that there is no room for the accommodation of homosexuality.<sup>48</sup> For these scholars, the consistency of the Bible, that is, the Old Testament and the New Testament on the condemnation of homosexuality implies that homosexuality in all its forms is absolutely condemned by the Bible. Indeed, there is nothing to discuss save to reiterate the divine position on the subject and to call upon the sinners to repent. This division among biblical scholars in the West continues and similar traits are manifest in Zimbabwe as well, though with differing degrees.

### **1.2.2 *The Bible and Homosexuality in Africa (Excluding Zimbabwe)***

There are discussions scattered across the breadth and length of the African continent, be it in biblical studies or (homo) sexuality or a combination of both. While there are some pieces of literature coming from different African scholars from different countries, there is no doubt that South Africa has been the most dominant. This is especially true on discussions on homosexuality in Africa. This section like the one above is not taken to be exhaustive of all works on the subject, rather this section seeks to carry out a survey and highlight the major viewpoints and arguments and will be split into three sub-sections, the first focusing on the Bible in Africa, the second focusing on South Africa and the third focusing on other African contributions.

#### **1.2.2.1 *The Bible in Africa***

The centrality of the Bible in Africa has always been emphasized in the works of African theologians and its use in various fora by

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2002, 41.

Africans. This centrality of the Bible led Mercy Amba Oduyoye to write that the first source for doing theology is the Bible. Even for those who cannot read, the Bible is a living book. If they cannot read, they have it read to them.<sup>49</sup> The Bible, unlike many other books, is not a book for the literate only. It is a book whose influence does not spare the illiterate, paradoxically, the illiterate read the Bible because not only do they hear it read in Churches and schools, but more so in their own homes.<sup>50</sup> The challenge with texts that attain the kind of status that the Bible has attained in Africa is that it can inspire communities to do good to or to harm others especially when people only consider their actions right if “it is in the Bible.”<sup>51</sup> This search for what is in the Bible has influenced in large measure the contextualized selective literal appropriations of the Bible prevalent in most African Christian communities.

This centrality of the Bible has not only been limited to popular readings of the Bible. In fact, the prominent African scholars who have made most of the contributions in biblical studies in Africa have been theologians and their interaction with the Bible has largely been for theological purposes. Among the leading lights on the Bible in Africa being John S. Mbiti, B. Idowu, Dickson Kwesi, Gerald O. West, Musa W. Dube and others. Biblical scholarship has therefore been a handmaid to theology. Justin S. Ukpog developed a chronology of African biblical scholarship and divided it into three phases, the first of which begins in the 1930s until the 1970s and which he calls the reactive phase. Its major focus appears to have been the legitimization of African religion and culture through comparative studies. It was then replaced by

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<sup>49</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. John S. Mbiti, “Do you understand what you are reading? The Bible in African homes, schools and Churches” in: *Missionalia* 33 (2), 2005, 240. See also, Emmanuel A. Obeng, “Emerging concerns for Biblical Scholarship in Ghana” in: Mary N. Getui, Tinyiko Maluleke & Justin Ukpog (eds), *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Mbiti, “Do you understand what you are reading?”, 237.

the reactive-proactive phase of the 1970s to the 1990s, which made use of the African context as a resource for biblical interpretation. Finally, the 1990s saw the rise of the proactive phase, which made the African context the explicit subject of biblical interpretation.<sup>52</sup>

The central concern for African theologians has been to establish an African Christian Theology that is independent of the western roots of most of contemporary African Christianity yet a theology that is based on and legitimized by the Bible.<sup>53</sup> This quest has seen most African theologians arguing that the Bible is at home in Africa because “Africans identify with much in the Bible.”<sup>54</sup> To that extent, Knut Holter is correct when writing “looking back, it seems clear that the twentieth century made the Old Testament [the Bible] an African book.”<sup>55</sup> While attempts have been made to appropriate the Bible from an African perspective, these attempts have not been fundamentally different from the manner in which the Bible was used by Western missionaries, that is, the Bible as an instrument that could effectively serve their purpose.

The only fundamental difference between the two being that Western missionaries saw everything African being condemned by the Bible while for African theologians, the Bible speaks the language of Africans using African conceptions.<sup>56</sup> Lately, the Bible has also been used to condemn everything labelled Western by Africans while justifying almost everything labelled African. This

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. J. S. Ukpong “Developments in biblical interpretation in modern Africa” in: *Missionalia* 27, 1999, pp313-329. The same article is also published in: Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube (eds) *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Leiden: Brill, 2000. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, 76.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. John Pobee, „The Sources of African Theology“ in: John Parat (ed), *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, London: SPCK, 1987, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa: A critical analysis and annotated bibliography of African Old Testament dissertations, 1967 – 2000*, New York: Peter Lang, 2002, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. John Parat, “Current Issues in African Theology: (B) Methodology and Bible” in: Parat (ed), *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, 150.

understanding of the Bible has affected the establishment of a critical study of the Bible in African institutions of learning as they have tended to be dominated by serving Christian ministers whose loyalty is more to their Churches than to merely the search for understanding the Bible. And, as senior leaders in their churches, biblical scholars have also been largely preoccupied with power relations between parent churches of the North and sister-churches of the South.

Further, the convergence of religious leaders' needs and political leaders' needs, that is, independence from Western dominance has affected the development of an independent critical study of the Bible in Africa.<sup>57</sup> "In the period of post-independence the mission of the universities was seen as part of the efforts of national development; politically, economically, and obviously also culturally."<sup>58</sup> The 1960s, "from a political perspective, [...] saw the liberation of Africa from colonial rule, and from an academic perspective, it saw various attempts at developing a scholarship that is liberated from western dominance and instead rooted in African experiences and needs."<sup>59</sup> The Bible was therefore used widely to justify various aspects of the newly independent nations from political authoritarianism to the reckoning of traditional culture as closer to the "divine" culture of ancient Israel and thought patterns of the "Chosen people of the Bible."

The search for meaning of biblical texts has never been an issue where such texts serve the Christian purpose in a literal sense, as in the case of the homosexual texts under consideration in this study. Instead, Africans "come to the Bible armed with questions arising out of [their] time and circumstance"<sup>60</sup> and this has been

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<sup>57</sup> David T. Adamo, "What is African Biblical Studies?" in: S. O. Abogunrin (ed), *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa volume 4*, Ibadan: The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS), 2005, 17ff.

<sup>58</sup> Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984, 142.

done at the expense of the Bible as a book with a context and a history of its own. There has been an emphasis on texts that could sustain this newly discovered self-worth among Africans after decades of being oppressed and ridiculed. Critical biblical scholarship that does not only focus on the ills of the West but of contemporary situations in Africa and the role of the Bible in sustaining oppressive structures in the postcolonial era became a still-birth. This has meant that the Bible is given the pedestal of being an unchanging book and very simple to understand and for that was widely appropriated not only for faith but for other reasons as well. This widespread usage of the Bible is severely questioned in the context of the homosexual debate because central to the debate and this study is the search for meaning of the disputed texts.

#### **1.2.2.2 Bible and Homosexuality in South Africa**

South Africa stands out as the only African country whose constitution explicitly provides for the protection of individuals against discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Chapter 2-Bill of Rights 9 (3): The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.<sup>61</sup>

Owing to this constitutional provision, it is not surprising that South African scholars have dominated in terms of published works on the Bible and homosexuality. It is therefore important to review what South African scholars have done in this regard.

The first and most critical contribution from South Africa has been the study of the Bible. With the apartheid experience still fresh in the life of South Africans, it is not surprising that Gerald West has argued that “biblical interpretations have life and death

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<sup>61</sup> South African Constitution Chapter 2-Bill of Rights 9 (3) 1996, available online: <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm> accessed 10/07/2008.

consequences.”<sup>62</sup> It is appreciated that the Bible can be a life-giving book or a murderous text and this depends on how it is interpreted. While there is no agreement on the best method of interpretation, there are three ways in which the Bible is being read in South Africa by both scholars and ordinary readers. West argues that there are three modes of reading the Bible, that is, reading behind the text; reading in the text; and reading in front of the text.<sup>63</sup> Among these modes, some of the methods already noted under western literature are fully appreciated. The first emphasizes the history of the text, the second implies a literary interrogation of the text itself and the last implies a closer appreciation of the influence of the reader on the text.

What is clear from this analysis is that biblical interpretation is not an easy but complex exercise. According to Jeremy Punt, “the complexity of biblical interpretation is also present when trying to make sense of the biblical texts on homoeroticism. The bigger questions on the authority, role and function of the Bible are as much part of the current gay-debate.”<sup>64</sup> Any attempt at understanding homosexuality within the Christian context eventually raises critical questions on what the Bible says regarding homosexuality. Among those who have contributed in the South African context is Desmond Tutu who has consistently drawn a connecting line between racial apartheid in South Africa and the Church’s position on homosexuality.

The Church of Jesus Christ, far from being inclusive and welcoming of all, has over and over again pushed many to the periphery; instead of being hospitable to all, it has made many of God’s children outcasts and pariahs on the basis of something which, like race or gender, they could do nothing about – their sexual orientation.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 54-5.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Punt „The Bible in the Gay-Debate in South Africa: Towards an Ethics of Interpretation” in: *Scriptura* 93, 2006, pp419-431, 420.

<sup>65</sup> Desmond Tutu „Foreword“ in: Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 1997.

This position has made many friends for Tutu throughout the world and even more enemies throughout the world. Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy write in introducing their edited book, *Aliens in the Household of God* (1997) “The paradox of the church as liberator and church as oppressor is repeatedly demonstrated in this book.”<sup>66</sup> While the accusation is directed against the Church, it is important to note that frequently the Church and the Bible are taken as synonymous hence the same statement can be said regarding the Bible.

In most of the writings emanating from South Africa it appears there is an appreciation of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s assertion that “intellectual neutrality is not possible in a historical world of exploitation and oppression”<sup>67</sup>, hence as Itumeleng Mosala notes “the Bible must be critically read.”<sup>68</sup> To that extent “the importance of contexts for understanding the meaning of texts is crucial.”<sup>69</sup> All this points to one critical contribution to an understanding of the Bible, that is, “the Bible is itself a cultural product.”<sup>70</sup> The challenge on the homosexual subject is to understand what was known and therefore condemned by the biblical authors. It is assumed that these texts are culture specific and therefore do respond to same-sex practices known to their culture. Equally important is that most of the scholars do not question the existence of homosexuality in South Africa, with Dunbar Moodie showing the existence of same-sex practices and relationships in South African mines and townships.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 87.

<sup>68</sup> Itumeleng Mosala in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 209.

<sup>69</sup> Punt „The Bible in the Gay-Debate in South Africa”, 422.

<sup>70</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 56-7.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. T. Dunbar Moodie „Black Migrant Mine Labourers and the Vicissitudes of Male Desire“ in: Robert Morrell (ed), *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001.

### 1.2.2.3 Other African Contributions outside South Africa

Despite the well known and articulated position on the un-Africanness of homosexuality, the publicity given to this view is not matched in terms of the quantity of publications by African scholars. On the un-Africanness of homosexuality, Cletus Chukwu argues that “it is morally wrong to allow the integration of homosexuality into the African culture and society.”<sup>72</sup> It is widely asserted that homosexuality is foreign to African peoples and societies. This section seeks to review some of the publications that are coming from African scholars outside South Africa and Zimbabwe but mainly focusing on sub-Saharan Africa. This section will consider both homosexuality and the Bible concurrently because that is how most of the scholars to be reviewed have dealt with the two subjects.

Bebson Ohihon Igboin defines homosexuality as the “persistent preoccupation with erotic encounters involving members of the same sex, which may or may not be acted out with another person.”<sup>73</sup> The definition preferred by Igboin is widely accepted by other conservative Africans who argue on the centrality of sexual intercourse in homosexual activities. In the same article, Igboin dismisses bisexuality as homosexuality and concludes that the essentialist explanation is severely flawed and contends that ‘legal morality’ has been used to attack and undermine the biblical view of homosexuality.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Justin Clemency Nabushawo, the editor of the journal *African Ecclesial Review* writes in one of the editorials, “Homosexual unions do not in any way contribute to the common good of humanity, as they are anti-life, anti-social and anti-Scriptural.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Cletus N. Chukwu “Homosexuality and the African Culture” in: *African Ecclesial Review Volume 46, Number 4*, 2004, pp 294-314, 294.

<sup>73</sup> Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“, 340-1.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“, 341-5.

<sup>75</sup> Justin Clemency Nabushawo, “Editorial” in: *African Ecclesial Review Volume 46, Number 4*, 2004.

The second major contention is that homosexuality and active homosexuals are not widespread in Africa, rather they are mainly found in areas dominated by Europeans and Americans. It is in this context that Chukwu writes; “In the contemporary world, the greed for money and material wealth as the means of economic survival may compel numerous unemployed heterosexual people to drift into bisexuality prostitution in the world’s cities where there are many rich gays and lesbians.”<sup>76</sup> Without emphasizing that the rich gays and lesbians are whites, the fact that Chukwu locates this in cities, the cosmopolitan centres in Africa, the idea of the dominance of Westerners can be inferred. Such areas are supposed to include Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa. The Zimbabwean case is illustrated by the need by homosexuals, mostly whites, demanding to exhibit at the Book Fair.<sup>77</sup> This implies that homosexual persons demand to be heard only if they are in areas dominated by Europeans and Americans because they are the ones who introduced and tolerate this practice and condition. Closely connected to this is the assertion that “the HIV/AIDS disease spreading over the globe is a consequence of homosexuality.”<sup>78</sup> Due to the role played by Archbishop Peter Akinola in the Anglican debate on homosexuality, Igboin writes;

Finally, when two ideologies clash, as a Christian, one must of necessity view them from the biblical standpoint. And when one is preposterous to the Bible, it is to be jettisoned for the Bible’s position because of its moral and ultimate consequences. This to our mind is what the Anglican Church (Nigeria) has done.<sup>79</sup>

What is of critical importance is the assumption that there exists an uncontested and incontestable biblical view, a position that is widely held in Africa. This will be challenged in this work because

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<sup>76</sup> Chukwu “Homosexuality and the African Culture”, 295.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Muyiwa Falaiye in Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“, 348.

<sup>78</sup> Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“, 355.

<sup>79</sup> Igboin „A Moral Appraisal of Homosexuality in Biblical, Western and African Worldviews“, 353.

the existence of an uncontested biblical injunction on homosexuality may not necessarily be appropriate.

Robert Baum argues on the existence of ritual homosexuality in Africa particularly the so-called transgenerational and transgender types of homosexuality while in some communities egalitarian homosexual relations do exist but lack religious significance.<sup>80</sup> The existence of ritual homosexuality has not been extensively covered in many other publications hence Baum bemoans the lack and scarcity of publications on the subject of sexuality in general and also observes that in southern Africa, homosexual relations intensified during the colonial era as families were separated and exclusive men only compounds created.<sup>81</sup> The lack of publications remains an inhibiting factor in this line of academic inquiry even though some publications continue to trickle in.

There are some African figures who are prominent whenever homosexuality is the subject and Neville Hoad identifies Robert Mugabe, Daniel Arap Moi, Sam Nujoma as well as Yoweri Museveni who all characterized homosexuality as un-African.<sup>82</sup> For all the historical work Hoad does in this book, two observations are worth noting here: First that “the European construction of sexuality coincides with the epoch of Imperialism and the two interconnect [...] [second] homosexuality may be used to mask various interests from different and competing groups.”<sup>83</sup> These observations are essential for an exhaustive understanding of homosexuality in Africa and will be pursued also in this study. In most of the publications it is generally argued that “homosexuality was not conceived as part of the created order at all but as part of its dissolution. And as such it was not a sexuality in its own right, but

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Robert M. Baum „Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions of the Americas and Africa“ in: Arlene Swidler (ed), *Homosexuality and World Religions*, Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993, 3, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Baum „Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions of the Americas and Africa“, 19, 34.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Neville Hoad, *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality and Globalisation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Hoad, *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality and Globalisation*, 3-4.

existed as a potential for confusion and disorder in one undivided sexuality.”<sup>84</sup>

Some key issues from this survey are that: First, some African scholars have argued and continue to do so, that homosexuality is not African, that the West has played a role in the emergence of this condition in Africa. Others do acknowledge the existence of homosexual persons in Africa and most of them are white scholars. There is a general agreement outside South Africa that the Bible is decisive on the subject of homosexuality and that is, the Bible does not allow homosexuality in all its forms, ancient or contemporary. The finality with which the Bible is always used is part of the uniqueness of the African argument especially because the Bible was also introduced in most African communities by missionaries from the West. “Christianity was presented with its Western-Judeo-Roman civilization or the Anglo-Saxon civilization to the people of ‘other cultures’ without any sort of integration.”<sup>85</sup> In most cases, as in this, what applies for Christianity applies also for the Bible because many scholars have always treated the two as synonymous.

### **1.2.3 Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe**

The idea of separating Zimbabwe from the rest of Africa is not informed by any special uniqueness of Zimbabwe, rather it is informed by two factors: First, Zimbabwe is my main focus in this study hence the need to separate it from the rest of Africa. Second, this separation allows for a better review of the works emanating from Zimbabwe without diluting them with other works. Despite the special position of Zimbabwe in this work, this

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<sup>84</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick „The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic“ in: Elaine Showalter (ed), *Speaking of Gender*, New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1989, 244.

<sup>85</sup> Cuthbert K. Omari „Early Missionaries’ Contributions to the Understanding of African Societies: Evidence from two Case Studies from Tanzania“ in: *Africa Theological Journal*, Volume 13, Number 1, 1984, 14.

section is not at all exhaustive of the works because it is possible that I have not seen some works.

### 1.2.3.1 The Bible in Zimbabwean Publications

It is widely accepted in Zimbabwean literature that Christianity and the Bible were introduced in the country from Europe. It is in this regard that Adrian Hastings writes, “The nineteenth century was the golden age of the Protestant missionary and Africa his most challenging field of work.”<sup>86</sup> This observation is echoed by Chengetai Zvobgo who also notes that Christianity came to Zimbabwe from the West through South Africa in the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> A number of publications focusing on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe do exist but their treatment of the Bible is fragmentary at best.<sup>88</sup> To a large extent, most Zimbabwean writers have always treated the Bible as part of the Christian mission. This is true in as much as the Bible was brought by Christian missionaries but it also fails to appreciate that the Bible slowly and gradually grew bigger than the missionaries. Despite this apparent lack of interest in the Bible as an entity the fragments that are there offer some interesting insights.

Zvobgo comments extensively on the complicity of missionaries with the settler regime in Zimbabwe and observes that some missionaries led the calls for a violent removal of the Ndebele tradi-

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<sup>86</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950 – 1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 39.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Chengetai J. M, Zvobgo “General Introduction” in: *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890 – 1939*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996.

<sup>88</sup> The following works are examples: David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*, Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2006, Martinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches, Volume 1: Background and Rise of the Major Movements*, The Hague: Mouton & Company N. V, 1971, Brandon Graaff, *Modumedi Moleli: Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity: Mashonaland 1892 – 96*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, Michael Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option? Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the independence of Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986, Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1996.

tional government system and that their land theology seems to have supported or even instigated the massive dispossession of indigenous people.<sup>89</sup> While Zvobgo as a historian does well to show the impact of those activities of missionaries, the question of the use/role of the Bible remains in the background. The Bible was accorded a role and its interpretation could have led to the activities cited above or the activities above led to a particular interpretation of the Bible. This aspect is unsolved. Similarly, Ndabaningi Sithole observes how indigenous people during the period of nationalism resorted to the Bible hence he observes “the Bible was read at political rallies to inspire people to fight against the settler regime.”<sup>90</sup> That the Bible was instrumental in many dimensions is widely acknowledged yet there is no deliberate interest in investigating the role of the Bible and the reading techniques that were being used by different groups, yet this changing with the latest generation of biblical scholars led by Lovemore Togarasei.<sup>91</sup>

The relationship between the Bible and traditional religion caused a great stir in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s, when Canaan Banana suggested that the Bible required re-writing for it to be more relevant to the experiences of different peoples of the World today. This eventually led to the publication of an edited volume, “*Rewriting the Bible: The Real Issues* (1993), in which;

the commonly agreed upon central issue reads [...] ‘Does the Christian Church claim that its Bible, which originated in a particular time and context, possesses an exclusive and universally normative value for peo-

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Ndabaningi Sithole, *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu, Christian Nationalist*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970, 118ff.

<sup>91</sup> There is a recently published book by Lovemore Togarasei with various articles on the interpretation of the Bible in Zimbabwe, which attempts to address some of the weaknesses pointed above. Togarasei, *The Bible in Context: Essays Collection, Bible in Africa Studies 1*, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2009.

ple living in quite different contexts and times with their own sacred traditions?<sup>92</sup>

This possibly remains the most critical engagement of the Bible to emanate from Zimbabwe and raises questions pertaining to the nature and authority of the Bible in contexts other than that which produced it. Insights for this work will be drawn from the various contributions to this book. Critical is the contention by Martin Lehmann-Habeck that “the biblical message can no longer be propagated in its literary [literal] form but must be divested of its mythological clothing and newly recovered by appropriate interpretation.”<sup>93</sup> The overall gist of this edited volume is that the Bible is in need of critical interpretation.

Differences and schisms have been noted in Zimbabwean Christianity and many possible reasons have been suggested by scholars. The socio-historical factors have been the most dominant factors; Togarasei makes these suggestions on the breakaway of Andrew Wutawunashe from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ) and the subsequent founding of his Family of God (FOG) Church.<sup>94</sup> In this article Togarasei dwells at length on the possible social and historical factors that could have contributed to the self-understanding of Wutawunashe as a prophet, from his experiences as a student political activist to the time he led the Youth ministry in the RCZ.<sup>95</sup> Daneel has written extensively on the rise of Independent Churches and also cites many factors that could have led to this development in Zimbabwean Christianity.<sup>96</sup> This however is not all there is in these and other works, below I will highlight some of the most interesting observations for this study.

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<sup>92</sup> Isabel Mukonyora et al (eds), *“Rewriting” the Bible: The real Issues*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993, xi.

<sup>93</sup> Martin Lehmann-Habeck, “New Light on the Bible for Today’s readers” in: Mukonyora et al (eds), *“Rewriting” the Bible: The real issues*, 35.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Lovemore Togarasei „The ‚Birth‘ of a Prophet: Andrew Wutawunashe’s break from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (Formerly Dutch Reformed Church)“ in: *Exchange Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*, 35, 2, 2006, pp215-225.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Togarasei „The ‚Birth‘ of a Prophet”.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*. 290-1.

Daneel makes two observations that are critical for the understanding of the Bible in Zimbabwe, among the reasons for the rise of the Independent churches he notes that the Bible was at times used to justify the doctrine of white supremacy and that most leaders of independent churches read the Bible literally.<sup>97</sup> Of critical importance is the appreciation that the Bible can be used to justify preconceived ideas and that there possibly exists different ways of reading the Bible. Togarasei goes a step further when writing, “The [other] possible reason for Wutawunashe’s break from the RCZ is his reading and interpretation of the Bible [...] fundamentalist-literalistic vs. RCZ’s reformist-liberal approach to the Bible.”<sup>98</sup> This is illustrated well by David Maxwell when he writes that one Lazarus Mamvura challenged Wilson, the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) missionary by referring to the Bible: “when we read in Matthew ‘Go ye and preach’ we do not hear the words ‘but not until you are ordained’. Why are you insisting on us being preachers in Church?”<sup>99</sup> The Bible is indeed a site for struggle for Zimbabwean Christians and this has been the case since the introduction of the Bible in Zimbabwe.

### 1.2.3.2 Homosexuality in Zimbabwean Literature

The subject of homosexuality in Zimbabwe has not been widely covered in academic publications in Zimbabwe; no wonder the authority on the subject is Marc Epprecht, a Canadian scholar who was a visiting lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe between 1995 and 1998. This lack of publications can be linked to the fact that generally in Zimbabwe, sex and sexual issues were hardly public issues and homosexuality was not talked about.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 207, 290-1.

<sup>98</sup> Togarasei „The ‚Birth’ of a Prophet”, 221-2.

<sup>99</sup> Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*, 68.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Masiwa Ragies Gunda, Leviticus 18: 22, Africa and the West: Towards cultural convergence on Homosexuality in: Joachim Kügler (ed), *Prekäre Zeitenossenschaft: mit dem Alten Testament in Konflikten der Zeit*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006,127.

Since “sex was governed by strong taboos, don’t ask, don’t tell”<sup>101</sup> the impact has been the lack of publications on the subject. This however has already been transgressed with the publication of two books and articles by Marc Epprecht and three undergraduate students have written dissertations on the subject while many more popular pieces have been published in newspapers and magazines. According to Gelfand;

the traditional Shona have none of these problems associated with homosexuality [...] obviously they must have a valuable method of bringing up children, especially with regard to normal sex relations, thus avoiding this anomaly so frequent in Western society.<sup>102</sup>

This traditional position has largely been discredited by the post-1995 publications.

Epprecht has concluded that there is historical evidence showing that homosexuality existed in Zimbabwe prior to the arrival of Europeans and he cites court records from as early as 1892, just two years after the arrival of the first European settlers and concludes that they could not have already influenced local people. Further, he also cites the rock-painting alleged to be within the vicinity of Harare and presumably over 2000 years old to support his position.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, William Guri citing Chief Makoni and Peter Sibanda, a traditional diviner-healer concludes, “if chiefs know about the punishment [meted out on homosexual persons] and traditional healers about the treatment, then homosexuality must be a reality in traditional Zimbabwean culture.”<sup>104</sup> With Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) being accused of introducing homosexuality in Zimbabwe, Guri counters by saying

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<sup>101</sup> Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 34.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Gelfand, “The infrequency of homosexuality in traditional Shona society” in: *Central African Journal of Medicine* 25, 9, 1979, 201-202.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. For the rock-painting see also Peter Garlake, *The Hunter’s Vision: The Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe*, Seattle: Washington University Press, 1995, 28.

<sup>104</sup> Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 27.

“GALZ is not introducing a new experience.”<sup>105</sup> There is unanimity among these scholars that homosexuality has always been present in Zimbabwe.

On homosexuality and the Bible, these scholars do indeed allude to the role of the Bible. Guri writes that the Christian view is influenced by biblical texts that directly condemn homosexuality even though exegetical problems have meant that Christian traditions are not unanimous on the homosexuality issue.<sup>106</sup> Douglas Jack argues that the Bible was used in entrenching homophobia by western missionaries.<sup>107</sup> Similarly Rudo Chigweshe does carry out a survey of the biblical texts that are constantly cited by Christians on the subject of homosexuality but she does not engage herself in the problems of interpretation challenges as she deals with the subject from a phenomenological perspective.<sup>108</sup> Epprecht also appreciates the role of the Bible in the discussions on homosexuality when he writes;

The most outspoken homophobes in the region often use biblical, public health, or ‘family values’ arguments that appear to be borrowed wholesale from social conservatives in the West, while repressive laws are a direct legacy of colonial rule. Even the claim that same-sex sexual behaviour is un-African appears to have originated in the West rather than Africa itself.<sup>109</sup>

While these scholars except Gelfand are generally sympathetic to homosexual persons, Chigweshe argues that “homosexuality is resented by both the traditional society and the Bible.”<sup>110</sup> Part of this resentment is predicated on family values by which it is as-

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<sup>105</sup> Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 56. See also, GALZ, *Unspoken Facts: A history of homosexualities in Africa*, Harare: Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, 2008.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 66.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Douglas Jack, *Human Sexuality, Politics and Religion in the era of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*, University of Zimbabwe: *Unpublished Dissertation*, 2004, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Rudo Chigweshe, *Homosexuality: A Zimbabwean Religious Perspective*, University of Zimbabwe: *Unpublished Dissertation*, 1996, 48-52.

<sup>109</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Chigweshe, *Homosexuality: A Zimbabwean Religious Perspective*, 63.

sumed that all individuals are obliged to procreate because “procreation in the worldview of an African is seen as an important factor in the survival of the community.”<sup>111</sup> In the same vein, Chigweshe notes the existence of various types of marriage contracts which ensured that everyone, poor and rich, could get married because marriage was an obligation in Shona culture.<sup>112</sup> There is a general agreement that marriage, always understood as the union between a man and a woman/women, and procreation were very important not only because they ensured the survival of the community but because they bestowed immortality on the parents who continued to live through their offspring.

In these works it is also noted that the prevalence of homosexuality is also associated with family disintegration, migration in search of employment, prevalence of same-sex institutions of confinement.<sup>113</sup> This is taken to be true particularly of the early colonial days when massive displacements were caused by the beginnings of industrialisation and commercial farming while prisons and schools for same-sex persons have also been seen as fertile grounds for homosexual activities and relationships.<sup>114</sup> While the views represented in these academic works give the impression that Zimbabweans are generally tolerant of homosexuality, there exist primary materials, newspaper articles and other unpublished materials, which however, do not share most of the views expressed in these works. Further, in these materials, the Bible appears prominently and with a privileged position of final arbiter on the subject of homosexuality. These materials form the primary resource base for this study and will be used extensively throughout this study. These materials appear at the end of this work as appendices.

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<sup>111</sup> Jack, *Human Sexuality, Politics and Religion in the era of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*, 15.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Chigweshe, *Homosexuality: A Zimbabwean Religious Perspective*, 37-8.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Chigweshe, *Homosexuality: A Zimbabwean Religious Perspective*, 20.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The construction of moral discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894-1930*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

## 1.3 Scope of this Study

### 1.3.1 Gaps in Previous Studies

As noted above, there exist very few published works on the subject of homosexuality in Zimbabwe and of these the impact of the Bible has not been fully investigated. When this is considered after the realization that “many Christians regard the Bible as in some way the inspired word of God and as the supreme authority in their faith”<sup>115</sup> then it becomes abundantly clear that the Bible cannot be treated lightly as has happened with previous studies in Zimbabwe. Closely connected to this is the widely accepted idea that “people do not read the Bible unbiased or neutrally since all human beings are susceptible to a variety of socio-cultural influences which constitute human life.”<sup>116</sup> Despite the centrality of the Bible in Zimbabwe, previous studies have at best provided fragmentary glimpses into the role of the Bible in this debate.

It is easy to think and assume that all the contributors are speaking about the same subject from the same angle. The contributions emanating from Zimbabwe have tended to be swept by global trends hence they have not fully appreciated the fact that “homosexuality may be used to mask various interests from different and competing groups.”<sup>117</sup> While Epprecht, Guri, Jack and Chigweshe have done well to address the origins of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, there is still a lot that can be done in analysing the debate at its cultural, political and religious levels. A critical question that they have not asked and therefore have not answered, which this work will seek to answer is: Is the debate all about homosexuality? The question does not appear important to Epprecht because his urgent need was to falsify the claim that homosexuality was foreign. He writes;

In May 1995, I took up a position in the History Department at the University of Zimbabwe. Right around that time, the chancellor of the University and the President of the country, Robert Mugabe, began to make

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<sup>115</sup> Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 20.

<sup>116</sup> Punt „The Bible in the Gay-Debate in South Africa“, 423.

<sup>117</sup> Hoard, *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality and Globalisation*, 4.

a series of speeches in which he vilified gays and lesbians as ‘un-African’. I began checking historical evidence from Zimbabwe to test what intuitively seemed to be a deeply implausible claim.<sup>118</sup>

Epprecht appears overly interested in exonerating the West of any blame and not necessarily to understand the concerns and other prejudices apparent in the debate.

The manner in which the Bible has been referred to in previous studies in Zimbabwe leaves the impression that the Bible is an absolute book that speaks with one voice. Chigweshe concludes that “if one looks at the attitude of the traditional society and the Bible one will notice that they both do not allow the practice of homosexuality.”<sup>119</sup> These writers have not only failed to analyse the different debates and interests within the debate, they have also failed to interrogate the Bible critically because “no text comes to us without ‘the plural and ambiguous history effects of its own production and its former receptions’.”<sup>120</sup> The history of the Bible and of its interpretation has not been dealt with in an attempt to understand the dynamics of biblical interpretation of the sort the homosexual debate has witnessed. Further, this work seeks to answer the question, are the interpretations of the so-called “explicit texts” in the debate adequate?

There has been a lot of preoccupation by African scholars to produce something that is always prefixed with the adjective *African*; African Christianity, African Theology, African Christian Theology, and lately African Old Testament scholarship.<sup>121</sup> These labels clearly demonstrate how reactive African scholars have continued to be. This work does not seek to become an African exegetical work but rather attempts to do exegesis in an African context. In doing this, this work begins on the premise that the Bible is neither Western nor African hence there is need for the Bible to be

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<sup>118</sup> Epprecht „Male-male Sexuality in Lesotho: Two Conversations“ in: Graeme Reid & Liz Walker (eds), *Men Behaving Differently*, Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005, 188-9.

<sup>119</sup> Chigweshe, *Homosexuality: A Zimbabwean Religious Perspective*, 53.

<sup>120</sup> David Tracy in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 43.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 12ff.

understood in its own context. That precisely is the central tenet of an exegetical work. The African context in this study comes into play only because this foreign book has been and is being used and abused within African communities in which I belong. Such a context will be of significance not for the establishment of meaning of the texts under dispute but as a source for understanding why the Bible continues to be regarded as an important book.

### ***1.3.2 Aim, Objectives and Hypotheses of Study***

On the strength of the above observations, this study aims to identify and analyse the multiple dimensions of the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe and the attendant use of the Bible in this debate. In order to achieve this overall aim, this study will be guided by the following objectives:

- To provide an overview analysis of the history of conflicting biblical interpretations in Zimbabwe.
- To analyse the position of GALZ from the time of ZIBF'95 and central to the debate.
- To analyse the response by political leaders to the challenge of homosexuality in Zimbabwe.
- To analyse the response by traditional cultural leaders to the manifestation of homosexuality as a public subject.
- To analyse the response by Christians in Zimbabwe on homosexuality and the invocation of the Bible as the final arbiter.
- To demonstrate through an exegetical analysis of the "explicit" biblical texts that the Bible cannot address all issues pertaining to contemporary homosexuality.

It is hoped that these specific objectives will guide this study through the maze of chapters and eventually will lead me to the overall aim of this study. Further, this study is predicated on the following hypotheses:

- That the manifestations of homosexuality have evolved from the pre-colonial times to the post-independence era in Zimbabwe.
- That the Bible has always presented interpretation challenges from the time of its introduction in Zimbabwe to the post-colonial homosexual debate.
- That the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe has been used to mask political, cultural and religious conflicts already present before the ZIBF'95.
- That the Bible through a careful analysis of its socio-historical context does not directly address all manifestations of contemporary homosexuality.

### **1 3.3 Relevance of Study**

Zimbabwe is still lagging behind in terms of a critical study of homosexuality in its various manifestations and it is important that this study seeks to address some of the issues. The second critical aspect is that this study seeks to contribute towards the critical study of the Bible focusing on contemporary existential challenges. As West observes;

An important task awaiting an African biblical hermeneutics is a comprehensive account of the transactions that constitute the history of the encounters between Africa and the Bible. While the accounts we have of the encounters between Africa and Christianity are well documented, the encounters between Africa and the Bible are partial and fragmentary. We should not assume, for example, that the reception of Christianity and the reception of the Bible always amount to the same thing.<sup>122</sup>

This is the major weakness of biblical studies in Zimbabwe that the Bible has consistently been subsumed in the Christian shadows that it has hardly been treated in a manner that justifies the importance it commands. In doing this it is important for this work to look at how different social groups make use of the Bible. It is not necessarily the religious message of the Bible that makes it appeal to people. Unless this is taken seriously the Bible may

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<sup>122</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 81.

continue being used and abused, depending on the interests of the different groups.

### **1.4 Method of Study**

Having outlined above the scope of this study, the critical question in this section is: How does one carry out this study? What method best helps to realise what I have set out to achieve in this study? This task is made all the more difficult when one appreciates that the interpretation of the Bible and the articulation of homosexuality are both human undertakings which can never claim absolute authority.<sup>123</sup> As Preus writes, “whatever else it was [is], the Bible was [is] a book with an astonishingly complex human history from which no miracle could exempt it.”<sup>124</sup> While the interests of those who see the Bible as the word of God are appreciated, it is equally, if not more, important to note that the Bible is a book that sheds light on a religion of a particular people at a particular time and place<sup>125</sup> that contains “questions about societal institutions and social location [which] help us to understand the fabric, tensions and power relations at work in ancient Israelite society.”<sup>126</sup>

The fact that the Bible is socio-historically conditioned calls for exegesis as opposed to eisegesis hence “the point of departure for this study is one of biblical exegesis (trying to discover what the writer intended).”<sup>127</sup> Exegesis recognizes the existence of the intended meaning that is to be searched from the text and other sources that shed light on the text, while hermeneutics help one in the appropriation of the biblical injunctions for their own con-

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 40.

<sup>124</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 17.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 11.

<sup>126</sup> David J. Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Roger W. Anderson (Jr), “To your descendants I will give this land”: Thoughts on the promise of land and rewriting the Bible” in: Mukonyora (eds et al), *“Rewriting” the Bible: the real issues*, 90.

texts. These observations mean that this study requires a method that does not only take into consideration the historical nature of the Bible and homosexuality but one that also takes into consideration the social nature of both the Bible and homosexuality, past and present. In this regard the socio-historical method has been chosen for this study.

### **1.4.1 Socio-Historical Approach**

The choice of this method for this study is based on some assumptions behind this project. First, it is assumed that literature, be it written or oral, is affected by and affects the history, social experiences and the social needs of the people who produce such literature. Second, it is assumed that by closely reading a text, one can uncover phases of a community's history.<sup>128</sup> Another critical assumption behind the choice of this method is that a "socio-historical analysis is interested in establishing the social conditions of a group within a historical time and this is indispensable for the understanding of the text, debate or arguments."<sup>129</sup> My contention is that the Bible and homosexuality in Zimbabwe require a method that appreciates their social dimension as well as their historical dimension, and the socio-historical method is one such method.

In this regard, the old genetic questions of the historical critical methods remain relevant for this study: Who is the author/speaker? When was the text written? Who were the intended audience?<sup>130</sup> This historical inquiry can be extended to cover not only the history of the production of the Bible but its history in Zimbabwe as well. Over and above these questions, it is impor-

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the early Christian Writings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, available online: <http://www.us.oup.com/us/companion.websites/0195154622/studentresources/ch11/?view=usa> accessed 24/06/2008.

<sup>129</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 38.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. John Barton „The Historical Critical Approaches“ in: Barton (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 9.

tant for this study to pursue another set of questions: Who are the social players in the text/debate? What are their interests in the debate/text? What are the social functions of the Bible/homosexuality in the text/debate? These questions help in investigating the social dimensions of both the religious injunctions of the Bible and the positions taken on homosexuality.

The major assumption leading to this idea is that “ancient socio-sexual taboos were meant to regulate sexual activity so as to strengthen the identity of society, its integrity and growth.”<sup>131</sup> This assumption does not only help in understanding biblical sexual taboos but Zimbabwean sexual taboos because sexual activity has social repercussions. In order to fully appreciate the necessity and importance of a socio-historical analysis for this study, the words of Gottwald are instructive; “Literalistic biblical interpretation, misconstruing both the substance and emphasis of biblical teachings, sometimes accompanies socially reactionary thinking, as people fear for the stability of their social world.”<sup>132</sup> A socio-historical method will interrogate these literalistic biblical interpretations which are apparent in Zimbabwe.

The socio-historical method will allow for the interrogation of ‘context’ at different levels as suggested by Frans J. Verstraelen when observing that there are three cultural contexts at play in interpreting the biblical message in the Zimbabwean context: the Bible culture context; the culture context of the missionaries; and the culture context of the receiving indigenous people.<sup>133</sup> Clearly, this method is dependent on the historical critical methods but it is by no means limited to the ‘obsession’ with the original meaning<sup>134</sup> as it also follows up on the contemporary usage of the Bible. It is in this context that Anthony Ceresko writes; “The Bible has often played a role in politics as well as in other contexts, the Church, the University, and popular culture. In each of them,

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<sup>131</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 42.

<sup>132</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 16.

<sup>133</sup> Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 86.

<sup>134</sup> Barton „Historical Critical Approaches“, 10.

questions of the meaning and role of the Bible, and conflict over that meaning and role, play a part.”<sup>135</sup> It is assumed that the socio-historical method will greatly enhance the analytical capacity of this study in dealing with the subject of the role of the Bible in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

#### **1.4.2 Hermeneutical Techniques**

While using the socio-historical method it is important to appreciate that there is need for some hermeneutical techniques in confronting the Bible as well as the different positions taken by different Zimbabweans on the subject of homosexuality. “Hermeneutics is the science of understanding and interpreting the viewpoint of an alien culture, person or text.”<sup>136</sup> The need for at least a hermeneutical technique is based on the realization that “since religion was of such pronounced importance to Jews, it is to be expected that elites and their critics would both try to summon religious support for their positions and programs. Decisions about holy books were thus not only decisions about religious matters but about who had controlling power in the life of the community.”<sup>137</sup> It is of critical importance to assume that texts and words used may shield the special interests of particular groups in ancient Israel as well as in contemporary Zimbabwe.

In order to be able to identify these hidden interests, the hermeneutic of suspicion will be employed in this study. Any analysis will therefore begin from an attitude of suspicion, that is, that when politicians cite a biblical text; the starting point should be to question what political interest is being served under the guise of religious conservatism? This hermeneutic has been extensively used in Feminist biblical studies and in this study; it will be used in interpreting the Bible as well as pronouncements on homo-

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<sup>135</sup> Anthony R. Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective*, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, 3-4.

<sup>136</sup> Thomas H. Eriksen & Finn S. Nielsen, *A History of Anthropology*, London: Pluto Press, 2001, 33.

<sup>137</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 111.

sexuality emanating from Zimbabwe. Besides helping in understanding the texts in their contexts, this hermeneutical technique will also prove indispensable for understanding the manner the Bible has continued to be used in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

### **1.4.3 Method of Data Collection**

Besides the use of library research for this study, extensive attempts were made to collect the contributed articles on the homosexuality debate in Zimbabwe. To this end, newspaper archives were used to retrieve these articles dating back to 1993 but which peaked after the 1995 speeches of Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe. It was unfortunate that the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) did not keep any files on the debate, but this was somewhat ameliorated by the fact that the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference – Social Communications Department (ZCBC-SCD) kept a detailed file on the debate and allowed me to go through their file as well as making copies of the materials kept therein. I was also allowed access to the Zimpapers archives in Harare, however, permission to copy materials was denied hence research notes were made and these are attached as appendices.<sup>138</sup>

In the ZCBC-SCD file, I also accessed some letters that were exchanged between Church leaders in Zimbabwe and the International community. These materials form the primary basis for this study. It is important however to note that the majority of the letters and newspaper articles bear pseudo-names and two prob-

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<sup>138</sup> The newspaper articles used in this work largely have no page numbers from the newspapers where they were published. This challenge was caused by the fact that the articles were kept as “cut copies” and filed. I was allowed access to these files by the ZCBC-SCD as well as the Zimpapers (Publishers of The Herald, The Chronicle and the Sunday Mail) Archives. With both keeping these cut articles, establishing the page numbers became an impossible task. Further, these newspapers cannot be accessed online. To mitigate this challenge, I copied most of these articles and they appear at the end of this work as Appendices.

able explanations may be proffered for this: First, the authors simply did not want to be identified because the subject was a sensitive one that it did not really matter on which side you were, the other side always appeared too militant for one's comfort; second, that these writers could be ghost writers sponsored by the State since the position of the President had to be clothed in the garb of the majority Zimbabweans. Finally, I also was allowed to access some materials by GALZ and this included some interviews.

### **1.5 Definition of Terms**

There are terms that are central to this work whose definitions remain contested in scholarly circles. In order to avoid some basic conflicts, this section will adopt definitions that will be used throughout this work for these particular words. Those not defined in this section will be defined as and when they appear for the first time in this work. At the centre of this study is the dichotomy of homosexuality and heterosexuality. Already, there is a general consensus among scholars that the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality may actually be artificial. According to Nissinen, "these categories represent a modern classification and cannot be found in ancient sources."<sup>139</sup> While these categories are indeed artificial, they nonetheless help in understanding the contemporary discussions.

The terms to be defined are fewer than the range of terms that are currently being used in discussions of human sexuality. However, because of the centrality placed on the Bible in this study not all terms are central to this study. It is fully appreciated that the dichotomy of homosexuality and heterosexuality only points to two extreme points on a scale of human sexuality which identifies a multiplicity of sexualities.

gender [sexual] orientation (an individual's desires and preferences regarding the sex of intimate partners) is more of a dimension than a

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<sup>139</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 12.

category, that is, individuals tend to have a range of preferences and desires rather than falling into neat, mutually exclusive categories [...] Gradations of sexual orientation are given little importance, and the notion that evidence of any same-sex oriented behaviour indicates that an individual is homosexual is often given credence.<sup>140</sup>

It is important to note that the idea of various degrees of sexual orientation can be traced back to the Kinsey studies (ca. 1948) which classified sexual orientation on a scale ranging from 0 to 6, in which 0 is exclusively heterosexual orientation while 6 is exclusively homosexual orientation with many people falling in between. In this scale, 3 is delicately balanced as perfect bisexual orientation.<sup>141</sup> While all the sexualities are central to the contemporary discussions, the Zimbabwean debate has tended to be limited to the dichotomy of homosexuality and heterosexuality. This emphasis will be reflected in this work.

*Homosexuality* refers to the sense or state of being sexually and/or emotionally attracted to members of the same sex and it is defined here as the opposite of *heterosexuality*, while *bisexuality* refers to the state of being sexually and emotionally attracted to members of both sexes. *Homosexual* is defined in this work as an adjective describing one who is sexually or emotionally (or both) attracted to members of the same sex and is contrasted with the adjective *heterosexual*. The adjective homosexual is taken as applying to both males and females, to whom the terms *gay* and *lesbian* will be applied respectively. In this usage, a homosexual person is “a person with sexual attraction to people of the same sex”<sup>142</sup> or a person who engages in sexual activities with members of the same sex.

According to GALZ “*sexual orientation* refers to the general type of person one is emotionally and sexually attracted to [...]while *asexual* refers to those who have no sexual interest or sex drive and so

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<sup>140</sup> Bazemore “eMedicine-Homosexuality”.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Robert Ehrlich, *Eight Preposterous Propositions: From the Genetics of Homosexuality to the Benefits of Global Warming*, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 9.

they could be said to have an absence of sexuality and no sexual orientation.”<sup>143</sup> This study will take the understanding of *sexual preference* which has been adopted by GALZ, that is, “this term refers to one’s sexual style, which has nothing to do with whether one is homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual.”<sup>144</sup> This is the understanding of sexual preference to be deployed in this study, which clearly distinguishes it from sexual orientation or the other categories and terms already defined in this study. According to Nissinen, “*sexual practice* is definitely bound to gender roles. Customs and norms of a society, more than a person’s identity or identities, often determine the forms for the expression of one’s sexuality.”<sup>145</sup> The important aspect from this observation is that sexual practice refers to actual engagement in sexual acts. In other words, when men and women decide to live out their sexual orientation and preferences, such living out is what constitutes sexual practice.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), *sex* is defined as referring to biological and physiological characteristics that define males and females.<sup>146</sup> “Biological sex includes external genitalia, internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, breasts, facial and body hair.”<sup>147</sup> According to Emily Esplen and Susie Jolly, “the term *gender* has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed.”<sup>148</sup> In illustrating the social construction of gender, WHO highlights that “gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that

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<sup>143</sup> GALZ, *Understanding Human Sexuality and Gender*, 10-11.

<sup>144</sup> GALZ, *Understanding Human Sexuality and Gender*, 22.

<sup>145</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 13.

<sup>146</sup> WHO „Gender, Women and Health“ [www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/index.html) accessed 28/05/2008.

<sup>147</sup> Diagram of Sex and Gender: <http://www.gendersanity.com/diagram.shtml> accessed 28/05/2008.

<sup>148</sup> Emily Esplen & Susie Jolly „Gender and Sex: A Sample of Definitions“ 2006. <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk> accessed 28/05/2008.

a given society considers appropriate for men and women.”<sup>149</sup> From these socially defined roles, behaviours and attributes emerge the categories of *masculinity* and *femininity*.

*Masculinity* is shaped in relation to an overall structure of power (the subordination of women to men), and in relation to a general symbolisation of difference (the opposition of femininity to masculinity).<sup>150</sup>

These two are according to GALZ, socially constructed in that societies define and characterize masculinity and femininity and more often than not societies expect boys/males to develop into masculine beings while girls/females are supposed to develop into feminine beings.<sup>151</sup> Masculinity and femininity are characterized as being aggressive, dominant, brave for the former and submissive, weak and dependent for the latter. Even more important for this work is the idea that femininity also entails penetrability while masculinity entails being able to penetrate, that is, femininity is passive while masculinity is active. For the purposes of this study it is important to appreciate the differences between sex and gender and this difference can be simply expressed as being constituted by two critical factors: sex is biologically determined while gender is socially constructed.

According to Germond and de Gruchy “*homophobia* refers to the fear of homosexual persons, usually resulting in discrimination and persecution.”<sup>152</sup> According to GALZ “it is the irrational hatred and fear of homosexual persons.”<sup>153</sup> From this description the attitude cannot be fully characterised as homophobia, rather this clearly is also a case of *homomisia*. This is not to suggest that there is no fear, rather this is to suggest that there is both fear and hatred of homosexual persons. In this regard, *homomisia* is taken to mean the hatred of homosexuality and homosexual persons. This word will go a long way in accounting for some of the hate

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<sup>149</sup> WHO “Gender, Women and Health”.

<sup>150</sup> Sarah C. White „Men, Masculinities and the politics of development“ in: Caroline Sweetman (ed), *Men and Masculinity*, Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000, 20.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. GALZ, *Understanding Human Sexuality and Gender*, 1ff.

<sup>152</sup> Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 10.

<sup>153</sup> GALZ, *Understanding Human Sexuality and Gender*, 34.

speeches that characterize discussions of homosexuality. “*Heterosexism* is the assumption that heterosexual orientation is the only natural or good orientation and the discrimination against gay and lesbian persons.”<sup>154</sup>

## **1.6 Outline of Study**

This study is an eight chapter work, in which the first chapter is the general introduction which sets the parameters for the entire work. In chapter two the attention is shifted to the Bible and its interpretation in Zimbabwe. This chapter serves as an historical overview of the conflicts of biblical interpretation in Zimbabwe. Central to this chapter is the need to demonstrate that contested biblical interpretations in Zimbabwe are as old as the Bible is in Zimbabwe. The third chapter focuses on the position taken by GALZ and its various implications in Zimbabwe. Chapters four and five are meant to analyse the different responses to GALZ from the political, cultural and Christian camps respectively. Of interest in these chapters being the manner in which these different groups align their responses to biblical injunctions on homosexuality. While various strands of Christianity do exist in Zimbabwe, distinctions will be made where a denomination stands out but generally, there has been a degree of unity on the subject and in the debate. Chapter six and seven are exegetical chapters focusing on the so-called “explicit texts” but emphasizing the relevance of their socio-historical contexts in interpreting them. Basing on the previous chapters, it is contended that what the debate has shown is the need for critical exegetical work to be popularised in Zimbabwe and this chapter seeks to bring this to the fore. Finally, chapter eight is my summary and conclusion for the entire work.

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<sup>154</sup> Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 10.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTESTATION IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN ZIMBABWE: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

It is impossible to fully appreciate the contemporary use of the Bible in Zimbabwe without going back to the history of the encounters with the Bible dating back to the missionary activities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Zimbabwe. There is a consistent interpretation and appropriation of the Bible by those who are privileged within the status quo to the detriment of the underprivileged and marginalized members of society. This chapter should therefore help in exposing this use of the Bible and how the same usage has been apparent in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe. That there have been two different appropriations of the Bible in the homosexual debate is closely connected to the conflict and contestation that has always defined biblical interpretation in Zimbabwe from the time of its introduction by Western missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Zimbabwe.

It cannot be disputed that the first Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible were through the mediation of Western missionaries as they propagated Christianity. This appears to have been the case in most sub-Saharan countries even though “the expansion of Christianity to Zimbabwe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century came from South Africa.”<sup>1</sup> Western missionaries who evangelized Zimbabwe in the early decades of the establishment of Zimbabwe as a missionary field came from their bases in South Africa, and some brought with them some Africans<sup>2</sup> who had converted there. A lot has been written on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe from the arrival of the Jesuit missionary, Father Gonzalo Da Silveira in the

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<sup>1</sup> Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, “General Introduction” in: *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890 – 1939*, 1996. See also Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *The Biblical basis for Evangelization: Theological Reflections based on an African experience*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1989, 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Brandon Graaff, *Modumedi Moleli: Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity: Mashonaland 1892-96*, 1988.

16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> but the real in-roads in the planting of Christianity in Zimbabwe were made during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As already intimated above, this work seeks not to engage in the history of Christian missions in Zimbabwe rather it seeks to highlight some of the problems inherent within the Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible or some aspects of the history of biblical interpretation in Zimbabwe.

Closely connected to this interest in the Bible is the quest to identify the role of cultural and socio-historical presuppositions in directing how people relate to the Bible, how people read the Bible and also what people think they get from the Bible. There is a general unanimity among Christians that “the Bible presents fundamental data and principles [...] but these principles and themes are not abstract concepts but culturally conditioned concepts [...]”<sup>4</sup> This realization of the culturally conditioned nature of the Bible is behind the call to appreciate the existence of various cultural influences when one engages in biblical interpretation. Frans J. Verstraelen has drawn attention towards three cultural contexts “that are at play in interpreting the biblical message; the ‘Bible culture context’; the culture of the missionaries; and the culture of the receiving people.”<sup>5</sup> This chapter, therefore, will seek to expose the workings of these three different cultural backgrounds in the encounters of Zimbabweans and the Bible. This would then serve as an “entrée into the uses and abuses of the Bible in the current discussions within Churches about homosexuality.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, “Rhodesia” available online: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13025a.htm> accessed 22 May 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Frans J. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses: Contemporary Aspects of Christianity in Zimbabwe*, 1998, 85-6

<sup>5</sup> Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 85-6.

<sup>6</sup> Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 1.

## **2.2 The Image of the Bible, Context and the Reader**

This section seeks to highlight the popular image of the Bible among Zimbabwean Christians and how such images affect the modes of reading that one encounters from the early readings of the Bible in Zimbabwe. While context and reader will be treated in two separate sub-sections, there is a great deal of overlap between them. The readers are intrinsically connected to their contexts hence the analysis of the context and reader betray the same structure.

### **2.2.1 The Image of the Bible**

“The word ‘Bible’, derived from the Greek *biblia*, which means simply ‘books’, refers in a general sense to a collection of writings regarded as possessing special religious sanctity and authority.”<sup>7</sup> While the Greek word *biblia* could be applied to many collections, the English derivative, Bible, has come to signify only one such collection, the one used by Christians as their “sacred text”. What is critical is the idea of ‘special religious sanctity and authority’ assigned to the Bible. This is not an ordinary collection of writings; these writings are believed to be holy and authoritative by Christians. It is “the inspired word of God and the supreme authority for faith.”<sup>8</sup> In essence, the Bible is seen as the final authority in all matters of Christian faith and conduct, as well as the last court of appeal for many Zimbabwean Christians when faced with some difficult issues.

No statement of faith best sums up the popular understanding of the Bible in Zimbabwe than that of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) of 1992: “We believe in the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God to be divinely inspired, infallible, without error, and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and con-

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<sup>7</sup> John H. Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 20.

duct.”<sup>9</sup> Despite the many questions raised with regards the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible in academic circles, the ordinary users and readers of the Bible in Zimbabwe continue on the path that leads them to view the Bible as nothing but the Word of the Perfect, error-free God, making it an infallible text. This would suffice to explain the general understanding and perception of Protestant traditions while for the Roman Catholic Church other sources of God’s word are invoked. Joseph Njino writes that; “there are those who judge indulgently and even excuse homosexual relations as tolerable and justifiable. Such attitudes are in opposition to the *Magisterium* and to the moral sense of Christianity.”<sup>10</sup> Essentially, the Roman Catholic Church draws its teachings from three basic sources, the Bible, Tradition and *Magisterium*, yet it must be noted that these sources are not at all always invoked by the ordinary lay Roman Catholics. It is therefore not surprising that in the debate, the other two sources are hardly comparable to the Bible in terms of influence over and accessibility to the people in Zimbabwe including ordinary Catholics.

This understanding by most indigenous Zimbabweans can be traced back to the understanding imparted by missionaries, who gave the impression that all events, past, present and future, were all recorded in this Holy Book. The Bible therefore, has been precisely understood in Zimbabwe as the divine answer book to all human questions, and all one has to do is approach the Bible to get the necessary answer for any circumstance facing them. This should however be treated more as the theoretical understanding because “while African Christians may mouth the Bible-is-equal-to-the-Word-of-God formula, they are actually creatively pragmatic and selective in their use of the Bible so that the Bible may enhance rather than frustrate their life struggles.”<sup>11</sup> The pragmatic and selective use of the Bible by Zimbabwean Christians will be

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<sup>9</sup> EFZ Statement of Faith cited in: Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Njino “Christian Marriage in the Era of Homosexuality” in: *African Ecclesial Review Volume 46, Number 4, 2004*, pp 339-365, 353.

<sup>11</sup> Tinyiko Maluleke cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 106.

dealt with later in this chapter. This pragmatic and selective use of the Bible appears to be based on the perception that most “Africans hear and see a confirmation of their own cultural, social and religious life in the life and history of the Jewish people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible.”<sup>12</sup> This self-identification of African readers with ancient Israelites has given the Bible its authority as it is seen as relating the story of Africans on top of that of the Israelites.

There is a general assumption in the understanding of the Bible among Zimbabweans, that is, the Bible is a self-contained book containing all truths about God and human beings yet it is silently accepted that “the Bible, which is a guide for Christians in personal and social relations, must be interpreted.”<sup>13</sup> While all Christians may agree on the authority of the Bible, when it comes to the interpretation of the text, cracks emerge within the Christian family;

Few Christians would disagree that authority rests ultimately in the Godhead and that on earth its supreme focus is Jesus Christ. Straightforward a matter though this may be in principle, in practice it is one of the thorniest, for there is no accepted explanation of how the ultimate authority of the Godhead becomes operative in the life of the Church.<sup>14</sup>

In response to this observation most Zimbabwean Christians would argue that the authority of the Godhead becomes operative through the Bible (the exception would be those among Roman Catholics and to a lesser extent Anglicans, who are aware of the other sources of authoritative Church teaching as indicated above), yet that also would raise the problem of interpretation. When talking about interpretation, it is important to note that “there is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, [and] no innocent text”<sup>15</sup> and this is particularly so for contexts like our own

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<sup>12</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Deotis J. Roberts, *Africentric Christianity: A Theological Appraisal for Ministry*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 19.

<sup>15</sup> West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 44.

where interpretation is a free-for-all venture with no clearly defined methods of interpretation. The interpretation, the interpreter and the text are all conditioned by their contexts; unless that context is fully appreciated the dangers of misuse of the text cannot be underestimated.

The centrality of the Bible in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe must be understood in the context of the Bible in Zimbabwean Christianity. At face value, Christianity in Zimbabwe is seen as synonymous with the Bible. "It is *the* book. It is read in times of joy and in times of sorrow. It is read to instruct children in moral issues."<sup>16</sup> Not only is the Bible the most widely read book in Zimbabwe, it is also in many cases the only piece of literature in many households. The book that many first came into contact with and in many other cases the last book that many see before they die. As West observes, "the Bible is meaning and powerful both opened and closed. For many ordinary readers, the Bible is both a sacred object 'of strange power' and a significant sacred text."<sup>17</sup> With the Bible being such a central text and object in Zimbabwean Christianity, it follows therefore that the Bible requires greater academic attention for two main reasons.

The first reason for the centrality of the Bible in this study is linked to the real possibility of the Bible being abused by some, especially the elites to hoodwink the generality of readers of the Bible. This is especially so, where leaders tend to influence what portions of the Bible should be read and the manner in which such portions should be read. Frequently, ordinary readers of the Bible get indicators from the leaders about which texts to read and how to understand such texts. In the case of homosexuality, the role played by Christian leaders as well as politicians in determining how the Bible is used cannot be underestimated. Prejudices

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<sup>16</sup> Lovemore Togarasei "Fighting HIV and AIDS with the Bible: Towards HIV and AIDS Biblical criticism" in: Ezra Chitando (ed), *Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in Theological Education: Experiences and Explorations*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008, 73.

<sup>17</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, vii.

are nationalized and with the easy availability of the Bible in many homesteads, such prejudices are then legitimized by a suspicious reading of the Bible which when seen from the perspective of ordinary readers are innocent readings.

The second reason is connected to the fact that the Bible itself is a historical product. Christian leaders in Zimbabwe have tended to blur the history of the Bible and promote the timelessness of the Bible. The danger of this reality is that ordinary readers of the Bible are driven further away from the meaning of biblical texts as historically and socially conditioned texts. This normally leads to the imposition of prejudices as meanings of these texts. This work therefore seeks to highlight how the recovery of the history of the Bible becomes central to any attempts to critically appropriate the Bible for contemporary teachings. The image of the Bible as a timeless document is one of the bases upon which a multiplicity of prejudices are legitimized in contemporary Christianity.

### **2.2.2 Context**

The realization that no interpretation is innocent, yet the Bible requires interpretation brings to the fore the role of cultural conditioning in the politics of interpretation. This can be summed up in one word, context. The idea of the role of contexts in interpretation is one of the most significant contributions of the social sciences to biblical interpretation, hence Daniel Carroll writes that “social-scientific criticism has as its twin goals to explicate the complex socio-cultural realities described or reflected in a number of ways in the biblical text and to explore the social dimensions of the interpretive process.”<sup>18</sup> Certain facts about the Bible are widely accepted in academic circles yet they remain anathema to the ordinary readers of the Bible. These facts require propagation to

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<sup>18</sup> M. Daniel Carroll R. “Introduction: Issues of ‘context’ within social science approaches to biblical studies” in: M. Daniel Carroll R. (ed), *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 299*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, 13.

allow for an informed appropriation of the biblical texts. One such fundamental point is made by Anthony Thiselton when writing, “traditional hermeneutics began with the recognition that a text was conditioned by a given historical context.”<sup>19</sup> In short, the Bible was produced by real people, living at a particular time and in a real place hence it affects and is affected by these real conditions.

This brings me to the first critical context that has a bearing on interpretive attempts. The context within which a particular text, in this case the Bible, is produced holds a key to any interpretation of such a text. The Zimbabwean use of the Bible has largely tended to ignore this context as can be seen from the cutting and pasting of texts in the public debate. This context in Zimbabwe has largely been considered important in academic circles where the critical study of the Bible is done but this is limited to a few academics. The majority of the readers and users of the Bible have generally operated outside the realm of this context. This context furnishes the readers of the Bible with what I have called cultural presuppositions which have a bearing on how the text should be understood. While this context has not been central in biblical interpretations in Zimbabwe, the exegesis of the so-called “explicit texts” in chapter six and seven will invoke this context.

By emphasizing that the Bible is a cultural product, the need to unravel the cultural knowledge and presuppositions, that is, the social history which shaped the present text becomes indispensable. By this, it is “[a] recognition that the Bible is a site of specific historical-cultural class conflicts”<sup>20</sup> and other socio-historical processes. In other words, the Bible is a text or compilation of texts that deal with real events in a real community in history. There have been spirited attempts by some Christians to strip the Bible of its historical specificity and to look at it as a timeless book of God’s truths. This understanding is widely shared within the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 73.

It is not surprising that David Tracy agrees and correctly so, that “no text comes to us without the plural and ambiguous history effects of its own production and its former receptions.”<sup>21</sup> Of critical importance and worth noting here is not only the idea of the importance of the context of production but also the history of transmission which should not be seen as an innocent process but one that can have lasting influences on the text. The effect of transmission will be dealt with later when I consider the role of missionaries in the Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible. According to Itumeleng Mosala, “biblical texts are products, records, and sites of social, historical, cultural, gender, racial and ideological struggles, and they radically and indelibly bear the marks of their origins and history. The biblical text is not an innocent and transparent container of a message or messages.”<sup>22</sup> The popular attempts to downplay these facts can only lead to widespread manipulations of biblical texts.

The above contentions direct me to propose that interpreters of the Bible are obliged to acknowledge that the Bible is a book or collection of books that emanates from a particular socio-historical context. This context of the Bible is indispensable to any serious attempts at interpreting the Bible. It is in this regard that West alerts us to three different modes of reading the Bible, namely: reading behind the text; reading in the text; and reading in front of the text.<sup>23</sup> By reading behind the text, the interpreter is brought closer to the context that produced the text. According to Gottwald;

The Hebrew Bible is a social document that reflects the history of changing social structures, functions, and roles in ancient Israel over a thousand years, and which provides an integral context in which the literary, historical, and religious features of the Israelite/Jewish people can be synoptically viewed and dynamically interconnected.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David Tracy cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Itumeleng Mosala cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 64-5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 68ff.

<sup>24</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 22.

There is certainly no substitute to the context that produced a text when it comes to interpreting such texts. The Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible, particularly at the public level, have tended to lack this critical realisation. The historical-critical methods are indispensable in attempting to establish this context.

The second context is linked to the fact that Western missionaries were responsible for introducing the Bible in Zimbabwe. Any attempt at biblical interpretation that ignores the impact of the cultural presuppositions of the carriers of the Bible from Europe and America to Zimbabwe is bound to miss a critical component of the encounters of Zimbabweans with the Bible. This is so because the missionaries were not only carriers of the Bible but for long were themselves the authorities of biblical interpretation *for* Zimbabweans. This, they did, from their own socio-cultural-historical perspective. In explaining the importance of the context of the missionaries, Gottwald's words help in that regard when he writes;

Since religion was of such pronounced importance to Jews, it is to be expected that elites and their critics would both try to summon religious support for their positions and programs. Decisions about holy books were thus not only decisions about religious matters but about who had controlling power in the life of the community.<sup>25</sup>

What Gottwald observed about ancient Israelites regarding the subordination of religion to special interests of different social groups applies also not only to the missionaries but even in the post-missionary era in Zimbabwe. It is imperative therefore that all the contexts within which the Bible has been used be unravelled to identify these special interests.

There is no doubt that missionaries were influenced by the Bible, but they also influenced the Bible because "the Gospel cannot circulate the world disembodied. It can only be spread if it is embodied and expressed in the people and culture of the people who

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<sup>25</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 111.

proclaim it.”<sup>26</sup> In this anecdote David Bosch accepts that not only does the Bible possess its own cultural embodiment but that those who proclaim it also embody the Bible with their own culture. The Bible, therefore, is inadvertently made to agree with the culture of the proclaimers hence the need for understanding the missionary context. It is not surprising therefore that “many missionaries convinced thoroughly of the superiority of their religion and culture deliberately linked Gospel message with Western civilisation and imperial power.”<sup>27</sup> The Bible that Zimbabweans heard and received from the missionaries was essentially a Western culturally conditioned Bible. It was therefore not possible to see Christianity or the Bible beyond the lifestyle of the missionaries. The missionaries had expertly packaged their own culture as the equivalent of the Bible and thereby appropriating for themselves immense power and authority.

A lot has been written in the British history about the Victorian era and its impact on the imperial interests of the British Empire. “Not unnaturally, the emphasis in the study of missionary activity in Africa has been on the role of the missionary as an agent of social and cultural change, and we know only too well the arrogance and prejudice of Victorian and early twentieth-century missionaries.”<sup>28</sup> The context of the missionary is characterized mostly by cultural prejudices against the so-called ‘heathens’ they sought to evangelize. Cuthbert Omari correctly observes that “the early missionaries like their contemporaries, the explorers, colonialists and merchants, came to Africa with pre-conceived ideas about African societies.”<sup>29</sup> In order to appreciate the nature of the mis-

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<sup>26</sup> David Bosch „The Question of Mission Today“ in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Number 1, 1972, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Bosch „The Question of Mission Today“, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Alison Hodge „The Training of Missionaries for Africa: The Church Missionary Society’s Training College at Islington, 1900-1915“ in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, volume IV, 1971-72, 86.

<sup>29</sup> Cuthbert K. Omari „Early Missionaries’ Contribution to the Understanding of African Societies: Evidence from two Case Studies from Tanzania” in: *Africa Theological Journal*, volume 13, Number 1, 1984, 14.

sionary context and its influence on their biblical interpretation, it is crucial to highlight some of the culturally conditioned presuppositions in their thought patterns regarding African societies in general.

The superiority-inferiority complex prevalent among Europeans during the eighteenth and nineteenth century (and still common in many other contemporary Westerners) did not escape the missionaries. Armed with this idea of their superiority, the missionaries' reading of the Bible was affected. According to Leon De Kock, "implicit in eighteenth-century thinking (and the thinking which made slavery possible) was the notion of a 'Great Chain of Being'. Eighteenth century classifications of nature as the older Biblical distinction between Ham, Shem and Japhet, shared the assumption that race and culture were closely related."<sup>30</sup> There is likelihood that the missionary reading of the Bible was influenced by "their ideas and interpretations of other cultures [which] were dominated and shaped by theories which had been developed and existed in their own societies about other societies and their cultures."<sup>31</sup> It is imperative therefore, that any biblical interpretation quest in Zimbabwe pays sufficient attention to the context not only of the Bible as a cultural production but of the missionaries as this has an impact on how the message of the Bible was first communicated.

The first two contexts I have dealt with give the impression that the indigenous Zimbabweans were or are victims of culturally conditioned readings of a culturally produced book called the Bible. That is only one side of the story! The fact is that, they were victims yet at the same time their context has not been completely ignored. This leaves me to deal with the third context, in the three-cultural-contexts quest for a critical appreciation of the Bible

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<sup>30</sup> Leon De Kock, *Civilizing the Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996, 38-9.

<sup>31</sup> Omari „Early Missionaries' Contribution to the Understanding of African Societies", 14.

in Zimbabwe. The third context is the context of indigenous Zimbabweans. The Bible has not remained relevant in Zimbabwe because of its history but because of its flexibility which has seen it being appropriated by many Zimbabweans today. The appropriation is not informed largely by the biblical or missionary contexts rather it is appropriated on the basis of the context of the indigenous people. To understand the continued relevance of the Bible in Zimbabwe therefore calls for the unravelling of the context that has accommodated it.

As is widely acknowledged; “during the colonial era African religions and culture were heavily suppressed by both the missionaries and the colonial administrators.”<sup>32</sup> This is by no means a minor issue because suppression of the culture and religion of the people of Zimbabwe holds key to some of the interpretations emanating from them. From a position of weakness and deprivation normally arise what West has called “guerrilla exegesis”.<sup>33</sup> In elaborating on guerrilla exegesis, West cites Osanyande Obery Hendricks who contends that;

Guerrilla exegesis like re-membering, takes whatever tools and resources are at hand, wherever they may come from, whether indigenous or imported, and uses them to sabotage and subvert dominant readings, to make new things out of old things, to find new truths in unexpected and familiar places, to redefine reality, to empower and inspire.<sup>34</sup>

The arrival and the attitude of the missionaries did leave the indigenous people at a great disadvantage, for long not able to read the Bible for themselves. For long believing that the missionaries were telling an innocent story from that “magical” book called the Bible.

Since most of the missionaries could hardly be separated from the settlers, it is understandable that they were equally blamed for the colonial plunder that was visited upon the local people. Not only

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<sup>32</sup> Ambrose M. Moyo „Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe“ in: *Africa Theological Journal*, volume 16, Number 1, 1987, 15.

<sup>33</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 98-9.

<sup>34</sup> Osanyande Obery Hendricks cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 98-9.

were the local people dispossessed of their land, they were reduced to foreigners in their own land. This context of severe deprivation due to colonial policies provides another key to unlocking the sort of presuppositions that they would bring to their own reading of the Bible. What we see depends on where we stand. The missionaries were operating from a privileged position; their interpretation betrays that standing while the local people operating from a position of deprivation and oppression, poverty and anger have an interpretation influenced by that standing. One of the founding fathers of Nationalist Movements in Zimbabwe, Ndabaningi Sithole writes; “African nationalism is an African feeling against this foreign rule because it relegates the African people, who are not foreigners, to the states of economic commodities to be valued and devalued according to the whims of the ruling foreigner.”<sup>35</sup> This feeling of being reduced to economic commodities did not only influence nationalism it equally impacted biblical interpretation because it was the context from which local people approached the Bible.

From a cultural perspective, the local people had their own lifestyle which was different from that of missionaries. For the missionaries, difference was taken to mean deviance and deviance had to be uprooted. For example, land was distributed by the Chief through his legates but essentially the Chief did not own the land. To that effect, Martinus Daneel writes; “land allocation by the *sabhuku* (headman) does not imply individualized land ownership. The land is communally ‘owned’ by the members of the village, whose rights to cultivate an allocated patch of land derive from membership of the village unit.”<sup>36</sup> This understanding stands diametrically opposed to the notions of the private ownership of land brought by the colonial regimes. Many local people were moved away from traditionally held lands to make way for

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<sup>35</sup> Ndabaningi Sithole, *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist*, 1970, 116.

<sup>36</sup> Martinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches: volume I: Background and Rise of the Major Movements*, 1971, 34.

whites and such a context could play a significant role in the manner in which local people approached the Bible. Another point of conflict has to do with the traditional acceptance of polygamy/polygyny and arranged marriages. Polygyny was indeed prevalent yet this was exaggerated by some missionaries, as according to Father J. O'Neil, "polygamy prevails among them all."<sup>37</sup> The local people were taught to hate themselves, to despise who they were and to strive to be like their 'masters', the white people. This context cannot be ignored when one seeks to understand how the local people of Zimbabwe approached the Bible.

To sum up the context in which the local encounters with the Bible took place, Desmond Tutu comes in handy. The totality of the colonial experience was such that "there was almost a universal attitude towards black men, that somehow he is God's stepchild [...]. Then, black was the colour of the devil, white the colour of angels, of Jesus Christ and perhaps even of God."<sup>38</sup> The local people found themselves in an island in which they had no right to speak, name or define anything including themselves. They were told who they were and were defined in terms other than they themselves had thought possible of anyone else.

This experience and context does influence the interpretations of the local people. However, so far the impression is that all local people share the same context, the same experience. This is certainly not true because in each community there are some elites, the haves and the have-nots; the degree of deprivation differs significantly. In this case the Bible becomes a site of struggle not only for the community behind the biblical text but also for missionaries and local people as well as between and among local people themselves. This is critical because the subject of homosexuality in contemporary Zimbabwe could be analysed in this latter context but it is a context that draws from the missionary legacy.

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<sup>37</sup> Fr. J. O'Neil cited in: Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Desmond Tutu „Some African Insights and the Old Testament“ in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Number 1, 1972, 16-7.

### 2.2.3 *The Reader*

The last consideration in this section focuses on the reader. Who is the reader of the Bible? There are various ways of searching for the reader of the Bible; conversely, there are various readers of the Bible. Gerald West identifies two categories of readers of the Bible – the ordinary readers, those who are not trained or semi-trained and these constitute the majority of Bible interpreters or readers and the specialist or trained readers, the scholars and theologians.<sup>39</sup> I have no intention of disputing these two categories of readers because these also apply to the Zimbabwean context. The question however, is: Are these two categories enough and exhaustive of the concept of the reader? For the purpose of this study, these two categories are not exhaustive and sufficient. I, therefore, propose to look at the concept of the reader in a different way from that given by West.

On the one hand, the Hebrew Bible was written between *ca.* 1200 and 125 BCE, with the contents being finalized between *ca.* 400 BCE and 90 CE, when it took its definitive form.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the New Testament Canon as we have it today was almost universally accepted towards the end of the fourth century CE, *ca.* 367 CE, Bishop Athanasius lists the books of the New Testament.<sup>41</sup> Two pertinent points for this study are that: First, the Biblical books appeared at different times in a long history of oral transmission, collection, writing, preserving and finally canonizing. Second, some of the later writers would have relied on earlier writings that they would have read or heard about in the writing of their own works.

The above observations point towards the existence of intra-biblical readers. Some biblical books betray the fact that their authors, compilers or editors were essentially readers of earlier books. A critical example could be that of Paul, who is a reader of the Hebrew Bible and who interprets the Hebrew Bible in the

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 80-93.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible*, 19-24.

process of his own writings, for example, Paul's discourse on the Law of Moses (Gal.3:1ff, 1Cor.9:1ff), or his statements on homosexuality (1Cor.6:9; Rom. 1:26-27) are examples of what is referred to here, as intra-biblical readership.

The prophets also read earlier works and traditions in the process interpreting these traditions and works for their audiences. In this work, therefore, the intra-biblical reader is to be considered an important reader for any contemporary attempts at understanding the Bible. Despite the fact that these readers have over the millennia become part of the text, in need of readers, they are themselves readers of an earlier text. Their own context is also critical when evaluating their reading and interpretation of earlier works. This is the framework within which I will approach those prophets who have interpreted Gen. 19, the story of Sodom as well as Paul in the texts mentioned above. The story of Sodom is one of the stories cited in the Zimbabwean discourse as an indictment of homosexuality in all ages.

The second reader for this study would be the Western readers and interpreters of the Bible. This could date back to early Christianity but because of the special focus in this work, I will confine this to the Western missionaries who introduced the Bible in Zimbabwe. These are the people who operated in the context noted above, a context characterized by the dichotomy of black and white, superior and inferior, truth and false, civilized and barbarian. Readers who upon seeing the dark coloured Africans believed that God had indeed cursed Ham/Canaan (Gen.9:25).

The third reader for this work is the local Zimbabwean reader; this could designate both scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible. These are the people who started off from a position of weakness and deprivation. These are the people who at one time were parcelled out to different missions as trophies as observed by David Maxwell when he writes; "The colony had been split into

discrete packages of missionary territory rather like tribal areas.”<sup>42</sup> Missionaries owned natives, and these two groups now emerge as distinct readers and interpreters of the Bible, each bringing their context to their reading.

I have sought here to highlight the different readers of the Bible because becoming a reader of the Bible is often equated with becoming an authority. “Authority has the constant function of being decisive or conclusive [...] the mark of an authority would accordingly be the extent to which it is conclusive, whatever the nature of its embodiment.”<sup>43</sup> None of the three categories of readers adopted for this study would escape this observation. All readers, trained or untrained always want to look at their reading of an authoritative text as being authoritative. The intra-biblical readers’ claim to authority has been sustained by the canonization of their interpretations; missionaries claimed authority because they had brought the Bible and therefore knew more than the local people.

The claim continues among the local Zimbabwean readers, everyone claims to be authoritative when they interpret the Bible. The result is that many different and sometimes even contradictory interpretations remain the order of the day. Some readers and leaders read the Bible to “make their judgments look unquestioned and ancient, even timeless, and certainly descended from divine authority.”<sup>44</sup> As demonstrated in this chapter so far, the word of God is indeed an interpretation. The question is; how much of this interpretation is essentially the special interests of the readers? With this concept of the readers of the Bible focus will be paid to the intra-biblical readers and how they read the “explicit texts” while the contemporary debate has seen various readers from within the society and all these bring along their different contexts.

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<sup>42</sup> David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*, 2006, 48. Emphasis my own.

<sup>43</sup> Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Gottwald cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 170.

### **2.3 Western Missionaries and the Bible in Zimbabwe**

This section is certainly not an attempt to reconstruct the history of missions and missionaries in Zimbabwe; this has been dealt with by a number of African historians and historians of Christianity in Zimbabwe and Africa in general.<sup>45</sup> Instead, this section focuses on missionaries as the first readers of the Bible in Zimbabwe and even on that point; this work is not exhaustive but rather attempts to give an overview of the modes of reading the Bible by missionaries. Their modes of reading have a bearing on the contemporary homosexual debate in Zimbabwe. The theoretical assumption behind this section is that the reading of the Bible by missionaries was directly linked to their ideas regarding themselves and regarding the indigenous Zimbabweans they sought to evangelize and convert to Christianity.

While I have already intimated on the authority of the Bible, it is pertinent that I also highlight here that missionaries entered Zimbabwe having designated themselves as authorities over the indigenous people. This is inherent in the ideology of evangelisation and was sustained by the Western ideology of the “great chain of being” cited above. However, there are other reasons upon which the claim to authority was legitimized. This claim to authority should be understood in the context of “expertise as authority”, “accepted hierarchy as authority” and “reliable information as authority”.<sup>46</sup> Missionaries understood themselves or at least made local Zimbabweans understand them as experts, who because they were white and Christians were hierarchically above the local people and that they were the purveyors of reliable information that they gleaned from the Bible.

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<sup>45</sup> For the history of missionaries and missions in Zimbabwe and Africa in general see: Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890 – 1939*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996; Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950 – 1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 17.

### **2 3.1 Conflict between and among Missionaries: The Bible and Racism**

Whatever the missionaries did in Zimbabwe, their reading of the Bible was a direct result of what they thought of Zimbabweans and their self-understanding as civilized. This blank cheque, it seems was not given to missionaries if some resolutions of some conferences are critically evaluated. For instance;

The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910 was unanimous as to the attitude a missionary should adopt towards believers in animistic religions: he 'must study and get to know the native religion. He must strive to understand the native concept of things and the heathen method of thinking'.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the misgivings surrounding the characterisation of African religions as animistic and the people as heathens, there is something of interest to this study in this conference resolution. There is the unmistakable influence of Paul at Athens (Acts 17:16-34), where he uses local knowledge to teach the new religion he had brought. The spirit of this conference resolution appears to be the evangelization of people and not their subjugation. This was seemingly the theoretical ideal behind those organisations that sought to live out Matt. 28:18-20:

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age'.

It should be appreciated here that indeed some missionaries did live up to such expectations and became prominent defenders of the full humanity of Africans. This remains debatable because some made themselves into defenders of a *sub-human species* they were in the process of civilising. However, the majority of missionaries allowed their cultural prejudices and presuppositions to determine their reading of the Bible. To further illustrate the

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<sup>47</sup> Hodge „The Training of Missionaries for Africa“, 86.

above argument, I make reference here to a reading of the Bible that was part of the Christian Gospel in Zimbabwe;

The 1932 declaration on race relations of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which noted that it sought the conversion and spiritual elevation of the Coloured and Native as well as their well-being but that this well-being is **not** promoted by way of *racial integration* and *social equality* [...] but by way of the preservation and development of their national character, sanctified by the blessed influence of the Gospel, so that both Coloured and Native can increasingly in every sphere take their legitimate place in society.<sup>48</sup>

It is apparent here that the reading of the Bible in the DRC based on the culturally prejudicial perception of Africans as a cursed people led to an interpretation that actively campaigned for racial segregation and social inequality. It is no wonder the Bible is sometimes characterized as a weapon of oppression and discrimination. In this context, it is possible to view missionaries as agents not of evangelization but of subjugation of local people.

Among the exceptions from the popular missionary reading of the Bible was Bishop Donal Lamont of the Roman Catholic Church who was shocked at finding racism existing within the Church itself, to which he responded: "This fact, more than anything else, drove me to a realisation of the disparity that existed between our preaching and our practice."<sup>49</sup> The observation and subsequent shock of Bishop Lamont brings to the fore one of the issues that has always featured prominently in works studying missionary activities in Africa. Lamont assumes that missionaries preached against racism and yet practiced it. This observation may not necessarily be true, it has been demonstrated above that some if not most missionaries did use the Bible to justify racism. Bishop Lamont assumed (wrongly) that the Bible always speaks with one voice on the subject of race. It seems there is almost always this

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<sup>48</sup> Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 208. The bold emphasis is my own.

<sup>49</sup> Donal Lamont cited in: Janice McLaughlin, MM, *On The Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, 1996, 114.

dividing line between different interpreters or readers of the Bible.

It is inappropriate to assume that all missionaries suffered from this superiority malaise, at least not in theory. In practice, things could be very different but on the race subject, the differences between and among missionaries is best summed up in a Pastoral Instruction published by Catholic Bishops of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) emphasizing the unity of the human race.

Though many fail to see it, or refuse through sheer selfishness to acknowledge it, the doctrine of racial superiority, as taught and practised by many in this country, differs little in essence from that of the Nazis, whom Pope Pius XI strongly rebuked in these words: 'As God's sun shines on all that bear human countenance, so does His law know no privileges or exception [...] Only superficial minds can make the mad attempt of trying to confine within the boundaries of a single people, within the bloodstream of a single race, God the Creator of the World'.<sup>50</sup>

Though not making any direct quotations from the Bible, readers of the Bible could indeed speculate as to what texts were at war on the subject of race relations. To a larger extent racial segregation was mostly linked to the Hamitic myth created from Gen. 9. After seeing the nakedness of his father, Ham is cursed to die a slave. Ham is etymologically associated with the colour black hence he was understood as the father of the black race. The enslavement of black Africans was therefore understood as divinely sanctioned. Racial equality was drawn from the famous Pauline line which is popularly recited by Christians; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28)."<sup>51</sup>

These readings and interpretations of the Bible can be explained in terms of socio-cultural-historical contexts of the interpreters as well as the self-identification of the interpreters in relation to the characters in the biblical texts. In the case of those who identified themselves as part of the humanity created by God, in God's own

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<sup>50</sup> Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Instruction „Peace Through Justice 1961“ cited in: Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 207.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sithole, *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist*, 102.

image, the oneness of the human race would have dominated their reading and interpretation of the Bible. As for those who identified themselves in terms of the dichotomy of white and black, good and evil, they interpreted the Bible in such a way that they themselves being white became by extension the true Israelites, meant to be set apart from the heathens. The Bible's failure to speak with one voice then became the recipe for protracted disputes among missionaries on which reading was authentic. The minority view eventually succeeded, when Apartheid was labelled a heresy.<sup>52</sup>

### **2.3.2 Evangelization or Subjugation of Indigenous People?**

On other subjects, missionaries closed ranks and agreed to condemn various beliefs and practices of indigenous Zimbabweans, among them the practice of polygamy/polygyny. Nowhere do cultural presuppositions and prejudices assert themselves so clearly than on the subject of marriage and sexuality. As missionaries established themselves in Zimbabwe, they began to observe certain practices of the local people among them polygyny. Fr. J. O'Neil wrote in 1905; "with regard to older pagans, there does not seem to be much hope of converting them to Christianity. Polygamy prevails among them all, and the last thing a man could be persuaded to do would be to give up any of his wives."<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Fr. Richard Sykes wrote in 1915; "The man who has a plurality of wives is practically hopeless as a prospective Christian convert."<sup>54</sup> These views cut across all missionaries and mission societies in Zimbabwe; polygyny was equated to sin. This was based on the interpretation of texts such as Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5ff and 1Tim. 3:1ff among other biblical texts that could sustain this understanding. The question is; is this all the Bible said about mar-

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. John W. de Gruchy & Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds), *Apartheid is a Heresy*, Grand Rapids : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> O'Neil cited in: Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, 94.

<sup>54</sup> Fr. Richard Sykes cited in: Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, 94.

riage? Was this an attempt to evangelize or subjugate indigenous people?

Certainly, it is possible that missionaries failed to make a distinction between Christianity, Western civilisation and European supremacy.<sup>55</sup> The assumption behind the missionary stance on polygyny was that the Bible could only agree with their cultural ways because only “western values were the ones compatible with Christianity”<sup>56</sup> and by extension with the Bible. Essentially therefore, one of the major reasons behind this selective reading of the Bible that led to a widespread condemnation of polygyny by missionaries is that “European culture was uniquely monogamous.”<sup>57</sup> Once again the Bible was read to sustain an already culturally accepted norm to attack a norm that was also culturally sanctioned. What I observe here is not the absolute word of God but the absolute position of domination of the cultural presuppositions of the missionaries over both the Bible and local cultures.

Most missionaries did not see anything wrong with colonialism and the plunder that came with it. Rather, most of them being Europeans seem to have encouraged the domination of local people by their kith and kin, to the extent of even advocating the use of force and violence. In the quotation below, the missionary is not ashamed to clearly spell out on which side he belongs;

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 1896, the Revd. George H. Eva wrote a letter to Marshall Hartley, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London; ‘In the last war the Matebele were not beaten, the only real victory was at Bembesi, the first Shangani battle was more or less a draw and the second was a decided defeat of our forces which were totally inadequate to cope with them, *so that the Matebele had never been thoroughly*

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Bosch „The Question of Mission Today“, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Tutu „Some African Insights on the Old Testament“, 18.

<sup>57</sup> D. N. Wambutda cited in: A. O. Nkwoka “The Church and Polygamy in Africa: The 1988 Lambeth Conference Resolution” in: *Africa Theological Journal*, volume 19, Number 2, 1990, 142.

*beaten by the White man and until we give them a thrashing we may expect periodical outbreaks such as this and many of us will lose our lives*'.<sup>58</sup>

According to McLaughlin the Zimbabwe National African Union (ZANU) taught that "by preaching against the use of force, [missionaries] softened the people so they could not defend their rights. Religion is nothing but a concept aimed at preserving the white rule."<sup>59</sup> This observation by freedom fighters also known as terrorists then was based on the reading of the Bible by missionaries. The Bible was being used to silence the local populace; violence and force were evil when used against the colonial occupiers while it was being encouraged when being used by colonial occupiers as indicated in the Eva letter. In this regard it is not surprising when Jean-Marc Ela writes; "we, Africans have been introduced to the Christian God by means of a theology of suffering, which seems to have been created so black people would learn to accept their historical status as a conquered people."<sup>60</sup> Missionaries read the Bible to "help" Africans accept their suffering and conquest, as if colonisation was a God-sent blessing on the Africans.

The decision by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to help those fighting against racism drew sharp criticism from some quarters among missionaries in Zimbabwe;

On the funding of guerrilla fighters by the World Council of Churches (WCC) Program to Combat Racism, Bishop Paul Burrough said; 'I believe that the conscience of many Christians was outraged recently by the action of the WCC. The outrage was because the Council said in effect that the violence which is inherent in Apartheid must, in the name of Christ, be answered by violence. This seemed to deny Christ's Gospel.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Rev. George H. Eva cited in: Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, 27. Emphasis my own.

<sup>59</sup> McLaughlin, *On The Frontline*, 54.

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988, 102.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Lapsley, SSM, *Neutrality or Co-option? Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe*, 1986, 33-4.

This is one case where the Bible was read in such a way that those not sharing the context of the Bishop would have never thought possible. The evil was to fight against a violent system. It is not immediately clear which Gospel of Christ, the Bishop was referring to. What is clear however is that the interpretation of the so-called Gospel of Christ had been subordinated to a context within which the Bishop saw the Bible as forbidding the violent removal of a violent system. How much of this context depended on the inherent sense of superiority emanating from the claims to cultural superiority among Europeans is also not immediately clear. Could this have been a culturally inspired reading of Rom. 13:4, touting local Zimbabweans to respect authorities or is it connected to Matt. 5:39, where Jesus advises people to turn the other cheek when slapped on one? Or was this inspired by the observation that in the process of setting up missionary centres, the missionaries were deliberately instigating the Settler authority to dispossess the people of their land which was then given to the Missionary Societies.<sup>62</sup> The missionaries (with a few exceptions) feared the use of violence because it threatened them since they had acted in collusion and complicity with colonial authorities. The Bible was then used to subjugate and not evangelize the indigenous people.

Another issue that seem to have played into this missionary reading of the Bible relates to the question of names for the converts. According to Sithole “many Africans took on new foreign names upon becoming Christians. This was partly an effort to break with the past, and partly to make it easier for their European evangelizers to address them. A new Christian name seemed to emphasize the serious intention of the African convert to follow Christianity.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Ezra Chitando observes that “often, conversion to traditions such as Christianity or Islam has been accompanied by

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Brandon Graaff, *Modumedi Moleli: Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity: Mashonaland 1892-96*, 1988, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Sithole, *Obed Mutezo*, 83.

a change of name.”<sup>64</sup> Pedzisai Mashiri writes “the white missionaries and employers had difficulty in pronouncing Shona names and it was believed that an English or Christian name symbolized salvation.”<sup>65</sup> Clearly, there was great significance attached to names during the early missionary adventures among the Shona and while all the reasons given by Mashiri and Sithole are true, it is equally true that there was also the influence of the Bible.

While agreeing with Sithole that Africans had new names upon baptism, it is unfortunate Sithole creates an impression that Africans freely chose to change their names. Names were changed primarily because Zimbabwean cultural/traditional names suffered together with their culture and were always regarded by missionaries as inherently evil. The cultural superiority of the missionaries influenced them to read the conversion of Saul on his way to Damascus and the subsequent use of the name Paul (Acts 9:1ff cf. 13:13 and the Letters of Paul in the New Testament) to justify their imposition of European names on Zimbabwean converts to Christianity.<sup>66</sup> This for me represents another attempt at subjugation disguised as evangelization. Chitando cites the Jesus tradition as part of the biblical basis for the change of names for converts because Jesus renamed his disciples to reflect their new tasks (cf. Matt. 16:18 and John 1:42).<sup>67</sup>

There are indeed many examples of how certain European values were equated with the word of God contained in the Bible. These

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<sup>64</sup> Ezra Chitando “Signs and Portents? Theophoric Names in Zimbabwe” in: *Word & World, Volume XXI, Number 2, 2001*, pp144-151, 144-5.

<sup>65</sup> Pedzisai Mashiri “Terms of Address in Shona: A Sociolinguistic Approach” in: *Zambezia* 16, 1999, 96.

<sup>66</sup> This reading of the Bible even persisted after independence and it died gradually as more Zimbabweans began giving their children what has been labelled Shona Christian names. The change from Saul to Paul has nothing to do with the taking up of new names as it is a shift from Latin to Greek of the same name. What is even more interesting is that the names given to converts were not necessarily biblical names but generally English or European names thereby sustaining my argument that this had little to do with the Bible but with European culture.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Chitando “Signs and Portents? Theophoric Names in Zimbabwe”, 146.

cannot obviously be exhausted in the context of this study save to say the examples cited above demonstrate that a number of missionaries gave “the impression that western standards were the only ones valid in the arduous business of life, that western values were the only ones compatible with Christianity.”<sup>68</sup> It is in the context of such observations that I propose in this study that there lie some cultural presuppositions behind the biblical interpretations of the missionaries. The Bible was co-opted by missionaries into the project of transforming and restructuring of African societies into some extensions of European societies.<sup>69</sup> To sum up this section, I must highlight the easy with which readers of the Bible can read their interests into and out of the Bible. This normally results in various interpretations, as many as the interpreters at times and even among the missionaries themselves these differences are well represented.

### **2.3.3 Missionaries as liberators of the Bible from Missionaries!**

In the hands of most of the missionaries, the Bible became a lethal weapon against indigenous Zimbabweans as it was selectively read and which reading depended so much on the cultural-historical context of the missionaries. Yet, despite this skewed reading of the Bible, the missionaries played a huge role in liberating the Bible from their own hands. This liberation of the Bible is closely linked to the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages (despite the real concerns on the subjectivity of the process of translation as argued by Musa Dube<sup>70</sup>), which meant as more indigenous people became literate; they could read the Bible

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<sup>68</sup> Tutu „Some African Insights on the Old Testament“, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. De Kock, *Civilising Barbarians*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Musa Dube argues that missionary translations were ideologically designed to exterminate the cultural identities of the indigenous people in her article “What I have written, I have written” in: Getui et al (eds), *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, 2001. See also Togarasei “The Shona Bible and the Politics of Bible Translation” in: *Studies in World Christianity, Volume 15/1*, 2009, 51-64.

for themselves without relying on the missionaries.<sup>71</sup> The translation of the Bible into local languages served to open up Bible reading to many people in Zimbabwe, and the result did not take long to manifest itself.

“Translation enabled the Bible to become ‘an independent yardstick by which to test, and sometimes to reject, what western missionaries taught and practised.’”<sup>72</sup> While the Bible had been an effective tool in the hands of most missionaries in their quest to redefine Zimbabweans, the translation of the Bible into local languages changed this. “They [Zimbabwean readers] see in their own language that between them and the Christian message there is no longer the authoritative missionary or other transmitter of that message as essential intermediary. Instead, they have full access to the Word of God in their own language.”<sup>73</sup> I shall draw this section to a close with the observation of Adrian Hastings:

The Protestant missionary sedulously presented a book to his converts, but he did not really expect them to imitate all its contents, any more than he did so himself – he had somehow overlooked, as essentially irrelevant, a great deal of what is actually in the Bible.<sup>74</sup>

To that extent, I agree with the analysis of Jesse Mugambi when he argues that while the modern missionary enterprise brought the Bible to condemn the entirety of the African life and culture, once the Bible was translated, the African converts found the Bible to be affirming their dignity as human beings created by God.<sup>75</sup> This observation is central in understanding the manner in which the Bible is used by most African Christians.

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<sup>71</sup> On the missionary activities on translation of the Bible into local languages refer to the works of: Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 189; Graaff, *Modumedi Moleli*, 123; and Sithole, *Obed Mutezo*, 97.

<sup>72</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 97.

<sup>73</sup> Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*, 1975, 71.

<sup>75</sup> Jesse N. K. Mugambi “Foundations for an African approach to biblical hermeneutics” in: Mary N. Getui, Tinyiko Maluleke & Justin Ukpong (eds), *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001, 16.

## **2.4 Indigenous Zimbabweans and the Bible**

I have given a few examples of missionary readings of the Bible paying attention to the connection between the missionaries' cultural-historical context and the interpretations they provided for their converts. These readings were accepted by some indigenous Zimbabweans but most Zimbabweans seemed to have harboured ill-feelings towards not only the missionary but also the Bible. The early popular feeling among Zimbabweans and in general Africans is well captured in the characterization of the "guerrilla exegete" of Osanyande Obery Hendricks who;

[S]truggles because the Bible continues to stand as the foremost tool of oppression and hegemonic domination in human history, surpassing even the *Communist Manifesto* for the mayhem committed in its name. Used to justify slavery, lynching, segregation, genocide, rampant militarism, gender oppression, myriad exclusions. A full calendar of hurts. Flawless flesh declared leprous. Beautiful hearts declared impure. A gospel of liberation debauched to a rationale for oppression. A proclamation of freedom perverted to promulgation of dominationist rhetorics. A chill-pill for the outraged. The balm in Gilead becomes social novocaine and priestly poison.<sup>76</sup>

This characterization captures the feelings of hopelessness, desperation, confusion and anger that ran among many Zimbabweans owing to the 'insensitive' reading of the Bible by missionaries and their subsequent attempt to align the Bible with their desperate context.

### **2.4.1 Whose book is the Bible? Indigenous Responses!**

One of the most radical responses to emanate from Zimbabwe was the call to disown everything that was identified with white people, including the Bible. One of the earliest indigenous Religious leaders in Zimbabwe and founder of one of the largest Apostolic churches, Johane Masowe is believed to have;

[P]reached that he was John the Baptist sent by God to earth. He urged everyone present to adopt the religion of their forefathers, to drink

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<sup>76</sup> Hendricks cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 68.

plenty of Kaffir beer and eat the meat blessed by our forefathers; further, *that we should burn the religious books of the Europeans as our forefathers did not have books. He suggested that the Bible, hymn books and the New Testament should be destroyed, together with all other religious books.*<sup>77</sup>

Such a drastic reaction, despite the fact that it was never fully implemented helps in illustrating how much the Bible became hated by some indigenous Zimbabweans. Further, as Mercy Amba Oduyoye observes “the close association of colonial power and particular denominations gave mission the appearance of an arm of colonialism.”<sup>78</sup> This did not only contribute to suspicions against the motives of missions but suspicions on the innocence of the Bible. The fact that prior to their own reading of the Bible, the Bible had consistently justified whatever white people were doing made the Bible the book of the Europeans.

However, as intimated above regarding the translation of the Bible and by implication the accessibility of the Bible to indigenous Zimbabweans without the mediation of the missionaries, brought about a new wave of culturally conditioned readings of the Bible by Zimbabweans. According to James C. Scott, (An Ethiopian proverb says) “when the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts.”<sup>79</sup> Theories of ideological hegemony look at the stage, the public transcript of the bowing peasant. Scott draws our attention to what is hidden, offstage, the silent fart.<sup>80</sup> There was a confidence among missionaries that indigenous Zimbabweans would acquit themselves as good peasants, reading the Bible as they had taught them. The reading of the Bible was what missionaries could observe with ease, what indigenous Zimbabweans were reading was far from the missionary read-

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<sup>77</sup> Statement of Andrea cited in: Clive M. Dillon-Malone, SJ, *The Korsten Basket-makers: A Study of the Masowe Apostles, an Indigenous African Religious Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978, 17. Emphasis my own.

<sup>78</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*, 1986, 41.

<sup>79</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

<sup>80</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 48-9.

ings; their understanding was far from the missionary understanding. What missionaries got in the end was more than they could have bargained for. Hence Verstraelen writes;

Once Africans had the Bible at their disposal in their own vernacular languages; they made a number of discoveries. These can be summarized by their finding out that there were many things in the Bible that made sense to them, but were not communicated to them because they were played down or overlooked by the missionaries from the West.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, there are many things that Zimbabweans saw as appealing to them yet all that had deftly been avoided by the missionaries. There are so many such discoveries and this section shall seek to give a few examples to demonstrate that these discoveries were not innocent but culturally conditioned, gained by a selective reading of the Bible. The greatest victory was for the Bible, it was given a new lease of life far removed from what it had been given by missionaries.

#### ***2.4.2 Wrestling the Bible from the Missionaries!***

The major missionary reading of the Bible was such that the status quo was preserved and the Bible was seen as not concerned with the cases of oppression and racial segregation or even seen as encouraging them by most of the missionaries. This was directly challenged by the discoveries Zimbabweans and other Africans made in the Bible. According to Ela;

Throughout the whole of scripture, which can be seen as a re-reading of the exodus, God brings forth words and deeds, revealing a God who is the last refuge of his beloved people subjected to exploitation, violence and misery. 'To oppress the poor is to insult their creator' (Prov. 14:31).<sup>82</sup>

Many Zimbabweans would have completely agreed with the words of Ela above, yet beneath them there is the reality of an exaggerated reading of the Bible. By referring to the "whole of Scripture", Ela creates the impression that the whole Bible is a

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<sup>81</sup> Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 103.

liberative document. What is at stake however is not the whole Bible; rather it is those sections that were deftly silenced in the missionary reading, which came alive when indigenous Zimbabweans read the Bible. By drawing our attention to the “exodus”, Ela and many other oppressed people are in the process of identifying themselves not with the curse of Ham/Canaan but with the blessing of liberation bestowed upon the Israelites.

It is the context of oppression and deprivation which influences this reading of the Bible. While the exodus was for long the model for liberation, African scholars like Jesse Mugambi have since questioned the sincerity of such a reading when considering that from Egypt the Israelites plundered Canaan and even uprooted and committed genocide against the inhabitants of the so-called Promised Land.<sup>83</sup> In essence, Zimbabweans would have noted the diversity of readings the Bible could inspire and would have observed the selective nature of the missionary readings and in the process they, themselves opted for their own selective reading.<sup>84</sup>

These observations of other ways of reading the Bible, opposed to the dominant missionary readings should be seen as the reason why the Bible was gradually being pulled away from the missionaries’ grips. In response to Bishop Burrough’s “Christian conscience on violence”, Bishop Murindagomo said:

No. Taking Bishop Burrough’s own words 6000000 Africans are oppressed by whom? By the present government, and its 1969 Constitution which was so designated to perpetuate the oppression of 6000000 Africans. No Christian conscience can reconcile such oppression with our Lord’s teaching: ‘Do unto others as we would have them do unto us’ (Matt. 7:12).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> For arguments on the motif of the Exodus see: Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1995; Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 85.

<sup>85</sup> Bishop Murindagomo cited in: Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option?* 52-4.

It is apparent here that two readings of the Bible are being contrasted and proving to be irreconcilable, why is this so? The starting point for the readings is what is different, Bishop Burrough begins from an assumption that colonialism is there to stay while Bishop Murindagomo begins from an assumption that colonialism is wrong. The cultural-historical contexts of the two are also crucial, Murindagomo was a “suffragan Bishop”<sup>86</sup>, essentially he was not a full Bishop as he served under Burrough. Nothing other than the claim to white supremacy really made the difference. The interpretations of Murindagomo as those of most Zimbabweans begin from a position of disadvantage.

Similarly, Lapsley writes and regarding the same sermon and comments of Burrough;

Some African Anglicans wrote anonymously to the Dean of Salisbury [Harare] criticizing the Bishop Burrough; ‘[...]. We now see it that the Bishop is sailing in the same boat with Arthur Lewis, Rector of Rusape who is an African enemy. The equality of man is the same according to the Bible teachings regardless of race, colour or creed. As far as the Bible is concerned, God created man; that’s all’.<sup>87</sup>

This is a clear case of Zimbabweans using the Bible to rebuke, reprimand and challenge the authority and interpretation of the missionaries. The meaning of certain texts was drastically revised once Zimbabweans had begun to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. While white missionaries would have read the Bible to entrench their supremacy over Africans and Zimbabweans in particular, Zimbabweans read the Bible to gain lost ground, talk of equality features prominently. This development is the major reason behind the importance of the Bible for many Zimbabweans, once they read for themselves it ceased to be an instrument for white domination and attempts were made to wrestle the Bible from the missionary, as is illustrated in this conversation:

**Sithole:** But many churches here practise colour bar, how can there be neither Jew nor Gentile?

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<sup>86</sup> Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option?* 9.

<sup>87</sup> Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option?* 56-7.

**Obed Mutezo:** Agreed. It's the individual missionaries who do this. The Bible doesn't say that. If an educated African ill-treats me, it is not his education that is wrong but himself. If I start saying education is no good because one educated man ill-treated me, then I do not know what I am doing.<sup>88</sup>

Mutezo is presented as being at pains and going to greater lengths to wean the Bible from the missionary grip. It is in this context that David Barrett writes; “[with] the publication of African translations, a momentous change took place: it now became possible to differentiate between missions and scriptures.”<sup>89</sup> The Bible could become a tool for liberation if only they (Zimbabweans) could liberate it from the missionaries.

### **2.4.3 ‘New Discoveries’: Indigenous Adventures in the Bible**

The subject of polygyny as noted earlier was one of the battlegrounds between missionaries and indigenous Zimbabweans. I noted in the previous section that missionaries deliberately exaggerated the prevalence of polygamy and this can be seen in the words of Mutezo;

You see, monogamy was there long before the church came here. It cannot be the centre of Christianity. I have relatives who are not Christians, but they only have one wife each. One wife is about enough trouble for a man. Christianity doesn't enter into it [...] It's a matter of personal choice. Our customs leave it to the individual whether one is to marry one or more wives.<sup>90</sup>

This is a precise description of the marriage tradition among most of the Zimbabwean societies, polygyny was not mandatory and it had a lot to do with one's ability to settle the *Lobola* (bride wealth) demanded by the in-laws. Peter Hatendi has argued that the problem was caused by the failure of missionaries to appreciate the

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Sithole, *Obed Mutezo*, 103.

<sup>89</sup> David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa (1968)* in: Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 29.

<sup>90</sup> Obed Mutezo cited in: Sithole, *Obed Mutezo*, 105.

functional value of polygyny in African communities.<sup>91</sup> The issue of polygyny/monogamy was therefore more of a clash of two cultural traditions, one considered superior and monogamous in nature, the other considered inferior and accepting polygyny and monogamy.

The emphasis on monogamy was dressed as a biblical imperative yet as the Constitution of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC-Mutendi) of Ezekiel Mutendi expounds on the subject, it directly challenges the missionary reading of the Bible on that subject based on some discoveries made in the Bible:

The Church members are not bound strictly to marry only one wife, nor did God blame those who married more than one wife; Lamek, Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon [...] We are irrational if we think that monogamy is a way of preventing sin from entering the family according to Christian experience. God married Adam, the first man, to one wife, through whom sin penetrated into the family. This we write to some who think that marrying many wives is the gateway of sin in the family [...] If we read these books (II Sam. 5:12; [I]Chro. 14:3; I Sam. 1:2; Judg. 8:30; 12:8; Isa. 4:1), we shall have wisdom to know what God wants and what he does not want, because all wisdom is found in the Bible.<sup>92</sup>

This bold declaration and opening up of polygyny in some churches was heavily influenced by searching for biblical models, yet the importance of polygyny to most Zimbabweans did not require external justification. What was at stake was the need to align the Bible to speak to the context of indigenous Zimbabweans. With the exception of Lamek, the other figures cited as being polygamous are figures that also featured prominently in missionary readings of the Bible yet their polygamous nature was never raised.

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. Peter R. Hatendi „Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches“ in: Anthony J. Dachs (ed), *Christianity South of the Zambezi, volume 1*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973.

<sup>92</sup> Zion Christian Church Constitution cited in: Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 499.

That God blessed Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon despite their plural marriages served to confirm that the age-old institution among the Shona was not after all, condemned by the Bible. This is captured in the words of Tutu;

Those who have denigrated things African would probably be surprised to discover that the African way of life, his worldview, his thought forms, are those, not only of the Old Testament but those of the entire Bible, since the New Testament is based so firmly on the Old Testament.<sup>93</sup>

Tutu relies here on a hermeneutic of identification/cultural hermeneutics, where readers seek to identify themselves with the biblical characters and culture. In the case of Tutu, Africans in general, and in this case Zimbabweans, can easily be identified with the Israelites in everything they do. In the same vein, Mbiti observes that “Africans feel that their own lives are described in the Bible, they as human beings are affirmed in it and that they belong to the world of the Bible.”<sup>94</sup> This is crucial for the struggle to control and direct the interpretations of the Bible. This recognizes the fact that “the Christian worldview held by most colonial missionaries was very much shaped by their native culture and colonial policy.”<sup>95</sup> That called for a Zimbabwean response shaped by indigenous culture and traditional institutions.

Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible have not always been pleasant encounters. With colonialism safely entrenched, most missionaries read the Bible and claimed neutrality, a neutrality that meant the status quo remained. It is this context that Lapsley interrogates and he asked the first black President of Zimbabwe, Canaan Banana to write the foreword to his book. Banana writes;

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<sup>93</sup> Tutu „Some African Insights on the Old Testament“ in: Hans-Jurgen, Becken (ed), *Relevant Theology for Africa: Report on a Consultation of the Missiological Institute at Lutheran Theological College, Mapumulo, Natal, September 12-21, 1972*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973, 42-3.

<sup>94</sup> Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Laurent Mbanda, *Committed to Conflict: The Destruction of the Church in Rwanda*, London: SPCK, 1997, 43.

There is no such animal as neutrality; neutrality at best means deafening silence and indifference, and at worst smiling at and admiring the status quo. I refuse to accept the notion that Jesus assumed the role of an honoured guest in the theatre of human slaughter and misery.<sup>96</sup>

The direct challenge on neutrality in an environment dominated by domination and oppression is characteristic of all liberation theologies and is based on the experiences of those who are encouraged by the status quo to accept their positions as god-given. In essence, there cannot be neutrality in a game pitting two unequal players, for in such a case neutrality as Lapsley observes is in practice co-option by the stronger player.

The dichotomy of neutrality and co-option is such a central framework in Zimbabwean (African in general) readings of the Bible. These indigenous readings affirm the declaration by Ela, that is, "God is not neutral."<sup>97</sup> I want to agree and simultaneously disagree with Ela on the implications of this declaration. Agreed, that God as an interested party in human affairs has to take sides where there is a division that I assume is widely acknowledged by many Christians. What is not immediately clear to many readers of Ela and other liberation theologians is that the idea of God not being neutral in human struggles is in itself an acknowledgment of the fact that those who think and formulate arguments about God almost always appropriate for themselves the right to confine God to their side.

This brings me back to the subjectivity of interpretation hence the readings of Banana and other Zimbabweans and the interpretation that emerges from them is such that "the most basic feature of [the Zimbabwean] our biblical heritage, therefore, is attentiveness to those who live in a state of oppression and suffering under unjust social structures [...] God is revealed as the one who brings justice to the oppressed."<sup>98</sup> This is the God that most missionaries, from their position of privilege, did not see in the Bible but

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<sup>96</sup> Canaan Banana „Foreword“ in: Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option?* 7.

<sup>97</sup> Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 104.

<sup>98</sup> Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 104.

the God that Zimbabweans in their encounter with the Bible, from their position of extreme deprivation and oppression, encountered in the Bible.

The Bible was suddenly transformed from a book that sustained oppressive structures to a book that challenged oppressive structures. The Zimbabwean readers of the Bible, who had at some point believed the authority of missionaries as readers and to a certain extent “owners” of the Bible, woke up to find themselves not as mere objects but as the major subjects of the biblical story. In doing this Zimbabwean readers practically engaged in the drawing of lines of connection between the biblical texts such as the exodus, prophetic literature as well as the ministry of Jesus and their context as a community under the rule of an oppressive system.<sup>99</sup> These lines of connection are critical in the appropriation of the text for a particular community and the context of the community becomes a determinative factor in the type of reading the community engages in. To therefore ignore the context of the reader is to do a great injustice to the fluidity of the Bible. Verstraelen observes that in an African perspective, the Bible confirms their culturally held religious notions such as the role of dreams, the reality of witchcraft and spirits, the importance of the dead, especially the ancestors.<sup>100</sup> These were nearly all wiped out as evil and the Bible presented as condemning them, but once the readers looked up for themselves, the discoveries transformed the Bible.

#### **2.4.4 *Who among us owns the Bible? Indigenous tensions!***

In essence, the Bible moved from a bad text, authorising oppression to a good text, authorising the violent removal of oppressive structures in its encounters with indigenous Zimbabweans. Is this smooth and consistent picture an honest assessment of the encounters between indigenous Zimbabweans and the Bible?

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 77.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 83.

This is a critical question that requires closer scrutiny and analysis because, the idea of cultural-historical context I have been emphasizing creates the impression that the context of all indigenous Zimbabweans was similar. This is not necessarily the case. Further, it also creates the impression that Zimbabwean men and women have the same encounters with the Bible. This also is not necessarily the case. Finally, it creates the impression that Zimbabwean heterosexual persons and homosexual persons have the same experiences. This is certainly not the case. To this end, the words of Verstraelen are instructive when he writes; “human beings are easily inclined to consider their own way of understanding, interpreting and expressing things as a norm to which other people have to conform.”<sup>101</sup> This is not only instructive in understanding the conflicts between missionaries and indigenous people but also between heterosexual and homosexual readings of the Bible in the contemporary debate.

It is therefore pertinent to briefly highlight the tensions and possible causes of such tensions among indigenous Zimbabweans. This is not at all unique to indigenous Zimbabweans as I highlighted earlier on that tensions also existed among missionaries. To begin with, it is important to highlight one characteristic among readers of the Bible, there is a pattern of all those who have their struggles to see such struggles in the Bible and therefore to appropriate the Bible for themselves as the true representatives of Israel today.<sup>102</sup> This is what keeps the Bible pivotal and alive in many communities today because both oppressors and oppressed are always struggling to identify themselves as the true recipients of the Bible. I could not agree more with Gottwald when he writes;

The Hebrew Bible [The Bible in general] is a collection of writings that teems with religious concepts and practices, [which] discloses segments of an involved history, reflects and presupposes social structures and

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<sup>101</sup> Verstraelen “Mission and Bible in Historical and Missiological Perspective” in: Mukonyora (eds et al), *“Rewriting” the Bible: the real issues*, 144.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. David J. Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, 2001, vii.

processes [...] Every state explained its origins and justified its existence and its practices by recourse to the *declared will of divine beings*.<sup>103</sup>

While Gottwald draws our attention towards states, the same analysis can be applied to different groups within states or societies. The Zimbabwean scenario is one such case where different groups claim positions of privilege and use the Bible to justify these claims.

In this context, liberation can never be understood as an event, rather it is best understood as a continuous process because those who are in need of liberation today can easily become the oppressors tomorrow and those being oppressed would also be in need of liberation.<sup>104</sup> The dominant readings analysed above assumed that all Zimbabweans would be independent at the same time. In an attempt to draw attention to problems of this nature, Canaan Banana is quoted as having said;

The Church has the opportunity to evolve a theology that encompasses a socialist transformation, instead of being frightened into a state of paralysis at the mention of the word socialism. Indeed, *the concept of a classless socialist society is essentially theological: a society where there is neither Gentile nor Jew; neither rich nor poor; neither the downtrodden nor the privileged*.<sup>105</sup>

This is an excellent example of how individuals reading the Bible tend to see nothing beyond themselves because while Banana indirectly refers to Galatians 3:28, he 'forgot' that the text calls for a community in Christ that has "neither men nor women" also. This reading which challenges patriarchal institutions and hegemony is nicely avoided and silenced. In such a reading, certainly women have the ammunition to fight. This is culturally inspired because the context of Banana is one that sees women as

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<sup>103</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 31,65.

<sup>104</sup> This has been the case with Zimbabwe because the paragons of liberation embodied in the person of Robert Mugabe have transformed themselves into masters of domination and exploitation of their kith and kin.

<sup>105</sup> Banana „Key Lecture, Sixth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS), Harare, 8-14 January 1985" cited in: Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 56. Bold emphasis my own.

not equal to men hence the silence imposed on one aspect of a text.

In most churches I have personally attended, particularly on wedding ceremonies, one of the favourite texts is the creation story of Gen. 2:4bff, which makes the woman a creation out of man. This has largely been interpreted to justify the subordination of women and other New Testament texts are read to justify the superiority of men over women, for example, Paul's instruction regarding the headship of men (1Cor.11:3). The problems that I observe in these indigenous readings seem to be the same problems that existed between missionary readers and indigenous Zimbabwean readers. Does this mean the Bible is at fault? While women are making great strides towards reading the Bible for themselves, the greatest challenge now is one that feature heterosexual readings of the Bible as the dominant readings while homosexual persons are just beginning (at least in Zimbabwe) to appropriate the Bible for their liberation or is it the liberation of the Bible from the grips of heterosexual persons? This latter aspect is the focus of this study and will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

## ***2.5 Interpreting the Bible in Zimbabwe: A Crisis?***

The Bible has been both a weapon of oppression and liberation. The Bible has hardly been neutral and I agree with Banana that there is nothing called neutrality in biblical interpretation. This is so because society is almost always divided into two major groups, one enjoying all the privileges including that of defining the others and another group that is oppressed, deprived and sometimes even discriminated. Why is this so in Zimbabwe? Why are most readers in Zimbabwe and in many other parts of the world content to read the Bible to their advantage? Why are all those seeking to entrench their interests finding it easy to use the Bible? These are questions that continue to be central in biblical and theological studies.

In addressing this interpretation crisis in Zimbabwe, it is clear that frequently biblical readers “are inclined to equate their own interests with those of God and to call everything of which they approve the handiwork of God.”<sup>106</sup> Becoming a reader, each individual appropriates the authority of the Bible to be their own and their reading conditioned by their own context and interests thereby attaining an authoritative status. There are hardly any questions regarding the authority of God yet the problem is how does one discern the interests of God from the interests of the reader? The view of Bosch goes a long way in explaining the multiple readings and interpretations, often contradictory emanating from Zimbabwe. If these multiple interpretations are not the result of the subordination of the Bible to special interests, does that mean God is so unpredictable as to contradict God’s self? On the basis of the Catholic Church’s teaching on homosexuality in Zimbabwe: that homosexual persons ought to change their sexuality to become heterosexual or to remain celibate, the question is: Whose interest is it to heterosexualize homosexual persons? Alternatively, whose interest was it to Europeanize indigenous Zimbabweans?

Why has the Bible been used and abused in the various readings in Zimbabwe? Everyone seems to encounter just what they are looking for in the Bible. Is this a sign that there is something terribly wrong with the readings themselves? According to Roberts; “The ease with which one can use a passage of Scripture to one’s advantage shows the need for serious Bible study in a critical sense and not in a merely literal sense.”<sup>107</sup> This brings me to the heart of the Zimbabwean biblical interpretation crisis, the level of critical study of the Bible has largely been confined to the Universities and this has hardly filtered down to affect and to direct the public debate. The readings have almost always been at the literal level and under the influence of sometimes, private and special interests. It is not surprising that the selected texts for each reader

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<sup>106</sup> Bosch „The Question of Mission Today“, 13.

<sup>107</sup> Roberts, *Africentric Christianity*, 43.

or reading group have been those whose significance lies on the surface, requiring no further exposition. This type of reading the Bible leads to other problems that are apparent in the Zimbabwean encounters with the Bible.

What is imperative from this brief analysis is that the Bible requires critical studying. How can this be done? The starting point towards a critical reading and appropriation of the Bible requires an admission that “reading the Bible is not enough. To understand the social vision of the Hebrew Bible [Bible in general], it is essential that we study the contours of the biblical writers’ world.”<sup>108</sup> There is need for a study of the Bible which begins by acknowledging that the valid religious truth or message of the Bible could only be brought to light when seen as the religion of a particular people at a particular time and place as expressed in these particular writings.<sup>109</sup> I am proposing here that any critical reading of the Bible that can minimize the destructive effects of personal interests has to begin at the beginning: the origins and context of the text.

## **2.6 Concluding Remarks**

In summing up this chapter, there is need to highlight the key aspects dealt with here and their implications on the subject of homosexuality. First, it is important to bear in mind the existence and sometimes reciprocal influence upon each other of three critical cultural-historical contexts pertaining to biblical interpretation in Zimbabwe. The context of the Bible, the context of Western missionaries and the context of indigenous Zimbabwean readers of the Bible, past and present, are critical for any attempt to understand the history of the Bible in Zimbabwe. These contexts are not mere passive contexts but have proven to be active and sometimes, the Bible has been deftly subordinated to them. This raises the question of what role these contexts or any one of

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<sup>108</sup> Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible*, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 11.

them has played in the readings of the Bible in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

The Bible, I should reiterate, is no innocent book every time someone reads it. The readers of the Bible are no innocent readers. The interpretations of the Bible are no innocent interpretations. This can be mitigated through the use of critical methods of interpretation and the acknowledgment of preconceived assumptions that people bring to the text. These are critical indictments on the whole process of interpretation yet seemingly no other assertion seems best suited in addressing the clear differences and sometimes contradictory interpretations as briefly highlighted in this chapter. There is need for greater caution and soul-searching before one absolutizes personal interests.

We know today that the Bible is not a neutral text offering some clearly defined truth for all to read, about which no problems of interpretation will emerge. Who reads the Bible will have as much impact on a theological judgment as will the text itself.<sup>110</sup>

This exposes what many readers of the Bible do but do not want to admit, that is appropriating for themselves a very powerful position, sometimes equating themselves to God and thereby making their pronouncements God's pronouncements.

Finally, this chapter clearly demonstrates that the overwhelming condemnation of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, presumably because the Bible condemns homosexuality, must be treated with caution and suspicion. According to Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza; "the Bible which is the source of our power is also the source of our oppression."<sup>111</sup> For those who are already experiencing discrimination and oppression, the Bible embodies both the power to do good as well as bad. This is especially so in those instances where even God is subordinated to personal interests and where many people are "often [prepared] to continue things which [may

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<sup>110</sup> James Cochrane cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 185.

<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 144.

have been] were once right but are now wrong.”<sup>112</sup> These problems have been exacerbated by the limited impact of the academic study of the Bible in influencing the public discussions. With this in mind, this work proceeds to a detailed analysis of the homosexual debate in the following chapters.

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<sup>112</sup> Bosch „The Question of Mission Today“, 13.

## CHAPTER 3: GALZ, ZIBF'95: "HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS"

Deviant behaviour is that which harms others; abuse of power, assault, paedophilia and rape are wrong because they hurt people.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter takes this work a step further by focusing on the issues central to the homosexual<sup>2</sup> debate from the perspective of homosexual persons. In 1995, Zimbabwe, a small country in Southern Africa grabbed global headlines on the subject of homosexuality and human rights. This prominence was connected to the annual hosting of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), which always attracted international attention, however "the 1995 theme for the Zimbabwe International Book Fair was 'Human Rights and Justice'. The emphasis on human rights might have gone unnoticed by the international media, had it not been for the richly ironic drama created by the Zimbabwean government."<sup>3</sup> While the government created the drama, this chapter will seek to understand the events leading to this drama by focusing on the issues central to the sexual rights lobby.

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Goddard, Open Letter to Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana, *Parade*, June 1996. Keith Goddard is essentially the face of GALZ in Zimbabwe, appearing in public all the time and has been at the helm of GALZ for over a decade. See Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Most contemporary discussions of sexual rights tend to prefer the use of homosexualities to highlight the multiplicity of forms and manifestations of the homosexual identities. The same is also done with heterosexualities for the same reasons. In this study, however, it is appreciated that the debate under analysis focused mostly on homosexuality as an alternative sexual identity to heterosexuality. This singular form will therefore be used in this work in as much as it helps one capture the essence of the Zimbabwean homosexual debate. Further, the contention in this study is that instead of plural homosexualities, this study will talk of multiple manifestations of homosexuality.

<sup>3</sup> Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 8.

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) was one of the groups that had applied for a stall to exhibit at the ZIBF and had their application accepted by the organisers. However, the possibility of GALZ exhibiting at the ZIBF, which was going to be officially opened by Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe drew the ire of the government. The Director of Information in the Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications then wrote to the organisers of the book fair and concluded the letter by writing, “In the interest of continued cooperation with the government, please, withdraw the participation of GALZ at this public event.”<sup>4</sup> This event triggered the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

This chapter focuses on how homosexual persons in Zimbabwe and those sympathetic to homosexual persons have framed their arguments for the recognition of homosexual persons as a minority group in society. In doing this, this chapter will seek to expose how homosexual persons have sought to demonstrate why homosexuality and homosexual persons should be tolerated in African societies. Among the issues to be considered in this chapter are: the existence of homosexuality in African communities; central arguments to the “sexual rights lobby”<sup>5</sup> such as human rights.

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<sup>4</sup> Bornwell Chakaodza’s letter to Trish Mbanga quoted in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of sexual rights lobby was drawn to my attention by Marc Epprecht in a private email as a better phrase for understanding the core of the arguments raised by homosexual persons. This has the effect of broadening the catchment area of GALZ to include other sexual minorities such as Transgendered persons, Bisexual, Men who have Sex with other Men (MSM), Women who have Sex with other Women (WSW) as well as Intersexed people (popularly known as Hermaphrodites). While indeed the statements from GALZ show their concern for all these sexual minorities, the name of the association still reflect what appears to me to be the core of their concern, that is, gays and lesbians. This is central because of the invocation of the Bible, which has been used largely to deal with gays and lesbians. There is only one contributor in Zimbabwe outside of GALZ who cites the Bible to attack these other sexualities, namely, Noah Pashapa. The multiplicity of sexualities have therefore led to the coining of the acronym LGBTI from Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersexed people. See also, GALZ, *Unspoken Facts: A History of Homosexualities in Africa*, Harare: Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, 2008, 182.

Most importantly, this chapter seeks to highlight how religion in general and biblical interpretation in particular has been invoked in these arguments.

## **3.2 Background information**

For an appreciation of the arguments raised by GALZ and other people in Zimbabwe, it is important to note that there are some underlying assumptions informing such arguments. In fact, the choice to begin with GALZ and not the other aspects to be dealt with in succeeding chapters does not mean everything followed a chronological sequence. The homosexual debate in Zimbabwe was a game of accusations and counter-accusations; hence the GALZ's sexual rights lobby is both proactive and reactive. In this section, the focus is on what has been done regarding the origins of homosexuality in Africa. In doing this, subsections have been devised, that is, the history of the formation of GALZ, homosexuality in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial African communities.

### **3.2.1 GALZ: The history of its formation<sup>6</sup>**

The rise of homosexuality as a public subject in Zimbabwe cannot be fully appreciated without recourse to GALZ. This section seeks to highlight the history of this movement, which because of its persistence during the ZIBF'95 and 96 pushed homosexuality into the limelight. As alluded to early on, GALZ was formed in 1990. GALZ was formed as a merger of two loose organisations of gays and lesbians which had been in existence since the 1980s. "The Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe was the amalgamation of two groups, the Women's Cultural Club (WCC1), and the men's party

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history of the Gay Movement in Zimbabwe see: Keith Goddard "A Fair Representation: GALZ and the History of the Gay Movement in Zimbabwe" in: *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, vol. 16 (1), 2004, pp75-98.

list of the Pink Berets.”<sup>7</sup> While the 1980s had an active gay and lesbian social scene, it was mainly limited to parties with little public programmes for members. The membership for these forerunners of GALZ was mainly “middle class professional white men and women”<sup>8</sup> hence it can be safely concluded that the earliest gay and lesbian social scene was exclusively white “except for a few coloureds.”<sup>9</sup> While the parties may have saved the interests of gay and lesbian people in Zimbabwe, it appears by the late 1980s dissatisfaction was creeping in within these circles because according to Evan Tsouroullis all gay men were ‘unconvicted felons’ owing to the legal sanctions against same-sex practices hence some gays and lesbians felt there was need for an organisation that could champion the cause of homosexual people.<sup>10</sup>

The need for an organisation that could effectively handle the challenges being faced by homosexual people in Zimbabwe saw the formation and launch of GALZ at David Reeler’s house in mid-1990 with Reeler, Tsouroullis, Chris Hunt, Nigel Crawhill, Sonia Perreira, Sheila Stewart, Amanda Hammer and Bev Scofield as the founding members.<sup>11</sup> Just like the 1980s gay and lesbian scene in Zimbabwe, GALZ initially was predominantly white in composition yet “by 1997, GALZ had changed drastically from being a largely white, middle class social club to an activist organisation truly representative of the social mix of Zimbabwe.”<sup>12</sup> By 1992, GALZ had adopted their constitution which limited membership to people who had reached 18 years and their principal objective was to strive for the attainment of full and equal rights in all aspects of life for gay men and lesbians within Zimbabwe.<sup>13</sup> The core objective of GALZ therefore meant it had

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<sup>7</sup> Goddard “A Fair Representation,” 85.

<sup>8</sup> Goddard “A Fair Representation,” 85.

<sup>9</sup> Goddard “A Fair Representation,” 85.

<sup>10</sup> Evan Tsouroullis in: Goddard “A Fair Representation”, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Goddard “A Fair Representation”, 84.

<sup>12</sup> GALZ pamphlet “What is GALZ?” undated. See Appendix 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Goddard “A Fair Representation”, 85.

aligned itself with the mainstream human rights movement which was gaining momentum in Zimbabwe.

Regarding the membership of GALZ, Goddard argues that from about 70 people predominantly white in 1990, the organisation had about 500 members by 1999 predominantly black with only about 3 white people remaining and by 2009 the membership had gone down to about 250 people. Most middle class white members had decided to revert back to private social gatherings while GALZ focused more on poor members who need the services being offered by GALZ. The decrease in membership from 1999 to date is explained in the context of the political and economic downturn from 2000 as members left the country in search of greener pastures like many other Zimbabweans who left the country during the same period.<sup>14</sup>

GALZ is an urban based organisation with offices in Harare and Bulawayo, the two largest cities in Zimbabwe. While plans were underway in 1999 to launch some awareness campaigns in rural areas, such plans were shelved following the political upheavals in the post-2000 Referendum period and have not yet been revived.<sup>15</sup> From its formation to the present, GALZ continues to offer counselling services to its members and also families with gay or lesbian members in a bid to diffuse tension between parents and their children because as Goddard contends, GALZ appreciates that “the family is one’s lifeline in Zimbabwe.”<sup>16</sup> The attempt by GALZ to disseminate information surrounding homosexuality through the ZIBF’95 became the turning point in Zimbabwe’s dealing with the subject.

### **3.2.2 Homosexuality in pre-colonial African communities**

One of the earliest scholars to mention the existence of homosexuality in African communities in an academic paper is Edward

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Goddard, *Interview*, Milton Park, Harare, 31/03/2009.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Goddard, *Interview*.

<sup>16</sup> Goddard, *Interview*.

E. Evans-Pritchard who wrote that among the Azande people of Central African Republic (CAR) pederastic ‘marriages’ among warriors were said to have been condoned in part to keep the men from developing mixed loyalties while they remained in the army.<sup>17</sup> It is suggested here that some African communities may have known homosexuality before the arrival of European settlers. Marc Epprecht adds that homosexual practices were especially pronounced in pastoral, hunting or militarised societies where men could be away from home for long periods of time. Among the communities that have been cited as having known and possibly condoned homosexuality are the Zulu of South Africa.<sup>18</sup> The idea of these works is to present homosexuality as an African phenomenon much as it is a Western phenomenon.

Peter Garlake, an Art Historian who carried some research in Zimbabwe claims to have discovered a rock painting presumably coming from the time of the San people.<sup>19</sup> Commenting on this rock painting Epprecht writes;

The most ancient depiction of homosexual practices in sub-Saharan Africa comes from the San (Bushmen)[...] one of the many paintings they left behind on rock faces shows a group of men apparently engaged in anal or intra-cural (between-the-thighs) sex. This picture dates back at least 2000 years.<sup>20</sup>

Further, Epprecht writes of the rock painting; “Like many Bushmen cave paintings, its exact location in the Harare area is kept secret in order to protect it from vandalism.”<sup>21</sup> That this rock-painting is within Zimbabwe makes its significance even more pronounced, particularly for Epprecht who sought to disprove the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, „Sexual Inversion among the Azande“, in: *American Anthropologist* 72, 1970, 1428-1434.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Marc Epprecht, “Homosexual behaviour in pre-modern and early colonial sub-Saharan Africa” in: G. E. Haggerty (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, New York: Garland Press, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Garlake, *The Hunter’s Vision: The Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe*, Seattle: Washington University Press, 1995, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*, 2004, xv.

<sup>21</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, xv.

claim that homosexuality was un-African. David Beach has speculated that the San avoided the danger of too many mouths to feed during hunger times by practising sexual restraint and even infanticide.<sup>22</sup> It is not immediately clear what 'sexual restraint' these San practised and maybe, it involves also same-sex practices. That the San were nomadic could point to a social need to keep numbers manageable and to avoid overpopulation hence chances are that in such communities non-procreative sexual practices can be permitted or at least tolerated. The example of the San as practising homosexuality is meant to absolve the Westerners of any role in the origins of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, since it is widely accepted that their contact with Europeans if they had any was minimal. Further, that the rock-painting is dated at about 2000 years shows also that it was painted a long time before the first Europeans made contact with sub-Saharan Africa.

It appears that in pre-colonial communities as suggested by Evans-Pritchard and Epprecht, homosexuality was a result of socialisation processes that took the form of military adventures which could separate men and women for long periods of time depending on the nature of the war and opponents. It could also take the form of hunting expeditions (*Charara*) where men could go on such expeditions for several months on end. This could also apply with regards to the Ndebele from whom the Shona word for homosexuality *ngochani* could be derived. The Ndebele/Shangani words translated as *ngochani* are *ubunkotshani/izinkotshane*.<sup>23</sup> The Ndebele used to raid the Shona communities<sup>24</sup> and could travel

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. David Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe, 900-1850*, New York: Africana, 1980, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Douglas, *Human Sexuality, Politics and Religion in the era of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe, 2004*, 24. See also Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality*, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> These raids are known among the Shona as wars of Madzviti (a nickname for Ndebele raiders). Among many things, the Ndebele would take cattle, grain and women as spoils of war. As they attacked the Shona throughout present day Zimbabwe, chances are that they would travel without their women. They should have also used Shona women that they kidnapped but before such conquests, chances are that they would engage in same-sex practices.

for very long distances. Further, they could have been exposed to this lifestyle while still among the Zulus of South Africa. Epprecht argues that some of the traditional friendships constituted under the broad term *chisahwira* among the Shona communities could be understood as covering up the existence of these pederastic marriages.<sup>25</sup>

But even at a younger age, young boys were also responsible for herding cattle while young girls were confined to household chores. Later in the evening the men were expected to sit outdoors while women were almost always indoors.<sup>26</sup> These parallel lifestyles and worlds for men and women are cited as being responsible for the development of homosexual practices among some communities in the world, including sub-Saharan Africa. It has been suggested that the “boys in this society also learned their sexual vocation from a very early age in largely homosocial environments.”<sup>27</sup> There is a clear demarcation of masculine and feminine space in the Shona cosmology. It is this demarcation that is behind Epprecht’s suggestion that boys learned their sexuality in homosocial environments because they were socialised to be with men at most times. In such a cosmology, “homosexual experimentation among adolescents took place as a normal part of this learning process. Boys did the herding. Out in the bush, sexual play with each other was ‘actually expected’ as ‘experimental’ at the age of puberty.”<sup>28</sup> The boys learnt of the community’s expectations from their sexual lives and especially that they had to satisfy their wives once they married. In that regard, experimental

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During the raids, they also did not kill all men but actually captured some whom they used to drive the cattle. These men could have been exposed to these practices by the Ndebele. The problem is there is no documentation of these things.

<sup>25</sup> Masiwa Ragies Gunda, “Leviticus 18: 22, Africa and the West: Towards cultural convergence on Homosexuality”, 2006,126.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival values of an African culture*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 32.

same-sex sexual practices could have been understood as necessary heterosexual training for the boys.

Some Zimbabwean citizens have suggested that indeed homosexuality existed before the colonial period. After one of the many interviews Epprecht writes; “Oral testimony suggests that ritual male-male sexual acts continued to be practiced by ambitious individuals long after the disappearance of Zimbabwe’s large medieval states.”<sup>29</sup> As ritual same-sex practices are believed to bestow upon the people involved magical powers, it is not surprising that one of Epprecht’s interviewees says;

I know the *ngochani* was traditionally done by chiefs and the leaders of soldiers here in Zimbabwe. The chiefs here were given strong medicines by the Ndebele and Zulu *n’angas* [traditional diviners and healers]... I also know that even the Ndebele and Shona, when they were fighting; the soldiers were made to have sex with other men for the whole group to be powerful.<sup>30</sup>

From this information it appears, and this is important for homosexual persons in Zimbabwe, that homosexuality or some forms of homosexuality were known among the indigenous people of Zimbabwe. That what they are talking about is a subject that is already known by some people.

### **3.2.3 Homosexuality in colonial Southern Africa**

That the Zulu are cited as having known homosexuality in pre-colonial times has implications for any study of homosexuality in Zimbabwe because one of the largest ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, the Ndebele is an offshoot of the Zulu tradition.<sup>31</sup> According to William Guri, homosexuality was borrowed by the Shona from the Ndebele people or the Shangaan people.<sup>32</sup> This is more of a

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<sup>29</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> *Sekuru H* quoted in: Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Pathisa Nyathi, *Alvord Mabhena, The man and his roots: a biography*, Harare: Priority Projects Publishing, 2000, 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. William Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Phenomenological investigation*, 2002, 21.

linguistic argument based on the etymology of the word *ngochani* which is believed to have been borrowed from the Ndebele or the Shangaan. Documentary evidence for this word can be established from around 1907 in connection with the Taberer Report of 1907 in South Africa, which avers that the word *izinkotshane* came from the Shangaan.<sup>33</sup> The word *ngochani* is therefore to be understood as deriving from this word. The word *izinkotshane* was used to label men who had sexual intercourse with other men and could have found its way into the Shona communities through either the Ndebele or the Shangaan people both of whom settled in Zimbabwe from South Africa.<sup>34</sup> Further, among the Ndebele, men who had sex with fellow men were also known as *inkonkoni* (Wildebeest), because male Wildebeests are often observed mounting other males.<sup>35</sup>

In an extensive historical study of same-sex sexual practices in Southern Africa, it has been noted that many of the tribal groups from as far as Malawi and including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa found themselves providing labour in South African mines. In these mines, same-sex practices were prevalent because the compounds were closed off from the public, making women very scarce and increasing the threat of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD).<sup>36</sup> It is suggested that more often than not most of the cases of same-sex sexual practices were happening between Africans even though there were some cases, which were interracial. As early as 1907, these practices seem to have been well known in South Africa as well as Zimbabwe because “according to an Ndebele police constable in 1907, an ‘*ingotshana*’ is a small boy who is used by

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Epprecht, “Good God Almighty, What’s this? Homosexual ‘crime’ in early Colonial Zimbabwe” in: Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe (eds), *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Epprecht, Good God Almighty.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Guri, Homosexuality in Zimbabwe, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. T. Dunbar Moodie “Black Migrant Mine Labourers and the Vicissitudes of Male Desire”, 2001, 307.

the Zambesi boys on the mine as a wife.”<sup>37</sup> While most of the documented mine activities were those in South Africa, there is oral evidence among Zimbabweans as well as documented evidence that some Zimbabwean men took part in the economic migrations in search of jobs in South Africa. In one of the many oral interviews gathered by Marc Epprecht, one Zimbabwean is quoted as saying:

Yes, I heard and I know about *ngochani*. The word comes from Shangaan people and their king, Socks. The word means sex between man and man, that is, just joining. The men who did this are men who are afraid of STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), which was common at that time in South Africa. The disease was serious- it made the penis rot and the only cure was to cut the penis off. King Socks who was in South Africa is the one who found homosexuals as the best solution because the disease was coming from prostitutes. Those women were fewer than men that is why they had the disease. They were the only suppliers of sex at our Stilfontein [?] and Bivol [sic] gold mines. I was there and I can say even us people from Rhodesia [Zimbabwe], we were doing *ngochani*.<sup>38</sup>

The understanding of homosexuality as foreign to Africans seems to have been widely accepted among the British who settled in Southern Africa in the nineteenth century as can be seen in the inquiries made in South Africa. “Indeed, contagion from Portuguese or Arab sources appeared to be self-evident to the British witnesses.”<sup>39</sup> There seems to be a conviction among Europeans that the Portuguese and Arabs were the sources of this ‘unnatural’ practice. This was seen as the reason why a particular group of Africans was more prone to same-sex sexual practices than others. This explains why the Shangaans appear prominently in discussions of homosexuality in Southern Africa, they were seen as casualties of their position on the frontline of contact with degraded non-African races.<sup>40</sup> The Shangaans were from the east,

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<sup>37</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 69.

which was the route used by the Arabs and Portuguese. “Lack of contact with Arab or Portuguese sources of contagion is what had presumably spared the non-Shangaan Africans on the mines.”<sup>41</sup>

With even the Europeans blaming some among themselves of being the carriers of this “perversion”, the foreign origins of homosexuality was well attested among the colonisers. There is even regret among some of the colonial officials about the contagious effects of this “perversion”. The judicial inspector of Johannesburg, for example, submitted in 1916 that “Tropical Natives, who have been initiated to revolting practices by the Arabs, have introduced them in the Transvaal Compounds and the infection has unfortunately spread.”<sup>42</sup> While the Westerners are blamed by Africans, it is important to note that in the early days of the colonisation of Southern Africa, Europeans particularly the British were blaming the Portuguese and the Arabs for importing this “revolting” practice to Africa.

### **3.2.4 Homosexuality in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe**

The earliest documentation of homosexual practices among indigenous Zimbabweans besides the San rock painting date from 1892 when crimes related to homosexuality were already being heard in magistrates’ courts around the country. In 1892, five cases were heard in Salisbury (now Harare) and Umtali (now Mutare). Of the accused and victims none was white.<sup>43</sup> The argument of Epprecht is that it is most unlikely that after only two years of their arrival, the few Europeans in the country could have already influenced the indigenous people. There is also evidence that these cases increased as more and more blacks sought recourse from the Western legal system. This observation can be linked to the developments happening after the arrival of the Europeans in Zimbabwe. The rise of farms, mines and towns brought about

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<sup>41</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Epprecht, The early history of homosexual behaviour among black males in Zimbabwe, *Unpublished*, 1998, 144.

high rates of mobility where men moved into the farms, mines and towns in search of jobs to sustain their families. As Diana Jeater observes; “Men in the compounds also turned to other men for sexual pleasure. Homosexual relationships in the compounds were common; often akin to *mapoto*<sup>44</sup> marriages [...] the conditions for this [...] existed before the Occupation.”<sup>45</sup>

There was indeed a major shift of migration trends as people criss-crossed the country. Such journeys took a long time and could not be undertaken often. As noted by Clive Dillon-Malone; “The young men especially had begun to spend long periods away from home, only returning at periodic intervals, as they sought employment in towns, mines and farms at the turn of the twentieth century.”<sup>46</sup> In towns, the accommodation meant for blacks were the famous hostels<sup>47</sup> where the living conditions made privacy very minimal. Then, women were not allowed in towns meaning towns, mines and farms were largely male only communities hence following the works of social constructionists, the environment could have caused men to resort to various forms of sexual release with homosexual practices being one of such relief practices. It has also been covered how in exclusive secondary schools, many boys and girls are known to engage in such acts, as well as prisons.

That prisons continue to be home to homosexual practices and relationships can be inferred from the fact that jailed Prophet *Madzibaba* Nzira pleaded to be placed in solitary confinement than where he was being threatened with homosexual rape [or

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<sup>44</sup> *Mapoto* is a term used by the Shona people to refer to marriages that have not been sanctioned by the parents of the bridegroom. Normally this happens if the husband has not paid bride wealth to his in-laws.

<sup>45</sup> Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The Construction of moral discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894 – 1930*, 1993, 194-5.

<sup>46</sup> Clive M. Dillon-Malone, *The Korsten Basketmakers: A study of the Masowe Apostles, an indigenous African Religious Movement*, 1978, 6.

<sup>47</sup> In the oldest suburb of Harare, Mbare, are the famous Matapi Hostels which did not offer any privacy to inhabitants because they were just one big room being shared by many men. Women were not allowed to visit their husbands because they did not have proper accommodation for families.

had already been raped].<sup>48</sup> These would be cases of people being environmentally conditioned due to the artificial circumstances they find themselves in. “Given the strong heterosexual orientation of the African communities, however, it is unlikely that its [homosexuality] pre-1890 incidence approached the level reflected in the Gwelo [Gweru] gaol.”<sup>49</sup> There is credence to the idea of homosexuality being a socially constructed phenomenon particularly because institutions designed by the society seem to breed homosexual persons internally. This however should be understood more in terms of men having sex with men (msm) or women having sex with women (wsw) and not as persons being homosexual in sexual orientation, only in practice.

The existence of GALZ in the post-1990 period has finally meant that homosexual persons have become part of the publicly acknowledged sexual groups even if without being accepted. This has been the greatest achievement by GALZ. The following section will consider the central arguments emanating from the debate and considered important by GALZ.

### **3.3 “Tolerate, Don’t Hate”: GALZ on homosexuality in Zimbabwe**

There are various scholars who have written on homosexuality in Africa and above, the major contentions have been given. The major focus has been to highlight how these scholars have sought to demonstrate that homosexuality has always been present in some if not all African communities. In the case of Zimbabwe, it has been argued that homosexuality was and is present during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. This study does not at all suggest that there are no contending arguments against these assertions. In this section, the focus is on the central arguments raised by homosexual persons in Zimbabwe in the post-1990 era.

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<sup>48</sup> Tsitsi Matope, “Nzira begs for protection in prison”, *The Harare Herald*, 11/02/2006. See Appendix 3.

<sup>49</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 195.

This period is critical because it heralds the formation of GALZ, which started to use the public media to disseminate information on the subject of homosexuality.

### **3.3.1 Sexual Rights are Human Rights**

There are certain basic givens when one engages in human rights discussions. These givens are however debatable and continue being debated within groups, among groups and even among nations. The basic assumption underlying the human rights agenda is that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All human rights are universal, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated.”<sup>50</sup> Rights are understood as those things that all should enjoy, they are not privileges. In this context, homosexual persons assert that they are entitled to these rights like all other citizens. That human rights issues are central to the sexual rights lobby carried out by GALZ can be discerned from GALZ’s principal objective:

The principal objective of GALZ is to build an association in Zimbabwe which is democratic and accountable and which strives for the attainment of full and equal human, social, and economic rights in all aspects of life for LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Intersex) persons. GALZ will pursue this objective for all LGBTI persons regardless of their sexual orientation, sexual preference, gender identity, race, class, sex, gender, religion or creed.<sup>51</sup>

This objective clearly demonstrates that not only are homosexual persons seeking the right to have partners rather they seek to be guaranteed all the rights that are guaranteed to all other citizens. This ideally includes the right for individuals to determine how to use their sexuality without harming the rights of other citizens.

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<sup>50</sup> The Yogyakarta Principles: Principles on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, March 2007, 6. available online: [www.yogyakartaprinciples.org](http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org). accessed on 05/06/2008.

<sup>51</sup> GALZ „I Think I Might Be“ undated pamphlet. See Appendix 4.

They seek to be protected against discrimination based only on their sexual orientation.

In demonstrating that gay and lesbian rights are human rights, the document dealing with that subject, which I will cite at length below raises the critical issues at the heart of GALZ lobby. While the document is undated and its author not named, a critical reading of the document shows that it was the position paper prepared for the ZIBF'95 whose theme was centred on Human Rights. The document draws parallels between GALZ and other groups that have fought or continue to fight for human rights for specific social groups:

There are many similarities between the women's movement, the Black movement and the gay movement. Prejudice against these groups has been deeply rooted in religious dogma and patriarchal tradition. Lesbian and gay issues are justice issues: The following four principles summarise why lesbian and gay issues cannot be ignored when developing a more just and broad perspective on human rights:

1. The principle of non-discrimination- the right not to be discriminated against is a basic human right that should apply to all individuals.
2. The right to be the same and the right to be different recognises the freedom of individuals to associate with each other, as long as they do not harm the rights of others, like the freedom to practice the religion of your choice. Taking the right to be different a step further means that people should not only be allowed to practice the religion, culture and language of their choice, but should also have the right to choose how to live their lives.
3. Sexual orientation is a public and not just a private issue- generally people say 'the right to personal privacy is enough to protect the rights of lesbians and gay men'. Unfortunately, things are not this simple [...] because discrimination happens in the streets, the newspapers, in the work place, in schools, in religious institutions, and relationships are not legally recognised for things like insurance, medical aid, pensions, inheritance and other spousal benefits.
4. Personal issues are political issues - it is no longer generally acceptable to say that women's issues are not really important political issues but just domestic or side-issues for women to worry about. In the same way broader gender issues, including questions of sexual orientation are

serious issues that should be faced by all people now and not at some distant time in the future.<sup>52</sup>

As articulated in this document, the heart of the GALZ lobby has been the insistence that “homosexual rights are human rights.”<sup>53</sup> The sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe seems to have revolved around the need to accept all human beings as creatures of God, each with some dignity, social and moral worth that needs to be respected.<sup>54</sup> One can detect the resistance and resilience in the face of concerted efforts to be silenced into oblivion when the editor of Whazzup, a GALZ magazine writes; “What surprises me the most is that amid all our fears and daily woes, we still stagger on determined to see a better tomorrow.”<sup>55</sup> The fight for human rights is therefore understood as a fight for a better future. The bottom line of this lobby is that homosexual persons (and all the other sexual minorities) in Zimbabwe are being discriminated against. This position appears to be supported by Mike Auret, the director of the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) who is quoted as saying, “there is no doubt that the gays and lesbians are being discriminated against in the book fair matter.”<sup>56</sup> This discrimination is being supported by religious dogma, which

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<sup>52</sup> *Author unknown*, Homosexuality and Human Rights: Developing tolerance, understanding and justice, undated. While this document does not explicitly refer to its author, a critical appraisal of the document betrays its origins. First, there is little doubt that the document emanates from the GALZ and most likely, authored by Keith Goddard because it addresses issues that are central to the lobbying done by GALZ, that is, Homosexual rights as Human rights. Second, it is most likely that this document was written in preparation of the 1995 ZIBF in Harare whose theme was: Human Rights and Justice. It is in this context and understanding that I use this document. The actual document obtained from the ZCBC is also attached at the end of this study. See Appendix 5.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Gaudencia Mutema, African Traditional Religion and GALZ, *Unpublished Essay*, 1996, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Toyin Falola (ed), *Tradition and Change in Africa: The essays of J. F. Ade Ajayi*, Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2000, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Editorial, *Whazzup November Issue*, GALZ Publications, 2006, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Mike Auret quoted in: Vivian Maravanyika, Scuffles break out at demo against GALZ, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 28/07/1996. See Appendix 6.

is where the Bible becomes an interesting focus and component of the debate.

The Yogyakarta experts meeting observed “that international human rights law affirms that all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, are entitled to the full enjoyment of all human rights, that the application of existing human rights entitlements should take account of the specific situations and experiences of people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities [...]”<sup>57</sup> Essentially, for those States that have yet to explicitly mention “sexual orientation” in their legal statutes, the expectation is that it is implied when it comes to applying the statutes and granting rights. In Zimbabwe, the case for GALZ is that they should be protected and be allowed to enjoy all the human rights “noting that the international community has recognised the right of persons to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality.”<sup>58</sup> It is envisaged that when this right is granted then all other civil rights that non-homosexual citizens enjoy will also be extended to homosexual citizens.

### ***3.3.2 Not All! Acceptable and Unacceptable Homosexual practices***

In chapter one it was noted that the nature of homosexuality is one of the problems that are central to the debate in Zimbabwe. This section is linked to the one above and in addressing the issue of homosexuality and the rights of other people, Keith Goddard wrote;

[...] deviant behaviour is that which harms others; abuse of power, assault, paedophilia and rape are wrong because they hurt people. Why should a consensual sexual relationship between two people of the same sex be abominable when it is fulfilling and socially constructive? It is homophobia which is deviant because it encourages hate and suspicion

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<sup>57</sup> Yogyakarta Principles, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Yogyakarta Principles, 9.

and destroys the lives of people who simply have sexual orientation which differs from the so-called heterosexual norm.<sup>59</sup>

Goddard makes here a distinction between inappropriate sexual practices from those conducted by two consenting adults. By doing so, homosexuality is taken to the same pedestal with heterosexuality in that there are also some practices that are regarded as unacceptable even if they are heterosexual. Keith Goddard is quoted as having lashed out at those gays who abused children.<sup>60</sup> It is in this context that society is accused of being too afraid to tackle the challenges presented by homosexuality and instead sweeps everything under the carpet of homophobia.<sup>61</sup> This distinction between homosexual practices, into appropriate and inappropriate, should be understood as the bedrock upon which *Kunzwana*<sup>62</sup> writes, “the decriminalisation of homosexuality does not increase the number of homosexuals in a nation, [and] neither does it encourage sex tourism.”<sup>63</sup> The suggestion is to decriminalize consensual adult homosexual relationships and practices, much in the same way such practices among heterosexual people are also considered non-criminal.

Homosexuality has existed since time immemorial and does not seek to demolish mankind but to be accepted as part of society, the refusal of which has led to the denial of many basic human and civil rights [...] Just as it is a genetic fact that there will always be homosexuals, so too

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<sup>59</sup> Keith Goddard, Open Letter to Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana, *Parade*.

<sup>60</sup> Goddard quoted in: *The Harare Herald*, Galz members in public appearance, 02/08/1996. See Appendix 7.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *The Harare Daily Mirror*, Broaching a difficult terrain, 08/07/2004. See Appendix 8.

<sup>62</sup> There are a number of letters that were written to editors of the various newspapers in Zimbabwe, such as *Kunzwana*, which are in essence pseudonyms. The authors can therefore not be positively identified. In this work, such names will always be put in italics. There are various possible explanations on why people sometimes prefer using pseudonyms. First, it could be that they are putting out ideas that could affect their day-to-day lives hence the covering up of their identities is meant to stop this eventuality. Second, the authors like in the Zimbabwe case, where most of these letters do.

<sup>63</sup> *Kunzwana*, Fear and ignorance, *The Harare Herald*, 06/02/1995. See Appendix 9.

will there always be heterosexuals, as nature exists in a delicate balance. Therefore, there will never be a 'threat' of earth's population becoming a 'gay world'.<sup>64</sup>

As shown above, homosexual persons present themselves as being aware of certain inappropriate same-sex practices. However, those who are out-gays and out-lesbians understand themselves as only approving of adult consensual relationships. In that regard, the problems that challenge homosexual persons can be blamed on the heterosexual majority, hence Mabhumbo observes;

[...] the problem is not with homosexuals. It lies within those of us who consider ourselves to be normal and will not countenance any behaviour considered to be outside the norm. Sub-consciously we may be afraid of the implications of the discoveries we are bound to make if we searched[...] Human nature is both attracted to and repulsed by mystery. When a mystery defies all efforts to unravel it, sometimes it evokes frustration, anger, fear and shame. That mystery may then be considered to be shameful in itself to compensate for our inadequacies in unravelling it [...]. When we think of homosexuality, it is always accompanied by all these feelings of frustration, anger, fear and shame. We are frustrated because we cannot explain how such a condition can come to be, angry because it will not disappear, afraid because it threatens to erode the very foundation of our values of normal behaviour, and ashamed for being rendered inadequate.<sup>65</sup>

What Mabhumbo tries to elucidate is that the shortcomings of society are the real problems behind the discrimination that homosexual persons suffer in everyday life. It has been central to the sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe and possibly throughout the world to make a rigid distinction between criminal same-sex practices such as homosexual rape and homosexual paedophilia on the one hand and same-sex consensual love relationships. Should activities of consenting adults in private be considered criminal even if they do not harm the rights of other people? The answer to this has been an emphatic No! Such activities should be decrimi-

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<sup>64</sup> Leonard Chaza, Leonard Chaza examines the controversial: It's a gay thing, *Mahogany*, July/August, 1995, 8.

<sup>65</sup> C. Mabhumbo, A Case that cries for Treatment, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 05/02/1995. See Appendix 10.

nalized because Zimbabwe still has the so-called “Sodomy laws in its Penal Code.”<sup>66</sup>

### **3.3.3 Homosexuality is ‘Natural’: Nature and Nurture**

One of the major contentions of the sexual rights lobby is the argument that homosexual persons are “born like that”. The organised homosexual community in Zimbabwe under the banner of GALZ subscribe to this notion. According to Keith Goddard homosexual orientation is determined before birth hence one is born with that orientation.<sup>67</sup> The argument is that

Nature is unquestionably one of the many factors to play a role in determining a person’s sexuality. It is almost certain, for example, that some people have a genetic pre-disposition to homosexual orientation or preference – they are born that way. The attraction to people of their own sex is in these cases ‘hard-wired’ into their brains and cells.<sup>68</sup>

While this is a central argument in the quest for recognition and tolerance on the part of homosexual persons, Gaudencia Mutema observes that this is just one side of the coin when she writes;

For gays and lesbians, homosexuality is a genuine state of being, not an ‘optional lifestyle’, which they choose. Their sexuality is firstly, a matter of biology; secondly, homosexuality is secondarily a matter of choice, in which case two persons of the same sex can enter into a relationship for pleasure.<sup>69</sup>

There is a clear use of both biology and social factors in the arguments raised by GALZ. It is at this level that the dichotomy of nature and nurture comes into play. The sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe has effectively combined the essentialist and constructionist arguments in presenting their side of the debate. This is so because “essentialists hold that the basic structures of sexuality and gender are independent of their social context, that people are

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<sup>66</sup> The implications of the Penal Code’s Sodomy laws will be dealt with in the following chapter.

<sup>67</sup> Goddard, Open letter to Rev Canaan Sodindo Banana.

<sup>68</sup> GALZ, *Unspoken Facts*, 7-8.

<sup>69</sup> Gaudencia Mutema, African Traditional Religion and GALZ, 1996, 4.

born with their sexual orientation [...] Constructionists see sexuality and its manifestations as social constructions.”<sup>70</sup> Despite this tension in the positions of essentialist and constructionist explanations, they seemingly agree on one critical aspect, whether it is innate or learned, homosexual persons are not to be held responsible for their being homosexual.<sup>71</sup> This is central in the self-understanding of homosexual persons and is possibly the major reason why they seek to distance themselves from those activities that they consider anti-social, such as rape and paedophilia. It should be noted however that the essentialist explanation seems to dominate the homosexual argument in Zimbabwe.

The basis for this explanation in Zimbabwe has been the 1991 LeVay investigation which concluded that “the hypothalamus gland which governs one’s sexuality is 28 percent larger in gay men and women.”<sup>72</sup> *Mother in Arms*, arguing on the basis of this scientific discovery writes, “It [Homosexuality] is not depraved nor a perverse choice, but a natural orientation which has been repressed, distorted and condemned over the years for not being the norm as society would deem it.”<sup>73</sup> Interesting in this argument is that not only is homosexual orientation seen as pre-determined, it has been moved up to the pedestal of being ‘natural’. ‘Natural’ in this case meaning that the individual is born with this condition; it is what God has given them as their ‘natural’ sexuality.

The idea of natural as that which is beyond an individual’s control is also shared in the debate. In strengthening this understanding of nature, medical, biological and psychological researches have been invoked. Cuthbert Mavheko writes, “In light of psychologi-

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<sup>70</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 51-2.

<sup>72</sup> *Mother in Arms*, Irresponsible remarks, *The Harare Herald*, 17/01/1995. See Appendix 11. The correct position though is that the hypothalamus gland is larger in heterosexual males while its size among gay men is consistently similar to that in heterosexual females. See Simon LeVay “A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men” in: *Science*, New Series, Vol. 253, No. 5023, 1991, 1034-1037.

<sup>73</sup> *Mother in Arms*, Irresponsible remarks.

cal, medical and biological researches, the conclusion reached is that homosexual conduct is not a perverse, depraved choice, but a natural orientation[...]"<sup>74</sup> The essence of this biological explanation is to demonstrate that homosexual orientation is beyond the control of the individual who turns out to have that orientation. It is therefore unjust for society to deny rights to such persons as if they chose their sexuality. This is their natural sexuality given to them by their creator. "If homosexuality was a choice, surely, some of us would have quit - who would want to lose their family, prejudiced and be called a pervert? God created me to live and I shall live my life to the full."<sup>75</sup>

Some biological and genetic studies are also alluded to in the arguments raised by GALZ and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe. Among such studies being the Prenatal Hormonal theory in which Simon LeVay explains the basics as follows;

In experimental animals it has been well established that sexual differentiation of the body and brain results primarily from the influence of sex hormones secreted by the testes or ovaries. Males have high levels of testosterone in foetal life (after functional development of the testes) and around the time of birth, as well as at and after puberty. Females have low levels of all sex hormones in foetal life, and high levels of estrogens and progestagens starting at puberty. High prenatal testosterone levels organize the brain in a male-specific fashion; low levels testosterone permits it to organize in a female-specific fashion. Hormones at puberty activate the circuits laid down in prenatal life but do not fundamentally change them. Thus, the range of sexual behaviours that adult animals can show is determined in large part by their prenatal/perinatal hormone exposure- manipulating these hormone levels can lead to atypical sex behaviour or preference for same-sex partners as well as a range of other gender-atypical characteristics.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Cuthbert Mavheko, Homosexuality has no place in Zimbabwe, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 29/01/2000. See Appendix 12.

<sup>75</sup> Dumisani Dube & Jack, Homosexuals like Heterosexuals, are God's creation, *The Harare Daily News*, 02/02/2004. See Appendix 8.

<sup>76</sup> Simon LeVay "The Biology of Sexual Orientation" available online: <http://members.aol.com/slevay/page22.html> accessed 18/08/2008.

While these tests have been carried out in animals and cannot be carried out in human foetuses because of ethical problems, it can be observed that genes, hormones or biological make up play significant roles in determining one's sexuality. This is what GALZ has consistently attempted to articulate and thereby deflecting liability on the part of homosexual persons. Another study is that carried out by Fred Whitam.

Fred Whitam studied the childhood experiences of 375 homosexual men in Guatemala, Brazil, the Philippines, Thailand, Peru, and the United States of America. On the basis of his research, he concluded that: (i) homosexuality is universal, (ii) the percentage of homosexual [persons] in all cultures is approximately the same (about 5%) and remains stable over time, (iii) the emergence of homosexuality is not affected by social norms regarding it. Homosexuality is just as likely to appear in societies that are homophobic as in those that are much more tolerant of homosexuality, (iv) given a large enough population, homosexual subcultures will be found in all societies, (v) there are striking resemblances in behavioural interests and occupational choices between homosexual persons in different societies, (vi) in all societies homosexual persons run the gamut from highly feminine to highly masculine. Clearly these findings suggest that preferential homosexuality is innately given rather than some sort of social construction or personal choice.<sup>77</sup>

These researches are central in the sustenance of the argument that homosexual persons are not responsible for being homosexual and should not be discriminated against for something that is beyond their control. Further, researches such as the one above are taken to sustain the view that homosexuality is to be found in all communities without the influence of the outside world.

Twin studies show a higher concordance for homosexuality among homozygous twins (identical) than among heterozygous twins (fraternal). Among identical twins, concordance rates for homosexuality are reported in the range of 48-66%, which indicates that genetic factors most

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<sup>77</sup> Steven K. Sanderson „The Sociology of Human Sexuality: A Darwinian Alternative to Social Constructionism and Postmodernism“, *Unpublished Paper*, 12 available online: <http://www.chss.iup.edu/sociology/Faculty/anderson%20Articles/Hum-Sexuality-paper-ASA2003.htm> accessed 18/08/2008.

likely play a role but are not the only factors in the expression of homosexuality. Molecular linkage studies have suggested chromosomal regions that may be involved in conferring a susceptibility to homosexuality (for example, Xq28), but a specific gene has not yet been identified.<sup>78</sup>

This self-generation of homosexuality is also demonstrated by studies of non-human species, from which studies it seems that there *may* be a connection between one's sexual orientation and one's biological make up. According to Bazemore;

Same-sex domestic and sexual relationships are a phenomenon found not only in humans but also in animals. Intensive studies involving several animals (for example birds and sheep) have also shown same-sex domestic and sexual relationships. Rosselli notes that studies have shown that 8-10% of rams are male-oriented in partner selection. Comparative studies of female-oriented and male-oriented rams have not identified social factors to explain the dichotomy.<sup>79</sup>

The findings from the animal species have been taken to suggest that homosexuality is not only confined to a few human beings but is a phenomenon that cuts across all living species. For the sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe, this also goes a long way in showing that some of the populist arguments suggesting that homosexual persons are doing something that not even non-human species do are not necessarily true. What these scientific researches have done is to give some rational justification for the existence of homosexual persons. That homosexuality is seen as universal means that indeed people can talk of homosexuality from ancient societies to the present, even though societies may have been exposed to different forms of homosexuality.

### ***3.3.4 Homosexual Persons and the Use of the Bible***

We noted earlier on that there is a general consensus that part of the problems faced by homosexual persons is a result of religious dogma. In the Zimbabwean debate, Christianity has been the dominant player and there have been some among the gay com-

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<sup>78</sup> Bazemore „eMedicine-Homosexuality”.

<sup>79</sup> Bazemore „eMedicine-Homosexuality“.

munity who have responded directly to the challenges posed by Christianity. “In addition, there is an emergent gay and lesbian theology developing worldwide, where texts are scoured and interpreted and re-interpreted.”<sup>80</sup> The attempt to find texts that do not frustrate gay and lesbian people is well pronounced in Zimbabwe. According to Leonard Chaza,

In the Christian faith, children are taught that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, they are taught to remember the fate of Sodom, and so on. The fundamental teaching of Christianity, and indeed of all religions, is that of love. Surely, the depth and intimacy that both gay men and women can experience in a fulfilling relationship, and the love and joy that they can bring into their own lives should not be condemned and vilified.<sup>81</sup>

There ought to be a central message in Christianity which is to be followed. This message should be derived from the Bible and any other biblical text, which does not conform to this central message, can thus be done away with. The creation of Adam and Eve therefore is one such peripheral component and must not be used to vilify and condemn homosexual persons. The central concern in this regard can be equated to what happened in America at the height of the fight against slavery. According to Jack Rogers, “abolitionists [of slavery] appealed to the Bible as a whole, and gave priority to its central themes, especially that Jesus was the central figure in Scripture and that he always displayed love, which required remedying injustice for those who were oppressed.”<sup>82</sup> The theme of love recurs in the arguments of the sexual rights lobby and is taken as the standard against which texts of the Bible should be judged. Jesus is the model for the arguments raised by homosexual Christians because his burden is no oppressive net-

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<sup>80</sup> Heather Garner & Michael Worsnip “Oil and Water: The Impossibility of Gay and Lesbian Identity within the Church” in: McGlory T. Speckman & Larry T. Kaufmann (eds), *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 205.

<sup>81</sup> Chaza, It’s a gay thing, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Jack Rogers, *Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 32.

work of legal prescriptions but simply the joy of a single call to love.<sup>83</sup>

Frequently, the attempt is made by homosexual persons to identify biblical texts that forbid the passing of judgment on other people. The use is such that the Bible is taken to condemn what most people are quick to do, that is, pass judgment. Hence *Gay Friendly* asked, “For all of you who are religious – is your God not a forgiving one? Did your God not tell you never to judge others?”<sup>84</sup> In essence, *Gay Friendly* seeks to draw people’s attention to other texts that can possibly incapacitate the anti-gay arguments. Similarly, arguing against the position taken by Zimbabwean churches, *Tirivanhuwo* writes;

For Christians to attack gays as evil doers, satanic and ungodly is the height of hypocrisy. God is the God of love who created man and woman in His image. He is a God of forgiveness. In the Bible itself, Jesus tells us in Luke 18 about the Parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector. The two men went to the temple to pray, where the Pharisee claimed to be righteous unlike the tax-collector whom he judged to be an evil-doer. The tax-collector asked for God’s forgiveness for his sins. Jesus says of the two men: ‘I tell you that this man [the tax-collector who is referred by the Pharisee as an evil-doer] went home justified’. In Matthew 7:1 God says, ‘Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you’. In John 8, in the story of the woman caught committing adultery, Jesus said ‘Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her’. Now that the holier-than-[thou] Christians have taken it upon themselves to threaten the gay community in Zimbabwe, the big question is, who will cast the first stone?<sup>85</sup>

Letters like the one cited above have sought to deflate the Christian zeal demonstrated in the popular voice. Whether such letters

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Donald Senior cited in: Benjamin A. Ntrel, “Africa in the New Testament” in: Getui et al (eds), *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, 78.

<sup>84</sup> *Gay Friendly*, Outdated Feuds, *The Harare Herald*, 02/02/1995. See Appendix 13.

<sup>85</sup> *Tirivanhuwo*, Why instruct bosses to crush homosexuals, *The Harare Sunday Gazette*, 03/09/1995. See Appendix 14.

have succeeded is not clear, at least for now. What is clear is that the Bible has been invoked to protect and fight for liberation of homosexual persons. Below are some quotations from members of GALZ on homosexuality and the Church in Zimbabwe. According to Samuel Matsikure, the Health Officer of GALZ, “[...] we all know that the Church is a family of God to which I should belong because I am also part of the community and God’s creation. God created me so I want to be there and we all want to be part of it.”<sup>86</sup> Matsikure uses the creation motif to justify why homosexual persons should be acknowledged as members of society and the Church. All human beings are seen as created by God, be they homosexual or heterosexual. That all are created by God implies therefore that all have a certain worthy, which has to be acknowledged and protected. The Churches therefore must welcome homosexual people as full members of these communities. This use of creation is in line with the argument that homosexual persons are born with a homosexual orientation.<sup>87</sup>

Fadzai Muparutsa continues with the attempt to make a distinction between the Church and the Bible. This attempt to wrestle the Bible from the Church is somewhat repeated by a number of homosexual persons. Muparutsa is quoted as saying,

For God says love one another, but Christians do not do that. Instead, some stand up at the pulpit and preach hatred, then expect someone to believe in God. Some even claim to be anointed and having a message from God. But God’s message as I understand it, is not about hate, but love.<sup>88</sup>

There is restraint of simply dismissing the Bible and God as oppressive against homosexual persons. Rather, the Church has been made to take the flake. The major accusation being that the Church, as the messenger, is guilty of tempering around with the message of God. The same can be detected in the following words:

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<sup>86</sup> Samuel Matsikure quoted in: *EDICISA News*, November/December, 2003, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Mutema, *African Traditional Religion*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Fadzai Muparutsa quoted in: *EDICISA News*, November/December, 2003, 4.

Why is the Church carrying on about homosexuality as evil spirits? They are all suddenly quiet about all other social ills. What is the Church doing about us as members of the community? They are doing nothing except preaching hatred against homosexuals. God is a God of love. We are here because He created us.<sup>89</sup>

In challenging the popular view that God created Adam and Eve, therefore, God created heterosexuality, GALZ writes, “those who defend compulsory heterosexuality with the argument that it is ‘the will of God’ or ‘nature’ are clearly on very shaky ground.”<sup>90</sup> Clearly, the attempt is to divorce prejudices of Christians from the will of God or nature. It appears for homosexual persons, what is being passed for the will of God is actually the prejudice of some heterosexual people.

Homosexual persons in Zimbabwe have drawn a lot of inspiration from some prominent African Christian leaders, among them Rev. Jide Macaulay, Rev. Jo Ndlela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. According to Rev. Jide Macaulay, who is the founder of House of Rainbow Church in Nigeria and is an out-gay;

Our vision is to take care of and empower people who are likely to be ostracised and isolated in diverse communities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in particular. The Church is supposed to be the place where we appear true to each other and to God.<sup>91</sup>

With such a message of hope the Christian-gay members have drawn upon such message to strengthen themselves. Also interesting are the words of Jo Ndlela, an Anglican priest in South Africa who says, “Jesus is saying, if you said apartheid was unjust then you must say laws discriminating against homosexual people are unjust.”<sup>92</sup> The South African apartheid experiences have been appropriated to show how societies can easily forget the pains of oppression once they have become privileged themselves.

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<sup>89</sup> Dumisani Dube quoted in: *EDICISA News*, November/December, 2003, 4.

<sup>90</sup> GALZ, *Unspoken Facts*, 86.

<sup>91</sup> Rev. Jide Macaulay quoted in: *Whazzup November Issue*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Rev. Jo Ndlela quoted in: *Whazzup November Issue*, 7.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's campaign for the recognition of the rights of homosexual persons is well documented. It has brought him enemies but also friends and a lot of homosexual persons take him as a role model. Below are some of the words why he is revered in the homosexual community:

It is only of homosexual persons that we require universal celibacy, whereas for others we teach that celibacy is a special vocation. We say that sexual orientation is morally a matter of indifference, but what are culpable are homosexual acts. But then we claim that sexuality is a divine gift, which when used properly, helps us to become more fully human and akin really to God, as it is this part of our humanity that makes us gentler and caring, more self-giving and concerned for others than we would be without that gift. Why don't we use the same criteria to judge same-sex relationships that we use to judge whether heterosexual relationships are wholesome or not?<sup>93</sup>

These are words that have been widely circulated among homosexual persons in Zimbabwe. Words that are meant to demonstrate the inherent contradictions that exist within the Church's teaching on homosexuality and sexuality in general. Homosexual persons believe and have tried to demonstrate that they are indeed an oppressed minority. They have also attempted to demonstrate that some Christians have read the Bible to entrench their oppression and in turn they have sought to read the Bible differently.

This is a challenge and a rejection of the popular perception that the Bible is timeless and not limited to historical and geographical environments. There is greater appreciation of the fact that readers influence the Bible in as much as the Bible influences the readers. According to Dumisani Dube and Jack, "[...] a contextual reading of the Bible will show that changed circumstances may call for a different approach to the Bible."<sup>94</sup> By seeking to subject the Bible to contextual interpretation, homosexual persons may be pushing their argument towards liberation hermeneutics. Previous studies following the liberation hermeneutics have always

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<sup>93</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu quoted in: Douglas Jack, *Human Sexuality, Politics and Religion in the era of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*, 2004, 43.

<sup>94</sup> Dumisani Dube & Jack, *Homosexuals like Heterosexuals, are God's creation*

operated on the basis that God is always on the side of the down-trodden and marginalized. Does the same apply to homosexual persons? So far, this question will have to be answered affirmatively, that is, from the perspective of homosexual persons. “The most commonly held approach (among Black Christians) has been to accuse oppressor-preachers of *misusing* the Bible for their oppressive purposes and objectives.”<sup>95</sup> The same is implied in the manner the Bible has been invoked by homosexual persons and those sympathetic to their plight.

### **3.4 Analysis of the position of GALZ**

The formation of GALZ and its attempt to champion the cause of homosexual persons in Zimbabwe has been the major reason for the emergence of homosexuality as a public subject in Zimbabwe. The effect GALZ has had on the debate in Zimbabwe can best be understood in the backdrop of the women empowerment movement as well as the Black empowerment movement. Any attempt to understand the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe must acknowledge the role played by GALZ in broaching a very difficult terrain of bringing to the public’s attention, issues that had been condemned to the abyss of silence for generations. Central to all the arguments raised by sexual rights activists is that homosexuality “is like left-handedness, a minority condition in a world where most people are right-handed and a few are ambidextrous, but a natural variation having its own contribution to the wholeness of the world.”<sup>96</sup> This analysis will proceed by way of subsections focusing on the key issues considered central by homosexual persons.

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<sup>95</sup> Takatso Mofokeng quoted in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 93.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Wennes Egertson “One Family’s Story” in: Walter Wink (ed), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999, 29.

### **3.4.1 On the origins and manifestations of homosexuality**

As intimated above, Guri, Chigweshe and Jack have all looked at the origins of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. The overwhelming perception from their works is that homosexuality in Zimbabwe originated locally. That, homosexual persons existed in pre-colonial Zimbabwean communities has been widely asserted in these works and was also confirmed by the celebrated historian of Zimbabwe, Prof. Terrence Ranger.<sup>97</sup> However, what they have not sought to demonstrate is that homosexuality, if it indeed existed from pre-colonial times, has evolved over the years. This is an area where various issues have to be taken into consideration. There is a strong possibility that contemporary Zimbabwean social constructions are a mixture of indigenous pre-colonial traditions and Western traditions. The fact that the documented evidence of homosexual practices is predominantly coming from court records and emanating from farms, mines and urban centres and now prisons and exclusive boys' and girls' schools presents a number of challenges to the sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe. The European settlers and missionaries are responsible for introducing these infrastructures in Zimbabwe.

The essentialist and constructionist explanations as used by GALZ do present some challenges to the sexual rights lobby. These explanations are predicated on the historical evidence and scientific researches on homosexuality. The first challenge is that frequently, the sexual rights lobby has attempted to present the biological, genetic and hormonal researches as if they were absolute. It is essential to observe that these researches are not absolute rather the findings are all tentative.

Dean Hamer, the author of the gay gene study, agreed, 'We knew that genes were only part of the answer. We assumed the environment also played a role in sexual orientation, as it does in most, if not all behav-

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<sup>97</sup> Prof. Terrence Ranger informed me of the existence of historical evidence of the existence of homosexuality in Zimbabwe through private email communication. He has published a lot on the history of Zimbabwe and was a Lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe from the colonial period and is now retired and in Great Britain.

iors.' Hamer further emphasizes, 'Homosexuality is not purely genetic [...] environmental factors play a role'.<sup>98</sup>

Further, even though there is no absolute solutions offered by geneticists and biologists among whom science has been reduced into some circus giving credence to Ehrlich's observation that "we live in an age when the boundaries between science and science fiction are becoming increasingly blurred."<sup>99</sup> Cameron writes:

No researcher has found provable biological or genetic differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals *that were not caused by their behaviour*. While the absence of such a discovery does not prove that inherited sexual tendencies are not possible, *it suggests that none has been found because none exists*.<sup>100</sup>

While the emphasized parts are highly debatable, it is important to observe that the scientific base upon which some claims made by homosexual persons are based is not necessarily absolute.

The second difficulty arising from this usage of essentialist and constructionist explanations pertains to the inherent conflict between the two theories. No attempt has been made in the sexual rights arguments to demonstrate that these theories are exclusive of each other. With essentialists arguing that it is biological, hormonal or genetic factors that are behind one's sexuality, constructionists argue that "only genitalia are determined; all other aspects of sexual relationships are socially constructed."<sup>101</sup> GALZ and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe have not done much to deal with this contradiction. The failure to deal with this contradiction could be one reason why the evolution of homosexual manifestations in Zimbabwe has not been critically considered, except in

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<sup>98</sup> Dean A. Byrd „Homosexuality: The Essentialist Argument Continues to Erode“ available online: [www.narth.com/docs/essentialist.html](http://www.narth.com/docs/essentialist.html) accessed 20/11/2007.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Ehrlich, *Eight Preposterous Propositions: From the Genetics of Homosexuality to the Benefits of Global Warming*, 2003, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Cameron „What Causes Homosexual Desire and Can it be Changed?“ available online: <http://www.biblebelievers.com/Cameron3.html> accessed 19/11/2007. Emphasis my own.

<sup>101</sup> Paul Germond & Steve de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, 167.

the work of Epprecht. There has been an overarching interest to draw lines of connection between homosexual practices from pre-colonial societies to the present without paying due diligence to the obvious differences that exist between them.

From the arguments presented from the ancient Azande and Zulu to the mine compounds of South Africa and in prisons, it appears that there have been significant changes not only in terms of manifestations of homosexual practices and relations but also regarding the perceptions of homosexuality. According to Epprecht, “homosexuality as an identity or an exclusive life choice did not exist when the pressures to have sex for reproduction were so over-determined by material, political, spiritual and other cultural considerations.”<sup>102</sup> It appears that early on, the warrior marriages were temporary and circumstantial and possibly had little to do with sexual orientation as understood and defined by GALZ. It is not clear from the evidence if there were some who outside of the military adventures or hunting adventures continued with same-sex practices. It seems therefore that early homosexual practices in African communities were circumstantial. Without enough evidence to deal with homosexual relations and practices among the Shona, it can be observed that studies elsewhere seem to suggest that “a variety of homosexual identities have been and still are produced by a set of power relations within the contexts of neo-colonialism, capitalist development, and racial domination.”<sup>103</sup>

Further, the evidence from the mines and prisons also show that most of the homosexual relations were in the mould of patriarchal heterosexual marriages, a former convict Shylet is quoted as saying, “Many prisoners are being forced into homosexuality in exchange for soap, toothpaste, Vaseline, bread and meat. The most vulnerable are those without relatives who bring them basic needs

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<sup>102</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality*, 224.

<sup>103</sup> Ronald Louw “Mkhumbane and New Traditions of (Un)African Same-Sex Weddings” in: Robert Morrell (ed), *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001, 288.

not supplied by the prison.”<sup>104</sup> The post 1990 period in Zimbabwe has seen a different kind of homosexuality, egalitarian and non-circumstantial homosexual relations. In the sexual rights lobby, it is possible to identify three kinds of homosexuality and homosexual practices believed to have or continue to exist in Zimbabwean communities. These are: *circumstantial same-sex practices*; *preferential same-sex practices*; and *medicinal same-sex practices*. GALZ appears to lobby for the preferential same-sex homosexuality, which is not related to the availability or non-availability of members of the opposite sex.

The criminal trial of Canaan Banana can go a long way in illustrating the changing faces of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. Canaan Banana was the first President of Zimbabwe after independence in 1980 and was a Methodist minister. He was married heterosexually and was a father. He certainly met all the traditional obligations thrust upon all adults among Zimbabwean communities. However, in 1999 he was convicted of sodomy and performing ‘unnatural acts’ with men. These offences were committed when he was still the president of Zimbabwe.<sup>105</sup> In the case of Banana, homosexuality and homosexual practices are not understood as alternatives to heterosexual practices and relations, rather they are understood as being side-events. This clearly differs with the understanding of homosexuality as essentially different from heterosexuality, an understanding that pervades the current sexual rights lobby. The other problem from the case of Banana is it was used to entrench the criminal stereotype of homosexual persons. This certainly is not the model for what GALZ has consistently argued for.

This perception of homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexuality is closely connected to urbanisation in Zimbabwe, which

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<sup>104</sup> *The Harare Herald*, “Former convict Shylet tells of Vices and Horrors of Life inside Chikurubi Prison” in: Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 99.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Andrew Meldrum „Canaan Banana, president jailed in sex scandal, dies“ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/nov/11/zimbabwe.andrewmeldrum> accessed 06/08/2008.

negatively impacted on the community/extended family relations and systems of pre-colonial communities. There was much more freedom in urban areas and with less sanctions being effected by the traditionally powerful elders. Many other traditional practices lost their value, such as, arranged marriages as more and more young men and women moved outside the influence of their families. Further, with urban employment opportunities, the young people required less help from the extended family for marriage and that meant, the management of sexuality was gradually taken away from the community and firmly placed in the hands of the individual. This should be understood as part of the severe disruption of traditional lifestyles due to European colonial expansion.<sup>106</sup> Finally, this could also explain why organised gays and lesbians clubs thrived and continue to thrive in urban centres and not rural areas in Zimbabwe.

These developments coupled with population control policies after independence could have brought a new perspective to sexual intercourse as essentially a procreative endeavour. In essence, while early on sexuality had been conflated with procreation these developments could have gone a long way in divorcing sexuality from procreation. This can be a result of the development of industrial capitalism in Zimbabwe. GALZ has therefore been responding to social developments and the sexual rights lobby is closely connected to these developments. The rise of GALZ signalled a critical development in the existence of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. The transformation of homosexual relations and practices from the pre-1990 period to the post-1990 period in Zimbabwe is best summed up in Michel Foucault's words.

Homosexuality [post formation of GALZ] appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The Sodo-

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Louw "Mkhumbane and New Traditions of (Un)African Same-Sex Weddings", 294.

mite<sup>107</sup> had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.<sup>108</sup>

### 3.4.2 *Transgressing Traditional boundaries of sexuality*

Sexual issues in Zimbabwean societies were never part of the public discourse, be they heterosexual or any other sexuality for that matter. Sex education was present in these societies but it was carefully confined to certain circumstances and in certain places and largely given in metaphors. The sex educators were the aunt and uncle for girls and boys respectively. This was the traditional set up which sustained the sexual discourses and sex education among Zimbabwean societies. In this context, the societies decided and succeeded somehow in pushing sex issues out of the limelight. In all this, “the concept of the community was at the heart of the life of the traditional society. Life was organised within an effective community not around an individual.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines this term as follows: “A sodomite was understood as act-defined, rather than as a type of person, persons who engaged in heterosexual sodomy were also Sodomites. There are reports of persons being burned to death or beheaded for sodomy with a spouse (Greenberg, 1988, 277)” accessed 28 November 2007. This essentially means sodomy refers to anal-intercourse irrespective of the sexes of the persons involved. The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9: 23) Act 23/2004 – Zimbabwe, Section 73 “Sodomy” Sub-section (1) “Any male person who, with the consent of another male person, knowingly performs with that other person anal sexual intercourse [...], shall be guilty of sodomy[...].” In this Zimbabwean criminal law code, sodomy is a male crime because according to Section 65 “Rape” Sub-section(1) “If a male person knowingly has sexual intercourse or anal intercourse with a female person and, at the time of the intercourse (a) the female person has not consented to it; and (b) he knows that she has not consented to it or realises that there is a real risk or possibility that she may not have consented to it; he shall be guilty of rape [...]” It is interesting that while anal intercourse between men is sodomy, heterosexual anal intercourse is classified under rape. Could this be because women are “naturally” supposed to be penetrated? Where they are penetrated by men is not a problem in itself if they consent to being penetrated there!

<sup>108</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*, 43.

<sup>109</sup> Falola, *Tradition and Change*, 5.

Clearly, the traditional community was dyadic in as far as it considered the communal interests ahead of individual interests and sexuality was not an exception.

In traditional societies in Zimbabwe, community interests took precedence over those of the individual members of that community. "Whatever its roots the community operated on the basis of group solidarity, shared interests, common loyalty to inherited values, cultural coherence and ideological consensus."<sup>110</sup> In this context the sexual rights lobby championed by GALZ did transgress this traditional set up on two fronts: First, by bringing sex into the public domain. This transgression is especially critical because it focused on a kind of sexuality that was against the widely accepted "normal" sexuality. Second, the GALZ lobby transgressed the traditional set up by emphasizing the primacy of individual rights over community interests.

As Michel Foucault describes sex in the Victorian era, the same could be said for the traditional Zimbabwean societies, particularly the Shona groups:

Sexuality was carefully confined; moved into the home [...] The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy.<sup>111</sup>

With this confinement of sex, it can be appreciated then why sex education in the traditional Shona societies was highly secretive; it was not supposed to be seen. The existence of sex in Shona societies was more often than not rejected, particularly where children who had not reached marriageable age were concerned. Hence, Shona women were often heard telling their young children on the birth of a child, 'I bought a new baby'. As Foucault writes "children have no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk

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<sup>110</sup> Falola, *Tradition and Change*, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3.

about it.”<sup>112</sup> I would add that they were also not supposed to hear about it. This confinement of sex seemed to have worked well for the Shona societies because we often hear the elderly people refer to their teen lives, during which they would swim with teens of the opposite sex, stark naked and without any realisation of the sexual possibilities.<sup>113</sup> It is not surprising that the GALZ lobby has been accused of wanting to influence children and young adults, the groups that were systematically starved of sex education.

Using the observation of Foucault, it is also clear that the sexual rights lobby has sought to redefine the essence of sex. In traditional societies, sex was meant for procreation. Children were considered a form of wealth; they guaranteed one a higher social status than one would normally get without children. Most importantly, children guaranteed their parents immortality. Through the ancestral veneration practices, parents died physically but were never forgotten as they graduated into the realm of the more powerful ancestral spirits. By suggesting that same-sex relations and practices could be good, GALZ and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe were treading a path that is diametrically opposed to what traditional culture and religion sanctioned. The community’s survival was also related to the procreation of children as these children meant a constant supply of labour, warriors and also women to cement political and economic treaties between different families and tribal groupings.

All this should be seen in the context of urbanisation and how it liberated many people from the daily surveillance from the family system as they sought employment in towns, mines, and farms. The adoption of ESAP and its impact on the functionality of the family meant severe individualism became the order of the day. On the evaluation of ESAP, Sarah Hudleston writes, “In 1991 a further wedge was driven between the labour movement and the government with the formal introduction of Zimbabwe’s Eco-

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<sup>112</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 4.

<sup>113</sup> This is almost a legend among elderly Shona people and is often used to critique the sexual maturity of contemporary youngsters.

conomic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) dubbed by ordinary Zimbabweans as the 'Extra Suffering for the African People'.<sup>114</sup> The social and economic developments resulting from ESAP challenged the extended family system into submission as individuals could hardly sustain themselves. No time could be spared to worry about what others were doing and most people were forced to find other ways of surviving as many companies were closing down. It is in this regard that accusations of prostitution and soliciting have been levelled against some homosexual persons. Among those forced into prostitution or soliciting are heterosexual persons who are lured by the big monies paid by foreign clients.<sup>115</sup> This does not however reduce everyone to being an opportunist and this should not be seen as if it is peculiar to homosexual persons. Many women were also forced into prostitution because of the same reasons that some men were forced into homosexual prostitution.

The argument that homophobia or homomisia was never part of the indigenous communities but was introduced by Europeans during the colonial era is an interesting assertion. It can be argued that "the culture of discretion around sexual matters meant that acts that were forbidden in theory could be tolerated in practice as long as the community was not compelled to pay explicit attention."<sup>116</sup> The challenge for the sexual rights lobby is that by seeking to exhibit at the ZIBF, they were essentially compelling society at large to focus its attention on them. There can be few arguments that this was understood by many Zimbabweans as being problematic.

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<sup>114</sup> Sarah Hudleston, *Face of Courage: A Biography of Morgan Tsvangirai*, Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005, 45.

<sup>115</sup> *Responsible Citizen* „Actions of the degenerate“ in: *The Harare Herald*, 25/01/1995. See Appendix 15.

<sup>116</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 37.

### 3.4.3 Re-ordering the traditional rule of Precedence

There is widespread acceptance that in traditional Zimbabwean communities, the community took precedence over the individual. Acts are judged on the basis of their importance not to the individual alone but to the community first and the individual later. It would seem that the rise of Human Rights movements throughout the world would have altered a number of social constructions. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 3, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”<sup>117</sup> This emphasis on the individual is diametrically opposed to traditional African philosophies of the person because according to Mbiti, such philosophies based themselves on the understanding that “I am because we are [not we are because I am].”<sup>118</sup>

While the Western authored UDHR emphasizes the individuality of each person, there is no doubt that such an emphasis is lacking in the pre-colonial Shona communities. In such communities, the individual was always understood in terms of the community in which he was accorded certain rights best understood as privileges that were in direct proportion to his/her duties in the community. The suggestion here is that contemporary manifestations of sexuality in Zimbabwe, especially the call for the recognition that ‘sexual rights are human rights’ cannot be fully appreciated outside these developments. It would have been unthinkable for gay and lesbian people in pre-colonial communities asking for recognition owing to the social structure that governed these communities. The essence is that in these societies, there were no individual human rights, only duties and privileges were granted by the society on its members. This is different from the post-colonial context; hence the manifestations have also changed.

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<sup>117</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3 cited in: Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*.

<sup>118</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1969, 2.

The challenges posed by the language of human rights are mainly focused on the political structures in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a signatory to the UDHR, the African Charter for Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and has its own Bill of Rights. The sexual rights lobby has sought to make use of these political commitments to fight for civil and legal rights. The post World War II era has largely been dominated by issues of human rights and lately, a number of African States have labelled human rights a neo-colonial Western agenda. It is assumed by many that the concept of universal human rights is itself a Western concept that is being imposed on the developing world. Since the sexual rights lobby does receive moral and possibly financial backing from some Western donors, this close cooperation has been interpreted as a clear sign of the foreign agenda that such organizations as GALZ are driving even though most African governments are also recipients of Western donor funds. This is further complicated by the unclear boundaries between the secular state, Christianity and traditional religious and cultural traditions. The fluidity of these entities has meant that the language of human rights has been fought at various levels depending on the nature of the battle at hand.

Despite the problems cited above regarding the challenges of talking of human rights in Zimbabwe, the sexual rights lobby has followed the route that gay movements in the West and in South Africa have already used. That the first person to critically tackle the subject in Zimbabwe is Marc Epprecht, a Canadian scholar (Epprecht was a visiting lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe between 1995 and 1998) does little to divorce GALZ from the Western influence in the eyes of those who are outside the organization. It appears that demanding civil and legal rights is the easiest of the various battles that homosexual persons have to engage in for tolerance and acceptance in their respective communities. In that regard, the call for the recognition of sexual rights remains the central concern for homosexual persons in Zimbabwe.

### **3.4.4 On the Use of the Bible**

From some personal interaction with members of GALZ in Harare, it became apparent that among the out-gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe are some practising Christians spread in the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church and Apostolic churches. This explains why there are some among them who have resorted to using the Bible in their quest for acceptance in the communities they live in. The use of the Bible should be understood in the context of how Christians perceive the Bible, it is “the inspired word of God and the supreme authority in their faith.”<sup>119</sup> This is the perception that homosexual persons who are practising Christians bring to the Bible. They are therefore searching for answers from the Word of God, and also want the Word of God to enlighten those who do not appreciate them as children of God. Homosexual Christians are quick to point out that the creation stories of Genesis do not discriminate against them as homosexual persons. To that end, most homosexual persons look at themselves as children of God because they are created by God. The critical question is: what was created by God, sex or sexuality? In the case of homosexual Christians, the creation stories in Genesis explain the creation of the sexes and not sexuality.

The first critical observation is that homosexual Christians, like all other Christians, do practice selective reading of the Bible. As argued in the previous chapter, the social conditions obtaining at a particular time and surrounding a particular group of readers does influence the kind of reading that they engage in. In the case of homosexual Christians in Zimbabwe, they are reading the Bible from a position of disadvantage and deprivation. Their arguments have tended therefore, to focus on texts that emphasize the liberating nature of God. This is in line with other liberation theologies and it explains why they have drawn inspiration from people like Desmond Tutu. It is not surprising therefore, some

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<sup>119</sup> Prozesky, „Religious Authority and the Individual“, 20.

elements of liberation hermeneutics figure prominently in their readings coupled with the hermeneutic of identification. In essence, this hermeneutical tool explains why in the homosexual reading of the Bible, they are always the victims and downtrodden. This position identifies them closely with the position of ancient Israel; a position from which God liberates them. It appears that without naming their reading technique, homosexual persons are indeed “reading in front of the text” where there is a dual affirmation of commitment to both the Bible and to contemporary context, essentially asking, how does a message expressed in another age, for a people of another cultural and social milieu, become effective in our time?<sup>120</sup> This should explain the call for a “contextual reading of the Bible”, which is cited above.

Even though there is the call to a contextual reading of the Bible, it appears that most homosexual Christians in Zimbabwe have been using a literal interpretation method, particularly regarding the texts taken from the New Testament. Lovemore Togarasei observes that some disputes are caused by the clash in interpretation methods and approaches to the Bible.<sup>121</sup> There is no attempt to demonstrate that “biblical texts are products, records, and sites of social, historical, cultural, gender, racial and ideological struggles, and they radically and indelibly bear the marks of their origins and history.”<sup>122</sup> Those texts whose usefulness lies in their literal sense find greater attention in these readings.

The importance of the cultural conditioning of the Bible is only hinted at but never really addressed in the readings of the Bible that have been emanating from among homosexual Christians. Because of this problem, some of the texts cited repeatedly, especially John 8, with the story of the woman caught committing adultery, present some challenges to readers of these interpreta-

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 154-5.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Lovemore Togarasei “The ‘Birth’ of a Prophet: Andrew Wutawunashé’s break from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (formerly Dutch Reformed Church)”, 2006, 221-2.

<sup>122</sup> Itumeleng Mosala cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 64-5.

tions. Are homosexual Christians suggesting that homosexuality is a sin like adultery? Should they be left alone simply because no one can cast the first stone? These questions do not seem to be an issue in the readings hence the contention that homosexual Christians are actively engaged in selective reading of the Bible, putting emphasis where the text does not frustrate their quest for liberation.

It is interesting that homosexual Christians in Zimbabwe have not cited directly the texts whose modern translations include the word homosexual or homosexuality. These are the texts around which much debate is centred on throughout the world. These are the texts that Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy have called the six bullets against homosexuality.<sup>123</sup> The texts are Gen. 19, Lev. 18:22; 20:13, 1Cor. 6:9, Rom. 1:26-7 and 1Tim. 1:10. The failure to deal with these texts can be explained on the basis of the reading techniques deployed by homosexual Christians. By using the final form of the text and without using the historical-critical approaches, their modes of reading are inadequate to deal with these explicit texts.

By not dealing with these texts and their implications to the lives of homosexual persons and Christians in general, the sexual rights lobby's use of the Bible appears to suggest they acquiesce to the texts, which is most unlikely or that they consider the texts now completely irrelevant, which appears most likely. Homosexual Christians in Zimbabwe do not seem to have fully recognized that "the complexity of biblical interpretation is also present when trying to make sense of the biblical texts on homoeroticism."<sup>124</sup> However, the reading techniques of homosexual Christians should be understood in the Zimbabwean context where the critical study of the Bible has remained a preserve of University education. These readings are mostly emanating from "ordinary rea-

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Paul Germond & Steve de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 188ff.

<sup>124</sup> Jeremy Punt „The Bible in the Gay-Debate in South Africa: Towards an Ethics of Interpretation”, 2006, 420.

ders” of the Bible whose primary concern is to answer their existential questions and challenges. To that end, the Bible is certainly seen as a liberating book by homosexual Christians, which is sometimes abused and used as an instrument of oppression.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The GALZ led sexual rights lobby in Zimbabwe has been revolving around the issues of human rights, and also to a larger extent the Bible and biblical interpretation. It is the argument of this perception that no-one must be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation because homosexuality is not a perverse sexuality but rather a variation of human sexuality. Genetic research has been appropriated to demonstrate that sexuality is not a choice but an innate condition. This has led to the view that homosexuality is natural because one is born with one’s orientation. The Bible has also been appropriated owing to the fact that there are some among the members of GALZ who are practicing Christians, and also because about 70% of Zimbabwe’s population is believed to be Christian and consider the Bible to be the Word of God and therefore authoritative. That Jesus is the defender of the weak and disadvantaged has been the rallying point of this perception. God is understood as a God of love and one who does not condemn. This view of the Bible has meant this perception attacks Christianity for misreading the Bible.

The successes of other liberation movements coupled with the gaining in popularity of family planning methods, meant the core of traditional heterosexual marriage was under siege. With people no longer obliged to procreate because of the need to regulate population demographics, the stage was set for the evolution of the manifestations of homosexuality. With high levels of mobility in the world chances of outside influence cannot be simply dismissed. In Zimbabwe homosexuality began to publicly manifest itself as an alternative to heterosexuality in the 1990s. This development appears to be directly linked to the rise in human rights activism. While the manifestations may not have existed as exclu-

sive before this period, their exclusivity became well pronounced. These developments had already taken root in a number of Western societies, where homosexual persons were already making strides towards being recognised as a minority group.

The following chapter will focus on how politicians and cultural icons responded to the challenge of homosexual persons and homosexuality in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s. Among the issues to be dealt with in this chapter are the traditional conceptions of sex and marriage that are seen as the basis for the arguments against homosexuality. Among these arguments is the un-Africanness of homosexuality as well as the proxy wars that are apparent in the homosexual debate.

## CHAPTER 4: THE POLITICAL AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL RESPONSE TO THE SEXUAL RIGHTS LOBBY (GALZ)

They seek to rule, having rightly discerned that they can achieve rule by no more certain path than if they are believed to be endowed by the Spirit of God. Since all will reverently hear the Spirit, if they think he speaks by the mouth of those men, captive to superstition, they follow with blind obedience.<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1 Introduction

The political and traditional cultural perspectives are so much intertwined such that it is profitable to discuss them together. This suggests that this work acknowledges what John Mbiti observed when writing;

Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of the religious systems of an African is, therefore, ultimately a study of the people themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life. The African traditional religion permeates in all the departments of life.<sup>2</sup>

With religious, economic, social and political dimensions all intertwined, it is not possible to make rigid distinctions among them. This could apply to both traditional religion and Christianity in Zimbabwe but this chapter will only treat traditional religious and political dimensions together, in the process excluding Christianity. Christianity is excluded here but will be the focus in the next chapter owing to its special relationship to the Bible. The need to look at political and traditional cultural arguments together is informed by the observation that;

To some extent the modern state is in competition with the traditional state. The modern state is undermining, replacing and transforming the traditional societies and cultures. Interestingly, traditional attitudes and

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wolzogen translated and cited in Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 2001, 111.

<sup>2</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 1989, 3.

concepts die-hard and the modern state is itself subject to pressure and influence from traditional ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the political developments of the past century, Zimbabwean politics still depend on some traditional cultural ideas and the subject of human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular clearly demonstrates this dependence of the modern state on traditional ideas. For that reason and others, this chapter will deal with political and traditional cultural arguments concurrently. The dominant voice has been that of Robert Mugabe, the *undisputed*<sup>4</sup> President of Zimbabwe at the height of the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe from 1995 to 2000. Whether, the public perception can be distinguished from and be considered independent of the perception of the President of the country is difficult to tell. That will be part of the analysis that will be undertaken later in this chapter. This chapter will begin by considering aspects that are considered central in understanding the arguments raised by politicians and custodians of traditional culture. These aspects include the traditional understandings of sex, marriage and homosexuality. These traditional understandings are assumed to be part of the foundation upon which the arguments against homosexuality are predicated.

Among the arguments raised against homosexuality and GALZ are that homosexuality is un-African. Besides the perception of

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<sup>3</sup> Toying Falola (ed), *Tradition and Change in Africa: The essays of J. F. Ade-Ajayi*, 2000, 3.

<sup>4</sup> This work acknowledges the fact that as I write, the legitimacy of Robert Mugabe as President of Zimbabwe is heavily disputed not only by the international community but most importantly by a significant percentage of the Zimbabwean population. While, as I write his party ZANU-PF and himself claim he is the legitimate leader of Zimbabwe, most Zimbabweans seem to object to this claim. However, in 1995, when he virulently spoke against homosexuality, the dissenting voices against his leadership in Zimbabwe were still the minority hence my use of the term undisputed. His support was still in the majority but after the referendum of 2000, his legitimacy has been contested ever since and was recently saved by the formation of the Inclusive Government in February 2009 following the Global Political Agreement signed on 15 September 2008.

homosexuality as not being African, it is further argued that homosexuality and human rights are merely proxies for neo-colonial Western agenda. It is also argued that homosexuality is illegal and criminal in Zimbabwe. Finally, some politicians have also invoked the Bible to justify their stance against homosexuality. In analysing these arguments raised against homosexuality, it is important to revisit the Africanness or lack of it, of homosexuality, the manner in which the Bible has been used in sustaining these arguments. Finally, it is also important to analyse the possibility of homosexuality being used for the waging of proxy wars in and/or outside Zimbabwe. The complexities involved in the homosexual debate are best appreciated in the statement released by the ZANU-PF Women's League five days before the 1995 Book Fair:

We are Zimbabweans and we have a culture for Zimbabweans to preserve as mothers and custodians of our heritage, we stand solidly behind our President and leader on his unflinching stand against homosexuality. Human Rights should not be allowed to dehumanise us. 'Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterous nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor the greedy nor drunkards will inherit the kingdom of God'.<sup>5</sup>

In this statement, there are many issues that are raised among them the idea that homosexuality is not and has never been part of the Zimbabwean culture hence the President is right for taking the position against homosexual persons. The statement also challenges the idea of universal human rights, applicable to all peoples at all times and in all places. Finally, the statement is also based on biblical appropriation and interpretation on the issue of homosexuality. In all three issues cited above, the statement managed to rally together Christians, Traditionalists and Politicians by making homosexuality a common enemy. These appropriations of culture and biblical texts form the axis of this study.

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<sup>5</sup> The Zanu-PF Women's League Press statement quoted in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 12. The internal quotation is my own emphasis to show a direct though unacknowledged quotation from the Bible, particularly 1Corinthians 6:9.

## **4.2 Background information**

This section seeks to highlight information considered as informing the arguments raised by the figures to be discussed in this chapter. Among the issues to be raised include some basic information regarding the existence of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, and sex and the evolution of marriage practices in Zimbabwe. To that end, this will be done in four subsections focusing on these specific issues including the assumptions about homosexuality that seem to direct the arguments to be highlighted in this chapter. This information provides the basis upon which one can understand and appreciate the arguments raised against homosexuality later in this chapter.

### **4.2.1 Sex as an economic instrument among the Shona communities**

It is widely acknowledged that present day Zimbabwe was once occupied by the San people and that later it was then populated by Bantu groups. The Shona people from whom specific examples will be drawn in this chapter are part of these Bantu groups, who settled in Zimbabwe after the San. In talking about the Shona<sup>6</sup>, it is important to note that the San were a hunter-gatherer group

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<sup>6</sup> The country called Zimbabwe is made up of a number of ethnic groups, among them the Shona group which makes up almost 80% of the total population, the Ndebele group which is the second largest group, then there are smaller groups like the Tonga, Varembe and Nda. The Shona group has several sub-groups such as Zezuru, Manyika, Karanga, Budja and Maungwe. Most of the specific examples being used in this study are coming from the Shona ethnic group because of two main reasons: First, this group is widely covered in the main sources that I have and continue consulting and the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe who has been one of the widely quoted individuals on the subject is coming from this group. Second, I happen to come from this group and that means, some of the issues that I will raise are a result of my own experiences as a Shona. However, where information circulating in the public media is concerned, it is difficult to identify which group one is coming from, particularly, in cases where the authors use pseudo-names. In that regard, the designation Zimbabwe best serves this study.

while the Shona are a sedentary group. The Shona as a sedentary people had to work the land in order to produce enough food for the present and some surplus in case of natural disasters. Thus, while numbers would have been undesirable for the hunter-gatherers, these settled groups had to thrive on increased numbers because “labour shortages at key points in the production cycle could thus endanger the survival of a family.”<sup>7</sup>

These societies quickly realised that a bigger family would entail greater food security as well as social security for the elderly members. Labour could not be hired easily; labour had to be produced hence the need to maximize family size would have resulted in the constructions of elaborate gender relations that emphasised fertility and subsequently conflating sexuality with procreation.<sup>8</sup> Epprecht observes that “individual sexual desire was largely subsumed to the broad interests of the extended family or lineage. Those interests included reputation, political alliance, material production, spiritual health, and ritual protection of the natural environment.”<sup>9</sup> In this case, it can be observed that the need to control sexuality was an early development among the Bantu-speaking migrants and the Shona being one of such migrants cannot be excluded from this exercise.

The Shona people make up the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, making up approximately 70 percent of the population. To understand sex in Shona communities, it is important to focus on how sex was integrated into the economic structures of the communities.

The Bantu-speaking migrants who began to arrive in the region about 2000 years ago established an economy that supported very different notions of gender [when compared to the San who had lived in this same area before them], sexuality and class: iron tools, pottery, livestock and

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<sup>7</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008, 37.

agricultural knowledge could sustain a larger population, could provide surpluses kept in case of droughts and longer life spans.<sup>10</sup>

It is within this context, that we can begin to appreciate the conception of sex and sexuality among the Shona. Within this context, Hatendi correctly captures this spirit when writing:

Sex is the property of the family-group and the individual must account for its use. An unmarried man is not the master of his body but the family; in the same way an unmarried woman is not the master of her own body but the family-group.<sup>11</sup>

The economy of sex among the Shona, therefore, was such that sex grew to become more than just an issue of reproduction because a well regulated and managed sexuality could also become a key political tool. In this regard, we risk losing sight of the importance of sexuality if we focus more on regulation as repression, rather, Diana Jeater's perspective as informed by Michel Foucault is worthy noting.

The point is not that specific sexual practices are repressed or forbidden, but that the social construction of sexuality requires the operation of power relationships at one of the most fundamental levels of human experience.<sup>12</sup>

The manifestation of the power relationships noted by Jeater contributed to the development of a pronounced class hierarchy and the rise of the sophisticated state structures. These then added a further, political imperative to sexual reproduction, that is, the control of female sexuality through the institution of *roora/lobola* [bride wealth] was central to this process.<sup>13</sup> This is best understood in the context of the type of marriage that was practiced by the Shona communities, that is, the exogamous marriages. Women's fertility did not benefit their biological families since they would bear children for another family, further women's

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<sup>10</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Peter R. Hatendi „Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches“, 1973, 139.

<sup>12</sup> Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The construction of moral discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894-1930*, 1993, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 28.

labour was also lost to their adopted families once they got married. Epprecht evaluates this development in the following words:

In the context of state formation on this scale, senior men, female elders and brothers had strong incentives to maintain careful vigilance over younger people's heterosexual contacts. The girls' virginity thus became a prized asset politically as well as economically and socially.<sup>14</sup>

In most Shona communities sex is presented as just a means to an end, the end being the fruitful marriage which bears children. To get to this end, gender roles are considered indispensable. To this extent, it is almost impossible to talk of sex without referring to gender roles. This amalgamation of sex and gender has tended to disguise the impact of gender ideologies and to make such ideologies look normal and natural. According to the WHO, sex is defined as referring to biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.<sup>15</sup> Sex is that which makes individuals male or female and we all know at birth that normally one is assigned to one of these sexes on the basis of genitals, even though this is no longer enough owing to advancements in science and technology, as being female is now understood as an aggregate of a number of characteristics. "Biological sex includes external genitalia, internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, breasts, facial and body hair."<sup>16</sup> Essentially, sex is to be understood as a biological given and may no longer be sufficiently addressed under the two categories of male or female because there are other sexes that may not be fully catered for under these two categories. There is also little or no discussion on some sexualities that defied the 'normal' sexuality. Gelfand acknowledges that from his researches the Shona communities knew of

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<sup>14</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> WHO „Gender, Women and Health“ <http://www.who.int/gender/whatis-gender/en/index.html> accessed 28/05/2008.

<sup>16</sup> Diagram of Sex and Gender: <http://www.gendersanity.com/diagram.shtml> accessed 28/05/2008.

children born as hermaphrodites and that these were almost always brought up as males.<sup>17</sup>

Gender on the other hand has to do with the constructions of masculinity and femininity. According to Emily Esplen and Susie Jolly, “the term gender has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed.”<sup>18</sup> In illustrating the social construction of gender WHO highlights that “gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.”<sup>19</sup> From these socially defined roles, behaviours and attributes emerge the categories of masculinity and femininity. “Masculinity is shaped in relation to an overall structure of power (the subordination of women to men), and in relation to a general symbolisation of difference (the opposition of femininity to masculinity).”<sup>20</sup> These differences are not necessarily natural even though they may be based upon some natural differences. Their importance is to legitimize why one sex is superior to the others. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has forced many people in Zimbabwe to acknowledge the existence of ‘harmful’ masculinities, which are central to the spread of the virus in Zimbabwe. These masculinities were for long considered central signifiers of real manhood captured in the metaphor “*bhuru rinorwa rinoonekwa nemavanga*” literally meaning “a bull that fights is seen by its wounds”. This was mainly used with reference to the sexual exploits of men, which normally led to the contraction of STDs.

Masculinity and femininity, according to GALZ, are socially constructed in that societies define and characterize masculinity and femininity and frequently societies always expect boys/males to

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Gelfand, *Growing up in Shona Society: From birth to marriage*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Emily Esplen & Susie Jolly „Gender and Sex: A Sample of Definitions“ 2006. <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk> accessed 28/05/2008.

<sup>19</sup> WHO „Gender, Women and Health“

<sup>20</sup> Sarah C. White „Men, Masculinities and the politics of development“ in: Caroline Sweetman (ed), *Men and Masculinity*, 2000, 20.

develop into masculine beings while girls/females are supposed to develop into feminine beings.<sup>21</sup> The characteristics of masculinity and femininity include aggressiveness, dominance, bravery for the former and submissiveness, weakness and dependence for the latter. Even more important for this work is the idea that femininity also entails penetrability while masculinity entails being able to penetrate, that is, femininity is passive while masculinity is active.

Despite the obvious differences between sex and gender, these two are closely related in many cultures. In sociological terms gender roles refer to the characteristics and behaviours that different cultures attribute to the sexes. A 'real man' needs male sex and masculine characteristics and behaviours; likewise a 'real woman' needs female sex and feminine characteristics.<sup>22</sup>

Some Shona metaphors may help in our quest to understand the social constructions surrounding sex and gender among the Shona. One such metaphor is *Ndinokuita mukadzi* [I can make you a woman], meaning essentially that one can dominate another man like a woman. This metaphor is only relevant when applied to men. It is used to denigrate men. Shona women are also known to mock men by using the metaphor *uri murume pasina vamwe varume or uri mukadzi* [you are a man only in the absence of real men, or you are a woman]. In all this we get the impression that a real man is one who is dominant, assertive, brave and independent. These constructions of masculinity could have been central in the types of sexual relations that would have existed among the Shona people.

This way we can understand the stereotypes of homosexual persons in Zimbabwe which prompted the following response from GALZ "most gay men have a male gender identity and do not think of themselves as women, and most lesbian women have a

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. GALZ, *Understanding Human sexuality and Gender*, Harare: GALZ Publications, 2005, 1ff.

<sup>22</sup> Monash University "What is the difference between sex and gender?" <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/gendermed/sexandgender.html> accessed 28/05/2008.

female gender identity and do not think of themselves as men.”<sup>23</sup> The idea that gay men are feminine or effeminate and that lesbian women are masculine seems to be a direct reflection of the essence of these sexual metaphors. The last metaphor to be considered here is *akaitwa mukadzi* [one was made into a woman]. This metaphor is used in such cases where a man has been thoroughly dominated by other men and also in cases where a boy/man has been homosexually raped. It is also used with reference to heterosexual rape. Clearly, while all those penetrated would be described through this metaphor, the metaphor itself could cover a wide variety of men, including some never penetrated.

There are also metaphors that are used when women have exceeded expectations of what women are thought to be able of achieving. One such metaphor is *mukadzi uya murume chaiye* [that woman is a real man]. In most cases where this metaphor is applied, the woman would have exhibited bravery in accomplishing certain tasks. In such cases, the woman would have accomplished tasks normally designated as masculine tasks. With such bravery the woman is equated with men. In some cases, a wife can chide the husband by claiming *ndini murume pamusha pano* [I am the man in this family]. This metaphor is mostly used where the husband is found wanting in the accomplishments of masculine tasks within the family, especially when it comes to providing for the family.

Among the Shona groups therefore, the woman aspires and can in some cases be equated to men for as long as the woman performs tasks that are normally assigned to men within these groups. From these metaphors, it is apparent that masculinity is indeed characterized by dominance, bravery and independence. “The concept of a ‘real man’ as one who proves himself to be virile, controls women, and is successful in competition with other men and is daring, heroic and aggressive is an almost universal

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<sup>23</sup> GALZ, *Understanding Human Sexuality and Gender*, 5.

cultural pattern.”<sup>24</sup> It is driven by the need to acquire power of precedence over competitors. While in one metaphor highlighted above, the question of femininity as penetrability is also clear in such cases where a rape victim is seen as being made into a woman. These social constructions are important for this study as shall be highlighted throughout this chapter.

#### **4.2.2 Understanding marriage and its essence among the Shona**

The world over, perhaps there is no culture that would regard same-sex interaction as unconditionally and unrestrictedly equal to or superior to relations between persons of the opposite sex.<sup>25</sup> This holds true for Shona communities and this subsection will demonstrate why this is so. In the preceding subsection, it has been observed that the regulation of sex was an early development in Shona communities and this regulation of sex is the direct basis upon which marriage practices among the Shona can best be appreciated.

African family culture values offspring very highly. A person lives on in his or her children. It is a shame and a disgrace for a man to die without children, it is to die twice, and it is a spiritual disaster [...] People go to enormous lengths to have offspring.<sup>26</sup>

From this assertion a number of issues can be identified and issues that are central for this study. The first is as already intimated above, the significance of children is always clear in Shona communities. It appears that Oskar Wermter<sup>27</sup> has in mind the

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<sup>24</sup> Serena Nanda & Richard L. Warmus, *Cultural Anthropology 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998, 210.

<sup>25</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homeropticism in the Biblical World: A historical perspective*, 1998, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Oskar Wermter, African family culture and the homosexual aspect of the sexual revolution: A challenge to the Church in Africa in: *EDICISA News*, 2003, 4. See also Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, 1973, 175.

<sup>27</sup> Oskar Wermter served as the Secretary to the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference at the height of the homosexual debate. He also wrote a number of statements to clarify the Catholic position on homosexuality.

practice of *kupindira* which was widely used in cases where a couple could not procreate and where the man was suspected of being at fault. This practice meant that a family could arrange for a brother of the impotent man to have a sexual relationship with the wife so as to bear children for the brother. Mostly, this was done without the knowledge of the impotent man and the wife and the brother of the husband as well as the elders behind the idea would be bound to an oath of secrecy, never to divulge this.

The second point which is of importance to this study pertains to the centrality of children in marriage.

Children are wanted for different reasons. As the father and mother grow old, it is comforting to know that their children can help them [...] A daughter is welcomed [...] she establishes an alliance with another family (affinal relationship). There is also a feeling amongst the Shona that the bigger the clan the stronger it becomes [...] Perhaps the most potent single reason for having children is that through them the parents and grandparents are remembered in the next world.<sup>28</sup>

Among the Shona people as in many other African communities, there is the world of the living and that of the living-dead, children guarantee a degree of immortality to their parents. The latter is dominated by ancestral spirits and these are spirits of departed parents and grandparents. Children are central in remembering and keeping constant communication with their departed parents because it is believed that departed parents continue to look after their offspring. Not having children therefore is a 'spiritual disaster' which may mean that such individuals will quickly be forgotten. These individuals may end up being alien spirits looking for mediums outside their own families because their own families would have forgotten them. Children are therefore very important in the social and religious set up of Shona communities.

With this high valuation of children, families increased numerically and gradually metamorphosed into clans and tribes and eventually into chiefdoms. While the family would have been

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival values of an African culture*, 1973, 175.

composed of blood relations as the communities grew bigger other forms of relations were acknowledged and integrated, particularly, relations brought about by marriages. The Shona groups practiced exogamous marriages, that is, they married outside their own communities. "Women [...] left their kin and were incorporated into the families of non-kin when they were married."<sup>29</sup> This meant that through marriage, two previously unrelated groups became related. That served in increasing the political clout of the heads of these families. With marriage becoming a political tool over and above its economic role, the regulation and control of sexuality and its uses became imperatives for group survival. However, despite this regulation there appeared to be some flexibility in terms of what could be done by singles in relationships hence Michael Bourdillon argues "generally anything is permitted provided that the relationship is leading towards a satisfactory marriage, suggesting that implicit permission is conveyed by the anticipation of marriage."<sup>30</sup>

Sexual indulgence could be practiced for as long as the family of the girl were aware of the boy's intention to marry. This meant that even when such marriages eventually failed to take place, the family could still sue the boy's family for compensation in the event of a disowned pregnancy or the taking away of a girl's virginity.<sup>31</sup> In this case, "the limits of sexual behaviour were defined by their likely impact on the family, rather than by fixed concepts of 'moral' and 'immoral' behaviour."<sup>32</sup> The African traditional values did not envisage a situation where individuals were masters of their own sexuality. Sex was a community asset whose use was closely monitored for the benefit of the community first and foremost and secondarily for the benefit of the individual. "The community was a close society of interdependent members whose every action, even accidental and unintended action, could affect

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<sup>29</sup> Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, 106.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: Ethnography of the contemporary Shona, with special reference to their religion, revised edition*, 1987, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, 173.

<sup>32</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 31.

the well being of all other members of society.”<sup>33</sup> This realisation is essentially important and can further be strengthened by the fact that:

The nature of sexual crime among the Shona was entirely a matter of lineage alliance, and there was no sense of sexual activity being right or wrong in itself. The concept of private morality, applied to acts in isolation from their consequences, was entirely alien.<sup>34</sup>

And as part of their attempts to change Africans, the Christian missionaries sought to undermine, replace and transform these societies and their cultures.<sup>35</sup> On the issue of sex, the outlines above can be summed up as follows:

In traditional societies, control over the sexual behaviour of lineage members was simply one aspect of the power of rural patriarchs [...] consequently, sexual acts were judged in terms of their impact upon the lineage, and lineages rather than individuals were held responsible for violations of the rules.

For the Occupiers, sexual acts were judged as right or wrong in themselves, with little reference to the context in which they took place. Moreover, except in cases of ‘unnatural’ or ‘perverse’ sexuality, the wider community, as represented by the state, had no right to intervene in sexual matters.<sup>36</sup>

Foucault helps in elucidating the ideological conception of marriage in society including the Shona societies of Zimbabwe when he writes;

relations of sex gave rise, in every society, to a *deployment of alliance*, which is a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions; *deployment of alliance* is firmly tied to the economy due to the role it can play in the transmission or circulation of wealth hence reproduction, the *deployment of sexuality* is linked to the economy through numerous and subtle relays, the main one of which, however, is the body- the body that produces and consumes.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Falola, *Tradition and Change in Africa*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 37.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Falola, *Tradition and Change in Africa*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 260.

<sup>37</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 1990, 106-107.

Under the deployment of alliance, it can be observed that the marriage practices of a given community arose. The need to establish an economic and political unit within and among different Shona communities meant that marriage became a key tool. Marriage was undertaken for economic reasons, as in cases where a family needed some goods and in return they offered their daughter. The daughter would pay back the goods by producing children for the family that would have supplied the goods to her family of birth. This has nothing to do with love at its core; it is precisely to be understood as an economic decision, which could be good or bad for the family. It is in this context that one can appreciate the existence of arranged marriages and such marriage practices as *kuzvarira*, in which a girl is pledged even before she is born.

Marriage could also be used as a political tool, where families married their daughters to other families as a way of establishing political pacts. In the event that one such family is attacked then the in-laws would come to the aid of the other family. The observation of the role of sex in social relations is precise because more often than not communities have managed sex for social benefits. Groups that seek to expand are likely going to trade loyalty for sexual favours granted through marriages. The social networks of pre-colonial ethnic groupings in Zimbabwe seem to point to this well-developed model of managing sex for economic and political benefits. Young girls were given in marriage to secure political ties and economic prosperity for their families of birth. This could also explain the possibility of transferring sexual rights from one individual to another in the same family upon the death of the first husband without having to pay *Lobola* again in the practice of *Kugara Nhaka* (wife inheritance).

### **4.2.3 Homosexuality in Zimbabwe**

As observed in the previous chapter, Epprecht, Guri and Jack all agree that the Shona word *ngochani* is a borrowed word. The fact that the Shona did not have a word that could be translated as homosexuality seems to be authenticated by the fact that in the

earliest Shona Dictionary (Hannah's) there is no Shona word for homosexuality/ homosexual. The Shona word *ngochani*, which has come to mean homosexual person only appears in the more recent *Duramazwi rechiShona*.<sup>38</sup> With no Shona word for the orientation or practice of homosexuality, it has generally been taken to suggest that this practice was unacknowledged in traditional Shona societies or that it may not have existed within traditional communities since they did not give it a name.

One scholar who has written extensively on the Shona people of Zimbabwe, Michael Gelfand noted that "homosexuality is very rare but bestiality and rape are not rare events."<sup>39</sup> He observed that the information supplied by his informants, showed that "before the coming of the white people, there were no unmarried men."<sup>40</sup> It is supposed by Gelfand that all men in traditional Shona communities were therefore heterosexual. This argument is sometimes stretched to suggest that homosexuality was non-existent among the Shona groups. According to Gelfand;

the traditional Shona have none of these problems associated with homosexuality [...] obviously they must have a valuable method of bringing up children, especially with regard to normal sex relations, thus avoiding this anomaly so frequent in Western society.<sup>41</sup>

Heterosexuality was carefully integrated in child socialization processes among the Shona. To that extent, Gelfand argues, "a practical training aimed at attaining a successful marriage is given at *mahumbwe* [children's games] where the young boy and girl [...] are paired off and allowed to pretend to be man and wife."<sup>42</sup> Through these games, children were effectively socialized to become 'real' men or women, with all the attributes of acceptable masculinity or femininity. With this elaborate socialization process prevalent among Shona groups; it is not surprising that at-

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Oskar Wermter S. J., Letter, *Unpublished*, 12/03/1996. See Appendix 16.

<sup>39</sup> Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival values of an African culture*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, 175.

<sup>41</sup> Gelfand, "The infrequency of homosexuality in traditional Shona society", 1979, 201-202.

<sup>42</sup> Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, 172.

tempts have been made to use this as proof of the impossibility of homosexuality being a part of such communities. As shall be highlighted later in this chapter, this understanding lies behind some of the assertions that homosexuality is foreign to African communities.

The idea of same-sex sexual practices as of medicinal value among the traditional communities has been noted by some scholars. The first critical observation is that the existence of ritual same-sex practices is never equated with the existence of homosexuality as an alternative sexuality. It is in this context that Robert Baum writes; “These religions tend to reject the tendency in many cultures to equate homosexual relations with being ‘homosexual’.”<sup>43</sup> Part of the complexities involved in securing information about the existence of same-sex practices is carefully articulated by David Greenberg who suggests that “questions by ethnographers about homosexuality often assume Western definitions of the phenomena [...] many researchers ask questions about men or women who sleep only with members of the same sex.”<sup>44</sup> It is in this context of same-sex practices that were never exclusive of heterosexuality that ritual same-sex practices could be understood. They were never a permanent feature of an individual’s life and in some cases such rituals were a once in a lifetime practice.

It is suggested that there exists a belief among many Bantu-speaking groups that very strong medicinal concoctions require some weird ingredients and it is generally accepted that the most powerful Mutapa King was involved in an incestuous sexual relationship with his sister Nehanda:

In the fourteenth century, as the state around Great Zimbabwe entered its twilight, some residents began moving northward. It is said that Prince Mutota left Great Zimbabwe with an army and, after a series of conquests on his northward trek, eventually settled down and founded the Mutapa state. Contrary to Shona tradition, he decreed that the son

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<sup>43</sup> Robert M. Baum “Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions of the Americas and Africa”, 1993, 3.

<sup>44</sup> David Greenberg cited in: Baum “Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions”, 20.

who desired to succeed him should commit incest with his daughter, Nyamhika. The practice of royal incest is said to have begun when his son, Matope, did commit incest with his half-sister, Nyamhika, who became widely known as Nehanda, or the ruler of Handa.<sup>45</sup>

In such cases, it is assumed that such unusual sexual practices endow their practitioners with unusual and extraordinary power. Further, “notions about the medicinal value of male-male sex acts come through in one of the first cases of sodomy involving Bantu-speaking Africans to be heard by an urban magistrate in the region.”<sup>46</sup> These could be done to acquire economic, social or political power. This was nonetheless not the norm but the exception. Such practices are therefore never looked at as providing the barometer for measuring the existence of homosexuality in these communities.

Similarly, it is suggested that part of the reasons why there was a shift in the balance of power between the Shona and the Ndebele in the 1880s, when the Shona began making successful raids into Ndebele territory lay in the fact that:

The Shona chiefs and the soldiers were using same-sex sexual practices as medicinal solution to their weaknesses. The chiefs were given strong medicines by the Ndebele and Zulu *n’angas* [...] when they were fighting the soldiers were made to have sex with other men for the whole group to be powerful. The Ndebele and Zulu were practising it for long [...] now we Shona people have learned about that medicine from them and we are also doing it.<sup>47</sup>

It is reluctantly acknowledged that there are a number of traditional healers who used homosexual practices as part of prescriptions for people seeking material wealth. It is also supposed that some of the traditional healers also practice homosexuality to enhance their own mastery of the spirit world. Some rich people, it is argued, are sometimes involved in these ‘weird’ practices including incest. These things, it is suggested, were happening even

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<sup>45</sup> Nehanda (c. 1863-1898) [www.blackhistorypages.net/pages/nehanda.php](http://www.blackhistorypages.net/pages/nehanda.php) accessed 12/10/2007.

<sup>46</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 56.

<sup>47</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 47-8.

before the arrival of the Europeans. The Shona practice which mainly brought about these prescriptions is known as *Kuromba*. This is where an individual acquires traditional medicinal/spiritual powers through which he/she is able to manipulate many things making him/her materially rich and immune from magical threats. Prescriptions for such things range from murdering a human being, to committing incest<sup>48</sup> and also to engaging in homosexual practices. However, as noted above even if traditional cultural custodians accept the existence of these same-sex practices, they are hardly used as indicating that homosexuality existed in these communities. The argument is that these practices were not the norm hence they cannot be used as if they were the norm.

#### **4.2.4 Assumptions in relation to homosexuality**

Many arguments that have been raised for or against homosexuality in the Zimbabwean debate are predicated on a number of assumptions. These assumptions are critical for appreciating the contextual arguments raised in this debate. This subsection seeks to highlight the assumptions behind the political and traditional cultural arguments that are the focus of this chapter. Most of the contributors rely on the assumption that being homosexual requires rational and conscious decision making. In short, it is assumed that homosexuality is a deliberate choice. This assumption can be detected in many of the contributions as in the following:

Please give your support to Minister Dabengwa [then Minister of Home Affairs in Zimbabwe 1995] and your sympathy to those deserving of it [...] the widow, the orphan, the sick, the lonely, the old, the unwanted and to the jobless and not to the homosexual who wants to legalise his lust.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Claude Maredza, *Ooooooh to celibate?! Harare: Norumedzo Enterprises (Pvt) Ltd, 2003, 18-23.*

<sup>49</sup> *Responsible Citizen*, Actions of the degenerate, *The Harare Herald*, 25/01/1995. References to the need to care for widows, orphans and other vulnerable groups can be taken as echoes of the biblical call to do the same. This

This assumption has some minor assumptions that are direct extensions of it. It is assumed that homosexual persons;

- If given room and freedom they can actively recruit members to join this homosexual lifestyle.
- Will seek to propagate their homosexual lifestyle in order to replace the 'normal' and 'natural' heterosexual lifestyle.
- Are immoral because they, with full knowledge of what is moral, decide and choose not to follow that which is natural, right and moral.

Another critical assumption is that homosexuality is almost always associated with violence and infidelity or promiscuity. In most arguments and contributions in Zimbabwe, homosexuality is synonymous with the constant changing of partners and the use of coercion or violence. That the Zimbabwean discussion is quick to label homosexual persons as 'child molesters' seems to point to an underlying assumption that sees homosexuality as synonymous with violence. Equally, it is also assumed in the debate that homosexual persons are a promiscuous lot hence Cecil Nyilika can write, "AIDS is a fast spreading killer disease and gays are the major contributors."<sup>50</sup> It is my observation that the Zimbabwean debate is guided by this assumption that homosexuality is synonymous with crime, violence and promiscuity. Further to these, but closely related to them, homosexuality is equated with indecency hence Mugabe can say "they want us to allow them to have sex in public."<sup>51</sup> These assumptions are critical for an appre-

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does not mean, traditionally local communities were not in the habit of caring for these groups, on the contrary, the extended family system was known for this particular role. However, with the coming of the bible, the call is no longer confined to families but to the nation as a whole. There is no longer any need to care only for those close to oneself; rather one must care for all because according to the Bible, we are all the same in the eyes of God. Galatians 3, Leviticus' laws of gleaning and Amos' call for the protection of the widows and orphans are clearly implied in these observations.

<sup>50</sup> Cecil „Mgosi“ Nyilika, Gays erode culture, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 06/09/1995. See Appendix 17.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Robert Mugabe cited in Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 9.

ciation of the arguments that will be highlighted in the following section.

### ***4.3 Summary of the political and traditional cultural arguments***

In chapter three it was noted that after GALZ had applied for a stall to exhibit at the ZIBF'95, the government through the Director of Information, Bornwell Chakaodza responded by 'requesting'<sup>52</sup> that the organizers of the book fair withdraw the participation of GALZ. This resulted in an outcry from the international community with the accusation that the government was violating the rights of homosexual persons in Zimbabwe. At the official opening of the book fair, Robert Mugabe tackled the issue of homosexual persons and below is an excerpt from that speech in which he addresses this subject:

Supporting persons who believe that the denial of their alleged rights to have sex in public is a violation of their human rights formed as association in defence and protection of it and proceeded to write booklets and other forms of literature on the subject of their rights. Is any sane government which is a protector of society's moral values expected to countenance their accessions? I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organisations, like those of homosexuals who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any advocates in our midst and even elsewhere in the world. If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organised drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they might claim and allege they possess under the rubrics of

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<sup>52</sup> The government purported to request that the organizers of ZIBF reconsider their decision but effectively put political pressure including the threat to stop cooperating with the organizers. The request was in effect a directive from government for ZIBF organizers to withdraw the stall allocated to GALZ.

individual freedom and human rights, including the freedom of the Press to write, publish and publicise their literature on them?<sup>53</sup>

This speech covers almost all the arguments that will be dealt with in this subsection, from the idea that homosexuality is un-African, that it is closely linked to criminal activities, that it is some form of mental sickness and unnatural. It can also be inferred from this speech that homosexuality is against the biblical injunctions on sexuality and its essence. It is in this context, that Mugabe was considered the hero for those opposed to homosexuality while he became the greatest human rights violator for those who shared the perception that sexual rights are human rights. Mugabe's position was widely covered in the Zimbabwean media, and was largely transmitted as the Zimbabwean position on homosexuality.

### **4.3.1 Homosexuality is un-African**

One of the major arguments that have been raised against the acceptance of homosexuality in Zimbabwe is that this practice is foreign to Zimbabweans. Frequently, people have not sought to understand what this foreignness refers to. This subsection attempts to show the implications of the un-Africanness of homosexuality as illustrated in a number of contributions to the debate. "The majority of Africans and Zimbabweans in particular, have religiously and steadfastly supported the stance of President Mugabe in rejecting any notion of Africans having had homosexual tendencies which originated from within Africa and possibly without any Western influences."<sup>54</sup> It is important to fully appreciate the concerns and observations leading to this perception. It is not enough to respond by citing pre-colonial same-sex practices because this accusation lies beyond these evidences.

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<sup>53</sup> Mugabe's opening speech at the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) cited in: Duntun & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> Masiwa Ragies Gunda, "Leviticus 18: 22, Africa and the West: Towards cultural convergence on Homosexuality", 2006, 123.

An interesting dimension on homosexuality and African culture is captured by the President of the traditional cultural pressure group, Sangano Munhumutapa, Lawrence Chakaredza who is quoted as saying, "They can do what they want with their bodies in the privacy of their homes but certainly not to exhibit at a Book Fair. Just what are they going to exhibit?"<sup>55</sup> What is interesting here is that Chakaredza has no problem with what happens in private, in traditional African perspective sexual matters are not for public consumption hence GALZ is behaving in an un-African way by seeking to transport homosexuality into the public domain. Homosexual persons who try to force the community to notice them and their practices are behaving in an un-African manner. Such a manifestation of homosexuality is therefore not African.

Almost in a similar fashion, the late Border Gezi, who was Member of Parliament (MP) and Minister of Gender, Youth and Employment, is quoted as having said the following in the Parliament of Zimbabwe:

We have asked these men whether they have been able to get pregnant. They have not been able to answer such questions. Even the women who are engaging in lesbian activities, we have asked them what they have got from such practices and no one has been able to answer.<sup>56</sup>

At the centre of Gezi's understanding is that sexual intercourse must result in pregnancy, hence the men who take the passive or is it the woman's role must be able to fall pregnant if homosexuality is to be acceptable. And this being the African perspective, homosexuality therefore does not qualify to be labelled African. According to Epprecht, "sex, by customary definition, was rather an act that served to propagate the lineage"<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Jeater writes, "[...] the reproduction of life - having babies - is equated with the long-term survival of settled communities."<sup>58</sup> African

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<sup>55</sup> Lawrence Chakaredza quoted in: *The Harare Herald*, We will raze down GALZ stand at the Book Fair, 23/07/1996. See Appendix 18.

<sup>56</sup> Border Gezi quoted in: Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 132.

<sup>57</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 132.

<sup>58</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 13.

sexuality is one that appreciates that sex is not an end but a means to an end, that is, sex is only acceptable when it is benefiting the community. The communal benefits accruing from sex include the numerical growth of the community through procreation, the successful negotiation of alliances both economic and political through marriage contracts, in which sexual privileges are given in return for some economic or political undertakings. Within this context, it is not difficult to understand why homosexuality is labelled un-African. That some individuals can now demand society to allow them to do as they please with their sexuality, irrespective of whether such use would benefit or disadvantage the larger community is therefore seen and understood as un-African. Homosexuality under the lobby of GALZ transgresses the accepted norms regulating the essence and treatment of sexual issues among Zimbabwean communities. These transgressions are important for the appreciation of the labelling of homosexuality as un-African. One major such transgression relates to publicity, sexual issues are best governed and regulated by the rule of 'don't ask, don't tell'. GALZ did not follow this unwritten law! Second, there is only a single sexuality among the indigenous groups, a sexuality which has been effectively deployed for political, economic and social benefits. Central to this sexuality is the procreation of offspring, homosexuality does not possess this potential and for that, has been labelled un-African. To that extent, Mugabe draws upon these conceptions when he says: "Let the Americans keep their sodomy, bestiality, stupid and foolish ways to themselves, out of Zimbabwe [...] Let them be gay in the US, Europe and elsewhere."<sup>59</sup> This is not surprising when one considers that the West is seen as having stopped worrying about the real uses of sexuality since they now also permit abortion and other so-called "anti-life" policies. The West that is highlighted is a West that permits everything as long as some individuals register their plea-

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<sup>59</sup> Mugabe cited in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 13.

sure for doing it. There is no regulation there; it is a world that is in free-fall.

### **4.3.2 Homosexuality and Human rights as neo-colonial Western agendas**

The central argument against the call by GALZ for the granting of sexual rights to homosexual persons is clearly articulated in the statement released by the ZANU (PF) Women's League when they say "human rights should not be allowed to dehumanise us."<sup>60</sup> In this context, human rights are understood as not absolute particularly because they can be used to undermine the traditions and heritage of the people of Zimbabwe. In the case where human rights are considered as detrimental to the well being of the society as a whole, then they have to be sidelined. What is critical in all this is that a number of people in Africa and particularly Zimbabwe do not feel like they own the human rights discourse. Human rights are an outcome of the Western world with little or no input from Africa. The UDHR was promulgated in 1948<sup>61</sup> soon after the Second World War and that context has meant that the UDHR is historically limited to the West hence where human rights threaten traditional values and political survival, their Western background is emphasized.

This has not been helped by the central role Western donors and agencies have played in dealing with African states, where human rights have been used as a basis for cooperation. In that context, governments that are considered to be human rights violators see in human rights talk, a subtle way through which Western powers seek to usurp and undermine these governments. The concept of universal human rights has been greatly challenged in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe. It is in this context that one can understand the fact that when "Mugabe was addressing 200 chiefs to

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<sup>60</sup> The Zanu-PF Women's League cited in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) available online; <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> accessed 13/08/2008.

garner support for seizures of land from white farmers he said, 'Unlike pigs and dogs, which knew their females and could naturally become intimate with them, gays and lesbians could not differentiate between males and females [...] we, as chiefs in Zimbabwe, should fight against such Western practices and respect our culture'.<sup>62</sup> Human rights in this case are understood as standing in opposition to traditionally held values.

The concept of human rights is attacked in Zimbabwe on the basis that they are not consistent with the traditional values and norms regulating human relations. "The notion of the community persists, especially at the level of the village. There is no substitute for the mutual support system of the lineage and of the shared interests and interdependence of the cultural group."<sup>63</sup> With this understanding of the community and it being put across as the ideal system for Zimbabwe, the excessive individualism of the human rights discourse is seen as not only foreign but a channel for continued domination of African communities by the West. The demand for human rights is therefore an affront to the aspirations and well being of Zimbabwe as a whole. To that extent it is important to note that there are attempts to move homosexuality away from the realm of rights to the realm of morals. "All over the world, homosexuals are claiming constitutional rights to perpetrate this unnatural living style. This is more than just a constitutional issue, it's a moral issue."<sup>64</sup> Essentially, the human rights discourse cannot be used to undermine moral fibres of the society as indicated in the speech of Mugabe at the ZIBF'95.

In a somewhat different way of looking at the origins of homosexuality in Zimbabwe and the Third World countries, Zondayi Chibanda writes: "Gays and lesbians are atoms of chaos being

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<sup>62</sup> Basildon Peta "Mugabe Goes on Gay Bashing Safari" cited in: Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality*, 181.

<sup>63</sup> Falola, *Tradition and Change in Africa*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Rev. C. Murefu "Homosexuals: Pros and Cons; God's natural order is being violated", *The Sunday Mail*, 05/02/1995. See Appendix 19.

unleashed on Planet Earth by the profane society which is endeavouring to unseat governments and replace them with fiefdoms (through conglomerates and multinational companies) in the name of 'human rights.'"<sup>65</sup> The first impression created by Chibanda is that homosexuality is not only alien to Zimbabwe but the whole world in general. However, a closer look at the allegations levelled against multinational companies seems to suggest that the author sees the developed world as playing a part in the emergence of homosexuality in the developing countries.

Throughout the article, he sees conspiracy involving the developed world in an attempt to unseat the governments in developing world. For him, homosexuality is one such attempt being used to unseat the Zimbabwean government and the Judiciary is seen as under the influence of these organisations because the High Court bench in Zimbabwe heard the application by GALZ and gave them the green-light to exhibit at the ZIBF.<sup>66</sup> In the said judgment of the High Court, Chibanda does not see the independence of the judiciary as some would want to quickly point out rather he sees a conspiracy between the judiciary and the multinational companies bend on rendering governments in the Third World weak and powerless. In his observations, this is being done in different ways and homosexuality is being imported into Zimbabwe from outside to serve the purposes and interests of these multinational companies, especially destabilizing governments.

The call for human rights by GALZ has also been attacked and below is an excerpt from *Christian Mother* who raises some critical issues against the human rights/sexual rights lobby;

[...] if it is being suggested that we fall in step with 'enlightened' Western nations where the gay rights movement is most vocal and influential and is part of a powerful lobby which has as its aim the total rejection and replacement of the Judea [sic]-Christian morality and structures, then my response must be a loud 'No'.

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<sup>65</sup> Zundayi Chibanda, Gays and Lesbians are atoms of chaos unleashed on Earth, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 04/08/ 1996. See Appendix 20.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Chibanda, Gays and Lesbians.

Gay rights activists campaign not only for what they perceive to be a right to express their sexual orientation in private with consenting adults of like persuasion, but also press for the right to proselytise the young in schools, inculcating notions about alternative lifestyles which can easily manipulate young minds and emotions in their grasping for identity. The homosexual lobby flies in the face of God-given, immutable morality by proclaiming that there is no difference between heterosexual married love (universally the cornerstone of family life) and homosexual relationships. The more blatant and hardened campaigners fight for legal sanction of pederasty and child pornography.

This is all part of a well-orchestrated movement for 'sexual reform' which has become increasingly strident throughout this century. The acceptance of homosexuality as a right and an alternative form of sexual expression, the legalisation of prostitution, the 'liberation' of marriage and expansion of divorce laws, the repeal of all restriction on abortion, openly making contraceptives information accessible to minors, the repeal of obscene libel laws. Foetal experiments, the growing euthanasia debate and the systematic sexual education of the young are inextricably interlinked.

They are the crop of rank weeds being sown across the world. What a fearful harvest we will reap if we kow-tow to international pressure to conform to 'civilised' standards.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly the argument against the human rights discourse has been that it is foreign and has been hijacked by Western players whose interests are not necessarily human rights. Homosexual persons' lobby for human rights therefore has been portrayed and understood as a Western agenda.

### **4.3.3 Homosexuality is illegal and criminal**

With the human rights argument having failed to stick in Zimbabwe, at least at the level of political and traditional leaders and even the general public, it is important to note that an argument closely related to it is that homosexuality is illegal and criminal in Zimbabwe. According to Neville Hoad,

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<sup>67</sup> *Christian Mother* "What rights and freedoms?" *The Harare Herald*, 27/01/1995. See Appendix 21.

Mugabe remarked, 'they can demonstrate, but if they come here (to Zimbabwe) we will throw them in jail'. The difference between 'here' and 'there' suggests that tolerance of homosexuality is becoming, among other things, a strategy for marking national and civilizational specificity. Zimbabwe has anti-sodomy laws on its statute books from its colonial past ('here' and 'there' were once closer).<sup>68</sup>

In Zimbabwe therefore, homosexuality is illegal and criminal under the inherited 'sodomy' laws from the colonial past. Under Zimbabwean law *The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9: 23) Act 23/2004* – Zimbabwe, Section 73 "Sodomy" Sub-section (1) "Any male person who, with the consent of another male person, knowingly performs with that other person anal sexual intercourse[...], shall be guilty of sodomy[...]"<sup>69</sup> In this Zimbabwean criminal law code, sodomy is a male on male crime because according to Section 65 "Rape" Sub-section(1) "If a male person knowingly has sexual intercourse or anal intercourse with a female person and, at the time of the intercourse (a) the female person has not consented to it; and (b) he knows that she has not consented to it or realises that there is a real risk or possibility that she may not have consented to it; he shall be guilty of rape[...]"<sup>70</sup> It appears that it is on the basis of this law that the traditional Chiefs of Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe ordered the arrest of all gays and lesbians and the subject of homosexuality not to be discussed in the public media because it was against traditional culture and illegal.<sup>71</sup> It is interesting that the 'sodomy' law appears to be based on an interpretation of the Bible, particularly Gen. 19.

Besides labelling homosexuality as immoral and promiscuous, it has also been linked to some criminal and anti-social practices.

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<sup>68</sup> Neville Hoad, *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*, 2007, xii.

<sup>69</sup> *The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23) Act 23/2004 Zimbabwe*, Section 73, available online: [www.kubatana.net/docs/legisl/criminal\\_law\\_code\\_050603.pdf](http://www.kubatana.net/docs/legisl/criminal_law_code_050603.pdf) accessed 24/02/2008.

<sup>70</sup> *The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23) Act 23/2004 Zimbabwe*, Section 65.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *The Harare Herald*, Masvingo Chiefs want GALZ banned, 03/08/1996. See Appendix 22.

Immorality and child abuse is also a favourite combination employed by Robert Mugabe but which is also captured by Garykai Mazara when writing, “Zimbabwe is our country, our heritage and future and subsequently our destiny should be in our hands; we must not make compromises on such issues that involve the ethics and morality of the nation, more so when our children are the targets.”<sup>72</sup> In this regard, homosexuality between consenting adults is viewed as immoral and its culpability is somewhat drastically increased because not only do homosexual persons constitute an immoral lot, they seek to extent their immorality to children, what *Christian Mother* above called the ‘proselytising of the young’. Robert Mugabe also turned to this association and he is quoted by Dunton and Palmberg as saying, “[...] If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organised drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they might claim?”<sup>73</sup>

That homosexuality is criminal and liable to prosecution in Zimbabwe can be observed from the court records that are widely used by Marc Epprecht and in the post-independence era, the high profile trial of Canaan Banana is one such case. According to Guri, “Canaan Sodindo Banana was charged and found guilty of eleven counts of homosexual crimes.”<sup>74</sup> Another high profile individual to be implicated is the former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation (ZBC) Alum Mpofo who was caught in a compromising position with another man at a Club in Harare.<sup>75</sup> The Zimbabwean media has covered these criminal activities such that these criminal activities are treated as synonymous with homosexuality.

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<sup>72</sup> Garykai Mazara, Ban them from Book Fair, *The Harare Herald*, 24/07/1996. See Appendix 23.

<sup>73</sup> Mugabe cited in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 10.

<sup>74</sup> William Guri, Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Phenomenological investigation, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 181-2.

#### 4.3.4 *They have no right to be that sick!*

Homosexuality has also been reduced to an illness and a mental challenge for that matter, hence homosexual persons ought to be looked upon as sick persons. According to Mabhumbo,

[...] biological science has revealed that every individual has a bit of both male and female hormones kept in a delicate balance in favour of one's sex [...] However, miscarriages of this balance do manifest themselves in various forms (including homosexuality) [...] It seems now the homosexuals themselves are saying they have a right to be sick while the other side is saying they have no right to be that sick.<sup>76</sup>

By reducing homosexuality to some disease, the public discourse strips homosexual persons of any dignity they might want to assert because sickness is not something to be proud of. Families and society must therefore pity the homosexual patient! Closely connected to this, it has also been portrayed as “[...] a mental problem that can be treated with traditional therapies.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Medeline Dube is quoted as saying lesbianism is a psychological problem when responding to the existence of lesbian activities among students at Langham Girls’ High school.<sup>78</sup>

With homosexuality looked upon as a form of psychological disorder, it therefore is a case that requires medical correctional procedures and not the granting of sexual rights because no one has a right to be sick. It is in this context that one can appreciate the fact that upon being confronted with a gay child some families suggest consulting *sangomas* (traditional diviner-healers) to seek treatment of this illness.<sup>79</sup> This understanding resembles 19th and 20th centuries Europe when writers differed as to whether homosexuality was to be interpreted as an illness or as a natural healthy

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<sup>76</sup> Mabhumbo, A Case that cries for Treatment.

<sup>77</sup> Gordon Chavunduka quoted in: *The Harare Sunday Mirror*, Homosexuality: Are Sodom and Gomorrah suddenly permissible? 05/03/2006. See Appendix 8.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Medeline Dube quoted in: *The Harare Herald*, Lesbianism: School readmits student, 18/02/2003. See Appendix 8.

<sup>79</sup> Mutema, African Traditional Religion and GALZ, 6.

occurrence.<sup>80</sup> The Freudian explanation of homosexuality seems to capture to a larger extent the association of homosexuality and arrested psychological development within the political and traditional cultural argument that homosexuality is a mental sickness.

According to Freud's infantile sexuality theory, the first few years of life pretty much determine all that follow. Freud believed that during the first five or six years of life each human being throughout the entire world and since the beginning of mankind is confronted with certain stages of development. Failure to successfully pass through these stages or experiencing a trauma during one of these stages supposedly results in inexplicable damage to one's psyche. Freud identified what he called the Oedipus complex. He considered it to be one of his greatest discoveries because of its supposed universal application.<sup>81</sup>

According to Sigmund Freud, "Every new arrival on this planet is faced by the task of mastering the Oedipus complex; anyone who fails to do so falls victim to neurosis."<sup>82</sup> Freud further taught that homosexuality resulted from this failure to master the Oedipus complex and he placed the fault on the parents.<sup>83</sup>

In his book *The Psychological Society*, Martin Gross describes Freud's reasoning:

Freud and many of his modern successors saw homosexuality as the penalty for the boy child's failure to win the Oedipal battle against a seductive, overbearing, over-affectionate mother—the classic Mrs. Portnoy. Instead of finally identifying with the hated father at the resolution of the oedipal rivalry, the child identifies with the mother. Thereafter, the now homosexual male seeks other men as his love object. [. . .] In the Freudian homosexual model, the *penis-adoring child also shows disgust for the penisless woman*. This is coupled with his castration fear at the hands of an angry father-rival.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. James W. Jones, *"We of the Third Sex": Literary Representations of Homosexuality in Wilhemine Germany*, 1990, 80.

<sup>81</sup> James Dobson Promotes Freud, available online: <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/dobson73.html> accessed 13/08/2008.

<sup>82</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) SE, Volume Seven, London: Hogarth Press, 1953, 226.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. James Dobson Promotes Freud.

<sup>84</sup> Martin Gross, *The Psychological Society*, New York: Random House, Inc. 1978, 79, 80 (Italics in original).

The political and traditional cultural understanding of homosexuality as a form of mental disorder has been used to demonstrate that homosexual persons like other sick people in society do not need rights to be sick but deserve compassion and treatment, hence the idea that society must not eliminate the patient but rather the disease. To that extent, Zimbabwean political and traditional cultural custodians as well as members of the public argue that homosexual persons have no right to be that sick and to publicize that sickness.

#### ***4.3.5 Even the Bible supports our position!***

In all the arguments raised in this section the basis seem to have been legal or traditional cultural heritage but the Bible has also been used, if not explicitly then implicitly. This invocation of the Bible has to be understood in the context of the religious demographics of Zimbabwe. As noted in chapter two, Zimbabwe is largely a Christian nation in as much as more than two-thirds of the total population confess to be Christian. It is not surprising therefore that politicians and some traditional leaders do identify themselves with one or another Christian denomination. That explains why the Bible seems to be used across the political and religious divide including by traditional leaders. Professor Gordon Chavunduka is both President of Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association (ZINATHA) and a practising Anglican, who once caused uproar when he was elected to be a church councillor at the Cathedral of St. Mary and All Saints, Harare.

The press release by the ZANU (PF) Women's League uses a direct quotation from the Bible, one of the so-called six bullets against homosexuality. The traditional and political concerns precede this biblical injunction in the statement giving the impression that the Bible carries the final authority. In it, homosexual persons are seen as not fit for the kingdom of God and therefore all they do is try to hoodwink society. Below is the biblical quotation used in the said statement, quoted fully above;

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterous nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor the greedy nor drunkards will inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9).

Not to be outdone and showing how the arguments are intertwined, Robert Mugabe also believes and sees homosexuality as ungodly. He also argues on the basis of creation when he says, "God did not create us this way [...] we pray that the Catholic Church will correct this."<sup>85</sup> By alluding to homosexuality as against the created order, Mugabe<sup>86</sup> seems to implicitly refer to homosexuality as a sin against nature. The Bible therefore is used to demonstrate and justify the position taken on the basis of culture and social well being of the community.

Further, the words of Emerson Mnangagwa (MP) also show the manner in which the Bible has been appropriated in the Zimbabwean debate. In 2006 in parliament and responding to a question from the opposition legislator, Ms. Trudy Stevenson (MP) he responded;

In Zimbabwe we prohibit marriages of similar sex. *It's in accordance with the wishes of God.* If it has happened in other countries, it is no consent for us. I have no doubt that the Honourable Member understands biology. In this country we are very clear, men marry women. If she is in doubt she should go to the library [for a biology research].<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, what culture or political perspective may say is subject to the standard of the Bible; it is in this regard that Mnangagwa explains the validity of the state's stance on banning same-sex practices, relationships and marriages. They are unacceptable because

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Homosexuality ungodly, says Mugabe, 02/12/1998. See Appendix 24.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe is himself a Roman Catholic and his appeal to the Roman Catholic Church to correct the anomaly with homosexuality may be because he believes that any spiritual problems that affect his life are best handled by the Roman Catholic Church. This does not necessarily mean he does not believe other churches have a role to play in correcting this anomaly as can be seen in his acceptance of the support he has received from different denominations.

<sup>87</sup> Emerson Mnangagwa quoted in: *Galzette*, GALZ Publications, December 2006, 4 (emphasis my own).

God has decreed them to be unacceptable and the Bible is the source of God's decrees. The creation stories and the six bullets against homosexuality have therefore been widely used in many contributions to the Zimbabwean debate.

#### ***4.4 Analysis of the political and traditional cultural arguments***

In this section, it is important to carry out an analysis of these arguments and their implications to the future discussions on homosexuality in Zimbabwe. In doing the analysis, focus will be paid to arguments on the un-Africanness of homosexuality and its meaning within the Zimbabwean debate, also interesting is the possibility that homosexuality may not be the 'real' issue hence the idea of proxy wars going on behind the scenes. Finally, the use of the Bible remains of critical interest to this study.

##### ***4.4.1 On the un-Africanness of Homosexuality and related arguments***

From the above outline it is clear that quite a significant portion of the population of Zimbabwe believes that homosexuality is foreign. While indeed, people like Gelfand have sought to argue that homosexuality was unknown, the arguments raised seem to point to an un-Africanness of homosexuality associated with contemporary manifestations of homosexuality. It is implicit from the writings emanating from Zimbabwe that the 'liberal lifestyles' (the Western conservative dimension is hardly noted, the West is homogenous and it is liberal) of Western cultures are the fertile grounds in which homosexuality was nurtured and not in Zimbabwe. This argument has been based on the conflation of sex, sexuality and procreation in African communities, something that contemporary homosexuality does not do. The argument is also predicated on the rule of 'don't tell, don't ask', which entails that such issues are confined to the abyss of silence. By seeking publicity, the sexual rights lobby makes homosexuality un-African.

These relationships are also considered un-African because they are understood to be ‘seeking the replacement of heterosexuality’<sup>88</sup> while in traditional African thought patterns these sexualities were never understood as exclusive of each other if ever they existed. To, then, proclaim that homosexuality is an alternative sexuality to heterosexuality makes this sexuality un-African.<sup>89</sup>

This understanding is best appreciated when one observes the concerns raised by the pressure group, Sangano Munhumutapa cited above where their concern is not what homosexual people do in the privacy of their bedrooms but rather their attempt to publicize themselves. The same is also detected in the speech of Border Gezi when he says, “My constituents hear that there is homosexuality and lesbianism going on. They have asked us and said that this is not a good practice. They say that if homosexuality and lesbianism is to go on, it should be done privately.”<sup>90</sup> It is important therefore to note that the un-Africanness of homosexuality in the Zimbabwe debate has more to do with contemporary manifestations than with the origins of homosexuality. To that extent, the sexual rights lobby has addressed the wrong dimension. The argument is that homosexuality and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe must remain closeted. That the sexual rights lobby has found sympathisers in the West has made the accusation stronger in the public debate, that indeed it is un-African.

The critical problem in this argument is that the conflation of sex, sexuality and procreation is no longer a defining characteristic of most African communities or Zimbabwean for that matter. Zimbabwe is known for the widespread policy of family planning designed as a way of controlling the population of the country. With most families now having one or two children and deciding that it is enough, it is difficult to argue that non-procreative sexual intercourse is un-African, which is essentially the argument against homosexuality. The contention is that heterosexual couples are

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<sup>88</sup> *Christian Mother*, What rights and freedoms?

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Gunda, *Leviticus 18:22, Africa and the West*, 126.

<sup>90</sup> Border Gezi cited in: Eprecht, *Hungochani*, 132.

engaging in sexual activities for recreational purposes knowing that children are not welcome and actively taking measures to prevent pregnancies. If the primacy of procreation made homosexuality un-African, then the argument is now difficult to sustain. If the publicity stunts of the sexual rights lobby are what makes it un-African, it is also difficult to sustain because sexual issues were made into public issues not by homosexual persons but by women's rights activists through gender discussions and through attempts at fighting against HIV/AIDS. Sexuality is now a common feature of the school curriculum in Zimbabwe.

On the criminality of homosexual activities, it is interesting to note that the current Sodomy laws operating in Zimbabwe are the legacy of colonialism. The sodomy laws themselves are based on an interpretation of Gen. 19, which interpretation is now strongly contested and disputed. It is also interesting that the Sodomy laws criminalize anal penetration between men, while heterosexual anal penetration with the consent of the woman is legal. It is in this context that David Crawford argues that "the strict division between what is heterosexual and what is homosexual becomes increasingly artificial as heterosexual patterns of behaviour begin to resemble those of homosexuals."<sup>91</sup> Could this be one of the subtle effects of patriarchy in the criminal law? It appears therefore that homosexuality is not illegal and even homosexual relationships are not illegal also rather only anal sex between men is illegal!

Could it be that, women are designed to be penetrated? Where? It really does not matter for as long as they assent. Being penetrated is therefore against the nature of men hence anal intercourse becomes criminal between men, with or without consent. These gender disparities are part of the broad legal challenge the state will always face from the sexual rights lobby. Closely connected to this is the realisation that "the modern state is an extension of

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<sup>91</sup> David S. Crawford „Liberal Androgyny: ‚Gay Marriage‘ and the meaning of Sexuality in our Time“ in: *Communio 33: International Catholic Review*, 2006, 253.

European legal systems based on the rights of the individual, the equality of individuals before the law, the concept of the law being to determine rights rather than to resolve conflicts.”<sup>92</sup> To that extent, the challenges launched by homosexual persons are likely to remain unless they are addressed because the state is now based on the primacy of the individual not the community.

While homosexual persons argued on the basis of the primacy of the individual as the basis upon which sexual rights are human rights, Mugabe and traditional leaders argued against them on the basis of the primacy of the community. In doing this, Mugabe and traditional leaders brought to the fore the cultural crossroads at which Zimbabwe as a community stands. This could not be effectively argued on the basis of the contemporary political system which is essentially monadic hence Mugabe invoked both traditional culture and the Bible as the bases upon which the nature of the Zimbabwean community should be understood. Politicians want to have their cake and eat it also because they continue to vacillate between the demands of a monadic and dyadic cultural state hence the suspicion that there could be other issues other than homosexuality at play.

#### **4.4.2 Homosexuality: a field of proxy wars?**

A critical analysis of the context of the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe allows one to suspect the existence of bigger wars being fought with the homosexual debate being the front. While the emphasis has been that homosexuality is against the age-old traditions of African communities, by 1993 the then well respected Media lecturer at the Harare Polytechnic now a staunch defender of Robert Mugabe, Dr. Tafataona Mahoso was quoted by the *Sunday Gazette* as saying;

Current attitudes are mere scape-goating, homosexuality has always been there but has continuously been suppressed in this society. With the development of individual independence there is now room for gays

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<sup>92</sup> Toyin Falola (ed), *Tradition and Change in Africa*, 7.

to come out in the open. Already, gays are coming out of the closet and bravely demanding their rights to be treated as normal people with different 'but not abnormal' sexual preferences.<sup>93</sup>

What makes the debate interesting is the realization that "as early as 1980, Mugabe had begun receiving reports about Canaan Banana's homosexual activities at State House."<sup>94</sup> The silence of Mugabe for 15 years is surprising considering the force with which he addressed the homosexual question in 1995. Mugabe's position on homosexuality has to be understood in the light of two critical developments during the time he spoke loud and clear on the subject. On the one hand, one has to take note of the 1996 Presidential election and on the other hand, one has to take note of the impact of ESAP on the living standards of Zimbabweans. Despite being convicted of the counts he was facing, Banana maintained his innocence, however his wife told *The Guardian*:

Mugabe used the issue of my husband's sexuality as a way of mobilising opinion against Canaan. Mugabe was jealous of Canaan's role in the OAU, which offered him an international platform not available to Mugabe. Canaan was also regarded as the most likely contender for Mugabe's position.<sup>95</sup>

The contention is that Mugabe may have used homosexuality to stop Banana from contesting the 1996 Presidential election. Since paving the way for Mugabe to become Executive President in 1987, Banana had enjoyed significant international recognition much to the chagrin of Mugabe. Homosexuality therefore would have presented itself for the prosecution of the battle against Banana, particularly focusing on the 1996 Presidential election. In that regard, Wermter aptly captures this view when writing; "The President can therefore count on the full support of Zimbabweans when he condemns homosexuality and homosexuals. Such support is useful in the middle of an election campaign (we have pre-

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<sup>93</sup> Tafataona Mahoso quoted in: *The Sunday Gazette*, Homosexuality Condemned, 21/02/1993. See Appendix 25.

<sup>94</sup> Guri, Homosexuality in Zimbabwe, 51.

<sup>95</sup> *The Guardian* cited in: Guri, Homosexuality in Zimbabwe, 52-3.

sidential elections this weekend, 16-17 March).”<sup>96</sup> In that case, the pressing problem would not have been homosexuality itself but that homosexuality presented itself as an issue through which Mugabe could eliminate the strongest challenger to his office had Banana wanted to contest.

Homosexuality would have also been a good side issue to take people’s attention away from the economy, where ESAP was wrecking havoc in the lives of workers and ordinary Zimbabweans. In the previous chapters we noted how ESAP became popularly known as an economic programme for the impoverishment of Africans. Homosexuality therefore could have been used for the prosecution of a political campaign in the face of a melting economy.

By the mid-1990s, Mugabe had become an irascible and petulant dictator, brooking no opposition, contemptuous of the law and human rights, surrounded by sycophantic ministers and indifferent to the incompetence and corruption around him. Whatever good intentions he had started out with had long since faded. A land reform programme financed by Britain came to a halt when it was discovered that Mugabe was handing out farms intended for peasant resettlement to his own cronies.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, the moral pronouncements against homosexual persons echoing throughout Mugabe’s tirade have to be taken in their context. While in 1995, Mugabe was the most outspoken Zimbabwean, it is interesting that he was silent in 1996. The reason for this silence is best put across by John Makumbe (Makumbe is Professor in Political Science at the University of Zimbabwe) who observes, “[...] the outbursts against Zimbabwe’s gays serve his purpose of diverting attention from his own closet where he is living with his former secretary and their two children. He

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<sup>96</sup> Fr. Oskar Wermter S. J, Letter, 1996.

<sup>97</sup> Martine Meredith, Mandela and Mugabe both embraced violence, available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/apr/08/zimbabwe.southafrica> accessed 13/08/2008.

should be the last one to talk about morals.”<sup>98</sup> It appears therefore that homosexuality was used as a battlefield when it suited the powers that be. In August 1996, Mugabe was preparing to wed his secretary with whom he had fathered children out of wedlock. He strategically did not comment on homosexuality for fear of allowing people to draw parallels between the morality or immorality of homosexuality and his own lifestyle.

The release of Nelson Mandela from prison and his subsequent rise to become the first democratically elected black President of South Africa was celebrated across Africa and the World. However, his rise could have created problems for Mugabe, who through his 1980 reconciliation speech was transformed overnight from a “heartless terrorist” to a respected African statesman in the Western world. Mandela took over the mantle from Mugabe in an un-African way because the Chief is not replaced while still alive. How did homosexuality play into the Mandela/Mugabe tussles? South Africa under Mandela enacted the Bill of Rights, in which discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was outlawed.<sup>99</sup>

While there were moves to acknowledge the existence and rights of homosexual persons in South Africa, Mandela’s profile in the liberal West was further enhanced. Mugabe moved to become the African statesman for the conservative West by attacking the core of the Bill of Rights in South Africa, which could be a veiled attack directed against Mandela. This should not be surprising considering that the closest ally of ZANU (PF) in South African politics was the Communist Party. To this extent, Stephen Bates sums up the idea of proxy wars brilliantly when writing, “But ultimately this is not so much about homosexuality. The answer to this crisis cannot lie in some recently discovered sexual proclivity. It is much

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<sup>98</sup> John Makumbe cited in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality*, 12.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. South African Constitution, The Bill of Rights (9), (3), available online: <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm> accessed 13/08/2008.

more than that. It is about control and authority. And at its heart are base issues of power and politics.”<sup>100</sup> The contention therefore is that homosexuality could have been used to fight other wars not necessarily that it was the issue being addressed. The call for communal solidarity against homosexuality in Zimbabwe is best summed in the following words: “With the emergence of excessive individualism and unlimited materialist accumulation, there is a danger that the solidarity of the community may become no more than an ideology, often turned into an instrument of propaganda.”<sup>101</sup> For Mugabe, community solidarity against homosexual persons was only good if it delivered votes in the presidential ballot.

The involvement of chiefs in the debate has to be understood in the context of the deliberate policies of Mugabe of disenfranchising the chiefs after independence. In homosexuality, the chiefs and Mugabe found common ground because Mugabe wanted to use the chiefs for political mileage, while the chiefs wanted to please Mugabe in order to benefit from his political patronage. It is in this context that JoAnn McGregor writes, “the hierarchies of chiefs and headmen which the councils [The Village Development Committees (VIDCO) and Ward Development Committees (WADCO) and Local government councils] replaced were treated ambiguously from the start; their judicial and land-allocating powers were initially removed.”<sup>102</sup> The support of chiefs for the political survival of Mugabe and ZANU (PF) eventually resulted in the enactment of the 1999 Traditional Leaders Act, which saw chiefs essentially becoming civil servants.<sup>103</sup> This is a position that many Chiefs had enjoyed under the Smith regime and which made them unpopular with the ZANU before independence.

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<sup>100</sup> Stephen Bates, *A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality, New Updated Edition*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005, 13-4.

<sup>101</sup> Falola, *Tradition and Change in Africa*, 7.

<sup>102</sup> JoAnn McGregor “The Politics of Disruption: War Veterans and the Local State in Zimbabwe” in: *African Affairs*, 101, 2002, 17-18.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Joost Fontein “Spirit Mediums and War Veterans in Southern Zimbabwe” in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36 (2), 2006, 184.

Homosexuality in this context should therefore be understood as a smokescreen for the proxy wars which were being fought by some key players in the debate. No objective research has been used in tackling this subject and none is needed because homosexuality is not the problem, it is basically an issue that presented itself to those who wanted to fight their own wars.

#### **4.4.3 *The Bible: a piece in power games?***

The use of the Bible by politicians in Zimbabwe is interesting. In terms of interpretation methods, it appears the literal interpretations of the Bible coupled with cultural hermeneutics are used freely. The Bible is given authority over culture and traditional heritage in as much as it is used to legitimize cultural heritages. This use of the Bible is conditioned by the fact that the majority of the people are Christian. The realization is that for Christians, the supreme authority is the Bible. While, the Bible could not have effectively addressed the argument of the un-Africanness of homosexuality because of its known history that it came through the Westerners, it played a critical role of justifying the cultural argument. Again, we note the attempt to identify with the Bible. The hermeneutic of identification in this case is such that eventually, Zimbabweans can even claim to be in sync with the Bible better than those who brought it to Zimbabwe. It appears therefore that the words of Anthony Ceresko in Latin America do apply to the Zimbabwean context when he writes; "In our culture, appeal to the Bible is made to advance and justify decisions and directions."<sup>104</sup>

The critical problem with this use of the Bible is that it is subordinated to the interests of those who have wars to fight. In Zimbabwe, Mugabe has effectively used the Bible as a propaganda instrument, meant to bring Christians behind him and most importantly to make himself unaccountable within the democratic

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<sup>104</sup> Anthony R. Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective*, 1992, 300.

framework which now only exists in theory. This, Spinoza had seen in the Dutch Republic when he argued that the supreme secret of despotism was the specious title of religion.<sup>105</sup> It is in this context that one can appreciate “the occasional reference [that] appears in public discourse, such as when novice MP Tony Gara told Parliament that ‘this country and its people should thank God almighty for giving us His only other son, by the name of Robert Gabriel Mugabe’.”<sup>106</sup> The restlessness of the 1990s owing to the misfiring of ESAP has been cited by Chitando as one of the reasons for the rise of protest music and a general feeling of betrayal by most people in Zimbabwe.<sup>107</sup>

To combat this disapproval by Zimbabweans, Mugabe resorted to using the Bible and homosexuality to divert attention from the real issues that affected Zimbabweans. In doing this Mugabe has attempted to establish in Zimbabwe a community that is governed by interpreters of ‘divine law’, which in itself is a major shift away from the “aspect of modern liberty.”<sup>108</sup> The use of the Bible and homosexuality can be understood as a well calculated game of numbers that Mugabe played. The Christians being in the majority and most of them convinced that the Bible is unequivocal on homosexuality had to be won over for the election while homosexual persons and their insignificant numbers could be sacrificed for political expediency. The Bible therefore was manipulated for personal interest than for its essence on the subject of homosexuality. Further, by clothing his position and interests as biblical injunctions, Mugabe continued on the path to dictatorship by conflating himself with the divine and the Churches

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 2001, 20.

<sup>106</sup> Sara Rich Dorman, *Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe*, PhD Thesis (2001) available online: <http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/493/1/thesis+final.pdf> accessed 20/07/2008.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Ezra Chitando „Down with the Devil, Forward with Christ”: A Study of the interface between religious and political discourses in Zimbabwe” in: *African Sociological Review*, 6, (1), 2002, available online: [http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/asr6\\_1full/chitando.pdf](http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/asr6_1full/chitando.pdf) accessed 14/08/2008.

<sup>108</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 1.

blindly supported him. It is not surprising that ever-since, Mugabe has always called upon Churches to hail him as godly, where Churches have refused; he has resorted to creating religious leaders in the mould of Obadiah Musindo, *Madzibaba* Nzira, and Bishop Nolbert Kunonga.<sup>109</sup>

The use of the Bible in this way has left some issues unsolved, particularly the relevance of the six bullets against homosexuality in the contemporary manifestations and discussions on homosexuality. There has been an overwhelming use of the creation stories to justify the normativity of heterosexual sexual practices, that is, the argument appears to be that God created heterosexuals not just males and females. This understanding is certainly different from the readings of homosexual Christians who have seemingly read the creation stories to emphasize that God created males and females not necessarily heterosexuals. On the other texts, the tendency has been to read them as if they were addressed to the Zimbabwean public.

The disregard of the socio-historical contexts of the production and transmission of the Bible is a weakness in both the readings of homosexual Christians and those addressed in this chapter. According to Togarasei, “[...] where interpretation is ‘free-for-all’ [...] the Bible can be a source of serious contestations. Political, economic, leadership and other crises become sources of different readings and interpretations of the Bible.”<sup>110</sup> The sodomy laws

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<sup>109</sup> These three religious leaders have been central in making Mugabe more than just an ordinary politician and have transformed him into some demigod in Zimbabwe. Nzira is currently jailed for rape but he became popular for mobilizing his followers to attend National functions presided over by Mugabe in their all-white religious garbs. Musindo likewise awaits his day with justice as he has a rape case within the courts but he has been a prominent feature for Mugabe in the last few years. Kunonga was the Bishop of Harare for the Anglican Church, he continues as a ‘Rebel Bishop’ after he was fired by the Church but has used his political connections to retain hold of Church assets.

<sup>110</sup> Lovemore Togarasei „Reading and Interpreting the Bible: The experience of the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe” in: Katharina Kunter & Jens Holger Schjörriing (eds), *Changing Relations between Churches in Europe and Africa:*

inherited from the colonial regimes are themselves based on a contested interpretation of the Sodom story in Gen. 19. The problem is that the sodomy laws assume that this text is general and universally valid. This interpretation will be challenged in chapter six.

What is at stake therefore is the dearth in interpretation methods. The critical question and challenge facing any scholar of the Bible in Zimbabwe is to understand the modes of reading and interpretation techniques in use. This is critical because readers of the Bible as demonstrated in this and the preceding chapters always claim to be the honest carriers of God's message on any given subject, yet the fact is that "the Bible, which is a guide for Christians in personal and social relations, must be interpreted."<sup>111</sup> The selective literal appropriation of selected biblical texts defines the use of the Bible from these two chapters, by both homosexual persons and politicians and other traditional leaders.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The political and traditional cultural arguments against homosexuality have largely not been fully appreciated by those scholars who are sympathetic to homosexual persons. This misunderstanding is part of the reason why many Zimbabweans and Africans in general supported the stance of Robert Mugabe. It is critical to appreciate that the contemporary manifestations of homosexuality have largely transgressed the boundaries set by traditional culture on sexual issues. Seeking publicity and the right to engage in consensual adult same-sex relationships and practices without the fear of being discriminated against, has been understood as breaching the boundaries set by the community. The discourse of human rights, touted as universal by the West, has

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*The Internationalization of Christianity and Politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008, 189.

<sup>111</sup> Deotis J. Roberts, *Africentric Christianity: A Theological Appraisal for Ministry*, 2000, 43.

been relativized in the Zimbabwean debate. Human rights have been subtly subordinated to the traditional conception of privileges and duties based on the primacy of the community.

There are certain facets of homosexuality that cannot be denied, that is, homosexuality has been in existence in Zimbabwe for a long period but over the years, it has gradually evolved in its manifestations. That homosexuality has been evolving and following manifestations of homosexuality in the West should be understood in the context of the general transformation of the Zimbabwean communities along Western models. As Mugabe spoke against homosexuality as a western agenda, he looked British in dress and sounded British in language. Communal solidarity is no longer the strongest ground because the economic models being pursued have done the greatest harm to communal solidarity than homosexuality. To that extent, homosexuality has been a scape-goat in as much as it is not the only facet of Zimbabwean contemporary living trends that has been transformed, borrowed, adapted from or modelled along trends in the West.

Homosexuality has been used and abused in a careful game of numbers, which have little or nothing to do with homosexuality *per se*, but essentially power games. In prosecuting these wars, the Bible and the significant numbers of Christians in Zimbabwe have been manipulated by those in the know of what wars are being fought. Homosexuality became a critical issue because of the controversial nature of it and the emotions that it could stoke among Zimbabwean Christians. A literal interpretation of the Bible informed by the hermeneutic of identification in which society is divided between 'us' and 'them' was carefully used to divide society into homosexuals and Christians. Despite this effective use of the Bible, critical questions remain unanswered regarding the interpretation of the Bible. Is a literal interpretation of the Bible on the subject of homosexuality sustainable? This leads one to ask, if the Bible has been widely used outside the parameters of the Church, how much has it been used by non-political and heterosexual Christians? This is the focus of the following chapter, in

which Christian arguments coming from ordinary Christians, Christian leaders of different denominations will be the central focus.

## CHAPTER 5: THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY AND GALZ

Homosexualism and lesbianism are condemned as symptoms of Godlessness. There is no distinction here between a mutually loving and respectful homosexuality and one that is self-seeking, self-centred and un-Christian. Such a distinction appears to be an imposition.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to address the question: How have Christians in Zimbabwe used the Bible in addressing the challenge posed by homosexuality and homosexual persons? In doing this, it is important to address the following questions; what is the position of the Bible in Zimbabwean Christianity and even among non-Christians in Zimbabwe? What issues lie behind the arguments against homosexuality in Zimbabwean Christianity? What are the arguments and biblical texts used in the homosexual debate? How has the Zimbabwean socio-historical context influenced the use of the Bible in the debate? These and other questions will be addressed in this chapter, bearing in mind that “homosexuality is not the first social issue with which [Christian Churches in Zimbabwe] have wrestled that invokes high emotion.”<sup>2</sup> This is so because chapter two has already demonstrated the contested nature of the Bible on various other issues.

This chapter is confined to Christian arguments and uses of the Bible. Within Christian circles;

There is a crucial question which is not asked in non-religious circles [the Zimbabwean case may not fit neatly into this designation as previous chapters have shown how religion appears to be intertwined with all other spheres]: Is homosexuality contrary to the will of God? What counts, however, as evidence for the will of God? At this point the Bible

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<sup>1</sup> Noah Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns homosexuality, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 26/04/1998. See Appendix 26.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Rogers, *Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, 2006, 17.

assumes centre stage, for the Bible has traditionally been that central locus where the church has found revealed the will of God.<sup>3</sup>

The conflation of the Will of God and the Bible has created an aura of holiness and authority around the Bible. This aura of authority has been manipulated to create authoritarian leadership based on interpretations of the Bible. As different interpretations arise, conflicts are the logical follow up. This clearly dismisses the assumption that the Bible is easy to understand. In the words of Ludwig Meyer;

The insoluble divisions of Christendom spring from rival interpretations of scripture; the insolubility of those differences arises from the unacknowledged ambiguity of language which in fact defeats the prime Protestant principle that scripture is clear and self-interpreting.<sup>4</sup>

The claim that the Bible speaks for itself is widely shared among Zimbabwean Christians, yet different issues have seen various interpretations and meanings being advanced by different groups substantiating the fact that the Bible does not speak for itself.

## **5.2 Background information**

The arguments against homosexuality emanating from Christian circles can be straightforward when one enumerates them. It is however not sufficient to enumerate them without providing a basis upon which such arguments are best understood. This section seeks to provide information that may not necessarily be classified under the main arguments but which information is considered central to understanding the arguments.

### **5.2.1 Christianity and the Position of the Bible in Zimbabwe**

Christianity is by far the most dominant religion in Zimbabwe and has been for the last half a century or more. This has been clear in the influence that it has had in Zimbabwe, politically,

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<sup>3</sup> Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*, 1983, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 2001, 35.

economically, culturally and socially. Indeed, “Zimbabwe is very Christian.”<sup>5</sup> However, “although they read the same Bible, the Christians differ on a number of subjects [...]”<sup>6</sup> Among the most interesting differences being the teaching on polygyny; baptism, the dispute has been whether proper baptism is by immersion or sprinkling, and whether infant baptism is baptism at all; marriage, the Roman Catholic Church takes marriage as a sacrament while other churches take marriage as a blessed contract.<sup>7</sup> These differences have led to the rise of various Christian expressions such as: “Mainline Churches, Evangelical Churches, African Initiated Churches (AICs) and their various forms and Pentecostal Churches.”<sup>8</sup> For biblical scholars, these are not Christianities but the various expressions of Christianity in Zimbabwe because “all the churches [...] claim to base their teachings and practices on the Bible?”<sup>9</sup>

The topic of homosexuality brings to the fore the fact that “part of the common heritage in which all Christians share is the conviction that the Bible occupies a special place in the life and worship of the church and its members.”<sup>10</sup> In cases like Zimbabwe, where Christians are in the majority, the Bible has since extended its influence to non-members. Even though the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges three sources of divine revelation, that is, the Bible, Church Tradition and the *Magisterium*, most lay Catholics treat the Bible as the unrivalled source of God’s injunctions on the subject of homosexuality. Clearly, most Christians in Zim-

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<sup>5</sup> J Alexander & Terence O. Ranger “Competition and Integration in the Religious History of North-Western Zimbabwe” in: *Journal of Religion in Africa XXVIII (1)*, 1988, 3-31.

<sup>6</sup> Lovemore Togarasei “One Bible Many Christianities: Revisiting Christian Typologies in Zimbabwe Today” in *Zambezia*, 32 (2), 2006, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jean-Bertrand Salla “Historic Churches and Family and Sexual Morality: Homosexuality and AIDS” in: Eloi Messi Metogo (ed), *African Christianities, Concilium 4*, 2006, 87.

<sup>8</sup> Togarasei “One Bible Many Christianities”, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Togarasei “One Bible Many Christianities”, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980, 21.

babwe “believe in the infallibility of the Bible.”<sup>11</sup> The Bible is possibly the single most read book in Zimbabwe and one that is widely spread out in families and homes. It is arguably the most influential text in Zimbabwe and has drawn attention from politicians, business leaders, and traditionalists not to mention Christians of all walks of life. In such an environment, it is not surprising that everyone appreciates the importance of invoking the Bible to justify their positions on various issues.

### **5.2.2 Sex and sexuality in Zimbabwean Christianity: The basis**

The successful planting of Christianity was at a time when Christianity and Colonialism (understood by Western settlers and occupiers as civilization) became bed-fellows in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To that end, Christianity, Colonialism and Western culture became the defining trinity of this period. One of the major expressions of Western culture was through the institution of Western sexual mores within the new territories. As Jeater writes:

The attitudes towards sex and sexuality which the white occupiers brought with them were profoundly different from the codes which were prevalent in the African community. Sex occupied the realm of the moral, and was linked to concepts of sin and of absolute right and wrong.<sup>12</sup>

In Europe, the Church had taught against strange pleasures, which could eventually result in nothing short of death: that of individuals, generations and the species itself.<sup>13</sup> With this fear of strange pleasures and the association of sex with pleasure, it is not surprising that the Victorian era is known for its severe confinement of sex. “A sexual act was right or wrong regardless of whether or not it was a matter of public knowledge. The individ-

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<sup>11</sup> J. Erica Murray (et al) “Homosexuality and the Church and the Blessing of Same Sex Unions”, Discussion Paper for Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Nov 2003-Jan 2004, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, 1990, 54.

ual's conscience became the primary arbiter of his or her actions."<sup>14</sup> This implies that with the rise of Christianity guilt was internalised in individuals that even acts done in secrecy remained right or wrong as defined by the Church. This internalisation of guilt explains why Foucault sees the centrality of confession in Europe:

The *scientia sexualis* that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century kept as its nucleus the singular ritual of obligatory and exhaustive confession, which in the Christian-West was the first technique for producing the truth of sex [...]. Thus sex became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the figment of darkness that we each carry within us.<sup>15</sup>

On the evaluation of the conception of sex in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Europe, I am greatly indebted to Diana Jeater's profound observations summed up in the following words:

In late 18th century and early 19th century Europe, there was a set of sexual offences pertaining to marital and heterosexual matters, such as adultery and adult rape, which were 'natural' but 'immoral', and in which the law became less willing to intervene. On the other hand, there developed an extensive catalogue of specific perversions, including homosexuality and sexual relationships with children, seen as 'unnatural' rather than simply 'immoral' and in which social reformers showed an increasing interest.<sup>16</sup>

When missionaries and colonialists made the long journey to Africa from the Christian West, they were armed with this perception of sex and sexuality. With the general denigration of Africans by Westerners, all traditional practices were labelled immoral. This understanding of sex has remained part of contemporary Zimbabwean Christianity, particularly on the subject of homosexuality. In that regard, while indigenous cultural norms and values are invoked, it is important to note that the values are those

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<sup>14</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 68-9.

<sup>16</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, 36.

that closely resemble these Western conceptions of early Zimbabwean Christianity.

For the most part and with a few exceptions to date, sex was seen as a dangerous blessing, one that was only licit when practised by a heterosexual couple with the blessing of the religious minister. Indeed the early missionary teaching tended “to see sexual intercourse as a rather sordid, dirty activity in which one should participate only to preserve the human race, that is, only of necessity.”<sup>17</sup> From this extends the centrality of procreation in Christian discussions of sexuality. This centrality of procreation is explicit in the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe.

### **5.2.3 Assumptions behind Christian arguments on homosexuality**

Among the assumptions driving the Christian arguments in Zimbabwe is the idea that there is a ‘natural’ sexuality to which all human beings must belong. According to Dave Chikosi, “the abomination of homosexuality stems mainly from the fact that it is a reversal of natural sexuality.”<sup>18</sup> The second and possibly even more important assumption behind Christian arguments is that the Bible is the Word of God, absolute, inerrant, timeless and not limited by geographical, historical or social constraints. Hence *Social Observer* writes; “It is important to draw upon the Word of God, which is steadfastly consistent and does not shift because of popular opinion.”<sup>19</sup> The idea that the Bible is consistent on the issue of homosexuality is also shared by some scholars such as William J. Webb who writes, “As the winds of culture blow, Christians are often faced with incredible challenges: Should we en-

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<sup>17</sup> Edward J. Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire: Paul's Sexual Ethics in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1*, London: T & T Clark International, 2007, 91.

<sup>18</sup> Pastor Dave Chikosi, What is Adam doing with Steve, asked Lot? *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 13/09/1995. See Appendix 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Social Observer*, Homosexuality: A view from the Bible, *The Harare Sunday Gazette*, 20/08/1993. See Appendix 28.

dorse the changes in our culture or should we challenge our culture?”<sup>20</sup> It is apparent that when confronted by contemporary challenges that require Christians to make decisions, the Bible is invoked to address existential challenges. The critical question that remains highly emotive is: How should the Bible be interpreted in such circumstances?

Related to the assumption on the nature of the Bible, further assumptions can be detected as follows; The ‘natural’ sexuality is based on the biblical creation; The Bible explicitly addresses the ‘problem’ of homosexuality for all times and in all its forms. This assumption can best be summed up in the words of Christopher Seitz, who writes; “The Church must give top priority to hearing the ‘plain sense’ of individual texts ‘interbiblically according to the rule of faith’ rather than to ‘reconstructions’ of an ‘original’ historical sense argued to be at odds with this ‘plain sense’.”<sup>21</sup> It is also assumed that homosexuality and homosexual persons threaten the very survival of the human species because they do not seek to carry out God’s command to multiply. It is therefore not surprising that some have argued that “legalising homosexuality would mean effectively casting a vote of no confidence on heterosexuality - on normality.”<sup>22</sup>

### **5.3 Summary of Christian arguments against homosexuality**

Various arguments have been proffered by Christians regarding what Christians should do about homosexuality and homosexual persons. To that end, Christians have indeed turned to traditional

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<sup>20</sup> William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, 2002, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Seitz cited in Robert A. Gagnon, “A comprehensive and critical review essay of homosexuality, science and the Plain sense of Scripture, Part 2” in: *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, volume 25, 2003, 180.

<sup>22</sup> *The Harare Sunday Gazette*, Homosexuality condemned, 21/02/1993.

culture<sup>23</sup> but most importantly, they have turned to the Bible for answers. In justifying his decision to pull out of the Anglican Church Province of Central Africa (CPCA), Bishop Nolbert Kunonga of the Diocese of Harare argued, “the big decision is that we want to abide by our conscience and our faith. We do not intend to deviate in any way from the *scriptures*. To do so is to go against *the rule of God if not His will*, and I would urge Zimbabweans and Anglicans throughout the country that we cannot accept homosexuality.”<sup>24</sup> The invocation of the Bible and homosexuality by Bishop Kunonga is representative of how most Zimbabweans reacted to the homosexual debate. Reference to the Bible is as if the Bible speaks clearly to all who read it.

As noted earlier, however, the Bible has to be interpreted to come to the answers. This section looks at the arguments and the biblical texts that have been used in the debate. Central to the overwhelming Christian arguments is the idea that the Bible condemns acts of homosexuality. In an undated script obtained from the SCD-ZCBC titled *Homosexuality and the Scripture: What does the Bible really say about Homosexuality?* Michael Ukleja is cited as saying “only towering cynicism can pretend that there is any doubt about what the Scriptures say about homosexuality.”<sup>25</sup> In the contemporary homosexual debate, there has been a general consensus that there are texts within the Bible that explicitly refer to homosexuality. Lovemore Togarasei (Former New Testament

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Hatendi, Challenge Not yet Answered, *The Harare Herald*, 24/06/1996. See Appendix 39.

<sup>24</sup> Nehanda Radio, Bishop Kunonga interview with The Herald, 17/09/2007 available online: [www.nehandaradio.com/kunongainterview170907.html](http://www.nehandaradio.com/kunongainterview170907.html) accessed 02/12/2008, emphasis my own.

<sup>25</sup> *Anonymous Author*, “Homosexuality and the Scripture: What does the Bible really say about homosexuality?” *Unpublished*, Undated, 1. See Appendix 29. This document was obtained from the files of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, who have a detailed file of most of the contributions made during this time. It is assumed that possibly one of the Catholic Priests authored this document even though it does not say anything about the identity of the author. The document is attached as an appendix at the end of this work.

Lecturer, University of Zimbabwe and now Senior Lecturer, University of Botswana) appears to subscribe to the notion that homosexuality is a universal social ill and immoral when he unquestioningly cites D. L. Carmody and J. T. Carmody, in writing “through interpretation, the Bible is made to justify war, hatred, dispossession and other traditionally conceived social ills like homosexuality.”<sup>26</sup> And Noah Pashapa (Formerly a lecturer in Old Testament Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy. Also the Pastor of Hatfield Baptist Church in Harare) explicitly makes this point when he writes;

In the Old Testament are scattered but clear-cut references that condemn homosexuality. It is necessary, however, to observe that there have been efforts to soften the condemnatory note of the Old Testament passages by some whose purpose has been to construct a biblically based legitimation of homosexuality.<sup>27</sup>

In the same vein, Chikosi writes “homosexuality is an abomination to biblical Christianity [...]”<sup>28</sup> This understanding is similarly advanced by Lovemore Togarasei who unquestioningly suggests that homosexuality is a sin of all time when he writes “almost all the ‘sins’ that are found in non-Christian communities: factionalism, complacency, adultery, incest, disorderly behaviour in church, homosexuality, you name it”<sup>29</sup> were also found in the Christian community at Corinth. There is a degree of confidence that the Bible addresses homosexuality once and for all. Among the texts cited are: Gen. 19 (and Judg. 19); Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; Rom. 1:18-32; 1Cor. 6:9 and 1Tim. 1:10. These are the so-called lethal weapons against which homosexuality cannot survive. Weapons that prove once and for all, that the Word of God knows about homosexuality and God has taken a position on the subject. Below, the different biblical texts and the pursuant arguments will

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<sup>26</sup> Lovemore Togarasei, *The Bible in Context: Essays Collection, Bible in Africa Studies*, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2009, 181.

<sup>27</sup> Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Chikosi, *What is Adam doing with Steve?*

<sup>29</sup> Togarasei, *The Bible in Context*, 88.

be highlighted. The fact that from the time of its introduction in Zimbabwe, Christianity was largely understood as the enemy of traditional religion and cultural values and norms,<sup>30</sup> has not stopped Christian leaders from advocating a return to those values now considered to be in tandem with the Word of God, especially on the subject of homosexuality.

### **5.3.1 Homosexuality and the fate of Sodom, Genesis 19 (and Judges 19)**

Gen. 19 tells the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Many Christian contributors to the debate have referred to this story, among them Pashapa, who writes; “The destruction that comes upon Sodom immediately following this incident [of wanting to know Lot’s visitors] implies that these homosexual intentions of the men of Sodom were responsible for it.”<sup>31</sup> It is suggested that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because God wanted to get rid of homosexual persons who infested these communities. Pashapa dismisses the Bailey<sup>32</sup> suggestion that the Hebrew word translated as know, (Gen.19:5) should be taken to mean interrogation for acquaintance because of the context within which it falls. In furthering this argument, Pashapa notes that the same word appears in v.8 where Lot offers his two daughters who have ‘not known’ men. He has argued that the context of Gen. 19 leaves no other explanation for the word, except that it carries with it some sexual overtones. In essence, the word translated as ‘know’ means the men of Sodom sought to have sexual intercourse with the male visitors who had been accommodated by Lot.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*.

<sup>31</sup> Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

<sup>32</sup> See D. Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955; reprint, Hamden, CT: Shoestring, 1975.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

In an article attacking Archbishop Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church in South Africa, who has been supporting efforts to grant homosexual persons their sexual rights, the *Herald* wrote:

The hordes of homosexual men threatened to do worse things to Lot than they wanted to do to the two men inside the house [...] God detests homosexuality so much that incest is a less punishable crime because Lot's two daughters successfully connived to have children with their father and their death was nowhere near as painful as that endured by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>34</sup>

There is a clear connection between the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the 'gay culture' which was prevalent in these communities according to the interpretation of Gen. 19 in the Zimbabwean debate. This is also attested to in the letter of Mrs. L. V. Weeks in which she maintains that had God been indifferent to homosexuality, God would not have gone on to destroy the two communities of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>35</sup> In a tellingly titled article in the *Sunday Mirror*, the reporter asks, "Homosexuality: Are Sodom and Gomorrah suddenly permissible?"<sup>36</sup> Closely connected to this story is the one that is told in Judg. 19. Pashapa sums up the Christian argument based on these two texts when he writes: "From these two passages, one cannot escape concluding that homosexual behaviour incurs God's judgment."<sup>37</sup>

To sum up the use of Gen. 19 in the Zimbabwean debate, it is of utmost importance that we realise that no other crime was committed by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their only crime was that they were homosexual persons who tried to have sexual intercourse with the two male visitors who were in Lot's house. This crime was so serious that God had to intervene by raining down fire to smother the two wicked communities. Zimbabwe

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<sup>34</sup> *The Harare Herald*, Tutu's gay campaign illogical, 09/12/2005. See Appendix 30.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. L. V. Weeks, Homosexuality a sin in God's eyes, *The Harare Daily Gazette*, 13/03/1993. See Appendix 31.

<sup>36</sup> *The Harare Sunday Mirror*, Homosexuality: Are Sodom and Gomorrah suddenly permissible? 05/03/2006. See Appendix 8.

<sup>37</sup> Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

and the World in general seem to be equated to these ancient societies and yet because of what Christians know to have happened to them, it is imperative for people to be different. Homosexuality therefore cannot be tolerated because it invokes the wrath of God. While the people of Sodom accepted it, their fate was destruction and the Zimbabwean Christian argument is an attempt to avert a similar destruction. “Homosexual conduct was the same evil that resulted in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>38</sup> This text, therefore, literally means what it says and it applies to any community that faces the threat of homosexuality. Indeed, a chilling warning!

### **5.3.2 Abomination! Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13**

These two texts are also widely used in the Zimbabwean debate and it is not surprising that they are sometimes referred to without even specification from the contributors. These texts have provided Christians with one of their “catchwords”. It is widely attested that “God clearly declares that the practice [homosexuality] is an abomination (totally unacceptable to God) and that it is absolutely detestable and disgusting (Lev. 18:22 and 20:13).”<sup>39</sup> According to Gaudencia Mutema, “GALZ has faced a lot of opposition from various churches on the grounds that homosexuality is forbidden in the Bible, particularly in Leviticus 18:22.”<sup>40</sup> The critical argument on the Levitical laws is that they refer to homosexuality as an *abomination*, which is a translation of the Hebrew word meaning the transgression of a divinely sanctioned boundary.<sup>41</sup> It is therefore not possible for Christians to tolerate that which transgresses boundaries that were set by God, the boundary that separate men from women.

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<sup>38</sup> C. Murefu, Homosexuals: Pros and Cons, God’s natural order is being violated, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 05/02/1995.

<sup>39</sup> *Social Observer*, A view from the Bible.

<sup>40</sup> Mutema, African Traditional Religion and GALZ, 1996, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Murray (et al) “Homosexuality and the Church and the Blessing of Same Sex Unions”

In an attempt to demonstrate the severity of homosexual transgression, Rev. C. Murefu (Murefu is a serving Pastor with the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe and has been for some years the Principal of Living Waters Bible College, which is responsible for the training of AFM pastors) observes that “Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 call for capital punishment for any lesbian or homosexual conduct. It is an abomination.”<sup>42</sup> The capital punishment highlighted by Murefu is in direct reference to 20:13 which calls for the death of the two male same-sex partners and not lesbian partners as Leviticus is silent on that point. Pashapa concurs with Murefu when he writes that the two Leviticus texts ban homosexuality describing it as an abomination which incurs the death penalty.<sup>43</sup> While no Christian in Zimbabwe has publicly called for the implementation of the death penalty on convicted homosexual persons, these texts have been widely referred to. Even though Christians in Zimbabwe have not openly advocated for capital punishment against homosexual persons, that the Bible makes homosexuality a crime deserving the death penalty is taken to demonstrate how serious the crime is. It is not possible for Christians to tolerate homosexuality because that would be disobeying the Law of God.

### **5.3.3 Crime against nature! Romans 1:18-32**

The confirmation of the condemnation of homosexuality in the New Testament proves God’s consistency on this subject.<sup>44</sup> The overlap between the two Testaments plays an important role in the Christian argument against homosexuality. Murefu also adds that all forms of homosexuality stand condemned because they are all manifestations of how “humans have changed the natural use of the opposite sex to that which is against nature (Rom. 1:25-27).”<sup>45</sup> That Paul calls homosexuality unnatural and immoral is

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<sup>42</sup> Murefu, Homosexuality: pros and cons.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Social Observer*, A View from the Bible.

<sup>45</sup> Murefu, Homosexuality: pros and cons.

widely attested hence in a letter titled “Even God disapproves”, the author writes, “so the truth is quite plain to see, as a Christian, one cannot practice immorality in any form. The way of truth is the best way of living.”<sup>46</sup> The dichotomy of natural and unnatural practice is interesting because it is also central in the Christian argument.

Paul’s profound analysis of the human condition in Romans 1 finds in homosexuality an example of sexual sin that falsifies our identity as created beings. Homosexual behaviour is ‘revolting’ because it epitomises in sexual terms the revolt against God. It is because it violates the plan of God, present from creation, for the union of male and female in marriage.<sup>47</sup>

Homosexuality is a crime against nature in that the sexual nature of human beings is heterosexuality. The argument is that “Paul has in mind not only the capricious sex swapping of the pervert, driven by lust and desire for sex stimulation, but the divergence from God’s original creation scheme which all homosexual behaviour represents.”<sup>48</sup> Men are supposed to mate with women, naturally women are supposed to be used in this way and not for men to use other men as women. It is unnatural for women to pretend to use other women as if they were themselves men. The religious bundling together of sex and gender in the Christian argument is based on the assumption that “a philological study of the creation accounts in Gen. 1-2 reveals that gender differentiation is created,”<sup>49</sup> yet a closer look shows that the texts are coming from a community which had elaborately socially constructed gender identities and roles. By reversing the roles and uses of sex, that is, men as penetrators and women as penetrable for purposes of procreation, homosexual persons are committing a crime against nature.

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<sup>46</sup> *Immorality, Even God disapproves*, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 24/08/1995. See Appendix 32.

<sup>47</sup> *Anonymous Author*, *Homosexuality and the Scripture*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Anonymous Author*, *Homosexuality and the Scripture*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Hilary B. P. Mijoga “Gender differentiation in the Bible: created and recognized” in: *Journal of Humanities (Zomba)*, 13, 1999, 87.

It is in this context where gender and sex are bundled together that Pashapa cites other texts that condemn sexual and gender improprieties to show that the Bible has a particular position when it comes to sexual offences. He cites Deut. 22:5 which condemns cross-dressing or transvestism as well as 1Kings 14:24; 15:12; and 22:46 which condemn the presence of male prostitutes in the Holy land. These texts, according to Pashapa reinforce the need for men to be men while women also must be women.<sup>50</sup> The charge is that homosexual persons are changing their essence because it is assumed that homosexual men want to be women while homosexual women want to be men.

### **5.3.4 Sexual perversion! 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10**

These two texts have also featured prominently in the arguments against homosexuality in the debate. They are here looked at together because they both use two terms that are central to the debate, and which terms have largely been rendered homosexual in most modern translations of the Bible. The tone of the debate is clear in the following words of *Immorality*:

The Apostle Paul, who saw the glorified Christ, has this to say about immorality: 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts [...] will inherit the kingdom of God.' (1Cor. 6:9)<sup>51</sup>

The author takes the literal text to mean what it says and since it is the Word of God it cannot be questioned or doubted. Pashapa who undoubtedly is the most prolific in pursuing the biblical references to homosexuality and explicitly mentioning the texts, writes:

Homosexuals are listed among the 'unrighteous' who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. In the Greek language it is more explicit as the words used by Paul actually describe the two partners in a homosexual

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

<sup>51</sup> *Immorality*, Even God disapproves.

union *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*. In I Timothy 1:10, the sodomites are listed among the lawless and disobedient that God condemns.<sup>52</sup>

Pashapa demonstrates his knowledge by even going to the Greek language, the language that Paul would have used when communicating with the people of Corinth. In essence, in both these texts, the sodomites or homosexuals are unconditionally condemned. In elaborating the significance of the two Greek words used by Paul, Pashapa argues,

It is important at this point to note that the most common Greek words Paul used to refer to homosexuality cover both the invert and pervert. Paul does indicate some distinction between homosexuals (1Cor.6:9) but this is in fact to include both partners in a homosexual relationship under the same condemnation. *Malakoi* referred to the male who played the passive same-sex sexual role, while *arsenokoitai* meant the male in bed.<sup>53</sup>

From these Pauline texts, Pashapa concludes in a way that embodies the concerns of the major Christian argument by writing that “it is quite evident that Paul’s position was anti-homosexuality.”<sup>54</sup>

The literal use of the texts that explicitly mention same-sex practices in the Zimbabwean debate and has strengthened the assumption that the Bible is decisive and definitive in its treatment of homosexuality. Homosexuality is behind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and is explicitly banned in the book of Leviticus and is even punishable by death. The New Testament pursues the same line as seen by the condemnation of homosexuality by Paul. In summing this up, Christians are encouraged to love what God loves and hate what God hates. In fact, the Church cannot tolerate homosexuality without also tolerating all other sins.<sup>55</sup> The assumption prevalent among many Christians being that God hates homosexuality and homosexual persons. While these texts are believed to cite homosexuality explicitly, the Bible

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<sup>52</sup> Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

<sup>53</sup> Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

<sup>54</sup> Pashapa, *Even the Bible condemns*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Anonymous Author*, *Homosexuality and the Scripture*, 7.

has also been used in other ways in sustaining this popular position against homosexuality.

### **5.3.5 Not created or sanctioned by God, neither natural nor cultural!**

The arguments above are further strengthened by the view that sexual intercourse is only licit when practised by approved players and to this most if not all denominations agree with minor variations. “The Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Churches agree that sex can be practised responsibly only in the context of a legitimately contracted marriage between a man and a woman. This automatically rules out sexual relations outside marriage and against nature, such as homosexuality.”<sup>56</sup> The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe has been very vocal on the point that homosexuality is unnatural. In a wide ranging Pastoral letter captured and extensively quoted by the *Masvingo Provincial Star* newspaper, Catholic Bishops in Zimbabwe label homosexual activities as contrary to natural law. They proceed to raise some fundamental questions on the subject of homosexuality and Christian faith, such as whether one enjoys total freedom as to how one may use one’s sexuality. Whether there are no limits imposed by human nature as created by God? Further, they note that God wills that human beings live their lives according to the nature He has given them. That nature refers to the way humans were made as men and women. Therefore, man and woman are to complement each other and their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family. Homosexuality is therefore intrinsically disordered.<sup>57</sup> There is no doubt that central to this Catholic position is the assumption that Gen. 1 and 2 explain the origins of sexuality, that heterosexuality is the created sexuality.

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<sup>56</sup> Salla “Historic Churches and Family and Sexual Morality” 87.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral letter quoted in: *The Masvingo Provincial Star*, Bishops blast homosexuals but warn against unjust discrimination of gays, 16/02/1996. See Appendix 33.

The then president of Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema (Who was also the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Central Zimbabwe and later Diocese of Harare before retiring in 2001) expressed his organisation's abhorrence of homosexuality and lesbianism. "We are not going to allow, as a Christian body, gays in our council and destroy that which we cherish; our culture,"<sup>58</sup> he was quoted as saying. The argument is that "Western cultures are being pitched against traditional scriptural morality, which is closer to African traditional cultural morality."<sup>59</sup> This is contrary to the realisation that to the early missionaries in the nineteenth century, the adoption of European life styles by the heathen was regarded as one of the fruits of conversion to Christianity.<sup>60</sup> Yet, now it appears that the same Western cultures are now being equated to that which has to be avoided at all costs. The close relationship of traditional culture and scriptural culture is in this case based on the centrality of procreation and the rigid distinction between men and women.

Homosexuality is unjustifiable within the Zimbabwean context because it is condemned not only by the Bible but by traditional cultural norms and values also. In this context some aspects of culture have to be preserved as aptly summed by Murefu, when he writes: "Just imagine if all turned homosexual and lesbian, then procreation stops [...] culturally we are a people of values. We should preserve those elements of culture with moral values so far as they come in line with the Bible, the Word of God."<sup>61</sup> This combination between the Bible and culture appears also when Cuthbert Mavheko writes,

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. *The Harare Sunday Mail*, ZCC condemn homosexuality, 16/06/1996. See Appendix 34.

<sup>59</sup> Dapo F. Asaju "The Homosexuality controversy in the Anglican Church revisited: A Biblical and contextual Perspective" in: S. O. Abogunrin (ed), *Biblical View of Sex and Sexuality from an African Perspective*, Ibadan: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS), 2006, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Anthony Chennells "The image of the Ndebele and the nineteenth century missionary tradition" in: Bourdillon (ed), *Christianity South of the Zambezi volume 2*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977, pp43-68.

<sup>61</sup> Murefu, *Homosexuals: Pros and Cons*.

There is no doubt that President Mugabe's sentiments are shared by the majority of Zimbabweans who not only regard homosexuality as perverse and repulsive, but also find it unnatural and indeed strange for any sane human being - male or female - to be attracted to someone of the same sex.<sup>62</sup>

According to Murefu, "In Gen. 1:27, the Bible says God created them male and female. This is God's natural order which we human beings are violating."<sup>63</sup> Clearly, most Christians believe "that creation stories depict how God intended creation, it is a natural *ordination*."<sup>64</sup> Nature or natural, therefore, is understood as the created order and owes its existence to God and cannot be faulted. That 'natural' proceeds from God leads Murefu to argue; "It is true, to some extent, that there is hypocrisy in the Church, but certainly not with God."<sup>65</sup> This is meant to make the case of homosexuality un-appealable because it is not the Church or society that makes homosexuality unnatural; rather it is the ever consistent and faultless God who makes homosexuality unnatural because He did not provide for it when He created man - male and female. In this case, the only biblically attested natural sexuality is heterosexuality. To that end he pleads, "We are created in the image of God and let us respect God in whose image we are created."<sup>66</sup>

When God wanted to create Adam's partner, he could have created a man not a woman, but as you can see it makes no sense.<sup>67</sup> According to Mutema, "at a demonstration organised by the Apostolic Faith Church one placard read, 'God created Adam and

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<sup>62</sup> Cuthbert Mavheko, Homosexuality has no place in Zimbabwe, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 29/01/2000.

<sup>63</sup> Murefu, Homosexuals: pros and cons.

<sup>64</sup> Murray (et al) "Homosexuality and the Church and the Blessing of Same Sex Unions", 14.

<sup>65</sup> Murefu, Homosexuals: pros and cons.

<sup>66</sup> Murefu, Homosexuals: pros and cons.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Tongai V Gwafa, Homos erode our culture, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 02/09/1995. See Appendix 35. Emphasis is my own; the italicized part shows how the writer sees homosexuality as being imported through literature into Zimbabwe.

Eve, not Adam and Adam’.”<sup>68</sup> In this regard, homosexuality is unnatural because it is the opposite of what was created by God. Further, at a demonstration organised by ZAOGA, one placard read “Sickness is not human rights. Homosexuality is sickness.”<sup>69</sup> This association of homosexuality with sickness dismisses any claims to it being natural since all diseases are considered as unnatural. It is in this context that we can appreciate the work of St. Thomas Aquinas on the subject of human sexuality. “Thomas Aquinas divided sexual sins on the basis that the natural function of sexuality is procreation, into those that are ‘against nature’ [unnatural], like masturbation and homoeroticism, and those that are ‘natural’, like adultery or [heterosexual] prostitution.”<sup>70</sup>

It is in this context that the complementarity of the sexes is emphasized as being part of God’s plan in creation. Kunonga argues that;

In our canons we say one husband one wife and a woman for a man. Homo means the same. Here we are talking of people of different sexes, one male, and one female. And if we want to be biblical, there was Adam and Eve, there was never Steven and Rob. It was not Jane and Mary, but it was Peter and Faith all the time.<sup>71</sup>

The creation stories are central in the argument for the complementarity of the sexes. “Complementarity extends also to a range of personality traits and predispositions that contribute to making heterosexual unions enormously more successful in terms of fidelity, endurance, and health than same-sex ones.”<sup>72</sup> Most importantly, however, is that heterosexuality is created by God and therefore, the only legitimate sexual relationships are those of the monogamous legitimately married heterosexual couple. Paul’s

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<sup>68</sup> Mutema, African Traditional religion, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *The Harare Sunday Mail*, Demo against homos in city, 18/09/1995. See Appendix 10.

<sup>70</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 136.

<sup>71</sup> Nehanda Radio, Bishop Kunonga interview with The Herald, 17/09/2007.

<sup>72</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon “A Comprehensive and Critical Review Essay of Homosexuality, Science, and the ‘Plain Sense’ of Scripture, Part 2” in: *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, Volume 25, 2003, pp179-275, 254.

use of the terms natural/unnatural must be understood in the light of God's creation-pattern of heterosexual beings together in their unity in diversity being made in God's image.<sup>73</sup> The labelling of homosexuality as unnatural is intertwined with it being understood as immoral also.

### **5.3.6 Homosexuality is Immoral**

While homosexual persons argued for the recognition of sexual rights as human rights and thereby seeking legal assurances for their freedom, Murefu responds by transporting the argument away from a legal framework to a moral realm when he writes;

All over the world, homosexuals are claiming constitutional rights to perpetrate this unnatural living style. This is more than just a constitutional issue, it is a moral issue. Morality cannot be legislated. Change has to take place from within the heart which the Bible describes as desperately wicked above all (Jer.17:9).<sup>74</sup>

It is therefore inappropriate for the Zimbabwean government to legalize homosexuality or decriminalize consensual adult same-sex relationships and practices because it is not a legal issue as Murefu and most Zimbabwean Christian contributors have argued, it is a moral issue. The Church therefore is better placed to deal with moral issues than the state. This also was alluded to in chapter four when Mugabe expressed his hope that the Catholic Church could correct this anomaly of homosexuality.

There is a clear association between morality and the Bible in this argument. Nyilika writes that "homosexuality is an immoral act [...] When God created man and woman He had a special reason for doing so."<sup>75</sup> There seems to be no distinction between what is moral and what was created by God rather it appears that what was created by God "is the official morality, firmly based on natural law, taught in the Christian churches and places of worship in

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

<sup>74</sup> Murefu, Homosexuals: pros and cons.

<sup>75</sup> Nyilika, Gays erode culture.

Africa.”<sup>76</sup> In essence, only when man and woman realise why they were created together can they begin to do what is moral. Homosexuality which requires, so to speak, a coin to have two similar sides is therefore considered immoral because God made a coin with two different sides.

Mavheko comes closest in trying to single out what is moral when he writes, “It cannot be over-emphasised that such relationships [same-sex], apart from being an antithesis to Zimbabwe’s cultural being, defy God’s spiritual law which approves of only two lifestyles - heterosexuality within marriage and celibacy - while, at the same time expressly forbidding homosexual acts.”<sup>77</sup> Any doubts about the centrality of the Bible are removed by this declaration of what is permitted and forbidden because these injunctions are supposed to be biblical. Immoral acts are therefore, those acts that are in contradiction with what God approved by providing for them in the created order.

The same moral understanding can also be detected in Pashapa’s arguments. First, he argues,

From the cumulative teaching of the Bible, there can be no form of Christian homosexuality, Christian adultery, bestiality and rape. There can be no respectable version of same-sex relationships just as there can be no respectable version of other violations of God’s basic moral law known in all cultures such as rape or murder (Rom. 1:18).<sup>78</sup>

Pashapa sees Christian and moral as synonymous such that one can substitute Christian for moral without distorting the meaning of his argument. In addition, it can also be noted that respectable is also seen as denoting Christian or moral. Second, Pashapa writes,

Obeying God’s moral law and his purpose for our lives is the only way to achieving our highest welfare as human beings. Therefore, homosexual

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<sup>76</sup> Salla “Historic Churches and Family and Sexual Morality”, 87.

<sup>77</sup> Mavheko, Homosexuality has no place.

<sup>78</sup> Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

relationships that are 'loving relationships' are incompatible with true love because they are in revolt to God's law and purposes.<sup>79</sup>

Homosexuality is therefore immoral in all its forms because God's moral law forbids it and also because it is against the purposes of God. The purpose Pashapa implicitly refers to seems to be what Catholic Bishops call 'fulfilment of marriage in children'.<sup>80</sup>

*The Herald* of 5 August 2006, in an attempt to justify why members of GALZ had been chased away from exhibiting at the ZIBF by members of the public, wrote that "members of the public felt they [GALZ] encouraged immorality and promiscuity."<sup>81</sup> The connection made here between immorality and promiscuity adds another dimension to the understanding of sexual morality in the Zimbabwean homosexual debate. To this end, heterosexuality is to be understood as not only moral but essentially it discourages promiscuity. The binary understanding therefore permeates this debate such that all the good things about sexuality are to be found in licit heterosexual relationships while homosexual relationships are associated with all bad things.

To sum up the moral argument emanating from this debate, the following aspects are considered essential: morality is understood as that which was ordered by God, meaning heterosexuality. But because morality is somehow understood as synonymous with Christianity, sexual morality therefore has to be understood as referring to the sexual relationship of the legitimate couple, implying the heterosexual monogamous couple as pronounced by Christianity to be husband and wife even though this can be extended to polygamous heterosexual marriages which are sanctioned in other denominations. Anything that falls outside of this legitimate couple is labelled immoral and that includes all forms

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<sup>79</sup> Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

<sup>80</sup> *The Masholanaland Guardian*, Catholic Bishops speak out on homosexuality, 15/03/1996. See Appendix 36.

<sup>81</sup> *The Harare Herald*, Galz members chased from exhibition stand (ZIBF), 05/08/2006. See Appendix 8.

of homosexuality and other sexual improprieties. According to Bishop Farai Chirisa of MCZ,

There are people born with a tendency to steal or lie. But do we accept the practices because one is born like that? Yes, we do tolerate and we do try to understand that there are people like that. But only as long as they do not go out and propagate and perpetuate society the way people should live.<sup>82</sup>

### **5.3.7 Not even science, convert!**

The argument by Bishop Chirisa leads directly to the position that most Christians have taken relating to the role of biological, hormonal and genetic explanations of homosexuality. The Christian argument has sought to amplify the culpability of individuals as responsible for their being homosexual in orientation and practice, so as to exclude them from the family of Christians. The exception to this has been the Catholic Church. “The bishops’ discerning statement, ‘Homosexuality is a disorder.’-‘Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies [...] must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided [...]’.”<sup>83</sup> By noting that homosexuality is ‘deep-seated’ in some individuals, the Catholic Bishops have been closest to acknowledging the in-nateness of homosexuality, yet the conclusion they arrive at varies significantly from those of homosexual persons who also argue that homosexuality is innate.

While homosexual persons have sought to eliminate their culpability by resorting to biological, hormonal and genetic explanations to the causes of homosexuality, Christians in Zimbabwe did not buy into it. According to Pashapa;

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<sup>82</sup> Bishop Farai Chirisa quoted in: Vivian Maravanyika, Scuffles break out at demo against Galz, *The Harare Sunday Mail*, 28/07/1996.

<sup>83</sup> Fr. Oskar Wermter S. J., Letter, *Unpublished*, 12/03/1996. The emphasis in italics is my own and it clearly peddles the idea that homosexuality is foreign to Zimbabwean societies.

The truth is that even though there may be some genetic/biological influences on human behaviour (for example, sleeping, breathing, eating, survival, and sex), these influences never dictate or determine the way humans behave [...] This fact is demonstrated by the thousands of ex-gays who have adopted heterosexuality exclusively. The existence of over 200 centres in North America that exist to help gays go straight also bears testimony to this.<sup>84</sup>

Homosexual persons who insist on remaining as such are therefore responsible and should not hide behind genes/biology because they are ultimately responsible for their condition. There is an attempt to discourage people from concluding that some can be irredeemably homosexual so as to encourage them to convert to heterosexuality.<sup>85</sup> In that regard, homosexuality is to be treated like any other temptation. Being tempted is not wrong but yielding to temptations is wrong.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, it has also been argued that:

The Apostle James recognises a distinction between orientation and behaviour. Every person 'is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death' (James 1:14,15).<sup>87</sup>

In this regard, orientation is equated to evil desire which when put to action results in sinful behaviour or practice. In response the emphasis from the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe has been on the elimination of the disease and not the victim of the disease.<sup>88</sup> The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe through Oskar Wermter insists, "The Church does not condemn persons who find they have a homosexual tendency as such, but cannot approve of their

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<sup>84</sup> Pashapa, Even the Bible condemns.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Kevin Ward "Same-Sex Relations in Africa and the Debate on Homosexuality in East African Anglicanism" in: *Anglican Theological Review* 84/1, 2002, 14.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *Responsible Citizen*, Actions of the Degenerate, *The Harare Herald*, 25/01/1995.

<sup>87</sup> *Anonymous*, Homosexuality and the Scripture, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Wermter, Letter to Mahogany, *Unpublished*, 26/06/1995. See Appendices 10 and 37.

engaging in homosexual relationships. Homosexuals who cannot be cured of their pathological condition have to abstain from any sexual activity.”<sup>89</sup> It appears that the appropriation of the biblical texts in these Christian readings is based on the assumption that “the homosexual texts are to be understood as transcultural.”<sup>90</sup> By this it is implied that they are timeless and not culture-specific. Any knowledge of homosexuality that appears to shed a different understanding from the biblical position should only lead to compassion for those homosexual persons who agree to live under mandatory celibacy or can be converted to heterosexuality.

To a greater extent, homosexuality is therefore understood as a sin. It is part of the Pentecostal discourse in Zimbabwe that the only force that opposes God in everything is the Satan. In fact, anything that is seen as making one not realising the full potential of being *born again* is the work of evil.<sup>91</sup> With this understanding, it is not surprising that some Christians have called for the repentance and conversion of homosexual persons to embrace Christian values. Ezekiel Guti was quoted as calling homosexuality “a perverse practice” and called upon those who are under the spell of homosexuality to come forward and be prayed for. He claimed that many who were under the spell and had received prayers had been delivered.<sup>92</sup> Essentially, homosexual persons require a double conversion to be fully Christian, first they have to be converted from homosexuality to heterosexuality or asexuality/celibacy, and second they have to be converted from serving the Satan to serve God.

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<sup>89</sup> Wermter, What does the Catholic Church teach about homosexuality: Statement requested by Mr. Tangai Chipangura for PARADE, undated. See Appendix 38.

<sup>90</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*, 36.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Birgit Meyer “Make a complete break with the past: memory and post-colonial modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist discourse” in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XXVIII, 3 (1998) pp316-349.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *The Harare Sunday Mail*, Demo against homos.

## 5.4 Analysis of Christian arguments

There are critical issues that are touched on in the arguments above, among them; the question of the inerrancy and timelessness of the Bible. Is it sufficient to argue that the Bible speaks for all times? In carrying out this analysis, it is important to remember that “it is always dangerous to draw parallels between events in the Bible and our contemporary experience, because the socio-political contexts are not the same.”<sup>93</sup> Further, there is a clear attempt to disregard the fact “that the investigation of original meanings must be prior to and separate from the question of truth.”<sup>94</sup> The need for political correctness in Zimbabwe has meant that few have sought to understand the texts; rather texts have been manipulated to achieve political correctness. Due to the legitimacy conferred by the Bible, the interpreters “wield vast power.”<sup>95</sup> In spite of this, some problems are apparent in the Christian arguments as shall be demonstrated below.

### 5.4.1 Companionship or Procreation? Understanding marriage

What is the essence of a Christian marriage today? Is companionship the defining characteristic of Christian marriage? Is procreation the *sine qua non* of Christian marriage? What does the Bible prioritize, companionship or procreation? Clearly, “just as there is not one view on marriage, there is also no single authoritative interpretation of scripture.”<sup>96</sup> The Catholic Church has been

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<sup>93</sup> Mongezi Guma & Leslie Milton (eds), *An African Challenge to the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Cape Town: Inner City Mission, 1997, 65.

<sup>94</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 2001, 17.

<sup>95</sup> David S. Crawford „Liberal Androgyny: ‚Gay Marriage‘ and the Meaning of Sexuality in our Time” in: *Communio 33: International Catholic Review* (2006) pp239-265, 250.

<sup>96</sup> Eddie Makue “Open Letter on Marriage: South African Council of Churches” available online: <http://sacc.org.za/news06/marriage.html> accessed 09/06/2008.

foremost in articulating the centrality of procreation<sup>97</sup> by teaching that “marriage must be fulfilled in children and family.”<sup>98</sup> However, “closer study of the sexual behaviour of Christians soon shows us that there is a vast dichotomy between received teaching and the everyday life of converts to Christianity.”<sup>99</sup> Sexual intercourse can therefore no longer be looked at as merely a means to procreation when some are deliberately taking measures to avoid procreating. This has the potential of disenfranchising more heterosexual Christians than homosexual Christians.

This realisation has led to some Christian denominations emphasizing companionship over procreation as the central concern of marriage. It is in this context that some have argued that “we understand religious marriage as a covenant that two people make publicly with God, a commitment to mutual sharing, caring, faithfulness and support.”<sup>100</sup> In this understanding of marriage, some of the arguments against homosexuality become untenable because some of the homosexual relationships do provide companionship like heterosexual relationships. To that extent

The Bishops of the Church of England stressed in their report *Issues in Human Sexuality* the similarities between homosexual and heterosexual people in their emotional experiences, in that both fall in love, tend to long for close, often exclusive relationships with another person, and desire to express love and commitment by mutual physical self-giving and enjoyment.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> The Catholic Church does teach against the use of contraceptives but it appears that the official Church teaching is far removed from the actual daily practices of Catholic members. It appears to me therefore that the teaching itself cannot be used as the yardstick of measuring how Catholic members have taken up issues of reproductive health. Where the cost of bringing up children has soared over the years, most Zimbabwean women are actively using contraceptives. Procreation does not seem to be the central focus of marriage now.

<sup>98</sup> *The Mashonaland Guardian*, Catholic Bishops speaks out.

<sup>99</sup> Salla “Historic Churches and Family and Sexual Morality”, 87.

<sup>100</sup> Makue, Open letter on Marriage.

<sup>101</sup> *Issues in Human Sexuality* report in: Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 121.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality, therefore, are similar in terms of the desire to engage in sexual activities, the emotional attachment to another person and many other dynamics that are involved in love-sex relationships.

On the charge that homosexual persons are inherently promiscuous, it is to a gay person's advantage in hostile environments since the most effective defense against oppression is in fleeting and clandestine relationships.<sup>102</sup> Evidence galore of heterosexual cheaters hence to suggest that promiscuity is synonymous with homosexuality is difficult to sustain. The essence of marriage remains a challenge that has not been effectively dealt with by Zimbabwean Christians, and one that requires further biblical investigation and interpretation of texts related to marriage and procreation or companionship. What is apparent however is that contemporary Zimbabwean Christians are not unanimous on whether procreation precedes companionship or companionship precedes procreation? Precedence here has a bearing on the arguments against homosexual relationships.

Even within the Roman Catholic Church where emphasis in Church teaching is on procreation, the lives of ordinary Catholics appear to disprove the effectiveness of this teaching. Catholics do use contraceptives against the Church's teaching against their use because the challenge of raising children does not fall on the Church but on the parents who have to contend with an ever rising cost of living. This active family planning among heterosexual persons clearly suggests that sexual intercourse is now understood more as recreational than reproductive. This therefore entails that procreation has effectively receded in importance than companionship among many Christians. The same companionship that homosexual persons seek in same-sex relationships is extolled for heterosexual persons.

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 267.

### 5.4.2 *Intra-biblical complications on the texts*

One of the major arguments coming out of the Christian usage of the Bible is that the Bible speaks with one voice. There has been a continuous reminder of the consistency of the Bible running through the Old and New Testaments. This confidence in the consistency of the Bible in general fails to appreciate that;

The Bible does not contain provisions for all conceivable situations; it does not always speak with one voice on a given subject; and its meanings are often far from clear [...] Some people contend that racial segregation is authorised by Scripture, others maintain the opposite, and this sort of divergence exists on many other matters.<sup>103</sup>

Indeed there are many areas where the consistency of the Bible is questioned and rightly so. The earliest readers of the Sodom story are Old Testament prophets; interestingly their interpretation of this story is far removed from the contemporary readings. The Christian argument has not considered the implications of Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:49-50 and Zephaniah 2:9, where it has considered them, the texts have largely been taken to support the contemporary position. However, “these Old Testament passages provide a complex of reasons as to why Sodom and Gomorrah were judged.”<sup>104</sup> The Zimbabwean debate has failed to appreciate the difference between the central theme and illustrations of that theme. These texts show that inhospitality not homosexuality was the cause of Sodom’s destruction.

Origen, one of the early church fathers interpreted the Sodom story differently from the Zimbabwean Christian argument when he writes, “Hear this, you who close your homes to guests! Hear this, you who shun the traveller as an enemy! Lot who lived among the Sodomites [...] escaped the fire on account of one thing only. He opened his home to guests.”<sup>105</sup> This demonstrates that

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<sup>103</sup> Prozesky „Religious Authority and the Individual”, 20.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Germond & Steve de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, 1997, 215.

<sup>105</sup> Origen cited in: Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, 67.

the reading of the Sodom story has evolved and is now being exclusively associated with homosexuality. This is a famous biblical story though before the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe, this story was well known for the changing of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt.<sup>106</sup> The text itself gives the impression that judgment was passed before the attempted homosexual assault on the visitors, suggesting that the attempted assault itself cannot be the author of the judgment.

With this changing of emphasis and meaning of the same text, it appears that what are at stake are modes of reading the Bible. "The handful of passages most commonly read as condemnations of homosexuality were informed by the dominant understanding of human nature at the time they were written. They must be read and interpreted in their historical and cultural context [...]"<sup>107</sup> Critical in this regard is for example, why the Leviticus prohibitions do not include female same-sex relations? Murefu falsifies this fact by arguing that Leviticus condemns both male and female same-sex practices. It certainly is not enough to argue that because Paul does, therefore he has answered this question.

Pashapa clearly misses the fact that when words are used metaphorically they do not carry their literal meanings when he discusses the *arsenokoitai* and the *malakoi*. Further, the etymological meaning of words is not always the best way to understand their meaning, especially where such words are used as descriptive terms. It is not always the case, among the Shona, that all men who are chided for not being real men would have been sexually penetrated. This understanding is however not used as an aid to understanding these biblical texts. Zimbabwean Christians have not effectively dealt with the fact "that a text was conditioned by a given historical context."<sup>108</sup> According to Itumeleng Mosala;

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<sup>106</sup> The moral of the Sodom narrative when we were growing up was that we should always listen to what we are told. Lot's wife failed to listen and obey hence she turned into a pillar of salt.

<sup>107</sup> Makue, Open letter on Marriage.

<sup>108</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 61.

Biblical texts are products, records, and sites of social, historical, cultural, gender, racial and ideological struggles, and they radically and indelibly bear the marks of their origins and history. The biblical text is not an innocent and transparent container of a message or messages.<sup>109</sup>

Zimbabwean Christians continue insulating themselves against a critical reading of the Bible that is why a selective literal-contextual approach to the Bible appears to be the most commonly used method of appropriating the Bible.

It is also interesting that the Christian argument against homosexuality is predicated on issues that were heavily challenged by Feminist readers of the Bible. The assumption that there are roles for women in sexual relations appears within the Christian arguments.

The idea that male and female are different and, moreover, associated with 'good' and 'bad' respectively, can already be detected in the creation myths [...] The oppositional categories of male and female underlie other dualistic notions that are interpreted in ways that are both gendered and unequal, perpetuated by the androcentric perspective of 'male' as the norm of humanness and 'female' as the subordinate 'other' that deviates from the norm.<sup>110</sup>

These are ideas that remain under discussion in many Christian communities but in the homosexual debate the accusation is that "the established Church [...] continues to seek to retain the orthodoxy which Jesus challenged in his day."<sup>111</sup> Clearly the picture of a consistent single-voice Bible presented in the Christian arguments is not sustainable. This unrealistic use of the Bible is also seen in the argument that gender differences are created by God when there is widespread agreement that such differences are socially constructed and meant to entrench the dominance of one group over the other.

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<sup>109</sup> Itumeleng Mosala cited in: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 64-5.

<sup>110</sup> Judy Tobler „Beyond a Patriarchal God: Bringing the transcendent back to the body“ in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 106, 2000, 33-50, 36.

<sup>111</sup> Heather Garner & Michael Worsnip „Oil and Water: The Impossibility of Gay and Lesbian Identity within the Church“ in: McGlory T. Speckman & Larry T. Kaufmann (eds), *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, 2001, 211.

Finally, the selectivity that is apparent in the use of the Bible is so widespread that any claims to reading the “whole Bible” are just that, mere claims. This is clearly observable when one realizes that “the Holiness Code [in which the Leviticus prohibitions fall] includes commandments not to eat meat with blood in it, not to wear garments of two kinds of cloth, not to plant fields with two kinds of seed.”<sup>112</sup> Why are these laws being used selectively if the Bible is consistent and timeless? The Bible is multi-dimensional and unless one demonstrates an awareness of this complexity of the Bible, the arguments pursued thereof remain shaky. It can be argued therefore that the Bible is in this case the worst critic of the Christian arguments raised above and seemingly based on the Bible.

#### **5.4.3 Power Politics in the Church: Homosexuality and the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe**

While Christians point to the immorality and unnaturalness of homosexuality, very few have tried to observe how homosexuality as a social issue has been used by church leaders in the prosecuting of private wars meant to secure power within the church. The case of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe and by extension the CPCA is one such example of how homosexuality has found itself as the battlefield for religious proxy wars. Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, a staunch supporter of Robert Gabriel Mugabe and a beneficiary of Mugabe’s land reform exercise announced he was pulling out the Diocese of Harare from the CPCA, and cited homosexuality as the reason for this withdrawal. Since his ordination as Bishop of Harare, Kunonga has been accused of victimizing Priests who openly opposed the government of Robert Mugabe.<sup>113</sup> After his withdrawal from the Province, the Province responded by excommunicating him and appointing retired Bishop Sebastian

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<sup>112</sup> L. Scanzoni & V. R. Mollencortt, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbour?* London: SCM, 1978, 61.

<sup>113</sup> Masiwa Ragies Gunda “The Reign of Bishop Nolbert Kunonga: Nationalist Spirit or Empire Builder?” in: *Missionalia* 36 (2/3) 2008, 299-318.

Bakare as his replacement effectively meaning the Diocese has two Bishops as Kunonga refused to recognize his expulsion from the Church.<sup>114</sup>

In a clear sign that Kunonga had bigger issues than homosexuality, particularly his shared (with Robert Mugabe and others) hatred of everything western, he was quoted as saying “it is our moral right, divine duty and sacred mission and God-given opportunity to help people reject all Western forms, designs, plots, tactics and strategies to drag us back into a state of boyhood and baboonhood.”<sup>115</sup> Once it became clear that the protection Kunonga was receiving from the Archbishop of the Province, Malango was coming to an end, as the Archbishop was retiring, the sudden rise of the importance of homosexuality within the Anglican communion in Zimbabwe and the Province should be understood as an attempt by Kunonga to remain in the Church by framing a problem that had nothing to do with all the charges that he faced from the Church.

Power politics and the use of homosexuality for the prosecution of proxy wars was therefore not limited to politicians but was equally being played within the Church. Kunonga capitalized on the worldwide polarization in the Anglican Communion over the same subject carefully dividing the Church into an Evangelical/Conservative faction to which Kunonga aligned himself and the Anglo-Catholic/Liberal faction to which Kunonga strategically placed his perceived opponents.<sup>116</sup> The bigger picture shows that homosexuality is not the central issue, power is! Homosexuality only allows power battles to be expressed through itself. What appeared to be a divine battle between the sons of light led by

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<sup>114</sup> Anglican-Information available online: <http://www.anglican-information-archive.org/kunonga4.html> accessed 02/12/2008.

<sup>115</sup> Zimbabwe's Heroes and Villains, Villain: Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, available online: <http://truezimbabweheroes.blogspot.com/2007/09/villain-2-bishop-nolbert-kunonga.html> accessed 02/12/2008.

<sup>116</sup> For the dispute regarding homosexuality within the Anglican, see, Stephen Bates, *A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004.

Kunonga and the sons of darkness led by Bakare was nothing but another of “churchmen’s ways of exploiting the widespread public acceptance of the authority of scripture to enhance their own authority as its interpreters.”<sup>117</sup> This may have failed dismally for Kunonga as the majority of Anglicans flocked to Bakare but the attempt is clear for those following the developments in the Diocese.

#### **5.4.4 Is homosexuality unnatural?**

The critical problem relating to the use of the term unnatural in describing homosexuality in the Zimbabwean debate relates to the meaning of nature itself. The least we can observe is that the terms natural and unnatural are relative and in the history of Christianity no one sums up this in a better way than St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote; “because of the diverse conditions of humans, it happens that some acts are virtuous [natural] to some people, as appropriate and suitable to them, while the same acts are immoral [unnatural] for others, as inappropriate to them.”<sup>118</sup> This crucial understanding is lacking in the contributions to the Zimbabwean homosexual debate. This leads us to pose some fundamental questions regarding the use of this designation.

Are things natural when they happen without the influence of human beings? Or, are things natural because they are common? Finally, are things natural because they benefit society? What is the basis upon which homosexuality is to be understood as unnatural?

The meanings of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ will vary according to the concept of ‘nature’ to which they are related [...]. Some ideas of nature are primarily realistic, that is, related to the physical world and observations of it [...] as the negation of this sense, unnatural would imply what is not part of the scientifically or physically observable world, for example, ghosts or miracles. In a less consistent way, nature is opposed to

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<sup>117</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 112.

<sup>118</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas in: Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God*, 163.

humans and their efforts, to designate what does or would occur without human intervention. Unnatural would therefore imply that which is characteristic of humans or that which is artificial.<sup>119</sup>

A closer look at the arguments raised by Zimbabwean Christians appears to show that it does not rely on realistic or empirical understanding of nature because under this understanding, homosexuality would be regarded as natural.

[Another] meaning of nature is in many respects a popular one [...] in everyday language; nature equals common sense and the normal. The criteria for differences are cultural and often based on unspoken agreements in society [...] cultural nature include the prevalent values and norms and reflect their changes. In this meaning nature is a societal concept.<sup>120</sup>

It would appear that frequently as observed by John J. Winkler, “nature stands for culture.”<sup>121</sup> Empirical and cultural natures may overlap but in some cases they may also stand in opposition. The existence of cultural nature brings to the fore the relativity of the concept of nature because while it is natural in some societies to marry a first cousin it is perfectly unnatural or incestuous in the Shona society of Zimbabwe for anyone to marry a first cousin. In this understanding, what is natural is that which society accepts as beneficial to the society. There is evidence that the Christian arguments are to a certain extent predicated on culturally defined nature. Homosexuality transgresses culturally defined sexual roles hence it is not natural. The Bible is therefore invoked to legitimize cultural conceptions of nature.

Nature can also be understood as an actual being with purpose and goal. Natural things are those whose purpose is beneficial to the society at large. This understanding of nature is the most represented in the Zimbabwean debate. Many contributors have sought to identify heterosexuality as natural while homosexuality is designated unnatural on the basis that the former was created

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<sup>119</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 137.

<sup>121</sup> Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 42.

by God and was intended for the purpose of procreation. In this regard individuals are;

Understanding nature teleologically, [this] is linked with Aristotelian and Thomist notions of nature as an actual being with purpose and goal. This very nature can be normative, because natural law orders the purpose and goal of each creature. The natural function of sexuality is seen in procreation.<sup>122</sup>

Nature as governed by laws of nature has seen Boswell christening it as ideal, what ought to be not what is, when he writes:

Ideal nature presupposes that nature is good. Some natural things may be sad or distressing, may even give the appearance of evil, but all can be shown to result in something which is desirable or worthwhile in the long run or on a grand scale. Concepts of ideal nature are strongly conditioned by observation of the real world, but they are ultimately determined by cultural values.<sup>123</sup>

On this basis therefore, the 'ideal nature', which seems to be a combination of purely scientific nature and an exclusively cultural nature becomes a third way of understanding the concept of nature. According to Boswell;

[A]nything which is truly vicious or evil must be unnatural since nature could not produce evil on its own [...] (The role of cultural values is unmistakable in some instances). This is particularly notable in the case of unnatural, which becomes in such a system a vehement circumlocution for bad or unacceptable. Not surprisingly, adherents of ideal concepts of nature frequently characterize as unnatural sexual behaviour to which they object on religious or personal grounds.<sup>124</sup>

In this understanding, which permeates the whole Christian argument, what is natural is what was created by God and that which God created can be seen from the end result of its use. It appears therefore that homosexuality is described as unnatural on the basis that it was not created by God and that traditional culture did not recognise it as beneficial to the society. It is interesting however that non-procreative heterosexual sexual activities,

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<sup>122</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 136.

<sup>123</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 13.

<sup>124</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 13.

which could equally be treated as unnatural in this understanding have escaped attention except in the Catholic Church. But even there, it is mostly theoretical as Catholics privately use birth control contraceptives against the teaching of the Church.

It appears that there is a selective application of the concept of nature in the Christian arguments. This is further complicated by the realization that procreation is no longer the central defining characteristic of many contemporary marriages. What was once natural may no longer be natural. The Christian argument also assumes that God created heterosexuality and it has largely been changing goal posts when it comes to homosexuality. According to Steven Greenberg, “homosexuals are either horrible corruptions of God’s intention or variations of God’s creative genius.”<sup>125</sup> To sum up this section, homosexuality appears to be ‘unnatural’ if ‘natural’ means common and socially acceptable. Other than that, the two bases upon which Christians have argued for the unnaturalness of homosexuality, that is, procreation and companionship can no longer be seen as excluding homosexual persons.

#### **5.4.5 Is homosexuality immoral?**

This question is one that can never be raised in most Christian circles because it is a foregone conclusion. However, in Zimbabwe the retired Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Harare, Peter Hatendi raised it in a letter to the Herald as well as one to Oskar Wermter of the Catholic Church. In these letters, the central question pertinent to this section is; is homosexuality and homosexual practice immoral even if it is proven that ‘homosexuals are born that way’?<sup>126</sup> While it is clear that “morals deal with the question of what is right and good, and what is wrong and evil, in human

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<sup>125</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 43.

<sup>126</sup> Peter Hatendi, Challenge Not yet Answered, *The Harare Herald*, 24/06/1996, see also Letter to Fr. Oskar Wermter, 02/07/1996. Both letters are attached as Appendix 39.

conduct,”<sup>127</sup> the application of morality is the greatest challenge. In dealing with morality, one has to deal with ethics because the two concepts are inter-related and this interrelation is captured by Peter Kasenene who writes:

Ethics and morality are terms that are often used interchangeably perhaps because they are closely related. Etymologically, ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which refers to the characteristic values, beliefs and practices of a social group. An ethos is constituted by the pervasive beliefs and values that are seldom questioned within a given society. Morality, on the other hand, is derived from a Latin word *mores*, which also refers to customs or the generally held beliefs and practices of a given society. Mores are the social norms of a given society making its moral system. By a moral system is meant the integrated and systematised set of ideas of right and wrong in a given culture.<sup>128</sup>

If morality refers to socially approved norms and values, does it entail that moral codes are socially constructed and not divinely sanctioned? If so, are moral codes deriving their relevance and authority from the fact that the majority support them? If so, are moral codes not ways through which the minorities are socially murdered for being different? Are moral codes not instruments for legitimizing majority dictatorships? What is the basis upon which homosexuality is labelled immoral in the Zimbabwean debate? There appears to be one critical basis throughout the Zimbabwean debate, that is, laws of nature. It is assumed that the morality or immorality of any action is to be judged on the basis of natural laws hence the following section focuses on these laws.

#### **5.4.6 Natural laws: Are they absolute?**

The Christian arguments have tended to portray unnatural and immoral as almost synonymous with the difference that the former is worse and more culpable than the latter. It therefore means that some things are immoral but natural (heterosexual

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<sup>127</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion, Second Revised Edition*, Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991, 174.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers Ltd, 1998, 8.

adultery, prostitution) while others are immoral and also unnatural (homosexual practice, paedophilia, bestiality). The natural law theory seems to bring to light the possible connection and justification of the view that, that which is unnatural is immoral. But are natural laws sufficient in dealing with the homosexuality challenge in society?

According to the natural law theory, the way the world is ordered and runs shows that people should act in conformity with natural law, not contrary to it. The basic idea is that any person who carefully studies human nature and who reflects upon it will be able to discover natural laws of human moral behaviour. Such laws, because they are based on the order of things and can be discovered by anyone, should be universal and binding on all humanity.<sup>129</sup>

This theory is closely related to, if not similar to the Divine Command Theory (DCT), which according to Derrick Farnell, is summed up in the answer of most believers when asked what morality is? “For most believers the answer is simple: what is in accordance with God’s command is moral, and what is contrary to that command is immoral.”<sup>130</sup> This raises the question, how does one tell what God has commanded from that which God has not commanded?

In Christian terms, natural law is the law of God imprinted in man [...]. The world, according to this view, reveals God’s plan and purpose for people and the world. People should follow it. The argument is that the world was created by God, who intended it to operate in a certain way and when people act against nature, they go against God [...]. The church uses the natural law argument on the ethics of abortion, sex, contraceptives, homosexuality and other moral issues.<sup>131</sup>

In adopting this theory as the basis of the moral pronouncements, the churches are assuming that nature is a concept that sums up all that was created by God. However, from our earlier analysis of the concept of nature, it goes without saying that the first chal-

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<sup>129</sup> Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*, 14-15.

<sup>130</sup> Derrick Farnell „God and Morality.“ [http://docs.google.com/View?docid=ah8t5xh9wmbx\\_123cwc35m](http://docs.google.com/View?docid=ah8t5xh9wmbx_123cwc35m) accessed 24/10/2007.

<sup>131</sup> Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*, 15.

lenge we face is: Which nature (empirical, ideal or cultural) was created by God? There are other philosophical problems raised against the natural law theory or the DCT such as the question raised by Plato's character, Socrates in *Euthypro's dilemma*. In it, the character Socrates asks: "Is something moral because the gods [God] command[s] it, or do the gods [God] command[s] it because it is moral?"<sup>132</sup> Commenting on this question Farnell writes;

The theory that God commands something because it is moral is problematic because it means that his command is dictated by morality, which is contrary to the theological doctrine of the supreme authority of God. While it is also problematic to say something is moral simply because God commands it [...]. Therefore, within this theory, acting morally is ultimately about complying with the whims of an amoral dictator, which is a far cry from the noble view of moral action held by most people today.<sup>133</sup>

The major perception of most of the contributors to the Zimbabwean debate is that "what is in accordance with God's command is moral and what is contrary to that command is immoral."<sup>134</sup> Nonetheless, we still remain with two critical problems that will be the focal point of our interaction with the moral discourse emanating from the Zimbabwean debate. A closer look at this simple understanding of the laws of nature shows that the Zimbabwean debate has silently endorsed the Bible as the source of these laws because in it all that God commands is contained. It is not surprising that contributors are quick to point to the creation of Adam and Eve. The catch-phrase "Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve"<sup>135</sup> has been popularly used in Zimbabwe to demonstrate that God created men to mate with women and any other mating that does not involve male and female is to be considered against the laws of nature. The Zimbabwean debate creates the impression that the creation stories of Genesis are indeed summaries of the God-created nature and it has to be followed.

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<sup>132</sup> Socrates (*Euthypro's Dilemma*) cited in: Farnell „God and Morality.“

<sup>133</sup> Farnell „God and Morality“.

<sup>134</sup> Farnell „God and Morality“.

<sup>135</sup> Dave Chikosi "What is Adam doing with Steve?"

The Christian argument also suggests that there cannot be any transgression of these laws, which transgression could also be viewed as natural. These observations and contentions in the Zimbabwean Christian arguments bring to light the selective manner in which the laws of nature become operative in different societies. While any transgression on sexual issues is seen as impossible because God is perfect, the same has not been insisted on, on other issues such as right-handedness or left-handedness, subjects that sometimes cause social problems in some societies. That in Zimbabwe, people are aware of children who are born as intersexed (hermaphrodites) has been deliberately put into the background because it would directly challenge the assumptions being made about the absoluteness of the laws of nature.

While Zimbabwean Christians have sought to absolutize the laws of nature, this move is difficult to sustain because of a number of reasons we have already intimated above. First, an absolute view of the laws of nature requires an absolute answer on what nature is. This has not been clear because the arguments have tended to selectively apply aspects of empirical, cultural and ideal concepts of nature. In the end, there is no single understanding of nature. Second, the Zimbabwean Christians have largely taken the creation stories in Genesis to demonstrate that God created the universe and commanded males to mate with females only since God created Adam and Eve. Is it that procreation is part of the laws of nature or “the propagation of humans is clearly not a law of nature, but rather something that she only tolerates?”<sup>136</sup>

The central role apportioned to the Bible calls for questions regarding the interpretation of the Bible. Interpretation is not an innocent endeavour because interpreters are not innocent readers of the Bible. Zimbabwean Christians have tended to amalgamate the created nature of Genesis with the Zimbabwean contextual and cultural nature hence more often than not; writers have equated nature and culture. The family values argument has to be un-

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<sup>136</sup> Donatien-Alphonse-Francois Sade or The Marquis de Sade cited in: GALZ, *Unspoken Facts*, 89.

derstood in this context, culturally, sexual intercourse had a goal to achieve, that is, making babies and strengthening the community. This was natural to the cultural context of most Zimbabweans but the same cannot be said in the contemporary context with the dominant theme of family planning.

This mixing of different concepts of nature means that the argument is so fluid and cannot be pinned down on any one concept of nature. In that regard, even the call on the natural law theory is done selectively, only when it serves the interests of the discourse is it invoked. There is no better way of illustrating this than the case of people who are born mentally or physically challenged; it is generally accepted that it is natural for human beings to be born with a pair of legs, arms, eyes, and all the other body parts but then experience has taught human beings that even though this is the ideal scenario time and again some occurrences have transgressed these expectations. In these cases, people are quick to note that “it is natural because s/he was born like that.”<sup>137</sup> Some would want to call these people disabled and many societies have enacted laws to protect such people from being discriminated against on the basis of their physical conditions. Also, despite the centrality of procreation there are some who are born impotent and cannot therefore procreate. While societies can accept these transgressions as God’s own purposeful planning, when it comes to homosexuality and homosexual persons, God’s purposeful planning is deftly limited by the readers of the Bible. To call homosexuality immoral on this basis appears to raise more questions than answers. It remains debatable if consensual adult same-sex relationships are inherently immoral.

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<sup>137</sup> This is commonly used when people try to explain those cases that transgress that which is commonly accepted as normal. Moves have been made to desist from using the term ‘abnormal’ because it is derogatory to those people.

### 5.4.7 Science and Biblical Interpretation

In chapter three, it was noted how homosexual persons have invoked science in their explanation of homosexuality. The challenge which has been hardly addressed in the Christian arguments is the impact of scientific findings in biblical interpretation. The position taken by Pashapa clearly captures the problems associated with scientific research on the biological, hormonal or genetic connections to homosexuality. The evidence as already intimated is not conclusive leaving homosexuality a social and scientific wonder. The problem is that Zimbabwean Christians have adopted the position taken by Paul Cameron when he argues that no researcher has found provable biological or genetic differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals because none exists.<sup>138</sup>

This understanding has meant that scientific researches have been accorded no role in biblical interpretation, at least, not a constructive role. Mabhumbo captures this fear of research when he writes;

When we think of homosexuality, it is always accompanied by all these feelings of frustration, anger, fear and shame. We are frustrated because we cannot explain how such a condition can come to be, angry because it will not disappear, afraid because it threatens to erode the very foundation of our values of normal behaviour, and ashamed for being rendered inadequate.<sup>139</sup>

The problems apparent in the Zimbabwean debate regarding the relevance of scientifically acquired knowledge are not new. Preus observes that by the seventeenth century, “theologians on the right resisted any suggestion that secular knowledge – even the new knowledge that was burgeoning all around them – was of any relevance for interpreting scripture.”<sup>140</sup> Zimbabwean Christians have seemingly adopted this age-old theological stance against

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Paul Cameron „What Causes Homosexual Desire and Can it be Changed?“ <http://www.biblebelievers.com/Cameron3.html> accessed 24/10/2007.

<sup>139</sup> Mabhumbo, A case that cries for Treatment.

<sup>140</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 70.

contemporary scientific evidence that challenges biblical injunctions.

It is the contention here that a critical and appropriate biblical interpretation should acknowledge the impact of socio-historical context, that of the Bible and of the readers as well as scientific researches. “Given the historical contextuality of the biblical writings and their cultural-religious conditionedness, exclusive universal normativity cannot be claimed for the Bible.”<sup>141</sup> Does it mean anything to observe that clearly, no one has the answer to how some people, a minority throughout the world; can be so different to the majority when it comes to sexual issues. It is interesting that Christian leaders have selectively been consulting scientific researches, those confirming their ideas about homosexuality are favoured over those against such ideas. As Banana observes, “when human beings make claims that they are inspired by God and that arising from this so-called inspiration their utterances represent the voice of God, care should be taken so as not to mistake the voice of mortals for the voice of God.”<sup>142</sup> How much of these interpretations are the voices of the readers and not necessarily the authors who also may have had their voices overshadow that of God?

Two critical questions arise out of this analysis: First, can one re-read the biblical texts using knowledge obtained from scientific researches? Second and most critical, did the ancient Israelites or the early believers in Jesus know what we know today about homosexuality? Regarding the differences between the original context and the Zimbabwean context within which the Bible is being read today, Christians seem to have downplayed the fact that “between the Bible and the African religio-cultural worldview and life there exists a gap of time and place.”<sup>143</sup> Science has already played a role in our understanding of the world we live in. No Christian

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<sup>141</sup> Lehmann-Habeck „New Light on the Bible for Today’s readers“, 53.

<sup>142</sup> Canaan S. Banana “The Case for a New Bible” in: Mukonyora (eds et al), “*Rewriting” the Bible: the real issues*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993, 18-9.

<sup>143</sup> Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, 79.

still believes that sperms are foetuses, which appears to be the case in the Bible (Gen. 38:9). Neither does one believe that women are only incubators in the conception of children. These are results of the impact of the biological researches on our understanding of human nature. It is surprising that the same openness to science is missing in the Zimbabwean Christian argument against homosexuality. The stance as noted above in the words of Cameron is that Christians have convinced themselves that it is impossible, when it comes to sexuality for any natural transgressions to occur. Even that they can decide what God can or cannot do, what is acceptable or not even if God were responsible for it.

It is possible to integrate scientific researches and findings in biblical interpretation because the Bible has to make sense in our context. However, a critical analysis of the Christian readings of the Bible shows that they are reactionary and not meant to understand the texts in their contexts before they are appropriated to the contemporary discussions. "Literalistic biblical interpretation, misconstruing both the substance and emphasis of biblical teachings, sometimes accompanies socially reactionary thinking as people fear for the stability of their social world."<sup>144</sup> Such socially reactionary interpretations are likely to betray existential fears of the readers rather than the issues that were addressed by such texts in their context of origin. This has already happened as noted above, slavery, racism and apartheid have been challenged. Further, dress codes have largely been modified and agricultural techniques disregard some of the biblical injunctions, regarding inter-cropping. As Lehmann-Habeck points out "the biblical message can no longer be propagated in its literal form."<sup>145</sup> Why has homosexuality remained as the taboo of all times?

The gender and women's rights lobby argued primarily on the basis of science, that is, biology shows that while there are differences in the physiology of women and men, they are however,

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<sup>144</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Lehmann-Habeck "New Light on the Bible for Today's readers", 35.

equally important. That has meant the Bible texts such as Gal. 3:28 were given a new lease of life in the empowerment of women. Further, this equality has led to the emphasis of woman as a companion rather than a helper in the interpretation of Gen. 1 and 2, the creation stories and in the understanding of marriage. It is therefore not without precedent that some scholars do call for closer attention to developments in biological, genetic and hormonal researches in biblical interpretation. The Zimbabwean Christian arguments have been less interested in this dimension; hence the answer to GALZ has been a series of accusations based on a literal appropriation of the Bible on the subject of homosexuality. "People do not read the Bible unbiased or neutrally since all human beings are susceptible to a variety of socio-cultural influences which constitute human life."<sup>146</sup> This may essentially explain why instead of people dialoguing over homosexuality, Zimbabweans engaged in a debate. The interest is not to understand the other; rather in a debate one is focused on throwing as much mud on the other as is possible.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The following points appear to have been the predominant ideas in the Christian argument against homosexuality; first, that the Bible as the Word of God has an irreversible position on the subject of homosexuality. This position is based on the reading of Gen. 19, Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, Rom. 1:24-26, 1Cor. 6:9 and 1Tim. 1:10 as understood in the light of the creation stories of Gen. 1 and 2. Despite the attempts by homosexual persons to make a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate homosexual practices and relationships, Christians have clearly treated homosexuality as a homogeneous condition. Christians have only been interested with what these biblical texts literally say and that is

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<sup>146</sup> Jeremy Punt „The Bible in the Gay Debate in South Africa: Towards an ethics of interpretation“, 2006, 423.

taken as a critique of homosexuality within their context.<sup>147</sup> Further, though heterosexuality has elements that are clearly not accepted within the society in Zimbabwe, homosexuality has been refused the same benefit of the doubt. What this demonstrates is that human beings decide what parts of the Bible remain relevant. That some texts are no longer considered relevant calls for a critical interpretation of the texts on homosexuality.

Concepts such as nature, morality and laws of nature have been shown to be complex concepts. It was noted how nature as a concept can be relative because it is sometimes determined by the socio-historical context within which it is being applied. Even more, the same socio-historical context can still use different conceptions of nature depending on which conception serves a particular interest. The same applies to morality and even more difficult for morality is the starting point. Is homosexuality immoral because it is a deliberate choice of that which is not normal and wrong? Is homosexuality inherently immoral, whether it is by choice or by default? If, as homosexual persons argue, homosexuality is not by choice does it remain immoral?

The Christian reading of the Bible assumes that the writers of Genesis knew about heterosexuality and homosexuality and that they clearly show that God created heterosexuality. It is in this light that some Christians are accused of a heterosexist reading of the Bible. What appears apparent from this work so far is that “there is need to reject a ‘fundamentalist of the left’ composed of short-circuits: attempts to transplant biblical paradigms and situations into our world without understanding their historical circumstances.”<sup>148</sup> The following chapter will therefore engage in an exegesis of the so-called “explicit texts” on homosexuality in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible. To this end, the interest is to establish what was condemned by these texts in ancient Israel and

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Justin S. Ukpong, “Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa” in: Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube (eds), *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 17.

<sup>148</sup> Assman cited in: West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 136.

focus will be on such key issues as the central concern of both Gen. 19 and Leviticus 18 and 20, particularly the connection between same-sex practices and humiliation.

## CHAPTER 6: SAME-SEX PRACTICES AND HUMILIATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST (ANE)

Sexual Relations are so fundamental to human experience that in every society, at any given point in history, systems of rules governing sexual conduct have been developed.<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

While various issues have been raised against the acceptability of homosexuality and homosexual persons in Zimbabwe, the Bible has been a central weapon in justifying the negative perception. However, the manner in which the Bible was used and the interpretations drawn from the Bible remain as debatable as the nature of homosexuality itself. That, some leaders in Zimbabwe have invoked the Bible while clearly fighting some private wars, calls for a critical interrogation of the role the Bible continues to play in African societies. This dimension of biblical studies has been somewhat suppressed in the post-colonial era even though it was possibly one of the pillars of many liberation attempts in Africa. Leaders, both political and religious, have sought to present themselves as representatives of God and by implication therefore, not accountable to the ordinary people. Questions on the authenticity of biblical interpretations are bound to arise where leaders claim to have been ‘appointed by God’ and therefore declaring the intention to bully all other mortals.

Two critical questions arise from the Zimbabwean debate: Have same-sex practices always manifested themselves consistently throughout the ages? Further, are the so-called ‘explicit texts’ universally valid in their condemnation of same-sex practices? The key players in the debate with the exception of GALZ and its sympathisers have affirmed the consistency of homosexual manifesta-

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, 17.

tions and the timelessness of the Bible. As noted in chapter two, the Bible was packaged as the manual for ‘good and respectable living’ by missionaries. It was the Word of God, and was a timeless source book for all those who simply searched in its pages. This was so because “God foresaw and designed the (Hebrew) Bible.”<sup>2</sup> This mystification of the Bible continued with indigenous leaders as they got into the reins of power leading to that popular dictum “is it in the Bible?” In many other denominations, the same Bible has acquired the status of ‘magical object’ that even with its pages closed, it can still be the legitimating force for those claiming authority. The Bible has been abused because of this authoritarian status it has been granted.

It shall be argued in this chapter that while there are concepts in the Bible that are trans-cultural such as the “love of one’s neighbour”, there are also portions that are culturally-specific such as the slavery texts.<sup>3</sup> While agreeing with William J. Webb and other scholars on these aspects of Biblical message, it shall be argued that contrary to the conclusion that texts on homosexuality are transcultural<sup>4</sup>, there is evidence that these texts are culturally conditioned. Further, it will be argued in this chapter that even the so-called ‘trans-cultural concepts’, are still clothed in a particular cultural garb conditioned by socio-historical circumstances of the particular groups. Of critical importance in this chapter being the prevalence of the association of homosexuality and humiliation within the ancient Israelite context and the greater ANE context.

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<sup>2</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 94.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, 2002, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*, 36ff.

## 6.2 Exegeting Genesis 19: 1-19

### 6.2.1 The Hebrew Text and its translation<sup>5</sup>

וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי  
הַמַּלְאָכִים סָדְמָה בְּעָרֵב וְלוֹט  
יָשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־סֹדֶם וַיִּרְאֵם לֹט וַיִּקָּם  
לְקִרְאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַפָּיִם אֶרְצָה:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground.

וַיֹּאמֶר הֵנּהּ  
נֹאֲדָדְנִי סִירוּ נָא אֶל־בַּיִת  
עֲבֹדְכֶם וְלִינוּ וּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם  
וְהִשְׁפַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם לְדַרְכְּכֶם  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִי בְּרָחוּב נִלְוִין:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:2 He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square."

וַיִּפְצַר־בָּםמֵאֲד  
אֱלֹוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיִּסְרוּ אֶל־בַּיִתוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ  
לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וּמִצּוֹת אָפֶה  
וַיֹּאכְלוּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:3 But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ  
וְאֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם נֹסְבֵי  
עַל־הַבַּיִת מִנְעַר וְעַד־זֶקֶן  
כָּל־הָעָם מִקְצָה:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house;

וַיִּקְרְאוּ  
וַיִּקְרְאוּ

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:5 and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you

<sup>5</sup> The translations within the table are taken from Bible Works, which in turn has taken these translations from various Bible translations being used by different Christian groups throughout the world. On verses whose meaning is not part of the central debate on homosexuality, only the NRS version has been noted, while on those verses where debate is centred on, at least two versions have been used, mainly the NRS and the NIV. The NRS is widely used in academic circles while the NIV is widely used by Christians (especially Pentecostal). Other versions are cited where it is hoped such translations can widen the scope of our argument in this work.

אֶל-לוֹט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֵיךְ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה  
אֵלֵינוּ נִרְעָה אִתָּם:

וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:6  
לוֹט הַפֶּתַח וַהֲדַלְתָּנּוּ אַחֲרָיו:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:7  
אֲחֵי תִרְעוּ:

וַיֹּאמֶר לֵי <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:8  
שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדְעוּ אִישׁ  
אֲוֹצִיָּאָה־נָא אִתָּהּ אֲלֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ  
לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לֹא-נָשִׂים  
הֵאלֵל אֶל-תַּעֲשׂוּ דָבָר כִּי-עַל-כֵּן  
בָּאוּ בְּצִל קַיִשׁ רַחֲמֵי:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:9  
גַּשְׁתָּלָּאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲחֵר  
בְּאֵל-גּוֹר וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שְׁפוֹט עִתָּהּ  
הַדָּלַת: נִרְעָה לָךְ מֵהֶם וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ  
בְּלוֹט מְאֹד וַיִּנְשׂוּ לְשֹׁבֵר

tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them."

<sup>NIV</sup> Gen. 19:5 They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:6 Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him,

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:7 and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:8 Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

<sup>NIV</sup> Gen. 19:8 Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."

<sup>NLT</sup> Gen. 19:8 Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection."

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:9 But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down.

<sup>TNK</sup> Gen. 19:9 But they said, "Stand back! The fellow," they said, "came here as an alien, and already he acts the ruler! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door.

וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:10  
הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת־יָדָם וַיִּבְיֵאוּ אֶת־לוֹט  
אֵלֵיהֶם הַבַּיִתָּה וּפְתַח־הַדָּלֶת סָגְרוּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:10 But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

וְאֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:11  
אֲשֶׁר־פָּתַח הַבַּיִת הֵכּוּ בְּסַגּוּרֵיהֶם  
מִקֵּץ וְעַד־גְּדוּל וַיִּלְאוּ לְמַצָּא  
הַפֶּתַח:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:11 And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:12  
הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶל־לוֹט עַד מִי־לָךְ פֹּה  
חַתָּן וּבְנֵיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ  
בְּעִיר הוּצֵא מִן־הַמָּקוֹם:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city—bring them out of the place.

כִּי־מִשְׁחַתֵּים <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:13  
אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי־גָדְלָה  
צַעֲקַתָּם אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַחֵנוּ  
יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:13 For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

וַיֵּצֵא <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:14  
וַיִּדְבֹּר אֶל־חַתָּנָיו לֵקְחֵי בָנֹתָיו  
וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צְאוּ מִן־הַמָּקוֹם  
אֶת־הָעִיר וַיְהִי כַּמְצַחֵק בְּעֵינֵי  
חַתָּנָיו:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

וּכְמוֹ הַשָּׁחַר <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:15  
עָלָה וַיֹּאצְרוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים בְּלוֹט  
לֵאמֹר קוּם קַח אֶת־אִשְׁתְּךָ  
וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי בְנֹתֶיךָ הַנִּמְצָאֹת  
פְּנֵי־תַסְפָּה בְּעֵינֵי הָעִיר:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city."

וַיִּתְמַהֲמַהּ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:16  
וַיַּחֲזִקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּיָדוֹ וּבְיַד־אִשְׁתּוֹ  
וּבְיַד שְׁתֵּי בְנֹתָיו בַּחֲמֹלַת יְהוָה  
עָלָיו וַיִּצְאֵהוּ וַיַּנְחֵהוּ מִחוּץ לָעִיר:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:16 But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city.

וַיְהִי <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:17  
כְּהוֹצִיאִם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
הַמַּלְטֵי עַל־נַפְשְׁךָ אֶל־תִּבֵּיט  
אֲחֵרֶיךָ וְאֶל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַכֶּבֶד  
הַהָרָה הַמַּלְטֵי פְּנֵי־תַסְפָּה:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:17 When they had brought them outside, they said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed."

וַיֹּאמֶר <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:18  
לוֹט אֱלֹהִים אֵל־נָא אֲדֹנָי:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:18 And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords;

הִנֵּה־נָא מָצָא <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 19:19  
עַבְדְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתִּגְדַּל חַסְדְּךָ  
עִשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחְיֹת אֶת־נַפְשִׁי  
וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אוּכַל לְהַמְלִיט הַהָרָה  
פְּנֵי־תִדְבַקְנִי הָרָעָה וּמָתִי:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 19:19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die.

This text has been one of the widely cited texts in the Zimbabwean debate. The story of Sodom has evolved significantly in Zimbabwean Christianity from the days when all children were taught about the 'turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt' (v.26) to the debate when the story exclusively taught 'the consequences of homosexual practice' to Sodom and contemporary societies. The

centrality of this text to the Zimbabwean debate is also based on the existence of the so-called ‘sodomy laws’ in the Penal Code, which are based on an interpretation of this text. Male-male anal intercourse is proscribed under the sodomy laws in Zimbabwe as noted in chapter four.

Part of the challenges posed by this text revolve around the translation of v.5 and v.8, particularly the Hebrew word יָדַע and this dates back to the work of Sherwin Bailey soon after World War II but whose argument is now widely discredited. Bailey argued that the term, which means ‘know’ only shows that the men of Sodom wanted to interrogate the strangers for acquaintance purposes.<sup>6</sup> The NRS for wanting to be as faithful to the original as possible has translated this term literally as ‘know’. However, the NIV and other modern translations have moved a step further by translating the term as expressing the desire to be intimate or to have sex. This translation appears however to conjure the wrong understanding of the text in that it fails to capture the apparent desire by the men of Sodom to use force on Lot or the strangers.

When someone attempts to forcefully ‘have sex’ with another, legally and in general talk, such action is not understood as ‘wanting to have sex’, rather that is called ‘wanting to rape’. Intimacy, generally, is associated with licit sexual relations not forced sexual relations! It is true that translations associating the term יָדַע with sex are correct even though they miss the intensity and implication of the text on contemporary readings. It is in this context that the preferred translation for this critical term in v.5 be rendered ‘Where are the men who came to you this evening? Bring them out to us so that we can rape them’, where יָדַע is translated as ‘rape’ instead of ‘wanting to have sex’ since the “message of the Bible has to be rendered as meaningful as possible”<sup>7</sup> capturing

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. D. Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955; reprint, Hamden, CT: Shoestring, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke & Peter M. Renju (eds), “Introduction” in: *Bible Translation and African Languages*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004, 1. See also,

both the original context and the context of the readers. Further, this is implied in the manner in which they ‘surrounded Lot’s house’. This clearly is violent language leading towards violent actions.

This study also contends that the attempt by Pashapa in Zimbabwe and other scholars to understand v.8 as essentially meaning the same thing as v.5 fails to appreciate the apparent difference in the tone of the two verses. This has had the effect of altering in a significant way, the manner in which the text should be understood by its readers. To this extent, this work argues that in v.8, Lot uses the term יָרַע in a fundamentally different way because while the men of Sodom sought to have sex with or without consent, Lot on the other hand clearly has the commonly agreed licit (not necessarily meaning consensual between sex partners but rather meaning socially approved, where sexual practice is intrinsically connected to social status and where it works as a symbol of power. The women were the divinely ordained victims of this understanding of sexual relations) sex between husband and wife in mind when he uses the term. In this environment, rape and consensual sexual intercourse are almost synonymous hence the double meaning of this term.

Lot, therefore uses יָרַע to refer not to rape as in v.5 but to ‘licit’ heterosexual sexual intercourse. Lot could not have said ‘my two virgin daughters have never been raped’ hence it is best rendered as ‘my two virgin daughters have never had licit sexual intercourse’. It is on the basis of this understanding that this text will be approached. The following sections will demonstrate how this difference is justifiable on the basis of the literary world created by the text, and the socio-historical context that produced the text itself. Further, examples will be drawn from extra-biblical materials that could have been known by the storytellers of ancient Israel.

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Stanley E. Porter, “The Contemporary English Version and the Ideology of Translation” in: Stanley E. Porter & Richard S. Hess (eds), *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004, 24-25.

### **6.2.2 *The socio-literary world of the text***

It has been argued consistently in this study that literary pieces and oral stories reflect on daily life in the communities in which they arise. We can understand the text if we search for the social world it creates in its story telling, a world which is either the dominant reality of the time or the ideal world that remains a dream, that which ought to be but is not. The world created by the text is one that is divided into the dichotomy of good guys and bad guys, Abraham representing the epitome of goodness through his hosting of the three sojourners in Gen. 18:1ff, while the men of Sodom are the complete contrast to Abraham as they are hostile to sojourners.

After being shown great hospitality by Abraham, the three visitors (believed to be God and two angels) divulge to Abraham that their mission is a fact-finding mission to establish if indeed the men of Sodom have committed all the evil they are accused of (Gen.18:21). This is significant for the understanding of Gen. 19 as it builds on this socio-literary world that it has created. This part of the story is significant because it clearly shows that the visitors of Abraham are already aware of the evil that is happening in Sodom and that a decision to destroy it has already been made. The good guy Abraham tries to talk the visitors out of that decision and only eventually manages to secure the sparing of Lot who happens to be a good guy living among the bad guys.

Lot as a good guy among bad guys comes to the 'rescue' of two of the three companions who in chapter 18 had been hosted by Abraham by offering them overnight accommodation against their wish of spending the night in the open. Clearly, the text strongly hints towards Lot's knowledge of the hostility the sojourners would encounter in the open. The good guys, Abraham and Lot are pro-hospitality while the men of Sodom are anti-hospitality. The men of Sodom surround the house of Lot and threatened to unleash an orgy of violence on the two visitors as well as Lot himself as he tried to convince the men of Sodom to unleash their orgy of sexual violence on his two virgin daughters.

Because the purpose is not to deal with sexual desire, the offer of two virgin daughters is not taken. The desire was to humiliate the visitors by undermining their masculinity, forcefully making them feminine by raping them.

In this socio-literary world, the men of Sodom are guilty of many crimes 'against humanity' as they seem to have a strong tradition of humiliating and ill-treating strangers and other vulnerable groups. There are many manifestations of this hostility to strangers and one of such manifestations is homosexual rape. This is a heinous crime in a world where gender differences are understood as 'divinely ordained'. This world created by the text does not know any other reason for homosexual rape except humiliating the other since it does not lead to procreation and since common sexual desire is dealt with by using women, which is why Lot offered his daughters. On the basis of this socio-literary world, it is apparent that the idea is to condemn this known manifestation of inhospitality which also expressed itself through homosexual rape. On the basis of the world that it creates, the text makes its opposition to sexual rape clear. To therefore interpret v.5 as 'wanting to have sex' fundamentally imposes a new world on the text.

### ***6.2.3 The Early interpretations of the Sodom story***

The argument above is that the socio-literary world of the text does not substantiate the popular argument in the Zimbabwean debate, that, homosexuality was the major and in some cases, the sole cause of the destruction of Sodom. This argument is further buttressed by the early interpretations of the story by Old Testament prophets and the Jesus tradition. In the Old Testament, the story of Sodom is referred to by a number of prophets, namely, Ezek. 16:49-50; Am. 4:1,11; Isa. 1:15;3:9,14-16; and Zeph. 1:9;2:9. "In all these references to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, the issue is wantonness. It is about domination of others, about ma-

lignant power.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, “whenever the sins of the sodomites are described in more detail, it is their pride, xenophobia, and judicial offences that get the main attention (Ezek. 16:49).”<sup>9</sup> It appears that the early propagations of the Sodom story did not focus on homosexuality as the major issue.

The prophets, particularly Ezekiel clearly highlight the centrality of inhospitality in the fate of Sodom. “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.” (Ezek. 16:49). The prophet Ezekiel clearly enumerates the sins that constituted the evil of Sodom and homosexuality as it were finds no room. The men of Sodom are depicted as individuals who always enjoyed expressing their supremacy on strangers, and the weaker groups in their own community. These are the evil that led to the mission which saw God and his two companions pass through Abraham’s abode at Mamre. This is not to reject that there are clear references to same-sex practices in the story; rather this is to argue that the references to same-sex practices are clearly illustrations of the decadence that had become rife in Sodom. On the basis of these early interpretations of the text, it is clear that, to use this text as fundamentally an injunction on homosexuality is to force our prejudices on the text.

The same is observable in the only reference to Sodom ascribed to Jesus in Luk. 10:10-12 and Matt. 10:14-15. The table below shows the Greek text and the NRS English translation. This is the only mention of Sodom in the Jesus tradition in the New Testament gospels and it clearly shows the understanding that people of that time had of the Sodom story and its moral teaching.

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<sup>8</sup> Ken Sehested „Biblical Fidelity and Sexual Orientation: Why the First Matters, Why the Second Doesn’t“ in: Wink (ed), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith*, 55. See also Judith H. Newman, “Lot in Sodom: The post-mortem of a city and the afterlife of a biblical text” in: Craig A. Evans & James A. Sanders (eds), *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 34.

<sup>9</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homeropticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, 1998, 46.

BGT **Matt. 10:14** καὶ ὅς ἂν μὴ δεῖξηται ὑμᾶς μηδὲ ἀκούσῃ τοὺς λόγους ὑμῶν, ἐξερχόμενοι ἕξω τῆς οἰκίας ἢ τῆς πόλεως ἐκεῖνης ἐκτινάξατε τὸν κοινορτὸν τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν.

NRS **Matt. 10:14** If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

BGT **Matt. 10:15** ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀνεκτότερον ἔσται γῆ Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρων ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως ἢ τῇ πόλει ἐκεῖνῃ.

NRS **Matt. 10:15** Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

BGT **Luke 10:10** εἰς ἣν δ' ἂν πόλιν εἰσέλθῃτε καὶ μὴ δεῖχωνται ὑμᾶς, ἐξελθόντες εἰς τὰς πλατείας αὐτῆς εἴπατε·

NRS **Luke 10:10** But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say,

BGT **Luke 10:11** καὶ τὸν κοινορτὸν τὸν κολληθέντα ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῶν εἰς τοὺς πόδας ἀπομασσοῦμεθα ὑμῖν· πλὴν τοῦτο γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

NRS **Luke 10:11** 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

BGT **Luke 10:12** λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι Σοδόμοις ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνῃ ἀνεκτότερον ἔσται ἢ τῇ πόλει ἐκεῖνῃ.

NRS **Luke 10:12** I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

It is apparent that “references in the New Testament follow the same course [following on the prophetic interpretations of the Sodom story], Sodom is the symbol of corruption, and in the Jesus tradition the sin of Sodom is an example of the lack of hospitality.”<sup>10</sup> The Jesus tradition equates Sodom with any town or city that will refuse to host his disciples, not a town or city that will seek to ‘have sex with the disciples’. There is nothing in the verses above to show that the Jesus tradition associated Sodom with homosexuality, rather it is explicit that the sin of Sodom is one of inhospitality. This understanding is equally represented in the words of Origen, one of the early Church Fathers who wrote; “Hear this, you who close your homes to guests! [...] Lot who lived among the Sodomites [...] escaped the fire on account of one thing

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<sup>10</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 47.

only. He opened his home to guests.”<sup>11</sup> In the understanding of the Jesus tradition and Origen, the sin of the sodomites appears to have been inhospitality.

The understanding of Sodom running through its socio-literary world, the prophets, the Jesus tradition and also Origen is further strengthened by the realization that;

Among the early rabbinic commentators, the common reading of the sin of Sodom was its cruelty, arrogance, and disdain for the poor [...] the Sages of the Babylonian Talmud also associated Sodom with the sins of pride, envy, cruelty to orphans, theft, murder and perversion of justice.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly from its earliest days, the same-sex overtones were not the central concern of the story instead they were deployed to illustrate the central concern, that is, hospitality. It is in this light that

From their conceptual understanding of Sodom, the sages of the Talmud developed the legal category of *middat sedom*, meaning Sodomite character or conduct. Someone who refuses to offer help to another in need when the generosity costs him nothing is, in *halakhic* [legal] terms, behaving like a Sodomite.<sup>13</sup>

Even Jewish Rabbis also came to the same understanding that the Sodom story was an indictment on the selfishness of the men of Sodom, who only thought of themselves and nothing else. It would appear the worst manifestation of the evil of Sodom was the manner in which they abused the less privileged members of society, the orphans, widows and the strangers.

The shift from this understanding to an emphasis of same-sex practices is evident in the works of Josephus and Philo. Greek conceptions were used in understanding this story. “In the Hellenistic age, sexual aspects were observed in the sin of Sodom. Josephus and Philo represent it explicitly.”<sup>14</sup> In their interpretations of the Sodom story, the cultural effect of Hellenism cannot be mistaken. Within the Hellenistic cultural understanding where

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<sup>11</sup> Origen cited in: Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, 2004, 65.

<sup>13</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 71.

<sup>14</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 47.

the beauty of boys was central in understanding same-sex practices, the story of Sodom had to be realigned to this cultural conception. It is with this conception that Josephus decided to portray the two companions as handsome young men when he writes; “But the sodomites on seeing these young men of remarkably fair appearance whom Lot had taken under his roof, were bent only on violence and outrage to their youthful beauty.”<sup>15</sup> That explains why the guests of Lot have to be young in Josephus’ understanding even though the biblical text makes no such mention of their ages. While tempering with the ages, Josephus captures the central concern of the Sodom story as the attempt to violently humiliate the guests hence maintaining the idea that this story’s teaching is about the various manifestations of inhospitality of which same-sex assault is just one such example.

Philo interpreted the Sodom story within the broader framework of reproduction. Philo is essentially a procreationist and sexual intercourse is only natural if it is meant to procreate. On the Sodom story, he writes that the Sodomites;

threw off from their necks the law of nature [...] not only in their mad lust for women did they violate the marriages of their neighbours, but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive, and so when they tried to beget children they were discovered to be incapable of any but a sterile seed.<sup>16</sup>

That Philo divides sex partners into active and passive clearly betrays the Hellenistic understanding of his time. However more importantly, “for Philo, same-sex contacts are considered a threat to the reproduction of humankind.”<sup>17</sup> The procreationism of Philo is behind the conception of man as the farmer who waits for the rain before planting the seed and therefore unites with his wife in

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<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 1:199 available online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146&layout=&loc=1.200> accessed 1/12/2008.

<sup>16</sup> Philo, *On Abraham* 133-141 Translated by F. H. Colson, Harvard (1954) available online: <http://www.well.com/user/aquarius/philo-abraham.htm> accessed 1/12/2008.

<sup>17</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 95.

a fitting time. For him, knowingly marrying an infertile woman is condemnable,<sup>18</sup> and “strange pleasures would eventually result in nothing short of death: that of individuals, generations and the species itself.”<sup>19</sup> In Philo’s understanding, all heterosexuals who engage in sexual intercourse while actively avoiding procreation are sinning. This has very few takers now owing to various developments that have changed people’s perceptions of sex and procreation in Zimbabwe.

#### **6.2.4 What was the sin of Sodom?**

On the basis of the above arguments from the translation of יָדַע in verses 5 and 8, to the socio-literary world of the text, and the early interpretations, the narrative of Sodom was understood as teaching against inhospitality. “The Hebrew Bible outside of Genesis suggests a number of ideas about the exact nature of Sodom’s sin: adultery, social injustice, arrogance, and oppression of the poor.”<sup>20</sup> The homosexuality that is condemned in this narrative is just but one form of the various manifestations of inhospitality. And in fact, it appears that the connection between the fate of Sodom and homosexuality was itself a late development finding explicit mention in the works of Josephus and Philo who are responding to Hellenistic same-sex practices. With the difference in the socio-literary world created by the text and the socio-historical world of Josephus and Philo, the first distortions of the text find expression. The attempt to violently gang rape two angels in Sodom is equated to Greek pederasty, which clearly is not covered under the evil of Sodom since Greek pederasty had nothing to do with rape.

It is abundantly clear in the narrative that what the men of Sodom sought was to homosexually gang-rape the visitors who had been

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, 1990, 54.

<sup>20</sup> Newman “Lot in Sodom: The post-mortem of a city and the afterlife of a biblical text”, 36.

accommodated by Lot. The men of Sodom sought to express their supremacy to the visitors and the sojourner-cum-judge Lot. This study concurs with George R. Edwards when he argues that “the Sodomite’s activity was phallic aggression generated by xenophobic arrogance [...] its purpose is to disgrace one’s manly honour, to reduce one to a woman’s role.”<sup>21</sup> Rape is one of the worst manifestations of inhospitality because it is motivated by the desire to subjugate and dominate not to entertain. It is motivated not by sexual desire but by the need to show supremacy and power.<sup>22</sup> In the Sodom story, such supremacy and power could not be satisfied by the offer of Lot’s daughters because it is best expressed when one reduces a man to a woman. “It would be meaningless to accept two virgin girls into the equation in a society where women were not valued and were not a threat to the dominance of the men of Sodom.”<sup>23</sup> In essence, the daughters of Lot had no manly honour that could be useful in expressing the kind of domination that the men of Sodom revelled in. The manifestation of homosexuality in Sodom is essentially of a violent nature, whose intention, according to Ken Sehested;

is not so much homosexual activity as it is rape. And the principle impulse in rape – whether homosexual or heterosexual – is not about sex. It is about power. Male rape of other males was a common form of humiliation and domination committed against defeated armies in the ancient world, as it is in modern prisons today.<sup>24</sup>

The story of Sodom raises the issue of same-sex practices; however, these practices have to be understood within the broader context of inhospitality. There is nothing in the text that suggests the men of Sodom had any other understanding of same-sex practices besides the humiliation that it entails on the penetrated partner. This text therefore cannot be seen as an injunction on homosexuality *per se*, it condemns the violent manifestation of

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<sup>21</sup> George R. Edwards cited in: Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 48-9.

<sup>23</sup> Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Sehested „Biblical Fidelity and Sexual Orientation”, 54-5.

homosexuality for reasons most would condemn also heterosexuality. Louis Crompton correctly argues that any “subsequent use of the Sodom legend for anti-homosexual rhetoric...is clearly wide of the mark.”<sup>25</sup> There are however, clear misappropriations that try to expand the narrow meaning of the text to condemn all manifestations of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. This appears to be a clear case of the abuse of the Bible, when majority prejudices are taken for the Word of God.

## 6.3 Exegeting Judges 19

### 6.3.1 The Hebrew Text and its translation

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:14**  
וַיֵּלְכוּ וַתָּבֵא לָהֶם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ  
אַצֵּל הַגְּבֵעָה אֲשֶׁר לִבְנֵימִן:

**NRS Judg. 19:14** So they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin.

וַיִּסְרוּ<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:15**  
לָבוֹא לָלוֹן בַּגְּבֵעָה וַיָּבֵא וַיֹּשֶׁב  
בְּרֶחֶב הָעִיר וְאִין אִישׁ  
מֵאַסְף־אוֹתָם הַבֵּיתָה לָלוֹן:

**NRS Judg. 19:15** They turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. He went in and sat down in the open square of the city, but no one took them in to spend the night.

וַיְהִי<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:16**  
אִישׁ זָקֵן בָּא מִן־מַעֲשֵׂהוּ  
מִן־הַשְּׂדֵה בְּעָרֵב וְהָאִישׁ  
מֵהָר אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא־גַר בַּגְּבֵעָה  
וְאֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם בְּנֵי יְמִינֵי:

**NRS Judg. 19:16** Then at evening there was an old man coming from his work in the field. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was residing in Gibeah. (The people of the place were Benjaminites.)

וַיִּשֶׂא<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:17**  
עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־הָאִישׁ הָאֲרָח  
בְּרֶחֶב הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ  
הַזֶּה אֵיךְ תֵּלֵךְ וּמֵאֵן תָּבוֹא:

**NRS Judg. 19:17** When the old man looked up and saw the wayfarer in the open square of the city, he said, "Where are you going and where do you come from?"

<sup>25</sup> Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 2003, 37.

<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:18** וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלָיו עֲבָרִים אֲנַחְנוּ מִבֵּית־לָחֶם  
יְהוּדָה עַד־נֶרְפְתֵי הַר־אֶפְרַיִם  
מִשָּׁם אָנֹכִי וְאֵלֶּךְ עַד־בֵּית לָחֶם  
יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה אֲנִי־לֹדֵךְ  
וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֶסֶף אוֹתִי הַבַּיְתָה:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:18** He answered him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, from which I come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; and I am going to my home. Nobody has offered to take me in.

<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:19** וְגַם־תִּבְּן  
גַּם־מִסְפּוֹא יֵשׁ לַחֲמוֹרֵינוּ וְגַם  
לָחֶם וְיַיִן וְיִשְׁלִי וְלֶאֱמֹתְךָ וְלַנֶּעַר  
עִם־עַבְדְּךָ אִין מִחֲסוֹר  
כָּל־דָּבָר:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:19** We your servants have straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and the woman and the young man along with us. We need nothing more."

<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:20** וַיֹּאמֶר  
הָאִישׁ הַזֶּקֶן שְׁלוֹם לְךָ רַק  
כָּל־מִחְסוֹרְךָ עָלַי רַק בְּרָחוּב  
אֶל־תֵּלֵן:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:20** The old man said, "Peace be to you. I will care for all your wants; only do not spend the night in the square."

<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:21** וַיָּבִיאוּהוּ  
לְבֵיתוֹ (וַיְבֹל) [וַיִּבֶל] לַחֲמוֹרִים  
וַיִּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:21** So he brought him into his house, and fed the donkeys; they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

<sup>WTT</sup> **Judg. 19:22** הִמָּה  
מִיֹּשְׁבֵי אֶת־לֶבֶם וְהִנֵּה אַנְשֵׁי  
הָעִיר אַנְשֵׁי בְנֵי־בִלְעֵל נֹסְבֵי  
אֶת־הַבַּיִת מִתְדַפְּקִים עַל־הַדָּלֶת  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת  
הַזֶּקֶן לֵאמֹר הוֹצֵא אֶת־הָאִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ וְנִדְעֵנּוּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:22** While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him."

<sup>NIV</sup> **Judg. 19:22** While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house so we can

have sex with him."

<sup>KJV</sup> **Judg. 19:22** Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

**Judg. 19:23** וַיֵּצֵא <sup>WTT</sup> אֲלֵיהֶם הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אַל-אֶחָי אֶל-תִּתְּרֵנּוּ נָא אֶחָרַי אֲשֶׁר-בָּא הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה אֶל-בֵּיתִי אֶל-תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת-הַנְּבִלָה הַזֹּאת:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:23** And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Since this man is my guest, do not do this vile thing.

**Judg. 19:24** וְהִנֵּה <sup>WTT</sup> בְּתוּרֵי הַבַּתּוּלָה וּפְיִלְגִישָׁהּ אוֹצִיָּאהָ-נָּא אוֹתָם וְעַנּוּ אוֹתָם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְלֹאִישׁ הַזֶּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ דְבַר הַנְּבִלָה הַזֹּאת:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:24** Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing."

**Judg. 19:25** וְלֹא-אָבּוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לִשְׁמֹעַ לוֹ וַיַּחֲזֹק הָאִישׁ בְּפִילְגָנָהּ וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם הַחוּץ וַיִּדְרֹעוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּתְּעַלְלוּ-בָּהּ כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה עַד-תִּבְקֹר וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהָ (בַּעֲלוֹת) [כַּעֲלוֹת] הַשָּׁחַר:

<sup>NRS</sup> **Judg. 19:25** But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.

<sup>NJB</sup> **Judg. 19:25** But the men would not listen to him. So the Levite took hold of his concubine and brought her out to them. They had intercourse with her and ill-treated her all night till morning; when dawn was breaking they let her go.

וַתָּבֹא <sup>WTT</sup> Judg. 19:26  
הָאִשָּׁה לַפְּנֹת הַבַּקָּר וַתִּפֹּל  
פֶּתַח בֵּית־הָאִישׁ אֲדוֹנֶיהָ  
שָׁם עַד־הָאֹר:

<sup>NRS</sup> Judg. 19:26 As morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.

וַיָּקָם <sup>WTT</sup> Judg. 19:27  
אֲדוֹנֶיהָ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּפְתַּח דְּלָתוֹת  
הַבַּיִת וַיֵּצֵא לְלֶכֶת לְדַרְכּוֹ  
וַהֲנִיחַ הָאִשָּׁה פִּילָגְשׁוֹ נֹפֶלֶת  
פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת וַיְדִיחַ עַל־הַסֶּף:

<sup>NRS</sup> Judg. 19:27 In the morning her master got up, opened the doors of the house, and when he went out to go on his way, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold.

וַיֹּאמֶר <sup>WTT</sup> Judg. 19:28  
אֵלַיָּה קוּמִי וּנְלַכְהָ וְאִין עֲנָה  
וַיִּקְחֶהָ עַל־הַחֲמֹר וַיֵּקָם הָאִישׁ  
וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִקְמוֹ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Judg. 19:28 "Get up," he said to her, "we are going." But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey; and the man set out for his home.

וַיָּבֹא <sup>WTT</sup> Judg. 19:29  
אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמְּאֻכָּלֹת  
וַיַּחֲזֵק בְּפִילָגְשׁוֹ וַיִּנְתְּחֶהָ  
לְעֵצְמֶיהָ לְשָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר נִתְחָהּ  
וַיִּשְׁלַחַהּ בְּכָל גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>NRS</sup> Judg. 19:29 When he had entered his house, he took a knife, and grasping his concubine he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.

וַהֲיָה <sup>WTT</sup> Judg. 19:30  
כָּל־הָרְאָה וַאֲמַר לֹא־נִהְיָתָה  
וְלֹא־נִרְאָתָה כִּזְאת לְמִיּוֹם  
עֲלוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שִׁמּוֹלְכֶם עָלֶיהָ  
עֲצוּ וּדְבְרוּ: פ

<sup>NRS</sup> Judg. 19:30 Then he commanded the men whom he sent, saying, "Thus shall you say to all the Israelites, 'Has such a thing ever happened since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak out.'"

The observations on the translation of Judg. 19 are closely related to comments already raised on Gen. 19 and attention will also be directed to the use of the Hebrew word יָדַע which is also used in v.22 above. As argued above, translating this term as "wanting to

have sex” is contextually unsustainable. In the contemporary understanding, which is the basis of these translations, ‘having sex’ is associated with consent yet the literary context of the text clearly shows that the men of Gibeah did not intend to seek for consent but sought to forcefully sexually assault the visitor. To that extent, the text (v.22c) should be rendered "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may rape him." This is the clear intention of the men who had surrounded the house of the host. This kind of sexual behaviour is hardly what contemporary Zimbabweans would understand as ‘having sex’, therefore the translations create a fundamentally different socio-literary world in which all manifestations of homosexuality are condemnable.

While the translations are questionable on the manner they have rendered clear cases of rape to some form of universal representation of homosexuality that it would appear that “rape” is impossible to explain the actions of these men, this same term is used in v.25 as a translation of the same Hebrew word **יָרַע**.

After refusing to allow his visitor to be raped, the visitor decided to buy his safety by giving them his concubine. Interestingly, the same translations that refuse to see the attempted homosexual gang-rape in v.22 now clearly see the same in the case of the woman. All the major translations widely read in Zimbabwe agree that what happened to the concubine is not “having sex” but rape. Even the NJB which translates the text as “they had intercourse with her”, still goes on to acknowledge that the woman was “ill-treated all night”.

The argument on the translation of **יָרַע** is that instead of translating it as “having sex” it should be translated as “rape” in certain contexts as is done in v.25 because it is associated with violence. In this understanding, same-sex is almost always associated with violence. It is apparent that the scenes created by these texts are violent in nature and would be better rendered as sexual assault, rape or sexual violation. These are not the scenes that represent most homosexual persons in the contemporary environment and maybe even in the ancient times. Translations therefore play a

much bigger role in determining the meanings of texts simply by deciding to use less precise words thereby generalizing or watering down the intensity of the original situation. With our suggested rendering of the translation of the term יָרַע in the cited contexts as “rape”, we will try to gaze into the world that is created by the text itself as a way of substantiating the suggested meaning.

### **6.3.2 *The socio-literary world of the text***

It has to be noted that this story clearly shares a lot in common with the Sodom narrative. There are a number of common features between these two narratives, features that any reader of the Bible can observe without difficulty, among them: the unfriendliness of the city men toward visitors; the easy with which the guests are prepared to spend a night in the streets but there is a friendly man in the city who possibly is aware of the existence of these mobs in the town and therefore tries to protect the sojourners and shows them hospitality; the friendly host is not a native in the town; in the midst of merrymaking the house is surrounded by aggressive men from the city; the men demand that the guests come out because they want to rape them; the host is terrified by this demand and pleads with the men not to do it; women are offered as a substitute; the hostility of the people of the city and the hospitality of the man are juxtaposed.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently these two narratives appear to have a similar literary structure and tend to share a number of details in terms of the plot. “Both narratives are preceded by an experience of special hospitality (Abraham hosting God and the two companions Gen. 18:1-5; the father of the Levite’s concubine Judg. 19:3-10).”<sup>27</sup> The two stories are agreed on the fundamental point of the manifestation of homosexuality in their created world, that is, the abomination of homosexual rape. This, within the socio-literary world of

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 50.

<sup>27</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 50.

the text is so evil that in an attempt to stop this from happening women were instead offered to be “raped” for the sake of the manly honour of the intended victims of homosexual rape. The main difference between the two narratives is that in Judg. 19, a heterosexual gang-rape actually takes place and with fatal consequences (v.25-29). Nothing is said by Pashapa about this dimension of the text even though he cites it explicitly in the debate. Is it not shocking that “no later interpreter of the story has condemned heterosexual behaviour because of this text in the manner the Sodom story has been used?”<sup>28</sup>

This text creates a world in which the world is divided as in the Sodom story between good guys and bad guys. In verses 11 and 12, the wayfarer assumes that Israel represents the good guys while non-Israelites represent the bad guys hence his refusal to stop in “the town of the Jebusites” (v.11) in favour of one of Israel’s towns and Gibeah was one such town. The text disproves the preconceived prejudices against non-Israelites when it turns out that the Israelites are the ones hostile to wayfarers even one of their own. While, the dichotomy in Gen. 19 has followed the written script, Judg. 19 does not; instead, it reverses the script. In both worlds however, women remain essentially at the mercy of men hence the text expresses moral indifference to the idea of sacrificing women to save men. It is a world of long ago and very different from the contemporary Zimbabwean world.

Unlike the Sodom narrative, this narrative continues to detail how the tribes of Israel responded to the gang-rape and murder of the Levite’s concubine. This was a wickedness of unseen proportions such that the other tribes with the blessing of Yahweh annihilated the inhabitants of Gibeah (Judg. 20:48). The actions of the Israelite tribes were instigated not by the attempted homosexual gang-rape of the Levite but by the murderous heterosexual gang-rape of the Levite’s concubine. Does this entail heterosexuality is unacceptable or some manifestations of heterosexuality are unaccept-

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<sup>28</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 51.

able? The politics of procreation appear to have won the day, as heterosexual excesses are understated while same-sex practices are over-elaborated. The issue is that Sodom was destroyed because of a multiplicity of deeds that revelled in humiliating fellow human beings, one of which was homosexual assault while Gibeah was annihilated because its inhabitants had fatally heterosexually gang-raped the Levite's concubine.

### **6.3.3 *Understanding the Judges text***

Apparently exegetical analyses of the story of Judg. 19 as that of Gen. 19 do not in any way sustain the view that the intention of these narratives was to condemn all same-sex manifestations. Instead, those same-sex manifestations bent on humiliating other men, establishing supremacy and dominance on guests violently are what the stories condemn. The effect of acknowledging the heterosexual rape of the woman (v.25), while rejecting the clear case of attempted homosexual rape (v.22) is that heterosexuality escapes a general condemnation while homosexuality and all its manifestations are put under a general condemnation. Despite the fatal consequences of heterosexual rape as happened in the story of Gibeah (Judg. 19:25-29), it is homosexuality that is condemned.

The association of homosexuality with violence and the desire to humiliate as a way of expressing social supremacy is at the centre of the two narratives of Gen. 19 and Judg. 19. To suggest that these stories condemn all manifestations of homosexuality is clearly not within the visions of the text and this has been aided by translations that have chosen words that fail to capture the condemned actions. These texts clearly respond to an understanding of homosexuality as an instrument of expressing supremacy as is normally the case with defeated enemies at war even in contemporary situations. This, however, does not capture the totality of the manifestations of homosexuality in contemporary Zimbabwe, where some stable relationships are based on mutual benefits and individual consent without the intention of establishing social

precedence over the other. Such relationships clearly do not fall into the ambit of these texts and any such calls appear to be based on the re-creation of a world that is foreign to the text.

## 6.4 Exegeting Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) has been used extensively in the Zimbabwean debate to show that the law of God is against homosexuality in all its forms. It has been argued that God abhors homosexuality such that, the law of God even prescribes the death penalty on those guilty of such an ‘abomination’. This section seeks to understand what these laws proscribed in ancient Israel. Unlike the Sodom narrative which is essentially folklore, Leviticus contains laws. While folklore can be based on a distant past that cannot be reconstructed, laws as those in Leviticus are ideological and clearly socio-historically conditioned. While in the debate, emphasis has been on the Bible as Law book, especially with reference to Pentateuchal laws, the same view is not entirely shared by Paul whose position on the relevance of the same laws appears to vacillate.

### 6.4.1 The Hebrew Texts and their translations

<p>וְאֶת־זָכָר לֹא תִשְׁכַּב מִשְׁכַּבֵּי אִשָּׁה תוֹעֵבָה הוּא׃</p>	<p><sup>WTT</sup> Lev. 18:22</p>	<p><sup>NRS</sup> Lev. 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.</p>
<p>וְאִישׁ</p>	<p><sup>WTT</sup> Lev. 20:13</p>	<p><sup>NRS</sup> Lev. 20:13 If a man lies with a male as</p>

אִשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִתְּזָכָר מִשְׁכְּבֵי  
 אִשָּׁה תוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם  
 מוֹת יוֹמְתוּ דְמֵיהֶם בָּם:

with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.

**KJV Lev. 20:13** If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

**NLT Lev. 20:13** "If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offense.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Lev. 20:13** "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

<sup>TNK</sup> **Lev. 20:13** If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death -- their bloodguilt is upon them.

These two laws are at the centre of the condemnation of homosexuality in Zimbabwe and these have the privilege of being regarded as laws of God. Various translations have been provided for above mainly focusing on those translations that are widely used among Zimbabweans. Coming back to the two laws cited above, same-sex practice is labelled תוֹעֵבָה (to'eba) while in v.23 bestiality is labelled תְּבֵל (tebel) meaning abomination and perversion respectively. Budd writes that "the word תְּבֵל used in 18:23; 20:12 denotes 'confusion', the mixing of distinct entities and the dislocation of a particular sense of order. Homosexual acts are described as תוֹעֵבָה in 18:22; 20:13 meaning 'hateful thing', 'detestable' or 'disgusting'."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Budd, *Leviticus*, 294.

תועבה is used in various other situations that can illuminate its meaning, for example, in Gen. 43:32 it is abominable for Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews, also in Deut. 14:3 eating meat from unclean animals is equally labelled an abomination, finally also in Deut. 32:16 it is equated with foreign gods. John H. Hayes argues that “the idea that certain things and acts are abominations is based on a world view in which sharp distinctions are drawn between the normal and acceptable and the abnormal and unacceptable. The latter are abominations.”<sup>30</sup> תועבה should therefore be seen as having its primary significance in a cultic setting where actions can make individuals impure without addressing the question of whether such individuals are guilty. This does not at all mean it cannot be used outside cultic circles as shall be demonstrated below.

From the above illustrations, it is apparent that the Hebrew תועבה is a general term with strongly negative connotations, it denotes a transgression of a “divinely sanctioned” boundary. Often used in connection with different, usually not fully defined customs of a mostly cultic nature affiliated with worship of foreign gods.<sup>31</sup> It is in this context that same-sex practices are described as תועבה because they transgress gender boundaries and also because they were associated with the worship of foreign gods.<sup>32</sup> The respect for gender boundaries was not simply a way of keeping women under the authority of men but in ancient Israel, it was also an attempt to maintain cultic purity and cultic purity essentially came down to daily living among the Israelites. Abomination should be understood as primarily denoting such actions that could make the individual actor and even the entire community

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<sup>30</sup> John H. Hayes “Abomination” in: William H. Gentry et al (eds), *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Germond “Heterosexism, homosexuality and the Bible” in: Germond & de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, 1997, 219. See also, Norman H. Snaith (ed), *Leviticus and Numbers*, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1967, 126.

impure. It certainly has little to do with the ‘confusion’ apparent in bestiality as the Zimbabwean debate has implied.

The argument that *הוֹעֲבָה* refers to the potential of some actions to make the community impure, is further boosted by the use of a phrase that explains why male-male sexual intercourse is an abomination. Lev. 18:22 explains male-male sexual intercourse as the *נִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה* “lyings of a woman”. The law assumes that there are certain ‘lyings’ that are only fitting for women, which ‘lyings’ if done by men on other men become detestable. Secondly, the law assumes that one’s gender determines whether one is to be the one who ‘lies with’ in an active sense or ‘acted on’ in a passive sense. To that extent, this study agrees with Rabbi Steven Greenberg when he writes;

By describing male-male sexual intercourse as the ‘lyings of a woman’, the verse sharpens the sense of gender substitution. A male subject must not do to another male an act ordinarily done to a female [...] the verse prohibits one, and only one, sexual practice between men, namely, anal intercourse, and speaks specifically to the active partner.<sup>33</sup>

For a man to be penetrated is therefore disgusting, shameful and defiling within the parameters of ancient Israelite understanding of same-sex practices. While for other cultures the condemnation would have been on the one taking the woman’s role, that is, being penetrated, Lev. 18:22 condemns the penetrating partner. Clearly, there is no condemnation of the one penetrated in this verse and there is no condemnation of female same-sex sexual practices in this verse either.

This raises one question pertaining to Lev. 20:13, if Lev. 18:22 is only addressed to the penetrating partner, why should the penetrated partner also die? This is a fundamental question which brings us back to *הוֹעֲבָה* and its relationship to concepts of cultic purity. While, it will be argued below that these laws presuppose the condemnations in Deuteronomy, for now it should be noted that the penetrated partner also posed a threat to cultic purity within the community. The death penalty is in this case not nec-

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<sup>33</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 80-1.

essarily to be understood as punishment for crimes committed rather it should be understood as a measure to prevent the contamination of the whole community with this impurity. It is the same case with the animal used in cases of bestiality (Lev. 20:15). It is clear that the animal would not have 'consented' yet it too must be killed because it has become 'impure' much the same way the passive partner in male-male sexual intercourse has become 'impure'. This impurity has nothing to do with guilty or innocent; it has everything to do with 'purity' and 'impurity'.

#### **6.4.2 *The socio-literary world of the laws***

Part of the problem at the centre of the Zimbabwean uses of the Bible is the attempt by many to disenfranchise the laws on homosexuality from their context. Attempts have been made to identify these as laws that directly proceeded from God without relation to the context of the ancient Israelites. As argued above, the texts of the Bible create their own world and the search for their meaning involves passing through this world to the socio-historical world that lies behind them. The laws in Leviticus are not an exception to this observation. In arriving at this socio-literary world of the laws, other biblical texts are to be invoked, especially injunctions in the book of Deuteronomy which are presupposed in these laws. The two verses under the spotlight in this section fall into the section of the book of Leviticus called the Holiness Code centred on the credo that: "You shall be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am Holy" (Lev. 19:2; 20:7). The project in the book of Leviticus is an attempt at establishing a community that is separated from other communities. A distinct identity for the Israelites as a people that serve a distinct God from other gods defines the essence of Leviticus. To achieve this separateness, the people of Israel are to observe a myriad of laws that mark them as different from the rest while also maintaining their cultic purity. In this project, no exceptions are tolerable and difference is the criteria for exclusion from the community of the select. Agricultural laws,

proper family relations' laws and many other regulations are given to guide in the daily life of the projected community.

In this socio-literary world, homosexuality was a result of idolatry and therefore unacceptable for a community trying hard to separate itself from other peoples and their gods, generally signified by its association with the Canaanites.<sup>34</sup> This understanding assumes that same-sex practices were prevalent among the other peoples and is equally confirmed in the text (Lev. 18:3). The connection between same-sex practices and idolatry appear to be testified to in some texts within the Hebrew Bible. This connection between same-sex activities and idolatry appears to be the most valid reason for the linking up of Lev. 18:22 with the previous verse (v.21). In this verse;

it is significant that the reference to the children and the Molech cult occurs in the middle of a series of prohibitions of illegal sexual intercourse [...] the probability is that the children were given to authorities at the shrine to be trained as temple prostitutes, male and female (Lev. 20:4,5; cf. Deut. 18:10; IIKgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Isa. 57:9).<sup>35</sup>

A closer look at the reference to the cult of Molech in the Bible appears to disconfirm the idea that children were being sacrificed rather the children were being dedicated because in the above cited texts, there is mention of children being made to pass through the fire and being dedicated to Molech.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Deut. 18:10** No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

It appears that the children were being made to pass through the fire in the process moving away from their parents and towards cultic personnel. The latter would have been responsible for the training of these children to become cultic functionaries and possibly their services included sexually servicing clients of the cult. This would explain why the writers of the Holiness Code saw a

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. „The Book of Leviticus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections“ in: Leander E. Keck et al (eds), *The New Interpreter's Bible, volume I*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 1127.

<sup>35</sup> Snaithe (ed), *Leviticus and Numbers*, 125.

connection between illicit sexual practices and the cult of Molech. A connection between homoeroticism and ‘cultic prostitution’ has been found in the following Deuteronomic prohibitions: ‘None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute’ (Deut. 23:17).<sup>36</sup> As intimated above, these prohibitions must not be looked at as mere predictions but rather as reactionary prescriptions in the socio-literary world of the laws.

It is also interesting that in Deut. 23:18(19) there is reference to the payment of both female and male prostitutes. Levine writes that “the phrase *קָדֵשׁ כֶּלֶב* ‘the pay of a dog’ mentioned in Deut. 23:18-9, refers to the wages of a male prostitute, who usually serviced men, not women, in ancient societies.”<sup>37</sup> Below are two translations of the said text;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Deut. 23:18** "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Deut. 23:18** You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

As Nissinen observes “the payment of the *קָדֵשׁ* is called ‘dogs-money’, suggesting that they were derisively called dogs.”<sup>38</sup> It would appear that the *קָדֵשׁ* was a man who would have adopted an unusual gender as he was dedicated to a god. In that context, he assumed the woman’s gender and role in sexual intercourse and was paid for his services. The existence of this dedicated passive partner would therefore imply that Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 build on the Deuteronomic prohibitions. Since Deuteronomy does not condemn the men who used the services of the *קְדָשִׁים* (qedeshim) it is logical that Lev. 18:22 only targets such men, while Lev. 20:13 passes sentence to both the active and passive partners.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation and Commentary*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 41.

In the socio-literary world of the laws of Leviticus, male same-sex practices are condemned because they endanger the purity of not only the individuals but of the whole community. This impurity is not related to whether such practices are consensual or not, they inherently bring impurity upon the community. In such a world, “The Holiness Code constitutes a major statement of law: It is, in effect, a priestly pronouncement of God’s will, defining what the God of Israel requires of His people.”<sup>39</sup> Holiness, as such was not only demanded of priests but of all members of the community hence there are general regulations for priest and lay, such as regulations pertaining to sexual relations and some regulations are specific to priests. In this world, the laws are not meant to protect the interests of some elites but the entire relationship between Israel and their God.

The central call to holiness is predicated on the separation of Israelites from all other peoples. “Israel is to be set apart from all other peoples, just as its God is set apart from all other beings (20:24,26); and that this holiness is maintained by the strict observance of the divine laws which ensure purity and cleanness.”<sup>40</sup> Hence the basic ideology of the Holiness Code centres on cultic purity, guaranteed by separation from other nations.<sup>41</sup> Finally, “to be Jewish was, and is, to be different. This is the root meaning of purity or, in biblical language, holiness – to be set apart for God’s purposes.”<sup>42</sup> This understanding would explain the perception in these laws that the Israelites must not do things as they are done by the Egyptians or the Canaanites. Whether indeed the Canaanites and Egyptians did all the evil things they are accused of is not central to this propaganda onslaught. In this world, the demand for purity is presented as beginning with Moses and the separation of the Israelites as beginning with Abraham when he is asked

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<sup>39</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, xiv.

<sup>40</sup> J. R. Porter, *Leviticus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 134.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 19.

to move away from his kith and kin (Gen. 12:1ff). The projection of traditions into the distant past is frequently used for propaganda purposes and not to establish historical facts.

What is apparent is that laws create the ideal world that each community aspires for. This attempt at creating a perfect world is socio-historically conditioned. Laws are best understood therefore as responding to some events considered by some to be detrimental to community well-being by proscribing such events and practices. To understand laws, one has to gaze into the past behind such laws.

### **6.4.3 *The socio-historical world of the laws***

To understand something about the socio-historical world of these laws, it is first important to establish when these laws were incorporated into the main text in which it comes to us in the Bible. In doing this, it is not suggested that its incorporation into the main text is the same as its composition. The group that incorporated these laws into the body of laws had to respond to various existential challenges of their time. By understanding this socio-historical environment, it is possible to establish what challenges led to the need for these laws and contrary to the majority view that these laws are timeless, their socio-historical context can shed light on the nature of challenges they were meant to answer.

While there is no unanimity as to whether these laws are pre-exilic, exilic or post-exilic in origin in scholarly circles, this study takes the argument that they should be understood as post-exilic. The existence of two contending arguments against understanding these laws as post-exilic is acknowledged yet the post-exilic date appears justifiable in this study. The first such argument can be detected from the argument of Jacob Milgrom who writes that “the Holiness Code is pre-exilic because [in it] there is no ban on intermarriage – neither opposition nor prohibition. This absence would be inconceivable in post-exilic times, when a national purge

of intermarriages was initiated (Ezra 9-10).”<sup>43</sup> This argument gives little weight to the fact that the purge in Ezra was due to the existence of such marriages which had continued to be contracted. Intermarriages had always been part of ancient Israel and even in the post-exilic era, such marriages continued and not many sources frowned upon them.

The other argument is represented by John Van Seters who argues that the Holiness Code in which these laws are found

belongs to the exilic period and has close affinities with the language and perspective of the prophet Ezekiel, a priest and leader of the Jewish community in exile in Babylon [...] Chapter 26 gives a vivid portrayal of the disaster of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the plight of the exiles.<sup>44</sup>

From the analysis of the socio-literary world, it is clear that central to the text is the creation of a community that is “set apart” for a “holy” God; to be “set apart” for this community means to “be holy” and “complete”. The life situation of the post-exilic Judean community is the basis upon which these laws must be understood. At that time, a hierocracy, or a government by priests, administered Jerusalem and Judea under Persian imperial domination.<sup>45</sup> Central to this extensive priestly project was the need to meet the challenge posed by the trauma of the exile and to provide a structure for the community trying to rebuild itself in Palestine in the years following the catastrophe.<sup>46</sup> The injunctions against homosexuality, like all other laws in the priestly code are therefore responding to these existential challenges. This is substantiated by the fact that at most 10% of the Judean population were deported into exile hence the idea of a collective exile and a collective

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<sup>43</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Volume 3A *The Anchor Bible*, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 1361.

<sup>44</sup> John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 203-4.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Levine, *Leviticus*, xxxiii

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Porter, *Leviticus*, 5.

return is merely a construction for the purposes of establishing an identity.<sup>47</sup>

To understand the laws on homosexuality in the post-exilic community it is instructive to listen to Gottwald who argues that once the post-exilic period is taken for the “final collection and ordering of the priestly writings”, which is the position taken in this study, then the central themes are “the promise of children and land”.<sup>48</sup> In the most of general ways of understanding these texts, it is suggested that the Jewish<sup>49</sup> community opposed whatever went against these two critical needs of the entire community. This is one of the socio-historical realities behind the understanding of same-sex practices in the post-exilic Jewish community. Particularly important in this post-exilic community and also in the post-exilic “Priestly program, it is apparent that woman’s true function is procreation. Whether P emerged in the land of exile or after the return – the latter being the more likely view – the offensive at establishing the community’s foothold in the promised land could not move forward without children (Gen.17:19, 27 cf. Lev.18:9-15).”<sup>50</sup> The understanding of the laws against same-sex practices should therefore be understood within this context.

Zimbabweans do appreciate that enactment of laws can best be appreciated within the socio-historical context that would have produced such laws. A number of laws were enacted to deal with forces thought of as anti-ruling party and government prior to the formation of the government of national unity in February 2009. This appreciation of context leads this study to agree with Mary Douglas that the laws of Leviticus are neither “meaningless, arbi-

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Klaus Bieberstein “Grenzen definieren: Israels Ringen um Identität” in: Joachim Kügler (Hg), *Impuls oder Hindernis?* Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 156.

<sup>49</sup> The transition from Israelites to Jews is important to note because Israel appears to have ceased to be the central identifying name and was replaced by Jews. After the exile, the descendants of Israelites from Judea became Jews and from whom, Judaism originated.

<sup>50</sup> Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible*, 136.

trary nor allegories” as many scholars have sought to argue.<sup>51</sup> Instead, these laws like many other laws from different communities are socially conditioned and they can best be understood with their context. Israelite laws are no exceptions to the social conditionedness of laws observed above hence this study agrees with the observation of Cheryl B. Anderson that;

Laws are normally considered solely in relationship to a society’s civil and criminal procedures. However, in contemporary legal theory, laws can be thought of as ‘discourses’ which are defined as ‘linguistic framings or stylized appeals to parts of ideologies’. Consequently, an analysis of a law can reveal its underlying ideologies, where the term ‘ideology’ refers to the ‘socially produced assumptions’ that operate in an intellectual system.<sup>52</sup>

Put simply, laws are not produced in a social vacuum and for that reason, it is critical to understand laws within the socio-historical milieu that produced them. Israelite laws such as the two under focus in this section cannot simply be transplanted into contemporary discussions without a clear understanding of the ideological biases that are inherent within them as socially produced laws. Pleins correctly observes that “when Max Weber looked at the Bible’s law codes, he sought to understand the social relationships and economic conditions that such laws presuppose.”<sup>53</sup> The need to do this is clearly articulated by Philip J. Budd when he writes; “many such [laws] make good sense as an interpretation of experience, rather than as disembodied prediction.”<sup>54</sup> This study argues that the laws on homosexuality are specific to some same-sex practices known to the post-exilic Jewish community and therefore cannot be adopted wholesale for the contemporary de-

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Mary Douglas „The Abominations of Leviticus” in: Charles E. Carter & Carol L. Meyers (eds), *Community, Identity and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996, 121.

<sup>52</sup> Cheryl B. Anderson, *Women, Ideology and Violence: Critical Theory and the Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic Law*, London: T & T Clark International, 2004, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Philip J. Budd, *Leviticus: New Century Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, 6.

bates. Further, same-sex practices were understood within the parameters of what the ancient Israelites and Jews understood as beneficial to their own community, especially the need to increase numerically and to take possession of the land.

That most of the Levitical laws are closely connected to Jewish ideas appear vindicated in the manner in which Christians have tended to sideline most of these laws except a few, especially those on homosexuality. Besides the manner in which Christians tend to sideline these laws, Steven Greenberg, a Jewish Rabbi writes; “the book of Leviticus contains the largest collection of core Jewish ideas and more laws than any other book of the Torah.”<sup>55</sup> To think that only homosexuality laws among all these laws are the only ones that are “trans-cultural” is beyond any logical imagination. In using the Bible, it is important to realize the implications of Baruch A. Levine’s assertion that “the Hebrew Bible expresses the central concerns of the minds and hearts of an ancient people.”<sup>56</sup> For some to contend that these laws are still normative today like those on incest, affinal relations, and adultery<sup>57</sup> reflects a failure to acknowledge the fact that these laws are understood in fundamentally different ways between the Shona and ancient Israelites. Among the former, a stepson can marry a stepmother upon the death of the father, and a man can marry two sisters also. The contemporary Zimbabwean debate has avoided facing these realities in their interaction with the Bible and contributors have sought to invoke ancient minds to deal with issues that they should be dealing with themselves.

In this post-exilic Jewish community practices believed to have caused the exile are largely frowned upon and are understood as defiling, that is, they leave the individual and community impure hence increasing the possibility of another exile. The idea of collective exile in this case is merely a construction around which the returnees sought to reoccupy positions of authority at the expense

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<sup>55</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 76.

<sup>56</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, xi.

<sup>57</sup> Kaiser, Jr. “The Book of Leviticus”, 1127.

of the majority who had remained in Judah. During this time “defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas.”<sup>58</sup> In this community, failure to maintain the physical demands of holiness were understood as causes of the exile hence for the sake of the entire community, even individuals who have been abused into impurity must be sacrificed. To that extent this study follows Douglas in arguing that “holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused.”<sup>59</sup> This is the context in which same-sex practices as “gender confusion” arose. The association of homosexuality with idolatry may as well be seen as yet another case of propaganda in that it would have exaggerated the culpability of individuals.

The importance of gender boundaries in ancient communities, especially in ancient Israel is captured in the words of Irmtraud Fischer when arguing that there is a trend in the Bible which attaches great importance to the impermeability of gender boundaries and thus the inalterable characters of genders and the inalterable assignment of gender roles.<sup>60</sup> In this line of thinking, the ultimate humiliation a man can suffer is to be turned into a woman. There can be no other way of understanding or rationalizing such a humiliating experience. “The formulation of Leviticus 18:22 exhibits [...] the division of masculine (active) and feminine (passive) roles [...] the penetrated partner lost his manly honour, gender boundaries were transgressed.”<sup>61</sup> In that regard, these laws were given as general laws for their time because the socio-

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<sup>58</sup> Douglas „The Abominations of Leviticus”, 119.

<sup>59</sup> Douglas „The Abominations of Leviticus”, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Irmtraud Fischer „Über ‚die Liebe‘ in hierarchischen Gesellschaftsformen. Sozialgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen zum Verständnis von Liebe in der Hebräischen Bibel“ in: Marlis Gielen/Joachim Kügler (eds), *Liebe, Macht und Religion: Interdisziplinäre Studien zu Grunddimensionen menschlicher Existenz: Gedenkschrift für Helmut Merklein*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003; pp63-81, 72.

<sup>61</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 43-4.

historical environment had no other way of explaining same-sex practices except as a violation of divinely ordained gender boundaries. Such violation was not only understood as a threat to the possession of the land, even worse it could result in population regression at a time when procreation was seen as the only way to sustain the long term survival of the community.

#### **6.4.4 Understanding the Leviticus laws on same-sex practices**

While the larger portions of the book of Leviticus focus on Priestly regulations, “the regulations of chapters 18 were meant to govern the conduct of the entire people (v.2).”<sup>62</sup> By this it is implied that these regulations were general within their original context. Levine correctly observes that “chapter 18 laws are formulated apodictically, they are imperatives hence they specify no penalty for offences while chapter 20 is formulated casuistically, they are conditional and provide specific penalties for each offense.”<sup>63</sup> There is a clear difference between these two laws, on the one hand apodictic laws brood no transgression. Casuistic laws, on the other hand, appreciate the potential of human beings to transgress laws hence they provide penalties to cater for circumstances when such laws are broken.

Again, this makes sense in the post-exilic environment where the exile was already being blamed on failure to abide by the laws to establish and maintain holiness in the community. “What is common between chapters 18 and 20 is the connection between pagan worship and sexual degeneracy – both are regarded as the causes of exile.”<sup>64</sup> In this context, the problem at the centre of the Holiness Code prohibitions appears to be two-fold: First, gender distinctions are considered critical in establishing a distinct Israelite identity. In this environment, men are penetrators while women are to be penetrated. For men to take the role of women is

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<sup>62</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 118.

<sup>63</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 135.

<sup>64</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 135.

to mix and confuse gender identities hence same-sex practices are described as shameful and disgusting. This would also explain why Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 do not mention female same-sex practices because women could not penetrate each other.

From this analysis it appears that the regulations of Leviticus understand same-sex practices as a transgression of gender roles. Gender roles are understood in this context as divinely ordained and not socially constructed. In this supposedly divine scheme, men are supposed to act on women while women are to be sexually acted upon. The Medieval Spanish Commentator, Abraham Ibn Ezra commenting on Lev. 18:22 writes; “since the male was created to act and the female to be acted on, the verse reminds us not to overturn the word of God.”<sup>65</sup> Since women had no manly honour to lose and since they could only be acted upon by men, the Levitical regulations could not have addressed female same-sex activities, they were simply inconceivable in the context of the Holiness Code. This explicit endorsement of heterosexuality should be understood as the natural response to the need to fulfil the “promise of children”, since the widely acknowledged women’s role was in the producing of children for the community. Sexual intercourse clearly had no other positive significance except procreation.

Secondly, this emphasis on gender difference and the subsequent justification of gender difference as divinely ordained led to the understanding of same-sex practices as defiling and humiliating. To achieve the necessary effect in the community, it is insinuated that same-sex practices are practiced by those “serving foreign gods” hence endangering the future security of the Jewish community considering that their God does not tolerate being a God among others. Clearly, Jewish women were not equal to their male counterparts in this community and as argued throughout this section for a man to be “reduced” to a woman was humiliating. While other ANE communities did protect the victims of

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<sup>65</sup> Abraham Ibn Ezra in: Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 175.

“homosexual rape”, these laws did not discriminate between “assailants” and “victims” because they did not seek to punish the “guilty” but sought to eradicate “impurity” from their community “the effect of impurity...was dangerous to the entire society.”<sup>66</sup> As shall be demonstrated below, the ANE communities were commonly exposed to a violent manifestation of same-sex practices through which some sought to express their supremacy through homosexual rape.

## **6.5 Homosexuality in the Ancient Near East (ANE)**

Two assumptions observed in the laws in Leviticus are that: same-sex practices were prevalent among the other peoples of the ANE, especially the Canaanites; and that same-sex practices are a violation of gender boundaries. This understanding of same-sex practices in the post-exilic Israelite community can be substantiated by looking at some Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET). Further, the centrality of humiliation in the Gen. 19 and Judg. 19 stories is also substantiated by looking at these texts. It is argued that understood within the larger context of the ANE, the Old Testament texts on same-sex practices are reactive and not proactive as some contemporary Zimbabweans have suggested in the debate. In an attempt to provide further information that can illuminate the meaning of these laws, this section will highlight the contest between Horus and Seth (Egypt), the Middle Assyrian law on same-sex practices, and the connection between same-sex practices and worship of some gods in Canaan.

### **6.5.1 Seth and Horus, homosexuality and humiliation**

The argument that the manifestation of homosexuality in Sodom and Gibeah in Genesis and Judges respectively should be understood as ‘attempted homosexual rape’ bent on humiliating the victims is indeed an understanding that was shared by other an-

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<sup>66</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 38.

cient communities, among them, the ancient Egyptians. This is clearly attested to in the legend on the contest for power between Seth and Horus, which “dates from the age of Ramses V and comes from Thebes.”<sup>67</sup> It should be appreciated that the legend is concerned with the contest between the two protagonists and in the process of the contest; some manifestation of same-sex practices is explicitly alluded to. Below, I cite at length part of the legend of Seth and Horus;

[11,1] Seth said to Horus, “come, let us have a feast day at my house”. And Horus said to him: “I will, I will.” Now when evening had come, a bed was prepared for them, and they lay down together. At night, Seth let his member become stiff and he inserted it between the thighs of Horus. And Horus placed his hands between his thighs and caught the semen of Seth. Then Horus went to tell his mother Isis: “Come, Isis my mother, come and see what Seth did to me.” He opened his hand and let her see the semen of Seth. She cried out aloud, took her knife, cut off his hand and threw it in the water. Then she made a new hand for him. And she took a dab of sweet ointment and put it on the member of Horus. She made it become stiff, placed it over a pot, and he let his semen drop into it. In the morning Isis went with the semen of Horus to the garden of Seth and said to the gardener of Seth: “What plants does Seth eat here with you?” The gardener said to her: “The only plant Seth eats here with me is lettuce.” Then Isis placed the semen of Horus on them. Seth came according to his daily custom and ate the lettuces which he usually ate. Thereupon he became pregnant with the semen of Horus. Then Seth went and said to (12,1) Horus: “Come, let us go, that I may contend with you in the court.” And Horus said to him: “I will, I will.” So they went to the court together. They stood before the great Ennead [name of the court of the gods], and they were told: “Speak!” Then Seth said: “Let the office of ruler be given to me, for as regards Horus who stands here, I have done a man’s deed to him.” Then the Ennead cried out aloud, and they spat out before Horus. And Horus laughed at them; and Horus took an oath by the god, saying: “What Seth has said is false. Let the semen of Seth be called, and let us see from where it will answer.” Thoth, lord of writing, true scribe of the Ennead, laid his hand on the arm of Horus and said: “Come out, semen of Seth!” And it an-

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<sup>67</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings volume II: The New Kingdom*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976, 214.

swered him from the water in the midst of the (marsh). Then Thoth laid his hand on the arm of Seth and said: "Come out, semen of Horus!" And it said to him: "Where shall I come out?" Thoth said to it: "Come out of his ear." It said to him: "Should I come out of his ear, I who am a divine seed?" Then Thoth said to it: "Come out from the top of his head." Then it came out as a golden sun-disk on the head of Seth. Seth became very angry, and he stretched out his hand to seize the golden sun-disk. Thereupon Thoth took it away (13,1) from him and placed it as a crown upon his (own) head. And the Ennead said: "Horus is right, Seth is wrong." Then Seth became very angry and cried out aloud because they had said: "Horus is right, Seth is wrong."<sup>68</sup>

The legend suggests that by attempting to homosexually rape Horus, Seth clearly hopes that this deed is enough to disqualify Horus hence he argues that he deserves the office of ruler because Horus is now unfit since Seth has "done a man's deed to him." Clearly, from the speech of Seth, homosexual rape was demeaning to the penetrated partner hence this case obviously deals not with same-sex desire but with sexual aggression used in exercising power.<sup>69</sup> To be penetrated was degrading that one could not claim supremacy over those that made him a woman.

This understanding of same-sex sexual practice as humiliating is not limited to the actions and speech of Seth, who planned to humiliate Horus but also to Horus who was the intended victim but ended up being the victor. Upon realizing what Seth was about to do, Horus placed his hands between his thighs and caught the semen of Seth and went to his mother, Isis, who upon seeing the semen of Seth in Horus' hand, she cried out loud and chopped off Horus' hand and threw it in the water. The reaction of Horus and his mother Isis, clearly show that they also understood this attempted homosexual rape as severely humiliating that an appropriate response was called for to reverse the deeds of Seth.

While, Horus did not plan a feast day to try and rape Seth in a drunken stupor, Isis masturbated her son Horus in order to feed

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<sup>68</sup> Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 219-220.

<sup>69</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 19.

Seth with Horus's seed in time for the showdown in the court of the Ennead.<sup>70</sup> At the end of the contention in the court, Seth loses out because while his semen answers to the call from the water, that of Horus answered from inside Seth's bowels. The impression being that it was not Seth who had done a man's deed on Horus but Horus who had done a man's deed on Seth. To this extent, this study agrees with Joachim Kügler when he argues that homosexuality does not appear here as a principal sexual orientation or a lifestyle but only under the concept of power and the subsequent social relations, especially the aggression to others. Hence, because Horus has done a man's deed on Seth, Seth is no longer a man.<sup>71</sup> Being penetrated therefore was humiliating that one could be disqualified from exercising power in some offices if found to have been penetrated.

With this understanding also in Egypt, the contention that to understand Gen. 19 and Judg. 19 as essentially opposing the violent manifestation of homosexuality should be seen as a primary concern of these texts. To be sexually penetrated by another man is essentially being reduced to a woman, and being a woman was not really what ancient men aspired to become. Even Hatshepsut in ancient Egypt was almost always depicted as a man because how could a woman, who is always penetrated by a man be regarded as the King/Queen? To that extent, the most serious critique of Hatshepsut is her depiction being mounted by a man to show that the King is just a woman. While, it is not clear what moral judgment Egyptians had of same-sex relations, the confession from the Book of the Dead appears to show that it was looked down upon. The confession in article A20 reads "I have not had sexual relations with a boy"<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 220.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Joachim Kügler, Warum Männer nicht zu Frauen werden sollen, *Unpublished Open Lecture*, Universität Bayreuth, 2005, 2.

<sup>72</sup> James B. Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, 34.

## 6.5.2 Homosexuality and humiliation: Other examples from the ANE

The association of homosexuality with humiliation of the penetrated partner and the intention of expressing supremacy by the violator observed in the Old Testament texts is also collaborated with a similar understanding within the Middle Assyrian laws dated from the time of Tiglath-pileser I in the 12th century BCE and Articles 19 and 20 are interesting for this study and read as follows;

19: If a man started a rumour against his neighbour in private, saying, 'People have lain repeatedly with him', or he said to him in a brawl in the presence of (other) people, 'People have lain repeatedly with you; I will prosecute you,' since he is not able to prosecute (him) (and) did not prosecute (him), they shall flog that man fifty (times) with staves (and) he shall do the work of the king for one full month; they shall castrate him and he shall also pay one talent of lead. 20: If a man lay with his neighbour, when they have prosecuted him (and) convicted him, they shall lie with him (and) turn him into a eunuch."<sup>73</sup>

In these laws, the association of homosexuality and humiliation is apparent, first, it is recognized that some men could use allegations of passive homosexuality against a rival in a fight to humiliate him. Failure to substantiate the allegation is met with punishment. Article 20 employs *Lex Talionis* principle on the man found guilty of homosexual rape as well as castration. "*Lex Talionis* is a law of retaliation by which the guilty party suffers the same harm as that experienced by the injured party [...] The classic formulation of taliation in biblical law is 'life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth' to nonfatal body injuries."<sup>74</sup> It is argued therefore that the most precise translation and understanding of law 20 would be to render 'lay' as rape, wherein the man convicted of homosexual rape is to be raped also and then castrated. Since, by

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<sup>73</sup> Theophile J. Meek (translator) "The Middle Assyrian Laws" in: Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 181.

<sup>74</sup> H. B. Huffmon "Lex Talionis" in: David Noel Freedman et al (eds), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, volume K-N, New York: Doubleday, 1992, 321. Cf. Wold, *Out of Order*, 45.

homosexually raping 'his neighbour' or another man, the rapist sought to establish dominance and supremacy, the community must respond by similarly humiliating the offender. In that regard, this study agrees with David Greenberg when he argues that "the state was willing to sponsor active, aggressive homosexual behaviour under special circumstances."<sup>75</sup> By castrating him, the community humiliates the offender permanently by reducing him from the rank of being a man.

The association of homosexuality and humiliation is also attested to within the Hittite laws, same-sex practice is also understood as a violation of the other and law 189 reads: "If a man violates his own mother, it is a capital crime. If a man violates his daughter, it is a capital crime. If a man violates his son, it is a capital crime."<sup>76</sup> It has been argued that in most cases, same-sex sexual assault was associated with violence and the law cited above enumerates a number of sexual violations that a man could unleash on a number of different persons. It must be however, noted that the Hittite laws address such sexual assault within the context of proper sexual relations within the family. While two of the proscribed sexual violations are heterosexual, the violation of the son is homosexual. By sexually raping his son, the crime is capital and therefore to be justified by the killing of the man who homosexually raped his son.

Another dimension raised in the analysis of the laws of Leviticus was the association of same-sex practices with cultic prostitution or sacred sex. The existence of cultic prostitution is attested to in the Code of Hammurabi. In this Code, law 181 reads "If a father dedicated (his daughter) to deity as a hierodule, a sacred prostitute, or a devotee and did not present a dowry to her, after the father has gone to (his) fate, she shall receive as her share in the

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<sup>75</sup> David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988, 126.

<sup>76</sup> Albrecht Goetze (translator) „The Hittite Laws“ in: Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 196.

goods of the paternal estate her one-third patrimony...”<sup>77</sup> The assumption that the compilers of Leviticus may have known about cultic prostitution, is not only elaborated by reading these laws together with Deuteronomy and 2 Kings, but is also attested to have existed in other communities. That could explain why biblical writers are quick to associate it with foreign gods because in the law cited above, it would appear that dedication to serve as a cultic prostitute was not frowned upon.

An understanding of same-sex love appears to be a feature of the Gilgamesh epic where it would appear same-sex relations are not seen as humiliating. This is particularly so, when one considers the dreams of Gilgamesh which he related to his mother as follows;

Mother, I saw a dream in the night. There were stars in the sky for me. And (something) like a sky-bolt of Anu kept falling upon me! I tried to lift it up, but it was too heavy for me. I tried to turn it over, but I couldn't budge it... I loved it as a wife, doted on it... Mother, I saw a second dream: An axe was thrown down in the street (?) of Uruk... I loved it as a wife, doted on it...<sup>78</sup>

Central to understanding these dreams is the idea that Gilgamesh loved the object of his dreams “as a wife”. What does that mean to ancient men, whose appreciation of women was in sexual intercourse leading to procreation? How else besides sexual union can we understand men's love for a wife? Gilgamesh's wise mother, Ninsun interprets this dream as referring to Gilgamesh's finding of a new friend, who will never forsake him.<sup>79</sup> The friend apparently is Enkidu a man like beast who becomes the friend of Gilgamesh. Upon the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh mourns him with the following words;

He who with me underwent all hard(ships) – Enkidu, whom I loved dearly, Who with me underwent all hardships – Has now gone to the

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<sup>77</sup> Theophile J. Meek (translator) „The Code of Hammurabi“ in: Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 174.

<sup>78</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 21; See also Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 75-77.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 76-77.

fate of mankind! Day and night I have wept over him. I would not give him up for burial – In case my friend should rise at my plaint – Seven days and seven nights, until a worm fell out of his nose. Since his passing I have not found life, I have roamed like a hunter in the midst of the steppe...<sup>80</sup>

While there is no explicit reference to sexual penetration and any misgivings about ‘loving Enkidu dearly’, clearly the words of Gilgamesh point to an intimate relationship that he shared with the departed Enkidu. In as much as this tale has little to do with the texts discussed from the Old Testament, it may help in understanding another Old Testament story, that is, David and Jonathan.

### **6.5.3 Homosexuality in the ANE: In service of the gods**

In the above section, it has been observed that the Code of Hammurabi attested to the existence of cultic prostitution of a heterosexual nature, since the dedicated child was a daughter. There is debate among biblical scholars interested in sexuality studies whether there are also evidences of cultic same-sex prostitution or sacred sex. It should be noted however, that the evidence of same-sex cultic prostitution or sacred sex in the ANE is difficult to come by and the fragments that have largely been used are those making reference to people with a “wavering gender”, the “man-woman”.<sup>81</sup> This search for information from the ANE is as a result of insinuations within the biblical texts that there were some male and female cultic prostitutes (Lev. 20:4-5, Deut. 23:17, 1Kgs. 14:24, 15:12, 2Kgs.23:7).

It appears that in their early Israelite environment, these prohibitions were targeted against known practices among other inhabitants of Canaan, which practices were also being adopted by some Israelites. Levine argues that there is evidence of the existence of homosexual practices among the Canaanites.<sup>82</sup> If indeed same-sex

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<sup>80</sup> Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 89-90.

<sup>81</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 28.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Levine, *Leviticus*, 123.

practices were found in other communities surrounding Israel, it is not surprising that such practices would have encroached into the Israelite community, particularly its external manifestations. That some Old Testament texts noted above mention cultic prostitutes may not necessarily be a literary creation. Further, as argued by Bieberstein, the emphasis on an Israelite society that is uncontaminated is the fiction of the Ezra-Nehemiah group that constituted only 10% of the total population.<sup>83</sup>

These same-sex practices appear to have had some connections to some cultic practices, especially the cult of Molech, presumably a foreign cult in which some Israelites were taking part. This would explain why same-sex practices are considered both against God and disgusting to the community. That some cultic personnel in the ANE could have been involved in some forms of “sacred sex” has been identified though with no absolute certainty. However, the multiple attestations of cultic prostitutes in the Old Testament and some ANE texts, appears to suggest that such practices were known to exist. Among various terms it is important to note that there appears to be a connection between the קִדְשִׁים (*qadesh(ah)* singular/ *qedeshim* plural) of Deuteronomy and the Akkadian *qadistu* which referred to female devotees with a disputed sexual function, Ugaritic *qds*, which referred to cult personnel but without a clearly defined role or sexual connection.<sup>84</sup> While these parallels may not be sufficient evidence for the conclusion that “cultic prostitution” or “sacred sex” was indeed prevalent in the ANE as suggested in the biblical text, they also do not support fully the argument by Phyllis A. Bird that the “biblical *qedeshim* are literary creations rather than historical facts.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Klaus Bieberstein “Grenzen definieren: Israels Ringen um Identität”, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 40.

<sup>85</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, “The end of the Male-cult prostitute: A literary-historical and sociological analysis of Hebrew *qadesh-qedeshim*” in: J. A. Emerton (ed), *Congress Volume Cambridge 1995, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 66, New York, 1997,55-56.

However we look at these same-sex practices there is a direct line of connection in the Old Testament between such practices and some cultic practices. On this point we agree with those scholars arguing that this is what explains the relationship between Lev. 18:21 and 22, in that the only way Israelites understood same-sex practices was that which resulted from offering their children to Molech. It is also apparent that in these societies, being penetrated was the conventional role of women and for any man to be so used was in effect being reduced to the rank of women. In these cultures, homosexuality was therefore degrading to the passive partner and in cases where one raped another man, the punishment seemingly was severe and outside ancient Israel, almost always involved humiliating the rapist permanently. For contemporary Zimbabweans, with all the talk of gender equality and women empowerment this may not make much sense. Yet, even with all this talk of equality one of the reasons why homosexual men are detested is because they “want to become women.” This is understood as humiliating.

## ***6.6 Homosexuality in the Old Testament: Two controversial stories!***

This section seeks to highlight that even though the texts finding expression in Zimbabwe are the ones dealt with above; there are more texts that currently are at the centre of discussions on homosexuality and the Bible. Two such texts will be briefly dealt with in this section and these are the “curse of Ham” in Gen. 9 and the famous story of David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 and 2 Samuel 1.

### ***6.6.1 On the curse of Ham and homosexuality (Genesis 9:20-27)***

It has been consistently argued that on the basis of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and extra-biblical materials the predominant manifestation of same-sex practices known in ancient Israel

and among her neighbours was bent on domination and humiliation. On the strength of this argument, it is also argued that the story of Noah and his sons, especially Ham can best be appreciated as yet another manifestation of homosexuality bent on domination and supremacy in the post-flood humanity.

וַיִּחַל נֹחַ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:20  
אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כַּרְם:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:20 Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard.

וַיִּישַׁת <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:21  
מִן־הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכַּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ  
אֹהֱלָה:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:21 He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent.

וַיֵּרָא <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:22  
חָם אָבִי כְנָעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת  
אָבִיו וַיַּגִּד לְשְׁנֵי־אֶחָיו בְּחוּץ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

וַיִּקַּח <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:23  
שֵׁם וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּפְּתוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלֶה וַיִּשְׂמוּ  
עַל־שִׁכְמָם שְׁנֵיהֶם  
אֶתְרֵנִית וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֶרְוַת  
אֲבִיהֶם וּפְנֵיהֶם אֶתְרֵנִית וְעֶרְוַת  
אֲבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

וַיִּיקֶץ <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:24  
נֹחַ מִיַּיְנוֹ וַיֵּדַע אֶת אֲשֶׁר־  
עָשָׂה לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him,

וַיֹּאמֶר <sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:25  
אָרוּר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים  
יְהִי לְאָחָיו:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."

וַיֹּאמֶר<sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:26  
 בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם וַיְהִי  
 כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:26 He also said, "Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave.

וַיַּפֵּחַ<sup>WTT</sup> Gen. 9:27  
 אֱלֹהִים לִיֹּפֶת וַיֹּשְׁבֵן  
 בְּאֶהֱלֵי־שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד  
 לָמוֹ:

<sup>NRS</sup> Gen. 9:27 May God make space for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave."

The curse of Ham is a highly controversial text primarily because of the seeming discord between the crime and the punishment. Noah sleeps naked in a drunken stupor and his son, Ham sees his nakedness and tells his brothers who then cover their father while facing backwards. Upon waking up, Noah realizes what Ham had done to him and pronounces the curse that extends to Canaan, the son of Ham to be slaves for life. The critical question that scholars continue to grapple with is: what did Ham ‘do’ to his father that justifies the curse pronounced on him and his son? In seeking to understand this text, attention will be directed on verses 22 and 24. These two verses possibly are the key towards answering the above question. To do so one has to answer the questions: what is the meaning of “seeing nakedness”? Further, what does the text mean when it says “after waking up Noah knew what his son had done to him”?

The term used to describe Noah’s state עֲרוּת is used extensively in Leviticus in the regulations governing appropriate from inappropriate sexual relations within the family. It is interesting that an almost similar situation appears in Lev. 18:7 where different versions have translated this verse in different ways. However, the translations rendered by the NJB, LXE and the KJV are most interesting for this study. These translations are preferred over the NRS because they are closer to the Hebrew text which literally should be translated “The nakedness of your father and the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover. She is your

mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. (Lev. 18:7)” The three translations are cited below.

<sup>LXE</sup> **Lev. 18:7** Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, for she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Lev. 18:7** The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

<sup>NJB</sup> **Lev. 18:7** "You will not have intercourse with your father or your mother. She is your mother -- you will not have intercourse with her.

Some scholars have drawn attention to the same-sex sexual overtones in the story of Ham owing to the relationship between the term ‘nakedness’ used in this text and in other areas, especially in Leviticus where it appears more widely. Further, it is also based on the metaphorical use of the term ‘saw’. The argument here is that “this ‘seeing’ (9:22) was more than meets the eye. It was the kind of seeing that is about violence and possession; about control and domination [...] penetrative anal intercourse empowers the penetrator and humiliates the penetrated.”<sup>86</sup> It is not surprising that Lev.18:7 clearly condemn the sexual violation of one’s father or mother as captured in the three versions cited above.

The story of Ham fits into the dominant model of same-sex stories from the Old Testament and other ANE communities, which viewed same-sex practices in the context of domination and humiliation. The severity of the curse of Ham (v.24) is commensurate with the severity of the crime committed that is, reducing his father to a woman. For Nissinen, by seeing his father, “Ham aspired to dominance among post-flood humanity and attempted to show his superiority by disgracing his father sexually.”<sup>87</sup> This understanding of the crime of Ham would be the most logical way of reconciling the crime and punishment in the text. Sexual desire was not the essence of Ham’s actions; rather the desire to become the supreme individual in the post-flood community drove Ham

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<sup>86</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 53.

into sexually abusing his father. There is still a raging debate on the best way to understand this text and am aware of many who disagree with this understanding, yet this is substantiated by the other texts dealt with earlier in this chapter.

### **6.6.2 David and Jonathan: same-sex overtones?**

While, the argument throughout this study has consistently associated homosexuality and humiliation, there are some exceptions to this. The first such exception was observed with regard the Gilgamesh epic in which Gilgamesh mourned over the death of Enkidu whom he 'loved dearly'. It was argued then, that there is nothing in the text that disparages this same-sex relationship even though Gilgamesh appears to suggest an intimate relationship existed between himself and Enkidu. It would seem that only those examples that clearly betrayed the humiliation and violence associated with same-sex practices receive condemnation in the biblical texts and other ANE texts. However, it was noted when the Gilgamesh epic was discussed that it bore close resemblances to the story of Jonathan and David. In understanding the relationship of David and Jonathan, it should be noted that;

the rabbis idealized the love between Jonathan and David. Love that exists outside the bounds of mutual benefit, they say is eternal. Love dependent on benefit and, in particular, love based on lust for sexual pleasure, is very short lived (David and Jonathan Cf. Amnon and Tamar 2Sam. 13:1-19).<sup>88</sup>

There is debate on the nature of the relationship between David and Jonathan as well as Naomi and Ruth, yet these relationships are extolled by the text and many contemporary Christians.

Could it be that David and Jonathan had a sexual relationship? How can one understand the outburst of Saul cited below;

<sup>NRS</sup> **1Sam. 20:30** Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know

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<sup>88</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 99.

that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?

Of critical importance is the question; what does Saul mean by the words “to your own shame”, which is also translated by other versions as “to your own confusion”? Confusion is also sometimes rendered as perversion and used in relation to bestiality and homosexuality, especially the fact that it reverses gender roles, while “the Hebrew word used for nakedness is the word used in Leviticus and elsewhere to express sexual violation.”<sup>89</sup> From the outburst of Saul, Jonathan should have done something that Saul interpreted as Jonathan's betrayal of his own throne. In the context of the argument pursued in this study of humiliation and dominance, could it be that Saul assumed that Jonathan was playing the demeaning passive role in a sexual relationship with David? If that is what was happening, could it be that Saul understood this to mean Jonathan was no longer fit to succeed him since David was doing a man's deed on him? In the context of the legend of Seth and Horus, this would be the most plausible understanding of the reaction of Saul.

Another text is also central to the search for the nature of the relationship between David and Jonathan, that is, 2 Samuel 1:26 which reads;

<sup>NRS</sup> **2Sam. 1:26** I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

The debate has centred on the meaning of the phrase “greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women”. The tendency by most readers of the Bible is to gloss over these texts for fear of discovering the unwanted, what in the Shona language is best expressed in the idiom “*ku-farira n'anga neinobata mai*”, which means one must be careful not to celebrate the arrival of a diviner-healer who will accuse your own mother of witchcraft. What love surpasses that of women for

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<sup>89</sup> Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men*, 102.

a heterosexual? Is there any other form of “love of women” besides sexual intercourse? Despite these difficulties regarding the interpretation of the relationship of David and Jonathan, the Zimbabwean debate has not touched on it. It remains the story of David, the beloved of God yet clearly there could be more to the relationship between David and Jonathan than just platonic friendship.

## **6.7 Concluding Remarks**

From the arguments raised throughout this chapter, one consistent line of thought is dominant. The manifestation of homosexuality that the ancients responded to was that which sought to dominate and humiliate the other. The texts that have been dominant in the Zimbabwean debate fit into this broad scheme of humiliation and domination. The Sodom narrative highlights the disgusting nature of premeditated homosexual gang-rape, which is one of the various manifestations of inhospitality. To use this text to condemn all homosexual relationships is an overstretching of the relevance of this text as a didactic text. The same applies to the Judges narrative, which also brings to the fore not only the violent manifestation of same-sex practices based on the manner the men of Gibeah attempted to gang-rape the sojourner but also the fatal consequences of heterosexual gang-rape.

The laws of Leviticus, which have been taken as the ‘law of God’ on homosexuality, also demonstrate how they also fit into this broad scheme of domination and humiliation. This is best understood in two ways, first on the basis of the general understanding of gender differentiation in ancient Israel. Penetrating another man was degrading because one was doing a deed normally done to women on a man, implying that the penetrated man was reduced to a woman therefore a humiliating experience. The challenge here is; how do contemporary understandings of gender differentiation affect the interpretation and appropriation of these texts? The predominant perception in the Old Testament texts is that homosexuality is violent and humiliating to the victim,

should this be perpetuated even when contemporary manifestations are far from being humiliating to the partners in a same-sex relationship? Part of the argument against homosexuality in Zimbabwe has been the unity of the Bible in condemning it. The Bible has been presented as consistent on the subject. The following chapter will investigate and exegete the New Testament texts that have been widely cited in the debate. Further, some examples of homosexuality from ancient Greece and Rome will be used. This will be done primarily because the texts of the New Testament arise in the broader Greco-Roman context.

## CHAPTER 7: HOMOSEXUALITY AND “FREEDOM” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: EXEGETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any exegetical analysis of an Epistle presupposes that it is an *ad hoc* document, that is, that it is a piece of correspondence occasioned by a set of specific historical circumstances, either from the recipient’s or the author’s side – or both.<sup>1</sup>

### 7.1 Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, an issue arises from the Zimbabwean homosexual debate, which is of interest to this study. The issue pertains the meaning and continued relevance of the biblical texts on homosexuality. As noted throughout this study, texts have a socio-historical context to which they respond, this has been wantonly neglected in the various contributions even those by eminent Christian leaders, some who are holders of higher degrees in theology. The deliberate attempt to silence the socio-historical background of the texts is an easy way to manipulate their possible meaning and therefore consequences for contemporary appropriations. Despite the fact that the Bible was the single most cited source in contributions to the debate, it appears that the majority of ordinary readers have been deliberately misinformed about the various possibilities of what the Bible ‘really’ says about homosexuality then and now.

Since the focus of this chapter is on the Pauline corpus of letters (1 Timothy is treated in this study as a Pastoral letter not written by the Apostle Paul even though it closely resembles 1 Corinthians on its treatment of same-sex practices), I reiterate the position highlighted in the citation above. Letters are not some puzzles to their intended audience especially these letters which show that there is an intimate knowledge between the author and the recipients of the letters, they “are bound to and shaped by specific

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 5-6.

types of social life-settings (*Sitz im Leben*).”<sup>2</sup> Though Romans is different being a letter to a community not founded by Paul, it nevertheless should be understood as responding to specific socio-historical circumstances.

The letters are therefore not some ‘divine’ predictions about the whole range of human challenges throughout the ages; rather they should be understood as socio-historically conditioned documents that respond to existential challenges of their age. All the letters of Paul clearly demonstrate the fact that “he is often responding to a specific situation or particular issues which have arisen in his absence and which need to be attended to,”<sup>3</sup> and does so by deploying “frank speech” much in the same way that other Roman authors of his time used this device. Plutarch and Philodemus understood frank speech as constructive criticism of one by a friend.<sup>4</sup> The popular attempts to reject this historical background are indeed attempts at undermining the specificity of these texts and therefore to postulate the “timelessness” of the texts, which by implication endorses the mass misinformation of the ‘faithful’ readers to make judgments without discussions and understanding.

It shall be argued in this chapter that same-sex practices at Corinth are associated with sexual immorality in which some members of the community understood their newfound freedom to mean that “all things are lawful” (6:12; 10:23) while Romans is not simply “a calmer, more systematic presentation of his [Paul’s] teaching”<sup>5</sup> instead, this letter deals with what Paul knows to be

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<sup>2</sup> Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kieran J. O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience” in: Kieran J. O’Mahony (ed), *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society*; The Milltown Institute and the Irish Biblical Association Millennium Conference (*Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 241*), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003, 191.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Paul J. Sampley „Paul’s Frank Speech with the Galatians and the Corinthians“ in: John T. Fitzgerald et al (eds), *Philodemus and the New Testament World*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004, 295-296.

<sup>5</sup> O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience”, 191.

challenging issues among the Roman Christians and it is in this context that same-sex practices should be understood. Finally, it shall be argued that the “spirituals” of Paul’s time appeared to have survived and consolidated their teaching that the justification of same-sex practices on a libertine understanding of freedom had become relatively prevalent in the time of 1 Timothy. Finally, this chapter will seek to show that these three texts (1Cor. 6:9-10, Rom. 1:18-32, and 1Tim. 1:10) demonstrate that Paul opposed a form of Roman same-sex practices which had encroached into the Christian communities and was being justified by some interpretations of Paul’s teachings. For this reason, conceptions of same-sex practices in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire will be considered.

## **7.2 Exegeting 1 Corinthians 6:9-10**

In exegeting this text, a number of points need to be addressed and these include some comments on the translations of the text into English, focusing on those versions that are widely used in Zimbabwe.<sup>6</sup> It is also pertinent that an attempt be made to reconstruct the key episodes of the world represented in the letter and especially relating to the attitude displayed towards homosexuality. It is critical that the socio-historical context presupposed in the letter be noted as holding a key towards a fuller understanding of the text on same-sex practices. This section hopes to come to a position regarding the nature of same-sex practices addressed in this letter.

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<sup>6</sup> While many strands of Christianity exist in Zimbabwe (as argued in chapter four), each strand of Christianity tend to popularise some translations over the others. Since this work is based on English translations, it is important to note here that the most popular versions are the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is highly recommended in Catholic Institutions in Zimbabwe, the New International Version (NIV) and the King James Version (KJV), which are popular among the Pentecostals, the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which is recommended in schools and universities. Other translations may be used for other reasons and such reasons will be given whenever such other versions are used in this study.

## 7.2.1 The Greek text and its translation

BGT **1Cor. 6:9** Ἦ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἄδικοι θεοῦ βασιλείαν οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν; μὴ πλανᾶσθε· οὔτε πόρνοι οὔτε εἰδωλόατραι οὔτε μοιχοὶ οὔτε **μαλακοὶ** οὔτε **ἀρσενοκοῖται**

NRS **1Cor. 6:9** Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites,

KJV **1Cor. 6:9** Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

NLT **1Cor. 6:9** Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality,

NIV **1Cor. 6:9** Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders

BGT **1Cor. 6:10** οὔτε κλέπται οὔτε πλεονέκται, οὐ μέθυσοι, οὐ λοίδοροι, οὐχ ἄρπαγες βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσουσιν.

NRS **1Cor. 6:10** thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers-- none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.

KJV **1Cor. 6:10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

NLT **1Cor. 6:10** or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people-- none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

NIV **1Cor. 6:10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

The two words that are at the centre of contemporary discussions on homosexuality in the Zimbabwean debate are the *μαλακοι* (*malakoi*) and *αρσενοκοιται* (*arsenokoitai*). In the Zimbabwean debate Noah Pashapa used *αρσενοκοιται* and concluded that it was

used to designate the men who took the active role in male-male sexual intercourse. In reaching this conclusion, Pashapa has argued on the basis that *arsenokoitai* is the sum of its two parts, *arsen*+*koite*, even though this is not always the case with such compound words. The position taken by Pashapa and other scholars is that *arsenokoites* is a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase זָכָר מִשְׁכָּב (mishkav zakur) meaning ‘lying with a male’.<sup>7</sup> This is not without its own problems, as shall be clear below.

This use of ἀρσενοκοιται betrays the interface between Hellenistic and Jewish cultures, which resulted in the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, the Septuagint (LXX). In fact, the LXX translation of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 uses the two roots combined in the structure of this word as follows: “With a male [αρσεν] you shall not lie the intercourse [κοιτε] of a woman.” The two roots *arsen* and *koite* are the two roots that make the compound noun *arsenokoitai* that Paul uses. Paul Germond defines *arsenokoitai* as “one who has intercourse with a male or crudely one who fucks men, that is, if ‘arseno’ is the object. If ‘arseno’ is the gender qualifying ‘koitai’, it would mean men who take an active role in intercourse or crudely men who fuck.”<sup>8</sup> The two definitions above are fundamentally different in that while the first is homosexual, the second could mean homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual men.

Part of the difficulty in accepting the above understanding of *arsenokoitai* is based on the fact that the term is not widely used in ancient Greek literature to refer to same-sex practices mainly designated under the term pederasty. In fact, according to Gordon Fee, this is “its first appearance in preserved literature, subsequent authors are reluctant to use it especially when describing

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*, 1983, 108.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Germond „Heterosexism, homosexuality and the Bible“ in: Paul Germond & Steve de Gruchy (eds), *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa*, 1997, 224.

homosexual activity.”<sup>9</sup> The rarity of this word in other pieces of literature that discuss same-sex relationships and practices has meant that its meaning is subject to speculation. Why, then, does Paul use an uncommon word? Clearly, Paul is communicating to a minority and the minority understands things within the greater Greco-Roman cultural environment. It is almost impossible to think that Paul did not know of pederasty. Could this choice of words suggest that Paul is actually not dealing with pederasty?

In such cases where the meaning of a particular word has become part of the problem, it is widely agreed among scholars that “the only reliable way to define a word is to analyze its use in as many different contexts as possible.”<sup>10</sup> Dale Martin argues that to interpret *arsenokoitai* as the sum of its two roots is ‘linguistically invalid’ because some compound words defy this method of defining, such as the English word ‘understand’ whose meaning has nothing to do with standing or being under.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding these arguments, this study will understand *arsenokoitai* as referring to men who engaged in active roles in exploitative same-sex practices. It is possible that some of them may have been involved in trade in slaves bearing in mind that slaves in both a Greek and Roman perspective could be sexually penetrated by their masters and clients. Nothing in this text suggests that this text is preemptive, rather it is reactionary meaning Paul here refers to some men who were engaging in same-sex practices and they were part of the Christians at Corinth.

There is wide agreement among scholars on the meaning of *malakos* which is translated as ‘soft’ or ‘effeminate’. Thus *malakos* has to be understood within the whole range of the categories of masculinity and femininity during that time and which under-

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<sup>9</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, 244.

<sup>10</sup> Dale B. Martin „*Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences*“, in: Robert L. Brawley (ed), *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, 119.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jack Rogers, *Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, 2006, 74.

standing persists to date in many other communities. Real men are virile, aggressive, and assertive and in sexual relations, penetrators while those men who do not meet this description are seen as weak or soft men. Essentially *malakos* is used metaphorically and must be understood as a metaphor “not a technical term” representing the “soft, submissive and penetrable femininity”<sup>12</sup> which many men did not highly regard. This is not an attempt to minimize the applicability of this term in describing men who took part in same-sex relations as the passive partner. Indeed playing the passive role was the epitome of effeminacy and femininity, highly humiliating and a serious dent on one’s social status. While all penetrated men would be understood as effeminate, not all effeminate men could be understood as having been penetrated since there are other masculine characteristics that such men could have lacked.<sup>13</sup> This understanding could have been closer to Pashapa and other Zimbabweans as the metaphors dealt with in chapter three clearly demonstrate that these metaphors are based on the wide range of masculine characteristics.

*Malakos* does not inherently point to an age differential as would have been normal within the ancient Greek culture where the beloved was almost always younger than the lover. That Paul chooses this term against the common pederasty is significant in that it marks the distinction between what Paul opposes from the common Greek pederasty. In fact, this term is closer to Latin *mollis* and *cinaedus* which simply referred to men who took the passive role in same-sex sexual relations even in their adulthood.<sup>14</sup> It is possible therefore that Paul is closer to Roman conceptions of same-sex practices when he uses the term *malakos* than many scholars have bothered to admit. Clearly, the meaning of *malakos* is wider than what Pashapa and others in Zimbabwe have pro-

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<sup>12</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 64-5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 2003, 104.

claimed since it covers many attributes of femininity observed in men.

### **7.2.2 The socio-literary world of the text**

While emphasis has been focused on the socio-historical context behind documents, it is equally acknowledged that documents create a world within themselves, in which the things they describe are happening. This is primarily the world of the text that ordinary readers of the Bible use as the basis for their interpretations. This study approaches this world as the first step towards understanding this text in its socio-historical context. While this letter appears in the Bible as ‘the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians’, the letter itself does not claim to be the first from Paul to the Corinthian community because in 1Cor. 5:9 Paul writes “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons...” implying that there was another letter, which we no longer have but which Paul and the Corinthians knew about and in which Paul had spoken about sexual immorality. Despite this previous and lost letter (some scholars think part of it is preserved in 2Cor.6:14-7:1)<sup>15</sup> the problems that had been addressed therein did not cease hence this second (first) letter.

There appears to have been multiple misunderstandings between Paul and his teaching on the one hand and the Corinthian Christians on the other hand. That there were many such misunderstandings between Paul and the Corinthian Christians has led some scholars to argue that “the Corinthian community was Paul’s problem child. The believers in Corinth managed to misunderstand just about everything Paul said and did, to their own detriment and Paul’s utter astonishment.”<sup>16</sup> Is it possible that some of the people who engaged in same-sex practices based their

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 227.

actions on one of these misunderstandings? This section seeks to argue that, indeed, Paul understood these practices in the light of the various other misunderstandings that he had heard about the actions and attitudes of some of the Christians at Corinth. The text points in this direction by suggesting that same-sex practices are being justified under some understanding of freedom derived from his teaching but which he does not approve.

The letter clearly spells out that it is part of an ongoing dispute regarding some issues that have arisen in Corinth since the departure of Paul. It is directed to the community at Corinth and seeks not to prophesy about what would happen 2000 years later but to deal with what was actually happening within that community. The basis of the letter are the accounts emanating from Corinth as is attested in the acknowledgment of meetings that took place between Paul and some people from Corinth, and the letter written by the Corinthian community (possibly also the earlier letter of Paul to this community). According to the letter, Paul met with Chloe's people who may have been slaves (1Cor. 1:11) and central to their report being "the news of cliques in the church"<sup>17</sup>, then Paul also received a letter written by the church at Corinth (1Cor. 7:1), which was possibly delivered by "Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus" (1Cor. 16:17) but there is no explication of what this letter contained save to say "the situation was serious and Paul was determined to send Timothy (1Cor. 4:17)."<sup>18</sup> While it is true that nowhere do we have this letter preserved, the responses of Paul clearly betray the issues raised by the Corinthians. As the issues are wide ranging, we shall only treat those that directly help in highlighting our focus, that is, same-sex practices at Corinth.

The question of apostolic authenticity appears to be central to the divisions rocking this Corinthian community hence the existence of factions identifying themselves as either followers of Paul, Apollos, Peter and even Christ. "What I mean is that each of you

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<sup>17</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 23.

says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ" (1Cor. 1:12). These divisions are not only limited to the "god father" but may have included competing interpretations of the gospel. It is possible that one of the factions was coming up with some philosophical interpretations of the gospel. This is implicitly suggested in some of the arguments raised by Paul, such as when he writes: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom..." (1Cor. 1:17). Here Paul attacks those who are using "eloquent wisdom" from among these factions. It is possibly an indirect attack on Apollos, an Alexandrian whose stay in Alexandria means he was exposed to Greek philosophy, who preached in Corinth after Paul (1Cor. 3:6,8). While there appears to be no tension between their messages that Paul suggests he had encouraged Apollos to return to Corinth (1Cor. 16:12) "the difference in presentation was enough to cause a certain partisanship with some of the Corinthians."<sup>19</sup>

This letter is addressed to a particular community experiencing some difficult challenges that threaten to tear this community apart. Central to this world is the realization that the same word proclaimed by Paul 'freedom' is leading to two diametrically opposed attitudes within this community. This letter is therefore not some distant prophecy for this age but a realistic attempt at addressing existential challenges at Corinth in the 1st century CE. The kinds of reports of what was happening in Corinth were reports that required urgent response from Paul. Paul gives his opinions and judgments on a number of issues, including sexual immorality, believed to be some of the problems bedeviling this community and he does so as a Jewish missionary of the crucified Lord. How then does this letter account for the prevalence of same-sex practices among Christians at Corinth?

Among the Christians at Corinth, at least one faction has adopted some slogans, which is the basis upon which Paul addresses

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<sup>19</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 22.

same-sex practices. In this community, some members are justifying everything they do by sloganeering that “everything is permitted me/everything is lawful” (1Cor. 6:12) or “everything is permitted” (1Cor. 10:23). These slogans are not in themselves totally foreign to Paul because his position on the law is largely understood by his hearers as negative. In preparing for the return of Christ, the new Israel (which is how the early believers in Christ understood themselves to be) had been unyoked from the burden of the law (cf. Gal. 3:1ff). It was no longer salvation based on achievements but rather based on grace. Works, as it were, were of no use in this new scheme of salvation. Distractions are to be avoided by this community as it eagerly awaits the second coming hence Edwards J. Ellis argues that “Paul believes that Christ will return in the near future and that the Corinthian Christians are living in a time of tribulation [...] in this turbulent time, Christians need to be free of all distractions that could interfere with their devotion to their Lord.”<sup>20</sup> This anxiety in the community led to different groups hence “some of the problems may have arisen from an over-zealous following of Paul’s teaching or Paul’s example on the part of some of his most enthusiastic followers.”<sup>21</sup> In its world, the over-zealous are not only ultra-conservative but also ultra-radical as shall be shown below.

The Christians at Corinth appear to have been the first to grapple with the question of freedom and salvation as articulated by Paul. Among the Christians there is agreement that the gospel preached by Paul gives them freedom. However, “their newfound freedom was used in different ways that appear to reflect two contrary dispositions toward ‘the world.’ One of these appears to be an example of the sexual asceticism that became such a prominent feature of subsequent Christian life, on the principle that ‘it

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<sup>20</sup> Edwards J. Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire: Paul’s Sexual Ethics in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1*, London: T & T Clark International, 2007, 152.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians*, London: T & T Clark International, 2004, 143.

is good for a man not to touch a woman' (1Cor. 7:1)."<sup>22</sup> Some took freedom to mean license to do as one pleases while some took freedom as servitude to drop everything else and wait for the second coming of Christ. Both positions were understood by their adherents as following after Paul.

While as correctly noted above, later Christian asceticism was to be based on the principle that re-confirms men as the sole initiators of sexual relations 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman', this should be understood as the reaction of men after having seen their 'conjugal rights' being withdrawn by ascetic wives. Here, we agree therefore with Ray Pickett that at Corinth, especially "women [were] abstaining from sexual relations with their husbands."<sup>23</sup> Will Deming argues that Paul advocated celibacy and not sexual asceticism, where celibacy is life without marriage while sexual asceticism is renunciation of sexual activity. The former eliminated responsibilities that could draw one's attention from service to God while the latter from a Jewish-Christian background, was implied.<sup>24</sup> The implied world of this text clearly draws a line of connection between the sexual ascetic attitudes of some of these Christians with the newfound freedom preached by Paul. It appears that Paul does not have serious disagreements with these sexual ascetics hence he pleads with them to consider restraint and moderation rather than asceticism (1Cor. 7:5). In this world, it is not possible to understand same-sex practices without referring to this sexual asceticism.

While sexual asceticism was one of the responses to the newfound freedom, other Christians at Corinth apparently took freedom for license to do anything and everything. To this group belongs the man who is living in an "incestuous" relationship with

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<sup>22</sup> Ray Pickett "Conflicts at Corinth" in: Richard A. Horsley (ed); *Christian Origins: A People's History of Christianity, volume 1*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Pickett, "Conflicts at Corinth", 113.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of I Corinthians 7*, Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans, 2004, xiv-xv, 216-7.

his stepmother or former stepmother, since it is not clear if this woman was widowed or had been divorced or was still married to this man's father. This letter alleges that the Corinthian Christians have been making some errors of judgment as demonstrated by their failure to censure the man in an "incestuous relationship" instead they seem to have not only condoned this but some are actually "boasting about it" (1Cor. 5:1-2).<sup>25</sup> There are some libertarian tendencies among Christians at Corinth, "the so-called pneumatists, enthusiasts or elitists who felt themselves enlightened and were apparently prone to a kind of moral libertinism in bodily matters such as food and sex."<sup>26</sup> These libertarian tendencies appear to have developed from a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching, which "would explain why Paul, on the one hand, has no fundamental disagreements with the Corinthian 'people of the spirit' (*pneumatikoi*) while, on the other hand, he criticizes theological propositions that could have been derived from his own teaching."<sup>27</sup>

The man living in an incestuous relationship and the men who are participating in other forms of sexual license as is clear in (1Cor. 6:9) are examples of this understanding of freedom as license. With Paul downplaying the role of works in the scheme of salvation, it would appear as if;

All things were lawful. But this liberty must be lived out in the spirit of Augustine's maxim, 'love, and do what you will' [...] The Corinthians, however, were taking Christian liberty to mean, not an unbounded opportunity to show the scope of love, but an incredible means of gratifying their own desires.<sup>28</sup>

With this attitude among the Corinthian Christians, it would appear that those Paul opposed were engaging in activities based on a false understanding of Paul's teaching. In 1Cor. 6:9, Paul warns

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 236.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Dieter Betz "First Epistle to the Corinthians" in: David Noel Freedman et al (eds), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, volume 1 A-C*, New York: Doubleday, 1992, 1142.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 95.

the Corinthians “Do not be deceived...” giving credence to our observation that these practices are based on some interpretation of the message of Paul, which interpretation Paul understands as a deception. In this world, no sexual orientation exists hence the cause of this sexual license has to be something else. This warning is central in understanding how same-sex practices are being viewed in this literary context.

Clearly, this letter understands its duty as “to set right disorders which the Corinthians took lightly, but which Paul saw as grave sin.”<sup>29</sup> In the outline of Paul’s argument, it becomes clear that there is a cultural war going on between Paul’s Jewish background and the wave of Hellenistic and Roman ideologies at Corinth, which are being used to interpret his teaching. The letter therefore clearly presupposes and responds to same-sex practices that were happening at Corinth. This point leads us into the socio-historical context and why Paul’s statements must be seen as essentially targeted against a particular manifestation of same-sex activities at Corinth.

### **7.2.3 The socio-historical context of the text**

While, most Zimbabwean Christians tend to spiritualize not only the words of the Apostles but also the places referred to in the Bible, this text is part of a letter written by Paul to the Christian community at Corinth *ca.* 55 CE. Corinth was one successful Greek city-state until it was totally destroyed by the Roman, L. Mummius Achaicus, in 146 BCE, but when it was re-founded a century later as a Roman colony it speedily regained much of its former greatness owing to its strategic geographical location, the route for East-West trade.<sup>30</sup> The new Roman Corinth “was re-founded as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.”<sup>31</sup> The re-

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<sup>29</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, 24ff. See also Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Pickett “Conflicts at Corinth”, 117.

founded city is the same city that was evangelized by Paul. In terms of its population, it was first inhabited by Romans, then Greeks came back in numbers and there were Jews, many enough to have a synagogue (Acts 18:4).<sup>32</sup> From this, it is clear that Corinth was cosmopolitan in many ways. Despite many other success stories of Corinth, allegations of sexual license against the Corinthians appear to have been widespread. The letter of Paul is only one of many other pieces that note sexual licentiousness as a problem at Corinth.

It appears that the reputation of Corinth was recognized by many such that “to become Corinthianized (Gk. *korinthianazesthai*) meant something like to become thoroughly immoral and materialistic.”<sup>33</sup> Corinth apparently became renowned for its pursuit of material riches and sexual immorality. The city of “Corinth, [was known as] a city where licentiousness was especially rife.”<sup>34</sup> It is apparent that Paul’s gospel was competing with Greek and Roman philosophies and practices and since, his movement was just a small minority, the influence of the greater community on this smaller community should not be surprising. But even more challenging is the fact that “although it is Paul’s letters and legacy that survived and became authoritative in the formation of Christianity, other apostles and interpretations of the gospel competed for the attention and loyalty of the earliest believers.”<sup>35</sup> To a larger extent, the Corinthian Christian community mirrored the larger Corinthian community in that the inhabitants would have been a mishmash of deracinated individuals who had been uprooted from any cultural roots by generations of imperial conquests, en-

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Morris, *1 Corinthians, Revised Edition*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 228. See also, Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Clarence T. Craig & John Short “The First Epistle to the Corinthians; Introduction, Exegesis and Exposition” in: George A. Buttrick et al (eds), *The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume X*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1953, 72.

<sup>35</sup> Pickett “Conflicts at Corinth”, 113.

slavement, and migration from the countryside or other cities in search of a livelihood.<sup>36</sup>

This study acknowledges the debate surrounding the significance of the literary genre of vs. 9-10, that is, the “catalogue of vices”. The argument developed by Robin Scroggs is that these catalogues are traditional and Paul has just adopted what was already there. This has been supported by the observation that the phrase “to inherit the kingdom of God” is not common in Pauline letters.<sup>37</sup> The implication being that they have nothing to do with historical occurrences but that this form was used widely in ancient societies for teaching. This form appears in 1Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:9-10. The attempt is to divorce the text from the obtaining socio-historical developments of its time. In this debate, this study follows William Loader who aptly captures this dichotomy of traditional lists and current concerns when he writes, “Paul is possibly dependent on a traditional list, but sexual offences are also a concern in the immediate context of the letter.”<sup>38</sup> While the Zimbabwean debate has attempted to portray the letter as intended for contemporary Zimbabweans, there is no doubt that there is a close relationship “between Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and the Corinthian community.”<sup>39</sup> Whatever these letters mean, it has to be understood as having meaning for the intended audience.

Who are the people that joined the new assembly in Corinth? While some of these early believers could have been relatively rich, it would appear that the vast majority of the Corinthian Christians were largely “descendants of freedmen and freed-

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Richard A. Horsley “Unearthing a People’s history”, in: Horsley (ed); *Christian Origins: A People’s History of Christianity*, volume 1, 2005, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 104-106.

<sup>38</sup> William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 18. See also, Paul Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian literature (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 137)*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 39.

<sup>39</sup> Horsley, “Unearthing a People’s History”, 17.

women, while some had been slaves (cf. 1Cor. 7:21-23).<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the majority of the people who flocked to this new movement were relatively poor people and some “had come also from the ranks of the most scandalous sinners.”<sup>41</sup> The attraction of the gospel to the poor and lowly can be understood in terms of the desires of such people to do away with the social stigma of poverty, hence for them being admitted into this new community meant the end of the distinction between slaves and free. In such an environment, it is not impossible for the slaves to understand being free in terms of doing all the things that the free citizens were allowed (cf. 1Cor. 1:27). As some of the early believers were slaves, it is not impossible that some early Christians were actively engaged in same-sex practices either as passive partners since they were slaves or as active partners if they owned slaves.

In contrast to the assemblies of saints in Thessalonica and Philippi, who were harassed by the authorities or other outsiders (1Thess. 1:6-7; 4:10-11; Phil. 1:27-30; 3:17-21), the Corinthians apparently experienced little or no conflict with outsiders. Conflicts emerged within the Corinthian assembly and between some Corinthians and Paul.<sup>42</sup>

The sexual conflicts at Corinth appear to have been internal, with at least two major contending groups, one “strong” and the other “weak”<sup>43</sup> regarding sexual intercourse. From what we have said about Corinth, it is clear that there were many manifestations of sexual license at Corinth both in the larger community and within the Christian community. The Pauline community was probably more diverse than other voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world<sup>44</sup> that the existence of multiple interpretations and contradictory practices should not be surprising.

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<sup>40</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 124.

<sup>41</sup> William F. Orr & James A. Walther, *1 Corinthians: A New Translation, Introduction with a Study of the Life of Paul, Notes and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976, 201.

<sup>42</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 126.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Udo Schnelle, *Paulus: Leben und Denken*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003, 223.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Charles K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968, 2ff. See also Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians*, 132-3.

The letter to the Corinthians is full of strife within the Christian community at Corinth (1Cor. 3:3) caused by beliefs and practices being extolled by some and condemned by others. To sum up the activities at Corinth it is apparent that in Corinth

Women [were] abstaining from sexual relations with their husbands. People [were] claiming ‘we all possess knowledge’ and ‘all things are lawful for me’ going to city temples to eat ‘meat offered to idols.’ Some [were] overindulging and others going hungry at celebrations of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>45</sup>

Whether some Christians were rich or not is debatable but that the Christians were of different means cannot be disputed in the light of the problems surrounding the Lord’s Supper (1Cor. 11:17ff). Since, some of the Christians were possibly well to do people who possibly owned slaves (1Cor. 1:26; 6:1-8; Acts 18:18), and some of them may have been slaves themselves; it happens therefore that relations between masters and slaves would have been one of the early points of conflicts regarding the Lord’s Supper. Could Christian masters do with their slaves, what the larger Greco-Roman communities did with their slaves? This is especially important for this study because “slaves were routinely subjected to physical and sexual abuse.”<sup>46</sup> This appears to be part of the problem included in the charge of sexual immorality against some at Corinth.

Sexual immorality at Corinth was wide ranging that besides the other practices named in the text cited above, the story in 1Cor. 5, where Paul charges that there is sexual immorality within the Christian community is important in understanding the sexual conflicts at Corinth. It is debatable if such immorality was only limited to the man living in an “incestuous”<sup>47</sup> relationship or that

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<sup>45</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 113.

<sup>46</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 113.

<sup>47</sup> This relationship is difficult to categorize as incest in other cultures. Among the Shona people, the practice of *Kugara Nhaka* (wife inheritance) had no problems with a son marrying his stepmother upon the death of the father. In most cases, some of the stepmothers are already much younger than the stepsons. Since it is not clear from the text if the father of this man is still

it was widespread as to demand the response of Paul. That some practices possibly not even extolled by the larger community were also finding expression among the Christians is attested to in the attack on women who pray and prophesy in Church without covering their heads, the charge being that these women are rejecting what their culture and community considered typically feminine.<sup>48</sup> For seeking to undermine their traditional culturally designated categories of masculinity and femininity, the women are reminded of the inviolability of 'divinely ordained' gender differences. It appears that the same is also implied in the statement on same-sex practices.

It is most probable that the two words used by Paul, *μαλακοι* and *αρσενοκοιται* to designate people engaging in same-sex practices appear to target a particular group that could have been establishing itself within the Christian community and justifying its practices through some interpretations of the freedom granted through the grace of Christ as taught by Paul. These arguments of Paul point to the existence of a group among the Christians who seemingly believed that all actions were permissible through the slogans cited above. But, who are these people? Here, we agree with Alexander Wedderburn that "the proffered identifications range from libertine pneumatics and Gnostics."<sup>49</sup> The elements of 'eloquent wisdom', which Paul attacks, could have been part of the challenge posed to his teaching through its deployment by Apollos (1Cor. 1:19-20).

Paul's mention of two factions one aligned to himself and the other to Apollos (1Cor. 3:4) in the context of his attack on some form of esoteric wisdom being claimed by some Corinthians sug-

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alive or dead, or if he is still married or divorced from this woman, it is impossible to refer to this case as incestuous.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Marlis Gielen "Gehört es sich, dass eine Frau unverhüllt zu Gott betet? Der Streit um Kopfbedeckung oder Frisur in 1 Kor 11, 2-16" in: *Bibel und Kirche*, 57, 2002, 134-138, 134.

<sup>49</sup> Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians*, 141. See also Clarence T. Craig & John Short "The First Epistle to the Corinthians" in: George A. Buttrick et al (eds), *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume X*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1953, 7.

gests that Apollos “had stirred up the excitement about wisdom and exalted spiritual status in Corinth.”<sup>50</sup> This reference to two factions is also supported by what is known about Corinth. Peter who is mentioned in the first reference to factions at Corinth never preached there, the inclusion of Christ is difficult to sustain (1Cor. 1:12) as constituting an actual faction though both positions are possible, they lack attestation anywhere else. Therefore Paul and Apollos are the two competing preachers at Corinth. When Paul warns the Corinthians, “Do not be deceived...” (1Cor. 6:9), he is admitting that these practices including same-sex practices are being justified on the basis of the newfound freedom as interpreted by the pneumatists.<sup>51</sup>

That Paul acknowledges that there have been diversions from what he considered as his standard teaching is apparent when he writes; “For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church” (1Cor. 4:17). It appears that, in spite of Paul’s claim to an amicable working relationship with Apollos, some of the conflicts were caused by the philosophical perspective of Apollos believed to have been learned at Alexandria, whose philosophical arguments were being interpreted as permitting all things. This explains why Paul charges that the Corinthian community is being deceived (cf. 1Cor. 3:10). The Corinthian assembly was now characterized by freedom for the “spirituals”, a freedom which saw literally everyone do as they please not only in terms of sexual asceticism and license but also in terms of their conduct during the Lord’s Supper (1Cor. 11:17-22), or the whole question of ‘meat offered to idols’ (1Cor. 10:25-33).

It appears that women dominated in the sphere of sexual asceticism that Paul had to appeal to the women to consider “temporary abstention from sexual intercourse” (1Cor. 7:5). It is not immediately clear if slaves had also adopted sexual asceticism as their

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<sup>50</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Orr & Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 200.

freedom from the abuses coming from their masters. There is evidence that the exploited people were sexually exploited, either as sex slaves to their masters and their clients or in brothels to work for their masters as prostitutes. Clearly, “for women in the ekklesia, as well as slaves and others of marginal social status, the wisdom and power that came with being imbued with the Spirit allowed them to transcend traditional sexual and religious norms that were a means of control in imperial society.”<sup>52</sup> As women’s significance was only in servicing the sexual desires of men, women used asceticism to get even with their male counterparts. This could have been justified under the slogan “everything is permitted me” that married women and men decided to settle for sexual asceticism without the consent of the other. The situation was disorderly in the eyes of Paul (1Cor. 14:33).

On the other hand, this newfound freedom was understood in terms of bodily liberties, in which the man living with his stepmother seems to be the antithesis of Corinthian women’s asceticism, almost an expression of sexual license. Paul clearly is baffled by the fact that the Corinthian community has not taken any action against this man and that instead of being ashamed of this the community is boasting about it (1Cor. 5:6). Clearly, the cultural background of some at Corinth may have not seen anything unbecoming in this relationship since different cultures have different perceptions on sons who inherit their stepmothers after the death of their fathers, if this was the case.

While some moved to asceticism, some were clearly moving in the opposite direction such that “the liberties being taken by the man and his (presumably former) stepmother could have been an expression of the newfound freedom in which some of the Corinthians were now living.”<sup>53</sup> It is possible also that this man had taken over his stepmother while his father was still living under the slogan “everything is permitted me!” Hence Fee writes, “the horror [for Paul] lies in the fact that there is sexual immorality

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<sup>52</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 129.

<sup>53</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 131.

among them and that with this sin in their midst they are 'proud' and 'boasting'."<sup>54</sup> The gospel as license to do as one pleases could have extended also to same-sex practices, especially in an environment where most women would have opted for sexual asceticism.

It is not surprising that same-sex practices are considered one of the manifestations of sexual immorality at Corinth because both Greeks and Romans who resided at Corinth belonged to communities who had a different perception of same-sex practices to that of the Jews. In short, both the Greeks and the Romans are known for condoning some manifestations of same-sex practices. It is not surprising that both could have been accused of "overbearing behaviour, the fostering of tyrannies and moral failings."<sup>55</sup> Sexual intercourse was always understood in terms of social relations where social seniority meant active sexual role while social inferiority meant passive sexual role. It was therefore scornful for a Greek or Roman citizen to be sexually penetrated. For the Greeks and Romans there existed some acceptable same-sex practices.

The possible existence of masters and slaves in the community of Christians as noted above is implied in the problems surrounding the Lord's Supper. In mediating slave-master conflicts, Paul is being asked to judge whether practices condoned by the larger community are prohibited to members of the Christian community. The sexual license being practiced by some is also being done by others in the larger community. Clearly, some of the early believers wanted to remain Roman or Greek with the benefit that in the new community there being no slaves or masters, they could freely enjoy that which had limitations outside. Some would have continued with their privileges as masters while some may have turned to male prostitution. The prevalence of same-sex practices could have benefited from the sexual asceticism of wo-

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<sup>54</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 199-201.

<sup>55</sup> Erich S. Gruen "Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity" in: John J. Collins & Gregory E. Sterling (eds), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 65.

men, which meant the male prostitutes would have been the ‘next best alternative’. Homosexual practices were therefore largely circumstantial and most of the practitioners would have been heterosexuals.

But since most of these early believers thought they were continuing the long divine history of ancient Israel (1Cor. 10:1ff), it is clear that part of the difficulty of mediating the relationship between Judaism and Christianity would be the relevance of Jewish laws for the Christians. It is apparent that what we call Christianity “did not yet exist in the New Testament period as an identifiable religion.”<sup>56</sup> Faced with the challenge of having to answer whether all Jewish prohibitions and attitudes had been invalidated in Christ? Paul responds to sexual immorality like the Jew that he was and sought to impose Jewish morality on a group that understood itself as no longer under the “Jewish laws”. As argued in chapter six, Jews understood sexuality and especially same-sex practices as defiling hence they threaten the wellbeing of the whole community. They also understood sexuality in terms of both the role and object of sexual desire. This Jewish cultural and religious understanding of same-sex practices is the basis upon which Paul condemns the male prostitutes and those who hire them. As this letter responds to situations within the Corinthian Christian community, it is therefore directed towards this specific manifestation of homosexuality at Corinth.

This historical specificity of the text disproves attempts to directly transplant it into a contemporary set up. What is apparent is that Paul clearly knows the manifestation of same-sex practices at Corinth and it is this manifestation that he thinks is in error because it is based on a teaching that Paul does not approve. It is possible that the *arsenokoitai* of Paul refer to the heterosexual men who upon facing the impact of the sexual asceticism being practiced by women at Corinth resorted to using the freedom proclaimed by Paul to justify the adoption of alternative forms of sexual release.

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<sup>56</sup> Horsley, „Unearthing a People’s History“, 2.

For the spiritually exalted individuals “they experienced a transition from a state of dishonour and humiliation”<sup>57</sup> to freedom without limits such that no activity could hamper them anymore. If same-sex was considered defiling in the old times, it could no longer defile the “spirituals”. If it was humiliating for reducing men to women, it could not humiliate the “spirituals” with unlimited freedom. These men are likely to have been heterosexuals who engaged the services of male prostitutes because such actions could not affect their service to God.

What made the *Malakos* highly detestable in Paul’s time was the fact that he “consciously imitated feminine styles and ways and walked the thin line between passive homosexual activity for pleasure and that for pay.”<sup>58</sup> To engage in activities, especially sexual intercourse for the sake of pleasure stands in stark contrast to Paul’s largely Stoic understanding of moderation in all things. These people were therefore guilty of following after their passions and lusts. The *malakos* or better still the *mollis* were effectively call-boys or male commercial sex workers servicing male clients. It is not clear whether some of these effeminate call-boys would constitute what we call gays today, but what was more problematic for Paul is that these men were deliberately transgressing gender boundaries, a capital crime under Jewish laws and possibly Paul’s sentence of 1Cor. 5:5 “you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” was a form of social death or excommunication pronounced on offenders. It is difficult to ascertain what Paul means by handing over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but it certainly carries the undertones of severe punishment to be meted out. It makes the whole community impure.

In this environment, same-sex practices at Corinth were condemned by Paul for a couple of reasons: first, they are attacked because they are based on a desire to dominate and second they

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<sup>57</sup> Pickett, “Conflicts at Corinth”, 129.

<sup>58</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 106.

have been justified by a misinterpretation of Paul's own teaching, particularly on the concept of freedom. Since Paul does not approve of this somewhat libertarian interpretation of freedom, he condemns practices that are being done on the pretext that as the new Israel, Christ had invalidated all Jewish laws. As a Jew, Paul condemned both active and passive homosexuality "lock, stock and barrel."<sup>59</sup> The condemnation had nothing to do with the sexual orientation of homosexual persons, it focused on the practices of some men who took freedom to be the end of many categories including gender differences. The environment of Roman Corinth at the time of Paul shows that prostitution was not only possible, it was prevalent and among the prostitutes, both male and female, were members of the Christian community. Male prostitution and not all manifestations of homosexuality is what Paul speaks against at Corinth.

### **7.3 Exegeting Romans 1:18-32**

The letter to the Romans is the longest of Paul's undisputed<sup>60</sup> letters and one of the most widely read of Paul's letters, there is almost virtual scholarly unanimity that Paul wrote to Rome from Corinth *ca.* 57/8 CE.<sup>61</sup> It is in this context that for many scholars of biblical sexuality, the major reference to homosexuality in the New Testament is a carefully crafted section of Rom. 1:18-32.<sup>62</sup> Of critical importance being verses 26-28. This section seeks to establish the most probable understanding of homosexuality in this Pauline letter. It shall be argued through this section that to understand Paul's condemnation of same-sex practices in the letter to the Romans, one has to understand it in the light of Rom. 3:8, 'And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we

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<sup>59</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Doubleday, 1997, 529.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 560.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 109.

say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved!' This verse brings to light the existence in Rome of some Christians who believed that their lifestyle had no effect on their salvation. It is possible that the events at Corinth were not isolated but spread in other assemblies. While there are similarities between the situation at Corinth and Rome, owing to their being part of the Roman Empire, there are also differences in the manifestations of homosexuality, of especial importance being the condemnation of female same-sex practices in Romans.

### 7.3.1 Greek text and its translation

<sup>BGT</sup> **Rom. 1:26** Διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας, αἵ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν,

<sup>NRS</sup> **Rom. 1:26** For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural,

<sup>KJV</sup> **Rom. 1:26** For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

<sup>NLT</sup> **Rom. 1:26** That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Rom. 1:26** Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

<sup>BGT</sup> **Rom. 1:27** ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργάζομενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Rom. 1:27** and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Rom. 1:27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another;

men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

<sup>NLT</sup> **Rom. 1:27** And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Rom. 1:27** In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

<sup>BGT</sup> **Rom. 1:28** Καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα,

<sup>NRS</sup> **Rom. 1:28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Rom. 1:28** And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

<sup>NLT</sup> **Rom. 1:28** Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Rom. 1:28** Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

In the critical verses cited above some phrases and words require further elucidation such as the idea that those who are engaging

in same-sex practices are doing so because “God gave them up...” (Rom. 1:26,28), “their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural” (Rom. 1:26), “and likewise also the men have left the natural uses of women” (Rom. 1:27). Of critical importance, are the questions; what does it mean to Paul and his audience that same-sex practices are unnatural? Are some Christians in Rome engaging in same-sex practices because God has given up on them or did God give them up because they were practicing homosexual persons? How should these texts be understood within their context? It is equally important to note that the vocabulary used in 1 Corinthians of *arsenokoitai* and *malakos* is missing in Romans, instead, Paul uses the phrase *para physin* to describe same-sex practices.

The idea of giving up is closely related to attempts at influencing a change in direction or conduct, which attempts are rejected by the targeted group or individual. God gave them up therefore entails that “the punishment of sin lies not in any direct intervention by which God disciplines offenders, but in the consequences which naturally follow from a lawless life.”<sup>63</sup> They are living in a false world where everything is make-believe. The impression is that these people are already under judgment; their lives are their punishment from God. Robin Scroggs argues that God’s judgment lies in His leaving them where they want to be,<sup>64</sup> while Moo observes that “handing over shows that those who were handed over were already immersed in sin.”<sup>65</sup> In this false reality that people are living in, “Paul insisted that the false world is lived in equally by women as well as men.”<sup>66</sup> In that regard it should be understood that Paul extends the horizons of same-sex practices to include female same-sex activities something that was not an issue

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<sup>63</sup> John Knox & Gerald R. Cragg “The Epistle to the Romans” in: George A. Buttrick et al (eds), *The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume IX*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1954, 400.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 113.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, 110.

<sup>66</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 115.

at Corinth. Therefore, the people who are under God's judgment can be seen by doing that which is described in the text. For Paul, it appears that same-sex practices have led God to give up on these people while their continued practicing of same-sex activities is the consequence of God having given up on them. This does not only apply to homosexual practice but to all sins.

The second critical argument that has found greater appeal in the Zimbabwean debate relates to the phrase *παρὰ φύσιν* (*para physin*) meaning "against nature, unnatural" which is also used in the Greco-Roman world to attack same-sex practices. In fact, the first person to refer to same-sex practice as "against nature" appears to be Plato.<sup>67</sup> In chapter five it was noted that the concept of nature is a difficult concept to comprehend, especially when it is applied to same-sex practices and orientation. This is so because "words such as 'nature' are polysemic, having many implicit meanings."<sup>68</sup> The question therefore is how does Paul deploy this phrase? How does Paul understand the meaning of nature? While some scholars like Gagnon have argued as if Paul consistently uses nature in relation to the creation of Genesis<sup>69</sup>, it would appear that this is highly debatable. Moo argues that "Paul generally uses the word 'nature' to describe the way things are by reason of their intrinsic state or birth, and in these cases there is no clear reference to divine intention."<sup>70</sup> In some cases, Paul uses nature to denote what is conventional (1Cor. 11:14-15) and thereby emphasizing the central role of cultural conceptions in his understanding. This appears to be the case with Paul's reference to some manifestation of homosexuality as unnatural.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, 1980, 13-14.

<sup>68</sup> Carol MacCormack & Marilyn Strathern (eds), *Nature, Culture and Gender*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 9.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Robert Gagnon „A Comprehensive and Critical Review Essay of Homosexuality, Science and the ‚Plain Sense‘ of Scripture, Part 2”, 2003, 192.

<sup>70</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 114.

### **7 3.2 The socio-literary world of Romans 1**

Unlike the other letters written by Paul to different Churches, Paul wrote to the Romans even though he was not the founder of this Church hence he is even apologetic for having written to them (Rom. 15:15).<sup>71</sup> To understand the context in which same-sex practices are condemned by Paul in this text, it is important to highlight how same-sex practices are woven into the socio-literary world. The letter to the Romans appears to be highly regarded in the history of Christianity such that “for [Martin] Luther and many Protestant interpreters who have followed him, ‘justification by faith’ is the centre of Romans, of Paul’s theology and indeed of the Bible.”<sup>72</sup> These have been widely discussed issues; this study will confine itself to the issue of homosexuality and only refer to the wider letter where that serves this study.

As noted in the previous chapter, these texts create a socio-literary world of their own, what O’Mahony has called a “community of discourse, which is otherwise not part of his history nor that of the community.”<sup>73</sup> Unlike O’Mahony, this study argues that the socio-literary world is indeed built by lived experiences of both Paul and his intended audience; hence any attempts to understand the contents of this letter require that we have to read it in its proper socio-historical environment. However, before worrying about the socio-historical world that produced the letter, it is of primary importance that the world created by the letter is equally important in our search for meaning in this text.

The Christian community at Rome was long in existence because Paul had been wishing to visit “for many years” (Rom. 15:23) and that their faith was being reported and attested “over the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). In essence, the letter clearly highlights the fact that Paul is not the founder of this community but that does not stop Paul from writing to them to address some problems that are happening in this community, which problems he had already

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 560.

<sup>72</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 89.

<sup>73</sup> O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience”, 209.

witnessed in some of the communities he founded. The existence of a group believing in Jesus at Rome is also attested to in *Acts of the Apostles*. Paul does not claim to have converted Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple who had recently come from Italy because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Hence, they may have left Rome as Jews who already believed in Jesus (Acts 18:1-3). Paul even goes to show his connection with the Roman community through various individuals who were members (Rom. 16:1-27). While Paul did not found the Church at Rome, it is apparent that through his earlier missionary journeys he had become acquainted to many people, some of whom had relocated to Rome at the time of the writing of the letter to the Romans.

While this study acknowledges the debate surrounding the position of chapter 16, whether it belongs to this letter or that it was independent of this letter, the position taken in this study is that it belongs to this letter since the names belong to people of early Roman Christianity. Six names are Latin; eighteen are Greek. Many are typical for slaves and freedmen and may represent Jews and non-Romans employed in the great Roman houses. Indeed, this position resonates with our earlier argument that this nascent movement attracted many freedmen and freedwomen and slaves scattered and traversing throughout the Empire. As for the early references to a 14 chapter or 15 chapter letter, the argument of Brown is here appropriated, that is, at some point and possibly in an attempt to universalize the letter the chapter on names could have been downplayed.<sup>74</sup>

Paul the successful missionary to the Gentiles has been attempting to visit the Christian community in Rome but without success (Rom. 1:10,13) such that he has decided to write to them. Clearly, he wants assistance from Rome as he attempts to go and evangelize Spain. Paul in this literary world has heard as have many others, about the Christian community in Rome (Rom. 1:8). While

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 575.

Paul highlights only the positive side of the stories about these Christians, it is most unlikely that Rome was exempt from the disturbances experienced in Pauline communities. This is crucial in understanding Paul's statements on same-sex practices. Since chapter 16 points to the existence of a Pauline group in Rome, which possibly is being accused of doing evil so that God's grace may be increased (Rom. 3:8), it is possible that this letter seeks to correct some "misconceptions and prejudices against his [Paul's] teaching."<sup>75</sup> But because Paul needs the Christians in Rome more than they needed him, he "goes to considerable lengths to communicate well and clearly with his audience."<sup>76</sup>

The Christian community is divided into two or more contending groups, but generally speaking "some more liberal and some more conservative."<sup>77</sup> As there are various disputes, Paul takes sides with both groups on the different substantive issues while reserving some strong words for the Gentile group which is the "stronger" of the two (Rom. 14:3-4,10,13). The difficulty for Paul is that none of the two groups is obliged to listen to Paul who is still an outsider to their community, which explains why he is "conciliatory and understanding."<sup>78</sup> As noted above, even though Paul is not the founder of the community, it is clear he understands himself to be responsible for the correction of this state of affairs, especially if his teachings have become part of the problem in Rome.

In writing to the Romans, Paul is interested in making the Christians in Rome conscious of the fact that they are supposed to be "that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). No one is exempt from the fall of humanity and salvation by grace hence to the Gentiles, Paul wishes to explain that a gracious God was knowable from the created order (Rom. 1:20). On the other

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<sup>75</sup> O'Mahony, "Imagining a Roman Audience", 192.

<sup>76</sup> O'Mahony, "Imagining a Roman Audience", 192.

<sup>77</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985, 31.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 31.

hand, Paul taunts the proud claims of Jewish superiority (Rom. 2:17-24) and insistence on a Law that they are not upholding. This scenario has created a dilemma for Paul, whether justification by faith is similar to predestination in which case works have no effect at all hence promoting freedom as license or whether without adhering to Jewish laws, Gentile Christians may not necessarily be equal members in the New Israel. In this context, how is Christian life to be lived, especially since we are still flesh and the flesh is not submissive to God's law?<sup>79</sup> Paul answers by arguing that we have to live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:14-17). By living according to the flesh, Paul suggests there are things that are done focusing on pleasing the flesh. This is the context in which Paul deals with same-sex practices in Rome.

The text on homosexuality is creatively integrated into this socio-literary world of the text and it appears that among Roman Christians, there is tension between the two groups named above such that their cultural differences appear to have also been manifest in their perceptions regarding homosexuality. The competition between Jewish and Gentile Christians has led to various accusations and counter-accusations and among these, Gentile Christians are accused of practicing homosexuality or at least tolerating homosexuality among many other practices that Paul considers evil (Rom. 1:18-25). Paul clearly takes a position that is largely consistent with his Jewish background against the Gentile Christians; this is fully balanced in the letter through other endorsements of Gentile Christians against the attacks from the Jewish Christian group.

The central concern of Paul is the demonstration of the universalism of God and the reliance of all humanity (Jew or Gentile) on the grace of God. To that extent, Scroggs posits that Paul's concerns in this text are theological and not ethical, yet in making his theological argument he demonstrates his disapproval of same-

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 569.

sex practices.<sup>80</sup> What makes this text even more interesting is that it is the only text in the Bible that mentions female same-sex sexual practices. The mentioning of female homosexual practices marks a fundamental departure from the Old Testament and Corinthian silences. This study agrees with Nissinen that Paul's mention "of women shows that his arguments are not limited to pederasty."<sup>81</sup> Instead of employing the "catalogue of vices" as in 1 Corinthians, Paul decides to describe what is happening presumably among the Gentile Christians, though it is possible some Jewish Christians would have belonged to this liberal group (Rom. 2:17-24).

Some liberal Christians have created a false world for themselves, a world in which no laws apply and no conventions are binding. As faith is the *sin qua non* of salvation, works are irrelevant. It is in this context that some women have started engaging in homosexual activities while the men are not left behind. Unlike in Corinth, where many women may have turned to sexual asceticism, women in Rome went for sexual license of a homosexual nature. In spite of this peculiar Pauline position on same-sex practices, gender differences are still understood much in the same way as in the Old Testament, as divinely ordained and therefore not to be breached. Clearly, Paul suggests the existence of "consensual same-sex practices" among Roman Christians (Rom. 1:24). However, while many would rush to claim its applicability today, Paul clearly associates these "consensual" practices to a false understanding of freedom in the scheme of salvation (Rom. 1:23). Paul in this case is again closer to the Old Testament, this time, by clearly associating same-sex practices with idolatry and impurity (Rom. 1:24). Due to this association Paul concludes that such practices are totally unacceptable within the community. Since same-sex practices are idolatry they are unacceptable within the

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 109.

<sup>81</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, 1998, 112-3.

community but not necessarily in the larger community which is ruled by the Roman Emperor.

Same-sex practices are wrong in this world also because they stand in opposition to the fact that on the basis of Genesis' creation stories, God created man to mate with woman, since this is observable to all there is no excuse for not doing what is right. While, some did not receive the will of God in scripture, they have however received it through the created order (Rom. 1:19,20). All human beings are capable of scrutinizing this environment to understand that which pleases God. In this instance, same-sex practices are labelled unnatural because they are against nature, meaning nature is equated with the observable world understood in the light of gender as divinely ordained.

Same-sex practices are also understood as humiliating, not only to the passive object but to the active subject as well. For that those engaging in same-sex practices are understood as already under punishment (Rom. 1:27) because what they are doing is humiliating even though they are not realizing it. Punishment involves inflicting physical, emotional, psychological pain and shame; hence the conclusion that the people are already being punished is based on this understanding of homosexuality as humiliating. Alternatively, Paul could have assumed that because God has given up on these people, their sexual desires have become excessive such that they can no longer control them. Despite these obstacles, there is hope for this community because eventually "God [will triumph] over the forces that would mislead people, setting things right and saving the world."<sup>82</sup>

### **7.3.3 *The socio-historical context of Romans 1***

While it is important to acknowledge the existence of a socio-literary world created by the text, this study rejects the assertion that this world is far removed from the socio-historical world of the author and its intended audience. It is argued here that the

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<sup>82</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 561.

socio-literary world is a reflection on the socio-historical world of the time. In searching for the socio-historical world of the text, it is important to highlight that Paul is writing not for the entire Roman Empire rather he is writing for the Christian community in Rome, which was essentially a minority. The critical question for this section is: “How specific is Romans to what is going on in the Roman Christian community?”<sup>83</sup> This section seeks to highlight the circumstances that led Paul to address the Romans and how these circumstances also occasioned the noting of same-sex practices for condemnation. Further, it shall be argued that the letter has clear manifestations of homosexuality it condemns, which are consistent with what is known about Rome of that time. While, some ordinary readers may be of the opinion that Paul only targeted Gentiles it is important to note that Christianity benefited from the existence of Jews outside Palestine because some among them were the earliest converts outside Palestine. There were about 40,000 to 50,000 Jews in Rome in the 1st century CE that it would not have been long before Jews who believed in Jesus and who were making converts in other cities of the Empire like Damascus and Antioch, made their way to such a promising missionary field.<sup>84</sup> A clearest example of this being the couple Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla) cited above, Jews who resided in Rome and who already were converts by the time they met Paul. Like the communities founded by Paul, the Roman Christians were faced with internal strife caused by the multiplicity of interpretations of what constituted true and faithful Christians. Similarly, like the Corinthian Christians, the Roman Christians found their community divided into factions all professing to be the faithful and having the correct interpretation. Among the many points causing tension in the community, chapter 14 “indicates that some in the community were scrupulous about meat, wine and the Sabbath, possibly Jewish Christians.”<sup>85</sup> The argument

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<sup>83</sup> O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience”, 192.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 561.

<sup>85</sup> O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience”, 207.

here is that the division of this community into liberal and conservative camps clearly follows this Jewish-Gentile divide in the community. The Roman Christian community is at a cultural crossroads where the Jewish culture is pitted against the Hellenistic culture of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>86</sup> While, the majority of scholars have identified “justification by faith” as the central concern of Paul in Romans, this study agrees with O’Mahony that the central concern is “the communion of the Gentiles and Jews in the Christian church.”<sup>87</sup>

Is it possible that some among the Christians were involved in same-sex practices? The letter is addressed to Christians in Rome and deals with issues that are important for Christians. It is also indisputable that this new movement was still too insignificant that it could not influence public policy hence Paul could not have intended the letter for the larger Roman community. This is also clear in the letter when Paul addresses his intended audience as those called to be saints in Rome (Rom. 1:7). These Christians had been exposed to various degrees of same-sex practices in the Empire, since as we argued earlier, most were slaves and these would have been at the receiving end of same-sex sexual relations. Others were freedmen and freedwomen, who as slaves previously would have been in the same situation as with current slaves. It is also possible that some were masters of their own slaves with whom they also enjoyed sexual rights like all other masters. The known history of Rome clearly substantiates the assertion that some were converted having been involved or still being involved in same-sex practices.

While Jews had the injunctions in their law against same-sex practices, the Gentiles did not have such condemnation. In fact, there were some manifestations that Romans and Greeks con-

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Justin Taylor, “The Original Environment of Christianity” in: Kieran J. O’Mahony (ed), *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 241)*; The Milltown Institute and the Irish Biblical Association Millennium Conference, 2003, 223.

<sup>87</sup> O’Mahony, “Imagining a Roman Audience”, 212.

done, especially those that remained within the socially accepted limits. If sexual roles were reversed it was degrading only for the citizen while the slave and other lesser human beings had to live with the humiliation! This is the manifestation of homosexuality that Paul is dealing with, a manifestation that celebrates the humiliation of the slaves, who have now become major stakeholders in this new movement. It is possible that like at Corinth, some among these Christians developed an interpretation of open-ended freedom, which could have resulted in those playing the passive role lose the stigma of being a woman, since this new life in Christ recognized no such difference (cf. Gal. 3:28). Paul, as a Jew treats same-sex practices as a Gentile failing as noted above even though some Jews could have been slaves and therefore equally exposed to same-sex practices.

The next critical question is: to what extent does the socio-historical world help in elucidating the meaning of the all important phrase *παρὰ φύσιν* (*para physin*)? Why in this context does Paul label homosexuality as unnatural? Two critical understandings of nature are apparent in Paul's arguments against same-sex practices. These conceptions are not at all novel in Paul. First, same-sex practices are unnatural because God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:22). The argument of Paul clearly understands this created order to be equivalent to nature (Rom. 1:20). Second, Paul uses nature to describe what is conventional; "Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering" (1Cor. 11:14-5). Does this mean that black African women who generally have short hair are acting unnaturally or it simply shows that Paul is using his own cultural conventions for nature?

Paul is firmly standing within the Jewish camp when it comes to sexual behaviour among Christians. As intimated in chapter six, Jews generally understood sexual intercourse as only important if it is being done to procreate and strengthen the community. While, Jews had scripture, Gentiles did not have scripture, how

then were the Gentiles to know? It is at this level that Paul argues on the basis of empirical observations, “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). By suggesting that natural things are empirically observable, Paul assumes that same-sex practices are absent in the animal world, something that cannot be sustained now. He also assumes that what is rare or does not result in tangible results such as children is also unnatural. Without being a major player on procreationism, Paul’s condemnation of same-sex practices as unnatural is actually based on an understanding of sexual intercourse as meant for procreation.

Paul charges that men and women are ‘exchanging’ their ‘natural’ sexuality for that which is ‘unnatural’, that it would appear “the text (Rom. 1:18-27) speaks of people who deliberately turn their natural sexual orientation upside down and take an adversary role in it [...] to use modern terms, Paul refers to heterosexual people who knowingly and voluntarily make themselves homosexuals.”<sup>88</sup>

However one may look at this text; it seems that Paul assumes that all men must have sexual intercourse with women. This is what is common and therefore from Paul’s understanding, natural and it normally results in procreation. Paul does not know of different sexualities. The understanding is still fundamentally similar to that in 1 Corinthians; the only difference being that while women in Corinth would have opted for sexual asceticism those in Rome “lusted after each other.” Sex must result in procreation and same-sex activities have no potential for fulfilling this very important aspect. Paul does not completely reject “sex for pleasure” but at least it should follow the common pairings, that is, male and female.

In reaching his verdict, Paul knows the general ideology behind same-sex practices in the Roman Empire and understands only too well that it is degrading even for unconverted slaves who re-

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<sup>88</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 113.

main in this Roman world. The message of Christ is a proclamation of liberty but engaging in humiliating same-sex practices is a rush back to servitude instead of liberty. Paul argues that those who are practicing homosexuality are now under the spell of their own “shameful desires” (Rom. 1:26) and have become “subject to the passions of sexuality.”<sup>89</sup> The gospel is a message of liberty in place of the yoke of bondage carried by those who rely on the law to secure their acceptance by God. Why should those who have been emancipated by Christ give up their freedom and submit to servitude afresh?<sup>90</sup> This was thoroughgoing during Paul’s time, but this certainly is a completely different socio-historical set-up to contemporary Zimbabwe hence solutions need not necessarily be the same.

#### **7.4 Exegeting 1 Timothy 1: 9-10**

There is much that is common between this text and the one in 1 Corinthians, that some scholars have always discussed them concurrently. While treating them separately here, only those peculiar aspects to this text will be emphasized as some of the arguments have been addressed under 1 Corinthians. In addressing this text, four questions need closer examination: who were the false teachers? What was the nature of the false teaching? What is the relationship between same-sex practices and the false teaching? Why was 1 Timothy written?<sup>91</sup> This study agrees with the scholars that maintain the position that this letter was written after Paul’s death. The marked difference in language between Pauline Epistles and the Pastorals is considered the most pressing criticism against Pauline authorship of the Pastorals.<sup>92</sup> This criticism dating

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<sup>89</sup> Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian literature*, 32.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Bruce, *The letter of Paul to the Romans*, 34.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Pastoral Epistles, Revised Edition*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, 53.

as far back as Schleiermacher (1807) is an aggregate of four observations;

The problem of the large number of words unique to the Pastorals in the New Testament (175 new words), the problem of the large number of words common to the Pastorals and other New Testament writings but unknown in the other ten Pauline letters, the problem of characteristic Pauline words and groups of words missing from the Pastorals, and the problem of grammatical and stylistic differences.<sup>93</sup>

### 7.4.1 Greek text and its translation

**BGT 1Tim. 1:9** εἰδὼς  
τοῦτο, ὅτι δικαίῳ νόμος  
οὐ κεῖται, ἀνόμοις δὲ  
καὶ ἀνυποτάκτοις,  
ἀσεβέσι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοῖς,  
ἀνοσίοις καὶ βεβήλοις,  
πατρολώαις καὶ μητρο-  
λώαις, ἀνδροφόνοις

**NRS 1Tim. 1:9** This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers,

**KJV 1Tim. 1:9** Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

**NLT 1Tim. 1:9** For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders.

**NIV 1Tim. 1:9** We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

**BGT 1Tim. 1:10** πόρνοις  
ἄρσενοκοίταις ἀνδραπο-  
δισταῖς ψεύσταις  
ἐπιόρκοις, καὶ εἴ τι

**NRS 1Tim. 1:10** fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching

**KJV 1Tim. 1:10** For whoremongers, for them that

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<sup>93</sup> Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, Revised Edition*, 54. See also Fred D. Gealy & Morgan P. Noyes “The First & Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus” in: George A. Buttrick et al (eds), *The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume XI*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1955, 346.

ἕτερον τῆ ὑγιαίνουσα  
διδασκαλίᾳ ἀντίκειται

defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

<sup>NLT</sup> **1Tim. 1:10** The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching

<sup>NIV</sup> **1Tim. 1:10** for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

These verses have been explicitly cited in the Zimbabwe debate on homosexuality alongside the texts from 1 Corinthians and Romans 1 as explicit New Testament texts that condemn homosexuality. While Dale Martin and also Jack Rogers argue that *arsenokoites* probably refers to some kind of economic coercion, prostitution, pimping or something of the sort since the vices were often grouped according to their similarity and in 1Tim. 1:10 *arsenokoitai* is followed by slave traders, a group who exploited others.<sup>94</sup> It cannot be disputed that in this letter this term is being used to refer to some men who are participating in same-sex activities, which could have been exploitative, as most such practices were in the Roman Empire.

It has to be noted that unlike in 1 Corinthians, *malakoi* does not appear in this text. It is surprising that *malakoi* is missing in this text considering that in 1 Corinthians there is a clear association between the *arsenokoitai* and the *malakoi*. Is the omission of this term signifying a change of attitude towards those who play the passive role from the position of Paul? This is entirely possible if one considers the fact that slaves had no option to accept or spurn the sexual advances of their masters in the Roman Empire. By implication, this would entail then that the *arsenokoitai* were Christians who owned slaves and were demanding the same rights over their slaves as their counterparts in the Roman Em-

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 41. See also, Rogers, *Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality*, 74.

pire. Alternatively, is it possible that the author treats *arsenokoitai* as not limited to one partner in same-sex practices as seen in some translations such as the King James Version above? It is possible that the author is noting the manner in which the *arsenokoitai* has also become the *malakoi* at the same time. These are issues that in our search for meaning we will keep in mind.

#### **7.4.2 The socio-literary world of the text**

As argued in the sections above, the text creates a socio-literary world and as previously suggested, the search for meaning begins by an appreciation of this socio-literary world. ‘Paul’ writes “I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine” (1Tim. 1:3). The letter identifies itself with the goings on in Ephesus and “was occasioned by Paul’s having left Timothy in Ephesus as his personal representative in order to stop the influence of some false teachers.”<sup>95</sup> The work of these false teachers apparently is succeeding in influencing the Christian community; the behaviour attacked is a direct reflection of the behaviour of the false teachers.<sup>96</sup> The teaching is characterized as “different” from that given by Paul. The argument of Paul is the need to establish a clear identity for the Christian communities but this is being undermined by the false teaching, such that, even the external behaviour of the Christians is not able to convince outsiders that they are different.

The letter presents a world in which there now exist clearly formulated “orthodox” teachings from the Apostles, in this case, Paul and some appointed elders. To that extent, Donald Guthrie writes “at the time of writing there was already a definite system of teaching, apostolically authenticated, committed particularly to apostolical delegates and generally to elders.”<sup>97</sup> In this socio-

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<sup>95</sup> Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, Revised Edition*, 39.

literary world, teaching is of such great importance that not everyone could teach in the community unless they were specially asked to do so by the Apostle. It appears that ordinations would have been carried out through the laying on of hands (1Tim. 4:14) to signal the transference of the spirit from the appointer to the appointee. That the false teachers are insiders is supported by the naming and excommunication of two such leaders, “Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1Tim. 1:20).

While there were many problems besides same-sex practices that are a cause for concern to the author, ‘Ephesus’ like Corinth is witnessing a wide range of sexual license hence it is argued that some widows may have been “indulging in pleasure and sensual desires that could overcome their dedication to Christ.”<sup>98</sup> It is possible also that as the people in this world searched for wealth, some of them went to extremes (1Tim. 6:10) including but not limited to same-sex prostitution. These practices like in Corinth are being justified by the false teachers hence as in Corinth it is not so much same-sex in general but same-sex practices that are done under the impression that Christian freedom entails sexual license to do as one pleases showing “some incidences of anti-nomian or libertarian trends.”<sup>99</sup> The argument remains that liberty in Christ means being in total control of the flesh hence being in a position not to be slaves to desires of the flesh.

### **7.4.3 The socio-historical context of the text**

While some scholars have acknowledged the socio-literary world, some of the claims by the letter cannot easily be reconciled with what is known about Paul and Timothy, the claim that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus when he went to Macedonia (1:3) “does not fit into the career of Paul and Timothy derived from Acts and the

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<sup>98</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 658.

<sup>99</sup> Gealy & Noyes “The First & Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus”, 357.

undisputed Pauline letters.”<sup>100</sup> This study takes the position that this letter was written after Paul’s time even though it is apparent that a number of scholars have raised their arguments for Pauline authorship of this letter such as Gordon D. Fee and Donald Guthrie.

The date adopted for the time of this letter brings us closer to understanding the nature of same-sex practices known during that time. On the basis of the organizational structure of the church, 1 Timothy supposes the existence of presbyters/bishops in Ephesus, a structure which is not far from that of Didache 15:1 and that of 1 Clement 42:4,5; 44:4-5; 54:2 suspected to have been written around 100 CE and 96 CE respectively. However, it has been noted that this structure is fundamentally different from that advocated by Ignatius around 110 CE of one bishop, presbyters and deacons.<sup>101</sup> In this case, the widely held date between 80-90 CE is similarly adopted in this study. Because of the focus on same-sex practices, it is important to note that there is a connection between same-sex practices and libertinism since it is argued that “debauched living and indulgence in illicit pleasures have gone to such a limit, and every sort of libertinism has become so rife in the cities, that they have become the norm.”<sup>102</sup> This realization helps in further understanding the context in which same-sex practices are condemned in 1Tim. 1:10.

Since libertinism could easily result from some interpretations of Paul, it is not surprising that the author appears to be tackling enemies from within the community. Internal strife within these early Christian communities is attested to in many texts. This is supported also from 1 Corinthians, where the pneumatists appeared to have beliefs and practices bordering on libertinism. Again as in Corinth, this teaching was dangerous because it led to two opposite tendencies; asceticism on the one hand (1Tim. 4:1-4) and probably licentiousness on the other hand (as 1Tim. 5:22

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<sup>100</sup> Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 655.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 666.

<sup>102</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 55.

seems to suggest).<sup>103</sup> Clearly, this text shows that the problems that Paul had dealt with earlier had not ended in Christian communities. Yet, it still remains a mystery why the author of this letter omits the *malakoi*. In this world “*arsenokoitai* could well refer to homosexuals, since certainly a century later there are known to have been many in Ephesus.”<sup>104</sup> Without asking whether these texts are true or false, the meaning of these texts can be understood in their socio-historical contexts. But, what manifestation of homosexuality are they opposing? Can ancient Greece and the Roman Empire help in our search for meaning?

### **7.5 Homosexuality in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire**

Paul, the Jewish apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles was also a child of the Roman Empire and even 1 Timothy was also written within this Empire. While he retained his Jewishness in his responses to same-sex practices, it is also apparent that he was dealing with the practices that were known to the larger Greco-Roman culture, which was “fairly bisexual, since many adult pederasts were or would be married and carry on sexual relationships with both sexes.”<sup>105</sup> It was a culture in which men were penetrators and for as long as they maintained this position in sexual relations with women, boys and slaves, their status was never in doubt. The argument in this study is that Paul’s statements on same-sex practices are an indirect attack on the manifestation of homosexuality throughout the Roman Empire, which manifestation was also apparent in Christian communities in Corinth and Rome and during the time of 1 Timothy.

There are two other critical points where perceptions appeared to converge in the two societies; first, common to both Roman and Greek homoeroticism was the basic structure that required an

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: Revised Edition*, 42.

<sup>104</sup> Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, Revised Edition*, 72.

<sup>105</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 42.

active and a passive partner, yet critically for a free Roman citizen the passive role was shameful, as it involved the loss of one's manly honour.<sup>106</sup> Both societies saw a direct connection between social status and sexual role. The free citizens could not take the passive role and retain their manly honour. It should be emphasized that in Rome, sexual relations between adult citizens was prohibited much in the same way that ancient Greece also frowned on such relations. However, among the Romans the only acceptable manifestation of same-sex practices was that involving a master and his slave.<sup>107</sup> While the Roman same-sex practices did not classify participants on the basis of age, the same effect is achieved by categorizing partners according to their social status. This leads us to consider below some of these points of discontinuity between Greek and Roman conceptions and how they help in understanding the biblical texts on homosexuality.

### **7.5.1 Homosexuality in ancient Greece**

The question central to this section is whether Paul and the author of 1 Timothy are responding to “pederastic homosexuality” or some other manifestation of homosexuality. Ancient Greece in sexuality studies is almost always associated with the institution of pederasty or the love of boys. Is there something that we can learn from ancient Greece that could elaborate further on the people these texts called the *arsenokoitai* and the *malakoi*? As noted earlier, these are not the terms that ancient Greeks used to describe pederastic relationships, but since there were variations of pederasty maybe there is something that Paul knew about such variations. What do we know about same-sex practices in ancient Greece? How does this information help us in understanding the biblical texts on homosexuality?

The first important observation is the position advanced by K. J. Dover who argues that “the Greeks were aware that individuals

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 70,72.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 80.

might differ in their sexual preferences, but their language has no nouns corresponding to the English nouns 'a homosexual' and 'a heterosexual', since they assumed that (a) virtually everyone responds at different times both to homosexual and to heterosexual stimuli, and (b) virtually no male penetrates other males and submits to penetration by other males at the same stage of his life."<sup>108</sup> There was no separate existence of homosexuality and heterosexuality since an individual could easily practice both. The choice of a sexual partner was not an issue of orientation but of social convention, dependent upon age and social status.<sup>109</sup>

While various manifestations of homosexuality may have existed in ancient Greece the model was pederasty, which could have been used metaphorically to also cover the adult males who continued to play the passive role. Pederasty in ancient Greece was not only based on an age differential but depended also on social status. In all cases, however, the legitimate expression of pederasty was through two unequal partners but most importantly the partners would have to come from the same social class. In this institutional set up, the pederastic relationship did not only entail sexual gratification for the active partner (the adult man) but also meant being mentored in becoming a respectable citizen (the boy). Even more important is how ancient Greece frowned upon anal penetration in these relationships. Ideally, therefore, pederasty was targeted at freeborn youths who aspired to become respectable citizens. They extolled pedagogical pederasty, which saw young boys being initiated into the polity of ancient Greece. It is in this context that Sjeff van Tilborg argues for an understanding of the relationship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple in the light of Greek pederasty, particularly with its pedagogical emphasis.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, London: Duckworth, 1978, 6.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Carola Reinsberg, *Ehe, Hetärenum und Knabenliebe im antiken Griechenland*, München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1989, 163.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Sjeff van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993, 77-110.

In terms of the general attitude of Greeks towards homosexuality, on the basis of vase paintings, literary sources and other sources, Greeks extolled the virtues of pederastic relationships. Same-sex practitioners were credited with having succeeded in many endeavours including establishing democracy at Athens:

But you found a law for the use of everyone; for you were first, Solon, they say, to discover this practice – a democratic one, by Zeus, and a saving one (I should know, Solon!); seeing the city full of young men and seeing them under the compulsion of nature misbehaving in ways they should not, you brought and stationed women in various public locations, equipped and fitted out as common possessions for all. They stand there naked, so you won't be fooled: what you see is what you get. You don't happen to feel quite yourself; you have something bothering you: how so? The door is wide open. One Obol, and in you hop. There isn't a bit of prudishness or nonsense, and she doesn't shy away from you, but goes straight to it, just as you like and in whatever way you like. You come out: tell her to go to hell, she is nothing to do with you.<sup>111</sup>

The most interesting aspect for this study is the fact that brothels were part of the Athenian democracy and were widespread in ancient Greece. Following on the arguments of Dale Martin noted in previous sections, it is possible that Paul could have included same-sex brothel owners under the designation *arsenokoitai*.

In searching for the *malakoi*, it is acknowledged that three categories of people took the passive role or were expected to take the passive role in ancient Greece. First, were the freeborn noble youths, second were the slave-prostitutes found in brothels and households to service their masters and their guests and the passive role was their duty. Third, were the effeminate call-boys, who normally were free youths or adults, dressed like women, clean shaven, coiffured, and perfumed. These sold themselves yet they were not under compulsion (like the first two) to live this way or to make their money in such a fashion – they chose to do it.<sup>112</sup> While same-sex practices clearly took many forms, it is clear the variations were simply understood as variations from the model

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<sup>111</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 100.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 38-42.

pederasty. We noted earlier that Paul uses a term that does not say anything about the age of the person and it is this that makes the effeminate call-boy the closest we have to the *malakoi* of Paul. These are people who possibly enjoyed the passive role or who enjoyed the financial benefits of the passive role. Considering that some of the earliest believers were slaves and lowly people, same-sex experiences of this nature should not be surprising.

Clearly, Paul like many others in ancient Greece found it surprising that some men could actually enjoy the passive role since in ancient Greece;

the positive pleasure women take in passivity contributed to justifying, in masculine eyes, their socially as well as sexually subordinate position in Athenian society, for their enjoyment of the passive role signified to Greek men that women are naturally constituted in such a way that they actually desire to lose the battle of the sexes.<sup>113</sup>

In this context, those men who took pleasure in the passive role forfeited their manly honour. Gender differences were understood as the basis of power relations, with the masculine body taking precedence over the feminine body. It is in this context that “Athenians tended to portray sex not as a collective enterprise in which two or more persons jointly engage but rather as an action performed by one person upon another.”<sup>114</sup> This understanding was widespread in ancient Greece that it is only logical to assume that Paul was aware of this kind of homosexuality in his dealings with Gentile Christians. Paul’s forays into same-sex practices cannot be entirely divorced from this general environment of his time. Further, the characteristics of Greco-Roman pederasty would have been in contradiction to the nature of Christian community Paul had in mind if Gal. 3:28 is to be taken seriously.

The remaining challenge is particularly focusing on Romans 1 and the condemnation of same-sex practices (including female same-sex practices) by Paul as ‘unnatural’. Female same-sex is

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<sup>113</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 133. See also, Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 39.

<sup>114</sup> Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 29.

rarely alluded to in ancient Greek sources because it was impossible for women to have sex without two of the primary requisites, that is, penises and men. The only widely acknowledged source of such relationships from ancient Greece comes from the writings of Sappho of Lesbos (lesbian is actually derived from Lesbos); these relationships are largely modelled along the lines of pedagogical pederasty.<sup>115</sup> This does not however imply that such relations were extolled by the Greeks whose conception of sex always involved penises and penetrators. Women could not possibly sexually relate to each other since they were born to be passive. Since this was the common practice, which also led to procreation this form of sexuality was therefore understood as natural while same-sex practices were understood as unnatural.

### **7.5.2 Homosexuality in the Roman Empire**

While Greek culture was dominant in the ANE during the New Testament period, it is apparent that “sources from Republican and early imperial Rome are both historically and culturally closer to the New Testament and other sources of the early church than are Greek documents from the classical age.”<sup>116</sup> While many scholars have drawn parallels between the biblical texts and pederasty, it is possible that the New Testament texts are responding to manifestations within the Roman Empire. Retired Anglican Bishop Peter Hatendi highlighted in the Zimbabwean debate the idea that of the first fifteen Roman emperors, only Claudius led an exclusively heterosexual life.<sup>117</sup> This fact alone clearly attests to the prevalence of homosexuality in the Roman Empire, at least at the level of political and social elites. It is also possible that Paul and other early Church leaders responded to Roman same-sex

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, 17.

<sup>116</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 69.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Peter Hatendi, The Challenge is not yet answered, *The Harare Herald*, 24/06/1996. See also John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 61.

practices which were finding expressions within these early Christian communities.

There are some substantive differences that separate Greek and Roman conceptions of same-sex practices, for example, Roman same-sex relationships were normally between free citizens and prostitutes or slaves something that Greeks considered ungentlemanly. Therefore, while pederasty was pedagogical in its Greek cultural understanding, Roman same-sex practices were driven by the desire to dominate and were characterized by aggression.<sup>118</sup> Crompton echoes the same understanding when arguing that

The Greeks were able to conceive of love between an older and a younger male as a protective and affectionate mentorship, while the Romans, generally speaking, did not accord this privileged status to male relationships [...] for the Romans, homosexual relations were not in themselves good or bad. But to submit to penetration was to be feminized and humiliated.<sup>119</sup>

While ancient Greece attached some value to their model pederasty because of its pedagogical nature, Romans only counted the victories for the penetrator, hence the idea that “Caesar conquered Gaul; Nicomedes, Caesar” and that Caesar was the “Queen of Bithynia” because he had been conquered by Nicomedes.<sup>120</sup> Being penetrated among the Romans was shameful and could hinder one’s progress in the social ladder. The penetrators were conquerors and soldiers used it as a way of humiliating defeated peoples. There was nothing but the desire to express social precedence in every given situation.

The Roman understanding of same-sex practices emphasized more the physical and sexual dimension, completely ignoring the

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. Joachim Kügler “Die Liebe des Sohnes und das Bleiben des Jüngers: Der Geliebte Jünger im Johannesevangelium und die Begründung kirchlicher Macht im johanneischen Christentum“ in: Marlis Gielen/Joachim Kügler (Hrsg.), *Liebe, Macht und Religion: Interdisziplinäre Studien zu Grunddimensionen menschlicher Existenz*, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003, 223-226.

<sup>119</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, 79-80.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 75.

pedagogical goal of Greek pederasty. “The Roman ideal of masculinity involved aggression [...] which manifested itself in the subordination of slaves to the passive sexual role.”<sup>121</sup> If Greek freemen had to charm freeborn youths into same-sex relations in which education rather than penetration was the central concern, Roman freemen had to subjugate their slaves and male prostitutes to demonstrate their power and dominance, and these were understood as “conquests”. While the Greeks incorporated love (*eros*) in *paiderastia*, *erastes*, *eromenos*, the Roman terms such as *pathici*, *cinaedi*, and *exoleti* are terms suggestive of passivity, degradation, and abuse.<sup>122</sup> On the basis of Roman conception of same-sex practices, it is possible that the *arsenokoitai* of Paul referred to men who not only had sexual relations with other men but possibly men who also engaged in some sexually exploitative ventures. These men did everything in pursuit of the power of precedence and sought to humiliate others in the process. They were not fit for the community Paul had in mind, a community of equals.

The Roman *mollis* and *cinaedi*, widely believed to be referring to the same person designated *malakos* in Greek are essentially highlighting the existence of some men who failed to meet the standards of ‘real’ masculinity and this was especially so, for men who enjoyed being penetrated by other men. Among the Romans, some men were effeminate or soft and some rebranded themselves as women. This was a public scandal because men could not aspire to become women, aspiring to be lesser beings. The *mollis* and the *cinaedus* are guilty of the voluntary abandonment of a ‘masculine’ identity in favour of a ‘feminine’ one. Such men are compared to the *tribades*, women who pursue women with an almost masculine jealousy.<sup>123</sup> These appear to be the closest we get to identify the *malakos* of Paul. Since among the Romans, social status and sexual role rather than age, defined acceptable

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<sup>121</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 71.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, 80.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Halpern, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, 23.

from unacceptable same-sex practices, it would appear that Paul is responding more to the manifestation of brutal Roman homosexuality than to pedagogical Greek pederasty as suggested by Robin Scroggs.<sup>124</sup> In this case, both male and female homosexual practices are labelled unnatural because they violate gender boundaries, especially from a Jewish background in which licit sexual intercourse clearly identifies women as the only acceptable passive partner. Paul's condemnation of female same-sex practices clearly responds to the existence of Christian *tribades*.

Finally, in an attempt to understand all the texts we dealt with in this chapter, there are three key issues that require highlighting here. Why is homosexuality *para physin* for Paul? Who are the *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*? Among the Romans, like the Greeks, sexual intercourse generally divided its partners into active citizens and passive women, slaves, and boys. As long as these relations were kept in this order, same-sex practices were understood as harmless to society and therefore largely tolerated. "The Roman sources repudiate women's homoerotic relations. In Roman literature 'love between women is in the first place against nature.'"<sup>125</sup> Clearly, Paul is not the first to label same-sex practices unnatural but the basis upon which Greeks and Romans label them as such is different from those of Paul though with some similarities. The reasons for understanding same-sex relations as unnatural is directly linked to what is natural, for the Romans and Greeks alike, natural sexual intercourse requires at least a man and a penis. The emphasis is on the active partner hence women cannot be doing something natural if they think they can sexually please themselves. As for male same-sex practices it would be unnatural for men to willingly submit to penetration, a role designated as feminine. The basis for Paul appears to be both scriptural and philosophical, that is, same-sex practices violate the created order of man and woman (Gen. 1-2), at a time when gender differences were understood as "divinely ordained" and not so

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 126.

<sup>125</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 77.

cially constructed (Rom. 1:20). For Paul, only the woman can be penetrated and while Paul does not directly link this to procreation, 1 Timothy clearly shows the acknowledgement of women as baby-makers (cf. 1Tim. 5:13-14). Clearly, even without mentioning it, it is apparent that procreation is implied in the texts and is understood as natural. Even more important is the idea that this can be done successfully through moderation. On the basis of Paul's Jewish understanding of sexuality, it is not surprising that Paul and the writer of 1 Timothy disagreed with Greeks and Romans on the value of same-sex practices.<sup>126</sup>

It has been argued earlier that the letters of Paul clearly associate the *arsenokoitai* with same-sex practices, particularly denoting those men who played the active role in such relations. It is possible that some of these men could have been involved in some forms of exploitative same-sex practices, maybe as owners of slaves or brothels. These men were transplanting a system prevalent in the Roman Empire into the Christian community hence defeating the freedom that was so central to Paul. Regarding the *malakos*, it is argued that Paul here had the Roman *mollis* and *cinaedus* in mind. The so-called effeminate call-boy, who enjoyed the passive role or took the passive role for pay. *Malakos* for Paul would have referred to those men (not necessarily boys) who willingly took the passive role in same-sex practices.

If pederasty was the problem, Paul could have used the common Greek words but since he uses a term that is age-neutral, the passive partner was not simply a boy but an adult. There is greater correlation between the *malakos* of Paul and the so-called effeminate call-boy, who was either a freeborn youth or adult or freed slave who engaged in same-sex practices for enjoyment or economic reasons. The texts above reflect this socio-historical background and for that their meaning is primarily located in that context. As many things have changed since then, their appropriation has to acknowledge this contextual meaning of the text,

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. Michel Foucault (trans. by Robert Hurley), *The History of Sexuality, volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, 14.

which entails looking further than simply the texts but their bases, that is, gender difference as divinely ordained and procreation as intrinsically connected to sexual intercourse.

## **7.6 Concluding Observations**

In conclusion, two critical questions are necessary to sum up this chapter. Are these texts responding to the encroachment of Greek pederasty in Corinth and Rome or they responded to the invasion of Roman same-sex practices in Corinth and Rome? Are these condemnations meant for contemporary Christian communities? First, this study contends that Paul responded to the encroachment of Roman same-sex practices into the Christian communities, practices which were centred on the quest to humiliate others. What even irked Paul more is that some Christians had corrupted his message to justify these practices. Clearly, the Christian community was moving beyond the indifference of the Greeks and Romans to virtually encouraging each other to freely experiment with everything, including same-sex practices. How could humiliation (which is how homosexual practices are being understood) be freedom? How could God grant the freedom to be humiliated? Even Romans did not justify and extol men who aspired to be feminine, so how could members of New Israel transgress divinely ordained gender boundaries?

Paul's understanding of 'nature' is multi-dimensional but essentially, it is culturally conditioned such that what Paul calls 'natural' may simply refer to that which was conventional to his context. Clearly, he bases this assertion on the creation of man and woman to mean that this is the only natural way human beings can mate. He also bases this assertion on the supposed goal of sexual intercourse, that is, procreation. Finally, he bases the assertion on sensory observations of the environment, in which case what is common is therefore natural. All these were strong arguments then but the amount of knowledge acquired since then has

also led to these conceptions being questioned and in some instances being shelved.

From the arguments raised above the *arsenokoitai* should be understood as men who engaged in economic sexual exploitation or uncommitted same-sex activities, and it would appear that these were well to do men who could afford to pay for such services. These were not simply homosexual persons but were individuals who considered it a mark of real virility and masculinity. Such conceptions were in stark contrast to what Paul sought to establish. The *malakos* were most probably adult men who because of the availability of men who paid for sexual services turned themselves into effeminate call-boys. While some of these men did this because they enjoyed it, others could have entered into this trade for economic benefits. Doing things on the basis of pleasing the flesh was in contrast to the life in spirit that Paul preached. These practices were condemned because they stood in opposition to what Paul intended. To then argue that Paul condemns all manifestations of homosexuality today is beyond the capacity of these texts.

## CHAPTER 8: THE HOMOSEXUAL DEBATE IN ZIMBABWE: OVERALL CONCLUSION

The Beliefs and opinions of the biblical authors, elaborated by theological tradition, were determined by the prejudices, imaginations, assumptions and political needs of their own times.<sup>1</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction

In summing up this study three critical concluding observations will be highlighted in this chapter. While in presenting the debate, the chapters focused on particular view points, first the history of conflict and contestation surrounding the use of the Bible in Zimbabwe. The arguments emanating from the sexual rights lobby championed by GALZ followed by the responses coming from politicians, traditional leaders and Christians also show the Bible as a contested document. The debate has tended to focus more on the acceptability of homosexual persons to which the majority of contributors have reacted negatively.

The second major observation is that the debate exposes the existence of a cultural dilemma in the sense that the sexual rights lobby bases its arguments on monadic cultural concepts where the individual takes precedence over the community while the other contributors have tended to base their arguments on dyadic cultural concepts where the community takes precedence over the individual. Finally, the Bible has continued to be used to justify preconceived judgments based on popularly created stereotypes devoid of any rational backup and this has encouraged a literal and selective use of the Bible. Away from preconceived prejudices, the biblical texts cited in the debate as speaking out against all forms of homosexuality are not transcultural but culture-specific. This however does not militate against a responsible and appropriate use of such texts in contemporary discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 2001, 184.

## **8.2 Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: Concluding Observations**

Throughout this study there are certain aspects surrounding homosexuality that are widely agreed upon. There is widespread agreement that homosexual persons or generally sexual minorities do exist in Zimbabwe. The debate therefore is not so much about the existence or non-existence of homosexuality or homosexual persons in Zimbabwe rather the debate is centred on the acceptability or unacceptability of homosexuality or homosexual persons within Zimbabwean communities. Further, it has also been demonstrated in this study that there are multiple manifestations of homosexuality within Zimbabwe, echoing the concept of homosexualities within the sexual rights' lobby. Finally, it can be observed and concluded that there are apparent double standards in the manner in which homosexuality and heterosexuality are treated in contemporary Zimbabwean communities.

### **8.2.1 Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Reality!**

The labelling of homosexuality as unAfrican has tended to create the impression that homosexuality was non-existent in pre-colonial African communities. The label has been widely interpreted in the light of the origins of homosexuality. This is a misunderstanding of the context within which such labelling has occurred. The clearest example of the existence of homosexuality and practising homosexual persons is the existence of GALZ, an organisation that represents the interests of sexual minorities in Zimbabwe. The existence of homosexual people is therefore not in doubt, especially in contemporary Zimbabwe.

This study acknowledges the fact that the existence of homosexual people in pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies is a highly debatable subject. At the heart of this problem being the fact that pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies were pre-literate and did not leave behind written documents from which one could scour for clues to the existence of homosexual people in these communities. The

discovery of the San rock-painting in Zimbabwe<sup>2</sup>, which has been interpreted as depicting a group of men engaging in some same-sex activities has been taken to be representative of most if not all pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies. This has been further buttressed by evidences of pre-colonial African communities that condoned same-sex practices, such as the Zulu of South Africa and the Azande of CAR.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the fact that some sodomy cases were heard in the magistrates' courts two years after the occupation of Zimbabwe by Western Settlers<sup>4</sup> has gone a long way in challenging the role of the Settlers in influencing indigenous people to adopt homosexuality as a lifestyle. Since the first group of Settlers was relatively small, the argument is that it took more than two years for them to influence the indigenous people. Further, the majority of the Settlers were still clearly influenced by the European concepts of sex, in which homosexuality was understood as unnatural and a psychological disorder. Clearly, it is not possible to draw absolute conclusions regarding homosexuality in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. This is especially so because sex was understood in terms of procreation hence;

Nothing that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured by it could expect sanction or protection. Nor did it merit a hearing. It would be driven out, denied and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation – whether in acts or in words.<sup>5</sup>

The existence of same-sex sexual practices in the colonial and post-colonial eras in Zimbabwe is testified to in some sources. The most widely used sources being the criminal court records.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. GALZ, *Unspoken Facts: A History of Homosexualities in Africa*, 2008, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, „Sexual Inversion among the Azande“, in: *American Anthropologist* 72, 1970, 1428-1434. See also Marc Epprecht, „Homosexual behaviour in pre-modern and early colonial sub-Saharan Africa“ in: G. E. Haggerty (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Epprecht, The early history of homosexual behaviour among black males in Zimbabwe, 1998, 144.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction volume 1*, 1990, 4.

Marc Epprecht<sup>6</sup> has consulted these sources widely in writing on homosexuality in Southern Africa. In the colonial era, most scholars have noted how such practices became synonymous with specific spaces. The prisons, mine compounds and urban centres became the fertile grounds for the prominent manifestations of homosexuality. Many factors have been suggested for this development among which the creation of exclusive spaces for men and women by the colonial regime remains the central factor.

The barring of women from the newly created urban centres and mine compounds in a bid to extract all the energy of the workers in “productive work” led to the forced separation of families for long periods of time. The prison system, itself foreign to most of the pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies, also thrived on enforcing a forced separation of husbands and wives, men and women.<sup>7</sup> The creation of exclusive boys’ and girls’ high schools saw the same principle of separate worlds for men and women being used in the education system. While pre-colonial societies had some form of marked spaces for men and women, there were clearly marked unisex spaces where men and women constantly interacted. The association of homosexuality and colonial institutions is not to be mistaken with the idea that it therefore follows that colonisation introduced homosexuality. Instead, it appears that Settler institutions may have provided space in which homosexuality in its various manifestations could thrive.

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<sup>6</sup> Marc Epprecht is the author of various articles on this subject. Among his contributions are the following works: *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*, 2008; *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*, 2004, “Good God Almighty, What’s this? Homosexual ‘crime’ in early Colonial Zimbabwe” in: Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe (eds), *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998. “Homosexual behaviour in pre-modern and early colonial sub-Saharan Africa” in: G. E. Haggerty (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, New York: Garland Press, 1998. In these works, Epprecht has done extensive research focusing on court records in the National Archives Department in Harare and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press (Pty) Ltd, 2001, 174.

Until 1982 homosexual relationships and practices remained well concealed with no organized group. Homosexuality simply remained a private matter for the individuals. The growth in urban centres and the availability of jobs meant the traditional communal lifestyle continued to be affected and as individuals instantly became strangers in the big cities, the environment was conducive to many “experiments” without the watchful eyes of the family. In 1982, the first social club was formed by 12 White women<sup>8</sup> who happened to be homosexual in orientation and practice. This group largely remained a private social club. It was however replaced effectively by the formation of GALZ in 1990<sup>9</sup>. GALZ remains the primary organisation for anyone researching on homosexuality in Zimbabwe as well as other sexual minorities as captured in their Mission Statement and in the acronym LGBTI.<sup>10</sup> This study therefore concludes that homosexuality is a reality in Zimbabwe and has been for over a century now. The debate itself does not dismiss the existence of homosexual persons; their existence is a historical fact.

### **8.2.2 Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: Multiple Manifestations**

The slogan “homosexuality is unAfrican” as noted above has been wrongly applied to questions of origins. In this study, it appears this slogan has been used in response to contemporary manifestations of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. This is best appreciated in the light of how the pre-colonial heritage on sexual matters is conceived in Zimbabwean communities. These pre-colonial communities had highly confined sexual matters, that the subject of sex (heterosexuality included) was carefully governed by the rule “don’t ask, don’t tell”. As Diana Jeater writes, “the limits of acceptability were defined by silences, rather than explicit prohibi-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. William Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Phenomenological investigation*, 2002, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 178.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. GALZ Pamphlet, “I Think I Might Be”, undated.

tions.”<sup>11</sup> A publicity seeking sexual rights lobby was therefore understood as being unAfrican because it transgressed some traditional boundaries, which defined where and when it was not possible to talk about sex, and among which speakers, sex could be discussed.<sup>12</sup>

Further, an understanding of homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexuality (This is only one of the many characteristics of the sexual rights lobby) was also understood as being unAfrican. The pre-colonial rule of precedence, which emphasized the primacy of the community over the individual, dictated that all individuals do things primarily because such acts are good for the community and secondarily for the individual. Essentially, in these communities, what was good for the community was good for the individual. In this context, sex was conflated with procreation such that individuals had to account for how they used their sexuality<sup>13</sup> and frequently, the larger group made the final decisions and individuals could only implement such decisions. These are the principles behind the slogan “homosexuality is unAfrican” hence the sexual rights lobby is challenging traditional attitudes.

In line with the argument that there are multiple manifestations of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, it can be concluded that the predominant manifestation of homosexuality in Zimbabwe has been through *circumstantial* practices. Beginning with pre-colonial communities of the Zulu and Azande, homosexual activities were associated with military and hunting expeditions.<sup>14</sup> Since the warriors were men and since they could be away from their families for long periods, same-sex practices were condoned as a way of keeping the armies ready for the next battle and loyal to only that cause. In the colonial era, mine compounds, urban centres,

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<sup>11</sup> Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The Construction of moral discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894-1930*, 1993, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Peter R. Hatendi, „Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches“, 1973, 139.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Epprecht, “Homosexual behaviour in pre-modern and early colonial sub-Saharan Africa.”

schools and also the prison system operated on the basis of the separation of men from women. While this was not at its worst in colonial Zimbabwe<sup>15</sup>, the system of separation became the fertile ground for the circumstantial practice of homosexuality. Under circumstantial practices, it should be noted that men and women may have engaged in same-sex practices because circumstances forced them to do so.<sup>16</sup> The majority of circumstantial practitioners are therefore heterosexual people who find themselves in conditions where heterosexual partners are absent or in short supply.

In some cases, homosexuality has been used as a prescription for medicinal concoctions. Among pre-colonial communities as well as contemporary communities in Zimbabwe, there is a belief that the spirit world can be successfully manipulated to the benefit of some individuals. To succeed in this manipulation of the spirit world, various prescriptions are given among them being *ritual* same-sex sexual practices. Traditional leaders, diviner-healers and wealthy individuals were suspected of being in possession of powerful charms brought about by among other things ritual same-sex practices.<sup>17</sup> The fundamental problem with this manifestation of homosexuality is centred on the esoteric nature of the pre-colonial African traditional religious systems. Such medicinal or ritual same-sex practices tended to range from single acts to constant multiple acts. Once again the majority of those engaging in ritual same-sex practices appear to be heterosexual persons who are bent on winning at all costs and such individuals do not understand themselves as being homosexual. This is yet again another manifestation of circumstantial same-sex practices occasioned by the ritual demands of particular ventures.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*, 174.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 85.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Robert M. Baum „Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions of the Americas and Africa“ in: Arlene Swidler (ed), *Homosexuality and World Religions*, 1993, 3, 31.

Finally, while the evidence shows that circumstantial practices are the dominant manifestation of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, and while ritual practices appear to be limited to some traditional high ranking community leaders as well as ambitious individuals, there are exceptions to these practices. The exceptions are brought about when one observes that there were men who despite the availability of female prostitutes and women close by, such men still preferred to have sexual relations with other men. While this was rare in the earliest manifestations of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, *preferential* homosexual practices have become the dominant manifestation in the post-colonial era. While homosexuality and homosexual practice were always conceived of as temporary hence circumstantial, as in the understanding Foucault has of “the sodomite”<sup>18</sup>, there were cases that clearly did not fit into this pattern. Lately, homosexual practice for some men and women has nothing to do with circumstances, such individuals sexually relate to members of their own sex whether members of the opposite sex are present or not. For this group, homosexuality is exclusive of heterosexuality while others are equally attracted to members of both sexes hence they are called bisexual. These are the ones that are at the heart of the slogan that homosexual persons are “born that way.”<sup>19</sup>

### **8.2.3 Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: The Double Standards**

The greatest challenge to Zimbabwean communities from the sexual rights lobby has been the insistence that individuals must enjoy their sexual rights, irrespective of whether they are heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or intersexed. Human beings are entitled to be in control of their sexuality and they must determine how they must use their sexuality without infringing on the rights of other individuals. “The belief that every human being is a creature of God endowed with certain worthy and dignity that

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Gaudencia Mutema, *African Traditional Religion and GALZ*, 1996, 4.

deserved respect dies hard. It is the ideal of Christianity, Islam and Indigenous religions.”<sup>20</sup> The individual sexual rights demanded by the sexual minorities are essentially based on the belief that God created not only heterosexuals but also all other sexual minorities. On the basis of the various contributions to the debate, it is apparent that Zimbabwean communities have been using double standards in the manner they have handled women’s rights issues on the one hand and sexual rights for all individuals championed by GALZ. This is notwithstanding the inherent worth of all individuals as captured by Falola above. These double standards manifest themselves in various forms throughout the debate.

When it comes to homosexuality unlike heterosexuality, one known case is used as a general condemnation. This has largely defined the interaction of debate contributors and the Bible. The creation of stereotypes is central in this regard. Homosexuality is ridiculed because it is violent and criminal. Homosexual persons are ridiculed because they are promiscuous and seek “to have sex in public.”<sup>21</sup> To fully appreciate the impact of the created stereotypes, one only needs to understand how discourses function. “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it.”<sup>22</sup> The homosexual discourse in Zimbabwe has created a monster called the homosexual and that way, homosexual persons have been left with a huge task of proving themselves innocent. For homosexual people, it is never ‘innocent until proven guilty’ it is always ‘guilty until proven innocent’.

The power generated by these stereotypes cannot be underestimated because the bulk of Zimbabweans have formed opinions about homosexuality based on the stereotypes created by these discourses. These generalized condemnations however, do not appear to be equally applied in heterosexual discussions. One

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<sup>20</sup> Toyin Falola (ed), *Tradition and Change in Africa: The Essays of J. F. Ade-Ajayi*, 2000, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Mugabe cited in: Dunton & Palmberg, *Human Rights and homosexuality*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 101.

promiscuous homosexual person is seen as representative of all homosexual persons yet one adulterous heterosexual person is not seen as representative of all heterosexual people, even if the adulterous person is a religious leader. The same can be detected in the labelling of homosexuality as unnatural. Heterosexuality is natural because it is a default state for heterosexuals but the same is unacceptable when applied to homosexual persons. Clearly, there has been a widespread shifting of goal posts in the debate as heterosexual people sought to create special criteria specific to homosexual persons. This is consistent with other cases of unwarranted discrimination where for example, skin colour was made more important over all other features that define humanity to justify racism, or particular political viewpoints were exaggerated as the only defining characteristic of enemies of “ZANU-PF and government” in Zimbabwe to justify the brutal response of ZANU-PF and state security agents to the waning of public support for their cause.

It is observed that because of the need to discriminate against sexual minorities, the attempts by the sexual rights lobby to make a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable homosexual practices and relationships have largely been ignored. This is not novel to homosexual persons; rather it should be understood in the light of the sexual ethic for heterosexuality. Almost all societies have some form of a heterosexual sexual ethic, which clearly outlines sexual practices that are considered moral by the society and others that are considered immoral. The immoral practices have not been used to label heterosexuality in its entirety as immoral. This is aptly summed by Nissinen when he writes;

Regarding the history of biblical interpretation, if it is a fact that Christian tradition has ‘always condemned homosexuality’, it is true also that the Christian tradition has in many ways heavily condemned heterosexuality also [...] Sexuality has been considered an expression of lust and thus sinful.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, 1998, 125.

Herein lie the double standards in that the unacceptable manifestations of homosexuality have been used to condemn homosexuality in its entirety but the same rule is adjudged to be inapplicable to heterosexuality.

A closer analysis of the Zimbabwean debate and the attendant arguments show that while in the West the essentialist and constructionist perspectives appear exclusive of each other, the same cannot be claimed for Zimbabwe. Both homosexual persons and other contributors tend to use both perspectives interchangeably. This study concludes by noting that the essentialist explanation goes a long way in answering questions of origins and causes of homosexual orientation. Most human beings are born with a particular sexual orientation ranging from 0 (exclusive heterosexual) to 6 (exclusive homosexual) according to the Kinsey scale of 1948.<sup>24</sup> This essentialist component explains why throughout the ages, there are people who are sexually oriented towards their own sex. The environment has nothing or very little to do with this orientation. However, it should also be appreciated that this essentialist explanation does not explain the different manifestations of homosexuality from pederasty in ancient Greece to contemporary egalitarian relationships.

These manifestations are best understood through a constructionist explanation. Homosexual practices are socially constructed while orientation is a biological given. In Zimbabwe homosexual practices have followed heterosexual models, from the dominant husbands (mostly associated with prison and mine compound forms of homosexual practices) to the equal partnerships in contemporary communities. Chapter three to chapter five clearly show the double standards that have been deployed in Zimbabwe and how they have been deployed in order to maintain the status quo. The double standards betray the usual battles between those in favour of the status quo and those against the status quo. During the Second liberation war in Zimbabwe, there were disputes

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 11.

as to the acceptability of using violence to fight against a violent colonial system.<sup>25</sup> This observation leads us to the second major concluding observation emanating from this study.

### **8.3 Understanding the Zimbabwean Dilemma on Homosexuality**

The second major concluding observation for this study is that homosexuality has exposed a fundamental dilemma for Zimbabweans. While the sexual rights lobby was not the first to touch on this fundamental dilemma, this dilemma is associated with the evolution of Zimbabwean communities from pre-colonial dyadic cultural communities and colonial monadic cultural communities leading to the cultural crossroads that is the fundamental dilemma for Zimbabwean communities as they debated homosexuality. This cultural crossroads is reflected among anti-homosexual activists as well as among homosexual persons. To this extent the contemporary Zimbabwean state and communities are at a cultural crossroads: Are we following the Western model of giving precedence to individuals over communities; or are we to follow the traditional pre-colonial model of giving precedence to the communities over the individuals? This dilemma helps in further elucidating the ease with which double standards have been deployed in the debate.

#### **8.3.1 Sex, Women and Homosexuals: Exposing the dilemma**

In the Zimbabwean debate anti-homosexuality contributors have accused the sexual rights lobby of breaching traditional boundaries on the subject of human sexuality, the basis upon which the “unAfrican” label has been used on homosexuality. This accusation was rightly noted for not being entirely true because the so-

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<sup>25</sup> See Janice McLaughlin, MM, *On The Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, 1996, 114. Michael Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option? Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the independence of Zimbabwe*, 1986, 24.

called traditional boundaries were first breached by other actors. HIV/AIDS was one of the first issues to challenge traditional boundaries on sexual matters. The reality of HIV/AIDS forced Zimbabwean communities to grudgingly remove sexual matters from the abyss of silence into an everyday subject. It also meant that sex became a part of the schools' curricular in Zimbabwe. Gender activists and women's empowerment movements were equally central and earlier in challenging and breaching these traditional boundaries. The realisation that gender was socially constructed and that it only served the interests of men over women had inspired gender activists to challenge the traditional attitudes over sex and women.

When it comes to the manifestation of homosexuality as a public subject in Zimbabwe, it should be appreciated that it was a consequence of historical developments in Zimbabwe. These developments bear a close resemblance to what Jack Rogers observes about American life.

It took the civil rights movement of the 1960s to begin to crack the facade of white racial superiority. In the 1970s, the women's movement forced a grudging acknowledgment that women were of equal value to men. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, the first awakenings began to come for many people that gay and lesbian people were different in some respects, but of no less worth than people who were heterosexual.<sup>26</sup>

The sexual rights lobby did not lead the breach of traditional boundaries and it was not the first in touching on this dilemma. The sexual rights lobby exploited the earlier successes scored through the nationalists' war of liberation, HIV/AIDS efforts as well as gender activism.

Zimbabwean communities have made several concessions to women's empowerment movements on the basis of contemporary conceptions of women as equal to men. Each human being is therefore treated as equal to all other individuals. Since this un-

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<sup>26</sup> Jack Rogers, *The Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, 2006, 3.

derstanding is a Western conception based on Western monadic cultures, it follows that Zimbabwean communities did and continue to subscribe to some notions of individual worthy which is the basis for individual human rights. While some traditionalists and religious leaders opposed the concessions made to women<sup>27</sup>, the battle did not explode in the manner the homosexual debate exploded in Zimbabwe. Whenever women's empowerment is under discussion in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean societies tend to operate at the monadic level.

The dilemma therefore comes about once one considers what transpired in the homosexual debate. The sexual rights lobby launched its case on the basis that the Republic of Zimbabwe is a democratic state and is based on a monadic cultural understanding of the rule of precedence. In a monadic culture the individual takes precedence over the larger group. In such societies, individuals have "inalienable rights"<sup>28</sup> and in that context, the sexual rights lobby followed developments in other monadic cultures especially in democratic Western states. The responses from various quarters have been to argue on the basis that the Republic of Zimbabwe is an "African democracy" and is based on pre-colonial dyadic cultures. The pre-colonial dyadic cultures operated on the primacy of the community over individuals and in such a system individual rights are non-existent, what exists are privileges and duties.

The state, traditional leaders, homosexual persons and Christians in general have tended to vacillate between these two cultural models such that one is forced to realize that the dilemma that is

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<sup>27</sup> Most Christian denominations opposed the equality of men and women on the basis that God had divinely ordained the positions of men and women in society. The creation story of Gen. 2:4b was central to this opposition so was also Paul's analogy of husband and wife as representing Christ and Church respectively. Traditionalists argued on the strength of the "traditions of the fathers", through which women are never independent beings. Women are always under a man, either their fathers or husbands.

<sup>28</sup> The Yogyakarta Principles: Principles on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, March 2007, 6.

exposed by the homosexual challenge is connected to whether contemporary Zimbabwean communities are culturally dyadic or monadic. Indeed, the issue of homosexuality exposes the *fact* that Zimbabwe as a nation is at a cultural crossroads, it has not yet become exclusively monadic neither has it remained exclusively dyadic. While gender activists also challenged society in almost a similar way, homosexuality was vigorously opposed primarily because it represented a minority that could as well be experimented with without incurring serious political or religious repercussions. It is not surprising therefore that there is very little common ground between the sexual rights lobby and its opponents because for the former, it has always assumed that contemporary Zimbabwe is monadic while their opponents insist that Zimbabwe is dyadic.

Finally, this cultural crossroads caused internal tensions within the women's empowerment movement as some women accused the activists of being marital failures bent on encouraging divorce and destroying families.<sup>29</sup> In the sexual rights lobby, the membership of GALZ clearly shows there are many homosexual persons who do not believe in the primacy of the individual. For such persons, all they need is to remain closeted while practising. Such voices are closely connected to attitudes represented by Gezi (MP) that his rural constituents do not mind people engaging in same-sex practices only as long as they do so in private.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, the dyadic attitude in Zimbabwe is that of indifference while the monadic attitude is that of fear and hatred. According to a Shangani traditional diviner-healer, the challenge of homosexuality "depends on where one is. In the rural areas where culture is deep

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<sup>29</sup> The popular response to gender activists has been to label them as marital failures. This accusation is especially prominent among women who are married or aspire to being married. The accusation has been based on the realization that the earliest gender activists were divorcees or single mothers. Further, gender activism was also considered against traditional culture because it was widely embraced by learned women who were accused of being western puppets.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Border Gezi (MP) in: Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 132.

rooted, this is understood but the best way to deal with it is being quiet about it.”<sup>31</sup>

### **8.3.2 Homosexuality and the cultural crossroads in Zimbabwe**

The homosexual debate should be seen as one of many issues that have been at the centre of many North-South cultural tussles in the 20th and 21st centuries. Most Zimbabwean communities remain undecided or uncommitted as to whether they are dyadic or monadic. The post-colonial communities in which the debate played out appear to be the most affected due to the existence of two competing cultural systems in both of which they have been thoroughly socialized. This has meant that vacillating between the two competing cultural systems is common practice among many Zimbabweans from all walks of life.

It is widely attested that most pre-colonial African societies were dyadic. This conception of pre-colonial African cultures is best summed up in the philosophical slogan “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.”<sup>32</sup> In these communities the larger group always took precedence over the individual. The “common good” (sometimes, it is clearly the interests of the elites) took precedence over private individual interests. It is in this context that sex was deployed to benefit the larger group. When White settlers and missionaries heard of the different ways through which marriages were contracted in these societies, they were culturally shocked.

Sex was managed by the family for the benefit of the family, clan and tribe. Individuals were obliged to contribute towards the propagation of their lineage. In such a context, very few individuals could escape heterosexual marriage. This widespread prevalence of heterosexual marriages has been mistakenly understood to mean the absence of homosexuality. Instead, this study using

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<sup>31</sup> Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 133.

<sup>32</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 214.

the high profile trial of Canaan Sodindo Banana (He was heterosexually married and had children yet he continued also with same-sex practices) concludes that owing to the obligation to procreate, some people would have married heterosexually while at the same time engaging in homosexual activities. If any of the contemporary vocabulary from sexuality studies is to be used to describe this scenario, it would be improper to refer to such individuals as homosexual; rather we should be talking of many individuals being bisexual.

In the pre-colonial communities, there was no distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The lack of an indigenous word for homosexuality among the Shona does not say anything about the existence of homosexual practices, rather it simply confirms that it was never understood as “the other” to be named. The pre-colonial dyadic Zimbabwean cultures had the larger group’s interests take precedence. This cultural heritage remains alive but challenged and in effect under siege. In such cultures, the concept of individual human rights remains a critical challenge because such rights reverse the traditional rule of precedence.

From 1890 when Zimbabwe was formally colonized, there was a deliberate attempt to supplant indigenous cultures as the settlers sought to “civilize” the indigenous people. With Western settlers and missionaries coming from a monadic cultural background, the colonial period saw the dyadic pre-colonial cultures being undermined by the monadic western cultures of the settlers and missionaries. Sexual issues, especially marriage, became a battlefield between missionaries and indigenous people. Arranged marriages were condemned and young girls were assisted by missionaries to rebel against their families.<sup>33</sup> The interests of the larger group, the basis upon which arranged marriages were rationalized, were seriously undermined.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Brandon Graaff, *Modumedi Moleli: Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity: Mashonaland 1892-96*, 1988, 79.

In this deliberate policy to obliterate pre-colonial cultures, deflections to the colonial monadic culture were seen as a mark of sophistication. As Christianity made significant inroads among the indigenous communities, the monadic western cultural traits found their way to the converts and eventually workers and their dependents. Pre-colonial cultural traits were throughout this period being stigmatized and receding from public view. By the time of the end of the colonial period, the Western monadic cultural traits had become the dominant culture of the “elite” who aspired to whiteness. In this era, the individual gradually grew in stature and importance while the larger group receded in stature and importance. Talk of individual human rights finds its most receptive audience within this monadic system and is the basis of the sexual rights lobbying. The majority of contemporary Zimbabweans identify with this movement towards modernity either through their professional associations or through religious associations. Traditional culture is only recalled where North-South relations are at stake and where individuals want to assert their equality with their counterparts from the North, politically, religiously or professionally.

The post-colonial Zimbabwean communities are faced with the challenge of having to decide to choose between the pre-colonial dyadic system and the colonial monadic system. The pre-colonial heritage has survived silently and continues to be passed on through the generations and is dominant in rural communities but even there, it is also significantly challenged through the ever growing presence of some strands of Christianity especially the Pentecostal/Evangelical brand. The monadic system remains the more dominant of the two competing cultures in the post-colonial societies. The homosexual debate exposed how the Zimbabwean post-colonial societies continue to vacillate between these two cultural systems depending on what is at stake.

It is therefore not a problem that an individual supports individual human rights for women on the basis of the monadic system while opposing individual sexual rights for homosexual persons

on the basis of the dyadic system. The homosexual debate shows that the arguments of the sexual rights lobby are predicated on the fact that Zimbabwe as a state follows the monadic system fully encapsulated in the nationalist slogan “One Man, One Vote.”<sup>34</sup> However, chapters four and five also demonstrate that the counter-arguments are predicated on the fact that Zimbabwe as a state follows the dyadic system dating back from pre-colonial times. Herein lies the post-colonial dilemma on homosexuality. Should we continue to shed off our identity? What is our identity? Can a hybrid identity be formed from these competing cultural systems? That is the dilemma confronting Zimbabwean communities. This brings us to the next observation regarding proxy wars masked by this public debate.

### ***8.3.3 Homosexuality and proxy wars in the Zimbabwean Debate***

It has been argued in this study that the homosexual debate in Zimbabwe can best be understood within the context in which it occurred. The last decade of the 20th century saw Zimbabwe adopting ESAP, it was also the time ZANU-PF grudgingly agreed to scrap the ambitious “one party state”<sup>35</sup> programme for multi-party democracy. When other bits of information are added to these factors, the suggestion that there are various wars that were fought under the guise of debating homosexuality ceases to be far-

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<sup>34</sup> This was the one of the central themes of the liberation war in the 1970s as Zimbabweans fought for “Majority Rule” from the colonial regimes. By emphasizing the importance of granting all men and women the equal right to vote for their government, the nationalist movements drastically changed course from pre-colonial systems where royal families existed for all communities and whose claim to power was by virtue of being born into the royal family. This was also a continuation with modification of the colonial government system which was monadic. This fact is hardly acknowledged within the Zimbabwean debate.

<sup>35</sup> Farai Magawu, *The Role of Civil Society in Building Peace in Zimbabwe: Focus on the Church*, 11 available online: [www.kubatana.net/docs/cact/farai\\_magawu\\_role\\_of\\_civil\\_society\\_zim\\_061001.doc](http://www.kubatana.net/docs/cact/farai_magawu_role_of_civil_society_zim_061001.doc) accessed 12/01/2008.

fetched. While Mugabe gave the impression that he could not countenance the existence of people who champion the cause of homosexual persons in Zimbabwe and throughout the world that was indeed playing to the gallery since he had been aware of Banana's same-sex activities early on after independence in the 1980s and remained silent about it.<sup>36</sup>

When Mugabe spoke against homosexuality in 1995, it was certainly not lost to him that in March 1996, there was a presidential election which he wanted to win. The wife of Banana, Janet, raised an important point when she highlighted that Banana was contemplating challenging Mugabe in the 1996 presidential election.<sup>37</sup> The debate presented a forum in which Mugabe could thoroughly discredit Banana without even mentioning his name. As Banana's trial received prominent coverage from the local media, "Sodindo" (Banana's middle name) became a euphemism for gay or homosexual person. This is only one example of the various political, cultural and religious wars that were waged within the debate.

The State-Church relations in Zimbabwe have been anything but consistent. Churches in Zimbabwe were and continue to be deeply divided on some important social issues such as the liberation (*Chimurenga*) war and the use of violence (1970s), during the *Gukurahundi* (The Last Storm) massacres in Matebeleland (1983-1987), during the farm invasions (post-2000) as well as Operation *Murambatsvina* (2005). While some Churches supported the government of the day during these troubled times, others opposed the governments. However, it should also be noted that Churches have been partners with the State on education and health issues. In the period of ESAP, living standards of the people started plummeting<sup>38</sup> and church leaders became more important as they retained their influence on the followers. Mugabe needed some

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 51

<sup>37</sup> Janet Banana, *The Guardian* cited in: Guri, *Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, 52-3.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 177-8.

favours from the churches on how to pacify Zimbabweans and the 1995 ZIBF became an important forum for selling a dummy to the religious lot in Zimbabwe. Clearly, Mugabe and his cohorts in government exaggerated the threat posed by homosexual persons to society as a whole. Aeneas Chigwedere (MP) and historian suggested that “the homosexuals are the festering finger endangering the body.”<sup>39</sup>

First, Mugabe wanted churches not to focus on “bread and butter” issues as the economy was clearly failing to sustain previous living standards.<sup>40</sup> By blowing homosexuality out of proportion and exaggerating its threat, Mugabe did succeed in overshadowing all other issues in the run up to the March 1996 election. Once he got the victory, Mugabe went silent about the morality (or lack of it) of homosexual practice because he was preparing to legitimize his own immorality as he sought to wed his former secretary with whom he had sired two children as his wife lay dying of kidney failure. Churches in the meantime sought to outdo each other in giving press statements supporting the President and condemning homosexuality while the living standards continued plummeting and corruption went out of hand.

While publicly tackling homosexuality, Mugabe was silently setting the agenda of State-Church relations. Since that time, Mugabe has consistently reminded and warned church leaders not to mix religion with politics,<sup>41</sup> even though he mixed politics with religion. Mugabe is quoted as having said “when the church leaders start being political, we regard them as political creatures and we are vicious in that area.”<sup>42</sup> Homosexuality therefore was not

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<sup>39</sup> Aeneas Chigwedere (MP) in: Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 185.

<sup>40</sup> Steve Kibble & Gerry Simpson, “Catholicism and Mugabe” in: *New Statesman*, 04/07/2008 available online: <http://www.newstatesman.com/af-rica/2008/07/mugabe-churches-leaders> accessed 13/01/2009.

<sup>41</sup> Magawu, *The Role of Civil Society in Building Peace in Zimbabwe: Focus on the Church*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Mugabe cited by Rev. Mtata-ZCC, Speech given at the Church and State in Zimbabwe Symposium, 05/07/2007 available online: <http://www.mpoi>.

the main issue, it was only a battlefield. The state had temporarily succeeded in setting the agenda for state-church relations. In the same vein, as the church bought into the onslaught on homosexual persons, little did they realize Mugabe was effectively eliminating all notions of leading a government that was accountable to its electors leading to his declaration that no one could remove him from office except God after losing the March 2008 election. This unaccountability became the defining characteristic of Mugabe's ruling party and government after the Referendum of 2000 and even saw the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) withholding the March 2008 presidential election results for five weeks.

#### ***8.4 Homosexuality and the Bible: (Ab)Uses of the Bible in Zimbabwe***

The question whether the Bible does address homosexuality is a question that continues to invite a lot of attention from scholars throughout the world. In Zimbabwe, the Bible has established its position as the single most authoritative collection of writings not only as a manual for Christian faith but also because it now influences all spheres of the people's lives, Christian or non-Christian. The authority of the Bible is never questioned by both those against homosexuality and also homosexual persons themselves. How the Bible should be used in deciding the fate of homosexual persons in Zimbabwe has been the major bone of contention. Homosexual persons and those sympathetic to them have actively sponsored the view that the central message of the Bible is the equality of all persons and love. These Christian injunctions are raised to deflate the "explicit" texts against homosexuality. The Bible as an authoritative document has also seen itself being invoked by those who have ulterior motives. This section will also highlight that the "explicit" texts can be appropriated profitably

only as guidelines towards the formulation of a homosexual sexual ethic otherwise they cannot be taken as general and universal injunctions against all manifestations of homosexuality.

#### **8.4.1 *The Bible in Zimbabwe: A Common Authority for All***

In all the chapters in this study, the Bible has consistently appeared as an authority in most Zimbabwean communities. The prominence of the Bible is directly linked to the fact that about 70% of the Zimbabwean population professes to be Christian and identifying themselves with one of many denominations. Since the Bible is the Christian manual, its prominence in a nation that is predominantly Christian should not be surprising. As noted in previous chapters, there are Christians in Zimbabwe who believe that the Bible is the mysterious and timeless Word of God. Since this God is all-knowing, it follows that His Word should have all the answers to all questions including those that are not yet being asked. It is important to note that the majority of Zimbabweans who invoke the Bible do so out of faith and trust in the faithfulness of God and His Word. Yet, this cannot be taken as licence for Christians to impose their prejudices as moral standards because “what *could* not have been meant by writers belonging to an ancient age cannot now be imposed as ‘biblical doctrine’ or ‘divine law’ for this age.”<sup>43</sup> There ought to be other ways of appropriating biblical injunctions for contemporary usage other than making them appear as if they were contemporary injunctions.

This however, should not obscure the fact that the Bible and any other authoritative documents are prone to being abused in the pursuit of private and selfish interests. The Bible is never all about religion or faith, it is primarily about power and how it expresses itself through a network of social relationships. Gottwald clearly highlights the existence of a clear tendency from ancient Israelite times of people who manipulated religion in pursuit of private or selfish interests when he writes; “Decisions about holy books

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<sup>43</sup> Preus, *Spinoza and the irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, 187.

were thus not only decisions about religious matters but about who had controlling power in the life of the community.”<sup>44</sup> To that extent, the political elites in Zimbabwe invoked the Bible as a way of exerting their control over the community while presenting their own prejudices as God’s will.

This applies not only to the context that produced the Bible; it also applies to its use in the Zimbabwean debate. As this study demonstrated in chapter four, there are many questions surrounding the religiosity and faith of Mugabe, as he used biblical injunctions in opposing homosexuality. The argument is that Mugabe used homosexuality and the Bible to influence the Christian vote for the 1996 presidential election. It never occurred to Mugabe that adultery was condemned by the same Bible that he so widely used to condemn homosexuality.

With ESAP already wrecking havoc in people’s lives, homosexuality and the Bible became necessary instruments through which the attention of people was diverted from the economic challenges towards homosexuality and the Bible. Homosexuality and the Bible became two critical public tools in smoothening Mugabe’s transformation into a total dictator. Homosexuality rallied people around him as he managed to link homosexuality to the cultural crossroads. The West was accused of sponsoring cultural imperialism and homosexuality was part of this grand project. Few Zimbabweans saw the link between Mugabe’s posturing and the continued erosion of individual rights and freedoms under Mugabe’s government. The majority however felt this in the post-referendum era when laws were enacted which basically eroded the various freedoms that they had enjoyed previously.

Homosexuality gave Mugabe the chance to get even with his Western nemesis Tony Blair, calling his cabinet a “gay cabinet”<sup>45</sup>. Mugabe used homosexuality to draw a bold line between “us” and “them” as moral and immoral respectively. That homosexuality

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<sup>44</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 111.

<sup>45</sup> The BBC News: Mugabe’s UK Feud, 02/04/2000 available online: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/698731.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/698731.stm) accessed 27/08/ 2008.

was not the main issue for Mugabe can be confirmed with some basic facts. GALZ has offices in Milton Park in Harare, their telephone numbers are in the Harare Telephone Directory and their offices are a stone's throw away from a Police station. Despite this public presence of GALZ, they have not been terrorized into oblivion because the government of Mugabe never wanted them to go underground. Goddard notes that they are actually involved in joint community programmes with Police Officers.<sup>46</sup> Homosexuality to Mugabe is what the devil is to Christians, a necessary evil that they could not do without. The presence of homosexual persons in the public sphere served the propaganda interests of Mugabe against the West.

The Bible became an indispensable ally because not only would it galvanize Christians around Mugabe, which was good for the election, it also gave greater authority to Mugabe as he creatively positioned himself into an avowed "man of God". This authority would eventually make Mugabe unaccountable to anyone but God. After losing the March 2008 presidential vote, Mugabe was quoted as saying "Only God, who appointed me, will remove me — not the MDC, not the British. Only God will remove me!"<sup>47</sup> Any lingering doubts about the intentions of Mugabe's use of the Bible would have been put to rest as he finally made public his dictatorship which he legitimized by invoking God.

The Bible therefore, is not always used because of its divinity and religious power but is sometimes used as a kingmaker in power relations. This is made easier by the fact that in Zimbabwe, the Bible already has a large following of believers, whose faith can then be abused as power structures get rearranged in society. This study has demonstrated that readers of the Bible claim significant authority when they cite the Bible. The homosexual debate has been used to also assert the authority of African Christians as the

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<sup>46</sup> Keith Goddard, *Interview*, Harare, 22/03/2007.

<sup>47</sup> Rowan Philip & Dominic Mahlangu 'Only God will Remove Me' in: *The Times*, 24/06/2008 available online: [www.thetimes.co.za/SpecialReports/Zimbabwe/Article.aspx?id=788598](http://www.thetimes.co.za/SpecialReports/Zimbabwe/Article.aspx?id=788598) accessed 04/06/2009.

“real” custodians of the Word of God in their battle against their counterparts from the North. This is so because “Africans feel that their own lives are described in the Bible, they as human beings are affirmed in it and that they belong to the world of the Bible.”<sup>48</sup> The greatest challenge to this is that there are hardly any attempts to understand the Bible as a text that betrays the markings of its time and place of production instead it is used as if it was originally intended for Africans.

This use of the Bible encourages literal interpretations, proof-texting as well as allegorical interpretations. One of the problems with these methods of reading the Bible is that they tend to begin with the conclusion. There is hardly any attempt to seek to understand the biblical texts as being responses by a people whose knowledge was fairly limited when compared to contemporary communities. Not only has the Bible been used against homosexual persons, it has also been used in support of homosexual persons. In that regard it continues the legacy of being a contested document, since homosexual persons tend to do like most other believers in their use of the Bible. They have also started from a definite conclusion which then shapes their reading of the Bible. This selectivity is part of the reason why the Bible has always been contested in many communities, and explains also its continued relevance and importance. Everyone wants to possess the correct meaning, since there is no one meaning in sight, everyone sponsors their own meaning as *the* meaning. This way, “the Bible continues to be an oppressive and restricting instrument, maintaining the *status quo* rather than fully liberating all people.”<sup>49</sup>

#### **8.4.2 The Bible and contemporary homosexual challenges**

Throughout this study we have contended that the Bible is a culturally, socially, geographically and historically limited collection

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<sup>48</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 1986, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Canaan Sodindo Banana “The Case for a New Bible” in: Isabel Mukonyora et al (eds), “*Rewriting the Bible: The Real Issues*”, 1993, 29.

of writings. This should not be misconstrued as undermining the importance of the Bible within Christianity. Accepting this fact however is understood as blasphemous by many Zimbabwean Christians because “it is common for faithful synagogue and church members to be surprised and shocked when they first seriously encounter other ways of viewing the Bible.”<sup>50</sup> The lack of popular literature that challenges biblical injunctions in Zimbabwe explains this child-like attitude towards the Bible. Inquisitive minds have not been granted space to ask more as no church has undertaken formal discussions on the subject. What exist are conclusions based on stereotypes that have been created around homosexuality.

The Bible is therefore asked if a man who “demands to have sex in public” can be tolerated in society. Further, the Bible is asked if a man or woman who seeks to convert all heterosexuals to same sex practices should be celebrated in society. There is fear to open a can of worms for churches yet one biblical text could be useful. “Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?” (Lk. 12:57) Churches should not be afraid to study situations and make decisions instead of asking the Bible wrong questions so as to mask their ignorance and prejudices. Clearly, “biblical texts that mention same-sex eroticism can only make a limited contribution to modern discussion about what is today called ‘homosexuality’.”<sup>51</sup> The challenge is on Christian leaders to expand their knowledge of homosexuality and to critically devise ways of dialoguing with homosexual persons.

These are issues that touch at the heart of African Christianity as it tries to assert its identity as different from but not inferior to Western Christianity. “Social identity in an ancient Israelite community did not proceed from the perspective of fulfilment of one’s individual rights or preferences but from that of the protection of society.”<sup>52</sup> Just as among politicians, there are power

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<sup>50</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 126.

<sup>52</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 42.

struggles within various denominations and the North-South divide has not escaped from being involved. Homosexuality therefore presented itself as an issue on which these power struggles could be fought while sacrificing a few individuals as collateral damage. Homosexuality became an attractive battlefield when compared to women considering their numbers.

In these tussles, while the West is synonymous with immorality, the most vocal African conservatives are funded by Western conservatives much in the same way African liberals are funded by Western liberals. It is not lost on African leaders that the dominant picture of Europe and America is that of extreme liberalism where “anything and everything is permitted” fully dependent on the make-believe world of Western films. This is the West that is attacked and contrasted with the dyadic pre-colonial traditions. The conservative West does not exist because its existence is a direct challenge on the claims to uniqueness central to the Pan-African ideology behind the North-South relations. While during the colonial era, identifying with western trends was considered a mark of progression towards sophistication, Christians have found themselves at the same cultural crossroads like everybody else.

The Bible was invoked because of two critical reasons that made pronouncements sound honest yet the same pronouncements would be vague and spin. First, there is a genuine fear by African Christian leaders across most denominations on the dangers of blindly following developments in the West. They want to have something that separates Africans as Africans without making them “step children of God.”<sup>53</sup> The strongest weapon to challenge Western influence is to ask God to judge who is more faithful to God. God’s judgement is readily available through His Word in the Bible. As Kunonga fought to retain his Bishopric, he suggested that at least one of the five Anglican bishops in Zimbabwe was homosexual. Since the Word of God is “explicit” on homo-

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<sup>53</sup> Desmond Tutu „Some African Insights and the Old Testament“ in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Number 1, 1972, 16-7.

sexuality, he had withdrawn the Diocese of Harare from the Province. Everything is clothed in explicit literal biblical injunctions or such injunctions are implied in pronouncements made by Christians.

Where the Bible is being deployed to justify prejudices and conclusions, the critical study of the Bible which seeks to understand the Bible on its own terms cannot be encouraged. A few proof-texts are all that is required to clothe private opinions in religious garb. This has resulted in a highly selective literal reading of the Bible focusing only on a few verses. There are challenges to this use of the Bible because in most cases readers are picking and choosing verses without regard to surrounding verses and socio-historical context. The lack of formal discussions could be linked to this lack of proper structures within which critical questions can be debated and discussed. Most Christians who contributed to the debate lacked basic knowledge about homosexuality and relied on the images created by the propaganda machinery.

An exegetical analysis of the key biblical texts used against homosexuality appears to sustain the general conclusion that these texts are neither general statements nor universal injunctions. The argument in chapter six and seven is that these texts are reactive not proactive. They respond to existential circumstances of their time within the parameters of their knowledge at that time. "Changes in worldview have forced people to adjust even to things and views that appear contrary to the Bible, because all biblical interpretation happens in concrete circumstances."<sup>54</sup> In some cases, Christians have acknowledged this basic fact such that there are more Christians who feel that contemporary societies know more about the differences between men and women than ancient Israelites and our treatment of women should reflect not ancient Israelite injunctions but should reflect the vast knowledge we have since amassed. The double standards noted above are clearly reflected in that the critical study of the Bible was hailed by

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<sup>54</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 126.

many as the position of women was redefined; the same is considered anathema for homosexual persons. On homosexuality the Bible is timeless!

The Sodom story teaches against inhospitality, a sin that manifests itself in various ways including but not limited to homosexual rape. This understanding is shared by Israelite prophets like Ezekiel (16:49-50), and in the Jesus tradition in the New Testament as well as by Origen. There is little debate on the idea that homosexual rape is an example of inhospitality when it is used to express power relations, particularly, humiliating the weak. The fact that one manifestation of homosexuality is considered wrong does not necessarily mean that all other manifestations of homosexuality are wrong. There are a number of biblical injunctions against heterosexual rape and adultery but those injunctions have not been used to condemn all other manifestations of heterosexuality. To use this story as a general and universal condemnation of homosexuality and all its manifestations borders on an abuse of the text.

The two Leviticus texts to begin with presuppose the Deuteronomic laws, especially the law against dedicating children to become temple prostitutes. This interpretation explains the mystery of the missing condemnation of the passive partner in Lev. 18:22. This interpretation also answers the question concerning the link between same-sex practices and idolatry. The passive partners were in effect religious functionaries serving in the cult of a presumably foreign god derisively called Molech (constructed from the root מלך for king and the vowels from the Hebrew word for evil בַּסָּה.<sup>55</sup> Molech therefore could have been a general designation for foreign gods who were seen as evil kings. These texts in Leviticus are clearly culturally conditioned and are targeted at a particular manifestation of homosexuality. These texts are also based on the assumption that gender identities and roles are ordained by God. To penetrate another man therefore means de-

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Norman H. Snaith (ed), *Leviticus and Numbers*, 1967, 125.

meaning the other man to the lowly position of a woman hence Steven Greenberg argues that Lev.18:22 should best be translated “You shall not humiliate a fellow male by the kind of penetrations men do with women; it is abhorrent.”<sup>56</sup> This rigid separation of men from women is now severely challenged. Since this basis is no longer determinative as it used to be, the universal claims made on behalf of these texts are unsustainable.

The letters of Paul have been used prominently also in the debate. That both Testaments have a similar position has been hailed as a big victory for those Christians not comfortable with critical researches. An exegesis of the New Testament texts focused mainly on the terms *αρσενοκοιται*, *μαλακοι* and *παρα φυσιν*. The challenge is whether these texts and terms are general and universal as to be literally applied in contemporary discussions. While it is possible that these terms and texts had something to do with same-sex practices, can more be said about the actual activities of the *arsenokoitai* and the *malakoi*? To that extend, it has been argued in this study that the former referred to men who may have been involved in some form of human exploitation, which exploitation had sexual overtones or that such men were engaging in same-sex practices of an exploitative nature. The latter was used by Paul to label those men who agreed to play the “woman’s role” in sexual relations, that is, that of being penetrated. These men were metaphorically and euphemistically labelled as effeminate or soft. Whether these men engaged in these practices out of interest because they were oriented that way or they engaged in such activities because of economic reasons is not clear. However, the ideas of sexual orientation are recent ideas hence same-sex practices were looked at from the single perspective of social relations obtaining during that time.

For Paul, these men were deliberately choosing what was wrong therefore they were immoral and unworthy of “inheriting the Kingdom of God.” These are possibly men who had understood

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<sup>56</sup> Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, 2004, 203.

Paul's early teaching as doing away with all obligations summed up in the slogan "everything is permitted me!" Since Christianity started off much in the same way that millenarian movements start "redemption itself refers to complete release from obligation [...] a condition of being which is without rules."<sup>57</sup> To this end it appears that Paul had in mind the "effeminate call-boy"<sup>58</sup> as the *malakoi* and both partners appeared to have interpreted Paul to have inaugurated an unbound freedom for believers in Christ.

Romans 1 add other dimensions because it expands its condemnation to include female same-sex practices. The second dimension is that it accuses homosexual persons of acting unnaturally. Paul is clearly assuming that natural sex is that whose results are tangible to all and sundry, that is, sex is important for procreation even though Paul does not condemn out rightly sex for pleasure.<sup>59</sup> This natural sex is indistinguishable from gender identity and roles. In other texts, Paul uses a cultural concept of nature which strengthens the argument that homosexuality is unnatural in as much as it is not common.

These texts share a negative attitude towards homosexual persons and homosexuality, but only those manifestations that are condemned. There is nothing in the text or outside the text that suggests that these ancient communities knew of all the manifestations of homosexuality that we now know. The Bible, especially the so-called "explicit texts", does not directly address all manifestations of homosexuality because the "explicit texts" only addressed those manifestations that were threatening the functioning of the larger group. "What all of this means is that the Scriptures have been conditioned by the culture within which they took their origin in the same way that all other writings are so af-

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<sup>57</sup> Gerald Harris "The Beginnings of Church Discipline 1Cor. 5" in: Brian S. Rosner (ed), *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*, 1995, 142.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*, 1983, 38.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Edward J. Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire: Paul's Sexual Ethics in I Thessalonians 4, I Corinthians 7 and Romans 1*, 2007, 6.

fected.”<sup>60</sup> This has been easy to appropriate because most Zimbabwean readers of the Bible have read the texts with the images of the stereotypes of homosexual persons, which stereotypes paint homosexuality as anti-social. What is lacking in all this is the appreciation that a gap of time and place stands between the Bible and the Zimbabwean worldview and life and whether this gap can be bridged and how that bridging can be done.<sup>61</sup>

This appropriation has been aided by the fact that the Bible has been used as a bridge to reach not ancient Israelites but pre-colonial dyadic cultures whose primacy of community is central in dismissing homosexual persons as a sexual minority. While Western missionaries presented Christianity as culturally monadic, focusing on the salvation of the individual and not communities, African Christianity has re-read the Bible showing that the Bible and subsequently Christianity is based on dyadic concepts much the same way as pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies had been. The Bible is no longer a source book for Christian faith but also for forging of closer ties between Africans and the Chosen People without the need for Western missionaries.

Some literal biblical assertions do bring Africans closer to ancient Israelites, as Mbiti correctly observes, “the Bible is close to African people because of the many items in common, between their cultural life and the cultural life of the Jewish people as contained in the Bible.”<sup>62</sup> This observation is part of the reason why the literal appropriation of the Bible has remained prominent as readers in Zimbabwe tend to draw lines of connection between themselves and the literal text. This meant the Bible became deeply involved in the North-South conflicts focusing on allegations of Western cultural imperialism. Once again, the Bible was used to try and

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<sup>60</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals*, 1980, 42-3.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Frans J. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses: Contemporary Aspects of Christianity in Zimbabwe*, 1998, 79.

<sup>62</sup> John S. Mbiti “Christianity and African Culture” in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Number 20, 1977, pp26-40, 35.

resist any further continuation of adopting Western trends in everything. The Bible is therefore caught in the web of the cultural crossroads.

### **8.4.3 *Can these texts be appropriated for contemporary discussions?***

While some scholars have concluded that these texts are now irrelevant in all contemporary discussions on homosexuality because the injunctions are culture specific, as Seward Hiltner writes, “At least in its reference to homosexuality, therefore, the Bible does not speak at all to the principal way in which homosexuality must be understood today.”<sup>63</sup> This study concludes that despite being culture specific, these texts can be appropriated profitably for contemporary discussions. Questions of appropriation remain central because the Bible remains a living book widely used in Zimbabwe.

For that reason, the socio-historical conclusions about the texts should not dissuade us from appropriating the texts. “We must not pretend to be content with ‘what it meant’, making covert connections with our social agenda; we must move on to asking ‘what it means’.”<sup>64</sup> This conclusion is based on two premises first; the Bible remains one of the key manuals for the daily living of many Zimbabwean Christians. This means that there are still many who rely on biblical injunctions in forming their own judgments. Second, the biblical texts should be used as guidelines in determining what is condemnable from what is not. To be able to do this one must always remember that the central concern of the biblical message is its “enduring challenge of creating a more just world.”<sup>65</sup> In doing this, we are informed by the realization that “there are times when new positions replace old ones in view

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<sup>63</sup> Seward Hiltner in: Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*, 1983, 12.

<sup>64</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 141.

<sup>65</sup> David J. Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, 2001, 4.

of changes in circumstances and contexts,”<sup>66</sup> and the subject of human sexualities calls for such action.

Clearly, the central teaching that runs throughout the “explicit texts” is that any same-sex practices that are bent on the exploitation of the other are detestable in the eyes of God. The Sodom story and its attempted homosexual rape clearly have this intention. The same can be said of the Leviticus laws and the dedication of children to become temple prostitutes betraying the same conception of same-sex practices as dehumanizing the other. The New Testament verses can also be understood in the same vein, where some men and women appear to have deliberately opted for homosexual practices when they were heterosexuals. The social vision in these texts on homosexuality remains a valid ethical objection not to homosexuality only but to sexuality and sexual practices in general. Any exploitative use of sexuality is condemnable. As Nissinen writes,

Things that shook the internal peace of the community and the coherence of its basic structures, interfered with the vital growth of population, or caused problems in family relationships were hazardous to a society that had to struggle constantly for its very existence.<sup>67</sup>

This should be the basis upon which we should discuss homosexuality within contemporary communities.

The second line of objection pertains to the association of same-sex practices and the worship of foreign gods. The essence of this observation is such that those who engage in same-sex practices as an obligation towards successfully serving some god cannot be tolerated in a community whose God clearly has no sacred-sex cult. Finally, these texts have in mind some heterosexuals who out of economic pressures turn to same-sex prostitution because of the economic rewards. What is at stake when appropriating these texts are the social visions not merely the literal words. The social

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<sup>66</sup> Mugambi, “Foundations for an African Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics”, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 42.

visions of these texts augur well for a stable community but their time is different from our time.

These texts and the attempts by GALZ to separate between acceptable and unacceptable same-sex practices<sup>68</sup> should eventually lead towards the development of a biblically based homosexual sexual ethic. "We can challenge both gays and straights to question their behaviours in the light of love and the requirements of fidelity, honesty, responsibility, and genuine concern for the best interests of the other and of society as a whole."<sup>69</sup> To this end, these texts can be appropriated in the same manner the texts that condemn some manifestations of heterosexuality have been appropriated. There is no attempt to condemn heterosexuality in its entirety because some biblical texts condemn adultery or because there are men and women who continue committing adultery. Rather, adultery is labelled immoral because when discovered it has the potential to disrupt social relations. These texts should therefore be used to condemn homosexual paedophilia, and rape because these are the manifestations of contemporary homosexuality closest to the social visions of the so-called "explicit texts".

### **8.5 Areas for further research arising out of this study**

Throughout this study, it has been apparent that this subject is wide and hardly worked on. Further, it is an area that involves various sub-plots hidden within the public debate. Owing to these and other factors, there are other areas that could not be radically pursued in this study but which areas require further research. The first such area relates to modes of reading the Bible and the reading techniques being used by different readers of the Bible. The Bible has now been present in Zimbabwe for over a century yet no attempt has been made to highlight aspects such as the

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Keith Goddard "Open Letter to Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana" in: *Parade*, 06/1996.

<sup>69</sup> Walter Wink „Homosexuality and the Bible“ in, Wink (ed), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith*, 45.

translation of the Bible into local languages, except in the article by Lovemore Togarasei, which however focuses only on the translation of banquetings.<sup>70</sup> Another area that requires further research is related to the impact of the cultural-crossroads and the tension caused by the competing dyadic and monadic cultures on the attitude of Zimbabweans to a number of Western developments and trends that continue to flood African nations such as dress codes, human rights, and other issues that are still not major subjects such as legalization of abortion, euthanasia and cloning.

While there is need for researches focusing on individual denominations and how they have handled the challenge posed by homosexual persons, in Zimbabwe there is greater urgency to direct such research towards the Anglican Church following accusations by Bishop Kunonga that one Anglican bishop in Zimbabwe is homosexual and the continuing struggle for the control of Church properties in Harare and Manicaland, which has sucked in the police and ZANU-PF. This should be interesting in the light of the worldwide Anglican discussions on the subject. As Scroggs writes, “the issue has emerged, and will emerge in other denominations, in individual churches throughout the land, and in theological seminaries.”<sup>71</sup> Finally, there is need for further investigation into the homosexual subculture in Zimbabwe. There is need for more information on the activities and stories of homosexual persons and how such activities are victims of the cultural crossroads.

## **8.6 Unconcluding the Issue!**

Homosexuality cannot be wished away therefore we have to confront the challenges head-on. Science has thrown enough doubt about the causes of homosexuality that homosexual persons must

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Lovemore Togarasei, “The Shona Bible and the politics of Bible translation” in: *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 15:1, 2009, pp51-64.

<sup>71</sup> Robbin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 6.

be given the benefit of the doubt when they say they are “born that way”. The ancient explanations of difference in terms of good and bad or deviance cannot be sustained in our context where frequently we have enjoyed the benefits of difference. While for many people the Bible remains relevant because it does not change, it would appear that for most people, the Bible remains relevant because of its flexibility. The “explicit texts” in the Bible do not address fully all manifestations of homosexuality and cannot be used as general injunctions against homosexuality. It is apparent that we do not know all we need to know about homosexuality and the Bible does not solve our problems in that regard. We need to appreciate all contributions arising out of other fields that will help us in understanding homosexuality. In closing this study I will cite here the Serenity Prayer,

*Lord give us the serenity to accept what cannot be changed;  
the courage to change what can be changed;  
and the wisdom to know the difference.<sup>72</sup>*

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<sup>72</sup> James A. Forbes, Jr. „Introduction: More Light from the Spirit on Sexuality“ in: Wink (ed), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith*, 27.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Parade, June 1996.

# OPEN LETTER TO REV CANAAN SODINDO BANANA

The membership of GALZ and the general gay community are deeply offended by the comment that you made about homosexuality at the end of an interview with the Financial Gazette published on January 21. You stated that homosexuality is deviant, abominable and wrong according to the scriptures and according to Zimbabwean culture. Such comments serve only to reinforce the prejudice against homosexuals in this country and encourage persecution.

Deviant behaviour is that which harms others; abuse of power, assault, paedophilia and rape are wrong because they hurt people. Why should a consensual sexual relationship between two people of the same sex be abominable when it is fulfilling and socially constructive? It is homophobia which is deviant because it encourages hate and suspicion and destroys the lives of people who simply have sexual orientation which differs from the so-called heterosexual norm.

As a man of the church, one would expect you to do your gospel duty by standing alongside the marginalised and the social outcast. You do not have the right to judge.

To say homosexuality is unAfrican is absurd. Same-sex activity is known to exist in one form or another in at least 55 African cultures. It is homophobia that has been imported from the West and not homosexuality.

It is one for you to remain silent or neutral about homosexuality; it is quite another for you to castigate us when you have been convicted of engaging in homosexual activity yourself. To describe your own kind as deviant and abominable is to define yourself as a scell-out.

You have never identified yourself as a homosexual, nor have you ever been a member of this organisation or appealed to us for assistance. GALZ was constantly asked to comment on your trial and your personal life and we refused. Instead, we commented on the issues we believed were relevant to the trial: sexual assault, decriminalising consensual sodomy, abuse of office and whether or not it was possible for you to receive a fair trial in such a homophobic climate.

Rumours of your homosexuality have abounded within the gay com-

munity for many years. Nevertheless, we have consistently maintained a policy never to out people, believing this to be highly dangerous on a homophobic climate which borders on hysteria. Now you have the audacity to contribute to the hate campaign against us.

Even though you do not wish to identify with us as a fellow gay person or lend support to this organisation and its activities, we would ask that, in future, you refrain from making comments which are damaging to the work of GALZ and the lives of the people we represent.

You hang your head in shame. As an African elder and as a man of the cloth, you are expected to act with integrity. As a former leader of this country we expect better of you.

Yours Sincerely

*Koith Goddard,  
Programmes Manager,  
Gays and Lesbians of  
Zimbabwe (GALZ)*



## Appendix 2

### The History of GALZ

GALZ was formed in 1990. In the first five years it set up a counselling hotline, explored ways of challenging homophobic laws and started HIV/AIDS campaigns.

Having failed to get its counselling advertised and finding itself under attack by government, GALZ decided to enter the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair which had as its theme that year 'Human Rights and Justice'. Government banned GALZ from participating but the publicity surrounding the attacks on gays and lesbians by the President threw GALZ into the limelight both locally and internationally.

In 1996, GALZ applied again to be at the Book Fair. As expected, government imposed a ban but GALZ took the government to court and won the right to participate.

By 1997, GALZ had changed drastically from being a largely white, middle class social club to an activist organisation truly representative of the social mix of Zimbabwe.

In 1998, GALZ again caused controversy when it applied to participate at the Padare of the 8th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches which took place in Harare in December.

In 1999, GALZ participated in two processes towards producing a national constitution for Zimbabwe, one by the National Constitutional Assembly (which GALZ had joined in 1997), the other being the government-led Constitutional Commission. Although GALZ failed to have the phrase 'sexual orientation' included in the government's proposed constitution, the phrase 'natural difference or condition' was widely interpreted to include gay and lesbian people. The constitution was rejected in a referendum in 2000, not because it protected gays but because it did not reflect the wishes of the people.

### Membership Information

#### Who can join GALZ?

- Any person over the age of 18 years
- Zimbabweans and foreign nationals
- All people, regardless of their sexual orientation
- Any organisation wishing to express support for and solidarity with GALZ

#### How can I join GALZ?

To obtain an application form, do one of the following:

#### If you live in or near Harare:

- Write to the Health Department, GALZ, Private Bag A6131, Avondale, Harare
- Phone 04-741736/ 04-740614, 04-2906809, 04-2906810
- Email: info@galz.co.zw
- Call in at the GALZ Centre, 35 Coleribrander Road, Milton Park, Harare on weekdays between 10:00 hrs and 16:00 hrs.

#### If you are in or near Bulawayo:

Phone 0913 063 290 or visit 26 Moffat Road, Northend, Bulawayo.

#### How much does membership cost?

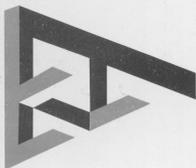
Membership fees are kept to a minimum to ensure that they are affordable to all. Details of fees can be obtained from the GALZ Centre.

#### How do I benefit as a member?

Membership entitles you to receive copies of all GALZ publications, allows you to be informed of GALZ events, qualifies you to join programmes and allows you full access to the centres in Harare and Bulawayo.



## What is GALZ?



An Association of LGBTI in Zimbabwe

The principle objective of GALZ is to build an organisation in Zimbabwe which is democratic and accountable and which strives for the attainment of full and equal human, social and economic rights in all aspects of life for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) persons. GALZ will pursue this objective for all LGBTI persons regardless of their sexual orientation, sexual preference, gender identity, race, class, sex, gender, religion or creed.



#### What happens at GALZZ?

The GALZ Resource Centres in Harare and Blawayo provide safe spaces for lesbian, gay bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people where they can meet, and socialise freely, read books, newspapers and magazines, or listen to music and watch videos and DVDs.

The Library and Video club, houses books, magazines, journals and research studies on LGBTI-related themes, health and human rights and is freely accessible to members.

Events such as general meetings, workshops, discussion groups and entertainment are organised on a regular basis at both centres and in public venues.

GALZ Affinity Groups, cater for members in areas where there is no GALZ office. Affinity Groups provide essential services such as counselling, and organise events such as workshops and social events.

Co-operating with other organisations in Zimbabwe, in the region and elsewhere is an important feature of GALZ's work and helps to normalise LGBTI in society. GALZ works with a wide-range of human-rights groups, AIDS Service Organisations and international LGBTI organisations throughout the world.

Legal and political lobbying is essential for GALZ in its strive to ensure legal protection for LGBTI and encouraging national leaders to adopt positive policies towards LGBTI people.

Legal advice and assistance is provided to members who have problems with the law on account of their sexual orientation.

#### GALZ Services

The work of GALZ is divided into four broad areas: health, gender, information & communications and operations.

#### The Health Department

Matters of health and physical and emotional wellbeing for LGBTI are a central focus within GALZ.

Counselling by fully trained and professional counsellors is offered to members who face difficulties with coming to terms with their sexuality, coming out to family and friends or handling personal relationships. HIV pre- and post-test counselling is also available.

GALZ Positive is a national support group for members who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The Positive Image Access to Treatment Health Scheme ensures access to affordable treatment for those members living with HIV or AIDS. The scheme also pays for the treatment of STIs and provides safer-sex packages to both men and women.

Gay-friendly health-service providers are important in a country where there is strong prejudice against LGBTI people. The Health Department keeps a database of gay-friendly doctors and clinics to ensure that members receive efficient healthcare from professionals.

Buddy Groups are teams of specially trained peer-group educators who provide information and moral support to other members.

*Skills for Life and the Women's Scholarship Programme* are unique for a human rights organisation in that they offer support for vocational training to members to help them improve their socio-economic status.

#### The Gender Department

Although lesbian and bisexual women share many of the same problems experienced by their gay/ male counterparts, there are additional barriers which these women have to overcome especially when it comes to visibility in society and social independence.

The *National Women's Programme* provides training and a year-round series of activities for women members of GALZ including an annual women's retreat.

#### Information & Communications Department

In Zimbabwe where there is so much misunderstanding about LGBTI people, it is important to produce and disseminate messages that are positive and informative about LGBTI life in this country and elsewhere.

*Publications include* The GALZETTE, a quarterly magazine, which includes serious articles by local and international writers on topics of interest to the LGBTI community and its supporters, and Whazup!, a bi-monthly magazine that specifically targets the GALZ membership.

*Special reports, books and booklets* published by GALZ cover areas such as sexual orientation and the law, human sexuality and gender and the history of homosexuality in Africa.



# Nzira begs for protection in prison

Herald 11/02/06

**JAILED** spiritual healer Godfrey Nzira is now living in voluntary solitary confinement in fear of being poisoned and sodomised by fellow inmates.

The once vibrant and ever-smiling prophet, who was jailed in 2004, is now a ghostly figure at Chikurubi maximum security prison.

He was slapped with a 20-year sentence after being convicted on seven counts of raping and two of indecently assaulting two women church members.

The High Court has since slashed the sentence to 20 years after declaring the initial sentence unjust.

Nzira told The Herald that he begged to be isolated from his fellow inmates after suffering from suspected food poisoning, which he claims might have damaged his intestines.

He also opted for isolation after some prisoners attempted to sodomise him as "punishment" for his rape conviction.

Prison officials confirmed Nzira's solitary confinement, saying he had problems with some inmates.

For 23 years, Nzira trudged the length and breadth of Zimbabwe, healing the sick and converting multitudes to his apostolic sect in Chitungwiza, outside Harare.

His reputation as a faith healer endeared him to thousands, who thronged his shrine for assistance.

Wherever he went there were always people around him — whether hangers-on, patients, friends or relatives.

Today Nzira is living the life of a hermit. For the past three years he has traded his milk-white church regalia for drab prison garb.

In prison Nzira follows a routine lifestyle.

His cell is opened at 8am to allow him time to mix with fellow inmates before he is locked in at 12 noon.

At 2pm he gets his supper and retires to bed at 4pm.

"Nzira panzva yekompa. Ndiri kumgozvishingira kumunhu." (I am going through a hard time. But as a man I must not give up.)

Nzira says his incarceration has been a traumatic experience, as he has had to regularly ward off fellow prisoners from molesting him.

"You meet hard-core criminals who scheme new ways of making you feel the real pinch of the torment. You clash with homosexuals who feel because of the nature of the crime that I was convicted of, I am an easy target.

"You meet some prison officers who tell you 'vava Nzira imhai muchatira pano apa' (you will die here) to just send a chill down your spine. My situa-

● To Page 10

# Appendix 4

rubbing bodies together to stimulate each other and much more.  
genitals with tongues and hands, inserting fingers in each other's  
Including, kissing, hugging, stroking, stimulating each other's  
There are many ways that lesbians can be sexual with each other.

### ◊ What about sex?

vary.  
of being a lesbian yourself. Be prepared that people's reactions will  
It is up to you who you decide to come out to. You should not feel  
◊ Who should I tell?  
straight. What is really important is that we learn to love ourselves.  
birth, it is normal and healthy to be yourself whether you are gay or  
Many people push away these feelings because of prejudices against  
their own sex. But it's not something that is encouraged in our society.

### ◊ Am I normal?

Yes! It's perfectly natural for people to be attracted to members of  
◊ What about AIDS?  
sexually active people need to be aware of AIDS as well as other  
sexually-transmitted infections. Being gay does not give you AIDS. Use  
condom only once, or choose activities that do not involve intercourse.  
Remember you have the power to choose what you do or do not do.  
You should not feel pressured into engaging in risky sexual  
penile stimulation, perineal penetration and finger-anal penetration  
◊ Who should I tell?  
of genital/damperastic wrap for oral-anal stimulation.

### ◊ Who should I tell?

honest with yourself. Contact GALZ if you need more information.  
trust to be understanding and sympathetic. It is up to you whether you  
"That's OK." Later you may want to tell someone else, someone you  
The first step in coming out is to tell yourself that you are gay and say,

### ◊ Will I ever have sex?

◊ Some frequently asked questions:  
If you cannot answer these questions now, do not worry, you should  
become more sure in time.  
Are my feelings for guys true and deep?  
Do I feel different from other guys?  
Have I had a crush on been in love with a boy or man?  
When I dream or fantasise sexually, is it about boys or girls?  
to label yourself. If you think you might be gay, ask yourself:  
Know what to call your sexual feelings but there is no rush to decide how  
sexual feelings towards men are normal and natural. You may not  
physically/sexually attracted to and fall in love with other men; that  
Men who call themselves gay are cognitively, emotionally and

### ◊ Am I normal?

◊ Will I ever have sex?  
one should start having sex until they are ready. We all choose to have  
sex in different ways, regardless of our sexual orientation. You are in  
complete control over what you do sexually and with whom.

### ◊ What about AIDS?

◊ Some frequently asked questions:  
If you cannot answer these questions now, do not worry, you should  
become more sure in time.  
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Do I feel different from other guys?  
Have I had a crush on been in love with a boy or man?  
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Know what to call your sexual feelings but there is no rush to decide how  
sexual feelings towards men are normal and natural. You may not  
physically/sexually attracted to and fall in love with other men; that  
Men who call themselves gay are cognitively, emotionally and

I think I might be...LESBIAN

I think I might be...GAY

## Still need help?

The Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) wants LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered) and intersex people to know their rights and be proud of who they are! Visit the GALZ Centre and make use of services such as personal counselling, HIV/AIDS and sexual health advice, or legal advice.

Or  
Just visit us to meet others for social Saturdays and discussions

Contact or visit us at:

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)  
35 Colenbrander Road  
Milton Park  
Harare

Tel: 04- 741736 (Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm)  
Fax: 04- 740614

E-mail: health@galz.co.zw  
info@galz.co.zw  
gender@galz.co.zw

## I think I Might Be ...

This pamphlet is aimed at helping people understand the meaning of sexual orientation, and at providing insight into the many different types of sexuality there are.

Brought to you by

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)



The principal objective of GALZ is to build an association in Zimbabwe which is democratic and accountable and which strives for the attainment of full and equal human, social and economic rights in all aspects of life for LGBTI persons. GALZ will pursue this objective for all LGBTI persons regardless of their sexual orientation, sexual preference, gender identity, race, class, sex, gender, religion or creed.

Reproduced from *I think I Might Be...* by kind permission of the Durban Lesbian & Gay Community and Health Centre

#### ◊ Do I have to worry about HIV and AIDS?

All of us should know about HIV and AIDS and how we can prevent ourselves from becoming infected. Safer sex for lesbians includes use of a dental dam/plastic wrap for oral vaginal and oral anal stimulation and use of surgical gloves when inserting your fingers into your partner's vagina or anus, especially if you have tiny cuts or rashes on your hands.

#### I think I might be ... BISEXUAL

Bisexuality is the potential to feel cognitively, emotionally and physically/sexually attracted to and engage in sensual or sexual relationships with people of either sex. A bisexual person may or may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and a degree of attraction may vary over time.

Some frequently asked questions:

#### ◊ Are bisexuals not just going through a phase of being confused about their sexuality?

For some people, bisexuality is a bridge between heterosexuality and homosexuality; for others it could be just a brief experimentation. But for many people, bisexuality is a lifelong, committed sexual orientation.

#### ◊ Are bisexuals not just denying their homosexuality?

Bisexuality is not an easy way out, a denial, or a middle ground. It is for some people the hardest decision they will ever make. Although some individuals who are attracted to members of the same sex may later identify as gay or lesbian, this by no means includes all bisexuals. Bisexuality is a valid and perfectly normal way to identify.

#### ◊ Are bisexuals equally attracted to both sexes?

Many bisexuals feel they have a 'preference' for one gender over another, but they do not deny their attraction for that other gender. Some bisexuals, however, have no such preference, and instead focus their attractions on qualities they see in an individual, regardless of that person's gender. Sometimes these qualities involve gender, sometimes they do not.

#### ◊ Why are bisexual issues different from gay and lesbian issues?

While homophobia is a bisexual issue, bisexuals also have concerns different from those of the gay community; the most striking being that bisexuals experience prejudice from the gay community itself. Bisexuals are sometimes perceived as 'hiding' and enjoying 'heterosexual privilege'. Also bisexuals are sometimes seen as blurring the issues and weakening the gay and lesbian movement.

#### I think I might be...INTERSEXUAL

Intersex is the word that describes those who, without voluntary medical interventions, possess bodies that doctors cannot neatly classify as male or female. This includes people who have chromosomal sex other than XX (female) or XY (male), or primary or secondary sex characteristics that defy the medical definitions of male and female. Intersexuality is referred to as a 'condition' because there is a medical basis for its existence. This in no way implies that it is a disease. The use of the word 'hermaphrodite' to describe intersex individuals should be avoided (unless used by an intersex individual as a 'pride word') owing to the stigmatisation that has occurred under this label.

Some frequently asked questions:

#### ◊ How common are intersex conditions?

No one knows exactly how many children are born with intersex conditions because of the secrecy and deception surrounding it.

#### ◊ How do I know if I am intersex?

This is different from, for example, having a feeling that your identity is different from most people of your gender. People with intersex conditions generally do not have to search for evidence that they are intersexed; the evidence is in their own bodies. For instance, women who do not have ovaries, men who do not have testes, people who remember multiple genital surgeries during childhood and people who have ambiguous genitalia.

#### ◊ What about surgery?

Since the mid 20th century, doctors have promoted early surgeries on infants with visibly intersexed genitalia on the assumption that they would otherwise grow up confused about their identities and sexual orientation. Some intersex people have recently called for the abolishment of this practice, believing that an end should be called to secrecy, shame and unwanted genital surgery. This surgery, it is felt, causes both physical pain and the emotional pain of having one's body sexuality violated.

#### ◊ Are intersexuality and transsexuality linked?

Some transsexual people and their advocates argue that transsexuality is a form of intersexuality that manifests itself in the brain, citing preliminary research suggesting a biological 'cause' for transsexuality or gender identity disorder. Intersex people reject this view, saying it misses the point. While some transsexuals are in fact intersexed, most transsexual people do not, for example, experience involuntarily medical 'treatment' to 'correct' their physical sex.

#### I think I might be...TRANSGENDER

Transgender is a broad term referring to the play on gender and sexual identities that will include cross-dressers, drag, transvestites and transsexuals.

**Drag:** this is unique to the gay subculture and involves dressing in women's clothing as a caricature of femininity. It is largely seen as a performance for entertainment value in gay bars and nightclubs and is intended for an audience.

**Cross dressers:** they identify with their birth gender most of the time but occasionally desire to look like or feel like women by wearing women's clothes. There is no wish to change sex. They are heterosexual males and many are married men whose wives are aware of their behaviour.

**Transvestites:** there is a subtle difference from the previous two in that the transvestite is a person who derives sexual pleasure from wearing the clothes of the opposite sex, and could be straight, gay or lesbian. Such a person plays with gender identity through the masquerade of dressing and usually does not want the impersonation to be discovered.

**Transsexual:** a person who feels, she/he is a member of the opposite sex and has a persistent wish to change sex anatomically. Such a person will follow a medical regime that might include hormone therapy to change his/her sex.

Some frequently asked questions

#### ◊ Who are transsexuals?

Transsexuals can be any race, religion, gender, mentality, profession or sexual orientation. The number of females born transsexual is estimated to equal the number of males.

#### ◊ Is there treatment for transsexuality?

Transsexuality is not something that needs to be cured but there is treatment for those wanting gender reassignment. Initially, there must be a psychological evaluation and counselling to determine the appropriateness of the dramatic and irreversible gender reassignment process. The pre-operative transsexual must begin hormone treatment and continue with counselling to help him/her unlearn the gender role played for years. Usually, the individual must live and work in the new role for a minimum of 12 to 18 months before gender reassignment surgery is authorised.

#### ◊ What motivates cross dressers and transvestites?

There are a number of reasons why men dress as women and vice versa. More attention has been paid to men wearing women's clothing because it is more socially acceptable for women to be seen in traditionally male attire. Motivation includes:

- \* *Erotic arousal/fetishism (sexual gratification achieved by wearing items of clothing of the opposite sex).*
- \* *Relief from tension - stepping away from what society traditionally expects from men.*
- \* *Expressing hidden personality characteristics that are not traditionally accepted in 'masculine' men.*
- \* *Envy of women, wanting to fool the world, or for creative reasons.*
- \* *Maintaining a conscious alternative personality.*

## Appendix 5

# Homosexuality and human rights:

## developing tolerance, understanding and justice

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) has been functioning as an organisation for about 4 years now. In this time it has represented the gay and lesbian community at a variety of workshops and seminars. This is however, GALZ's first opportunity to speak directly to the issue of gay rights as they pertain to human rights in general. Many people - organisations and individuals alike - question the relevance of gay and lesbian rights in Zimbabwe. They would obviously be better able to express their reasons in this regard than I. An educated guess would be that the invisibility of gay men and lesbians has contributed to an "out of sight is out of mind" situation. In addition, in the absence of any balanced coverage, the negative images published in the media provide the public with its misconceptions of gay men and lesbians. Prime amongst these misconceptions is that homosexuality does not exist in African society. The theme of this year's Zimbabwe International Book Fair is: Human Rights and Justice. An associated Indaba is entitled: Freedom of Expression and of the Press. GALZ's application to participate in both events was recently denied. The organisers of the Book Fair stated that "In light of recent press reports concerning your organisation, we cannot jeopardise the safety of exhibitors and the public" by allowing GALZ to participate. Furthermore they believed that a representation of gay and lesbian rights at the fair would detract from what they considered to be the more critical issues of women's rights and children's rights. They stated that the Indaba was irrelevant to the lesbian and gay community because "... here we feel the issue 'Freedom of Expression and of the Press' is one that affects the majority. The programme has been clearly defined to address these issues and a debate on sexuality is not within the terms of reference."

After energetic lobbying by GALZ this decision has been reversed. Strong support from South African publishers reinforced the principal that human rights are not divisible. A visit from Black gay men and women forced the organisers to reconsider their assertion that homosexuality is not African.

In a similar vein, a few weeks ago GALZ was denied funding for the Book Fair by a leading liberal donor agency who claimed that gay rights were not an issue in Zimbabwe. They perceived the issue to be restricted to the white middle class in this country.

These incidents, among others, highlight a situation where society chooses to judge people they cannot understand because they can neither see them nor hear them. Individuals and organisations perpetuate this problem by allowing the human rights of gay men and lesbians to be undermined by the state, the church and "tradition". (An older Ndebele woman recently incorrectly thought that homosexuals were hermaphrodites - in possession of male and female genitalia!)

Many individuals in the gay community in Zimbabwe live in fear. Their freedom of expression is non-existent. They have no access to the press or radio to represent themselves or communicate with other gay men and lesbians. The gay and lesbian counselling service in Harare struggles to function. Access to the general population is seriously compromised because The Herald will not accept an advertisement publicising the counselling facility. They claim that as "a family newspaper" this advertisement would be inappropriate. Archaic laws criminalise private and public displays of affection between gay men in particular. Though seldom applied to consenting adults, the threat of prosecution can never be ignored.

The fact that donor agencies and other authorities involved in work in the human rights arena are willing to dictate which human rights are more human than others, cannot go unchallenged. Prejudice and discrimination are found both in the law and in the attitudes of people. Many lesbians and gay men are mocked or rejected by family and friends; their relationships are not recognised by the law or religion; many experience discrimination in the work-place once their sexual orientation is suspected.

Politically lesbian and gay rights are often dismissed as irrelevant and not really part of the 'national debate'.

As with racism and sexism, prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men is a violation of human rights. It is a form of oppression because it does not just affect individuals, but results from the way in which society is structured.

If we are truly committed to developing a just and democratic society, then it is wrong to pick and choose which forms of oppression we are going to fight against. Every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

**What exactly do we mean when we say that lesbians and gay men are oppressed?**

In our society everyone is assumed to be heterosexual. In other words, people automatically think that you are heterosexual, rather than lesbian or gay. Lesbians and gay men face this heterosexist way of thinking on a daily basis, with questions like "So when are you going to get married?"

Being heterosexual is then seen to be 'normal' and 'acceptable', whereas being lesbian or gay is labelled 'abnormal'. Lesbian and gay oppression is a deeply rooted and complex form of oppression which has been happening for centuries. Intolerance of lesbian and gay lifestyles is part of many religions, cultures and traditional rituals and customs.

Lesbian and gay lifestyles are seen as threatening because they challenge ways of thinking such as: that all adults should get married and have children; that men should be breadwinners and women, home-makers and child-rearers. Lesbian and gay relationships, where partners share domestic and other responsibilities are a direct challenge to the fixed gender roles that men and women are expected to play at home and in society.

**Criminalisation of lifestyle and behaviour**

At present Zimbabwean law does not allow gay men and to a lesser extent, lesbians to give full expression to their sexual orientation. Our laws on homosexuality are particularly repressive. The law criminalises sex and even the display of affection between men. Sexual acts between consenting adults of the same gender are prohibited.

Although these outdated laws are not always applied, the threat of being 'caught' still hangs like a sword over peoples' heads. The presence of oppressive laws causes much personal stress to people, even though they may not be prosecuted each time they break the law. This oppression has caused the gay community in Zimbabwe to become invisible for fear of prosecution or public harassment. *Even the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe rejects this criminalisation of gay and lesbian lifestyles.*

**The labelling and cosetting of lesbians and gay men**

Lesbians and gay men are often called names like 'faggot', 'queer', 'lesbo', 'dyke'. This kind of hate is called homophobia and people who behave like this are said to be 'homophobic'.

Together with things like fear of arrest and losing jobs, homophobia is another reason why so many lesbians and gay men remain invisible and feel that they can never be open about their sexual orientation. Lesbians and gay men live in fear of being labelled 'abnormal' or being automatically associated with issues like AIDS or child abuse. As a result many lesbians and gay men behave as if they are heterosexual in public. This hiding of one's sexual orientation and heterosexual role playing causes great unhappiness, suffering, stress and isolation. It also perpetuates the myth that gay people are a small minority. It denies other gay men and lesbians role models to debunk the misconception that all homosexuals and lesbians are miserable, tormented deviants. The alternative for lesbians and gay men is to come out and reveal their sexual orientation. This can also cause tremendous stress because people run the risk of being rejected by their families, losing their jobs, being arrested, being blackmailed and being cut off from friends.

#### The marginalisation of lesbians and gay men

Discrimination against lesbian and gay men is not taken seriously in our society. One of the ways that discrimination against lesbians and gays is reduced to a 'non-issue', is to say that they are such a small group and that they are only to be found in white or middle class communities. The truth is: we are everywhere. Kadoma, Tare, Zvishivane, Chipinge, Johannesburg, Soweto, Windhoek, Maputo, Cairo... Gay men and lesbians are not seen because they live in fear of prosecution and harassment. Most conservative estimates put the number of people who are gay or lesbian at least 10% in any society. Because gay men and lesbians hide their sexual orientation, it is likely that this figure could be much higher.

There are lesbians and gay men in all communities, whether they are black or white, rich or poor, urban or rural. But it is definitely more difficult for lesbians and gay men to come out and be open about their sexual orientation in more conservative communities, for example, in traditional and rural communities. In Zimbabwe, where unemployment is on the increase, the extended family can be the only means of survival. Rejection by the family in this context is extremely serious.

Another way in which lesbian and gay issues are marginalised, is the argument that the 'more important' national political issues should be dealt with first, and at a later stage, 'secondary' issues like lesbian or gay rights. Is it fair or just however, to stand aside and let lesbians and gay men suffer the risk of arrest and daily oppression? Until a few years ago the same approach was used to try and reduce broader gender issues. Mobilisation around the liberation of women and the fighting of sexism and sexist attitudes has discredited this approach.

There are many similarities between the women's movement, the Black movement and the gay movement. Prejudice against these groups has been deeply rooted in religious dogma and patriarchal tradition.

#### Why lesbian and gay issues are justice issues

Questions of social, political, economic and legal justice affect all individuals including lesbians and gay men. Examples are: *the right to personal dignity, the right to a job and the right to get a fair hearing in a court of law.*

The following four principles summarise why lesbian and gay issues cannot be ignored when developing a more just and broad perspective on human rights.

- the principle of non-discrimination
- the right to be the same and the right to be different
- sexual orientation is a public and not just a private issue
- personal issues are political issues

#### The principle of non-discrimination

The right not to be discriminated against is a basic human right that should apply to all individuals. The history of lesbian and gay oppression, together with daily experi-

ences of prejudice and discrimination in this country, show that lesbians and gay men are discriminated against regularly.

#### The right to be the same and the right to be different

This principle recognises the freedom of individuals to associate with each other, as long as they do not harm the rights of others. For example, being allowed to practice the religion of your choice while allowing others to follow the same religion, to follow another religion of their choice or not to follow any religion.

Taking the right to be different a step further means that people should not only be allowed to practice the religion, culture and language of their choice, but should also have the right to choose how to live their lives. In other words, people should have the right to lead a different lifestyle. For lesbians and gay men, this would include having the freedom to form relationships regardless of the gender of their partner and having these relationships formally recognised and accepted as legal.

*Examples of different lifestyles: - staying single, - living together, - heterosexual marriage, - lesbian/gay registered partnerships, - single parenting.*

#### Sexual orientation is a public and not just a private issue

Sometimes people say that sexual orientation is a purely private matter and that having a right to personal privacy would be enough to protect the rights of lesbians and gay men. Unfortunately, things are not this simple. While the right to personal privacy is a good principle, it doesn't solve the problems faced by gay men and lesbians. This is because they are not just discriminated against as sexual beings but as human beings in all spheres of their lives.

Sexual orientation is a public issue for lesbians and gay men precisely because discrimination happens in the streets, the newspapers, in the work place, in schools, in religious institutions and through their relationships not being legally recognised for things like insurance, medical aid, pensions, inheritance, other spousal benefits and so on. As a result, public laws and policies are needed to ensure both the private rights and the public rights of lesbians and gay men are protected.

#### Personal issues are political issues

It is no longer generally acceptable to say that women's issues are not really important political issues but just domestic or side-issues for women to worry about. In the same way broader gender issues, including questions of sexual orientation are serious issues that should be faced by all people now and not at some distant time in the future.

The human rights struggle waged by women's organisations and their allies, have shown that the only way to force issues on to the political agenda of people resistant to change is to consistently raise these issues publicly and to challenge political organisations, parties and leaders when they fail to act in a gender-sensitive and non-sexist way.

Similarly, it is now the responsibility of lesbian and gay organisations, as well as all organisations concerned with human rights to ensure that the principle of non-discrimination against historically oppressed groups is asserted and not compromised at the negotiating table.

We must insist that gay and lesbian rights be acknowledged as a part of the struggle for the attainment of full human rights for all individuals. We have to work together to educate our society about the importance of tolerance.

A human rights culture in which everyone will have access to justice is a fundamental goal for all present today.

If you, or someone close to you, are lesbian or gay, you will know the prejudice and discrimination that gay men and lesbians have to live with. Thank you.

# Govt must respect 'homosexuals rights

THE current debate concerning homosexuals and their rights is a thorny one indeed. Unfortunately it is an emotional one too, and where emotions are involved, it often tends to cloud the rationality of the situation. The purpose of this letter is to try to clarify the issue.

Probably most Zimbabweans who consider it important to uphold the moral values of society find it difficult to understand how anyone can seriously believe that the homosexuals have a right to express their opinion in public. However the fundamental assumption of democratic thinking (presuming Zimbabwe is a democracy) is that every adult (regardless of race, tribe, sex or origin) has the inalienable right to freedom of speech and opinion. And in addition, that the individual also has a right to be protected from the tyranny of the majority. This is because (in democracy), it is argued, everyone should be respected as an individual in his own right and accorded equal rights and equal treatment, meaning everyone has as much right to his own opinion (and to express it) as anyone else.

However, in the case in question, since the opinion of the homosexuals is offensive to the majority, and since the "will of the majority" is to be respected, it is felt to be quite rational (and moral) to suppress it.

But this they cannot do and still preserve their democratic integrity, for what they would be doing (in effect) would be denying the fundamental logical premiss (of democracy) upon which (they think) they are acting.

What the majority are actually doing when they deny an individual or a minority the right of free opinion and speech, is denying that all men are equal (which is a democratic contradiction).

They are also saying (in effect) that they (the majority) have a right (by their supposed superior morality or whatever) to suppress the opinion of the minority and that they (the majority) have a monopoly of the truth; all of which are dangerous, arrogant and manifestly undemocratic assumptions.

The trouble with opinion (majority opinion or otherwise) is that it is only that opinion. It is not (and never will be) incontrovertible truth. What is held to be true by the majority is always conditional. It is only in a totalitarian state that official opinion is considered to be absolute. The danger of suppressing individual opinion is twofold. Not only does it deny the majority the opportunity of exchanging their opinion for a better one, it also destroys the very fabric for the democratic basis upon which truth can be pursued and advancement can take place.

It is only in the free and equal exchange of informed opinion in free and equal public debate that "truth" can be advanced. Because, before independence, the majority of Zimbabweans were denied freedom of speech and expression, it is sometimes forgotten, now that they have achieved it, that there is another side to the coin; that is, tolerance of the opinions of others with whom one does not agree. In fact, if the rule was that only opinions which are acceptable to the majority have a legitimate right to be expressed, then there would be no point in hav-

ing the rule of freedom, and no way of knowing that it was the consensus.

It could also be argued that this particular opinion (of homosexuals) not only offends traditional law, but natural law and the law of God as well. In the first case it could well be argued that traditional law is not a rational law. It is merely a matter of cultural conditioning — after all it was perfectly acceptable among the ancient Greeks.

Secondly, in terms of natural law, the homosexual believes (or says he does) that he is obeying (what for him) is natural law. And in the case of God's law, again it is a non-rational one.

It is not obeyed out of rational conviction (although some may mistakenly think it is) but out of obedience to the will of God through faith — and faith is no substitute for reason. However, having said all that, if it were not for all the above reasons the present writer would like to see all homosexuals and all other perverts sentenced to utter silence forever.  
Roger Baxter,  
Bulawayo.

# Scuffles break out at demo against Gaiz

By **Wihara Maravanyika**  
**A MESSAGE** written on a placard calling for the resignation of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair executive director, Mrs Tish Mhangwa, because of ZIBF's decision to allow the participation of the Gaiz and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe at this year's fair in Harare led to a physical confrontation between demonstrators and some participants of a writers' bazaar yesterday.

A small but vocal group of artists was at the entrance of the Book Fair venue in the Harare Gardens, singing songs denouncing homosexuality when a man, identified only as a German national, came to place a placard denouncing the ZIBF executive director. He had appeared at the demonstration from a book publishers and writers meeting at a nearby hotel.

A melee degenerated into a physical confrontation after which police were called to quell tempers.

A co-ordinator of the demonstrators under the banner of Artists Against AIDS, Profirahmwe Ndoye Jeffrey, said, the man accused them of violating human rights.

"We were using our democratic right to demonstrate and we worked what human rights he was talking about. He got physical with us and we got physical with him. Other delegates attending the meeting then intervened. One of them said the donor agencies would not sponsor again the book fair and we told him that Zimbabweans were not keen on donations with strings attached," said Cde Jeffrey. The nation's disapproval of ZIBF's insistence to let the association participate at the fair resulted in a number of demonstrations that were conducted yesterday in the city centre.

Hundreds of Christians Apostolic Church members were awash in their white robes as they filled the city centre streets holding placards supporting the stance against homosexuality taken by President Mugabe. A number of international gay and lesbian organisations have picketed against Cde Mugabe in a number of world cities that he has visited.

An evangelist with the Christian Apostolic Church, Fradrick Magaya, applauded the President, saying at least his good message had reached the whole world.

Speaking soon after their demonstration, an evangelist of Christ Apostolic Church, Nathaniel Ndlovu, said those who were criticising President Mugabe were being unhelpful since according to him homosexuality was ungodly. He said after God put him on earth, he then created a woman for him. He never created a man for a man.

The Indigenous Business Development Centre secretary general, Cde Enock Kamushinda, said: "Liberalism and so-called democracy are taken to mean destruction of everything that black people have like businesses, homes, family, culture and sense of nationhood. Irish Mhangwa should be removed and someone else in tune with the culture of our country should replace her."

The president of the Hobbesellers Association of Zimbabwe, Cde Lillian Mafurisa, said she was not in the stake of false accusations being created that his organisation was overall in charge of the ZIBF. He wanted to make it clear that it is yet to be the company.

Cde Mafurisa, who is also a Member of Parliament for Seke, said his association unreservedly condemned homosexual

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# Disapproval of Galz mounts

● From Page 1

ity as a perversion totally alien to the black Zimbabwean way of expression.

"It also, in our view, has nothing to do with democracy, or denial of it," he said. The association did not sympathise with those who for obvious ulterior motives intended to engage the Government of Zimbabwe on this obnoxious topic.

"The Government position on homosexuals is unambiguous. Under the circumstances, we find it absolutely puzzling that seemingly balanced fellow blacks are either encouraging, condoning or publicising this absurdity. They must be condemned unsparingly — whose interests are they serving, and to what end?"

Cde Manhombho said ZIBF needed to be re-guided about its real purpose, which if stuck to, did Zimbabwe tremendous good.

Meanwhile, former High Court judge, Justice Manyarara, is reported by Ziana to have angered senior Zimbabwean journalists who attended a reception held in honour of the participants on Friday night, saying the former judge was out of touch with reality.

Some even questioned his role in Zimbabwean media, saying he was not fit to lead the Media Council of Zimbabwe if he was so disparaging about local journalists, some of whom have worked abroad and received international recognition for their professionalism.

Justice Manyarara claimed homosexuality existed in traditional Zimbabwe. He said he had read this from an article published by a local magazine.

"The story was killed by not being republished by anybody else — I have the clipping. This is self censorship," he told participants who included journalists from Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Cameroon and South Africa.

Justice Manyarara said Zimbabwean journalists had not investigated the legality of the ban on Galz. He said he personally knew that the ban was illegal. He challenged Zimbabweans to carry out a referendum on the matter.

"No journalist had any knowledge on what was going to be exhibited, so how can you begin to support the banning," he said.

Justice Manyarara is currently the chairman of

the Zimbabwe Media Council which is demanding that the Government should reform laws on information.

The national director of the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace, Mr Mike Auret, said the church acknowledged that there is a good number of people in the world who were homosexual. But they had to be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.

"Every sign of unjust discrimination in that regard should be avoided. If one is homosexual and is celibate, there is nothing wrong with it. There is no doubt that the gays and lesbians are being discriminated against in the book fair matter," said Mr Auret.

He said he was not aware under what law Galz had been banned from the book fair, but CCJP was trying to discover that.

"According to information I have, the association was going to exhibit at the fair information and counselling services. We would have to object to Galz having a stand for promoting homosexuality," Mr Auret said.

He said there were a number of deep taboos in Zimbabwe's culture, including homosexuality, which were prevalent to day. "Rape and sexual abuse of children were a daily occurrence."

"Unfortunately, we can't claim to be a sexually normal society."

The head of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Bishop Farai Chirisa, said that the argument that homosexuality was a given creation of a particular person did not justify its propagation.

"There are people born with a tendency to steal or lie. But do we accept the practices because one is born like that."

"Yes, we do tolerate

and we do try to understand that there are people who live like that. But only as long as they do not go out and propagate and perpetuate society as they way people should live," said Bishop Chirisa.

An ex-member of Galz, who refused to be named, said the association was going to meet today to decide if they would participate at the book fair. The ex-member said the association no longer represented the majority of gays and lesbians due to, among other things, its political, confrontational, destructive and uncompromising stance.

In a statement sent to The Sunday Mail yesterday, the writer said membership had decreased considerably due to the fiasco at last year's Book Fair, adding that the present membership stood at less than 100. The majority of executive committee members resigned in protest of Galz's participation at last year's fair.

"What Galz now represents is the hard core, perhaps I could say very left wing, sector of our community. I do not see why we should participate in this year's book fair, the theme is not Human Rights and we are obviously not in the Books for Business Business," said the ex-member.

"I do not want to see gays and lesbians to be put on a special pedestal and have special attention; we are part of Zimbabwean community and therefore no different in many ways as the man in the street, and therefore are protected by law as ordinary citizens."

The ex-member castigated foreign organisations for supporting associations that did not represent the majority of people that they claimed to

## Galz members in public appearance

A HANDFUL of members of the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe made their first public appearance at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair yesterday with visitors paying little or no attention to their otherwise empty stand.

Led by Keith Goddard, the small group only received notable attention when the Press followed them to find out what they were up to following the nullification of the censorship order preventing them from exhibiting at the fair.

Less than five people were clearly visible as Galz members at the stand. But The Herald understands that more members and supporters were mingling with the crowds.

"We did not mean anyone harm. We were admitted into the book fair like everyone else and any attempt to ban us from the event was very improper," said Goddard speaking to journalists.

Asked if his organisation was posing a security risk by their mere presence at the fair, Goddard said their presence was "in no way a threat to security" and they should be allowed to stay.

"There is freedom of association and expression in the country. It is up to the law enforcement agencies to protect homosexuals like they protect anybody else.

"Police should see to it



THREE members of the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe — Gerald, Keith Goddard and Tina Machida, manning their stand at the Book Fair — yesterday.

that no harm comes our way and the ZIBF is not disrupted," said Goddard.

Mr Goddard also lashed out at those gays who abused children. "We have a strict code of conduct with regards to the issue of abusing children. We are aware that young children are within the high risk class and our organisation is doing everything it can to eliminate this," said Goddard.

Galz intended to exhibit pamphlets on homosex-

uality prepared by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, another on counselling, and one on general information on their organisation.

Meanwhile, the European Union yesterday denied reports that its member countries are considering reducing co-operation with the Zimbabwean Government over its continued condemnation of gays and lesbians.

The head of delegation of European communities to Zimbabwe, Mr Michael Laidler, told Ziana yesterday that there was no intention on the part of the EU or EC to link future aid to Zimbabwe with its human rights record.

"As far as we are concerned, we think there is no initiative for serious violation of provisions specified by the Lomé Convention," Mr Laidler said.

## ***Appendix 8***

### **Notes from The Herald Archives, Harare, on the subject of homosexuality.**

*The Herald* 05-06-2006 “GALZ members chased from exhibition stand ZIBF.”

A mob came, destroyed the GALZ stand and chased members of GALZ away because the association was inhuman and of behaviour likely to corrupt children. GALZ has been a regular exhibitor since 1995, the members of the public felt GALZ encouraged immorality and promiscuity. In 2004, they exhibited only after making a High Court application.

*The Sunday Mirror*, 05-03-2006 “GALZ speaks out”

It was argued by GALZ that contrary to suggestions that they are calling for legal same-sex marriages, gay marriage was not on their agenda. Priority was on survival and fighting political and social intolerance of gender and sexual difference. It was also noted that towards this cause, GALZ had published a book, *Understanding Human sexuality and gender*.

*The Herald* 04-08-2004 “GALZ members beaten up”

The Herald covered an incident in which some members of the public allegedly stormed the GALZ stand at ZIBF, beat up GALZ members manning the stand and chased away after assaulting them.

*The Sunday Mirror* 05-03-2006 “Homosexuality: Are Sodom and Gomorrah suddenly permissible?”

Three respected individuals were interviewed for this article, in which Robert Mugabe accused gays of adopting feminine trends such as the adorning of earrings instead of leaving such practices to westerners. Mugabe further insists that such practices should be done in the West where churches are also blessing same-sex marriages. Respected gospel musician and AFM pastor, Charles Charamba is quoted in the same story as saying “same-sex bless-

ings contradict the clear teaching on marriage and sexuality from the Bible.” Finally, Prof. Gordon Chavunduka, the president of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers’ Association (ZINATHA) contended that homosexuality is a mental problem that can be treated with traditional therapies. He also argued that the primary reason why homosexuality was banned traditionally was because it had no potential for procreation. Finally, he argued that African cultural ethos were under threat owing to the proliferation of alien cultural practices, largely borrowed from the West.

*The People’s Voice* 26-02-2006 “Gays risk jail”

This official ZANU-PF paper reported on the continued insistence by Mugabe that homosexuality would not be tolerated in Zimbabwe and that instead homosexual persons risked being sent to jail in Zimbabwe. Even those advocating for homosexuals also risked being sent to jail. This was said when Mugabe addressed the 21<sup>st</sup> February Movement, a ZANU-PF attempt at nationalising Mugabe’s birthday. The story also cites other African leaders who have strongly condemned homosexuality among them, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya, and Joachim Chissano of Mozambique.

*The Herald* 18-02-2003 “Lesbianism: School readmits children”

Langham Girls’ High school in Mashonaland Central Province expelled 45 girls from among the students because they were accused of engaging in lesbian activities. However, after meetings with the parents and the concerned students some of the students have been readmitted back into school. Medeline Dube of Women’s Action Group (WAG) was quoted as saying lesbianism was a psychological problem and called for psychological help for the concerned students.

*The Tribune* 24-09-2003 “Gay activists lash out at health organizations”

Gay activists have lashed out at the health department and NGOs for ignoring homosexuals in campaigns to prevent the spread of

HIV/AIDS. One, Glenn De Swardt argues that gay men observe homophobic attitudes in many doctors, nurses, counsellors at state sector clinics and counsellors working for NGOs. It was also argued that the spread of HIV among lesbian women was because lesbians are forced to have sex with men because they are forced to have sex with men due to the need for financial security or because they are sex workers.

*The Daily News* 22-05-2003 “African Leaders leading gay bashing”  
The Daily News, a private newspaper cites the report by Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) which say that violence and harassment was rife in southern Africa where victims are assaulted, jailed, sacked from jobs, denied access to healthcare, expelled from schools and evicted from homes. These attacks on homosexuals are based and instigated by speeches of leaders like Robert Mugabe.

*The Daily News* 01-02-2003 “Moyo’s media law protects homosexuals” written by Pedzisai Ruhanya.  
The controversial and draconian AIPPA (Access to Information and the Protection of Privacy Act) law protects and recognizes homosexuality. The Act defines *personal information* as recorded information about an identifiable person and includes the person’s age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or family status. Section 33 deals with protection of such information in which the head of a public body shall protect such information that is under his custody by taking reasonable steps to ensure that there is no unauthorised access, collection, use, disclosure or disposal of such personal information.

The article also insinuated that Prof. Jonathan Moyo, the Minister for information and Publicity could possibly have had a sexual relationship with the Chief Executive Officer of the ZBC, Alum Mpofu.

*The Herald* 07-06-2002 “Outrage over The Daily News story”

Heritage Zimbabwe expressed outrage over an article implying that Minister of State for Information and Publicity, Prof. Jonathan Moyo, had a gay affair with former ZBC CEO Mr. Alum Mpfu. Mpfu resigned from his post in a huff after being caught in a compromising position with a man at a Nightclub in Harare.

*The Herald* 11-04-2001 “Presence of homosexuals at congress irks delegates” by Ivy Ncube.

The presence of two homosexuals at the ongoing Zimbabwe National Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS (ZNNP+) congress in Masvingo has irked some 20 delegates from Harare who are worried about the political connotations. However, justifying their presence, Mr. Romeo Tshuma argued that homosexual persons attended the congress as people infected with HIV and fighting for the same cause. The community of gays and lesbians is equally affected with HIV as any other hence the background of participants should not hinder this fight.

*The Herald* 10-03-2001 Letter to the Editor “President Mugabe is principled” by Brother CM Chivhumudhara.

The letter contends that Mugabe’s leadership is supported solely because of his unwavering stance against homosexuals in Zimbabwe and abroad. Homosexuality is a sin according to the Bible and Mugabe is right to condemn this sin.

*The Herald* 03-04-2002 “ZBC boss Mpfu quits”

Alum Mpfu resigned following allegations of his involvement in a homosexual act at a city night club in the early hours of Thursday last week. Mpfu was caught in a compromising position with another man at a city night club.

*The Daily Mirror* 03-12-2004 “Mugabe blasts homosexuals”

In a keynote address to the 4<sup>th</sup> ZANU-PF National People’s Congress, Mugabe argued that the acceptance of homosexuality

showed the West had reached its nadir culturally. The West had become morally decadent. The West was accused of wanting to convince Africans that same-sex relations are good even though God created a man and a woman. Mugabe rhetorically asks: what can we learn from them? The story also notes that in the past, Mugabe has lambasted homosexuals as worse than pigs and dogs.

*The Daily Mirror* 08-07-2004 “Broaching a difficult terrain”

The society is too afraid to tackle the challenges presented by homosexuality and instead sweeps everything under a “homophobia carpet”.

*The Herald* 12-03-2004 Letter to the Editor “Homosexuals not Christians” by Elton Chibhebhenenga Chisiwa.

Homosexuals are not Christians because Christians are persons who indulge for God, separated for God’s purpose, called out from their desires to serve God and in fact, one who has been born again through baptism which is ritual cleansing for the remission of sins (Mtt.3:1, 1Peter 2:7). Christians should love what God loves and hate what God hates, God hates homosexuality. God calls all homosexuals to repent and turn to him to find help and strength in time of need.

*The Herald* 18-10-2003 “Sodomy rife in prisons”

Up to 70% of Zimbabwe’s prisoners are involved in homosexuality. Most of the inmates give in either because they want bigger food rations or blankets, which are often under the control of the senior prisoners. The Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs last week expressed concern at the increase in cases of consensual sodomy in prisons.

*The Sunday Mail* 12-10-2003 letter to the Editor “Homosexuals’ claims a pity, catastrophe” by C. Ndhlovu.

The claim by homosexuals to be part and parcel of the Christian fraternity is a catastrophe of our time. The Bible does not commend homosexuality hence if homosexual want to be religious

they must create their own counterfeit religion. Rom. 1:18-32 written by the Apostle Paul attacks homosexuality so does Gen. 19:1-11. Homosexuality is abhorred by the scriptures. The men of Sodom wanted to 'know' the angels meaning they wanted to have sexual intercourse cf. Adam *knew* his wife.

*The Daily News* 02-02-2004 letter to the Editor "Homosexuals like Heterosexuals are God's creation" by Dumisani Dube and Jack. The letter responds to a letter by Chai Musoni of 29-01-2004 "The Christian manual clearly condemns homosexuality." The letter affirms that God created homosexuals to live and that homosexuals should live their lives to the full. Further it argues that a contextual reading of the Bible shows that changed circumstances may call for a different approach to the Bible. Showing that homosexuality is not a choice, the writers argue that if homosexuality was a choice, most homosexuals would have quit because no one would want to lose their family, be prejudiced and be called a pervert.

*The Sunday Mail* 15-02-2004 "Foreigners blamed for Avenues vice" Various forms of vice in the Avenues area are blamed on foreigners particularly homosexuality. It is now common to see two people of the same sex, kissing and caressing in public.

## Fear and ignorance

**EDITOR** — Responsible Citizen (Letters, January 25) is typical of the blind prejudice against homosexuals. While it is obvious that we cannot equate racism with forms of sexual discrimination, the underlying causes are nevertheless the same — fear and ignorance.

The decriminalisation of homosexuality does not increase the number of homosexuals in a nation (they are there anyway), neither does it encourage sex tourism (those people come anyway).

As homosexuals do not advocate sex on the streets or the promotion of sex tourism, how do the sexual acts between two consenting adults in the privacy of the bedroom affect the life of "Responsible Citizen?"

The decriminalisation of homosexuality encourages the development of a responsible gay community which provides community services such as crisis lines to prevent tragic suicides, sex education to prevent the spread of social diseases (including Aids) and social and legal advice to cut down on instances of blackmail and that most loathsome of crimes, the sexual abuse of children.

The gay community of Zimbabwe (which is heavily black, by the way) continues its work but it would be so much easier if it had access to regular channels of information instead of having to beg for favours, compassion and tolerance each time it tries to get information across.

At best, the persecution of homosexuals perpetuates misunderstanding; at worst it results in social degeneration and sometimes death.

**Kunzwana.**

**Harare.**

## Appendix 10

The Editor  
Sunday Mail Bag  
P.O. Box 396  
HARARE

I refer to your article of 22 January 1995 on the rights of the homosexual. I fully agree with Father Oskar Wermter of Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' conference when he says that homosexuality is a pathological disorder. What beats me however is the fact that, even with this realization, we continue to treat homosexuals as criminals or social scum who bring it upon themselves to become homosexuals.

This same prejudice has been meted out to victims of mental disorders from time immemorial. How often have we read or heard about people with mental disorders being locked up under chains for the rest of their lives even to this day. Many a times these people have been made to wallow in their excrement provoking no sympathy at all from those they could have most expected it.

Legislating against homosexuality, raiding and arresting homosexuals is, in my view, like chasing a shadow. It makes as much sense as it would if legislation were to be promulgated against all those suffering from mysterious ailments or the sick in general.

In reality the problem is not with the homosexuals. It lies within those of us who consider ourselves to be normal and will not countenance any behaviour considered to be outside the norm. We do not have time to ask searching questions. Subconsciously we may be afraid of the implications of the discoveries we are bound to make if we searched.

Homosexual tendencies discovered earlier in life are known to have been cured through counselling and other psychological treatments. It is also known that this condition may be brought about through a traumatized upbringing. The more deeply rooted condition is known to be a congenital miscarriage.

Supported by physical proof, biological science has also revealed that every individual has a bit of both male and female hormones kept in a delicate balance in favour of one's sex. However, miscarriages of this balance do manifest themselves in various forms. These are those born with sexual organs of both sexes, the hermaphrodites. There are also those born female in every aspect except their sexual organs and vice versa. Some of these have had to undergo operations for sex change. These are examples of the more apparent disorders. Certainly some of these disorders are not as glaringly apparent and as such render themselves mysterious.

Human nature is both attracted and repulsed by mystery. When a mystery defies all efforts to unravel it, sometimes it evokes frustration, anger, fear and shame. That mystery may then be considered to be a shame in itself to compensate for our inadequacies in unravelling it.

When we think of homosexuality, it is always accompanied by all those feelings of frustration, anger, fear and shame. We are frustrated because we cannot explain how such a condition can come to be, angry because it will not disappear, afraid because it threatens to erode the very foundation of our values of normal behaviour and ashamed for being rendered inadequate.

In the past, lepers and epileptics suffered the same prejudice. It must be with shame that we should admit that, even to this day, this prejudice has not completely disappeared. People with mental illnesses, T.B. and AIDS are treated with the same scorn. Of all the sufferers of mysterious diseases, lepers had the added burden of being legislated against and being condemned to leper colonies. Young boys who displayed homosexual tendencies are known to have had their sexual organs mutilated by their parents.

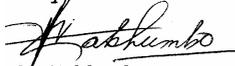
If homosexuals were understood to be people with a pathological disorder and regarded as people who needed help like any other person with an infirmity, there would not be this wrangle. The whole problem is being viewed from a wrong premise all together. It seems now the homosexuals themselves are saying they have a right to be sick while the other side is saying they have no right to be that sick.

It is only recently that efforts are being made to reorient the general public's attitude towards the mentally ill. Are we sure the homosexuals do not deserve the same understanding? What man, who feels like man, would want another man for a man if there was nothing pathologically amiss?

If homosexuals must be condemned for suffering from a hormones disorder, I suppose we might as well add back to the list the mentally ill, lepers, T.B sufferers and the rest of those suffering from mysterious ailments.

As far as I can see it, this clamour for homosexual rights is being fuelled by the negative and hostile attitude against a people who otherwise need a solution to be found to their problem. Most of these homosexuals undergo untold mental anguish made worse by the lack of sympathy even from those of their close relatives and loved ones like their parents, brothers and sisters.

Homosexuality is not a case for condemning or condoning. It is a case that cries for treatment. The same goes for lesbianism. Until that is realized and something done about it, it must be known that we have a growing problem capable of rocking the very foundation of our sanity.



C. Mabhumbo  
19 Scott Road  
HATFIELD

# Tor treatment

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through the generosity of friends and Parish Priests and international donor generosity of friends and benefactors international donor agencies. Currently women and 20 aids orphans. ♦

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The Sunday Mail, February 5, 1996. "Homosexuals: A Case that cries for Treatment."

# Let's eliminate the disease, not the patient

SIR — Certainly "God is the God of love".

I wish to make it clear that the Catholic Church does not wish to see a witch-hunt or hate campaign against homosexuals (see also my Sunday Reflection in the *Sunday Gazette*, August 27).

Christianity is about compassion. "Men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies . . . do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination should be avoided," says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2358).

"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her," has become a popular biblical quotation in

this context. Unfortunately, people are rather selective in what they quote from scripture. They omit to say that the punchline of that passage (John 8, 1-11) is, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way, and from now on; sin no more."

Christianity is not only about compassion and love, but also about truth. And the truth is that man was created for woman, and woman for man. Man and woman are to complement each other, physically and psychologically. Their mutual love in marriage is to be

fruitful: Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family. The truth is that there is a natural order whose boundaries we only overstep at our peril.

Homosexuality is a disorder. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law" (*Catechism*, n2357). Christians must not practice a homosexual lifestyle. We must not parrot expressions like "sexual preference" and thereby swallow an ideology which implies that homosexuality is on par with normal heterosexuality.

But while we need to eliminate the disease, we are not going to eliminate those suffering from the disease. And while we regret the immoderate language used in the debate, GALZ also lacks sensitivity towards the feelings of ordinary Zimbabweans whose culture, based on family values, is incompatible with the slogan "gay and proud of it".

**Fr. Oskar Wermter SJ**  
**Social Communications Secretary**  
**Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference**

The Sunday Gazette, September 10, 1995.

# Demo against homos in city

## Sunday Mail Reporter

**HUNDREDS** of members of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Church demonstrated against homosexuality and lesbianism in the streets of Harare yesterday morning, in solidarity with President Mugabe's recent stance against the practice.

The demonstrators, who included men and women of all ages, chanted slogans and waved placards that condemned homosexuality as "a detestable, abnormal and sick practice and we say no to it!"

Some of their placards read: "We support Cde Mugabe. No gays in Zimbabwe", "Sickness is not human rights: Homosexuality is sickness", "Let's follow the principles of our leader, Zimbabwe says no to homosexuality", and others that blamed the homosexual practice for the lack of rains in the country.

After marching through the streets of Harare and the Avenues, the two groups then met at Africa Unity Square where they were addressed by the founder of the church, Archbishop Ezekiel Guti.

Archbishop Guti said they had marched in "total opposition" to homosexuality and lesbianism.

"On behalf of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Church, the Christian community and all the people of Zimbabwe who are opposed to homosexuality, we are gathered here in solidarity with His Excellency the President, Cde R. G. Mugabe's stand against sexual pervasion.

"We do not accept in Zimbabwe our sound moral values to be destroyed by perverse ideas and practices from other nations. God did not create men to marry other men or women to do likewise. . . . This (practice) could be the reason why we do not have enough rain," he said to cheers from the followers.

The archbishop dismissed the argument by homosexuals and lesbians that they are victims of nature who did not choose to be what they are.

"We want to assure them today, that through experience, we have prayed for some people who had similar moral problems and have been delivered."

Like his followers who had earlier on spoken against the practice, Archbishop Guti blamed the homosexual tendencies for the current drought afflicting the country.

"Like our President, we should stand up against such perverse and alien practices so that they will be nipped in the bud once and for all, to avert disaster," he said.

Cde Mugabe publicly stood up against homosexuals and lesbians at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, saying they had no place in the country.

The Sunday Mail, September 18, 1995.

# Irresponsible remarks

EDITOR — I refer to the remarks by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Dumiso Dabengwa on gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe which he made at a function to open a new church at which he was officiating (Herald, January 12).

As a mother of a gay son who committed suicide 18 months ago because he could not deal with his sexuality owing to pressures of his family and society in general, I find the minister's remarks particularly irresponsible and repressive.

How a Government in this day and age can adopt such blatantly discriminatory policy and legislation towards a basic human right — that of deciding one's own sexual orientation — says more about them than it does of those being oppressed.

Everywhere else in the civilised world governments have long since recognised the moral and ethical right of equality for their gay citizens and are granting them the right to join in a legal union, addressing the age of gay consent and recognising the economic impact the gay community can make.

During Bill Clinton's presidential campaign the gay community in the US contributed significantly to swinging the balance in his favour. The world's favourite airline, I believe, recently

extended the same travel benefits to the partners of its gay staff.

Does the Government have such an ill-informed, retrogressive and bigoted attitude that it would advocate the persecution and prosecution of gay men and women, perhaps burn them at the stake? Politically correct? I don't think so, especially, if you'll excuse the pun, in the months preceding a general election.

Perhaps someone could enlighten Minister Dabengwa, before he makes Zimbabwe a total laughing stock in the eyes of the international community and perpetuates the concept that we're a Third World country entrenched with archaic laws and attitudes. Homosexuality, in its genetic term, is predetermined before birth.

The hypothalamic gland which governs one's sexuality is 28 per cent larger in gay men and women. It is not a perverse, depraved choice, but a natural orientation which has been repressed, distorted and condemned over the years for not being the norm as society would deem it.

Research by scientists into the genetic and biological differences of gay people has been covered widely in books and international weekly magazines. None of which Minister Dabengwa has obviously taken the trouble or interest to read.

What a reassurance to Zimbabwean citizens to have such a Minister of Home Affairs; and what an inspiration to foreign investors. I know of at least two multi-million-dollar corporations headed or owned by gay people who are under tentative negotiations to move into Zimbabwe. I wonder whether they will be quite so enthusiastic when they get wind of Government's policy.

Had I known of the existence of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Zimbabwe and the counselling facility manned by people who were sponsored by international donor agencies it now offers to people unsure of their sexuality, it would perhaps have eased my son's despair and prevented his unnecessary death.

Is it too much to hope the Government will reconsider a more enlightened and evolved policy towards gay people? What will it take to illustrate the Government's total lack of appreciation for the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms that gay people should possess?

What will it take to effect a change in Government's attitude; public demonstrations? International pressure? A human rights stance? Another generation?

**A Mother in Arms.  
Harare.**

# Research finds biological link to homosexuality

**TORONTO.** EW evidence suggests that the boy, gay US and Canadian psychiatrists told a recent meeting of the American Psychological Association in Toronto.

However, they said, research so far produced nothing to suggest hereditary factors played a part in lesbianism.

A long-term study of 500 sets of identical twins showed that where

a male is homosexual, his brother is very likely to be homosexual as well. Often this was not the case with identical twins, who came from separate eggs, with separate sets of genes.

The findings were consistent with the theory that "there is a male gene of sexual orientation", said Chicago's Michael Bailey.

Prof Bailey said the study failed to produce significant data that identical twin sisters had genetic factors predetermine women's sexual orientation in the same way.

But US psychiatrist Kenneth Zucker said 16 recent studies on women did support the concept of a biological link to lesbianism. — Ziana-Sapa.

The Herald, September 5, 1996.

# Homosexuality has no place in Zimbabwe

By GUTHBERT MAVHEKO

## Saturday Forum

**LAST year's attempt by Peter Tatchell and members of the group "Outrage" to effect a citizens' arrest on President Mugabe reinforces the determination by gay rights activists to coerce the Government to revisit its stand on homosexuality with a view to accepting it as a normal way of life.**

The President, a devout Catholic and steadfast opponent of homosexuality, has made it clear that the seeds of this abomination (homosexuality) would be deprived of fertile ground from which to germinate and breed in Zimbabwe.

In the aftermath of an attempt to exhibit gay literature at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair a few years ago, he asked: "If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomites and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society have to deny organised drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they might claim including the freedom of the press to write, publish and publicise their literature?"

There is no doubt that President Mugabe's sentiments are shared by the majority of Zimbabweans who not only regard homosexuality as perverse and repulsive, but also find it unnatural and indeed strange for any sane human being — male or female — to be attracted to someone of the same sex.

In November 1997 this newspa-

per published a story about two women who were living as "husband and wife" in one of Bulawayo's suburbs.

It was also reported that the lesbian couple lived with two children who were being forced to address one of them as "dad".

It cannot be over-emphasised that such relationships, apart from being an antithesis to Zimbabwe's cultural being, defy God's spiritual law which approves of only two lifestyles — heterosexuality within marriage and celibacy — while, at the same time expressly forbidding homosexual acts.

But what causes a man or woman to shun a normal lifestyle in preference of this weird tendency?

Is homosexuality an inherited and thus a natural and acceptable condition?

Some psychologists say the root causes of homosexuality lie in traumatic experiences suffered in childhood when sexual identity is being formed.

Children need love, security and acceptance from the very beginning of their lives. They need proper sexual models in addition to praise, encouragement, teaching and unconditional love.

These are the things that the majority of homosexuals have been deprived of, in spite of the fact that some of them come from stable, affectionate families with heterosexual parents and siblings.

While homosexuality is a complex condition, studies show that a common factor for many homosexuals is a dysfunctional family background.

Some homosexuals are victims of sexual abuse while others were neglected and never received love, affection and acceptance. Most gays grew up craving for someone to love them.

Emotional bonding with parents and the evolution of sexual identity begin early in life. Research shows that at the age of 2 or 3 years, the foundations of sexual identity are being laid and this is a crucial time in the development of a child.

According to the US and British psychological and medical associations, research into the biological differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals revealed that the hyperthalamous gland, which regulates and governs an individual's sexuality, is 28 percent larger in gays.

In light of this, the conclusion reached is that homosexual conduct is not a perverse, depraved choice, but a natural orientation that has been repressed, distorted and vilified since time immemorial out of society's fear and ignorance.

However, whether people become homosexuals by free choice or are drawn to it by circumstances beyond their control is inconsequential.

The fact of the matter is that homosexuality is not only an embarrassment to any society worth its salt, but is in fact a decadent foreign culture that militates against the institution of marriage.

Today those who set the moral standards of this sick world — the doctors, educators, scientists and psychologists — being intoxicated with the wine of evolution, are

now questioning the institution of marriage.

Who started the marriage custom and when? Since (according to evolution) mankind is merely the highest evolution of the animal kingdom, when, in the progression from lower animal into man, did marriage start, they ask.

Because they (the educated of this world) have rejected God, poured scorn on his Instruction Manual (the Bible) and rely on the evolutionary concept as their basic premise and approach to knowledge, they have unwittingly thrown away the key that would have unlocked the profound mysteries shrouding the true origins, meaning and purposes of marriage.

In their educated ignorance, they erroneously suppose that somewhere along the evolutionary trail mankind started marriage as a mere custom. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

I will abstain from projecting a detailed exposition of the true origins and purposes of marriage. Suffice to say that marriage and the family unit were not instituted by mankind but were, in fact, devised and ordained by God for a special reason that has remained an enigma to the "wisdom" of this world.

While marriage is a physical union, it is a divine institution which was established for purposes of procreation and also as an institution that provides a conducive environment for training, protection and security of children.

Human babies are born helpless and need the tender care, loving instruction, patient training, discipline and the warm affection and love of a father and mother.

That is one of the fundamental reasons why God instituted mar-

## Outdated feuds

**EDITOR** — First we have abortion, then we have racism, now we have homophobia. Where will it end? It's all segregation after all.

What amazes me is that people actually have the time for such outdated feuds. Let me put it simply for all who have nothing better to do than hate what they don't understand.

For all of you who are religious — is your God not a forgiving one? Did your God not tell you never to judge others?

For all of you who are not religious — are your lives so wholesome that you have the right to condemn others?

How many times have you heard homosexuals condemning others for what or who they are? They may not be what outdated and unfair laws call "normal", but at least they're not so bored with their own lives that they have to entertain others.

So all I have to say to all you homophobes is leave them alone and for goodness sake get a life!

**Gay Friendly.**

**Harare.**

# Why instruct bosses to crush homosexuals?

SIR — Some religious sects in Zimbabwe have joined the state media and the government in attacking the defenceless and minority gay community.

How ironic that the so-called Christians are inciting the authorities to crush individuals simply because of their sexual preference and this is done all in the name of God.

I have noticed that the politician-cum-Christian, Isaac Manyemba, has joined this crusade against us gays. I guess this is the only instance that Manyemba and Zanu (PF) see eye to eye.

Politicians assume that the majority of people in Zimbabwe are anti-gay to the extent that they are prepared to support anyone who comes out against the gay cause.

Far from it, the majority of people in Zimbabwe are not directing their anger to gays and lesbians. They don't care a hoot what two consenting adults agree on.

Their main concern is the bread and butter issues. Their anger is directed at politicians who make empty promises.

But for Christians to attack gays as evil doers, satanic and ungodly is the height of hypocrisy. God is the God of love, who created man and woman in His image. He is a God of forgiveness.

In the Bible itself, Jesus tells us in Luke 18 about the Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The two men went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. "God I thank you I am not like the other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers..."

However, the tax collec-

tor stood at a distance and would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and only said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner".

Jesus says of the two men "I tell you that this man (the tax collector who is referred by the Pharisee as an evildoer went home justified".

In yet another verse, Matthew 7:1 God says "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you".

But no incident in the Bible typifies the attitude of these self-righteous Christians than John 8 when the Pharisee brought up a woman caught in adultery to Jesus at the Mount of Olives.

"Teacher, this woman was caught in an act of adultery". They wanted to stone her to death. Jesus said "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her".

Now that the holier-than-Christians have taken it upon themselves to threaten the gay community in Zimbabwe, the big question is who will cast the first stone?

Tirivanhuwo  
Harare

# Actions of the degenerate

EDITOR — Readers will have been quick to notice that "Angry" and "Mother in Arms" (Letters, January 17) used similarly emotive language . . . "enlightened, evolved, progressive . . ." But when they use these terms they have in mind the degenerate Western world that has legalised abortion, given divorce on demand and permits homosexuals to perform sexual acts together.

Are these countries "enlightened or progressive?"

"Angry" says "What impact will a remark like Mr Dabengwa's make on tourism?" Most Zimbabweans do not want homosexuals to choose Zimbabwe because it allows homosexual practices as a country in which to spend their holidays.

Anyone who has visited Bangkok, Manila and certain Brazilian cities will

know that thousands of homosexuals go there solely to pervert street children. No thank you, we do not want that here.

Both writers threatened our country, too. "Angry" even going so far "my recommendations to my head office will certainly contain my reservations concerning pursuing further support for Zimbabwe . . ."

I hope he will make it abundantly clear to his head office that he does not wish his company to offer further support to Zimbabwe because he cannot legally pursue his perversion here.

The letter from "Mother in Arms" is totally illogical. In one paragraph she says: "Deciding one's own sexual orientation is a basic human right" and in a later paragraph states that it is not a matter for the individual to decide because it is "determined before birth". She can't have it both ways.

There is a theory that in some, though not all, people the matter was partly determined before birth in the same way that some people are predestined to be born with Downs Syndrome or as a lunatic.

The last two unfortunately have little or no control over much of their behaviour. On the other hand the homosexual does and therein lies the difference in the attitude that some people show to them in contrast to the sympathy they extend to the person with Downs Syndrome, for example.

No right thinking person condemns a homosexual's inclinations. It is his actions that they condemn.

The churches do not condemn temptations; it is the yielding to them that is wrong. Provided the homosexual does not practise there is nothing wrong in being a homosexual.

Every major religion in the world, however, condemns utterly homosexual practises. Similarly one might be tempted to steal (and who has not at some time in his life?) and there is nothing wrong in that.

But the moment you give in to that temptation you put yourself in the wrong.

Readers will also have noticed that both writers (and this is typical of emotional, bigoted writing, showing slightly paranoid feelings) claim to know how the minister thinks and what he does.

"Angry" says that "the only opinions that matter I would wager are those that conform with those of Minister Dabengwa and the Government." This is pure assumption.

"Mother in Arms" similarly states: "Research by scientists into the genetic and biological differences of gay people has been widely covered in books and magazines, none of which Minister Dabengwa and the Government has obviously taken the trouble or interest to read."

She doesn't know this. He might have read and thought about every article before stating his opinion. She is trying to put her biased opinion of the minister into the readers' minds; a very old trick.

No, readers; please give your support to Minister Dabengwa and your sympathy to those deserving of it . . . the widow, the orphan, the sick, the lonely, the old, the unwanted and to the jobless and not to the homosexual who wants to legalise his lust.

**A Responsible Citizen.**

## Appendix 16



### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Father Davies 12/3/96  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales General Secretariat  
London UK FAX: 0171-630 5166

Dear Father Davies,

Mike Auret passed your FAX on to me. - Yes, President Mugabe did condemn homosexuality again when addressing a conference organised by the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA, a fundamentalist NRM). The Herald, the only daily paper published in the capital Harare which is government controlled, wrote on February 29, in a front-page article in which the President urged the church(es) to "intensify their operations in moulding a better society", "Cde Mugabe also deplored homosexuality and lesbianism, which he said were threatening to pervade the nation. The church in Zimbabwe stood behind Cde Mugabe when amid international protests, he publicly condemned homosexuality and lesbianism.

He had received confidential messages from some presidents who said they also did not believe in homosexuality and lesbianism but would not dare say so publicly for fear of losing votes."

The bishops did not react to this statement which went largely unnoticed and was not commented on at all. The international media outside the country took a much larger interest in the story than the local ones.

We have the impression that for the government press the subject of homosexuality is now taboo, given the President's stance. The Bishops' statement "Male and Female He Created Them" which dealt with several moral issues, homosexuality being one of them, went unreported in the government-controlled media. [A copy of the full statement should be with the TABLET].

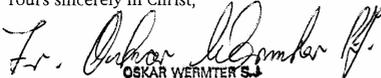
Westerners must understand that homosexuality is largely unknown in African society. To the vast majority of Africans it is something abhorrent. The President can therefore count on the full support of Zimbabweans when he condemns homosexuality and homosexuals. Such support is useful in the middle of an election campaign (we have presidential elections this weekend, 16-17 March).

The bishops' discerning statement ("Homosexuality is a disorder." - "Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies ... must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided (Catechism of the Catholic Church)" did not have much of a chance to be accepted.

The situation is this: if you are against homosexuality as a disorder, you also loathe and hate homosexuals (the Zimbabwean majority). Or else you accept homosexuality as an "option" and support homosexuals (a small westernised minority).

I would like to stress, however, that we really have much bigger problems than homosexuality. Personally I am getting tired of the western media continuously bothering us about homosexuality when we have to contend with the effects of a disastrous drought, of a disastrous economic policy imposed on us by force by the World Bank and the IMF, a huge unemployment problem, a virtual breakdown of the health services because the government no longer has the money to support them (partly because of overspending on the military), a deterioration of the educational system for the same reason and the rampant AIDS epidemic.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

  
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## Gays erode culture

I AM writing to air my views on the on-going controversy regarding homosexuals and lesbians. I am not a great follower of President Mugabe but as a person who believes in giving credit where it is due, I believe Cde Mugabe deserves more than a handshake for speaking boldly about gays.

Cde Mugabe is our

leader whatever he does, says, he does for us as a country. I am also of the idea that homosexuality is an immoral act and should not be allowed in Zimbabwe. This country has not yet stooped so low as to accept evil practices with both hands outstretched.

When God created man and woman he had a special reason for doing so. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for the immoral practices which some people seem to embrace under the disguise of equal rights. If homosexuality is a natural thing, then God would not have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Zimbabwe people have rights but these should not be used as a silence for allowing stinking Western cultural values to invade our otherwise civilised nation. To the South African gays who demonstrated against Cde Mugabe for speaking out against gays I can only say: If you cannot chew it, swallow it, and if you cannot swallow

it, then spit it out.

You cannot run our country for us. If Mr Mandela allows you to do whatever you want, all in the name of equal rights, then I ask you to see the difference between President Mugabe and Mr Mandela, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Only the blind have their eyes closed to reality so I think it is time we face the fact; look at how the nations are allowed to exist. AIDS is a fast spreading killer disease and gays are the major contributors. God did not first create Adam and John but Adam and Eve, nor Eve and Eden. All this was done for a special purpose. I would like to ask the President not to change his stance for we are rallying behind him. Down with gays, up with President Mugabe. Cecil "Mgosi" Nyilika, Bulawayo.

# 'We'll raze down Galz stand at the Book Fair'

**Herald Reporter**

SANGANO Munhumutapa, has threatened to disrupt the Zimbabwe International Book Fair for allowing the Gays and Lesbians Society of Zimbabwe to exhibit.

ZIBF executive director, Mrs Trish Mbanga, who took the threats seriously, quickly responded last night. "It would be up to the police to come to our assistance. We appeal to the police to protect us because there will be a lot of children there."

The president of the group, Mr Lawrence Chakaredza, said yesterday:

"We are ready to raze down the stands and go to jail. Our actions will be for a noble cause. We want to protect the values of our culture. The essence of the fair should be exhibiting what the country has achieved and can offer in literary arts, and, absolutely not homosexuality."

ZIBF has allowed GALZ to participate in this year's fair despite a ban last year when the Government also refused to be associated with the event.

President Mugabe, churches and social organisations last year denounced GALZ's presence at the annual event.

ZIBF last night stuck to its defence of GALZ saying it was a registered group that was not banned in the country and "has the right to participate". At the weekend Mrs Mbanga had said the people could demonstrate their displeasure by ignoring GALZ.

Sangano Munhumutapa said their bone of contention with GALZ was not the practice of homosexuality or lesbianism.

"They can do what they want with their bodies in the privacy of their homes but certainly not to exhibit at a book fair. Just what are they going to exhibit?" asked Mr Chakaredza.



**As they see it . . .**

# Homosexuals: pros and cons God's natural order is being violated

**I HAVE** followed, with a great sense of shock the polemics on homosexuals. I refer to two articles of The Herald, Letters to the Editor (January 17, 1995). Euphemistically these people are referred to as "gay" which is a practical misuse of the English word. "Gay" means "lively", "merry", "light hearted or joyous". It simply means "happy".

All over the world, homosexuals are claiming constitutional rights to perpetrate this unnatural living style. This is more than just a constitutional issue, it's a moral issue.

Morality cannot be legislated. Change has to take place from within the heart which the Bible describes as desperately wicked above all!! (Jeremiah 17:9).

Man's nature is basically depraved since sin entered into man through Adam. By varying degrees of human views, homosexual practice is the worst and most unnatural practice in our culture. However, before, God, sin is sin. Prostitution, adultery and homosexuality are equally sinful before God. None is better than the other.

In the Sunday Mail front page article of January 22 1995 about Zimbabwe violating homo-

The case for the rights of homosexuals is more than just a constitutional issue, it's a moral issue. Morality cannot be legislated, argues REVEREND C. MUREFU of the Living Waters Bible College in Harare. He says God gave people life which must be lived according to His ideas. Let us not allow society or the influx of foreign ideas dictate our lives. Let's live holy, dignified moral lives.

sexual rights, it was noted that a US resident Irish accountant "has petitioned the African Commission on Human Rights to open an inquiry into Zimbabwe's laws and State against homosexual conduct". How outrageous this is to any moral heart and sane mind.

In Genesis 1:27 the Bible says God created them male and female. They were Adam (male) and Eva (female) not Adam and Steve (male & male) and certainly not Eve and Eve (female & female). This is God's natural order which we human beings are violating. Homosexual conduct was the same evil that resulted in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah (Genesis 19).

Lev 18:22 and 20:13 calls for capital punishment for any lesbian or homosexual conduct. It is an abomination.

Romans 1:25-27 humans have changed the natural use of the opposite sex to that which is against nature. They profess to be wise and have become foolish (Romans 1:22).

God has given us life which must be lived according to His ideas. God is the only one who has a right over us. He created us for a purpose. Enshrined in our constitution is the fact that Zimbabwe is a Christian country. Let us engender those Christian values to our generation and society. Zimbabwe belongs to God. We need to submit ourselves to the Saving power and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

It's true, to some extent, that there is hypocrisy in the church, but certainly not with God.

In his word, God tells us that in all times and nations, men are sinners. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This universal sinfulness of man is traced back to mankind's ultimate oneness in Adam. Salvation is available to all alike on the principle of faith in Jesus Christ "the author and finisher of our faith".

This Salvation is in relation to creation itself and to every nation in it. We belong to God by His act of Creation but we also need to belong to

Him by His act of redemption. Those who are creatively His, must be redemptively His as well.

Let us live and not allow society or the influx of foreign ideas dictate our lives. Let live holy dignified moral lives. If homosexual conduct is the "progressive" way of life, we better stick to the "archaic" dignity and moral value.

God can effect change inwardly to any person no matter what his condition is or no matter how large his hyperthalameous gland is. Just imagine if all turned homosexual and lesbian, then procreation stops. How damned we would be! God help us and forgive us.

We are created in the image of God and let us respect God in whose image we are created. Failure to know God as God will result in catastrophe and loss of direction.

Culturally we are a people of values. We should preserve those elements of culture with moral values so far as they come in line with the Bible, the word of God. Be advised!

# Strike practical balance on rights says President

## Herald Reporter

A PRACTICAL balance had to be struck among the rights of the majority versus those of minorities and the individual, President Mugabe said yesterday when opening the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, with its theme of human rights and justice.

The foundation of human rights was that all human beings were born free and equal. "My Government is committed to the respect of human rights and striking a practical balance among the rights of the majority versus those of minorities and the individual."

## Freedoms

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights gave a long and impressive list of freedoms and formed the basis of many constitutional provisions for individual rights.

"Freedom, however, is not a selfish one-way street. The other side of the street has to do with social responsibility and obligation. The greater the freedom one enjoys, the more the responsibility one owes to the community which bestows that freedom."

The major right, said the President, was the right to life and that had to include the rights to the basic resources and services without which life became insupportable.

President Mugabe looked at two specific issues: freedom of the Press and of homosexuals.

Zimbabwe recognised the right of journalists and writers to pursue their callings "as our laws or moral norms permit them".

"Writers cannot enjoy rights beyond those which apply to society as a whole, nor have they the licence to breach the law through reckless, treasonous, subversive, libellous, defamatory or immoral statements."

## Taboos

He defined immoral in the context of the codes of morals and taboos within the society. He gave the example of a universally accepted taboo, that sexual relations between a married couple should be expressed in private, not in public, and asked whether a Government would be expected to countenance the assertions of those who asserted a right to public expression of sexual marital relations.

Turning to homosexuality, he said: "I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and revolutive organisations, like those of 'homosexuals' who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society should have any advocates in our midst and even elsewhere in the world."

## Argued

"If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual pervers, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organised drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they might claim and allege they possess under the rubrics of 'individual freedom' and 'human rights', including

the freedom of the Press to write, publish and publicise their literature on them?"

Writers had a noble responsibility to inform, educate and entertain the society as well as help it uphold and develop its accepted social and moral values. There were areas which needed change, such as those of gender equality and those affecting children. Writers should therefore continue to be heard in these areas, he said.

The references came as a result of debate on whether the Gay and Lesbian Association of Zimbabwe should have been denied the right to participate at the book fair with the Government expressing the view that a public display of their material was undesirable.

## Empty

Flowers, instead of people, were in an empty stand which GLAZ had intended to use during the fair.

On the importance of books, he said no meaningful social and economic development could take place without an informed society. And for people to be informed, they had to be literate and have access to informative literature.

Although the literacy war had not been completely won in Zimbabwe yet, the country had gone a long way in reducing illiteracy. He noted that the cost of books was still high in the country with text books being the most widely read while reading for pleasure, entertainment and information was at a minimum.

● See Book Fair story on Page 2 and Comment on Page 4

## Appendix 20

# Gays and lesbians are atoms of chaos Unleashed on earth'

**G**AYS and lesbians are atoms of chaos being unleashed on Planet Earth by the profane society which is endeavouring to unseat governments and replace them with fiefdoms (through conglomerates and multinational companies) in the name of "human rights".

These people are being unleashed on developing countries by multinational companies from the West supported by their governments. There was a case in Iran, in 1994, involving Mary Jones who was caught drunk in Teheran Square and sentenced to receive 80 lashes. She confessed that she was one of many people being sent to Third World countries to corrupt young people of these countries so that they revolt against their governments.

The same is the case with homosexuals here who are claiming that it is a right to live an abnormal life. Surprisingly, because I thought the fever was not yet a concern here, they do have support in the high echelons of our society.

The speed with which they managed to book a hearing in the High Court and the support they received from the Bench all speak volumes of how the mafia of chaos has penetrated our country and are ready to destroy our culture.

A former judge talked about homosexuality in the African society and went on to say the banning of gays at the Book Fair was inhuman. A Catholic for Peace and Justice leader said people should be allowed to see what the gays want to display. A multinational company representative was appalled by Government's insensitivity to the rights of gays.

They may hide behind the "human rights banner" but it is not hard to come to the conclusion that they may be members of the arm of chaos endeavouring to overtake Third World governments and replace them with fiefdoms.

All this unpalatable

Murderers, rapists and thieves, to name a few, are not accepted as normal. They are outcasts of society who need rehabilitation in one way or another. Why should gays and lesbians be tolerated? Have we accepted bestiality, sodomy and masturbation, for example, as normal? The answer is NO. Then why should we accept people who perpetrate such abnormal practices? All outcasts of society can present "genuine facts" to prove that it is not their fault that they are what they are. Surely we should not accept that Gays and lesbians, hiding behind the banner of human rights, are atoms of chaos being unleashed to destroy our culture and ultimately governments. The only way to defend ourselves from this inhuman practice is to stand fast and give physical and moral support to leaders who resist homosexuality and lesbianism, writes ZONDAYI CHIBANDA of Harare.

squabbling reminds me of Robert Ludlum in THE MATARESE CIRCLE, when he talked of chaos being created and funded by wealthy people in an endeavour to weaken governments so that they (affluent) can perpetuate depriving the common people of their livelihood.

The most effective system they use is to employ influential persons in society to carry on their inhuman acts.

The campaign to weaken Third World governments can easily be seen in the strings-attached aid programmes that we receive from donor countries and the invading of small nations by multinationals who go on to deprive these nations of their natural resources.

We do have that problem here where all mining and agricultural industries are controlled by foreign forces.

Former US president George Bush talked about THE NEW WORLD ORDER. Unfortunately the new world order was for every nation on earth to toe the American line of thinking. Hassan-al-Turabi said, "the world is too big for more than one civilisation. You cannot mould the whole universe into one pattern."

The new world order would have made sense had it included other cultures. Now since it is an American dream, it is the product of the mafia.

It was designed by people with a mission to create chaos on Planet Earth and lead other people to reject themselves as they will be forced to worship itself.

—So what has the above got to do with gays? Everything. Because they

are the atoms of chaos, very able to divert governments from national issues and look at the gays.

Governments cannot afford to ignore atoms of chaos because they (governments) are funded by conglomerates and multinationals who in turn are the atoms of chaos all over the world.

A certain mope said that homosexuality is present in the African society, particularly in Zimbabwe. Yes, including bestiality and masturbation, but has it been accepted as normal?

There are murderers, thieves and wizards in our society. Have we accepted them or are we going to accept them if they claim that it is not their fault that they are what they are? Surely they may have genuine facts to convince everyone if they are given the platform, but who can give them the platform?

I only accept the fact that gays/lesbians are mentally disturbed and need rehabilitation as any drug addict. Why? Because their problem is self-acquired like those of alcoholics and drug addicts.

Just look at the street kids and how they are imitating "gayism". One can't enjoy walking in Harare's streets early in the morning because he/she will encounter street kids giggling. "Nidizvo zvakadzidziswa nemaprest uye wepachurch pavanorara pamabench, nekumba kwawashishop vava wanovapa chokudya here?"

The above may offend many Christians, but the truth is homosexuality, unfortunately, is also present in the church and the churches that practice it are the ones today who seek to protect gays as they did long back when they had power

around and you will see

As I see it, the only way to defend our human practice is to stand fast and give physical and moral support to leaders who resist homosexuality. Laws governing this country are foreign and were made to protect initiators of chaos, hence they win every case they take to court and then cry human rights abuse when governments override court verdicts.

How can we stand fast? By speaking through once voice: that we are a people with a culture to admire because "... a nation without a past is a lost nation, and people without a past are people without a soul." said Sir Seretse Khama.

How do we speak with one voice? If Nigeria talks of reparation for slavery, every African nation should rally behind it and not be swayed by the Ogoni-macabre intended to divert the world from a healthy debate.

We should be able to reject double standards: when a rastafarian lawyer is denied to practise law in this country because of his religious belief, then gays should be treated the same way by the same law.

When the CIA kills Patrice Lumumba, Machel and many others (in the name of protecting capitalism) we should stand together in a show of solidarity and demonstrate that we are a force to be reckoned with. Let them kill us to the last man.

Positive thinking is not superstitious. A Nigerian writer said: "... if you do not respect yourself, do not expect someone to respect you." Thus, if Africa is not ready to respect its culture and defend it, it should not expect the West to protect it. In Nigeria, the West is here to contaminate Africa

## What rights and freedoms?

EDITOR — I feel deeply for the mother of the young homosexual who committed suicide (Letters, January 17). Any parent must grieve very deeply over the untimely and tragic death of a child.

While I am able to empathise with their pain, I am alarmed by the emotional appeal both in her letter and in the other from "Angry" published the same day.

I sincerely trust we will not see witch-hunts against homosexuals in Zimbabwe as did Nazi Germany, which grossly persecuted them and hounded them into the death camps. But your correspondent's plea to our Government to join "progressive" nations in extending full and equal rights and freedoms to homosexuals begs the question "what rights and freedoms"?

If it is a matter of recognising homosexuals as men and women created in the image of God, fully deserving our love and compassion and our respect for them as fellow human beings, then I have no quarrel with that. However, if it is being suggested that we fall in step with "enlightened" Western notions where the gay rights movement is most vocal and influential and is part of a powerful lobby which has as its ultimate aim the total rejection and replacement of the Judea-Christian morality and structures, then my response must be a loud "No".

Gay rights activists campaign not only for what they perceive to be a right to express their sexual orientation in private with consenting adults of like persuasion, but also press for the right to proselytise the young in schools, inculcating notions about alternative lifestyles which can easily manipulate young minds and emotions in their grasping for identity.

The homosexual lobby flies in the face of God-given, immutable morality by proclaiming that there is no difference between heterosexual married love (universally the cornerstone of family life) and homosexual relationships. The more blatant and hardened campaigners fight for legal sanction of pederasty and child pornography.

This is all part of a well-orchestrated movement for "sexual reform" which has become increasingly strident throughout this century.

The acceptance of homosexuality as a right and an alternative form of sexual expression, the legalisation of prostitution, the "liberation" of marriage and expansion of divorce laws, the repeal of all restriction on abortion, openly making contraceptive information accessible to minors, the repeal of obscene libel laws, foetal experiments, the growing euthanasia debate and the systematic sexual education of the young are inextricably interlined.

They are the crop of rank weeds being sown across the world. What a fearful harvest we will reap if we kow-tow to international pressure to conform to "civilised" standards.

The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.

**Christian Mother.  
Borrowdale.**

## Galz not there

DESPITE being granted permission to exhibit at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe were yesterday conspicuous by their absence at their stand.

For the second day running, Galz shied away from displaying their literature and yesterday none of their members showed up.

Instead, a wreath of flowers occupied the table meant for their literature.

Galz had been permitted to exhibit at the fair after Judge President Sandura ruled that his order to have them do so was to stand in its entirety.

On Wednesday Justice Sandura declared invalid a notice of prohibition by the Board of Censors to Galz saying that the board's decision did not conform to the requirements of the relevant Act. — Ziara.

● See Page 5

## Masvingo chiefs want Galz banned

From Masvingo Bureau

CHIEFS in Masvingo have called on the Government to ban and arrest all members of the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe whom they accused of causing untold damage to Zimbabwean culture.

The chiefs also took a swipe at the media for carrying stories on the subject which they said should never be discussed in the public or given space on the national radio and newspapers.

"This is disgusting, I cannot believe this is happening in Zimbabwe, these people should be arrested and sent to prison forever. We wonder why the Government is allowing them to run an association," said Chief Vuramai Mapanzure.

He said the Government should make it a point that the practice came to an end as this was likely to bring bad omens to the country.

"We do not want to hear or to read about it in our radios and newspapers. Our children should not even come to know that there are people who behave in such a way," said Chief Ronias Chirove Gurajera.

The Government barred Galz from exhibiting at all future book fairs saying that homosexuality was immoral and against the country's cultural ethics.

But Chief Philimon Chihanga Zimuto said banning Galz from taking part at the Book Fair was not enough as the association had to be banned so as to stop further damage to the country's youths.

Last year President Mugabe provoked criticism from some sections of the international community when he described homosexuals as perverts and sodomists.

Some organisations including the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference say there is nothing wrong with Galz exhibiting at the Fair.

Chief Nemarundwe said traditional leaders were opposed to homosexuality and would do anything within their powers to stop the practice from spreading to other parts of the country.

## Ban them from Book Fair

**EDITOR** — It is with regret that after watching Insight on TVI last Sunday, my fears were confirmed the following morning when I picked up my daily paper to be told that for sure the gays and lesbians had been granted a stand at the Book Fair.

The team which interviewed Mrs Mbanga could have gone deeper and really grilled her — what on earth do these people have to exhibit at the fair? What kind of literature can they offer the public? After all has the Government changed its stance towards these shameless people?

If it has, well that decision was never made public. As of now, I still think that the Government's, party's and people's position is that gays and lesbians have no place whatsoever in this country, let alone in our society. It is worse still at an exhibition where the morality of the country is at stake.

Mrs Mbanga told us that it is up to the Censorship Board to decide what kind of material the gays have to present, but why were they given that stand in the first place? Isn't it a compromise on our noble decision we made last year?

The mere presence of these homosexuals at the fair will give the impression that we tolerate them, which will be a grave misconception. Under no circumstances should they have been given the stand.

Zimbabwe is our country, our heritage and future and subsequently our destiny should be in our hands; we mustn't make compromises on such issues that involve the ethics and morality of the nation, more so when our children are the tar-

get. Should we just let it pass merely because some human rights are involved?

Hopefully the President is to say exactly what he said last year and intervene, put a stop to all this and give the nation direction like he has always done.

It is very unfortunate that the Book Fair Trust allowed such a thing to happen. Probably they wanted to protect their sovereignty, but the nation should come first in all instances. Patriotism is the word; if you can't serve the country then who are you going to serve?

Let's stand up and fight this scourge before it takes on our society!

Garykayi Mazara,  
Greendale, Harare.

## Homosexuality ungodly, says Mugabe

ROME (Italy) — President Mugabe yesterday once again condemned homosexuality as ungodly.

He was speaking in an interview with Vatican Television during his two-day official visit here.

Cde Mugabe, who has maintained his anti-gay stance against an international outcry, expressed dismay at what he called flaws in morality which

allowed people of the same sex to marry.

"God did not create us this way and this is an area of revulsion to us in Africa, but even there we find some people who say gays must be allowed. We pray that the Catholic Church will help correct this," he said.

The President spoke highly of the Catholic leader, Pope John Paul, whom he said did a lot for

Africans as much as he did for the rest of the world including non-Catholics.

He promised to work hard to ensure the Pope's wish that all countries fighting in the DRC lay down arms and negotiate peace in that country.

Cde Mugabe admitted that Africa's poverty was perpetuated by such wars as in the DRC which depleted meagre resources

that could be used to develop people's economic and social needs.

He also said AIDS had also seriously affected Africa's ability to sustain itself due to the incapacitation of productive age groups.

"But having said this, there is some progress towards the development of the people of Africa and we hope more can be done for the people," he said. — Ziana.

The Chronicle, December 2, 1998.

## Homosexuality condemned

ONLY in select clubs in Zimbabwe can homosexuals come out in the open and reveal their true sexual preferences.

While in San Francisco gays can walk arm in arm with their heads up high, in Harare being gay is widely regarded a shameful and obscene business, deserving the full contempt of society.

Shiela Tungware, a 28-year-old engineer sums up the attitude of many Zimbabweans towards homosexuality: "Homos must go. If we say they are justified, we are only encouraging them. We have to be cruel to their kind so we should all treat them with contempt."

"It's difficult being gay in Zimbabwe. Both the law and the people around you don't let you be," says a 26-year-old homosexual who identified himself only as Tendayi.

Under Zimbabwean law, homosexuality is an offence punishable by five to 10 years imprisonment says a local legal practitioner who did not wish to be named.

"I'll be leaving the country soon to stay overseas where people are more liberal," adds Tendayi (26) who is employed by a local hotel and discovered his preference for men while in his teens.

"There exists a huge black gay community, even a former high ranking government official is gay, yet Zimbabwean law denies the existence of gays," says Tendayi.

While Zimbabwean society condemns homosexuality as a product of an alien Western culture, social scientist Dr Tafataona Mahoso says this attitude is plain scape-goating.

"Homosexuality has always been there but has continuously been suppressed in this society. With the development of individual independence there is now room for gays to come out in the open."

He predicts that in future, homosexuality will become more open in line with the country's move from a rather secretive socialist ideology to a more open free market economy which is bound to have repercussions on cultural trends.

"Already, gays are coming out of the closet" and bravely demanding their rights to be treated as normal people with different "but not abnormal" sexual preferences.

To protect their interests in the present hostile society, homosexuals have formed their own association, Galz.

Affiliated to the international lesbian and gay association, Galz offers legal aid to members under prosecution from the law and conducts "safe sex" workshops as part of its anti-Aids campaigns.

In a recent nation wide radio programme Romeo and Juliet (two gays) openly called on society to accept them as they are.

Romeo claims to have gone through traditional healers, prophets and psychiatrist to "treat" his homosexuality but has now learned to accept himself as he is.

But Zimbabwe's homosexual community has a long way to go before they can conquer the prejudice against them.

"It's crazy. Why should one be given a male organ but still want to be used as a woman?" asked Harare resident, Thomas Jones.

Religion, too, regards homosexuality as an unnatural condition that works against the norms and morals of society.

"We do not regard homosexuals as outcasts because we know they are there. But they tend to be permissive and do not want to be guided by any standard rigid morals," says Noah Pashapa, a religious minister and youth counsellor.

He says legalising homosexuality would mean effectively casting a vote of no confidence on heterosexuality — on normalcy.

Romeo, who is married to a "normal" woman and has a child, summed up the dilemma of gays: "My family does not know I am gay that is why I say we are prisoners in our own society. We have to live under pretence, to cover up what we really are."

Ziana-IPS

# Even the Bible cond

THE question of homosexuality and biology needs to be explored because the greatest achievement of the gay lobby in this decade has been the emphasis shift from perceiving homosexuality as primarily a question of behaviour to perceiving it as essentially a matter of biological/natural orientation.

Some researchers and writers that are pro-homosexuality argue that it is a condition that is decided by biological structure or genetic determination and that the homosexual really has no choice whatsoever in the matter of sex preference. Many homosexuals will justify their practice on this basis. These researchers and writers do not, however, own up to the whole truth about genes (biology) and how they influence behaviours (including sex).

The truth is that even though there may be some genetic/biological influences on human behaviour (e.g. breathing, eating, sleeping, survival, sex, etc), these influences never dictate or determine the way humans behave. In fact, the degree of influence on human behaviour by genes has been demonstrated to be much less than that of environment conditioning. If genes (biology) were as deterministic and as dictatorial as pro-homosexual researchers would have us believe, then it would not have been possible to modify and change basic human instinctsive behaviour (such as survival, sleeping, eating, etc) through

the universal service" and freedom. The critic goes on to point out what Cde Chikerema would always point out: technology alone does not liberate people. Liberation depends on the transformation of social relations as well. "The claims being made for the digital highway... had been made for the automobile, the telephone and the television, too."

Indeed, Cde Chikerema also understood that

**The correctness or wrongness of homosexuality has become a controversy preoccupying much of public and private debate in Zimbabwe today. The evangelical Christian community, among others, has no choice but to engage this issue and engender information, attitudes and actions that are not only morally and culturally enriching but also biblically funded. This position paper by REVEREND NOAH PASHAPA is a contribution to this end.**

training as is the case.

This is far from saying environmental conditioning alone accounts for human sexual behaviour. Human behaviours, including sex, result from a process of interaction between genetic and environmental influences. The whole truth therefore concerning homosexuality and biology can never be that someone becomes gay because their biological structure (which cannot change) has determined it so. As a matter of fact the social/environmental conditioning (learning process) is extremely important if not predominant in this interaction between biology and environment in the determination of human behaviour (including sex).

If a certain form of psychopathology should be caused primarily by genes, it might be mistakenly assumed that psychotherapy and other environmental factors would be useless. This pessimistic view is simply wrong. Genes do not determine one's destiny," according to a 1980 publication on behavioural genetics.

This fact is demonstrated by the thousands of ex-gays who have

adopted heterosexuality exclusively. The existence of over 200 centres in North America that exist to help gays go straight also bears testimony to this.

According to Dr N. E. Whitehead: "Human learning and culture override any relevance biology may have for the explanation of human behaviour... Biology determinism is what people often think of first when they hear a biology theory. That's shame because it's been years if not decades since biology has meant biologically deterministic... Men are predisposed to grow hair on the face, but most men override that predisposition every morning.

"Genes never dictate sexual behaviour, identity or feelings. Scientists in most disciplines believe that the genetic influence is near zero, and that environmental factors override it."

It cannot be objective truth therefore to say that someone became gay because their genes determined it so.

Indeed some people may have a homosexual orientation in the same way many people have a tendency to over-eat, anger, tantrums or alcoholism. But humans, unlike animals, have the ability to choose how we act out those tendencies.

A gay activist and La Trobe University lecturer, Dennis Altman, has said: "To be Haitian or a haemophilic is determined at birth, but being gay is an identity that is socially determined and involves personal choice. Even if, as many want to argue, one has no choice in experiencing homosexual desire, there is a wide choice of possible ways of acting out these feelings from celibacy and denial... to self-affirmation and adoption of a gay identity... being gay is a choice." (Dr Altman, Aids and the New Puritanism, 1986).

The view of this writer is that it is in fact cruel to tell homosexuals that they cannot help themselves. They can find forgiveness and transformation in Christ's love. There is hope for homosexuals just as there is hope for others trapped in all sorts of sinful conditions.

What the Bible in its entirety has to say about homosexuality makes it difficult for the Christian to condone the practice of homosexuality or to view it permissively. This is no way suggesting that people adopt a culture of homophobia or homobashing. The Christian will condemn homosexuality and reach out to the homosexual with Christ's forgiving and transforming love and compassion.

In the Old Testament are scattered but clear-cut references that condemn homosexuality. It is necessary, however, to observe that there has



Reverend

been efforts to soften the condemnatory note of the Old Testament passages by some whose purpose has been to construct a Biblically based legitimation for homosexuality. Here are a few relevant scripture passages.

Genesis 19 concerns the incident from which the term "sodomy" originates. Lot, in his home, in the town of Sodom, offered hospitality to messengers of God. The men of the city surrounded his house and demanded that he surrender to them his two male visitors so that they may be intimate with them. Their intentions were recognised by Lot to have been hostile. Lot tried to reason with them but failed, resulting in him offering his two virgin daughters instead of two men. The mob was still not satisfied. The destruction that comes upon Sodom immediately following this incident implies that these homosexual intentions of the men of Sodom were re-

# emns homosexuality



**Pushapa**

responsible for it. Judges 19 has an account that follows the same pattern with that in Genesis 19. An elderly resident in the city of Gibeon receives a traveller accompanied by his servant and concubine. When the men of the city discovered there is a stranger in town they demand he be brought out to them. The elderly host refuses and offers them his virgin daughter and the concubine whom the men of the city sexually abuse all night until next morning. The judgment that follows is connected to the intended homosexual assault. From these two passages, one cannot escape concluding that homosexual behaviour incurs God's judgment. Leviticus 18 vs 22 and 20 vs 13 are references that ban homosexuality describing it as an "abomination" which incurs the death penalty. Deuteronomy 22 vs 5 condemns transvestism while 1 Kings 14 vs 24, 15

vs 12 and 22 vs 46 condemn the presence of male prostitutes in the land.

Those interested to soften this condemnatory note have argued that in Genesis 19 and Judges 19 the citizens only wanted to get acquainted (know) with the two visitors. The Hebrew word *Yadah*, which is used to describe the intentions of the men of the city, usually means to get acquainted with. However, in about 10 out of 12 times (e.g. Adam knew his wife: Genesis 5 vs 1-3) it means "to have sex with".

In each case the context makes it clear how the word is to be used. In both passages above the desire to know the visitor by the men of the city is described as wickedness. In both cases they are offered virgins who have not "known" (had sex with) any man. It is difficult to believe the judgments that followed were incurred by the inhospitality of the men of the city. This is further supported by Jude 7 and (ii) Peter 2 vs 7-10 in the New Testament. Only a pro-homosexuality bias would lead to a pro-homosexuality interpretation of these passages.

It has been suggested that Leviticus 18 vs 22 and 20 vs 13 are more concerned about the safety of the Hebrew community than in the moral denunciation of homosexuality that these passages express.

Looked at cumulatively, these Old Testament passages condemn not only bestiality, adultery, and sexual intercourse between blood relations but homosexuality as well.

The New Testament has no record of Jesus' publicly expressed views on the matter. He was dealing primarily with the Jewish religio-cultural context that was morally conservative. Jesus seems to have focussed more on the correctness or wrongness of heart and mind matters such as (arrogance,

greed, lust, etc). However, the acceptance, elevation and endorsement that Jesus assumes towards the Old Testament on moral issues should lead one to conclude that Jesus embraced the Old Testament's unfavourable stance towards homosexuality. Perhaps the witness of the rest of the New Testament reflects more distinctly Jesus' inspiration on his followers.

The Apostle Paul, who dealt with Gentiles and Jewish converts whose religious-morality was rooted in the Old Testament, appears to have expressed clear condemnatory views on homosexuality.

In Romans 1 vs 18-32 homosexual and lesbianism are condemned as symptoms of Godlessness (Romans 1 vs 23 ff). There is no distinction here between a mutually loving and respectful homosexuality and one that is self-seeking, self-centred and un-Christian. Such a distinction appears to be an imposition.

In 1 Corinthians 6 vs 9, homosexuals are listed among the "unrighteous" who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. In the Greek language it is more explicit as the two words used by Paul actually describe the two partners in a homosexual union (*arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*).

In 1 Timothy 1 vs 10 sodomites are listed among the lawless and disobedient whom God condemns. Those who are keen to soften this apparent condemnatory view have suggested that it is not self-giving homosexuality (homosexuality in a mutually loving homosexual relationship) that is condemned here. They suggest that it is self-centred abusive homosexuality (homosexuality out of sheer curiosity or supersensuality) that is condemned.

It is important at this point to note that the most common Greek words Paul used to refer to homosexuality (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*) cov-

er both invert and pervert. Paul does indicate some distinction between homosexuals (1 Corinthians 6 vs 9) but this is in fact to include both partners in a homosexual relationship under the same condemnation. "Malakoi" referred to the male who played the passive same-sex sexual role, "Arsenokoitai" meant "the male in bed". Unless one is intending to impose on Paul's teaching pro-homosexuality interpretations, it is quite evident that Paul's position was to the contrary.

People like Rev A. E. Millward of the Council of Homosexuality and Religion want to argue for a Christian form of homosexuality. He mentions: "A few theologians and numbers of gay Christians, working from a growing understanding of the homosexual condition and from a renewed study of the Biblical texts, have come to the conclusion that the Bible does not exclude homosexual persons from Christian fellowship, within bounds analogous to those applied to heterosexuals..."

This new consensus, in our view, is based on a diminishing of the authority of the Bible as a rule for life and a guide for personal holiness. This view imposes human thoughts and opinions on the Bible undermining its authority. From the cumulative teaching of the Bible:

- There can be no form of Christian homosexuality just as there can be no form of Christian adultery, bestiality or rape (Roms 1 vs 18-32).
- There can be no respectable version of "same-sex relationship" just as there can be no respectable version of other violations of God's basic moral law known in all cultures such as rape or murder (Roms 1 vs 18).

According to the Biblical sponsored view of human sexuality:

- God's obtained design for human sexual rela-

tions in the male-female union, man and wife becoming one flesh. (Genesis 2 vs 24, Gen 1 vs 28, Mark 10 vs 6-9; 1 Cor 6 vs 16; Eph 5 vs 31).

- Human personhood linked as it is to human sexuality is reflected in the maleness and femaleness of males and females as they reflect their sexuality in their differentiation. (Genesis 1 vs 26,27 Gen 2).

- The fact that Jesus did not overtly condemn homosexuality does not make it right. (Argument from silence.) Jesus did not overtly condemn incest, rape, child abuse, etc, which are nevertheless contrary to God's moral law.

- Obeying God's moral law and his purpose for our lives is the way to achieving our highest welfare as human beings. Therefore homosexual relationships that are "loving relationships" are incompatible with true love because they are in revolt to God's law and purposes.

The Biblical doctrines of creation, sex and love lay the parameters within which human companionship should be understood and experienced.

The theological content of Paul's statements on homosexuality in Romans 1 is that of creation. His argument is that human, who has been created to honour God, has exchanged his glory for a poor replacement of God (Romans 1 vs 19-23). This spiritual defiance has led to moral decadence (Romans 1 vs 26-27) of which homosexuality is a symptom. Paul describes this practice as unnatural. This must be understood in the light of God's creation-pattern of "being brought together in their unity by diversity being made, in God's image (Genesis 1 vs 26-27).

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# What is Adam doing with Steve, asked Lot

THIS man came here as an alien and now he wants to play the judge. That was the accusation against Lot for refusing to allow a group of male homosexuals the opportunity of "knowing" his two female visitors.

About 3995 years later, another person is also accused of judging over the issue of homosexuality in Harare, Zimbabwe. President Mugabe's attitude about homosexuality have been interpreted in some quarters as repressive morality or politico-cultural xenophobia.

Those that argue for homosexuality insist that society must differentiate between the genuine sexual invert and the homosexual pervert. Sexual inversion, we are told, is an inborn and apparently unalterable condition, whose causes are familial and/or psychological and so society must exercise tolerance towards the genuine invert who cannot be held accountable for his condition.

On the other hand, the argument goes, the homosexual pervert is not a true homosexual, since heterosexual who engages in homosexual behaviour in pursuance of novel sexual experiences.

If we are Christian, this argument is likely to be redundant since the Zimbabwean Christian faith like "tolerance towards the pervert" needs to be reminded that Scripture knows nothing of homosexuality as an inborn trait or inherent condition of the individual causes. Paul writes under inspiration identifying homosexuality as simply the "use of a man," leaving the natural use of the woman and eschiasm as that of a woman changing the natural use to that which is against nature.

Even if the condition is psy-



By PASTOR DAVE CHIKOSI

chological or demon-inspired, there is deliverance for the subject in Christianity.

The Christian must not be duped by these calls for tolerance. Tertullian once said that "all other frenzies of the lusts which exceed the laws of nature and are inimical towards both human bodies and eyes, prohibit not only from the threshold but disfigure all the rest of the structure, for they are not a disease, but a monstrousness."

Homosexuality is an abomination to biblical Christianity and the abomination stems mainly from the fact that in reversing what is sexually natural, mankind exemplifies the spirit of idolatry which is itself the fundamental subversion of true order. God is intolerant towards idolatry — why should we be otherwise? It is interesting to note that in an effort to stamp out idolatry from ancient Israel, King Josiah "broke down the house of the sodomites." I submit that the dissolute behaviour of homosexuals is an inevitable concomitant of the spirit of idolatry characteristic of our generation.

We must further note that the extent of this behaviour is indicative of the general condition of our society. And so I argue, that homosexuality must not be viewed in isolation, (homosexual offences are not any

more serious both intrinsically than heterosexual offences, such as the "sugar daddy" syndrome). Rather, it must be viewed as a consequence of a corrosion in our society, which has already left its imprint upon our marriage and family life. If not checked, this corrosion threatens to undermine our whole social structure and lead to social anarchy.

One can feel that there is a definite stasis in our nation's economic and life. We seem to have fallen victim to a "wealth" of moral life emanating from the developed nations. Our world before they invented sex. Music is the new pornography. And homosexuality is but an indication of how deep the problem is.

John Chrysostom said that the race, by deflecting sex from its primary procreative process, has disharmony and strife between men and women, who as a result are no longer impelled by their physical desires to live peacefully together. And homosexuality is symptomatic of that disharmony in relationships between men and women upon which the whole social structure is built.

This disharmony is being fuelled by over-zealous attempts by some local feminists to radically reverse the patriarchy of which the African culture has always fundamentally been. While there is everything to be

said for the genuine emancipation of women from male domination, tyranny and infantilization, there is absolutely nothing to be said for the replacement of that patriarchy society by a "Babylonian" matriarch system that seeks to cut off the husband as head of the family. "Scripture cannot be broken" and as popular as these new "ideas" are, in the long run we shall soon find out that we cannot reverse Divine order and destroy biblical patterns, and hope to get always with it. Jezebel didn't. Nor did Sodom.

And so if the Divine order for male and female to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" we have to ask with alarm what Adam wants to do with Steve? He ought to be with Eve. We have to join President Mugabe in asking Steve to prove he can fall pregnant and thereby fulfil, multiply and replenish the earth.

And if this 20th century, it sounded like "he wants to play the judge" when he barred GALZ (pronounced "girls"), I submit that it is because Zimbabweans generally feel that it is within the province of leaders secular and sacred, to restrain and/or discourage perversion in all its forms for the benefit of society in general.

It is such a refreshing change from the tirade we have been subjected to lately by those of our political civic leaders championing the cause of she chiefs etc.

The fate of Sodom awaits both those who indulge in sexual vice and the society which condones such depravity of conduct. Concerning the destruction of Sodom, Dr George Adam Smith said that although the ruins it left have entirely disappeared, its glare burns still. And so be warned!

## Appendix 28

# Homosexuality: a view from the Bible

SIR — ZIBF '95 has brought the issue of homosexuality to the fore. It is a very revolting and uncomfortable subject, so most people would rather leave it alone.

But left on his own, man does not have any consistency in terms of morality: what was taboo may, over a short while, become acceptable or, at least, tolerable. For this reason, it is important to draw upon the Word of God, which is steadfastly consistent and does not shift because of popular opinion.

About homosexuality, the following truths emerge: first, God clearly declares that the practice is an abomination (totally unacceptable to God) and that it is absolutely detestable and disgusting (Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13).

The men of Sodom refused Lot's offer to have sex with his virgin daughters but insisted that they preferred men (Genesis 19:3-11). Because of the perversion of widespread homosexuality, Sodom and Gomorrah were de-

stroyed (Genesis 19).

The New Testament also confirms God's consistency on this subject. Romans 1:26-27 says: "Even their women exchanged natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men."

It is clear, therefore, that homosexuality is not only wrong but also unnatural. The natural and God-ordained order is for heterosexual relationships.

A man, the Bible says, will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). This is an eternal truth.

**Social Observer**  
**Bulawayo**

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## Appendix 29

### **HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE SCRIPTURE** **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?**

Despite attempts by revisionist theologians to suggest that the Bible affirms or condones intimate same-sex relationships, "only towering cynicism can pretend that there is any doubt about what the Scriptures say about homosexuality," states Michael Ukleja.

Sherwin Bailey's word count study argues that the sin of the men in Genesis 19 who desired to "know" Lot's guests was merely a breach of hospitality. Bailey correctly notes that in only 12 of the 943 uses of the Hebrew word *yada* ("to know") in the Old Testament does the term refer to sexual intercourse. But what Bailey minimizes, of course, is the importance of the context in determining the meaning of words. Lot's offering his own virgin daughters instead of his guests for the sexual satisfaction of his rude neighbours indicates that he knew exactly what the men wanted and purposely tried to lead them in a different direction not only for reasons of hospitality.

J. Boswell and later L. William Countryman, presented studies suggesting that Romans 1:26-27 declared same-sex relations culturally impure but not sinful. Schmidt responds by saying: "Paul's profound analysis of the human condition in Romans 1 finds in homosexuality an example of sexual sin that falsifies our identity as created beings. Homosexual behaviour is 'revolting,' not because heterosexuals find it so - they have their own dirt to deal with (2:22) - but because it epitomises in sexual terms the revolt against God. It is because it violates the plan of God, present from the creation, for the union of male and female in marriage.

Same-sex relations are condemned by Scripture because they stand in opposition to God's created order and His plan revealed from the beginning. While it is true that the Creation stories do not present us with neatly packaged commands about sex, they do provide a basis. Thomas E. Eschmidt in his book *Straight And Narrow*, believes that there is "a basis for biblical commands and for subsequent reflection on the part of those who wish to construct a sexual ethic to meet changing situations".

The Apostle James recognises a distinction between orientation and behaviour. Every person "is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and

enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14, 15, NIV). For all who possess human nature and wrestle with a host of temptations, this should come as welcome news. Only in the arena of moral choices and behavioural responses to one's inclinations is sin or the resistance of it possible by God's grace. Inclination alone does not constitute sin.

### **THE CASE OF SODOM**

Genesis 19:4-10. But before they lay down, the men of the city, them of Sodom, both young and old, all; the people to the last man surrounded the house and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wicked. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot and drew near to break the door., But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them and shut the door.

Throughout the history of the Church this passage has been used to show God's displeasure with homosexuals. In this instance, it was claimed, homosexuality caused the destruction of the cities in the plain.

In 1975 the first extensive and radically new interpretation of this passage was published by D. S. Bailey, whose ideas have been repeated in numerous books. Bailey is an Anglican clergyman who was a member of an informal group of Anglican clergy and physicians that produced a report called "The Problem of Homosexuality," published by the Church of England Welfare council. Bailey, the main lecturer for the Council, later published his own book, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. Bailey was also instrumental in inaugurating a Government Committee to investigate law and practice relating to homosexual offenses. This report, *The Wolfendon Report*, named after the Committee chairman, recommended that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults private no longer be considered a criminal offense in England. the recommendation of the Committee was adopted legally by Parliament in 1967.

Crucial to their decision was Bailey's thesis that Christian tradition has misread the account of the judgement of Sodom in Genesis 19. This under-cut the notion that toleration of homosexuality behaviour is a sign of national decay and paved the way for relaxing legal sanctions.

Bailey, considered by many the high priest of pro-homosexuality interpretation of Scripture, raises numerous questions about this passage. "What ground is there," he asks, "for the persistent belief that the inhabitants of the city were addicted to male homosexual practices and punished accordingly?" He finds little evidence. Beginning with verse 5, "Bring them out to us, that we may know them," he suggests that the word "know" (yada) occurs some 943 times in the Old Testament; but in only twelve instances, without qualification, does it mean coitus. On the basis of these statistics, he adopts Barton's view that there is no actual necessity to interpret "know" in Genesis 19:5 as equivalent to "have coitus with" and that it may mean no more than "get acquainted with."

Few biblical scholars agree with this restricted interpretation of yada. Many point to verse 8 which is manifestly sexual in connotation. Even McNeil, a Catholic Priest who advocates responsible homosexual behaviour, admits that the case has been overstated here. However, many scholars who admit that this interpretation is weak still point out that it is clearly violent homosexual rape /that/ is intended and which is being condemned here. Therefore if this text does not speak negatively about a loving homosexual relation between consenting adults, it cannot be used to condemn it, they claim.

Those who accept this new interpretation, however, have to explain why the mere request to get acquainted with the visitors is made in such a violent manner. The suggested answer proposes that Lot was a sojourner (ger) and as a resident alien, he did not have the right to bring other aliens into his house, especially those whose credentials were unknown to the citizens. Furthermore, he was unpopular. The citizens of the place might be accused of boorish inhospitality, but there is no evidence that homosexual vice was prevalent there.

In trying to explain why, under these circumstances, Lot offered his virgin daughters to the citizenry to do as they pleased with them, Bailey's argument is at its weakest. he suggests, "that it was simply the most tempting bribe that Lot could offer on the spur of the moment to appease the hostile crowd". This assumes that the crowd was bent on violence, perhaps rape. But Bailey has assured us already that they are just concerned citizens who want to clarify the status of Lot's visitors. If this is so, Lot's offer of his daughters is most incongruous and calculated to heighten the suspicions of the citizens about his visitors.

If "know" in verse 5 simply means "get acquainted with," Lot grossly misunderstood the citizens. His best course of action would have been to acquaint them with the visitors. In addition, this interpretation finds the biblical account to be influenced by later legends dealing with punishment for inhospitality.

But this entire construction throws a serious question on the justice of God, for we are presented with God destroying the cities by fire for their lack of hospitality, first and foremost, as well as undefined general wickedness. Bailey points out that no Old Testament citation of this passage explicitly identifies the sin of Sodom as homosexuality. (See Genesis 13:13, 18:20; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49, 50). It is only in the post-canonical literature relating to Hellenism that these passages are interpreted of homosexuality, he suggests and in the late New Testament books influenced by Hellenistic literature and pseudepigrapha - 2 Peter and Jude.

The Old Testament depicts the people of Sodom as a symbol of utter wickedness and grievous sin, who committed adultery, walked in lies, were haughty and committed abomination. Sodom was also a symbol of complete destruction (see Isaiah 1:9, 13:19; Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zechariah 2:9). True, there is no explicit mention of homosexuality here. The further claim is made that this witness, that is, that Sodom was destroyed for inhospitality, folly and pride is continued in the Apocrypha. Especially quoted are Wisdom 10:8 and 19:8 and Ecclesiastics 16:8.

In Wisdom 19:13, 14 (Bailey cites Wisdom 19:8 but quotes 19:14) neither the words "Sodom" nor "Egyptians" appear in the text, though they are implied. The Egyptians are being compared with Sodom and seem to be declared the more wicked. In Wisdom the Egyptians are accused of "hatred of strangers" (misozenia, vs. 13) and this is construed, along with verse 14, as a testimony to inhospitality.

This particular argument has not reckoned with the fact that in the Hellenistic world misozenia was a loaded word. As Radin points out, it had within its broad range of meaning not only inhospitality and a social behaviour but also abuse of strangers and in extreme cases, even cannibalism.

This particular passage does not support the new thesis as thoroughly after careful inspection. We can agree with those who contend that it is nonsense to assume that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed solely because of homosexuality. The Old Testament clearly states that the sins of the cities were many and grievous. On the other hand, we cannot agree with attempts of exclude homosexuality as one of these sins. Therefore, we conclude that Genesis 19 is clearly a reference to an

attempted homosexual rape of Lot's visitors. The question of whether this text condemns all homosexual activity does not seem to be answered here but perhaps comes within the scope of the next references.

### **NEW TESTAMENT VICE LISTS : CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN**

Regulations for Christian ethical behaviour also are stated negatively in the New Testament. This was achieved by listing vices that Christians were exhorted to avoid. It is possible that such lists were used in catechetical instruction beginning at a very early period. These lists existed in the popular moral teaching of the period and parallels among Stoics are unmistakable.

For Christians, however, mere avoidance of vice is not the essence of an ethical morality). Morality and ethics cannot begin until these acts are removed from the lifestyle. Christian ethics and morality involve the doing of positive things, not merely removal of negatives.

Homosexual activity never appears in any positive list in the New Testament, although numerous other activities are listed. When homosexuality is mentioned it is always included in the negative vice lists. This fact cannot be ignored by those who claim that loving homosexual relations are condoned in Scripture. Nowhere does Paul issue instructions for the homosexual couple or tell how they are to be integrated into the Church. He does this for slaves, for families where only one spouse is a believer, for those coming from pagan cults and worldly associations, for those who are virgins and those who are not and for Jews and/or Pharisees with all their religious and cultural baggage. But homosexual acts are listed as one of the lifestyles left behind, discontinued upon acceptance of Christ.

### **PRIMARY NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS CITED WITH REFERENCE TO HOMOSEXUALITY.**

Roman 1:26-28. For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men likewise gave up relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and improper conduct.

These verses are followed immediately by the longest vice list in the New Testament (Roman 1:29-32). It includes no sexual sins. Apparently Paul was satisfied with his treatment of them in verses 24-28, the whole of which (vss. 24-32) may be seen as an extended vice list.

### **NATURAL VERSUS UNNATURAL**

The two key terms in these verses are the expressions "natural" and "unnatural" and much depends upon what Paul meant here. The crux of the issue turns on why Paul concludes that homosexuality is unnatural. Paul uses the terms *para phusin* ("against," "besides", or "contrary to") nature and *kata phusin* ("according to") nature. (CF. expressions in Romans 11:24) There is no doubt that these terms are common Greek usage and that they are used at times to express an ethical judgment on homosexuality. This is true in Plato (Laws 1,636; VIII, 836-841), who repeatedly use the term "natural" to describe heterosexual intercourse and "unnatural" for homosexual intercourse.

Plato attempts a reason why it is unnatural, that is, because men cannot fall below the level of the animal world where homosexuality does not take place (Laws VIII, 841). These expressions are common in the Hellenistic period, as we see in Diodorus Siculus (ca 49 BC). In his History 32, 10, 8-11, he uses the term *kata phusin* of natural intercourse with a woman. However, in a case where the woman was in reality a man, he speaks of the intercourse as having taken place "as with a man" and the marriage as "against nature" (*para phusin gamou*). In any event the woman (in reality a man) had to submit to "unnatural embraces" (*para phusin homilian*).

Paul has in mind not only the causal and capricious sex swapping of the pervert, driven by lust and desire for flesh stimulation, but the basic divergence from God's original creation scheme which all homosexual behaviour represents. The invert or constitutional homosexual may be seen as an aberration of God's original creation. He may be considered depraved (as all are to some extent) in the theological sense but not in a moral sense.

Paul uses the homosexual practices of his day to illustrate the depravity that follows departure from God's will. If homosexual acts could gain divine approval in any sense, surely Paul would have indicated how and drawn the distinction.

In a day when homosexual acts were commonly practised and widely known, Paul could hardly have been ignorant of the variety of relationships existing in the first century Hellenistic world. An interpretation of his words that allows homosexual activity would have to allow also any sin in the list of vices which follows.

We need to emphasise, however, that Paul is speaking of homosexual acts, not temptations to homosexuality or disposition to homosexuality of whatever intensity. Paul concludes verse 27 by observing that those who practice such act, "receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error." The apostle may refer to spiritual moral erosion in the life or the physical deterioration that results from a dissolute life or both. At the end of the vice list (verse 32) he notes finally that "they not only do them but approve those who practice them." We must keep in mind that in Paul's day male-with-male sexual relationships not only went largely uncondemned but were sometimes glorified as a stage of love higher than that between man and woman.

One might argue that as a conservative Jew Paul was merely reacting to the Gentile culture around him in typical Jewish fashion. But Paul was the most liberated of the apostles. He was most open and accepting of the Gentiles and willing to reject Jewish tradition where he saw it in conflict with the will of God. Other reasons have to be found for Paul's rejection of homosexuality. He was not conservative reactionary. Based on evidence, there is no "Pauline privilege" for homosexual activity in Romans 1:26-28.

I Corinthians 6:9, 10. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, no (homosexuals), not thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God.

If the Church accepts the idea of powerless grace it nullifies its evangelistic mission in the world. The gospel is no longer the "power for Salvation to everyone who believes," and as Lovelace points out about such a Church,

It should logically be prepared to tolerate many other forms of sin within the Church which might cause neuroses if repressed: compulsive adultery and fornication, compulsive racism and other forms of hatred acted out in physical hostility, compulsive disobedience to authority, compulsive theft, and so on. The argument that sexual control is impossible for most homosexuals because they do not have the gift of continence leads necessarily to the Church's encouraging premarital and extramarital sex

among single persons, the divorced and the widowed. Neither the Bible nor the common convictions of Christian support this implication and we must conclude that where there is responsibility to be continent God will supply the gift.

The prohomophile literature written in a Christian context overemphasises love and the Spirit at the expense of the word. It is true that without these the Church is a dry, lifeless husk. But it is equally true that the Church without the objective Word of God is a ship without a rudder. It simply rides out the swells of worldly events, fads, and opinions with all the other flotsam and jetsam until it is beached or smashed on the rock. Uncontrolled and drifting it has no means of directing its course.

For the Church to try to function ethically without objective information from God concerning His will means that it is dead in the water without chart, compass, or any real way of steering itself or anyone else. With both Spirit and the Word, the Church has power, a means of direction and can safely find a passage between subjective antinomianism and the rocks of legalism.

Homosexuals needs to reconsider the scriptural passages in both Old and New Testaments that relate to homosexual behaviour. Exegetical and hermeneutical attempts to displace the plain meaning of these passages and a too simple reliance on the exegesis and arguments of scholars who support their opinions will not help. Rather than make other human beings masters of their consciences, homosexuals in the Christian context need to study the Scriptures for themselves. Then they will recognise that many prohomophile arguments are "strained, speculative and implausible, the product of wishful thinking and special pleading."

Many homosexuals are convinced that increasingly permissive sexual attitudes in the Church will in time lead to acceptance of their sexual behaviour. Consequently, it is difficult for many Christian gays to understand why they are scapegoats for sexual sins in the Church. Are adultery or fornication less culpable than homosexuality? The Church must become serious about all sexual immorality or it has little case against the homosexual and stands accused of rank hypocrisy. On the other hand homosexuals need to realise that two wrongs never make a right.

Secondly, the Church needs to come to terms with homophobia and some of its ultra-conservative knee-jerk reactions even to the mention of homosexuality. Homophobia is a fear and hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality. As with

most phobias, usually it is unreasoned and unreasoning. As with race prejudice, homophobia is often a transferred hostility. The homosexual becomes a convenient whipping boy on whom old fears, hurts and angers may be safely focussed. Hatred of homosexuals may mask insecurity about one's own sexual identity. Christian concern is missing.

Whatever its cause, Church members need to rise above it and to foster an attitude of compassionate concern for homosexuals while at the same time they strongly disapprove of the active homosexual lifestyle. Many who lack a conviction of sin in their own lives and their need of the grace of Christ for daily strength will find it difficult to do this.

Christians who understand human frailty and know the power of sin will be able to empathise with the pain, hopelessness and guilt, the loneliness and rejection felt by many exclusive homosexuals. They will understand also that for many homosexuals the condition is not the result of voluntary choice and will begin to appreciate why numerous homosexuals from a religious background sink in despair to the verge of suicide and sometimes complete the act.

All of this does not suggest that biblical and theological arguments put forward by homophile advocates should persuade the Church to change its position on the subject. On the contrary, how the Church relates to homosexuality may determine how it relates to all other questions of morality. As a prominent Jewish author put it,

When religion begins to adapt its norms to current practice, it succeeds in becoming "popular religion" of the kind the Bible fought against through all antiquity. It then surrenders its right to speak in the name of a higher calling. Moral law must apply even - especially! - in the face of popular neglect. Religion must teach society; it must hold up for its moral ideals for which to strive, ethical and spiritual norms the neglect of which will give men a bad conscience. The direction some Churches are taking today threatens to leave the majority religion in our country shorn of its ideals, its challenge, its role as conscience - and its courage. I fear that, in some measure, contemporary Christianity is reverting to its pre-Judaic roots by institutionalising the sanction of popular immorality.

This statement also is a challenge to the Church. The Church cannot condone homosexual activity without betraying its biblical, historical and spiritual heritage. Its conscious acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture would need to undergo such a radical, liberalising change that the fundamental teachings of the Church would be left without foundation.

# Tutu's gay can

Herald 09/12/05.

Features Writer

"AND it came to pass in the days . . . when Abraham was 99 years old . . . two angels came to Sodom . . . (where) men . . . were wicked and exceedingly sinned before the Lord," so says the Holy Bible in Genesis chapters 13 to 19.

It is also written that when the two angels visited Lot, a nephew of Abraham, who was righteous and a servant of God, "the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house and they called to Lot: 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.' So Lot said to them: 'But what may I do?'

It is further written that Lot replied: "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold I have two daughters who have not known man; let them come out, and I will give them to you as wives, for it is better for me to do this than for you to do such a thing."

The hordes of homosexual men threatened to do worse things to Lot than they wanted to do to the two men inside the house.

They then tried to force their way into the house but failed and later, despite Abraham's passionate plea to God to spare Sodom and the adjoining city of Gomorrah from destruction, the cities were flattened by fire and brimstone.

And this, according to Christian anthology, was God's clear testimony of his disapproval of the complete liberty of homosexuals.

According to Lot's story, God detests homosexuality so much that incest is a less punishable crime because Lot's two daughters successfully connived to have children with their father and their death was nowhere near as painful as that endured by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

A mere disregard of an instruction by God not to look back on Sodom and Gomorrah as they were devoured cost Lot's wife her life - she turned into a pillar of salt.

Sodom and Gomorrah may have been destroyed thousands of years ago, but the gay culture that led to their destruction is still alive and making strong inroads into many communities.

Gay and lesbian activists believe their sexual inclination is natural and that they have the right to freely have same sex marriages.

The gay culture has spread its tentacles, infiltrating deep into many corridors of power as well as Christian churches whose roots stem from Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God.

In Sodom and Gomorrah, the gay had free rein because they had successfully overridden the territory. They even challenged Lot whom they described as not a resident but a mere sojourner or lodger.

Today, gay communities are challenging Christianity, one of the biggest and most influential doctrines that is openly against their existence, to accept them, their beliefs and what they are.

And two years after one of the first early

Christian bodies, the Anglican Church, was rocked by the homosexuality controversy, the age-old gay spectre has returned to haunt this denomination.

Malawi's Anglican African bishops have blocked the appointment of a pro-gay bishop, Reverend Nicholas Henderson, to head the Lake Malawi diocese.

Confirming the decision this week, Archbishop Bernard Malango, the leader of the Anglican Church in Central Africa, says: "He (Bishop Henderson) has actively demonstrated that he was of no sound faith - that's what the Court of Confirmation said."

This is the second time in two years that Archbishop Malango has openly declared his distaste of gay culture.

When, on August 5, 2003, the United States Episcopalians (the American equivalent for Anglicans) appointed a gay divorcee, Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire, Archbishop Malango was among the first African Anglicans to disapprove of the appointment.

"How can you have a divorcee and, worse still, a man who sleeps with a fellow man, to head a communion?" said Archbishop Malango back then, calling the election "odd and unnatural".

That gay controversy led to a global rift within the church that prompted Anglican bishops in Africa to stop sending African clergy for training in the Western institutions in November last year.

The development signalled the first clear-cut drift from the centre of Africa's 76.5 million Anglicans across the world.

African Anglicans' strong stance against homosexuality is firmly rooted in their cultural background which has never accepted gay or lesbian relationships although the practice has long existed on the continent.

President Robert Mugabe has described gays as "worse than dogs and pigs", while Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni outlawed homosexuality in the country, and unleashed detectives to root out gays, "lock them up and charge them".

But the gay debate within the Anglican Church and elsewhere on the continent is set to create further controversy after the South African Constitutional Court ordered President Thabo Mbeki's government to amend the country's marriage laws within the next 12 months. The court wants marriage to be defined as a "union between two persons" instead of a "union between a man and woman".

Even if the South African government which argues that Parliament was the supreme law-making body, refused to act, it will be lawful for same sex marriages to take place in that country as from December 21, 2006. The ruling follows a court petition by two white African lesbians, Marie Fourie

**SOUTH AFRICA'S Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu has now become the self-styled crusader for the permeation of gay culture in the church.**  
and Cecelia Bonhys.

South Africa's controversial Anglican archbishop, Desmond Tutu (74), has now become the self-styled crusader of the permeation of gay culture in the church.

Being quoted extensively for his clear support of the appointment of gay bishops, Archbishop Tutu says because sexual orientation is something that cannot be changed, the Anglican community should support the first openly gay Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire.

Maintaining that consistency is important when speaking out against discrimination, whether based on race, gender or sexual orientation, Archbishop Tutu says: "I am deeply saddened at a time when we've got such huge problems . . . that we should invest so much time and energy in this issue. I think God is crying."

Indeed, God could be crying like He did in the old days of Sodom and Gomorrah, but His tears fell in the form of fire and brimstone.

The Herald, December 9, 2005. "Tutu's gay campaign illogical."

*Daily Gazette 13 March 1993*  
**Homosexuality a sin  
in God's eyes**

I WOULD like to respond to remarks made by Humanist of Harare on homosexuality.

Homosexuals are the way they are by choice and not by nature. If we are the trouble to look at nature we will see that nowhere else in nature is there any form of homosexuality.

Let us not start blaming nature for the way we are, or what we have become.

God is the creator of all nature. If He wanted homosexuals to be part of that scheme He would not have called it "an abomination in His eyesight". If homosexuality was what God had intended, He would not have wiped out two whole towns to get rid of it.

It is nothing new and

dates back to the very beginning of time. It is first mentioned in the book of Leviticus 20:13 (please read it).

There are many other mentions of it in the Bible.

I personally view homosexuality as I would any other sin — adultery, stealing, lying, cheating. They are all considered sin in God's sight.

God gives to us the power of free choice. We choose right or wrong. I cannot blame nature if I make a free choice to commit adultery, to steal or to become a homosexual.

With people's brains there is no problem. With people's hearts there is a very big problem. The problems we have lie in our hearts. If you harbour lust you become a lustful

person. If you harbour greed you end up stealing.

When you clean up your heart you clean up your act. The only way you clean up your heart is by putting God there. Once God is in control, you get in control and your life is controlled.

There is an old saying that birds of a feather flock together. I would feel very uncomfortable mixing with a gang of thieves and they would feel very uncomfortable mixing with me.

God clearly tells us that the sheep and the goats don't mix but He also tells us that there is a better way and we can make that choice through Him.

**L V Weeks (Mrs)  
Harare.**

The Daily Gazette, March 13, 1993.



haps an exhibition match by two leading sides? As far as I can ascertain, the opening ceremony was attended by a few representatives of the MHB and HAZ with the balance being made up of the party faithfuls. It is a pity that the recent events of the Rugby World Cup are not emulated here.

For the record there are 16 teams from Bulawayo, Gweru, Kwekwe and Zvishavane in the local league, eight of which are entirely "non-white". The rest of the teams have non-white players. The most recent Midlands provincial team is entirely non-white.

**P R Ward,  
Hillside,  
Bulawayo.**

## Even God disapproves

IN 1962, the British Parliament repealed the law regarding sodomy and introduced another one which permitted intercourse between consenting male adults. Since then many "advanced" countries dropped sodomy from their law books.

Many gays drag Christ into their argument and there are churches who "marry" them.

Let us see what the Bible has to say about such matters.

Genesis 19:4-5 "Before they could lie down, the men of Sodom surrounded the house, from boy to old man, all the people in one mob. 5: And they kept calling out

to Lot and saying to him 'where are the men who came to you tonight Bring them out to us that we may have intercourse with them'."

We know what happened next, God destroyed Sodom. Evidently God disapproves of their Christ who is the image of the Father also disapproves.

The Apostle Paul, who saw the glorified Christ has this to say about immorality.

Romans 1:24-27  
"Therefore God, in keeping with the desires of their hearts, gave them up to uncleanness, that their bodies might be dishonoured among them 25: Even those who exchanged the Truth of God for the lie and venerate and rendered sacred service to the created rather than the One who created, who is blessed forever Amen. 26: That is why God gave them up to disgraceful sexual appetites, for both their females changed the natural use of themselves into one contrary to nature. 27: And likewise even the males left the natural use of the female and became violently enamored in their lust to use one another, male with male, working what is obscene and revolting in themselves the full recompense which was due for their error."

1 Corinthians 6:9  
"What! Do you know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's Kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men."

So the truth is quite plain to see, as a Christian, one cannot practice immorality in any form. The way of truth is the best way of living.

**Immorality,  
Hillcrest,  
Bulawayo.**

The Chronicle, August 24, 1995.

# Bishops blast homosexuals but warn against unjust discrimination of gays

There is no 'human right' to a 'homosexual lifestyle' but it is not right for anyone to harass, persecute or torture gays

**Star Reporter**  
HOMOSEXUAL activities are "disordered" and "contrary to the natural law" acts which all should avoid, but those practising them should not be discriminated against. Zimbabwe's Catholic Bishops say in their latest pastoral statement.  
The Bishops also noted "another equally important development" but which caused little public debate, that is, how "family planning agents are more and more urging people to use the ultimate and irreversible means of birth control sterilisation."  
Last year, a heated public debate on homosexuality took place in Zimbabwe, say the Bishops in their pastoral statement. "Men and women with a tendency to be attracted to persons of their own sex demanded the freedom to live according to their sexual orientation and lifestyle as a human right, even in contradiction of the inherited culture, morality and laws of the State."  
Such issues, say the Bishops, raise some "fundamental" questions: "Do we enjoy total freedom as to how we may use our sexual nature?"

"Are there no limits imposed by human nature as created by God?"  
"Does modern biotechnology allow us to manipulate our bodies any way we want?"  
"Can we claim such wanton transgression of all limits as a human right?"  
"Which then begs the question: what are human rights? What are they based on?"  
Those questions, the Catholic Bishops say, "touch on something very close to our hearts, the family. Our culture is based on the family. And yet the family is under threat."  
Culture alone has no answer to these threats; the Bishops state, and "we have to ask the Creator himself what he created man and woman for."  
"Who would have thought that something as basic as the mutual complementarity of man and woman in marriage could be questioned? And yet now we are being told that anyone has the right to choose a person even of his/her own sex as a life partner, instead of the opposite sex."  
"Being fertile and giving life was regarded as a positive value. Now we are

told that it is a threat to human survival and must be suppressed in any way possible. But is everything possible also permissible?"  
"This poses the further question: do we have the right to limitless freedom? Can we claim just about everything as a human right?"

### Human Rights Based On The Created Order.

In the pastoral statement, the Bishops say the Church fully supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter of Human Rights.  
"But when people claim as a 'human right' what is clearly immoral and harmful to society and its basic unit, the family, we need to remind ourselves that we do not make 'human rights' ourselves. They are given to us by God."  
"Every person, man or woman, is infinitely precious in the eyes of the Creator who made them. The life of every human being, from the moment of conception until natural death, must be respected as something sacred" that

belongs to God.  
"And God will not allow us to live our lives according to the nature He has given us; our nature, i.e. the way we were made as men and women, imposes certain laws on us which we have to respect."  
"What is not in accordance with God's will as expressed in our nature cannot be claimed as a 'human right'. Let us apply this principle to two moral issues on which we wish to give you clear guidance."  
**(1) Homosexuality and the "right to choose":**  
"Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man, and both were created for God," say the Catholic Bishops in their pastoral statement.  
"Man and woman are to complement each other. They are of equal dignity and value in the eyes of God, and yet different. Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family."  
This is the order given to humankind by God: the

(To Page 11...)

# Homosexuals

(Continued from Page 5)

Creator, the Bishops state, and "there is no 'option' or 'choice' about it. There is no 'human right' to a 'homosexual lifestyle'."

"Homosexuality is a disorder," say the Bishops, quoting from the Catechism (Teachings) of the Catholic Church where it is stated:

*"Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law."*

Christians, say the Bishops, must not practise a "homosexual lifestyle", and that "African culture abhors homosexuality and considers it abnormal."

But, the Bishops say, while people wish to eliminate a disease, wherever it exists, "we do not eliminate those who suffer from it."

"Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided..."

"Some homosexual

persons may have the strength like that: they have to learn how to live with their condition, helped by the Christian community."

"Others have suffered a deep wound in their psyche when young, and healing may be possible. Others again act under the pressure of a given social environment and need to be freed from such pressure."

"It is therefore not right for anyone, including government, to harass, persecute or torture people simply because they are known to have this inclination. At the same time, homosexual persons have no right to propagate what some of them call their 'lifestyle'."

"Laws protecting the young from sexual abuse, whether by homosexual or heterosexual persons, are legitimate."

"At the same time, society must not create breeding grounds for homosexuality through overcrowding in prisons, forced separation of married men from their families, and forcing an undue number of homeless people who have no hope ever to marry and

(To Page 12...)

# Homosexual acts are against nature...

(...From Page 11)

have a family."

## (2) The integrity of the human person.

Turning to the issue of family planning and sterilisation, the Catholic

Bishops say that fertility is "a beautiful gift to be used if and when the parents responsibly can do so, but, since sex is often used irresponsibly, it is now seen as a threat that has to be destroyed by sterilisation."

"This threatens the integrity and wholeness of the human person. So often in our day, the sexual encounter between man and woman is no longer an expression of commitment, but has been reduced to a consumer good for momentary pleasure."

"Love is no longer seen as open to fruitfulness. The bodily union no longer signifies mutual, personal responsibility for one another and for possible offspring. A basic truth of the created order is denied."

Many a man, say the Bishops, no longer expresses love to a woman with the implied responsibility for the child that may be "the fruit" of their love. "Instead, he wants to be a lover without

the responsibility of a father..."

"As sterilisation is more and more advertised as a means of family planning, it is our duty to state unequivocally: sterilisation is morally unacceptable as a means of family planning. It contradicts human dignity. It disfigures God's creation."

"Parents together have the responsibility to decide on the size of their family. They cannot bypass their personal responsibility by some physical intervention."

"Forced sterilisation, e.g. tying the tubes of a woman during surgery when she is not aware of what is being done to her, is a violation of her human dignity and a denial of her right to personal integrity. There cannot be any moral justification for causing such grievous bodily harm."

The Catholic Bishops also state that, social fragmentation, destruction of family life and the isolation of the individual "may well be contributing

factors to the spread of homosexuality in Western countries."

"In so far as similar trends appear in Africa, the Church must become the extended 'family' and supportive community that people need."

The image of the 'Church as God's Family' emphasizes "care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust", the Bishops say, quoting from the "Church in Africa", the final document in which Pope John Paul II pronounced the final results of the recently-held African Synod of the Catholic Church.

"Natural family planning which stresses cooperation and responsibility between partners should be promoted."

"The dignity of fatherhood and motherhood should be taught and recognised," say the Bishops, quoting what was said by the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa

at their assembly in Namibia last year.

The "wholeness and integrity of the person as explained in this message can only be preserved within the context of Christian monogamous marriage."

The Catholic Bishops in Zimbabwe who issued the pastoral statement are all members of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) which is currently headed by Bishop Francis Mugadz of Gweru as president, with Archbishop Henry Karlen of Bulawayo as the vice-president.

Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa of Harare, Bishop Alexio Muchabaiwa of Mutare, Bishop Ignatius Prieto of Hwange, Bishop Helmut Reckter of Chinboyi, Bishop Michael Bhasera of Gokwe and Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Mutume of Mutare are the other members of the ZCBC who all subscribed to the pastoral statement.

# WCC condemn homosexuality

Sunday Mail Reporter

THE president of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema, has expressed his organisation's abhorrence of homosexuality and lesbianism, which he has said destroys local culture.

Announcing on Thursday at a Press conference in Harare that Zimbabwe would be hosting the World Council of Churches' 8th Assembly in September, 1998, Bishop Siyachitema condemned the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism.

"We are not going to allow, as a Christian body, gays in our council and destroy that which we cherish; our culture," he said.

He said he supported President Mugabe's anti-homosexuality stance and said that the church's role was to fight against sins which destroyed culture.

Since the President's unflinching stand against homosexuality last year, demonstrations against him by members of the gay community were held last year.

International debate on human rights of homosexuals in Zimbabwe was sparked by a government request that organisers of the 1995 Zimbabwe International Bookfair withdraw participation of gay and lesbians. The 1995 Book Fair focused on human rights.

The WCC assembly theme would

be "Turn to God-Rejoice in the Hope," would dwell on such issues as faith, poverty alleviation, racism, environment and debt crisis.

Approximately 3500 people from all over the world were expected to attend. Zimbabwe was chosen as host because it was enjoying peace and had held many international church conferences before.

WCC is a fellowship of churches which seek to fulfill together their common calling to glory of God. It has a membership of over 147 churches worldwide.

Bishop Siyachitema urged the Zimbabwean community to rally behind the church in preparing for the Assembly.

The Sunday Mail, June 16, 1996.

## Homos erode our culture

I WOULD like to strongly oppose letters written on August 12 and August 15, which were entitled: "Give gays freedom of expression" and "Government must respect homosexuals' rights", respectively.

One of the writers pointed out that in some countries homosexuals and lesbians are tolerated, but we are talking about our country Zimbabwe. In those countries nobody cares what damage they cause to their society's culture.

I would sincerely like to express my full support for President Mugabe's stand in condemning homos because if they were given their undeserved rights, who knows what kind of new associations would be formed, for example a prostitutes' association might be set up and demand the Government to respect their rights as well.

The Bible condemns acts of homosexuality.

When God wanted to create Adam's partner, he could have created a man not a woman, but you can see it makes no sense.

President Mugabe is right, homos deprive the human race of its superiority over dogs and pigs when it comes to moral values. If we grant them their rights, then let us expect more inhumane groups asking to respect their rights and I won't be surprised if cases increase.

The issue is clear.

If literature promoting this "dirty" act of homosexuals and lesbians is allowed into Zimbabwe then our social and religious structure will be threatened. Let us not misuse the true meaning of democracy and let us strike the iron while it is still hot, before this inhumane group takes its toll on our cultural values.

**Tongai V Gwafa,  
Mzilikazi,  
Bulawayo.**

The Chronicle, September 2, 1995.

# Catholic bishops speak out on homosexuality

**HARARE** - CATHOLIC bishops have spoken out against homosexuality saying that it is not a human right to practise a homosexual lifestyle.

In a recent pastoral statement issued to homosexuals by their social communications secretary Fr Oskar Wernier and entitled "Male and Female He Created Them," the bishops also spoke out against the irreversible means of birth control - sterilisation.

"During the last year, a heated public debate took place in our country about homosexuality. Men and women with a tendency to be attracted to

persons of their own sex demanded the freedom to live according to their "sexual orientation" and "lifestyle" as a human right, even in contradiction of the inherited culture, morality and laws of the State.

"Another equally important development has come to our notice, though it caused little public debate: family planning agents are more and more urging people to use the ultimate and irreversible means of birth control, sterilisation."

The above issues, says the statement, raise some fundamental questions: do we

enjoy total freedom as to how we may use our sexuality? Are there no limits imposed by human nature as created by God? Does modern biotechnology allow us to manipulate our bodies any way we want? Can we claim such wanton transgression of all limits as a human right? Which then begs the question: what are human rights? What are they based on?

The above questions touch on the family which is under threat, the statement says adding that culture is based on the family.

No-one would have thought that something as basic as the

mutual complementarity of man and woman in marriage could be questioned yet it was now being said anyone has a right to choose a person even of his/her own sex as a life partner, instead of someone of the opposite sex.

The church supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter of Human and People's Rights.

"But when people claim as a "human right" what is clearly immoral and harmful to society and its basic unit, the family, we need to remind ourselves that we do not make "human rights" ourselves. They are given to us by God."

Every person, man or woman, is infinitely precious in the eyes of God and the life of every human being must be respected as something sacred that belongs to God.

God wants people to live according to the nature given them; their nature may be made them men and women and this means certain laws on themselves they have to respect.

"What is not in accordance with God's will as expressed in our nature cannot be claimed as a human right," says the statement.

On homosexuality and the right to choose, the bishops say man and woman are there to complement each other and they are of equal dignity and value in the eyes of God even though they are different.

Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful and multiplied must be full of affection and a family.

"It is therefore not right for anyone, including Government, to harass, persecute or torture people simply because they are known to have this (homosexual) inclination. At the same time homosexual persons have no right to propagate what some of them call their "lifestyle".

On sterilisation, the bishops say it is threatening the integrity and wholeness of the human being.

"As sterilisation is more and more advertised as a means of family planning, it is our duty to state unequivocally: sterilisation is morally unacceptable as a means of family planning. It contradicts human dignity. It disfigures God's creation. The spouses no longer express unconditional mutual self-giving to one another. Their sexual union, like a promise that is not kept, becomes a lie."

"This is the order given to humankind by God the Creator. There is no 'option' or 'choice'. There is no 'sexual right' to a homosexual lifestyle.

Homosexuality is a disorder. Homosexual acts are biologically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. Christianism not practising "homosexual lifestyle" in African culture abhors homosexuality and considers it abnormal."

When a disease is not eliminated where it exists, those who suffer from it are not to be eliminated as well, so those who are homosexual should not be eliminated but must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. They must not be treated unjustly.

"Some homosexual persons may have been born like that; they have to learn how to live with their condition, helped by the Christian community."

The Mashonaland Guardian, March 15, 1996.

## Appendix 37



### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Editor OF THE ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

MAHOGANY

HARARE

*Moral*

Dear Editor,

RE: Leonard Chaza, "It's a gay thing" (Mahogany, July/August 1995)

Allow me to comment on your article on homosexuality. While I agree that "gay" people should not be harrassed simply for being what they are, this does not mean that their particular condition should be accepted as on par with normal heterosexuality.

Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man. Man and woman are to complement each other, physically and psychologically. They are of equal dignity and value in the eyes of God, and yet different. Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family.

Homosexuality is a disorder. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357). Christians must not practise a "homosexual lifestyle". African culture abhors homosexuality and considers it abnormal because men and women are meant to be fruitful and have children. The development from polygamy towards monogamy may be said to be in line with the primary aim of African marriage of having a family while this cannot be said of homosexual unions.

If a person is incapable of relating to the other sex, then he or she has developed in the wrong way and lacks full human maturity. [This, incidentally, also applies to men who use women sexually, but are incapable of relating to women as persons, friends, workmates and colleagues, and are, therefore, also unsuitable for marriage]. Some homosexual persons have suffered a deep wound in their psyche when young, and healing may be possible. Others have to learn how to live with their condition. But there is no sense in the slogan "Gay and proud of it".

While we recognize the disease, we do not discriminate against those who suffer from it. "Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided", e.g. in employment or housing (Catechism, 2358).

At the same time homosexuals have no right to propagate what some call their "lifestyle" and have it recognised as a legitimate alternative to heterosexuality. There is no "option" or "choice".

The State has a duty to protect children from homosexual ( as well as heterosexual!) abusers.

Yours sincerely,

Fr Oskar Wermter SJ

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## Appendix 38



### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

#### WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Statement requested by Mr. Tangai Chipangura, for PARADE

Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man. This is how God created the human race. Human sexuality is not an end in itself, but is directed towards the procreation of children, i.e. towards marriage and family. This is the natural order to which we have to adhere. We have no free option to choose this or that "sexual orientation".

However, homosexuality is a fact. It is a deviation from human nature, i.e. a pathological condition. The Church has not given a definite answer to the question whether homosexuality is biologically inherited or culturally conditioned. It is, however, striking, that homosexuality seems to be prevalent in some cultures (e.g. USA) and largely absent in others (e.g. Zimbabwe, except in artificial environments like prisons).

The Church does not condemn persons who find they have a homosexual tendency as such, but cannot approve of their engaging in homosexual relationships. Homosexuals who cannot be cured of their pathological condition have to abstain from any sexual activity. Members of the Church in this situation are welcome within the Church community and must not be shunned or discriminated against. The Church expects them, of course, to accept the Church's teaching and to refrain from drawing other persons into homosexual relationships. Any recognition of homosexual relationships as kind of "marriages" is completely out of the question.

  
Fr Oskar Wermter SJ  
Social Communications Secretary  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

## Appendix 39

Bishop R P Hatendi  
P O Box 3585  
HARARE

02 July 1996

The Reverend Fr Oskar, Wermter, SJ,  
ZCBC Social Communications Department  
Africa Synod House  
P O Box CY2220, Causeway, HARARE

Dear Father

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of the ZCBC's statement on this topical issue about homosexuality which I had not seen. Generally I agree with the statement that our culture alone has no answer to "these threats".

Unfortunately we have become a God-less or God-fearless generation. Man has become a god and a measure of all things, hence the emphasis on Human Rights rather than Divine Right/Will. Submission to higher principles or the will of God is a thing of the past. Like Satan we are following our own wills and desires of our own hearts. Without God, good and evil choices are matters of opinion.

In my view, the issue of free will, like so many great truths, is a paradox. Sadly there is no neutral ground regarding the "right to choose". On the other hand I have a problem with the hypothesis that, "some homosexual persons may have been born like that". This is the crux of my letter to the Herald. If some are 'born like that', therefore they are not blameworthy and should live out who they are without let or hindrance as a human right given to them by God. It would be wrong to oppose what God has ordained or ordered. Where there is no choice there is no moral blameworthiness.

Could it be established as a biological or psychological fact that there are people who are "born like that"?

It was good to hear from you on this subject.  
Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Peter Hatendi*

# Challenge not yet answered

**EDITOR** — The stance taken by the President last year on behalf of Zimbabwe on the subject of homosexuality and homosexuality that stirred up much controversy beyond the borders of Zimbabwe ended with a challenge which has not yet been answered, and if an answer has been received it has not been published.

The reason for opposing the existence and practice was cultural. The Christian denominations and some individuals openly supported the stance for the same reason. Residents and visitors from other cultures are expected to respect the local culture. This is the message.

The denominations that support the local culture on this matter should have added other reasons such as morality, doctrine and biblical teaching. Although biblical references on the subject are few, male and female homosexuality is denounced categorically and the death penalty is prescribed.

However, social anthropology has established proof of homosexuality and male prostitution among many other cultures. There is historical evidence that Roman law punished homosexuality perhaps to protect minors, because there is also evidence that the ancient world north of the equator was riddled with homosexuality. It would be difficult to name one of the Greek philosophers who did not practise this kind of love for boys.

It is a fact of history that of the first 15 Roman Emperors 14 were practising homosexuals. It took a brave missionary, St Paul, to denounce what the greatest and wisest practised. Who will listen to the small voice of a young sovereign state of Zimbabwe?

Christian denominations have not spoken with one voice on the subject. Recently the Episcopal (Anglican) Church of America court cleared a retired bishop of the charge of heresy with a, however, ruling on the issue of morality.

The bishop had knowingly ordained a non-celibate man to the priesthood. The court of bishops acting as judges declared that the Episcopal Church doctrine does prohibit the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals, thus the

"core doctrine" is silent on the matter. The "core doctrine" refers to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the Creeds.

It is a fact that most major Protestant denominations are divided also on the related issues of the morality of homosexuality and deciding whether homosexuals in committed relationship should be ordained priests or ministers. With the cultural background described above this is not surprising. Some cultures have tolerated or even institutionalised it; others have ignored it; and others again have penalised it or attempted to suppress it.

Because the mainline Christian denominations in this country have not yet fully become local they can only speak as parrots regarding the local culture. Has the local culture done any one of the above on homosexuality not until it was imposed like HIV/Aids?

Zimbabwe was at the World Council of Churches in 1991. The WCC is an assembly of Christian denominations from different world cultures and different stances on this subject.

In preparation for the Assembly when the subject might be raised what better service could the Ministry of Sport and Culture and/or the Zimbabwe Council of Churches render to Zimbabwe than setting up a commission of inquiry into the existence and practice of homosexuality and homosexuality before and after 1890 and to report their findings before 1993?

**Bishop R. P. Hatendi,**  
Harare.

# 'Homosexuals are victims of society

THE report entitled "President lashes at homos" prompted me to put down my views. I think the issue of homosexuality or homosexuals demands greater and deeper analysis before individuals or society at large denounces or condemns individuals with homosexual tendencies or attempts by such individuals to come together and form organisations aimed at seeking protection from the wrath of society.

A fundamental question needs to be asked and answered before we react to the issue of homosexuality. What causes an individual to develop homosexual tendencies? Does an individual choose to be a homosexual? If not, are the causes biological or social? The answers to these questions determine the nature of our response to the issue of homosexuality.

As long as an individual does not choose to be a homosexual then it follows that nobody has the moral authority or civil right to condemn a homosexual especially if the homosexuality of such an individual is not arbitrarily practised on unwilling victims.

My own opinion is that homosexuality is an aberration and a homosexual is a victim who deserves understanding and sympathy and not hostility and the wrath of society as is presently the general attitude. Nobody chooses to be homosexual in the same way none of us chooses to be impotent or what we call "normal". I also doubt if someone who did not have homosexual tenden-

cies could suddenly develop homosexual tendencies simply because one has read literature pleading the case of homosexuals which, if it was the case, would then justify their denial of the right to express their ideas at the Zimbabwe Book Fair.

It is quite possible the most likely result of such a dialogue between the so-called 'normal' and these social 'outcasts' would be the development of greater understanding and tolerance between them and a lessening of the current attitude of hostility and condemnation which I think is the result of the public's prejudice rather than enlightenment.

As an individual, homosexuality, in my opinion (it's just an opinion) is more of a social problem than a biological problem and if anyone has to be made to feel guilty about its existence then it is society and not the homosexuals who are in my opinion just the symptoms manifesting the problems of society at large. What therefore is needed is not more repression of these victims but more investigation

into the causes of this problem so that in our reaction we are sure to deal with the causes and not the symptoms.

**David Chakombera,  
Nkulumane,  
Bulawayo.**

The Chronicle, August 9, 1995.

## Appendix 40



### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Editor OF THE ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
Financial Gazette  
Post Office Box 1773  
Independence Avenue HARARE

SIR,  
RE: "LINKING HOMOSEXUALITY WITH CRIME IS DOWNRIGHT INSULT TO GAYS"  
(FINGAZ 31, AUGUST 1995)

Some editors in this country do not know, or choose to ignore, the fact that, when you quote from a lengthy interview only what suits you and leave out what does not, you are actually distorting the truth. Officialdom uses the churches by quoting bits and pieces that fit into the official line while ignoring the rest. Unfortunately, some churchmen are not even aware of this.

I have been giving many interviews on the Church's stance on homosexuality in recent weeks. In each and every one of them I made it clear that the Catholic Church does not wish to see a witchhunt or hatecampaign against homosexuals, as "Muckraker" noted in FinGaz, 24 August (see also my "Sunday Reflection" in the Sunday Gazette, 27 August).

Certainly Christianity is about compassion. "Men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies ... do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination should be avoided," says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2358).

"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her," has become a popular biblical quotation in this context. Unfortunately people are rather selective in what they quote from Scripture. They omit to say that the punchline of that passage (John 8, 1-11) is, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way, and from now on, no longer sin."

Christianity is not only about compassion and love, but also about truth. And the truth is that man was created for woman, and woman for man. Man and woman are to complement each other, physically and psychologically. Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family. The truth is that there is a natural order whose boundaries we only overstep at our peril.

Homosexuality is a disorder. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law" (*Catechism*, n.2357). Christians must not practice a homosexual lifestyle.

Tolerance does not mean approval. It means that, though we need to eliminate the disease, we are not going to eliminate those suffering from the disease. While we regret the immoderate language used in the debate, our South African friends who resigned from the board of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in protest, those seventy American congressmen and GALZ also lacked tolerance and sensitivity towards the feelings of ordinary Zimbabweans whose culture based on family values is incompatible with the slogan "gay and proud of it".

Fr. Oskar Wermtner SJ  
Social Communications Secretary  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

# **SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT**

## **OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**



*moral.*

ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
Extract from the Pastoral Statement of January 1996  
**"MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM"**  
(Gen. 1:27)

### 1) Homosexuality and the "right to choose"

Man was created for woman, and woman was created for man, and both were created for God. Man and woman are to complement each other. They are of equal dignity and value in the eyes of God, and yet different. Their mutual love in marriage is to be fruitful. Marriage is to be fulfilled in children and a family.

This is the order given to humankind by God the Creator. There is no "option" or "choice". There is no "human right" to a "homosexual lifestyle".

Homosexuality is a disorder. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357). Christians must not practise a "homosexual lifestyle". African culture abhors homosexuality and considers it abnormal.

While we want to eliminate a disease, wherever it exists, we do not eliminate those who suffer from it. "Men and women with deep-seated homosexual tendencies do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2358).

Some homosexual persons may have been born like that: they have to learn how to live with their condition, helped by the Christian community. Others have suffered a deep wound in their psyche when young, and healing may be possible. Others again act under the pressure of a given social environment and need to be freed from such pressure.

It is therefore not right for anyone, including Government, to harrass, persecute or torture people simply because they are known to have this inclination. At the same time homosexual persons have no right to propagate what some of them call their "lifestyle". Laws protecting the young from sexual abuse, whether by homosexual or heterosexual persons, are legitimate.

At the same time, society must not create breeding grounds for homosexuality through overcrowding in prisons, forced separation of married men from their families, and forming an underclass of homeless people who have no hope ever to marry and have a family.

### Conclusion

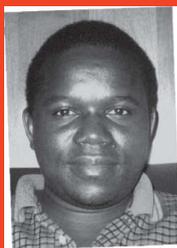
Whoever has said, as in defence of God's grand design for the loving and faithful union between man and woman called marriage which with  
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God's blessing, is to be fruitful and become a family. These are the points we would like to stress:

Social fragmentation, the destruction of family life and the isolation of the individual may well be contributing factors to the spread of homosexuality in western countries. Insofar as similar trends appear in Africa, the Church must become the extended family and supportive community that people need. The image of the "Church as God's Family" ...."emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust" (Church in Africa, 65).



BiAS volume three is a monograph which was submitted and passed as PhD thesis at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. The author revisits the subject of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, a subject that attracted the attention of the international community from 1995 when Robert Gabriel Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe described homosexual persons as “worse than dogs and pigs”. The President’s position was widely supported by Christians and Traditionalists alike, and the Bible was used as the final arbiter, as it is the “Word of God”. The Bible was also used by homosexual persons and those sympathetic to them, such that the Bible fought against the Bible. The book highlights the interconnection between homosexuality, religion and the socio-economic and political challenges from the 1990s, and raises critical questions about the widespread selective-literal appropriation of the Bible, a practice that ignores the socio-historical context of the Bible. This is a book for biblical students, scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible who want to engage with contemporary socio-theological challenges.



#### **The Author**

Masiiwa Ragies Gunda is a Zimbabwean citizen, born in 1975 in Makoni District, Rusape. At present he is Research Assistant at Bamberg University and holds a PhD (2010) from Bayreuth University, Germany. He also holds a Diploma in Religious Studies (1998), BA Honours Religious Studies (2001) and MA Religious Studies (2003) all from the University of Zimbabwe. Gunda is a former Diocesan Youth Secretary General of the Anglican Church, Harare Diocese (1998-2000) and has taught Old Testament Studies and Classical Hebrew at the University of Zimbabwe. He also taught at Chishawasha Regional Seminary as well as Domboshawa, Gaul House and United Theological colleges in Harare. Issues of justice and the public use of the Bible in contemporary socio-theological challenges remain his major research interest. Gunda is married to Shuvai and is a father to Takudzwa.

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